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**EDUCATION: CHINA PLANS TO ALLOW FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES FROM MACAU AND HONG KONG SARS TO INDEPENDENTLY OPERATE IN HAINAN**

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AP PHOTO



**Indian** Defense Minister Rajnath Singh met with visiting Chinese Defense Minister Li Shangfu and “had frank discussions about the developments in the India-China border areas as well as bilateral relations,” India’s Defense Ministry said. Singh told Li that “development of relations between India and China is premised on the prevalence of peace and tranquility at the borders,” and that all border issues need to be resolved in accordance with existing agreements and commitments.

AP PHOTO



**China** Ya Ya the giant panda landed yesterday in Shanghai after departing from the Memphis Zoo in Tennessee, where she spent the past 20 years on loan. The popular panda’s trip was closely followed online. People shared screenshots tracking Ya Ya’s flight path into Shanghai. “Finally back at home!” cheered one user in response to the news.

AP PHOTO



**Asia** must rapidly cut fossil fuel subsidies and plow more money into a clean energy transition to avoid catastrophic climate change that puts its own development at risk, according to a new report yesterday from the ADB. The region’s economic development is being fueled in a carbon-intensive way that is well above the world average, said David Raitzer, an ADB economist and one of the authors of the report. He urged quick action on an energy transition for greater benefits and lower costs.

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# COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY IS ESSENTIAL TO NAVIGATING A CHANGING WORLD

– NEW RESEARCH IN MICE SHOWS HOW YOUR BRAIN LEARNS NEW RULES

**VIKAAS SOHAL**  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

**KATHLEEN CHO**  
INSERM

**B**EING flexible and learning to adapt when the world changes is something you practice every day. Whether you run into a new construction site and have to reroute your commute or download a new streaming app and have to relearn how to find your favorite show, changing familiar behaviors in response to new situations is an essential skill.

To make these adaptations, your brain changes its activity patterns within a structure called the prefrontal cortex – an area of the brain critical for cognitive functions such as attention, planning and decision-making. But which specific circuits “tell” the prefrontal cortex to update its activity patterns in order to change behavior have been unknown.

We are a team of neuroscientists who study how the brain processes information and what happens when this function is impaired. In our newly published research, we discovered a special

class of neurons in the prefrontal cortex that may enable flexible behavior and, when they malfunction, may lead to conditions such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

## INHIBITORY NEURONS AND LEARNING NEW RULES

Inhibitory neurons dampen the activity of other neurons in the brain. Researchers have traditionally assumed they send their electrical and chemical outputs only to nearby neurons. However, we found a particular class of inhibitory neurons in the prefrontal cortex that communicate across long distances to neurons in the opposite hemisphere of the brain.

We wondered whether these long-range inhibitory connections are involved in coordinating changes in activity patterns across the left and right prefrontal cortex. By doing so, they might provide the critical signals that help you change your behavior at the right moment.

To test the function of these long-range inhibitory connections, we observed mice performing a task that required them to learn a rule to receive a reward

and then later adapt to a new rule in order to continue receiving the reward. In this task, mice dug in bowls to find hidden food. Initially, the smell of garlic or the presence of sand within a bowl might indicate the location of the hidden food. The specific cue associated with the reward would later change, forcing the mice to learn a new rule.

We found that silencing the long-range inhibitory connections between the left and right prefrontal cortex caused the mice to get stuck, or perseverate, on one rule and prevented them from learning new ones. They were unable to change gears and learn that the old cue was now meaningless and the new cue signaled food.

## BRAIN WAVES AND FLEXIBLE BEHAVIOR

We also made surprising discoveries about how these long-range inhibitory connections create behavioral flexibility. Specifically, they synchronize a set of “brain waves” called gamma oscillations across the two hemispheres. Gamma oscillations are rhythmic fluctuations in brain activity that

occur roughly 40 times per second. These fluctuations can be detected during many cognitive functions, such as when performing a task that requires holding information in your memory or making different movements based on what you see on a computer screen.

Though scientists have observed the presence of gamma oscillations for many decades, their function has been controversial. Many researchers think that the synchronization of these rhythmic fluctuations across different brain regions doesn't serve any useful purpose. Others have speculated that synchronization across different brain regions enhances communication between those regions.

We found a completely different potential role for gamma synchrony. When long-range inhibitory connections synchronize gamma oscillations across the left and right prefrontal cortex, they seem to also gate communication between them. When mice learn to disregard a previously established rule that no longer leads to a reward, these connections synchronize gamma oscillations

and seem to stop one hemisphere from maintaining unneeded activity patterns in the other. In other words, long-range inhibitory connections seem to stop input from one hemisphere from “getting in the way” of the other when it is trying to learn something new.

For example, the left prefrontal cortex can “remind” the right prefrontal cortex about your usual route to work. But when long-range inhibitory connections synchronize these two areas, they also seem to shut off these reminders and enable new patterns of brain activity corresponding to your new commute to take hold.

Finally, these long-range inhibitory connections also trigger long-lasting effects. Shutting off these connections just once caused mice to have trouble learning new rules several days later. Conversely, rhythmically stimulating these connections to artificially synchronize gamma oscillations can reverse these deficits and restore normal learning.

## COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY AND SCHIZOPHRENIA

Long-range inhibitory connections play an important role in cognitive flexibility. The inability to appropriately update previously learned rules is one hallmark form of cognitive impairment in psychiatric conditions such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

Research has also seen deficiencies in gamma synchronization and abnormalities in a class of prefrontal inhibitory neurons, which includes the ones we studied, in people with schizophrenia. In this context, our study suggests that treatments that target these long-range inhibitory connections may help improve cognition in people with schizophrenia by synchronizing gamma oscillations.

Many details of how these connections affect brain circuits remain unknown. For example, we do not know exactly which cells within the prefrontal cortex receive input from these long-range inhibitory connections and change their activity patterns to learn new rules. We also do not know whether there are specific molecular pathways that produce the long-lasting changes in neural activity. Answering these questions could reveal how the brain flexibly switches between maintaining and updating old information and potentially lead to new treatments for schizophrenia and other psychiatric conditions.

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HO IAT SENG IN BELGIUM

# CE meets Secretary-General for Economic and Global Issues of EU's EEAS

RENATO MARQUES

**O**N his last stop before returning to Macau, Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng met the Deputy Secretary-General for Economic and Global Issues for the European External Action Service (EEAS) of the European Union (EU), Helena König in Brussels, Belgium.

The meeting addressed various topics including the strengthening of trade relations between Macau and the EU and post-pandemic economic recovery.

As in other meetings of the 10-day tour, the CE briefed König on the current situation and development direction of Macau, particularly noting the pandemic's effects and the



perspective of post-pandemic recovery.

The CE extended an invitation to all present to visit Macau to experience

the city's latest developments.

Ho noted the EU, as Macau's second-largest trading partner, has a strate-

gic role in Macau.

Ho said the region is keen to welcome EU member state entrepreneurs seeking more business opportunities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area, and the Guangdong-Macau Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

König said the meeting was very productive and noted the advancements and opportunities currently offered in Macau and the region.

The meeting was also attended by several officials representing the EU, such as Political Assistant of the EEAS Deputy Secretary-General for Economic and Global Issues, Suvi Roponen; and Head of EEAS's Division for China, Dominic Porter.

## HO IAT SENG MEETS CHINA'S AMBASSADOR TO BELGIUM AT EUROPEAN TOUR'S END

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng met with the Head of the Chinese Mission to the European Union (EU) Ambassador, Fu Cong, and the Ambassador of China to Belgium, Cao Zhongming in his Belgium visit.

Both meetings discussed promoting ties between Macau and EU member states, including Belgium, as well as promoting people-to-people exchanges.

The trip, the first overseas visit in three years due to the pandemic, aimed "to strengthen Macau's ties with Portugal, Luxembourg and Belgium," Ho said.

It also sought "to promote the latest developments in Macau, the Guangdong-Macau Intensive Cooperation

Zone in Hengqin, and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area."

Aiming to foster further progress in Macau's economic development, cultural and tourism sectors and society, the Belgium Embassy promised to work closely with the MSAR in numerous sectors, such as economics and trade, tourism, Big Health, modern financial services, high and new technology, conventions and exhibitions, sports and people-to-people exchanges.

The CE noted on several occasions, his desire "to expand Macau's international tourism market, to deepen cooperation in economic and trade matters, and to attract a greater number of foreign investors."

EDUCATION

## CHINA PLANS TO ALLOW FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES FROM SARs TO INDEPENDENTLY OPERATE IN HAINAN

**C**HINA has released a plan to permit foreign higher education institutions and those from the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions and Taiwan to independently set up and run universities and higher vocational schools in the Hainan Free Trade Zone (FTZ), as cited in a report by China Daily.

Previously, universities outside the Chinese mainland needed to cooperate with a local partner to run schools on the mainland, according to the paper.

Reputable overseas universities specializing in the fields of science, engineering, agriculture and medicine can open campuses in Hainan, according to the plan released by the Ministry of Education and the provincial government of Hainan.

The universities are encouraged to introduce advanced courses and tea-



ching materials and admit foreign students, and they can also enroll students from the mainland through the national enrollment policy, according to the plan.

Allowing foreign universities to independently operate in the Hainan FTZ shows the determination and confidence of China to accelerate high-quality education opening-up, which will be more in-depth, proactive and flexible,

Lin Jinhui, director of the center of research on Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools at Xiamen University, was quoted as saying.

The favorable policies in Hainan are expected to attract more foreign universities to open campuses in China and Chinese students can have more options to enjoy high-quality education without going overseas, he said. **MDT/XINHUA**

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### HKZMB EXPECTED TO SEE 92,000 CROSSINGS IN GOLDEN WEEK

The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge is expecting approximately 92,000 passengers per day during the May Golden Week, according to Hong Kong's Immigration Department. The Transport Bureau (DSAT) has coordinated with bus companies connecting the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge border posts to increase the number of buses in operation and trips depending on passenger demand. The local airport authority believes the number of aircraft passengers will stand at 14,000, which is an increase of approximately 20% compared to April.

### GP FAMILY CARNIVAL POSTPONED

The Macau Grand Prix Organizing Committee announced that the 70th Macau Grand Prix - Family Carnival, originally scheduled for April on 29 to 30, has been postponed due to predicted unstable weather. The new date will be announced in due course. The Macau Grand Prix will be held on November 11-12 and 16-19. The Macau Grand Prix Organizing Committee is going to hold a series of activities to give residents and tourists an early taste of the festive atmosphere, organizers said in a statement.

### STATS

## CITY SEES 23 SUICIDE CASES IN Q1

**M**ACAU has seen 23 suicides in the first quarter of this year, 16 men and eight women, aged between 18 and 92.

This is eight cases more than the previous quarter, according to Health Bureau (SSM) data.

Among the 23 cases, 19 were Macau residents, accounting for 82.6%, and four were non-local residents.

Data analysis has revealed that the suicides were likely related to mental illness, chronic illness or physical illness.

The Health Bureau said that suicides are complex and often involve mental illness, psychological factors, socioeconomic factors, family factors, interpersonal relationship factors and biological genetic factors.

"Effective suicide prevention requires the attention and active participation of all people as gatekeepers," SSM said.

Last year, the bureau recorded 80 suicides, a significant increase from the 60 cases in 2021.

March data from the of Bosco Youth Service Network showed that the number of teenagers



seeking mental health services has remained steady this year. According to the network, 35% of middle school students are still suffering "severe" anxiety.

The SSM has called on the public to seek help actively if they have psychological and

emotional problems, to prevent these becoming sources of pressure and mental illness. At the same time, the SSM has pledged to keep monitoring the social situation and providing assistance to people in need.

The Social Welfare Bureau

(IAS) encourages residents to be conscious of their psychological and emotional state as well as those of their relatives and friends. If in need, residents can call Caritas' Life Hope hotline (28525222) or IAS' counseling hotline (28261126).LV

AD

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# March Hotel occupancy 77% amid growing tourist numbers

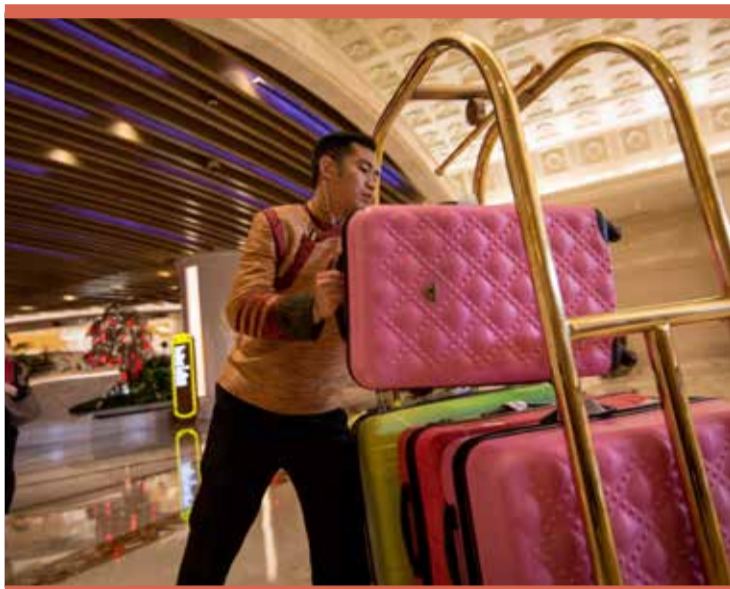
**T**HE average occupancy rate of guest rooms in March stood at 77%, the highest figure the sector has recorded so far in three years.

The rates for 5-star (77.2%) and 2-star hotels (80.9%) surged 50.2 percentage points and 46.2 percentage points respectively, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

The continued rise in the occupancy rate comes after the tourism board's continued promotion of the city to neighboring regions and the international market.

However, the rising number of tourist arrivals remain a challenge for the hotel sector due to staff shortages.

The Times is aware that some integrated resorts are requiring employees to work an extra half day shift, meaning the work schedule runs 12 hours a day due to lack of staff as they await increased quotas for non-resident workers.



Meanwhile, guests from mainland China (694,000), Hong Kong (186,000) and Taiwan (13,000) jumped by 156.9%, 933.7% and 478.4% respectively, whereas local guests (49,000) fell 31.4%.

There were nearly 1.96 million tourist arrivals in March as the city ramped up its tourism marketing to visitors from the

mainland and the international market.

Further, in the first quarter of 2023, the average occupancy rate of guest rooms of hotel establishments went up by 33.9 percentage points year-on-year to 74.7%. The number of guests soared by 96.3% year-on-year to 2,699,000, while their average length of stay decreased by 0.2

night to 1.7 nights.

In March, the number of visitors arriving on package tours totaled 93,000, occupying a majority of the 110,000 recorded for the first quarter of this year.

A total of 126 hotel establishments offered accommodation services to the public in March, an increase of six year on year. Besides, the number of available guest rooms grew by 0.7 percent to 39,000, showed the report.

Meanwhile, hotel rooms are almost fully booked, and it is estimated occupancy rates will reach 90% or above throughout the May Golden Week, according to the Hotel and Tourism Chamber of Commerce.

The price of a 3-star to 4-star hotel is about MOP1,500 to 2,500, and up to MOP5,000 for 5-star hotels.

It is believed that there will be no significant price hikes during the May Day holiday.

As for budget hotels, room rates may exceed MOP1,000. **LV**

## IAM TO SET UP COLLECTION POINTS FOR LARGE FURNITURE

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) will establish 60 temporary collection points for large unwanted furniture items in the different districts of the city from May 1 to 7. Of the 60 temporary collection points, 50 will be in the Macau Peninsula, six in Taipa and four in Coloane. IAM urges the public to dispose of unwanted furniture items properly during the specified period and locations to avoid affecting environmental hygiene, as well as pedestrian and traffic safety.

## PROJECTS ON BIOTECH, SMART CITY PRESENT IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMPETITION

The Bank of China Trophy One Million Dollar Macao Regional Entrepreneurship Competition was held at the University of Macau (UM) again this year. The shortlisted teams will compete in the Macau regional final. The top three teams from the regional final will represent Macau in the national final, where they will compete with other regional finalists for the grand prize of over RMB1 million as start-up capital as well as financing opportunities. During the trade show and elevator pitch session, the participating teams showcased their projects covering topics such as medical equipment, biotechnology, smart city and financial technology.

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### FERRY NUMBERS INCREASED DURING GOLDEN WEEK

Ferry operator TurboJet has announced increased services during the May Golden Week, with a new maximum of 66 daily trips to and from Hong Kong and Macau. Special services will be added on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, increasing service frequency to every 15 minutes on weekends at the Macau Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal and the Taipa Terminal.

### A PETITION TO ADDRESS UNEMPLOYMENT

A group has handed a petition at the government Headquarters hoping the authority will focus on the unemployment problem and continue to introduce measures to benefit residents. "The unemployment rate is high, wages are stagnant and the inflation rate is climbing," the secretary general of People Power Macau, Lam Weng Loi, said, before adding it is reflective of "declining living standards," as cited in media reports. The group expects the introduction of measures, including consumption stimulation, to help needy residents solve immediate hardships caused by unemployment.

### AUTHORITIES HOLD EMERGENCY RESPONSE DRILLS IN ENVIRONMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURES

The Environmental Protection Services Bureau has conducted simulation exercises in the environmental infrastructures under its responsibility to prevent incidents caused by typhoons. The drills simulated public power grid instability and flooding in low-lying city areas during a typhoon. They also test capacity to quickly remove a large amount of garbage. During the operation, the solid waste incineration plant, the wastewater treatment plant and the landfill for construction material waste were mobilized.

### PUBLIC WORKS

# CPU MEMBERS CALL FOR MORE BALANCE IN DEFINING LAND PURPOSES

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) should be more balanced and not opt for a single and restrictive purpose when considering uses of land plots, said members of the Urban Planning Committee (CPU) yesterday.

Álvaro Rodrigues, supported by Vong Kock Kei, among other committee members, noted the DSSCU should allow land owners and developers more options when deciding land purposes for private land plots under the urban conditions plan (PCU).

The DSSCU has proposed only commercial purposes (C1 and C2) for a land plot at Rua Formosa, 16-16A, in central Macau. It has not considered other options, such as residential, for which is what the current building has been used since at least 1966, according to Rodrigues.

The four-story Edifício Campo building is currently dedicated to housing, including the ground floor.

The DSSCU's decision under a PCU to change the building's purpose to commercial use surprised several CPU members with Rodrigues saying that even the building registry shows the building is residential use only.

Another member noted that a PCU issued for the same plot



a few years ago referred to its "non-industrial purpose," a former designation indicating land plots can be used for all purposes except industrial units.

The DSSCU rejected several members' proposal that an H2 (residential) purpose be added as an option.

The committee's vice president defended the C1 and C2 designation saying "this area is considered a commercial area and that is why we defined it as commercial purpose," noting

that while other purposes are not excluded, the designation demands that at least 50% of the area should be dedicated to commercial spaces.

Independently of the purpose, the DSSCU has attributed to the plot a maximum construction height of 20.5 meters, a fraction of the height authorized around two years ago to the land plot immediately next door at Rua Formosa 12-14, which the PCU capped at a maximum height of 75 meters and with the number of stories ranging between 20 and 24.

Although some members expressed dissatisfaction, including the architect and President of the Board of Directors of the Architects Association of Macau, Christine Choi, the PCU was approved with the DSSCU's initial proposed conditions.

### PRAISE FOR COLOANE LAND PLOT'S CHANGED PURPOSE

**COMMITTEE** member Kou Ngon Seng praised the government for withdrawing its plan to use a Coloane land plot to store hazardous materials and repurposing it for the construction of a recycled water plant. The land plot became the center of an uproar when a few years ago, the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, announced the government's intention to use it as a storage facility for

hazardous materials and products. Residents protested the idea citing safety concerns. The government has now proposed the construction of a recycled water plant occupying 2,930 square meters instead. The building has a maximum proposed height of 20.5 meters and 30% of the area is to have planted vegetation or be filled with green potted plants.

# Revamp of Green Villas at Coronel Mesquita approved with fewer restrictions than expected

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Urban Planning Committee (CPU) has greenlighted the project to transform the green villas at the Avenida do Coronel Mesquita in Macau into a commercial complex dedicated to the cultural and creative industries.

The CPU made the decision in a meeting yesterday afternoon.

The project, led by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), surprised some committee members by being "less restrictive than expected" in the preservation of the houses, some members, including Christine Choi, said. Choi recalled that back

in 2010, there was already an urban conditions plan (PCU) issued for the same space which noted the necessity of preserving the trees as well as the housing façades and other characteristics.

The architect noted that, in yesterday's PCU, the IC had imposed fewer restrictions as they were issuing the opinion of the owner of the project in addition to the preservation.

An IC representative said that in 2010, when the first PCU was issued, the Cultural Heritage Safeguarding Law establishing standards did not exist. He noted that in this case some changes need to be made to the hou-



ses, namely at the roof level to comply with fire safety regulations.

"It is worth preserving the façade [of the building] as well as some other characteristics, but there must be

a balance between heritage preservation and utility," the IC representative said.

The same conditions were also in the public consultation that took place over 15 days between

April 4 and April 18, a period during which the Land and Urban Construction Bureau only received one submission that was about the diversion of the sewage piping system.

PHILANTHROPY

# Take Our Kids to Work Day turns 30, hopes donations rebound

THALIA BEATY, NEW YORK

**A**T Michigan State University, children of employees can spend today seeing what it's like to staff a dairy farm, work in sports or plant a tree at the school's first in-person Take Our Kids to Work Day since the pandemic began.

Some 1,500 employees and kids have registered and the university has invited staff to bring any child in their life to explore the campus.

"This is a way that people can see each other and meet their families, show off MSU, which is designated a family friendly university," said Jaimie Hutchison, director of the university's WorkLife Office. "It also allows people to see what others do across campus and have more pride in the institution that they work for."

MSU's plans recall the roots of Take Our Kids to Work Day, which celebrates its 30th anniversary on April 27. However, much has changed since then.

The idea of Take Our Kids to Work Day seemed like part of a bygone era in recent years because, due to the pandemic, there weren't a lot of workplaces to take them.

Many parents were always taking their kids to work — or taking their work to wherever the kids were — in the dawn of the work-from-home era caused by COVID-19. And for parents who needed to head to a workplace, precautions over limiting the spread of the disease generally



AP PHOTO

kept their kids away.

This year, though, The Take Our Daughters And Sons To Work Foundation, the nonprofit that promotes the day, hopes to remind people of the importance of showing kids where their parents work. The foundation also hopes to get some help to ensure its survival.

The foundation, which marks the day annually on the third Thursday in April, was led for years by Carolyn McKecuen, an entrepreneur, artist and MacAr-

thur Fellow, who Dave Oliveria, the foundation's interim executive director, called the linchpin of the organization. She died in November.

"The board is trying to pick up the pieces to just keep it going," Oliveria said. The foundation lost money last year and currently has no employees.

This year, it is partnering with Junior Achievement USA to host a virtual event that will include a gameshow format where panelists will answer questions about

their careers.

In the coastal town of Brigantine, New Jersey, school superintendent Glenn Robbins is encouraging his staff to bring their children to school and for students to accompany their parents to their workplaces Thursday. He estimates that around 30% of students will participate.

"It makes them appreciate things that they might not see when they're stuck in a school building every day for five days a week," he said.

Over the years, educators and schools have complained that having some students taken out of class is more disruptive than helpful.

Thirty years ago, the head of the Ms. Foundation for Women, Marie Wilson, was inspired by research into the flagging self-esteem of girls when they reached adolescence to suggest that parents bring their daughters to work to expand their sense of possibility.

The foundation's cofounder, Gloria Steinem, mentioned the idea in an interview and in the spring of 1993, "Take Our Daughters to Work" day exploded into reality.

"It challenged the workplace to be responsive to the family needs in some ways, even making people aware that many people had children at home," said Teresa Younger, president and CEO of the Ms. Foundation for Women.

Women's participation in the work force has been largely flat since 2000, after picking up in

the 1990s. About three-quarters of women aged 25 through 54, a group that filters out students and retirees, were in the workforce in 1993, a figure that reached nearly 78% this year, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The pandemic disproportionately drove women out of the workforce and they returned more slowly even after lockdown measures ended and available jobs again increased.

The name and date of the day has changed since it started, including boys officially in 2003, though many workplaces have used "kid" or "child" for years. Also, companies and workplaces are free to organize a day for employees to bring their children to work whenever and however they like, said Oliveria.

Around 1,000 kids have registered for this year's livestream, Junior Achievement US said. But it has always been difficult to measure participation, Oliveria said, but this year's participation likely represents a sharp decline from the 18 million kids that the organization said participated between 2005 and 2009.

"I don't see evidence of a million people, but I think that many companies can do their own thing and we wouldn't know," Oliveria said. "That's just a tough thing to put your arms around."

Younger said she understands the difficulty of continuing to meet the needs of the current moment.

"That's the challenge of every legacy organization, is: how do we respond to the challenges of now and continue to integrate the work as it needs to be?" she asked.

Bringing a child to work is still a meaningful way to create a more economically and socially equitable society, she said. "It holds industry accountable for the opportunities that they provide for the next generation and the exposure they provide." **MDT/AP**

## CORPORATE BITS

### Melco launches Mother's Day spa promos



Melco has launched promotions for Mother's Day, where Melco Style WeChat members will receive a gift when they make a dining reservation at Jade Dragon at

City of Dreams or L'attitude at Morpheus, Pearl Dragon or Rossi Trattoria at Studio City, Ying or Aurora at Altira Macau.

Between May 1 and 31,

Forbes Travel Guide five-star Zensa Spa will offer a "Just for Mom" spa package, which includes a 60-minute aromatherapy customized body massage, 30-minute express facial, 90-minute standard manicure or pedicure and a detoxifying ginger tea. Guests will also enjoy complimentary access to the outdoor swimming pool and wet spa facilities on the day.

From May 1 to 31, Altira Spa will offer a "Mother's Day Pampering" spa package with a 75-minute aroma relaxing massage and a spa manicure service, which will send mothers on a luxurious and pampering spa journey.

### Parisian Macao's Brasserie to launch 'French GourMay 2023' dinner



The Parisian Macao's Brasserie will celebrate the 14th edition of its French GourMay Food & Wine Festival,

the only major festival in Hong Kong and Macau dedicated to French gastronomy.

The event's theme will be "Bubble Up," highlighting France's famed sparkling wines, such as Crémant d'Alsace and Pol Roger Brut Réserve Champagne, making "gastronomic philosophies accessible to everyone," as cited in a statement issued by the group.

French Executive Chef Daniel Brolese has designed a special four-course French GourMay menu that will include many specialties from France, such as foie gras, Bouillabaisse-style fish soup, Toulouse sausage, and Rum baba.

The four-course menu is only available for dinner from April 28 to May 31, 2023 (except May 13 and 14), and is priced at MOP 648 per person.

AP PHOTO



Russian President Vladimir Putin (right) speaks to President Xi Jinping as they attend an official welcome ceremony at The Grand Kremlin Palace, in Moscow, March 21

ANALYSIS

# CHINA'S UKRAINE PLAN MIXES PEACE, SELF-INTEREST

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

**C**HINESE leader Xi Jinping's plan to send an envoy to Ukraine allows his government to deflect criticism of its support for Moscow and pursue a bigger role as a diplomatic force, but Xi faces daunting obstacles if he is serious about trying to help end the 14-month-old war.

The biggest: Neither Ukraine nor Russia is ready to stop fighting.

Xi's announcement in a phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy prompted optimism Beijing might use its warm relations with Russia's Vladimir Putin to push for peace. That was followed by skeptical questions about whether Beijing is more focused on ending an invasion it refuses to criticize, or serving its own interests.

China's starting point is a peace proposal issued in February that called for a cease-fire, negotiations and an end to sanctions against Russia. It offered few details, but repeated Russian accusations that Western governments were to blame for the invasion.

China has good reasons to want to see the war ended. It jolted the Chinese economy by pushing up oil, wheat and other commodity prices. Beijing war-

ned Wednesday about the dangers of nuclear war, after Russia announced earlier it would move atomic weapons into neighboring Belarus.

"China's self-interest happens to align with ending the war," said John Delury, an international relations specialist at Yonsei University in Seoul.

"Beijing has no interest in seeing Russia humiliated, nor is it in China's interest for Russia to be triumphant," Delury said. "The best option is a cease-fire and, with it, economic opportunities to participate in Ukraine's post-war reconstruction." The statement gave no indication how China might recommend addressing the questions the two countries are fighting over, including Crimea, the Black Sea peninsula seized by Moscow from Ukraine in 2014.

## PLAYING PEACEMAKER HELPS BEIJING IN EUROPE

By playing peacemaker, Beijing might also be looking to separate European allies from the United States, which Xi accuses of trying to block China's economic and political rise.

Beijing is trying to repair relations with Europe after an uproar over a Chinese ambassador's comment that former Soviet republics might not be sovereign countries. That group

includes Ukraine, and European Union members Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Leaders including French President Emmanuel Macron have visited Beijing and appealed for help with Ukraine, highlighting the challenges faced by Washington in holding together allies to oppose China's assertive policies abroad.

"Trying to drive a wedge between the U.S. and European partners is an important goal," said Alexander Gabuev of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "For that, China needs to pretend that it's an active force for peace."

Xi's call with Zelenskyy might sustain European hopes that China can be persuaded to "wield its influence to help end the war" but is "unlikely to change the Western assessment of Beijing's stance as one of 'pro-Russian neutrality,'" said Eurasia Group analysts in a report.

## XI SHOWS HE DOESN'T ALWAYS SUPPORT PUTIN

The announcement gives Beijing a chance to show it doesn't always agree with Moscow, though the differences might be too subtle for Western critics. They complain China helps Putin resist Western sanctions by purchasing Russian oil

and gas and provides political support.

Xi's government sees the Kremlin as a partner in opposing U.S. domination of global affairs. China has used its status as one of five permanent U.N. Security Council members to block efforts to censure Russia.

Xi and Putin said in a joint statement before the February 2022 invasion their governments had a "no limits friendship." Their navies held joint exercises with Iran in March.

Despite that, the Chinese government says they have a "non-alliance" relationship. Beijing has promised not to supply armaments to either side in the Ukraine war.

"China has never taken one side," said Da Wei, an international relations specialist at Tsinghua University in Beijing and director of its Center for Strategic and Security Studies.

"Which Western leader has maintained communication with leaders of both parties directly involved in the crisis?" said Da. "I think this call is an indication of China's fair and impartial objective in promoting peace talks."

A Chinese statement yesterday [Macau time] also cited "mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity" as a foundation of relations with Ukraine.

While Russia is trying to move borders by annexing portions of Ukraine, Beijing is intensely sensitive about respecting territorial sovereignty. It says borders must be respected and no country has a right to meddle in another's affairs.

## BEIJING'S EFFORT TO RAISE GLOBAL PROFILE

Positioning itself as a mediator also helps Beijing as it pursues a bigger role in managing global affairs as part of efforts to restore China to what the Communist Party sees as its rightful place as a political, economic and cultural leader.

Beijing should "actively participate in the reform and construction of the global governance system" and promote "global security initiatives," Xi said in March. A proposal for a "Global Security Initiative" issued in February said China is "ready to conduct bilateral and multilateral security cooperation with all countries."

Also in March, Saudi Arabia and Iran announced the end of a 7-year diplomatic split following Chinese-organized talks. This year, Xi's government has also offered to mediate Israeli-Palestinian talks, set up a new Middle East security structure, and help African countries resolve disputes.

If Beijing can organize peace talks, "that backs up Xi Jinping's ambitions to being a global power," said Delury.

China's diplomatic ambition is a reversal from decades of staying out of other countries' disputes and most international affairs to focus on economic development.

Its peacemaking initiatives are also at odds with confrontational Chinese behavior toward its neighbors in territorial disputes and threats to attack Taiwan, the self-ruled island democracy claimed by Beijing as part of its territory.

## DIM HOPES FOR PEACE TALKS

Zelenskyy's government said in a statement his conversation with Xi might lead toward "possible interaction with the aim of establishing a just and sustainable peace for Ukraine." Zelenskyy said March 29 he had invited Xi to visit, but neither government has indicated whether that might happen.

Despite that, political analysts see little chance for progress. Ukraine is believed to be preparing a new offensive to recapture Russian-occupied territory.

A resolution is "maybe years, even decades, away, because the Russian and Ukrainian positions are still miles apart," said Gabuev.

Shi Yinhong, an international relations specialist at Renmin University in Beijing, noted Russia's Foreign Ministry has said peace talks are "almost impossible," while Zelenskyy stressed to Xi the importance of recovering all captured territory.

"Neither side in the war materially echoed China's initiative, which fell far short of what they were striving for," said Shi.

MDT/AP



DIPLOMACY

# Ukraine's Zelenskyy upbeat after talk with Xi

DAVID RISING  
& JOE MCDONALD, KYIV

**U**KRAINIAN President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he and Chinese leader Xi Jinping had a "long and meaningful" phone call yesterday [Macau time], their first known contact since Russia invaded Ukraine over a year ago, and Beijing appointed an envoy to pursue a "political settlement."

The hour-long call came two months after Beijing, which has long been aligned with Russia, said it wanted to act as a mediator and a month after Xi visited Moscow. The call also coincided with indications that Ukraine is readying its forces for a spring counteroffensive.

Zelenskyy was upbeat about the conversation, which offered him the chance to insert his views into what had been a bilateral dialogue between Moscow and Beijing. Russian President Vladimir Putin is eager to keep Xi close as a counterweight to the United States, which has sided with Ukraine.

"I believe that this call, as well as the appointment of Ukraine's ambassador to China, will give a powerful impetus to the development of our bilateral relations," Zelenskyy said on Facebook.

An official readout on his website called the conversation "productive" and said it leads the way toward "possible interaction with the aim of establishing a just and sustainable peace for Ukraine."

Zelenskyy emphasized the need to regain all Ukrainian lands and stated, "There can be no peace at the expense of territorial compromises."

In an indirect reference to U.S. reports that China had considered supplying weapons to Russia for its war, Zelenskyy's office said he asked countries to refrain from doing so because "any support -- even partial -- is converted by Russia into the continuation of its aggression, into its further rejection of peace." China has said it won't supply weapons to either side in the conflict.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said Beijing's "core stance is to facilitate talks for peace," announcing that an envoy — a former ambassador to Russia — would visit Ukraine to seek a "political settlement."

The ministry's statement struck a positive tone, giving a nod to Kyiv's insistence that its territory cannot be broken up by Russia's annexations and making clear that Beijing values its longstanding ties with Ukraine.

"Mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity is the



Xi meets Zelenskyy (right) midway

political foundation of China-Ukraine relations," the statement said. "China's readiness to develop relations with Ukraine is consistent and clear-cut. No matter how the international situation evolves, China will work with Ukraine to advance mutually beneficial cooperation."

Analysts expressed skepticism about the prospects for peace.

The call balances China's dialogue with Russia by showing it is "recognizing Ukraine's leadership and indicating Ukraine is an important entity," said political science professor Kimberly Marten of Barnard College at Columbia University in New York.

But, she added in an interview with The Associated Press, unless undisclosed details reveal otherwise, "it's a non-starter. It's pro-Russian. I would not guess that this holds a lot of significance for ending the war."

She noted the Chinese statement didn't call for Russia to leave occupied areas or brand Russia as an aggressor, and refers to the situation as "a crisis, rather than a war."

Elizabeth Wishnick, of the U.S.-based think tank CNA and Columbia University's Weatherhead East Asian Institute, noted in an email to AP that the Chinese statement about the call contains "no mention of a Russian troop withdrawal, which, to my mind, makes this a less than serious initiative and unlikely to contribute in any major way to

ending the war, which will likely be decided on the battlefield."

In Moscow, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova commended China's approach, praising Beijing's "readiness to strive to establish a (peace) negotiations process," while slamming Kyiv's "rejection of any sound initiatives aimed at a settlement."

The White House described it as a positive development, allowing Xi to hear Ukraine's view of the "illegal, unprovoked invasion."

"We think that's a good thing," White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said.

**"The conversation was productive ... toward possible interaction with the aim of establishing a just and sustainable peace for Ukraine"**

UKRAINE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

Talks between the two leaders had been anticipated for weeks, after China produced a 12-point proposal to end the fighting, although it did not contain details.

Russia and Ukraine are far apart in their terms for peace. The Kremlin wants Kyiv to acknowledge Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the Ukrainian provinces of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia, which most nations have denounced as illegal. Ukraine

has rejected the demands and ruled out any talks with Russia until its troops pull back from all occupied territories.

Zelenskyy said in an interview with the AP last month that he hadn't spoken with Xi since the war began and invited him to visit Ukraine.

China has announced it was keen to act as mediator in the war that has reenergized NATO. Xi's position reinforces China's claim that it's neutral in the war, despite blocking U.N. efforts to condemn the Kremlin's invasion.

While Zelenskyy has moved his country closer to NATO and persuaded alliance members to send Ukraine sophisticated weapons to help defeat Russia, Beijing has echoed the Kremlin line in accusing the West of provoking the conflict and "fanning the flames" by arming Kyiv.

When China called in February for a cease-fire and peace talks between Ukraine and Russia, Zelenskyy cautiously welcomed

Beijing's involvement but said success would depend on actions, not words.

Putin warmly welcomed Xi to the Kremlin, in what was seen as a powerful message to Western leaders that their efforts to isolate Moscow over the fighting in Ukraine have fallen short.

Also, Zelenskyy used the 37th anniversary of the world's worst nuclear disaster at Chernobyl to repeat his warnings about the threat of a new atomic catas-

trophe during his country's war with Russia.

Zelenskyy drew a parallel between the Chernobyl accident on April 26, 1986, to Moscow's brief seizure of that plant and its radiation-contaminated exclusion zone following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

"Last year, the occupier not only seized the (Chernobyl) nuclear power plant, but also endangered the entire world again," Zelenskyy said in a Telegram post in English.

In other developments:

—Ukrainian and Russian officials announced the latest prisoner exchange, saying 44 Ukrainian and 40 Russian POWs were released this week. The head of the Ukrainian presidential office, Andriy Yermak, said on Telegram that the Ukrainians included soldiers, sailors, border and national guards, and two civilians.

—The head of the southeastern Zaporizhzhia Regional Military Administration, Yurii Malashko, said Russia struck 19 civilian areas with 53 artillery attacks, six rocket attacks, seven drone attacks and one airstrike overnight.

—At least two civilians were killed and 13 others were wounded in Ukraine since Tuesday, the presidential office said.

—An Italian journalist in Ukraine, Corrado Zunino, was injured and his interpreter Bogdan Bitik killed in the southern city of Kherson. Zunino, a correspondent for La Repubblica daily, told the newspaper he suspected Russian snipers hit him after passing through Ukrainian-manned checkpoints. **MDT/AP**

NEW ZEALAND

FORMER PRIME MINISTER JACINDA ARDERN TO JOIN HARVARD

STEVE LEBLANC, CAMBRIDGE

FORMER New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who led her country through a devastating mass shooting, will be temporarily joining Harvard University later this year, Kennedy School Dean Douglas Elmendorf said this week.

Ardern, a global icon of the left and an inspiration to women around the world, has been appointed to dual fellowships at the Harvard Kennedy School. She will serve as the 2023 Angelopoulos Global Public Leaders Fellow and a Hauser Leader in the school's Center for Public Leadership beginning this fall.

"Jacinda Ardern showed the world strong and empathetic political leadership," Elmendorf said in statement, adding that Ardern will "bring important insights for our students and will generate vital conversations about the public policy choices facing leaders at all levels."

Ardern, who was just 37 when she became prime minister in



Jacinda Ardern

2017, shocked New Zealanders when she announced in January she was stepping down from the role after more than 5 years because she no longer had "enough

in the tank" to do it justice. She was facing mounting political pressures at home, including for her handling of the coronavirus pandemic, which was initially wi-

dely lauded but later criticized by those opposed to mandates and rules.

She said she sees the Harvard opportunity as a chance not only to share her experience with others, but also to learn.

"As leaders, there's often very little time for reflection, but reflection is critical if we are to properly support the next generation of leaders," she said.

Ardern's time at the Cambridge, Massachusetts, university will also include a stint as the first tech governance leadership fellow at the school's Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society.

The center has been an important partner as New Zealand worked to confront violent extremism online after a white supremacist gunman killed 51 people at two mosques in the city of Christchurch in 2019, Ardern said. The gunman livestreamed the slaughter for 17 minutes on Facebook before the video was taken down.

Two months after the shooting, Ardern launched the Christchurch Call with French President

Emmanuel Macron. The initiative's goal is to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content online.

More than 50 countries joined the initiative, including the United States, Britain, Germany and South Korea, as well as technology companies like Facebook parent company Meta, Amazon, Google, Microsoft, YouTube, Zoom and Twitter.

"The Center has been an incredibly important partner as we've developed the Christchurch Call to action on addressing violent extremism online," Ardern said, adding that the fellowship will be a chance not only to work collaboratively with the center's research community, but also to work on the challenges around the growth of generative AI tools.

Jonathan Zittrain, co-founder of the Berkman Klein Center, said it's rare for a head of state to be able to immerse deeply in a complex and fast-moving digital policy issue.

"Jacinda Ardern's hard-won expertise — including her ability to bring diverse people and institutions together — will be invaluable as we all search for workable solutions to some of the deepest online problems," he said in a statement.

Ardern said she planned to return to New Zealand after the fellowships. MDT/AP

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C&C RECEIVED THE 1ST SILVER "DEIGNAN AWARD" FOR RESPONSIBLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN MACAU (2023)



AP PHOTO



A Chinese Coast Guard ship with bow number 5201 blocks Philippine Coast Guard ship BRP Malapascua as it maneuvers to enter the mouth of the Second Thomas Shoal locally known as Ayungin Shoal at the South China Sea on Sunday

## SOUTH CHINA SEA

# Face-off: Philippines confronts China over sea claims

JIM GOMEZ, ABOARD BRP MALABRIGO

A Chinese coast guard ship blocked a Philippine patrol vessel steaming into a disputed shoal in the South China Sea, causing a frightening near-collision in the latest act of Beijing's aggression in the strategic waterway.

The high seas face-off Sunday between the larger Chinese ship and the Philippine coast guard's BRP Malapascua near Second Thomas Shoal was among the tense moments it and another Philippine vessel encountered in a weeklong sovereignty patrol in one of the world's most hotly contested waterways.

The Philippine coast guard had invited a small group of journalists, including three from The Associated Press, to join the 1,670-kilometer patrol for the first time as part of a new Philippine strategy aimed at exposing China's increasingly aggressive actions in the South China Sea, where an estimated \$5 trillion in global trade transits each year.

In scorching summer heat but relatively calm waters, the Malapascua and another Philippine coast guard vessel, the BRP Malabrigo, journeyed to the frontlines of the long-seething territorial conflicts. They cruised past a string of widely scattered Philippine-occupied and claimed islands, islets and reefs looking for signs of encroachment, illegal fishing and

other threats.

In areas occupied or controlled by China, the Philippine patrol vessels received radio warnings in Chinese and halting English, ordering them to immediately leave what the Chinese coast guard and navy radio callers claimed were Beijing's "undisputable territories" and issuing unspecified threats for defiance.

Hostilities peaked Sunday morning in the Philippine-occupied Second Thomas Shoal in the Spratly archipelago, the most fiercely contested region in the busy sea channel.

As the two patrol vessels approached the shoal's shallow turquoise waters for an underwater survey, the Chinese coast guard repeatedly warned them by radio to leave the area, which is about 194 kilometers west of the Philippine island province of Palawan.

After several radio exchanges, a Chinese coast guard caller, sounding agitated, warned of unspecified adversarial action.

"Since you have disregarded our warning, we will take further necessary measures on you in accordance with the laws and any consequences entailed will be borne by you," the Chinese speaker said.

A Chinese coast guard ship rapidly approached and shadowed the smaller Malapascua and the Malabrigo. When the Malapascua maneuvered toward the mouth of the shoal, the Chinese ship suddenly

shifted to block it, coming as close as 36 to 46 meters from its bow, said Malapascua's skipper, Capt. Rodel Hernandez.

To avoid a collision, Hernandez abruptly reversed his vessel's direction then shut off its engine to bring the boat to a full stop.

Filipino personnel aboard the vessels — and journalists, who captured the tense moment on camera — watched in frightened silence. But the Malapascua steered just in time to avoid a potential disaster.

Hernandez later told journalists that the "sudden and really very dangerous maneuver" by the Chinese coast guard ship had disregarded international rules on collision avoidance. He had the Philippine vessels leave the area after the encounter for the safety of the ships and personnel.

Earlier, a huge Chinese navy ship shadowed the two Philippine patrol vessels in the dark of night as they cruised near Subi, one of seven barren reefs China has transformed in the last decade into a missile-protected island base. The Chinese navy ship radioed the Philippine vessels "to immediately leave and keep out."

The coast guard radioed back to assert Philippine sovereign rights to the area before steaming away.

China has long demanded that the Philippines withdraw its small contingent of naval forces and tow away the actively commissioned but crumbling BRP Sierra Madre. The navy ship was deliberately

marooned on the shoal in 1999 and now serves as a fragile symbol of Manila's territorial claim to the atoll.

Chinese ships often block navy vessels delivering food and other supplies to the Filipino sailors on the ship, including just a few days earlier, Hernandez said.

As hostilities between Chinese coast guard and navy ships and the Philippine patrol vessels were unfolding, Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang was in Manila, where he held talks with his Philippine counterpart and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Saturday. China was willing to work with the Philippines to resolve differences and deepen ties, Qin said.

The Chinese Embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to an AP request for comment on the encounters.

In another Philippine-claimed reef called Whitsun, the Philippine patrol vessels spotted more than 100 suspected Chinese militia ships arrayed side by side in several clusters in the shallows. China says the huge trawler-like ships are fishing vessels, but Manila's coast guard suspects they are being used for surveillance or to hold the reef for future development.

Filipino coast guard personnel aboard two motor boats approached the Chinese ships and ordered them through a loudspeaker to leave, but none did.

Philippine officials required participating journalists to not immediately

release information about the trip to ensure the safety of the mission and to give the coast guard time to brief defense, justice and foreign affairs officials in charge of handling the touchy territorial conflicts.

Faced with a militarily far-superior China in the disputed waters, the Philippines launched the campaign early this year to expose the Asian superpower's aggression, hoping public awareness and criticism will force Beijing to abide by international law.

Philippines coast guard spokesperson Commodore Jay Tarriela said the strategy was working. He noted the Chinese ambassador in Manila was prompted to hold a news conference to explain Beijing's side amid outrage over a publicly released video that showed a Chinese coast guard ship aiming a military-grade laser in early February that temporarily blinded two crewmembers of the Malapascua off Second Thomas Shoal.

"We are David," Tarriela said, likening the Philippines to the underdog hero of the Biblical story. "We believe that through the publication of all these aggressive actions of China, we would find friends who would criticize Goliath."

The territorial conflicts involving China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei have long been regarded as an Asian flashpoint and a delicate fault line in the rivalry between the United States and China in the region.

While the U.S. lays no claims to the South China Sea, it has deployed its warships and fighter jets for patrols and military exercises with regional allies to uphold freedom of navigation and overflight, which it says is in America's national interest.

Beijing has criticized a recent agreement by the Philippines and the U.S. to grant American forces access to additional Filipino military camps. China fears the access will provide Washington with 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.

Washington has repeatedly warned that it would help defend the Philippines — its oldest treaty ally in Asia — if Philippine forces, ships or aircraft are attacked in the South China Sea.

With multiple conflicts looming in what appears to be a placid expanse of sea, where dolphins and starlit night skies send seafarers grabbing their cameras, Malabrigo's skipper Julio Colarina III said he would always strive to stay on the right side of a geopolitical minefield.

"As much as possible we'll avoid conflict in the area," he said. "All these competing interests just need one spark." **MDT/AP**

CALL OF DUTY

# UK blocks Microsoft-Activision gaming deal, biggest in tech

KELVIN CHAN, LONDON

**B**RITISH antitrust regulators yesterday [Macau time] blocked Microsoft's \$69 billion purchase of video game maker Activision Blizzard, thwarting the biggest tech deal in history over worries that it would stifle competition for popular titles like Call of Duty in the fast-growing cloud gaming market.

The Competition and Markets Authority said in its final report that "the only effective remedy" to the substantial loss of competition "is to prohibit the Merger." The companies have vowed to appeal.

The all-cash deal announced 15 months ago faced stiff opposition from rival Sony, which makes the PlayStation gaming system, and also was being scrutinized by regulators in the U.S. and Europe over fears that it would give Microsoft and its Xbox console control of hit franchises like Call of Duty and World of Warcraft.

The U.K. watchdog's decision "came as a surprise to most people" and heightens global uncertainty over the deal, said Liam Deane, a game industry analyst for research firm Omdia.

"It's a big enough market to throw a pretty serious spanner in the works from Microsoft and Activision's perspective, but things will get a lot worse if they also get the wrong decision from the European Commission in a few weeks time," he said.

The U.K. watchdog's concerns centered on how the deal would affect cloud gaming, which streams to tablets, phones and other devices and frees players from buying expensive consoles and gaming computers. Gamers can keep playing major Activision titles, including mobile games like Candy Crush, on the platforms they typically use.

Cloud gaming has the potential to change the industry by giving people more choice over how and where they play, said Martin Colman, chair of the Competition and Markets Authority's independent expert panel investigating the deal.



Visitors passing an advertisement for Activision's video game 'Call of Duty' at the Gamescom fair for computer games, in Cologne

"This means that it is vital that we protect competition in this emerging and exciting market," he said.

The decision underscores Europe's reputation as the global leader in efforts to rein in the power of Big Tech companies. A day earlier, the U.K. government unveiled draft legislation that would give regulators more power to protect consumers from online scams and fake reviews and boost digital competition.

The U.K. decision further dashes Microsoft's hopes that a favorable outcome could help it resolve a lawsuit brought by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission. A trial before the FTC's in-house judge is set to begin Aug. 2. The European Union's decision, meanwhile, is due May 22.

Activision lashed out, portraying the watchdog's decision as a bad signal to international investors in the United Kingdom at a time when the British economy faces severe challenges.

The California-based game maker said it would "work aggressively" with Microsoft to appeal, asserting that the move "contradicts the ambitions of the U.K." to be an attractive place for tech companies.

"We will reassess our growth plans for the U.K. Global innovators large and small will take note

that — despite all its rhetoric — the U.K. is clearly closed for business," Activision said.

Redmond, Washington-based Microsoft also signaled it wasn't ready to give up.

"We remain fully committed to this acquisition and will appeal," President Brad Smith said in a statement. The decision "rejects a pragmatic path to address competition concerns" and discourages tech innovation and investment in Britain, he said.

"We're especially disappointed that after lengthy deliberations, this decision appears to reflect a flawed understanding of this market and the way the relevant cloud technology actually works," Smith said.

Activision CEO Bobby Kotick said in a blog post that both companies have begun working on an appeal to the U.K.'s Competition Appeal Tribunal.

It's not the first time British regulators have flexed their antitrust muscles on a Big Tech deal. They previously blocked Facebook parent Meta's purchase of Giphy over fears it would limit innovation and competition. The social media giant appealed the decision to the tribunal but lost and was forced to sell off the GIF sharing platform.

Microsoft already has a strong position in the

overall cloud computing market, and regulators concluded that if the deal went through, it would reinforce the company's advantage by giving it control of key game titles.

In an attempt to ease concerns, Microsoft struck deals with Nintendo and some cloud gaming providers to license Activision titles like Call of Duty for 10 years — offering the same to Sony.

Sony's European press office did not respond to a request for comment.

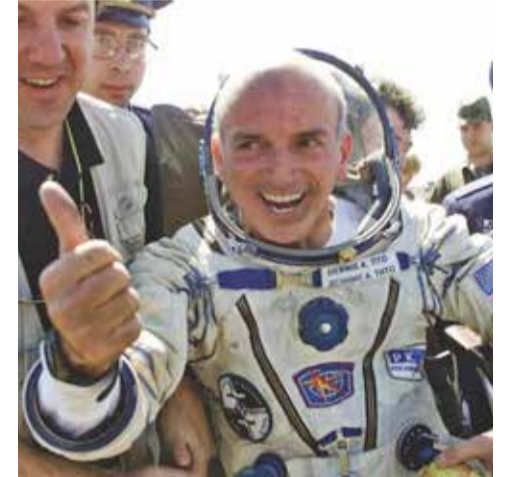
The watchdog said it reviewed Microsoft's remedies "in considerable depth" but found they would require its oversight, whereas preventing the merger would allow cloud gaming to develop without intervention.

Cloud gaming is a small piece of Britain's 5 billion pound (\$6.2 billion) video game market. But an expert forecast suggested it will see explosive growth over the coming years, with user numbers tripling from the start of 2021 to the end of 2022 and the cloud game market expected to grow to a value of 1 billion pounds by 2026, regulators said.

They dropped concerns last month that the deal would hurt console gaming, saying it wouldn't benefit Microsoft to make Call of Duty exclusive to its Xbox console. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 2001 FIRST SPACE TOURIST BLASTS OFF



A billionaire businessman from California has become the first paying passenger to go to outer space.

Dennis Tito, aged 60, set off from Kazakhstan at 1338 local time (0838 GMT) for an eight-day holiday aboard the International Space Station.

For Mr Tito, a former Nasa employee, it is the fulfilment of a dream he has held for 40 years. He paid \$20m (£14m) for his trip of a lifetime, but he has faced a number of setbacks.

First, Nasa rejected his proposal, on the grounds that he is not a trained astronaut.

So he turned to Russia. The space authorities in Moscow agreed to take him - but his ticket became null and void after his original destination, the Mir Space Station, was decommissioned and fell back to Earth earlier this year.

He was then offered a place on board a scheduled flight with a Soyuz supply mission to the International Space Station.

The change of plans provoked a bitter row between the United States and Russia. After months of wrangling, the American space agency only agreed to allowing Mr Tito on board the Space Station on the condition that he agree not to sue if injured, to pay for anything he breaks, and to sleep only in Russian sections of the station.

Even then, it looked as though the flight might not go ahead, after last-minute computer glitches forced the Endeavour space shuttle to delay its return to Earth from the ISS and Nasa requested that the Soyuz trip be put off.

Moscow refused to delay the mission, and after a tense stand-off Nasa finally relented.

Now, though, Mr Tito can put all that behind him, as he heads out of the Earth's atmosphere and towards the destination that at times has seemed so near - yet so very far away.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The quarrels between Nasa and Moscow continued throughout Dennis Tito's week in space. At one point, Nasa demanded compensation from Russia for lost research time.

On his return to Earth, Mr Tito described his journey as "a major crossing point in my life". He split up with his girlfriend, Dawn, shortly after his return, and found his business had suffered in his absence.

He has spent much of his time since promoting the idea of ordinary people going into space, although he says he wouldn't go back and do it again himself.

Only two other people have paid to go into space - South African computer millionaire Mark Shuttleworth in 2002, and US businessman and scientist Greg Olsen in October 2005.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

## YOUR STARS



### ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

One-sided relationships are likely. If you're in the mood, go out and socialize, or get involved in sports activities. They won't pay you back and you'll be upset.



### TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Your personal life will be under the gun and you may want to avoid the questions your lover is going to want to ask you. Unexpected bills will leave you a little short.



### GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

You can finish projects early, which will bring you praise from superiors. Try not to allow your partner to lead you astray or upset your routine.



### CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Compromise will be necessary. Balance is required if you want stability. Don't let others try to create unwarranted guilt if you can't meet their demands.



### LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Think about your priorities. Take care when dealing with older relatives. You will be able to make changes regarding your living arrangements.



### VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Don't point your finger unjustly at others. If you're feeling uncertain, spend some time alone and reevaluate your motives as well as your needs.



### LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Sudden changes regarding your domestic scene are probable. Lack of funds may add stress to your already uncertain situation. Some situations may be blown out of proportion.



### SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

New emotional connections can be made through business contacts. A change of attitude has probably disrupted your home environment. Romance could be exciting if you are spontaneous.



### SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Your lover probably won't put up with your behavior. There's lots to be done and if you meet your deadline you'll be in your boss's good books.



### CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You can do well in group endeavors. Don't be too quick to let friends and relatives know what you're up to. You will be able to contribute a great deal to organizations that you join.



### AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Be sure to spend time helping children with projects that are too difficult for them to accomplish alone. You can get ready to celebrate your new direction. Love relationships will flourish.



### PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Don't avoid your true feelings. Try not to judge too quickly. Be sure that you have all the facts before you take action. Get motivated and follow up on some self-improvement resolutions.

## The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



## SUDOKU

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

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

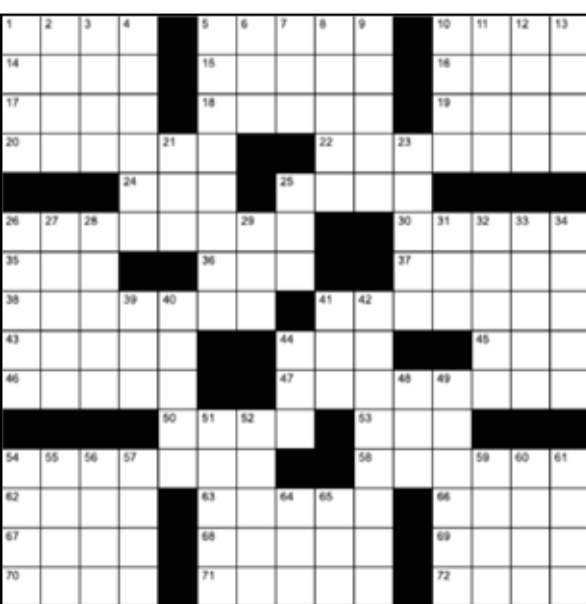
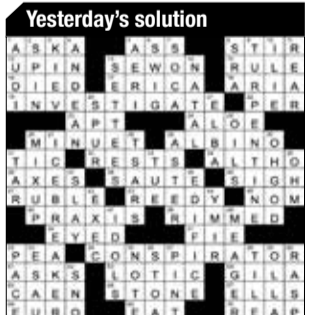
## WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	13	26	cloudy
Changchun	9	13	rain
Chengdu	15	24	rain
Chongqing	16	25	overcast
Fuzhou	17	29	overcast
Guangzhou	19	29	cloudy
Guiyang	15	22	showers
Haikou	23	30	cloudy
Hangzhou	15	28	rain
Harbin	8	14	rain
Hefei	12	25	rain
Nanjing	15	26	rain
Shanghai	16	24	rain
Taipei	19	26	cloudy
Wuhan	13	21	rain
Hong Kong	22	24	overcast
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	4	16	rain
Frankfurt	10	18	thunderstorm
Paris	9	20	rain
London	8	18	rain
New York	10	14	cloudy

## CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Gee whiz!; 5- Terra \_\_\_; 10- Zeno's home; 14- Ancient theaters; 15- Met highlights; 16- Gone by; 17- Monetary unit of Lesotho; 18- Inventory; 19- Gaffer Aoki; 20- Republic in W Europe; 22- Condiment; 24- Goal, intention; 25- ...\_\_\_ forgive our debtors; 26- Doesn't stay on topic; 30- Concert venue; 35- New Haven collegian; 36- Slangy refusal; 37- Noted Civil War biography; 38- Notched; 41- From dawn to dusk; 43- Lend \_\_\_; 44- Afflict; 45- Architect I.M.; 46- Impudent; 47- Vulnerable; 50- Gillette brand; 53- Bus. bigwig; 54- Chocolate chevy cake; 58- Served soup; 62- Broccoli \_\_\_ (leafy vegetable); 63- Result; 66- Strong wind; 67- Take \_\_\_ from me; 68- Unit of magnetic induction; 69- Vogue rival; 70- Run into; 71- Dog tag datum; 72- Coarse file, angry tone of voice;

DOWN 1- Ball game; 2- Scent; 3- Stiff bristle; 4- Island in the South China Sea; 5- Casing or covering; 6- Meal crumb; 7- Juan's uncle; 8- Small nails; 9- Cockeyed; 10- Long poem, such as those attributed to Homer; 11- Eye shade?; 12- Biblical birthright seller; 13- Riding; 21- Scotland Yard div.; 23- Weeping; 25- Blonde shade; 26- Flat-topped hills; 27- Actress Verdugo; 28- Buenos \_\_\_; 29- Actress Charlotte; 31- Fam. member; 32- Run away with a lover; 33- Hawaiian state birds; 34- Protection; 39- \_\_\_ Tafari (Haile Selassie); 40- Ancient Indo-European; 41- Casino cube; 42- Signal that danger is over; 44- There you are!; 48- Seed of a legume; 49- One who lives in rented rooms; 51- Connect with; 52- Continue a subscription; 54- "Dracula" author Stoker; 55- Appraise, charge per unit; 56- Village Voice award; 57- Cried; 59- In \_\_\_ land; 60- Building wings; 61- Thought-provoking; 64- Nine-digit ID; 65- Suffix with glob;



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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AD

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

JAKE COYLE,  
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

DRIVE IN

# 'POLITE SOCIETY' IS A PUNK BLAST OF PURE DELIGHT

COMING-OF-AGE comedies about young protagonists with esoteric dreams are not exactly a rarity. What is less common, though, are films as spirited and charming as Nida Manzoor's "Polite Society," a roundhouse kick of a movie about two British-Pakistani sisters that marries Jane Austen with kung-fu flare.

"Polite Society," the feature film debut of writer-director Manzoor, creator of the British sitcom "We Are Lady Parts," is a fun and increasingly preposterous comedy. But it's propelled by an infectious and genuine punk-rock energy. Make no mistake about it, the sisters of "Polite Society" are here to take down Pakistani tradition, the patriarchy and anything else you got.

Manzoor's film, which opens in U.S. theaters today, first debuted at the Sundance Film Festival, where a lot of quirky coming-of-age comedies tend to emerge. And while there isn't much inherently groundbreaking in "Polite Society," Manzoor's zippy script and direction, plus terrific performances from newcomer Priya Kansara and Ritu Arya,



AP PHOTO

give a familiar teen-comedy form some spry new moves.

Ria Khan (Kansara) and Lena (Arya) are London sisters with ambitions that don't jive with their mostly sweet and not-all-that-demanding parents (Shobu Kapoor, Jeff Mirza). Ria dreams of being

a stuntwoman. Lena is a budding artist. But having recently dropped out of art school, Lena's self-confidence is flagging. Ria's, however, is sky high — sometimes comically so. When she faces off with a library monitor (Shona Babayemi) at school, the sce-

ne turns into an amplified fight scene with all the aplomb of a Sergio Leone showdown. But as Lena flies through the air for the knockout kick, she falls short by a foot or two.

Like most comedies, "Polite Society" is best in its first half. Manzoor juxtaposes Ria and Lena's brazen individualism against the expectations they're saddled with growing up.

Lena is set up with Salim (Akshay Khanna) by her mother and Salim's wealthy, strong-arming mother (Nimra Bucha, terrifically diabolical) with the idea of an arranged marriage. Horrifying as this prospect is to Ria, even worse is that Lena actually falls for him. With her best friends (Seraphina Beh and Ella Bruccoleri), Ria endeavors to spy on Salim to find some dirt on him. Undercover at his gym, Ria communicates through a walkie-talkie: "The eagle is on the treadmill."

"Polite Society" does spiral

as it goes along, taking on a too-out-there science-fiction plot. But throughout, the joy of the film is how Manzoor celebrates Ria and Lena's non-conformist spunk while playfully mocking their grandiose efforts to bend the world with their will.

Often, the editing (by Robbie Morrison) is just as funny. The timing couldn't be more perfect between Lena pronouncing that she and her sister wouldn't be caught dead at a "hoity-toity" soiree and the cut to them at the ball.

Manzoor's film unfolds in chapters, each announced with elaborate yellow titles. The joke is how much Ria and Lena aren't your typical kung-fu heroes, how much their teen dramas don't equate to thrilling martial-arts clashes. But why "Polite Society" is so winning is because they really are engaged in a battle of life and death. Refusing who you're supposed to be isn't always polite business. Sometimes, it takes a karate chop.

**"Polite Society," a Focus Features release is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for strong language, violence, sexual material, and some partial nudity. Running time: 103 minutes.**

★★★★

AD

《澳門特寫》**16**  
MACAU CLOSER

生活藝術雜誌 LIVING & ARTS MAGAZINE

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

TASTE OF EDESIA

# MICHELIN Stars in the 15th anniversary edition

IRENE SAM, MDT

**T**HIS week, the full restaurant selection of the MICHELIN Guide Hong Kong & Macau 2023 was finally revealed in a ceremony at Grand Lisboa Palace in Cotai attended by hundreds of guests.

Including the Starred, Bib Gourmand, and Selected food establishments, the 2023 selection of the MICHELIN Guide features a total of 206 eateries in Hong Kong and 44 in Macau. Four restaurants, including one new, are also awarded the MICHELIN Green Star.

"Accompanied with the lift of travel restrictions, the culinary scene in Hong Kong remains vibrant and passionate, while the hospitality industry is also picking up its pace. In fact, it has not been a quiet year in Hong Kong, with lots of new projects in town, catering to diners of different nationalities and taste buds," said Gwendal Poullennec, International Director of the MICHELIN Guides.

"Our inspection team is delighted to see that many veterans in Hong Kong continuously go the extra mile to strive for betterment, showing a level of refinement that

does not restrict to any cuisine type; but rather, a demonstration of determination on both quality of ingredients and execution. Macau, on the other hand, flaunts the uniqueness of regional cuisine delicately presented in skilful hands with outstanding ingredients. In this 15th edition of the MICHELIN Guide Hong Kong and Macau, our inspectors were also thrilled to award the unique cuisine of restaurant Ta Vie Three MICHELIN Stars."

In Macau, The Huaiyang Garden is the only restaurant newly awarded with One MICHELIN Star in Macau this year. Helmed by the renowned culinary master chef Zhou, the kitchen team excels in sophisticated Huaiyang fare, incorporating fresh river fish shipped from the region twice a week, such as stir-fried shrimps with roe and tomalley, or Liangxi-style crispy eel.

Five Foot Road is promoted from a MICHELIN Selected to One MICHELIN Star restaurant. With more than 30 years of experience, the chef from Sichuan excels in presenting traditional Sichuan flavours and aromas with various seafood.



Three MICHELIN Stars



Two MICHELIN Stars



MICHELIN Green Star



One MICHELIN Star



Jacky Luk

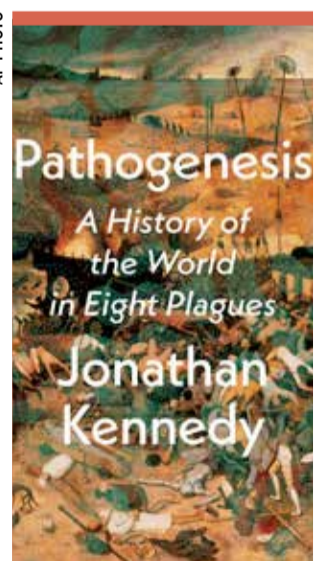


Kit Li



Steve Lee

AP PHOTO



"Pathogenesis: A History of the World in Eight Plagues," by Jonathan Kennedy (Crown)

BOOK IT

## 'Pathogenesis' offers different lens on history

nally women, but Jonathan Kennedy argues in his book "Pathogenesis: A History of the World in Eight Plagues," that germs are largely responsible for everything from the decline of the Neanderthals to the current poverty of sub-Saharan Africa.

His quick history of the world from the Paleolithic to the present day offers a different lens to view many of the big events of the past. Some of Kennedy's conclusions are mere speculation, like his idea that deadly plagues in the Roman empire led to the swift rise of Christianity. In the midst of so

much death, he argues, the new religion offered a more enticing view of the afterlife than paganism.

Most of his observations are bolstered by more historical research and are more convincing. In showing how pathogens helped the Spanish conquer Central and South America, Kennedy explains that European diseases including smallpox and measles killed or incapacitated most of the native population, which had no immunity to the previously unknown germs. One outbreak in 1545 alone is estimated to have killed up to 80% of the Indigenous

peoples of Mesoamerica.

The death and destruction also accelerated their religious conversion as many of the remaining Indigenous peoples, along with the Spanish, saw it as proof that the Christian God was superior, Kennedy argues.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Kennedy explains how resistance to infectious disease — especially the malaria and yellow fever prevalent in parts of sub-Saharan Africa — boosted the slave trade. Disease-resistant Africans were less likely to die on the new world plantations than Eu-

ropeans, and much of the native population had already been wiped out. The subsequent association of Africans with slavery contributed to the ideology of white supremacy.

The presence of malaria and yellow fever also prevented Europeans from colonizing the African interior, but only for a time. That changed when quinine was discovered to help prevent death from malaria.

Poverty, including in wealthy countries like the United States, is a sort of modern plague, killing millions each year with

both infectious disease and non-communicable diseases like diabetes, Kennedy argues in the final chapter. These poverty-associated health problems, in turn, have been associated with higher death rates during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kennedy ends with a passionate plea for public health expenditures to eliminate disease. Relying on examples of successful public health campaigns throughout the book, he argues that such an investment will both improve human lives and bolster economies. TRAVIS LOLLER, MDT/AP

**G**REAT historical changes are often conceived of as being brought about by the genius and tenacity of great men, or occasio-

**OPINION**

**China Daily**  
 Editorial, China Daily

**IT'S TIME TO GIVE PEACE A CHANCE THROUGH DIALOGUE RATHER THAN ADDING FUEL TO FIRE**

After China brokered a reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran last month, it raised hopes that it would act as a mediator to help bring an end to the hostilities in Ukraine.

China is neither the instigator nor a party to the conflict, and it has kept its communication channels with both Moscow and Kyiv open. Having consistently called for talks to end the conflict, it has established its credentials as a peace broker. Thus the telephone talk between Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky on Wednesday has attracted great attention.

The warm response Zelensky gave to Xi's proposal to send the Chinese government's special representative for Eurasian affairs to Ukraine and other countries to have in-depth communication with all parties to pursue a political resolution to the crisis, demonstrates the Ukrainian side's full recognition of the important role that China can play in promoting peace talks. After speaking with Xi, who elaborated on the principles and solution China has outlined and proposed in its document on securing a political settlement to the crisis, the Ukrainian leader tweeted that it had been a "long and meaningful" phone call.

A settlement to the crisis cannot come soon enough. Not only has the conflict disrupted global food and energy supply chains producing shock waves around the world, but as the hostilities have intensified, talk has been flying around raising the prospect of nuclear weapons being used. As Xi said, there will be no winners in such a nightmare scenario. All parties involved should remain calm and exercise restraint, truly focus on the future and the destiny of themselves and all humanity, and jointly manage the crisis. He noted that rational thinking and the voices of parties concerned are increasing now, and the opportunity should be seized to accumulate favorable conditions for a political resolution to the crisis.

The talk between the two leaders will prove to be of substantial meaning if it can produce pragmatic progress to secure a cease-fire as the prelude to negotiations to reach an agreement on a lasting resolution to the crisis. The conflict was able to erupt because of the tensions that had built up on the European continent due to the absence of a lasting and practical peace mechanism. Tensions that Washington was able to exploit via NATO.

And for more than a year, the United States-led extreme sanctions on Russia and ever-increasing provision of military assistance and weapons to Ukraine have only served to prolong the crisis and escalate the tensions as it seeks to permanently weaken Russia, control Europe and isolate China.

The talk between Xi and Zelensky appears to have been fruitful in providing new inspiration and motivation for concerted efforts to create the necessary conditions for peace talks. That's what true mediating efforts should entail. It is dialogue, not weapons and sanctions, that will end the conflict and restore peace and stability in Europe.

Wednesday's telephone call shows that China is neither watching the fire from afar nor pouring oil on the flames. Instead, it is trying to leverage its relations with both Kyiv and Moscow to help resolve the crisis and restore peace through diplomatic means.

**JACK TEIXEIRA GUARDSMAN SPOKE OF 'MURDER,' MAY STILL POSSESS SECRETS: US**

**THE BUZZ**

The Massachusetts Air National guardsman accused of leaking highly classified military documents kept an arsenal of guns, talked of "violence and murder" on a social media platform and an "assassination van," prosecutors wrote ahead of today's [Macau time] hearing for 21-year-old Jack Teixeira.

The court filings raise new questions about why Teixeira had such a high security clearance and access to some of the nation's most classified secrets. They said he may still have material that hasn't been released, which could be of "tremendous value to hostile nation states that could offer him safe harbor and attempt to facilitate his escape from the United States."

Yesterday, the Air Force announced it suspended the commander of the 102nd Intelligence Support Squadron where Teixeira worked and the administrative commander "overseeing the support for the unit mobilized under federal orders," pending further investigation. It also temporarily removed each leader's access to classified systems and information.

Court papers urging a federal judge to keep Teixeira in custody detailed a troubling history going back to high school, where he was suspended when a classmate overheard him discussing Molotov cocktails and other weapons as well as racial threats. More recently, prosecutors said, he used his government computer to research past mass shootings and standoffs with federal agents.

**BRAZILIAN DICTIONARY ADDS PELÉ AS ADJECTIVE, SYNONYM OF BEST**

**MAURICIO SAVARESE, SAO PAULO**

A Brazilian dictionary has added "Pelé" as an adjective to use when describing someone who is "exceptional, incomparable, unique."

The announcement by the Michaelis dictionary yesterday [Macau time] is part of a campaign that gathered more than 125,000 signatures to honor the late soccer great's impact beyond his sport.

The three-time World Cup champion died in December at age 82 after a fight against colon cancer.

The dictionary entry reads: "The one that is extraordinary, or who because of his quality, value or superiority cannot be matched to anything or anyone, just like Pelé; nickname of Edson Arantes do Nascimento (1940-2022), considered the best athlete of all time; exceptional, incomparable, unique."

Examples: He is the Pelé of basketball, she is the Pelé of tennis, she is the Pelé of Brazilian theater, he is the Pelé of medicine."



Brazil's Pelé is hoisted on the shoulders of his teammates after Brazil won the World Cup final against Italy, 4-1, in Mexico City's Estadio Azteca, June 21, 1970

The Pelé Foundation, Santos FC — where he played most of his career — and many Brazilians celebrated the decision by the publishers of one of the country's most popular dictionaries.

"The expression that was already used to refer to the best at something is already eternal in the pages of the dictionary," Pelé's social media channels said after the announcement. "We made history together and put

the name of the King of Soccer into the Portuguese language. Pelé means 'THE BEST'."

Pelé spent nearly two decades enchanting fans and dazzling opponents as the game's most prolific scorer with Brazilian club Santos and the Brazil national team. In the conversation about soccer's greatest, only the late Diego Maradona, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo are mentioned alongside. **MDT/AP**



Iran's foreign minister said yesterday that Tehran wants Lebanon's rivals to reach an agreement to elect a new president in the crisis-hit country that has been without a head of state since October. Hossein Amirabdollahian (pictured) made his comments during his first visit to Lebanon since Iran and Saudi Arabia reached an agreement in China last month to re-establish diplomatic relations and reopen embassies after seven years of tensions that had major repercussions in the tiny Mediterranean country.



USA A federal appeals court yesterday moved former Vice President Mike Pence (pictured) closer to appearing before a grand jury investigating efforts to undo the results of the 2020 presidential election, rejecting a bid by lawyers for former President Donald Trump to block the testimony. It was not immediately clear what day Pence might appear before the grand jury, which for months has been investigating the events preceding the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol and efforts by Trump and his allies to subvert the election outcome.



USA Cigarette smoking dropped to another all-time low last year, with 1 in 9 adults saying they were current smokers, according to government survey data released yesterday. Meanwhile, electronic cigarette use rose, to about 1 in 17 adults. The preliminary findings from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are based on survey responses from more than 27,000 adults.

**THE DECISIVE MOMENT**

AP Photo/Anupam Nath



Around 11,000 Assamese dancers in traditional attire perform as they attempt Guinness World Record in the largest folk dance performance category in Guwahati, India.