



MACAU'S TOURISM IS RECOVERING WELL, WITH A 22.69 MILLION INBOUND TOURISTS FROM JANUARY TO OCTOBER - NEARLY 70% OF PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS P2

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ISRAEL-HAMAS TRUCE TO START TODAY, EGYPTIAN SOURCES SAY P7



Indonesia A strong, deep undersea earthquake shook the eastern side of Indonesia yesterday with no immediate reports of casualties or damages in the area. The 6.0 magnitude earthquake hit an area 94 kilometers west of Tobelo in Indonesia's North Maluku province, at a depth of 116 kilometers. Indonesia's weather agency said there was no potential danger of a tsunami but warned of possible aftershocks.



South Korea decided to partially suspend an inter-Korean agreement and restart front-line aerial surveillance of North Korea, hours after the North claimed to have put its first military spy satellite into orbit in violation of U.N. resolutions, officials in Seoul said. The South Korean announcement — which will likely infuriate North Korea — came as the North's neighbors are trying to confirm whether the launch evening was successful.



UAE The websites of two government ministries in Bahrain briefly became inaccessible yesterday [Macau time] after a cyberattack took them down, purportedly over the island kingdom's stance on the ongoing Israel-Hamas war. A statement posted online by a self-described group calling itself Al-Toufan, or "The Flood" in Arabic, claimed hacking the Foreign Ministry and the Information Affairs Ministry's websites. Both later became accessible.

Iraq U.S. fighter aircraft struck two operations centers belonging to Iraqi Hezbollah in response to attacks on U.S. bases that have escalated alongside Israel's operations against Hamas in Gaza, two defense officials said. They said attacks on U.S. bases included the first use of a short-range ballistic missile against U.S. troops, which happened Tuesday.

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GRAND PRIX
250,000 gifts to attract foreign visitors P2

'ABOVE ZOBEIDE' TO REPRESENT MACAU IN VENICE BIENNALE

The exhibition proposal, "Above Zobeide," submitted by local curator Chang Chan and artist Wong Weng Cheong, will represent Macau at the Biennale in Venice, Italy in April next year. The open call for proposals for the 60th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia – Collateral Event from Macao, China aims to select outstanding work to promote Macau's contemporary art on the international stage. The selected proposal was inspired by the famous novel "Invisible Cities" by Italian writer Italo Calvino, and expresses concern over the development of human civilization.

INSURANCE EMPLOYEES SEE 6% SALARY GROWTH

There were 8,566 full-time employees in Financial Activities at the end of the third quarter of 2023, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). Among them, 7,281 were in the Banking Sector, 801 in Insurance Activities and 274 in Other Financial Intermediation, up by 1.8%, 4.8% and 10.5% respectively year-on-year. In September, average earnings (excluding irregular remuneration) in Financial Activities were MOP30,480, down slightly by 0.1% year-on-year. Average earnings in the Banking Sector dropped 1.4% year-on-year to MOP30,650, while those in Insurance Activities grew 6% to MOP33,000.

THREE JOB-MATCHING SESSIONS BY MONTH'S END

Three job-matching sessions will be organized on Nov 20, and Nov. 30, offering 308 vacancies. Organized by the Labour Affairs Bureau and the Macao Federation of Trade Unions, the Nov. 29 session targets residents seeking work as sales directors, customer service directors, administrative assistants and tour guides, among others. Also, a catering industry matching meeting will be held Nov.30, providing 163 job vacancies, followed by a high-end retail job-matching session in the afternoon, providing 20 job vacancies.

MDT ARCHIVE



POLICY ADDRESS 2024 | ECONOMY & FINANCE

250,000 GIFTS TO ATTRACT FOREIGN VISITORS

RENATO MARQUES

THE government is proposing to entice more foreign visitors by offering a package of 250,000 gifts, including air tickets, hotel rooms and discounts for food and beverages as well as entertainment.

The new "Tourism Sources Expansion Package" follows on measures earlier this year to revive the tourism industry and, particularly, to attract more visitors not from Greater China, the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, said at the Legislative Assembly yesterday.

Noting that Macau is currently experiencing tourism growth and that hotel occupancy has reached about 80% on average this year, Lei said the positive results are not the goal but, instead, serve as the basis for next year's work.

Lei said that although pre-pandemic the hotel occupancy was about 90%, now "we have about 15,000 more rooms than in 2019," noting that more work is needed to fill them.

The Secretary also noted changes in the type of tourists visiting Macau and that this has

changed consumption patterns and other aspects that operators must be aware of.

"We have more and younger tourists. This also changes the consumption patterns."

"We know that [in comparison with last year] consumption per head has increased 64% and this means that we have been successful with our measures and the positioning of our tourism."

"But next year, and with the development of the economy, we will have to do more and better, based on this year's results, and we also need to widen the sources of tourists," Lei said.

He added, "Our goal is that these [new package of offers] can bring more tourists from abroad. This is why we have budgeted these 250,000 gifts to distribute including airfares, hotel lodging

and other discounts."

Responding to lawmakers' requests for clarification, the director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, said that "besides the direct flights [to and from Macau] we also explore other possibilities via travel agencies from Hong Kong," she said, noting visitors arriving in Macau via Hong Kong can also benefit from this package of offers.

Senna Fernandes said the government intends to continue to promote Macau via international media, with a campaign promoting Macau in several countries, which were not disclosed at this moment.

"We want to promote Macau more through international media. Each month we have an average of 1,000 foreign visitors daily, a figure that shows we have recovered about 70% [from pre-pandemic levels]."

Senna Fernandes also said the gifts are varied and will not be restricted to luxury hotels but "also include offers in the old neighborhoods as well as ferry trips and boat tours."

Still on the topic of tourism, lawmaker Ma Io Fong called on the government to improve the quality of the local tour guides, especially since the government's aim is to attract more foreigner visitors.

Senna Fernandes replied that for 2024, the MGTO wants to launch the legal process for reviewing the laws in this sector.

It is also planning to launch several training sessions for tour guides that will focus mainly on language skills, public relations and courtesy."

DAILY TOURIST ARRIVALS AT 70% PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has stated Macau's tourism economy is recovering well, with 22.69 million inbound tourists from January to October, an average of about 75,000 per day, returning to nearly 70% of the daily average of pre-pandemic levels.

There were about 1.02 million international tourists, and the average daily passenger volume increased from about 1,000 in January to more than 5,200 in October, a significant increase of more than five times. The average daily international passenger volume in October has also recovered to 70% of the same period in 2019.

In addition, the average hotel occupancy rate from January to September was 80.6%, which was

only 10.3 percentage points lower than the 90.9% in the same period in 2019.

In the third quarter, tourists' total consumption excluding gaming increased 28.9% compared with the same period in 2019, and per capita consumption increased 54% to more than MOP2,300.

As for the air tickets and hotel discounts issued for traveling to Macau, by the end of October, the 50% hotel discount coupons had recorded an order volume of nearly RMB1.1 billion, while the air ticket discounts also drove an order volume of nearly MOP153 million.

Also, the tour group subsidy program attracted some 14,532 groups.

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Gaming concessionaires salaries to rise up to 3%, Secretary says

RENATO MARQUES

THE gaming concessionaires workers' salaries should be raised next year by at least 2 or 3%, the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, said yesterday at the Legislative Assembly (AL).

Lei was responding to several lawmakers while at the AL to present more detail from the sector of economy and finance about the 2024 Policy Address.

Lei told the lawmakers who raised the topic, including Lei Chan U, Ella Lei and José Pereira Coutinho, the government knows next year will see pay increases in this sector.

"We can't force the gaming concessionaires to raise their workers' salaries [as they are private entities]. But we have been advising them this would be a good time for sharing their profits among their workforce. We believe the salaries [of this sector] will grow by at least 2 or 3%. We know this will certainly happen," the Secretary affirmed.

The pay rise from the gaming companies has been a hot topic since the government announced well ahead of the presentation of the Policy Address, in mid-August, that civil servants will receive a raise from January 2024.

At the same opportunity and



also at the AL, the Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng, also called on the gaming concessionaires, which are the six major employers besides the government, to take this opportunity to increase their workers' salaries.

"I can only negotiate with the gaming concessionaires and hope that post-pandemic they can assume their social responsibilities. We can and will follow up on this matter, but we cannot order them to do so. This we cannot do, as the government cannot interfere in the market," the CE remarked.

Lawmakers from the Macau Federation of Trade Unions, in-

cluding Lei Chan U and Ella Lei, have repeatedly called for gaming sector salary increases.

The first calls for increases came in late July, when the salary increase for civil servants and the gaming sector were called essential to set an example for the whole private sector to follow.

This was an attempt to link with the so-called "silent majority" of private sector workers in Macau's small and medium enterprises, from varied sectors, not represented at the AL.

On a related topic, several lawmakers, including Pereira Coutinho and Ella Lei, noted the

percentage amount of salary increase, particularly after more than three years without increases and with many difficulties during the pandemic, is insufficient to restore families' purchasing power where the prices of essential goods and fuels have risen exponentially.

Secretary Lei said the government's focus is economic recovery so companies can see profits again that can eventually be shared among society.

Meanwhile, Lei said MOP216 gross gaming revenue (GGR) can be achieved in 2024, higher than the earlier forecast of MOP202.4 billion.

CE ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENTS OF ECONOMIC COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng announced in yesterday's Official Gazette the appointments of 19 members to the Economic Development Committee. The members include hotelier Wong Suk Yan, sports organizer Lou Kit Long, Micro Connect boss Charles Li Xiaojia, tourism professional Wong Fai and designer Au Chon Hin. The CE also announced the appointments of Luís Gomes and Chao Kuok Wai respectively as member and stand-by member of the Administrative Board of the Sports Fund until Apr. 30, 2024.

CITI MAINTAINS MOP16B GGR FORECAST FOR NOVEMBER

Macau's gross gaming revenue (GGR) for the first 19 days of November was MOP10 billion, a decrease of 11% compared to the previous week, according to a Citi Research report, citing industry sources. The figure implies a daily run-rate of MOP486 million last week, as some big players avoided going to Macau during the Grand Prix weekend. Hotel occupancy approximated 90% on race weekends. With such a figure, the institution maintains its forecast of MOP16 billion GGR for the city's gaming sector in November - a figure equivalent to 70% of the same period in 2019.

POLICY ADDRESS 2024 | ECONOMY & FINANCE

Gov't argues it would be 'risky' for banking sector to subsidize housing mortgage interests



RENATO MARQUES

THE government will not subsidize housing mortgage interest rates in Macau, which happens elsewhere in the world, because that would pose a risk to the banking sector and to Macau's financial stability, the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, said yesterday at the Legislative Assembly.

Lei was replying to questions from lawmakers, especially Ella Lei, about support

measures, financial help, and tax benefits to the population, saying there are no plans for such a scheme.

"This can pose a risk, namely to young people who want to acquire houses. If there is an economic downturn this could cause a significant increase on interest rates that would put them in credit risk," Lei said, adding, "We also need to guarantee the stability of Macau's banking system and ultimately Macau's financial stability in ge-

neral."

He referred to the American example where the US Federal Reserve has raised interest rates 11 times and the current interest rate is now between 5.25% and 5.5%, a figure commonly followed worldwide.

Lei said that, if the government subsidizes part of the interest rate, many young people would have the illusion that they might be able to support the expense of acquiring a house and repaying a

mortgage based on the instalment amount calculated at the moment of the acquisition.

However, due to economic instability, this amount can change suddenly with consequent bad performing loans.

Over the years, several experts have noted that Macau's real estate market is highly speculative and the real value of the housing units is far lower than the market price requested for them.

Banks are hesitant to lend a high percentage of the purchase price because, if the mortgage contract is not repaid, and even if the bank repossesses the property, this would not cover the amount of unpaid loan.

CRIME

POLICE ARREST TWO MPAY FRAUD SUSPECTS

ANTHONY LAM

POLICE have arrested two men for abusing MPay accounts allegedly stolen by a criminal syndicate, the Judiciary Police (PJ) has disclosed.

The two suspects, surnamed Huang, 23, and Chen, 26, are from the mainland.

The police said that from Nov. 17 to 20, they received crime reports from 10 local residents about fraudulent MPay communications.

The residents had all received text messages that appeared to be from MPay, which notified them of the imminent expiration of their membership points and directed them act immediately.

After clicking the included hyperlink, they discovered their MPay accounts had been robbed, and that they had lost between MOP1,100 and MOP15,500. Total lost funds amounted to over MOP68,900.

Investigations led to the criminal syndicate, which constructed and operated a phishing website pretending to be MPay, and which also sent mass text messages to local phone numbers.



After successfully robbing the MPay accounts, the syndicate would assign people to mass purchase alcoholic drinks and cosmetic products from online platforms. These purchases would then be delivered to a collection point in the Northern District, before being sent to mainland China.

As investigations progressed, the police intercepted Huang and Li on the afternoon of Nov. 20. The two were on their way to the collection point to receive the deliveries.

They confessed to entering Macau on Nov. 17 and 18 respectively to make purchases and collect deliveries. They also told the police they received RMB1,000 per day as remuneration.

However, they both denied having any role in the construc-

tion and the operation of the phishing website.

At the duo's hotel, more merchandise was seized. The police believe the website began operation Nov. 14.

In another case, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) arrested three mainland men for theft at a local pharmacy and sex work separately.

The three suspects are surnamed Chen, 38, Ye, 31 and Li, 35.

It was reported that on Nov. 19, the police received a theft report from a local pharmacy, from which seven items had been stolen. The loss amounted to MOP2,100.

Following preliminary investigations, the police arrested Chen and Ye at a local inn. Li was also at the scene.

The police found a significant number of condoms and lubricants in the inn room. Interrogations revealed that Chen and Li had come to Macau to provide sex work. Ye denied the allegation of sex work.

Chen and Ye will face theft charges, while Chen and Li will be charged with practicing extra-tourism activities.

OBITUARY



ARNALDO ERNESTO DOS SANTOS

With great sadness, we announce the passing of Arnaldo Ernesto dos Santos on 16th November, at the Kiang Wu Hospital, at the age of 63. The wake and mass will be held at the Diocesan Mortuary House, on **25th November 2023 at 20:00.**

On 26th November 2023 at 11:00, a mass will be held at the Diocesan Mortuary House, followed by the funeral service at the crematorium in Zhuhai.

Our family expresses the most sincere gratitude to everyone in supporting and honouring his life. Thank you for your thoughts and prayers.

MP INVESTIGATES PHONE SCAM SUSPECT

POLICE have arrested a man suspected of an alleged phone swindle and investigations are underway, the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) announced yesterday.

The suspect, a Hong Kong resident, along with several others, allegedly swindled a senior Macau resident.

One of the suspects contacted the victim and pretended to be the victim's son-in-law.

They told the victim they needed money for bail due to a wrongful physical assault allegation.

The Hong Kong man, pretending to be a lawyer, collected the money, which amounted to MOP50,000.

Preliminary investigations indicate the alleged suspect has committed major fraud, which carries a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment.

The Court of Criminal Procedure has accepted the MP's recommendation to that the suspect be held in custody.

The MP made the recommendation because



the suspect is not a Macau resident; and also because of the seriousness of the alleged crime. The MP feared the suspect may flee Macau and continue his alleged criminal activities.

The MP said Macau has seen several cases of fraud using telecommunications in recent days.

Criminals have pretended to be victims' family members, professionals or public service employees through telephone calls or

messages, using various pretexts to request the victims pay or transfer money to designated bank accounts.

The MP has called on the public to report suspicious phone calls or messages to law-enforcement immediately.

Meanwhile, the public should remain vigilant against callers who claim to be relatives, especially when those callers request money. **AL**

GBA

Guangdong issues three-year plan for digitalization

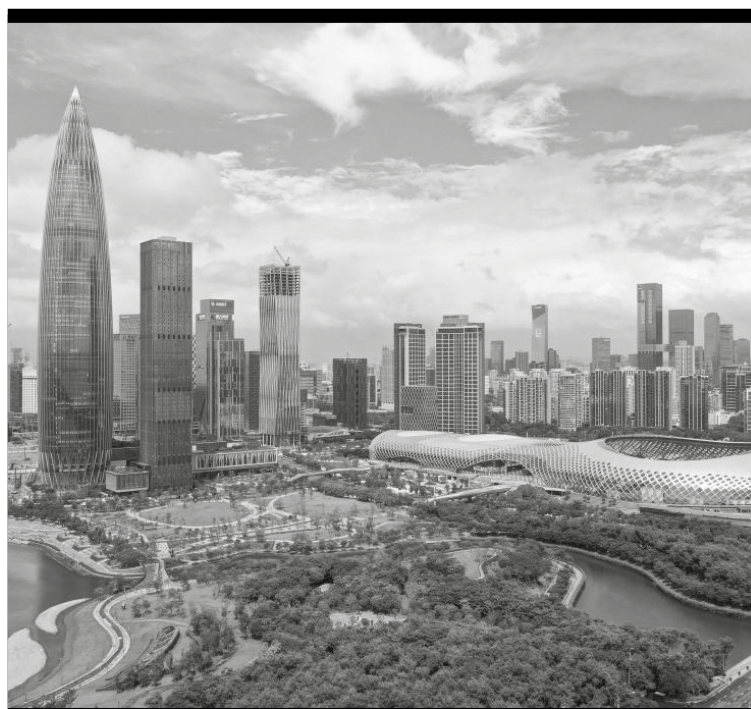
GUANGDONG authorities have published a three-year plan to digitalize the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA).

In a press conference in Guangdong, it was announced the province will work with Hong Kong and Macau to integrate a series of digital resources such as network, computing power, storage and data of the three regions to optimize sharing the publishing of computing resources in the GBA.

Meanwhile, Guangdong will fully enable the Guangdong Investment Promotion Platform (Invest Guangdong) to provide innovative services for investment professionals and business investors through digital techniques.

The province will also work to build industrial clusters for information innovation, digital government, data and network security, encouraging enterprises and scientific research teams in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau to research general artificial intelligence.

According to Yang Pengfei, director of the Guangdong Provincial Government Affairs Data Administration, Guangdong plans to use the Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, the Qianhai Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Cooperation Zone, the Nansha Demonstration Zone for Comprehensive Cooperation between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau as well as the Hetao



Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation Zone as platforms to optimize the distribution services and classification management of cross-border data.

Meanwhile, a mini program named Wanshitong is ready to better serve the people who work and live in GBA, according to the press conference. It will soon be officially available on WeChat and Alipay.

According to Wei Wentao, spokesperson for the Guangdong Provincial Government Affairs Data Administration, this public service platform offers residents and expats living in GBA over 70 frequently used services, covering travel, customs clearance, communication, payment, em-

ployment, care for seniors, education and insurance.

"For instance, residents who travel to Hong Kong and Macau SARs from the Chinese mainland can make an appointment for customs clearance permits and find the nearby immigration office hall through Wanshitong," said Wei Wentao.

"Hong Kong and Macau residents who visit the mainland can also enjoy an array of services through the mini program such as the guidance for Hong Kong vehicles entering Guangdong."

Moreover, according to the press conference, the 2nd Digital Government Summit and Forum on Digital GBA will be held from Dec. 8 to 10 in Guangzhou. **MDT/NEWSGD**

DOUYU

FOUNDER OF CHINESE STREAMING PLATFORM ARRESTED FOR OPERATING AN ILLEGAL CASINO

STAFF REPORTER

FOUNDER and president popular Chinese video game streaming platform Douyu, Chen Shaojie, was arrested last week for operating a casino, the latest in a series of detentions amid crackdown.

In recent days there had been speculation about Chen's possible arrest after some media reports that he had lost contact with him in October, but it was not until Tuesday when his company confirmed this in a statement released on its website, as cited in a report by news agency, Noticias Financieras.

The document notes that the executive was detained in Chengdu (center) last Thursday and that Douyu "has not received any official notice of the investigation against MChen or the reasons for his detention".

However, the Chengdu Police indicated today on the social network Weibo - Chinese equi-

valent of X, censored in the Asian country - that Chen's arrest occurred for "opening a casino" and that it is still investigating the case.

The local press had already speculated that the arrest was related to gambling, illegal in China except in the semi-autonomous region of Macau, considered the 'Las Vegas of Asia'.

Douyu warned that the arrest and possible prosecution of Chen could "have a negative impact on the company's reputation, business and results of operations," according to the report.

Shares of the company, which is listed on the U.S. Nasdaq, fell more than 5.7% between Monday and Tuesday.

In recent months, Chinese authorities have arrested numerous executives of major firms in the country, focusing especially on the financial sector, where the Communist Party (CCP) promised earlier this year to "eliminate" corruption.



CORPORATE BITS

Sands China donates MOP300,000 to Caritas Macau



Sands China Ltd. recently donated MOP300,000 to Caritas Macau to support two of the NGO's annual events: the 54th Charity Bazaar and the 2023 Charity Run.

It is Sands China's 20th consecutive year donating to the

local NGO and helping raise public awareness of its services.

"Cultivating Kindness Together, Sharing with Charity" was the theme of this year's bazaar, where funds raised will develop a new

social service.

Visitors to the booth won prizes that included hotel accommodation, food and beverage vouchers and tickets to teamLab SuperNature Macao at The Venetian Macao.

Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd., said, "Congratulations to Caritas Macau for another successful year organising their Charity Bazaar and Charity Run. It is a pleasure for Sands China to continue supporting the important work that Caritas does in the community, and our thanks go to our team members and their families for their support of these annual Caritas Macau initiatives."

Melco promotes Macau through 'tourism + sports'



Melco has pledged to continue to proactively work with the SAR government to attract tourists from home and abroad by showcasing Macau's unique charm through "tourism + sports," promoting economic diversification

and development through increased tourism spending.

This comes after the gaming operator sponsored the recent 70th Macau Grand Prix.

To help tourists and residents experience the exci-

tement of the Macau Grand Prix, Melco is presenting the Mount Fortress at High Speed event at the city's renowned UNESCO World Heritage Site for two weeks between Nov. 10 to 23.

The event offers two racing-themed photo areas for visitors to take photos with model racing cars and experience the speed and passion of motorsports. A decorative camping and resting area, together with food stalls offering racing-themed light bites are also available, while Grupo de Danças e Cantares de Macau will be on-site to perform Portuguese folk dances and interact with visitors.

SOUTH CHINA SEA

US and Philippines conduct joint air, sea patrols not far from Taiwan

DAVID RISING, BANGKOK

THE United States and the Philippines are conducting joint air and maritime patrols in the South China Sea, which come as the two countries step up cooperation in the face of growingly Chinese activity in the area.

The Philippine Air Force said yesterday its aircraft had taken part in joint patrols the day before in the vicinity of Batanes, the northernmost province of the Philippines, which is only about 200 kilometers from Taiwan.

The patrols run through today and also include both the U.S. and Philippine navies. They come only days after Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. called the situation in the South China Sea increasingly "dire" as China seeks to assert its presence in an area where multiple nations have competing territorial claims.

Asked about the patrols, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said Beijing's position



In this handout photo released by the Philippine Air Force, a Philippine Air Force FA-50PH jet fighter, joins the maritime patrol over Batanes and areas in the West Philippine Sea

had been made clear to both the Philippines and the U.S.

"The Philippines-U.S. joint patrol drill must not undermine China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests," she said.

The U.S. 7th Fleet said the patrols were part of routine American

interaction with its allies and partners in "preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region."

China claims virtually the entire South China Sea as its own waters, which has led to disputes not only with the Philippines but also with Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei. These claims have

long been regarded as potential flashpoints in the region, and have fueled U.S.-China rivalry.

Earlier this month a Chinese coast guard ship blasted a Philippine supply ship with a water cannon in disputed waters, and last month a Chinese coast guard ship and an accompanying vessel

rammed a Philippine coast guard ship and a military-run supply boat near a contested shoal, according to Philippine officials.

Speaking on Sunday in Honolulu, Marcos said China has been showing interest in atolls and shoals that are "closer and closer" to the coast of the Philippines, with the nearest atoll about 60 nautical miles away.

"Unfortunately, I cannot report that the situation is improving," Marcos said. "The situation has become more dire than it was before."

In announcing the start of the joint patrols, Marcos said on X, formerly known as Twitter, that they were "testament to our commitment to bolster the interoperability of our military forces."

Under Marcos, who was elected last year, the Philippines has been deepening its relationship with the U.S. in a shift from his predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte, who had been closer to China and Russia.

In February, Marcos approved an expansion of the U.S. military presence in the Philippines to add four new bases from five existing sites under a 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement between the longtime treaty allies.

Marcos has also been strengthening ties with others, including Tokyo, signing an agreement earlier in the year to allow Japanese troops to join training exercises. **MDT/AP**

STANDARD CHARTERED CHINA CHIEF

China's financial opening up brings broad opportunities

XINHUA REPORTER

WE are firmly optimistic about China's medium- and long-term development prospects and look forward to the broad opportunities brought about by China's continuous opening up," Standard Chartered's China chief Zhang Xiaolei said.

In an interview with Xinhua, Zhang, executive vice chairman and chief executive officer of Standard Chartered Bank (China) Ltd, described China as "the most important strategic market" of Standard Chartered.

"China is steadily expanding institutional opening up in the financial sector, and foreign banks are accelerating their pace to get access to various financial markets in China," said Zhang.

The country's sustained momentum of economic recovery and continued financial opening up provide the bank with huge deve-



Zhang Xiaolei

lopment opportunities in both domestic and international markets, Zhang said.

The U.K.-based multinational bank became one of the first foreign banks that locally incorporated in China in 2007.

Over the past years, Standard Chartered China has been granted a domestic fund custody license to

provide custody-related services to investment products offered by domestic funds and asset managers in China. It has also been given the approval to take part in the Bond Connect Scheme between the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong, as well as the Wealth Management Connect Pilot Scheme in the Guang-

dong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. It has also been designated as one of the quoting banks for the loan prime rate by the central bank.

Earlier this year, Standard Chartered Bank (Hong Kong) Ltd obtained regulatory approval to set up a wholly foreign-owned securities company in Beijing. Standard Chartered China was also allowed to participate in the trading of treasury bond futures in China.

Seizing opportunities in China has become one of the bank's strategic priorities. In the first three quarters of 2023, its China onshore and offshore pre-tax profit increased about three-fold year on year, reaching 1 billion U.S. dollars.

"The Chinese market has been the largest contributor to Standard Chartered's global network revenue for many years, which proves the effectiveness of our China strategy," Zhang said.

With high-end manufacturing, digital economy, green economy and other segments becoming the new growth engines of the Chinese economy, Standard Chartered China has taken the initiative to provide financial services for more new economy enterprises since 2016, in addition to serving clients from traditional industries.

"By 2025, the revenue from new economy enterprise customers is expected to account for more than half of all our enterprise customers in the Chinese market," Zhang said.

Regarding the Belt and Road Initiative, Zhang said that the Standard Chartered group supported a total of 131 Belt and Road projects with financial services last year, of which 40 percent met the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

With an accelerating pace of Belt and Road construction, the cross-border business of Standard Chartered China has seen steady

growth.

Zhang said the bank would continue to promote RMB internationalization by exploring establishment of RMB balance sheets in Singapore. By taking advantage of the relatively low RMB interest rate, the bank would also facilitate more offshore RMB financing business.

"Riding on China's development and opening-up opportunities, Standard Chartered China has logged a sustained and steady growth, with several business segments posting remarkable growth," said Zhang.

Standard Chartered China will continue to focus on wealth management, supply chain financing, trade financing, unsecured loans for small and medium-sized enterprises, and green and sustainable finance products. It would also strengthen cooperation with online banks to expand its customer base, Zhang said. **XINHUA**

ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

Truce deal set to free hostages in swap, raising hopes of halting worst Mideast violence in decades

JOSEF FEDERMAN,
TIA GOLDENBERG &
AMY MAGDY, JERUSALEM

ISRAEL and Hamas have reached an agreement for a four-day halt to the devastating war in Gaza, accompanied by the release of dozens of hostages held by the militant group in return for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, mediators said yesterday.

The truce marks the biggest diplomatic breakthrough since Hamas' Oct. 7 rampage into southern Israel ignited a war that has devastated vast swaths of Gaza, fueled a surge of violence in the occupied West Bank and raised fears of a wider conflict across the Middle East.

The Persian Gulf nation of Qatar, which has played a key role in mediating with Hamas, announced the deal without saying when it would go into effect. Fifty hostages will be released in stages, in exchange for what Hamas said would be 150 Palestinian prisoners.

Both sides will release women and children first, and the supply of humanitarian aid flowing into the besieged territory will be ramped up.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel would resume the war after the truce and keep fighting "until we achieve all our goals," including the defeat of Hamas and the return of all hostages.

Residents in Gaza City said the fighting there had intensified overnight into yesterday, with gunfire, heavy artillery and airstrikes in central neighborhoods.

"They are mad. Apparently they want to advance before the truce," said Nasser al-Sheikh, who is sheltering with relatives in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood.

A DIPLOMATIC BREAKTHROUGH

The announcement capped weeks of indirect Qatari-led negotiations between Israel and Hamas, an Islamic militant group that seized Gaza from the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority in 2007. The United States and Egypt were also involved in stop-and-go talks to free some of the roughly 240 hostages captured by Hamas and other militants during their wide-ranging Oct. 7 raid.

AP PHOTO



President Joe Biden welcomed the deal, saying Netanyahu has committed to supporting an "extended pause" to make sure that the hostages are released and humanitarian aid can be sent to Gaza.

Qatar's prime minister and top diplomat, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, said he hoped the deal would eventually lead to a permanent cease-fire and "serious talks" on resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel said that the truce would be extended an extra day for every additional 10 hostages released by Hamas. The International Committee of the Red Cross said it is standing by to assist any swap.

Israel's Justice Ministry published a list of 300 prisoners eligible for release as part of the deal, mainly teenagers detained over the past year for rock-throwing and other minor offenses. Under Israeli law, the public has 24 hours to object to any release.

The Israeli military says it has detained more than 1,850 Palestinians in the West Bank since the war began, mostly suspected Hamas members. More than 200 Palestinians have been killed there,

mostly during gunbattles triggered by army raids.

WILL THE WAR RESUME?

As the full extent of the devastation becomes known and as hostages are released, pressure could grow on Israel to end its war without achieving its goal of crushing Hamas. Even the U.S., Israel's chief backer, has expressed concerns about the heavy toll on Gaza's civilian population.

An airstrike overnight hit a residential building in the southern town of Khan Younis, killing 17 people, including children, said Ahmad Balouny, a relative of the deceased. An Associated Press reporter saw the bodies of two children pulled from the rubble, one of them badly burned.

In northern Gaza, about 60 bodies and 200 people wounded by heavy fighting were brought into the Kamal Adwan Hospital overnight, hospital director Dr. Ahmed al-Kahlout told Al-Jazeera television yesterday. He said the hospital is using cooking oil to keep its generator running.

Despite the massive destruction across Gaza and the killing of thousands of Palestinian civilians, Hamas leader Yehya Sinwar will likely present the release of the prisoners

— seen by most Palestinians as heroes resisting occupation — as a major achievement, and declare victory if the war ends without removing Hamas from power.

Hamas said hundreds of trucks carrying humanitarian aid — including fuel — would be allowed to enter Gaza. It said Israeli aircraft would stop flying over southern Gaza for the duration of the four-day cease-fire and for six hours daily in the north.

The war erupted in early October, when several thousand Hamas militants broke through Israel's formidable defenses and poured into the south, killing at least 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and capturing scores more. Israel responded with weeks of devastating airstrikes on Gaza, followed by a ground invasion.

More than 11,000 Palestinians have been killed during the Israeli offensive, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory. It does not differentiate between civilians and militants, though some two-thirds of the dead have been identified as women and minors.

The invasion has caused vast destruction in northern Gaza, including Gaza City, displaced over 1.7 million people and caused

severe shortages of food, medicine and other basics throughout the territory. Israel cut off all fuel imports at the start of the war, causing a territory-wide power blackout.

DEAL COULD DIVIDE ISRAELIS

The return of hostages could lift spirits in Israel, where their plight has gripped the country. Families of the hostages — who include babies and toddlers, women and children, and people in their 80s with health issues — have staged mass demonstrations and pressured the government to bring them home.

But they could also find themselves divided as some hostages are freed and others remain in Gaza. Soldiers are likely to be the last to be freed, and their families may press the government to extend the truce until they return home.

Ofri Bibas Levy, whose brother, sister-in-law and two nephews — aged 4 and 10 months — are among the captives, said the deal puts the families in an "inhumane" situation. Her brother, 34, is not expected to be among the first groups released.

"Who will be released, who won't? Will the kids be freed? Will they be freed with their mothers or not?" she told The Associated Press before the deal was announced. "No matter which way it happens, there will still be families that will remain worried and sad and angry."

PAUSE COULD HELP HAMAS REGROUP

The structure of the deal could limit Israel's ability to press its offensive, even after the truce expires.

Any pause would give Hamas a chance to regroup after suffering heavy losses, especially if it drags things out with additional hostage releases. Israeli troops and tanks are expected to remain in place, despite the risks of being stationary behind enemy lines.

Israel claims to have killed thousands of Hamas fighters and destroyed parts of the group's tunnel system. But Israeli officials acknowledge much of Hamas' infrastructure remains intact. The military says 68 soldiers have been killed in ground operations.

Some three-quarters of Gaza's population has been uprooted from their homes, with most packing into overcrowded shelters. Many, if not most, will be unable to return home because of the vast damage in the north and the continued presence of Israeli troops there.

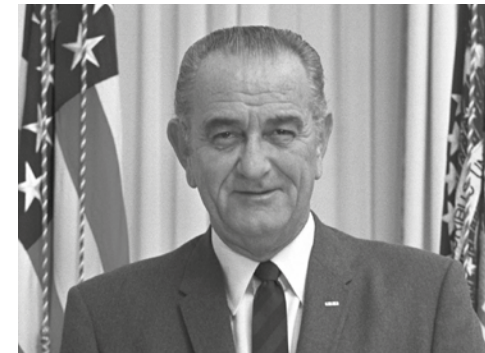
Iran-backed armed groups across the Middle East have been drawn into the war, with Lebanon's Hezbollah trading fire with Israel on a daily basis along the border and Yemen's Houthi rebels launching drones and missiles as well as seizing an Israeli-linked cargo ship. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



this day in history

1963 JOHNSON TAKES OVER AS US PRESIDENT



Fifty-five year old Lyndon Baines Johnson begins his new job today as US president.

He was sworn in yesterday just two hours after an assassin shot President John F Kennedy in the head.

The former vice-president took his oath on the presidential plane at Andrew's Air Force Base.

The new first lady, Claudia Alta Taylor Johnson, witnessed the swearing-in together with the dead president's widow Jacqui Kennedy - her stocking still stained with her husband's blood.

The party flew to Washington with the assassinated president's coffin after the ceremony.

On arriving in Washington the president said, "I will do my best. That is all I can do."

President Johnson will address a joint session of Congress in three day's time where it is likely he will outline his future programme.

Commentators say there probably will be little immediate change in policy with a presidential election on the horizon.

The new president has come from humble beginnings to become one of the world's most powerful men.

The eldest of five children, he was born on a Texan farm in 1908 into a poor background.

Mr Johnson worked as a teacher before entering politics as a Texan congressman's secretary in 1931.

President Roosevelt soon spotted his talents and made him the director of the National Youth Administration in Texas in 1935.

After serving six successive terms in the House of Representatives, he entered the senate in 1948 and rapidly rose through the ranks gaining powerful posts.

He made his mark by single-handedly steering the Civil Rights Act through the senate in 1957 despite opposition from within his own party.

In 1960 Mr Johnson ran in the Democratic presidential elections which he lost to Kennedy who then invited him to be his running mate.

He is regarded by some commentators as a master of compromise with an able political brain.

Mr Johnson is married with two daughters, 19 year old Lynda and Lucy aged 16.

Courtesy BBC News

USA

JFK ASSASSINATION REMEMBERED 60 YEARS LATER BY SURVIVING WITNESSES TO HISTORY

JAMIE STENGLE, DALLAS

JUST minutes after President John F. Kennedy was fatally shot as his motorcade rolled through downtown Dallas, Associated Press reporter Peggy Simpson rushed to the scene and immediately attached herself to the police officers who had converged on the building from which a sniper's bullets had been fired.

"I was sort of under their armpit," Simpson said, noting that every time she was able to get any information from them, she would rush to a pay phone to call her editors, and then "go back to the cops."

Simpson, now 84, is among the last surviving witnesses who are sharing their stories as the nation marks the 60th anniversary of the Nov. 22, 1963, assassination.

"A tangible link to the past is going to be lost when the last voices from that time period are gone," said Stephen Fagin, curator at The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza, which tells the story of the assassination from the Texas School Book Depository, where Lee Harvey Oswald's sniper's perch was found.

"So many of the voices that were here, even 10 years ago, to share their memories — law enforcement officials, reporters, eyewitnesses — so many of those folks have passed away," he said.

Simpson, former U.S. Secret Service Agent Clint Hill and others are featured in "JFK: One Day in America," a three-part series from National Geographic released this month that pairs their recollections with archival footage, some of which has been colorized for the first time. Director Ella Wright said that hearing from those who were there helps tell the "behind the scenes" story that augments archival footage.

"We wanted people to really understand what it felt like to be back there and to experience the emotional impact of those events," Wright said.

People still flock to Dealey Plaza, which the presidential motorcade was passing through when Kennedy was killed.

"The assassination certainly defined a generation," Fagin said. "For those people who lived through it and came of age in the 1960s, it represented a significant shift in American culture."

On the day of the assassination, Simpson had originally been assigned to attend an evening fundraising dinner for Kennedy in Austin. With time on her hands before she needed to leave Dallas, she was sent to watch the presidential motorcade, but she wasn't near Dealey Plaza.

Simpson had no idea that anything out of the ordinary

had happened until she arrived at The Dallas Times Herald's building where the AP's office was located. Stepping off an elevator, she heard a newspaper receptionist say, "All we know is that the president has been shot," and then heard the paper's editor briefing the staff.

She raced to the AP office in time to watch over the bureau chief's shoulder as he filed the news to the world, and then ran out to the Texas School Book Depository to track down more information.

Later, at police headquarters, she said, she witnessed "just a wild, crazy chaotic, unfathomable scene." Reporters had filled the hallways where an officer walked through with Lee Harvey Oswald's rifle held aloft. The suspect's mother and wife arrived, and at one point authorities held a news conference where Oswald was asked questions by reporters.

"I was just with a great mass of other reporters, just trying to find any bit of information," she said.

Two days later, Simpson was covering Oswald's transfer from police headquarters to the county jail, when nightclub owner Jack Ruby burst forth from a gaggle of news reporters and shot the suspect dead.

As police officers wrestled with Ruby on the floor,

Simpson rushed to a nearby bank of phones "and started dictating everything I saw to the AP editors," she said. In that moment, she was just thinking about getting out the news.

"As an AP reporter, you just go for the phone, you can't process anything at that point," she said.

Simpson said she must have heard the gunshot but she can't remember it.

"Probably Ruby was 2 or 3 feet away from me but I didn't know him, didn't see him, didn't see him come out from the crowd of reporters," she said.

Simpson's recollections are included in an oral history collection at the Sixth Floor Museum that now includes about 2,500 recordings, according to Fagin.

The museum curator said Simpson is "a terrific example of somebody who was just where the action was that weekend and got caught up in truly historic events while simply doing her job as a professional journalist."

Fagin said oral histories are still being recorded. Many of the more recent ones have been with people who were children in the '60s and remembered hearing about the assassination while at school.

"It's a race against time really to try to capture these recollections," Fagin said.

MDT/AP

IN CONTEXT

President Lyndon Johnson was re-elected by a massive majority in 1964.

He gained widespread popularity for his programme of social reform introducing improvements in civil rights legislation, housing and medical care for the elderly.

The president began to lose support as a result of the continued involvement of US troops in Vietnam.

In 1968 he gave in to demands to stop the bombing of North Vietnam.

He then announced he would not stand for re-election and retired to his Texan ranch in 1969.

He published his memoirs, "The Vantage Point" in 1971.

He died in 1973.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Get together with friends for some competitive physical activities. Try not to allow your partner to lead you astray or upset your routine. Instant romance could be yours if you go out with friends.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Listen to the complaints of others. Do what's best for the people you love most. Assist a relative or good friend by setting of a budget for them.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Spending too much time talking to friends or relatives could easily turn into a debate that could lead to estrangement. You can convince anyone of anything.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Do not confront situations unless you are sure you have a good understanding of the dilemma. Go to the top if you're being harassed or held back.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
People you live with will not be terribly happy with you regardless of what you do today. Residential moves look hectic and sudden changes in your life are likely.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
You must deal with an emotional problem with your loved one that you have been avoiding for some time now. Added knowledge will give you the edge when dealing with peers.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
You can become obsessed with detail and must be sure to divide your time appropriately. You can make extra money. Rewards will be yours if you put in the overtime required.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Family members will not be happy with the amount of time you are spending away from home. Talk to an older family member you have helped in the past.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
If your lover tries to curtail your freedom, it may lead to conflict. You should be able to get involved in an interesting proposition today. Disputes on the home front may be hard to avoid.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Check into art objects or precious stones. You can do well in group endeavors. Update and review your personal investments. Spend time getting to know each other.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Monitor your budget carefully to avoid unnecessary stress. Try to do things with children that will enable you to bond closer to them. Don't let your emotions get out of hand.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
You can pick up some overtime today. Sudden romantic connections may be short lived. You can expect to feel confused about your personal prospects.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

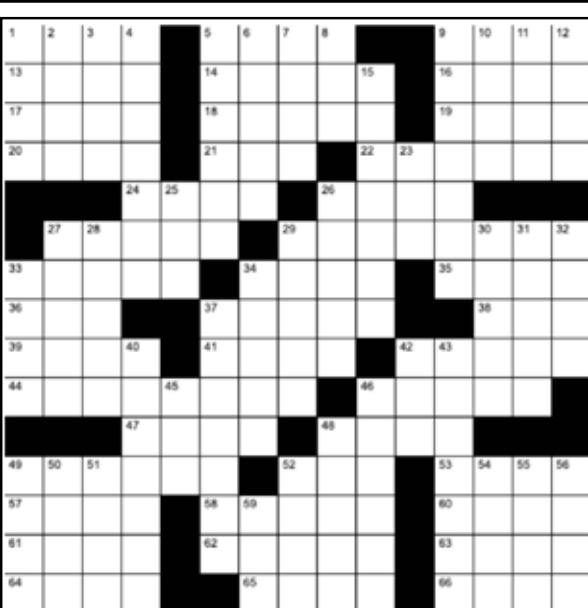
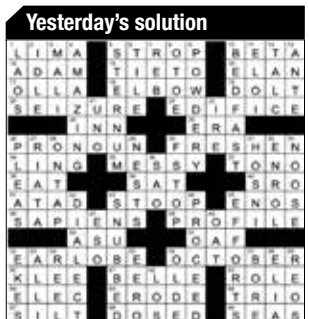
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-2	2	fine
Changchun	-2	-1	fine
Chengdu	11	19	fine
Chongqing	13	19	cloudy
Fuzhou	15	27	cloudy
Guangzhou	14	28	fine
Guiyang	9	17	overcast
Haikou	22	25	cloudy
Hangzhou	13	22	fine
Harbin	-10	-9	snow
Hefei	7	16	fine
Nanjing	9	18	fine
Shanghai	14	19	cloudy
Taipei	17	24	cloudy
Wuhan	11	18	fine
Hong Kong	21	26	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-7	-7	snow
Frankfurt	5	9	cloudy
Paris	10	13	rain
London	6	13	overcast
New York	6	13	fine

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Stitched; 5- Clickable image; 9- Kind of collar; 13- Dos cubed; 14- Water wheel; 16- Additional; 17- Forcible impact; 18- Urns; 19- Corn bread; 20- ___ bene; 21- That, in Tijuana; 22- Leopardlike cat; 24- Fender ding; 26- Operation memento; 27- Coquet; 29- Exposed; 33- Thaw before takeoff; 34- Singer Turner; 35- Change the decor; 36- Female sheep; 37- Artificial waterway; 38- J. Hancock?; 39- Staying power; 41- She played Carla on "Cheers"; 42- Rival of Helena; 44- Building; 46- Deluge; 47- Capital of Italy; 48- Derrick; 49- Wading birds; 52- Directional suffix; 53- Rights org.; 57- Move along in a stream; 58- Had; 60- Animal house; 61- Ballerina's skirt; 62- Umbilicus; 63- Nest eggs, briefly; 64- Footfall; 65- Jekyll's alter ego; 66- Gillette brand;

DOWN 1- Planted; 2- Reflected sound; 3- Come again?; 4- Wandering; 5- Create with the imagination; 6- Seashore; 7- Estimator's phrase; 8- Never, in Nuremberg; 9- High ruler; 10- Kit item; 11- Yes ___?; 12- Nair rival; 15- Reclusive; 23- Scoundrel; 25- Before, of yore; 26- Capital city of Yemen; 27- Not as many; 28- Feudal vassal; 29- Fabric woven from flax yarns; 30- Basil-based sauce; 31- Barely beat; 32- Network point; 33- Remove from text; 34- Lake in the Sierra Nevada; 37- Incarnadine; 40- Foul-up; 42- "Hold On Tight" band; 43- East African nation; 45- Small drink, young child; 46- Caress; 48- Cultivate; 49- Newts; 50- Oversupply; 51- Routine; 52- A deadly sin; 54- Wagon; 55- Yarn spinner; 56- Bear up there; 59- Baby's cry;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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Nam Long (Old Taipa)
HKD 10,200/mth 2 beds 1 bath

Hellene Garden
HKD 13,000/mth 3 bed 2 bath

AD

SCIENCE

EATING LESS MEAT WOULD BE GOOD FOR THE EARTH. SMALL NUDGES CAN CHANGE BEHAVIOR

JONEL ALECCIA &
LAURA UNGAR, NEW YORK

PRESTON Cabral eats meat nearly every day at home, but his favorite meals at school are served on “Meatless Mondays” and “Vegan Fridays.”

“Today I ate chips, tangerines and this thing that looked like chili but without the meat — just beans,” the 12-year-old said after lunch on a Friday at I.S. 318 Eugenio Maria De Hostos.

The Monday and Friday lunches have inspired Preston's family to make more vegetarian meals at home, sparking what experts say is a healthy shift for them — and for the planet.

Programs like these are among the few proven to work for one of the thorniest problems of the 21st century: How to get people to eat less meat.

A new poll conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that most U.S. adults said they eat meat at least several times each week. About two-thirds (64%) said they eat chicken or turkey that often, and 43% eat beef that frequently.

But experts agree that the urgency of climate change and the demands of a surging global population call for an overhaul of how humans get their protein.

“There has arguably never been a more important time in human history to transform our food system for the sake of humans and nature,” a coalition of United Kingdom climate scientists concluded in a 2020 analysis.

That will require changing consumer behavior around meat, particularly in rich countries, experts said. From a health perspective, people in places like the U.S., Canada and Europe eat far more meat, especially red meat and processed meat, than recommended. That puts them at risk for obesity, heart disease, stroke and other problems plaguing wealthy nations.

Scientists say the average U.S. adult consumes about 100 grams of protein, mostly meat, each day — about twice the recommended amount. That adds up to more than 328 pounds of meat per person each year, including 58 pounds of poultry, 37 pounds of beef, 30 pounds of pork and 22 pounds of fish and seafood, according to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations.

At the same time, meat production is a key driver of climate change. The livestock sector is responsible for at least 14.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions and is the single greatest source

AP PHOTO



of methane, a top threat to Earth's climate, according to the Food and Agriculture Association of the United Nations.

There's no question that cutting back on meat consumption could have real and lasting effects.

MEAT PARADOX

Researchers at the University of Oxford recently reported that vegans have 30% of the dietary environmental impact as people who eat high amounts of meat. Vegans produced 25% of greenhouse gas emissions and land use impact, 46% of water use, 27% of water pollution and 34% of the impact on biodiversity than the top meat-eaters.

Significantly, even low-meat diets contributed only about 70% of the environmental impact of high-meat diets, wrote Keren Papier, a co-author of the study.

“You don't have to go full vegan or even vegetarian to make a big difference,” Papier said.

Younger people could be key. They may be open to new ways of eating because they're more aware of climate change and the environmental costs of our current eating patterns, said Dr. Martin Bloem, an environmental health professor at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

But he's worried about the pace of change: “I think it goes too slow.”

Changing human behavior,

especially regarding something as important and intimate as the food we eat, is challenging, no matter a person's age.

Eating meat is an ingrained, habitual part of daily life in most parts of the world, said Julia Wolfson, who studies nutrition at Johns Hopkins University. Meat consumption is “orders of magnitude higher” in the U.S. than in low-income countries, and meals are often centered around it. She recalled a well-known advertisement from the mid-1990s that resonated across the country: “Beef: It's What's for Dinner.”

Besides its central role in U.S. and other cultures, there are firm perceptions that meat is necessary, especially for “young boys to grow up healthy and strong,” she said.

At the same time, research shows most people are reluctant to even learn about the negative impacts of eating meat and they're stymied by the so-called “meat paradox.” That's the term scientists use to describe the psychological conflict that occurs in people who like to eat meat but don't like to contemplate the animals that died providing it.

The AP-NORC poll illustrates that conundrum.

About 8 in 10 U.S. adults said taste was an extremely or very important factor when buying food, with its cost and nutritional value following close behind. Americans are much less likely to

prioritize the food's effect on the environment (34%) or its effect on animal welfare (30%).

INTERVENTIONS

Despite those hurdles, certain interventions can cut meat consumption, research shows.

Stressing the connection between meat and animals seems to work. For instance, experiments that displayed photos of meat dishes on restaurant menus alongside pictures of the animals that they came from have consistently proven to reduce meat consumption, according to researchers at Stanford University.

Another strategy is to emphasize animal welfare. Research subjects exposed to information about it are more likely than control groups to buy or eat less meat or to say they intended to eat less meat, studies show.

Interventions described as “nudges,” or small choices aimed at influencing behavior, appear to be among the most effective at cutting meat consumption. Many are designed to help make healthy choices more convenient.

They can be as simple as decreasing portion sizes of meat and boosting veggies at home and in restaurants. Or they can involve positioning vegetarian offerings more prominently in grocery stores and buffet lines. In a 2021 study in the *Journal of Public Health*, vegetarian choices surged from as low as 2% to nearly 90% when re-

searchers made non-meat meals the default option on conference menus.

Some nations are mulling more drastic measures. In the Netherlands, the agriculture minister proposed introducing a tax on meat, an idea that is still being debated. The city of Haarlem, outside of Amsterdam, is set to ban advertising of “industrialized meat” in public spaces starting in 2025.

Those options wouldn't go over well in the U.S., according to the AP-NORC poll. About 7 in 10 U.S. adults said they would somewhat or strongly oppose raising taxes on the sale of meat and 43% would oppose banning public advertising for meat on government property.

Meanwhile, meat-free menu days are becoming more common, with Meatless Monday programs taking root around the world.

“Meatless Monday has had a lot of success in raising awareness and starting a conversation just about small changes that one can make that make it seem not overwhelming to people,” Wolfson said.

It seems to be working at Preston Cabral's school. Ricardo Morales, a cook ambassador, said more kids get school lunch on Fridays than any other day of the week.

“Vegan day is just the biggest day we serve right now,” he said. “It's bigger than hamburger and even pizza day.” **MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL

Messi vs Ronaldo rivalry could be rekindled in Saudi Arabia tournament

JAMES ROBSON, MANCHESTER

LIONEL Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo could resume their longstanding rivalry in a tournament being staged in Saudi Arabia in February.

Organizers of the Riyadh Season Cup said yesterday (Macau time) that Messi's Inter Miami is expected to play in the three-team event.

Miami called the announcement "inaccurate" and said it had been determining its preseason schedule. But the prospect of Messi vs. Ronaldo was already being pushed in Saudi Arabia.

"We look forward to welcoming everyone from Inter Miami in February for the Riyadh Season Cup, which will bring together a number of the biggest international stars from across all three clubs competing," said Turki Alalshikh, chairman of the Saudi General Entertainment Authority.

Messi has promoted tourism in Saudi Arabia and in May was suspended by former club Pa-

AP PHOTO



ris Saint-Germain for making an unauthorized trip to the country. He also played in this year's Riyadh Season Cup when PSG was the guest team.

Ronaldo's Al Nassr and Neymar's Al-Hilal will take part in February's event, organizers said.

Inter Miami has confirmed it will embark on an international tour but did not reveal details.

"Since day one, Inter Miami CF has set out to be a global brand.

To this end, we have been in conversations to determine our 2024 preseason schedule," it said. "We look forward to showcasing our players on Inter Miami CF's first international tour which will be announced in the coming weeks."

Saudi Arabia has made a major push to be a big player in world soccer by signing some of the game's biggest players amid allegations of sportswashing. But it couldn't lure Messi to the oil-rich

kingdom when he left PSG at the end of last season, with the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner opting to move to MLS instead.

Messi, who led Argentina to triumph at last year's World Cup, has already won his first trophy with the David Beckham co-owned Miami — the Leagues Cup in August.

Messi and Ronaldo are widely considered to be two of the greatest players of all-time and com-

peted against each other for soccer's biggest prizes during their prime years at Barcelona and Real Madrid, respectively.

Both have left European soccer behind but have shown little sign of giving up their ambition to add to their legacies.

Ronaldo has led Portugal to next year's European Championship and Messi will be aiming to retain the Copa America for Argentina at next year's tournament.

The Riyadh Season Cup is scheduled to be held in the first week of February at Kingdom Arena.

Inter Miami sporting director Chris Henderson said earlier this week that nothing had been finalized or was ready to be announced about the team's preseason plans. It will resume training in the second week of January, with the expectation that the MLS season will begin in late February. Henderson said he thought the team would need between four and six preseason matches, split between the U.S. and overseas. **MDT/AP**

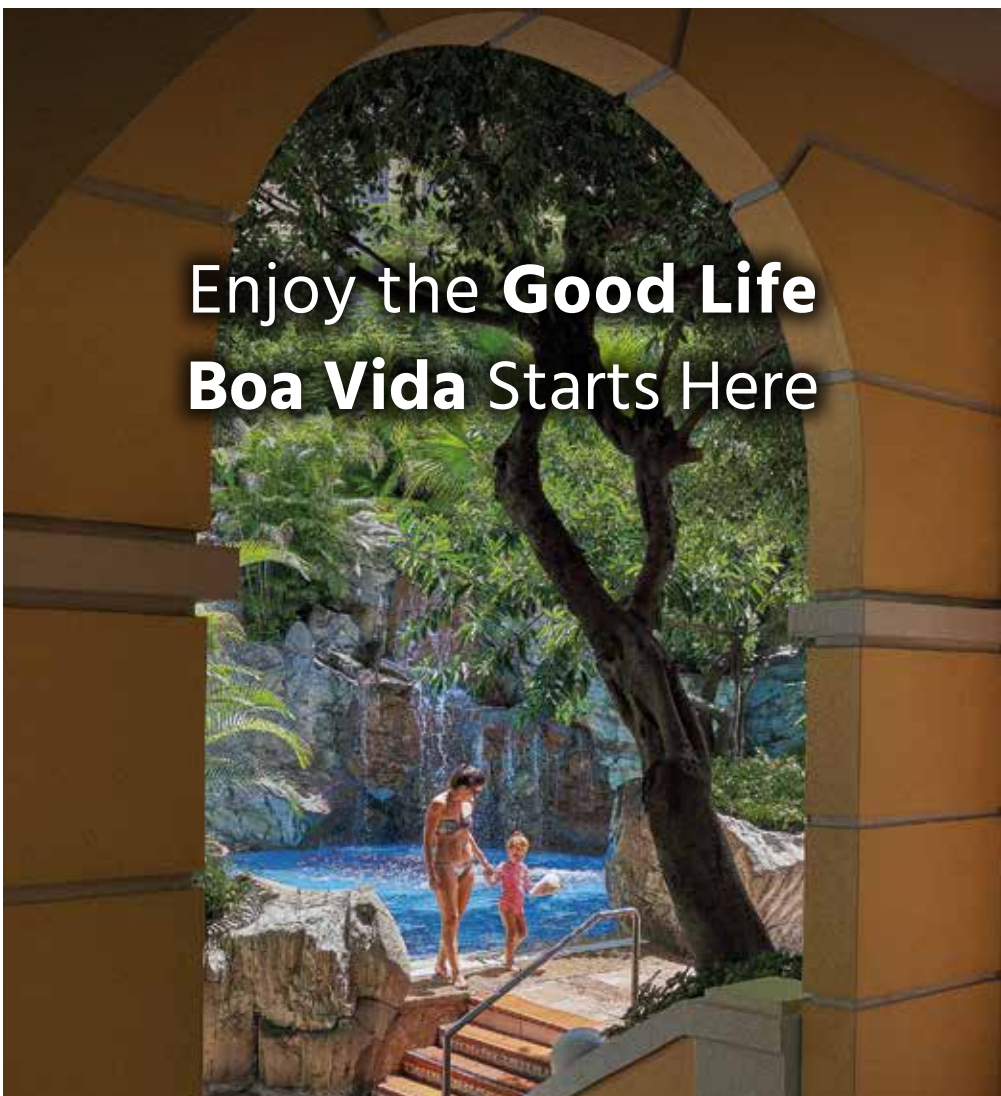
AD



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OPINION

Multipolar World

Jorge Costa Oliveira



THE ENVIRONMENTAL (IR)RESPONSIBILITY OF RUSSIA AND THE ARCTIC ROUTE

According to an article published in the December 14, 2021 issue of Science magazine, the Arctic is warming four times faster than the rest of the world. Several scientific studies, including one published on August 11, 2022, in the Communications Earth & Environment Journal, and others mentioned in an article in the August 12, 2022, issue of Scientific American, confirm the same conclusion.

Apparently, this accelerated warming of the Arctic, most notably above the Arctic Circle, is essentially due to physical processes, among which it is important to highlight the thawing of large areas previously covered by ice, including the permafrost that covers about 65% of Russian territory.

For a long time, President Putin was one of the main skeptics of the relevance of human beings in the world's climate changes and even suggested that global warming could create new economic opportunities for Russia.

However, in 2019, the Russian leadership took up the fight against global warming, albeit in very limited terms. Yet, the proposed legislation was subverted by economic lobbies, enshrining weak provisions regarding the reporting of emissions and sanctions for polluters, in addition to the elimination of a national emission permit trading scheme; and with the cunning move of using 1990 as a reference – when the then USSR emitted almost 2.4 billion tons of carbon – so Russia can increase its emissions over the next decade and still meet its target of a 30% reduction...

If environmental disasters resulting from climate changes, especially due to the disappearance of permafrost – significant damage to human settlements and major energy and transport infrastructures, release of long-stored greenhouse gases (such as methane), forest fires, local pollution – fuel popular protests and increase tensions between regional governors and Moscow, perhaps this position will be reviewed. But the economic greed for access to land freed by the thawing permafrost – whether for cereal production or for the exploitation of minerals for the production of precious and critical metals – will probably continue to drive Russian environmental policy.

Moreover, a significant global reduction in the demand for oil and natural gas (which would act as a catalyst for environmental policy changes in Russia) is unlikely in the next 2 - 3 decades.

Lastly, the navigability of the Arctic Ocean resulting from its accelerated melting will allow large cargo ships to use this Arctic Route (NSR), which can reduce travel time between the Far East and Europe by 40% compared to the Suez Canal route.

A container ship from China can take about 34-40 days to reach Rotterdam, the main European port. In contrast, the Arctic Route may take around 23 days to the same destination. Russian authorities believe the route could be viable by 2035.

In truth, the Arctic Route will be feasible all the sooner the faster the Arctic Ocean thaws. And the navigability of the Arctic will make Russia indispensable in international maritime trade for decades if not centuries.

SAM ALTMAN IS BACK AS OPENAI CEO JUST DAYS AFTER BEING REMOVED, ALONG WITH A NEW BOARD

THE BUZZ

The ousted leader of ChatGPT-maker OpenAI is returning to the company that fired him late last week, culminating a days-long power struggle that shocked the tech industry and brought attention to the conflicts around how to safely build artificial intelligence.

San Francisco-based OpenAI said in a statement late Tuesday: "We have reached an agreement in principle for Sam Altman to return to OpenAI as CEO with a new initial board."

The board, which replaces the one that fired Altman on Friday, will be led by former Salesforce co-CEO Bret Taylor, who also chaired Twitter's board before its takeover by Elon Musk last year. The

other members will be former U.S. Treasury Secretary Larry Summers and Quora CEO Adam D'Angelo.

OpenAI's previous board of directors, which included D'Angelo, had refused to give specific reasons for why it fired Altman, leading to a weekend of internal conflict at the company and growing outside pressure from the startup's investors.

The chaos also accentuated the differences between Altman — who's become the face of generative AI's rapid commercialization since ChatGPT's arrival a year ago — and members of the company's board who have expressed deep reservations about the safety risks posed by AI as it gets more advanced.

AP PHOTO



UK-SOUTH KOREA

CHARLES III WELCOMES PRESIDENT YOON WITH STATE BANQUET, MINGLES WITH K-POP BAND BLACKPINK

JILL LAWLESS & SYLVIA HUI, LONDON

King Charles III hosted South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and his wife at a glittering banquet at Buckingham Palace yesterday [Macau time], as Britain rolled out the red carpet for a formal state visit aimed at strengthening trade and defense ties between the two countries.

The U.K. government hopes the Korean leader's three-day visit will help cement an "Indo-Pacific tilt" in its foreign and trade policy.

The king and Queen Camilla hosted Yoon and first lady Kim Keon Hee at a sumptuous white tie and tiara banquet at Buckingham Palace, where Charles paid tribute to South Korea's political and economic advances and celebrated its culture. The monarch even singled out for praise the K-pop girl group Blackpink, whose members were among more than 170 guests in the grand ballroom.

"I applaud Jennie, Jisoo, Lisa and Rose, better known collectively as Blackpink, for their role in bringing the message of environmental sustainability to a global audience," Charles said in his banquet speech. "I can only

admire how they can prioritize these vital issues, as well as being global superstars."

"Sadly, when I was in Seoul all those years ago, I am not sure I developed much of what might be called the Gangnam Style!" he joked, referring to the global hit song by Korean rapper Psy.

Camilla donned the late Queen Elizabeth II's ruby and diamond Burmese tiara and a red gown for the occasion, while Kate, the Princess of Wales, chose a white gown paired with what's known as the Strathmore Rose tiara. The headpiece had belonged to Elizabeth's mother, known as the Queen Mother.

Earlier Tuesday Charles and Camilla welcomed Yoon and his wife at Horse Guards Parade, a military parade ground in central London. Heir to the throne Prince William and government ministers also attended the welcome ceremony, where the king and president inspected rows of soldiers from the Scots Guards in gray tunics and bearskin hats.

The visiting couple traveled by horse-drawn coach down an avenue lined with British and Korean flags to Buckingham Palace.

Yoon also is scheduled to

hold talks Wednesday with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak focused on trade, technology and defense. A defense agreement will see the two countries' navies work together to curb smuggling and to enforce U.N. sanctions imposed on North Korea to curb its nuclear weapons ambitions.

U.K. and Korean officials also will officially launch talks on an "upgraded" free trade agreement to replace their current deal, which largely replicates the arrangements the U.K. had before it left the European Union.

Britain has launched trade talks with several countries since leaving the EU in 2020, though it has finalized deals only with Australia and New Zealand. The U.K. also has joined the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership, or CPTPP, an Asia-Pacific trade bloc that includes Japan and 10 other nations.

Sunak and Yoon are expected to sign an agreement covering cooperation in defense and technology, including artificial intelligence. Britain hosted the first international AI Safety Summit this month, and South Korea intends to hold a follow-up event next year.

MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Vatican Pope Francis met separately yesterday with relatives of Israeli hostages in Gaza and Palestinian prisoners in Israel and begged for peace and an end to what he called terrorism and "the passions that are killing everyone." Francis spoke about the suffering of both Israelis and Palestinians after his meetings, which were arranged before the Israeli-Hamas hostage deal and a temporary halt in fighting was announced.

AP PHOTO



Netherlands No fewer than 26 Dutch political parties are seeking a share of the 150 seats in the lower house of parliament as the Netherlands hold a general election yesterday. Only a few of them stand a realistic chance of providing the candidate who will succeed Mark Rutte as prime minister. Dilan Yesilgöz-Zegerius (pictured), People's Party for Freedom and Democracy is one of the main contenders.

AP PHOTO



Czech President Petr Pavel has signed yesterday into law an economic package of dozens of measures introducing budget cuts and increased taxes designed to keep the ballooning budget deficit under control. Pavel's signature was the last step before the government proposal — which was approved by parliament — turned into law that would see Czechs pay more taxes on alcoholic beverages, in the country renowned for its beer, and medicine.