



THE PRESIDENT OF THE ELECTORAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION ADMITS A DELAY IN LAUNCHING THE PROCESS FOR THE UPCOMING ELECTION FOR THE NEXT CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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PORTUGUESE CONSULATE TO EXPAND SERVICES TO ACCOMMODATE DEMAND

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XI MEETS LAVROV, REAFFIRMS CHINA'S EMPHASIS ON TIES WITH RUSSIA

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AP PHOTO



North Korea A top Chinese leader will lead a delegation to North Korea this week, both countries announced yesterday. Zhao Leji, who is chairman of the National People's Congress and considered the No. 3 official in the ruling Communist Party, will visit North Korea from Thursday to Saturday, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said. [More on p6](#)

AP PHOTO



Indonesia Millions of Indonesians are packing bus and train stations, airports and highways as they head to hometowns to celebrate Thursday's Eid al-Fitr festival with family. The Transportation Ministry expects the largest movement of people in Indonesia's history. The agency is projecting the number of travelers heading home could reach 193 million, or nearly 72% of the population of the world's most populous Muslim-majority country.

AP PHOTO



Gaza Strip Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has escalated his pledge to invade the southern Gaza city of Rafah, which is filled with around 1.4 million Palestinians, most of whom are displaced from other parts of the Gaza Strip. "It will happen. There is a date," Netanyahu said in a video statement Monday, without elaborating. The United States, Israel's closest ally, has said a ground operation into Rafah would be a mistake and has demanded to see a credible plan to protect civilians.

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CE Electoral Commission president acknowledges election process is late

RENATO MARQUES

THE president of the Electoral Affairs Commission for the Chief Executive (CE) Election, Judge Song Man Lei, has admitted that the commencement of the upcoming Macau CE election process is delayed. This acknowledgment was made during the inauguration ceremony of the new five members who will be responsible for overseeing the election proceedings.

Speaking to the media, Song noted that the process has been somewhat delayed since several legal periods need to be fulfilled, namely two months mediating between the end of the evaluations done by the Commission and the date of the election day.

Nonetheless, she noted that this delay is a slight one and should not interfere with the election date which is yet to be defined by the CE.

"I am confident that we have enough time to finalize all our work and I don't think we are too late. Our goal is to finish our work before the deadline."

Commenting on the new provisions, recently approved and establishing stricter rules for the approval of candidates and members for the 400-strong election college who will elect the CE, Song said that the mechanism to exclude the "non-patriots" will contribute positively to the election, and will not cause any interference in the electoral process.

Still, she noted the fact that the potential candidates are not entitled to an appeal from the decisions of the Commission as "an aspect to review and perfect [in the future]."

PORTUGUESE CONSULATE TO EXPAND SERVICES TO ACCOMMODATE DEMAND

RENATO MARQUES

THE Consulate General of Portugal in Macau and Hong Kong is increasing temporarily the number of daily time slots for the renewal of Portuguese identity cards and passports, the consulate announced through their social media pages.

In the post, the consulate said, "Thanks to a temporary increase of workers allocated for this purpose, we will provide more daily vacancies between May 6 and July 31, [which will increase the time slots] from 800 to 1,100 per week."

The bid is also related to the summer holiday period, aiming to facilitate renewal of the documents ahead of the peak season for traveling.

This is the second time that the Portuguese consulate has enforced measures aiming to reduce significantly the time for processing documents; in 2023 these vacancies were increased by 60% from 500 to 800 per week.

It was also said that this new addition of time slots



aims to benefit those whose documents have already expired or, in the case of passports, allow the renewal of documents that have less than eight months of validity.

The consulate also announced that the measure of scheduling a booking for the same week of the next month (one month ahead) will continue.

In the past, due to difficulties justified by a lack of staff, people of Portu-

guese nationality wishing to renew their ID cards or passports have had to wait as long as nine months or even longer for a booking vacancy, a problem that the Consul General Alexandre Leitão has called one of the most pressing issues to address.

In a different notice, also posted on the consulate's social media pages, it was noted that the consulate will be open during lunchtimes from April 15

onwards for the collection of passports and ID cards that have been processed. The measure is said to be a trial one aiming to evaluate the effects so that a final decision can be made on whether the working hours will continue to be as they are currently (9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.) or if the trial extended hours will be made permanent to (9 a.m. to 4 p.m. without a lunchbreak).

TOURISM

EASTER AND CHING MING ACCOUNT FOR ONE MILLION VISITORS

RENATO MARQUES

THE holiday period that included the Easter holiday and the Ching Ming Festival (March 29 to April 8) has closed with a total of 1,051,826 visitors recorded to have entered Macau over the 11 days, figures from the Public Security Police Force (PSP) show.

Analysis of the figures shows that over the 11 days, the number of arrivals has averaged 95,621, falling only slightly shorter than the predictions made by the Macao

Government Tourism Office of 100,000 visitors per day.

The highest single day over the period was reached on April 4 (Ching Ming Festival public holiday) with an influx of 136,363 visitors, immediately followed by the next day (April 5) when 135,661 people entered Macau.

In the same period, the total border movement reached some 6,403,837 with a large share of those being arrivals and departures of local residents who took the opportunity to travel or to visit family

or friends outside Macau.

In total, 2,425,287 border movements were related to residents of Macau, that is, 37.87% of all border crossings.

In terms of arrivals per country or region, those arriving from the mainland totaled 78%, followed by the arrivals from Hong Kong (16%). Arrivals from Taiwan continue to account for about 2% of all visitor arrivals to Macau while international arrivals from other countries were 4%, which is 1% up from the same period last year.



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STAFF REPORTER

CRIME

IN an effort to address increasing fraud cases, the Judiciary Police (PJ) has introduced a new anti-fraud initiative providing scam prevention resources through the popular social media platform WeChat.

At a press briefing yesterday, PJ director Sit Chong Meng revealed that from January to February, authorities received 81 telephone fraud reports, 126 online scam complaints, and 58 cases of credit card fraud. This represented a sharp increase of 70% to 120% compared to the same period last year, resulting in total losses of 69 million patacas for victims.

Additionally, scams targeting students by phone saw a concerning 44% jump.

With these troubling fraud trends continuing to spread, Sit acknowledged these kinds of deception crimes have become a highly significant issue both locally and globally. That is why the new WeChat program was created, leveraging the widespread use of the platform among Macau residents and visitors.

The interactive digital resource offers four key functions to assist the public in analyzing fraud risks, reporting fraud clues, "Fraud Knowledge 101," and identifying fraudulent cases. The program also includes simulated fraud case experiences, with the aim of enhancing the public's ability to identify fraudulent schemes.

Sit stated the initiative aims to significantly strengthen the police's anti-fraud efforts through both passive learning opportunities and an engaged reporting channel. After comprehensive review, authorities determined WeChat was the optimal platform given its alignment with local technology habits while ensuring data privacy and security.

Meanwhile, police yesterday disclosed that a report was received by the bureau last month regarding a local woman who fell victim to a scam

PJ launches new anti-fraud initiative in an effort to curb rising fraud



PJ director Sit Chong Meng

orchestrated by individuals posing as public prosecutors. The woman had gone to hide in five or six different countries without informing her family.

The scammers managed to elude capture by hiding in various locations, eventually finding refuge in a remote suburb of Mexico with stringent security measures.

With the assistance of local authorities, Interpol, and the

local Mexican police, the authorities formed an investigation team to rescue the victim from the area.

The PJ director emphasizes the significance of these cases, urging the public to exercise caution and collaborate in order to prevent fraud. The police officer emphasized that the current anti-fraud program houses approximately 170,000 records pertaining to fraudu-

lent activities.

If widely utilized, officials hope the new program will help offset the rising social and economic costs of fraud crimes. With enhanced community awareness and engagement in deterrence, along with clues aiding police work, the PJ reiterated the goal is to eventually curb the troubling fraud trends seen multiplying in Macau in recent months.

TWO WOMEN DEFRAUDED IN 'PUBLIC PROCURATORATE' PHONE SCAM

A local young woman lost nearly 42,000 patacas and another woman fell victim to a phone scam impersonating Macau authorities, according to the police.

The scam targeted the two women earlier this month. The young victim reported a loss of 41,700 patacas, while the other woman did not lose any money, said the police chief, who has taken over the investigation of both cases.

In the first incident, the young woman received a call on March 20 from a man claiming to be an immigration officer. He said her phone number was registered to spread gambling information in mainland China and she needed to manage it or face restrictions entering and leaving the country.

As the woman believed the claims, the scammer transferred the call to a "police officer" in

mainland China. He said the woman was involved in a 2 million pataca money laundering case with multiple victims. The "officer" coerced the victim into downloading communication software and providing bank details. She deposited 30,000 patacas on March 24 and another 11,700 patacas the next day.

In the second incident, a woman received a call on March 5 from a man posing as a telecom manager, saying fraudulent donation messages had been sent from her number. Transferred to "public security," she downloaded software and provided details as instructed. She later realized it was a scam after discussing it with friends.

The police chief is investigating both cases of fraud impersonating Macau authorities. People are warned to beware of these types of scam calls.

COURTS

MP calls for a retrial of former deputy prosecutor Kong Chi

THE Public Prosecutions Office (MP) has called for a retrial of the former deputy prosecutor Kong Chi, the public broadcaster TDM reported, citing access to an appeal

document.

According to the report, the MP has filed an appeal, disagreeing with the sentence handed to Kong by the Court of Second Instance (TSI).

Back in January this year the TSI sentenced Kong to 17 years in prison.

Kong was charged with accepting bribes and neglecting his duties to favor others, as well as posses-

sing assets from unknown sources.

His sentence is the accumulated result of several counts of crimes related to bribery and other illegal acts. He was, howe-

ver, acquitted of accusations related to the establishment and operation of a criminal organization.

In the appeal, the MP insists that several pieces of evidence, particularly a recording that was ruled out for being considered illegal, should be re-evaluated.

The MP believes and is calling for the handing of an even heftier sentence to its former staff member. **RM**

DSEDJ EXPECTS 4,600 FIRST-TIME KINDERGARTEN ENROLLEES

The government is anticipating 4,600 first time kindergarten students this year. According to the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), 85% of children who applied were accepted in its Central Registration System, showing an increase from the previous year. Authorities have given assurances that there are sufficient school placements available and have urged parents not to be overly concerned. The bureau also highlighted that there are over 500 students currently enrolled in various grades at the school in the Macao New Neighborhood, with more than 200 children enrolling for the first time.

SAR SIGNS VISA-FREE WAIVER WITH KAZAKHSTAN

Macau SAR passport holders will be exempted from visa requirements when entering the Republic of Kazakhstan for a stay of a maximum of 14 days, the Identification Services Bureau said in a statement yesterday. This comes after the signing of an agreement between the SAR and Kazakhstan on mutual exemption of visa requirements. In turn, visitors from the country can also visit the SAR for a stay of a maximum of 14 days. Macau passport holders can visit 146 countries or territories visa-free or with visa-on-arrival.

POLICE INTERCEPTS VISITOR CAUGHT WITH NARCOTICS

A woman from Thailand was apprehended by authorities for attempting to smuggle narcotics into Macau. During the inspection, 2.14 grams of ketamine and various drug-related items were found in her luggage. The suspect had traveled from Bangkok, Thailand, to Macau, according to the police officer. Upon arrival at the airport, a police dog alerted officers to her bags, prompting an officer to assist customs in conducting a thorough search. The suspect claimed she had forgotten to remove the narcotics after buying them at a nightclub in Thailand.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION FOR PONTE 16 DEVELOPMENT KICKS OFF

A fresh set of seven preliminary planning condition plans has been issued, and the collection of public opinions will commence from today for the development undertaking along Ponte 16. As per the draft, the existing structures within the project are prohibited from being heightened, and the height of additional buildings is limited to 20.5 meters. The Cultural Affairs Bureau insists on preserving the architectural appearance of Ponte 16. According to the draft, approximately 265 square meters of land will be reclaimed for the purpose of a public street. After reconstruction, it will cover an area of around 22,800 square meters.

GAMING

Analysts predict April gambling revenue to reach up to MOP 18.7b

STAFF REPORTER

THE growth trajectory of Macau's gaming industry remains uncertain, with only modest growth observed in recent months, according to analysts from Jefferies.

The sector is facing macroeconomic challenges in China, which continue to exert pressure.

However, Macau operators are expected to focus on expanding their market share in the region through asset optimization and promotional strategies like player referral programs. Jefferies predicts a decline in gaming revenue for April compared to March, citing the month's seasonal weakness. They also anticipate a gradual return to pre-Covid trends.

Meanwhile, a research report by Macquarie indicates that Macau's gambling revenue in April is projected to reach MOP 17.6 to MOP 18.7 billion. This estimate is based on third-party data showing an average daily gambling income of MOP 600 million last week, with expectations of MOP 580 million to MOP 630 million for the rest of the month.

The projected revenue represents 75% to 79% of the same period in 2019 and reflects a strong recovery trend compared to last month. Macquarie also mentions that the proposed Macau Gaming Credit Law, set to take effect in August, will have slightly relaxed regulations compared to the previous draft from March.

The bank believes that the impact of prohibiting intermediaries from directly issuing credit is controllable. The bank prioritizes Galaxy Entertainment and Sands China among the Macau gambling stocks.

Meanwhile, investment group CLSA raised its gross gaming revenue forecast for Macau by 4% to USD30.3 billion for 2024, according to a research report.

The institution also kept its GGR forecast for 2025 at US\$31.9 billion. However, CLSA lowered its Ebitda forecasts for 2024 and 2025 by 1-3%.

As Macau gradually normalizes, CLSA was bullish on stocks with strong balance sheets and recurring free cash flow generation, with MGM China and Sands China being its top picks.

GAMING

SMART TABLES DRIVE FASTER PLAY AND INCREASED REVENUE IN MACAU: CITIGROUP

STAFF REPORTER

THE use of "smart" gaming tables fitted with radio frequency identification (RFID) technology has the potential to significantly boost casino revenue in Macau, according to a recent report from Citigroup.

By reducing by just five seconds each hand of baccarat, smart table usage could lead to a 5.9% increase in gross gaming revenue without the need to attract any additional customers, the analysts estimated. This efficiency boost stems from accelerated gameplay and an increase in hands dealt per hour.

"If the use of smart gaming tables becomes more widespread, we will be much more confident in the long-term growth prospects of the Macau gaming industry," stated the research note, as cited in a GGR Asia report.

Currently, approximately 10% of tables in Macau are equipped with this technology. However, Citigroup suggested that more widespread adoption could further cement long-term growth of the gaming industry.

In addition to revenue growth,



smart tables provide other benefits like more accurate tracking of foreign players. This data collection could lower casino tax rates, strengthen anti-money laundering controls, and prevent the use of counterfeit chip use, all of which are priorities for the Macau government.

The technology also allows casinos to gather detailed analytics on individual customer behavior and spending habits. This information allows casinos to more precisely determine the value of each player and reward top spenders with

tailored complimentary perks and incentives.

"For example, it makes sense for casinos to increase their comps on players who consistently spend 10% of their baccarat wages on the Lucky 6 exotic bet, as these players are, in our estimates, worth 125.5% more than players who strictly do main bets," the Citigroup note states.

Ben Lee, managing partner of IGamIX Management & Consulting, previously noted that the adoption of RFID by Macau's gaming concessionaires could

provide the government with access to gambling data at a level that was previously unimaginable.

The casino expert said that every bet can be tracked back to the player, providing insights into the locations of players and betting amounts and volumes.

Gaming operators including Galaxy Entertainment Group, Melco Resorts and SJM announced plans to roll out the technology on their casino floors, with Wynn Macau reportedly considering introducing it in the near future.

STAFF REPORTER

WITH plans to redevelop the former Fai Chi Kei canidrome into a multi-faceted sports park for approximately 40,000 residents, a feasibility survey has been conducted. The advisory committee has called for improvements to the pedestrian system in the area.

The redevelopment project aims to position the sports park as a source of revenue for local residents. It will take into account existing and future feedback from the committee, local schools, and residents to further enhance the redevelopment plans for the area.

Currently, the local community and residents are confident that the park's redevelopment will meet the community's needs. However, the Transport Advisory Committee has advised making alterations to the existing plans to accom-

TRANSPORT ADVISORY

COMMITTEE CALLS FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM AROUND FORMER CANIDROME

modate better pedestrian systems.

The committee has proposed the addition of pedestrian bridges to improve accessibility to the sports park and reduce traffic congestion in the area.

"There are more than five entrances to the park, but not all of them are connected to footbridges. Currently, due to the lack of proper pedestrian systems, conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians are common," said Kou Ngon Fong, Deputy Head of the North District Community Services, as cited in a TDM report.

"In the early planning stages of this redevelopment, pedestrian brid-



Renderings of the Fai Chi Kei project

ges should be included to prevent crowding and traffic congestion in the area," Fong added.

Cheong Sok Leng, a member of the Transport Advisory Committee, shares the same opinion. She pointed out that tra-

ffic flow in the vicinity of the canidrome is already fairly congested.

Cheong further stated that after the sports park opens, traffic congestion will worsen without the implementation of proper pedestrian systems

that prioritize public transport and pedestrian activity. She also suggested the possibility of widening the lanes from two to three to help alleviate traffic congestion on the three main roads surrounding the park.

EXPLAINER

What policies are in use to boost China's economic growth

CHINA has leveraged a variety of policies to offset downward economic pressure and address structural challenges, securing a robust start of this year with accelerated growth in retail sales, investment, and industrial output.

China's retail sales of consumer goods rose by 5.5 percent year on year in the first two months of 2024, picking up from an increase of 3.5 percent in the same period of 2023.

Fixed-asset investment also saw a notable uptick, growing by 4.2 percent year on year, quickening from the 3 percent increase in 2023. Furthermore, value-added industrial output rose 7 percent year on year during the January-February period, accelerating from the rise of 6.8 percent registered in December 2023.

China's economy began the year on a positive note, and the country has the confidence, capabilities, and conditions to meet this year's economic and social development targets, said Zheng Shanjie, head of the National Development and Reform Commission.

The country's macroeconomic policy mix bolsters the improving data and increasing confidence in China's economic outlook, which strategically addresses both short-term challenges and long-term structural issues within the economy.

FISCAL AND MONETARY POLICIES

According to the Ministry of Finance, China vowed to continue to implement a proactive fiscal policy this year and appropriately enhance its intensity.

Notably, the issuance of ultra-long special treasury bonds has drawn widespread attention. These bonds will be used to implement major national strategies and build up security capacities in



key sectors, with an initial allocation of 1 trillion yuan (about 140.95 billion U.S. dollars) for 2024.

Tax and fee reduction incentives will persist this year and be pivotal for business support. Last year, tax refunds, as well as cuts and deferrals of taxes and fees exceeded 2.2 trillion yuan.

Priorities of this year's tax policy include fostering scientific and technological innovation and bolstering the manufacturing sector. Measures include enhanced pre-tax deductions for enterprise research and development costs and tax relief for technology adoption.

On the monetary front, Pan Gongsheng, governor of the People's Bank of China (PBOC) emphasized that "China has a rich monetary toolbox and there is still ample policy headroom."

In January, the PBOC announced a 0.5-percentage-point cut in the reserve requirement ratio (RRR) for financial institutions, releasing around 1 trillion yuan of long-term liquidity into the market.

Furthermore, China cut the over-five-year loan prime rate by 25 basis points in February to 3.95 percent. The move marked the most significant drop in recent years and reflected the country's efforts to reduce comprehensive financing costs.

Pan said in March that the average RRR of China's

entire banking sector is 7 percent, and there is still room for further RRR cuts.

The central bank also underscored the use of structural monetary policy tools, including a special relending facility worth 500 billion yuan to support sci-tech innovation, technical transformation and equipment renewal.

FOSTERING NEW ENGINES

China unveiled a range of policies in the first quarter to boost investment and consumption and foster a better business environment.

According to this year's government work report, China vows to cultivate new growth drivers, such as biomanufacturing, the commercial space industry, and the low-altitude economy.

In the low-altitude economy sector alone, the market size is estimated to surge from over 500 billion yuan in 2023 to 2 trillion yuan by 2030 as the country accelerates the development of unmanned aerial vehicles for tourism and logistics activities, among other uses.

Moreover, China has unveiled plans to facilitate equipment renewal and encourage consumer goods trade-ins. This initiative spans sectors such as industry, agriculture, construction, transportation, education, culture, tourism, and medical care, presenting an expansive

market opportunity estimated to exceed 5 trillion yuan annually.

China has introduced guidelines to establish around ten high-level industrial parks to leverage the potential of the silver economy. Additionally, efforts are underway to develop innovative products like nursing and housekeeping robots.

Meanwhile, China is actively promoting the sales of new energy vehicles in rural areas by ramping up efforts to build more charging facilities in the countryside.

China has introduced new rules on consumer finance, raising access thresholds for consumer finance companies in a bid to strengthen regulation and bolster consumption growth.

China proposed 24 measures in an action plan to promote high-level opening up to create a better business environment. The country vowed to further shorten its negative list for foreign investment and launch pilot programs to relax foreign entry thresholds in scientific and technological innovation.

With an economic growth target set at around 5 percent for 2024, China's policy mix aims to synergize efforts in stabilizing the economy and fostering new quality productive forces. More can be expected to enrich the policy toolbox further in the foreseeable future. XINHUA

ADVERTORIAL

GREAT TIMES

MGM's Sichuanese Restaurant Five Foot Road Continues to Shine with Its MICHELIN Star

Five Foot Road, signature Sichuanese fine dining establishment of MGM COTAL, has once again been awarded One Michelin Star in the MICHELIN Guide Hong Kong and Macau 2024, reaffirming its commitment to culinary excellence, as it continues to showcase the richness of Sichuan cuisine beyond fiery and hot.



Led by Executive Sous Chef Yang Dengquan with nearly four decades of culinary experience and expertise in Sichuan cuisine, Five Foot Road presents a profound culinary concept that preserves traditional Sichuan delicacies with an indigenous twist. Chef Yang's culinary mastery and exquisite ingredients revive the intricate flavors of Sichuan. Each creation reflects his meticulous attention to detail and unwavering commitment to precision and perfection.



Delight in a symphony of refined Sichuan flavors with Five Foot Road's Michelin Star Discovery Menu. Each masterpiece is an embodiment of Chef Yang's passion for reviving the authentic Sichuan cuisine, such as the signature dish Marinated Fresh Abalone with Homemade Chili Sauce, Sichuan Style, and the Stewed Bird's Nest with Minced Chicken and Egg White in Bouillon, which is a classic delicacy from the Chengdu mansion banquet. The menu is available for a limited time. Make your reservation at (853) 8806 2358 or visit mgm.mo.

DIPLOMACY

President Xi meets Lavrov, reaffirms China's emphasis on ties with Russia

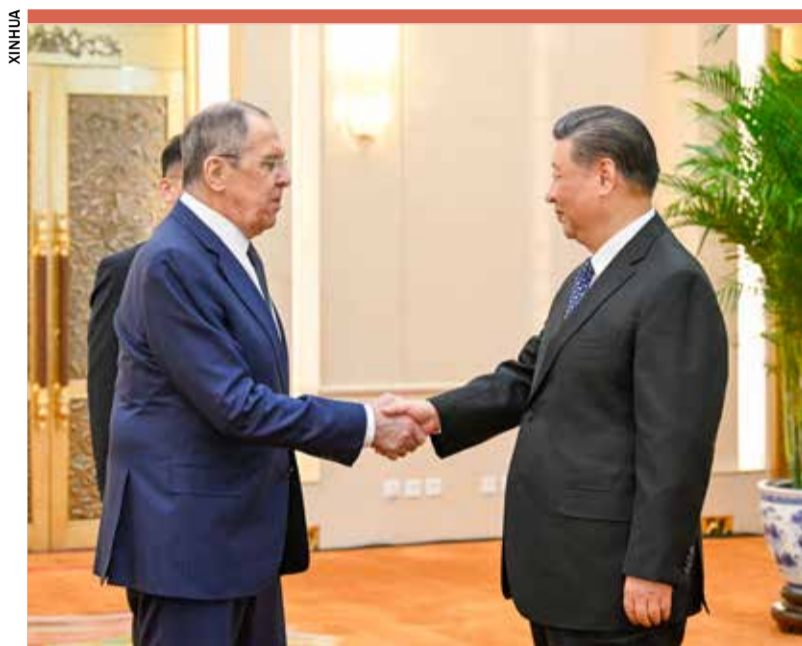
CHINESE leader Xi Jinping met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov yesterday in a sign of mutual support and shared opposition to Western democracies amid Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

"We would like to express our highest appreciation and admiration for the successes that you have achieved over the years and, above all, over the last decade under your leadership," Lavrov told Xi, according to Russian media.

"We are sincerely pleased with these successes, since these are the successes of friends, although not everyone in the world shares this attitude and are trying in every possible way to restrain the development of China — in fact just like the development of Russia," Lavrov said.

Russia's growing economic and diplomatic isolation has made it increasingly reliant on China. In past decades, the two have closely aligned their foreign policies, held joint military exercises and sought to rally non-aligned states in groupings such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Lavrov held a news conference earlier yesterday with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi at which they reaffirmed solidarity in international affairs.



President Xi Jinping meets with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, yesterday

Lavrov said Russia and China oppose any international events that do not take Russia's position into account.

He said Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's "so-called peace formula" was "completely detached from any realities."

Zelensky has called for the withdrawal of Russian forces and the return of all occupied Ukrainian territory, but is heavily reliant on support from the U.S., where the Republican Party majority in the House of Representatives has been holding

up a new military aid package.

China and Russia are each others most important diplomatic partners, both holding permanent seats on the United Nations security council and working together to block initiatives by the U.S. and its allies to spread democratic values and human rights from Venezuela to Syria.

While China has not provided direct military support for Russia, it has backed it diplomatically in blaming the West for provoking Russian Presi-

dent Vladimir Putin's decision to launch the war and refrained from calling it an invasion in deference to the Kremlin. China has also said it isn't providing Russia with arms or military assistance, although it has maintained robust economic connections with Moscow, alongside India and other countries, amid sanctions from Washington and its allies.

At their joint news conference Wang repeated China's calls for a ceasefire and "an end to the war soon."

"China supports the convening at an appropriate time of an international meeting that is recognized by both Russia and Ukraine, in which all parties can participate equally and discuss all peace solutions fairly," Wang said.

Wang also said Xi and Putin would continue to maintain close exchanges this year amid expectations of visits to each other's capitals.

"China and Russia have gone through ups and downs, and both sides have drawn lessons from historical experience and found a correct path to promote the healthy and stable development of bilateral relations," Wang said. "Today's good relations between China and Russia are hard-won and deserve to be cherished and carefully maintained by both

sides."

Lavrov arrived in China on Monday, while Wang and other leading Chinese figures have recently visited Russia and maintained China's line of largely backing Russia's views on the cause of the conflict.

China has at times taken an equally combative tone against the U.S. and its allies. China and Russia have held joint military drills, and are seen as seeking to supplant democracies with dictatorships in areas where they wield influence. China is involved in its own territorial disputes, particularly in the South China and East China Seas.

Just weeks before Russia invaded Ukraine, Putin visited Beijing for the opening of the 2022 Winter Olympics and the sides signed a pact pledging a "no limits" relationship that has China supporting Russia's line, even while formally urging peace talks.

In a phone call last week with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, U.S. President Joseph Biden pressed China over its defense relationship with Russia, which is seeking to rebuild its industrial base as it continues its invasion of Ukraine. And he called on Beijing to wield its influence over North Korea to rein in the isolated and erratic nuclear power. **MDT/AP**

NPC's chairman will lead a delegation to North Korea this week

A top Chinese leader will lead a delegation to North Korea this week, both countries announced yesterday, in what would be the highest-level meeting between the two countries since the pandemic began.

Zhao Leji, who is chairman of the National People's Congress and considered the No. 3 official in the ruling Communist Party, will visit North Korea from Thursday to Saturday, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said.

No details were released on what was described as a goodwill visit, except that the delegation would attend the opening cere-



mony for the "China-North Korea Friendship Year."

"The specific arrangements for the visit are still under negotiation," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said.

A dispatch from North Korea's official KCNA news agency also announced the trip.

Zhao is one of the seven members of the Politburo Standing Committee, the

Communist Party's top leadership body headed by Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

Zhao's visit to North Korea will be the first bilateral exchange involving a Chinese Politburo Standing

Committee member since the pandemic started. In 2019, the two countries held a pair of summit meetings, for one of which Xi traveled to Pyongyang.

North Korea and China are expected to hold a number of exchanges to mark the 75th year since they established of diplomatic ties, according to South Korea's Unification Ministry.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has been pushing to boost partnerships with China and Russia in a bid to strength his regional footing and join a united front against the United States.

Kim traveled to Russia in September for a summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The U.S., South Korea and others accuse North Korea of supplying conventional weapons for Russia's war in Ukraine in

return for advanced weapons technologies and other support.

China, North Korea's biggest source of aid, is believed to have long shipped assistance to help keep afloat its impoverished socialist ally, which it views as a bulwark against U.S. influence on the Korean Peninsula.

"China is key to North Korea's economy. There is a limit that Russia can do for North Korea economically," Park Won Gon, a professor at Seoul's Ewha Womans University. "For the short-term assistance, shipments of food or crude oil can be made. But to make its economy grow in the long term, North Korea needs investments and markets. China is the only country that can provide those to North Korea." **MDT/AP**

VIETNAM

Vatican's top diplomat begins a 6-day visit aimed at normalizing relations

THE Vatican's top diplomat began a six-day visit to Vietnam yesterday as part of ongoing efforts to normalize relations between the two sides.

Richard Gallagher, the Holy See's foreign minister, will meet with his Vietnamese counterpart Bui Thanh Son and Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, and visit a children's hospital in the capital, Hanoi, state media Vietnam News Agency reported.

Gallagher will also hold Mass in Hanoi, in Hue in central Vietnam and in the financial hub of Ho Chi Minh City in the south.

Last December, Archbishop Marek Zalewski beca-



Vatican Secretary of State Paul Richard Gallagher

me the first Vatican representative to live in the Southeast Asian country and open an office there.

Vietnam described that appointment as a "historic moment," underscoring a stronger relationship that could have implications in the future for the Holy See's ties with China. The Vati-

can's relationship with Vietnam has long been seen as a model for its relations with China. Beijing severed diplomatic ties with the Vatican in 1975 after the communists rose to power and expelled foreign priests.

Vietnam and the Vatican still don't have full diplomatic relations. Their ties

were severed in 1975 after the Communist Party established its rule over the entire country following the end of the Vietnam War. Relations have been strained ever since, although the two sides have had regular talks since at least the late 1990s.

Catholicism is officially the most practiced religion in Vietnam, with 5.9 million or 44.6% of the 13.2 million people who identified as religious in a 2019 census saying they were Catholic. That works out to more than 6% of the country's population.

Diplomats have speculated that Pope Francis could visit the country, but no official announcements have been made by the Vatican or Vietnam.MDT/AP

BANGLADESH

ROHINGYA WHO MOVED TO ISLAND ARE LEARNING JOB SKILLS

JAPAN'S Nippon Foundation will spend \$2 million to help move tens of thousands more Rohingya refugees to a remote island in Bangladesh and provide them with skills training, the charity's chairman said.

Speaking to The Associated Press last weekend after a visit to Bhashan Char, Yohei Sasakawa praised the support the government has provided to refugees on the island and said it's a step toward returning them to Myanmar.

Some 700,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar for Bangladesh after August 2017, when the military in Buddhist-majority Myanmar began a harsh crackdown following an attack by insurgents. The crackdown included rapes, killings and the torching of thousands of homes, and was termed ethnic cleansing by global rights groups and the U.N., while the United States called it genocide.

Efforts to repatriate refugees to Myanmar under a 2017 agreement mediated by China have failed at least twice, and seem only more distant as the security situation worsens. Fighting has spread across much of Myanmar as the ruling junta loses ground to rebel and separatist groups in the country's long-running civil war.MDT/AP

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DIPLOMACY

Biden to meet Kishida amid differences on US Steel deal

AAMER MADHANI,
WASHINGTON

JAPANESE Prime Minister Fumio Kishida begins a much-anticipated visit to Washington today [Macau time] aiming to spotlight shared concerns about assertive Chinese military action in the Pacific and at a rare moment of public difference between the two nations over a Japanese company's plan to buy an iconic U.S. company.

Kishida and his wife will stop by the White House ahead of Wednesday's (tomorrow, Macau time) official visit and formal state dinner as President Joe Biden looks to celebrate a decades-long ally he sees as the cornerstone of his Indo-Pacific policy. Kishida will be the fifth world leader honored by Biden with a state dinner since he took office in 2021.

Ahead of the White House visit, Kishida is set to visit Arlington National Cemetery and stop by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Biden and Kishida will hold talks and take part in a joint news conference before Biden fetes the Japanese leader with the state dinner in the East Room.

The prime minister has also been invited to address a joint meeting of Congress on Thursday. He will be just the second Japanese leader to address the body; Shinzo Abe gave a speech to Congress in 2015.

The visit comes after Biden announced last month that he opposes the planned sale of Pittsburgh-based U.S. Steel to Nippon Steel of Japan, exposing a marked rift in the partnership at the very moment the two leaders aim to reinforce it. Biden argued in announcing his opposition that the U.S. needs to "maintain strong American steel companies powered by American steelworkers."

Ambassador Rahm Emanuel, Biden's envoy to Tokyo, sought yesterday [Macau time] to downplay the impact of Biden's opposition to the U.S. Steel acquisition to the relationship. Emanuel

AP PHOTO



Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and his wife Yuko Kishida participate in an arrival ceremony at Andrews Air Force Base

noted that in February the Biden administration approved a plan that would drive billions of dollars in revenue to a U.S.-based subsidiary of the Japanese company Mitsui for crane production in the United States.

"The United States relationship with Japan is a lot deeper and stronger and more significant than a single commercial deal," said Emanuel, the former mayor of Chicago, in a joint appearance at Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies with Japan's chief envoy to Washington. "As we would say in Chicago, you got to chill."

Nippon Steel announced in December that it planned to buy U.S. Steel for \$14.1 billion in cash, raising concerns about what the transaction could mean for unionized workers, supply chains and U.S. national security. Shigeo Yamada, Japan's ambassador to Washington, declined to comment on whether Kishida would raise the Nippon-U.S. Steel deal with Biden.

Biden has sought to place greater foreign policy focus on the Pacific even while grappling with the fallout of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the grinding Israel-Hamas war. Last year, Biden brought together Kishida and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol at the presidential retreat at Camp David, Maryland, a historic summit between leaders of two countries

that have a difficult shared history.

Biden has honored Yoon with a state visit and picked Kishida's predecessor, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, as the first face-to-face foreign leader visit of his presidency.

The administration has been pleased by Japan's strong support for Ukraine. Tokyo has been one of the largest donors to Kyiv since Russia's February 2022 invasion, and Japan has surged its defense spending amid concern about China's military assertiveness.

Yamada suggested in his joint appearance with Emanuel that Kishida would underscore Japan's support for Ukraine during his appearance before Congress, and lay out why the conflict in Eastern Europe matters to his country. Biden is struggling to get House Republicans to back his call to send an additional \$60 billion to Kyiv as it tries to fend off Russia.

Kishida has warned that the war in Europe could lead to conflict in East Asia, suggesting that a lax attitude to Russia emboldens China.

"The prime minister's conviction is today's Ukraine could be tomorrow's East Asia," Yamada said.

Kishida will stick around Washington on Thursday to take part in a meeting with Biden and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Philippine-Chinese relations have been repeatedly tested by skirmishes

between the two nations' coast guard vessels in the disputed South China Sea.

Chinese coast guard ships also regularly approach disputed Japanese-controlled East China Sea islands near Taiwan. Beijing says Taiwan is part of its territory and will be brought under control by force if necessary.

"Cooperation among our three countries is extremely important in maintaining peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific and in defending a free and open international order based on the rules of law," Kishida said Monday before leaving for Washington.

The leaders are expected to discuss plans to upgrade the U.S. military command structure in Japan. There are about 54,000 U.S. troops stationed in Japan.

Kishida and Biden are also expected to confirm Japan's participation in NASA's Artemis moon program as well as its contribution of a moon rover developed by Toyota Motor Corp. and the inclusion of a Japanese astronaut in the mission. The rover, which comes at a roughly \$2 billion cost, would be the most expensive contribution to the mission by a non-U.S. partner to date.

On Friday, Kishida will tour Toyota's electric vehicle battery factory under construction as well as Honda's business jet subsidiary in North Carolina. He will also meet students at North Carolina State University. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1998 NORTHERN IRELAND PEACE DEAL REACHED



The Northern Ireland peace talks have ended with an historic agreement.

The accord - dubbed the Good Friday Agreement - was reached after nearly two years of talks and 30 years of conflict.

Negotiations on the final day dragged on more than 17 hours after the deadline for an agreement passed.

The agreement is a triumph for British Prime Minister Tony Blair and the Republic of Ireland's leader, Bertie Ahern, who have succeeded where all their predecessors failed.

Speaking at a news conference after the deal was announced Tony Blair said he hoped it marked a new beginning.

"Today I hope that the burden of history can at long last start to be lifted from our shoulders," Mr Blair said.

Bertie Ahern said he hoped a line could now be drawn under the "bloody past".

The proposals in the agreement include plans for a Northern Ireland Assembly, new cross-border institutions involving the Irish Republic and a body linking devolved assemblies across the UK with Westminster and Dublin.

A copy of the proposals will be posted to every household in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic and then put to a referendum in May.

The chairman of the talks, former US Senator George Mitchell, paid tribute to all those who had taken part.

But Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams said there was still a huge gap of distrust between nationalists and unionists.

"It must be bridged on the basis of equality. We are here reaching out the hand of friendship," he said.

Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble added: "I see a great opportunity for us to start a healing process."

The peace agreement was also welcomed by the UDP and PUP parties, which represent loyalist paramilitary groups.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

A referendum held in May 1998 on both sides of the Irish border, returned a resounding "yes" vote for the Good Friday Agreement.

The first three years of the agreement's implementation saw accusations and counter-accusations from both sides.

Unionists said the republicans had not complied with the spirit of the agreement's requirement for the decommissioning of arms.

Disagreement over decommissioning and policing led to three suspensions of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

In October 2002 it was also suspended after allegations of IRA intelligence gathering inside the Northern Ireland Office.

Devolved power was restored to the Assembly on 8 May 2007. DUP leader Ian Paisley and Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness - age-old opponents - took office as first and deputy first ministers ending five years of direct rule.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Maintain positive cash flow, despite delays or challenges. Guard against technical glitches. Research carefully before purchasing. Provide reliable and excellent service. Patience pays.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
You're especially energized; don't overshoot your mark. Let things develop naturally. Provide leadership behind the scenes. Self-discipline serves you well. You're growing stronger.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Rest and recharge. Settle into peaceful privacy. Savor your favorite rituals. Process recent events and emotions. Wait for developments. Plan for different options.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Keep promises with friends. Communicate through delays or breakdowns. Take advantage of forward momentum. Together, you can adapt around an obstacle. Connect and share.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Focus on a professional priority. Make sure that what you build is solid. An unexpected development could change things. Plan for the long term.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Adapt your educational exploration around delays or barriers. Organization and planning prepare you for a successful connection. Monitor conditions closely.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Patiently take care of shared financial management. File papers and documents. Review accounts and balances. Monitor budgets. Discuss options and potential.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Enjoy the company of someone who gets you. Avoid risk, irritations or sensitivities. Keep your patience, especially with misunderstandings. Share your favorite rituals.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Slow the pace to avoid mistakes, pitfalls or risky business. Follow rules and best practices carefully. Demand for your attention is rising. Prioritize health.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Relax and have fun. Postpone important conversations. Spend unstructured time together with beloved people. Indulge your favorite passions. Reconnect with nature, beauty and love.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Family comes first. Patiently untangle misunderstandings. Make repairs and clean messes. Don't overthink things. Rest, relax and savor the fruit of your efforts.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Extra patience pays extra. Messages can get garbled or lost in translation. Expect transportation or shipping delays. Clarify and repeat. It all works out.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

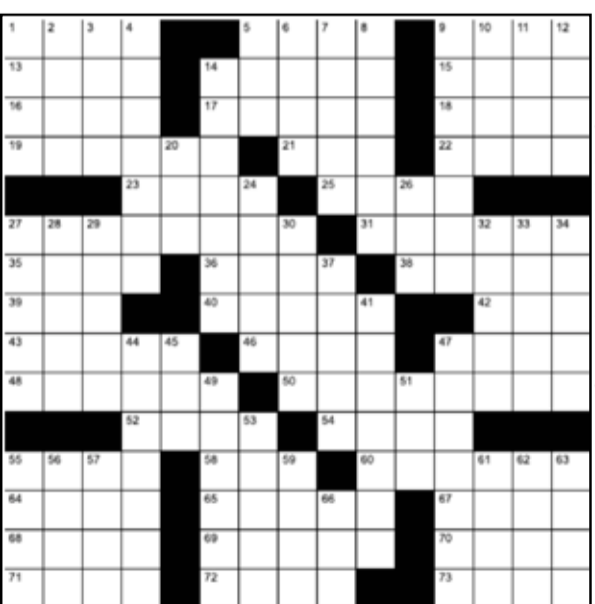
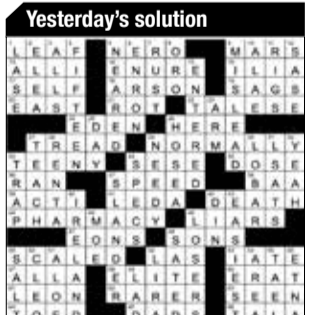
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	7	13	rain
Changchun	1	18	cloudy
Chengdu	15	23	rain
Chongqing	16	23	rain
Fuzhou	13	23	cloudy
Guangzhou	19	25	cloudy
Guiyang	12	23	rain
Haikou	22	29	rain
Hangzhou	11	23	fine
Harbin	-3	15	fine
Hefei	11	24	rain
Nanjing	11	22	cloudy
Shanghai	11	20	fine
Taipei	18	24	overcast
Wuhan	14	21	rain
Hong Hong	14	21	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	13	22	fog
Frankfurt	4	16	cloudy
Paris	10	17	cloudy
London	12	14	rain
New York	10	14	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Ran, as colors; 5- Woe is mel; 9- Horse hair; 13- Ethereal; Prefix; 14- Overhead; 15- Shake ___ (hurry); 16- Fragrant neckwear; 17- Secret organization; 18- 1963 role for Liz; 19- Get away; 21- Scot's cap; 22- Fragments; 23- Aloe ___; 25- Title; 27- Spanish Miss; 31- Spice; 35- Cat's weapon; 36- Surrender; 38- Grave robber; 39- No longer working (abbr.); 40- Line in a play directed to the audience; 42- Singer's syllable; 43- Make ___ for oneself; 46- Prepared to drive; 47- Entrance; 48- Harmful intent; 50- Cosmos; 52- ___ Like It Hot; 54- Attempt; 55- Molt; 58- Structural engineer's software; 60- Consecutively; 64- Story; 65- One of the Muses; 67- Designer Chanel; 68- Literary lioness; 69- Actress Burstyn; 70- Cowardly Lion portrayer; 71- Rind; 72- Feat; 73- Highlands tongue;

DOWN 1- Bundle; 2- Dregs; 3- Guitarist Clapton; 4- Disown; 5- Lawyers' org.; 6- Attic; 7- Birdlike; 8- Sailor; 9- Tragedy by Shakespeare; 10- ___ want for Christmas...; 11- Nair rival; 12- They may clash; 14- "A Horse With No Name" band; 20- Apiece; 24- This is only ___; 26- Drinking cup; 27- Beat it!; 28- Actress Verdugo; 29- Birth-related; 30- French farewell; 32- Engine; 33- Continental cash; 34- Stare angrily; 37- Paradises; 41- Version; 44- Distribute the wrong cards; 45- Environmental prefix; 47- Fiasco; 49- Hosted; 51- Moving vehicle; 53- Steve of country music; 55- Word that can succeed dance, foot and door; 56- Patriot Nathan; 57- Last word in a threat; 59- Roy's "singin' pardner"; 61- Crowd sound; 62- Publisher Adolph; 63- Had on; 66- Actor Danson;



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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AD

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

GEOGRAPHY

EVEN IN THE AGE OF GOOGLE EARTH, PEOPLE STILL BUY GLOBES

LAURIE KELLMAN, LONDON

FIND a globe in your local library or classroom and try this: Close the eyes, spin it and drop a finger randomly on its curved, glossy surface.

You're likely to pinpoint a spot in the water, which covers 71% of the planet. Maybe you'll alight on a place you've never heard of — or a spot that no longer exists after a war or because of climate change. Perhaps you'll feel inspired to find out who lives there and what it's like. Trace the path of totality ahead of Monday's solar eclipse. Look carefully, and you'll find the cartouche — the globemaker's signature — and the antipode (look it up) of where you're standing right now.

In the age of Google Earth, watches that triangulate and cars with built-in GPS, there's something about a globe — a spherical representation of the world in miniature — that somehow endures.

London globemaker Peter Bellerby thinks the human yearning to “find our place in the cosmos” has helped globes survive their original purpose — navigation — and the internet. He says it's part of the reason he went into debt making a globe for his father's 80th birthday in 2008. The experience helped inspire his company, and 16 years later is keeping his team of about two dozen artists, cartographers and woodworkers employed.

“You don't get onto Google Earth to get inspired,” Bellerby says in his airy studio, surrounded by dozens of globes in various languages and states of completion. “A globe is very much something that connects you to the planet that we live on.”

Or, as Scottish-born American explorer John Muir wrote in 1915: “When we contemplate the whole globe as one great dewdrop, striped and dotted with continents and islands, flying through space with other stars all singing and shining together as one, the whole universe appears as an infinite storm of beauty.”

BUILDING A GLOBE AMID CHANGE?

Beyond the existential and historical appeal, earthly matters such as cost and geopolitics hover over globemaking. Bellerby says his company has experience with customs officials in regions with disputed borders such as India, China, North Africa and the Middle East.

And there is a real question about whether globes — especially handmade orbs — remain relevant as more than works of art and history for those who can afford them. They are, after all, snapshots of the past — of the way their patrons and makers saw the world at a certain point in time. So they're inherently inaccurate representations of a planet in constant flux.

“Do globes play a relevant role in our time? If so, then in my opinion, this is due to their appearance as a three-dimensional body, the hard-to-control desire to turn them, and the attractiveness of their map image,” says Jan Mokre, vice president of the International Coronelli Society for the Study of Globes in Vienna. “Perhaps a certain nostalgia effect also plays a role, just as old cars and mechanical watches still exert a certain attraction on people.”

Joshua Nall, Director of the Whipple Museum of the History

of Science in Cambridge, says a globe remains a display of “the learning, the erudition, the political interests of its owner.”

“Sadly, I think globe usage probably is declining, perhaps particularly in the school setting, where digital technologies are taking over,” Nall says. “I think now they're perhaps more becoming items of overt prestige. They're being bought as display pieces to look beautiful, which of course they always have been.”

HOW, AND HOW MUCH?

Bellerby's globes aren't cheap. They run from about 1,290 British pounds (about \$1,900) for the smallest to six figures for the 50-inch Churchill model. He makes about 600 orbs a year of varying size, framing and ornamentation.

Creating them is a complex process that starts with the construction of a sphere and progresses to the application of fragile petal-shaped panels, called “gores,” that are fitted together around the sphere's surface. Artists perched around Bellerby's London studio painstakingly blend and apply paint — dreamy cobalt and mint for the oceans, yellow, greens and ochre for the landscape.

The imagery painted on the globes runs the gamut, from constellations to mountains and sea creatures. And here, The Associated Press can confirm, be dragons.

WHO BUYS A GLOBE THESE DAYS?

Bellerby doesn't name clients, but he says they come from more socioeconomic levels than you'd think — from families to businesses and heads of state. Private art collectors come calling. So do movie-makers.

Bellerby says in his book that the company made four globes for the 2011 movie, “Hugo.” One globe can be seen in the 2023 movie “Tetris,” including one, a freestanding straight-leg Galileo model, which features prominently in a scene.

And yes, some of the planet's wealthiest people buy them. The family of German tool and hardware company chairman Reinhold Würth gave him a Churchill, the largest model, for his 83rd birthday. It is now on display at the Museum Würth 2 in Berlin.

His granddaughter, Maria Würth, says in an Instagram video that the piece highlights the history of the company and the magnate's travels.

A 'POLITICAL MINEFIELD'

There is no international standard for a correctly drawn earth. Countries, like people, view the world differently, and some are highly sensitive about how their territory is depicted. To offend them with “incorrectly” drawn borders on a globe is to risk impoundment of the orbs at customs.

“Globemaking,” Bellerby writes, “is a political minefield.”

Most countries don't recognize Taiwan, which is part of China. Morocco doesn't recognize Western Sahara. India's northern border is disputed. Many Arab countries, such as Lebanon, don't acknowledge Israel.

Bellerby says the company marks disputed borders as disputed: “We cannot change or rewrite history.”

HERE'S THE 'EARTH APPLE'

Scientists since antiquity, famously Plato and Aristotle, posited that the earth is not flat but

closer to a sphere. (More precisely, it's a spheroid — bulging at the equator, squashed at the poles).

No one knows when the first terrestrial globe was created. But the oldest known surviving one dates to 1492. No one in Europe knew of the existence of North or South America at the time.

It's called the “Erdapfel,” which translates to “earth apple” or “potato.” The orb was made by German navigator and geographer Martin Behaim, who was working for the king of Portugal, according to the Whipple Museum in Cambridge. It contained more than just the cartographical information then known, but also details such as commodities overseas, market places and local trading protocols.

It's also a record of a troubled time.

“The Behaim Globe is today a central document of the European world conquest and the Atlantic slave trade,” according to the German National Museum's web page on the globe, exhibited there. In the 15th century, the museum notes, “Africa was not only to be circumnavigated in search of India, but also to be developed economically.”

“The globe makes it clear how much the creation of our modern world was based on the violent appropriation of raw materials, the slave trade and plantation farming,” the museum notes, or “the first stage of European subjugation and division of the world.”

TWIN GLOBES FOR CHURCHILL & ROOSEVELT

If you've got a globe of any sort, you're in good company. During World War II, two in particular were commissioned for leaders on opposite sides of the Atlantic as symbols of power and partnership.

For Christmas in 1942, the United States delivered gigantic twin globes to American president Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. They were 50 inches in diameter and hundreds of pounds each, believed to be the largest and most accurate globes of the time.

It took more than 50 government geographers, cartographers, and draftsmen to compile the information to make the globe, constructed by the Weber Costello Company of Chicago Heights, Illinois.

The Roosevelt globe now sits at the Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park, N.Y., and Churchill's globe is at Chartwell House, the Churchill family home in Kent, England, according to the U.S. Library of Congress.

In theory, the leaders could use the globes simultaneously to formulate war strategy. “In reality, however,” Bellerby writes, “the gift of the globes was a simple PR exercise, an important weapon in modern warfare.” **MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL

FIFA may change policy blocking league matches from being played in other countries

RONALD BLUM, NEW YORK

FIFA said it will consider changes to its policy that blocks league matches from being played in other countries as part of an agreement with a soccer promoter to dismiss the world governing body from a lawsuit challenging that policy.

Relevant Sports lawyer Jeffrey L. Kessler filed a letter this week in U.S. District Court in Manhattan stating FIFA and his client agreed to the dismissal. Keller wrote FIFA agreed to abide by any injunction arising from the suit, which also includes the U.S. Soccer Federation as a defendant. The agreement did not alter the suit against the USSF.

"FIFA and Relevant have



agreed to resolve this matter as it concerns FIFA, pending FIFA's consideration of changes

to existing FIFA policies with respect to playing official season games outside of a league's

home territory," FIFA said in a statement. "FIFA has not admitted any liability and continues to deny the legal claims alleged in Relevant's complaint."

Relevant, controlled by Miami Dolphins owner Stephen Ross, announced in August 2018 it planned to host a Spanish league match between Barcelona and Girona at Miami Gardens, Florida, the following January.

In October 2018, FIFA said its ruling council adopted a policy that "emphasized the sporting principle that official league matches must be played within the territory of the respective member association." Barcelona then withdrew its commitment to play in Florida.

Relevant in 2019 also was refused permission by the USSF to sanction a league match be-

tween two teams from Ecuador.

Relevant sued the governing bodies, claiming violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act and tortious interference.

"Bringing official matches from Europe to the U.S. is an exciting proposition but it must be done thoughtfully and collaboratively," Relevant CEO Daniel Sillman said in a statement. "We look forward to partnering with FIFA to support the global growth of the game and the best leagues in the world."

Caproni in July 2021 granted the USSF's motion to dismiss the antitrust claim but the case was reinstated in March 2023 by the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The USSF asked the Supreme Court in August to take the case, and the Biden administration last month said the Supreme Court should let the appellate decision stand.

"FIFA and Relevant Sports have agreed to resolve this matter specific to FIFA while FIFA considers changes to its existing rules about whether games can be played outside of a league's home territory," the promoter said in a statement. "Relevant Sports looks forward to supporting FIFA as both sides work to grow the game." **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

The Conversation

Matthew J. Kohn, Boise State University



TINY CRYSTALS CAPTURE MILLIONS OF YEARS OF MOUNTAIN RANGE HISTORY - THE HIMALAYAS

The Himalayas stand as Earth's highest mountain range, possibly the highest ever. How did it form? Why is it so tall?

You might think understanding big mountain ranges requires big measurements – perhaps satellite imaging over tens or hundreds of thousands of square miles. Although scientists certainly use satellite data, many of us, including me, study the biggest of mountain ranges by relying on the smallest of measurements in tiny minerals that grew as the mountain range formed.

These minerals are found in metamorphic rocks – rocks transformed by heat, pressure or both. One of the great joys in studying metamorphic rocks lies in microanalysis of their minerals. With measurements on scales smaller than the thickness of a human hair, we can unlock the age and chemical compositions hidden inside tiny crystals to understand processes occurring on a colossal scale.

Minerals containing radioactive elements are of special interest because these elements, called parents, decay at known rates to form stable elements, called daughters. By measuring the ratio of parent to daughter, we can determine how old a mineral is.

With microanalysis, we can even measure different ages in different parts of a crystal to determine different growth stages. By linking the chemistry of different zones within a mineral to events in the history of a mountain range, researchers can infer how the mountain range was assembled and how quickly.

My research team and I analyzed and imaged a single grain of metamorphic monazite from rocks we collected from the Annapurna region of central Nepal. Though only 0.07 inches (1.75 mm) long, this is a gigantic crystal by geologists standards – roughly 30 times larger than typical monazite crystals. We nicknamed it “Monzilla.”

Using an electron probe microanalyzer, we collected and visualized data on the concentration of thorium – a radioactive element, similar to uranium – in the crystal. Colors show the distribution of thorium, where white and red indicate higher concentrations, while blue and purple indicate lower concentrations. Numbers superimposed on the image represent age in millions of years.

Thorium-lead dating measures the ratio of parent thorium to its daughter lead; this ratio depends on thorium's decay rate and the age of the crystal. We see two different zones are present in the sample: a roughly 30 million-year-old core with high thorium concentrations and a roughly 10 million-year-old, blobby rim with low thorium concentrations.

As the Indian tectonic plate crunches northward into Asia, rocks are first buried deeply, then thrust southward on huge faults. These faults are presently responsible for some of the most catastrophic earthquakes on our planet. As one example, in 2015, the magnitude 7.8 Gorkha earthquake in central Nepal triggered landslides that obliterated the town of Langtang, where I had worked about a dozen years prior. An estimated 329 people died there, and only 14 survived.

Our chemical analyses of this monazite crystal and nearby samples indicate that these rocks were buried deep underneath thrust faults, causing them to partially melt and form the roughly 30 million-year-old monazite core. About 10 million years ago, the rocks were carried up on a major thrust fault, forming the monazite rim. This data shows that building mountain ranges takes a long time – at least 30 million years, in this case – and that rocks basically cycle through them.

By studying rocks in other locations, we can chart the movement of these thrusts and better understand the origins of the Himalayas.

BROKEN RECORD: MARCH IS 10TH STRAIGHT HOTTEST MONTH ON RECORD, SCIENTISTS SAY

THE BUZZ

For the 10th consecutive month, Earth in March set a new monthly record for global heat — with both air temperatures and the world's oceans hitting an all-time high for the month, the European Union climate agency Copernicus said.

March 2024 averaged 14.14 degrees Celsius (57.9 degrees Fahrenheit), exceeding the previous record from 2016 by a tenth of a degree, according to Copernicus data. And it was 1.68 degrees C (3 degrees F) warmer than in the late 1800s, the base used for temperatures before the burning of fossil fuels began growing rapidly.

Since last June, the globe has broken heat records each month, with

marine heat waves across large areas of the globe's oceans contributing.

Scientists say the record-breaking heat during this time wasn't entirely surprising due to a strong El Nino, a climatic condition that warms the central Pacific and changes global weather patterns.

“But its combination with the non-natural marine heat waves made these records so breathtaking,” said Woodwell Climate Research Center scientist Jennifer Francis.

With El Nino waning, the margins by which global average temperatures are surpassed each month should go down, Francis said.

THAILAND

TRIAL OPENS FOR SON OF SPANISH ACTORS OVER KILLING OF COLOMBIAN SURGEON

THAILAND'S court began a trial Tuesday of the son of Spanish actors accused of killing and dismembering a Colombian surgeon on a popular tourist island.

Daniel Sancho Bronchalo, 29, was indicted by prosecutors in October over the death of Edwin Arrieta Arteaga, whose remains were found stuffed in plastic bags at a landfill on Koh Pha Ngan, an island famous for its rave-style “full moon parties.”

Lawyer Juan Gonzalo Ospina Serrano, who represents Arrieta's family, told reporters at the Koh Samui Provincial Court before the trial that the family trusts Thai prosecutors to deliver justice.

“They are grateful and hope that Thai law is forceful and that the truth can be told,” he said.

The charges against Sancho include premeditated murder, concealment of a body and destruction of other people's documents, which is related to the alleged damaging of the Arrieta's passport. Sancho pleaded not guilty to premeditated



A Thai police officer escorts Spaniard Daniel Sancho Bronchalo to Koh Samui Island court, southern Thailand, last August

murder and destruction of documents but pleaded guilty to hiding the victim's body.

The charge of premeditated murder carries a possible death penalty. The maximum sentence for damaging other's documents carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a 100,000 baht (\$2,750) fine. The concealment or damaging of a body carries a year in prison and a 20,000 baht (\$550) fine.

The trial is opening with statements from witnesses brought in by the plaintiff, said Apichart Srinual, a Thai lawyer who represents Sancho.

When asked whether he

is confident about his defense case, Aprichart said “it depends on the evidence,” adding that “there are a lot of witnesses. It depends on what they will say.”

Sancho was driven to the court in a closed car and was not visible to reporters waiting outside. Sancho's father, Spanish actor Rodolfo Sancho, also came to the court but declined to comment.

Sancho, a chef, was arrested in August after the remains of Arrieta, 44, were discovered at the landfill.

Police said Sancho came in to report a missing person and was subsequently detained. MDT/AP



Gaza Strip Stunned Palestinians found their home city unrecognizable this week as they filtered in to salvage what they could from the vast destruction left by Israeli troops who withdrew from southern Gaza's Khan Younis a day earlier after months of fighting and bombardment. With thousands of buildings destroyed or damaged, families tried to find their homes along streets bulldozed down to the dirt, surrounded by landscapes of rubble and debris that were once blocks of apartments and businesses.



Netherlands Germany yesterday strongly rejected a case brought by Nicaragua at the United Nations' top court accusing Berlin of facilitating breaches of the Geneva Convention and international humanitarian law by providing arms and other support to Israel in its deadly assault on Gaza. “The minute we look closely, Nicaragua's accusations fall apart,” Christian Tams, a member of Germany's legal team, told the 16-judge panel at the International Court of Justice.



Europe's highest human rights court ruled yesterday that its member nations have an obligation to protect their citizens from the ill effects of climate change, but still threw out a high-profile case brought by six Portuguese youngsters aimed at forcing countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The European Court of Human Rights sided with more than 2,000 Swiss members of Senior Women for Climate Protection, who also sought such measures in a mixed session of judgements.

The Vatican declared gender-affirming surgery and surrogacy as grave violations of human dignity, putting them on par with abortion and euthanasia as practices that it said reject God's plan for human life. The Vatican's doctrine office issued “Infinite Dignity,” a 20-page declaration that has been in the works for five years. After substantial revision in recent months, it was approved March 25 by Pope Francis, who ordered its publication.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Robert F. Bukaty



Total eclipse of the sun. The moon covers most of the sun as it approaches the total solar eclipse, as seen from the summit of Saddleback Mountain, yesterday (Macau time), near Rangeley, Maine.