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DSAL SAYS THERE IS AN INCREASE IN TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN TO ACCOUNT FOR RISING DEMAND AND PROVIDE GREATER OPPORTUNITIES IN THE WORKFORCE

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BEIJING APPROVES 105 ONLINE GAMES AFTER DRAFT CURBS TRIGGER MASSIVE LOSSES

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AP PHOTO



Japan nuclear safety regulators lifted an operational ban yesterday imposed on a nuclear plant owned by Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, the operator behind the Fukushima plant that ended in disaster, allowing the company to resume preparations for restarting the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant after more than 10 years. The decision removes an order that prohibited TEPCO from transporting new fuel into the plant or placing it into reactors, a necessary step for restarting Kashiwazaki-Kariwa's reactors. More on p7

AP PHOTO



Indonesia Students in Indonesia's Aceh province rallied yesterday demanding the government drive away Rohingya refugees arriving by boat in growing numbers as police named more suspects of human trafficking. Over 1,500 Rohingya, who fled violent attacks in Myanmar and now are leaving camps in neighboring Bangladesh in search of better lives, have arrived in Aceh off the tip of Sumatra since November. They have faced some hostility from fellow Muslims in Aceh.

AP PHOTO



Australia Wild weather has left at least 10 people dead in the eastern Australian states of Queensland and Victoria, officials said yesterday. Three men, aged 48, 59 and 69, were killed after a boat with 11 people on board capsized in rough weather in Moreton Bay off the south Queensland coast on Tuesday, police said. Ambulances took eight survivors to a hospital in stable conditions. The men were aboard the 39-foot pleasure craft on an annual fishing trip, The Courier Mail newspaper reported.

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XINHUA



THE RICH AND THE POOR

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UM RESEARCH

ECONOMY TO SURGE UP TO 21% IN 2024

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CTM AND MTEL LANDLINE LICENSES EXTENDED TO SEPTEMBER 2024

The government announced via two Chief Executive Dispatches yesterday that the validity of communication operators CTM and MTel's landline licenses will be extended to the end of September next year. These licenses cover the installation and operation of landline networks and services and were initially set to expire by the year's end. Recent discussions have centered on the potential acquisition of the network installed by CTM by the government to optimize and better coordinate the use of the strategic equipment, without substantial progress.

ZAPE KUN IAM STATUE CLOSED FOR MAINTENANCE UNTIL APRIL

The Kun lam Ecumenical Centre, more commonly known as the Kun lam Statue at ZAPE District, is now closed for maintenance, which is expected to conclude in early April next year. The closure affects the exhibition center, the outdoor ring, and the causeway. The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) noted that inquiries can be made by calling 87919814 between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. from Tuesdays to Sundays. The 50-ton statue is made up of approximately 50 bronze castings, measuring 20 meters tall.

TAX PAYMENTS VIA ATM DISCONTINUED FROM NEXT YEAR

The government will no longer take tax payments from JETCO ATMs starting from Jan. 1 2024. The government has rationalized the decision in a statement noting that tax payments made using the Macau Tax or One Account apps are both seamless and efficient and will advance e-governance and promote centralized payment systems. Meanwhile, tax payers can also monitor their tax data and obtain receipts in real-time. Tax payments can be made through the apps by scanning the QR code on each tax invoice and settling the bills using eligible mobile payment platforms.

GLOBAL FINANCE REPORT

MACAU'S PURCHASING POWER IN 2023 NEARLY 30% LOWER THAN PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

RENATO MARQUES

A report from Global Finance Magazine on the "Richest Countries in the World 2023" revealed that Macau's per capita purchasing power this year dropped nearly 30% compared to 2019 pre-pandemic levels.

Based on data from the International Monetary Fund and World Economic Outlook April 2023, the annual report noted that despite a significant recovery, Macau's performance this year is still 28.4% below 2019 figures, with the region initially commencing the year with some USD124,670 per capita.

From around the third quarter of 2016, Macau led the ranking of 193 countries and regions according to their gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, corrected by the purchase power parity (PPP).

Macau's performance started to drop right before mid-2019. It ended 2019 in 13th position behind Luxembourg, Singapore, Ireland, Qatar, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Norway, Brunei, USA, San Marino, Hong Kong, and Denmark.

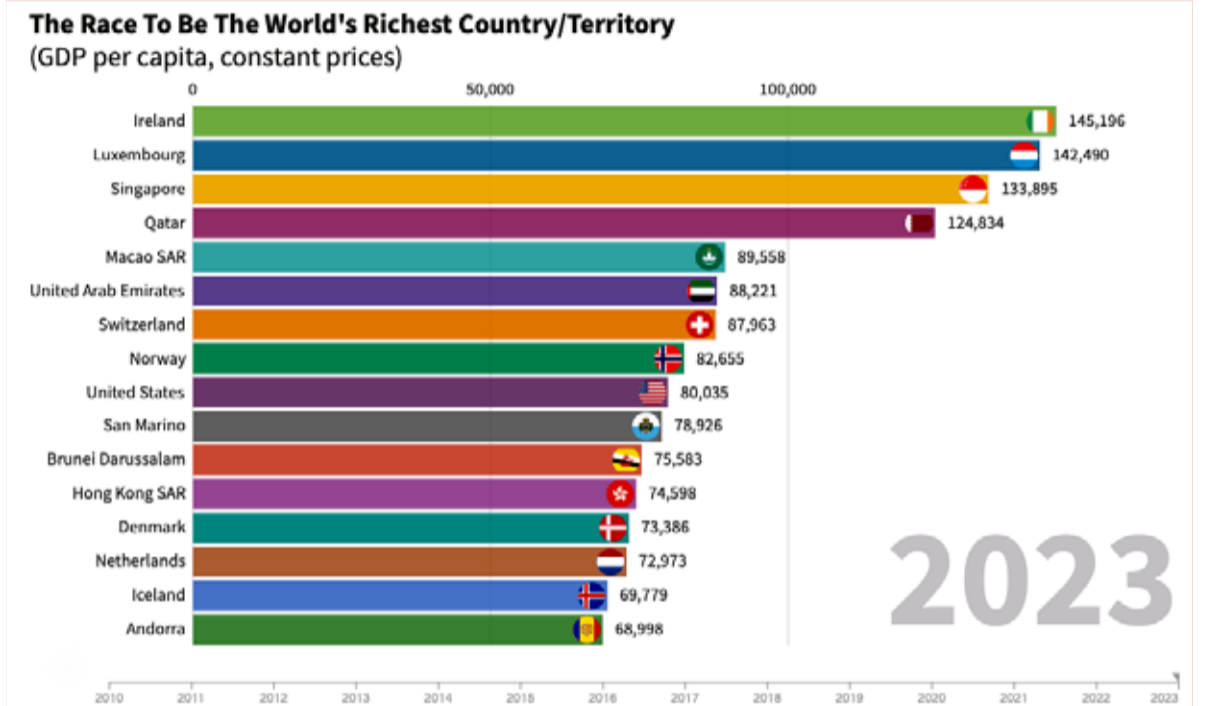
Macau recovered to the seventh position in 2021 but dropped significantly to the 16th position in 2022 with just USD55,714.

A major economic recovery fueled by the performance of the gaming industry brought Macau to 5th place globally in 2023, with USD89,558.

The ranking is currently led by Ireland, followed respectively by Luxembourg, Singapore, and Qatar ahead of Macau.

The report highlighted the severe impact of Covid-19 restrictions on the local economy, especially on the performance of the gaming sector, but noted that the sector as a whole is now "slowly returning to business as usual."

Notwithstanding this, Macau remains the only region on the list whose per-capita purchasing power is lower than before the global pandemic — down by more than USD35,000 today



compared to USD125,000 in 2019.

The Global Finance Magazine report also notes that some of the richest countries and regions of the world are also the smallest ones, including San Marino, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and Singapore (which boasts sophisticated financial sectors and tax regimes that attract foreign investment, professional talent, and large bank deposits) as well as others like Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, which have large reserves of hydrocarbons or other lucrative natural resources.

The reports noted that Macau's "shimmering casinos and hordes of tourists are also good for business." As such, the report noted that Macau remains one of the most affluent states in the world despite almost three years of intermittent lockdowns and pandemic-related travel restrictions.

Moreover, it was observed that while the GDP-PPP formula incorporates adjustments to allow a comparison between countries and regions, the GDP-PPP figure is an average mea-

sure that does not necessarily reflect structural inequalities within each country or region, which "can easily swing the balance in favor of those who are already advantaged."

As such, overall populations within high-scoring regions and countries may not be visibly better off than other places worldwide.

The report also noted that the pandemic made some of these disparities visible in ways few could have predicted.

"Furthermore, the economic fallout of lockdowns hit low-paid workers harder than those with high-paying occupations. This in turn fueled a new kind of inequality between those who could comfortably work from home and those who had to risk their health and safety by traveling to work. Those who lost their jobs because their industries shut down entirely found themselves without much of a safety net—large holes in the most celebrated welfare systems in the world were exposed."

As the pandemic subsided, "inflation surged globally and Russia invaded Ukraine, exacer-

bating the food and oil price crisis." These factors disproportionately affected lower-income families who were forced to spend a greater proportion of income on necessities.

MIXED FEELINGS FROM POPULATION

The Times surveyed members of the public at random, the majority of whom reported noticing a decrease in their purchasing power, taking into account inflationary pressures and the downstream impact on rising costs of goods and services.

Most of those who noticed rising costs cited an approximate increase of 10% between pre-pandemic times and the present day. Several noted that they felt incapable of meeting their daily expenses during the pandemic.

On the other hand, several interviewees said they felt that their purchasing power had reverted to pre-pandemic levels, noting that during 2023 their employers had increased wages via promotions or approving requests to work overtime, rather than direct salary increases.

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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

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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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
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IAS: Studies underway to formulate next phase of women development goals

ANTHONY LAM

DIRECTOR of Social Welfare Hon Wai reiterated that sexual harassment was criminalized in 2017 in response to an inquiry made by lawmaker Ella Lei concerning women's issues. Following a discussion on workplace and other protections, the social welfare official addressed legal protection measures, stating that authorized departments are empowered to handle sexual harassment complaints.

Hon noted that the Macau Women Development Goals Taskforce comprises 11 bureaus, highlighting that, as of 2023, 36 short-term and 24 mid-term measures outlined in the goals had been successfully implemented. Meanwhile, four out of the 19 long-term measures have been systematically rolled out.

Furthermore, studies are underway to formulate the next phase of the development goals.



Citing the Labour Affairs Bureau (DASL), Hon highlighted stipulations in the Labour Relations Law pertaining to maternity and paternity leave. DSAL emphasized the need for a balanced review of laws to accommodate both employee and employer interests.

DSAL says there is an increase in training opportunities for women to account for rising demand and provide greater opportunities in the workforce.

In another inquiry about the social security system by lawmaker Wong Kit Cheng, Pre-

sident Long Kong Io of the Social Security Fund (FSS) highlighted a monitoring mechanism enacted in 2022. This mechanism regularly monitors economic data such as the composite consumer price index for timely adjustments in social security issuance.

He explained that when economic data reaches a certain threshold, this may suggest the need for an adjustment. Final adjustments are made at the discretion of the Chief Executive with input from the Social Coordination Permanent Commission. The mechanism itself undergoes review every five years, Long said.

The review of social security will consider sustainability of the system and the entire beneficiary population.

Regarding childbirth incentives, Long noted that the birth subsidy is one of several government incentives. Other incentives include the provision for 70 days of maternity leave and five days of paternity leave.

Long also highlighted other supportive measures to encourage childbirth, including but not limited to parental training, health-care, educational subsidies, pre-natal preparation and post-natal care, as well as counselling and mentorship programs.

UM RESEARCH

Economy to surge up to 21% in 2024

LYNZY VALLES

MACAU'S economy is forecasted to experience significant growth of between 8.3% and 21.0% in 2024, driven by diversification efforts.

The University of Macau's (UM) Macroeconomic Forecast for Macau 2024 anticipates an increase in service exports between 10.3% and 26.7%, potentially resulting in government revenues between approximately MOP95.3 billion and MOP109.6 billion.

Recovery in visitor arrivals became apparent in 2023, particularly with Hong Kong arrivals reaching 5.95 million between January and October 2023 (accounting for 97.1% of 2019 figures in the same period).

Mainland visitor arrivals reached 15.32 million between January and October 2023, or 64.4% of the 2019 figures.

Under optimistic projections – assuming no major public health-related disruptions to Ma-



cau's social operations – the UM research team predicts that mainland visitor arrivals in 2024 may return 2019 levels.

A more conservative estimate foresees a 5% increase in mainland visitor arrivals over 2023 numbers for 2024.

Despite strategic government initiatives for economic diversification, which focus on transforming Macau into

a global tourism and leisure hub, the UM expects Macau to face uncertainties over the impact of mainland China's economic development in 2024.

Challenges in the real estate market, as well as local government and corporate debt, may potentially affect residents' income, leading to decreased interest and purchasing power for travel

to Macau.

An October forecast by the International Monetary Fund shows that global economic growth will slow from 3.5% in 2022 to 3.0% in 2023, further declining to 2.9% in 2024. Emerging markets and developing economies are projected to experience a modest decline in growth, from 4.1% in 2022 down to 4.0% in both 2023 and 2024.

TOURISM

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY ARRIVALS EXCEED PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

STAFF REPORTER

DURING the handover day, winter solstice and Christmas holidays, visitor arrivals in Macau reached 679,584.

Provisional data shows that over 456,000 visitors traveled to Macau from December 23 to December 26, an average of 114,000 per day. The figure represents a 1.3% increase compared to the same period in 2019, signaling a robust recovery in tourism, according to the Macao Government Tourism Office.

According to preliminary figures, the average occupancy rate of hotel establishments between December 23 to December 26 reached 90.8%,

an increase of 2.7 percentage points when compared to the November average of 88.1%.

From December 20 to December 26, the majority of the arrivals were from the Border Gate and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai Macao Bridge, totaling 225,414 and 202,432 respectively.

With an array of large-scale activities planned for December, the tourism bureau is confident in drawing more tourists to the region.

The bureau will continue to collaborate with other public services, tour operators, companies and associations to enhance tourism offerings and elevate service quality in anticipation of Lunar New Year celebrations in February.



SAR REQUESTS LAND FROM ZHUHAI FOR LRT

The local government has formally requested the acquisition of a land plot from Zhuhai to accommodate the east line of the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) system. In a proposal recently submitted to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the SAR is seeking a 3,700-square-metre plot of land southeast of the Border Gate to construct the east line's railway infrastructure. The east line will comprise six stations, connecting the Border Gate to Taipa.

26 COMPLAINTS AGAINST NURSERIES

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) has received 26 complaints against nurseries this year. During yesterday's TDM radio phone-in show, IAS representatives stated that an average of 20 complaints were received each year. This year's complaints primarily related to administrative operations and injuries to children. Lawmaker Wong Kit Cheng stated that the IAS has collaborated with various associations to conduct childcare training as part of efforts to enhance the academic qualifications and skills of new childcare workers.

MACAU DONATES MOP30M TO GANSU AND QINGHAI

Macau has announced a donation of 30 million patacas to assist earthquake-affected areas in northwest China's Gansu and Qinghai provinces. Ho Iat Seng, Chief Executive of the SAR, said the Macau government is committed to providing disaster relief work in the two provinces. He expressed the hope for a swift return to normalcy for residents in the affected areas. A 6.2-magnitude earthquake struck the Jishishan County of the Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu last week.

CHINA RELEASES ACTION PLAN TO BOOST BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT IN GBA

A three-year action plan was released earlier this week by China's economic planning body aimed at fostering a world-leading business environment within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Sources within the National Development and Reform Commission said the move is aimed at deepening cooperation within the area and enhancing market integration and international competitiveness in the Greater Bay Area. After three years of hard work, the Greater Bay Area is expected to be at the global forefront for business competitiveness, according to the plan.

CRIME

TWO HIT-AND-RUN CASES SOLVED

ANTHONY LAM

THE Public Security Police Force (PSP) has solved two hit-and-run cases involving motorcyclists, according to the police's social media page.

The investigations for both cases were triggered by reports lodged by the complainants.

The first complaint was brought by a taxi driver, whose taxi was reportedly hit on the right side by a passing motorcycle while it was stopping at a traffic light on Avenida de Sacadura Cabral.

When the traffic light turned green, the motorcyclist drove away and disappeared.

The police reviewed surveillance camera footage and identified a male suspect, who admitted to overtaking a taxi at the relevant location. However, he reported that he had not felt any impact due to the heavy traffic and noise in the area.

The second case concerned a motorcyclist who had reportedly hit the back of a car on Avenida Leste do Hipodromo. The complainant told the police that the motorcyclist drove away.

Upon interrogation, the motorcyclist admitted to hitting the car but claimed neither personal injury nor damage to the motorcycle. The hit vehicle also reportedly departed the scene.

Both motorcyclists were charged with the crime of evasion of responsibilities.

The police reminded the pu-



blic that any traffic accidents must be reported to the police.

In another case, the PSP caught a driver driving under the influence of alcohol. During routine traffic inspections, officers observed a heavy motorcycle being ridden on the sidewalk. The police administered a breath test that yielded a reading of 2.14 g/L blood alcohol reading, surpassing the permitted legal limit.

The motorcyclist, a local resident in their thirties, admitted to consuming alcoholic beverages during a dinner in Zhuhai the same day. If convicted, the motorcyclist will face a maximum punishment of one year in prison and a three year driving suspension.

The Judiciary Police (PJ) announced yesterday that an illegal immigration syndicate had been dismantled in a joint operation with the mainland police. In Macau, five suspects, all mainland residents, were arrested. Among them, three are believed to be part of the syndicate, while two were "service buyers."

Around 1 p.m. on Tuesday, PJ inspectors observed a person lingering suspiciously near the Inner Harbour before a ship berthed near Pier 21. Another person disembarked from the ship to chat with that person, and were both intercepted by the PJ.

The PJ searched the ship jointly alongside customs officers, where they arrested ano-

ther three suspects and impounded the ship.

It was revealed that the a member of the syndicate was stationed on land to coordinate and lead the operations, while each service user was charged RMB55,000.

Subsequent investigation revealed that the two service users were banned from entering Macau for three years in 2022 due to convictions for making false declarations and document forgery. They revealed to the police that they sought to enter Macau for casino gambling and illegal currency exchange activities.

The mainland police arrested three suspects, all mainland men.

GBA

CE pledges efforts to achieve initial 2024 goals in Hengqin plan

CHIEF Executive Ho Iat Seng highlighted the significance of the plan to boost the development of the Guangdong-Macao in-depth cooperation zone in Hengqin and its role in contributing to the long-term prosperity and stability of Macau, as well as its integration into overall national development.

The plan, unveiled last week by China's National Development and Reform Commission, along with a plan for the Qianhai Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Cooperation Zone in Shenzhen, will serve as catalysts for the industrial diversification and long-term deve-

LYNZY VALLES



lopment of Macau.

The Macay SAR government will leverage

opportunities arising from the development of Hengqin and Qianhai

that align with Macau's economic diversification plan. Leveraging Macau's

strategic location, the intention is to further promote the coordinated development of Macau and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

The Hengqin plan sets specific development goals for the Hengqin in-depth cooperation zone to develop new industries and open up new systems in the zone. In doing so, Ho outlined, it will expand opportunities to develop Macau businesses and enhance the work and life prospects of Macau residents.

He pledged that the government would invest in efforts to achieve goals set for the first stage by 2024, inject new momentum into the sustainable socioeconomic development of Macau, and promote the successful practices of One Country, Two Systems with Macau characteristics. **MDT/XINHUA**

LIQUOR

Whisky wooing young Chinese away from 'baijiu' as top distillers target a growing market

A distillery in southwestern China is aiming to tap a growing taste among young Chinese for whisky in place of the traditional "baijiu" liquor used to toast festive occasions.

The more than \$100 million distillery owned by Pernod Ricard at the UNESCO World Heritage site Mount Emei launched a pure-malt whisky, The Chuan, earlier this month.

The French wine and spirits group says it is produced using traditional whisky-making techniques combined with Chinese characteristics including locally grown barley and barrels made with oak from the Changbai mountains in northeastern China.

"Chinese terroir means an exceptional and unique environment for aging, including the wa-



ter source here — top-notch mineral water. The source of water at Mount Emei is very famous," says Yang Tao, master distiller at the distillery.

A centuries-old drink, whisky is relatively new to China, but there are already more than 30 whisky distilleries in the mainland, accor-

ding to the whisky website Billion Bottle.

Whisky consumption in China, as measured by volume, rose at a 10% compound annual growth rate from 2017 to 2022, according to IWSR, a beverage market analysis firm. Sales volume is forecast to continue to grow at double di-

git rates through 2028, according to Harry Han, an analyst with market research provider Euromonitor International.

"We see huge potential for whisky here in China. It is a product which is developing very nicely, very strongly," said Alexandre Ricard, chairman and CEO of Pernod Ricard. "We do believe that the Chinese have developed a real taste, particularly for malt whisky."

Raymond Lee, founder of the Single Malt Club China, a whisky trading and distribution company in Beijing, said whisky has become more popular as the economy has grown.

"As the economy develops and personal income increases, many people are pursuing individuality. In the past we all lived the same lives. When your economic conditions reach a certain level, you

will start to seek your own individuality. Whisky caters just to the consumption mindset of these people. And its quality is very different from that of other alcoholic drinks," he says.

On a recent Friday night at a bar in Beijing, 28-year-old Sylvia Sun, who works in the music industry, was enjoying a whisky on the rocks.

"The taste of it lingers in your mouth for a very long time. If I drink it, I will keep thinking about it the rest of tonight," she said.

Lee, who has been in the industry for more than 35 years, said the whisky boom is largely driven by younger Chinese who are more open to Western cultures and lifestyles than their parents' generation was.

More than half of China's whisky consumers are between 18 and 29 years old, according to an analysis based on data from the e-commerce channel of Billion Bottle, which has more than 2 million registered users.

"Now the country is more and more open, and there are increasing opportunities to go abroad, and they have absorbed different kinds of cultures. They also have the courage to try new things. When they try something new — for example whisky — they realize that it's very different from China's baijiu. Whisky may be easier for them to accept," Lee said. MDT/AP

AD

Academic Year 2024/2025 Central Registration for Children Entering Kindergarten for the First Time



Aims

To optimise schools' enrolment mechanism, simplify the procedures that parents complete for their children entering kindergarten for the first time and enable parents to confirm which school to enrol their children in as early as possible.

Eligibility

Macao residents aged 3 by 31st December, 2024, who will enrol in infant education in Macao for the first time.

Gentle Reminder:

- To enrol in Macao schools, non-Macao residents must possess a stay or residence permit for over 90 days issued by the authorised entity of the Macao SAR. Parents must process the registration at any of the DSEDJ counters.
- Schools set no limit to the number of registrants and interviews. There is also no priority for early registration in the Central Registration system. Therefore, parents do not need to rush to be the first to register.
- Macao residents can apply for "School for Macao Children" in Hengqin through Central Registration; it is not counted as the registration limit of 6 schools.
- At the time of interview, parents should show the screenshot of "Interview QR Code" to school staff. The QR Code can be used repeatedly.
- Parents only need to bring the screenshot of the child's "First-time Enrolment QR Code" to the school to process enrolment or school transfer procedure according to the requirement of the school.
- The DSEDJ will provide "Service of consultation and arrangement of school places" to parents who are in need.

Timeline (Year 2024)

Enrolment information	Starting from 1 st January onwards, parents can consult the enrolment information on the DSEDJ website or school website.
Central Registration	Parents register on the DSEDJ website or at the DSEDJ counters Between 5 th and 16 th January.
Schools release the interview date and time	Between 21 st and 24 th February
School admission interviews	Between 1 st and 24 th March
Release of the admission list and the period for online confirmation	Release of the admission lists on the DSEDJ website and by schools 9 th April
	Parents can check the admission list and confirm one school to enrol their children on the DSEDJ website Between 9 th and 11 th April
Schools release the admission list of waitlisted students	From 12 th April onwards
Parents process enrolment / school transfer procedures in person	From 13 th April onwards (According to the period informed by schools) Admitted students must finish the registration procedure on or before 16 th April.
Enrolment at other schools	If a child has not yet been admitted to any school by 17 th April, or parents want to enrol their child in another school, parents can visit the DSEDJ website to check the status of K1 places available at different schools, and go to the schools that still accept enrolment for enquiries and registration.

For enquiries:
8397 2309

For details, please browse
DSEDJ website:

www.dsedj.gov.mo



DSEDJ website



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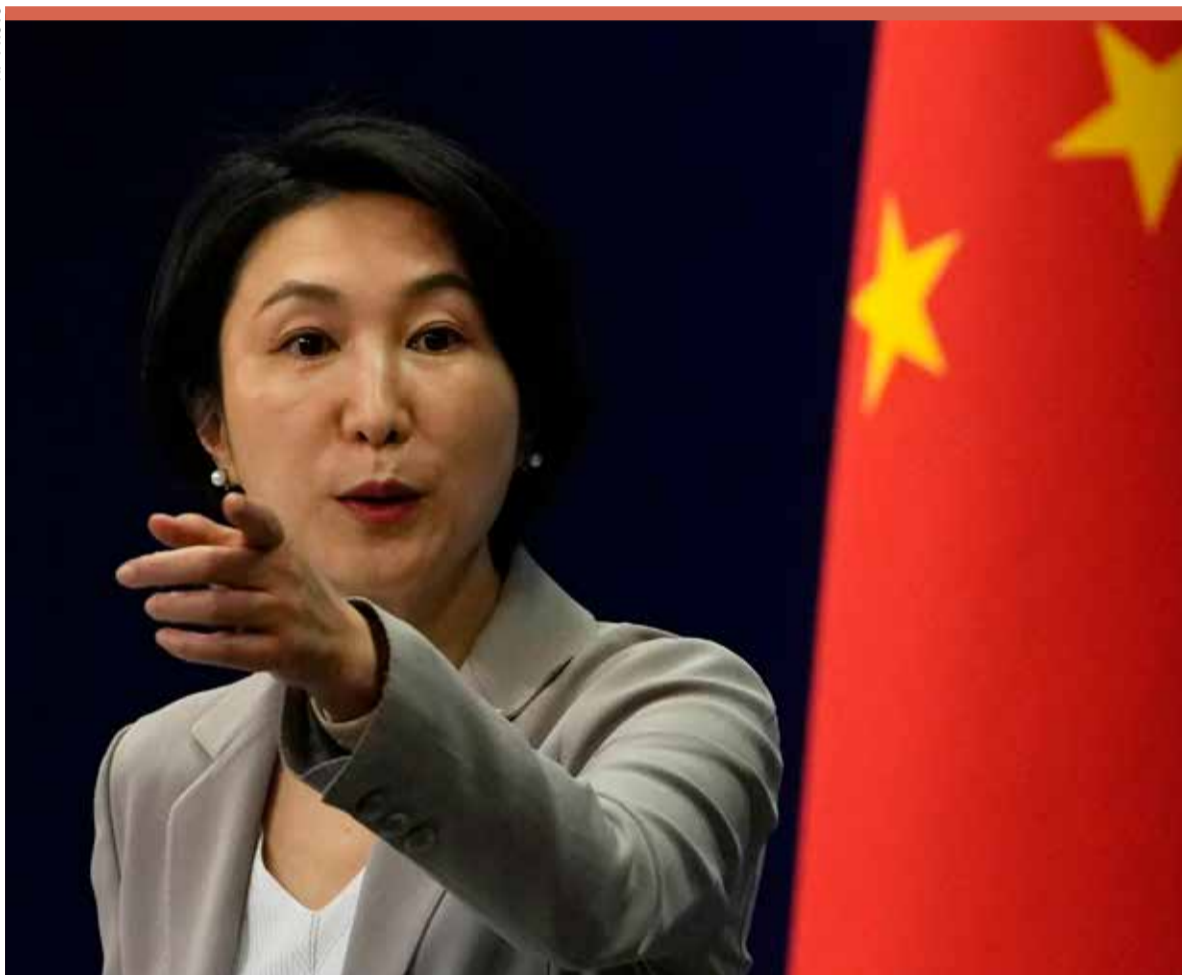
Gov't sanctions a US research firm and two individuals over reports on human rights

CHINA says it is banning a United States research company and two analysts who have reported extensively on claims of human rights abuses committed against Uyghurs and other Muslim minority groups native to the country's far northwestern region of Xinjiang.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning was quoted as announcing yesterday [Macau time] that Los Angeles-based research and data analytics firm Kharon, its director of investigations, Edmund Xu, and Nicole Morgret, a human rights analyst affiliated with the Center for Advanced Defense Studies, would be barred from traveling to China. Also, any assets or property they have in China will be frozen and organizations and individuals in China are prohibited from making transactions or otherwise cooperating with them.

In a statement on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, Mao said the sanctions against the company, Xu and Morgret were retaliation for a yearly U.S. government report on human rights in Xinjiang. Uyghurs and other natives of the region share religious, linguistic and cultural links with the scattered peoples of Central

AP PHOTO



Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning gestures during a press conference at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing, on July 26, 2023

Asia and several groups have long "resented the authorities' heavy-handed control and attempts to

assimilate them with the majority Han ethnic group." In a paper published in June

2022, Morgret wrote, "The Chinese government is undertaking a concerted drive to industria-

lize the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), which has led an increasing number of corporations to establish manufacturing operations there. This centrally-controlled industrial policy is a key tool in the government's efforts to forcibly assimilate Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples through the institution of a coerced labor regime."

Such reports draw from a wide range of sources, including independent media, non-governmental organizations and groups that may receive commercial and governmental grants or other outside funding.

China has long denied such allegations, saying the large-scale network of prison-like facilities through which passed hundreds of thousands of Muslim citizens were intended only to rid them of violent, extremist tendencies and teach them job skills.

China says the camps are all now closed, but many of their former inmates have reportedly been given lengthy prison sentences elsewhere. Access to the region by journalists, diplomats and others is tightly controlled, as is movement outside the region by Uyghurs, Kazaks and other Muslim minorities.

"By issuing the report, the United States once again spread false stories on Xinjiang and illegally sanctioned Chinese officials and companies citing so-called human rights issues," Mao was quoted as saying.

"If the United States refuses to change course, China will not flinch and will respond in kind," Mao was quoted as telling reporters at an earlier news briefing. **MDT/AP**

Beijing approves 105 online games after draft curbs trigger massive losses

ELAINE KURTENBACH,
BANGKOK

CHINA'S press and publications authority has approved 105 new online games, saying it fully supports the industry after proposed curbs caused massive losses last week for investors in major games makers.

The National Press and Publication Administration issued a statement on its WeChat social media account Monday saying the approvals by the Game Working Committee of China Music and Digital Association were "positive signals that support the prosperity and healthy development of the online game industry."

Tencent's "Counter War:

AP PHOTO



Future" and NetEase's "Firefly Assault" were among games approved.

Draft guidelines for curbs on online gaming had caused share prices of video

game makers like Tencent and NetEase to plunge on Friday, causing losses of tens of billions of dollars and dragging Chinese benchmarks lower.

The administration's guidelines said online games would be banned from offering incentives for daily log-ins or purchases. Other restrictions include limiting

how much users can recharge and issuing warnings for "irrational consumption behavior."

Last week, Netease's Nasdaq-traded shares fell 16.1% while it's Hong Kong-traded shares sank 25%. Tencent's closed 12% lower. Huya Inc., a smaller online games maker, lost 10.7% on the New York Stock Exchange. Overall, the companies lost tens of billions of dollars in market value.

Hong Kong's market was closed Monday for the Christmas holiday. Share prices in Shanghai were flat.

The Press and Publication Administration said that in 2023, 1,075 game version numbers had been issued, of which 977 were domestically produced and 98 were imported.

It also cited a "2023 China Game Industry Report" that it said showed sales revenue for the domestic online games market exceeded 300 billion yuan (\$42 billion) in

2023, with the number of people playing the games reaching 668 million.

"The Game Working Committee hopes that member units will take this opportunity to launch more high-quality products, promote high-quality development of the online game industry, and contribute to promoting cultural prosperity and development and building a culturally powerful country," it said.

China has taken various measures against the online games sector in recent years.

In 2021, regulators limited the amount of time children could spend on games to just three hours a week, expressing concern about addiction to video gaming. Approvals of new video games were suspended for about eight months but resumed in April 2022 as a broader crackdown on the entire technology industry was eased. **MDT/AP**

NORTH KOREA

Kim boasts of achievements as he opens key year-end political meeting

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

NORTH Korean leader Kim Jong Un praised what he called achievements and victories that strengthened national power and boosted the country's prestige this year, as he opened a key political meeting to set new policy goals for 2024, state media reported yesterday.

Experts said that during this week's year-end plenary meeting of the ruling Workers' Party, North Korea would likely hype its progress in arms development because the country lacks economic achievements amid persistent international sanctions and pandemic-related economic hardships.

In his opening-day speech at the meeting that began Tuesday, Kim defined 2023 "as a year of great turn and great change both in name and reality, in which (North Korea) left a great trace in the glorious course of development in the efforts to improve the national power and enhance the prestige of the country," according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

KCNA said North Korea achieved a rapid advancement in its defense capabilities this year in the wake of the launch of its first military spy satellite in



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, center, holds a year-end plenary meeting of the ruling Workers' Party in Pyongyang, North Korea, Tuesday

November and the introduction of other sophisticated weapons.

KCNA said North Korea also reported a rare good harvest this year as the country finished building new irrigation systems ahead of schedule and met major agricultural state objectives. It said that modern streets, new houses and other buildings were built in Pyongyang and elsewhere across the country.

According to a recent assessment by South Korea's state-run Rural Development Administration, North Korea's grain production this year was estimated at 4.8 million tons, a 6.9% increase from last year's 4.5

million tons, thanks to favorable weather conditions. But the 4.8 million tons are still short by about 0.7 million tons of sufficient annual levels, as experts say North Korea needs about 5.5 million tons of grain to feed its 25 million people each year.

The Workers' Party meeting, expected to last several days, will review state projects from this year and establish new objectives for next year. In recent years, North Korea has published the results of its meeting, including Kim's closing speech, in state media on Jan. 1, allowing him to skip his New Year's Day address.

The meeting comes after

North Korea launched its most advanced intercontinental ballistic missile, the solid-fueled Hwasong-18, which is designed to strike the mainland U.S., into the sea last week. North Korea said the Hwasong-18 launch, the third of its kind this year, was meant to warn the U.S. and South Korea over their confrontational moves against North Korea.

On Nov. 21, North Korea put its first military spy satellite into orbit, though outside experts question whether it can send militarily useful high-resolution imagery.

The launches of the Hwa-

song-18 missile and the spy satellite were part of an ongoing run of weapons tests by North Korea since last year. Kim has maintained he was forced to expand his nuclear arsenal to cope with increasing hostilities from the U.S. and its allies toward the North, but foreign experts say he eventually hopes to use an enlarged arsenal to win greater outside concessions when diplomacy resumes.

Last week, South Korean Defense Minister Shin Wonsik told lawmakers that North Korea appeared to be speeding up its weapons testing activities to highlight its achievements in defense sectors because it lacked major progress in the economy and public livelihoods.

In recent years, North Korea's fragile economy was severely battered by pandemic-related curbs, U.S.-led sanctions and the North's own mismanagement. But monitoring groups say there are no signs of a humanitarian crisis or social chaos that could threaten Kim's absolute rule at home.

In August, South Korea's National Intelligence Service told lawmakers that North Korea's economy shrank each year from 2020 to 2022 and that its gross domestic product last year was 12% less than in 2016. **MDT/AP**

JAPAN

Court only holds utility responsible to compensate Fukushima evacuees and reduces damages

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

ATokyo court has ruled that only the operator of the tsunami-wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant had to pay damages to dozens of evacuees, relieving the government of responsibility. Plaintiffs criticized the ruling as belittling their suffering and the severity of the disaster.

The Tokyo High Court also slashed the amount to half of a lower court's decision, ordering the Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, known as TEPCO, to pay a total of 23.5 million yen (\$165,000) to 44 of the 47 plaintiffs.

Tuesday's ruling backpedaled from an earlier decision in March 2018, when the Tokyo District Court held both the government and TEPCO accountable for the disaster, which the ruling said could have been prevented if they both took better precautionary measures, ordering both to pay 59 million yen (\$414,400) in damages.

Motomitsu Nakagawa, a lawyer representing the plaintiffs, said he was infuriated by the high court ruling, which he called a "copy and paste" of an earlier Supreme Court decision relieving the government of responsibility.

The decision comes at a

time when Japan's government is trying to accelerate reactor restarts to maximize nuclear energy to meet decarbonization targets, while seeking to tone down the impact of the nuclear disaster 13 years ago, and its memory gradually fades.

Three reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant melted after a magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami hit on March 11, 2011, releasing massive amounts of radiation in the area and displacing more than 160,000 people at one point. About 27,000 of them are still unable to return home.

The government has pushed for the deconta-

mination of affected areas and the reopening of no-go zones, and has urged evacuees to return to their homes while cutting back support for them. The government-set compensation program, which is mostly based on distance from the plant and radiation levels, has triggered divisions and discrimination among communities.

The dispute centers on whether the government could have foreseen the risk of a massive tsunami, and whether the disaster could have been averted if the government had ordered the utility to take precautions.

In the ruling, judge Hiro Misumi said the flooding

of the plant because of the tsunami wasn't preventable even if the industry ministry used its authority and ordered the utility to enhance a seawall based on a tsunami estimate at that time.

The decision is among the four rulings that apparently came in line with the June 2022 Supreme Court decision that said the government wasn't liable for the disaster and that the disaster from a tsunami that high wasn't foreseeable or preventable.

Nakagawa, the lawyer for the plaintiffs, said the ruling takes the disaster-hit residents' suffering lightly, and the reduction

of the amount of compensation is also tantamount to saying that the operator can get away with paying only that much damage in a disaster.

He said that he planned to discuss a possible appeal to the Supreme Court after consulting with his clients.

Yuya Kamoshita, who has evacuated to Tokyo from Iwaki, south of the Fukushima Daiichi plant with his family, said the ruling was unacceptable because it trivialized the evacuees' sufferings, and failed to hold the government accountable even though the nuclear power plant was operated as part of the national energy policy. **MDT/AP**

ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

Israeli military says Gaza ground offensive has expanded into urban refugee camps

NAJIB JOBAIN, WAFASHURFA & SAMY MAGDY, RAFAH

ISRAELI forces on Tuesday expanded their ground offensive into urban refugee camps in central Gaza after bombarding the crowded Palestinian communities and ordering residents to evacuate. Gaza's main telecom provider announced another "complete interruption" of services in the besieged territory.

The military's announcement of the new battle zone threatens further destruction in a war that Israel says will last for "many months" as it vows to crush the ruling Hamas militant group after its Oct. 7 attack. Israeli forces have been engaged in heavy urban fighting in northern Gaza and the southern city of Khan Younis, driving Palestinians into ever-smaller areas in search of refuge.

The U.S. said Israel's minister for strategic affairs, Ron Dermer, was meeting with Secretary of State Antony Blinken and national security adviser Jake Sullivan to discuss topics including transitioning to a different phase of the war to maximize focus on high-value Hamas targets, improving the humanitarian situation, and planning for governance and security in Gaza after the war.

Despite U.S. calls for Israel to curb civilian casualties and international pressure for a cease-fire, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the military was deepening the fighting.

"We say to the Hamas terrorists: We see you and we will get to you," Netanyahu said.

Israel's offensive is one of the most devastating military campaigns in recent history. More than 20,900 Palestinians, two-thirds women and children, have been killed, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza, whose count doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants. The agency said 240 people were killed over the past 24 hours.

The U.N. human rights office said the continued bombardment of middle Gaza had claimed more than 100 Palestinian lives since Christmas Eve. The office noted that Israel



Medics unload the bodies of Palestinians killed in fighting with Israel and turned over by the Israeli military during a mass funeral in Rafah, Gaza Strip, Tuesday

had ordered some residents to move there.

Israel said it would no longer grant automatic visas to U.N. employees and accused the world body of being "complicit partners" in Hamas' tactics. Government spokesman Eylon Levy said Israel would consider visa requests case by case. That could further limit aid efforts in Gaza.

Residents of central Gaza described shelling and airstrikes shaking the Nuseirat, Maghazi and Bureij camps. The built-up towns hold Palestinians driven from their homes in what is now Israel during the 1948 war, along with their descendants.

"The bombing was very intense," Radwan Abu Sheitta said by phone from Bureij.

The Israeli military ordered residents to evacuate a belt of territory the width of central Gaza, urging them to move to nearby Deir al-Balah. The U.N. humanitarian office said the area ordered evacuated was home to nearly 90,000 people before the war and now shelters more than 61,000 displaced people, mostly from the north.

The military later said it was operating in Bureij and asserted that it had located a Hamas training camp.

The telecom outage announced by Paltel follows similar

outages through much of the war. NetBlocks, a group that tracks internet outages, confirmed that network connectivity in Gaza was disrupted again and "likely to leave most residents offline."

Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan said several countries had sent proposals to resolve the conflict following news of an Egyptian proposal that would include a transitional Palestinian government in Gaza and the occupied West Bank. He did not offer details of the proposals.

REGIONAL SPILLOVER

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Israel faces a "multi-arena war" on seven fronts — Gaza and the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Iran. "We have responded and acted already on six of these," he told the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

Iranian-backed militia groups around the region have stepped up attacks in support of Hamas.

Iranian-backed militias in Iraq carried out a drone strike on a U.S. base in Irbil on Monday, wounding three American service members, according to U.S. officials. In response, U.S. warplanes hit three locations in Iraq connected to a main militia, Kataib Hezbollah.

Almost daily, Hezbollah and Israel exchange missiles, airstrikes and shelling across the Israeli-Lebanese border. On Tuesday, Israel's military said Hezbollah struck a Greek Orthodox church in northern Israel with a missile, wounding two Israeli Christians, and fired again on arriving soldiers, wounding nine.

"Hezbollah is risking the stability of the region for the sake of Hamas," said Israel's military spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari.

In the Red Sea, attacks by Houthi rebels in Yemen against commercial ships have disrupted trade and prompted a U.S.-led multinational naval operation to protect shipping routes. The Israeli military said a fighter jet on Tuesday shot down a "hostile aerial target" above the Red Sea that the military asserted was on its way to Israeli territory.

The USS Laboon, a Navy destroyer, and American fighter jets shot down 12 drones, three anti-ship ballistic missiles and two land-attack cruise missiles in the southern Red Sea that were fired by the Yemen-based Houthis over a 10-hour period Tuesday, according to the Pentagon. U.S. Central Command said there was no damage to ships in the area or reported injuries. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

2003 BRITAIN GIVES GO-AHEAD FOR 'SKY MARSHALS'



Armed undercover "sky marshals" will be placed on some British passenger planes in the United States, the British Government has announced.

Home Secretary David Blunkett and Transport Secretary Alistair Darling said the move was a "responsible and prudent step" in response to the heightened state of alert in the US and would be deployed "where appropriate".

Last week America raised the national alert to code orange, the second-highest level, after reports that a French airliner would be hijacked and used as a missile against a US city.

The plan, which is part of a general tightening of airport and airline security in the wake of the September 11 attacks, is opposed by the British Airline Pilots Association (Balpa).

Balpa general secretary Jim McAuslan said: "We do not want guns on planes. It is dangerous to have guns on planes and there are other things you can do, like investing in security measures on the ground."

He said the union would be advising its members not to fly if they were "not comfortable with arrangements".

British Airways and Virgin Atlantic have declined to comment.

The announcement follows a number of security scares involving airports in recent days.

Last Wednesday six Air France flights between Paris and Los Angeles were cancelled amid fears of a terrorist attack.

Today's announcement follows a similar move by the Australian Government two days ago. It said it would place sky marshals on Qantas flights to Singapore.

The Israeli airline El-Al, famous for its strict security, has been using armed marshals for more than 30 years. The German airline Lufthansa also has them on some of its flights.

In a separate warning yesterday, the British Government said it believed terrorists could be in the final stages of planning an attack in Saudi Arabia.

British nationals have already been warned against all but essential travel to the kingdom following attacks in Riyadh in May and November this year.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The following day the Bush administration ordered all foreign airlines to deploy armed sky marshals on flights to the US deemed by Washington to be a risk, or face having their flights banned from US air space. Some EU countries - in particular Italy, Portugal, Denmark, Sweden and Finland - strongly opposed the use of sky marshals, preferring to cancel flights that the US felt were a threat and to concentrate on tightening security at ground level. After talks in Brussels with EU officials in January 2004, the US softened its stance insisting there was no "blanket policy" to stop airlines without marshals entering America. In December 2005 a US sky marshal shot dead a man who claimed to have a bomb on board an American Airlines plane. It was the first time since 9/11 that a passenger had been shot by an air marshal.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Stomach problems could prevail if you haven't been watching your diet. Don't second guess yourself, just go to it. Quarrels will erupt if you get into philosophical debates with friends.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Don't neglect these problems; deal with them once and for all, then move on to more pleasurable tasks. Get some sound advice and help setting up a workable budget.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Deception regarding joint finances or investments will cause upsets between family members. Be prepared to encounter new friendships that will provide you with valuable information.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Uncertainty regarding your direction is likely. Problems with fire, gas, or oil may cause disruptions and annoyances. Talking to those you trust and respect will help you sort out any problems.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Opportunities for travel must be carefully considered. You will encounter those who can help you further your goals if you attend functions that attract prominent people.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Ask a close friend for advice. Your partner may make you feel jealous and unloved. Take a second look; another person's philosophy may be extremely different from yours.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Try not to take others for granted. Tempers could get out of hand today. It might be time to pick up the slack and do your share. You can make money if you get involved in real estate deals.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Don't let opposition from those envious of your talents daunt your progress. Be cautious not to get involved in office chatter that will cause problems for others.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
You may want to try your hand at a little creative writing. Don't let your boss get the better of you. Refrain from arguing with your mate. Problems with peers is apparent.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Your self esteem will benefit. Friends will be loyal and caring. Find an outlet for any mounting frustration. Consider a creative hobby.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
You can make a difference if you offer your help at functions that involve children. A new image can be the result if you change your look.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
You're best to channel your energy into work. You need a day to rest and relax with the ones you love. It may be a disappointing day emotionally.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-9	5	fine
Changchun	-10	-4	fine
Chengdu	0	12	overcast
Chongqing	5	13	cloudy
Fuzhou	13	22	cloudy
Guangzhou	10	24	cloudy
Guiyang	4	18	fine
Haikou	18	22	cloudy
Hangzhou	3	14	fine
Harbin	-19	-7	fine
Hefei	-2	12	fine
Nanjing	0	12	fine
Shanghai	6	13	fine
Taipei	17	21	rain
Wuhan	1	12	cloudy
Hong Kong	19	22	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-6	-4	cloudy
Frankfurt	9	10	cloudy
Paris	9	12	cloudy
London	9	12	rain
New York	8	12	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Let's Make ___; 6- Composed; 10- Lady of Spain; 14- Shout of exultation; 15- Hip bones; 16- Large jug or pitcher; 17- Compadre; 18- Thought-provoking; 19- Diplomacy; 20- Talks; 22- Trade; 24- Hit the slopes; 26- Sickness at the stomach; 27- As an alternative; 31- Equipment; 32- Stan's pal; 33- More bizarre; 36- It may be picked; 39- Test choice; 40- Elevator stop; 41- Repeated, an island of French Polynesia; 42- 1972 treaty subj.; 43- Saunter; 44- John of England; 45- Bus, bigwig; 46- An item in a series; 48- Picks up the check; 51- And so on; 52- Grifter; 54- Uncouth; 59- Snaps; 60- Monogram ltr.; 62- Courtyard; 63- Twinge; 64- Canceled; 65- Related on the mother's side; 66- ___-do-well; 67- Battleship shade; 68- Adlai's running mate;

DOWN 1- Cries of discovery; 2- Moist; 3- Nobelist Wiesel; 4- Pond organism; 5- Quick visual inspection; 6- Heston's hero, with Loren; El ___; 7- One of the Baldwins; 8- Rest atop; 9- Cartographer; 10- Hate; 11- Alert, knowing; 12- Tourist draw; 13- Commedia dell'___; 21- Musical style with similarities to reggae; 23- The Ghost and Mrs. ___; 25- Graven images; 27- Scintilla; 28- Workers' rights org.; 29- Run-down quarter; 30- No-win situation; 34- Forest female; 35- Holmes's creator; 36- Words of denial; 37- Tiger's choice; 38- Zingy taste; 40- Trifling; 41- Sandwich order; 43- Alcoholic drink of fermented honey; 44- One on the run; 45- It spreads aromatic smoke; 47- Judge in 1995 news; 48- More than once; 49- Nouveau ___; 50- Spanish Mister; 52- Duration; 53- Baltic capital; 55- Devotees; 56- Let's just leave ___ that; 57- Web locale; 58- Weed whackers; 61- Plaything;

Friday's solution

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Emergency calls 999	Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
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	
Tourism 28 333 000	
Airport 59 888 88	

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VA FAT (Taipa Village)
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77.10 m² / 830 ft² | HKD3,980,000



Tou Un (Taipa)
1 bed 1 bath
44.12 m² / 475 ft² | HKD2,980,000



Supreme Flower City (Taipa)
4 bed 3 bath 1 car park
191.38 m² / 2,060 ft² | HKD22,000/mth



Manhattan (Taipa)
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FOOTBALL

FIFA threatens to suspend Brazil over confederation president's removal by court

MAURICIO SAVARESE,
RIO DE JANEIRO

FIFA warned Brazil recently it could suspend its national teams and clubs from international competitions if an intervention by its soccer body leads to the election of a new president in January.

FIFA said in a letter to a Brazilian soccer executive that the country's soccer body CBF could face suspension if it does not heed its call to wait and instead holds a swift election to replace Ednaldo Rodrigues as president regardless. The document was obtained by The Associated Press.

A Rio de Janeiro court removed Rodrigues and all his appointees at CBF from office on Dec. 7 due to irregularities in his election last year. Brazil's two highest courts upheld that ruling last week.

Soccer's governing body FIFA historically rejects government and third-party interference in its member associations, which



Fernando Diniz, left, the new head coach of the Brazil's national soccer team, and Brazilian Soccer Confederation President Ednaldo Rodrigues, right

ultimately could leave five-time World Cup winners Brazil out of major competitions until the crisis is solved.

The Rio court ruling also named José Perdiz, the head of Brazil's top sports court, as an intervenor to organize new elections for the presidency within 30 working

days. FIFA said in previous letters to CBF it considers the intervention to be undue.

Sunday's letter was signed by FIFA's Kenny Jean-Marie, its chief members' association officer, and CONMEBOL's deputy secretary-general, Monserrat Jiménez García.

FIFA and South American soccer body CONMEBOL also said in the letter they will form a commission to discuss the matter in Brazil on Jan. 8.

"FIFA and CONMEBOL would like to strongly emphasize that, until such mission takes place, no decision affecting CBF, including any elections or call for elections, shall be taken. Should this not be respected, FIFA will have no other option but to submit the matter to its relevant decision-making body for consideration and decision, which might also include a suspension," the letter said.

"For the sake of good order, we would also like to underline that should CBF be eventually suspended by the relevant FIFA body, it would lose all of its membership rights with immediate effect and until the suspension is lifted by FIFA. This would also mean that CBF representative and clubs teams would no longer be entitled to take part in any international competition while it is suspen-

ded," it added.

The document also says that any irregular interference in its member associations "can lead to sanctions as provided for in the FIFA Statutes, including a suspension, and this even if the third-party influence was/is not the fault of the member association concerned."

Perdiz said in a statement he sees FIFA's letter "as a positive sign." He also added he will "call for the elections within the established deadline, with the transparency and integrity that are demanded."

Spokespersons for Rodrigues did not respond a request for comment from the AP.

Rodrigues first took the job as interim president in 2021 after predecessor Rogério Caboclo was suspended. Local media reported he is currently in negotiations with other Brazilian soccer executives to either bid again for the presidency in new elections or to support another candidate. **MDT/AP**

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C&C RECEIVED THE 1ST SILVER
"DEIGNAN AWARD"
FOR RESPONSIBLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP
IN MACAU (2023)



OPINION

World Views

Thalia Beaty, AP/MDT

'TIS THE SEASON FOR GIVING: A GUIDE FOR HOW TO GIVE, EVEN A LITTLE

Christmas is over, but giving season for nonprofits is just starting to peak.

The end of the calendar year is when nonprofits make appeals far and wide to attract donors — in part because of holiday traditions or, for some, tax advantages. Nonprofits get about 30% of their annual donations in December — including 10% in the final three days of the year — according to marketing agency Nonprofits Source.

“This is one of the busiest times of the year for us as we assist donors with their year-end giving,” said Erin Musgrave, a spokesperson for the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

Many potential donors don't realize how much nonprofits value even small gifts, especially local organizations that meet community needs. And nonprofits and industry groups warn that donations are down this year, so gifts right now could help them a lot.

Only 11% of Americans itemize their taxes, which allows them to claim significant tax deductions for charitable donations. That means most Americans don't give in December for tax reasons.

“They're thinking about the organization in their community that's having an impact and digging deep and giving,” said Chuck Collins, director of the Program on Inequality and the Common Good at the Institute for Policy Studies.

As you watch commercial appeals and sort through donation requests, here are some things to consider:

WHERE SHOULD I DONATE?

Experienced donors often have a short list of criteria they use to help select nonprofits to support. It could be organizations that serve the area where they live or specific causes or issues with which they have a personal connection.

A question to ask yourself is: “What are the issues or communities that are important to me and where do I want to make a difference?”

A great way to find out about organizations in your area is to ask your friends, coworkers and neighbors. They may have interacted directly with a nonprofit that supports after-school programs, sends companions to elderly residents, advocates around traffic safety or supports local artists. For any topic that is important to you, an organization in your area is likely working on it.

Another potential consideration is check if your employer will match donations to the nonprofit you want to support. If so, your donation could go even further.

If you feel burdened by all the urgent appeals everywhere from the checkout line to the mail or online, one tactic is to make a budget and set aside time to give to organizations important to you. Be realistic, make a plan and then, set aside the guilt.

DO I HAVE TO GIVE NOW? I HAVE LOTS OF EXPENSES.

No, simply put.

First, there's no obligation to give to nonprofits. Many people make a difference in their communities — donating blood, volunteering with their fire department, caring for neighbors and myriad other ways.

Second, many nonprofits actually prefer for donors to set up automatic monthly donations, even in very small amounts, rather than giving a lump sum at the end of the year. The automatic donation from your bank account or credit card means they can plan for how to spend those funds in advance, which often helps them save money and resources.

[Abridged]

S. KOREAN ACTOR LEE SUN-KYUN OF OSCAR-WINNING FILM 'PARASITE' FOUND DEAD

THE BUZZ

Lee Sun-kyun, a popular South Korean actor best known for his role in the Oscar-winning movie “Parasite,” was found dead in a car in Seoul yesterday, authorities said, after weeks of an intense police investigation into his alleged drug use.

Police and emergency officers initially found Lee in what they believed was an unconscious state in the car parked on a street in northern Seoul. Emergency officers later confirmed he was dead, according to Seoul's Seongbuk police station.

Police had been searching for Lee, 48, after receiving a report that he was missing, Seongbuk police said.

They refused to provide further details including whether they had determined Lee killed himself. But South Korean media outlets including Yonhap news agency said that Lee's family earlier Wednesday reported to police that he left home after leaving a message similar to a suicide note.

Lee's body was later transported to a nearby Seoul hospital, according to Seongbuk police.



AP PHOTO



Netherland's Sigrid Kaag

ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

UN APPOINTS A FORMER DUTCH DEPUTY PREMIER AND MIDEAST EXPERT AS ITS GAZA HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR

EDITH M. LEDERER, UNITED NATIONS

SIGRID Kaag, the Netherlands' former deputy prime minister and a Mideast expert, was appointed the U.N. coordinator for humanitarian aid to war-torn Gaza, the United Nations chief announced earlier this week.

The announcement by U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres follows the Security Council's adoption of a resolution on Friday requesting him to expeditiously appoint a senior humanitarian and reconstruction coordinator for Gaza, where more than 2 million civilians are in desperate need of food, water and medicine.

Guterres said Kaag, who speaks fluent Arabic and five other languages, “brings a wealth of experience in political, humanitarian and development affairs as well as in diplomacy” to her new post. She is expected to start on Jan. 8.

“She will facilitate, coordinate, monitor, and verify humanitarian relief consignments to Gaza,” he said, adding that Kaag will also establish a U.N. mechanism to accelerate aid deliveries “through states which are not party to the conflict.”

Gaza's entire 2.3 million population is in food crisis, with 576,000 people at catastrophic or starvation levels and the risk of famine is “increasing each day,” according to a report released last Thursday by 23 U.N. and nongovernmental organizations. It blamed the widespread hunger on insufficient aid entering Gaza.

Israel stopped all deliveries of food, water, medicine and fuel into Gaza after the militant Hamas group's Oct. 7 incursion into southern Israel that killed about 1,200 people.

The Israel-Hamas war has so far killed more than 20,900 people in Gaza, two-thirds of them women and children, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza, which doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants among the dead.

After U.S. pressure, Israel allowed a trickle of aid in through Egypt, but U.N. agencies say that for weeks, only 10% of food needs has been entering Gaza. Last week, Israel opened the Kerem Shalom crossing into Gaza and truck traffic increased but an Israeli strike on Thursday morning on the Palestinian side of the crossing stopped aid pickups, the U.N. agency for Palestinian

refugees, or UNRWA, said.

Kaag has for years worked in the Middle East, including in the Palestinian territories. She started working for the United Nations in 1994 in Sudan and has worked for UNRWA and as regional director for the Mideast for the U.N. children's agency UNICEF.

She also served as assistant director of the U.N. Development Program, headed the U.N. mission to destroy Syria's chemical weapons, and was U.N. special envoy for Lebanon until October 2017.

Kaag then became minister for trade and development in the Dutch government, and in 2018 she became the country's first female foreign minister. Most recently, she served as deputy prime minister and the first female minister of finance from January 2022.

In July, she announced she was leaving Dutch politics because of “hate, intimidation and threats” that put “a heavy burden on my family.” She told the website Euronews that after becoming finance minister and deputy prime minister she received many death threats, but the most frightening was when a man showed up at her home shouting and waving a burning torch. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Turkish parliament's foreign affairs committee gave its consent to Sweden's bid to join NATO on Tuesday, drawing the previously nonaligned Nordic country closer to membership in the Western military alliance. Sweden's accession protocol will now need to be approved in the Turkish parliament's general assembly for the last stage of the legislative process in Turkey. No date has been set.

AP PHOTO



Russia fired almost 50 Shahed drones at targets in Ukraine and shelled a train station where more than 100 civilians were gathered to catch a train to Kyiv, Ukrainian officials said yesterday. The barrages killed at least five people and knocked out power in most of the southern city of Kherson. The aerial barrage came a day after Ukrainian warplanes damaged a Russian ship moored in the Black Sea off Crimea as both sides' soldiers struggle to make much progress along the front line of the 22-month war.

AP PHOTO



Belarus The president said recently that Russia has completed its shipments of tactical nuclear weapons to his country, an initiative that raised strong concerns in neighboring Poland and elsewhere in the region. President Alexander Lukashenko said at a meeting of a Moscow-led economic bloc in St. Petersburg that the shipments were completed in October, but he did not give details of how many weapons were sent or where they have been deployed.

Romania The death toll from a massive fire at a guesthouse in Romania rose to seven people yesterday morning, including at least two children, authorities said. Emergency intervention teams were deployed to the blaze that erupted Tuesday morning in the village of Tohani in Prahova county, where 26 people were staying at the guesthouse, according to the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations.