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**A UN COMMITTEE HAS EXPRESSED CONCERNS OVER THE CITY'S INADEQUATE PROTECTION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND HIGH REPORT RATE**

**LAWMAKER CALLS FOR COMPENSATION TO SAN MA LO AFFECTED BUSINESSES**

**AS BOURBON BOOMS, THIRST FOR RARE BRANDS BREEDS SKULLDUGGERY**



**Afghanistan** Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the country has become the most repressive in the world for women and girls, deprived of many of their basic rights, the United Nations said yesterday. In a statement released on the International Women's Day, the U.N. mission said that Afghanistan's new rulers have shown an almost "singular focus on imposing rules that leave most women and girls effectively trapped in their homes."



**Taiwan** Thousands of residents of Matsu islands near the Chinese coast have been without the internet for the past month, and Taiwan's largest service provider claims China is to blame. But authorities stopped short of calling it a deliberate act on the part of Beijing, and there was no direct evidence to show that Chinese ships were responsible.



**Georgian** authorities used tear gas and water cannon outside the parliament building in the capital yesterday [Macau time] against protesters who oppose a proposed law some see as stifling freedom of the press. The law, which has received initial approval, would require media outlets and nongovernmental organizations that receive more than 20% of their funding from foreign sources to register as "agents of foreign influence."

More on backpage

# TRENDING UPWARDS

**Beijing has issued 12.67 million certificates for travel to and from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan since borders reopened**

XINHUA



P5

**GP WAX FIGURES**

**DRIVERS' CAREER RECOGNITION WEIGHS MORE THAN LOCAL SUCCESS: MGTO**

RENATO MARQUES



P3

### HUMAN SKELETON FOUND IN COLOANE

A human skeleton was found on March 7 on the south side of a mountain near Estrada do Altinho de Ká Hó, according to the Fire Services Bureau's report to the Judiciary Police (PJ). An outsourced greening worker found the skeleton's skull at 9:50 a.m and reported it to his superiors and the police. The skull was confirmed as human after inspection. Police excavated the skeleton which was wearing an overcoat, a pair of trousers, a pair of sneakers, and a men's watch. A bag believed to belong to the deceased and a nylon rope were found near the skeleton. No identity document was found. The case is now being investigated and forensic testing is needed for more information.

### SJM RESORTS RECORDED HEAVY LOSSES IN 2022

Gaming operator SJM Resorts recorded heavy losses in 2022 as its net gaming revenue stood at HK\$6,092 million, as compared with HK\$9,608 million for the year 2021. Adjusted EBITDA of the group was negative HK\$3,095 million, as compared with negative HK\$1,581 million for the year 2021, according its statement. Loss attributable to owners of the company was HK\$7,798 million, as compared with a loss HK\$4,144 million for the year 2021. SJM had a 15.8% share of Macau's gaming revenue, including 19.8% of mass market table gross gaming revenue and 4.9% of VIP gross gaming revenue.

# MACAU'S WEAK DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION EFFORTS CONCERN UN

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) has expressed concerns over the city's inadequate protection against domestic violence and high report rate.

The Committee met with the Macau, China delegation about the latter's third regular report on the conditions of related topics.

"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," the CESCR reported in its concluding observations.

In response, the Committee suggested local government review the law to include same-sex couples and "ensure its effective implementation by raising awareness and conduct-specific training for law enforcement agents and the prosecution service with a view to protecting all victims, bringing perpetrators to justice and preventing impunity."

Coincidentally, the police yesterday announced another case of domestic violence involving a medical center's male owner and his wife, whom he is divorcing. It was the third case of its kind announced within a month.



Contrary to the report's comments, the government said "the Committee [...] affirmed the [Macau] Government's commitment to preventing and combating domestic violence."

On labor rights, the Committee expressed concerns over the city's lack of protection for strikes, collective negotiations and reprisal.

"[The] Committee is concerned that no legislation has been passed to regulate this right, and that the law does not provide for collective bargaining nor specific protection from retribution against workers who strike," the report pointed out. "The Committee is also concerned that employers and the government are influencing certain unions."

The Trade Union Bill is now

with a parliamentary committee for detailed study. The Bill has been assigned to a committee presided over by businessperson Chan Chak Mo rather than trade unionist Ella Lei.

Therefore, the UN Committee suggested the government make laws that actually protect workers' rights to form and join trade unions as well as their right to strike. Undue restrictions should be eliminated by legislation.

The UN sub-body specifically mentioned that Macau's mini-constitution has provisions in this respect.

However, the government rebutted the statement, saying that both the Basic Law and the Labour Relations Law offer protections in the aforementioned

respect. "The accusations are unfounded," the government said.

The government pointed to the public consultation result for the Trade Union Bill to highlight "the lack of social consensus" for collective bargaining rights, omitting the fact that the Committee suggested that government "take all necessary measures to ensure that workers enjoy their trade union rights without undue restrictions or interference."

Meanwhile, the UN Committee also criticized the government for exerting superfluous pressure on the medical system during the abrupt post-Covid-19 normalization. However, the government said the city had "in general smoothly overcome the sudden escalation of medical needs in late December last year."

### CRIME

# Man detained for several instances of alleged abuse and violence to wife



RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Judiciary Police (PJ) yesterday detained a 49-year-old male, the owner of a central district medical center, suspected of repeated abuse and violence against his wife, the PJ announced in a special press conference.

According to the report, the wife has accused the

man of continuous abuse over several years, including physical assault and deprivation of freedom, among other psychological abuse.

The PJ said that after several years of alleged violence, the 32-year-old woman has spoken out and pressed charges against her husband.

The PJ alleged most of

the abuse occurred at the clinic, where the woman worked as a staff member. At least two clinic workers allegedly witnessed the acts although none had reported them or provided her any assistance, fearing retaliation.

Among the violent acts allegedly committed, the police said the woman was confined to one treatment room for over six hours until 2 a.m. as well as physical assault, including beatings, hair pulling, and having hands and feet tied with ropes.

The woman said the alleged abuse started at home but had moved

more often to the workplace as she initiated divorce proceedings against the man while working at the medical center.

The couple got married in 2014 and has an eight-year-old son.

She said that after allegedly being restrained and confined to a room around one year ago, she informed social workers who encouraged her to report the abuse.

In the case filed with the PJ, the woman reported at least 10 acts of violence including the use of a toilet cleaning brush and strangulation with a belt.

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MACAU GP MUSEUM | WAX FIGURES

# Drivers' 'career recognition' weighs more than local success

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE completion of the Macau Grand Prix Museum revamp with the addition of wax figures of famous racers was announced by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Sunday.

Of the eight names to be immortalized in the local museum, only four have been unveiled so far, John Macdonald, Ron Haslam, Ayrton Senna da Silva and Sebastian Vettel.

To a Times inquiry on the criteria for the choice, the MGTO said, "Our decision was based upon the fact that these drivers are well-known international racers, some of whom also garnered numerous awards on the Guia Circuit in Macau."

The MGTO said the success and international recognition of the drivers weighed more on the decision than winning the local GP or exceptional achievements in locally held racing events.

For instance, this justified the choice of Sebastian Vettel, a four-time Formula 1 World Champion who had only finished third during 2005's Formula 3 GP.

The MGTO said the idea is to match racers' wax figures with the vehicles currently displayed in the museum. This means the four racers to be announced are also racers with racing machinery on display.

"Considering too that the Macau Grand Prix Museum has the related exhibits in-house, we



decided to have these wax figures made after the eight drivers," MGTO said, repeating that the waxwork installation was part of the initial idea and was made in parallel with the renovation project of the Macau Grand Prix Museum.

The delay of almost two years was explained by the fact that border restrictions made it difficult for specialized staff from Madame Tussauds to visit Macau to assemble the wax figures.

## TWO OF THE FIGURES ALREADY FEATURED IN OTHER ASIAN MUSEUMS

Another contributing factor to the final choice of some of the wax faces is that some have already seen their figures made in wax

by Madame Tussauds' brand and are featured in other museums.

The Times' research found that at least two of them (Ayrton Senna and Sebastian Vettel) already have wax figures in Madame Tussauds' museums in Asia. The first is in Tokyo, and the second in Singapore.

Questioned on the matter, MGTO did not disclose if this fact played any role in the choice, saying only that the project is a joint promotion between MGTO and Madame Tussauds Hong Kong.

## SEVERAL POSSIBILITIES FOR FOUR AVAILABLE SLOTS

As MGTO noted previously, the identity of the four other racers to be featured in wax in the museum

will be only announced later.

But, according to information disclosed by MGTO, names such as Teddy Yip, who not only played a significant role as a racer but also as an organizer and a highlighted figure of worldwide motorsport have gained momentum.

Other names may include the seven-time Formula One World Champion winner Michael Schumacher, the ten-time Macau Guia Race winner, Rob Huff, and Michael Rutter, the nine-time winner of Macau's Motorcycle GP.

Other possibilities include Edoardo Mortara, also named Mr. Macau, for his success in both F3 and GT racing categories, and the first-ever winner of the Macau event, Eduardo Carvalho, or the first-ever motorcycle race winner and two-time winner, Hiroshi Hasegawa.

Another possibility, taking into account, the criteria suggested as a principal by MGTO, is that the public would see the seven-time Formula One World Champion, Lewis Hamilton, which has also been represented in wax by Madame Tussauds in several of the international brand museums worldwide, including Singapore, Dubai and Blackpool (UK).

Hamilton raced in Macau twice (2003 and 2004) with the best result being 14th place in the main race in 2004.

The GP Museum currently displays the 2003 car of the racer when he crashed and did not finish the race.



## U U SANG ASSUMES IPIM PRESIDENCY

The new president of the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), U U Sang, took office yesterday with the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, presiding at the inauguration ceremony. At the ceremony, Lei said that over the years, U has held various positions in the areas of economic studies, attracting investment and business and guiding IPIM's representation offices in mainland China, having also monitored industrial development and regional cooperation projects.

## HOUSING PRICE SLIGHT DECREASE

The overall residential property price index for November 2022 - January 2023 decreased 0.8% over the previous period (October - December 2022) to 245.2. The index for the Macau Peninsula (243.9) dropped 1.3% while that for Taipa and Coloane (250.4) rose 1.1%, data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) shows. Analyzed by age of building, the indices for residential units of buildings of 5 years old or less and for those over 20 years old fell 2.0% and 0.7% respectively, whereas the index for those between six and 10 years old grew 0.8%.

## BOOK EXCHANGE ACTIVITY KICKS OFF

In conjunction with the "City of Reading Series of Activities - Macao Library Week 2023", the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) launched the book collection for the book exchange activity until April 9. On April 22 and 23, residents can exchange books of equivalent value at the venue of the event, the Macao Cultural Centre and the Seac Pai Van Library. Staff will categorize the books according to their original price. The scoring method is one point for every MOP10. The maximum score for each book or set is 100 points, and books without a price indication will be valued at MOP10.

## MOBILE APP

# Updated 'Macau GeoGuide' has more functions

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Macau GeoGuide app, which enables searches on land plots, the calculation of distances between locations in Macau and the checking of bus routes, among other functions, has been updated, the Cartography and Cadastre Bureau (DSCC) has revealed in a press statement.

Most of the new version's (v2.6) updates enhance travel route planning for the light rapid transit (LRT). Also updated were some map-browsing functions, in-

cluding the addition of a satellite image layer.

The DSCC also revealed the updates are mostly tied to the city's development.

In the app's new version, the route planning function allows a user to plan a trip based on five travel route criteria, including, shortest walking distance, leisure/sightseeing, bus, LRT and driving, to respond to different users' traveling needs.

The newly added LRT route scheme not only assists users to find LRT stations near their start and end point, but includes

walking routes and bus interchanges and provides information such as the walking path, the LRT or bus station, stations enroute, the destination station, the number of interchanges, the number of stations traveled and fares, among items for combined bus and LRT traveling.

Satellite images allow users to better perceive locations based on aerial images, with the possibility of overlaying them with street data for browsing.

With the new update, the "Macau GeoGuide" app provides more than

60 types of services locations, such as health care, food, housing, transportation, education and entertainment. It provides users with a full range of geographic information services.

Currently, over 410,000 users have downloaded the app, available in both app stores. Citizens and tourists are welcome to download the app from the Apple app store or Google Play.

Some time ago, during a parliamentary debate, several lawmakers called on the government and the Transport Bureau

(DSAT) to find a way to integrate the information into one or two apps. At the time, lawmakers criticized "the mushrooming" of apps that had overlapping functions but that were incomplete when standing alone.

The Macau GeoGuide was mentioned specifically, along with the Macao Smart Go (used mostly for checking parking spaces availability but also has the function of public transport planning) and also several other DSAT apps used for public bus travel, among others.

# MGTO PROMOTING CATERING, TRAVEL AGENCY APPLICATIONS FOR QUALITY CERTIFICATION

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) is promoting the application for the Quality Tourism Services Accreditation Scheme (QTSAS) among the catering and travel agency sectors in Macau, the office said in a press statement.

Applications for the certification program from these two sectors can be submitted from March 16 to 31 through the MGTO's dedicated website, the Macao Tourism Industry Net.

As noted in the same statement, the purpose is to promote quality tourism services through the scheme allowing customers to know that such businesses follow services and management standards. In the process, the MGTO hopes that local businesses can learn more about the quality service standards of the industry.

To be eligible for the certification, merchants must have been operating their businesses in Macau for at least one year.

Included among the eligible



business types are restaurants and eateries licensed under designated categories, as well as eligible main/branch offices of licensed travel agencies in Macau, provided that they submit the required documents within the application period and fulfill the application criteria. Businesses

will qualify for the scheme on a first-come, first-served basis until the quotas in each of the two categories have been filled.

For this year, the QTSAS has set the quotas on participants as 100 catering businesses and 30 travel agencies. Interested merchants can submit applications on Ma-

cao Tourism Industry Net (<http://industry.macaotourism.gov.mo>).

As part of the QTSAS, launched in Macau almost a decade ago, there is a series of awards and accolades that reward businesses in categories such as the "Quality Tourism Services Merchant Award", "Quality Tourism Services

Gold Award", "Quality Tourism Services Excellence Award" and "Special Theme Award" (including Sustainable Dining Award, Community Care Services Award, Local Feature Award, and Operational Innovation Award) for the catering sector.

Travel agencies can also receive the "Quality Tourism Services Merchant Award."

Upon passing the assessment, merchants will receive their accreditation certificate, window sticker, and badges, for display at the establishment.

Currently-accredited catering businesses can choose whether to compete for accreditation awards again or to undergo the assessment for the supervision period to maintain their accredited status. If they choose to compete for awards again, they will have to submit new applications to compete for the awards against other new participants.

Currently-accredited travel agencies, however, are not required to apply again. They can keep their accreditation if they continue to satisfy the criteria.

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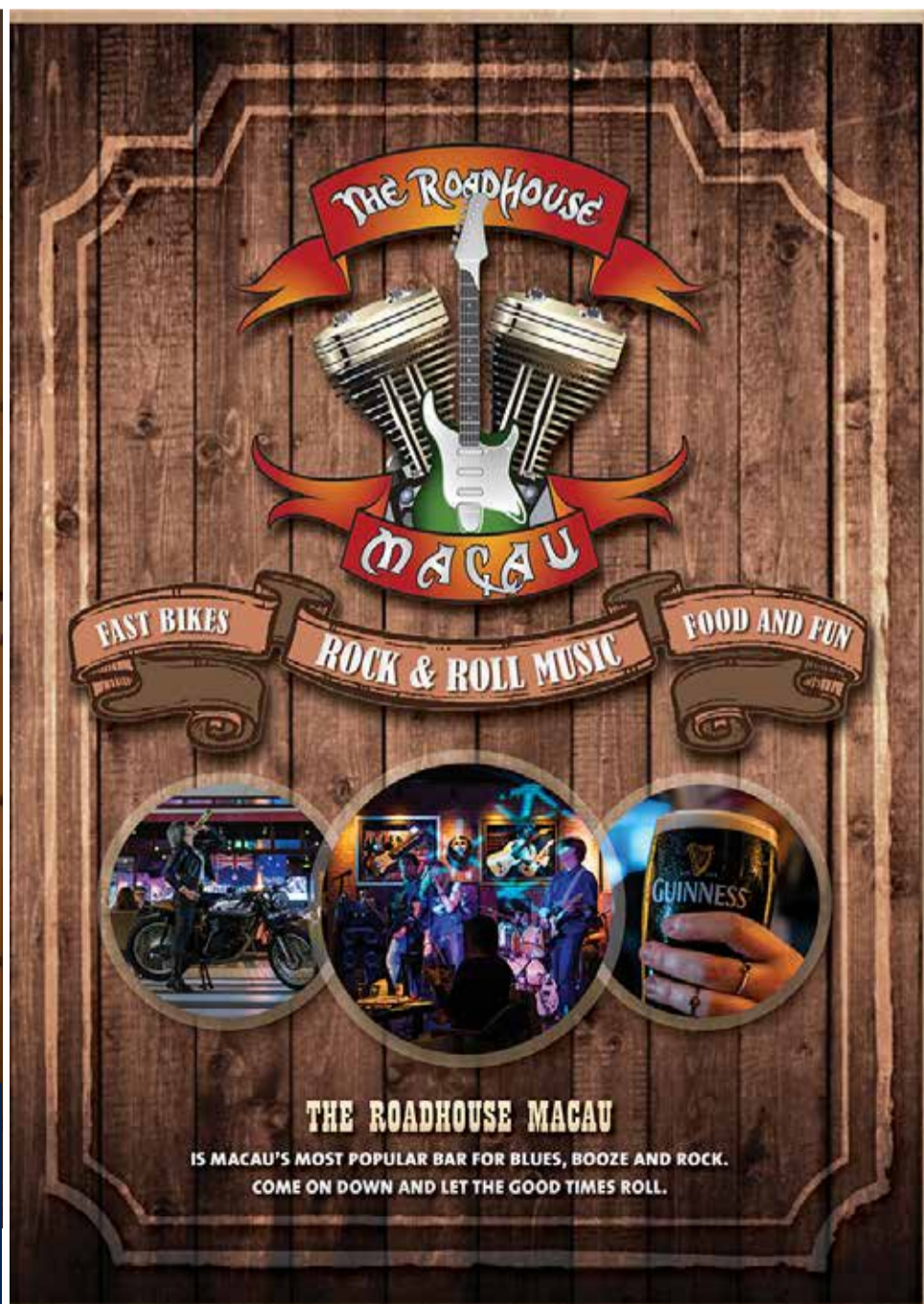


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# Lawmaker calls for compensation to San Ma Lo affected businesses

ANTHONY LAM

**B**USINESSES adversely affected by the San Ma Lo pedestrian lane event should be compensated, lawmaker Pereira Coutinho has noted in his latest inquiry.

Officially referred to as Strolling on Almeida Ribeiro - Pedestrian area pilot project, the San Ma Lo pedestrian lane event had, for the first time, completely suspended motor traffic on the artery road on the Macau Peninsula and allowed people to walk in vehicle lanes.

The tourism event was negatively affected by the lack of promotion of the history of nearby areas, despite the event being hosted by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC).

Coutinho's inquiry revealed both the cultural and business sectors were dissatisfied with the event. The lawmaker said businesses in the alley network peripheral to the main road did not benefit from the event.

Coutinho said about 20 such businesses had filed



complaints with his office, criticizing the government's lack of advanced negotiation and consultation about the event.

He said that due to the influx of crowds to San Ma Lo, police imposed crowd control measures and implemented a single direction flow. People wanting to enter peripheral alleyways could only do so at either end of the main road, stopping them from visiting the alleyway businesses.

Nonetheless, due to the an-

nouncement of the event, these businesses had ordered additional stock for the expected increase of customers – which did not occur – causing them to order too much stock. Merchandise with short validity periods was most affected.

The lawmaker asked the government to compensate the businesses, publicize the review report on the event and state whether it had consulted nearby businesses before the event.



EMBRACE EQUITY

## CHAMBERS HOST FORUM TO CELEBRATE WOMEN

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE Australian and British Chambers of Commerce in Macau yesterday joined forces to host a panel debate discussing 'Embrace Equity' for International Women's Day.

Building on the 2023 International Women's Day theme of 'Embrace Equity', the panel comprised of a line up of leaders from organizations in Macau that have seen the implications of gender equity including Jingbo Huang, director of the United Nations University Research Institute in Macau; Joanna Tam, a palliative care nurse; and Michelle Garnaut Ao, founder and CEO of M Restaurant Group.

AustCham chairman and Multi-Property vice president of Sheraton Grand Macao and The St. Regis Macao Janet McNab acknowledged that gender equity is both a fundamental

human right, and a solution to some of our greatest global challenges.

"There is a gender problem that needs to be fixed, and whilst the battle is far from over, days like today help us remind ourselves that the challenges and obstacles that women face will always evolve and we need input from women if we are to overcome them," said McNab.

"Despite the challenges and ever-changing business landscape, we need to lead by example, sustain and build on the gains made in senior leadership and strengthen efforts at every level within the organisation," she added.

The proceeds of the International Women's Day event of MOP70,000 will be donated to the Good Shepherd Sisters to support their work, uplifting the welfare of women and girls, especially those marginalised by society.

TRANSPORTATION

## Improve customer support facilities to boost LRT use

**L**IGHT Rapid Transit (LRT) network customer support facilities should be improved to incentivize use, a community service advisor has suggested.

In a recent Island District Community Service Advisory Board meeting, Kelvin Tan Hai Ching said with normal travel resuming and each tourist remaining in Taipa for an average of four hours, the LRT had not seen a corresponding rise in passenger numbers, although it is a core mode of transport in Taipa. He said a daily average of only 3,550 passengers was logged in January.

The advisor said shuttle bus services or footbridges should be added to certain LRT stations to better link passengers with attractions, be they near or afar.

For example, he used a pic-



ture to highlight the footbridge connecting the LRT Cotai East Station to the Grand Hyatt hotel noting footbridges will help draw traffic and improve safety.

Tan also suggested the government collaborate with resorts near the LRT route to improve the system's infrastructure and refine the passenger

experience.

Constant supervision of the system's popularity and efficiency must be conducted, the advisor added.

He suggested better advertising packages to both improve the income of the system and to better promote Macau's image. AL

## BEIJING ISSUES OVER 12.6M TRAVEL CERTIFICATES FOR SARs, TAIWAN SINCE JAN. 8

STAFF REPORTER

**B**EIJING has issued 12.67 million certificates for travel to and from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, up 837.7%, albeit from a low base, and 122,000 visas and residence permits for foreigners, up 33.1%.

The dramatic increase came after China lifted its Covid restrictions on Jan. 8, allowing its residents to move freely.

National Immigration Administration data shows that as of Tuesday, immigration authorities inspected about 39.72 million people entering or exiting the Chinese mainland, up 112.4% year-on-year, and about 2.5 million times checked inbound and outbound vehicles, boats, planes and trains, up 59.3% year-on-year.

As cited in a China Daily report, NIA spokesman Lin Yongsheng said that since the implementation of the optimized policies, the numbers of entry-exit flow and the application for entry-exit documents has risen sharply, due to the steady increase of international passenger flights and the resumption of personnel exchanges between the mainland, Hong Kong and Macau.

Immigration authorities will continue to improve the working plan and measures to meet the increased entry-exit needs and promote exchanges between Chinese and foreign personnel, he said.

Also, immigration authorities across the country issued about 3.36 million passports to Chinese citizens.



NPC

# INSTITUTIONAL REFORM DRAFT PLAN UNVEILED

XU WEI, CHINA DAILY

CHINA has unveiled a draft plan for the biggest reorganization of State Council departments in five years as part of its broader efforts to bolster self-reliance in science and technology, enhance financial oversight and protect intellectual property rights.

The draft plan on the institutional reform of the State Council, China's Cabinet, includes steps to restructure the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, and set up a national administration for financial regulation — a financial oversight body.

A new regulator for data governance will be created to coordinate the integration, sharing, development and application of data resources, the plan said.

The proposed national data bureau, to be administered by the National Development and Reform Commission, will be responsible for advancing the development of data-related fundamental institutions and pushing forward the planning and building of a Digital China, the digital economy and the digital society.

The draft plan for the Cabinet reshuffle comes five years after an institutional reform of the State Council cut the number of ministerial-level bodies by eight and vice-ministerial-level entities by seven.

Xiao Jie, state councilor and secretary-general of the State Council, introduced the draft plan at the second plenary meeting of



the first session of the 14th National People's Congress this week.

The plan, adopted at the second plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee last week, has been submitted to the NPC deputies for deliberation.

Xiao explained that the CPC Central Committee will set up a central commission on science and technology to enhance the Party's leadership in the sector, and the restructured Ministry of Science and Technology will serve as the working body of the new commission.

The restructured ministry will play a bigger role in building a new system for mobilizing the nation to make technological breakthroughs, optimizing sci-tech innovation, facilitating application of sci-tech advances, and

coordinating science and technology with economic and social development, according to the draft plan.

The Ministry of Science and Technology's task of bringing in talent from overseas will be reassigned to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, which will also adopt the functions of the State Administration of Foreign Expert Affairs.

The setting up of a national administration for financial regulation is intended to solve some long-standing, prominent problems and issues in the financial sector, Xiao said.

The new body, which will replace the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, will be responsible for supervising financial institutions outside the securities sector, step up

oversight of institutions, actions and functions, coordinate the protection of consumer rights in the financial sector and investigate wrongdoings.

The draft plan has further called for the establishment of a local financial regulatory mechanism, with agencies dispatched by central financial regulators as the mainstay to tackle problems such as a lack of means for oversight and professional talent shortage in local financial regulatory departments.

The reform also involves the adjustment of the China Securities Regulatory Commission from a public institution to a government agency directly under the State Council, and the reform of the local branches of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, will be deepened.

In order to upgrade IPR creation, application, protection and management, the National Intellectual Property Administration — currently managed by the State Administration for Market Regulation — will become an institution that operates directly under the State Council, the plan said.

The functions of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs will be optimized, and the ministry will take over the functions of the National Rural Revitalization Administration.

Meanwhile, the number of positions at central government departments will be cut by 5 percent as part of the reshuffle, and the State Council will still consist of 26 departments, besides its general office, after the draft plan is implemented. CHINA DAILY

NPC

# Nation's interests safeguarded

CAO YIN, CHINA DAILY

CHINA'S national sovereignty, security and development interests have been safeguarded over the past five years as its legislation in this regard was further strengthened, said a report delivered this week by the nation's top legislator.

From 2018 to 2022, several new laws relating to national security were formulated, including the Biosecurity Law, the Data Security Law and the Land Border Law, according to the work report of the Standing Committee of the 13th National People's Congress delivered by Li Zhanshu, chairman of the 13th NPC Standing Committee.

President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, attended the meeting with other Party and State leaders.

The report, which was submitted on Tuesday for review to the ongoing first session of the 14th NPC, China's top legislature, said that some other laws in this area, including the Counter-Terrorism Law, the National Intelligence Law and the Maritime Traffic Safety Law, were also revised during the period.

Recalling the top legislature's diplomatic work over the past five years, Li said,

"A major task in the work is stepping up to the front lines of any legal, political or diplomatic struggle whenever the country requires, without the slightest hesitation, to defend China's sovereignty, security and development interests."

Li said that legislation in foreign-related fields had been strengthened over the past five years, with the enactment of the Law on Countering Foreign Sanctions and the Export Control Law, adding that "the legal system for opposing foreign sanctions, interference and long-arm jurisdiction has also been improved".

Draft laws on foreign relations and foreign state immunity were also delibe-



rated by the 13th NPC Standing Committee, according to the report.

All of these items of legislation concerning foreign-related affairs have provided legal protection for the

interests of the country and its people, it added.

The work report said that the Law on International Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters was formulated and the Criminal

Procedure Law was amended in the five-year period, providing the legal means for pursuing fugitives who had fled abroad and for recovering stolen State assets. CHINA DAILY

# In Japan, women find rare parity in the prosecutors' office

YURI KAGEYAMA, TOKYO

**A**T the prosecutors' office in Tokyo, everyone makes their own copies and tea — tasks often relegated to women in a country that's been criticized for its lack of gender equality.

Twenty years ago, only about 8% of Japanese prosecutors were women. By 2018, that number rose to nearly a third of newly hired prosecutors. This year, the male-female ratio reached 50-50, according to the Tokyo District Prosecutors Office.

Japan ranks among the worst in gender equality for developed nations despite being No. 1 in equal access to education for women and men. So how are women finding equal footing in the esteemed field?

Prosecutor Rina Ito is quick to acknowledge that luck played a role, though her accomplishments didn't hurt.

Ito graduated from the prestigious Keio University, whose founder Yukichi Fukuzawa was a proponent of women's rights and where women make up nearly half of attendance. She then passed the national bar, the stringent test required of all Japanese prosecutors. Now she's on her 10th year on the job.

"When you think about who has the task of pursuing the truth, among judges, defense lawyers and prosecutors, it's the prosecutors," Ito said in a February interview with The Associated Press. "Prosecutors can go after the truth. That's why I set my heart on becoming a prosecutor."

Tokyo District Prosecutors are Japan's top-brass upholders



Tomoko Suzuki (left) and Rina Ito

of justice, notorious for going after corruption in the highest places: the Lockheed scandal of the 1970s that unseated a prime minister, the Recruit company insider trading debacle of the 1980s, and, more recently, bribery and bid-rigging related to the Tokyo Olympics.

Reaching gender parity, as in Ito's occupation, is rare in Japan. Women tend to be over-represented in the service sector and among clerical workers, while being fewer in manufacturing, security personnel and management, according to Statista data. Only about 5% of listed companies' board members are women, according to the Gender Equality Bureau in the Japanese

Cabinet Office.

Ito's mother was a full-time homemaker, and her father a "salaryman," but neither has discouraged her from pursuing a career. Her husband cooks and helps take care of their 2-year-old daughter.

She also notes that prosecutors, male or female, get moved around a lot — as quickly as every year or two — to various regional offices throughout the nation. The shuffling makes it almost impossible to curry favor with bosses, or develop personal relationships that could affect advancement prospects and fair evaluation. That may help even out the score in Japan, which ranks 116th in gender equality

in a list topped by Iceland and Finland, according to the latest data compiled by the World Economic Forum. The United States is No. 27.

Some men are also helping to even the playing field. Male prosecutors say they make a point to treat female colleagues equally.

"I have never viewed the women prosecutors as women," Tokyo District Deputy Chief Prosecutor Hiroshi Morimoto said.

Prosecutors are taking paternity leave in growing numbers, easing the gap between men and women like prosecutor Tomoko Suzuki, who took maternity leave for a combined several years to have two sons and is back full-time at her job.

Parental leave — particularly paternity — is often frowned upon in Japan. Although both men and women have such privileges under Japanese law, men make up only about 14% of those taking parental leave, in contrast to 85% for women, according to government data. Informally, men say people are surprised and puzzled when they take time off work to be fathers.

Suzuki acknowledged juggling being a mother, wife and prosecutor is a serious challenge. She has relied on her parents, older sister and babysitters for help.

Her husband, who works in shipping, is based in Singapore. She puts her sons on a plane during school vacations. Her children are learning to make friends with flight attendants and enjoying Singapore's diverse culture.

"Yes, it's stressful and tough

to live apart from my husband. But there are positives, too," Suzuki said.

When they do get to meet, it's like falling in love again. And he gets paid in Singapore dollars — a plus with Japanese yen declining recently.

"You can think that married couples must live together, which means I can't be happy. Or you can think we are blessed with more varied experiences," she said.

Suzuki, a Keio graduate like Ito, is now in management, overseeing younger prosecutors.

A prosecutor's success isn't measured by the number of guilty verdicts won, as in other countries. The conviction rate in Japan is higher than 99%, a statistic that's been slammed by human rights advocates as "hostage justice." Japan has had several high-profile cases in which innocent people were forced into false confessions.

Suzuki says the conviction rate has been taken out of context.

"The fact is that we don't prosecute many of the cases. We don't bring to trial those cases that aren't likely to produce guilty verdicts," said Suzuki, who has some 20 years' experience in the field. "That's why the conviction rate is 99%."

"We also need to try harder to communicate what's going on," she said.

Communication skills are far more important than guilty verdicts, Suzuki said, because perpetrators and victims alike are hesitant to talk to prosecutors, whose work includes helping people who have been convicted rehabilitate and re-join society. Having female prosecutors is helpful when victims request to speak with a woman, as is sometimes the case with sex-related crimes.

But usually, Ito and Suzuki said, individual ability is all that matters. MDT/AP

# Australian leader plans meeting with Biden after India trip

**AUSTRALIAN** Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said yesterday he plans to meet with President Joe Biden in the United States following a trip to India this week, amid speculation the leaders will make an announcement about Australia's plans to build nuclear submarines.

Albanese gave few details of the U.S. trip, saying there would be further announcements about the arrangements. Albanese is visiting India through Saturday.

Some media have spe-

culated that Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak could join Biden and Albanese in the U.S. to make a joint announcement about the agreement among the three nations, which would see Australia build a fleet of nuclear submarines powered by U.S. technology.

Albanese wouldn't say if he expected Sunak to also travel to the U.S.

"I'll look forward to the continuing engagement that I have with the U.S. administration," Albanese said.

Albanese made the re-

marks to reporters at Perth Airport before boarding his plane to India.

In India, Albanese plans to visit Ahmedabad, Mumbai and New Delhi, where he will meet with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Australia and India are important partners," Albanese said. "We share common values. We are both vibrant democracies. We have an interest in improving our economic relations."

He said India, along with Indonesia, would grow to

be the third- and fourth-largest economies in the world, which presented "an incredible opportunity" for Australia.

The previous Australian government infuriated France in 2021 by cancelling a \$66 billion contract for a French-built fleet of conventionally powered submarines and opting instead for nuclear-powered versions in a deal secretly brokered with the U.S. and Britain.

Albanese has stood by the AUKUS agreement to embrace nuclear techno-



Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese

logy. An announcement on whether Australia will opt for a version of the U.S.

Virginia-class or British Astute-class submarines is expected soon. MDT/AP

MEXICO

# Survivors of deadly abduction returned to US

ALFREDO PEÑA,  
FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ &  
TRAVIS LOLLER,  
CIUDAD VICTORIA

A road trip to Mexico for cosmetic surgery veered violently off course when four Americans were caught in a drug cartel shootout, leaving two dead and two held captive for days in a remote region of the Gulf coast before they were rescued from a wood shack, officials said yesterday [Macau time].

Their minivan crashed and was fired on shortly after they crossed into the border city of Matamoros on Friday as drug cartel factions tore through the streets, the region's governor said. A stray bullet also killed a Mexican woman about a block and a half away.

The four Americans were hauled off in a pickup truck, and Mexican authorities frantically searched as the cartel moved them around — even taking them to a medical clinic — “to create confusion and avoid efforts to rescue them,” Tamaulipas Gov. Américo Villarreal said.

They were found yesterday in a wooden shack, guarded by a man who was arrested, in a rural area east of Matamoros called Ejido Tecolote on the way to the Gulf called “Bagdad Beach,” according to the state's chief prosecutor, Irving Barrios.

The surviving Americans were whisked back to U.S. soil in Brownsville, the southernmost tip of Texas and just across the border from Matamoros. The convoy of ambulances and SUVs was escorted by Mexican military Humvees and National Guard trucks with mounted machine guns.

A relative of one of the victims said earlier this week that the four had traveled together from the Carolinas so one of them could get a tummy tuck surgery from a doctor in Matamoros.

The governor said the wounded American, Eric Williams, had been shot in the left leg and the injury was not life threatening.

“It's quite a relief,” said Robert Williams, 38-year-old Eric's brother, reached by phone yesterday in Nor-



A Red Cross worker closes the door of an ambulance carrying two Americans found alive after their abduction in Mexico last week, in Matamoros

th Carolina. “I look forward to seeing him again and actually being able to talk to him.”

Robert Williams was not sure if the other survivor, Latavia Burgess, was the one seeking the surgery.

The survivors were taken to Valley Regional Medical Center with an FBI escort, the Brownsville Herald reported. A spokesperson for the hospital referred all inquiries to the FBI.

The two dead — Shaeed Woodard, age 33, and Zindell Brown, in his mid-20s — will be turned over to U.S. authorities following forensic work at the Matamoros morgue, the governor said.

Video and photographs taken during and immediately after Friday's abduction show the Americans' white minivan sitting beside another vehicle, with at least one bullet hole in the driver's side window. A witness said the two vehicles had collided. Almost immediately, several men with tactical vests and assault rifles arrived in another vehicle to surround the scene.

The Mexican authorities' hypothesis is “that it was confusion, not a direct attack,” the state prosecutor said.

The gunmen walked one of the Americans into the bed of a white pickup, then dragged and loaded up the three others. Terrified civilian motorists sat silently in their cars, hoping not to draw attention. Two of the victims appeared to be motionless.

The shootings illustrate the terror that has prevailed for years in Matamoros, a city dominated by factions of the powerful Gulf drug cartel who often fight among themselves. Amid the violence, thousands of Mexicans have disappeared in Tamaulipas state alone.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said the people responsible would be punished. He referenced arrests in the 2019 killings of nine U.S.-Mexican dual citizens in Sonora near the U.S. border.

López Obrador complained about the U.S. media's coverage of the missing Americans, accusing them of sensationalism. He said that when Mexicans are killed, the media “go quiet like mummies.”

“We really regret that this happens in our country,” he said, adding that the U.S. government has every right to be upset by the violence.

U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland put blame for the deaths squarely on the drug cartels

“The DEA and the FBI are doing everything possible to dismantle and disrupt and ultimately prosecute the leaders of the cartels and the entire networks that they depend on” Garland said.

The FBI had offered a \$50,000 reward for the victims' return and the arrest of the abductors.

Robert Williams said in a telephone interview that he and his brother Eric are from South Carolina but now live in the Winston-Salem area of North Carolina.

Williams described his brother as “easygoing” and “fun-spirited.”

He didn't know his brother was traveling to Mexico until after the abduction hit the news. But from looking at his brother's Facebook posts, he thinks his brother did not consider the trip dangerous.

“He thought it would be fun,” Williams said.

When told that his brother was among the survivors, Williams said that when they meet, “I'll just tell him how happy I am to see him, and how glad I am that he made it through, and that I love him.” MDT/AP

## this day in history

### 1967 STALIN'S DAUGHTER DEFECTS TO THE WEST



The daughter of the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin has requested political asylum at the United States Embassy in India.

The American Mutual Radio network broke the news but the American State Department has so far refused to comment.

Since her father's death in 1953, little has been heard of 42-year-old Svetlana Alliluyeva - who prefers to be known by her mother's maiden name.

She has been living in a flat in Moscow near the British Embassy working as a researcher and translator.

Svetlana is the only daughter of Joseph Stalin by his second wife Nadezhda Alliluyeva who committed suicide in 1932 when Svetlana was nine years old.

When she was just 18, Svetlana, married a Jewish fellow student at Moscow University against her father's wishes.

She had a son by him but the marriage was dissolved and her ex-husband sent to his death in a Siberian labour camp.

Her second husband was Yuri Zhdanov, the son of Andrei, a close ally of Stalin.

This marriage was also dissolved.

In 1964 she married Brajesh Singh, an Indian communist.

He died last November and Svetlana came to India on 20 December last year to bury his ashes.

She is believed to be planning to go to Geneva, Switzerland, after the Indian authorities refused her permission to stay in the country for fear of marring relations with the Soviet Union.

She leaves behind a grown-up son and daughter in Moscow.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Svetlana Alliluyeva was allowed to stay in Switzerland for three months. She went to the United States in April 1967. On arrival at New York, she held a press conference and astonished the world by denouncing her father's regime - much to the irritation of the Soviet leader of the time, Alexei Kosygin, who said she was a “sick person”. Later that year, she published her memoirs, *Twenty Letters to a Friend*, and another autobiography in 1969 called *Only One Year*. Svetlana became a US citizen and changed her name to Lana Peters when she married American architect, William Peters in 1970. But they separated after their daughter, Olga, was born. She returned to the Soviet Union in 1984 and settled in Tbilisi, Georgia - her father's homeland. In 1986 she left the USSR for the second time to live in the US and then during the 1990s settled in England. Svetlana died on 22 November 2011, aged 85, in Richland Center, Wisconsin.



**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Opportunities for romance will develop through activities with large groups. You may be more emotional than usual. You must watch your tendency to spend whatever you make.

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20  
You can expect changes in your living arrangements. Self-improvement could bring amazing results. Don't allow someone to do a job that was designated specifically for you.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21  
Attend seminars that will bring you in contact with the right people. If you haven't already, consider starting your own business. Secret affairs will only lead to deception.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
Keep a lookout for any individuals eager to confront you with unsavory situations. Mingle with those who have similar interests, and you should be able to start something.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
You may blow situations out of proportion when dealing with the one you love. Make changes regarding your friendships. Get on with business.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
Dinner, theater, or a comedy club may be just the place. Try to curb your bad habits, and compromise if your partner gives you an ultimatum.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
Don't promise to deliver the goods if you aren't positive that you can meet the deadline. You can persuade even the toughest opponents to think your way.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
Don't get involved in joint ventures. Acceptance will be necessary. Your ideas are right on the mark and your work commendable.

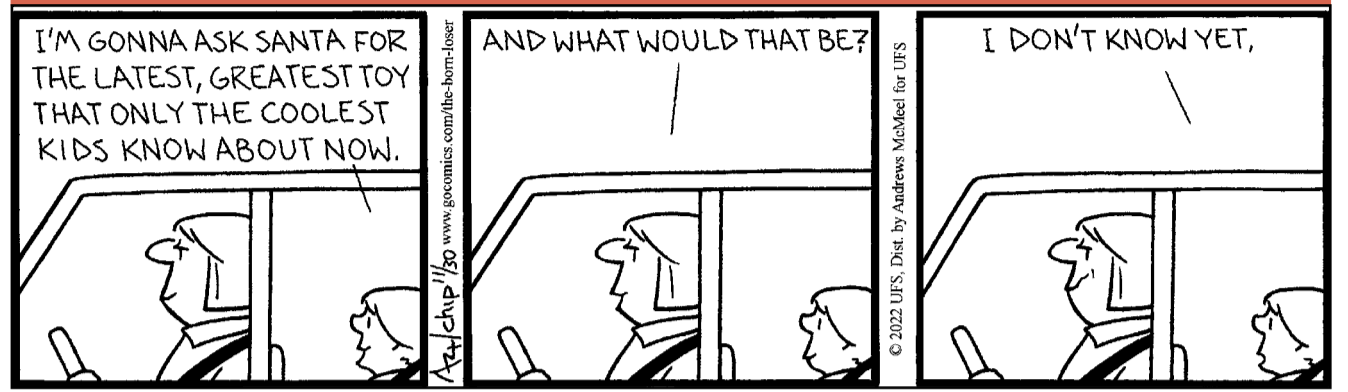
**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
Communication will be your best bet. You may find that family members may not be too easy to get along with. Don't waste this exciting day by sitting at home.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
Try to stay calm and understand both sides of the situation. Your professional attitude will not go unnoticed. You won't have much time for your mate today.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
Use your better judgment before you sign up for a costly venture. You may be overreacting to a situation at hand. You could receive recognition for a job well done.

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
Your emotional life may be up in the air if your mate has been going through a change of heart. You can pick up additional responsibility that will lead to higher wages and a better position.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

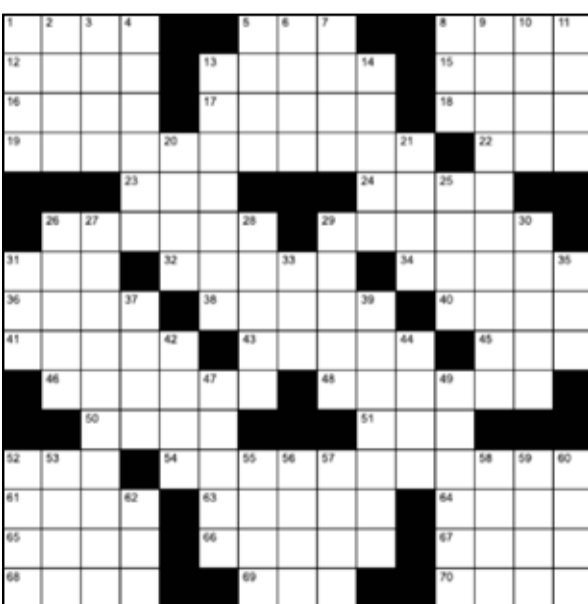
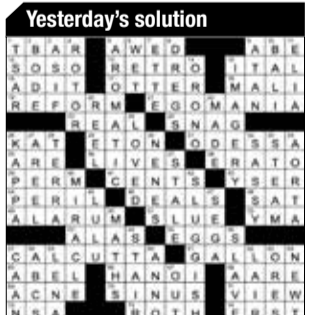
**WEATHER**

|              | MIN | MAX | CONDITION |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----------|
| <b>CHINA</b> |     |     |           |
| Beijing      | 2   | 20  | fine      |
| Changchun    | -2  | 10  | cloudy    |
| Chengdu      | 14  | 24  | cloudy    |
| Chongqing    | 11  | 23  | cloudy    |
| Fuzhou       | 14  | 27  | cloudy    |
| Guangzhou    | 15  | 28  | cloudy    |
| Guiyang      | 8   | 22  | cloudy    |
| Haikou       | 17  | 26  | cloudy    |
| Hangzhou     | 13  | 27  | cloudy    |
| Harbin       | -2  | 8   | cloudy    |
| Hefei        | 8   | 29  | fine      |
| Nanjing      | 12  | 26  | cloudy    |
| Shanghai     | 14  | 25  | cloudy    |
| Taipei       | 12  | 20  | cloudy    |
| Wuhan        | 12  | 27  | fine      |
| Hong Kong    | 18  | 23  | fine      |
| <b>WORLD</b> |     |     |           |
| Moscow       | -6  | -1  | snow      |
| Frankfurt    | 9   | 12  | rain      |
| Paris        | 10  | 15  | rain      |
| London       | 4   | 9   | rain      |
| New York     | 1   | 10  | overcast  |

**CROSSWORDS**

**ACROSS** 1-Bushy hairstyle; 5- L.A. clock setting; 8- Japanese soup; 12- Yarn spinner; 13- Madame de \_\_\_; 15- \_\_\_ uproar; 16- Mont Blanc, par exemple; 17- Tidal bore; 18- Hurt; 19- Coins; 22- Not in the pink; 23- A collection of articles; 24- Singer Stefani; 26- Beautifully imaginative; 29- Place for a lace; 31- TKO caller; 32- More tender; 34- Less common; 36- Aware of; 38- Thermoplastic yarn; 40- Defense grp. since 1949; 41- Get the better of; 43- "The Taming of the Shrew" setting; 45- Hanoi holiday; 46- Commence; 48- Makes rhapsodic; 50- Drive-\_\_\_; 51- China's Chou En-\_\_\_; 52- Singer DiFranco; 54- Not of the Christian religion; 61- San \_\_\_, Italy; 63- Tribe ruler; 64- Alley; 65- Normandy city; 66- Firm; 67- Novel ending; 68- Estimator's phrase; 69- Stutz contemporary; 70- Highly ranked competitor in sporting events;

**DOWN** 1- Sigher's word; 2- Thin layer; 3- \_\_\_ Nui (Easter Island); 4- Ultimatum words; 5- Egyptian deity; 6- Heroic adventure tale; 7- Small gull; 8- Actress Farrow; 9- Cremate; 10- Satirist Mort; 11- Like Nash's lama; 13- Subdivision; 14- Having long gambs; 20- Permits; 21- Large jug or pitcher; 25- Brio; 26- Old finnish money; 27- Quite a bit; 28- Subterranean vault; 29- French beans?; 31- Outback hopper; 33- Guido's high note; 35- Decay; 37- "That smart!"; 39- Render legally void; 42- Andean country; 44- Small batteries; 47- Blow with the fist; 49- Names; 52- Sacramento's \_\_\_ Arena; 53- In the neighborhood; 55- Burn slightly; 56- Bring on board; 57- Start from scratch; 58- Must've been something \_\_\_; 59- Start the pot; 60- Requirement; 62- Lennon's lady;



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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HKD 11,500/mth 2 bed 1 bath

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

AP PHOTO



F&B

# AS BOURBON BOOMS, THIRST FOR RARE BRANDS BREEDS SKULLDUGGERY

ANDREW SELSKY & DAMIAN DOVARGANES, SALEM (ORE.)

**B**UTTERY, smooth, oaky. These are characteristics of the best bourbons, and a growing cult of aficionados is willing to pay an astonishing amount of money for these increas-

ingly scarce premium American spirits — and even bend or break laws.

Premium spirits have always been expensive and sought-after. But a surge in interest in high-end bourbon has made finding that elusive bottle even more difficult. Distillers have upped production to try to meet

increased demand, but before the whiskey reaches stores and bars, it must age for years and even decades. Scarcity has changed what some fans are willing to do to obtain the most sought-after bourbon.

In Oregon, a criminal investigation is under way after an internal probe con-

cluded several state liquor officials used their clout to obtain scarce bourbons, including the holy grail for bourbon fanatics: Pappy Van Winkle 23-year-old, which can sell for tens of thousands of dollars on resale markets. That brand is so popular that it found itself at the center of criminal investigations in at least three other states, from Virginia to Pennsylvania to Kentucky.

The cases underscore how demand has reached a fever pitch. A limited number of Pappy Van Winkle 23-year, produced by Old Rip Van Winkle Distillery of Frankfort, Kentucky, goes to each state. In 2022, Oregon received just 33 bottles.

"The average person cannot get good bottles," said Cody Walding, a bourbon aficionado from Houston who has been on the hunt for Buffalo Trace Distillery's five-bottle Antique Collection. He hasn't been able to find any despite making connections with liquor store managers. He believes he's years away from success.

"Like, to be able to get Pappy Van Winkle or Buffalo Trace Antique Collection, unless you're basically best friends with a store manager, I don't even think it's possible to get those," he said.

In a Los Angeles bar that Walding visited last week, one shot of Pappy 23-year cost \$200.

Supplier sales for American whiskey — which includes bourbon, Tennessee whiskey and rye — rose 10.5% last year, reaching \$5.1 billion, according to

the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States. Revenues for makers of super-premium American whiskey grew 141% over the past five years.

In Oregon, the price of a bottle of Pappy 23-year-old bourbon is set by the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission at \$329.95. But finding Pappy 23-year-old on a store shelf would be almost as hard as finding a mythical Sasquatch in Oregon's forests.

The commission says that of last year's allocation of Pappy 23-year-old, 25 bottles went to bars, restaurants and/or liquor stores, three were reserved as safety stock to replace any damaged product and five went to "chance to purchase," a lottery started in 2018. The odds of winning Pappy 23-year-old were 1 in 4,150.

Utah and Pennsylvania are among other states that also use lotteries for coveted liquor. Two men in Pennsylvania each bought a bottle of Pappy Van Winkle after winning the liquor lottery in different years. They tried to sell their bottles on Craigslist, but undercover officers posing as buyers nailed them for selling liquor without a license.

In Virginia, an employee of the state's Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority downloaded confidential information about which state-run liquor shops would be receiving Pappy Van Winkle and other rare bourbons. An accomplice then sold the intel to Facebook groups of bourbon fans. In September, the now-former employee pleaded gui-

lty to felony computer trespass, received a suspended prison sentence and a fine, and was banned from all Virginia liquor stores.

In Kentucky, an employee of Buffalo Trace Distillery was arrested in 2015 for stealing bourbon, including Pappy, over several years and selling it. The caper became part of "Heist," a Netflix miniseries, in 2021.

Bourbon, in particular, has a rich American heritage. It's been around since before Kentucky became a state in 1792 and is where the vast majority of bourbon comes from. In 1964, Congress declared bourbon "a distinctive product of the United States," barring whiskey produced in other countries from being labeled as bourbon. Today, some of the best-known Kentucky bourbon distilleries are foreign-owned.

In the 1960s and '70s, bourbon had a reputation as a cheap drink. Then came a change: Targeting Japan, Kentucky distillers developed single-barrel and small batch versions in the 1980s and 1990s, which later blossomed in the United States, said Fred Minnick, who has written books on bourbon and judges world whiskey competitions.

"The distillers were starting to wake up — there was an interest in the whiskey, because the culture itself was beginning to change," Minnick said. "We were going from a steak-and-potatoes nation to foie gras and wagyu."

Minnick lovingly describes what it's like to sip a great bourbon, which obtains sweetness by absorbing natural wood sugars from charred oak barrels.

"It begins at the front of your tongue, walks itself back, will drip a little bit down your jawline, a little bit like butter, very velvety," Minnick said. "Caramel is one of the quintessential notes, followed by a little touch of vanilla."

Some of the world's top beverage companies that own major brands include Kirin (which owns Four Roses), Beam Suntory (Maker's Mark, Jim Beam, Knob Creek, Basil Hayden), Diageo (Bulleit, I.W. Harper), Sazerac (Buffalo Trace, Van Winkle, Blanton's) and Campari Group (Wild Turkey).

They boosted bourbon production with multi-million-dollar expansions and renovations, but there's still not enough of the best stuff to go around. **MDT/AP**

AD



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FOOTBALL

# Benfica shows strength going into Champions League quarters

TALES AZZONI, LISBON

BENFICA 5, CLUB BRUGGE 1

**W**HEN Benfica started its Champions League campaign in the third qualifying round in August, few expected the Portuguese team to make much of a run in Europe's top club competition.

It was coming off a poor season by the club's standards, and expectations were low.

But round after round, Benfica kept battling, advancing and showing improvement under new coach Roger Schmidt.

Now the traditional club is in great form and is seen by many as one of the teams to beat in Europe entering the decisive stages of the Champions League. Come the draw for the last eight next week, Benfica will not be considered one of the softer opponents.

That hasn't been the case recently, as until last season it had not reached the round of 16 since 2016-17.

AP PHOTO



Benfica's Goncalo Ramos celebrates after scoring his side's second goal

It surprised this time with an unbeaten run to win a difficult group that included powerhouses Paris Saint-Germain and Juventus. It routed Club Brugge 5-1 yesterday for its biggest Champions League home win, advancing to the quarterfinals 7-1 on aggregate.

"At this stage of the Champions League there are always good

opponents, we have to respect everyone," Schmidt said. "But playing this way, with this focus, motivation and defending well, we will try our best to reach the semifinals."

It would be the first time Benfica qualified for the semifinals since 1990, when it eventually lost the final to AC Milan. Last season,

Benfica was eliminated by eventual runner-up Liverpool in the last eight.

"We had a lot of respect for Brugge, now we are already focused on the next round," said striker Gonçalo Ramos, who scored twice in the team's rout yesterday. "No matter who is our next opponent, we will keep playing

the same way."

The 21-year-old Ramos has been one of the top players for Benfica this season along with Rafa Silva and João Mário, who also scored a goal each at the Stadium of Light.

They have been linking up well with Gonçalo Guedes, who arrived in the winter transfer window from Wolverhampton.

Chiquinho and Florentino have been doing the hard work in the first line of defense, with young defender Antonio Silva and veterans Nicolás Otamendi and Álex Grimaldo thriving behind them.

Benfica has lost only once in 42 matches this season and is unbeaten in its 19 home games. It is unbeaten in its last 13 matches in all competitions, with 11 wins. It now has the most prolific attack in the Champions League this season with 23 goals, one more than Napoli and two more than defending champion Real Madrid. It comfortably leads the Portuguese league, eight points ahead of rival Porto.

"The team has been working hard and things have been going well for us," Silva said.

Twice a European champion in the early 1960s, Benfica had last made it to the last eight in consecutive seasons in 1968 and 1969.

It will find out its next opponent in the draw on March 17. Chances are, though, Benfica's players aren't too worried about which rival it will face next. **MDT/AP**

## RUGBY ACADEMY

# BATS FLYING HIGH

**M**ACAUI Bats attended their 2nd rugby festival in Hong Kong last weekend. The club fielded seven teams across the various age groups and the teams acquitted themselves well.

Both U6 and U7 teams won all of their respective four games to get the club off to a flying start. The U8s also performed well with 3 wins and one narrow loss. Similarly, the U9s overcame an early defeat and delivered two wins. The U10s recorded a 100% win record from their four games and the U11s lost to Shatin Sha Pei before responding with two good wins against hosts Valley Fort and Hong Kong Football Club.

Meanwhile the U12s were playing in the Richard Hawkes tournament and gained promotion through three wins and one loss. It should give them confidence for a shot at the Cup in a fortnight's time.



**OPINION**

**China Daily**  
 Editorial, China Daily

**MEETING WOULD BE PROVOCATION NO MATTER WHERE**

According to a recent report by the Financial Times, Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen will meet with US House of Representatives Speaker Kevin McCarthy in California next month while on transit to Central America.

Tsai has previously made use of her "visits" to the few countries in Central America and the Caribbean that are still among the island's "diplomatic allies" to have a "transit stay" in the United States.

But the situation this year is drastically different from that of 2019, when she made her last such trip and spent four days on a "transit stay" in the US out of an 11-day trip to four Central American countries.

Today, neither Sino-US relations nor the situation in the Taiwan Straits is comparable to how they were four years ago. Both are more complicated and fraught with risks, as not only is the Joe Biden administration intent on playing the "Taiwan card" as part of its strategy to contain China, but the secessionist-minded Tsai administration is speculating on that.

The fight against the COVID-19 pandemic should have provided a chance for the two sides of the Straits to de-escalate tensions. However, due to the collusion between the Tsai administration and Washington, the tensions have only escalated.

Then House speaker Nancy Pelosi's reckless visit to the island in August directly pushed the tensions across the Straits as well as between China and the US to the brink of conflict.

Pelosi's provocation sparked strong condemnation from China and prompted it to hold military drills around the island as a warning that it would not tolerate any attempt to sever the island from its motherland.

The no-comment replies from Taipei and Washington suggest that the purpose of the "anonymous sources" from the United States in releasing the information this time is to test the reaction of the Chinese mainland.

Those parties that are trying to probe Beijing's reaction with such unverified reports should save the trouble as they should know that Beijing will by no means tolerate any actions in support of "Taiwan independence".

At present, both Washington and Taipei are trying to weave the Taiwan question into the fabric of the world's concerns over the Ukraine crisis in a bid to eliminate Beijing's space to resolve the Taiwan question peacefully. But the two issues are different in nature.

The Taiwan question concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The consequences of any meeting between Tsai and McCarthy will be solely on the heads of the secessionists and their US patrons.

Edmund Ho, the vice-chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), called for the CPPCC members in Macau SAR to implement the "spirit of the 20th National Congress of the CPC," elaborate the positive effect to both sides and support the Macau CE and SAR governments in adhering to law-based administration.

The 14th National People's Congress (NPC), China's national legislature, opened its first session Sunday morning at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

According to Ho, Chinese President Xi Jinping and the central government "always care about and support Macau's prosperous development." He said Macau SAR CPPCC members should support the SAR with the positioning of "one center, one platform, and one base", enhance communication with all classes in Macau society, implement the work to bolster solidarity, help Macau integrate into the national development blueprint, accelerate the multiple and proper development of the economy, and promote the practice of 'One country, two systems' in Macau.

AP PHOTO



This still image from video provided by Lisa Olsen shows a man who federal authorities have identified as Francisco Severo Torres

**HOW PASSENGERS TEAMED UP TO RESTRAIN MAN ON CHAOTIC FLIGHT**

MARK PRATT, BOSTON

A passenger who helped restrain a threatening man on a weekend flight from Los Angeles to Boston said yesterday [Macau time] that the entire chaotic episode was over within seconds thanks to teamwork.

Simik Ghookasian said in a telephone interview that he was seated several rows behind the man, who had quietly tried to open an airliner's emergency door before trying to stab a flight attendant with a broken metal spoon, according to prosecutors.

"I heard the guy getting louder and louder and I thought it was just an argument, but he started yelling and screaming and threatening people, threatening to kill them," said Ghookasian, a Los Angeles government contractor flying to Boston on United Flight 2609 on Sunday for work.

Until the yelling, he hadn't noticed anything unusual about the man, who federal authorities have identified as Francisco Severo Torres.

Ghookasian said he saw the spoon and he was among five or six passen-

gers who piled onto Torres and removed it from his grasp. It turned out to be the handle of a metal spoon, from which the bowl portion had been broken off, authorities said.

"That guy was really strong and was really resisting," Ghookasian said. "We had a hard time holding him down. It was total teamwork."

Ghookasian asked a flight attendant for some zip ties or duct tape, and the flight attendant produced some zip ties.

Ghookasian, who said he has first aid and counter-terrorism training, said he didn't have time to be scared, he just reacted and used his instincts.

"Everything just exploded in a few seconds," he said.

Torres, 33, of Leominster, Massachusetts, was arrested when the plane arrived in Boston and charged with interference and attempted interference with flight crew members and attendants using a dangerous weapon, federal prosecutors said. He was detained pending a hearing scheduled for today.

The plane was about 45 minutes from Boston

when the crew received an alarm that a side door on the aircraft was disarmed, according to court documents. One flight attendant noticed the door's locking handle had been moved. Another flight attendant had noticed that Torres was seen near the door and believed he had moved the handle.

Airplane doors cannot be opened once in flight due to cabin pressure.

The crew told the captain that he was a threat and the plane should be landed as soon as possible, authorities said.

Then Torres approached two flight attendants, according to the court documents. One of the flight attendants felt the metal object in Torres' hand hit him on his shirt collar and tie three times.

Torres told investigators that he went into the airplane's bathroom and broke a spoon in half to make a weapon, prosecutors said in the documents. They say he told authorities he wanted to open the door so that he could jump out of the plane.

Investigators said Torres admitted knowing that if he opened the door many people would die. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



**West Bank** The Israeli army raided a home in a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank last night, triggering a battle that killed at least six Palestinians and wounded more than two dozen others, Palestinian health officials said. The military said that one of those killed in the Jenin refugee camp was the suspected assailant behind a fatal shooting of two Israeli brothers in the northern West Bank town of Hawara last week.

AP PHOTO



**USA** The FBI finds itself in a challenging moment as it conducts simultaneous investigations involving classified documents held by Donald Trump and President Joe Biden. In an interview with The Associated Press, FBI Director Christopher Wray (pictured) acknowledges it is a tough time but downplays the impact that the "noise" had on the FBI's day-to-day work.

AP PHOTO



**Colombia** For the first time in 25 years, Colombia has opened military service to women. A cohort of 1,296 women enlisted in Colombia's army in February. Colombia has long had compulsory military service for men ages 18 to 24. This year, officials allowed females in the same age range to voluntarily join the military, in what the army says is part of an effort to "strengthen the role of women" in its ranks.

AP PHOTO



**Ukraine** A blacksmith in the Russian-controlled eastern Ukrainian city of Donetsk is practically beating swords into ploughshares, and turning one man's trash into treasures. Viktor Mikhalev (pictured) takes weapons and ammunition and produces what he calls the flowers of war. Mikhalev, who trained as a welder, lives and works in a house whose fence and door are decorated with forged flowers and grapes.

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