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**POOR QUALITY ROADS ARE DAMAGING VEHICLES AND POTENTIALLY CAUSING ACCIDENTS, CLAIMED LAWMAKER JOSÉ PEREIRA COUTINHO**

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AP PHOTO



**Indonesia** Mount Marapi erupted again yesterday, spewing smoke and ash high into the air, but no casualties were reported. The Marapi Volcano Observation Post in West Sumatra province recorded an eruption with an ash column about 1,300 meters high from its peak, followed by ash rain. Sprays of ash from the eruption were seen blanketing roads and vehicles in nearby villages. At least 100 residents have been evacuated since Friday.

AP PHOTO



**Japan** An All Nippon Airways domestic flight turned back to Japan's northern airport of Sapporo after a crack was found on the cockpit window, according to the airline and media reports. ANA Flight 1182 was en route to Toyama airport in central Japan on Saturday but had to return to the New Chitose airport for repairs, the airline said. There were no reports of injuries among the 65 people on board.

AP PHOTO



**India** Thousands of members of the main opposition Congress party and its supporters began a 2-month cross-country march yesterday in a bid to regain some of the popularity it has lost to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist party ahead of a crucial national vote this year. The march led by Rahul Gandhi (pictured), scion of the influential Gandhi family, began from the northeastern Manipur state's Thoubal district. The "Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra," or "Unite India Justice March," is scheduled to cover 6,713 kilometers in 67 days, mostly in buses but also on foot.

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**NEW TREATMENT VENUE FOR MENTALLY HANDICAPPED**

Planning for a professional treatment venue to provide services for mentally handicapped students aged three to 21 is underway. According to the Macao Association of Parents of Mentally Handicapped Persons, the group is still looking for a suitable commercial building and will decide on the location after the Lunar New Year (at the earliest). The new center is expected to provide 90 places. Currently, the group assesses 700 children every year. The association's speech and occupational therapy venues are basically full, and the group hopes to build a new center and hire more therapists to provide services.

**COURT REDUCED LEVO CHAN'S JAIL TERM**

The Court of Second Instance has reduced former junket mogul Levo Chan's prison term to 13 years. The court overturned the ruling of the Court of First Instance, acquitting the former head of the defunct Tak Chun of fraud charges. In a verdict last week, the court had mandated the payment of around HKD2.49 billion to the Macau government as compensation for profits derived from "illicit gambling." Last April, the Court of First Instance sentenced the junket kingpin to 14 years' imprisonment for illegal gambling and gang crimes.

**BRITISH CONSULATE GATHERING JAN. 18**

A gathering with the consular team of the British Consulate-General, Hong Kong and Macau will be held Jan. 18, from 6:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. The venue will be at Ambiente Properties Ltd. The Consulate had previously advised that it planned to visit the town regularly, where it will focus its efforts to "make a difference for the development of Macau and promotion of British interests" in the SAR.

# SLASH IN JUNKETS A 'NORMAL MARKET ADJUSTMENT'

LYNZY VALLES

**T**HE slash in the number of Macau's junkets is in line with the city's development on economic transformation.

Macau has again seen a reduction of licensed junkets this year after figures from the government show the number of gaming promoters has been slashed to 18.

The figure represents 50% of 2023's numbers, according to information from the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ).

The latest reduction comes after the government enforced the largest gaming law overhaul in Macau's history, as well as the junkets law, which states that junkets can no longer engage in revenue sharing arrangements with concessionaires.

Gaming scholar Davis Fong said the decrease in gaming junket licensees is a normal market adjustment.

He said it is expected the relevant numbers will not change much, adding the positioning of the gaming industry towards the mass market is in line with Macau's positioning as a world tourism and leisure center and is



suitable for the mid- to long-term development of Macau's gaming.

Kwok Chi Chung, a board member of the General Association of Administrators and Promoters for the Macau Gaming Industry, echoed similar sentiments, noting the reduction of junkets is "reasonable and normal."

He said the main reason for the

decrease of gaming junket licenses is still the changes in customer sources, markets and business models, as cited in a TDM report.

Currently, independent travelers are the main source, and the gaming industry is moving towards a mass consumption model. He believes the market-dominated trend will not change.

The Secretary for Economy and Finance has previously ruled that gaming promoters' commissions cannot exceed 1.25% of the (rolling) net amount of the conversion of gambling chips, whatever the calculation basis for converting those chips may be.

Kwok has advised gaming promoters to examine their balance sheets, as mass markets will be the driving force of the industry.

"The clientele is just not as great and diverse as before. They don't even set foot in their market anymore. In the past when the profits were higher, junkets would take the initiative to search for customers. Now, with less profit on offer, they won't make the initiative. This makes the market even smaller," Kwok told the public broadcaster.

The government estimates gambling revenue this year will be MOP216 billion, which the two gaming experts believe will be achieved.

Fitch Ratings, however, said in a previous forecast that Macau's gaming industry will reach some MOP231 billion in revenue.

The American credit rating agency expects local gaming revenue to recover in 2024 to 79% of the level seen back in 2019 (pre-pandemic).

At that time, casino revenues made, according to figures from the DICJ, an accumulated MOP292.455 billion.

**PUBLIC WORKS**

## New overpass at Taipa Swimming Pool opens Jan. 19

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE new overpass at Taipa's Olympic Swimming Pool roundabout (southwest access) will open Jan. 19, the Public Works Bureau (DSOP) and the Transport Bureau (DSAT) have said in a statement.

The new overpass, which is part of a larger project of building overpass roads, links Avenida dos Jogos da Asia Oriental to the Cotai area.

The overpass will enable traffic from Avenida dos Jogos da Asia Oriental to



head directly to both Coloane and the Macau University Campus in Hengqin without having to use the existing roundabout.

It is part of the second

reorganization phase of the road network of the Rotunda da Piscina Olimpica that began in the third quarter of 2022 and is aimed at easing traffic at the

roundabout.

The two bureaus also noted that works related to the new road beside Avenida Marginal Flor de Lótus, close to Yoho Co-Tai Marina Bay, will be completed at the end of this month and, following inspection, be available for public use.

It will be a by-pass road enabling traffic from Avenida Marginal Flor de Lótus to detour directly to Avenida dos Jogos da Asia Oriental in the direction of Ocean Gardens or Sai Van Bridge without having to access the same roundabout.

The DSAT and DSOP have warned that final works for the new road, including laying asphalt, will occur every day between Jan. 14 and Jan. 23, from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. These works will affect some sections road.

**PHASE ONE ALREADY NEEDS REPAIR WORKS**

In the same statement, the DSOP and DSAT also noted the temporary closure of part of the phase one overpass (in the direction of Venetian to Sai Van Bridge) for repairs.

This section of the overpass will be closed from the early hours of Jan. 21 until 7 a.m. the same day.

The phase one overpass needing repairs opened less than two and half years ago on the morning of Sept. 25, 2021.

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# Pereira Coutinho protests dangerous roads

RENATO MARQUES

**P**oor quality roads are damaging vehicles and potentially causing accidents, claimed lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho when he spoke at the Legislative Assembly late last week.

Pereira Coutinho cited problems such as bad asphalt, potholes, and uneven manhole covers.

According to the lawmaker, his office is receiving a growing number of residents' complaints about vehicle damage, as well as criticism about a lack of accountability for the problem.

"Excluding the Guia Circuit section, most of the streets are poorly asphalted and very uneven, causing bumps that constitute a daily danger for motorcyclists and car drivers," he said.

"The collapse of the asphalt coating on streets is a daily occurrence, and worsens after rain, most likely due to the use of poor-quality asphalt material. Just one rain shower can cause the asphalt to disappear and potholes to appear."

"Potholes on public roads cause enormous inconvenience to buses

and cars and are a constant danger to motorcyclists who can be 'swallowed' by big holes hidden by rainwater."

"The damage can range from harm to the vehicle's suspension, wheels and tires, up to [causing] collisions and serious injuries."

Pereira Coutinho also noted there was no explanation as to why Macau has so many metal covers on its roads.

"Some [are] at a very short distance from each other with almost all of them not level with the road surface."

The lawmaker urged the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) to conduct more thorough inspections during road maintenance and resurfacing, which he said, at the moment, "is a disaster, with covers broken for several months without anyone taking an interest in solving the matter."

He said drivers, riders and pedestrians who submitted formal complaints to the IAM after suffering losses due to poor quality public roads should be compensated by the services responsible for maintaining roads.



## Gov't submits draft to amend oath-taking law

STAFF REPORTER

**T**o align with national security legislation, the SAR government has proposed an amendment to the oath of upholding Macau's Basic Law during the inauguration of government officials.

The Executive Council has completed discussions on the relevant bills, which will be sent to the Legislati-

ve Assembly for review and voting.

By studying and referring to similar provisions in neighboring regions and considering the specific situation of Macau SAR, the government aims to ensure that Macau takes a step forward in implementing the principle of "Macau governed by patriots," said the spokesperson of the Executive Council

and Secretary for Administration and André Cheong.

The amendments are intended to ensure government officials sincerely and respectfully swear their oaths.

Consequently, the oath of upholding the Macau's Basic Law, which all officials take during their inauguration, will undergo changes.

The amendments

include several provisions.

Officials are prohibited from taking the oath in an insincere or non-serious manner.

Second, officials must sign a declaration of sincerity.

Finally, an independent overseer from the Electoral Commission will ensure transparency throughout the inauguration process.

This overseer will be able to invalidate an official's inauguration if they determine the official exhibited disrespectful behavior while reading the oath, read the oath incorrectly, or showed disrespect towards the inauguration procedures.

If the overseer observes any of these behaviors, the official's inauguration may be voided without any opportunity for a second chance.

The director of the Legal Affairs Bureau, Leong Weng In, said during the press conference that if the oath-taker is deemed to have refused to take the oath, he will be immediately disqualified from taking office and cannot take the oath again or make up for it.

## GOV'T FORMULATES PROTECTION PLAN FOR HISTORIC CENTERS

STAFF REPORTER

**T**he Macau government has formulated a protection and management plan for historic centers to safeguard heritage sites, which will take effect Jun. 1.

Administrative regulations in an Executive Council announcement have identified 11 "visual corridors," 19 "picturesque streets" and 24 "urban fabric" zones, and have proposed guiding principles.

These zones have restrictive construction regulations in place to preserve existing heritage sites.

To ensure Macau's economic development does not significantly impact these heritage sites, guiding principles will be implemented.

These principles have been developed through two

rounds of public consultation in 2014 and 2018, as well as consultations between the State Administration of Cultural Heritage and the World Heritage Center, Executive Council spokesperson André Cheong said.

Additionally, the regulations include provisions on current use, the use of municipal equipment, afforestation, transport and other aspects.

These provisions aim to ensure tourists enjoy authentic experiences when frequenting Macau's historic centers, according to Cheong.

The goal is to safeguard Macau's popular tourist sites, such as Senado Square and A-Ma Temple, in a way that does not hinder Macau's overall development.



# GERMANY'S CANADOS SAILING TEAM WINS 2024 INTERNATIONAL REGATTA

RENATO MARQUES

**H**ELMED by skipper Petr Kochnev, the Canados Sailing Team won the main category of the 2024 MGM Macao International Regatta, using the Beneteau First 40.7 Unified Design Group boats.

The German-flag team ended four days of competition on top after eight races in a fierce competition with second-place-overall Team Windy from Estonia.

The Canadian Vivat Sailing team took third place.

Teams from 11 different countries or regions participated in this year's event. On the second out of three category competitions, China's Muwu BBQ took the final win at the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Cup Regatta (IRC group).

Muwu BBQ took the final win even if the boat was disqualified on the last of eight races due to



a premature start on the final event of Sunday.

Macau's WanBooFish Sailing

Team came second to Muwu BBQ, with third place overall on the IRC group taken by another

mainland team, Sailingin, which beat the Zhongshan Sailing Team to third place after the it

was also penalized with a black flag (disqualification) due to a premature start.

In the regatta dedicated to the smaller boats (International Catamaran Invitational - Hobie 16 unified design group), Thailand dominated, coming first and second.

First place went to Team Yacht Racing of Thailand (Damrongsak Vongtim and Kitsada Vongtim) while Team Fenix (Teerapong Watiboonruang and Kan Kachachuen) came in second. In third place overall after 12 races was Korean duo Kim Keun Soo and An Sun Jin (Team Jeonbuk).

Two teams represented Macau in this racing category.

They were Team AVM – from the local Sailing Association, which finished in 12th position and Team Pintos which finished last (15th) after a difficult start to the event.

Team Pintos failed to complete the second and third races and did not start in the fourth. The team was also unable to complete the ninth race and failed to present itself at the start of the last two races of the event.

# Humbling start for Rodrigues in F4 UAE, more to come

RENATO MARQUES

**M**ACAU'S teen racer, Tiago Rodrigues, debuted over the weekend at the 2024 Formula 4 (F4) UAE Championship.

The reigning champion at China's F4 Championship has had a humbling start to the season at Abu Dhabi's Yas Marina Circuit scoring 20th, 14th and 16th position finishes in the weekend's three races.

The F4 UAE, dubbed the "F4 World Championship," is potentially one of the most competitive championships of this class. A wide range of drivers and teams flock to the race to test their skills.

Commenting on the race, Rodrigues said, "[It was a] bittersweet weekend in general. I had to make up for my mistakes in qualifying and we gained a handful of positions every single race, which put me in the middle of the field."

"Considering the limited experience compared to everyone in front and [many that finished]



behind, I would say I came pretty close to fully maximising my results. Now shifting focus for next weekend so that we can improve," he added.

Rodrigues told the Times in a recent interview before the championship that he was drawn to this championship precisely for its high degree of competitiveness, which provides different experiences and learning possibilities that are difficult to get in a less competitive series such as the China F4 Championship.

The first of five almost consecutive weekends saw the championship kick off with plenty of track action and three diffe-

rent winners.

Saturday's Race 1 saw rookie Kean Nakamura-Berta win, while Nikita Bedrin won Race 2 Sunday, in an inverted grid race from Race 1 results.

In the last race of the weekend (Race 3), Freddie Slater won in a very interesting and action-packed race that unfortunately finished behind the Safety Car due to a crash with only about two laps to go.

Slater is one of the many racers participating in this championship after having raced in the last Macau Grand Prix.

Other examples of racers who took part in the

2023 edition of the local GP and are racing at the F4 UAE are Rashid Al Dhaheri (Prema Racing), Jack Beeton (AGI Sport), Enzo Yeh (R-ace GP), Kai Daryanani (Pinnacle Motorsport), Raphael Narac (R-ace GP), and one of Rodrigues teammates at XCEL Motorsport, Hong Kong's Liu Kai Shun.

The championship continues this weekend with Round 2 (Jan. 19-21), with another three races on the same circuit, but this time in the F1 layout.

Last weekend's three races were performed in the so-called corkscrew circuit, one of the less usual layout possibilities of the Yas Marina.

## EDUCATION

# UM TO BUILD NEW HENGQIN CAMPUS

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE University of Macau (UM) will build a new campus in Hengqin to further promote the development of academia and research.

UM president Song Yonghua said that, at 4,000 square meters, the campus will be half the size of the current campus.

Song recalled the overall Hengqin development plan states Macau universities will be jointly promoting the fields of microelectronics, medicine, financial technology, and other disciplines, as well as partnering with global universities.

The new Hengqin campus will also launch courses in medicine, engineering,

microelectronics, the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence and quantitative financial technology.

Meanwhile, the Zhuhai UM Institute of Science and Technology has received more than 150 government-funded science and technology projects.

These include 96 projects funded by the National Natural Science Foundation, 11 key projects and projects of the National Ministry of Science and Technology, six other national projects, and 43 provincial and municipal scientific research projects.

Project funding exceeds MOP77 million.

UM held its Open Day over the weekend and extended its activities to Hengqin for the first time.



AUCTION

# From a ludicrously capacious bag to fake sausages: 'Succession' props draw luxe prices

JOCELYN NOVECK, NEW YORK

**S**OMEDAY soon, someone will be walking down the street proudly carrying a ludicrously capacious bag, bought for a ludicrously capacious price.

The voluminous Burberry tote is one of the most famous props used on "Succession," the famed HBO saga of the Roy family dynasty, and it sold at auction Saturday for \$18,750.

But that bag, which became notorious when Matthew Macfadyen's Tom Wambsgans savagely ridiculed it, wasn't even the priciest item sold from the set of the addictive drama expected to also clean up at Monday's Emmy Awards, on the heels of its Golden Globes wins.

No, that was a set of pink index cards containing Roman Roy's eulogy notes for his father's funeral — a speech he never gave. Beginning, "My father Logan Roy was a great man," the four cards represent the tragic failure of Roman (Kieran Culkin) to meet the moment. They have a new life now with someone who paid \$25,000 and hopefully will frame them nicely.

The online auction on behalf of HBO at Heritage Auctions in Dallas, ending Saturday, brought in a total of \$627,825 for 236 lots. The results showed not only that people loved the show, says Heritage spokesperson Robert Wilonsky, but also that meaningful objects, and not the show's high-end "stealth" fashion, clicked most with bidders.

"At the end of the day, it was key moments of the show that resonated with fans," he says.

Props often take a back seat to costumes. After all, there's no award for "best props" at awards shows, like there is for costumes, notes "Succession" prop master Monica Jacobs, who joined the show after the pilot episode. But prop departments go to extreme lengths to secure just the right item — even if it only appears for a few seconds. Jacobs shared the origin stories of some of the show's most iconic props.

## DRIED SCORPIONS IN THE OVEN

Why did Tom give wife Shiv Roy (Sarah Snook) a paperweight of a dried scorpion encased in resin? Who knows? It certainly illustrated the turbulence of their marriage — and also caused a few turbulent hours in Jacobs' kitchen at home.

"It turns out you can buy

AP PHOTO



Burberry bag prop from the HBO series "Succession." The item was part of an online auction on behalf of HBO at Heritage Auctions

(dead) scorpions pretty easily," she says, "but they're small. Getting them large enough was not easy."

Once she had a bunch — duplicates are always needed — she had to soak them to loosen up the glue so that she could reposition them for maximum effect. She stabilized them with wire and slow-baked them for hours on low heat until they were dry enough to be encased. All for a brief appearance. And maybe a spot on someone's desk: a duplicate sold for a cool (and baked) \$10,000.

## MOURNFUL WORDS

Roman's sad, pink notecards with that eulogy never spoken were not the only scribbled words that went for a fortune. On the day Logan died on his private plane, Shiv was the one who spoke to the waiting press.

"You'll understand I won't be taking questions," she said, in part, "but my brothers and I just want to say Logan Roy built a great American family company..."

The words were written in block letters in Snook's own handwriting. She did the first card and then, for duplicates, her writing was recreated. Likewise,

Culkin's handwriting inspired his pink notecards, Jacobs says. As for Jeremy Strong, who played Kendall, he often preferred to write every copy himself. Shiv's speech card went for \$17,500.

## THAT ... BAG

Let's just say Bridget, the date of Cousin Greg (Nicholas Braun) at Logan's birthday party, made an unfortunate accessory choice. Tom, in his worst "human-grease-stain" way, imagined aloud what could be in the "ludicrously capacious" tote: "Flat shoes for the subway? Her lunch pail? ... You could take it camping. You could slide it across the floor after a bank job."

Jacobs explains that finding the perfect bag to match the script was a collaboration between the props and wardrobe departments.

"Everybody brought in a version," she says. "We had to decide, how big IS this bag, actually?" Also — it needed to be just the right level of high-end, "not enough for the Roy world, but still higher end than I am," she quips. Ultimately, costume designer Michelle Matland "had the vision," Jacobs says.

The winning bidder also got an embroidered Sandro dress.

## MAKING THOSE MAGAZINES LOOK REAL

When the Roys appear on the cover of New York magazine, you might think it's just a matter of slapping together a few pages in the art studio. But no.

It begins with a real issue of the magazine, to get the weight and the size exactly right. Then, not just the cover but inner pages are created too, and carefully incorporated.

"It's a very delicate process" to make the magazine look authentic, Jacobs says. "We're very picky about how we do it."

The cover sold for \$10,000.

## SOME OF THOSE SAUSAGES WERE REAL

Remember that horrific game, or hazing ritual, that Logan inflicted on his poor executives, forcing them to grunt like pigs and beg for sausages? Some sausages were real, as needed, and some fake. (A group of prop sausages went for \$5,250.)

But mostly, food — at weddings, or other gatherings — was not only real but intricate, evocative of the locale, and fun to create, says Jacobs.

"Every cheese board has to be a little different than the last time we did a cheese board," she says.

"We got very creative."

## THE DRUGS, THOUGH? NOT REAL

Ever wonder what serves for cocaine on set? A set of vials containing a white powder went for \$2,000. Jacobs and her colleagues had to use substance that looked real and was also ... snortable.

In this case it was a naturally occurring sugar, inositol. At other times, lactose powder was used — "as long as the person could tolerate lactose."

## SAME WITH THE CREDIT CARDS

Three lots of Roy family credit cards were auctioned, but they won't be accepted at your local supermarket. The cards were crafted by a graphic designer, then sent for printing at a special shop in New York, on either plastic or metal.

"The plastic ones are actually much more durable as props," says Jacobs. "But," she adds, "with 'Succession' characters it made sense for most of them to be metal."

Indeed. Kendall's cards — two American Express Platins, two Mastercards and one driver's license — went for \$10,000. MDT/AP

## OPINION

### DPP MUST ACCEPT IT WILL NOT BE ABLE TO IMPEDE THE INEVITABLE TREND OF NATIONAL REUNIFICATION

EDITORIAL, CHINA DAILY

Immediately following his election win, Lai Ching-te of Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party said maintaining cross-Straits peace and stability would be his mission as Taiwan's new leader. He also pledged to preserve the status quo, and seek to "replace confrontation with dialogue".

How the incoming Lai team behaves and how Washington handles the sensitive relations with the island will to a great extent determine whether peace can be maintained across the Taiwan Strait.

The results of the island's election will not change the basic landscape and development trend of cross-Straits relations, and will not impede the inevitable trend of China's reunification. The Chinese mainland will work with relevant political parties, groups and people from various sectors in Taiwan to boost cross-Straits exchanges and cooperation, enhance integrated development, jointly promote Chinese culture, and advance the peaceful development of cross-Straits relations as well as the cause of national reunification.

Those that sent their congratulatory messages to Lai should be reminded that the Taiwan question is China's internal affair. Whatever changes take place in Taiwan, the basic fact that there is only one China in the world and Taiwan is part of China will not change; the Chinese government's position of upholding the one-China principle and opposing "Taiwan independence" separatism, "two Chinas" and "one China, one Taiwan" will not change; and the international community's prevailing consensus on upholding the one-China principle and long-standing and overwhelming adherence to this principle will not change.

As a Foreign Ministry spokesperson reiterated in a statement on the result of the election, the one-China principle is the solid anchor for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. Beijing believes that the international community will continue to adhere to the one-China principle, and understand and support the Chinese people's just cause of opposing "Taiwan independence" separatist activities and striving to achieve national reunification.

The biggest uncertainty in the relations concerning Taiwan, therefore, lies in how the island's new leadership and the US approach them. How Lai balances his own inclination for "independence" and the island's need for cross-Straits peace and stability will test his political wisdom as well as credibility.

"We do not support independence", said US President Joe Biden, responding to a request for comment on the election outcomes. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken reiterated the US' commitment to "maintaining cross-Straits peace and stability" and "long-standing unofficial relationship, consistent with the US' one-China policy". Their remarks align with the ongoing efforts of China and the US to prevent the China hawks in Washington from using Taiwan as a tool to provoke Beijing. This necessitates the US not having official exchanges with the island and avoiding sending encouraging messages to the secessionists on the island.

The reunification of China has always been the dream of people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, and this is the firm and clear policy of the Chinese government and strong aspiration of the Chinese people. If Lai truly wants to replace confrontation with dialogue, then this is the reality that must be faced.

AP PHOTO



KMT's Hou Yu-ih (left) and TPP's Ko Wen-je: The two China-friendly parties secured a combined absolute majority in the Legislative Yuan

## TAIWAN ELECTION

# WAR OF WORDS AFTER VOTE HIGHLIGHTS THE INTRACTABLE DIVIDE OVER THE ISLAND'S FATE

EMILY WANG FUJIYAMA & KEN MORITSUGU, TAIPEI

A war of words erupted the day after Taiwan's executive and parliamentary elections, with Taiwan yesterday accusing Beijing of making "fallacious comments" and China criticizing the U.S. for congratulating the winner.

The verbal sparring highlighted the seemingly intractable divide over Taiwan's fate, a major flashpoint in U.S.-China relations that risks leading to an actual war in the future.

The victory of Lai Ching-te in Saturday's election was a setback for China's efforts to bring Taiwan under its control. His Democratic Progressive Party advocates maintaining the status quo, in which Taiwan governs itself but refrains from declaring formal independence — a move that could trigger a Chinese military response.

Beijing, meanwhile, calls for what it terms a "peaceful reunification," but that seems increasingly unrealistic as most Taiwanese have come to oppose becoming part of China.

Taiwan said as much, taking issue with China over its often-repeated line that Taiwan is a domestic Chinese

issue. China regards the island of 23.5 million people as a renegade province and says it should not have its own "president" or official relations with foreign governments.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement on the election that "the Taiwan question is China's internal affair" and "the basic fact that ... Taiwan is part of China will not change."

Taiwan said that statement "is completely inconsistent with international understanding and the current cross-strait situation. It goes against the expectation of global democratic communities and goes against the will of the people of Taiwan to uphold democratic values."

The U.S., in a statement attributed to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, congratulated Lai on his victory and said it looks forward to working with all of Taiwan's leaders "to advance our shared interests and values." It congratulated the people of Taiwan for demonstrating the strength of their democracy.

China's Foreign Ministry said the U.S. statement "sends a gravely wrong signal to the 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces" and

goes against a U.S. commitment to maintaining only unofficial ties with Taiwan.

Lai's victory means the Democratic Progressive Party will continue to hold the executive leadership for a third four-year term, following eight years under Tsai Ing-wen. But he won a three-way race with 40% of the vote, less than the clear majority Tsai won in 2020. He will take office in May.

The Democratic Progressive Party lost its majority in the legislature, finishing with one seat fewer than the Kuomintang, or Nationalist Party. Neither holds a majority, giving the Taiwan People's Party — a relatively new force that won eight of the 113 seats — a possible swing vote on legislation.

A statement from the Taiwan Affairs Office in China said that the results showed that the Democratic Progressive Party does not represent mainstream public opinion on the island.

Taiwan's Foreign Ministry, in its response, called on China "to respect the election results, face reality."

The Chinese military regularly sends fighter jets and warships into the skies and waters near Taiwan. Any conflict could draw in the United States, which

officially doesn't support Taiwan's independence but opposes any attempt to change the status quo by force.

Meanwhile, former U.S. national security adviser Stephen Hadley and former Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg arrived in Taipei yesterday for post-election meetings with political leaders. It was unclear how China would react, as it seeks to nurture a recent improvement in its troubled ties with the U.S. while also maintaining a firm and unwavering position on Taiwan.

They two will have meetings today, the American Institute in Taiwan said in a news release. The institute said the U.S. government had asked Hadley and Steinberg "to travel in their private capacity to Taiwan."

China has said that it opposes any official interaction with Taiwan but has not indicated whether it considers the upcoming visit an official one.

The U.S. does not have diplomatic relations with Taiwan, though it maintains an office in Taipei, the capital city, and is the main supplier of weapons for the island's military. MDT/AP

TAIWAN ELECTION

# Ruling-party candidate strongly opposed by China wins leader's election

CHRISTOPHER BODEEN & SIMINA MISTREANU, TAIPEI

**R**ULING-PARTY candidate Lai Ching-te emerged victorious in Taiwan's major election on Saturday, a result that will determine the trajectory of the self-ruled democracy's contentious relations with China over the next four years.

China had called the poll a choice between war and peace. Beijing strongly opposes Lai, the current deputy leader who abandoned his medical career to pursue politics from the grassroots to the top post.

At stake is peace, social stability and prosperity on the island, 160 kilometers off the coast of China, which Beijing claims as its own and to be retaken by force if necessary.

While domestic issues on mainland-China such as the sluggish economy and expensive housing also featured prominently in the campaign, Lai's Democratic Progressive Party's appeal to self-determination, social justice and rejection of China's threats ultimately won out. It's the first time a single party has led Taiwan for three consecutive four-year terms since the first open election in 1996.

At a post-election news conference, Lai thanked the Taiwanese electorate for "writing a new chapter in our democracy. We have shown the world how much we cherish our democracy. This is our unwavering commitment."

He added: "Taiwan will continue to walk side by side with democracies from around the world ... through our actions."

Lai supporter Hsieh Hsin-chou, a 57-year-old physical therapist, said he was "very proud" of the election result.

Lai and incumbent leader Tsai Ing-wen reject China's sovereignty claims over Taiwan. They have, however, offered to speak with Beijing, which has repeatedly refused to hold talks and called them separatists.

Beijing was believed to have favored the candidate from the more China-friendly Nationalist party, also known as Kuomintang, or KMT. Its candidate, Hou Yu-ih, also had promised to restart talks with China while bolstering national defense.

In his concession speech, Hou apologized for "not working hard enough" to regain power for the KMT, which ran Taiwan under martial law for nearly four deca-



DPP's Lai Ching-te

des before democratic reforms in the late 1980s.

"I let everyone down. I am here to express my sincerest apologies, I'm sorry," Hou said in front of an audience whose numbers fell well short of expectations.

Hou supporter David Chia, who works in information technology, said the loss came as a shock, but he was pleased by the turnout for the KMT, which he had hoped could have merged with the opposition.

A third candidate in the race, Ko Wen-je of the smaller Taiwan People's Party, or TPP, had drawn the support particularly of young people wanting an alternative to the KMT and DPP, Taiwan's traditional opposing parties, which have largely taken turns governing since the 1990s.

Ko said that dialogue between the sides was crucial, but that his bottom line would be that Taiwan needs to remain democratic and free.

"At least this time the TPP has become a critical opposition power. I would like to say thank you to every one again, as the chairman of the TPP," Ko said. "Each vote represents recognition and support for us."

"This is also the first time that Taiwan managed to create a whole new three-party-competition between the clash of the green and blue," he said, referring to the DPP and the KMT by the colors with which they are affiliated.

Chen Binhua, spokesperson of the Chinese Cabinet's Taiwan Affairs Office, said that Beijing wouldn't accept the election result as representing "the mainstream

**"This election cannot change the basic situation and direction of cross Strait relations, nor ... the common desire of compatriots on both sides to get closer and closer."**

CHEN BINHUA

public opinion on the island," without giving any evidence or justification.

"This election cannot change

the basic situation and the direction of cross Strait relations, nor can it change the common desire of compatriots on both sides to get closer and closer, nor can it stop the general trend that the motherland will eventually and inevitably be reunified," Chen said.

The United States, which is bound by its laws to provide Taiwan with the weapons needed to defend itself, had pledged support for whichever government emerges, reinforced by the Biden administration's plans to send an unofficial delegation made up of former senior officials to the island shortly after the election.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken congratulated Lai on his victory.

"We also congratulate the Taiwan people for once again demonstrating the strength of their robust democratic system and electoral process," Blinken said in a statement.

Lai won nearly 5.6 million votes, amassing just over 40%, while Hou claimed 33.5%. Ko garnered 26.5%.

Evelyn Ni traveled from China especially to get a taste of Taiwan's election.

"I would really like to experience what it is like to be empowered," the 24-year-old student told The Associated

Press. She said that she started paying closer attention to relations between Taipei and Beijing after Russia launched a full-scale

invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and is worried that China could one day do the same with Taiwan.

Besides the China tensions, domestic issues such as the dearth of affordable housing and stagnating wages dominated the campaign.

For Tony Chen, a 74-year-old retiree who voted in Taipei in the hour before the polls closed, the election boiled down to a choice between communism and democracy.

"I hope democracy wins," he said. He added that more Taiwanese were open to China's model of governance decades ago, when the Chinese economy was growing by double digits annually, but are repulsed by "the crack-down on civil liberties that has occurred in recent years."

Taiwan's election was seen as having "real and lasting influence on the geopolitical landscape," said Gabrielle Reid, associate director with the global intelligence consultancy S-RM.

"The outcome of the vote will ultimately determine the nature of ties with China relative to the West and will have strong bearing on the state of play in the South China Sea," she said.

The warming of Taiwan's ties with the U.S. will likely continue under Lai's administration, said Wen-Ti Sung, a fellow with the Washington, D.C.-based Atlantic Council.

Beijing is likely to deploy a "maximum pressure campaign" to influence the new administration along military, economic and political lines, Sung told the AP. **MDT/AP**

## BEIJING SLAMS US STATE DEPARTMENT'S STATEMENT ON ELECTION IN CHINA'S TAIWAN

**T**HE U.S. State Department's statement on the election in China's Taiwan region seriously violates the one-China principle and the three China-U.S. joint communiqués, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said yesterday.

It goes against the U.S.' own political commitment of maintaining only cultural, commercial, and other unofficial relations with the Taiwan region, and sends a gravely wrong signal to the "Taiwan independence" separatist forces, the spokesperson said.

"We strongly deplore and firmly oppose this, and have made serious representations to the U.S. side," the spokesperson said.

The Taiwan question is at the very core of China's core interests and the first red line that must not be crossed in China-U.S. relations. The one-China principle is a basic norm in international relations, a prevailing consensus among the inter-

national community, and the political foundation of China-U.S. relations, according to the spokesperson.

The spokesperson said China firmly opposes the U.S. having any form of official interaction with Taiwan and interfering in Taiwan affairs in any way or under any pretext.

The spokesperson urged the U.S. to earnestly abide by the one-China principle and the three China-U.S. joint communiqués and act seriously in accordance with the commitments that have been reaffirmed multiple times by the U.S. leaders to not supporting "Taiwan independence," "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan", and not seeking to use the Taiwan question as a tool to contain China.

The spokesperson said China urges the U.S. to stop interactions of an official nature with Taiwan and stop sending any wrong signal to the separatist forces for "Taiwan independence." **XINHUA**

ISRAEL

# A defiant Netanyahu says no one can halt war to crush Hamas, including the world court

NAJIB JOBAIN, SAMY MAGDY AND BASSEM MROUE, RAFAH

**I**SRAEL will pursue its war against Hamas until victory and will not be stopped by anyone, including the world court, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a defiant speech Saturday, as the fighting in Gaza approached the 100-day mark.

Netanyahu spoke after the International Court of Justice at The Hague held two days of hearings on South Africa's allegations that Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians, a charge Israel has rejected as libelous and hypocritical. South Africa asked the court to order Israel to halt its blistering air and ground offensive in an interim step.

"No one will stop us, not The Hague, not the axis of evil and not anyone else," Netanyahu said in televised remarks Saturday evening, referring to Iran and its allied militias.

The case before the world court is expected to go on for years, but a ruling on interim steps could come within weeks. Court rulings are binding but difficult to enforce. Netanyahu made clear that Israel would ignore orders to halt the fighting, potentially deepening its isolation.

Israel has been under growing international pressure to end the war, which has killed more than 23,000 Palestinians in Gaza and led to widespread suffering in the besieged enclave, but has so far been shielded by U.S. diplomatic and military support.

Thousands took to the streets of Washington, London, Paris, Rome, Milan and Dublin on Saturday to demand an end to the war. Protesters converging on the White House held aloft signs questioning President Joe Biden's viability as a presidential candidate because of his staunch support for Israel during the war.

Israel argues that ending the war means victory for Hamas, the Islamic militant group that has ruled Gaza since 2007 and is bent on Israel's destruction.

The war was triggered by a deadly Oct. 7 attack in which Hamas and other militants killed



led some 1,200 people in Israel, mostly civilians. About 250 more were taken hostage, and while some have been released or confirmed dead, more than half are believed to still be in captivity. Sunday marks 100 days of fighting.

Fears of a wider conflagration have been palpable since the start of the war. New fronts quickly opened, with Iran-backed groups — Houthi rebels in Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria — carrying out a range of attacks. From the start, the U.S. increased its military presence in the region to deter an escalation.

Following a Houthi campaign of drone and missile attacks on commercial ships in the Red Sea, the U.S. and Britain launched multiple airstrikes against the rebels Friday, and the U.S. hit another site Saturday.

In more fallout from the war, the world court this week heard arguments on South Africa's complaint against Israel. South Africa cited the soaring death toll and hardships among Gaza civilians, along with inflammatory comments from Israeli leaders presented, as proof of what it called genocidal intent.

In counter arguments Friday, Israel asked for the case to be dismissed as meritless. Israel's defense argued that the country has the right to fight back against a ruthless enemy, that South Africa had barely mentioned Hamas, and that it ignored what Israel considers

attempts to mitigate civilian harm.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu and his army chief, Herzl Halevi, said they have no immediate plans to allow the return of displaced Palestinians to northern Gaza, the initial focus of Israel's offensive. Fighting in the northern half has been scaled back, with forces now focusing on the southern city of Khan Younis, though combat continues in parts of the north.

Netanyahu said the issue had been raised by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken during his visit earlier this week. The Israeli leader said he told Blinken that "we will not return residents (to their homes) when there is fighting."

At the same time, Netanyahu said Israel would eventually need to close what he said were breaches along Gaza's border with Egypt. Over the years of an Israeli-Egyptian blockade, smuggling tunnels under Egypt-Gaza border had constituted a major supply line for Gaza.

However, the border area, particularly the city of Rafah in southern Gaza, is packed with hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who had fled northern Gaza, and their presence would complicate any plans to widen Israel's ground offensive.

"We will not end the war until we close this breach," Netanyahu said Saturday, adding that the government has not yet decided how to do that.

In Gaza, where Hamas has put up stiff resistance to Israel's

blistering air and ground campaign, the war continued unabated.

The Gaza Health Ministry said Saturday that 135 Palestinians had been killed in the last 24 hours, bringing the overall toll of the war to 23,843. The count does not differentiate between combatants and civilians, but the ministry has said about two-thirds of the dead are women and children. The ministry said the total number of war-wounded surpassed 60,000.

Following an Israeli airstrike before dawn Saturday, video provided by Gaza's Civil Defense department showed rescue workers searching through the twisted rubble of a building in Gaza City by flashlight.

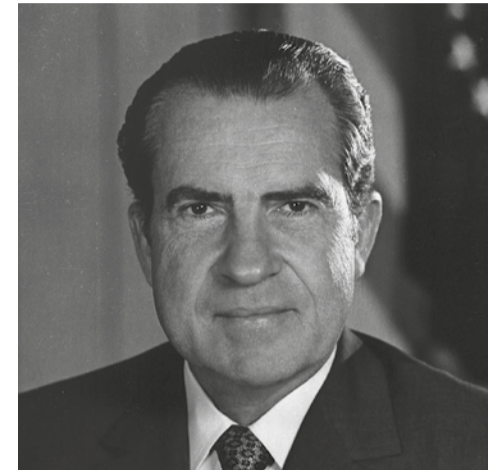
Footage showed them carrying a young girl wrapped in blankets with injuries to her face, and at least two other children who appeared dead. A boy, covered in dust, winced as he was loaded into an ambulance.

The attack on the home in the Daraj neighborhood killed at least 20 people, according to Civil Defense spokesperson Mahmoud Bassal.

Another strike late Friday near the southern city of Rafah on the Egyptian border killed at least 13 people, including two children. The bodies of those killed, primarily from a family displaced from central Gaza, were taken to the city's Abu Youssef al-Najjar hospital where they were seen by an Associated Press reporter. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1973 NIXON ORDERS CEASEFIRE IN VIETNAM



President Nixon has ordered a halt to American bombing in North Vietnam following peace talks in Paris.

The decision comes after Dr Henry Kissinger, the president's assistant for National Security Affairs, returned to Washington yesterday from France with a draft peace proposal.

Representatives from North and South Vietnam and the United States have been at the negotiating table and reports from Paris say progress has been made with compromises on all sides.

But many political issues remain to be resolved.

Although attacks against the North have been halted, air assaults are continuing against communist forces in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Communist negotiators in Paris are now calling for the ceasefire to be extended to these areas.

President Nixon's special envoy to Saigon, General Alexander Haig, is in the South Vietnamese capital briefing the president on the 25 article peace agreement worked out in Paris.

Initial discussions with President Nguyen Van Thieu lasted nearly three hours.

Afterwards, the president ordered a five-man delegation to fly to France to consider the proposals in more detail.

Reaction in Washington has been cautious. Senator Barry Goldwater, who previously supported the American role in Vietnam, said: "I can't say peace is at hand, but I feel that we're making progress."

The Daily Telegraph correspondent in Saigon says President Thieu may feel it is unwise "to jeopardise further American support by holding out against an agreement which Washington considers just".

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

A week later, Dr Kissinger returned to Paris for further meetings with the North Vietnamese delegation. On 23 January, a ceasefire was agreed to take effect from midnight on 27 January. The settlement called for the eventual reunification of Vietnam, permitted the South Vietnamese and Vietcong troops to remain in place and provided for the release of all American prisoners of war within 60 days - on condition American troops withdrew within the same period of time. No mention was made of the presence of North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam. It spelled the end of American involvement in the Vietnam war - which had begun on 12 February 1973. The last American prisoner was freed on 30 March, 1973. Vietnam was finally reunited on 30 April 1975.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

<p><b>ARIES</b>                  Mar. 21-Apr. 19                  You are best to tuck your money away where no one will be able to touch it, including yourself. Try to get away with your mate. Involve yourself in group endeavors.</p>	<p><b>TAURUS</b>                  Apr. 20-May. 20                  Avoid conflicts with in-laws or other family members. Look into any educational activities involving the whole family. Use your charm, but don't sign or agree to anything.</p>
<p><b>GEMINI</b>                  May. 21-Jun. 21                  Outdoor sports events should entice you. You'll be surprised how much you can accomplish. Difficulties relating to children will be stressful.</p>	<p><b>CANCER</b>                  Jun. 22-Jul. 22                  Focus your efforts on your work. You always seem to spend more than you make. Your health may have suffered due to neglect or abuse.</p>
<p><b>LEO</b>                  Jul. 23-Aug. 22                  Resist any idle chatter. The great outdoors will allow you to teach youngsters some of the things you learned when growing up.</p>	<p><b>VIRGO</b>                  Aug. 23-Sep. 22                  You must consider yourself for a change. Take time to do some writing, whether it's correspondence, poetry, or keeping a journal. It will do you some good.</p>
<p><b>LIBRA</b>                  Sep. 23-Oct. 22                  Things will be emotional with your mate. Involvement in groups will be favorable and lead to valuable information. Try not to judge too quickly.</p>	<p><b>SCORPIO</b>                  Oct. 23-Nov. 21                  You need to spend some time pampering yourself. This will not be the best day for communication or travel. Think hard before going into business with friends or family.</p>
<p><b>SAGITTARIUS</b>                  Nov. 22-Dec. 21                  Your ability to see other people's points of view will allow you to come to reasonable agreements. Talk to those in a position of power about your intentions.</p>	<p><b>CAPRICORN</b>                  Dec. 22-Jan. 19                  You will need to do a lot of research if you wish to get to the bottom of things. Home improvement projects will run smoothly.</p>
<p><b>AQUARIUS</b>                  Jan. 20-Feb. 18                  You can make major accomplishments while on short trips. Social events may lead to a romantic interlude. Opportunities for romance will develop through activities with large groups.</p>	<p><b>PISCES</b>                  Feb. 19-Mar. 20                  Don't try to hide your true feelings from your mate. Sudden changes concerning coworkers may surprise you. You can finish projects early, which will bring you praise from superiors.</p>

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

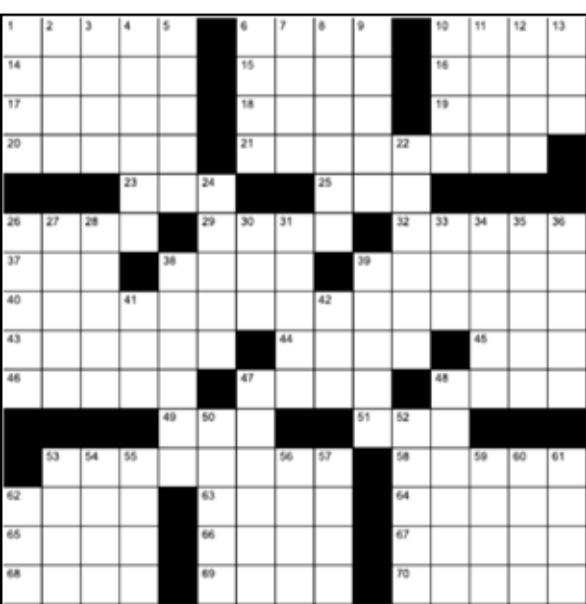
**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	-9	4	fine
Changchun	-18	-7	fine
Chengdu	10	14	overcast
Chongqing	13	15	rain
Fuzhou	11	18	cloudy
Guangzhou	12	26	cloudy
Guiyang	12	17	overcast
Haikou	19	24	cloudy
Hangzhou	5	13	cloudy
Harbin	-24	-14	fine
Hefei	-3	6	cloudy
Nanjing	0	7	cloudy
Shanghai	4	8	overcast
Taipei	15	19	rain
Wuhan	6	10	overcast
Hong Kong	19	23	clear
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-4	-1	cloudy
Frankfurt	-1	4	overcast
Paris	-3	3	cloudy
London	-3	2	clear
New York	-2	0	overcast

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Fiber obtained from a banana plant; 6- "\_\_\_\_\_ sprach Zarathustra"; 10- 27th president of the US; 14- Visible exhalation; 15- Rules; 16- In fine fettle; 17- Novelist Calvino; 18- Bread spread; 19- Minerals; 20- Watery animal fluid; 21- No long-distance charge; 23- Bell and Barker; 25- Wreath of flowers; 26- Scrutinize; 29- Sigher's word; 32- Wears well; 37- Nasser's org.; 38- Starting; 39- Person in the petroleum industry; 40- Make a trade?; 43- Series of prayers; 44- Film spool; 45- Chinese philosopher Mo-\_\_\_; 46- Prince Valiant's wife; 47- Andean country; 48- Wither through heat exposure; 49- Convert into leather; 51- Writing instrument; 53- Inattentive; 58- Saturn's largest moon; 62- Course list?; 63- "Chicken of the sea"; 64- Evade; 65- Lodge members; 66- Foreign dignitary; 67- \_\_\_ firma; 68- Caesar's wings; 69- Pro follower; 70- Streamlined;

DOWN 1- National competitor; 2- Soak leather in base solution; 3- On \_\_\_ with; 4- Decorative pillar; 5- Bouquet; 6- Bunches; 7- Composer Schiffrin; 8- Bulges; 9- \_\_\_ Mio; 10- Red-bearded god; 11- Swiss river; 12- Head for the hills; 13- French possessive; 22- Pertaining to a son or daughter; 24- Pert; 26- Above; 27- Christmas song; 28- "\_\_\_ by any other name..."; 30- \_\_\_ Lobos; 31- Ablaze; 33- Tie-score word; 34- Strike hard; 35- Shallow ornamental bowl; 36- Twisted expression?; 38- Add fizz; 39- Get the better of; 41- Budgetary excess; 42- \_\_\_ the land of the free...; 47- Soul; 48- Whine; 50- Adjust, modify; 52- Les \_\_\_-Unis; 53- Unit of an insurgency; 54- "Puppy Love" singer; 55- Subterfuge; 56- Foul mood; 57- Poet Teasdale; 59- Made tracks; 60- Yorkshire river; 61- Mont. neighbor; 62- \_\_\_ culpa;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

**USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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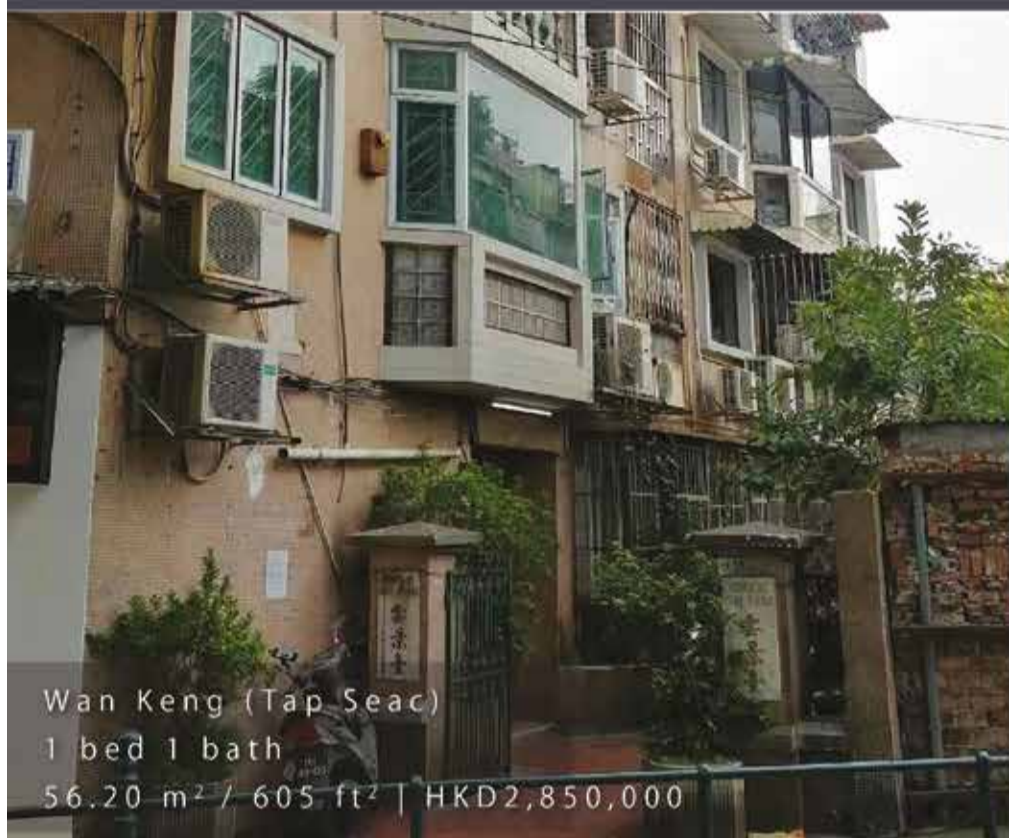
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1 bed 1 bath  
56.20 m<sup>2</sup> / 605 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD2,850,000



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



Tou Un (Taipa)  
1 bed 1 bath  
44.12 m<sup>2</sup> / 475 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD2,980,000



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



Manhattan (Taipa)  
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162.58 m<sup>2</sup> / 1,750 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD13,000,000



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FIGURE SKATING

# Loena Hendrickx wins European championships gold to end wait

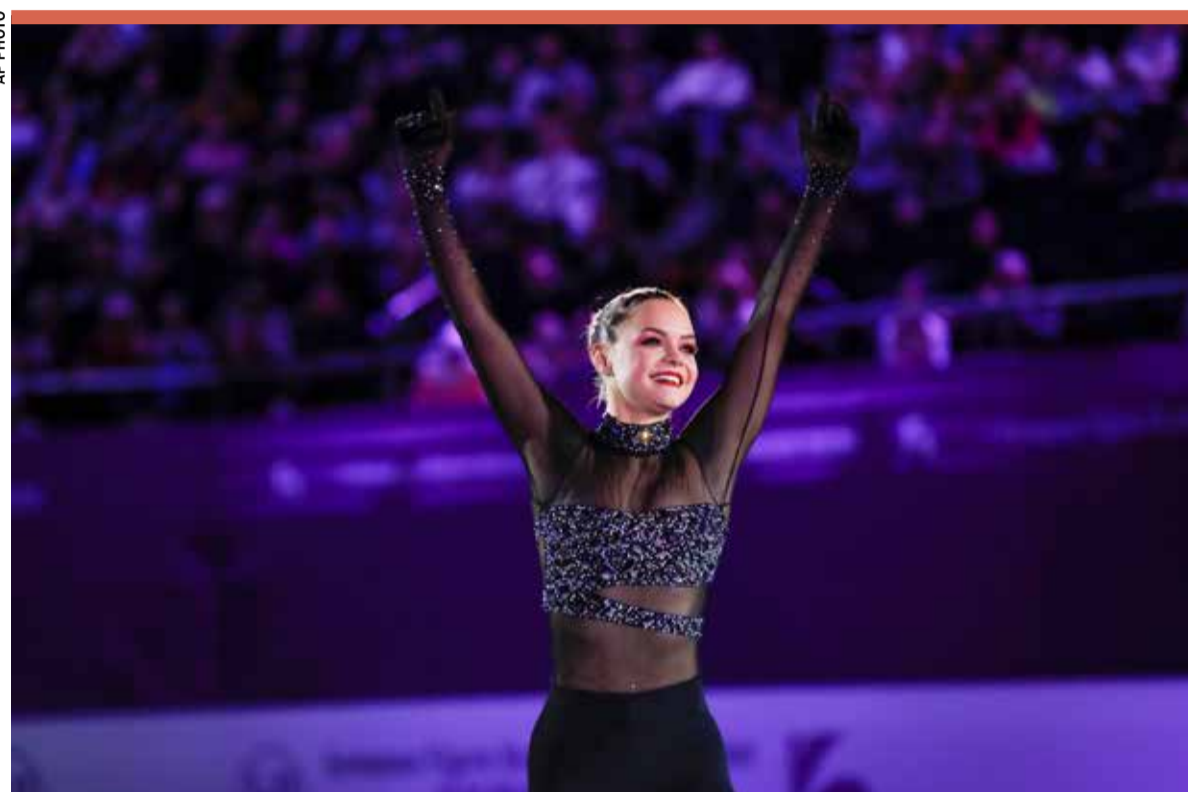
**L**OENA Hendrickx's wait for a major figure skating gold medal ended Saturday with victory at the European figure skating championships.

Hendrickx had placed second at the world and European championships but finally finished top of the podium with a high-energy program to Beyoncé and Madonna's "Break My Soul (The Queens Remix)". Hendrickx finished by striking a pose on the rink wall in front of the judges.

"I have no words, I'm just so happy. I worked so hard. Now all the emotion's coming," Hendrickx said with tears in her eyes.

"It was really hard because I had a lot of nerves going into the free program, I had a lot of pressure but I tried to enjoy my performance and I think I never enjoyed a program as much as I did here, so I'm very happy."

Hendrickx won Belgium's first European figure skating gold for 77 years in a close contest with defending champion Anastasiia



Winner Loena Hendrickx of Belgium

Gubanova of Georgia and another Belgian, 17-year-old Nina Pinzarrone, as all three medalists skated

near-flawless free skates.

Hendrickx already had a five-point lead from the short

program and finished on a total 213.25 points, but had to wait for Gubanova and Pinzarrone to

skate before she could celebrate. Gubanova scored 206.52 and Pinzarrone 202.29.

For the second year running, Russia and Belarus are barred from the European championships following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Before that, the last time a skater not representing Russia won the women's gold medal was in 2013.

Charlene Guignard and Marco Fabbri won the ice dance title for the second straight year for Italy's second gold medal of the championships.

They scored a total 214.38 to beat Britain's Lilah Fear and Lewis Gibson, who took the silver medal on 210.82 with a "Rocky"-themed program. The American-born Allison Reed and her partner Saulius Ambrulevicius won bronze for Lithuania with 203.07.

"We're super happy about our performance," Fabbri said. "The support that we received tonight (from the crowd) was incredible, one of the best that we received outside of Italy."

Adam Siao Him Fa won the men's gold medal Friday with a lead big enough to absorb the two-point deduction he earned for a banned backflip — a gesture, he said, "to push our sport, to develop it and to bring that element back."

Lucrezia Beccari and Matteo Guarise won the pairs gold medal for Italy on Thursday. **MDT/AP**

AD

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**Breast Surgery** : Dr. Leong Jat Lun

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

**Paediatric Surgery** : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong

**Paediatrics** : Dr. Zhang Zhiqin

**Obstetrics & Gynaecology** : Dr. Fong Kuan lo

**Plastic & Aesthetic Surgery** : Dr. Lam U Lin

**Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine** : Dr. Lam Kun Kuan

**ENT** : Dr. Cheng Zheng Ang

**Cardiology** : Dr. Jin Chun, Dr. Leong Man Kin

**General Medicine** : Dr. Ng Kam Hong, Dr. Lam Weng Chio

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**OPINION**

**China Daily**  
 Editorial, China Daily

**VISIT CARRIES FORWARD MOMENTUM OF COOPERATION**

The ongoing visit by Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Egypt, Tunisia, Togo and Cote d'Ivoire, from Saturday to Thursday, continues the 34-year tradition of African countries being the first destinations of the year for China's foreign minister.

That this tradition has been maintained for so many years speaks volumes about how unbreakable and sincere the friendship between China and Africa is. No matter how the international situation changes, the country's endeavor to strengthen ties with African countries remains unchanged.

At the China-Africa Leaders' Dialogue in South Africa in August last year, the African leaders thanked China for supporting African integration and for its indispensable cooperation in their quest for modernization and for the assistance it has provided in times of need.

The ninth Forum on China-Africa Cooperation will be held in Beijing later this year, which will undoubtedly further promote cooperation between the two sides. Egypt, Tunisia, Togo and Cote d'Ivoire have long been China's partners and Wang's visit will further promote China's ties with them. Wang's visit also aims to promote the implementation of what was achieved at the China-Africa Leaders' Dialogue last August in Johannesburg, and make preparations for this year's Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

At last year's dialogue, China issued blueprints for its support of Africa's industrialization, agricultural modernization and the training of its personnel, which received a warm response from African countries. The cooperation between the two sides brings about win-win results, and all of China's cooperation projects with African countries are aimed at resolving the structural issues hindering their development. None of them targets any third party.

The sustainability of cooperation between the two sides in various areas points to the fact that China is a responsible partner which sincerely hopes that its cooperation with African countries will help them shake off poverty and realize industrialization and modernization.

China's support has helped provide African countries with opportunities to secure positions in the global industry and supply chains by leveraging their comparative advantages of labor costs and resources.

That China never attaches any political conditions to its investment or cooperation projects to African countries speaks volumes about the earnestness with which it extends a helping hand.

It is believed that Wang's visit will consolidate ties with the four countries and serve to further boost the cooperative relations between China and African countries.

**A ROYAL FIRST: AUSTRALIA CELEBRATES PRINCESS MARY'S HISTORIC RISE TO BE QUEEN CONSORT IN DENMARK**

**THE BUZZ**

For the first time, Australians find themselves on the brink of witnessing one of their own, Princess Mary of Denmark, rise to the rank of queen when her husband, Crown Prince Frederik, is proclaimed king of that European nation Sunday.

He will become King Frederik X of Denmark two weeks after his 83-year-old mother, Queen Margrethe II, announced she would be the first Danish royal to abdicate in some 900 years.

The 51-year-old Princess Mary's unlikely journey from a law student in Tasmania to European royalty as the world's first Australia-

lian-born queen has captivated Danes and Australians alike for over two decades.

The then Mary Donaldson was 28 years old and working as a real estate agent when her chance meeting with the Danish prince occurred at a Sydney pub during the 2000 Olympics.

The announcement of their engagement in 2003 marked the beginning of what is considered in Australia a fairytale romance, and her succession to the title of queen consort has many Australians brimming with excitement and anticipation.



AP PHOTO

**N. KOREA LAUNCHES SUSPECTED INTERMEDIATE-RANGE BALLISTIC MISSILE THAT CAN REACH DISTANT US BASES**

**HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL**

**N**ORTH Korea fired a suspected intermediate-range ballistic missile toward the sea on Sunday, South Korea's military said, two months after the North claimed to have tested engines for a new harder-to-detect missile capable of striking distant U.S. targets in the region.

The launch was the North's first this year. Experts say North Korea could ramp up its provocative missile tests as a way to influence the results of South Korea's parliamentary elections in April and the U.S. presidential election in November.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement that it detected the launch of a ballistic missile of an intermediate-range class from the North's capital region on Sunday afternoon. It said the missile flew toward the North's eastern waters.

South Korea, the U.S. and Japan are analyzing further details of the launch as the South's military maintains readiness, according to the statement.

Japan's Defense Ministry also said it spotted the North's possible ballistic missile. The Japanese coast guard, quoting the Defense Ministry, said the suspected missile was believed to have

landed in the ocean.

In mid-November, North Korea's state media said it had successfully tested solid-fuel engines for a new intermediate-range ballistic missile that observers say is likely designed to hit U.S. military bases in Okinawa, Japan and the U.S. Pacific territory of Guam.

Built-in solid propellants make missile launches harder for outsiders to detect than liquid-fueled missiles, which must be fueled before launch and cannot last long. North Korea has a growing arsenal of solid-fuel short-range missiles targeting South Korea, but its existing intermediate-range missiles, including the Hwasong-12, are powered by liquid-fuel engines.

The last time North Korea performed a public missile launch was Dec. 18, when it test-fired its Hwasong-18 solid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missile, the North's most advanced weapon. The Hwasong-18 is the North's only known solid-fuel ICBM and it's designed to strike the mainland U.S.

In recent days, North Korea has also been escalating its warlike, inflammatory rhetoric against its foes. Leader Kim Jong Un, during visits last week to munitions factories, called South Ko-

rea "our principal enemy" and threatened to annihilate it if provoked, the North's state media said Wednesday.

On Jan. 5, North Korea fired a barrage of artillery shells near the disputed western sea boundary with South Korea, prompting South Korea to conduct similar firing exercises in the same area. South Korea accused North Korea of continuing similar artillery barrage in the area for the next two days. The site is where the navies of the two Koreas have fought three bloody sea battles since 1999 and attacks blamed on North Korea killed 50 South Koreans in 2010.

Experts say Kim likely wants to see South Korean liberals pursue rapprochement with North Korea while maintaining a parliamentary majority status and for former U.S. President Donald Trump to be elected again. They say Kim might believe he could win U.S. concessions like sanctions relief if Trump returns to the White House.

In a key ruling party meeting in late December, Kim vowed to expand his nuclear arsenal and launch additional spy satellites to cope with what he called U.S.-led confrontational moves. **MDT/AP**



AP PHOTO

**Russia** A huge fire tore through a large warehouse used by Russia's largest online retailer south of St. Petersburg on Saturday morning. The blaze covered an area of 70,000 square meters, with 50,000 square meters of the Wildberries warehouse collapsing, according to Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry. No casualties were reported. Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry said that, according to preliminary data, the cause of the fire was faulty electrical wiring.



AP PHOTO

**Switzerland** Top foreign policy advisers from Western countries and Ukraine met yesterday to help push forward Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's peace formula that aims to end Russia's war on his country. The fourth such meeting of national security advisers took place in the Swiss town of Davos, where Zelenskyy is set to attend the World Economic Forum's annual meeting starting Tuesday. He will endeavor to keep up international focus on Ukraine's defense amid eroding support for Kyiv in the West and swelling distractions like conflict in the Middle East.



AP PHOTO

**Iceland** A volcano has erupted in southwestern Iceland for the second time in less than a month, sending semi-molten rock spewing toward a nearby settlement. The eruption yesterday came after a swarm of earthquakes near the town of Grindavik, the Icelandic Meteorological Office said. The community was evacuated overnight, Iceland's RUV television reported. Iceland, which sits above a volcanic hot spot in the North Atlantic, averages an eruption every four to five years.