



**THE EXCO ANNOUNCED THAT THE PUBLIC ASSETS SUPERVISION OFFICE AND THE PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION OFFICE WILL BE UPGRADED TO BUREAUS**

P2

**FOLLOWING MONTHS OF REPAIR AND RENOVATION, THE FIRST JETFOIL IS SET TO RETURN**

P2

**TOP DIPLOMATS OF SOUTH KOREA, JAPAN AND CHINA MEET TO RESTART TRILATERAL SUMMIT, REVIVE COOPERATION**

P6



AP PHOTO



**India** Attempts to reach 41 construction workers stuck in a collapsed tunnel in northern India for two weeks were again stymied this weekend. The drilling machine broke down late Friday while making its way through the rubble, stones and metal, forcing the rescuers to work by hand to remove debris in hopes of reaching the stranded workers, but the whole operation has ground to a halt. Arnold Dix, an international expert assisting the rescue team at the site in the mountainous Uttarakhand state, said that it was unclear when the drilling will start again.

AP PHOTO



**India** A stampede during a music festival at a university in southern India on Saturday killed at least four students and injured 60 others, according to news agency Press Trust of India. The disaster happened at the Cochin University of Science and Technology in Kerala state where students were enjoying a live musical event that was interrupted by rain, leading the audience to scamp for shelter that resulted in a stampede. At least two people among the injured are in critical condition, news website Indian Express reported.

AP PHOTO



**Pakistan** A fire tore through a shopping mall in the southwestern Pakistani city of Karachi, killing at least 10 people and injuring 22 others, police and local officials said Saturday. The multi-story RJ Mall is in a commercial high-rise that also houses call centers and software firms. The fire department dispatched eight fire trucks to the scene after being alerted at 6:30 a.m. local time. Chief fire officer, Ishtiaq Ahmed Khan, said the fourth floor of the building was the most affected.

More on backpage

# CYBER AGE RISK

**Wong Sio Chak considers the escalating number of cyberattacks in Macau 'alarming'** P3



**EDUCATION**  
**HOU KONG TO RUN SCHOOL AT MACAU NEW NEIGHBOURHOOD** P2



**EVENTS**  
**LIGHT UP MACAO EXTENDED TO CNY**

P4

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

HENGQIN

# HOU KONG TO RUN SCHOOL AT MACAU NEW NEIGHBOURHOOD



ANTHONY LAM

**H**ou Kong Middle School will oversee operations of the school located in Macau New Neighbourhood (MNN) on Hengqin, which will open for enrollments tomorrow.

The school will cater to the needs of Macau ID holders before mainland students, and will adopt the Macau curricula and qualifications.

Despite this, mainland Chinese textbooks, educational tools and curricula have been prevalent in Hon Kong schools in Macau.

While expressing the intention to operate the Hengqin school, the Hou Kong operation entity disclosed that negotiations with mainland authorities were being conducted to clarify procedures.

Although formal permission

is pending, the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) has already signed an agreement with Hou Kong on the operation of the Hengqin school.

The future school will be integrated into Macau's free education system.

In its first academic year planned for 2024 to 2025, there will be five classes offered from Kindergarten 1 to Primary 2.

The campus is designed to accommodate 1,050 students, distributed across 18 primary classes and 12 kindergarten classes.

The director of Education, Kong Chi Meng, congratulated Hou Kong for securing operation rights, describing this as a new milestone in Hou Kong's and Macau's educational histories.

It was also announced on

a separate occasion that the Hengqin residential project is scheduled to open for sale at 9 a.m. tomorrow. Each apartment is priced between RMB2.41 million and RMB3.71 million, depending on size, floor and location.

Application forms will be available for download at the Macau Urban Renewal Limited's website. Applicants must submit completed forms, IDs and property ownership certifications issued by the Zhuhai government to the sale centers located in both Macau and Hengqin.

An intentional sum of RMB20,000 or HKD/MOP22,000 should be provided alongside these documents.

Those who work, live or study in the mainland Greater Bay Area cities should also submit relevant proof or certifications during the application process.

Five designated realty agencies will assist with the applications, being Centaline Macau, Midland Macau, Mcore Real Estate, Sun City Property Co. Ltd. and Kok Vui Real Estate Development.

## JETFOILS TO RETURN TO OPERATIONS, CONSERVATION GROUP SAYS

RENATO MARQUES

**F**ollowing months of repair and renovation, the first Jetfoil is set to return, providing transportation between Macau's Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal and Hong Kong-Macau Ferry Terminal, according to the Jetfoil Conservation Concern Group.

The group, which closely follows developments concerning these historical vessels, said at least one jetfoil will soon return to operation, according to an internal source. However, the precise date is unspecified.

The first jetfoil slated to return will be the 'Terceira,' (IMO: 7910008) a Hydrofoil initially built in 1979. It began operation as the 'Normandy Princess' by Jetlink Ferries Ltd. One year later, the vessel was acquired by Far East Hydrofoil (now TurboJET Hong Kong) and has since been operating between Hong Kong and Macau.

RENATO MARQUES



According to the latest records, 'Terceira' is among five Boeing 929 model Jetfoils still active and owned by TurboJET, alongside vessels named Funchal, Horta, Cacilhas and Taipa.

"Our sources said Terceira will resume service shortly - if all goes to plan!" the group stated.

In early September, TurboJET's official Facebook page said Jetfoils could not resume

operation due to the construction of the fourth bridge between Macau and Taipa, noting it was unsafe to operate this vessel type during this phase.

"We know how much you guys miss our Jetfoils, and we are working with relevant departments on fairway construction to ensure that Jetfoils can pass through safely. We hope you all can ride a Jetfoil soon!" the operator noted.

## GOV'T TO UPGRADE TWO OFFICES INTO BUREAUS

**T**he Executive Council (ExCo) announced over the weekend that the Public Assets Supervision Office and the Personal Data Protection Office will be upgraded to bureaus.

While concluding discussions on the Executive Regulations for the upgrade, the ExCo disclosed specific details to a press conference.

The current Public Assets Supervision and Planning Office, will become the Public Assets Supervision Administration Bureau. The new bureau will be directly under the leadership of the Chief Executive, and will have a director, a deputy director, Public Assets Management Department and three divisions, being the Public Capital En-

terprise Supervision Division, Grant Coordination and Supervision Division, and Administration, Finance and Information Division.

The future bureau will plan, coordinate, execute and evaluate policies and measures related to public assets supervision and management, and related work.

Meanwhile, the 16-year-old Personal Data Protection Office will become the Personal Data Protection Bureau. Its leadership will include a director and deputy director. The bureau will have an Investigation, Administration and Finance Department, encompassing Investigation and Supervision divisions.

The Personal Data

Protection Bureau will research, evaluate and suggest policies and measures concerning personal data protection. It will also conduct public education on personal data protection and privacy, and issue opinions and recommendations on the installation of surveillance cameras.

Both bureaus are slated for inauguration Feb. 1, 2024.

At the same press conference, the bill to restructure the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) was also discussed. If enacted, the CCAC will be authorized to investigate money laundering cases and expand its capabilities and authority in regional and international cooperation. **AL**

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POLICY ADDRESS 2024 | SECURITY

# Cybersecurity situation in Macau is alarming, says Secretary Wong

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE escalating number of cyberattacks in Macau is alarming, the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, said Friday at the Legislative Assembly (AL).

According to Wong, who was at the AL to hear inquiries and opinions from the lawmakers over the Policy Address for 2024 for the security sector, the number of cyberattacks on Macau's critical facilities has been growing exponentially. Wong described the situation as "alarming."

"In 2020, the number of cyberattacks per day was 1,850 and this refers only to critical facilities. In 2021, the number grew to 4,850 cyberattacks per day. In 2022, that number was 5,500. This year, we have some 5,800 cyberattacks per day," he said. However, he said the increasing number of attacks have not caused significant damage to any of the facilities, as existing protective measures have worked effectively.



"Although we see a hike in the number of attacks, the resultant damage has not been very serious. Until October this year, there were attacks that resulted in severe consequences. This demonstrates our awareness and the effectiveness of protections applied to critical facilities," Wong concluded.

## LOSSES OF MOP215 MILLION IN FIRST 9 MONTHS

Of more serious impact were scams perpetrated via phone or online, with the Secretary acknowledging authorities' concerns about this year's out-

come in this domain.

According to data referenced by Wong, in the first nine months of this year, phone and online scams caused losses totaling 215 million patacas. However, mechanisms enforced by the banks to monitor and prevent suspicious transactions have prevented the loss of an additional 110 million patacas.

Despite widespread disclosure and efforts to raise awareness by authorities, particularly the Judiciary Police, many members of the populace still fall victim to such scams.

Wong highlighted significant losses in the neighboring region of Hong Kong, where the equivalent of 5 billion patacas has been lost. Similarly, in Singapore, the equivalent of some 3 billion patacas has also reportedly been lost to scammers.

Compared to these regions, Macau's problem seems relatively small, said Wong. However, the Secretary said, "even one case is too much for us." Wong noted that between January and September, 1,640 scams were reported in Macau, a 69% increase year-on-year.

## CHINA TO OFFER TEMPORARY VISA-FREE ENTRY TO CITIZENS FROM SIX COUNTRIES

Citizens from six countries will temporarily enjoy visa-free entry to the People's Republic of China, the country has announced on its consular service website. The six countries are France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Malaysia. The temporary measure will be effective from Dec. 1, 2023 to Nov. 30, 2024. During this period, citizens of these six countries will be accepted for visa-free entry with regular passports for business, tourism, visitation and transit purposes for a period not exceeding 15 days. Citizens from these countries who do not meet the criteria will still need a visa for entry into China.

## 40 FIRMS BID FOR TAXI LICENSES

40 companies submitted bids for 10 eight-year licenses to operate 500 new regular taxis, according to the Transport Bureau (DSAT). The minimum bid price for a company license to operate 50 taxis is set at MOP2.5 million. The tender was initially set to reissue some 300 licenses currently due to expire, but DSAT director Kelvin Lam previously said that the number might potentially involve 500 licenses based on the needs of both locals and tourists. The tender, which commenced last month, allows companies to bid for packs of 10 licenses, with each company permitted to apply for up to 50 taxis.

POLICY ADDRESS 2024 | SECURITY

## SECURITY CHIEF SUGGESTS OVERTIME PAY IMPROVEMENT 'NOT READY'

ANTHONY LAM

**A**s lawmakers propose improving overtime remuneration for security forces, Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak said that while adjustments are being considered, they are not yet prepared for implementation.

Over the weekend, Wong was present at the parliament for his policy question session.

Several lawmakers said security forces workers are entitled to 100 salary points of additional remuneration for working over 44 hours per week. However, their overtime payment will remain the same regardless of how much overtime they have completed. The lawmakers advocated for adjustments to this policy, some suggesting raising the payment to 120 salary points.

In response, Wong said



the current overtime payment scheme is acceptable. Furthermore, he noted the related law had only recently been reviewed, but said that when circumstances were appropriate and consensus was reached, proposals for further review would be considered.

Wong also said the average working time for security forces stood at 50 hours per week, although certain departments might exceed this due to specific occasions or limited staffing. Notwithstanding, he said sufficient rest for workers was ensured.

Addressing lawmakers' concerns on the size of the security forces, Wong said the Public Security Police Force has a team of only 5,100 officers, although the allotted size is 6,300. The actual number is 4,800 after accounting for some officers being designated to other workplaces. To manage this situation, the police have increasingly relied on technological advancements, Wong added.

When asked about retirement criteria for the security forces, Wong said officers who requested retirement on the grounds of "carpe diem" would be refused, given the rigorous training required for police officers.

Retirement by the age of 55 is usually permitted under special circumstances, such as the health condition of the officers or their family members.

## 7-YEAR-OLD FALLS VICTIM TO SEX OFFENSE

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, revealed to the parliament that a seven-year-old child has fallen victim in a sex offense.

When questioned by lawmakers about sex offenses in the city, Wong disclosed that in the first nine months of this year, there were 24 reported cases, marking an increase year-on-year. Of these, 15 involved sexual harassment cases minor in nature, while nine involved voluntary sexual activities between partners.

Wong highlighted the need for collective societal efforts to combat sexual offenses targeting youths.

He also disclosed that in the first nine months of this year, there were 74 instances of youth delinquency – 28 more than the corresponding period last year. These included 27 fights and 12 thefts.

Lawmaker Kou Kam Fai asked whether fraud victims themselves became perpetrators. In response, Wong said

he felt "grieved" by the scenario. He added that this "chain action" did not only concern youths, but also adults. Many were coerced into swindling others to recover their lost funds.

In addition, many such victim-turn-suspects were highly educated.

"There were even PhD holders," the secretary disclosed. "Many of these victims disregard the government's warnings, because they think they will not fall victim to scams."

The Secretary said the government would consider methods to enhance education and awareness campaigns to prevent scams.

On sham marriage, Wong said there were cases in which individuals guilty of this offense had their Macau ID revoked. "The key is the verdict," Wong said. Regarding punishments for drug matters, Wong said Macau and mainland China have different legal systems, so the severity of punishments cannot be directly compared.

## CHRISTMAS MARKET STARTS DEC. 16

The Christmas Market in Tap Seac Square will be held from Dec. 16 for 17 consecutive days and will revolve around the theme "Christmas Dream Workshop." In addition to 23 special booths selling Christmas gifts and food, facilities like a festive Christmas merry-go-round and Christmas spinning tea cups are available. Associations, local cultural and creative enterprises engaged by the Cultural Development Fund, and the public have been invited to participate in the operation of certain booths selling Christmas gifts. The aim is to diversify the products for sale and support the local cultural and creative sector.

## MACAO ONE ACCOUNT INTEGRATES HEALTH PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATIONS

The Health Professionals Council has integrated the accreditation certificates into the e-wallet of the Macao One Account app. The 15 categories of health professionals governed by Law No. 18/2020, "Regime of Qualification and Registration of Health Professionals," can add their accreditation certificates to the app with just one click in the app's e-wallet through the 'My card -> Professional' feature. This electronic version has the same legal effect as its physical counterpart and will enable health professionals to easily display their accreditation at any time.

## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE STEADY AT 3.1%

The general unemployment rate (2.4%) and the unemployment rate of local residents (3.1%) for the August - October 2023 period held steady from the previous period (July - September 2023), data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) shows. Meanwhile, the underemployment rate dropped slightly by 0.1 percentage point to 1.5%. The labor force living in Macau totaled 379,500 and the labor force participation rate was 68.3%. Total employment was 370,500 and the number of employed residents totaled 287,400, up by 1,200 and 600 respectively from the previous period.

## INFLATION UP 1.1%

Inflation in October grew by 1.10% year-on-year, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). The increment was attributed to higher prices for eating out, rising tuition fees, as well as higher prices for clothing and gasoline. However, the rise was partially offset by falling airfares and lower dwelling rentals. The average Composite Consumer Price Index for the first ten months of 2023 rose 0.87% year-on-year.

## EVENTS

# 'LIGHT UP MACAO' TO DAZZLE CITY UNTIL CHINESE NEW YEAR

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE 2023 local light festival - Light up Macao - will commence Dec. 2 (Saturday), the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) announced last Friday.

This year's light festival will be the longest ever, being staged from Dec. 2, 2023 to Feb. 25, 2024. This extended festival will blend celebrations for Christmas, New Year and Chinese New Year.

Themed 'Dazzling Wonderland,' the festival will present a variety of colorful light installations, interactive installations, and shows in the Peninsula as well as the islands of Taipa and Coloane.

The MGTO said the event "is set to propel the community tourism and nighttime economy forward."

At Friday's press conference, the director of the MGTO, Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, noted the festival will not only span a series of major festivities such as the Anniversary of the Estab-



lishment of the Macau Special Administrative Region, the Winter Solstice, Christmas, New Year's Eve, New Year's Day and Chinese New Year, but will also coincide with other festivities such as Valentine's Day, Renri (The Day

of All Humans) and the Chinese Lantern Festival.

The festival's goal is also to encourage visitors to explore different areas of the city and provide local SMEs with increased business opportunities.

The festival includes 36 light installations, 20 interactive installations and 3 mapping show venues.

The installations will be active from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. every night during the event.

## KAI FONG REMOVES DEITIES OF FAMOUS ALTAR AHEAD OF NEW CENTRAL LIBRARY CONSTRUCTION

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) has authorized the Macau General Union of Neighborhood Associations, commonly referred to as "Kai Fong," to oversee the removal and temporary storing of the statues representing revered gods at the prominent altar located on the corner of the old Hotel Estoril building.

The removal of a large number of statues, most of them depicting the



goddess Guanyin (Kuntshvara, the Bodhisatt-

va of Mercy, and one of the most important and

venerated deities by locals, was undertaken by several staff members who proceeded with an inventory of the images at the location before they were stored.

A notice was also displayed at the site outlining the reasons for the statues' removal.

"To facilitate the construction works of the New Central Library and to provide support for the adjacent pagoda tree (Ficus microcarpa), it is necessary to temporarily remove

the statues of deities located under the tree to guarantee their safety throughout the construction period," the notice reads.

It further explained, "The Macau General Union of Neighborhood Associations has been entrusted by the IC to coordinate the removal and temporary storage of these statues. Religious rites regarding the removal of the statues will be carried out from 10:00 to 12:00 on Nov. 25 (Saturday)."

## OVER 370 HONG KONG, MACAU LAWYERS LICENSED TO PRACTICE IN GREATER BAY AREA

**A**total of 372 lawyers from Hong Kong and Macau have obtained certificates of practice for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, a senior official from the Ministry of Justice said last week.

They are among more than 1,500 lawyers from

Hong Kong and Macau who attended special examinations to obtain the certificates, said Tian Xin, chief of the ministry's Bureau of Lawyers' Work, at a press conference.

Lawyers in Greater Bay Area have taken their advantages of being familiar with laws of Hong Kong

and Macau as well as relevant foreign laws, and also being familiar with laws of the mainland, and actively handled civil and commercial litigation and arbitration as well as legal affairs in areas such as investment and intellectual property rights that involve Hong Kong and Macau

or foreign entities, Tian said.

In 2020, the central government began a trial program allowing lawyers from the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions to obtain licenses and practice in nine cities in south China's Guangdong Province.

In September this year, the trial program was extended to 2026, with the related policies improved to make the process easier.

The ministry will further improve policies on opening up mainland's legal service to Hong Kong and Macau legal professionals and refine supportive measures to enable them to enjoy better opportunities, Tian said. **MDT/XINHUA**

AUTOMOBILE

# Nissan will invest \$1.4 billion to make EV versions of its best-selling cars at its UK factory

KELVIN CHAN, LONDON

**N**ISSAN will invest \$1.4 billion to update its factory in northeast England to make electric versions of its two best-selling cars, a boost for the British government as it tries to revive the country's ailing economy.

The Japanese automaker manufactures the gasoline or gas-hybrid Qashqai and smaller Juke crossover vehicles at the factory in Sunderland, which employs 6,000 workers.

Nissan Motor Co. said it's directly investing up to 1.12 billion pounds (\$1.4 billion) to produce electric successors to the two models. The money also will enable "wider investment in infrastructure projects and the supply chain, including a new gigafactory" for EV batteries at the site, the government said in a separate press release.

"Nissan's investment is a massive vote of confidence in the



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, right and Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt attach a Nissan badge to a car as they visit the car manufacturer Nissan, in Sunderland, England, last week

U.K.'s automotive industry," which contributes 71 billion pounds a year to the economy, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said.

Sunak visited the factory for the announcement, posing for photos with Treasury chief Jeremy Hunt in front of a blue Qashqai on the assembly line, meeting workers and getting a tour from plant staff. The day before, Hunt

announced tax cuts and other budget priorities ahead of a national election next year, coming as economic growth is weak in the U.K. and still-high inflation is squeezing consumers.

The Qashqai is the U.K.'s second most popular vehicle this year, while the Juke is the seventh. Nissan also said it will make the next generation of its long-

-running Leaf electric car at the factory.

The company said in 2021 that it planned to build an electric vehicle at the factory, alongside batteries made next door by supplier AESC, owned by China's Envision. AESC already has two gigafactories in Sunderland, and Friday's announcement adds a third.

EVs are "at the heart of our plans to achieve carbon neutrality," Nissan President and CEO Makoto Uchida said in a statement. "With electric versions of our core European models on the way, we are accelerating towards a new era for Nissan, for industry and for our customers."

Nissan has set a target of electrifying its entire European passenger car lineup by 2030.

"With today's announcement, we are making that vision happen," Uchida said at the plant, which temporarily stopped production for the ceremony.

The future of Nissan's Sunder-


land had been in question before and after Britain's 2016 vote to leave the European Union. Brexit opponents said leaving the bloc without a trade deal would damage Britain's economy because companies like Nissan would face tariffs on exports to the EU.

The auto industry is bracing for 10% post-Brexit trade tariffs taking effect in January. They threaten to raise the cost of new EVs by punishing manufacturers in their respective markets for not sourcing enough of their components from either the EU or Britain.

Many EV makers will struggle to meet the requirement because Europe lags behind Asia in battery production. Nissan, however, is the only carmaker in the U.K. with a dedicated battery plant nearby.

Nissan joins other automakers making the transition to EV production in the U.K., even as Sunak pushed back a deadline to end the sale of new gas and diesel cars by five years, to 2035. MDT/AP

AD



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## Ceremony for the Conferment of Honorary and Higher Degrees 2023

Date : 2 December 2023 (Saturday)      Time : 4:00pm      Venue : University Hall (N2) of the University of Macau

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The University of Macau will confer honorary doctorates on Prof Cai Fang, Prof Leong Kam Weng, Prof Ching-Ping Wong, Prof Franco Maloberti, and Prof William Shiyuan Wang, in recognition of their outstanding achievements.

Doctor of Social Sciences  
*honoris causa*  
Prof Cai Fang



Prof Cai is a member of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a chief expert of the China Top Think Tank, a member of the Monetary Policy Commission of

the People's Bank of China, a member of the Academic Committee of the Chinese Economists 50 Forum, and the chairman of the Academic Committee of the China Finance 40 Forum. He was recognised as one of the '100 economists who influenced the economic development of China in the past 60 years'.

Doctor of Science  
*honoris causa*  
Prof Leong Kam Weng



Prof Leong is a member of the US National Academy of Engineering, a fellow of the US National Academy of Inventors, and a member of the US National

Academy of Medicine. He is currently the Samuel Y. Sheng Professor of Biomedical Engineering and a professor in the Department of Biomedical Engineering and Systems Biology at Columbia University in the US. He has published more than 450 papers in different journals.

Doctor of Science  
*honoris causa*  
Prof Ching-Ping Wong



Prof Wong is a world-renowned scholar in electronic engineering and is known as the Father of Modern Semiconductor Packaging, second only to

Nobel laureate Sir Charles Kuen Kao. He is currently Regents' Professor and the Charles Smithgall Institute Endowed Chair in the School of Materials Science and Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology in the US. He has published over 1,000 technical papers.

Doctor of Science  
*honoris causa*  
Prof Franco Maloberti



Prof Maloberti serves on the Board of Directors of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) and is the Division I Director of

IEEE. He has published more than 620 papers and 10 books and holds 41 patents. He has worked with UM for a long time and was awarded an honorary professorship by UM.

Doctor of Humanities  
*honoris causa*  
Prof William Shiyuan Wang



Prof Wang is a world-renowned linguist and an academician of the Academia Sinica in Taiwan. He founded *Journal of Chinese Linguistics*, which is regarded as the most influential

academic journal in linguistics. He is also the founding president of the International Association of Chinese Linguistics. Prof Wang has received numerous academic honours and titles, including Lifetime Achievement Award in Anthropology from Shanghai Society of Anthropology.

DIPLOMACY

# Top diplomats of South Korea, Japan and China meet to restart trilateral summit, revive cooperation

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

**T**HE top diplomats from South Korea, Japan and China met yesterday to discuss when to resume their leaders' trilateral summit after a four-year hiatus and how to strengthen cooperation among the three Northeast Asian neighbors.

Closely linked economically and culturally with one another, the three countries together account for about 25% of the global gross domestic product. But efforts to boost trilateral cooperation have often hit a snag because of a mix of issues including historical disputes stemming from Japan's wartime aggression and the strategic competition between China and the United States.

"Korea, Japan and China have the potential for massive cooperation. Our three countries are neighbors that can't be separated from one another," South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin said at the start of the meeting in Busan, South Korea. "I hope we can strive together to hold the South Korea-Japan-China summit, which is at the apex of three-way cooperation, at an early date."

Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said they would also push to revive three-way cooperation. Park said he hoped Sunday's meeting would also discuss ways of collaboration in the face of North Korea's evolving nuclear



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, right, South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin, center, and Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa pose for a photo prior to the trilateral foreign ministers' meeting in Busan, South Korea, yesterday

threats, as well as trade, climate change and personnel exchange between the three countries.

In September, senior officials of the three nations agreed to restart the trilateral summit "at the earliest convenient time."

Since they held their first stand-alone, trilateral summit in 2008, the leaders of the three countries had been supposed to meet annually. But their summit has faced on-again, off-again suspensions and remains stalled since 2019.

Their relationships are intertwined with a slew of complicated, touchy issues.

South Korea and Japan are key U.S. military allies, hosting a total of 80,000 American troops on their territories. Their recent push to beef up a trilateral security coo-

peration with the United States has angered China, which is sensitive to any moves it perceives as seeking to contain its rise to dominance in Asia.

But some observers say that the fact that Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Joe Biden struck a conciliatory tone in their first face-to-face meeting in a year earlier this month would provide Seoul, Tokyo and Beijing with diplomatic rooms to maneuver to find ways to revive three-way cooperation.

The three ministers held bilateral talks on the sidelines.

After her meeting with Wang on Saturday, Kamikawa said she renewed Japan's demand that China remove its ban on seafood imports from Japan in respon-

se to Tokyo's discharge of treated radioactive wastewater from its tsunami-hit nuclear power plant. Wang, for his part, said China opposed Japan's "irresponsible action" of releasing the wastewater and called for an independent monitoring mechanism of the process, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

Ties between South Korea and Japan deteriorated severely in past years due to issues originating from Japan's 1910-45 colonization of the Korean Peninsula. But their relations have warmed significantly in recent months as the two countries took a series of major steps to move beyond history wrangling and boost bilateral cooperation in the face of North Korea's advancing nuclear pro-

gram and other shared challenges.

In a reminder of their difficult relations, however, a Seoul court earlier this week ordered Japan to financially compensate Koreans forced into sexual slavery by Japanese troops during the colonial period.

During her meeting with Park yesterday, Kamikawa called the court verdict "extremely regrettable" and urged South Korea to take appropriate steps to remedy the breaches of international law, according to Japan's consulate-general in Busan. South Korea's Foreign Ministry said the two ministers discussed the court ruling as well as ways to work together to reinvigorate three-way cooperation with China. The ministry also said that both strongly condemned the North's spy satellite launch last week.

Meeting Wang bilaterally, Park asked for China to play a constructive role in persuading North Korea to halt provocations and take steps toward denuclearization, according to South Korea's Foreign Ministry.

Wang described China as "a stabilizing force" in the region that has "always played and will continue to play a constructive role in easing the situation on the peninsula," according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry. It said Wang called for stronger trade and economic ties between the two countries and criticized the "tendency to politicize economic issues."

North Korea's growing arsenal of nuclear-capable missiles poses a major security threat to South Korea and Japan. But China, North Korea's last major ally and biggest source of aid, is suspected of avoiding fully enforcing United Nations sanctions on North Korea and shipping covert assistance to the North to help its impoverished neighbor stay afloat and continue to serve as a bulwark against U.S. influences on the Korean Peninsula. **MDT/AP**

HEALTH

# WHO asks China for more information about rise in illnesses and pneumonia clusters

AMEY KEATEN & MARIA CHENG, GENEVA

**C**HINESE officials say they did not detect any "unusual or novel diseases" in the country, the World Health Organization said last week, following an official request by the U.N. health agency for information about a potentially worrying spike in respiratory illnesses and clusters of

pneumonia in children.

WHO cited unspecified media reports and a global infectious disease monitoring service as reporting clusters of undiagnosed pneumonia in children in northern China and formally requested more details from China earlier last week.

Outside scientists said the situation warranted close monitoring, but were not

convinced that the recent spike in respiratory illnesses in China signaled the start of a new global outbreak.

The emergence of new flu strains or other viruses capable of triggering pandemics typically starts with undiagnosed clusters of respiratory illness. Both SARS and COVID-19 were first reported as unusual types of pneumonia.

WHO noted that autho-

rities at China's National Health Commission on Nov. 13 reported an increase in respiratory diseases, which they said was due to the lifting of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. Other countries also saw a jump in respiratory diseases such as respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, when pandemic restrictions ended.

WHO said media reports about a week later reported

clusters of undiagnosed pneumonia in children in northern China.

The U.N. agency said it held a teleconference with Chinese health officials last week, during which the data it requested were provided. Those showed an increase in hospital admissions of children due to diseases including bacterial infection, RSV, influenza and common cold viruses since

October.

"No changes in the disease presentation were reported by the Chinese health authorities," WHO said. It added that Chinese officials said the spike in patients had not overloaded the country's hospitals.

Dr. Paul Hunter, a professor of medicine at Britain's University of East Anglia, doubted the wave of infections was sparked by a new disease.

"If it was (a new disease), I would expect to see many more infections in adults," he said in a statement. "The few infections reported in adults suggest existing immunity from a prior exposure." **MDT/AP**

NEW ZEALAND

# New government promises tax cuts, more police and less bureaucracy

NICK PERRY, WELLINGTON

**N**EW Zealanders can expect tax cuts, more police on the streets and less government bureaucracy, according to the three leaders who signed an agreement last week to form a new government.

The coalition deal ended nearly six weeks of intense negotiations after New Zealand held a general election on Oct. 14.

The deal will see Christopher Luxon serve as prime minister after his conservative National Party won 38% of the vote, the largest proportion of any party.

Luxon thanked New Zealanders for their patience during the negotiations and said each party had made policy compromises to close the deal.

"Our government will rebuild the economy to ease the cost of living, and deliver tax relief to increase the prosperity of all New Zealanders," Luxon said. "Our government will restore law and order, and personal responsibility, so that Kiwis are safer in their own communities."

The leaders agreed to make cuts to the public service and train 500 more police within two years. They also agreed to change the mandate of the nation's Reserve Bank so it focuses solely on keeping inflation low, rather than its current dual mandate to keep low inflation while maintaining maximum employment.



New Zealand Prime Minister elect Christopher Luxon, centre, watches as his coalition partners, New Zealand First leader Winston Peters, left, and ACT leader David Seymour shake hands following a signing ceremony in Wellington, New Zealand, last week

The deputy prime minister role will be split between the other two leaders. It will be held for the first 18 months of the election cycle by maverick 78-year-old lawmaker Winston Peters, who leads the populist New Zealand First party, before he hands the baton for the remaining 18 months to David Seymour, leader of the libertarian ACT Party.

Peters, who has long had an acrimonious relationship with the news media, took aim at some reporters.

"Look, please don't start off this government with your antagonistic attitude," he said, grinning, in response to one reporter's question. "You've lost. You lost. Right?"

Peters, who will also be foreign minister, said he didn't foresee

any changes to New Zealand's current foreign policy on China. New Zealand depends on China to buy many of its agricultural exports but has also expressed growing concern about China's increased assertiveness in the Pacific.

Seymour, who will take on the newly created role of regulation minister, said the country had

been going in the wrong direction under the previous liberal government, with prices and crime rising, and society becoming too divided.

"We must now draw a line under that and work to ensure New Zealanders have hope that a government can, indeed, deliver better public services and return for their hard-earned taxes," Seymour said.

Under New Zealand's proportional voting system, parties typically need to form alliances in order to command a governing majority.

On the election night count, the closely aligned National and ACT parties had just enough votes to govern. But a final count, which included special votes, changed the equation and made for the tougher three-way negotiations.

Outgoing Prime Minister Chris Hipkins, who decided he wouldn't work with Peters, had already conceded to Luxon on election night.

Hipkins, who leads the liberal Labour Party, held the top job for just nine months. He took over from Jacinda Ardern, who unexpectedly stepped down in January, saying she no longer had "enough in the tank" to do the job justice.

Ardern won the previous election in a landslide, but her popularity waned as people got tired of COVID-19 restrictions and inflation threatened the economy. **MDT/AP**

CLIMATE

# Vietnam's plan for spending \$15.5 billion for its clean energy transition to be announced at COP28



ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL,  
HANOI

**A** plan for how Vietnam will spend \$15.5 billion to transition to cleaner energy has been finalized and will be announced at the COP28 climate conference, which begins in Dubai this week.

Mark George, the climate counselor for the British Embassy in Hanoi, said that after months of coordination with key Vietnamese ministries to iron out details of how the

money will be used, the final plan was finalized on Thursday.

George gave no details of the plan.

The United Kingdom is co-chair of a group of nine, rich industrialized nations that have agreed to provide the \$15.5 billion to help Vietnam end its reliance on dirty coal power and more quickly switch to renewable energy as a part of a Just Energy Transition Partnership, or JETP.

"That is a really important milestone," said

George.

George was speaking at a panel discussion hosted by the UK-Vietnam Joint Economic and Trade Committee centered around opportunities for the two nations after Britain officially joined an Asia-Pacific trade group that includes Japan and 10 other nations.

Earlier this year, Vietnam released a national energy plan that aimed to more than double the maximum power Vietnam can generate to some

150 gigawatts by 2030. It called for a drastic shift away from heavily polluting coal and pledges that no new coal-fired plants will be built after 2030. It also called for expanding use of domestic gas and imported liquefied natural gas or LNG, which will account for about 25% of total generating capacity, while hydropower, wind, solar, and other renewable sources will account for nearly 50% by 2030.

Tang The Hung, the deputy director general of Vietnam's department of Energy Efficiency and Sustainable Development, who also was at Friday's panel, said "great support" from the international community was needed to ensure Vietnam can carry out its plan. **MDT/AP**

CLIMATE

# Skyscraper-studded Dubai has flourished during regional crises. Could it benefit from hosting COP28?

JON GAMBRELL, DUBAI

**I**N a city known for its excesses, whether reaching toward the sky with the world's tallest building or hard partying at its beach resorts and bars, Dubai has pulled off another record-breaking feat in the rolling dunes of its desert outskirts.

Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park, named for the ruling sheikh of Dubai, stretches across some 122 square kilometers (47 square miles) and represents a pledge of billions of dollars by this city-state to reach its goal of becoming carbon-neutral by 2050. It's a solar-paneled gamble in a city where casinos have yet to arrive — though it always seems to be betting big no matter the risk.

Rising rapidly from a creek-bound pearling village to a city associated with international glamor, Dubai has a long history of finding economic success amid the war-ravaged woes of the wider Middle East. Its ruling family likely views the upcoming United Nations COP28 climate talks as another such opportunity, though it carries the significant peril of becoming synonymous with a collapse in negotiations on limiting greenhouse emissions, or being overshadowed by the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

There's a risk of reputational damage to the UAE if they fail to make any traction in the talks, particularly as they are a major oil producer, said Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, a research fellow at Rice University's Baker Institute who has long studied the region.

"There is also a risk that media and civil society coverage will focus critically on issues such as the UAE's planned expansion of oil production capacity and depict the UAE as part of the problem rather than the solution in terms of climate politics."

In response to questions from The Associated Press about criticism over its foreign policy and other issues, the Emirati government insisted



that "the UAE is deeply committed to human rights and building upon its steady progress in this field."

"As the host of COP28, the UAE will welcome constructive dialogue and continue to work with international partners and stakeholders to deliver impactful results," the statement said. "Climate change is a global problem that demands a collective effort, and this significant, momentous event will be a conference of action."

Given the futuristic skyline of downtown Dubai — and how it gleams at night as one side of the Burj Khalifa lights up with a massive 770-meter (2,525-foot) LED display — it can be easy to forget that the city only received its first electrical generator in 1952. Before that, only candles and kerosene lamps lit the night along its eponymous Dubai Creek where the village first grew.

In recent years, Dubai has started to focus on renewable energy — despite a moment where it appeared it would launch a coal-fired power plant before switching it to be fueled by natural gas as its hosting of COP28 loomed.

The jewel of Dubai's clean energy efforts is the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park, some 50 kilometers (30 miles) southeast of the city's downtown. There, solar

panels stretch far into the distance, taking in the rays in a country that sees, on average, 10 hours of sunlight some 350 sunny days a year.

By 2030, the city hopes to get 5 gigawatts of electricity from the plant, which could power some 1.3 million homes based on United States averages. These days, peak demand in the city-state is nearly 10 gigawatts, according to the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority, its sole utility provider.

Overall, the Emirates says it plans to be carbon neutral by 2050. While not specifically outlining its plans to achieve the goal, projects like the solar park and Abu Dhabi's Barakah nuclear power plant, the first on the Arabian Peninsula, aim to make generating electricity a "green" endeavor.

On top of all that, while the UAE pledges to zero out its own emissions, it's also planning to ramp up oil production. A member of OPEC, the UAE produces some 4 million barrels of crude oil a day. In the coming years, it aims to produce 5 million barrels a day — fuel that will be exported, used by other countries and contribute to climate change.

Those plans have sparked criticism by activists ahead of COP28, with most aimed particularly at the upcoming talks'

president-designate, the oil company chief Sultan al-Jaber.

Al-Jaber, who also has led billions of dollars in Emirati investments in renewable energy, has dismissed criticism from those who "just go on the attack without knowing anything, without knowing who we are."

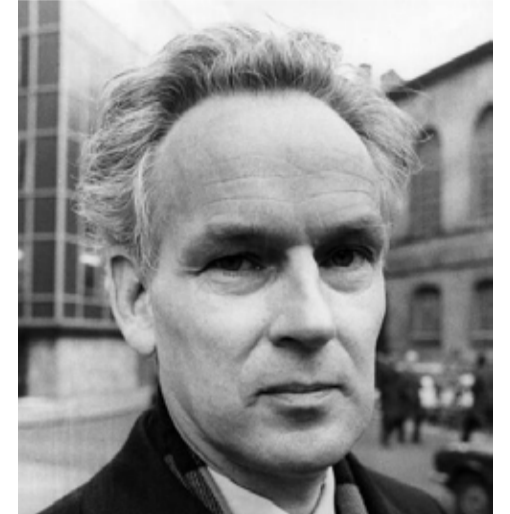
Dubai's \$7-billion Expo City, built for the 2020 world fair that was delayed a year by the coronavirus pandemic, will host the upcoming climate talks. But its selection also raises questions about Dubai's reliance on low-paid foreign workers in its construction boom.

The Expo site work saw at least three workers killed and some 200,000 laborers exposed to high heat and potentially exploitative labor practices ahead of the world's fair. Those labor abuses continue at Expo City, renewable energy projects and elsewhere in the Emirates, according to Equidem, a labor advocacy group.

While the Expo didn't draw all the world's biggest names, the climate conference already has King Charles and Pope Francis confirming they'll attend, along with other world leaders. That makes it an opportunity for Dubai, as well as a risk given the wider regional tensions over the Israel-Hamas war. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1975 TV PRESENTER ROSS McWHIRTER SHOT DEAD



Guinness Book of Records co-founder and editor Ross McWhirter has been shot dead outside his North London home.

Mr McWhirter was hit at close range in the head and chest at 1845 GMT. He was taken to a local hospital, but died soon after being admitted.

The well-known author and BBC Record Breakers presenter recently offered a reward of £50,000 for information leading to the arrest of IRA bombers.

Scotland Yard said no group had yet claimed to be behind the attack.

The two gunmen are thought to have waited in the garden of the couple's Enfield house for an hour while Mr McWhirter was in the house preparing to go out to the theatre.

Shots

When Rosemary McWhirter arrived home, she got out of her blue Ford Granada and was approached by two men holding pistols.

She ran into the house as her husband came to the front door and seconds later heard two shots.

The killers then used her car to escape. Police later found the car abandoned a few miles away in Tottenham.

Outspoken critic of the IRA

Mrs McWhirter and her two sons, Iain and James, were taken to a secret address soon after the murder, where they are being guarded around the clock.

Mr McWhirter edited the Guinness Book of Records with his twin brother, Norris, and also worked closely with Guinness Director David Hoy, who said the outspoken critic of the IRA was aware he could be in danger.

"He took normal precautions recommended by the police and always looked under his Mercedes — he also varied his routes home," he said.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The IRA gang who killed Ross McWhirter and carried out dozens of other attacks in London throughout 1975 was apprehended two weeks later.

Martin O'Connell, Edward Butler, Harry Duggan and Hugh Doherty exchanged shots with police in central London on 6 December and escaped to a flat in Balcombe Street, taking two hostages.

The four men were arrested after a six-day siege, charged with 10 murders and 20 bombings and jailed for life in 1977.

They were freed in April 1999 under the terms of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement — the multi-party peace deal for Northern Ireland.

Norris McWhirter continued to edit the Guinness Book of Records until 1985 and presented BBC's Record Breakers until 1994. He died in April 2004.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**



**ARIES**

**Mar. 21-Apr. 19**

Deception is probable if you don't use discrimination. Your willingness to help others can and will lead to fatigue if you don't learn to say no.



**TAURUS**

**Apr. 20-May. 20**

Have some fun, but draw the line if someone tries to fast talk their way into your heart. Friends and relatives may not understand your needs.



**GEMINI**

**May. 21-Jun. 21**

Opportunities to make advancements through good business sense are apparent. You will feel better about yourself and you may also meet potential lovers.



**CANCER**

**Jun. 22-Jul. 22**

You can help sort out problems that friends are facing. You should be doing something special with children. Don't bother retaliating, just walk away.



**LEO**

**Jul. 23-Aug. 22**

You should be making plans to spend some time with the ones you love. You can make some money if you get involved in a conservative financial prospect that is presented to you.



**VIRGO**

**Aug. 23-Sep. 22**

Don't blow situations out of proportion. Be tolerant, but don't let any one take you for granted. You must be careful not to trust just anyone.



**LIBRA**

**Sep. 23-Oct. 22**

Try not to get upset or angry without having all the facts. Disharmony in your relationship may cause minor ailments. You'll find it easy to charm members of the opposite sex today.



**SCORPIO**

**Oct. 23-Nov. 21**

This could be a serious relationship. You can develop your creative talents if you take the time to practice your art. You will be in the mood to socialize.



**SAGITTARIUS**

**Nov. 22-Dec. 21**

Don't try to get even without having all the facts. You can expect to have a problem with your lover. Don't put off the things that they have asked you to do.



**CAPRICORN**

**Dec. 22-Jan. 19**

Be diplomatic when dealing with in-law. Not the best day for business trips. Don't believe everything you hear. Your lack of interest in your partner is a problem.



**AQUARIUS**

**Jan. 20-Feb. 18**

Look into the cost factor, but don't try to get backing yet. Cutbacks at work will be a cause for worry. You may meet that special person if you attend fundraising functions.



**PISCES**

**Feb. 19-Mar. 20**

Realize that you don't have to do everything yourself. You may have the opportunity to get involved in some interesting conversations.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

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

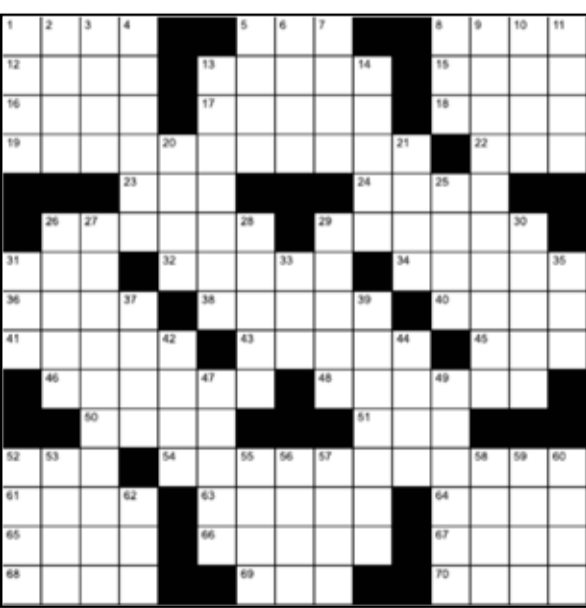
**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
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
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-7	-7	snow
Frankfurt	5	9	cloudy
Paris	10	13	rain
London	6	13	overcast
New York	6	13	fine

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Will-\_\_\_-isp; 5- Occupational suffix; 8- Ella specialty; 12- Some digits; 13- In shape; 15- Reactor part; 16- \_\_\_ first you don't...; 17- Say; 18- Troubles; 19- Large self-service retail store; 22- Used car locale; 23- Backward tidal movement; 24- Top-notch; 26- Figure of speech with "like" or "as"; 29- Kiss; 31- RR stop; 32- Simmons rival; 34- Juice of the rubber tree; 36- Riga resident; 38- Judges; 40- Employ; 41- Shake like \_\_\_; 43- Frog sound; 45- Takes too much; 46- Choose by divine election; 48- Foreigners; 50- Canadian gas brand; 51- Sawbuck; 52- It's cold; 54- Imaginable; 61- Make-up artist?; 63- Eliot's Marner; 64- Heath; 65- Bluesy James; 66- Methuselah's father; 67- Responsibility; 68- Exploit; 69- Biblical verb ending; 70- Network of nerves;

DOWN 1- Elevator man; 2- Beancurd; 3- Pile; 4- Prize; 5- Letter after theta; 6- \_\_\_acte (intermission); 7- Stink; 8- School subj.; 9- Accumulated objects; 10- Woody's boy; 11- Student's hurdle; 13- Fell; 14- Night vision?; 20- Diamond stats; 21- Kit item; 25- Flood survivor; 26- Stone marker; 27- Soften; 28- Upright; 29- Mead subject; 30- Range rovers; 31- Hearst kidnap grp.; 33- Thrice, in prescriptions; 35- Crosses (out); 37- New Mexico art colony; 39- Having some sodium; 42- Money-related; Abbr.; 44- Capital of the Ukraine; 47- Snare; 49- Captivate; 52- Ran, as colors; 53- Ceremony; 55- Baseball team; 56- Thicken; 57- A pop; 58- Osteologist's concern; 59- Boor; 60- Gaelic language of Ireland or Scotland; 62- Far out!;



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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1,663 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD13,000/mth



VA FAT (Taipa Village)  
2 bed 1 bath  
830 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD3,980,000



Coloane Hellene Garden  
3 bed 2 bath 1 car park  
1,663 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD11,800/mth



Supreme Flower City (Taipa)  
4 bed 3 bath 1 car park  
2,060 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD22,000/mth



Manhattan (Taipa)  
3 bed 2 bath  
1,750 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD13,000,000



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**GOLF**

# Min Woo Lee serves up a victory at the Australian PGA Championship

**M**IN Woo Lee started celebrating his first Australian PGA Championship title on the next-to-last hole yesterday when he put on a chef's hat and did a synchronized clap along with the boisterous crowd before jogging off to the 18th.

He narrowly missed par at the last but still closed with a 3-under 68 to finish 20 under for the tournament and a three-shot win over Japan's Riyuka Hoshino, who also closed with 68.

Lee, who is ranked No. 45 and comes from Western Australia, has made "let him cook" his popular catch phrase.

And so, with a four-shot lead going into the final hole, he put on a chef's hat and clapped his hands above his head in time with the crowd at the 17th, the so-called Party Hole at Royal Queensland Golf Club.

He also brought the crowd alive with a long chip for an eagle at the par-5 ninth.

"The best atmosphere shot



Australia's Min Woo Lee reacts on the 17th hole during the final round of the Australian PGA Championship in Brisbane, yesterday

I've ever hit," Lee said. "That one, at that point, it was getting close.

"I was in a pretty average position. To chip that in — it was amazing. It's one of the best shots

I've probably hit."

Lee had a wire-to-wire win in the Asian Tour's Macau Open

last month for his first victory since 2021, and added this one quickly on home soil. It was his fourth career title.

Marc Leishman made seven birdies in a closing 64 to move into third place at 16 under, one ahead of Curtis Luck (69). Joaquin Niemann of Chile was fourth at 13 under, his final round 67 highlighted by an ace at the 160-meter, par-3 fourth.

Adam Scott slipped back to sixth place at 12 under with a 70 on Sunday after threatening Lee's lead in the second and third rounds.

The Australian PGA, co-sanctioned by the Australasian Tour and DP World Tour, gave Lee a third title on the European circuit.

"I've always thought I could win, but it took a while to get over the hump," he said. "Two wins in the last month or so .... really proud of it."

He was targeting a victory on the European tour in 2023 and while he didn't achieve it in the season that ended last week, he still made it within the calendar year that also included a tie for 5th at the U.S. Open.

Lee will play next week at the Australian Open that has a joint tournament format to feature men's and women's fields. His sister, two-time major winner Minjee Lee, will also be playing in Sydney. **MDT/AP**

AD



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TRILATERAL MEETING OFFERS RAY OF HOPE THAT EAST ASIA CAN FIND FIRMER FOOTING

The China-Japan-ROK Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Busan, the Republic of Korea, on Sunday is the first since 2019.

Relations between China and its two East Asian neighbors had become increasingly fraught in the intervening years, as the US administration has worked hard to draw its two allies into its "Indo-Pacific" strategy at the expense of their ties with China.

If the three sides can take advantage of the meeting to pave the way for an anticipated trilateral meeting of their heads of state, to be arranged at the "earliest convenient time", the Busan meeting might become an overture to a much-needed thawing of relations between China and its two neighbors.

It is against the backdrop of easing tensions between Beijing and Washington that the trilateral foreign ministers' meeting is being staged. The pace with which Tokyo and Seoul are trying to repair relations with Beijing has apparently accelerated after the meeting between the leaders of China and the United States in San Francisco earlier this month, in which the two sides reached some consensus to strengthen exchanges and responsibly manage the Sino-US relations and avoid decoupling and confrontation.

Subsequently, the leaders of Japan and China held their first meeting in a year on the sidelines of the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, which was held alongside the summit. ROK President Yoon Suk-yeol also exchanged warm greetings with his Chinese counterpart face-to-face during the multilateral gathering.

And the generally friendly and constructive tones of the readouts of the ROK-China and Japan-China bilateral foreign minister's meetings arranged on Saturday and Sunday before their trilateral meeting show their readiness to focus on economic and trade cooperation, as well as their common recognition of the difficulties that they face in resolving their divergences on some issues, not least pro-US diplomacy of Tokyo and Seoul, which touches on China's core interests.

As long as Japan and the ROK surrender their strategic autonomy to the US, the extent to which they can mend ties with Beijing will depend on how much space Washington grants them to do so.

Their security cooperation with the US is set by their trilateral and respective bilateral agreements, through which the US holds the reins on how they address regional hotspot issues such as the maritime tensions in the East and South China seas and even the Taiwan question, a grave interference in China's internal affairs.

Even the economic and trade cooperation between China and the two countries, where they have broad common interests, is now restricted by the economic, trade and technology pacts introduced by the US. For instance, both the ROK and Japan have been pressured to be part of the "chip alliance" Washington has founded to try and prevent China having access to advanced chips and related equipment.

It is likely that the relations between China and the two US allies will take on a dual-track model with Washington pulling the strings it has affixed to Seoul and Tokyo.

But despite this, if the leaders of the three East Asian countries can have their first trilateral meeting since 2019, it would undoubtedly provide a boost for the regional stability as well as bolster confidence in the economic prospects of the global economy.

ONE OF WORLD'S LARGEST ICEBERGS DRIFTING BEYOND ANTARCTIC WATERS AFTER IT WAS GROUNDDED FOR 3 DECADES

THE BUZZ

One of the world's largest icebergs is drifting beyond Antarctic waters, after being grounded for more than three decades, according to the British Antarctic Survey.

The iceberg, known as A23a, split from the Antarctic's Filchner Ice Shelf in 1986. But it became stuck to the ocean floor and had remained for many years in the Weddell Sea.

The iceberg is about three times the size of New York City and more than twice the size of Greater London, measuring around 4,000

square kilometers.

Andrew Fleming, a remote sensing expert from the British Antarctic Survey, told the BBC last week that the iceberg has been drifting for the past year and now appears to be picking up speed and moving past the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, helped by wind and ocean currents.

"It was grounded since 1986, but eventually it was going to decrease (in size) sufficiently was to lose grip and start moving," Fleming told the BBC.



Israa Jaabis, center, a Palestinian prisoner released by Israel, is hugged by relatives as she arrives home in the east Jerusalem neighborhood of Jabel Mukaber, yesterday

ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

GAZA TRUCE IS BACK ON TRACK AFTER HOURS LONG DELAY IN HOSTAGE-FOR-PRISONER SWAP

WAFAA SHURFA & SAMY MAGDY, GAZA STRIP

The tense cease-fire between Israel and Hamas appeared to be back on track yesterday after the release of a second group of militant-held hostages and Palestinians from Israeli prisons, but the swap followed an hours-long delay that underscored the truce's fragility.

In a separate development, Hamas announced yesterday that one of its top commanders had been killed, without saying when or how.

The exchange was delayed yesterday (Macau time) after Hamas accused Israel of violating the agreement, which has brought the first significant pause in seven weeks of war marked by the deadliest Israeli-Palestinian violence in decades, vast destruction and displacement across the Gaza Strip, and a hostage crisis that has shaken Israel.

Qatar and Egypt, which mediate with Hamas, announced late Saturday that the obstacles to the exchange had been overcome. The militants released 17 hostages, including 13 Israelis, while Israel freed 39 Palestinian prisoners.

Thousands of people gathered in central Tel Aviv late Saturday to call for the release of all the estimated 240

people captured by Hamas in its Oct. 7 rampage across southern Israel, which ignited the war. They accused Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of not doing enough to bring them back.

Pressure from the hostages' families has sharpened the dilemma facing the country's leaders, who seek to eliminate Hamas as a military and governing power while returning all the captives.

The war has already claimed the lives of more than 1,200 Israelis, mostly civilians killed by Hamas in the initial attack. More than 13,300 Palestinians have been killed, roughly two thirds of them women and minors, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza.

The four-day cease-fire, which began Friday, was brokered by Qatar, Egypt and the United States. Hamas is to release at least 50 Israeli hostages, and Israel 150 Palestinian prisoners. All are women and minors.

Israel has said the truce can be extended by an extra day for every additional 10 hostages freed, but has vowed to quickly resume its offensive once it ends. Israel said early Sunday that it had received a new list of hostages slated to be released later in the day, in the third of four scheduled swaps.

HAMAS COMMANDER KILLED

Hamas announced the death of Ahmed al-Ghandour, without providing further details. He was in charge of northern Gaza and a member of Hamas' top military council, and is the highest-ranking militant known to have been killed in the fighting.

Al-Ghandour, believed to have been around 56 years old, had survived at least three Israeli attempts on his life, and helped plan a cross-border attack in 2006 in which Palestinian militants captured an Israeli soldier, according to the Counter Extremism Project, an advocacy group based in Washington.

Hamas said he was killed along with three other senior militants, including Ayman Siam, who Israel says was in charge of Hamas' rocket-firing unit. The Israeli military had mentioned both men in a Nov. 16 statement, saying it had targeted an underground complex where Hamas leaders were hiding and accusing the group of concealing their deaths.

The Israeli military claims to have killed thousands of militants, without providing evidence, including several mid-ranking commanders it has identified by name. MDT/AP



Israel A container ship owned by an Israeli billionaire came under attack by a suspected Iranian drone in the Indian Ocean as Israel wages war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip, an American defense official said Saturday. The attack Friday on the CMA CGM Symi comes as global shipping increasingly finds itself targeted in the weeklong war that threatens to become a wider regional conflict — even as a truce has halted fighting and Hamas exchanges hostages for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

UK Tens of thousands of people turned out on central London's streets Saturday for a pro-Palestinian march calling for a permanent cease-fire in Gaza. Police said that while the majority of people protested peacefully, 18 people were arrested including at least five people who were detained on suspicion of inciting racial hatred. The National March for Palestine in central London was the latest in several huge protests staged in the British capital and many European cities every weekend since the Israel-Hamas war began last month.



Italy Tens of thousands took to the streets of main cities on Saturday to mark International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, just as an Italian man suspected of killing his ex-girlfriend was extradited from Germany. The slaying of 22-year-old university student Giulia Cecchetti, allegedly at the hands of her former boyfriend, sparked outrage across Italy, where on average one woman is killed every three days.

Ecuador Less than 48 hours into his term, Ecuador President Daniel Noboa last week repealed controversial guidelines established by the country's left a decade ago that eliminated penalties for people found carrying illegal drugs under certain amounts. Noboa's decision fulfilled a campaign promise to fight drug trafficking. Consequences of the illegal trade have kept Ecuadorians on edge.