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VIETNAMESE CONSUL PHAM BINH DAM URGES MACAU TO RESTART AND EXPAND TWO-WAY TOURISM, RELAXING VISA POLICIES FOR VIETNAMESE VISITORS

AVIATION BILL DISCUSSION ALMOST CONCLUDED, VOTING AFTER EASTER HOLIDAY

CHINA'S CITY OFFICIALS ISSUE RARE APOLOGY AFTER POLICE OBSTRUCT REPORTERS ON LIVE TV



AP PHOTO



Indonesia The camps of the two Indonesian presidential candidates who appear to have lost in an election last month said yesterday they plan to challenge the official results in the Constitutional Court with allegations of widespread fraud. Indonesians voted on Feb. 14 for a successor to popular President Joko Widodo, who is serving his second and final term.

AP PHOTO



Japan A high court ruled yesterday that denying same-sex marriage is unconstitutional and called for urgent government action to address the lack of any law allowing for such unions. The court does not have the power to overturn the current marriage law, which has been interpreted to restrict marriage as between a man and a woman. Government officials may continue to deny marriage status to same-sex couples unless the existing law is revised to include LGBTQ+ couples, or a new law is enacted that allows for other types of unions.

AP PHOTO



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un joined troops training on a new model of tank and drove one himself, state media reported yesterday, as his rivals South Korea and the U.S. wrapped up their annual military exercises. It's the third time Kim was reported to have observed military exercises since the start of the 11-day South Korean-U.S. exercises, which he views as rehearsals for an invasion. That's a less provocative option than missile tests. North Korea has intensified launches since 2022 and ramped up belligerent rhetoric this year.

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SWEET AND SOUR

Macau less prominent in Michelin guide despite new entrants P2

HORSEGATE HORSE OWNERS AWAIT COMPENSATION FROM JOCKEY CLUB

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TASTE OF EDESIA

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MACAU SEES NEW RESTAURANTS IN LIST YET LOSES MICHELIN STARS

ANTHONY LAM

MACAU'S Michelin stars dropped in the 2024 edition of the "Michelin Guide Hong Kong Macau" despite seeing new additions to the list.

The Huaiyang Garden at the Londoner Macao was awarded the two-star status recognized by the global dining accreditation body, the Michelin Guide.

Opened in early 2022 and bearing a homophonic Chinese name that resembles China's "god of Huaiyang cuisine," Zhou Xiaoyan, the restaurant, attained this accolade just over a year after its opening.

The restaurant managed the rare feat of securing another star this year, meaning that progress was made for two years in a row. While this is not unheard of in Macau, it is a rare feat. When on stage receiving the accolade for the restaurant, Senior Chef Xiao Fei admitted that he was frightened when he saw the restaurant was not named in the list of 1-star restaurants, fearing that the restaurant had lost its status. Only later was it revealed that the restaurant is the only new winner of the 2-star status in Macau.

At the post-event press conference, the chef suggested that his colleagues' and his daily scrutiny of the restaurant's productions was what likely caused the restaurant's upward movement. Working at the only Huaiyang restaurant among the 95 star-rated outlets in Macau and Hong Kong this year, he agreed that Macau deserves a wider variety of culinary offerings and that he is happy to see that happening.

Two local restaurants – Chef Tam's Seasons at Wynn Palace and Sushi Kinetsu at the City of Dreams – shone by achieving their respective one-stars surprisingly within the first year of opening.

Highlighting seasonal ingredients and recipes and helmed by veteran Chef Tam Kwok Fung, the former restaurant, which is the chef's namesake establishment, obtained its first star. Chef Tam is renowned for achieving stars for restaurants that he previously served, including Wing Lei Palace, the restaurant at the same resort that ceased operations to make



ways for a Jiangnan restaurant.

Speaking to the press, Chef Tam boasted his seasonal menu that changes every two weeks. "As such, regular diners will feel refreshed almost every time they visit the restaurant," he said. "We focus on a total expe-

rience of dining."

Meanwhile, Head Chef Jay Myung at the sushi omakase establishment said he feels elated about the accreditation. Discussing challenges operating a fine-dining omakase sushi place in Macau, the Korean chef, who has

lived in Canada and Japan, highlighted the difficulty in not being able to handpick his ingredients. "Running a sushi restaurant in Macau is particularly difficult because I cannot visit the fish market [in Japan] every day to handpick my ingredients," he

said, although produce is flown into his restaurant on regular basis.

The palatial French fine-dining atop the Grand Lisboa hotel – Robuchon au Dôme – once again retained its 3-star accolade, marking its 16th consecutive time on the status. Executive Julien Tongourian of the restaurant, who oversees L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon in Hong Kong, has six stars under his belt this year.

When asked by the Times how he managed to maintain his restaurants' service and culinary quality in order to retain the stars amid challenges in workforce and delivery of quality ingredients over the past few years, Chef Tongourian emphasized "training" as the critical factor.

Constant and patient training is the key to the success of his two restaurants, he suggested, hinting that it takes a lot of time to cultivate people who meet the bar.

"When I started working in Hong Kong and Macau, I have changed my mindset," he said. "I'm now more a teacher [in the kitchen] than a chef."

LOCAL FOOD CRITIC CALLS FOR CLEARER CULINARY POSITIONING IN MACAU

THE wider options in Macau securing Michelin stars this year is a signal that the city should have a more diverse dining offering, Myth Chao, local veteran food critic, told the Times yesterday.

Repeatedly boasting itself as a UNESCO City of Gastronomy, Macau having too narrow choices of cuisines is not a comment unheard of. It is also part of the reason why more and more local residents have decided to go northbound for food.

In an exclusive interview with the Times, Chao, director-general at the Macau Society of Gastronomic and Culinary Arts, cited Five Foot Road, the 1-star Sichuan restaurant at MGM Cotai and The Huaiyang Garden as the signal that Macau deserves a larger number of more diverse cuisines.

Admitting that cuisines representing different parts of China are needed in Macau, he turned to discuss the positioning of dining in Macau. "I find it strange to see the growing numbers of Chinese cuisines in Macau, for which the clientele still relies greatly on mainland China" he said. "Since these cuisines are widely available in the mainland, I wonder who these local restaurants are targeting."

Commenting on the star for Chef Tam's Seasons, he found it an expected outcome, citing Chef Tam's established background and the fact that Wynn Resorts have invested so much in the inauguration and promotion of the restaurant.

On the lost stars for both The Eight, Cantonese dining, and The Kitchen, steakhouse – both at Grand Lisboa Hotel – Chao found it less surprising for the former but worthy of contemplation for the latter.

"Innovative or refined Cantonese dining is so widely available in Macau now," he pointed out. "As such, we need to look at their initial intention. If it focuses too much on instagrammable effects, two stars will be already legitimate."

The Kitchen, meanwhile, may have lost its star under unclear circumstances. Admitting that he liked its steaks very much, "probably the quality of ingredients has deteriorated," he suggested.

Chao especially mentioned that he is not

a big fan of what he called "the chef's three treasures" – caviar, foie gras and black truffle – especially when used in Cantonese cuisine. Many chefs, in his opinion, have resorted to these expensive ingredients to accentuate their cooking, "in order to enlarge the price tags of the dishes."

When asked if he had experienced a deterioration in service standards in star-rated restaurants in Macau after the resumption of normalcy, Chao admitted that with a smaller population of big-spending tourists in Macau, restaurants will have greater cost considerations. With certain costs being unchangeable, such as salary, restaurants may be forced to consider less flamboyant ingredients or smaller teams as possible solutions.

MICHELIN-STAR RESTAURANTS IN MACAU



- Jade Dragon (City of Dreams)
- Robuchon au Dôme (Grand Lisboa)



- The Huaiyang Garden (Londoner)
- The Eight (Grand Lisboa)
- Alain Ducasse at Morpheus (City of Dreams)
- Mizumi (Wynn)
- Wing Lei (Wynn)
- Feng Wei Ju (StarWorld)



- Chef Tam's Seasons (Wynn Palace)
- Ying (Altira)
- Pearl Dragon (Studio City)
- 8 ½ Otto e Mezzo – Bombana (Galaxy)
- Sushi Kinetsu (City of Dreams)
- Zi Yat Heen (Four Seasons)
- Lai Heen (Galaxy)
- Five Foot Road (MGM Cotai)



- IFTM Educational Restaurant

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Aviation bill discussion almost concluded with new national security provision

RENATO MARQUES

THE new civil aviation bill that the government has introduced to partially liberalize air transport in Macau is reaching its final stage of analysis and discussion at the Third Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL).

According to the president of the committee, the lawmaker Vong Hin Fai, a final version of the bill will likely be reviewed by the legal advisories of both the AL and the government in the upcoming weeks; the final version of the bill might be ready for voting on its final reading at the plenary after the Easter Holidays.

Although it is not yet clear when the bill will be voted and passed, the provisions state that it will enter into force the day after its publication in the government's official gazette.

After yesterday's extensive meeting, both Vong and the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário said that there are only small details to



perfect and that the bill has already reached consensus among the committee members and the proposer.

During yesterday's media briefing, Vong noted that one of the topics that took the committee significant time to discuss was related to the number of operating licenses that will be issued in the future.

Lawmakers wanted the government to clearly define the number of licenses that will be issued or at least name the maximum number. In response, the government

explained that this would be a flexible matter related to the interest of the market. In the end, it was agreed that there would be discretionary power granted to the Chief Executive (CE) to make the necessary adjustments when needed.

Another of the topics about which the government has managed to convince the lawmakers is related to the provision ensuring that the licenses are untransferable even if there is a company acquisition or merger. All license transfers need to be authorized by the CE and can never automati-

cally pass to a different company, Vong said.

NEW NATIONAL SECURITY PROVISION ADDED BY LAWMAKERS' REQUEST

The president of the Committee also said that the government accepted several of the suggestions from the lawmakers and introduced changes to the law's drafting. Among them is a new article that aims to ensure that there are no problems related to National Security.

The article, introduced by request of lawmakers makes it impossible for any person who has been found guilty of any National Security Law violation to be able to take part in the future operations of the airport or its concessionaires or operators.

5 YEAR BUSINESS PLAN FOR AIRLINES

The rules that establish the criteria for evaluation of applicants for an air transport license also state, among others, that the airlines need to submit a 5-year busi-

ness plan as part of their application.

Also changed was a section of the initial version of the bill that lawmakers found confusing. Some lawmakers questioned whether the current operator (Air Macau) would be granted a license without passing through the same procedure as new applicants and, the fact that the law seemed to force the current solo operator to continue to be an operator in the future.

The new redaction clarifies that after the new law enters into force, the current operator has 90 days to acquire a license to continue to operate as a transitory rule. According to the new drafting, it is up to the company to require or not a new license to operate together with other potential interested parties.

Exiting the meeting, Raimundo do Rosário did not want to risk advancing the timing for the approval of the law, but he said that "surely it will be done before the end of this legislative year," that is, before the AL summer holidays that start on August 15.

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

GOV'T SUSPENDS HOUSING CONSTRUCTION IN ZONE A FOLLOWING WORKER'S DEATH

A 65-year-old worker died following an accident that occurred at the public housing construction site in Section A11 of Zone A. Fellow workers told emergency responders that as the crane's turntable was rotating, it knocked down the construction site manager. He was sent to the hospital for emergency treatment and later died. Authorities are now investigating the incident and works will only be resumed once authorities evaluate the reports of the contractors.

POLICE ARREST NON-RESIDENT WORKERS OVER DRUG USE

Police arrested three non-resident employees, aged between 31 and 41, on suspicion of drug abuse. During the operation, a total of 1.56 grams of methamphetamine and 1.11 grams of marijuana were seized in the suspects' apartment, with a black market value of MOP6,300. Police also seized smoking paraphernalia from the bed of another resident in the unit. The urine tests of the three men all came back positive and they admitted to using drugs.

RENATO MARQUES

THE government is moving 411 public housing units, built to be sold under the public housing economic acquisition scheme into the economic rental scheme, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário said yesterday at the Legislative Assembly on the sidelines of the meeting of the Third Standing Committee. The meeting was convened to discuss the new aviation law.

After the meeting and speaking to the media, Rosário explained that this was a decision that the government made after taking into account the fact that, when they were made available for acquisition, these houses did not garner interest from the public, while there is still a long list of people who have applied and are waiting for economic rental housing from the government.

"I would like to clarify first that this is something that the law allows and, second, that we are not picking these housing units from the group of over 5,400 that are being built in new public housing projects. These 411 housing units are spread over, I believe, some 10 public housing buildings or projects and there are a few on each project that have not been sold,"

GOV'T TO PASS 411 PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS FROM ACQUISITION TO RENTAL



said do Rosário.

"Since it would be complex and time-consuming to re-tender them for acquisition, and since there is a long waiting list for the social housing [economic rental], we have decided to make these units available for that first level of public housing so we can ease the pressure on that list since there will be some time before

we have new [economic rental] units to offer," the Secretary added, noting that the fact that the list is now permanent and does not expire also allows this type of decision to be made.

Rosário further explained that to tender these units for acquisition would be a much more complex process as a new price would have to be set and a

whole new tender would need to be commenced for a relatively small number of units.

He also added that the next public housing development to be completed will be the one located at the Avenida de Veneslau de Moraes (the land of the former CEM thermal power plant and fuel park), but this is still some months away.

AD



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TRANSPORTATION

Light rail's connection to Qingmao is not on Rosário's agenda

RENATO MARQUES

THE potential extension of the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) East line from the Border Gate up to the Qingmao Port is not a matter for the current agenda, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário told the Times on the sidelines of the Third Standing Committee meeting held yesterday morning at the Legislative Assembly.

Questioned by the Times on the matter, Rosário said that such an idea "will have its right time" and that is not now, hinting, yet again, that such a project will be not part of the major construction of the East line and, instead, will be a different project that will come at a later stage.

As for the works for the construction of the currently appro-



ved LRT East line, Rosário said that the works at the Border Gate area are progressing slowly since the granting of the land plot area, recently approved by the central government, has not yet been formalized. This means that the land plot has not yet officially passed to Macau's jurisdiction.

Still, he said that the government is doing "what is possible" to advance preparatory works and other "small-scale" constructions until the land is officially under the government's possession, which is when the pace of construction should accelerate.

VIETNAM URGES MACAU GOV'T TO RELAX VISA POLICIES FOR VISITORS

STAFF REPORTER

PHAM Binh Dam, the Vietnamese Consul General in Hong Kong and Macau, has proposed that the SAR take steps to restart and expand two-way tourism, including by relaxing visa policies for Vietnamese visitors.

During a visit to Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng of Macau earlier this week, the diplomat expressed gratitude for the attention and support provided to Vietnamese people working and living in Macau. Moreover, Dam urged Macau to increase the reception of Vietnamese laborers, enhance cooperation in addressing labor issues, and eliminate visa restrictions for Vietnamese workers and tourists.

During the meeting, Dam highlighted the significant progress in cooperative ties between Vietnam and Macau, which have developed alongside fruitful Vietnam-China relations. He expressed confidence that with determination

and readiness from both sides, the cooperative relationship between Vietnam and Macau will continue to advance in the future.

Ho appreciated the efforts of the Vietnamese diplomat in promoting Vietnam-Macau relations across different areas and expressed hope that Dam would continue to strengthen these relations in his new position.

The Chief Executive expressed support for Dam's proposals, and assured that visa procedures would be simplified, including by way of implementing online visa applications and visa-on-arrivals for Vietnamese citizens as soon as possible.

During his visit, the Vietnamese consul general also made a courtesy visit to Commissioner Liu Xianfa of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China in Macau, met with the Executive Board of the Vietnamese Association in Macau, and held a working session with representatives from the University of Macau.

AD



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MAN STABS ESTRANGED WIFE IN ACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

A 39-year-old man has allegedly stabbed his wife with a kitchen knife, authorities report. The injured woman had stab wounds on her shoulders and ears, and bruises on many parts of her body. She independently sought medical treatment and called the police to report the incident. The couple were married in 2013 and have two children together. About four or five years ago, the woman filed for divorce multiple times on the basis that the two parties had irreconcilable difference. After receiving the report and investigating, the police found the man at a relative's home and arrested him. Individuals and family members who suffer or are at risk of suffering from domestic violence can access support services using the helpline for victims of domestic violence on 28233030.

ITTF WORLD CUP MACAU TO BE HELD IN APRIL

The Macao 2024 edition of the ITTF Men's and Women's World Cup, sponsored by Galaxy Entertainment Group and authorized by the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF), will take place at Galaxy Arena from April 15 to April 21. The ITTF Men's World Cup and Women's World Cup will feature a total of 48 players in each category. The tournament is set to bring together elite table tennis players from around the world.

ACTIVISTS ADVOCATE FOR HARSHER PENALTIES TO TACKLE CASES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

STAFF REPORTER

A women's rights organization in Macau has urged authorities to implement harsher punishments to address the increasing incidents of violence against women and children in the region.

In a statement, Loi I Weng, the vice-president of the Women's Association, emphasized the need for Macau to strengthen deterrents and ensure the safety of women and children from violence. This includes raising the maximum sentence limit, eliminating suspended sentencing, and reevaluating the implementation of coercive measures.

She noted that the rise in reported cases of violence against women and children indicates that more victims are seeking help. However, Loi emphasized that prevention and deterrence are the most effective approaches to addressing



the problem.

Government data shows a significant increase in cases of child sexual abuse, with 36 cases registered last year, a 33% rise compared to 2022.

In 2019, only 11 cases were recorded. Additionally, there were 129 cases of domestic violence

reported by victims last year. Loi, who is also a member of the state-run Council for Women and Children's Affairs, said that existing laws and administrative measures need to be reviewed promptly to enhance their deterrent effect and improve support and protection

for victims.

"It must be emphasized that the psychological damage caused to victims of sexual assault is often long-lasting or even permanent. Raising awareness about reporting is just one part of protecting minors; prevention is the best measure to safeguard children's safety," she warned.

Loi also noted that some victims fear retaliation from their aggressor, should they file a police complaint and seek help.

To address this, Loi emphasized the need for collaboration between the government and community service institutions to provide comprehensive support, both psychologically and financially. While the government revised the Penal Code in 2017 to impose stricter penalties for sexual crimes against children, Loi called for a review to investigate why these changes have not effectively curbed child abuse.

AD

CEM NOTICE

Temporary traffic arrangements for traffic lights installation on Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-Sen

To facilitate CEM's traffic lights installation works, vehicles coming from Avenida da Amizade (near Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau) will be prohibited from turning left to enter the flyover on Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-Sen between **1:30 a.m. and 5:30 a.m. from 18 to 22 March (Monday to Friday).**

Horse owners await response and compensation from MJC

THE group of horse owners who have been demanding the Macau Jockey Club (MJC) "reasonably compensate" them for their losses have reminded the MJC to provide a response, as set out in a recent set of letters.

In a letter addressed to all directors of the MJC, dated March 13, the owners urged Angela Leong, indirectly-elected lawmaker and chairperson of the MJC Board of Directors, to uphold her

commitment made in a separate letter to respond to the group's demands by March 15. Leong's letter also stated that a Board Meeting was required for such decision-making.

The Secretariat declined the owners' request to meet with Leong.

The owners said the correspondence had been copied to Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng and his Chief-of-Office Hoi Lai Fong, Secretary for Administration

and Justice André Cheong, the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau, the Legislative Assembly, and Beijing's representative in Macau Zheng Xincong.

Despite this, local media outlet All About Macau reported that, the MCJ, in a letter, refused to provide additional compensation as per the owners' request, citing "phenomenal financial pressure" as the rationale behind their decision. **AL**



KEVIN FREKING,
WASHINGTON

SOCIAL MEDIA

House passes bill that could lead to a TikTok ban

THE House yesterday [Macau time] passed a bill that would lead to a nationwide ban of the popular video app TikTok if its China-based owner doesn't sell its stake, as lawmakers acted on concerns that the company's current ownership structure is a national security threat.

The bill, passed by a vote of 352-65, now goes to the Senate, where its prospects are unclear.

TikTok, which has more than 170 million American users, is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Chinese technology firm ByteDance Ltd.

The lawmakers contend that ByteDance "is beholden to the Chinese government," which could demand access to the data of TikTok's consumers in the U.S. whenever it wants. The worry stems from a set of Chinese national security laws that compel organizations to assist with intelligence gathering.

"We have given TikTok a clear choice," said Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash. "Separate from your parent company ByteDance, which is beholden to the CCP, and remain operational in the United States, or side with the CCP and face the consequences. The choice is TikTok's."

House passage of the bill is only the first step. The Senate would also need to pass the measure for it to become law, and lawmakers in that chamber indicated it would undergo a thorough review. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said he'll have to consult with relevant committee chairs to determine the bill's path.

President Joe Biden has said if Congress passes the measure, he will sign it.

The House vote is the latest example of increased tensions between China and the U.S. By

AP PHOTO



targeting TikTok, lawmakers are tackling what they see as a grave threat to America's national security — but also singling out a platform popular with millions of people, many of whom skew younger, just months before an election.

In a video posted yesterday, TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew said that the company has invested to keep user data safe and the TikTok platform free from outside manipulation. If passed, he said the bill would give more power to a handful of other social companies.

"We will not stop fighting and advocating for you. We will continue to do all we can, including

exercising our legal rights, to protect this amazing platform that we have built with you," Chew said in his message to the app's users.

In anticipation of the vote, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman, Wang Wenbin, accused Washington of resorting to political tools when U.S. businesses fail to compete. He said the effort would disrupt normal business operations and undermine investor confidence "and will eventually backfire on the U.S. itself."

Overall, 197 Republican lawmakers voted for the measure and 15 against. On the Democratic side, 155 voted for the bill and 50 against.

Some Republican opponents of the bill said the U.S. should warn consumers if there are data privacy and propaganda concerns, but the final choice should be left with consumers.

"The answer to authoritarianism is not more authoritarianism," said Rep. Tom McClintock, R-California.

Democrats also warned of the impact a ban would have on users in the U.S., including entrepreneurs and business owners. One of the no votes came from Rep. Jim Himes, the ranking Democratic member of the House Intelligence Committee.

"One of the key differences be-

tween us and those adversaries is the fact that they shut down newspapers, broadcast stations, and social media platforms. We do not," Himes said. "We trust our citizens to be worthy of their democracy. We do not trust our government to decide what information they may or may not see."

The day before the House vote, top national security officials in the Biden administration held a closed-door briefing with lawmakers to discuss TikTok and the national security implications. Lawmakers are balancing those security concerns against a desire not to limit free speech online.

"What we've tried to do here is be very thoughtful and deliberate about the need to force a divestiture of TikTok without granting any authority to the executive branch to regulate content or go after any American company," said Rep. Mike Gallagher, the bill's author, as he emerged from the briefing.

TikTok has long denied that it could be used as a tool of the Chinese government. The company has said it has never shared U.S. user data with Chinese authorities and won't do so if it is asked. To date, the U.S. government also has not provided evidence that shows TikTok shared such information with Chinese authorities.

Republican leaders moved quickly to bring up the bill after its introduction last week by Gallagher and Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, D-Ill. A House committee approved the legislation unanimously, on a 50-0 vote, even after their offices were inundated with calls from TikTok users demanding they drop the effort. Some offices even shut off their phones because of the onslaught. Supporters of the bill said the effort backfired.

"(It) provided members a preview of how the platform could be weaponized to inject disinformation into our system," Gallagher said. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Melco Resorts hosts 'Macau Ideas' roadshow



Melco Resorts & Entertainment and the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute co-organized the first "Macau Ideas" roadshow at Melco's integrated resorts. The goal is to promote local small and medium-sized business that specialize

in Made in Macau, Macau Brand and Macau Design products.

Recently, hosted at Melco's properties - City of Dreams, Studio City and Altira Macau, the roadshow features 24 "Macau Ideas" vendors offering over 300

product types. It aims to help local SMEs promote their business and brands through an effective marketing and sales platform.

Representatives from Melco and IPIM spoke at the opening ceremony, saying the partnership successfully leverages both organizations' resources to support local SME development. The roadshow forms part of Melco's SME initiative launched in 2016, providing retail space to generate revenue through direct marketing to 16,000 employees. In 2023, the program helped 270 local SMEs and non-profits generate over MOP9 million in additional revenue.

Grand Coloane Resorts announces Easter offerings



Grand Coloane Resorts has announced its Easter weekend celebration, offering workshops and activi-

ties for children, dining and weekend staycation packages.

In its "Easter Grill & Thrill,"

the hotel will offer live BBQ stations with sizzling grilled meats, seafood and unlimited Easter cocktails, mocktails, and beers.

The Easter weekend celebration, meanwhile, will have a variety of over 20-30 games, activities, and workshops crafted for children of all ages.

According to hotel, it will also offer promos for its "Take · Eat · Easy" dining program, offering 20% on its dining buffet.

Additionally, when members purchase both "Brunch Munch & Fun" and "BBQ & Thrill" for two at original price, they will receive a complimentary room.

BRIEFS

HK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE DELEGATION COMING TO MACAU, ZHUHAI

The China Committee and GBA Working Group, under the auspices of the Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce, are set to embark on a two-day mission to Macau, Hengqin, and Zhuhai next week. This delegation aims to deepen understanding and foster cooperation within the Greater Bay Area by engaging with local government officials, enterprises, and academic institutions. The visit includes meetings with government representatives and tours of key projects and facilities to examine the latest developments, policies, and business opportunities in the region. This initiative reflects the strategic importance of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge in enhancing connectivity and economic integration within the GBA, underlining the commitment to exploring synergies and facilitating business exchanges across these dynamic cities.

SWIRE PACIFIC'S STRATEGIC FORAY INTO HEALTHCARE IN CHINA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Swire Pacific Ltd., a conglomerate with a storied history in aviation and manufacturing, is diversifying its investment portfolio by entering the healthcare sector in China and Southeast Asia. The company has earmarked HK\$20 billion for investment in mainland China's healthcare industry over the next decade, signaling a strong commitment to this new venture. This includes acquiring a controlling stake in DeltaHealth China Ltd., a specialist hospital in Shanghai, marking Swire's inaugural foray as a lead operator in healthcare. Additionally, Swire's partnership with the Indonesia Investment Authority to invest in Pertamina Bina Medika-Indonesia Healthcare Corporation highlights its expansion strategy into Southeast Asia. These investments align with Swire's long-term vision of being a key player in healthcare, seeking growth opportunities in markets with potential for future expansion amidst economic uncertainties.

NEW GUIDE FOR EXPATRIATES WORKING AND LIVING IN CHINA LAUNCHED

The Ministry of Commerce of China, along with other governmental bodies, has released the 2024 edition of the "Guide to Working and Living in China" for business expatriates. This guide is an essential resource for foreign professionals navigating the complexities of relocating to China, offering detailed information on daily life, residency services, and work-related matters. From residence registration to mobile payments and transportation, the guide aims to simplify the transition for expatriates, facilitating a smoother integration into Chinese society and the business environment. This effort is part of China's broader strategy to attract international talent by providing comprehensive support and making it easier for foreign nationals to live and work in the country.

MACAU'S NEW TELECOMMUNICATIONS

ANALYSIS BY RUI MARCELO*

THE realization of an integrated plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, in line with the Central Government's guidelines and commitment to establish a high-level development model for this region, requires Macau to accelerate the planning and implementation of an innovative plan for the future of its ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) infrastructure and knowledge, with particular emphasis on Innovation, Technology and Interconnectivity, increasing its connectivity capacity, locally and internationally, increasing its competitive advantage, reducing duplication of resources and introducing new opportunities for the growth of its economy, especially considering its positioning as a world center for tourism and entertainment, with more than 30 million visitors annually, before the coronavirus pandemic.

Over the past three years, and through consultation with various entities, including the regulator, consumers and organizations in the sector, I've noted that some common expectations and opportunities have been outlined for Macau's evolution within the scope of regional integration of systems and information, and to support the territory in regaining its status as an advanced city in terms of technology and communications, given its privileged status and geographical constraints, namely the establishment of Macau as a cluster of smart cities, serving as a test bed for new technologies, ICT standardization, pervasive computing and the reduction

of telecommunications service fees.

As stated by the Macau Post and Telecommunications Bureau (CTT) of the Macau Special Administrative Region Government, the entity responsible for regulating the territory's telecommunications sector, the process of revising Macau's telecommunications law is "fundamental for defining a sustainable development path for Macau's telecommunications sector, including the treatment of the Concession's assets and the Telecommunications Law, having announced in 2019/2020 that it would have improved the articles of the Telecommunications Networks and Services Convergence Regime", which would be called the "Telecommunications Law", whose bill would be submitted to the legislative process, anticipating that it could come into force in 2020.

However, this process has suffered some delays, with the Macau government opting, at the end of 2021, to award the consultancy services to an independent entity, anticipating that the result of this study would serve as a reference for the drafting of future telecommunications policies, and would be known in the first half of 2023, whilst it would move forward with the introduction of 5G services, through independent licensing.

Having dedicated a large part of my professional career of more than 35 years in the areas of business management and communications, and to promoting technological and scientific development, I believe that in order to achieve a sustainable development strategy for Macau, Information and Communication Techno-



AI-generated illustrative scene capturing the essence

logies play an important role in the modernization of local industry. Hence, it is therefore essential that the government's strategy for the future of the telecommunications market in Macau, and for its integration into the Greater Bay Area, be made public as soon as possible, and that an early deadline be announced for finalizing the legislative process for updating the proposed Telecommunications Framework Law.

In this context, allow me to make the following considerations:

Although Macau has modern telecommunications infrastructure suitable for the provision of sophisticated commu-

nications services, the delay in introducing new legislation has prevented the development of a process of technological convergence in the territory and the transformation of Macau into a "smart city".

The adoption of new legislation for the telecommunications sector will allow investment in infrastructure to be strengthened, ensuring a fast and stable connection throughout Macau; it will facilitate the updating of existing regulations to reflect technological changes and the current needs of the sector, including the regulation of new services and technologies, such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and 5G

Solar energy key in powering rural areas

ON THE AGENDA

IN the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), solar energy is gradually becoming a key player in addressing rural energy needs, aligning with the region's and country's goals for sustainable development and economic growth. The GBA's emphasis on distributed solar power aims to improve energy efficiency and support environmental initiatives, the China Daily has reported.

Dr. Li Wen, a renewa-

ble energy expert, points out, "Solar installations are gaining popularity due to their low operational and maintenance costs." This trend is part of a larger move away from traditional, inefficient energy sources towards more sustainable and cost-effective alternatives.

Despite the enthusiasm for solar energy, the sector faces several challenges. According to Dr. Wen, "The variability in component quality, along with infrastructure limitations for energy

distribution, presents significant barriers." These issues underscore the necessity for targeted policies to enhance the reliability and effectiveness of solar power solutions in rural areas.

The adoption of solar energy in the GBA is also part of China's broader environmental and energy strategy. "There's a national push towards reducing carbon emissions and promoting green development across both urban and rural settings by 2035," notes policy analyst Zhang Qiang. In

this context, solar energy not only addresses immediate energy needs but also contributes to the larger vision of sustainable rural development.

The rise in distributed photovoltaic capacity across China, with the GBA expected to contribute significantly, is noteworthy. "The trend towards distributed solar power, particularly for residential use, is critical for achieving China's environmental goals," says Zhang, highlighting the importance of solar energy in meeting

ONS LAW AND GBA INTEGRATION



e of integrating GBA with a focus on Macau's telecom and tech

technology; stimulate competition between telecommunications operators, and encourage the entry of new service operators, enabling an improvement in services and more competitive prices for consumers; and encourage technological innovation, which through specific support, as well as the implementation of policies that facilitate the development and adoption of new technologies, will facilitate the establishment of startups and technology companies.

Business interconnectivity, innovation and competitive advantage in the market depend on faster networks, wireless or otherwise, provided via optical cables, on land or underwater. The importance of fixed networks, which act as the foun-

ndation of the infrastructure, cannot be underestimated, as the demand for high-quality connectivity continues to grow, fueled by significant jumps in Internet traffic, as we have witnessed particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, with fixed broadband networks increasingly taking the strain of the growing demand for wireless networks.

On the other hand, high-capacity fixed networks and 5G are seen as the connectivity underpinning innovative areas such as the Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence. Therefore, planning and regulatory policies to promote access to affordable high-speed broadband networks are key to Macau's digital transformation.

In the process of adopting the

new Law, the provision of quality services to consumers should be guaranteed, through the implementation of regulations and quality standards, as well as effective monitoring and enforcement; the promotion of education and awareness on the proper and safe use of telecommunications, to help improve the user experience, and avoid problems such as misuse of the internet and cyberbullying; and ensuring the appropriate approach to cyber security issues, establishing requirements and guidelines to protect telecommunications networks from threats and attacks.

It is also essential to guarantee the protection of consumer rights by implementing privacy and data protection policies, as well as providing complaint and dispute resolution channels.

The government announced that the operating license allocations granted to operators, including mobile and fixed service networks, would be integrated into a unified and technologically neutral convergence license, including the 5G license. This would allow for the effective promotion of the convergence of telecommunications networks and services in Macau, and greater flexibility and efficiency in the provision of telecommunications services, already available in other countries and surrounding regions.

In summary, the modernization of the telecommunications sector in Macau is a priority in order to promote innovation, competitiveness and economic development. In this sense, the urgent but balanced introduction of legislation that addresses the various issues related to regulation, security, competition and the protection of end users, including the implementation of 5G technology, is important.

In terms of regulation, it is necessary to establish a clear and up-to-date regulatory framework that

promotes fair competition and a level playing field for all telecommunications operators. This includes defining transparent rules for allocating licenses, managing the frequency spectrum and promoting interoperability between the different services and networks.

As far as security is concerned, it is essential to guarantee the protection of telecommunications systems against cyber threats and other forms of attack. This involves the implementation of robust security measures, collaboration between operators and competent authorities, and the adoption of international security standards.

In the area of competition, it is important to promote healthy competition and avoid anti-competitive practices that could harm innovation and consumer choice. This includes monitoring telecommunications markets, applying fair competition rules and promoting the entry of new operators into the market.

As for the protection of end users, it is necessary to ensure that consumers have access to quality services, transparent prices and clear information about their rights. This involves the implementation of consumer protection measures, the promotion of transparency in commercial offers and the efficient resolution of disputes between users and operators.

With regard to the implementation of 5G technology, it is necessary to create an environment conducive to the development and adoption of this technology. This includes allocating adequate spectrum, promoting investment in infrastructure, collaboration between the different players and making users aware of the benefits and opportunities offered by 5G.

***Vice President, General Assembly –
Macau Communications Development
Association**

WORK IN PROGRESS

NOTES ON ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Corporate governance and firm performance in listed companies:

Evidence from China

Peter Chi Wan Yip, Elvy Pang
Corporate Governance and
Sustainability Review

This research examines the relationship between corporate governance and firm performance in listed companies within China's Greater Bay Area (GBA), analyzing data from the Hang Seng and Shenzhen Component Indices from 2015 to 2021 (Alzubi & Bani-Hani, 2021).

A sample of 30 firms from Hong Kong and Shenzhen is investigated, considering corporate governance as the independent variable and return on assets (ROA), return on equity (ROE), and Tobin's Q as dependent variables. Control variables include firm size, age, board size, and the engagement of an external auditor from the Big Four. Findings reveal a 58 percent governance level in the Hong Kong and Shenzhen exchanges, consistent with prior studies (Buallay et al., 2017). Despite this, the research shows no significant impact of corporate governance on operating and financial performance, and factors such as the largest shareholder's ownership, board independence, and board size do not significantly influence firm performance. In light of these findings and limitations such as aggregated data and limited sample size, the necessity for further research is underscored. **FROM THE**

ABSTRACT

national targets for carbon neutrality.

To capitalize on this potential, various stakeholders, including companies and state-owned enterprises, are expanding their investments in solar products for the GBA. "Collaboration is key to advancing distributed photovoltaics in the region," states CEO Huang Wei of a leading solar technology company. He emphasizes the role of innovative business models and green finance in overcoming challenges related to investment and financing.

China's commitment

to increasing rooftop solar installations by 2025, especially in rural areas and industrial parks of the GBA, reflects a strategic approach to utilizing available space and reducing costs. Local governments and power companies are encouraged to streamline processes to enhance the viability of distributed photovoltaics. "It's important to simplify regulatory and operational processes to fully leverage solar power's potential," suggests Huang, advocating for measures that ensure the industry's sustainability and growth.



XINHUA

OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

HK 'FREEDOM' SMEARERS DOUBLE DOWN

Whenever the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region authorities make moves to plug any legal and institutional loopholes, its remedial efforts are smeared by those in the SAR hoping to exploit them, as well as their foreign backers, as attacks on "freedom".

The latest example is the smearing of the HKSAR government's proposed package of legislation to update or create new laws to prohibit treason, sabotage, sedition, the theft of State secrets and espionage. An editorial The Washington Post published on Sunday, which accused the HKSAR government of doubling down on repression after it tabled the draft national security bill, being a case in point.

But as the open letter the spokesperson for the Commissioner's Office of the Foreign Ministry of China in the HKSAR addressed to the Editorial Board of The Washington Post on Tuesday said, it is the "ignorance and double standard on Hong Kong" the Washington Post has displayed in the editorial, rather than its well-pretended care for the SAR, that impress readers.

The Safeguarding National Security Bill, the long-awaited Article 23 of the Basic Law of the HKSAR, proposes tough sentences for acts of treason, insurrection, sabotage and mutiny, and "illegally disclosing State secrets", which accords with international practice and reflects the need for better tools to deal with espionage and the activities of foreign agents in the SAR.

Only those that find they will face harsher legal punishments for acts that threaten national security will lament the lost space for such activities.

The National Security Law, which has helped restore peace and stability in the SAR since its introduction in mid-2020, has made it extremely difficult for them to take advantage of social media and other platforms and channels to spread misinformation to mislead the public. It is understandable that they decry the fact that they will no longer be able to rely on their foreign patrons to be their mouthpieces as there are provisions in the proposed Article 23 legislation defining external forces and outlawing external interference.

That the punishments for those threatening national security in the SAR, the criteria of which will be clearly defined, will become more draconian is aimed at deterring prohibited activities. This reflects the fact that the previous penalties were too lenient to deter such wrongdoings. The short detention and easy bail became badges of pride, if not tokens of merit, during the anti-government unrest in 2019, which the perpetrators then used to demand more from their overseas backers.

The US media outlets and rights groups, many of which are funded by the US government, that are decrying the passing of Article 23 as "a dangerous moment" for human rights were also those that echoed the sentiment of Nancy Pelosi, then speaker of the US House of Representatives, who praised the violence and chaos that the US and its allies orchestrated in the SAR before the central authorities introduced the National Security Law, as "a beautiful sight to behold".

And when the US imposed unilateral and politicized sanctions on Hong Kong, which still harm the SAR's interests and were widely opposed by the people in Hong Kong, these institutions, and their Hong Kong proxies, kept silent or even praised the move with Apple Daily's owner Jimmy Lai being portrayed as a martyr to their cause. Their hypocrisy on Hong Kong and whose interests they stand for are both self-evident.

The Washington Post barked up the wrong tree in pitying China "crushing" one of its greatest assets in connecting it with the world. What China is seeking to crush with the legislation work in Hong Kong is the "freedom" for anti-China forces in the HKSAR to engage in anti-China activities on Chinese soil.

HONG KONG

THREE ACTIVISTS BEHIND VIGIL LOSE BID TO OVERTURN CONVICTION

KANIS LEUNG, HONG KONG

THREE former organizers of Hong Kong's annual vigil in remembrance of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown on pro-democracy protests lost their bid to overturn their conviction yesterday over their refusal to provide authorities with information on the group under a national security law.

Chow Hang-tung, Tang Ngok-kwan and Tsui Hon-kwong were core members of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China before it disbanded under the shadow of the Beijing-imposed law in 2021. They received a sentence of 4 1/2 months last year — widely seen as part of a crackdown on dissidents following massive protests and violence in 2019.

The alliance was best known for organizing candlelight vigils in the city on the anniversary of the Chinese military's crushing of the 1989 protests in Beijing for decades. Critics said its shutdown reflected that civil liberties were shrinking despite promises they would be kept intact when the territory returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Before the group dissolved, police had sought details about its operations and finances in connection with alleged links to democracy groups overseas, accusing it of being a foreign agent. But the group refused to cooperate, arguing police were arbitrarily labeling pro-democracy organizations as foreign agents.

Judge Anna Lai at the Court of Appeal dismissed their appeal, saying she was satisfied that there was ample evidence to support the convictions.

Last December, their lawyer argued in an appeal hearing that the activists were denied a fair trial because they had not been



shown the full evidence that suggested the group was a foreign agent.

During previous legal proceedings at the lower court, some crucial details, including the names of groups that were alle-

ged to have links with the alliance, were redacted. The court ordered a partial redaction of some information after prosecutors argued that a full disclosure would jeopardize an ongoing probe into na-

tional security cases. Under the security law's implementation rules, the police chief can request a range of information from a foreign agent.

Chow and two other former alliance leaders, Lee Cheuk-yan and Albert Ho, were charged with subversion in a separate case under the sweeping law in 2021. It was still unclear when their trial would begin.

The annual vigil at Hong Kong's Victoria Park organized by the alliance was a rare public commemoration of the June 4 crackdown on Chinese soil for decades and was attended by massive crowds until authorities banned it in 2020, citing anti-pandemic measures.

After the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions last year, the park was occupied instead by a carnival organized by pro-Beijing groups to celebrate Hong Kong's handover in 1997. Those who tried to commemorate the event near the site were detained. Many others marked the day in private ways under the chilling effect brought by the tough law. **MDT/AP**

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MEDIA

City officials issue a rare apology after authorities obstruct journalists on live TV

CITY officials in eastern China apologized to local journalists after authorities were shown pushing them and trying to obstruct reporting from the site of a deadly explosion, in a rare acknowledgment of state aggression against journalists.

The city of Sanhe, near Beijing, issued a public apology yesterday after authorities were shown harassing reporters from state broadcaster CCTV during a live broadcast near the site of a suspected gas leak explosion that killed seven and injured 27 on Wednesday.

A statement on the city's official website expressed "deep regret" over the treatment of the CCTV reporters and other media workers. It said



Chinese security personnel attempt to push Chinese journalists from the scene of an explosion in Sanhe city in northern China's Hebei province

authorities were trying to remove the journalists from the site because they were concerned about a potential gas leak.

"The poor communication skills of our frontline staff and their rough

and simplistic methods caused misunderstandings among journalists and doubts among the public, resulting in a negative social impact," it said.

The incident, shown live during the midday newscast, was a rare off-

script moment for China's tightly controlled state media. Beijing regards media as propaganda tools and regularly issues directives about topics that are off-limits for coverage.

The All-China Journalists Association put out a statement defending the journalists' rights to report from disaster sites. It fell short of explicitly condemning the Sanhe authorities' actions.

China's harassment of journalists is often directed at foreign reporters. Earlier this month, a Dutch journalist and a camera operator were detained while reporting on a protest outside an investment bank in the southwestern province of Sichuan.

Foreign journalists are also reportedly followed by plain-clothes police, especially when reporting from areas considered sensitive by the Chinese government. Such incidents are regularly condemned by the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China, a profes-

sional group. But the Chinese Foreign Ministry, which is the point of contact for foreign journalists in the country, has never in recent memory publicly acknowledged or apologized for the harassment. China is also the country with the most imprisoned journalists — 44 in 2023, according to a report by the Committee to Protect Journalists. Over the past few years, China has also increasingly restricted journalists' access to politicians and officials of any kind. This year, Beijing canceled the annual news conference by the premier — a 30-year tradition that constituted one of the rare times a top Chinese leader took questions from journalists. MDT/AP

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MIDDLE EAST

Report claims Yemen's Houthis have hypersonic missile

JON GAMBRELL, DUBAI

YEMEN'S Houthi rebels claim to have a new, hypersonic missile in their arsenal, Russia's state media reported yesterday, potentially raising the stakes in their ongoing attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and surrounding waterways against the backdrop of Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The report by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency cited an unnamed official but provided no evidence for the claim. It comes as Moscow maintains an aggressively counter-Western foreign policy amid its grinding war on Ukraine.

However, the Houthis have for weeks hinted about "surprises" they plan for the battles at sea to counter the United States and its allies, which have so far been able to down any missile or bomb-carrying drone that comes near their warships in the Red Sea.

The Houthis' main benefactor, Iran, claims to have a hypersonic missile and has widely armed the rebels with the missiles they now use. Adding a hypersonic missile to their arsenal could pose a more-formidable challenge to the air defense systems employed by America and its allies, including Israel.

"The group's missile forces have successfully tested a missile that is capable of reaching speeds of up to Mach 8 and runs on solid fuel," a military official close to the Houthis said, according to the RIA report. The Houthis "intend to begin manufacturing it for use during attacks in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, as well as against targets in Israel."

Mach 8 is eight times the speed of sound.

Russia has maintained close ties with Iran, relying on Iranian bomb-carrying drones to target Ukraine. Russian state media, particularly its Arabic-language services, have closely reported on Yemen's yearslong civil war that pits the Iran-backed Houthis against forces of the internationally backed Yemeni government, supported by a Saudi-led coalition.

Hypersonic weapons,



Houthi supporters attend a rally against the U.S. airstrikes on Yemen, last week

which fly at speeds higher than Mach 5, could pose crucial challenges to missile defense systems because of their speed and maneuverability.

The danger from a hypersonic missile depends on how maneuverable it is. Ballistic missiles fly on a trajectory in which anti-missile systems like the U.S.-made Patriot can anticipate their path and intercept them. The more irregular the missile's flight path, such as a hypersonic missile with the ability to change directions, the more difficult it becomes to intercept.

China is believed to be pursuing the weapons, as is America. Russia claims it has already used them on the battlefield in Ukraine. However, speed and maneuverability isn't a guarantee the missile will successfully strike a target. Ukraine's air force in May said it shot down a Russian hypersonic Kinzhal missile with a Patriot battery.

In Yemen, Abdul Malik al-Houthi, the Houthi rebels' secretive supreme leader, boasted about the rebels' weapons efforts at the end of February.

"We have surprises that the enemies do not expect at all," he warned at the time.

A week ago, he similarly warned: "What is coming is greater."

"The enemy ... will see the

level of achievements of strategic importance that place our country in its capabilities among the limited and numbered countries in this world," al-Houthi said, without elaborating.

After seizing Yemen's capital, Sanaa, in 2014, the Houthis ransacked government arsenals, which held Soviet-era Scud missiles and other arms.

As the Saudi-led coalition entered Yemen's conflict in 2015, the Houthis arsenal was increasingly targeted. Soon — and despite Yemen having no indigenous missile manufacturing infrastructure — newer missiles made their way into rebel hands.

Iran long has denied arming the Houthis, likely because of a yearslong United Nations arms embargo on the rebels. However, the U.S. and its allies have seized multiple arms shipments bound for the rebels in the Red Sea. Weapons experts as well have tied Houthi arms seized on the battlefield back to Iran.

Iran also now claims to have a hypersonic weapon. In June, Iran unveiled its Fattah, or "Conqueror" in Farsi, missile, which it described as being a hypersonic. It described another as being in development.

Iran's mission to the U.N. did not respond to a request for comment yesterday, nor

did the U.S. Navy's Bahrain-based 5th Fleet, which patrols the Red Sea waterways.

Israel's military — which also has come under Houthi fire since the war against Hamas erupted on Oct. 7 — similarly did not respond to a request for comment.

The Houthis have attacked ships since November, saying they want to force Israel to end the war in Gaza, which has seen over 31,000 Palestinians killed in the besieged strip. The ships attacked, however, have increasingly had little or no connection to Israel, the U.S. or other nations involved in the war.

But the assaults have raised the profile of the Houthis, whose Zaydi people ruled a 1,000-year kingdom in Yemen up until 1962. Adding a new weapon increases that cachet and puts more pressure on Israel after a cease-fire deal failed to take hold in Gaza before the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Earlier in March, a Houthi missile struck a commercial ship in the Gulf of Aden, killing three of its crew members and forcing survivors to abandon the vessel. It marked their first fatal attack by the Houthis on shipping. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1981 PAKISTANI JET HOSTAGES RELEASED



The passengers and crew of a Pakistan Airways plane held hostage for nearly two weeks have been released in Syria.

They were freed after the Pakistani Government agreed to the hijackers' demand to release 54 people from prison.

The 147 people on the plane were set free after the former prisoners arrived in Damascus.

The Pakistani's Airways Boeing 720 was taken over at gunpoint by three men during an internal flight from Karachi to Peshawar on 2 March.

They forced the pilots to fly to Afghanistan where they murdered one of the passengers, a Pakistani diplomat.

Led by a man identified as Islamullah Khan, the three hijackers are said to be part of the Al Zulfikar group which wants to oust General Zia ul-Haq.

General Zia came to power four years ago in a coup which toppled Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the leader of the Pakistani People's Party (PPP).

Mr Bhutto was hanged in 1979 after being found guilty of the murder of a political opponent following a trial which was widely condemned as unfair.

Pakistan's rulers have accused the deposed leader's son, Murtazo Bhutto, of being in league with the hijackers.

General Zia said Mr Bhutto, who lives in London, had flown to Kabul Airport to meet the men after they took control of the jet.

Three Americans, one Canadian and a Swede were among the released passengers.

They are said to be unharmed but suffering from mental and physical exhaustion.

The hijackers had said the Americans were CIA agents and threatened to kill them and blow up the plane.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

In the wake of the hijack members of the Pakistani People's Party (PPP) were rounded up and arrested.

Pakistanis were horrified by the murder of the diplomat, Tariq Rahim, and the PPP's alleged backing of the hijackers lost it a lot of popular support.

In 1986 Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's daughter, Benazir, returned from exile to lead the PPP in a campaign for fresh elections.

In 1988 General Zia died in mysterious circumstances in an air crash.

Later the same year Benazir Bhutto led the PPP to victory in the general election.

However, she was dismissed in 1990 after being accused of corruption and incompetence.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Develop a dreamy opportunity for positive cash flow. Power the efforts behind the scenes to build foundations. Put love into your work to grow.

TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Reassess conditions. Slow for tricky sections. Advance a personal dream by building foundational structures and supports. Prepare carefully. Dress for the role you want.

GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Listen to intuition and dreams. Make a spiritual connection. Your heart knows the way to go. Some roads are blocked. Slow to strategize.

CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Teamwork can make dreams come true. Provide practical contributions to advance a group effort. It's the work backstage that allows for excellent performances.

LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Keep developing a dreamy possibility. Plan and prepare a passion project. Don't share incomplete work. Strengthen support structures and launch when conditions allow.

VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Study options and potential. Take your research in a dreamy direction. Follow your heart and intuition. Expand your own boundaries. Explore the possibilities.

LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Discuss dreams and possibilities with your partner. Direct a cash flow trickle to savings. Pennies add up over time. Juggle priorities. Budget for family thriving.

SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

A collaborative effort could get complicated when fantasy and reality clash. Back to the drawing board. Don't race off unprepared. Discuss practical options.

SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Get your heart pumping. Dive into an exciting project. Practice for high performance. Maintain healthy routines for body, mind and spirit. Go for a dream.

CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Relax and enjoy the scenery. Allow for spontaneous detours. Romance sparks when least expected. Follow your heart to discover new levels of fascination.

AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Express your creative inspiration with home decoration and beautification projects. Plant a garden. Move things around and give away extra stuff. Nurture yourself.

PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Refine a creative project. Edit, illustrate and polish the story. Don't share unfinished work. Craft the descriptive text and social posts. Prepare well.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	5	21	fine
Changchun	1	9	fine
Chengdu	13	20	cloudy
Chongqing	14	21	overcast
Fuzhou	12	19	rain
Guangzhou	16	22	rain
Guiyang	9	23	rain
Haikou	21	27	cloudy
Hangzhou	8	19	rain
Harbin	1	8	cloudy
Hefei	6	21	cloudy
Nanjing	6	19	cloudy
Shanghai	9	18	overcast
Taipei	16	22	fine
Wuhan	10	19	rain
Hong Kong	21	22	windy
WORLD			
Moscow	0	5	overcast
Frankfurt	9	16	overcast
Paris	9	13	rain
London	7	14	heavy rain
New York	8	18	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Fundamental; 6- Consumer; 10- Exposed; 14- Greek marketplace; 15- Noble gas; 16- Hebrew month; 17- Puerto ___; 18- Bears' lairs; 19- Small mountain; 20- Black cuckoo; 21- Things; 23- Shoe ties; 24- Moore's TV boss; 26- Dwelt; 27- Hammerlike tool; 29- Strong string; 31- Small jazz combo; 32- ___ and desist; 33- Rock's ___ Speedwagon; 36- In spite of; 40- Nor. neighbor; 41- Distributed cards; 42- Heinous; 43- Sporty Mazda; 44- Ebb; 46- Felon; 48- Pavarotti, for one; 49- Role for Clark; 50- Brigham Young University site; 52- Sexy; 55- Pledge; 56- Scott of "Charles in Charge"; 57- In ___ (unborn); 59- Make weary; 60- Russia's ___ Mountains; 61- Rice unit; 62- ___ about (approximately); 63- Back talk; 64- Barrier;

DOWN 1- Vamp Theda; 2- Not "fer"; 3- Debutante; 4- George Gershwin's brother; 5- Like a dog; 6- Below; 7- Appear to be; 8- Ages and ages; 9- ICU workers; 10- Act properly; 11- Wonderland girl; 12- Governed; 13- Building wings; 22- Vietnamese New Year; 23- Fabric woven from flax yarns; 25- Gradual; 26- Actress Bonet; 27- Range; Abbr.; 28- Get one's ducks in ___; 29- Physicist Nikola; 30- Power unit; 32- FDR's fireside ___; 33- Source of a waterway; 34- Novelist Bagnold; 35- Eyeball; 37- Blockhead; 38- Durable wood; 39- Art ___; 43- Female parent; 44- Accelerate; 45- Adequate; 46- Series of metal rings; 47- Fashionably old-fashioned; 48- Implements; 49- ___-Rooter; 50- Graph prefix; 51- Narrow inlets; 53- Not a dup.; 54- Color quality; 56- Student's conveyance; 58- Quattro minus uno;



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- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
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- 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
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DRIVE IN

JOHN CENA GETS THE LAUGHS IN MIDDLING COMEDY 'RICKY STANICKY'

LINDSEY BAHR,
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

YOUR tolerance for the new Peter Farrelly comedy "Ricky Stanicky" may come down to whether or not you think the idea of accidentally miming a certain sex act is funny. The concept is of little consequence to the plot. It's something that a few of the leads notice that the buttoned-up leader of a financial company (William H. Macy) does when he makes speeches. They decide that that's why he's unable to close a deal, giving it a name that is repeated so many times it could be a new drinking game. The movie thinks this is just comedy gold. You might too.

"Ricky Stanicky" (it is meant to rhyme) is a name chosen in haste by three pre-teen boys who have just accidentally lit a house on fire. They didn't mean to commit arson, they simply wanted to burn some dog poop on the doorstep of a house that didn't give out any Halloween candy. When the fire gets out of control, they leave

AP PHOTO



John Cena (right) in a scene from "Ricky Stanicky" (Amazon)

behind a jacket with a fake name inscribed in it: Ricky Stanicky. He becomes their imaginary fourth friend and forever fall guy even into adulthood (in which they're played by Zac Efron, Andrew Santino and Jermaine Fowler). But their house of alibis is in danger of crumbling when suspicious partners and one nagging mother-

-in-law demand that the elusive Ricky materialize. So, the guys decide to hire a washed up Atlantic City celebrity impressionist who goes by "Rock Hard" Rod (John Cena) to play Ricky for a day.

This idea did not originate with Farrelly, who, of course, with his brother defined a moment in broad 1990s comedy with movies

like "Dumb & Dumber," "Kingpin" and "There's Something About Mary." The sensibility was always more than a bit juvenile — but done so gleefully and with such unabashed commitment that it was hard not to just laugh along with the antics.

And unfortunately, "Ricky Stanicky" feels like one of those les-

ser 2000 comedies that wanted so badly to be "There's Something About Mary." It makes a certain amount of sense when you consider that the script has been circling Hollywood for about 15 years.

It has stamps of a Farrelly romp — a bit with a dog and a duck, a little accidental drugging, a comedic circumcision and an album's worth of pop songs reworked to be about masturbation — but little of the charm.

One of the problems is that it is filmed with all the artfulness of a yogurt commercial. Everything looks like a set. Everyone looks like an actor.

The one bright spot is Cena, who is quite good. Like his character, who goes above and beyond to adeptly play Ricky Stanicky, Cena really and truly commits and brings a kind of unexpected depth and pathos to Rock Hard Rod. He's flexed his comedy muscles before and should again, soon. Is it enough to save the movie? Not for me.

"Ricky Stanicky," an MGM/Amazon Studios release streaming on Prime Video last week, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for "language throughout, some drug content and sexual material."

Running time: 112 minutes.

★ ★ ★ ★

AD

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



No. 51, L'Effervescence, Tokyo



No. 63, Blue, Bangkok



No. 77, Ministry of Crab, Colombo

press One To Watch Award 2024 and sits at No.97. Howard's Gourmet from Hong Kong enters the list at No.100 with its reinvented Chinese fine cuisine.

William Drew, Director of Content at Asia's 50 Best Restaurants, says: "In its fourth edition, we proudly present the 51-100 list of restaurants in Asia, extending a particularly warm welcome to the newcomers to the 50 Best ranking. This underscores our ongoing commitment to championing the remarkable gastronomic talent thriving in the region. With 12 new entries and representation from 16 Asian cities, this extended list offers gourmets worldwide a selection of establishments to savour during their travels and a variety of exceptional experiences to choose from."

The 2024 list of Asia's 50 Best Restaurants will be revealed at the awards ceremony held on the 26 March 2024 in Seoul, South Korea. Hosted in collaboration with destination partner Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) and the Seoul Metropolitan Government, the event programme will also comprise 50BestTalks, a thought-leadership forum exploring some of the most pertinent topics affecting the hospitality world today, with the title 'Food of the People'; the 50 Best Signature Sessions series of collaborative dining events open to the public, which sees 50 Best chefs cooking alongside renowned local talent for exclusive dining opportunities; a Chefs' Feast showcasing the finest cooking and ingredients that Seoul is renowned for; a 'Meet the Chefs' media roundtable event and the awards ceremony itself.

TASTE OF EDESIA

Asia's top restaurants

IRENE SAM, MDT

THIS week, Asia's 50 Best Restaurants announces the list of restaurants ranked between 51st and 100th in the region ahead of its live awards ceremony. This coveted list is created from the votes of Asia's 50 Best Restaurants Academy, an influential, gender-balanced group of 318 leaders made up of food writers and critics,

chefs, restaurateurs and regional culinary experts. This year's 51-100 list welcomes 12 new entries.

Among the 12 new entries this year, three are from the host city, Seoul. Serving up nature-inspired contemporary cuisine is Solbam at No.65, followed by Kwonsooksoo, a modern Korean restaurant that pays tribute to time-honoured techniques at No.89. Alla Prima, a stylish Mediter-

ranean-influenced spot is another new entry from the city at No.91.

Tokyo contributes three new entries to the 2024 list. Crony at No.58 offers whimsical tasting menus influenced by French, Scandinavian and North American cuisines. Meanwhile, Maz introduces Peruvian fine dining to Tokyo at No.69, while Myoujyaku is at No.76, with its vegetable-focused seasonal cuisine.

Singapore is represented by two new entrants: contemporary Chinese restaurant Peach Blossoms enters the ranking at No.74 while the kaiseki-style multi-course restaurant of Singaporean flavours, Mustard Seed, debuts at No.81.

Mumbai's The Bombay Canteen, with its innovative take on regional Indian cuisine, enters the list at No.70 while Haoma in Bangkok, helmed by Indian chef Deepanker Khosla (a recipient of the Champions of Change Award at The World's 50 Best Restaurants 2021) debuts at No.90.

Vegetarian fine dining restaurant Lamdre in Beijing is the recipient of the American Ex-

tTUNES

MGMT's 'Loss of Life' is a nostalgic return full of hope and heart

THEY say trends make a cyclical comeback every 20 years.

MGMT, an American rock band formed by singers Andrew VanWyngarden and Ben Goldwasser in 2002, is perhaps best known for its indie sleaze anthems like "Kids" and "Time to Pretend." The duo's carefree lyrics and electrifying synth instrumentals fueled an era that was all about fun and freedom — and questionable fashion choices like fedoras and fur coats.

Their newest work, "Loss of Life" isn't quite a return

reminiscent of those times, but MGMT has gone through a few different phases since then, such as gothic fourth album "Little Dark Age." Their fifth studio album certainly has a nostalgic feel to it, but there's also something new: a tenderness and hopefulness that listeners might not expect from a title like "Loss of Life" or a band with a history of unseriousness.

It's crazy what adding a little bit of acoustic guitar to synth-pop can do.

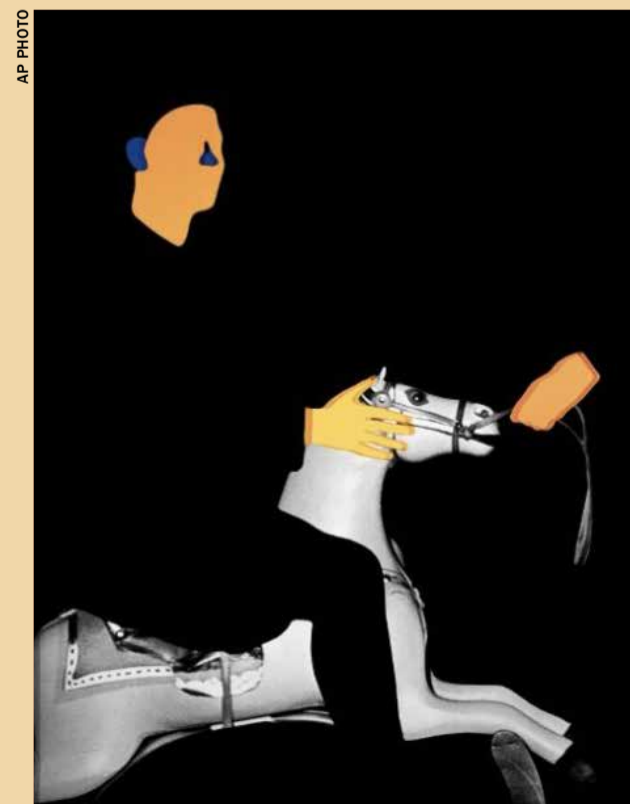
And VanWyngarden and Goldwasser experiment

with more than just guitar in "Loss of Life." The track "Dancing in Babylon," including the vocal talent of Christine and the Queens, is the first-ever feature on an MGMT album, and the first song samples a reading of an anonymous poem titled "I Am Taliesin. I Sing Perfect Metre."

Heartstring-tugging lyrics about love juxtapose themes of loss throughout the album, such as in "Phradie's Song," which has lines like "And every time the tears begin/The morning sun is there in your hands."

Album namesake "Loss of Life" is an eerie, electronic-backed soul-searcher. It's the shining star and grand finale, solving the mystery behind the hopeful tone of the album. A gorgeous instrumental interlude featuring triumphant trumpet blares and plucking strings builds up to the answer in the last four lines:

"When the world is born and life is ending/Then you learn to love your loss of life/When that moment comes and life is over/Anyone can love." **KIANA DOYLE, MDT/AP**



"Loss of Life" by MGMT (Mom+Pop)

OPINION

China Daily

Xin Ping, Global Times

WHO IS CHANGING THE STATUS QUO ACROSS THE TAIWAN STRAITS?

Congratulating a “presidential election” as “victory of democracy,” sending delegations to the “inauguration” of the newly-elected -- these are protocol arrangements that are quite usual between sovereign countries when either side has elected a new head of state. It would seem rather peculiar and quite weird if such practices took place between a country and a region of another country. This was exactly what happened days ago when the regional leadership election was held in Taiwan, a province of the People's Republic of China. Congratulatory messages came from the secretary of state and State Department spokesman of the US. Both should represent the official position of the country, which has always acknowledged Taiwan as part of China.

Since Lai Ching-te, a typical “trouble-maker” for cross-Straits relations and a self-claimed “Taiwan independence worker,” was elected as the regional leader of Taiwan, what the US has done has seriously violated the three China-US joint communiqués and breached its own commitment of acknowledging that there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China. Saying “we do not support independence” is only paying lip service. Rhetoric cannot be used as a cover for the intimate interaction between Washington and Taipei. Besides the message from the State Department, the visit to Taipei immediately after the counting of votes by a high-level US delegation, which was said to be sent by President Biden to convey blessing or reassurance or whatever it is, could be interpreted as a certain endorsement from the US government. This has sent a gravely wrong signal to the separatist forces on the island and caused great indignation and rage among people from the mainland.

Neither can the visits by US congressmen to Taiwan at the “inauguration” be excused as unofficial exchanges, since the legislative branch was fundamentally a part of the US state power. Officials in the government and lawmakers in congress alike represent the US and speak on behalf of the country. However, what their gestures tell Lai and his deputy is nothing more than the US supporting their efforts. As a result, the “Taiwan independence” forces led by them will only become more and more reckless in their unscrupulous moves toward separation.

These actions are further attempts at slicing the “sausage” and changing the “status quo” of cross-Straits relations. This is how it is done: Politically, the US has repeatedly introduced Taiwan-related bills to enhance its contact with Taiwan, encouraging frequent visits to Taiwan by more politicians.

Under these tactics, the “status quo” across the Taiwan Straits no longer refers to a peaceful state in which the two sides live in peace and harmony, but a dangerous process in which the DPP authorities continue to promote de-Sinicization and independence, aiming to haul the island further away from the motherland. To blindly emphasize the maintenance of such a “status quo” is to support “Taiwan independence” and split Chinese territory in the end, leading to “one China, one Taiwan.” This is a serious trampling on China's national interests. No Chinese will agree.

It is also futile for the US to use the trap of “keeping the status quo” on the Taiwan question to tie down China. China has full sovereign rights over the island, as Taiwan is an integral part of the country.

When more than 100 countries and international organizations have reiterated their support for the one-China principle and strongly opposed “Taiwan independence” right after the regional election on the island, the US had better think twice about what it will bring to itself and to China-US relations by changing the status quo across the Taiwan Straits. [Abridged]

The author is a commentator on international affairs, writing regularly for Xinhua News, Global Times, China Daily, CGTN etc.

Math enthusiasts around the world, from college kids to rocket scientists, celebrate Pi Day yesterday, which is March 14 or 3/14 — the first three digits of an infinite number with many practical uses. Around the world many people will mark the day with a slice of pie — sweet, savory or even pizza.

Simply put, pi is a mathematical constant that expresses the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter. It is part of many formulas used in physics, astronomy, engineering and other fields, dating back thousands of years to ancient Egypt, Babylon and China.

Pi Day itself dates to 1988, when physicist Larry Shaw began celebrations at the Exploratorium science museum in San Francisco. The holiday didn't really gain national recognition though until two decades later. In 2009, Congress designated every March 14 to be the big day — to hopefully spur more interest in math and science. Fittingly enough, the day is also Albert Einstein's birthday.

Pi can calculate the circumference of a circle by measuring the diameter — the distance straight across the circle's middle — and multiplying that by the 3.14-plus number.



AP PHOTO

A DANISH HIPPIE OASIS HAS FOUGHT DRUG SALES FOR YEARS, BUT LOCALS WANT TO TEAR UP THE STREET

JAN M. OLSEN, COPENHAGEN

The inhabitants of Copenhagen's freewheeling Christiania neighborhood plan to dig up the aptly named Pusher Street, in their latest attempt to stop illegal hashish sales which have led to deadly gang turf wars and sometimes violent confrontations with the police.

Residents of the hippie enclave are calling for volunteers to help dig up the street on April 6, the Berlingske newspaper wrote yesterday. All are welcome, and participants can take home one of its cobblestones as a souvenir.

It is yet unclear what will replace the street.

The residents are fighting to preserve Christiania's reputation as a “free-wheeling society” made up of political idealists and aging hippies. For years, hash has been sold openly in Christiania from roadside stalls, among buildings painted in psychedelic colors. But inhabitants say that feuding gangs, not them, control the trade and the survival of their community hinges on

ending it.

The neighborhood has been a world apart from the rest of Copenhagen since 1973, when hippies squatted at a derelict naval base and set up a community dedicated to the flower-power ideals popular at the time: free cannabis, limited government influence, no cars and no police.

After more than four decades of locking horns with authorities, they were given control over their homes when the state sold the 84-acre (24-hectare) enclave for 85.4 million kroner (\$12.5 million) to a foundation owned by its inhabitants. There are nearly 700 adults and about 150 children living in the community today, and it's one of the Danish capital's biggest tourist attractions.

The “Christianites” have made several attempts to close the hashish market in the roughly 100 meter-long street. Police say the trade, worth millions, is controlled by the Hells Angels and the outlawed Loyal Family.

Authorities tolerated hashish sales in Christiania until 2004, when poli-

ce started to crack down. To preempt police raids, residents took down hash booths, but trading soon came back. Last year, they brought heavy machinery to tear down the market but masked men stopped them.

In the past month, Christiania has worked with local authorities to make plan that includes ending the drug trade and replacing it with other activities.

The social and housing ministry said that it was “an important prerequisite to get rid of the organized hashish trade” before Christiania can get 14.3 million kroner (\$2.1 million) earmarked for the work.

A 30-year-old man who was selling drugs was shot and killed, and four others injured, in August; in 2022, a man selling hashish from one of the street's booths was shot dead. The previous year, a man was shot and killed at the entrance to the same street.

Last year, the mayor of Copenhagen urged foreigners not to buy hashish there because of the deadly shootings. MDT/AP



AP PHOTO

India Thousands of farmers protested in the capital yesterday to press their demand for a new law that would guarantee minimum crop prices, after weeks of being blocked from entering the city. They rode crowded buses and trains instead of their tractors to New Delhi after authorities barricaded highways into the capital with cement blocks and barbed wire. Police also banned use of farm vehicles as a condition for granting permission for the rally in the city. Participants were also barred from carrying sticks or swords to avoid clashes with police.



AP PHOTO

EU was embroiled in a damaging legal standoff yesterday between its legislature and its executive Commission over the release of billions in frozen funds to the government of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. The release of the funds came on the eve of a major decision on Ukraine for which Orban's consent was needed. Parliamentarians from several groups said that the necessary rule of law commitments needed to release over 10 billions euros in funds were not met by Orban and claimed the approval by the Commission was a mere bargaining chip to make sure that he would lift his longstanding objections to opening EU membership talks with Ukraine.



AP PHOTO

UK The government published an official definition of “extremism” yesterday, and said groups that get the label will be barred from receiving government funding. It's unclear who will be on the list, and critics say branding nonviolent groups as extremist could undermine freedom of speech and worship, or risk unfairly targeting some people, such as Muslims, and create more division.