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Germany-China Berlin gave final approval for a Chinese company to take a significant minority stake in the operator of a container terminal at the Hamburg port, following concerns that a larger buy-in might pose a national security risk. The government said it would stick to a compromise agreed to last year barring COSCO Shipping from acquiring more than 24.99% of the Tollerort terminal of Hamburg port logistics company HHLA.



Germany A man opened fire at a Mercedes-Benz factory in southwestern Germany on Thursday, leaving two people dead, authorities and the company said. The shooting occurred in Sindelfingen, a city near Stuttgart. The suspect, a 53-year-old man, was taken into custody, a spokesman for the Stuttgart prosecutor's office said. Police received the first emergency calls around 7:45 a.m. (local time) yesterday, a police spokeswoman told German news agency dpa.



Japan Financial leaders of the Group of Seven advanced economies are discussing ways to support Ukraine and pressure Russia to end the war as they meet in Japan starting yesterday. Ukraine's finance minister, Serhiy Marchenko, was participating online in the first session of the G-7 talks in Niigata, a port city on the Japan Sea coast. U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said the G-7 nations "will stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes" to end the conflict.

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MOTHERHOOD ANGST



Mother's Day is a day of celebration, but a day of painful longing for migrants

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URBAN DESIGN

HEIGHT FOR NAM VAN LAKE LAND EXTENDED BY 12 METERS

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SOUTH EAST ASIAN REPS ON A VISIT TO MACAU FOR TRAVEL TRADE DISCUSSION

Early this week, over 50 trade delegates from Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand arrived in Macau for a five-day familiarization trip, which includes visits to various attractions and major integrated resorts. According to the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), the delegation is in the city to discuss business opportunities with 70 representatives from Macau's hotels, travel agencies, integrated tourism and leisure enterprises and tourism-related facilities. Since the start of 2023, the local tourism bureau has successively invited over 330 delegates of the travel trade, media and key opinion leaders from the mainland, Hong Kong, Thailand and Korea to Macau for familiarization visits.

APPROVED MORTGAGE LOANS RISE TO 57%

New approvals of residential mortgage loans (RMLs) and commercial real estate loans (CRELs) both increased month-on-month in March, with a rise of 56.5% up to MOP1.91 billion for the new RMLs approved by Macau banks and a rise of 61.5% month-on-month up to MOP2.52 billion for the new CRELs. Data from the Monetary Authority of Macau shows that the monthly average of new RMLs approved is lower than the previous period, with only MOP1.53 billion between January and March 2023 compared to MOP1.9 billion between December and February, a decline of 19.6%.

CHINA EASES POLICIES TO FACILITATE CROSS-BORDER TRAVEL

China will resume its fast-lane services at all its ports from May 15, as part of the country's efforts to facilitate travel across the border, said the National Immigration Administration on Thursday. Chinese nationals are allowed to use fast lanes for expedited border inspection on the following travel documents: Chinese ordinary passports, exit-entry permits for traveling to and from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, mainland travel permits for Hong Kong and Macau residents, five-year mainland travel permits for Taiwan residents, and permits of multiple entries valid for one year, said the administration in a notice.

HEALTH

MONKEYPOX VACCINE SOON AVAILABLE: GOV'T

ANTHONY LAM

A monkeypox vaccine will soon be available to people 18 years-of-age or older, the Health Bureau (SSM) revealed at an orientation session for its frontline staff.

Similar to Covid-19 vaccines, Macau residents and those with valid permits to stay in Macau, such as working passes or a student visa, will be eligible to receive the vaccine. There is an additional eligibility requirement that vaccine recipients must have engaged in certain types of at-risk sexual activity.

Vaccinations will be administered at health centers or stations. Bookings can be made directly to relevant



health centers or stations.

Two doses will be required for those who have never

received a cowpox vaccination. Those who have received a cowpox vaccine will

only need a single dose of the monkeypox vaccine.

The SSM emphasized that all those born in Macau in or before 1980 had already received the cowpox vaccine.

According to the WHO, monkeypox spreads from person-to-person through close contact with someone who has a monkeypox rash.

Close contact can mean being face-to-face, such as talking, breathing or singing close to one another, which can generate droplets or short-range aerosols; skin-to-skin, such as touching or vaginal/anal sex; mouth-to-mouth, such as kissing; or mouth-to-skin contact, such as oral sex or kissing the skin.

Possible mechanisms of transmission through the air for monkeypox are not yet well understood and studies are underway to learn more, the WHO added.

Meanwhile, the SSM has recently held a session to introduce the vaccine to its frontline staff.

HEALTH

SSM issues suggestions amid rise in Covid cases

AFTER assessing an increase in Covid-19 infections, the Health Bureau (SSM) issued infographics to educate people about receiving medical support in case they contract Covid-19.

A total of 70 residents tested positive for Covid-19 on May 10. There

was also a rise in emergency visits to the public hospital from 600 to 1,000. Alvis Lo, director of the Health Bureau (SSM) said that the medical and health system in Macau can meet the needs of residents and deal with the virus, adding that that bureau has

recently mobilized frontline medical personnel to meet the increased demand for medical consultations.

When there are approximately 1,000 medical consultations per day at the peak of influenza, the average waiting time is about one hour, which is

“an ideal level,” said Lo.

The bureau disclosed days ago that three senior officials in the government recently contracted SARS-CoV-2 for the first time.

Predicting more infections, the SSM encourages patients with breathing difficulties, chronic chest pain or tightness, mental unconsciousness, narcolepsy, or other similar and severe symptoms to immediately seek help from a hospital.

Presently, the epidemic situation in Macau

is similar to that on the mainland. Omicron XBB sub-variants – including XBB.1.5, XBB.1.16, XBB.1.9, etc. – are the main new coronavirus strains detected in Macau, the SSM stated.

With the gradual decline of immunity from either natural infection or vaccination, as well as the emergence of new sub-variant strains and an increase in physical interactions, the risks associated with outbreaks have increased, the SSM concluded. AL

DEMOGRAPHICS

RISE IN POPULATION ATTRIBUTED TO NON-LOCAL STUDENTS

STAFF REPORTER

THE total population of Macau increased to 673,600 at the end of March from 672,800 in the previous quarter, an increase which can be

largely explained by the rise of non-local students living in the city.

Data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) shows that new arrivals from mainland China with one-way

permits (898) and individuals newly granted right of abode (186) increased by 327 and 102, respectively, quarter-to-quarter. On the other hand, the number of non-resident workers

at end-period (154,658) dropped by 254 during the first quarter.

The number of live births decreased during the first quarter of 2023, dropping down from 1141 during the previous quarter to 987 at the end of March, whereas the number of deaths increased by 36 quarter-to-quarter reaching a total of 1,214.

The bureau detailed the three main causes of death during the first quarter of 2023, including respiratory diseases (491 deceases), diseases of the circulatory system (262 deceases) and neoplasms (208 deceases).

A total of 815 marriage registrations were recorded in the first quarter, up by 56 quarter-to-quarter.

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DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR_Lynzy Valles
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS_Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS_Alex Torrão, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Jorge Costa Oliveira, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Sérgio de Almeida Correia, Viviana Seguí DESIGNERS_Miguel Bandeira, Rebeca Almeida | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS_JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES_Associated Press, MacauHub, MacaoNews, Xinhua SECRETARY_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

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Height for Nam Van Lake land extended by 12 meters

ANTHONY LAM

THE height clearance for land adjacent to the Nam Van Lake has been extended by 12 meters to 46.7 meters.

The information was revealed in the Planning Condition Draft for the plot, numbered C7, which is located between the Nam Van Lake Aquatic Activities Centre and the Criminal Building of the Court of First Instance.

Submissions on the draft will be accepted until May 24.

The old height clearance at 34.5 meters was determined by a former draft that was compiled in 2016.

The land has been allotted to the use of type H2 residential housing: multi-apartment and mixed-use residential buildings.

The area of the plot measures 4,669 square meters. The highest point of buildings and their structures shall not



exceed 46.7 meters above sea level, and the maximum permissible plot ratio is 5.58 times.

The architectural design must complement the surrounding enlisted properties.

The draft proposes that the top floor of each building be reserved for greening, in addition

to being used for vertical traffic. The greening should be no less than 50% of the uncovered area.

The ground floor of the buildings, however, may be used as common facilities for residents, such as a clubhouse. No less than 30% of the uncovered area of the ground floor must also be used for greening.

No less than 30% of the uncovered area of the roofs must also be used for greening or solar power facilities.

The distance between the towers must not be less than one-sixth of the height of the towers, and the maximum continuous width of the façades must be 70 meters. An evaluation report on air circulation must be submitted for evaluation if the aforementioned conditions are bypassed.

At least 50% of the gross floor area, excluding the parking lot, should be saved for residential use. This land plot can be used for other purposes compatible with residential purposes, especially commercial and public facilities.

The draft is subject to discussion at the upcoming Urban Planning Committee plenary.

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MOTHER'S DAY: A DAY OF CELEBRATION, BUT A DAY OF PAINFUL LONGING FOR MIGRANTS

LYNZY VALLES

PREPARATIONS are underway to celebrate Mother's Day, prompting families to honor mothers through thoughtful gifts and memorable dinners.

For many, Mother's Day can be a time of feeling appreciated and loved – but to some, it can be a time of painful longing – a longing that comes in waves, but which is most evident during this occasion.

For foreign workers in the city, the price is high.

A majority of foreign workers in Macau are women, most of whom are mothers, who chose to trade time with their kids to be able to send money back home.

"I feel very sad. No mothers would want to celebrate this occasion alone," said a non-resident worker, Marie Agurin.

Agurin has been working in the city for over 21 years, and has not celebrated the occasion since she left her children, who are all now grown-ups with families.

"All mothers would want to be surrounded by her children on occasions like this. There is no other way to [be with them] but



to receive greetings through video calls," she added.

The three-year pandemic has hit the city hard, making it nearly impossible for many foreign workers to go back home due to the closure of borders and the absence of flights. The restrictions on blue card holders, ban-

ned from returning once they go back home, was also a major reason.

Now, five months into the opening up of the city and the gradual resumption of flights, many are still unable to go back home due to work.

With the upcoming Mother's

Day occasion, many told the Times that they will only continue to share stories of joy and pride as many of them remain the breadwinners of their families, hoping to give them a better shot at life.

"I really feel incomplete because I cannot fulfill my mo-

therly duties to my children. I was not able to watch them grow and see the changes they went through," said another mother of three, Marjorie Laguna.

Lagua has not been able to spend Mother's Day with her sons for the past eight years – something that she wishes she could have done.

"They are grown-ups. They have their own interests and make their own decisions. I feel like there is no longer a reason for me to celebrate this occasion," she added.

"This occasion is just another reminder of how we have been absent in the lives of our children. But what can we do? We need to provide for those back home," said another mother who refused to be identified.

This Sunday, while it's a fun day for many, can trigger homesickness in many mothers.

Amid homesickness and the strong longing to feel the embrace of their children, these mothers consider themselves resilient and are willing to perform their motherly duties by providing for their children the best they can.



GAMING

Casino credit bill first reading May 18

ANTHONY LAM

A bill dealing with credit-handling at local casinos will have its first reading in parliament next Thursday.

Officially called Legal System Governing Casino Games of Luck Credits, the bill establishes frameworks and procedures pertaining to the way credits are handled.

As stated by the government in the introductory document, the bill proposes that credits conducted between casinos or their representatives with players must be conducted with contracts as supporting materials.

Casino intermediaries need contractual support in order to initiate business.

The bill also proposes that casino intermediaries no longer represent casinos to establish credit-issuer contracts or conduct legal actions.

Failure to comply with the new obligations under the bill would result in fines between MOP600,000 and MOP5 million, depending on whether the infringing party is a casino operator or an intermediary, according to the bill.

Procedural details are also added in this bill and provide the essential terms of the contracts, as well as requirements to vary and terminate the contracts.

The bill has also named the authorities of competent government entities "so as to refine the supervisory mechanism."

The government expects the bill to be promulgated as law on the first day of 2024 at the earliest.

CRIME

MAN LOSES MOP3.2 MILLION IN CRYPTO IN SHAM SEXUAL SERVICE OFFER

A local man has recently lost MOP3.2 million's worth of cryptocurrency in a sham offer of sexual services, the Judiciary Police (PJ) has announced at a regular press conference.

The MOP3.2 million equated to 400,000 crypto coins, the police revealed.

The victim, who is in his 30s, reportedly came across a woman online while in mainland China on May 6. He said the woman

was willing to offer him sexual services, but he had to complete certain "missions." He registered with a website and paid RMB50 as membership fee, before getting an RMB60 refund later.

He was told to complete some tasks after telling the woman about his crypto investments.

He first wired 43 crypto coins and got RMB360 in return. In the second attempt, he was told that the

operation faced an error and must be redone. He then conducted eight additional transfers, but did not get any refunds. The website kept asking him to transfer more coins.

The man then tried to file a complaint but got no reply. At this point, he realized that he might have been scammed.

He returned to Macau and reported the case to the police on the same day. AL



Cultivating Talent to Deepen Tourism and Gastronomy Integration

Wynn's Internationally Acclaimed Culinary Services Contribute to Macao's Sustainable Development as a City of Gastronomy

WYNN'S dedication to providing guests with high-quality catering standards is evident in our sincere belief that inheritance, innovation, and talent cultivation are crucial to the future development of Macao. To this end, Wynn has invested substantial resources in developing a variety of training programs and encouraging team members to participate in international events and industrial competitions in a bid to facilitate a broadening of the horizons of Macao's youth and to enhance the overall competitiveness of the industry. Wynn also actively supports the "1+4" adequate diversification strategy and continuously deepens the integration of tourism and gastronomy to further consolidate Macao's continuing efforts to become a World Center of Tourism and Leisure.

WYNN LEADS THE INDUSTRY WITH AWARD-WINNING CULINARY SERVICES

Several of Wynn Macau's and Wynn Palace's signature restaurants have been honored with multiple international awards this year, which demonstrates the industry's clear recognition of Wynn team members' achievements which lend great support to the city in bolstering sustainable tourism development through gastronomy.

Wynn's four restaurants garnered a total of seven stars from the *MICHELIN Guide Hong Kong & Macau 2023*, with Sichuan Moon, Wing Lei and Mizumi each receiving two MICHELIN stars, and Wing Lei Palace once again honored with one MICHELIN star. Supervisor Kit Li of Sichuan Moon became the first in the Hong Kong and Macao SARs to receive the highly acclaimed "MICHELIN Guide Service Award" by virtue of her attention to detail and dedication to customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, Sichuan Moon together with Wing Lei Palace had the unique honor of being the first two restaurants in Macao to earn a place on the *Asia's 50 Best Restaurants* list. Golden Flower was once again recognized in the 51-100 list of best restaurants, and Wing Lei Palace received the "Best Restaurant in Macau" honor for the first time this year.

In the *2023 Black Pearl Restaurant Guide*, Wing Lei Palace and Mizumi once again received two Black Pearl Diamonds, and SW



Wynn's four signature restaurants garner seven stars from MICHELIN Guide Hong Kong & Macau 2023

Steakhouse received the honor of one Black Pearl Diamond. Executive Chief Tam Kwok Fung of Wing Lei Palace has also become the first chef in Macao to be named "Chef of the Year" in the *2023 Black Pearl Restaurant Guide*. Moreover, Wynn collaborated with the *Black Pearl Restaurant Guide* as the official venue partner to host the "Seeking Mountain and Sea to Rediscover the Flavors of China" launch event in Macau where a "Culinary Discussion Forum" was held to foster networking among celebrity chefs and culinary professionals from the two regions.

This year, Wynn Macau continues to hold its exclusive status as the only resort in the world with eight Five-Star Awards from the Forbes Travel Guide (FTG), while Wynn Palace continues to boast the most FTG Five-Star restaurants of any individual resort in the world. The Five-Star Award winners this year are Wing Lei, Golden Flower, Ristorante il Teatro, and Mizumi of Wynn Macau; and Sushi Mizumi, Mizumi, Wing Lei Palace, Sichuan Moon, and SW Steakhouse of Wynn Palace. In addition, Sichuan Moon, Wing Lei Palace, Golden Flower, Mizumi and Wing Lei have been honored in the "Top 25 Best Restaurants in Macau" list by the South China Morning Post's *100 Top Tables 2023 - Hong Kong / Macau Fine Dining Guide*.

NURTURING LOCAL CULINARY TALENT FOR FUTURE GROWTH OF THE CITY OF GASTRONOMY

Wynn has been continually inviting award-winning celebrity

chefs from overseas and mainland China to jointly host the "Guest Chef Dining Series" and masterclasses in Macao. Moreover, Wynn also regularly runs culinary expertise workshops with local tertiary institutions including the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM) and the Macau University of Science and Technology. Wynn Food & Beverage Academy specially invited Thai celebrity chefs

Paisarn Cheewinsiriwat, Kanyarat Jib Thanomsaeng, and Num Weerawat Triyasenawat to demonstrate their expertise in Macao in April this year, giving participants a deeper understanding of the true essence of different cuisines, how they are prepared, and shared a wealth of culinary experience with local catering professionals and students. By proactively collaborating with local educational

institutions, Wynn hopes to nurture more outstanding culinary talent for Macao and inject new vitality and creativity into the catering industry to further its prosperity.

ENCOURAGING YOUNG PEOPLE TO ELEVATE PROFESSIONAL SKILLS THROUGH INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS

Wynn encourages exchange among young catering talent to enhance their professional skills and international competitiveness, thus contributing to the diversity and sustainability of Macao's tourism. It is our great honor that two of our team members have recently been crowned winners of the "Young Chef Macao Final" and the "Young Waiter Macao Final" and will go on to represent Macao to compete in the "World Young Chef Young Waiter" final in Monaco. Throughout the competition, the contestants will be given high-level training and have the opportunity to listen to celebrity chefs and judges share their unique insights and experiences in the industry, which will be invaluable in helping contestants upgrade their culinary skills and professional catering knowledge.



Wynn is the Only Integrated Resort Operator in Macau to Rank on the Asia's 50 Best Restaurants List



The Culinary Discussion Forum held during the "Seeking Mountain and Sea to Rediscover the Flavors of China"



Master Chef Demo Workshop series hosted by Wynn Food & Beverage Academy with IFTM



Wynn supports team members in enhancing professional knowledge and skills through industrial exchange

GAMING

MELCO REVENUES IMPROVE ON SIGNS OF CITY'S RECOVERY, TO OPERATE AT FULL CAPACITY BY JUNE

LYNZY VALLES

MELCO Resorts & Entertainment is on a recovery rebound as it records operating revenues of USD716.5 million in the first quarter, representing an increase of approximately 51% from USD474.9 million for the comparable period in 2022.

The increase in total operating revenues was primarily attributable to the improved performance in all gaming segments primarily due to the relaxation of Covid-19 related restrictions in Macau during the quarter.

Lawrence Ho, chairman and Chief Executive Officer, commented, "we have seen a very encouraging start to the recovery in Macau during the first quarter of 2023, following the relaxation of border restrictions in early January."

"We continued to see improving momentum into April and Golden Week in May, with mass market table games drop and mass gross gaming revenue during the Golden Week period

LYNZY VALLES



exceeding the same period in 2019."

In an earnings call with analysts, Ho expects the next uptick in visitation and revenues in Macau to be around summer – in July and August.

On whether the city will see a 2019 kind of visitation to Macau, Ho

cites that the Macau Airport is still only doing about 30%

"But in terms of provinces that require more airplane and stuff like that, I think that's certainly a growth area. And so far, the recovery, the first few months have been – there has been a lot of Hong Kong," he said.

"I certainly think that Macau will

hopefully get back to close to the visitation levels of the past in the next few months within this calendar year and I think, in which case, just judging from where our mass and slots and premium direct numbers are, will exceed that of 2019 sooner rather than later," the executive added.

100% ROOM AVAILABILITY BY JUNE

The gaming operator is hoping to open its hotel rooms at full capacity, following the hurdles it has faced in fully opening up due to labor shortages.

When the group started off in the first quarter, it was working to get back to 70%-80% of its availability of the hotel rooms amid the lack of staff as it had lost a significant number of employees during the pandemic.

"I'd say 70% through the first quarter, and then [...] basically back to 100% of availability by the time we get to the end of June," said David Sisk, COO of Melco.

"It takes time, as you know, in Macau, because the [Labour Affairs Bureau] and some of the labor kind of constraints that we have in the process in terms of how you go back and you bring the waiver into the market. So that's had a constraint on us, which impacted us too, somewhat," he added.

AD

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AVIATION

Dubai main airport sees over 21.2m passengers in early 2023

NICK EL HAJJ, DUBAI

DUBAI International Airport had over 21.2 million passengers pass through its terminals in the first quarter of the year, potentially nearing numbers it saw before the coronavirus pandemic grounded air traffic around the world.

The Dubai airport, the home of the long-haul carrier Emirates, is the world's busiest for international travel and serves as a bellwether for the global aviation industry.

"DXB's performance in the first quarter has exceeded our expectations and reflects the strong growth in demand that we are continuing to see across our key markets," Paul Griffiths, CEO of Dubai Airports, said in a statement, using its three-letter airport code.

With China further easing travel restrictions and Saudi Arabia lifting all pandemic restrictions for the yearly hajj pilgrimage, Dubai International Airport likely will see millions more passengers come through the key East-West transit point.

The airport said Tuesday it had increased its 2023 travel forecast by over 5 million passengers to reach 83.6 million. The airport saw its most-ever passengers in 2018 just before the pandemic, when it served



89.1 million passengers.

March has been the busiest month for the first quarter of 2023, with 7.3 million passengers. The airport said that's the highest monthly traffic since January 2020, when it saw 7.8 million passengers.

Passenger traffic this year largely has been driven by the airport's standard travel destinations — India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom. Russia as well has been a major market as Dubai remains one of the few places still open to Russians amid Moscow's war on Ukraine.

Emirates' president, Tim Clark, last week acknowledged the carrier still has some of its double-decker Airbus A380s parked at Al Maktoum International Airport at Dubai World Central — a massive facility in the city-state's southern reaches planned one day to take over for Dubai International Airport. As Emirates fully starts flying again, that will drive more passengers through DXB — and help contribute to the city's crucial tourism market.

Dubai International Airport serves 234 destinations across 99 countries. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



AUTOMAKERS

HONDA RECORDS LOWER PROFIT, PROJECTS RECOVERY AHEAD ON SALES REBOUND

HONDA'S profit for the fiscal year that ended in March dropped 1.7% as sales took a hit from a semiconductor shortage and restrictions in China related to the coronavirus pandemic.

But the Japanese automaker said yesterday that recovery was on the way, forecasting record sales and operating profitability for the current fiscal year.

Net profit for the fiscal year that just ended totaled 695.2 billion yen (\$5.2 billion), as declining auto sales and rising research costs offset the perks of a favorable currency exchange rate.

A cheap yen is a plus for Japanese exporters like Honda because it raises the value of overseas revenue when it is converted into yen.

Sales for the fiscal year grew 16% to 16.9 trillion yen (\$126 billion), lifted by healthy motorcycle sales.

Tokyo-based Honda Motor Co. projected record sales revenue for the fiscal year ending in March 2024, at 18.2 trillion yen (\$136 billion). The 1 trillion yen (\$7.5 billion) operating profit projected for the fiscal year, if achieved, would

also be a record for the company.

The maker of the Accord sedan and Odyssey minivan is expecting fiscal year net profit to improve to 800 billion yen (\$6 billion).

Although auto sales dropped on-year for the fiscal year just ended, they are expected to recover, Chief Operating Officer Shinji Aoyama told reporters.

Also yesterday, Honda announced it has signed a joint venture agreement with GS Yuasa, which makes batteries for cars and motorcycles, to set up a new company to research and develop batteries for electric vehicles.

The company will focus on collaborations in lithium-ion batteries, including coming up with production methods, both sides said. The new company, which is receiving capital of 2 billion yen (\$15 million), is 50% owned by Honda and 50% by GS Yuasa.

The move comes as the world's automakers are scrambling to keep up with a major consumer shift toward EVs, as demand grows especially in China, but also elsewhere like the U.S. and Europe. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Melco co-hosts activities for women to support diversity and inclusion



Melco Resorts & Entertainment and Women's General Association of Macau delivered updates on their collaborative initiatives yesterday. The Melco x Women's Association Project Series 2023 includes the Feel Better Mental

Wellness Programs which recognizes mental wellness as an emerging issue in the community that needs to be addressed, and the anticipated fourth annual Best Mom Award. Lawrence Ho, Chairman and CEO of Melco

Resorts & Entertainment, said, "Melco continues to prioritize initiatives for women to support diversity and inclusion. Our 'Best I Can Be' philosophy continues to encourage women to embrace life's choices to bring out the best in themselves."

"Over the last few years, the Feel Better Mental Wellness Programs in partnership with the Women's Association offer an average of four monthly mental health workshops, a total of 88 seminars for our colleagues to help them recognize the importance of mental wellness," he added.

The gaming operator is now planning to bring the workshops to its colleagues' families and the community.

Nova Mall collaborates with merchants to celebrate Mother's Day



Nova Mall has collaborated with various merchants to offer exclusive Mother's Day privileges until May 14. Customers can choose from

a variety of heartwarming gifts to express their love and gratitude to their mothers, as well as exploring a wide range of Mother's Day

rewards and offers with their loved ones.

Paul Lee, general manager of Nova Mall, said "This Mother's Day, we have prepared a wide range of activities to deliver the sincerest blessings to all mothers. Our goal is to ensure that every family can fully embrace the festive atmosphere and enjoy unexpected surprises and rewards, while creating warm and wonderful memories with their loved ones."

During the promotion period, customers who spend MOP380 or above on a single transaction at participating merchants can participate in the "Let's Celebrate Mother's Day @ Nova Mall" Instant Lucky Draw.

HONG KONG

NEWSPAPER TO STOP PUBLISHING DRAWINGS BY PROMINENT CARTOONIST AFTER GOVERNMENT COMPLAINTS

KANIS LEUNG, HONG KONG

A Hong Kong newspaper announced yesterday it will stop publishing drawings by the city's most prominent political cartoonist after they drew government complaints, in another example of restrictions on speech and media after a Beijing-led crackdown.

Chinese-language newspaper Ming Pao did not explain why it is ending its 40-year partnership with Wong Kei-kwan on Sunday. Wong, better known by the pen name Zunzi, told The Associated Press the decision was made through mutual consultation.

"Everyone knows why publication has to be halted, but no one will 'confirm' the reason," he said in a text message to the AP with two emojis showing a laughing face.

His comic drawings caricatured Hong Kong society's frustrations since before the territory was returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

The newspaper has not responded to requests for further comment.

Wong said he feels the city's freedoms of speech and expression "are shrinking" but that he will continue to create as long as he is able to. He will try to find other channels to publish his car-

AP PHOTO



toons, he said.

"Honestly, I appreciate very much that Ming Pao let my cartoons be published until now. If it had been other platforms, the halting of publication would have happened way earlier," Wong said.

Multiple cartoons by Wong have been criticized in recent months by different government agencies, including the security bureau. Most recently, the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau slammed his work for "smearing" the government's role of appointing local committee members who will choose candidates in district

council elections later this year.

In his drawing, a man tells a woman that even if some people failed exams and have health problems, they can still be appointed to the committees as long as the "senior officers" deemed they are suitable.

According to the government plan to overhaul district councils, local committees staffed by many government supporters will choose about 40% of the 470 seats. The councils were the last major political representative bodies chosen by the public in Hong Kong and will be reduced from some 90%

directly elected seats to about 20%, even lower than the level under British rule.

Asked whether the newspaper's decision to halt publication of Wong's cartoons was related to the government's criticism, Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs Alice Mak said she wouldn't comment on decisions made by individual organizations.

"But for false statements or things that are far from facts, we have to clarify to let residents understand about the truth," she told reporters.

Security minister Chris Tang,

who criticized Wong's work last month, insisted the city's residents have the right to freedom of speech and press under the city's constitution and the security law.

If some editors do not want to let someone use their platform to smear and incite dissatisfaction toward the government through misleading allegations, and they stop these activities, it is a very responsible way to handle this, he said.

Other government departments that complained about Wong's drawings have not responded to requests for comment.

In its announcement, Ming Pao's editorial department expressed the newspaper's gratitude to Wong for witnessing the changing times with them over the last four decades.

The Ming Pao Staff Association on its Facebook page expressed regret that Wong's cartoons will no longer be featured in the newspaper.

"Other than news reports, the works of columnists are also a part of Ming Pao's core value," it wrote. "A diversified society should be inclusive of different voices. We hope all sectors can respect freedom of speech."

The Hong Kong Journalists Association said the incident showed that "the space for freedom of speech in the city has further shrunk."

Hong Kong ranked 140th out of 180 countries and territories in Reporters Without Borders' latest World Press Freedom Index released last week. The global media watchdog said the city has experienced an unprecedented setback since 2020, when the security law was introduced. MDT/AP

HONG KONG

Lawmakers amend law to limit foreign lawyers in some cases

HONG Kong lawmakers this week passed an amendment to a law granting the city's leader the power to bar overseas lawyers from handling national security cases, following a high-profile row sparked by a pro-democracy Hong Kong publisher's hiring of a British lawyer.

The changes will require overseas lawyers who do not generally practice in Hong Kong to obtain permission from the chief executive before submitting applications to represent clients in national security cases in court.

The city's leader will only give approval if there are sufficient grounds to believe the lawyers' involvement will not contradict the interests of national security, and the decision cannot be

AP PHOTO



challenged.

The bill was passed by a majority in the city's legislature, filled by mostly Beijing loyalists, with little opposition through a show-of-hands vote. Critics said the changes will leave defen-

dants with even fewer choices when they look for legal representation in some of the city's most controversial cases.

The legal changes were proposed this year after the city's top court approved

jailed pro-democracy publisher Jimmy Lai's appointment of London-based lawyer Timothy Owen to represent him as he faces collusion charges under a Beijing-imposed national security law.

Hours after Hong Kong's top court in November approved Lai's choice of lawyer, city leader John Lee asked Beijing to decide whether foreign lawyers should be allowed to work on national security cases. While China's top legislative body didn't directly rule on whether these lawyers could handle such cases, it said the city's leader and committee for safeguarding national security had the power to decide the matter.

In proposing the amendment, the government said

the changes would "effectively implement the spirit of the interpretation" of the law and address potential national security risks associated with overseas lawyers handling such cases. The mechanism will apply to both criminal and civil cases related to national security, it said.

On Wednesday, Secretary for Justice Paul Lam defended the changes by arguing defendants can choose representation from more than 1,600 barristers in Hong Kong. But, in practice, defendants in national security cases are left with a small pool of lawyers who can handle such cases, said Kevin Yam, senior fellow at Georgetown Center for Asian Law.

"Pretty much almost

all the barristers who are willing and able" to take up such cases are already handling an ongoing trial involving 47 activists who were charged under a national security law over an unofficial primary election, Yam said.

He also noted the definition of national security is vague, so it will be hard to determine when foreign lawyers will be turned away under the new mechanism.

"If you are a foreign lawyer ... would you take the risks in going through the whole uncertainty about whether the case you're going to take is going to involve national security elements?" he said.

The legal changes passed are not retrospective. MDT/AP

DEEPPAKES

ChatGPT user in Gansu detained for creating, spreading fake news: police

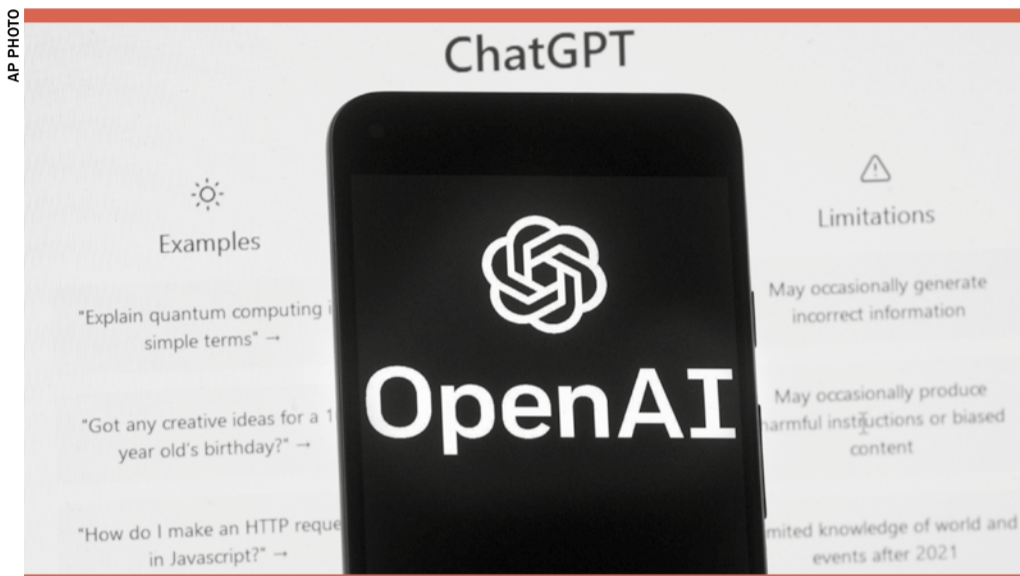
CHINESE police said they detained a ChatGPT user for allegedly using the AI-powered chatbot to create a fake news story about a nonexistent train crash

It's one of the first enforcement actions under a recently enacted Chinese law regulating AI-generated "deepfakes" — seemingly realistic but fabricated digital images, video or other media.

According to a police report from the northwest Chinese province of Gansu, a man identified only by his surname, Hong, used ChatGPT to create a fake news article about a crash that supposedly led to the deaths of nine construction workers in Gansu.

Twenty-one accounts on a popular social platform, all owned by a media company based in southern China, spread the fake story within a short period of time.

Like most foreign websites and applications, ChatGPT is technically unavail-



able in China thanks to the country's "Great Firewall," which censors the internet for residents. But determined individuals can gain access via commonly available "virtual private network" software that bypasses the firewall. The police report did not describe how Hong managed to use ChatGPT.

By the time Gansu security officials realized the article was fake, it had received 15,000 views, according to the report. Police

subsequently raided Hong's residence to collect evidence and then took "criminal coercive measures" against Hong himself. Police use that phrase to describe temporary measures to limit the freedom of a suspect.

The new Chinese deepfake law took effect on Jan. 10. It bans several categories of fake media produced by "deep synthesis technologies" such as machine learning and virtual reality, but offers only vague defini-

tions for many of these forbidden classes.

According to a translation of the law provided by the crowdsourced site China Law Translate, it prohibits deepfakes used in activities that endanger national security, harm the nation's image or societal public interest, or disturb "economic or social order." It specifically prohibits the use of such technologies to produce, publish or transmit fake news. **MDT/AP**

DIPLOMACY

VICE PRESIDENT VISITS NETHERLANDS, CONTINUING DIPLOMATIC PUSH IN EUROPE

CHINA continues its diplomatic push in Europe yesterday with a high-level visit to the Netherlands where Vice President Han Zheng will be meeting the king and the prime minister — and facing questions about its relations with Russia and the European Union.

The visit comes amid difficult relations between China and the West. The 27-nation EU increasingly sees Beijing as a systemic rival on the global stage instead of an ally and economic partner.

Dutch King Willem Alexander received Han early yesterday before Prime Minister Mark Rutte has political talks with the vice president in the afternoon. Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang has also traveled through Western Europe this week, meeting with his German and French counterparts.

On Wednesday, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said that Berlin wants to work

in partnership with China "everywhere it's possible" but that it would be naive to ignore the risk of ending up in a position of reliance, including on security issues. It is a view increasingly shared in the West.

The European Union is not specifically advocating decoupling from the economic and geopolitical giant but is proposing "de-risking" its relations to avoid becoming too dependent on China.

The EU, of which the Netherlands is a founding member, also wants Beijing to be more forceful in addressing the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The visit comes amid diplomatic tensions around proposed new EU trade measures against countries that help the Kremlin to circumvent the bloc's sanctions against Russia. The proposal sparked a warning from China that it would retaliate if targeted by such sanctions. **MDT/AP**

TRADE

AUSTRALIAN MINISTER VISITS CHINA AS PART OF JOINT EFFORTS TO REPAIR TIES

AUSTRALIAN Trade and Tourism Minister Don Farrell visited China yesterday as part of a joint effort to repair ties scarred by political rifts over the past decade.

In a statement issued by his office, Farrell said he would be "advocating strongly for the full resumption of unimpeded Australian exports to China."

China is Australia's biggest trading partner, with two-way exchanges totaling \$287 billion in 2022. China recently resumed imports of coal, cotton and copper from Australia after a lengthy unannounced trade embargo.

Farrell said he would push for a review of tariffs on Australian barley and represent "the interests of Australian exporters and producers."

China blocked such exports in retaliation for government actions targeting Beijing's alleged interference in Australian elections, civic life and the large Australian-Chinese community.

Despite improvements in economic relations, ties between the two remain tense.

In April, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong said bilateral relations were unlikely to return to the level of the early 2000s, when trade

was separated from political and strategic priorities.

Since then, Australia has expanded security cooperation with the United States, China's main rival for influence in the Asia-Pacific region.

Beijing has strongly criticized Australia's participation in the so-called AUKUS partnership, linking it with the United States and Britain to create an Australian fleet of eight submarines powered by U.S. nuclear technology, largely in response to China's growing military assertiveness in the South China Sea, the South Pacific and the East China Sea.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will host U.S. President Joe Biden and the leaders of India and Japan — countries with which China maintains active border disputes — for a May 24 summit of leaders of the so-called Quad nations.

Australia has also blocked the sale of assets, including critical infrastructure, to Chinese companies on national security grounds in recent years.

Farrell said he would meet with Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao following a commitment in February to improve dialogue "at



Australian Trade Minister Don Farrell

all levels as a pathway towards the full resumption of trade."

"Since then, the Australian Government is

pleased there have been several positive trade developments," his office quoted him as saying. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi

INDIA

Modi to visit White House in June as Biden seeks stronger ties amid competition with China

DARLENE SUPERVILLE & AAMER MADHANI, WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT Joe Biden will host Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the White House next month, courting an Indo-Pacific leader with whom he has sought stronger ties as the United States looks to blunt China's growing assertiveness in the region.

Modi's visit June 22 "will affirm the deep and close partnership between the United States and India and the warm bonds of family and friendship that link Americans and Indians together," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Wednesday in announcing the Indian leader's official state visit.

Biden and Modi will focus on their countries' commitment to a free and secure Indo-Pacific region, as well as on their technology partnerships, including in defense, clean energy and space, she said. They will also discuss

common challenges, including climate change, health security and developing the workforce.

India's Ministry of External Affairs said the visit will "underscore the growing importance of the strategic partnership between India and the United States"

"This historic visit offers a valuable opportunity for India and the US to further deepen a comprehensive and forward-looking global strategic partnership," the Indian government said.

U.S.-India relations under Biden have been warm, but also marked by complexity as Biden has sought stronger ties with the world's largest democracy while at the same time looking to counter China's growing economic and military assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region.

Since coming to office, Biden has sought to reinvigorate the Quad, an international partnership with the U.S., Australia, India and Japan. But unlike the other Quad countries and nearly every

other major U.S. ally, India has not imposed sanctions on Russia and has offered only limited criticism of its invasion of Ukraine. Russia is India's biggest supplier of military hardware.

The partnership first formed during the response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami that killed some 230,000 people. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is set to host Biden, Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida for a Quad Leaders' Summit in Sydney later this month.

As Biden worked to unite the world against Russia, India boosted its imports of Russian oil. That allowed India to increase its energy supplies at a discount as its economy struggled to recover from the coronavirus pandemic.

When Modi met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in September, he offered measured public comments about Russia's actions in Ukraine. "I know that today's era is not of war," Modi told Putin.

But Biden has put a premium stronger economic ties with India and other Indo-Pacific nations amid growing competition with China. That's helped soften the differences between the U.S. and India over Russia.

"So even though, on Russia, Ukraine, and a whole range of other issues around the world, we do have differences in approaches and different views," said Richard Rossow, senior adviser and chairperson of U.S.-India Policy Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington "On the threat that we both kind of agree is the major emerging threat ... for the next generations, there's very little daylight in our perception there."

Last year, Biden launched a trade deal with India and 11 other Indo-Pacific nations called the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. The White House said the agreement would help those economies work more closely on issues including supply chains,

digital trade, clean energy, worker protections and anticorruption efforts.

The president is likely to face criticism from human rights advocates for inviting Modi on a state visit and for plans to celebrate him at a state dinner, which is a high diplomatic honor reserved for close U.S. allies.

Press freedom in India has declined in recent years and opponents of Modi's governing Hindu nationalist party have accused it of stifling dissent and introducing divisive policies that discriminate against Muslims and other minorities.

Modi has also been accused of trying to silence critics of his administration's handling of the pandemic.

India routinely denies criticism of its human rights record. It has also rejected criticism by foreign governments and rights groups that civil liberties have contracted in the country.

Asked about the optics of lavish treatment for Modi, Jean-Pierre said Biden always discusses human rights concerns with his counterparts. She said the U.S.-India relationship is critical.

"This is an important relationship as we speak about the Indo-Pacific, as we talk about how to move forward in that region," Jean-Pierre told reporters Wednesday during a trip with Biden. "The president believes this is an important relationship that we need to continue and build on."

Modi had a warm relationship with Biden's immediate predecessor as president, Republican Donald Trump.

In 2020, weeks before the COVID-19 pandemic forced much of the world into lockdown, Trump made a two-day visit to India that included a raucous rally at a 110,000-seat cricket stadium. Trump had hosted Modi in the U.S. in 2019, a visit that included a side trip to Houston that drew about 50,000 people, many from the large Indian diaspora in the U.S.

Biden last hosted Modi at the White House in September 2021 for a meeting of leaders of the Quad. India also holds the rotating presidency of the Group of 20 nations and Biden is expected to attend that summit in New Delhi later this year.

Modi is the third foreign leader whom Biden has invited on an official state visit, which includes an expansive arrival ceremony with pomp and pageantry on the White House lawn and a ritzy state dinner with scores of guests from the worlds of politics, business and entertainment. French President Emmanuel Macron visited late last year, followed by South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol in April.

The last time India was so honored was nearly 15 years ago, under then-President Barack Obama in 2009. **MDT/AP**

USA

Trump digs in on election lies, insults accuser during CNN town hall event

JILL COLVIN

DURING a contentious CNN town hall yesterday [Macau time], former President Donald Trump dug in on his lies about the 2020 election, downplayed the violence on Jan. 6, 2021, and repeatedly insulted the woman whom a civil jury this week found him liable of sexually abusing and defaming.

Trump, returning to the network after years of acrimony, also refused to say whether he wants Ukraine to win the war against Russian aggression and said the U.S. "might as well" default on its debt obligation, despite the potentially devastating economic consequences.

The live, televised event — held in early-voting New Hampshire — underscored the challenges of fact-checking Trump in real time. The former president was cheered on and applauded by an audience of Republican and unaffiliated voters who plan to vote in the GOP primary, as moderator Kaitlan Collins sometimes struggled to correct the record as Trump steamrolled with untrue statements. "You are a nasty person," he snapped at one point.

The event also highlighted what is perhaps Trump's most fundamental challenge as he emerged as the undisputed frontrunner for the Republican nomination to take on President Joe Biden again. While Trump's tone and divisive statements often thrill Republican primary crowds, he has so far done little to expand his appeal among the moderates and independents who soured on him in 2020 and will be crucial to winning the general election.

Indeed, Trump yesterday repeatedly doubled down on his lies that the 2020 election had been "rigged," even though state and federal election officials, his own campaign and White House aides, and dozens of courts, including Republican judges, have said there is no evidence to support his claims.

He also displayed no remorse for what happened on Jan. 6, when a mob of his supporters violently stormed the Capitol in a bid to halt the certification of Biden's win. He excused his delayed response that day — he was silent for more than three hours as the carnage unfolded — pulling out a printout of his tweeted timeline as a form of defense.

Instead, he lashed out at the Black police officer who shot and

AP PHOTO



killed rioter Ashli Babbitt, calling him a "thug," despite a Justice Department finding that the shooting was justified. And he said he is inclined to pardon "a large portion" of the rioters charged in the attack. More than 670 people have been convicted of crimes related to that day, including some found guilty of seditious conspiracy or assaulting police officers.

Trump also rejected a suggestion that he apologize to his former vice president, Mike Pence, who was targeted by the mob after Trump wrongly insisted that Pence had the power to overturn the election results.

"I don't feel he was in any danger," he said. In fact, Trump said, Pence was the one who "did something wrong."

He would not commit to accepting the results of the next election, either, saying he would do so only if he feels "it's an honest election" — as he said before the 2020 election.

The primetime forum — the first major television event of the 2024 presidential campaign and Trump's first interview appearance on CNN since before he was elected president in 2016 — drew suspicion from both sides of the political divide as soon as it was announced.

Democrats questioned whether a man who continues to spread lies about his 2020 election

loss should be given the airtime. Conservatives wondered why Trump would appear on — and potentially give a ratings bump to — a network he has continually disparaged.

The stakes were raised considerably Tuesday after jurors in New York found Trump had sexually abused and defamed advice columnist E. Jean Carroll nearly three decades ago, though they rejected her claim that he raped her. The jury awarded her \$5 million in damages.

Trump, at the event, called the case "fake news" and insisted he didn't know Carroll, even as he attacked her in deeply personal terms. "She's a wack job," he said, drawing laughs from the crowd.

Trump has generally not reacted well when pressed onstage about his behavior toward women, most notably during the first Republican presidential debate of 2015, when he sparred with then-Fox News host Megyn Kelly and later accused her of having "blood coming out of her wherever." Carroll is one of more than a dozen women who have accused Trump of sexual assault or harassment over the years; Trump has denied the allegations.

While the civil trial verdict carried no criminal penalties, it is just one of myriad legal issues facing Trump, who was indicted in New York in March over hush

money payments made to women who alleged extramarital affairs with him. Trump is also facing investigations in Georgia and Washington over his alleged interference in the 2020 election and his handling of classified documents and potential obstruction of justice.

The difficulties of interviewing Trump live on air became immediately apparent as the town hall began with questions about the 2020 election. As the evening wore on, Collins became more aggressive in trying to pin Trump down on specifics, trying half a dozen times to get him to say what he would do if a federal abortion ban were to reach his desk.

He said that he would "negotiate" so "people are happy."

During the exchange, Trump repeated the false claim that abortion rights supporters wanted to "kill a baby" in the ninth month of pregnancy or even after a birth — comments that went unchecked by Collins.

He also refused to say whether he wants Ukraine to win its war against Russia. "I don't think in terms of winning and losing," he answered. And he declined to say whether he believes Russian President Vladimir Putin is a war criminal, as the International Criminal Court has alleged.

"That's something to be discussed at a later date," Trump

said, arguing that calling Putin a war criminal would complicate efforts to make a deal to end the conflict. Trump was widely criticized during his time in office for accepting Putin's insistence that Russia had not interfered in the 2016 election to help him, even though U.S. intelligence agencies had determined otherwise.

As for the looming risk of an unprecedented government default, Trump sounded blasé.

"Well, you might as well do it now because you'll do it later because we have to save this country," he said.

A discussion about Trump's refusal to turn over classified documents kept at his Mar-a-Lago club was particularly contentious. When Collins interrupted him at one point, Trump said, "Can I finish?"

"Yeah, what's the answer?" she said.

"You are a nasty person," Trump quipped.

Biden responded to the town hall on Twitter, writing: "It's simple, folks. Do you want four more years of that? If you don't, pitch in to our campaign."

Trump has long called CNN "fake news" and sparred with Collins. Nonetheless, Trump's team saw the invitation from the network as an opportunity to connect with a broader swath of voters than those who usually tune into the conservative outlets he favors. One adviser noted that Trump found success in 2016 by stepping outside Republicans' traditional comfort zone.

The appearance served as another contrast with Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is seen as a top rival to Trump for the GOP presidential nomination in 2024 and is expected to launch his campaign in the coming weeks. DeSantis has taken a sheltered media approach, largely eschewing questions from the mainstream press while embracing Fox News, which was once a loyal Trump cheerleader but is now frequently denigrated by the former president.

Trump's campaign has turned to new channels, including popular conservative podcasts and made-for-social-media videos that often rack up hundreds of thousands of views. His team has also been inviting reporters from a variety of outlets to ride aboard his plane and has been arranging unadvertised stops at local restaurants and other venues to show him interacting with supporters, in contrast to the less charismatic DeSantis. **MDT/AP**

PUTIN'S WAR

ZELENSKY: UKRAINE COUNTEROFFENSIVE NEEDS MORE TIME, LAUNCHING NOW WOULD COST TOO MANY LIVES

SUSIE BLANN, KYIV

UKRAINIAN President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says his country's military needs more time to prepare an anticipated counteroffensive aimed at pushing back Russian occupying forces and opening a new chapter in the war more than 14 months after the Kremlin's full-scale invasion.

Zelenskyy said in an interview broadcast yesterday by the BBC that it would be "unacceptable" to launch the assault now because too many lives would be lost.

"With (what we have) we can go forward and be successful," Zelenskyy said in the interview, according to the BBC.

"But we'd lose a lot of people. I think that's unacceptable," he was quoted as saying. The interview was reportedly carried out in Kyiv with public service broadcasters who are members of Eurovision News, including the BBC.

"So we need to wait. We still need a bit more time," Zelenskyy was quoted as saying.

A Ukrainian fightback against Russia's invasion has been expected for weeks. Ukraine is receiving advanced Western weapons, including tanks and air defenses, and Western training for its troops as it gears up for an expected assault.

While a counterpunch is possible as the weather in Ukraine improves, there has been no word on when it might happen. Zelenskyy's remarks could be a red herring to keep the Russians guessing, and ammunition supply difficulties faced by both sides have added more uncertainty.

A claim by the Ukrainian military on Wednesday that it had advanced up to two kilometers (1.2 miles) around the hotly contested eastern city of Bakhmut brought speculation that the coun-



AP PHOTO

teroffensive was already underway.

But Serhii Cherevatyi, spokesman for Ukraine's Operational Command East, told The Associated Press that the attack was not the "grand counteroffensive, but it's a harbinger showing that there will be more such attacks in the future."

The Kremlin's forces are deeply entrenched in eastern areas of Ukraine with layered defensive lines reportedly up to 20 kilometers deep. Kyiv's counteroffensive would likely face minefields, anti-tank ditches and other obstacles.

Russia is "acting slow" in Ukraine because it wants to preserve infrastructure and save lives there, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov claimed in an interview with the Bosnian Serb channel ATV broadcast Wednesday night.

Moscow has repeatedly explained its lack of advances on the battlefield as an effort to protect civilians, but those claims have been proven false.

Zelenskyy said Russian President Vladimir Putin is counting on reducing the war to a so-called frozen conflict, with neither side able to dislodge the other, accor-

ding to the BBC. He ruled out surrendering territory to Russia in return for a peace deal.

Military analysts have warned that Putin is hoping that the West's costly support for Kyiv will begin to fray.

Ukraine's Western allies have sent the country 65 billion euros (\$70 billion) in military aid to help thwart the Kremlin's ambitions, and with no peace negotiations on the horizon the alliance is gearing up to send more.

European Union Foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the possible need to delay a counteroffensive was a sign that the West must step up its military support for Ukraine.

"Certainly, they need more preparation," Borrell said at a defense and security conference in Brussels. "They need more arms. They need to gather more capacity, and it is us who have to provide for that."

A senior NATO official said that in the coming months of the war, Ukraine will have the edge in quality but Russia has the upper hand in quantity.

"The Russians are now starting to use very old materiel, very old capabilities," Adm. Bob Bauer, chair of the NATO Mili-

tary Committee, told reporters late Wednesday in Brussels.

"The Russians will have to focus on quantity," he said. "Larger number of conscripts and mobilized people. Not well-trained. Older materiel, but large numbers, and not as precise, not as good as the newer ones."

Over the winter, the conflict became bogged down in a war of attrition with both sides relying heavily on bombardment of each other's positions.

A counteroffensive is a major challenge, requiring the Ukrainian military to orchestrate a wide range of capabilities, including providing ammunition, food, medical supplies and spare parts, strung along potentially extended supply lines.

The front line extends more than 1,000 kilometers (600 miles).

The Kremlin wants Kyiv to acknowledge Russia's sovereignty over Crimea and also recognize September's annexation of the Ukrainian provinces of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia.

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

this day in history



1967 STANSTED TO BECOME LONDON'S THIRD AIRPORT



The British Government has given the green light to plans to convert Stansted into London's third airport.

President of the Board of Trade Douglas Jay told the House of Commons that the small airfield in Essex would become the site for a £47m international airport by 1974.

Announcing the decision following the conclusions of a White Paper, Mr Jay said the verdict had been reached "after very careful consideration".

There had been considerable support for an alternative site on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent but Stansted was eventually selected by an inter-departmental committee.

The cost of developing Stansted, where there was already an airport with a 10,000ft runway, would be far cheaper than building a new airfield from scratch.

But Mr Jay said that the government had carried out a thorough re-examination and was satisfied that Stansted, though by no means ideal, was the best area for the airport.

Under proposals in the White Paper, the current airfield will be extended from 800 acres to 2,500 acres and once operational will include two parallel runways for supersonic and jumbo jets.

On top of the £41m development, another £6m will be allocated for road and rail access.

When the new travel facilities are completed it will take 70 minutes by road using the M11 and 45 minutes by rail to reach the airport from central London.

The development will also create jobs for over 20,000 people. But 20 schools and a hospital will have to close and around 7,000 houses will be exposed to high levels of noise.

Peter Kirk, MP for Saffron Walden, objected to the development and said the decision would be received with "deep resentment and bitterness in his constituency".

But Mr Jay said: "We realise there will be regret in the neighbourhood but this is inescapable wherever the airport is placed.

"No matter where the airport is sited, there will be a disturbance to some people who live and work in the area."

Farmers also objected to the development on the grounds that it would lead to the loss of good agricultural land.

The National Farmers Union said: "From an agricultural point of view, few if any sites could be more disastrous.

"The government has opted for the easy and unimaginative course in preference to the realistic and bold planning for which we had hoped."

Mr Jay defended the proposals and said that compensation would be "arranged in the normal course of compulsory land purchase."

He said that Stansted would begin operating scheduled services from next year.

Improvements to all three of London's international airports including Gatwick and Heathrow, would cost £100m.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The decision to build Britain's third airport at Stansted came against a background of 10 years of discussion.

More than 3,000 people from towns and villages in north Essex and east Hertfordshire took part in a rally in the weeks following the announcement.

The airport's first terminal building opened in 1969 and was expanded a year later to handle a growing number of holiday-makers.

In 1979 it was, once again, designated as London's third airport. In February 2005, the High Court gave the go-ahead for further expansion at either Stansted or Luton airports.

The "Stop Stansted Expansion" group is campaigning against a second runway.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Be sure to use your charm and diplomacy when dealing with potential new clients. You need to distance yourself from the situation for a little while first.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
You have bent over backward trying to help them and now it's time to let them stand on their own two feet. Don't make any rash decisions that may affect friendships.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
You can accomplish a lot if you put some effort into household duties or redecorating plans. You could be your own worst enemy if you overreact to something you're told.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Listen to the advice given by others. You should try to elaborate on an idea you have regarding a product or service for the home. Take time to explain your intentions to loved ones.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Speak of your future goals, intentions, and commitments. Social evenings at your place will be highly successful. Try to stay calm and understand both sides of the situation.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
If you keep busy you won't feel the personal pressures you are going through. Stick to your work and avoid emotional confrontations.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
It will be all around you. Extravagance and overindulgence are not a cure if you're feeling sorry for yourself. Don't let your emotions interfere with your professional integrity.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
You could be attracting individuals who are anything but good for you. Don't confide in any relatives whom you know have a tendency to meddle in other people's affairs.

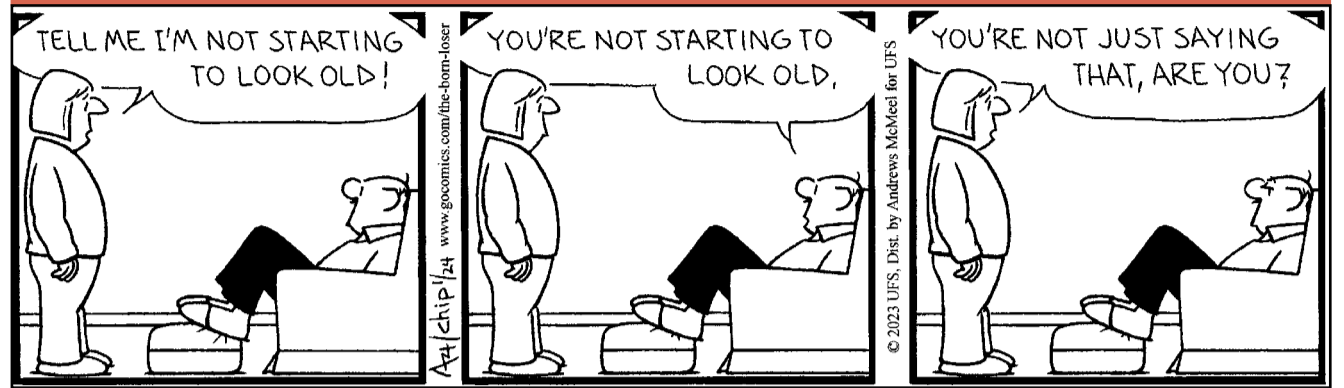
SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
You have bent over backward trying to help them and now it's time to let them stand on their own two feet. Channel your energy into projects that will enhance your home.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Clear up domestic chores that have remained undone for some time. Get involved in fitness programs that will bring you in contact with new friends.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Your trendy style and unique way of doing things will entice new acquaintances. Your involvement in sports or entertainment will lead to new romances.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
You will be in the mood for entertainment. Travel will promote new romantic encounters. You may enjoy doing something musical for entertainment.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	13	28	cloudy
Changchun	13	22	rain
Chengdu	15	29	cloudy
Chongqing	17	27	cloudy
Fuzhou	19	25	overcast
Guangzhou	21	24	rain
Guiyang	12	19	overcast
Haikou	25	27	rain
Hangzhou	13	25	overcast
Harbin	11	22	showers
Hefei	12	26	fine
Nanjing	15	26	fine
Shanghai	16	24	overcast
Taipei	19	25	overcast
Wuhan	13	28	fine
Hong Kong	23	26	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	9	11	cloudy
Frankfurt	10	17	rain
Paris	11	16	rain
London	9	13	rain
New York	19	30	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Chilly; 6- Woeful word; 10- Repose; 14- Immerse; 15- Deep affection; 16- Charles Lamb's nom de plume; 17- Sash; 18- Yeah, right; 19- Action word; 20- Rocky pinnacle; 21- Lets up; 23- Queues; 24- Separated; 26- In the future; 27- Important; 29- Relative by marriage; 31- Routine; 32- Leg joints; 33- Urn hero; 36- Typical instance; 40- Soap-making ingredient; 41- The Hilton, e.g.; 42- Banned apple spray; 43- "See ya!"; 44- Zimbabwe's capital; 46- Copper and zinc alloy; 48- North American buffalo; 49- Aggregate of qualities that make good character; 50- German manufacturer of armaments; 52- La-la lead-in; 55- Narrow strip of wood; 56- Untruths, tells falsehoods; 57- One of the Allens; 59- Grow weary; 60- Writer Wiesel; 61- Enumerate; 62- ___ about (approximately); 63- Hostelties; 64- Try;

DOWN 1- Helper; Abbr.; 2- Bonkers; 3- Ensure; 4- Leb. neighbor; 5- Vanquish; 6- Elite group; 7- Roundish projection; 8- St. crosses; 9- Establish; 10- Critique; 11- Actress Verdugo; 12- Brought into being; 13- Bar bills; 22- Exist; 23- Potlata Palace site; 25- Composition in verse; 26- Novelist Waugh; 27- Hurler Hershiser; 28- Cunning; 29- Deduce; 30- Singer Sedaka; 32- Bird of prey; 33- An urban shade tree; 34- Laugh heartily; 35- As to; 37- Facet; 38- A great deal; 39- Edible corm; 43- Suds; 44- In; 45- Feature; 46- Genius; 47- Back in; 48- Public transports; 49- Singing voice; 50- Potter's oven; 51- Bride strap; 53- Harangue; 54- Chip in; 56- Maui memento; 58- Get thee ___ nunnery;



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
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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

JAKE COYLE,
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

DRIVE IN

IN 'STILL', MICHAEL J. FOX MOVINGLY TELLS HIS STORY

I've always liked Michael J. Fox and always will. I suspect most people feel the same way.

That's surely partly because, as Marty McFly in "Back to the Future" and Alex P. Keaton in "Family Ties," Fox was a fixture of so many childhoods. But there's also a way that Fox remains forever boyish—a charming pipsqueak, a plucky kid with a touch less confidence than he lets on. His sheer geniality and universal appeal has remained indomitable, even in the face of a degenerative brain disorder.

"I'm a cockroach," Fox says in Davis Guggenheim's glossy, entertaining and often affecting documentary, "Still: A Michael J. Fox Movie."

In Guggenheim's film, Fox recounts his life, career and arduous battle with Parkinson's disease, with which he was diagnosed at age 29. The documentary, debuting Friday on Apple TV+, does this through candid on-camera interviews with Fox along with narration read by the actor.

And while there's footage here of home movies, much of Fox's life story unspools on screen. Along with bits of reenactment, Guggenheim uses clips of Fox's film and TV series to illustrate his off-screen life.

AP PHOTO



Michael J. Fox in a scene from the documentary "Still: A Michael J. Fox Movie"

And this is surprisingly effective, in part because Fox's screen presence has always been so genuine. Actors aren't the parts they play but I think they always exude something innate about themselves. And more than that, a surprising amount of Fox's life has really happened in front of cameras.

He met his wife, Tracy Pollan, on "Family Ties"; she played a love interest. His first symptoms came during the filming of "Doc Hollywood." And for years after Fox's diagnosis, he masked his increasing tics on "Spin City" by fidgeting with props.

But dramatizing Fox's life like

this can also feel like a shallow gimmick. Instead, the most memorable images in "Still" are those of a present-day Fox in frame, speaking straight into the camera.

Fox's rags-to-riches rise in Hollywood was meteoric and head-spinning. The Alberta-born actor landed "Family Ties" while

penniless and negotiated from the payphone of a Pioneer Chicken. From there on, it was movie deals, women and Ferraris.

The diagnosis knocked Fox sideways. The doctor, he recounts, laid out the odds: "You lose this game." But after a period of heavy drinking, Fox says the disorder, despite sending tremors through his body, made him more present, stiller. Pollan and their children are surely a big reason for that. Fox is never so endearing as when he's extolling the level-headedness of his wife: "I could be the King of England and she would be her. I could be Elvis and she would be her."

"Still" finally makes you realize that even Fox's likability can be a burden. Being widely beloved while suffering through debilitating pain is another layer to his Parkinson's journey, one rarely so intimately observed. When Guggenheim follows him out of his Upper East Side apartment in Manhattan, the difficulty Fox has just walking is as apparent as his abiding will to remain a man of good cheer. After a stumble near a fan on the sidewalk, Fox brightly jokes: "Nice to meet you. You knocked me off my feet!"

"Still: A Michael J. Fox Movie," an Apple TV+ release is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for language.

Running time: 94 minutes.

★★★★

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IN MACAU (2023)





TASTE OF EDESIA

Dinner among the clouds

IRENE SAM, MDT

LAI Heen, the highest Cantonese restaurant in Macau located at The Ritz-Carlton, sits proudly atop the city with its delicate and classic Chinese vessels and beautiful ceramic tile décor. The intimate and exclusive atmosphere, paired with personalised service, offers guests the opportunity to embark on an unparalleled and luxurious culinary journey. For gourmands seeking to elevate their culinary experience, Lai Heen offers an eclectic menu of wines and spirits, including a rich French Bordeaux selection and a best-in-class Portuguese wine cellar.

Additionally, guests can choose from an extensive selection of

premium-aged Pu Erh tea.

Lai Heen has achieved the One Star title for the seventh consecutive year in the recently released Michelin Guide Hong Kong and Macau 2023, recognising its culinary excellence. To celebrate this accolade, The Ritz-Carlton, Macau's long-serving Chinese Executive Chef, Jackie Ho Hon-sing, honours the authenticity of Cantonese cuisine while exploring innovative possibilities with a new limited-time menu.

The Michelin Star's Menu is a grand showcase featuring a string of masterpieces that helped Lai Heen earn and keep its highly-coveted Michelin Star for seven years. The journey starts with a trio of umami-packed appetisers, featuring Chilled Abalone Marinated in Ferment-

ed Rice Wine, Crispy Alaskan King Crab Rolled with Coconut, and Marinated Jellyfish with Passion Fruit, before moving on to the comforting Double-boiled Superior Fish Maw Soup with Pearl Oyster. The luxurious Steamed Tiger Prawn with Egg White Topped with Superior Caviar is delicate and flavourful, with a good balance between umami and subtle elements. The Pan-seared French Quail Fillet with Pearl Onion in Port Wine Sauce is a unique Macau-Portuguese specialty demonstrating the chef's culinary ingenuity. Finally, three distinct desserts including Kiwi and Mango Panna Cotta, Sweetened Pumpkin Dumpling with Egg Custard, and Baked Lotus Seed Paste Cake with Nuts round up the meal on a sweet note.

ITUNES

Lovano's trio is post-free jazz in a chamber setting

THE latest album from saxophonist Joe Lovano's Trio Tapestry has almost no pulse but plenty of heart and soul.

"Our Daily Bread," released Friday, is post-free jazz in a chamber setting, and absorbing despite the lack of a bass or beat. Lovano's eight original compositions leave plenty of space for individual explorations by the sax man, drummer Carmen

Castaldi and pianist Marilyn Crispell, even when they're all playing at the same time.

Look elsewhere for swing, torrents of notes or chord changes. There is momentum to the music, however, as the trio pushes jazz forward, using silence as an instrument to build space between the players and what they play. The result is a set of tunes that float, undula-

ting and unhurried, creating a mood of reflection but also liberation.

Lovano's minimalist meditations include the flowing and lyrical title cut, which almost finds a steady rhythm, and the chromatic "All Twelve," framed by an angular, edgy melody. Graceful interplay drives the romantic sax-piano duet "Le Petit Opportun," and Lovano's golden tenor

tone is especially moving on "One for Charlie," a slow, sad solo in tribute to the late bassist Charlie Haden.

On the final cut, "Crystal Ball," Crispell falls into unison with Lovano, whose last note is perhaps the album's longest, as if he's reluctant to let go. This challenging music is worth lingering over. **STEVEN WINE, MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



"Our Daily Bread," Joe Lovano's Trio Tapestry (ECM)

OPINION

The Conversation

Alyssa Beall, West Virginia University



RELIGIONS REVERE MOTHERHOOD IN SOMETIMES UNEXPECTED WAYS

As we approach Mother's Day, many groups will hold special events or services to celebrate the holiday. In the United States, Mother's Day was originally founded in 1908 at Andrews Methodist Episcopal Church in West Virginia and became a nationally recognized holiday in 1914. The mid-May date spread around the world, though many countries still maintain their own dates and traditions.

Religions around the world use these days to honor the importance of many kinds of nurturing, from traditional celebrations to events that honor modern parenting, infertility struggles or the pain of losing a child.

Motherhood and nurturing are not celebrated only on particular days, however. Many religions include goddess-centered traditions that embrace many forms of the divine feminine as central to their belief systems.

In Asia, Guan Yin, who goes by many variations of her name, is revered as the goddess of compassion and mercy in several different Eastern traditions. Beginning – interestingly enough – as a male bodhisattva called Avalokiteshvara, the goddess figure was adapted in many different cultures around the world. Called Kannon in Japan and Quan Am in Vietnam, she is frequently a focal point of temple worship and is also considered the guardian of sailors and a goddess of fertility.

One of the most well-known goddesses in Hinduism, meanwhile, is perhaps the least understood from an outside perspective. Kali is often seen as a terrifying figure, depicted using multiple weapons and dressed in clothing of severed heads and arms. Yet Kali is also an important mother figure who channels her ferocity into the care and defense of all creation. As a manifestation of the primal force of Shakti, Kali is essentially all aspects of motherhood wrapped up into one, often simultaneously caring, loving and fierce.

In Neopaganism, an umbrella term for a diverse group of new religious movements most popular in the United States, Australia and Europe, goddess figures also often play a primary role. Neopaganism's various branches include Wicca and Hellenic reconstructionism, a religion that focuses on the gods and goddesses of Ancient Greece.

Of primary importance for many Neopagans is the triple goddess, a figure who encompasses the three aspects of maiden, mother and crone. Sometimes these goddess figures are based on specific ancient deities, such as Persephone, Demeter and Hekate, and sometimes they are worshipped more generally as representations of various phases of life.

More recently, many of these traditions are intentionally expanding to reject ideas of gender essentialism and embrace a range of identities. For some Neopagans, exploring what femininity and masculinity signify in today's society is an important extension of religious belief and a way to include people who have felt rejected from other religious communities.

Many other religions revere mother figures, even if they are not worshipped or considered goddesses. Khadija, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad and the first convert to Islam, is given the title "the Mother of Believers," signifying her importance for the development of the religion. Devotion to Mary, mother of Jesus, has been common throughout the history of Christianity and remains popular today. In Judaism, the idea of "Shekinah" has been influential in some feminist thought. Rather than representing a single woman or female figure, Shekinah is seen as the feminine aspect of the divine, a manifestation of God's wisdom on Earth.

Nurturing and compassion are key concepts in a variety of religions, whether they are represented as specific goddess figures, archetypes of the feminine or new religious developments that embrace shifting ideas about gender.

BANK OF ENGLAND RAISES UK INTEREST RATES TO HIGHEST LEVEL SINCE 2008

The Bank of England raised interest rates to their highest level since late 2008 as it continues to combat stubbornly high inflation in the U.K.

The decision yesterday by the bank's nine-member Monetary Policy Committee to lift its main interest rate by a quarter of a percentage point to 4.5% was widely anticipated in financial markets. The increase was its 12th in a row.

Like other central banks around the world, the Bank of England has sought to keep a lid on inflation, which over the past year has been fueled by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

That sent energy prices soaring, a development that then led to price increases across a wide array of goods and services.

The Bank of England started raising interest rates in late 2021 from a low of 0.1% in order to keep a lid on price rises that were first largely stoked by bottlenecks resulting from the lifting of coronavirus lockdown restrictions and subsequently by Russia's war in Ukraine.

Higher interest rates help lower inflation by making it more expensive for households and businesses to borrow, meaning they potentially spend less, thereby reducing upside demand pressure on prices.

THE BUZZ

AP PHOTO



ASEAN LEADER: NO PROGRESS IN ENDING MYANMAR'S DEADLY CIVIL STRIFE

INDONESIAN President Joko Widodo somberly acknowledged to fellow Southeast Asian leaders yesterday that no progress has been made to end the civil strife gripping Myanmar and renewed a call for an end to the violence, including a recent airstrike a rights group called an "apparent war crime."

"I have to be honest," Widodo told fellow leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on the final day of their two-day summit in the Indonesian harbor town of Labuan Bajo. "There has been no significant progress in the implementation of the five-point consensus."

ASEAN's chairperson this year, Widodo was referring to a peace plan forged by the 10-nation bloc with Myanmar's top general in 2021 that called for an immediate end to the violence and dialogue among contending parties to be brokered through an ASEAN special envoy.

Myanmar's military-led government refused to take steps to enforce the plan, prompting ASEAN leaders to exclude the country's ruling generals and their appointees from the bloc's summit meetings. The generals have protested ASEAN's move, which they said strayed from the group's bedrock policy of non-intervention in each other's domestic affairs and deciding by consensus.

Widodo called for unity —

a seemingly futile call as he spoke with fellow heads of state in a bayside hotel conference room with the chair reserved for Myanmar's leader empty.

After the leaders concluded their summit, Widodo and his foreign minister, Retno Marsudi, told a news conference that the bloc would continue to push for the peace plan's enforcement and expand ASEAN's engagement not just with military leaders but with various groups in Myanmar, hoping the military-led government would do the same.

"We will try again and again," Marsudi told reporters. "We are still united and strong in seeing the urgency of the five-point consensus."

"Engagement doesn't mean recognition," Widodo said.

Founded in 1967 as a diverse club of authoritarian regimes, monarchs and nascent democracies, ASEAN has come under international pressure to take tougher steps to address the crisis in Myanmar. But ASEAN members appeared to be divided, with some recommending an easing of punitive actions aimed at isolating Myanmar's generals and allowing its top diplomat and officials back to attend the summit meetings.

"The time for isolation has served its purpose," an internal ASEAN report obtained by The Associated Press cited "some member states"

as saying in a meeting of the bloc's top diplomats ahead of the leaders' summit.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim publicly expressed his frustrations. He has said that about 200,000 people have fled to Malaysia to escape the tumult in Myanmar.

"ASEAN has not been able to resolve most problems, contentious ones," Anwar told fellow leaders Wednesday in videotaped remarks he posted on his Twitter account. "We are stuck with the principle of non-interference."

"Yes, there is non-interference, but we will have to then have a new vision that could give us some flexibility in order to navigate and maneuver the way forward," he said.

ASEAN leaders on Wednesday condemned an attack on an aid convoy that their group had arranged for displaced people in Myanmar, calling for an immediate stop to violence and for the military government to comply with a peace plan.

Gunmen opened fire on a convoy delivering aid to displaced villagers and carrying Indonesian and Singaporean diplomats over the weekend in Myanmar's eastern Shan state. A security team with the convoy returned fire and a vehicle was damaged, but there were no injuries, state-run television MRTV reported. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



UK is sending Ukraine long-range cruise missiles to help push back Russian forces, British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace (pictured) said yesterday. It's the first known shipment of the weaponry that Kyiv has long sought from its allies. Wallace told lawmakers in the House of Commons that Britain is donating Storm Shadow missiles, which have a range of more than 250 kilometers. He didn't say how many are being sent. **More on p12**

AP PHOTO



Serbia The United States' top international development official, Samantha Power (pictured), yesterday [Macau time] pledged U.S. support to Serbia and Kosovo as the two former wartime enemies work to stabilize relations at a time of heightened tensions. "It will take political courage to find a durable solution, acceptable to both sides, but the support from the U.S. will be steadfast in the coming weeks as Serbia and Kosovo work to take next steps," Power told reporters in Belgrade, Serbia's capital.

Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza Strip killed a fourth militant commander yesterday, raising the Palestinian death toll from the latest burst of fighting to 25. Rocket fire toward southern Israel continued even as Egypt pressed on with attempts to broker a cease-fire. It has been the worst bout of fighting between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza in months, and among the dead were also women and children.

AP PHOTO



Turkey A candidate in Turkey's presidential election announced his withdrawal from the race yesterday, a move that's likely to benefit President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's main challenger. The candidate who pulled out, Muharrem Ince, is the leader of the center-left Homeland Party. He was one of four contenders running in Sunday's presidential election. Turkey holds a parliamentary election the same day.