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FEBRUARY'S INFLATION REACHED THE HIGHEST POINT OF THE LAST FOUR YEARS, A RELEASE FROM THE STATISTICS AND CENSUS SERVICE HAS SHOWN

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GAMING: MGM, WYNN RESUME DIVIDEND DISTRIBUTIONS

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RUSSIANS MOURN HUNDREDS OF VICTIMS OF CONCERT HALL ATTACK

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AP PHOTO



Indonesia The camp of Indonesia's losing presidential candidate filed a complaint with the Constitutional Court on Saturday alleging widespread fraud at the polls and demanded a revote. The legal team of Ganjar Pranowo, who was backed by the governing Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, said it wants the elected president, Prabowo Subianto, and his vice president, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, disqualified.

AP PHOTO



India Hundreds of protesters in the capital took to the streets for a second day Saturday, demanding the immediate release of one of the top rivals of the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as the country gears up for a national election next month. Arvind Kejriwal, New Delhi's top elected official and one of the country's most consequential politicians of the past decade, was arrested by the federal Enforcement Directorate last week. The agency, controlled by Modi's government, accused his party and ministers of accepting 1 billion rupees (\$12 million) in bribes from liquor contractors nearly two years ago.

AP PHOTO



US Congress has passed a bill that involves a total of \$228 million in military and defense aid to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania this year under the Baltic Security Initiative, Estonia's defense officials said. The U.S. government funding legislation includes military aid to the three Baltic countries, which all are NATO members and neighbors of Russia, that was approved by lawmakers on Friday.

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FOR POORER

Non-auspicious 'Blind Year' will damage the wedding business in 2024, activity operators fear

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TOURISM TRAVEL AGENCIES TO HIRE MORE BLUE CARD TOUR GUIDES

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TRAVEL AGENCIES WILL BE ABLE TO HIRE MORE TNR AS TOUR GUIDES WITH SPECIAL LANGUAGE SKILLS

RENATO MARQUES

LOCAL travel agencies will be able to hire more non-resident workers (TNR) as tour guides, under the bill to update existing laws regulating such activity.

Although hiring TNRs as tour guides is not new, the new law will establish more specific criteria for their employment.

The new law will fix a duration for their employment and restrict the hiring of TNRs to agencies that need professionals with special language skills, those who can communicate in languages that are not in common use in Macau.

The director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, spoke during the Executive Council's presentation of the new

bill late last week.

She said new specific provisions will allow travel agencies to more easily hire the professionals they need, for a specific period.

They will also enable Macau to diversify its visitor sources and to attract more visitors from different countries and regions.

According to Senna Fernandes, over 1,758 tour guides are local residents and just 17 are TNRs.

Senna Fernandes said the requirements will be basically the same as for other tour guides.

That is, before operating tours, TNR will need a certification and license from the Macao University of Tourism (formerly the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies).

The bill also includes several changes such as on professional ethics.

Stricter rules will govern Tour guides' actions. They can undertake to sell a tourism service and follow the travel plan originally contracted with the clients.

The MGTO director said there are not many cases of infractions or complaints of wrongdoing of this kind but the government still wants the law to state clearly how the professionals of the tourism sector must act to avoid grey areas.

One of the practices the new law will ban is the offering of services below the real cost of the service, the so-called "zero-cost tours."

Such tours have, in the past, caused disputes between tourists and guides, with guides forcing visitors to acquire goods and products in particular shops and following a minimum ceiling for expenditure.



CRIME

Robbers of illegal currency exchanger arrested in mainland

ANTHONY LAM

FOUR men suspected of robbing illegal currency exchange operator in Macau were apprehended in mainland China eight hours after the alleged crime, the Judiciary Police (PJ) has announced.

The victim, a middle-aged man from Hong Kong, reported a loss of HKD500,000 from the alleged crime.

The four suspects are mainland men.

At 4 p.m. March 22, after a referral from the Public Security Police Force (PSP), PJ inspectors began investigating an alleged robbery in a hotel room in Cotai.

According to the alleged victim, he was contacted via social media and asked to meet at the hotel room for a currency exchange of



HKD500,000. Arriving at the hotel room, the alleged victim saw Liu and He.

As he handed the cash to the two men, he was suddenly electrocuted on his head and back and fell unconscious for several minutes.

When he woke, his wrists

and legs were bound with bathrobe straps and wires and he saw the two suspects fleeing with the cash.

It took him several hours to untie himself before calling police with the assistance of hotel staff.

Preliminary investigations have implicated Li's

and Yu's involvement in the incident. The four people left for mainland China after allegedly committing the crime.

The police notified police departments in several mainland cities, and the mainland police apprehended the four men in three different cities within eight hours.

Mainland police have said the four suspects have been reluctant to cooperate with the investigation, according to the local police.

In another case, a non-local man who works at a Cotai hotel has allegedly scammed his employer of MOP31,900, the PJ has disclosed.

The 28-year-old mainland man, surnamed Yu, works as a waiter at the hotel.

On Feb. 28, the hotel

told police the man had logged non-member spending at the hotel to a number of members' accounts. As such, he had redeemed perks to enjoy at the hundreds of properties under the same brand around the world.

He was arrested March 21 when he tried to repeat the same deed, the police said.

Further investigations led police to believe that from December 2019 to January this year, the man had redeemed 27 nights of accommodation in properties of the hotel group in mainland China and Macau. He either used the accommodation rights himself or sold them online.

Sometimes when diners settled their bills with cash, he used his membership points to settle part of the

bills, so he could appropriate the cash.

The man has six membership accounts, the police added.

In another case, a mainland businessman lost RMB45,000 after his mainland friend, surnamed Zhu, 34, scammed him.

During one of his trips to Macau on July 31 last year, the victim lost all his money to a local casino.

Meeting at a hotel room in Cotai, the two agreed on the currency exchange. The victim digitally transferred RMB45,000 to Zhu, who then started procrastinating and said he did not have enough cash for the victim. The two went out to get cash but Zhu reportedly fled.

On March 18, Zhu was arrested at the local airport but has denied the accusation.

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HOSPITALITY

'Blind Year' will be hindering wedding organizers businesses this year

RENATO MARQUES

THIS year is unfavorable for wedding organizers, a sector representative interviewed by public broadcaster TDM Chinese has said, justifying the statement by calling 2024 a "Blind Year."

The name comes from Chinese beliefs that a year in which the "Spring Start Festival" has not been held, is called a "Blind Year," or a "Year of the Widow."

The term generally means the year is unfavorable for both marriages and new business ventures.

The interviewee said there will be a significant decrease in the number of wedding ceremonies over this year.

The comments were made on the sidelines of the 22nd Asian Wedding Celebration Expo 2024 held over the weekend at the Macau Tower Convention and Entertainment Center.

The same person said many of



those visiting the Wedding Expo were planning for ceremonies in 2025.

Another interviewee, with a booth dedicated to wedding pho-

tography, also expected a decrease of about 20% in business this year because, since the pandemic, couples have chosen "simpler" and "lighter" packages, aiming to spend a

lot less than couples have spent in the past.

The Wedding Expo, which took place over three days, invited wedding companies from Macau, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, and other places in the Asia-Pacific region, representing 62 different wedding planners and companies in all.

Business owners have also said that in the last few years, the wedding ceremonies industry has developed rapidly.

Fierce competition has led most companies to seek overseas clients and to turn to travel photography to expand their customer base.

Wedding fairs and expos have become less popular among a younger generation that prefers to search for information and packages online and this has contributed to fewer visitors this year.

According to the business owners, the business is currently divided into even shares of online and offline.

EVENTS

Arts Festival tickets on sale now, short-films fest opens

ANTHONY LAM

THE box office for this year's Macao Arts Festival (FAM) is now open simultaneously at the Macau Ticketing outlets, by telephone and via online booking.

Themed "Wondrous Encounters," this year's festival, between May 3 and June 7, will feature 19 selected events covering theater, Chinese opera, dance, circus, music and visual arts.

As the first festival after a full year of post-pandemic normalcy, this year's is the 34th festival and it focuses on a post-modern remake of several classical art pieces.

Opening the festival is "Jungle Book" reimagined, an adaptation of the classic The Jungle Book, written by Nobel Laureate in Literature Rudyard Kipling.

The "reimagination" is a dance theater produced by British dancer and choreographer Akram Khan and team. It aims at inspiring the public to ponder the survival crisis of humanity from a child's perspective.

To close the festival is a Sino-Portuguese Concert, in which Portuguese pop rock band Capitão Fausto will share the limelight with David Huang, who is an expert in melding Western and Asian flavors.

They will jointly create wonderful moments of Sino-Portuguese cultural exchange with their distinctive music.

The contemporary ballet, "Sleeping Beauty," presented by Spanish National Dance Award winner Marcos Morau and the Lyon Opera Ballet from France, will try to reshape the public's imagination.

The festival also includes a series of local productions, such as "A Star is Arriving" by Dóci Papiçám di Macau Drama Group, "Frankenstein/Creatures" by Space for Acting and "Impression of Iec Long" by The Funny Old Tree Theatre Ensemble.

THE 'SHORTS' IN FULL STEAM

The First Macao International Shorts Film Festival opened Saturday and will run until March 30.

The Shorts Film Festival features four sections of screenings, namely "Macao Shorts," "New Voices from Horizon," "Director in Focus" and "Special Screenings".

During the event, over 50 short films from different genres will be screened at the Galaxy Cinemas of Galaxy Macau and Cine-



matheque.Passion.

The closing and award ceremony will be held March 29 at the Galaxy International Convention Center.

Ten shortlisted short films in the section "Macao Shorts" will compete for the "Best Macao Short" Award.

In the section "New Voices from Horizon," 26 works from across the world will compete for four awards, namely the "Best Short Film," the "Best Technical Contribution Award," the "Best Director

Award" and the "Innovative Storytelling Award".

The section "Director in Focus" of the Shorts Film Festival features renowned Japanese director Shunji Iwai, who will come to Macau to share his creative experiences with the public.

In the section "Special Screening," Hong Kong actor Will Or and director of the film "Fly Me To The Moon," Sasha Chuk Tsz-yin will hold post-screening talks, offering audiences a deeper viewing experience.

JAPANESE PHARMACEUTICAL RECALLS SUPPLEMENTS

Japan's Kobayashi Pharmaceutical has started recalling three types of supplements following reports of users developing kidney problems, several media have reported. The suspect ingredient is red yeast, which contains an as yet unidentified substance. The company said the connection between the ingredient and the kidney problem is still unclear. Six people have been admitted to hospital due to kidney conditions of varying severity. About 300,000 items are to be recalled, the century-old pharmaceutical company has announced.

NORTHBOUND CARS FROM SARS SURPASS 2M

As of 4 a.m., March 24, the number of northbound vehicles from Macau and Hong Kong surpassed 2 million, a mainland authority has disclosed. Since the beginning of the year, the average daily customs clearance volume of single-plate vehicles in Macau has been nearly 4,000, a year-on-year increase of 27.6%. The daily average number of single-plate vehicle clearances in Hong Kong has exceeded 3,200, which is 20.9 times the average daily customs clearance volume in the first month of policy implementation, with the highest single-day number exceeding 8,300 vehicles.

MACAU LOGS 94% SUCCESS RATE IN TUBERCULOSIS TREATMENT

In the past 20 years, Macau has seen an average tuberculosis recovery rate of 94.4%, "much higher than the 85% required by the WHO," the government has said. The local multidrug resistance rate remains at around 2%, it added. According to the Health Bureau (SSM), the onset rate in the past 20 years has dropped from 109.1 per 100,000 people in 1998 to 46.2 per 100,000 people in 2023, a decrease of 57.7%. There were 316 newly registered tuberculosis cases in 2023, of which about 50% occurred in people aged 65 and over.

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GAMING STOCKS

MGM, Wynn resume dividend distributions

INVESTMENT firms are optimistic in view of last week's dividend resumption announcements from MGM China and Wynn Macau, marking their first dividend distributions since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

MGM China announced it would pay a final dividend of HKD0.243 per share and a special dividend of HKD0.104 per share for 2023. Wynn Macau also announced a final dividend of HKD0.075 per share for the same year.

Following these announcements, analysts DS Kim, Mufan Shi, and Selina Li from J.P. Morgan noted Friday that the move came "a year earlier than the market had expected."

With MGM China and Wynn Macau joining the ranks of dividend-paying gaming operators in Macau, the analysts anticipate Sands China will start distributing dividends next year. They expect Melco and SJM to focus on reducing debt for the time being.

J.P. Morgan's analysts believe these dividends could attract a broader investor base and help stabilize the valuation of Ma-

MDT ARCHIVE



cau's gaming stocks.

Also on Friday, Morningstar analyst Jennifer Song wrote that "following Galaxy's special interim and final dividend offerings, MGM China and Wynn Macau have followed suit and both declared final dividends on March 21. We view this as a positive surprise, which came in at least one year earlier than our expectations, suggesting that mana-

gement groups are confident in Macau's gaming demand recovery."

Morningstar maintains their forecast for gross gaming revenue, which "will rise to 85% of 2019's level in 2024, up from 63% in 2023. With that, we believe Macau casinos will record meaningful improvements in profitability and cash flows in 2024." PC

ECONOMY

February Inflation highest in 4 years, DSEC blames calendar

RENATO MARQUES

LAST month's inflation reached the highest point of the last four years, a statistics release from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) has shown. According to official statistics, the Composite CPI (Consumer Price Index) for February 2024 grew 1.46% year-on-year. The DSEC said the growth was "partly caused by the relatively high prices during the Lunar New Year (LNY)."

The service noted that while it is common during the season for the prices of goods and services to rise, this year's LNY happened in February while last year it occurred in January due to the differences between the Lunar and the Gregorian calendars.

Official statistics show that among the various sections of

goods and services, the price indices of Recreation & Culture (+11.92%) and Education (+5.05%) showed notable year-on-year growth, on account of rising charges for package tours, more expensive hotel room rates and higher university tuition fees.

Concurrently, increases in clothing prices and charges for outpatient services pushed up the price indices of Clothing & Footwear (+4.09%) and Health (+3.18%).

The price index of Food & Non-Alcoholic Beverages also registered a rise beyond the average (+1.73%) with the DSEC noting that this happened due to the higher cost of eating out. The increase was partially offset by the lower prices of pork.

The price indices of Transport (-1.82%) decreased due to lower airfares, while Alcoholic Bever-

ages & Tobacco (-0.77%) also fell due to lower prices of alcoholic beverages.

Compared month-on-month with January this year, February's Composite CPI rose 0.54% with the price indices of Recreation & Culture (+6.95%) and Transport (+1.20%) showing the most significant growth.

The price index of Food & Non-Alcoholic Beverages (+0.34%) also increased although not so significantly, while the price indices of Clothing & Footwear and Alcoholic Beverages & Tobacco dropped, respectively by 1.17% and 0.49%.

In the past year (Mar 2023 to Feb 2024), the price indices of Education (+7.39%), Recreation & Culture (+6.35%), and Clothing & Footwear (+4.63%) climbed most notably, contributing to an average Composite CPI growth of 1.02%.



Opening ceremony for China's 14th National Games

NATIONAL GAMES COMPETITIONS IN MACAU TO BE UNVEILED NEXT MONTH

THE five or six sports competitions that will be hosted in Macau as part of the co-hosting of the 2025 National Games will be known next month, the president of Sports Bureau (ID), Pun Weng Kun, said yesterday on the sidelines of the Women's Sports Festival event.

Speaking to the media, Pun reaffirmed that the final number of events to be held in Macau is either five or six and that this decision will take into account the conditions to host the events as well as the popularity of the sports in Macau.

DSOP

INFRASTRUCTURE READY BEFORE DELIVERY OF FIRST PUBLIC HOUSING IN ZONE A

RENATO MARQUES

ALL infrastructure at Zone AA of the new landfills will be ready before the delivery of the first new public housing apartments, the Public Works Bureau (DSOP) has said, responding to lawmaker Leong Sun Iok enquiry.

This includes the roads and links to the Peninsula.

The DSOP also reaffirmed this first batch of apartments will be delivered before the end of this year.

The bureau said it is working to complete all the additional infrastructure on time, so the new units at Zone A will be ready for the residents.

This particularly includes the transport networks, but also power, water and gas supply, as well as communications and sewage systems.

The DSOP also noted it had consulted the Transport Bureau, which is studying changes to public bus routes passing

through the new residential area to eliminate difficulties for the residents in accessing public transportation.

Another of the projects that will affect inhabitants in this area is the new wastewater treatment plant that is still at the project stage.

The plant will be built at the administration area of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Border Post.

When completed, it will be the major facility treating wastewater from Zone A and Zone B of the new landfills.

Currently, the government is evaluating the eight bids received for the construction of the facility with prices that vary between MOP6.1 and MOP8.2 billion.

According to the tender rules, the project will need to build the facility in a maximum of 63 months (5 years and one quarter) and after that, operate and maintain the facility for 10 years.



SOUTH CHINA SEA

Chinese coast guard hits Philippine boat with water cannons, causing injuries

JIM GOMEZ,
MANILA, PHILIPPINES

CHINESE coast guard ships hit a Philippine supply boat with water cannons this weekend in the latest confrontation near a disputed shoal in the South China Sea, causing injuries to its navy crew members and heavy damage to the wooden vessel, Philippine officials said.

The United States and Japan immediately expressed their support to the Philippines, as well as alarm over Chinese forces' aggression off the Second Thomas Shoal, which has been the scene of repeated confrontations between Chinese and Philippine vessels over the past year.

The far-flung shoal has been occupied by a small contingent of Philippine navy and marines on a marooned warship since 1999, but has been surrounded by Chinese coast guard and suspected militia vessels in an increasingly tense territorial standoff. It's the second time the Philippine boat *Unaizah May 4* has been damaged by the Chinese coast guard's water cannon assault in March alone.

The repeated high-seas confrontations have sparked fears they could degenerate into a larger conflict that could bring China and the United States into a collision.

Washington lays no claims to the busy seaway, a key global trade route, but has deployed Navy ships and fighter jets in what it calls "freedom of navigation" operations, which China has criticized.



In this screen grab from video provided by the Armed Forces of the Philippines, a Chinese coast guard ship uses water cannons and closely maneuvers beside a Philippine resupply vessel as it approaches Second Thomas Shoal, Saturday

The U.S. has also warned repeatedly that it's obligated to defend the Philippines — its oldest treaty ally in Asia — if Filipino forces, ships or aircraft come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea.

U.S. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a statement yesterday [Macau time] that the United States "stands with its ally the Philippines and condemns the dangerous actions by the People's Republic of China (PRC) against lawful Philippine maritime operations in the South China Sea on March 23."

Escorted by two Philippine coast guard ships, the *Unaizah May 4* was en route to deliver supplies and a fresh batch of Filipino sailors to the territorial outpost in the shoal at dawn Saturday when they were blocked and surround-

ed by Chinese coast guard ships and suspected militia vessels.

"Their reckless and dangerous actions culminated with the water cannoning of *Unaizah May 4*, causing severe damage to the vessel and injuries to Filipinos onboard," a Philippine government task force dealing with the territorial conflicts said without elaborating.

The two Philippine coast guard patrol ships maneuvered through the Chinese blockade to treat the injured Filipino crew members and tow the disabled supply boat away. Another motorboat managed to transport the new batch of Filipino sailors and supplies to the Philippine outpost in the shallows of the shoal despite the Chinese coast guard's attempt to block them by placing a floating barrier in the waters, Philippine officials said.

The hostilities dragged on for about 8 hours, they said.

"The Philippines will not be deterred — by veiled threats or hostility — from exercising our legal rights over our maritime zones," the government task force said in a statement. "We demand that China demonstrate in deeds and not in words that it is a responsible and trustworthy member of the international community."

Chinese coast guard spokesperson Gan Yu said the Philippine vessels intruded into what he said was China's territorial waters despite repeated warnings. "The China coast guard implemented lawful regulation, interception and expulsion in a reasonable and professional manner," Gan said.

Washington's ambassador to Manila, MaryKay Carlson, said

that "the U.S. stands with the Philippines against the PRC's repeated dangerous maneuvers and water cannons to disrupt" the Philippine coast guard's "lawful activities" in Manila's exclusive economic zone.

Japan's ambassador-designate to Manila, Endo Kazuya, reiterated his country's "grave concern on the repeated dangerous actions by the Chinese coast guard in the South China Sea, which resulted in Filipino injuries."

Aside from China and the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei also have overlapping claims in the resource-rich and busy waterway, which Beijing continues to claim virtually in its entirety despite a 2016 international arbitration ruling that invalidated its expansive claims on historical grounds.

Video released by the Philippine military shows two Chinese coast guard ships hitting the smaller wooden-hulled boat *Unaizah May 4* with high-pressure water cannon sprays at close range, causing the boat to shift in the high seas.

Chinese coast guard previously blasted the *Unaizah May 4* with high-pressure water cannons in a confrontation near the Second Thomas Shoal on March 5, shattering its windshield and slightly injuring a Filipino admiral and four of his men with glass shards and splinters of debris.

The Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila summoned China's deputy ambassador after the March 5 confrontation to convey a protest against the Chinese coast guard's actions, which it said were unacceptable. **MDT/AP**

RELIGION

A pastor is released after seven years in prison, finds himself unable to get an ID

UNABLE to buy a train ticket, or even see a doctor at a hospital, a Chinese pastor found that his even after release from prison, he is not quite free.

The Rev. John Sanqiang Cao was arrested and sentenced to seven years in prison while coming back from a missionary trip in Myanmar. Now back in his hometown of Changsha in southern Hunan province,

he is without any legal documentation in his country, unable to access even the most basic services without a Chinese identification.

"I told them I'm a second-class Chinese citizen, I cannot do this, I cannot do that," Cao in an interview with The Associated Press. "I'm released, I'm a free citizen, why should there be so many restrictions upon me?"

Cao, who was born and raised in Changsha, had dedicated his life to spreading Christianity in China, where the religion is strictly regulated. He had studied in the U.S., married an American woman and started a family, but said he felt a calling to go back to his home country and spread the faith.

It's a risky mission. Christianity in China is allowed only in state-sponsored

churches, where the ruling Communist Party decides how Scripture should be interpreted. Anything else, including clandestine "house" churches and unofficial Bible schools, is considered illegal, though it was once tolerated by local officials.

Cao was undeterred, citing the courage of Chinese Christians he had met who spent time in prison for their faith. During his years in



Rev. John Sanqiang Cao poses for a photo a day after his release from prison in Changsha

China, he said he had set up some 50 Bible study schools all across the country.

After completing his sentence, Cao is no longer behind bars. But he is facing another major obstacle.

He said that police who came to his mother's house in 2006 took away her "hukou" registration book, which had also included Cao.

Every child born in China is registered in the hukou, which is an identification system through which social benefits are allocated by geography. Later in life, the hukou is needed to apply for a national ID card, which is used in everything from getting a phone number to public health insurance. **MDT/AP**

INDIA

Protesters in remote Ladakh demand protection of fragile ecology

AIJAZ HUSSAIN, SRINAGAR

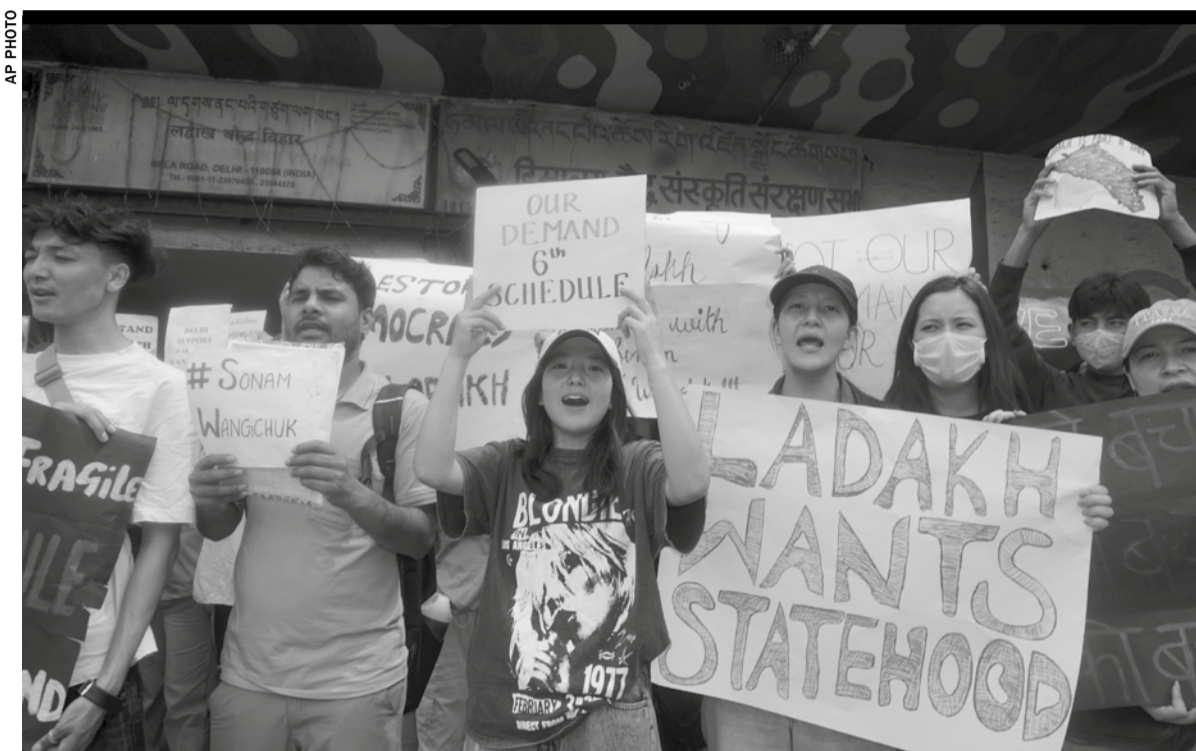
THOUSANDS of people in the remote region of Ladakh have been protesting for over two weeks in freezing temperatures, demanding constitutional provisions from the Indian government to protect their territory's fragile ecology and to have autonomy over land and agriculture decisions.

Nestled between India, Pakistan and China, Ladakh has faced territorial disputes and suffered the effects of climate change. Shifting weather patterns in the sparsely populated villages altered people's lives through floods, landslides and droughts.

Top climate activist Sonam Wangchuk is taking part in the demonstrations in the town of Leh. He has been on a fast, since the protests started on March 6, in the open in sub-zero temperatures and surviving only on salt and water.

Wangchuk, also an engineer working on solutions for sustainability at his Himalayan Institute of Alternative Ladakh, has called his protest a "climate fast."

"We're already facing climate disaster and these glaciers and mountains will be destroyed if there is not a check on unbridled



People from Ladakh participate in a protest in New Delhi, demanding statehood for their mountainous region

industrial development and military maneuvers" in the region, Wangchuk told The Associated Press yesterday.

Ladakh's thousands of glaciers, which helped dub the rugged region one of the "water towers of the world," are receding at an alarming rate, threatening the water supply of millions of people. The melting has been exacerbated by

an increase in local pollution that has worsened due to the region's militarization, further intensified by the deadly military standoff between India and China since 2020.

He also said Ladakh critically needs ecological protection because "it's not just a local disaster in (the) making but an international one as these mountains are part of Greater Himalayas intricately

linked to over two billion people and multiple countries."

Wangchuk said the Ladakh nomads were also losing prime pastureland to huge Indian industrial plans and Chinese encroachment. The region's shepherds complain that Chinese soldiers have captured multiple pasturelands and restricted them from grazing their herds.

The shepherds and Wangchuk are planning to march to the Chinese border later this month to underscore what they say is "Beijing's land grab attempts in Ladakh to gain territory."

In August 2019, Ladakh was split from Indian-controlled Kashmir after New Delhi stripped the disputed region of its statehood and semi-autonomy.

While restive Kashmir has largely been silenced through a crackdown on any form of dissent and slew of new laws, demands for political rights in Ladakh have intensified with demands of statehood with local legislature to frame their own laws on land and agriculture. The region's representatives have held several rounds of talks with Indian officials, including with the powerful Home Minister Amit Shah earlier this month, without any results.

"This government likes to call India the 'Mother of Democracy,'" Wangchuk recently posted on X, formerly Twitter. "But if India denies democratic rights to people of Ladakh & continues to keep it under bureaucrats controlled from New Delhi then it could only be called a Stepmother of Democracy as far as Ladakh is concerned." **MDT/AP**

INDONESIA

Bodies of three Rohingya refugees found dead, rescue ops called off

THE bodies of three Rohingya refugees were found in the sea as the Indonesian authorities ended a search for survivors from a boat that capsized near Aceh province, the provincial search and rescue agency said yesterday.

Fishers and a search and rescue team rescued 75 people from the boat on Thursday — 44 men, 22 women and nine children — after they huddled on its overturned hull throughout the night.

A few were taken to a local hospital for treatment, but most were sent to a temporary shelter in the Aceh Barat district. Several told UNHCR workers they had lost family members on the journey.



Fishers first spotted the three bodies and reported them to local authorities

on Saturday. "After we searched the area, the team found three

bodies, two adult women and one boy. They are allegedly Rohingya refugees

who were the passengers of the capsized and sunken boat," Al Hussain, chief of Banda Aceh Search and Rescue Agency in a statement on Sunday.

The bodies were immediately taken to the hospital in Calang city in Aceh Jaya district, before local authorities buried them.

Faisal Rahman, a UNHCR staff member in Aceh, said that some of the survivors also helped to identify the bodies.

"We have verified as we take one of the refugees to identify and verify that they were together on the boat," Faisal Rahman, a UNHCR staff member in Aceh, said Saturday evening.

Local authorities in Aceh have received several reports about dead bodies floating in nearby waters since Saturday.

U.N. agencies in a statement on Friday said that about 70 Rohingya refugees are feared missing

or dead from a boat that made a grueling sea voyage from Bangladesh and sank off Indonesia's coast this week.

About 1 million of the predominately Muslim Rohingya live in Bangladesh as refugees from Myanmar. They include about 740,000 who fled in 2017 to escape a brutal counterinsurgency campaign by Myanmar's security forces, who were accused of committing mass rapes and killings and burning thousands of homes. The Rohingya minority in Myanmar faces widespread discrimination and most are denied citizenship.

Indonesia, like Thailand and Malaysia, is not a signatory to the United Nations' 1951 Refugee Convention, and so is not obligated to accept them. However, the country generally provides temporary shelter to refugees in distress. **MDT/AP**

RUSSIA | CONCERT HALL ATTACK KILLS 133

As people mourns, some families still wonder if their loved ones are alive

FAMILY and friends of those still missing after an attack that killed over 130 people at a suburban Moscow concert hall waited for news of their loved ones as Russia observed a day of national mourning yesterday.

Events at cultural institutions were cancelled, flags were lowered, and TV entertainment and ads were suspended, according to state news agency RIA Novosti. A steady stream of people brought flowers to a makeshift memorial near the burnt-out concert hall.

The attack, which has been claimed by an affiliate of the Islamic State group, is the deadliest on Russian soil in years.

As rescuers continue to search the damaged building, some families still don't know if members who went to the event targeted by gunmen on Friday are alive.

Igor Pogadaev was desperately seeking any details of his wife's whereabouts after she went to the concert and stopped responding to his messages.

He hasn't seen a message from Yana Pogadaeva since she sent her husband two photos from the Crocus City Hall music venue.

After Igor saw the reports of gunmen opening fire on concertgoers, he rushed to the site but couldn't find her in the numerous ambulances or among the hundreds of people who had made their way out of the venue.

"I went around, searched, I asked everyone, I showed photographs. No one saw anything, no one could say anything," Pogadaev told The Associated Press in a video message.

He watched flames bursting out of the building as he made frantic calls to a hotline for relatives of the victims but received no information.

As the death toll mounted on Saturday, Igor scoured hospitals in Moscow and the Moscow region, looking for information on newly admitted patients.

But his wife wasn't among the 154 reported injured, nor on the list of 50 victims au-



A man places flowers at a spontaneous memorial in memory of the victims of Moscow attack in St. Petersburg

thorities have already identified, he said.

Refusing to believe that his wife could be one of the 133 people who died in the attack, Pogadaev still hasn't gone home.

"I couldn't be alone anymore, it's very difficult, so I drove to my friend's," he said. "Now at least I'll be with someone."

The Moscow Region's Emergency Situations Ministry posted a video Sunday showing equipment dismantling the damaged music venue to give rescuers access.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin appears to be trying to tie Ukraine to the attack, something its government firmly denies.

Russian authorities arrested four suspected attackers on Saturday, Putin said in an nighttime address to the nation, among 11 people detained suspicion of involvement in the attack. He claimed they were captured while fleeing to Ukraine.

Though no court hearing has been officially announced, there was a heavy police presence around Moscow's Basmany District Court on Sunday. Police tried to drive journalists away from the court.

Putin called the attack "a bloody, barbaric terrorist

act" and said Russian authorities captured the four suspects as they were trying to escape to Ukraine through a "window" prepared for them on the Ukrainian side of the border.

Russian media broadcast videos that apparently showed the detention and interrogation of the suspects, including one who told the cameras he was approached by an unidentified assistant to an Islamic preacher via a messaging app and paid to take part in the raid.

Kyiv strongly denied any involvement, and the Islamic State group's Afghanistan affiliate claimed responsibility.

The Islamic State group released highly graphic footage from the attack on Saturday, appearing to show one of the gunmen opening fire on people lying on the ground.

Putin did not mention IS in his speech to the nation, and Kyiv accused him and other Russian politicians of falsely linking Ukraine to the assault to stoke fervor for Russia's fight in Ukraine, which recently entered its third year.

U.S. intelligence officials said they had confirmed the IS affiliate's claim.

"ISIS bears sole responsibility for this attack. There

was no Ukrainian involvement whatsoever," National Security Council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson said in a statement.

The U.S. shared information with Russia in early March about a planned terrorist attack in Moscow and issued a public warning to Americans in Russia, Watson said.

The raid was a major embarrassment for the Russian leader and happened just days after he cemented his grip on the country for another six years in a vote that followed the harshest crackdown on dissent since the Soviet times.

Some commentators on Russian social media questioned how authorities, who have relentlessly suppressed any opposition activities and muzzled independent media, failed to prevent the attack despite the U.S. warnings.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement that the U.S. condemned the attack and said that the Islamic State group is a "common terrorist enemy that must be defeated everywhere."

IS, which fought against Russia during its intervention in the Syrian civil war, has long targeted Russia. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1980 BRITAIN WILL GO TO MOSCOW OLYMPICS



The British Olympic Association (BOA) has voted by a large majority to defy the government and send athletes to the Olympic Games in Moscow.

Fifteen sports voted to accept the invitation to participate in the Olympics in July.

Only hockey opposed travelling to Moscow, while fencing, equestrian, swimming and yachting deferred the decision.

The decision is a blow to the government which issued a statement claiming Downing Street "seriously regrets" the BOA decision.

Earlier this week the government placed pressure on the BOA not to attend the games after the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan last year.

Sir Denis Follows, the chairman, said the "rather heavy letter" received from Mrs Thatcher after a commons debate had been placed before the committee ahead of the meeting.

He added while he was sympathetic to the government's stance "we believe sport should be a bridge, and not a destroyer".

Earlier this week Michael Heseltine, secretary of state for the environment, outlined the government's hope of taking sporting sanctions against the Soviet Union in a parliamentary written answer in the House of Commons.

Mr Heseltine stressed there would be no government funding or attendance in support of the BOA's presence in the games in Moscow.

Monique Berlioux, the director of the international Olympic Committee, said earlier this week the IOC might provide funds for teams attending the games against their government's wishes.

It came as National Olympic committees from the United States and 15 Western European countries who met in Brussels earlier this week rejected calls for a boycott of the Moscow Olympics.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Many countries joined the US-led boycott of the summer games of the 22nd Olympics in 1980 because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979.

Almost 6,000 competitors from 81 countries arrived to compete in 22 sports compared to the 10,000 athletes expected.

The Soviet Union took home 197 medals, Britain took home 21.

The International Olympics Committee condemned the boycott and said athletics should not be concerned with politics although sport had long been a tool in international affairs.

At the time South Africa was banned from participating because of its policy of discriminating against blacks.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES  **Mar. 21-Apr. 19**
 Join forces with a partner to get farther. Strategize and make plans together. Stick to practical steps and schedule them. Support each other.

TAURUS  **Apr. 20-May. 20**
 Maintain practical routines for best performance. Good luck follows dedicated efforts. Prioritize your own health and well-being. Break it down.

GEMINI  **May. 21-Jun. 21**
 Relax and have fun with someone you love. Handle practical matters. Abandon unrealistic fantasies. Let the small stuff go. Make a delightful connection.

CANCER  **Jun. 22-Jul. 22**
 Begin a new domestic phase. Assess the situation. You can see what's missing. Make repairs and upgrades. Research materials and sources.

LEO  **Jul. 23-Aug. 22**
 Keep generating positive buzz. One story ends another begins. Dispel illusions, scams and lies. Hunt for the truth and find it. Share your discoveries.


VIRGO  **Aug. 23-Sep. 22**
 Stay in action. Ignore risky business. You can find the resources you need. Shift perspectives. Stick to practical priorities. Discover income in new directions.


LIBRA  **Sep.23-Oct. 22**
 Inspiration motivates a phase of personal focus. Make a beneficial change. Listen to your heart. Self-discovery provides power and confidence.

SCORPIO  **Oct. 23-Nov. 21**
 A shift in perspective alters the context. Rest, recuperate and reassess. Meditate on recent changes. Consider the past, present and future.

SAGITTARIUS  **Nov. 22-Dec. 21**
 Friends have great suggestions. Connect with someone who's been where you want to go. Collaborate for mutual gain. Teamwork gets results.

CAPRICORN  **Dec. 22-Jan. 19**
 Professional matters have your attention. Prepare for an upcoming inspection or challenge. Go for a prize. Reinforce structural elements.

AQUARIUS  **Jan. 20-Feb. 18**
 Investigate, study and research. Dispel false illusions or misinformation. Prove your theory. Stick to reliable sources. Things may not be as imagined.

PISCES  **Feb.19-Mar. 20**
 Collaborate on family finances. Store provisions for the future. New destinations or plans could call to you. Determine the funding.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

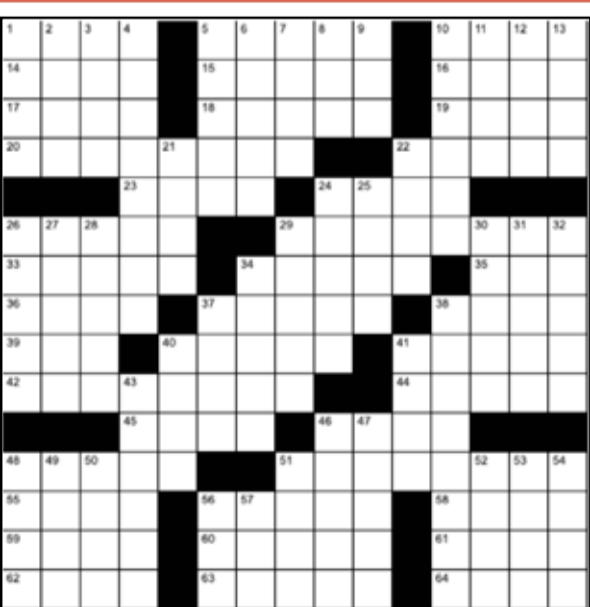
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	6	17	cloudy
Changchun	-3	11	fine
Chengdu	12	25	cloudy
Chongqing	16	26	cloudy
Fuzhou	19	32	cloudy
Guangzhou	22	30	cloudy
Guiyang	12	22	cloudy
Haikou	24	34	cloudy
Hangzhou	18	26	rain
Harbin	-6	9	fine
Hefei	9	17	rain
Nanjing	13	14	thunderstorms
Shanghai	15	24	rain
Taipei	20	29	cloudy
Wuhan	10	11	rain
Hong Kong	23	25	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	-2	6	rain
Frankfurt	2	11	cloudy
Paris	8	12	cloudy
London	7	11	cloudy
New York	21	26	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Discounted by; 5- Island off Venezuela; 10- Jam-pack; 14- Caesar's accusation; 15- Iraqi port; 16- Hindu music; 17- Party to; 18- Cream-filled cookies; 19- Teen follower; 20- Surgeon; 22- Chopin composition; 23- Super server; 24- Appraise; 26- 71% is under water; 29- The day following today; 33- Boise's state; 34- Redbreast; 35- Yalie; 36- "Great" dog; 37- Ventilated; 38- Comedian Foxx; 39- Freudian topic; 40- Smells; 41- Ms. Hawkins; 42- Restore to good condition; 44- Ruhr Valley city; 45- Sunbathers catch them; 46- Ho Chi ___ City; 48- Disney mermaid; 51- Comment at the bottom of a page; 55- Hang loose; 56- Foremost part; 58- Archer of myth; 59- Iowa college town; 60- Main blood vessel; 61- Droops; 62- Must've been something ___; 63- ___ Ark; 64- Gin flavor;

DOWN 1- Fragrant neckwear; 2- European erupter; 3- Pack away; 4- Bask; 5- Have ___ to pick; 6- Harder to find; 7- Employs, consumes; 8- Pal in the 'hood; 9- Small batteries; 10- Office of a volcano; 11- Prego competitor; 12- Got on in years; 13- Stallion's mate; 21- Cuatro doubled; 22- English public school; 24- Judges' garments; 25- In the middle of; 26- Sea duck; 27- Proverb, saying; 28- Babbled; 29- Baseball manager Joe; 30- Orchestra section; 31- Song from the past; 32- Broaden; 34- Mob scenes; 37- An apple ___; 38- Temerity; 40- Egg-shaped; 41- Shipped off; 43- Ultimatum ender; 46- One-twelfth of a year; 47- Little bits; 48- Jai ___; 49- Type of tomato; 50- Belinda Carlisle's "Should ___ You In?"; 51- ___ song (cheaply); 52- Word that can precede hygiene, tradition and agreement; 53- Fast-food option; 54- "___ quam videri" (North Carolina's motto); 56- Devoted follower; 57- Aussie hopper;



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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Va Fat
 HKD 3,780,000 2 bed 1 bath



Tou Un
 HKD 2,980,000 1 bed 1 bath



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

NATURAL WONDERS

NAPOLEON'S EXILE, A REMOTE ISLAND IN SOUTH ATLANTIC IS NOW EASIER TO REACH

NICOLE EVATT,
JAMESTOWN, ST. HELENA

ST. Helena, a small, craggy island in the South Atlantic Ocean, hasn't seen many tourists in the past for good reason: It's one of the most remote inhabited places in the world.

Until 2017, it took five nights by boat to reach the British overseas territory, which is nearly halfway between southern Africa and Brazil. Today, with weekly commercial flights and the recent arrival of high-speed internet, the government is hoping to breathe new life into a fledgling tourism industry that welcomed about 2,100 leisure travelers in 2023.

The island has just a little more than 4,000 residents, or Saints as they call themselves, and is likely to attract a certain kind of visitor.

"It's people with a real desire to travel and learn rather than, 'let's go somewhere to have a bit of sunshine and some nice food,'" says Emma Phillips, whose husband, Nigel, is St. Helena's governor.

After all, weather can be unpredictable and supplies occasionally run low when you're 1,200 miles from the nearest continent.

"You've got to be prepared to embrace all of that," Phillips says, while extolling the island's welcoming locals, rich history and natural wonders. "Come with an open mind."

HISTORY: NAPOLEON, GEORGIAN ARCHITECTURE

Perhaps best known as the site of Napoleon Bonaparte's exile from 1815 until his death in 1821, St. Helena features multiple heritage sites honoring the deposed French emperor. Visitors can tour his homes and his original burial grounds. His remains were returned to France in 1840.

The capital city, Jamestown, is an eclectic mix of new and old. British Georgian-era colonial buildings house small retail and grocery stores. There are a couple DVD rental shops — remnants of the island's pre-high-speed internet days.

For a workout with a view, climb the 699 steps of Jacob's Ladder on the edge of town. The 600-foot-high outdoor staircase was originally a donkey-powered cart track used to transport goods between the city and fortifications on the cliffs above.

Plantation House, 2 miles south of the capital, is a grand Georgian mansion built in 1792 by the British East India Company, which administered St. Helena until 1834. Now the official governor's residence, the house features a

AP PHOTO



The city of Jamestown is pictured from the top of Jacob's Ladder, a massive staircase carved into the side of a mountain on the remote island of St. Helena

collection of royal portraits and original furnishings, including antique china and a chandelier from Bonaparte's final home.

WHALE SHARKS, A LEGENDARY TORTOISE

Plantation House's well-manicured yard is home to one of the island's most famous residents, a venerable tortoise named Jonathan. At the approximate age of 192, Jonathan holds the Guinness World Record for the oldest living land animal. He has met several royals, including Queen Elizabeth II, who visited St. Helena in 1947, and Prince Edward, who made the trip in January.

"Jonathan is an enigmatic tortoise," says Teeny Lucy, one of his caretakers for over a decade. "If you come to St. Helena, people usually know two things: Jonathan the tortoise and Napoleon Bonaparte." She's not sure who is the bigger celebrity.

Jonathan has lost his sight and sense of smell, but remains a major draw for tourists like Gilly Hill, who traveled from the U.K. to snap selfies with him.

"I just think he's the most amazing creature," she said.

Other bucket-list activities include swimming with Chilean devil rays or whale sharks, which are often spotted December through March. There's also humpback

whale watching from June to December. Come in January to catch peak nesting season for the wirebird, also known as the St. Helena plover, which can only be found on St. Helena.

BIODIVERSITY, SCENERY

Roughly one-third of all endemic biodiversity in U.K. territories can be found within the 47-square-mile island. More than 500 species are not seen anywhere else on earth, including 45 flowering plants and ferns.

Microclimates that range from cool tropical forests to sunny rolling grasslands and windswept volcanic cliffs can all be experienced within an hour's drive.

With two dozen scenic trails, St. Helena can satisfy even the most avid hiker's wanderlust. Serious trekkers might opt for the highest point, Diana's Peak. The 2.3-mile hike takes you 2,690 feet above sea level and into Britain's last remaining natural cloud forest.

Casual hikers can stroll along Blue Point Trail for spectacular views of Sandy Bay, Sperry Island and Castle Rock. For a moderate challenge, try the shaded hike to St. Helena's famed Heart Shaped Waterfall, which only flows in winter and early spring. Be sure to catch the best views of the falls from the main road out of Jamestown.

RARE COFFEE, COLORFUL CAKES

Perched at 1,700 feet on one of the lushest and most remote parts of the island lies a historic estate with sweeping cloud-forest views and a really good cup of joe.

Wranghams is a small coffee farm with tours and home stays, run by Neil and Debbie Fantom.

Coffee connoisseurs seek out St. Helena's beans, often touted as one of the rarest and most expensive varieties in the world due to their export costs and single-origin status. It sells online for \$150 per half pound. Extreme isolation has ensured that the coffee plants, which were imported from Yemen in the 18th century, have never been cross-fertilized.

"Is it the best in the world? I couldn't tell you. Is it coffee that we enjoy producing and drinking? One hundred percent," Neil says. "We've got the perfect climate for it, and we do it ourselves."

"With love," adds Debbie.

Other local culinary delights include plo, a cross between curry and Spanish paella, fresh fishcakes, and sponge cakes with bright pink icing known as coconut fingers.

WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Money: St. Helena has no ATMs, credit cards are not widely

accepted, and the local bank has limited hours. Be sure to bring British pounds (GBP) to cover your stay and the 20 pounds entry fee (about \$25). Another option is St. Helena Bank's prepaid Tourist Card app, which can be loaded with debit cards online and is accepted throughout the island.

Connectivity: Download essentials like the Tourist Card app and offline Google maps before you arrive, as Wi-Fi and mobile data is limited and expensive.

Getting There: Airlink flies once weekly from Johannesburg. A mid-week flight is often added during the busier summer season, December to March. You'll need proof of medical insurance covering at least 175,000 pounds (about \$223,000) to board the plane.

Where to Stay: Accommodations range from simple home stays to boutique hotels. The higher-end Mantis St. Helena has 30 rooms and complimentary, reliable internet.

Getting Around: St. Helena's narrow roads and blind curves are not for the faint of heart. If you're comfortable driving stick shift on the left side of the road, rental cars are available. Otherwise, taxis are your best option for island adventuring. **MDT/AP**

STEWART BELL,
MELBOURNE

F1 | AUSTRALIA GP

Sainz wins race after Verstappen retires early with engine fire

FERRARI'S Carlos Sainz ended Red Bull's Formula 1 winning streak yesterday when the Spaniard took advantage of Max Verstappen's early retirement to win the Australian Grand Prix just two weeks after missing the previous race in Saudi Arabia due to an emergency appendectomy.

Sainz, who started on the front row alongside Verstappen, kept his place into turn one, but passed the Dutchman on lap two at turn nine for the lead and took control once his rival retired two laps later with a fiery mechanical failure.

Verstappen had won the first two F1 races of the season in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia and was on a nine-race winning streak.

Sainz finished ahead of teammate Charles Leclerc for Ferrari's first 1-2 result since the 2022 Bahrain Grand Prix, with McLaren's Lando Norris finishing in third for his first podium at Albert Park.

His teammate, Australian Oscar Piastri, was fourth.

Sainz, who will be replaced by Lewis Hamilton at Ferrari from 2025, was thrilled to get his third career win against the odds, his first since last year's Singapore Grand Prix.

"I felt really good out there," he said. "Of course, (I felt) a bit stiff, especially physically. It wasn't the easiest, but I was lucky that I was more or less on my own so I could just manage my pace, manage the tires, manage everything."

"Life sometimes is crazy, you know. What happened at the beginning of the year, then the podium in Bahrain, then appendix, the comeback, the win, it's a roller coaster. But I loved it."

Leclerc, on the podium for the second straight race, was encouraged by Ferrari's pace, and its ability to take the fight to rival Red Bull during its period of dominance.

"We knew that pole position and the race win was possible because we had very good tire degradation, very good pace," he said. "That is a very encouraging sign. However, if you look at the first three races, two out of the first three races, they (Red

AP PHOTO



Bull) had the upper hand in the race, so we still have a lot of work to do."

Norris said it wasn't a surprise that he was able to earn his first podium since Brazil last year.

"I think when you take a Red Bull out of it, I would say no," he said. "I think our pace has been good all weekend. We put things together very nicely yesterday. We showed good long run, high-fuel pace on Friday, so I wouldn't have said we had no chance."

The race finished under the virtual safety car, ensuring there was no racing for most of the final lap, after Mercedes driver George Russell crashed on turn seven. Red Bull's Sergio Pérez closed out the top five, and made up just one place from where he started in sixth, after he was handed a three-place grid penalty for impeding Nico Hülkenberg in qualifying.

Two-time world champion Fernando Alonso finished sixth on the road, but fell to eighth after the stewards gave him a 20-second time penalty and three penalty points on his license, for "potentially dangerous" driving

in battling Russell on the final lap.

Alonso lifted off the throttle slightly more than 100 metres earlier than he had done going into turn six during the race, while Russell behind him lost control and crashed at the exit of the corner.

Russell's teammate Lewis Hamilton also didn't finish following a lap 17 engine failure for Mercedes' first double non-finish since the 2021 Azerbaijan Grand Prix, ending its record of reliability.

Japanese driver Yuki Tsunoda earned RB, the team formerly known as AlphaTauri, its first points of the season - with six points for seventh, having been elevated by Alonso's penalty.

American team Haas earned its first double points finish since the 2022 Austrian Grand Prix, with Hülkenberg and teammate Kevin Magnussen closing out the top-10 in ninth and 10th, respectively.

Verstappen's lead in the drivers' standings has been reduced from 15 points to four, with Leclerc in second place. Verstappen has 51 points and Leclerc 47. MDT/AP

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Urology : Dr. Lo Kwong Yin Richard, Dr. Zhao Yun Qiao

Paediatric Surgery : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong

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Obstetrics & Gynaecology : Dr. Fong Kuan Io

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Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine : Dr. Lam Kun Kuan

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OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

TERRORISM A CHALLENGE TO CIVILIZATION THAT CALLS FOR CONCERTED ENDEAVORS TO COUNTER

By attacking a concert hall in a Moscow suburb on Friday night, which has resulted in at least 143 deaths and more than one hundred people being hospitalized for their injuries, the perpetrators have once again exposed to the world how morally low terrorists can be.

Wearing the false mask of “the weak against the strong”, terrorist organizations attack only the most vulnerable targets. Often, as in this instance, concertgoers intent on enjoying live music or people going about their daily lives, commuting or shopping.

It's ordinary people that suffer from the cruelty of these cold-blooded killers.

The Chinese government and Chinese people stand in solidarity with the victims and their families at this time. In a statement released on Saturday, the Chinese leader extended his deep condolences to the bereaved families of the victims, and extended his sincere sympathy to the injured.

He emphasized that China opposes all forms of terrorism, strongly condemns terrorist attacks, and firmly supports the Russian government's efforts to maintain national security and stability.

According to the Russian authorities, the four suspected gunmen and seven others have been arrested and are being detained and questioned in Moscow.

The global response to the attack shows that it is a common understanding that nothing can justify such heinous acts.

The United Nations Security Council has condemned “the heinous and cowardly terrorist attack” and called it “reprehensible”, while other members of the international society have expressed similar statements of sympathy and outrage.

Despite the complexities of international affairs and the conflicts of interests among countries, it is a consensus of the international community as a whole that terrorism targeted at civilians is intolerable. So even though some countries are at odds with Russia, they have still decried the terrorist attack on Moscow concertgoers on Friday.

This is the right response because terrorism poses a challenge to all countries and people around the world. What happened in Moscow on Friday could happen anywhere at any time. The attack is a reminder that terrorism remains one of the most serious threats to global peace and security, and it requires a unified and resolute response from all nations. The international community must work in close cooperation to ensure that all those responsible are swiftly brought to justice in accordance with international law.

As a major member of the international community and close neighbor with friendly relations with Russia, and a country that has also been the victim of terrorist attacks, China engages in practical cooperation with Russia and other countries on multiple aspects in the fight against the evil forces of terrorism, separatism and extremism.

The nation has joined 12 global counterterrorism conventions and it has played an important role in facilitating joint efforts to promote regional security and stability through agreements such as the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Member States Agreement on Border Defense Cooperation.

Founded in 2001, the SCO has grown from six member states to a big family of over 20 member states, observers and dialogue partners. As a major political, economic and international security and defense organization, the SCO's counterterrorism mechanism is of great practical importance in the regional approach to fighting terrorism, which is an inherently cross-border threat to countries. The SCO now needs to further strengthen its collective and collaborative counterterrorism capacities.

The terrorist attack in Moscow on Friday is a call of action for all nations to stand together in the fight against extremism and to work tirelessly to prevent such tragedies from occurring in the future.

Russia and China vetoed a U.S.-sponsored United Nations resolution supporting “an immediate and sustained cease-fire” in the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, calling the measure ambiguous and saying it was not the direct demand to end the fighting that much of the world seeks.

The vote in the Security Council became another showdown involving world powers that are locked in tense disputes elsewhere, with the United States taking criticism for not being tough enough against its ally Israel, whose ongoing military offensive has created a dire humanitarian crisis for the 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza.

A key issue was the unusual language that said the Security Council

“determines the imperative of an immediate and sustained cease-fire.” The phrasing was not a straightforward “demand” or “call” to halt hostilities.

The resolution reflected a shift by the United States, which has found itself at odds with much of the world as even allies of Israel push for an unconditional end to fighting.

In previous resolutions, the U.S. has closely intertwined calls for a cease-fire with demands for the release of Israeli hostages in Gaza. This resolution, using wording that's open to interpretation, continued to link the two issues, but not as firmly.

AFTER SHOCKING CANCER REVEAL

WORLDWIDE SUPPORT POURS IN FOR KATE

SUPPORT poured in from around the world over the weekend for Kate, the Princess of Wales, after she revealed in a candid video message that she is undergoing chemotherapy for cancer following major abdominal surgery.

The princess's poignant video, in which she spoke about the “huge shock” and “incredibly tough couple of months” for her family after her diagnosis, came after weeks of frenzied speculation on social media about her health and well-being.

“This of, course, came as a huge shock, and William and I have been doing everything we can to process and manage this privately for the sake of our young family,” Kate said in the video, which was recorded Wednesday in Windsor.

“It has taken us time to explain everything to George, Charlotte and Louis in a way that is appropriate for them, and to reassure them that I am going to be OK,” she added, referring to her three young children.

Kate, 42, did not say what type of cancer was discovered after her sur-

gery. She said she is now in the early stages of preventative chemotherapy, and is “getting stronger every day.”

Her condition was initially thought to be non-cancerous, until post-surgery tests revealed the diagnosis, she said.

The announcement will at least partly tamp down the intense and sometimes fantastical speculation and conspiracy theories about Kate's condition that have multiplied on social media since Kensington Palace announced in mid-January that she had been hospitalized for unspecified abdominal surgery.

Hashtags including “WeLoveYouCatherine” and “GetWellSoonCatherine” were trending Friday on X, formerly Twitter, while political leaders, celebrities and cancer survivors sent messages of support.

“She has been subjected to intense scrutiny and has been unfairly treated by certain sections of the media around the world and on social media,” Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said. “She has shown tremendous bravery with her



statement.”

U.S. President Joe Biden posted on social media, saying he and first lady Jill Biden “join millions around the world in praying for your full recovery, Princess Kate.”

King Charles III, who is also undergoing treatment for an unspecified type of cancer, said in a statement that he was “so proud of Catherine for her courage in speaking as she did.” Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, who have been estranged from the royal family since their move to California in 2020, said they wished “health and healing for Kate and the family.” MDT/AP

THE DECISIVE MOMENT



Dancing in the street. The 2024 Macao International Parade, in celebration of the 25th anniversary of Macau's return to China, filled main streets downtown with thousands of people.



US-backed force that defeated the Islamic State group in Syria five years ago warned that the extremists still pose grave dangers throughout the world and called on the international community to find solutions for thousands of fighters still held in its jails. The statement by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces to mark the fifth anniversary since IS lost the last sliver of its self-declared caliphate came hours after the group claimed responsibility for Friday's attack in Moscow that left 133 people dead.



Russia A Soyuz rocket carrying three astronauts to the International Space Station blasted off this weekend, two days after its launch was aborted at the last minute. The spacecraft carrying NASA astronaut Tracy Dyson, Russian Oleg Novitsky and Marina Vasilevskaya of Belarus launched smoothly from the Russian-leased Baikonur launch facility in Kazakhstan.

Vatican Pope Francis decided at the last minute to skip his homily during Palm Sunday Mass in St. Peter's Square, avoiding a strenuous speech at the start of a busy Holy Week that will test his increasingly frail health. Hobbled by bad knees and persistent respiratory problems, Francis also didn't participate in the procession of cardinals around the obelisk in the piazza at the start of the Mass. Instead, the 87-year-old pontiff blessed the palm fronds and olive branches carried by the faithful from the altar.



Brazil Heavy rains in Rio de Janeiro state have killed at least seven people, authorities said, while a 4-year-old girl was rescued after more than 16 hours under mud. Firefighters have struggled to reach those hit by heavy rains, many of them residents of long endangered areas. Sniffing dogs were also part of the rescue efforts. Almost 100 people had been saved, authorities said.