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AP PHOTO



**South Korean** President Yoon Suk Yeol said yesterday his government will move to restore Japan's preferential trade status as he pushes to resolve history and trade disputes with Japan despite domestic opposition. In lengthy, televised comments during a Cabinet Council meeting, Yoon defended his moves, saying that leaving ties with Japan as fraught as they are would be neglecting his duty because greater bilateral cooperation is vital to resolve diverse challenges facing Seoul.

AP PHOTO



**Japan's** Prime Minister Fumio Kishida invited his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi for the Group of Seven summit in May and announced action plans for a new Indo-Pacific initiative aimed at countering China's influence in the region. Kishida, who is on a two-day trip to India, said he hopes to promote a vision of free and open Indo-Pacific, a Tokyo-led initiative for greater security and economic cooperation that is geared toward curbing Beijing's growing assertiveness.

AP PHOTO



**Google** has suspended the Chinese shopping app Pinduoduo on its app store after malware was discovered in versions of the app from other sources. The suspension of the Pinduoduo app -- mainly used in China -- comes amid heightened U.S.-China tensions over Chinese-owned apps such as TikTok, which some U.S. lawmakers say could be a national security threat. They allege that such apps could be used to spy on American users.

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President Xi's visit to Moscow and his 'poster' peace plan for Ukraine's conflict seen as major leap forward to China's greater prominence in world affairs

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**AIR CONFIDENCE**

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## FLIGHTS TO MULTIPLE DESTINATIONS TO RESUME MAR. 26

Flights from Macau to Singapore by Air Macau will resume on Mar. 23, according to the official memo of the Civil Aviation Authority of Macao (AACM). Flights to Manila by Philippine Airlines and Cebu Pacific Air, Osaka by Air Macau, and Chiangmai by AirAsia will resume on Mar. 26, while flights to Kaohsiung by EVA Air will resume on May 1. Other flights from Macau to several mainland and regional destinations will also resume from Mar. 26 onwards. Meanwhile, the website of the Macau International Airport revealed that Taiwan's low-cost carrier, Tigerair Taiwan, will resume flights to Macau on Mar. 26, although this information is not in the AACM's memo.

## RESIDENTS ADVISED TO RESET TV CHANNELS FROM MAR. 27

The city's official TV signal handler, Macau Basic Television Channels Ltd., will tune its system from 11 a.m., Mar. 27, which may interrupt TV viewing. The Macao Post and Telecommunication Bureau (CTT) reminds residents to conduct a new search for TV channels so as to ensure correct reconfiguration. It emphasized that the order of TV channels will remain the same. Any residents who encounter problems during or after the tuning are advised to contact their building's management office or TV Channels Ltd. for assistance.

## MAN CAUGHT BY GONGBEI CUSTOMS FOR SMUGGLING 240 CPUS

At 8:10 p.m. on Mar. 16, a man was caught at the Gongbei Border Checkpoint attempting to smuggle 239 wrapped CPUs into Zhuhai, Gongbei Customs announced. The man was passing through the "Nothing to Declare" line, but was seen wearing a bulky shirt and appeared to be behaving suspiciously. Upon inspection, the CPUs were found taped around his waist and inner thigh area. The customs authority advises that smuggling is a crime in China and violators will be prosecuted.

## EMPLOYMENT

# NEARLY 650 PEOPLE HIRED THROUGH LABOR BUREAU FROM JAN. TO FEB.

ANTHONY LAM

A series of events have been organized in the first two months of this year and successfully resulted in 646 people attaining employment, the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) revealed in a response to lawmaker Ella Lei's questions.

The lawmaker's written inquiry, dated Feb. 10, sought clarifications in several areas. Lei wanted to explore specific plans that the DSAL had made to further lower city's unemployment rate.

She also asked if the bureau had assessed whether the salaries posted were reasonable, and how the bureau would refine its Paid Hands-on Internship Programme.

Responding to the questions, the head of the DSAL, Wong Chi Hong, pointed out that in January and February this year, 28 job-matching sessions involving



various trades and industries were organized. Online and offline recruitment seminars and workshops were also held, and more of such sessions would be held amid the resumption of group tours.

Regarding the salary question, the bureau emphasized that it would review recruitment

information provided by companies "to ensure that recruitment conditions correspond to the status quo." The bureau also deployed officers to witness job interviews "to ensure jobseekers with professional capacities were employed under fair and reasonable conditions."

To follow up with unsuccessful

matches, the bureau has provided additional recruitment support to concerned jobseekers, in addition to analyzing the reasons why they were not hired.

On the other hand, the Employment-Training Programme that started in 2015 has provided employees who wanted to change career paths the chance to relocate themselves vocationally, while acquiring the requisite skills on the job, the bureau added.

The program covers such areas as facility maintenance, culinary positions, as well as catering operations and management.

Further efforts will be invested in collaborating with local resort operators in expanding the program to provide more opportunities for interested jobseekers to broaden their career paths. Targeted recruitment support will also continue, the bureau added.

# Lawmakers concerned over new rules for issuing bonds

THE lawmakers of the Second Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly are concerned with the new financial rules that no longer require bonds issued to the public in Macau to

obtain prior authorization from the Chief Executive (CE).

The fact was revealed yesterday by the president of the Committee, lawmaker Chan Chak Mo, in a press briefing

after the committee meeting.

According to the new rules currently under discussion at the AL, it will be only required that the issuer be registered with the Mone-

tary Authority of Macao (AMCM) to issue bonds. This is in contrast to the current law, which requires authorization from the CE.

Lawmakers are concerned that the rule could result in less supervision over the process from authorities and are asking the government to explain their reasoning in more detail.

A list of questions was

developed by the committee and will now be sent to the government to be answered in an upcoming meeting. Chan said that the queries focus on several aspects such as the proposed financial management structure and elaboration of several definitions, such as the meaning of 'General Manager,' which the lawmakers regarded as broad. **RM**

## GAMING

# CASINOS LIKELY TO EARN MOP11B IN GGR FOR MARCH

THE city's gross gaming revenue (GGR) is estimated to have reached MOP6.8 billion by Mar. 19 as economic revival continues, following the consistent recovery in tourist arrival numbers.

Data from investment bank J.P. Morgan suggests-

ted that casinos recorded a daily run-rate of MOP357 million a day on average.

"This is all within expectations, but still quite encouraging against what is implied by the recent pull-back in shares," said analysts DS Kim and Mufan Shi.

Meanwhile, the analysts said that the figures represent a 45% recovery in GGR, and a recovery of 60% to 70% in the mass market, compared with pre-pandemic levels.

If these trends continue, the city will record MOP11 billion in

GGR for March, similar to February's figure of MOP10.3 billion as the sector benefitted from the city's easing of restrictions since early January. The figure was up 33.1% year-on-year.

Although the February figure is still down 59% when compared to pre-

-pandemic levels, analysts surveyed by Bloomberg predict that annual gambling revenue could jump almost four-fold to MOP158 billion.

The government has estimated that the city's GGR this year would amount to MOP130 billion. **LV**

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# Business aviation firm expects to return to 50% of pre-Covid sales volume this year

ANTHONY LAM

**A** business aviation company operating in Macau expects its business to return to half of pre-Covid sales levels this year.

TAG Aviation Asia's Macau branch was inaugurated early 2019.

During the first two months of this year, the business aviation company has seen sales reaching the levels of its inaugural period, Rita Tam, general manager of the branch, told local media Macao Daily News.

Tam added that the company is optimistic about the development prospects of the business aviation market in Macau and the Greater Bay Area (GBA). Not long after the branch's inauguration, the business achieved a market share of 27% in Macau. Major clientele back then comprised business and leisure travelers, sports teams and entertainment personalities.

After Covid-19 emerged as a pandemic in 2020, the business aviation market was inevitably af-



ected, and the number of private jet operations plunged. "However, TAG Macau still garnered more than half of the market share, reflecting a positive recognition from customers on our services and standards," Tam told the news outlet.

Early January, when Macau and mainland China eliminated travel restrictions, the private jet market recorded a rebound. "The number of business jet requests from Southeast Asian countries

**As foreign markets are seen as key markets by [...] casino operators, these operators had started requesting quotations from the company**

increased significantly that month," Tam revealed. "Most of them came to Macau for entertainment and vacations."

In addition, Tam added that

premium brands are a growing clientele, as she disclosed that executives from certain brands requested TAG's services to Macau for their business and inspection

trips.

As foreign markets are seen as key markets by the government and consequently local casino operators, Tam also disclosed that these operators had started requesting quotations from the company.

Some of these jobs commenced in February, when some casino operators bought the company's services and transported about a dozen passengers on each of the chartered flights.

She emphasized that more requests are on the table and details should be confirmed next month.

All six casino operators have pledged to boost the concerted effort to diversify the city's market, according to an approved landmark casino bill that also targets attracting foreign players.

The biggest reform in over 20 years, the SAR government has updated the stipulations regarding the bidding process for casino licenses in Macau, which highlights corporate social responsibility and attracting non-Chinese bettors.

## TRANSPORT

### 2,109 NEW QUOTAS ISSUED FOR VEHICLE CIRCULATION BETWEEN MACAU AND HK

RENATO MARQUES

**A** total of 2,109 new quotas for private vehicles to cross between Macau and Hong Kong via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge have been allocated by the Transport Bureau (DSAT). The quotas have been allocated in a lucky draw after the DSAT received a total of 8,881 applications, the DSAT noted in a press statement.

The almost 9,000 applications for the license plates that allow passage on the bridge were received in just over a month (the period that the tender was open).

All applicants whose bids were approved will receive a notification from DSAT via SMS.

They must then submit all necessary documents in person at DSAT between March 27 and May 31 and fill in and upload their applicant, vehicle, and dri-



ver data online (app.dsat.gov.mo) between 10 a.m. on April 17 and 6 p.m. on June 30.

The DSAT also informed all interested parties that, should further quotas be made available this year, applicants in this most recent period will be eligible to receive them according to the list defined by the draw.

Eligible applicants must

be residents of Macau and be an employee of a company in Hong Kong or own a company established in the neighboring region. Owners of real estate property in Hong Kong (with the exception of parking spaces) may also apply.

Each quota allows up to three drivers, including the applicant (unless they are over 70 years old).

## TOURISM

### HKZMB RECORDS NEW HIGH IN PASSENGER TRAFFIC

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge recorded some 100,000 passengers entering and exiting during the weekend, hitting a record high in three years.

According to state media CCTV, routes from Zhuhai to Hong Kong via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, and then from Hong Kong to Macau via the bridge are booming, receiving an average of 2,000-3,000 mainland tourists every day.

In addition, driven by the policy of "Macau Cars Going Northward" tourists have increased significantly, and the increase in Macau single-plate vehicles entering Guangdong is particularly obvious.

The border checkpoint of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge inspected more than 3,000 Macau single-plate vehicles on Sunday, the highest num-



ber since the implementation of the policy.

As of Sunday, the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge border inspection station has inspected and let through more than 1.78 million people, a year-on-year increase of 2.3 times. The number of vehicles entering and exiting exceeded 466,000, a year-on-year increase of nearly 49%.

The deputy leader of

the second duty team of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge border inspection station, Tan Chang, said that they will continue to strengthen communication with the relevant departments in Hong Kong and Macau, plan the entry and exit lane routes based on available data, and open a sufficient number of inspection channels in a timely manner.



# PSP OFFICER CONVICTED OF DISOBEDIENCE, SENTENCED TO JAIL ON PROBATION

**A**N officer of the Public Security Police Force (PSP) has recently been convicted and sentenced to imprisonment with probation for the crime of disobedience.

The incident was first brought to public notice by Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak, in his 'Criminal Alarm' blog. According to the security official, on the night of Mar. 19, the officer was found driving in the wrong direction at the intersection between Rua de Coimbra and Rua de Évora in Taipa.

Patrolling police officers caught him red-handed and requested that he conduct a breathalyzer test, which he refused to do. Wong pointed out that his actions had already constituted the crime of disobedience, regardless of whether he had consumed alcohol before being apprehended.

The PSP officer was off duty at the time of the incident.

At the recent press conference, a PSP spokesperson added that the convicted officer was driving without his headlights on. Upon being requested to take the



test, the officer revealed his occupation and admitted to drinking earlier that night at a wedding banquet.

As the scene developed, the on-duty PSP officers had no choice but to refer him to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP). The Criminal Court afterwards sentenced him to four months in jail with two

years of probation. He will also be banned from driving for five months.

The spokesperson further disclosed that the officer first joined the PSP in 2008. An internal disciplinary investigation has already been opened. The PSP also reiterated its stand against any violations involving police officers. **AL**

## CRIME

# THREE PEOPLE DEFRAUDED OF MOP4.4 MILLION IN 'PARCEL DELIVERY' SCAM

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Judiciary Police (PJ) has reported that at least three people have reported falling victim to similar scams involving the apparent receipt of postal parcels.

The common phone scam that has already affected a large number of victims in Macau over recent years has returned to catch some new victims unaware.

The modus operandi is similar in all cases, with an alleged company or apparent authority contacting the victims via SMS or phone, claiming that there was a problem with a parcel addressed to the victim.

After that, the fraudsters try by several means to collect personal data such as the victims' credit card information, or call them to pay large amounts of money to "release the parcel."

Some cases involve the intervention of an alleged autho-

riety from the mainland, usually claiming that the parcel contained some illegal good and is now a criminal case.

In one of the three cases recently reported by the PJ, a female mainland student studying in a university in Macau was asked to pay some RMB800,000 to clear herself of an alleged crime related to a parcel.

Two other cases involving a 29-year-old man and a 47-year-old woman, both from Macau, also reportedly lost MOP610,000 and HKD3 million respectively in scams related to alleged customs problems with parcels arriving in Macau under their names.

The PJ already issued several warnings to the public, advising them not to trust information from unknown sources and not to pay any sums or provide personal data to potential fraudsters. The PJ further asks all people in Macau to report any suspicious cases of fraud to the authorities.

AD

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# Gov't refutes US report on Macau's alleged increased censorship

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE SAR government expressed its opposition to content relating to Macau in the "2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices", recently issued by the United States Department of State.

According to a statement issued by local authorities, the report "has an axe to grind, and contains baseless commentary, smearing the actual human-rights conditions in Macau."

"It is a brutal attempt to intervene in Macau's internal affairs and China's domestic affairs," it added.

The government noted that the central government is committed to law-based governance in Macau. Under such protections, "MSAR residents enjoy extensive rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, and the Basic Law of Macau."

According to the US report, "there were reports of increased



censorship, especially on topics related to the SAR's authorities."

US authorities recalled that in October 2021, the prodemocracy website Macau Concealer, which regularly published satirical news, suspended operations, citing a worsened political landscape and budgetary constraints.

"The SAR imposed restrictions

on press freedom and urged media to be patriotic," the report said.

It also recalled that back in July, the Macau Journalists Association issued a statement accusing government officials of "guiding" reporters on the direction of questions in advance of a regular pandemic press conference, re-

peatedly interrupting reporters, and snatching the microphone away from reporters."

Under the report's "Freedom of Peaceful Assembly" section, the report noted that in Macau, the Tiananmen Square commemoration organizer in the SAR, the Union for Democratic Development, represented by former

lawmakers Sunny Au and Antonio Ng, decided not to hold a June 4 vigil, making this the first year without a public or virtual Tiananmen candlelight vigil in the SAR since 1990.

"The organizers reportedly said the group cancelled the event due to fear of prosecution," the report read.

Also, according to the report, the law did not fully protect members of racial or ethnic minority groups against violence and discrimination.

The authorities were referring to the SAR's order to all Filipino nationals to take a daily Covid-19 test – back in July 2022 – on top of multiple rounds of citywide testing adopted previously, stating Filipinos accounted for 9.5% of the city's total Covid-19 cases and suggesting they might be hidden sources of infection.

Meanwhile, the local government stressed that the "historic development achievements in Macau cannot be discredited."

"With the support from the central government, the MSAR will continue to give full play to the city's advantages, integrate intensively into overall national development, and contribute fresh achievements for the successful and steady implementation of the 'One country, two systems' principle," the local government concluded.

## SCHOLAR CALLS FOR BETTER MEDICAL ENVIRONMENT FOR LYMPHOMA TREATMENT IN MACAU

STAFF REPORTER

**A**DMINISTRATIVE procedures for treating lymphoma cancer should be hastened for early treatment of patients, said former Clinical Professor of Hematology in Taiwan and current hematologist-oncologist in Macau, Ming-Sun Yu, who hosted a doctor-patient communication workshop for the Association of Happy Paradise.

Some young adults who have experienced autologous stem cell transplantation participated in the workshop and shared their experiences with lymphoma and the mindsets that helped them to combat cancer.

The workshop is targeted at better communication between cancer patients and their families and doctors to enable patients to talk with their families about their experiences, understand each other and get advice from



doctors, said Yu.

The intention behind the workshop is to provide encouragement and accurate medical information for patients and their families.

Yu said that it will only take less than a month for a patient who is found with symptoms of lymphoma to obtain a diagnosis and treatment, and treatment can end in half a year. However, in Macau, he said, there may be a waiting period of over three months (and multiple instances of such waiting periods), because of the slow administrative

procedure.

One of the treatments for cancer is bone marrow transplantation (BMT). Patients need to be transferred to other cities for this treatment.

Meanwhile, Yu hopes that the Islands Healthcare Complex in Cotai will help cancer patients complete the entire treatment without being transferred to another facility or region by improving the software and hardware used for the procedure, investing in the development of professional medical teams, and accelerating progress in treating patients.

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AP PHOTO



In this handout photo released by Russian Presidential Press Office, Russian President Vladimir Putin (right) and President Xi Jinping shake hands prior to their talks at the Kremlin

## DIPLOMACY

# PUTIN WELCOMES XI TO KREMLIN AMID UKRAINE FIGHTING

VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV,  
MOSCOW

**R**USSIAN President Vladimir Putin warmly welcomed Chinese leader Xi Jinping to the Kremlin yesterday [Macau time], sending a powerful message to Western leaders that their efforts to isolate Moscow over the fighting in Ukraine have fallen short.

Xi's trip — his first abroad since his re-election earlier this month — showed off Beijing's new diplomatic swagger and gave a political lift to Putin just days after an international arrest warrant was issued for the Kremlin leader on war crimes charges related to Ukraine.

The two major powers have described Xi's three-day trip as an opportunity to deepen their "no-limits friendship."

China looks to Russia as a source of oil and gas for its energy-hungry economy, and as a partner in standing up to what both see as U.S. aggression, domination of global affairs and unfair punishment for their human rights records.

The two countries, among the five U.N. Security Council's permanent members, also have held joint military drills. U.S. officials have picked up indications China is considering supplying Russia

with weapons for its fight in Ukraine but have seen no evidence they've actually done so.

The leaders smiled and shook hands before sitting down at the start of their meeting, calling each other "dear friend" and exchanging compliments. Putin congratulated Xi on his re-election and voiced hope for building even stronger ties.

"China has made a colossal leap ahead in its development in recent years," Putin said, adding that "it's causing genuine interest all around the world, and we even feel a bit envious," as Xi smiled.

The Kremlin leader welcomed China's proposals for a political settlement in Ukraine and noted Russia is open for talks.

"We will discuss all those issues, including your initiative that we highly respect," Putin said. "Our cooperation in the international arena undoubtedly helps strengthen the basic principles of the global order and multipolarity."

Both Moscow and Beijing have accused Washington of trying to isolate them and hold back their development as they challenge it for regional and global leadership.

In an increasingly multipolar world, the U.S. and its allies have been unable to build a broad front against Putin. While 141

countries condemned Moscow in a United Nations vote marking the first anniversary of Russian troops rolling into Ukraine, several members of the G-20 — including India, China and South Africa — abstained. Many African nations also have refrained from openly criticizing Russia.

"We hope that the strategic partnership between China and Russia will on the one hand uphold international fairness and justice, and on the other hand promote the common prosperity and development of our countries," Xi said.

In their 4 1/2 hours of talks, along with a dinner that included a Pacific seafood platter and roast venison in cherry sauce, Putin would offer Xi a "detailed explanation" of Moscow's actions in Ukraine, according to Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

For Putin, Xi's presence is a prestigious, diplomatic boost to show partnership in the face of Western efforts to isolate Russia over Ukraine.

In an article published in the Chinese People's Daily newspaper, Putin described Xi's visit as a "landmark event" that "reaffirms the special nature of the Russia-China partnership" and said the meeting signaled that the two

countries aren't prepared to accept attempts to weaken them.

"The U.S. policy of simultaneously deterring Russia and China, as well as all those who do not bend to the American diktat, is getting ever fiercer and more aggressive," he wrote.

China portrays Xi's visit as part of normal diplomatic exchanges and has offered little detail about its purpose, though Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin told reporters Monday that China "will uphold its objective and fair position on the Ukrainian crisis and play a constructive role in promoting peace talks." Xi didn't directly mention the Ukraine fighting or his peace plan when he sat down for the talks with Putin.

Beijing's leap into Ukraine issues follows its recent success in brokering talks between Iran and its chief Middle Eastern rival, Saudi Arabia, which agreed to restore their diplomatic ties after years of tensions.

Following that success, Xi called for China to play a bigger role in managing global affairs.

Although they boast of a "no-limits" partnership, Beijing has conducted a China First policy. It has refrained from supplying Russia's military — a move that could worsen relations with Washington

and turn important European trade partners against China. On the other hand, it has refused to condemn Moscow's aggression and criticized Western sanctions against Moscow, while accusing NATO and the United States of provoking Putin's military action.

Western pressure has made Russia increasingly reliant on Beijing, observers said.

China last month called for a cease-fire and peace talks. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy cautiously welcomed Beijing's involvement, but the overture fizzled.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby urged Xi "to press President Putin directly on the need to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity." He also said the U.S. administration believes Xi could play "a constructive role" by speaking directly with Zelenskyy.

The Kremlin has welcomed China's peace plan, while U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said any proposal that left Russian forces in place in Ukraine would merely let Moscow reequip and otherwise regain strength to resume its offensive.

Ukraine's allies, meanwhile, are stepping up their support. The State Department announced Monday that the U.S. will send Ukraine \$350 million in weapons and equipment. The latest aid package includes ammunition, such as rockets for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, fuel tanker trucks and riverine boats.

In Brussels, European Union countries endorsed a fast-track procedure to provide Ukraine with artillery shells, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said. He hailed "a historic decision" for the 27-nation bloc and Norway to send Ukraine 1 million 155 mm artillery shells within 12 months.

Xi's trip came after the International Criminal Court in The Hague announced Friday it wants to put Putin on trial for the abductions of thousands of children from Ukraine.

The Kremlin doesn't recognize the court's authority and has rejected its move against Putin as "legally null and void." China, the U.S. and Ukraine also don't recognize the ICC, but the decision tarnished Putin's international standing.

China's Foreign Ministry urged the ICC to "respect the jurisdictional immunity" of a head of state and "avoid politicization and double standards."

Russia's Investigative Committee retaliated by opening a criminal case against a prosecutor and three judges of the ICC over the arrest warrants issued for Putin and his commissioner for children's rights, Maria Lvova-Belova. The committee called the ICC's prosecution "unlawful" because it was, among other things, a "criminal prosecution of a knowingly innocent person." **MDT/AP**



# Japan, China leaders visit rival capitals in Ukraine war

KARL RITTER, KYIV

**J**APANESE Prime Minister Fumio Kishida began a surprise visit to Kyiv yesterday, hours after Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in neighboring Russia for a three-day visit with Moscow's invasion of Ukraine casting a shadow over both meetings.

It comes after a week in which China and Japan both enjoyed diplomatic successes, and as both are increasing support for their favored sides in the ongoing war.

Kishida will meet President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Ukrainian capital.

He will "show respect to the courage and patience of the Ukrainian people who are standing up to defend their homeland under President Zelenskyy's leadership, and show solidarity and unwavering support for Ukraine as head of Japan and chairman of G-7," during his visit to Ukraine, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said in announcing his trip to Kyiv.

At the talks, Kishida will show his "absolute rejection of Russia's one-sided change to the status quo by invasion and force, and to affirm his commitment to defend the rules-based international

AP PHOTO



order," the ministry's statement said.

Japanese public television channel NTV showed Kishida riding a train from Poland heading to Kyiv. His surprise trip to Ukraine comes just hours after he met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi, and the week after a breakthrough summit with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yoel.

In New Delhi, Kishida called for developing and Global South countries to raise their voices to defend the rules-based interna-

tional order and help stop Russia's war.

Japan, which has territorial disputes over islands with both China and Russia, is particularly concerned about the close relationship between Beijing and Moscow, which have conducted joint military exercises near Japan's coasts.

Kishida, who is to chair the Group of Seven summit in May, is the only G-7 leader who hasn't visited Ukraine and was under pressure to do so at home. U.S. President Joe Biden took a simi-

lar route to visit Kyiv last month, just before the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Due to limitations of Japan's pacifist constitution, his trip was arranged secretly. Kishida is Japan's first postwar leader to enter a war zone. Kishida, invited by Zelenskyy in January to visit Kyiv, was also asked before his trip to India about a rumor of his possible trip at the end of March, denied it and said nothing concrete has been decided.

Japan has joined the United States and European nations in

sanctioning Russia over its invasion and providing humanitarian and economic support for Ukraine.

Japan was quick to react because it fears the possible impact of a war in East Asia, where China's military has grown increasingly assertive and has escalated tensions around self-ruled Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its territory.

In Beijing, foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said that Beijing's contacts with Russia will help to bring about peace.

Asked about Kishida's trip to Kyiv, he added, "We hope Japan could do more things to deescalate the situation instead of the opposite."

Kishida is expected to offer continuing support for Ukraine when he meets with Zelenskyy.

Television footage on NTV showed Kishida getting on a train from the Polish station of Przemyśl near the border with Ukraine, with a number of officials.

Due to its pacifist principles, Japan's support for Ukraine has also been limited to non-combatative military equipment such as helmets, bulletproof vests and drones, and humanitarian supplies including generators.

Japan has contributed more than \$7 billion to Ukraine, and accepted more than 2,000 displaced Ukrainians and helped them with housing assistance and support for jobs and education, a rare move in a country that is known for its strict immigration policy. **MDT/AP**

## SRI LANKA

# IMF to assess governance as part of \$3B bailout

**T**HE International Monetary Fund said yesterday it is assessing Sri Lanka's governance in the first case of an Asian country facing scrutiny for corruption as part of a bailout program.

The IMF executive board approved a nearly \$3 billion bailout plan for the bankrupt nation Monday and about \$333 million was to be disbursed immediately to alleviate the country's humanitarian crisis. The approval also will open up financial support from other institutions.

Sri Lanka suspended repayment of its debt last year as it ran short of foreign currency needed to pay for imports of fuel and other essentials. Shortages led to street protests that forced out Sri Lanka's president. The economic situation has improved under current

AP PHOTO



President Ranil Wickremesinghe, but his plans to privatize state companies have raised objections.

The senior mission chief for the IMF in Sri Lanka said the development lender would assess corruption and governance vulnerabilities in Sri Lanka and provide recommendations.

"Sri Lanka will be the first country in Asia to undergo a governance diag-

nostic exercise by the IMF. We look forward to further engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and civil society organizations on this critical reform area," Peter Breuer told reporters.

Sri Lankans took to the streets since last year demanding accountability for alleged corruption and demanding recovery of assets allegedly stolen by members of a former ruling fam-

ily. Graft has been a main factor behind the country's economic meltdown, critics of the government say.

Sri Lanka's "institutions and governance frameworks require deep reforms," IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said in a statement.

The IMF's approval means Sri Lanka will no longer be considered a bankrupt nation and the

country can resume its normal dealings, Wickremesinghe said in a brief recorded statement yesterday. It also will unlock financing of up to \$7 billion from it and other international financial institutions.

"As our foreign currency improves, we will gradually lift import restrictions. In the first cycle we will bring in essential goods, medicines and goods needed for the tourism industry," Wickremesinghe said, adding that he expects to present the agreement with the IMF to Parliament after making a detailed statement Wednesday.

Earlier this month, the last hurdle for the approval was cleared when China joined Sri Lanka's other creditors in providing assurances for debt restructuring.

Sri Lanka has raised income taxes and removed

electricity and fuel subsidies, fulfilling prerequisites of the IMF program but also burdening the public. Authorities must now discuss with Sri Lanka's creditors how to restructure its debt.

The IMF mission chief, Breuer, said the "impact of the reforms on the poor and vulnerable needs to be mitigated."

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said Beijing saw the agreement with the IMF as "good news."

"We are willing to continue to work with relevant countries and international financial institutions to play a positive role in helping Sri Lanka cope with the current difficulties, ease the debt burden and achieve sustainable development," said the spokesman, Wang Wenbin.

But he also urged other creditors to join in restructuring Sri Lanka's debt and sharing responsibility fairly.

China owns about 10% of Sri Lanka's total foreign debt. **MDT/AP**



AP PHOTO



## FRANCE

# In Paris streets, heaps of garbage become protest symbol

ELAINE GANLEY, PARIS

**G**ARBAGE. Heaps, mounds and piles of it are growing daily — and in some places standing higher than a human being.

A strike by Paris garbage collectors, which begins its 16th day on Tuesday, is taking a toll on the renowned aesthetics of the French capital, a veritable blight on the City of Light.

“I prefer Chanel to the stink,” joked Vincent Salazar, a 62-year-old artistic consultant who lives in a tony Left Bank neighborhood. A pile of garbage sits at the corner of his building overlooking the Luxembourg Gardens.

“I’ve seen rats,” he said.

But like many nonchalant and strike-hardened Parisians, Salazar doesn’t mind.

“I’m fortunate to live here, but I’m 200% behind these guys,” Salazar said. “They’re smelling it all day long,” he said, though “it” wasn’t the word he used. “They should get early retirement.”

He is among the majority of French who, polls show, oppose President Emmanuel Macron’s decision to raise the retirement age by two years, from 62 to 64 for most and from 57 to 59 for garbage collectors.

Macron rammed the showcase legislation of his second term through Parliament last week — without

a vote, thanks to a special constitutional article. Yesterday [Macau time], the government won two no-confidence motions put forth by angry lawmakers. The bill is now considered adopted.

But garbage got wrapped up in the politics. And neither unions organizing protests nor some citizens are prepared to back down.

Posters showing a digitally altered images of Macron atop a garbage heap — or collecting garbage himself — have made the rounds on social networks.

The Socialist mayor of Paris, who supports the strikers, found herself in a bind. City Hall refused orders to get the trucks out, saying it’s not their job. Police Chief Laurent Nunez then ordered garages unblocked and ordered 674 sanitation personnel and 206 garbage trucks back to work to provide a minimal service, police tweeted Tuesday.

Sure enough, a green Paris garbage truck was seen collecting a long, high pile of rubbish Tuesday outside a school on a Left Bank street — although the truck was full long before all the refuse could be cleaned up. With incinerators blocked, the garbage was being taken to a storage site outside Paris.

City Hall said that as of yesterday, 9,300 tons of rubbish remained on the streets.

Workers in numerous sec-

tors, from transportation to energy, have been holding intermittent strikes since January. But it is the garbage in the French capital that has made garbage collectors, long taken for granted, visible — and their anger obvious.

The city’s vibrant outdoor culture is feeling the effects. Some of Paris’ famed narrow streets are more choked than usual, forcing people on foot to pass through garbage heaps single file. The scent of rancid, rotting garbage increasingly wafts through the air as spring arrives and the weather grows milder. Seats at some sidewalk cafes located near heaps of rubbish are empty.

A server for the past 26 years at Le Bistro du Dome specializing in fish, adjacent to the famed restaurant Le Dome, said some 50% of diners had disappeared in the past 10 days. Other restaurants are suffering the same fate, said Guillaume, who would identify himself only by his first name.

“It doesn’t bother me because it’s for a good cause,” said Franck Jacquot, 51, standing outside a small bar he runs. Nearby, heaps of garbage loomed. “If we’re obliged to go this route — well, we’re here,” he said.

However, garbage bags and bins have served as fuel for troublemakers.

Two spontaneous protests last week at the huge Place

de la Concorde, facing the National Assembly, degenerated when police started evacuating thousands with tear gas and water cannons. Some of those forced out began setting fires to garbage piles along their path through high-end Paris.

That scenario was repeated yesterday when hundreds of young people demonstrated near the gold-domed Invalides monument, site of Napoleon’s tomb. As night fell, small, mobile groups of troublemakers combed the city, burning trash bags, lamp posts and other objects. Nunez, the police chief, speaking on TV news station BFM, said 234 people were detained.

More is ahead: Unions are planning nationwide marches and strikes for Thursday to pressure the government to withdraw the retirement measure.

“Garbage is a good way to protest. It has a big impact,” said Tony Gibierge, 36, who is opening a restaurant in several months on a street in southern Paris — a street currently heaped with garbage.

He was among those who have peacefully demonstrated through Paris, and other cities, with song and dance in recent weeks. “Now we have to send out the fire, stop dancing,” he said. The message: Nothing is over, and much of the garbage isn’t going anywhere quite yet.

## this day in history

### 1979 BRITISH AMBASSADOR ASSASSINATED IN HOLLAND



British ambassador in Holland Sir Richard Sykes has been shot dead outside his Dutch home.

Two gunmen opened fire on Sir Richard and his Dutch footman as they left his residence at The Hague to make the short five minute car journey to the embassy.

At about 0900 local time the 58-year-old and 19-year-old footman, Karel Straub, were both shot in the head.

The father-of-three is reported to have fallen into his car and been driven off at speed by his chauffeur Jack Wilson.

Mr Straub fell to the pavement and was repeatedly shot again.

Both men were taken to hospital but died on arrival within minutes of each other.

Eyewitnesses said the gunmen were wearing dark suits and coats, aged between 35 and 40, and escaped down a quiet alleyway.

Alyson Bailes, secretary to the former Trade Secretary Edmund Dell, is on a special visit to Holland and is understood to have been with Sir Richard during the attack.

But initial reports suggest she is unharmed.

A spokesman for the embassy said: “We have no idea who perpetrated this horrible act, or for what motive.”

Police in the Netherlands and in Britain have not ruled out IRA involvement, but other groups under suspicion include Palestinians and Iraqis.

Detectives are also considering the possibility Dutch “hit-men” could be involved.

The embassy and the police said no threats had been made against the ambassador, and there had been no sign of IRA activity in Holland during recent months.

Sir Richard was an acknowledged expert on security affairs and had been a diplomat in Cuba, Peking and Washington.

He was responsible for an internal report on the safety of British diplomats following the killing in 1977 of the British ambassador to Eire, Christopher Ewart-Biggs.

Sir Richard took up his job in June 1977 after a two year posting as a Foreign and Commonwealth Office deputy under-secretary in London.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Security came under scrutiny after the killing as there was no permanent guard on the ambassador’s residence and he relied on mobile patrols by local police based about 300 yards from his home.

Sir Richard’s assassination baffled detectives in both countries but police suspected the IRA more than any other group.

It was later revealed he had been killed by members of the IRA.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You are best to be discreet. Curb or cut out that bad habit you've been meaning to do something about. You'll be prone to tears if your mate is harsh with you today.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You may have a hard time relating to children today. You might find added popularity with those around you today. Good day for romance.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

You can find out interesting information if you get a chance to talk to people you respect. Avoid letting children and friends borrow.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You can find solutions if you are willing to communicate. If you're looking to do something worthwhile, consider volunteer work.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You will easily blow situations out of proportion. Call siblings or old friends to catch up on recent news. Travel will be good if you are seeking knowledge.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Make sure to arrange in advance to spend quality time together. You can come into money that you don't necessarily work for.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Abrupt changes concerning your professional position are evident. Get help setting up a reasonable budget. Look into ways of making extra cash.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

It's time to let loose. Try to be understanding. Travel will be favorable. A change of attitude has probably disrupted your home environment.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

The personal problems you may be having are interfering with your productivity. A change of attitude has probably disrupted your home environment.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Your emotions will be touched off concerning recent encounters with your lover. Catch up on overdue phone calls and correspondence.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

In-laws or relatives may oppose your personal intentions. Make changes regarding your status in society. Be sure to organize events that will keep the children busy.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Trips will be favorable for business as well as pleasure. Unexpected bills may set you back. Be careful when dealing with investments.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	10	17	cloudy
Changchun	3	10	fine
Chengdu	12	17	overcast
Chongqing	15	21	overcast
Fuzhou	16	31	rain
Guangzhou	22	30	cloudy
Guiyang	8	19	cloudy
Haikou	23	36	cloudy
Hangzhou	12	19	rain
Harbin	5	12	showers
Hefei	11	15	rain
Nanjing	11	16	showers
Shanghai	13	18	rain
Taipei	18	25	cloudy
Wuhan	10	18	overcast
Hong Kong	23	27	cloudy

WORLD

Moscow	3	5	cloudy
Frankfurt	11	16	cloudy
Paris	11	13	rain
London	9	14	rain
New York	9	14	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Showed interest; 6- Stopwatch-holder; 11- So there!; 14- Grammarian's concern; 15- Clear the boards; 16- Clean air org.; 17- Bingo!; 18- Despised; 19- \_\_\_ day now...; 20- It transforms carbon dioxide into oxygen; 22- Ventured; 24- Bulky and heavy; 28- Isolda's love; 30- Quaking trees; 31- Unrefined; 32- Unpaid; 33- Horrible; 37- Rodent, betrayer; 38- Emulate Cicero; 39- From \_\_\_ Z; 40- Oafish; 43- Arrived; 45- Stan's pal; 46- Mental condition; 47- Stronghold; 50- Rug rat; 51- Get around; 52- Fleece; 53- John \_\_\_ Passos; 54- Arrested; 57- Utopian; 62- Illustrative craft; 63- Singer Frankie; 64- Destiny; 65- Cereal grass; 66- Jerks; 67- Short literary composition;

DOWN 1- Big \_\_\_; 2- Faulkner's "\_\_\_ Lay Dying"; 3- Children's game; 4- Exclamation of disgust; 5- Necking; 6- Titter; 7- Dies \_\_\_; 8- Slip preventer; 9- Nationality suffix; 10- A little embarrassed; 11- Compassion; 12- Sleep disorder; 13- "Surprise Symphony" composer; 21- Campers, briefly; 23- Kind of prof.; 24- New Zealand aboriginal; 25- Dam extending across the Nile; 26- Malice; 27- D.C. VIP; 28- Country singer Travis; 29- Latest thing; 31- Large wading bird; 33- Easily broken; 34- Deadly; 35- Useful; 36- Hermit; 38- Look at lustfully; 41- Mutual fund fee; 42- On in years; 43- Divine; 44- Old California fort; 46- Cattle call; 47- Cupressus; 48- Creamy white; 49- Sensation provided by buds on the tongue; 50- Shades; 52- Blink; 55- Battery size; 56- Diarist Anais; 58- \_\_\_ Kapital; 59- Hesitant sounds; 60- Doctor's org.; 61- Put Down;

Yesterday's solution

K	N	E	E	L	A	A	R	O	N	L	E	A
A	R	E	T	E	P	L	A	N	E	A	R	C
T	A	R	A	S	P	S	H	A	W	I	A	N
S	I	L	O									N
Q	U	O	T	O	N	E	T	S	E			
A	R	S	E	N	T							L
R	O	A	R	S								O
E	L	K										I
S	T	A	T	E	M	E	N	T				O
F	E	E	A	R	S							T
C	L	E	A	R								S
A	D	D										T
S	E	E										E
E	R											D

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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AD



EXPLAINER

# WILL THE CREDIT SUISSE BANK TAKEOVER CALM FINANCIAL FEARS?

**I**N a bid to ease turmoil in the world financial system, Swiss authorities engineered a plan for the UBS bank to acquire its troubled smaller rival Credit Suisse at a marked-down price.

It's another urgent attempt to fight fears that have put the financial world on edge 15 years after the failure of U.S. investment bank Lehman Brothers pitched the global economy into a crisis.

Here are key things to know — and some things that aren't yet known — about the takeover and the wider market anxiety fueled by bank failures in the U.S.

## WHY IS UBS TAKING OVER CREDIT SUISSE?

Swiss authorities pushed UBS to take over its rival after the price of Credit Suisse shares plunged and depositors fled, raising fears that it could fail.

Credit Suisse isn't just any bank. Unlike midsize Silicon Valley Bank, which went under earlier this month in the U.S., it is one of 30 banks classified as globally significant because it could pose a risk of bigger trouble if it collapses, as happened with Lehman.

Credit Suisse's troubles predated Silicon Valley's failure, including a \$5.5 billion loss on its dealings with private investment firm Archegos and a spying scandal.

Then fears about banks fed by the U.S. failures made investors take a closer, less friendly look at banks. When Credit Suisse's biggest investor, Saudi National Bank, refused to put up more money, investors and depositors headed for the exits.

AP PHOTO



## WILL THE TAKEOVER RESTORE CONFIDENCE?

Confidence in banks is shaky right now. That said, economists, bank regulators and stock-market analysts generally say that banks are in better shape than in 2008, with thicker financial buffers against losses and a slew of new regulations.

And this time, policymakers have been quicker to respond. The U.S. Federal Reserve offered credit to banks that suffered uninsured losses on bond holdings due to rising interest rates.

On Sunday, just ahead of the opening of markets in Asia, other central banks joined the Fed in expanding unlimited dollar credit to any bank that needs it. That was a swift preemptive move used in earlier emergencies such as the pandemic market meltdown of 2020.

Swiss officials balked at letting Credit Suisse just fail, unlike the U.S. government in 2008, when it let Lehman go under, spreading losses and fear across the financial system. Financial institutions had been in trouble since 2007, but it wasn't until two weeks after Lehman that the U.S. Congress came to the system's aid with a \$700 billion emergency economic stabilization act.

Questions have been raised about the technicalities of the Credit Suisse rescue and the decision to insure all depositors at Silicon Valley. But officials are showing that they learned one lesson from Lehman, "namely to act decisively and swiftly, and if needed to run roughshod over any discussion of moral hazard and legal obstacles, both of which can be discussed once the dust settles," said Marc Ostwald, chief economist and glo-

bal strategist at ADM Investor Services International.

As a result, "some semblance of calm has been restored. This crisis is far from over, but at least some of the immediate risks of an exponential ballooning of contagion effects have been mitigated."

## SO WE CAN SOUND THE ALL CLEAR?

Not yet. UBS shares initially plunged Monday on fears that the bank has simply inherited trouble by buying Credit Suisse. The share later turned positive. And the way the takeover was done, by wiping out some of the Credit Suisse's bondholders, rattled markets in those bonds. So new problems could arise.

"Containing crises is a bit like a game of whack-a-mole — with new fires starting as existing ones are extinguished," said Neal Shea-

ring, group chief economist at Capital Economics. "A key issue over the next week will be whether problems arise in other institutions or parts of the financial system."

Among the lingering worries: Did other U.S. banks ignore the risk that interest rates might swiftly rise, as Silicon Valley did? Could there be trouble in other parts of the financial sector that don't take insured deposits, such as investment banks, hedge funds and mortgage brokers?

Said Shearing: "A reasonable base case is that we avoid a system-wide crisis on the scale of 2007-08, but further problems emerge at individual institutions."

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE GLOBAL ECONOMY?

Analysts say pressure from markets and regulators may now make banks less likely to risk new lending, which could restrict credit for new purchases or investment in new businesses.

If credit is seen to tighten because of fears over banks, central banks such as the Fed, the European Central Bank and the Bank of England might choose to slow down their recent rapid interest rate increases aimed at fighting inflation — or to stop the increases at a lower level than they otherwise would have.

Tighter credit, whether from nervous banks or from central bankers raising rates, tends to counteract inflation.

That was behind European Central Bank head Christine Lagarde's statement last week after the bank raised rates by a half-percentage point. She said further rate decisions would be taken meeting to meeting based on the latest data.

Lagarde said Monday that the current financial tensions "might have an impact on demand and might actually do some of the work that might otherwise be done by monetary policy." **MDT/AP**

## CORPORATE BITS

### Sands Resorts Macao participates in roadshow across GBA



Sands Resorts Macao is participating in the 'Experience Macao, Unlimited' caravan roadshow series across the Greater Bay Area hosted by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) to attract more tourists

to Macao and propel economic recovery. The event was held in the Carnival Square of OCT Harbour in Shenzhen on March 18 and 19.

Sands Resorts Macao is highlighting its diverse gourmet,

accommodation, shopping and entertainment options, including the recently launched Tulip Garden installations in The Parisian Macao. Meanwhile, exclusive benefits on entertainment tickets and hotel accommodation were also available for visitors during the roadshows.

At the Shenzhen event, Sands Resorts Macao's booth attracted visitors and became a popular photo backdrop, the firm said in a statement.

Following the stop in Shenzhen, the 'Experience Macao, Unlimited' caravan roadshow series across the Greater Bay Area will tour three other GBA cities including Dongguan, Foshan and Zhaoqing every weekend.

### SJM holds F&B workshop for university students



SJM Resorts, S.A. recently invited lecturers and students from the School of Hospitality Management of the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM) to a workshop at Grand Lisboa Palace Resort Macao to learn from Mesa's Chef de

Cuisine.

In addition to teaching 25 Year-4 students and lecturers how to prepare modern Portuguese cuisine, the chef also shared insights about the F&B industry's future developments during the workshop.

Passionate about Portuguese cuisine, Chef de Cuisine Andre Lai shared Mesa's farm-to-table philosophy, his own personal culinary experiences, and demonstrated how to prepare two Mesa signature dishes — Bacalhau à Brás and Kumquat.

After the demonstration, a group of students toured around the restaurant to learn more about its daily operations.

"By continuing to partner with academic institutions and providing learning and development opportunities to local students, SJM aims to promote the diversified development of Macao," the gaming operator said in a statement.



RONALD BLUM, MIAMI

BASEBALL

**R**ANDY Arozarena dazzled with his bat, glove and style. It wasn't enough for Mexico but won countless fans for his adopted nation and himself.

Arozarena jumped at the 8 1/2-foot left field wall to rob Kazuma Okamoto of a home run and preserve a three-run lead, then sparked a two-run rally with a leadoff double in the eighth inning of yesterday's [Macau time] World Baseball Classic semifinal.

While Japan rallied for two runs in the ninth off Giovanny Gallegos for a thrilling 6-5 victory and a championship matchup against the United States, the Mexican team was proud of reaching the semifinals for the first time and raising the sport's profile back home in a land where soccer is No. 1.

"We lost a baseball game but we won many things," Arozarena said. "Mexican baseball continues to grow. This is the first step."

Mexico had been knocked out in the second round of the 2006 and 2009 WBCs, then failed to advance past the first round in 2013 and 2017.

"I think that they are not aware of what they have done for

Mexico and for the Mexican boys and girls," manager Benji Gil said. "These two weeks are going to attract so many young players in Mexico and also Mexicans that live abroad. For that reason, I believe that this was a victory, even when we didn't win today."

Milwaukee's Luis Urias put Mexico ahead in the fourth inning with a three-run homer off 21-year-old sensation Rki Sasaki, turning on a belt-high cutter from the pitcher who nearly threw consecutive perfect games in Japan last season.

Arozarena preserved the lead with his catch, then stared straight ahead for almost 10 seconds.

That stood until the seventh when Masataka Yoshida pulled JoJo Romero's changeup just inside the right-field foul pole for a tying, three-run drive.

Arozarena had entertained during batting practice, shagging flies in left while wearing a sombrero and cowboy boots. The

AP PHOTO



Mexico left fielder Randy Arozarena catches a ball hit by Japan's Kensuke Kondo during the fifth inning of a World Baseball Classic game

Tampa Bay Rays outfielder signed autographs for fans behind the left-field wall during a pitching change.

Fans responded, chanting "M-V-P!" at him.

"I leave with much joy because

of all the love I received from the fans," Arozarena said. "It was a beautiful experience for me."

He sparked an eighth-inning rally with a leadoff double against Yoshinobu Yamamoto, the two-time Pacific League MVP who

had followed Sasaki and thrown three hitless innings.

Alex Verdugo's RBI double and Isaac Paredes' run-scoring single built a 5-3 lead, but Hotaka Yamakawa hit a sacrifice fly in the eighth and two-time Central League MVP Munetaka Murakami hit a two-run double in the ninth that sent Japan's players sprinting onto the field and left deflated Mexicans hanging over their dugout rail.

"In the U.S., I hope that baseball grows, but it's not going to grow that much," Gil said. "We won't see an extreme change. In Japan, the same, baseball is No. 1. In Mexico, there will be a radical, extreme change. I don't know whether tomorrow, in one week, in one month, or in one year, but baseball will start growing. It will be the most important game again."

Arozarena hit .450 with six doubles, one home run and nine RBIs, another big performance in a big event after he hit 10 home runs with 13 RBIs for Tampa Bay in the 2020 postseason.

Now 28, he left Cuba for Mexico after the 2015 season, played briefly for Toros de Tijuana and signed with the St. Louis Cardinals. He was traded to the Rays after the 2019 season and became a Mexican citizen last year. **MDT/AP**

AD

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OPINION

China Daily

Yu Sui, China Daily\*



CHINA-RUSSIA TIES A STABILIZER FOR VOLATILE WORLD

President Xi Jinping's state visit to Russia from Monday to Wednesday is his first foreign trip after being re-elected China's president earlier this month.

The visit has drawn international attention because it comes just after the first anniversary of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and many expect Xi to promote peace talks between Moscow and Kyiv.

The meeting between the two heads of state is expected to further strengthen the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination in the new era.

The Chinese and Russian leaders have been visiting each other's country at regular intervals. Since 2013, Xi and Putin have held 40 meetings and discussed many bilateral and international issues including how to strengthen bilateral ties, better protect regional security, democratize international relations, improve global governance, facilitate global development, and help build a community with a shared future for mankind.

China and Russia have bolstered strategic mutual trust, and good-neighborly and friendly relations, creating a new pattern of international relations. China-Russia ties are a win-win pattern which includes features such as comprehensive strategic coordination without alignment, closely cooperating but with independent policies, safeguarding of each own's national interests without targeting each other, dealing with global issues, and settling disputes through consultation.

Why have China-Russia ties strengthened despite increasing global turbulence? The answer lies in the fact that, despite being major countries, China and Russia have been cooperating to help stabilize the global situation and have formulated domestic and foreign policies in accordance with the interests and demands of their own country and people without targeting any third party.

Trade and economy have been the foundation of bilateral ties. For example, the bilateral trade volume in 2022 increased by 34.3 percent year-on-year to reach 1.28 trillion yuan (\$185.41 billion). While China's exports of mechanical and electrical products to Russia increased by 9 percent, and automobiles and component and parts by 54 percent, energy trade hit \$33.78 billion in the first two months of 2023, up 36.4 percent year-on-year.

Besides, people-to-people exchanges between the two sides have enriched bilateral ties, thanks to the many China-Russia Year of Exchange with themes such as language, tourism, youth and the media. For example, the sports-themed 2022-23 China-Russia Year of Exchange has been a great success.

No wonder many expect Xi's ongoing visit to Russia to boost China-Russia win-win cooperation and promote the integration of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative and Russia's Eurasia Economic Union.

On the Russia-Ukraine conflict, China refuses to take sides because it has good relations with both Russia and Ukraine, but it disagrees with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization which has been using the Ukraine crisis to wage a proxy war against Russia.

The US-led NATO is a legacy of the Cold War which should have been dissolved after the collapse of the Soviet Union. But instead of dissolving NATO, the Western powers have been expanding it eastward, triggering disputes with Russia.

So during Xi's visit to Russia, China will stick to its objective position and try to play a constructive role in brokering peace between the warring sides. But whether the Ukraine crisis can be peacefully resolved or not depends on the policies and actions of the US-led NATO, especially because the United States has been comparing Ukraine crisis with the Taiwan question, in order to further interfere in China's internal affairs.

However, the Taiwan question is totally different from the Russia-Ukraine conflict, as Ukraine is a sovereign country and Taiwan is an inseparable part of China. The Taiwan question is purely a domestic issue of China.

Russia has taken a clear position on the Taiwan question. "The Russian side reaffirms its support for the one-China principle, confirms that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China, and opposes any form of independence of Taiwan," said China-Russia's joint statement on Feb 4 in 2022.

Amid rising uncertainties around the world, President Xi's visit to Russia will not only strengthen China-Russia relations but also help restore global peace and promote global development. [Abridged]

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'WINNIE THE POOH' FILM PULLED FROM HONG KONG, MACAU CINEMAS

THE BUZZ

Public screenings of a slasher film that features Winnie the Pooh were scrapped abruptly in Hong Kong yesterday, sparking discussions over increasing censorship in the city, the Associated Press reports.

Film distributor VII Pillars Entertainment announced on Facebook that the release of "Winnie the Pooh: Blood and Honey" on Thursday had been canceled with "great regret" in Hong Kong and neighboring Macau. It did not elaborate nor immediately respond to a request for comment.

The film's pull in Hong Kong has prompted concern on social me-

dia over the territory's shrinking freedoms.

The movie was initially set to be shown in about 30 cinemas in Hong Kong, VII Pillars Entertainment wrote last week.

The Office for Film, Newspaper and Article Administration said it had approved the film and that the arrangements of local cinemas on the screening of approved films "are the commercial decisions of the cinemas concerned." It refused to comment on such arrangements.

A screening initially scheduled for yesterday night in one cinema was canceled due to "technical reasons," the organizer said on Instagram.

AP PHOTO



Journalists film uncovered ruins on Siniyah Island in Umm al-Quwain

THEIR WORLD WAS THE OYSTER

OLDEST PEARL TOWN FOUND IN UAE

JON GAMBRELL, SINIYAH ISLAND, UAE

Asaid this week they have found the oldest pearling town in the Persian Gulf on an island off one of the northern sheikhdoms of the United Arab Emirates.

Artifacts found in this town on Siniyah Island in Umm al-Quwain, likely once home to thousands of people and hundreds of homes, date as far back as the region's pre-Islamic history in the late 6th century. While older pearling towns have been mentioned in historical texts, this represents the first time archaeologists say they have physically found one from this ancient era across the nations of the Persian Gulf.

"This is the oldest example of that kind of very specifically Khaleeji pearling town," said Timothy Power, an associate professor of archaeology at the United Arab Emirates University, using a word that means "Gulf" in Arabic. "It's the spiritual ancestor of towns like Dubai."

The pearling town sits on Siniyah Island, which shields the Khor al-Beida marshlands in Umm al-Quwain, an emirate some 50 kilometers northeast of Dubai along the coast of the Persian Gulf. The island, whose name means

"flashing lights" likely due to the effect of the white-hot sun overhead, already has seen archaeologists discover an ancient Christian monastery dating back as many as 1,400 years.

The town sits directly south of that monastery on one of the curling fingers of the island and stretches across some 12 hectares. There, archaeologists found a variety of homes made of beach rock and lime mortar, ranging from cramped quarters to more sprawling homes with courtyards, suggesting a social stratification, Power said. The site also bears signs of year-round habitation, unlike other pearling operations run in seasonal spots in the region.

"The houses are crammed in there, cheek by jowl," he added. "The key thing there is permanence. People are living there all year around."

In the homes, archaeologists have discovered loose pearls and diving weights, which the free divers used to quickly drop down to the seabed while relying only on their held breath.

The town predates the rise of Islam across the Arabian Peninsula, making its residents likely Christians. Islam's Prophet Muhammad was born around 570 and died in 632 after conquering Mecca in present-day Saudi Arabia.

Umm al-Quwain's Department of Tourism and Archaeology, UAE University, the Italian Archaeological Mission in the emirate and the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University all took part in the excavation. Umm al-Quwain, the least-populated emirate in the UAE, plans to build a visitor's center at the site.

Today, the area near the marshland is more known for the low-cost liquor store at the emirate's Barracuda Beach Resort. In recent months, authorities have demolished a hulking, Soviet-era cargo plane linked to a Russian gunrunner known as the "Merchant of Death" as it builds a bridge to Siniyah Island for a \$675 million real estate development. Authorities hope that development, as well as other building, will grow the emirate's economy.

However, even this ancient site bears lessons for the Emirates.

The story of pearling, which rapidly collapsed after World War I with the introduction of artificial pearls and the Great Depression, holds particular importance in the history of the UAE — particularly as it faces a looming reckoning with another extractive industry.

"You only find one pearl in every 10,000 oyster shells," Power said. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Pakistan A court yesterday granted former Prime Minister Imran Khan a weeklong bail in two new cases in which he faces terrorism charges, officials said. The ruling gave the embattled ousted premier and now popular opposition leader another brief reprieve from arrest. Since his ouster in a no-confidence vote in Parliament last April, the 70-year-old former cricket player turned Islamist politician has become embroiled in a series of legal cases against him, including on terrorism charges and graft while in office.

AP PHOTO



European Union and international donors pledged seven billion euros to help Turkey and Syria in the aftermath of the earthquake that devastated parts of the neighboring countries last month. The European Commission said after the fundraising conference in Brussels that 6.05 billion euros of the total pledge will be going to Turkey, in grants and loans.

AP PHOTO



Finance Asian stock markets followed Wall Street higher yesterday ahead of a Federal Reserve decision on another possible interest rate hike amid worries about global banks. Shanghai, Hong Kong and Seoul advanced. Japanese markets were closed for a holiday. Oil prices declined. Wall Street's benchmark S&P 500 index rose 0.9% on Monday after U.S., European and Japanese central banks announced measures to ease strains on the financial system, including lending more dollars if necessary.