



**SECOND GROUP OF 40 HONG KONG SECONDARY STUDENTS EMBARKS ON EDUCATIONAL TOUR OF MACAU, MGTO REPORTS**

P2

**PSP EXPANDS ONLINE FINE PAYMENT PLATFORM**

P4

**NEVADA'S FIRST-EVER BIG-GAME MOOSE HUNT IN THE FALL**

P5



AP PHOTO



**Japanese** Prime Minister Fumio Kishida offered to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un “as soon as possible,” but was told that prospects for their countries’ first summit in about 20 years would depend on Tokyo tolerating North Korea’s weapons program and ignoring its past abductions of Japanese nationals. Kishida said later that a meeting with Kim is “crucial” to resolve the abduction issue, a major sticking point in bilateral ties, and that his government has been using various channels to discuss the possible summit.

AP PHOTO



**South Korea** Senior doctors at dozens of hospitals in South Korea planned to submit their resignations yesterday in support of medical interns and residents who have been on a strike for five weeks over the government’s push to sharply increase medical school admissions, their leader said. The senior doctors’ action won’t likely cause an immediate worsening of hospital operations in South Korea because they have said they would continue to work even after submitting their resignations.

AP PHOTO



**North Korean** leader Kim Jong Un supervised a tank exercise and encouraged his armored forces to sharpen war preparations in the face of growing tensions with South Korea, the North’s state media said yesterday. Kim made those comments while visiting his top tank group, the Seoul Ryu Kyong Su Guards 105th Tank Division. The unit’s name marks how it was the first North Korean military unit to reach the South Korean capital in 1950 when a North Korean surprise attack triggered a war that dragged on for almost four years.

More on backpage



# MORE HOSPITAL BEDS NEEDED URGENTLY: LAWMAKERS

P3

**EVENTS**  
**CITY OF ‘SPORTS AND SHOWS’ SHORT OF VENUES**

P2

**CRIME**  
**36 ARRESTED IN DRUG PARTY RAID AT KARAOKE BAR**

P4

EVENTS

# ELSIE WITHOUT ANSWERS ON 'CITY OF SPORTS AND SHOWS' VENUES

RENATO MARQUES

**L**AWMAKERS' questions on the development of the "City of Sports and Shows" and especially on the search for adequate spaces for major outdoor events did not make much progress in the replies of the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong, at the Legislative Assembly (AL) yesterday evening.

Lawmakers Leong Sun Lok and Ma Io Fong presented two similar inquiries to the government on this topic but the Secretary failed to respond with any real developments, continuing to say, as in the past, that the government is studying alternatives.

Leong had expressed concerns on how Macau could become an effective "City of Sports and Shows" when Macau has few spaces for these activities to take



place and the land resources that could potentially fit the purpose are not being addressed by the government.

While admitting that the current and planned outdoor venues have a maximum capacity limited to as few as 7,000 people, Ao Ieong said "For events including dozens of thousands of people [we are still thinking

[of outdoor venues]."

Nonetheless, she said the government is considering the use of a land plot next to the Macau Tower, one of those mentioned in the inquiry of Leong.

Ao Ieong also said that in about two weeks the government will publish the creation of a multidisciplinary team including elements of

several government services and departments to coordinate the development of the "City of Sports and Shows" from different perspectives, including suitable locations and transportation.

Lawmakers Nick Lei and Ella Lei also intervened in the topic pushing the government to be more proactive and provide faster responses to the policies they create or embrace.

Ella Lei insisted on the low utilization of the Macao East Asian Games Dome in Cotai as well as land plots contiguous to this facility claiming that "noise would be less of the problem there" but the Secretary refrained from advancing any comments on such possibilities.

## ZONE A SPORTS FACILITIES WILL COME LAST

**T**HE two new sports facilities planned for Zone A of the new landfills will not be rising from the ground anytime soon, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong, said in response to lawmaker Ma Io Fong at the AL.

The lawmaker had questioned the topic as part of his inquiry on the development of Macau as a "City of Sports and Shows."

In response, the Secretary noted that while there are plans to build two sports facilities in plots A9 and B4 of Zone A, these facilities as well as "several cultural facilities that will be side-by-side" are included in the "last part of the development of Zone A," she said, the construction of which is expected to start in the next few years.

# MGTO hosts 2nd group of HK students to educational tour in Macau

**A** second group of 40 secondary school students from Hong Kong has visited Macau for an educational tour, which covered several sites, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has announced.

The tour was the second occasion so far this year. Both tours were held in association with the Young Post of South China Morning Post (SCMP).

The statement said the young travelers explored different famous attractions such as the Ruins of St. Paul's, Na Tcha Temple, Mount Fortress, Macao



Museum, Macau Tower and Macao Grand Prix Museum.

A guided tour was arranged for the students to learn more about the

exhibits and motorsport culture in Macau at the Macao Grand Prix Museum.

"As a highlight of the tour, the students also visited the Macao Science Center, which is one of the 'National Science Popularization and Education Bases' and 'National Scientist Spirit Education Bases' as well as a learning space that fosters Macau's 'City of Education Study Tours' project. Their visit furthers educational tourism development in Macau," the MGTO said.

It was also disclosed that following a pre-selection process, the news outlet provided English media writing lessons for students in preparation for the educational tour, to enhance their related skills and writing of travelogues about their education tour experiences in Macau. **AL**

# ROTARY BLOOD DONATION DAY ENCOURAGES PUBLIC TO GIVE BLOOD REGULARLY

**M**ACAU'S eight Rotary clubs partnered with the local Blood Transfusion Service to hold their annual "Rotary Blood Donation Day" last weekend at the NOVA Mall. Now in its 24th year, the event aims to encourage regular blood donations, especially of negative blood types.

For over two decades, the collaborative effort has emphasized the lifesaving importance of maintaining Macau's blood reserves.

This year, donations were accepted throughout March at the NOVA Mall, which provided a high-traffic location to maximize outreach and allow for

donations to be accepted over an extended timeframe, a press release from the organizers said.

Rotary Club of Macau president Joao Pinto thanked the mall for hosting and giving the campaign renewed visibility.

"Blood donors offer the gift of life," he said.

Originally launched in 2001 by late Rotary Club president Alfredo Ritchie, a medical doctor himself, the drive has had a profound impact over two decades. The eight local clubs "aim to ensure a robust blood supply through inspiring regular donations and emphasizing their role in public welfare."

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**Times**  
DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF\_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com  
ASSISTANT EDITOR\_Lynzy Valles  
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS\_Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS\_Alex Torrao, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Jorge Costa Oliveira, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Sérgio de Almeida Correia, Viviana Seguí DESIGNERS\_Miguel Bandeira, Rebeca Almeida | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS\_JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES\_Associated Press, MacauHub, MacaoNews, Xinhua SECRETARY\_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com  
OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com  
ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84  
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RENATO MARQUES



## HEALTH

# Lawmakers call for more hospital beds

RENATO MARQUES

**M**ANY lawmakers yesterday called on the government increase public hospital beds to cater to the growing needs of an increasingly older population.

The calls came at yesterday's Legislative Assembly (AL) session dedicated to the first part of a Q&A between lawmakers and the government officials.

The debate started over an inquiry by lawmaker Ella Lei on the need to improve rehabilitation services and staffing, seizing the golden period of treatment to support patients' recovery.

In several interventions, lawmakers insistently called on the government to add more hospital beds to attend to those of older age who suffer from strokes and their side effects as well as fractures related to falls, among others.

Lawmakers claimed that it was "unsuitable," in most cases, for senior citizens to return to their homes while receiving treatment from the hospital, noting the difficulties for their families in taking care of them.

In response, and also advancing that soon a higher number of beds will be available in the new hospital facilities that the government is finalizing, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, El-

sie Ao Ieong, said that, in some cases, "there are people that stay in hospital[] for treatment over fractures for as much as two years."

She said the government aims to transfer some of these cases, when that is possible, to nursing homes.

On the topic, Ao Ieong also said that the government has recently raised the financial support to caretakers by 3% but lawmakers insist that rather than subsidies what residents need is for the government to offer them quality public health services, as most of them cannot afford the price of the private services.

The Secretary added that she was "happy that people prefer the public" but added, "but if they want a complete service that might not be possible as this [type of service] is only available to those that can afford it."

Still, Ao Ieong said that the government intends to establish a third level of medical care in Macau in between the hospitals and the healthcare centers. The Secretary said that as soon as the Day Hospitals start operating, the search for treatments, and particularly rehabilitation, should improve.

### RESPONSE TO CASES OF STROKE ACCORDING TO STANDARDS

One of the matters that also raised wide discussion during

yesterday's meeting was regarding the time taken to respond to cases of stroke.

As mentioned in the inquiry of Ella Lei, there is a so-called "golden period" for the detection and usage of an intravenous treatment to prevent serious damage or death in patients who suffer strokes.

According to Ao Ieong, Macau is meeting the international standards that she said was 60 minutes, while noting that the local response time is around 54 minutes.

Several lawmakers, including Ron Lam, rejected the statement, noting that the time statistics made by the public hospital take only into account the time of arrival of the ambulance to the emergency and not the time that mediates in between that and the application of the treatment. He also called on the government to push the time way back to a safer level to avoid unnecessary harm to residents.

On the same topic, the director of the Health Bureau, Alvis Lo, clarified that the "Golden Period" for the treatment of strokes is about three hours, from the first signs until the treatment.

He also said that in Macau there is not a great issue with this time as "transportation [via ambulance] to the hospital is usually fast as Macau is small when compared with other places", reaffirming that local medical services are well on time.

### LACKING THERAPISTS BUT SOME ARE UNEMPLOYED

Another of the debated points was the alleged lack of therapists for several specialties such as physiotherapy and occupational and speech therapy.

According to the Secretary, Macau needs a lot more of these professionals and there are not enough locals who have qualifications for these posts. Lawmaker Chan Iek Lap, who is also the president of the Macau Chinese Medical Association disagreed, however, and stated that there are currently some of these therapists that are unemployed or working in a precarious situation.

Chan noted that there are enormous differences between the salary and benefits of the therapists who work in the private or the public sector.

Those in the private sector only earn a fraction of what those hired by the government are earning.

This discourages more young people from joining the profession, although the government is saying that it is working hard to promote it among them. Chan said the government should rectify this situation as soon as possible.

In response, Ao Ieong said that in some cases, such as Speech Therapy, the government outsources therapists from the private sector, something that, she said, can also happen to other types of therapists.

On the same topic, lawmaker Lo Choi In intervened suggesting, yet again, an unusual solution. For Lo since Macau is becoming an even more aging society, the solution would be to hire "unqualified" therapists as "Therapist Assistants" which would allow more young people to start in the profession without the need to "waste time taking university majors that take a long time," she said.

### NORTHBOUND DRIVERS SHOULD BE MINDFUL OF DURATIONS OF STAY

Local drivers in mainland China on the northbound vehicle travel scheme are reminded to be mindful of their durations of stay as well as geographical boundaries, the Traffic Bureau (DSAT) has said in a statement. Under the scheme, a vehicle should stay no longer than 30 days on one trip each year 180 days in Guangdong Province, which is the only provincial jurisdiction open to the scheme. From the beginning of the scheme to mid-March this year, 15 vehicles stayed longer than 30 days, while in February this year, nearly 10 vehicles crossed the provincial boundary.

### MEDICAL VOUCHERS FROM 2022 TO EXPIRE END OF APRIL

The medical vouchers issued by the government in 2022 will expire April 30, 2024, the Health Bureau (SSM) has said in a statement, adding that holders of these vouchers should use them before the deadline if they want to make use of the facility. All these vouchers are available in digital form, the use of which is facilitated by the user's ID card. Transfer of the vouchers, only to spouses and first level ancestors or descendants, can be conducted on the One Account app or government service e-kiosks.

### 2024MIECF TO WELCOME PUBLIC ON LAST SHOW DAY

Held between March 28 and 30, this year's Macao International Environmental Co-operation Forum & Exhibition (2024MIECF) will welcome members of the public on free-of-charge basis on its last show day. A series of educational activities on environmental protection will be arranged at the venue, including stage games, booth games, environmental workshops, a booth for the public to apply as a member of "Eco Fun" and a lucky draw. In addition, eco-friendly souvenirs will be available on-site and the mascots of the Environmental Protection Bureau will be present to interact with the public to promote the concept of a green and low-carbon lifestyle.



**CRIME**

# 36 ARRESTED FOR DRUG PARTY AT A KARAOKE BAR

ANTHONY LAM

**L**AST Saturday, 36 partygoers were arrested for dealing or staging a drug party at a local karaoke bar, the Judiciary Police (PJ) announced yesterday.

Three people were charged with drug dealing, and the other 33 – 15 men and 18 women – with drug taking. The three alleged drug dealers are all non-local workers from Vietnam, respectively surnamed Lam, 27, cleaner; Tran, 36, security worker; and Tran, 30, cook.

The other 33 alleged drug takers are aged between 21 and 44. Of the 15 men, 13 are Vietnamese, and the other two are a local resident and a Hong Kong resident. All the women are non-local workers with a mix of nationalities.

Following intelligence about the possibility of a drug party in the karaoke bar, the police took action on March 23 and investigated the

VIP room of the karaoke bar. Upon arrival, the police found the 36 people apparently looking under the influence who declined to cooperate with the investigation.

Searching the room, the inspectors found 1.31 grams of suspicious substances and a significant number of apparatuses for drug taking. The substances were later confirmed to be ketamine, of a value equating to about MOP1,000.

Further investigations have revealed that the alleged drug dealers had bought the substances for the price of MOP14,000 and organized the "birthday party" to distribute the substances to their friends. The police believed that most of the drugs had been consumed.

Drug tests confirmed that 24 people were positive for methamphetamine, ecstasy and ketamine. The police added that further investigation is needed to determine the source and original quantity

of the drugs.

In another case, a woman has accused a man of sexual harassment, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) disclosed yesterday.

The police received the report of the case at about 10:30 p.m. on March 19. The suspect is surnamed Kou, 34, a local resident who reportedly works as a driver. The incident took place in an inner alley, the police added.

The female victim told the police that she was dragging a bag of trash to the collection point from her workplace. The bag was torn by the friction of the dragging, so trash started coming out of the bag.

She said that at this moment, the man approached her, saying that he could offer help. However, he reportedly grasped both of her hands. Feeling frightened, the woman called her boss for help. The boss arrived at the scene and the man left briefly, before returning to the scene to

further disturb the woman. He then departed from the site.

Receiving the report, the police locked down the suspect using the public surveillance camera system. At about 12:40 p.m., March 20, the man was intercepted at Central District. Interrogations revealed that the man had consumed alcoholic beverages during dinner in Fai Chi Kei earlier that night. He said that he was tipsy, if not drunk, so that he forgot what had happened.

Another case had the PJ, PSP and Macao Customs working together to stop an illegal immigration syndicate and 14 people were arrested as a result – six operators and eight illegal immigrants. Four of them were arrested in Macau. Among them, two are a local couple, with the husband surnamed Lei, 40 and the wife Mui, 33. The rest are two mainland men – surnamed Xiong, 40 and Wei, 46.

It was added that the eight illegal immigrants were reported to be coming to Macau for gambling purposes.

The police disclosed that the illegal immigrants made use of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge island to conduct the activity.

# PSP expands fine payment online platform

**T**HE Public Security Police Force (PSP) has updated its fine payment online platform to allow payment of fines for jaywalking and a number of other traffic violations.

Before the update, the platform only accepted fine payments for vehicle violations, such as illegal parking.

Payments can be paid in the Traffic section of the online services of the PSP website. After clicking Violation Query, the fine ticket number should be inserted. This final step concerns jaywalkers; cycling, skatebiking or wheelchair violations; as well as violations by non-local vehicles at the delta bridge East Carpark.

The relevant car plate number, however, should be entered into the system when paying fines concerning vehicle violations.

Payments can be made by Visa, MasterCard or UnionPay.

Violations involving pedestrians have dropped from the weekly average of several hundred early this year, to a little over 100 cases recently. Between March 11 and 17, 157 such violations were logged.

The police said that handling relevant violations through the bureau's online system will be more convenient and time-saving, adding that to ensure the safety of road users, the latter must abide by traffic rules when traveling.

Non-local drivers should understand the local traffic laws and regulations before driving. They should pay attention to road conditions when driving and avoid driving behaviors that jeopardize other road users. Pedestrians should use pedestrian crossing facilities to cross the road and not engage in dangerous behaviors that jeopardize road traffic. **AL**



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HUNTING

# Nevada's first big-game moose hunt will be tiny as unusual southern expansion defies climate change

SCOTT SONNER, RENO

**I**N what will be a tiny big-game hunt for some of the largest animals in North America, Nevada is planning its first-ever moose hunting season this fall.

Wildlife managers say explosive growth in Nevada moose numbers over the past five years, increasing to a population of more than 100, justifies the handful of harvests planned.

Scientists say the experiment of sorts should also provide a real-time peek at how the complexities of climate change affect wildlife, and why these majestic — some say goofy-looking — mammals the size of a horse have unexpectedly expanded their range into warmer territory.

"Moose are newcomers to North America," said Cody McKee, a Nevada Department of Wildlife specialist.

The last deer species to cross the Bering Sea land bridge into Alaska and Canada, McKee said the movement of moose into the Lower 48 has occurred almost exclusively in the past 150 years.

"Their post-glacial range expansion isn't really complete," McKee said. "And that's what we're currently seeing in Nevada right now, is those moose are moving into the state and finding suitable habitat."

Only a few Nevada moose, perhaps just one, will be killed across an area larger than Massachusetts and New Jersey combined. But state officials expect thousands of applications for the handful of hunting tags, and it's already controversial.

"Why a moose hunt at all?" Stephanie Myers of Las Vegas asked at a recent wildlife commission meeting. "We want to see moose, view moose. Not kill moose."

The first moose was



spotted in Nevada in the 1950s, not long before the dim-witted cartoon character "Bullwinkle" made his television debut. Only a handful of sightings followed for decades, but started increasing about 10 years ago.

By 2018, officials estimated there were 30 to 50, all in Nevada's northeast corner. But the population has more than doubled and experts believe there's enough habitat to sustain about 200, a level that could be reached in three years.

Bryan Bird, Defenders of Wildlife's Southwest program director, is among the skeptics who suspect it's a short-lived phenomenon.

"I believe the moose story is one of 'ghost' habitat or 'ghost' range expansion. By that I mean, these animals are expanding into habitat that may not be suitable in 50 years due to climate change," Bird said.

Government biologists admit they don't fully understand why the moose have moved so far south, where seasonal conditions are warmer and drier than they traditionally prefer.

"It seems to be opposite of where we would expect to see moose expansion given their ecology," said Marcus Blum, a Texas A&M

University researcher hired to help assess future movement. He analyzed aerial surveys, individual sightings and habitat to project growth trends.

Six feet tall at the shoulder and up to 1,000 pounds moose live in riparian areas where they munch on berry bushes and aspen leaves along the edges of mountain forests native to the northern half of Nevada.

They usually avoid places where temperatures regularly exceed 20 Celsius.

The Nevada study documented moose spending nearly half their time in areas where that "thermal threshold" was exceeded about 150 days a year, while climate change models suggest the threshold will be surpassed by another 14 days annually by 2050, Blum said.

To be clear, the valleys beneath the snow-capped winter mountain ranges with moose are 500 miles from the Las Vegas Strip in the desert many people picture as Nevada.

Researchers have more questions than answers about why moose continue to expand their range into Nevada where extended drought has taken a toll on other wildlife, McKee said.

"There's a lot of speculation and questions about why they are here, given concerns about the changing environment and how it's probably getting warmer and dryer," McKee said. "Why is it that our extensive drought cycles haven't seemed to be affecting the moose population?"

Populations along the U.S.-Canada border have oscillated for more than a century. Several states, from Idaho to Minnesota and Maine, have dramatically reduced hunting quotas at times to allow populations to recover.

Alaska is home to the vast majority of U.S. moose, upwards of 200,000, with about 7,000 harvests annually. Maine has nearly 70,000, which is five times more than any other Lower 48 state, and issued 4,100 permits last year. Neighboring New Hampshire offered only 35 for 3,000-plus moose and Idaho issued about 500 for its 10,000 to 12,000.

No moose were observed in Washington state before the 1960s but its growing population now exceeds 5,000. The state issued three hunting permits in 1977 and now tops 100 annually.

Nevada's research suggests its population could sustain more harvests than planned, McKee said, but "conservative is the name of the game here."

Successful hunters must present the skull and antlers for state inspection within five days. That will give scientists more insight into herd health, body conditions, disease and parasites.

Bill Nolan of Sparks, who first hunted ducks at age 12, says he intends to apply for a chance he describes as "slim and none" to draw a moose tag.

"For hunters, it would be like hitting the lottery," he said. **MDT/AP**

ADVERTORIAL

## GREAT TIMES

Hop into Easter with Vibrant Delights at MGM

**E**aster long weekend is just around the corner. For a perfect blend of festivities and culinary delights, look no further than MGM MACAU and MGM COTAI. From exclusive lunches and festive specialties to lavish buffets, there's something to satisfy all tastes and needs for holiday gatherings.



Indulge in a French-style Easter Lunch at Aux Beaux Arts, where Pâté Berrichon, Lamb Roulade and more classic delicacies await, while Grill 58 elevates your lunch escapade with its scrumptious creations featuring premium cuts of beef from Butcher's Trolley, seasonal seafood, and more. If you love fusion creations, you can't miss the exquisite "Eggs on Egg" Chawanmushi with Caviar and Chanterelle at Aji.



If you prefer a buffet style, Rossio presents Easter Lunch and Dinner Buffet with a variety of Portuguese and Macanese delicacies, seasonal seafood, and Easter-themed desserts. Coast offers an Easter Lunch Buffet with a live station serving roasted lamb leg and slow cooked beef ribeye, and a variety of seasonal specialties.



Add a touch of sweetness to your Easter basket with vibrant pastries. Delight in the adorable festive cakes at Pastry Bar and Anytime beneath the enchanting glass canopy. Kids can join the popular Easter Egg Decoration Workshop at Anytime and take home their unique creations.

For more Easter delights, visit [mgm.mo](http://mgm.mo).

SOUTH CHINA SEA

# Philippines lodges its 'strongest protest' against China, Beijing urges Manila to 'stop infringements'

**T**HE Philippines lodged its "strongest protest" against Beijing yesterday and summoned a senior Chinese diplomat over a water cannon assault by the Chinese coast guard that injured Filipino navy crew members and heavily damaged their boat in the disputed South China Sea, officials said.

Two Chinese coast guard ships hit a Philippine navy-operated supply boat with water cannons Saturday in the latest and most serious confrontation between the rival Asian claimants near the disputed Second Thomas Shoal, which is surrounded by Chinese vessels in a bid to dislodge Philippine forces from there.

The Chinese Embassy in Manila issued a statement by the Chinese coast guard that warned the Philippines against "playing with fire."

Philippine Foreign Undersecretary Theresa Lazaro in a phone call with her Chinese counterpart expressed "the Philippines' strongest protest against the aggressive actions undertaken by the China coast guard and Chinese maritime militia against the rotation and resupply mission undertaken by the Philippines," the Department of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

It added that it separately summoned a senior Chinese diplomat in Manila to convey the protest and demand that Chinese ships immediately leave the waters around Second Thomas Shoal, which lies in the Philippines' ex-



clusive economic zone, and for China "to stop violating international law," the Associated Press has reported.

Philippine defense, security and foreign affairs officials convened a meeting yesterday to discuss new steps to deal with what they say is China's unacceptable and provocative actions in the South China Sea.

According to AP, their recommendations would be submitted to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

and were not immediately released to the public.

On Sunday, China's Ministry of National Defense urged the Philippines to stop all infringements and provocative actions around Ren'ai Reef in the South China Sea.

Ministry spokesman Senior Colonel Wu Qian made the remarks after Philippine ships illegally entered waters adjacent to Ren'ai Reef, off China's Nansha islands.

China Daily reported that, Wu said on Saturday, three Philippine vessels illegally intruded into the waters during an attempt to transport supplies and construction materials to a military vessel that the Philippines intentionally grounded on the reef in 1999.

The China Coast Guard lawfully and properly regulated, intercepted and expelled the Philippine vessels, resolutely thwarting the Philippines' provocative attempt to encroach on Chinese

territory, Wu said, adding that the incident was entirely provoked by the Philippines, and China's handling of the situation was standard, reasonable, lawful and professional.

China Coast Guard spokesman Gan Yu said in a statement issued on Saturday that just 18 days after the last round of resupply — which he earlier described as "a temporary special arrangement out of humanitarian concern" — the Philippines had broken its pledge to respect China's territorial waters and again dispatched two coast guard ships and one supply vessel to infringe into the waters near Ren'ai Reef, attempting to carry out "abnormal resupply operations and transport construction materials" to the grounded vessel.

He said the Philippine side had provocatively seized the opportunity to infringe on China's rights and intentionally destroy the peace and stability of the South China Sea.

"At the scene, the Philippine supply ship disregarded the Chinese side's repeated dissuasion, warnings and navigation control, and still forcefully intruded," Gan said.

He said that in response, the China Coast Guard implemented interception, obstruction and expulsion following laws and regulations, handling the situation in a "reasonable, lawful, professional and standardized manner".

"We warn the Philippine side: those who play with fire will only humiliate themselves," he said. "The China Coast Guard is always on high alert, resolutely safeguarding national territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests."

Wu emphasized that China holds indisputable sovereignty over the Nansha islands, including Ren'ai Reef and adjacent waters.

"China's sovereignty and territorial integrity are not to be violated," he said. **MDT/AGENCIES**

CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

## Former Taiwan leader Ma Ying-jeou to visit mainland

**F**ORMER Taiwan leader Ma Ying-jeou will lead a group of Taiwan youths to the Chinese mainland from April 1-11 and visit places including Guangdong, Shaanxi and Beijing, for "root-seeking" and exchanges, a Chinese mainland spokesman said yesterday, according to China Daily.

The newspaper said they will participate in the Qingming Festival Memorial Ceremony for the Yellow Emperor held in Shaanxi province, said Chen Binhua,

a spokesman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office.

"We welcome Mr Ma and the group's visit, hoping that compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait will jointly inherit and promote the excellent traditional Chinese culture of honoring ancestors and remembering their origins," he said.

He called on compatriots from both sides to facilitate cross-strait exchanges and cooperation in fields such as youth exchanges,

to enhance mutual understanding and spiritual resonance, promote the peaceful development of cross-strait relations, benefit compatriots on both sides, and jointly promote the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Ma led a group of Taiwan youths to the mainland for exchanges from March 27 to April 7 last year. During the visit, he paid his respects to his ancestors on Tomb Sweeping Day, and talked with mainland youths.



MDT ARCHIVE

MYANMAR

# Thailand sends aid to war-torn country, but critics say it will only help junta

**T**HAILAND delivered its first batch of humanitarian aid to war-torn Myanmar yesterday, in what officials hope will be a continuing effort to ease the plight of millions of people displaced by fighting.

But critics charge that the aid will benefit only people in areas under the Myanmar military's control, providing it with a propaganda boost while leaving the vast majority of displaced people in contested areas without access to assistance.

Myanmar is wracked by a nationwide armed conflict that began after the army ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021 and suppressed widespread nonviolent protests that sought a return to democratic rule. The fighting has displaced millions of people and battered the economy.

Thailand sent ten trucks over the border from the northern province of Tak, carrying some 4,000



A Myanmar's truck driver walks by his truck carrying aid before they leave the customs checkpoint near the Thai border with Myanmar, in Mae Sot

packages of aid to three towns in Kayin State, also known as Karen State, where it will be distributed to approximately 20,000 displaced people.

The parcels contained aid worth around 5 million baht (\$138,000), mostly food, instant beverages and other basic items such as toiletries.

More than 2.8 million people

in Myanmar are displaced, according to U.N. agencies, most by fighting that arose after the army's takeover. They say 18.6 million people, including 6 million children, require humanitarian aid.

Carl Skau, Chief Operating Officer of the U.N.'s World Food Programme, said earlier this month that one in four of the displaced is at risk of acute food insecurity.

The initiative for what has been called a humanitarian corridor is being carried out by the Thai Red Cross, with funding from Thailand's Foreign Ministry and logistical support from the army, which traditionally has played a major role in border activities.

Officials from Thailand and Myanmar's Kayin State attended a send-off ceremony, which was presided over by Thai Vice Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuanketkeow. Myanmar's Red Cross will handle distribution of the aid.

Drivers from Myanmar took the trucks across the 2nd Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge, which crosses the Moei River on the border.

"That corridor puts humanitarian aid into the hands of the junta because it goes into the hands of the junta-controlled Myanmar Red Cross," Tom Andrews, the U.N. independent human rights expert on Myanmar, said last week.

"So we know that the junta

takes these resources, including humanitarian, and weaponizes them, uses them for their own military strategic advantage. The fact of the matter is, is that the reason that humanitarian aid is in such desperate need is precisely because of the junta."

Andrews said the areas in desperate need are "conflict areas in which the junta has absolutely no influence or control whatsoever. So those are the areas we need to focus on."

Large areas of the country, especially frontier areas, are now contested or controlled by anti-military resistance forces, including pro-democracy fighters allied with armed ethnic minority organizations that have been fighting for greater autonomy for decades.

Thai officials say the process of distribution will be monitored by the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management to ensure it reaches people fairly and equally. **MDT/AP**

AD



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Times

PUTIN'S WAR

# Poland demands explanation from Russia after missile enters its airspace

VANESSA GERA  
& TONY HICKS, KYIV

**P**OLAND demanded an explanation from Russia yesterday [Macau time] after one of its missiles strayed briefly into Polish airspace during a major missile attack on Ukraine, prompting the NATO member to activate F-16 fighter jets.

It was Russia's third big missile attack on Ukraine in the past four days, and the second to target the capital, Kyiv.

The governor of the Lviv region, Maksym Kozyskyi, said on the Telegram platform that critical infrastructure was hit, but he didn't specify what precisely was struck. No deaths or injuries were reported.

Later, authorities said that rescuers had just put out a fire at a critical infrastructure facility in the Lviv region, which had been attacked with missiles and drones at night and in the morning.

The head of Kyiv's military administration, Serhiy Popko, said Russia used cruise missiles launched from Tu-95MS strategic bombers. An air alert in the capital lasted for more than two hours as rockets entered Kyiv in groups from the north.

He said the attacks were launched from the Engels district in the Saratov region of Russia.

According to preliminary data, there were no casualties or damage in the capital, he said.

Armed Forces Operational Command of Poland, a member of NATO, said in a statement that there was a violation of Polish airspace at 4:23 a.m. (0323 GMT) by one of the cruise missiles launched by Russia against towns in western Ukraine.

The object entered near Oserdow, a village in an agricultural region near the border with Ukraine, and stayed in Polish airspace for 39 seconds, the statement said. It wasn't immediately clear if Russia intended for



A woman holds a sign during a protest in Kyiv

the missile to enter Poland's airspace. Cruise missiles are able to change their trajectory to evade air defense systems.

Polish Defense Minister Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz later told reporters in a televised news conference that the Russian missile would have been shot down had there been any indication that it was heading towards a target in Poland.

He said that Polish authorities monitored the attack on Ukraine and were in contact with Ukrainian counterparts. Polish and NATO F-16s were activated as part of the strategic response.

He said the missile penetrated Polish airspace about a kilometer or two (a half-mile to around a mile) as Russia was targeting the region around Lviv in western Ukraine.

"As last night's rocket attack on Ukraine was one of the most intense since the beginning of the Russian aggression, all the strategic procedures were launched on time and the object was

monitored until it left the Polish airspace," he said.

On the diplomatic front, the Polish foreign ministry said that it would "demand explanations from the Russian Federation in connection with another violation of the country's airspace."

"Above all, we call on the Russian Federation to stop the terrorist air attacks on the inhabitants and territory of Ukraine, end the war, and address the country's internal problems," the statement read.

Andrzej Szejna, a deputy foreign minister, told the TVN24 broadcaster that the foreign ministry intended to summon the Russian ambassador to Poland and hand him a protest note.

Henryk Zdyb, the head of the village of Oserdow, said in an interview with the daily Gazeta Wyborcza that he saw the missile, saying it produced a whistling sound.

"I saw a rapidly moving object in the sky. It was illuminated and flying quite low over the border with Ukraine," he told the paper.

Since Russia launched a

full-scale invasion of Ukraine more than two years ago, there have been a number of intrusions into Polish airspace, triggering worry in the European Union and NATO member state and reminding people of how close the war is.

"We have to come to terms with the fact that the war is taking place right next to us, and we are part of the confrontation between the West and Russia," commentator Artur Bartkiewicz wrote in the Rzeczpospolita newspaper Sunday.

In 2022, two Poles were killed in a missile blast. Western officials blamed those deaths on a Ukrainian air defense missile that went astray, but also accused Russia of culpability because it started the war, with the Ukrainian missiles launched in self-defense.

On Saturday night, one person was killed and four others were wounded in a Ukrainian missile attack on Sevastopol on the Russia-occupied Crimean Peninsula, city Gov. Mikhail Razvozhayev said on his Telegram channel. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1979 ISRAEL AND EGYPT SHAKE HANDS ON PEACE DEAL



Israel and Egypt have ended 30 years of war with an historic peace treaty brokered by the United States.

The ceremony on the White House lawn in Washington was broadcast live on television. The two leaders sealed the deal with a firm handshake, watched by a smiling President Jimmy Carter.

Both President Anwar al-Sadat of Egypt, and the Israeli Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, described the ceremony as an "historic turning point".

Mr Sadat praised President Carter as "the man who performed the miracle".

"Without exaggeration," he said, "what he did constitutes one of the greatest achievements of our time".

Mr Carter, however, was more cautious, saying the treaty was "a first step on a long and difficult road."

"We must not minimise the obstacles that lie ahead," he said.

Deep divisions between the two sides remain, and even in their speeches following the ceremony the two presidents revealed how far there is still to go.

Mr Begin spoke emotionally of how the city of Jerusalem could never be divided; while Mr Sadat was unreservedly frank about the question of Palestinian autonomy.

News of the signing ceremony was greeted with angry demonstrations throughout the Arab world. Crowds stormed the Egyptian Embassy in Kuwait, and there was a strike in the West Bank.

The PLO leader, Yasser Arafat, told a rally in West Beirut: "Let them sign what they like. False peace will not last."

He accused President Sadat of betraying the Egyptian people, and said they would eventually eliminate him.

The normally moderate King Hussein of Jordan has now joined President Assad of Syria and President Hassen al Bakr of Iraq in calling a summit conference of opponents of the treaty.

Egypt is thought likely to be expelled from the Arab League as a symbolic gesture of anger at the decision to go it alone in negotiating peace with Israel.

Even in the West, the response to the treaty has been lukewarm. A statement from the nine European Community nations praised the efforts of President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin to make peace.

But, in a comment bound to anger the Israelis, it added that a settlement could only happen if the Palestinian people were given a homeland.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Under the accords, Israel agreed to withdraw troops from the Sinai Peninsula in return for Egypt's recognition of the state of Israel. Palestinians were also granted the right to some self-determination. President Sadat died for his decision to shake hands with Israel, assassinated in 1981 by extremists in the Egyptian army opposed to the treaty. The last Israeli troops left the Sinai Peninsula in 1982. Less than two months later Israel invaded Lebanon. There was little further progress towards peace in the Middle East until the Oslo Peace Process began in 1993. In August 2005, Israel put into force its so-called Disengagement Plan and evicted Jewish settlers from the Gaza strip and began to demolish some settlements on the West Bank as well.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
 Make adjustments together. Collaborate for shared commitments around changes over six months after this Full Moon Eclipse. Adapt for solutions.

**TAURUS**  
 Apr. 20-May. 20  
 Begin a new physical health, work and fitness phase. Adapt practices to grow stronger over the next half-year illuminated by the Libra Lunar Eclipse.

**GEMINI**  
 May. 21-Jun. 21  
 Express your heart, imagination and artistry. Tonight's Full Moon shines on a transition. Adapt directions with a romance, passion or creative endeavor. Shift perspectives.

**CANCER**  
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
 Make repairs. Renovate, remodel and tend your garden. Adapt with domestic changes over six months. Nurture your home and family with this Lunar Eclipse phase.

**LEO**  
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
 Start another chapter. A six-month Full Moon phase highlights communications, connection and intellectual discovery. Adapt around challenges. Keep channels open.

**VIRGO**  
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
 Make a shift around income and finances. Discover profitable opportunities in new directions under this Libra Full Moon Eclipse. Redirect attention toward fresh potential.

**LIBRA**  
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
 A challenge reorients you. This Lunar Eclipse in your sign illuminates new personal directions. Expand boundaries over half a year. Develop an inspiring possibility.

**SCORPIO**  
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
 Review priorities privately. This Eclipse illuminates the dawn of a six-month introspective phase. Balance old responsibilities with new. Process transitions.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
 One social door closes and another opens with this Eclipse. Adapt with community and team changes over six months. Share appreciation and salutations.

**CAPRICORN**  
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
 Consider an exciting career opportunity. Make professional changes under this Eclipse. Redirect efforts over the next half year toward your talents, passions and purpose.

**AQUARIUS**  
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
 Your exploration changes and adapts. The Full Moon Eclipse illuminates a shift in your educational direction. Experiment with new concepts over six months.

**PISCES**  
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
 Collaborate for financial growth over the next six months following tonight's Full Moon Lunar Eclipse. Shift directions for changing conditions. Deepen bonds. Pull together.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

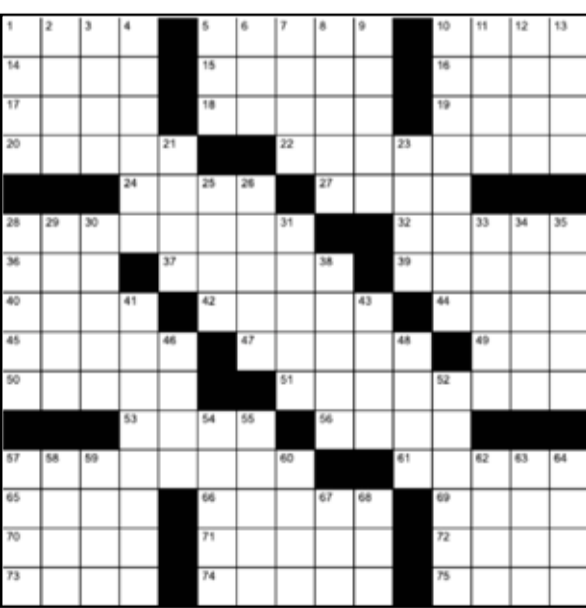
**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	6	19	cloudy
Changchun	-2	12	cloudy
Chengdu	13	21	cloudy
Chongqing	14	23	cloudy
Fuzhou	18	22	overcast
Guangzhou	21	27	showers
Guiyang	11	21	cloudy
Haikou	24	31	cloudy
Hangzhou	9	17	cloudy
Harbin	-4	12	fine
Hefei	9	17	cloudy
Nanjing	10	16	cloudy
Shanghai	20	22	rain
Taipei	5	19	fine
Wuhan	5	19	fine
Hong Kong	22	27	overcast
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-4	6	cloudy
Frankfurt	5	16	cloudy
Paris	6	12	rain
London	6	11	rain
New York	6	10	cloudy

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Too bad!; 5- Actor Buchholz; 10- Manager; 14- Swallow eagerly; 15- \_\_\_ Gay; 16- Med school subj.; 17- Cabinet dept.; 18- Alpine song; 19- "Star Wars" princess; 20- George of "Just Shoot Me"; 22- Young plant; 24- Walk in water; 27- Romanov ruler; 28- Top of a metal fastener; 32- Carved pole; 36- First name in advice; 37- Chart anew; 39- Artery that feeds the trunk; 40- \_\_\_ uproar; 42- Actress Zellweger; 44- Handle roughly; 45- Bowling alley divisions; 47- Cancels a dele; 49- Ox tail?; 50- Look of disdain; 51- Gives a right to; 53- Go out with; 56- Adam's third son; 57- Laborious; 61- The devil; 65- Actress Heche; 66- Cooperative race; 69- Spouse; 70- Teachers' favorites; 71- Serious wrongdoing; 72- Way out; 73- Greek love god; 74- Marriott competitor; 75- Drinks slowly;

DOWN 1- Matures, as wine; 2- Crescent-shaped figure; 3- Shake \_\_\_ (hurry); 4- Spread out; 5- Yoi; 6- Yoko \_\_\_; 7- Curtain holders; 8- Driving hazard; 9- Stories; 10- Large hall for dancing; 11- That's \_\_\_ haven't heard; 12- Spahn teammate; 13- Adult male deer; 21- Cowardly Lion portrayer; 23- Statistics, collection of facts; 25- Woodland animal; 26- Chair designer Charles; 28- Metal spikes; 29- Kofi of the U.N.; 30- Mindlessly stupid; 31- "Inferno" writer; 33- Bring up the rear; 34- Chopin composition; 35- Men; 38- Hammer parts; 41- Unnecessary; 43- Novel ending; 46- Sp. ladies; 48- Poses; 52- English river; 54- Burr down; 55- Abrasive mineral; 57- Record; 58- Lulu; 59- Long Day's Journey \_\_\_ Night; 60- "East of Eden" director Kazan; 62- Curbside cry; 63- Take \_\_\_ from me...; 64- Takes home; 67- Qty.; 68- So far;



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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AP PHOTO



## ENVIRONMENT

# IN UGANDA, GOV'T-BACKED BAMBOO CROPS HAVE REAL GROWTH POTENTIAL

RODNEY MUHUMUZA,  
ALONG RIVER RWIZI

**A**LONG a stretch of bush by a muddy river, laborers dug and slashed in search of bamboo plants buried under dense grass. Here and there a few plants had sprouted tall, but most of the bamboo seedlings planted more than a year ago never grew.

Now, environment protection officers seeking to restore a 3-kilometer stretch of the river's degraded banks were aiming to plant new bamboo seedlings, clear room for last year's survivors to grow and look after them better than they did the first time.

A successful bamboo forest by the river Rwizi — the most important in a large part of western Uganda that includes the major city of Mbarara — would create a buffer zone against sand miners, subsistence farmers and others whose activities have long threatened the river. The National Environment Management Authority estimates that the Rwizi has lost 60% of its water catchment area over the decades, and in some areas this winding river runs as narrow as a stream.

"Once bamboo is established, it is almost like a net," said Jecocious Musingwire, an environment officer who was the project's technical advisor. "The roots trap everything, including the surface runoff, and stabilize the weak-

ses of the banks."

This East African country is seeing growing interest in bamboo, a perennial plant cultivated in many parts of the world. It can be burned for fuel in rural communities, taking pressure off dwindling forest reserves of eucalyptus and other natural resources. It's a hardy plant that can grow almost anywhere. And businesses can turn it into products ranging from furniture to toothpicks.

Some of the bamboo species grown in Uganda are imported from Asia, but many — like one whose shoots are smoked and then boiled to make a popular traditional meal in eastern Uganda — grow wild.

The Ugandan government has set a 10-year policy that calls for planting 300,000 hectares of bamboo, most of it on private land, by 2029 as part of wider reforestation efforts.

That's an ambitious target. The Uganda Bamboo Association, the largest such group with 340 members, has planted only 500 hectares. Even with growing interest in bamboo farming, authorities will have to encourage more farmers in rural parts of Uganda to plant vast tracts of land with bamboo.

## SIGNS ARE PROMISING

Not far from the scene where laborers were tending bamboo plants sits a large commercial farm that includes seven acres

of bamboo. The plants at Kitara Farm were well-tended, and a stockpile of 10,000 bamboo poles sat waiting to be sold.

Caretaker Joseph Katumba said the property has become something of a demonstration farm for people who want to learn more about bamboo. He recalled that when they first began planting bamboo in 2017, some people asked why they were "wasting land" by planting bamboo when it grows wild in the bush.

Katumba said that's changed, with skeptics now interested in planting bamboo "because they have studied it and they love it." Unlike eucalyptus — a tall flowering plant widely planted here for its timber — "there is no bamboo season. The more you look after it well, weeding around it, the more and more years you will earn from bamboo."

Bamboo grows faster than eucalyptus and regenerates like a weed. It also can thrive in poor soil. Kitara Farm stopped planting new eucalyptus lots while its bamboo acreage continues to expand, he said.

"We have so many eucalyptus forests. But we realized that once you cut the eucalyptus trees, eventually they get finished, and once they are finished there is no more money," he said. "But with bamboo, we investigated and found out that when you plant it ... the grandkids and their grandkids

and their grandkids will earn from bamboo."

A single bamboo pole brings a little less than a dollar, so farmers need to grow a lot to earn enough. Bamboo promoters are urging them to see a bamboo plantation as the same kind of cash crop as coffee or tea estates. Banks are offering bamboo "plantation capital" to clients, loans that promise ownership of substantial acres of bamboo.

"Each person should actually plant bamboo, and a lot of it," said Taga Nuwagaba, a bamboo farmer and businessman who owns a bamboo furniture factory near the Ugandan capital of Kampala. He touts the plant as a renewable resource that sequesters carbon, too.

"You cut one, five will grow," he said.

## BAMBOO IS 'EASY TO MANAGE'

Bamboo plants are normally ready for harvesting in three to five years, and a well-maintained plantation can be useful for at least 50 years, said Jacob Ogola, an agronomist who is working as a consultant at Kitara Farm. He said bamboo is easy to manage, and typically doesn't need spraying for pests.

Bamboo seedlings are now more widely available via private nursery beds.

Steve Tusiime, a self-described bamboo collector, owns one such

nursery in Mbarara. Tusiime said he's been fascinated by the plant since seeing one as a boy. Before he got into growing, he recalls traveling to a farm in central Uganda to "hug" bamboo plants, and in 2018 spending his own money to attend a bamboo convention in China, where he got his first bamboo seeds.

Standing on another stretch of land by the river Rwizi where he and his partners have created a bamboo park in a recreation resort still to be commissioned, he waxed lyrical about how bamboo "energizes" him.

"Each bamboo you see here has a story. It has where it comes from and it has different use and it has a different name," he said. "When you come here the story is bamboo. You learn about different species, different uses. You see different features of bamboo."

Still, Uganda's bamboo plantations aren't growing fast enough to build an industry around the plant. Tusiime's nursery has sold fewer than 10,000 seedlings in the past two years, confounding his own assessment of bamboo as an important cash crop which also happens to benefit the environment.

"Bamboo can be a future tree for Uganda or for even Africa. For example, you've heard people talking about charcoal and firewood and this and that. Bamboo is a better solution," he said. "You can produce the briquette, you can use it directly as firewood. Bamboo is going to be a game changer in Africa. You can eat bamboo, you can use it to build, you can create an industry for bamboo, you can feed it to your animals, and it can take care of your land." **MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL

# Australia, Saudi get a chance to advance in World Cup Asian qualifying

**A**USTRALIA and Saudi Arabia are among the Asian Football Confederation heavyweights aiming to secure a spot in the next stage of World Cup qualifying with wins today, while Japan's bid to advance will have to wait after North Korea cancelled a home game in Pyongyang.

Just hours after a 1-0 loss to Japan in Tokyo last week, the North Koreans informed tournament organizers that they could not host the return match.

FIFA, the sport's world governing body, later canceled the qualifier after deciding the game "shall neither be played nor rescheduled" because North Korea couldn't come up with an alternative venue and there was no room in the calendar for a postponement.

"The matter and match outcome will be referred to the FIFA disciplinary committee," FIFA announced, which indicates North Korea will be sanctioned



Australia's Kye Rowles, right, is congratulated by teammate Keanu Baccus

with a 3-0 forfeit.

North Korea has so far only one win from three games — all away

from home — in Group B of Asia qualifying. Japan has nine points from three consecutive wins.

The top two teams from each of the nine groups will advance to the third round, where Asia's allocation of eight automatic World Cup slots for 2026 is available.

Like Japan, Saudi Arabia has won all three games so far and can secure its spot in the next stage if it can complete back-to-back wins over Tajikistan in Group G following its win at Riyadh last week.

"We know that Tajikistan is a strong team and has been improving," Saudi Arabia coach Roberto Mancini said. "It will be a tough game for us but we are looking forward to the challenge."

Australia also has nine points and can guarantee its progression to the next stage from Group I with a victory over Lebanon in Canberra. The game was originally scheduled to take place in Beirut but due to the security situation in the region Lebanon remained in Australia

following its 2-0 loss in Sydney last week.

Qatar, Iraq and United Arab Emirates also have maximum points and are potentially one win away from the last 18. South Korea, however, slipped up against Thailand with a 1-1 draw in Seoul.

It was South Korea's first appearance since Jurgen Klinsmann was fired as head coach last month following a disappointing Asian Cup campaign.

The teams will meet again in front of an expected sell-out crowd of 60,000 in Bangkok.

The South Koreans leads Group C, three points above Thailand and China, which let a two-goal lead slip against No. 156-ranked Singapore to draw 2-2 last week.

It was the first game under new coach Branko Ivankovic appointed after the Asian Cup in which China exited at the group stage and didn't score a single goal. **MDT/AP**

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**OPINION**

**China Daily**  
 Editorial, China Daily

**YELLEN'S VISIT EXPECTED TO HELP NUDGE SINO-US TIES BACK ON THE RIGHT TRACK**

Among major US government officials, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is known for the often pragmatic and relatively positive tone she strikes in terms of how to manage Sino-US relations. She has reiterated that the United States is not seeking to decouple from China and called for a "constructive" and "healthy" economic relationship between the two countries.

"The world is big enough for both of our countries to thrive," she said.

Her reasonable voice, which comes in sharp contrast to the barbed comments of the anti-China hawks in Washington is most needed nowadays when the latter keep threatening to push bilateral relations onto a collision course. This anti-China rhetoric is becoming increasingly strident in Washington as the US presidential election campaign heats up, which bodes ill if not tempered given the difficult situation that bilateral relationship already finds itself in.

Thus it is welcome news that Yellen, according to US media, will travel to China next month as part of efforts to "responsibly manage" bilateral ties. The face-to-face meetings she is scheduled to hold with Chinese officials should certainly help the two sides increase trust and stabilize their relationship by airing their differences and seeking to resolve them on some pertinent issues.

It will be Yellen's second trip to Beijing within a year. Her visit in July was among a series of visits by high-ranking US officials to China, including those of Secretary of State Antony Blinken in June and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo in August, that sought to put a brake on the free fall in the two countries' relations. Yellen's last visit achieved positive results, as it resulted in the formation of new economic and financial working groups designed for "frank and substantive discussions" on contentious issues.

Thus hopes are high that Yellen's upcoming visit will yield more productive outcomes that can help give a boost to ties by removing some of the hurdles hindering the development of healthy, stable and sustainable bilateral relations. This is crucial given the heightened tensions between the two countries recently as a result of US moves.

The House of Representatives, for example, passed a bill early this month that could ban the popular video-sharing app TikTok in the US using national security as a pretext. The US government is also reportedly considering blacklisting a number of Chinese semiconductor companies linked to the Chinese telecommunications enterprise Huawei.

Such suppressive actions belie Washington's claim that it does not seek conflict with China, and run counter to the agreement reached by the two countries' top leaders that they would work to manage the Sino-US relationship responsibly. All this requires a productive channel of communication to be established between the two sides, which is what is expected from Yellen's visit.

Given her experience of working with China and the trust she has gained from her Chinese counterparts, Yellen is well-suited to play the bridging role. She has said that the Joe Biden administration's economic strategy is centered on investing in US infrastructure, clean energy and technology manufacturing, "not suppressing or containing any other economy". And she has made it clear that China's economic growth "need not be incompatible with US economic leadership". It would be good for all if such thinking could become an integral part of the US' policies toward China.

Her visit, of course, will not solve all the problems facing Sino-US relations. But surely it can help steady the two sides' relations on a more stable course. After all, China and the US stand to gain from cooperation, and lose from confrontation.

**FRANCE RAISES ITS SECURITY READINESS TO HIGHEST LEVEL AFTER ATTACK IN RUSSIA, WORRIED ABOUT IS**

**THE BUZZ**

France's government increased its security alert posture to the highest level Sunday after the deadly attack at a Russian concert hall and the Islamic State's claim of responsibility.

French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal announced the decision in a post on X, saying authorities were "taking into account the Islamic State's claim of responsibility for the (Moscow) attack and the threats weighing on our country."

The announcement came after President Emmanuel Macron

held an emergency security meeting prompted by Friday's attack in a Moscow suburb that killed more than 130 people. The attack was claimed by an affiliate of the Islamic State group.

France has repeatedly been hit by deadly Islamic State attacks, including the Bataclan theater massacre in 2015 in which extremists opened fire on concert-goers and held hostages for hours. French troops have also fought against Islamic extremists in the Middle East and Africa.



Simon Harris speaks after being confirmed as the new leader of Fine Gael, paving the way for him to become Ireland's youngest premier

**IRELAND POISED TO HAVE ITS YOUNGEST-EVER PREMIER, SIMON HARRIS**

PAN PYLAS, LONDON

Ireland is poised to get its youngest-ever premier next month after Simon Harris secured the leadership of the Fine Gael party on Sunday [yesterday, Macau time], replacing Leo Varadkar who announced his surprise resignation last week.

The 37-year-old Harris, who has been the coalition government's further and higher education minister, was the only candidate to put his name forward to succeed Varadkar, who had been Ireland's previous youngest prime minister, or what Ireland calls its taoiseach.

Harris is expected to be formally elected premier in the Irish parliament in early April after lawmakers return from their Easter break.

In his victory speech in the central Ireland town of Athlone, Harris said this was a "moment for Fine Gael to reconnect" with the people and pledged to fight against populist forces in Irish politics.

"I want this party to fight against populism and deliberate polarization," he said.

He confirmed Fine Gael as a "proudly pro-European party," condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and called for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza.

"There is a hell of a lot to get done in the time ahead," he said.

**"I want this party to fight against populism and deliberate polarization."**

SIMON HARRIS  
 LEADER OF FINE GAEL

Harris said nothing about the coalition government, which came into place at the end of 2020, but has previously said that he would remain fully committed to the program for government agreed upon with partners Fian-na Fail and the Green Party. He has stopped short of ruling out a general election this year, but insisted such a poll wasn't his priority.

Varadkar, 45, has had

two spells as taoiseach — between 2017 and 2020, and again since December 2022 as part of a job-share with Micheál Martin, the head of Fianna Fáil.

He was the country's youngest-ever leader when first elected at age 38, as well as Ireland's first openly gay prime minister. Varadkar, whose mother is Irish and father is Indian, was also Ireland's first biracial taoiseach.

He played a leading role in campaigns to legalize same-sex marriage, approved in a 2015 referendum, and to repeal a ban on abortion, which passed in a vote in 2018.

He led Ireland during the years after Britain's 2016 decision to leave the European Union. Brexit had huge implications for Ireland, an EU member that shares a border with the U.K.'s Northern Ireland. U.K.-Ireland relations were strained while hardcore Brexit-backer Boris Johnson was U.K. leader, but have steadied since the arrival of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. MDT/AP



Russia launched missiles against Kyiv for the third time in five days yesterday, part of an apparent escalation of aerial bombardment of Ukrainian cities by the Kremlin's forces as the war stretches into its third year with the front line largely stationary. Five people were injured in the strike on the Ukrainian capital, with two of them taken to hospital, Kyiv Mayor Vitalii Klitschko said.



Armenia Three men were charged with terror offences yesterday after attempting to storm a police station in the Armenian capital of Yerevan, detonating hand grenades that injured two of the attackers, an internal affairs ministry official said. A third man stood in the entrance to the station for more than an hour threatening to set off another grenade. Police units headed by Armenia's deputy internal affairs minister, Aram Hovhannisyanyan, rushed to the scene and were ultimately able to detain the attacker.



EU regulators opened investigations into Apple, Google and Meta yesterday, the first cases under a sweeping new law designed to stop Big Tech companies from cornering digital markets. The European Commission said it was investigating the companies for "non-compliance" with the Digital Markets Act. The Digital Markets Act that took effect earlier this month is a broad rulebook that targets Big Tech "gatekeeper" companies providing "core platform services." Those companies must comply with a set of do's and don'ts, under threat of hefty financial penalties or even breaking up businesses.