



THE IFTM INCREASED ITS 2023/2024 INTAKE BY AROUND 13%, OFFERING 650 SEATS ACROSS DIFFERENT LEVELS P4

JUNKETS ONLY ALLOWED GIVING CREDIT TO GAMBLERS UNDER CONTRACT WITH CONCESSIONAIRES P4

GOV'T ANNOUNCED NEW HOTLINE 113 DEDICATED TO ASSISTING CITIZENS IN CIVIL PROTECTION-RELATED INCIDENTS P5

Japan's defense chief this weekend ordered troops to activate missile interceptors and get ready to shoot down fragments from a North Korean satellite that may fall on the Japanese territory.



Myanmar A top election official was fatally shot in his car in Yangon, the country's commercial capital, in the latest attack attributed to militants opposed to military rule.



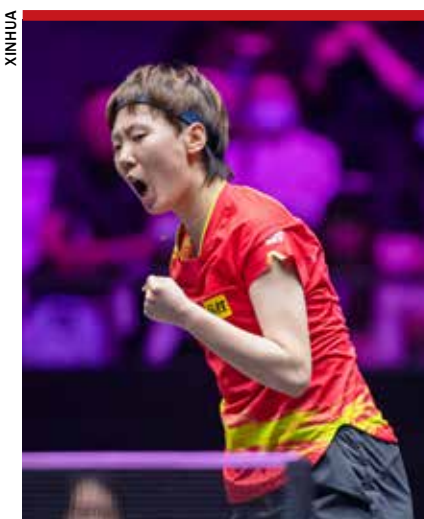
Indian police yesterday arrested a separatist leader who has revived calls for an independent Sikh homeland and the secession of India's northern Punjab state.

2049 AND BEYOND

Ho Iat Seng reaffirmed the SAR's autonomy, political freedom in his Portugal visit; says the city should remain as it is after 2049 P3



LEVO CHAN JUNKET KINGPIN SENTENCED TO 14 YEARS P5



WTT CHAMPIONS MACAO WANG CHUQIN, WANG MANYU CROWNED CHAMPIONS P15

CYBERCRIME

AI-GENERATED SPAM MAY SOON BE FLOODING YOUR INBOX -- AND IT WILL BE PERSONALIZED TO BE ESPECIALLY PERSUASIVE

JOHN LICATO

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

EACH day, messages from Nigerian princes, peddlers of wonder drugs and promoters of can't-miss investments choke email inboxes. Improvements to spam filters only seem to inspire new techniques to break through the protections.

Now, the arms race between spam blockers and spam senders is about to escalate with the emergence of a new weapon: generative artificial intelligence. With recent advances in AI made famous by ChatGPT, spammers could have new tools to evade filters, grab people's attention and convince them to click, buy or give up personal information.

As director of the Advancing Human and Machine Reasoning lab at the University of South Florida, I research the intersection of artificial intelligence, natural language processing and human reasoning. I have studied how AI can learn the individual preferences, beliefs and personality quirks of people.

This can be used to better understand how to interact with people, help them learn or provide them with helpful suggestions. But this also means you should brace for smarter spam that knows your weak spots – and can use them against you.

Spam, spam, spam

SO, WHAT IS SPAM?

Spam is defined as unsolicited commercial emails sent by an unknown entity. The term is sometimes extended to text messages, direct messages on social media and fake reviews on products. Spammers want to nudge you toward action: buying something, clicking on phishing links, installing malware or changing views.

Spam is profitable. One email blast can make US\$1,000 in only a few hours, costing spammers only a few dollars – excluding initial setup. An online pharmaceutical spam campaign might generate around \$7,000 per day.

Legitimate advertisers also



want to nudge you to action – buying their products, taking their surveys, signing up for newsletters – but whereas a marketer email may link to an established company website and contain an unsubscribe option in accordance with federal regulations, a spam email may not.

Spammers also lack access to mailing lists that users signed up for. Instead, spammers utilize counter-intuitive strategies such as the “Nigerian prince” scam, in which a Nigerian prince claims to need your help to unlock an absurd amount of money, promising to reward you nicely. Savvy digital natives immediately dismiss such pleas, but the absurdity of the request may actually select for naïveté or advanced age, filtering for those most likely to fall for the scams.

Advances in AI, however, mean spammers might not have to rely on such hit-or-miss approaches. AI could allow them to target individuals and make their messages more persuasive based on easily accessible information, such as social media posts.

FUTURE OF SPAM

Chances are you've heard about the advances in genera-

tive large language models like ChatGPT. The task these generative LLMs perform is deceptively simple: given a text sequence, predict which token – think of this as a part of a word – comes next. Then, predict which token comes after that. And so on, over and over.

Somehow, training on that task alone, when done with enough text on a large enough LLM, seems to be enough to imbue these models with the ability to perform surprisingly well on a lot of other tasks.

Multiple ways to use the technology have already emerged, showcasing the technology's ability to quickly adapt to, and learn about, individuals. For example, LLMs can write full emails in your writing style, given only a few examples of how you write. And there's the classic example – now over a decade old – of Target figuring out a customer was pregnant before her father knew.

Spammers and marketers alike would benefit from being able to predict more about individuals with less data. Given your LinkedIn page, a few posts and a profile image or two, LLM-armed spammers might make reason-

ably accurate guesses about your political leanings, marital status or life priorities.

Our research showed that LLMs could be used to predict which word an individual will say next with a degree of accuracy far surpassing other AI approaches, in a word-generation task called the semantic fluency task. We also showed that LLMs can take certain types of questions from tests of reasoning abilities and predict how people will respond to that question. This suggests that LLMs already have some knowledge of what typical human reasoning ability looks like.

If spammers make it past initial filters and get you to read an email, click a link or even engage in conversation, their ability to apply customized persuasion increases dramatically. Here again, LLMs can change the game. Early results suggest that LLMs can be used to argue persuasively on topics ranging from politics to public health policy.

GOOD FOR THE GANDER

AI, however, doesn't favor one side or the other. Spam filters also should benefit from advances in AI, allowing them to erect new

barriers to unwanted emails.

Spammers often try to trick filters with special characters, misspelled words or hidden text, relying on the human propensity to forgive small text anomalies – for example, “c1ick h.ere n0w.” But as AI gets better at understanding spam messages, filters could get better at identifying and blocking unwanted spam – and maybe even letting through wanted spam, such as marketing email you've explicitly signed up for. Imagine a filter that predicts whether you'd want to read an email before you even read it.

Despite growing concerns about AI – as evidenced by Tesla, SpaceX and Twitter CEO Elon Musk, Apple founder Steve Wozniak and other tech leaders calling for a pause in AI development – a lot of good could come from advances in the technology. AI can help us understand how weaknesses in human reasoning might be exploited by bad actors and come up with ways to counter malevolent activities.

All new technologies can result in both wonder and danger. The difference lies in who creates and controls the tools, and how they are used. **MDT/THE CONVERSATION**

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HO IAT SENG IN LISBON

CE reaffirms autonomy and differences between Macau and mainland cities

RENATO MARQUES

MACAU is different from the mainland cities and that difference is reflected in the autonomy and the liberties Macau citizens enjoy, the Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng, said Saturday in a media session in which he evaluated his Portugal visit and responded to media questions.

"We cannot say that there is a lack of freedom, Macau is different from other [Chinese cities, and citizens] can scold the government, criticize and have their own opinions," Ho was cited as saying in a report by the Portuguese news agency, Lusa.

"We are not equated with any city in mainland China," Ho added, stressing that the respect for the "One Country, Two Systems" principle continues to grant autonomy and political freedoms to Macau as well as to the other Special Administrative Region (SAR), Hong Kong.

For the CE, this autonomy and political freedom allows, for instance, citizens to express their ideas and opinions freely as well as allow the media to exercise their freedom more broadly.

"[Although] some people may have the feeling that Macau does not differ much from the rest of China, we, as the government of Macau, will not comment upon nor criticize these opinions," Ho was quoted saying by Lusa, adding that neither himself nor anyone on his behalf, including the Government Information Bureau (GCS), has ever called any



Ho Iat Seng meets with Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa

media outlet to tell them that they cannot write or report on any specific topic.

"You know very well that you were never limited, I, Ho Iat Seng, never called you to say that you cannot cover the news," the CE said, reaffirming the existence of press freedom in Macau in the same way as it always occurred in the past.

Addressing also the topic of the Basic Law, Ho said that it has been in force and without problems in its application for the past 30 years (since the promulgation), noting that in his opinion it is not

likely to undergo many changes.

At the same encounter with the media Ho noted the importance of the first visit from a Macau delegation abroad to be precise to Portugal, a trip through which he said he "honored the profound and long-standing friendly ties between Macau and Portugal."

The leader of the local government noted that the two sides had seen growing cooperation in various areas and that he expects this cooperation to continue and become even stronger, reinforcing Macau's role as a commercial and trade cooperation service

platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

The Portugal trip has been an opportunity to explain to people overseas the fresh development opportunities available in Macau under the new situation, aiming also to complement the city's overall effort regarding appropriate economic diversification, the GCS noted in a press statement about the visit.

While in Lisbon, Ho had meetings with, respectively, the President, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Portuguese Republic; with the Ambassador of China to Portugal; and with the Mayor of Lisbon. The conclusion drawn from each of these meetings was that Macau and Portugal should continue to deepen their cooperation and explore new opportunities relating to economics and trade, innovation in science and technology, healthcare and culture, GCS also stated.

The CE also revealed that he had invited Portugal's Minister of Foreign Affairs to visit Macau and to help host the seventh meeting of the Macau-Portugal Joint Committee.

In addition, Macau is also striving to organize, within this year or next year, an in-person edition of the Ministerial Meeting of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries, an event to which Ho also extended an invitation to the Portuguese government to send a delegation to attend the meeting, which does not yet have a final date set.

Ho also remarked that the visiting delegation, accompanied by local entrepreneurs, and officials and entrepreneurs from the Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, following the Lisbon stop, is being led by the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, on a visit to Porto with Macau and Cooperation Zone investment opportunities on the agenda.

HO IAT SENG MEETS UNWTO TO DEVELOP TOURISM IN MACAU

STAFF REPORTER

CHIEF Executive Ho Iat Seng has met the secretary-general of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Zurab Pololikashvili, in Lisbon, to exchange views on issues including the upgrade of tourism cooperation between Macau and the UNWTO.

The CE expressed his desire to expand sources of international tourists in Macau, sharing his hope UNWTO would give greater support to reach this objective.

"UNWTO had been helping Global Tourism Economy Forum (GTEF) to bring tourism ministers from many overseas countries and regions to participate in the forum, making GTEF a well-known brand in the global tourism industry," Ho said, adding that a "new memorandum of understanding between UNWTO and GTEF's organizer

would foster tourism business opportunities for Macau."

For his part, Pololikashvili noted that Macau had a rich history and cultural heritage, which was an important factor for the success of GTEF.

"UNWTO already had an effective cooperation mechanism with the MSAR government and looked forward to even stronger collaboration with Macau in terms of education for tourism professionals, and in the field of community tourism," the UNWTO official.

Secretary for Economy and Finance and executive chairman of GTEF Lei Wai Nong, who was also at the meeting, remarked that "elevated collaboration between UNWTO and GTEF would further contribute to the long-term sustainable development of the tourism sector globally, and related industries, as well as promoting the diversified development of Macau's economy."

MACAU AFTER 2049 SHOULD REMAIN AS IT IS

FORECASTING the potential changes to be enforced in future with the expiration of the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration on December 19, 2049, the CE said that he does not expect many changes in comparison with the current times.

"A system that has proven to be

good, we don't need to change it. So we trust that after 50 years the system will remain," he said, noting that he expects that Macau will continue, beyond 2049, to have a different degree of autonomy and lifestyle when compared to other cities or regions in the mainland.

MAN ARRESTED FOR ALLEGED SEXUAL ABUSE OF DAUGHTER

A 68-year-old resident has been arrested for allegedly sexually abusing his six-year-old daughter, the Judiciary Police (PJ) has advised. The senior citizen reportedly physically punished his daughter several times, causing injuries to the girl which were noticed by teachers at school. According to the PJ, since 2022, the man has tried to sexually assault his daughter several times when his wife was at work. The child was silent about her father's alleged offences. The suspect refused to cooperate during the investigation.

29 MILLION TRIPS FROM SARS, TAIWAN MADE IN CHINA

More than 65 million entry and exit trips were made in China in the first quarter of this year, according to data provided by National Immigration Administration (NIA). Of the 60.6 million people who made entry and exit trips, 32.4 million are mainland residents, 29.5 million are residents from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, and 3.2 million are foreign nationals. Meanwhile, the country's immigration agencies issued more than 5.12 million ordinary passports, 19.14 million entry-exit documents to and from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, and accepted 604,000 passes from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan residents to and from the mainland.

CEBU PACIFIC TO LAUNCH THREE WEEKLY MFM-CRK FLIGHTS

Philippine carrier Cebu Pacific said Friday it will launch three-times-weekly flights to Macau from Clark on April 28. The budget airline has increased its frequency and launched new flights from Clark to re-establish it as an important gateway for local and international travelers. The carrier will also launch daily flights of the Hong Kong-Clark route from April 26, daily flights to Singapore on April 28 and four-times weekly flights to Taipei on April 29.

MACAU CELEBRATES WORLD TABLE TENNIS DAY

World-leading table tennis players who competed in the WTT Champions Macao 2023 participated in a related promotional activity yesterday at Ruins of St. Paul. Since the inaugural WTT event in Macau in 2020, this international table tennis event is being held in the city for the fourth year, with the 2023 theme being "Think Sustainably, Act Now." It has an aim to highlight the need of the International Table Tennis Federation to promote sustainable development. According to an official statement, Macau "will continue to optimize training conditions and environment for athletes, actively coordinate and support sports associations."

GAMING

JUNKETS ONLY ALLOWED GIVING CREDIT TO GAMBLERS UNDER CONTRACT WITH CONCESSIONAIRES

RENATO MARQUES

THE gaming promoters, also called "junkets," will only be able to grant credit to gamblers to play in the local casinos if such promoters have a formal contract with the concessionaire allowing such an activity, as stated by a new law proposal.

This is the most relevant change within the proposal, discussion of which has concluded in the Executive Council (ExCo), with the proposal now to be sent to the Legislative Assembly (AL) to be addressed by lawmakers, the ExCo announced last Friday during a press conference.

The bill also includes several changes and updates to the current regime, namely correcting the designations and status of the concessionaires according to the current situation in which

there are six formal concessions and no sub-concessions (as before), a situation that has not been reflected in the law regulating the credit for casino games.

Some new changes are also proposed to the sanction's regime of the new law for the cases in which any of the operators fail to comply with the rules. However, for the time being, the government does not wish to disclose the details of the penalties and sanctions to be applied, leaving such debate to the legislators.

At the same press conference, the Secretary for Administration and Justice and spokesperson of the ExCo, André Cheong, also said that the government plans to present an amendment to the current law on illegal gambling activities this year.

Questioned as to whether these amendments are related



to the cases recently tried at the local courts involving two of the most prominent junket companies (Suncity Group and Tak

Chun Group), Cheong said that these cases were not relevant to the law amendment that was already planned to take place.

EDUCATION

IFTM TO UP SLOTS TO 650 IN UPCOMING ACADEMIC YEAR

STAFF REPORTER

THE Macao Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM) has increased its 2023/2024 intake by around 13%, implying around 650 seats will be available across different levels.

Speaking to the press on the sidelines of IFTM's Open Day yesterday, Fanny Vong, IFTM president, said that although there are aims to reach out to the mainland and international market, as a public higher institution, she deems that the priority is to "meet local demand." "We remain at the ser-



vice of the local community, first of all, we satisfy local needs and then with the available resources left, we'll reach out to other markets, mainly the

mainland market [which] is a [vast] one," said Vong.

"But we also do a lot of promotion in [the] international market. We hope to expand the mainland

and international market in general after satisfying local needs," the scholar added.

Meanwhile, to keep up with the government's Tourism+ strategies, Vong said that IFTM's future program offerings will have an emphasis on combining traditional tourism knowledge with technology. In the last academic year, IFTM launched a new Masters program in smart technologies for hospitals and tourism. This coming 2023/2024 academic year, the institute aims to launch a Masters program

in digital marketing and analytics.

"In the future you will see us moving more towards the direction of Tourism+, especially Tourism+ technology."

With approximately 400 students graduating this summer, the president is confident in the students' skills, and noted that they are ready to fill the demand in the hotel sector.

Before the pandemic, the institute achieved an employment rate of over 90%, with students able to find jobs within six months, Vong said.

USJ HOLDS CITY-WIDE POETRY CONTEST

STAFF REPORTER

THE University of Saint Joseph (USJ) has co-organized a contest to promote English language literacy and foster creativity among local youth through poetry.

Open to all public or private elementary, secondary and university

students across the region, this year's theme was "A Pocketful of Efferescence in the Greater Bay Area."

USJ received over 700 submissions from 37 schools and universities, with only 40 original poems selected to enter the recital contest, including 15 in the elementary school ca-

tegory, 15 in the secondary category and 10 in the university category.

All of the submitted written works were evaluated based on their relevance, creativity and originality, coherence of form and structure, and clarity of imagery and language.

The contest was co-organized with the Macao

Youth Greater Bay Area Development Association, where the final round of the contest followed by awards ceremony was held Saturday at USJ Ilha Verde Campus.

The winners of this second edition are Chan Ay Ren for the elementary category, Matilde Neves dos Santos Augusto for the secondary category

and Alexandre Lebel for the university category.

A total of nine cash prizes worth 19,000 patacas were given to the champion, first runner-up, and second runner-up of each category.

Next year's contest will be under the theme of "Macao – the garden of life" with subcategories "Beauty in the eye of the beholder," "Wisdom of the ages," and "Emotions running over."

TAK CHUN TRIAL

Junket kingpin Levo Chan sentenced to 14 years; defendants ordered to pay HKD780m

LYNZY VALLES

FORMER Tak Chun boss Levo Chan was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment Friday for illegal gambling and gang crimes by the Court of First Instance.

The high-profile arrest and prosecution of the junket kingpin comes three months after the court arrested junket mogul Alvin Chau, coinciding with China's intensified crackdown on junket operators bringing high-rollers from the mainland.

A panel of Macau judges convicted Chan on 34 counts, including unlawful gambling, running criminal syndicates, fraud as well as money laundering, and sentenced him to 14 years in prison.

On Friday, four other defendants in the case were also sentenced to years in prison: two were sentenced to prison terms of 10 years, one for 11 years and the other seven years for gang crimes and fraud.

The defendants, including the former junket boss, have been ordered to pay HKD575.2 million to the SAR government, and about HKD204.5 million to gaming operators.

Last year, concessionaires sought damages from Chan and other defendants, claiming to have lost revenue due to Tak Chun allegedly allowing under-the-table betting at their VIP rooms.



These were "multiplier bets," private wagers that involved Tak Chun multiplying the stakes on "official" bets placed at Macau's casinos. They were settled later, tax-free, according to prosecutors.

Chan was estimated to have earned USD200 million from these bets on a total outlay of USD4.5 billion while denying the government USD62 million in tax revenue.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the nine defendants in the case were acquitted due to insufficient evidence.

In January 2022, the Judiciary Police announced the arrest of

two local men, including Chan, who were suspected of being involved in criminal groups, illegal gambling operations and money laundering.

In his closing statement last month, Chan said that Tak Chun had played a role in contributing to Macau's economic and social development, denying accusations of a criminal syndicate and triad gang.

However, Prosecutor Coordinator Tam I Kuan emphasized that through the court hearings, she considered the accusations to be "highly justified."

Also, according to the prosecutor, despite positioning to

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

Meanwhile, Chan had planned to flee to Taiwan, a court heard in February. According to the court, he was preparing to start a new life in Taiwan, which does not have an extradition treaty with Macau or China. Documents have been uncovered showing he had applied for Taiwanese residency.

INFLATION UP 0.86%

The composite consumer price index (CPI) grew 0.86% year-on-year to 104.28 in March. The latest report from the Statistics and Census Service attributed the increase to higher charges for dining out, rising wages of domestic helpers and increased tuition fees, as well as dearer fruit prices and hotel room rates. However, the rise was partially offset by lower rentals for dwellings and reduced airfares. For the 12 months ending March, the average composite CPI increased 1% from the previous period. The average composite CPI for the first quarter went up by 0.80% year-on-year.

LISBON ART EXHIBITION FEATURES MACAU ARTISTS

The exhibition "Journeys of Light: Macao Landscape Watercolours from the Macao Museum of Art Collection" was inaugurated in Lisbon, Portugal last week, featuring 50 landscape watercolours by 17 Macau artists from the collection of the Macao Museum of Art. The exhibition presents development of local watercolors since the 1970s from different perspectives and the city's urban landscapes and residents' lives. It will run until Aug. 11 and is open from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Macau Scientific Cultural Center in Lisbon.

RESERVATÓRIO PARK FOOTBRIDGE PASSAGE TO TEMPORARILY CLOSE

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) will temporarily close the footbridge for passage between Reservatório Park and Avenida da Ponte da Amizade from April 28. The public is advised to be mindful of this arrangement and use alternative road-crossing facilities to reach Reservatório Park. The government will carry out construction works to build a flyover of connection bridge (A2) from Zone A to Macau Peninsula, which are estimated to be completed by October 2024.

IC CALLS FOR ART MACAO PARTICIPANTS

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) is calling for exhibition proposals of the "Art Macao 2023" Local Curatorial Project until May 24. Themed "The Statistics of Fortune," this edition aims to explore the correlation between science and religion through artworks. The "Local Curatorial Project" is one of the key projects of the city's mega art event, with the aim of providing an open and diversified exchange platform. Each selected team will be awarded a subsidy to the maximum amount of MOP500,000 for the production of the exhibition.

COPC announces new hotline '113'

RENATO MARQUES

THE Civil Protection Operation Center (COPC) has announced a new hotline dedicated to assisting citizens in civil protection-related incidents – 113 – will become operational on May 1.

The announcement was made on the sidelines of the civil protection major drill "Crystal Fish 2023" which, as usual, tested the operability of all the forces and departments for incidents related to the incidence of a severe

typhoon.

The COPC also said that the new hotline, "113," has also seen phone communication expanded with 24 lines now available at the same time.

The drill, which took place Saturday, simulated a wide range of situations such as the transference of injured people, traffic accidents, and the fall of heavy objects, trees and debris, among others.

One of the main foci was also to test the operability of the evacuation of residents from low-lying

areas, in the event of an expected severe storm surge with serious flooding.

Several other types of incidents such as a fire on board a ship and search and rescue operations for people in cases of landslides were other situations put to the test.

At the end of the drill, the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, said that the drill went as expected and resulted in positive effects for both training and coordination of activities and interdepartmental cooperation.



Crystal Fish 2023 typhoon drill

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

IC2 PROMOTES SUSTAINABLE LIVING IN WORLD EARTH DAY

STAFF REPORTER

FOR the third consecutive year in Macau, local NGO Macau IC2 Association hosted the World Earth Day on April 22, themed this year "IC2 Invests In Our Planet," promoting a low-carbon lifestyle and sustainable practices for environmental protection.

The event reminded its audience of the importance of investing in the planet, with numerous educational activities set up to engage and involve the community, including a Pickleball game demonstration, a fashion show featuring recycled materials that turned into clothes, and a harmony choir with sign language.

The occasion was highlighted by its signature tree-planting ceremony featuring the Osmanthus Fragrans tree, which will join the previously planted trees of the past two years.

"In 2023, we will continue to carry out today's Earth Day activities regardless



of the weather, and do our part to protect the earth." Luis Leong, IC2 president, said, while the Secretary of the Society of Food & Environmental Health (SFEH) Cecilia U added, "As this is the second year we support this event, we want to take this opportunity to reinforce that food is the single strongest lever to optimize

human health and environmental sustainability on Earth."

Meanwhile, general manager of Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau Rutger Verschuren expressed his hope that the event will "inspire people to think about the impact of their actions on the planet and make small changes in their daily lives

to reduce their carbon footprint."

With over 150 participants, the event shone a spotlight on sustainable practices and environmental protection policies not just in Macau but also in the Greater Bay Area and beyond.

*Macau Daily Times is the official media partner of the event.

CATERING AND RETAIL REVENUE INCREASED 22.6%

STAFF REPORTER

REVENUE from all categories of restaurants and similar establishments interviewed increased in February compared to last year, with the most significant increase (64.1%) seen in Western-style restaurants. There was a year-on-year increase in revenue of 22.6% in restaurants and similar establishments in February, while that figure for retailers was 7%, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

Among interviewed retailers, the revenue of cosmetics and sanitary products and leather goods both increased by more than 20%, while department stores saw a 10.7% decrease.

A month-on-month shrinking of 23.8% was recorded for surveyed Chinese restaurants in

February, while the data for Western style restaurants showed a 3.4% growth compared to January, when the Lunar New Year took place. Restaurants and similar establishments and retail trade both saw revenue drop by more than 15%, of which adult clothing and supermarkets both fell by more than 30%.

Around 30% of restaurants and similar establishments and retailers expected revenue in March to drop compared to February, while more than 20% in both industries were more optimistic.

As the index indicated, surveyed restaurants and similar establishments showed slightly lower confidence in their business performance in March compared to February, while interviewed retailers showed opposing expectations.

britcham 澳門英國商會
British Chamber of Commerce in Macao

britcham "Earth Day Quiz Night"

Welcome to Earth Day Quiz Night! In celebration of Earth Day on 22nd April, we're inviting you to join us for a networking, fun and educational evening.

Put your eco-friendly thinking caps on and celebrate our planet by testing your knowledge and skills about all things environmental and sustainable. Get ready for tough questions on climate change, renewable energy, sustainable living, and wildlife conservation. Form a team to take on the challenge. Not only will you be fighting for the planet, but the team with the highest score will also win a grand prize. Let's celebrate Earth Day in style and become more aware and involved in protecting our planet for generations to come. Don't miss out on this fun opportunity and show your support for a more sustainable future!

Date : 27th April 2023 (Thursday)
Time : 7pm - 9pm
Venue : Old Taipa Tavern (OTT) 2nd Floor
Fee : MOP\$280 (Members) / MOP\$350 (Non-Members)

Advance booking is required. No refund for cancellation 48 hours prior to the event.
Email: ivone@britchammao.org or call +853 6331 1124

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ECONOMY

German government, unions reach pay deal for public workers

GERMAN government officials and labor unions have reached a pay deal for more than 2.5 million public-sector workers, ending a lengthy dispute and heading off the possibility of disruptive all-out strikes.

The ver.di union had pressed for hefty raises as Germany, like many other countries, grapples with high inflation. Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said as the deal was announced around last night that “we accommodated the unions as far as we could responsibly do in a difficult budget situation.”

The deal entails tax-free one-time payments totaling 3,000 euros (\$3,300) per employee, with the first 1,240 euros coming in June and monthly payments of 220 euros following until February. In March, regular monthly pay for all will be increased by 200 euros, followed by a salary increase of 5.5% — with a minimum raise of 340 euros per month assured. The deal runs through to the end of 2024.

Ver.di originally sought a one-year deal with a raise of 10.5%. The deal was reached on the basis of a proposal by arbitrators who were called in after talks broke down last month.

Ver.di chair Frank Werneke said that “we went to our pain threshold with the decision to make this compromise.” He said



Frank Werneke, chairman of the trade union

that the raises in regular pay next year will amount to an increase of over 11% for most employees of federal and municipal governments.

The union has staged frequent walkouts over recent months to underline its demands, with local transport, hospitals and other public services hit.

Germany's annual inflation rate has declined from the levels it reached late last year but is still high. It stood at 7.4% in March.

The past few months have seen plenty of other tense pay negotiations in Europe's biggest economy, some of which have yet to be concluded. In a joint show of strength, ver.di and the EVG union — which represents many railway

workers — staged a one-day strike last month that paralyzed much of the country's transport network.

EVG, whose members walked off the job again on Friday, is seeking a 12% raise and has rejected the idea of negotiating a deal based on the arbitration proposal that helped resolve the public workers' dispute. The next round of talks is set for Tuesday.

And ver.di is still in a dispute with Germany's airport security companies association over pay and conditions for security staff. In the latest of a string of walkouts, it has called on security workers at Berlin Airport to walk out on Monday. The airport says there will no departures all day. **MDT/AP**

F&B

BUD LIGHT EXEC TAKES LEAVE AFTER BOYCOTT CALLS, REPORTS SAY

THE marketing executive who oversaw a partnership between Bud Light and a transgender influencer is taking a leave of absence after it snowballed into cries for boycotts from some angry customers, according to media reports.

Alissa Heinerscheid, Bud Light's vice president of marketing, will be replaced by Todd Allen, most recently global vice president of Budweiser, according to reports from Beer Business Daily and Ad Age.

A spokesperson for Bud Light's parent company, Anheuser-Busch InBev, on Saturday did not directly confirm the leave of absence but said Allen as vice president of Bud Light will report directly to Benoit Garbe, U.S. chief marketing officer. The company also made streamlining changes so that its most senior marketers are more closely connected to all of its brand activities.

The partnership between the blue-emblazoned beer brand and Dylan Mulvaney, who has more than 10.8

million followers on social media, hit the internet on April 1. That's when Mulvaney posted a video on Instagram showing herself cracking open a can of Bud Light, one with the hashtag #budlightpartner.

Companies have broadened efforts to attract customers and employees across racial, cultural and other lines as the country continues to diversify. In many cases, their own shareholders have pushed them to become more inclusive in hopes of improved returns.

Earlier this month, Bud Light said, “Anheuser-Busch works with hundreds of influencers across our brands as one of many ways to authentically connect with audiences across various demographics.”

But the Bud Light-Mulvaney partnership quickly brought an onslaught of criticism from people who said they're angry about the world going “woke.” Musician Kid Rock posted a video of himself shooting cans of Bud Light with a rifle. **MDT/AP**



CORPORATE BITS

Sands promotes city's offerings in Lisbon



Sands Resorts Macao participated in the 'Experience Macao Unlimited - Macao Promotion in Lisbon' tourism promotion event from April 15 to 22 in Lisbon, Portugal.

Organized by the local government, the event show-

cases the latest developments in tourism, culture, economy and trade among other areas, and represents Macau's first in-person tourism promotion in Europe post-pandemic.

At the 'Experience Macao

Unlimited - Macao Exhibition in Lisbon', Sands Resorts Macao's booth takes inspiration from the most iconic Portuguese-style architecture in Macau.

Hotel packages are also on offer during the event, drawing guests from Portugal to visit Sands Resorts Macao and create brand new holiday experiences in a city known for its vibrant mix of cultures.

Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd., said: “Through multiple activities and channels, we aim to raise Macao's profile, arouse customer interest in Macau as a leading travel destination, and tap the potential of the Portuguese market.”

Wynn pledges to boost Sino-Portuguese cooperation



Wynn recently participated in the “Experience Macao Unlimited - Macao Promotion in Lisbon” themed roadshow, held in Commerce Square in Portugal.

The gaming operator said it

“took this opportunity to help advance the Macau SAR government's “1+4” appropriate diversification strategy to enhance the business environment and overall competitiveness.”

“Wynn will continue to be involved in Sino-Portuguese friendly cooperation and exchanges activities, promoting interaction in tourism, catering, cultural activities, and youth development, and strengthening cooperation with Portuguese companies in tourism and four major industries,” Wynn said in a statement.

“It will also contribute to explore more collaborative opportunities and help develop the four key industries including Big Health, modern finance, high-end technology, convention and exhibition trade, and culture and sport, fostering Macau's economic appropriate diversification,” it added.



Lawmakers in a new House select committee on China from left, Rep. Jake Auchincloss, D-Mass., Rep. Haley Stevens, D-Mich., committee Chairman Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Wis., and Rep. Carlos Gimenez, R-Fla., gather for a tabletop war game exercise in the House Ways and Means Committee room, last week

DIRE STRAIT

LAWMAKERS WAR-GAME CONFLICT WITH CHINA, HOPING TO DETER ONE

ELLEN KNICKMEYER,
WASHINGTON

IT'S April 22, 2027, and 72 hours into a first-strike Chinese attack on Taiwan and the U.S. military response. Already, the toll on all sides is staggering.

It was a war game, but one with a serious purpose and high-profile players: members of the House select committee on China. The conflict unfolded on Risk board game-style tabletop maps and markers under a giant gold chandelier in the House Ways and Means Committee room.

The exercise explored American diplomatic, economic and military options if the United States and China were to reach the brink of war over Taiwan, a self-ruled island that Beijing claims as its own. The exercise played out one night last week and was observed by The Associated Press. It was part of the committee's in-depth review of U.S. policies toward China as lawmakers, especially in the Republican-led House, focus on tensions with President Xi Jinping's government.

In the war game, Beijing's missiles and rockets cascade down on Taiwan and on U.S. forces as far away as Japan and Guam. Initial casualties include hundreds, possibly thousands, of U.S. troops. Taiwan's and China's losses are even higher.

Discouragingly for Washington, alarmed and alienated allies in the war game leave Americans to fight almost entirely alone in support of Taiwan.

And forget about a U.S. hotline call to Xi or one of his top generals to calm things down — not

happening, at least not under this role-playing scenario.

The war game wasn't about planning a war, lawmakers said. It was about figuring out how to strengthen U.S. deterrence, to keep a war involving the U.S., China and Taiwan from ever starting.

Ideally, the members of Congress would walk out of the war game with two convictions, the committee chairman, Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Wis., told colleagues at the outset: "One is a sense of urgency."

The second: "A sense ... that there are meaningful things we can do in this Congress through legislative action to improve the prospect of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," Gallagher said.

In reality, Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, the committee's top Democrat, told lawmakers, "we cannot have a situation where we are faced with what we are going to be facing tonight."

The "only way to do that is to deter aggression and to prevent a conflict from arising," said Krishnamoorthi, D-Ill.

The U.S. doesn't formally recognize the Taiwan government but is Taipei's most vital provider of weapons and other security assistance. Xi has directed his military to be ready to reclaim Taiwan in 2027, by force if necessary.

Asked about lawmakers' war game, Liu Pengyu, spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy, said China wants peaceful reunifi-

cation with Taiwan but reserves "the option of taking all necessary measures."

"The U.S. side's so-called 'war game' is meant to support and embolden 'Taiwan independence' separatists and further fuel tensions in the Taiwan Strait, which we firmly oppose," Liu said.

In the war game, lawmakers played the blue team, in the role of National Security Council advisers. Their directive from their (imaginary) president: Deter a Chinese takeover of Taiwan if possible, defeat it if not.

"The US side's so-called 'war game' is meant to support and embolden 'Taiwan independence' separatists... which we firmly oppose.

LIU PENGYU
CHINESE EMBASSY WASHINGTON

Experts for the Center for a New American Security think tank, whose research includes war-gaming possible conflicts using realistic scenarios and unclassified information, played the red team.

In the exercise, it all kicks off with opposition lawmakers in Taiwan talking about independence.

With the think tank's defense program director Stacie Pettyjohn narrating, angry Chinese officials respond by heaping unacceptable demands on Taiwan. Meanwhile, China's military moves inva-

sion-capable forces into position. Steps such as bringing in blood supplies for treating troops suggest this is no ordinary military exercise.

Ultimately, China imposes a de facto blockade on Taiwan, intolerable for an island that produces more than 60 percent of the world's semiconductors, as well as other high-tech gear.

While the U.S. military readies for a possible fight, U.S. presidential advisers — House committee members who are surrounding and studying the wooden tables with the map and troop markers spread out — assemble.

They lob questions at a retired general, Mike Holmes, playing the role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, before deciding courses of action.

What are the economic consequences if the U.S. goes maximalist on financial punishments, one lawmaker asks.

"Catastrophic" is the response, for both the United States and China. China will hit back at the U.S. economy as well.

"Who's going to tell the president that he has to say to the American people, 'Say goodbye to your iPhones?'" Rep. Ashley Hinson, R-Iowa, asks.

Do American leaders have any way to communicate with their Chinese counterparts, lawmakers ask. No, China's leaders have a history of shunning U.S. hotline calls, and that's a problem, the exercise leaders tell them.

In the war game, U.S. officials are left trying to pass messages to their Chinese counterparts through China-based American business leaders, whose Dell, Apple, HP and other product operations China all subsequently seizes as one of its first moves in the attack.

Are potential military targets in China "near major metropolitan areas that are going to include millions and millions of people?" asks Rep. Mikie Sherrill, D-N.J.

Has Taiwan done all it can to try to calm the situation? All it can and will, lawmakers are told.

"It's not clear to me we've exhausted all our diplomatic options," Gallagher notes.

Then, on paper, U.S. and Chinese satellites, space weapons, drones, submarines, ground forces, warships, fighter squadrons, cyber warriors, communications experts, bankers, Treasury officials and diplomats all go to war.

At the end, before the lessons-learned part, the war-game operators reveal the toll of the first wave of fighting. Lawmakers study the tabletop map, wincing as they hear of particularly hard setbacks among U.S. successes.

U.S. stockpiles of very long-range missiles? Gone.

Global financial markets? Shaking.

U.S. allies? As it turns out, China's diplomats did their advance work to keep American allies on the sidelines. And anyway, it seems the all-out U.S. economic measures against China's economy have put allies off. They're sitting this one out.

In the "hot-wash" debrief at the end, lawmakers point to a few key military weaknesses that the war game highlighted.

"Running out of long-missiles is bad," said Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-S.D.

But the most glaring shortfalls appeared in diplomacy and in nonmilitary planning.

Becca Wasser, a think tank senior fellow who role-played a convincingly menacing Chinese official, pointed to lawmakers' recurring frustration in the war game at the lack of direct, immediate leader-to-leader crisis communication. It's something Beijing and Washington in the real world have never managed to consistently make happen.

"In peacetime, we should have those lines of communication," Wasser said.

The exercise also underscored the risks of neglecting to put together a package of well-thought out economic penalties, and of failing to build consensus among allies, lawmakers said.

"As we get closer to 2027, they're going to be trying to isolate us," Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Va., said of Xi's government.

Holmes, in the role of Joint Chiefs chairman, reassured lawmakers, after the first three days of fighting.

"We survived," he said. **MDT/AP**

DIRE STRAIT

Taiwan, foreign supporters 'playing with fire': Qin

CHINA'S foreign minister warned Taiwan and its supporters last week that they are "playing with fire" if they go against Beijing's demand to exert control over the self-governing island democracy.

Qin Gang's remarks came at the end of a speech espousing China's contribution to the global economy and the interests of developing nations, in which he repeatedly praised Communist Party Secretary General Xi Jinping's Global Security Initiative.

The concept is the latest of China's moves to position its single-party political system, with its claim to social stability and economic growth, as an alternative to the Western liberal approach that largely defines international relations.

Toward the end of his speech in the financial hub of Shanghai, Qin turned to what China calls the "Taiwan problem."

While China has taken a consistently hard-line position on Taiwan, it has usually delegated threatening statements to spokespeople or lower-level diplomats speaking through news releases or in bilateral settings. Qin answers directly to the Politburo Standing Committee of the ruling Communist Party led by deeply nationalistic leader Xi, and his comments Friday reflected a harsher tone of Chinese language over the possibility of a military clash over Taiwan.



Foreign minister Qin Gang speaks during the forum titled Chinese Modernization and the World held at The Grand Halls in Shanghai

As a former chief spokesperson at the Foreign Ministry, Qin was a forerunner in taking Xi's more confrontational approach toward relations with the United States, its Asian allies and Western democracies.

Countries from South Korea to Germany have recently spoken out against China's threats against Taiwan, underscoring a war of words that teeters on the edge of outright conflict with

recent Chinese military exercises surrounding Taiwan and the strengthening of U.S. alliances in Asia aimed at responding to Beijing's increased military presence.

The threat level toward Taiwan is difficult to rank, but U.S. officials have said China intends to be prepared to launch an invasion within the next decade. Qin's comments, while not unprecedented, gave higher visibility to the Chinese threats in front of an interna-

tional audience of the type China has sought to recruit as partners in business and development.

"The safeguarding of national sovereignty and territorial integrity is beyond reproach," Qin said.

"The Taiwan problem is at the core of China's core interests," he said. "We will never back down in the face of any act that undermines China's sovereignty and security. Those who play with fire on the question of Taiwan will burn themselves."

Such remarks are typically directed at the island's democratically elected government under Tsai Ing-wen and its most important ally, the United States. China considers Taiwan a part of its territory to be annexed by force if necessary.

Earlier in April, China held large-scale air and sea drills in the areas surrounding Taiwan in retaliation for Tsai's meeting with U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy on April 5 in California. China said the exercises simulating an encirclement of Taiwan were intended as a "serious warning" to pro-independence politicians on the self-governing island and their foreign supporters.

China has stepped up its military pressure and diplomatic isolation against Taiwan in recent years, sending fighter jets and navy vessels towards the island on a near-daily basis.

While Taiwan maintains official diplomatic relations with

just 13 sovereign states, it retains robust ties with most major nations, including the U.S.

After former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in August, China sent more military vessels over the midline of the Taiwan Strait, an unofficial boundary that had been accepted for decades.

The heightened pace of military activity and increasingly bellicose language have raised concerns about a possible conflict in one of the world's most economically vital regions. Taiwan produces much of the world's much-needed computer chips and the Taiwan Strait separating the island from mainland China is one of the world's busiest waterways.

Taiwan will elect a new leader and parliament in January, with China seen as heavily favoring the opposition Nationalist Party that backs political unification between the sides under terms yet to be defined. Most Taiwanese responding to surveys back the status quo of de facto independence.

At a daily briefing Friday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin criticized recent comments by South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol opposing any changes in the status quo across the Taiwan Strait.

Wang said that recent tensions are the responsibility of Taiwan's government, which opposes Beijing's demand that it recognize China's claim to the island.

"Taiwan independence cannot coexist with peace and stability in the Taiwan region," he said. "To maintain the situation in the Taiwan Strait and regional peace and tranquility, it is necessary to clearly oppose Taiwan independence and external interference." **MDT/AP**

SOUTH CHINA SEA

Chinese FM holds talks in Philippines amid strained ties

CHINA'S foreign minister said over the weekend his country is willing to work with the Philippines to resolve their differences, as tensions rise over Beijing's behavior in the disputed South China Sea and Manila's deepening military cooperation with the U.S.

Foreign Minister Qin Gang held talks in Manila with his Philippine counterpart, Enrique Manalo, and was scheduled to meet with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. just days before he travels to Washington for a meeting with President Joe Biden.

China has warned that a



Foreign Minister Qin Gang (right) and Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo shake hands prior to their bilateral meeting at a hotel in Manila

deepening security alliance between the United States and the Philippines should not harm its security and territorial interests and

interfere in long-simmering territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Beijing has criticized a recent agreement by the Philippi-

nes and the U.S. to grant U.S. forces access to additional local military camps.

The deal allows American forces to establish military staging grounds and surveillance outposts in the northern Philippines across the sea from Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its territory, and in provinces facing the South China Sea, which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety.

"We are willing to work together with Philippines to implement the consensus of both leaders, keep China-Philippine ties in the right direction, safeguard the overall situation of our bilateral rela-

tionship, work together to continue our tradition of friendship, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation, and properly resolve our differences in the spirit of credibility, consultation, and dialogue," Qin told reporters.

Manalo said he hoped the meeting will provide an opportunity to make "some headway in addressing common issues and challenges."

The Philippines has filed more than 200 diplomatic protests against China since last year, including at least 77 since Marcos took office in June. Most of the complaints refer to China's

assertive behavior in the South China Sea, including targeting a Philippine coast guard ship with a military-grade laser in February.

Washington lays no claims to the contested waters but has challenged Beijing's extensive claims, including by deploying warships and fighter jets and repeatedly warning that it would help defend the Philippines — a treaty ally — if Philippine forces, ships and aircraft are attacked. Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also have overlapping claims in the seaway, which sits atop vast deposits of oil and gas. **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

Dame Edna creator Barry Humphries dies in Sydney at 89

ROD MCGUIRK, CANBERRA

TONY Award-winning comedian Barry Humphries, internationally renowned for his garish stage persona Dame Edna Everage, a condescending and imperfectly-veiled snob whose evolving character has delighted audiences over seven decades, has died. He was 89.

His death in the Sydney hospital, where he spent several days with complications following hip surgery, was confirmed by his family.

"He was completely himself until the very end, never losing his brilliant mind, his unique wit and generosity of spirit," a family statement said.

"With over 70 years on the stage, he was an entertainer to his core, touring up until the last year of his life and planning more shows that will sadly never be," they added.

Humphries had lived in London for decades and returned to native Australia in December for Christmas.

He told The Sydney Morning Herald newspaper last month that his physiotherapy had been "agony" following his fall and hip replacement.

"It was the most ridiculous thing, like all domestic incidents are. I was reaching for a book, my foot got caught on a rug or something, and down I went," Humphries said of his fall.

Humphries has remained an active entertainer, touring Britain last year with his one-man show "The Man Behind the Mask."

AP PHOTO



Australian TV presenter Barry Humphries performs on stage as Dame Edna for the Farewell Tour, at the London Palladium theatre on Nov. 13, 2013

The character of Dame Edna began as a dowdy Mrs. Norm Everage, who first took to the stage in Humphries' hometown of Melbourne in the mid-1950s. She reflected a postwar suburban inertia and cultural blandness that Humphries found stifling.

Edna is one of Humphries' several enduring characters. The next most famous is Sir Les Patterson, an ever-drunk, disheveled and lecherous Australian cultural attache.

Patterson reflected a perception of Australia as a Western cultural wasteland that drove Humphries along with many leading Aus-

tralian intellectuals to London.

Humphries, a law school dropout, found major success as an actor, writer and entertainer in Britain in the 1970s, but the United States was an ambition that he found stubbornly elusive.

A high point in the United States was a Tony Award in 2000 for his Broadway show "Dame Edna: The Royal Tour."

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese paid tribute to the celebrated comedian.

"For 89 years, Barry Humphries entertained us through a galaxy of personas, from Dame Edna to Sandy Stone," Albanese tweeted,

referring to the melancholic and rambling Stone, one of Humphries most enduring characters. "But the brightest star in that galaxy was always Barry. A great wit, satirist, writer and an absolute one-of-a-kind, he was both gifted and a gift."

British comedian Ricky Gervais tweeted: "Farewell, Barry Humphries, you comedy genius."

Piers Morgan, British television personality, tweeted: "One of the funniest people I've ever met."

"A wondrously intelligent, entertaining, daring, provocative, mischievous comedy Genius," Morgan added.

The multi-talented Humphries was also a respected character actor with many stage and screen credits, an author of novels and an autobiography, and an accomplished landscape painter.

John Barry Humphries was born in Melbourne on Feb. 17, 1934. His parents were comfortable, loving and strait-laced, and must have wondered about their eldest son, whom they called Sunny Sam. His mother used to tell him to stop drawing attention to himself.

Before he'd finished at the prestigious Melbourne Grammar School, Humphries was more interested in art and secondhand bookshops than football. At 16, his favorite author was Kafka and later said he "felt a little foreign."

He spent two years at Melbourne University, where he embraced Dadaism -- the subversive, anarchic and absurdist European art movement.

His contributions included "Pus In Boots," waterproof rubber boots filled with custard, and, on the performance art side, getting on a tram with an apparently blind accomplice whom Humphries would kick in the shins while yelling "Get out of my way, you disgusting blind person."

In 1959, he settled in London and was soon working in Peter Cook's comedy venue The Establishment. He played Sowerberry in the original London production of "Oliver!" in 1960 and repeated the role on Broadway. He appeared with Spike Milligan and William Rushton in "Treasure Island."

Humphries, with New Zealand artist Nicholas Garland, created the Barry McKenzie comic strip for the satirical magazine Private Eye in 1964.

When the strips came out as a book, the Australian government banned it because it "relied on indecency for its humor." Humphries professed delight at the publicity and implored authorities not to lift the ban.

By then Humphries' drinking was out of control. In Melbourne in late 1970, he was charged with being drunk and disorderly. He finally admitted himself to a hospital specialising in alcoholism for the treatment that would turn him into a lifelong abstainer.

In 1972 came the first Barry McKenzie film -- financially supported by the Australian government, despite the earlier ban. It was savaged by the critics, largely because they trembled at what the world's first film to feature beer-induced vomiting would do to Australia's image overseas.

But it was a popular success and a sequel two years later included then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam knighting Edna, who was McKenzie's aunt.

Married four times, he is survived by his wife Lizzie Spender, four children and 10 grandchildren. **MDT/AP**

PACIFIC WAR

Explorers find Japanese ship sunk with over 1,000 Allied POWs

A team of explorers announced it found a sunken Japanese ship that was transporting Allied prisoners of war when it was torpedoed off the coast of the Philippines in 1942, resulting in Australia's largest maritime wartime loss with a total of 1,080 lives.

The wreck of the Montevideo Maru was located after a 12-day search at a depth of over 4000 meter -- deeper than the Titanic -- off Luzon island in the South China Sea, using an autonomous underwater vehicle with in-built sonar.

There will be no efforts to remove artifacts or human remains out of respect for the families of those who died, said a statement this weekend from the Sydney-based Silentworld Foundation, a not-for-profit dedicated to maritime archaeology and history. It took part in the mission together with Dutch deep-sea survey specialists Fugro and Australia's Defense Department.

"The extraordinary effort behind this discovery speaks for the enduring truth of Australia's solemn national promise to always

remember and honour those who served our country," Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said. "This is the heart and the spirit of Lest We Forget."

The Montevideo Maru was transporting prisoners and civilians who were captured after the fall of Rabaul in Papua New Guinea. The ship was not marked as carrying POWs, and on July 1, 1942, the American submarine Sturgeon, after stalking the ship through the night, fired four torpedoes, which found their target, sinking the vessel in less than 10 mi-

AP PHOTO



This photo provided by the Australian War Memorial shows the Montevideo Maru

nutes.

Those killed included 1,080 people from 14 nations, including 979 Australians.

"Families waited years

for news of their missing loved ones, before learning of the tragic outcome of the sinking," said Silentworld director John Mullen. "Some never fully came to accept

that their loved ones were among the victims. Today, by finding the vessel, we hope to bring closure to the many families devastated by this terrible disaster." **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Governments race to rescue diplomats, citizens from Sudan

THE U.S. military airlifted embassy officials out of Sudan yesterday and international governments raced to evacuate their diplomatic staff and citizens trapped in the capital as rival generals battled for control of Africa's third-largest country for a ninth day.

Fighting raged in Omdurman, the city across the Nile from Sudan's capital, Khartoum, residents reported. The violence came despite a declared truce that was to coincide with the three-day Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr.

"We did not see such a truce," said Amin al-Tayed from his home near state television headquarters in Omdurman. He said heavy gunfire and thundering explosions rocked the city. "The battles did not stop," he said.

Thick black smoke filled the sky over Khartoum's airport. The paramilitary group battling the Sudanese armed forces claimed the military unleashed airstrikes on the upscale neighborhood of Kafouri, north of Khartoum. There was no immediate comment from the army.

After a week of bloody battles

that hindered rescue efforts, U.S. special forces swiftly evacuated some 70 U.S. embassy staffers from Khartoum to an undisclosed location in Ethiopia early Sunday. Although American officials said it was still too dangerous to carry out a government-coordinated mass evacuation of private citizens, other countries scrambled to evacuate their citizens and diplomats.

France, Greece and other European countries said yesterday they were organizing evacuations for embassy employees and nationals, along with some citizens of allied countries. French Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Anne-Claire Legendre said France was undertaking the operation with the help of European partners.

The Greek foreign minister said the country had dispatched aircraft and special forces to its ally, Egypt, in preparation for an evacuation of 120 Greek and Cypriot nationals from Khartoum. Most of them have sought shelter in recent days at a Greek Orthodox

cathedral in the capital, Nikos Dendias said.

The Netherlands sent two air force Hercules C-130 planes and an Airbus A330 to Jordan ahead of a possible rescue mission. "We deeply sympathize with the Dutch in Sudan and will make every effort to evacuate people where and when possible," said Defense Minister Kaja Ollongren.

The country experienced a 'near-total collapse' of internet connection and phone lines nationwide

Italy has dispatched military jets to the Gulf of Aden nation of Djibouti to prepare for the evacuation of 140 Italian nationals in Sudan, many of whom have already taken refuge in the embassy. Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said the ministry's crisis unit was in touch with stranded citizens.

The fighting between the Sudanese armed forces and the powerful paramilitary group, known as

the Rapid Support Forces, has targeted and paralyzed the country's main international airport, reducing a number of civilian aircraft to ruins and gutting at least one runway. Other airports across the country have also been knocked out of operation.

Overland travel across areas contested by the warring parties has proven dangerous. Khartoum is some 840 kilometers (520 miles) from Port Sudan on the Red Sea.

But some countries have pressed ahead with the journey. Saudi Arabia on Saturday said the kingdom successfully evacuated 157 people, including 91 Saudi nationals and citizens of other countries. Saudi state TV released footage of a large convoy of Saudis and other foreign nationals traveling by car and bus from Khartoum to Port Sudan, where a navy ship then ferried the evacuees across the Red Sea to the Saudi port of Jeddah.

The power struggle between the Sudanese military, led by Gen.

Abdel-Fattah Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces, led by Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, has dealt a harsh blow to Sudan's heady hopes for a democratic transition. More than 400 people, including 264 civilians, have been killed and more than 3,500 have been wounded in the fighting.

Hospitals say they are struggling to cope. Many dead and wounded have been stranded by the fighting, according to the Sudan Doctors' Syndicate that monitors casualties, suggesting the death toll is probably far higher than what is publicly known.

The conflict has left millions of Sudanese stranded at home — hiding from explosions, gunfire and looting — without adequate electricity, food or water. Yesterday, the country experienced a "near-total collapse" of internet connection and phone lines nationwide, according to NetBlocks, an internet monitoring service.

"It's possible that infrastructure has been damaged or sabotaged," Alp Toker, director of Netblocks, said in an interview. "This will have a major effect on residents' ability to stay safe and will impact the evacuation programs that are ongoing."

Thousands of Sudanese have fled the combat in Khartoum and other hotspots, according to U.N. agencies. At least 20,000 people have abandoned their homes in the western region of Darfur for neighboring Chad. War is not new to Darfur, where ethnically motivated violence has killed as many as 300,000 people since 2003. But Sudan is not used to such heavy fighting in its capital.

"The capital has become a ghost city," said Atiya Abdalla Atiya, secretary of the Doctors' Syndicate. "Half of the population have fled and the rest are looking desperately for a way to get out of this hell."

The fighting has also caught civilians — including foreign diplomats — in the crossfire. Fighters attacked a clearly marked U.S. Embassy convoy last week, and stormed the home of the European Union ambassador to Sudan. Gunfire wounded an Egyptian diplomat in Sudan, spokesman for Egypt's Foreign Ministry Ahmed Abu Zaid, said yesterday, without offering further details.

The current explosion of violence came after Burhan and Dagalo fell out over a recent internationally brokered deal with democracy activists that was meant to incorporate the RSF into the military and eventually lead to civilian rule.

The rival generals rose to power in the tumultuous aftermath of popular uprisings that led to the ouster of Sudan's longtime ruler, Omar al-Bashir, in 2019. Two years later, they joined forces to seize power in a coup that ousted the civilian leaders and opened a troubled new chapter in the country's history. **MDT/AP**



TRAVEL

TOURISM BOOMS IN JAMAICA AFTER PANDEMIC, OVERWHELMS AIRPORT

JOHN MYERS JR., KINGSTON

THE number of tourists flocking to Jamaica's sun-drenched beaches soared nearly 100% in the first three months of the year, causing long queues and hours-long waits for arriving passengers at the island's main airport.

Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett told The Associated Press that the problem stemmed from a shortage of airport staff to process the unexpected volume of people flying into Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay since the end of the pan-

demic.

Bartlett told Parliament later that day that there were 1.18 million arrivals from January through March — 94% more than the same period of 2022 and a record high for Jamaica's tourism high season.

"The recovery has been stronger than anticipated and everybody all over the world is having difficulty with their airports because ... (many) of the workers have not come back," Bartlett said.

He said authorities plan to spend more on technology as they strive to do away with paperwork at the airport, including ending a require-

ment for visitors to fill out a form upon arrival.

Prime Minister Andrew Holness said the problems at Sangster underscore the need to push through the \$70 million modernization and expansion project that already was underway.

The work is scheduled to be completed by 2025, and Honess said the improvements at the Caribbean's largest and busiest airport "will make Jamaica more attractive and make Jamaica more competitive with other countries in the region, which have also invested heavily in improving

their infrastructure."

As part of the project, the runway is being lengthened at a cost of \$34 million, work that is expected to be finished in June.

"We are excited about the prospects of Sangster being able to accommodate these mega airlines that will be flying to Jamaica and the Caribbean," Bartlett said during the AP interview last week.

He said the Tourism Ministry's growth plan aims to have the island draw 5 million visitors annually by 2025. That would be a 35% increase from Jamaica's peak of 3.7 million tourists in 2022.

Bartlett said Asian and Middle Eastern countries are among new markets being targeted and the airport must be able to accommodate the larger aircraft that would be used on such long-haul flights.

In 2019, before the pandemic, the airport processed 4.7 million passengers, including citizens and visitors. The number of tourists to Jamaica peaked at 3.7 million in 2022, 70% of whom used the Sangster gateway.

Sangster is managed by MBI Airports Ltd., a consortium 74.5% owned by a subsidiary of the Mexican airports operator Grupo Aeroportuario del Pacifico and the rest by Vantage Airport Group of Canada.

The consortium, which has a 30-year concession that began in 2003, said it spent \$287 million to improve the airport in the first 18 years of the deal.

Among the improvements, the airport operator has expanded the immigration hall and departure lounge. The check-in area was recently outfitted with 60 self-service kiosks, with plans to install more, to reduce passenger processing and waiting times. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1993 IRA BOMB DEVASTATES CITY OF LONDON



A massive bomb has ripped through the heart of the City of London, killing one and injuring more than 40.

The explosion shook buildings and shattered hundreds of windows, sending glass showering down into the streets below. A mediaeval church, St Ethelburga's, collapsed; another church and Liverpool Street underground station were also wrecked.

The cost of repairing the damage has been estimated at more than £1bn.

Police had received coded warnings, but were still evacuating the area when the bomb went off. Most of those injured were security guards, builders and maintenance staff, and those who had come into their offices to work at the weekend.

Police said the bomb was hidden in the back of a dark blue tipper truck, parked in Bishopsgate.

It was home-made, with about a ton of fertiliser - similar to the bomb which devastated the Baltic Exchange a year ago, killing three people.

Repairs to the Exchange had just been completed, and the building re-opened, when the same banks were damaged again by today's blast.

One of those injured, security guard Raymond Fayers, said, "We were all surprised that they picked the same hotspot again. Every night, virtually, we get some sort of scare, but we didn't expect them to do it again in the same area."

The dead man was found under rubble during a five-hour search of debris near where the bomb went off. He has not yet been identified.

Police say they are in no doubt that the bomb was planted by the IRA, although the organisation has not said it carried out the attack.

The explosion comes just over a month after the Warrington bomb, which killed two children. The IRA expressed its regret after the outcry that followed.

Commander David Tucker, of the Anti-Terrorist Squad, said, "We had hoped after the deaths in Warrington that there would be some sort of turning point, but that seems to be not the case."

The area around the site of today's blast remains sealed off, but the Lord Mayor of London has promised that the City will be back in business on Monday.

Courtesy BBC News

Israelis protest legal changes before nation's 75th birthday

TENS of thousands of protesters flocked to Tel Aviv and cities across Israel on Saturday to vent their opposition to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right government and its divisive plan to overhaul the country's judicial system.

The mass protest — staged weekly since the start of the year — comes just ahead of Israel's landmark 75th anniversary celebration. The ho-

liday honoring Israel's founding in 1948, meant to be a display of national unity, has been marred by one of Israel's gravest crises in its history. Plans by Netanyahu's government to weaken the Supreme Court have outraged Israelis who see it as an assault on their country's system of checks and balances and a threat to its very democracy.

"This is not about so-called judicial reform, it's about

democracy," said Sheila Katz, head of the National Council of Jewish Women, from the rally in central Tel Aviv — a sea of blue-and-white national flags. "In order for your sacred courts to protect the rights of all people, they must remain independent from politics."

Ahead of Israel's memorial day on Tuesday, family members of slain service members held a candlelight vigil

in Tel Aviv to commemorate the fallen. "We'll defend what you've fallen for," read one banner.

Crowds of Israelis also held signs marked with 75 for Israel's birthday and banners with the words "Crime Minister" overlaid on Netanyahu's face.

The protests have galvanized people across Israeli society. Thousands of officers in elite reserve units of the military have said they will refuse to report for duty. High-tech business leaders and the security establishment have come out against the proposal. Trade unions have called for a general strike. **MDT/AP**

IN CONTEXT

The dead man was later identified as 34-year-old Ed Henty, a freelance photographer working for the News of the World. He was married with two children.

Directly after the explosion the government threw what it called a "ring of steel" around the City, with roadblocks in and out of the financial district. Security in the area remains high.

The damage caused by the Bishopsgate bomb cost £350m to repair. The huge payouts by insurance companies contributed to a crisis in the industry, including the near-collapse of the world's leading insurance market, Lloyd's of London.

The IRA carried out one more major attack on London's financial centre. In 1996, after a year-long ceasefire, it planted a bomb in Canary Wharf in the Docklands area. Two died and many more were injured.

A second ceasefire has held since 1997 and opened the way for the IRA's political wing, Sinn Fein, to join multi-party talks on the future of Northern Ireland.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Don't make large purchases or investments. You will find their philosophies worth exploring. You will enjoy interaction with others today.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 This will not be the best day for communication or travel. Get together with people who stimulate you mentally. You are best to concentrate on work.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 If you have treated them equitably, you might be able to count on their loyalty. Your lover may disappoint you in such a way that estrangement will follow. Do not let lovers cost you money or take advantage of you.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Do yourself a favor and leave your plastic at home. Work at home if at all possible. You can make money if you're willing to push your ideas on those in a position to support your efforts.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 You must get out and mingle. You may find yourself changing crowds. Try to be reasonable. Think about starting your own small business.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 You may be in love today, but who knows what tomorrow may bring. Don't let other people meddle in your private affairs. Limitations with females could lead to unfortunate circumstances.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Be sure to think twice before you say something that might hurt your partner's feelings. You are best to listen for the time being. Monitor your budget carefully to avoid unnecessary stress.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Try not to be too harsh with your mate. Don't back down but don't ignite the situation. Think before you act.

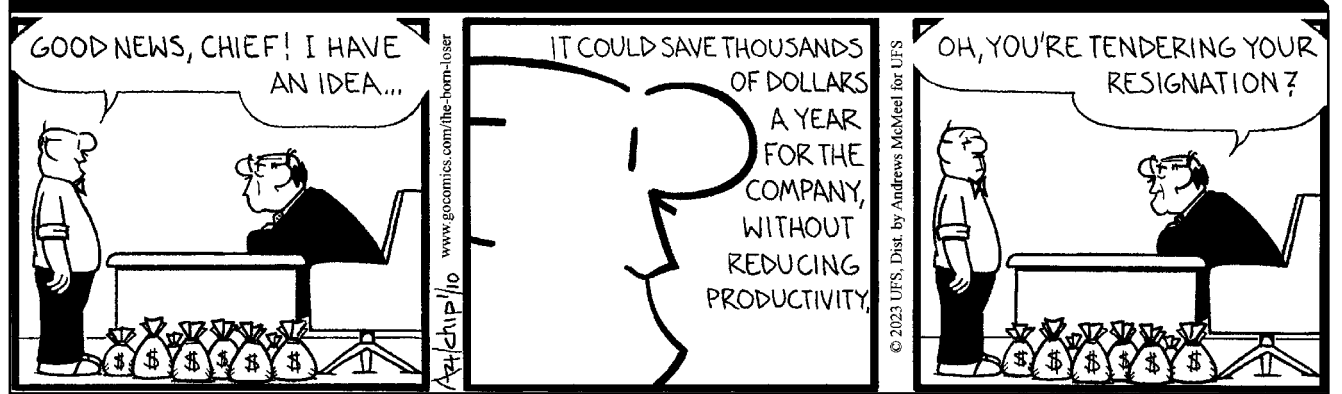
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Avoid getting too close to coworkers or employers. You are best to stick to yourself today. You will attract potential lovers, but be sure that they're unattached.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Try to have patience and refrain from being judgmental. You are likely to be left alone if you aren't willing to bend just a little. A little rest will do wonders.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Curb the impulse to make lavish purchases and maybe spend some time with good friends. Don't let those close to you get under your skin. Social activity should be on your agenda.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 There are ways of making extra cash if you put your mind to it. Your ability to ferret out secret information will lead you to an inside scoop on an amazing financial deal.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

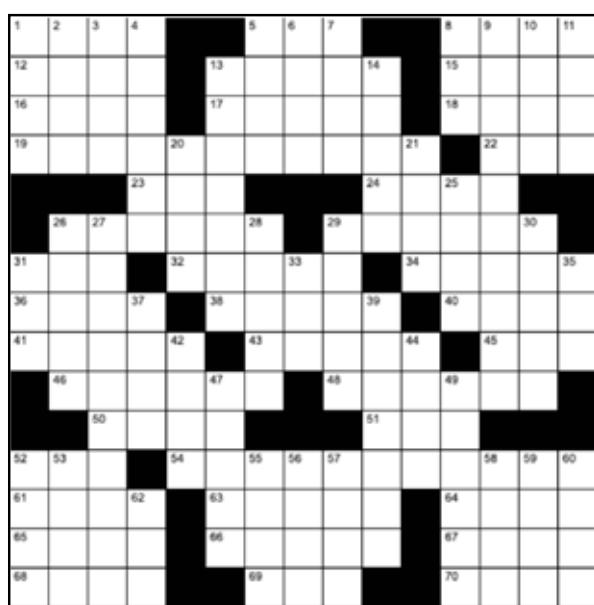
WEATHER

| | MIN | MAX | CONDITION |
|--------------|-----|-----|---------------|
| CHINA | | | |
| Beijing | 6 | 15 | rain |
| Changchun | -1 | 16 | cloudy |
| Chengdu | 10 | 17 | cloudy |
| Chongqing | 13 | 16 | rain |
| Fuzhou | 17 | 23 | overcast |
| Guangzhou | 23 | 26 | thunderstorms |
| Guiyang | 8 | 13 | overcast |
| Haikou | 25 | 30 | thunderstorms |
| Hangzhou | 12 | 14 | rain |
| Harbin | -2 | 16 | fine |
| Hefei | 9 | 14 | overcast |
| Nanjing | 11 | 14 | overcast |
| Shanghai | 13 | 14 | rain |
| Taipei | 19 | 24 | rain |
| Wuhan | 8 | 13 | rain |
| Hong Kong | 26 | 21 | overcast |
| WORLD | | | |
| Moscow | 9 | 21 | overcast |
| Frankfurt | 6 | 14 | rain |
| Paris | 7 | 14 | rain |
| London | 2 | 11 | rain |
| New York | 7 | 17 | overcast |

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- High point; 5- Baby's cry; 8- Kind of alert; 12- Cunning; 13- Tint; 15- Injunctable diazepam, in military lingo; 16- Asian sea; 17- Giraffe kin; 18- "She Lovely?"; 19- Recalling; 22- Foot digit; 23- Without delay; 24- Team; 26- Required; 29- Harsh; 31- Mythical bird; 32- Deadly virus; 34- Violinist Mischa; 36- Perched on; 38- Sniff; 40- Italian bread?; 41- Actor Leary; 43- Register as a participant; 45- Vane dir.; 46- Put on; 48- Cedex; 50- Letters, e.g.; 51- Paulo, Brazil; 52- Indian honorific; 54- Enjoyable; 61- A pop; 63- "Oklahoma!" aunt; 64- 24 hour periods; 65- Gardner and others; 66- Racket; 67- Cupid's counterpart; 68- Dissolve; 69- T.G.I.F. part; 70- Hamlet, e.g.;

DOWN 1- From a distance; 2- Go (over) carefully; 3- Test; 4- Benzene derivative; 5- Came to; 6- Banned apple spray; 7- Snake dancers; 8- Biol., e.g.; 9- Plan skillfully; 10- ___ account (never); 11- Movable barrier; 13- Spider's traps; 14- Wash cycle; 20- Method; 21- Be generous; 25- Big name in PCs; 26- Well-known; 27- Thrifty; 28- Like some stadiums; 29- Saline; 30- Merits; 31- Far out!; 33- Sportscaster Berman; 35- Wedding page word; 37- ___ colada; 39- Unhurried ease; 42- Barbershop sound; 44- The back end of something; 47- Actress Barkin; 49- Full; 52- Thin stratum; 53- Pan's opposite; 55- "The Time Machine" race; 56- Hit the ground; 57- Cong. meeting; 58- Vamp Theda; 59- City on the Rhone; 60- Being, to Brutus; 62- DDE's predecessor;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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2,530 ft² | HKD17,900/mth



HELLENE GARDENS
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1,663 ft² | HKD11,800/mth



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TABLE TENNIS

Wang Chuqin, Wang Manyu crowned again at WTT Champions Macao

CHINA'S Wang Chuqin and Wang Manyu were crowned again in the men's and women's singles respectively at the World Table Tennis (WTT) Champions Macao yesterday.

In the men's singles final, 22-year-old Wang Chuqin defended his title after closing out a dominant 4-0 win over double Olympic gold medalist Ma Long 12-10, 11-1, 11-8, 11-7.

Both players flew out of the starting blocks at top speed, but Ma failed to capitalize on several opportunities, leaving second seed Wang enough room to race 2-0 in front.

Frustrated by the opening stages of the match, Ma struggled to get back on track while Wang remained focused and approached each point with excellent balance to inch closer to victory.

"I was very happy to win against Ma Long, but I still had some problems during the match. I had a slow start and I need to analyze this problem later. This championship gives me a lot of confidence," Wang



Wang Manyu (left) and Wang Chuqin

said after the match.

In the women's singles final, second seed Wang Manyu lifted the second WTT Champions trophy after fighting from behind to defeat Olympic champion Chen Meng 4-2 (11-13, 11-7, 8-11, 12-

10, 11-9, 11-8).

Chen enjoyed the brighter start to the final, but Wang slowly began to work her way up into the contest, digging deep to move ahead and putting her foot firmly on the accelerator to close

out the match in style.

"I handled the key shots a little better today. The championship gives me confidence, which will help me keep a good form in the following matches," Wang said.

On Saturday, Ma survived huge

pressure from the French teenager, who had upset world No. 1 Fan Zhendong of China on Friday.

"This was our first encounter. I had faith to strive for victory and did quite well in finding solutions under difficult circumstances. He played fiercely. He is a powerful player," Ma said after the match.

Fan was stunned by France's Alexis Lebrun in the men's singles quarterfinals on Friday.

With a sensational 3-2 victory over Fan (11-7, 8-11, 11-5, 5-11, 11-9), the 19-year-old Lebrun became the first European player to defeat Fan since Dimitrij Ovtcharov's 3-2 victory at the WTT Cup Finals Xinxiang 2022 last October.

"I feel amazing! He's the World No.1. He played very, very good, so I think I did amazing today and reached my peak service game," said Lebrun after the match.

Ranked at No.1050 in the World as recently as January 2022, World No.22 Lebrun has enjoyed an astonishing rise to prominence over the past 15 months.

MDT/XINHUA

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Urology : Dr. Lo Kwong Yin Richard, Dr. Zhao Yun Qiao

Paediatric Surgery : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong

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OPINION

China Daily

Aparajit Chakraborty, China Daily

INDIA CAN LEVERAGE HIGHER POPULATION FOR GROWTH, PROGRESS

India can reap the benefits of its demographic dividend and reach its Sustainable Development Goals, experts said, although there has been no official reaction from India to recent reports it has become the most populous country in the world.

India has surpassed China in population according to data from this year's United Nations Population Fund report. The State of World Population 2023 projected India's population will be 1.4286 billion by the end of June, compared with China's 1.4257 billion.

According to the report, India's demographic diversity provides unique opportunities.

"The Indian survey findings suggest population anxieties have seeped into large portions of the general public," said Andrea Wojnar, UNFPA's India representative. "Yet population numbers should not trigger anxiety or create alarm. Instead, they should be seen as a symbol of progress, development, and aspirations if individual rights and choices are being upheld."

A healthy and competitive workforce is needed to maximize the gains a large population can bring. Federal and local governments should invest adequately and urgently in health and education, suggested Biswajit Dhar a professor at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning in Jawaharlal Nehru University.

But these numbers could become a liability if policymakers do not create trained workforce and enough jobs, experts warned.

The report shows 25 percent of India's population is age 0-14, 18 percent is 10-19, 26 percent is 10-24, 68 percent is 15-64, and 7 percent is over the age of 65.

Conversely, 17 percent of China's population is age 0-14, 12 percent is 10-19, 18 percent is 10-24, 69 percent is 15-64, and 14 percent is over 65. Life expectancy is also higher, at 82 for women in China and 76 for men, while for India it is 74 and 71, respectively.

India's capital New Delhi is the most populated city, with 30 million inhabitants in and around the National Capital Region followed by Mumbai with 20 million, Kolkata with 15 million and Bengaluru with 12.

"Young people have great potential to contribute to the economy," said Poonam Muttreja, executive director of the Population Foundation of India. "But for them to do that requires the country to make investments in not just education but health, nutrition and skilling for employability."

India has made significant progress in many SDGs and per-capita income has increased, federal finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Feb 1. She also said the Indian economy has increased in size, from 10th-largest to fifth in the last nine years.

But these opportunities cannot be seized if the Indian government fails to create sufficient job opportunities or make progress on training its labor force, said professor Manmohan Agarwal, the Reserve Bank of India chair at the Centre for Development Studies.

Progress is possible with labor-intensive investment, but at present the country's investments are largely driven by capital which has failed to utilize a large chunk of the workforce, Visva-Bharati University professor Sudipta Bhattacharyya said.

Equity is also a question the country must solve.

In recent years, India has embarked on several ambitious programs aimed at improving living standards such as improving electricity access and extending sanitation coverage. According to the World Bank, 70 percent of the population had electricity access in 2007, and that had increased to 93 percent by 2017. According to India's Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, basic sanitation coverage across the country has also increased to 99.45 percent. [Abridged]

PARK OUTSIDE: GM RECALLS 40,000 PICKUPS TO FIX FIRE RISK

General Motors is recalling certain Chevrolet Silverado medium-duty trucks for model year 2019 or later, following the discovery of a potential leak in brake fluid that could result in a fire.

Potentially 40,428 vehicles could be affected. They include 4500HD, 5500HD, and 6500HD models with model years between 2019 and 2023, according to documents posted by U.S. safety regulators yesterday [Macau time].

The vehicles may have a brake pressure sensor assembly that

allows brake fluid to leak and cause a short circuit. That in turn increases the risk of a fire that could occur when the vehicle is either driving or parked.

GM advises owners with potentially affected models to park outdoors and away from structures until the recall repair is done. Vehicles with model years before 2019 used a different design.

GM said it's not aware of any injuries related to the condition.

THE BUZZ



Lula and his wife Rosângela with Marcelo in Lisbon

BRAZIL'S LULA KICKS OFF VISIT TO EUROPEAN ALLY PORTUGAL

HELENA ALVES, LISBON

PORTUGAL'S president welcomed President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil on an official visit Saturday, as the Brazilian leader looks to strengthen ties with his country's natural partner in the European Union.

Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa received Lula and Brazilian first lady Rosângela da Silva in an official ceremony at the Jeronimos Monastery in Lisbon.

Portugal is home to over 250,000 Brazilians, and some were on hand to cheer the visiting president.

During his first joint press conference with Sousa, Lula avoided feeding the controversy regarding his recent comments about Western military aid fueling Ukraine and Russia's conflict.

"My country took the decision long ago to condemn Russia for the occupation of the space and violating the territorial integrity of Ukraine, in the first days, and we have voted in the U.N. in this regard," he said.

The Brazilian leader reiterated his proposal that a group of nations including Brazil mediate a peaceful resolution to the war.

"I never equaled both

countries, because I know what an invasion is and what territorial integrity is. And all of us think Russia is wrong and we already condemned it in every UN decision", he stated.

Although Lula backed down from his comments regarding the war he made during his trip to China last week, Brazil's president also said Saturday that neither Ukraine nor Russia wanted to cease the conflict.

This is Lula's first trip to an European country since he defeated incumbent Jair Bolsonaro and won a third non-consecutive term in October. While in Portugal, the left-wing leader aims to secure about a dozen agreements on trade and migration.

The relaunch of a Portugal-Brazil summit, which was last held in 2016 when Michel Temer was Brazil's president, was planned as the diplomatic highlight of the trip.

In an event with Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa, Lula announced the signings of 13 bilateral agreements, including a cooperation deal between the space agencies of Brazil and Portugal. He affirmed the importance of maintaining commercial and humanitarian relations with Portugal.

Before departing for Spain tomorrow, Lula's

itinerary includes a prize-giving ceremony today to honor renowned Brazilian musician Chico Buarque and a visit to Brazilian airline manufacturer Embraer's factory near Lisbon.

Lula tweeted images of his arrival in Lisbon that showed him walking down a red carpet accompanied by his wife, Rosângela.

Lula's trip to Portugal is an opportunity to repair some of the damage to Brazil-EU relations his comments on the war in Ukraine caused, said Guilherme Casarões, a political scientist at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation, a think tank and university in Sao Paulo.

"It could be an important step for Lula to show that he is really willing to adopt a position of balance or equidistance between the parties involved in the conflict, potentially allowing Brazil to play the role of mediator in the medium term," Casarões said.

Lula is scheduled to attend a prize-giving ceremony today for Brazilian musician and writer Chico Buarque.

Lula plans to address Portugal's parliament tomorrow, which is the anniversary of the 1974 Carnation Revolution that ended nearly a half-century of authoritarian rule in Portugal. **MDT/AP**



Germany A suspect has been arrested over last week's stabbing attack at a gym in the western city of Duisburg in which four people were seriously wounded, authorities said. The man, a 26-year-old Syrian citizen, was arrested shortly after midnight, police and prosecutors said in a statement. Police on Friday had released pictures of a man sought in the attack after obtaining footage from a surveillance camera located near the John Reed Fitness studio where the attack took place late Tuesday.



UK Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab grudgingly resigned last week after an independent investigation found he bullied civil servants, though he criticized the findings as "flawed." Raab's announcement came the day after Prime Minister Rishi Sunak received the investigation report into eight formal complaints that Raab, who was also justice secretary, had been abusive toward staff members during a previous stint in that office and while serving as Britain's foreign secretary and Brexit secretary. Attorney Adam Tolley, who conducted the inquiry and noted that "bullying" was not a legal term, found Raab "acted in a way which was intimidating," was "unreasonably and persistently aggressive" and "introduced an unwarranted punitive element" to his leadership style.



Serbia The populist leaders of Serbia and Hungary observed a Serbian military exercise Saturday, an event seen as a display of lethal firepower amid the war in Ukraine and tensions in the Balkans. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban arrived in Serbia on a previously unannounced visit. He was greeted by Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, who said he was happy "to once again welcome a great friend of Serbia." "Serbian-Hungarian relations are at the highest level in the history of our countries," Vucic wrote on Instagram.