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**THE HAPPINESS SCORE IN A SURVEY INDICATES HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE NOT HAPPY WITH THEIR LIVES, WITH A SCORE OF 2.97 OUT OF 5 POINTS**

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**LAWMAKER MA CALLS FOR GOV'T TO UNVEIL DETAILS ON THE 250,000 'GIFTS' PLAN TO BENEFIT SMES**

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**LEADER OF KUOMINTANG VISITS THE MAINLAND AS TAIWAN'S ELECTION LOOMS**

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**China** An accident in a coal mine in northern Shanxi province left three people dead, state broadcaster CCTV yesterday reported. Four people were cleaning a bunker used to store coal when the accident occurred on Wednesday. It was unclear what caused the accident. Rescue workers were able to save one person, but the three others died after resuscitation efforts failed, the report said. The accident occurred at Huajin Coking Coal Company in Shanxi, a major coal-producing region.

AP PHOTO



**South Korea's** Olympic chief has defended a decision to send hundreds of athletes to a military camp next week as part of preparations for the 2024 Games in Paris, citing a need to instill mental toughness in competitors. About 400 athletes, including women, will arrive at a marine boot camp in the southeastern port city of Pohang on Monday for a three-day training aimed at building resilience and teamwork.

AP PHOTO

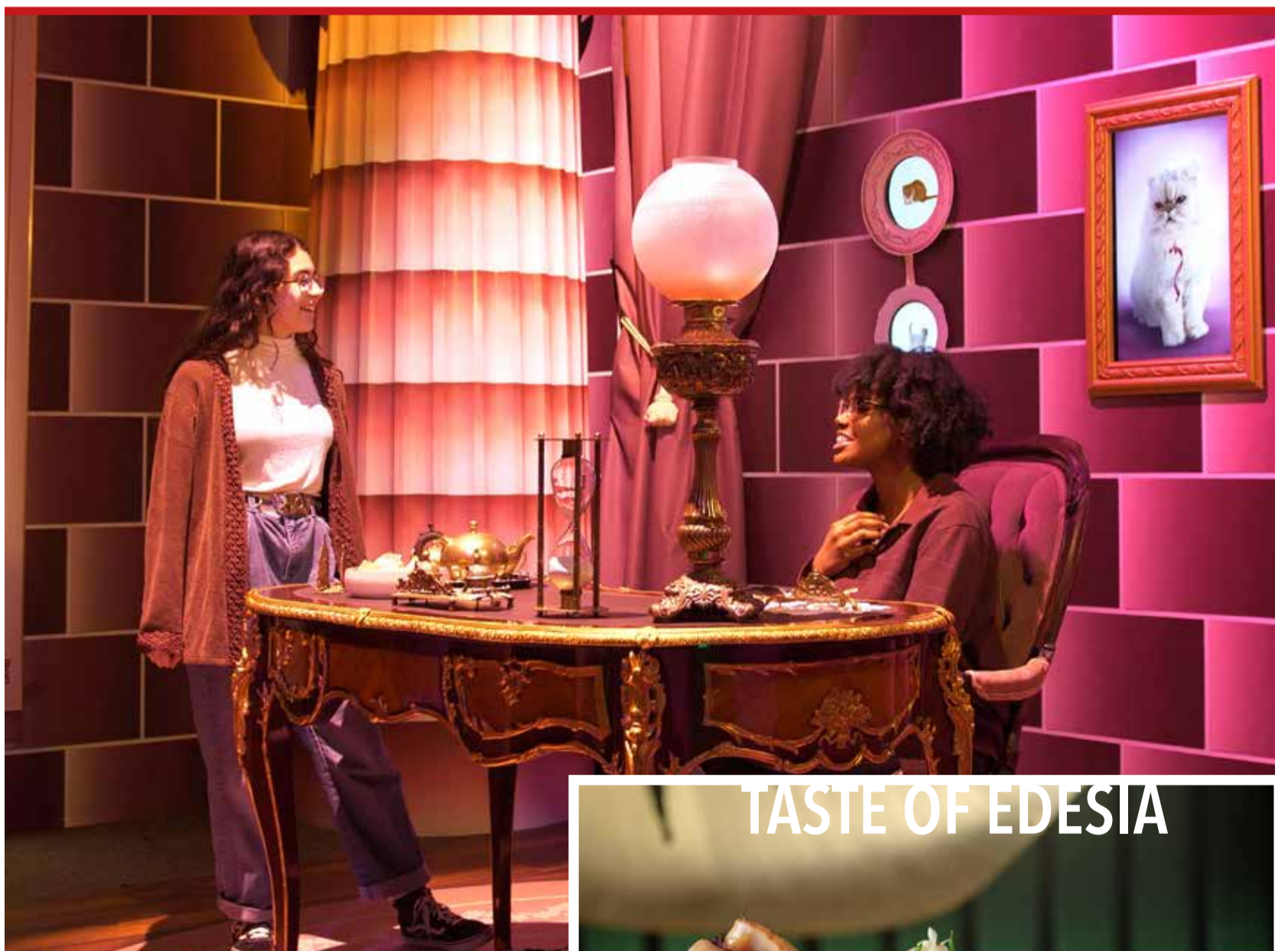


**Colombian** authorities were investigating the alleged kidnapping and murder of a Hmong American comedian and activist who was found dead Monday in a wooded area of the northern city Medellín. Prosecutors told reporters that Tou Ger Xiong, 50 (pictured), arrived in Medellín on Nov. 29. He went to meet a friend in the city on Dec. 10. Hours later he called a friend in the U.S. to tell him that he was kidnapped and his captors demanded a \$2,000 ransom to free him.

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## THE LONDONER POTTERHEADS IN FOR A TREAT

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## TASTE OF EDESIA

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ANTHOINY LAM

PRAIA GRANDE

# LAND PLOT DRAFT PLAN RETURNED AMID CPU MEMBERS' OBJECTIONS

**T**HE draft plan for a land plot in Praia Grande has returned for further review as six Urban Planning Committee (CPU) members and four members of the public expressed opposing opinions.

These opinions concerned the permitted use of the land. The Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU), the authority that issues draft development plans, has designated the land to be used for commercial purposes C1 and C2, pursuant to legal definitions.

However, at a recent CPU meeting, six members expressed different opinions. In addition to the four opinions from the public received prior to the meeting, DSSCU director and CPU president Lai Weng Leong proposed to withdraw the plan for further review.

The four opinions from the public were drafted in similar fashion. All of them proposed that the use of the land be expanded to allow for "tourism and entertainment."

Their reasons provided echo the government's calls to develop tourism and support economic progress. The public opinions added that there are several three to four-star hotels in the neighborhood, proving that the expansion of use will not have significant impact on the planning and general environment of the area. The land plot's close proximity to



the tourism area makes it suitable for hotel use, they added.

Based on the land plot's location in between Avenida de Praia Grande and Rua de Formosa and the fact that the latter is filled with residential buildings, some members questioned whether, should other land plots in that area be

redeveloped in the future, they would be allowed for commercial use only.

In response, Leong Io Hong, DSSCU department head for urban planning, pointed out that land for commercial use is scarce as per the Master Urban Plan. Identifying this land plot for com-

mercial use was done in consideration of the broader social development in the area. In addition, he emphasized the need for a wider range of offerings given that the area is densely populated with residential buildings.

Meanwhile, the lack of commentary on preservation from

the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), appeared to imply that the building on No 106 Rua das Estalagens, built in the early 20th century, may be dismantled.

IC official Sou Kin Meng explained that the quality of the building does not meet the legal threshold for heritage recognition.

## Survey reveals secondary students' lower happiness scores

**T**HE Happiness Score calculated by a recent survey has shown that local secondary school students are not happy with their lives, with a score of 2.97 out of 5 points.

The survey was conducted via questionnaires. A total of 2,015 questionnaires were issued, with 1,655 valid responses received. Among responding students, 725 were boys and 930 were girls. Students across varying educational levels were surveyed, with percentages ranging from 11% in Form 6 to 22% in Form 5. The survey was commissioned by the General Association of Chinese Students of Macao and carried out by the University of Saint Joseph (USJ).

The Happiness Score was calculated through five statements measuring students' reported feelings of happiness or satisfaction. Two statements received below-average scores, i.e. 3 points. Lower scores indicated lesser agreement with the statements. The two statements that received below-average scores were: "My current life is generally close to my ideals" and "I would want to change almost nothing if I had the chance to relive my life." The former statement had an average score of 2.74, and the latter had a score of 2.49.

The qualitative section of the survey also revealed that relationships were ranked as the most stressful

aspect of life by responding students. They expressed concerns about their abilities relative to their peers, and worried that they lacked common topics for conversations with friends.

Nonetheless, the qualitative response section also discovered that respondents usually sought emotional support from their friends. As such, the research team likened friendship to a two-sided coin.

The association urged parents and teachers to foster confidence in children and pupils, and to play a supporting role in helping students face challenges rather than imposing undue pressure due to concerns about potential failures. **AL**



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AL PLENARY

# State secret and CE election laws pass unchallenged

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE bills on the state secret and election for the Chief Executive (CE) passed unanimously and unchallenged yesterday in their final reading at the Legislative Assembly.

The two bills passed with minimal commentary from lawmakers, who opted to commend the bills and their anticipated benefits to Macau's governance.

The first bill relates to the National Security Law, and includes provisions concerning potential state secrets, as well as measures to ensure confidentiality and to establish penalties for potential breaches.

This law will come into effect on June 1 next year and only prompted brief comments on the systems used to classify different levels of confidentiality. Some lawmakers called for clearer disclosure on the symbols used to classify confidential information to avoid confusion.

The Secretary for Administration and Justice, André Cheong, said that such symbols and their meaning will be officially announced via a publication in the government's official gazette, following further directives from the CE.

He also explained that the legal provisions would govern situations where



André Cheong

state secrets were at risk of being exposed due to the person in possession of such secrets being involved in legal procedures.

Also approved in the same plenary session, the CE Election Law will also take effect next year. As intended since its inception the upcoming procedures for the election of a new CE late next year will fall under the new provisions. These revisions aim to ensure a higher degree of patriotism from potential candidates as well as for voting members of the restricted college involved in the election.

Cheong also noted that the primary focus of the revised law is to tighten regulation around the candidate qualifications and legalize

the requirements of those aspiring to be in a CE role.

Among the differences to the current law is the establishment that the National Security Commission will be responsible for reviewing all candidates' qualifications. If, during this review, the Commission identifies evidence of certain facts or behaviors that prove, in the Commission's opinion, that the candidate is not loyal to the People's Republic of China and the Macau Special Administrative Region, this candidate will be considered ineligible.

As previously reported, decisions made by the Commission regarding candidate eligibility are not subject to objection or judicial appeal.

LAWMAKERS AGENDA

## NICK LEI CRITICIZES LRT OPERATION, CLAIMS MOST OF THE WORK IS YET TO BE DONE

RENATO MARQUES

**L**AWMAKER Nick Lei took the opportunity during the period before the agenda of Wednesday's session at the Legislative Assembly (AL) to criticize the "lack of proactivity" from the government in solving the problems related to the Light Rapid Transit (LRT).

Following the recent opening of the Barra Station and the extension of the Taipa line to the Peninsula, Lei listed several concerns that in his opinion, are contributing to the persistent inefficiency of the public transport system.

"Although the extension of the [Taipa] line makes it easier for residents to travel, unresolved problems persist even after this new station comes into operation. For example, at the moment, it is only possible to use the Macau Pass and the LRT Pass to enter the stations through access channels [gates]. It is not possible to use other means of electronic payment, and the Macau Pass top-up service is not available at the stations. This inconveniences the public and fails to meet societal expectations about the system," Lei said.

Lei added, "Furthermore, the signage at Barra Station is not clear. There are no mobile phone applications to check the frequency of the trains in real time, and the content displayed on



the information screen in the train is rudimentary."

Lei also complained about the lack of Wi-Fi networks at the stations and the absence of interconnectivity between the LRT and other public transport methods such as buses.

The same lawmaker said, "All these factors will impact the public's experience and willingness to use the LRT."

In a recent report by the Times, some of the aspects mentioned by Lei were also noted by the Times, which reported difficulties in using the Macau Pass for direct access to the trains via the gates.

The same report reiterated concerns that information screens within the train carriages are basic and "old-fashioned," only displaying the name of the next station. This is in contrast to the bus system, where detailed information on which

stops to use to access popular tourist spots, integrated resorts and other venues of interest is displayed.

Lei also remarked that according to the 2022 Annual Report of the LRT, only 0.22% (MOP1.5 million) of LRT receipts resulted from operations (i.e. tickets sold), while 96.8% of these receipts came directly from government injections of funds, representing a significant burden on the public purse.

Lei expressed the hope that the link to Barra, an area rich in tourist attractions, would ensure greater utilization and update of the LRT system, particularly by visitors. Notwithstanding this, the lawmaker called on the government to improve itineraries and pedestrian routes in the area to allow the best possible experience for those using the LRT.

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### MACAU-HKIA FERRIES TO RELOCATE TO MACAU TERMINAL

The Macau berthing point for the ferry services between Macau and the Hong Kong airport will be relocated to the Macau Ferry Terminal from today, the government announced yesterday in a statement. The services will be available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, offering two departures per day from each terminal. Departure times are typically scheduled for 10:45 a.m. from Macau and 12:30 a.m. from Hong Kong. However, passengers are advised to confirm the schedule with the ferry operator before their trips.

### GOV'T TO HOST COMPETITION TO NAME THE NEW HARBOR BRIDGE

Details will be announced at 11 a.m. today regarding a competition to determine the naming right of the new Macau-Taipa Bridge, connecting New Urban Zone A with Pak On, the Public Works Bureau (DSOP) announced yesterday. The government has so far been referring to the bridge as the Fourth Macau-Taipa Connection. A social media page has speculated on potential names for the new bridge, based on existing bridge-naming conventions. Proposed names so far have included Eastern Bridge, Pak On Bridge, New Urban Zone Bridge or Shizimen Bridge, among others.

### CONTACTLESS PAYMENT FOR HK MTR RIDES FROM DEC. 23

Contactless bank card payment for MTR in Hong Kong rides will be launched in phases from Dec. 23, MTR Corporation announced. Passengers will initially be able to use the new service using Visa at designated gates. Additional bank cards will be accepted for payment in the third quarter of 2024. The corporation also aims to upgrade the entry/exit gates of the Airport Express and launch contactless bank card payment by 2026 at the earliest. The entire asset renewal plan for the automatic fare collection system is expected to be completed in 2028.

### CATALOG ON CHINA AND EUROPE TO LAUNCH TODAY

A catalog titled "China seen from Europe, 16th-19th centuries" will be launched today in Lisbon, Portugal. The catalog features Portuguese cartography and travel literature, which played an important role in disseminating a fresh image of China across various parts of Europe. An exhibition accompanying the catalog kicked off late last month and will run until March 2, 2024. Through this exhibition, which encompasses maps and itineraries, and literary works, as well as art and digital images, the public can trace some of the most important moments in the European construction of the Chinese image

LYNZY VALLES

**POTTERHEADS** are in for a treat as an exhibition on Harry Potter and the entire Wizarding World kicks off today at The Londoner.

From today, guests can choose a Patronus, cast a spell, test their Quidditch skills, and brew potions at "Harry Potter: The Exhibition."

Initially slated to open two years ago, the tour was delayed due to the pandemic, when border closures halted tourism and entertainment activities in the city.

The exhibition is held in partnership with Warner Bros. Discovery Global Themed Entertainment, which described the Macau exhibition as the "most comprehensive touring event that has ever been developed for the Harry Potter world."

"Macau is also known as the city of magic and entertainment. [...] Harry Potter, we know, has been [a] delight for fans, and this is [the] biggest entertainment for fans. We thought it would provide a great mix and connectivity with Macau," said Julian Moon, head of EMEA and APAC Consumer Products within Warner Bros.

"This is the Asian premiere. I'm personally thrilled that we've brought this to Macau, making the premiere here," he added.

Harry Potter exhibitions were also launched in Philadelphia, Georgia, Atlanta, New York and Paris among other cities last year.

Created and developed by Imagine Exhibitions, the exhibition includes highlights such as the Page to Screen Gallery, which showcases a first edition of Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone encased in a Gringotts-inspired vault and surrounded by inspirational video and

# POTTERHEADS IN FOR A TREAT AS HARRY POTTER EXHIBITION OPENS TODAY



LYNZY VALLES

Julian Moon

Tom Zaller

literary quotes, reconnecting guests to the story as they are introduced to the exhibition.

Among the highlights are the Hogwarts Castle Gallery, The Great Hall Gallery, and Hogwarts Houses gallery, which enables visitors to experience all the Hogwarts Houses in a celebratory hall featuring an iconic Sorting Hat.

The exhibition takes visitors to the Wizarding World, using best-in-class design and technology to celebrate some of the most iconic moments from the books and films of the Harry

Potter and Fantastic Beasts franchise.

Upon entry, participants are given an exhibition wristband, which will allow their interactions to be captured using RFID wristbands.

Tom Zaller, president and CEO of Imagine Exhibitions, emphasized the blend of physical and digital experiences and photo opportunities provided by the different rooms.

"It's a great mix of traditional museum settings where you have object inside cases, original costumes worn by characters

and the rich environment they were set in, augmented with technology. It's a blend of all those things together," Zaller added.

The exhibition celebrates the iconic moments, characters, settings, and beasts as seen from the films and stories of Harry Potter and Fantastic Beasts, as well as the wonders of the expanded Wizarding World, including the costumes, props and imagery.

"It's our finest work to date and the most beautiful and finished version. And what a setting at the Londoner! That can't be scripted," he added.

### LAWMAKERS AGENDA

## Ma Io Fong calls for gov't to unveil details on the 250,000 'gifts' plan to benefit SMEs

**LAWMAKER** Ma Io Fong is concerned about the sustainability of local Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), which he said are still struggling to recover from the pandemic.

In a spoken inquiry delivered at the Legislative Assembly (AL) on Wednesday before the agenda, Ma said that SMEs still have a long way to go to recover from the lasting damage caused by the pandemic, and

urged the government to extend support measures for SMEs.

Ma noted that in addition to measures to reduce operating expenses, the government should also strive to open up new markets.

The lawmaker asked the government to reveal further details on the recently announced promotional activities for tourists, which aim to distribute 250,000 'gifts' to promote Macau to

tourists from abroad.

Ma emphasized the need for SMEs to have access to specific details as this would allow them to plan, coordinate, and take advantage of the proposed activities.

The same lawmaker also called on the government to resume the 'Distinctive Shops' program or similar strategies so that shops located in the old districts can be advertised and attract new clients. RM



Ma Io Fong





"Sands China, with two decades of roots in Macao, has been continuously expanding its offerings, from the initial opening of Sands Macao to our latest British-themed resort, The Londoner Macao. The company realised its vision for Cotai and is continuing its efforts to help build Macao as a world centre of tourism and leisure, having invested more than US\$15 billion in Macao to date. We will invest another US\$3.7 billion to the city over the next decade, including US\$3.5 billion in non-gaming projects, making essential contributions to the development of Macao into a world centre of tourism and leisure. Over the next decade, Sands China is dedicated to providing a tremendous amount of resources to foster the economic and societal development of Macao, bolstering the development of local SME suppliers and cultivating professionals, thereby contributing to the city's moderate economic diversification and strengthening the city's position in the Greater Bay Area."

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

## ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

# SANDS CHINA'S PROACTIVE INVESTMENTS IN NON-GAMING DIVERSIFICATION

**A**LL sectors of society in Macao have been directed toward driving the synergistic development of non-gaming elements in pursuit of economic diversification and sustainability. As the largest integrated resort operator in the city, Sands China has been continually investing in Macao and injecting unique new elements into the market over the years, including during the pandemic. The company's integrated resorts offer an array of leisure facilities that includes distinctive hotels, event venues, shopping, entertainment, food and beverage options, and kids play zones, which have successfully attracted a vast middle-class market, prolonged visitors' stay in Macao and boosted their spending, effectively advancing family tourism, MICE tourism and other industries in Macao.

### THE LONDONER MACAO

The Londoner Macao was thrilled to host a grand celebration in May to honour the completion of the integrated resort's ambitious redesign and usher the Cotai Strip into a new chapter. A bold, British-themed

reimagining of the Sands Cotai Central integrated resort, The Londoner Macao has been refined over the past two years in anticipation of an influx of visitors, now that Macao is once again open to the world.

The Londoner Macao comprises five lavish hotels – including the award-winning all-suite flagship, The Londoner Hotel, and the ultra-luxurious Londoner Court – with nearly 6,000 rooms and suites in total. On site are three spas, four health clubs, more than 20 dining options, boutiques from 150 world-renowned brands, and state-of-the-art conference facilities, including the new 6,000-seat The Londoner Arena.

The grand celebration marked the culmination of Sheldon G. Adelson's vision of the Cotai Strip as one of the world's most spectacular leisure destinations. The late Chairman and CEO of Las Vegas Sands Corp. saw Cotai's enormous potential and invested in its development. With The Londoner Macao interconnected with The Venetian Macao and The Parisian Macao, visitors can enjoy the romantic atmosphere of Europe in just one stop.

### CONCERT ECONOMY

In order to drive more international tourism to Macao and increase the number of first-time and repeat visitors, Sands China continues to bring in A-list concerts, sporting events, theatre productions, and other new-to-market attractions, including over 40 entertaining events and performances – inviting Jacky Cheong, Chang Hui Mei, Hacken Lee, Eason Chan, and Westlife. The company will continue to bring top-tier performers to the city to support the development of the "concert economy" and the Macao government's "1+4" economic diversification strategy.

Cantopop superstar Jacky Cheung performed a record-breaking 12 shows at The Venetian Macao's Cotai Arena between June and July, selling more than 109,000 tickets on the first leg of his 10th world tour. In addition to recently introducing The Londoner Arena, Sands China is investing in and upgrading the Cotai Arena, further confirming the company's commitment to leading entertainment and sporting events in Macao.

### TEAMLAB SUPERNATURE MACAO

The innovative teamLab SuperNature Macao is a permanent interactive art experience at The Venetian Macao's Cotai Expo. The landmark project of The Venetian Macao and Tokyo-based international art collective teamLab held its official grand opening ceremony in May, and has attracted over 450,000 visitors since its soft opening three years ago.

Several new art experience spaces within teamLab SuperNature Macao were launched in June, and more are yet to come, continuing Sands China's strong support of MGTO's 'tourism+' cross-sector integration initiative. Furthermore, Sands China has just launched the much-anticipated Harry Potter™: The Exhibition – continuously bringing novel experiences to support Macao's vision of becoming a world centre of tourism and leisure.

### ATTRACTING OVERSEAS CUSTOMERS

In support of the recovery of Macao's tourism economy, Sands China and its sister com-

pany, Marina Bay Sands, held the Macao Showcase event in Singapore in June. The three-day event introduced the diverse charm of Macao to sales and trade partners, regional and international media, Singapore's residents, and travellers – promoting Macao as a world centre of tourism and leisure and a premier MICE destination. The event also served as a business platform for local suppliers, with Sands China leading a delegation of around 200 people, including local SMEs, to promote the unique arts and culture, beauty, and products of Macao.

Sands China has further supported MGTO by participating in several mega roadshows in Portugal, Singapore, Korea, Malaysia and mainland China. During one of them, "Macao Week in Tianjin," the company co-launched the "Macao Gastronomy Showcase: Taste of Macao" to present Macao's famed culinary treasures. It allowed Tianjin residents and tourists to taste the charms of 'tourism + gastronomy' and highlighted Macao as a UNESCO-designated 'Creative City of Gastronomy.'



MUSIC

# PEKING OPERA: SCHOOL CURRICULA SHOULD INCLUDE EDUCATION IN PLAYS AND DRAMAS

ANTHOINY LAM

**T**WO major Peking Opera actors assured the press yesterday that when young people are introduced to Peking opera, they will gain a deeper understanding of and attraction to this art form.

On tour in Macau, two leading Peking Opera actors – Yu Kuizhi and Li Shengsu – both leaders at the China National Peking Opera Company, met with the press yesterday despite a busy schedule that included visits to local schools.

Yu said that on Wednesday, they visited the Tong Sin Tong Secondary School and yesterday afternoon, they were set to visit the Sam Yuk School.

Yu added that many students fell in love with the art form after close engagement with it. Li added that school visits often involved applying traditional make-up on the students and transforming them into various roles.

Yu disclosed that some students expressed an interest in attending shows after school visits. When students embraced Peking opera,



they became more receptive to this classic art form. Li suggested that nurturing a seed of interest in students' hearts is crucial for the regeneration of Peking opera.

The Company conducts 40 to 45 campus visits each year and currently comprises about 70% of members born in the third millennium, according to Yu, who

explained that the Company is bringing the art forward to new generations.

Regarding the preservation of the artform, Yu suggested that school curricula should include education in plays and dramas, including all forms of opera across China. This is the fifth year and marks the fourth time that the

company has toured Macau. Last year, the same shows were set to take the stage of the Macao Cultural Centre. However, due to disease control measures, the tour was cancelled and postponed to this December.

The troupe will stage two different shows today and tomorrow as part of this year's tour to Macau.

Today, the troupe will present The Fiery Red Horse, a 170-minute production, highlighting a legend that immerses the audience in ancient imagery so often displayed in theatres across China. Taking place during the Tang dynasty, this story transcends historical and geographic boundaries, touring in cities like London and New York.

Tomorrow, another performance will depict the historical and devastating story between an emperor and his concubine during the post-Qin Dynasty era. In the face of military defeat, the leader's faithful concubine will dance for him one last time before using his sword to end her own life, to great dramatic effect. In the 1990s, this widely known classic was featured as a colorful backdrop in an award winning film with the same title, featuring the late Hong Kong star Leslie Cheung.

Founded in 1955, the National Peking Opera Company has long nurtured a line of accomplished artists, playwrights, directors and composers from across the country.

AD

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AP PHOTO



People stand beside the sculpture titled History of Suspended Time at an entrance to the Fontainebleau Las Vegas hotel-casino

GAMING

# Newest, bluest resort on Las Vegas Strip aims to bring Miami Beach vibe to southern Nevada

KEN RITTER, LAS VEGAS

A developer's drive to open a Las Vegas Strip resort with a vibe echoing Miami Beach's venerable Fontainebleau reaches reality this week, with the opening of a 67-story hotel-casino tower that became famous as it sat unfinished for more than a decade. "Bringing Fontainebleau Las Vegas to life has been an extraordinary journey," said Jeffrey Soffer, who started the project, lost it and reacquired it to finish it. "Opening a resort of this size and scope is a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

The Fontainebleau is the tallest, newest and bluest hotel in southern Nevada's glittery resort corridor. At \$3.7 billion, it's second in cost to the \$4.3 billion, 66-story Resorts World that opened in June 2021 a short walk down Las Vegas Boulevard.

The name of the 3,644-room Fontainebleau recalls Miami Beach's icon among destination resor-

ts, which Soffer's family acquired in 2005. But the project in the Mojave Desert has its own lore about starts, stops and changing ownership since work began in 2007.

Soffer, the Miami-based chairman of Fontainebleau Development, lost funding during the Great Recession and walked away from the project in 2009 with the building about 70% complete.

Various new owners stepped in, including famous financier Carl Icahn and New York developer Steven Witkoff. The latter announced plans in 2018 to redesign and rename the resort The Drew, but progress stalled again during the pandemic.

Meanwhile, sitting idle, the hulking shell of a building with an incomplete street-front facade was occasionally used by area firefighters for high-rise rescue training. Last July, with work progressing toward opening, a smoky rooftop fire raised alarm but caused little damage.

Soffer and Fontainebleau Development reac-

quired the project in 2021 and partnered with Koch Real Estate Investments to finance and finish it.

He called completion "the fulfillment of a long-held dream and a testament to the spirit of our brand, which has stood for seven decades."

The resort that opened to guests and gamblers just before yesterday [Macau time] includes a bowties theme that is an homage to the standard neckwear of Morris Lapidus, architect of the Miami resort that opened in 1954.

"Art, architecture, and design are key components of our Fontainebleau culture and guest experience," Brett Mufson, Fontainebleau Development president, said in a statement ahead of the opening.

Mark Tricano, Fontainebleau Las Vegas president, told state gambling regulators last month that the resort will employ more than 7,000 workers. The property has 1,300 slot machines, 128 gambling tables and more

than 36 bars and restaurants — some featuring chefs with Miami roots. Officials said hotel room rates for the opening started around \$300 nightly.

The structure is the tallest occupiable building in Nevada and second-tallest in Las Vegas, behind the nearby Strat tower observation deck at 1,149 feet (350 meters).

The Fontainebleau was built on the site of the El Rancho hotel, which dated to 1948 and was imploded in 2000 after Soffer and condominium developer Turnberry Associates bought it. Plans to build a British-themed hotel-casino hotel with Tower of London and Buckingham Palace replicas were shelved after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Fontainebleau is adjacent to the newest section of the Las Vegas Convention Center, a \$1 billion expanse that opened in January 2021, and has a down-the-Strip view of the brightly lit Sphere concert and entertainment venue that opened in September. MDT/AP

ADVERTORIAL

## GREAT TIMES

Ring in the New Year with a Multisensory "Buddha Passion" Journey at MGM Theater

MGM has always been a pioneer of cultural tourism. Their latest collaboration with Chinese music maestro Tan Dun, one of the top 10 most important musicians on the global music scene, promises to be an unprecedented multisensory experience for music enthusiasts. The monumental symphonic masterpiece, Buddha Passion, is a fusion of Eastern and Western music with Dunhuang epics. Featuring a spectacular cast led by Tan Dun, including internationally renowned Lanzhou Symphony Orchestra, Lanzhou Concert Hall Choir, acclaimed vocalists and soloists, the show will be grandly staged at the MGM Theater on January 1 and 2, 2024.



With numerous site visits and extensive research, Tan Dun has dedicated six years to composing the Buddha Passion and recreating the ancient Dunhuang musical instruments and dances for the show, including the Dunhuang xiqin and Fantan Pipa.



Adding to the grandeur of the performance is a giant LED screen showcasing the breathtaking Dunhuang murals and the entire reclining Buddha, which innovatively creates an immersive epochal journey through thousand years of legacy that conveys the compassionate and kind spirit of Dunhuang culture to the audience through digitalization. Don't miss out on this awe-inspiring multisensory music extravaganza. Visit [mgm.mo](http://mgm.mo) for ticketing information.





DIRE STRAIT

# A LEADER OF NATIONALIST PARTY VISITS CHINA AS TAIWAN'S ELECTION LOOMS

CHRISTOPHER BODEEN,  
TAIPEI

A leader of Taiwan's main opposition Nationalist Party is visiting rival China less than one month before the self-governing island holds elections for its leader and the legislature under pressure from Beijing.

In a news release yesterday, the party — also known as the Kuomintang or KMT — said vice chair Andrew Hsia and his delegation departed for China on Wednesday at the invitation of Taiwanese businesspeople. It called the trip a mission to maintain contacts and contribute to “peace, stability and prosperity between the two sides.”

Though the party said the invitation was accepted in October, the visit comes at a sensitive time as the Nationalists seek to regain the executive and the legislative bodies from the ruling Democratic Progressive Party, which has been shunned by China for its insistence that Taiwan “is an independent country.”

Taiwan is part of China's territory, to be brought under Beijing's control by military force if necessary. The Nationalists ruled Taiwan under martial law for almost four decades after fleeing to the island amid the Communist takeover of mainland China in 1949 and formally agree with Beijing that both sides are part of a single Chinese nation.



Andrew Hsia, deputy chairman of the Kuomintang, last July

Most surveys show the party's ticket of former national police chief Hou You-yi and his running mate, ex-legislator Jaw Shaw-kong, are well behind the DPP's William Lai, currently No. 2, and Bi-khim Hsiao, Taiwan's former representative to the United States. That appears to reflect the prevailing sentiment among Taiwanese of maintaining their current status, even while maintaining close economic ties with China.

On Wednesday, China's Taiwan

Affairs Office denounced Lai as a “troublemaker” and “war-maker.” Spokesperson Zhu Fenglian said Taiwanese should reject independence “for the sake of their peace, stability and well-being.”

In its statement, the Nationalist Party said it is committed to Taiwan's security and democracy, and to peace and stability between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. It accused the DPP of generating “fake news” concerning contacts between Nationalist officials and the ruling Chinese

Communist Party, saying that was an attempt to smear a “normal and appropriate agenda to conduct exchanges on the mainland to serve Taiwan compatriots and Taiwan businesspeople.”

The statement said Taiwanese on the mainland needed particular care “at a time of heightened tensions between the U.S. and Beijing authorities,” and leaders must maintain channels of communication.

That appeared to cast Hsia in the role of go-between, although

there was no indication he had been entrusted with carrying any specific messages to the Chinese authorities. The statement did not say whether Hsia would be meeting any high-ranking Chinese officials.

Contacts between Taiwan politicians and China have come under particular scrutiny in the run-up to the election amid concerns Beijing will seek to “influence the vote by offering favors and spreading disinformation.” Prosecutors have been looking into trips to China by grassroots ward chiefs during which their expenses were allegedly covered by the Chinese government, saying that is part of a long-term “united front” strategy of steering votes toward pro-unification politicians.

The Nationalists said Hsia was due to visit cities including Chengdu, Nanchang, Zhongshan, Xiamen, and Chongqing on what it termed a listening tour.

It's at least his second trip to China in 2023; a visit in February included a meeting with the head of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, Song Tao.

Since leader Tsai Ing-wen first took office in 2016, China has refused all contact with Taiwan's government over her refusal to recognize the “One China” principle embodied in an earlier agreement brokered by the Nationalists and mainland Communists known as the “92 Consensus.”

The vast majority of Taiwan's 23 million people support the current status quo. Tsai, who is limited to two four-year terms, says there is no need to make a formal declaration that would likely spark a military response from China. **MDT/AP**

ECONOMY

# World Bank forecast economy to slow sharply in 2024

CHINA'S economy will slow next year, with annual growth falling to 4.5% from 5.2% this year despite a recent recovery spurred by investments in factories and construction and in demand for services, the World Bank said in a report issued yesterday.

The report said the recovery of the world's second-largest economy from setbacks of the COVID-19 pandemic, among other shocks, remains “fragile,” dogged by weakness in the property sector and in global demand for China's exports, high debt levels and wavering consumer confidence.

The estimate that growth would be around 5% this year but then fall in



coming months was in line with other forecasts.

Growth is expected to slow further in 2025, to 4.3% from 4.5% next year, the

World Bank said.

The economy has yoyoed in the past few years, with growth ranging from 2.2% in 2020 to 8.4%

in 2021 and 3% last year. Stringent limits on travel and other activities during the pandemic hit manufacturing and transport. Job losses due to those disruptions and to a crackdown on the technology sector, combined with a downturn in the property industry, have led many Chinese to tighten their purse strings.

Most of the jobs created during China's recovery have been low-skilled work in service industries with low pay, it noted. Chinese also are cautious given the threadbare nature of social safety nets and the fact that the population is rapidly aging, putting a heavier burden for supporting elders on younger generations.

The report highlights the need for China to pursue broad structural reforms and said moves by the central government to take on the burden of supporting cash-strapped local governments also would help improve confidence in the economy.

China's leaders addressed such issues in their annual Central Economic Work Conference earlier this week, which set priorities for the coming year, but state media reports on the gathering did not provide specifics of policies.

Real estate investment has fallen by 18% in the past two years and more needs to be done to resolve hundreds of billions of dollars in unpaid debts

of overextended property developers, the report said.

It said the value of new property sales fell 5% in January-October from a year earlier while new property starts dropped more than 25%. The slowdown was worst in smaller cities that account for about 80% of the market in the country of 1.4 billion people.

Some of that weakness has been offset by strong investment in manufacturing, especially in areas such as electric vehicles and batteries and other renewable energy technologies and in strategically important areas such as computer chips that are receiving strong government support. **MDT/AP**



CHINA-US

# Yellen says the Trump administration's policies left the US more vulnerable

FATIMA HUSSEIN,  
WASHINGTON

**T**REASURY Secretary Janet Yellen says former President Donald Trump's policies toward China left America "more vulnerable and more isolated" in the global economy, a rare jab by her at the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination.

Yellen, in prepared remarks to be delivered at a U.S.-China Business Council event today [Macau time], says the Trump administration "failed to make investments at home in critical areas like infrastructure and advanced technology, while also neglecting relationships with our partners and allies that had been forged and strengthened over decades."

Her comments come as the U.S. rebuilds its relationship with the Asian superpower, including a November meeting between U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping in San Fran-



U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen

cisco. The two nations agreed to curb the production of illicit fentanyl, a deadly component of drugs sold in the United States, and agreed to resume military-to-military communications.

Yellen, who rarely comments on the previous administration's approach on trade, said Trump-era policies on China "left America more vulnerable and more isolated in a competitive global economy that demands that nations take exactly the opposite approach."

"It damaged our global stan-

ding and meant significant missed economic opportunities for American firms and workers," she says.

In her speech, previewed for the press ahead of the event, Yellen highlights the Biden administration's strategy of strengthening relationships with like-minded nations through "friend shoring" with South Korea, Vietnam, Japan, India and Indonesia.

"Over the past three years, the Biden administration has course-corrected," she says. "We're

investing at home through President Biden's Investing in America agenda," citing new laws on infrastructure, climate and semiconductors, among others.

The Biden administration has, however, kept in place some major Trump-era policies that are punishing to China, including tariffs on select Chinese goods imported into the United States.

In an interview with The Wall Street Journal in May, Yellen said the U.S. wouldn't likely lower the tariffs.

"I can imagine some adjustments taking place to rationalize the tariff structure, but my sense is the general feeling in the administration is that it's not appropriate to lower the tariffs," she said.

In addition, Biden signed an executive order over the summer designed to regulate and block high-tech U.S.-based investments going toward China, a move his Democratic administration said is based on protecting national security. And in 2022, the U.S. mo-

ved to block exports of advanced computer chips to China.

Eswar Prasad, a Cornell trade policy professor, said there are major differences between the way the two administrations have approached the U.S.-China economic relationship.

"The Biden administration has maintained a tough but constructive approach toward China, prioritizing national security considerations but also seeking avenues of cooperation and progress in areas with mutual benefits," Prasad said. "The Trump administration took a more hostile and aggressive approach that was not tempered by a recognition of shared interests between the two countries."

Goods and services traded between the two nations totaled a massive \$758.4 billion in 2022, according to the U.S. Trade Representative. However, Chinese investment in the U.S. is decreasing, to \$28.7 billion in 2022, down 7.2% from the prior year. **MDT/AP**

AD

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THAILAND

ELECTED PROGRESSIVE LAWMAKER SENTENCED TO SIX YEARS FOR DEFAMING THE MONARCHY

JERRY HARMER, BANGKOK

A court in Thailand convicted and sentenced a recently elected lawmaker this week to six years in prison for defaming the monarchy under a controversial law that guards the royal institution.

Human Rights Watch decried the ruling, saying it "violated her rights to freedom of expression protected under international human rights law."

Rukchanok Srinork arrived for her court hearing in the capital, Bangkok, as her fellow lawmakers were convening in Parliament.

"I submitted a request to postpone (the hearing) because today the new parliament convenes for its first session, but the court refused. So I came to hear the verdict," she told reporters, standing next to her party leader who was there to lend support.

She was charged over two posts she allegedly shared two years ago on X, the social media platform then known as Twitter. One tweet reportedly defamed



Parliament member Rukchanok Srinork of opposition Move Forward party arrives at criminal court for the verdict for allegedly violating the lese majeste law in Bangkok

the monarchy over links to a coronavirus vaccine and an anti-monarchy quote by 18th-century French philosopher Denis Diderot was allegedly retweeted.

Rukchanok was sentenced to three years on each count under Article 112 of Thailand's Crimi-

nal Code, known as lese majeste, which protects the monarchy. She was also convicted under the Computer Crime Act, whose broad provisions covering online activities have been criticized as a threat to freedom of expres-

sion. Late Wednesday, the court granted her release on bail of 500,000 baht (\$14,200). If it had been denied, she would have lost her lawmaker status immediately.

The parliamentarian denied she posted the tweets, calling the case against her "weak." The plaintiff reportedly provided screenshots of the posts, but the police couldn't find the links.

Rukchanok, 29, won a seat in May's general election, part of a surprise victory for the progressive Move Forward Party that shook Thai politics. The win did not translate into power due to the party being ultimately outmaneuvered by influential conservative forces. She was initially a defender of the conservative establishment before switching sides and joining the progressive movement.

"The prosecution of an opposition member of parliament for two tweets is not only an appalling violation of free expression, but sends a chilling message to other outspoken opposition party members to

keep silent," Elaine Pearson, Asia director at Human Rights Watch, said Thursday in an emailed statement. "The Thai authorities should quash this sentence, and cease prosecuting other cases under the lese majeste law."

Critics say the lese majeste law is often used to suppress political dissent. The law makes insulting the monarch, his immediate family and the regent punishable by up to 15 years in jail.

The monarchy and the laws that protect it have come under pressure in recent years. In 2020, tens of thousands of predominantly young people marched in several Thai cities, demanding constitutional reform and the abolition of the law against royal defamation. The government's response was an unprecedented slew of prosecutions.

The advocacy group Thai Lawyers for Human Rights says that since early 2020, more than 200 people — many of them student activists — have been charged with violating Article 112. MDT/AP

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MILITARY

# Japan, UK and Italy formally establish a joint body to develop a new fighter jet

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

**T**HE defense ministers of Japan, Britain and Italy signed an agreement yesterday to establish a joint organization to develop a new advanced jet fighter, as the countries push to strengthen their cooperation in the face of growing threats from China, Russia and North Korea.

The three countries had agreed last year to merge earlier individual plans — for Japan's Mitsubishi F-X to succeed the retiring F-2s developed with the United States and Britain's Tempest — to produce the new combat aircraft for deployment in 2035.

Japan, which is rapidly building up its military.

Defense Minister Minoru Kihara said at a joint news conference with his British and Italian counterparts, Grant Shapps and Guido Crosetto, that co-developing a high-performance fighter aircraft is "indispensable to securing air superiority and enabling effective deterrence" at a time that Japan faces an increasingly severe security environment.

Kihara said no individual nation can defend itself today, adding that securing the technology

AP PHOTO



Britain's Defense Minister Grant Shapps (right), Italy's Defense Minister Guido Crosetto (left) and Japanese Defense Minister Minoru Kihara prior to a meeting in Tokyo, yesterday

and funding to develop an advanced fighter jet involves large risks. He said the joint trilateral Global Combat Air Program is a "historic program" enabling the countries to work together to create a new fighter jet while reducing risks.

Shapps said the joint project will develop cutting-edge technology as well as "a new era of prosperity" involving thousands of people working on the project. "It will strengthen our collective security," he said. "The risks and problems from Europe to Indo-Pacific are clear for all to see."

Under the plan, a joint body called the GCAP International Government Organization will manage the private sector joint venture — which includes Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy, Britain's BAE Systems PLC and Italy's Leonardo — to oversee the aircraft's development. The organization, which will be staffed by several hundred people from the three countries, is tasked with distributing work in different areas, such as the engine and avionics.

The organization will be headquartered in Britain and headed

by a Japanese official, and the joint venture will be led by an Italian representative, Kihara said. The top posts will rotate every few years, Japanese defense officials said.

The project, however, hinges on Japan easing its postwar ban on exporting jointly developed lethal weapons to third countries. It said before yesterday's signing it was working to do so, but the process has been delayed.

Shapps said he expected Japan would approve the changes as soon as possible.

"We are working within the

three of us. It needs updating. Otherwise, who will be able to take the project forward at all?" he said. "We couldn't live with this program without updating those principles of yours. So, clearly that time is coming now."

Japan is moving ahead despite delayed approval at home in easing its current policy that bans the export of lethal weapons to a third country. The restriction under Japan's postwar pacifist Constitution does not allow the country to sell a jointly developed fighter jet and possibly complicates the project, since Britain and Italy hope to be able to sell the new aircraft.

A Japanese government panel has been discussing the easing of military sales and has agreed to relax restrictions on the transfer of licensed technology and equipment. But it recently postponed a decision on easing the policy for the joint fighter jet until early next year.

Japanese defense officials refused to discuss how the situation would affect the joint project.

The project is the first time that Japan will participate in a multinational organization to jointly develop new military equipment. MDT/AP

MYANMAR

# Editor says authorities arrested two local journalists from online news service

GRANT PECK, BANGKOK

**M**YANMAR'S military government has arrested two journalists with a local online news service, their editor said this week, in its latest crackdown on media freedom since seizing power nearly three years ago.

The chief editor of Dawei Watch, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals from authorities, told The Associated Press that Aung San Oo and Myo Myint Oo were arrested late Monday at their homes in the coastal town of Myeik. The town is about 560 kilometers south of Yangon, the country's biggest city.

The editor said they were arrested three days after re-

turning home from hiding and that security forces told family members they were arrested for reports they had filed. The computers and mobile phones of the reporters and their family members were confiscated by police, and the journalists are being held in an interrogation camp, the editor said.

Dawei Watch mostly covers news in southern Myanmar.

"Journalists are writing the news reports and producing it in line with journalism ethics. Writing reports is not a crime," the editor said. "Arresting, interrogating, and taking actions against the journalists in the same manner as done to people who committed crimes should not

be allowed. So I want to say: Release the detained journalists as soon as possible."

Dawei Watch's chief editor said a total of five reporters and a columnist have been arrested since the army began cracking down on independent media after seizing power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021.

Myanmar is one of the world's biggest jailers of journalists, second only to China, according to Reporters Without Borders, and it is ranked near the bottom of the watchdog group's Press Freedom Index at 173rd out of 180 countries this year.

At least 14 media outlets have had their licenses revoked and at least 163 jour-

nalists have been arrested since the coup, with about 49 of them still detained, according to media workers in Myanmar who track the situation. More than half of those still in custody have been convicted and sentenced.

Most of the detained journalists were charged with incitement for allegedly causing fear, spreading false news or agitating against a government employee.

At least four media workers have been killed and others tortured while in detention, the researchers said.

Most media outlets, including Dawei Watch, now operate semi-clandestinely, publishing online as staff members try to avoid

AP PHOTO



Aung San Oo (left) and Myo Myint Oo in front of the office of the Tanintharyi Weekly Journal published by Dawei Watch media, in Dawei township (2020)

arrest. Others operate from exile.

Last month, the military government amended the broadcasting law to place the Television and Radio Broadcasting Council un-

der the ruling military council's direct control. The law previously allowed the council to operate freely without the influence of any government organization. MDT/AP



ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

# Israel vows to fight on despite deadly ambush, rising international pressure

NAJIB JOBAIN &  
KAREEM CHEHAYEB, RAFAH

**I**SRAEL has vowed to keep fighting in Gaza until it crushes Hamas after one of the deadliest single battles of the war for its soldiers, even as it faces mounting international calls for a cease-fire and unease on the part of its closest ally, the United States.

The ambush in Gaza City showed Hamas is still able to fight in some of the hardest-hit areas more than two and a half months into a massive air and ground war aimed at destroying its military capabilities. Israel has imposed a total siege on northern Gaza and flattened much of it, forcing most of the population to flee south several weeks ago.

Hamas' resilience has called into question whether Israel can defeat it without wiping out Gaza. Support for Hamas has surged among Palestinians — in part because of the militant group's stiff resistance to a far more powerful foe — while Israel's most important ally, the U.S., has expressed growing discomfort over civilian deaths in what is already one of the 21st century's most devastating military campaigns.

"We are continuing until the end, there is no question," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said yesterday [Macau time]. "I say this even given the great pain and the international pressure. Nothing will stop us."

U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan was set to visit Israel today [Macau time]. The U.S. has pressed Israel to take greater measures to spare civilians, and President Joe Biden said earlier this week that Israel was losing international support because of its "indiscriminate bombing."

The ambush took place Tuesday in the dense Gaza City neighborhood of Shijaiyah, which was also the scene of a major battle during the 2014 war between Israel and Hamas. The dead included two high-ranking officers. A total of 116 soldiers have been killed in the ground offensive, which began Oct. 27.

Heavy fighting has raged for days in Shijaiyah and other areas in and around eastern



AP PHOTO

Gaza City that were encircled earlier in the war. Tens of thousands of people remain in the north despite repeated evacuation orders, saying they don't feel safe anywhere in Gaza or fear they may never return to their homes if they leave them.

## A HEAVY CIVILIAN TOLL

Israel's air and ground assault, launched in response to Hamas' unprecedented attack into southern Israel on Oct. 7, has killed more than 18,600 Palestinians, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza.

The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths. Its latest count did not specify how many were women and minors, but they have consistently made up around two-thirds of the dead in previous tallies. Thousands more are missing and feared dead beneath the rubble.

Nearly 1.9 million Palestinians have been driven from their homes, with most seeking refuge in the south, even as Israel has continued to strike what it says are militant targets in all parts of the territory, often killing women and children.

Residents reported Israeli airstrikes overnight in Rafah, the southernmost town along the Egyptian border. An Associated Press reporter saw 27 bodies brought into a local

hospital yesterday.

One woman burst into tears after recognizing the body of her child.

"They were young people, children, displaced, all sitting at home," Mervat Ashour said as she and others mourned their relatives. "There were no resistance fighters, rockets, or anything."

A neighbor who helped pull bodies from the rubble of one strike said there were no survivors. "We saw people in pieces," Hassan Abdulaal said.

New evacuation orders issued as troops pushed into the southern city of Khan Younis earlier this month have pushed U.N.-run shelters to the breaking point and forced people to set up tent camps in even less hospitable areas. Heavy rain and cold in recent days has compounded their misery, swamping tents and forcing families to crowd around fires to keep warm.

Israel has sealed Gaza off to all but a trickle of humanitarian aid, and U.N. agencies have struggled to distribute it since the offensive expanded to the south because of fighting and road closures. Almost no aid has reached the north since the start of the war.

## RISING SUPPORT FOR HAMAS

Israel might have hoped that the war and its hardships would turn Palestinians against Hamas, hastening its

demise, but as with previous rounds of violence, it seems to be having the opposite effect.

A poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research found 44% of respondents in the occupied West Bank said they supported Hamas, up from just 12% in September. In Gaza, the militants enjoyed 42% support, up from 38% three months ago.

That's still a minority in both territories. But even many Palestinians who do not share Hamas' commitment to destroying Israel and oppose its attacks on civilians see it as resisting Israel's decades-old occupation of lands they want for a future state.

The poll meanwhile showed overwhelming rejection of Western-backed Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, with nearly 90% saying he must resign. The 88-year-old leader's administration, which governs parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, is widely seen by Palestinians as a corrupt and autocratic accomplice to the occupation because it works with Israel to suppress Hamas and other militant groups.

The U.S. wants Abbas' internationally recognized Palestinian Authority to also govern Gaza, which it lost to Hamas in a week of street fighting in 2007. The U.S. also wants to revive the long-defunct peace process to negotiate the creation of a Palestinian state. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1982 SPAIN OPENS BORDER WITH THE ROCK



The gates isolating the people of Gibraltar from Spain have been opened to pedestrians after 13 years.

Spain's new socialist government opened the frontier for "humanitarian reasons" at one minute after midnight this morning.

A Spanish police official in plain clothes unceremoniously unlocked the gates for both sides.

Carmen Ward, 35, married to a British worker in Gibraltar - known as the Rock - was the first Gibraltarian to come through on foot.

She said: "This is a humanitarian step and it ought to have been taken long ago."

A crowd of several thousand sightseers in festive spirit gathered to celebrate the momentous occasion as students performed an impromptu live music session.

There were several hundred Gibraltarian well wishers on the other side.

Despite the good will gesture by the Spanish authorities the frontier has opened under tight restrictions which include a ban on any British or foreign tourists crossing.

Only Spanish citizens or inhabitants of Gibraltar are allowed across.

Cars and commercial goods remain banned.

The government of Gibraltar has reacted angrily to the restrictions but its plans to retaliate by closing the gates at night were overruled by the British Government.

The opening ends a period of isolation begun by General Franco in 1969 during the siege of Gibraltar.

The 25,000 inhabitants have been divided from Spain ever since. [...]

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The gates were officially opened to everyone in 1985.

Inhabitants of Gibraltar said Spain had relaxed its laws on the frontier to gain support for its bid to enter the European Community which it achieved in 1986.

The bitter battle over the sovereignty of the Rock continues.

It is relentlessly contested by the majority of the 30,000 inhabitants of the Rock who wish to remain British.

In 2002, talks between Britain and Spain continued with new vigour but an announcement the countries could share sovereignty was met with angry protests on the streets of Gibraltar.

A referendum was held on 7 November that year in which an overwhelming majority of Gibraltarians - 98.97% - voted not to share British sovereignty with Spain.

But both the Spanish and British governments have said the result has no legal weight.

The British and Spanish Foreign Secretaries met in December 2004 with a view to opening a new dialogue on the Rock's future.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**



**ARIES**

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Relatives may play an important role in your personal life. Things at work have been moving quickly and you may be feeling a little uncertain about the changes taking place.



**TAURUS**

Apr. 20-May. 20

You won't be well received by superiors or by your spouse. You will easily charm members of the opposite sex. Loved ones may be annoyed if they feel restricted.



**GEMINI**

May. 21-Jun. 21

Eliminate situations that are no longer to your advantage. You can make extra cash by moonlighting. Be prepared for an active but rewarding day.



**CANCER**

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You need to look into ways to change your self-image. The answers can only come from within. Don't let your partner start any arguments. Passion should be redirected positively.



**LEO**

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You may be emotionally unstable if you let someone you care about get away with verbal abuse. Make plans to attend group discussions or get together with friends who like to talk as much as you do.



**VIRGO**

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Resistance leading to conflict will only make it twice as hard to turn the situation around. Disappointments are likely if your mate embarrasses you in front of friends.



**LIBRA**

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Spend some time with the one you love. Pleasure trips will be satisfying. You should get out and enjoy social events where you are likely to meet new potential mates; however, don't over spend.



**SCORPIO**

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You might want to spend some time by yourself in order to decide exactly how you feel. Secret love affairs may be enticing; however, you must be prepared for the restraints that will follow.



**SAGITTARIUS**

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Get back into a routine that promises a better looking, more aware individual. Don't be too quick to sign documents. Be aware of any deception on the part of those you deal with.



**CAPRICORN**

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Deception may cause disputes you can do without. You may not have the same ideas when it comes to what you both enjoy. Romance may be likely if you travel.



**AQUARIUS**

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

In-laws or older individuals may give you a bit of a hard time today. You need to keep the peace and you will have to bend in order to do so. Travel should open doors that lead to exciting new adventures.

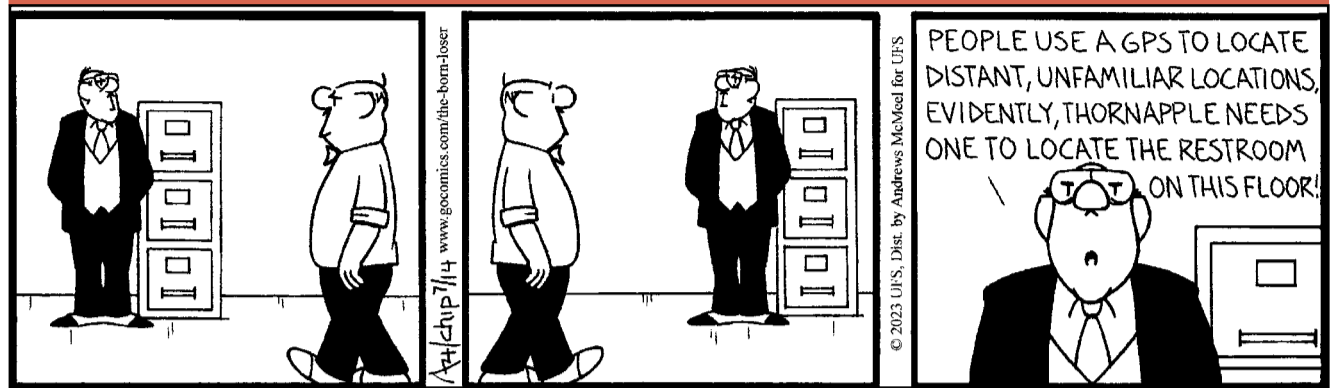


**PISCES**

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

A better diet, exercise, or a change to a relaxed atmosphere could be ways to soothe your nerves. Unexpected romantic connections can be made if you go out with friends or take a pleasure trip.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	-7	-3	cloudy
Changchun	-18	-14	snow
Chengdu	7	10	overcast
Chongqing	7	14	rain
Fuzhou	17	29	fine
Guangzhou	20	27	cloudy
Guiyang	10	11	overcast
Haikou	23	28	cloudy
Hangzhou	11	12	rain
Harbin	-23	-16	cloudy
Hefei	0	1	rain
Nanjing	4	14	rain
Shanghai	7	14	rain
Taipei	19	25	fine
Wuhan	1	4	rain
Hong Kong	19	26	overcast
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-8	-5	snow
Frankfurt	3	7	cloudy
Paris	4	10	overcast
London	6	7	overcast
New York	4	12	fine

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Indigo; 5- Bruins' home; 9- Suggest; 14- Actress Singer; 15- London stroller; 16- 1985 Kate Nelligan film; 17- Norwegian king; 18- Change the decor; 19- Dreadlocks wearer; 20- Cure-all; 22- One's first needlework piece?; 24- Bill; 25- Ancient fortress in Israel; 26- Arrest; 29- Lobster state; 31- Healing plants; 32- Intentions; 33- Toothpaste type; 36- \_\_\_ the season...; 37- Shut in; 40- Philosopher \_\_\_-tzu; 41- Mayday!; 42- Hog sound; 43- Dens; 45- Parenthetical remark; 47- Fit to be eaten; 48- Gazes fixedly; 51- Rink leap; 52- Ancient capital of Assyria; 54- Inactive; 58- Nitrogen compound; 59- Like the Sahara; 61- Zeno's home; 62- Pave over; 63- Stead; 64- In the neighborhood; 65- Clear the boards; 66- Weight; 67- Mal de \_\_\_;

DOWN 1- Hanging to one side; 2- Vincent Lopez's theme song; 3- Neighbor of Turkey; 4- Habitable; 5- Raise; 6- Harsh squeaky sound; 7- Young fellow; 8- Old Testament book; 9- From Cologne; 10- Slip by; 11- Unit of magnetic induction; 12- Chipped in; 13- Ornamental coronet; 21- Discontinue; 23- Wrong; 26- Members of the Felidae family; 27- Assortment; 28- A pitcher may take one; 29- Pooh's creator; 30- In a frenzy; 32- Biting; 33- Smooth-talking; 34- British nobleman; 35- Get rid of; 38- Racket; 39- Senior; 44- Illness; 45- Places of contest; 46- Harsh; 47- Second book of the Bible; 48- Capture; 49- Stopwatch-holder; 50- Writer Loos; 51- Old French expression meaning "goodbye"; 53- Light ring; 55- Sheltered, nautically; 56- Cool!; 57- Shipping deduction; 60- Oysters \_\_\_ season;

**Yesterday'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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HKD 13,000/mth 3 bed 2 bath

AD



DRIVE IN

# 'LEAVE THE WORLD BEHIND' IS A TERRIFIC BLEND OF THRILLER, DISASTER AND SATIRE

MARK KENNEDY, MDT/AP  
ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

IMAGINE that it's close to midnight and there's a knock at the door of your luxurious weekend rental home. A man is standing there, calmly apologizing. He says it's his home and that he and his daughter need your help. He's also dressed immaculately in a tux.

What would you do?

Did the tux make a difference? Would the man's race?

That early scene is when Netflix's "Leave the World Behind" really kicks into gear and never slackens as this terrific, apocalyptic, psychological thriller races to its conclusion, exploring race, affluence and responsibility along the way.

The luxurious home becomes a castle of sorts as the outside world crumbles. The man who says he's the owner tries to explain why he's turned up. "Under the circumstances, we thought you'd understand," he says. But understanding is in short supply here.

Adapted from Rumaan Alam's acclaimed novel, the movie is set against an end-of-days disaster in which technology — Wi-Fi, TV, phones, internet — has gone silent due to a cyberattack and there's been a massive blackout.

Well-to-do Amanda (a tart Julia Roberts) and her Atlantic magazine-quoting husband Clay (a hang-dog Ethan Hawke) must work with the even-more-well-off G.H.



From left: Mahershala Ali, Myha'la Herrold, Julia Roberts and Ethan Hawke in a scene from "Leave the World Behind" (Netflix)

(a calmly sophisticated Mahershala Ali) and his savvy daughter Ruth, (a superb Myha'la). The racial divide easily swamps their joint class affiliation.

Also along for the disaster are Amanda and Clay's children, a "Friends"-obsessed daughter (a soulful Farrah Mackenzie, who even wears her hair in a "Rachel" 'do) and her older, slightly bratty

16-year-old brother (a brooding Charlie Evans).

It's a story brilliantly adapted and directed by Sam Esmail, showrunner of "Mr. Robot," who has made "Leave the World Behind" into a homage of Alfred Hitchcock, complete with the image of a man trying to outrun a crashing plane and using the master's discordant loud music.

Esmail, who manages to make a group of deer appear sinister, even makes a Hitchcockian cameo as a corpse on a beach.

The director paces the deepening dread flawlessly and there are visual delights throughout, like when the family starts off on their adventure with their car exiting at "Point Comfort." The camera often swirls and soars throu-

gh glass cracks or holes in roofs like an uneasy bird, or parks itself at strange angles.

The mysterious catastrophe — ships beach themselves, driverless cars crash like lemmings — sloughs away any pretense at civility, leaving the adults and children to turn on each other. Amanda, in particular, reveals a dark side and her husband — before the disaster, a can't-we-all-get-along bro — abandons a hysterical survivor by the side of the road. Community is shattered, guns come out and protect-at-all-costs is the motto of the day.

The acting is first rate and it needs to be — this is a drama of manners and secrets, and each sigh or glance reveals so much. We haven't seen a nasty Roberts character in a while and Ali balances sophistication and slyness artfully. Together, they have some of the film's best scenes.

But a warning of sorts: It's best to click play on your remote knowing that the movie is more a satire than a true action-survival movie — the open-ended ending may divide viewers. Click anyway because the journey never drags. And don't be surprised if there's a jump in sales of survival tools this holiday season.

"Leave the World Behind," a Netflix release, is rated R for "some sexual content, brief bloody images, language and drug use." Running time: 141 minutes. ★★★★★

BOOK IT

# A dazzlingly fun historical fiction, 'A True Account' tests the borders of reality

HANNAH Masury, for a brief time, was a pirate. At least, according to the mysterious manuscript that shows up on Professor Marian Beresford's desk, brought by a bright-faced student excited at the possibility of finding the treasure that Hannah left behind.

Novelist and historian Katherine Howe embarks on a dazzlingly fun historical fiction, "A True Account: Hannah Masury's Sojourn Amongst the Pyrates, Written by Herself: A Novel" — aptly named given the way it tests the boundaries between reality and imagination.

When undergrad Kay Lonergan brings Hannah's

found manuscript to her professor, Marian's years of cynicism have hardened her. She highly doubts its authenticity and even points out the more doubtful details, verging on breaking the fourth wall. But Kay convinces Marian to approach her famous explorer of a father and persuade him, and his expedition society club, to back their trip in search of long-lost pirate booty.

And is that jealousy we detect in the professor? The further the story gets, the more it seems that Kay is everything Marian wishes she was: young, exciting, fashionable, carefree, commanding, self-assured.

But Hannah's manuscript might be just the thing to spark some excitement into Marian's dull life — and to finally win her father's attention and approval.

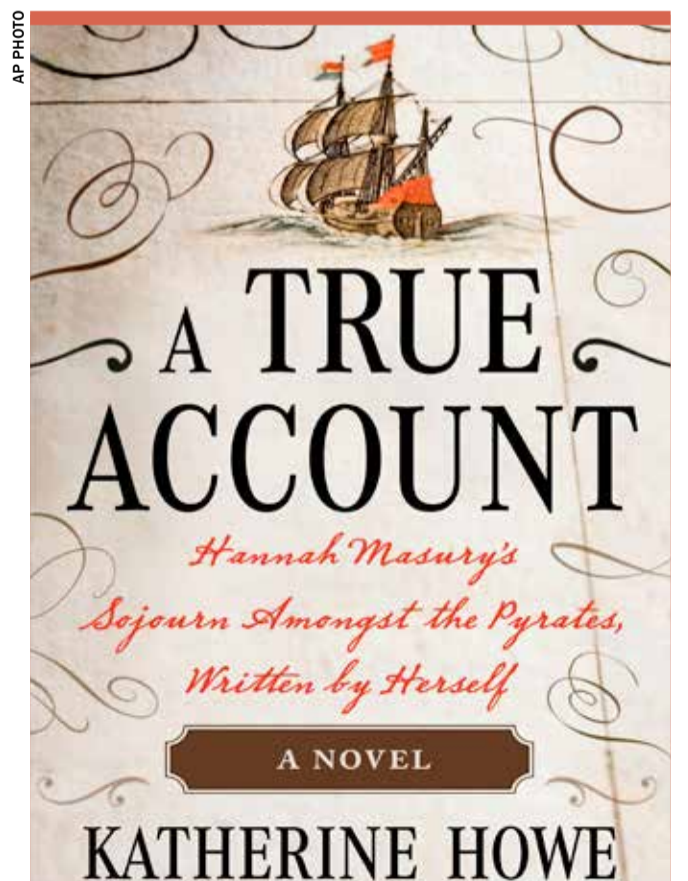
History buffs will appreciate the accurate inclusion of figures such as pirate William Fly and Puritan preacher Cotton Mather. Those who aren't so thrilled about history will enjoy Hannah's wry take on the happenings of the early 1700s.

Mirrored in Hannah's restlessness with the status quo is Marian's inability to fit into the mold set for women of the early 1900s. She quickly becomes endeared to the young pirate who dis-

guised herself as a cabin boy and went bravely adventuring with one of the world's most notoriously vicious pirates, Edward Low.

Hannah's manuscript, which is about half of the book, follows only hints of the linguistic style of 18th-century American literature. Mercifully, she's far more readable than Mathers.

"A True Account" is a slow start that picks up quickly into a wild voyage of satisfying twists and an even more satisfying ending. The story ties threads of fact and fiction into an intricate knot that's just as enjoyable to look at as it is to untangle. DONNA EDWARDS, MDT/AP



"A True Account: Hannah Masury's Sojourn Amongst the Pyrates" by Katherine Howe (Henry Holt)





TASTE OF EDESIA

# Vanilla Wonderland

IRENE SAM, MDT

**F**ESTIVE season is almost here. **Four Seasons Hotel Macao** is introducing an exquisite Winter Afternoon Tea Set at **Xiao Ting**, featuring the delightful flavour of vanilla sourced from Madagascar. The essence of vanilla brings comforting warmth and joy to both sweet and savoury treats, creating a magical experience.

In the pursuit of this magical ingredient, Four Seasons Hotel Macao has partnered with Prova Gourmet, an esteemed supplier of organic and sustainable vanilla, through longstanding relationships with trusted producers, to ensure the highest quality. To support communities and the environment is also a shared vision reflected upon in Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts' commitment to preserve and regenerate the beautiful places in which one

operates, all endeavouring to leave a positive, enduring impact on the planet.

The Winter Afternoon Tea menu presented is a work of meticulous effort by renowned Prova Gourmet's Chef Tristan Rousselot and Four Seasons Hotel Macao's Executive Pastry Chef Kaori Scott. Highlights on the menu include Chef Tristan's Religieuse, where Tahitian Vanilla is put into a whipped ganache that contrasts the power and bitterness of sesame. The small pastry gives the Christmas vibe a classic touch, elegant and flavourful.

Another standout dessert is the Christmas Tree, meticulously crafted with attention to detail, combining the nostalgic charm of Christmas spice biscuit with the alluring allure of cardamom mousse and coffee ganache. Chef Tristan has reimagined the traditional Christmas tree symbol, offering a modern twist that captivates both the

palate and the eye. Breaking free from moulds and conventions, the dessert showcases the vibrant strength of Colombian coffee entwined with the refreshing floral notes of green cardamom.

Chef Kaori's Canelé with toasted vanilla bean-infused rum custard and caramelized crust is one of a kind. With its crispy exterior and velvety interior, Chef Kaori plays with the smokiness of caramelized aroma combined with honey soaked in the essence of vanilla, creating an irresistible and mysterious delight.

For those seeking savoury pleasures, the Molted Lava Cheese Tart brings on the sumptuous vanilla Brie cheese, masterfully merged with mulled apple compote. Brie cheese oozes with its softness while mulled apple introduces a hint of acidity, resulting in a heavenly pairing that will leave your taste buds craving more.

## RUGBY ACADEMY

# BATS FLAP WINGS IN HONG KONG

DONALD SHAW, MDT, HONG KONG

**M**ACAU Bats Rugby Club have had a busy period recently, starting with the U14s playing Hong Kong Football Club and Singapore Saints at the end of November. Two difficult games against top calibre opponents resulted in two defeats, however the team put up very creditable performances, particularly bearing in mind, that this was the first competitive games these players had played in almost four years.

The following weekend saw the Bats host Tuen Man Sharks at U9 and U11 age groups and a successful day saw the Bats edge the series.

The Bats then travelled to TaiPo, Hong Kong for the Flying Kukris rugby festival. This saw the first appearance of the U6 team with a number of high scoring games - a 2-3 loss to Sandy Bay was followed by a 2-2 draw with the Kukris, a 4-4 draw with Sai Kung Stingrays before signing off with a rollercoaster 5-4 win over Causeway Bay Monkeys.

The U7s had a mixed day, a narrow 1-2 loss to Aberdeen was followed by a convincing 3-1 win over Sai Kung Stingrays, a 1-3 reversal against Shatin Shapei and a close 3-2 win over USRC Tigers.

Meanwhile the U8s were steamrolling over all comers, a convincing 8-0 win against San Kung Stingrays was followed by a 5-0 win over Valley Fort, 7-0 over HKFC and the same score against Tin Shui Wai Eagles.

The U9s kept their strong run of performances going with another four wins in their section, beating Tigers (5-0), Sai Kung Stingrays (4-0), HKFC (7-0) and Kukris (7-2). The U10s came close to matching that with 3 wins and a draw from their games. While the U11s were debuting in the top division, two wins over USRC Tigers (7-1, 5-1) gave them a great start and despite two losses against HKFC (1-5) and Sai Kung Stingrays (0-5) this was a very good first performance at the higher level and bodes well for future tournaments.

The U12s, playing in Sandy Bay, lost 0-3 against HKFC; won 3-1 against Tigers, and secured two 3-3 draws against Discovery Pirates and Causeway Bay Monkeys to round off a busy and productive day.





OPINION

China Daily  
Editorial, China Daily

SOME LESS THAN HAPPY AT ELEVATED NEIGHBORS' TIES

Several weeks ago, Hanoi designated both the United States and Japan as "comprehensive strategic partners". This is Vietnam's highest official designation for a diplomatic relationship and one that Hanoi has used for its relations for China starting 15 years ago. Media in the US heralded the announcement as though the US is now standing on the same starting line with China in a race to draw the Southeast Asian country to the side of one country or the other.

The sensitivity the US media have displayed to such a diplomatic term should leave no one in doubt that the unease they have displayed over Hanoi and Beijing further upgrading their ties on Tuesday indicates it has taken them by surprise.

The sour grapes some US media organizations have shown at China-Vietnam relations being elevated from that "highest official designation" to a strategic China-Vietnam community with a shared future indicates they were not expecting China to leave the US flatfooted on the line.

But for the US, treating Vietnam as "comprehensive strategic partner" means selling it weapons with a view to turning Vietnam into a proxy alongside the Philippines on the other side of the South China Sea.

In contrast, as the continual strengthening of their economic and trade cooperation indicates, China and Vietnam view each other as partners. While the US cares about how Hanoi designates it and how much it can take advantage of that to push through its own agenda, even to Vietnam's cost. China cares about how the two sides can better tap the potential of their cooperation and exchanges and further expand their common interests.

Both China and Vietnam are now closely integrating into the global industry and supply chains. Not only have they seen a steady increase in their bilateral trade and investment but also their industrial, technological and cultural collaborations. They are working closely together to advance the digital economy, green economy and innovation-driven growth, featuring booming people-to-people exchanges. From January to October, Chinese tourists made more than 1.3 million visits to Vietnam.

Moreover, China and Vietnam support each other on issues involving their respective core interests and major concerns, and maintain close coordination in regional and international cooperation mechanisms. Vietnam is an important player in the Group of Friends of the Global Development Initiative. It also supports the global security and civilization initiatives China has put forward, as well as China's accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

With dozens of deals inked over the past two days during the Chinese leader's visit, the two neighbors will accelerate synergizing the Belt and Road Initiative and the Two Corridors and One Economic Circle strategy, and broaden cooperation in such areas as connectivity, SOE reform, green energy and critical minerals.

The development of Sino-Vietnamese ties does not target any third party. Only those trying to drive a wedge between the two neighbors or those trying to undermine stability and peace in the Asia-Pacific will be unhappy about the enduring vitality of China-Vietnam relations.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said yesterday there would be no peace in Ukraine until the Kremlin realizes its goals, which remain unchanged after nearly two years of fighting that has sent tensions soaring between Moscow and the West.

Speaking at a year-end news conference that offered him an opportunity to reinforce his grip on power, Putin gave some rare details on what Moscow calls its "special military operation."

He dismissed the need for a second wave of mobilization of reservists to fight in Ukraine — a move that has been deeply unpopular. He said there are some 617,000 Russian soldiers there, inclu-

ding around 244,000 troops who were called up to fight alongside professional military forces.

"There will be peace when we will achieve our goals," Putin said, repeating a frequent Kremlin line.

Putin, who has held power for nearly 24 years and announced last week he is running for reelection, was greeted with applause as he arrived in the hall in central Moscow. He didn't hold his traditional press conference last year after his military failed to take Kyiv and as the Ukrainian army retook territory in the east and south of the country.

AP PHOTO



EARLIEST VERSION OF MICKEY MOUSE SET TO BECOME PUBLIC DOMAIN IN 2024

ANDREW DALTON,  
LOS ANGELES

M-I-C-K-E-Y will soon belong to you and me.

With several asterisks, qualification and caveats, Mickey Mouse in his earliest form will be the leader of the band of characters, films and books that will become public domain as the year turns to 2024.

In a moment many close observers thought might never come, at least one version of the quintessential piece of intellectual property and perhaps the most iconic character in American pop culture will be free from Disney's copyright as his first screen release, the 1928 short "Steamboat Willie," featuring both Mickey and Minnie Mouse, becomes available for public use.

"This is it. This is Mickey Mouse. This is exciting because it's kind of symbolic," said Jennifer Jenkins, a professor of law and director of Duke's Center for the Study of Public Domain, who writes an annual Jan. 1 column for "Public Domain Day." "I kind of feel like the pipe on the steamboat, like expelling smoke. It's so exciting."

U.S. law allows a copyright to be held for 95 years

after Congress expanded it several times during Mickey's life.

"It's sometimes derisively referred to as the Mickey Mouse Protection Act," Jenkins said. "That's oversimplified because it wasn't just Disney that was pushing for term extension. It was a whole group of copyright holders whose works were set to go into the public domain soon, who benefited greatly from the 20 years of extra protection."

"Ever since Mickey Mouse's first appearance in the 1928 short film Steamboat Willie, people have associated the character with Disney's stories, experiences, and authentic products," a Disney spokesperson said in a statement to The Associated Press. "That will not change when the copyright in the Steamboat Willie film expires."

Current artists and creators will be able to make use of Mickey, but with major limits. It is only the more mischievous, rat-like, non-speaking boat captain in "Steamboat Willie" that has become public.

"More modern versions of Mickey will remain unaffected by the expiration of the Steamboat Willie copyright, and Mickey will

continue to play a leading role as a global ambassador for the Walt Disney Company in our storytelling, theme park attractions, and merchandise," Disney's statement said.

Not every feature or personality trait a character displays is necessarily copyrightable, however, and courts could be busy in the coming years determining what's inside and outside Disney's ownership.

"We will, of course, continue to protect our rights in the more modern versions of Mickey Mouse and other works that remain subject to copyright," the company said.

Disney still solidly and separately holds a trademark on Mickey as a corporate mascot and brand identifier, and the law forbids using the character deceptively to fool consumers into thinking a product is from the original creator. Anyone starting a film company or a theme park will not be free to make mouse ears their logo.

Disney's statement said it "will work to safeguard against consumer confusion caused by unauthorized uses of Mickey and our other iconic characters." MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



USA Tesla is recalling nearly all vehicles sold in the U.S., more than 2 million, to update software and fix a defective system that's supposed to ensure drivers are paying attention when using Autopilot. Documents posted yesterday [Macau time] by U.S. safety regulators say the update will increase warnings and alerts to drivers and even limit the areas where basic versions of Autopilot can operate.

AP PHOTO



Germany The inflation plaguing European shoppers has fallen faster than expected. The economy is in the dumps. That has people talking about interest rate cuts by the European Central Bank, perhaps as soon as the first few months of next year. No rate move is expected at the bank's policy meeting today [Macau time], and analysts say ECB President Christine Lagarde is highly unlikely to confirm any plans to cut. She may even warn that it's too early to declare victory over inflation despite how it's improved.

AP PHOTO



Sweden A large Swedish study has uncovered a paradox about people diagnosed with an excessive fear of serious illness: They tend to die earlier than people who aren't hypervigilant about health concerns. Hypochondriasis, now called illness anxiety disorder, is a rare condition with symptoms that go beyond average health worries. People with the disorder are unable to shake their fears despite normal physical exams and lab tests. Some may change doctors repeatedly. Others may avoid medical care.