



**THE ONCE-BELEAGUERED THE 13 HOTEL IS NOW UP FOR AUCTION, WITH THE MARKET VALUE ESTIMATED AT ABOUT HKD2.4 BILLION**

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**FOURTH BRIDGE MAIN DECK COMPLETE, ON TIME FOR OPENING LATE THIS YEAR: GOV'T**

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**ARTS FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS POSTMODERN REMAKE OF WESTERN CLASSICS**

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AP PHOTO



**China** An explosion caused by a suspected gas leak ripped through a building in northern China yesterday, killing at least two people and injuring 26 others, authorities said. The blast occurred early in the morning at a fried chicken shop in the city of Sanhe, authorities said in a short statement. The city is around 63 kilometers east of Beijing. Police cordoned off streets 1 kilometer around the explosion, Associated Press reporters saw, and were directing people away.

AP PHOTO



**Lebanon** Three and a half years after hundreds of tons of improperly stored ammonium nitrate ignited at the Beirut port, setting off one of the world's biggest non-nuclear explosions, Lebanese and French officials put forward a plan for reconstruction and reorganization of the port yesterday. The Aug. 4, 2020, explosion at Beirut's port killed more than 200 people, injured and displaced thousands and devastated entire neighborhoods of the city.

AP PHOTO



**British** government introduced legislation yesterday to quash the wrongful convictions of hundreds of Post Office branch managers in England and Wales who were caught up in one of the U.K.'s biggest miscarriages of justice. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said the legislation "marks an important step forward in finally clearing" the names of those who were convicted on the basis of a faulty computer accounting system, known as Horizon, and have faced long delays in having their compensation claims assessed.

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# TWO SESSIONS, ONE GOAL

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# NATIONAL INTEGRATION STILL KEY IN TWO SESSIONS SPIRIT

ANTHONY LAM

ONE country, two systems and national integration remain the core spirit of the "Two Sessions," the collective term for the second plenaries of the 14th term of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), according to a briefing yesterday afternoon following the recent close of the sessions in Beijing.

Yesterday, Beijing's Liaison Office in Macau organized a briefing on the spirit of the Two Sessions, catering to over 260 people from the local government as well as local and national associations, companies and governmental advisors.

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng reminded those present to "accurately implement 'One country, two systems' and construct walls for national security." He said that the relations between 'One country, two systems' must be accu-



rately understood to "safeguard the full governance authority of the Central People's Government, implement the principle of 'Macau governed by patriots' and unyieldingly safeguard national sovereignty, security and develop-

mental interests."

He also reiterated that Macau must grasp its opportunities to diversify its economy through means such as cultivating new industries. The development in Hengqin should also be utilized.

Macau should also act as a platform between overseas countries and China to help foster deeper development of the country. Public administration reform and livelihood are also points worth noting, Ho added.

In addition to these items, director Zheng Xincong of the liaison office also added that Macau should perform excellently to embrace the silver jubilee of the Special Administrative Region (SAR). Highlighting the Chinese Government Work Report's mention of the two SARs, he underlined that Beijing exercises special care for the SARs. He also reminded NPC and CPPCC delegates to build a strong sense of honor, responsibility and mission.

CPPCC vice chairman Edmund Ho pointed out that the spiritual core of the entire Two Sessions is inseparable from the comprehensive promotion of Chinese-style modernization and the comprehensive deepening of reform and opening up.

He added that Macau residents must not stay aloof or stuck in a mindset from decades ago, and become determined and courageous to comprehensively improve and optimize the business environment. He also instructed the government to improve its administrative efficiency.

Conceding that reform will involve difficulties, he warned that reluctance to change will only bring a lack of development and avoidance of reality.

## GAMING

# World Poker Tour headed to Macau for first time ever

STAFF REPORTER

THE World Poker Tour (WPT) is expanding its reach globally with an upcoming event in Macau. This marks a significant milestone in the WPT's 22-year history, as it will be the first time this tournament takes place in Macau.

Macau has long been a hub for gambling and poker, attracting renowned players like Phil Ivey, who has called it home. WPT chief executive Adam Pliska expressed excitement about bringing the WPT experience to the region and thanked Allied Gaming & Entertainment (AGAE) and Wynn Macau for their support in expanding the tour's global footprint.

The WPT Macau festival is scheduled to run from June 18 to 24, featuring the Main Tour



championship event, with a HKD40,000 buy-in, from June 20 to 24. All the action will take place at Wynn Macau casino.

"We are thrilled to be joining forces with two esteemed global partners, bringing the WPT to Macau. With a shared commitment to enhancing offerings in this burgeoning entertainment market, we are poised to make a

significant impact," said Yinghua Chen, Chief Executive Officer of AGAE.

Before the Macau event, the WPT will hold the WPT Rolling Thunder Championship at Thunder Valley Casino Resort in Northern California on March 23, followed by the WPT Voyage, a poker cruise to the Bahamas from March 31 to April 6.

## GAMING

# CASINOS TO EMBRACE RFID TECHNOLOGY BY YEAR-END

STAFF REPORTER

ALL major casino operators in Macau will soon have radio frequency identification (RFID) technology integrated into all table games as part of an effort to improve marketing and operations, according to a report by Goldman Sachs.

The report indicates Melco Resorts will have its first RFID tables installed this month in premium mass gaming areas. Galaxy Entertainment will follow in the second quarter of 2024, while Sands China will begin rolling out RFID

tables at the Grand Lisboa casino in the fourth quarter, multiple media outlets have reported.

RFID technology was first introduced in Macau in 2014 with MGM China the first operator to adopt it in 2016. RFID chips and tables can help combat cheating, improve inventory management and reduce dealer errors. The technology also utilizes analytics that enable a deeper understanding of player behavior for more effective marketing.

Concerns have been raised about RFID's potential impact on privacy due to the detailed

tracking of players. But Goldman Sachs reported that gaming operators view marketing and productivity benefits as outweighing privacy disadvantages.

The other five casino operators—SJM Holdings, Sands China, Wynn Macau, Galaxy Entertainment and Melco Resorts—indicated that they are preparing to introduce RFID tables in coming quarters, according to the report. The technology rollout is expected to help operators maximize floor productivity and balance competition in the lucrative Macau gaming market.

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TRAFFIC

# New road markings in Taipa cause 'confusion' among netizens

RENATO MARQUES

**N**EW road markings that the Transport Bureau (DSAT) is placing in Taipa have caused uproar on social media, with many netizens claiming the signs "make no sense" or that "they are confusing" or "hard to understand."

At issue is a new type of road marking that the DSAT has painted on a section of road near the

Rotunda de Leonel de Sousa in the direction leading to Ocean Gardens as well as near the roundabout.

The aim was said to be warning drivers to reduce their speed in the area, as there are several intersections with low visibility and a large pedestrian crossing.

In a statement, the bureau said the markings were implemented to reduce traffic speed in an area of heavy vehicle and foot traffic as

well as to better protect those on foot who use the zebra crossing to access the flyover or the coastal promenade.

According to the same statement, the patterns of the new road markings will give drivers the visual perception that the lanes are getting narrower, reminding them to reduce their speed.

The "narrowing" patterns are also used in several other countries such as Japan.

While these did not cause much concern or comment from netizens, the use of painted rhombuses in the center of the traffic lane was the main cause of "confusion."

In most of the comments reviewed by the Times on several social media platforms, users complained that the rhombus sign "made no sense." Some also suggested the DSAT use more common and "easier-to-understand" signage such as that in nei-

ghoring Hong Kong, where the marking "Slow 慢駛" is used, meaning "drive slowly."

The rhombus used by DSAT comes, reportedly, from the vertical road signage used in some jurisdictions, especially in North America. The sign presents a yellow background in a black outline and contains graphics or written information in the center, explaining the reason for the "warning." It is not commonly used worldwide as a road marking.

Exceptions are made in some jurisdictions, although even in these cases, the "white diamond" marking has different meanings, including indicating a warning or caution, or a traffic lane reserved for a particular kind of vehicle.

In New Zealand, a white diamond painted on the road means, as similarly intended by DSAT, that you are approaching a pedestrian crossing. This is used when this crossing is not particularly visible to road users, such as when the crossing is around a corner or at the top of an inclined road.

According to DSAT, the marking was painted, "taking into account references from the mainland's official standards."

The Times found this marking is indeed used in mainland China to indicate any form of danger on the road ahead, including pedestrian crossings.

Reference material indicates that this pavement marking needs to be complemented by vertical signage explaining the warning. This signage is not yet installed at the location in Taipa, but DSAT was said to be installing it soon.

PUBLIC WORKS

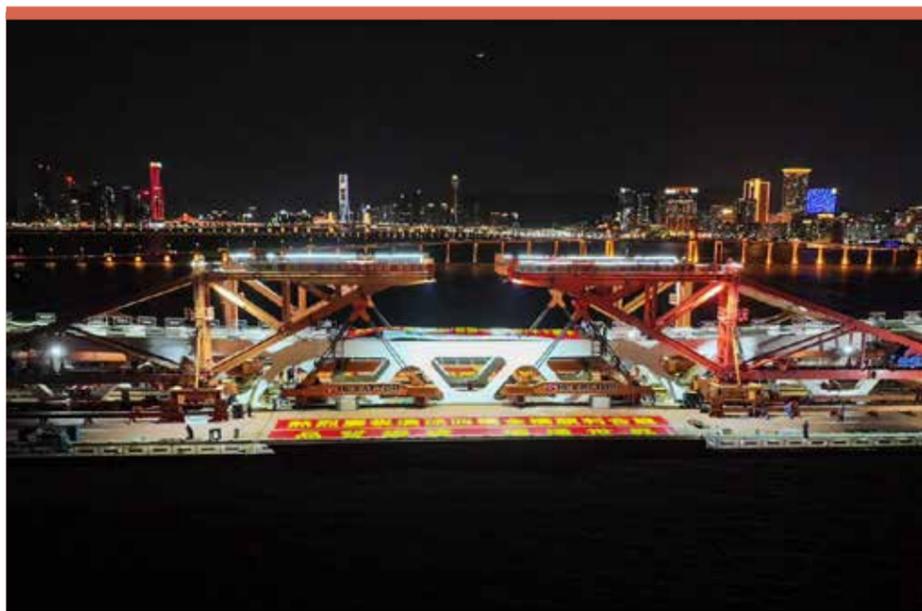
# City's 4th bridge main deck complete, DSOP says works on time for opening late this year

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE structure of the main deck of the 4th Macau-Taipa Bridge has been completed, the Public Works Bureau (DSOP) has announced.

According to the statement, the bridge's main deck was completed Tuesday evening, effectively linking the two ends of the bridge, with the assembly in place of the last pre-made piece of the structure.

DSOP noted the major milestone achieved Tuesday evening, remarking also that the works were completed according to plan, with the bridge main structure to reach completion before the end of the first quarter (Q1) as expected.



Although the Pac On area in Taipa and the Zone A of the new landfill areas are now technically linked via a road link, there is still

a lot of work to be done until the new bridge can start operating, the DSOP noted. The bureau confirmed that construction is on time and

should reach full completion in the last quarter of this year.

The 4th Bridge started construction almost four

years ago, on March 26, 2020, and according to DSOP, the project has suffered several constraints and delays due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as impacts from severe weather conditions.

DSOP also noted that there were some additional difficulties related to "the complexity of geological conditions and air traffic restrictions."

The bureau advised that the next steps for this project include works related to corrosion prevention, waterproofing and asphalt paving on the deck and installation of safety barriers on the traffic lanes as well as wind protection barriers. Other works still to be completed include the installation of electromechanical

equipment and systems.

The bridge is about 3.1 kilometers long, with the section above the sea measuring approximately 2.9 kilometers, and includes two maritime navigation spans measuring 280 meters.

The bridge deck is designed to have eight traffic lanes (four in each direction) with two to be used exclusively as motorcycle lanes (as happens currently at Sai Van Bridge).

The government also said to expect that, when the bridge commences operations, there will be an alleviation of traffic on the current three bridges, as well as an increase in road circulation capacity between Macau, Taipa and Coloane.

The bridge will also serve an important role in the development of Zone A of the new landfill areas, as well as allowing a faster and shorter connection between Taipa, Cotai and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge Port.

FAM24

# ARTS FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS POSTMODERN REMAKE OF WESTERN CLASSICS

ANTHONY LAM

A line-up of western literary classics with slightly modern or even postmodern takes will be the core of this year's Macao Arts Festival (FAM24), as announced at a press briefing yesterday.

The line-up includes some of the most popular or renowned western works, such as *The Ugly Duckling* and *The Jungle Book*. A number of external performance groups will showcase these productions in Macau from May 3 to June 7.

Director of Culture Deland Leong disclosed that this year's festival is expected to cost about MOP24.9 million, MOP2.9 million more than last year. When asked to explain the increase, she said that it was caused by a higher number of external performers than the previous edition. Nonetheless, she said, the budget is similar in size to the 2019 festival.

She elaborated that, in the previous festival, it was more difficult to secure shows by external performers because it was so soon after the lifting of disease control restrictions. Despite this year's festival having 10 external performance groups, Leong said the ratio of local to external performers is about 50:50.

During her speech, Leong said this year's slightly modern take is mostly based on her bureau's belief that "innovation is vital to art and originates from various creative ideas that boldly break through boundaries." She hopes



that this year's program will be able to inspire the public "to reflect on their future through the vicissitudes of life."

This year's festival will kick off with the dance theatre production *Jungle Book*, reimagined by legendary British dancer and choreographer Akram Khan, an insightful adaptation of the classic book by Literature Nobel Laureate Rudyard Kipling.

Featuring dancers who portray animality with movement and ingenious animation, the production relates to the human need to connect with others and conveys the importance of universal harmony.

For the curtain-closer, Por-

tuguese pop rock band Capitão Fausto will share the limelight with David Huang, an expert in melding Western and Asian flavors, jointly creating wonderful moments of Sino-Portuguese cultural exchange with their distinctive music and continuing Macau's centuries-old tradition of fostering Sino-Western cultural contact and integration in a show titled *Sino-Portuguese Concert*.

Ballet lovers, meanwhile, will be delighted by a variety of dance and theatre performances catering to their tastes. In the contemporary ballet *Sleeping Beauty*, Spanish National Dance Award winner Marcos Morau is

teaming up with the Lyon Opera Ballet to take the audience into the otherworldly space of the sleeping princess. *The Three Brothers*, presented by Portuguese art troupe My Own Name, depicts family relationships and invites the audience to probe human feelings by presenting the friction and struggles among brothers on the stage.

More postmodern adaptations include circus theatre Duck Pond, inspired by Tchaikovsky's ballet *Swan Lake* and Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale *The Ugly Duckling*, and presented by Circa Contemporary Circus from Brisbane, Australia, with their stunning techniques. Meanwhi-

le, *Frankenstein/Creatures* is an adaptation presented by Space for Acting in collaboration with Japan-based Theatre Moments, which will offer a time-traversing vision of the past, present and future at the Dom Pedro V Theatre.

Shakespeare's classic *Macbeth*, the literary work derived from the history of the namesake Scottish King, will be transformed as *Macbettu*, an adaptation by Italian director Alessandro Serra that boldly recreates the classic with an all-male cast, rendering breathtaking scenes with martial physicality.

Eastern arts lovers will be well served with the Cantonese opera *Under the Pagoda Tree*, presented by Zhen Hua Sing Cantonese Opera Association, which tells an immortal love story of utmost sincerity and soul-stirring beauty. Kun opera curation *The Chairs* is an adaptation of the play of the same name created by the great playwright Eugène Ionesco in 1952.

Local artists will showcase their capabilities in *Anamnesis no.: XXXX*, *Impression of Iec Long* and *A Star is Arriving*, among other shows. The former retells *Equus*, a play by British playwright Peter Shaffer. The middle aims at reconstructing the times when Macau shone in firecrackers manufacturing. The latter is the annual favorite and blockbuster drama performed in Patuá, Macau's unique creole.

Box offices will open at 10 a.m., March 23, at all Macau Ticketing Network channels.

## Defunct The 13 Hotel on the market for HKD2.4 billion

LYNZY VALLES

**T**HE once-beleaguered The 13 Hotel is now up for auction, with the market value estimated at about HKD2.4 billion.

Realtor JLL said it has been appointed as the sole agent for the sale of debt-ridden The 13 Hotel by public tender, starting from March 6. The tender will close on April 5.

The 13 Hotel is a deluxe 22-storey hotel with a total gross floor area of approximately 944,993 sq ft. It features 199 guest rooms, including 196 luxury rooms ranging from 1,800 sq ft to 5,000 sq ft. Additionally, there are three super luxurious high-end villa-style

suites of 10,000 sq ft, with guests having the privilege of using elevators opening directly into their own villa's private elevator lobby.

In February last year, the bankruptcy of the operator of defunct hotel, located in the Seac Pai Van area in Coloane, was declared by a Macau court, finally ending operations of the hyper-luxurious development envisioned by Hong Kong entrepreneur Stephen Hung, after a lengthy process.

Hung was known to have placed an order for 30 bespoke Rolls-Royce Phantoms for the project.

The original project, budgeted at MOP11.32 billion, started construction in 2013 but encountered se-

veral issues with financing that led to slow-downs in construction, ending only five years later.

Late last year, the operator failed to secure backing from Macau's top court to proceed with its bid to shrug off a bank loan of about MOP3 billion.

Oliver Tong, general manager at JLL in Macau and Zhuhai, said, "The five-star hotel being offered for sale has garnered significant attention since its opening due to its luxurious design and opulence. [...] The opportunity to acquire the entire hotel is exceptionally rare in the market and is expected to be highly sought after by investors."



CONTEMPO

# Japanese artists in contemporary exhibition reflect on their work

STAFF REPORTER

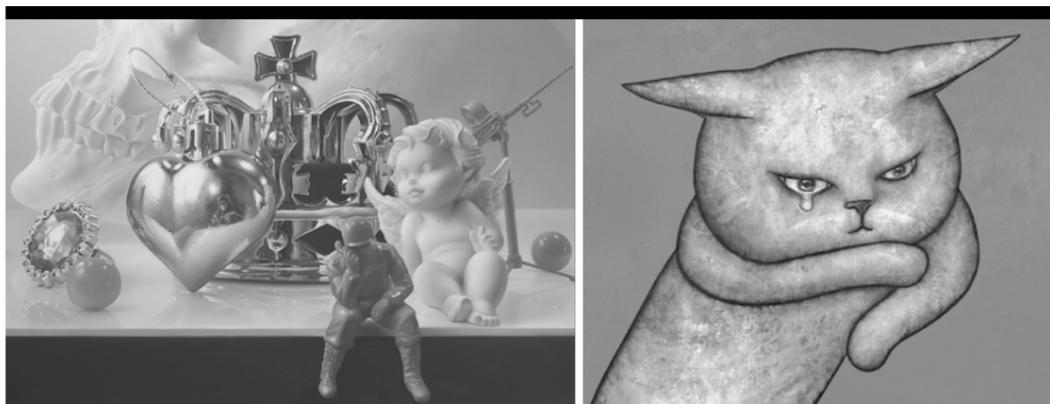
**I**N the midst of the Japanese Contemporary Art Exhibition at the Sands Gallery, Level 6 of The Grand Suites at Four Seasons, two outstanding artists, Hiroya Yoshikawa and Keitoku Toizumi, have taken center stage, providing a captivating blend of tradition and imagination.

Hiroya Yoshikawa, born in Kyoto in 1967, proudly carries on the legacy of his family business, Yoshikawa Sensho. With a focus on the art of yuzen dyeing, a technique cherished for 380 years within the realm of kimono design, Yoshikawa's craftsmanship is marked by meticulous attention to detail and a profound dedication to preserving this time-honored tradition.

Growing up within the walls of Yoshikawa Sensho, he was immersed in the captivating world of kimono-making, where the delicate beauty of silk and the intricate techniques of yuzen dyeing became a part of himself.

Yuzen dyeing, a technique that has thrived for 380 years, holds a special place in his heart. The silk, introduced alongside techniques from China, has become the canvas for the creation of kimono, known as gohuku.

"My goal, and one of the defining characteristics of my gohuku work, is to provide a unique sense of transparency and depth, achievable only



Artworks by Keitoku Toizumi and Hiroya Yoshikawa

through the application of traditional techniques on high-quality silk," Yoshikawa said, in a reply to the Times.

While the world of art often focuses on conceptual ideas and messages, Yoshikawa acknowledges the importance of capturing the essence of beauty, stating, "I think it is necessary to have beauty that can captivate people's hearts and minds, so I do not create my work with an awareness of trends."

Beyond aesthetic appeal, Yoshikawa's work is a tribute to the profound history and culture that is intertwined with the fabric of Kyoto. He challenges himself to express the "beauty" and "glamor" of women not as kimonos, but as works of art, using traditional techniques. With the technique of yuzen dyeing, Yoshikawa aspires to "deliver lustrous messages that are concerned with inviting women's deepest pleasures and intelligence into a beautiful

world."

The other artist in the exhibition, Keitoku Toizumi, born in Osaka in 1979, is renowned for his Pink Army series, a collection that masterfully depicts the delicate balance between reality and fiction. In this exhibition, his primary focus is on the artwork titled "Tender Heart."

According to Toizumi, he aims to explore different "forms of expression in addition to the tableaux I make, and this work is one of them."

"I wanted to create a different work, as I have an impression that many of the edition works we see nowadays are reproductions of the original. The original tableau [was] completed as a two-in-one set, but this work, in which the two images are fused together using lenticular printing, is the final form as I envision it," the artist added.

The "Tender Heart" artwork consists of two images fused together using lenticular prin-

ting, resulting in a final form that embodies the artist's vision. By incorporating additional expressive elements into edition works, which are not achievable in traditional tableaux, the artist enhances the originality and uniqueness of these pieces.

Asked by the Times for his take on the city's art scene, Toizumi said, "In the Cotai area, the whole city looks like a huge artwork, and I felt that the passion was incredible. Although the number of works I exhibited this time was not that many, I felt a desire to create work that would not lose this passion."

As visitors wander through the Sands Gallery, they are invited to embark on a dual artistic experience. Yoshikawa's meticulous yuzen dyeing transports them to a world of tradition and grace, while Toizumi's imaginative "Tender Heart" series blurs the lines between reality and fiction, inspiring introspection and wonder.

## HZMB CIRCULATION QUOTAS FROM 2021 OPEN FOR RENEWAL FROM TODAY

Residents holding vehicle circulation quotas for the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HZMB) acquired in 2021 can, from today, apply to renew those quotas for another three years, the Transport Bureau (DSAT) has announced. The quotas relate to regular private vehicles only and the holders can submit renewal applications within 90 days of expiration. When submitting a renewal application, quota holders must pay a non-refundable fee of MOP1,000.

## FORUM MACAU'S MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE TO BE HELD APR. 21

The 6th Ministerial Conference of Forum Macau will be held on April 21 and 22, likely bringing in Portuguese-speaking delegations to participate in the conference, who will be led by their respective heads of government, TDM Radio has reported. The conference will bring together delegations from Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe, Timor-Leste and China.

## CITY SEES OVER MOP600B BONDS ON MARKETPLACE

Bonds totaling MOP600 billion in value have been issued to the marketplace, according to the Chongwa (Macao) Financial Asset Exchange (MOX). In an update yesterday, the operator of Macau's bond market said that bonds denominated in RMB amounted to approximately MOP228.5 billion, while the value of green bonds issued through the MOX reached MOP108.8 billion. "In 2023, the number and size of bonds listed on the MOX increased by 167.5% and 53.1% year-on-year respectively," the statement read.

## CORPORATE BITS

### Pop star Leon Lai returns to Melco Residency Concerts



Pop star Leon Lai has announced his return to the Melco Residency Concert Series at the Studio City Event Center in May. Lai will perform 10 shows as part of "Leon Lai Stage on

8 2024," now in its second season.

The concerts are presented exclusively by Melco Style. Kevin Benning, Melco senior vice president and property gene-

ral manager of Studio City, said the concerts have become a sought-after entertainment spectacle in Asia. Last year, Lai delighted fans with his greatest hits in a new stage production.

Inspired by Studio City's iconic Golden Reel, a figure-8 Ferris wheel attraction, Lai created the concert series' name and theme exclusively for Melco. Of the return series, Lai said the name represents the exclusivity created for Melco. He looks forward to unveiling "Melco exclusive surprises" and reuniting with fans from across Asia to connect through music.

### Top golfers gather at International Series Event hosted by Wynn



Several top golfers recently attended a press conference at Wynn Palace to promote the USD2 million International Series Macau presented by Wynn. Fireballs GC captain Sergio Garcia and Majesticks GC co-

-captain Ian Poulter were in attendance, along with HyFlyers GC star Andy Ogletree and Hong Kong's 2022 Asian Games gold medalist Taichi Kho.

Organizers also donated USD25,000 to the Macau

Special Olympics. Garcia, a six-time winner in Asia, said the region offers huge growth potential for golf. Poulter, who won the 2010 Hong Kong Open, said he enjoys competing in Asia and hopes for continued success. Ogletree, last year's Order of Merit winner, said the series draws top talent by visiting great locations.

Kho said competing against stars like Poulter, Garcia and Ogletree highlights the series' strength. A ceremony was held for Wynn Macau, LIV Golf and The International Series to present the Special Olympics with a USD25,000 donation. The tournament runs from March 14-17 at Macau Golf & Country Club.

MO YAN

# Nobel Literature laureate accused in patriotism lawsuit of insulting China's heroes

SIMINA MISTREANU, TAIPEI

**H**IS writing won China's first Nobel Prize for Literature, but is it patriotic enough? That's the question at the center of a high-profile lawsuit now driving a debate about nationalism in China.

Patriotic campaigns have become more common in recent years in China, as online nationalists attack journalists, writers or other public figures they say have offended the country's dignity, but it is unusual for a figure as prominent as Mo Yan to be targeted.

Patriotic blogger Wu Wanzheng, who goes by "Truth-Telling Mao Xinghuo" online, sued under a law that carries civil penalties and, in some cases, criminal punishments for perceived offenses against China's heroes and martyrs.

Wu claimed Mo's books have smeared the Chinese Communist Party's reputation, "beautified" enemy Japanese soldiers and insulted former revolutionary leader Mao Zedong.

The lawsuit filed last month demands that the author apo-



Chinese Literature Nobel Prize winner Mo Yan leaves following a panel discussion at the Beijing International Book Fair in Beijing (August 2017)

logize to all Chinese people, the country's martyrs and Mao, and pay damages of 1.5 billion yuan (\$209 million) — 1 yuan for each Chinese person. He also requested that Mo's books be removed from circulation.

Wu based his grievances on the 2018 law that made insulting heroes and martyrs a crime punishable by up to three years in prison. The law is part of President Xi's campaign to fight "historical nihilism," a phrase the party uses for any interpretation of historical events that runs counter to its official narrative.

Mo, whose real name is Guan

Moye, won the Nobel in 2012. He is known for portraying rural life in China and delving into some of the downsides of the country's rapid economic development.

"Literature and art should expose the darkness and injustice of society," he said in 2005 while accepting an honorary doctorate from a Hong Kong university. But the 69-year-old has had few conflicts with Beijing.

In 2011, he became vice chairman of the state-backed Chinese Writers Association. After he received his Nobel, a top party official praised him as an "outstanding representative" of Chi-

na's rising economic might and international influence.

It seems unlikely that Wu will win the lawsuit. The Chinese government has not formally commented on the saga, but state-run tabloid Global Times on Tuesday published a story quoting a recent speech by Mo, indirectly signaling support for the author.

The blogger said on Chinese social media platform Weibo that a Beijing court rejected his first lawsuit because Wu failed to provide Mo's home address. His current lawsuit is based on part of the 2018 law that would hold so-

meone civilly liable if they insult or slander "heroes and martyrs to the detriment of the public interest." The Associated Press could not independently verify his claims because the court has not made the documents public.

Sharp-tongued media commentator and former editor of Global Times Hu Xijin also criticized Wu, calling his attempt to sue Mo a "farce" and a "populist" act. On Weibo, Hu decried support for the action as "a very alarming trend in online public opinion."

In return, Wu threatened to sue Hu too.

Online, discussion was divided: Some called it a reflection of growing nationalism in China and others condemned the accusers. The controversy has trended on Weibo, where the hashtag #MoYanbeingsued had been viewed around 2 million times. At least one other related hashtag has been censored.

Murong Xuecun, a well-known Chinese writer who lives in exile in Australia, said he sees no evidence the government is backing the targeting of Mo.

However, "this trend has incited people to report, to inform on and to expose each other, targeting those who diverge from mainstream ideologies or promote universal values," he said.

The 2018 law and other similar laws have resulted in scores of arrests, including an investigative reporter who challenged China's official casualty numbers in a border skirmish with India in 2021 and a former editor of a financial magazine who questioned official justifications for China's involvement in the Korean War. **MDT/AP**

**C**HINA stocks were lower yesterday after the overnight United States inflation report that signaled a diminished possibility of the Fed's rate cut made investors cautious.

Hong Kong stocks edged less than 0.1% lower at 17,082.11, ending its three consecutive days of gain. Hang Seng Tech Index advanced 0.4%, with JD.com gaining 0.3% after the company announced a share buyback of as much as \$3 billion over the next three years.

The Shanghai Composite Index dropped 0.4% to 3,043.83, and the smaller market in Shenzhen also shed 0.3%.

The overnight report on U.S. inflation subdued investor optimism, with the data showing that consumers paid prices in February that were a bit higher than expected, making it less likely that the Federal Reserve could

MARKETS

## Chinese stocks slide as investors maintain caution after US inflation report

deliver long-sought cuts to interest rates at its meeting next week.

China's local media reported Tuesday that the country's state-owned banks may raise up to 80 billion yuan (\$11.2 billion) in syndicated loans to assist the property developer China Vanke in meeting its impending repayment deadlines.

Vanke was the second-largest developer in the nation based on market value, and has followed the path of Evergrande and Country Garden, both of which have already defaulted on their debts. In January, a Hong Kong court ordered Evergran-

de to undergo liquidation following a failed effort to restructure \$300 billion owed to banks and bondholders.

The rating agency Moody downgraded Vanke's credit rating to "junk" status on Monday.

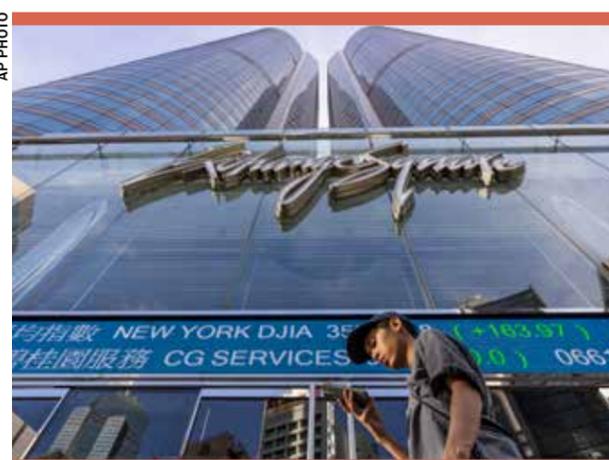
Vanke stocks surged after the news of the potential financial support while experiencing a 3.7% pullback yesterday. On Tuesday, its shares listed in Hong Kong closed 10.3% higher, and the stock traded in Shenzhen ended the day with a 5.7% increase.

In metal trading, China central bank continued to exhibit robust gold-buying activities amid global

geopolitical tensions and haven demand, which further drove up the price of gold. Official data showed that China's gold reserves increased for a 16th-consecutive month, with gold reserves reaching 72.58 million ounces by the end of February, representing a month-on-month increase of 390,000 ounces.

Chow Tai Fook Jewellery Group saw a 0.6% increase yesterday following last week's 4.6% surge that pushed the stock to all-time highs. Zijin Mining Group, China's biggest gold producer by market value, rose 2.3% in Shanghai and 3.5% in Hong Kong.

In the bond market,



China's Ministry of Finance issued the year's first batch of renminbi-denominated treasury bonds yesterday in Hong Kong with the scale of 12 billion yuan (\$1.7 billion). This is the 16th

consecutive year that the Ministry of Finance has issued Renminbi sovereign bonds in Hong Kong, with the total issuance size surpassing 300 billion yuan (\$41 billion). **MDT/AP**

JAPAN

# IAEA chief reassures residents that treated wastewater discharge at Fukushima nuclear plant is safe

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOMIOKA

**T**HE head of the U.N. atomic agency told local Japanese representatives at a meeting in Fukushima on Wednesday that the ongoing discharge of treated radioactive wastewater at the ruined nuclear power plant has met safety standards and that any restrictions on products from the region are “not scientific.”

International Atomic Energy Agency Director-General Rafael Grossi joined local officials and representatives from fishing and business groups and reassured them that the discharges are being carried out “with no impact to the environment, water, fish and sediment.”

Grossi, who arrived in Japan on Tuesday, visited Fukushima for the first time since the release of



International Atomic Energy Agency Director-General Rafael Grossi attends a meeting with officials and representatives from fishing and business groups in Iwaki, northeast of Tokyo, yesterday

the treated water began in August.

Grossi examined the discharge and sampling facility on Wednesday, escorted by Tomoaki Kobayakawa, president of the plant's operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings. He last visited the plant in July after issuing an IAEA review predicting only negligible impact from the dis-

charges. An IAEA comprehensive report later concluded that the discharges meet international safety standards.

The 2011 disaster damaged the Fukushima plant's power supply and reactor cooling functions, triggering meltdowns of three reactors and causing large amounts of radioactive wastewater to accu-

multate. After more than a decade of cleanup work, the plant began discharging the water after treating it and diluting it with large amounts of seawater on Aug. 24, starting a process that's expected to take decades.

The discharges have been opposed by fishing groups and neighboring countries including China, which banned all imports of Japanese seafood immediately after the release began.

“There is no scientific reason to impose any restriction on products coming from us,” Grossi said at the meeting in Iwaki, south of the Fukushima Daiichi plant.

“This is very important in particular to be said in this forum here in Fukushima,” he said. He noted a “political dimension to this activity since ... some neighboring countries are also manifesting concerns.”

Despite earlier fears that the water discharge would further hurt Fukushima's hard-hit fishing industry, it has not damaged its reputation domestically. China's ban on Japanese seafood mostly hit scallop exporters in Hokkaido. Tokyo has earmarked a fund of more than 100 billion yen (\$680 million) that includes compensation and other support, including measures to help find other export destinations.

The discharges are at the beginning of a long process, Grossi said, stressing the importance of “transparency, technical accuracy and wide open, honest dialogue and consultation.” He stressed that the IAEA has its own office and lab at the Fukushima plant to independently monitor the process.

Grossi said he met with residents not only to highlight the main points about the discharges but “to learn from you.” He said he would keep coming back to Fukushima and that he is open to hearing residents' concerns and needs.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government has reversed earlier plans for a nuclear phaseout and is accelerating the use of nuclear power in response to rising fuel costs related to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and pressure to meet decarbonization goals. MDT/AP

AD



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SAUDI ARABIA

# Religious freedom group ends trip early after rabbi ordered to remove his kippah

JON GAMBRELL, DUBAI

A U.S. Congress-mandated group cut short a fact-finding mission to Saudi Arabia after officials in the kingdom ordered a Jewish rabbi to remove his kippah in public, highlighting the religious tensions still present in the wider Middle East.

Speaking to The Associated Press, Rabbi Abraham Cooper of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom sought to distance the order over his skullcap from what he described as progress made in the kingdom under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on quietly allowing different faiths to worship privately.

He also said Saudi Arabia may release four Uyghur Muslims held prisoner in the kingdom for asylum in the U.S.

However, displaying any religious symbols other than Islamic ones remains criminalized, the kingdom two years ago carried out its largest mass execution ever that included minority Shiites, and authorities continue a harsh crackdown on any perceived dissent against Prince Mohammed.

"The situation in Saudi Arabia is very complex," said the Rev. Frederick Davie of New York City, the commission's vice chair. "And not everybody's on board, and this may be an example of that."

Officials in Saudi Arabia, as well as at the Saudi Embassy in Washington, did not respond to questions from the AP over the kippah incident. A message from the embassy released online called it "unfortunate" and "a misunderstanding of internal protocols," without elaborating.

The commission, accompanied by members of the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh, had been attending meetings for about two days when they made a visit on March 5 to Diriyah, a mud-walled village that is a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the Saudi capital.

About a third of the way through the village, a Saudi official handed a phone to Cooper, on which an official told him to remove his kippah, a skullcap worn by some Jews



Rabbi Abraham Cooper (center) of the Simon Wiesenthal Center

also known in Yiddish as a yarmulke.

"It's a pretty stunning request, considering we're there as a vanguard for international religious freedom and we're preparing a report on Saudi Arabia," said Cooper, who lives in Los Angeles.

"It's like asking somebody in Saudi Arabia to remove her hijab. I didn't take off my kippah 50 years ago in the Soviet Union — I was there for a month — I'm surely not taking off my kippah for you."

Cooper refused and the rest of the group agreed to cut their visit short over the demand. However, Davie noted that Cooper's kippah hadn't been an issue in government meetings or while eating in public earlier on the trip. Some Jewish online influencers have made trips into the kingdom, publicizing their visits.

The current Saudi sensitivity may come in part because of Israel's grinding war targeting Hamas in the Gaza Strip after the Oct. 7 militant attack that killed 1,200 people and took 250 others hostage. In the months since, Israel's war in the Gaza Strip has killed over 31,000 Palestinians there and left the seaside enclave on the brink of famine, particularly enraging Muslims across the

Mideast as they mark the holy fasting month of Ramadan.

Saudi Arabia's Al Saud royal family, which bases part of its legitimacy on protecting the holiest sites in Islam in the kingdom, particularly feels that pressure. Just before the war, it had been negotiating a U.S.-mediated deal to potentially diplomatically recognize Israel in exchange for a series of concessions.

That deal now appears largely abandoned. A chance meeting last month between Israeli Economy Minister Nir Barkat and Saudi Arabian Commerce Minister Majid bin Abdullah al-Qasab at a summit of the World Trade Organization in Abu Dhabi drew an angry retort from Riyadh, which referred to Barkat as an "Israeli occupation official."

"We're not naive. We live in the real world. I have eight grandchildren in Jerusalem, so I have literally skin in the game," Cooper said. "Of course, we would prefer if people weren't dying right now in the Holy Land. ... I think they would have canceled our meeting if they decided that they want to send a message to Washington and Jerusalem."

Responding to questions from the AP, the State Department said it had "raised our

concerns with Saudi government authorities" over the order given to Cooper to remove his kippah.

"The United States fully supports freedom of religion or belief, including the right to express beliefs through religious attire," the State Department said. "The United States continues to work with our Saudi counterparts on religious freedom issues and we hope the net effect of this incident will push Saudi Arabia to make further strides on these issues."

The Gulf Arab states, particularly the United Arab Emirates, have grown more religiously accommodating. Both Bahrain and the UAE reached a diplomatic recognition deal with Israel in 2020. A prominent synagogue now sits in Abu Dhabi's capital, and a new Hindu temple just opened as well.

But things have moved slower in Saudi Arabia, once dominated by ultraconservative Wahhabi religious leaders before the rise of Prince Mohammed. A U.S. religious freedom report has noted there recently have been "large Christian worship services discreetly and regularly without substantial interference" in the kingdom. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1960 RADIO TELESCOPE MAKES SPACE HISTORY



The British radio telescope at Jodrell Bank in Cheshire has set a new space record making contact with the American Pioneer V satellite at a distance of 407,000 miles.

The previous record, about 290,000 miles, was set by the Soviet satellite Lunik III, which photographed the back of the Moon last year.

Jodrell first made contact with Pioneer V after it went into orbit around the Sun, between the paths of Earth and Venus.

The American satellite was launched from Cape Canaveral in Florida three days ago on 11 March.

Solar 'paddles'

Shortly after launch, the Jodrell Bank telescope was used for the first time to give commands to a rocket in space.

By pressing a button at Jodrell Bank, the 90lb (43kg) payload was separated from the third stage of the launching rocket.

The telescope then succeeded in switching off the satellite's transmitter, which will help conserve its battery power for later in the mission.

It is hoped eventually Jodrell Bank will be able to pick up signals from the satellite up to 50 million miles from Earth.

This will only be made possible by the very large solar-powered batteries on board which run the transmitter. The solar "paddles" projecting from the satellite will recharge the batteries using the sun's radiation, but the current will still need to be conserved if it is to last until July, as planned.

The transmitter will be switched on for no more than 45 minutes a day at first. Later transmitting time will be reduced to five minutes a day.

Within a week, the satellite will be more than a million miles from Earth and its more powerful 150-watt transmitter will have to be switched on by command from Jodrell Bank.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

In April 1960, the command centre in Hawaii began having problems contacting Pioneer V and Jodrell Bank began to play a bigger role in controlling the satellite.

When the telescope was built in 1957, it was the world's largest fully steerable radio telescope, a title it held for more than 10 years. It is still in the top few radio telescopes in the world.

Originally called the Mark 1, it was upgraded to the Mark 1a in 1970. It was rededicated the Lovell Radio Telescope in 1987 to mark 30 years of operation.

The Lovell Radio telescope now has a new galvanised steel surface built at a cost of £2.5m. It is 30 times more sensitive than when it was built.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Take advantage of a lucrative opportunity. Make plans and prepare. Polish your presentation. Get ready to make your pitch. Do the homework and profit.

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20  
Follow your heart. A personal dream inspires and energizes. Put in the preparation behind the scenes before launching. Get the perfect outfit together.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21  
Get quiet enough to hear yourself think. Develop plans for growing love. Plant seeds. Invest in passion projects. Map a route to dreams realized.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
Confer with allies. Schedule meetings, gatherings and parties. Advance a cause that moves your heart through your social networks.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
Professional projects demand attention. Focus disciplined attention to strengthen foundations. Make dreams come true with practical preparation.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
Make plans and preparations for your next adventure. Study options. Determine what's needed. Chart your course. Make long-distance connections.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
Collaborate with financial matters. Consider and discuss an important decision. Avoid impulsive expenses. The truth becomes obvious.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
Strategize with your partner. Coordinate and prepare for shared dreams. Negotiate and compromise. Align forces and plot the course.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
Nurture your health, vitality and work. Dedicate time for yourself. Don't push limitations. Practice exercise routines. Reconnect with trees and nature.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
Have fun with someone you love. Relax and enjoy simple connections with nature, creativity and romance. Don't fret about the future. Get playful.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
Have the party at your house. Clean up to get ready. Authorize improvements. Organize and plan. Put in the backstage efforts for later delight.

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
Creative projects produce satisfying results. Network to share data, resources and ideas. A solution to an old problem is becoming obvious.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

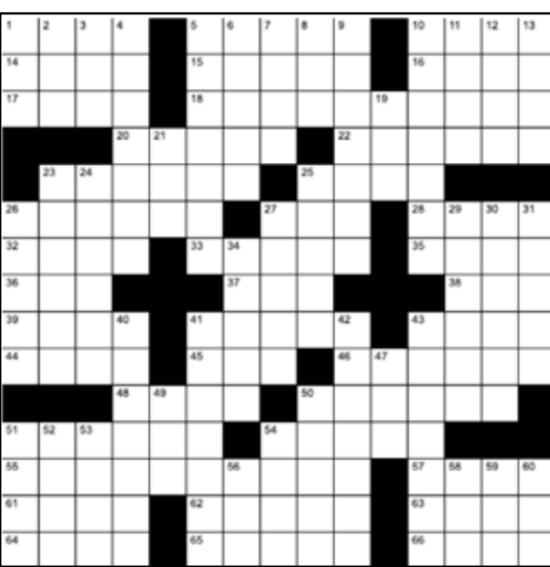
**WEATHER**

|              | MIN | MAX | CONDITION |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----------|
| <b>CHINA</b> |     |     |           |
| Beijing      | 3   | 21  | fine      |
| Changchun    | -2  | 11  | cloudy    |
| Chengdu      | 11  | 20  | rain      |
| Chongqing    | 13  | 20  | cloudy    |
| Fuzhou       | 11  | 19  | rain      |
| Guangzhou    | 15  | 21  | rain      |
| Guiyang      | 8   | 15  | overcast  |
| Haikou       | 19  | 26  | cloudy    |
| Hangzhou     | 7   | 18  | overcast  |
| Harbin       | -2  | 8   | cloudy    |
| Hefei        | 7   | 18  | cloudy    |
| Nanjing      | 8   | 16  | cloudy    |
| Shanghai     | 6   | 15  | overcast  |
| Taipei       | 14  | 21  | cloudy    |
| Wuhan        | 9   | 21  | cloudy    |
| Hong Kong    | 20  | 20  | windy     |
| <b>WORLD</b> |     |     |           |
| Moscow       | -7  | 3   | overcast  |
| Frankfurt    | 8   | 16  | overcast  |
| Paris        | 12  | 17  | cloudy    |
| London       | 11  | 15  | cloudy    |
| New York     | 11  | 19  | overcast  |

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Fail to hit; 5- Like some bears and icecaps; 10- Adds; 14- Billy \_\_\_ had a hit song with "White Wedding"; 15- Came up; 16- Pennsylvania port; 17- Top-rated; 18- 90° angle; 20- Jack Sprat could \_\_\_ fat; 22- Unobserved; 23- Owing; 25- Little Tenderness; 26- Harsh; 27- Bronze component; 28- Dosage amts.; 32- Very, in Versailles; 33- Tears apart; 35- Footnote abbr.; 36- Suffix with ball; 37- \_\_\_ good deed; 38- Mr. Onassis, to friends; 39- Enlist again; 41- Name; 43- Flower part; 44- River of Flanders; 45- Devoured; 46- Benzene derivative; 48- Electric fish; 50- Bewail; 51- Persons in general; 54- Pie nut; 55- Achievement; 57- Percussive instrument; 61- Paint can direction; 62- Add up; 63- "\_\_\_ quam videri" (North Carolina's motto); 64- Zaire's Mobutu \_\_\_ Seko; 65- Actress Spacek; 66- AAA suggestions;

DOWN 1- Actress Farrow; 2- Altar words; 3- Part of the Holy Trinity; 4- Arm coverings; 5- Associate; 6- Rubber gasket; 7- Nike's swoosh, e.g.; 8- Tree used to make baseball bats; 9- Comes back; 10- Feeling; 11- Impulse; 12- Eight furlongs; 13- Visualized; 19- At all; 21- Televised; 23- People of courage; 24- Wide street; 25- Wave-related; 26- Tale; 27- Govt. security; 29- \_\_\_ Island Ferry; 30- Mom or pop; 31- Thin glutinous mud; 34- Prepares for publication or release; 40- Get ready; 41- Abilities; 42- Precisely; 43- Thin; 47- Vocalist Sumac; 49- Yale student; 50- Horne and Olin; 51- Make the grade; 52- Kitchen addition?; 53- Elevator man; 54- Teachers' favorites; 56- Miss Piggy's query; 58- Queue after Q; 59- Exercise; 60- Parisian possessive;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

**USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

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



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**Jade Garden**  
HKD 11,880,000 4 bed 3 bath

## LAW

# EUROPE'S WORLD-FIRST AI RULES ARE SET FOR FINAL APPROVAL. HERE'S WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

KELVIN CHAN, LONDON

**E**UROPEAN Union lawmakers are set to give final approval to the 27-nation bloc's artificial intelligence law today [Macau time], putting the world-leading rules on track to take effect later this year.

Lawmakers in the European Parliament are poised to vote in favor of the Artificial Intelligence Act five years after they were first proposed. The AI Act is expected to act as a global signpost for other governments grappling with how to regulate the fast-developing technology.

"The AI Act has nudged the future of AI in a human-centric direction, in a direction where humans are in control of the technology and where it — the technology — helps us leverage new discoveries, economic growth, societal progress and unlock human potential," said Dragos Tudorache, a Romanian lawmaker who was a co-leader of the Parliament negotiations on the draft law.

Big tech companies generally have supported the need to regulate AI while lobbying to ensure any rules work in their favor. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman caused a minor stir last year when he suggested the ChatGPT maker could pull out of Europe if it can't comply with the AI Act — before backtracking to say there were no plans to leave.

Here's a look at the world's first comprehensive set of AI rules:

## HOW DOES THE AI ACT WORK?

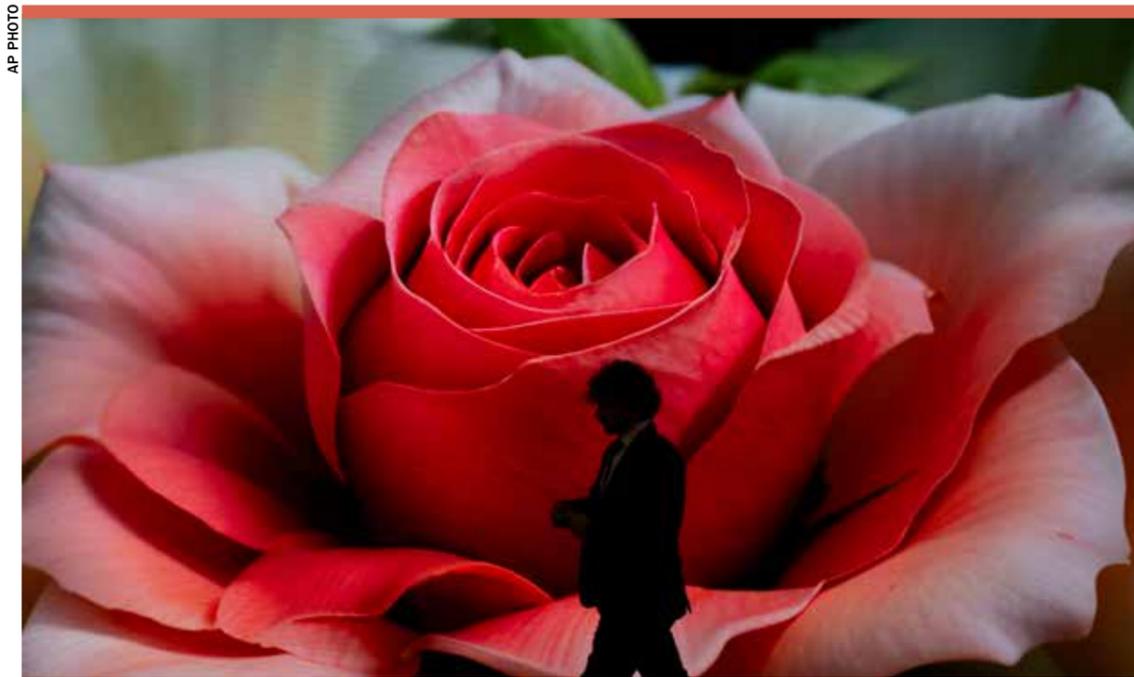
Like many EU regulations, the AI Act was initially intended to act as consumer safety legislation, taking a "risk-based approach" to products or services that use artificial intelligence.

The riskier an AI application, the more scrutiny it faces. Low-risk systems, such as content recommendation systems or spam filters, will only face light rules such as revealing that they are powered by AI. The EU expects most AI systems to fall into this category.

High-risk uses of AI, such as in medical devices or critical infrastructure like water or electrical networks, face tougher requirements like using high-quality data and providing clear information to users.

Some AI uses are banned because they're deemed to pose an unacceptable risk, like social scoring systems that govern how people behave, some types of predictive policing and emotion recognition systems in school and workplaces.

Other banned uses include police scanning faces in public using



An outdoor with an image of a flower created with artificial intelligence by artist Refik Anadol is displayed in Davos ahead of the World Economic Forum, last January

AI-powered remote "biometric identification" systems, except for serious crimes like kidnapping or terrorism.

## WHAT ABOUT GENERATIVE AI?

The law's early drafts focused on AI systems carrying out narrowly limited tasks, like scanning resumes and job applications. The astonishing rise of general purpose AI models, exemplified by OpenAI's ChatGPT, sent EU policymakers scrambling to keep up. They added provisions for so-called generative AI models, the technology underpinning AI chatbot systems that can produce unique and seemingly lifelike responses, images and more.

Developers of general purpose AI models — from European startups to OpenAI and Google

— will have to provide a detailed summary of the text, pictures, video and other data on the internet that is used to train the systems as well as follow EU copyright law.

AI-generated deepfake pictures, video or audio of existing people, places or events must be labeled as artificially manipulated.

There's extra scrutiny for the biggest and most powerful AI models that pose "systemic risks," which include OpenAI's GPT4 — its most advanced system — and Google's Gemini.

The EU says it's worried that these powerful AI systems could "cause serious accidents or be misused for far-reaching cyberattacks." They also fear generative AI could spread "harmful biases" across many applications, affecting many people.

Companies that provide these systems will have to assess and mitigate the risks; report any serious incidents, such as malfunctions that cause someone's death or serious harm to health or property; put cybersecurity measures in place; and disclose how much energy their models use.

## DO EUROPE'S RULES INFLUENCE THE WORLD?

Brussels first suggested AI regulations in 2019, taking a familiar global role in ratcheting up scrutiny of emerging industries, while other governments scramble to keep up.

In the U.S., President Joe Biden signed a sweeping executive order on AI in October that's expected to be backed up by legislation and global agreements. In the mean-

time, lawmakers in at least seven U.S. states are working on their own AI legislation.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has proposed his Global AI Governance Initiative, and authorities have issued "interim measures" for managing generative AI, which applies to text, pictures, audio, video and other content generated for people inside China.

Other countries, from Brazil to Japan, as well as global groupings like the United Nations and Group of Seven industrialized nations, are moving to draw up AI guardrails.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The AI Act is expected to officially become law by May or June, after a few final formalities, including a blessing from EU member countries. Provisions will start taking effect in stages, with countries required to ban prohibited AI systems six months after the rules enter the lawbooks.

Rules for general purpose AI systems like chatbots will start applying a year after the law takes effect. By mid-2026, the complete set of regulations, including requirements for high-risk systems, will be in force.

When it comes to enforcement, each EU country will set up their own AI watchdog, where citizens can file a complaint if they think they've been the victim of a violation of the rules. Meanwhile, Brussels will create an AI Office tasked with enforcing and supervising the law for general purpose AI systems.

Violations of the AI Act could draw fines of up to 35 million euros (\$38 million), or 7% of a company's global revenue. **MDT/AP**

## US SPEARHEADS FIRST UN RESOLUTION ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

**T**HE United States is spearheading the first United Nations resolution on artificial intelligence, aimed at ensuring the new technology is "safe, secure and trustworthy" and that all countries, especially those in the developing world, have equal access.

The draft General Assembly resolution aims to close the digital divide between countries and make sure they are all at the table in discussions on AI — and that they have the technology and capabilities to take advantage of its benefits, including detecting diseases, predicting floods and training the next generation of workers.

The draft recognizes the rapid acceleration of AI development and use and stresses "the urgency of achieving global consensus on safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems." It also recognizes that "the governance of artificial intelligence systems is an

evolving area" that needs further discussions on possible governance approaches.

U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said the United States turned to the General Assembly "to have a truly global conversation on how to manage the implications of the fast-advancing technology of AI."

The resolution "would represent global support for a baseline set of principles for the development and use of AI and would lay out a path to leverage AI systems for good while managing the risks," he said in a statement to The Associated Press.

If approved, Sullivan said, "this resolution will be an historic step forward in fostering safe, secure and trustworthy AI worldwide."

The United States began negotiating with the 193 U.N. member nations about three months ago, spent hundreds of hours in direct talks with individual countries, 42 hours

in negotiations and accepted input from 120 nations, a senior U.S. official said. The resolution went through several drafts and achieved consensus support from all member states this week and will be formally considered later this month, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

Unlike Security Council resolutions, General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding but they are an important barometer of world opinion.

A key goal, according to the draft resolution, is to use AI to help spur progress toward achieving the U.N.'s badly lagging development goals for 2030, including ending global hunger and poverty, improving health worldwide, ensuring quality secondary education for all children and achieving gender equality.

**MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL | CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

# Conceicao says Arteta 'insulted my family' during match in latest spat with opposing manager

ARSENAL 1, FC PORTO 0  
(4-2 IN PENALTIES)

**P**ORTO coach Sergio Conceicao accused Arsenal counterpart Mikel Arteta of insulting his family during yesterday's [Macau time] Champions League game between the teams, continuing a trend of lashing out at the opposing manager after a loss.

Arsenal beat Porto on penalties at the Emirates Stadium to advance to the quarterfinals, and the two managers had a lengthy exchange after the game in which Conceicao seemed to admonish Arteta, pointing his finger at the Spaniard as he made his point. Arteta responded by shaking his head as he walked away.

"During the game, (Arteta) turned to the bench and in



Spanish — it must be a Spanish coach thing because it was the same thing with (Pep)

Guardiola — he insulted my family," Conceicao said in Portuguese after the game. "In the

end I told him to pay attention because who he insulted is no longer with us, and to worry about coaching his team, because due to individual quality he has an obligation to do more and better."

When asked about the exchange with Conceicao in his post-game news conference, Arteta only said "no comment" before leaving the podium.

Conceicao has made similar claims about other managers.

After a group-stage loss to Manchester City in 2020, he said Guardiola "spoke about our country using ugly words" and that "Guardiola's attitude was extremely unpleasant."

After Porto lost to Chelsea in the 2021 Champions League quarterfinals, he also said then-Blues coach Thomas Tuchel "insulted" him during the game. **MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL BURGLARIES

## SPANISH POLICE ARREST SIX ROBBERS AT WEALTHY FOOTBALLERS' HOMES IN MADRID

**S**PANISH police say they have arrested six members of gang that specialized in burgling footballers' home in and around Madrid.

A National Police statement yesterday said the group selected their victims after studying photographs and videos of the houses posted by the players, family and friends on social media.

Police said the gang was responsible for eight robberies over the past two years in wealthy residential areas of Madrid.

In one of the burglaries last May, the group made off with some 500,000 euros in watches and jewelry, police said.

Police said the gang then tried to sell off the stolen goods on the black market.

Agents seized 10 watches, several pieces of jewelry, 3,300 euros in cash and two air guns in raids while making the arrests.

The names of the footballers targeted were not released. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

China Daily  
Editorial, China Daily

CONCLUSION OF NPC  
SESSION HIGHLIGHTS  
GUARANTEES FOR  
HEALTHY PRIVATE SECTOR

The development of new quality productive forces is a clear priority for the country, as the advancements in artificial intelligence, blockchain, cloud computing, big data, the metaverse and Web 3.0 are ushering in a new scientific and technological revolution, which will transform every aspect of life.

China has made unprecedented achievements in almost all fields in the past more than four decades. The country is a giant in terms of its manufacturing industries, IT industry, and innovation.

However, China cannot afford to slacken its endeavors in innovation, and must continue to make breakthroughs in key technologies and key fields not only to shore up its own economic growth but also to act as a major contributor to global development and social progress.

The emphasis on the development of new quality productive forces is meant to tap the potential of innovation in China to the utmost.

This means that governments at all levels must do whatever they can to make policies that will encourage and support enterprises and institutions in their pursuit of innovations. National support must be given to the development of key technologies in a targeted manner, and the national resources mobilized nationwide must be used in a way that will facilitate a leap forward in the advancements in frontier areas.

As part of these efforts, it has been emphasized time and again in Communist Party of China Central Committee documents that institutions and mechanisms at all levels must be constantly optimized to unswervingly encourage, support and guide the development of the nonpublic sector, which is an important factor in the development of new quality productive forces, as it accounts for about 70 percent of the country's innovation, according to official data.

In light of this, the central authorities have stressed that efforts should be made to optimize the environment for the development of private enterprises, enhance policy support and strengthen the legal guarantees for the private sector.

The work report of the National People's Congress Standing Committee that was approved at the conclusion of the weeklong second session of the 14th NPC on Monday reaffirmed that the legal guarantee for the private sector is to be strengthened in the form of a new law that will help pioneer the development of future-oriented industries, encourage the development of venture capital and equity investment and improve the functions of industrial investment funds.

The law to promote the development of the private sector that is in the works aims to address the difficulties faced by private enterprises, make sure their property rights are protected and that entrepreneurs have a sense of security and the confidence that their rights will be protected and they will be competing on a level playing field.

As the NPC said in the report, the law that is being drawn up will encourage, support, and guide the development of the nonpublic sector and create an environment conducive to stimulating the endogenous impetus and innovative vitality of private business entities and entrepreneurs.

It will hopefully give a shot in the arm for the private sector enabling it to play its role in advancing the country's overall economic and social development.

President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that Russia is ready to use nuclear weapons if its sovereignty or independence is threatened, issuing another blunt warning to the West just days ahead of an election in which he's all but certain to win another six-year term.

The Russian leader has repeatedly talked about his readiness to use nuclear weapons since invading Ukraine in February 2022. The most recent such threat came in his state-of-the-nation address last month, when he warned the West that deepening its involvement in the fighting in Ukraine would risk a nuclear war.

Asked in an interview with Russian state television released yesterday if he has ever considered using battlefield nuclear weapons in Ukraine, Putin responded that there has been no need for that. Still, the remarks appeared to be a message to the West that he is prepared to use all means to protect his gains there.

In an apparent reference to NATO allies, he also declared that "the nations that say they have no red lines regarding Russia should realize that Russia won't have any red lines regarding them either."



Space One's Kairos rocket explodes after liftoff from a launch pad in Kushimoto, Wakayama prefecture, yesterday

COMMERCIAL ROCKET  
TRYING TO PUT A  
SATELLITE INTO ORBIT  
EXPLODES MOMENTS  
AFTER LIFTOFF IN JAPAN

YURI KAGEYAMA, TOKYO

A commercial rocket trying to put a satellite into orbit was intentionally exploded shortly after liftoff yesterday morning in central Japan following a problem that's still under investigation.

Space One was aiming to be Japan's first private sector success at putting a satellite into orbit.

Online video showed the Kairos rocket blasting off in a mountainous area filled with trees then exploding five seconds later. A huge plume of smoke engulfed the area, and flames shot up in some spots. spurts of water were shown trying to put out the blaze.

Live footage on public broadcaster NHK showed debris scattering from the sky and later charred pieces were shown strewn about on the ground.

No injuries were reported and the fire was brought under control, according to the fire department for Kushimoto city in Wakaya-

ma prefecture.

The launch was halted five seconds after liftoff but the problem that was detected by the rocket's automated system was unclear and still under investigation, according to Space One.

It occurred during step two of the launch, with the first step being liftoff, and all the pieces of the rocket landed on Space One's property, the company said.

"We are taking what happened in a positive way and remain prepared to take up the next challenge," President Masakazu Toyoda told reporters.

The rocket was supposed to have sent a government-made satellite into orbit around Earth to gather various information, including monitoring possible dangers from rocket launches from neighboring North Korea.

But one of its main purposes was for Japan to play catch-up as rocket launches here have fallen behind that of the U.S. and China. The launch has been delayed

several times.

Toyota and other officials stressed that space travel succeeds only after multiple failures. He even refused to call the aborted launch a failure, and declined to reveal the costs or when the investigation might be completed.

Tokyo-based Space One was set up in 2018, with investments from major Japanese companies, including Canon Electronics, IHI, Shimizu and major banks. It's hoping to eventually offer space services and travel.

Japan's main space exploration effort has been led by the government under JAXA, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, which has developed various rockets, sent a spacecraft to the moon and brought back asteroid samples for research.

Japan's companies are aiming to become a larger part of the growing global space business, as exemplified by ventures abroad like Elon Musk's Space X. MDT/AP



Germany Tesla CEO Elon Musk visited the electric car maker's first European plant yesterday as production resumed at the factory just outside Berlin about a week after a suspected arson attack cut its power supply. Musk was expected at a "team huddle" with employees at the plant in the Gruenheide municipality, employee council chief Michaela Schmitz told regional broadcaster RBB's Inforadio channel. Reporters at the scene could see him arriving from a distance.



Denmark wants to increase the number of young people doing military service by extending conscription to women and increasing the time of service from 4 months to 11 months for both genders, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said yesterday. "We do not rearm because we want war. We are rearming because we want to avoid it," Frederiksen told a press conference. She said the government wants "full equality between the sexes."



Lithuania Leonid Volkov, the late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's close associate and top strategist, accused yesterday Russian President Vladimir Putin's "henchmen" of being behind a brutal attack that left him hospitalized in Lithuania's capital and vowed to "not give up." Police said an assailant attacked Volkov yesterday as he arrived in a car at his Vilnius home, where he lives in exile. The attacker smashed one of his car's windows, sprayed tear gas into his eyes and hit him with a hammer, police said.