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A DOMESTIC HELPER HAS BEEN ARRESTED FOR STEALING WATCHES, HANDBAGS, AND GOLD JEWELRY WORTH OVER MOP1 MILLION FROM HER EMPLOYER

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TRADE UNIONIST ELLA LEI CALLS FOR TAILOR-MADE TRAINING

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MGTO GIVES CONSERVATIVE FORECAST FOR VISITORS

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AP PHOTO



Indonesia Seventeen-year-old Naima Khairiya Ismah started being bombarded by social media posts from candidates for Indonesia's presidential election on before she'd even given voting any thought. As three candidates vie to replace popular but term-limited President Joko Widodo in an election later this month, they've been aggressively seeking millennials and Gen Z voters. People between the minimum voting age of 17 and the age of 43 make up about 55% of the country's 205 million eligible voters.

AP PHOTO



India yesterday said it will replace its military personnel in Maldives with civilian technical staff who will operate three aircraft from India that provide humanitarian services. The decision comes after new Maldives President Muizzu Mohamed Muizzu demanded that the Indian military personnel be withdrawn by March 15. At least 75 Indian military personnel are believed to be in Maldives and their known activities include transporting patients from remote islands and rescuing people at sea.

AP PHOTO



Pakistan Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif expressed confidence his party would win national elections yesterday, a vote that has been marred by violence, deep political tensions and the imprisonment of a popular contender. A day before the election, at least 30 were killed in bombings at political offices, and sporadic attacks yesterday appeared aimed at disrupting the balloting, including one that killed five police officers in a country beset by surging militancy.

More on backpage

THE YEAR OF THE DRAGON

Auspicious by nature, the year of the Wood Dragon is bringing the city into a new era where more foreign tourists are expected and most sought after. For a starter, the only taxi app in the city is... for residents only. We are just in the beginning: the Dragon will show more twists and challenges - stay tuned!

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

STAFF REPORTER

WHAT'S ON

GOV'T TO PRESENT ARRAY OF FESTIVE EVENTS FOR CNY

To mark the arrival of the Year of the Dragon, Macau is abuzz with multiple festive activities, including the 25th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Macao SAR and the Parade for the Celebration of the Year of the Dragon. The Macao Government Tourism Office is organizing numerous events, and notable events during this festive period also include Chinese New Year Fireworks Displays and the creation of Firecracker and Firework Zones, as well as the Lunar Year Market.

PARADE FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE YEAR OF THE DRAGON

Held on Feb 10 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., the parade will feature parade floats, a giant dragon, and lion dance. Beginning at the Ruins of St. Paul and ending at Sai Van Lake Square, the parade will travel across the city, bringing lively performances to locals and tourists alike.

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MACAU SAR PARADE

Scheduled for two different days (Feb 12 and 17), the parade will feature parade floats and performance groups from Macau, mainland China, and Hong Kong. Both parades will start at 8 p.m. and tour around Macau's nor-



thern districts, bestowing blessings upon viewers and bringing good fortune for the coming year.

CHINESE NEW YEAR FIREWORKS DISPLAYS

Held on Feb 12, 16, and 24 at 9 p.m. by the waterfront near Macau Tower, locals and tourists will marvel at the annual firework displays presented by the Macau Tower at night.

FIRECRACKER AND FIREWORK ZONES

Fireworks and firecrackers play an essential role in Lunar New Year Celebrations, as their loud cracking sounds are used to ward off evil spirits. To ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for residents and tourists, the Macau government has designated two areas for the public to buy and set off fi-

reworks and firecrackers—one on the Macau Peninsula and the other in Taipa.

LUNAR NEW YEAR MARKET

Held from Feb 2 to 9, the market will accommodate the important tradition of decorating homes with fresh flowers, potted plants, and red couplets, symbolizing good luck. Public demand is met by a special flower fair in

Tap Seac Square during this time. The market also offers an array of other traditional items for Lunar New Year, ranging from toys to decorations and small snacks.

ORCHESTRA AT THE RUINS OF ST. PAUL

Against the backdrop of the Ruins of St. Paul, a series of concerts by the Macao Chinese Orchestra and Macao Orchestra will be held to celebrate the New Year. Audiences have the option to attend the concerts in person or online. Concerts will be held on Feb 14, 17, and 24 at 6 and 7 p.m..

OTHER EVENTS

Numerous other events will also take place around Macau during this month, such as the Macau Japanese Spring Festival Contempo, which celebrates Japanese culture and serves as a cultural bridge between Macau and Japan. Another event, the Exhibition of Annual Contemporary Art of China 2022, will also run this month and is the latest presentation of the annual selection of contemporary art from China.

Locals and tourists alike are recommended to check out the respective websites of the Municipal Affairs Bureau and Macao Government Tourism Office for more detailed information on upcoming events.

SPRING FESTIVAL GOLDEN WEEK

MGTO makes conservative forecast of 120,000 visitors per day

RENATO MARQUES

OVER the first eight days of the Spring Festival Golden Week, Macau is expected to receive some 120,000 visitors per day on average, the director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes said yesterday.

Speaking with the media on the sidelines of the float parade blessing ceremony that will be part of the Lunar New Year celebrations, the MGTO director provided estimates of the anticipated visitor numbers, which represent a drop of around 30%

compared to 2019's daily average of 171,702 people per day across the seven-day period.

The MGTO's conservative outlook is consistent with previous statements and projections by both MGTO and the Public Security Police Force (PSP).

The MGTO previously stated that Macau has been receiving over 100,000 visitors per day on weekends since the start of this year, with the festive season likely to account for a higher number of visitors.

Earlier this week, the PSP also said it expected the volume of passengers at border posts to be simi-

lar or up by 3% compared to 2019 levels, potentially reaching up to 6 million border crossings (from both locals and tourists) over the ten-day period from February 9 to February 18.

Senna Fernandes also noted that the hotel occupancy rate in Macau is likely to exceed 90%, with some hotel room rates potentially higher due to increased demand. Nonetheless, she assured that MGTO is in close contact with industry to prevent excessive price hikes.

The MGTO director also called on the owners of commercial establishments to keep stores ope-

rating during the Golden Week to benefit from the influx of tourists. This would also prevent tourist disappointment by ensuring that traditional stores remain open.

The float parade will continue on the streets on the third day of the new year (February 12) at the Central District and downtown, and in the Northern District area on the eighth day of the new year (February 17).

Senna Fernandes also said that the night float is also intended to incentivize tourists to stay longer, promote community tourism, and provide an economic boost.



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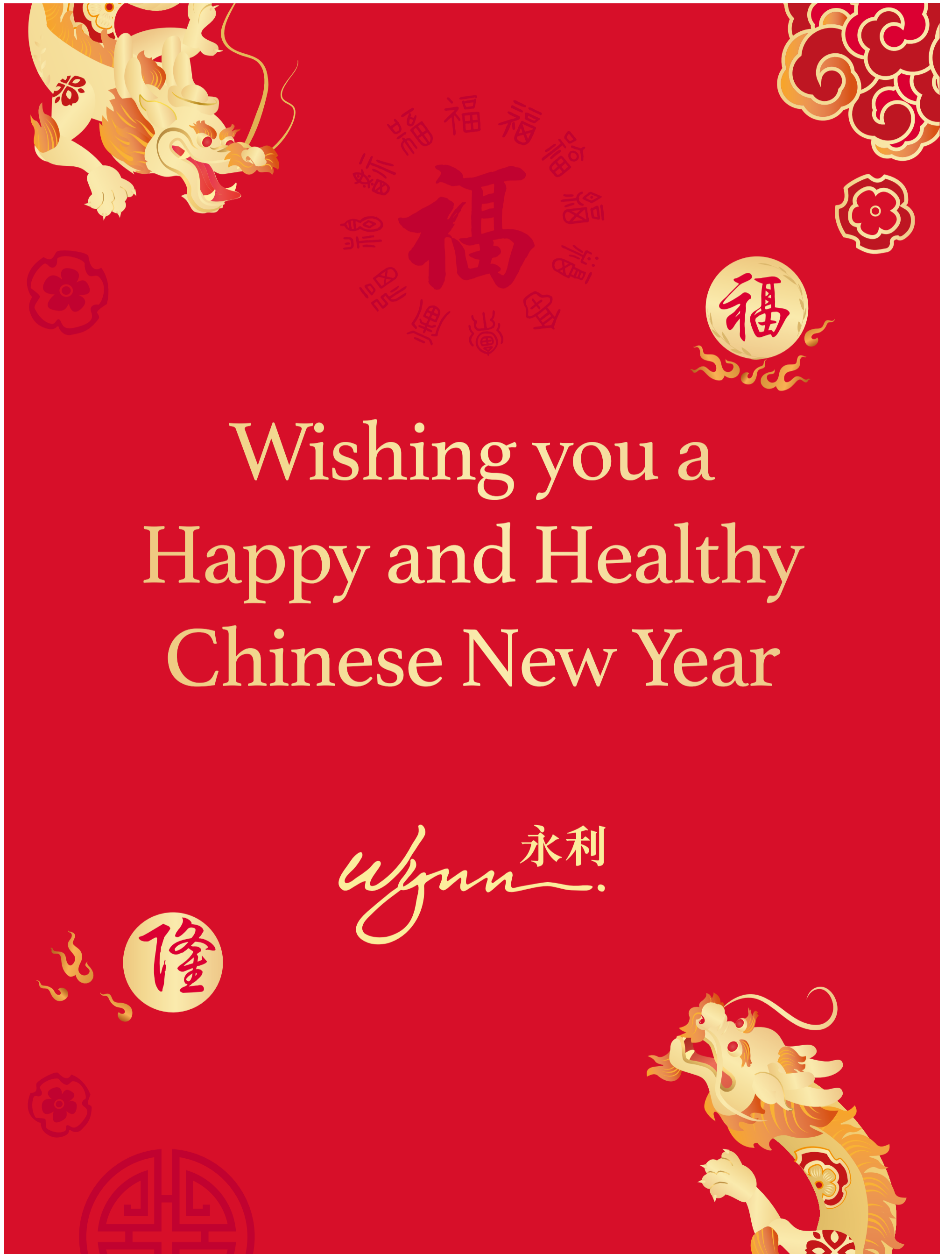
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EVENTS

MGM and IC unveil exhibition celebrating Barra's heritage

ANTHONY LAM

LOCAL resort operator MGM and the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) yesterday inaugurated an exhibition at Barra to present paintings, drawings and photographs on the neighborhood.

Titled "Reminiscences of Barra: A Visual Journey Archives and Arts Exhibition" and curated by the Macao Cultural Development Promotion Association, the exhibition is part of the larger Barra Spring Fest, a Lunar New Year gala held at the Navy Yard 1 and 2.

The exhibition explores themes of architectural conservation, community development, and cultural promotion, displaying artworks created by local artists that document Barra's history. These artworks include documentary materials carefully singled out by the IC, as well as 70 watercolor paintings, traditional Chinese paintings, and photography works by Macau artists.

Audiences can explore Barra's heritage from various angles through these art forms. The exhibition is also intended to serve as a stage for local artists to better showcase their creations.

Free guided tours are available at specific time slots on weekends,



ANTHONY LAM

allowing visitors to experience the remarkable stories of Macau under the guidance of docents without needing to make an advance reservation.

To further enhance Barra district's artistic ambiance and encourage public transportation usage, a gallery has been ins-

talled at the LRT Barra Station, showcasing artworks on the neighborhood using the station's lightboxes.

The MGM hopes that the gallery will meld culture and tourism with transportation, creating a different experience for passengers commuting in and out of the

district.

Additionally, an augmented reality (AR) experience, "Macao: Back to Common Roots," introduced by renowned local artist Lok Hei, has been integrated into the MGM Macau Cruise sightseeing cruise launched last year. The company believes that this will

enable passengers to utilize innovative technology to enhance their experience of Lok's paintings, which depict eight milestones of Macau's East-West cultural fusion.

The depiction provides an immersive cultural journey between two historical heritage areas in the Macau Peninsula and the Coloane Village in just 30 minutes.

At the opening ceremony, Director of Culture Deland Leong highlighted that the Barra district played a significant role in Macau's industrial development.

"It once played a key role in local shipbuilding and now stands as a rather intact area of Macau's maritime culture and industrial facilities," she said. "Through this exhibition, which embraces histories and local artworks, [MGM and IC] aim to showcase the historical transitions and cultural richness of Barra district, encouraging more people to support and participate in its future development."

Local SMEs are also invited to participate through running coffee shops, floral workshops, and souvenir stalls at the venue for the remainder of the spring fest. Choi Heong Yuen Bakery Macau, E Rodrigues (suc.res) LDA, Yau Kei Dragon's Beard Candy and Fill Café are among the participants.

Visitors will have the chance to participate in floral workshops, purchase their desired flowers, or take a few sips of coffee in the day (or other drinks at night) against the aesthetic backdrop of Barra Yard. Local performers have also been invited to provide entertainment.



Macau remains the city with most Forbes five-star hotels

STAFF REPORTER

MACAU has maintained its status as the city with the highest number of Forbes-recognized five-star hotels in the world.

22 hotels received this prestigious rating in the 2024 Star Awards by Forbes

Travel Guide.

The majority of these luxury hotels are located within casino resort properties. One notable addition to the Forbes list is The Paiza Lofts, a French-themed hotel within The Parisian Macao, operated by Sands China Ltd.

Among the top-rated hospitality venues in Macau are Galaxy Hotel, Grand Lisboa Palace Macau, The Karl Lagerfeld, Londoner Hotel, and Londoner Court. Melco Resorts, Wynn Resorts, SJM Holdings, and MGM China Holdings have all received

multiple five-star ratings for their properties.

At Galaxy Macau, other hotels with a five-star rating include the Banyan Tree Macau, Hotel Okura Macau, and the Ritz-Carlton, Macau. The resort also features two top-tier spas and two five-star restaurants.

Wynn Resorts Ltd, the parent company of Wynn Macau Ltd, received 15 five-star awards in Macau according to the latest Forbes Travel Guide list. These awards were distributed among their hotels, restaurants, and spas at Wynn Macau on the city's peninsula, and Wynn Palace in the Cotai district.

Additionally, the Four Seasons Hotel Macao and the Grand Suites at the Four Seasons Hotel Macao – both part of the Sands China portfolio – were awarded five stars by Forbes. The Four Seasons also had its spa and the Zi Yat Heen restaurant recognized in the top tier of the awards.

MGTO APPROVED SUPPORT TO 44 COMMUNITY PROJECTS EXPECTED TO DRAW 1.8M TOURISTS

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) is said to have approved financial support for a total of 44 different community projects this year in several districts, aiming to attract some 1.8 million tourists.

Such projects will include fairs, carnivals, and other events involving the participation of 2,300 merchants.

MGTO expects that these localized activities, held mostly in the old neighborhoods, will attract people to these locations and create new business opportunities. MGTO is said to be promoting these events and activities broadly through their

social media channels – which have over 6 million followers in total – with promotional information being released in different languages.

The director of MGTO, Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, also advised that the Light Festival from December 2 last year to February 25 this year attracted some 420,000 people in December last year.

Senna Fernandes also said that according to the MGTO's information, pedestrian traffic this month has increased by about 51% compared to November last year in the Barra area, while the increase in the Central District was about 27%. **RM**

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Trade unionist calls for tailor-made training

ANTHONY LAM

ELLA Lei, trade unionist and lawmaker, yesterday called for targeted training programs for certain groups such as middle-aged jobseekers to facilitate their employment opportunities.

On the side lines of a cultural event yesterday, the lawmaker was asked about talent cultivation and enhancing professionalism in the city.

Acknowledging that the city's unemployment and underemployment rates have dropped to low levels, the lawmaker noted that those with limited or no experience may struggle when looking for work.

Another concern is that this demographic of job seekers, despite having experience and the willingness to work, may be disadvantaged by employers who prefer a younger workforce due to a desire for team stability.

She hopes that specific training can be developed for these workers. "The government should make specific schemes—similar to the past Youth Employment Assistance Scheme—to help jobseekers with difficulties. This could be via

a variety of means such as subsidizing their training or employers to improve the employment environment for this subset," she said.

Hands-on training should also be provided in newer industries to benefit both industry workers and overall economic development.

"The government should work with the industry, training entities and institutions to operate hands-on training in '1 + 4' industries such as financial technologies, culture and tourism, as well as MICE. This will allow trainees to be imparted with new knowledge as well as opportunities to put it into practice at workplaces," said Lei.

Although her association has not heard reports of pay rises or bonuses being denied to employees, she stressed that she hopes employees in a position to do so will achieve increased remuneration. She said that with the government, public service entities and the six casino licensees granting pay raises and/or bonuses this year, other employers are encouraged to follow suit. However, she acknowledged reports of business slowdowns at some SMEs.

"Despite the past year of post-Covid normalization, some SMEs



have expressed the hope that the government will take a further lead in developing SMEs through various collaborations, allowing them to expand their businesses," said Lei.

While acknowledging the unique pressures faced by SMEs, she encouraged business owners to capitalize on the recovery of tourism to create more favourable financial conditions that will have

downstream impacts on employee remuneration.

She believes that, "provided that [SMEs] have sufficient businesses, they have conditions for better remuneration schemes."

ADVERTORIAL

"GENESIS: CONTEMPORARY INSTALLATION ART JOURNEY" UNVEILED AT GALAXYART AT GALAXY MACAU™

Exhibition period: February 2 – May 6, 2024

Location: GalaxyArt, 1/F Galaxy Promenade, Galaxy Macau



Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) proudly presents "GENESIS: Contemporary Installation Art Journey", a groundbreaking exhibition co-organized by the Macau Artist Society, this event was launched with a grand opening ceremony at GalaxyArt on Feb 2, 2024. Ms. Leong Wai Man, President of the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macau SAR Government, Mr. Cheng Wai Tong, Deputy Director of the Macao Government Tourism Office, Mr. Philip Cheng, Director of Galaxy Entertainment Group, Ms. Hazel Wong, Executive Vice President, Retail of Galaxy Entertainment Group, the Macau Artist Society President Mr. Lok Hei and the exhibition curator Miss Lam Tsz Kwan, and the artists—Ng Man Wai, Sou Leng Fong, and Cheong Hoi I were in

attendance to celebrate the extraordinary exhibition.

The name "GENESIS" derives from the Greek word meaning "creation" through their fascinating installation arts—"Doppelgänger: The Apple", "Blooming", "Pleased as Fruit Punch", visitors are invited to explore new perspectives and immerse themselves in a world of creativity.

Visitors are welcome to share their experiences on social media to redeem a limited-edition gift. Additionally, they can participate in Galaxy Macau's social games with friends during the exhibition period for a chance to win a prize. Please stay tuned for more details at Galaxy Macau's social media platforms.

Please scan QR code to enroll:



The Genesis exhibition also offers three themed workshops: Doppelgänger: The Apple Making, Diffusing Stone—Nutrient, and Pleasant Light Making. The workshops led by the artists provide attendees with an opportunity to delve deeper into their own artistic capabilities.



Ng Man Wai - Doppelgänger: The Apple.



Sou Leng Fong - Blooming.



Cheong Hoi I - Pleased as Fruit Punch.

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AL PLENARY

LAWMAKERS WANT TO PROMOTE PE IN SCHOOLS AS A PATH TO LOCAL SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

RENATO MARQUES

LAWMAKERS Pang Chuan and Kou Kam Fai want to promote Physical Education (PE) in local schools as a path for local sports development as well as cultivating sporting habits among local residents.

The idea was presented to the government via a spoken inquiry delivered recently at the Legislative Assembly during the period before the agenda of the latest plenary session.

Pang and Kou noted that, in recent years, the government has been determined to discover talented young sportspeople. The services responsible for sports affairs have deepened collaboration with several sports associations in the joint creation of the Macau Youth Sports Schools, as well as launching the financial support plan for the training of elite athletes, among other efforts.

The lawmakers said, "PE is an important component of education" citing the educator Cai Yuanpei who once said that "Physical Education is the basis

of a healthy personality". They noted that to support Macau's economic diversification, in which sports play an important role, "we must give importance to the role of sport in strengthening the body, and also identify and promote the educational function of sport, that is, cultivating sporting habits among students and young people to improve their physical condition, shape, characters, and develop a good spirit, and improve students and young people's understanding of sports activities and the sports industry, to encourage them to engage in sport."

The lawmakers hope that reinforcing PE in primary, secondary, and higher education curricula will lead to students discovering and later developing their skills in the sport of their choice.

But the lawmakers want more; they want to "increase public knowledge and participation in sports, making sport a lifestyle."

They claim that, only in this way, Macau can produce well-trained and knowledgeable sports professionals to support the in-



dusty and make Macau a "City of Sports."

In the speech, Kou noted that different countries and regions of the world "have taken the organization of major sporting events [by] a major brand that becomes an important means of building

the international image of cities," noting six of the largest international marathons in the world in Tokyo, Boston, London, Berlin, Chicago and New York as examples.

The lawmaker also gave the example of Beijing, saying it has

"strengthened its international influence through the organization of major sporting events," such as the Asian Games and the Olympic Games, adding that Macau, as a World Center for Tourism and Leisure, must follow these national and international examples.

AD

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Better planning needed for 'city of shows'

RENATO MARQUES

BETTER planning, localization, and an annual calendar for local concerts is necessary to turn Macau's bid into a "city of shows" more international and with world-level artists, the Central

District Community Advisory Board member, António Monteiro, recently said during the meeting of the Central District Community Advisory Board.

The member noted the plans recently unveiled by the Municipal Affairs Bureau for the construction of the se-

cond phase of the south coast promenade, which is said to include facilities for concerts and other outdoor events.

Monteiro said this space will be "an important leisure space for both residents and tourists."

It should be considered an example of a regional and

international outdoor music concert, "coinciding with possible cultural and even musical festivals, boosting Macau's economy and tourist image through large-scale shows, in places that do not collide with urban concentration areas."

The member mentioned the planned music festivals "Rock in Rio" and "Super Bock Super Rock," scheduled for upcoming seasons, noting that having a well-planned calendar helps to possibly draw the attention of international bands and artists, which in turn will attract international tourists.

"However, we must rethink the entire tourist structure and capacity, from aviation and structures that welcome tourists en masse, as well as put significant effort into training personnel to master, at least, the English language. We must increase transport such as taxis, buses and light rail, as well as varied services, such as local catering."

Monteiro remarked that a "bad experience and the sense of a lack of capacity to accommodate this type of activity will certainly lead tourists not to return to Macau," which clashes with the original purpose of attracting and keeping international tourists in Macau for a longer period.

CRIME

WOMAN SUSPECTED OF JEWELRY THEFT WORTH OVER MOP1 MILLION

STAFF REPORTER

A domestic helper from the mainland has been arrested for stealing watches, handbags, and gold jewelry worth over 1 million patacas from her employer.

The employer discovered the theft in his flat in Coloane at night and reported it Saturday, according to the Judiciary Police (PJ).

He said the items were in his flat when he left in the morning and that they had disappeared when he returned in the early evening, leading him and the PJ to suspect the domestic helper.

The PJ immediately contacted the domestic helper and persuaded her to surrender.

During questioning, she confessed she had a gambling addiction and had stolen her employer's watch multiple times, pawning it to fuel her gambling habits.

Whenever she won money, she would redeem what items she had pawned.

However, last week she had gambled away all the money she had received from pawning the items and decided to steal from her employer again.

AD

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HAPPY CHINESE NEW YEAR

2024
YEAR OF THE DRAGON

MASSPLUS

LAWMAKER DOUBTS LOCAL RADIO TAXI'S CAPACITY TO SERVE FOREIGN VISITORS

ANTHONY LAM

LAWMAKER Ron Lam has expressed doubts about the local radio taxi's ability to cater to foreign visitors, due to its unreliable location platform and outdated means of communication.

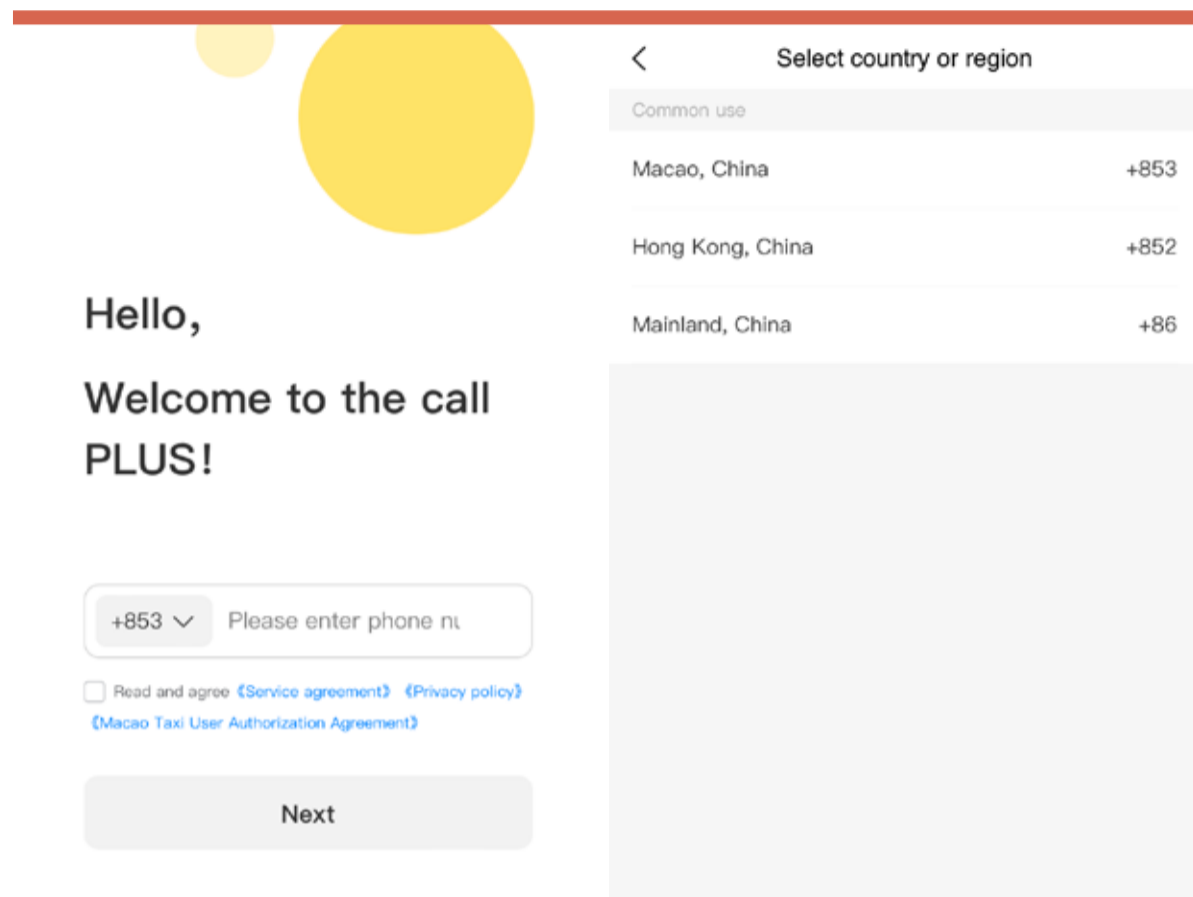
In an exclusive interview with the Times, Lam commented on reports of the latest radio taxi app allegedly excluding non-mainland and non-Hong Kong visitors.

The MassPlus app only allows registration using cell phone numbers from Macau, Hong Kong or mainland China, potentially hindering visitors not from these regions from using the app to prebook a ride before arriving in Macau.

Despite being named 'Mass-Plus,' the app cannot be found when searching with that name on the Apple App Store. However, a search using the Chinese name yielded better results. Additionally, using 'Macau taxi' as the keywords led to the radio taxi app.

After the resumption of normal activities in Macau, the government has been seeking to attract foreign tourists to diversify Macau's source market and alleviate the tourism industry's overreliance on the mainland market.

When asked about the lack of options for non-Hong Kong and non-mainland visitors, Lam poin-



ted out that this is not unusual for apps developed in Macau. Lam noted the need for improvements in apps developed for public services, especially as the government aims to attract more foreign visitors.

He questioned the ability of foreign visitors to hail a taxi through the app, given the highly unreliable

location pinpointing function.

"In Macau, a taxi driver often needs to call the rider to confirm the pick-up location," Lam said, noting that in other places, the location service is much more reliable.

He hinted that local taxi drivers may be unable to communicate

over the phone with their foreign customers, who may not speak Cantonese or Putonghua. He expressed disappointment that the app falls short of the general public's expectations for a ride-hailing app.

The app's faults indicate a lack of thorough planning, particularly in

infrastructure, to realize the government's vision of attracting foreign visitors.

Regarding the reliability of location services, Lam suggested that the government release the rights to use a digital map developed in-house. "The map is very accurate, with all roads, alleys, buildings and other constructions presented in the correct locations, which will be useful for scenarios such as ride hailing," Lam said.

The lawmaker also pointed out that however many taxi licenses the government is willing to issue, there will still be a service gap between peak and off-peak hours, resulting in insufficient taxis in peak times and excessively long lines of empty vehicles at taxi stands during off-peak hours.

As such, the lawmaker again called for licensed ride hailing options. Objecting to the government's comment that these cars are unlicensed, the lawmaker suggested the government monitor their operations using the licensing system.

Lam commented that these drivers were likely to work on a freelance basis and only operate during the high hours "to complement the shortage of taxi services."

Yesterday, local taxi fares were raised from MOP19 to MOP21 at the commencement of a ride.



Mother and daughter found deceased in apartment

RENATO MARQUES

THE bodies of two women, later identified as a mother and daughter, were found in an apartment on Estrada do Cemitério in Macau around noon on Tuesday, as reported by the Judiciary Police (PJ).

The case came to light

when a landlord, unable to contact his tenants, enlisted the help of a locksmith to enter the residence. The two bodies were found in an advanced state of decomposition.

According to the landlord, he decided to break into the unit after losing contact with the tenants, an elderly woman and her

middle-aged daughter.

The landlord also said he had attempted to contact them on several occasions as the rent had been unpaid, but to no avail.

According to the preliminary examination conducted by PJ forensics investigators, the bodies appeared to have died around a year ago or

longer.

No one appeared to have noticed the two women's absence or reported them as missing to the police.

Neighbors did not report anything out of the ordinary, and no complaints were made about the smell.

The PJ also said that there were no signs of struggle or fight in the apartment and no signs of theft.

No items suspected to be involved in the death of the two women, either by murder or suicide, were identified.

For the time being, the PJ is categorizing the incident as the discovery of bodies, with the exact cause of death to be determined after an in-depth forensic examination.

As crime has not yet been ruled out as a potential cause of the deaths, the case has been handed to the PJ criminal investigation department for follow-up.

EDUCATION

TIS HOLDS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAY

STAFF REPORTER

THE International School of Macao (TIS) recently organised a Professional Development (PD) Day to "empower their educators with the latest teaching methods and technological advancements."

TIS PD days are held twice annually. This year's topics placed strong emphasis on technology, "equipping educators with the necessary skill set to effectively incorporate technological methods into their classrooms, aiming to foster innovative thinking and problem-solving skills among students," according to a statement.

One of the key highlights of the day was the AI Empowerment course. According to the statement,

teachers learned how to "leverage AI to support content delivery during teachable moments, optimizing student engagement and understanding."

"Both administrators and staff look forward to the opportunity during PD days to hone and improve our skills as teachers and educational assistants, learning more about the best practices for teaching, learning and safety," said Lorne Schmidt, TIS Head of School. Furthermore, Schmidt emphasised that "Technology is always an area where teachers benefit by gaining a deeper understanding of available technologies and understanding how these can be effectively used to enhance teaching and ultimately, student learning."

TRADE

Mexico overtakes China as the leading source of goods imported by US

PAUL WISEMAN, WASHINGTON

FOR the first time in more than two decades, Mexico last year surpassed China as the leading source of goods imported by the United States. The shift reflects the growing tensions between Washington and Beijing as well as U.S. efforts to import from countries that are friendlier and closer to home.

Figures released yesterday [Macau time] by the U.S. Commerce Department show that the value of goods imported by the United States from Mexico rose nearly 5% from 2022 to 2023, to more than \$475 billion. At the same time, the value of Chinese imports tumbled 20% to \$427 billion.

The last time that Mexican goods imported by the United States exceeded the value of China's imports was in 2002.

Economic relations between the United States and China have severely deteriorated in recent years as Beijing has fought aggres-



A woman works in a shoe maquiladora or factory in Leon, Mexico

sively on trade and made ominous military gestures in the Far East.

The Trump administration began imposing tariffs on Chinese imports in 2018, arguing that Beijing's trade practices violated global trade rules. President Joe Biden retained those tariffs after taking office in 2021, making clear that antagonism toward China

would be a rare area of common ground for Democrats and Republicans.

As an alternative to offshoring production to China, which U.S. corporations had long engaged in, the Biden administration has urged companies to seek suppliers in allied countries ("friend-shoring") or to return manufacturing to the United States ("reshoring").

Supply-chain disruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic also led U.S. companies to seek supplies closer to the United States ("near-shoring").

Mexico has been among the beneficiaries of the growing shift away from reliance on Chinese factories. But the picture is more complicated than it might seem. Some Chinese manufacturers have established factories in Mexico to exploit the benefits of the 3-year-old U.S.-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement, which allows for duty-free trade in North America for many products.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said this week that the trade status gives Mexico new leverage, saying it would make it hard for the U.S. to close the two countries' border to limit immigration, as suggested in negotiations on a border bill in the U.S. Senate.

"The negotiation is proposing closing the border," he said. "Do you think Americans, or

Mexicans, but especially the Americans, would approve that? The businesses wouldn't take it, maybe one day, but not a week."

Some industries — especially auto manufacturers — have set up plants on both sides of the border that depend on each for a steady supply of parts.

Derek Scissors, a China specialist at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, noted that the biggest drops in Chinese imports were in computers and electronics and chemicals and pharmaceuticals — all politically sensitive categories.

Scissors suggested that the drop in U.S. reliance on Chinese goods partly reflects wariness of Beijing's economic policies under President Xi Jinping.

Overall, the U.S. deficit in the trade of goods with the rest of the world — the gap between the value of what the United States sells and what it buys abroad — narrowed 10% last year to \$1.06 trillion. **MDT/AP**

AD



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SOUTH CHINA SEA

SHIPS FROM US, AUSTRALIA AND JAPAN CONDUCT JOINT DRILLS IN DEFIANCE OF BEIJING

CHRISTOPHER BODEEN, TAIPEI

WARSHIPS from the United States, Australia and Japan have held joint drills in the South China Sea in defiance of Beijing, which claims sovereignty over virtually the entire strategic waterway.

The U.S. 7th Fleet that oversees most U.S. Navy operations in the region said the guided-missile destroyer USS John Finn and combat ship USS Gabrielle Giffords carried out operations with navy ships from Japan and Australia over the last two days.

There was no word on whether the exercises were conducted close to islands and shoals claimed by Beijing, which has built military bases on at least seven islands by piling concrete and sand on top of coral atolls. Beijing objects strongly to foreign naval operations in the area, saying historical records prove it belongs to China.

Each year, an estimated \$5 trillion in international commerce passes through the South China Sea, which also holds vital fish stocks and underwater mineral resources.



The U.S. takes no formal stand on sovereignty in the area but rejects China's claims, partly based on a 2016 ruling by a United Nations-backed court in The Hague. There was no immediate reaction to the exercises from China's Defense Ministry.

"This multinational sail fortifies our relationship between

the U.S., Japan and Australian allies," Cmdr. Earvin Taylor, John Finn's commanding officer, said in a statement from the 7th Fleet. "We promote transparency, rule of law, freedom of navigation and all principles that underscore security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific."

Australian Commodore Jona-

than Ley said in the statement that such deployments are "crucial for enhancing mutual understanding and our ability to operate together."

The U.S., Australia and Japan also operate together in a strategic alliance known as the Quad that also includes India, a Chinese rival in Asia.

The Quad has frequently accused China of flexing its military muscles in the South China Sea and aggressively pushing its maritime territorial claims.

Beijing maintains that its military is purely defensive and protects its sovereign rights, and calls the Quad an attempt to contain its economic growth and influence.

The navies of the four countries regularly hold drills seen as part of an initiative to counter China's growing assertiveness in the Pacific and Indian oceans and waters surrounding Taiwan. China and Japan also claim exclusive ownership over an uninhabited island group in the East China Sea controlled by Tokyo, with China routinely dispatching ships and planes to the area.

Beijing applies similar tactics with Taiwan, a self-governing island of 23 million that is part of China's territory. A Taiwan's ministry said yesterday it had detected four Chinese ships operating in the area and that it had, as usual, upgraded security ahead of the Lunar New Year holiday starting at the end of the week. **MDT/AP**

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CNY BOOST

Markets welcome Beijing's choice of an industry veteran as top regulator

ELAINE KURTENBACH,
BANGKOK

CHINESE shares rose yesterday as investors appeared to welcome Beijing's choice of an industry veteran to head its securities watchdog, in its latest effort to boost confidence in ailing markets.

Wu Qing, a former chair of the Shanghai Stock Exchange with a reputation for being tough on market misbehavior, was named chairman and Communist Party chief of the China Securities Regulatory Commission late Wednesday.

He replaced Yi Huiman, who presided over months of turmoil as share markets slumped, losing trillions of dollars of value.

Chinese stocks still had been trading near five-year lows despite those measures, making buying shares feel "like catching a falling knife," Ipek Ozkardeskaya of Swisquote said in a commentary.



Investors registered their enthusiasm in online comments, with some saying they expected Wu, whose full name is a homophone for characters meaning "ruthless" in Chinese, to live up to his nickname of "Broker Butcher."

Markets in Shanghai and Shenzhen have languished, partly because of heavy selling of property shares following a crackdown on excessive borrowing by developers as defaults among dozens of developers undermined confi-

dence in the government's efforts to revive the economy following the pandemic.

Authorities recently have sought to relieve some of the pressure on the real estate market by freeing up financing that might enable developers to finish projects imperiled by their financial woes.

China's CCTV state television network reported that banks were extending nearly \$2.5 billion in loans to 83 real estate projects

chosen for support as part of measures to rescue the industry.

The shakeup at the CSRC came during a week that has seen wild swings in share prices and despair among investors who have seen their investments evaporate. China's leaders may be hoping to turn a new page: markets are due to be closed for a week beginning Friday for the Lunar New Year holiday, allowing the dust to settle.

The effort to calm the markets has gained urgency as top officials prepare to gather in Beijing in early March for the annual meeting of the national congress, a time when the Communist Party showcases its accomplishments and sets new financial targets.

The ruling party has been exhorting state media and others with influence to promote confidence in the markets and the economy, which is forecast to slow further this year from the 5.2% official growth rate reported for 2023, one of the lowest in decades apart from the years of the

pandemic.

In further evidence of weakness, the government reported yesterday that consumer prices fell 0.8% in January from a year earlier, the lowest level since September 2009 amid the global financial crisis.

In a New Year's address yesterday, President Xi Jinping urged fellow leaders to "effectively strengthen economic vitality, prevent and resolve risks, improve social expectations, consolidate and enhance the upward trend of economic recovery, continue to improve people's well-being, and maintain harmony and stability in the overall social situation."

Economists say that restoring strong and sustained growth will hinge on reforms needed to make China less reliant on investments in construction and export manufacturing. Prolonged weakness in the property market and share prices has dented consumer confidence, hindering that transition. **MDT/AP**

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JAPAN

FUKUSHIMA PLANT LEAKED RADIOACTIVE WATER, BUT NONE ESCAPED THE FACILITY

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

HIGHLY radioactive water leaked from a treatment machine at the tsunami-hit Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, but no one was injured and radiation monitoring shows no impact to the outside environment, the utility operator said yesterday.

A plant worker found the leak Wednesday morning during valve checks at a SARRY treatment machine designed to mainly remove cesium and strontium from the contaminated water, the Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings said. The machine has been idled for maintenance work.

An estimated 5.5 metric tons (6 tons) of radioactive water — enough to fill two ordinary backyard swimming pools — leaked out through an air vent, leaving a pool of water on an iron plate outside and seeping into the soil around it, TEPCO said, but no radioactive water escaped the compound.

The leaked water was 10 times more radioactive than the legally releasable limit, TEPCO said. The pool of water has been wiped off and the contaminated soil is being removed, said TEPCO spokesperson Kenichi Takahara.

It's not clear when the machine began leaking, but TEPCO said that no problems were detected in an inspection Tuesday.

The leak may have been caused by valves left open while workers



flushed the machine with filtered water — a process intended to reduce radiation levels before the maintenance work, Takahara said. TEPCO said that 10 of 16 air valves that should have been closed were left open during the flushing, and the leak stopped when the valves were closed.

Radiation levels around the plant and inside gutters on the compound have showed no increase.

Takahara offered an apology for the leak, and said that TEPCO is committed to fully investigate and take preventive measures. He

said the company pledged to put safety first in decommissioning the plant and to handle contaminated water and discharges “with maximum levels of alertness.”

The filtering machine is part of TEPCO's controversial wastewater discharge project, which began in August. The Fukushima Daiichi plant suffered triple meltdowns following the 2011 quake and tsunami.

The discharges, which are expected to continue for decades, have been strongly opposed by fishing groups and neighboring countries, including China, which

immediately banned imports of all Japanese seafood.

The next round of water discharges is set to begin later this month.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin at a daily briefing yesterday said the latest incident highlighted management problems at TEPCO and questioned its ability to safely carry out the decades-long treated water discharge.

Wang urged Japan to respond to the concerns of the international community and handle the discharge responsibly while

cooperating with an independent and long-term monitoring system involving neighboring countries and other stakeholders.

The latest leak comes only months after another accidental leak at a separate treatment facility called the Advanced Liquid Processing System, or ALPS.

In that accident, four workers were sprayed with radioactive liquid waste while cleaning the ALPS piping. Although two of them were briefly hospitalized for skin contamination, none showed symptoms of poisoning. **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

Papua New Guinea's PM becomes first Pacific leader to address Parliament House



Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese (right) greets Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister James Marape at Parliament House in Canberra, yesterday

PAPUA New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape yesterday became the first Pacific leader to address Australia's parliament, vowing “nothing will come in between our two countries.”

The nations announced that Australia will spend AU \$100 million (US \$65.3 million) on Papua New Guinea's internal security, including the development of a police recruiting and investigation training facility and a police barracks.

The speech, Marape's meeting with Australian counterpart, Anthony Albanese, and the neighbors'

release of details of a security pact signed in December, come as Pacific nations deal with China's growing ambitions.

Resource-rich Papua New Guinea has rebuffed overtures from China, which struck a security pact with Solomon Islands in 2022 that caused worry among some in the region.

Papua New Guinea, which is in a strategically important part of the South Pacific, struggles with tribal violence and civil unrest and wants to increase its police numbers from 6,000 officers to 26,000. Anger over high unem-

ployment and cost of living led to rioting and looting last month in its two biggest cities.

Papua New Guinea and Australia “reaffirmed their commitment to the region's existing security architecture as a key driver of security cooperation,” a joint statement between Marape and Albanese said.

Papua New Guinea is a nation of mostly subsistence farmers where some 800 languages are spoken. With 10 million people, it is the most populous South Pacific nation after Australia, which is home to 26 million.

Australia Foreign Minister Penny Wong said Marape's historic speech elevated Australia's relationship with the Pacific.

“We know that China is a great power asserting its interests,” she told reporters. “What we are doing is reemphasizing our part in the Pacific family and the importance of that engagement.”

After last month's civil unrest, a number of Papua New Guinea ministers resigned and an under-pressure Marape may soon face a vote of no confidence.

“We must become a strong country standing on our own two feet, economically independent and strong so we too can help Australia maintain democracy, preserve peace and ensure stability... in our Pacific,” he said in his speech. **MDT/AP**

RUSSIA

Election officials reject antiwar politician's bid to oppose Putin in upcoming vote

DASHA LITVINOVA, TALLINN

ESTONIA (Antiwar politician Boris Nadezhdin was rejected yesterday as a candidate in next month's presidential balloting by Russian election authorities, a strong signal from the Kremlin that it would tolerate no public opposition to the invasion of Ukraine.

The move by the Central Election Commission provides an even smoother path for President Vladimir Putin to win a fifth term in power. He faces only token opposition from pro-Kremlin candidates in the March 15-17 vote and is all but certain to win, given his tight control of Russia's political system.

Nadezhdin, a local legislator in a town near Moscow, had needed to gather at least 100,000 signatures of supporters — a requirement that applies to candidates of political parties that are not represented in the Russian parliament.

The Central Election Commission declared that more than 9,000 signatures submitted by Nadezhdin's campaign were invalid, which was enough to disqualify him. Russia's election rules say potential candidates can have no more than 5% of their submitted signatures thrown out.

Nadezhdin, 60, has openly called for a halt to the war in Ukraine and for starting a dialogue with the West. Thousands of Russians

AP PHOTO



Boris Nadezhdin, a liberal Russian politician

lined up across the country last month to sign papers in support of his candidacy, an unusual show of opposition sympathies in the country's rigidly controlled political landscape.

Speaking to officials at the election commission yesterday, Nadezhdin asked them to postpone their decision, but they declined. He said he would appeal his disqualification in court.

"It's not me standing here," Nadezhdin said. "Hundreds of thousands of Russian citizens who put their signatures down for me are behind me."

Putin is running as an independent candidate, and his campaign was required to gather at least 300,000 signatures in his support.

He was swiftly allowed on the ballot earlier this year, with election officials disqualifying only 91 out of 315,000 that his campaign submitted.

Most of the opposition figures who might have challenged Putin have been either imprisoned or exiled abroad, and the vast majority of independent Russian media outlets have been banned.

Three other candidates registered to run were nominated by parties represented in parliament and weren't required to collect signatures: Nikolai Kharitonov of the Communist Party, Leonid Slutsky of the nationalist Liberal Democratic Party and Vladislav Davankov of the New People Party.

The three parties have been

largely supportive of the Kremlin's policies. Kharitonov ran against Putin in 2004, finishing a distant second.

Exiled opposition activists threw their weight behind Nadezhdin last month, urging their supporters to sign his nomination petitions.

Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said the Kremlin doesn't view Nadezhdin as "a rival."

Nadezhdin urged his supporters not to give up despite the setback.

"One thing happened which many could not believe: citizens sensed the possibility of changes in Russia," he wrote in an online statement. "It was you who

stood in long lines to declare to the whole world: 'Russia will be a great and a free country.' And I represented each of you today in the auditorium of the Central Election Commission."

Nadezhdin is the second antiwar hopeful to be denied a place on the ballot. In December, the election commission refused to certify the candidacy of Yekaterina Duntsova, citing problems such as spelling errors in her paperwork.

Duntsova, a journalist and a former legislator from the Tver region north of Moscow, had announced plans last year to challenge Putin. Promoting a vision of a Russia as "peaceful, friendly and ready to cooperate with everyone on the principle of respect," she said she wanted to end the fighting in Ukraine swiftly and for Moscow and Kyiv to come to the negotiating table.

Abbas Gallyamov, a former Putin speechwriter who became a political analyst, said the decision to keep Nadezhdin off the ballot showed how hollow the support for Putin was.

"All of Putin's mega-popularity, which official sociology constantly broadcasts, all that 'rally around the national leader' that Peskov regularly talks about is, in fact, a highly artificial and unstable structure that does not withstand any contact with reality," he said. **MDT/AP**

ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

Israeli strikes kill 13 in a southern Gaza town that could be the next target

ISRAELI airstrikes killed over a dozen people overnight and into yesterday in Rafah in the Gaza Strip, hours after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected Hamas' cease-fire terms and vowed to expand the offensive into the southern Gaza town.

More than half of strip's population has fled to Rafah, on the mostly sealed border with Egypt, which is also the main entry point for humanitarian aid. Egypt has warned that any ground operation there or mass displacement across the

AP PHOTO



border would undermine its four-decade-old peace

treaty with Israel. The overnight strikes

killed at least 13 people, including two women

and five children, according to the Kuwaiti Hospital, which received the bodies. At the scene of one of the strikes, residents used their cellphone flashlights as they dug through the rubble with pick-axes and their bare hands.

"I wish we could collect their whole bodies instead of just pieces," said Mohammed Abu Habib, a neighbor who witnessed the strike.

Israel's four-month-old air and ground offensive — among the most destructive in recent history — has killed over 27,000 Palestinians, driven most people from their homes and pushed a quarter of the population toward starvation.

Netanyahu has said the offensive will continue and expand until "total victory" over Hamas,

which started the war by launching a wide-ranging attack into southern Israel on Oct. 7 in which militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took around 250 hostage.

Israel has also vowed to bring back the over 100 captives still held by Hamas after most of the rest were freed during a cease-fire in November in exchange for the release of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

But both of those goals appear increasingly elusive, as Hamas re-emerges in parts of northern Gaza, which was the first target of the offensive and suffered widespread destruction. Israel has only rescued one hostage, while Hamas says several have been killed in airstrikes or failed rescue missions. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



People look at the volcano erupting and spilling lava, north of Grindavik, yesterday

ICELAND

A VOLCANO IS ERUPTING FOR THE THIRD TIME SINCE DECEMBER

MARCO DI MARCO,
GRINDAVIK

A volcano in southwest Iceland erupted yesterday for the third time since December, sending jets of lava into the sky and triggering the evacuation of the Blue Lagoon spa, one of the island nation's biggest tourist attractions.

The eruption began at about 0600 GMT along a three-kilometer fissure northeast of Mount Sýlingarfell, the Icelandic Meteorological Office said. The site is about 4 kilometers northeast of Grindavik, a coastal town of 3,800 people that was evacuated before a previous eruption on Dec. 18.

The Meteorological Office said that lava was flowing to the west and there was no immediate threat to Grindavik, and civil defense officials said that no one was believed to be in the town at the time of the eruption.

"They weren't meant to be, and we don't know about any," Víðir Reynisson, the head of Iceland's Civil Defense, told national broadcaster RUV.

The Civil Defense agency said that lava was heading for a pipe that supplies communities on the penin-

sula with hot water from the Svartsengi geothermal plant. Authorities asked people to use hot water sparingly, as workers rushed to lay an underground water pipe as a backup.

The nearby Blue Lagoon thermal spa, created using excess water from the power plant, was closed when the eruption began and all the guests were safely evacuated, RUV said. A stream of steaming lava later spread across the exit road from the spa.

The Icelandic Met Office earlier this week warned of a possible eruption after monitoring a buildup of magma, or semi-molten rock, below the ground for the past three weeks. Hundreds of small earthquakes had been measured in the area since Friday, capped by a burst of intense seismic activity about 30 minutes before the latest eruption began.

Dramatic video from Iceland's coast guard showed fountains of lava soaring more than 50 meters into the darkened skies. A plume of vapor rose about 3 kilometers above the volcano.

Iceland, which sits above a volcanic hot spot in the North Atlantic, averages an eruption every four to five years. The most disrupti-

ve in recent times was the 2010 eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano, which spewed huge clouds of ash into the atmosphere and led to widespread airspace closures over Europe.

This is the third eruption since December of a volcanic system on the Reykjanes Peninsula, which is home to Keflavik, Iceland's main airport and several large towns. There was no disruption reported to the airport on Thursday.

Dave McGarvie, a volcanologist who has worked extensively in Iceland, said it's highly unlikely the "gentle, effusive" eruption will disrupt aviation because such volcanoes produce only a tiny amount of ash.

Grindavik, about 50 kilometers southwest of Iceland's capital, Reykjavik, was evacuated in November when the Svartsengi volcanic system awakened after almost 800 years with a series of earthquakes that opened large cracks in the earth north of the town.

The volcano eventually erupted on Dec. 18, sending lava flowing away from Grindavik. A second eruption that began on Jan. 14 sent lava towards the town. Defensive walls that had been bolstered since the first eruption stopped some

of the flow, but several buildings were consumed by the lava, and land in the town has sunk by as much as 1½ meters because of the magma movement.

No confirmed deaths have been reported, but a workman is missing after falling into a fissure opened by the volcano.

Both the previous eruptions lasted only a matter of days, but they signal what Icelandic President Gudni Th. Johannesson called "a daunting period of upheaval" on the Reykjanes Peninsula, one of the most densely populated parts of Iceland.

It's unclear whether the residents of Grindavik will ever be able to return permanently, McGarvie said.

"I think at the moment there is the resignation, the stoical resignation, that, for the foreseeable future, the town is basically uninhabitable," he said.

He said that after centuries of quiet, "people thought this area was fairly safe."

"It's been a bit of a shock that it has come back to life," he added, "Evidence that we gathered only quite recently is that eruptions could go on for decades, if not centuries, sporadically in this particular peninsula." MDT/AP

this day in history



1950 McCarthy LAUNCHES ANTI-RED CRUSADE



United States Senator Joe McCarthy has accused more than 200 staff in the State Department of being members of the Communist Party.

He made the startling allegation in a public speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, saying the State Department was infested with communists and brandished a sheet of paper which purportedly contained the traitors' names.

Senator McCarthy told the Ohio county women's Republican Club that Secretary of State Dean Acheson knew the names of 205 people who were in his words still "working in and shaping the policy of the State Department".

His comments brought an immediate denial from Lincoln White, press officer at the State Department.

Mr White said: "If he is correctly quoted, his allegation that the Secretary of State has a list of 205 Communist Party members who are working and shaping policy in the State Department is entirely without foundation.

"We know of no Communist Party members in the department and if we find any they will be summarily dismissed. We did not furnish Senator McCarthy with any such list and we would be interested in seeing his list."

Senator McCarthy has made his claims against a background of growing anti-Communist feeling.

Alger Hiss, a former senior public servant, was convicted and jailed last month of perjury after being accused of being an accomplice to a self-confessed former member of an underground Communist network.

Senator McCarthy's speech also coincides with the collapse of the Kuomintang regime in China and the establishment there of a Communist government, adding to American fears about the global spread of Communism.

Mr McCarthy was defeated for the Republican nomination for the Senate in 1944 but two years later was able to win the Republican nomination away from veteran Senator, Robert La Follette.

In the election he beat his Democrat opponent after a campaign of continuous misrepresentation of Professor Howard McMurray as a Communist sympathiser.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Two days after this initial outburst, Senator Joe McCarthy wrote to President Harry Truman saying he had been able to compile a list of 57 Communists.

On 20 February he delivered a six hour speech to Congress in which he referred to 81 individuals - not by name but nevertheless identifiable - who he said were members of the Communist Party or loyal to it.

By the time an investigating sub-committee was set up to look into his claims, his list of communists had dwindled to 10 names. [...]

His claims were not substantiated, but many lost their jobs or reputations. [...]

His Communist witch-hunt did win him popular support. At its height, 25 states passed legislation outlawing communist organisations.

The conviction in March 1951 of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg for passing atomic secrets to the Russians also helped fuel his campaign.

His downfall came when he turned his attentions to the US Army. His methods were finally exposed to the public during a televised cross-examination of army personnel following further unsubstantiated allegations.

In 1954 he was censured by the Senate committee. His health declined through heavy drinking and he died in 1957.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Keep your feelings to yourself if you want to avoid embarrassment. Travel should be on your agenda. You may find that someone at work hasn't been trustworthy.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
False information is likely if you listen to idle chatter or gossip. Be sure to question any detail that you feel could leave you in a precarious position at a later date.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Abstain from getting involved with married individuals. Minor accidents could occur if you don't take precautions. Older family members will make demands on your time.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Such over indulgence due to emotional upset will be your downfall. Try not to be too lavish with your lover. Drastic financial losses may be likely if you lend money.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Don't gamble unless you can afford to lose. Secret affairs will only lead to deception. You're best to avoid disputes. You need to spend time with friends and family.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Get together with friends who like to participate in indoor sports. You may have a problem keeping secrets. Unreliable people will be negative about your ideas.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
You may be up for some changes in your home. You may be sensitive concerning friends and their situations. Romantic opportunities may not be as they appear.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
You will learn easily if you put forth an effort. Your ability to dazzle others with your unique and innovative ideas will attract attention.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
You need to take a break with the ones you love. You are best not to confront situations that deal with in-laws or relatives. Don't be too quick to spend money.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Involvement in financial schemes will be followed by losses. You can gain approval, get kudos, and ask for help if you put a little heart into your speech or request.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
You will enjoy interaction with others today. Your charm will mesmerize members of the opposite sex today. Discuss your problems and complaints if you wish to rectify them.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
You are exceptional at presenting your ideas. If you're feeling uncertain, spend some time alone and reevaluate your motives as well as your needs.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-4	8	fine
Changchun	-17	-3	fine
Chengdu	-1	10	fine
Chongqing	6	12	cloudy
Fuzhou	7	13	cloudy
Guangzhou	6	12	rain
Guiyang	-1	8	overcast
Haikou	13	16	rain
Hangzhou	-1	10	fine
Harbin	-22	-7	cloudy
Hefei	-3	12	cloudy
Nanjing	-1	10	fine
Shanghai	1	9	overcast
Taipei	11	13	rain
Wuhan	-2	11	cloudy
Hong Kong	13	16	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-21	-9	cloudy
Frankfurt	8	12	rain
Paris	8	13	cloudy
London	7	12	rain
New York	3	11	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Nay sayers; 6- Influential person; 11- Bon ___; 14- Wanting; 15- Martini garnish; 16- Doc bloc; 17- Wreck; 18- Little bits; 19- Teen's desire; 20- In case; 22- Former Russian rulers; 24- Irregularity; 28- Newspaper executive; 30- Summerhouse; 31- Customary; 32- Maker of Pong; 33- Hollow-horned ruminants; 37- Handle roughly; 38- ___ Irish Rose; 39- Big heart?; 40- Ornate; 43- Cotton thread used for hosiery; 45- Sealing cement; 46- Period of five years; 47- Taoism founder; 49- Noisy; 50- Schleppe; 51- Push with the head; 52- Small shot; 53- Had dinner at home; 56- Higher; 61- Jurist Fortas; 62- Occupied; 63- Mikhail's wife; 64- Scandinavian rug; 65- Abrasive mineral; 66- Set up;

DOWN 1- Pantry pest; 2- Classical beginning; 3- Asian holiday; 4- Highest mountain in Crete; 5- Course outlines; 6- Like a subway; 7- Tons; 8- Mouthpiece of a bridle; 9- Reproductive cells; 10- Inhuman; 11- Port near Hong Kong; 12- Astrologer Sydney; 13- Swabbies; 21- "Xanadu" band; 23- WWII battle site; 24- Slack-jawed; 25- Pertaining to birth; 26- Conductor Seiji; 27- Debussy's "La ___"; 28- Lauder of cosmetics; 29- Membership fees; 31- Oneness; 33- Lessen; 34- Stickum; 35- Dazzling display; 36- Squalid; 38- Humanities; 41- Lodge letters; 42- Make obsolete; 43- Speech; 44- Cuttlefish excretion; 46- Bit of butter; 47- Foyer; 48- Clueless; 49- Like soft-boiled eggs; 50- Ski lift; 51- Coffin support; 54- Skye cap; 55- Scratch (out); 57- Duffer's goal; 58- Slapstick prop; 59- Corner key; 60- Squealer;

Yesterday's solution

Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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

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

AD

DRIVE IN

WIM WENDERS' 'PERFECT DAYS' IS SUBLIME

JAKE COYLE,
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

Wim Wenders' "Perfect Days" is set among the crowded skyscrapers of Tokyo and the quiet urban parks that Hirayama (Kôji Yakusho) traverses daily in his job cleaning public toilets. But where the movie resides, really, is Yakusho's face.

In this gently sublime film, Hirayama steps outside his humble apartment each morning and gazes up at the sky with a smile radiating gratitude. Hirayama says little throughout the course of Wenders' quiet, quotidian film. Little happens. Yet Yakusho's warm presence speaks volumes in a film where less can mean profoundly more.

Wenders, the 78-year-old German filmmaker, has long had a preference for troubled loners. Think of Harry Dean Stanton's dusty drifter in "Paris, Texas," or Bruno Ganz's terminally ill man in "The American Friend." But the Wenders' movie that "Perfect Days" most recalls is "Wings of Desire," where melancholy angels watched over Cold War-era Berlin and spoke of testifying "day by day



Kôji Yakusho (left) and Arisa Nakano in a scene from "Perfect Days" (Neon)

for eternity." "Perfect Days" has no such supernatural element, but its gaze is likewise attuned to what's beautiful and meaningful in everyday living.

Each morning, Hirayama wakes, puts on his blue sanitation jump suit and neatly drapes a white towel around his neck.

"How can you put so much into a job like this?" says Takashi (Tokio Emoto), Hirayama's young,

less scrupulous coworker.

Hirayama's days are rigorously routine but lively with variation. While driving through the elevated highways of Tokyo, he selects a cassette tape from a rack above the sun visor. Patti Smith, Lou Reed, the Kinks, the Animals or Nina Simone play as he rides. Usually, Hirayama, analog through and through, is driving against the traffic.

He's a lover of trees, and each day on his lunch break takes a photograph of the branches above him, with light pouring through. At night, he reads Faulkner.

Eventually, a niece (Arisa Nakano) turns up, followed by Hirayama's estranged sister (Yumi Aso). But Wenders' film, which is nominated for best international film at the Oscars and opened in theaters last week, is largely uncluttered by

plot or exposition. Instead, we're invited to ponder Hirayama's serene, monastic existence — to admire the joy he finds in the mundane and the attentiveness he gives to the things he values.

Is he running from the world or in its thrall? Wenders, who co-wrote the film with Takuma Takasaki, is a longtime admirer of Japan.

My 8-year-old daughter accompanied me on my second watch; that she hung with the movie from start to finish, I think, is because Yakusho's Hirayama is a character to love.

Wenders was initially drawn to the project by Tokyo's exquisite public toilets, which are light years more artfully designed than the few you can even find in most American cities. In that way, they're a symbol of civic good. And so is Hirayama, who in his life and work, in plant life and cassette tapes, fully encapsulates the definition of custodian.

"Perfect Days," a Neon release, is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association for some language, partial nudity and smoking. Running time: 123 minutes.★★★★★

AD

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甲辰龍

tTUNES

Paul McCartney and Wings' release bare bones 'Band on the Run' on 50th anniversary

SOMETIMES less is more. At least that's the thought behind Paul McCartney and Wings' "Band on the Run (Underdubbed)."

Fifty years after its debut, the beloved album gets yet another rerelease, this time with a version that doesn't include bonus tracks but instead pulls back some of the layers that were added after the original rough mixes. Hence, "underdubbed" in the title.

This isn't the first time McCartney has revisited an album to strip off some of the bells and whistles to get closer to the original recording. He did it with the unfortunately titled "Let It Be Naked" back in 2003. The "underdubbed" version of "Band on the Run" is notable for a slightly different song order from the U.S. release that will be jarring for those with the original sequencing committed to memory after decades of listening. The new order mirrors how the original tapes were discovered in McCartney's archives and omits "Helen Wheels," which McCartney didn't intend to inclu-

de on the album but did after it was a hit single.

Some of the changes with the songs themselves are subtle: a missing guitar riff or echo here, no backing vocals there. Others are more noticeable, like no orchestral overdubs, what sounds like a vocal flub on the title track and no vocals at all on "Nineteen Hundred and Eighty-Five."

So, which version is better? They are different. The original still sounds fresh and exciting today, a half century later. There's a reason why it's McCartney's best-selling, post-Beatles release.

The better question is whether it's worth paying to hear the "underdubbed" version. The answer to that depends on your level of McCartney fandom.

If "Band on the Run" is part of your musical DNA, then "Underdubbed" is a fun alternate take that gives a window into what might have been. If that doesn't interest you, or you've somehow never listened to the original, stick with enjoying it the way McCartney first put it out. **SCOTT BAUER, MDT/AP**



TASTE OF EDESIA

British Gastropub

IRENE SAM, MDT

NOT long ago, Gordon Ramsay has opened his first restaurant in Macau at The Londoner. **Gordon Ramsay Pub & Grill** is an authentic and convivial British gastropub and steakhouse and the only one of its kind in Asia. The interior design pays a nod to 1830s industrial revolution architecture. It is intricate and detailed so as to create the perfect cosy British pub ambience. The first iconic and impressive feature is the large centrally located bar, complemented by a variety of seating options decorated in a British flag inspired colour palette. Specific materials also add to the authenticity, in-

cluding wood panelled walls, plush leather booths, reclaimed timber, plaster work and glass detailing, all alongside contemporary London artwork and accessories.

The menu includes well-known Ramsay signatures such as Beef Wellington with a mushroom and truffle duxelle served with creamed potato and a red wine jus, Fish & Chips made from line-caught ale-battered cod, triple cooked chips and a homemade tartar sauce, and Sticky Toffee Pudding with crème fraiche and vanilla ice cream.

Other highlights are Slow Roasted Pork Belly with a cider vinegar glaze, a zingy Dijon mustard mash and tender green lentils and The London

Burger with a juicy beef patty, tomato apple ketchup, sweet onion relish and cheddar cheese paired with triple cooked chips. There is also a quintessential British Sunday Roast of porcini rubbed roast beef, Yorkshire pudding and duck fat roasted potatoes that is only available Sunday lunch.

Another unique aspect is the selection of hand-picked steaks that are cooked on the charcoal fired grill and served with café de Paris butter, herb salad, fried onion ring, overnight tomatoes and a choice of four sauces. The beef is sourced from the finest farms that focus on particular breeds that are known for greater complexity, extremely high marbling and rich, buttery and nutty flavours. Options include Stockyard M6+ tomahawk, Westholme Chateaubriand tenderloin M5+, and David Blackmore striploin M9+.

AP PHOTO

Band on the Run



UNDERDUBBED MIXES

The 50th Anniversary edition of "Band on the Run (Underdubbed)" (UMe)

OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

**CHANGE-OR-RUIN
 MINDSET MAIN
 OBSTACLE TO ECONOMIC
 TALKS MAKING ANY
 REAL PROGRESS**

Although the exchanges between the two sides at the Third China-US Economic Working Group Meeting that concluded on Tuesday in Beijing were described as “in-depth, candid, pragmatic and constructive”, it is almost impossible that any breakthroughs will be forthcoming on any major issues it covered.

In fact, the only major reported outcome of the meeting is that the two sides have agreed to continue to maintain communication. It indicates that the development of bilateral ties is restrained by the Joe Biden administration’s insistence on an approach which it claims is “competitive when it should be, collaborative when it can be, and adversarial when it must be”, when in fact it seeks to squeeze the space for collaboration by prioritizing the other two facets of the prism through which it views bilateral relations.

Indeed, it seems that the only reason the US side is still cooperating with China at all is because it is not yet ready to try and decouple in certain areas as it has not yet found an alternative to China.

The turning point came after the US realized that its efforts, “implied or explicit, to shape or change the PRC over several decades” had not succeeded, as US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said in a speech on the future of US-China relations on Jan 30. For the US, the sole point of Sino-US engagement has been to “change” China to the US’ liking.

The other important realization the US side has come to regarding China, which determines the exchanges between them even on the economic and trade fronts but are unlikely to make a difference in the overall situation, is that China’s development achievements are the result of either the US’ condescending gifts or of China exploiting the global market system led and designed by the US.

Given China’s indispensable and tremendous contributions to the prosperity, stability and growth of the world economy and market, the actual situation could be deemed to be the opposite — it is the US, as well as some other developed countries, that have benefited unfairly from the opening-up of China first as a source of rich mineral resources, raw materials and cheap labor, and then as a large market and efficient manufacturing base, and a reliable source of investment and talents.

After the US realized China was not going to “change”, it started approaching bilateral ties from the perspective of a zero-sum game mentality. An important reason why the US still finds it imperative to come back to the table on economic and trade issues, climate change and even security concerns with China is that it keeps butting up against the fallacy of that mentality — the US’ losses are not necessarily China’s gains, and vice versa. In most cases, it is the US side that bears the brunt of its China containment strategy which is a lose-lose scenario.

Unless Washington discards its zero-sum mentality and its change-it-or-ruin-it mindset, bilateral dialogue such as the economic and trade meeting will be nothing more than a talk shop.

**CONSPIRACY THEORIES SWIRL AROUND TAYLOR SWIFT:
 REPUBLICAN VOTERS SAY THEY DON’T CARE**

**THE
 BUZZ**

To hear some conservatives on cable news or on social media tell it, Taylor Swift is part of an elaborate plot to help Democrats win the November election.

“I wonder who’s going to win the Super Bowl next month,” wrote former Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy in January after the Kansas City Chiefs made the game with a strong performance from tight end Travis Kelce, Swift’s partner. “And I wonder if there’s a major presidential endorsement coming from an artificially culturally propped-up couple this fall.”

Many voters just see that talk as noise to tune out.

Ryan Allstun said he supports Trump and wants famous peo-

ple to keep their politics private. But Allstun doesn’t look to celebrities such as Swift and Kelce for endorsements.

“Couldn’t care less,” he said. “To each their own.”

Many people at Republican political events were far more ambivalent about the pop star than some personalities who suggest the media coverage of Swift and Kelce’s relationship is a pretext to boost a potential endorsement of Biden.

Some have gone so far as to suggest — some tongue in cheek, others perhaps not — that the U.S. government is running a covert operation involving Swift.

Some Republican strategists think the focus on Swift could hurt the party.

AP PHOTO



**LUNAR NEW YEAR IN
 THE PHILIPPINES DRAWS
 CROWDS TO ONE OF
 THE WORLD’S OLDEST
 CHINATOWNS**

AARON FAVILA

CROWDS are flocking to Chinatown in the Philippine capital to usher in the Year of the Wood Dragon and experience lively traditional dances on lantern-lit streets with food, lucky charms and prayers for good fortune.

Still recovering from the pandemic years and struggling amid global economic concerns, Chinese restaurants and shops in the area brimmed with festive lights and decor ahead of the Lunar New Year on Saturday, hoping to cash in on an influx of tourists.

Lamp posts in Manila’s riverside Binondo commercial district, said to be one of the oldest Chinatowns in the world, feature dragon decor with tails curled around the poles. In a crowded mall, a huge dragon hangs over selfie-taking shoppers.

Manila Mayor Honey Lacuna lit a “money tree” and led a ceremony to mark what she and other officials said was the 430th founding anniversary of the Binondo district.

Dragon dancers performed to the beating of

drums at the event, which was capped by fireworks.

At the height of the coronavirus pandemic, business establishments large and small were forced to shut down, and Chinatown resembled a ghost town. But the crowds returned in force this week, with traffic jams

and parking lots crammed with SUVs.

Each year is named after one of the 12 signs of the Chinese zodiac in a repeating cycle. The Year of the Wood Dragon, which local Chinese hope will bring abundance, follows the Year of the Rabbit. MDT/AP

AP PHOTOS



AP PHOTO



Ukrainian forces claimed yesterday to have shot down a Russian attack helicopter in eastern Ukraine near the city of Avdiivka, where soldiers are fighting from street to street as Russia’s army steps up its four-month campaign to surround Kyiv’s defending troops. Ukrainian soldiers used a portable anti-aircraft missile to take down the Ka-52 Alligator attack helicopter, one of the Russian air force’s deadliest weapons, according to Oleksandr Tarnavskiy, the commander of Ukrainian units fighting on the southeastern front line.

AP PHOTO



EU A German Navy frigate set sail on yesterday toward the Red Sea, where Berlin plans to have it take part in a European Union mission to help defend cargo ships from attacks by Yemen’s Iranian-backed Houthi rebels that are hampering trade. The Hessen set off from the North Sea port of Wilhelmshaven with about 240 servicepeople on board. The aim is to have it in place once the EU mission is given the official go-ahead and the German parliament has approved a mandate for the ship to join in.

EU lawmakers called yesterday for an independent investigation into allegations of vote-rigging in Serbia and demanded that EU funds be cut off if the authorities in Belgrade fail to cooperate with the inquiry or are found to be implicated in election irregularities. The governing Serbian Progressive party of populist Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić won the Dec. 17 parliamentary and municipal elections, securing 129 seats in the 250-seat assembly. The opposition Serbia Against Violence coalition finished a distant second with 65 seats.

HOLIDAY TIMES

Macau Daily Times will not be published during the holiday. The Times will be back on the stands on Friday February 16. However the MDT website will be updated with breaking news during the recess period. We wish our readers, advertisers and friends the best of times. KHFC!