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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN' "

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AP PHOTO



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AP PHOTO



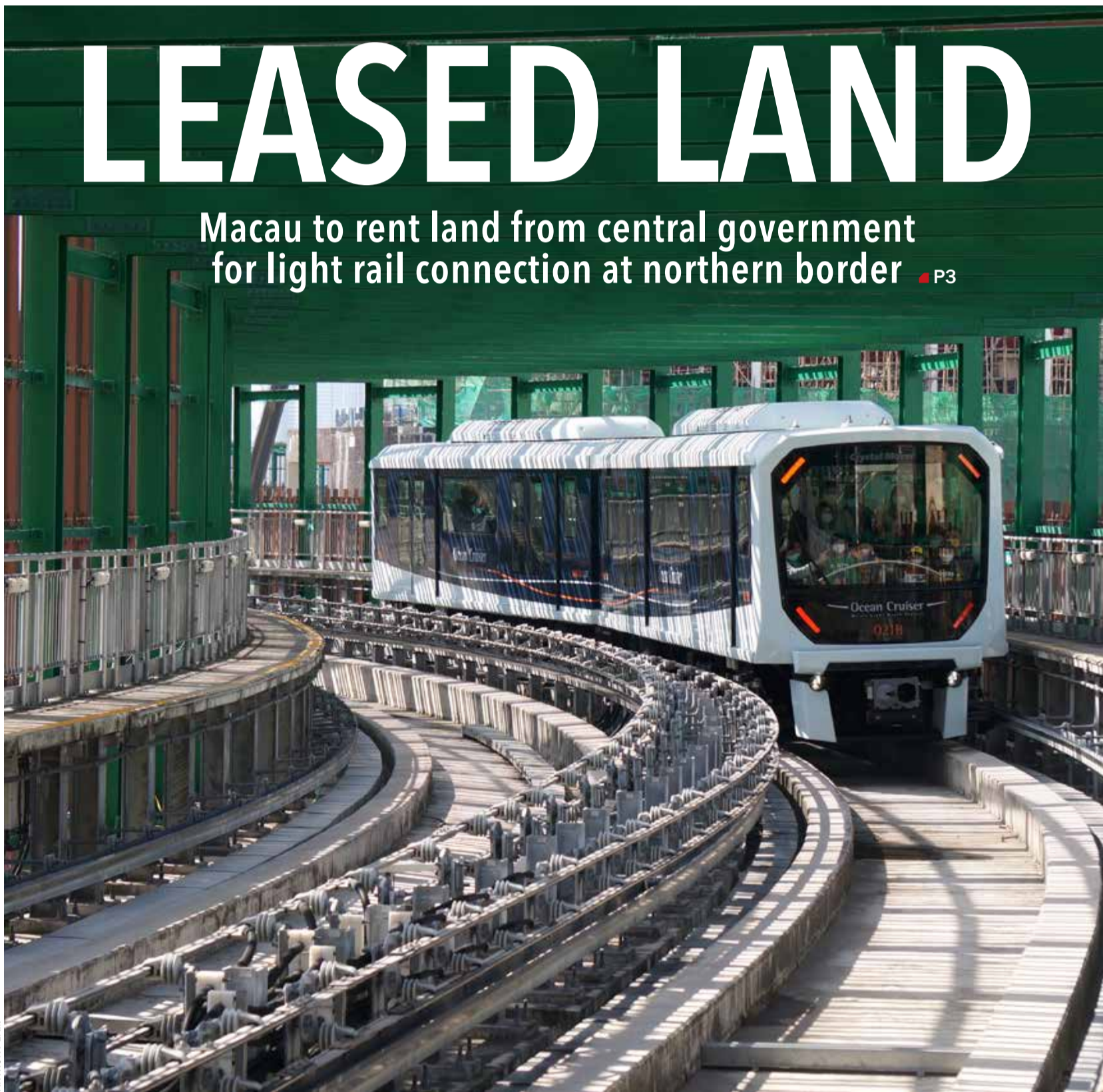
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IFTM TO BECOME MACAU UNIVERSITY OF TOURISM BY APR. 1

On April 1, the Macau Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM) will undergo a name and status change and officially become the Macau University of Tourism. The announcement of the new legal framework for this transformation has been published in the Official Gazette. While the current directors and officers of the IFTM are appointed on a fixed-term basis, their legal status will remain intact until the expiration of their term. Additionally, the legal framework for the Macau Polytechnic University will also come into effect on April 1st, as stated in the SAR Gazette.

JANUARY GAMING TAX UP 365% Y-O-Y

In January, gaming operators in Macau paid MOP7.34 billion in gaming tax, marking a remarkable 365% increase compared to the same month in 2023. According to data from the Financial Services Bureau, the government had collected a mere MOP1.58 billion in gaming tax in January 2023. This significant improvement reflects the ongoing recovery of the gaming industry following the lifting of pandemic prevention measures. Notably, the gaming tax revenue for January accounted for 8.8% of the government's gaming tax budget for the upcoming year.

CATHOLIC PROCESSION MARKS START OF LENT

The annual event of a statue of Jesus Christ being carried across Macau's historic heart to mark Lent, a period of 40 days that leads up to Easter, took place last weekend. Flanked by clergymen in purple robes and crowds of spectators, the Procession of the Passion of Our Lord, Jesus Christ saw the statue transported from St. Augustine's Church to the city's cathedral for an overnight vigil. On Sunday, the procession returned to St. Augustine's, with worshippers pausing regularly to mark the 14 Stations of the Cross – a series of tableaux depicting Jesus' suffering on his way to crucifixion.

MACAU RESIDENTS LIVING IN HENGQIN ALLOWED TO TRANSPORT PETS, PLANTS

Authorities have confirmed Macau residents who study, work, set up businesses or live in Hengqin can transport animal and plant products without applying for import licenses or making declarations from March 1. Owners of cats and dogs can pass through the border as long as the animals have been implanted with electronic microchips by the Municipal Affairs Bureau and have the "International Vaccination Certificate for Dogs and Cats" and a valid "Travel Endorsement for the In-depth Cooperation Zone" issued by the bureau.

PUBLIC WORKS

OUTER HARBOUR TERMINAL TENDER LAUNCHED

RENATO MARQUES

THE government is launching a new public tender for the operation of the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal, an order from the Chief Executive (CE) published in yesterday's official gazette announced.

In the brief note, the CE ordered the opening of the tender for the concession of the operation of the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal, which is an order that was originally signed on Feb. 8 and is valid from today.

Currently, the Outer Harbour terminal is operated by Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões de Macau (STDM), which won a public tender held in 2018 that granted them a contract with a validity of 66 months.

The Times has seen an extract of the contract and, besides the duration of five and half years, it also grants discretionary powers to the company that wins the bid to decide when to commence performing the contract (within the period from January 1, 2019 to July 1, 2019).



In the last tender, held in 2018, the STDM's bid was almost four times higher (MOP1.8 billion) than the second highest bid (MOP500,000) from China Communications Construction Company – Third Harbor Consultants Company Limited.

A third bid of just MOP350,000 was also tendered by the CSI Group Ltd, which is a company that currently holds the concession for the manage-

ment of the commercial spaces of the Taipa ferry terminal (Pac On).

In response to an inquiry from the Times early this month, the Marine and Water Bureau (DSAMA) said the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal is to continue to operate normally.

DSAMA's statement dispelled rumors the government was preparing to close the facility due to the upcoming construction of an overpass to con-

nect Zone A of the new landfills and Zone B of the same urban new landfills that connects to Zone B at the side of the Macau Science Center.

Further details on the tender conditions including bid evaluation criteria will only be known when DSAMA officially launches the tender.

STDM's current concession was made under a regime of exclusivity, and it not confirmed that it will continue.

Bill proposes up to five years imprisonment for illegal betting-related loans

STAFF REPORTER

THE government has drafted bill that proposes a jail term of between one and five years for individuals involved in illegal gambling loans within casino premises.

The proposed legislation updates Macau's existing illegal gambling regime, known as Law No.8/96/M.

According to the bill, anyone providing money or other means for gambling with the intention of obtaining financial benefit may face imprisonment for



between one to five years.

In aggravated circumstances, such as when the accused per-

son demands an identification document as a guarantee, those found guilty could face imprisonment for be-

tween two and eight years.

The bill also provides for punishments for various gambling-related crimes, including an entry ban of between two and 10 years in Macau gaming establishments, and expulsion or a ban from entering the Macau SAR for non-residents convicted of such crimes.

The legislation also provides for individuals involved in these crimes as part of a "secret association or society," potentially resulting in longer prison sentences.

The latter legal term in Macau is usually understood to be a reference to Chinese criminal groups often referred to as "triads," and is considered a crime that might result in longer prison sentences.

Furthermore, the bill proposes increasing maximum jail sentences and the permitted duration of preventive detention for gambling crimes, including under-the-table betting via the "multiplier," as previously mentioned in a December briefing by local government officials.

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CNY

Overseas spending of Alipay users surpasses 2019 figures

LYNZY VALLES

THE Year of the Dragon started strong as preliminary data from Alipay shows the number of outbound spending transactions by Alipay users during the 2024 Spring Festival was already 107% of the level in the same period in 2019.

Alipay operator Ant Group said in a statement that transactions of overseas Chinese tourists from Feb. 9 to Feb 12 were 7% higher than for the same holiday period in 2019.

Data shows there was a 45% increase in Hong Kong, signaling the return of the overseas Chinese tourist.

According to Alipay's analysis of its Lunar New Year holiday cross-border travel data, the period has once again become the peak season for global travel consumption after four years, with a clear "two-way" warming trend.

Hong Kong, Macau, Japan, South Korea and other nearby destinations are the most sought after, while the popularity of Europe, the US, Australia, North America, the Middle East and other long-haul destinations are also gradually warming up.

By spending amount, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Korea, Fran-



ce, Australia and Canada are the top 10 destinations favoured by Alipay users, as cited in the statement.

Data from multiple online travel platforms showed that on the first day of the eight-day holiday,

outbound travel bookings already surpassed the 2019 figure with Southeast Asian countries, particularly those with visa-free policies for Chinese nationals, emerging as red-hot destinations.

From Feb. 10 to 13, bookings for

hotels in Bangkok tripled year on year, while reservations for Singaporean hotels reported a stunning growth of 800%, according to the travel platform LY.com.

According to a market forecast by Ctrip, a leading travel platform

in China, the eight-day holiday would mark the country's first travel rush of the year, with a notable increase in international travel being one of the highlights.

"Destinations in Southeast Asia have continued to gain traction as many in China opted for the region for an escape from the winter season," said Gao Tao, from Tuniu.

"The tourism industry has gone through a rough patch in the past three years due to the pandemic. But it is now poised for a growth spurt, particularly in outbound tourism."

The holiday period is an important barometer for consumption, which has been lagging due to the country's continued property crisis and macroeconomic headwinds.

However, the post-CNY data is showing a temporary relief as the world's second largest economy is regaining its footing amid deflationary risks.

Total domestic trips for the eight-day long holiday that began Feb. 10 rose 34.3% to 474 million, while tourism receipts grew 47.3% to 632.6 billion yuan, according to data published Sunday by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. That's 19% more in terms of trips and 7.7% more in terms of tourism spending for the equivalent period in 2019.

"Supported by various favorable factors such as government policies, [services] supply and propaganda work, people in urban and rural areas have exhibited a rising willingness to travel, with many indicators such as the number of trips and travel spending hitting record high levels," the ministry said in a statement.

PUBLIC WORKS

Macau to rent land for LRT expansion

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macau government will rent land from the Central government around the Border Gate to expand the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) project into this part of the city.

This and other details were announced yesterday when the decision of the Permanent Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), adopted on Dec. 29 last year, was published in the official gazette. This decision empowered the SAR to use the land.

In Article 3 of the decision from the Central government, it is noted that the Macau Special Administrative Region government acquires the right to



use the land and sea areas by way of lease.

It also provides that "the lease period starts from the date of transference of

jurisdiction over the relevant land and sea assets and ends on December 19, 2049."

The same article also

adds, "at the end of the lease period, the lease may be renewed by decision of the Standing Committee of the NPC."

It is unclear, at this stage, how much the local government will have to pay to rent the land or when it will officially take possession of the area.

The decision only notes that, according to the State Council decision, a date will be assigned at a later stage for the transference of jurisdiction.

At stake is a V-shaped plot of land and surrounding sea areas, which is part of the Zhuhai Municipal Administrative Region.

The whole area has approximately 3.7 square kilometers, with the largest portion (2.26 km²) being water.

A total of 1.44 square kilometers is located on the north side of the intersection between the Border Gate Square and the Avenida Norte do Hipódromo.

As the Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng noted at the time of the decision,

the granting of such areas was important to both the development of the LRT system as well as Macau in general and its commuting links with the mainland.

As the local government also announced at the time, the granting of the land will allow the LRT East Line to connect directly to the Border Gate as well as extend to the Qingmao border post via a new station.

The construction of the LRT East line began in August last year and it was expected to conclude by 2028.

But with the line extension to Qingmao, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works has said that both the completion date and the budget would undergo changes that are still under evaluation.

The foundation stone of the East Line of the LRT was officially laid on October 20, 2023.

SPRING FESTIVAL GOLDEN WEEK

MACAU WRAPS UP WITH 1.5 MILLION VISITORS IN 10-DAY CNY

RENATO MARQUES

FOLLOWING a 10-day Spring Festival (CNY) Golden Week that included the Lunar New Year's Eve and the Sunday after the Golden Week, the earlier forecast by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) turned out to be the most accurate.

According to the PSP, it was expected border movements would reach between 5.5 to 6 million over the 10 days of the CNY holidays from Feb. 9 to 18, which eventuated yesterday and which was shown in yesterday's final figures.

According to the figures released for the 10 days, 5,833,510 border movements were recorded.

From these, over 3 million were movements related to visitors' entry and exit, with total visitor entries reaching 1,524,823.

During the same period, the PSP recorded 876,987 departures of Macau residents and the entry of some 911,939, totaling 1,788,926 border mo-



vements, i.e., 30.67% of all border movements registered in this season.

As expected, the busiest border post was the Border Gate accounting for 1.16 million crossings.

It was followed by the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HZMB) Post with over 700,000.

The border post with the third largest movement was the Macau Port Area at Hengqin Port, which recorded 457,233 crossings.

The majority of those arriving from Hong Kong have done so via the HZMB (181,452).

For those taking the Ferry, the preferred route was the

Taipa Ferry Terminal (36,306).

Those traveling from Hong Kong by ferry who arrived at the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal surpassed 25,000.

Foreign visitors arrived mostly via the HZMB (34,090), followed by the Macau International Airport (11,343) and the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal (11,770).

Business rep warns SMEs are struggling

A representative of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Macau has raised concerns about the potential closure of businesses in non-tourist districts.

Fong Kin Fu, the president of the Federal General Commercial Association of Macau Small and Medium Enterprises, highlighted the decline in business activity and spending in residential areas, particularly in northern Macau. While the recent influx of visitors to Macau during CNY has undoubtedly helped local SMEs, Fong believes more focus needs to be redirected towards non-tourist district, as cited in a Macao Daily News report.

He noted the absence of Hong Kong

visitors who used to explore local culture in less popular areas during the Lunar New Year. Fong also said budget-conscious younger travelers now prefer city walking experiences.

An anonymous desert business owner in Areia Preta expressed the struggles faced by his family-run business due to changing consumer attitudes and increased competition among smaller businesses, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, the report added.

"Customers tend to be heading across the border for cheaper options. You either lower prices to keep them or risk losing them, but the lower the prices are, the closer the business is to closing down."

DSSOPT CASE

WILLIAM KUAN'S HABEAS CORPUS PETITION REJECTION BY TOP COURT EXPLAINED

STAFF REPORTER

MACAU'S Court of Final Appeal (TUI) has released an explanation for its rejection of businessman William Kuan's habeas corpus petition.

According to a statement from the Office of the President of TUI, the top court pointed out that Kuan's pre-trial detention had already concluded, and he had commenced serving his sentence.

Therefore, the TUI said that the assumptions and grounds of the habeas corpus application cannot stand.

While the decision to dismiss the petition was made in January, the court's detailed reasons were only disclosed Sunday.

Kuan was one of the defendants in the



"Public Works Case," which involved several businessmen and two former directors of the Public Works Bureau, all found guilty of various criminal offenses. Kuan has been in custody since December 2021.

Initially sentenced to

18 years in prison, his sentence was subsequently reduced to five and a half years by the Court of Second Instance. Currently, Kuan is awaiting the outcome of the prosecution's appeal seeking to reinstate the original 18-year sentence.

STAFF REPORTER

THE purchase and sale of residential units rose 70 year-on-year to 2,879 units, and the total transaction value swelled 1.8% to MOP18.30 billion.

Data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) shows that transaction values of existing residential units (2,722 units) and pre-sale residential units (157 units) amounted to MOP17.42 billion and MOP882 million respectively.

However, in comparison with 2019, the volume and value of residential units transacted declined by 65.2% and 64.2% respectively.

indicated that 4,416 building units and parking spaces were purchased and sold in 2023 as per Stamp Duty record, a decrease of 2.8% year-on-year.

The total value of transactions was MOP23.23 billion, down by 5.9%.

In 2023, the overall average price per square metre of usable area of residential units was MOP93,500, down by 0.3% year-on-year; the average price of those in the Macau Peninsula (MOP89,956) dropped by 3.4%, whereas the prices of those in Taipa (MOP97,367) and Coloane (MOP107,512)

PROPERTY

RESIDENTIAL UNITS TRANSACTIONS UP IN 2023



went up by 5.6% and 1.3% respectively.

For non-residential units, the average price per square metre of office units increased by 5.4% to MOP89,035, whereas that of industrial units went down by 1.9% to MOP47,238.

When compared to 2019, the average prices of residential units, office units and industrial units decreased by 13%, 17.9% and 14.1% respec-

tively.

New residential construction

In relation to construction in the private sector, there were 6,415 residential units in the design stage, 2,286 under construction, and 322 under inspection as at the end of 2023. During the year, 183 residential units were issued a licence of use, all of which were located in the Macau Peninsula.

AVIATION

Dubai airport had 86.9 million passengers last year in a post-pandemic surge

JON GAMBRELL, DUBAI

THE number of passengers flying through Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel, surged last year beyond its total for 2019 — just before the coronavirus pandemic grounded global aviation.

While still shy of its all-time high in 2018, the figures for 2023 showed just how far the airport, known as DXB, has bounced back from the pandemic. The number of passengers passing through its cavernous, air-conditioned terminals that are home to the long-haul carrier Emirates in Dubai, has served as a barometer for the aviation industry worldwide and the wider economic health of this city-state.

Overall in 2023, the airport had 86.9 million passengers. Its 2019's annual traffic was 86.3 million passengers. The airport had 89.1 million passengers in 2018 — its busiest-ever year before the pandemic, while 66 million passengers passed through in 2022.

"I think our performance post-pandemic has been quite exceptional and a tribute to the investment we've made in the technology to smooth things along and also, in our people who've performed absolutely magnificently," Paul Griffiths, the CEO of Dubai Airports, told The Associated Press.

Passenger traffic largely has been driven by the airport's standard travel destinations — India, Saudi Arabia, the United King-



dom and Pakistan. Russia has also been a major market as Dubai remains one of the few places still open to Russians during Moscow's war on Ukraine.

Dubai was among the first cities to reopen to tourists in the pandemic. That helped boost its tourism industry as attractions like the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, and the sail-shaped Burj Al-Arab luxury hotel drew both visitors and transit passengers out of airport lounges.

Earlier in February, Dubai announced its best-ever tourism numbers, saying it hosted 17.15 million international overnight visitors in 2023. Average hotel occupancy stood around 77%. Its boom-and-bust real estate

market remains on a hot streak, nearing all-time high valuations.

"The economic contribution to the city of having more and more visitors, it's obvious for everyone to see," Griffiths said. "We can see it on the roads, we can see in hotel occupancy, and we see it in the general economy here."

The airport has estimated it will serve 88.8 million passengers this year — nearing its all-time high. But that will put increasing pressure on the already-stretched airport, which had its highest-ever number of aircraft takeoffs and landings in a single year — 416,405.

Dubai has another airport, Al Maktoum International Airport at Dubai World Central, some 45

kilometers away in its far southern reaches. While used by commercial airlines when Qatar hosted the 2022 FIFA World Cup, that airport, opened in 2010, largely sees cargo and private aircraft flights.

Plans to put Emirates and other major carriers there have been repeatedly pushed off. Griffiths said current efforts remained aimed at increasing plane stands at DXB and other remodeling at the airport, to allow for expected further growth in passenger numbers.

"Ultimately, there will come a time when a new airport will be required to continue to fund the expansion of the aviation sector," Griffiths said. "But plans for that

are very much under discussion."

Meanwhile, DXB plans to invest in new security scanners to allow laptops, liquids and other objects typically needed to be removed for screening to remain inside hand luggage. There's also work experimenting with cameras to allow for people to simply walk through an area and clear immigration without even stopping, Griffiths said.

"There are huge advances in technology which are going to make us what we're calling a 'no red lights' airports," he said.

Dubai International Airport connects to 262 destinations in 104 countries worldwide via just over 100 international carriers. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Sands China strengthens responsible gaming promotions in 2023



Sands China's responsible gaming efforts in 2023 has wrapped up with donations to support local social service organisations, training sessions

and workshops.

"As an integrated resort operator, it is our responsibility to raise awareness of the importance of responsi-

ble gaming among our team members and the community," said Wilfred Wong, executive vice chairman of Sands China Ltd.

Two of Sands China's gaming areas, The Plaza Casino and The Parisian Casino, passed the Responsible Gambling Indicators program, and held 46 responsible gaming roadshows at the back-of-house team member areas of its properties.

Sands China donated MOP 10 million to five local nongovernmental organisations in Macau last year. The gaming operator also held a variety of responsible gaming trainings during the year and held six parent-child events to strengthen communication and understanding among families.

Wynn showcases series of CNY celebrations



In honor of the auspicious Year of the Dragon, Wynn has recently showcased an array of vibrant Chinese New Year celebrations including traditio-

nal lion dance performances, the lighting of firecrackers, and also participating in the annual Chinese New Year parade organized by the Macao

Government Tourism Office.

On Feb. 17 (the eighth day of Chinese New Year) and Feb. 18 (the ninth day of Chinese New Year), Wynn Macau and Wynn Palace hosted spectacular dragon and lion dance performances.

On Feb. 12 (the third day of Chinese New Year) and Feb. 17 (the eighth day of Chinese New Year), Wynn once again participated in the "Parade for Celebration for the Year of the Dragon 2024".

This year, the design of the Wynn float featured the iconic Wynn SkyCab and a golden dragon to symbolize a dragon taking flight to bring good fortune to everyone at Chinese New Year.



Staff members work in an inflatable testing lab provided by Chinese biotech company BGI Genomics, a subsidiary of BGI Group, in Beijing, in mid-2020

US rivalry with China expands to biotech, lawmakers see a failure to compete and want to act

DIDI TANG, WASHINGTON

U.S. lawmakers are raising alarms about what they see as America's failure to compete with China in biotechnology, warning of the risks to U.S. national security and commercial interests. But as the two countries' rivalry expands into the biotech industry, some say that shutting out Chinese companies would only hurt the U.S.

Biotechnology promises to revolutionize everyday life, with scientists and researchers using it to make rapid advances in medical treatment, genetic engineering in agriculture and novel biomaterials. Because of its potential, it has caught the attention of both the Chinese and U.S. governments.

Bills have been introduced in the House and Senate to bar "foreign adversary biotech companies of concern" from doing business with federally funded medical providers. The bills name four Chinese-owned companies.

The Chinese Embassy said those behind the bills have an "ideological bias" and seek to suppress Chinese companies "under false pretexts." It demanded that Chinese companies be given "open, just, and non-discriminatory treatment."

The debate over biotechnology is taking place as the Biden administration tries to stabilize the volatile U.S.-China relationship,

which has been battered by a range of issues, including a trade war, the COVID-19 pandemic, cybersecurity and militarization in the South China Sea.

Critics of the legislation warn that restrictions on Chinese companies would impede advances that could bring a greater good.

"In biotech, one cannot maintain competitiveness by walling off others," said Abigail Coplin, an assistant professor at Vassar College who specializes in China's biotech industry. She said she was worried that U.S. policymakers would get too obsessed with the technology's military applications at the cost of hindering efforts to cure disease and feed the world's population.

In a letter to senators sponsoring the bill, Rachel King, chief executive officer of the trade association Biotechnology Innovation Organization, said the legislation would "do untold damage to the drug development supply chain both for treatments currently approved and on market as well as for development pipelines decades in the making."

But supporters say the legislation is crucial to protecting U.S. interests.

The National Security Commission on Emerging Biotechnology, a group created by the U.S. Senate to review the industry, said the bill would help secure the data of the federal government and of

American citizens and it would discourage unfair competition from Chinese companies.

The commission warned that advancement in biotechnology can result not only in economic benefits but also rapid changes in military capabilities and tactics.

Much is at stake, said Rep. Mike Gallagher, chair of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party. Gallagher, a Wisconsin Republican, introduced the House version of the bill and last week led a congressional delegation to Boston to meet with biotech executives.

The Chinese Embassy said those behind the bills have an 'ideological bias'

"It's not just a supply chain battle or a national security battle or an economic security battle; I would submit it's a moral and ethical battle," Gallagher said. "Just as the sector advances at a really astronomical pace, the country who wins the race will set the ethical standards around how these technologies are used."

He argues that the U.S. must "set the rules of the road" and if not, "we're going to live in a less free, less moral world as a result."

Both the United States and China, the world's two largest economies, have identified biotech as a

critical national interest.

The Biden administration has put forward a "whole-of-government approach" to advance biotechnology and biomanufacturing that is important for health, climate change, energy, food security, agriculture and supply chain resilience. A stated goal is to maintain U.S. technological leadership and economic competitiveness.

The Chinese government has plans to develop a "national strategic technology force" in biotech, which would be tasked with making breakthroughs and helping China achieve "technological independence," primarily from the U.S.

"Both the Chinese government and the Americans have identified biotech as an area important for investment, a sector that presents an opportunity to grow their economy," said Tom Bollyky, the Bloomberg chair in global health at the Council on Foreign Relations. He said any restrictive U.S. measures should be tailored to address military concerns and concerns about genomic data security.

"Naturally there's going to be competition, but what's challenging in biotech is that we are talking about human health," Bollyky said.

Ray Yip, who founded the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention office in China, also worries that the rivalry will slow

medical advancements.

The benefit of coming up with better diagnostics and therapy is beyond any individual country, Yip said, "and will not overshadow the capacity or prestige of the other country."

What concerns Anna Puglisi, a senior fellow at Georgetown University's Center for Security and Emerging Technology, is Beijing's "lack of transparency" and its "unfair market practices."

Puglisi described BGI, a major Chinese biotech company identified in both the House and Senate bills, as "a national champion" that is subsidized and given favored treatment by the state in a system that "blurs private and public as well as civilian and military."

"This system creates market distortions and undermines the global norms of science by using researchers and academic and commercial entities to further the goals of the state," Puglisi said.

BGI, which has stressed its private ownership, offers genetic testing kits and a popular prenatal screening test to detect Down syndrome and other conditions. U.S. lawmakers say they are concerned such data could end up in the hands of the Chinese government.

The Defense Department has listed BGI as a Chinese military company, and the Commerce Department has blacklisted it on human rights grounds, citing a risk that BGI technology might have contributed to surveillance. BGI has rejected the allegations.

In raising its concerns about BGI, the National Security Commission on Emerging Biotechnology says the company is required to share data with the Chinese government, has partnered with the Chinese military, and has received considerable Chinese state funding and support.

State subsidies have allowed BGI to offer genomic sequencing services at a highly competitive price that is attractive to U.S. researchers, according to the commission. The genomic data, once in the hands of the Chinese government, "represents a strategic asset that has privacy, security, economic, and ethical implications," it said.

BGI could not immediately be reached for comment.

Also named in the bills is WuXi AppTec, a Chinese pharmaceutical and medical device company. The legislation states that the company presents a national security threat because of its ties to the Chinese military and its involvement in a Chinese plan to develop technologies for both civilian and military use.

WuXi AppTec said in a statement that it abides by the laws in the countries where it operates and does not pose a security risk to any country. "In fact, we serve as a valued contributor to the global pharmaceutical and life sciences industries," the company said in a statement. **MDT/AP**

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Tribal violence kills 26 combatants and an unconfirmed number of bystanders

ROD MCGUIRK,
MELBOURNE

AT least 26 combatants and an unconfirmed number of bystanders were killed in a gunbattle between warring tribes in Papua New Guinea, police said yesterday.

A tribe, their allies and mercenaries were on their way to attack a neighboring tribe when they were ambushed Sunday in Enga province in the South Pacific nation's remote highlands, Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary Acting Superintendent George Kakas said.

Police Commissioner David Manning later described the clash as a "gunbattle between warring tribes." An unconfirmed number of villagers also were killed. Police reinforcements were sent to the scene of the battle, Manning said.

"At this point, it's not clear exactly how far we have moved into the conflict there," Manning told Australian Broadcasting Corp. "But the intent is to regain control or have a significant presence in that conflict area and then work ... our way through our procedures in dealing with this type of incident."

Kakas initially said 53 combatants had died. But security forces later revised the death toll down to 26.

Bodies were collected from the battlefield, roads and the riverside, then loaded onto police trucks and taken to the hospital. Authorities were still counting "those who were shot, injured and ran off into the bushes," Kakas said.

Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape said he had "great concern" about the violence in Enga and urged the warring tribes to lay down their weapons.

"If there are community disputes, there are ways to deal with the community disputes," Marape said.

"Lay down your arms. A lot of disputes will be resolved. One killing or two killings doesn't solve the problem. It contributes towards more problems,"

AP PHOTO



Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea James Marape

he added.

Papua New Guinea is a diverse nation of 10 million mostly subsistence farmers speaking 800 languages. Internal security has become an increasing challenge for its government as China, the United States and Australia seek closer security ties to the country in a strategically important part of the South Pacific.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said his government was ready to assist Papua New Guinea, which is Australia's nearest neighbor and the largest single recipient of Australian foreign aid.

"That is very disturbing the news that has come out of Papua New Guinea," Albanese said before the death toll was revised down.

"We remain available to provide whatever support we can in a practical way, of course, to help our friends in PNG," Albanese added.

Albanese said Australia was already providing "considerable support" for Papua New Guinea and was helping train the country's police officers.

Tribal violence in the Enga region has intensified since elections in 2022 that maintained Prime Minister James Marape's administration. Elections and accompanying allegations of cheating and process anomalies have always triggered violence throughout the country.

Enga Gov. Peter Ipatas said there were warnings that tribal fighting was about to erupt.

"From a provincial perspective, we knew this fight was going to be on and we (alerted) the security forces last week to make sure they took appropriate action to ensure this didn't occur," Ipatas said.

Ipatas described the violence as a "very, very sad occasion for us in the province and it's a bad thing for the country."

Scores of people have died in tribal fighting in the Enga region in the past year.

Port Moresby's Post-Courier newspaper has reported that high-powered firearms used in the recent fighting made it risky for police to enter the battlefields.

Police said they were assisted by the military in protecting the general public and government property.

Papua New Guinea government lawyer Oliver Nobetau expected more lives would be lost in retaliation for the massacre.

"There's a big concern that this will continue on. Revenge killings tend to be a normal thing that happens," said Nobetau, who is on temporary assignment to the Sydney-based international policy think tank Lowy Institute.

"Tribal violence is something that happens com-

monly, but never to this scale," Nobetau added. His comments related to the higher death toll, but he later said they still applied to the revised toll of 26.

Police had limited resources to deal with such violence on a "massive scale," Nobetau said.

"Tribal violence is something that is prevalent and

the government with its limited resources will try to deploy the police wherever they can to try to curb the security issues," he said.

MDT/AP

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AP PHOTO



Senator Thom Tillis, co-chair of the Senate NATO Observer Group speaks, during a press conference, in Budapest, over the weekend

HUNGARY

Budapest declines offer to meet US senators seeking approval for Sweden's NATO bid

JUSTIN SPIKE, BUDAPEST

A bipartisan delegation of U.S. senators made an official visit to Hungary's capital yesterday [Macau time] and called on the nationalist government to immediately approve Sweden's request to join NATO.

Hungary is the only one of NATO's 31 existing members not to have ratified Sweden's bid. The Hungarian government faces mounting pressure to act after delaying the move for more than 18 months since admitting a new country to the military alliance requires unanimous approval.

The visiting senators announced they would submit a joint resolution to Congress condemning alleged democratic backsliding in Hungary and urging the government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to lift its block on Sweden's trans-Atlantic integration.

"With accession, Hungary and your prime minister will be doing a great service to freedom-loving nations worldwide," Sen. Thom Tillis, a North Carolina Republican, said during a news conference at the U.S. Embassy in Budapest.

The resolution, first re-

ported early Sunday by The Associated Press, was authored by Tillis and Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, a New Hampshire Democrat. Joining them in the delegation to Budapest was Sen. Chris Murphy, a Democrat from Connecticut.

Shaheen said it was "disappointing" that no members of the Hungarian government had accepted invitations to meet the delegation but she was "hopeful and optimistic" Sweden's accession would be submitted for ratification when Hungarian lawmakers reconvene on Feb. 26.

Murphy said the refusal of Orbán's government to meet was "strange and concerning," but that the onus was on the long-serving leader to push for a vote.

"We are wise enough about politics here to know that if Prime Minister Orbán wants this to happen, then the parliament can move forward," he said.

Earlier this month, U.S. Sen. Ben Cardin, a Maryland Democrat and chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, raised the prospect of imposing sanctions on Hungary for its conduct, and called Orbán "the least reliable member of NATO."

In the resolution, obtained

by the AP, the senators note "the important role Hungary can have in European and trans-Atlantic security," but point out its failure to keep earlier promises not to be the last NATO ally to sign off on Sweden's membership.

Hungary, the resolution says, "has not joined all other NATO member states in approving the accession of Sweden to NATO, failing to fulfill a commitment not to be last to approve such accession and jeopardizing trans-Atlantic security at a key moment for peace and stability in Europe."

Orbán, a staunch nationalist who has led Hungary since 2010, has said that he favors making Sweden part of NATO but that lawmakers in his party remained unconvinced because of "blatant lies" from Swedish politicians on the state of Hungary's democracy.

But in a state of the nation speech in Budapest on Saturday, Orbán indicated that Hungary's legislature might soon relent.

"It's good news that our dispute with Sweden is nearing a conclusion," he said. "We are moving toward ratifying Sweden's accession to NATO at the beginning of the spring session of Parliament."

The senators' resolution criticizes Orbán's increasingly warm relations with Russia and China, and notes that while Hungary has opened its doors to Ukrainian refugees fleeing Moscow's invasion, it has also "resisted and diluted European Union sanctions with respect to the Russian Federation."

Orbán, widely considered to be the Kremlin's closest EU ally, has long been criticized for flouting the bloc's standards on democracy and the rule of law. The EU has withheld billions in funding from Budapest over alleged breaches of its rules.

Hungary's government has also adopted an increasingly adversarial stance toward the administration of President Joe Biden, accusing the U.S. of attempting to influence Hungarian public life.

Péter Szijjártó, Hungary's foreign minister, said Friday that he welcomed the senators' visit but that it was "not worth trying to exert pressure on us, because we are a sovereign country."

"We are glad they are coming here because they can see for themselves that everything they read about Hungary in the liberal American media is a blatant lie," Szijjártó said. MDT/AP

this day in history

1986 SOVIETS LAUNCH SPACE STATION MIR

The Soviets have opened a new phase in space exploration with the launch of the world's biggest space station, Mir.

The successful launch of Mir comes just over three weeks after the American space shuttle Challenger disaster, in which seven astronauts died.

At next week's Communist Party congress in Moscow the Mir project is likely to be hailed as proof that the Soviets are leading the peaceful exploration of space.

Mir, which means both peace and world in Russian, is intended to provide a base for a permanently manned complex orbiting the Earth.

It succeeds the Soviet Salyut models, the last of which, Salyut 7, was launched in April 1982 and is still in orbit.

The Americans also had a space station, Skylab, which suffered damage on its initial launch and eventually proved too costly to maintain and fell back to Earth in 1979.

Soviet officials say their new craft represents the transition from research to large-scale production activities in space.

The station has six docking stations, which means other modules or laboratories can be added to it, expanding its size and capability.

The deputy head of the Soviet cosmonaut training centre, Alexei Leonov, said it would only be possible to determine how long Mir would remain in orbit after it had completed its first flight.

He said the cosmonauts, now taking part in a special training programme, would have separate cabins with windows and even individual desks and armchairs.

Mr Leonov explained that Salyut 7 was too small for the plans now being implemented by Soviet experts.

It has only two docking stations and can support a crew of only three, whereas Mir can carry between six and ten people.

The main work of the first cosmonauts on board Mir will be to continue with the experiments in materials processing, begun on Salyut 6 and 7.

Other activities will include observation of the Earth using high-powered cameras, as well as helping locate mineral deposits on Earth and monitor the seas for trawlers.



Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The first crew arrived on board Mir on 15 March 1986 and it remained more or less continuously occupied until November 2000. Crew member Valeri Polyakov stayed up a record 439 days.

The end of the Cold War marked a new era of space co-operation.

In September 1993 US Vice-President Al Gore and Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin announced plans for a new space station, which would later be called the International Space Station, or ISS.

In preparation for this new project, the US became more closely involved with Mir.

From March 1995 seven US astronauts consecutively spent 28 months on Mir, during which time the spacecraft suffered a number of emergencies including a large fire on 23 February 1997 and a collision with an unmanned cargo ship on 25 June 1997. Mounting costs contributed to the decision to bring down Mir.

Mir remained in space until 23 March 2001, during which time it orbited the Earth more than 86,000 times.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Be considerate and avoid being overly opinionated, or arguments will ensue. You can come up with solutions to the problems responsible for inefficiencies at work.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Don't make accusations unless you are completely sure that you are correct. Curl up with a good book or go for a drive in the country. Try to keep ahead of the game.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

You may be torn between two possibilities. This has left you in a confused and uncertain state. You might not accomplish all that you want to at home today.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Minor health problems may flare up if you haven't been taking care of yourself or have been burning the candle at both ends. You're undergoing changes.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You need to reevaluate your situation. Avoid lovers who already have a relationship, even if it is a bad one. Business conducted in your own office will proceed smoothly.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Any renovation or decorating to your home should include the whole family. Don't shy away from potential mates they want to introduce you to.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Look into alternatives that would better suit both your needs. Obstacles may stand in your way where career and success are concerned. You're in the mood to party.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Be careful not to overexert yourself. Interaction with colleagues will only be upsetting. You can be sure that any dealing with large institutions should go well.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Hide your cards and learn to say no. Someone you care about may not be too well. Don't let jealous friends put you down, making you insecure about your capabilities.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Set a limit, or you'll wind up on a tight budget. You may have problems with children. Be prepared to step into the limelight if you wish to promote your ambitions.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

If you've been really busy, try to schedule some time to spend with loved ones. Don't hold yourself back because you think you're too old.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Don't evade issues or twist the truth around. Abrupt action will cause difficulties with relatives. Don't turn down offers that include sports activities or children.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

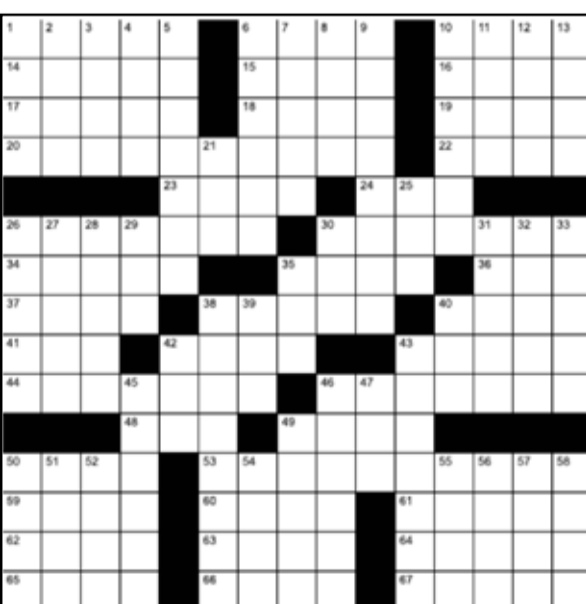
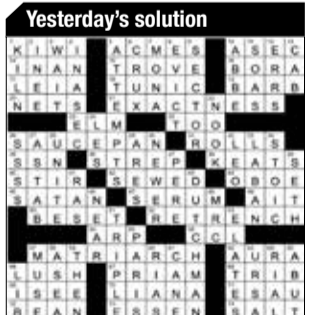
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-5	-1	overcast
Changchun	-19	-10	cloudy
Chengdu	8	17	cloudy
Chongqing	12	18	overcast
Fuzhou	15	29	cloudy
Guangzhou	20	27	overcast
Guiyang	15	26	fine
Haikou	21	33	cloudy
Hangzhou	8	11	rain
Harbin	-17	-12	fine
Hefei	3	6	rain
Nanjing	4	6	rain
Shanghai	8	10	rain
Taipei	18	25	cloudy
Wuhan	4	5	rain
Hong Kong	22	24	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	-8	-7	cloudy
Frankfurt	7	11	cloudy
Paris	8	12	cloudy
London	9	13	cloudy
New York	-2	3	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- A Musketeer; 6- Hoax; 10- Utah ski resort; 14- Reluctant; 15- Salade niçoise ingredient; 16- Blue hue; 17- Where Columbus was born; 18- Eros, to the Romans; 19- Detest; 20- Positive declarations; 22- Monumental; 23- Cat sound; 24- Attila, e.g.; 26- Grades; 30- Bulky and heavy; 34- Actress Barkin; 35- Nettle; 36- Not 'neath; 37- Neeson of 'Rob Roy'; 38- Seasonal song; 40- Type of gun; 41- Director Browning; 42- Speaker's spot; 43- Puppeteer Lewis; 44- Manciple; 46- Do-nothing state; 48- Form of poem, often used to praise something; 49- Dagger of yore; 50- ___ Alto; 53- Without prospect; 59- Lost traction; 60- Back; 61- Worth; 62- Identical; 63- Model Macpherson; 64- Throw out; 65- Propend; 66- Slippery swimmers; 67- Figure skater Cohen;

DOWN 1- Seaweed, e.g.; 2- Ten below?; 3- Author ___ Christian Andersen; 4- Siouan speaker; 5- Use a whetstone on; 6- Flight of steps; 7- Bookstore section; 8- Soon; 9- Sheriff; 10- Capital of Greece; 11- Spring; 12- French actor Jacques; 13- Actor Baldwin; 21- Calendar abbr.; 25- It's no ___!; 26- Shoulder muscles, briefly; 27- "Silas Marner" author; 28- Forest clearing; 29- Sleep stage; 30- O Sole ___; 31- Bits; 32- Swerves; 33- Els with tees; 35- Monopoly quartet; Abbr.; 38- Without anxiety; 39- Succor; 40- "___ loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah"; 42- Pop; 43- Arm coverings; 45- Covered with trees; 46- Hardens; 47- ___ Rosenkavalier; 49- Stable compartment; 50- Attention-getter; 51- Winglike parts; 52- Delineate; 54- River to the Ubangi; 55- Molten rock; 56- Some Ivy Leaguers; 57- Of like kind; 58- Stiff bristle;



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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Cillian Murphy



Emma Stone

FILM

'OPPENHEIMER' WINS SEVEN PRIZES, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, AT THE BAFTA

JILL LAWLESS, LONDON

ATOM bomb epic "Oppenheimer" won seven prizes, including best picture, director and actor, at the 77th British Academy Film Awards on Sunday (yesterday, Macau time), cementing its front-runner status for the Oscars next month.

Gothic fantasia "Poor Things" took five prizes and Holocaust drama "The Zone of Interest" won three.

British-born filmmaker Christopher Nolan won his first best director BAFTA for "Oppenheimer," and Irish performer Cillian Murphy won the best actor prize for playing physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, the father of the atomic bomb.

Murphy said he was grateful to play such a "colossally knotty, complex character."

Nolan noted that nuclear weapons are "a nihilistic subject and the film inevitably reflects that," telling the movie's backers: "Thank you for taking on something dark."

Emma Stone was named best actress for playing the wild and spirited Bella Baxter in "Poor Things," a steampunk-style visual extravaganza that won prizes for visual effects, production design, makeup and hair and costume design.

"Oppenheimer" had a field-leading 13 nominations, but missed out on the record of nine trophies, set in 1971 by "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid."

It won the best film race against "Poor Things," "Killers of the Flower Moon," "Anatomy of a Fall" and "The Holdovers." "Oppenheimer" also scooped trophies for editing, cinematography and musical score, as well as the best supporting actor prize for Robert Downey Jr., who played Atomic Energy Commission head Lewis Strauss.

Da'Vine Joy Randolph was named best supporting actress for playing a boarding school cook in "The Holdovers" and said she felt

a "responsibility I don't take lightly" to tell the stories of underrepresented people like her character Mary.

"Oppenheimer" faced stiff competition in what's widely considered a vintage year for cinema and an awards season energized by the end of actors' and writers' strikes that shut down Hollywood for months.

"The Zone of Interest," a British-produced film shot in Poland with a largely German cast, was named both best British film and best film not in English — a first — and also took the prize for its sound, which has been described as the real star of the film.

Jonathan Glazer's unsettling drama takes place in a family home just outside the walls of the Auschwitz death camp, whose horrors are heard and hinted at, rather than seen.

"Walls aren't new from before or since the Holocaust, and it seems stark right now that we should care about innocent people being killed in Gaza or Yemen or Mariupol or Israel," producer James Wilson said. "Thank you for recognizing a film that asks us to think in those spaces."

Ukraine war documentary "20 Days in Mariupol," produced by The Associated Press and PBS "Frontline," won the prize for best documentary.

"This is not about us," said filmmaker Mstyslav Chernov, who captured the harrowing reality of life in the besieged city with an AP team. "This is about Ukraine, about the people of Mariupol."

Chernov said the story of the city and its fall into Russian occupation "is a symbol of struggle and a symbol of faith. Thank you for empowering our voice and let's just keep fighting."

The awards ceremony, hosted by "Doctor Who" star David Tennant — who entered wearing a kilt and sequined top while carrying a dog named Bark Ruffalo — was a

glitzy, British-accented appetizer for Hollywood's Academy Awards, closely watched for hints about who might win at the Oscars on March 10.

The prize for original screenplay went to French courtroom drama "Anatomy of a Fall." The film about a woman on trial over the death of her husband was written by director Justine Triet and her partner, Arthur Harari.

"It's a fiction, and we are reasonably fine," Triet joked.

Cord Jefferson won the adapted screenplay prize for the satirical "American Fiction," about the struggles of an African American novelist

Jefferson said he hoped the success of the movie "maybe changes the minds of the people who are in charge of greenlighting films and TV shows, allows them to be less risk-averse."

Historical epic "Killers of the Flower Moon," Leonard Bernstein biopic "Maestro," grief-flecked love story "All of Us Strangers" and class-war dramedy "Saltburn" all won nothing despite multiple nomina-

tions.

"Barbie," one half of 2023's "Barbenheimer" box office juggernaut and the year's top-grossing film, also came up empty from five nominations. "Barbie" director Greta Gerwig failed to get a directing nomination for either the BAFTAs or the Oscars, in what was seen by many as a major snub.

Britain's film academy introduced changes to increase the awards' diversity in 2020, when no women were nominated as best director for the seventh year running and all 20 nominees in the lead and supporting performer categories were white. However, Triet was the only woman among this year's six best-director nominees.

The Rising Star award, the only category decided by public vote, went to Mia McKenna-Bruce, star of "How to Have Sex."

Before the ceremony, nominees, including Bradley Cooper, Carey Mulligan, Emily Blunt, Rosamund Pike, Ryan Gosling and Ayo Edebiri all walked the red carpet at London's Royal Festival Hall, along with presenters Andrew Scott, Cate

Blanchett, Idris Elba and David Beckham.

Guest of honor was Prince William, in his role as president of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts. He arrived without his wife, Kate, who is recovering from abdominal surgery last month.

The ceremony included musical performances by "Ted Lasso" star Hannah Waddingham, singing "Time After Time," and Sophie Ellis-Bextor, singing her 2001 hit "Murder on the Dancefloor," which shot back up the charts after featuring in "Saltburn."

Film curator June Givanni, founder of the June Givanni PanAfrican Cinema Archive, was honored for outstanding British contribution to cinema, while actress Samantha Morton received the academy's highest honor, the BAFTA Fellowship.

Morton, who grew up in foster care and children's homes, said that "representation matters."

"The stories we tell, they have the power to change people's lives," she said. "Film changed my life, it transformed me, and it led me here today." **MDT/AP**

WINNERS 2024

FILM — "Oppenheimer"

BRITISH FILM — "The Zone of Interest"

DIRECTOR — Christopher Nolan, "Oppenheimer"

ACTOR — Cillian Murphy, "Oppenheimer"

ACTRESS — Emma Stone, "Poor Things"

SUPPORTING ACTOR — Robert Downey Jr., "Oppenheimer"

SUPPORTING ACTRESS — Da'Vine Joy Randolph, "The Holdovers"

RISING STAR (VOTED BY THE PUBLIC) — Mia McKenna-Bruce

OUTSTANDING BRITISH DEBUT — Savannah Leaf, Shirley O'Connor and Medb Riordan, "Earth Mama"

ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY — Justine Triet and Arthur Harari, "Anatomy of a Fall"

ADAPTED SCREENPLAY — Cord Jefferson, "American Fiction"

FILM NOT IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE — "The Zone of Interest"

MUSICAL SCORE — Ludwig Goransson, "Oppenheimer"

CINEMATOGRAPHY — Hoye van Hoytema, "Oppenheimer"

EDITING — Jennifer Lame, "Oppenheimer"

PRODUCTION DESIGN — Shona Heath, James Price and Zsuzsa Mihalek, "Poor Things"

COSTUME DESIGN — Holly Waddington, "Poor Things"

SOUND — Johnnie Burn and Tarn Willers, "The Zone of Interest"

CASTING — Susan Shopmaker, "The Holdovers"

VISUAL EFFECTS — Simon Hughes, "Poor Things"

MAKEUP AND HAIR — Nadia Stacey, Mark Coulier and Josh Weston, "Poor Things"

ANIMATED FILM — "The Boy and the Heron"

BRITISH SHORT FILM — "Jellyfish and Lobster"

BRITISH SHORT ANIMATION — "Crab Day"

DOCUMENTARY — "20 Days in Mariupol"

OUTSTANDING BRITISH CONTRIBUTION TO CINEMA: Film curator June Givanni

BAFTA FELLOWSHIP — Samantha Morton

BOXING

IOC won't change age limit to let Pacquaio compete at Paris Olympics at 45

THE International Olympic Committee will not change its rules to let boxing great Manny Pacquaio compete at the Paris Games aged five years beyond the entry limit.

Pacquaio, who retired in 2021, wanted to box at age 45 in the Olympic tournament in Paris where medal bouts will be held in the Roland Garros tennis complex.

The IOC said yesterday [Macau time] it wrote to Olympic officials in Philippines explaining the age limit for boxers of 40 will be upheld. The IOC now oversees Olympic boxing after



de-recognizing the International Boxing Association governing body.

The age limit for Olympic

boxing was raised to 40 from 34 in 2013 — a move that would have let Pacquaio try to compete at the 2016 Rio

de Janeiro Olympics. He chose not to at the time when he was also elected to be a senator in his home country.

It is unclear if Pacquaio would have tried to earn a place at the Paris Olympics in one of two qualification tournaments that open later this month in Italy and in May in Thailand.

The Philippines Olympic body had talked of trying to get a so-called "universality" entry to the Paris Summer Games. These are effectively free passes to events given to countries that have few athletes at the Olympics and typically struggle to qualify on merit.

However, the IOC explained Sunday that the Philippines had been too successful to benefit from the scheme.

"Universality places are not allocated to (teams) with an average of more than eight athletes in individual sports/disciplines at the last two editions of the Olympic Games," the IOC said. "This is the case for the Philippine Olympic Committee."

Pacquaio ended his storied career in September 2021 at age 42 after 72 fights, winning 12 world titles at a record eight different weight divisions. **MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL

New Zealand women win Oceania to qualify for Paris Olympics

NEW Zealand will compete in the women's football tournament at the Paris Olympic Games after beating the Solomon Islands 11-1 in the final of the Oceania qualifying tournament yesterday in Apia, Samoa.

Hannah Wilkinson, who scored the first goal of the Women's World Cup in New Zealand and Australia last year, was one of four players to score twice for New Zealand. The others were Grace Jale, Indiah-Paige Riley and Katie Kitching.

New Zealand led 5-0 at halftime.

The final saw New Zealand continue its dominance of a tournament in which it scored 32 goals and conceded two in five matches.

New Zealand is the sixth team to qualify for the Olympic women's tournament after host France, Canada, United States, Brazil and Colombia. Australia and Japan are expected to qualify for the 12-team tournament later this month.

New Zealand has played in the Olympic tournament on four previous occasions but has won only two matches, against Cameroon in 2012 and Colombia in 2016. **MDT/AP**

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- 冼玲鳳 Mariana Afonso Esteves
- 馬秀文 Sofia Mendes Martins
- 飛嘉華 Carlos dos Santos Ferreira °
- 莫永誠 Rui Velez de Moura
- 安東尼 António Manuel dos Santos
- 巴慧雅 Vera Bastos
- 歐文傑 Miguel Evaristo
- 陳芷喬 Joana Chan

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



OPINION

The Conversation

Jeff Inglis, MDT/The Conversation



CANDIDATES' AGING BRAINS ARE FACTORS IN US PRESIDENTIAL RACE

The leading contenders in the 2024 U.S. presidential election are two of the three oldest people ever to serve as president. President Joe Biden is 81. Former President Donald Trump is 77. Ronald Reagan took office at 69 and left it at age 77.

Both Biden and Trump have faced criticism about what can appear to be obvious signs of aging, including questions about their memory and cognitive abilities.

Scholars writing for The Conversation U.S. have discussed various aspects of how aging affects people's brains. Here we spotlight four articles that collectively explain why there is cause for concern, why there is no clear statement to be made about any specific person's cognitive power as they age, and ways people can preserve their brain power into their golden years.

1. Decline in thinking can come with age. Brandeis psychology professor Angela Gutches, who studies brain activity to understand human thought, said there is a body of work documenting a cognitive decline in aging people:

"Past behavioral data largely pointed to loss in cognitive – that is, thinking – abilities with age, including poorer memory and greater distractibility."

But her work has also found that "aging brains can reorganize and change, and not necessarily for the worse."

2. Some people age faster than others. Aging is an individual experience, explained Aditi Gurkar, a geriatric medicine scholar at the University of Pittsburgh:

"Although age is the principal risk factor for several chronic diseases, it is an unreliable indicator of how quickly your body will decline or how susceptible you are to age-related disease. This is because there is a difference between your chronological age, or the number of years you've been alive, and your biological age – your physical and functional ability."

Gurkar's work has been focused on the latter, noting that some people with the same chronological ages can have very different cognitive and physical abilities. Key factors include the strength of a person's social connections, as well as their sleeping habits, water consumption, exercise and diet.

3. Even cells age differently inside the body. Ellen Quarles, who teaches cellular and molecular biology of aging at the University of Michigan, explained that aging is so individualized that it varies even at the cellular level:

"There is no single cause of aging. No two people age the same way, and indeed, neither do any two cells. There are countless ways for your basic biology to go wrong over time, and these add up to create a unique network of aging-related factors for each person that make finding a one-size-fits-all anti-aging treatment extremely challenging."

4. There is a way to preserve abilities. Brian Ho and Ronald Cohen, University of Florida scholars who study brain health in aging people, have found that physical activity makes a real difference in cognition:

"People in the oldest stage of life who regularly engage in aerobic activities and strength training exercises perform better on cognitive tests than those who are either sedentary or participate only in aerobic exercise."

Specifically, they found:

"(T)hose who incorporated both aerobic exercises, such as swimming and cycling, and strength exercises like weightlifting into their routines – regardless of intensity and duration – had better mental agility, quicker thinking and greater ability to shift or adapt their thinking."

Whether it's for Biden and Trump or anyone else, these scholars advise staying active, deepening connections with family and friends and recognizing that not everyone ages the same way.

FORMER BANK OF CHINA CHAIRMAN INDICTED FOR BRIBERY IN NATION'S LONG-RUNNING ANTICORRUPTION DRIVE

THE BUZZ

The former chairman of the Bank of China has been indicted on bribery charges, prosecutors said last night, adding to a long list of business and government officials who have been brought down by Chinese leader Xi Jinping's yearslong anticorruption drive.

Liu Liange is accused of taking advantage of his positions at the Bank of China and previously as president of the Export-Import Bank of China, the Supreme People's Procuratorate said in a statement posted on social media.

He has been charged with helping others with loans and per-

sonnel appointments in return for property and cash and with making loans in violation of regulations, causing significant losses, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

The charges against Liu, who has been under investigation for more than 10 months, were brought in the city of Jinan in eastern China's Shandong province.

The state-owned Bank of China, one of the country's "Big Four" banks, has a major overseas presence.

The anti-corruption campaign, which is popular with the public, shows no sign of letting up.

AP PHOTO



Woman cries as she pays tribute to Navalny

RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES EXTEND A PROBE INTO NAVALNY'S DEATH AS ALLIES SPEAK OF COVER-UP

VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV

THE mother of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny yesterday was denied access to a morgue where his body was believed to be kept after his death in an Arctic penal colony, and Navalny's allies accused authorities of trying to hide evidence.

Navalny's spokesperson Kira Yarmysh said that the Investigative Committee, the country's top criminal investigation agency, informed Lyudmila Navalnaya that the cause of her son's death remained unknown and that the official probe had been extended. "They lie, buy time for themselves and do not even hide it," Yarmysh posted on X, formerly Twitter.

Many world leaders blamed President Vladimir Putin and his government for Navalny's death Friday at age 47. Navalny's team said he was "murdered," and charged that officials' refusal to hand over his body was part of a cover-up.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov slammed what he described as "boorish" and "inadmissible" statements by Western leaders who held Putin responsible for Navalny's death.

"Those statements can't

do any harm to the head of our state, but they certainly aren't becoming for those who make them," Peskov said in a call with reporters.

Yarmysh said that Navalny's 69-year-old mother and his lawyers were not allowed into the morgue in Salekhard on Monday morning. The staff didn't answer when they asked if the body was there, Yarmysh said.

Asked when Navalny's body could be handed over to his family, Peskov responded that the Kremlin was not involved in those proceedings, adding that the official probe was continuing in line with the law.

Navalny's ally Ivan Zhdanov denounced the Russian authorities as "lackeys and liars." "It's clear what they are doing now — covering up the traces of their crime," he wrote Monday.

Navalny's death has deprived the Russian opposition of its most well-known and inspiring politician less than a month before an election that is all but certain to give Putin another six years in power. It dealt a devastating blow to many Russians, who had seen Navalny as a hope for political change following his unrelenting criticism of the Kremlin.

Nearly 300 people have been detained by police in

Russia as they streamed to ad-hoc memorials and monuments to victims of political repression with flowers and candles to pay tribute to Navalny, according to OVD-Info, a group that monitors political arrests. The U.S. and British ambassadors also mourned Navalny's death at a memorial in Moscow.

Authorities cordoned off some of the memorials across the country and were removing flowers at night, but they kept appearing.

Over 50,000 people have submitted requests to the Russian government asking for Navalny's remains to be handed over to his relatives, OVD-Info said.

Russia's Federal Penitentiary Service reported that Navalny felt sick after a walk Friday and became unconscious at the penal colony in the town of Kharp, in the Yamalo-Nenets region about 1,900 kilometers northeast of Moscow.

Navalny had been jailed since January 2021, when he returned to Moscow after recuperating in Germany from nerve agent poisoning he blamed on the Kremlin.

His widow, Yulia Navalnaya, was in Brussels yesterday and is expected to meet with European Union foreign ministers and other EU officials.

AP PHOTO



Netherlands The Palestinian foreign minister Riyad Al-Maliki (pictured) accused Israel of apartheid as he urged the United Nation's top court in The Hague to declare that Israel's occupation of lands sought for a Palestinian state is illegal and must end immediately and unconditionally. The allegation came at the start of historic hearings into the legality of Israel's 57-year occupation of lands sought for a Palestinian state. The case stands against the backdrop of the Israel-Hamas war.

Russian forces have completed their takeover of Avdiivka by eliminating the last pocket of resistance at the eastern Ukraine city's huge coke plant, the Russian military said yesterday, after the sheer weight of its troop numbers and greater firepower drove out Kyiv's forces. Moscow officials announced Saturday they had taken control of Avdiivka. Ukrainian forces confirmed pulling out of the bombed-out city in what amounted to a triumph for the Kremlin.

Gulf of Aden A missile attack by Yemen's Houthis rebels that damaged a Belize-flagged ship traveling through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait that connects the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden has forced the crew to abandon the ship, authorities said yesterday. The Iran-backed Houthis also claimed they shot down an American MQ-9 Reaper drone, something not immediately acknowledged by U.S. forces in the region. However, the Houthis have downed U.S. drones before.

AP PHOTO



USA The funeral of a renowned transgender activist in a New York cathedral elicited a denunciation of the event by a senior church official, who called the mass a scandal within one of the preeminent houses of worship in U.S. Catholicism. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York condemned the funeral of Cecilia Gentili (pictured), which was held in St. Patrick's Cathedral in Manhattan and drew a large audience last week.