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“THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’”

THE MONTH-LONG JOINT OPERATION OF ALL SECURITY FORCES THAT ENDED FEBRUARY 18 RESULTED IN FINDING 1,288 PEOPLE SUSPECTED OF COMMITTING CRIMES

JOCKEY CUB CLAIMS IMPOSSIBLE TO ACCOMMODATE COMPENSATION TO HORSE OWNERS

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CHINESE C919 JET IN SPOTLIGHT AT SINGAPORE AIR SHOW

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MOP 8.00
HKD 10.00

2305 4271

AP PHOTO



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres says combatants in places such as Congo, Gaza, Myanmar, Ukraine and Sudan are turning a “blind eye” to international law as he made a plea for greater respect for human rights and peace around the world. Speaking as the U.N.’s top human rights body opened its latest session, Guterres warned that the world is becoming “less safe by the day.” “Our world is changing at warp speed,” he told the Human Rights Council. “The multiplication of conflicts is causing unprecedented suffering. But human rights are a constant.”

AP PHOTO



EU Farmers clashed with police in Belgium yesterday, spraying officers with liquid manure and setting fire to piles of tires in a fresh show of force as European Union agriculture ministers met in search of ways to address their concerns. Brussels police said that 900 tractors had entered the city, many bearing down on the European Council building where the ministers were meeting.

AP PHOTO



Hungary’s parliament voted yesterday on ratifying Sweden’s bid to join NATO, likely bringing an end to more than 18 months of delays that have frustrated the alliance as it seeks to expand in response to Russia’s war in Ukraine. Hungary’s government submitted the protocols for approving Sweden’s entrance to NATO in 2022, but the matter has stalled in parliament since then over opposition by governing party lawmakers.

ECONOMY
SECRETARY EXPECTS
90% PRE-COVID
GDP THIS YEAR

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1,600-SIGNATURES
PETITION
OPPOSING LANDFILL
OFF COLOANE
SUBMITTED



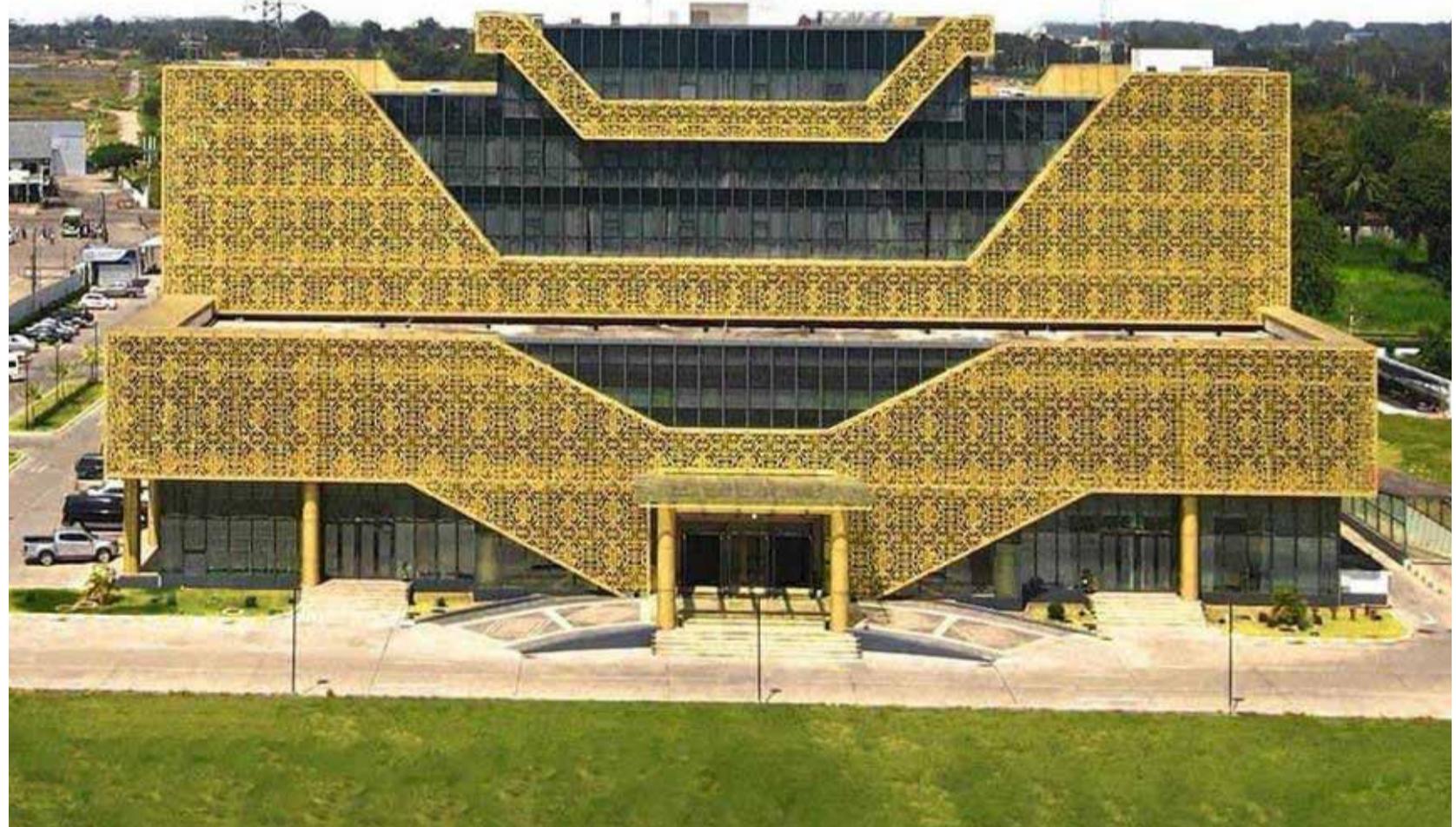
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EXCLUSIVE

THE AWARD IS ARBITRATION

A Macau-seated Tribunal awarded \$175 million to local gaming firm over Laos casino dispute – a landmark in the application of newly-revised arbitration law ▶ P2-3



SANUM VS ST GROUP

Major arbitration in Macau-seated Tribunal

PAULO COUTINHO

In a landmark decision that has rippled through the international arbitration community, a Macau-seated Tribunal has awarded a significant victory to a local company in its dispute against a Laotian gambling and banking group. The "Final Award," an extensive document of 284 pages reviewed by Macau Daily Times, awards a compensation of around USD175 million to the claimant, local-based firm Sanum Investments Ltd, over a commercial dispute in Laos.

The case, which pitted Sanum against a Laos-based gambling group that developed Savan Vegas, centered on allegations of contractual breaches and disputes over the terms of engagement between the two parties. A tribunal appointed by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), with an office in Macau, not only awarded the local company monetary compensation but also marked a significant moment in the application of Macau's revised arbitration law of 2019, under which this case



ST Casino, where Thanaleng Slot Club is located, in Vientiane

was decided.

This award is particularly noteworthy as it is the first major

arbitration case seated in the Macau Special Administrative Region since the revision of its

arbitration law in 2019. The revised law, aimed at modernizing and enhancing the arbitration

framework in Macau, has evidently provided a robust basis for resolving this high-stakes

LAWYERS AND JUDGES

SANUM Investments Ltd, a Macau company with American ownership, was represented by a team comprising both U.S. and Macau-based legal experts. From the United States, the team included Deborah Deitsch-Perez and Jeffrey T. Prudhomme of STINSON LLP and Jorge Menezes from FC Law – Lawyers & Private Notaries in Macau.

On the opposing side, the respondents - ST GROUP CO. LTD, ST VEGAS CO. LTD, and Sithat Xaysouliwong, were represented by a legal team spanning multiple jurisdictions. Singaporean legal expertise was provided by Francis Xavier, Edwin Tan, Kristin Ng, Alvin Tay, and Alina Chia of RAJAH & TANN SINGAPORE LLP, along with Thomas Tan from Haridass Ho & Partners. Adding to this international team was Somphone Lakanchanh from SPL LAW OFFICE CO. LTD in Laos, ensuring that the respondents had legal advice that was well-versed in both Singaporean and Laotian legal principles. Within Macau, Jorge Neto Valente and Erica Medeiros from JNV – LAWYERS & NOTARIES, along with Andre Santos Raquel, contributed their local legal expertise to the respondent's defense. This extensive and diverse legal representation underscores the complexity and international scope of the dispute, reflecting the increasing globalization of legal practice, especially in the

realm of arbitration. The case also highlights the strategic importance of assembling a legal team that combines both deep local knowledge and broad international expertise, capable of navigating the intricacies of international arbitration law, as well as the specific legal landscapes of the jurisdictions involved.

The involvement of such high-caliber legal teams from multiple jurisdictions exemplified the high stakes of the arbitration and also demonstrated the "legal acumen and strategic planning required to litigate effectively in the global arena." This arbitration case serves as a significant reference point for future disputes involving international investments and contractual agreements, particularly in the gaming industry.

The arbitration panel that delivered the unanimous decision on the merits in favor of Sanum Investments Ltd against the Lao-based ST Group and its affiliates comprised a trio of internationally renowned arbitrators. Their collective expertise, drawn from diverse legal traditions and jurisdictions, underscores the arbitration's rigorous and fair adjudication process. Robert H. Smit, serving as a co-arbitrator, is based in New York, USA. His extensive experience in international arbitration, coupled with his academic contributions to the field, posi-



Jorge Menezes



Neto Valente

tions him as a leading figure in international legal circles. His role in this arbitration underscores the panel's commitment to incorporating a broad, international perspective. V.K. Rajah SC, another co-arbitrator, hails from Singapore. His distinguished career includes service as the Attorney-General of Singapore, and his contributions to legal scholarship and practice in Singapore and internationally are well recognized. His involvement in the tribunal added a depth of understanding about Asian

legal systems and international commercial law, enriching the panel's deliberations. Vera van Houtte, the President of the Tribunal, is based in Leuven, Belgium. Her global reputation as an arbitrator in international disputes, especially in commercial and investment arbitration, brought a wealth of experience and a balanced approach to the tribunal. Her leadership ensured the arbitration process was conducted to the highest standards of fairness and impartiality. **PC**

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awards \$175 million to local gaming firm

ICC INTERNATIONAL COURT OF ARBITRATION

CASE No. 25100/PTA/XZG

SANUM INVESTMENTS LIMITED
(Macau)

vs/

1. ST GROUP CO., LTD
(Lao People's Democratic Republic)2. Sithat Xaysoulivong
(Lao People's Democratic Republic)3. ST VEGAS CO., LTD.
(Lao People's Democratic Republic)

award. It represents a crucial test of Macau's revised legal framework for arbitration. The law emphasizes principles such as the autonomy of the arbitration process, equality, confidentiality, and, notably, the minimal intervention of state courts, which aligns with international best practices in arbitration.

One of the key aspects of this case was the tribunal's adherence to the principle of minimal court intervention, a "cornerstone of arbitration-friendly jurisdictions." This principle, underscored in both Macau's arbitration law and international conventions such as the 1958 New York Convention, to which Macau is a signatory, ensures that arbitration proceedings are not unduly influenced or hindered by external judicial processes. This approach not only expedites the resolution of disputes but also maintains the integrity and autonomy of the arbitration process, as stated in academic literature and legislation reviewed by the Times.

The process is currently in the "recognition of the award" stage by Laotian judicial au-

thorities, a final and procedural step that paves the way for immediate enforcement. This legitimizes the decision in Laos and exemplifies the cross-border enforceability of arbitration awards, a critical factor for international businesses seeking reliable dispute resolution mechanisms.

This landmark case also highlights the finality of arbitration tribunal awards. As per the legislation, in an arbitration tribunal decision such as this one, there is no avenue for appeal. The respondents or their legal representatives can only challenge the decision "on procedural grounds." This aspect of arbitration is vital for businesses that seek certainty and wish to avoid protracted legal battles.

The recognition of the award by Laotian judicial authorities is a critical step that "underscores the international legal community's respect for arbitration decisions," a note distributed by Sanum Ltd said. This act of recognition facilitates the practical implementation of the award but also strengthens

the international arbitration framework by ensuring that awards are respected and enforced across borders. It highlights the importance of international cooperation and respect for the rule of law in the global arbitration landscape.

Macau's successful handling of this type of case without any annulment being upheld against the arbitral award may reinforce its status as "an arbitration-friendly jurisdiction," thereby enhancing its attractiveness as a seat for international arbitration, which is an important goal of the SAR government.

Recently, in a meeting with Vong Hin Fai, president of the Macau Lawyers Association, the Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng remarked that "arbitration and mediation are effective extrajudicial means of dispute resolution." He added that in the future, Macau will be able to provide legal arbitration services catering to the Greater Bay Area (GBA) and international trades, making particular mention of China-Lusophone trades, as reported by the Times.

dispute, highlighting the region's capabilities in handling complex international arbitra-

tion cases.

The significance of this case extends beyond the monetary

The litigation: A joint-venture gone south

PAULO COUTINHO

IN the heart of a groundbreaking legal arbitration that unfolded within the uniquely positioned Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR), a vivid narrative emerged, spotlighting the complex interplay of international investment, legal disputes, and the intricate dynamics of the gaming industry in Southeast Asia. This narrative is centered on the arbitration case between Sanum Investments Ltd, a Macau company with American ownership, and the Lao-based ST Group Co. Ltd, ST Vegas Co. Ltd, along with its owner, Sithat Xaysoulivong, a prominent Lao businessman and owner of ST Bank. The case, overseen by a Tribunal seated in Macau under the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), resulted in a monumental award of approximately USD175 million in favor of Sanum Investments Ltd.

The crux of this arbitration lay in the establishment and operational disputes of slot clubs and casinos in

Laos, particularly spotlighting the Thanaleng Slot Club. Sanum's venture into the Lao gaming industry, in partnership with the ST Group, was initiated by a mutual interest: ST and Sithat's quest "for a partner with necessary capital and gaming expertise, and Sanum's ambition to expand its gaming industry footprint into Southeast Asia." This partnership, in the form of a joint-venture, commencing in May 2007, was a complex agreement wherein Sanum was to hold a 60% stake in the joint ven-

ture after an initial period favoring ST. However, the essence of their dispute concerned the management and profit-sharing arrangement of the Thanaleng Slot Club, with Sanum alleging significant investments over the years into the Laos gaming businesses. The arbitration proceedings were intricately tied to the procedural and jurisdictional nuances of international arbitration law, particularly after a pivotal ruling by the Singapore Court of Appeal in late 2019. This ruling redirected the arbitra-

tion to be seated in Macau, contrary to an initial seating in Singapore by the Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC). This decision not only emphasized the legal significance of the arbitration seat but also highlighted Macau's emerging stature and legal framework as conducive to handling complex international arbitration cases, namely when it pertains to the gaming sector, the driver of the local economy, where giant international players are operating under concessions from the MSAR.

The Tribunal's Final Award, rendered on October 16, 2023, unequivocally sided with Sanum, citing breaches by the respondents of their agreements. This award encompassed damages, legal costs, and compounded interest, thereby affirming the gravity of the contractual violations and the consequential financial reparations owed by the ST Group and Sithat to Sanum.

The financial crux of the arbitration highlighted the massive investments and the expected returns from those investments. Sanum Investments Ltd had invested USD85 million over the years in the Laos gaming business. This investment was pivotal in transforming the profitability of the ventures involved, particularly the Thanaleng Slot Club and the Savan Vegas Casino, before its seizure by the Lao government. The Thanaleng Slot Club, positioned at the Vientiane Friendship Bridge bordering Thailand, was notably lucrative, drawing a significant customer base from Thailand where gaming remains restricted.

This arbitration showcases the complexities and financial stakes involved in international gaming industry disputes, particularly in regions like Southeast Asia where legal and regulatory frameworks can be challenging.



The ICC Tribunal, in its Final Award, ordered the respondents—ST Group Co. Ltd., Sithat Xaysoulivong, and ST Vegas Co. Ltd.—to jointly and severally pay Sanum Investments Limited a total of USD170,210,000 in damages. This figure represents a quantification of the breach of agreements attributed to the respondents. In addition to the damages, the Tribunal also awarded USD2,713,458.15 in legal and ICC costs to Sanum Investments Ltd, alongside the USD1,787,849.22 that Sanum had previously collected from Sithat in Singapore pursuant to a court order.

The award further included annually compounded interest at the US FED (Federal Reference Interest Rate), currently at 5.5% per annum, emphasizing the Tribunal's recognition of the financial losses and legal expenses incurred by Sanum due to the respondents' breaches.

This arbitration showcases the complexities and financial stakes involved in international gaming industry disputes, particularly in regions like Southeast Asia where legal and regulatory frameworks can be challenging.

ANTHONY LAM

SECRETARY for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong expects this year's GDP will reach 90% of the level back in 2019, or a 10.3% de-facto year-over-year increase from last year.

While sitting in at a seminar organized by a local business association, the economy official said that last year, the city saw "strong recovery" in the economy with the resumption of normalcy after Covid-19 restrictions. The de-facto GDP increase last year was 80.5% year-over-year, with a per capita GDP reaching nearly MOP560,000, which signaled a recovery to over 80% of the pre-Covid level.

In addition, he announced that the State Council has approved the addition of Xi'an City in Shaanxi Province and Qingdao City in Shandong Province as eligible cities for the Individual Visitor Scheme (IVS) to Hong Kong and Macau, with applications starting to be accepted from Mar. 6. The official believes that this addition will promote the development of the city's tourism industry by generating greater synergies.

Moreover, he said that this year, there will be four key tasks in his areas, including continuing to improve people's livelihood and optimizing the business environment; accelerating the implementation of various major tasks and key projects determined by the "1+4" plan; deepening Macau's function as a China-Lusophone platform; as well as accelerating the construction of the Guangdong-Macao In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin (the Zone).

ECONOMY

LEI WAI NONG EXPECTS 90% PRE-COVID GDP THIS YEAR



Lei underlined that Macau had a very satisfactory opening of this year with nearly 5.3 million counts of visitor entries logged from Jan. 1 to Feb. 18, equating to a daily average of about 108,000 counts. These amount to about 88% of the level in 2019.

In January, there were 199,278 international tourists, a year-on-year increase of 5.6 times, further recovering to 66.4% in the same period in 2019. The average hotel occupancy rate was 85.9%, especially during the past Golden Week from Feb. 10 to 17, when a total of 1,357,803 was recorded. The daily average number of tourists reached 169,725, a significant increase of 163.8% from the average of 64,328 during the same Golden Week in 2023, and has returned to the daily average level during the

same Golden Week in 2019.

At the same event, Macao Chamber of Commerce (MCC) president Chui Sai Cheong gave several opinions on the development of Macau.

Chui suggested that the development of community economy

should be further boosted. He cited the Central Economic Work Conference held at the end of last year as pointing out that the positioning of the promotion of consumption should be elevated from post-pandemic recovery to constant expansion. In addition,

he said that the national Ministry of Commerce had dedicated this year to the promotion of consumption.

While emphasizing the difficulties faced by community business operators, he suggested the government organize more activities to attract local residents to spend in Macau. He also suggested the government designate land plots in Northern District for the construction of budget hotels, so as to boost the energy of the district.

Describing this year as a benchmark year for the Zone, Chui suggested the government ensure the effective implementations of policies in Hengqin that will attract capital and enterprises from Macau, so that investors from Macau will have the confidence and aspiration to participate in the construction of the Zone.

To his fellow businesspeople and entrepreneurs, Chui suggested they adjust to the new trend by analyzing changes in the market and consumer habits, as well as improving quality of both services and products with an open mindset.

GDP TO GROW LESS THAN 10% IN 2024: MEA

LAU Pun Lap, the president of the Macau Economic Association (MEA), predicts GDP growth of less than 10% year-on-year in 2024. Lau said that visitor arrivals to Macau have been steadily increasing between January and February of this year. Lau also highlighted that the experience of visitors to Macau is changing as gaming operators invest more in non-gaming elements. He suggested strengthening tourism cooperation between Macau and Hengqin to expand the visitor base. However, the president of the Macau

Economic Association pointed out that shops in some non-tourism districts are still facing challenges, with some closures in the North District. This suggests that commercial tenants in certain areas have not fully benefited from the growth of tourists. Additionally, there may be pressure on non-performing loans in the banking sector, and uncertainties remain in Macau's economic development. It is hoped that with the support of the Central Government, Macau's economy will continue to develop steadily.

1,600 signatures submitted opposing landfill off Coloane coast

ANTHONY LAM

IN opposition to a proposed landfill off the coast of Coloane, the organizers of a petition have submitted 1,600 signatures to the government over the weekend to call for protection of marine life.

Organized by the Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society (HKDCS), the Macau Green Student Union (MGSU) and local ecological worker Kuan Hok In, the petition was initiated in response to the earlier revelation of the Environmental Protection Bureau's (DSPA) request for budgeting for the proposed landfill.

The budget plan concerns MOP15.59 billion and the project's execution period is set from January

2021 to December 2045.

Previously, various government officials have been asked about the proposed project. They have appealed to necessity, development and science to justify the project. However, the organizers of the petition argued that the project will jeopardize the habitat of the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin, a nationally protected species.

Cited by All About Macau, MGSU president Joe Chan reiterated that the proposed location of the landfill is a critical habitat of the endangered species and arguably the most biologically diverse marine location in Macau.

Should the landfill go ahead, it will "completely extinguish" the city's marine ecological development. He

questioned if this is a step that a responsible government should take. Adding that the landfill is irrevocable once in place, he called on the public to reconsider the necessity of the project.

He also criticized the public consultation period being too short and the lack of evidential proof supporting the scale of the landfill.

HKDCS vice-chairman Vienna Mak was cited as describing the dolphins and local people as very much alike, because "we both love Macau and reside here with our children." Additionally, she said that only by conservation can the government drive people to Hac-Sa Beach and its neighborhood by means such as coastal dolphin observation tours. This will diversify both tourism pro-

ducts and lifestyle, she said, adding that nature tours are also a sustainable means of development, while children will have additional locations for leisure.

Citing national guidelines and directives for marine protection that require 70% of dolphin habitats in each territory be under protection, Mak explained that the correct roadmap is to start with protection, before looking into the ways towards conservation, development and utilization.

However, she said that the Macau government's mentality is in the reverse direction and far behind those of mainland cities, Hong Kong and other territories.

On the other hand, she emphasized that construction wastes are actually



recyclable resources, which can be used to pave sidewalks or be transformed into other construction materials, for example.

Outlining the food chain, Kuan highlighted that protecting marine life is not only protecting a single species but the entire biological diversity, which ultimately concerns the income of local fishermen. He added that Hac-Sa District is the only natural coastal

leisure area in Macau. "By protecting the dolphins, we are also protecting the rights of our descendants," he was cited as saying.

Meanwhile, when asked to respond to the petition, Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo do Rosário has been cited as saying that "external comments might not be true" and as reiterating the government's compliance with procedures.



Sands China Presenting Japanese Contemporary Art Exhibition at Sands Gallery - Now Open

SANDS China is co-hosting its first-ever Japanese art extravaganza in 2024 – “Japanese Contemporary Art Exhibition” – at Sands Gallery until March 30, with over 90 artworks showcased.

Proudly presenting six contemporary artists, this is the first time Sands Gallery is featuring Japanese artists – heeding the Macau government's call for local integrated resort operators to expand their non-gaming portfolios with diversified offerings.

By this, the gallery aims to

showcase the essence of contemporary Japanese art and culture with some cutting-edge, diverse artwork, offering an enriching and rewarding art experience.

The exhibition is being presented as part of the 2024 Macao Japan Spring Festival organized by Silk Entertainment Limited. Co-organized by Sands China and supported by the Kyoto Prefecture of Japan, the City Government of Kyoto, the Macao Government Tourism Office and the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), the 2024 Macao

Japan Spring Festival is a two-month-long, multi-event festival, punctuated by popular idol performances, culinary experiences and art immersions at Sands China properties.

The exhibition is presenting some of Japan's finest contemporary artists including Kunihiko Nohara, Takaoki Tajima, Hiroya Yoshikawa, Nami Okada, Keitoku Toizumi and Ryosuke Kawahira, all of whom are exclusive artists to gallery UG.

Japan's gallery UG is one of the country's largest contemporary

art galleries. Over 25 years old, it is built upon a philosophy of discovering and nurturing young artists. Currently, it has showrooms in New York and Osaka, as well as two galleries in Tokyo.

It is Sands China's continuous goal to support the growth of arts and culture in Macau, aligning with the government's ‘tourism+’ policy.

Such vibrant events enrich the non-gaming experiences of residents and visitors, strengthening the city's cultural and artistic growth.

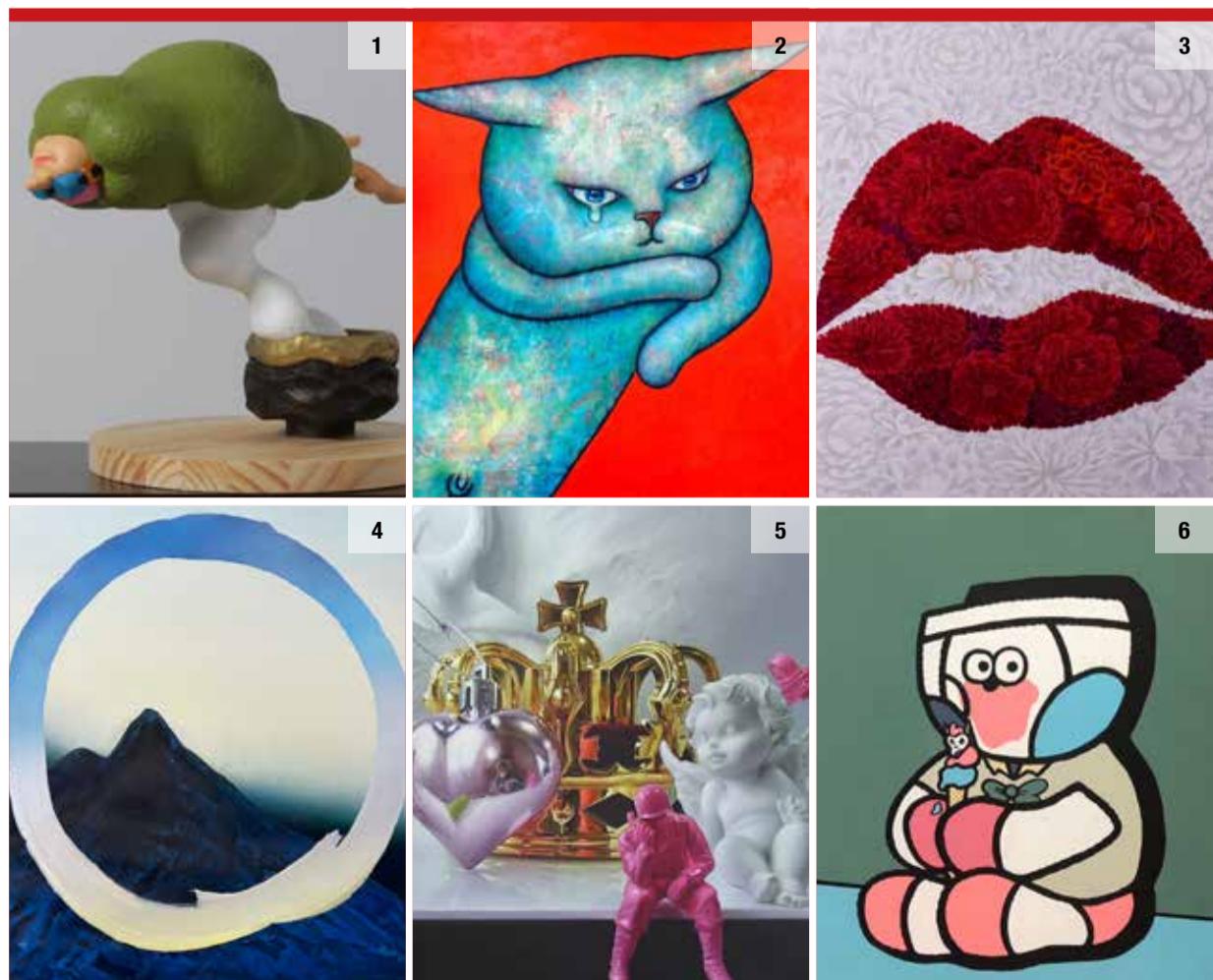
“This new exhibition is part of Sands China's ongoing commitment to the diversification of art and culture in Macau, and provides a platform for promoting extensive exchange and cooperation among local and international art talent as we help strengthen Macau's international image of multiculturalism and inclusiveness,” said Dr. Wilfred Wong, executive vice chairman of Sands China Ltd.

“Sands Gallery is proud to host this exhibition in support of ‘tourism + art’ in Macau, helping attract international tourists and residents with our expansive non-gaming portfolio.”

Eiichiro Sasaki, owner of gallery UG, stated: “Sands Gallery gives me a museum-like feeling. Therefore, being able to divide these spaces appropriately into different showrooms, allowing artists with different characteristics to have independent exhibition areas and display their works clearly, has become our curatorial mission this time.”

“Macau left me with the impression of a ‘playground for adults’ in the past, and this exhibition is also themed around ‘Happy Aura, Happy Taste,’ carefully selecting six artists whose works can bring a sense of happiness to everyone.”

Sands Gallery, which launched in 2022, has been dedicated to introducing a greater diversity of art exhibitions to Macau, as well as promoting the sustainable development of the local art and cultural industry. This permanent art space was born out of Sands China's increased investment in art and cultural development and its commitment to support the SAR government's strategy for non-gaming development.



ABOUT THE ARTISTS AND THEIR WORKS

1- Kunihiko Nohara, a Hokkaido-born and raised artist and sculptor, unveils mesmerising wooden sculptures that transcend convention. His unique motifs blend abstract imagery with vibrant colors, infusing an avant-garde essence into his creations. Each sculpture is a world of its own, with signature characters wearing underwater goggles symbolizing the enigmatic faces and images of individuals in our modern, information-based society.

2- Takaoki Tajima's artistic prowess shines through his exceptional skill in exploring the intricate relationship between colors. With simple yet bold compositions, he mesmerises viewers, inviting them to delve into the mysterious expressions and movements of his characters.

3- Hiroya Yoshikawa, the fourth-generation owner and craftsman of Yoshikawa Sensyo, presents his remarkable technique that seamlessly merges traditional Kyo Yuzen dyeing with contemporary aesthetics. His exquisite kimonos and artworks transform dye meticulously applied within the silk into living art.

4- Nami Okada, a trailblazing contemporary artist from Gunma prefecture, takes viewers on a nostalgic journey through captivating landscape paintings. Inspired by her personal experiences, memories and recollections, Okada beautifully captures real places, exploring the theme of nostalgia with enchanting allure.

5- Discover the surrealistic wonders of Keitoku Toizumi, renowned for his technical precision. His meticulously crafted scenes, often featuring toys, transport viewers to a world where reality and fiction intertwine. The acclaimed Pink Army series represents the intriguing gap between the real and the imagined.

6- Ryosuke Kawahira fearlessly channels childhood experiences into a unique form of creative expression. Through vibrant canvas works, he transforms memories, including childhood incidents like bed-wetting, into captivating art. Highly regarded for his distinctive and colorful portrayal of underpants, Kawahira's artistic mastery shines through.

4TH MACAU-TAIPA BRIDGE SET TO BE COMPLETED IN Q3

Construction of the fourth bridge between the Macau peninsula and Taipa is expected to be completed during the third quarter of this year, according to the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário. Originally scheduled to be operational by January 2024, the completion date was shifted to the second quarter of this year, with 85% of the construction already finished. Despite acknowledging that the project is running behind schedule, Rosário considers the delays acceptable given the scale of the project. The second section of the bridge is expected to be completed in the next few days.

MACAU TO HOST 2014MIECF IN MARCH

The "2024 Macao International Environmental Co-operation Forum & Exhibition" (2024MIECF) is scheduled to take place from 28th to 30th March 2024. This year's event promises significant upgrades in various areas, aiming to facilitate green exchanges, promote sustainable development, and contribute to the country's "dual carbon" goals. For the first time, the event will introduce the "Green Transformation Service Counter." This initiative aims to assist enterprises in staying ahead of future ESG trends, enabling them to make early deployments of upgrades and transformations.

MONTH-LONG 'WINTER OPERATION' FROM POLICE FORCES FINDS 1,288 CRIME SUSPECTS

RENATO MARQUES

THE month-long joint operation from all security forces that took place between January 22 and February 18 resulted in finding 1,288 people suspected of committing crimes in Macau, the Unitary Police Service (SPU) announced in a statement.

According to the same statement, from those suspects, 664 were expelled from Macau while another 349 were presented to the Public Prosecutions Office to respond to accusations of several crimes.

Among the most frequent cases were fraud (72 cases), theft (45 cases), usury (35 cases) and drug-related crimes (7 cases).

In total, the SPU is said to have inspected 24,302 people in 672 police operations that mobilized over 7,000 police officers.

The SPU also reported that another 14 people were intercepted in Macau in compliance with arrest and detention warrants issued by the judicial bodies, of which three were sent to prison to serve an immediate sentence.

During the same period, 271 people were caught in activities of illegal currency exchange and two were detained in connection to loan sharking activities. Fourteen people were also detained on suspicion of crimes relating to prostitution.

Note that although prostitution is not an illegal activity under Macau laws, usually those who are caught practicing are not residents of Macau and have entered the region under a tourism visa which does not allow


PSP observes pedestrians street and road crossing

them to work. In most cases, these people are charged under the provisions of the laws related to

illegal work.

The so-called "Winter Crime Prevention Operation" takes place

every year around the Lunar New Year season and aims to prevent and tackle criminal activities during this period of peak visitation.

As part of this operation, the Customs Service (SA) launched several actions to combat smuggling, illegal immigration, and entering of counterfeit products. In cooperation with the customs services of the mainland, the SA also participated in the "Spring Joint Operation", aiming to combat illicit trafficking activities and maintain maritime order and security.

Thirty-four patrol vessels were used in these actions and 181 people were found in smuggling attempts. They were all charged under the provisions of the "Foreign Trade Law" and a large quantity of cosmetic products, meat, alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, electronic products, and endangered species of plants, among others, were seized.

PSP EXTENDS OPERATIONS TARGETING PEDESTRIANS

THE Public Security Police Force (PSP) has extended their operations on the observation of pedestrians' street and road crossing to several areas of the city, the Times has observed in loco.

While in the past most of these operations were carried out in the area of the surroundings of the Vasco da Gama Garden and Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro, in the last few days, and especially on the weekends, several of these operations specifically targeting pedestrians were undertaken in other areas such as Calçada de São João and the intersection with the Rua Formosa as well as in the area of Flora Garden in

the Avenida de Sidónio Pais.

Contrary to what happened in the past when most of those caught illegally crossing the streets (avoiding the zebra crossings and pedestrian bridges, as well as under red traffic lights for pedestrians) were tourists, this time, according to the observation of the Times, most of those intercepted by the PSP were local residents and non-resident workers.

Operations of this kind are likely to continue due to the high number of this kind of incident resulting in traffic accidents, as discussed in a recent meeting of the Traffic Advisory Committee. RM

MJC claims impossible to accommodate requests for compensation to horse owners

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macau Jockey Club (MJC) has said in a letter to a group of horse owners who previously subscribed to a petition to the company that the company is "unable to accommodate the requests for compensation," claiming that on top of the company's financial difficulties, the company needs to comply with the agreement made with the local government.

Such an agreement includes the provisions that the company continues to be in legal possession of all the facilities as well as in charge of the horses for one year commencing on April 1, 2024, a period in which they need to provide a proper relocation of all horses to outside Macau.

As the company explained in the same letter, this carries an additional financial load as it involves keeping on a high number of staff members to operate

the facilities and manage the horses while they need also to compensate those who will lose their jobs.

In the petition subscribed by several horse owners and submitted to the MJC on February 7, they claimed compensation based on the value of the horses, as they said they "have already given up [on] shipping the animals out of Macau."

The horse owners justified the compensation based on the investments



made in the acquisition of horses for racing purposes under the promise that the MJC would operate for at least another 20 years.

In the response letter, MJC notes that such investments, related to the acquisition of horses, carry risks and that the horse owners were well aware of the financial situation of the MJC and of the non-profitable activity of horse racing in Macau, stating that horse owners decided to invest in the activity at their own risk.

The exchange of letters seems to open the way to a conflict between horse owners and the MJC that is likely to have soon further developments.

AVIATION

Chinese C919 jet in spotlight at Singapore air show, but not quite ready to compete internationally

ZEN SOO, SINGAPORE

CHINA'S C919 single-aisle jet made its international debut at the Singapore Airshow, attracting masses of visitors and hundreds of orders, but analysts say it still has a long way to go before it can compete with aircraft from market leaders Boeing and Airbus.

The Commercial Aircraft Corp. of China — also known as COMAC — has received over 1,000 orders for the jet, mostly from Chinese airlines. A lack of international certification means the aircraft cannot operate commercially in most countries unless they recognize certifications by China's civil aviation regulator.

Over the course of last week's airshow, which drew over nearly 120,000 trade and public visitors, the C919 performed fly-pasts, allowing visitors to see the jet in action. Its only previous foray outside mainland China was to Hong Kong in December.

"It's quite symbolic and a major milestone in that push by China to become considered, alongside Airbus and Boeing, for commercial aircrafts," said Brendan Sobie, an independent aviation analyst based in Singapore.

COMAC aims to compete with companies like Boeing and Airbus in the single-aisle jet market. But

AP PHOTO



first, the C919 has to be certified internationally, he said.

The plane is currently certified only in China, where China Eastern Airlines are operating four C919 aircrafts. A lack of international certification means the C919 cannot operate in most countries

unless they recognize certifications by China's civil aviation regulator.

Another aspect COMAC needs to work on before its jets can become serious contenders alongside the Airbus A320neo and Boeing's 737 Max narrow-body airliners is

building up a reliable distribution system and market support services for its aircraft.

"Most of the orders come from Chinese airlines and the challenge moving forward is that in order to have a sustainable future, COMAC must demonstrate that they are

able to go beyond Chinese shores," said Mabel Kwan, managing director at consultancy Alton Aviation.

COMAC declined to make its executives available for an interview.

So far, the state-owned company says it has received 1,061 domestic orders for the C919, but it has yet to secure many international customers. Brunei-based GallopAir, which is backed by Chinese investors, signed a letter of intent in September to purchase 30 aircraft from COMAC, including a C919 jet, in a deal estimated to be worth \$2 billion.

COMAC faces supply chain challenges similar to those of Boeing and Airbus, which currently have backlogs of thousands of aircraft yet to be delivered. While the C919 is designed in China, much of its technology and many of its parts are from foreign suppliers. Its engine, for example, is made by CFM International, a joint venture between GE Aerospace and France's Safran Aircraft Engines.

"It's not like China has its own supply system, its own avionics, its own engines, so that they're not impacted by what's happening globally," Sobie said, adding that COMAC might not be a high priority for suppliers also struggling to catch up with deliveries to Boeing and Airbus.

COMAC however does have the luxury of a wide talent pool from China, Kwan said, and in the long run this may allow the firm to develop more homegrown technology and parts for use in its aircraft.

"Right now, COMAC is using mostly Western technology ... but with enough research & development, training and education, the whole ecosystem may be able to overcome (challenges in the long term)," she said. MDT/AP

SOCIAL MEDIA

Two Chinese bloggers in exile says 'police are interrogating their followers'

DAKE KANG &
HUIZHONG WU,
SHANGHAI

TWO prominent Chinese bloggers in exile said that police were investigating their millions of followers on international social media platforms, in an escalation of Beijing's attempts to clamp down on critical speech even outside of the country's borders.

Former state broadcaster CCTV journalist Wang Zhi'an and artist-turned-dissident Li Ying, both Chinese citizens known for posting uncensored Chi-

nese news, said in separate posts Sunday that police were interrogating people who followed them on social media, and urged followers to take precautions such as unfollowing their accounts, changing their usernames, avoiding Chinese-made phones and preparing to be questioned.

Li Ying, known as Teacher Li, came to prominence as a source of news about the White Paper protests, a rare moment of anti-government protests in mainland China in 2022. Teacher Li's account on X, formerly known as Twit-

ter, @whyyoutouzhele now posts news and videos from submitted by users, which cover everything from local protests to viral videos of real-life incidents that are censored on the Chinese internet.

In a post Sunday evening, Teacher Li suggested people unfollow his account. "Currently, the public security bureau is checking my 1.6 million followers and people in the comments, one by one."

Li shared screenshots of private messages he received from followers over the past few months, which

claimed that police had interrogated individuals, and that one person had even lost their job.

As of yesterday afternoon, Li had dropped down to 1.4 million followers on X.

International social media platforms like X and YouTube are blocked in China, but can still be accessed with software that circumvents the country's censorship systems.

Wang, who has a million subscribers on X and 1.2 million followers on YouTube, also told his fans to unsubscribe.



Wang Zhi'an speaks during an interview with the Associated Press in Tokyo in Oct., 2022

Li, Wang and the Chinese foreign ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Over the past decade, Beijing has cracked down

on dissent on Chinese social media, with thousands of censors "employed both at private companies and with the Chinese state." MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Israeli soldiers run as they carry a stretcher towards a military helicopter during an exercise simulating evacuation of wounded people in northern Israel

MIDDLE EAST

Israel's air force strikes deep inside Lebanon, killing two people, after Hezbollah downs a drone

BASSEM MROUE, BEIRUT

THE Israeli military said its air force yesterday struck targets of the militant Hezbollah group "deep inside Lebanon," where residents reported explosions near the northeastern city of Baalbek. At least two people were killed in the strikes, a Hezbollah official said.

The strikes are among the deepest into Lebanon since the Israel-Hamas war began more than four months ago. They come a day after Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant vowed to step up attacks on Lebanon's Hezbollah even if a cease-fire is reached with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The strikes, which came shortly after Hezbollah said its air defense shot down an Israeli drone, are likely to increase tensions along the Lebanon-Israel border as talks for a cease-fire in Gaza are underway.

Lebanese security officials said Israel's air force carried out three airstrikes on the outskirts of the village of Buday, near Baalbek, targeting a convoy of

trucks. Buday is a Hezbollah stronghold.

A Hezbollah official confirmed that three strikes hit near Baalbek. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to reporters. He said the strikes killed at least two people and that one hit a warehouse for food products that is part of Hezbollah's Sajjad Project that sells to people in its stronghold at prices lower than on the market.

The airstrikes near Baalbek occurred less than two hours after Hezbollah said its fighters yesterday shot down an Israeli Elbit Hermes 450 drone over its stronghold in a province in southern Lebanon. Another missile fired by Hezbollah toward the drone was intercepted by Israel, and landed near a synagogue in a town close to Nazareth in northern Israel. There were no injuries or damage.

The Israeli army said in a statement later in the day that its fighter jets struck sites used by Hezbollah in the eastern Bekaa Valley. It said they were in retaliation for Hezbollah's firing of a surface-to-air missile

at the Israeli drone.

Hezbollah has been exchanging fire with Israeli troops along the border since the Israel-Hamas broke on Oct. 7.

The strike on Baalbek, because of its location deep inside Lebanon, is the most significant one since the early January airstrike on Beirut that killed top Hamas official Saleh Arouri.

Hezbollah, which has been exchanging fire with Israel throughout the war in Gaza, has said it will halt its near-daily attacks on Israel if a cease-fire is reached in Gaza. Hezbollah is an ally of the Palestinian militant Hamas group.

However, Gallant, the Israeli defense minister, said Sunday that anyone who thinks a temporary cease-fire for Gaza will also apply to the northern front is "mistaken."

Western diplomats have brought forward a series of proposals for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, most of which would hinge on Hezbollah moving its forces 7-10 kilometers (4-6 miles) away from the border.

This will come in addition

to a beefed-up Lebanese army presence, and negotiations for Israeli forces to withdraw from disputed points along the border where Lebanon says Israel has been occupying small patches of Lebanese territory since it withdrew from the rest of country's south in 2000.

Lebanon's caretaker Foreign Minister Abdallah Bouhabib said yesterday that he discussed with the country's prime minister, Najib Mikati, a French proposal about the southern region, adding that the Lebanese side is working on a response that the French should have by next week.

"We welcome the French role," Bouhabib said, adding that Lebanon wants a solution that includes the disputed Chebaa Farms and Kfar Chouba hills that Israel captured from Syria during the 1967 Mideast war. Beirut says the disputed area belongs to Lebanon and Israel should withdraw from there.

Hezbollah has signaled willingness to entertain the proposals but has said there will be no deal in Lebanon before there is a cease-fire in Gaza. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1953 SPELLING BILL PASSES SECOND READING



A proposal to simplify English spelling has cleared its second hurdle in parliament.

After a second debate MPs in the House of Commons voted by 65 votes to 53 to approve the Simplified Spelling Bill for consideration by parliamentary committees.

The private member's bill was introduced by Labour MP Mont Follick earlier this month.

It proposes setting up an investigation into the feasibility of introducing a simpler version of English to make reading easier for younger children.

The children would switch to standard English as they got older.

The new system would be tested in school experiments in England and Scotland paid for by the government.

It is Mr Follick's second attempt to get parliamentary support for a new spelling system.

A bill he introduced in 1949 was eventually defeated by just three votes in spite of opposition by the Labour government of Clement Attlee.

The new bill has also attracted cross-party support - it was seconded by a Conservative MP, James Pitman, whose grandfather devised the Pitman shorthand system.

During a debate lasting four-and-a-half hours Mr Pitman said that around 150,000 of the 400,000 children who started school each year would leave without being able to read properly.

'Confusion'

Mr Pitman - a member of the Simplified Spelling Society - used large printed cards with words such as "out" and "ought" to display what he said were inconsistencies in the spelling and pronunciation of some English words.

"English is halfway between the alphabetic system of Spanish and picture-writing of Chinese," he told MPs.

However, Labour's MP for South Shields James Ede said the bill would only confuse the less intelligent by making them learn two ways of spelling.

But Mont Follick said they had no intention of forcing children to learn two different systems.

Spelling reform was also one of the passions of the writer George Bernard Shaw who died two years ago.

His will set aside money for a national competition to devise a simplified version of English.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Mont Follick withdrew his bill after reaching a compromise with the government.

The Ministry of Education backed a small-scale research project conducted under the aegis of the University of London.

However, the idea was put on the back burner until James Pitman devised the Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA) - a phonetics-based system made up of 44 characters.

ITA was tested in a handful of schools in England during the early 1960s with mixed success for the children involved.

It largely fell into disuse although James Pitman had some success in persuading schools in the USA and Australia to try out the system.

ITA is among numerous alternatives to standard English spelling - others include Spanglish and Cut Spelling.

YOUR STARS**ARIES**

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Adapt to a surprise with your partner. Keep your patience and sense of humor. Resolve a foundational matter. Compassion and shared support provide resolution.

**TAURUS**

Apr. 20-May. 20

Your energy level is on the rise. Prioritize your health and work. Wait until the dust clears before making important decisions. Watch your step.

**GEMINI**

May. 21-Jun. 21

Make a creative change. Begin a new family and romantic phase. Relax and enjoy your favorite games, music and activities. Focus on love.

**CANCER**

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

The love that you put into your home returns three-fold. Make upgrades before things break down. Soap, water and fresh paint work wonders.

**LEO**

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Discover an obstacle with a creative or communications project. Make structural repairs. Focus on short-term objectives. Another sees what you're missing. Work together.

**VIRGO**

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Monitor financial conditions. Delays or interruptions could disrupt your cash flow. Figure costs and benefits. Adjust the budget as you go. Postpone and adapt.

**LIBRA**

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You're reaching a turning point with a personal project. One phase ends and another begins. Shed old habits, complaints or anxieties. Go for new possibilities.

**SCORPIO**

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Find a peaceful hideaway to review plans. Adapt around transitions. Resolve any breakdowns backstage. Stick to practical routines and soothing rituals. Rest and recharge.

**SAGITTARIUS**

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Confer with allies, partners and friends. Support each other to adapt. Begin a new social phase. Offer a helping hand. Grab one when needed.

**CAPRICORN**

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Clean a professional mess. Patiently sift through chaos or confusion. Make adjustments. Ask for support when needed. Provide it as you can. Discover workaround solutions.

**AQUARIUS**

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Your travel and study plans could change. Slow to review. Adjust schedules as needed. An educational turning point reveals new horizons and fresh views.

**PISCES**

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Work with your partner to resolve a financial challenge or transition. Craft budgets and hunt for solutions. Add your contributions to the family pot.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**SUDOKU****EASY**

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

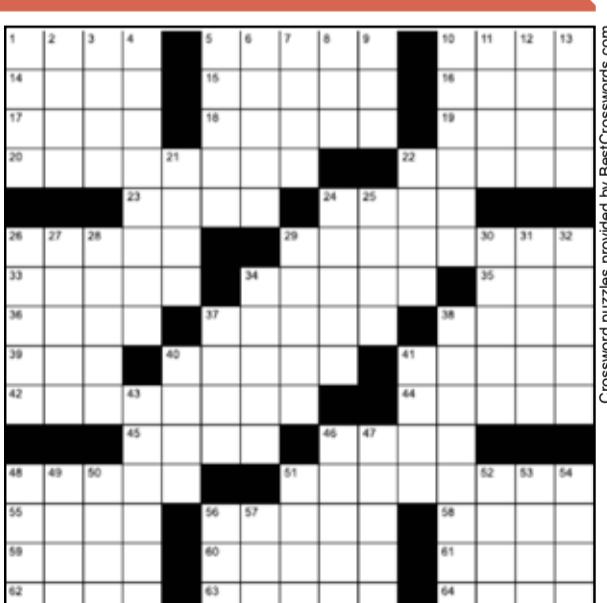
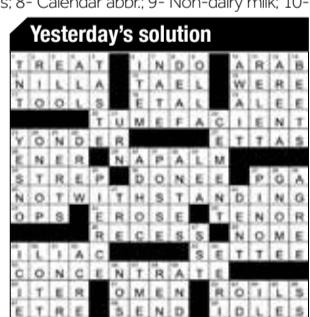
HARD

4	2											5
	7	8	3									
8		7										
9	5				8							
5						1						

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Sneaker or loafer; 5- Tiny particles; 10- Father of Deimos and Phobos; 14- Dark cloud; 15- No-no; 16- Ballerina's skirt; 17- Peter Fonda role; 18- Deep black; 19- Head of France; 20- Depict in words; 22- Apple juice; 23- Very small; 24- Ski lift; 26- Anticipate; 29- Distance across a circle; 33- Insect stage; 34- Phobias; 35- Clay today; 36- Mozart's "___ kleine Nachtmusik"; 37- ___ is human; 38- Like ___ of bricks; 39- Twice Lili; 40- ___ firma; 41- Gets ready; 42- Remembrance; 44- Be of one mind; 45- Rowing implements; 46- Corker; 48- Jockey; 51- Person who makes firearms; 55- Let's just leave ___ that; 56- Prince Valiant's wife; 58- Singer Brickell; 59- Anklebones; 60- "See ya!"; 61- Beatty and Rorem; 62- Clapton of rock; 63- Sudden convolution; 64- Digits of the foot;

DOWN 1- Potato; 2- Patriot Nathan; 3- Cries at the bullfight; 4- Optional; 5- Dined at home; 6- Domestic cat; 7- It's blown among the reeds; 8- Calendar abbr.; 9- Non-dairy milk; 10- Clothing; 11- Felt sorry about; 12- Kitchen addition; 13- Plaintiff; 21- Moreno of "West Side Story"; 22- Engine parts; 24- Jewelled crown worn by women; 25- Roseanne, once; 26- Smart guy; 27- Forgo; 28- Golfer Palmer, informally; 29- Tractor maker; 30- Spud; 31- Take the honey and run; 32- Wash cycle; 34- Eating implements; 37- Eye drop; 38- Altercation; 40- Romanov ruler; 41- Chums; 43- Kind of license or justice; 46- Old stringed instruments; 47- Render weaponless; 48- Ceremony; 49- ___-Tass (Russian news agency); 50- Surrealist Salvador; 51- "___ grip!"; 52- Logical beginning?; 53- It may turn; 54- Pianist Myra; 56- Gore and Hirt; 57- One circuit;

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PJ (Open line) 993

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GREENSLATE

PG AWARDS

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(PGA) AWARDS

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TE

(PGA) AWARDS

GR GREENSLATE

PRODUCERS GUILD OF AMERICA

GREENSLATE

(PGA) AWARDS

PRODUCERS GUILD OF AMERICA

GRE

From left: Cillian Murphy, Emily Blunt, and Robert Downey Jr. at the 35th Annual Producers Guild Awards on Sunday

FILM

'OPPENHEIMER' KEEPS DEVOURING AWARDS WITH TOP PRIZE AT PRODUCERS GUILD, WITH OSCARS UP NEXT

ANDREW DALTON,
BEVERLY HILLS

WITH two weeks to go before the Oscars, "Oppenheimer" looks unstoppable.

Director and producer Christopher Nolan's tale of the life of J. Robert Oppenheimer and the birth of the atomic age won the top prize Sunday (yesterday, Macau time) at the 35th Producers Guild of America Awards — a frequent predictor of Oscar best picture winners — the night after doing the same at the Screen Actors Guild Awards.

"Oppenheimer" won the PGA's Darryl F. Zanuck Award for Outstanding Producer of Theatrical Motion Pictures over the exact same set of 10 nominees up for best picture at the March 10 Academy Awards, including "Barbie," "Poor Things" and "Killers of the Flower Moon," whose director, Martin Scorsese, was honored Sunday for his concurrent career as a producer.

The Zanuck Award winner has gone on to take the best picture Oscar for five of the past six years, and 12 of the past 15, includ-

ing last year with "Everything, Everywhere All at Once."

From the stage at the Ray Dolby Ballroom in Hollywood, in the same complex where the Academy Awards will be held at the Dolby Theatre, Nolan thanked his fellow producer Charles Royen for giving him "American Prometheus," the book that led to "Oppenheimer," and "starting a chain reaction that's spread all over the world."

Earlier in the show, Robert Downey Jr. called it "the highest-grossing film about theoretical physics yet made."

Downey on Saturday won best supporting actor at the SAG Awards, where "Oppenheimer" also won best ensemble, part of an awards season sweep that also included wins at the Golden Globes and Directors Guild Awards.

"Succession" and "The Bear" took the top television prizes at the PGA Awards after doing the same at the SAG Awards and last month's Emmy Awards.

"Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse," nominated for the animated feature Oscar, won the PGA's animated motion picture

award. Its predecessor, "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse," won the PGA award in 2019 before going on to win the Academy Award.

Scorsese joined Tom Cruise, Steven Spielberg and Kevin Feige as winners of the David O. Selznick award for an outstanding body of work as a producer of motion pictures.

Scorsese said the first film he remembers seeing, at age 4, was the Selznick written and produced "Duel in the Sun."

"It was condemned by the Catholic church, and my mother wanted to see it," Scorsese told the audience. "She said, 'The kid likes westerns, I'm taking him.'"

Scorsese said "the very first impact of classic Hollywood cinema starts right there for me. Slashes of color, movement, the landscapes, stunning set pieces."

He called them "Proustian sense memories" of early cinema.

"I was frightened by them," he said, "and thrilled."

The 81-year-old said he was grateful for the privilege of getting to spend his life exploring

"beauty that's at the core of what we all strive to do."

Scorsese-produced films include his own "Hugo," "The Wolf of Wall Street," "Silence" and "Killers of the Flower Moon," along with dozens of films for younger directors including Spike Lee's "Clockers," the Safdie brothers' "Uncut Gems" and Joanna Hogg's "The Souvenir."

Other career achievement awards went to producers Charles D. King and Gail Berman.

King became the first Black winner of the PGA's Milestone Award, whose previous winners include Walt Disney, Clint Eastwood and George Lucas, for historic career contributions to the motion picture industry.

King was lauded for leaving his job as a Hollywood agent in 2015 to found MACRO, a media company dedicated to amplifying the voices of black artists and other people of color.

The company has produced films including 2016's "Fences" starring Denzel Washington and Viola Davis, who won an Oscar for the role, and 2021's "Judas and the Black Messiah," for which

King was personally nominated for an Oscar as a producer.

King thanked "our ancestors who kicked down doors, made sacrifices and blazed a trail for me to be able to do what I'm blessed to do."

Berman, the only woman to have held the top job at both a major film company and television network, was given the Norman Lear Achievement Award in Television. Berman was the driving force behind the creation and airing of "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," whose star, Sarah Michelle Gellar, presented her the award.

"Not a single person on this earth was interested in buying that television show," Berman said. "But I just couldn't ignore my gut telling me there was something unique there."

The PGA announced an initiative during the show that seeks to provide healthcare coverage for its member producers who are not covered other ways. Members of the actors and writers guilds have long used the unions for health insurance.

"Producers deserve to be covered," PGA Co-President Stephanie Allain said.

The effort involves asking production companies, including major studios and streamers, to include contributions to producers' health coverage on its production budgets.

Film companies Blumhouse, Legendary and King's MACRO already have signed on. MDT/AP



FOOTBALL

Klopp savors his 'most special trophy' as Liverpool wins the English League Cup

JURGEN Klopp just couldn't keep the smile from his face.

It was deep into extra time at Wembley on Sunday and the English League Cup final against Chelsea was locked at 0-0. A penalty shootout loomed.

Yet, with tensions running high, Klopp turned to the Liverpool fans, savored the moment and produced that trademark toothy grin.

Perhaps he knew what was coming. That Virgil van Dijk was about to score a 118th-minute winner to finally break down Chelsea's resistance and secure a record-extending 10th League Cup trophy for Liverpool.

Perhaps not.

"That would be cool if I could see goals coming. That would relax a lot of moments in my life," Klopp said afterward — his voice hoarse, likely from the wild celebrations that greeted his eighth trophy as Liverpool manager.

Klopp is stepping down at the end of the season and this may

AP PHOTO



well be his last Wembley final with the club.

He said he was simply taking it all in and enjoying watching a new generation of Liverpool players that may turn out to be his lasting legacy after he goes.

"I loved it ... What I see today

is so exceptional, we might never see it again. Not because I am on the sidelines but because these things don't happen in football.

"It is in my more than 20 years, easily the most special trophy I ever won. It is absolutely exceptional."

without the injured Mohamed Salah, Darwin Nunez, Diogo Jota, Trent Alexander-Arnold and more, Liverpool still triumphed.

"I got told outside there is an English phrase, 'You don't win trophies with kids,'" Klopp said. "I didn't know that. Yeah right."

"Sometimes I'm asked if I am proud of this, proud of that. I don't know. I wish I could feel pride more often. Tonight was an overwhelming feeling of 'Oh my God, what is going on here?' I was proud of everybody involved."

Victory keeps Klopp on track for a quadruple of trophies in his final year with Liverpool as he looks determined to go out on a high.

His team is currently top of the Premier League and still in contention to win the FA Cup and Europa League. But even if Klopp cannot add those trophies to the full set he has already delivered, he provided Liverpool with another memorable day at Wembley. MDT/AP

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



OPINION

China Daily

Editorial, China Daily

WASHINGTON AT ODDS WITH INTERNATIONAL CONSENSUS

Speaking to the media in Brazil on Thursday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said of the situation in Gaza that “we all share the same goals” and “everyone wants to see an end to this conflict as soon as possible”.

But thanks to a technical mistake that enabled a small group of journalists to listen in on the discussions of the G20 foreign ministers because the audio headsets were broadcasting their remarks, it is clear that many of the other participants were scornful of such claims.

With the US opposing a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza on Tuesday, the third time it has done so, the US’ stance was widely questioned by the other participants in the session.

While the Hamas attack on Israel on Oct 7 triggered the Israeli onslaught on the Palestinian enclave, that does not justify the brutality of the Israeli offensive, which has already claimed the lives of over 29,000 Palestinians, many of them women and children.

Nor does Blinken’s claim that so many innocents are suffering and continue to suffer terribly, because they are caught in a cross fire of Hamas’ making, since agreement hasn’t been reached on the 100 hostages that are being held by Hamas.

Israel has occupied lands of Palestine for decades, during which, with the backing of the US, Israel has always taken an I-don’t-care approach against calls from the international society for it to obey the international and humanitarian laws. In that time, it has acted against a growing number of UN resolutions, from No 194 about allowing refugees to return to their homes in 1948 to No 2720 about humanitarian issues in 2023. So while Blinken was right in saying everyone supports finding a way to end the conflict and move to the path of a durable solution, it seems that is effectively the whole of the international community bar the US.

Even the United Kingdom, a country that seems robotically programmed to toe the US line, while unable to show any suspicion of being disloyal, could not bring itself to vote in accordance with the US on the recent Gaza resolutions, and abstained.

Besides, the US’ unconditional support of Israel continues to make the situation worse. On Thursday, Australia’s representative in the G20 session called on Israel to “not go down the path” of carrying out its planned military campaign in the southern city of Rafah, where more than 1 million displaced Palestinians have sought shelter.

The US’ refusal to call for a cease-fire has also led to the whole regional situation becoming a mess threatening even its own interests.

The US should take a good look at itself and reflect on the consequences of its actions. It should join the rest of the international community in their efforts to rein in Israel and work with other countries to secure a cease-fire.

JAPAN’S MOON LANDER SURVIVES SECOND LUNAR NIGHT, BEATING PREDICTIONS

Japan’s first moon lander responded to a signal from Earth, suggesting it has survived a second freezing weeks-long lunar night, Japan’s space agency said yesterday.

JAXA called the signal, received late Sunday night, a “miracle” because the probe was not designed to survive the lunar night, when temperatures can fall to minus 170 degrees Celsius.

The craft, Smart Lander for Investigating Moon, or SLIM, made a “pinpoint” touchdown on Jan. 20, making Japan become the fifth country to successfully place a probe on the moon.

But the probe landed the wrong way up, with its solar panels initially unable to see the sun and had to be turned off within hours.

SLIM regained power on the eighth day after its landing, when it got the sun. For several days, SLIM collected geological data from moon rocks, before going back into hibernation in late January to wait out another lunar night.

JAXA said Sunday’s communication was kept short because it was still “lunar midday” and SLIM was at a very high temperature, about 100 Celsius. JAXA is now preparing to make contact again when the vehicle has cooled.

Scientists are hoping to find clues about the origin of the moon by comparing mineral compositions of moon rocks and those of Earth.



South Korean Vice Health Minister Park Min-soo

KOREA

SEOUL GIVES YOUNG DOCTORS FOUR DAYS TO END WALKOUTS, THREATENING PROSECUTIONS

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

JUNIOR doctors in South Korea have four days to end their walkouts, the government said yesterday, or they could face prosecution or have their medical licenses suspended.

About 9,000 medical interns and residents have stayed off the job since early last week to protest a government plan to increase medical school admissions by about 65%. The walkouts have severely hurt the operations of their hospitals, with numerous cancellations of surgeries and other treatments.

Government officials say adding more doctors is necessary to deal with South Korea’s rapidly aging population. The country’s current doctor-to-patient ratio is among the lowest in the developed world.

The strikers say universities can’t handle so many new students and argue the plan would not resolve a chronic shortage of doctors in some key but low-paying areas like pediatrics and emergency departments.

Vice Health Minister Park Min-soo said during a televised briefing Monday that the government won’t

seek any disciplinary action against striking doctors if they return to work by Thursday.

“We want them to return to work by the end of this month, Feb. 29. If they return to the hospitals they had left by then, we won’t hold them responsible” for any damages caused by their walkouts, Park said. “It’s not too late. Please, return to patients immediately.”

But he said those who don’t meet the deadline will be punished with a minimum three-month suspension of their medical licenses and face further legal steps such as investigations and possible indictments.

Under South Korea’s medical law, the government can issue back-to-work orders to doctors and other medical personnel when it sees grave risks to public health. Refusing to abide by such an order can bring suspensions of their licenses and up to three years in prison or 30 million won (\$22,480) in fines. Those who receive prison sentences would be stripped of their medical licenses.

Hyeondeok Choi, a partner at the law firm Daeryun which specializes in medi-

cal law, said it’s highly unlikely the government will suspend the licenses of all doctors on strike, as that would cause “an enormous medical vacuum.” Other observers said authorities would likely punish strike leaders.

There are about 13,000 medical interns and residents in South Korea, most of them working and training at 100 hospitals. They typically assist senior doctors during surgeries and deal with inpatients. They represent about 30% to 40% of total doctors at some major hospitals.

The Korea Medical Association, which represents about 140,000 doctors in South Korea, has said it supports the striking doctors, but hasn’t determined whether to join the trainee doctors’ walkouts. Senior doctors have held a series of rallies voicing opposition to the government’s plan in recent days.

Earlier this month, the government announced universities would admit 2,000 more medical students starting next year, from the current 3,058. The government says it aims to add up to 10,000 doctors by 2035. MDT/AP



Ukrainian troops have pulled out of a village in the east of the country, an army spokesman said yesterday, as Russian forces make their advantages in manpower and ammunition tell on the battlefield at the start of the war’s third year. The latest setback for Kyiv’s soldiers was in the village of Lastochkyne, where they fell back to nearby villages in an attempt to hold the line there.



Belarusian authorities yesterday announced preliminary results from parliamentary and local elections in which only candidates loyal to the country’s authoritarian leader were allowed to compete and the opposition called for a boycott. The vote further cemented the 30-year rule of President Alexander Lukashenko, who declared his intention to seek another five-year term in a presidential election next year.

Denmark yesterday joined Sweden in closing its investigation into the 2022 explosions that damaged the Nord Stream gas pipelines, with authorities saying they concluded there was deliberate sabotage but “not the sufficient grounds” to pursue a criminal case. Danish authorities said the probe “has been both complex and comprehensive.” Copenhagen police, which carried out the investigation jointly with the Danish security service, said they were not able to provide further comments.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said yesterday that a Conservative lawmaker was wrong to say the mayor of London is controlled by Islamists, and also denied that the governing party tolerates anti-Muslim prejudice. Sunak is under pressure to condemn Islamophobia after the comments by Lee Anderson, who was suspended from the Conservative Party group in Parliament on Saturday for comments about Mayor Sadiq Khan, amid growing tensions within British politics over the Israel-Hamas war.