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# MacauDaily 澳門每日時報

# Times

FOUNDER & PUBLISHER Kowie Geldenhuys EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Paulo Coutinho www.macaudailytimes.com.mo

THE CONVERSATION P2



N. 4999 FRIDAY 05 Jan 2024 T. 15°/ 22° Air Quality Moderate

“THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’”

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**A MACAO ONE ACCOUNT-LIKE PLATFORM SOLELY DEDICATED TO ASSOCIATIONS AND ENTERPRISES IS BEING PREPARED AND WILL BE LAUNCHED THIS MONTH**

**LAND COMMITTEE CALLS FOR IMPROVED PROCEDURES ON PUBLIC TENDERING**

**CHINA'S BYD IS RIVALING TESLA BUT IN GLOBAL REACH**



AP PHOTO



**South Korea's** main opposition leader is recovering well from surgery after being stabbed in the neck earlier this week, his doctor said yesterday, as a local court issued an arrest warrant to extend the suspect's custody by police. Lee Jae-myung, head of the liberal Democratic Party, South Korea's biggest political party, was stabbed by a knife-wielding man who approached him asking for his autograph at an event in the southeastern city of Busan on Tuesday. The man was immediately detained by police.

AP PHOTO



**Pakistan** A court on Wednesday indicted imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan in a contempt case for allegedly insulting election officials, his defense lawyer said. The indictment is another blow for Khan, who is serving time on a corruption conviction and has multiple other legal cases hanging over him. It also comes days after election officials rejected Khan's nomination papers, blocking his attempt to contest parliamentary polls on Feb. 8.

AP PHOTO



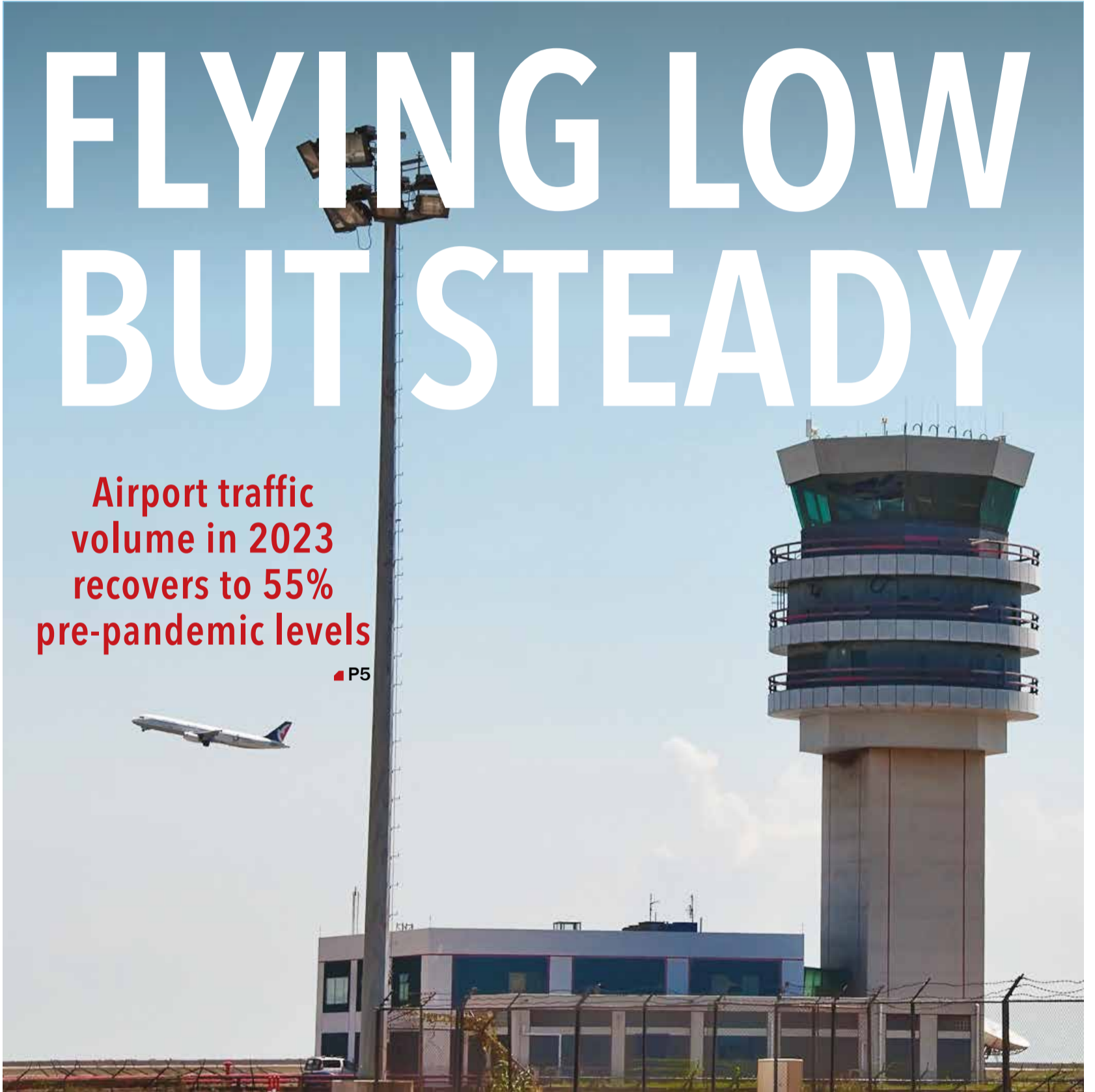
**Israel** A law that would make it harder to remove Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from office must go into effect only after the next parliamentary elections, the country's Supreme Court ruled Wednesday, saying the legislation was clearly crafted for personal reasons. Israeli legislators passed the law last year as part of the government's contentious legal overhaul plan, which sparked widespread opposition and tore open deep divisions in society.

More on backpage

# FLYING LOW BUT STEADY

**Airport traffic volume in 2023 recovers to 55% pre-pandemic levels**

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**GAMING 2024**  
**BEN LEE FORECASTS REVENUE TO GROW 15%**

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**DRIVE IN**



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## OVER THE SEAS

# WE USED AI AND SATELLITE IMAGERY TO MAP OCEAN ACTIVITIES THAT TAKE PLACE OUT OF SIGHT, INCLUDING FISHING, SHIPPING AND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

**H**UMANS are racing to harness the ocean's vast potential to power global economic growth. Worldwide, ocean-based industries such as fishing, shipping and energy production generate at least US\$1.5 trillion in economic activity each year and support 31 million jobs. This value has been increasing exponentially over the past 50 years and is expected to double by 2030.

Transparency in monitoring this "blue acceleration" is crucial to prevent environmental degradation, overexploitation of fisheries and marine resources, and lawless behavior such as illegal fishing and human trafficking. Open information also will make countries better able to manage vital ocean resources effectively. But the sheer size of the ocean has made tracking industrial activities at a broad scale impractical – until now.

A newly published study in the journal *Nature* combines satellite images, vessel GPS data and artificial intelligence to reveal human industrial activities across the ocean over a five-year period. Researchers at Global Fishing Watch, a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing ocean governance through increased transparency of human activity at sea, led this study, in collaboration with me and our colleagues at Duke University, University of California, Santa Barbara and SkyTruth.

We found that a remarkable amount of activity occurs outside of public monitoring systems. Our new map and data provide the most comprehensive public picture available of industrial uses of the ocean.

**OPERATING IN THE DARK**

Our research builds on existing technology to provide a much more complete picture than has been available until now.

For example, many vessels carry a device called an automatic identification system, or AIS, that automatically broadcasts the vessel's identity, position, course and speed. These devices communicate with other AIS devices nearby to improve situational awareness and reduce the chances of vessel collisions at sea. They also transmit to shore-based transponders and satellites, which can be used to monitor vessel traffic and fishing activity.

However, AIS systems have blind spots. Not all vessels are required to use them, certain regions have poor AIS reception, and vessels engaged in illegal activities may disable AIS devices or tamper with location broadcasts. To avoid these problems, some governments require fishing vessels to use proprietary vessel monitoring systems, but the associated vessel location data is usually confidential.

Some offshore structures, such as oil platforms and wind turbines, also use AIS to guide service vessels, monitor nearby vessel traffic and improve navigational safety. However, location data for offshore structures are often incomplete, outdated or kept confidential for bureaucratic or commercial reasons.

**SHINING A LIGHT ON ACTIVITY AT SEA**

We filled these gaps by using artificial intelligence models to identify fishing vessels, non-fishing vessels and fixed infrastructure in 2 million gigabytes of satellite-based radar images and optical images taken across the

ocean between 2017 and 2021. We also matched these results to 53 billion AIS vessel position reports to determine which vessels were publicly trackable at the time of the image.

Remarkably, we found that about 75% of the fishing vessels we detected were missing from public AIS monitoring systems, with much of that activity taking place around Africa and South Asia. These previously invisible vessels radically changed our knowledge about the scale, scope and location of fishing activity.

For example, public AIS data wrongly suggests that Asia and Europe have comparable amounts of fishing within their borders. Our mapping reveals that Asia dominates: For every 10 fishing vessels we found on the water, seven were in Asia while only one was in Europe. Similarly, AIS data shows about 10 times more fishing on the European side of the Mediterranean compared with the African side – but our map shows that fishing activity is roughly equal across the two areas.

For other vessels, which are mostly transport- and energy-related, about 25% were missing from public AIS monitoring systems. Many missing vessels were in locations with poor AIS reception, so it is possible that they broadcast their locations but satellites did not pick up the transmission.

We also identified about 28,000 offshore structures – mostly oil platforms and wind turbines, but also piers, bridges, power lines, aquaculture farms and other human-made structures. Offshore oil infrastructure grew modestly over the five-year period, while the number of wind turbines more than doubled globally, with

development mostly confined to northern Europe and China. We estimate that the number of wind turbines in the ocean likely surpassed the number of oil structures by the end of 2020.

**SUPPORTING REAL-WORLD EFFORTS**

This data is freely available through the Global Fishing Watch data portal and will be maintained, updated and expanded over time there. We anticipate several areas where the information will be most useful for on-the-ground monitoring:

– Fishing in data-poor regions: Shipboard monitoring systems are too expensive to deploy widely in many places. Fishery managers in developing countries can use our data to monitor pressure on local stocks.

– Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing: Industrial fishing vessels sometimes operate in places where they should not be, such as small-scale and traditional fishing grounds and marine protected areas. Our data can help enforcement agencies identify illegal activities and target patrol efforts.

– Sanction-busting trade: Our data can shed light on maritime activities that may breach international economic sanctions. For example, United Nations sanctions prohibit North Korea from exporting seafood products or selling its fishing rights to other countries. Previous work found more than 900 undisclosed fishing vessels of Chinese origin in the eastern waters of North Korea, in violation of U.N. sanctions.

We found that the western waters of North Korea had far more undisclosed fishing, likely also of foreign origin. This previously unmapped activity peaked each year in May, when China bans fishing in its own waters, and abruptly fell in 2020 when North Korea closed its borders because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

– Climate change mitigation and adaptation: Our data can help quantify the scale of greenhouse gas emissions from vessel traffic and offshore energy development. This information is important for enforcing climate change mitigation programs, such as the European Union's emissions trading scheme.

– Offshore energy impacts: Our map shows not only where offshore energy development is happening but also how vessel traffic interacts with wind turbines and oil and gas platforms. This information can shed light on the environmental footprint of building, maintaining and using these structures. It can also help to pinpoint sources of oil spills and other marine pollution.

Healthy oceans underpin human well-being in a myriad of ways. We expect that this research will support evidence-based decision-making and help to make ocean management more fair, effective and sustainable.

**MDT/THE CONVERSATION**



Data analysis reveals that about 75% of the world's industrial fishing vessels are not publicly tracked, with much of that fishing taking place around Africa and South Asia

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RENATO MARQUES

LAND AND PUBLIC CONCESSIONS

**T**HE Legislative Assembly (AL) Follow-up Committee for Land and Public Concessions Affairs has reviewed public tendering processes, particularly for public works, and has issued six recommendations to the government to improve procedures, the president of the committee, lawmaker Chui Sai Peng said yesterday in a press briefing after the committee meeting.

According to Chui, the committee focused on project bidding procedures of a total of ten governmental departments concentrating on eight different aspects. These included the composition of the bid opening committee and the bid evaluation committee, the selection of procedures, the formulation of bid evaluation criteria, the list of contractors and the creation of this database; the selection criteria of the entities, the supervision mechanism, the follow-up work after the contract awarding, and the fairness and transparency of information in the process.

After this detailed analysis, the AL committee concluded that the government has been generally following the relevant legislation on the procedures but noted that some departments' procedures lack consistency with others.

Tenders from 10 government departments were analyzed, including the Municipal Affairs Bureau, the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau, the Financial Services Bureau, the Labour Affairs Bureau, the Public Security Forces Affairs Bureau, the Correctional Services Bureau, the Health Bureau, the Cultural Affairs Bureau, the Public Works Bureau, and the Environmental Protection Bureau.

The committee issued a report that submits a total of six recommendations to the gover-

# Committee calls for improved procedures on public tendering



ment, aiming to improve the process and add consistency and uniformity to all the public tendering procedures.

Firstly, it hopes that the government can examine in more detail the differences in the public project bidding operations of the different departments, and evaluate whether there are any disadvantages to the existing results, in order to optimize them.

Secondly, the committee hopes that there will be a unification of the criteria and standards, noting that departments can independently call for an introduction of new criteria or standards when found necessary, but that this should be brought to the attention of all the departments to be refined and made uniform.

The third recommendation is related to the review of the legal

standards and making appropriate assessments of the legal provisions particularly if there are cases in which problems in the implementation of the legal provisions have been found.

The committee also proposes that all departments should proactively put forward all work requirements to improve the bid opening procedure.

A further recommendation relates to the contractors' database and the lack of software that can be used as a regular procedure for the lucky draw to avoid any human interference in the process as well as making it faster, consistent, and uniform.

The committee also wants the government to address the risks related to the direct awarding process, with the committee expressing hope that the gover-

ment can provide a more detailed justification on why such cases were necessary in lieu of a formal public tender.

The sixth and final recommendation has to do with information transparency and uniformity, particularly concerning the bidding price, construction period, and list of accepted or refused bidders as well as the reasons for the exclusion.

The AL committee also wants to improve the notification procedure, noting that all bidders should be notified of the results of the tender they took part in.

All these recommendations will be part of a final report to be published at a later stage by the AL where more details on the flaws found can be consulted for further review and improvement.

## US CONSULATE TO OFFER SERVICES JAN. 24

The US Consulate General Hong Kong and Macau will be offering consular services for US citizens in Macau on Jan. 24. Consular officers will be traveling to Macau to receive minor passport applications, first-time adult passport applications, and applications for Consular Reports of Birth Abroad. However, the consulate will not be providing notarial nor renewal of adult passport services during the upcoming visit. Appointments will be required to obtain services in Macau, the office noted.

## YOHO TREASURE ISLAND RESORTS WORLD HOTEL DELAYS OPENING

Macau YOHO Treasure Island Resorts World Hotel has delayed its opening to Jan. 26, the company announced on its website. Currently in its soft opening phase, the opening was scheduled to be on Dec. 15. Previously, JLL announced that the property will house Galeries Lafayette, a French premium department store with a 128-year history and 65 locations worldwide; UFC Gym, and POP MART, among others, as well as the first Bona International Cinema. This will include two separate hotels once fully operational: "YOHO Treasure Island Hotel" and "YOHO Resorts World Hotel".

## DSAMA EYES DEVELOPING MARINE TOURISM

The Marine and Water Bureau (DSAMA) is looking at ways to develop the city's marine tourism sector on the abundance of Macau's maritime resources. Speaking on TDM's radio program, deputy director Kuok Kin said that Macau has the capacity to develop waterborne excursions and attractions. He said that DSAMA has been working to promote further collaboration in a bid to launch activities such as sightseeing cruises. In October, the MGM kicked off its "Macau Cruise" sightseeing cruise – with daily departures connecting Barra Pier and Coloane Pier.

## ONE ACCOUNT

# Platform for associations and companies to launch this month

RENATO MARQUES

**A** Macao One Account-like platform solely dedicated to associations and enterprises is being prepared and will launch this month, Chan Sok Cheng, head of the Department of Organizational Performance and Operations of the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP) said yesterday.

The announcement was

made by Chan who was speaking to the media as part of a series of interviews with people, groups, and organizations that have been granted Decorations, Medals, and Certificates of Merit Conferred by the Macau SAR in 2023.

One of the groups that has been conferred a Professional Merit Medal was actually the interdepartmental group for the Macao One Account, which will soon

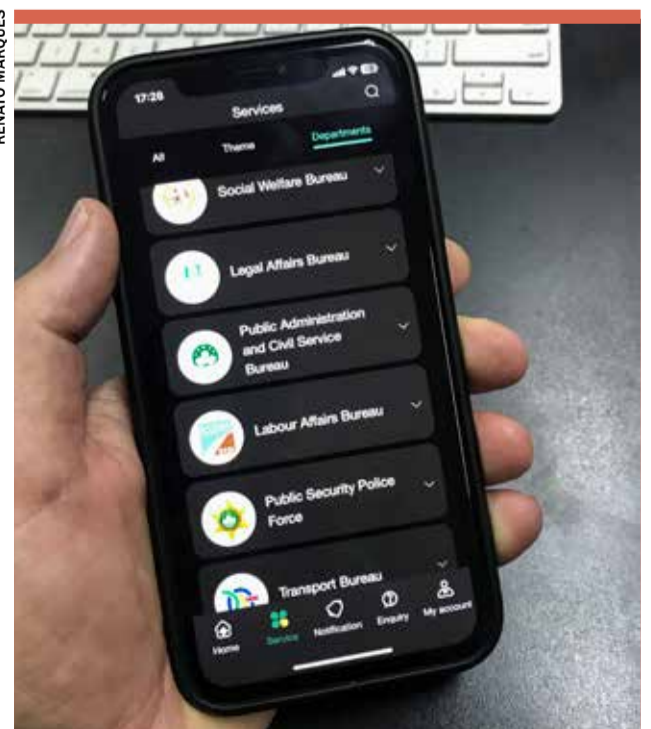
receive the award from the Chief Executive for work on the online platform during 2023.

As Chan also noted in the interview, in the last four years, the number of users of the platform has increased from approximately 70,000 to the current 560,000, encompassing the large majority of Macau residents who have seen especially in the last two years the number of services and

functionalities of the platform increase exponentially.

It is precisely the same thing Chan said the SAFP is aiming for with the new platform which will follow the same style and will allow the extension of online services that are, so far, only accessible to individuals, companies, and associations, streamlining the bureaucracy and facilitating access to public services to these entities.

RENATO MARQUES



RENATO MARQUES

GAMING

# LOCAL EXPERT FORECASTS 2024 GGR TO GROW 15% FROM 2023

**L**ocal gaming industry expert and analyst Ben Lee has projected that local casinos' gross gaming revenue (GGR) in 2024 should increase by some 15% when compared year-on-year with 2023.

The managing partner at IGameX forecasts that the industry should reach the end of this year with an accumulated GGR of MOP210.52 billion, as 2023 closed with a total of MOP 183.06 billion.

This is also the most conservative forecast for 2024 so far, presenting a result even below the local government expectations of MOP216 billion.

Prior to Lee's forecast, the most conservative projection was from another local analyst, Davis Fong, who said that the industry should generate as much as MOP220 billion in 2024.

The gaming sector scholar at the University of Macau and director of the Institute for the Study of Commercial Gaming presented this projection in November last year.

International brokerage companies seem more optimistic with Morgan Stanley recently fo-



recasting a 28% increase for this year (MOP234.32 billion). Less than a month ago, Fitch Ratings provided a forecast of Macau's gaming industry in 2024 as some MOP231 billion in revenue.

Traditionally, forecasts from the local government have been

the most conservative, including in 2023 when the government estimated the GGR to be around MOP130 billion, a figure far from the actual one of over MOP183B.

Lee has previously explained to the Times that it is very difficult to make an accurate and

reliable projection for the local market one year ahead. This is because the local market is "special" in that it is subject to several decisive external factors, other than the will of the players, that are not easy to predict. Among such factors are aspects such as

the issuing of individual visas to mainland visitors (the large majority of Macau gamblers) as well as other aspects related to potential constraints to be imposed on "visitors influx" that can come at any time and that are not "market regulated."

LYNZY VALLES

GAMING

# SJM to see positive cash flow in 2024

**F**ITCH Ratings has revised the Outlook on SJM Holdings Limited's (SJM) Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) to Stable from Negative as the outlook reflects the robust recovery in visitation and gaming revenue in Macau, despite the economic downturn in China. The recovery, together with the continued ramp up of Grand Lisboa Palace (GLP), is likely to improve SJM's leverage metrics to within the 'BB-' threshold in the coming years, said Fitch.

"The rating also reflects the potential for further weakness in China's economy and regulatory changes, as well as execution risk on the ramp up of GLP amid a competitive environment in Macau due to new openings and expanded facilities," the institution said.

Reviewing GLP's performance, Fitch noted that the integrated resort continues to build up, even though the progress has been slower than expected. In 3Q23, GLP recorded GGR of HKD783 million, translating to a market share of 1.6%.

This has allowed it to narrow the property EBITDA loss to HKD27 million, close to break-even.

Meanwhile, there is a strong recovery at self-promoted casinos.

Mass GGR of Grand Lisboa and other self-promoted casinos reached 91% to 92% of 2019 levels in 3Q23, in line with the overall market.



SJM has shifted focus away from the VIP segment at these casinos, resulting in VIP revenue at Grand Lisboa recovering to only 9% of 2019 levels and no VIP revenue generated at other self-promoted casinos.

This has led to a lower GGR contribution, but the EBITDA impact is much more limited, as VIP has low margins. "We project Grand Lisboa and other self-promoted casinos adjusted property EBITDA to recover to 95% of 2019 levels in 2024," said Fitch.

Meanwhile, Fitch observed that satellite casinos are dragged

by excess costs as SJM has had to "take on the excess costs of redundant staff from the closure of five satellite casinos at end-2022, amounting to HKD488 million through [first nine months of 2023]."

It expects the excess costs to be fully absorbed through attrition and redeployment by 2025. However, steady progress has been made so far, with headcount dropping below 2,000 in 3Q23, from 2,700 at end-2022, and the daily run rate of excess costs dropping to HKD1.6 million in 3Q23 from over HKD2 million in 2022.

# SANDS CHINA ANNOUNCES BONUS, ALONG WITH SALARY INCREASE

**S**ANDS China Ltd. announced a discretionary bonus for all eligible full-time team members on Jan. 31, as well as a salary increase effective March 1.

Discretionary bonuses are usually paid by the gaming operators to their employees during Chinese New Year and summer. MGM had announced theirs earlier this week.

In a statement, the gaming operator said that on Jan. 31, a discretionary bonus equivalent to one month's pay will be paid to non-management team members who have been with the company for one year or more.

For management team members, the discretionary bonus will be paid based on the company's Management Incentive Plan.

Meanwhile, the company has also



announced a salary increase that takes effect March 1, a move the government had previously called for.

Eligible full-time team members earning monthly salaries up to MOP13,000 (before tax) will receive a pay rise of MOP 600, while eligible full-time team members earning monthly salaries above MOP 13,000 (before tax) will receive a 2.5% pay rise.

In a Legislative Assembly plenary session back in August, the Chief Executive announced the proposal to increase civil servants' wages, and

called on the gaming concessionaires to follow suit.

"I can only negotiate with the gaming concessionaires and hope that post-pandemic they can assume their social responsibilities. We can and will follow up on this matter, but we cannot order them to do so," the CE previously remarked.

Late last year, Uniqlo Macau also announced a salary adjustment for its frontline store staff, with an average increment of approximately 10%, effective from October 2023. LV

STATS

# Airport traffic volume in 2023 recovers to 55% pre-pandemic levels

LYNZY VALLES

**T**HE traffic volume of Macau International Airport (MIA) gradually recovered last year as it recorded a significant increase in air passengers, with a total annual airport passenger volume of 5.15 million passengers and 42,504 aircraft movements.

The MIA handled an average of approximately 14,000 passengers and 116 aircraft movements per day, according to data released yesterday.

Compared to the same period in 2019, overall passenger volume and aircraft movements have recovered by approximately 55% and 54% respectively. MIA currently accommodates 25 airlines, offering in total 48 routes covering various destinations in the mainland of China, China Taiwan, Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia.

Passengers from the mainland of China market accounted for 58%, the China Taiwan market



accounted for 15% of the total of passenger volume and Southeast Asia routes made up the remaining 27%.

Aligned with the new tourism development strategy of the government, the Macau International Airport Co. (CAM) has anticipated the ongoing promotion of Macau in the markets of medium-haul routes, which will at-

tract more international tourists to Macau and, with them a faster recovery of the aviation sector.

During the summer, SAR's flagship airline Air Macau announced an increase in the number of flights to numerous popular travel spots across Asia, including Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, Japan and South Korea.

The company appears deter-

mined to improve momentum for the aviation industry in Macau for the summer this year to compensate for the poor results in 2022, when Air Macau registered a 23% decline in its operating revenue compared to 2021, dropping from MOP1.05 billion to about MOP812 million.

In a statement, the MIA pledged that it will continue to coo-

perate with the tourism development direction of Macau SAR Government and consolidate the passenger market of the mainland in 2024.

In addition, the MIA will maintain close contact with airlines to explore international markets, and actively work with various airlines to develop international passenger source markets. In response to the market demand, the network of major cities of Mainland China and international routes has been rapidly recovered.

Meanwhile, MIA will constantly collaborate with overseas and base airlines to explore international markets to develop more direct or connecting long-haul routes.

"In order to increase routes from Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia, MIA enhanced communication with overseas airlines for promoting [the] tourism market, aiming to attract more international tourists to visit Macau," the firm said.

AD



Notice

**Funding Scheme for Innovation and Technology Promotion 2024**

**I. Objectives**

To align with the Macao SAR Government's policies of science and technology development, this scheme is devised in order to encourage young researchers to engage in scientific and technological research, enhance the research and innovation capabilities of junior researchers and also the technological innovation capability of Macao, so as to promote the effect and contribution of scientific and technological innovation to social development.

**II. Applying Entities**

1. Local higher education institutions supervised by the Macao SAR Government;
2. Laboratories or other entities engaged in scientific R&D in the Macao SAR;
3. Non-profit organizations (NPOs) registered in the Macao SAR.

**III. Application and Funding Amount**

Applications for less than or equal to MOP500,000. (five hundred thousand patacas)

**IV. Project Duration**

The duration of each project is from one year to two years.

**V. Application Period**

5<sup>th</sup> January, 2024 to 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2024

**VI. Applying Method**

Please apply through FDCT's online funding application system. (website: www.fdct.gov.mo )  
Office Address: Room K, 11/F, Macau Square, No.43-53A Avenida do Infante D. Henrique, Macao.  
Tel.: 28788777

**VII. Assessment Criteria**

The assessment is performed by FDCT according to the Funding Regulations of the Science and Technology Development Fund as approved by the Chief Executive's Dispatch No. 93/2023.

Key considerations will be given to the followings:

- (1) The capability of implementing the project of the applying entity;
- (2) Project feasibility and work plan;
- (3) Budget justification;
- (4) Expected R&D results;
- (5) The effect of the project in promoting the R&D ability of participating researchers

President of FDCT Administrative Committee,  
Che Weng Keong  
2024/01/04



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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



22ND EDITION

# FRINGE FESTIVAL TO INFUSE ART ACROSS LOCAL NEIGHBORHOOD

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE 22nd Macao City Fringe Festival will take place from Jan. 17 to Jan 28, featuring 17 performances and a string of outreach activities.

Themed “artistic playground”, this edition will feature two Crème de la Fringe series: the “SilverARTS Festival” and the “Contemporary Circus Festival”, according to the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC).

Curated by Stella Ho, the “SilverARTS Festival” consists of three programmes: “One, Two...and a Half,” “FreeSteps – Swinging Years” and “Let the Flower in Your Heart Bloom”, as well as three

outreach activities.

The “Contemporary Circus Festival” will present three programmes, “Game On”, “Track”, and “The Crow Clowns” and two outreach activities.

Curated by Leong Ka Wai, the programmes aim to lead the audience to “find happiness in the carnival spirit through original performances, clowning, busking and a juggling competition.”

Meanwhile, the upcoming festival will continue to infuse art across different local neighborhoods. In “Court Theatre: Land Act”, the audience will be summoned to serve on a jury to give an objective and reasonable verdict at the Taipa Grande Viewing Platform.

In “Travelling at Your Doorstep”, using voice-over narration, the Ieng Chi Dance Association will guide the audience to stroll around Flora Park to embark on a mental “excursion” on this familiar, small piece of land following the dancers’ steps.

In “A City of Visible Music”, Vincent Cheang, Guo Xiaohan and Kang Meow will look into Macau’s cultural landscape and its communities and feel the city’s warmth and textures in a pop-up radio station and three live concerts in different places.

EDUCATION

# UM to offer Doctor of Public Health programme

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE University of Macau (UM) will offer the Doctor of Public Health (DrPH) programme in the 2024/2025 academic year. In a statement, the university announced that the programme, which combines traditional public health, hospital management, and medical administration, aims to “nurture more professionals in public health and related fields to make greater contributions to the healthcare sector in Macau, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, China, and [the] global community.”

The DrPH programme is a three-year programme. It covers prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, clinical medicine, and the study of basic sciences. It also involves interdisciplinary fields such as epidemiology, biostatistics, environmental health, nutrition, food safety, social medicine, and management of health services.

The programme also focuses on population health, health systems, chronic diseases, and the impact of and recovery from public health emergencies.

AD

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



TECH

# Microsoft adds AI button to keyboards to summon chatbots

**P**RESSING a button will be one way to summon an artificial intelligence agent as Microsoft wields its computer industry influence to reshape the next generation of keyboards.

Starting this month, some new personal computers that run Microsoft's Windows operating system will have a special "Copilot key" that launches the software giant's AI chatbot.

Getting third-party computer manufacturers to add an AI button to laptops is the latest move by Microsoft to capitalize on its close partnership with ChatGPT-maker OpenAI and make itself a gateway for applications of generative AI technology.

Although most people now connect to the internet — and AI applications — by phone rather than computer, it's a symbolic kickoff to what's expected to be an intensely competitive year as tech companies race to outdo each other in AI applications even as they haven't yet resolved all the ethical and legal ramifications. The New York Times last month sued both OpenAI and Microsoft alleging that tools like ChatGPT and Copilot — were built by infringing on copyrighted news articles.



The keyboard redesign will be Microsoft's biggest change to PC keyboards since it introduced a special Windows key in the 1990s. Microsoft's four-squared logo design has evolved, but the key has been a fixture on Windows-oriented keyboards for nearly three decades.

The newest AI button will be marked by the ribbon-like Copilot logo and be located near the space bar. On some computers it will replace the right "CTRL" key, while on others it will replace a menu key.

Microsoft is not the only company with customized keys. Apple pioneered the concept in the 1980s with its "Command" key marked by a looped square design (it also sported an Apple logo for a time). Google has a search button on its Chromebooks and

was first to experiment with an AI-specific key to launch its voice assistant on its now-discontinued Pixelbook.

But Microsoft has a much stronger hold on the PC market through its licensing agreements with third-party manufacturers like Lenovo, Dell and HP. About 82% of all desktop computers, laptops and workstations run Windows, compared to 9% for Apple's in-house operating system and just over 6% for Google's, according to market research firm IDC.

Microsoft hasn't yet said which computer-makers are installing the Copilot button beyond Microsoft's own in-house line of premium Surface devices. It said some of the companies are expected to unveil their new models at next week's CES gadget show in Las Vegas. **MDT/AP**

GAMES

# TEEN GAMER BECOMES THE FIRST TO BEAT THE 'UNBEATABLE' TETRIS — BY BREAKING IT

**T**HE falling-block video game Tetris has met its match in 13-year-old Willis Gibson, who has become the first player to officially "beat" the original Nintendo version of the game — by breaking it.

Technically, Willis — aka "blue scuti" in the gaming world — made it to what gamers call a "kill screen," a point where the Tetris code glitches, crashing the game. That might not sound like much of a victory to anyone thinking that only high scores count, but it's a highly coveted achievement in the world of video games, where records involve pushing hardware and software to their limits. And beyond.

It's also a very big deal for players of Tetris, which many had long considered unbeatable. That's partly because the game doesn't have a scripted ending; those four-block shapes just keep falling no matter how good you get at stacking them into disappearing rows. Top players continued to find ways to extend their winning streaks by staying in the game to reach higher and higher levels, but in the end, the game beat them all.

Until, that is, Willis managed on Dec. 21 to trigger a kill screen on Level 157, which the gaming world takes as a victory over the game — something along the lines of pushing the softwa-

re past its own limits.

The makers of Tetris agree. "Congratulations to 'blue scuti' for achieving this extraordinary accomplishment, a feat that defies all preconceived limits of this legendary game," Tetris CEO Maya Rogers said in a statement. Rogers noted that Tetris will celebrate its 40th anniversary this year and called Willis' victory a "monumental achievement."

It's been a very long road. Early on, "the Tetris scene people didn't even know how to get to these higher levels," said David Macdonald, a gaming YouTuber who has chronicled the gaming industry for years. "They were just stuck in the 20s and 30s because they just didn't know techniques to get any further."

In 2011, one got to Level 30 using a technique called "hypertapping," in which a player could rhythmically vibrate their fingers to move the game controller faster than the game's built-in speed.

In his livestream video, he appears to hyperventilate before barely gasping "Oh my God" several times, clutching his temples and worrying that he might be passing out. After cupping his hands over his mouth in an apparent attempt to regulate his breathing, he finally exclaims, "I can't feel my fingers." **MDT/AP**



## CORPORATE BITS

### Wynn to host Chinese Wine Awards



Wynn is hosting the first-ever Wynn Signature Chinese Wine Awards from March 1 to March 5 at Wynn Palace, with the results to be announced on April 13. Through the inaugural awards

event in March, Wynn's goal is to "present the very best of Chinese wines and continue elevating Macau's status as a UNESCO-designated 'Creative City of Gastronomy,'" the firm said in a statement.

Wineries entering the competition will compete for the Wynn Signature Best Wine of China Trophy and 27 other category trophies that champion the excellence of major varietal expressions and regionality.

The judging process will be conducted blind and under the international 100-point system whereby medals will be allocated to wines based on a tiered scoring system.

Award-winning wines will not only receive the "Wynn Signature Award" label, but will also be invited to showcase at national masterclasses, industry and consumer tastings, media tastings, and major banquets.

### Buddha Passion presented by MGM and Tan Dun concludes



The symphonic masterpiece Buddha Passion — jointly presented by MGM musician Tan Dun at the MGM Theater on Jan. 1 and Jan. 2 has concluded.

The two-day shows are Buddha Passion's maiden appearance in Macau, in which Tan Dun took the lead on stage as conductor to enliven Dunhuang

ancient dances and instruments, paying homage to Chinese cultural heritages.

Tan Dun, composer and conductor of Buddha Passion said, "Macau is a key stop of Buddha Passion. This performance symbolizes a perfect harmony of both maritime and overland Silk Road, intertwining the sounds of Dunhuang with the diverse cultural backdrop of Macau to the extent that audiences can fully immerse in the intangible cultures of the Silk Road."

This event marks Buddha Passion's stage debut in Macau.

# CHINA URGES COUNTRIES TO FULLY RESPECT FACT THAT HONG KONG HAS ALREADY RETURNED TO CHINA: FM SPOKESPERSON

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson this week urged relevant countries to fully respect the fact that Hong Kong has already returned to China and abandon their colonial mentality.

Spokesperson Wang Wenbin made the remarks at a daily press briefing when asked to comment on a Hong Kong-related statement recently issued by countries including the United Kingdom and the United States in the name of "Media Freedom Coalition".

Noting this is a smear against press freedom in Hong Kong, an attack on the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government's legitimate law enforcement and a move to embolden those who are anti-China and engaged in destabilizing Hong Kong such as Jimmy Lai, Wang said China deplores and firmly rejects this so-called statement from a handful of countries in the name of "Media Freedom Coalition".

The cases of Julian Assange and Edward Snowden have already shown the world that the so-called "freedom of press" is just a tool some countries use to attack and



People walk past China national flags and Hong Kong flags for the celebration of 24th anniversary of Hong Kong handover to China at a shopping district in Hong Kong, June 27, 2021

smear others, Wang said.

"These countries care little about the freedom of press when their selfish interests are involved. They made irresponsible remarks on matters concerning Hong

Kong in the name of freedom of press only because they are not happy that Hong Kong is prospering, and they still hope to keep their past privileges and influence in Hong Kong but to no avail,"

Wang said.

Wang said Hong Kong follows the rule of law, and all laws in Hong Kong must be observed and those who break the law must be held accountable.

"Since the national security law entered into effect in Hong Kong, Hong Kong has restored order and is set to thrive.

The rule of law has been upheld and justice served. The lawful rights and freedoms including the freedom of press and freedom of speech of Hong Kong residents have been protected in a safe and stable environment under the rule of law," Wang said.

The spokesperson said that the number of international media outlets and journalists in Hong Kong has increased from before the national security law was introduced. "This is a fact that could not be denied by any unbiased person," he added.

"In recent years, over 100 countries spoke up in multilateral fora, including the third committee of UNGA and Human Rights Council, to voice their support for China in various ways on matters concerning Hong Kong. This fully shows that the world is not blind to the truth," Wang said.

"Any attempt to interfere in Hong Kong affairs in the name of the freedom of press is doomed to fail," he said. XINHUA

## China's shipbuilders lead global race

ZHONG NAN,  
CHINA DAILY

CHINA'S shipbuilding industry will continue to lead the global race this year on the back of its supply chain growth, market expansion, and intelligent and green transition over the years, said analysts and industry sources.

The industry has become adept at constructing all types of mainstream vessels, reflecting its versatility and innovative capabilities, they said.

Their view is borne out by data. In terms of volume, orders for new ships across the global industry reached 41.49 million compensated gross tonnage in 2023, according to the latest data released by the London-based shipping services provider Clarkson Plc.

Chinese shipbuilders took the lead with a 59 percent share of the global share, accounting for 24.46 million CGT, while South Korean shipbuilders accounted for 24 percent,

amounting to 10.01 million CGT. South Korea's shipbuilding industry trailed China for the third consecutive year in 2023.

The greatest strength of China's shipbuilding industry lies in its capabilities, said Huang Jiantao, an analyst at the Shanghai Merchant Ship Design and Research Institute, a unit of China State Shipbuilding Corp.

Chinese shipyards have been expediting their shift toward green and intelligent shipbuilding while bolstering independent design and industry-supporting capabilities, especially in the areas of building liquefied natural gas (LNG) carriers, car carriers, core components and new materials, said Huang.

The shipbuilding industry is often referred to as the "crown jewel of integrated industries". It involves a multitude of components, a lengthy supply chain and high levels of industrial interconnectivity, encompassing over 50 different

sectors, including steel, nonferrous metals, machinery and electronics, said the Beijing-based China Machinery Industry Federation.

China's shipbuilding industry has increasingly focused on domestic self-reliance, particularly in its industrial and supply chains. This approach has substantially cut construction times and costs during various projects, said Zeng Ji, a professor of shipbuilding at Shanghai Maritime University.

"In this market, efficiency is critical as shorter delivery times for vessels often attract more orders from shipowners," said Zeng, adding that by producing materials domestically, Chinese shipyards have not only stimulated the growth of their industrial chain but also increased their profitability. This strategy will continue to create a mutually beneficial scenario for both shipyards and their global clients.

China's ship exports

were worth \$24.4 billion in the first 11 months of 2023, up more than 21 percent year-on-year, data from the Beijing-based China Association of the National Shipbuilding Industry showed.

Nantong, Jiangsu province-based Nantong COSCO KHI Ship Engineering Co Ltd exported 12 types of ships in 2023, with export revenues reaching \$790 million.

"Among them, there are three 24,188 TEU (twenty-foot equivalent unit) mega containerships, for which we have full intellectual property rights. Each of these ships has a length of 400 meters and a deck area that surpasses the size of three standard soccer fields," said Chen Haoyu, head of the company's procurement department.

Based on its current order backlog and production schedule, the Chinese shipyard will commence construction, testing and delivery of eight more ships of the same class from this month.



Between January and November last year, China Merchants Heavy Industry (Jiangsu) Co Ltd, another Nantong-based shipyard, exported six ships, including polar expedition cruise ships and wind turbine installation vessels, with a combined value of nearly \$900 million.

If the company has to deal with the same type of ships, it can mass-produce, said Shi Liechao, a manager at the sales unit of the company. "With more orders, cost reductions become possible, enhancing the

overall value of our production line."

China saw new shipbuilding orders surge nearly 64 percent year-on-year to 64.85 million dead-weight tons (DWT) from January to November last year, taking up almost 66 percent of the world's total during the period, data from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology showed. China's shipbuilding output climbed more than 12 percent year-on-year to 38.09 million DWT, accounting for half of the world's total. CHINA DAILY



EVS

# BYD is rivaling Tesla in size. Can it also match its global reach?

KEN MORITSUGU, BEIJING

**A** less flashy Chinese electric vehicle maker is fast closing the gap with Tesla, the longtime, market-leading pioneer.

BYD Co., based in the southern China tech hub of Shenzhen, dethroned Texas-based Tesla Inc. as the top seller of electric cars in the last three months of 2023, according to sales figures released by the companies this week.

Tesla retained the crown for all of 2023, but BYD's sales have skyrocketed on the back of a government-driven EV boom in China. The rise of BYD and other Chinese electric vehicle makers is a challenge not only for Tesla but also the world's major automakers as Chinese competitors push into Europe, Southeast Asia and other overseas markets with a relatively affordable option for drivers who want to go green.

Car makers like Volkswagen, Ford, Honda and Toyota all are playing catch-up with both BYD and Tesla, said James Attwood, acting managing editor at Autocar magazine.

"I think perhaps the most interesting thing is less about the battle between Tesla and BYD and more about what the big established manufacturers that have a hundred years of history in making cars are going to do to catch these upstarts," he said.

## HOW DID BYD OUTSELL TESLA?

Aggressive price cutting helped Tesla beat analysts' estimates for sales in the October to December quarter, but BYD did even better. The Chinese automaker sold 526,409 electric cars in the three-

AP PHOTO



-month period, topping Tesla's 484,507 units.

Its results were boosted by a surge in sales of small, low-cost EVs such as its Seagull and Dolphin models, said Cui Dongshu, secretary-general of the China Passenger Car Association. Whether that growth in small vehicles can be sustained remains to be seen, he said.

For the entire year, BYD's EV sales rose 73% in 2023 to nearly 1.6 million vehicles, the company said in a filing Monday with the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. The

total still fell short of Tesla, which announced the next day that its annual sales were up 38% to 1.8 million cars.

Unlike Tesla, BYD also makes hybrid vehicles. Including its 1.4 million hybrids, BYD far outpaced its American competitor in 2023 with sales of 3 million passenger cars.

China's subsidies for EVs were phased out at the start of this year, but a fierce price war among makers including BYD and Tesla has kept sales buoyant. China is a major market and production

base for Tesla, which exports cars to Europe and elsewhere from China.

## WHAT'S NEXT FOR BYD?

BYD's growth has been primarily at home, where it has benefited from the huge Chinese market and government policies to encourage the EV industry. It rivals Tesla in size but not yet in reach.

"Most of BYD's EVs were sold in China despite its fast-growing overseas sales, whereas Tesla is already a global player," said Jing

Yang, the director of China corporate research at Fitch Ratings.

The company is expanding into new markets. Its exports more than quadrupled to 242,765 vehicles in 2023, accounting for 8% of its sales, and BYD announced last month that it would build an electric vehicle factory in Hungary, its first in Europe.

Chinese EV makers are still in the early stages of going abroad and may run up against regulatory or trade barriers, Yang said, particularly in markets that are home to major automakers such as the U.S., Europe, Japan and South Korea.

The EU has launched a trade investigation into subsidies to electric vehicle makers in China and the U.S. has passed legislation that blocks consumers from getting a full \$7,500 tax credit for an electric vehicle if its battery components come from China and a few other countries.

"The main concern for global automakers is the influx of cheap Chinese EVs into their home markets and other major markets before they can produce EVs at lower costs," Yang said.

## HOW DID BYD GET ITS NAME?

Company founder Wang Chuanfu has said that BYD, or "Biyadi" in Chinese, was chosen mainly because it was a simple and unusual name, two characteristics that make it easier to register a new company in China.

At the time, it was a rechargeable battery maker that Wang set up in Shenzhen in 1995. From batteries, BYD expanded into other fields including consumer electronics. BYD launched an automobile subsidiary in 2003 that initially made gasoline-fueled cars. By 2008, Wang was eyeing the electric vehicle market.

BYD has stopped producing gasoline cars. It also manufactures electric buses, including at a U.S. factory in Lancaster, California. While the origins of its name are unclear, the company has turned its acronym into a slogan: "Build Your Dreams." MDT/AP

AVIATION

# Electric aircraft makes debut flight in East China



WEIBO ACCOUNT OF SASAC

The AG60E, China's self-developed two-seater light-sport aircraft, makes its debut flight in Jiande of Hangzhou city, Zhejiang province, on Wednesday

**C**HINA'S self-developed two-seater light-sport aircraft, AG60E, made its debut flight in the eastern Zhejiang province this week, according to the country's top State-assets regulator.

The test flight was carried out at Qiandaohu General Aviation Airport in Jiande, Hangzhou city, the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of

the State Council said in a Sina Weibo post.

Designed and manufactured by Tongfei Yema, a subsidiary of Aviation Industry Corp of China, the AG60E has a length of 6.9 meters and a wing span of 8.6 meters. It can fly at an altitude of 3,600 meters with a maximum average speed of 218 kilometers per hour. It is an upgrade from its predecessor, the gasoline-fue-

led AG60.

Equipped with an MGL electronic flight instrument system and communication devices, the AG60E is capable of fulfilling a wide variety of tasks, such as pilot training, competitive recreational flying and private travel, and can land on unpaved runways, according to Tongfei Yema.

The success of this debut flight laid a solid foundation for aviation power transformation and promoted the development of low-altitude economic industries, Tongfei Yema said. CHINA DAILY



David Rasavong stands by a mural depicting his family's journey from Laos to San Francisco and then to Fresno, in his restaurant "Love & Thai" in Fresno

## RACIAL BIAS

# CALIFORNIA RESTAURANT'S COMEBACK SHOWS HOW OUTDATED, FALSE ASIAN STEREOTYPE OF DOG-EATING PERSISTS

TERRY TANG, FRESNO, CALIFORNIA

DAVID Rasavong's cultural pride is evident all throughout his restaurant.

It's on the wall of family portraits and where a stunning mural depicts his family's journey from Laos to California. It's on the menu filled with Lao and Thai dishes like the crispy coconut rice salad of Nam Khao and the stir-fried rice noodles of Pad See Ew.

And it's in the fact that Love & Thai in Fresno, California, restaurant is open at all. A baseless accusation grounded in a racist stereotype about Asian food using dog meat brought a six-month barrage of harassment so heated that Rasavong, 41, closed down its previous location over fears for his family's safety.

His earlier restaurant had itself only been open for seven months when a so-called animal welfare crusader in May implied on social media that a pitbull tied up at an unconnected home next door was going to be served on the menu.

A day after the initial commentary, vitriolic statements, voice-mails and calls rained down. Rasavong's body still tenses up when recounting, in particular, a call from an elderly woman.

"She was so disgusted by me

and yelling and screaming, and the only thing I can remember hearing her say at the end was 'Go back to the country you came from you dog-eating mother-ef-fer,'" Rasavong recently told The Associated Press.

Within days, he closed that restaurant because it no longer felt safe between the harassment and people loitering in the parking lot outside of business hours.

The false accusation tapped into a longstanding slur against Asian cuisines and cultures that has persisted in the U.S. for over 150 years, dating back to the xenophobia that grew in the U.S. after Chinese immigrants started arriving in more visible numbers in the 1800s and other Asian communities followed. It's also one that Asian American communities are fighting against.

It may be astonishing to some that a claim rooted in a racist stereotype took down a family's restaurant three years after "Stop Asian Hate" became a rallying cry. But for many Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, it's something they've heard before as an insult or under the guise of a "joke," along with other negative reactions to the actual foods of their cultures. In December, a comedian received some backlash for dressing like a UPS delivery

driver and walking into an Asian restaurant with caged puppies for a social media video.

There is hope though that more people will learn to tell truth from trope. Since the pandemic first fueled anti-Asian hostilities, AAPI communities themselves have tried to take control of the narrative that Asian food is "dirty," "weird" yet "exotic." Furthermore, the appetite to learn about food from the Asian diaspora has only grown across traditional and new media.

Still, there were moments where Rasavong felt like nobody, even media, was on his side. He said a few reporters approached him assuming the claims were true.

But he soon received tons of community support, and the closure ended up being a new beginning.

A shopping center property manager offered him the chance to take over a suite vacated by another restaurant. Nkundwe P. van Wort-Kasyanju, a graphic designer in the Netherlands, and Los Angeles-based interior designer Danny Gonzales proffered their services for free. Hana Luna Her, a local artist, painted the mural. By the Nov. 3 grand opening of the new space, Love & Thai definitely felt the love. The

place was bustling all day, Rasavong said, and the city presented a proclamation.

Rasavong is holding onto the belief that he went through this whole saga for a reason.

"There's a journey that we're supposed to go on," said Rasavong, who declined to say if he'll pursue legal action. "Don't get me wrong. People need to realize this business is not easy ... But you know, we believe in what we're doing and so far so good."

In actuality, consuming dog meat is something that has happened in various parts of the world for centuries, where they weren't seen as domesticated family pets, said Robert Ku, author of "Dubious Gastronomy: The Cultural Politics of Eating Asian in the USA." Greeks and Romans referenced it. The French also ate dog meat during World War II.

But when Chinese immigrants came to the U.S., it was linked to them as part of "the myths that the Chinese were these bizarre people who had bizarre diets," Ku said. "It was one of the attractions of actually going to Chinese restaurants back in the day because it came with 'danger.'"

As other Asian immigrant groups came, the stereotype spread to include them.

"This is a real just blurring

of the Asian identity where it doesn't matter if you're Thai or Korean or Vietnamese or Cambodian. You're all the same," Ku said.

Along with the false allegation of eating dog meat, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders over the generations have often faced disgust and worse from others when they've brought their cultures' foods from home to public spaces like school or work.

They're taking steps to fight back, like in 2021, when San Francisco-Bay Area-based writers Diann Leo-Omineto, Anthony Shu and Shirley Huey self-published "Lunchbox Moments," a compilation of over two dozen personal essays and illustrations that raised \$6,000 for charity.

The project became "a powerful thing for all of us," Leo-Omineto said.

"We tried to show it's not always about being in relation to being American or being white or assimilated," she said. "You can have moments of joy, too...I hope that it opened people's minds a little bit more — or made them want to try new foods."

It's actually been a big year in publishing and food media for Asian cuisine. Publishers Weekly dedicated a feature in August entirely to Chinese and Taiwanese food after observing nine new cookbooks on the subjects were coming out this year. Several of the authors grew up outside of Asia. The titles range from "Vegan Chinese Food," to "Kung Food" and "A Very Chinese Cookbook" from America's Test Kitchen. Also, children's book author Grace Lin released "Chinese Menu," which relays folklore behind favorite Chinese American dishes. They all share personal anecdotes and readers often seem drawn to "personality-driven" cookbooks, said Carolyn Juris, features editor.

"It's not just about the recipes. It's about the stories behind them and I think people respond to that," Juris said.

Like any other culture, Asian cultures encompass many different regional cuisines and nuances. With the growing Asian diaspora, it's not strange that so many cookbooks can be mined and "publishers are savvy enough to know that there is a market for these books," Juris added.

Back at Love & Thai, Rasavong is busy filling online orders for a waiting third-party delivery driver. He is optimistic about keeping up business now that the initial hoopla around his restaurant renaissance has calmed down. Rasavong also hopes his situation will remind others to think before they speak.

"People say these jokes and they think it's just fun and just light-hearted," he said. "There are certain things that you shouldn't say that really do cross a line."

MDT/AP

MYANMAR

# Military government pardons 10,000 prisoners to mark Independence Day

**M**YANMAR'S military government yesterday pardoned nearly 10,000 prisoners to mark the 76th anniversary of gaining independence from Britain, but it wasn't immediately clear if any of those released included the thousands of political detainees jailed for opposing army rule.

The head of Myanmar's military council, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, pardoned 9,652 prisoners to mark the holiday, state-run MRTV television reported.

Min Aung Hlaing also granted amnesty to 114 jailed foreigners who will be deported, MRTV said in a separate report.

The prisoner releases were expected to begin yesterday and take several days to be completed. At Insein Prison in Yangon — notorious for decades for housing political detainees — relatives of prisoners gathered at the gates from early morning.



Myanmar's Deputy Chairman of State Administration Council, Vice Senior Gen. Soe Win speaks during a ceremony marking Myanmar's 76th anniversary of Independence Day in Naypyitaw, yesterday

The identities of those granted pardons were not immediately available. There was no sign that among the prisoners being released would be Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been held virtually incommunicado by the military since it seized power from her elected government in February 2021.

The 78-year-old Suu Kyi is serving 27 years' imprisonment after being convicted of a series of politi-

cally tinged prosecutions brought by the military. The charges on which she was convicted include illegally importing and possessing walkie-talkies, election fraud, corruption, violating coronavirus restrictions, breaching the official secrets act and sedition.

Her supporters and independent analysts say the cases against her are an attempt to discredit her and legitimize the military's

seizure of power while keeping her from taking part in the military's promised election, for which no date has yet been set.

According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, a rights monitoring organization, 25,730 people have been arrested on political charges since the army takeover.

Of those arrested, 19,930 people were still in detention as of Wednesday, AAPP reported. At least 4,277 civilians, including pro-democracy activists, have been killed by security forces in the same period, the group says.

Most of those detained are being held on incitement charges for allegedly causing fear, spreading false news or agitating against government employees.

Mass prisoner releases are common on major holidays in the Southeast Asian

nation.

Myanmar became a British colony in the late 19th century and regained its independence on Jan. 4, 1948.

In the capital, Naypyitaw, Myanmar's military government celebrated the anniversary with a flag-raising ceremony and a small military parade at City Hall.

Myanmar has been under military rule since the army's takeover, which was met with massive resistance that has since turned into what some U.N. experts have characterized as civil war.

Despite huge advantages in trained manpower and weaponry, the military government has been unable to quash the resistance movement. After an alliance of ethnic minority armed groups launched a coordinated offensive against the military last October in Shan state in the north and

Rakhine in the west, it is now facing its greatest battlefield challenge since the conflict began.

Min Aung Hlaing did not touch on the country's extended political crisis in his Independence Day message, which was published in the state-run press. Vice-Senior Gen. Soe Win, the vice-chairman of the ruling military council, delivered Min Aung Hlaing's speech at a flag-saluting ceremony, which was broadcast live on state television.

He appealed to ethnic minority groups, many of which are engaged in armed struggle against military rule, to strengthen national unity, and promised that the military government would hold an election and hand over state responsibilities to the elected government. However, he did not give a timeframe for the election. **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

## LETHAL SYDNEY FUNNEL-WEB SPIDER 'HERCULES' SETS RECORD FOR LARGEST SPECIMEN COLLECTED

**W**ITH fangs that could pierce a human fingernail, the largest male specimen of the world's most poisonous arachnid has found a new home at the Australian Reptile Park where it will help save lives after a member of the public discovered it by chance.

The deadly Sydney funnel-web spider dubbed "Hercules" was found on the Central Coast, about 50 miles north of Sydney, and was initially given to a local hospital, the Australian Reptile Park said in a statement yesterday.

Spider experts from the nearby park retrieved it and soon realized it was the largest male specimen ever received from the public in Australia.

The spider measured 7.9 centimeters from foot to



foot, surpassing the park's previous record-holder from 2018, the male funnel-web named "Colossus".

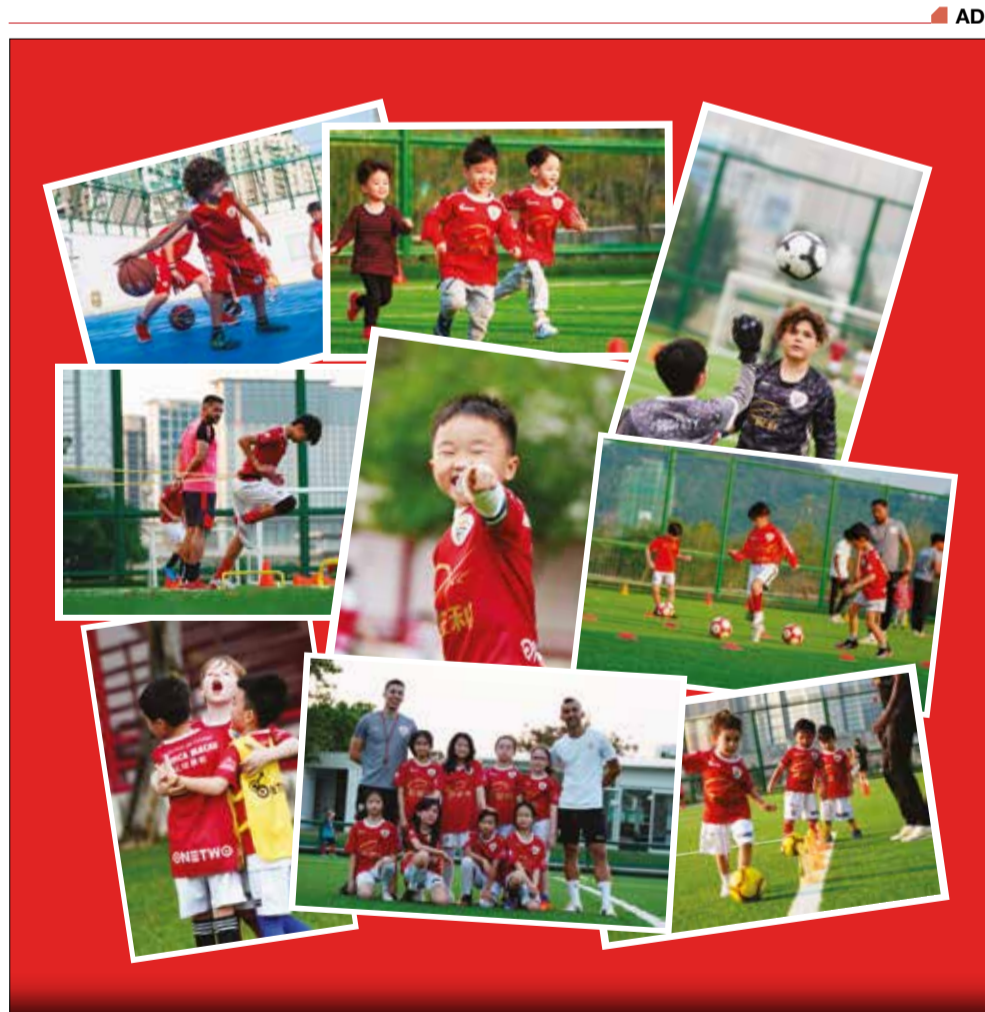
Sydney funnel-web spiders usually range in length from one to five centimeters, with females being generally larger than their male counterparts but not as deadly. They are predominantly found in forested areas and suburban gar-

dens from Sydney, Australia's most populous city, to the coastal city of Newcastle in the north and the Blue Mountains to the west.

"Hercules" will contribute to the reptile park's antivenom program. Safely captured spiders handed in by the public undergo "milking" to extract venom, essential for producing life-saving antivenom.

"We're used to having pretty big funnel-web spiders donated to the park, however receiving a male funnel-web this big is like hitting the jackpot," said Emma Teni, a spider keeper at Australian Reptile Park.

Recent rainy, humid weather along Australia's east coast has provided the ideal conditions for funnel-web spiders to thrive. **MDT/AP**



**BENFICAMACAU**  
**ACADEMY**  
澳門賓菲加體育學校



**FOOTBALL**

**BASKETBALL**

**DAILY TRAININGS**

AP PHOTO



In this image provided by the U.S. Navy, the amphibious dock landing ship USS Carter Hall and amphibious assault ship USS Bataan transit the Bab al-Mandeb strait last August

## this day in history

### 1981 MAN ARRESTED FOR RIPPER MURDERS



A 35-year-old lorry driver from Bradford, suspected of carrying out 13 murders across West Yorkshire over the past five years, has appeared in court.

Peter William Sutcliffe, of 6 Garden Lane, Bradford, is accused of murdering 20-year-old university student Jacqueline Hill, who was killed in Leeds seven weeks ago.

Sutcliffe, who was also charged with the theft of two number plates, was remanded in custody for eight days by magistrates in Dewsbury today.

Miss Hill is the latest victim in a spate of murders across West Yorkshire.

Following Sutcliffe's arrest in Sheffield last Friday, police told reporters they were confident they had apprehended the notorious Yorkshire Ripper.

A crowd of more than 2,000 people, who had gathered outside the court, shouted abuse and threats as Sutcliffe, handcuffed to a police officer, was ushered into the court.

Accompanied by his wife Sonia and her father Sutcliffe was led up into the dock surrounded by uniformed police officers.

Wearing a blue cardigan and grey trousers, he stood motionless in the dock during the ten-minute hearing.

He spoke only to say that he understood the charges he was facing and to confirm that he had no legal representation.

The investigation into the Yorkshire ripper murders has involved hundreds of police officers and thousands of man-hours.

Sutcliffe will make his next court appearance on 13 January.

Courtesy BBC News

## MIDEAST

# US warns Houthis to cease attacks on Red Sea vessels or face military action

ZEKE MILLER & AAMER MADHANI, WASHINGTON

**T**HE United States and 12 allies issued what amounted to a final warning to Houthi rebels yesterday [Macau time] to cease their attacks on vessels in the Red Sea or face potential targeted military action.

The Yemen-based militants have carried out at least 23 attacks in response to the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza since Dec. 19.

A senior Biden administration official declined to detail rules of possible engagement if the attacks continue, but underscored that the Iranian-backed Houthis should "not anticipate another warning" from the U.S. and its allies.

The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House, spoke soon after the countries issued a joint statement earlier condemning the attacks and underscoring that international patience was strained.

The statement was signed by the United States, Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore and the United Kingdom. Separately, the U.S. called on the United Nations Security Council yes-

terday to take action against the Houthis and warned their financier Iran that it has a choice to make about continuing to provide support to the rebels.

"Let our message now be clear: we call for the immediate end of these illegal attacks and release of unlawfully detained vessels and crews," the countries said. "The Houthis will bear the responsibility of the consequences should they continue to threaten lives, the global economy, and free flow of commerce in the region's critical waterways."

For weeks, the Houthis have claimed attacks on ships in the Red Sea that they say are either linked to Israel or heading to Israeli ports. They say their attacks aim to end the Israeli air-and-ground offensive in the Gaza Strip that was triggered by the Palestinian militant group Hamas' Oct. 7 attack in southern Israel.

However, the links to the ships targeted in the rebel assaults have grown more tenuous as the attacks continue.

The attacks have targeted commercial shipping vessels transiting through the critical Bab el-Mandeb Strait that links markets in Asia and Europe since the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas and Israel's subsequent war against the militant group in Gaza.

The U.S. and its allies have

formed Operation Prosperity Guardian to protect ship traffic, and currently, warships from the United States, France, and the United Kingdom are patrolling the area. On Sunday, U.S. helicopters opened fire on Houthi rebels after they attacked a cargo ship in the Red Sea, killing several of them.

The U.S. Navy helicopters returned fire in self-defense sinking three of the four boats and killing the people on board while the fourth boat fled the area, according to U.S. Central Command said. The Houthis acknowledged that 10 of their fighters were killed in the confrontation and warned of consequences.

U.S. ships in recent weeks have shot down waves of Houthi ballistic missiles and one-way explosive drones.

President Joe Biden has sought to keep the three-month war between Israel and Hamas from escalating into a broader regional conflict. But the official stressed that the U.S. and its allies would respond similarly to such malign action that has impacts on global commerce anywhere around the globe.

"As the President has made clear, the United States does not seek conflict with any nation or actor in the Middle East, nor do we want to see the war between Israel

and Hamas widen in the region," White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said. "But neither will we shrink from the task of defending ourselves, our interests, our partners, or the free flow of international commerce."

The official said any potential action against the Houthis will be done in a "very smart way that does not potentially draw us in deep to a situation" with Iran and its proxy groups.

At the U.N., U.S. deputy ambassador Christopher Lu said that without Iranian support the Houthis "would struggle to effectively track and strike commercial vessels navigating shipping lanes through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden."

Biden last week ordered U.S. airstrikes against Iranian-backed militia groups, including Kataib Hezbollah, after three U.S. servicemembers were injured in a drone attack in northern Iraq.

In November, U.S. fighter jets struck a Kataib Hezbollah operations center and command and control node, following a short-range ballistic missile attack on U.S. forces at Al-Asad Air Base in western Iraq. Iranian-backed militias also carried out a drone attack at the same air base in October, causing minor injuries. **MDT/AP**

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Residential moves should be considered carefully. You could meet potential new mates if you go out with friends or take pleasure trips. Don't offer to pay for others.

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20  
Think of joining a health club that will benefit your physical appearance. Your changing philosophies may lead you into new circles and open doors that will give you a unique outlook on life.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21  
Offer consolation, but don't give them any direction. Small business ventures can earn you extra cash. You will be confused about the intentions of someone you work with.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
Get together with friends and catch up on reading and letter writing. Coworkers may not be on your side. You may not see your situation clearly.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
You can do well in group endeavors. You need to get out and have some fun to reduce tension. You need to spend some time with individuals who have more experience than you.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
Beware of someone who is trying to make you look bad. Think twice before eating spicy foods; you may have problems with your stomach.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
You need to be active and spend time with friends you enjoy. You will feel compelled to do some traveling. If you can put some work into home improvements, you should.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
Abrupt action will cause difficulties with relatives. Avoid functions that will bring you in contact with those you find difficult to get along with.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
Your health may have suffered due to neglect or abuse. You would be wise to consider attending lectures that will broaden your awareness concerning your professional direction.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
Communications with loved ones may be strained. Put your thoughts into action. You must be careful not to ignore the needs of the youngsters in your family.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
Try to bend but by no means should you give in completely. Your family may not be pleased with your decisions. Be sure to take care of any minor ailments.

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
Change will be required to make your life more harmonious. You must deal with an emotional problem with your loved one that you have been avoiding for some time now.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	-5	5	fine
Changchun	-15	-6	fine
Chengdu	7	13	cloudy
Chongqing	9	13	rain
Fuzhou	8	22	fine
Guangzhou	9	23	cloudy
Guiyang	6	12	rain
Haikou	18	25	cloudy
Hangzhou	1	16	cloudy
Harbin	-15	-14	cloudy
Hefei	-1	14	cloudy
Nanjing	-1	12	cloudy
Shanghai	3	14	fine
Taipei	13	20	fine
Wuhan	0	13	cloudy
Hong Kong	19	21	clear
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-21	-19	snow
Frankfurt	3	11	snow
Paris	3	9	rain
London	4	7	cloudy
New York	-2	3	overcast

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Meanies; 6- Actor Cobb; 10- Lab culture; 14- Single-master; 15- Raines of film; 16- Limerick language; 17- Horn-shaped bone; 18- Linguist Chomsky; 19- Pro follower; 20- Hail to Caesar; 21- Pathfinder; 24- Causes to remember; 26- Furry swimmers; 27- Peeples or Long; 28- Multitude; 30- Bottle; 33- Satisfies; 34- Bee follower; 37- Timber wolf; 38- Set free; 39- Fellow; 40- FedEx rival; 41- Leg joints; 42- Merchandise; 43- Shoe ties; 44- Heston's org.; 45- Horrify; 48- Sports arena; 52- Disease of the heart; 55- Sugar suffix; 56- Monetary unit of Cambodia; 57- Faithful; 58- \_\_\_ alia; 60- "\_\_\_ quam videri" (North Carolina's motto); 61- Screen; 62- Growl angrily; 63- Cheek; 64- Foreign dignitary; 65- "Siddhartha" author;

DOWN 1- Academy award; 2- Covering for the hand; 3- Composer Ned; 4- Great length of time; 5- Soviet satellite; 6- Horne and Olin; 7- "The Time Machine" race; 8- Airline to Tel Aviv; 9- Festive gathering; 10- Add fizz; 11- Feed on grass; 12- Late bloomer; 13- Brings up; 22- Nutritional std.; 23- Old Fords; 25- Not \_\_\_ many words; 28- Can't stand; 29- Elevator man; 30- Stomach, Asian, or Hong Kong; 31- Chop off; 32- Bodybuilder's pride; 33- Dagger of yore; 34- Bus, bigwig; 35- Break off; 36- French connections; 38- Lay bare; 39- Incite; 41- Wife of Shiva; 42- Like grandpa's hair?; 43- Soup spoons; 44- Ultimate; 45- Lots of lots; 46- Monetary unit of India; 47- Squeeze; 48- Guide; 49- Little bits; 50- Software buyers; 51- Blackbird; 53- Schoolmarmish; 54- Autobahn auto; 59- Compass dir;

**Yesterday's solution**

**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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AD

AP PHOTO



## GOLDEN GLOBES

# MICHELLE YEOH, WILL FERRELL, ANGELA BASSETT WILL PRESENT AWARDS. HERE'S WHAT TO KNOW

**M**ICHELLE Yeoh, Will Ferrell, Angela Bassett and Amanda Seyfried will be among the presenters at Sunday's Golden Globe Awards.

The show announced its first batch of presenters Wednesday. Others taking the stage will be Julia Garner, George Lopez and Justin Hartley.

Yeoh is returning to the Globes a year after she won best actress in a drama film for "Everything Everywhere All at Once," delivering a poignant acceptance speech (and a semi-serious threat to beat up the piano player who started to cut her off).

Wednesday's announcement is the latest indicator that stars are likely to return to the show as it continues to attempt a return to form after several scandal-tarnished years. The show is known for its boozy celebration of film and television and as an early stop for awards season contenders. Scandals have led to a membership revamp and a new broadcaster for the Jan. 7 show, but a key question remains: Will viewers tune in?

Here's more to know about the 81st Golden Globe Awards.

### HOW CAN I WATCH THE GOLDEN GLOBES?

Viewers can catch the ceremony, broadcast live from the Beverly Hilton Hotel, beginning at 8 p.m. Eastern [9am Monday, Macau time]. It will air beginning at 5 p.m. on the West Coast.

The three-hour show will have a strong lead-in since CBS is ai-

ring an NFL game directly before the Globes.

CBS says the show will air on its app and stream on Paramount+, but there's an important caveat. Only Paramount+ subscribers with the Showtime add-on will be able to watch the show live. Otherwise, it'll be available on the streaming platform on Monday.

### WHAT'S NEW WITH THE GOLDEN GLOBES?

The 81st Golden Globe Awards will be the first major broadcast of awards season, with a new home on CBS. And while to audiences it might look similar on the surface, it's been a tumultuous few years behind the scenes following a bombshell report in the Los Angeles Times. The 2021 report found that there were no Black members in the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which voted on the awards.

Stars and studios boycotted the Globes and NBC refused to air it in 2022 as a result. After the group added journalists of color to its ranks and instituted other reforms to address ethical concerns, the show came back in January 2023 in a one-year probationary agreement with NBC. The network did not opt to renew.

In June, billionaire Todd Boehly was granted approval to dissolve the HFPA and reinvent the Golden Globes as a for-profit organization. Its assets were acquired by Boehly's Eldridge Industries, along with Dick Clark Productions, a group that is owned by Penske Media whose assets also

include Variety, Deadline, The Hollywood Reporter, Rolling Stone and Billboard.

The show has also added a new award for stand-up comedy, with Chris Rock, Amy Schumer and former Globes host Ricky Gervais among the nominees.

### WHO'S HOSTING THE GLOBES?

Comedian Jo Koy, who has headlined several Netflix specials and starred in last year's comedy film "Easter Sunday," will host the Globes.

Organizers cited his "infectious energy and relatable humor" in announcing Koy would headline the event.

Hosting the Globes typically requires serving a mix of biting humor to the audience of film and television stars and keeping the ceremony from getting too sloppy.

Previous hosts include Ricky Gervais, whose jokes were particularly caustic, the duo of Tina Fey and Amy Poehler and last year's emcee, Jerrod Carmichael.

### WHAT ABOUT '60 MINUTES'?

The Globes, and New Year's Eve celebrations, are keeping "60 Minutes" from airing for two weeks.

CBS aired "New Year's Eve Live: Nashville's Big Bash" on Sunday.

CBS says "60 Minutes" will resume on Jan. 14.

### GOLDEN GLOBE NOMINEES

"Barbie" is the top nominee this year, followed closely by "Oppenheimer."

The films reflect one unique aspect of the Globes — they split the

top film winners into two categories. With Greta Gerwig's "Barbie" and Christopher Nolan's "Oppenheimer" leading the way, it gives the show a chance to capitalize on the Barbenheimer craze that boosted theaters in 2023.

Films nominated for best motion picture drama include "Oppenheimer," Martin Scorsese's "Killers of the Flower Moon," Bradley Cooper's "Maestro," Celine Song's "Past Lives," Justine Triet's "Anatomy of a Fall" and Jonathan Glazer's "The Zone of Interest."

In the best motion picture musical or comedy category, "Barbie" was joined by Ben Affleck's "Air," Cord Jefferson's "American Fiction," Alexander Payne's "The Holdovers," Todd Haynes' "May December" and Yorgos Lanthimos' "Poor Things."

"Succession" was the top-nominated television program, with nine nods including for series stars Brian Cox, Jeremy Strong, Sarah Snook and Kieran Culkin, followed by Hulu's "The Bear."

For the full list of nominees, click here.

### WHAT ARE THE GLOBES KNOWN FOR?

The Golden Globe Awards had long been one of the highest-profile awards season broadcasts, second only to the Oscars.

The show was touted as an A-list party whose hosts often took a more irreverent tone than their Academy counterparts. It also only honored the flashiest filmmaking categories — picture,

director, actors among them — meaning no long speeches from visual effects supervisors or directors of little-known shorts.

But the voting body was a small group of around 87 members who wielded incredible influence in the industry and often accepted lavish gifts and travel from studios and awards publicists eager to court favor and win votes.

Some years, the HFPA were pilloried for nominating poorly reviewed films with big-name talent in hopes of getting them to the show — the most infamous being "The Tourist," with Angelina Jolie and Johnny Depp. In the past decade, they've more often overlapped with the Oscars. The show also recognizes television.

Before the expose and public relations crisis though, no one in the industry took much umbrage with who was voting on the awards. The show had become an important part of the Hollywood awards ecosystem, a platform for Oscar hopefuls and was, until recently, a reliable ratings draw. As of 2019, the broadcast was still pulling in nearly 19 million viewers. In 2023, NBC's Tuesday night broadcast got its smallest audience ever for a traditional broadcast, with 6.3 million viewers.

### WHO VOTES ON THE GLOBES?

The group nominating and voting for the awards is now made up of a more diverse group of over 300 people from around the world. **MDT/AP**

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

TASTE OF EDESIA

# Wynn's Line Up of Culinary Stars

IRENE SAM, MDT

**M**ANY of Wynn Macau's restaurants are now world famous and becoming must-visits destinations for both tourists from within China and around the world.

Starting this month, the resort brand is inviting an incredible line-up of five culinary artists for the "Celebrity Chef Pop-Up Kitchen at Wynn Macau" and Four-hand Collaboration dinners in January. 2020 MasterChef UK Finalist Sandy Tang will be the first to proudly present her own culinary heritage of Macau with British flair; Executive Head Chef Nilas Corneliusen of Villa Frantzén will showcase his native Nordic dishes with a Thai twist; and Head Chef Wang Xiaofeng of Guan Yan Liu Jin in Hangzhou will craft delicacies from

his hometown of Chaoshan.

Two resident chefs at Wynn Palace and Wynn Macau will also partner with two guest chefs to host Four-hand Collaboration dinners. Executive Chef Helder Sequeira Amaral of the Forbes Five-Star SW Steakhouse at Wynn Palace will partner with Chef-owner Eric Rätty of the 2-MICHELIN-star Arbor, while Executive Chef Hironori Maeda of the 2-MICHELIN-star Mizumi at Wynn Macau will work with Executive Chef Mitsuru Konishi of the MICHELIN-starred ZEST by Konishi. These high quality, monthly dining events at Wynn aim to bring exceptional culinary talent to Macau, continue raising the bar in gastronomy and promote Macau as a "Creative City of Gastronomy."

MDT will be covering the events ahead with more details in upcoming columns.



Chef Eric Rätty, Arbor



Chef Helder Sequeira Amaral, SW Steakhouse



Chef Hironori Maeda, Mizumi



Chef Mitsuru Konishi, ZEST by Konishi



Chef Nilas Corneliusen, Villa Frantzén



Chef Sandy Tang



Chef Wang Xiaofeng, Guan Yan Liu Jin

DRIVE IN

# Anthony Hopkins shines in 'Freud's Last Session'

JAKE COYLE,  
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

**F**REUD'S Last Session," starring Anthony Hopkins as Sigmund Freud, adds to a string of sterling late-chapter performances by the 86-year-old actor. He was the soul of "Armageddon Time," the reason to see "The Father" and the papal foil to Jonathan Pryce's Pope Francis in "The Two Popes."

"Freud's Last Session," which expands in theaters this weekend, also comes from the stage and, like "The Two Popes," centers on the tete-a-tete of intellectual opposites. Mark St. Germain's 2009 two-character play brought together Freud and C.S. Lewis (played by Matthew Goode in the film) for a speculative meeting between the two in 1939 London.

An aged Freud, suffering from oral cancer, prepares



Matthew Goode as C.S. Lewis and Anthony Hopkins as Sigmund Freud in a scene from "Freud's Last Session" (Sony Pictures Classics)

to receive the Oxford academic at his London home while war with Germany is growing inevitable. The factual jumping off point is that Freud, three weeks before his death, is recorded as meeting with an unnamed Oxford don. As Freud's

daughter Anna (Liv Lisa Fries) prepares to leave in the morning, he mentions Lewis' impending arrival. "The Christian apologist?" she responds. "Yah," he chuckles.

Their conversation, which makes up the bulk of the

film, imagines a spiritual debate between the father of psychoanalysis, a proud atheist and man of science, and the theological Lewis, a believer who in the years after "Freud's Last Session" takes place would pen his Christian apologetic novel

"The Screwtape Letters" and, later, the fantasy parables of "The Chronicles of Narnia."

If their adverse positions didn't make for enough drama, air raid sirens are sounding (Hitler has just taken Poland) and Freud's health is bad enough that he, in between dripping morphine into his whiskey, several times eyes a suicide pill during the day. Death and history buffer their talk of God, fear and pain.

But the elements never quite cohere in "Freud's Last Session." The rhythm of conversation feels choppy and lacks the probing give and take that can electrify a two-hander. Freud — or it is Hopkins? — so dominates their talk. Goode, with less to chew on, remains more observational and removed for his Lewis to ever fully engage Freud.

Anna's story, including

a relationship with a woman, Dorothy Tiffany Burlingham (Jodi Balfour), not acknowledged by her father, is too complex to graft into the theological debate. It feels like a movie in its own right. That "Freud's Last Session" is overly murky in shadows also contributes to the movie's lack of clarity.

But Freud and Lewis' dialogue sometimes finds compelling points of commonality. Fantasy figures prominently into both minds — Freud in his analysis of dreams and Lewis in the dreamworlds he'll create. And both come to their beliefs in part from childhood experiences that color their lives. "I have only two words to offer humanity: Grow up," says Freud.

And Hopkins remains riveting.

"Freud's Last Session," a Sony Pictures Classics release, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for thematic material, some bloody/violent images, sexual material and smoking. Running time: 108 minutes. ★★☆☆

**OPINION**

**World Views**

Hyung-Jin Kim, MDT/AP



**SOUTH KOREA VIEWS THE YOUNG DAUGHTER OF KIM JONG UN AS HIS LIKELY SUCCESSOR**

The young daughter of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is seen as her father's likely heir apparent, South Korea's spy agency said Thursday, its first such assessment on the girl who was unveiled to the outside world a little more than a year ago.

There has been intense outside debate and speculation about the girl, reportedly about 10 years old and named Ju Ae, since she made her first public appearance in November 2022, when she watched a long-range missile test-launch with her father.

The girl has since accompanied her father at a number of major public events, with state media calling her father's "most beloved" or "respected" child and churning out footage and photos proving her rising political standing and closeness with her father.

A senior general knelt and whispered to her when she clapped while watching a military parade at a VIP observation stand in September. She was photographed standing in front of her father at one point during a visit to the air force headquarters in November, with both Kims wearing sunglasses and long leather jackets. In a New Year's Eve celebration at a packed Pyongyang stadium Sunday, Kim Jong Un kissed her on the cheek and she did the same to her father.

Most of these scenes are something that had been unimaginable in North Korea, where Kim is the subject of a strong and loyal following that treats him like god.

South Korea's main spy agency, the National Intelligence Service, said that it sees Kim Ju Ae as her father's highly likely successor, citing a comprehensive analysis of her public activities and the state protocols provided to her.

The NIS public affairs office told The Associated Press recently that it still considers all possibilities regarding the North's power succession process because Kim is still young, has no major health issues, and has at least one other child. Kim turns 40 on Monday.

The NIS has a spotty record in confirming developments in North Korea, one of the world's most secretive nations. North Korea's state media have yet to make any direct comments on the succession plan.

Du Hyeogn Cha, an analyst at Seoul's Asan Institute for Policy Studies, said while the NIS currently sees a high possibility for Kim Ju Ae to be primed as her father's successor, few can predict whether she would eventually become the North's next leader. Cha added that Kim Ju Ae lacks political achievements that he said are essential to be formally anointed as the country's future leader.

NIS and other South Korean officials earlier said it was premature to view Kim Ju Ae as her father's heir, given Kim Jong Un's relatively young age and North Korea's Confucianism-influenced, male-nominated power ranking. They had said the girl's repeated appearances were more likely meant to shore up public support of Kim's ruling family and his plan to hand over his power to one of his children.

Since its foundation in 1948, North Korea has been successively ruled by male members of the Kim family. Kim Jong Un inherited power upon his father Kim Jong Il's death in late 2011. Kim Jong Il took over power after his father and state founder Kim Il Sung when he died in 1994.

The name of Ju Ae matched what retired NBA star Dennis Rodman called Kim's baby daughter, whom he said he saw and held during a trip to Pyongyang in 2013. In 2023, the NIS told lawmakers Kim Ju Ae has an older brother and a younger sibling whose gender has not been made public.

[Abridged]

**EPSTEIN: PRINCE ANDREW NAMED IN NEWLY RELEASED COURT FILES**

Prince Andrew is among high-profile figures named in newly released US court documents detailing connections of sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, BBC has reported.

A judge ordered the release of the records as part of a legal case related to Epstein associate Ghislaine Maxwell.

According to the British broadcaster, the legal papers include a previously reported claim of groping by Prince Andrew, which he has denied.

Former US presidents Bill Clinton and Donald Trump are also named, though neither is accused of illegality, the report adds.

The much-hyped trove - covering about 900 pages - did not appear to

reveal any new bombshell revelations about Epstein, who died in jail in 2019, as he awaited federal sex-trafficking charges.

However, more documents in the case are expected to be released in the coming days, BBC revealed.

According to BBC, of more than 100 people named, some are accused of wrongdoing, while others in the court records are making allegations or are potential witnesses.

The legal filings highlight the well-connected social circle in the orbit of Epstein, who pleaded guilty to soliciting prostitution from a minor in 2009.

AP PHOTO



Denmark's Queen Margrethe is escorted by the Hussar Regiment as she rides in a horse-drawn coach from Christian IX's Palace, Amalienborg to Christiansborg Palace in Copenhagen, yesterday

**DENMARK'S QUEEN MAKES ONE LAST PUBLIC APPEARANCE BEFORE STEPPING DOWN IN RARE ABDICATION**

JAN M. OLSEN, COPENHAGEN

EUROPE'S longest reigning monarch Queen Margrethe rode through Denmark's capital yesterday in a gilded, horse-drawn coach as she concluded her last New Year celebrations before her abdication later this month.

Thousands braved the freezing temperatures, strong winds, snow and sleet to cheer the popular queen along the route in what is to be her last public appearance as monarch. She will step down on Jan. 14 after 52 years on the throne.

The 83-year-old monarch will hand the throne to her oldest son, Crown Prince Frederik in the first such resignation in Europe's oldest ruling monarchy in nearly 900 years.

Margrethe rode in the so-called Gold Coach — pulled by six white horses — that is used when the monarch rides from the royal residence at the

Amalienborg Palace to the Christiansborg Palace during the traditional New Year's fete with officers from the Armed Forces, among others.

The monarch wore a fur coat and white gloves in the closed 19th-century coach covered in 24-karat gold leaf and topped with four gilded crowns on the roof. It was escorted by members of the Hussar Regiment in blue uniforms with red jackets.

Earlier this week, Queen Margrethe held a series of events to greet the Danish government, parliament, top civilian and military officials and foreign diplomats.

The Christiansborg Palace which is used for official royal events, such as gala banquets and public audiences, also houses the Danish parliament, the prime minister's office and Denmark's highest court. It is located a little over half a mile from Amalienborg.

The queen will sign her formal abdication on Jan.

14 at a state council — a meeting with the Danish government — making Frederik, 55, and his Australian-born wife Mary, 51, king and queen of Denmark.

Although monarchs in several European countries have abdicated to allow younger royalty to take over, there is no such tradition in Denmark.

For years, Margrethe has insisted that she will not quit. However, her health has changed that. In her annual New Year televised address on Dec. 31, Margrethe said back surgery in early 2023 led to "thoughts about the future" and when to pass on the responsibilities of the crown to her son. "I have decided that now is the right time," she said.

When she ascended the throne in 1972 after her late father, King Frederik IX, only 42% of Danes supported the monarchy. The most recent survey shows that 84% of Danes favor it to a high or some degree. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



NATO announced Wednesday that it would help buy up to 1,000 Patriot missiles so that allies can better protect their territory as Russia ramps up its air assault on Ukraine. NATO's Support and Procurement Agency said it will support a group of nations, including Germany, the Netherlands, Romania and Spain, in buying the Patriots, which are used to defend against cruise and ballistic missiles as well as enemy aircraft.

AP PHOTO



France A report said the UK is not sufficiently coordinating with France in efforts to reduce the number of migrants crossing the English Channel in small boats, as part of a broader assessment pointing to the "uncertain effectiveness" of illegal migration policies. France is "struggling to develop operational cooperation arrangements" with the U.K., according to the report published Thursday by France's Court of Accounts, a body in charge of auditing the use of public funds.

Argentina President Javier Milei suffered a judicial blow yesterday [Macau time] as a court suspended labor rule changes he recently announced as part of sweeping deregulation and austerity measures aimed at reviving Argentina's struggling economy. The ruling by a three-judge court came on a legal challenge brought by the main union group, the General Labor Confederation, which argued that the changes affected workers rights.

El Salvador's Nayib Bukele took his presidential reelection campaign beyond the tiny Central American country's borders yesterday to capitalize on his rising profile across Latin America. During a two-hour forum on the platform X, Bukele accused critics of his controversial policies — including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and international institutions like it — of trying to keep El Salvador and other developing nations down.