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BY CHINESE NEW YEAR, MACAU'S ECONOMY HAS RECOVERED TO 60-70% OF THE PRE-PANDEMIC ERA, SAID CPPCC MEMBER PANSY HO

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GBA: HENGQIN COMPANIES TO OFFER OVER RMB700,000 TO RECRUIT POST-GRAD GRADUATES

▲ P2

WHY INDONESIA IS MOVING ITS CAPITAL FROM JAKARTA TO BORNEO

▲ P7



Hong Kong national security police arrested a veteran labor activist who is also the wife of an organizer of annual vigils commemorating China's 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protesters, two people close to her said. Officers arrested Elizabeth Tang, the wife of Lee Cheuk-yan (pictured), outside Stanley Prison but it was still unclear for what reason.



Malaysia Former Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin was grilled by anti-graft agency officials for a second time in a matter of weeks and reportedly will be charged over alleged corruption connected with awarding of government contracts while he was in office.



Nepal's parliament held elections for a new president, as the Himalayan nation faces increasing political instability with a fragile coalition government that has been in power for only a few months.



USA Thousands of pages of documents in a recent lawsuit show that Fox News' top executives sometimes were actively involved in politics rather than simply reporting or opining on it. Fox's founder, Rupert Murdoch, suggested his staff intervene in Republican party primaries and even assisted President Donald Trump's reelection campaign.

More on backpage

ROOMS WITHOUT VIEW

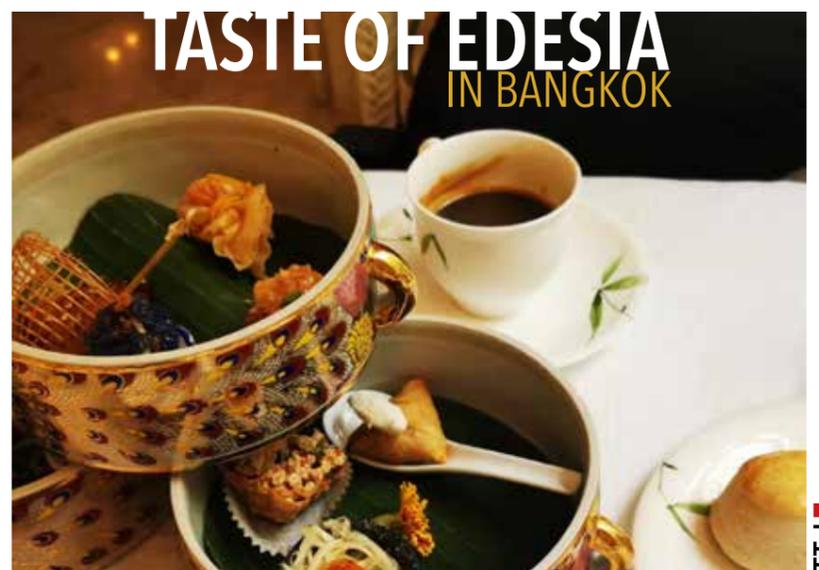
Hotel prices hike driving international, Hong Kong visitors away ▲ P5



CONFIDENTIAL

IAM MEMBER TALKS OF 'BIG PROJECT' NEAR GRAND COLOANE

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GBA

HENGQIN COMPANIES TO OFFER OVER RMB700,000 TO RECRUIT POST-GRAD GRADUATES

STAFF REPORTER

COMPANIES in the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone on Hengqin island in the Zhuhai special economic zone are offering annual compensation of up to 700,000 yuan to recruit post-doctoral graduates from the University of Macau.

During a job fair held at the university, more than 28 companies and research institutes in the zone listed a total of 500 jobs for graduates, master's degree graduates, doctoral degree holders and post-doctoral graduates.

Of those jobs, more than 40 had an annual salary of more than 400,000 yuan, equivalent to the annual income of local senior white collar workers.



In addition to high annual salaries, some companies and research institutes were providing living subsidies ranging from 20,000 to 300,000 yuan for specialists or high-end talent.

Li Ziwei, director of the economic development bureau of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone, said the zone has always regarded talent as a strategic resource to promote the

moderately diversified development of Macau's economy.

The zone is expecting to implement a talent policy to get graduates from Macau to participate in the construction and development

process of the zone and share development opportunities, Li said.

"The cooperation zone has continuously and actively improved the talent development environment, created a talent development platform and cooperated with Macau to implement the talent development plan since it was established," he said.

The zone will continue to deepen talent exchange and recruitment from universities in Macau in the months ahead, he added, to create strong attraction for talented graduates, make good use of resources, provide sustainable talent support for the development of the cooperation zone and better promote high-quality integrated development between Hengqin island and Macau.

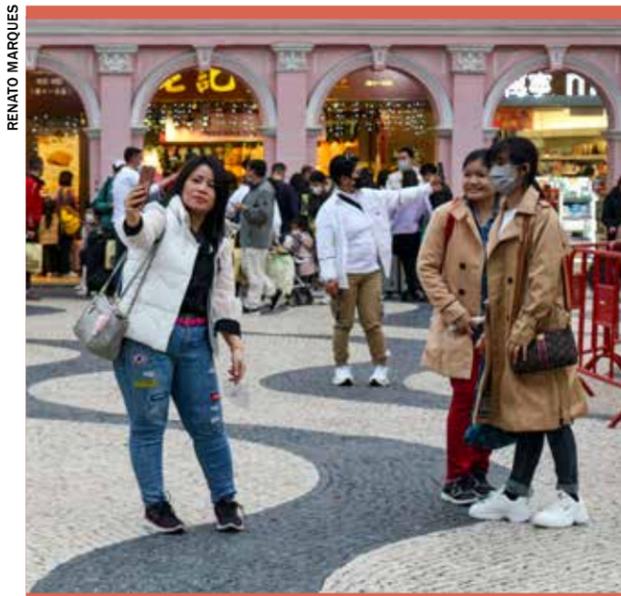
Economy recovering to over 60% of pre-pandemic era: Pansy Ho

STAFF REPORTER

AS at Chinese New Year, Macau's economy has recovered to 60-70% of the pre-pandemic era, said Pansy Ho, CPPCC member, vice president of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, and managing director of MGM Grand Paradise, in an interview with Hong Kong media during the first session of the 14th CPPCC National Committee.

She mentioned that the reason for the remarkable recovery is the resumption of border-crossings under the similar prevention and control mechanisms for Covid-19 in Macau and the mainland. However, Macau is still facing challenges in fully recovering to pre-pandemic levels, because mainland tourists have many choices for destinations.

According to Ho, the new gaming licenses were successfully awarded last year



(2022), though the pandemic had an effect. She remarked that the six awarded casino operators will continue to bolster the diverse development of non-gaming elements and make Macau into a more attractive tourism and leisure center, with significant funds expected in

the coming 10 years. She also expected more interaction and cooperation between the Macau and Hong Kong SARs to give full play to their respective advantages and boost "multi-destination travel" to attract overseas visitors to travel along cities in the Greater Bay Area.

MGTO INVITED THAI 'INFLUENCERS' TO EXPLORE MACAU

RENATO MARQUES

A group of 20 people including five travel and gourmet Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) as well as program hosts of four mainstream television stations from Thailand have been touring Macau since March 6, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) said in a press statement.

The group came by invitation of the local tourism authority following the plan from the office to promote Macau abroad.

This is the first post-pandemic international familiarization group comprising Thailand influencers and media to arrive at Macau with a travel

trade delegation from the same country to be also arriving in mid-March for inspection and business networking.

MGTO noted that by arranging for delegation visits from different sectors in Thailand, the office aims to ignite Thais' interest in Macau as a preferred destination, aiming to diversify visitor source markets for tourism and economic revival.

The delegation, who is on a four-day visit, visited not just the world heritage sites and the tourism facilities of several major integrated resorts, but also the Macao Grand Prix Museum, MinM Plaza, Maritime Museum, Macau Tower, and Macau Fisher-

man's Wharf.

They also sampled different culinary treats as part of the bid of Macau as a Creative City of Gastronomy.

According to MGTO, the invited Thai KOLs and TV stations have a base of around 31 million followers on social media, hoping that their online posts and TV travelogues about travel in Macau can induce trending topics about the city in Thailand with extensive marketing impact.

Pre-pandemic, in 2019, Macau registered over 150,000 visitor arrivals from Thailand, which ranked as the 10th largest contributor of visitors to Macau.



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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

IAM member hints at 'big project' near Grand Coloane Resort

ANTHONY LAM

A "big project" with undisclosed details has been planned for the area from Hac-Sa Beach to Grand Coloane Resort, Mak Kim Meng, Municipal Affairs Administration Committee member of the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM), recently revealed.

This preview was given at the Island District Community Seminar organized by the IAM. It saw the attendance of José Margarida Tavares, president of the IAM's Municipal Affairs Administration Committee.

Participants asked questions about the refinement project concerning the Estrada de Cheoc Van towards Hac-Sa Beach. The current



job ended at the Helene Garden, a residential estate near the beach. Participants expressed concern about whether the project will be extended further to the beach area.

In response, Mak said that there was no plan to make such an extension, because "small projects need to cope with bigger ones, as the government has planned on a larger project the-

re," adding that he believed details would be announced in due course.

The seminar also discussed the refinement of pedestrian facilities in Seac Pai Van. The first phase of the project was finished last year, and its second and third phases are under a bidding process and are expected to be started this year. The fourth phase has been scrapped, as per an announcement by the Secretary for Transport and Public Works late last year, and was not mentioned at the seminar.

The only update Mak announced was that the pedestrian facilities will be waterproofed with cover.

Public parking spaces near the karting circuit are often abused, with cars parked for an extensive period. Tavares, who referred himself to a karting enthusiast, is affected by the problem as well.

He said such cars have been towed away during the Covid-19 pandemic period but recently the problem has returned. He added that inter-departmental efforts will be exerted to consider whether more towing will be required.

OVER 10,000 FIRE INSPECTIONS HELD SINCE 2022

STAFF REPORT

A total of 10,519 fire inspections have been conducted, of which 2,506 were targeted at restaurants and shops from last year to January this year, according to the Office of the Secretary for Security.

Guidelines on inspections will be updated in a timely manner, and inspections of restaurants and shops will be further strengthened for better community fire safety.

The Office of the Secretary for Security said in its reply to the written inquiry from lawmaker Lo Choi In that the Fire Services Bureau (CB) continues to promote electrical safety to residents in various ways. The bureau has already conducted fire safety promotions at over 30,000 units as

of January this year.

The CB is also paying attention to the regulation of household appliances. According to CB, the franchisees of problematic products will be urged to stop selling the products and remove them from their shelves immediately. The bureau will also undertake safety inspections on random samples, including small household appliances, in the market.

During 2022, CB dealt with 816 fires. Approximately 64% of them were induced by stoves left on, electrical short-circuits, burning incense, the quest for arson, and equipment failure. The bureau launched 605 fire safety promotion events last year to bring more attention to fire safety within society.

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TAK CHUN TRIAL

LEVO CHAN SOMEWHAT EMOTIONAL SPEAKING CONCLUDING STATEMENT

ANTHONY LAM

FORMER Tak Chun Group boss Levo Chan became somewhat emotional as he addressed his concluding statement to the court.

The first court hearing for his case, in which he and 33 other people were accused of crimes including but not limited to forming and operating criminal syndicate and illicit gambling, has recently reached the stage of concluding statements.

Chan was the last person in the most recent court session to speak.

He stated that his now-defunct company had started with only a few dozen people and had expanded to a scale capable of supporting several hundreds, if not thousands, of staff members.

"I don't dare say how much Tak Chun has contributed to Macau's economic and social development, but we have definitely played a role in it," the former junket mogul said.

He also took the opportunity to deny the accusations of a cri-



minal syndicate and triad gang, claiming that the accused staff member was innocent and was only working diligently.

"Knowing that their families felt depressed and frustrated since the matter broke up, I feel extremely apologetic," he confessed, before moving to discuss his own situation.

"I have a 90-year-old father and two two-year-old children...

I have heard that my father often wept privately," he said, pausing briefly and inhaling deeply. "My two daughters asked my wife why daddy hadn't returned home."

He persuaded the judge to plead not guilty on behalf of him and his co-defendants, as Tak Chun is not a criminal syndicate.

At the same time, Chan's lawyer, Leong Hon Man, referred to the presumption of innocence

to suggest that his client's judgment should be made without fear or favor.

Leong first questioned why Tak Chun needed to resort to illegal deeds when it had a multibillion yearly income that was scrutinized by certified auditors. He also pointed out that testimonies given by former Tak Chun staff were "indirect and word-of-mouth." He then suggested that judging 21st-century practices with 27-year-old law may not be suitable, before referring to the casino operators' responsibilities in the case.

Leong then emphasized that if Chan wanted to evade any accusations, he would not have undergone criminal prosecutions in Macau.

In his concluding statement, defence lawyer Alex Ai Linzhi questioned what the government had done to control the "monstrous" development of the gambling industry, and accused the testifying officials of the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) of being unapologetic when they said they inspected ca-

sinos every day but could not find evidence of parallel gambling.

The prosecution, meanwhile, held that Chan should be found guilty of 83 charges.

Prosecutor-Coordinator Tam I Kuan emphasized that through the court hearings, she considered the accusations "highly justified." Although the six defendants accused of the illicit gambling in approved venues denied the accusation, the parallel gambling practices were conducted in the name of Tak Chun, with the awareness of the six people.

Despite positioning to pitch gamblers for the six casino operators, Tak Chun "violated" the contract and caused loss to the government through parallel gambling. This has also led to erroneous reports of gross gambling revenue due to unreliable turnover reported to the casino operators.

Prosecutor-Coordinator Lai U Hou found Chan's explanation on destroying company documents – so as to protect gamblers' data – unreasonable. He added that the conduct was against the mandatory preservation provision.

He also asked the court to designate all seized properties to the government to compensate the latter's loss.

The presiding judge announced that the verdict on the case will be handed down on April 21.

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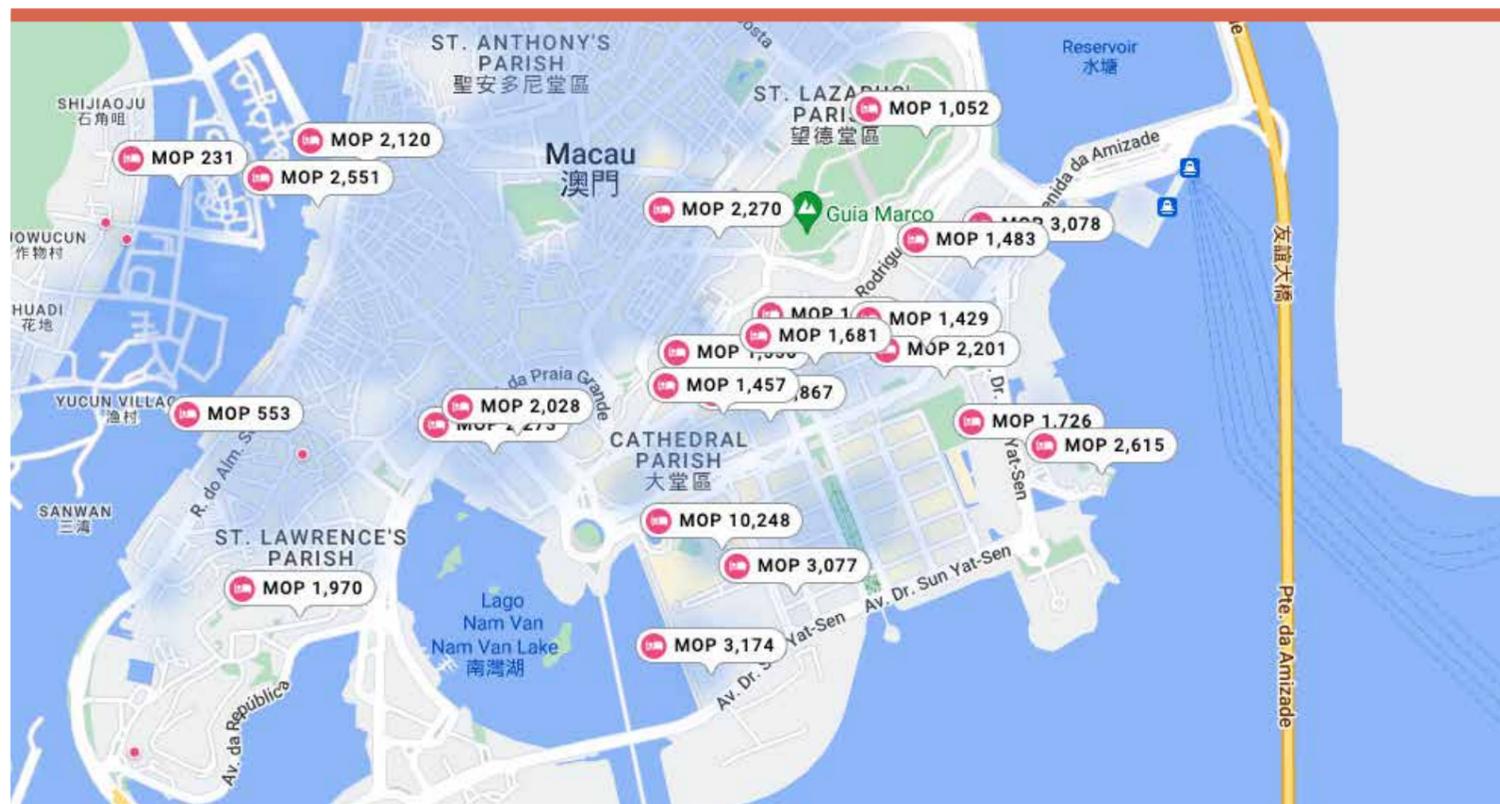
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Hotel prices driving international, Hong Kong visitors away

RENATO MARQUES

THE recent spike in the hotel room prices in Macau following the border reopening and influx of tourists from the mainland is driving international visitors away from Macau, or at least motivating them to stay for a shorter period, visitors have told the Times.

Giancarlo and Anna are Italian nationals whom the Times encountered while they were traveling into Macau from the neighboring region of Hong Kong. Anna is currently working in Hong Kong, while Giancarlo was visiting her.

They decided to travel to Macau as part of a week's tour organized by Anna for Giancarlo to see this part of the world, where he had never been before.

The couple confided to the Times that "they wish to stay a little longer" than the one-day trip they are starting but that the "hotel prices are impossible," Anna said.

She noted that she tried several searches on major online hotel booking platforms to try to find a place where they could stay overnight, but the prices were "way over" their budget.

Curious to see "Macau's Venice" replica, Giancarlo said that the idea was mostly to see the old Macau, as they have little interest in the casinos.

"I have heard about it of course and I saw photos of it but I want to see it with my eyes. I think will be funny," he told the Times with a laugh.

The couple admitted to having significantly shortened their ini-

tial travel plans from two days to just one, adding also that they opted to travel to Macau by bus and then return by ferry, due to the unsuitable ferry schedules from Hong Kong to Macau.

"The last ferry is too early (in my view)," Anna said, adding, "Since we shortened the trip to one day, we want to come to Macau in the early hours of the day so we can still have the chance to browse the nightlife and the casinos before the morning rises. Then we just go around the city and monuments. If we are too tired, we will probably rest somewhere for a little and then we return to Hong Kong on the 5 p.m. ferry," she explained.

To the Times, 41-year-old Maria, a Filipina national working in Hong Kong, also said she was town for a "short trip."

"It's actually my first time in Macau. I came from Hong Kong with two friends. We only met in the ferry terminal before boarding the ferry," she said, noting that she wanted to see what Macau looked like as it is a popular destination among Filipinos, namely those seeking work abroad.

Contrary to Maria, who is returning to Hong Kong on the same day, the two friends said they were staying overnight, but not in a hotel.

"We are staying overnight and returning to Hong Kong tomorrow morning because we have a day off. We are staying at a boarding house that some fellow Filipino friends helped us to arrange," Bella said.

Questioned by the Times if they ever considered staying in a hotel or another lodging facility, they

quickly replied, "No! It's impossible for us. Hotels are so expensive right now. Even these small ones... unreachable," they said.

Contacted by the Times, the residents of Hong Kong – Angela and Bruno – also expressed similar thoughts. Angela, a teacher at a Hong Kong Secondary School, said that they do wish to come to Macau more often, but the budget necessary for such a trip makes it unlikely to happen anytime soon.

"In the past, we did these one-day trips once in a while, maybe once a month or so. But now we have a toddler and it's quite complicated not to have a place to rest. It's too tiring to go and return on the same day and the hotels are too expensive. We cannot spend 3 or 4,000 [HKD] for a night's stay. This is a very important slice of the cake, as we would need probably another 2 to 3,000 for other expenses including transportation, food, and so on," Angela said.

With a more straightforward approach, Bruno added, "Macau is for the high-rollers only. Those that do not mind the price tag, because, at the end of the day, they will be spending millions anyway. It is not for common mortals like us..."

Questioned as to their opinion about the idea suggested recently by the local government that Macau tourism operators, namely the gaming concessionaires, should cater more to international visitors, not to the mainland market, and diversify from the gaming industry, Bruno said, "I believe it is either just an expression

of a wish or one of those things that some government officials say without really meaning it. In Hong Kong we see some international tourists, but they are coming with different purposes – either to take a job opportunity to come here or to join some kind of convention or seminar. Some also come to work for the short-term such as training staff from multinationals [companies] but these are just a few and I doubt they would have the interest to visit Macau, besides the casinos. Macau is all about casinos. If you remove that from the equation, I don't think [Macau] can survive."

INEXPLICABLY HIGH HOTEL PRICES

In research conducted by the Times, using a random weekend (March 17/18) as a reference, hotels were found to be charging, for a one-night stay, over MOP10,000 (Wynn Macau) and over MOP8,000 (The Ritz-Carlton Macau), with the majority of the hotels presenting prices ranging between MOP2,000 to 3,000.

In the Cotai area, it was virtually impossible to find a hotel unit charging below MOP3,000 for a one night stay for the given date, with the average price reaching over MOP4,000 per night.

In the Peninsula, where there are more options and hotels of a lower ranking, the prices still average over MOP2,000, with 3-star units like Hotel Sintra charging as much as MOP2,063 and Grand Emperor Hotel charging as much as MOP2,229, noting that the price was described as a "Great Deal" and was 38% less than usual.

HENGQIN TO HOST MARKET FOR PRODUCTS FROM LUSOPHONE COUNTRIES

The 2023 "Special Market for Products from Portuguese-speaking Countries and Macau" Grand Opening will be held for the first time outside Macau from today until Mar. 12 at Legend Ponto Square, Hengqin. The event will feature Portuguese delicacies as well as Portuguese dances and magic shows. The event is jointly organized by the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute and Economic Development Bureau of the Guangdong-Macao In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin. Twenty-six SMEs from Macau and Hengqin will participate in this new event, and they will exhibit and offer for sale a wide range of special products from Portuguese-speaking countries and Macau.

GOV'T TO HOLD ART WEEKEND

On the occasion of the 24th anniversary of its establishment, the Macao Museum of Art (MAM) will hold "Art Weekend 2023" on Mar. 18 and 19, taking the theme of "Art Boundless," which symbolizes the exploration of all Chinese and foreign art. The events feature an array of activities, including "Visual x Music – Interdisciplinary Live Performance," where programme curator Pal Lok joined with the local visual artist Fan Sai Hong and three Macau musicians, namely Iat U Hong, Akitsugu Fukushima and Ivan Wing, to create the interdisciplinary live performance, "In the Shadow In the Light."

BUSINESSMAN CALLS ON YOUNGSTERS TO SEIZE INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES

Frederico Ma Chi Ngai is now calling on youngsters in the city to "focus on the motherland's dynamics and seize development opportunities." The president of the Macao Chamber of Commerce made the remarks on Tuesday during a group interview on the sidelines of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. "I usually encourage young people from Macau to visit the mainland to experience and witness the development and changes there," he said, adding that he hopes they will "seize the opportunities" and "integrate themselves into overall national development," as cited in a report issued by China Daily.

EXPLAINER

China's economic growth target 2023

XINHUA REPORTERS, BEIJING

CHINA'S economic growth target for 2023 has been set at around 5 percent, according to a government work report submitted to the national legislature for deliberation on Sunday. Why around 5 percent? Is the new target a sign of caution or careful consideration? How will the Chinese economy fare this year? Read on for the answers to these questions and more.

PRIORITIZING HIGH QUALITY

First up, the annual growth target for this year sends an unmistakable signal: China is not interested in either stimulus packages or inefficient investment to achieve rapid, unsustainable short-term high growth.

The growth target, therefore, not only encourages high-quality development but is also in line with current economic momentum and will guide all sectors as they focus on improving the quality and efficiency of development, said Zhao Chenxin, deputy head of the National Development and Reform Commission.

High-quality development is the primary task driving China's modernization endeavors. While giving weight to economic growth, the days of growth at all costs are gone. Instead, the government



wants a greener and more efficient economy.

RISKS AND RESILIENCE

In 2022, China's economy expanded by 3 percent, higher than many other major economies, including the 2.1 percent posted by the United States.

Such achievements, attributable to the fundamentals supporting China's steady economic growth, shed light on the country's economic resilience, poten-

tial, and vitality.

On Sunday, the government work report warned of external challenges from lingering high inflation and weakening economic and trade growth globally. It said the foundation for stable growth at home also needs to be consolidated. Despite such headwinds, China still enjoys strong tenacity and a solid material foundation for generating recovery momentum, according to Gong Liutang, a member of the 14th National

Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

EXPECTED AND ACHIEVABLE

The IMF's World Economic Outlook report, released in February 2023, predicted that growth in China would rise to 5.2 percent in 2023, reflecting global confidence in China's economy.

Indeed, 2023 is already off to a good start with a notable increase in economic activity. China's economy is seeing a faster-than-

expected recovery, which may be stronger than expected in the short term, said Gu Xueming, head of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation under the Ministry of Commerce.

The fundamentals of China's long-term economic recovery remain the same. China's economy is steadily improving, and the country is full of confidence in achieving the 2023 economic growth target.

DIPLOMACY

Adviser expresses confidence in China-US friendship

A political adviser expressed confidence in the solidarity of people-to-people friendship between China and the United States despite challenges in bilateral relations, saying that both peoples believe that the two sides "cannot run into conflict, confrontation or war".

Lin Songtian, who served as ambassador to multiple countries including South Africa and Malawi, is currently president of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. He said in an interview with China Daily that the only option for Beijing and Washington is to work together for a shared future.

Lin, who returned from a 10-day trip to the US in February, said he had extensive meetings with peo-



ple from various sectors of US society, and the hospitality he received "went far beyond imagination".

"I feel the bright future in people-to-people exchanges between China and the

US," said Lin, who is also a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

He described his visit as a "door-knocking" trip to the

US, his first visit since taking office as the CPAFFC president in 2020, during which he held in-depth exchanges with politicians, business executives and think tank experts.

"We have one consensus that China-US relations matter in promoting world peace and prosperity and the future of humanity," he said.

He noted that China-US relations are built upon a solid people-to-people foundation — 284 pairs of friendship cities or provinces/states have been established, and mutual visits reached 5 million per year before COVID-19.

"We expect both governments to follow the people's call and create positive conditions and atmosphere to bring our bilateral relations back to the normal track

and bring our two peoples together for a shared future," he said.

As this year marks the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative, Lin envisions a stronger role for people-to-people diplomacy in enhancing the development of the initiative going forward.

He underscored that the BRI is inclusive rather than exclusive, and stays open to all nations, including the US.

"We have no reason to deny such a productive initiative," he said.

He said the CPAFFC will seek to employ its strength in people-to-people engagement, better leverage the platform of friendship cities and contribute to the implementation of the BRI.

As a national political adviser, Lin is set to appeal for

greater efforts to better tell the stories of China this year.

He explained that a lack of people-to-people exchanges has aggravated the problem of China being wrongly presented or misunderstood in the world.

Lin spoke out against some Western politicians who've never visited China but keep "lecturing about China". "They have a lot of academic degrees or diplomas, but no 'passport'," he said jokingly.

"We believe seeing is believing. We'd like to invite more and more friends to come to China to have a look to see the whole picture of China," he said.

He highlighted the need to encourage the Chinese people, including senior officials, to beef up efforts to make the voices of China better heard. **CHINA DAILY**

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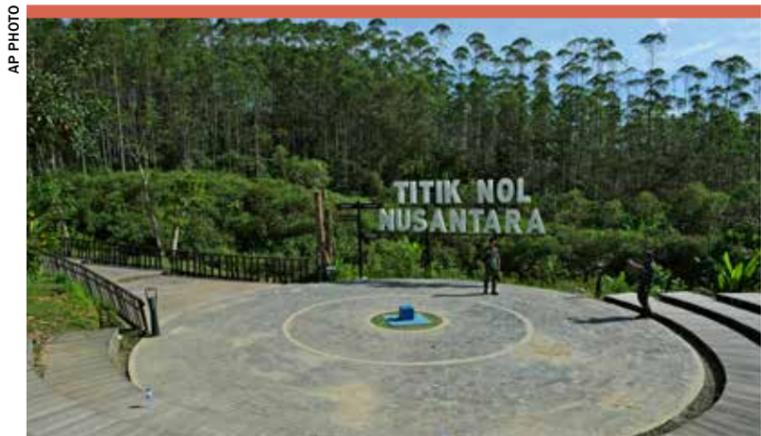
Sands China team members and community members experience the Yimeng spirit

Sands China recently invited 100 teachers and students from Escola Tong Sin Tong, students from the Bosco Youth Service Network, and Sands China team members to enjoy the original ballet "Yimeng" by the National Ballet of China. Sands China was the venue sponsor of the performance.

Yimeng refers to the Yihe River and Mengshan mountain area in Shandong province. During wartime, many women in the Yimeng area, known as "Yimeng Sisters," gave up their lives for the cause, supported the army, and spared no effort to raise children who lost their parents during the years of war. The ballet Yimeng demonstrates an absorbing Chinese story in an elegant and eloquent presentation of Western ballet, presenting the great Yimeng spirit of "harmony and shared destiny between the Army and the people" to the audience with exquisite techniques immersed in great artistic traditions.

Chu Chi Sam, a Sands China team member who watched the performance, said: "I am thrilled to have this rare opportunity to catch the National Ballet of China's performance in Macao after so many years, and I am truly grateful to our company for offering this chance for us to watch such a high-quality performance. I was impressed that the show combined the essence of Chinese classical dance and ballet with modern stage effects, and that was really unexpected and entertaining. Through the dance drama, you could feel the spirit of the Yimeng women who fearlessly supported the frontline soldiers during the war. Their great moral character moved me deeply."

The venue sponsorship is part of Sands China's ongoing efforts to support art and cultural development and the Macao SAR government's "Tourism + Art" initiative. By giving an opportunity to team members and the younger generation to enjoy this stirring show, Sands China hopes to enhance their understanding of the nation's history and development and reinforce their national identity, thereby enabling them to continue making contributions to support the advancement of the nation.



Indonesian soldiers take photos at the ground zero of the construction site of the new capital city in Penajam Paser Utara, East Kalimantan

EXPLAINER

Why is Indonesia moving its capital from Jakarta to Borneo?

JAKARTA is congested, polluted, prone to earthquakes and rapidly sinking into the Java Sea. Now the government is in the process of leaving, moving Indonesia's capital to the island of Borneo.

Indonesian officials say the new metropolis will be a "sustainable forest city" that puts the environment at the heart of the development and aims to be carbon-neutral by 2045.

But environmentalists warn that the capital will cause massive deforestation, threaten the habitat of endangered species such as orangutans and imperil the homes of Indigenous communities.

While access to the new capital's site is usually limited, The Associated Press was allowed to tour parts of the site to view construction progress in early March.

Here's a look at why the capital is moving, the government's plans and why activists are worried about how it will impact the environment, endangered species and Indigenous communities located near the project site.

WHY IS INDONESIA MOVING ITS CAPITAL?

Jakarta is home to about 10 million people and three times that number in the greater metropolitan area. It has been described as the world's most rapidly sinking city, and at the current rate, it is estimated that one-third of the city could be submerged by 2050. The main cause is uncontrolled ground water extraction, but it has been exacerbated by the rising Java Sea due to climate change.

Its air and groundwater are heavily polluted, it floods regularly and its streets are so clogged that it's estimated congestion costs the economy \$4.5 billion a year.

President Joko Widodo envisions the construction of a new capital as a nostrum for the problems plaguing Jakarta, reducing its population while allowing the

country to start fresh with a "sustainable city."

WHAT WILL THE NEW CAPITAL BE LIKE?

Widodo's plan to establish the city of Nusantara — an old Javanese term meaning "archipelago" — will entail constructing government buildings and housing from scratch. Initial estimates were that over 1.5 million civil servants would be relocated to the city, some 2,000 kilometers northeast of Jakarta, though ministries and government agencies are still working to finalize that number.

Bambang Susantono, head of the Nusantara National Capital Authority said that the new capital city will apply the "forest city" concept, with 65% of the area being reforested.

The city is expected to be inaugurated on Aug. 17 next year to coincide with Indonesia's Independence Day. New capital authorities said that the final stages of the city, however, likely won't be completed until 2045, marking the nation's hundredth anniversary.

WHY ARE ENVIRONMENTALISTS CONCERNED?

Skeptics worry, however, about the environmental impact of building a sprawling 256,000-hectare city down in Borneo's East Kalimantan province, which is home to orangutans, leopards and a wide array of other wildlife.

Forest Watch Indonesia, an Indonesian nongovernmental organization that monitors forestry issues, warned in a November 2022 report that most of the forested areas in the new capital are "production forests" meaning permits could be granted for forestry and extractive activities that would lead to further deforestation. Until now there has been no certainty regarding the protection status of the remaining natural forests in the new capital city area, the report said. MDT/AP

PUTIN'S WAR

Major Russian missile barrage slams targets across Ukraine

HANNA ARHIROVA & ELENA BECATOROS, KYIV

RUSSIA unleashed "a massive rocket attack" that hit critical infrastructure and residential buildings in 10 regions of Ukraine, the country's president said yesterday, with officials reporting at least six deaths in the largest such night-time attack in three weeks.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the barrage that came while many people slept as an attempt by Moscow "to intimidate Ukrainians again."

"The occupiers can only terrorize civilians. That's all they can do," Zelenskyy said in an online statement.

The war has largely ground to a battlefield stalemate over the winter. The Kremlin's forces started targeting Ukraine's power supply last October in an apparent attempt to demoralize the civilian population. The barrages later became less frequent, with analysts speculating Russia may have been running low on ammunition. The last massive barrage took place on Feb. 16.

U.S. intelligence doesn't believe Russia can make major territorial gains in Ukraine this year due to its large numbers of casualties, its inability to replenish its stocks of weapons and ammunition, and poor leadership and morale, Avril Haines, the director of national intelligence, told a U.S. Senate committee Wednesday. That may persuade Russian President Vladimir Putin to prolong the war, she said.

The latest missile attack left almost half of consumers in Kyiv without heating, with temperatures at around 9 degrees Celsius (48 Fahrenheit) amid a spring thaw.

In southern Ukraine, the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, which is occupied by Russian forces, lost power as a result of the missile attacks, according to nuclear state operator Energoatom.

It is the sixth time that Europe's largest nuclear plant has been in a state of blackout since it was taken over by Russia months ago, forcing it to rely on diesel generators that can run the station for 10 days. Nuclear



Three rockets launched against Ukraine from Russia's Belgorod region are seen at dawn in Kharkiv yesterday

plants need constant power to run cooling systems and avoid a meltdown, and fears remain about the possibility of a catastrophe at Zaporizhzhia.

The head of the U.N. nuclear watchdog expressed alarm at the latest blackout, saying he was "astonished by the complacency" of the organization he leads, the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"What are we doing to prevent this happening? We are the IAEA, we are meant to care about nuclear safety," he told its board of directors in a meeting yesterday, according to an IAEA statement.

"Each time we are rolling a dice," he said. "And if we allow this to continue time after time then one day our luck will run out."

The agency has placed teams of experts at all four of Ukraine's nuclear power plants to reduce the risk of severe accidents.

Air raid sirens wailed through the night across Ukraine, including the capital, Kyiv, where explosions occurred in two western areas of the city. Defense systems were activated around the country.

Overall, Russia launched 81 missiles and eight exploding Shahed drones, ac-

ording to Ukraine's chief commander of the armed forces, Valerii Zaluzhnyi. Thirty-four cruise missiles were intercepted, as were four drones, he said.

Viktor Bukhta, a 57-year-old resident of a damaged residential building in Kyiv's Sviatoshynski district, where officials said three people were wounded and apartment windows were shattered, said a missile landed nearby at about 6.45 a.m..

"We went into the yard. People were injured, they helped, first aid kits were handed out from the cars," he told The Associated Press. "Then the cars caught fire. We tried to extinguish them with car fire extinguishers. And I got a little burnt."

Kyiv's city administration said the capital was attacked with both missiles and exploding drones. Many were intercepted but its energy infrastructure was hit.

Smoke could be seen rising from a facility in Kyiv's Holiivskyi district and police had cordoned off all roads leading to it.

The alarm in Kyiv was lifted just before 8 a.m., with the air raid sirens falling silent after some seven hours.

Private electricity operator DTEK reported that three of its power stations

had been hit. There were no casualties, but the company said equipment was severely damaged.

Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, was left without running water and heating after 15 missiles hit the region, mayor Ihor Terekhov told the Ukrainian public broadcaster.

Terekhov added that electricity shortages also disrupted mobile communications and public transport in the city, as all trams and trolleybuses ground to a halt.

Five people were killed in the Lviv region after a missile struck a residential area, Lviv Gov. Maksym Kozytskyi said. Three buildings were destroyed by fire, and rescue workers were combing through rubble looking for more possible victims, he said.

A sixth person was killed and two others wounded in multiple strikes in the Dnipropetrovsk region that targeted its energy infrastructure and industrial facilities, Gov. Serhii Lysak said.

In the south, Odesa Gov. Maksym Marchenko said residential buildings were hit and several power lines were damaged in strikes on his region. He said six missiles and one drone were shot down. MDT/AP

this day in history

1990 OBSERVER 'SPY' SENTENCED TO DIE



A court in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, has imposed the death sentence on The Observer journalist Farzad Bazoft.

He has been convicted of spying for Israel while working on a story about an explosion at a weapons complex 30 miles (48km) south of the capital.

The British nurse, Daphne Parish, who is said to have driven him to the site has been jailed for 15 years.

The pair were arrested last September after visiting the military establishment.

Mr Bazoft, who came to live in Britain from Iran in the early 1980s, had written a number of articles on the Middle East for The Observer newspaper. He was subsequently invited by the Iraqi government to join a journalists' trip to examine reconstruction work after the war with Iran.

But on the day he flew out, there were reports of an explosion at the Al-Iskandari plant, said to be at the centre of Iraq's development of medium-range missiles. Hundreds were reported to have been killed.

The Observer newspaper commissioned Mr Bazoft to write a report. Independent Television News was also interested in the explosion, but a camera crew was stopped from reaching the plant. Mr Bazoft, travelling with Mrs Parish, got through.

He was picked up at Baghdad airport, waiting for a flight back to London.

Observer editor Donald Treford said: "Farzad Bazoft is not a spy. He is a reporter who went to do a story. He said in advance the story he was going to do."

"He told the Baghdad government where he wanted to go... This is not the action of a spy, this is the action of a reporter."

The so-called spies were tried behind closed doors. Mr Bazoft had earlier been filmed making a confession - his colleagues say it was false.

Foreign Office Minister William Waldegrave met the Iraqi Deputy Foreign Minister, Nizar Hamdoun, before today's hearing to demand a full and fair trial. Now he says he will be pressing for clemency.

He said: "Our objective now is to concentrate on the next few hours to try to get the death sentence lifted and to appeal on humanitarian grounds for an urgent review of the sentences."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Before their trial, President Saddam Hussein had written to the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, assuring her Farzad Bazoft and Daphne Parish would get a fair hearing. International appeals for clemency fell on deaf ears. Mr Bazoft was hanged on 15 March 1990. He told a British envoy shortly before his death that he was "simply a reporter after a scoop". There was international condemnation of the execution - but not surprise. Saddam Hussein's regime was becoming well known for its brutality. The British ambassador to Iraq was ordered to leave and all ministerial visits cancelled. Daphne Parish was released on 16 July 1990. On 2 August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, starting the Gulf War.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Involvement in financial schemes will be followed by losses. You may find that you can be the recipient of valuable information if you're willing to be a good listener.

TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20
You should be raising your self esteem and confidence in order to promote your work. Your interests could lead you down avenues you never realized existed.

GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21
Taking on too much won't help the situation. You can make personal changes that will enhance your appearance and bring about greater social activity.

CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22
You can make money if you put your mind to it. Don't bang your head against a wall. You can come up with future trends in creative fields.

LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Don't let your emotions take over. Your sensitive, affectionate nature will capture the heart of anyone you are attracted to. Check into art objects or precious stones.

VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22
You will meet exciting new people through interest groups or functions that you attend with your children. Travel will be favorable. Resist overspending on luxury items.

LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22
This could be a difficult day to deal with coworkers. Not everyone will be pleased with your plans. You may have a problem dealing with elders.

SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Moves or the possibility of having someone different living with you may be difficult at first. You must not make unnecessary changes today.

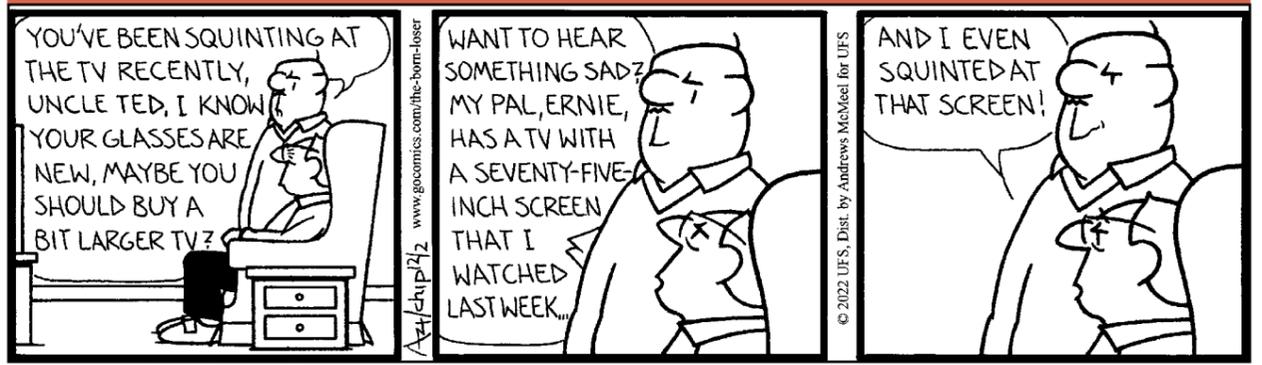
SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21
You are best to be discreet. Listen to the complaints of others. Your fight for those less fortunate is not likely to end in sweet victory. Don't be too quick to react.

CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Don't be too pushy or demanding, or you may find yourself all alone. Your high energy will enable you to take the role of leader in group functions.

AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18
You will have to do a lot of running around, so be prepared to fall short of your expectations. Deception is probable if you don't use discrimination.

PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Family members may feel anxious if you make promises you don't deliver. Offers of joint ventures are likely. Colleagues may try to undermine you.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	5	22	fine
Changchun	0	18	cloudy
Chengdu	14	21	overcast
Chongqing	12	23	cloudy
Fuzhou	13	28	fine
Guangzhou	16	28	cloudy
Guiyang	8	20	cloudy
Haikou	17	27	cloudy
Hangzhou	10	28	cloudy
Harbin	-2	14	cloudy
Hefei	10	29	overcast
Nanjing	14	28	cloudy
Shanghai	12	25	cloudy
Taipei	13	20	fine
Wuhan	13	26	cloudy
Hong Kong	18	23	fine
WORLD			
Moscow	-13	-4	snow
Frankfurt	1	11	rain
Paris	2	11	rain
London	-2	7	rain
New York	3	7	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- On ___ with; 5- Potala Palace site; 10- Env. notation; 14- Allot; 15- Bar fare; 16- Andean country; 17- Rare-earth metallic element; 19- Rind; 20- Penultimate round; 21- Stronghold; 23- Actor Erwin; 25- Inhibit; 26- Small batteries; 29- Raced; 31- Hawaiian state birds; 35- Alien's subj.; 36- Steer clear of; 37- Congenitally attached; 38- What plots may do; 40- See-through material; 41- Closer; 42- ___'acte; 43- No gentleman; 44- It's a good thing; 45- Singing voice; 46- ___-daisy; 47- Muffler; 49- Cartoon Chihuahua; 51- Mental; 54- Plant life; 58- To ___ (perfectly); 59- Having a face unsuitable for TV; 63- Extended family unit; 64- Accumulation of fluids; 65- Witnessed; 66- Legal wrong; 67- Rod used to reinforce concrete; 68- Having a sound mind;

DOWN 1- Rock blasters; 2- French father; 3- Molecular component; 4- Negligent; 5- D-Day craft; 6- So there!; 7- Clay today; 8- Intoxicated; 9- Allow to enter; 10- Obvious; 11- Prepared to drive; 12- Family portrait?; 13- Without value; 18- Ballpark fig.; 22- Not tough; 24- Member of the wedding; 25- Cub Scout unit; 26- MetLife competitor; 27- Barbecue leftovers?; 28- Rapsheet info; 30- Groaner; 32- Civil rights org.; 33- Kett and James; 34- Squalid; 36- Rough design; 37- Participant; 39- Semilunar; 40- Colonial insect; 42- Pixie; 45- Area with coin-operated games; 46- If not; 48- Broadcaster; 50- Alphabetical trio; 51- Treaty; 52- WWII battle site; 53- 365 days; 55- Fit for service; 56- Nothing in Nice; 57- Skin eruption; 60- Ball girl; 61- ___ Believer (Monkees hit); 62- Scull;



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- 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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AD



Idris Elba in a scene from "Luther: The Fallen Sun"

DRIVE IN

IDRIS ELBA RETURNS AS LUTHER IN GRISLY NETFLIX FILM

LINDSEY BAHR,
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

FOR anyone holding on to some latent hope that Idris Elba will be the next James Bond, I have some

bad news: "Luther: The Fallen Sun" puts (another) nail in that very firmly sealed coffin. In one of the rare moments of levity in the sinister film, the embattled detective John Luther sits down at a chic bar and

tells the bartender it's been a long day (an understatement).

"I would say a long day calls for a martini," the bartender says.

Luther's response? "No." He'll take some water, and, "if it makes

you happy you can make it fizzy."

This was not an accidental moment, "Luther" creator Neill Cross has said. Elba even wondered if it was a bit too cheeky. But it's worth remembering that Elba doesn't need Bond. He's already got a moody, tortured bachelor with a talent for hunting bad guys. And Luther belongs exclusively to him.

In this outing, written by Cross and directed by Jamie Payne, Detective Chief Inspector (DCI) John Luther finds himself imprisoned for his unconventional methods at work and haunted by the unsolved missing person case that opens the film and sets its macabre tone. His imprisonment and the missing teen are related — the work of a wealthy villain David Robey (Andy Serkis).

At the start, the film takes on a kind of David Fincher vibe, with echoes of "Seven" and "Zodiac" crossed with some of Christopher Nolan's "The Dark Knight."

It's a pretty fun, tense ride up until that point with some stunning shots of London at night. Elba slips back into Luther like no time has passed, though he has taken on some superhero-adjacent talents here, evident in his escape from jail — a sequence that is somehow both violent and cartoonish. It's not an easy or straightforward role, but Elba makes it look so. This is a guy who is so devoted to his former job that he'll risk death to break out of

prison and get right back to work trying to solve the case, knowing well that he's also being hunted by his replacement, DCI Odette Raine (Cynthia Erivo, not to be trifled with).

At times, you just kind of wish Luther could take a vacation — it can be exhausting watching his relentless pursuit, but there's little room for boredom in a movie that never lets its protagonist take a breath.

And then of course there's the ludicrous theatrics of Robey's ultimate plan, which hinges on the assumption that would be serial killers and snuff-porn fetishists are everywhere just waiting for a twisted mind to live-stream gruesome murders. As if going by some bad guy checkbook, this "Saw"-like game show also takes place in a hidden lair in the snowy north.

But even though it may go over-the-top at the end, Elba keeps you interested.

You needn't have watched all five seasons of "Luther" to take a chance on "Luther: The Fallen Sun." But there's also a chance that you may find yourself wanting to afterwards.

"Luther: The Fallen Sun," a Netflix release streaming today, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for "disturbing/violent content, language and some sexual material." Running time: 129 minutes. ★★★★★

AD

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TASTE OF EDESIA

Bangkok Escape

IRENE SAM, MDT

THERE is no doubt that Bangkok is one of the food capitals of Asia, but for the serious foodies, going away from the big shopping malls to discover local eateries and restaurants that truly reflects the dynamics of the Thai gastronomic scene is essential. MDT recommends several spots as top picks for exploration.

ON LOK YUN FOR BREAKFAST

French toast lovers must not miss On Lok Yun, a breakfast establishment that has been around for decades serving old school sandwiches, milk tea and delicious traditional treats. Here the toast is dipped in soy sauce and chilli sauce so if you prefer to eat your French toast with syrup, do not forget to bring your own.

WATTANA PANICH FOR LUNCH

If you are not afraid of a beef broth that has been cooking for the last 50 years, go visit Wattana Panich and you will not be disappointed with the rich and

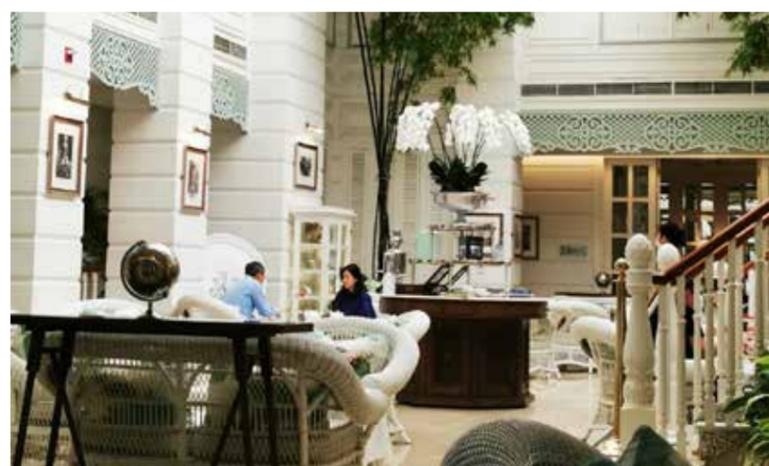
flavourful beef noodles offered. Boiled for decades with species and herbs, the beef broth presents layers of tastes and is loved by foodies coming from very corner of the globe.

AUTHORS' LOUNGE FOR AFTERNOON TEA

Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok is a legendary hotel and Authors' Lounge is the place to be for an elegant afternoon gathering. On the menu, there is a beautiful Thai afternoon tea set that serves exotic delights reflecting the sophistication of Thai gastronomic culture and visual aesthetics.

KHRUA NAI BAAN FOR DINNER

In the Lang Suan neighbourhood and steps away from the glitzy hotels is an eatery that serves typical dishes like Pad Thai and pork neck slices. The choices on the menu might sound ordinary yet dishes are prepared with precision and the restaurant is frequented by Thai families and locals. Prawn crackers and prawn cakes are their must-try items.



tTUNES

Lucero's new album serves rock 'n' roll comfort food

IT would be selling Lucero short to say the Memphis band's new album feels like what you'd take away from a visit to the Lucero store. As in, you know just what you want, you pay your money for it, and you walk away satisfied with another tasty set of rock 'n' roll comfort food.

"Should've Learned by Now" is more than that, for sure, but it's that, too. And yet the reason it tastes good is because it comes from a band that has po-

lished its sound over more than two decades but still has too many rough edges to come off as complacent or ordinary.

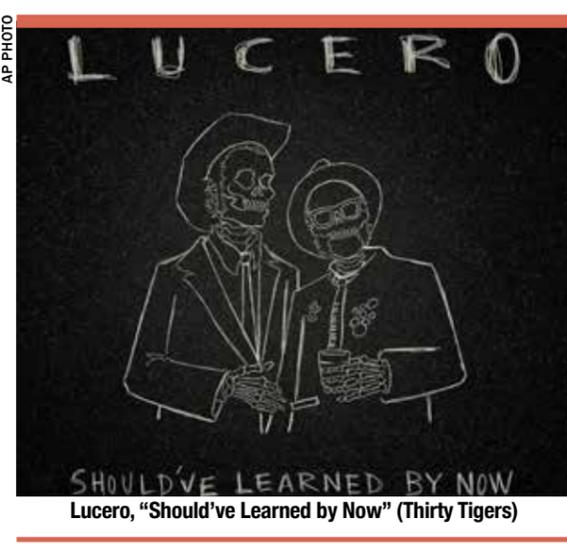
Sure, Lucero sounds less like a garage band than it once did. But the serrated edges of Brian Venable's guitar-playing and the gravel in frontman Ben Nichols' voice prevent it from slipping into the over-polished category. It also helps that Nichols writes compelling songs and grows them out with energy and conviction.

Nichols' Arkansas roots may account for why the band's music tends to land in the alt-country bin, but his songwriting owes more to the Replacements and Tom Petty than anything coming out of Nashville. That's obvious from the first cowbell and electric guitar riff on the opener, "One Last F.U." It continues into the second cut, "Macon if We Make It," a song about a road trip through Georgia during a hurricane that rides the gale-force energy

of Venable's electric guitar.

Other cuts nudge keyboardist Rick Steff to the forefront. "She Leads Me" and "Raining for Weeks" both show off a band making the most of each member's ability to drive a song forward.

The new stuff is good enough that the loyal followers will stay, and any newcomers who stray into Lucero's orbit will discover a still-underrated band that just keeps serving up good music. SCOTT STROUD, MDT/AP



OPINION

The Conversation

Michael A. Allen, Boise State University



RUSSIA WANTS MILITARY AID FROM CHINA - THIS DEAL COULD HELP CHINA, TOO

China is considering sending weapons, ammunition and drones to Russia, according to information the Biden administration declassified at the end of February 2023.

China's military aid would directly support Russia's war in Ukraine.

This public disclosure, emerging less than a month after the U.S. navy shot down a Chinese balloon that allegedly was being used for spying purposes, further heightened existing tensions between the U.S. and China.

It also comes as Russia is facing mounting costs in its war on Ukraine - both financial and in human lives.

These setbacks have pushed Russia to seek help where the government can find it.

Russia has tried to secure weapons and other military support from allies such as North Korea and neighboring country Belarus. Russia has also turned to neutral countries like India and China to whom it can sell its oil and gas and bring in more money.

China has not publicly announced a decision to give military aid to Russia.

I am a scholar of international relations whose work focuses on the increasing competition between the U.S. and China. Based on my research, I'm certain Russia would welcome any assistance China would offer. China's decision about whether to get involved in the Ukraine war will be carefully calculated, factoring in potential long-term benefits, risks and the influence of Western powers.

But I think that China's choice in supporting Russia or not chiefly comes down to two considerations: how the Ukraine conflict will affect China's overall growth in world politics, and its interest in invading Taiwan.

Massive military aid to a struggling army is not cheap. The U.S. spent over US\$75 billion on aid to Ukraine in 2022. But despite the costs of war, China is considering supplying Russia military hardware for a few reasons.

Economically, China's interests in Russia include money, energy and trade opportunities.

During the Cold War, the U.S. successfully drove a wedge between the two countries. However, after the Cold War, Russia and China grew closer and became economically interconnected.

Since Russia first launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, China has appeared to maintain a "pro-Russia" neutrality.

Russian success in Ukraine would align with China's goals of reshaping global politics and power, and could help facilitate China's own rise as an economic and military leader.

Yet a prolonged Russia-Ukraine war may present a new kind of opportunity for China in Taiwan by diverting U.S. money, military resources and attention away from the island.

Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang argued on March 7, 2023, that because the U.S. sells weapons to Taiwan, this justifies China selling weapons to Russia.

Some critics have noted that U.S. aid to Ukraine makes it harder for the U.S. to justify defending Taiwan if China attempts to overtake it.

While China invading Taiwan appears unlikely in the short term - and some experts say such a move would be disastrous for China - both the U.S. and China have a vested interest in the fate of Taiwan and the surrounding region.

Given that China has not yet officially stepped forward to support Russia, these efforts appear successful.

[Abridged]

China's consumer inflation eased in February to a 12-month low, while its factory-gate prices showed an annual fall for a fifth month, official data showed yesterday.

China's consumer price index, a main gauge of inflation, climbed 1 percent from a year earlier in February after a three-month high of 2.1 percent in January, according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics, quoted by China Daily.

Food prices increased by 2.6 percent in February compared with a year ago, down from 6.2 percent in January. Pork, a staple in Chinese cuisine, saw prices surge by 3.9 percent, down from a

rise of 11.8 percent in January. The prices of potatoes, fresh fruit, eggs and poultry rose by 14.4 percent, 8.5 percent, 7.9 percent and 6.4 percent respectively, all deflating from the increases reported in January.

On a month-on-month basis, February's CPI declined by 0.5 percent, while January's CPI increased by 0.8 percent, the NBS said.

The growth in core CPI, which excludes volatile food and energy prices and is deemed a better gauge of the supply-demand relationship in the economy, rose by 0.6 percent year-on-year in February after a 1 percent rise in January.

HARRY & MEGHAN'S DAUGHTER CHRISTENED, WILL USE ROYAL TITLE

DANICA KIRKA, LONDON

PRINCE Harry and his wife Meghan announced yesterday [Macau time] that their daughter had been christened in a private ceremony in California, publicly calling her a princess and revealing for the first time that they will use royal titles for their children.

Princess Lilibet Diana, who turns two in June, was baptized on Friday by the Archbishop of Los Angeles, the Rev John Taylor, Harry and Meghan said in a statement. Lilibet's title and that of her brother, Archie, who will be four in May, will be updated on the Buckingham Palace website later.

The announcement marked the first time that the children's titles had been used in public.

The question of the children's titles took center stage two years ago during Harry and Meghan's television interview with Oprah Winfrey. Meghan, who is biracial, said that when she was pregnant with Archie "they" - presumably the palace - "were saying they didn't want him to be a prince ... which would be different from protocol."

Meghan suggested that this was because Archie



was the royal family's "first member of color" and would have marked the first time a royal grandchild wasn't given the same title as the other grandchildren.

At the time, royal experts said Meghan's comments appeared to be based on a misunderstanding of the way royal titles are conferred.

Titles are conferred in line with a decree issued by King George V in 1917 that limits the titles of prince and princess to the male-line grandchildren of the sovereign.

As long as the late Queen Elizabeth II was alive, Harry and his older brother, Prince William, were the sovereign's grandchildren. Harry and William's children, as great grandchildren, didn't

receive the titles automatically.

But Elizabeth had the power to amend the rules, and in 2012 she decreed that the children of Prince William and his wife, Catherine, would be princes and princesses. This decree didn't apply to Harry and Meghan.

However, the situation changed when King Charles III ascended the throne on the death of his mother last September. William and Harry are the king's sons, meaning their offspring are now royal grandchildren and so entitled to be known as prince and princess.

Nonetheless, they have remained a plain "master" and "miss" on the Buckingham Palace website for the past six months. MDT/AP

USA With the government at risk of defaulting, President Joe Biden will make his opening offer in a high-stakes debate over federal finances as he proposes a federal budget that would cut deficits by nearly \$3 trillion over the next decade.



USA Hundreds of thousands of Americans who came of age during the pandemic have opted not to go to college. Many have shunned traditional college paths, turning instead to hourly jobs or careers that don't require a degree. Still others feel locked out, deterred by high tuition and the prospect of student debt. What first looked like a pandemic blip has turned into a crisis. More on macaudailytimes.com.mo



Israeli protesters were intensifying their opposition to a contentious government plan to overhaul the judiciary, with plans to block Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's route to the airport ahead of an official trip overseas and as the U.S. defense secretary was visiting. Meanwhile, at least three Palestinians were killed in Israeli military raid.



Israel Chaim Topol, a leading Israeli actor who charmed generations of theatergoers and movie-watchers with his portrayal of Tevye, the long-suffering and charismatic milkman in "Fiddler on the Roof," has died, Israeli leaders said. He was 87.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Natacha Pisarenko



Yee-haw. A man rides a bucking horse during a rodeo contest in Chascomus, Argentina, Feb. 26.