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# Times

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**THE INAUGURAL MGM MACAU TENNIS MASTERS WILL FEATURE RENOWNED TENNIS PLAYERS IN A MIXTURE OF SINGLES AND DOUBLES IN DECEMBER**

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**NINE KILLED AS RUSSIAN MISSILE SLAMS INTO RESTAURANT IN UKRAINE**

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AP PHOTO



**Philippines** A Vietjet plane carrying 214 people made an unscheduled but safe landing in the northern Philippines yesterday morning after encountering an unspecified technical problem. None of the passengers and crew were hurt. The Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines said the Airbus A321 was enroute to Vietnam from the South Korean city of Incheon when it encountered the problem and had to divert to Laoag international airport in Ilocos Norte province.

AP PHOTO



**Japanese** regulators began the final inspection yesterday before treated radioactive wastewater is released from the wrecked Fukushima nuclear plant into the Pacific Ocean. The inspection began a day after the plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings had installed the last piece of equipment needed for the release — the outlet of the undersea tunnel dug to discharge the wastewater 1 kilometer offshore. More on p7

AP PHOTO



**Thailand** A court yesterday acquitted a student activist and four other people of impeding the motorcade of the country's queen during pro-democracy demonstrations in 2020, an offense that could have seen them sentenced to 16 years in prison or even the death penalty. The Bangkok Criminal Court verdict was rendered in a case brought under a little-used law that targets actions intended "to harm the liberty of the queen, the heir apparent and the regent." Legal experts were unable to recall any previous prosecutions under the law.

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

## STATEMENT

Liu Xianfa\*



### JAPAN'S OCEAN DISCHARGE BLATANTLY TRAMPLES ON INTERNATIONAL LAWS AND HUMAN CONSCIENCE

The Japanese government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water from the Fukushima nuclear plant into the sea has, from the very beginning, been questioned and opposed by the international community. Recently, news from Japan has said that the tritium-laced wastewater from the crippled plant will be released into the sea this summer. It is an extremely irresponsible move for Japan to ignore the professional and authoritative opinions of international agencies and opposition at home and abroad, disregard the global marine environment and public health, and forcibly dump nuclear-contaminated water into the sea.

Japan's ocean discharge will bring endless disaster. The amount of nuclear-contaminated water Japan intends to discharge, its duration, the sea area covered, and its potential risks are all unprecedented. The nuclear-contaminated water contains over 60 radionuclides, many of which cannot be treated effectively with existing technologies. Some long-lived radionuclides may spread with ocean currents and form a bioconcentration effect. The contaminated water, which is expected to be discharged into the ocean over a period of 30 years, has cross-border impact on the marine environment and public health. According to a German marine scientific research institute, with the world's strongest currents along the coast of Fukushima, radioactive materials could spread to most of the Pacific Ocean within 57 days from the date of discharge, and reach all oceans of the globe in a decade. Greenpeace nuclear experts have said that the level of the radioactive isotope carbon-14 in the wastewater will remain hazardous for thousands of years with the potential to cause genetic damage.

Japan's ocean discharge violates its obligations under the international law. All countries in the world are obliged to abide by the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on protection and preservation of the marine environment, and jointly protect the planet Earth-- our only homeland. According to provisions in general international law and UNCLOS, Japan has the obligation to take all possible measures to prevent pollution of the environment, the obligation to notify and fully consult with states likely to be affected, the obligation to assess and monitor the environmental impact, the obligation to take precautions to minimize hazardous effects, the obligation to ensure transparency, and the obligation to engage in international cooperation. However, the Japanese side has been shunning its responsibilities and international obligations under various

pretexts and decided on the ocean discharge plan out of selfish interests. In fact, the Task Force of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is conducting a safety assessment in Japan now, has a very limited mandate as agreed between Japan and the IAEA, and is not authorized to evaluate other options than the discharge into the ocean. Therefore, no final report shall be used as an excuse for Japan to dump the nuclear-contaminated water into the ocean.

Japan's ocean discharge tramples on human conscience. The dumping plan is not the only way to deal with the nuclear-contaminated water, nor is it the safest and most optimal means of disposal. However, the Japanese side, before exhausting all safe ways of disposal, has unilaterally decided to discharge the nuclear-contaminated water into the ocean based on economic cost, thus passing on the risk of nuclear pollution to all mankind. The Japanese government has repeatedly claimed that the contaminated water from its crippled Fukushima nuclear plant is safe enough to drink once treated. However, according to the data released by the Japanese side, more than 70 percent of the treated water stored in tanks has still exceeded the regulatory standards for discharge. Based on a report from Japan, fish caught in the failed nuclear plant's harbour has contained levels of radioactive caesium more than 180 times that of Japan's legal standard. It is worth noting that some western governments and media keen on hyping up environmental issues such as the Chernobyl nuclear accident in the Soviet Union and smog and sandstorms in China, respond to the moves of the Japanese government in an extremely calm manner. They avoid talking about the hazard of the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water into the sea, and some even acquiesce to Japan's move. Their hypocrisy and double standards are evident.

It should be pointed out that the sea is not Japan's dustbin, nor the Pacific Ocean its sewer. Instead of sacrificing human well-being and standing in opposition to the international community, the Japanese side should face up to international concerns, earnestly fulfill its international obligations, stop pushing forward the ocean discharge plan, and fully study and validate the best alternative to ocean discharge to ensure the nuclear-contaminated water is handled in a scientific, open, transparent and safe manner, and under international oversight.

\*Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region



## CONTINUING EDUCATION SUBSIDY RETURNS WITH SAME AMOUNT

ANTHONY LAM

**T**he fifth round of Continuing Education Subsidy will commence on Jul. 1, with the subsidized amount to remain at MOP6,000, the government has announced in the Official Gazette.

The validity of this round of the subsidy is three years.

According to the Executive Regulations, anybody reaching 15 years of age on or before year-end of a calendar year between 2023 and 2026 will be eligible to start using their subsidized amounts from the said year.

For example, a person who will turn 15 years old on or before Dec. 31 this year will be allowed to use their subsidized amount once the subsidy scheme commences. Those who will only reach 15 years of

age next year will be able to start using the amount next year.

The scope of application of the subsidy covers higher education programs, registered continuing education courses, as well as licensing examinations. The Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), meanwhile, has discretion as to the applicability.

The DSEDJ will publish a list of approved or eligible licensing exams.

A key adjustment has been made this year; those who seek subsidies for one-on-one classes, driving courses and licensing exams should settle the bills themselves before getting reimbursed by the subsidy scheme if they meet certain conditions. Applications can be made on the government One Account app.

The scheme also has restrictions on the duration of subsidized programs. The duration of common programs should range between nine and 60 hours as well as no longer than 90 days. That of professional or certified training should not exceed 120 hours and 180 days.

For driving courses, the legal minimum practice hours will be subsidized.

As for roll-taking, students and teachers should take rolls with their ID cards at each class. Students should check in between 30 minutes before and 15 minutes after class, as well as check out no later than 30 minutes after class. Teachers should check in no earlier than 30 minutes before and check out no later than 30 minutes after class.

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EVENTS

# The Sound of Music returns to Macau this summer

ANTHONY LAM

**G**LOBALLY acclaimed stage musical The Sound of Music will be performed in 16 shows from Aug. 10 to 22 at the Grand Auditorium of Macao Cultural Centre, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) told a press conference yesterday afternoon.

Box office for the shows will open 10 a.m. Friday.

This edition of the performance was premiered in 2015 at New York's Broadway. After several years touring the country, the production commenced its world tour in 2020, with Asia being its first stop.

This upcoming showcase in Macau will be the China debut of this edition of the musical. This new production conceived by three-time Tony award winner Jack O'Brien features an international company of leading performers and young stars in the roles of the Von Trapp family.

The tour is led by Jill-Christine Wiley as Maria Rainer, Trevor Martin as Captain von Trapp, with Daniel Fullerton as Rolf, Lauren



Kidwell as Mother Abbess, Joshua La Force as Maximilian Detweiler, Lauren O'Brien as Liesl and Gail Bennett as Elsa Schraeder.

Earlier this year, when speaking with the press, the IC president said the bureau plans to invite international-level stage productions from Broadway or London's West End to Macau. The Sound of Music' is the fulfilment of the pledge.

It is not the first time the musical has been staged in Macau; it has seen at least two prior perfor-

mances. From late 2017 to early 2018, the musical was staged at the Venetian Theater at the namesake resort. Earlier than that, the Macao Cultural Centre had also invited the production for performances.

The IC said bringing the production to Macau is among its strategies to "enrich local cultural tourism resources and broadly promote Macau's cultural image through cooperation with tourism platforms, thus contributing to the city's economic diversifica-

tion through culture."

The classic film version of the musical starring Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer, originally won five Oscar Awards, including Best Picture.

## EVENT ACADEMIC APPLAUDS MUSICAL RETURN

Global-scale musicals, among other similar events, will help nurture the city's "cultural value and knowledge," Dr Ubaldino Couto, assistant professor of event management at the Macao Institute

for Tourism Studies (IFTM), told the Times considering the expected return of "The Sound of Music".

The academic finds these events playing "a huge role" in improving the cultural experience for people in the city. It is also important, according to him, that cultural events help widen entertainment options for both local residents and visitors.

Questioned on doubts that the city constantly inviting returning performances and shows that some people may not find appealing, Couto found returning shows not uncommon in a global perspective.

"We naturally have younger generations who have not had the opportunity [of viewing classic shows]," he said, adding that it is common and somewhat natural that live productions adjust their performances during each tour.

"Live events such as musicals are supposed to be a bit different each time with new cast members and revised arrangements as well as the event attendees' personal circumstances that may renew and create different experiences," the academic further explained.

"Live events are thought to evoke memories and nostalgia, enhancing one's subjective well-being. These are also a means of building cultural capital and encouraging expenditure, therefore attracting investments and business objectives," he said.

EDUCATION

# UM, MUST rise in QS World University Rankings

**T**HE University of Macau (UM) and the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) were again included in the QS World University Rankings 2024, with both universities improving their positions.

UM ranked 254th place, up 50 places from the previous year, while MUST ranked 505th from the 681-590th position.

The rankings also shows that in Greater China, the UM secured the 19th position, being the only higher education institution in Macau to make it to the top 300 in the world rankings.

The biggest edition to date – featuring 1,500 institutions – of the QS World University Rankings 2024 introduces three



new indicators to reflect the changing priorities of students and the evolving missions of world-class higher education institutions today: a commitment to sustainability; even greater emphasis on supporting graduate employability;

and increased international research collaboration to solve the world's biggest challenges.

In the Asia Pacific, the National University of Singapore (NUS), Peking University and Tsinghua University ranked first, second and

third respectively.

NUS is the only institution from Asia to sit in the top 10.

President, Nunzio Quacquarelli, said: "While we have always tried to remain consistent in our methodology, we must also evolve to reflect the changing missions of universities."

"We recognize that the global student community we serve understands the significance of the climate crisis and sees a real responsibility among universities in supporting the sustainability agenda," he added.

The QS World University Rankings 2024 top performers are The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford. LV

SPORTS

# TENNIS TOURNAMENT TO FEATURE BENCIC, FRITZ AND TIAFOE IN DECEMBER

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE inaugural MGM Macau Tennis Masters will feature renowned tennis players in a mixture of singles and doubles in December.

Swiss star Belinda Bencic along with Taylor Fritz and Frances Tiafoe of the United States were the first names to be unveiled yesterday for the event to be held on Dec. 2 to 3 at the Macao East Asian Games Dome, as cited in a report issued by South China Morning Post.

The three remaining players who will complete at the upcoming Macau Masters will only be revealed next month.

The mixed hard-court event will feature four men's and two women's players competing in a best-of-three sets format, with a 10-point match tiebreak in lieu of a third set, the report noted.

Day one will consist of two



Belinda Bencic

men's singles matches and one mixed doubles clash, and day two will include one women's singles and two men's singles matches.

Tickets for the event will be released in July.

The last tennis match when renowned players competed in Macau was The Venetian Macao Tennis Showdown in 2007; this was the grand finale of a three-leg Pete Sampras vs Roger Federer Asia exhibition match tour.

# COURT RULES DRIVERS, PEDESTRIANS HAVE EQUAL RESPONSIBILITY ON ROADS

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE Court of Final Appeal has ruled that “drivers and pedestrians should exercise equal caution and attention when using public roads.”

The ruling was issued for a car accident in which a car had crashed into a pedestrian in Fai Chi Kei District. The court did not note the year or date of the accident.

According to the court, the accident happened when the driver, A, was driving a heavy vehicle, and made a right turn at Rua Norte do Patane towards Rua da Doca Seca, crashing into victim, B, who was crossing the road illegally through a greening area on the sidewalk.

Charges were then pressed against A for aggravated physical assault by misconduct. Meanwhile, B filed civil procedures against A, A's then employer – C – and insurance agency D which insured the vehicle.

In February 2022, the Court of First Instance heard the case. The criminal procedure was termi-



nated as the victim withdrew it. The civil procedure, meanwhile, was accepted, and the court ruled that B bore 70% and A 30% of the

stakes of the accident. In addition, D was ordered to pay B about MOP227,000 as compensation.

B filed an appeal with the Court

of Second Instance, which ruled that A was the only liable party in the accident. Consequently, the insurance agency was ordered to

pay about MOP773,000 instead.

The insurance agency then filed the final appeal.

The top court commented that identifying A as the sole responsible party was “inappropriate and unreasonable,” but added that it was obvious A led to the existence of the accident.

The court considered A's driving was “careless and inappropriate,” judging from his continued velocity and his entering road separation areas during the turn. Nonetheless, B was not completely innocent either. The court added that while crossing the road, B did not pay attention to approaching traffic, nor cross at legal facilities but at a location that was difficult to see for A as a heavy vehicle driver. This led to B being partially responsible.

In addition, the court suggested that if a driver must abide by the Road Transport Law, all pedestrians must also do so. It added several principles that pedestrians should bear in mind, such as not suddenly entering vehicle lanes without being certain that they will not cause obstruction to road traffic.

Ruling A and B having 40% and 60% of responsibility respectively, the court ordered the insurer to pay about MOP310,000 to B as compensation.

## HEALTH

# SSM exports 15 patients for organ transplantation in past four years

ANTHONY LAM

**B**ETWEEN 2018 and 2022, 15 patients in Macau have been sent elsewhere for organ transplants, Acting Director Cheang Seng Ip of the Health Bureau (SSM) has told lawmaker Ron Lam.

In his response to Lam's earlier inquiry, the health official said the 15 patients were to receive either a liver, heart or kidney transplant. Among them, nine have undergone the operation, two were awaiting the operation, three were evaluated as not having an immediate need, while one patient declined transplant rights.

He also added that in 2016, the bureau administered the city's first live organ transplant. Afterwards, the bureau has sought appropriate matches for these procedures, but in vain.

Besides asking for figures, the lawmaker also suspected the bureau had been playing with words. The bureau has previously told lawmakers that no terminal



kidney failure patients in Macau had died due to lack of appropriate treatment. Lam found this evading the key question of patients succumbing to a lack of organ transplants.

To this, Cheang said no patients have so far died because of the lack of organ transplants. He said terminal kidney failure patients have been receiving substitute therapies, such as hemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis.

On the supply of organs,

the lawmaker criticized the bureau for not doing enough to promote and educate people about organ donation. He expressly referred to the lack of updates on the bureau's organ donation website since 2018 to support his criticism.

Cheang blamed the Covid-19 pandemic – which started in 2020 – as the main reason for halted promotion. He added that “the website's main function is to provide information on organ donation to residents,

who can also register their intention on the website. The website also provides real-time figures of partial and complete registrants.”

As of May 8 this year, 5,738 people have registered their intention for donation with the local database, with 4,086 of them having completed full registration procedures.

Cheang said Macau had not seen a registered organ donor have their intentions dishonored after being identified as brain dead.

## MAINLAND SECURITIES INVESTMENT DOWN 18%

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE Asian region continued to occupy the largest share of Macau residents' external portfolio investment, at 51.2%, according to latest data from the Monetary Authority of Macao.

Investment in securities issued by mainland Chinese entities, including those securities listed on non-mainland exchanges, continued to assume the leading position, occupying 31.7% of local residents' portfolio investment outside Macau.

Its market value decreased by 18.3% from end-2021 to MOP325.3 billion.

Meanwhile, the market value of Macau residents' portfolio investments in the North Atlantic and Caribbean decreased by 10.4% from end-2021 to MOP159.0 billion, while

its share in total external securities investment dropped from 16.2% to 15.5%; the market value of portfolio investment in the British Virgin Islands fell by 9.9% to MOP78.2 billion.

Investment in European securities rose by 0.3 percentage points to 13.7% in share but decreased by 4.8% to MOP140.1 billion in market value from end-2021.

The market value of Macau residents' investment in countries along the Belt and Road (excluding China) decreased by 1.2% from end-2021 to MOP92.5 billion, equivalent to 9.0% of total external portfolio investment. Meanwhile, the market value of portfolio investment in Portuguese-speaking countries was MOP935.0 million, which was placed in securities issued by entities in Portugal and Brazil.

# Local SME Genyield: From sub-contractor on Sands Macao project to successful long-term partnership with Sands China

**E**STABLISHED in 1989, local construction company Genyield Construction Co., Ltd. has a history of over 33 years. At first, the company was mainly involved in civil engineering infrastructure projects for government and public utilities, including the Ká Hó port, the Ká Hó Power station, the Macau International Airport Building, and the old campus of the University of Macau Sino-Luso Building and its parking lot. The SME's project experience accumulated as the number of construction projects increased. After the 1999 Macao handover, Genyield expanded its business scope to external wall renovation, billboard installation, and building maintenance, among other projects.

After the liberalization of Macao's gaming industry, Sands China opened Sands Macao in 2004. Rooted in Macao for two decades now, Sands China brought its valuable experience in international construction standards, construction control, and quality management to Macao's construction industry, which has benefited its local SME partners.

Sensing the business opportunity of new resort construction, Genyield began participating in some of the construction work of Sands Macao as a sub-contractor. Then in 2006, before the opening of The Venetian Macao, Genyield became a construction contractor for The Venetian Macao's shuttle bus parking area. The long-term collaboration between the two parties thus began.

One of the more recent outstanding projects completed by Genyield was the steel structure erection of The Parisian Macao's Eiffel Tower. It is the first steel structure tower in Macao and was very complicated to construct. Genyield nevertheless completed the project on time. In 2015, the local construction company was recognized with a Sands Supplier Excellence Award by Sands China Ltd. for its valued ongoing partnership and its excellent performance. Then in 2022, Genyield was once again a winner for its continuing efforts in providing excellent and sustainable service.

Ben Yeung, an executive director of projects at Sands China, spoke highly of Genyield: "They are responsible and pay attention to the details of each project, [so] we have maintained a long-term partnership."

With past engineering experience, Genyield has been affirmed and recognized by clients in all aspects of project quality monitoring and project management. Genyield's abundant experience in construction work, especially in metal struc-

tures, impressed Sands China, so the SME was later invited to take part in the steel structure project of The Londoner Macao, Sands China's newest integrated resort.

With a unique understanding and skills in metal roofing works, Genyield has also completed the repair and replacement of about 15,000 square meters of metal roofing of The Venetian Macao's Cotai Expo. The replacement project was challenging: the construction was conducted in the rainy season and thus some waterproofing measures were needed. Meanwhile, it was necessary to ensure the normal operation of the indoor venue.

Genyield replaced the existing imported materials with locally designed and produced

materials that are waterproof, can withstand strong winds from typhoons, and meet international standards. The completion of this project in 2022 is what led to Genyield's second Sands China Supplier Excellence Award. Additionally, the project also earned Sands China and Genyield a gold award for construction waterproofing by the China National Building Waterproof Association.

Danny Cheung, managing director of Genyield, said: "After the partnership with Sands China, our company has become more comprehensive and diversified, providing more opportunities for staff to enhance their skills, which further enhanced the company's competitiveness in the market

and developed its business."

He added that with the booming tourism industry and the increase in the number of construction projects, his company continues to hire more staff, with the peak number of employees reaching nearly 100, including engineering management and the construction team.

"Sands China has been rooted in Macao for 20 years and has grown up together with local construction companies," said Yeung. He recalled that local construction companies were relatively weak in paperwork in the past. But after more than a decade of adaptation, learning, and development, they are much more flexible and capable of meeting project requirements and

users' needs. "While local construction companies are constantly improving in experience, professionalism, and strength, they have an advantage over foreign construction companies in terms of human resources and maintenance services," he added.

As a continuing supporter of local SMEs, Sands China management encourages local enterprises to take the initiative and communicate with customers, and bring in new technologies or materials from the industry to increase business opportunities – so that local SMEs can continue to grow hand-in-hand with integrated resort operators as Macao continues its development as a world center of tourism and leisure.



HONG KONG

# Detained activist begins final appeal for recognition of his overseas same-sex marriage

**A**N activist detained in Hong Kong began his final appeal yesterday seeking recognition for his same-sex marriage registered overseas, in a landmark case for the city's LGBTQ+ community.

Jimmy Sham, a prominent pro-democracy activist during 2019, first asked for a judicial review five years ago seeking a declaration that the city's laws, which do not recognize foreign same-sex marriage, violate his constitutional right to equality. But the lower courts dismissed his legal challenge and a subsequent appeal over the case.

Sham is now in custody after being charged with subversion over an unofficial primary election under a national security law.

The upcoming judgment by the city's top court in his marriage case will have strong implications for the lives of the LGBTQ+ community and the financial hub's reputation as an inclusive place to live and work.

Currently, the city only recognizes same-sex marriage for certain purposes such as taxation, civil service benefits and dependent visas. Many of the government's concessions were won through legal challenges over the last few years.

The court will have to address whether the exclusion of same-sex couples from the institution of marriage and a failure to



Detained activist Jimmy Sham leaves a prison van to enter the Court of Final Appeal

provide alternative means of legal recognition for same-sex partnerships violate the right to equality. The judges will also have to decide if the city's laws violate that right enshrined in Hong Kong's constitution, as they do not recognize foreign same-sex marriage.

Yesterday, Sham appeared spirited inside the courtroom.

His lawyer Karon Monaghan argued that the absence of same-sex marriage in Hong Kong sent

a message that it is less worthy of recognition than heterosexual marriage.

Sham and his husband married in New York in 2013. They wished to marry in Hong Kong but it was not allowed under the law, according to previous judgments.

The ruling in 2020 said his marriage lacks essential validity because the city's law does not permit marriage between same-sex persons. It added that Sham's attempt to achieve complete pari-

ty of recognition between foreign same-sex marriages and foreign heterosexual marriages is "too ambitious."

Sham's appeal over the case was also dismissed last August.

Sham is the former convenor of Civil Human Rights Front, which was best known for organizing the annual march on the anniversary of Hong Kong's handover to Chinese rule on July 1, 1997, for years. The group also organized some of the bigger political

protests in 2019.

The front was disbanded in 2021 as it reportedly faces a police investigation for possible violation of the security law.

In February, the top court ruled that full sex reassignment surgery should not be a prerequisite for transgender people to have their gender changed on their official identity cards. Supporters said it was an important milestone for the transgender community in Hong Kong. MDT/AP

**N**EW Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins discussed his country's interest in boosting economic ties with China during a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing on Tuesday.

Hipkins said the focus of his meeting with Xi was to "reaffirm our close economic relationship by supporting businesses (to) renew their connections with Chinese counterparts and helping grow new ones to support New Zealand's economic recovery."

Hipkins is on a five-day visit to China, his first since becoming prime minister in January, along with a business delegation representing areas including tourism and education.

Before starting his visit, he described New Zealand's relationship with

DIPLOMACY

## New Zealand Prime Minister Hipkins visits China to boost economic ties

China as a "critical part of our economic recovery."

New Zealand officially entered a recession this month after its economy contracted for two consecutive quarters. Officials say China is key to three of New Zealand's engines for post-pandemic economic recovery: exports, tourism and education.

China is New Zealand's largest export market, and Wellington over the years has managed to maintain warmer ties to Beijing than some of its Western allies.

Xi praised "the great importance" of China-

-New Zealand ties, saying Hipkins' visit was "very meaningful," according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

Earlier in the day, Hipkins attended a meeting of the World Economic Forum in the Chinese port city of Tianjin alongside other foreign officials and joined a signing ceremony for four New Zealand exporters and their Chinese counterparts, according to a statement from his office.

Yesterday, he met with Chinese Premier Li Qiang. MDT/AP



New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins, left, shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping before their meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Tuesday

JAPAN

# Regulators begin final safety inspection before treated Fukushima wastewater is released into sea

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

**J**APANESE regulators began a final inspection yesterday before treated radioactive wastewater is released from the wrecked Fukushima nuclear plant into the Pacific Ocean.

The inspection began a day after plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings installed the last piece of equipment needed for the release — the outlet of the undersea tunnel dug to discharge the wastewater 1 kilometer offshore.

TEPCO said the Nuclear Regulation Authority inspectors will examine the equipment related to the treated water discharge and its safety systems during three days of inspections through Friday. The permit for releasing the water could be issued about a week later, and TEPCO could start discharging the water soon after, though an exact date has not been decided.

The plan has faced fierce protests from local fishing groups concerned about safety and reputational damage. The government and TEPCO promised in 2015 not to release the water without consent



AP PHOTO

from the fishing groups, but many in the fishing community say the plan was pushed regardless. Neighboring South Korea, China and some Pacific Island nations have also raised safety concerns.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told reporters Wednesday that the government "abides by its policy of not carrying out a release without the

understanding" of fishing groups in Fukushima. He said the government will continue to communicate closely with them and others involved, while ensuring safety and addressing the issue of reputational damage. Fishing groups fear the wastewater release will cause consumers to stop buying seafood from the area.

Government and utility offi-

cials say the wastewater, currently stored in about 1,000 tanks at the plant, must be removed to prevent any accidental leaks and to make room for the plant's decommissioning. They say the treated but still slightly radioactive water will be diluted to levels safer than international standards and will be released gradually into the ocean over decades, making it harmless

to people and marine life.

Some scientists say the impact of long-term, low-dose exposure to radionuclides is unknown and the release should be delayed. Others say the release plan is safe but call for more transparency, including allowing outside scientists to join in sampling and monitoring the release.

Japan has sought support from the International Atomic Energy Agency to gain credibility and ensure that safety measures meet international standards. IAEA has dispatched several missions to Japan since early 2022, and its final evaluation report is expected soon, though the organization has no power to stop the plan. IAEA chief Rafael Mariano Grossi is expected to visit Japan in early July to meet Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and visit the plant.

A massive earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011, destroyed the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant's cooling systems, causing three reactors to melt and their cooling water to be contaminated and leak continuously. The water is collected, treated and stored in the tanks, which will reach their capacity in early 2024. **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

# Sisters tell court that abuse by Jewish school principal broke trust, painful to remember

ROD MCGUIRK,  
CANBERRA

**T**WO sisters told an Australian court yesterday that being sexually abused by their Jewish school's principal broke their ability to trust and was painful to remember.

Malka Leifer was convicted of rape and other crimes in the Victoria state County Court in April after years of fighting her extradition from Israel. She watched intently on a video link from prison but didn't visibly react as the two sisters read victim impact statements at her sentencing hearing.

Dassi Erlich, 35, was positioned in the courtroom specifically so she and Leifer could see other as she spoke



AP PHOTO

Israeli-born Australian Malka Leifer, right, is brought to a courtroom in Jerusalem on Feb. 27, 2018.

about the impact of the abuse, as both Erlich and Leifer had requested.

Erlich said she was 16 when Leifer told her: "I love you like a mother."

"I trusted her completely," Erlich said. "The insidious nature of her sexual

abuse has fractured my ability to trust forever."

Elly Sapper, 34, later told the court she had questioned whether she wanted to relive the trauma that has affected more than half her life.

"It hurts to remember. It

hurts more than I'll ever be able to describe," Sapper said.

Sapper was pregnant when she testified at Leifer's six-week trial and said she lost the unborn baby a week before the verdicts. She did not detail the circumstances.

"Her heart stopped beating," Sapper said. "There were no concrete answers, there were no abnormalities. I will never know if the stress, the worry, the anxiety or the years of trauma played any part in the loss of my little girl."

Leifer was acquitted of nine charges, including five relating to the victims' eldest sister, Nicole Meyer. Meyer, 37, sat in court with her sisters Wednesday.

The Associated Press

does not usually identify victims and alleged victims of sexual abuse, but the sisters have chosen to identify themselves in the media.

Leifer smiled when Judge Mark Gamble told her she would have to answer questions asked in court rather than nod her head.

Asked by Gamble's associate her occupation, Leifer replied: "Now I'm not working."

Leifer, 56, was convicted of six charges of rape, each carrying up to 25 years in prison. She was convicted of three charges of sexual penetration of a child, each carrying a potential 10-year sentence, and six charges of indecent assault, which also carries a 10-year sentence. She was convicted of three

charges of committing an indecent act with a child, which is punishable by 5 years in prison. There are no minimum sentences.

Leifer's trial ended an extradition battle that strained relations between the Australian and Israeli governments while antagonizing Australia's Jewish community.

Leifer, who was born in Tel Aviv, returned to Israel in 2008 as allegations against her first emerged. The fight she waged in Jerusalem courts since 2014 against being extradited ended in 2021 when she boarded a flight toward Melbourne at Ben Gurion Airport, her ankles and wrists shackled.

Prosecutors claimed Leifer abused the students between 2003 and 2007 at the Adass Israel School, an ultra-Orthodox school in Melbourne where she was head of religion and later principal, as well as at her Melbourne home and at rural school camps. **MDT/AP**

PUTIN'S WAR

# Nine killed as Russian missile slams into pizza restaurant in east Ukraine city

HANNA ARHIROVA, KYIV

A Russian missile attack that hit a crowded pizza restaurant in an eastern Ukrainian city killed at least nine people, including three children, authorities said yesterday, as rescue workers continued searching in the destroyed building's rubble.

The Tuesday evening attack on Kramatorsk wounded another 56 people, the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs said, in the latest bombardment, a tactic Russia has used heavily in the 16-month-old war.

Two sisters, both age 14, died as result of the attack, the educational department of the Kramatorsk city council said. "Russian missiles stopped the beating of the hearts of two angels," it said in a Telegram post.

The other dead child was 17, according to Prosecutor General Andrii Kostin.

The attack, using what officials said were S-300 missiles, also damaged 18 multi-story buildings, 65 houses, five schools, two kindergartens, a shopping center, an administrative building and a recreational building, the regional governor, Pavlo Kyrylenko, said. The S-300 is



AP PHOTO

a surface-to-air missile that cannot hit ground targets accurately, but Russia's forces have repurposed it for loosely targeted strikes on cities.

Kramatorsk is a front-line city that houses the Ukrainian army's regional headquarters. The pizza restaurant was frequented by journalists, aid workers and soldiers, as well as locals.

It's located in Donetsk, one of four Ukrainian provinces that Russia claimed to annex last September but does not fully control. Russia has also occupied Crimea since 2015.

Ukrainian-held parts of

the partially occupied provinces have been hit especially hard by Russian bombardment and are a key barrier to resolving the war.

The Kremlin demands that Kyiv recognize the annexations, while Kyiv has ruled out any talks with Russia until its troops pull back from all occupied territories. Kyiv recently launched a much-anticipated counteroffensive to take back occupied territory.

Russia, meanwhile, has stepped up its air campaign in Ukraine while the fighting continues along the front line.

Russian forces on Monday and overnight also shelled 16 settlements in the southern Zaporizhzhia region, the Ukrainian presidential office reported.

It said that a 77-year-old civilian was killed in the front-line town of Orikhiv, and that Russian shelling wounded three people in a nearby village recently retaken by Kyiv.

Also, a Russian supersonic cruise missile slammed into a cluster of holiday homes in central Ukraine, sparking a fire which injured a child, the presidential office said. **MDT/AP**

# Muslims at Hajj pilgrimage brave intense heat to cast stones at pillars representing the devil

RIAZAT BUTT

HUNDREDS of thousands of Muslim pilgrims yesterday braved intense heat to perform the symbolic stoning of the devil during the Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia.

With morning temperatures rising past 42 degrees Celsius, huge crowds of pilgrims walked or took buses to the vast Jamarat complex just outside the holy city of



AP PHOTO

Mecca, where large pedestrian bridges lead past three wide pillars representing the devil.

Using pebbles collected

the night before at a campsite known as Muzdalifa, the pilgrims stone the pillars. It's a reenactment of the story of the Prophet Ibrahim —

known as Abraham in Christian and Jewish traditions — who is said to have hurled stones at Satan to resist temptation.

The ceremony was marred by tragedy on a number of occasions in the 1990s and 2000s, when hundreds died in stampedes during the stoning ritual. Saudi authorities have since built an expanded network of massive pedestrian bridges and redesigned the site to make it safer for pilgrims.

This year, the biggest danger might be the heat.

Temperatures soared past 45 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, as Muslims marked the spiritual high point of the pilgrimage by spending the day praying at Mount Arafat, where there was no breeze and almost no shade. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1995 US SHUTTLE DOCKS WITH RUSSIAN SPACE STATION



American and Russian spacecraft have successfully docked in orbit for the first time in 20 years.

The US shuttle Atlantis delivered a relief crew of two cosmonauts to the Russian Mir space station, signalling a new era of space co-operation between the two former Cold War rivals.

The operation to link the craft was led by the commander of the Atlantis, Robert Gibson. Flying over the Mediterranean at 17,500mph, he lined up the Mir in his sights and with barely a shudder the two craft touched.

"We have capture," he said.

After the safety of the spacecraft was confirmed with the pressure between them equalised, Gibson opened the hatch separating them.

Propelling himself through to the Russian craft he stretched out his arm to shake hands with his counterpart.

The symbolic gesture was watched live from Moscow by US Vice President Al Gore, and by the head of NASA Dan Goldin at the Russian control centre.

The crew of the US shuttle moved into the Mir for group photos, before presenting the cosmonauts with gifts of chocolate, fruit and flowers. The Russians gave the Americans gifts of bread and salt, the traditional symbols of welcome.

Mr Gibson said: "After all the training and the preparation it seems hard to believe we're actually there but indeed we are."

The two spacecraft will remain attached for five days, giving the Mir crew time to stock up on fresh water, oxygen and nitrogen. The crews will carry out a range of scientific experiments.

A further six link-ups between the shuttle and Mir are planned, before work on the assembly of an international space station begins in orbit in two years' time.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

After 15 years in space, the Mir space station returned to Earth in March 2001. Over the years, Mir has circled the Earth about 88,000 times, travelling 3.6bn km (2.2bn miles). In many ways, the platform has been humankind's first real home in space, as well as being the pride of the Russian space programme.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

## YOUR STARS



### ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Anger could lead to problems. Control your emotions and everything will fall into place. Get back to basics and reevaluate what is important in life.



### TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Older family members may try to put unreasonable demands on you. It's time to reconnect with some of the people you used to know.



### GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

You are best not to say too much to colleagues. If you're uncertain of your feelings, keep your opinions to yourself. Travel should be on your agenda.



### CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Think twice before eating spicy foods; you may have problems with your stomach. Don't be too eager to cut those who have disappointed you from your life.



### LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Your emotional life may be up in the air if your mate has been going through a change of heart. You may as well work on projects that will allow you to make progress.



### VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

If you put your mind to it, you could entertain or host a multitude of social events. Your lover may disappoint you in such a way that estrangement will follow.



### LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

There's a good chance that they won't come back. If it can make you extra cash, it will be even better. You need to keep everyone on your domestic scene too busy to complain.



### SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You will be overly generous with children today. You are better off visiting friends or relatives than entertaining at home. You're apt to make a move or experience changes at home.



### SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You can make progress professionally. Take time to look at any outdated papers or possible investments. Do not invest in joint ventures.



### CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You may find that relationships are not going as well as you'd like. You may not be as well received in group endeavors if you try to force your will on others.



### AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

If you can, try to work out of your home today. Shopping could cost more than you bargained for. You can make career moves that will be prosperous.



### PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

It's a good time for long awaited relationships to begin. Do what's best for the people you love most. Don't use the interstate as a racetrack.

## The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



## SUDOKU

### EASY

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

### EASY+

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

### MEDIUM

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

### HARD

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

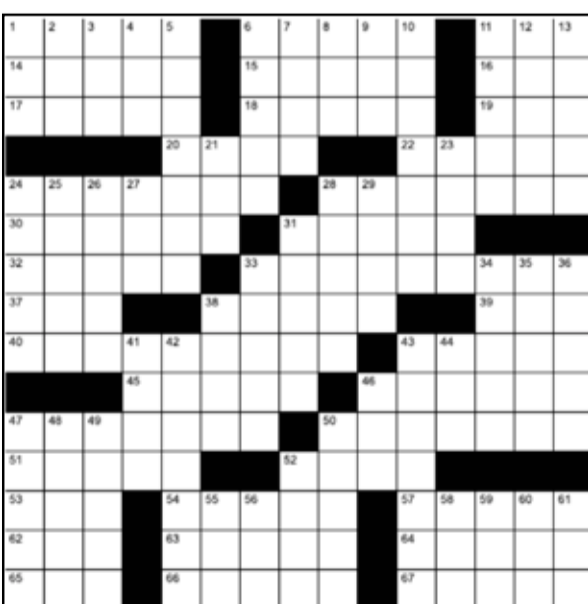
## WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	22	37	fine
Changchun	21	27	thunderstorms
Chengdu	22	31	overcast
Chongqing	28	33	rain
Fuzhou	26	35	rain
Guangzhou	26	35	cloudy
Guiyang	22	29	cloudy
Haikou	27	35	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	26	35	thunderstorms
Harbin	21	28	thunderstorms
Hefei	26	32	rain
Nanjing	28	31	rain
Shanghai	27	35	rain
Taipei	25	31	rain
Wuhan	29	33	rain
Hong Kong	29	32	cloudy
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	13	19	thunderstorms
Frankfurt	17	28	cloudy
Paris	14	26	rain
London	12	21	rain
New York	20	29	overcast

## CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Trimming tool; 6- Balls; 11- Grog ingredient; 14- \_\_\_ Janeiro; 15- Chosen; 16- Conductor \_\_\_ Pekka Salonen; 17- Cathode's contrary; 18- Western; 19- Tampa Bay player, for short; 20- Fix hose; 22- Model; 24- Subsiding; 28- Blind system of writing; 30- Thrifty; 31- Monster; 32- Adhere closely; 33- Asteroid; 37- Al Jolson's real first name; 38- Vestige; 39- "\_\_\_ Believer" (Monkees hit); 40- Gesture without speech; 43- Like some bears and icecaps; 45- Make \_\_\_ for oneself; 46- Assert; 47- City in central Texas; 50- Scoffed; 51- Clan symbol; 52- Env. notation; 53- Madrid Mrs.; 54- In a strange way; 57- Words of resignation; 62- Long fish; 63- Bucolic; 64- Great; 65- "Much \_\_\_ About Nothing", play by Shakespeare; 66- Habituate; 67- White with age;

DOWN 1- Historical period; 2- Loud noise; 3- Sticky stuff; 4- Hall or Byrnes; 5- Convex fluting; 6- Conductor Solti; 7- Lawyer Dershowitz; 8- Tennis do-over; 9- Whiz; 10- Furrow; 11- Insurgent; 12- Everyday; 13- Twinned crystal; 21- Film director Lee; 23- Low-cal; 24- Songwriters' org.; 25- Light wood; 26- Like a roc; 27- Can metal; 28- Clamp; 29- Mysterious character; 31- Responsibility; 33- Of first importance; 34- Fuel transport; 35- Picture; 36- Ventured; 38- Counterfeiter catcher; 41- Story, often rooted in folklore; 42- Another; 43- Fill up; 44- Flamenco cheer; 46- Pantry pest; 47- Lost; 48- Made a hole; 49- Novelist Calvino; 50- Elegance; 52- Banned apple spray; 55- Pester for payment; 56- Actress Joanne; 58- Status follower; 59- \_\_\_ Lazy River; 60- Occupational suffix; 61- Attempt;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

## USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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## ART

# KLIMT PAINTING SETS EUROPEAN RECORD WITH \$108 MILLION PRICE TAG AT SOTHEBY'S AUCTION IN LONDON

A late-life masterpiece by Austrian artist Gustav Klimt sold Tuesday for 85.3 million pounds (\$108.4 million), making it the most expensive artwork ever auctioned in Europe.

"Dame mit Fächer" — Lady with a Fan — sold to a buyer in the room at Sotheby's in London after a 10-minute bidding war for a hammer price of 74 million pounds (\$94.35 million). The higher final figure includes a charge on top of the sale price known as the buyer's premium.

The sale price well exceeded the presale estimate of 65 million pounds, or \$80 million.

It also beat the previous European auction record of \$104.3 million — 65 million pounds at the time — including buyer's premium paid for Alberto Giacometti's sculpture "Walking Man I" at Sotheby's



in 2010. Previously, the most expensive painting auctioned in Europe was Claude Monet's

"Le bassin aux nymphéas," which fetched \$80.4 million at a Christie's sale in 2008.

The piece sold Tuesday was the last portrait Klimt completed before his death in 1918.

The painting shows an unidentified woman against a resplendent, China-influenced backdrop of dragons and lotus blossoms.

It was last sold in 1994, going for \$11.6 million at an auction in New York.

Sotheby's said the buyer was art adviser Patti Wong, acting on behalf of a Hong Kong collector.

Famed for his bold, daring art nouveau paintings, Klimt was a key figure in artistic modernism at the start of the 20th century. His work has fetched some of the highest prices for any artist.

Klimt's "Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer II" sold at a New York auction in 2006 for \$87.9 million, and his landscape "Birch Forest" sold at Christie's in New York last year for \$104.6 million.

Two more of his portraits are reported to have sold privately for more than \$100 million.

The world auction record for an artwork is the \$450.3 million paid in 2017 for Leonardo da Vinci's "Salvator Mundi," though some experts dispute whether the painting of Jesus Christ is wholly the work of the Renaissance master. **MDT/AP**

AD

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## That's no pizza: A wall painting found in Pompeii doesn't depict Italy's iconic dish

A still-life fresco discovered recently in the Pompeii archaeological site looks like a pizza, but it's not, experts at the archaeological site said Tuesday.

They noted that key ingredients needed to make Italy's iconic dish — tomatoes and mozzarella — were not available when the fresco was painted some 2,000 years ago.

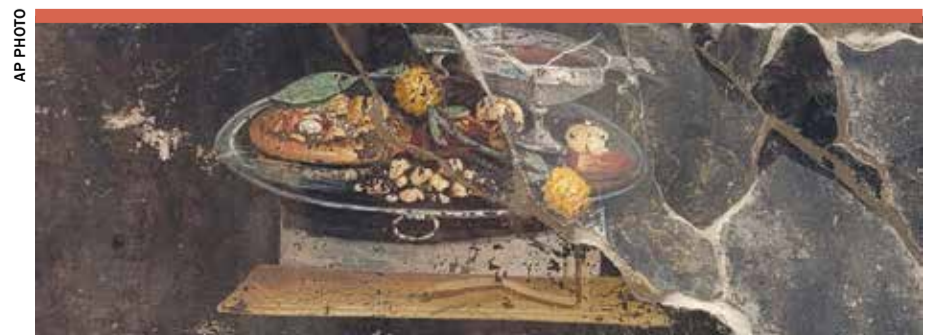
Tomatoes were only introduced to Europe from the Americas a few centuries ago, and some histories have it that the discovery of mozzarella led directly to the invention of pizza in nearby Naples in the 1700s.

The image is instead believed to be a focaccia covered with fruit, including pomegranate and possibly dates, finished with spices or a type

of pesto, experts said. In the fresco, it is served on a silver plate and a wine chalice stands next to it.

The contrast of the frugal meal served in a luxurious setting, denoted by the silver tray, is not unlike modern-day pizza, "born as a poor-man's dish in southern Italy, which has won over the world and is served even in starred restaurants," said Gabriel Zuchtriegel, director of the Pompeii archaeological site.

The ancient Roman city of Pompeii was destroyed in the eruption of nearby Mount Vesuvius in 79 A.D. The sudden and deadly event left much of the structure intact, embalmed in volcanic ash, and the site is now a major archaeological project and tourist attraction. **MDT/AP**



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

SWIMMING

# Katie Ledecky joins an elite club with another dominating performance at the US nationals

PAUL NEWBERRY,  
INDIANAPOLIS

**K**ATIE Ledecky joined an elite club yesterday (Macau time), earning her sixth trip to the world championships with a dominating victory in the 800-meter freestyle at the U.S. nationals.

Ledecky was under her own world-record pace for much of the race before settling for the victory in 8 minutes, 7.07 seconds — her third-fastest time in the grueling event, which she has dominated over her long career with the 30 fastest times in history.

She was clearly pleased with the performance, flashing a thumbs-up and a defiant shake of the head when she turned and spotted the time.

Ledecky will head to Fukuoka,

AP PHOTO



Japan, next month as only the sixth U.S. swimmer to make the world championships for the sixth time, joining Michael Phelps, Ryan Lochte, Natalie Coughlin, Elizabeth Beisel and Nathan Adrian.

No one else was even close to Ledecky. When she touched the wall, the closest swimmer was

more than a half-lap behind.

Seventeen-year-old Jillian Cox claimed the second spot on the worlds team in a major surprise. She finished in 8:20.28 — more than 13 seconds behind the winner.

Ledecky didn't seem the least bit surprised by the performance, which was her fastest showing

since the world record of 8:04.79 she set at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games.

Next month in Fukuoka, Ledecky will attempt to become the first swimmer ever to win the same event at six world championships. She's already the first to claim five consecutive titles, having started her streak of 800

triumphs a decade ago at the worlds in Barcelona.

"I've been feeling good," Ledecky said. "I thought I would be pretty good tonight. I didn't expect a world record or anything. But felt I could be at least what I was last summer at worlds (when she won her fifth straight 800 title in 8:08.04). I'm really pleased with that. And really pleased with how it felt, as well."

At age 26, Ledecky shows no sign of slowing down — even though she's been on top of the world in distance freestyle swimming since her surprising gold medal at the 2012 London Olympics.

Next summer in Paris, she'll be expected to add to an already impressive haul of seven gold medals and three silvers at the last three Olympics. Her medal record at worlds is downright staggering: 19 gold medals and three silvers.

Ledecky seems rejuvenated by her move to Florida after the Tokyo Olympics to join a training group led by coach Anthony Nesty.

"Training's been great. Just every day, chipping away and putting in really good work," she said. "Of course, there are ups and downs and days that makes you a little worried. But Coach Nesty always knows how to calm me down." **MDT/AP**

AD

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**OPINION**

**China Daily**  
 Editorial, China Daily

**NEIGHBORS  
 STRENGTHEN TIES  
 RATHER THAN CUT THEM**

Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh is in China on a four-day formal visit, during which he will attend the 14th Annual Meeting of the New Champions in Tianjin.

In their meeting on Monday in Beijing, Chinese Premier Li Qiang pointed out that amid the complex and volatile world situation China and Vietnam can inject more stability and positive energy into world peace and the development of the two countries by working together to take their relations to a new level.

Pham's positive responses to the series of proposals Li made to upgrade and expand bilateral cooperation in trade, security, energy, regional development and culture show Vietnam's willingness to share China's development dividends, tap the potential of their complementary economies and seek regional integration.

Prime Minister Pham's visit is important for both countries in multiple ways. It is not only Pham's first China trip as Vietnamese prime minister, but the first by a Vietnamese prime minister in seven years. It occurs as the two countries commemorate the 15th anniversary of their comprehensive strategic partnership, and as an increasing number of non-regional countries are bolstering their presence in the region seeking to sow the seeds of discord.

But Pham's remarks will upset those awaiting a breakup between Hanoi and Beijing. To their disappointment, Pham's trip has nothing to do with the kind of geopolitical game outsiders want, but everything to do with strengthening ties.

The openness the Vietnamese prime minister expressed to strengthening exchanges and coordination to properly handle the disputes between the two sides was highly welcomed by Li. No matter how hard third parties work to exploit the maritime disputes between the two neighbors in an attempt to turn them against each other, Beijing and Hanoi are shelving their differences to pursue the greater good of peace and cooperation.

As both sides have pointed out in relation to Pham's visit, each side considers relations with the other to be a diplomatic priority. This is not only a natural product of the two countries' historical friendship and their long-standing mutually beneficial exchanges in the process of regional economic integration. It is also the result of a forward-looking strategic choice by them.

During Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong's China visit in 2022, the two countries signed the "Joint Statement on Further Consolidating and Deepening the China-Vietnam All-round Partnership of Strategic Cooperation".

Prime Minister Pham's participation in the Tianjin event is meant, to a great extent, to attract more foreign direct investment to Vietnam. Chinese enterprises are already showing they are happy to oblige. Vietnam is China's largest trading partner among the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and Chinese direct investment in Vietnam has kept increasing in recent years, becoming the fourth largest last year.

Those trying to drive a wedge between the two countries are betting on a losing hand.

**CYPRUS BATTLES DISEASE-CARRYING MOSQUITOES  
 BY BREEDING WITH IRRADIATED, STERILIZED ONES** **THE BUZZ**

Cyprus is battling an influx of disease-carrying mosquitoes by bringing in hundreds of thousands of the insects after being sterilized through radiation.

The battle is primarily focused on eradicating the *Aedes aegypti* variety of mosquito that has been found in large numbers in the island nation's coastal town of Larnaca.

Cyprus' Environmental Health Services head Herodotos Herodotou told The Associated Press that the *Aedes aegypti* has been specifically targeted to prevent its potential migration to continental Europe.

The effort is also targeting the *Aedes albopictus* mosquito on the island, which is more common in Europe.

Both varieties can transmit to humans dangerous diseases such as dengue, Zika and yellow fever, as well as West Nile virus.

Herodotou said that his service collects and dispatches both varieties of mosquitos — both eggs and grown insects — to laboratories in Italy and Austria where they're bred and separated into male and female.

The male mosquitos are then sterilized by being exposed to ionizing radiation.

About 100,000 mosquitoes are then brought back to the island every week. The mating won't produce any offspring and as a result, the mosquito population diminishes.

**SOME DUTCH PEOPLE  
 SEEKING EUTHANASIA CITE  
 AUTISM OR INTELLECTUAL  
 DISABILITIES,  
 RESEARCHERS SAY**

MARIA CHENG, LONDON

SEVERAL people with autism and intellectual disabilities have been legally euthanized in the Netherlands in recent years because they said they could not lead normal lives, researchers have found.

The cases included five people younger than 30 who cited autism as either the only reason or a major contributing factor for euthanasia, setting an uneasy precedent that some experts say stretches the limits of what the law originally intended.

In 2002, the Netherlands became the first country to allow doctors to kill patients at their request if they met strict requirements, including having an incurable illness causing "unbearable" physical or mental suffering.

Between 2012 and 2021, nearly 60,000 people were killed at their own request, according to the Dutch government's euthanasia review committee. To show how the rules are being applied and interpreted, the committee has released documents related to more than 900 of those people, most of whom were older and had conditions including cancer, Parkinson's and ALS.

Irene Tuffrey-Wijne, a palliative care specialist at Britain's Kingston University, and her colleagues reviewed the documents to see how Dutch doctors were dealing with euthanasia requests from people with autism or with lifelong mental impairments. They published their findings in the journal *BJPsych Open* in May.

Among the 900 people with publicly posted case files, 39 of them were autistic and/or intellectually



Slogan on table reads, "Human considers, God decides."

disabled. A handful were elderly, but 18 of them were younger than 50.

Many of the patients cited different combinations of mental problems, physical ailments, diseases or aging-related difficulties as reasons for seeking euthanasia. Thirty included being lonely as one the causes of their unbearable pain. Eight said the only causes of their suffering were factors linked to their intellectual disability or autism — social isolation, a lack of coping strategies or an inability to adjust their thinking.

"There's no doubt in my mind these people were suffering," Tuffrey-Wijne said. "But is society really OK with sending this message, that there's no other way to help them and it's just better to be dead?"

Other countries, including Belgium, Canada and Colombia, have legal euthanasia, but the Netherlands is the only one that shares detailed information about potentially controversial deaths, providing the best window into emerging trends in assisted dying. Still, its records are limited to what doctors disclose. So there could be other factors that weren't released or cases where the patient's autism or intellectual disabilities weren't noted.

Because the commit-

tee releases only select records, it's also impossible to know the true number of people with autism or intellectual disabilities killed at their own request.

Among the eight patients cited by researchers were an autistic man in his 20s. His record said "the patient had felt unhappy since childhood," was regularly bullied and "longed for social contacts but was unable to connect with others." The man, who was not named, chose euthanasia after deciding that "having to live on this way for years was an abomination."

The records also included an autistic woman in her 30s who also had borderline personality disorder. She was offered a spot in a supported living center, but her doctors said she could not maintain relationships and deemed contact with others "too difficult."

In one-third of cases, Dutch doctors concluded autism and intellectual disabilities were untreatable and that there was "no prospect of improvement," the researchers wrote.

Simon Baron-Cohen, director of Cambridge University's Autism Research Centre, said it was "abhorrent" that people with autism were being euthanized without being offered further support. **MDT/AP**



Sri Lanka's Cabinet yesterday approved a program to restructure the country's staggering domestic debt as the island nation struggles to emerge from an economic crisis that has engulfed it since last year. The domestic debt restructuring is required as part of a bailout package obtained from the International Monetary Fund, under which nearly \$3 billion in government budgetary support will be disbursed in stages. Sri Lanka's total debt exceeds \$83 billion, of which \$41.5 billion is foreign and \$42.1 billion is domestic.



French emergency workers found a body Tuesday in the rubble of a Paris building whose facade collapsed in an explosion last week and are working to remove the remains and identify the person, the Paris prosecutor's office said. The discovery marks the first fatality in the blast, which left six people critically injured and more than 50 people with lighter injuries or psychological shock.



Norway announced yesterday it approved 19 oil and gas projects on the Norwegian continental shelf, saying the total investments are worth over 200 billion kroner. Norway was the only net exporter of oil and gas in Europe, said Terje Aasland, Norway's minister for petroleum and energy, adding, "By carrying out these projects we ensure new production from the latter half of the 2020s."