



**MGTO WILL PROMOTE THE NEW CROSS-BOUNDARY BUS SERVICE BETWEEN MACAU AND HK AIRPORT, WHICH STARTED OPERATIONS YESTERDAY, VIA DIGITAL INFLUENCERS**

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**UM ACADEMIC EXPECTS 2023 GAMING REVENUES TO REACH OVER MOP180B**

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**INDIA PROTESTS CHINA'S LAND CLAIM IN HIMALAYAN BORDER**

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AP PHOTO



**Indonesian** police said last night they have arrested 88 Chinese citizens for involvement in a cross-border telephone and online romance scam syndicate after receiving a tip from the Chinese security ministry. The suspects, including five women, were arrested on Batam island, next to Singapore, said Riau Islands police spokesperson Zahwani Pandra Arsyad. They were working from a shophouse, a building with mixed commercial and residential use, in an industrial park. Police believe the suspects are members of a telephone fraud and online love scam syndicate.

AP PHOTO



**Australia** The bodies of three U.S. Marines killed in a tiltrotor aircraft crash during a training exercise in Australia were retrieved from the crash scene while another Marine remained in critical condition, the Marine Corps said. The Marine V-22B Osprey with 23 Marines on board crashed Sunday in tropical forest on Melville Island while taking part in Exercise Predators Run, a drill that includes the militaries of Australia, Indonesia, the Philippines and East Timor.

AP PHOTO



**United Nations** An alarming rise in global distrust and division coupled with efforts by countries to improve the accuracy and destructive power of nuclear weapons is “a recipe for annihilation,” the United Nations chief warned. In a statement marking the International Day Against Nuclear Tests, Secretary-General António Guterres said that with nearly 13,000 nuclear weapons stockpiled around the world, “a legally binding prohibition on nuclear tests is a fundamental step in our quest for a world free of nuclear weapons.”

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# SATURDAY TO REMEMBER?

**Weather bureau warns of possibility of hoisting T8 on Saturday due to passage of super typhoon Saola in region**

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### CROSS-BORDER VEHICULAR TRAFFIC SOARS IN JULY

Cross-border vehicular traffic in July soared 3,158.7% year-on-year to 631,234 trips, on account of a relatively low base of comparison in July last year. Gross weight of containerized cargo by land in July fell 50.8% year-on-year to 3,128 tonnes: cargo passing through the checkpoint of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (2,940 tonnes) took up 94.0% of the total. In the first seven months of 2023, cross-border vehicular traffic (3,942,431 trips) leapt 105.7% year-on-year, while gross weight of containerized cargo by land (19,113 tonnes) slid 38.6%.

### FACE MASK IMPORTS DROP 99%

Total merchandise imported soared 156.6% year-on-year to MOP11.24 billion; imports of gold jewelry, beauty, cosmetic and skincare products and watches jumped 837.9%, 828.2% and 347.1% respectively, whereas imports of face masks plunged 99.3%. Total merchandise exported expanded by 68.3% year-on-year to MOP1.00 billion. From January to July this year, the total value of merchandise exported dropped 5.2% year-on-year to MOP7.36 billion, of which the value of re-exports (MOP6.49 billion) and domestic exports (MOP877 million) fell 1.5% and 25.9% respectively. The total value of merchandise imported grew 6.0% year-on-year to MOP82.82 billion.

### CHIMELONG SPACECRAFT PROJECT TO START TRIAL OPERATIONS IN SEPTEMBER

The Chimelong Spacecraft Project project is set to start trial operations in September. The Spacecraft Project covers a total construction area of 400,000 square meters. It integrates functions such as rare marine life exhibitions, environmental education and conservation, large-scale performances, interactive amusement facilities, and food specialties. Lei Wai Nong, director of the Executive Committee of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone expects that Hengqin and Macau could leverage their combined advantages in the future, promote a portfolio of cultural tourism projects, and collectively develop the cultural and tourism industry.

# MACAU'S WEAK SERVICE STANDARDS THREATEN PREMIUM SALES

ANTHONY LAM

**M**ACAU needs to improve its service standards when it comes to the sustainability of premium sales, a marketing professional told a business audience yesterday.

The France Macau Chamber of Commerce hosted the vice president of the Macau Marketing Institute, James Law, yesterday at its breakfast briefing, where the remark was made.

Founded in 2018, the marketing organization aims to enhance collaboration within Macau's marketing industry and among Macau's marketing professionals, while promoting the development of marketing in response to the economic development policies of the Chinese and the Macau SAR governments, thereby contributing to society.

With premium brands opening more stores across mainland China, the marketing professional said service is the critical area in which Macau should improve. Working with a retail chain, Law said mainland China has more and larger renowned fashion brand stores than Macau. For example, he said, there is a three-story Christian Dior mansion in Shanghai, hinting



James Law

that Macau cannot compete with the mainland in terms of size.

As such, the key area for competition is service standards. Law said that in the past, service only became an issue when a customer was in the boutique. Now it starts before the customer sets off for a return visit. A customer's awareness of a brand is maintained by social media channels sending regular greetings and new product information.

It is equally important that sales associates refrain from complimenting a customer's beauty

or body build directly. Instead, it is recommended they "guess" the customer's routine, such as how frequently the customer visits the gym or the beauty parlor, to build human interest and connection.

Price competition is unlikely in the premium jewelry, watches, leather goods or fashion sectors since they have a tax-free status "of around 10-20%," the marketing professional said. However, it is possible in the beauty, cosmetic, skincare and fragrance sectors.

Even so, Law believes stores

will be able to overcome challenges with better service standards for they are well-established in Macau.

A key area in which stores can improve to maintain their impact is client segmentation. In addition, larger chains will have more flexibility in operations and pricing, for they can cover losses in certain locations or sectors with profits from others.

Law reminded the audience about the shift in customer tastes. Before 2020, he said, it was common to see Chinese people wearing clothing with obvious logos. But now, they have become more subtle, restraining their expression.

On whether China's expected economic downturn would impact the sustainability of these global brands, Law thinks that with a large millennial middle class, consumption will still remain stable because these people have disposable savings or investment returns. Generation Z, on the other hand, raised under China's single-child policy, is understood to be wealthier and have more disposable income to spend. He said it was expected, in 2025, 40% of worldwide premium goods sales will come from Chinese nationals.

# MGTO promotes new direct route from HK Airport to Macau via influencers

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) will promote the new cross-boundary bus service between the Hong Kong International Airport Sky Pier and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, which started operations yesterday, via digital influencers, the office has said in a statement.

According to the same statement, "MGTO will invite overseas tourism travel trade and internet celebrities to experience the Hong Kong-Macau

cross-border bus service and promote it through its network."

The same source also said it would "intensify efforts to publicize the convenient transit bus measures at Hong Kong and Macau ports to international media, continue using official social media to promote it, and continue using online platforms and offline promotion activities to introduce the Hong Kong-Macau cross-border bus service."

The service will also be promoted to passengers via electronic screens at

the Hong Kong International Airport and MGTO counters.

Although the service seems more beneficial for local residents traveling abroad, the local tourism authority has said it has the purpose of encouraging visitors from countries and regions with no direct flights to Macau to travel to Macau via Hong Kong, thereby expanding international visitor sources.

Besides the convenience of directly reaching the airport and having no need to perform any immigration proce-



dures in Hong Kong, the service also includes check-in and through-che-

ck services, facilitating the transportation of the passengers' luggage.

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GAMING

# UM academic expects 2023 GGR to reach MOP180b

ANTHONY LAM

**A** University of Macau (UM) academic has estimated this year's gross gambling revenue (GGR) will reach MOP180 billion, higher than the government's expectation of MOP130 billion.

The university's Macau Research Centre yesterday organized a panel discussion on this year's policy address, expected to be released in November. Agnes Lam, director of the center, coordinated the discussion.

During his speech, Davis Fong Ka Chio, director of the Institute for the Study of Commercial Gaming (ISCG), said the industry had estimated that in October conditions will return to 2019 levels. It was also expected the city's GGR will rise to between MOP180 and MOP190 billion this year, despite the slower recovery in the junket market. He said this figure implies a recovery surpassing previous expectations. Moreover, Fong also forecast next year's GGR would exceed MOP200 billion.

Despite his optimism, he expects the government will still have a budget deficit next year, because there are a series of public projects and infrastruc-



ture beginning construction next year, implying a growing expenditure.

He also suggested the government plan early on striking a balance between tourists' experience and residents' quality of life during the upcoming Oct. 1 "Golden Week," as all hotel rooms will likely be filled.

Lam, meanwhile, suggested the government invest more in mental healthcare and traffic enhancement. She said society has "experienced a roller-coaster ride" in the past three years, and improvements in psycho-

logical wellbeing are crucially needed.

The city's GGR continued to strengthen in July, returning to about 68% of pre-pandemic levels, hitting a post-pandemic high.

Revenues last month increased MOP16.7 billion, a surge of over 4,000%, albeit from a low base as casinos shut for almost two weeks in July last year.

The first seven months of 2023 saw gaming operators make revenues of MOP96.80 billion, an increase of 263% year-on-year.

The figures suggest that the city can accumulate MOP130 billion for this year, a figure initially forecasted by the government.

Meanwhile, analysts from JP Morgan are forecasting that August will break the July's revenue record.

It also noted that premium mass GGR have probably recovered to "100% plus" of pre-pandemic levels.

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng said earlier this month that gaming revenues may hit MOP200 billion next year.

TYPHOON SAOLA

## MEDIUM POSSIBILITY OF HOISTING T8 ON SATURDAY

**T**he weather bureau has listed the possibility of Typhoon Signal No. 8 on Saturday as "medium" as it expects Typhoon Saola to strengthen as it heads for China's southern coast.

Yesterday, the typhoon was moving northwest with sustained winds of 191 kph and gusts of up to 234 kph, according to Taiwan's Central Weather Bureau, and is now considered a strong typhoon. The typhoon's eye will not hit Taiwan's mainland, but the storm's outer bands will hit the island's southern cities.

According to Macau's Meteorological and Geophysics Bureau yesterday, the typhoon is moving northwestward towards the eastern Guangdong region in the next two days.

At 4:30 p.m. yesterday, the bureau hoisted Typhoon Signal No. 1.

"It may undertake a track closer to the Pearl River Estuary later. It is expected that Saola will remain [in] the category [of a] severe typhoon or above in the next two or three days," it added.

Under the influence of the mainland's northeasterly airstream, in addition to the potential interaction with Typhoon Haikui, there are still uncertainties about the track and the intensity of Saola and its impact may persist for a longer period.

Under the influence of its associated circulation, the winds in Macau will strengthen today with showers and thunderstorms in coming days.

Meanwhile, under the joint effect of storm surge and astronomical tide, flooding may occur in low-lying areas Saturday.

Based on the current forecast track, the possibility of issuing a yellow storm surge warning signal is medium to relatively high, said the bureau.

The typhoon passed by the Philippines earlier this week, with no reports of casualties so far.

The typhoon is expected to hit China's southern Fujian and Guangdong provinces tomorrow. China's National Meteorological Center said the storm is expected to weaken as it approaches land. LV



# Hotel suspected of discharging greasy water into stormwater pipes

**A** hotel near Praça de Ferreira do Amaral has allegedly discharged greasy wastewater into the rainwater pipe network, the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) disclosed yesterday.

However, the bureau did not reveal the name of the hotel.

Earlier, when the bureau conducted regular pipeline inspections with a surveillance camera near the location, it detected an accumulation of greasy waste in a section of a rainwater pipeline. Preliminary investigations pointed to a nearby hotel releasing the wastewater into the pipeline.

As it included partner bureaus for follow-up, the bureau also pressed charges against hotel management and requested the grease be cleared. About 4 tons of grease was removed



from the pipeline.

The bureau has called on the public to avoid discharging wastewater or foreign objects into

rain waterspouts or pipelines to ensure their reliability against heavy rainfall.

Since a tropical cyclone is ed-

ging towards Macau, the bureau has also commenced a special pipeline inspection task, which has so far covered systems in the Inner Harbour, San Kio and Toi-San districts, as well as Praça de Ferreira do Amaral. The bureau is also closely monitoring the operations of rainwater pumping stations to ensure their capacities. The underground water storage near Estrada da Baía de Nossa Senhora da Esperança in Taipa has also been cleared to cope with possible heavy rainfall and extreme weather conditions.

When similar weather conditions exist, the bureau's workforce will be on stand-by and, when necessary, remotely control the operations of the pumping stations to react in real-time to changing conditions. AL



70TH GRAND PRIX

# F4 SEA TO REPLACE F4 CHINESE CHAMPIONSHIP IN THIS YEAR'S GP

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Formula 4 (F4) South East Asia (SEA) is preparing to race in Macau for the first time this November, replacing the F4 Chinese Championship which has performed the role for the last three editions since 2020, the championship promotor, Top Speed, has announced.

According to the same Shanghai-based promoter, the Macau race will be by invitation only and outside of the championship.

Starting in 2016, the F4 SEA Championship ran until 2019 with events in Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, India and Malaysia before being canceled due to the outbreak of Covid-19.

Now, the promoter, Top Speed, is using its experience organizing F4 championships such as F4 UAE and Formula Renault Middle East Championships to revive this series in a championship that, so far, has only three rounds confirmed besides the Macau weekend.

The F4 SEA is scheduled to



start in the last weekend of October in the neighboring city of Zhuhai with the first three races taking place from Oct. 27 to 29.

Participation in the Macau GP as a support race will follow on Nov. 11 and 12, and is expected to be a qualification race and final race to take place at Guia Circuit.

After this "special event," the championship moves to the Malaysian circuit of Sepang for the last two rounds taking place, respectively, on the last weekend of November and the first weekend of December.

For the time being, three major names of the Asian junior

formula championships have already been listed to participate in the championship, including the Zhuhai-based local team Asia Racing Team (ART) and Hong Kong-founded BlackArts Racing and the Philippines' Eurasia Motorsports, which joins the UAE-based R2Race Cavicel.

## NEW-GEN F4 CARS MIGHT WEIGHT THE CHOICE

According to information collected by the Times from sources familiar with the decision, the choice to run the F4 SEA in the Macau GP, instead of the Chinese F4, is based on the fact that the SEA series will, for the first time, use the Tatuus F4-T421, a second-generation chassis (with safety halo), something that the cars used on the Chinese F4 (Mygale) do not possess.

The F4 SEA also uses the Abarth 1.0L Turbo engine, which is technologically more evolved and updated than the cars in use in the Chinese championship.

The Tatuus F4-T421 is also the car chosen to run this year's launched F1 Academy series, an all-female single-seater racing championship founded by Formula One, featuring Filipino Bianca Bustamante.

## MACAU RACERS' HOPES TO RACE AT HOME DAMAGED

The most significant impact of this change affects the three local racers currently disputing the Chinese F4 Championship.

Tiago Rodrigues, current championship leader, as well as Marcus Cheong and Chui Ka Kam, see their hopes of racing at home in the major motorsports event of this part of the world severely harmed.



Eddie Kou (left) and Ng Wai Han

# Eddie Kou replaced at the helm of SAFF, Ng Wai Han new director

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE director of the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFF), Eddie Kou, will today end his term in the post. Deputy director Ng Wai Han will become SAFF director from Sept. 1 for a period of one year.

The new roles, determined by the Secretary for Administration and Justice, André Cheong, were published yesterday in the government's official gazette.

Kou will now head the Legal and Judicial Training Centre (CFJJ) in an appointment valid for one year.

The CFJJ operates under the Legal Affairs Bureau and is considered a public vocational school institution. Kou has been the SAFF director since 2015.

Kou has a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Jinan, a master's degree in economic law from Sun Yat-Sen University and a doctorate in public administration from the Renmin University of China.

Ng has a bachelor's degree in law and a master's degree in criminal law, both from Sun Yat-Sen University.

Since she joined the SAFF in June 2020, Ng has overseen sev-

eral aspects related to the reform of public administration and has been the face of the Macao One Account's new functionalities.

In June, during a press conference that presented the public consultation on the amendments to the electoral laws in Macau, Kou was misinterpreted by the simultaneous interpretation to Portuguese saying that "permanent residents of Macau who do not have Chinese nationality don't have the capacity of eligibility" for the Legislative Assembly elections. The Times later learned this was the interpreter-translator's misinterpretation of the director's words.

## HEALTH

# MO-HK SIGNS MEDICAL COOPERATION AGREEMENT

**A** five-year cooperation Agreement has been signed between Macau and Hong Kong on several areas of healthcare, the Health Bureau (SSM) announced.

A delegation from the Hong Kong Hospital Authority (HA) visited the SSM Monday, which is when the two parties signed the agreement. The agreement is a renewal of an existing document. The first agreement was signed in 2007, with two renewals in 2013 and 2018.

The agreement focuses on strengthening the joint development of the two parties in healthcare and medical administration, and promote medical cooperation within the Greater Bay Area (GBA).

A variety of fields are covered, such as academic and technical exchanges, work-

force training, information exchange, medical management, emergency medical and material assistance, case referrals, as well as the exchange of information regarding infectious diseases and experiences in diagnosis and treatment.

Before signing the agreement, the two parties had a formal meeting to debrief and forecast the future of medical cooperation.

Ho Ioc San, the chief of office of the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, the SSM, and the HA have long enjoyed a close and mutually beneficial partnership, particularly in areas such as training of medical professionals, prevention and control of infectious diseases, patient referrals, medical cooperation and technical support. **AL**





ECONOMY

# US growth for last quarter is revised down to a 2.1% annual rate

PAUL WISEMAN, WASHINGTON

**T**HE U.S. economy expanded at a 2.1% annual pace from April through June, showing continued resilience in the face of higher borrowing costs for consumers and businesses, the government said yesterday in a downgrade from its initial estimate.

The government had previously estimated that the economy expanded at a 2.4% annual rate last quarter.

The Commerce Department's second estimate of growth last quarter marked a slight acceleration from a 2% annual growth rate from January through March. Though the economy has been slowed by the Federal Reserve's strenuous drive to tame inflation with interest rate hikes, it has managed to keep expanding, with employers still hiring and consumers still spending.

Wednesday's report on the nation's gross domestic product — the total output of goods and services — showed that growth last quarter was driven by upticks in consumer spending, business investment and outlays by state and local governments. A measure of consumer prices in the report also showed inflation cooling, which could ease the pressure on the Fed to further raise interest rates.

"Lower growth and weaker increases in prices are good news for the Federal Reserve," said Eugenio Aleman, chief economist at



Raymond James.

Consumer spending, which accounts for about 70% of the U.S. economy, rose at a 1.7% annual pace in the April-June quarter — a decent gain, though down from 4.2% in the first three months of 2023. Excluding housing, business investment rose at a strong 6.1% annual rate last quarter. Investment in housing, hurt

by higher mortgage rates, fell in the second quarter.

The American economy — the world's largest — has proved surprisingly durable in the midst of the Fed's aggressive campaign to stamp out a resurgence of inflation, which last year hit a four-decade high. Since March of last year, the Fed has raised its benchmark rate 11 times, making

borrowing for everything from cars to homes to business expansions much more expensive and prompting widespread predictions of a coming recession.

Since peaking at 9.1% in June 2022, year-over-year inflation has fallen more or less steadily. Last month, it came in at 3.2% — a significant improvement though still above the Fed's 2% inflation tar-

get. Excluding volatile food and energy costs, so-called core inflation in July matched the smallest monthly rise in nearly two years.

One measure of prices in the GDP report — the personal consumption expenditures index — rose at a 2.5% annual rate last quarter, down from a 4.1% pace in the January-March quarter and the smallest increase since the end of 2020.

Since the Fed began raising rates, the economy has been bolstered by a consistently healthy job market. Employers have added a robust average of 258,000 jobs a month this year, though that average has slowed over the past three months to 218,000.

On Tuesday, a report from the government added to evidence that the job market is gradually weakening: It showed that employers posted far fewer job openings in July and that the number of people who quit their jobs tumbled for a second straight month. (When fewer people quit their jobs, it typically suggests that they aren't as confident in finding a new one.)

Still, job openings remain well above their pre-pandemic levels. The nation's unemployment rate, at 3.5%, is still barely above a half-decade low. And when the government issues the August jobs report tomorrow, economists polled by the data firm FactSet think it will show that while hiring slowed, employers still added 170,000 jobs.

The combination of tumbling inflation, continued economic growth and slower but steady hiring has raised hopes for a rare "soft landing." That's a scenario in which the Fed manages to conquer high inflation without causing a painful recession.

Wednesday's government report, its second of three estimates of last quarter's growth, will be followed by a final calculation late next month. **MDT/AP**

## CORPORATE BITS

### Sands Performing Arts Program concludes 2023 season



The Sands Performing Arts Program 2023 brought 10 top-notch national and international performances to Macau from May to August, attracting over 11,000 audience members.

This year's program of performances concluded following the staging of the

mesmerising dance drama, "Poetic Dance: The Journey of a Legendary Landscape Painting," Aug. 24-28 at The Venetian Theatre.

In addition to this show, the Sands Performing Arts Program 2023 showcased a series of captivating performances: the play "The

Peony Pavilion," performed during the final round of the China Theatre Plum Blossom Award competition; the acclaimed and legendary Cantonese opera performance "Floral Princess"; and Vienna-based quartet Janoska Ensemble's unique interpretations of classical pieces.

Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd., said: "We are pleased to leverage our diverse resources through the Sands Performing Arts Program, continually bringing world-class performance art projects from the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Europe, as well as promoting artistic exchange between Macau and other regions."

### Studio City's B.Duck marketing campaign wins PATA Gold Award



Melco Resorts & Entertainment has been named winner of the 2023 Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Award's Marketing Hospitality category for its Melco Style x B. Duck @

Studio City campaign.

Melco was selected as the category winner from 108 entries received from travel and tourism organizations by PATA's independent judging panel.

David Sisk, COO of Macau Resorts, said, "Our Studio City campaign was strategically designed and implemented to highlight and heighten the breadth of offerings available across our integrated resort, including its hotel accommodations, attractions, entertainment and food and beverage, and to attract visitors from Macau and beyond."

The Company's Studio City x B.Duck marketing campaign ran in three distinctive phases between August 2022 and April 2023 which featured seasonal tie-ins with the 2022 FIFA World Cup and Chinese New Year.



HIMALAYAS

# India protests China's land claim ahead of G20 summit President Xi is expected to attend

ASHOK SHARMA, NEW DELHI

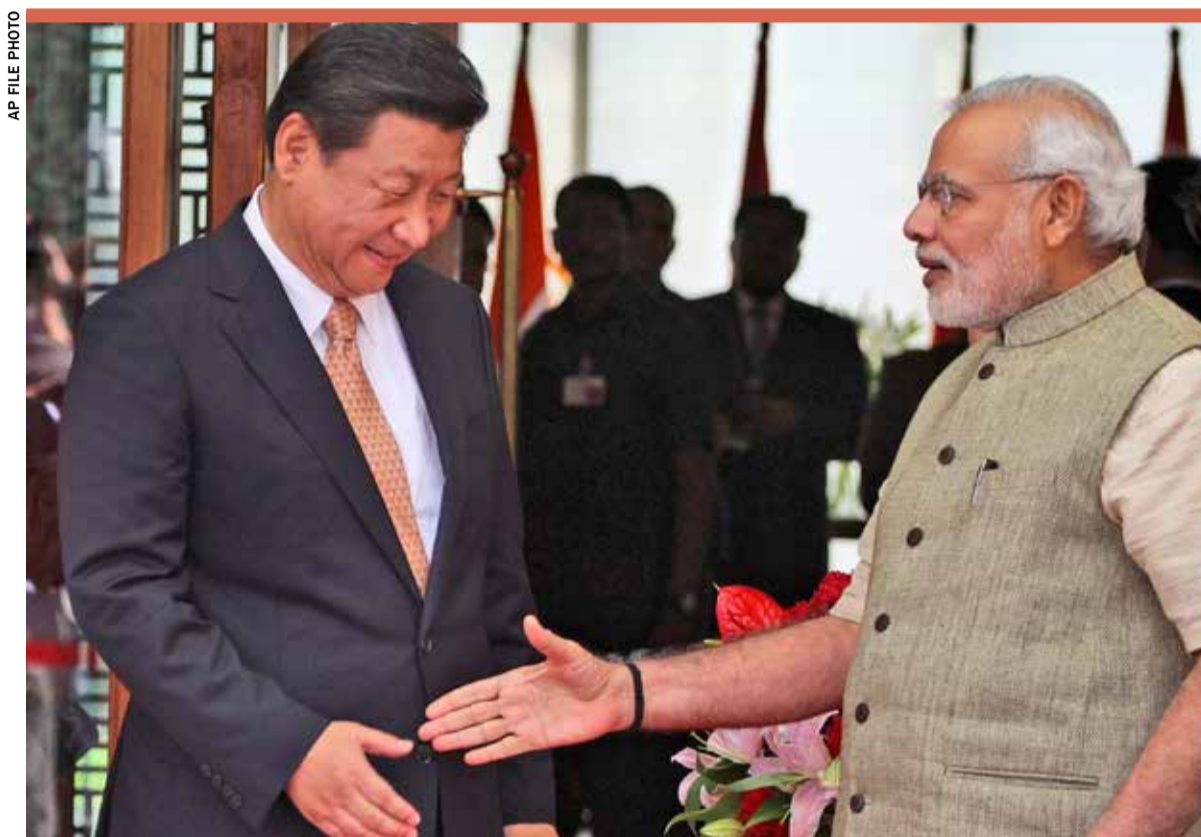
**I**NDIA is protesting a new Chinese map that lays claim to India's territory ahead of next week's Group of 20 summit in New Delhi, a foreign ministry official said, exacerbating tensions during a three-year military standoff between the two nations.

The timing of the protest is key, as Chinese President Xi Jinping is expected to attend the summit of industrialized and developing countries.

"We reject these claims as they have no basis. Such steps by the Chinese side only complicate the resolution of the boundary question," the External Affairs Ministry spokesman Arindam Bagchi said in a statement.

He said India Tuesday formally lodged the objection through diplomatic channels with the Chinese side on the so-called 2023 "standard map" of China that lays claim to India's territory.

The version of the Chinese map published on the website of the Ministry of Natural Resources clearly shows Arunachal Pradesh and the Doklam Plateau, over which the two sides have feuded, included within Chinese borders, along with Aksai Chin in the wes-



Modi informally spoke with Xi on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Johannesburg, where the former highlighted New Delhi's concerns about their unresolved border issues

tern section which China controls but India still claims.

Indian External Affairs Minister Jaishankar Subramanyam also dismissed China's claim in a television interview yesterday [Macau time].

"Making absurd claims on India's territory does not make it China's territory," Jaishankar said.

China recently refused to put visas in the passports of officials from Arunachal Pradesh state in India's northeast, using a stapled-

-in certificate instead. It also refuses to recognize India's sovereignty over its part of Kashmir and declined to send a delegation to a G20 meeting in Srinagar in May.

Last week, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi informally

spoke to China's President Xi on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Johannesburg, where Modi highlighted New Delhi's concerns about their unresolved border issues.

India's foreign ministry said the two leaders agreed to intensify efforts to de-escalate tensions at the disputed border between them and bring home thousands of their troops deployed there.

The disputed boundary has led to a three-year standoff between tens of thousands of Indian and Chinese soldiers in the Ladakh area. A clash three years ago in the region killed 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese.

"The two sides should bear in mind the overall interests of their bilateral relations and handle properly the border issue so as to jointly safeguard peace and tranquility in the border region," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said after the two leaders' meeting.

Indian and Chinese military commanders had met earlier this month in an apparent effort to stabilize the situation. A border, dubbed 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 had fought a war over their border in 1962. 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 faceoff is happening. **MDT/AP**

DIPLOMACY

# Britain's top diplomat visits China for the first time in five years

**B**ITAIN'S top diplomat, James Cleverly, began a long-awaited visit to China yesterday as the two countries attempt to stabilize their ties that have frayed badly in recent years.

The trip is the first by a U.K. foreign secretary to China in more than five years, underscoring the downturn in relations over Beijing's curbing of civil liberties in Hong Kong, a former British colony, alleged abuses against Muslim minorities in the Xinjiang region, China's support for Russia and Britain's close security ties with the United States.

Cleverly met first with Vice President Han Zheng, who said the visit will "further promote the sound and stable development of



British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly (left) and Vice President Han Zheng shake hands before a meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, yesterday

bilateral relations."

The British official said it was important to "avoid misunderstandings" in relations between the U.K. and China.

"It is important that countries like ours meet

and speak face to face on regular occasions to enhance understanding, to avoid misunderstanding and to address the challenges and differences of opinion that all countries have in bilateral relations," Cleverly said af-

ter his meeting with Zheng.

He said he had "a number of conversations with senior representatives of the Chinese government and I have raised human rights in every single one of those meetings, and I will continue to do so."

Cleverly will meet later his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, who is both the ruling Communist Party's top official for foreign affairs and recently resumed his former post as foreign minister after the dismissal of his predecessor, Qin Gang.

Cleverly has said he would raise issues such as Xinjiang and Hong Kong, and is expected to stress that Chinese influence comes with responsibility on the global stage — including helping end Russia's

invasion of Ukraine and defusing geopolitical tensions in the South China Sea.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is aiming to pursue a nuanced, non-confrontational approach to relations with Beijing. He has described China as a growing "systemic challenge" to Britain's values and interests, but he has also stressed the need to maintain a relationship with the Asian superpower.

Asked about Cleverly's agenda at a daily briefing yesterday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said that, as two of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and major economies, China and Britain should "shoulder the common respon-

sibility of promoting world peace, stability and development."

He added, however, that "issues related to Hong Kong and Xinjiang are purely China's internal affairs, and no country should interfere."

The visit is not expected to yield any major tangible results due in part to the countries' conflicting objectives, said Steve Tsang, director of the SOAS China Institute in London.

"The fact that they are talking is a positive," Tsang said. "We need to engage in conversation with China, we need to have effective communication channels with China — even if we don't agree on anything — because China does matter." **MDT/AP**



AUSTRALIA

# People to vote in a referendum on Indigenous Voice to Parliament on Oct. 14

ROD MCGUIRK,  
CANBERRA

**A**USTRALIANS will vote on Oct. 14 on a proposed law to create a so-called Indigenous Voice to Parliament in the nation's first referendum in a generation.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese yesterday announced the referendum date, triggering just over six weeks of intensifying campaigning by both sides of the argument.

The referendum would enshrine in the constitution an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, a collection of advocates aimed at giving the nation's most disadvantaged ethnic minority more say on government policy.

Albanese urged people to vote "yes" as polls showed more than 80% of Australia's Indigenous population - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - intended to do so.

"Let's be very clear about the alternative: because voting 'no' leads nowhere. It means nothing changes," Albanese told 400 Voice supporters in the city of Adelaide.

"Voting 'no' closes the door on this opportunity to move forward. I say today, don't close the door on constitutional recognition, don't close the door on listening to communities to get better results. Don't close the door on an idea that came from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people themselves, and don't close the door on the next generation of Indigenous Australians. Vote 'yes,'" Albanese added.

Australia has not held a referendum since 1999 and a referendum has not passed since 1977.

No referendum has ever passed without bipartisan support and the major parties remain divided over the Voice.

Proponents argue that giving Indigenous people a say in policies that affect their lives would lead to less disadvantage.

Indigenous Australians account for 3.8% of population and they die around eight years younger than Aus-



AP PHOTO

tralia's wider population.

Megan Davis, an Indigenous lawyer who helped craft the Voice proposal, said Outback Indigenous residents should not have move to the national capital Canberra to "have a say in the laws and policies made about their lives."

"Best practice globally tells us that human beings are more likely to flourish if they have control over their lives," Davis told the same audience as Albanese. "To dream, to have vision, to plan: this is what the Voice is about. It permits our people to have a seat at the table."

Proponents say there would be no Indigenous right of veto over government policy and lawmakers would be free to disregard the Voice's representations.

But opponents argue the courts might interpret the Voice's constitutional powers in unpredictable ways, creating legal uncertainty. They also say the Voice would be the biggest ever change in Australia's democracy that would divide the nation along racial lines.

"It is evident to me that this elite proposal is about division in our country. And it is that old rule of divide and conquer that I can't stand for," Indigenous opposition Sen. Jacinta Nampijinpa Price told reporters.

"I'm not going to allow a

line to run straight through the middle of my family within our constitution," Price added, referring to her mixed-race heritage.

Albanese has long maintained his confidence that the referendum would succeed despite opinion polls showing that the marginal majority support for the Voice has waned in recent months as the public debate has become more heated and divisive.

Indigenous businessman Warren Mundine, a vocal Indigenous anti-Voice campaigner, recently revealed that the personal abuse he had received over his stance had left him with suicidal thoughts.

"Everyone knows the pressure that was put on me to send me almost to suicidal positions and this is what this prime minister has done," Mundine told reporters.

"This prime minister from day one had attacked people who had a different opinion to him, called them names and that opened up the floor for the whole division to start, with all the horrible racial abuse, with all the horrible bigotry that's been going on out there and it's all Albo. He's the one who started this," said Mundine, referring to the prime minister by his nickname.

Voice proponents complain that social media companies have not done

enough to exclude racial abuse from the argument.

Opponents including opposition leader Peter Dutton, Australia's alternative

prime minister, argue the system is stacked in favor of the "yes" vote.

"Just make it a fair process instead of trying to load the system and trying to skew it in favor of the 'yes' vote," Dutton said.

The system requires voters to write "yes" or "no" on their ballot. But the Australian Electoral Commission, which runs federal elections and referendums, has said it will accept a tick as an affirmative vote, but a cross would be an invalid vote.

Opponents of the Voice want crosses to be added to the "no" tally.

Voice advocates accuse Dutton of attempting to undermine faith in the voting system.

The commission said the ruling that a cross would be open to interpretation and therefore invalid had been unchanged since 1988. The proportion of invalid votes,

including those marked with crosses, at the last referendum was only 0.86% of the ballots cast, the commission said.

Most observers agree that the referendum result is unlikely to turn on the tiny proportion of ballots marked with crosses.

Opponents also accuse the government of failing to provide sufficient detail about who will be part of the Voice and how it will work.

"If you don't know, vote 'no,'" No campaigners urge uncertain voters.

While some opponents argue the Voice proposal is too radical, others argue that it is not radical enough.

Independent Indigenous Sen. Lidia Thorpe told the National Press Club this month that the Voice would be a "powerless advisory body" that insulted the intelligence of Indigenous Australians. **MDT/AP**

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PUTIN'S WAR

# Russia earns less from oil and spends more on war; sanctions are working like slow poison

DAVID MCHUGH

**T**HE Russian ruble's wobble in value has exposed a crack in President Vladimir Putin's fortress economy, a vulnerability quickly plastered over by the Kremlin's economic team in a move that allowed the currency to regain its footing, at least for now.

Yet the patch — an emergency interest rate increase — cannot hide the dilemma at the heart of the Russian economy: how to fund the military while not undermining the national currency and overheating the economy with corrosive and politically embarrassing inflation.

Life in Moscow presents a facade of normality despite sweeping sanctions tied to the war in Ukraine and the departure of hundreds of name-brand Western companies.

Outdoor seating at restaurants and bars on the popular Bolshaya Nikitskaya street were packed on a recent evening with well-dressed residents enjoying balmy August weather. Loud music from DJs boomed from a nearby courtyard eatery. Malls haven't changed at first glance, but where Zara and H&M once stood, shoppers find new clothing brands Maag and Vilet.

And doughnut seller Krunchy Dream could easily be mistaken for the Krispy Kreme that once stood in its place in Evropeysky mall, even the branding is similar. In the absence of Apple Pay, banks provide stickers with a chip that enables mobile payment.

Key economic gauges are also in normal ranges. Unemployment is low, economic growth is better than many had expected and inflation is moderate by Russian standards — at 4% in July — though hard on those with limited incomes.

People in Moscow — where criticism of the military can bring jail time and some only provided their first names — expressed a mix of unease and resignation.

Retiree Vladimir Chermesyev, 68, recalled that the



troubles after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 were delayed by several years.

"I think that although I am a pensioner, and there is not much income, I don't feel much yet," Chermesyev said, "but there is anxiety — sometimes my blood pressure rises."

Others noted how prices constantly changed.

Yuliana, a 38-year-old entrepreneur, was more concerned: "Our condition has deteriorated sharply, it's no good. ... It won't end today or tomorrow, and not the day after tomorrow. I think more than one generation will pay for this story."

For businesses in need of supplies, they're turning to alternatives.

Andrei Lavrov, owner of the Smile Atelier dental clinic, said he's had to get sutures and silicone from Asia because he uses "quite a lot" of imported materials.

"But, by the way, no disaster happened," he said. "If something is no longer supplied, then it is easily replaced through parallel channels."

Some Russian-made sutures are "very high-quality material," he said, as local industry picks up the slack: "A certain substitution is taking place."

Still, imports to Russia are rebounding as goods come through nearby countries such as Kazakhstan and Armenia, avoiding sanctions.

Government spending on the

military and social programs is spreading cash to people and companies, who are using some of it on imported products.

Labor shortages, stemming from people leaving the country, also are supporting salaries, while government-subsidized mortgages help maintain real estate activity.

Some blows to the economy are obvious, particularly the auto industry after Western manufacturers abandoned their Russian businesses. But Chinese vehicle imports are gaining ground.

Foreign travel is painfully expensive and limited by visa and airline bans, though the rich manage as always and those with modest incomes couldn't afford it to begin with.

When it comes to the pressure on the ruble, Russia, one of the world's biggest oil suppliers, is earning less from selling its oil because of Western sanctions. That's narrowing the country's trade surplus with the rest of the world because Russian people and companies also are buying more products from abroad.

Earning more from exports than what is spent on imports typically supports the ruble. While the shrinking trade surplus has led the currency to steadily decline, Moscow has benefited because a weaker exchange rate actually helps the government pay its bills.

That's because dollars earned from oil can be exchan-

ged for a larger amount of rubles to spend on government agencies, workers' wages and pensions.

But Russia's currency dipped too far for the Kremlin's liking — below 100 rubles to the dollar on Aug. 14, a psychologically important level. It prompted the central bank to carry out a large emergency interest rate hike of 3.5 percentage points aimed at cooling local demand for imports. The currency rose to 92 to the dollar in the days following the rate hike but has steadily slipped since; it traded at 95.5 to the dollar on Tuesday.

While weaker than last year's levels of about 60 rubles to the dollar, the lower exchange rate isn't a crisis yet, if a freefall can be avoided.

The Kremlin has worked to sanctions-proof the economy following the annexation of Ukraine's Crimea Peninsula in 2014. It also shifted food production to local companies by banning EU imports and pushed manufacturers to source parts locally.

Thanks to oil earnings, the government has negligible debt and robust reserves, though about half of that stockpile has been frozen by sanctions.

Longer term, however, Russia's economy is facing a "slow burn" under pressure from sanctions and Putin's war spending, said Robin Brooks, chief economist with the Institute of International Finance. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1959 ANGLO-US TV DEBATE MAKES HISTORY



British prime minister Harold Macmillan and American president Dwight Eisenhower have given an historic live television broadcast from Downing Street.

Among the subjects the two leaders discussed were world peace and global poverty.

President Eisenhower told the prime minister he thought Anglo-American relations had never been stronger.

But, he said, the two countries' efforts to achieve world peace must remain at the top of the agenda.

He said: "When we are talking about peace, we're talking about something that's the imperative of our time.

"War has become so frightening in its capacity for destruction of the whole of civilisation that we... have the responsibility of making sure that our actions... are all directed by this single purpose."

The two men discussed the threat of Communism and the Anglo-American efforts being made to control the Soviet Union's attempts to dominate Western Europe, particularly in Berlin.

Mr Macmillan called for a summit meeting to discuss the Cold War and ways to bring it to an end - Mr Eisenhower indicated he had reservations on that subject.

The debate then moved to the topic of global poverty and the need to tackle it through expanding world trade and contact between countries.

The president said: "There are one billion, seven hundred million people living today without sufficient food, clothing and health facilities."

Mr Macmillan then spoke about the Commonwealth and its role in improving conditions for millions around the world.

"Don't let anyone in America think it's the sun setting on the British Empire, it's the dawn rising on the new Commonwealth and it's all part of the same story," he said.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

During his trip he held talks with the French President General Charles de Gaulle in Paris, where he also met with Italian Prime Minister Signor Segni and Nato personalities. He then held talks with German Chancellor, Dr Konrad Adenauer in Bonn. The main purpose of the round of meetings was to discuss issues such as the future status of Berlin and to strengthen Western ranks against any future Soviet pressure on Berlin. It was during the British leg of his tour that the historic television broadcast was made, which according to sources at the White House, was received very favourably around world. It was the first time that such a broadcast had ever been made and initial protests by the Labour party - fearing the event would jeopardise its chances in the forthcoming General Election - were withdrawn.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Be sure to pay attention to your bank account. Passion is inevitable and commitments can be made during the heat of the night. Your health may have suffered due to neglect or abuse.

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20  
A friendship might suffer if money becomes an issue. You'll be dropping friends for no apparent reason. Uncertainties about your home may cause tension.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21  
Relatives may be less than easy to deal with. Don't let your work and your personal life interfere with each other. You can enjoy short trips.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
Don't be disappointed if you don't get your way emotionally. The great outdoors will allow you to teach youngsters some of the things you learned when growing up.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
Emotional disputes will only end in sorrow. Travel will be to your advantage; however, it might be expensive. Frustrations and limitations could cause anxiety today.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
Children's needs could be more costly than you anticipated. You are best to be accommodating for the time being. Sudden romantic infatuations won't be lasting.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
Invite friends over rather than spending money on lavish entertainment. Work quietly at your own goals and forget about situations that you can do little about.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
Trips will be favorable for business as well as pleasure. You may want to put everyone to work on a project that will keep them all too busy to complain.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
You may become rundown if you take on too much. Your main concern will be to spend as little as possible of your own cash in the process.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
Romance is quite possible if you are willing to approach someone who interests you. Passion is inevitable and commitments can be made during the heat of the night.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
Avoid any petty ego confrontations; they could lead to estrangement if you aren't careful. Travel could turn out to be more exciting than you imagined.

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
You have to believe in yourself and your talents. Your colorful conversation may attract new mates. You may experience financial loss if you don't use good judgment.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sanson**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

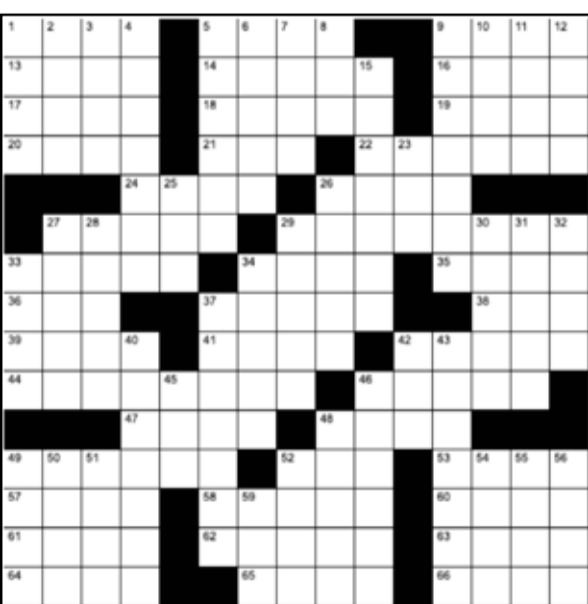
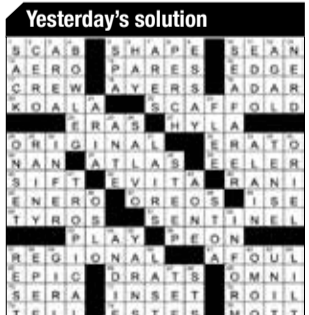
**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	19	29	fine
Changchun	13	24	cloudy
Chengdu	20	29	showers
Chongqing	23	33	fine
Fuzhou	26	31	rain
Guangzhou	25	34	cloudy
Guiyang	15	26	fine
Haikou	25	32	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	20	27	rain
Harbin	14	22	showers
Hefei	19	30	fine
Nanjing	20	28	cloudy
Shanghai	21	29	rain
Taipei	26	30	rain
Wuhan	20	31	fine
Hong Kong	26	30	cloudy
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	15	27	fine
Frankfurt	13	21	overcast
Paris	17	19	rain
London	15	17	rain
New York	16	26	overcast

**CROSSWORDS**

**ACROSS** 1- Trace; 5- British nobleman; 9- Go downhill fast?; 13- Chieftain, usually in Africa; 14- Lost a lap; 16- \_\_\_ Bell; 17- Editor Wintour; 18- Young dog; 19- Atop; 20- Composition in verse; 21- Rage; 22- Teat; 24- Hammer end; 26- Created; 27- Small mountains; 29- Branchlike; 33- Party; 34- Ethereal; Prefix; 35- It's used to walk the dog; 36- Latin I verb; 37- Room at the top; 38- Strange; 39- Actress Hatcher; 41- It may be floated; 42- Scuffle; 44- Any unnamed object; 46- Grinder; 47- Canadian tribe; 48- Raise to third power; 49- Fungus; 52- TV part; 53- Conclusion; 57- King of the Huns; 58- Heron, usually white; 60- Math course; 61- Bridle part; 62- Muse of poetry in Greek mythology; 63- Beige; 64- Kind of alert; 65- Sign; 66- Go out with;

**DOWN** 1- Pile; 2- \_\_\_ expert, but...; 3- Baseball team; 4- Tread underfoot; 5- Spots; 6- Done to \_\_\_; 7- Thick cord; 8- Chop off; 9- Astonish; 10- Reindeer herder; 11- Environmental sci.; 12- Ready to eat; 15- Energetic; 23- Despot Amin; 25- Building add-on; 26- San Rafael's county; 27- Macho guys; 28- Creamy white; 29- Put a new price on; 30- Alley Oop's girlfriend; 31- U-Haul competitor; 32- Method; 33- Pro follower; 34- Compensate; 37- Person to whom property is transferred; 40- Pruritus; 42- Crowd; 43- Voted into a seat; 45- Charlemagne's realm; Abbr.; 46- Flesh of sheep; 48- El Greco's birthplace; 49- Metallica drummer Ulrich; 50- News bit; 51- Muse of history; 52- Stuff; 54- Killer whale; 55- Gossip; 56- Malaria symptom; 59- Miracle-\_\_\_;



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



## RELIGION

# POPE HEADS TO MONGOLIA TO MINISTER TO ITS FEW CATHOLICS AND COMPLETE CENTURIES-OLD EAST-WEST MISSION

NICOLE WINFIELD,  
VATICAN CITY

**W**HEN Pope Francis travels to Mongolia this week, he will in some ways be completing a mission begun by the 13th-century Pope Innocent IV, who dispatched emissaries east to ascertain the intentions of the rapidly expanding Mongol Empire and beseech its leaders to halt the bloodshed and convert.

Those medieval exchanges between Roman pope and Mongolian khan were full of bellicose demands for submission and conversion, with each side claiming to be acting in the name of God, according to texts of the letters that survive.

But the exchanges also showed mutual respect at a time when the Catholic Church was waging Crusades and the Mongol Empire was conquering lands as far west as Hungary in what would become the largest contiguous land empire in world history.

Some 800 years later, Francis won't be testing new diplomatic waters or seeking to proselytize Mongolia's mostly Buddhist people when he arrives in the capital Ulaanbaatar tomorrow for a four-day visit.

His trip is nevertheless a historic meeting of East and West, the first-ever visit by a Roman pontiff to Mongolia to minister to one of the tiniest, newest Catholic communities in the world.

"In a way, what's happened is that both sides have moved on," said Christopher Atwood, professor of Mongolian and Chinese frontier and ethnic history at the University of Pennsylvania. "Once upon a time, it was either/or: Either the world was ruled by the pope, or the world was ruled by the Mongol Empire. And now I think both sides are much more tolerant."

Officially, there are only 1,450 Catholics in Mongolia and the Catholic Church has only had a sanctioned presence since 1992, after Mongolia shrugged off its Soviet-allied communist government and enshrined religious freedom in its constitution. Francis last year upped the Mongolian church's standing when he made a cardinal out of its leader, the Italian missionary Giorgio Marengo.

"It is amazing (for the pope) to come to a country that is not known to the world for its Catholicism," said Uugantsetseg Tungalag, a Catholic who works with Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity in a nursing home in the



A mural showing Pope Francis with depiction of nomadic daily life in Mongolian outside a church in Ulaanbaatar

capital. "When the pope visits us, other countries will learn that it has been 30 years since Catholicism came to Mongolia."

The Mongol Empire under its famed founder Genghis Khan was known for tolerating people of different faiths among those it conquered, and Francis will likely emphasize that tradition of religious coexistence when he presides over an interfaith meeting Sunday. It was after all, one of Genghis Khan's descendants, Kublai Khan, who welcomed Marco Polo into his court in Mongol-ruled China, providing the Venetian merchant with the experiences that would give Europe one of the best written accounts of Asia, its culture, geography and people.

Invited to Francis' interfaith event are Mongolian Buddhists, Jewish, Muslim and Shinto representatives as well as members of Christian churches that have established a presence in Mongolia in the last 30 years, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, which officially claims more than 12,500 members in Mongolia in 22 congregations.

In a message to Mongolians ahead of his visit, Francis emphasized their interfaith traditions and said he was travelling to the "heart of Asia" as a brother to all.

"It is a much-desired visit, which will be an opportunity to embrace a Church that is small in number, but vibrant in faith and great in charity; and also to meet at close quarters a noble, wise

people, with a strong religious tradition that I will have the honor of getting to know, especially in the context of an interreligious event," Francis said Sunday.

Aside from the historic first, Francis' trip holds great geopolitical import: With Mongolia sandwiched between China and Russia, Francis will be travelling to a region that has long been one of the thorniest for the Holy See to negotiate.

Francis will fly through Chinese airspace in both directions, allowing him a rare opportunity to send an official telegram of greetings to President Xi Jinping at a time when Vatican-Chinese relations are once again strained over the nomination of Chinese bishops.

As Russia's war in Ukraine and China's crackdown on religious minorities grind on, Francis will be visiting a relatively neutral player but one that is striving to show its regional importance in the shadow of its two powerful neighbors, said Manduhai Buyandelger, a professor of anthropology at MIT and a Mongolia scholar.

"I think Mongolia is a very safe arena for the pope to land to demonstrate his outreach, as well as to show Mongolia's belonging on equal stage with the rest of the world," she said from Ulaanbaatar.

Mongolia's environmental precariousness, climate shocks and the increasing desertification of its land are likely to be raised by the pope, given he has made

combatting climate change and addressing their impacts on vulnerable peoples a priority of his 10-year pontificate.

Mongolia, a vast, landlocked country historically afflicted by weather extremes, is considered to be one of the most affected by climate change. The country has already experienced a 2.1-degree Celsius (3.8-degree Fahrenheit) increase in average temperatures over the past 70 years, and an estimated 77% of its land is degraded because of overgrazing and climate change, according to the U.N. Development Program.

The cycles of dry, hot summers followed by harsh, snowy winters are particularly devastating for Mongolia's nomadic herders, since their livestock are less able to fatten up on grass in summer before cold winters, said Nicola Di Cosmo, a Mongolian historian and professor of East Asian Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey.

"If these events become more and more common and more frequent ... this change interferes with this very delicate pastoral economy, which is a delicate balance between the resources of the grassland and the animals using those resources," Di Cosmo said.

Already, many of Mongolia's herders, who comprised about a third of the population of 3.3 million, have abandoned their traditional livelihoods to settle around Mongolia's capital, stressing social services in a country

where already nearly 1 in 3 people live in poverty.

More recently, Mongolia has turned to extraction industries, particularly copper, coal, gold, to fuel the economy, which gets more than 90% of its export revenue from minerals. Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said Francis would likely refer to this trend in his remarks; Francis has frequently spoken out about the harm caused by extraction industries, particularly on the natural environment and local populations.

Munkh-Erdene Lkhamsuren, a professor of anthropology at the National University of Mongolia, said he hoped Francis would speak out about "predatory" Western mining companies which, he said, together with Mongolian officials, are robbing Mongolia of its natural wealth.

In December, hundreds of people braved freezing cold temperatures in the capital to protest corruption in Mongolia's trade with China over the alleged theft of 385,000 tons of coal.

The government has declared 2023 to be an "anti-corruption year" and says it is carrying out a five-part plan based on Transparency International, the global anti-graft watchdog that ranked Mongolia 116th last year in its corruption perceptions index.

"It is well known fact that most common Mongolians now see their country as a victim of a neo-colonialism," Lkhamsuren said. **MDT/AP**



**BASKETBALL**

# USA rolls past Jordan 110-62. Now Round 2 of World Cup awaits

TIM REYNOLDS, MANILA

**A**NOTHER game, another blowout for the U.S. at the Basketball World Cup. And now the competition figures to get considerably tougher.

Anthony Edwards scored 22 points and the Americans completed an easy march through the group stage yesterday, beating Jordan 110-62 to improve to 3-0 and finish atop Group C. Second-round play for the U.S. starts Friday against Montenegro.

"Staying aggressive, staying confident, it's just something that I do," Edwards said. "It paid off today."

Bobby Portis scored 13 for the U.S., which led by 19 after one quarter and 62-33 at the half. Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 12 and Jalen Brunson added 10.

"It's always fun when everybody gets to play and contribute," U.S. coach Steve Kerr said.

Rondae Hollis-Jefferson — the



only player with any NBA experience on Jordan's roster — led his team with 20 points and seven rebounds. Jordan finished group

play 0-3 and will play in the classification round for non-second-round teams starting Thursday.

The U.S. improved to 8-0 ove-

ral this summer, counting five exhibitions played on the way to Manila. They're one of three teams that won all three group-stage games by at least 20 points — joining Group H winner Canada and Group D winner Lithuania, which will face the Americans in the second-round finale on Sunday.

This one was the easiest of the three for the U.S., which beat New Zealand by 27 in its opener and Greece by 28 on Monday.

"We tried to slow them down as much as possible," Jordan coach Wesam Al-Sous said. "We failed. They scored 110 points."

Hollis-Jefferson has tried to fashion his game — not to mention his current haircut, it seems, since there is a striking similarity — after Los Angeles Lakers legend Kobe Bryant, even wearing No. 24 on his jersey for Jordan this summer.

If this was his audition to get back to the NBA, after not playing in the league since June 2021, it

wasn't bad. He had 66 points in Jordan's first two games at the World Cup, then shot 6 for 16 yesterday — while again getting the occasional "Kobe! Kobe!" chants from some in the crowd in Manila.

Hollis-Jefferson spent a short stint with Edwards and Minnesota before the start of the 2020-21 season. Hollis-Jefferson never played a real game with the Timberwolves, but Edwards remembered their time together.

"He was kind of like my vet when I was a rookie," Edwards said. "We haven't seen each other since then, so it was fun to catch up."

**TIP-INS**

**USA:** The U.S. also won all its group games by at least 20 points at the 2014 tournament, when there were five games in that round and not three. ... FanDuel Sportsbook listed the Americans as 41.5-point favorites.

**Jordan:** It was the first time Jordan played the U.S. in a senior men's competition. U.S. teams beat Jordan in World University Games matchups in 1979 and 1985 (both times by exactly 110 points, not a typo), and by 10 at the U19 world championship in 1995. ... After playing Egypt on Thursday, Jordan finishes its World Cup stay against Mexico on Saturday. **MDT/AP**

AD

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OPINION

The Conversation

Armin Langer, University of Florida

**QURAN BURNING IN SWEDEN PROMPTS DEBATE ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION VS INCITEMENT OF HATRED**

The Swedish government is concerned about national security following several incidents involving the burning of the Quran that have provoked demonstrations and outrage from Muslim-majority countries.

The spate of Quran-burning incidents followed an act of desecration by far-right activist Rasmus Paludan on Jan. 21, 2023, in front of the Turkish embassy in Stockholm. On Aug. 25, Denmark's government said it would "criminalize" desecration of religious objects and moved a bill banning the burning of scriptures.

While freedom of expression is a fundamental human right in liberal democracies, the right to express one's opinion can become complex when expressing one's views clashes with the religious and cultural beliefs of others and when this rhetoric veers into hate speech.

As a scholar of European studies, I'm interested in how modern European societies are trying to navigate the fine line between freedom of expression and the need to prevent incitement of hatred; a few are introducing laws specifically addressing hate speech.

Several countries in Europe retain blasphemy laws, but their approaches are highly varied. Often the laws may not prevent present-day acts like dishonoring of religious texts.

The Quran burnings in Sweden and Denmark, aren't random – they're part of a broader agenda of targeting Muslims that's being pushed by far-right groups across Europe.

In many European countries, lawmakers and others are asking whether these book burnings should be seen as exercises of free expression or more as incitement based on religion.

A few countries are introducing new legislation to curb hate speech against religious communities. For example, in 2006 England got rid of the blasphemy law and introduced The Racial and Religious Hatred Act, which makes it an offense to stir up religious hatred. After repealing its blasphemy law in 2020, Ireland has been discussing the introduction of a hate speech law, which will criminalize any communication or behavior that is likely to incite violence or hatred.

The police argued that the Quran burning wasn't just about religion but specifically targeted the Muslim community. This was evident, according to the authorities, as the incident took place in front of a mosque during the Islamic holiday of Eid, setting it apart from other burnings that took place outside of the Swedish Royal Palace, the Turkish and Iraqi embassies and other public spaces. Because of the existing hate speech law focusing on incitement against minorities rather than religions, the activist received a fine from the police.

In recent weeks, some have called for a stricter application of the hate speech law and have demanded a ban on all Quran-burning events for implicitly inciting hatred against Muslims.

This discussion isn't limited to Europe alone. Even in the U.S., there's an ongoing debate about the boundaries of free speech. The First Amendment of the Constitution allows free speech, which some can interpret as the right to burn holy books.

As societies change, I believe it has become important to recognize when freedom of speech has turned into promoting hatred. Figuring out where this boundary lies, understanding the standards applied and uncovering potential biases can spark important conversations. While a solution that applies to every single country may not exist, it's essential to engage in this dialogue, recognizing its complexity and the varying perspectives across societies.

[Abridged]

The Biden administration said yesterday [Macau time] that it detected and stopped a network attempting to smuggle people from Uzbekistan into the United States and that at least one member of the network had links to a foreign terrorist group.

U.S. officials do not believe the Uzbek nationals who used the smuggling network had any terrorist ties or were planning a terrorist attack, said a statement from National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson.

The statement did not specify the foreign terrorist group, but a U.S. official told The Associated Press that it was the Islamic State.

The official was not authorized to speak about the ongoing investigation and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The U.S. worked with governments overseas to detain key members of the smuggling network, including the person with the foreign terrorism links, the NSC said. The statement did not specify how the person was linked to the terrorist group or what governments the U.S. worked with to apprehend the smugglers.

The FBI, which has been investigating, also stressed that it had not identified any specific terrorism threat associated with the migrants.



Forensic officers and a rescue worker arrive at a house where a woman and her two sons were killed and her husband was found severely injured, in Samut Prakan province

THAILAND

**POLICE SAY MAN KILLS HIS FAMILY AFTER ONLINE SCAM LEAVES THEM IN MASSIVE DEBT**

At least 11 people are suspected to be involved with a loan scam that allegedly drove a man to kill his wife and two young boys before trying to take his own life in their family home, Thai police said yesterday.

Sanit Dokmai has been charged with premeditated murder after police found the bodies of his wife and two sons, who were 9 and 13, with slash wounds Monday inside a house in Samut Prakan province, Bangkok's eastern suburb, said local police chief Rangsan Kamsook.

Rangsan said Sanit was conscious yesterday but in critical condition and unable to speak nor eat due to severe wounds at his throat.

Police believe Sanit's motive came from a huge debt the family was in. Police said Sanit is a debt guarantor for his friend in an amount of 400,000 baht (\$11,400). The friend ran away and left Sanit to pay off the debt, then his wife tried to take out a loan to help and got

scammed, said provincial police chief Pallop Araemlah.

Rangsan said the investigation of the money trail has allowed the police to obtain an arrest warrant on fraud and a violation of the Computer Crime Act for nine Thais and two Cambodians.

According to the police, Sanit's wife applied for a loan online and was tricked into transferring money that scammers claimed to be for different processing fees. Local chief Rangsan said she filed a complaint to police last week saying she lost over 1.7 million baht (\$48,000).

Thailand has struggled to cope with a recent explosion of cyber-crime and scam cases. In 2022, the Thai police said they received over 200,000 online reports of scam totaling an estimated 30 billion baht (\$855 million) or more.

A new report from the United Nations said criminal gangs have forced hundreds of thousands of people in Southeast Asia

into participating in unlawful online scam operations involving billions of dollars worth of revenues, especially in Myanmar and Cambodia. Laos, the Philippines and Thailand were also cited among the main countries of destination or transit for victims of false recruitment.

In an attempt to tackle the problem, Thailand enacted a new law earlier this year that allows banks to immediately freeze suspicious accounts for 72 hours without requiring victims of scams to submit their police report. Once a victim transfers money to a scammer, that sum usually is quickly transferred to several other accounts, making it extremely difficult for the authorities to track and retrieve it.

Earlier in August, Thailand's minister of Digital Economy and Society threatened to shut down Facebook, accusing the social media platform of not thoroughly screening the advertisements it runs, leaving people vulnerable to costly scams. MDT/AP

**Greece** Two rescue operations were underway yesterday for migrants crammed on board sailboats, one far off the coast of a western Greek island and the other off the coast of a Cycladic island near the Greek capital, the coast guard said. A group of 76 people were rescued from a sailing boat in distress 64 nautical miles southwest of the Ionian Sea island of Zakynthos in western Greece, the coast guard said. All were taken on board a passing Egyptian-flagged cargo ship, and there were no reports of any missing people.

**Switzerland** A former member of Belarus President Lukashenko's special security forces is set to face trial in Switzerland next month for the forced disappearances of political opponents in the late 1990s, according to human rights and victims advocacy groups yesterday. Activists and opponents called it a "watershed moment" in international justice that could trigger prosecutions abroad of other Belarus officials — including its strongman leader. The case against Yuri Harauski, a former member of a military unit known as SOBR, is set to take place Sept. 19-20 in the northern Swiss regional court of St. Gallen and centers on the enforced disappearances of three people in 1999.



**India's** moon rover confirmed the presence of sulfur and detected several other elements near the lunar south pole as it searches for signs of frozen water nearly a week after its historic moon landing, India's space agency said. The rover's laser-induced spectroscope instrument also detected aluminum, iron, calcium, chromium, titanium, manganese, oxygen and silicon on the lunar surface, the Indian Space Research Organization, or ISRO, said in a post on its website.