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COURT OF SECOND INSTANCE RULES DELETED RECORDING ILLEGAL, SECONDS GRAFT BUSTER

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PUTIN WARNS OF 'GLOBAL NUCLEAR CONFLICT' IF WEST SENDS TROOPS TO UKRAINE

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AP PHOTO



China-USA The Biden administration says it will investigate Chinese-made “smart cars” that allegedly can gather sensitive information about Americans driving them. The probe could lead to new regulations aimed at preventing China from using sophisticated technology in electric cars and other so-called connected vehicles to track drivers and their personal information. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo (pictured) said connected cars “are like smart phones on wheels.”

AP PHOTO



USA A Pacific storm packing powerful winds and heavy snow is shaping up to be the strongest of the season, forecasters say, as it pushes toward California with potential blizzard conditions in the Sierra and up to 3 meters of snow in the mountains around Lake Tahoe by the weekend. The National Weather Service in Reno issued a blizzard warning yesterday [Macau time] for a 482-kilometer stretch of the Sierra from north of Lake Tahoe to south of Yosemite National effective today.

AP PHOTO



Canada's government is reimposing some visa requirements on Mexican nationals visiting Canada, an official familiar with the matter told The Associated Press. Quebec's premier has been urging the federal government to slow the influx of refugees which he says has been straining resources. The official spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak ahead of yesterday's announcement.

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KARAOKE SHUTS DOWN

Neway outlet reportedly closes following MACA association's copyright complaint in a dispute that sparked public outcry P2



**LOST IN TRANSLATION?
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FOR THIS
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HOTEL GUESTS SURPASS PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

Macau saw an increase in the number of operating hotels by January, totaling 141, an increase of 16 year-on-year. The total number of available guest rooms grew by 20.4% to 46,000. Data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) also shows the average occupancy rate of guest rooms rose 14.5 percentage points year-on-year to 85.9%. The number of guests of hotel establishments in January leapt by 55.7% year-on-year to 1,320,000; moreover, the figure represented an increase of 7.4% compared to the same month of 2019.

YELLOW COLD WEATHER ALERT ISSUED BY SMG

Macau's observatory has issued another cold weather warning as temperatures are expected to drop to 8 degrees Celsius over the weekend. It is expected to be cold in Macau continuously over the next couple of days. Showers will affect the city throughout the week. The forecast also projects a maximum temperature of 26 degrees next week, and a mercury of 8 degrees at its lowest.

APPLICATIONS FOR HEALTHCARE SUBSIDY FOR RESIDENTS WITHIN GBA OPENS

From today, eligible persons living in the mainland can apply for the Healthcare Subsidy Scheme through the Macao One Account app. The Health Bureau said applicants must be Macau residents who live in specific areas on the mainland and who have participated in the mainland's basic medical insurance system. Medical insurance subsidies are paid once a year, with the upper limit of the subsidy amount being MOP 1,000. The plan currently covers mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area.

TRADE NEARLY MOP14.5B IN JANUARY

External merchandise trade totaled MOP13.59 billion in January, up 19.9% compared with MOP11.34 billion a year earlier, data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) has shown. Total merchandise exports amounted to MOP1.13 billion, up by 22.1% year-on-year. The value of re-exports (MOP985 million) rose by 18.2%, of which re-exports of footwear and diamond jewelry surged by 155.7% and 71.5% respectively, while those of articles for casino and wine declined by 85.4% and 39.7% respectively.

NEWAY OUTLET CLOSES AFTER MACA COPYRIGHT COMPLAINT

ANTHONY LAM

THE Neway Karaoke outlet near the Golden Lotus Plaza has reportedly ceased operations, following copyright violations filed by a local non-governmental copyright entity.

A week ago, the Macau Association of Composers, Authors & Publishers (MACA), represented by CEO Ung Kuoc Iang, said at a press conference held at an outlet of the karaoke chain that the chain had violated Ung's intellectual rights.

Ung accused the chain of using pieces he composed for commercial purposes without paying the appropriate royalty fees to MACA.

MACA describes itself as the only non-governmental entity in Macau entitled to handle copyright and royalty matters related to composers, authors and publishers.

Although the relationship between the copyright claims filed by MACA and the closure of the Neway outlet is unclear, social media mourned the termination of the outlet.

Some netizens sarcastically took issue with the loss of the chain's now-unavailable chicken hotpot.



The karaoke chain is widely described as selling a better hotpot than it does a karaoke experience. Many customers see its hotpot as elevating the karaoke experience.

Many social media users criticized MACA for murdering the entertainment and music industries. Others considered paying the outstanding royalties an appropriate measure.

Those opposing MACA urged the entity to publish its accounts, to prove it actually paid royalties collected in Macau to external copyright holders.

Some other social media users referred to MACA as a "co-

pyright beggar," while pointing out that MACA takes 30% from all copyright incomes for their "administrative costs."

In 2019, the entity generated MOP5 million in administrative costs.

In response to these criticisms, the entity, represented by MC Law Firm, issued an open letter to warn social media users they may be subject to civil or criminal prosecutions should they continue posting "untrue" content.

The letter reiterated MACA's own statement – available on its own website.

Macau "is a member of the

Berne Convention, and copyright rights and interests are protected by law whenever a local's musical work is publicly performed, broadcasted or disseminated in different ways [...] including but not limited to through hotels, casinos, karaoke outlets, entertainment and leisure venues, concerts, one-off events, the Internet, film and television."

The same statement also noted that under local law, MACA – a Collective Management Organization (CMO) legally established in Macau – is entitled to collect copyright charges for local and external music creators.

Macau Cruise to welcome new operator

STAFF REPORTER

A new ferry company will join the Macau Cruise local maritime tourism program in 2024, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has said in a reply to an inquiry.

The addition will provide new sightseeing routes for fireworks, according to MGTO director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, responding to lawmaker Ella Lei.

Macau Cruise, operated by Shun Tak-China Travel Ship Management (Macau), has already conducted over 600 voya-

ges since resuming operations in August of the previous year, accommodating more than 5,000 passengers.

However, the director did not disclose specific details about the newcomer.

The Macau Cruise, which connects the Barra Pier and the Coloane Pier, also facilitates various water activities, such as watching fireworks displays, study tours and ecological visits.

In response to the legislator's inquiry, the Marine and Water Bureau (DSAMA) expressed its commitment to fostering



collaboration between ferry companies and local gaming operators.

Its goal is to incorporate local elements into

maritime tourism projects.

Tomorrow, SJM Resorts' collaboration with Shun Tak-China Travel to

launch the "SJM x Macau Cruise" will begin.

Late last year, MGM also launched its sightseeing cruise.

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Macau GP: Strange dates for this year's FIA GT World Cup

RENATO MARQUES

It was already known that the 71st Macau Grand Prix would be made even more special by the concurrent seventh FIA GT World Cup, which returned to the Guia Circuit last year after a three-year hiatus brought on by the pandemic.

According to an announcement by the Macau Grand Prix Organizing Committee (MGPOC), the 71st Macau GP returns this year to its normal four-day format, running from Thursday Nov. 14 to Sunday Nov. 17.

Unexpectedly, during the first meeting of 2024 of the World Motor Sport Council, held in Geneva Feb. 28, FIA proposed this year's event in Macau run from Tuesday Nov. 12 to Sunday Nov. 17; that is, two more days than usual.

According to FIA, "The seventh edition of the FIA GT World Cup will be held at the Guia Circuit from Nov. 12 to Nov. 17 as



part of the 2024 Macau Grand Prix."

The organization added,

"Sporting and technical regulations for the competition have also been approved."

"The format remains unchanged from 2023, with two 30-minute practice sessions followed

by a single qualifying race of the same duration."

"The world's premier sprint-format competition for GT3 cars will be held across two race heats, with a 12-lap qualifying race followed by a 16-lap, title-deciding main race."

The governing body of world motorsport also added that, following last year's measures, the FIA GT World Cup will use sustainable fuel supplied by ETS Racing Fuels.

To clarify the matter, the Times contacted the MGPOC, which replied that it "has no idea regarding [FIA's] date announcement."

"Whilst our official calendar is Nov. 14 to Nov. 17," the organizing team of the local event said, hinting they might have disclosed of "their working calendar" and not the public event dates.

This idea of a "mistake" in FIA's disclosure increases in likelihood if it is taken into account that, during the same meeting, it was also confirmed that the Kumho FIA TCR World Tour, which has its seventh and last round of the season in Macau during the Macau GP, would take place from Nov. 14 to Nov. 17 (coinciding with the official calendar from MGPOC).

MACAO WATER

Consumption to increase 5.5% driven by tourism growth

STAFF REPORTER

Water consumption is expected to increase 5.5% this year, driven by the continuous recovery of the city's tourism sector, according to executive director of Macao Water Nancy Kuan.

Speaking on the sidelines of a media spring luncheon yesterday, the executive said water consumption had increased 12% year-on-year in January this year.

It is forecast to increase 7% to 8% in the first half of the year and is expected to increase 5.5% for the whole year, mainly driven by tourists.

She also revealed statistics on water consumption during the New Year period and how the increase in water supply volume compared to the previous year. Although there were many tourists during this holiday period, the water consumption did not increase significantly.

The forecast for the first half of the year is predicting a higher water consumption due to the relaxing of pan-



Executive director of Macao Water Nancy Kuan

demographic restrictions, allowing more tourists into the city. In the second half of the year, water consumption is expected to slow to normal levels.

"So our full-year forecast for this year's water consumption is about 5%. It's mainly driven by commerce and tourists," she said.

Kuan also mentioned replacing old infrastructure, including water pipes and meters, and cooperating with government on improving water supply in the new urban areas, specifically in Zone A.

She elaborated on existing issues, such as the fact that

96% of the city's water supply comes from Zhuhai, which the city facilitates by means of four pipelines that run untreated water from Zhuhai to Macau.

Projects to boost water conservation that started in 2023, alongside Macau's numerous water treatment facilities, have been credited with keeping water bills relatively stable.

Additionally, the water subsidy scheme for low-rise buildings has been running for three years and has received a good response from owners. The plan is to extend the program for another year.

STATS

NEARLY 26,000 FOREIGN WORKERS HIRED IN 2023

STAFF REPORTER

Macau companies hired nearly 26,000 blue card holders in the past year, following a reduction in the number of foreign workers the year prior due to the pandemic.

As of the end of January, there were 177,561 non-resident workers in the SAR, an increase of 25,683 compared to the same month last year.

By January 2023, the number of foreign workers, including those from mainland China, had dropped to less than 152,000, marking the lowest level since April 2014.

Since the peak of 196,538 non-resident workers in December 2019, at the beginning of the pandemic, the city has seen a decrease of almost 45,000 non-residents, which accounts for 11.3% of the active population.

A recent data from the Labour Affairs Bureau shows that the number



of non-resident workers has been steadily increasing for the past 12 months, reaching the highest level since the end of 2020.

Among the sectors, the hotel and restaurant industry hired the most non-resident workers in the past year, adding 13,110 employees. This was followed by the construction sector, which saw an increase of 2,950 workers, and the domestic workers sector, which added 2,788 workers.

The hotel and restaurant industry was severely impacted by the loss of labor during the pandemic, resulting in over 17,600 non-resident employees being laid off since December 2019.

The unemployment rate reached 4% in the third quarter of 2022, the highest figure since 2006.

However, by the end of last year, the unemployment rate had fallen to 2.3%, below the pre-pandemic historic low of 1.7%.

DSAT KICKS OFF THIRD TRAVEL PATTERNS SURVEY

ANTHONY LAM

TODAY will see the start of the data collection period for the city's third origin-destination network survey, the Transport Bureau (DSAT) announced yesterday at a press briefing.

UMTec Ltd., a private research entity owned by the University of Macau (UM), will conduct the survey.

The survey will map the origin-destination network of the local population with the aim of understanding citizens' travel habits and characteristics, as well as their perspectives and opinions about their journey.

Data collected will be analyzed to provide the foundation for the government's policymaking in the transport area.

Asked whether the results will be used for the government's transport planning for the years 2021 to 2030, Un Chao Wa, acting department head for transport planning and construction of the bureau, said yes.

Un said the results will also be used for the intermediate evaluation for planning. This planning should be conducted between 2025 and 2026.

Both physical and online

questionnaires comprise the survey.

The physical part will be conducted between March and July this year, with interviewers visiting households to collect data through interviews.

A total of 3,600 households have been selected based on the database of the Statistics and Census Service Bureau (DSEC) through stratified sampling. The proportion of samples in each district will correspond to the overall proportion of the population.

The physical survey will collect responses per household, Un said.

The online section of the survey, meanwhile, will commence in the second half of the year.

However, neither Un nor Gu Veng Keong, a project manager at UMTec, gave any clear picture as to how this section will be conducted.

The only detail provided is that a QR code will be generated to link people to the questionnaire. No details on how the QR code will be disseminated are available.

As for how many responses the research entity is expecting for the online questionnaire, Gu said

that there is no hard threshold on the number of responses to be collected. The online questionnaire will act as supplementary data to the physical data.

Asked whether an influx of online data would jeopardize the survey's reliability, Un disagreed, saying it would actually improve reliability, because of the increase in the data's sample size.

The panel was also asked if questions about commuting difficulties will be in the questionnaires.

Un said the survey is mostly focused on the origin-destination network of the local population.

However, DSAT has considered including questions about commuting difficulties in the survey, but given the length of the existing questionnaire, the bureau sees the inclusion not very suitable.

On whether traffic signs and signals in the city will be updated, upgraded or improved after the survey, Un said the survey results will be used to these ends, because questions will concern some of these situations.

He said DSAT constantly reviews these signs and signals.

This year's survey will cost the government MOP4.48 million.

ANTHONY LAM



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Illegal gambling bill passed amid concerns

RENATO MARQUES

THE bill to amend laws regulating illegal gaming practices in Macau passed at its first reading during the recent Legislative Assembly plenary session.

The government justified the new amendments as necessary to modernize the law, as the current provisions are over 25 years old.

Although in general agreement with the idea of updating the law, several lawmakers expressed concerns that the new bill's scope might go a little too far.

The bill also includes some provisions that, in lawmakers' opinions, are difficult, if not impossible, to implement.

Initially seeking to objectively clarify, criminalize

and prevent "side betting" and other tricks of the gaming industry – such as "multipliers" and "online gaming" – the bill seems to have, in some lawmakers' opinion, broadened its scope.

It forbids locals from participating in online sports betting and other activities, even if these do not take place, in part or in full, within Macau's borders.

The bill's amended provisions seem so strict to lawmakers that they were forced to question activities such as the traditional Mah-jong or the Chinese Chess (Xiangqi) games, traditionally played by local people in parks and gardens.

Some said the idea of banning all online activities and sports betting might cause problems as Macau fights to become a major sports event host. It is known that there are markets in sports betting for major sports events, such as team sports and boxing.

Responding to these many concerns, Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong seemed able to answer only a few questions.

He centered on the proposed possibility of police "night-time raids" to investigate some of the crimes noted in the bill, as well as the use of "undercover agents."

Despite many doubts, lawmakers approved the bill after its first reading, leaving further discussion to the Second Standing Committee, which has received the bill and is preparing to further analyze it.

COURTS

TSI RULES DELETED RECORDING ILLEGAL

ANTHONY LAM

REGARDLESS of its deletion or retention, a recording made without consent will be subject to related violations should the act of recording be proven, the Court of Second Instance (TSI) has ruled.

The court disclosed that in 2021, the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) summoned a convicted person – referred to as A – to an inquiry as a witness.

The two CCAC inspectors conducting the inquiry discovered that the voice recording function on A's cell phone was turned on during the inquiry, although the phone was in A's bag.

The inspectors had not consented to the voice recording.

Upon the discovery,

A was charged with illicit recording and photographing as a main suspect and an accomplice.

The Court of First Instance (TJB) heard the case and convicted A on both charges, sentencing A to nine months in prison under two years of probation.

The TJB has also conducted tests with the same mobile phone model and proved that voice can be clearly recorded even with the phone inside the type of bag that A had.

The TSI saw that the deletion of the recording is not the same as the absence of the act of recording. It stressed that once an act of recording is concluded, the condition of violation is established, regardless of the deletion afterwards.

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AL PASSES PUBLIC HOUSING SALE REGIME AFTER FIRST READING WITHOUT AMENDMENT

RENATO MARQUES

THE Legislative Assembly (AL) has passed, after a first reading, the "Regime for the Transfer of Autonomous Units of Buildings Used for Economic Acquisition Housing and Intermediate Housing," also called the Public House Sale Regime.

The bill, embroiled in controversy earlier this month when lawmakers forced the government to postpone voting on it, has now passed, with the support of all plenary members bar one.

Alone, lawmaker Ron Lam stood against the bill, continuing to express the same concern that he had earlier raised: that the government returned to the AL to discuss the bill without one single amendment to it.

Lam raised his initial concerns when the bill was first presented Feb. 5.

This time, lawmakers seemed convinced the bill would pose no problems, rendering it safe to enact. Some, however, hinted at having a few lingering concerns, but they said they were content to address these behind the closed doors of the AL Standing Committee, which will address the bill in more detail.

One matter in play is the fact that, through the bill, the Land Law states that from 2014 the land in Macau belongs to the State (China) with the Macau Special Administrative Region to have only the right to use it.

Contrary to previous practice, where buyers of units situated on public housing develop-



ments would acquire those properties from the Housing Bureau (IH), the former entity that government granted land plots to, the government now seeks to remove this step, with buyers acquiring units directly from the government.

This change confused several lawmakers, who were unable to understand where responsibility for the developments lay, particularly in the event of construction defects.

Without clearly explaining how the procedure will be made, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, continued to claim that "unit buyers will not be affected" and will "not suffer any impact" from this change of policy.

Another of the issues raised regarded the establishment of a sale price for this type of housing, including not only the regular economic acquisition but also the new "sandwich class" housing, a development that has been stopped by the government.

Lawmaker Ron Lam also expressed concerns over the lack of a promoter or concessionaire for the land, since the law that establishes the price for the rental of the land plots states that a premium is to be paid annually by any intermediate entity as a rental for the use of the land.

The bill has now been distributed to the Third Standing Committee of the AL, which will soon start discussing it in detail.



Security chief: More precise victim age detail unnecessary

ANTHONY LAM

THE current mode of age announcement in the police's crime information release is suitable and more precise segmentation in "unnecessary," Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak has commented.

During a recent press briefing to announce crime figures and data from 2023, the Security official was asked to explain why police forces had become unwilling to give clearer reference to the age groups of stakeholders in crimes or incidents.

Until now, when announcing crime or related data, the police also announced the age of the victim – or at least provided an age range – regardless of whether or not they were deceased.

Now, however, the police decided to widen the age range, using broad categories like youth, middle-aged and old aged.

The same mode of age announcement was used when the information about the demise of two co-residing elderly residents was disclosed earlier this month. The police only said the two residents were middle-aged and senior-aged.

At the press briefing, Wong was

questioned about the matter, and he said that young-aged equates to below 30 years, middle-aged includes those aged 31 to 60 years, and senior includes those aged above 60 years.

"This is actually very clear and easy to remember," Wong said.

He said the police have no incentive to follow the World Health Organisation's (WHO) categorizations. Although he did not find more precise categorization problematic, he didn't find it "necessary" either.

Another reason behind the vague categorization is demands from the families of the deceased.

"They have written letters to and called the police to express their objections [against clear age announcements]," Wong disclosed. "We understand these demands which focused on preventing secondary damages."

He said news of deaths or suicide will be announced, but will not be as detailed as before. Information such as personal particulars, such as surnames, will not be announced.

"There are many rare surnames. Once they're announced, connections can easily be made," Wong said.

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ONE TECH TIP

Don't use rice for your device. Here's how to dry out your smartphone

KELVIN CHAN, LONDON

YOU were walking next to a swimming pool when you slipped and dropped your phone into the water. Or it slipped out of your hand when you were next to a filled bathtub or toilet.

However your smartphone got wet, you now need to dry it. But what do you do? There's lots of advice on the internet, some of it conflicting. Apple inserted itself into the debate recently when it put out an advisory that included a warning against using rice.

Here are some things to keep in mind next time your phone has an unintended encounter with a liquid.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

Dry off the exterior with a towel or clean cloth, even your shirtsleeve — anything that's absorbent. Take out the SIM card and holder. If possible, remove the back housing and battery to wipe them dry. Also, if possible, turn the phone off.

iPhones can't be disassembled so Apple recommends tapping it gently against your hand with the connector ports facing down so liquid can flow out.

Samsung, which is the biggest maker of Android phones, recommends using a cotton bud to get moisture out of the earphone jack and charging port. In contrast, Apple says cotton buds shouldn't be inserted into iPhone openings.

If it's not water but another liquid — a drink, seawater or chlo-

AP PHOTO



minated pool water — Samsung advises soaking the phone in clean water for a few minutes then rinsing it to get rid of any impurities or salinity that could speed up corrosion of the circuitry inside.

Both companies say it's best to leave the phone out in a well ventilated area (perhaps with a fan) to dry it out. Google says leave the device to dry at room temperature.

WHAT YOU SHOULDN'T DO

Don't use a hair dryer or compressed air on your phone. Don't put it in a freezer - this might stop

your device from short-circuiting but the problem will be back once you try to thaw it. And while this might seem obvious, don't put your device in a tumble dryer or on top of a radiator.

Don't power it up or try to charge it with a cable — although wireless charging is OK if your phone has it and you really need to turn it on in an emergency.

So what about using rice to dry your device? You may have heard that putting a phone in a bowl of rice will help draw out moisture. It's been a tip that's been out there for years.

Apple, however, says that's a no-no. The company warned against it in an advisory published in early January. It drew little attention at the time, but then people noticed the line that said: "Don't put your iPhone in a bag of rice. Doing so could allow small particles of rice to damage your iPhone."

IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN USE BESIDES RICE?

The best option is silica gel, a drying agent that can absorb lots of moisture. Silica gel beads are typically found in packets that are included with products like beef

jerky, seaweed sheets or sneakers to keep them dry. You can also buy them in bulk online. This works best if you put them in an airtight box with your phone.

When do I know it's dry?

It's hard to tell but it's best to wait as long as possible — at least a few days. Samsung advises bringing your device into a service center for inspection even after it's been air-dried.

AREN'T PHONES WATERPROOF NOWADAYS?

Most phones nowadays are designed to be water-resistant, which means they can resist water entering critical areas for a certain amount of time. But beware, this isn't the same as being waterproof.

Apple says the iPhone 7 and newer models are splash and water resistant. iPhone XS devices and up have the IP68 rating, which means they can be submerged for as long as 30 minutes and, depending on the model, as deep as 6 meters (20 feet). These models also pop up a warning if there's liquid detected in key ports, and warn against charging. Samsung says most of its Galaxy Android phones feature the same rating, though the maximum depth is about 5 meters (16 feet).

Google's newer Pixel phones carry the same water resistance ratings, but Google warns that they aren't waterproof and the water resistance will diminish over time because of "normal wear and tear, device repair, disassembly or damage." **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

MGM to host CHOCOL'ART' pop-up with pastry master Angelo Musa



MGM has commissioned French pastry master Meilleur Ouvrier de France (MOF) Angelo Musa to Macau for the first time, to deliver a limited three-day 'CHOCOL'ART' pop-up series at

MGM Cotai from March 7 to 9.

The series encompasses demo sessions for local pastry aficionados-entrepreneurs, a whisky-pairing session, an exclusive afternoon

tea set, and award-winning pastry, as well as the highlight of a six-hands dinner with chefs at MGM.

The pastry chef won the World Pastry Cup (Coupe du Monde de la Pâtisserie) in 2003 and the coveted title of Craftsman of France (Meilleur Ouvrier de France) in 2007. He was also named as a Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters (Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres) by the French Minister of Culture for his contribution to the industry.

Throughout the series in Macau, MOF Musa will bring chocolate ingredients from Chocolaterie de l'Opera, a French chocolate expert with nearly 90 years of experience, to Macau for the showcase.

Grand Coloane Resort launches dining program



Grand Coloane Resort has launched a 12-month membership, offering discounts at its dining outlets, as well as at Ar-

tyzen Grand Lapa.

For MOP988, the membership includes a one-night stay with breakfast for two, a com-

plimentary afternoon tea set, and a MOP 200 dining voucher. Dubbed as "Take · Eat · Easy Dining Program," the scheme includes discounts of international cuisine at Café Panorama, Cantonese specialties at Kwun Hoi Heen Chinese Restaurants, special drinks and light bites at Poolside Bar, and signature drinks at Panorama Lounge.

The membership is also applicable at Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau's Café Bela Vista, NAAM Thai Restaurant, Kam Lai Heen Chinese Restaurant and Vasco - Bar & Lounge.



Copies of "The Three-Body Problem" on display at a bookstore in Beijing

ART HOW CHINESE SCIENCE FICTION WENT FROM UNDERGROUND MAGAZINES TO NETFLIX EXTRAVAGANZA

SIMINA MISTREANU,
CHENGDU

FOR a few days in October 2023, the capital of the science fiction world was Chengdu, China. Fans traveled from around the world as Worldcon, sci-fi's biggest annual event, was held in the country for the first time.

It was a rare moment when Chinese and international fans could get together without worrying about the increasingly fraught politics of China's relationship with the West or Beijing's tightening grip on expression.

For Chinese fans like Tao Bolin, an influencer who flew from the southern province of Guangdong for the event, it felt like the world finally wanted to read Chinese literature. Fans and authors mingled in a brand new Science Fiction Museum, designed by the prestigious Zaha Hadid Architects in the shape of a huge steel starburst over a lake.

But three months later, much of that goodwill turned sour as a scandal erupted over allegations that organizers of the Hugo awards — sci-fi's biggest prize, awarded at Worldcon — disqualified candidates to placate Chinese censors.

The event embodied the contradictions that Chinese science fiction has faced for decades. In 40 years, it's gone from a politically suspect niche to one of China's most successful cultural exports, with author Liu Cixin gaining an international following that includes fans like Barack Obama

and Mark Zuckerberg. But it's had to overcome obstacles created by geopolitics for just as long.

With a big-budget Netflix adaptation of his "The Three-Body Problem" set to drop in March, produced by the same showrunners as "Game of Thrones," Chinese sci-fi could reach its biggest audience yet.

Getting there took decades of work by dedicated authors, editors and cultural bureaucrats who believed that science fiction could bring people together.

"Sci-fi has always been a bridge between different cultures and countries," says Yao Haijun, the editor-in-chief of Science Fiction World, China's oldest sci-fi magazine.

A SMALL STEP FOR A PROVINCIAL BUREAUCRAT

Chinese sci-fi's journey abroad started with another convention in Chengdu three decades ago, but politics nearly derailed that one before it could get off the ground.

Science Fiction World planned to host a writers' conference in the city in 1991. But as news of the crackdown on student protesters in Beijing's Tiananmen Square circled the globe in 1989, foreign speakers were dropping out.

The magazine sent a small delegation to Worldcon 1990, hosted in The Hague, to save the conference.

Its leader was Shen Zaiwang, an English translator in Sichuan province's Foreign Affairs Department who fell in love with sci-fi as

a child. He packed instant noodles for the weeks-long train journey across China and the fragmenting Soviet Union.

In The Hague, Shen used toy pandas and postcards of Chengdu to make the case that the city — more than 1,800 kilometers from Beijing — was friendly and safe to visit.

"We tried to introduce our province as a safe place, and that the people in Sichuan really hope the foreign science fiction writers can come and have a look and encourage Chinese young people to read more science fiction novels," Shen says.

In the end, a dozen foreign authors attended the conference. It was a small start, but it was more than anyone could have imagined a few years earlier.

A GIANT LEAP FOR THE GENRE

China's science fiction community faced suspicion at home as well.

Science fiction magazines such as Chengdu's Science Fiction World started being launched in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as China began opening to the world after the Mao era.

But in the early 1980s, Beijing initiated a nationwide "spiritual pollution cleaning" campaign to quash the influence of the decadent West, and sci-fi was accused of being unscientific and out of line with official ideology. Most of the young publications were shuttered.

Science Fiction World's editors kept going.

"They believed if China wanted to develop, it needed to be an innovative country — it needed science fiction," Yao, the editor, said in a recorded public address in 2017.

In 1997, the magazine organized another international event in Beijing, headlined by U.S. and Russian astronauts. The conference got attention in the Chinese press, giving sci-fi a cool new aura of innovation, exploration and imagination, Yao says.

LIU CIXIN'S BIG BANG

China's growing sci-fi fandom was devouring translated works from abroad, but few people abroad were reading Chinese stories. Liu Cixin was going to change that.

A soft-spoken engineer at a power plant in the coal-dominated province of Shanxi, his stories were hits with genre fans.

But "The Three-Body Problem," first serialized by Science Fiction World in 2006, reached a new level of popularity, says Yao.

Authorities took note. The China Educational Publications Import & Export Corporation, the state-owned publications exporter, picked up the novel and its two sequels.

The translations were intended from the start as "a big cultural export from China to the world, something very highly visible," says Joel Martinsen, who translated the trilogy's second volume, "The Dark Forest."

But no one could have anticipated the critical and popular

success: In 2015, Liu became the first Asian author to win a Hugo Award for a novel.

"There was something quite fresh and raw and eye-catching, and even sometimes very dark and ruthless in his work," says Song Mingwei, a professor of Chinese literature at Wellesley College.

The next year, Beijing-based writer Hao Jingfang beat Stephen King to win a Hugo for short fiction with a story about social inequality in a surreal version of China's capital.

Liu's translations were a political breakthrough for the genre: In two decades, it had gone from barely tolerated to a flagship export of China's official cultural machine.

The government encouraged the growth of an "industry" spanning movies, video games, books, magazines and exhibits, and set up an official research center in 2020 to track its rise.

Worldcon Chengdu was to be the crowning achievement of these efforts.

The event itself was seen as a success. But in January, when the Hugo committee disclosed vote totals, the critics' suspicions seemed to be confirmed. It turned out several candidates had been disqualified, raising censorship concerns. They included New York Times bestselling authors R. F. Kuang and Xiran Jay Zhao, both politically active writers with family ties to China.

The Hugo awards organizers did not respond to requests for comment by the AP.

A NEW HOPE?

Despite the frictions, Chinese sci-fi remains poised to continue its international rise. Netflix's adaptation of the "The Three-Body Problem" could bring it to a vast new audience, a coming-out orders of magnitude bigger than Shen Zaiwang's trip to The Hague.

And insiders like Song and Yao are looking forward to a new generation of Chinese sci-fi authors that's starting to be translated into English now.

It's led by younger, female writers who were educated abroad such as Regina Kanyu Wang and Tang Fei. Their works explore themes that resonate with younger audiences, Song says, such as gender fluidity and climate catastrophes.

"When doing anything with the endorsement of either the market or the government, imagination can dry up very quickly," Song says. "I think often the important thing happens on the margin."

Yao continues to believe in sci-fi's role as a bridge between cultures, even in turbulent times.

"As long as there is communication," he says, "we'll be able to find some things in common."

MDT/AP

SECURITY PROTOCOLS

Fired scientists in Canada failed to acknowledge links to China, newly released records say

TWO scientists at a high-security infectious disease laboratory in Canada lost their jobs after reviews found they failed to protect sensitive material and information and did not acknowledge links with China, newly released records show.

The scientists, Xiangguo Qiu and her husband, Keding Cheng, were stripped of their security clearances in 2019 at Canada's National Microbiology Laboratory over questions about their loyalty to Canada and the potential for coercion or exploitation by a foreign entity, the documents say.

More than 600 pages were made public yesterday [Macau time] following a special all-party review of the records.

The records show Canada's spy agency, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, assessed



The National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg

that Qiu repeatedly lied about the extent of her work with Chinese institutions and refused to admit involvement in various Chinese programs, even when evidence was presented to her.

The documents are likely to further chill relations between the two countries. Last September,

Canada announced a public inquiry into "whether China, Russia and other countries interfered in Canadian federal elections in 2019 and 2021" that re-elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberals.

Opposition parties hoped the documents released yesterday

would shed light on why Qiu and Cheng were escorted out of Winnipeg's National Microbiology Laboratory in July 2019 and subsequently fired in January 2021. The two have not publicly commented and are reportedly in China.

Three former senior judges had the final say on public disclosure of the newly disclosed documents, which are partially redacted.

The Canadian Security Intelligence Service concluded that, despite being given every opportunity in her interviews to describe her association with Chinese entities, "Ms. Qiu continued to make blanket denials, feign ignorance or tell outright lies."

A November 2020 Public Health Agency of Canada report on Qiu says investigators "weighed the adverse information and are in agreement with the CSIS assessment."

Investigators concluded that Qiu's loyalty "remains of grave concern" due to her direct contact with the entities linked to a foreign state.

A Public Health Agency report on Cheng's activities says he allowed restricted visitors to work in laboratories unescorted and, on at least two occasions, did not prevent the unauthorized removal of laboratory materials.

The report also says Cheng was not forthcoming about his activities and collaborations with people from government agencies "of another country, namely members of the People's Republic of China."

"Dr. Cheng's actions reflect those of an individual who is careless with information and assets in his custody and not forthcoming and truthful when questioned about these communications."

Health Minister Mark Holland said the documents revealed a "lax adherence to security protocols."

But Holland insisted that at no time did national secrets or information that threatened the security of Canada leave the lab.

"I think that there was an inadequate understanding of the threat of foreign interference," he told reporters. "I believe that an earnest effort was made to adhere to those policies, but not with the rigor that was required. MDT/AP

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SOUTH CHINA SEA

Philippine president tells Australian parliament their strategic partnership 'more important than ever'

ROD MCGUIRK, MELBOURNE

PHILIPPINE President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. told Australia's Parliament yesterday that the strategic partnership between the two nations was more important than ever with the rule of law and peace in the region under threat.

Marcos told a special joint sitting of the two chambers during a state visit that the Philippines would not allow a foreign power to "take even one square inch of our sovereign territory."

It is a declaration he has often repeated since taking office in 2022 and refers to China's disputed claims to the Philippines' territory in the South China Sea.

Marcos said Australia and the Philippines need to band together against new challenges to the region's peace and stability, as they had against Japanese forces during World War II.

"Not one single country can do this by itself. No single force can counter them by themselves," Marcos said. "This is why our strategic partnership has grown more important than ever."

Marcos said his father, former



Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. meets with Australia's PM Anthony Albanese at Parliament House in Canberra, yesterday

President Ferdinand Marcos, and then-Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam reaffirmed that the security of their two countries was bound together in 1974 when they toured the Philippines' WWII battlefields of Bataan and Corregidor.

Australia and the Philippines for the first time conducted joint sea and air patrols in the South

China Sea in November last year.

Marcos said the Philippines and Australia fought to build a rules-based international order after WWII, and that they must now fight to protect that order in the South China Sea.

"The protection of the South China Sea as a vital, critical global artery is crucial to the preservation of regional peace and, I dare

say, of global peace," Marcos said.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese reminded Marcos of his words when the leaders last met: prosperity and progress dependent on peace.

"That is what is so significant about the maritime cooperation activities our two navies completed together for the first time in November last year," Albanese said.

"Our cooperation is an assertion of our national interest and a recognition of our regional responsibility," Albanese added.

Marcos' address was interrupted briefly by Senator Janet Rice, from the minor Greens party, who held up a sign that read: "Stop human rights abuses," in a protest against the Philippines' record on rights.

Rice was later censured by a majority of her colleagues in the Senate with a motion that disapproved of her "unparliamentary and disrespectful conduct" in her protest and her "disregard for the importance of Australia-Philippines relations." The censure is symbolic and carries no consequences for Rice.

Marcos and Albanese yesterday announced new agreements on maritime cooperation, cybersecurity and fair trade regulation.

Following the two-day state visit, which ends on Thursday, Marcos will return to Australia next week with other Southeast Asian leaders to take part in an ASEAN-Australia Summit that marks 50 years of Australia's partnership with the regional bloc. **MDT/AP**

THAILAND

A former police chief will face charges for allegedly helping a Red Bull scion avoid justice



Gen. Somyot Poompanmoung (2015)

PROSECUTORS in Thailand announced this week they will indict a former national police chief on charges of impeding legal action against an heir to the Red Bull energy drink fortune who was accused of killing a Bangkok police officer in a 2012 hit-and-run.

Several government officials and police officers have been accused of a conspiracy to help Vorayuth "Boss" Yoovidhya escape justice by fleeing abroad in a case widely held up as an example of how the rich and well-connected enjoy impunity in Thailand.

Vorayuth is the grandson of Chaleo Yoovidhya, one of the creators of the

globally famous Red Bull brand. Forbes magazine puts the family's net worth at \$20 billion.

Somyot Poompanmoung, the police chief in 2014-15, and other suspects were charged with abuse of power in order to aid an individual to avoid prosecution. Somyot was accused by the National Anti-Corruption Commission last year of involvement in tampering with evidence by altering the record of the speed of the car that Vorayuth was allegedly driving at the time of the accident.

The Office of the Attorney General said it also will indict seven other people including police officers, a

lawyer, an engineering specialist and a former deputy attorney general in relation to the case.

Vorayuth was believed to be at the wheel of a Ferrari that struck the back of a traffic policeman's motorcycle on a main Bangkok road. The officer, Wichan Glunprasert, was flung from his motorbike and died at the scene. The car sped off but police followed a trail of oil and brake fluid to the Yoovidhya family's luxury compound on a nearby side road.

Wichan's family have told Thai media that they received compensation of 3 million baht (\$83,000) from the Yoovidhya family in exchange for them not pur-

suing further legal action.

For years Vorayuth avoided court by not turning up to meet prosecutors. At the same time he continued to lead a busy, globetrotting life, flying in private Red Bull jets to attend F1 races, snowboarding in Japan and cruising in Venice, among other activities. It was only after his lifestyle was revealed by an Associated Press investigation, and Vorayuth was confronted on a London doorstep by AP reporters, that Thai police issued an arrest warrant in 2017.

He left Thailand three days before the warrant was issued and his whereabouts since then have not been publicly known. His Thai passport was revoked. Interpol issued a "Red Notice" for him in August 2017.

Meanwhile, almost all charges against him have expired due to the statute of limitations. The last remaining charge — causing death by reckless driving — will expire in 2027. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



PUTIN'S WAR | TWO YEARS ON

US adults fracture along party lines in support for Ukraine military funding: AP-NORC

STEPHEN GROVES & LINLEY SANDERS, WASHINGTON

AS Russia makes battlefield advances and Ukrainian soldiers run short on ammunition, U.S. adults have become fractured along party lines in their support for sending military aid to Kyiv, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Democrats are more likely to say the U.S. government is spending "too little" on funding for Ukraine than they were in November, but most Republicans remain convinced it's "too much." That divide is reflected in Congress, where the Democratic-held Senate — with help from 22 GOP senators — passed a \$95 billion package of aid for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan earlier this month. But the bill, which includes roughly \$60 billion in military support for Kyiv, has languished in the Republican-held House as

Speaker Mike Johnson has so far refused to bring it up for a vote.

President Joe Biden, along with top Democrats and Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, passionately urged the Republican speaker during a White House meeting this week to take up the foreign aid package, but Johnson responded by saying that Congress "must take care of America's needs first."

Most Republicans still share Johnson's view, and their opinions haven't changed significantly since the fall: 55% say the U.S. is spending too much on Ukraine aid, compared to 59% in November.

Meanwhile, support for increasing Ukraine aid has grown among Democrats. About 4 in 10 Democrats say the U.S. is spending "too little" on aid to Ukraine in the war against Russia, up from 17% in November. The share of Democrats who say the U.S. is spending "too much" or "about the right amount" has also dro-

pped over the same period.

Chloe Henninger, 24, a Democrat from West Hartford, Connecticut, was among those who said the U.S. is spending too little on aid to Ukraine. She said it was important for the U.S. to show commitment to democracies like Ukraine that are under siege.

"From a humanitarian point of view, there were sovereign borders agreed upon internationally. And then an autocratic power went and invaded a sovereign territory. The U.S., as one of the major military forces in the world, sort of has a duty to respond," Henninger, who works as a cosmetic chemist, said.

The poll shows that two years after Russia's initial invasion, the Ukraine war has become a partisan dividing line: Majorities of Democrats think it's extremely or very important to prevent Russia from seizing more Ukrainian territory, to negotiate a permanent ceasefire between the two countries, help Ukraine regain its

land and provide general aid to its military, while less than half of Republicans and Independents agree.

Biden and Democratic leaders in Congress have cast the conflict in Ukraine — the largest land invasion in Europe since World War II — as a potential turning point in history. Failing to repel Russian President Vladimir Putin's assault, they warn, would have grave consequences, from destabilizing the rest of Europe to emboldening other potential foes such as China and North Korea.

At the same time, Donald Trump, the former president who appears to be marching towards the Republican nomination, has injected serious doubts about America's involvement in Ukraine and the rest of the world. While McConnell, the top Republican in the Senate, has remained a strong advocate of robust American involvement abroad, Trump has swayed the party towards an isolationist stance, as well as at times

heaped admiration on Putin's strongman style of rule.

"We're throwing all this taxpayer money to Ukraine and to Israel, and we can't even take care of our own people," said Jeffrey Jackson, a 55-year-old Republican from Granbury, Texas. "The U.S. government needs to take care of our own people and then worry about the rest of the world later."

Jackson also holds deeply unfavorable views of Biden and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. And while Jackson said he was not "pro-Putin," he liked the way Putin has led Russia more than how Biden has led the U.S.

Putin is broadly unpopular among U.S. adults, including Republicans. About 8 in 10 U.S. adults have an unfavorable opinion of Putin, including nearly 9 in 10 Democrats and three-quarters of Republicans. Views of Zelenskyy are more reflective of the divisions over the war itself. About 4 in 10 U.S. adults have a favorable opinion of Zelenskyy, with Democrats having a more positive view than Republicans.

Trump has also cast doubt on whether he would uphold commitments to defend fellow NATO countries if he became president again. Jackson agreed with that sentiment, saying he would like to see NATO dismantled.

However, a majority of U.S. adults — including 52% of Republicans — support the spirit of Article V of the NATO military alliance, that an attack on one NATO country represents an attack on all. Nearly 6 in 10 adults say they would favor the U.S. deploying U.S. troops to defend a U.S. NATO ally if it were attacked by Russian forces.

Still, when it comes to Ukraine, partisan divisions persist even on questions about basic diplomacy. For example, around 4 in 10 Republicans say that negotiating a permanent ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine should be an extremely or very important foreign policy goal for the U.S., compared to about 6 in 10 Democrats. Overall, half of adults say it's highly important for the U.S. to focus on stopping Russia from gaining more territory in Ukraine.

Six in 10 adults continue to support imposing economic sanctions on Russia. And half favor providing weapons.

Chris Bahr, a 41-year-old from Houston, Texas, who described himself as libertarian politically, said he liked the fact that most of the funding for Ukraine would be spent on U.S.-made weapons. He wanted Congress to approve the aid package "as soon as possible."

"It helps another allied country defend itself and helps America economically — getting rid of a lot of our older weapons as we're ordering new stuff," Bahr said. "I think it would save lives in the long run just to not let Russia become expansionist again." **MDT/AP**



RUSSIA

PUTIN WARNS THAT SENDING WESTERN TROOPS TO UKRAINE RISKS A GLOBAL NUCLEAR CONFLICT

VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV,
MOSCOW

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin vowed yesterday to fulfill Moscow's goals in Ukraine and sternly warned the West against deeper involvement in the fighting, saying that such a move is fraught with the risk of a global nuclear conflict.

Putin's warning came in a state-of-the-nation address ahead of next month's election he's all but certain to win, underlining his readiness to protect Russian gains in Ukraine.

In an apparent reference to French President Emmanuel Macron's statement earlier this week that the future deployment of Western ground troops to Ukraine should not be "ruled out", Putin warned that it would lead to "tragic" consequences for the countries who decide to do that.

Putin noted that while accusing Russia of plans to attack NATO allies in Europe, Western allies were "selecting targets for striking our territory and selecting the most efficient as they think striking assets and talking about the possibility of sending a NATO contingent to Ukraine."

"We remember the fate of those who sent their troop contingents to the territory of our country," the Russian leader said. "Now the consequences for the potential in-

vaders will be far more tragic."

Speaking before an audience of lawmakers and top officials, Putin said the West should keep in mind that "we also have the weapons that can strike targets on their territory, and what they are now suggesting and scaring the world with, all that raises the real threat of a nuclear conflict that will mean the destruction of our civilization."

"Don't they understand it?" he said, alleging that Western leaders are playing with options of deeper involvement in the conflict, as in a simulation. "Those people haven't been through any tough challenges and they have forgotten what war means."

The strong statement followed earlier warnings from Putin, who has issued frequent reminders of Russia's nuclear might since he sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022 as he sought to discourage the West from expanding its military support for Kyiv.

Putin emphasized that Russia's nuclear forces are in "full readiness," saying that the military has deployed potent new weapons, some of them tested on the battlefield in Ukraine.

The Kremlin leader said they include the new Sarmat heavy intercontinental ballistic missile that has entered service with Russian nuclear forces, along with the Bure-

vestnik atomic-powered cruise missile and the Poseidon atomic-powered, nuclear-armed drone, which are completing their tests.

He added that the Kinzhal and Zircon hypersonic missiles have proven their efficacy on the battlefield in Ukraine.

At the same time, he rejected Western leaders' statements about the threat of a Russian attack on NATO allies in Europe as "ravings" and again dismissed Washington's claim that Moscow was pondering the deployment of space-based nuclear weapons.

Putin charged that the U.S. allegations were part of a ploy to draw Russia into talks on nuclear arms control on American terms even as Washington continues its efforts to deliver a "strategic defeat" to Moscow in Ukraine.

"Ahead of the U.S. election, they just want to show their citizens, as well as others, that they continue to rule the world," he said. "It won't work."

In his speech that focused heavily on economic and social issues ahead of the March 15-17 presidential vote, Putin argued that Russia was "defending its sovereignty and security and protecting our compatriots" in Ukraine, charging that the Russian forces have the upper hand in the fighting.

He hailed Russian soldiers and honored those who were killed in fighting with a mo-

ment of silence.

Putin has repeatedly said that he sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022 to protect Russian interests and prevent Ukraine from posing a major security threat to Russia by joining NATO. Kyiv and its allies have denounced it as an unprovoked act of aggression.

The Russian leader has repeatedly signaled a desire to negotiate an end to the fighting but warned that Russia will hold onto its gains.

Putin, 71, who is running as an independent candidate in the March 15-17 presidential election, relies on the tight control over Russia's political system that he has established during 24 years in power.

Prominent critics who could challenge him have either been imprisoned or are living abroad, while most independent media have been banned, meaning that Putin's reelection is all but assured. He faces token opposition from three other candidates nominated by Kremlin-friendly parties represented in parliament.

Russia's best-known opposition leader Alexei Navalny, whose attempt to run against Putin in 2018 was rejected, died suddenly in an Arctic prison colony earlier this month, while serving a 19-year sentence on extremism charges. Navalny's funeral is set for Friday. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1954 US TESTS HYDROGEN BOMB IN BIKINI



The US has produced the biggest ever man-made explosion so far in the Pacific archipelago of Bikini, part of the Marshall Islands.

It is believed the hydrogen bomb was up to 1,000 times more powerful than the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima.

It was so violent that it overwhelmed the measuring instruments, indicating that the bomb was much more powerful than scientists had anticipated.

The 15 megaton bomb delivered a force far more powerful than expected.

One of the atolls has been totally vaporized, disappearing into a gigantic mushroom cloud that spread at least 100 miles wide and dropping back to the sea in the form of radioactive fall-out.

The Atomic Energy Commission announced this was the first in a series of tests to be carried out in the area.

Tests first began in Bikini in 1946 after the natives were moved to the island of Rongerik, then to Ujelan a year later and to Kili in 1949.

This is the second H-bomb test in the area.

A 10.4 megaton bomb was exploded on 1 November 1952 at Enewatak, west of Bikini.

It destroyed one island and left a crater 175 feet deep.

It was hundreds of times more powerful than that used over Hiroshima.

Unlike that device which tapped energy by splitting atomic nuclei, the Enewatak weapon forced together nuclei of hydrogen to unleash an even greater destructive force.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The 1954 Bikini bomb was the biggest man-made explosion until the USSR's 50-megaton test in 1961.

Three weeks after the Bikini bomb it emerged that a Japanese fishing boat, called Lucky Dragon, was within 80 miles (129 km) of the test zone at the time. Its 23 crew were severely affected by radiation sickness.

They were among 264 people accidentally exposed to radiation because the explosion and fall-out had been far greater than expected. The original natives were granted \$325,000 in compensation and returned to Bikini in 1974. But they were evacuated four years later when new tests showed high levels of residual radioactivity in the region.

Twenty-three nuclear tests were carried out at Bikini between 1946 and 1958.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Leap into profitable ventures. Keep up the good work. Collaborate behind the scenes for lucrative results. Fortune blesses connection and communication.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Collaborate for common gain. Discuss an inspiring possibility. You can realize shared dreams with steady discipline. Invent fun ideas and options.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Maintain your work, health and exercise practices. Choose stability over illusion. Discipline and experience make a difference. Get expert support with a physical goal.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Follow your heart. Take advantage of lucky conditions. Develop creative ideas into something beautiful. Talk about what you love. Discover valuable connections in conversation.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Infuse your home with love and beauty. Communicate with family. Increase levels of peace, beauty and comfort food. Rediscover the elegance of simplicity.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Communication channels flow with ease. Listen respectfully. Observe from multiple perspectives. Express what you're learning. Network and collaborate.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Maintain lucrative routines. Disciplined efforts contribute to growing income. Bargain, trade and make deals. Provide consistent, reliable value.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Visualize yourself winning. Practice self-discipline for lasting benefit. Remain true to your word and yourself. Talk about what you love. Develop a personal passion.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Look back for insight on the road ahead. Imagine rising love, beauty and joy. Clean and organize. Make plans to realize an interesting possibility.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Develop team strategies. Come up with a winning plan together. Friends offer advice, resources and support. Stick to basics. Do what you said.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Professional projects benefit from communication. Clarify objectives. Let people know what you need. Polish your pitch. Disciplined actions advance on your target.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Widen your perspective. Explore to discover new views. Write what you're learning. Disciplined steps can realize your educational dreams.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-5	6	fine
Changchun	-16	-7	fine
Chengdu	5	11	rain
Chongqing	8	11	cloudy
Fuzhou	9	10	rain
Guangzhou	11	15	rain
Guiyang	0	6	overcast
Haikou	16	18	rain
Hangzhou	3	7	rain
Harbin	-13	-7	cloudy
Hefei	0	7	overcast
Nanjing	0	6	overcast
Shanghai	3	7	overcast
Taipei	11	13	rain
Wuhan	1	8	overcast
Hong Kong	13	17	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	0	2	cloudy
Frankfurt	3	11	cloudy
Paris	6	9	rain
London	3	8	rain
New York	4	7	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Trample; 6- Cushions; 10- Edinburgh native; 14- Wrong move; 15- Juan's water; 16- Shoestring; 17- Do not disturb; 18- Nothing in Nice; 19- Super server; 20- Helper; 22- Kett and James; 23- Fragrant neckwear; 24- Chowder cracker; 26- Cockpit abbr.; 29- Sedaka or Simon; 31- Marseille Mrs.; 32- Excavate; 33- Cheerio!; 34- Main arteries; 38- Guitarist Clapton; 40- West ender?; 42- Geeky type; 43- Adventurous expedition; 46- Deities; 49- Acapulco aunt; 50- Pop; 51- Pizzeria fixture; 52- North American deer; 53- Swampfever; 57- Foil alternative; 59- Mistreat; 60- Moderate; 65- Tirade; 66- Thick slice; 67- Helicopter part; 68- Skin marking, often due to injury; 69- Must've been something...; 70- Minneapolis suburb; 71- Tortoise's rival; 72- Nicholas II, for one; 73- Bus station;

DOWN 1- Actress Ward; 2- Very, in Versailles; 3- Scraps; 4- It merged with Exxon; 5- Gift; 6- Sponger; 7- Not "fer"; 8- Songs for two; 9- ___ Clemente; 10- Harlot; 11- Desert bloomers; 12- The Pacific, for example; 13- Curt; 21- ___ yellow ribbon...; 22- Ticklish doll; 25- Doctor's org.; 26- Citrus quenchers; 27- Currency of Turkey, and formerly of Italy; 28- End-of-workweek shout; 30- Key ___; 35- Head of France; 36- Seed covering; 37- Neb. neighbor; 39- Real estate register; 41- 11th month of the year; 44- Describes a gently cooked steak; 45- Despot Amin; 47- "Pirates of the Caribbean" star; 48- Scoffed; 53- Waterlogged soil; 54- Manila hemp plant; 55- Pertaining to the moon; 56- Collection of maps, Titan of Greek mythology; 58- Wear down; 61- I could ___ horse!; 62- Take ___ from me; 63- Up ___ good; 64- Part of Q.E.D.; 66- Obedience school command;



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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The Art of Giving

Lurdes de Sousa *



AI AND PHILANTHROPY

C-3PO: Sir, it's quite possible this asteroid is not entirely stable.

Han Solo: Not entirely stable? I'm glad you're here to tell us these things. Chewie, take the "Professor" in the back and plug him into the hyperdrive.

C-3PO: Sometimes I just don't understand human behavior. After all, I'm only trying to do my job."

IF you were born in the 70's or 80's, your teen and early adult age were intrinsically immersed in the Star Wars saga, created by George Lucas in 1977.

The saga had all the ingredients of success: the first generation of visual effects, the battle between the good Force and evil, a love story, and a myriad of eccentric personages that enchanted generations, amongst them the famous android couple C-3PO and R2-D2.

While these androids became known to us on the cinema screen, with their unforgettable sense of humor, honesty, devotion, evilness or compassion (and even, at times, more human than humans...), we know today that Lucas was writing the future. Artificial intelligence is here to stay.

A.I. presents itself in both grand and mundane ways.

ChatGPT is the talk of the town and much will still be written about this algorithm that writes, composes, thinks and, simultaneously, even has the capacity to admit its mistakes, according to OpenAI, the chatbot's creator.

Philanthropy has, surprisingly, been mostly absent from debates surrounding A.I., despite the fundamental role it must play in shaping A.I.'s full potential as a force for good.

Although philanthropy generally occupies a privileged position in the financial sphere, it is a driving force for moral responsibility and is a source of public leadership.

Philanthropist Organizations (PO's) must use their influence among those inside and outside companies and institutions to build a future in which A.I. works ethically and effectively to help solve humanity's greatest challenges.

It's time to define the role philanthropy should play in protecting the most vulnerable and ensuring that A.I. works towards social improvement for all.

That's the purpose of the newly created "Global AI Action Alliance," a platform for philanthropic and technology leaders to engage in the development of good A.I. practices.

The alliance is led by 20 senior philanthropic leaders and POs. It proposes a four-stage action plan with a strong commitment to learning and to acting. How, though? By which means or legitimate channels does all this occur?

As Dan Huttenlocher, dean of the MIT Stephen A. Schwarzman College of Computing and board chair of the MacArthur Foundation, observed at the recently held Davos Forum, "A.I. can help us leapfrog some of the societal challenges we face, but we must design it to do so. There's no such thing as a 'good technology' in and of itself — we have to make it work for us."

Action can be translated into many ways, as A.I. will impact a broad range of potential issues.

It is likely, say some advocates, that organizations should consider appointing their own chief technology ethics officers with responsibility and authority to marshal necessary resources.

An A.I. ombudsman could even be considered.

After all, A.I., Chabots, such as ChatGPT, are only programmed, like C-3PO, to "do their job." The ball is in our court. Let philanthropy and society at large ensure that the extraordinary potential of A.I. works ethically and for the common good.

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Macau Daily Times is the official media partner of the Associação Internacional de Filantropia (Macau).

AP PHOTO



Julio Torres (left) and Tilda Swinton in a scene from "Problemista" (A24)

DRIVE IN

WRITER-DIRECTOR JULIO TORRES PROVES A STORYTELLER TO CHEER WITH AWESOME 'PROBLEMISTA'

MARK KENNEDY, MDT/AP ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

THE hero of "Problemista" sees the world differently. He's an aspiring toy designer named Alejandro who thinks today's toys are too fun. He proposes a toy truck with a deflating tire to teach kids they're running out of time.

Alejandro is the creation of Julio Torres, who stars, directs and has written "Problemista," an off-kilter and very winning movie from a rising artist who thrillingly reflects his own toy maker's singular, idiosyncratic mind.

"Problemista" is not like a Wes Anderson-type hyper-whimsy, but more like the surreal bursting joy of "Everything Everywhere All at Once." It even breaks space and time like the latter. It is absolutely captivating.

It tells the story of Alejandro (Torres), an El Salvadoran immigrant desperate to work for Hasbro but needing to extend his New York stay by getting his work visa approved. His artistic mother back home has tried to shield him from life's harshness, but he's alone in a hulking, unfriendly city filled with trash. Isabella Rossellini narrates, adding a starry gravitas.

Torres plays the aspiring toymaker as a delicate soul, always trying to be accommodating and a dreamer. He is childlike, with terrible bangs and a tuft of hair jumping out like an exclamation mark, always with a backpack, and walking in little unsure steps, almost hopping like a small bird, as if he doesn't want to leave an impression.

A twist of fate gets him into the orbit of Elizabeth, the widow of an artist who has been cryogenically frozen by FreezeCorp. To afford to keep her husband on ice, she must locate and sell his unloved paintings — a 13-painting series of eggs in different places — and she needs the computer and gofer assistance of Alejandro. He sees this as a potential lifeline.

Tilda Swinton — a Wes Anderson favorite — plays the widow as an unhinged, self-involved, rude and frightening force of nature. She thinks people are screaming at her when she's the one screaming, she can't turn her iPhone light off, she confronts waiters over tiny things and is banned from Uber. Swinton is in her element here.

These two very opposite souls need each other and not just in a transactional sense. She needs his calmness and vision, and he needs her forthrightness. "When they tell you you can only turn left or right, you let them know you're going up. Always send the food back. Stand up for yourself," she tells him.

Torres displays a Kafkaesque bent as he illustrates the byzantine hurdles of red tape that immigrants face, with Alejandro negotiating a fantasy office maze, like a human rat opening vents to climb into sterile offices. In one scene, an immigrant who is told she must leave the country suddenly disappears — poof!

The filmmaker also skewers the Catch-22 of another overly bureaucratic institution — banks. "I know that there's a still person in there and I know that she can hear me," he pleads to a

bank representative about a nonsense overdraft fee. Both institutions feast on people who have no margin of error.

Torres is a comedian and TV writer, who worked at "Saturday Night Live" — his skit for Ryan Gosling about how "Avatar" weirdly used the Papyrus font is a new classic. He also was the creator of the oddball HBO sitcom "Los Espookys." He revels in the surreal and this movie proves he's one of the best out there.

If the hysterical weirdness about fonts is any indication, viewers won't be surprised that there are bizarre sequences about FileMaker Pro, misbehaving iPads, dropdown menus and Ikea's Billy bookcases. Craigslist is portrayed by a sinister man (Larry Owens) crowded by junk, people prove odd and kinky and a tense phone call is depicted as a knight in armor battling a dragon. Customer service calls descend into horror movie chanting and madness.

There is so much rich material in the absurdity: how immigrants and artists crave to be seen, how modern systems eat up people, how we try to cheat death and how technology doesn't live up to its promise. The movie even speeds more than 300 years into the future.

In that cool future, we're pretty certain they'll be talking about the big directorial debut of a talented filmmaker. Torres is just starting to toy with us.

"Problemista," an A24 release, is rated R for "sexual content and some language." Running time: 104 minutes. ★★★★★

TASTE OF EDESIA

Sichuan extravaganza

IRENE SAM, MDT

LANDMARK'S highly successful Tasting Mastery Series, which combines the creative talents of food personalities and acclaimed chefs, announces its first 2024 culinary adventure from now to March 31, this time bringing together two independent and successful professional women: celebrated food critic Susan Jung and Executive Chef Theign Phan of Grand Majestic Sichuan LANDMARK.

The duo aims to enthuse diners by highlighting that besides the spicy and mouth-numbing mala flavour, for which Sichuan cuisine is best known, there is a surprisingly diverse range of unique and balanced aromatic sensations and flavours to discover. The result of the collaboration is a menu which is spellbinding in its flavour variety, from the starter right through the dessert.

Ms Jennifer Lam, Hong Kong Land's director and head of Marketing and Communications, says, "We are delighted to kick off our Tasting Mastery Series this year with such a powerful female duo whose formidable, combined talents are sure to present a memorable and one-of-a-kind culinary adventure."

The menu begins with the cold appetiser XIANG LA ER CAI. Delicate Chinese brassica, sliced with finesse, is infused with a blend of green peppercorn, sesame oil, chilli oil, and sweet aromatic soy, weaving a spell of flavours that lingers on the palate. Er cai, or Chinese brassica, is a vegetable Chef Theign Phan recently discovered in Shenzhen, and is normally used to make zha cai, a type of preserved vegetable in Sichuan cuisine. Instead, she incorporates the spiciness and numbness profile to create a refreshing Sichuan

"salad" as a complement to the main course of crispy Sichuan Fried Chicken. This will be the debut of the er cai dish at Grand Majestic Sichuan.

With the SICHUAN ZHA JI, Chef Theign Phan crafts a taste sensation with locally sourced three yellow chicken, a recipe from Susan's Cookbook, expertly finished with a specially crafted Sichuan spice mix that incorporates spicy, salt, sweet and numbing flavours.

Next, XIANG LA CHAO BAN QIU reigns supreme with a symphony of flavours in the wok-fried grouper fillets, deftly balancing dried chillies, garlic, ginger, leeks and Chinese celery.

The finale unfolds with Chef Theign's masterpiece: SICHUAN GUI HUA BING FEN in the form of Osmanthus ice jelly crowned with candied cumquats, a sensory delight to savour.

The inspiration for this collaboration, according to Susan, is her admiration for Theign Phan, who has elevated Sichuan cuisine to new heights while maintaining its essential spirit and flavours under the mentorship of Fuchsia Dunlop, the British cookbook author famous for her knowledge of Sichuan cuisine, who is also a consultant to Grand Majestic Sichuan.

"Sichuan cuisine is known for its numbing and spicy flavours, but it's not only that - there are dishes that can be subtle, too," says Susan. "But even with the traditional mala flavours, there needs to be balance - you can't just have only spicy tastes without adding other ingredients that balance the spiciness. That's where the skill of the chef is so important - if all you're tasting is the heat of chillies, then the chef isn't doing their job right. Chef Theign is really good at balancing the flavours."



Chef Theign Phan and Susan Jung



SICHUAN GUI HUA BING FEN (Osmanthus ice jelly crowned with candied cumquats)



XIANG LA ER CAI (Chinese brassica, sliced with finesse, is infused with a blend of green peppercorn, sesame oil, chilli oil, and sweet aromatic soy)



XIANG LA CHAO BAN QIU (Wok-fried grouper fillets, deftly balancing dried chillies, garlic, ginger, leeks and Chinese celery)

OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

BUILDING TARIFF CASTLES WILL ONLY ENTRENCH TRADE WAR

According to a source at a major UK automaker cited by Politico, “the wheels have started turning” at the United Kingdom’s Department for Business and Trade on an investigation into Chinese State subsidies for its electric vehicle makers.

Some UK automakers have been urging the UK government to launch such a probe with a view to getting protection. They are concerned that the Chinese-made EVs will be diverted to the UK market if the European Union slaps duties on Chinese EV imports when the EU’s own probe wraps up later this year.

Apparently, UK Trade Secretary Kemi Badenoch is preparing to instruct the UK’s trade watchdog, the Trade Remedies Authority, to open an investigation since UK manufacturers “are worried about putting their heads above the parapet” by filing a complaint themselves, the Politico report quoted an unnamed consultant familiar with the plans as saying.

The UK manufacturers are hoping to have their cake and eat it too, as they are prompting the government to close the UK market to Chinese EV makers while they keep access to the Chinese market.

This creates something of a dilemma for the UK government as it is seeking to advance the country’s green transition by accelerating the changeover to greener technologies such as EVs.

In getting the wheels of its trade defense machinery turning, the UK should turn its gaze toward the EU’s anti-subsidy probe which could end up with Germany’s export-led economy becoming the main victim as its automakers are heavily invested in, and exposed to, China, which will be forced to respond should the EU build a defensive castle for its EV industry.

Both the EU and the UK should realize that Chinese EVs can be sold at lower prices not because of government subsidies, but because the Chinese EV makers have higher efficiencies that lower their costs. In the words of Michael Shu, European president of BYD, “we have unique technology ... and our management efficiency is high.”

Instead of seeking further protection for their uncompetitiveness, EU and UK companies should sharpen their own technologies and enhance their own efficiency. The German Association of the Automotive Industry has said that relying solely on anti-subsidy inquiries fails to tackle the urgent competitiveness challenges faced by Europe. The UK has already been “supporting” its own domestic EV industry as part of a £4.5 billion investment program for key manufacturing industries.

Any trade protection measures taken against Chinese products will harm normal trade exchanges and hinder efforts to green economies. Only with greater inclusivity and fairness can EVs bring convenience to all.

MYSTERIOUS WORLD’S RICHEST BITCOIN INVESTOR JOINS TOP 130 RICH-LIST OVERNIGHT

THE BUZZ

The world’s richest Bitcoin investor has seen their fortune hit a staggering \$15 billion – a \$2 billion increase in just 24 hours, U.K. media reported yesterday.

After days of huge rises, Bitcoin has neared its all-time high on Wednesday (yesterday, Macau time).

At one point, Bitcoin – the world’s most popular crypto coin – has skyrocketed to \$60,650.

It’s close to its all-time high value of \$67,707 that it reached on November 9, 2021 when many people turned to bitcoin in the pandemic.

The mysterious trader’s stake was valued at \$13 billion just a day prior, The Sun says.

But at the time of writing, that holding is currently worth \$15.1 billion – a gain of \$2 billion, according to BitInfoCharts.

The anonymous trader’s fortune peaked at more than \$19bn with some 288,000 BTC back in September 2021.

The recent hike in Bitcoin has earned its owner a place in Forbes top 130 rich-list overnight.

The unknown investor has joined ranks of the world’s richest, overtaking WhatsApp co-founder, Jan Koum, who is valued at \$13.7 billion.

This comes after the mysterious trader has seen their fortune crumble by \$6 billion in just two months in 2022 as the cryptocurrency plummeted.



AP PHOTO

YOUNG SOUTH KOREAN DOCTORS RESIST BACK-TO-WORK ORDERS, RISKING PROSECUTION

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

AS South Korea’s government made a last plea for junior doctors to end a walkout hours before yesterday’s deadline, many were expected to defy orders to return to work, risking suspensions of medical licenses and prosecution.

Thousands of medical interns and residents have been on strike for about 10 days to protest the government’s push to boost medical school enrollments. Government officials have warned that strikers would face legal repercussions if they don’t return to their hospitals by yesterday.

As of Wednesday night, about 9,076 of the country’s 13,000 medical interns and residents were confirmed to have left their hospitals after submitting resignations, according to the Health Ministry. It said 294 strikers had returned to work.

There was no word on any others going back to their jobs as of 10 p.m. (1300 GMT) Thursday.

Observers say many strikers are likely to defy the deadline, continuing the work boycott for weeks or months. The government is expected to begin formal steps toward penalties on Monday, as Friday is

a national holiday.

“We’ve said that we won’t hold them responsible for leaving their worksites if they return by today,” Vice Health Minister Park Min-soo told a briefing. “Doctors are there to serve patients, and those patients are anxiously waiting for you. This isn’t the way to protest against the government.”

Later yesterday, Park met some striking doctors for more than three hours, but there were no reports of a breakthrough. Officials invited 94 representatives of the strikers to the meeting, but Park said less than 10 showed up and they were ordinary strikers, not leaders. Park said they asked him about the government’s recruitment plan and he called for them to end their walkouts.

Ryu Ok Hada, one of the striking doctors, told reporters that he wouldn’t attend the meeting. He accused the government of treating the striking junior doctors “like criminals and inflicting humiliation on them.”

Starting March 4, the government will notify doctors who miss the deadline that it plans to suspend their licenses and will give them opportunities to respond, senior Health Mi-

nistry official Kim Chung-hwan said.

Under South Korean law, the government can order doctors back to work if it sees grave risks to public health. Those who refuse to abide by such orders can have their medical licenses suspended for up to one year and also face up to three years in prison or a 30 million won (roughly \$22,500) fine. Those who receive prison sentences would be stripped of their medical licenses.

Some observers say authorities will probably punish only leaders of the strike to avoid further straining hospital operations.

At the center of the dispute is a government plan to admit 2,000 more applicants to medical schools starting next year, a two-thirds increase from the current 3,058. The government says it aims to add up to 10,000 new doctors by 2035 to cope with the country’s fast-aging population.

The country’s 13,000 trainee doctors represent a small fraction of South Korea’s 140,000 doctors, but they account for about 30%-40% of the total doctors at some major hospitals and perform many vital functions to support senior medical staff. **MDT/AP**



AP PHOTO

Russia The funeral of opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who died earlier this month in a remote Arctic penal colony, will take place today in Moscow after several locations declined to host the service, his spokesperson said. His widow, Yulia Navalnaya, accused Putin and Moscow Mayor of trying to block a public funeral. “We don’t want any special treatment — just to give people the opportunity to say farewell to Alexei in a normal way,” she wrote on X.



AP PHOTO

Gaza Strip A strike yesterday on a crowd of Palestinians waiting for humanitarian aid in Gaza City killed at least 70 people, bringing the death toll since the start of the Israel-Hamas war to more than 30,000, health officials said. Trucks carrying food reached northern Gaza this week, the first major aid delivery to the area in a month, officials said. Aid groups say it has become nearly impossible to deliver humanitarian.



AP PHOTO

Iran With flashy celebrity ads and promises of deep discounts, a shop in Iran’s capital had offered consumers in the Islamic Republic one of the hottest products in the country — an iPhone that came out in 2021. But instead of getting their hands on the handsets, police and prosecutors in Iran allege customers found themselves ensnared by a business owner running a multimillion-dollar Ponzi scheme.