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**SINCE ITS OPENING AFTER THE COMPLETE RENOVATION, THE MACAU GRAND PRIX MUSEUM HAS ATTRACTED SOME 120,000 VISITORS**

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**URBAN COUNCIL APPROVES RESIDENTIAL BUILDING WITH 46.7 METERS AT NAM VAN**

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**CHINA AND SINGAPORE AGREE TO TOP-LEVEL DEFENSE HOTLINE**

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AP PHOTO



**Sri Lanka** The Central Bank reduced its interest rates yesterday for the first time since the island nation declared bankruptcy, after stern fiscal controls, improved foreign currency income and help from an International Monetary Fund program resulted in inflation slowing faster than expected. The Central Bank said in a statement that the lending and deposit interest rates were reduced by 250 basis points to 14% and 13%.

AP PHOTO



**Australia's** most decorated living war veteran unlawfully killed prisoners and committed other war crimes in Afghanistan, a judge ruled yesterday in dismissing the claims by Victoria Cross recipient Ben Roberts-Smith (pictured) that he was defamed by media. Federal Court Justice Anthony Besanko ruled that the articles published in 2018 were substantially true about a number of war crimes committed by Roberts-Smith, a former Special Air Service Regiment corporal.

AP PHOTO



**Jordan's** highly anticipated royal wedding day got underway yesterday with the surprise announcement that Britain's Prince William and his wife Kate had arrived to witness the nuptials of Crown Prince Hussein and his Saudi Arabian bride. The attendance of the British royals had been kept under wraps, and was only confirmed by Jordanian state media a few hours before the start of the palace ceremony.

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## FASTEST GROWING ECONOMY

**May gaming revenue soars by 366% amid city running second for fastest growing economy in the world, according to macroeconomic intelligence**

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ARTS

**‘PHYGITAL’ ARTWORKS CELEBRATE VAN GOGH’S BIRTH**

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STARRY NIGHT GARDEN

# 'PHYGITAL' ARTWORKS CELEBRATE VAN GOGH'S BIRTH

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE new Artech exhibition is now open at One Central Macau until July 31, aiming to integrate physical art and digital art, to create "phygital" art.

"This new kind of art will be the future," the senior art advisor and founder of the consultancy Art Prince Advisory, the curator of the exhibition, Herman Ng, told the Times.

"Even as a big believer [in] physical art, I'm sure that refusing and banning AI in this sector is a mistake, and that it is better to try understanding it to work with instead of against [it]," he added.

The exhibition reinvents Van Gogh's story using AI and other technologies.

As part of the celebration of the 170th anniversary of the birth of Dutch artist Van Gogh, Hong Kong artist, architect and collector, William Lim, created in partnership with the creative agency Kaiju Matter the 360° immersive AI art space "Full moon and blossoming flowers." This gives a new perspective to his creations "Flowers Good Moon Round," "Ode to the Wandering Son," "Journey Home" and "Child Inside," also displayed in the exhibition.

"In the past few years, I have painted several works with different flowers and moon, many of

RAPHAEL ROUAULT



which are influenced by Van Gogh's works," featured artist, Lim, said. "I am very happy to share my latest artistic creations with everyone in Macau."

Eight projectors are set up to display the 360° immersive art piece, while a dozen works of oil on canvas complete the exhibition.

"It was a real challenge to imagine how to transpose the physical artworks into an animated and digitalized one, because Lim and the agency always had to think about what should be behind the

elements, taking [into] account that the whole artwork is based on different levels," Ng said.

In addition, the Hong Kong-based web3 company, Appreciator.io, will present its VG39 digital art series, the world's first limited edition of "phygital" artworks certified by the Van Gogh Sites Foundation. This will include NFTs representing at least 39 cultural landmarks inspired by the life of the Dutch artist, such as the church of his hometown, Brabant, and the site of his famous painting "The Potato Eaters."



## CULTURAL EXCHANGE

The Artech exhibition displays a desire to become a kind of platform to promote the cultural exchange between Hong Kong and Macau, according to organizers.

"As this is the first time we are going outside Hong Kong since the pandemic, our goal through this Artech exhibition is to highlight the cultural exchange between Macau and Hong Kong, and to bring important pieces of art to Macau," Herman Ng explained.

Numerous interactive artistic elements are also in place at the exhibition to reinforce this exchange, particularly targeted at the young.

"I think that it is very important to involve more and more the young generation in the field of AI and to raise awareness [among] them, showing that art and technology can work together," the founder of Art Prince Advisory asserted. "This is this kind of legacy that we want to transfer [to] them."

# GP Museum gaining traction in visitation but still a lot of potential

RENATO MARQUES

**S**INCE its opening after the complete renovation, the Macau Grand Prix Museum has attracted some 120,000 visitors.

According to the deputy director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Cheng Wai Tong, since the reopening of the borders and resumption of tourism activities, the museum has been gaining some traction in terms of visitation but is still far from reaching its peak ca-

capacity, Cheng said yesterday on the sidelines of the celebration of the new museum second anniversary.

The same official said that the museum is currently receiving an average of about 600 visitors per day while its capacity is estimated to be around 2,200.

According to the statistics of MGTO, from the total of 120,000 visitors, some 40,000 (one-third) have visited the museum this year (January to May), reaching an average of about 8,000

visitors per month, a fact that Cheng says makes the government optimistic that the figure could rise more over the summer holidays.

Celebrating the second anniversary yesterday, the museum introduced some new elements including a new and more realistic Motorcycle Grand Prix race simulator as well as a 360-degree self-video-taking platform.

The MGTO deputy director also noted that the full resumption of visitors

to Macau and the resumption in hosting many activities and events attracts even more visitors. These events include sports competitions, cultural performances, and concerts.

Questioned if the museum is planning any special activity for the 70th anniversary of the Macau Grand Prix this year, Cheng said that the matter is still being discussed but hinted that during this time the museum might allow visitors to enter and experience the venue free of charge.

RENATO MARQUES



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GAMING

# May revenue soars by 366% amid city running second for fastest growing economy

LYNZY VALLES

**M**AY revenue from the casino sector has seen a surge of 366% from a year ago to total MOP15.6 billion in May, again hitting a three-year high following the end of pandemic-related restrictions that led to heavy losses and economic downturn.

The monthly take was bolstered by a five-day national holiday that saw around 300 travel groups and nearly 500,000 visitors. The number of visitors rose more than 262% from the May Day holiday of last year and recovered to about 62% of the level in 2019 before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Previously analysts forecasted that casino floor revenues will reach a new post-pandemic high of MOP15.5 billion in May, which translates to an average daily casino floor income of around MOP500 million, according to JP Morgan analysts DS Kim and Mufan Shi.

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.

Only in the first four months of the year, gross gaming revenue surpassed the total amount generated in the whole of last year, as it recorded MOP49.23 billion, which is 16.7% higher than the MOP42 billion recorded in all of 2022.

For the first five months in 2023,

MDT ARCHIVE



revenues aggregated MOP64.93 billion, up 172.9% year-on-year.

Meanwhile, according to a provider of macroeconomic intelligence, Macau is forecasted to grow at the world's second-fastest rate over its forecast horizon.

FocusEconomics, however, stated that, "this will largely reflect a base effect following one of the world's steepest pandemic-related downturns, rather than strong underlying growth prospects."

"The strong growth projections for the coming years hinge on an eventual loosening of China's Covid-19 stance and a subsequent rebound in foreign visitor arrivals," yet risks include the SAR's reliance on gaming and mainland visitors.

FocusEconomics estimates that the average growth of the

SAR's economy stands at 11.9% from 2022 to 2026.

"Macau's recovery remains contingent on a recovery in Chinese visitors, which Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) does not expect to significantly materialize until after mid-2023. Recurring outbreaks will still keep gambling and tourism activity below pre-crisis levels until beyond 2024," stated EIU.

Echoing similar sentiments

was Ben Lee, managing partner of IGamiX Management & Consulting, who stated that Macau's recovery is "riding on the back of a domestic revenge travel phenomenon."

Speaking to Bloomberg, the gaming expert remarked, "Macau is benefiting from the lack of Chinese traveling overseas right now. Chinese aviation authorities reported that international flights to and from China are down 70% compared to 2019."

With the gaming operators' added impetus to build non-gaming offers and boost revenues from the non-gaming sector, Lee laments that amid billions of investments in the MICE industry from the big six, "it is not one of our key competencies."

"We don't have the labor. In terms of infrastructure for getting around Macau, we don't have that either. For Singapore, despite being a so-called western market, their non-gaming revenue at best was about 13%. Ours, historically, was 5%. So yes, we may move the needle, but don't expect any major movement," said Lee.

## MONTHLY GROSS GAMING REVENUE

	2023	2022	Variance
Jan	11,580	6,344	+82.5%
Feb	10,324	7,759	+33.1%
Mar	12,738	3,672	+246.9%
Apr	14,722	2,677	+449.9%
May	15,565	3,341	+365.9%

UNITS: MOP MILLION

## STALLS FOR LAI CHI VUN SHIPYARDS OPEN FOR SUBMISSION

In order to enrich the cultural tourism and leisure experience of the public and tourists, the Cultural Affairs Bureau plans to set up a featured market in the Lai Chi Vun Shipyards between Fridays and Sundays, as well as on public holidays. The market will be launched at the end of June, and applications for stalls are open from until June 7. There will be 15 stalls set up in the shipyards, displaying and selling souvenirs with cultural features of Coloane, original products and special snacks. The market aims to "create the cultural and artistic vibe of the shipyards and enrich the exploration experiences of residents and tourists through different themes and activities of the market."

## CLUBE MILITAR TO KICK OFF GASTRONOMY FESTIVAL JUN. 18

Clube Militar de Macau will carry out another Portuguese Gastronomy and Wine Festival headed by Chef António Loureiro, from June 18 to October 27. This is the 24th Portuguese Gastronomy Festival held by the Macao Military Club since 2000, and within its scope is the Clube Militar that has brought 14 of Portugal's renowned chefs to Macau. "With these festivals, the Clube Militar aimed, and has achieved to great success, the promotion of Portuguese gastronomy in Macau and the promotion of Macau for the quality and diversity of its gastronomic offering and the training and improvement of its professionals," organizers said in a statement.

# June 4 vigil organizer admits to group's dissolution

MDT ARCHIVE



**O**NE of the founders and leaders of The Macau Union of Democratic Development (UMDD) has admitted to dissolving the group amid the promulgation of the amended National Security Law, several media outlets reported.

Over the past three decades or so, the UMDD has organized the city's annual candlelight vigil in commemoration of the June 4 incident that took place in Beijing in 1989. The incident is referred to by Beijing as a political turmoil between spring

and summer.

The vigil had been banned the past three years by the security authorities in the city, who cited "Covid-19 prevention and control." Elaborating on the decision, former lawmaker and co-founder of the UMDD, Au Kam San, was cited by Radio Free Asia's Cantonese platform as saying that "the current political atmosphere might impact UMDD members who have left public life if those who have remained say something, and if further persecutions occur."

Another key person in the UMDD is former lawmaker António Ng Kuok Cheong.

Both former lawmakers were disqualified from running in the parliamentary elections back in 2021 on allegations of "not upholding the Basic Law," as accused by Electoral Affairs Commission President Tong Hio Fong, who was a judge at the local court.

The main evidence presented at the trial centered around Au's and Ng's organizing of the June 4 vigil. According to Tong, cer-

tain banners and placards shown in the past vigils contained text that violated the Chinese Constitution.

Cited by the same media outlet, Au pointed out that the decision to disassemble the group came before the promulgation of the amended National Security Law. His understanding of the law is that advocating for democracy is itself an illegal act, according to the news outlet.

After the passing of the amended law, lawmaker Ron Lam demanded that the law should not bring about political persecution or jeopardize freedom of speech and expression. **AL**



## DSAL TO LAUNCH MORE JOB- MATCHING SESSIONS

The Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) said it will continue to cooperate with the big six and launch at least six job-matching sessions with a total of 1,457 job vacancies. Macau residents who intend to apply can apply online from today until June 25. Also, the DSAL will hold three industry-specific matching sessions June 8 and 9, involving high-end retail and hotel industries. A total of 337 job vacancies will be provided.

## MAY LRT PASSENGERS SLIGHTLY DROP

The average daily passenger volume of Taipa's Light Rapid Transit (LRT) in May stood at 5,500, a drop of 1,000 compared to April. April's was the highest figure on record since the end of a free ride campaign in February 2020. The LRT has been strongly impacted by Covid-19 as it only saw between 1,100 and 2,600 in the past three years.

## 135 RESIDENTIAL TRANSACTIONS IN FIRST HALF OF MAY

The city has seen a total of 135 residential transactions in the first half of May, 38 fewer than the second half of April, a drop of nearly 22%, according to data from the Financial Services Bureau (DSF). The average property price per square meter was MOP93,471, an increase of 1.5%. Recent data shows that residential property price index for the first quarter increased by 1.3% over the previous period (December 2022 – February 2023).

## 14TH IIICF

# IPIIM HIGHLIGHTS CHINESE FIRMS' INVESTMENT IN LUSOPHONE COUNTRIES

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HERE were Lusophone elements in an infrastructure expo in the form of officiating guests and sponsored projects, a local official insisted yesterday.

U U Sang, president of the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIIM), insisted on the sidelines of the opening ceremony of the 14th International Infrastructure Investment and Construction Forum and Expo that the event is the embodiment of Macau's role in bridging China and Lusophone countries.

There were no Lusophone exhibitors, even though the IPIIM maintained that it acts as a platform between China and Lusophone countries.

In contrast, officials from several Lusophone countries, such as Cape Verde and Mozambique, attended as officiating guests at the opening ceremony.

When questioned about this, U highlighted that participation by officials from these countries signaled official support for the event.

He emphasized that among the exhibitors – of which at least 90% were Chinese enterprises – some had participated in international projects about Lusophone countries, such as building roads and bridges.

Two exhibitors that the Times spoke to yesterday disclosed that they had conducted projects in Lusophone countries.

U added that many Chinese infrastructure constructors had invested in Lusophone countries through partnerships, acquisitions or mergers, hinting that these Chinese enterprises conduct

ANTHONY LAM



businesses in these countries.

He also admitted that IPIIM did not have much time to invite enterprises from these countries. With the border and the expo opening in January and June in the same year respectively, enterprises did not have enough time to settle their arrangements.

On the revivals of the local convention and exhibition trade, U disclosed that there are 10% more such activities in Q1 2023 year-over-year, with the number of exhibitions already recovered to the level in 2019. He is confident that trade will further recover as the second half of a year is normally a high season for MICE in Macau.

He also disclosed that the previous edition of the forum saw each of its participants spending on average MOP18,000 during their time in Macau, as opposed to the MOP3,200 spent by each general tourist.

This year's expo is expected to

involve over 3,000 guests, including ministers from various countries, key management personnel from financial institutions and international contractors, among others.

Attendance at this year's event will be double that of the previous event, which was held in September last year. Of note is that the exhibition section will be expanded to be hosted at the exhibition hall. Previous versions only saw minor exhibitions that were held in conference rooms beside forums, seminars and roadshow sessions.

Prior to the commencement day, the Auspices Committee of the forum had its fourth work meeting.

At this meeting, Chinese Deputy Minister of Commerce Guo Tingting made three suggestions: align with the national development strategy and support Macau in building a functional plat-

form for the joint construction of the Belt and Road Initiative; help Macau to achieve adequately diversified economic development and enrich the industrial chain of Macau's convention and exhibition industry; and serve the development needs of enterprises and support the sustainable development of the forum.

Meanwhile, Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong made two suggestions: for Macau to continue to play its role as a platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries to better serve and integrate into the overall development of the country and contribute more to the joint construction of high-quality development of the Belt and Road and promote the new development pattern of the dual cycle; as well as achieve market expansion under the "Macao Platform + International Resources + Hengqin Space + Achievement Sharing" model.

# City records less than 3% of youth addicted to gambling

ANTHONY LAM

**O**VER the past five years, Macau has recorded data showing that less than 3% of youths suffer from gambling disorders, Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) President Hon Wai has said.

The data was disclosed by Hon in his reply to lawmaker Ella Lei's earlier written inquiry about gambling problems among youths.

Hon further said that, since 2009, his bureau had conducted annual surveys on the prevention of youth gambling through non-governmental associations.

Survey results over the past five years indicated that the proportion of local youths with suspected gambling disorders ranged between 2.2% to 2.9%.

Additionally, Hon said that the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) commissions research entities to conduct surveys every two years to determine indices in relation to local youths.

The latest results are expected this year, Hon disclosed, adding that the survey involves questions related to the development of the gambling industry and youths.

Hon also described other work done by his bureau in relation to problematic gambling among youths. A cross-departmental taskforce concerning youth policies have compiled "multifaceted operation plans" to prevent problematic gambling among youths.

He emphasized that the DSEDJ had been in constant contact with various stakeholders to raise awareness at high-risk times, such as by sending letters to schools before the World Cup Finals in 2022. The DSEDJ has also promoted values of financial respon-

sibility during Lunar New Year.

Hon said that, since 2015, his bureau had collaborated with local associations to educate students about personal finance and problematic gambling. Since 2021, the program has expanded to train the trainers, teaching teachers how to help construct healthy financial values in students.

In the future, Hon said, the program is expected to further expand to teach parents good financial values. Measures and tactics catering to university students are also in place, Hon confirmed.







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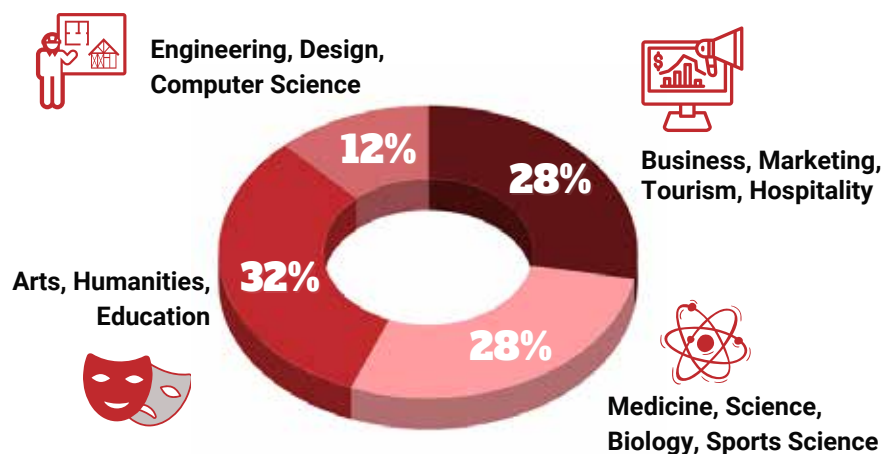
# CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!

We at the International School of Macao are delighted to congratulate the Class of 2023 on their remarkable achievement! On June 3rd, 73 students will graduate and begin a new journey. Providing a balanced educational environment helps our students be happy and resolute to aim high. Their dedication to their studies has resulted in outstanding academic performance and numerous university offers per student. This is a testament to their character, curiosity, ambition and determination to reach their goals. We are confident that our graduates will continue to thrive and succeed in their future endeavours. We wish them all the best. Congratulations, Graduates!



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Niki Chan	Bill Ke	Gordon So
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Idilia Cheang	Zesheng Lai	Donald Tang
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Adrian Cheng	Angel Lao	Christina Wan
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Vivi Chong	Alyssa Lee	Bryan Wu
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Eunice Cordeiro Hoi	Jacko Leong	Mario Yeung
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## PJ WARNS AGAIN OF SMS SCAMS

As numerous people continue to fall victim to consumer bonus point expiry notification scams, the Judiciary Police (PJ) has once again reminded the public to check the authenticity of SMS messages and avoid clicking on unknown links. This kind of scam aims to trick victims by sending them malicious links that purport to grant bonus points on consumer platforms. Personal information, as well as credit card details, are collected and after a few days the victim's credit card details are used for multiple big transactions.

## MUR HOLDS SEVERAL MEETINGS WITH LAO HON PROPERTY OWNERS

As the legal framework for urban renewal takes effect on June 1, Macau Urban Renewal Limited (MUR) has held numerous meetings to help Lao Hon Estate property owners in organizing management committees. Since 2022, the MUR has already helped owners from three different blocks in the Lao Hon Estate old neighborhood, including Son Lei House, Seng Yee House and Hong Tai House, accounting for a total of 18 condominium owners' general assembly meetings.

## PUBLIC WORKS

# CPU APPROVES RESIDENTIAL BUILDING WITH 46.7M AT NAM VAN

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Urban Planning Committee (CPU) approved on Wednesday the Urban Conditions Plan (PCU) for a residential building to be constructed at the Nam Van Lake area in the plot identified as C7 of Nam Van.

The land, with a total area of 4,669 square meters, will be able to host a residential tower with a maximum height of 46.7 meters, as noted by the opinion issued by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), which noted the area as being part of the protected heritage area that includes, among others, the Penha Hill Chapel.

According to information from the staff of the Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU), the plot has already had a PCU dating from September 2016 with the new one, now issued, only involving minor changes to the height and width of the project.

Contrary to what is common in other projects that gather little to no interest from the public, this PCU has gathered a total of 17 opinions from the public during the period of public consultation, mostly regarding the purpose of the building as well as the area and maximum height.

Commenting on the PCU, the member of CPU and Civil Engineer, Sio Chi Veng took the opportunity to call on the government, namely on the DSSCU, to pay closer attention to the projects and to have a "forward thinking" approach to them.



Sio noted that the occupation of the land is total and that there are no plans or space for, for example, a future installation of pedestrian flyovers or other structures of this kind to facilitate pedestrian access.

"We need to have sustainable development and prepare for the future. This is not restricted to the C7 plot but also in general," Sio said, noting that in most projects approved recently both the government and owners or developers seem to fail to consider the future needs of the people who will live or use those spaces.

Commenting on other requirements made by IC for the project that lacked clarity, the president of IC, Deland Leong said that, besides height, the IC wants the building to

"be merged into the architecture of this area," she said while trying to explain the requirements of the IC

opinion that state that the façade, color, and materials should integrate with the surrounding area.

## CPU WANTS TO ADOPT NEW ZEALAND RULES FOR PROTECTED ZONES

**DURING** the discussion of several private projects and namely one located at Rua do Cunha in Taipa and another at the Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro, CPU member Teng Kai On, said that the government should call for the owners to state more clearly the purpose of the building they want to have in certain land plots and describe the extent of the changes to be made. Teng said that this is a requirement

used in places like New Zealand and aims to give the CPU (and equivalent bodies) more information on the project and intention of the owner, especially when these are located in protected zones of cultural interest. In response, the representatives of the DSSCU noted that such a statement is not a requirement of local laws and the DSSCU cannot force owners to state their intentions beyond what is legally required.

# June: Month of Portugal but without Saint John's Fest

RENATO MARQUES

**J**UNE has commenced and, with it, the traditional celebrations of the Portuguese community in Macau. Named "June – Month of Portugal", the series of events peaks with the celebration, on June 10, of the Day of Portugal, Camões and Portuguese communities. There will be a program that includes 20 activities, the Portuguese Consul-General Alexandre Leitão unveiled on Wednesday in a press conference at the Portuguese Consulate building.

At the press conference, Leitão, who recently started his term as Consul for Macau and Hong Kong, highlighted the fact that the celebration of the



Day of Portugal in Macau has come a long way but, more important than just tradition, is the purpose of displaying the vitality of the Portuguese community

and the different Portuguese associations and groups in Macau.

The cultural program includes a series of conferences as well as movie projec-

tions that not only includes Portuguese productions but also others, coming from different Portuguese-speaking countries.

A book launch about the

"Battle of Macau" is also part of the program for this year as well as a Portuguese artists' collective exhibition.

Because Portuguese culture often involves food, the celebrations of June – Month of Portugal also includes a gastronomic route involving a total of 11 restaurants that aim to allow both Macau residents as well as tourists experience Portuguese cuisine.

## WITHOUT SAINT JOHN'S FEST

One tradition related to both Portuguese and Macau culture is the Saint John Festival, a street party that used to fill the streets around Saint Lazarus District with food, drinks, souvenirs, and entertainment.

The popular celebration of the Catholic saint, which is also the "Patron Saint's Day of Macau" and that is already listed as part of the Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Macau, will not take place this year.

According to a report from the Portuguese newspaper Tribuna de Macau, the organizers of the festival said that the event will not take place this year after a proposal to move the party from the streets of Saint Lazarus to the Broadway in Taipa was considered.

Authorities were concerned about the traffic that would be imposed on several streets in the area as a result of the festival, which ultimately meant the festival could not take place this year.



ECONOMY

# Europe sees inflation drop to 6.1%, but real relief will take months

DAVID MCHUGH, FRANKFURT

EUROPE'S inflation took a positive turn with a significant drop to 6.1%, but prices are still posing a pinch to shoppers who are yet to see real relief in what they pay for food and other necessities.

The annual figure in May eased from 7% in April for the 20 countries that use the euro currency, the European Union's statistical agency Eurostat said yesterday.

It was a welcome sign that the explosion in price increases — which peaked in record double digits last October — is heading in the right direction.

But economists warned that it will be many months before disgruntled consumers see more normal levels of inflation reflected on price tags in shops. While prices are rising more slowly, they are coming on top of already-high costs triggered by Russia's war in Ukraine and other factors.

Relief is far off for people like 76-year-old Brigitte Weinbeck, who was shopping this week at an open-air market in Cologne, Germany.

"I shop more consciously — for instance, I always make a plan at the beginning of the week about what I'm going to cook and when and then I go shopping," she said. "Otherwise, you sometimes make impulse purchases."

The food bank at Berlin's St. Wilhelm Roman Catholic Church, meanwhile, has gone from serving 100-120 households before the war in Ukraine to 200.

"Now, there are people coming

AP PHOTO



who are at the limit of their income," coordinator Christine Klar said. "They say the prices have risen so much now. And now they know, or heard, that they are entitled to use the food bank, so now they come."

Food prices in the eurozone rose by a painful 12.5% in May from a year earlier, but still eased from the 13.5% increase recorded in April.

Key to the lower overall inflation figure was energy prices, which fell 1.7% from a year ago following an increase of 2.4% a

month ago.

Core inflation, which excludes volatile food and energy, fell to 5.3% from 5.6% in April. That figure is seen as the better indication of price pressures in the economy from demand for goods and higher wages. It's high enough that the European Central Bank is expected to approve another interest rate increase at its June 15 meeting.

Inflation fell in the three biggest economies where the euro is used: Germany to 6.1%, France to 5.1% and Italy to 7.6%. The

decline was "broad based, with food, energy and core inflation all contributing to the easing," economist Rory Fennessy wrote at Oxford Economics.

Inflation took off in mid-2021 as fears that Russia might invade Ukraine sent natural gas and oil prices higher on fears of losing Russian supplies and as the global economy bounced back from the worst of the pandemic, straining supplies of parts and materials.

The energy and supply choke points have eased, but higher prices have kept spreading through

the economy as workers demand better pay and companies find they can raise prices to cover increasing costs.

"Total inflation is rapidly declining, driven by such factors as lower energy prices and large base effects from 2022. In this context, it is important to bear in mind that the general price level is continuing to rise from an already high level," according to economists at SEB bank.

"Consumers will continue to have a tough time, even though central banks will find the situation somewhat easier late in 2023 from an inflation targeting perspective," they wrote.

Germany, whose economy has contracted for two straight quarters that marks one definition of recession, has tried to cushion the blow of high energy prices with subsidies for households and businesses and discounted public transit tickets. That partly helped push energy increases much lower, but food is still surging.

Price rises for energy and food have been major challenges for the European economy because consumers are forced to spend more on necessities and have less to spend on everything else.

The eurozone dodged recession in the early months of the year, thanks largely to governments scrambling to line up non-Russian sources of natural gas to avoid an energy catastrophe. The economy grew only 0.1% in the first three months of the year.

Also weighing on economic growth are rapid interest rate hikes from the European Central Bank as it tries to wrestle inflation toward its target rate of 2%.

Higher interest rates influence the cost of borrowing across the economy, making it more expensive to get a mortgage to buy a house or a business investment loan — in turn, reducing demand for goods that drives inflation higher. **MDT/AP**

## CORPORATE BITS

### MGM hosts annual blessing ceremony for its Dragon Boat Team



Participating in the upcoming "Macau International Dragon Boat Races 2023," MGM held earlier in May at the Nam Van Lake Nautical Center its annual blessing ceremony for its Dragon

Boat Team, which aims to extend best wishes to the Golden Lion Team.

The ceremony featured a series of traditional rituals such as offering incense, carving a suckling pig, eye-

-doting the dragon boats and a cheerleading performance.

"Over the years, our Dragon Boat Team has achieved extraordinary results in the races," the president and chief strategic & financial officer of MGM, Kenneth Feng, said. "Determined to excel in the race, the Team has been dedicating their spare time to months of intensive training," he added.

The Golden Lion Team, composed of 58 MGM team members including at least 90% of local employees, will compete across four categories in six different teams.

### SJM organizes travel trade event in Hong Kong



To develop its international market, SJM recently organized a travel trade event in Hong-Kong in partnership with the SJM's parent company Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões de Macau (STDM),

showcasing numerous tourism offerings and hotels such as its latest integrated resort the Grand Lisboa Palace.

During the event, at least 120 local travel industry pro-

fessionals gained a better understanding of the offerings of SJM and STDM, including their hotel accommodations, dining options, shopping choices, and a diverse array of leisure activities.

Daisy Ho, managing director of SJM, expressed, "Hong Kong has long been a key source market for Macau, taking account that large numbers of international visitors arrive in Macau via Hong Kong every year."

"As such, we organized this trade event with the objective to expand our catchment and ultimately contribute to reinforcing Macau as the World Centre of Leisure and Tourism," she added.



# US DEFENSE CHIEF CALLS BEIJING'S REFUSAL TO MEET UNFORTUNATE DURING VISIT TO TOKYO

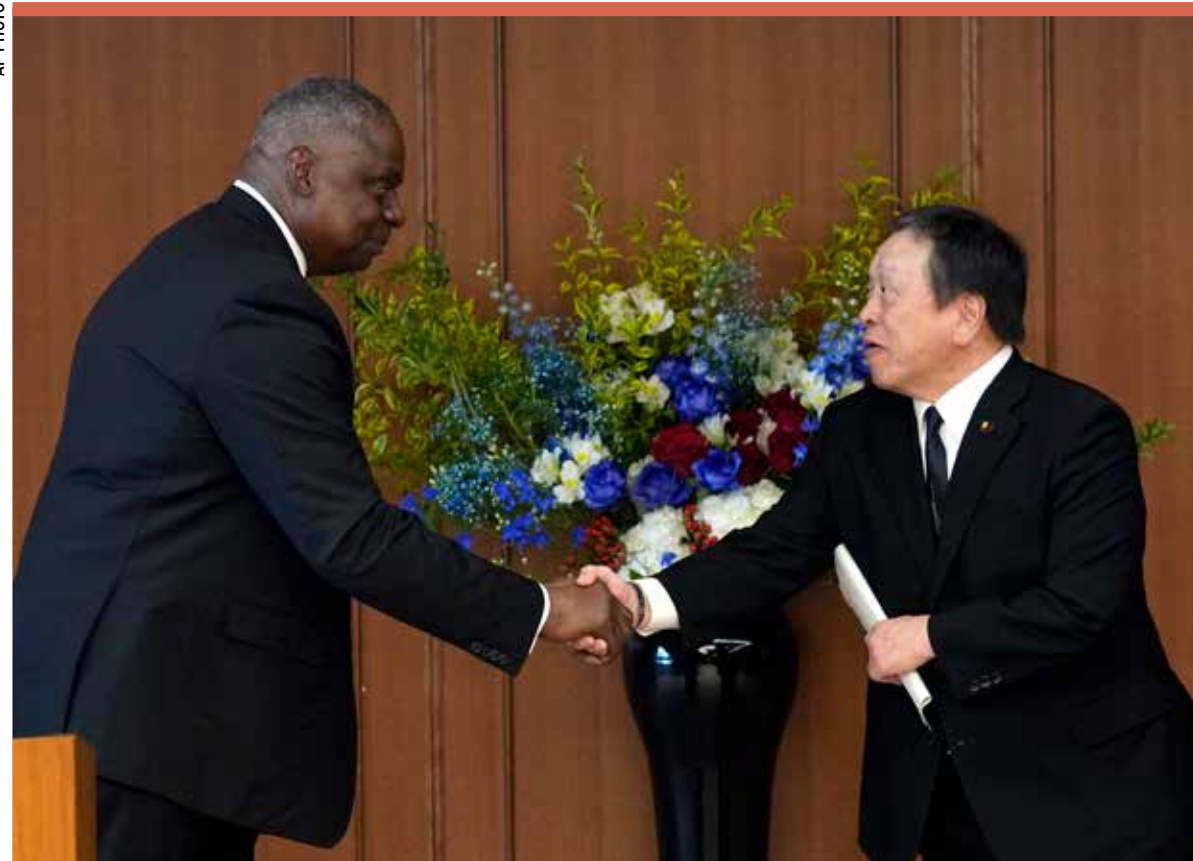
**U.S.** Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin stressed the importance of communication during a stopover today in Tokyo, calling it unfortunate that his Chinese counterpart is refusing to meet him at an upcoming annual security conference in Singapore, which both men are attending.

On the way to the annual Shangri-La Dialogue Asian security summit this weekend, Austin held talks with Japanese Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada. Noting China's increasingly assertive military actions in international airspace and waterways in the region, he told a joint news conference in Tokyo, "The provocative intercepts of our aircraft and also our allies' aircraft, that's very concerning, and we would hope that they would alter their action."

The United States military said Tuesday that a Chinese fighter jet flew aggressively close to a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft over the South China Sea, forcing the American pilot to fly through the turbulent wake.

Although Beijing said there will be no meeting between Austin and his Chinese counterpart at the security summit, Hamada is expected to attend and meet with Chinese Minister of National Defense Li Shangfu on the sidelines.

Japan and China set up a defense hotline in March to



U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin (left) and Japanese Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada shake hands at the end of a joint press conference at the Defense Ministry in Tokyo, yesterday

improve communication and avoid accidental encounters in the tense region, and Hamada and Li recently held their first telephone talks on the hotline.

Washington and Beijing have yet to hold such a talk, and when Austin phoned their crisis line in February, the call went unanswered.

"We need to strengthen our cooperation of Japan-U.S., and

Japan-U.S.-South Korea," Hamada said yesterday. The two criticized North Korea's failed rocket launch Wednesday for using ballistic missile technology that's prohibited under United Nations' Security Council resolutions, and affirmed further cooperation between them and with South Korea in case of another launch attempt.

Ties between Japan and South Korea have improved rapidly in recent months under Washington's pressure in the face of growing regional threats. Tokyo and Seoul are also discussing real-time sharing of North Korea's missile launch data.

Austin said the United States stands with Japan and South Korea in the face of Pyon-

gyang's provocations and that "the United States will take all necessary measures to secure to ensure the security of our homeland in the defense of our allies."

Austin and Hamada agreed to strengthen extended deterrence for Japan, which includes U.S. nuclear weapons.

"I am here to reaffirm America's unwavering commitment to Japan. This includes extended deterrence and provided by the full range of U.S. conventional and nuclear capabilities," Austin said.

The two ministers also agreed to step up and expand their defense industries and strengthen multinational formats, including with South Korea, Australia, the Philippines and India to reinforce their Indo-Pacific security cooperation.

At a meeting later yesterday with Austin, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Japan wants to further strengthen its deterrence and response capabilities by working with the United States, especially focusing on Japan's use of strike capability.

Under its new security strategy issued in December, Japan pledged a military buildup that includes strike capabilities and doubling defense spending — a break from its postwar self-defense-only principle. **MDT/AP**

## ESPIONAGE

# Trial opens for three charged with aiding Chinese campaign to pressure expats into returning home

JENNIFER PELTZ,  
NEW YORK

**A**n American sleuth and two Chinese men faced jurors yesterday [Macau time] in the first trial to come out of U.S. claims that China's government has tried to harass, intimidate and arm-twist dissidents and others abroad into returning home.

Michael McMahon, Zheng Congying and Zhu Yong are charged with being part of a conspiracy to hound a former Chinese city official, his wife and their adult daughter to get him to go back to his homeland, where the government alleges he took bribes.

"If you are willing to go back to the mainland and spend 10 years in prison, your wife and children will be all right," read a translated note that Zheng helped tape to their New Jersey door in 2018, though his lawyer said Zheng quickly had second thoughts and took the note down.

Prosecutors say it was one in a series of pressure tactics that included flying in the man's then-octogenarian father to warn him that relatives would suffer if he didn't come home.

"The victim and his family endured years of harassment," Assistant U.S. Attorney Irla Chen said in an opening statement. "It's part of a public Chinese go-

vernment initiative to force people living abroad to return to China against their will."

The defendants, charged with acting as illegal agents for China, all say they weren't aware they were doing Beijing's bidding in what's known as "Operation Fox Hunt." Their lawyers said the men believed they were helping to collect a private debt.

The trial comes as grievances mount between Beijing and Washington. This year, a Chinese spy balloon flew over the U.S., U.S. law enforcement authorities accused China of setting up a secret police station in New York, and -- just this Tuesday -- the U.S.

military complained that a Chinese fighter jet made an "unnecessarily aggressive maneuver" near an American reconnaissance aircraft over the South China Sea.

China told the U.S. to stop such surveillance flights, maintains that the spy balloon was a civilian aircraft that went off-course and says the supposed secret police outposts just provide such services as driver's license renewals.

The U.S., meanwhile, has in recent years brought a number of cases like the one now on trial in a Brooklyn federal courthouse, saying they are examples "transnational repression."

China in July 2014 announced "Operation Fox

Hunt," a plan to pursue and repatriate nationals it considers fugitives.

Beijing has denied all accusations of issuing threats to force repatriations and says the U.S. is discrediting legitimate Chinese crime-fighting.

The geopolitical backdrop was hardly invisible from the Brooklyn federal courtroom yesterday [Macau time].

Noting the recent rise in U.S.-China tensions, defense lawyer Paul Goldberger asked jurors "to take a long, hard look at what the (U.S.) government has done" in the case against his client, Zheng.

In response, U.S. District Judge Pamela Chen warned

that "the U.S. government is not on trial." (She isn't related to the prosecutor.)

Zhu's lawyer, Kevin Tung, said he was "not here to defend the People's Republic of China," but to defend "a person who I believe is innocent."

The ex-official who was allegedly targeted, Xu Jin, came to the U.S. about a decade ago after falling out of favor with the Communist Party, prosecutors said. They said China initially went after him by issuing an international alert that he was wanted and by publicizing the bribery allegations. His family says they are false.

China has no extradition treaty with the U.S., so Beijing can't legally compel suspects to return. Instead, according to U.S. prosecutors, the Chinese government "worked through intermediaries to try to squeeze Xu into deciding to return." **MDT/AP**



MILITARY

# China and Singapore agree to top-level defense hotline

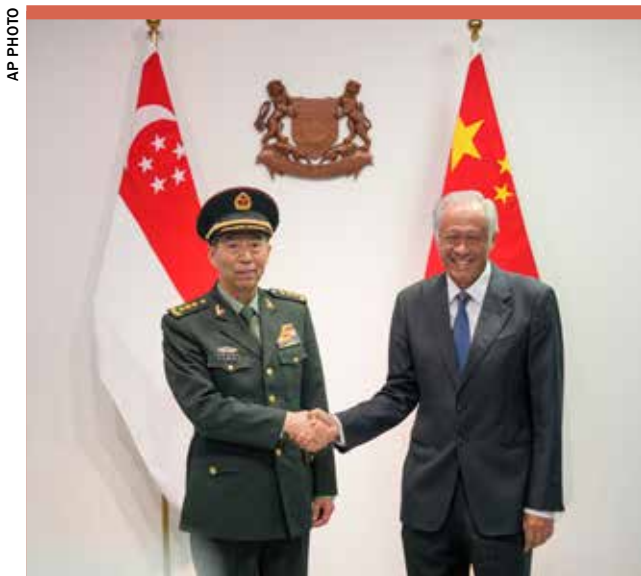
SYAWALLUDIN ZAIN  
& DAVID RISING,  
SINGAPORE

CHINA and Singapore laid the groundwork yesterday for a hotline between the two countries that would establish a high-level communications link between Beijing and a close American partner in Asia at a time when Chinese tensions with Washington are high and dialogue has stalled.

Chinese Defense Minister Li Shangfu, a general in China's People's Liberation Army who was named minister in March, signed a memorandum of understanding with his Singaporean counterpart Ng Eng Hen to work toward establishing a secure telephone link "for high-level communications between our defense leaders," according to a statement released by Singapore.

"Such high-level open lines of communications are important for strengthening mutual understanding and trust," the statement said, without giving a timeline for when it would be established.

Li is on his first visit to Singapore as defense



Chinese Defense Minister Gen. Li Shangfu and Singapore Defense Minister Ng Eng Hen

minister, and is broadly discussing global and regional security issues with a range of officials. Singapore said both countries' defense establishments "interact regularly through bilateral and multilateral exercises" and that his visit underscores "long-standing, warm and friendly" relations.

At the same time, Singapore is a close military and economic partner of the United States, and the agreement to establish the direct phone link comes as communications between Washington and Beijing are strained.

Li also established a defense hotline with Ja-

pan in March to improve communication and help avoid accidental encounters in the tense region.

While in Singapore, Li is expected to address a meeting of defense officials, diplomats and country leaders on Sunday, but declined a request from Washington to meet on the sidelines with U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who will give a speech at the same Shangri-La Dialogue security conference on Saturday.

Among many issues, China has been irritated by American support for Taiwan, a self-governing democracy that it claims

as its own territory, the shooting down of what the U.S. called a Chinese spy balloon, and sanctions directly targeting Li.

Those sanctions are related to Washington's broad package of measures against Russia, but predate its invasion of Ukraine and were imposed in 2018 over Li's involvement in China's purchase of combat aircraft and anti-aircraft missiles from Moscow.

The sanctions, which broadly prevent Li from doing business in the United States, do not prevent him from holding official talks, the U.S. has said.

Earlier this week, Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman Tan Kefei said Austin's offer of talks in Singapore had been rejected because the U.S. "disregards China's concerns and creates artificial obstacles."

"The U.S. side should take practical actions to show sincerity and correct mistakes, so as to create the necessary conditions and proper atmosphere for communication and exchange between the two sides," he said, while not mentioning the sanctions or other issues directly. **MDT/AP**

DIRE STRAIT

# Foreign Ministry criticizes US plan for trade deal with Taiwan

CHINA'S government criticized the United States' plans to sign a trade treaty with Taiwan and called on Washington yesterday to stop official contact with the self-ruled island democracy claimed by Beijing as part of its territory.

The agreement due to be signed today comes amid increased Chinese efforts to intimidate Taiwan by flying fighter jets and bombers near the island, a global center for

high-tech industry. American and European politicians have visited Taiwan in a show of support for its elected government.

The Chinese foreign ministry accused Washington of violating agreements on the status of Taiwan, which split with the mainland in 1949 after a civil war. The United States has no official relations with Taiwan but has extensive informal ties and multibillion-dollar annual trade.

"The United States should stop any form of official exchanges with Taiwan, refrain from negotiating agreements with Taiwan that have sovereign connotations or official nature and refrain from sending wrong signals to the 'Taiwan independence' secessionist forces," said a ministry spokesperson, Mao Ning.

Beijing has threatened to attack if Taiwan declares formal independence or

delays talks on unification.

American and Taiwanese officials say the U.S.-Taiwan Initiative on 21st-Century Trade will increase trade by simplifying customs, investment and other rules.

It is due to be signed by employees of the unofficial entities that represent the two governments to each other at a ceremony attended by trade officials from both sides, according to the Taiwanese government. **MDT/AP**

ADVERTORIAL

# GREAT TIMES

Cool off your summer with German Rieslings



SAVOR a weekend of relaxed sophistication and immerse yourself in the world of German Rieslings at the upcoming MGM Riesling Uncorked event in June. This highly anticipated wine tasting event returns with a 3-day celebration from June 9 to 11, featuring a refined selection of over 25 labels from Germany's most prestigious wine regions, including Mosel, Rheinhessen, Rheingau, and Pfalz, handpicked by professional sommeliers. The festival offers a perfect opportunity for wine enthusiasts to enjoy a satisfying tasting experience in a chilled and relaxing atmosphere.

German Rieslings are known for their exquisite quality and complex taste profiles. The festival showcases a selection of Prädikatswein, the top-tier superior quality German Rieslings, featuring iconic wineries including Weingut Gunderloch, Sybille Kuntz, Dr. Loosen, Joh. Jos. Prüm and Weingut Robert Weil. With a range of styles, from crisp to sweet to full-bodied and complex, the tasting experience is sure to satisfy every palate.

To complement the wines, the festival will offer an array of delectable canapés. And there's no better place to enjoy all of this than The Vista at MGM COTAI, featuring magnificent indoor and outdoor spaces with floor-to-ceiling windows, providing unobstructed views of the pool with lush greenery.

Don't miss out on the chance to unwind and indulge in the elegance and charm of authentic German Rieslings. Secure your tickets now for the MGM Riesling Uncorked 2023 at [mgm.mo](http://mgm.mo) and enjoy a sophisticated weekend with friends.





## HIMALAYAS

# INDIA, NEPAL PRIME MINISTERS MEET TO TAKE RELATIONS TO 'HIMALAYAN HEIGHTS'

**N**EPAL'S prime minister held talks with his Indian counterpart yesterday as India and its rival China bid for influence in the tiny Himalayan nation as part of a greater regional power struggle.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal met Narendra Modi in New Delhi during a four-day visit to India, his first trip abroad since taking office last December. After the meeting, the two prime ministers remotely inaugurated several projects, including a cargo railway line and two border checkpoints, and oversaw the signing of a slew of agreements.

Modi said they agreed to further deepen their historic ties and "take our relations to Himalayan heights." He said they agreed to resolve all their outstanding issues, including a border dispute.

Dahal said at a joint news conference that they reviewed ongoing projects and discussed ways to further cooperate in connectivity, energy and people-to-people contact.

New Nepalese prime ministers traditionally visit neighboring India soon after taking office.



Nepal's Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi (right) chat before their meeting in New Delhi

Nepal is bordered on three sides by India, with an open frontier allowing traffic without passports or visas.

Until recently, India was a dominant force in Nepal, but China's involvement has grown in the last few years. China has invested in

the building of airports, highways and hydropower projects.

Beijing views Nepal as key to its massive transcontinental infrastructure Belt and Road Initiative that builds on old Silk Road routes that once connected China to the West.

Landlocked Nepal, however, remains dependent on India for all its oil needs and many other necessities.

In a recent interview with The Associated Press, Nepali Foreign Minister Narayan Prakash Saud said his country will work to

enhance its relations with both India and China while maintaining a policy of nonalignment.

India has been wary of Nepal since it elected a communist government in 2017. A coalition government headed by a communist prime minister has again taken power after an election in late 2022.

Relations with India soured in 2015, when it supported protests by ethnic groups in southern Nepal against a new constitution and imposed an unofficial economic blockade, shutting down the supply of oil and goods over the border.

The previous communist government issued a new map of the country in 2020 that includes an area claimed by both India and Nepal, further angering New Delhi.

This is Dahal's third time in office since his Maoist group abandoned a decade-long armed revolt and joined a U.N.-assisted peace process and entered mainstream politics in 2006. The conflict killed more than 17,000 people. **MDT/AP**

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NORTH KOREA

# Powerful sister says US hypocritical for criticizing failed satellite launch

KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

**T**HE powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un yesterday accused the United States of “gangster-like” hypocrisy for criticizing her country’s failed launch of a military spy satellite and insisted a successful launch will be made soon.

Kim Yo Jong said North Korea’s efforts to acquire space-based reconnaissance capabilities were a legitimate exercise of its sovereign right and restated the country’s rejection of U.N. Security Council resolutions that ban it from conducting any launch involving ballistic missile technology.

Her comments on state media came a day after the rocket carrying the satellite failed. North Korea said the rocket lost thrust after a stage separation and crashed in waters off the Korean Peninsula’s western coast.

Washington, South Korea and Japan had quickly criticized the launch. Adam Hodge, a spokes-



Kim Yo Jong, sister of North Korea’s leader Kim Jong Un

person at the U.S. National Security Council, said Washington strongly condemns the North Korean launch because it used banned ballistic missile technology, raised tensions and risked destabilizing security in the region and beyond.

In her statement, Kim Yo Jong briefly mentioned Hodge’s comments before saying the United States “is letting loose a hackneyed gibberish prompted by its brigandish and abnormal thinking.”

“If the DPRK’s satellite launch should be particularly censured,

the U.S. and all other countries, which have already launched thousands of satellites, should be denounced. This is nothing but sophism of self-contradiction,” she said, using the initials of North Korea’s formal name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

She noted how the United States closely monitors the North through its own reconnaissance satellites and other aerial assets, calling the Americans a “group of gangsters” who would deem it as “illegal and threatening” had Nor-

th Korea attempted to send a satellite into space by balloon.

“The far-fetched logic that only the DPRK should not be allowed to do so according to the (U.N. Security Council’s) ‘resolution’ which bans the use of ballistic rocket technology irrespective of its purpose, though other countries are doing so, is clearly a gangster-like and wrong one of seriously violating the DPRK’s right to use space and illegally oppressing it,” she said.

“It is certain that the DPRK’s military reconnaissance satellite will be correctly put on space orbit in the near future and start its mission,” she added.

Citing what she described as U.S. hostility toward the North, Kim reiterated that Pyongyang has no intent to reengage in negotiations with Washington, which have stalemated since 2019 because of disagreements over crippling U.S.-led sanctions imposed over the North’s nuclear weapons and missiles program.


Wednesday’s launch extended

a provocative run in North Korean military demonstrations, including the test-firings of around 100 missiles since the start of 2022 that underscored Kim Jong Un’s attempts to acquire dual ability to conduct nuclear strikes on both the U.S. mainland and South Korea.

Wednesday’s failed launch raised security jitters in South Korea and Japan, where residents in some areas were briefly urged to take shelter shortly after the launch. South Korea’s military later said it was salvaging an object presumed to be part of the North Korean rocket. Lee Sung Joon, spokesperson of South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff, said during a briefing yesterday that the country’s navy has mobilized more vessels and aircraft in search of additional debris to recover and analyze. U.S. and South Korean intelligence officials are closely monitoring North Korea over possible launch preparations but it wasn’t immediately clear whether the North would attempt another launch within the stated June 11 launch window.

The International Maritime Organization’s maritime safety committee adopted a rare resolution Wednesday denouncing North Korea for conducting launches without proper notification, which have “seriously threatened the safety of seafarers and international shipping.” **MDT/AP**

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SWEDEN

# Close to becoming first 'smoke free' country in Europe as daily use of cigarettes dwindles

KARL RITTER, STOCKHOLM

**S**UMMER is in the air, cigarette smoke is not, in Sweden's outdoor bars and restaurants.

As the World Health Organization marks "World No Tobacco Day" on Wednesday, Sweden, which has the lowest rate of smoking in the Europe Union, is close to declaring itself "smoke free" — defined as having fewer than 5% daily smokers in the population.

Many experts give credit to decades of anti-smoking campaigns and legislation, while others point to the prevalence of "snus," a smokeless tobacco product that is banned elsewhere in the EU but is marketed in Sweden as an alternative to cigarettes.

Whatever the reason, the 5% milestone is now within reach. Only 6.4% of Swedes over 15 were daily smokers in 2019, the lowest in the EU and far below the average of 18.5% across the 27-nation bloc, according to the Eurostat statistics agency.

Figures from the Public Health Agency of Sweden show the smoking rate has continued to fall since then, reaching 5.6% last year.

"We like a healthy way to live, I think that's the reason," said Carina Astorsson, a Stockholm resident. Smoking never interested her, she added, because "I don't like the smell; I want to take care of my body."

The risks of smoking appear well understood among health-conscious Swedes, including younger generations. Twenty years ago, almost 20% of the population were smokers — which was a low rate globally at the time. Since then, measures to discourage smoking have brought down smoking rates across Europe, including bans on smoking in restaurants.

France saw record drops in smoking rates from 2014 to 2019 but that success hit a plateau during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic — blamed in part for causing stresses that drove people to light up. About one-third



of people aged 18 to 75 in France professed to having smoked in 2021 — a slight increase on 2019. About a quarter smoke daily.

Sweden has gone further than most to stamp out cigarettes, and says it's resulted in a range of health benefits, including a relatively low rate of lung cancer.

"We were early in restricting smoking in public spaces, first in school playgrounds and after-school centers, and later in restaurants, outdoor cafes and public places such as bus stations," said Ulrika Årehed, secretary-general of the Swedish Cancer Society. "In parallel, taxes on cigarettes and strict restrictions on the marketing of these products have played an important role."

She added that "Sweden is not there yet," noting that the proportion of smokers is higher in disadvantaged socio-economic groups.

The sight of people lighting up is becoming increasingly rare in the country of 10.5 million. Smoking is prohibited at bus stops and train platforms and outside the entrances of hospitals and other public buildings. Like in most of Europe, smoking isn't allowed inside bars and restaurants, but since 2019 Sweden's smoking ban also applies to their outdoor seating areas.

On Tuesday night, the terraces of Stockholm were full of people enjoying food and drinks in the late-setting sun. There was no sign of cigarette

smoke, but cans of snus could be spotted on some tables. Between beers, some patrons stuffed small pouches of the moist tobacco under their upper lips.

Swedish snus makers have long held up their product as a less harmful alternative to smoking and claim credit for the country's declining smoking rates. But Swedish health authorities are reluctant to advise smokers to switch to snus, another highly addictive nicotine product.

"I don't see any reason to put two harmful products up against each other," Årehed said. "It is true that smoking is more harmful than most things you can do, including snus. But that said, there are many health risks even with snus."

Some studies have linked snus to increased risk of heart disease, diabetes and premature births if used during pregnancy.

Swedes are so fond of their snus, a distant cousin of dipping tobacco in the United States, that they demanded an exemption to the EU's ban on smokeless tobacco when they joined the bloc in 1995.

"It's part of the Swedish culture, it's like the Swedish equivalent of Italian Parma ham or any other cultural habit," said Patrik Hildingsson, a spokesman for Swedish Match, Sweden's top snus maker, which was acquired by tobacco giant Philip Morris last year.

He said policymakers should encourage the tobacco

industry to develop less harmful alternatives to smoking such as snus and e-cigarettes.

WHO, the U.N. health agency, says Turkmenistan, with a rate of tobacco use below 5%, is ahead of Sweden when it comes to phasing out smoking, but notes that's largely due to smoking being almost nonexistent among women. For men the rate is 7%.

WHO attributes Sweden's declining smoking rate to a combination of tobacco control measures, including information campaigns, advertising bans and "cessation support" for those wishing to quit tobacco. However, the agency noted that Sweden's tobacco use is at more than 20% of the adult population, similar to the global average, when you include snus and similar products.

"Switching from one harmful product to another is not a solution," WHO said in an email. "Promoting a so-called 'harm reduction approach' to smoking is another way the tobacco industry is trying to mislead people about the inherently dangerous nature of these products."

Tove Marina Sohlberg, a researcher at Stockholm University's Department of Public Health Sciences, said Sweden's anti-smoking policies have had the effect of stigmatizing smoking and smokers, pushing them away from public spaces into backyards and designated MDT/AP

## this day in history

### 1953 QUEEN ELIZABETH TAKES CORONATION OATH

Queen Elizabeth II has been crowned at a coronation ceremony in Westminster Abbey in London.

In front of more than 8,000 guests, including prime ministers and heads of state from around the Commonwealth, she took the Coronation Oath and is now bound to serve her people and to maintain the laws of God.

After being handed the four symbols of authority — the orb, the sceptre, the rod of mercy and the royal ring of sapphire and rubies — the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Geoffrey Fisher, placed St Edward's Crown on her head to complete the ceremony.

A shout of "God Save the Queen" was heard and gun salutes were fired as crowds cheered.

The Archbishop and fellow bishops then paid homage to Queen Elizabeth II.

In a radio broadcast the Queen said: "Throughout all my life and with all my heart I shall strive to be worthy of your trust".

An estimated three million people lined the streets of London to catch a glimpse of the new monarch as she made her way to and from Buckingham Palace in the golden state coach.

The ceremony was watched by millions more around the world as the BBC set up their biggest ever outside broadcast to provide live coverage of the event on radio and television. Street parties were held throughout the UK as people crowded round television sets to watch the ceremony.

The crowds, some of whom had camped out overnight to ensure a prime position, were rewarded when the Queen and other members of her family, including the Queen Mother, appeared on the balcony at Buckingham Palace.

Despite the overcast weather conditions the RAF marked the occasion with a fly past down the Mall.

A fireworks display then lit up the skies above Victoria Embankment.

The Queen replaced her father, King George VI, as monarch following his death on 6 February 1952. After 16 years on the throne he passed away in his sleep and his 25-year-old daughter Elizabeth immediately became Queen.

The princess formally proclaimed herself Queen and Head of the Commonwealth and Defender of the Faith in February 1952 but the amount of planning and a wish for a sunny day for the occasion led to the long but excited wait for this day.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Over 20 million people watched the BBC coverage of the coronation. Many people crowded round neighbours' sets to watch television for the first time. The broadcast was made in 44 languages. There was a shortage of professional coachmen to help transport dignitaries to Westminster Abbey in horse drawn carriages. Millionaire businessmen and country squires offered their services and on the day they dressed up as Buckingham Palace servants and helped take people to the ceremony. Many commemorative souvenirs were produced to mark the occasion including a special set of four postage stamps. In 2002 the Queen celebrated her Golden Jubilee. She marked her 50 years on the throne with a mammoth tour of the Commonwealth and UK where millions turned out to celebrate during the Jubilee weekend. The highlight of the weekend was the 'Party at the Palace' where stars from Ozzy Osbourne and Sir Paul McCartney to S Club 7 and Blue joined forces to entertain the crowds at Buckingham Palace.



YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You should be making plans to spend some time with the ones you love. Career changes may not be your choice right now, but in the long run they will be to your advantage.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Discord could be unnerving. You could experience unusual circumstances and meet eccentric individuals. Get involved in sports events that will benefit your physical appearance.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Just be yourself. Now is the time to concentrate on building a strong financial future for your family. Travel for business or pleasure will be enlightening.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You can make personal changes that will enhance your reputation and give you greater self confidence. Do things that involve children.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Resistance leading to conflict will only make it twice as hard to turn the situation around. Now is the time to concentrate on building a strong financial future for your family.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Emotionally you won't see things accurately. To avoid any minor health problems, don't get too stressed. Insurance pay outs, tax rebates, or just plain luck.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Take a trip or just spend some quality time with your mate. Remember; talk to them, not at them. Beware of someone who is trying to make you look bad.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You can discuss your findings behind closed doors with your boss. Travel opportunities must be taken advantage of. Make changes in your domestic scene.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Avoid extravagance or risky financial schemes. You need to concentrate on your business ventures more than on your relationship today. A lot has changed and so have you.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You should include children in your activities. Residential moves will also be advantageous for all concerned. You can enjoy short trips.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

A need to be in love may fool you. You may want to invest in something that will grow in value. You may be in an extremely passionate mood today.

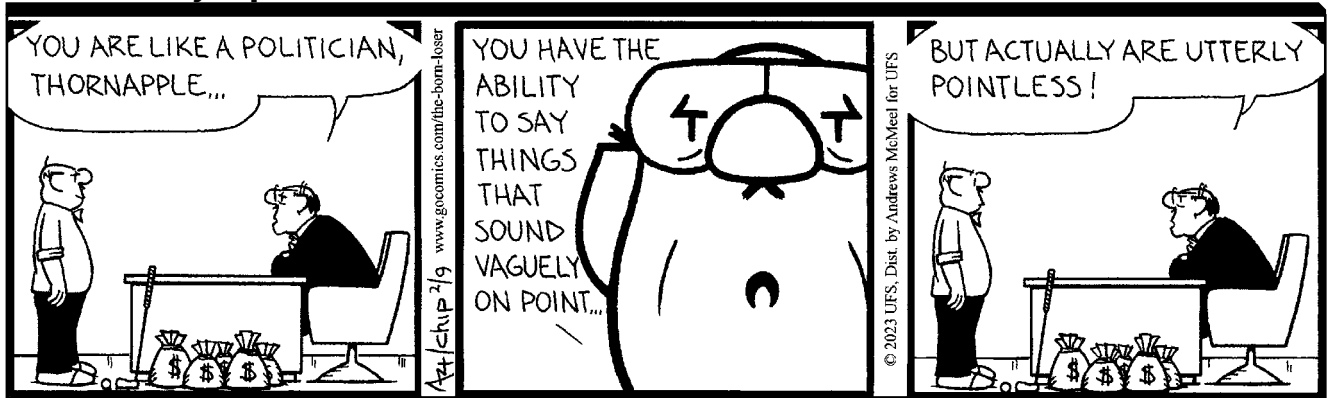


PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Extend an invitation to clients you enjoy spending time with. Emotional relationships will be plentiful if you attend group activities. Trips should be your choice.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	18	30	cloudy
Changchun	12	25	fine
Chengdu	21	29	overcast
Chongqing	22	28	rain
Fuzhou	25	36	cloudy
Guangzhou	26	35	thunderstorms
Guiyang	22	30	showers
Haikou	27	36	cloudy
Hangzhou	22	33	cloudy
Harbin	9	25	cloudy
Hefei	19	32	fine
Nanjing	19	32	fine
Shanghai	22	33	fine
Taipei	23	28	overcast
Wuhan	21	31	cloudy
Hong Kong	27	30	thunderstorms

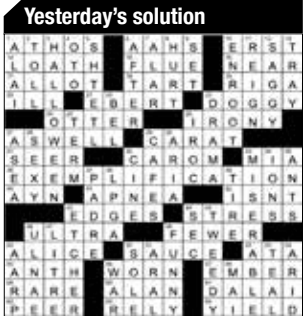
WORLD

Moscow	9	24	rain
Frankfurt	12	23	overcast
Paris	11	23	fine
London	8	19	overcast
New York	17	32	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Skirt stitching; 4- Mazda model; 9- Perfume the air; 14- Cheer for Manolete; 15- Stan's pal; 16- Beside oneself; 17- Spectacular; 19- Bridal path; 20- Law of Moses; 21- Methuselah's father; 23- Glitch; 24- Son of Abraham; 27- Gardner and others; 30- So far; 32- Call \_\_\_ day; 33- Reservoir for sewage; 37- Lace tip; 39- Emblem; 40- I've been framed; 42- Connection; 43- Makes larger; 44- Building annex; 45- Like a headstrong teenager; 48- Hawk; 50- Stately; 51- Banned apple spray; 55- Pig out; 57- Penniless; 58- Writer Loos; 60- Vain; 64- "Tiny Bubbles" singer; 65- Horselike African mammal; 66- 401(k) alternative; 67- Cordillera of South America; 68- Walt Disney's middle name; 69- Upper limit;

DOWN 1- Emcees; 2- John of England; 3- Funny Anne; 4- Lepidopterous insect; 5- Unwell; 6- Boxer Laila; 7- Like some ears; 8- Mediterranean arm; 9- So long!; 10- "All My Children" vixen; 11- Capital of Tennessee; 12- Letters on a Cardinal's cap; 13- Extra-wide shoe size; 18- Piece of cloth, tabloid newspaper; 22- Cpl., for one; 24- Wall St. debuts; 25- Portico; 26- "You've got mail" co.; 28- Had dinner at home; 29- Satisfies; 30- Overturn; 31- Attended; 33- Quotes; 34- "South Pacific" hero; 35- Enchant; 36- Hindu title; 38- Gangster's gun; 40- Ayatollah's land; 41- Shepherd; 43- Actress Scala; 46- Ovum; 47- Change into ice; 49- Supple; 51- \_\_\_ longa, vita brevis; 52- Living in flowing water; 53- Director Kurosawa; 54- Summarize; 56- Greek temple; 57- Prejudice; 58- Nabokov novel; 59- Oui's opposite; 61- Hair goop; 62- Kimono accessory; 63- \_\_\_-la-la;



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Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply – Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone – Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity – Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
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IAM 28 387 333	
Tourism 28 333 000	
Airport 59 888 88	



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DRIVE IN

# THE GIDDY SPLENDOR OF 'SPIDER-MAN: ACROSS THE SPIDER-VERSE'

JAKE COYLE,  
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

**L**ET'S get this upfront: "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse" was the best comic-book film of the last decade.

With an animation blizzard blown straight in from the pages of comics, "Into the Spider-Verse" took a supercollider to all the conventions of the superhero movie. Solemnity was out. Gone, too, was the idea of a chosen one. Spider-Man could be anyone, including a graffiti-tagging kid from Brooklyn, including a pig named Spider-Ham. The possibilities of the comic book movie were suddenly limitless. With Post Malone and Swae Lee's "Sunflower" thumping, the vibes were, as they say, immaculate.

So a lot to live up to. Yet five years later, the Spider-verse is still expanding in thrilling ways. "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse" is the rare sequel that dazzles as much as the original did.



Miles Morales as Spider-Man, voiced by Shameik Moore, left, and Spider-Gwen, voiced by Hailee Steinfeld, in a scene from Columbia Pictures and Sony Pictures Animation's "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse"

It's something to behold. Colors drip, invert and splatter in a shimmering pop-art swirl.

If "Into the Spider-Verse" reveled in the head-spinning

collision of universes, "Across the Spider-Verse" turns the multiverse blender up a notch, or 10. Worlds bump into each other like shoppers in a crowded

bodega. Spider-Men and Spider-Women tumble forth like unloaded clown cars. In this frenetic, freewheeling thing that dares you keep up with its web-slinging pace, the sheer muchness of what's in the frame can be almost overwhelming.

But despite all that's going on, "Across the Spider-Verse" is remarkably grounded as a coming-of-age tale. The masterful flair of writers-producers Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, who penned the script with David Callahan, lies in how they detonate convention and then assemble the leftover, splintered shards to build something deceptively sweet and simple.

The directing team has been entirely swapped out. Joaquim Dos Santos, Kemp Powers and Justin K. Thompson take the reins in this second chapter, which finds Miles Morales (voiced by Shameik Moore) now a 15-year-old with a better handle on his crime-fighting powers. He's less adept, though, at communicating with his parents, Jefferson (Brian Tyree Henry) and Rio (Luna Lauren Vélez), who still don't know their son's secret identity and are growing increasingly concerned about his strange behavior.

Similar issues bedevil Gwen Stacy (Hailee Steinfeld), who by revealing to her police captain father (Shea Whigham) that she's Spider-

-Woman has caused a huge rift in their relationship. (He blames her for Peter Parker's death.)

When Miles and Gwen, stuck in worlds apart, meet again and swing in tandem through New York, they're less a romantically linked Spidey pair than they are a couple of teenagers whose parents just don't understand. When they sit together, on the underside of a ledge on the Williamsburg Savings Bank Tower, gazing at an upside down Manhattan, hazy and blue in the distance, the lingering image perfectly encapsulates an electrifyingly downside-up movie franchise.

In its chaotic and jumbled way, "Across the Spider-Verse" keeps playing with these notions. Miles and Gwen, rightly, feel exceptional — that their problems are unique to being enormously gifted kids. But the movie again and again reinforced that, yes, they're supremely talented, but, no, they're far from alone. "I'm Spider-Woman," Gwen says when a pregnant superhero (Issa Rae) peels in on a motorbike. "Me, too," she replies.

This being a "Spider-Verse" movie, though, there more than just a few Spider-Men lurking about. There are actually gobs of them, each from some parallel world. (Among those here are a Mumbai-like New York, a Lego land and

a nightmarish alternate reality.) The portals start opening thanks to The Spot (Jason Schwartzman), a supervillain-in-training who looks like a splotchy blank page with ink drops on him.

But Spot's powers grow, bringing the attention of the Spider-Society, a gaggle of Spider-People who guard over order in the multiverse. Some of them are pretty cool — most notably Daniel Kaluuya's Spider-Punk, a British rocker who looks like he dropped out of The Clash. Others, like the leader Miguel O'Hara (Oscar Isaac), are more serious and haunted.

When worlds start colliding, prescribed storylines get upset. Seemingly anything goes in these multiverse realms, but, Miguel informs us, there is Canon that needs to be obeyed. Certain foundational narrative beats must occur, in some form, for every Spider-Man, including the sacrifice of a loved one.

When Miles tests these tenets, he brings about a cataclysmic battle across the Spider-Verse, and a movie series hellbent on deconstruction faces-off against formula. For Lord and Miller, the post-modern makers of "The Lego Movie" and "The Mitchells vs. The Machines," it's a battle they've been girding for their whole lives.

The danger in all these crisscrossing dimensions is that no reality seems to mean all that much. By exponentially multiplying worlds and Spider-Men, "Across the Spider-Verse" risks making itself dizzy. Yet it surprisingly, even movingly, stays true to the teenage emotions at its core and the parent-kid relationships driving all these multiverse convulsions.

It's the first Marvel movie that I felt in the theater a palpable disappointment that it was over. ("Across the Spider-Verse" is a sequel in two parts, and ends here in full-on cliffhanger fashion.) That "Across the Spider-Verse" earned that response is surely partly due to its giddy design just as it is to its conviction that we all contain multitudes. As Rachel Dratch's principal says in the film: "Every person is a universe."

**"Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse," a Sony Pictures Animation release, is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association for sequences of animated action violence, some language and thematic elements. Running time: 117 minutes. ★★★★★**

AD

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Chef Aaron Verzosa



Pastry chef Vince Bugtong prepares Yema cakes

F&B

# Filipino American chefs come into their own with multiple James Beard award nods

TERRY TANG

**L**IKE a lot of chefs, Aaron Verzosa has been hustling the past three years to get Archipelago, his Filipino restaurant in Seattle, through the pandemic and its ripple effects. Getting a James Beard Award nomination was a validating moment.

"Being able to amplify and showcase stories about the Filipino American culture, the communities here, specifically in the Northwest, and really the immigrant story that my parents came with ... I was just very humbled to be able to have the opportunity to showcase what the sacrifice was and be able to represent the region in that way," said Verzosa, who is up for Best Chef: Northwest and Pacific.

In the culinary world, the awards are the equivalent of the Oscars. Three Filipino restaurants will be represented at the James Beard Foundation's annual awards ceremony, on June 5 in Chicago.

Abacá, in San Francisco, scored an Outstanding Pastry Chef or Baker nod for Vince Bugtong. And Kasama, in Chicago, earned a joint Best Chef: Great Lakes nomination for husband and wife Tim Flores and Genie Kwon. Last year, Kasama was nominated for Best New Restaurant and also became the first Michelin-starred Filipino restaurant. Past Fili-

pino American winners include Tom Cunanan, who snagged Best Chef: Mid-Atlantic in 2019 for his now closed Washington, D.C., restaurant, Bad Saint.

All this recognition is welcome praise for a cuisine that has historically been stifled by colonialism and a general lack of appreciation. These chefs are part of a younger generation giving voice to the Filipino American experience through the language of food.

Before joining Abacá in January, Bugtong said he was having an identity crisis as pastry chef for an Oakland cocktail bar. He wanted to do more Filipino-centric desserts, but at the same time felt he lacked authenticity. At Abacá, he said, chef and owner Francis Ang gave him the freedom to explore his culinary roots. He has since experimented with dishes from the Philippines' pre-Spanish days, like rice-based desserts, or kakanin in Tagalog.

"In the small amount of time that I've worked here, I definitely learned so much," Bugtong said.

He enjoys playing around with ingredients from the Philippines. For example, he wants to make a granita with barako coffee, which is grown there, and pair it with muscovado jelly and leche flan ice cream. Leche flan is the Filipino version of creme caramel.

Bugtong doesn't worry about whether something is unconventional and outside the usual traditions of Filipino culture.

"My thought process when I come up with stuff is, 'Do I like it?'" he said. "Does it represent me as a Filipino American? Then the second thing that I think about is, 'Is this approachable to other people? Filipino or otherwise?' And then I think of a composition that makes it aesthetically beautiful."

In Seattle, Archipelago, named because the Philippines is comprised of 7,100 islands, has been dishing out a seasonal tasting menu since 2018. Verzosa and his wife, Amber Manuguid, wanted a "Pacific Northwest restaurant first and foremost." But there's a "Filipino American-ness" intrinsic to the meals too.

For instance, Verzosa might swap out tamarind for wild lingonberries. He does his own take on Filipino banana ketchup with sweeter tubers or root vegetables.

With only 12 seats in the restaurant, Verzosa chats with every patron.

"When we have Filipinos coming from the Philippines and we have Filipinos that are here from the U.S. — whether they be first, second, all the way to fifth generation — there's a really beautiful way to connect with them differently," Verzosa said.

"I think the most important thing to realize is that there is absolutely — like anything — no one way to be Filipino."

Neither Verzosa nor Bugtong seriously considered a culinary

career until after college. Verzosa grew up on a diet of PBS and Food Network cooking shows, as well as the cooking of his father, aunts and uncles.

"I would come home from school, be eating my dad's food and watching these shows," said Verzosa, who was originally headed to medical school. "At some point, he was like, 'Hey, listen, Aaron, if you love eating as much as you do, you need to learn how to love to cook.'"

Bugtong dropped plans to become a teacher and enrolled in a Bay Area culinary school in 2014. As a child, he hadn't demonstrated any passion for making things from scratch.

"I did stuff with Betty Crocker and thought I was badass, like substituting milk instead of water," Bugtong said, chuckling. "When I was a kid, I used to put egg wash on Chips Ahoy! and bake them. They came out very gooey inside and crispy on the outside."

Filipinos have heard on and off for the last decade that their food is having a moment, about to be the next big thing in U.S. cuisine. Its staples include steamed rice, meat, fish, and notes of sweet, salty and sour. Dishes like adobo (a meat braised in vinegar, soy sauce and garlic), lumpia (spring rolls) and pancit (fried noodles) are already part of the zeitgeist.

Yet Filipino restaurants make up only 1% of U.S. restaurants

serving Asian food, according to a Pew Research Center analysis released earlier this month.

There's no one explanation why other Asian cuisines like Chinese grabbed a bigger foothold in the restaurant industry.

One reason is the "funneling" of early Filipino immigrants into particular occupations, according to Martin Manalansan IV, an American Studies professor at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. In the 1920s and '30s, he said, they came to the U.S. for agricultural work. After 1965, they worked mostly in more technical fields like nursing and engineering.

Many young Filipino Americans were discouraged from becoming chefs "because that was seen as very lowly, especially if your parents are nurses, doctors, engineers, whatever," Manalansan said.

In addition, Filipino food was often dismissed as a fusion of Chinese, Spanish and a dash of American. That perception annoys Manalansan because it doesn't recognize the creativity of Filipino culture.

"The late '90s foodie revolution was really ... about being adventurous and being called a 'foodie,' being into more 'exotic,' interesting cuisine," Manalansan said. "The Filipino cuisine was seen as kind of homey, kind of blasé."

Whether this year's James Beard love is a coincidence or not, Verzosa says it feels like there are more rising, accomplished Filipino chefs than ever.

"Over the last five, 10 years or so now, they're finally coming through and developing their own voice, and wanting to showcase their own families, their own communities, their own regions," Verzosa said.

"Having the craft and ability to make delicious food — obviously that needs to happen to tell those stories." **MDT/AP**



**OPINION**

**China Daily**  
 Editorial, China Daily

**BUSINESS COMMUNITY  
 GIVES LESSON TO  
 WASHINGTON  
 ON BENEFITS OF  
 COOPERATION**

The global public sphere is rife with narratives about an “exodus” of foreign companies from China, claiming they are leaving en masse.

But things are different in the real world. Unlike Western governments, which have just begun to come to terms with the impossibility of an overall “decoupling” from China and are now shifting toward severing ties in specific areas, multinational corporations seem to be clear-minded about the cost of such politicization of normal business relations. The politically motivated nature of the bid to reshape supply chains is revealed by the use of the term “de-risking”, which slyly tarnishes any ties with China as being risk-laden.

Some in the West may detest their countries’ politicians and business executives heading to China. But that is how today’s world works — countries and businesses are too deeply intertwined to not engage with one another.

“De-risking” may be in vogue as the latest ingredient of political correctness in the West, and as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, companies cannot rely too heavily on specific suppliers or markets. But that is because links may be broken by such unanticipated events, not because there are inherent risks in having business links with a particular country.

Business decision-making may become a formula for self-inflicted damage once it is hijacked by geopolitical calculations.

Some Western politicians seem unable to control their anti-China hysteria. Fortunately, the business world appears to be more sensible about what economic interdependence and its win-win potentials mean.

At the JPMorgan Global China Summit in Shanghai, JPMorgan Chase & Co CEO Jamie Dimon said the United States’ disputes with China over security and trade are “resolvable”.

Like many Chinese counterparts, he highlighted the need for serious communication. “You’re not going to fix these things if you are just sitting across the Pacific yelling at each other. So I’m hoping we have real engagement,” he said.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk, too, highlighted the interconnectedness of the two economies. “The interests of the United States and China are intertwined like conjoined twins,” Musk said in a meeting with a senior Chinese official on Tuesday.

And, in what is something of a slap in the face for those Western politicians who have been calling for “decoupling”, some of the visiting Western business leaders, including Dimon and Musk, have chosen to expand their business presence in the Chinese market.

Not only private capitalists, but also the US Treasury Department is keenly aware of the increasing necessity for the two economies to sustain proper collaboration. Echoing Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen’s warning against the “decoupling” of the Chinese and US economies, Assistant Secretary Elizabeth Rosenberg reportedly told a Senate banking committee hearing that her department would “seek expanded engagement” with China in order to work through the difficult issues her country faces.

That is a more realistic appraisal of what the two countries need.

**RENEWABLE ENERGY SURGES,  
 DRIVEN BY SOLAR BOOM AND HIGH**

The world is set to add a record amount of renewable electricity capacity this year as governments and consumers seek to offset high energy prices and take advantage of a boom in solar power, according to a new report yesterday.

The International Energy Agency said high fossil fuel prices — resulting from Russia’s attack on Ukraine — and concerns about energy security had boosted the rollout of solar and wind power installations, which are expected to reach 440 gigawatts in 2023.

That’s about a third more than the world added the previous year, taking the global installed capacity to 4,500 GW, roughly the combined total power output of the United States and China, the Paris-based

agency said.

“The global energy crisis has shown renewables are critical for making energy supplies not just cleaner but also more secure and affordable,” said Fatih Birol, the IEA’s executive director.

“Governments are responding with efforts to deploy them faster,” he said.

About two-thirds of this year’s increase in renewable power capacity will come from photovoltaic, with both large-scale solar farms and consumer rooftop installations seeing significant growth.

IEA said manufacturing capacity for PV components was also surging, especially in China.

**BRICS**

**PUTIN ARREST WARRANT,  
 WAR AND WEAPONS AMONG  
 ISSUES AS LAVROV ATTENDS  
 MEET IN SOUTH AFRICA**

**GERALD IMRAY,  
 CAPE TOWN**

**R**ussian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met in South Africa with counterparts from the BRICS economic bloc of developing nations for discussions yesterday that were preceded by officials questioning the West’s intentions in the war in Ukraine and calling the United Nations Security Council a “failing” institution.

South African Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor also confirmed that an invitation had been extended to Russian President Vladimir Putin to attend a larger BRICS summit in South Africa in August despite him being the subject of an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court.

Yesterday’s meeting in Cape Town of foreign ministers or representatives from the BRICS countries of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa is a precursor to that main BRICS summit and comes less than two weeks after the world’s most advanced economies held their own summit in Japan.

The Group of Seven gathering was dominated by extending sanctions against Russia as punishment for its invasion of Ukraine and finding ways to deal with China’s global economic influence.

BRICS, with the presence of Russia and China, is increasingly viewed as an emerging counterpoint to the G-7 and the West. Before the talks in Cape Town got underway, South Africa’s ambassador to BRICS, Anil Sooklal, referred to the West’s military aid to Ukraine as one of the things that “fuels the conflict.”

“Any endeavor that fuels the conflict does not solve the problem,” Sooklal said when asked for his reaction to Western “attempts” to



**Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, at a meeting with his counterparts from the BRICS economic bloc in Cape Town, yesterday**

transfer weapons to Ukraine.

“We do not know of any global conflict that has been solved though war,” he said. “All it does is cause more pain and suffering and, as BRICS countries, this is what we are saying: Let’s focus on finding a peaceful resolution to the challenges, rather than fueling the conflict.”

Amid statements by Lavrov and others of an unfair world order dominated by the West to the detriment of developing countries, Pandor said the current makeup of the U.N. Security Council was one of the key problems because of its lack of permanent African representation.

“Today, we can see it is failing,” she said. “So, (it’s) absolutely imperative that the U.N. SC is reformed.”

Pandor, who hosted the talks at a luxury hotel on Cape Town’s Atlantic seaboard, was also peppered by questions from reporters on the possibility of a visit in August by Putin, who has been indicted by the ICC for war crimes for the alleged abduction of children from Ukraine.

South Africa is a signatory to the treaty of the ICC and is obliged to arrest Putin if he visits. It hasn’t stated whether it will.

Rather, the South African government has said that it is taking legal advice on its options, a move seen by critics as an attempt to find a way out of its obligation. Pandor was asked if South Africa was “fudging” its position when it had a clear obligation to detain Putin and hand him over to the international court.

“The obligations are clear but the answer is not fudged,” Pandor said. “The answer is that the (South African) president will indicate what the final position of South Africa is.”

Pandor declined to comment on any behind-the-scenes talks between South Africa and Russia to strike some kind of agreement over a Putin visit for the summit in Johannesburg.

“Diplomacy does not take place in front of cameras and microphones so I’m not going to reveal what deliberations we’re having,” she said. **MDT/AP**



**USA** Justice Department prosecutors have obtained an audio recording of former President Donald Trump from after he left office in which he talks about holding onto a classified Pentagon document related to a potential attack on Iran, according to a CNN report. The comments on the recording, made in July 2021 at his golf club in Bedminster, New Jersey, would seem to undercut the former president’s repeated claims that he declassified the documents he took with him from the White House to Mar-a-Lago, after leaving office.



**USA** The start of June marks the beginning of Pride month around the U.S. and some parts of the world, a season to celebrate the lives and experiences of LGBTQ+ communities and to protest against recent attacks on hard-won civil rights gains. This year’s Pride takes place in a contentious political climate in which some state legislators have sought to ban drag shows, prohibit gender-affirming care and limit how teachers can talk about sexuality and gender in the classroom.



**Portugal** German prosecutors said yesterday that they will examine objects that were found in a search in Portugal last week for clues regarding the disappearance of Madeleine McCann, but can’t yet say whether they are linked to the British girl who went missing in 2007. Investigators spent three days last week searching around a dam some 50 kilometers from the Praia da Luz resort in southern Portugal, where the 3-year-old girl was last seen 16 years ago.