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**Indonesia** Millions of Muslims in Indonesia are gearing up to celebrate the holy month of Ramadan, which is expected to start today, with traditions and ceremonies across the world's most populous Muslim-majority country amid soaring food prices. From colorful torchlight street parades to cleaning relatives' graves and sharing meals with family and friends, every region in the vast Southeast Asian archipelago seems to have its own way to mark the start of Ramadan.



**North Korea** launched multiple cruise missiles toward the sea yesterday, South Korea's military said, three days after the North carried out what it called a simulated nuclear attack on South Korea. The launches are the North's fourth round of weapons tests since the U.S. and South Korean militaries last week began large-scale military drills that the North views as an invasion rehearsal.



**Australia** A jury retired yesterday to consider their verdicts following the six-week trial of a former principal of a Melbourne ultra-Orthodox Jewish girls school accused of molesting three sisters. Malka Leifer, 56, has pleaded not guilty in the Victoria state County Court to 27 sexual offenses that were allegedly committed at the Adass Israel School, where she was head of religion and later principal, and at her Melbourne home and at school camps in the rural Victorian towns of Blampied and Rawson between 2003 and 2007.

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# HO TO UNPACK MACAU IN LISBON

PRAÇA DO COMÉRCIO, LISBON



**Top executives from the six gaming concessionaires, among others, will accompany Ho Iat Seng in an official visit to Portugal from April 18-22, with daily events planned at downtown Lisbon to showcase Macau as tourism destination**

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## SAFETY NET

Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak pledged that the police will safeguard public security amid the tourism revival

RENATO MARQUES



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## BANKING CHINA EVERBRIGHT OPENS BRANCH IN MACAU

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### HONGQIAO AIRPORT TO RESUME INT'L FLIGHTS

Shanghai Hongqiao International Airport will resume international airline services this Sunday, the Shanghai airport operator announced. The resumption of international flights, which includes routes to Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, comes after a three-year suspension in international services. Since March 25, 2022, all international flights and those to Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan were moved to Pudong International Airport. From Sunday, 11 airlines — Shanghai Airlines, Air China, Japan Airlines, All Nippon Airways, Korean Air, Asiana Airlines, Cathay Pacific, Hong Kong Airlines, Air Macau, China Airlines and EVA Air — will provide international flight services at Hongqiao's Terminal 1.

### UM RESEARCH TEAM DEVELOPS ROBOT FOR TREATMENT OF ACUTE PNEUMONIA

A research team led by Wang Ruibing, associate professor in the Institute of Chinese Medical Sciences (ICMS) at the University of Macau, has developed a supramolecularly engineered motorized cell platform as a nanomedicine carrier, based on the excellent inflammatory tropism of macrophages and the catalytic generation of oxygen as the propelling force. When loaded with anti-inflammatory curcumin, "the platform showed a good therapeutic effect against acute pneumonia," the university said in a statement. The research results have been published in the top academic journal, *Advanced Materials*.

### INTERNET PENETRATION RATE INCREASES SLIGHTLY

The number of households with internet access totaled 195,100 in 2022, equivalent to 95.8% of the total households, up by 1.2 percentage points year-on-year, the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) reported. Among the households with internet access, 97.9% used a mobile network while 91.2% used home broadband. Meanwhile, 72.4% (147,400) of the total households had computer equipment (e.g. tablet, laptop), the same proportion as in 2021. The internet penetration rate increased by 1.5 percentage points year-on-year to 90.0%. The penetration rate was the highest among those aged 15-24, at 99.5%, the same as the previous year.

### TRAFFIC RESTRICTIONS FROM MAR. 24 TO APR. 2

The Transport Bureau will conduct maintenance on traffic cones and delineator posts, and traffic will be restricted in non-peak periods from Friday March 24 to Sunday April 2. The following areas will be affected: the Sai Van Bridge, Amizade Avenue, the underpass of Barrier Gate Plaza, Amizade roundabout, and the underpass of Estr. do Reservatorio, a part of the Macau Ferry Terminal flyover near Jai Alai. Traffic on the Sai Van Bridge will be limited for three to five hours starting around 9 a.m. on consecutive days from March 24 to March 26, while traffic on the Amizade Bridge will be limited from March 31 to April 2 for a similar time slot.

# SECURITY OFFICIAL PROMISES GREATER EFFORTS AGAINST CRIME

ANTHONY LAM

**S**ECRETARY for Security Wong Sio Chak pledged that the police departments will safeguard public security amid the tourism revival.

The official admitted that the greater number of tourists will pose higher risks to public safety but refuted the claim that a recent homicide case equated to a decline in security.

He emphasized that alerts must be raised to respond quickly to "any changing situation," but hopes that society will work together to eliminate conflict, which he saw as the cause of instability.

Meanwhile, with the Dr. Sun Yat Sen Municipal Park



now open round-the-clock for tourists, Wong said that all possible resources would be employed to obstruct illicit border crossing activities. Other than asking residents

to stay calm, Wong also asked residents to report suspicious cases to the police.

On parallel trading and dishonest businesses, Wong disclosed that four illegal tour guides had been arrested in a joint operation with the tourism board. The matter will be dealt with in a cross-departmental manner accordingly, the security official said.

On the hazardous material storage in Ka-Ho, Wong disclosed that the plan was the subject of a lawsuit, but his and the secretary for transport and public works' teams were working together to resolve the matter. Restating his blog post, the security official also stated that he saw room to improve fraud prevention efforts.

# LOW VISITOR ARRIVALS IN 2022 ACCOUNTED FOR FEWER TAXI DRIVERS FINED FOR UNLAWFUL BEHAVIOR

RENATO MARQUES

**I**n a year where Macau had reduced visitor numbers due to the pandemic, authorities have nevertheless fined a total of 60 taxi drivers for unlawful behavior. The fines totaled 86,500 patacas, statistics released by the Transport Bureau (DSAT) show.

The figure represents a significant drop (-77% cases) when compared to the previous year when 262 fines were issued, with the total

value amounting to 275,500 patacas.

Concurrently, the number of complaints filed against taxi drivers with the DSAT in 2022 also registered a drop compared to the previous year (-26.4%), although this drop is not so significant when compared to the reduction in the number of fines.

Still, the number of cases reported in 2022 represents an increase of 26.2% when compared year-on-year with



2020, when the total number of complaints was 455.

The same statistics also show that the "attitude of drivers" motivated the large majority of complaints (61.7%).

Although the number of fines applied to taxi drivers reached 60 in 2022, no taxi licenses were cancelled last year. In contrast, two licenses were cancelled in 2021.

In 2020, as a result of 455 complaints, six taxi driver licenses were revoked, and the number of fines reached 1,167, with the total fines amounting to 1.2 million patacas.

# 14-YEAR-OLD STUDENT FALLS FROM SCHOOL BUILDING

STAFF REPORTER

**A** 14-year-old female student at Ilha Verde Secondary School is believed to have fallen from a building yesterday afternoon.

The school said that the incident happened during its lunch break.

The Fire Services Bureau received the report

from school staff yesterday around 1:30 p.m. The female student was found lying on the ground playground and has been evaluated for a forehead laceration, left knee contusion, left calf scratch, and suspected right calf fracture. She was conscious on the way to Conde S. Januário Hospital.

The Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEDJ) and Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) have been informed of the incident.

The DSEDJ commenced its crisis incident handling protocol after receiving notice of the incident to coordinate with the school and counseling ins-

titution. Support was provided to the school in the form of a leadership, supervisory, and counseling teams to follow up and support the crisis incident handling mechanism and provide support to parents, teachers, and students, including emotional counseling.

The DSEDJ calls for

students to refer to trusted contacts such as parents, teachers, friends, and professional counselors for support, should they experience distress or difficulty.

The IAS says that residents should take care to manage the emotions of their families, friends, and relatives, as well as their own.

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# CE to visit Portugal, Brussels next month

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng will visit Portugal from April 18 to 22 on a visit that will be restricted to Portugal's capital city, Lisbon, according to official information from the Government Information Bureau (GCS).

This will be the first time that Ho Iat Seng has visited Lisbon since he took office as the CE in late December 2020.

According to TDM radio, while in Portugal, the CE will meet the Portuguese President, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, Prime Minister António Costa, Foreign Affairs Minister João Cravinho as well as the Chinese ambassador in Lisbon, among other scheduled visits that also include a meeting with local students attending universities in Lisbon.

The CE will lead a delegation comprising several members of the government, including the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosá-



rio, and representatives across various economic interests and business sectors.

The same source also noted that the main focus of the visit will be to publicize opportunities for foreign investment in the Greater Bay Area and particularly to the Guangdong-Macau In-depth

Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

The delegation will include representatives from the six gaming concessionaires, who will participate in a promotional event from the Macao Government Tourism Office at Praça do Comércio, in downtown Lisbon.

This event will be hosted be-

tween April 15 and 22 and will include representatives from the Cultural Affairs Bureau.

The event includes a light projection show featuring Macau that will be displayed on the façades of the Praça do Comércio for the week, with four presentations per night.

Ho previously noted that the local government would pay a "courtesy visit to the European Commission" in Brussels to promote collaboration across trade, science and technology, tourism and movement across borders between Macau and countries within the European Union.

Although the CE will be received in Lisbon as a "head of state," the same is not expected to occur in Brussels, Portuguese magazine "Comunidades" (Communities) reported, citing a source close to government.

The same source revealed that it would be "almost impossible" that the CE would be received by the president of the European Council, Charles Michel, or even by the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen. The only possibility on the table remaining at this point is for Ho to meet with the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrel – however, this has yet to be confirmed.

## Sports bureau has no plan to revamp shooting range

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE Macau International Shooting Range will not be revamped to host more competitions, the Sports Bureau (ID) announced in response to a lawmaker inquiry.

A written inquiry from lawmaker Leong Sun Iok, questioned whether it was reasonable to allow only particular sports associations to book or rent facilities at the shooting range.

Leong also questioned the suitability of the facility for other types of shooting sports, given it was built specially for the 4th East Asian Games.

He also questioned why athletes of other shooting sports could not use the shooting range for

practice, when auxiliary facilities and venues at the shooting range are open to be booked for other sports.

The lawmaker had concerns that if athletes and enthusiasts do not have enough opportunities and access to facilities to practice, this will eventually impact the city's international performance in the sports.

Acting president Lam Lin Kio of the ID replied that the shooting range was built in compliance with the safety regulations promulgated by the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF).

As such, the shooting range is only suitable for ISSF-sanctioned 10m, 25m and 50m shooting practices and competitions. For

the time being, the venue will not be upgraded to host non-ISSF events.

Lam added that the sport requires actual guns and bullets, which are subject to rigorous standards on storage and delivery. She disclosed that the ID had been sponsoring costs for delivery, which must be conducted by the police.

The acting president further explained that the auxiliary venues at the shooting range were sometimes rented to dance sport and wushu athletes "after satisfying the needs of the shooting sport."

She pledged that should land become available in the future, additional facilities will be allotted to other types of sports.



### FINANCE

## CHINA EVERBRIGHT OPENS BRANCH IN MACAU

STAFF REPORTER

**C**HINA Everbright Bank yesterday opened its Macau branch with aims to "develop and serve Macau" and contribute to the development of the city's modern finance.

The Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng met with the chairman of the Board of Directors of China Everbright Ltd and China Everbright Bank, Wang Jiang and his delegation, in which both parties exchanged views on the group's targeted contribution to the development of Macau's financial sector.

Ho indicated that the the financial industry supports the overall economic development, therefore, "the stability of the financial market is very important for Macau."

He hopes that the China

Everbright Bank will contribute to the financial development of Macau, namely the creation of the stock market and securities.

Meanwhile, Wang Jiang said that the group will take the opening of the Macau Branch as an opportunity to continue to "take root in Macau, build Macau and serve Macau," as well as seize the opportunity alongside the development of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone.

Headquartered in Beijing, China Everbright Bank is one of 12 Chinese joint-stock commercial bank. It is a national joint-stock commercial bank approved by the State Council and approved by the People's Bank of China. The SAR approved its bid to run banking services in the city in July 2022.



# TOURISM OFFICIAL INTRODUCES MACAU TO ZHEJIANG

ANTHONY LAM

**D**EPUTY director Ricky Hoi of the local tourism board has highlighted Macau's potential as a destination for study tours to a symposium in Zhejiang Province.

The tourism official recently made a trip to Shaoxing City to attend the symposium, which was held to discuss the findings of a report on the conditions of Zhejiang's study tours. Similar to academic field trips, study tours are conducted by students, academics or researchers who wish to engage in hands-on education, research and observation.

At the symposium, the tourism official said that talent cultivation, product research and development, and heightening industries' awareness are key to Macau's study tours.

Hoi also exchanged views with leaders from various Chinese cities.

The Chief Executive made particular mention of Macau's efforts to develop its study tours in his Policy Address this year. Of note to the tourism board was the fact that the first



Ridley Hoi (center)

draft of research on Macau's study tour prospects commissioned to the China Tourism Academy is now ready. Further steps to improve Macau's study tours will be made based on this first draft, the tourism board added.

Last year, the tourism board operated the "Stay, Dine and See Macao" local tour initiative, which aimed to support

the tourism industry amid Covid-19 travel restrictions. As part of this, the option of study tours was added at a later stage of the initiative. Each local student was sponsored with MOP280, while non-local students were eligible for the tours but not the sponsorship.

Meanwhile, a local entity called Macau International Research and Study Travel As-

sociation was established on Jan. 13, 2022, as announced by the Public Notary Office. The entity's charter states that the association's purpose is to "provide services for the industry and members through communication, consultation, training, public service platform and other forms around the export of Macau's culture."

## ECONOMY GBA'S GDP TOTALS RMB13T IN 2022

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE gross domestic product (GDP) in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) exceeded RMB13 trillion last year.

The data from the Bureau of Statistics of Guangdong Province shows that the 2022 GDP in the nine mainland cities of the GBA amounted to RMB10 trillion. According to the Census and Statistics Department in the Hong Kong SAR, the GDP in Hong Kong was HKD2.8 trillion in 2022. The figure for Macau was around MOP177 billion. Collectively, these metrics add up to a GDP of over RMB13 trillion in the GBA.

At the end of 2022, the governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau jointly held the Global Investment Promotion Conference. 853 cooperation projects were signed on the spot, with a total investment of RMB2.5 trillion.

The Guangdong government mentioned in its government work report at the beginning of this year that its socio-economic development goal in 2023 is to achieve more than 5% of economic growth.

The targets set are mostly higher than this figure for the nine mainland cities in the GBA. The 2023 economic growth in Hong Kong is projected to increase 3.5% to 5.5%, while some institutions suggest that Macau's economy will also rebound this year.

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# Chui Sai Cheong appointed to the Council of MPU

RENATO MARQUES

**C**HUI Sai Cheong, the vice president of the Legislative Assembly (AL) and older brother of the former Chief Executive (Chui Sai On), has been appointed by the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong, to preside over the Council of Macao Polytechnic University (MPU). Chui Sai Cheong will replace former president Lei Heong Iok.

The government reappointed the director of Macao Daily News, Lok Po, as vice president of the Council. New members were also appointed to the Council, namely Leong Su Sam, Chan Ka Leong, Leonel Alves, Sio Hon Pan, Chan Hong (former lawmaker), Lao Wa Chi and Carlos André.

All the appointments are valid for a period of three years from April 1, 2023.

The Council is the body

responsible for guiding the development of the University. From the nine members previously appointed by the government, only Chui Sai Cheong and Lok Po were retained, with Chui moving from the role of a regular member to the role

of president.

According to the same dispatch from Ao Ieong in the government's official gazette, Chui Sai Cheong is entitled to a monthly wage of 50,050 patacas, while Lok Po will earn some 25,025 patacas.



Chui Sai Cheong

# Thinktank: Reform of HK, Macau office sets milestone for SARs' stability

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE reform of the central leadership structure for Hong Kong and Macau affairs highlights the importance of the work on both SARs' affairs in national strategy, said Tu Haiming, Hong Kong member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

In an opinion piece for media outlet China Daily, Tu said that the move is slated to "go a long way to pooling strength from all sides to ensure the full and accurate implementation of 'One country, two systems', setting a milestone in the course of maintaining long-term prosperity and stability in Hong Kong and Macau."

Just a few days after the conclusion of China's Two Sessions, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council has established the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office of the Central Committee and will no longer retain the separate Hong Kong and Macau

Affairs Office of the State Council.

The changes imply the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office will answer to the party's Central Committee instead of the State Council, according to an institutional reform proposal.

"In a nutshell, the central authorities' work on Hong Kong and Macau affairs is a matter of great national significance; and it makes perfect sense for the central leadership to put in more effort and pay more attention to this area," said Tu, who is also the chairman of Hong Kong New Era Development Thinktank.

The reform plan emphasizes "investigation, research, coordination and supervision" in describing the responsibilities of the Hong Kong and Macao Work Office of the CPC Central Committee. In particular, to ensure effective "coordination and supervision," there is a need for the Party to strengthen its leadership over Hong Kong and Macau.

Therefore, Tu noted that although Hong Kong and Macau have their own advantages, "they are small economies that need



Tu Haiming delivers a speech at the second plenary meeting of the third session of the 13th CPPCC National Committee, Beijing, 2020

the strong support of the motherland in their socioeconomic development."

"The establishment of the Hong Kong and Macao Work Office of the CPC Central Commit-

tee will surely benefit the practice of 'One country, two systems' and the development of Hong Kong and Macau."


Tu said that businesses from Hong Kong and Macau may face

challenges when entering the mainland market. Yet, with the new work office in place, "companies from the two SARs will be given greater support in tapping into the mainland market."

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STATE VISIT

# PUTIN HOSTS XI IN THE KREMLIN WITH IMPERIAL PALACE PAGEANTRY

VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV,  
MOSCOW

**R**USSIA and China showcased their “no-limits friendship” during a pomp-laden Kremlin ceremony intended to further cement ties amid the fighting in Ukraine.

After hosting Chinese leader Xi Jinping over a seven-course private dinner for 4½ hours earlier this week, Russian President Vladimir Putin greeted him in the old imperial palace for talks involving top officials from both countries.

Xi walked slowly up the opulent red-carpeted staircase of the Grand Kremlin Palace as guards in 19th century-style parade uniforms snapped to attention.

Putin was waiting to greet the Chinese leader in St. George's hall where walls are covered by white-marble plaques with gold engravings of the names of military units and soldiers awarded the order of St. George, a top military award established by Catherine the Great.

In a tightly choreographed ceremony filled with imperial grandeur, the two leaders entered the huge chandelied room from opposite sides and shook hands in the middle to the sound of the Russian and Chinese national anthems.

They walked past a lineup of Russian and Chinese officials to sit down for talks. Putin and Xi both wore black suits and dark



red ties.

The pageantry reflected the importance of Xi's three-day visit to Russia that gave a strong political boost to Putin.

After the talks, Putin and Xi issued joint declarations pledging to further bolster their “strategic cooperation,” develop cooperation in energy, high-tech industries and other spheres and expand the use of their currencies in mutual trade to reduce dependence on the West.

They said they would develop military cooperation and conduct

more joint sea and air patrols, but there was no mention of any prospective Chinese weapons supplies to Russia that the U.S. and other Western allies feared.

Putin and Xi made long statements after the talks to a selected audience of officials and reporters from their pools. They didn't take questions.

Putin hailed China's proposals for a political settlement and a cease-fire in Ukraine, saying that it could serve as a basis for a peaceful settlement “once the West and Kyiv are ready for it.” The U.S.

has criticized Beijing's plan as a move intended to allow Russia to shore up its gains.

Putin and Xi wrapped up the day with a state dinner in the 15th-century Palace of Facets that served as a banquet hall for the czars. They again exchanged pledges of expanding the countries' “comprehensive partnership” at a table next to a frescoed wall before the audience of top officials.

Putin cited a long quote from China's classical Book of Changes about friendship capable of overcoming any obstacles that the

interpreter failed to fully grasp. He raised a glass with a toast wishing good health to Xi and prosperity for the two countries and their peoples, ending it with ‘Ganbei,’ the Chinese equivalent of ‘cheers.’ Xi responded in kind.

After hosting Xi in the Kremlin for six hours, Putin accompanied him down the grand staircase.

“We are now witnessing the changes that haven't been seen for more than a century, and we are pushing them together,” Xi told Putin through an interpreter as they stood in the Kremlin's doorway. “Take care, dear friend!”

They shook hands, and Putin stood on the pavement for a moment, waving his hand as Xi's limo drove away.

Before the Kremlin talks, Xi met with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin. Unlike them, Russian and Chinese officials who attended the talks wore medical masks — a reminder of the COVID-19 pandemic that halted mutual visits.

Xi briefly referred to it, telling Mishustin he was happy to be back in Moscow after a long break because of the pandemic. He said that he invited Putin over Monday's dinner to visit China later this year to attend a top-level meeting of China's Belt and Road regional initiative.

Kremlin foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov said Putin could make the trip but didn't give the date.

Xi stayed at a brand-new Chinese-owned Soluxe Hotel set in a lavish riverside park in northern Moscow that features trees and plants from all over China. He used a Chinese-made Hongqi limousine for driving around Moscow. **MDT/AP**

SOUTH CHINA SEA

# Marcos defends US military presence, which Beijing opposes

**P**RESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. yesterday defended his decision to allow a larger United States military presence in the country as vital to territorial defense despite China's fierce opposition and warning that it would “drag the Philippines into the abyss of geopolitical strife.”

The Marcos administration announced in early February that it would allow rotating batches of American forces to indefinitely stay in four more Philippine military camps in addition to five local bases earlier designated under a 2014 defense pact of the longtime treaty allies.

Marcos said the four



new sites would be announced soon and they include areas in the northern Philippines. That location has infuriated Chinese officials because it would provide U.S. forces a staging ground close to southern China and Taiwan.

The Biden administration has been strengthening an arc of military alliances in the Indo-Pacific to better counter China, including in any future confrontation over Taiwan. America's moves dovetail with Philippine efforts to shore up its

territorial defense amid a long-seething dispute mainly with China in the South China Sea.

Aside from the northern and southern Philippines, Marcos told a news conference that under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, U.S. forces would also be allowed to stay in western Palawan province, which faces the South China Sea. He underscored the moves were meant to boost the country's coastal defense and added in reply to a question that opposition to the U.S. military presence by some local Filipino officials had been overcome.

“We explained to them

why it was important that we have that and why it will actually be good for their province,” Marcos said, adding most of those who had objections had come around “to support the idea of an EDCA site in their province.”

Governor Manuel Mamba of northern Cagayan province, where American forces may be allowed to stay with their weapons in up to two Philippine military areas, said Marcos has the prerogative to make the decision. But added he remained opposed to allowing the Americans to base in Cagayan, which lies across a sea border from southern China and Taiwan, because that

could turn his province into a key target of the Chinese military if an armed conflict involving the U.S. military breaks out over Taiwan.

“It is the president's call, not mine,” Mamba told The Associated Press. “But I maintain my stand against any foreign forces stationed in my province. Still, I am against EDCA sites in my province.”

Marcos spoke to reporters after delivering a speech at an army anniversary ceremony where he asked troops to prepare to face potential external threats after a half-century battle against communist rebels that he said “is coming to an end.” **MDT/AP**

HANNA ARHIROVA, KYIV

ANALYSIS

# China, Japan leaders end visits to warring capitals

**U**KRAINE faced more Russian drone attacks yesterday that killed at least three people shortly after Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida left Kyiv.

Kishida was back in Poland yesterday, according to Japan's Kyodo News, and is expected to return to Japan today.

Kishida's surprise visit to the Ukrainian capital "stole some of the attention" from Chinese leader Xi Jinping's trip to Moscow where he promoted Beijing's peace proposal for Ukraine, which Western nations have already dismissed. Xi left Moscow yesterday.

The rival visits by Xi and Kishida, about 800 kilometers apart, highlighted how countries are lining up behind Moscow or Kyiv during the nearly 13-month-old war. Kishida, who will chair the Group of Seven summit in May, became the group's last member to visit Ukraine and meet President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, after paying tribute to those killed in Bucha, a town that became a symbol of Russian atrocities against civilians.

Xi's visit gave a strong political boost to Russian President Vladimir Putin just days after the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for the Russian leader on charges of alleged involvement in abductions of thousands of children from Ukraine.

In a joint statement, Russia and China emphasized the need to "respect legitimate security concerns of all countries" to settle the conflict, echoing Moscow's argument that it sent in troops to prevent the U.S. and its NATO allies from turning the country into an anti-Russian bulwark.

Kishida called Russia's invasion a "disgrace that undermines the foundations of the

AP PHOTO



Leaving Moscow: President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin talk to each after their dinner at The Palace of the Facets in the Moscow Kremlin

international legal order" and pledged to "continue to support Ukraine until peace is back on the beautiful Ukrainian lands."

## XI, PUTIN BLAME NATO

The Russia-China front against the West was a prominent theme of Xi's visit. Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov accused NATO of seeking to become the world's

dominant military force. "That is why we are expanding our cooperation with China, including in the security sphere," he said.

After the talks, Putin and Xi issued joint declarations pledging to further bolster their "strategic cooperation," develop cooperation in energy, high-tech industries and other spheres and expand the use of their currencies in mutual trade to reduce dependence on the West.

They said they would develop military cooperation and conduct more joint sea and air patrols, but there was no mention of Chinese weapon supplies to Russia, a prospect that the U.S. and other Western allies feared. Xi and Putin announced no major progress toward implementing the Chinese peace deal, although the Russian leader said it could be a basis for ending the fighting when the West is ready.

Putin is keen to show he has a heavyweight ally and market for Russian energy products under Western sanctions. He and Xi signed agreements on economic cooperation, noting Russian-Chinese trade rose by 30% last year to \$185 billion and is expected to top \$200 billion this year.

Russia stands "ready to meet the Chinese economy's growing demand for energy resources" by boosting deliveries of oil and gas, he said, while listing other areas of cooperation, including aircraft and shipbuilding industries and other high-tech sectors.

Further contacts are planned. Xi said he invited Putin to China this year to discuss a regional initiative that seeks to extend Beijing's influence through economic cooperation.

After meeting Kishida, Zelenskyy told reporters his team had sent his own peace formula to China but hasn't heard back, adding that there were "some signals, but nothing concrete about the possibility of a dialogue."

## KISHIDA CONDEMNS RUSSIAN "CRUELTY"

Hours before Xi and Putin dined at a state dinner in glittering Kremlin opulence, Kishida laid flowers at a church in Bucha for the town's victims.

"Upon this visit to Bucha, I feel a strong resentment against cruelty," Kishida said. "I would like to represent the people in Japan, and express my deepest condolences to those who lost

their loved ones, were injured as a result of this cruel act."

Japan's top government spokesman said yesterday that Kishida's visit to Ukraine was "very meaningful" for Japan's future support for that country, while taking a leadership role as president of the Group of Seven nations in responding to the issue.

"Through Prime Minister Kishida's visit to Ukraine, Japan was able to show not only to other members of the G-7 but also the international society including the Global South (nations) its determination to defend the rules-based international society," he said.

Matsuno noted that the China-Russia summit took place almost at the same time as Kishida's visit to Ukraine, and said "President Xi (Jinping)'s visit to Russia only underscored the unwavering ties between China and Russia despite Russia's invasion of Ukraine."

## DRONE ATTACKS CONTINUE

The Ukrainian military's General Staff said that Russia struck Ukraine with Iranian-made Shahed exploding drones.

It said air defenses downed 16 of the 21 drones launched by Russia. The Kyiv military administration said that eight of the drones were downed near the Ukrainian capital.

A high school and two dormitories were partially destroyed in an overnight drone attack in the city of Rzhyshev, in Ukraine's north-central Kyiv province, local officials said Wednesday morning. "As of 7 a.m., three people were killed, two people were wounded and one person was rescued. There are probably four people under the rubble," the Ukraine's State Emergency Service reported.

In neighboring Zhytomyr province exploding drones damaged infrastructure facilities, according to regional Gov. Vitalii Bunechko. He said Ukrainian air defenses shot down three drones.

Mikhail Razvozhayev, the Moscow-appointed head of the Black Sea port of Sevastopol, said the Russian military has fended off a drone attack on the main harbor early Wednesday.

Razvozhayev said the Russian navy destroyed three unmanned sea drones that attempted to attack Sevastopol that serves as the main base for Russia's Black Sea Fleet. He said that Russian warships weren't damaged in the attack, but added that several civilian facilities were slightly damaged when the drones were hit and exploded, shattering windows in several buildings near the harbor. He said there were no injuries. Ukrainian officials didn't claim responsibility for the attacks. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv

UK

# Boris Johnson faces high-stakes grilling over 'partygate'

JILL LAWLESS, LONDON

**B**ORIS Johnson is back where he likes to be: at the center of attention. But he's not so happy about the reason.

Britain's former prime minister faces a grilling today [Macau time] by a committee of lawmakers over whether he misled Parliament about rule-breaking parties in government buildings during the coronavirus pandemic.

In a statement, a bullish Johnson said "the evidence conclusively shows that I did not knowingly or recklessly mislead Parliament."

"The committee has produced not a shred of evidence to show that I have," he said.

Expected to last several hours, the hearing is a moment of peril for a politician whose career has been a roller coaster of scandals and comebacks. If the House of Commons Committee of Privileges concludes Johnson lied deliberately, he could be suspended or even lose his seat in Parliament.

That would likely end hopes of one more comeback for the 58-year-old politician, who led the Conservative Party to a landslide victory in 2019 but was forced out by his own party in July 2022 after getting mired in scandals over money, ethics and judgment.



In an interim report this month, the committee — made up of Conservative and opposition lawmakers — said evidence strongly suggested that it would have been "obvious" to Johnson that gatherings in his Downing Street offices in 2020 and 2021 broke COVID-19 lockdown rules.

Johnson acknowledged on Tuesday that his repeated reassurances to Parliament that the rules were followed at all times "did not turn out to be correct." But he said he "did not intentionally or recklessly mislead" lawmakers.

In a dossier of written evidence, Johnson said it never occurred to him that the ga-

therings — which variously included cake, wine, cheese and a "secret Santa" festive gift exchange — broke the restrictions on socializing that his own government had imposed on the country.

He said he "honestly believed" the five events he attended, including a send-off for a staffer and his own surprise birthday party, were "lawful work gatherings."

"No cake was eaten, and no one even sang 'Happy Birthday,'" he said of the June 19, 2020, celebration.

Police eventually issued 126 fines over the late-night soirees, boozy parties and "wine time Fridays," including one to Johnson, and the

scandal helped hasten the end of premiership.

Revelations about the gatherings sparked anger among Britons who had followed rules imposed to curb the spread of the coronavirus, unable to visit friends and family or even say goodbye to dying relatives in hospitals.

Johnson said he was assured by "trusted advisers" that no rules had been broken — assurances that turned out to be wrong. He said he was later "genuinely shocked" by the rule-breaking uncovered by police and by senior civil servant Sue Gray, who led an investigation into "partygate."

Johnson and his supporters have also questioned the impartiality of Gray, because she has now accepted a job as chief of staff to the leader of the opposition Labour Party.

If the committee finds Johnson in contempt, it could recommend punishments ranging from an oral apology to suspension from Parliament, though any punishment would have to be approved by the whole House of Commons.

A suspension of 10 days or more would allow his constituents in the suburban London seat of Uxbridge and South Ruislip to petition for a special election to replace Johnson as a member of Parliament. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1983: REAGAN LAUNCHES COLD WAR INTO SPACE



President Reagan has unveiled plans to combat nuclear war in space.

The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) proposes a defensive shield, using laser or particle beam technology to "intercept and destroy" incoming missiles as they travel through the stars.

Defense analysts have described it as the first major attempt to move away from the 30 year-old Cold War strategy of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) - where the threat of nuclear attack acts as a deterrent.

In a televised address from the White House the US leader said: "We seek neither military superiority nor political advantage. Our only purpose - one all people share - is to search for ways to avert the danger of nuclear war."

Speaking just half an hour after the House of Representatives (HOR) had rejected the Republican Party's demands for 10% increases in defence spending, President Reagan attempted to justify his \$2 trillion, five-year military spending plans.

In the first major congressional revolt against Mr Reagan's economic policies the HoR have voted in Democrat proposals to reduce the Republican budget by more than half.

The President said: "They're the same kind that led the democracies to neglect their defences in the 1930s and invited the tragedy of World War II."

Senior White House aide Michael Deaver reported a positive reaction to Mr Reagan's scheme: "He has had the most favorable response to any speech since he was elected President."

Critics argue SDI contravenes the Soviet-American Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972.

Article V of the treaty states: "Each party undertakes not to develop, test or deploy anti-ballistic missile systems or components."

President Reagan has stressed SDI does not entail the actual development of a defensive shield, but is a programme for research and development.

Courtesy BBC News

GREECE

# After rail disaster, trains gradually restart

**T**RAIN services in Greece resumed yesterday for the first time since a deadly rail disaster three weeks ago, and just a day after the embattled conservative prime minister announced an early election for May.

The Feb. 28 head-on collision, the deadliest in the country's history, killed 57 people and left dozens injured, with nine still hospitalized.

Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, whose center-right government has been struggling to regain its footing after the crash, said

yesterday he would hold the election in May a month later than initially expected but didn't give an exact date.

Greece must hold an election by July when the government's term expires.

Since the crash, the government's lead in opinion polls has roughly halved to as little as three points over its main left-wing rival.

"It was a tragedy that should never have happened. It is inconceivable to think that in Greece in 2023 there could be two trains on the same track, traveling



in opposite directions, and that no one realized it," Mitsotakis said in the interview

with private Alpha television where he discussed the election date. **MDT/AP**

## IN CONTEXT

Reagan's SDI became known as "Star Wars" - after the George Lucas film.

President Andropov of the USSR was highly critical of the plan, saying it violated the 1972 ABM Treaty and there was little difference between building up weapons for purportedly defensive or offensive purposes.

The Democrats in the US - and even some Republicans - claimed Reagan's initiative was an expensive and unfeasible diversion from his administration's domestic failures.

SDI signalled a new round in the Arms Race and a worsening of the relationship between the US and the USSR.

The increasing financial strain it placed the Soviet Union under contributed to the break up of the regime.

SDI was abandoned in 1993 and the department was renamed the Ballistic Missile Defence organisation.



**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You will have to put those you live with in their place if they try to interfere with your work. You are likely to reveal information unintentionally.

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20

Turn things around, make sure that they do their share. Plan a day of enjoyment with them. Talk to an older, established individual about your present situation.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21

Be prepared to take advantage of your good fortune. Coworkers may not be on your side. Restrictions may be difficult for you to live with.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You could be disillusioned if you let relative in on your emotional thoughts. Be sure that the person you're drawn to is not already involved.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Try to curb your habits, or you could find yourself in an awkward financial position. Problems with your partner are apparent. Discord may arise with someone you're close to.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22

This is a great day for a family outing or just a drive. You will be entertained and intrigued by the logic foreigners possess. Opportunities to get ahead are evident.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Your efforts will be rewarded handsomely. Favors will be offered readily. Don't jump the gun; you may find yourself getting angry at the wrong person.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21

New projects may lead you into a dead end. Stick to your own projects and by the end of the day you'll shine. Refrain from arguing with your mate.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Things may not be as harmonious as you would like with colleagues or employers today. Disharmony will result in a lowered vitality. Stress may result in minor illness.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Be sure to look into travel opportunities that will provide you with mental stimulation. You need to look into new philosophies.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You will be viewed as a sensitive, compassionate individual and others will ask you for advice. Don't let those close to you get under your skin. Only bite off what you can chew.

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20

This is a great day to mingle with people you would like to impress. You can meet friends who will let you know how valuable you are. You will benefit by taking care of other people's concerns.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

**EASY**

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

**EASY+**

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

**MEDIUM**

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

**HARD**

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

**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	4	14	cloudy
Changchun	-4	3	fine
Chengdu	10	15	rain
Chongqing	15	18	rain
Fuzhou	19	27	rain
Guangzhou	22	26	rain
Guiyang	11	18	showers
Haikou	22	35	cloudy
Hangzhou	13	15	rain
Harbin	-4	3	fine
Hefei	10	14	rain
Nanjing	11	13	rain
Shanghai	12	14	overcast
Taipei	19	25	overcast
Wuhan	12	16	rain
Hong Kong	23	27	overcast
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	7	9	rain
Frankfurt	12	14	rain
Paris	11	17	rain
London	8	13	rain
New York	8	18	rain

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Aquatic mammal; 6- Result; 11- \_\_\_ Aviv; 14- Unfettered; 15- Having some prominent blood vessels; 16- Doctor's org.; 17- Compact; 18- Point in question; 19- Scotland Yard div.; 20- Conduit; 22- Interval of time; 24- Tickler of the ivories; 28- Add sugar; 30- Brought to ruin; 31- Shed \_\_\_; 32- Jargon; 33- Disposal sale; 37- With it; 38- Bellowing; 39- One of the Gershwins; 40- Rare metallic element; 43- Impressionist Edgar; 45- Like ears; 46- Tranquil; 47- Winter melons; 50- Scoffed; 51- Toothbrush brand; 52- Breakfast chain, for short; 53- Roadie's load; 54- Pass over; 57- Tennis champ Chris; 62- Dip in liquid; 63- Noted Civil War biography; 64- Femme fatale; 65- Endeavor; 66- Klondike territory; 67- Fortune-telling cards;

DOWN 1- Ancient; 2- Water tester; 3- Freight weight; 4- Start of something?; 5- Convex fluting; 6- Kick out; 7- Treehouse used by birds; 8- Lisa, to Bart, briefly; 9- Burma's first prime minister; 10- Spectacles or goggles; 11- Unsaid; 12- "South Pacific" hero; 13- Weighted down; 21- Employ, utilise; 23- Jealous wife of myth; 24- Obnoxiously forward; 25- Bay; 26- Make fit; 27- Smoking alternative; 28- Water vapor; 29- Put on; 31- One way to think; 33- Weeps; 34- Chad neighbor; 35- Large wading bird; 36- Alleviated; 38- "Dancing Queen" group; 41- Airline to Tel Aviv; 42- Heist; 43- Most profound; 44- Poetic conjunction; 46- \_\_\_-Cone; 47- Seashore; 48- Knight wear; 49- Mawkish; 50- Luster; 52- Logical beginning?; 55- Romanian monetary unit; 56- Sort; 58- By way of; 59- Drop the ball; 60- Stutz contemporary; 61- Big bang cause;

**Yesterday's solution**

S	A	T	U	P	T	I	M	E	R	N	A	H
U	S	A	G	E	R	A	S	E	E	P	A	
R	I	G	H	T	H	A	T	E	D	A	N	
M	A	S	S	A	G	E	D	A	R	E	D	
A	S	P	E	N	S	G	R	A	S	S		
O	W	I	N	G		F	R	I	G	H	T	P
R	A	T		O	R	A	T	E		A	T	O
L	I	N	E	L	E	G	A	N	T		G	O
S	E	A	S	H	O	R	E					
C	I	T	A	D	E	L						
E	V	A	D	E								
O	O	S										
A	R	T										
R	Y	E										

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PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731	
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AP PHOTO



The Hebrew Bible "Codex Sassoon", that dates back more than 1,000 years, on display during a media preview of Sotheby's auction, in London

## AUCTIONS

# SOTHEBY'S HOPES FOR RECORD SALE OF ANCIENT HEBREW BIBLE

ILAN BEN ZION, JERUSALEM

ONE of the oldest surviving biblical manuscripts, a nearly complete 1,100-year-old Hebrew Bible, could soon be yours — for a cool \$30 million.

The Codex Sassoon, a leather-bound, handwritten parchment tome containing almost the entirety of the Hebrew Bible, is set to go on the block at Sotheby's in New York in May. Its anticipated sale speaks to the still bullish market for art, antiquities and ancient manuscripts even in a worldwide bear economy.

Sotheby's is drumming up interest in hopes of enticing institutions and collectors to bite. It has put the price tag at an eye-watering \$30 million to \$50 million.

Yesterday, Tel Aviv's ANU Museum of the Jewish People opened a week-long exhibition of the manuscript, part of a whirlwind worldwide tour of the artifact in the United Kingdom, Israel and the United States before its expected sale.

"There are three ancient Hebrew Bibles from this period," said Yosef Ofer, a professor of Bible studies at Israel's Bar Ilan University: the Codex Sassoon and Aleppo Codex from the 10th century, and the Leningrad Codex, from the early 11th century.

Only the Dead Sea Scrolls and a handful of fragmentary early medieval texts are older, and "an entire Hebrew Bible is relatively

rare," he said.

Starting a few centuries before the Codex Sassoon's creation, Jewish scholars known as Masoretes started codifying oral traditions of how to properly spell, pronounce, punctuate and chant the words of Judaism's holiest book. Unlike Torah scrolls, where the Hebrew letters are devoid of vowels and punctuation, these manuscripts contained extensive annotation instructing readers how to recite the words correctly.

Precisely where and when the Codex Sassoon was made remains uncertain. Sharon Liberman Mintz, a senior Judaica specialist at Sotheby's, said that radiocarbon dating of the parchment gave an estimated date of 880 to 960. The codex's writing style suggests its creator was an unspecified early 10th-century scribe in Egypt or the Levant.

"It's like the emergence of the biblical text as we know it today," Mintz said. "It's so foundational not only for Judaism, but also for world culture."

Though it's certainly ancient and rare, scholars say the Codex Sassoon doesn't match the pedigree and quality of its contemporary — the Aleppo Codex.

"Any Masoretic scholar in their right mind would take the Aleppo Codex over the Sassoon Codex, without any regret or hesitation,"

said Kim Phillips, a Bible expert at the Cambridge University Library. He said the scribal quality was "surprisingly sloppy" compared to its counterpart.

The Aleppo Codex, dated to around 930, has been considered the gold standard of the Masoretic Bibles for around 1,000 years. The Codex Sassoon's margins contain an annotation from a later scholar who says he checked its text against the Aleppo Codex — referring to the manuscript by the Arabic title a-Taj, "the Crown."

## The Codex Sassoon's writing style suggests its creator was an unspecified early 10th-century scribe in Egypt or the Levant

"The Aleppo Codex is more precise than the Sassoon Codex, there's no doubt," Ofer said. "But because it's missing (a third of its pages), in those parts that are absent, there is great significance to this manuscript." The Codex Sassoon's 792 pages make up around 92% of the Hebrew Bible.

These venerable manuscripts were protected and treasured by Syrian Jewish communities for centuries until the 20th century. How the Sassoon Codex survived

the ages is an epic in its own right.

A note on the manuscript attest to its owners in centuries past: A man named Khalaf ben Abraham gave it to Isaac ben Ezekiel al-Attar, who gave it to his sons Ezekiel and Maimon.

It later migrated east to the town of Makisin in what's today northeast Syria, where it was dedicated to a synagogue in the 13th century. Sometime in the following decades, the synagogue was destroyed and the codex entrusted to Salama ibn Abi al-Fakhr until the synagogue was rebuilt.

It never was rebuilt, but the book survived.

Its whereabouts for the next 500 years remain uncertain until it resurfaced in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1929, and was bought by a legendary collector of Jewish manuscripts whose name it still bears.

David Solomon Sassoon was a Bombay-born son of an Iraqi Jewish business magnate who filled his London home with a massive collection of Jewish manuscripts.

"His capacity was astounding, both in terms of number but also in terms of what he was able to find," said Raquel Ukeles, head of collections at Israel's National Library.

Sassoon roved across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa buying up old books, and by his

death in 1942, he had amassed over 1,200 manuscripts.

Sassoon's estate was broken up after he died and the codex was sold by Sotheby's in Zurich in 1978 to the British Rail Pension Fund, which had started investing in art several years earlier, for around \$320,000.

The pension fund flipped the Codex Sassoon 11 years later for 10 times its hammer price. Jacqui Safra, a banker and art collector, bought it in 1989 for \$3.19 million and is now putting it up for auction.

If the target price is realized, the Codex Sassoon could not only eclipse the most expensive Jewish document ever sold — the 2021 sale of the Luzzatto Machzor, a 14th-century prayerbook, for \$8.3 million. It also could break the record for the priciest historical document ever sold at public auction. That honor is currently held by a 1787 copy of the U.S. Constitution sold in 2021 for \$43 million.

Yoel Finkelman, a former curator of Judaica at Israel's National Library, said that prices for Judaica manuscripts have skyrocketed in recent years, but Sotheby's proposed range is "a different league."

Few institutions, and only a small handful of ultrawealthy collectors, could afford such a price tag. There is precedent, however, of museums joining forces to buy prized manuscripts or philanthropists donating their purchases to libraries and other bodies.

Ukeles said that the National Library managed to purchase seven of Sassoon's manuscripts when his collection was auctioned off in the 1970s, "but this one got away. And so for us, this is an opportunity to bring this great treasure home." **MDT/AP**

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

BASEBALL

# Japanese beating Americans is must-see viewing

STEPHEN WADE, TOKYO

**J**APANESE television stuck to its live coverage from Miami for almost two hours after Japan defeated the United States 3-2 to win the World Baseball Classic.

This was must see viewing — over and over and over.

Shohei Ohtani striking out Los Angeles Angels teammate Mike Trout on a pitch away to end the game was replayed repeatedly between player interviews, beer-sprayed clubhouse interludes, and the traditional “doage” — team members tossing the winning manager and players into the air.

The country’s top circulating newspaper Yomiuri rolled out a special yesterday afternoon edition for commuters, usually reserved for serious matters of state, late-breaking election news, or as it was last year — the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

“Japan, the World’s No. 1,” the



headline read in Japanese, with commuters at Shibuya station pushing and shoving to grab the collector’s item.

The victory and the focus on Ohtani for the past two weeks provided a distraction from economic malaise, missile threats from North Korea, and China’s rise across Asia and its implica-

tions for Japan.

It also gave a boost in Japan to baseball, which has been challenged by soccer as the country’s favorite sport. Japan is unlikely in the short-term to win soccer’s World Cup, but its baseball is world class. Its won three of the five WBC titles, dating to the first event in 2006.

Japan joined the Dominican Republic in 2013 as the only unbeaten champions of baseball’s premier national team tournament.

“I was OK with either losing or winning,” said Hiroya Kuroda, a 44-year-old in a crowd of about 400 watching the game in a studio at Tokyo Tower. “But I was

very moved by the fact that they showed us a dramatic game on that stage in the United States.”

Toshiya Ishii, a 29-year-old fan, broke down crying at the victory.

“Thank you Ohtani,” he said. “Congratulations Samurai Japan. Thank you.”

Japan beat the Americans at their own game, and it wasn’t the first time.

American teachers and missionaries popularized the game in Japan in the 1870s and 1880s, but it was a game in 1896 in Yokohama between Americans and Japanese that Japan won 29-4 that helped baseball take root in the country.

“The greatest decision I ever made,” said Lars Nootbaar, the St. Louis Cardinals outfielder who was the first to play for Japan by ancestry. He spoke in a television interview after the game, and then hugged his mother, Kumiko, who was standing alongside.

“Nippon daisuki,” Nootbaar said in Japanese. “Arigato.”

“I love Japan. Thank you.”

Nootbaar, Ohtani, pitcher Yu Darvish, and manager Hideki Kuriyama were among those tossed into the air by celebrating teammates.

“That’s the first time I’ve ever been lifted up like that before,” Nootbaar said. “I hope I got a picture of it because that’s something that I want to remember forever.” **MDT/AP**

AD

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**OPINION**

**China Daily**  
 Editorial, China Daily

**VAGUE 'ONE-CHINA  
 POLICY' NO EXCUSE  
 FOR SECESSIONISTS**

According to a spokeswoman for her office, Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen will transit through New York and Los Angeles on her way to and from Central America, leaving Taipei on March 29 and returning on April 7.

No matter what words Tsai and the United States use to describe her stopovers in the US on her way to and from Guatemala and Belize, they cannot disguise the provocative motivation for them. The essence of the transit is that Tsai is entering US territory to give credence to her pro-independence stance and bolster the collusion between the anti-China hawks in Washington and her pro-independence forces. The two sides are working hand in glove in a bid to take advantage of each other to advance their own agenda and interests.

Tsai is making the trip to Guatemala and Belize, as they are two of the only 14 states in the world to officially recognize Taiwan. In comparison, 181 countries have diplomatic relations with Beijing. She is paying the visit because one of the 14, Honduras, has just decided to cut official ties with Taipei and establish diplomatic relations with Beijing.

Tsai had already lost "diplomatic ties" with eight countries since she took office in 2016. Now she is about to lose a ninth. The remaining 13 will inevitably be cut and even the US "daddy" cannot prevent that.

Despite all its claims that it adheres to the US' one-China policy, the Joe Biden administration has been an enthusiastic player of the Taiwan card.

It has been mooted that Tsai will meet US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy during her stopover in California. This would be a kind of official contact between the US and Taiwan, something the US solemnly pledged not to have.

Once again, Washington is showing that its word means nothing. White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby even disingenuously claimed "there's no reason for China to overreact".

Beijing's position on such contacts remains firm and crystal clear. It opposes any official exchanges between Washington and Taipei in any shape or form.

The US pledges are essentially smoke and mirrors for its reneging on the commitments it made to Beijing. The one-China principle is unambiguous even to most worldly-wise bereft politicians in Washington.

Yet since many of them were lawyers before they entered the political field, it is no wonder that US politicians play word games and seek loopholes to wriggle out of their commitments.

Playing the Taiwan card has become routine for Washington as it seeks to confront China on almost all geopolitical and economic fronts. As such, how much can they expect from Beijing even if it does respond favorably to Washington's latest suggestion that the visits of the Biden administration's trade and finance chiefs and top diplomat to China should be put on the agenda at an early date.

A report issued on the eve of the first major U.N. conference on water in over 45 years says 26% of the world's population doesn't have access to safe drinking water and 46% lacks access to basic sanitation.

The U.N. World Water Development Report 2023, released yesterday [Macau time], painted a stark picture of the huge gap that needs to be filled to meet U.N. goals to ensure all people have access to clean water and sanitation by 2030.

Richard Connor, editor-in-chief of the report, told a news conference that the estimated cost of meeting the goals is between

\$600 billion and \$1 trillion a year.

But equally important, Connor said, is forging partnerships with investors, financiers, governments and climate change communities to ensure that money is invested in ways to sustain the environment and provide potable water to the 2 billion people who don't have it and sanitation to the 3.6 million in need.

According to the report, water use has been increasing globally by roughly 1% per year over the last 40 years "and is expected to grow at a similar rate through to 2050."

AP PHOTO



**DOCTORS EXPECTED TO  
 TESTIFY IN GWYNETH  
 PALTROW'S SKI TRIAL**

**SAM METZ, PARK CITY**

**M**ORE witnesses are expected to testify today [Macau time] in a trial about a 2016 ski crash between Gwyneth Paltrow and a retired Utah man suing her and claiming her recklessness left him with lasting injuries and brain damage.

On the opening day of the trial, Paltrow and retired optometrist Terry Sanderson appeared across the courtroom from each other, looking nonplussed to hear arguments that have become familiar over the past seven years of legal proceedings. Since Paltrow and Sanderson's skis intertwined on what they expected to be an enjoyable day on the slopes with friends and family, the two have been tangled in a lengthy legal drama about what really happened on a beginner's run that day at one of the most upscale ski destinations in the United States.

The mountain, Deer Valley Resort, has among the region's most expensive lift tickets and is known for its après-ski champagne yurts and proximity to Park City — a posh resort town known for hosting the Sundance Film Festival.

Though the court is not

publishing a witness list, attorneys said Wendell Gibby and Sam Goldstein — a radiologist and neuropsychologist — would likely be called to testify. Sanderson's lawyers said they expected to call four witnesses total today and left the possibility open that one could be Paltrow, depending on when others expected to testify arrive in Park City.

Gibby and Goldstein have previously appeared as expert witnesses for Sanderson, who has said he broke ribs and sustained brain damage from the crash. Attorneys have argued over whether Sanderson's medical problems stemmed from the crash or were merely a byproduct of aging.

Both parties blame the other for the collision and claim they were crashed into from behind, relying on a little-known Utah law stipulating that whoever is downhill has the right of way when skiing and snowboarding. Paltrow's attorney has asked Judge Kent Holmberg to enact special restrictions throughout the actor-turned-wellness tycoon's trial, while she has used a blue notebook to shield her face from view when entering and exiting

the courtroom.

They called Sanderson's story "utter B.S." building off earlier claims from court filings and previous depositions where they accused him of suing to exploit the Oscar-winning star of "Shakespeare in Love's" wealth and celebrity.

Sanderson's attorneys have attempted to paint her as a negligent celebrity with little care for the injuries inflicted upon the 76-year-old military veteran. They called Sanderson's ex-girlfriend and a ski companion who was nearby during the crash to testify on Tuesday. Karlene Davidson said the crash had "changed" Sanderson and contributed to the demise of their romance. Craig Ramon testified that Paltrow hit Sanderson and said that afterward, one of her family's ski instructors came up to him and said "Your buddy just took out Gwyneth Paltrow."

The trial underway in Park City is the latest development in the seven-year case and follows Sanderson's decision to amend an earlier lawsuit after a \$3.1 million complaint that named Paltrow and Deer Valley was dismissed. Paltrow subsequently filed a counterclaim for \$1 and attorney fees. **MDT/AP**

**Afghanistan** An overnight raid by Taliban forces in Kabul killed three members of the extremist Islamic State group, a Taliban spokesman said yesterday. The regional affiliate of the Islamic State group — known as the Islamic State in Khorasan Province — has been the key rival of the Taliban since their takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021. The militant group has increased its attacks, targeting both Taliban patrols and members of Afghanistan's Shiite minority.

AP PHOTO



**Ukraine** and the IMF have agreed on a \$15.6 billion loan package aimed at shoring up government finances severely strained by Russia's invasion and at leveraging even more support by reassuring allies that Ukraine is pursuing strong economic policies. Ukraine's finance ministry said yesterday that the program will "help to mobilize financing from international partners, as well as to maintain macrofinancial stability and ensure the path to post-war reconstruction after Ukrainian victory in the war against the aggressor."

**UK** Inflation accelerated for the first time in four months in February as high food and energy prices hit consumers battered by the nation's cost-of-living crisis. The consumer price index jumped to 10.4% in the 12 months through February from 10.1% the previous month, the Office for National Statistics said yesterday. The figures surprised analysts who had forecast inflation would slow to 9.9%.

AP PHOTO



**USA** Def Leppard drummer Rick Allen (pictured) says he is recovering from an attack earlier this month outside a Florida hotel. Allen, who was in South Florida to perform a show at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino, was attacked while taking a smoke break outside the the Four Seasons hotel on Fort Lauderdale Beach. Police arrested a 19-year-old man, but said they don't have a motive for the attack. They did not identify either the suspect, or Allen, in the police report.