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# Times

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**FIVB HAS CONFIRMED MACAU WILL BE PART OF NEXT YEAR'S WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL NATIONS LEAGUE WORLD TOUR, TO BE HELD FROM MAY 28 TO JUNE 2**

**HEALTH: GOV'T TO EMPLOY TWO OUT OF 12 DOCTORS FROM PORTUGAL**

**HONG KONG COUNCIL ELECTIONS SHOW LOW TURNOUT - PROJECTIONS**



AP PHOTO



**South Korea** The national security advisers of the United States, South Korea and Japan on Saturday called for a stronger international push to suppress North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and missiles, its cybertheft activities and alleged arms transfers to Russia. The meeting in Seoul came as tensions on the Korean Peninsula are at their highest in years, with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un accelerating the expansion of his nuclear and missile program and flaunting an escalatory nuclear doctrine that authorizes the preemptive use of nuclear weapons.

AP PHOTO



**Egyptians** began voting yesterday in a presidential election in which President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi faces no serious challenger and is certain to win another term, keeping him in power until 2030. The election has been overshadowed by the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. Almost all Egyptians' attention has been on the war on their country's eastern borders and the suffering of Palestinian civilians in the coastal enclave.

AP PHOTO



**Iraq** A rocket attack on the sprawling U.S. Embassy in Baghdad caused minor damage but no casualties last week, U.S. and Iraqi officials said. The attack was the first on the embassy located in the heavily fortified Green Zone of Iraq's capital to be confirmed since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war on Oct. 7, triggered by the deadly attack on southern Israel by Palestinian militants from Gaza.

More on backpage

# FOLLOW THE CROWD

Amid its recovery, Macau is set to see 28 million travelers in 2023, while gov't will continue to explore alternative tourist sources: Lei Wai Nong



**TRANSPORT**  
**CCAC RECEIVES COMPLAINTS ON TAXI BIDDING PROCEDURES**



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**GAMING**  
**SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN EMPLOYEES FACING PRESSURE**

P3



TOURISM

# ECONOMY SECRETARY CONFIDENT IN TOURIST ARRIVALS REACHING 28 MILLION

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, is confident Macau will see 28 million tourists by year-end, given there have been over 25 million tourists in the first 11 months of the year.

The official announced the forecast yesterday on the sidelines of a charity event.

He said that the proportion of non-Greater China visitors to Macau had grown from 10% in January to 70% in October, suggesting that strategies employed by the government had been effective.

The official believes the numbers show the city's recovery is going well, with an increase in

tourist expenditure also observed. He expressed hopes for a continuation of this upwards trajectory in the upcoming year.

The official said promoting Macau to the Northeast Asian and Southeast Asian markets is the major objective of next year, aiming to further explore these potential source markets.

In his recent Policy Address, he announced that a total sum of MOP235 million has been reserved to attract international visitors.

The allocation of money is subject to approval by the parliament, although there has been no instance of the budget failing to pass in the past.

When previously questioned by the Times about the de-

tails of how the allocated funds will be spent, Lei underscored the importance of non-Greater China source markets in the government's tourism strategy. He further revealed that attracting family visitors will also be a core part of the city's target.

He also briefly mentioned that this year's gross gambling revenue (GGR) should be better than expected. In the first 11 months, the city made MOP164.4 billion in GGR.

Lei added that this year, as of Saturday, the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) had matched 12,000 jobseekers with employers. In the future, the bureau will concentrate on vocational training, as the subsidized training scheme has ended.



## ASSOCIATION DATA SHOWS SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN GAMING EMPLOYEES FACING PRESSURE

**T**HERE has been a significant increase in gaming employees seeking assistance due to work pressures, said lawmaker Leong Sun Iok.

Data from the Macau Gaming Industry Employees Home indicates that the high employee turnover rate is the key factor, as cited in a TDM report.

The current number of employees in gaming operations is about 60,000, about 20,000 fewer than the over 80,000 employed before the pandemic.

However, with the gradual recovery of tourism and the shift of business to the mass market, the demand for services is greater.

Therefore, the lawmaker, who is also the union president, has called on gaming companies to hire more employees and, if conditions permit, re-hire employees over 60 years old to bolster the existing workforce.

The casino industry had



expected staff shortages once the economy returned to normal, and operators should have a clear plan for reemploying staff.

In mid-2020, integrated resorts did not renew the contracts of most non-resident workers, particularly those in the service industry, as casinos bled cash due to strict Covid-19 restrictions.

The number of non-resident workers in Macau declined to 154,912 in 2022, the lowest since 2013.

Data from the DSAL in late 2022 noted that non-resident workers employed by the six gaming operators declined by 47.5% between January 2020 and October 2022.

40,000 non-resident workers left Macau either because of the lack of jobs or because of the government's decision not to renew the workers' permits to prioritize local residents' access to jobs during times of high unemployment. LV

SPORTS

## VNL 2024 CONFIRMS MACAU ROUND IN MAY-JUNE NEXT YEAR

RENATO MARQUES

**V**OLLEYBALL'S International governing body, FIVB, has confirmed Macau will be part of next year's Women's Volleyball Nations League (VNL) world tour.

The FIVB's final layout and VNL 2024 calendar confirms Macau will be part of Week 2 from May 28 to June 2 next year.

The Macau tournament now has a new format with rounds played over six consecutive days.

Eight national teams will participate in the Macau round, in a venue yet to be announced. They are China, the Dominican Republic, Italy, the Netherlands, Brazil, Thailand, Japan and France.

Sources familiar with the event's organization indicated the matches are likely to take place in the newly inaugurated Galaxy Arena, at the Galaxy International Convention Center in Co-



tai. This move would mark the conclusion of the use of the old Macau Forum revenue, located beside the Sports Bureau (ID) headquarters, for international events of this nature.

The Galaxy Arena venue, which seats 16,000, is the largest venue of its kind in Macau. Its use will enable more spectators to watch the games, providing more comfortable amenities and incorporating all the modern features to be expected from such a venue.

The VNL was last played in Macau in 2019, with the 2021 event canceled because of Macau's Covid-19

border restrictions. Teams will use this year's VNL event not just as a regular competition but also as preparation for the Paris 2024 Olympics, which start a few weeks after the VNL finals in late June.

In line with its past tradition, Galaxy Entertainment Group will sponsor the Macau VNL 2024 round.

The ID has said the organizing entities are currently preparing the event with further information on the match schedules of each day as well as ticket sales to be disclosed at a later stage via the event's official website (<http://macaovnl.com/>).

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# CCAC receives complaints on taxi bidding procedures

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE Commissioner Against Corruption, Chan Tsz King, yesterday disclosed that a lawmaker had complained of perceived injustice in the recent taxi license bidding procedures.

In the policy question session for Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo do Rosário, lawmaker Ron Lam asked if the official would request an investigation from the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC).

However, Chan confirmed no stakeholders – tender bidders in particular – had filed complaints to the commission thus far.

The anti-graft official said details must be reviewed to determine if an investigation will be instigated. He cited the commission's governing law that stipulates that in addition to seeking assistance from the CCAC, bidders also have the right to express objections or seek judicial appeal. Seeking the latter two courses of action will not affect the limitation period for CCAC investigations.

As such, the commissioner believes objections and judicial appeals should be



prioritized above filing a complaint with the CCAC.

On the same matter, director of Transport Kelvin Lam said the tender opening and bidding processes were transparent and in compliance with the law. As bidders and/or their legal representatives were present at the announcement of the bid winner, he had no additional information to disclose.

He said his bureau conducts many tenders each year, and that the procedures were in compliance with the applicable laws and regulations. An appeal mechanism

is available to guarantee the bidders' rights.

The debate arose after half the bidders were disqualified from the tender, with some being disqualified at a later stage. In response, Lam suggested anybody with evidence suggestive of corruption should file complaints with his bureau or other investigative or supervisory bodies.

The Transport Bureau (DSAT) has accepted 21 of 40 bids in the public tender for the allocation of regular taxi licenses.

The successful bids aim to secure 10 general taxi licen-

ses with eight-year terms.

According to Law 3/2019 and Administrative Regulation 34/2023, this tender will grant 10 general licenses to operate taxis, with each contracting company entitled to request permits for a maximum of 50 taxis per license.

On another case, the CCAC's Chan said work is underway on alleged administrative flaws related to the now-scrapped Kun Iam statue in Hac-Sa Reservoir Park, following complaints. However, he declined to comment as investigations are continuing.

and pneumonia cases, overall case numbers are low. She believes that the situation would still be manageable even if flu cases were to increase.

She said most jurisdictions employ a preventive strategy against the flu, and that the city uses data monitoring to supplement this. The SSM management will be notified once the number of patients or available beds exceed a critical threshold, and more clinicians will be deployed to improve services.

The official expressed her confidence in Macau's robust measures against flu, mycoplasma pneumoniae and Covid-19 infections. She also called on fever or cold patients to avoid public venues or locations, in addition to wearing masks.

She said requirements to conduct rapid viral tests on entrants were unnecessary, although some mainland cities are reimplementing the requirement.

## HEALTH

# GOV'T TO EMPLOY TWO DOCTORS FROM PORTUGAL

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE local SAR government will hire only two of 12 Portuguese doctors, according to Portuguese news agency Lusa.

The Health Bureau (SSM) has said the two specialist doctors will be employed in Internal Medicine.

Initially, SSM director Alvis Lo said eight of 12 doctors met the requirements to join the Islands District Medical Complex in Cotai.

This comes after Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao Ieong's Portugal visit in May, where one of the main agenda topics was the recruitment of physicians from Portugal to work at Macau's public hospital.

Applications opened shortly after Ao Ieong's visit, and an advertisement for the different posts was published on the Portuguese Medical Association (Ordem dos Médicos) website.

The SSM said that, of the eight applications, four were submitted by holders of a Macau resident identity card (BIR). As such, they would need to "obtain accreditation before fulfilling the legal requirements for employment."

"As for the remaining four, who hold Portuguese passports, after the curricular assessment of the Centro Hospitalar Conde de São Januário, the proposal is to hire two specialist Internal Medicine doctors, with the other two still requiring additional information and analysis," SSM told Lusa.

The Macau government last launched a recruitment drive for physicians from Portugal in 2017.

In September, the government announced that 200 doctors, nurses, administrative staff and other personnel will be recruited in October, with the Peking Union Medical College Hospital sending managers and senior doctors to Macau.

The SAR government will complete the construction of the Islands Hospital this year, with a phased introduction scheduled for December. The hospital will have more than 800 beds, and more than 300 beds in the rehabilitation hospital.

Officially referred to as the Islands District Medical Complex – Macao Medical Center of Peking Union Medical College Hospital, plans for the new hospital began more than a decade ago. The decision to reclaim a lake, where the current hospital stands, was made by the former government to build a new medical facility to accommodate the growing permanent and transient population in Taipa, Coloane and Cotai.

## HEALTH

# Mainland's updated mask guidelines similar to Macau's

ANTHONY LAM

**S**ECRETARY for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao Ieong said yesterday that there is close alignment between the mainland's updated guidelines on mask usage and Macau's existing guidelines.

Mainland authorities updated the guidelines on Saturday to require people with respiratory symptoms, as well as those in medical or care facilities or those working in medical, catering and cleaning positions at "key venues," to wear medical grade masks.

When asked if Macau will follow suit, the social official said the spirit of Macau's guidelines are aligned with those



of the mainland. She assured the public that the local Health Bureau (SSM) constantly

monitors disease data in Macau.

Despite a slight rise in flu





### TEMPERATURE TO DROP BELOW 13 DEGREES THIS WEEKEND

The Meteorological and Geophysics Bureau has warned a strong winter monsoon will arrive along the South China coast during the weekend. The northerly wind in Macau is expected to strengthen and the temperature will drop significantly. The lowest temperature will be 16 degrees Celsius on Saturday, while Sunday's minimum temperature will drop further to 13 degrees, with northerly, gusty winds blowing at level 5 to 6.

### 40TH WALK FOR A MILLION RAISES MOP18 MILLION

The 40th Walk for a Million has raised nearly MOP18 million, reaching a new record high, with about 100,000 participants both online and offline. After a three-year hiatus, the walk follows a four-kilometer circuit starting near the Kun lam Statue on Avenida Dr Sun Yat-Sen. Last year, the 39th Walk for a Million was held under Covid restrictions, with fund representatives undertaking sponsored walks around the University of Macau campus.

### ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION EXPECTS 2024 GDP TO RECOVER TO 90% PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

The Macau Economic Association believes the current global economic recovery is slow and there are still uncertainties in the external environment, adding that Macau's economic development forecast next year should be cautiously optimistic. GDP forecast value in the fourth quarter of this year is approximately MOP97 billion, an increase of 85% year-on-year, and the full-year GDP forecast value is approximately MOP350 billion yuan, an increase of 80% year-on-year. The preliminary forecast range for full-year GDP for 2024 is MOP355.8 to MOP392.9 billion yuan, which is expected to recover to between 85% to 90% of 2019 levels.

### SHENZHEN LAUNCHES SUPPORT MEASURES FOR SARS' MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS

Shenzhen authorities have launched subsidy measures of up to RMB20 million to support Hong Kong and Macau medical institutions in its Qianhai cooperation zone. The subsidies will be distributed over three years, with an annual allocation rate of 50%, 30% and 20%, respectively. The hospitals will be categorized into two levels: hospitals fully owned by Hong Kong and Macau operators, where the subsidy will range from RMB8 million and RMB20 million. Those jointly owned by SARs operations will have subsidies ranging from RMB4 million to RMB16 million.

### LIGHT RAIL

# CROWDS FLOCK TO BARRA STATION AT OPENING OF FIRST PENINSULA CONNECTION

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Macao Light Rapid Transit (LRT) is now officially operating on the Macau Peninsula with the opening of the Barra Station.

The LRT commenced service to the Barra Station in the early hours of Friday, Dec. 8, with many residents eager to be among the first to try the new station that connects the Taipa line to Macau via the Sai Van Bridge.

During the Barra Station's opening ceremony, the chairman of the Board of Directors of the Macao Light Rapid Transit Corporation, Limited (MLM), Ho Cheong Kei, highlighted that this is the first station located at the Peninsula and the



first time the LRT has traveled between Taipa and Macau.

Ho said the expansion of the LRT operation will give the public more public transport options.

The MLM chairman also expressed hopes the LRT could attract more citizens and tourists to the old community neighborhoods.

The first LRT trip between

Macau and Taipa left Barra Station at 6:30 a.m., with members of the MLM Board of Directors present to commemorate the occasion by distributing souvenirs to the initial passengers.

With the extension of the Taipa line into the Peninsula, the line now has 12 stations and a total length of around 12.5 kilometers. A full journey from the Taipa Ferry Terminal at Pac On to the Barra Station takes approximately 27 minutes.

Though commuters may not yet have incorporated the extension to the Macau side into their daily travel routines, many residents took the opportunity to try the new station and traverse between Barra and Taipa over the weekend.

### EDUCATION

# Fine Art experts discuss AI and art innovation at UM

RENATO MARQUES

**S**EVERAL experts from the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) delivered three lectures at the University of Macau (UM), where they shared insights into art innovation in the age of artificial intelligence (AI).

Painters and Chinese printmakers Ma Lu, Liu Qinghe, and Li Fan, shared their thoughts on the growing use of AI and the challenges and opportunities this brings to traditional artists.

Ma Lu, a contemporary oil painter in China

who has served as the dean of the School of Plastic Arts and the director of the Oil Painting Department at CAFA, highlighted the cultural differences between the East and the West in their choices of artistic media.

He said the East prefers nature and uncertainty, while the West prefers regularity and controllability.

To face the challenges and seize the opportunities of this new age, Ma suggested artists focus on themselves and the origin of life, stressing the importance of the ar-

tist in his creation.

He said AI can be a powerful tool for creators to better understand themselves, prompting them to think about their weaknesses and strengths.

Liu, a contemporary ink painter in China, as well as an educator and scholar, noted that the artist's judgment is more important than mere technique. He believes artists should keep a certain distance from orthodox thinking and strike a balance between reality and imagination.

He said the return to



Ma Lu

tradition and roots is the foundation for artists to re-examine themselves, noting also the importance of simplifying the act of creation.

Li, an associate professor at CAFA and Chinese printmaker and educator, shared his insights into the practice and research in art education, drawing from his experiences over the past three decades.

He said art education is bidirectional, and teachers should understand the circumstances of each student and consider their personality and background to help them identify their strengths and uniqueness.

Li also noted that the purpose of education is to guide students to discover their best qualities, fostering new ideas and innovation.

# FORMER FOOTBALLER LUIS FIGO AT THE KICKOFF OF ASIA'S SPORTS COLLECTORS CONVENTION

**F**ORMER top-level celebrity footballer Luis Figo has been invited to participate in the inaugural Asia's Sports Collectors Convention (ASCC), taking place over a full weekend at The Venetian Macao.

With over 500 parti-

cipants, the event brings together collectors of sports memorabilia such as cards and stickers.

This first convention is focused on football, inviting three other former footballers, Christian Vieri (Italy), Carles

Puyol (Spain), and Pu Wei (China) over the weekend.

Now 51 years old, Figo, the former Portuguese football star, gained prominence as a winger in his career with Sporting, Barcelona, Real Madrid and Inter

Milan.

He won 127 caps for the Portuguese national team, setting a record, and has been described as one of his generation's best players.

Besides many team titles, Figo was honored with the Ballon d'Or

in 2000 and FIFA World Player of the Year 2001, surpassing British star David Beckham.

He is also part of the FIFA 100, a list of players chosen by late football legend Pelé to commemorate FIFA's 100th anniversary.

He is regarded as one of the football legends by the International Federation of Football History and Statistics. **RM**



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

## HUMAN RESOURCES | ROOTED IN MACAO FOR 20 YEARS

# SANDS CHINA BUILDS WORKPLACE OF EQUALITY AND WELL-BEING

**S**ANDS China believes in supporting team members with favourable career and promotion opportunities, and the company has long been committed to talent cultivation. The percentage of Macao residents in its management positions has risen from 20% in 2004 to nearly 92% currently. The company also believes in creating an equitable work environment, and 44% of its management professionals are women.

### LONG-SERVING TEAM MEMBERS

Team member loyalty is a natural result of these efforts. Nearly 13,200 team members have worked with the company for over 10 years; among them, more than 6,600 have served for 15 years, representing 26% of the company's total workforce. Over 1,200 founding team members have stayed with the company since Sands Macao's opening – demonstrating Sands China's philosophy of "standing together with the community and team members."

### TEAM MEMBER WELLBEING

Promoting team member wellbeing and work-life balance is key to Sands China's success. Initiatives include the Amazing Summer campaign, which promotes family harmony through recreational and family activities, with around 500 team members and their families joining this year. The company has also collaborated with the Macao Education and Youth Bureau to promote parenting education among team members since 2022, and has organized approximately 30 on-the-job parenting education programmes to date.

For six consecutive years now, Sands China has run a large-scale campaign to raise awareness of occupational safety and health (OSH). During November's OSH Month, Sands China hosted a diverse range of activities to engage team members, including inter-



"As a company rooted in Macao for 20 years, Sands China is the largest private employer in the city. Our thanks go to our team members for walking alongside us to achieve milestone after milestone. With 26,000 team members, we believe in 'placing people at the heart of our strategy' and caring about their personal growth and physical and mental health, as we provide them with bright prospects for career development. "Our team members' expertise has proven invaluable to the steady growth of our company. Over the years, Sands China has created an abundance of diverse job opportunities in Macao, promoting the employment of local talent, actively supporting the SAR government's policy of 'Building Macao through Talent Training,' and contributing to Macao's moderate economic diversification. In the next decade, we look forward to working with our outstanding employees to create new milestones together."

**Dr. Wilfred Wong, President of Sands China Ltd.**

active game booths, roadshows, seminars, and competitions. The primary objective was to motivate team members to prioritise their OSH awareness, physical fitness, and dietary habits.

### UNCONDITIONAL CARE

Sands China is determined to protect the rights of women by creating a diverse and equitable work environment, and female team members comprise 51% of

the company's total workforce. The company regularly organises activities to enhance their physical and mental health, including talks, workshops, and yoga. Moreover, Sands China led the industry with the launch of its new maternity benefits, which offers a celebratory gift and support – during the first 30 calendar days after resuming work, postnatal mothers can reduce their daily work schedule by one hour and

shift workers can also enjoy a non-rotating shift.

For supporting elderly team members, the Golden Age Programme provides those who are ready to begin in a new chapter in their lives with a wide range of post-career benefits, with 1,300 having signed up to date. They enjoy a variety of lifelong discounts and benefits on par with those of Sands China team members, including free access to

activities like leisure classes and gatherings, unlimited opportunities to join company-sponsored community events, four years of complimentary annual health check-ups, and a Golden Age allowance in 18 monthly instalments.

### CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Sands China aims to play a leading role in talent development for the Greater Bay Area (GBA) via its Sands China Academy. In 2023, each team member trained for an average of 90 hours, nearly 33 hours above the standards of the Association for Talent Development (ATD). Sands China offers such platforms so industry experts can share experience and knowledge with both Sands China team members and industry practitioners in the GBA to foster their growth.

Enhancing professionalism is central to improving personal competitiveness and it helps team members seize the huge opportunities of national development. Sands China therefore proactively hosted more than 60 sessions of various professionalism education activities, including training programmes, thematic seminars, professional exchanges, and art and cultural activities. To date, more than 7,000 team members have participated. The company hopes these efforts will help team members gain a deeper understanding of the nation's development and be ready for upcoming opportunities, while simultaneously contributing to Macao's development as a world centre of tourism and leisure.



**Silvia Ip**

"I have worked for Sands China for 10 years; after years of training at guest services, I was promoted to become a supervisor. I was [later] determined to step out of my comfort zone and transfer from a gaming department to a non-gaming department, and I seized the opportunity to participate in the My Way Program and am now a conventions and exhibitions manager. I am grateful to the company for giving us the opportunity to try different jobs, so that I could find a job that suits me and unleash my full potential."

**Manager, Conventions and Exhibitions**



**Valentino Ali**

"Time flies – I will have worked in the company for 14 years in January 2024! I joined the company as a project manager and gradually got to where I am today. I admire the collaborative projects organised by Sands China; I participated in the Sands China International Strategic Leadership Programme for Integrated Resorts, attending courses at Católica Lisbon and Cornell University. I believe the charm of Sands China is in its diverse development and endless possibilities, which allowed me to fully understand and discover my own talents for comprehensive self-improvement."

**Vice President, Operations Development**



**Joanna Lei**

"As a career woman, Sands China has provided me an abundance of satisfaction, sense of belonging, and respect, and the company's support and respect for women is seen in various aspects; during team members' pregnancies, for example, they are exempted from rotating shifts so as to ensure enough rest. At Sands China's diverse, equal and harmonious workplace, I am full of confidence and vision for the future. I firmly believe that as long as we are passionate about our work, stay true to ourselves, and strive to pursue our dreams, we will be able to show the charm of professional women and embody gender equality in the workplace."

**Executive Director, Operations Development**



**Carolina Lou**

"What I find most impressive is how the company values and supports its team members' development with professional trainings and various programs. I joined the All-round Food & Beverage Management Program in 2019 as it offers swift development opportunities, and I began working as a waitress at a Chinese restaurant and then switched to the Event & Sales team, where I learned how to organise events. Later, I began working at a Western restaurant to learn about Western table manners and wine knowledge. I gained various international qualifications, including wine, coffee, customer service, and food safety. Within two years, I completed my internships and got hired by the company."

**Food & Beverage Manager II, The Venetian Macao**



# Hong Kong holds first council elections under Beijing's guidance of 'patriots administering the city'

KANIS LEUNG, HONG KONG

**R**ESIDENTS went to the polls yesterday in Hong Kong's first district council elections since an electoral overhaul was implemented under authorities' guidance of "patriots" administering the city, effectively shutting out all pro-democracy candidates.

Turnout is expected to be much lower than in the last elections, held at the height of the 2019 anti-government protests. Some pro-democracy voters, dismayed by the drastic rule changes, including the elimination of most directly elected seats, are turning their backs on the polls.

The final turnout will be a barometer of public sentiment toward the "patriots"-only system, the new political order following the 2019 protests.

In 2021, the city amended its electoral laws for its legislature, drastically reducing the public's ability to vote and increasing the number of pro-Beijing lawmakers making decisions for the city. After the changes, the turnout rate plunged from 58% to 30% in a legislative election that year.

The district councils, which primarily handle municipal matters such as organizing construc-



Hong Kong's Chief Executive John Lee casts his ballot at a polling station during the District Council elections in Hong Kong, yesterday

tion projects and public facilities, were the last major political bodies mostly chosen by the public.

The elections four years ago held symbolic importance in the anti-government movement, with a record turnout rate of 71%. The pro-democracy camp's landslide victory acted as a rebuke to the government's handling of the 2019 protests.

But an amendment passed in July slashed the proportion of directly elected seats from some 90% to about 20% — a level even lower than when the bodies were first introduced in the 1980s under British rule. A new nomination requirement has effectively resulted in the exclusion of pro-democracy candidates from the elections for the first time in about four decades.

At a polling station in the residential district of Wong Tai Sin yesterday morning, about 30 people stood in line outside the center waiting for the doors to open at 8:30 am. More than 10,000 police officers were deployed across the city to ensure the elections would be conducted in a safe and orderly manner.

Housewife Ivy Sze, 37, said the overhaul did not shake her confidence in the electoral system. But she said she felt there were fewer voters in the morning than in previous elections.

"There used to be a long queue outside," she said, holding a thank-you card from the government, part of what officials called a "heartwarming" gesture for those who voted.

But university student Timothy Cheung, 21, decided not to vote following the rule changes, saying his peers also intended to abstain from the polls.

"It's useless even if I vote. All candidates are leaning to one side," he said, referring to their pro-government backgrounds.

Government officials have downplayed the significance of the turnout rate as a measure of the overhaul's success. On Friday, Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Erick Tsang said

not voting doesn't necessarily imply opposition to the elections, adding one's non-participation could be due to other reasons.

Still, Hong Kong leader John Lee and his administration have stepped up efforts to drum up support for the polls. The government held various promotional activities, including carnivals, an outdoor concert and free admission to some museums.

The city's prominent airline, Cathay Pacific, also offered discount fares for passengers traveling back from mainland China to Hong Kong, saying it wanted to help residents "actively participate" in the polls.

Lee earlier this month said civil servants have a responsibility to support the government to implement its policies, urging them to lead by example and vote. He and his wife went to a polling station to vote on Sunday morning and described the elections as the "last piece of the puzzle" to implement the principle of "patriots" administering the city.

"The elected councilors will serve the interests of Hong Kong. They won't betray the interests of Hong Kong and the interests of the country," he said.

Members of the League of Social Democrats, one of the city's remaining pro-democracy political parties, had planned to stage a small protest against Lee to express their discontent over the electoral rule changes. But their members were arrested by the police after being stopped and searched in Central, the group said.

The police said three people were arrested on suspicion of intending to incite others to disrupt the elections, but did not provide names. **MDT/AP**

## SEA DISPUTE

# Philippines says Chinese coast guard used water cannons against its vessels for a second day

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

**T**HE Chinese coast guard targeted Philippine vessels with water cannon blasts yesterday and rammed one of them, causing damage and endangering Filipino crew members off a disputed shoal in the South China Sea, just a day after similar hostilities at another contested shoal, Philippine officials said.

The Philippines and its treaty ally, the United States, immediately condemned the latest confrontation near the Second Thomas Shoal, where two Philippine navy-operated supply boats and two Philippine coast guard escort ships



sailed to deliver food and other supplies to Filipino forces in a long-marooned navy ship that serves as a territorial outpost.

"We condemn, once again, China's latest unprovoked acts of coercion and dangerous maneuvers against a legitimate and

routine Philippine rotation and resupply mission to Ayungin Shoal that has put the lives of our people at risk," a Philippine government task force that deals with the territorial disputes said in a statement, using the Filipino name for the shoal.

"The systematic and consistent manner in which the People's Republic of China carries out these illegal and irresponsible actions puts into question and significant doubt the sincerity of its calls for peaceful dialogue," it said. "We demand that China demonstrate that it is a responsible and trustworthy member of the international

community."

U.S. Ambassador to Manila MaryKay Carlson said her country "stands with the Philippines and partners in vehemently condemning the PRC's repeated illegal and dangerous actions against Philippine vessels." She referred to the acronym of China's formal name.

"(Chinese) aggression undermines regional stability in defiance of a free and open Indo-Pacific," Carlson added.

The Chinese coast guard said it had "implemented controls in accordance with laws and regulations" yesterday against two Philippine coast guard vessels,

including one official ship and one supply ship that were attempting to transport construction materials to the Second Thomas Shoal.

The statement gave no details about the measures taken but said the Philippines action "seriously infringed on China's sovereignty."

It also claimed a Philippine vessel ignored warnings and in violation of international navigation regulations made a sharp turn in an "unprofessional and dangerous manner" and intentionally collided with a Chinese coast guard ship, causing "scratching."

"The responsibility lies entirely with the Philippine side," the coast guard said.

Coast guard spokesperson Gan Yu described China's actions as "reasonable, legal and professional," and said such operations would continue unabated. **MDT/AP**



MIGRATION

# Over 300 Rohingya Muslims arrive in Indonesia's Aceh region after weeks at sea

REZA SAIFULLAH  
& EDNA TARIGAN, ACEH BESAR

**T**WO boats carrying more than 300 Rohingya Muslims, including emaciated women and children, arrived at Indonesia's northernmost province of Aceh yesterday morning after being adrift for weeks.

One boat, which had been at sea for about one and a half months and carrying 135 passengers, arrived at a beach in Lamreh village in Aceh Besar Regency. Shahidul Islam, a 34-year-old survivor, said they left their refugee camp in Bangladesh. "The boat was sinking. We had no food or water left," he said.

The other boat carrying nearly 180 people docked at a beach in Blang Raya village at Pidie Regency. It has been adrift in the Andaman Sea without adequate supplies for about 27 days. Mahmud Husein, 25, a survivor, said he gave the boat owner 40,000

AP PHOTO



taka (\$363) to help him leave Bangladesh.

"We came to Indonesia, but we want to go to other countries if they want to help us," Husein said.

Another boat, carrying more refugees, embarked from Bangladesh at the same time, Husein confirmed, but has remained missing. The U.N. refugee agency warned that people onboard

could die if more is not done to rescue them.

About 740,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled Buddhist-majority Myanmar to camps in Bangladesh since August 2017, following a brutal counterinsurgency campaign. Myanmar security forces have been accused of mass rapes, killings and the burning of thousands of Rohingya homes, and international courts are considering whether their actions constitute genocide.

Since November, more than 1,500 Rohingya refugees have arrived by boat in Indonesia's Aceh province. Some were denied landing by the residents in Aceh Utara district and Sabang island, sparking concerns from human rights organizations.

Rijalul Fitri, head of Blang Raya village in Aceh, said Sunday they do not want the refugees in their village. "We stayed up all night so as not to allow them to dock, but at 2.30 a.m., they arrived," he said.

Fitri was adamant about the refugees' relocation, saying, "they can't stay here."

President Joko Widodo on Friday said in a statement that Indonesia's government suspected a surge in human trafficking because of the increasing number of Rohingya Muslims who entered the country over the past few weeks, especially in Aceh.

Police in the city of Lohkseumawe — where there is a camp for Rohingya Muslim refugees — arrested three Aceh residents for human trafficking. They were charged with taking 1.8 million rupiah (about \$115), to smuggle 30 refugees from the camp to the city of Medan in North Sumatra province, said Henki Ismanto, the Lhokseumawe police chief.

Most of the refugees leaving by sea attempt to reach Muslim-majority Malaysia, in search of work. Indonesia, where Muslims comprise nearly 90% of the country's 277 million people, has been detaining them. MDT/AP

AD



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Curators João Ó & Rita Machado

Duration of exhibition

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藝博館





ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

# Heavy fighting across Gaza as Israel presses ahead with renewed US military and diplomatic support

NAJIB JOBAIN & SAMY  
MAGDY, RAFAH, GAZA STRIP

**H**EAVY fighting raged overnight and into Sunday across Gaza, including in the devastated north, as Israel pressed ahead with its offensive after the U.S. blocked the latest international push for a cease-fire and rushed more munitions to its close ally.

Israel has faced rising international outrage and calls for a permanent cease-fire after the killing of thousands of Palestinian civilians. Nearly 85% of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been displaced within the besieged territory, where U.N. agencies say there is no safe place to flee.

The United States has lent vital support to the offensive once again in recent days, by vetoing United Nations Security Council efforts to end the fighting that enjoyed wide international support, and by pushing through an emergency sale of over \$100 million worth of tank ammunition to Israel.

The U.S. has pledged unwavering support for Israel's goal of crushing Hamas' military and governing abilities in order to prevent any repeat of the Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war. Hamas and other Palestinian militants stormed into southern Israel that day, killing some 1,200 people and capturing around 240, over 100 of whom were released during a weeklong cease-fire late last month.

In response to the attack, Israel launched an air and ground war that has killed thousands of Palestinians, mostly civilians, and forced some 1.9 million people to flee their homes. With only a trickle of aid allowed in, and delivery rendered impossible in much of the territory, Palestinians face severe shortages of food, water and other basic goods.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who invoked a rarely-used power last week to call for a cease-fire, said "we are facing a severe risk of collapse of the humanitarian system."



Israeli troops are seen near the Gaza Strip border, in southern Israel yesterday

"The situation is fast deteriorating into a catastrophe with potentially irreversible implications for the Palestinians as a whole and for peace and security in the region," he told a forum in Qatar.

Israel's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, told Israel's Channel 12 TV late Saturday that the U.S. has set no deadline for Israel to achieve its goals of dismantling Hamas and returning all the hostages.

"The evaluation that this can't be measured in weeks is correct, and I'm not sure it can be measured in months," he said.

## FIGHTING AND ARRESTS IN THE NORTH

Israeli forces continue to face heavy resistance, even in northern Gaza, where entire neighborhoods have been flattened by air strikes and where ground troops have been operating for over six weeks.

Israel's Channel 13 TV broadcast footage showing dozens of detainees stripped to their underwear with their hands in the air. Several held assault rifles above their heads, and one man could be seen slowly walking forward and placing a gun on the ground before returning to the group.

Other videos in recent days have shown groups of unarmed men held in similar conditions, without clothes, bound and blindfolded. Men from a separate group of detainees who were released on Saturday told The Associated Press they had been beaten and denied food and water.

Israeli media have portrayed the mass detentions as a sign that Hamas is surrendering in the north.

But residents said there was still heavy fighting underway in the Gaza City neighborhood of Shijaiyah and the Jabaliya refugee camp, a dense urban area housing Palestinian families who fled or were driven out of what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation.

"They are attacking anything that moves," said Hamza Abu Fatouh, a resident of Shijaiyah. He said the dead and wounded were left in the streets as ambulances could no longer reach the area, where Israeli snipers and tanks had positioned themselves among the abandoned buildings.

"The resistance also fights back," he added, saying gunbattles had raged late Saturday.

Israel ordered the evacuation of the northern third of the territory, including Gaza City, early in the war, but tens of thousands of people have remained there, fearing that the south would be no safer or that they would never be allowed to return to their homes.

In Khan Younis, in southern Gaza, where ground forces moved in earlier this month, residents said they heard constant gunfire and explosions through the night as warplanes bombarded areas in and around Gaza's second largest city.

"It doesn't stop," said Radwa Abu Frayeh, who lives close to the European Hospital in Khan Younis. "There's bombing, and then the ambulances head out to bring back victims."

## NO SAFE PLACES

With the war in its third month, the Palestinian death toll in Gaza has surpassed 17,700, the majority women and children, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-controlled territory. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths.

Israel holds Hamas responsible for civilian casualties, saying the militants put civilians in danger by fighting in dense, residential neighborhoods. The military says 97 Israeli soldiers have died in the ground offensive. Palestinians militants have also continued firing rockets into Israel.

Israel says it has provided detailed instructions for civilians to evacuate to safer areas, even as it continues to strike what it says are militant targets in all parts of the territory. Thousands have fled to the southern town of Rafah and other areas along the border with Egypt in recent days — one of the last areas where aid agencies are able to deliver food and water.

Israel has designated a narrow patch of barren southern coastline, Muwasi, as a safe zone. But Palestinians there face overcrowded conditions with scant shelter and no toilets.

The head of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, warned yesterday that Gaza's health system was "collapsing," with its capacity reduced by two-thirds, even as needs have soared. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

2001 30,000 POSTAL JOBS 'TO BE CUT'



Up to 30,000 Post Office workers could lose their jobs over the next 18 months, Consignia, the company which runs the service, has announced.

The company previously said it was to launch a £1.2bn cost-cutting package but today's news was the first indication of the scale of the jobs affected.

Consignia's Chief Executive John Roberts made the announcement as he spoke to the House of Commons Trade and Industry Select Committee today.

"We haven't finalised numbers. We could be looking at anything up to 30,000 redundancies," Mr Roberts said.

Mr Roberts said it is hoped the bulk of the cuts would be through natural wastage, voluntary redundancies and contracting out activities like cleaning and catering.

He also said many parcel routes would be franchised out.

Consideration would also be given, he said, to transferring mail from trains on to road and air transport.

Earlier this year Consignia announced a reduction of about 10,000 managers' positions with many of the staff affected to be moved to other jobs.

Consignia has been hit by falling profits and lost £281m in the first six months of this year.

It aims to cut costs by 15% by March 2003 in order to stay profitable and in line with competitors.

Bosses blame the losses on the rising popularity of e-mail and text messaging along with the current economic climate and the rail chaos since the Hatfield crash.

Other factors are also said to be the cost of installing post office computers, Parcelforce's losses and the autumn decision not to increase stamp prices.

But Mr Roberts refused to be drawn on whether the company's semi-privatised status had anything to do with its financial difficulties.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The announcement was met with the threat of strike action from postal unions.

They argued any compulsory redundancies would force Post Office workers on to the picket line creating further profit slumps for Consignia.

The company appointed a new chairman, Allan Leighton, in 2002 to turn round the fortunes of the Post Office and bring it back into profit.

He did this but at a cost - 30,000 jobs were cut and thousands of post offices were closed in order to stem losses that peaked at more than £1bn in the year to March 31 2002.

The organisation reverted to the name Royal Mail Group plc split into three divisions - Royal Mail, delivering letters, Parcelforce, delivering parcels and Post Office Limited, managing the nationwide network of post office branches as retail outlets. From January 1, 2006, the Royal Mail lost its 350-year monopoly and the UK postal market became fully open to competition.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
 Take a long look at your present direction and consider your professional options. Your ability to organize and get everyone together will enhance your popularity and bring interest from potential mates.

**TAURUS**  
 Apr. 20-May. 20  
 Try not to overspend on luxury items. Exhaustion will lead to minor injury if you don't know when to quit. Jealous coworkers may try to sabotage your attempts to get ahead.

**GEMINI**  
 May. 21-Jun. 21  
 Avoid overloading your plate. Now is the time to concentrate on building a strong financial future for your family. If you can mix business with pleasure much can be accomplished.

**CANCER**  
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
 You can set your goals and make a beeline for your target. You can make financial deals, but it may be best if you're not using your own cash. Plan your social events carefully.

**LEO**  
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
 Deep discussions may only lead to friction. Travel may be confusing. Investments that deal with property will be lucrative; however, upsets with family members may be likely.

**VIRGO**  
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
 Investments that deal with property will pay off but could cause conflict with some family members. You need to concentrate on your business ventures more than on your relationship today.

**LIBRA**  
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
 Don't blame others for your own stubbornness. Stomach problems could prevail if you haven't been watching your diet. Try to do things with children that will enable you to bond closer to them.

**SCORPIO**  
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
 Your attitude is changing rapidly and your plate is overloaded. Work quietly at your own goals and forget about situations that you can do little about. You need to sit back and enjoy.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
 You should sit down with someone you trust and work out a budget that will enable you to save a little extra. Your social activity should be conducive to finding love.

**CAPRICORN**  
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
 Don't let them blame you. You will get drawn into groups that are not favorable to you. Children or friends may try to talk you into lending them money.

**AQUARIUS**  
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
 Acknowledge your lover's needs. Concentrate on work. Friends from your past may come back into your life. You will have original ideas for ways to make extra money.

**PISCES**  
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
 Opportunities for new romantic encounters will unfold through the social events you attend. You must watch your tendency to spend whatever you make.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

**WEATHER**

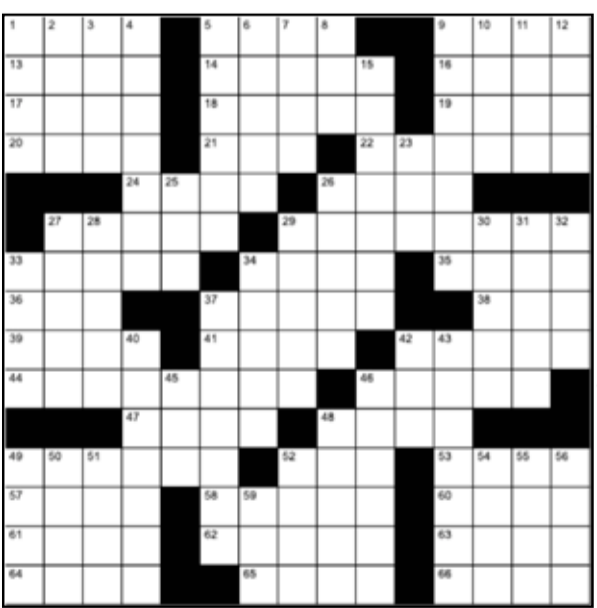
	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	-4	2	overcast
Changchun	-16	-11	cloudy
Chengdu	10	15	overcast
Chongqing	14	15	overcast
Fuzhou	17	30	cloudy
Guangzhou	21	26	overcast
Guiyang	12	17	cloudy
Haikou	21	29	cloudy
Hangzhou	13	17	rain
Harbin	-25	-17	fine
Hefei	2	8	rain
Nanjing	7	11	rain
Shanghai	14	18	rain
Taipei	20	26	fine
Wuhan	4	6	rain
Hong Hong	24	26	overcast
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-8	-7	snow
Frankfurt	4	11	rain
Paris	9	13	cloudy
London	6	11	overcast
New York	2	8	rain

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Fizzy drink; 5- Secluded spot; 9- Passing notice; 13- \_\_\_ Three Lives; 14- Compass point; 16- 20th letter of the Hebrew alphabet; 17- Capital of the Ukraine; 18- Hilo hi; 19- Basic unit of heredity; 20- Clinton's birthplace; 21- Literary monogram; 22- Like bread dough; 24- Be dependent; 26- Singer Stefani; 27- Kitten; 29- Qualified; 33- Quotes; 34- Coal-rich region; 35- Geezer; 36- Chopper; 37- Raison \_\_\_; 38- Heston's org.; 39- Melodies; 41- Pinnacle; 42- Wise ones; 44- Novice; 46- Biblical brother; 47- Lubricates; 48- High-ranking NCO; 49- Rough shelter; 52- Dogpatch adjective; 53- Single, individual unit; 57- Shade trees; 58- Racket; 60- Bristle; 61- Peek follower; 62- Open space in a forest; 63- Shrinking sea; 64- German Mister; 65- Plummet; 66- The world's longest river;

DOWN 1- Like many Punjabis; 2- Potpourri; 3- Thought-provoking; 4- Unfavorable; 5- Twisted; 6- Hard candy; 7- Son of Aphrodite; 8- High degree; 9- Pertaining to compounds of carbon; 10- Apians; 11- \_\_\_ She Lovely?; 12- So \_\_\_ say; 15- Out of control; 23- Hosp. readout; 25- Pothook shape; 26- Stare angrily; 27- Sprite; 28- In \_\_\_ (unborn); 29- Words on a Wonderland cake; 30- Small tuned drum; 31- "Arabesque" actress; 32- JFK postings; 33- James of "The Godfather"; 34- Shakers et al.; 37- From dawn to dusk; 40- Underwriter; 42- Hang loosely; 43- Craftsperson; 45- Strike; 46- Out, in bed; 48- Botch; 49- Wife of Jacob; 50- North Sea feeder; 51- Cupid; 52- Yarn spinner; 54- Actress Hatcher; 55- Catchall abbr.; 56- Boy or man; 59- No longer young;

**Friday's solution**



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 bed 1 bath  
56.2 m<sup>2</sup> / 605 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD2,850,000



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



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



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



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



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FOOTBALL

# Messi, Inter Miami schedule match in Hong Kong on Feb. 4

**L**IONEL Messi and Inter Miami are headed to Hong Kong.

The club revealed plans for a Feb. 4 match there on its first international tour, part of its pre-season before the 2024 Major League Soccer campaign. Messi and Inter Miami will face a team composed of top players from the First Division league in Hong Kong.

"Hong Kong is a beautiful city with a great sports scene," Inter Miami co-owner David Beckham said in remarks distributed by the team. "Throughout my career, I have spent a lot of time in Asia—I am so pleased to have the opportunity to bring Inter Miami to play our first international tour match in this fantastic city."

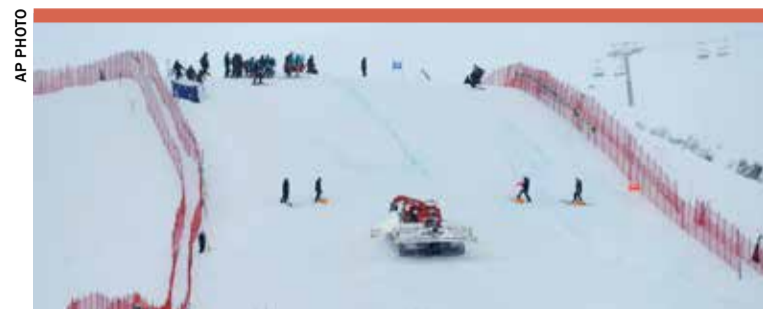
The match will be hosted at the 40,000-capacity Hong Kong Stadium.

Inter Miami previously revealed plans to play in El Salvador on



Jan. 19. The team was scheduled to play in China last month but plans for that two-game trip fell through.

Inter Miami said additional "preseason matches and destinations will be announced in the coming weeks." MDT/AP



Track attendants attempt to clear the slope of an alpine ski, women's World Cup super g race, in St. Moritz, Switzerland, yesterday

SUPER-G

## HEAVY SNOW AT ST. MORITZ FORCES CANCELLATION OF MIKAELA SHIFFRIN'S RACE IN WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

**H**EAVY snowfall overnight forced the cancellation yesterday of a women's World Cup super-G race where Mikaela Shiffrin was an expected strong contender.

The sunshine that bathed Shiffrin's winning run in downhill Saturday on the Corviglia course at St. Moritz gave way to snow through the night and made preparing the course impossible.

The "drastic change of the slope condition" was cited by the International Ski and Snowboard Federation. "This decision was made in order to ensure the safety of the athletes."

It was the third speed race canceled so far in a season of difficult weather conditions, after both scheduled downhills last month at the Matterhorn mountain on the Swiss-Italian border were lost to heavy snow and strong winds.

The races can be made up at different venues later in the season.

The women's World Cup circuit now moves to Val d'Isere, France, for downhill and super-G races next weekend. The storied resort had to cancel its men's slalom Sunday because of snow and rain overnight. MDT/AP



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

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**OPINION**

**China Daily**  
 Editorial, China Daily

**BY KEEPING A CLEAR EYE ON THE MUTUAL BENEFITS CHINA AND EU CAN INJECT IMPETUS INTO RELATIONS**

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and the European Union and the 25th anniversary of the China-EU leaders' meeting mechanism.

Although the two sides have different values and systems, that has never prevented them from working together to enlarge their common interests in various fields through dialogue and cooperation.

The 24th China-EU Summit held in Beijing on Thursday, the first in-person EU-China summit since 2019, provided the opportunity for further expansion of their stakeholdings, for not only do the two sides share broad interests in economic, trade and green collaboration, but they have a common responsibility to help resolve the many crises that threaten global development, peace and stability.

In his meeting with European Council President Charles Michel and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, President Xi Jinping noted that both sides should establish a correct understanding of each other, enhance mutual trust, value justice, and work together to develop their relations wholeheartedly. The EU leaders will be well aware these remarks were in part an implicit urging that they not let Washington's China-targeted "value diplomacy" drive a wedge between Brussels and Beijing.

As Xi said, China and the EU should not regard each other as opponents because of their different systems, they should not reduce cooperation because of their competition, and they should not engage in confrontation because of their differences. He called on the EU to refrain from defining China-EU relations by their differences, but instead define it by their complementarities. If the EU really looks forward to developing "a long-term, stable, predictable and sustainable relationship" with China and not "decouple" as the two visiting leaders said, their words should be matched with deeds. These should include working with China to safeguard the stability of the global industry and supply chains and breathing life back into their hard-earned bilateral investment pact, which has still to be ratified by the EU Parliament.

China regards the EU as a key partner in economic and trade cooperation, a priority partner in scientific and technological cooperation, and a trusted partner in industrial and supply chain cooperation. It welcomes EU companies, investments, talents, and it is willing to open the Chinese market wider to the EU. Likewise, the EU should provide a nondiscriminatory business and policy environment for Chinese partners.

It is wrong to define China as a systemic challenge, or even threat as some extreme voices influenced by Washington allege. To do so is a grave strategic misjudgment that only hurts the interests of both sides.

**UKRAINE SAYS ANY RUSSIAN PRESIDENTIAL VOTING IN ITS OCCUPIED REGIONS WOULD BE 'NULL AND VOID'**

**THE BUZZ**

Ukraine on Saturday condemned Russia's intention to organize presidential election voting in occupied Ukrainian territory next year.

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry said any such balloting held in the occupied regions in the country would be "null and void" and pledged that any international observers sent to monitor the Russian election would "face criminal responsibility."

"We call on the international community to resolutely condemn Russia's intention to hold presidential elections in the occupied Ukrainian territories, and to impose sanctions on those involved

in their organization and conduct," Ukraine's Foreign Ministry said.

Lawmakers in Russia last week set the country's 2024 presidential election for March 17. On Friday, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced his candidacy for reelection. He is all but certain to win another six-year term.

Russian authorities are still pondering whether to arrange the voting in Ukraine's Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions. Moscow illegally annexed the four regions in September 2022 but only controls parts of them.

AP PHOTO



**COP28**

**THE EU WANTS TO PUT A TAX ON EMISSIONS FROM IMPORTS. IT'S IRKED SOME OTHER NATIONS**

**GAURAV SAINI & SIBI ARASU, DUBAI**

**T**HE European Union's plan to impose a tax on the carbon pollution emitted to make goods imported from countries like India and China has sparked a debate at the United Nations climate conference in Dubai, as poorer countries argue that the tax will harm livelihoods and economic growth.

Known as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, the tax wants to set a price on the carbon emitted to make energy-intensive products like iron, steel, cement, fertilizers and aluminum in non-EU countries. The EU says this creates a level-playing field for domestically-manufactured goods that have to adhere to stricter green standards and also reduces emissions from imports. But other nations, particularly developing countries, are worried this would harm their economies and make it too expensive to trade with the bloc.

"CBAM's sole aim is to prevent carbon leakage" elsewhere in the supply chain, European Commissioner Wopke Hoekstra said at a press conference at COP28.

He said the tax is crucial for funding and achieving

the bloc's climate goal of slashing emissions 55% by 2030.

A recent study by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development found that a tax of \$44 per ton of carbon emitted would slash pollution from the supply chain by half. It also estimated that rich countries would make \$2.5 billion from the tax, but poorer countries might lose up to \$5.9 billion.

The EU already caps emissions from industries that operate within its 27 countries and let's them buy "allowances" if they exceed their carbon pollution limits. Without a carbon tax on imports, the fear is that the EU's emissions cap will push industries to other nations outside the bloc that have looser rules around greenhouse gas emissions.

Countries like the United States and Canada are also considering their own versions of a carbon tax, which some worry could "overwhelm" developing countries.

India's government is one of those strongly opposed to the idea.

India's former steel secretary Aruna Sharma urged the government to continue to oppose the tax, but said industries do need to invest in lowering their carbon footprint for both exports

and domestic goods.

Other nations could also take a hit.

Mohamed Adow, the founder-director of Power Shift Africa, an independent think tank based in Kenya, called carbon taxes a "trade weapon" that could negatively affect Africa.

The tax could "lead to a loss of trade revenue amounting to at least \$25 billion for the continent," he said.

"This issue is a significant concern in international climate politics. It's not going away, and lives are at stake," said Li Shuo, director of China Climate Hub at the Asia Society Policy Institute.

There's also a technical concern: Vaibhav Chaturvedi, a research fellow at the Council on Energy, Environment and Water in New Delhi, said that under the U.N. climate change rules, countries cannot dictate how others should reduce emissions. Carbon taxes go against that rule, he said.

Trade and climate policy experts say many developing countries fear being shut out of Western markets because they won't be able to clean up their businesses fast enough. They also worry about being caught in conflicts between China and the West, with China seen as the primary target of the EU's carbon tax. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



**EU** negotiators clinched a deal last week on the world's first comprehensive artificial intelligence rules, paving the way for legal oversight of AI technology that has promised to transform everyday life and spurred warnings of existential dangers to humanity. Negotiators from the European Parliament and the bloc's 27 member countries overcame big differences on controversial points including generative AI and police use of face recognition surveillance to sign a tentative political agreement for the Artificial Intelligence Act.

AP PHOTO



**Ukraine** City workers in Kyiv dismantled an equestrian statue of a Red Army commander, the latest Soviet monument to be removed in the Ukrainian capital since Russia launched its full-scale invasion last year. The statue of Mykola Shchors on horseback, erected in the 1950s, was taken down from a pedestal in downtown Kyiv to the applause of a small group of onlookers. City officials said it will be stored in the State Aviation Museum.

AP PHOTO



**Poland** Pickup trucks and tourniquets bound for Ukraine's battlefield are among items stuck in a mileslong line at the border with Poland. Components to build drones to fight off Russian forces are facing weeks of delays. Ukrainian charities and companies supplying the war-torn country's military warn that problems are growing as Polish truck drivers show no sign of ending a border blockade that has stretched past a month. The Polish protesters argue that their livelihoods are at stake after the E.U. relaxed some transport rules and Ukrainian truckers undercut their business.