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**EMPLOYERS WILL HAVE TO PAY SALARIES IN FULL DURING EMPLOYEES' MATERNITY LEAVE FROM MAY 26, AS GOV'T SUBSIDIZATION WILL COME TO AN END**

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**STUDY SHOWS CONFIDENCE IN EARLY RESUMPTION OF ECONOMIC STABILITY**

▲ P2

**CHINA SENTENCES US CITIZEN TO LIFE IN PRISON ON SPYING CHARGES**

▲ P6



AP PHOTO



**South Korean** President Yoon Suk Yeol met with Japanese business leaders yesterday and called for expanded technology cooperation between the countries, which he described as a key element in broader efforts to improve relations. Yoon has met twice with Japanese PM Fumio Kishida in recent weeks, demonstrating their intent to overcome historical grievances that have strained ties for years and to strengthen cooperation in response to shared challenges, including a nuclear-armed North Korea and growing Chinese assertiveness in the region.

AP PHOTO



**India-Japan** President Joe Biden has made it a mission for the U.S. to build friendships overseas — and the next few weeks will offer a vivid demonstration of the importance he's placing on a relationship with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The two are both scheduled to attend this week's Group of Seven summit in Japan, a subsequent gathering of Pacific island leaders in Papua New Guinea, and a later meeting of Indo-Pacific leaders in Australia.

AP PHOTO



**Pakistan** Thousands of government supporters converged on the country's Supreme Court yesterday, in a rare challenge to the nation's judiciary. The demonstrators demanded the resignation of the chief justice over ordering the release of former Prime Minister Imran Khan. The Pakistan Democratic Alliance, a grouping of 13 political parties affiliated with the ruling Pakistan Muslim League, called for the protests.

More on backpage

# ROLLING HIGH

Casino floors see MOP8b in revenues in May's first half

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**NO EVENT**

**IC CONFIRMS NO INT'L PARADE THIS YEAR**

▲ P2

**SOCIETY**

**SURVEY FINDS LOW CHILD VISITATION RATE IN DIVORCED PARENTS**

▲ P3

### MAINLAND, MACAU TO MUTUALLY RECOGNIZE DRIVING LICENSES

An agreement enabling mutual recognition and exchange of driving licenses between the mainland and Macau will take effect today, according to the Ministry of Public Security (MPS). The MPS and the SAR government signed the agreement in February. Under the deal, the mainland and Macau will allow individuals holding valid driving licenses issued by authorities from either side to drive directly through or obtain driving permits on the other side without any additional tests. Previously, the mutual recognition and exchange of driving licenses has been organized between the mainland and the Hong Kong SAR.

### HEALTH COURSES PARTICIPANTS SURGE 250% Y-O-Y

Participants in health courses surged by 250.1% year-on-year, mainly due to an increase in participants in rescue techniques courses, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). Those who participated in production and processing of food and beverages courses grew by 55.3%, while those who took tourism and leisure courses decreased by 17.4%. Business and administration courses had the highest number of participants, at 23,795 (30.5% of total); this was followed by health courses, with 6,875 participants (8.8%), and tourism and leisure courses, with 6,541 participants (8.4%). Data shows that 59 institutions are offering vocational training courses in 2022. A total of 1,625 courses were organized, an increase of 13.2% year-on-year.

### SUMMIT DISCUSSES GBA AS 'WINDOW OF TALENT'

A summit on talent development was held last week in Macau to discuss building the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) into a "window of talent." Over 200 delegates, including business executives, scholars and diplomats, exchanged views on the impacts of science and technology on talent nurturing and planning, quality development and cooperation on digital service trade between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Chiang Chun Yuan, executive chair of the summit, said Macau's geographic location, first-class exhibition and tourism infrastructure, and the supporting business environment could help tech firms grow continuously. "Macau boasts unique advantages in the areas of health, financial science and technology, education and digital empowering," Chiang said.

### PROSPERITY INDEX

# STUDY SHOWS CONFIDENCE IN EARLY RESUMPTION OF ECONOMIC STABILITY

ANTHONY LAM

**T**he city's Prosperity Index may return to the stability level in April – earlier than expected – the Macau Economic Association (MEA) said in a statement yesterday.

To fall into the stability level, the index must achieve at least 5.0 units in the evaluation of the city's economic momentum.

In the estimate it made in April, the group expected the index to return to the stability level only in June.

As for the months spanning May to July, the association expects the index to range between 5.4 and 5.6 units.

The advantageous factors supporting the association's estimation include the escalations in data related to tourism activities, such as average hotel occupancy rate in March having reached 77%, generated by the influx of tourists from several source markets.

The average daily gross gambling revenue (GGR) for March and April has also risen to MOP410 million and 490 million. M2 currency supply



has seen an historic high as well with year-over-year rise for four consecutive months.

The job market has also seen significantly improved vitality. The unemployment rate has continued to drop and is now 3.1%. Many industries are experiencing workforce shortages and have escalated recruitment efforts. The total employed population has also bottomed out.

May 1 holidays, commonly

referred to as the Golden Week, have also seen daily average tourist arrivals at 99,000 and daily average GGR at MOP640 million – both new heights after Covid-19.

Despite the "prosperity," the association warned about uneven recovery across the market. It said that except for those in tourist areas, small and micro enterprises in traditional residential districts had not yet

benefited from this round of recovery. These enterprises have not only not seen recovering businesses, but falling consumption, especially during weekends and holidays. A key reason is that many people have decided to travel out of Macau on holidays, especially under the trigger of the Northbound Travel for Macao Vehicles scheme.

The association said the phenomenon is of social concern because these businesses, usually targeting a local clientele, did not see lime lights shining from either internal or external markets.

It is noteworthy that the external environment is still quite complicated, with sluggish demand in the consumer market, strong risk aversion sentiment in the investment market, and many uncertain and unstable factors. In particular, the rise in the US dollar interest rate has profoundly impacted the global economy and finance, the association said.

The March index has been confirmed as 4.5 units, the association added.

### EVENTS

## IC confirms no Int'l Parade this year

**F**ollowing three years of absence, the Macao International Parade will see another year of abeyance, president Leong Wai Man of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) has disclosed.

On the sidelines of a recent event, the IC president was asked if this year would see the return of the parade. She replied the bureau was reviewing the event "in several directions" to identify the possibility of "improvement and accentuation."

One of the areas of review was time, she added.

Previous parades were held in December, which

is the handover commemoration month in Macau, meaning that there would be a multitude of events being held in the month. In addition to that, the IC president thought December was usually a cold month.

Despite the comment, she revealed that the event may be moved to the first or second quarter of the year, adding that the upcoming edition may be held in the first half of the coming year.

Another area of concern is the route. The IC president confirmed that the bureau was working

on a new route for the parade.

She hoped that the parade can be used to showcase more effectively the different aspects of Macau, such as the urban characteristics of Chinese and Western cultures. Apart from the old route that passed through the Ruins of St. Paul's as well as the old city, there are still other places well worth experiencing, the IC president added.

She also said that the event will increase the number of participants, hoping to cooperate with integrated resorts. **AL**



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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 Torráo, 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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ANTHONY LAM

A survey has discovered that the non-guardian side of divorced couples only occasionally visit their children.

Yesterday, the Women's General Association of Macau announced the results of a survey it had conducted concerning single-parent families.

The survey discovered that nearly 60% of the respondents said that their ex-partners could not meet their children at least once a week on average, while more than 40% of the respondents reported that they would spend six hours or more per day taking care of their children.

The targets of this questionnaire survey are single-parent families with children under the age of 18. A total of 277 valid questionnaires were collected. More than 75% of the respondents work as clerks, salespersons or workers, among other professions, with a monthly income of less than MOP15,000. They responded that their economic income was not sufficient to handle daily expenses.

# Survey finds low child visitation rate in divorced parents

Nearly 64% of the respondents showed concern about their children's lack of self-value and self-confidence, due to growing up in a single-parent family. The next most prevalent worry concerned children's social skills and the parents' lack of time to interact with children due to work.

The survey organizer also said the survey revealed restraints in personal and career development of the respondents, who reported that due to the weak responsibility fulfilment of their former partners, they faced double pressure from handling work and caring for their children. They have also experienced emotional disturbances due to these situations.

The association suggests that a legal arbitration mechanism for family affairs will help ease the situation.



## Full payment by employers for maternity leave to start from May 26

ANTHONY LAM

EMPLOYERS will be obligated to pay salaries in full during their employees' maternity leaves from May 26, as government subsidization will come to an end on the previous day.

The length of maternity leave was increased from 56 days to 70 days following the promulgation of the amended Labour Relations Law on May 26, 2020. Alongside the extension, a provision on transitional arrangements also started taking effect.

The provision states that in the first three years of the promulgation of the amended law, the government would issue up to 14 days of salary to eligible local employees. Under this arrangement, employers were only required to pay 56 days of salary, meaning there would be no change to their responsibilities in the first three years.

As the transitional period will end on May 25, employers are reminded to pay the salary of 70-day maternity leave to employees who have worked in the company for over a year while giving birth or

fitting the definitions as stated in Clauses 5 and 6 of Article 54 of the amended law.

Employees giving birth or fitting the aforementioned definitions and eligible for maternity leave on or before May 25 will still be eligible to apply for the salary subsidy from the Social Security Fund within 120 days of their labor or the occurrence of the conditions as stated in the aforementioned clauses.

The government explained that the transitional arrangement was implemented to ease immediate impacts on employers.



### PUBLIC WORKS

## FAI CHI KEI PUMPING STATION CONSTRUCTION TO COMMENCE IN THREE PHASES

STAFF REPORTER

THE first phase of construction for the new pumping station in Bacia Norte do Patane will begin on May 19, with the aim to complete construction of the box culvert drain in the second half of 2024.

The earthworks for the pumping station are to be completed in 2025, and a trial and adjustment period will begin subsequently to reach the optimal operation result.

As the construction location is situated in a densely populated area near the embankment which is heavily impacted by tidal changes, a certain level of difficulty will arise in the construction period.

The new pumping station will facilitate rainwater discharge into the sea after it is collected in the box culvert drain during heavy rain.

The pumping station will also be equipped with a contaminant intercepting function to alleviate the problem of water pollution along the coast of Bacia Norte do Patane.



Meanwhile, a new waterfront leisure area will be built through the construction works to comprehensively optimize the leisure facilities in Bacia Norte do Patane.

The construction works will be divided into three phases. In the first phase of construction, a 170-meter long section of box culvert drain will be constructed along the coast in Rua do Comandante João Belo to improve the whole drainage network. The second phase includes a box culvert drain of 268 meters that will be constructed in a road section in Rua

da Doca Seca, to connect the box culvert rainwater drain in Avenida Marginal do Lam Mau with the new box culvert drain in Rua do Comandante João Belo constructed in the first phase.

The third phase of construction mainly involves the construction of the pumping station in Bacia Norte do Patane, spanning about 920 square meters. The pumping station will have a contaminant intercepting function in addition to rainwater drainage. The pumping station will also be equipped with an odor removal system.

### FOREX RESERVES DROP TO MOP213B BY APRIL

The preliminary estimate of the SAR's foreign exchange reserves amounted to 213.5 billion patacas at the end of April, the monetary watchdog said yesterday. The latest statistics from the Monetary Authority of Macao showed that the reserves decreased 0.7% from the revised value of 215.0 billion patacas for the previous month. Macau's foreign exchange reserves as of the end of April represented 10 times the currency in circulation, or 84.2% of the pataca broad money supply (M2) at the end of March.

### RENTAL APPLICATION PERIOD FOR NEW NEIGHBORHOOD UNITS END MAY 25

As the Macau New Neighborhood (MNN) is expected to be completed in August, a submission period for 60 shop units was put in place from May 15 to May 25, in the aim of developing the Guangdong-Macao In-depth Cooperation Zone market. Located at the junction of Tianyu Road and Xiangshun Road, the shop unit will be dedicated to grocery retailers, food and beverage merchants, livelihood services providers and homeware marketers. In addition, special offers will be set up to support Macau's small and medium-sized companies, as well as young entrepreneur's start-ups. Already more than 300 enquiries have been received.

### GAMING

# CASINO FLOORS SEE MOP8B IN REVENUES IN MAY'S FIRST HALF

#### STAFF REPORTER

**CASINO** floors have seen MOP8 billion of gross gaming revenue (GGR) in the first 14 days of the month, an average daily run rate of MOP570 million, according to investment bank JP Morgan.

The ongoing robust recovery, according to the firm, shows elevated baseline demand levels, similar to what was seen during the Lunar New Year in late January this year.

"This implies that last week's GGR – a seasonally slow week after the long holiday – was still at MOP500 million per day, a meaningful notch above the MOP400 million plus run-rates that the industry generated prior to the Labor Day holiday," said analyst DS Kim.

Meanwhile, VIP demand is on a recovery rate of around 25% to 30%, significantly higher than the recovery recorded during the first quarter of the year.

"VIPs still don't move the needles for profits/cash flows,




but we believe this level of recovery is pretty impressive, nonetheless," said the brokerage.

Meanwhile, casino stocks have been on a decline amid the sector gaining momentum.

Last month, the casino sector continued to gain traction in recovery, recording MOP14.7 billion in revenue in April, the highest monthly taking since January 2020.

However, Kim noted that "that better-than-expected fundamentals will ultimately drive the sentiment or stocks higher as the street numbers move up."

AD



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### GAMING

## SJM'S LOSSES NARROW IN Q1 AS SECTOR UPBEAT FOR RECOVERY

**SJM** Holdings recorded a net gaming revenue HKD3.70 billion during the first quarter (Q1) of the year, amid the robust recovery the casino sector has been undergoing since January.

The figure is a significant increase as compared with HKD2.35 billion in the same period the year prior.

The gaming operator's losses also narrowed to HKD869 million in the first quarter, as compared with a loss of HKD1.28 billion in Q1 2022.

Adjusted EBITDA of the Group in Q1 2023

was HKD31 million, as compared with negative HKD474 million in Q1 2022.

Daisy Ho, chairman of SJM Holdings Limited and managing director of SJM Resorts, S.A., commented, "In the first quarter of 2023, after several years facing challenges caused by the pandemic, SJM has turned an important corner by returning to positive adjusted EBITDA."

"Our revenues from both gaming and non-gaming activities showed important gains during the quarter, and we ex-

pect that our team's efforts will pay off further in future, especially as our Grand Lisboa Palace Resort with all of its features ramps up into a growing market," she added.

Grand Lisboa's gross revenue in Q1 2023 was HKD992 million including gross gaming revenue HKD928 million and non-gaming revenue HKD64 million, while Grand Lisboa Palace's gross revenue in Q1 2023 was HKD474 million, including gross gaming revenue of HKD310 million and non-gaming revenue of HKD164 million. LV

MDT ARCHIVE



AP PHOTO



TECH

# EU backs Microsoft buying Call of Duty maker Activision Blizzard - but the \$69B deal is still at risk

KELVIN CHAN, LONDON

**T**HE European Union yesterday approved Microsoft's \$69 billion purchase of video game maker Activision Blizzard, deciding the deal won't stifle competition for popular console titles like Call of Duty and accepting the U.S. tech company's remedies to boost competition in cloud gaming.

But the blockbuster deal is still

in jeopardy because British regulators have rejected it and U.S. authorities are trying to thwart it.

The deal, sweetened by Microsoft's promises to free up licensing conditions for cloud gaming, "would no longer raise competition concerns and would ultimately unlock significant benefits for competition and consumers," said the European Commission, the 27-nation bloc's executive arm and top antitrust watchdog.

The all-cash deal announced more than a year ago has been scrutinized by regulators around the world over fears that it would give Microsoft and its Xbox console control of Activision's hit franchises like Call of Duty and World of Warcraft.

Fierce opposition has been driven by rival Sony, which makes the PlayStation gaming system.

Microsoft sought to counter the resistance by striking a deal with

Nintendo to license Activision titles like Call of Duty for 10 years and offering the same to Sony if the deal went ahead.

Following its review, the European Commission dismissed the possibility that Microsoft would cut off its games from PlayStation, saying that excluding the most popular gaming console would put a big dent in its profits.

The emerging cloud gaming market received closer scrutiny

from Brussels. Cloud gaming frees players from buying expensive consoles and gaming computers by allowing them to stream games they own to tablets, phones and other devices, typically through a cloud platform that may charge a fee.

The commission approved the deal after accepting Microsoft's offer to modify its licensing agreements to allow users and any cloud gaming platforms to stream its titles without paying any royalties for 10 years.

Microsoft has already announced deals to bring Xbox PC games to cloud gaming platforms operated by chipmaker Nvidia and independent player Boosteroid.

Activision games aren't available on cloud services, but the commission noted that the licensing commitments could expand the cloud gaming market "by bringing Activision's games to new platforms, including smaller EU players, and to more devices than before."

The EU decision is at odds with the stance taken by British anti-trust regulators, who last month upended the biggest tech deal in history over concerns it would stifle competition in the small but rapidly growing cloud gaming market.

The companies are appealing the U.K. Competition and Markets Authority's decision to a tribunal, but history doesn't bode well.

The watchdog previously denied Facebook parent Meta's purchase of Giphy over concerns it would limit innovation and competition. The social media giant was ultimately forced to sell off the GIF-sharing platform after it lost an appeal.

The EU's decision could enhance Microsoft's chances as it faces down U.S. regulators. The Federal Trade Commission is taking the company to court to block the deal, with a trial before the FTC's in-house judge set to begin Aug. 2. **MDT/AP**

## CORPORATE BITS

### Manulife HK, Macau's critical illness plans increase over 40%



Manulife Hong Kong and Macau reported a double-digit year-on-year increase in insurance sales in the first quarter of 2023, primarily driven by strong demand from mainland Chinese visitors (MCV) following the lifting of all

Covid-19 related restrictions, and the full reopening of borders with mainland China.

First-quarter annualized premium equivalent (APE) sales increased by 26% to HKD1.66 billion, compared to the same period in 2022, with

critical illness plans and Qualifying Deferred Annuity Plans each showing an increase by more than 40% year-on-year.

"In addition to our broker channels, our professional agency force in Hong Kong and Macau has played a pivotal role in driving this growth, resulting in double-digit year-on-year sales increases across multiple product lines, such as savings, critical illness and Qualifying Deferred Annuity Plans," said Patrick Graham, chief executive officer of Manulife Hong Kong and Macau.

As of March 31, 2023, Manulife's professional agency force in Hong Kong and Macau consisted of 11,112 agents.

### teamLab Macao creates three new artworks spaces



From June 1, The Venetian Macao and international Tokyo-based art collective teamLab will hold three new artwork spaces, such as "Floating Flower Garden: Flowers and I are of the Same Root,

the Garden and I are One," "Massless Clouds Between Sculpture and Life," and "En Tea House," to provide visitors all-new experiences focused on "immersion and creation of unique shapes

and colors for each person."

While the "Floating Flower Garden" will feature an interactive garden artwork composed of over 8,000 living orchids that bloom in mid-air as if floating in space, the "Massless Clouds Between Sculpture and Life" will be composed of one giant white cloud-like mass floating in space.

In addition, the "Light Sculpture" series will be renewed with the intention of reinforcing the immersion, as the "Autonomous Abstraction, Continuous Phenomena from the Universe to the Self" will replace the existing "Life is the Light that Resonates in the Dark," to give visitors new surprises.

COURTS

# China sentences 78-year-old US citizen to life in prison on spying charges

**C**HINA sentenced a 78-year-old United States citizen to life in prison yesterday on spying charges, in a case that could exacerbate the deterioration in ties between Beijing and Washington over recent years.

Details of the charges against John Shing-Wan Leung, who also holds permanent residency in Hong Kong, have not been publicly released.

Leung was detained April 15, 2021, by the local bureau of China's counterintelligence agency in the southeastern city of Suzhou, according to a statement posted by the city's intermediate court on its social media site. His detention came after China had closed its borders and imposed tight domestic travel restrictions and social controls to fight the spread of COVID-19.

Such investigations and trials are held behind closed doors and little information is generally released other than vague accusations of infiltration, gathering secrets and threatening state security.

Relations between Washington and Beijing are at their lowest in decades amid disputes over trade, technology, human rights and China's increasingly assertive approach toward its territorial claims involving self-governing Taiwan and the South China Sea. High-level government visits have



John Shing-Wan Leung (video shot)

been on hold and U.S. companies are delaying major investments amid mixed messaging from Beijing.

The sentencing comes as U.S. President Joe Biden is traveling to Hiroshima, Japan, for the Group of Seven major industrial nations summit, followed by a visit to Papua New Guinea, a Pacific island nation in a region where China has sought to increase its economic, military and diplomatic in-

fluence. After Beijing's gains in the area, the U.S. and its Asia-Pacific partners stepped up their regional presence, offering investments and financial support rivaling those furnished by China.

Now the world's second-largest economy, China is expanding its footprint in ports, railways and other infrastructure from Europe to Southeast Asia and beyond.

While the Suzhou court offered no indication of a tie to over-

all China-U.S. relations, spying charges are highly selective and evidence backing them up is not released. That is standard practice among most countries, who wish to secure their personal connections, networks and access to information.

The U.S. Embassy in Beijing said it was aware of the case, but could not comment further due to privacy concerns. "The Department of State has no greater priority than the safety and security of U.S. citizens overseas," the embassy said in the emailed statement.

The government of Hong Kong had no immediate word on Leung's sentencing.

Chinese national security agencies have also raided the offices of foreign business consulting firms in Beijing and other cities as part of a crackdown on foreign businesses that provide sensitive economic data.

Foreign companies operating in China have come under increasing pressure as Xi Jinping's government tightens control over the economy. That stands in stark contrast to efforts to lure back foreign investors after draconian COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were lifted at the beginning of the year.

Long pretrial detentions "are not unusual in China and prosecutors have broad powers to hold people charged in national

security cases," regardless of their citizenship status.

Two Chinese-Australians, Cheng Lei, who formerly worked for China's state broadcaster, and writer Yang Jun, have been held since 2020 and 2019 respectively without word on their sentencing.

According to China observers, government suspicion is particularly focused on Chinese-born foreign citizens and people from Taiwan and Hong Kong, especially if they have political contacts or work in academia or publishing.

Under Xi, the party has launched multiple campaigns against what it calls foreign efforts to sabotage its rule. Universities have been ordered to censor discussions of human rights, modern Chinese history and ideas that could prompt questions about total Communist Party control.

Xi's government has also taken a hard line on foreign relations, most recently ordering out a Canadian diplomat in retaliation for Ottawa's expulsion of a staffer at the Chinese embassy accused of threatening a member of the Canadian parliament and his family members living in Hong Kong.

That meshes with Xi's fierce global stance that has seen China partner with Russia in accusing the West of provoking Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and seeking to overthrow the U.S.-led liberal dominance of global affairs. **MDT/AP**

DIPLOMACY

# Ukraine envoy due to start Europe trip



**A** Chinese envoy was preparing yesterday to visit Ukraine and Russia, but there appeared to be little chance of a breakthrough to end the 15-month-long invasion.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping's government says it is neutral and wants to play a role as mediator, but has given Moscow political support. Beijing released a proposed peace plan in February, but that was largely dismissed by Ukraine's allies, who insist Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces must withdraw.

Li Hui, a former ambassador to Moscow, also will visit Poland, France and Germany, according to the

foreign ministry. It gave no other schedule details.

Political analysts see little hope for a peace agreement because neither Ukraine nor Russia is ready to stop fighting. They say by sending an envoy, China appears to be trying to neutralize criticism of its friendship with Putin and to split European allies away from Washington.

Xi spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy by phone in April, setting the stage for the diplomatic push.

The trip "expresses China's commitment to promoting peace and negotiations," foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said Friday. Wang said China wishes to prevent an "escalation of the situation."

Beijing previously avoided involvement in

conflicts between other countries but appears to be asserting itself as a global diplomatic force after arranging talks between Saudi Arabia and Iran in March that led them to restore diplomatic relations following a seven-year break.

China has friendly relations with Moscow as well as economic leverage as the biggest buyer of Russian oil and gas after the United States and its allies cut off most purchases.

Xi's government sees Moscow as a diplomatic partner in opposing U.S. domination of global affairs. Beijing has refused to criticize the February 2022 invasion and used its status as one of five permanent United Nations Security Council members to deflect diplomatic attacks on Russia. **MDT/AP**

THAILAND

# Opposition parties, after stunning election win, set plans to enlist allies to take power

GRANT PECK & JINTAMAS  
SAKSORNCHAI

**F**RESH off a stunning election victory in which they together captured a majority of seats in the House of Representatives, Thailand's top two opposition parties began planning yesterday for the next stage in their bid to replace the military-dominated government.

Yesterday's headliner was 42-year-old businessman Pita Limjaroenrat, who led his Move Forward Party to a first-place finish, surpassing most expectations. It squeaked past the Pheu Thai Party, its opposition partner, which had been favored to top the polls.

Pheu Thai stumbled despite the star power of Paetongtarn Shinawatra, daughter of Thaksin Shinawatra, the former populist prime minister who was toppled



Pita Limjaroenrat, leader of Move Forward Party, poses to media as he announces the victory in Sunday's general election at the party's headquarters in Bangkok

by a 2006 military coup and is the driving force behind the party.

"The overwhelming electoral victory by Move Forward and Pheu Thai is a decisive sign that voters want a polity where the people, not the military, decide their future," said Tyrell Haberkorn, a Thai studies scholar at the University of Wisconsin.

"Voters want a Thailand with free speech, without compulsory

military conscription, and where the people's voices are valued, not something to be silenced or bought," she said.

Pita said yesterday he has been talking to five other parties about forming a coalition government. It would have 309 House seats in total, providing more stability than the 292-seat partnership with Pheu Thai as a sole ally. Parliament selects a new prime minister in July, so

has about two months to seal a deal.

Thailand for the past nine years has been led by former army commander Prayuth Chan-ocha, who seized power in a 2014 military coup and was returned as prime minister after the 2019 election. He ran for reelection on Sunday, but is saddled with blame for a lagging economy, a botched response to the coronavirus pandemic and thwarting democratic reforms — a particular sore point with younger voters.

"The sentiment of the era has changed and it's right," Pita said. "And today it's a new day and hopefully it's full of bright sunshine of hope going forward."

As it earlier became clear his party was taking the lead, he tweeted that he is ready to bring about change as the country's 30th prime minister. "Whether you agree or disagree with me, I will be your prime

minister. Whether you have voted for me or not, I will serve you."

With almost all votes counted yesterday, Move Forward had captured a projected 151 seats in the lower House by winning over 24% of the popular vote for 400 constituency seats, and more than 36% of the votes for the 100 seats allocated by proportional representation.

Pheu Thai Party trails a close second with its combined seat total projected at 141.

Prayuth's United Thai Nation Party holds the fifth spot in the constituency vote and third in the party-preference tally, for a projected total of 36 seats.

Although the numbers place Pita in a favorable position to becoming the next prime minister, he faces a difficult path.

The prime minister is elected by a joint session of the 500 members of the newly elected House and 250 senators, who were appointed by the military. The winner must secure at least 376 votes.

The Senate, a stalwart defender of the royalist order along with the army and the courts, voted unanimously for Prayuth in 2019, enabling him to overcome Pheu Thai's first-place finish and form a coalition government.

There is a strong possibility that Pita will be seen as too radical by partner parties, and they will have to look for a more moderate candidate. **MDT/AP**

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FOR RESPONSIBLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
IN MACAU (2023)



FRANCE

# Macron vows to build back factories, boost economy

SYLVIE CORBET, DUNKIRK

**B**UILDING factories to boost job creation and make France more independent — that's President Emmanuel Macron's ambition for the French economy.

It's a big challenge, as France reels from protracted protests, rising food and energy prices and other fallout from the Ukraine war.

While Macron woos investors to help "re-industrialize" France and reduce Europe's dependence on China and the U.S., protesters follow him around the country, banging saucepans to protest economic injustice and his leadership.

More than 200 international business leaders are expected today [Macau time] at the 'Choose France' event staged at the palace of Versailles to promote foreign investment.

It follows a series of incentives announced by Macron last week to support innovative industries and transition towards greener technology. They include tax credits in fields like battery production, electric cars, hydrogen and wind power, as well as accelerating authorization for industrial projects.

"France is changing, is getting adapted to the course of the world and I believe that we're following the right path, which is to reindustrialize the country, to be more sovereign and more respectful of the climate and biodiversity," Macron said Friday during a visit to Dunkirk, in northern France.

Macron's move comes after months of protests against his decision to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64. The unpopularity of the reform has weakened his government at parliament and hampered his economic strategy.

Unions have called for a new round of nationwide demonstrations on June 6. Meanwhile, opponents keep staging small protests, with people loudly banging pots and pans in places where Macron and government members are scheduled to travel.

Credit rating agency Fitch last month downgraded France's sovereign credit ra-



French President Emmanuel Macron visits the Aluminium Dunkerque factory in Dunkirk

ting, citing the protest movement. "Political deadlock and (sometimes violent) social movements pose a risk to Macron's reform agenda," the agency wrote.

In Dunkirk Friday, Macron made time for many selfies with workers from several local factories who attended his speech at Aluminium Dunkerque, one of the biggest aluminum production sites in Europe. None of them asked him about the retirement age and, in contrast with his previous visits across French regions, he didn't walk through the city streets to meet with the crowd.

A heavy police presence was deployed in Dunkirk to keep potential protesters away.

Macron announced two major investments, both in the battery sector: one worth 5.2 billion euros (\$5.7 billion) by Taiwanese group ProLogium, the other one via a joint venture of China's XTC with French energy giant Orano worth 1.5 billion euros (\$1.6 billion). They are expected to create 3,000 and 1,700 jobs in the area respectively by 2030.

He seized the occasion to present the pension reform as part of a "package" that has already produced "results." "If we want to be more competitive, we must work a little longer," he said.

Since he took office in 2017, Macron has cut business taxes. He has made it easier to hire and fire workers and more difficult for the unemployed to claim

benefits, amid other pro-business policies.

Macron said 300 new factories had been created since 2017 — two thirds in the past two years — while 600 had been shut down in the previous decade. The COVID-19 crisis and Ukraine war have shown that domestic industrial production is needed to strengthen the country's sovereignty, he stressed.

For a fourth consecutive year, France was the European country that had attracted the greatest number of foreign investments, Macron said, citing a survey by EY last week.

The Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development said Friday its statistics showed France's unemployment rate in March reached its lowest level since 2001, at 6.9% — down from about 10% when Macron was elected. Still, the proportion of jobless people in France is higher than the average in the European Union, which is stable at 6%.

ProLogium CEO Vincent Yang told reporters in Dunkirk his group considered establishing facilities in the U.S., yet eventually chose the European Union as being more a favorable environment to develop innovative battery technology.

France was a relevant choice, Yang said, because "we need to have stable, low-cost, and green electrical power" and Dunkirk, one of the major industrial ports in Europe, already has battery-related facilities. The coun-

try relies on nuclear power for 70% of its electricity, offering a low-carbon alternative to fossil fuels.

Macron has been one of the most prominent advocates for a strong EU response to the \$375 billion U.S. Inflation Reduction Act announced last summer by President Joe Biden to favor clean energy technology.

Earlier this year, the European Union presented plans to revamp its policies on promoting green technologies, unleashing subsidies and other financial incentives to ramp up domestic production.

"We're going to better target our subsidies on low-emission European productions," Macron said. "We're not being protectionist but taxpayers neither in the U.S. nor China fund batteries made in Europe. So why should we be the only place in the world where taxpayers' money goes to helping non-European products? We're going to stop doing that."

He also called last week for a "pause" on EU environmental regulations, arguing the bloc of 27 already imposes tougher rules than its competitors. The comments prompted immediate criticism from French and European Green politicians.

Macron later insisted he was sticking to his climate-related commitments, including all policies aimed at making the EU reaching carbon neutrality by 2050, but said, "Let's not add more." **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 2001 PRESCOTT PUNCHES PROTESTER



The Labour Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, has punched a protester who threw an egg at him during a visit to Rhyl in north Wales.

The undignified brawl happened as the Labour deputy stepped off the so-called Prescott Express campaign bus.

Television pictures clearly showed Mr Prescott aiming a left jab at a man after being hit on the side of the face by an egg.

The two men were then involved in a scuffle before the police intervened.

A 29-year-old man was taken away in handcuffs. He was later identified by his girlfriend as Craig Evans, a farm worker from Denbigh.

The woman, who did not want to be named, said: "He's a placid lad who has never been in trouble."

"Craig threw an egg at Mr Prescott, who was walking past after getting off the battle bus. Then Mr Prescott grabbed him by the scruff of the neck and thumped him."

Mr Prescott said: "I was attacked by an individual. In the melee that followed I clearly defended myself. I believe that someone is now being questioned by the police and it would be quite improper and quite wrong to add any further comment."

The television pictures of the incident appear to show Mr Prescott trapped against a wall after his left fist flew and he and the protester became locked together in a struggle.

The deputy prime minister, who was clearly shaken, was then led into the theatre where he was due to address an election rally. [...]

Today also saw the launch of Labour's manifesto in Birmingham. But that did not go quite according to plan either, after Prime Minister Tony Blair was confronted by a woman who said Labour had failed the NHS.

Sharron Storer, whose boyfriend is a cancer patient, confronted Mr Blair in full view of the TV cameras, berating him for the treatment her boyfriend had received.

Labour was elected in 1997 on a promise to "save" the NHS but the encounter with Miss Storer forced Mr Blair to admit he had only "just begun" to fulfil some of the promises made four years before.

The manifesto, Ambitions for Britain, has set out 10-year targets for key objectives and there are promises to spend more on education, health and transport over the next three years.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

A number of newspaper surveys carried out after Mr Prescott's punch suggested the public supported his actions. It earned him the nickname "Two Jabs" — a variation on the more familiar Two Jags from his apparent fondness for luxury cars. He later described the incident as "frightening and regrettable".

In a news conference Prime Minister Tony Blair explained away the punch-up, saying, "John is John." Mr Prescott was interviewed by police but he was not prosecuted. The Crown Prosecution Service concluded there was not a realistic chance of convicting Mr Prescott because he had acted in self-defence.

Craig Evans spent several hours in police custody no action was taken against him.

On 8 June 2001 Labour won a second term in government despite a record low turn-out of less than 60%. It won 413 seats, the Conservatives took 166, the Liberal Democrats 52 and others 10.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
 Depression may be likely if you're away from home. Travel for business will not only bring you valuable information but also profits as well.

**TAURUS**  
 Apr. 20-May. 20  
 You will do well in social settings, and new and interesting individuals may spark a romantic curiosity. Go out with friends who are positive and supportive.

**GEMINI**  
 May. 21-Jun. 21  
 Try not to jump to conclusions. Develop some of your good ideas. Keep an eye on your weight. Organize your day to avoid any setbacks that might ignite temper flare-ups.

**CANCER**  
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
 Talk to people who can give you important knowledge. Insincere gestures of friendliness may be misleading. You can deal with large institutions or government agencies successfully today.

**LEO**  
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
 Your high energy and discipline will enable you to complete any seemingly insurmountable tasks. Put aside any decisions concerning your position at work.

**VIRGO**  
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
 You may divulge private information without realizing it today. Look into the cost factor, but don't try to get backing yet. Be careful while traveling.

**LIBRA**  
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
 Changes in your home environment may cause friction. Be sure to pay attention to your bank account. You will be up and down emotionally.

**SCORPIO**  
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
 You are best not to nag or criticize. This will not be the best day for communication or travel. You will find it easy finalizing personal papers if you make an effort.

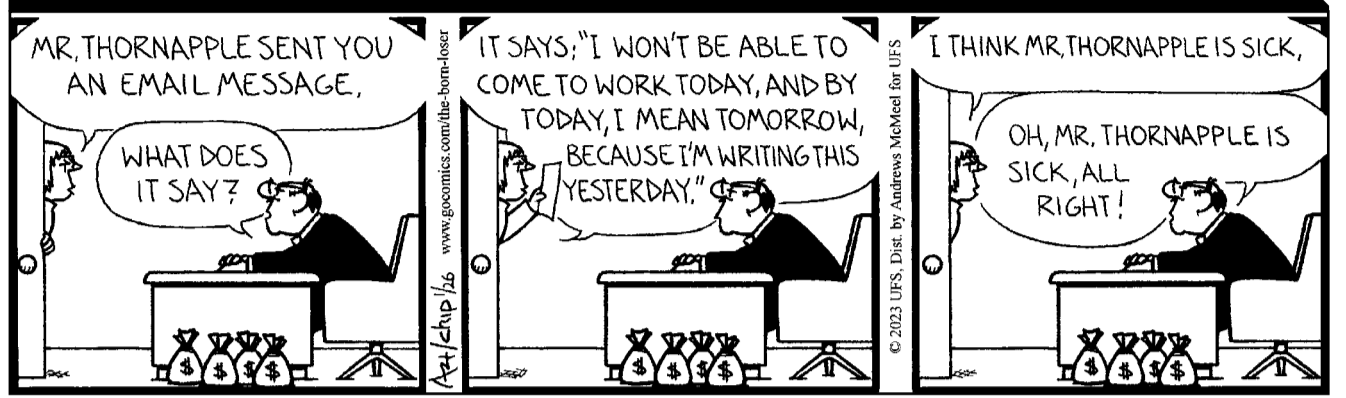
**SAGITTARIUS**  
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
 Take time to do some writing, whether it's correspondence, poetry, or keeping a journal. If you're willing to cut loose you will find yourself in the midst of an exciting encounter.

**CAPRICORN**  
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
 You need time to rejuvenate. Your added discipline will help you complete the impossible at work. Make plans to do something special with the one you love.

**AQUARIUS**  
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
 Compromise may be necessary. Try not to lend or borrow money today. Sudden changes regarding your circle of friends could prove interesting and stimulating.

**PISCES**  
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
 Don't ruffle the feathers of those you care about most. Don't let friends convince you that you should contribute to something you don't believe in.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	22	35	cloudy
Changchun	12	30	rain
Chengdu	17	30	fine
Chongqing	20	29	cloudy
Fuzhou	19	30	overcast
Guangzhou	20	28	cloudy
Guiyang	16	27	showers
Haikou	24	32	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	18	30	overcast
Harbin	6	17	rain
Hefei	20	31	overcast
Nanjing	20	33	overcast
Shanghai	21	29	overcast
Taipei	19	26	overcast
Wuhan	20	24	rain
Hong Kong	26	28	overcast
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	10	21	overcast
Frankfurt	6	16	overcast
Paris	7	17	overcast
London	8	18	overcast
New York	13	28	overcast

**CROSSWORDS**

**ACROSS** 1- ake \_\_\_ at (try); 6- RR stops; 10- Dissolve; 14- Woody vine; 15- Legal wrong; 16- Pink-slips; 17- Awry; 18- Bhutan's continent; 19- Jump; 20- Tending to use bombast; 22- Invites; 23- "A Doll's House" heroine; 24- Tie the knot; 26- Spider's traps; 30- Fluctuant; 34- Dazzling display; 35- Titanic's undoing; 36- Neighbor of Leb.; 37- Heavy metal; 38- Hilton competitor; 40- Actress Ward; 41- Young fellow; 42- Ovid, e.g.; 43- Biblical brother; 44- Solidarity; 46- Salary; 48- Muesli morsel; 49- Basin; 50- Hunk; 53- Thrifty; 59- Timber wolf; 60- Crazy as a \_\_\_; 61- Military camp; 62- Elderly, matured; 63- Art Deco artist; 64- Scandinavian; 65- Bouquet; 66- Break; 67- Carryalls;

**DOWN** 1- Banned apple spray; 2- [Oh, well]; 3- Story, often rooted in folklore; 4- Work without \_\_\_; 5- Daggerlike weapon; 6- Flight of steps; 7- Puccini classic; 8- La Scala solo; 9- Steadfast partisan; 10- Disease of the body; 11- Former partners; 12- Escaping fluid; 13- Dosage abbr.; 21- Steal from; 25- Work unit; 26- Yo Yo's instrument; 27- Current location; 28- Part of an ice skate; 29- Glob of gum; 30- Spot checker?; 31- Grenoble's river; 32- Thermoplastic yarn; 33- Stately; 35- Cricket need; 38- He owns the place where backpackers crash in Europe?; 39- Affirmative answer; 40- Dupe; 42- Green shade; 43- Illness; 45- Little guy; 46- Poem of 14 lines; 47- Tango need; 49- Heavy footwear; 50- Hit with an open hand; 51- Trademark; 52- Burrows and Vigoda; 54- Heart; 55- Langston Hughes poem; 56- Wagon; 57- Semicircular recess; 58- Dreg;

**Yesterday's solution**

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

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<b>Fire department</b> 28 572 222	<b>Water Supply - Report</b> 2822 0088
<b>PJ (Open line)</b> 993	<b>Telephone - Report</b> 1000
<b>PJ (Picket)</b> 28 557 775	<b>Electricity - Report</b> 28 339 922
<b>PSP</b> 28 573 333	<b>Macau Daily Times</b> 28 716 081
<b>Customs</b> 28 559 944	
<b>S. J. Hospital</b> 28 313 731	
<b>Kiang Wu Hospital</b> 28 371 333	
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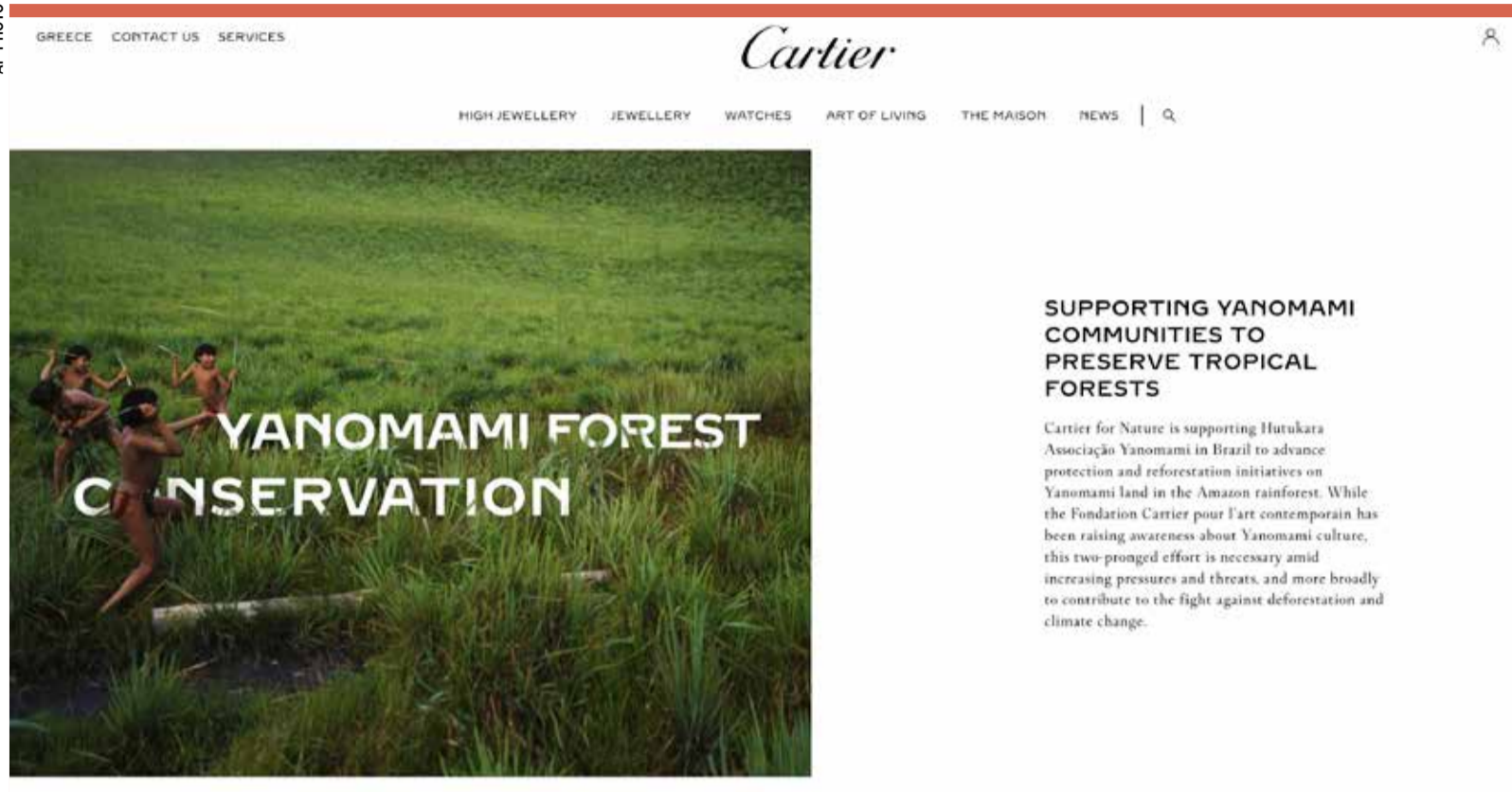
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AP PHOTO



This frame, which was removed from Cartier's website, features an image of four Yanomami children playing in a lush green field while at the top of the page are links to purchase high-end jewelry

## FASHION

# CARTIER'S USE OF IMAGES OF AMAZON TRIBE PROMPTS INDIGENOUS ADVOCATES TO ALLEGE HYPOCRISY

FABIANO MAISONNAVE, BOA VISTA

UNTIL two months ago, Cartier's website showed Yanomami children playing in a green field.

The French luxury jewelry brand said it was working to promote the culture of the Indigenous people and protect the rainforest where they live, in a vast territory straddling Brazil and Venezuela. But the project that the site described protecting the Amazon never took place. And Cartier published the photo without the approval of Yanomami leadership, violating the beliefs of a people who had been living in almost total isolation until they were contacted by outsiders in the 1970s.

Some of the Yanomami and their defenders praise Cartier's promotion of Yanomami causes. However, advertising by one of the world's biggest jewelers with images of an Indigenous people devastated by illegal gold mining has some complaining of greenwashing, a corporation promoting its own image by supporting a cause.

"How can a gold jewelry company, which we, the Yanomami people, are against, use the image of the Yanomami?" asked Júnior Hekurari, a member of the Indigenous group and head of the Yanomami's health council.

Disease, killing and prostitution, fueled by the drugs and alcohol imported by thousands of

illegal gold miners, have devastated traditional Yanomami life, and 570 Yanomami children died from malnutrition, diarrhea, and malaria between 2019 and 2022, according to Brazilian statistics. The poisonous mercury used in illegal mining causes birth defects and ravages ecosystems.

Cartier says it does not buy illegally mined gold, but Yanomami leaders have urged people not to buy gold jewelry at all, regardless of its source, because demand for the precious metal drives gold prices up and draws miners into their territory.

Cartier and other jewelry brands that are part of the Swiss conglomerate Richemont had combined sales of 11 billion euros (\$11.7 billion) in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022, according to its annual report. Some of the pieces advertised on its U.S. website cost as much as \$341,000.

Cartier's connection to the roughly 40,000 Yanomami goes back 20 years, primarily through Fondation Cartier, a corporate philanthropy created and funded by the company in 1984.

In the past, few Yanomami or their advocates have publicly criticized Cartier or the foundation, but a growing number have begun expressing concerns.

Cartier's foundation recently sponsored a finely curated exhibit displaying photographs of Yanomami, along with works by Indigenous artists, in an elegant non-profit Manhattan arts center. The

exhibit, previously in Paris, was praised by outlets ranging from The New York Times to Luxury Daily, an influential industry publication whose headline read, "Fondation Cartier continues push for indigenous justice through art sponsorship."

Barbara Navarro, a French multimedia artist, saw something very different, as did several other artists, including some Yanomami.

In the multimedia show "Pas de Cartier," or "Not Cartier," in the village of Nemours, France, Navarro and others critique the luxury brand and the devastation caused by illegal miners in an exhibit that includes sculptures and drawings. In one photo montage, a large gold mine surrounded by the Amazon forest is seen next to a Cartier store.

"The Yanomami are paying the price with their health and their very lives for our society's relentless avidity for gold," said Navarro. "For Cartier, sponsorship of the Yanomami represents an opportunity to burnish their brand."

For many Indigenous groups, a corporation or philanthropy using a photo of them requires formal permission. The photo of the children on the website violated the Yanomami's right to prior, free, and informed consent, according to the Roraima Indigenous Council, a grassroots umbrella organization, citing the International Labour Organization's Conven-

tion 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, which Brazil signed.

Hekurari said his people need international cooperation, but his organization would never accept money from a jewelry company.

In his trips along the Yanomami territory, an area the size of Portugal, the Yanomami leader has encountered scores of skeletal children in communities under siege by thousands of illegal miners. In March, his organization, Urihi, launched an online campaign to raise awareness against the gold trade and in a video the Yanomami leader calls on Oscar winners to replace the famous gold-plated statuettes with wooden figures of Omama, a mythical entity.

"When someone buys gold in a jewelry store, he is financing more invasions to destroy Indigenous lands," he said. "It is not just a matter of extracting gold. It is a matter of reaping lives."

Cartier declined to comment on the Yanomami's appeal for people to stop buying gold jewelry but, when contacted by The Associated Press in late March, Cartier removed the picture and the project description. Funds had been allocated to a forest-preservation project but ended up being used to acquire medical equipment to fight COVID-19 among the Yanomami, the company said. A donation worth \$74,200 was made in June 2020.

The inaccurate description "was a regrettable oversight on our part, and it was addressed im-

mediately after it was brought to our attention," the company said.

But the problem is bigger than poor image choices, many say. Dário Kopenawa, vice-president of the Hutukara Yanomami Association, said he believes that, "anyone who buys a gold ring is part of the crime."

Cartier and its foundation describe their relationship as arms-length. Kopenawa also made a distinction between Cartier and its namesake foundation.

"We know that Cartier buys gold all over the world ... but the foundation is different. It is another coordinator, another branch. It supports the protection of the Yanomami," he said.

In February, Kopenawa even flew to New York to attend "Yanomami Struggle - Art and Activism in the Amazon," the exhibit sponsored by the Fondation Cartier with photographic portraits of Indigenous people alongside works by Yanomami artists. Kopenawa and other Yanomami participated in the opening ceremony, with U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres among the guests.

Fondation Cartier has a collection of nearly 2,000 works at its Paris headquarters. The foundation "is run by an independent dedicated team of professionals from the art world in charge of defining and implementing the artistic program," it said.

The foundation is led by Alain Dominique Perrin, a prominent figure in the luxury industry who previously served as Richemont's top executive. In a 2018 interview with French business magazine *Entreprendre*, he emphasized the corporate value of arts patronage.

"Patronage is similar to sponsorship: You help an artist to exhibit, to gain recognition and to develop, but in return, the Fondation receives praise from the press, the media and social networks, which necessarily benefits the company," he said.

The foundation, "will become a focal point for the management and the image of the Cartier brand," Richemont wrote in its 1994 annual report, when the headquarters was inaugurated with 12,000 square feet of exhibition space.

French anthropologist Bruce Albert has been engaged with the Yanomami for decades, participating in a campaign in the 1990s that secured the tribe's land demarcation. He connected Fondation Cartier with the Yanomami in 2003. That year, Albert curated the first photo and art exhibit about the Yanomami sponsored by the foundation.

When it comes to acquiring gold, Cartier says the vast majority is purchased recycled and the company conforms to standards of the Responsible Jewelry Council, which describes itself as the world's leading sustainability standard-setting organization for the jewelry and watch industry. **MDT/AP**

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

FOOTBALL

# Gundogan is Guardiola's go-to guy again in City's latest title march

STEVE DOUGLAS

**P**EP Guardiola's first signing as Manchester City manager will go down as one of his best.

Reliable, versatile and delivering when it really matters, Ilkay Gundogan is perhaps the player who best epitomizes Guardiola's trophy-laden era at City since they arrived at the club within weeks of each other in 2016.

And this season, the Germany midfielder's importance to City has magnified as the team powers toward another Premier League title and, just maybe, a trio of major trophies.

In the past week, Gundogan has played three pressure-filled games in three different positions and scored four goals.

"He can do everything," Guardiola said of Gundogan after his two goals in the 3-0 win at Everton yesterday [Macau time] that has left City on the brink of the title.

Against Everton, Gundogan



Manchester City's Ilkay Gundogan (center) scores his side's opening goal

played as an attacking midfielder just off Erling Haaland and showed his eye for goal by flicking the ball up to himself in the middle of a crowded area and deftly poking home a finish to put City ahead. He then non-

chalantly curled in a free kick to make it 3-0.

Five days earlier, he played a slightly more withdrawn role, closer to midfield anchorman Rodri, as City drew 1-1 with Real Madrid in the Champions League

semifinals at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

And three days before that, Gundogan had filled in for the rested Rodri as the deep-lying midfielder in City's 2-1 win over Leeds in the Premier League. Oh, and he scored twice then, too, by dispatching edge-of-the-area finishes after arriving late to join attacks.

"He shows again, again and again his quality and his importance," Guardiola said. "His commitment to all of us at the club."

The next few weeks will show just how committed City is to Gundogan.

The 32-year-old midfielder's contract is expiring at the end of this season and he has been linked with an off-season move to Barcelona.

Guardiola wants Gundogan to remain at the club — "Nobody knows what is going to happen," the Spanish coach said. "Maybe he stays. Hopefully." — but the player's age might be an issue,

with reports suggesting he wants a two-year deal and City only want to give him a 12-month contract.

With uncertainty over the future of another key midfielder, Bernardo Silva, Guardiola faces the alarming prospect of losing two of his most influential players in the same off-season. Two players who are so important to the way City operates with its suffocating pressing game and stylish attacking approach.

Ahead of what might be his own last season at City, Guardiola surely will insist that does not happen.

Gundogan, in particular, is Guardiola's comfort blanket, his man for all seasons.

After joining from Borussia Dortmund for about 20 million pounds (\$25 million), he spent the first four seasons as mostly a back-up for a stellar midfield comprising Fernandinho, Kevin De Bruyne and David Silva. He particularly came into his own in the 2018-19 campaign when he played as the anchorman in place of the injured Fernandinho in the final months as City held off Liverpool to win a second league title under Guardiola.

Last season, he memorably scored the two late goals against Aston Villa on the final day to ensure City again edged Liverpool for the title. **MDT/AP**

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**OPINION**

**China Daily**  
 Editorial, China Daily

**HIGH HOPES FOR FIVE-NATION PEACE SHUTTLING**

From Monday, Special Representative of the Chinese Government on Eurasian Affairs Li Hui is paying visits to Ukraine, Poland, France, Germany and Russia for communication aimed at promoting a political settlement to the Ukraine crisis.

Since the start of the crisis, China has adopted a principled position calling for joint efforts to promote an end to the conflict. As the crisis has dragged on and escalated, and the spillover effects have worsened, a growing number of countries have acknowledged the road map to peace that China proposed in its position paper.

The 12 points set out in the paper take into account the legitimate concerns of all parties and look beyond a cessation of the current hostilities to the broader issues of reducing strategic risks and mitigating the spillover effects that have been caused by the conflict. As a feasible foundation on which to build a consensus, it has received extensive understanding and recognition from the international community.

Through his coordination, Li will hope to provide momentum for the resumption of peace talks between Ukraine and Russia and seek to foster agreement on a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture for Europe.

Ukraine and Russia are the two belligerents and any end to the crisis necessitates dialogue between them to de-escalate the situation and ultimately reach a cease-fire and establish the conditions in which peace talks can have a chance to bear fruit.

Poland, France and Germany are key stakeholders in realizing the broadest common understanding in Europe of any peace agreement.

It is notable, that the United States is not among Li's destinations. Although US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that "We're open to any country engaging in responsible efforts to try to advance peace", the US has not yet demonstrated its willingness to create the space necessary for the compromises that could bring an end to the conflict.

Having played Europe against Russia with the aim of permanently debilitating it, scared several European nations into joining NATO and made a profit of \$100 million per ship by selling liquefied natural gas to Europe with Russia's gas supply cut, the US has perhaps been the only beneficiary from the bloodshed in Europe. And it has certainly been the biggest. As such it is questionable whether it is "open" to any efforts to try to advance peace, as Blinken claimed.

Regardless, China will continue to play a constructive role by making efforts to broker peace talks. It has expressed its hopes that the international community will extend its support to Li's efforts by not making any moves that exacerbate tensions and protract the fighting.

It is to be hoped that the US will honor Blinken's words by heeding that call.

**TURKEY PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WILL GO TO RUNOFF AS ERDOGAN PERFORMS BETTER THAN EXPECTED**

**THE BUZZ**

Turkey's presidential election will be decided in a runoff, election officials said yesterday, after incumbent Recep Tayyip Erdogan pulled ahead of his chief challenger, but fell short of an outright victory that would extend his increasingly authoritarian rule into a third decade.

The May 28 second-round vote will determine whether the strategically located NATO country remains under the president's firm grip or can embark on a more democratic course promised by his main rival, Kemal Kilicdaroglu.

While Erdogan has governed for 20 years, opinion polls had suggested that run could be coming to an end and that a cost-of-living

crisis and criticism over the government's response to a devastating February earthquake might redraw the electoral map.

Instead, Erdogan's retreat was still less marked than predicted — and with his alliance retaining its hold on the parliament, he is now in a good position to win in the second round.

The uncertainty drove the main Turkish stock exchange BIST-100 more than 6% lower at the open yesterday, prompting a temporary halt in trading. But shares recovered some after trading resumed, and the index was 2.5% lower in the afternoon compared to the market close Friday.

AP PHOTO



A group of Arab refugees walks along a road from Jerusalem to Lebanon, carrying their belongings with them on Nov. 9, 1948

**UN TO COMMEMORATE PALESTINIANS' 1948 FLIGHT FROM ISRAEL FOR THE FIRST TIME**

FOR the first time, the United Nations will officially commemorate the flight of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from what is now Israel on the 75th anniversary of their exodus — an action stemming from the U.N.'s partition of British-ruled Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is headlining today's [Macau time] U.N. commemoration of what Palestinians call the "Nakba" or "catastrophe."

Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian U.N. ambassador, called the U.N. observance "historic" and significant because the General Assembly played a key role in the partition of Palestine.

"It's acknowledging the responsibility of the U.N. of not being able to resolve this catastrophe for the Palestinian people for 75 years," Mansour told a group of U.N. reporters recently.

He said "the catastrophe to the Palestinian people is still ongoing." The Palestinians still don't have an independent state, and they don't have the right to return to their homes as called for in a General Assembly resolution adopted in December 1948.

Israel's U.N. ambassador, Gilad Erdan, condemned the commemoration, calling it an "abominable event" and a "blatant attempt to distort history." He said tho-

se who attend will be condoning antisemitism and giving a green light to Palestinians "to continue exploiting international organs to promote their libelous narrative."

The General Assembly, which had 57 member nations in 1947, approved the resolution dividing Palestine by a vote of 33-13 with 10 abstentions. The Jewish side accepted the U.N. partition plan and after the British mandate expired in 1948, Israel declared its independence. The Arabs rejected the plan and neighboring Arab countries launched a war against the Jewish state.

The Nakba commemorates the estimated 700,000 Palestinians who fled or were forced from their homes in 1948.

The fate of these refugees and their descendants — estimated at over 5 million across the Middle East — remains a major disputed issue in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel rejects demands for a mass return of refugees to long-lost homes, saying it would threaten the country's Jewish character.

As the 75th anniversary approached, the now 193-member General Assembly approved a resolution last Nov. 30 by a vote of 90-30 with 47 abstentions requesting the U.N.

The United States was among the countries that joined Israel in voting

against the resolution, and the U.S. Mission said no American diplomat will attend the commemoration.

Explaining why a U.N. commemoration took so long, Mansour told The Associated Press on Friday that the Palestinians have moved cautiously at the United Nations since the General Assembly raised their status in 2012 from a non-member observer to a non-member observer state.

U.N. recognition as a state enabled the Palestinians to join treaties, take cases against Israel's occupation to the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice, which is the U.N.'s highest tribunal, and in 2019 to chair the Group of 77, the U.N. coalition of 134 mainly developing nations and China, he said.

At the 70th anniversary of the 1948 exodus five years ago, Mansour said, "the word Nakba was used in a General Assembly resolution for the first time," and Abbas then gave instructions to obtain a mandate from the U.N. to commemorate the 75th anniversary.

The Nakba commemoration comes as Israeli-Palestinian fighting has intensified and protests over Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government and its plan to overhaul Israel's judiciary show no sign of abating. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



**UK** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was in Britain Monday on his whirlwind European tour, as the staunch ally of Kyiv promised to give Ukraine hundreds more missiles and attack drones in an effort to change the course of the war. Zelenskyy landed by helicopter at Chequers, the British leader's official country retreat, where he was greeted by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak with a handshake and a hug. Sunak told Zelenskyy that "your leadership, your country's bravery and fortitude are an inspiration to us all."

**Cyprus** and Israel are working on a deal to build a pipeline that will convey natural gas from both countries to the east Mediterranean island nation, where it will be liquefied for export by ship to Europe and potentially elsewhere, the Cypriot energy minister said. Minister Giorgos Papanastasiou said Monday he would soon visit Israel to hammer out a formal agreement. Once the deal is signed, the pipeline could be completed in 18 months. It will take 2 1/2 years to build a liquefaction plant on Cyprus.

AP PHOTO



**United Nations** Member countries of the U.N. migration agency were casting ballots yesterday to choose its leader for the next five years — an unusual contest between its European director-general and his American deputy who's looking to oust him from the job. After a first round of voting, International Organization for Migration director-general Antonio Vitorino of Portugal (pictured) received 67 votes and his Biden administration-backed deputy, Amy Pope, garnered 98. three diplomatic officials said on condition of anonymity about the closed-door proceedings.