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THE FINAL TWO SHOWS OF THIS YEAR'S INTERNATIONAL FIREWORKS DISPLAY CONTEST WILL BE HELD TONIGHT, MGTO ANNOUNCED

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10 YEARS ON, CHINA TOUTS BRI AS AN ALTERNATIVE FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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AP PHOTO



Japan An executive at Japanese publishing house Kadokawa was found guilty yesterday of bribing a former Tokyo Olympics organizing committee member. Toshiyuki Yoshihara, charged with paying 69 million yen to Haruyuki Takahashi, was given a two-year prison sentence, suspended for four years. That means he avoids prison, as long as he doesn't break the law in the next four years.

AP PHOTO



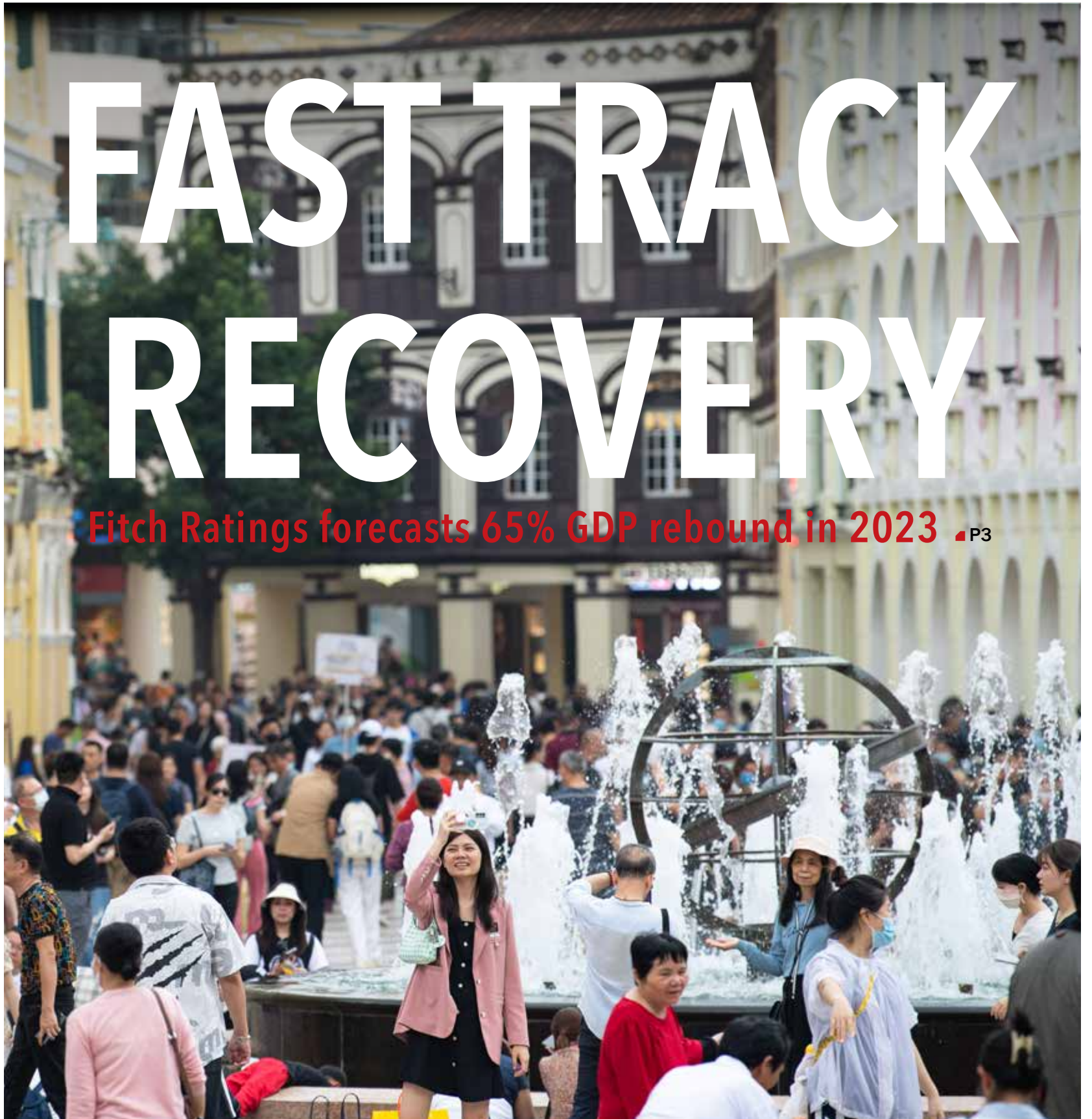
Russia will move to revoke the ratification of a global nuclear test ban to put itself on par with the United States but will only resume nuclear tests if Washington does it first, a senior Russian diplomat said yesterday. Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told reporters that Moscow will rescind the ratification of the nuclear test ban treaty to "mirror" the action by the U.S. He added that if the U.S. conducts a nuclear test, "we will be forced to mirror that as well."

AP PHOTO



UN, aid groups and public health experts expressed growing concerns about humanitarian needs in Palestinian areas as Israel ratchets up a muscular military riposte and a lockdown of Gaza, after the weekend attack by Hamas militants who killed and kidnapped hundreds of civilians in Israel. U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres led the clarion call, endeavoring to put the focus on civilians in both Israel and Gaza and renewing his condemnation of the fatalities and hostage-takings by Hamas.

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SPORTS

MACAU TEAM KICKS OFF CAMPAIGN TO WORLD CUP 2026 IN YANGON

THE Macau football team begins its campaign in the Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 1 for the FIFA World Cup 2026 tomorrow.

The local team will play against Myanmar in Yangon at 5:30 p.m. (Macau time) with the hopes of securing a place in the qualifiers group stage.

Macau is part of a quartet of teams striving to advance from the first round for the first time, along with Brunei Darussalam, Pakistan, and Timor-Leste.

The opening Round 1 fixture will take place at the Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon, where Myanmar (FIFA rank:160) will begin their fifth qualifying campaign against Macau (FIFA rank:182). The match will mark the 10th time Myanmar has participated, and the team has come out on top in all four previous international encounters.

Myanmar is a clear favorite, given their flawless record against Macau in the previous four ma-

tches against Macau. The local team has never been able to score a single goal against Myanmar, conceding 11 times.

Myanmar and Macau are meeting for the second time this year, following a friendly match in June at Taipa's Olympic Stadium, where Myanmar won 2-nil.

For the double-header against Myanmar, Macau's national team head coach, Lázaro Oliveira, has enlisted some reinforcements, including Bruno Pereira, Nuno Pereira, a 25-year-old Macau-born Portuguese currently playing for Imortal Desportivo Clube. This is a football club from the city of Albufeira playing at the "Campeonato de Portugal," being the fourth level of the Portuguese football league.

The only time that the Macau team came close to reaching the

next stage of the World Cup Qualifiers was back in 2019, when the local team won 1-0 over Sri Lanka in the first leg in Macau but failed to take part in the second match at the Sri Lankan capital Colombo. The Macau Football Association elected not to travel to Sri Lanka, citing security concerns following the 2019 Sri Lanka Easter bombings.

The second match of this Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 1 with Myanmar is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 17 October at Taipa's Olympic Stadium, when it will finally be decided who will enter the group stage.

The winner of the two national teams will secure the final slot in the World Cup 2026 Asian Qualifiers Group F, which already includes Japan, Syria, and North Korea.



TRANSPORT

Ferry passengers dissatisfied with communication during Typhoon Koinu

SEVERAL passengers reported difficulties accessing information about the suspension and resumption of ferry services between Macau, Hong Kong, and the mainland during Typhoon Koinu.

The passengers, interviewed by the public broadcaster TDM, reported having limited access to information from ferry operators, including outages, on the company website.

One of the passengers said that he found it very hard to communicate with the company even over the phone.

Ferry services were suspended during the passage of Typhoon Koinu last Sunday and Monday morning, with Macau raising Typhoon Signal No. 8 for 17 hours and 30 minutes.

In Hong Kong, Typhoon



Signal No. 8 was raised four hours earlier, resulting in an almost day-long suspension of all maritime transport.

According to the Marine and Water Bureau, several ferry services in Macau were suspended even during Typhoon Signal No. 3. The last ferry from Shekou (Shenzhen) to Pac On (Taipa) departed at

7:30 p.m. on October 6, while the last ferry in the opposite direction took place at 9 p.m. that day.

Some ferry connections between Taipa and Sheung Wan (Hong Kong) were also canceled from Saturday, leaving several passengers stranded for almost two days and needing to seek alternative transportation. **RM**

EDUCATION

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF PORTUGAL CONSIDERS BIOTECH COURSES WITH USJ

THE Catholic University of Portugal (UCP) has expressed its intention to collaborate with the University of St Joseph (USJ) during a visit to Macau.

The plan was announced during a meeting in Macau between the UCP delegation and Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng, the government announced in a statement.

Rector Isabel Capelo Gil of UCP highlighted the institution's history of training talented individuals for Macau in various professional fields. She emphasized that bilingual students proficient in both Chinese and Portuguese are an important bridge between Macau and Portugal.

She expressed the university's desire to continue to deepen cooperation with Macau through



academic exchanges between higher education institutions, professional training, and fostering relations between both parties.

Agreeing with the rector's comments on the importance of talent acquisition for Macau, Ho recalled meeting Macau students in Portugal back in April, highligh-

ting their stated commitment to returning to Macau upon completion of their studies.

Ho stated that Macau is dedicated to developing big health and biotechnology industries, expressing hopes that the university would encourage students from Macau to pursue these disciplines. **AL**

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HEALTH

Public hospital's A&E demand easing, 30% are flu cases

ANTHONY LAM

DEMAND for accident and emergency services at the government hospital declined last week, with approximately 30% of cases related to the flu, local media has reported.

Dr Leong Iek Hou, Division head at the local Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, advised that there was a daily average of 1,050 patients presenting at the Accident and Emergency Department of the Conde São Januário Hospital last week.

While demand was high, it was about 10% lower than the previous week, Leong informed public broadcaster TDM – Radio Macau (Chinese). She also said that 30% of the cases were related to flu, while 20% related to Covid-19.

The public health doctor said



that the peak of this year's second flu season in Macau occurred between June and September, as evidenced by an increase in flu infections in August. She cautioned

that the flu season is ongoing, but that this season has been less severe than in April when 50% of daily A&E cases were due to flu.

Leong attributed the recent

surge in flu infections to the recent holiday season and corresponding gatherings or travel. While the situation is being monitored, Leong urged the public

to maintain personal health.

In the past two weeks, 14,000 flu shots have been administered, the public health official revealed, adding that uptake was high.

Meanwhile, in response to an earlier written inquiry by lawmaker Wong Kit Cheng, Director of Health Alvis Lo was asked about the global prevalence of EG.5 variant of SARS-CoV-2.

Lo pointed out that the variant was detected in Macau in as early as May, accounting for about 5.6% of all cases detected. The prevalence rose to 58% in August.

The pulmonologist cited comments from the World Health Organization, which stated that EG.5 has stronger transmissibility and immune evasion than previous variants, but there is no evidence as yet regarding an "obvious change" in pathogenicity.

He reiterated that nationally, Covid-19 is categorized as a second-tier disease and the focus is on reducing severe cases and deaths.

Regarding a monkeypox case recorded last month, Leong reported that the patient had been discharged after treatment. Close contacts have been identified, the public doctor added.

ECONOMY

Fitch forecasts 65% GDP rebound in 2023

LYNZY VALLES

FITCH Ratings anticipates growth of up to 65% in Macau's economy this year, driven by sustained recovery in the gaming and tourism sector.

In its report entitled "Asia-Pacific Sovereigns – Peer Review," the new forecast by Fitch Ratings rose 19 percentage points compared to initial predictions made in December when borders were still closed.

In December, the group forecast a 46% rebound in 2023 from a 17% decline. The initial projection was based on expectations that heightened policy uncertainty and lackluster recovery in mainland China, coupled with the global monetary tightening cycle and recessions in the US and Eurozone, would affect growth in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan.

In its recent report,



the firm said that the strong growth comes amid China's faltering economy – which adds to worries over surging youth unemployment and a weak property sector. The situation is thought to increase the likelihood of the government doubling down on support for the faltering post Covid-19 recovery.

"We project economic growth will remain robust at 17% in 2024, with full-year gaming revenue recovering further to almost 80% of its

2019 level," said Fitch Ratings.

The city's gaming revenues have so far already reached MOP128.95 billion, approaching the government's expected MOP130 billion this year.

Tourist arrivals have also sustained momentum and demonstrated consistent recovery, despite slightly lower arrivals in September compared to August's post-pandemic record high.

The recent eight-day National Day holiday

broke post-pandemic records, marking the first Golden Week where Chinese travelers were free to travel without border restrictions in three years.

Fitch Ratings also anticipates Macau's current-account surplus to increase to 25.6% of GDP in 2023.

Despite the budget remaining in the red for next year, Ho Iat Seng said in August that the government would maintain population livelihood allowances for 2024.

Previously, the ratings institution anticipated it could take until at least end-2025 for GDP to return to 2019 levels, "along with a moderate non-gaming diversification."

The statement was previously echoed by the local government, which stated that with the approval of the new gaming law and new concessions to be attributed before the year's end, the gaming concessionaires will "promote the development of non-gaming elements next year according to the commitment made on the public tender."

EVENTS

TWO REMAINING FIREWORKS SHOWS TONIGHT

THE final two shows of this year's International Fireworks Display Contest will be held tonight, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) announced yesterday.

Teams representing the United Kingdom (UK) and Germany will showcase their designs tonight at 9 p.m. and 9:40 p.m. respectively. The overall contest winners will be announced at the conclusion of the two shows.

The "Fireworks Carnival" and the two "Fireworks Extravaganza" markets, which are held in conjunction with the contest, will also be held tonight, according to the MGTO.

It was initially announced on Monday that the shows would be cancelled, but they were ultimately postponed.

MLE Pyrotechnics Limited from the UK and Potsdamer Feuerwerk Vertriebs GmbH from Germany will present their shows, reflecting their respective themes "The Harmonic Symphony: Igniting the Power of Music" and "A Journey through Classical Music."

The UK and German teams were originally scheduled to perform on Sunday, but the shows were postponed to Monday due to Typhoon Koinu. As Monday was still impacted by the typhoon, the MGTO initially announced that the both shows were cancelled. This was changed to a postponement yesterday.

The shows on September 9 were also postponed for two days due to unfavorable weather conditions, affecting the teams from Australia and Switzerland. AL



SPORTS BUREAU YET TO DISCLOSE PLANS FOR MACAO DOME USE

ANTHONY LAM

The director of Sports was unable to provide a clear roadmap to encourage utilization of the Macao East Asian Games Dome for major sporting events in his response to lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho's written inquiry.

Coutinho requested director of Sports Pun Weng Kun to provide details on specific measures that his bureau would implement to encourage use of the dome for major sporting events, including international events. The dome includes two convention and exhibition halls, an auditorium and an arena.

In response, the official said, "In the future, the Sports Bureau (ID) will continue to leverage the multifunctional characteristics of the dome to provide leisure and sports training spaces for more residents and sporting associations, and serve as a suitable venue for major events or activities of public interest."

The dome was previously briefly used as an ice-skating rink, and Coutinho asked why this had been discontinued. In response, Pun ex-



plained that the dome was not designed for this purpose, and that it had sustained damage during this period.

The government previously announced plans to build a dedicated ice-skating rink to promote sports that require this facility. The local ice hockey team, for example, has been relying on the private Future Bright

ice-skating rink for practice.

Pun added that the planned dedicated venue will also enhance tourism. However, the details have yet to be confirmed.

Nonetheless, Pun stated that his bureau would carefully evaluate and coordinate the construction and operation of the proposed venue.

PJ WARNS OF WHATSAPP HACKING, FAKE DONKI FACEBOOK PAGE

In response to related reports, Judiciary Police (PJ) has issued warnings to the public regarding hacked WhatsApp accounts and a sham Facebook page masquerading as that of supermarket Don Don Donki.

The existence of hacked WhatsApp accounts was reported to the PJ. As reported by the victims, the PJ had been made aware that messages had been sent out from these hacked accounts to individuals in affected contact lists in an attempt to obtain loans.

These victims only became aware of the hacking when they were questioned over the phone or in person by their friends and relatives who received messages asking for money.

It was underlined that fraudsters had long been sending out impostor hyperlinks to phish victims. Moreover, it has also been discovered that fraudsters impersonated valid WhatsApp sites and enabled prioritization of the fake links in Google searches.

The PJ have recommend people ensure they use the validated hyperlinks to WhatsApp pages, not click on any suspicious links, and turn on two-way authentication, as well as verify messages with their friends and relatives should they have any concern.

In another case, the PJ proactively discovered a Facebook page simulating that of Don Don Donki. The page pretends to be hosting a raffle and attempts to persuade Facebook users to follow a hyperlink for registration. It claimed that prizes would come in the forms of goodie bags, cash and coupons.

The link would bring users to a website where they were asked to create accounts, during which the provision of personal particulars and credit card information were mandatory.

The PJ reiterated that exceptional caution must be exercised whenever personal and credit card data are requested by any websites. **AL**

RENATO MARQUES

The suspected leader of a criminal group involved in a RMB4.5 million cash theft from a passenger at the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal earlier this year has been transferred to the Judiciary Police (PJ). He was apprehended in a joint operation by Macau and mainland authorities in late August.

The alleged ringleader was among the six individuals detained by police on both sides of the border, including the mother and a brother of the main suspect.

He was arrested by mainland police in Wuhan and subsequently handed over to local authorities through judicial cooperation mechanisms.

According to the PJ, the victim, a local resident, was carrying several pieces of luggage containing RMB4.5 million in cash. He was followed by the group, who had been waiting for an opportunity to steal the bags.

The opportunity arose when the victim visited the restroom at the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal.

CRIME

Suspected leader in RMB4.5 million theft handed over to PJ



With the arrest of the six suspects, the PJ managed to recover RMB1.3 million of the stolen cash. It is suspected that the remainder had been transferred to various accounts that are still under investigation.

The PJ stated yesterday that the main suspect will face charges of aggravated

fraud and crimes related to running a criminal organization.

Investigations and questioning of the detained suspects are ongoing. The PJ has not ruled out the possibility that the group is involved in more activities associated with laundering the stolen funds.

F&B

ARTYZEN GRAND LAPA PRESENTS 'MACANESE NIGHTS'

STAFF REPORTER

ARTYZEN Grand Lapa Macau is hosting "Macanese Nights" at Café Bela Vista for the second time, featuring renowned Chef Antonieta Manhão, known for her expertise in Macanese cuisine, and the hotel's Chef Pedro Santos Do Carmo from restaurant Café Bela Vista.

"Macanese Nights" is not just a dining experience; it's a captivating cultural celebration of the city's rich culinary heritage - a tradition that has graced Macau for over 400 years," the hotel said in a statement.

To be held every Tuesday to Thursday during these three weeks, the event aims to preserve and promote the unique flavors and traditions that define Macau. It will also spotlight and



celebrate Macau's culinary heritage, entwined with its Portuguese influence, bridging east and west.

Rutger Verschuren, general manager of Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau, commented, "This promotion not only represents our dedication to providing unique and culturally rich experiences to our guests

but also reinforces our strong commitment to the preservation of Macau's culinary heritage."

Echoing similar sentiments, Chef Antonieta Manhão, also known as Chef Neta, said, "Through this, I hope to remind the public of true Macanese family cuisine and preserve it for younger generations."

WYNN proactively cooperates with the Macao SAR Government's "1+4" moderate economic diversification strategy, working with different stakeholders in the community to progressively propel the development of non-gaming projects and community tourism. One such example of this can be found on Rua da Felicidade, an old street at the core of the Macao Peninsula that overflows with history and culture, and the "Pedestrian Zone" project that Wynn has implemented there exemplifies the company's initiative of combining history with the advancement of "community tourism", as well as facilitating the spread of local culture on an international scale and intensify and enrich the city's cultural and tourism experience for visitors.

CREATING A BRAND-NEW EXPERIENCE WITH RUA DA FELICIDADE PEDESTRIAN ZONE

The "Rua da Felicidade Pedestrian Zone," jointly developed by Wynn and the Macao SAR Government, started its pilot period on 29 September and since then it has breathed new life into the community with the theme of innovation and heritage. Though the core of the pedestrian zone project focuses on Rua da Felicidade, the project also extends to cover Travessa do Mastro, Travessa do Aterro Novo, Rua do Mata-pau, and Travessa de Hó Lo Quai, thereby maximizing the collateral benefits for all to enjoy.

As the first enterprise to collaborate with the SAR Government in revitalizing historical districts, Wynn has fully utilized its own advantages, including

Wynn Eagerly Propels Community Revitalization



Wynn held the "Rua da Felicidade Pedestrian Zone" launch ceremony during the Mid-Autumn Festival and National Day.

resources and business expertise, to enrich the cultural and tourism elements of Rua da Felicidade, such as elevating the street atmosphere and introducing large-scale art installations, a cultural market, art and cultural activities, an interactive check-in game, and a night market experience. By creating a vibrant and artistic atmosphere filled with cultural and tourism experiences, the project attracts tourists to visit the community, unleashes new vitality in the old street, drives community tourism, and boosts the economy of the entire central district.

BACKING SME MARKET DEVELOPMENT

During the pilot period of the project, Wynn collaborated with the Industry and Commerce Association of Macao to organize a daytime cultural market in the district and invited many local brands to sell and display local cultural and creative products and handicrafts to increase business opportunities for SMEs.

Furthermore, to enhance SME interactivity and marketing opportunities Wynn also developed a WeChat mini program to connect key areas within the business district; taking Rua da

Felicidade as the core, the mini program links approximately 60 check-in points located at landmarks and businesses in key tourist areas. These check-in signs provide QR codes that offer visitors a chance to win prizes from shops and daytime market stalls around Rua da Felicidade, and cash vouchers from a total of 40 SMEs. Wynn also partnered with MPay to invite SMEs in the area to join the community spending promotions., adding an extra level of excitement and satisfaction which encourages even more people to visit.

BRINGING INTERNATIONAL SPORT STARS TOGETHER

Five world-class sport stars made appearances in Rua da Felicidade, including the seven-time snooker world champion Ronnie O'Sullivan; renowned English snooker player, Jimmy "Whirlwind" White; Gold Badge Referee of the International Heyball Pool Association, June Wang; the first-ever Chinese F1 driver Ma Qinghua; and golf prodigy Rose Zhang. They enjoyed a lively, festive, and creative atmosphere as they visited local SMEs, markets, and tourist attractions in the area; savored the exquisite cuisine and fine wines produced by Wynn; and took photos with visitors in the elegant and charming streets.

NIGHT MARKET TO INVIGORATE NIGHTTIME ECONOMY

Night tourism can enhance Macao's tourism industry and encourage visitors to prolong their stay and spend more. To further leverage this aspect, Wynn installed embellished lanterns and moon rabbit installations along Rua da Felicidade during the Mid-Autumn Festival to complement its unique cultural ambience and create a prosperous and festive atmosphere for residents and visitors.

But what are festivities without great food? Macao is renowned for being a "City of Gastronomy" in addition to its abundant art and culture, so to enrich the nighttime experience of the Rua da Felicidade community, Wynn set up a roadside bar and food trucks in the market and provide colorful tables for public use along the street, assisting the neighborhood to gradually develop a unique night market ambience.



International sport stars enjoyed the pedestrian zone with other visitors



Local cultural and creative brands were invited to open stalls in the daytime cultural market



Embellished lanterns illuminated the prosperous and festive atmosphere in Rua da Felicidade



"Back to Rua da Felicidade" theater introduced the public to the elegance of the street

DIRE STRAIT

FACING BEIJING'S THREATS, TAIWAN LEADER SAYS PEACE 'ONLY OPTION' TO RESOLVE POLITICAL DIFFERENCES

PEACE between Taiwan and China is the "only option," Taiwanese leader Tsai Ing-wen said yesterday, while strongly asserting the self-governing island's defenses against Beijing's threats to invade.

Tsai said in a National Day address that the international community views stability in the Taiwan Strait as an "indispensable component of global security and prosperity."

China claims Taiwan as its own territory and has been increasingly sending ships and warplanes across the Taiwan Strait in an effort to intimidate the population of 23 million, who strongly favor the status-quo of de-facto independence.

Tsai's Democratic Progressive Party will seek to maintain power in elections next year against the Nationalists, who officially support unification between the sides that divided amid civil war in 1949.

"Let me reiterate that peace is the only option across the Taiwan Strait," said Tsai, who will step down after two terms in office. "Maintaining



the status quo, as the largest common denominator for all sides, is the critical key to ensuring peace."

"Neither side can unilaterally change the status quo. Differences across the strait must be resolved peacefully," Tsai said.

Tsai also referred to Taiwan's recent launch of a home-built submarine as a major breakthrough in efforts to re-energize the domestic arms industry,

"We took a big step forward in our national defense self-sufficiency and further enhanced the asymmetric capabilities of our military," she said.

The ceremonies with marching bands from Taiwan, Japan and the U.S. also underscored Taiwan's split personality as a self-governing democracy whose national symbols and state institutions were founded on mainland China after the Manchu Qing

dynasty was overthrown in 1911. The Chinese Nationalist Party under Chiang Kai-shek moved the government to Taiwan in 1949 following the takeover of mainland China by the Communist Party under Mao Zedong following a yearslong bloody civil war.

Now in the opposition, the Nationalists (KMT) continue to support China's goal of eventual unification between the sides. Former party leader Ma Ying-jeou and other Nationalist politicians boycotted this year's ceremonies because the government used the term "Taiwan" rather than the official name of the Republic of China in English references to the occasion.

China cut off most communications with Tsai's government shortly after she took office in 2016. Her No. 2 William Lai is favored to win the main election, potentially laying the groundwork for further tensions between the sides, which retain close economic and cultural ties despite the massive gap between Beijing's one-party system and Taiwan's robust democracy. **MDT/AP**

SOUTH CHINA SEA

CHINESE COAST GUARD CHASED AWAY PHILIPPINE NAVY SHIP FROM SHOAL

CHINA'S coast guard claimed yesterday to have chased a Philippine navy ship from a disputed shoal in the South China Sea as tensions between the two countries over rich fishing areas escalate.

Coast guard spokesman Gan Yu said the Philippine ship had sailed into waters next to the Scarborough Shoal, which China calls Huangyan Island, and ignored "multiple calls" to turn back.

"The Chinese coast guard took necessary measures to expel the Philippine ship in accordance with the law, such as following it and forcing it out and controlling its route," Gan said.

In Manila, the Philippines' military chief of staff, Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr., said authorities were still looking into the alleged incident but think it was more likely "propaganda from the Chinese" than an actual confrontation.

"If we ever have a ship there, we will not agree to be driven away (from our) exclusive economic zone," Brawner told reporters. "It's our right to make sure that our fishermen can fish in our economic zone."

The Scarborough Shoal lies within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone, just west of the country's main Luzon Island. It has been occupied by China since 2012 as part of an Beijing's push to lay claim to almost the entire South China Sea, which has also sparked disputes with Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

The conflicts have long been regarded as a potential Asian flash point and a delicate fault line in the United States-China rivalry in the region.

Gan, the spokesman for China's coast guard, insisted that "China has indisputable sovereignty over Huangyan Island and its adjacent waters," and that chasing away the Philippine ship yesterday was "legitimate and legal."

"The Philippines' actions infringe on China's sovereignty and seriously violate international law and basic norms of international relations," he said. "We urge the Philippines to immediately stop its infringement."

Under Marcos, who took office last year, the Philippines has intensified efforts to push back against China's increasingly assertive actions.

Following the incident with the barrier, Philippine military authorities said there was a concern that the Chinese coast guard may attempt to install a similar floating blockade at the entrance to the Second Thomas Shoal. It is several hundred kilometers (miles) southwest of the Scarborough Shoal and is occupied by a small Philippine navy contingent on a long-grounded warship but has been surrounded by Chinese coast guard ships.

Last week a Chinese coast guard ship came within a meter of colliding with a Philippine patrol ship off the Second Thomas Shoal, prompting strong condemnation from Manila.

Yesterday, the Philippines said a senior diplomat had witnessed the incident from aboard a coast guard ship and that his "first-hand information will allow him to effectively convey our concerns to China." **MDT/AP**

Hong Kong eyes stronger economic and trade ties with Thailand to expand its role in Southeast Asia

HONG Kong's leader said yesterday the city would seek to strengthen its economic and trade ties with Thailand after a meeting with the country's prime minister, as the Chinese financial hub looks for more business opportunities in Southeast Asia.

Chief Executive John Lee said at a weekly press briefing that he and Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavasin agreed during a meeting on Monday that the two sides have "good and close relations" and that they would promote more exchanges between their people.

Lee's administration wants to expand the city's role in Southeast Asia to boost economic growth for the financial hub after years of COVID-19



Chief Executive John Lee (right) and Thailand's Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin before their meeting at Government House in Hong Kong

restrictions. It aims to position the city as a bridge between mainland China and the international community.

Lee said Hong Kong will work to deepen regional cooperation and strengthen its work on economic, trade and investment activities with

countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Since 2010, ASEAN has been the second-largest trading partner for Hong Kong, the government said.

Srettha arrived in Hong Kong on Sunday for a three-day trip. He met with officials

and business leaders including Bernard Chan and Allan Zeman, according to his post on the X platform, formerly known as Twitter.

In a press statement on Monday, Lee also thanked Thailand for supporting Hong Kong's attempt to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a major 15-nation trade agreement that took effect last year. The deal slashes tariffs on thousands of products, streamlining trade procedures and providing mutual advantages for member nations.

Members of the trade bloc hope the initiative, encompassing about a third of world trade and business activity, will help power their recoveries from the pandemic. **MDT/AP**

BRI 10 YEARS

China touts Belt and Road as an alternative for international development

CHINA is touting its 10-year-old Belt and Road Initiative as an alternative model for economic development, releasing a government report that praises the program while glossing over criticism that it has saddled poor countries with too much debt.

The program championed by Chinese leader Xi Jinping has financed construction of ports, power plants, railroads and other projects around the world.

"Over the past 10 years, the fruitful results of building the Belt and Road together and the growing circle of friends have fully proved that the Belt and Road does not engage in a closed and narrow circle, transcends the old mindset of geopolitical games and creates a new paradigm of international cooperation," Li Kexin, the Foreign Ministry's director for international economics affairs, told reporters in Beijing.

Since it was launched, the Belt and Road Initiative, or BRI, has backed projects carried out mostly by Chinese construction com-



Train launching in Southeast Asia's first high-speed railway, a key project under China's Belt and Road infrastructure initiative, at Halim station in Jakarta

panies, financed by loans from Chinese development banks.

Its official goal is to boost trade and investment by improving China's transport links with the rest of the world. Analysts credit the program with directing needed funding to poor countries but say that came at a cost.

A study released this week by Boston University's Global Development Policy Center said the BRI had delivered more than \$330 billion in loans to developing country governments through 2021, lending more than the World Bank in some years.

"On some level, China has ad-

ded a World Bank to the developing world, and that is no small feat and very appreciated by developing countries," said Kevin Gallagher, the center's director.

But the same study noted that many recipients of Chinese loans are now struggling with their overall debts. Also, Chinese-funded power plants are emitting about 245 million tons of carbon dioxide a year, adding to emissions of climate altering greenhouse gases.

Gallagher says the initiative has switched to a new focus, dubbed "small and beautiful," that favors smaller projects and renewable energy.

China's development lending has slumped in recent years, in part because China has learned from the debt crises in multiple countries and also because it has less money to lend as its own economy slows down.

Cong Liang, a senior official of China's main planning agency, said during the release of the BRI report that the country would adhere to "the principle of sustainable debt" and work with indeb-

ted countries toward "a sustainable and risk-controllable investment and financing system."

The Belt and Road Initiative is part of China's efforts to raise its international stature and push back against U.S. criticism of Communist Party rule and Beijing's human rights record.

China's leaders accuse the U.S. of trying to impose their principles on everyone else—including China. They say their system offers a different approach that accepts other countries as they are.

The BRI report says the program transcends differences in ideologies and social systems, offering an alternative to the current path of globalization that Beijing says has just widened the gap between rich and poor countries.

"It is no longer acceptable that only a few countries dominate world economic development, control economic rules, and enjoy development fruits," the report said.

Next week, China is expected to host a forum showcasing the BRI program. **MDT/AP**

CEM NOTICE

Temporary traffic arrangements for the maintenance and improvement works of the distribution power network

Due to the maintenance and improvement works of the distribution power network carried out by Companhia de Electricidade de Macau - CEM, S.A. (CEM), traffic lights at the intersection of Avenida do Almirante Magalhães Correia and Estrada Marginal da Areia Preta will be suspended from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on 12 October (Thursday), please be aware of the arrangements.

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Breast Surgery : Dr. Leong Jat Lun

Urology : Dr. Lo Kwong Yin Richard, Dr. Zhao Yun Qiao

Paediatric Surgery : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong

Paediatrics : Dr. Zhang Zhiqin

Obstetrics & Gynaecology : Dr. Fong Kuan Io

Plastic & Aesthetic Surgery : Dr. Lam U Lin

Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine : Dr. Lam Kun Kuan

ENT : Dr. Cheng Zheng Ang

Cardiology : Dr. Wong Kwok Yiu Chris, Dr. Jin Chun, Dr. Leong Man Kin

General Medicine : Dr. Ng Kam Hong, Dr. Lam Weng Chio

Dietitian : Chan Lai U Joey

GAZA STRIP

Under heavy bombing, Palestinians move from place to place to discover nowhere is safe

ISSAM ADWAN, GAZA CITY

OVER 180,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are packed into United Nations shelters as Israeli warplanes pound the tiny territory of 2.3 million people after their Hamas militant rulers launched an unprecedented weekend attack on Israel.

Among them is 27-year-old Sabreen al-Attar. She sprang into action when she heard rocket after rocket whoosh over her farmland in Beit Lahiya just south of the Israeli border on Saturday. She knew from experience that Israeli retaliation would be swift and severe.

Grabbing her children, al-Attar rushed to one of the dozens of shelters set up in schools run by the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees in Gaza City. There, blasts of unprecedented intensity punctuated hours of steadily declining conditions Monday as food and water ran out.

"When I escape, I do it for my children," she said, her hands trembling. "Their lives rest on my shoulders."

But residents say there is no real escape in Gaza, which has been under a suffocating 16-year blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt. When war breaks out, as it has four times since the Hamas militant group seized power in 2007, even United Nations facilities that are supposed to be safe zones risk becoming engulfed in the fighting. The U.N. said that an airstrike directly hit one of its shelters Sunday and damaged five other schools-turned-shelters on Monday. There was no immediate word of casualties.

In the downtown Rimal area, Gaza City's bustling commercial district with high-rises home to international media and aid organizations, al-Attar hoped she would be safe. Rimal had until then not been an immediate Israeli target, unlike border towns or densely populated refugee camps.

But as the Israeli military



went neighborhood to neighborhood with rapid and intensifying airstrikes, the heavy bombardments reached the heart of Gaza City, transforming the affluent neighborhood into an uninhabitable desert of craters. Rimal was also hit by Israeli airstrikes in Gaza's bloody 2021 war, but not to this extent.

Israeli bombs that struck Gaza's flagship Islamic University, government ministries and high-rises in Rimal, starting Monday afternoon, also blew out the windows of al-Attar's shelter, shattering glass everywhere, she said. Life there, crammed with 1,600 others, was full of danger and deprivation but al-Attar said she had no choice but to stay, telling her boys — 2-year-old Mohammed and 7-year-old Nabil — to keep away from the windows.

"The night was very, very difficult," she said yesterday. "We have nowhere else to go."

The bombing in Rimal and the potential risks of sheltering in U.N. schools highlighted the desperate search by Gaza civilians for refuge, with the territory's safe spaces rapidly shrinking. There are no civilian bomb shelters in Gaza. Ahead of the Israeli military's warning to civilians on Monday that

Rimal would be hit, families staggered into the streets with whatever belongings they could carry and without a destination.

In a briefing yesterday, Israeli army spokesman Lt. Col. Richard Hecht suggested Palestinians should try to leave through the Gaza border crossing with Egypt — a seemingly impractical suggestion.

While Hamas officials operating the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing said yesterday that Gazans who had registered in advance could cross into Egypt, the number of those allowed to travel has typically been small. That has led to backlogs and waiting times of days or weeks, even in calm times.

"There is never a Plan B here," said 31-year-old Maha Hussaini, as she watched terrified Rimal residents flood her Gaza City neighborhood further south just as bombs began to fall there, too.

So far, the Gaza toll stands at about 700 dead and thousands wounded, according to Gaza health officials, a punishing response to the militant group's attack that has killed over 900 Israelis. More than 150 Israeli civilians and soldiers have been taken captive.

Israel says it takes pains to avoid civilian casualties as it

targets Hamas sites in Gaza, which is heavily built up and has scant open space. But Hamas militants also fire rockets and operate in civilian areas, using civilians for cover while drawing return fire to houses, offices and mosques.

But the military long has carried out airstrikes in crowded residential neighborhoods, inevitably harming civilians and civilian infrastructure. Hamas authorities on Monday reported the destruction of seven mosques and 15 civilian homes that killed many members of the same family.

The Israeli defense minister also has ordered a "complete siege" on the already blockaded Gaza Strip, vowing to block food, water and fuel from the territory.

Residents described a dangerous dance around the heavy Israeli bombing — fleeing home, crashing at relatives' apartments, fleeing again to U.N. schools and then starting all over again in an attempt to find some sense of safety.

"It is better than dying," said 37-year-old Muhammad al-Bishawi, exhausted as he hustled between a U.N. shelter in Gaza City and his home in Beit Lahiya to secure food and other supplies before returning. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1987 SEARCH ENDS FOR LOCH NESS MONSTER



A major sonar exploration of Loch Ness in Scotland has failed to find a monster.

Searchers on Operation Deepscan spent a week on the loch using £1-million worth of equipment to scan the lake.

The flotilla of 24 boats did pick up three sonar "contacts" shown on paper as crescent shaped marks.

They indicated something big in the waters below Urquhart castle but this could have been a seal or a group of salmon.

Project leader Adrian Shine, who has been looking for "Nessie" for many years, told the BBC: "I think if we were to get a fish on the scale that the contacts would suggest then I don't think anyone would be too dissatisfied and all those eye-witnesses would get their vindication."

The legend of the monster dates back to the 6th century but it was not until the 1930s that the myth really took off.

In 1933, Mr and Mrs George Spicer told newspapers they saw a monster, measuring 40 to 50 ft (12 to 15 m) long, crossing the road near the loch.

"Although I accelerated quickly towards it," he said, "it had disappeared into the loch by the time I reached the spot."

"There was no sign of it in the water. I am a temperate man, but I am willing to take any oath that we saw this Loch Ness beast. I am certain that this creature was of a prehistoric species."

There have been numerous sightings since then — and numerous hoaxes.

In the 1970s, a photograph taken by Dr Robert Rhines attracted worldwide attention. It seemed to show a flipper or fin of the monster.

The creature in the photo was even given a scientific name — *Nessiteras rhombopteryx* by the famous naturalist Sir Peter Scott.

Published in the top journal *Nature*, the name meant "Ness wonder with a diamond shaped fin" however, it didn't take long for some sceptical minds to point out that the name was also an anagram — "Monster hoax by Sir Peter S".

It was later revealed that the image had been computer enhanced.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Loch Ness is world famous for sightings of "Nessie".

Most witnesses described the creature as having a long neck giving rise to the theory that there might be a prehistoric reptile — a plesiosaur — living in the lake.

Several photos of a monster in the lake have been published over the years. In 1994 the most famous of these, taken by Colonel Robert Wilson on 19 April 1934, was revealed to be a hoax. There have been several sonar searches of the loch.

In July 2003 BBC programme-makers carried out the most extensive search yet using 600 separate sonar beams and satellite navigation technology — but found nothing.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
This will not be the day to start new business ventures or make drastic changes in your career. Concentrate on spending quality time with children. Professionalism will be of utmost importance.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Sudden romantic encounters are quite likely, but discretion will be a must. Try not to lend or borrow money today. You can make alterations to your appearance that everyone will admire.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
You will feel the limitations if you have been overdoing it. Don't make any rash decisions that may affect friendships. Romantic encounters will be full of excitement.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Your emotions are fluctuating, so be careful not to say things you'll regret. You've been in a rut and you need to do something that will help you break the pattern you've fallen into.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Take time to find out all you can. Be aware of any deception on the part of those you deal with. Look into joining groups that can give you hands-on advice about business.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Don't let your emotions interfere with your professional integrity. You can make financial deals, but it may be best if you're not using your own cash. Your creative talent will prove to be lucrative if put to proper use.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
You can get phenomenal returns if you present your ideas to those who can back your interests. Your ability to take hold of a situation will surely bring you popularity and leadership.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Don't take your frustrations out on the ones you love. You can make excellent career moves if you are open to the opportunities that exist. Talk to someone you trust if you need advice.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Older relatives may make unreasonable demands. Try to channel your energy into professional endeavors. Find out exactly what's expected of you and you'll be surprised to find out how capable you are.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Don't be too quick to sign documents. Don't overreact if your partner has a poor attitude. Unpleasant situations concerning family members will be unnerving.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Don't be too shy to promote your own interests. Strengthen your position among your peers. Emotional partnerships may develop through projects you initiate.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Follow through on some of the good ideas that come up, and you could have a real winner of a deal. Be diplomatic but stem when it comes to giving of yourself.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	10	23	fine
Changchun	4	20	fine
Chengdu	15	17	rain
Chongqing	17	23	overcast
Fuzhou	21	26	cloudy
Guangzhou	20	29	cloudy
Guiyang	12	20	overcast
Haikou	23	26	rain
Hangzhou	16	23	cloudy
Harbin	3	18	fine
Hefei	11	22	cloudy
Nanjing	14	22	cloudy
Shanghai	18	24	cloudy
Taipei	23	24	overcast
Wuhan	12	24	fine
Hong Kong	24	29	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	5	8	overcast
Frankfurt	15	25	overcast
Paris	18	27	overcast
London	11	22	rain
New York	11	21	cleat

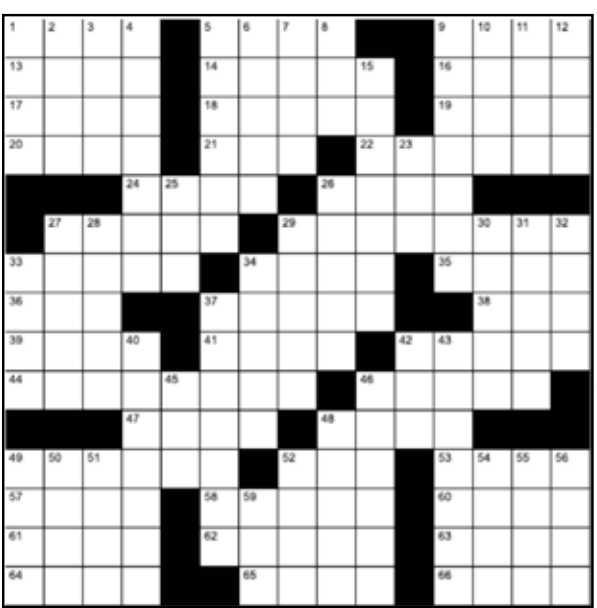
CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Take down ___; 5- RR stops; 9- Broadway opening; 13- Carson's predecessor; 14- Chick of jazz; 16- Middy; 17- Female choir voice; 18- Peer; 19- Vintner's prefix; 20- Travel aimlessly; 21- Convent dweller; 22- Climbing device; 24- Spouse; 26- Last word of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow"; 27- Mail frequenters; 29- Very large; 33- Hilton competitor; 34- Animal raised by humans, abandoned by mother; 35- Sea eagle; 36- Authorizes; 37- Melt and mold metal; 38- Velvet finish?; 39- Goes out with; 41- Harangue; 42- Masterful; 44- Editorial writer; 46- Robbery; 47- High-ranking NCO; 48- Swabbies; 49- Commotion; 52- Student's conveyance; 53- Slippery ___ eel; 57- ___ never work!; 58- Spoil; 60- Objectionable; 61- Scrabble piece; 62- Host; 63- Gothic-type arch; 64- Injury reminder; 65- Org.; 66- Stimulate;

DOWN 1- On ___ with; 2- ___ Alto; 3- I could ___ horse!; 4- Eyelet; 5- Perfumes; 6- Close-fitting hat for women; 7- Make ___ for it; 8- Neptune's realm; 9- Soothing to the mind; 10- Like some dorms; 11- Accent; 12- Are you ___ out?; 15- Supposed; 23- "SNL" alum Gasteyer; 25- Tiny toiler; 26- Failed to; 27- Wee ones; 28- Alleviates; 29- Haggard; 30- Forest makeup; 31- Bumbling; 32- 1/100 of a monetary unit; 33- Flexible tube; 34- Seashore; 37- Warship; 40- One's first needlework piece?; 42- ___ Lingus; 43- Disown; 45- Fashion designer's monogram; 46- Hurry; 48- Melodies; 49- Strikes; 50- Auricular; 51- Spicy stew; 52- Some pens; 54- [Oh, well]; 55- Away from the wind; 56- Nair rival; 59- Dr.'s org.;

Yesterday's solution

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



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
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	



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AP PHOTO



A man holds up a tablet showing a digitally overlaid virtual reconstruction of the ancient Parthenon temple, at the Acropolis Hill in Athens, Greece

HERITAGE & TECH

AN APP SHOWS HOW ANCIENT GREEK SITES LOOKED THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO

DEREK GATOPOULOS &
THEODORA TONGAS, ATHENS

TOURISTS at the Acropolis this holiday season can witness the resolution of one of the world's most heated debates on cultural heritage.

All they need is a smartphone.

Visitors can now pinch and zoom their way around the ancient Greek site, with a digital overlay showing how it once looked. That includes a collection of marble sculptures removed from the Parthenon more than 200 years ago that are now on display at the British Museum in London. Greece has demanded they be returned.

For now, an app supported by Greece's Culture Ministry allows visitors to point their phones at the Parthenon temple, and the sculptures housed in London appear back on the monument as archaeologists believe they looked 2,500 years ago.

Other, less widely known features also appear: Many of the sculptures on the Acropolis were painted in striking colors. A statue of goddess Athena in the main chamber of the Parthenon also stood over a shallow pool of

water.

"That's really impressive ... the only time I've seen that kind of technology before is at the dentist," Shriya Parsotam Chitnavis, a tourist from London, said after checking out the app on a hot afternoon at the hilltop Acropolis, Greece's most popular archaeological site.

"I didn't know much about the (Acropolis), and I had to be convinced to come up here. Seeing this has made it more interesting — seeing it in color," she said. "I'm more of a visual person, so this being interactive really helped me appreciate it."

The virtual restoration works anywhere and could spare some visitors the crowded uphill walk and long wait to see the iconic monuments up close. It might also help the country's campaign to make Greek cities year-round destinations.

TOURISM DOT REBOUND

Tourism, vital for the Greek economy, has roared back since the COVID-19 pandemic, even as wildfires chased visitors from the island of Rhodes and affected other areas this summer. The number of inbound visitors from

January through July was up 21.9% to 16.2 million compared with a year ago, according to the Bank of Greece. Revenue was up just over 20%, to 10.3 billion euros (\$10.8 billion).

The app, called "Chronos" after the mythological king of the Titans and Greek word for "time," uses augmented reality to place the ancient impression of the site onto the screen, matching the real-world view as you walk around.

AR is reaching consumers after a long wait and is set to affect a huge range of professional and leisure activities.

Medical surgery, military training and specialized machine repair as well as retail and live event experiences are all in the sights of big tech companies betting on a lucrative future in immersive services. Tech giant like Meta and Apple are pushing into VR headsets that can cost thousands of dollars.

The high price tag will keep the cellphone as the main AR delivery platform to consumers for some time, said Maria Engberg, co-author of the book "Reality Media" on augmented and virtual reality.

She says services for travelers will soon offer a better integrated experience, allowing for more sharing options on tours and overlaying archive photos and videos.

"AR and VR have been lagging behind other kinds of things like games and movies that we're consuming digitally," said Engberg, an associate professor of computer science and media technology at Malmö University in Sweden.

"I think we will see really interesting customer experiences in the next few years as more content from museums and archives becomes digitized," she said.

Greece's Culture Ministry and national tourism authority are late but enthusiastic converts to technology. The popular video game Assassin's Creed Odyssey, which allows players to roam ancient Athens, was used to attract young travelers from China to Greece with a state-organized photo contest.

MAGICAL TOUR

Microsoft partnered with the Culture Ministry two years ago to launch an immersive digital tour at ancient Olympia, birthplace of

the Olympic Games in southern Greece.

Culture Minister Lina Mendoni said the innovations would boost accessibility to Greece's ancient monuments, supplementing the recent installation of ramps and anti-slip pathways.

"Accessibility is extending to the digital space," Mendoni said at a preview launch event for the Chronos app in May. "Real visitors and virtual visitors anywhere around the world can share historical knowledge."

Developed by Greek telecoms provider Cosmote, the free app's designers say they hope to build on existing features that include an artificial intelligence-powered virtual guide, Clio.

"As technologies and networks advance, with better bandwidth and lower latencies, mobile devices will be able to download even higher-quality content," said Panayiotis Gabrielides, a senior official at the telecom company involved in the project.

Virtual reconstructions using Chronos also cover three other monuments at the Acropolis, an adjacent Roman theater and parts of the Acropolis Museum built at the foot of the rock. **MDT/AP**

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

FOOTBALL

UEFA picks UK-Ireland to host soccer's 2028 Euro; Italy-Turkey to stage 2032 edition

GRAHAM DUNBAR, NYON

THE future of soccer's European Championship for the next decade was decided yesterday — the United Kingdom and Ireland will host in 2028 and an unusual Italy-Turkey co-hosting plan was picked for 2032.

There were no losers when the executive committee of European soccer governing body UEFA finally approved the double hosting award that was inevitable after former bid rivals Italy and Turkey united under one flag of convenience in July.

That deal took Turkey out of the Euro 2028 contest where the team of five neighboring UEFA member federations — England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Ireland — was long favored to win.

Turkey finally will get to host a European Championship after several failed previous bids, including by one vote against France for the Euro 2016 edition.



Turkey also was likely to lose in any contested vote for 2032 even amid doubts Italy could finish a massive construction project to build and upgrade the stadiums needed for a 24-team, 51-game tournament.

UEFA gains stability over the organization if Italy and Turkey each has to provide just five stadiums despite its own bid rules stating that only neighboring member federations can propose co-hosting.

Rome and Istanbul are separa-

ted by about 1,400 kilometers (870 miles) across the Mediterranean Sea and Aegean Sea with flights taking more than two hours.

Co-hosting by five UEFA members in 2028 and two in 2032 follows the radical 13-nation project that was agreed for Euro 2020. It was cut to 11 when the tournament was eventually played during the COVID-19 pandemic one year behind schedule. That final was played at Wembley Stadium in London.

The UEFA picks are not even

the most scattered and logistically challenging chosen this month for a major soccer event.

FIFA decided last week to accept just one candidate for hosting the 2030 World Cup spread among six countries and three continents.

A European-led bid that started with Spain and Portugal, then added Morocco, now includes Argentina, Paraguay and inaugural 1930 tournament host Uruguay in a stunning addition revealed six days ago. Ukraine was included in that project last year but was dropped without a public acknowledgement.

The 2030 bidding deal let FIFA fast-track opening the 2034 bidding contest reserved only for member federations from Asia and Oceania that looks a shoo-in for Saudi Arabia.

Though Italy and Turkey both get direct entry to Euro 2032 as hosts, UEFA will not offer five automatic places for the 2028 hosts. One option is putting all five into

traditional qualifying groups and awarding the automatic places to the two best records among the non-qualifiers.

The 2028 bid plan has six stadiums in England, led by Wembley Stadium with the club venues of Aston Villa, Manchester City, Newcastle, Tottenham and the under-construction new home of Everton in the docks area of Liverpool. The national stadiums of Ireland, Scotland and Wales will be used plus a planned new stadium in Belfast at the currently derelict Casement Park.

Euro 2024 in Germany is an increasingly rare example in modern soccer of a single host nation.

UEFA has targeted the Euros of 2024 and 2028 to be high-profit tournaments with revenues at each edition of at least 2 billion euros (\$2.12 billion). UEFA aims to rebuild its cash reserves above 500 million euros (\$528 million) after being depleted during the pandemic. **MDT/AP**

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Advance booking is required.
Booking: ivone@britchammao.org or call 6331 1124 for details

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In this engaging session, Dr Mark Lee will not only impart valuable insights on AI but also offer a chance to participate in a hands-on experience through a simple workshop. By downloading the POE app on your phone prior to the talk, you can actively participate and explore the potential of AI firsthand.

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OPINION

World Views

Paul Wiseman, MDT/AP Business Writer



**IMF OUTLOOK:
MIDEAST WAR ADDS
NEW UNCERTAINTY**

The world economy has lost momentum from the impact of higher interest rates, the invasion of Ukraine and widening geopolitical rifts, and it now faces new uncertainty from the war between Israel and Hamas militants, International Monetary Fund warned.

The IMF said it expects global economic growth to slow to 2.9% in 2024 from an expected 3% this year. The forecast for next year is down a notch from the 3% it predicted back in July.

The deceleration comes at a time when the world has yet to fully mend from a devastating but short-lived COVID-19 recession in 2020 and now could see fallout from the Middle East conflict — particularly to oil prices.

A series of previous shocks, including the pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine, has slashed worldwide economic output by about \$3.7 trillion over the past three years compared with pre-COVID trends.

"The global economy is limping along, not sprinting," IMF chief economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas said at a news conference during the organization's annual meeting in Marrakech, Morocco.

The IMF expectation of 3% growth this year is down from 3.5% in 2022 but unchanged from its July projections.

It's "too early" to assess the impact on global economic growth from the days-old war between Israel and the militant Palestinian group Hamas in Gaza, Gourinchas said. He said the IMF was "monitoring the situation closely" and noted that oil prices have risen by about 4% in the past several days.

"We've seen that in previous crises and previous conflicts. And of course, this reflects the potential risk that there could be disruption either in production or transport of oil in the region," he said.

If sustained, a 10% increase in oil prices would reduce global economic growth by 0.15% and increase global inflation by 0.4%, Gourinchas said.

"But again, I emphasize that it's really too early to jump to any conclusion here," he added.

So far, the world economy has displayed "remarkable resiliency," Gourinchas said, at a time when the U.S. Federal Reserve and other central banks worldwide have aggressively raised interest rates to combat a resurgence in inflation.

The hikes have helped ease price pressures without putting many people out of work. That combination, he said, is "increasingly consistent" with a so-called soft landing — the idea that inflation can be contained without causing a recession.

The IMF sees global consumer price inflation dropping from 8.7% in 2022 to 6.9% this year and 5.8% in 2024.

The United States is a standout in the IMF's latest World Economic Outlook, which was completed before the outbreak of war between Israel and Hamas. The IMF upgraded its forecast for U.S. growth this year to 2.1% (matching 2022) and 1.5% in 2024 (up sharply from the 1% it had predicted in July).

Things are gloomier in the 20 countries that share the euro currency and are more exposed to rising energy prices. The IMF downgraded eurozone growth to 0.7% this year and 1.2% in 2024. It actually expects the German economy to shrink by 0.5% this year before recovering to 0.9% growth next year.

The Chinese economy, the world's second biggest, is forecast to grow 5% this year and 4.2% in 2024 — both downgrades from what the IMF expected in July.

China's economy was expected to bounce back this year after the communist government ended draconian "zero-COVID" lockdowns that had crippled growth in 2022. But the country is struggling with troubles in its overbuilt housing market.

The IMF again expressed concern that the countries of the world were breaking into geopolitical blocs that could limit international trade and economic growth globally.

A SURGE IN RAIL TRAFFIC ON NORTH KOREA-RUSSIA BORDER SUGGESTS ARMS SUPPLY TO RUSSIA, THINK TANK SAYS

THE BUZZ

Recent satellite photos show a sharp increase in rail traffic along the North Korea-Russia border, indicating the North is supplying munitions to Russia, according to a U.S. think tank.

Speculation about a possible North Korean plan to refill Russia's munition stores drained in its protracted war with Ukraine flared last month, when North Korean leader Kim Jong Un traveled to Russia to meet President Vladimir Putin and visit key military sites. Foreign officials suspect Kim is seeking sophisticated Russian weapons technologies in return for the munitions to boost his nuclear program.

"Given that Kim and Putin discussed some military exchanges and cooperation at their recent summit, the dramatic increase in rail traffic likely indicates North Korea's supply of arms and munitions to Russia," Beyond Parallel, a website run by the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank, said in a report Friday.

"However, the extensive use of tarps to cover the shipping crates/containers and equipment makes it impossible to conclusively identify what is seen at the Tumangang Rail Facility" on the border, it said.

**CHINESE DEVELOPER
COUNTRY GARDEN SAYS IT
CAN'T MEET DEBT PAYMENT
DEADLINES AFTER SALES SLUMP**

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

CHINESE property developer Country Garden warned yesterday that it cannot repay on time a 470 million Hong Kong dollar (\$60 million) loan in the latest sign of distress in the industry after Beijing clamped down on mounting debts in the industry.

The company said in a filing to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange that it "expects that it will not be able to meet all of its offshore payment obligations when due or within the relevant grace periods," including U.S. dollar notes the firm has issued.

Country Garden earlier had been hailed as a model real estate company by Chinese authorities. It had avoided defaults on debt even as rivals such as China Evergrande, the world's most heavily indebted property firm, defaulted in 2021 after the Chinese government began restricting borrowing by developers.

The company's Hong Kong-traded shares sank 10.7% yesterday.

Its liquidity crisis suggests developers remain



AP PHOTO

under pressure even after regulators lifted some controls on housing purchases to alleviate troubles in the industry.

The company also has recently received loans from banks, such as a \$50 million loan from China Minsheng Banking Corporation earlier this year on top of a separate \$280 million loan from the Hong Kong unit of the Industrial & Commercial Bank of China in December 2022.

Country Garden said its sales faced "remarkable" pressure after the property sector went under "profound adjustments."

Its sales slumped nearly 44% in January-September from the same period a year

earlier, the company said. Since there has not been an industry-wide improvement in property sales, Country Garden said "its liquidity position is expected to remain very tight in the short- to medium-term."

Last month, the company made interest payments on two securities before the end of a 30-day grace period. Country Garden had more than \$180 billion in liabilities as of June. Evergrande has more than \$300 billion.

Last month, a former Chinese official estimated that even China's 1.4 billion population would not be able to fill all the vacant homes across the country.

MDT/AP



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy traveled to neighboring Romania yesterday for talks with his counterpart on regional security and strengthening bilateral ties against the backdrop of Russia's invasion of his country. Zelenskyy met with President Klaus Iohannis in the capital, Bucharest. The two are also expected to discuss security cooperation in the Black Sea region, Zelenskyy said on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter.



Poland Two top commanders of the Polish armed forces have tendered their resignations, the military said yesterday. Polish media have reported on growing tensions between the two commanders — the chief of the General Staff, Gen. Rajmund Andrzejczak, and operational commander Gen. Tomasz Piotrowski — and Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak. There was no immediate comment from the two commanders or the government.



Sweden's national police chief said yesterday that an escalation in gang violence this year — with almost daily shootings and bombings that have claimed dozens of lives, including teenagers and innocent bystanders — is "extremely serious." Sweden has grappled with gang violence for years but the latest surge has been exceptional, Anders Thornberg said at a news conference, calling it "the most violence we have ever had in the country." He added that police have "prevented about 80 imminent murders or explosions" since the start of the year.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Vincent Thian



Artists perform during the closing ceremony of the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, Oct. 8