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AP PHOTO



Myanmar's military has been accused of launching an airstrike on a camp for displaced persons in the northern state of Kachin that killed about 30 people, including about a dozen children, Kachin militants and activists and local media said. Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military overthrew the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021, triggering widespread popular opposition. After peaceful demonstrations were put down with lethal force, many opponents of military rule took up arms, and large parts of the country are now embroiled in conflict.

AP PHOTO



Afghanistan Another strong earthquake shook western Afghanistan yesterday morning after an earlier one killed more than 2,000 people and flattened whole villages in Herat province in what was one of the most destructive quakes in the country's recent history. The magnitude 6.3 earthquake yesterday was about 28 kilometers outside Herat, the provincial capital, and 10 kilometers deep, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

AP PHOTO



NATO A top commander said the alliance equipped its peacekeeping force in Kosovo with weapons of "combat power" following a recent shootout between masked Serb gunmen and Kosovo police that left four people dead and sent tensions soaring in the region. Adm. Stuart B. Munsch of the Allied Joint Force Command Naples, Italy said that a battalion of some 200 troops from the United Kingdom and 100 others from Romania "is bringing heavier armament in order to have combat power to" the NATO-led Kosovo Force.

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REFUND FOR CANCELLED OPERA SHOWS TO END OCT. 31

Refunds for canceled performances of The Barber of Seville will end on Oct. 31, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) has announced. Extreme weather conditions forced the cancellation of last Sunday's afternoon and evening shows. Ticket holders can be refunded at any Macau Ticketing Network shop. Enquiries can be made during office hours to 2855 5555. The IC has also encouraged the public to buy tickets for upcoming shows at the 35th international music festival, which opens with the opera.

POLICE WARN ABOUT FAKE OCBC APP

The OCBC Bank Macau has reported the existence of a fake app impersonating the bank's app, the Judiciary Police (PJ) has announced. The fake app is on non-official platforms. The PJ said the name, the icons and the interface of the fake app closely resemble the authentic one, which is a common phishing strategy. Bank clients may be deceived into entering their personal and login data into the fake app. The PJ reiterated apps should only be downloaded from official platforms, such as Apple App Store and Google Play.

NEAR 20,000 VISIT SCIENCE CENTRE DURING GOLDEN WEEK

During October's first seven days, over 19,000 people visited the Macao Science Center, public broadcaster TDM—Radio Macau (Chinese) cited the venue as disclosing. This is a 5.7% rise year-over-year or 80% for the same period in 2019. On Oct. 1 alone, there were 6,000 entrants, a new single-day high this year. The venue's operator sees this as the embodiment of the center's role as a base for both extracurricular education on science and leisure activities.

CTT HOSTS POSTCARD DESIGN CONTEST TO CELEBRATE 140TH ANNIVERSARY

The Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau (CTT) is hosting a postcard design contest to celebrate its 140th anniversary. Contestants' designs should feature themes such as East-meets-West culture, gastronomy, festivities, architecture and humanities. Winning designs may be printed and distributed to promote Macau. The contest has student and open categories and is open to all Macau ID holders with corresponding categories. Designs can be submitted physically or digitally in A4 size. Submissions close 5:45 p.m. on Nov. 15.

MACAU SNOOKER EVENT IN THE CENTER OF INT'L IMBROGLIO

RENATO MARQUES

A local snooker exhibition event under Melco Style at Studio City Event Center between Oct. 27 and 29 is at the center of an international-scale imbroglio that has led the World Snooker Tour (WST) to threaten the participants with severe sanctions.

The threat has arisen because to participate in the exhibition event in Macau, the players would have to miss the Northern Ireland Open, a world tour event.

Several big names of the sport will participate in the Macau event, including the reigning world champion Luca Brecel, former Crucible kings Mark Selby and John Higgins, as well as Thepchaiya Un-Nooh and Ali Carter.

In a long statement issued yesterday by the WST, the players were warned that participation in the local non-sanctioned event during a professional tournament, instead of the Northern Ireland Open in Belfast from Oct. 22-29, would constitute a breach of their contracts with WST.

"If these players decide to participate in the exhibition in Macau, the WST will have no alternative but to refer them to the WPBSA (World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association) Disciplinary Committee for breach of their player contract, and this has been clearly communicated to the players," the WST statement reads.

Selby, Higgins, Un-Nooh and Carter have all been in China this week playing in the Wuhan Open, although only Carter remained in the competition at the time of writing.

In the same statement the WST explained that it is not the fact that they might not play at the Belfast event, but, instead, that they are playing in a non-sanctioned WST event.

"It is important to stress that WST players do not have to enter all WST events, they have the freedom to choose, which has always been the case. This level of freedom is



Luca Brecel

"If these players decide to participate in the exhibition in Macau, the WST will have no alternative but to refer them to the WPBSA Disciplinary Committee for breach of their player contract."

WORLD SNOOKER TOUR

unlike any other sport where players have voluntarily opted to enter contracts with their club/organization."

"However, with this level of freedom, we do make clear in our player contracts that a player must not do anything detrimental to the WST or a WST event."

"It is without doubt that playing in a non-sanctioned event instead of playing in a WST event is detrimental to that WST event," the WST statement continued, commenting on the players' already expressed intentions to join the Macau event.

"Unfortunately, despite engaging in email correspondence and phone calls intended to best explain our position and enable the players to make informed decisions, five players (four of whom

are ranked within the top 16) have decided not to compete in the Northern Ireland Open and have withdrawn their entry to play in Macau."

"These players are Mark Selby, John Higgins, Luca Brecel, Thepchaiya Un-Nooh, and Ali Carter, none of whom will therefore appear in Belfast."

According to information cited by specialized media, the appearance fees involved in the Macau exhibition are likely to rival the prize money on offer for reaching the latter stages of the Northern Ireland Open.

The same sources note that this will not be the only event of this kind in Asia in the upcoming weeks. Another exhibition event featuring Ronnie O'Sullivan, Judd Trump, Mark Williams, Jack Lisowski, and

Ding Junhui is also due to take place in Shanghai this month.

The Shanghai exhibition takes place during the Northern Ireland Open qualifiers, and despite the top 16 ranked players having their qualifying round matches held at the venue in Belfast, the WST, which is also unhappy over the participation of some of the sport's star names in this event, is unlikely to take any disciplinary action.

O'Sullivan, who withdrew from the British Open due to illness, flew to Macau for an exhibition alongside Jimmy White before returning on the day of his First-Round match at the English Open last week., LiveSnooker.com noted, adding that the world's number one has been outspoken in his criticism of the current tour structure which is called a "car boot sale," criticizing the UK venues as well as the treatment of players in comparison to the events taking place in Asia.

O'Sullivan is also set to feature in the Macau Masters at the Wynn Palace which will take place from Dec. 25-29. O'Sullivan will play alongside Trump, Ding, Mark Williams, Kyren Wilson, Jack Lisowski, Marco Fu, and Si Jiahui in the Masters event that was announced earlier this year.

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DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR_Lynzy Valles
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS_Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS_Alex Torrao, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Jorge Costa Oliveira, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Sérgio de Almeida Correia, Viviana Seguí DESIGNERS_Miguel Bandeira, Rebeca Almeida | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS_JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES_Associated Press, MacauHub, MacaoNews, Xinhua SECRETARY_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com
OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com
ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84
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RUA DA FELICIDADE

Urban planner: Way of decorations hanging on 'Happiness Street' 'not ideal'

ANTHONY LAM

AN urban planner has described the way decorations were hung on Rua da Felicidade during the pedestrianization campaign as "not ideal".

Although he did not see the use of expansion anchor bolts on the exterior of buildings on Rua da Felicidade, commonly known in English as Happiness Street, to hang decorations during the past long holidays as severely damaging, urban planner Lam Iek Chit told local media Cheng Pou that the method was "not ideal."

He even pointed to the festive lighting installation on Senado Square as an example to prove that alternative methods exist. No holes were drilled on the Municipal Affairs Bureau or the General Post Office buildings, he said.

Earlier, complaints had been received on public channels about the way in which the pedestrianization decorations were hung on Happiness Street. Some members of the public asked about the pos-



sibility of cracks and water leakage after the puncturing of the external walls.

It was also asked why the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) reacted so severely after scratches were made on the outer wall of the Mandarin's House, but allowed constructors to puncture the walls of Happi-

ness Street buildings.

Buildings on the street are listed as part of Macau's local cultural heritage, meaning that any alterations require approval from the IC.

In response to the complaints, the IC department head for cultural heritage, Choi Kin Long, said the Happiness Street listing falls

into the category of ensembles, meaning groups of architectures. The IC allowed the installation of signboards, advertising billboards, promotional materials and temporary festive decorations, he added.

On the same matter, Lam said any installation of metal structu-

res on historic architecture should be allowed on a restricted basis, such as to prevent further deterioration or damage, and upgrading the buildings to meet modern requirements. However, he could not see this was the basis in the recent punctures.

It is stated in the Burra Charter – a global document governing the protection of historic sites – that such sites must be protected based on their existing structure, use, relevance and meaning, while alterations must be minimized and conducted with exceptional caution.

Lam sees the punctures as conflicting with Charter provisions.

On the existence of signboards, Lam considered it a commercial tradition, as commercial activities are still occurring in these buildings. However, he did not see the hanging of decorative installations a commercial necessity.

The urban planner said these buildings have existed for over a century and a half, and that the conditions of their bricks may not be satisfactory.



PUBLIC WORKS

Taipa gas station land to give way to 90m tower

RENATO MARQUES

THE fuel station on Taipa's Avenida Dr. Sun Yat Sen may give way to the construction of a building tower of up to 90 meters in height.

This year's seventh meeting of the Urban Planning Committee (CPU) yesterday acknowledged the change as it approved the Urban Conditions Plan (PCU) for the land's development.

At the meeting and

after some discussion, Leong Io Hong, head of the Department of Urban Planning of the Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) said that while the purpose of the project is not yet completely settled, the land might soon hold a new hotel unit, noting that a residential building is another possibility.

The land, with 1,008 square meters, is privately owned and the CPU also considers a significant

parcel will become part of the public domain in consequence of the reform of the land plot in the area.

According to the DSSCU conditions, the building should be about 30 stories high.

Responding to CPU members' questions about the fuel station's future, Leong said it will be evaluated if there is a need to relocate the facility to another location or if it will simply be closed.

He also said the go-

vernment's authorization for the construction of the fuel station was conditional and intended as a temporary use for the land plot, which is the reason why there is no impediment to the process on this aspect.

"The owners need to decide [on their own] if the fuel station needs or not to be relocated," Leong said, adding that DSSCU hopes that "by granting all these options in terms of land use [including, residential, commercial, tourism and entertainment] this land plot can be developed as soon as possible."

"There is a possibility of it being used for the construction of a hotel. If so, we will issue some specific guidelines regarding the number of parking spaces that the project needs to possess," the same official said, hinting at some urgency in developing this land parcel.

The reformation and development of the land plot should give way to the creation of a new street that would link with the Rua do Porto.

2.8-FOLD INCREASE IN TELECOM FRAUDS LOGGED

ANTHONY LAM

THERE have been 436 investigations initiated this year against telecom and cyber fraud, a 2.8-fold increase year-over-year, a communal advisor has cited the police as saying.

The cases involved nearly MOP100 million.

The Central District Communal Advisory Committee and the Judiciary Police (PJ) organized a crime prevention briefing yesterday, and the disclosure was made therein.

The deputy convenor of the Committee, Lei Chong In, cited the PJ as describing fund revocation as very difficult, because swindled funds are usually disseminated to thousands of bank accounts once

received by the first fraudsters.

The PJ added that should victims recognize they are being defrauded, they should seek help early because banks may be able to suspend the wire transfer instructions and help save the money.

The Cybersecurity Committee presided over by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng, met Tuesday for this year's meeting.

Ho said safeguarding cybersecurity is key in the current era. He required all organs of the government to consider cybersecurity as important as national security. He added that although Macau's cybersecurity situation had remained stable and favorable, many problems and security risks still stand out.



TELECOM COMPANIES ASKED TO TEXT MACAU CELLPHONES IN ISRAEL

The local government has requested local telecommunications companies to send text messages to two local cell phones that are currently connected to the Israeli network, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has announced. The text messages included emergency contact numbers. Local telecommunications companies were not aware of any local cell phone numbers connected to the Palestinian network. The tourism board has also contacted the tourism industry and it was confirmed that no tour groups were in Israel or Palestine. For the time being, no inquiry nor request for help has been received. The second-tier travel warning to Israel is still in effect.

15 COMPANIES CERTIFIED UNDER NEW TECHNOLOGY COMPANY CERTIFICATION SCHEME

The Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) have granted the Technology Company certification to 15 companies under the new Technology Company Certification Scheme. A total of 39 local enterprises applied to the certification program. The certification is valid for three years and is based on several factors such as company size, intellectual property ownership, research and development staff, awards, academic qualifications of staff, and qualification of associate companies. Of the 15 companies now certified, three are considered key technology companies while the other 12 are considered technology companies with potential.

RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY PRICE INDEX SLIGHT DECREASE

The overall residential property price index for June - August 2023 decreased by 0.9% over the previous period (May - July 2023) to 248.2. The index for the Macau Peninsula (245.5) dropped by 1.3% while that for Taipa & Coloane (258.6) rose by 0.5%, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service. In comparison with the same period last year, the overall residential property price index fell by 2.6%. The index for the Macau Peninsula dropped by 3.8% while that for Taipa & Coloane rose by 1.9%.

DSAL TO ORGANIZE JOB MATCHING SESSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES FOR DEC. 5

Job-matching sessions for persons with disabilities will be held on December 5, in a bid to provide direct interview opportunities for local enterprises and people with disabilities who have employment needs. Organized by the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL), the bureau will accept registrations from companies from today. According to DSAL, the aim of the session is to "increase the understanding of people with disabilities about the job market, so as to improve employment opportunities."

GOV'T WANTS INTERDISCIPLINARY TALENT IN CULTURE

ANTHONY LAM

THE government is keen for people with interdisciplinary talent in the cultural sector to extend the industry beyond Macau, director of Culture Leong Wai Man has been cited as saying.

Leong added that this is not the only possible option. In addition, to encourage "core personnel with leadership functions" into commercial entities is also an alternative for the city.

Following a recent Cultural Development Advisory Committee plenary meeting, a press conference was held, where these comments were made.

Committee member Ieng Weng Fat told the press conference that committee members were inclined towards promotion of talent acquisition and cultivation. They expressed the hope that the government would study the introduction of "leaders." They also hoped that intangible cultural heritage can be better utilized to development



the cultural industry.

When asked what type or types of talent the government wanted to acquire or nurture, Leong pointed toward the cultural and education sectors, and added that more information would be announced in due course.

In addition, she pointed out that the government wanted to introduce people with "interdisciplinary talent" or "leaders" in the cultural circle, so that their experience could be utilized to

boost developments in the cultural industry, or even expand the industry across the city's borders.

Moreover, the committee has also discussed work on Portuguese culture promotion in Macau, revolving around an upcoming Chinese-Portuguese culture and arts festival.

Ieng disclosed that translations between the Chinese and Portuguese languages were raised at the meeting. Certain members were concerned about

the role of translation amid interactions between China and lusophone countries. It was also suggested that more Portuguese literature be translated into Chinese.

This year's activities will see the usual Lusofonia Festival, illustrated book fair and exhibition, as well as singing and dance performances, among other events. A slightly bold event this year is the blending of Fado music with Chinese orchestral music.

HEALTH

SSM extends Healthy Eating campaign to delivery platforms

THE Health Bureau (SSM) has extended its Healthy Eating campaign to the city's three food delivery platforms: Aomi; mFood; and Tikbee, the SSM has revealed.

The SSM said extending the campaign to food delivery platforms means restaurants offering dishes considered healthy in a medical and scientific sense are highlighted and presented in specific areas or with specific markings.

Food delivery platforms will be able to add a Healthy Eating icon on their apps' front page. Healthy Eating restaurant webpages will highlight vegetarian, whole grain, as well as low salt, sugar and fat-free options. On the check-out page, keys for light salt, light sugar and light oil are added for quick choice.

A total of 48 caterers



on food delivery platforms have joined in the campaign.

To join the Health Eating campaign, a caterer should provide at least five legitimate dishes regularly available on their menu.

Restaurants with licenses from either the Macao Government Tourism Office or the Municipal Affairs Bureau - with takeaway caterers included - can re-

gister with the campaign provided they meet the necessary prerequisites.

Director of Health and pulmonologist Alvis Lo noted at the launch ceremony that ordering food online has become more popular and a regular part in the dining life of local people. Therefore, the SSM has decided to extend the campaign to food delivery platforms to promote healthy dining. **AL**

CRIME

MAN ARRESTED FOR USING PRIVATE VEHICLE TO PICK UP 'PASSENGERS' DURING T8

STAFF REPORTER

A local man was arrested over picking up passengers and collecting payments during Typhoon Signal No. 8 Monday.

When civilian police officers intercepted him, he tried to drive away and injured a policeman, according to authorities. The police said that during the typhoon, officers found a car carrying passengers with five people inside.

The vehicle stopped at the traffic light in the afternoon. Police officers signaled the driver to open the window, but the driver refused to cooperate and tried to drive away, knocking down a police officer in his 30s, causing injuries to his hands and feet and sending him to the hospital for treatment.

Other police officers

immediately stopped the driver. One of the passengers said that he paid MOP100 to take a white-plate car.

T8 was hoisted for over 17 hours, halting public transportation. With the two bridges in the city linking Taipa and the Macau peninsula closed, only the Sai Van Bridge was available for private vehicles.

Civil servants suspected of MOP600,000 theft

Two female civil servants were suspected of stealing more than MOP600,000 in cash and property from an acquaintance's workplace. The police received a report from a local woman that someone had broken into her house and taken more than MOP600,000 in property, including more than HKD200,000 in cash, gold jewelry, watches, ginseng, antler and seafood.

Wynn Develops Diversified International Tourism Brand To Continuously Enhance Non-Gaming Elements

WYNN actively supports the SAR Government's "1+4" moderate diversification strategy. By organizing a rich variety of events, Wynn seeks to further "tourism+" cross-industrial integration in Macao to explore greater potential value for the city's tourism and showcase its charm as a "World Center of Tourism and Leisure" and a "Creative City of Gastronomy" as designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

PROMOTE ALL-ROUND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EXCLUSIVE LIFESTYLE BRAND

To further support the long-term non-gaming development of Macao, Wynn has launched "Wynn Signature," an exciting new lifestyle brand designed to create the ultimate Wynn experience. "Wynn Signature" will work in partnership with the world's top brands to bring together exceptional gastronomy, premium resort experiences, world-class indulgences and an array of high-end themed events. These new signature events allow visitors to experience a series of Wynn's exclusive explorations into international excitements, while also propelling the sustainable development of Macao's tourism industry.

The "Wynn Signature" launch dinner was recently held at the Forbes Five-Star SW Steakhouse at Wynn Palace, where Executive Chef Helder Sequeira Amaral presented guests with his meticulously crafted dishes, each thoughtfully paired with Chinese wines for guests to savor the rich variety of distinctive flavors and aromas from across the mainland.

ASSISTING THE INDUSTRY TO GO GLOBAL BY ORGANIZING "CHINESE WINE COMPETITION"

To promote the future development of the Chinese wine industry and provide an excellent exchange platform for wine industry professionals from China, Wynn will hold the "Wynn Signature - Chinese Wine Competition" in March-April next year. A number of wine connoisseurs from China and abroad will be invited to serve as judges to select the most outstanding Chinese wines as well as wineries and individuals whose contributions



Officiating guests unveiled the "Wynn Signature" brand

to the wine industry are most deserving of recognition.

Wynn hosted three Chinese Wine Masterclass sessions last month to give the industry and the public a deep yet easily understandable knowledge of wines and wine tasting. The first session featured Ms. Ma Huiqin, Professor at the China Agricultural University and Deputy Secretary General for the Grape Department Branch of China Association of Agriculture Science Societies, who talked about the "Diversity of Chinese Wines" and guided the participants in a special wine tasting experience. The other two sessions were led by Terry Xu, a mainland Chinese wine expert whose opinion is widely sought after and highly regarded, gave an introduction on Western influences in Chinese winemaking and China's highly collectible wines.

ENRICHING MACAU GRAND PRIX WITH HYPERCAR EXHIBITION

To celebrate the 74th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and welcome the Macau Grand Prix in November, Wynn is hosting the "Wynn Signature - 2023 Hypercar Exhibition" from now until November 30, showcasing a collection of 16 world-class and rare luxury cars with a total value exceeding HKD500 million at Wynn Macau and Wynn Palace, which is open to the public to enjoy with free admission. Featuring the first-ever McLaren Hyper-GT Speedtail of McLaren Automotive; Bugatti's ultimate masterpiece, "Bugatti Chiron;" and most notably the Pagani Huayra BC, a rare treat for Macao enthusiasts because only 20 have been pro-

duced worldwide.

Ms. Linda Chen, President and Vice Chairman of the Board of Wynn Macau, Limited, said, "The exhibition aims to promote the annual international sporting event 'Macau Grand Prix', enrich the experience of Macao visitors, and showcase a diverse tourism image of 'tourism + sports' to travelers from around the world."

BUILDING A CITY OF EVENTS AND GASTRONOMY WITH LEISURE AND ENTERTAINMENT SPECTACLES

Wynn Palace hosted the "Legend DJ Poolside Dance Party" during the National Day holiday. DJ SODA, who is known for her

rapid rise to fame as Asia's No. 1 female DJ and garnering more than 900 million views and over 18 million fans, performed on the same stage with internationally acclaimed Malaysian DJ AMBER NA, renowned Czech music producer and DJ John Culter, and legendary basketball player-turned DJ, Shaquille O'Neal — "DJ Diesel." The four world-class performers set the crowds on fire with powerful beats by the pool of Wynn Palace, rocking Macao with their magnetic energy in combination with huge LED screens in front of Wynn Palace and water dances performed to the music.

For those who enjoy a more

subdued event infused with tense strategy and skill, Ronnie "The Rocket" O'Sullivan — internationally renowned king of snooker and seven-time world snooker champion — competed against world-class player Jimmy "Whirlwind" White in the Wynn Macau Ballroom. The two snooker superstars are renowned worldwide for garnering many awards throughout their career, and the legendary exhibition match gave snooker fans the opportunity to see their idols up close in Macao for the first time.

In addition to the rich variety of entertainment activities, two of Macao's most acclaimed Chinese restaurants newly opened in Wynn Palace are offering feasts of fine dining delights to residents and tourists. Chef Tam's Seasons is a brand-new conceptual restaurant created by renowned Master Chef Tam Kwok Fung — "Chef of the Year" honored by the Black Pearl Restaurant Guide to showcase the best of Cantonese cuisine with inspiration from the 24 solar terms of Chinese traditional wisdom. At Chef Tam's Seasons, the award-winning chef takes Cantonese cuisine to new heights by matching global ingredients with contemporary culinary techniques with perfectly balanced flavors that embrace the gastronomical delight of seasonality. In Lakeview Palace, Executive Chef Wilson Fam, who is renowned for his exceptional Chinese and Western culinary skills, cleverly combines classic Jiangnan cuisine with contemporary flavors from Jiangsu and Zhejiang, as well as taking influences from the spicy and fragrant Sichuan flavors and the exquisite and seasonal Cantonese dishes.



Wynn held masterclasses to introduce wine-related knowledge to industry practitioners



16 limited-edition hypercars are being showcased at Wynn Macau and Wynn Palace



World's hottest DJs livened up the holiday with performances



Two world snooker superstars had an exhibition match at Wynn Macau

CHENG LEI

Chinese Australian journalist detained for three years returns to Australia

ROD MCGUIRK, CANBERRA

A Chinese Australian journalist who was convicted on murky espionage charges and detained in China for three years has returned to Australia, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said yesterday.

Cheng Lei, 48, worked for the international department of China's state broadcaster CCTV. She has reunited with her two children in Melbourne, Albanese said.

Her return comes ahead of Albanese's planned visit to Beijing this year on a date yet to be announced. He will become the first Australian prime minister to visit the Chinese capital in seven years.

Albanese said Australia had traded nothing with China for Cheng's release.

"Her release follows the completion of judicial processes in China," he said.

China's Ministry of State Security said that Cheng had been approached by a foreign organization in May 2020 and provided them with state secrets she had obtained on the job in violation of a confidentiality clause signed with her employer. A police statement did not name the organization or say what the secrets were.

A court in Beijing convicted her of illegally providing state secrets abroad and she was sentenced to two years and 11 months, the statement said. She was



deported yesterday after serving her sentence, presumably because she had already been detained for that long.

"Her return brings an end to a very difficult few years for Ms. Cheng and her family," Albanese said. "The government has been seeking this for a long period of time and her return will be warmly welcomed not just by her family and friends but by all Australians."

The FreeChengLei account on X, formerly known as Twitter, posted a photo of Cheng with Australian Foreign Minister

Penny Wong and Australia's ambassador to China, Graham Fletcher.

The post included a quote, apparently from Cheng, that read: "Tight hugs, teary screams, holding my kids in the spring sunshine. Trees shimmy from the breeze. I can see the entirety of the sky now! Thank you Aussies."

Albanese's government has been lobbying for the release of Cheng and another Chinese Australian held in China since 2019, Yang Hengjun.

Bilateral relations have impro-

ved since Albanese's center-left Labor Party was elected after nine years of conservative rule. Beijing has lifted several official and unofficial trade barriers on Australian exports.

Albanese's reference to China's judicial system suggested that Cheng had recently been sentenced after she was convicted in a closed-court trial last year on national security charges.

Questioned by a reporter, Albanese said China was not acknowledging through Cheng's release that she posed no threat or had been wrongfully detained.

"No, China would have not have said that that's the position. China would say that the judicial processes have been completed in China," Albanese said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said that the Chinese judicial system tried the case "in accordance with the law, fully safeguarding the rights enjoyed by the person concerned in accordance with the law."

Albanese said he spoke to Cheng in Melbourne, where her children have been living with her mother, and that they discussed a letter she had written to the Australian public in August to mark the third anniversary of her detention. The Chinese-born journalist spoke in her letter about her love for her adopted country.

In the letter, she also described her living conditions in detention in China, saying she was

allowed to stand in sunlight for just 10 hours a year.

"She is a very strong and resilient person ... and when I spoke with her she was delighted to be back in Melbourne," Albanese said.

Albanese did not say whether Yang was also likely to be released.

"We continue to advocate for Dr. Yang's interests, rights and wellbeing with the Chinese authorities at all levels," Albanese said.

Yang, a 58-year-old writer and democracy blogger, told his family in August he fears he will die in a Beijing detention center after being diagnosed with a kidney cyst, prompting supporters to demand his release for medical treatment.

Yang has been detained in China since January 2019, when he arrived in Guangzhou from New York with his wife and teenage stepdaughter.

Yang received a closed-door trial on an espionage charge in Beijing in May 2021 and is still awaiting a verdict.

Yang's friend, University of Technology Sydney academic Feng Chongyi, said yesterday a verdict had been postponed for three months 11 times and the next possible ruling was January.

He said Cheng's release was good news for Yang. "I do hope Yang is treated in the same way. Given Yang's poor health, his release is actually more urgent," Feng said. **MDT/AP**

ANALYSIS | BRI

The revival of a millennia-old port

XINHUA EDITORS

TASSOS Vamvakidis, who has worked at the Port of Piraeus in Greece for over five decades, has seen the ebb and flow of this millennia-old port. Nevertheless, there are still moments that evoke strong emotions whenever he recalls.

On Nov. 11, 2019, President Xi Jinping visited Piraeus port, a flagship project of China-Greece Belt and Road cooperation, during his state visit to Greece. The project has brought the port back from the brink of

bankruptcy through Chinese investment of capital and advanced technologies and equipment.

"The port was bustling with excitement, just like celebrating a festival," Vamvakidis recalled. "President Xi's visit is of great significance for every staff member and the entire port."

Standing on a rooftop platform overlooking the port, Xi talked with the staff members.

"He spoke with wisdom and foresight," Vamvakidis recalled.

Xi said the principles of the Belt and Road Ini-

tiative (BRI) - extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits - mean that no single country dictates the terms and all participants share the responsibilities and the gains.

Over the past decade, China has signed BRI cooperation documents with more than 150 countries and 30-plus international organizations, helping participating countries address challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, lagging industrial development, limited industrialization, insufficient

capital and technology, and a shortage of skilled workers.

The Piraeus project is one of them. Situated on the Mediterranean coast, Piraeus is Greece's largest port and boasts a history of over 2,000 years.

As a pivotal gateway linking Europe with Asia and Africa, this port serves as a testament to the vicissitudes of European maritime civilization.

Yet, the prominence of Piraeus had been steadily diminishing for years until Chinese shipping company COSCO made an investment in 2008,



helping it out of the clutches of the international financial crisis.

Through the Belt and Road cooperation, Piraeus has experienced rapid growth in recent

years. Its container operating capacity surged from around 1.5 million TEUs in 2010 to 6.2 million TEUs, making it one of the largest ports in the Mediterranean. **XINHUA**

MALAYSIA

Wildlife department defends its use of puppies as live bait to trap black panthers

EILEEN NG, KUALA LUMPUR

MALAYSIA'S Wildlife Department defended its use of puppies as live bait to capture black panthers spotted at a Malaysian village after animal rights groups protested the method and appealed to the government to use other means.

The department resorted to using puppies after earlier attempts to lure the panthers with a goat failed. It's standard procedure to use live animals, Wildlife Department Director General Abdul Kadir Abu Hashim said in remarks published this week, noting that the puppies were not physically harmed in the process.

"In this particular case, there was indication that the panther had attacked dogs (before), so we used the puppies for their barking and scent to attract the panther," he told the Free Malaysia Today online news portal.

Farmers in a village in southern Negeri Sembilan state were terrified after spotting a panther near their home in September. Villagers lodged a complaint with the Wildlife Department after a panther mauled their dog at a fruit orchard in the state on Sept. 4, according to a Facebook post by



Negeri Sembilan Chief Minister Aminuddin Harun.

Aminuddin said the Wildlife Department immediately installed a trap for the big cat, which was believed to have come from a forest reserve nearby. The department managed to trap three panthers on Sept. 18, Sept. 27 and Oct. 1, he said.

The operation, however, sparked controversy after local media reported that puppies were used as live bait to lure the panthers. Malaysian Animal Welfare Association slammed the move as shocking, and said it would have been more ethical for the department to use raw cattle meat. The Animal Care Society also appeared

led to the government to stop using live animals in such operations.

Abdul Kadir explained that the trap — a cage with a separate compartment to hold the puppies — is able to swiftly release the canines once the panther is caught. He said the pups were unharmed and that officials adhered to ope-

rating procedures.

Abdul Kadir did not immediately respond to requests for comment by phone and email.

Wildlife officials in Negeri Sembilan told local media that the first panther caught was a female weighing about 40 kilograms (90 pounds). The department has caught a dozen panthers in the state since the start of the year, including the three caught in September.

Aminuddin previously said the panthers have been treated and appeared healthy, though he did not say whether they were released back into the forest. He said the Wildlife Department was also conducting aerial investigations using drones to find out why the panthers had strayed into the village.

Black panthers, found in tropical forests in Asia, Africa and Central and South America, are solitary animals that hunt at night and rarely bother people.

Conservation researchers said panthers are a protected species and rarely bother people, but they face threats of habitat loss and poaching in Malaysia.

In May, an adult black panther was hit by a car and died after it strayed on to a road from a forest reserve and the driver couldn't stop in time. **MDT/AP**

NEW Zealand's immigration numbers have hit an all-time high, enabling employers to fill jobs but also putting pressure on the housing market, according to economists.

The net number of immigrants was 110,000 in the year ending August, beating the previous high of 103,000 set a month earlier, according to figures released yesterday by Statistics New Zealand. The numbers represent a big turnaround after more people left New Zealand than arrived during much of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We are talking very, very big numbers for a small economy like ours," said Jarrod Kerr, chief economist at Kiwibank.

Kerr said the surge likely reflected pent-up demand that had built during the pandemic. He said it had come as a relief to employers, who last year were

NEW ZEALAND

Immigration hits an all-time high as movement surges following pandemic lull

having great difficulty finding skilled workers to fill vacant roles.

New Zealand's unemployment rate remains at a relatively low 3.6%.

But Kerr also cautioned the migrants would need a lot of resources, including tens of thousands of homes — something that remained in short supply.

The figures show the greatest number of immigrants came from India, followed by Philippines and China. The total number of immigrants reached a record 225,000 during the year while the number of New Zealanders leaving also neared record levels, at 115,000.

The figures included a

net loss of nearly 43,000 New Zealand citizens, many of whom were lured to Australia with offers of better pay. Under a reciprocal arrangement, New Zealanders and Australians can live and work in either country.

"Unfortunately, we lose trained, smart individuals," Kerr said. "That is something that worries us."

The figures were released three days before New Zealand holds a general election, although immigration hasn't been a major campaign issue. Both main parties have focused on the soaring cost-of-living, tax cuts and crime.

MDT/AP



AP PHOTO



PUTIN'S WAR

Zelenskyy at NATO defense ministers meeting seeking more support

LORNE COOK & LOLITA BALDOR, BRUSSELS

FOR the first time, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy joined a meeting of more than 50 defense leaders from around the world yesterday to make a personal pitch for military aid, in the face of lagging political support in the U.S. and new pressure on allies to send weapons to bolster Israel's war with Hamas.

His presence underscored growing concerns about cracks in what has been staunch international backing for Kyiv in its war against Russia's invasion, and worries that Ukrainian forces haven't made measurable progress in the counteroffensive, as winter closes in.

"Next Monday, we will mark the 600th day of our resistance to Russia's full scale aggression against our people, against Ukraine. And today, no one can say for sure how many more days we will have to defend our independence and to defend our identity," Zelenskyy told the gathering as they opened the meeting.

"But we can already say several things which I think are important. First, Putin will not achieve Ukraine. Second, Russia cannot afford a new arms race. And third, democracy can win this battle."

The meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, hosted by the U.S., comes as Ukraine is desperately seeking more weapons to help its troops regain ground from Russian forces before the muddy weather sets in. But political chaos in Congress stalled approval of new Ukraine funding, and there has been growing opposition among some lawmakers to any increase in spending.

Speaking as he entered NATO headquarters, Zelenskyy noted the Israel war, and said Ukrainians understand such tragedy. But he was also quick to detail Ukraine's ongoing need for air defense systems and long-range missiles "to push Russia out of our land."

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told reporters traveling with him to Brussels that support for Ukraine continues unabated. He said a number of allies will

announce they are sending additional weapons and other support to Kyiv. A key demand has been more air defense systems and munitions.

"The energy, in my view, is still there," said Austin. "And I will reassure them that we remain committed to this."

He echoed those thoughts as he opened the meeting, asserting that Ukraine is making steady progress in the war. And he said allies during this meeting will focus not only on meeting Kyiv's immediate needs but also on setting up plans to coordinate investments in Ukraine's future force

The contact group is the main forum for raising contributions of weapons, equipment and training for Kyiv's war effort. It meets about once a month, in person and virtually, and this is the 16th gathering.

Zelenskyy, who was greeted with applause as he entered the building, went immediately into a private session with Austin and U.S. Air Force Gen. CQ Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Speaking to reporters as he came in, Zelenskyy reite-

rated his country's need for long-range missiles and ammunition.

"It's very important that there are priorities. There are air defense systems. These are not just basic words. These are very concrete things and we need them," Zelenskyy said.

Following that meeting, the 31 allies and Ukraine will take part in the first NATO-Ukraine Council at this level. The forum was formally established in July as part of efforts to bring Kyiv closer to the alliance. It allows NATO and Kyiv to discuss issues of common interest and concern.

The new package of U.S. aid includes AIM-9M missiles for air defense, counter-drone systems, munitions for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), artillery, electronic warfare equipment, demolition munitions, anti-armor systems and more than 16 million rounds of small arms ammunition.

The weapons are provided under presidential drawdown authority, so will be taken from Pentagon stocks and delivered quickly to the battlefield. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1986 REYKJAVIK SUMMIT ENDS IN FAILURE



US President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev have failed to reach agreement at a disarmament summit in Reykjavik.

The two men came close to striking a radical arms reduction deal after a weekend of lengthy negotiations at Hofdi House in the Icelandic capital.

But the talks finally stalled over President Reagan's refusal to abandon his Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI).

The White House spokesman, Larry Speake said, "We had high hopes and we came very close to realising them but in the end we are deeply disappointed at the outcome."

After the summit, Mr Gorbachev said that he had told President Reagan, "We are missing an historic chance. Never had our positions been so close together."

Before flying back to Washington, President Reagan said:

"We moved towards agreement on drastically reduced numbers of intermediate-range missiles in both Europe and Asia and sharply reducing our strategic arsenals for both."

"We made progress in the area of nuclear testing, but there was remaining at the end of our talks one area of disagreement."

This was the American SDI programme - also known as Star Wars - a series of networked satellites intended to protect the USA from foreign missile attacks.

The two leaders have met for 11 hours over the past two days including an unscheduled meeting today.

Stalemate was reached this afternoon.

President Reagan agreed to develop and test his missile defence system for a decade but wanted a definite plan to deploy it after then.

Mr Gorbachev insisted a decision on its implementation should be reserved until the end of the 10 year period.

Soviets officials questioned the need for Star Wars if America's stated ambition was arms reduction.

They fear the project could potentially give the US a first strike capability and promote an arms race.

The US Secretary of State George Shultz defended SDI saying it "was the best insurance policy" against the USSR backing out of arms reduction.

The leaders plan to meet in Geneva next but no fixed date has been arranged.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

President Reagan's administration invested heavily in building up America's nuclear capability. It was estimated that SDI would cost \$26bn over a five-year period.

Critics dubbed the project Star Wars indicating they thought SDI was nothing more than a futuristic plan that would never work.

Gorbachev eventually de-linked negotiations on arms control from the SDI issues.

In December 1987, Gorbachev and Reagan signed the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. This was the first ever treaty to reverse the arms race.

The INF treaty effectively eliminated more than 2,500 long and short range missiles.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Hide your cards and learn to say no. You will be too quick to point your finger at your mate. You can get phenomenal returns if you present your ideas to those who can back your interests.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20

You can make money if you're willing to push your ideas on those in a position to support your efforts. If you can put some work into home improvements, you should.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21

Don't let others put unreasonable demands on you. Ask those in key positions to help you overcome the delays and to support your concerns in order to move on.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You may be in an extremely passionate mood today. Don't be critical or overly opinionated with dislikes; it could cause disapproval and unwanted opposition.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22

In return, the satisfaction you get is enough for you. You may want to take a look at courses offered at a local institute. Try to take care of the needs of those you love.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Get busy trying to make more money. Try not to overspend on luxury items. Sign up for courses that will bring you more skills.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Trips should be your choice. Don't put all your cash in one place. Enlist coworkers in order to get the job done on time.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Your professional attitude will not go unnoticed. Enlist the aid of family members and consider the feelings of your mate. Realize that you don't have to do everything yourself.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Close deals that have been up in the air and move on to new ones that appear to be profitable. Be precise in your communications to avoid any misunderstandings and arguments.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Opportunities to get involved in investment groups will payoff. Hold on; your time will come. Get together with friends for some competitive physical activities.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Expect temper tantrums on the home front if you haven't been letting someone have their way. You may want to sign up for courses that will encourage you to have more confidence in yourself.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Don't let peers distract you or push their work your way. You can meet potential new mates, but make sure that they aren't already committed to someone else.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

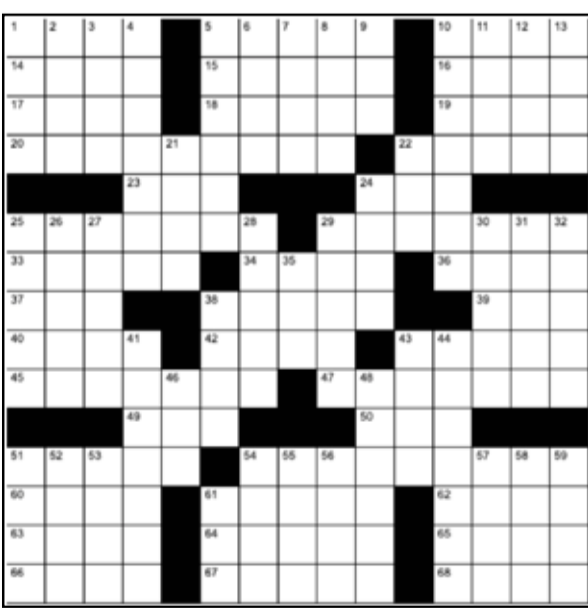
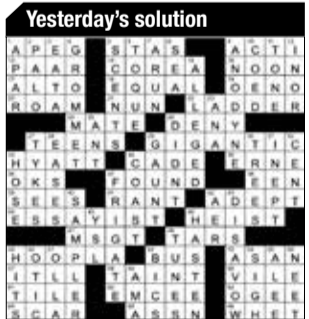
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	11	18	rain
Changchun	6	20	fine
Chengdu	15	19	rain
Chongqing	18	21	rain
Fuzhou	20	28	cloudy
Guangzhou	21	30	cloudy
Guiyang	11	18	rain
Haikou	23	28	rain
Hangzhou	15	24	cloudy
Harbin	5	20	fine
Hefei	13	22	cloudy
Nanjing	14	22	cloudy
Shanghai	17	23	rain
Taipei	22	25	cloudy
Wuhan	13	22	cloudy
Hong Hong	23	27	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	7	14	rain
Frankfurt	14	19	rain
Paris	18	23	rain
London	15	17	rain
New York	11	21	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Stated; 5- Songwriters' org.; 10- Bedouin; 14- Draw in; 15- Bread; 16- Bandleader Puentes; 17- Hullabaloo; 18- Money spent; 19- Swabbies; 20- Conversely; 22- Museum piece; 23- Tease; 24- Milne's "Mr. ___ Passes By"; 25- Country in SE Asia; 29- Pasquinade; 33- Fidgety; 34- Long poem, such as those attributed to Homer; 36- ___ avail; 37- Cheering word; 38- Fend (off); 39- Barcelona bear; 40- Robert of "The Sopranos"; 42- Exude slowly; 43- Income source; 45- Rapid in tempo; 47- Place; 49- No-win situation; 50- Barker and Bell; 51- Crazy as ___; 54- Going; 60- "Star Trek" role; 61- Put a new price on; 62- Pentathlon need; 63- One of the Baldwins; 64- Strange and mysterious; 65- Cheer (for); 66- Thrust; 67- Portents; 68- Actress Best;

DOWN 1- Croat, e.g.; 2- Autobahn auto; 3- Camaro model; 4- Arid areas; 5- Simple life form; 6- Go bad; 7- Camp beds; 8- Pond organism; 9- Kung ___ chicken; 10- Try; 11- Unit of currency in Iran and Yemen; 12- Longfellow's bell town; 13- Winter pear; 21- Overgrown with ivy; 22- Outer edge; 24- Step; 25- Miscellany; 26- Total; 27- Lucy's landlady; 28- Ditto; 29- Resides; 30- Alley Oop's girlfriend; 31- Start; 32- Snare; 35- La ___. Bolivia; 38- Annoyed; 41- Airbrush; 43- Lead; 44- Spartan; 46- Rickey ingredient; 48- Mental pictures; 51- PDQ; 52- Pip; 53- Corrida cries; 54- Consider; 55- French 101 infinitive; 56- Physical suffering; 57- Apple player; 58- Light gas; 59- "___ grip!"; 61- Stutz contemporary;



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- PSP 28 573 333
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- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
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RUGBY WORLD CUP | PREVIEW

Springboks have earned back respect from referees, Erasmus says

Pool A	P	W	D	L	PD	B	PTS
France	4	4	0	0	178	2	18
New Zealand	4	3	0	1	206	3	15
Italy	4	2	0	2	-67	2	10
Uruguay	4	1	0	3	-99	1	5
Namibia	4	0	0	4	-218	0	0

Pool B	P	W	D	L	PD	B	PTS
Ireland	4	4	0	0	144	3	19
South Africa	4	3	0	1	117	3	15
Scotland	4	2	0	2	75	2	10
Tonga	4	1	0	3	-81	1	5
Romania	4	0	0	4	-255	0	0

Pool C	P	W	D	L	PD	B	PTS
Wales	4	4	0	0	84	3	19
Fiji	4	2	0	2	5	3	11
Australia	4	2	0	2	-1	3	11
Portugal	4	1	1	2	-39	0	6
Georgia	4	0	1	3	-49	1	3

Pool D	P	W	D	L	PD	B	PTS
England	4	4	0	0	111	2	18
Argentina	4	3	0	1	58	2	14
Japan	4	2	0	2	2	1	9
Samoa	4	1	0	3	17	3	7
Chile	4	0	0	4	-188	0	0

ONE of the surprises of the Rugby World Cup pool stage was the only team not to concede a yellow or red card: South Africa.

The defending champion Springboks were also one of the least penalized — 34, which put them among the top six teams. The least penalized was France, whom the Springboks face in the quarter-finals on Sunday [Monday, 03:00] at Stade de France.

Asked yesterday [Macau time] about their relationship with referees, South Africa director of rugby Rassie Erasmus said, "The first word is respect."

He wasn't kidding.

Not long ago, Erasmus was enemy No. 1 among referees for a scathing hour-long video critique of the match officials in



Rassie Erasmus, South Africa's coach

the first test against the 2021 British and Irish Lions. The gist of the vi-

deo was right. The public delivery of it wasn't. World Rugby sanctio-

ned Erasmus with a nearly year-long matchday ban. Just weeks later last November, he was handed a two-game ban from match days and social media for criticizing the refs again after losses in Ireland and France.

He's been out of trouble since then. Erasmus tried to persuade retired refereeing great Nigel Owens last March to join the squad as a law and strategy consultant like France did with retired official Jerome Garces.

Owens declined, but their conversation helped Erasmus and South Africa learn how better to see the refs' point of view, and improve communication. It hasn't been perfect. The Springboks received yellow cards in four consecutive tests preceding the Rugby World Cup. But they have been squeaky clean during the tournament.

Yesterday, Erasmus admitted to being wrong in the past.

"We got it wrong," he said, "especially when we had the year off with COVID and we went into the Lions series. The level of communication

AD

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RUGBY WORLD CUP | PREVIEW

Smith not burdened by All Blacks-Ireland history ahead of quarterfinal

ARON Smith made his New Zealand test debut against Ireland in 2012. The Irish were his first three tests, including his first test try.

That year was the last the All Blacks ever felt comfortable facing Ireland.

Their unbeaten record enduring for more than a century ended in 2016 in Chicago, and that bloomed rugby's best new rivalry. They have another showdown on Saturday [Sunday, 3:00] the Rugby World Cup quarterfinals at Stade de France.

Smith played in the historic Chicago defeat then in three more losses to Ireland, including the seismic 2-1 series loss in New Zealand in July last year. That series gave Ireland the No. 1 ranking and launched a 17-test winning streak. Both are on the line on Saturday.

Recent history weighs in favor of Ireland, which has beaten New Zealand in three of their last four tests, and five of their last eight. But Smith, who is retiring after the Rugby World Cup, isn't looking back for motivation or inspiration, not even to the 2019 World Cup quarterfinal when the All Blacks crushed Ireland 46-14 and Smith scored two



Aron Smith, New Zealand

of their seven tries.

"My energy is pushed towards more the opportunity that's in front of us," he said yesterday. "The excitement of what we can control as a group.

"If you're held down by the weight of the past, you won't be able to do anything, you won't be able to play well, you'll be too scared to do anything. To trust your instincts.

"Being free, being energized with intent (is important) — and there's plenty of intent and want this weekend. I don't think there's the burden or the statistics or the weight on us like that. It's a final at a World Cup for us and we're ready

"But I believe we're a totally different team to July last year. We've got new coaches and, as a group, that series really galvanized us. I can't wait for Saturday to see what happens.

"We're at a World Cup, we're playing in a final and it's all on the line. History is history and history's going to get created on Saturday. There is a definite mutual respect, two proud nations. Happiness and pain for how the result goes."

The fallout from New Zealand's first home series loss to Ireland almost cost coach Ian Foster his job. He took on new assistants Jason Ryan from the Crusaders and Joe Schmidt, who coached Ireland from 2013-19 and beat the All Blacks in Chicago and Dublin.

Schmidt, renowned for his forensic attention to detail, has impressed the All Blacks.

"He always has clips to show you if you ask, so you've got to be careful what you ask him because it could cost you 20 minutes!" Smith said with a smile. "The last 18 months, I've really enjoyed connecting with him." **MDT/AP**

QUARTERFINALS

	Date	Time	Home	Away	ODDS
Sat	Oct 14	23:00	Wales	Argentina	H 1.57, D 23, A 2.88
Sun	Oct 15	03:00	Ireland	New Zealand	H 1.75, D 23, A 2.3
		23:00	England	Fiji	H 1.33, D 26, A 3.75
Mon	Oct 16	03:00	France	South Africa	H 1.83, D 23, A 2.25

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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

WARY OF NON-REGIONAL POWER MUDDYING WATERS

Overlapping, contradictory territorial claims over some islands, islets and reefs in the South China Sea, including those of China and the Philippines, is the result of complicated historical and geographical factors. Managing such maritime disputes well is critical to maintaining peace and stability in the region as well as the strategic international waterways.

That is why China has engaged in marathon negotiations with other claimant countries. The aim, needless to say, is to negotiate a common code of conduct in the South China Sea.

The most desirable way of managing such disputes is through diplomatic, rather than military, means, while pursuing common development. It is in such a spirit that they have achieved unprecedented economic growth over the past few decades.

Accordingly, China has persistently called for shelving the differences and seeking common ground with countries in the region — an approach that has benefited all stakeholders, including the Philippines. For instance, during the presidency of Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, Manila and Beijing engaged in consultation to resolve their maritime disputes and prevent them from disrupting their trade relations. If they could do that then, there is no reason why they can't do the same today.

Both China and the Philippines know the best way to handle their maritime disputes is to put them on the back burner and pursue common development and maintain regional peace.

Unfortunately, there seems to be an urge to do the opposite in Manila these days.

There is no lack of actors in and outside the region who excel in provoking disputing parties toward confrontation. Obviously, some such elements in the Philippines want to involve non-regional actors to exploit the situation and isolate China from the international community.

But it is unrealistic to believe China would budge on matters of sovereignty and territorial integrity. More important, as China has repeatedly asserted, its sovereignty over the South China Sea islands and reefs, which the Philippines lays claim to, is based on solid historical facts, and international law and conventions.

The standoff over the Ren'ai Reef, for one, is a typical case of Manila taking advantage of Beijing's goodwill in an attempt to twist facts. Manila, full aware of the illicit nature of the continued presence of its navy ship at the reef, had promised to tug away the grounded vessel. But now it refuses to do so, obviously at the goading of non-regional powers.

But no matter how the issue is twisted, the fact remains the same: there is no legal basis for the Philippines' sovereignty claim over the reef. What is China's cannot become the Philippines'.

Beijing has every right to handle the matter in accordance with domestic and international laws, as the Foreign Ministry said on Monday.

BULGARIA ARRESTS 12 PEOPLE FOR VIOLATING EU SANCTIONS ON EXPORTS TO RUSSIA

THE BUZZ

Bulgarian police have arrested 12 people accused of illegally exporting dual-use goods to Russia that can be used by the Russian military in the war in Ukraine.

The Interior Ministry chief secretary, Zhivko Kotsev, told reporters this week the suspects included citizens of Bulgaria, Russia and Belarus.

The operation to arrest the suspects was carried out by several agencies after the State Agency for National Security received information about the illegal transfer of goods with possible dual use, the agency head Plamen Tonchev said.

Such exports to Russia are banned under EU sanctions imposed on

Russia after it launched its war in Ukraine.

"An international network has been revealed for the illegal supply of dual-use goods with civilian and military applications from European countries to the Russian Federation," Tonchev said.

He added that the shipments were not intended for the regular Russian army, but for the special forces fighting in Ukraine, like the Wagner Group and the Akhmat paramilitary unit.

Tonchev also said that the criminal group has been operating in other EU member states, as well as in Britain, Serbia, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates.



AP PHOTO

ISRAELI VILLAGE NEAR GAZA BORDER LIES IN RUIN

SAM MCNEIL, KFAR AZZA

On the road approaching this rural village, the bodies of militants lie scattered between the shells of burned-out cars. Walls and doors of what used to be neatly kept stucco homes are blasted wide open. As bags holding the bodies of slain residents await identification, the smell of death hangs thick in the hot afternoon air.

This is the scene confronting Israel's military as it battles to beat back a sweeping assault launched by Hamas from the Gaza Strip, in fighting that has killed hundreds in this country left reeling and the adjoining Palestinian enclave under heavy Israeli bombardment.

"You see the babies, the mothers, the fathers in their bedrooms and how the terrorists killed," Maj. Gen. Itai Veruv, a 39-year veteran of the Israeli army who led forces that reclaimed the village from militants, said yesterday [Macau time] as he stood amid the wreckage. "It's not a battlefield. It's a massacre."

The Israeli military led a group of journalists, including an Associated Press

reporter, on a tour of the village, a day after retaking it from what they said was a group of about 70 Hamas fighters.

Kfar Azza, surrounded by farms and just a few minutes down a country road from the heavily fortified fence Israel erected around Gaza, is one of more than 20 towns and villages attacked by Palestinian fighters early Saturday. Before the attack, the kibbutz, whose name means "Gaza village" in English, was a modestly prosperous place with a school, a synagogue and a population of more than 700.

Walking through what is left provides chilling evidence of its destruction.

On the town's perimeter, the gate that once protected residents had been blasted open. Inside the settlement, the doors of many homes had been blown from their hinges by militants using rocket-propelled grenades. Throughout the town, walls and torched cars are riddled with bullet holes, tracing a path of violence that continues inside to bedrooms with mattresses spattered in blood, safe rooms that could not withstand the at-

tack, even bathrooms.

Inside one partially destroyed home a framed quotation from a popular television theme song hinted at what Kfar Azza meant to its residents: "I'll be there for you, because you're there for me, too," it read. "In this house, we are friends."

Outside, unexploded hand grenades were scattered on the ground. A few minutes away, a Hamas flag lay crumpled in the dirt near a paraglider, used by militants to attack by air.

By the time journalists were escorted into the town, rescuers had already removed the bodies of most of the villagers killed in the attack. But reporters watched as crews carried several more bags containing bodies to a truck and then to a lot in front of Kfar Azza's synagogue, where workers attached name tags.

An AP reporter saw the bodies of about 20 militants, many of them badly bloated and disfigured. Hundreds of Israeli soldiers, in helmets and body armor, patrolled the town, as the sounds of explosions and gunfire echoed in the distance. **MDT/AP**



Russia was defeated in its bid to regain a seat in the U.N.'s premiere human rights body by a significant majority in Tuesday's election in the General Assembly, which voted last year to suspend Moscow after its invasion of Ukraine. Russia was competing against Albania and Bulgaria for two seats on the Geneva-based Human Rights Council representing the East European regional group.



minister who plans to end the country's military support for Ukraine is poised to return to office after his political party signed a deal yesterday with two other parties to form a coalition government. The leftist Smer, or Direction, party captured 22.9% of the vote in Slovakia's Sept 30 parliamentary election. The party's leader, populist former Prime Minister Robert Fico (pictured), needed to find coalition partners to rule with a majority in the country's 150-seat Parliament.



Argentina Dozens of people were evacuated from their homes in Argentina's central Cordoba province yesterday [Macau time] as wildfires grew amid an intense heat wave. Images and video from the area showed massive flames in hills surrounding populated areas as firefighters worked to combat the flames that had reached some homes in the region. It was not immediately clear how many homes had been affected by the flames.

UK Thousands of travelers faced disruption as all flights were suspended yesterday at London's Luton airport after a fire tore through a newly built parking garage, destroying vehicles and partially collapsing the structure. Four firefighters and an airport employee were treated in hospitals for smoke inhalation after the fire, which erupted on Tuesday evening.