



A TOTAL VALUE OF NEARLY MOP95 BILLION IN SECURITIES ARE CURRENTLY UNDER MANAGEMENT OF MACAO CENTRAL SECURITIES DEPOSITORY, A SUBSIDIARY OF AMCM

P5

CRIME: PSP ARRESTS 11 OVER FALSE EMPLOYMENT SCHEME

P4

CHINA'S CENTRAL BANK MOVES TO SPUR ITS SLOWING ECONOMY AND BOOST MARKETS

P7



China Riot Games, the developer of the popular "League of Legends" multiplayer battle game, is joining other tech companies that have been trimming their payrolls with a layoff of 11% of its staff. In a lengthy statement to staff issued late Monday, CEO Dylan Jadeja and chief product officer and co-founder of Riot Games Marc Merrill said 530 jobs were being eliminated, accounting for about 11% of the headcount at the company, which is owned by the Chinese technology giant Tencent.



Japan's exports surged almost 10% in December from a year earlier, helped by a revival in trade with China and strong demand for vehicles, machinery and computer chips. Imports fell almost 7%, leaving a trade surprise of 62 billion yen, according to preliminary customs data released yesterday.



Mongolia A truck carrying 60 tons of liquefied natural gas and a car collided at an intersection in the Mongolian capital yesterday, causing a massive fireball and a series of explosions that killed three firefighters and injured 11 people, officials said. Images showed the huge blaze at the scene of the crash outside a shopping center, close to an apartment building and an international school in Ulaanbaatar. The 12-story apartment building caught fire, with firefighters working until early morning to extinguish the flames.

More on backpage

UNFAIR PRICES



Consumer Council investigation finds immense price disparity in bakery products

P3

AVIATION AIRPORT EXPECTS MORE FLIGHTS, DIVERSE ROUTES

P2



ARTIVISM 'WE ARE NOT FOOD' ALERTS FOR OVER-CONSUMPTION

P2

AVIATION

AIRPORT EXPECTS 20% UP IN PASSENGER COUNTS, FLIGHT MOVEMENTS Y-O-Y THIS YEAR

ANTHONY LAM

MACAU International Airport (MIA) management announced yesterday that it expects passenger volume and flight movements to increase by more than 20% year-over-year in 2024.

The announcement was made during this year's media luncheon at noon yesterday, chaired by Chan Weng Hong, chairman of the Executive Committee of Macau International Airport Company Limited (CAM).

Business aviation movements and cargo volume are expected to rise by 40% and 9% respectively. Additionally, during the upcoming Lunar New Year period, the airport is set to witness 13 special charter flights, including seven to mainland Chinese destinations, three to Taipei, and three to Bangkok, Cam Ranh and Phnom Penh.

Last year by comparison, the local airport handled 5.15 million passengers and over 42,500 aircraft movements, representing a 54% and 55% recovery to pre-pandemic (2019) levels. The cargo market experienced steady growth, with cargo volume of 63,800 tons handled, marking a year-over-year increase of 24% in 2023.



Business aviation operations reached 923 movements, more than double the previous year.

These factors, combined with other undisclosed areas, have generated an estimated revenue of MOP1.18 billion for CAM, equivalent to 65% of pre-pandemic revenue and a remarkable 178% increase from the previous year.

Looking ahead, the airport management is committed to expanding passenger and cargo operations

in the overseas market, with a continued focus on passenger needs. The company will also enhance service quality by promoting the modernization of airport infrastructure and incorporating innovative technologies, ensuring a safe, efficient, and convenient travel experience for passengers.

In terms of facility enhancements, Chan revealed that the network setup and system installation for

the New Integrated Airport Management Center (IAMC) and Emergency Operation Center (EOC) have been completed and are expected to be operational in 2024.

The Environmental Monitoring and Hydrologic Monitoring works are also in the process of being gradually rolled out, and the reclamation project is expected to commence in the second half of 2024.

Further initiatives slated for

implementation include the replacement of flight information display hardware and deployment of airport private cloud infrastructure. Tenders for operations of business and customer facilities at the airport were recently opened to suitable tenants. Chan further revealed that over 60 airport facilities, equipment, and information optimization projects have been systematically carried out in 2023, and third-party tender evaluators will be involved in the grading process.

In 2023, CAM actively initiated preliminary preparations for the Macau International Expansion and Reclamation Project, conducting various tendering processes and refining the layout of the first-phase apron.

CAM will fully cooperate with the plan and actively facilitate the implementation of an airport check-in service at Hengqin Port, jointly developing the "One Journey, Multiple Stops" interline trips between Macau and Hengqin.

Further cooperation is planned with well-known mainland logistics and cross-border e-commerce systems to promote cross-border logistics and facilitate the integrated development of Hengqin and Macau.

ART

'We Are Not Food' by Justin Chiang continues on the path of preservation, over-consumption



STAFF REPORTER

RUNNING until Saturday (Jan. 27), the solo exhibition "We Are Not Food" by Justin Chiang aims to raise continued awareness on nature preservation, over-consumption, and respect for animal rights.

Commencing a decade ago through the artist's initial exhibit "I'm Not Food," the journey is part of the artist's commitment to provide sustained

messaging on such topics through art.

Presented at the Rui Cunha Foundation (FRC), the exhibition features a series of 18 acrylic paintings in the artist's latest exhibition, which represents an evolution in Chiang's work and artistry.

The showcased artwork portrays a diverse array of fauna including cows, pigs, fish, bees, butterflies, sharks, jellyfish, tigers, and elephants.

According to Chiang,

this exhibition is deeply personal. He hopes to elicit empathy for animals and inspire viewers to adopt more compassionate and sustainable ways of coexisting with them.

In comparison to his first exhibition, Chiang notes that the message of the acrylic paintings in "We Are Not Food" is more direct and impactful.

An example of this approach is seen in the piece titled "Specimens," which challenges the was-

tefulness of taxidermy.

Through his art, Chiang aims to motivate viewers to collectively strive to minimize harm to animals and reconsider their treatment as mere commodities. He hopes that this exhibition will catalyze change, forging a more harmonious future in our coexistence with the planet's diverse animal life.

"We Are Not Food" is Chiang's ninth solo presentation and includes several works exhibited both locally and internationally, in locations such as Taiwan, Portugal, France, and various other destinations.

The exhibition is on display at the FRC Gallery and offers free admission.

www.macaudailytimes.com.mo

REACHING OUT!

+25,000

Like us on facebook.com/mdtimes



MacauDaily 澳門每日時報
Times

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

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

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

A MACAU TIMES PUBLICATIONS LTD PUBLICATION

ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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

THE FAIR PRICE

CC investigation finds immense price disparity in bakery products

RENATO MARQUES

DURING regular price investigations of various products, the Consumer Council (CC) inspectors identified significant imbalances in the price of bakery products across 75 bakeries in Macau.

The CC scrutinized the prices of eight pre-chosen bakery items, identified as the most popular among consumers.

The items included pineapple buns, croissants, sausage breads, Chinese-style custard tarts, sliced white breads (in packages of four and eight slices), breads with luncheon meat, and sweet breads with coconut filling, known as Gai Mei Bao.

For instance, a package of eight slices of white bread exhibited a price disparity ranging between 9 and 17 patacas, reflecting a 88.9% difference between the cheapest and most expensive items. Similar discrepancies were noted in the four-slices packages (ranging from 4.5 to 8.5 patacas).

Price differences were even larger for croissants, ranging from 5.5 to 13 patacas, a difference of 236.4%.

Similar patterns were also observed in other food items under investigation.

The CC also observed the price fluctuations between Dec. 28, 2023 and Jan. 23, 2024, noting that several shops implemented price increases, some as high as 25%.

RENATO MARQUES



Despite this, most shops maintained stable prices over the last month.

The CC's research also revealed that the bakery stores offering lower-priced products tended to be concentrated around similar areas, within the Northern District and between Areia Preta and Ilha Verde, around the Border Gate.

Meanwhile, stores selling higher-priced items were usually located in Taipa's Flower City area or Macau's central district from Avenida da Praia Grande to Aveni-

da do Ouidor Arriaga and Rua do Campo.

The CC's price investigation aims to provide consumers with accurate price information to enable effective comparison, informed consumer choices, and preventing overspending.

Citizens can use the CC mobile app – available on all mobile app stores – or consult the CC's website (consumer.gov.mo) to check the current prices of a range of products, from rice to preserved foods, as well as frozen and refri-

gerated meat, children's products, cleaning products, and personal hygiene items.

The Times has contacted the CC to obtain additional clarification on whether the bakery stores provided feedback on pricing, as well as further commentary as to whether these were attributed to differences in rental prices or competition in specific areas. Despite acknowledging the Times' inquiry, no response was received from the government department as of press time.

NEW HEADS AT PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION BUREAU

The director and vice director of the Personal Data Protection Office, scheduled to be established on Feb. 1, were announced yesterday in the Official Gazette. Yang Chongwei, incumbent director of the Personal Data Protection Office, will be appointed as director of the new bureau. Yang has a Ph.D. in international relations from Macau University of Science and Technology. He previously served at the Social Welfare Bureau. Meanwhile, Ho Weng Kong will be appointed vice director of the new bureau. Ho has a Master in criminal law from the Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou. He currently is engaged in legal work at the education bureau.

MAJOR FOOTBRIDGE PLANNED FOR SEAC PAI VAN - IP HENG

The Public Works Bureau (DSOP) has unveiled plans to build a major footbridge at the Seac Pai Van government housing estate. The infrastructure is set to connect the estate with the promenade on the Seac Pai Van Reservoir and pass over Estrada do Altinho de Ká Hó. The future bridge is designed to be 188 meters in length with seven entrances/exits. The government aims to improve the pedestrian environment in the area. Five firms have been invited to bid for the project's planning rights, with prices ranging from MOP1.72 million to MOP2.76 million.

TRADE UNION PROPOSES EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE FOR ELDERLY

Deputy executive director of the Macao Federation of Trade Unions and lawmaker Leong Sun lok has suggested that the government make additional investments to assist older individuals re-enter the workforce, should they be willing. During the pandemic, many older workers lost their jobs. Despite being willing to resume work, this demographic faces challenges due to technical and skill mismatches. The trade unionist pledged further cooperation with the government to facilitate employment opportunities for these individuals.

Macau refutes US allegations on migrant workers rights

STAFF REPORTER

MACAU government's representative refuted the allegations by the United States regarding the repression of migrant workers in the region, in a session this week at the United Nations Human Rights Council, in Geneva, Lusa News Agency reported.

The U.S. diplomat criticized Macau for imposing "repressive measures against women, members of the LGBTIQ+ community, and migrant workers," including those in Hong Kong and Macau. In res-

ponse, the spokesman of Macau's Executive Council asserted that the territory upholds the principle of non-discrimination, ensuring that non-resident employees enjoy the same rights, obligations, and working conditions as local residents.

During the Geneva-based session, André Cheong Weng Chon noted that Macau's government has enacted a law to guarantee a basic income for migrant workers.

In 2020, Macau extended its minimum wage, which initially covered only cleaning and security

workers in building administration, to MOP32 (\$4) per hour or MOP6,656 (\$832) per month. This minimum wage was increased in January to 7,072 patacas per month or 34 patacas per hour, but domestic employees were again excluded from this revision.

Official data indicates that as of November, Macau had nearly 176,000 non-resident workers, with over 25,700 being domestic workers.

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights highlighted in a March 2023 report that



Secretary Andre Cheong in Geneva for United Nations Human Rights Council meeting

migrant workers in construction and domestic sectors are vulnerable to exploitative conditions.

Regarding women's rights, André Cheong stated that the maternity leave has been increased from 56 to 70 days, a five-day paternity leave was introduced, and a law against domestic violence was enacted in 2016.

Cheong did not comment on the situation of the LGBTIQ+ community in Macau. In July 2022, the UN Human Rights Committee observed that discrimination against individuals of diverse sexual orientations and LGBT people still exists in Macau, reflecting the conservative nature of local society and government inaction.

CRIME

PSP ARRESTS 11 OVER FALSE EMPLOYMENT SCHEME

STAFF REPORTER

THE Public Security Police Force (PSP) recently apprehended 11 individuals suspected of participating in a scheme to fraudulently obtain non-resident worker permits, colloquially known as blue cards, through fabricated job contracts, a PSP spokesperson announced yesterday at the joint press conference of the police forces.

The PSP discovered the scheme based on information received from an undisclosed source, alleging that a company was granting blue cards to workers who were not employed by the company but were engaged in other duties.

Upon investigation, it was discovered that the workers were working for a furniture and cargo moving company, despite holding blue cards stating they were employed as car mechanics and related roles.

In November 2023, the police began investigating a worker who was engaged in other activities such as delivering and assembling furniture. Through this process, they eventually discovered a more extensive scheme.

On Dec. 5, during a visit to the worker's residence in the Areia



Preta district, PSP identified another non-resident worker involved in the same scheme. Both workers possessed blue cards indicating that they had been hired by the same company – one as a mechanic, and the other as a transport assistant for student transportation from a school.

In subsequent investigations, both workers admitted to obtaining their blue cards through an intermediary.

In reality, one of the men worked as a furniture assembler, while the other was involved in the delivery of goods and products for another company.

The PSP apprehended the individual responsible for the transport company holding the blue card quotas, who confessed to participating in the scheme since 2014.

He admitted to assisting nine individuals in obtaining blue

card quotas, receiving compensation of MOP60,000 for each quota fulfilled. He received benefits of approximately MOP240,000 from the scheme.

On December 6, the middleman in the scheme was intercepted at the border, confessing his involvement on Dec. 15 and 16 last year. On Jan. 17 this year, the PSP apprehended the remaining detainees linked to the case.

One of the detainees was a mainland man and owner of a company specializing in house renovations. In reality, all workers were employed by his company. He claimed to pay them a monthly salary ranging from 6,000 to 8,000 patacas.

In response to further questioning, he explained that when furniture arrived in Macau from the mainland, the company that sold the blue card quotas would handle transportation of the furniture. The workers were responsible for delivery and assembly of the furniture at residences.

The individuals involved in the employment scheme are facing charges under Article 78 of Law 16/2021, which addresses the simulation and invocation of legal acts to obtain authorizations. Under this law, those who simulate marriage, de facto unions, adoption, or employment contracts to enable others to obtain or obtain for themselves a residence permit or special authorization to stay in Macau will be subject to a penalty ranging from two to eight years of imprisonment.

HEALTH

COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING FOR OVER 55S

RENATO MARQUES

THE Health Bureau (SSM) has started a campaign to screen for early signs of colorectal cancer in residents aged 55 to 69 years old, the SSM has said.

The ongoing program targets residents who meet certain conditions.

Besides being born between 1955 and 1969 and being Macau residents (permanent or non-permanent), those who have not had a colonoscopy in the last five years and who have not conducted a fecal occult blood test in the last two years are eligible for a screening.

Those who have had the condition or have already been diagnosed are excluded from the program.

Those who meet the conditions, can book their screening via the website (www.ssm.gov.mo/coloncancer) or go in person to the healthcare center in their residential area.

More information about the Colorectal Cancer Screening Program is available on the mentioned website.

According to the SSM, the screening program was first launched in November 2016.

By Dec. 31, 2023, 27,092 residents had registered. Of those, 23,350 had already completed the fecal occult blood test, free of charge.

From this group, 2,680 people produced a positive test and were subsequently referred for a government-funded colonoscopy at a private medical institution.

The SSM also noted that to date, of the 2,457 people who had a colonoscopy, 139 were eventually diagnosed with colorectal cancer, with most cases diagnosed early and being transferred for treatment and follow-up.

Colorectal cancer is one of the most common cancers in Macau, ranking second among the top 10 cancers with the most incidence and cause of death.

The SSM said that, due to Macau's aging population and unbalanced diet, the number of colorectal cancer cases is expected to continue to increase.

Colorectal cancer can develop in anyone and at different stages of life but occurs more frequently in people aged 60 years and over due to the entering the period in which cells in the colorectal mucosa become polyps, and subsequently can turn cancerous.

This process can take up to 10 years to occur and that is why is important to have early detection to prevent the development.

CRIME

Dispute over inheritance leads to detention of four individuals

RENATO MARQUES

A dispute over inheritance in the mainland, following the death of a Macau resident, has resulted in a series of complications and the subsequent arrest of four individuals. All suspects are alleged to have provided false declarations with the intent of securing the deceased's inheritance, as revealed by the Judiciary Police (PJ) yesterday during the routine joint police press conference.

The case originated from a complaint by the deceased's nephew, the son of the deceased's brother, who filed a complaint against his aunt (the younger sister of the deceased).



The allegations involve false declarations made by the woman and by three individuals she employed to take possession of three property units owned by the deceased in Macau.

According to PJ's inves-

tigation, the case began when a 58-year-old man named Lok approached the deceased's sister, Chan, at her brother's funeral in 2016.

Lok informed Chan that given that the entire family except the deca-

sed were mainland residents with no recorded presence in Macau, she could inherit the deceased's entire estate, including three apartment units with an acquisition value of about MOP1 million each.

This man reportedly helped her secure "false witnesses" who provided misleading statements asserting that she was the sole known family member, enabling her to claim the inheritance without sharing it with the deceased's other brother and his family.

After becoming aware of this fact in July last year, the nephew came to Macau and filed a complaint with the PJ against his aunt and the witnesses,

prompting the PJ to investigate the case.

During the investigation, the PJ discovered that Chan rewarded Lok with MOP1 million for planning and executing all arrangements for her to acquire the properties in her name.

The other two detainees, identified as 65-year-old Chau and a 49-year-old Wong, are the witnesses implicated in making the false declarations.

Wong admitted to receiving MOP2,500 as compensation for his false testimony, while Chau declined to cooperate with the police.

A third witness remains at large. All the witnesses are residents of the mainland and were detained at different times upon entering Macau.

The case is now being referred to the Public Prosecutions Office for charges related to the crime of providing false declarations.

INVESTMENT

MOP95 billion's worth of securities managed by local central bank's subsidiary

ANTHONY LAM

SECURITIES with a total value of nearly MOP95 billion are currently under the management of the Macao Central Securities Depository (MCSD), a subsidiary of the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM), as announced in a statement yesterday.

This portfolio of securities includes the five-year national bond issued by Beijing for the third time in Macau, and the government bond issued by Guangdong Province, also for the third time in Macau.

The MCSD revealed that as of yesterday, over 100 entities hold participant accounts at the MCSD, comprising 34 from the local market and 67 from the external market.

Reflecting on its activities in the past year, the AMCM noted that last April, together with MCSD, it visited two International Central Securities Depository Institutions (ICSD) headquartered in Europe. It is currently optimizing the construction of the Macao Central Securities Depository System in accordance with international practices, with the aim of attracting more overseas institutions to participate in Macau bonds.



Yesterday, the MCSD held an award ceremony to recognize the contributions of entities in the local securities market. MCSD presented six awards at the event, including the existing Excellent Underwriting Agency, Excellent Issuing Agency and Excellent Overseas Marketing Agency awards, as well as the newly-added ESG Outstanding Contribution Agency, Excellent Secondary Market

Trading Institution and Excellent Professional Service Institution awards. A total of 27 local and overseas institutions won awards.

AMCM head Chan Sau San emphasized in his speech that the registration system, with information disclosure as its core, was officially implemented in November last year. It has simplified the bond issuance process while protecting investors, aligning prac-

tics in the Macau bond market with global financial market standards and enhancing the Macau market's competitiveness.

He further recapped that the AMCM had revised guidelines related to the bond business and completed industry consultation on Macau's first Securities Law. The goal is to establish a legal system that promotes efficient market operation in line with in-

ternational standards, to enhance investors' understanding and confidence in the Macau bond market.

In addition, he said the authority had launched a bond repurchase mechanism and a financial bill issuance and trading system (MTS) to create conditions for activating the secondary market for financial bills.

Regarding the Cross-boundary Wealth Management Connect Scheme in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the local government promulgated an amended version of the implementation details. This will allow Macau banks and registered financial institutions to provide securities services in Macau to operate within the scheme. However, all activities must comply with the implementation details.

Investors will be allowed to purchase a wider range of eligible financial products, and their personal investment limit has been increased from RMB 1 million to RMB 3 million. If an investor chooses to invest through both banks and securities companies simultaneously, the individual investment limits corresponding to the two channels are RMB 1.5 million each.

UNESCO rejects Lighthouse group request for report access, citing respect for China's rights

RENATO MARQUES

THE local Concern Group for the Protection of the Guia Lighthouse has announced that UNESCO has denied its request to access the government report on the unfinished building located at Calçada do Gaio 18-20, the group noted in a statement.

As per the disclosed UNESCO response letter within the same statement, the international organization explained that, in response to the group's request to seek permission from the State Party (China) to divulge details on the Heritage Impact Assessment for the building, "UNESCO is not in a position to make such a request and we kindly advise you to



reach out to the concerned authorities directly." The letter was signed by the director of UNESCO's World

Heritage Center, Lazare Eloundou Assomo.

On the line was the intention of the group to access the details of the report, produced by the local government and delivered to UNESCO via the central government of the People's Republic of China.

Assomo remarked, "UNESCO remains deeply committed to continuing to work closely with all concerned stakeholders in preserving and safeguarding the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including through the implementation of Decision 45 COM 7B.154 adopted at the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee." The 45th session took place last year in Riyadh, Saudi Ara-

bia from Sep. 10 to 25.

The same group also requested that UNESCO send a team of experts to assess the situation on-site. This request was also denied, with the director of the World Heritage Center stating, "Please note that such missions are, in principle, conducted either at the request of the World Heritage Committee (Reactive Monitoring missions) or at the invitation of the States Parties (Advisory missions)." As such, Assomo clarified that such assessments can only be conducted at the request and invitation of the State Member (China).

Nevertheless, UNESCO acknowledged the concerns expressed by the group in multiple letters submi-

tted to the body and confirmed ongoing communication with the State Party of the People's Republic of China and the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee regarding the property's conservation, adhering to the provisions of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

The Guia Lighthouse group remains determined to halt the ongoing reconstruction, which began in mid-2022 after the government approved a new project to conclude the real estate development.

The group advocates for the cessation of construction and urges a decision to reduce the building's height from the current 81 meters to a maximum of 52.5 meters.

Such a decision would require the demolition of several floors, as the building has already been built to the height of 81 meters.



GAMING

LAS VEGAS SANDS 4Q REVENUE TO RISE AMID TOURISM RECOVERY: DOW JONES

LAS Vegas Sands, a major player in the casino and resort industry, is set to announce its fourth-quarter earnings today [Macau time], with "a notable net profit of \$494.9 million, or 59 cents per share," Dow Jones reported yesterday.

This forecasted profit represents a stark contrast to the loss of \$169 million, or 22 cents per share, reported in the same quarter the previous year. The company had already returned to profitability in the third quarter.

According to Dow Jones Institutional News, LVS' revenues are also anticipated to show robust growth, with projections indicating a rise to \$2.89 billion.

This expected increase is a significant jump from the \$1.12 billion reported in the same period last year and slightly higher than the \$2.80 billion in the previous third quarter.

The company's stock has demonstrated steady growth, increasing by 2.3% in the past three months, trading at around \$48.74.

Investors will be keenly observing specific aspects of the earnings report, particularly the company's casino revenue and revenue per available room, which are crucial indicators of the company's operational efficiency and market demand, the report added.

In the third quarter, these figu-

res saw "an impressive upswing, with revenue per available room soaring by 178% to \$342 million, and casino revenue escalating by 215% to \$2.01 billion."

Another critical factor, according to Dow Jones, is the ongoing recovery in tourism spending in Macau and Singapore.

The news agency considers these regions "vital to Las Vegas Sands' financial health and future growth prospects."

The company's ability to capitalize on the resurgence of tourism in these areas post-pandemic "will be a significant point of interest" for those assessing the company's market position and its potential for sustained growth in the coming quarters. PC

TRADE

US CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION VISITS TAIWAN TO 'ENGAGE WITH SENIOR BUSINESS LEADERS'

THE co-chairs of the U.S. Congressional Taiwan Caucus yesterday opened the first trip by U.S. lawmakers to the island where the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party won a third straight term in elections this month.

U.S. Reps. Ami Bera, a Democrat from California, and Florida Republican Mario Díaz-Balart plan to "engage with senior officials and business leaders," Bera's office said in a statement, without naming those with whom they would meet.

"The aim of the trip is to reaffirm U.S. support for Taiwan following their successful democratic elections, express solidarity in their shared commitment to democratic values, and explore opportunities to further strengthen the robust economic and defense relationship between the United States and Taiwan,"

the statement said.

Beijing objects to any form of official contact between the U.S. and Taiwan and responded to a 2022 visit by then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi with some of its largest military maneuvers in years, including missile launches and a simulated blockade of the island. It views visits by foreign government officials as them recognizing the island's sovereignty.

President Joe Biden has sought to calm that complaint, insisting there's no change in America's longstanding "one-China policy," which recognizes Beijing but allows informal relations and defense ties with Taipei.

While China regularly sends warplanes and navy ships to intimidate and harass Taiwan, there was no discernible spike in activity on Tuesday and Wednesday. **MDT/AP**



Rep. Ami Bera, D-California

CORPORATE BITS

Renowned educator Anne van Dam headlines TIS's first-ever Early Childhood Education Conference

The International School of Macao (TIS) marked a significant milestone in early childhood education, with its first Early Childhood Education (ECE) Conference on Jan. 20, 2024. Inquiry-based educator Anne van Dam from the Netherlands was the keynote speaker, alongside notable attendees including DSEDJ's Chen ZiChang and TIS Head of School Lorne Schmidt, according to a note from TIS.

Lorne Schmidt set the tone for the conference, lauding Anne van Dam for her influential session on "The Power of Play," which highlighted the crucial role of play in developing children's creativity, competence, and confidence.

The event featured a variety of sessions by TIS teachers



and specialists, addressing key topics like child safeguarding, language difficulties, and application of the Reggio Emilia approach in education.

With over 120 participants, the conference served as "a vibrant international

networking platform," fostering a community focused on enhancing early childhood education.

Additionally, a special parent session with Anne van Dam emphasized the value of play in child development, encouraging active parental involvement in education.

Anne van Dam commended the conference's emphasis on children's rights, stating, "It is really powerful and important that people have come here to learn together... I think it is going to have a ripple effect in other schools."

TIS continues to champion a "nurturing learning environment," aiming to nurture a community of lifelong learners who contribute positively to the global community, the school added.

Londoner Arena hosts Street Dance of China season 6 finale



The Londoner Arena at The Londoner® Macao was the center of attention as it hosted the grand finale of 'Street Dance of China' Season 6 on Jan. 20. Sands China Ltd announced.

This globally livestreamed event on Youku marked an electrifying start to the year for dance fans. The venue, a 6,000-seat arena, was filled

to capacity, with audiences eagerly witnessing a battle among top dancers for the highest honor, according to a press release from the company.

The night was set ablaze with performances from three captains, Van Ness Wu, Jay Park, and TNT-Ding, and further enlivened by surprise appearances

from past captains Han Geng, Wang Yibo, and Lay Zhang.

Dubbed the 'Battle for Unity,' the finale showcased ten finalists delivering "diverse and ingenious performances," culminating in Swiss dancer Poppin'C clinching the title, followed by b-boy Neginu.

This marks the second time Sands China has hosted the season finale of this popular variety show, with the previous season 5 finale at The Venetian's Cotai Arena in 2022. According to the press release, this event not only enriched Sands China's entertainment offerings, but also played a significant role in developing Macau into a City of Performing Arts, underlining the commitment to diversify the cultural and tourism sectors.

DIPLOMACY

China formally restores relations with Nauru after Pacific island nation cut Taiwan ties

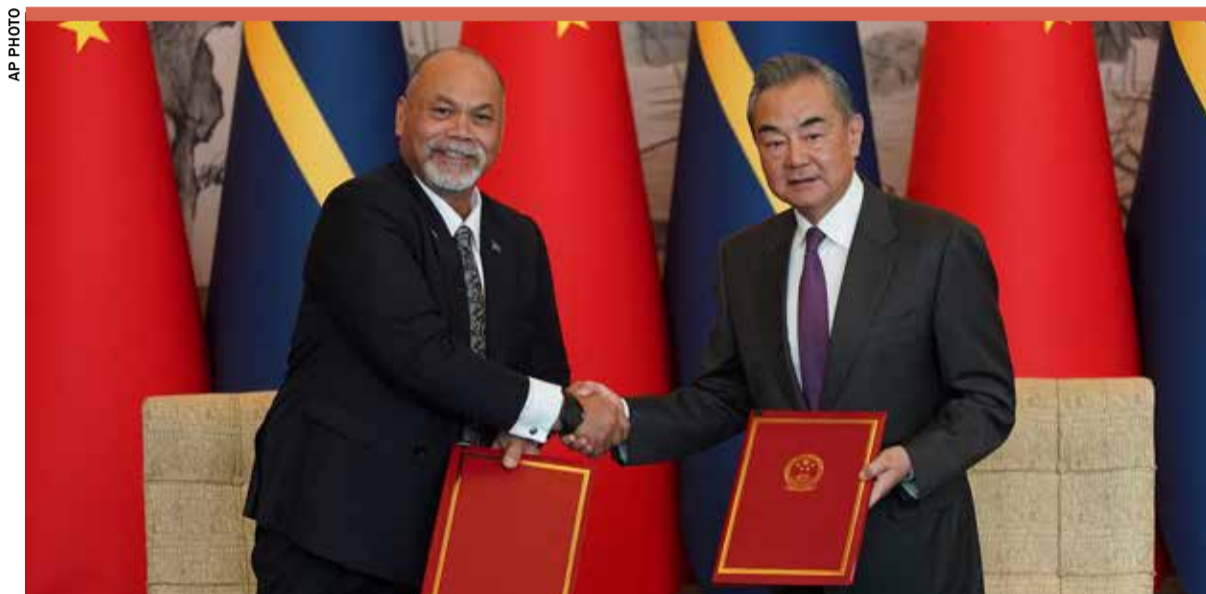
CHINA and Nauru formally restored diplomatic relations yesterday after the tiny Pacific island nation cut its ties with Taiwan earlier this month, in a further move by Beijing to isolate Taipei's democratic government.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Nauru's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Lionel Aingimea at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, and Wang said the resumption of ties "once again demonstrates to the world that adherence to the one-China principle is an irresistible historical trend."

Aingimea said Nauru recognized that Taiwan is part of China.

"We look forward to the practical cooperation that's going to happen between Nauru and China. The prospect is bright," Aingimea said.

Nauru's announcement on Jan. 15 came just two days after Taiwan elected a new leader and left the self-governing republic with only 12 remaining diplomatic allies, although it enjoys strong unofficial



FM Wang Yi and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Nauru Lionel Aingimea after signing a joint communique on the resumption of diplomatic relations in Beijing, yesterday

relations with the U.S., Japan and other Western nations.

American officials expressed disappointment with the decision. The United States has diplomatic relations with China but also maintains extensive unofficial ties with Taiwan, including selling it fighter jets and other

weaponry for its defense.

Nauru first established diplomatic ties with Taiwan in 1980, then switched to Beijing in 2002, then back to Taiwan in 2005, amid allegations that both sides were paying off or otherwise pressuring Nauruan officials.

Taiwan is China's territory and

Beijing doesn't recognize its government or its right to diplomatic recognition, participation in global bodies such as the United Nations or any official contact with foreign political entities.

"This policy change is a significant first step in moving forward with Nauru's development," Nau-

ru's government said in a news release announcing the severing of relations with Taiwan.

China has been gradually "poaching Taiwan's diplomatic allies," partly to punish the ruling Democratic Progressive Party that advocates maintaining the status quo under which Taiwan has its own government, military and de-facto independent status outside of the control of the PRC.

Ten countries have switched ties from Taipei to Beijing since the initial election of DPP's Tsai Ing-wen in 2016.

China says that Taiwan must come under its control at some point and has staged military drills around the island to demonstrate its determination.

At the time of the break with Nauru, Taiwan's minister Tien Chung-kwang accused China of purposefully timing the news to the election of DPP's new leader. He said China's "authoritarian one-party Communist government's intention [...] was to attack the democracy and freedom that the Taiwanese people are proud of."

Taiwan now has official ties with 11 countries and the Vatican. Seven are in Latin America and the Caribbean, three are in the Pacific islands and one is in Africa.

Nauru's switching of relations has further intensified the focus on Taiwan's remaining allies, most of which are developing nations seen as vulnerable to China's global influence and willingness to offer hefty financial inducements. **MDT/AP**

FINANCE

Central Bank moves to spur its slowing economy and boost markets by cutting required bank reserves

CHINA'S central bank said yesterday it will cut amount of reserves it holds for banks as part of a slew of measures to support the slowing economy.

The announcement by the governor of the People's Bank of China prompted a surge in share prices, with Hong Kong's benchmark jumping 3.6%.

Chinese stock markets have languished in recent months as investors pulled money out, discouraged by a faltering recovery from the shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A sell-off earlier in the week was followed by unconfirmed reports that the government planned to get state-owned investment companies to funnel offshore funds into the markets to help staunch the losses. The central



bank's moves appear to be part of a concerted effort to stabilize the markets and instill greater confidence in the outlook for the world's second-largest economy.

Central bank Gov. Pan Gongsheng told reporters in Beijing that the deposit reserve requirement would

be cut by 0.5 percentage points as of Feb. 5. Pan said that would inject about 1 trillion yuan (\$141 billion) into the economy. As of December, the reserve requirement ratio was 7.4%.

Unlike bank reserves — the cash banks must keep on hand to cover unexpect-

ted demand — these reserves are held by the central bank and used mainly as a monetary policy tool.

Such changes are usually conveyed in a written notice by the central bank, not at a news conference.

Pan said the central bank also plans to issue a policy soon on lending to property developers to help support the industry.

China's economy is recovering, he said, allowing ample room for policy maneuvers.

"At present, our country's financial risks are generally controllable, the overall operations of financial institutions are sound, and financial markets are operating smoothly," the government website China.com cited Pan as saying.

The economy expan-

ded at a 5.2% annual pace in the October-December quarter, enabling the government to attain its target of about 5% annual growth for 2023. But the recovery remains uneven, and most forecasts say the economy will grow more slowly in 2024.

Chinese leaders have been talking up the economy in an all-out effort to counter such expectations.

Initial reactions were cautious.

Mark Williams of Capital Economics said the latest moves would "provide only a small boost for China's economy."

"Meaningful improvements in household or corporate borrowing would require substantial rate cuts or a significant change in economic sentiment. Neither seems likely in the

near future," he said in a commentary.

The slow pace of the recovery after China dropped stringent anti-virus precautions in late 2022 has added to gloom over a crisis in the once-booming property market as dozens of developers defaulted on loans after the government cracked down on excessive borrowing a few years ago.

That has left many Chinese families who had invested their life savings in unbuilt homes in limbo, unsure if the developers would deliver those apartments.

There have been some signs of improvement: Last week, the government resumed its reporting on the rate of unemployment among young people, which stood at a record 21.3% in June. **MDT/AP**

BRIEFS

**FORUM MACAO'S
SIXTH MINISTERIAL
CONFERENCE SCHEDULED
FOR APRIL**

The sixth ministerial conference of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-Speaking Countries (Forum Macao) is set to convene in Macau this April. This meeting, previously postponed due to scheduling conflicts and the global pandemic, is a significant event for fostering economic ties. The forum, established in 2003, includes China and nine Portuguese-speaking nations, aiming to strengthen economic collaboration. Forum Macao's recent activities include visits to Cape Verde and Equatorial Guinea. A topic featuring strong on the agenda, will be the future role of PSCs in Macau's integration process in the GBA.

**CATHAY PACIFIC
EXPANDS IN
GUANGDONG-HONG
KONG-MACAO BAY AREA**

Cathay Pacific is reinforcing its presence in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area following recent challenges, including a discrimination controversy. Aiming to recover, the airline inaugurated a new lounge at Shenzhen's Shekou Cruise Home Port and debuted its first group of mainland attendants. CEO Ronald Lam announced that Cathay Pacific has recovered 70% of its passenger flights in 2023, with a projected profit exceeding HK\$8.6 billion. Plans include hiring 5,000 employees in 2024 and adding 1,500 mainland attendants by 2025. Efforts to cater to GBA travelers include Mandarin broadcasts and locally tailored menus. The move signifies Cathay Pacific's commitment to its homeland and global connections.

**SHENZHEN'S CROSS-
BORDER RENMINBI
PAYMENTS HIT
RECORD HIGH**

Shenzhen, Guangdong province, recorded a record-breaking 4 trillion yuan (\$556 billion) in cross-border renminbi payments in 2023, the highest ever. The renminbi, or yuan, continues as the dominant settlement currency between Shenzhen and Hong Kong for the fourth consecutive year, with a 28.3% year-on-year increase in cross-border payments. Approximately 58.3% of these transactions occurred between Shenzhen and Hong Kong, totaling 3.5 trillion yuan. To facilitate payments for Hong Kong residents in Shenzhen, diverse methods including digital RMB and mobile payments are being adopted. Notably, Hong Kong residents have opened around 3 million bank accounts in Shenzhen, with a significant portion established through the witness account opening system.

ANALYSIS BY LEANDA LEE*

AN earlier analysis (Jan 11) of the benefits of the Greater Bay Area in The Times' GBA Views focused on the region as being "poised to play a crucial role in China's economic future and its integration into the global economy" through "plans to enhance connectivity, foster innovation, and strengthen international partnerships." One of the purposes as stated in the 2017 GBA Development Framework is to leverage the integrated advantages of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau.

Macau and Hong Kong have long been integrated into - indeed at various points in history they have been critical to the smooth functioning of - a prosperous global economy. The characteristics of these cities, such as the depth of understanding within society of the formal institutions and infrastructure and the soft skills and human networks, are critical to successful international partnerships. Most of this knowledge is now deeply embedded into legislation and systems of finance, logistics and communication and is internalised into the thinking of both professionals and society as a whole.

SHARING WITH AND BY THE PE

Internationalism was part of the DNA of Hong Kong, and the romance of Macau.

Within a much-truncated timeframe since the re-opening of the Chinese economy in 1978, Guangdong Province has developed its own integrated systems of global exchange with socialist characteristics.

The Framework Agreement acknowledges the unique contributions that each party brings to the GBA: Guangdong as the driver of economic reform, growth and opening up through innovation and high-tech manufacturing solutions; Hong Kong to strengthen its position as an international finance, trade and logistics centre, and an international dispute resolution centre for APAC; and Macau, to move beyond reliance on visitors from China and develop as a global leisure and recreation centre and to realise those long-promised economic and trade outcomes as a platform for trade between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

Transferring the three sets of internalised knowledge and ways of being and



AI-generated artistic rendition that visually captures the blend of architectural elements across various professions, and symbolic references to connectivity

then integrating them into harmonized infrastructures and systems as required

of a connected, innovative and globalised GBA will not be easy. The task will

Guangdong governor prioritizes economic integration in Southeast China for 2024: Reports

ON THE AGENDA

IN a significant move towards bolstering China's economic growth, Guangdong Governor Wang Weizhong announced this week that the province will take on a larger role in supporting the national economy. A key focus will be the development of the Greater Bay Area, a metropolitan region in the Pearl River Delta.

Speaking to local media, Governor Wang emphasized Guangdong's commitment to accelerating the construction of a world-class Greater Bay Area. This initiative aims to foster closer ties with Hong Kong and Macau, ensuring the integration of the Chinese economy and promoting modern economic development.

Efforts will also concentrate on enhancing regional



transport connections and cultivating a strong talent pool in the integrated circuits sector, alongside boosting

industrial software production.

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the Grea-

ter Bay Area, a cornerstone among President Xi Jinping's three major regional integration strategies.

Governor Wang also revealed plans for Guangdong to achieve 5% economic growth this year, aligning with targets set by other provinces. In 2023, the Guangdong economy grew by 4.8%.

Supporting the local private sector, considered the backbone of the provincial economy, is also on the agenda. Guangdong aims to create more job opportunities this year, taking a lead role in boosting the economy.

Beyond integrating Macau and Hong Kong, Beijing also aims to transform the region's growth model by emphasizing domestic consumption and services over exports and manufacturing.

PEOPLE – BAY VISIONS



lements, the human aspect of integration and policy changes in GBA

of Guangdong outside the GBA. It will remain to be seen whether and where there may be reluctance, and which push and pull factors will prevail in the transition: the international characteristics of the free-market economies of Hong Kong and Macau or that of more centralised control and big government.

The navigation of these conundrums will be determined mainly by policy and possibly by emergent strategy honed through some trial and error. Knowledge transfer and the subsequent implementation of financial, logistics, regulatory, security, quality standards, communications technology, among other systems to bring these regions together successfully will be left to actors in the field – people. Knowledge transfer, systems' change and cultural shift are all human capital and time intensive endeavours but critical to the GBA vision.

Since the sealing of the agreement back in 2017, we have been able to visualise what integration might look like as we have watched the skyline chan-

ge over Hengqin; been presented with incentives for Macau businesses to invest in the 4 industries of Sci-tech research and high-tech manufacturing, Chinese Traditional Medicine, Finance, MICE and culture; provided with easier access between Hengqin and Macau for vehicular and people traffic and seen secondments of Macau bureaucrats to departments across the Lotus Bridge.

In terms of knowledge transfer and integration, it is this latter initiative, that of human interaction and face-to-face learning in situ, that promises the swiftest and most profound mode of change and cross-pollination. To achieve this requires an enthusiasm for bi-directional knowledge transfer: fail at this micro, human level and the broader plan will lose momentum.

A hugely important psycho-social element of successful knowledge transfer is a shared vision. A shared vision embodies collective goals and a human aspiration to integrate and combine resources. Shared vision is also a cognitive element of social capital which unifies people, causing them to come together and become like-minded. That affiliation between individuals facilitates a sharing

of personal resources and knowledge. This is the individual-level mechanism which is critical to GBA integration.

Here in Macau, the symbols of integration have been years in the planning such as the completion of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, shared border transfer facilities, the University of Macau being relocated to a bonded area of Hengqin, the now common plying of mainland coast guard vessels along the Macau waterline: There are many more. The subtle and not-so-subtle insertion into a community of such elements familiarises a population with symbols of change and helps the community visualise what integration may look like. A shared vision is transferred both imperceptibly through such methods and overtly through grand policy announcements. Both are critical to laying the groundwork to ensure a willingness by people to share embedded and internalised knowledge, their resources, networks, and skills to leverage each region's unique assets for the integrated vision of the GBA.

*Contributing Editor, Scholar, and partner at IGamiX Management & Consulting Ltd

WORK IN PROGRESS NOTES ON ACADEMIC STUDIES

“Dynamic Information Grid Optimization of Trade Logistics Industry Sharing Based on Remote Sensing Image Analysis of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao”

Zhao Yajie
International Journal of Science and Engineering Applications (2023)

Using the nighttime light image of “Luo-jia No. 1”, the urban built-up area of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is extracted by the simple threshold method and the urban night light index method adjusted by vegetation. It can weaken the oversaturation phenomenon of the “Luo-jia No. 1” image and reduce Mistaken extraction due to the “overflow” of the image. Calculate and compare the landscape index of urban built-up areas in the Greater Bay Area. Then use the gravity model to measure the highway logistics gravity in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau, determine the road freight volume between cities, and use the logistics network The road logistics network in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao is optimized with the goal of minimizing the total cost, and the robustness of the optimization results under different carbon policies is further tested. The economic and social development of mainland China has had an important impact on the evolution of logistics layout in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. In regional logistics planning, attention should be paid to the impact of industrial agglomeration such as spatial correlation, and attention should be paid to the impact of the environment and economic cycles on the optimization of regional logistics layout and the deep integration of industries.

FROM THE ABSTRACT

be made more complex by the need to maintain systemic cohesion with the rest

ZHUHAI ON A WINTER WEEKEND

Warm-up with hot springs, food street and nightlife

TRAVELOG

ZHUHAI, often celebrated for its scenic beauty and vibrant nightlife, offers a blend of natural wonders and modern attractions. This coastal city, nestled in the Pearl River Delta, is a gateway to an array of experiences, from serene beachfront walks to lively cultural events.

For nature lovers, Zhuhai does not disappoint. The city's famed Lovers' Road is a picturesque seaside promenade, stretching for miles along the coast and offering stunning views of the South China Sea. It's a perfect spot for leisurely walks or cycling, especially during sunset... Hold that thought: one might wish to defer this pleasure until the chill of winter yields to



A panoramic view of the Lovers' Road

milder days.

Worth exploring also after the chill, is the Xian-gshan ancient road in

Zhuhai along its villages made of stone. After several years of restoration, the ancient road has beco-

me a site of cultural heritage and a favorite destination for climbers.

The Zhuhai Imperial

Hot Spring Resort is a haven for those seeking relaxation, now we're talking. Here, you can indulge in

the therapeutic benefits of natural hot springs. The pools are meticulously maintained, with cleaning routines every four hours, ensuring a hygienic and rejuvenating experience.

Zhuhai's nightlife is equally exciting, with a variety of options ranging from vibrant music festivals to cozy coffeehouses. ShuiWan JiuBa Jie 水灣酒吧街, for instance, is a popular destination for nightlife, offering a diverse range of bars and clubs. Whether you're in the mood for live music, a quiet drink, or a night of dancing, Zhuhai's nightlife has something for everyone.

The city's culinary scene, particularly at Zhuhai Wanzai Seafood Street, is a must-try. Here, you can savor the freshest seafood, selecting your meal live and having it cooked to your preference. It's a unique experience that combines dining with a touch of local culture and flavor.

AP PHOTO



Residents displaced in the aftermath of an earthquake arrive at a school dormitory used as temporary shelter in Wushi county in Xinjiang

XINJIANG

THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ARE FORCED OUT OF THEIR HOMES AFTER 7.1 QUAKE

KEN MORITSUGU & NG HAN GUAN, UCHTURPAN

AS aftershocks continued to rock western China yesterday, more than 12,000 people were staying in tents and other shelters, lighting bonfires to fend off the freezing weather.

The previous day, a magnitude 7.1 earthquake in a remote part of China's Xinjiang region killed three people and left five injured, while damaging hundreds of buildings.

The quake caused significant damage amid freezing temperatures, but the toll on lives and property was relatively light, owing to the sparse population around the epicenter in Uchturpan county, near the border with Kazakhstan.

Footage shown by state broadcaster CCTV yesterday showed evacuees eating instant noodles in tents with bonfires providing heat.

Jian Gewa, a 16-year old student in Uchturpan, said he was in the bathroom when the quake began. The entire building shook violently.

"I just thought I had to get myself to safety as quickly as possible," Jian said.

He was evacuated to a school where he was staying in a dorm room with his grandfather, joining about 200 others. Local

officials said they planned to check houses' stability before people could return.

The earthquake hit in a sparsely populated area with clusters of towns and villages scattered across an otherwise barren winter landscape. A two lane highway runs from the city of Aksu about 125 kilometers to the area, through frozen brown flatlands on one side and craggy outcroppings on the other. Power lines and an occasional cement factory are virtually the only signs of human presence.

In Kizilsu Kirgiz prefecture, the earthquake caused damage of various degrees to 851 buildings, collapsing 93 structures near the epicenter and killing 910 livestock, according to the prefecture deputy party secretary Wurouziali Haxihaerbayi.

The area is populated mostly by Kyrgyz and Uyghurs, ethnic Turkic minorities who are predominantly Muslim and have been the target of a state campaign of forced assimilation and mass detention. The region is heavily militarized, and state broadcaster CCTV showed paramilitary troops moving in before dawn to clear rubble and set up tents for those displaced.

Two of the three people who died were members of a Kyrgyz sheep herding family who had

brought their flock up the mountain and spent the night in their rest hut, said Shi Chao, the Communist Party head of Kulansarike township.

Rescuers found the family of three, including a 6-year old girl, and brought them down the mountain but only the father survived, Shi said.

The township has been replacing the huts with sturdier structures partially subsidized by the government, he said. The third death happened elsewhere in Akqi county.

The prefecture has deployed more than 2,300 rescuers, and Akqi county evacuated 7,338 residents. In total, 12,426 people have been evacuated.

Rescue crews combed through the rubble while emergency survival gear including coats and tents arrived to help the thousands of people who fled their homes.

"This 7.1 rating is very strong, but the death and injury situation is not severe," Zhang Yongjiu, the head of Xinjiang Earthquake Administration, told a news conference.

The quake's epicenter was in a mountainous area about 3,000 meters (9,800 feet) above sea level, Zhang said.

In the village of Yamansu, about 115 people were staying in

a Communist Party meeting hall, their bedding neatly rolled up on Wednesday morning on top of five long rows of metal bed frames. Medical staff were on hand to check on older residents.

A grandmother fed one of her grandchildren on one of the beds, while an older one slurped instant noodles.

Outside, men chatted around a large metal wood-burning cooker with a stove pipe, two wearing chef's toques. Chunks of meat and vegetables in large plastic and metal containers sat on two weathered desks set up on the ground outside.

A light layer of snow covered the frozen ground as temperatures remained well below freezing, although the sunshine brought people outside.

The quake hit shortly after 2 a.m. on Tuesday. By evening, authorities said three people had died and five were injured, two seriously.

State broadcaster CCTV said 1,104 aftershocks, including five that were above magnitude 5.0, were recorded as of 8:00 a.m. Wednesday. The largest registered at magnitude 5.7.

Among the buildings damaged, 47 houses had collapsed, the government of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region posted on its official Weibo social media

account Tuesday.

Officials said most of the houses that collapsed were in remote areas and were built by residents. Newer public housing built by the government did not collapse.

Footage broadcast by CCTV showed staff at Aksu's train station ordering passengers out of the waiting hall in a speedy but not panicked manner.

Associated Press journalists saw some walls cracked or partially collapsed in the empty Aksu country village of Youkakeyaman-su, a name transliterated in Mandarin from Uyghur. All residents had been evacuated to a shelter.

The mountainous Uchturpan county is recording temperatures well below freezing, with the China Meteorological Administration forecasting lows reaching negative 18 degrees Celsius (just below zero Fahrenheit) this week.

The county had around 233,000 people in 2022, according to Xinjiang authorities.

The quake downed power lines but electricity was quickly restored, Aksu authorities said. The Urumqi Railroad Bureau resumed services after 7 a.m. following safety checks that confirmed no problems on train lines. The suspension affected 23 trains, the bureau serving the Xinjiang capital said on its official Weibo account.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the area's largest quake in the past century was also magnitude 7.1 and occurred in 1978, about 200 kilometers to the north of Tuesday's epicenter.

Tremors were felt hundreds of kilometers away.

Tremors also were felt in neighboring Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan and reportedly as far away as New Delhi. Videos posted on the Telegram messaging platform showed people in the Kazakh city of Almaty running downstairs in apartment blocks and standing in the street, some of them wearing shorts in the freezing weather.

In Xinjiang and Kazakhstan, classes were suspended to allow children to recover from the shock.

Earthquakes are common in western China.

A 6.2 magnitude earthquake that struck Gansu province in December killed 151 people and was China's deadliest quake in nine years. An earthquake in Sichuan province in 2008 killed nearly 90,000.

Elsewhere, authorities raised the confirmed death toll to 31 on Tuesday in a landslide in a remote, mountainous part of China's southwestern province of Yunnan, Chinese state media reported.

The disaster struck just before 6 a.m. on Monday in the mountain village of Liangshui. Authorities said Tuesday that a total of 44 people were either missing or had been found dead. **MDT/AP**

KOREAS

North appears to demolish reunification arch as Kim turns against ties with South

KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

NORTH Korea appears to have torn down a huge arch in its capital that symbolized reconciliation with South Korea, a week after leader Kim Jong Un dismissed decades of hopes for peaceful reunification with the war-divided peninsula's south, according to satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press yesterday.

South Korea's military also said that North Korea fired several cruise missiles into waters off its western coast.

Kim last week described the Pyongyang monument as an "eyesore" and called for its removal while declaring that the North was abandoning long-standing goals of a peaceful unification with South Korea and ordered a rewriting of the North's constitution to define the South as its most hostile foreign adversary.

Satellite images from Planet Labs PBC appeared to show the destruction of Pyongyang's Monument to the Three Charters for National Reunification, also called the Arch of Reunification. An image Tuesday clearly showed the arch missing along a roadway.

Clouds and snow cover made it difficult to ascertain when North Korea tore down the monument, but it appeared to be within the last few days. NKNews, a website focused on North Korea, first re-



The Arch of Reunification, a monument to symbolize the hope for eventual reunification of the two Koreas, in Pyongyang

ported on the satellite images.

The arch was a 30-meter (about 100-foot) tall structure that looked over a highway leading to the city of Kaesong near the border with South Korea.

The cruise missile launches were North Korea's second known launch event of the year, following a Jan. 14 test-firing of the country's first solid-fuel intermediate range ballistic missile, which reflected its efforts to advance its lineup of weapons targeting U.S. military bases in Japan and Guam.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said yesterday that the U.S. and South Korean militaries were analyzing the latest launches. It did not immediately confirm the exact number of missiles fired or

their specific flight details.

"Our military has increased surveillance and vigilance and is closely coordinating with the United States while monitoring for further signs and activity from North Korea," the Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have increased in recent months as Kim continues to accelerate his weapons development and issue provocative threats of nuclear conflict with the United States and its Asian allies.

The United States, South Korea and Japan have been expanding their combined military exercises in response to the North's missiles tests. Kim characterizes these drills as rehearsals for an invasion.

In the latest tit-for-tat, North Korea said last week that it conducted a test of a purported nuclear-capable underwater attack drone in response to a combined naval exercise by the United States, South Korea and Japan, as it blamed its rivals for tensions in the region.

Cruise missiles are among a broad range of weapons North Korea has been testing in recent years as it attempts to build a viable nuclear threat against the United States and its Asian allies.

Since 2021, the North has conducted several flight tests of what it describes as long-range cruise missiles, which it claims can cover ranges of up to 2,000 kilometers (1,242 miles) and are nuclear-ca-

pable.

While North Korean cruise missile activities aren't directly banned under U.N. sanctions, experts say those weapons potentially pose a serious threat to South Korea and Japan, as they are designed to fly like small airplanes and travel along landscape that would make them harder to detect by radar.

There are concerns that North Korea could dial up tensions in a U.S. election year. Experts say the North would aim to increase its bargaining power as it plans for eventual negotiations with whoever wins the November presidential vote.

North Korea also has a long history of ramping up pressure on rival South Korea when it doesn't get what it wants from Washington.

During the speech at Pyongyang's rubber-stamp parliament where Kim announced that his country would no longer pursue reconciliation with the South, he accused South Korea of acting as "top-class stooges" of the Americans and repeated a threat that he would use his nukes to annihilate the South if provoked.

Analysts say North Korea could be aiming to diminish South Korea's voice in the regional nuclear standoff and eventually force direct dealings with Washington as it looks to cement its nuclear status. MDT/AP

THAILAND

Court says popular politician Pita didn't violate law, can remain a lawmaker

THAILAND'S Constitutional Court ruled yesterday that popular progressive politician Pita Limjaroenrat, who was blocked from becoming prime minister even though his party placed first in last year's election, did not violate the election law and can retain his seat in Parliament.

Pita had been suspended from the legislature pending the court ruling on whether he violated the law by owning shares in a media company. He was the executor of his father's estate which included stock in ITV, a company that is the inactive operator of a

defunct independent television station.

The court agreed with Pita's contention that ITV was not an operator of a media business.

By law, political candidates are prohibited from owning shares in any media company when they register to contest an election.

Pita was forced to step down as leader of the progressive Move Forward Party when he was suspended from Parliament.

The party's election victory last year reflected a surprisingly strong mandate for change among Thai voters after nearly a decade

of military-controlled government. But the party was denied power by members of the conservative unelected Senate.

The Senate, whose members were appointed by the military, joined the elected lower house in casting votes to choose a prime minister under a constitution that was adopted in 2017 under a military government. The Move Forward Party now heads the opposition in Parliament.

The nine-member panel of judges ruled 8-1 in Pita's favor.

"ITV did not operate any newspapers or media

businesses, therefore, the shareholding didn't violate the Constitution's Article 98. According to the above reasoning, the accused member's parliamentary status isn't suspended," the ruling said.

"I'm happy and will keep working as planned," Pita said after the verdict.

About 40 supporters who had gathered outside the court with signs and flowers cheered Pita as he walked out.

"There is justice for the people. At first, I didn't trust the court but now I see justice," said Jiraporn Busawaket, 76.



Former leader of Move Forward Party Pita Limjaroenrat (center) leaves Constitutional Court in Bangkok, yesterday

Pita still faces another serious legal challenge this month.

On Jan. 31, he is to appear again in the Constitutional Court in another case in which he and his party are accused of attempting to overthrow Thailand's system of government by proposing an amendment to a law that makes it illegal to defame Thailand's royal fa-

mily, an offense known as lese majeste.

Critics say the law, which carries a penalty of up to 15 years in prison, is often abused as a political weapon.

The monarchy is considered by many people to be central to Thai identity, and conservative Thais insist that it must be protected. MDT/AP

USA | AP VOTECAST

Trump rides to New Hampshire victory on the strength of support from the GOP base

JOSH BOAK
& LINLEY SANDERS

FORMER President Donald Trump had rock-solid support from New Hampshire Republicans in his primary victory Tuesday (yesterday, Macau time), with even most backers of rival Nikki Haley acknowledging the GOP belongs to him.

Yet as Trump's hold on securing the party's nomination tightened, AP VoteCast found that some voters express concerns that he is too extreme to compete in the November general election. Some also worry about his legal peril in a trio of pending criminal trials.

Haley, a former South Carolina governor and a U.N. ambassador under Trump, performed relatively better with college graduates and moderates, a possible sign that Trump has yet to expand his political base.

The survey found signs that primary voters on the Democratic side rallied around President Joe Biden. He won in New Hampshire with strong support on the economy, but many have concerns about his age – he is 81 – and his handling of the situation in the Middle East.

Only weeks into 2024, voters have already shown an awareness of Trump's strengths and liabilities. But even as the coronavirus, the major challenge during the 2020 election, has faded from public view, the cultural and social forces of that Biden-Trump matchup have hardened in ways that are testing the country's sense of itself.

The New Hampshire primaries are unique because undeclared voters – those not affiliated with either party – can choose to vote in either party's primary. This draws in voters who are not necessarily party loyalists.

More than 4 in 10 GOP primary voters were not affiliated with a party, compared with about 2 in 10 in the Democratic primary. Among those affiliated with the Republican Party in the state, Trump won handily.

AP VoteCast is a survey of 1,968 New Hampshire voters who are taking part in the Republican primary and 903 De-



Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump arrives a campaign stop in Londonderry, New Hampshire

mocratic primary voters. The survey is conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

HOW TRUMP WON IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire's demographics favored Trump.

He won in the small towns and rural communities, where about two-thirds of primary participants say they live. Most GOP voters in the state lack a college degree; about two-thirds of them voted for Trump. He won about 7 in 10 Republican voters who identified as conservatives.

Trump was backed by Republicans who prioritize either immigration or the economy, the two top issues among GOP voters in New Hampshire and Iowa, where the former president won the leadoff caucuses last week.

Among those in New Hampshire who named immigration as their top priority, about three-quarters support Trump. New Hampshire's primary voters agreed with Trump on the need to limit immigration and build a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border.

About half of those who said the economy was the top issue backed Trump.

HOW HALLEY'S STRENGTHS FELL SHORT

Haley drew her support from groups that could be crucial in November. But those groups were distinct minorities in the GOP electorate.

She beat Trump among primary participants who were

not formally affiliated with any party. About half of Haley's supporters graduated from college, just as about half of them identify as moderates.

In many cases, her backers were simply uncomfortable with Trump.

Haley performed well among those who said Trump did something illegal in at least one of the criminal cases against him. And in the 2020 presidential election, about half of Haley's supporters voted for Biden, a Democrat.

Iowa exposed suburban voters as a potential weakness for Trump. While Haley did slightly better in New Hampshire's suburban communities than she did in other areas, she still didn't pull ahead of Trump in those areas.

POTENTIAL WEAKNESSES FOR TRUMP

Compared with Iowa caucusgoers, New Hampshire Republican primary voters have slightly more doubts about Trump.

In New Hampshire, about half of GOP voters are very or somewhat concerned that Trump is too extreme to win the general election. Only about one-third say the same about Haley.

Regarding Trump's criminal indictments, about one-third of GOP participants in New Hampshire believe he has done something illegal related to either his alleged attempt to interfere in the vote count in the 2020 presidential election, his role in what happened at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021,

or the classified documents found at his Florida home after he left the White House.

The vast majority of Republican voters in New Hampshire, about 8 in 10, believed Trump would win the nomination, a finding that came after his dominant showing in Iowa.

Only about 2 in 10 say Haley will be the nominee. In a blow to a candidate who has pitched herself as a Trump alternative, more than half of Haley's own supporters think Trump will represent the party on the ballot.

About 8 in 10 say they decided before Iowa which candidate they would support. After the caucuses, three contenders ended their campaigns: biotech investor Vivek Ramaswamy, former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

About 6 in 10 GOP voters say they had their minds made up more than a month ago, including about 4 in 10 saying they have known all along.

Republican primary voters and 873 Democratic primary voters was conducted for six days, concluding as polls close. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. The survey combines a random sample of registered voters drawn from state voter files and self-identified registered voters selected from nonprobability online panels. The margin of sampling error for voters is estimated to be plus or minus 3.8 percentage points for Republican primary voters and plus or minus 4.6 points for Democratic primary voters. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

2004 NASA ROVER LOOKS FOR WATER ON MARS



The second of two Nasa rovers sent to explore Mars has landed on the surface of the planet, where it will look for signs of water.

The Opportunity rover touched down at 0505 GMT, on the opposite side of Mars from where its sister rover, Spirit, landed three weeks ago.

After a promising start sending back striking colour photographs of the Martian surface, the Spirit rover has run into difficulties and stopped working altogether last week.

Space scientists say they are making progress on fixing the probe, but that it could take days or weeks to put right.

After a six-month journey from Earth, the Opportunity landed on a smooth, flat plain in the highest altitude landing ever attempted by Nasa.

It sent images back of its landing site showing an unfamiliar, largely featureless landscape except for a conspicuous outcrop of bedrock nearby.

"This is a beautiful, alien place, a world unlike any we've seen before," said Professor Steve Squyres, principal payload investigator.

He added that Opportunity could have landed in a crater and that the bedrock could be the rim of that crater.

The rock has a slab-like form which scientists say could have been created either by volcanic activity or by the action of water.

The rover's airbags have made distinctive imprints in the Martian soil, suggesting it may be fine-grained and multi-layered. It is also much darker in colour than the soil at Spirit's Gusev Crater landing site, 10,600 km (6,600 miles) away.

Scientists believe the soil is rich in a mineral called grey haematite, usually formed on Earth in the presence of water.

Opportunity approached the Martian surface at a speed of 19,000 km/h (12,000 mph). It deployed a parachute to slow its descent and airbags to cushion its landing.

Rockets on the lander counteracted light gusts of wind during the descent.

Because of this, it touched down with a force of between two and three Gs – an exceptionally gentle landing.

The rover was designed to withstand a landing of up to 40 Gs.

Nasa will now spend a week unpacking and testing the six-wheeled vehicle.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

A week later, Opportunity rolled off its lander on to the Red Planet and began its investigations of the surface. Its twin probe, Spirit, returned to working order soon afterwards.

In March 2004 Opportunity showed unequivocally that Mars had had the right conditions to support life at some time in its history.

Analysis of rocks at the landing site showed they had been exposed to water. Scientists now believe that the probe had come down on the shore of what had been a salty lake or ocean.

Both probes continued to work so well that their original 90-day missions were extended into late 2006.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Be sure to sidestep those who are eccentric or unpredictable. Your sensitive, affectionate nature will capture the heart of anyone you are attracted to.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20

Try to keep to yourself; work diligently on domestic chores and responsibilities. You may find yourself changing plans for some form of entertainment.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21

Plan to get out and do a bit of travel. Visit friends or relatives who have been confirmed. Opportunities for new romantic encounters will unfold through the social events you attend.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22

It may not be the best time to socialize with clients or colleagues today. Visit those less fortunate than yourself; be sure to help them with their personal problems.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Too much talk will lead to disputes. Do not jump to conclusions concerning your romantic partner. Don't hesitate to talk to your partner about rekindling your relationship.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Try not to allow superiors or those in a higher position to take advantage of you. Be sure to spend time helping children with projects that are too difficult for them to accomplish alone.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Don't hesitate to voice your opinions at a group meeting; however, keep your thoughts to yourself at home. You can meet someone who will become very dear to you if you get out and socialize.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Friends or groups that you're affiliated with may want you to contribute more cash than you can really afford. Organize your day to avoid any setbacks that might ignite temper flare-ups.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You can make reasonable bids on real estate or large items for your home. Look into making changes to your personal papers and don't neglect those bills that have been piling up.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Stay calm and focus on things that will help you understand the situation better. New romantic relationships will develop through group activity related to sports events.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Use discretion in your dealings and refrain from making verbal promises of any kind. You are best to concentrate on work. Try not to push your philosophies on others.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Concentrate on your career and on making money. Opportunities will develop through those you encounter while attending organizational events.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

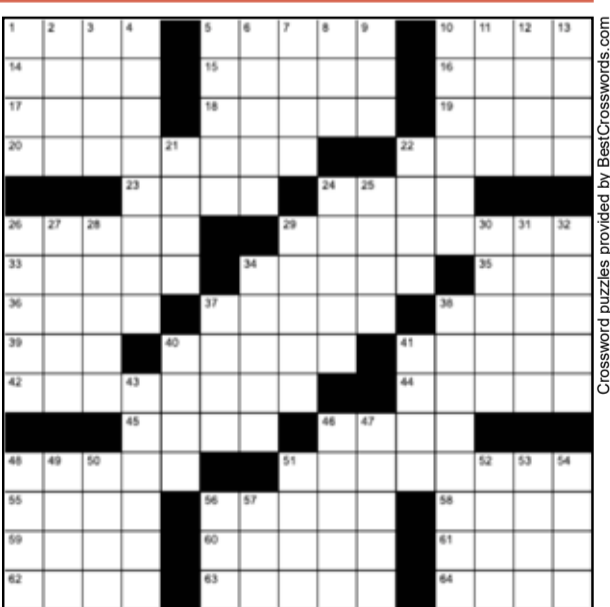
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-5	5	fine
Changchun	-18	-5	fine
Chengdu	1	8	cloudy
Chongqing	3	7	overcast
Fuzhou	1	13	cloudy
Guangzhou	3	12	cloudy
Guiyang	-5	1	overcast
Haikou	11	15	overcast
Hangzhou	-3	7	fine
Harbin	-28	-10	fine
Hefei	-5	6	fine
Nanjing	-4	6	fine
Shanghai	-1	6	fine
Taipei	8	13	overcast
Wuhan	-5	8	fine
Hong Kong	12	16	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-3	0	cloudy
Frankfurt	6	9	cloudy
Paris	10	12	rain
London	9	12	cloudy
New York	7	10	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Titanic's undoing; 5- Speed contests; 10- Imbroglia; 14- Baseball family name; 15- Clear the boards; 16- Fighting; 17- Baht spender; 18- Burrowing animals; 19- Acting part; 20- Religion of India; 22- Tell me about it!; 23- Commedia dell'arte; 24- Select; 26- Sharp pain; 29- Ancestry; 33- de Leon; 34- Layers; 35- Short snooze; 36- "The Morning Watch" author; 37- Family tree member; 38- Roseanne, once; 39- es Salaam; 40- Pig out; 41- Beau; 42- Keep at a distance; 44- Lake in the Sierra Nevada; 45- Peter Fonda title role; 46- On top of; 48- Blackboard crayon; 51- Get a letter off?; 55- Spy name; 56- Salt water; 58- Gothic-type arch; 59- Get the ground floor; 60- African language group; 61- Alley; 62- Highly excited; 63- Place; 64- Prepare for publication;

DOWN 1- Alternative to a shower; 2- K-12; 3- Horse of mixed color; 4- Leadership; 5- Pardon; 6- " by any other name..."; 7- Composed; 8- End for Siam; 9- Paris possessive; 10- Former monetary unit of Finland; 11- Harrow rival; 12- Structure for storing grain; 13- Do a slow burn; 21- Hanking; 22- Locks up; 24- Portion; 25- Memo opener; 26- Club alternative; 27- Roman garments; 28- Not moving; 29- Feudal vassal; 30- Grind together; 31- Keep an the ground; 32- Carousal; 34- Slight trace; 37- Mudville complement; 38- Skinny kid?; 40- Refuse curty; 41- Old Pontiacs; 43- "The Class" (O'Toole); 46- Utah's Mountains; 47- Prefix meaning "false"; 48- Pet plant; 49- Put up; 50- Buck follower; 51- Pit; 52- Mild oath; 53- Filmmaker Riefenstahl; 54- Internet writing system that popularized "pwn3d" and "n00b"; 56- Air-gun ammo; 57- Rodent, betrayer;



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



It's prime time to **BUY & RENT!**

jml property

CONTACT US & SEIZE THIS OPPORTUNITY!

hello@jmlproperty.com
www.jmlproperty.com

f jmlmacau @jmlproperty

Va Fat
HKD 3,980,000 2 bed 1 bath

Tou Un
HKD 2,980,000 1 bed 1 bath

Supreme Flower City
HKD 22,000/mth 3 bed 1 CP

AD



Actress Emily Blunt (left) with writer-director-producer Christopher Nolan (center) and actor Cillian Murphy on the set of "Oppenheimer"

OSCARS 2024

NOLAN ON 'OPPENHEIMER' OSCAR SUCCESS: 'SOMETIMES YOU CATCH A WAVE'

JAKE COYLE, NEW YORK

CHristopher Nolan was still sleeping when his film, "Oppenheimer," landed a leading 13 Academy Awards nominations yesterday [Macau time]. Emma Thomas, Nolan's wife and producing partner, roused him after a flurry of congratulatory messages came through on her phone.

"Don't take it as being blasé," Nolan told The Associated Press, laughing. "We just didn't want to jinx anything. Watching the nominations was more than our nerves could take so we just had a restless night and slept through."

Nolan and Thomas didn't have much reason to be anxious. "Oppenheimer," Nolan's sprawling American saga of J. Walter Oppenheimer and the creation of the atomic bomb, has more or less been the Oscar frontrunner since it made its acclaimed debut in late July. Yesterday, it earned nominations for seemingly every creative aspect of its achievement, including acting nods for Cillian Murphy, Robert Downey Jr. and Emily Blunt.

"Oppenheimer" was nominated for Nolan's direction and adapted screenplay; for Hoyte van Hoytema's cinematography;

Jennifer Lame's editing; Ellen Mirojnick's costume design; Ruth De Jong and Claire Kaufman's production design; Luisa Abel's makeup and hairstyling; best sound; and Ludwig Göransson's score. It came one nomination shy of tying the record for best Oscar nominations ever.

"It's flabbergasting," said Thomas who spoke with her husband in an interview a few hours after nominations were announced. "Then we got on with the routine of getting a 16-year-old out of bed, but with a spring in our step."

Though Nolan is regarded as the big-canvas auteur of his era, he's never won an Academy Award — nor have any of his films won best picture. He was nominated for best director once before, for "Dunkirk." But Nolan's absence from the movie's biggest stage has often been more notable than the honors his films have collected. After his "The Dark Knight" was overlooked for best picture in 2009, the academy expanded the category beyond five films.

But this year's Oscars may be leading toward a coronation for the 53-year-old Nolan and a three-hour opus that broke records — and Hollywood conventional reasoning — in grossing nearly \$1 billion worldwi-

de. Yesterday, he and Thomas reflected on the movie's Oscar success.

- Do you see the success of "Oppenheimer" as a statement to the industry — which usually funnels big budgets only to sequels and remakes — about what's possible for an original film made with scale?

Nolan: I grew up loving Hollywood movies and believing studio filmmaking can take on anything. Seeing audiences respond to that this summer was incredibly thrilling and getting this kind of recognition from the academy, I don't know what to say, really. It certainly confirms our faith in what studio filmmaking can be.

- Have you reflected on why "Oppenheimer" has resonated so much?

Nolan: It's always a tricky thing to try to analyze the zeitgeist or analyze success. We were really interested and excited, in particular, to see young people responding to a piece of history. I keep coming back to the unique nature of the story. I think it is one of the great American stories. It encompasses so much that's important and dramatic about our history. That gives audiences a lot to hang on, when

you get a great group of actors and incredible cast like we have, you can make this feel real and emotionally accessible. That's as far as I can analyze its success. Beyond that, sometimes you catch a wave and it's a wonderful and unique thing.

Thomas: Oftentimes you think of history as being the ancient past, and it's not terribly relevant to today. But I think the unique thing about the Oppenheimer story is that everything the movie deals with has direct relevance to this moment in time as well. And so I think that's something that really touched audiences.

Nolan: Yeah, that's a good point. When I first started on the project, one of my kids said to me about nuclear weapons, people my age don't really worry about that so much. This was a couple of years ago. With everything that's going on in the world since, that's very much changed. We came along right at a time when people were beginning to worry about this again, and worry about the fate of the world. Oppenheimer's story is so relevant to that — not just the threat of nuclear weapons but also the burgeoning threat of AI and what it can do to our world.

- Though your films have often been celebrated by the academy, neither of you have won an Oscar. Does this year feel different?

Nolan: I think the breadth of recognition that we woke up to this morning is something we haven't experienced before, and it's really thrilling for us. It's a very unique feeling to see in academy recognizing all different aspects of the film, from the performances to the technical achievement of the film. I mean, I grew up watching the Academy Awards. It's the pinnacle of sort of the recognition of your peers.

- Do you see "Oppenheimer" as the culmination of your collaboration together?

Thomas: It definitely feels like a film that was made with all the things we've learned together over the years. It all came together on this film. But I'm hoping it's not the culmination. I'm hoping that we'll get to make another one. (Laughs) We're at the midway point!

Nolan: We're just getting started! With every film, you try to build on what you've learned previous films.

- Any big plans to celebrate tonight?

Thomas: Well, we'll probably be having dinner with our kids. We've got one who's going back to college. We'll have a family celebration, which feels entirely appropriate given the nature of our movie and the way we work. **MDT/AP**

A LIST OF NOMINEES FOR THE OSCARS

BEST PICTURE

"American Fiction"; "Anatomy of a Fall"; "Barbie"; "The Holdovers"; "Killers of the Flower Moon"; "Maestro"; "Oppenheimer"; "Past Lives"; "Poor Things"; "The Zone of Interest"

BEST ACTRESS

Annette Bening, "Nyad"; Lily Gladstone, "Killers of the Flower Moon"; Sandra Hüller, "Anatomy of a Fall"; Carey Mulligan, "Maestro"; Emma Stone, "Poor Things"

BEST ACTOR

Bradley Cooper, "Maestro"; Colman Domingo, "Rustin"; Paul Giamatti, "The Holdovers"; Jeffrey Wright, "American Fiction"; Cillian Murphy, "Oppenheimer."

SUPPORTING ACTOR

Sterling K. Brown, "American Fiction"; Robert De Niro, "Killers of the Flower Moon"; Robert Downey Jr., "Oppenheimer"; Ryan Gosling, "Barbie"; Mark Ruffalo, "Poor Things"

SUPPORTING ACTRESS

Emily Blunt, "Oppenheimer"; Danielle Brooks, "The Color Purple"; America Ferrera, "Barbie"; Jodie Foster, "Nyad"; Da'Vine Joy Randolph, "The Holdovers"

DIRECTOR

Justine Triet, "Anatomy of a Fall"; Yorgos Lanthimos, "Poor Things"; Christopher Nolan, "Oppenheimer"; Martin Scorsese, "Killers of the Flower Moon"; Jonathan Glazer, "The Zone of Interest"

ANIMATED FILM

"The Boy and the Heron"; "Elemental"; "Nimona"; "Robot Dreams"; "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse"

DOCUMENTARY FEATURE

"Four Daughters"; "20 Days in Mariupol"; "Bobi Wine: The People's President"; "The Eternal Memory"; "To Kill a Tiger."

INTERNATIONAL FEATURE FILM

"Society of the Snow," (Spain); "The Zone of Interest," (United Kingdom); "The Teachers' Lounge," (Germany); "Io Capitano," (Italy); "Perfect Days," (Japan)

COSTUME DESIGN

"Barbie"; "Killers of the Flower Moon"; "Napoleon"; "Oppenheimer"; "Poor Things"

ORIGINAL SCORE

"American Fiction"; "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny"; "Killers of the Flower Moon"; "Oppenheimer"; "Poor Things"

ORIGINAL SONG

"The Fire Inside" from "Flamin' Hot"; "I'm Just Ken" from "Barbie"; "What Was I Made For?" from "Barbie"; "Wahzhazhe (A Song For My People)" from "Killers of the Flower Moon"; "It Never Went Away" from "American Symphony."

MOTORSPORT

Visa enters F1 with Red Bull, rebrands AlphaTauri with wordy new team name

JENNA FRYER, MDT/AP AUTO RACING WRITER

VISA will enter Formula One this year with Red Bull Racing in its first new global sports sponsorship agreement in 15 years.

Visa has taken over the title sponsorship of Red Bull's second team, which has been called Scuderia AlphaTauri since 2020 when Red Bull put its fashion label on its two junior cars. The team said yesterday it will be called Visa Cash App RB F1 Team when Daniel Ricciardo and Yuki Tsunoda start the season.

The rebrand is the second one in F1 ahead of this upcoming season — the team most recently known as Alfa Romeo is now called Stake F1 Team Kick Sauber — and the third name in history for Red Bull's junior team.

The team was known as Scuderia Toro Rosso — the Italian translation of Red Bull — from its 2006 debut season until 2020. Visa's deal with Red Bull is for three

AP FILE PHOTO



years, its senior vice president of global sponsorship strategy told The Associated Press.

Andrea Fairchild also acknowledged that the new team name is a "mouthful" and Visa was eager to see how fans will casually refer to the formal name.

"The best way to explain it is we had an opportunity, as we do with all of our global clients, specifically with Cash App in the Uni-

ted States, in teaming up with Red Bull," Fairchild said. "It is a mouthful but it was a way that we could showcase one of our key clients. There wasn't a way to shorten it after bringing those two things together.

"The fans will certainly decide how they reference it," she continued. "It is our formal name that we've introduced to the marketplace. We certainly are capturing

all the brands involved and this complex equation, but we'll listen to the feedback and I'm certain we'll pick up on some really interesting nuances and I think the fans will have some fun with it."

The Visa logo will be on all of Red Bull's F1 properties, including the cars of three-time champion Max Verstappen and Sergio Perez, as well as the Visa Cash App RB entry in the F1 Academy. Visa

becomes the third billion-dollar American company to join Red Bull as a sponsor in the last two years; Oracle is the title sponsor of the main two Red Bull cars, while Hard Rock International also launched a partnership.

Visa also follows American companies MoneyGram, and most recently American Express and Meta via its WhatsApp brand, as new sponsors in F1. The interest from U.S.-based companies has grown with F1's recent uptick in popularity in America, where F1 raced a series-high three times in 2023.

"F1 has an immensely passionate fanbase, so for us, the partnership and Formula One really gives us a platform for the brand globally, and there's not a lot of opportunities in that space," Fairchild said. "It gives us the ability to think about and drive business for our clients, and it really aligns our brand with Formula One's popularity... it is one of the fastest growing sports on the planet." MDT/AP

AD



Enjoy the **Good Life**
Boa Vida Starts Here

Discover Now



T +853 2856 7888
Terms & conditions apply



BENFICAMACAU
ACADEMY
澳門賓菲加體育學校



FOOTBALL

BASKETBALL

DAILY TRAININGS

OPINION

Multipolar World

Jorge Costa Oliveira



CHINA'S GDP GROWS 5.2%, STOCK MARKET SHARES FALL

According to China's National Bureau of Statistics, in 2023 the Chinese GDP grew by 5.2%, exceeding the government's forecast of about 5% (3% in 2022). In the fourth quarter of 2023, the growth rate was also 5.2% year-on-year, higher than the previous quarter's 4.9% year-on-year.

Several positive data points include: (i) a decrease in youth unemployment [from 21%] to 14.9%; (ii) maintaining a low overall unemployment rate (5.2%); (iii) a 7.2% increase in retail consumer sales; (iv) 4.6% growth in industrial production (good recovery in the manufacturing sector); (v) 5.8% growth in the service sector (with emphasis on hotel accommodation and IT services); (vi) a 5.9% increase in [public] investment in infrastructure; (vii) stability in consumer prices (+0.2%).

On the negative side, there is: (i) continued instability in the real estate sector, with falling prices, a decrease – to 6.5% – in the sale of new homes (26.7% in 2022), a slowdown in construction, insolvency of major real estate developers, and the sector still far from the end of the restructuring process; (ii) public spending limited by the burden of local debt; (iii) a decrease (-0.4%) in private investment (although, if real estate development were excluded, private investment would have grown by 9.2% [10.3% in high-tech industries]); (iv) a decline in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in China; (v) continued selling of Chinese stock market shares by foreign funds; (vi) a reduction in the trade balance surplus; (vii) investment in fixed assets grew only 3% (5.1% in 2022), sustained by spending on infrastructure and manufacturing industries; (viii) stagnation in the value of China's exports and imports (with good recovery in Q4).

The government argues that this 5.2% GDP growth was achieved without massive stimuli; however, stimuli were used, such as the utilization in Q4 2023 of half of the funds raised from government-issued bonds totalling 1 trillion yuan (\$140 billion) to finance natural disaster recovery projects. Accordingly, data cited by Bloomberg and the NIFD show that, in 2023, China's debt-to-GDP ratio increased to 286.1% [of GDP] (+14%).

The GDP growth reported by China's National Bureau of Statistics is questioned by credible entities, such as the Rhodium Group – which believes that China's economic growth likely did not exceed 1.5% – and Capital Economics – whose "China Activity Proxy" suggests that Beijing has overestimated its GDP since early 2022 – with these issues being the subject of expert articles in Bloomberg and the Financial Times.

The lack of confidence in the official figures is probably what underlies the strange phenomenon of the announcement of a 5.2% GDP growth not only failing to halt but actually accentuating a significant fall in the value of shares in China's stock markets, including Hong Kong.

The global relevance of the Chinese economy is enormous. There should be no room for doubt regarding its key economic indicators. The Chinese government needs to act to avoid this discrepancy between official numbers and the perception of investors and analysts.

Traditional Chinese wisdom (see the Analects) teaches that "without the trust of the people, the government cannot stand."

'DOOMSDAY CLOCK' SIGNALS EXISTENTIAL THREATS OF NUCLEAR WAR, CLIMATE DISASTERS AND AI

THE BUZZ

Earth, for the second year running, is nearing apocalypse, a science-oriented advocacy group said, pointing to its famous "Doomsday Clock" that shows 90 seconds till midnight.

The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists made the annual announcement yesterday [Macau time] rating how close humanity is from ending.

It cited nuclear threat in Russia's war on Ukraine as well as the Oct. 7 attack in Israel and war in Gaza, worsening climate-related disasters and the danger of generative artificial intelligence.

"Last year, we expressed amplified concern by moving the clock to 90 seconds to midnight, the closest to global catastrophe it has ever

been," said Rachel Bronson, CEO of the Bulletin group. "The risks from last year continue with unabated veracity and continue to shape this year."

Starting in 1947, the advocacy group used a clock to symbolize the potential and even likelihood of people doing something to end humanity. After the end of the Cold War, it was as close as 17 minutes to midnight.

The group said the clock could be turned back if leaders and nations worked together, and specifically noted powerful countries that have the capacity to do so, including the United States, China and Russia.

AP PHOTO



Visual artist and activist Ai Weiwei (left) speaks during a conversation with author Mira Jacob on stage at The Town Hall theatre

AI WEIWEI GETS 'INCORRECT' DURING AN APPEARANCE AT THE TOWN HALL IN MANHATTAN

HILLEL ITALIE, NEW YORK

Ai Weiwei, the Chinese artist and dissident who believes it his job to be "incorrect," was hard at work yesterday [Macau time] during an appearance at The Town Hall in Manhattan.

"I really like to make trouble," Ai said during a 50-minute conversation-sparring match with author-interviewer Mira Jacob, during which he was as likely to question the question as he was to answer it. The event was presented by PEN America, part of the literary and free expression organization's PEN Out Loud series.

Ai was in New York to discuss his new book, the graphic memoir "Zodiac," structured around the animals of the Chinese zodiac, with additional references to cats. The zodiac has wide appeal with the public, he said, and it also serves as a useful substitute for asking someone their age; you instead ask for one's sign.

"No one would be offended by that," he said.

Ai began the night in a thoughtful, self-deprecating mood, joking about when he adopted 40 cats, a luxury forbidden during his childhood, and won-

dered if one especially attentive cat wasn't an agent for "the secret police." Cats impress him because they barge into rooms without shutting the door behind them, a quality shared by his son, he noted.

"Zodiac" was published this week by Ten Speed Press and features illustrations by Gianluca Costantini. The book was not initiated by him, Ai said, and he was to let others do most of the work.

"My art is about losing control," he said, a theme echoed in "Zodiac."

He is a visual artist so renowned that he was asked to design Beijing's Bird's Nest stadium for the 2008 Summer Olympics, but so much a critic of the Chinese Communist Party that he was jailed three years later and has since lived in Portugal, Germany and Britain.

The West can be just as censorious as China, he said. Last fall, the Lisson Gallery in London indefinitely postponed a planned Ai exhibition after he tweeted, in response to the Israel-Hamas war, that "The sense of guilt around the persecution of the Jewish people has been, at times, transferred to offset the Arab world. Financially, culturally, and in

terms of media influence, the Jewish community has had a significant presence in the United States."

After Jacobs read the tweet to him, Ai joked, "You sound like an interrogator."

Ai has since deleted the tweet, and said that he thought only in "authoritarian states" could one get into trouble on the internet.

"I feel pretty sad," he said, adding that "we are all different" and that the need for "correctness," for a single way of expressing ourselves, was out of place in a supposedly free society.

"Correctness is a bad end," he said.

Some questions, submitted by audience members and read by Jacobs, were met with brief, off-hand and often dismissive responses, a test of correctness.

Who inspires you, and why?

"You," he said to Jacobs.

Why?

"Because you're such a beautiful lady."

Can one make great art when comfortable?

"Impossible."

Does art have the power to change a country's politics?

"That must be crazy to even think about it." MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



UN chief warned Israel that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's rejection of a two-state solution will indefinitely prolong a conflict that is threatening global peace and emboldening extremists everywhere. In his toughest language yet on the Israeli-Hamas war, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told a ministerial meeting of the U.N. Security Council that "the right of the Palestinian people to build their own fully independent state must be recognized by all, and a refusal to accept the two-state solution by any party must be firmly rejected."

AP PHOTO



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday pitched the United States as a better security partner for Africa in place of Russia's Wagner mercenary group, which he accused of exploiting coup-hit and conflict-hit nations in the continent's Sahel region. Blinken, who is visiting Nigeria as part of an Africa tour to strengthen bilateral relations, said the U.S. will continue to support Nigeria and other regional partners in their efforts to help stabilize the Sahel, the vast region south of the Sahara Desert that Islamic extremist groups have turned into a global terror hot spot.

AP PHOTO



Germany's train drivers brought rail traffic to a standstill again yesterday when they began a six-day strike to push their demands in a rancorous dispute with the country's main railway operator over working hours and pay. The strike by the GDL union will affect passenger services and freight trains operated by state-owned Deutsche Bahn until 6 p.m. (1700 GMT) on Monday.