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**THE GOVERNMENT LAUNCHED A PUBLIC TENDER FOR THE FIRST PHASE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW FACILITIES FOR THE COURT OF FINAL APPEAL**

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**SSM NOTIFIED OF CO POISONING OF TOURIST LODGED AT PRIVATE APARTMENT**

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**INDONESIA WILL SPEND \$20 BILLION TO TRANSITION TO CLEANER ENERGY**

P6



**North Korea** denounced U.S.-led plans for an open Security Council meeting on its human rights record as “despicable” and only aimed at achieving Washington’s geopolitical ambitions. Vice Foreign Minister Kim Son Gyong called the United States a “declining” power and said if the council dealt with any country’s human rights, the U.S. should be the first “as it is the anti-people empire of evils, totally depraved due to all sorts of social evils.”



AP PHOTO

**United Nations** The International Criminal Court should prosecute Taliban leaders for a crime against humanity for denying education and employment to Afghan girls and women, the U.N. special envoy for global education, Gordon Brown (pictured) said on the second anniversary of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan that its rulers are responsible for “the most egregious, vicious and indefensible violation of women’s rights and girls’ rights in the world today.”



AP PHOTO

**Libya** Clashes between rival militias in Libya’s capital killed at least 27 people and left residents trapped in their homes yesterday [Macau time], unable to escape the violence, medical authorities said. The fighting appears to be the most intense to shake Tripoli this year. In addition to the 27 deaths, over 100 people were injured in the fighting, Libya’s Emergency Medicine and Support Center, a medical body that is deployed during humanitarian disasters and wars.

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P2



ANTHONY LAM

# SAFE FUN

For lawmaker Ron Lam, safety should come first when regulating fun fairs venues and operations

P3

**CRIME**  
**LOST ITEM**  
**‘THEFT’**  
**ON THE**  
**RISE**



**MICE**  
**MACAU**  
**WINS ‘BEST**  
**CONVENTION**  
**CITY (ASIA)’**  
**AWARD**

P2

### CITY SEES LOWEST PROPERTY SALES IN JULY

July saw 204 residential property transactions, the lowest in a single month this year, according to the Financial Services Bureau. The figure recorded a decrease of 32 transactions, a drop of 13.5%. The average property price of a square meter in an apartment was MOP88,834, down 8.2%. The transaction volume and average price during the month were the lowest this year. Recent data shows that average rent for those with an area between 50 and 99.9 square meters and for those with a floor area between 100 and 149.9 square meters is MOP128 and MOP118 respectively, both down by 0.8% quarter-to-quarter.

### AIR MACAU TO HIKE FUEL SURCHARGE

Air Macau will increase its passenger fuel surcharge starting Sept. 1, the local carrier said yesterday. The fuel surcharge between the mainland and Macau has been raised from the current MOP203 to MOP230. The fuel surcharge from Macau to other countries or regions, as well as Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam to Macau, has been raised from the current USD28 to USD32. Children and infant tickets are still subject to fuel surcharges, the group said.

### CRIME

# LOST ITEM THEFT ON THE RISE

ANTHONY LAM

**A**MONG five cases publicized by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) yesterday, three concerned the appropriation of lost items, with losses reaching MOP125,000.

The PSP disclosed the cases at yesterday's regular police press conference. Although not all cases occurred recently – with only one case occurring this month – the police have arrested suspects.

At about 10 p.m. on Aug. 8, the PSP was notified of a property loss case at a Cotai hotel. The victim reported losing a handbag with contents equating to a total monetary loss of MOP125,000. She was briefly away from the spot until she realized she had lost the handbag. After returning for a search, she could not find her bag.

Viewing the hotel surveillance camera footage, the police identified two suspects, surnamed Guan and Xiong, 42 and 49, both mainland residents. Police officers located and arrested the suspects the next afternoon on Rua Cidade de Sintra.

Guan admitted to appropriating and "gifting" the handbag to Xiong, while taking a golden ring, a wireless headset and some cosmetics from the bag as hers.

In two other cases, lost property was taken from taxis by subsequent passengers.

In one case, the police were notified of lost properties on Feb. 5 this year. The victim, a mainland man, reported losing his bag on



a taxi ride from Cotai to Hengqin on Jan. 25. He reported a loss of MOP29,261.

The police later believed a female suspect, surnamed Liu, in her 40s, and a self-reported businessperson, was involved. Liu was intercepted at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge checkpoint on Aug. 12.

She admitted to conducting the crime and keeping the bag in her home in Sichuan Province.

The next case involved two suspects, both female in their 30's and reported to be businesspeople from mainland China. They are surnamed Xiong and Du.

The male victim from Hong Kong reported that at about 9 p.m. on May 25, he took a taxi from a Cotai hotel to the Taipa Maritime Terminal and left his phone in the taxi. He reported a loss of

HKD9,000.

On Aug. 11, the police arrested the two suspects at the Border Gate checkpoint. They denied the allegations, but the police were confident and pressed charges against them.

Meanwhile, in a case publicized by the Judiciary Police (PJ), a woman swindled MOP2.38 million from a local man in his 20s. The mainland woman, 35 and surnamed Lu, was apprehended while re-entering Macau through Hengqin Border Checkpoint on Aug. 15.

The woman confessed that she had lost all the money to local casinos.

The police were notified of the case on Aug. 1. According to the man, the two met in April 2021 at a local casino. After becoming friends, the woman told the man that she was in possession of a lar-

ge amount of cryptocurrency. She wanted to cash 60 crypto for USD6 million but could not pay the surcharge, so she asked the man for a loan and promised to pay him HKD3 million as remuneration afterwards. The man thus transferred MOP805,000 to the woman in several instalments.

In late November in the same year, the woman claimed that a mobile app got hacked and so she lost all her crypto. She then claimed that she was helping a friend to process a USD8 million inheritance but needed money for a surcharge. Again, she claimed that the man would get HKD6 million for remuneration if he helped her with the surcharge.

Between November 2021 and February 2022, the man wired MOP1.58 million to the woman, who disappeared in July 2022.

### M&C ASIA STELLA AWARDS

# Macau wins 'Best Convention City (Asia)' award



**M**ACAU has been awarded the "M&C Asia Stella Awards - Best Convention City (Asia)" as the city's MICE sector has "made concerted efforts to provide excellent conference experiences for event participants with outstanding environmental equipment and services."

The M&C Asia Stella Awards honors the best of MICE industry, with its winners selected by indus-

try professionals, event organizers, practitioners and other people closely engaged in MICE industry.

There are 29 awards across six categories, including Destination Management Company, Meeting Hotel and Convention Center.

The Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) executive director Sam Lei attended the award ceremony yesterday.

"The award affirms Macau's leading position in hardware equipment and software services in the convention and exhibition industry in Asia," said Lei.

He hopes that all practitioners in the convention and exhibition industry will continue to work together to boost the development of the Macau convention and exhibition sector.

Macau is home to MICE venues spanning upwards

of 240,000 square meters.

208 MICE events, including 196 conferences, 10 exhibitions, and two award events were held in the first quarter of 2023, attracting nearly 200,000 participants.

Meanwhile, the 1,000 MICE events set for this year are expected to bring some 170,000 business visitors to Macau.

The government has previously said that the local MICE sector was going to have its "peak season" during the second half of the year, with many events taking place before the year's end. LV

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# Lawmaker calls for regulating fun fair safety

ANTHONY LAM

**R**EGULATIONS should be formulated to supervise the safety of fun fairs and related facilities provided at local hotels and resorts, lawmaker Ron Lam has demanded in his latest inquiry.

Opening his inquiry, the lawmaker said several residents had made social media posts saying they were injured while playing at fun fairs at local resorts. They wrote that due to the lack of a soft bottom and clear indicators, they suffered bone fractures or cracks at a ball pit.

Lam was approached by the victims in inquiry of relevant laws and regulations concerning such issues in Macau, such as guidelines on safety and the need for mandatory insurance coverage.

He then said the city lacked specific rules and regulations in this regard. The only available regulations are a set of guidelines concerning the facilities' architectural aspects and another set about the economic operations of them. Neither had a reference on the safety of these facilities.

As early as in 2017, the government ran a public consultation



on the review of administrations in several areas, which included fun fairs and related facilities and activities. The hygiene of such facilities was also within the scope of the public consultation.

However, as of now, the govern-

ment has not advised whether these safety guidelines will be updated. The government demanded casino license holders diversify their product offerings, as part of the criteria for license re-tender at the end of last year.

## PUBLIC WORKS

# Gov't opens public tender for new TUI building at Nam Van

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE government yesterday launched the public tender for the first phase (superstructure) of the new facilities for the Court of Final Appeal (TUI) to be built in place of the old Judiciary Police (PJ) headquarters and the old court building, located side-by-side at Nam Van area.

The public tender notice, published in the government's official gazette, notes that proposals will be received until Sept. 6 at 5 p.m. at the Public Works Bureau (DSOP) headquarters at the Avenida do Dr. Rodrigo Rodrigues, Nam Kwong Building, 9th floor.

There is no base pri-



ce for the proposals and the maximum time for the works is 600 working days.

The tender has a progress checkpoint at 300 working days, which includes the conclusion of all the works of revamp-

ing the interior part of the building of the old TUI.

The criteria to evaluate the proposals include the price of the bid (50%), the execution time (30%), the experience of the contractor,

and quality of the works (20%).

The tender will be awarded to the proposal that gathers most points with a tiebreak following the lower price, if two or more proposals get the same points.



## HOTELS

# RAFFLES SOFT OPENS AT GALAXY MACAU

**C**ENTURY-old Singapore-accepted luxury hotel brand Raffles yesterday saw its first hotel in Macau soft opening at the Galaxy resort, with an all-suite lineup.

The new hotel pushes the resort's count of hotel brands to seven. It is located on the resort's east promenade, with access secretly nestled on both ends of the Crystal Lobby. In terms of design, the hotel, located on the peripheral of the resort, can be seen from afar, especially at night with an arch-shaped LED screen covering the entire height of the building.

According to a statement issued by the resort, the new property reflects Macau's rich East-Meets-West heritage and modern-day vibrancy. The property features subtle peacock motifs

throughout in the form of a geometric pattern.

Raised some floors above, the hotel lobby is home to Raffles Lounge & Terrace, which is a western tea house in the day and an energetic sip-house at night. To come later is a Japanese restaurant by celebrated Chef Masaaki Miyakawa. Meanwhile, as a treat for the eyes, there are wondrous art pieces well curated and subtly arranged around the hotel.

Since 1887, Raffles has been among the top tier of luxurious accommodation around the world. Its supporters have found its personalized service, time-honored traditions, and exceptional attention to detail appealing and the reason for return patronage. **AL**

## TOURISM

# VISITOR EXPENDITURE SURGES TO MOP17B IN Q2

STAFF REPORTER

**T**OTAL visitor spending (excluding gaming expenses) surged 354.6% year-on-year to MOP17.48 billion in the second quarter of 2023.

Data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) shows that the spending of overnight visitors (MOP14.58 billion) and same-day visitors (MOP2.90 billion) soared 415% and 186.2% year-on-year respectively.

In the first half of 2023, total visitor spending amounted to MOP32.46 billion, an uplift of 210.9% year-on-year.

Analyzed by source of visitors, per-capita spending of visitors from mainland China grew 31.8% year-on-year to MOP3,261.

According to DSEC, spending of those traveling under the Individual Visit Scheme

(MOP3,385) fell 31.1%. Visitors from Hong Kong and Taiwan spent an average of MOP1,140 and MOP2,595 respectively.

As regards type of expense, visitors spent primarily on shopping (48.5% of total) in the second quarter, followed by accommodation (24.5%) and food and beverage (17.4%).

Recent data from the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has recorded the arrival of almost 12 million visitors during the first half of this year.

According to those records, some 11.65 million entered Macau between January and June, a daily average of over 64,000 visitors.

Although the numbers are still far from those recorded pre-pandemic (2019), the MGTO noted the current numbers account for a rebound to 59.6% of 2019 numbers.

# SSM NOTIFIED OF CO POISONING OF TOURIST LODGED AT PRIVATE APARTMENT

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Health Bureau (SSM) has reported a case of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning that occurred Tuesday (Aug. 15) at a housing unit in a private residential building at Ilha Verde.

According to the report, a 38-year-old woman, a tourist from the mainland, was transported to the Kiang Wu Hospital with symptoms such as dizziness and almost fainting after having used the gas stove and the gas water heater at a housing unit located at the Fok Seng Building, Fok Tak San Chun, located on the Estrada Marginal da Ilha Verde.

The Fire Services Bureau (CB), which transported the woman by ambulance, said she started feeling unwell five minutes after using the stove and water heater and those symptoms persisted for over 30 minutes.

The CB also noted the water heater was installed without an exhaust pipe to the exterior of the housing unit, a reason they believed caused the CO poisoning.

Laboratory tests found the woman had high concentrations of carbon monoxide hemoglobin (COHb), which resulted in a diagnosis of carbon monoxide poisoning. She was subjected to hyperbaric oxygen therapy.

According to SSM, the woman is currently in a stable condition. She was living in the housing unit with two family members who are said to have suffered no symptoms.

Carbon monoxide is a gas, the product of incomplete combustion of a fuel. After carbon monoxide is inhaled, it combines with hemoglobin in the bloodstream and causes it to lose its ability to carry oxygen.

Mild symptoms of CO poisoning are dizziness,

nausea and vomiting, while in more severe cases it can lead to coma and death.

According to regulations, all fuel-burning stoves and heaters should be used with good ventilation.

All modern and certified equipment of this kind has a CO sensor that detects concentrations of CO and shuts down the appliances to prevent poisoning. In some cases, and due to the poor condition of some houses, these safety devices are bypassed so the equipment continues to operate beyond critical safety conditions.

Macau regulations on the matter provide that such equipment can only be installed and maintained by a certified professional, usually provided by the company supplying the fuel, who must ensure the equipment is in a proper safety condition before supplying the fuel to users.

RENATO MARQUES



AD

## CEM NOTICE

### Temporary traffic arrangements of traffic lights suspension

Due to the improvement works carried out by Companhia de Electricidade de Macau - CEM, S.A. (CEM), multiple sets of traffic lights will be suspended from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on 18 August (Friday). Please refer to the table below for details.

Date	Estimated suspension time of traffic lights	Traffic light locations
18 August (Friday)	From 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	The intersection between Avenida do Almirante Lacerda and Avenida do Ouvidor Arriaga
		The intersection between Avenida do Almirante Lacerda and Avenida do Coronel Mesquita
		The intersection between Avenida do Ouvidor Arriaga and Estrada de Coelho do Amaral

## DSEDT: RETAILED TOYS ON PAR WITH NATIONAL SAFETY STANDARDS

ANTHONY LAM

**S**OME 79 toy samples sent for testing in 2022 were on par with Chinese safety standards, the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSEDT) has disclosed.

In reply to lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho's written inquiry, the bureau said the toy samples tested included childrens' toys and infants' products.

In his inquiry, the lawmaker cited the Hong Kong Consumer Council for discovering that all the 19 rubber balloon samples tested contained materials suspected of being carcinogenic. Among them, only six met EU safety standards.

As such, the council suggested people avoid inflating balloons with their bare mouths. Children and infants were also reminded to clean their hands thoroughly after playing with balloons.

He criticized the government for never having enforced any measures or mechanisms to gauge the



safety of childrens' and infants' toys. He suggested the government take note of Hong Kong in terms of testing and the issuance of warnings.

The DSEDT meanwhile, cited Executive Regulations No 17/2008 as stating that only safe products can be put into the market. In addition, the bureau said it constantly monitors product safety, including but not limited to acting on referrals from other bureaus. It has also conducted site inspections and "regular

product tests". Should problematic products be found, a recall order is issued immediately.

A long-term cooperation system has also been established between the bureau, the Chinese Customs service and neighboring jurisdictions for enhanced communications and upstream handling of problematic products. The bureau believes that the system will "effectively ensure the safety of products circulating in Macau" through regional and departmental cooperation.



Special Exhibition of "Art Macao: Macao International Art Biennale 2023"

# 'M Art [To Infinity and Beyond] The Art of Hsiao Chin

**EXPLORE THE COLORFUL UNIVERSE OF MODERN ABSTRACT  
MASTER HSIAO CHIN THROUGH 'ART-TECH-TAINMENT' AT MGM COTAI**

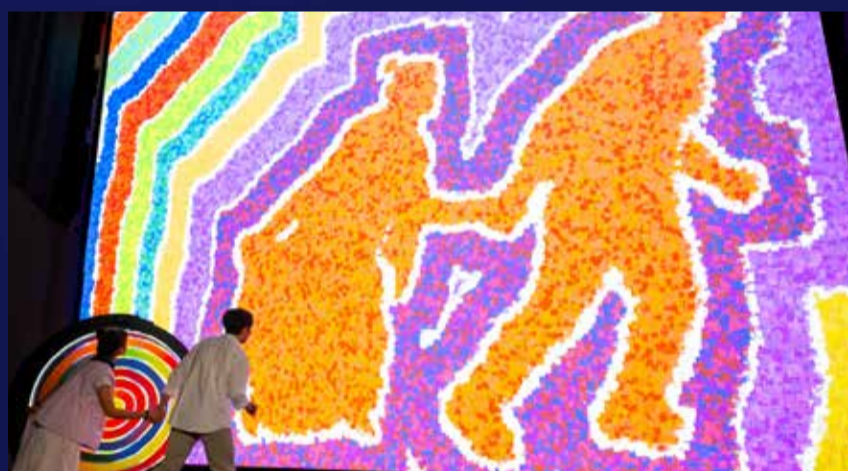


Ready to experience a one-of-kind art exhibition in Macau? Under a new curatorial concept of "ART-TECH-TAINMENT," art, technology, and entertainment converges at "To Infinity and Beyond - The Art of Hsiao Chin" Special Exhibition at MGM COTAI. Modern Abstract Art Master Hsiao Chin has been acclaimed as the one of the most significant post-war abstract masters for the past six decades, his art embodies the energy, love and blessings of the universe, integrating traditional Chinese philosophies with Western aesthetics. Featuring Hsiao's museum-level masterpieces, some of which are unveiled to the public for the very first time, the exhibition is regarded as the most alluring and vital station in Hsiao Chin Exhibition World Tour.



The exhibition venue creates a new artistic universe with the dynamic state-of-the-art black box space, features a panoramic 900-square-meter ultra-high-definition 4K LED display screen, immersing audiences into Hsiao's artistic universe through the integration of cutting-edge technologies. The 8 zones of the exhibition, echoing the symbol of infinity "∞", starts from Hsiao's physical art masterpieces to interactive multimedia explorations.

One of the most remarkable experiences is "Space Travel" which showcases Hsiao's first art film through Asia's largest state-of-the-art panoramic LED screen. Other highlights include "Origin of Chi", which explores the vitality of the original energy in nature through interactive digital installations, physical movements of audiences are transformed into endless energy, just like the brushstrokes and colors in the artist's "Chi" series. The multisensory journey continues at "Samantha's Eternal Garden", where artworks centered on the intimate dialogue between Hsiao and his daughter are presented through VR experience, accompanied by the artist's favorite Italian opera melodies.



As an extension of the exhibition, there is a Digital Art Jamming experience at MGM Lion Lobby where visitors can create their own digital artwork by exploring unique elements in Hsiao's art. In addition to a series of creative daily life souvenirs, limited lithographs and prints, bringing good wishes into the daily lives.

The Special Exhibition opens to the public until September 24 with free admission, scan the QR code to embark on an extraordinary ART-TECH-TAINMENT experience and space travel journey of art at MGM Theater, MGM COTAI.

**Register Now**

Embark on an extraordinary time  
and space travel journey of art



ENERGY

# A PLAN FOR HOW INDONESIA WILL SPEND \$20 BILLION TO TRANSITION TO CLEANER ENERGY SUBMITTED

VICTORIA MILKO, JAKARTA

A plan for how Indonesia will spend \$20 billion to transition to cleaner energy was submitted yesterday to the government and its financing partners, the planners said.

Indonesia's Just Energy Transition Partnership deal was announced last year and aims to use the funds over the next three to five years to accelerate retirement of the nation's coal plants and development of renewable energy.

Details were not made public. The investment plan will be reviewed and revised further by Indonesia and its JETP partners before being made available for public review and comment, according to a statement from Indonesia's JETP Secretariat.

"The Indonesian public will have the opportunity to review the full draft text of the (plan) and submit comments and feedback," Dadan Kusdiana, Indonesia's Secretary General of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, said in a statement.

A person with direct knowledge of the talks who was not authorized to comment on the deal told The Associated Press that new information regarding the country's captive coal and mineral processing infrastructure and difficulties matching the financing with potential transition projects were some of the crucial reasons why the details were still being negotiated.

"We welcome the submission

AP PHOTO



of the (plan) to the Indonesian government. We understand that this is a global effort to address a very complex problem in Indonesia. We will review and ensure that it is aligned with Indonesia's priorities in energy transition," Rachmat Kaimuddin, Indonesia's deputy coordinating minister for maritime affairs and investment, wrote in a statement.

The investment and policy plan comes after Indonesia's JETP was announced at the Group of

20 summit in November 2022. The deal also shifted Indonesia's renewable energy policy, which will need to account for some one-third of the country's power production by 2030.

Experts have warned that Indonesia's JETP deal and energy transition face significant challenges including retiring a relatively new network of coal plants, securing enough financing for the transition and ensuring it's equitable for those who are likely to be impac-

ted by the transition, such as the some 250,000 people employed by the country's coal industry.

The Indonesian government also plans to build new coal-fired power plants to power strategic infrastructure projects such as smelters, raising concern amongst stakeholders and environmental activists alike.

"The International Partner's Group failure to discourage the development of captive coal power plants would stifle any pro-

gress made from the JETP's early retirement of coal power plants, and compromise the gains from rolling out renewable energy," said Binbin Mariana, an Asia energy finance campaigner at Market Forces, a nongovernmental organization that monitors investments.

Local stakeholders have also expressed concern over how the JETP funds will be provided via a mix of grants, concessional loans, market-rate loans, guarantees, and private investments. Indonesia's JETP deal is anticipated to be comprised of some \$10 billion in public sector pledges and another \$10 billion from private lenders, coordinated by the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero, which includes Bank of America, Citi, Standard Chartered and other major banks.

"We definitely would like to see more grants or concessional loans as the bigger part of the funding," said Anissa Suharsono, an associate with International Institute for Sustainable Development.

While some \$20 billion is pledged through the JETP, the International Renewable Energy Agency estimates Indonesia would need \$163.5 billion for its renewable energy technology, grid expansion and storage needs through 2030.

The emissions targets could also still be part of the plan's negotiations, said Deon Arinaldo, a program manager at the Institute for Essential Services Reform.

According to research published last year by IESR and the University of Maryland, a more ambitious target than specified in the JETP and Indonesia's current regulation must be implemented in order to be compatible with the 1.5 °C target goal of the Paris Agreement, which calls for countries to take concerted climate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to limit global warming. **MDT/AP**

## CORPORATE BITS

### Eason Chan to bring 'Fear & Dreams World Tour' to Cotai Arena



The Venetian Macao has announced that singer Eason Chan will be bringing

his Fear & Dreams World Tour in Macau to the Cotai Arena in October.

The world tour kicked off in Hong Kong last December, continuing to Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Taipei. According to a statement, the Macau performances will give fans the chance to enjoy his hits songs like "When the Earth Has No Flowers," "A Dance for Tomorrow" and "The Wanderer".

Chan said, "The meaning behind the concert theme can only be completely understood after experiencing the show and will resonate with each concert goer differently."

Online and phone ticketing will start Aug. 28 at 12 p.m. via Cotai Ticketing, with all ticketing options available the following day, Aug. 29.

### Line up of renowned chefs featured at MGM x RR1 Culinary Masters Macau



MGM has recently presented the MGM x RR1 Culinary Masters Macau, Asia's first exclusive RR1 Signature Event in Macau, featuring a deluxe four-day dining ex-

travaganza, with a lineup of renowned celebrity chefs along with MGM award-winning chefs and local Macanese chefs. As the first of many future

RR1 Signature Events taking place in MGM, the event brought over 150 guests from 10 different countries including Australia, China, Italy, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand.

On top of the culinary creations, the international guests also experienced the city's rich cultural heritage as well as its unique food culture, with a tailor-made program that highlighted the true colors of local Macau.

Hubert Wang, president and COO of MGM China, said, "This event will continue to serve as a platform for a vibrant cultural exchange, bringing together travelers from around the globe to experience every aspect of Macau in style."

DIPLOMACY

# India and China pledge to maintain 'peace and tranquility' along disputed border

**C**HINESE and Indian military commanders pledged to "maintain the peace and tranquility" along their disputed border, China's Defense Ministry said, in an apparent effort by the sides to stabilize the situation after a rise in tensions.

China's Defense Ministry issued a joint statement on social media this week saying the 19th round of commander-level talks between the sides held on Sunday and Monday had produced a "positive, constructive and in-depth discussion" centered on resolving issues related to the Line of Actual Control in the border's western sector.

The statement said they "agreed to resolve the remaining issues in an expeditious manner," but there is no indication that either side is willing to offer concessions. However, both appear eager to avoid the sort of clashes between their troops that have led to bloodshed in recent years.

"In the interim, the two sides



AP PHOTO

agreed to maintain the peace and tranquility on the ground in the border areas," the statement said.

India's Defense Ministry issued an identical statement.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin yesterday praised the talks, held at the Indian army post in the town of Chushul-Moldo, and high-

lighted the two sides' commitment to "maintain the momentum of communication and dialogue through military and diplomatic channels."

The Line of Actual Control separates Chinese and Indian-held territories from Ladakh in the west to India's eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China

claims in its entirety. India and China fought a war over their border in 1962. As its name suggests, it divides the areas of physical control rather than territorial claims.

According to India, the de facto border is 3,488 kilometers long, but China promotes a considerably shorter figure.

In all, China claims some 90,000 square kilometers of territory in India's northeast, including Arunachal Pradesh with its mainly Buddhist population.

India says China occupies 38,000 square kilometers of its territory in the Aksai Chin Plateau, which India considers part of Ladakh, where the current face-off is happening.

China, in the meantime, began cementing relations with India's archrival Pakistan and backing it on the issue of disputed Kashmir.

Firefights broke out again in 1967 and 1975, leading to more deaths on both sides. They've since adopted protocols, including an agreement not to use firearms, but those protocols have fractured.

A clash three years ago in the Ladakh region killed 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese. It turned into a long-running standoff in the rugged mountainous area, where each side has stationed tens of thousands of military personnel backed by artillery, tanks and fighter jets.

Both India and China have withdrawn troops from some areas on the northern and southern banks of Pangong Tso, Gogra and Galwan Valley, but continue to maintain extra troops as part of a multitier deployment.

Li was visiting New Delhi to attend a meeting of the defense chiefs of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which consists of China, India, Pakistan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. **MDT/AP**

DIRE STRAIT

# New Paraguay president stresses ties with Taiwan at swearing-in ceremony

**P**RESIDENT Santiago Peña said Paraguay and Taiwan are "not just allies, but also brothers" when he was sworn in as the South American country's new president yesterday [Macau time].

Peña took the presidential oath outside the government palace in the capital of Asunción in a ceremony attended by several regional leaders and Taiwan's No. 2 William Lai.

Paraguay is the only country in South America, and a member of a dwindling group of 12 governments around the world, to have diplomatic relations with Taiwan. It lost a key ally in the region earlier this year when Honduras cut diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

"We will build alliances



AP PHOTO

Paraguay's newly sworn-in President Santiago Peña and wife Leticia Ocampos wave from a car taking them to the Cathedral on Peña's inauguration day in Asunción

and cooperation with a geostrategic vision, seeking horizontal agreements," Peña said, noting that the country's relationship with Taiwan "is an example of this and of Paraguay's friendly and cooperative spirit with nations for which we have deep affection

and with whom we feel not only as allies, but also like brothers."

Before leaving on the trip Saturday, Lai said his visit to Paraguay was in part "so that the international society understands Taiwan is a country that persists in its democracy,

human rights and freedom and actively takes part in international affairs." Lai stopped in New York en route to Paraguay and was planning to stop in San Francisco on his way back home.

When Peña, 44, visited Taiwan in July, he told lea-

der Tsai Ing-wen his country would "stand with the people of Taiwan" during his five-year term.

Peña, an economist, easily won election earlier this year, keeping the long-ruling Colorado Party in power for five more years.

Taiwan's envoy to Paraguay, José Han, published photos on social media of Lai making chipa, a traditional cheese-flavored roll, and drinking tereré, an infusion popular in the South American country. "He loved the traditional flavors of Paraguay," the ambassador wrote.

Taiwan had become a thorny issue during Paraguay's presidential campaign as Peña's main challenger argued the alliance had become too costly because it prevented the small country from pursuing business opportunities with China.

In his inaugural speech, Peña, a conservative, business-friendly president, praised former President Horacio Cartes (2013-2018), the head of the Co-

lorado Party who has been accused by Washington of involvement in "significant corruption." The U.S. government accuses him of bribing government officials and legislators and of having ties to people who raise money for the Hezbollah group, which Washington has deemed a terrorist organization.

"Thank you for persevering, without faltering, in the construction of consensus and in the pursuit of agreements above differences," Peña said in words addressed to Cartes. "Today, it is our turn to bring that political calling to the service of all Paraguayans."

Spain's King Felipe VI attended the inauguration ceremony as did presidents from the region, including Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil, Alberto Fernández of Argentina, and Gabriel Boric of Chile.

"Success is making sure all Paraguayans are better off, and that the world becomes witness to the resurgence of a giant," Peña said. **MDT/AP**

NIGER

# Nigeriens call for mass recruitment of volunteers as the junta faces regional invasion

SAM MEDNICK, NIGER

**N**IGERIENS are preparing for a possible invasion by countries in the region, three weeks after mutinous soldiers ousted the nation's democratically elected president.

Residents in the capital, Niamey, are calling for the mass recruitment of volunteers to assist the army in the face of a growing threat by the West African regional bloc, ECOWAS, which says it will use military force if the junta doesn't reinstate the deposed President Mohamed Bazoum. ECOWAS has activated a "standby force" to restore order in Niger after the junta ignored a deadline to reinstate and release Bazoum.

The initiative, spearheaded by a group of locals in Niamey, aims to recruit tens of thousands of volunteers from across the country to register for the Volunteers for the Defense of Niger, to fight, assist with medical care, and provide technical and engineering logistics among other functions, in case the junta needs help, Amsarou Bako, one of the founders, told The Associated Press yesterday [Macau time].

"It's an eventuality. We need to be ready whenever it happens," he said. The recruitment drive will launch Saturday in Niamey as well as in cities where invasion forces might enter, such as near the borders with Nigeria and Benin, two countries, which have said they would participate in an intervention. Anyone over 18 can register and the list will be given to the junta to call upon people if needed, said Bako. The junta is not involved, but is aware of the initiative, he said.

Regional tensions are deepening as the standoff between Niger and ECOWAS shows no signs of defusing, despite signals from both sides that they are open to resolving the crisis peacefully. Last week the junta said it was open to dialogue



Mohamed Toumba, one of the soldiers who ousted Nigerien President Mohamed Bazoum, addresses supporters of Niger's ruling junta in Niamey

with ECOWAS after rebuffing the bloc's multiple efforts at talks, but shortly afterwards charged Bazoum with "high treason" and recalled its ambassador from neighboring Ivory Coast.

ECOWAS defense chiefs are expected to meet this week, for the first time since the bloc announced the deployment of the "standby" force. It's unclear when or if the force will invade, but it would probably include several thousand troops and would have devastating consequences, say conflict experts.

"A military intervention with no end in sight risks triggering a regional war, with catastrophic consequences for the vast Sahel that is already plagued by insecurity, displacement and poverty," said Mucahid Durmaz, senior analyst at Verisk Maplecroft, a global risk intelligence company.

Niger was seen as one of the last democratic countries in the Sahel region south of the Sahara Desert, and a partner for Western nations in the effort to beat back growing jihadi violence linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group. France, the former colonial ruler, and the United States have approximately 2,500 military personnel in the region which train Niger's military and, in the case of France, con-

duct joint operations.

Since the coup, France and the U.S. have suspended military operations and jihadi attacks are increasing. At least 17 soldiers were killed and nearly two dozen wounded in an ambush by extremists in the Tillaberi region, said the ministry of defense on state television. The attack occurred in the afternoon when a military detachment was traveling between Boni and Torodi villages. The wounded have been evacuated to Niamey.

Coups in the region have been rampant and the one in Niger is seen by the international community as one too many. But analysts say the longer this drags on, the probability of an intervention fades as the junta cements its grip on power, likely forcing the international community to accept the status quo.

A diplomatic solution is likely; the question is how much military pressure is applied to make it happen, a Western official who was not authorized to speak to the media told The AP.

Yesterday, United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken said there was still space for diplomacy to return the country to constitutional rule and said the U.S. supported ECOWAS' dialogue efforts, including its contingency plans.

The new U.S. ambassador to Niger, Kathleen FitzGibbon, is expected to arrive in Niamey at the end of the week, according to a U.S. official. The United States hasn't had an ambassador in the country for nearly two years: some Sahel experts say this has left Washington with less access to key players and information.

"The U.S. is in a difficult situation with no good choices," said Michael Shurkin, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council and director of global programs at 14 North Strategies. "It either sticks to a principled position and pushes for democracy while alienating the junta and risk pushing it into Russia's arms, or we give up on principle and work with the junta in the hope of salvaging a productive working relationship," he said.

While regional and western countries scramble for how to respond, many Nigeriens are convinced they'll soon be invaded.

The details of Niger's volunteer force are still vague, but similar initiatives in neighboring countries have yielded mixed results. Volunteer fighters in Burkina Faso, recruited to help the army battle its jihadi insurgency, have been accused by rights groups and locals of committing atrocities against civilians. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1998 CLINTON ADMITS LEWINSKY AFFAIR



President of the United States Bill Clinton has admitted having an inappropriate relationship with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

In a televised address Mr Clinton told the American people that he took full responsibility for his actions.

He said: "Indeed I did have a relationship with Ms Lewinsky that was not appropriate. In fact, it was wrong."

Aides close to the president now hope the confession will bring an end to the investigation into Mr Clinton's affairs, brought by independent prosecutor Kenneth Starr.

Mr Starr's four-year inquiry began as an investigation into land deals by Hillary and Bill Clinton when he was governor of Arkansas.

It moved onto his personal life when Mr Starr began to investigate allegations that Mr Clinton had had sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky and then lied about it under oath in a sexual harassment case brought by Paula Jones in 1994.

'I misled the people'  
The president's confession follows months of denial. On 26 January this year, Mr Clinton categorically denied having sexual relations with Miss Lewinsky.

Appearing serious and contrite, Mr Clinton told the American people: "I misled people, including my wife. I deeply regret that."

He concluded: "This matter is between me, the two people I love most - my wife and my daughter - and our God."

He said he had not come clean earlier because he was embarrassed but he denied he had asked anyone to lie about the relationship.

He also criticised Mr Starr and the investigation, which so far has cost £25m.

On 6 August this year Ms Lewinsky told the jury that she had an 18-month sexual relationship with the President and that the pair had discussed ways of concealing the relationship.

She also presented one of her dresses as evidence, stating it had been stained with Mr Clinton's semen during one of their sexual encounters.

If it is proved that he lied he faces possible impeachment hearings on Capitol Hill.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

On 21 September President Clinton's Grand Jury testimony was released to the public.

On 9 December 1998 the House Judiciary Committee proposed four articles of impeachment against the president.

Ten days later - after a bitter debate between republicans and democrats - the House of Representatives voted to confirm the recommendation. Bill Clinton became only the second president in American history to face such an indictment, but he refused to resign.

His trial began on 7 January 1999 and ended on 12 February when senators voted to acquit him of the impeachment charges of perjury and obstruction of justice.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

## YOUR STARS



### ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

It's hard to stay mad if the object of the anger refuses to react. You need to make your lover feel wanted, not like a piece of the furniture.



### TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Your ability to do detailed work will dazzle those who are less creative. Relatives will want to get together. Offer good conversation and a nice soothing lunch.



### GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

You might not be as reserved on an emotional level as you'd like. You need to make changes that will raise your self esteem, such as a new hairstyle or a new image.



### CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You will be in the mood for entertainment. A lack of support and negativity have been the main problems. Your social skills with people may be more than just helpful.



### LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Secret love affairs may be enticing; however, you must be prepared for the restraints that will follow. You may have difficulties while traveling or problems dealing with close friends or relatives.



### VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

You will meet new romantic partners through the company you keep. Don't let your mate bully you into thinking that you owe them your time and your life. Take your time and try not to overload yourself.



### LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You may find that someone you live with is not too happy, but you can't really do anything about that right now. Be sure not to reveal private information to the wrong individuals.



### SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Social get-together will bring you in contact with intelligent new friends. Avoid being intimately involved with clients or colleagues. Chances are you could get stuck with a colleague's job unexpectedly.



### SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Go to the top if you're being harassed or held back. Take care that arrangements to spend quality time together are made in advance. Uncertainties are still prevailing.



### CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Don't let someone you work with put words in your mouth. Romantic opportunities are evident. Do not borrow or lend money or belongings to friends or relatives if you wish to avoid any hassles.



### AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Uncertainties regarding your home and family are evident. Social events may lead to a romantic interlude. Don't let your friends talk you into taking time off.



### PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Ask those in key positions to help you overcome the delays and to support your concerns in order to move on. Don't make promises you can't keep.

## The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



## SUDOKU

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

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

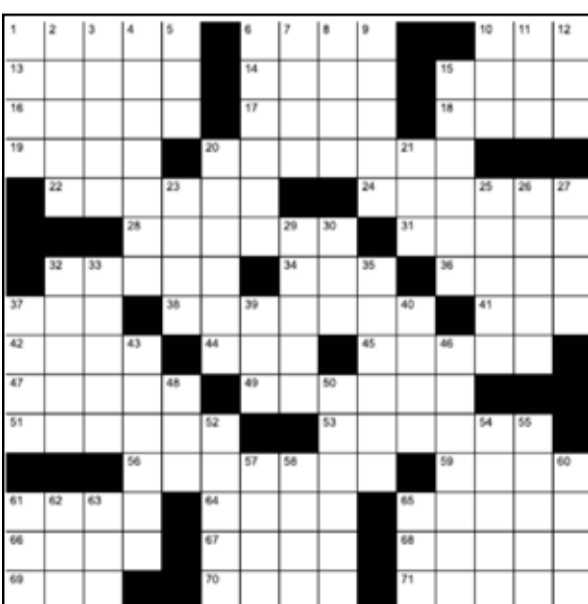
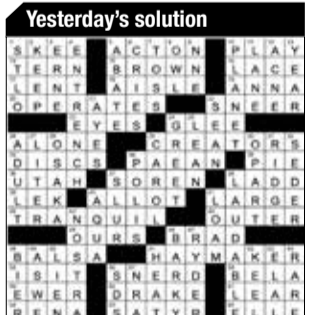
## WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	24	34	cloudy
Changchun	20	31	cloudy
Chengdu	25	34	cloudy
Chongqing	29	38	cloudy
Fuzhou	26	33	rain
Guangzhou	25	33	rain
Guiyang	20	28	showers
Haikou	27	35	cloudy
Hangzhou	25	31	rain
Harbin	21	31	cloudy
Hefei	24	30	thunderstorms
Nanjing	25	32	thunderstorms
Shanghai	27	31	rain
Taipei	26	29	rain
Wuhan	25	36	fine
Hong Kong	26	30	thunderstorms
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	17	28	fine
Frankfurt	18	27	thunderstorms
Paris	20	29	thunderstorms
London	17	24	overcast
New York	22	28	overcast

## CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Rocklike; 6- Big rig; 10- Feather scarf; 13- Monetary unit of India; 14- Tom, Dick and Harry, e.g.; 15- Shepherd; 16- Red as \_\_\_; 17- Garden spot; 18- What's \_\_\_ you?; 19- Reddish-brown gem; 20- Shah, e.g.; 22- Salty; 24- Allege; 28- Exertion; 31- Can't stand; 32- Like Fran Drescher's voice; 34- Anger; 36- Old Fords; 37- Cleaning implement; 38- Forming of objects on a lathe; 41- Narcissist's problem; 42- Rat-\_\_\_; 44- Crosses (out); 45- Dawdle; 47- Virtuous; 49- Kathmandu resident; 51- Hymn; 53- Legally responsible; 56- First; 59- Sect; 61- Lament; 64- Album unit; 65- Parsonage; 66- Not pro; 67- Meat substitute; 68- From the top; 69- Sleep stage; 70- Blackthorn fruit; 71- Roman name of Demeter;

DOWN 1- Ladies of Sp.; 2- Big brass; 3- Musical drama; 4- Teases; 5- Nevertheless; 6- Sound investment?; 7- Mother of the Valkyries; 8- Appearance; 9- Ancient region of Asia Minor; 10- You \_\_\_! Sure!; 11- Toronto's prov.; 12- Stir; 15- Crude native borax; 20- Flow; 21- Rhine whine; 23- \_\_\_ first you don't...; 25- Say; 26- Like a marsh; 27- Canadian gas brand; 29- Wash cycle; 30- Part of TNT; 32- \_\_\_ your life!; 33- Separated; 35- Involve; 37- Baby's cry; 39- Cartoon Chihuahua; 40- Big bash; 43- Falafel sauce; 46- Enclosure formed by the chest bones; 48- Sportscaster Berman; 50- Pestilence; 52- Thin fogs; 54- Pertaining to the moon; 55- Beast of Borden; 57- Shop item; 58- Poop; 60- Addition column; 61- Scratch the surface of; 62- Half and half; 63- PIN requester; 65- Brit's raincoat;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

## USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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AD

AP PHOTO



A house's entrance gate is buried under the sand at the Bedouin village of al-Ghuraifa about 100 km, 62 miles, southeast of Sharjah

NICK EL HAJJ, AL-MADAM

## CULTURAL HERITAGE

# AN ABANDONED DESERT VILLAGE AN HOUR FROM DUBAI OFFERS A GLIMPSE AT THE UAE'S HARDCRABBLE PAST

**N**ESTLED in sand dunes an hour's drive from the skyscrapers of Dubai, a desert village abandoned in the 1990s stands as an eerie relic of the rapid urbanization of the United Arab Emirates.

Built in the 1970s to house semi-nomadic Bedouin, the village of al-Ghuraifa was abandoned two decades later as oil wealth transformed the country into a global hub of commerce and tourism, home to the futuristic cities of Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

In recent years, the ghost village near the town of al-Madam in the Sharjah emirate has become something of a tourist attraction, offering an escape from the concrete jungles of the coastal cities and a glimpse at the Emirates' hardscrabble past.

The village, which comprises two rows of homes and a mosque, "can teach us a lot of the modern history of the UAE," said Ahmad Sukkar, an assistant professor at the University of Sharjah who is part of a team researching the site.

It was built as part of a public housing project after the 1971 formation of the United Arab Emirates, a federation of seven sheikhdoms. The discovery of oil 13 years earlier was just starting to reshape the country.

The village housed around 100 members of the al-Ketbi tribe, Sukkar said. They were one of several Bedouin tribes that until then had led a semi-nomadic existence, raising animals, traveling among the desert oases and visiting Dubai and Abu Dhabi when they were small port towns reliant on fishing and pearl diving.

The modern cement houses, built to ease the transition to

AP PHOTO



settled life, featured local flourishes. The interior walls were brightly colored, and some were adorned with mosaics. The homes also featured spaces where village elders could host local councils, known as "majalis" in Arabic. One house had wallpaper depicting a lush green landscape, a stark contrast to the monotonous sandscape outside.

It's unclear what exactly sparked the exodus just two decades after the homes were built.

In local lore, the residents

were driven away by evil spirits, but Sukkar says it's more likely that they left to seek a better life in the UAE's fast-growing cities. The village had limited access to electricity and water, and was buffeted by sandstorms. Families would have also had to contend with a long commute across the desert to reach government jobs and schools in Dubai.

Nowadays the desert is slowly reclaiming the village. Drifts of sand have blown into the homes, and in some rooms, they

obsure walls and nearly reach the ceiling. Only the mosque remains as it was, thanks to regular sweeping by maintenance workers from nearby al-Madam.

Some descendants of the camel-mounted Bedouin who once plied the desert sands still reside in the Emirates' rural stretches, though many now live in cities with glimmering skyscrapers, cavernous, air-conditioned malls and a sprawling network of modern highways. Expatriates from all corners of the ear-

th make up the vast majority of the UAE's population, and some have taken an interest in its humbler past.

On a recent day, tour guides could be seen leading groups of visitors through the abandoned village. It's also been the setting for music videos and social media posts featuring the foreign models, fancy cars and displays of opulence for which Dubai is now best known.

"I wonder why they left," said Nitin Panchal, an Indian expatriate visiting the site. "Could it be a genie, could be black magic? We'll never know."

The municipality recently installed fencing around the perimeter, along with a security gate, garbage bins and a parking lot. Past visitors had left graffiti, scraped décor from the walls and climbed atop fragile roofs for photos.

The new measures have drained some of the mystery from the site and raised the prospect of it becoming yet another tourist attraction in a country filled with them.

Danny Booth, an expatriate from the Isle of Man, a British Crown Dependency in the Irish Sea, said he had decided to "come and have a look before things start to change here."

"Sometimes these places are better left undisturbed, as they lose their charm when they become crowded," he said. **MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL | WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

# England beats Australia to move into final against Spain

JOHN PYE, SYDNEY

AUSTRALIA 1, ENGLAND 3

**E**NGLAND moved on to its first Women's World Cup championship game with a 3-1 victory over co-host Australia yesterday, ending the Matildas' captivating run through the tournament.

Australia superstar Sam Kerr started her first match of the tournament and scored for the Matildas but it wasn't enough to hold off European champion England.

Ella Toone scored in the 36th minute to put England up 1-0 and the Lionesses dominated possession in the first half.

Kerr's equalizer in the 63rd gave the 75,000-plus crowd some hope, but Lauren Hemp scored to restore England's lead in the 71st and provided a perfect through ball for Alessia Russo to clinch the game four minutes from the end of regulation time.

England and Spain will each



England's Rachel Daly and Georgia Stanway celebrate after the match

be playing in the Women's World Cup final for the first time when they meet at Stadium Australia on Sunday. It will be the first all-European final since 2003.

England manager Sarina Wiegman became the first coach to lead two countries to the Women's World Cup final. She guided Netherlands to the final before a loss

to the United States in 2019.

"You make it to finals, it's really special," Wiegman said in a post-match television interview. "I'd never take anything for granted, but I'm like, 'Am I here in the middle of a fairytale or something?'"

Australia will play Sweden for third place on Saturday in Brisbane.

"We wanted to dominate the game, we didn't do that. And we wanted to probably create more scoring opportunities and we didn't do that," Australia midfielder Katrina Gorry said, reflecting on her 100th game for her national team. "But you know, we've got a quick turnaround and we want to win the bronze medal."

England was playing in the semifinals for the third consecutive Women's World Cup and Australia was in the final four for the first time.

It showed, particularly in the first half and in the last 20 minutes.

England had a harder edge,

was more clinical when it counted and played a game that deprived Australia of possession for long periods.

The Australians seem to have played their final in the 7-6 penalty shootout win over France last weekend, their first win in four quarterfinal appearances at the Women's World Cup.

Australia had to wait five games for Kerr to join the starting lineup in her home tournament because of a calf muscle injury she sustained on the eve of the tournament.

After being subdued by England's defense in the first half, the superstar striker made a big entrance with an equalizer just after the hour. Kerr took the ball at half way, moved up-field in a solo run and wrong-footed a defender before launching a right-foot shot from outside that lightly touched defender Mille Bright before going into the top left corner.

Kerr started making inroads but England responded quickly, with Hemp running onto a long ball into the area and scoring with a left-foot finish after Australia defender Ellie Carpenter over-ran the ball.

Kerr missed a chance to equalize again with a header of the crossbar in the 82nd and England made them home team pay for the miss, with Russo finishing it off for England. **MDT/AP**

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**FOOTBALL | BASKETBALL | DAILY TRAININGS**

OPINION

China Daily

Editors, Xinhua

EXQUISITE DINING CREATES A SIZZLING NEW TREND IN CHINA

Few individuals have shown greater enthusiasm for the culinary arts than Tian Zeyu, a chef hailing from southwest China's Guizhou Province. This culinary master has been celebrated for his inventive take on modern regional cuisine.

One of the most sought-after dishes at his restaurant in downtown Shenzhen incorporates Bolognese pasta and aromatic Guizhou cured sausage, with a touch of white wine upon serving.

"After years of traveling abroad, I chose to come back to China, bringing along fusion dishes," Tian said. He aspires to weave together his taste memories from his travels and intertwine Chinese indigenous ingredients with global cooking techniques.

From modernized imperial dishes in quaint restaurants to local eateries showcasing top-notch ingredients from home and abroad, Chinese cuisine is blossoming in the realm of fine dining.

Tian's concepts secured his restaurant a spot on the Black Pearl Guide in February, a dining rating that has represented the taste of Chinese customers from the Chinese perspective since 2018, compared with the Michelin Guide, which was introduced in China in 2016.

The Black Pearl Guide for this year encompasses 304 restaurants across 25 cities throughout the country, as well as Tokyo, Bangkok, and Singapore. Among them, 65 are newcomers.

Fine dining goes beyond just the food; it also satisfies customers' desires for ambiance, service, and facilities. Moreover, it showcases the restaurant's distinctive blend of cultural heritage and innovation.

Cantonese cuisine master Chef Guo Yuanfeng's restaurant is situated on the 70th floor of Raffles Shenzhen, offering a panoramic view of Hong Kong. It draws a substantial number of patrons from across Guangdong, Hong Kong, Macau, and Southeast Asia.

"Rooted in Cantonese cuisine, we annually revitalize one-third of our traditional dishes, preserving the essence while infusing innovation. This approach ensures a high-quality and distinctive dining experience for every guest," said the Chef.

This growing refined fine-dining landscape is also beneficial for business. Meituan's China Fine-Dining Report, released in 2022, showed that the market for fine dining in 2021 expanded by 40 percent over the previous year.

"In 2023 alone, the newly listed restaurants in the Black Pearl Guide saw an online traffic surge of over 150 percent, and many of these restaurants have found their way onto customers' must-try lists," said Tang Yan with the Black Pearl Guide.

Statistics also reveal a surge in the number of fine dining restaurants in China, which reached 4,429 in 2022, up 1.5 percent over the previous year. Shanghai, Beijing, and Shenzhen took the lead, with Shanghai boasting 961, Beijing 688, and Shenzhen 476.

In 2022, the market size of China's fine dining industry reached a transaction volume of 55.9 billion yuan (around 7.7 billion U.S. dollars), marking a 7.8 percent rise from the previous year, said Guo Ningxuan, head of Black Pearl Guide's business analysis.

Guo added that with China's economy rapidly rebounding, the sector in China is expected to embrace even brighter prospects.

Almost a week after the Apple faithful collectively gasped at the first evidence that the iPhone's red "end call" button might soon be vacating its center position to take up residence one column to the right, it looks like it might have been mostly a false alarm.

The initial shock followed the release of last week's test, or beta, version of iOS 17, the next major update of the iPhone's operating software. That's where users first saw the end-call button, which has traditionally lived in splendid iso-

lation centered well below function buttons such as "mute," "keypad" and "speaker," instead joining its peers and taking a more assimilated position in the lower right-hand corner of a six-button block.

Now, though, images of the latest iOS 17 beta shared by multiple media sites shows the red button right back in the center of the phone dialpad, pretty close to where it's long staked out its territory. But it's still not alone; now it's in the second row, center seat of that six button block.

AP PHOTO



Priskila Ribka Jelita (center) talks with her mother, Maria Napitupulu, right, and lawyer Melisa Anggraini

ACCOUNTS OF 'BODY CHECKS' AT MISS UNIVERSE INDONESIA SHOCK THE NATION

ANDI JATMIKO, JAKARTA

THEIR dreams of representing Indonesia in the 2023 Miss Universe pageant turned to nightmares when they were forced to undergo "body checks" in front of local organizers. Now seven contestants have filed complaints with the police, accusing the organizers of sexual harassment, their lawyer said this week.

During the July 29-Aug. 3 Miss Universe Indonesia contest in the capital of Jakarta — and ahead of the show's Grand Final event — the contestants were told to strip to their underwear for "body checks" for scars or cellulite, said lawyer Melisa Anggraini.

The checks took place in a ballroom at the downtown Sari Pacific Hotel, where the contest was held, with about two dozen people present, including men. Five of the contestants said they were then photographed topless, Anggraini said.

"We have obtained some evidences, even videos showing that the organizer had carried out 'body checks,'" she added.

One of her clients, 23-year-old model Priskila Ribka Jelita who represented West Java province in the pageant, recounted her

"body check" ordeal in an interview with The Associated Press.

"When they asked me to open my bra ... I was shocked! But I couldn't speak or refuse," she said. "When I tried to cover my breast with my hand, I was even scolded and yelled at."

"I was totally confused, nervous and humiliated, especially when I was told to lift my left leg on the chair" for an inspection up the inside of her leg, Jelita said.

After news of the "body checks" leaked out, the Miss Universe Organization cut its ties with its Indonesian franchisee. The New York-based organization said in a statement late Saturday that it had decided to sever ties with PT Capella Swastika Karya, the franchisee, and its National Director Poppy Capella.

"In light of what we have learned took place at Miss Universe Indonesia, it has become clear that this franchise has not lived up to our brand standards and ethics," the Miss Universe Organization said on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter.

The organization also said it would be cancelling this year's Miss Universe Malaysia as the Indonesian franchisee also holds the

license for the neighboring country's pageant.

It said it would make arrangements for the Indonesia 2023 title holder, Fabienne Nicole Groeneveld, who won in Jakarta, to compete in the upcoming Miss Universe pageant, to be held in El Salvador later this year.

Groeneveld was not among the contestants who filed a complaint.

Jelita's mother, Maria Napitupulu, said she found out what happened to her daughter only after reading her daughter's post on Instagram, where she recounted the ordeal.

"It's very sad and this really hurts me," Napitupulu said, tears streaming down her cheeks.

In March, Indonesian beauty company PT Capella Swastika Karya took over the license for Miss Universe Indonesia from Yayasan Putri Indonesia, or YPI, an Indonesian foundation that had held the license for 30 years.

In its statement, the Miss Universe Organization said no measurements of height, weight, or body dimensions are required to join the pageant, and thanked the Indonesian contestants who have shown "bravery in speaking out." MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Lebanon An offshore drilling rig arrived at its location in the Mediterranean Sea off Lebanon's coast and will start operations in the coming weeks to search for gas. Lebanese Cabinet ministers said yesterday. The rig is expected to begin drilling in September in Lebanese waters near the border with Israel.

AP PHOTO



USA After every new indictment, Donald Trump has boasted that his standing among Republicans only improves — and he has a point. Nearly two-thirds of Republicans — 63% — now say they want the former president to run again, according to new Associated Press-NORC. That's up slightly from the 55% who said the same in April.

AP PHOTO



Hawaii Federal officials sent a mobile morgue with coroners, pathologists and technicians to Hawaii to help identify the dead, as Maui County released the first names of people killed in the wildfire that all but incinerated the historic town of Lahaina a week ago and killed at least 106 people.

AP PHOTO



Germany's Cabinet is set to approve today [Macau time] a plan to liberalize rules on cannabis, setting the scene for the European Union's most populous member to decriminalize possession of limited amounts and allow members of "cannabis clubs" to buy the substance for recreational purposes.