



THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS BUREAU IS ORGANIZING VARIOUS PERFORMING ARTS PROGRAMS DURING UPCOMING CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR HOLIDAYS

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AP PHOTO



Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said yesterday he planned to take "appropriate steps" over his governing party's widening slush funds scandal as speculation is rife that he may purge implicated Cabinet members in a major shuffle this week. The scandal mostly involves the Liberal Democratic Party's largest and most powerful faction formerly led by assassinated ex-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Its key members, including those in top Cabinet and party posts, were suspected of systematically failing to report several hundred million yen in funds in a possible violation of campaign and election laws.

AP PHOTO



India's top court yesterday upheld a 2019 decision by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government to strip disputed Jammu and Kashmir's special status as a semi-autonomous region with a separate constitution and inherited protections on land and jobs. The five-judge constitutional bench of the Supreme Court ruled that the region's special status had been a "temporary provision" and that removing it in 2019 was constitutionally valid.

AP PHOTO



Russia fired eight ballistic missiles at Kyiv yesterday, all of which were shot down, Ukraine's Air Force said. The thwarted attack still left one person injured by shrapnel and three more suffered severe stress reactions, officials said. A series of loud explosions rang out in Ukraine's capital just after 4 a.m., as the city was under its nightly curfew, followed by air raid sirens.

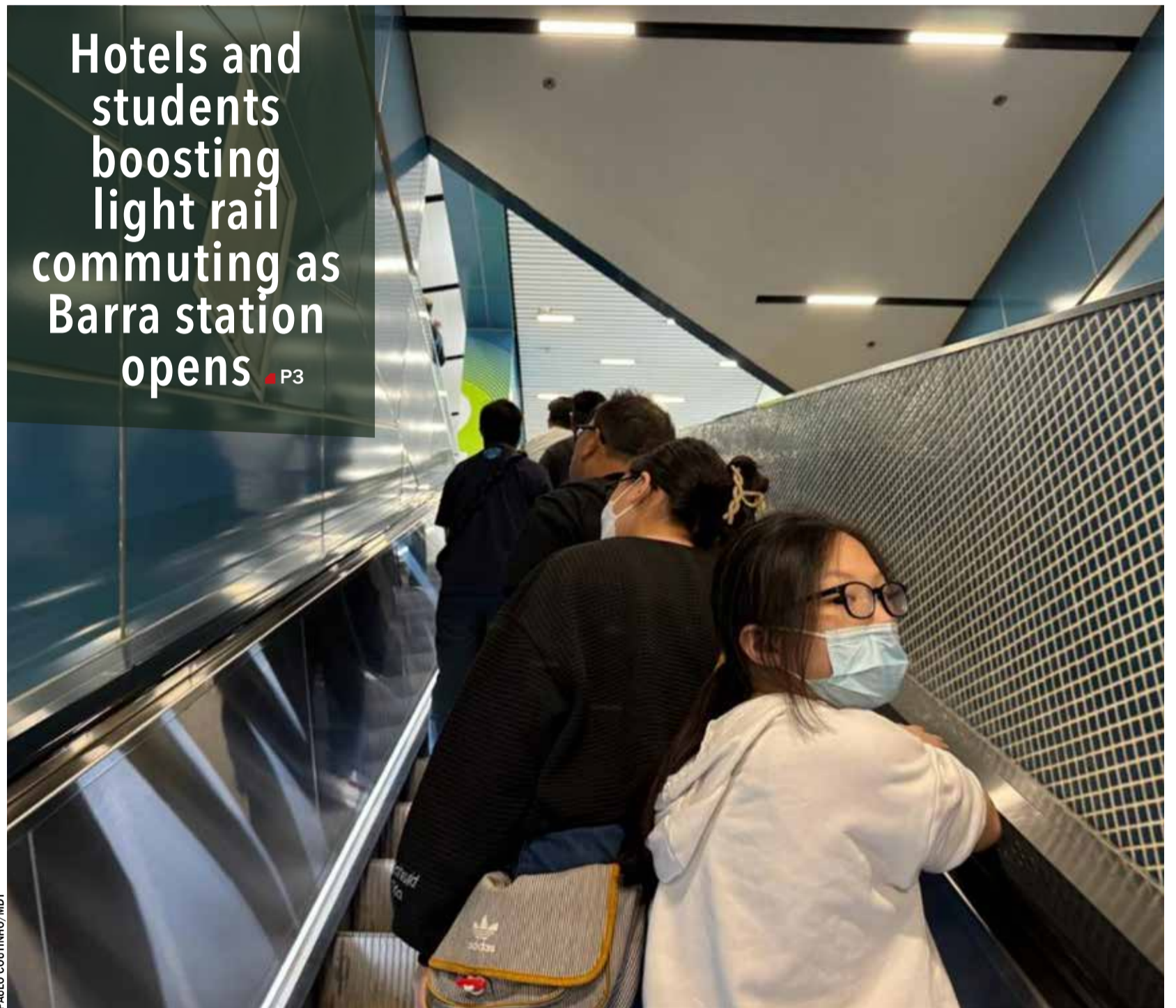
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Hotels and students boosting light rail commuting as Barra station opens

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PAULO COUTINHO/MDT

GAMING SECURITY CHEONG FOR 'SNOOP' SYSTEM TO BUST CRIMINALS



GASTRONOMY SINGER-CHEF NICOLAS TSE FINDS MACAU'S CREATIVITY 'AMAZING'

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EXCO

INFORMANT SYSTEM PROPOSED FOR BUSTING ILLEGAL GAMBLING

ANTHONY LAM

THE government has proposed an informant system to tackle illegal gambling crimes, Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong said yesterday.

Cheong, who is also the spokesperson of the Executive Council (ExCo), yesterday afternoon announced at a press conference the Combating Illegal Gambling Crime Bill.

The text of the bill has not been published yet.

By illegal gambling, this bill refers to all kinds of gambling activities, including sports betting, animal race betting, mahjong and lotteries. With this, the existing Law No 9/96/M – illegal matters related to animal racing, is proposed to be incorporated into this bill. Additionally, the government also plans to invalidate Law No 8/96/M – Illegal Gambling after the promulgation of this future law.

Describing illegal gambling crimes as “highly evasive of investigation and concealed,” the government intends to introduce the informant or undercover system for these crimes.

ANTHONY LAM



With the system constantly dropped for taxi violations, Coco Leong, director of the Legal Affairs Bureau (DSA), was asked to disclose more information on the matter. She underlined that “this is not completely new” and the same system exists in the anti-narcotics law. Meanwhile, communications between her bureau and the security branch have

been constant on similar matters.

When further questioned if the police will be allowed to put undercover operatives into an alleged criminal syndicate for investigation, Leong said that “[the proposal] is similar to this situation.”

The bill also proposes that before judicial interrogations, suspects in an illegal gambling case be forbidden to contact anybody

except their lawyers. When asked for further explanations, the law official said that it was proposed in consideration of the organizational nature of similar crimes, hinting that alignments of testimony can and should be avoided.

Another proposal is to allow investigative entities to conduct search and seizure between 9 p.m. and 7 a.m. “for particular brea-

ches,” which Leong disclosed to be illegal operations of gambling, online gambling and competitive wagers. She later added, when questioned by the press, that investigators will be allowed to enter private locations even without the consent of the owner provided that sufficient authority, such as a court warrant, was issued.

The operations, promotion and organization of online gambling and competitive wagers will be clearly banned as proposed, regardless of the location of the computer system or facilities concerned.

Clearly as a result of the Sun-city case, Leong clarified that no advertising of these practices will be allowed in Macau. When asked by the Times if operators or betters will be subject to prosecution if, for example, betters proactively open a betting account with a British sports betting company, which takes bets from the Macau users.

Both Cheong and Leong emphasized that should no advertising or luring be involved or concerned, no party would be prosecuted. Cheong added that should the operator not operate in Macau, the practices would not be subject to this proposed law.

Parallel or side betting would also be banned and consequently punished in this future law.

Penalties would be escalated and detention periods extended as per the government’s proposals.

Gov't announces series of events for Christmas and New Year

ANTHONY LAM

THE Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) is organizing various performing arts programs during the Christmas and New Year holidays.

In an announcement, the bureau said it will hold a number of large-scale performances from Dec. 21 to Dec. 31, inviting different artists to Macau.

The IC will attempt to stage a resident Fado show at the Dom Pedro V Theatre, director of the IC, Leong Wai Man, announced yesterday.

Yesterday morning, the bureau organized a press conference to announce

its entertainment plans for this Christmas and New Year, where the official made the announcement.

Officially called One Cultural Base, the series of events is aimed at catering to both local residents and visitors during the coming holiday season. Leong revealed that her bureau is trying to introduce Fado music to the 1.5-century-old theater on a regular basis. During its first phase, the bureau aims at staging at least three shows each weekend, incorporating into the show evened Portuguese and Macanese delicacies.

Fado is dubbed a national treasure of Portugal

and was listed in 2011 as World Intangible Heritage.

The official also announced that bundles will be made for local travel agencies to sell to visitors.

Another highlight of this year’s program is an artistic exhibition featuring Tibetan Buddhist artifacts from the Palace Museum and the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. The Golden Eminence exhibition will see the return of the city’s annual collaboration with the Beijing museum. Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, which has been the traditional seat of successive Panchen Lamas, is one of the four great monasteries of Tibetan Buddhism’s Gelug

lineage.

A total of 137 treasures from the collections of both the Palace Museum and Tashi Lhunpo Monastery are on display in this exhibition. These meticulously selected artworks tell the story of the exchanges between the successive Panchen Lamas and the Qing court, showing the unity and integration among diverse ethnic groups along the way.

The exhibition will run from Dec. 16, 2023 to Mar. 17, 2024.

The full list of events – with many co-hosted by casino operators – is available on the website of the bureau.



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MacauDaily 澳門每日時報
Times

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

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

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com
OFFICE MANAGER_Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com
ADDRESS_Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84
Advertisement_advertising@macaudailytimes.com
For subscription and general issues: general@macaudailytimes.com | Printed at Welfare Printing Ltd

RENATO MARQUES



TRANSPORT

Hotels and students boosting LRT operations

RENATO MARQUES

THE hospitality industry and students from several institutions in Taipa are contributing to the boosting of operations of the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) system, particularly with the recent opening of the Barra station.

An investigation by the Times on the Taipa Line of the LRT found that many of the people filling the train cars since last Friday are tourists. Some tourists had been advised by local hotels to use the LRT for commuting and visiting various local landmarks.

Interviewed by the Times inside the train, a group of six visitors in their 20s from Shanghai said they were using the LRT to travel from the Macau International Airport to a recently opened hotel in Cotai, explaining that they were told by the hotel that “this was the easiest and fastest method.”

On the same train, a couple from Singapore also told the Times they intended to visit A-Ma Temple and were advised by another hotel unit also located in Cotai to take the LRT to Barra terminal station

“We wanted to visit this famous

temple and we asked the concierge what kind of transportation we could use to get there and they advised us to take the train [LRT], which is similar to the MRT and LRT system we have in Singapore.”

The same couple said they found the fare relatively cheap (they said they paid MOP10/each for a single-journey) and the service very convenient.

“In Singapore, for a similar distance, we also pay about SGD1.68, which is about the same price.”

ADDED CONVENIENCE FOR STUDENTS

Another group clearly taking a good number of trips is the students. During the investigation, students from three institutions in particular, Macao Sam Yuk Middle School – Kindergarten section, The International School of Macao (TIS) and Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) were observed using the LRT.

Interviewed by the times, two students from MUST traveling from Barra station to MUST station said that they use the LRT often, and “particularly on rainy days,” adding that it is much more convenient than using the buses as “you [are] always inside [the

stations of the train].”

They said that they were already using it, transferring to the bus at the Jockey Club, “but now [it] is much easier as we can go to [the] Macau side with LRT.”

Accompanied by parents or guardians several students from TIS also said they use LRT as “it is very close to school” although in most cases the opening of the Barra station makes no difference as they use it mostly between MUST station and Pai Kok, Stadium or Jockey Club.

The Times observed that the busier stations and those where more passengers get on and off from the LRT were Barra, MUST, Cotai East, Lotus and Pai Kok.

BARRA OPENING ‘DOUBLED’ THE PASSENGER NUMBERS

According to a staff member from the LRT company, assisting and giving direction to travelers inside the train car, since the opening of the Barra Station (December 8) the number of passengers using the system “ha[s] increased significantly and maybe doubled.” She also noted that there is a very large number of passengers at the moment trying out the system for the first time and doing

round-trips between Barra and Taipa Ferry Terminal “as an entertainment.”

“We see many senior citizens particularly, some in the company of young children [who appear to be their grandchildren]. They are using the LRT as a city tour. Which is OK. It’s a form of bonding also between generations.”

SOME STATIONS MORE CONVENIENT THAN OTHERS

With several mega projects still under construction in the Cotai area that are taking into account the presence of the LRT, it is likely that the transport system will progressively gain more enthusiasts.

Paths and pedestrian flyovers are already in place for the linking of LRT stations to the Islands Medical Complex as well as for the new mall and commercial building being constructed at the side of the Studio City development in the plot of land that was formerly part of the former Lotus Flower Border post.

Interviewed by the Times, a crew member from an airliner traveling to the airport admitted that she uses the LRT as it the fastest and cheapest solution to travel between her home in the area of Taipa Central Park and the Airport.

“It’s more practical than us[ing] a bus that is usually very full, and I need to carry my luggage and, at the same time, [it is] much cheaper than taxis, which are also not easy to get at some times of the day,” the crew member of Japanese nationality said. She added, “I believe for the Airport and [Taipa]

Ferry Terminal as well as some of the hotels, the LRT is very convenient, for others, not so much,” she said giving the example of the integrated resorts that are located in the so-called Cotai Strip, which are “not [in] walking distance [of] any of the stations.”

ALL HOPES ON EAST LINE

At least two local residents also traveling on the LRT yesterday noted that although the opening of the Barra station is a “step forward” or an “advancement,” maximum use of the LRT will only occur when the East Line comes into operation.

The plan so far unveiled for this line includes six stations over a total length of 7.7 km. The north part of the East Line is set to run from the neighboring area of Border Gate passing through the coastline in front of the Avenida Norte do Hipódromo and the Avenida da Ponte da Amizade to the New Urban Landfills of Zone A. Extending south along the central greenway of Zone A, the East Line then crosses the sea in an underwater tunnel to connect the New Urban Landfills of Zone E on the Taipa side, connecting to the existing tip of the Taipa Line after the Taipa Ferry Terminal.

Such a project would link the Border Gate to the Macau Port of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, as well as the new residential and commercial areas of Zone A to Taipa, linking also two land borders, one maritime border and one air border.

The conclusion of the East Line is expected to be in 2028.

FIVE VICTIMS OF FAKE 'CTM POINTS'

The police have received reports from five local men and women who were each suspected of being defrauded when fake "CTM points" were exchanged for gifts when their points expired. Each person lost an amount ranging from about MOP400 to MOP30,000. The police said that the five people who had been scammed were three men and two women, one of whom was an elderly person. The victims received a message claiming that their points were about to expire and asked them to log in and fill in their personal information in exchange for their points. It was later discovered that the credit card had been used as a gift, and the spending amounts were in pounds, US dollars and euros.

MAN ARRESTED FOR PUBLIC EXPOSURE

A 39-year-old man is accused of exposing himself to a female student on the bus, the Judiciary Police report. The security police checked the surveillance system and arrested him. The victim filed a report to police authorities after the suspect, sitting next to her on the bus, allegedly used a backpack to cover his genitals while exposing himself to her. The suspect admitted to the crime and confessed that he was attracted by the appearance of the female student and so had acted in the criminal manner.

VISA FREE TO KYRGYZSTAN FOR MACAU PASSPORT HOLDERS

Holders of the Macau SAR Passport may enter Kyrgyzstan without a visa for a maximum stay of 30 days, the Identification Services Bureau has announced. The announcement came after the Macao Special Administrative Region received a notification from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan, via the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. At present, a total of 145 countries or territories have agreed to grant visa-free access or visa-on-arrival to Macau SAR Passport holders. In addition, 26 countries have confirmed that Macau SAR Passport holders can apply for an e-visa or apply for visas online.

FAOM SURVEY

SALARIES OF 75% RESPONDENTS REMAINED STAGNANT FOLLOWING PANDEMIC

LYNZY VALLES

A survey shows that the income of nearly 75% of respondents has remained the same since 2019, not receiving any salary rise during the pandemic amid the economic downturn.

Commissioned by the Macau Federation of Trade Unions (FAOM) to determine the working status of employees in various industries from January to December this year, the survey has received 3,115 validly completed questionnaires.

The survey has also shown that 20% of respondents have had their salaries cut while the city endured some of the world's strictest anti-virus controls for nearly three years, which made the tourism-driven economy plunge.

Lawmaker and vice-chairman of the FAOM Leong Sun Iok said in a press conference that many employees hope to improve their employment level by changing jobs,



while many have also called on the government to improve vocational training systems in the city.

Iok has also called local firms to "appropriately increase employee

salaries."

Earlier this year, a survey by the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) found that employees in the city are increa-

singly confident in the job market, but less satisfied with their current roles.

The poll uncovered an 11.87% increase in the confidence index concerning Macau's job market, despite it being 2.5% down compared to 2019. However, overall satisfaction with work declined by 2.6% compared to 2019, largely due to a drop in work quality and job stability.

The three satisfaction indicators with the largest increase are the impact of work on health (20.34%); salary (17.69%); and other benefits (15.96%).

Meanwhile, the FAOM survey also shows that more than 40% of respondents believe that the illegal labor problem in Macau is serious.

Therefore, the FAOM proposes four suggestions, covering training systems, labor rights, foreign employment policies, and employment of middle-aged and elderly people.

SPORTS

ITTF SINGLES WORLD CUPS SET TO RETURN IN 2024

THE International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) has announced the return of the men's and women's singles World Cups slated for April 2024 in Macau.

The world's table tennis governing body made the announcement following the conclusion of the inaugural Mixed Team World Cup in Chengdu, southwest China's Sichuan Province, on Sunday.

The World Cups will be staged at the Galaxy Arena,

the largest indoor arena in Macau.

In a press release, the ITTF said the decision to revive the World Cups signifies a strategic move, underscoring the ITTF's commitment to revitalizing and preserving the rich legacy of the sport.

"As the global governing body approaches its centenary year, in 2026, this initiative aligns seamlessly with its mission to breathe new life into iconic events," the ITTF stated.

Originating in 1980, the first ITTF World Cup was held in Hong Kong, China, with the latest staged in Weihai, east China's Shandong Province in 2020.

Since 2021, the event has been replaced with the World Table Tennis (WTT) Cup Finals, which was staged in Singapore in 2021, and Xinxiang, central China's Henan Province, in 2022.

"The remarkable success of the 2023 Mixed Team World Cup in

Chengdu has set the stage for an exciting future. Building on this momentum, we are thrilled to announce the return of the singles World Cups in April 2024 in Macau, while the Mixed Team event will make a comeback in Chengdu in November next year," said ITTF president Petra Sorling.

"This decision underscores our commitment to advancing the sport globally, and we are confident that we will once again wit-

ness incredible events that will further enrich the legacy of the ITTF World Cups," she added.

Liu Guoliang, ITTF deputy president and Chinese Table Tennis Association (CTTA) president, expressed his anticipation towards a successful ITTF World Cup in Macau.

"Macau has hosted many World Table Tennis events in recent years, and the enthusiasm of the fans has always impressed our athletes," he shared. **MDT/XINHUA**

GASTRONOMIC FEST

SINGER-CHEF NICOLAS TSE FINDS MACAU'S CREATIVITY 'AMAZING'

ANTHONY LAM

HONG Kong singer-chef Nicolas Tse finds Macau's gastronomic and culinary scenes amazing, as the city melds dining cultures from around the globe with its own.

During an MGM event

that blended a live music showcase with culinary delights, the star, dubbed Chef Nic in the kitchen, said that he finds it "magical" to see Macau gathering all the worldwide specialties despite its small size, when asked about his view on Macau as a UNESCO Creative

City of Gastronomy.

The event featured about two dozen chefs from the resort operator as well as Tse's collaborative squad. According to Chef Nic, these chefs have upgraded many street foods to be showcased at the event.

Besides working in the

kitchen, Tse has also performed his rock repertoire which many in the audience found reminiscent.

When asked if any further collaborations with Tse, including but not limited to having a Chef Nic branded outlet at MGM, Geoffrey Simmons, Vice President of Food and Beverage of MGM, said that his team is open to all possibilities.

Promising that additional dining options will be available at MGM in

the future, Simmons disclosed that the options will be new, which "will definitely be unique, new to the market, not be something that is refreshed or common," adding that the MGM team will ensure the variety and level of gastronomy "will be improved."

MGM highlighted that MGM Chef Nic Gastronomic Fest was organized to foster diversification and celebrate the Tourism+ concept promoted by the local government.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

SMALL and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are a pillar of social prosperity, stability and moderate economic diversification. They play a vital role in Macao's long-term prosperity, job market and economic diversification. Sands China upholds a business philosophy of supporting local enterprises, and the company has spared no effort in promoting Macao brands to support the Macao SAR government's policy of fostering SMEs, resulting in thousands of fruitful collaborations and strengthening Macao's development as a world centre of tourism and leisure.

PROCUREMENT SPEND

In 2015, Sands China co-launched its Local Small, Medium and Micro Suppliers Support Program with the Macao Chamber of Commerce (MCC), becoming the first integrated resort operator in Macao to launch such a programme. It focuses on three categories of local businesses: small and micro companies, "Made-in-Macao" companies, and Macao young entrepreneurs. This aligns with the Macao government's initiative to "buy local" and demonstrates Sands China's commitment to supporting local enterprises as part of its corporate social responsibility efforts. The programme has made remarkable achievements in the eight years since its implementation. Sands China's percentage of procurement spend on Macao enterprises increased from 77% to 89% while the percentage of procurement spend on SMEs climbed from 14% to 25% as of last year.

SANDS PROCUREMENT ACADEMY

To reinforce its support for local SMEs under the programme, Sands China launched the E.I.T. initiative, which is comprised of three pillars: Financial Support, Invitational Matching, and Training and Development. E.I.T. targets both existing and new local Sands China suppliers and

LOCAL PROCUREMENT

SANDS CHINA LEADS SMES TO STRIVE FOR GROWTH AND SUCCESS



delivers practical knowledge by Sands China, the Macao Chamber of Commerce and the Macau Productivity and Technology Centre (CPTTM). It seeks to continually increase and strengthen procurement between Sands China and local SME suppliers by enhancing their capabilities.

The Sands Procurement Academy has delivered over 8100 training hours since launching in 2017, having welcomed 14 cohorts to date. Over 520 local SME suppliers have enrolled, and more than 480 have already graduated. Graduates of the academy have consistently given positive feedback about the ways the programme has benefited their business. Graduates receive a completion certificate and are given preferential procurement opportunities with Sands China under otherwise equal circumstances.

SANDS RESORTS INCUBATION CENTRE

In keeping with the Macao SAR government's initiative to spearhead technology-driven smart tourism, Sands China launched the Sands Resorts Incubation Centre in May. It aims to not only facilitate the optimization and refinement of existing products and services, but to also facilitate the development of new and innovative solutions targeted at the integrated resort industry. It seeks to help entrepreneurs transform their conceptual ideas into commercially viable offerings that are poised for success in the marketplace.

Additionally, Sands China has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Parafuturo de Macau Investment and Development Limited (PFM) to work together to identify potential enterprises through periodic workshops,

classroom trainings, and competition events. By sharing industry expertise and business knowledge, the two entities aim to enhance the development of Macao's young entrepreneurs and support the growth of local small, medium, and micro suppliers.

LOCAL SUPPLIER OPEN DAY

Sands China held its 2023 Sands China Local Supplier Open Day in April, aimed at providing procurement opportunities for prospective local SME suppliers. The event was well-attended, with close to 220 SME suppliers participating. The Local Supplier Open Day gave potential suppliers a chance to connect with Sands China procurement representatives and learn about procurement opportunities in various departments. Several categories of procurement booths were set up: food and beverage, out-

side services and logistics, marketing and printing, technology and gaming, operating supplies and equipment, facilities and construction, and Macao brand and made-in-Macao products.

THE MACAO SHOWCASE

Sands China held "The Macao Showcase" at Singapore's Marina Bay Sands in June, inviting sales and trade partners, regional and international media, Singapore's residents, and travellers to experience the multifaceted charm of Macao – promoting the city as a world centre of tourism and leisure and a premier MICE destination. Sands China utilized the event as a large sales platform for Macao's SME suppliers, leading a delegation of 200 representatives to Singapore to promote the unique beauty, products, and arts & culture of Macao.

The Macao Showcase was the first time a Macao integrated resort operator drove SME suppliers to participate in an exhibition together to facilitate overseas business opportunities. One of Macao's time-honoured SMEs, Wong Chi Kei Foods (Macao) Co. Ltd., recently made its mark in Singapore through The Macao Showcase, where the company showcased its latest gift souvenir, "Yea Yea Noodles (Grandpa Noodles)." Additionally, Sands China successfully facilitated procurement partnerships for several SMEs, such as Choi Heong Yuen Bakery, Kam-in Catering, and Yeng Kee Bakery through The Macao Showcase, enabling them to successfully enter the international market.

SANDS SHOPPING CARNIVAL

In order to boost post-pandemic economic revival, Sands China held the 2023 Sands Shopping Carnival in July at The Venetian Macao's Cotai Expo, attracting nearly 110,000 visits over its four days of shopping, activities and performances; around 50 percent of the visitation came from tourists. Now in its fourth year, the carnival has welcomed over 420,000 visitors since debuting in 2020.

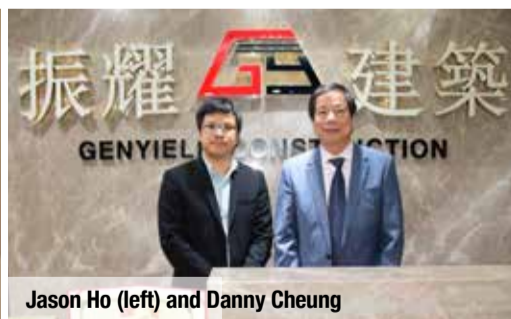
The Sands Shopping Carnival has become an annual signature event for Sands China. It gives local residents and tourists an exciting weekend destination, while offering a free business platform for local SMEs and Sands retailers to take advantage of the synergistic effects of having both local and international brands at one event. This year's carnival offered visitors more than 580 booths to browse, the highest number to date, across 11 zones.



Wong Yu Fei

"Our company achieved great results from participating in 'The Macao Showcase' organised by Sands China in Singapore. And our participation in this year's Sands Shopping Carnival brought us a lot of business opportunities as well, as the event attracted a great number of residents and tourists. Sands China fully supports local SMEs – they provided booths for us for free at the carnival, which helps alleviate costs, in turn making SMEs more confident about sales."

Business Development Director,
Wong Chi Kei Foods (Macao) Co. Ltd.



Jason Ho (left) and Danny Cheung

"Sands China's valuable experience in international construction standards and quality management has led to local SMEs learning and accumulating experience and professional skills. Since working with Sands China, Genyiel has become more comprehensive and diversified, providing opportunities for our engineering management, technology and construction team members to improve their capabilities and craftsmanship. This has brought positive impact to the company, as it has enhanced our competitiveness in the market and developed our business."

Deputy General Manager, and Managing Director,
Genyiel Construction Co., Ltd.



Fred Ma Chi Ngai

"The Macao Chamber of Commerce and Sands China have worked together on SME support programs for eight years now, in line with the government's policies to promote the development of Macao's SMEs. Initiatives such as SME Open Day and the Sands Procurement Academy have brought many business opportunities and new space for development to SMEs. During the pandemic, Sands China's Expedited Payment Program helped alleviate SMEs' cash flow pressures and restored their competitiveness amid unstable conditions. This shows that Sands China upholds the business philosophy of supporting SMEs, creating mutual benefits and a win-win situation."

President, Macao Chamber of Commerce

HONG KONG

Voter turnout plunges below 30% in council elections

KANIS LEUNG, HONG KONG

VOTER turnout plunged below 30% in Hong Kong's first district council elections since new rules introduced effectively shut out all pro-democracy candidates, setting a record low since the territory returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

According to official data yesterday, 27.5% of the city's 4.3 million registered voters cast ballots in Sunday's polls — significantly less than the record 71.2% who participated in the last elections held at the height of anti-government protests in 2019. The pro-democracy camp won those polls in a landslide victory, in a clear rebuke of the government's handling of the protests.

Beijing loyalists are expected to take control of the district councils after Sunday's elections, with results showing big pro-government parties winning most directly elected seats.

"The newly elected district councilors come from diverse backgrounds," Hong Kong leader John Lee said. "They will make the work in the districts more multidimensional ... better aligning with the interests of the citizens."

The district councils, which primarily handle municipal matters such as organizing construction projects and public facilities, were Hong Kong's last major political bodies mostly chosen by the public.

But under new electoral rules



introduced under a Beijing order that only "patriots" should administer the city, candidates must secure endorsements from at least nine members of government-appointed committees that are mostly packed with Beijing loyalists, making it virtually impossible for any pro-democracy candidates to run.

An amendment passed in July also slashed the proportion of directly elected seats from about 90% to about 20%.

The electoral changes fur-

ther narrowed political freedoms in the city, following a separate overhaul for the legislature in 2021. Following those changes, turnout in the last legislative election two years ago plunged to 30% from 58% in 2016.

Lee on Sunday said the council elections were the "last piece of the puzzle" in implementing the principle of "patriots" administering the city.

Beijing's top office for Hong Kong affairs yesterday said the council elections helped promote

the "enhancement of democracy."

China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said the Chinese government believed the newly elected members would be able to "serve as a good link" between the city's government and the people of Hong Kong.

Government officials have downplayed turnout as a measure of the overhaul's success, but stepped up efforts to promote the polls. Lee's administration held carnivals, an outdoor concert and offered free admission to some

museums to encourage voting.

Kenneth Chan, professor at Hong Kong Baptist University's government and international studies department, said the low turnout was not the result of political apathy or a coordinated boycott, but rather "a widespread political disengagement by design" under the revised rules, with most people understanding that they were "disinvited."

"The record low turnout must be hugely humiliating for the government and its allies given the unprecedented propaganda campaigns and ubiquitous mobilization," he said.

John Burns, an honorary professor of politics and public administration at the University of Hong Kong, anticipated the "narrow range of patriots" in the new councils were likely to consult like-minded people, and that might keep the government out of touch with people's true concerns and opinions.

"This can lead to instability," he said. "It can lead to a government not understanding people's expectations when it makes policy. The government needs the active cooperation of all citizens to implement policies."

Sunday's elections were extended by 1.5 hours because of a failure in the electronic voter registration system. Multiple politicians said the glitch would affect their chances of winning because some residents gave up voting before authorities implemented a contingency plan.

David Lok, chairman of the Electoral Affairs Commission, refused to comment on the turnout and said it was unclear whether some voters were unable to cast ballots due to the system failure.

"I can't rule out this possibility," he said. "If they can't vote due to our errors, I feel remorseful." MDT/AP

OBITUARY

Doctor and self-exiled activist Gao Yaojie dies at 95

RENOWNED Chinese doctor and activist Gao Yaojie who exposed the AIDS virus epidemic in rural China in the 1990s died Sunday (yesterday, Macau time) at the age of 95 at her home in the United States.

Gao's outspokenness about the virus outbreak — which some gauged to have infected tens of thousands — drove her to live in self-exile for over a decade in Manhattan, New York.

Lin Shiyu, a woman close to Gao and who compiled an oral history of her, confirmed to The Associated Press in

an email yesterday that Gao's "guardian," Columbia University professor Andrew J. Nathan, contacted her to let her know of the physician's death. Nathan did not immediately respond to emailed questions by the AP.

Gao became China's most well-known AIDS activist after speaking out against blood-selling schemes that infected thousands with HIV, mainly in her home province of Henan in central China. Her contributions were ultimately acknowledged to a certain extent by the Chi-

nese government, which was forced to grapple with the AIDS crisis well into the 2000s.

Gao's work received recognition from international organizations and officials. She moved to the U.S. in 2009, where she began holding talks and writing books about her experiences.

She told the Associated Press in a previous interview that she withstood government pressure and persisted in her work because "everyone has the responsibility to help their own people. As a doctor, that's my job. So it's worth it." MDT/AP



Med Dr Gao Yaojie

VIETNAM

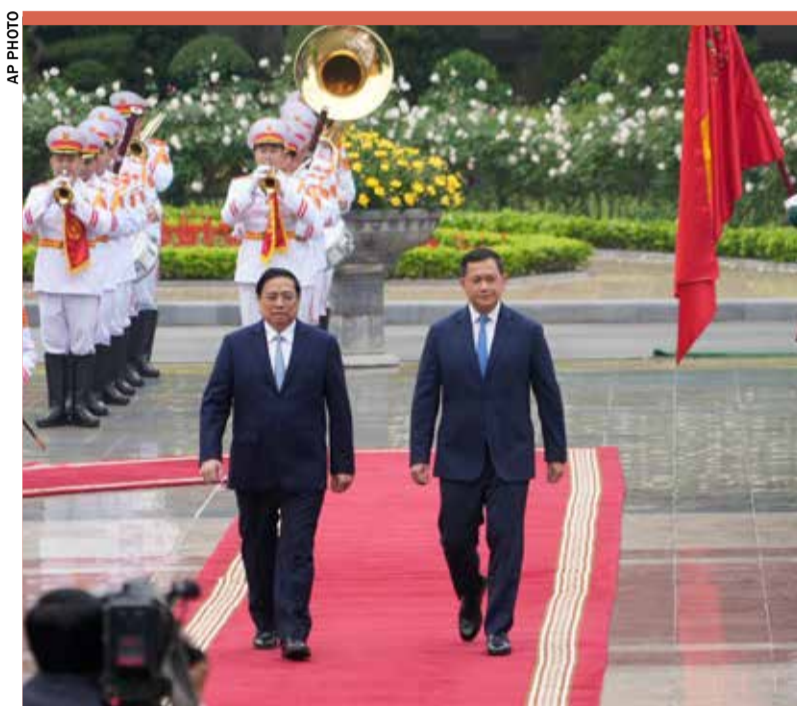
Cambodia's Hun Manet holds talks in neighboring country on first visit as PM

CAMBODIAN Prime Minister Hun Manet met with his Vietnamese counterpart yesterday on an official visit to boost relations between the neighboring Southeast Asian countries that are close but historically complicated.

Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh and Hun Manet attended a welcome ceremony in the capital, Hanoi, where they reviewed an honor guard before holding talks that Cambodian officials had said would cover cooperation in the fields of education, trade, security, defense and border affairs, among others.

The two leaders also witnessed the signing of several agreements on cooperation in trade and science.

Two-way trade between Vietnam and Cambodia totaled \$10.57 billion in 2022 and \$7.1 billion in the first 10 months of 2023, with a projection to reach \$9 billion by the end of the year,



Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh (left) and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet inspect honor guards in Hanoi, yesterday

according to the state Vietnam News Agency. Vietnam is Cambodia's third-largest trading partner.

Hun Manet was also schedu-

led to meet with Nguyen Phu Trong, who as general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam is the country's top leader; Vo Van Thuong, the president;

and Vuong Dinh Hue, the National Assembly chief.

It is Hun Manet's first visit to Vietnam since he became prime minister in August, succeeding his father Hun Sen, who maintained close relations with Vietnam's communist leadership during his 38 years in power.

Many Cambodians, however, harbor a traditional hostility toward bigger and richer Vietnam, which they suspect of seeking to annex Cambodian territory. Some Cambodian politicians highlight the issue, and prejudice against ethnic Vietnamese residents is not rare.

Hun Manet's father, Hun Sen, was installed as prime minister in 1985 by a Vietnamese occupying force that had invaded Cambodia to oust the communist Khmer Rouge from power in 1979. The extremist policies of the Khmer Rouge are held responsible for the deaths of an estimated 1.7 million Cambodians through starvation, overwork and execution.

Hun Sen had served as a middle-ranking Khmer Rouge commander, losing an eye in combat during Cambodia's 1970-75 civil war. He fled to Vietnam in 1977 — as the Khmer Rouge were carrying out purges among its own cadres — and joined an anti-Khmer Rouge resistance movement established there.

Hun Manet in 1999 became the first Cambodian to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Before becoming prime minister, he was commander of Cambodia's army.

However, he shows no signs of deviating from his father's policies, under which China is Cambodia's most important ally. China in recent years has increased its influence throughout Southeast Asia.

China's leader Xi Jinping is scheduled to make a state visit to Vietnam today and tomorrow. It was not announced if he would also meet Hun Manet, whose own visit extends until today. **MDT/AP**

OFF JAPAN

DIVERS RECOVER THE SEVENTH OF EIGHT CREW MEMBERS KILLED IN CRASH OF US MILITARY OSPREY

DIVERS last weekend recovered the remains of the seventh of the eight crew members from a U.S. military Osprey aircraft that crashed off southern Japan during a training mission.

The Air Force CV-22 Osprey went down Nov. 29 just off Yakushima Island in southwestern Japan while on its way to Okinawa. The bodies of six of the crew had since been recovered, including five from the sunken wreckage of the aircraft.

The U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command said in a statement that the body found by Air Force divers was one of the two crew members still missing. The identity of the airman had been determined but the information was being withheld until next of kin could be notified, the command said.

"Currently there is a combined effort in locating and recovering the remains of our eighth airman," it said.

A week after the crash



and repeated reminders from the Japanese government about safety concerns, the U.S. military grounded all its Osprey V-22 aircraft after a preliminary investigation indicated something went wrong with the craft that was not a human error.

The U.S.-made Osprey is a hybrid aircraft that takes off and lands like a helicopter but can rotate its propellers forward and cruise much faster, like an airplane, during flight.


The crash raised new questions about the safety of the Osprey, which has been involved in multiple fatal accidents over its relatively

short time in service. Japan grounded its fleet of 14 Ospreys after the crash.

Japanese defense officials say Ospreys are key to the country's military buildup especially in southwestern Japan, in the face of a growing threat from China. But the crash has rekindled worries and public protests in areas where additional Osprey deployment is planned.

Japanese residents and media have criticized Japan's government for not pushing hard enough to get Ospreys grounded sooner or gain access to information about the crash. **MDT/AP**

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GAZA STRIP

Israel battles militants in main cities, with civilians still trapped in the crossfire

NAJIB JOBAIN
& SAMY MAGDY, RAFAH

ISRAELI forces battled Palestinian militants in Gaza's two largest cities yesterday, with civilians still trapped in the fighting even after hundreds of thousands have fled to other parts of the besieged territory.

Israel has pledged to keep fighting until it removes Hamas from power, dismantles its military capabilities and returns all of the hostages taken by militants during Hamas' Oct. 7 surprise attack into Israel that ignited the war.

The U.S. has provided unwavering diplomatic and military support for the campaign, even as it has urged Israel to minimize civilian casualties and further mass displacement. The war has killed thousands of Palestinian civilians and driven nearly 85% of the territory's 2.3 million people from their homes.

Residents said there was heavy fighting in and around the southern city of Khan Younis, where Israeli ground forces opened a new line of attack last week, and battles were still underway in parts of Gaza City and the built-up Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza, where large areas have been reduced to rubble.

Radwa Abu Frayeh saw heavy Israeli strikes around the European Hospital in Khan Younis, where the U.N. humanitarian office says tens of thousands of people have sought shelter. She said a strike hit a home close to hers late Sunday.

"The building shook," she said. "We thought it was the end and we would die."

Hussein al-Sayyed, who fled Gaza City earlier in the war with his three daughters, is staying in a three-story home in the city with around 70 others, and said they have been rationing food for days.

"Over many days, I have eaten just one meal a day to save food for the girls. They are still young," he said. "I don't know where to go. No



place is safe."

Hamas is believed to have suffered heavy losses, but yesterday it fired a barrage of rockets that set off sirens in Tel Aviv. One person was lightly wounded, according to the Magen David Adom rescue service, and Channel 12 broadcast footage of a cratered road and damage to cars and buildings in a suburb.

FEARS OF PERMANENT DISPLACEMENT

With very little aid allowed into Gaza, Palestinians face severe shortages of food, water and other basic goods. Some openly worry that Palestinians will be forced out of the territory altogether in a repeat of the mass exodus from what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation.

"Expect public order to completely break down soon, and an even worse situation could unfold including epidemic diseases and increased pressure for mass displacement into Egypt," U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told a forum in Qatar on Sunday.

Eylon Levy, an Israeli government spokesman, cal-

led allegations that Israeli intends to drive people en masse from Gaza "outrageous and false." But other Israeli officials have discussed such a scenario, raising alarm in Egypt and other Arab countries that refuse to accept any refugees.

At the same time, it's not clear when or if Palestinians would be allowed to return to Gaza City and much of the north — home to some 1.2 million before the war — where entire neighborhoods have been flattened.

Palestinians in Lebanon and the Israeli-occupied West Bank observed a general strike yesterday called by activists to demand a cease-fire, after the U.S. vetoed a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for one on Friday. A similar, nonbinding vote is planned in the General Assembly on Tuesday.

HARSH CONDITIONS IN THE SOUTH

Israel says it tries to avoid harming civilians and blames their deaths on Hamas, saying it endangers residents by fighting in dense areas and positioning military infrastructure — including weapons, tunnels and ro-

cket launchers — in or near civilian buildings.

The military said five soldiers were killed in a battle in southern Gaza on Sunday, after militants fired at them from a school and set off an explosive device. It said the troops, backed by aircraft and tanks, returned fire and killed the militants.

Forces operating in Jabaliya found a truck full of long-range rockets near a school, and a rifle, two rocket-propelled grenade launchers and explosives in a home, the army said.

Israel has urged people to flee to what it says are safe areas in the south — and the fighting in and around Khan Younis has pushed tens of thousands toward the town of Rafah and other areas along the border with Egypt. But Israel has continued to strike alleged militant targets throughout the territory. Associated Press reporters saw nine bodies brought to a local hospital after an airstrike hit a home in Rafah overnight.

The aid group Doctors Without Borders said people in the south are also falling ill as they pack into crowded shelters or sleep in tents in open areas. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1992 PRINCESS ROYAL REMARRIES



Princess Anne today became Mrs Timothy Laurence after a small family wedding in Scotland.

The 42-year-old arrived at Crathie church near Balmoral Castle accompanied by her father Prince Philip, and her daughter and bridesmaid 11-year-old Zara.

Before a small family congregation she and the groom, Commander Laurence, 37, exchanged vows to stay together "until God shall separate us by death."

Anne, dressed in a simple white suit with white blossoms in her hair, and Mr Laurence, in a Royal Navy uniform, emerged from the church to cheers from about 500 well wishers.

The newlyweds are expected to join the rest of the royal family for a short celebration at Craigmowan Lodge on the Balmoral estate.

Among the guests were the Queen, the Queen Mother, Princess Margaret and Anne's son from her first marriage Peter, 15.

Anne married Mark Phillips in 1973 at Westminster Abbey and they divorced this year.

But this is the first marriage for her groom whom she met during a tour of duty on the Royal Yacht Britannia.

In 1986, he was appointed an equerry to the Queen.

Their relationship became known in April 1989 when letters from the Commander were stolen from Anne's briefcase and given to newspapers.

Four months later Anne announced her separation from Mark Phillips.

It is hoped Anne's wedding celebrations will end a turbulent year for the Royal Family.

It was announced this week Prince Charles and the Princess of Wales have separated and Diana chose not to attend today's ceremony.

The Queen's second son, Prince Andrew, also separated from his wife the Duchess of York this year.

Both brothers accompanied Prince Edward at today's ceremony.

The palace would not reveal if there are any plans for a honeymoon.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Rumours Princess Anne and Commander Laurence were leading separate lives surfaced in 2001 but received no comment from the Royal Family. Princess Anne's no fuss approach to royal duties has won her much admiration as the hardest working royal - with 655 engagements in her diary in 2001 - but also criticism for being too severe. She was criticised at Christmas 2000 for apparently berating a well wisher in her seventies who had waited to greet the royal family as they completed a traditional celebration at St Mary Magdalen church on the Sandringham Estate. The princess apparently took a basket handmade by the woman and said: "What a ridiculous thing to do."

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Your charm will mesmerize members of the opposite sex today. You will not be pleased with family members who try to put demands on you when you just don't have the time.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Take a different approach; make an offer they just can't refuse. Sudden changes at home will affect family members more than you anticipated. Opportunities for travel must be carefully considered.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 You can accomplish a lot if you put some effort into household duties or redecorating plans. Any capricious behavior will confuse loved ones and your mood swings will result in loneliness.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 The advice you get today may be based on false information. You have been stagnating for some time now and you need a change of pace. Your ability to deal with humanitarian groups will enhance your reputation.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Don't expect new acquaintances to be completely honest about themselves. Don't jump too quickly if someone tries to make you join in on their crusade. You have the stamina and determination to succeed.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 You will meet exciting new people through interest groups or functions that you attend with your children. Take care of your own responsibilities before you help others.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 You can gain distinction; however, it may be for the wrong reasons. You can make money through real estate or by using your head when it comes to personal investments.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Be sure to use your charm and diplomacy when dealing with potential new clients. Put your money into a safe place that will ensure a profit if you let it sit long enough.

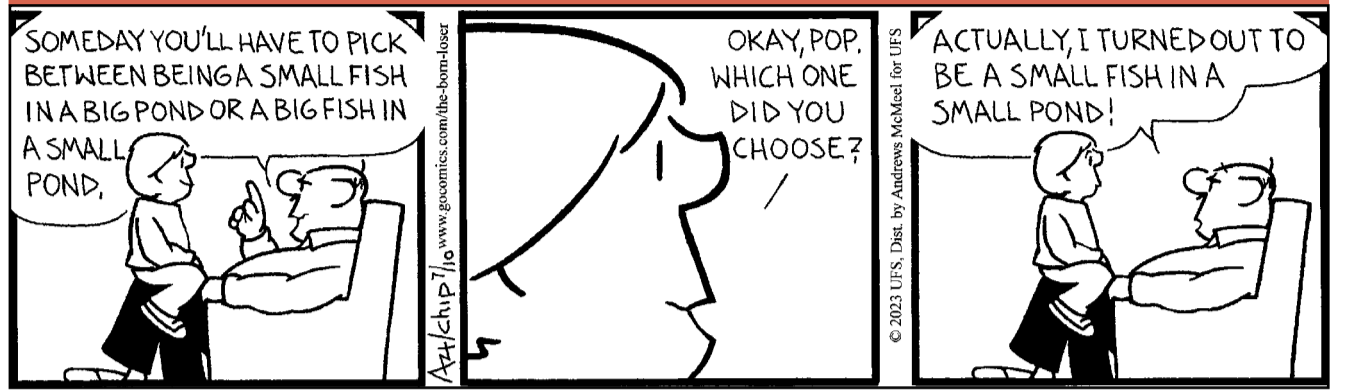
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Don't hesitate to voice your ideas and opinions. Take a look at investment opportunities. Losses are likely if you aren't careful where you leave your valuables.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Your lack of attention may have been a factor. Disruptions may set you back, but you're strong, and in the end the choices you make will be favorable.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 You can ask for favors but don't take them for granted. You may not be as well received in group endeavors if you try to force your will on others.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Don't forget that you've only heard one side of the story. You will have some problems with children, but if you are patient you will win their favor.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

MEDIUM					HARD									
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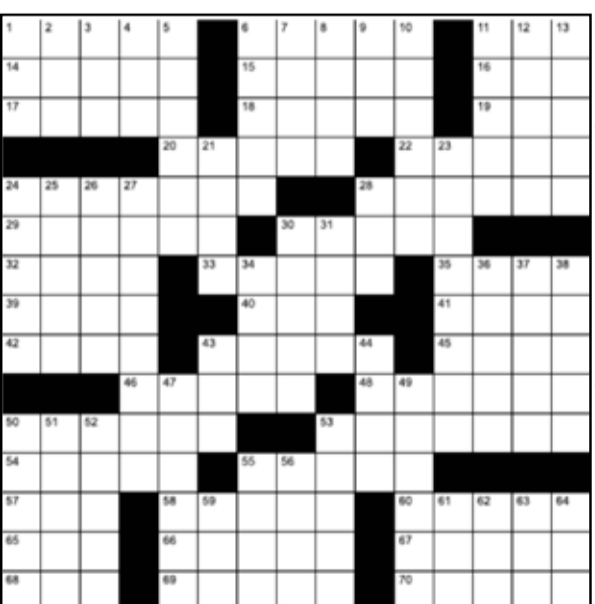
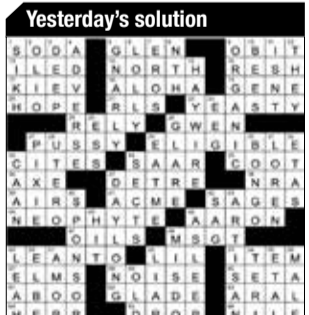
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-7	2	cloudy
Changchun	-21	-13	fine
Chengdu	7	14	fine
Chongqing	11	16	cloudy
Fuzhou	17	18	overcast
Guangzhou	19	25	cloudy
Guiyang	7	15	overcast
Haikou	21	27	rain
Hangzhou	5	11	overcast
Harbin	-26	-17	fine
Hefei	0	7	cloudy
Nanjing	3	8	cloudy
Shanghai	5	11	overcast
Taipei	19	20	rain
Wuhan	0	8	fine
Hong Kong	22	27	fine
WORLD			
Moscow	-6	-4	snow
Frankfurt	7	8	rain
Paris	9	14	rain
London	7	12	rain
New York	3	8	fine

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Brings up; 6- Babble; 11- Proverb ending?; 14- Beginning; 15- Employ again; 16- Dallas sch.; 17- Green; 18- Fuel transport; 19- Goal, intention; 20- Strike repeatedly; 22- Picture; 24- Shock with wonder; 28- Lighthouse; 29- Like the Everglades; 30- Enhance; 32- Bellyache; 33- Brand name for a copying machine; 35- When said three times, a 1970 war movie; 39- Eastern nanny; 40- Ovum; 41- Ages; 42- Galileo's birthplace; 43- Uneven; 45- Scottish boys; 46- Yellowish citrus fruit; 48- King Minos, for one; 50- Bring in from a foreign country; 53- Tarries; 54- Pithy; 55- Buckets; 57- From ___ Z; 58- Tribe ruler; 60- Small hill; 65- Author Deighton; 66- Baseball manager Joe; 67- Prufrock's creator; 68- Assn.; 69- Spanish Mister; 70- Profundity;

DOWN 1- Jockey Turcotte; 2- Bambi's aunt; 3- ___ see it...; 4- Increase, with "up"; 5- Increase; 6- Arrogant; 7- Bridle; 8- ___ Lang Syne; 9- Lao-___; 10- More spine-tingling; 11- Son of Abraham; 12- Buddy; 13- Light unit; 21- Quartz variety; 23- Short cape; 24- Songwriters' org.; 25- Pundit; 26- Gogol's "___ Bulba"; 27- Umbilicus; 28- Spar; 30- About 1% of the atmosphere; 31- Canines; 34- Architect Saarinen; 36- Pontificate; 37- Radiolocation; 38- Orgs.; 43- CPR expert; 44- Environmental sci.; 47- Builds; 49- Dared; 50- Author Calvino; 51- Unit just above a yard; 52- Fork; 53- One in prison for good; 55- Fishing reel; 56- Dynamic beginning; 59- Garden tool; 61- Cheer for Manolete; 62- Lulu; 63- Scribble (down); 64- Biblical verb ending;



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Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731	
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333	
Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300	
IAM 28 387 333	
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RELIGION

HOW SACRED IMAGES IN ASIAN CULTURES INCORPORATE DIVINE PRESENCE AND MAKE THEM COME 'ALIVE'

MICHAEL NAPARSTEK,
UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Walking into a favorite restaurant here in Knoxville, Tennessee, I was immediately greeted by a golden statue of Buddha, its sparkling gemstone eyes meeting my own as I made my way through the door. The aromas of Thai curries beckoned, but as I was led to a table, I kept thinking about those glinting eyes.

Sacred objects are everywhere: Statues and paintings of gods fill museum galleries and catalog pages alike. You might also see them gracing a neighbor's yard or upon an altar in your friend's home.

Some dazzle in bejeweled splendor. Others may appear more humble, their luster softened through generations of hands passing them down. Oftentimes, it can feel as though sacred images are looking back.

I research the ways in which objects express the power of divine presence in Asian religious contexts. Studying different perspectives on sacred objects helps us think beyond religious contexts and allows us to rethink how objects and images play an active role in our lives.

SACRED VISUAL CULTURE

Hindu practice is defined by "daran" – a ritual act of interacting with the divine through the

visual experience. Scholar Diana Eck describes this interaction in her seminal study of Indian visual culture, "Daran," in the following way: "to stand in the presence of the deity and to behold the image with one's own eyes, to see and be seen by the deity."

Theravada Buddhist rituals in Southeast Asia include all-night chanting sessions to recharge statues' power. As scholar of Theravada Buddhism Donald Swearer notes in "Becoming the Buddha," monastics and laypeople in northern Thailand will gather to recite Buddhist sutras while holding cords attached to an image of the Buddha, forming an intricate web of connection between the image and the Buddhist community.

The benefits gained from these chants is understood to enter the statue, recharging its karmic power and reanimating it to once again interact with the community.

Japanese Buddhist statues contain multiple items ritually placed within their wooden cavities: bones of saints, robes from eminent monastics and even silk-fashioned replicas of visceral organs like lungs and kidneys. As art historian James Dobbins notes, certain Buddhist rituals are performed in order to transform the body of a statue into a living body.

In cases like this, inanimate objects are believed to transform into

not only sacred things, but also active, living beings who can see, hear, taste and respond to the concerns of those who worship them.

'EYE-OPENING' RITUAL

There are many different ways to enliven an image, and each ritual tradition carries its own unique process. However, the most well-known across Asia is commonly referred to as the "eye-opening" ceremony. The term "eye-opening" gets its name from the culmination of an intense ritual process wherein the monk paints in the pupils of the image, thus opening its eye to see.

In Sri Lanka, Buddhist monks perform a version known as the *netra-pinkama*, which loosely translates to "meritorious action of the eyes."

Richard Gombrich, a scholar of Buddhism and Sanskrit, noted in his study of Buddhism in Sri Lanka that "Before consecration, a statue is treated with no more respect than one would give the materials of which it is composed. ... The very act of consecration indicates that a statue is being brought to life."

Enlivening an image is not a task undertaken lightly, as it is believed in some cases that any

demonic spirits loitering around could interrupt the process, thereby resulting in an ineffective ritual or even a malevolent icon. Both the temple grounds and the ritual specialists must undergo purification rites before beginning. The whole process is filled with strict procedures and avoidance of taboos – a common theme among consecration rituals across Asian religious traditions.

Perhaps most importantly, the monk must refrain from looking directly into the icon's eyes, and thus uses a mirror to look over their shoulder in order to paint in the icon's pupils.

In Taiwan, statues and paintings of Buddhist, Daoist and local gods will undergo a similar kind of practice known as "kaiguang," meaning "opening the radiance." Monks, Daoist masters and even the artists who carve the statues may perform the rite on behalf of the individuals or temple communities that commission the image.

Once completed, shops will wrap a piece of red paper around to cover the statue's eyes to ensure that the first thing that the image sees is the face of the one who requested it. The power of sacred vision is such that it must literally be kept under wraps.

LIVING IMAGES

Once its eyes have been opened, the image becomes a living thing capable of performing powerful deeds. As such, people may behave much differently – making offerings of incense and taking pains to follow social etiquette lest they offend. The care with which these objects are treated once they have been "activated" suggests that there is a lot more here than meets the eye.

As Eck's observation attests, being seen is critical to understanding what images do. By seemingly looking back at us, sacred images remind us that we are not alone in this world. In so doing, they also send a message that the world is not there for our eyes only, but that other viewpoints are just as powerful as our own.

MDT/THE CONVERSATION



A family prays to the Hindu god Ganesha

FOOTBALL | CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Bayern brings anger and unbeaten record to Man United after 5-1 loss

JAMES ELLINGWORTH,
DUESSELDORF

Wednesday, 04:00
Man Utd v Bayern Munich
H 2.8, D 4.1, A 2.5

ODDSCHECKER.COM

SIX years and 39 games. That's how long it's been since Bayern Munich lost a Champions League group stage game.

That makes today's [Wednesday, 04:00] game against Bayern an especially daunting task for Manchester United. After its own loss to Bournemouth, United needs to beat Bayern to have any chance of avoiding an embarrassingly early exit from the Champions League.

Bayern — which is already qualified for the knockout stages — won't just be playing to add a 40th game to that unbeaten record. After a shock 5-1 loss to Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday, forward Thomas Müller called on his teammates to show their emotion

AP PHOTO



Frankfurt coach Dino Toppmøller hugs Munich goalkeeper Manuel Neuer

at Old Trafford.

"There has to be a reaction following this. We need to tap into our anger, but we can't lose our heads," he said.

The Frankfurt game was much closer than the score suggests — Bayern actually had four more shots than its opponent — but

Bayern is keen to bounce back.

Midfielder Leon Goretzka suggested Bayern hadn't been helped by having 10 days without a game after its last Bundesliga match was called off because of heavy snow. He told broadcaster ZDF that Bayern had been training well, though "we couldn't have sensed

in training that we'd fallen into a hole, but after kickoff today it looked very much like that."

Against United, Bayern needs to show the Frankfurt loss was just a "slip-up," Goretzka said.

It was Bayern's third loss of the season but the first with England captain Harry Kane in the

starting lineup.

Kane had tasted defeat on his debut for Bayern against Leipzig in the German Super Cup in August, but on that occasion Bayern was already 2-0 down before Kane came on for a half-hour cameo — and he had the excuse of having been up late the night before for a medical and contract signing. Kane was an unused substitute in Bayern's only other loss of the season, an upset away defeat to third-division Saarbruecken in the German Cup.

Kane has 22 goals in 19 games for Bayern, numbers that resemble his Munich predecessor Robert Lewandowski. The former Tottenham striker has a career seven goals in 20 games against United and scored in the entertaining 4-3 win in Munich in September.

The 5-1 loss to Frankfurt was Bayern's worst loss in the Bundesliga since a defeat by the same score, to the same opponent, back in 2019. On that occasion it cost coach Niko Kovac his job. Thomas Tuchel is rather more secure in his job but history shows it doesn't take much to unsettle Bayern coaches. A draw or loss at United would be Bayern's third game in a row without a win.

Bayern heads to Manchester without forward Serge Gnabry after he lasted just five minutes off the bench against Frankfurt before he had to go off with a groin strain. **MDT/AP**

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羅善齡 Zelina Rodrigues
馬潔冰 Maria João Marques
陶義德 António Isóo de Azeredo
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黃瀚賢 Frederico Vong
斐彥德 Gonçalo Figueiredo
吳建鋒 Ng Teng Fong

實習律師 TRAINEE LAWYERS:

陳健雄 Eurico Chan
戴博晴 Tai Pok Cheng
吳佩愉 Ng Pui U
陳子健 Kimi Chan

法律專家及外地註冊律師

JURISTS AND LAWYERS
QUALIFIED IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS:
林思潔 Jessie Lin
羅成軒 José J. Rodrigues
楊詩婷 Si Teng leong

法律專家 JURISTS:

張偉鴻 Cheong Wai Hong
伍福賢 Domingos Ng
許栢桓 Rui Fernandes Brás

WWW.CCADVOG.COM
TEL: (853) 2837 2642/ 2837 2623

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C&C RECEIVED THE 1ST SILVER
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IN MACAU (2023)



OPINION

China Daily

Xinhua editors

HKSAR'S DISTRICT COUNCIL ELECTION FULLY DEMONSTRATES QUALITY DEMOCRACY

Various sectors of Hong Kong have spoken highly of the 7th District Council Ordinary Election of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) as a high-quality election with democracy underscored.

The election, the first of its kind since the HKSAR reformed the electoral system to improve district governance, concluded on Sunday and was considered to be of great significance.

Wong Wai-ching, a member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference National Committee, said that since district affairs are very important to people's livelihood, this high-quality election has fully implemented the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong," allowing the district councils (DCs) to restore their original function, which is to serve the public.

Many of the candidates in this election are young and of high quality, having professional backgrounds, and more importantly, with the further implementation of the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong," anti-China disruptors were excluded from the grassroots governance structure of the HKSAR and the DCs will have a group of dedicated and strong members who are ready to serve the public and society, said Wong who is also head of the Kowloon Federation of Associations.

Lau Siu-kai, a consultant for the Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macao Studies, a think tank, said the new term DCs are broadly representative of the Hong Kong community and fully reflect public opinion, representing the optimization and enhancement of democracy in Hong Kong.

Willy Fu, a director of the Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macao Studies, also vice chairman of the Executive Council of Hong Kong Legal Exchange Foundation, said the election is a high-quality reform from the bottom, bringing order out of chaos. It has been conducted in a fair, just, and open manner, following the law and regulations, so as to put the DCs back on the right track.

Yan Xiaojun, an associate professor in politics and public administration at the University of Hong Kong, said it is conducive to the implementation of the executive-led system of the HKSAR with the new term DCs reverting to their positioning as district advisory bodies which are not organs of political power in accordance with Article 97 of the HKSAR Basic Law.

Yan said that under the new system, the DCs can better perform their functions and play their roles in reflecting public opinion, to better assist the HKSAR government in further improving governance, which in turn, will improve people's livelihood and well-being.

Members of the HKSAR Legislative Council (Legco) also expressed their expectations that by working together with the legislature and the executive, the new DCs can help promote good governance of the HKSAR government and resolve deep-seated problems.

Lawmaker Chan Han-pan summed up this election as "high quality", noting that the success of the poll reflected the superiority of the new electoral system.

Chow Man-kong, another Legco member, said the new electoral system will effectively collect the views of the grassroots and, more importantly, enable quality democracy, which combines the rule of law with order, to take root in Hong Kong for the benefit of all Hong Kong residents.

SNOW BLANKETS NORTHERN CHINA, CLOSING ROADS AND SCHOOLS, SUSPENDING TRAIN SERVICE

THE BUZZ

Overnight snowfall across much of northern China prompted road closures and the suspension of classes and train service yesterday.

A red alert for a blizzard was in effect until mid-morning in Zhengzhou, Henan, and schools were closed there and in two other cities in Henan, state broadcaster CCTV reported. The airport was also closed until 11 a.m.

A total of 134 road sections in 12 provinces,



including 95 on highways, were closed as of 7 a.m. because of snowfall and icy conditions, CCTV said. Several trains in two parts of Shanxi province were suspended.

It was the first significant snowfall this year in much of China, outside of mountainous areas and in the northeast near the border with Russia's Siberia.

A thin layer of snow blanketed rooftops and parked cars in downtown Beijing.

AP PHOTO



This undated file photo provided by The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shows a vaquita porpoise

ENVIRONMENTALISTS ACCUSE!

MEXICAN STARTUP IS ILLEGALLY SELLING HEALTH DRINK FROM AN ENDANGERED FISH

DANIEL SHAILER, MEXICO CITY

Enviro watchdogs accused a Mexico-based startup Thursday of violating international trade law by selling a health supplement made from endangered totoaba fish to several countries including the U.S. and China.

Advocates told The Associated Press they also have concerns that the company, The Blue Formula, could be selling fish that is illegally caught in the wild.

The product, which the company describes as "nature's best kept secret," is a small sachet of powder containing collagen taken from the fish that is designed to be mixed into a drink.

Under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, to which Mexico and the U.S. are both signatories, any export for sale of totoaba fish is illegal, unless bred in captivity with a particular permit. As a listed protected species, commercial import is also illegal under U.S. trade law.

The environmental watchdog group Cetacean Action Treasury first cited the company in November. Then on Thursday, a coalition of environmental charities — The Center for Biological Diversity, National Resources Defense Council and Animal Welfare Institute — filed a written complaint to CITES.

The Blue Formula did not immediately respond to an AP request for comment.

The company claims on its website to operate "100%" sustainably by sourcing fish from Cygnus Ocean, a farm which has a permit to breed totoaba, and using a portion of their profits to release some farmed fish back into the wild.

However, Cygnus Ocean does not have a permit for commercial export of their farmed fish, according to the environmental groups. The farm also did not immediately respond to a request from the AP for comment.

While the ecological impact of breeding totoaba in captivity is much smaller relative to wild fishing, ad-

vocates like Alejandro Olivera, the Center for Biological Diversity's Mexico representative, fear the company and farm could be used as a front.

"There is no good enforcement of the traceability of totoaba in Mexico," said Olivera, "so it could be easily used to launder wild totoaba."

Gillnet fishing for wild totoaba is illegal and one of the leading killers of critically endangered vaquita porpoise, of which recent surveys suggest less than a dozen may exist in the wild.

Gillnetting is driven by the exorbitant price for totoaba bladders in China, where they are sold as a delicacy for as much as gold. The Blue Formula's supplement costs just under \$100 for 200 grams.

In October U.S. Customs and Border Protection seized over \$1 million worth of totoaba bladders in Arizona, hidden in a shipment of frozen fish. Roughly as much again was seized in Hong Kong the same month, in transit from Mexico to Thailand. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Brussels Thousands of protesters are expected to gather today to protest what they perceive as new austerity measures as the 27 European Union countries discuss ways to overhaul rules on government spending. Finance ministers from the bloc have been negotiating for months a reform of the EU's rules limiting debt and deficits for member states, known as the Stability and Growth Pact, which would curtail the options of nations seeking to spend their way out of a crisis and potentially force them into austerity.

AP PHOTO



Hungary Pressure mounted yesterday not to veto the opening of European Union membership talks and the supply of economic aid to war-torn Ukraine at a pivotal EU summit this week, after Prime Minister Viktor Orban demanded that the issue be struck from the agenda. With tens of billions of dollars in military and economic assistance blocked by Senate Republicans in the United States, Ukraine is desperate to ensure longer-term financial and military assistance as fighting in its almost 2-year war with Russia bogs down.

AP PHOTO



Zambia Eleven informal miners have been confirmed dead and their bodies retrieved from an open-pit copper mine in Zambia after landslides buried them in tunnels they were digging last month. One survivor has been found but up to 26 others remain missing and are feared dead nearly two weeks after the disaster. Rescuers announced the latest death toll late on Sunday. The survivor, a 49-year-old man, was pulled out from underneath the debris last week and is recovering in the hospital, said the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit, which is overseeing the rescue operation.