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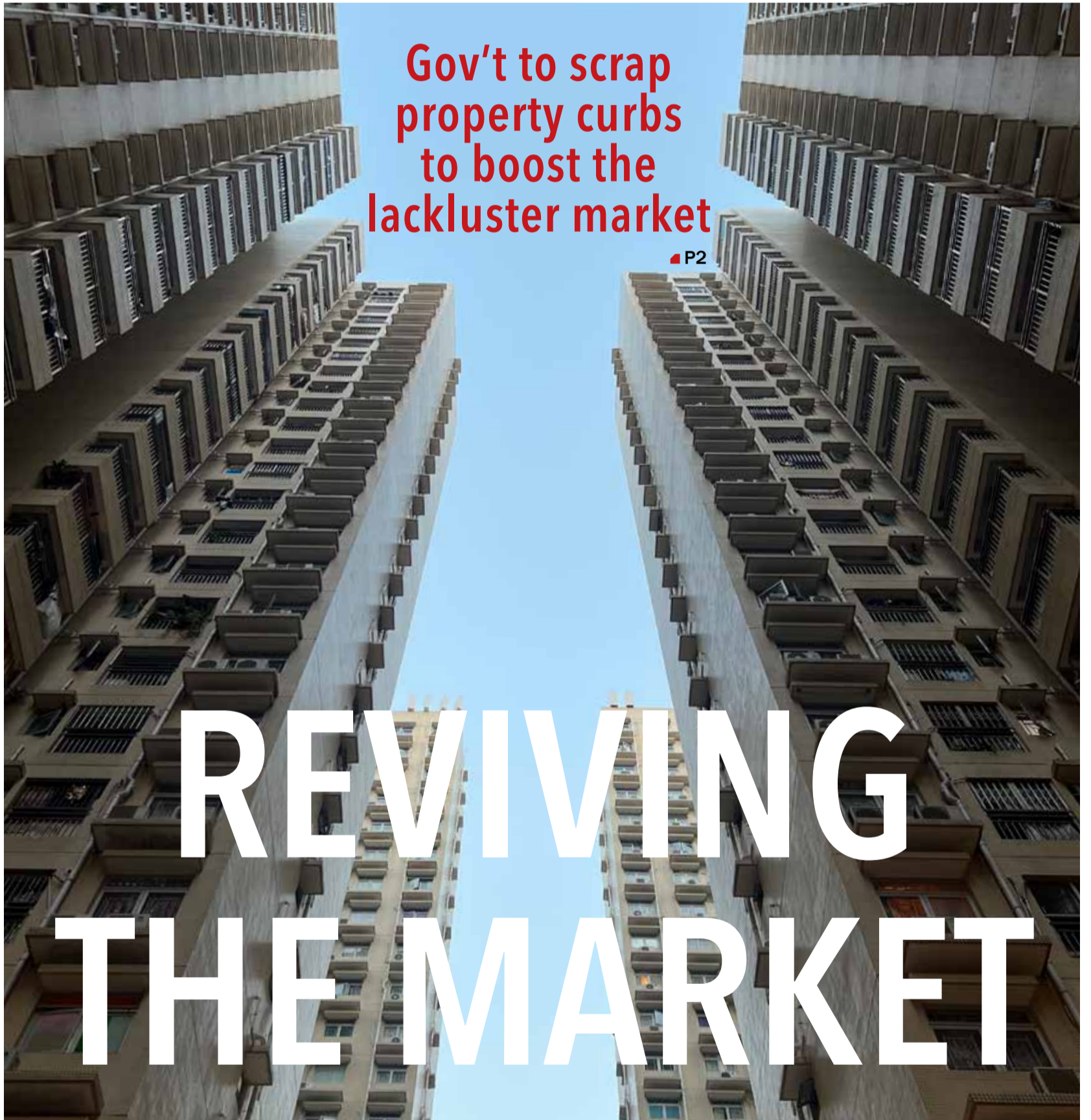
China Two people have been detained following the capsizing of a tourist boat on a river in northeastern China that led to the drowning deaths of 12 visitors, state media reported yesterday. The accident occurred Saturday afternoon outside the city of Qinhuangdao near the coast of Hebei province, a few hour's drive from the capital Beijing. A total of 31 people were thrown into the water. The boat was made by local villagers and was unequipped with life jackets or other safety equipment, according to the Xinhua News Agency.



China-North Korea A top ranking official Chinese official reaffirmed ties with North Korea during a meeting Saturday with the country's leader Kim Jong Un in the capital Pyongyang. China's state media reported, in the highest-level talks between the allies in years. The visit by Zhao Leji, who ranks third in the ruling Communist Party hierarchy and heads the ceremonial parliament, came as North Korea has test fired missiles to intimidate South Korea and its ally, the United States.

Indonesia Torrential rains triggered landslides on Indonesia's Sulawesi island, killing at least 14 people and leaving three others missing, officials said yesterday. Mud fell from surrounding hills onto four houses just before midnight Saturday in the Tana Toraja district of South Sulawesi province, said local police chief Gunardi Mundu. He said a family gathering was being held in one of the affected houses.

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GOV'T TO SCRAP HOUSING SECTOR COOLING MEASURES TO BOOST AILING MARKET

LYNZY VALLES

THE SAR government plans to scrap housing market cooling measures amid calls from the property sector as demand continues to weaken.

The Executive Council submitted Friday a policy proposal to the Legislative Assembly (AL) to adjust the measures regulating real estate demand in Macau, as well as the tax measures in these regulations, which are a decade old.

According to the council, the proposal to eliminate tax measures associated with real estate demand has been submitted to the AL and will undergo an expedited process for swift implementation.

The draft proposes to abolish the special stamp duty, additional stamp duty, and stamp duty on acquisition, as well as easing mortgage lending restrictions, increasing the maximum loan-to-value ratio to 70% for Macau residents and 90% for affordable housing purchases.

For mortgages, the Monetary Authority of Macao will standardize the maximum loan-to-value ratio at 70% for both residents and non-residents (90% for affor-



dable housing) and suspend the requirement to stress test for a 2% interest rate increase.

These measures were initially established from 2010 to maintain the stable development of the real estate market.

However, several property associations and realtors have long called for the government to fully lift its cooldown measures following the pandemic, particularly after foreseeing a tough real property market in Macau in 2024.

According to the current envi-

ronment, even if the government launches another land auction, there will be no bidders.

Last year, the transaction volume dropped another 3%, compared to 2022.

Oliver Tong, general manager at JLL in Macau and Zhuhai, has welcomed the Macau government's decision to remove all cooling measures in the housing market.

However, JLL has noted the economy remains weak, and the return of tourists benefits a few industries only.

"Coupled with high interest rates, the impact of the removal of cooling measures may not be as significant as what was witnessed in Hong Kong," Tong said.

"It may encourage the local people to buy new flats for upgrading and could help ease the downward pressure on the housing prices," he added.

Meanwhile, the realtor has revised its forecast on mass residential prices from a 0-5% decline to a stable trend, similar to luxury residential properties.

The transaction volume in se-

condary markets is expected to increase slightly, while the performance of the primary market would depend on whether developers will further cut asking prices to attract buyers.

"Otherwise, the sales of new flats are unlikely to rebound significantly."

"We are not going to see the influx of mainland buyers in Macau's housing market as they still prefer to invest in Hong Kong's housing market," said Tong.

Hong Kong in February scrapped all buy-side property tightening measures for residential properties with immediate effect, leading to a rise in stocks of its property developers.

Despite efforts to stimulate the market, including halving the buyers' stamp duty and waiving duties for certain resales, the property sector has seen a significant downturn, with transactions at a 33-year low and prices dropping to a record low since February 2017.

The luxury market has experienced a sharp decline in prices.

The neighboring region considers that the "relevant measures are no longer necessary amidst the current economic and market conditions."

STAFF REPORTER

EIGHT directors were selected to receive HKD300,000 each to fund their short film projects after completing last week's inaugural International Film Camp.

Organized by the Asian Film Awards Academy and sponsored by Sands China Ltd., the film camp hosted over 550 applicants from across Asia.

The selected participants received mentorship from industry professionals such as Hong Kong director Mabel Cheung and Singapore's Anthony Chen.

Through a panel of judges, eight winners were chosen from 16 finalists based on their film concepts addressing the the-

me of "My Hometown."

The recipients represent a range of countries and regions, including mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, Mongolia and Cambodia.

The winning directors and their film project titles are: Song Dongxu of mainland China for "Ride Your Horse"; Lee Chak Hang of Hong Kong for "Sweet, Sour and Bitter"; Galilee Ma of Macau for "Pop It"; Lkhagvadulam Purev-ochir of Mongolia for "A South Facing Window"; Chen Yun of mainland China for "Catching Alternative"; To Chun Him of Hong Kong for "Once Upon A Time There Was A Mountain"; Lan Tian of mainland China for "One Home To Another"; and Ines Sothea of

CINEMA

Eight films selected for Sands' funding for international film camp

Cambodia for "Homecoming Waves."

Once completed, the films will premiere at the Asian Film Awards Festival.

Wilfred Wong, executive vice chairman of Sands China Ltd., remarked, "The highly-anticipated inaugural International Film Camp is the result of an unprecedented collaboration between Hong Kong and Macau, marking a significant milestone for the development of Macau's film industry."



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ECOLOGICAL ISLAND

Gov't: Landfill off Coloane the 'only solution' for waste

STAFF REPORTER

THE government has said ecological island is currently the only solution to effectively handling waste.

Speaking to the press on the sidelines of an event yesterday, Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo do Rosário reiterated that existing landfills for construction waste have become full, hence, such reclamation is necessary.

He defended that the entire process of the ecological island, including site selection, size and dolphin conservation was discussed with the central government and monitored by national experts and institutions, and called on the public to rest assured.

Asked whether all research reports on the ecological island will



Ecological Island's project location

be made public, the government said it generally does not "disclose while doing it," as cited in a TDM report.

Once the authorities decide the development direction, they

will disclose the information online, he said.

Earlier this year, there was a call to halt the proposal to put a landfill off the southern coast of Coloane.

In the description of an online petition, an environmentalist, Joe Chan, predicted the landfill will damage marine life, intensify water pollution, and risk the health of aquatic activities practitioners.

More importantly, it will destroy the ecology of Indo-Pacific humpbacked dolphins, he said. The dolphin is a national Tier-1 key protected animal.

Chan also criticized the government for failing to provide any scientific data to support the "unique necessity" of the project, and no environmental assessments were produced. The public consultation period only lasts 50 days, which he believes is too short for such an important issue.

According to the government official, it is impossible to satisfy everyone's opinions, but the government will collect and analyze all suggestions before deciding.

MARITIME PUBLIC CONSULTATION REPORT

Ecological Island receives 233 responses

RENATO MARQUES

THE Marine and Water Bureau (DSAMA) late last week published the public consultation report on the new law to regulate maritime areas as well as a plan for their usage and classification in different zones.

The most heated consultation was about the construction of an artificial island dedicated to the deposit of construction residue.

According to DSAMA, the "Ecological Island" project generated 233 comments, with 161 supporting its construction.

The report also noted DSAMA had received only eight opinions against the construction of the island, while 64 opinions called for a change in the facility's location and the release of more in-

formation.

One opinion noted the launching of an online petition to cancel or move the project to reduce its impact on the marine ecosystem and more specifically on the habitat of the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin, also called the Chinese white dolphin.

In response, DSAMA published the same earlier response justifying the island's creation.

It quoted the Environmental Protection Bureau stating the need for a new and larger facility for the purpose, since the current one has almost reached its limit.

DSAMA noted 76 opinions about the dolphins, of which 38 called for a dolphin protection zone.

It received another 38 about the welfare of the ani-

mals although they had no specific proposal or suggestion.

The government noted there is already a dolphin national reserve in the maritime areas near Macau and, for that reason, no specific area was considered in this particular location.

DSAMA also said all areas established by the "Functional Maritime Zoning" included matters related to the environmental protection of marine ecosystems.

In general, DSAMA claimed the 50-day public consultation on the zones, plan, and use of the maritime areas yielded many opinions favoring the government's project with an acceptance of over 80%.

In total, 515 opinions were collected during the public consultation.

AL APPROVES BILL LIMITING GAMBLING CREDIT TO CASINOS

STAFF REPORTER

THE Legislative Assembly (AL) passed a bill Friday to amend rules for issuing credit for casino gambling in the special administrative region.

The "Legal regime of credit concession for games of chance in casinos" bill received unanimous approval from legislators and takes effect Aug. 1.

The bill stipulates that only casino concessionaires – the six companies licensed to operate casinos in Macau – will be permitted to provide gambling credit to patrons.

Government-licensed junket operators, officially known as gaming promoters, will no longer be able to directly issue credit to gamblers.

Junkets can only request that their partnering casino extend credit to players they introduce, and such an arrangement requires a notarized contract approved by Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong.

Credit extended by junkets before the new law's effective date will

still be valid under the existing betting credit law.

Legislator Chan Chak Mo, who introduced the bill, said junkets' role under Macau's revised gaming regulations that began with the concessions' January 2023 renewals was to "assist" casinos, not manage credit risk.

Lei said the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau will monitor concessionaires' financial status and credit issuance.

The bill's passage comes as Macau limits junkets to partnering with just one casino following reforms last year.

As of February, Macau had 19 licensed junkets, down from over 200 in 2013.

An amendment also allows concessionaires' credit rights to be terminated if the chief executive deems it in the "public interest."

Macquarie Equity Research said the law's impact on Macau's gaming revenue should be "manageable" given junkets' diminished scale and limited VIP contributions.

FOOTBALL MATCHES RETURN TO TAIPA STADIUM AFTER REPAIRS

The turf resurfacing work at the Taipa Sports Ground has been completed, allowing some football league matches to return there as early as next week, Pun Weng Kun, president of the Sports Bureau (ID), said. After a January concert damaged the lawn and facilities, nearly three months of repairs were needed at the Taipa Sports Stadium, according to Pun Weng Kun, the president of the Sports Bureau (ID). The grass restoration met requirements and the stadium will now reopen after final grooming and markings, he said. According to the Macau Football Association website, the First Division League will use the Taipa Sports Stadium starting Friday.

MACAU BRIDGE COMPLETION DATE SET FOR END OF JUNE

The Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, said the Macau Bridge will be completed by the end of June at the earliest and opened within the third quarter. Director of Public Construction Bureau Lam Wai Hou said the name "Macau Bridge" was selected through a public naming campaign last year. If tourists arrive in Macau by sea, it will be the first bridge they see and signify their arrival. Each of Macau's four cross-harbor bridges now has a distinct name reflecting its location. Officials said signage will be added to help residents and visitors identify the new bridge. Completion is expected in the third quarter allowing for final inspections and preparations for opening.

WORLD CUP RETURNS WITH NEW TOURNAMENT FORMAT

The Men's and Women's ITTF World Cup is set to return to Macau from Apr. 15-21 after being suspended in 2021 due to the pandemic, but with a new single-elimination competition format. A total of 96 top players, including defending men's champion Fan Zhendong of China and women's title holder Chen Meng, also of China, will be divided into 16 groups of three for a round-robin stage. The top player from each group will advance to the knockout round. Sports Bureau (ID) Director Pun Weng Kun said ticket sales have been strong and they hope to promote sports development ahead of hosting the 2025 National Games, where table tennis will be a focal point.

GOV'T FUNDS 70 ATHLETES WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN 2023

The government supported 70 athletes with intellectual disabilities in 2023, according to the Sports Bureau (ID). In a reply to an interpellation from lawmaker Nick Lei, the government said the bureau funded various sports associations for people with disabilities to hire 14 coaches and psychological counsellors and subsidized 70 athletes with intellectual disabilities. The ID said it has also given qualified sports facilities under its jurisdiction barrier-free equipment and facilities and continues to optimize them to make them more convenient for those in need.

IAM WARNING BEER BRAND CHEMICAL RISK

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has issued a recall alert for packs of 1664 Blanc Bière Blanche beers after ethylene glycol was discovered in some batches overseas. Drinkers in France are being warned to avoid the popular beer brand after it was found to potentially contain dangerous chemicals. The recalled beer comes in 12-bottle packs with bottles holding 25 cl each. Affected batches have the identification barcode 3080216036182 and best before date of March 31, 2025. Food safety watchdogs in Hong Kong and Macau are now investigating potential imports of the tainted brew.

TOURIST PRICES RISE 4.68% YEARLY BUT DROP FROM LAST QUARTER

The tourist price index for the first quarter of 2024 rose 4.68% from the same period last year due to higher hotel rates and clothing prices, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DESC). Clothing and footwear prices jumped 9.17% while accommodation grew 8.35% and other goods 6.54%. Entertainment dropped 15.29%. When compared to the fourth quarter of 2023, the TPI for the first quarter of 2024 witnessed a decrease of 3.85%. Notably, the price indices of Entertainment & Cultural Activities and Accommodation experienced the most substantial drops, with decreases of 15.98% and 11.98% respectively.

AL APPROVES TRADE UNION LAW, ATFPM-LINKED LAWMAKERS ABSTAIN

RENATO MARQUES

MACAU will soon have a trade union law to regulate the establishment and activities of workers' unions, after long years and many rejected proposals.

The Legislative Assembly (AL) approved the bill at its final reading Friday.

However, lawmakers José Pereira Coutinho and Che Sai Wang, both linked with the Macao Public Servants Association (ATFPM), abstained.

After the bill's approval, Che, speaking for both lawmakers, said they had abstained in all 53 articles of the bill because this version, "is still very fragmented."

"It does not take into account many aspects that we [Che and Pereira Coutinho] have alerted the government to, especially matters related to local organizations' participation and membership of international workers' organizations as well as [the matters related to] collective negotiation."

The two also claimed the "government should scrupulously respect the provisions of the Macau Basic Law" as well as other



Labor Day demonstration, 2016

documents and local regulations that safeguard the right to protest and to strike.

Che said the new law as approved will not in any way "empower the workers."

They also believe it will not improve anything when compared to the current regulations on associations.

Recently, Pereira Coutinho, one of the major advocates for the creation of a trade union law, had expressed disappointment

with the direction the new law was taking, stating conclusively on several occasions that "this law [proposal] is worse than the current law."

The new law will take effect March 31, 2025, almost one year after being approved.

This is to allow existing groups involved in workers' rights activities to adjust to the new rules, including the formalization of the groups as unions.

Lawmakers Chui Sai Peng,

Wang Sai Man, and Ip Sio Kai approved the bill.

They hoped the new law can continue to strike a balance between employers and employees, noting that balance is "essential so local companies can develop stably."

Also pleased with the new law's approval were lawmakers linked to the Macau Federation of Trade Unions who said it is "an important step forward to tackle an existing legal loophole."

ECONOMY

UM lowers GDP growth forecast to 16.8%

LYNZY VALLES

THE University of Macau (UM) has revised its economic projection on the SAR, predicting a growth of 16.8% (equivalent to 94.5% of the 2019 levels) for this year.

Based on the latest economic data in 2024, the research team anticipates the economic slowdown in mainland China will have a relatively small impact on Macau and has, therefore, revised the projected number of visitor arrivals from mainland China to be 90% of the 2019 level.

The revised baseline forecasts for other major economic variables include the growth of exports of services, which is projected to be 23.4%; as well as the overall unemployment



rate, which is expected to be 2.2%.

"The unemployment rate of Macau residents is expected to be 2.8%; and the government current revenue is estimated to reach MOP100.2 billion," according to the report.

Late last year, UM said Macau's economy is forecasted to experience significant growth of up to 21.0% in 2024, driven by diversification efforts.

The initial Macroeconomic Forecast for Macao 2024 anticipates an increase in service exports between 10.3% and 26.7%, potentially resulting in government revenues between approximately MOP95.3 billion and MOP109.6 billion.

Meanwhile, in January and February 2024, total visitor arrivals reached 6.16 million, representing 88.3% of the 2019 level.

FITCH AFFIRMS MACAU'S 'AA' RATING, CITES POTENTIAL ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

STAFF REPORTER

RATING agency Fitch Ratings has affirmed Macau's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'AA' with a stable outlook, believing recent changes to China's credit profile do not significantly impact Macau.

In a report Friday, Fitch analysts said Macau's economy highly depends on mainland China, but its strong public finances and fiscal prudence support the current rating.

Although Macau sees economic and gaming revenue shocks, Fitch said finances were managed well during difficult periods.

The rating agency said "sustained economic diversification away from the gaming industry"

could lead to a positive rating action or upgrade for Macau. Currently, gaming dominates Macau's economy.

Fitch has reported Macau's rating remains underpinned by exceptionally strong public and external finances demonstrated even during past economic downturns.

However, the narrow economic base focused on gaming and high reliance on gaming tourists from mainland China present risks if policies change how gaming tourism operates.

In March, Fitch projected Macau's 2024 economic growth at about 15% assuming casino gross gaming revenue recovered to 79.5% of pre-pandemic 2019 levels compared to 2023's estimated 62.6% recovery.

RENATO MARQUES

New road traffic law raises doubts

A Road Traffic Law amendment bill late last week passed in its first reading at the Legislative Assembly (AL).

But several lawmakers have raised concerns over the bill, questioning the need for a deductible point system for some traffic-related infractions.

Several lawmakers including Nick Lei, Ella Lei, Leong Sun Iok, and Lo Choi In, have questioned the necessity of a system that mimics similar systems in many regions worldwide.

They claim the government's proposed system is confusing, and the government side has been unable either to justify it or explain why it applies to some traffic infractions and not others.

Nick Lei, one of the more active critics, said Macau does not need to "copy what others have just because they have it."

He said several infractions proposed for point deduction are not even that problematic and occur infrequently in Macau.

Ella Lei and Leong raised the same concerns while lawmaker Lo said the government should focus on improving road and street conditions before enforcing harsher penalties.

RENATO MARQUES



"The government should also improve a lot the conditions of some traffic-related facilities instead of imposing the penalties. There are zebra crossings in bad locations with a lack of visibility for drivers and pedestrians, for instance."

"I believe before enforcing new penalties without a public discussion [] the government should fix the existing problems [that contribute to some of the traffic infractions and

accidents]," she said. The same lawmaker opposed the new rule that pedestrians are not allowed to use mobile phones while crossing streets. She said this is something that "interferes directly

with people's freedoms."

In response, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, did not provide a clear answer to the many concerns raised, but he said the government side was open to discussing details about the point deduction system and the infractions included.

He refused to debate the topic at the plenary, calling instead for discussion to move behind closed doors, that is, to the AL Standing Committee meetings that will analyze the bill in detail.

This was the second time the bill has been discussed at the AL.

The first time it was discussed, the bill was not subject to a vote with several lawmakers calling for a postponement of the debate because the government could not clearly explain the proposed amendments.

This time, even though the responses were the same, most lawmakers voted in favor of the bill.

It was passed in the first reading and now moves to the First Standing Committee for further discussion.

AD



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Food and Beverage Sector



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DIPLOMACY

Germany's Scholz arrives in China on a visit marked by trade tensions and Ukraine conflict

GERMAN Chancellor Olaf Scholz arrived in China yesterday on a visit focused on the increasingly tense economic relationship between the sides and differences over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Scholz's first destination was the industrial hub of Chongqing, where he and his delegation of ministers and business leaders were to visit a partially German-funded company and other sites in the vast city, which is a production base for China's auto and other industries.

Scholz is also scheduled to visit the financial hub of Shanghai during his three-day visit, before traveling to the capital, Beijing, to meet with Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang.

German companies such as BMW and Volkswagen are highly reliant on the Chinese market, but Beijing's support for Russia creates frictions with the West.

Germany's economy has benefited from China's demand for investment and manufactured items from cars to chemicals, but those ties have frayed amid increasing competition from



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz

Chinese companies and tightened regulations. Political interference has also been blamed for a sharp drop in foreign investment.

German companies have argued they face unfair market barriers in China and the government has pushed for a policy of "de-risking" to reduce reliance on the Chinese market and suppliers.

Despite that, China remained Germany's top trading partner for the eighth straight year in 2023, with 254.1 billion euros (\$271 billion) in goods and services exchanged between the sides, slightly more than what Germany traded with the U.S. but a 15.5% contraction from the year before. German exports to China totaled 97.3 billion euros (\$104 billion), according to Germany's

Federal Statistical Office, although figures have varied depending on exchange rate fluctuations and rounding of numbers.

Chinese state broadcaster CCTV showed Scholz descending from his plane in Chongqing and leaving in a motorcade, but did not carry any comments made to the welcoming delegation.

Prior to his arrival, Scholz pos-

ted on social platform X that he had discussed the "massive" Russian air attacks on civilian energy infrastructure with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Saturday, and declared that Berlin will "stand unbreakably by Ukraine's side."

China has maintained trade relations with President Vladimir Putin's government and aligned its foreign policy with Moscow in opposition to the U.S.-led liberal political order.

After visiting a hydrogen motor production facility run by German firm Bosch, Scholz toured the city with young architects and was to go on a boat cruise on the famed Yangtze River, one of two mighty waterways that partly surround the city perched on overlooking cliffs.

Following a visit today to Shanghai, Scholz will fly to Beijing and meet with Xi Tuesday at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse before being received with military honors by Li at the Great Hall of the People, the seat of the ceremonial legislature in the heart of the Chinese capital. Further visits and meetings will follow before he departs late Wednesday night.

This is Scholz's second trip to China since he became chancellor in late 2021. His previous visit was in November 2022 and essentially was a one-day trip because of the strict COVID restrictions still in place at the time.

It is his first visit since the German government last year presented its China strategy, which met with criticism from Beijing. Premier Li and a delegation of senior officials visited Berlin in June. **MDT/AP**

TRADE

Exports tumble 7.5% in March and imports also fall as demand slows

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

CHINA'S exports contracted in March after growing in the first two months of the year, underscoring the uneven nature of the country's recovery from the pandemic.

Customs data released late last week show exports declined 7.5% in March from a year earlier, while imports slipped 1.9%. Both figures fell short of estimates.

In the January-February period, exports rose 7.1% year-on-year while imports climbed 3.5%.

China, the world's second-largest economy,

posted a trade surplus of \$58.55 billion in March. The surplus in the first two months of the year was \$125 billion.

The decline in exports partly reflected a higher base of comparison with March 2023, when exports jumped 14.8% as the economy reopened after languishing under strict COVID-19 controls.

The economy has slowed in the medium-term partly due to a crisis in the property industry brought on by a crack-down on excessive borrowing. Weakness in exports would be a further drag on growth.

"We think export volumes will rise more slowly

this year, given that consumer spending in advanced economies is cooling and the tailwind from last years sharp drop in export prices is fading," Zichun Huang, a China economist at Capital Economics, said in a note.

But she said imports would probably gain momentum as higher government spending boosts demand.

An official survey of factory purchasing managers in March showed manufacturing activity expanding for the first time in six months. The survey showed an expansion in new export orders for the first time in nearly a year.

China has set a target of around 5% for economic growth this year, an ambition that will require more policy support, economists say.

The latest data belie worries that China might ramp up its exports to help meet its growth target, adding to excess capacity in many industries. Surging shipments of electric vehicles to Europe have raised alarm over whether Chinese-made EVs might crowd out those made by local manufacturers.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen made the issue of overcapacity a main topic of her recent visit to Beijing, where

she met with Premier Li Qiang and other top leaders.

Exporters have been slashing prices to increase their sales abroad, but with losses mounting, the ability of manufacturers to cut prices is shrinking, Huang said.

Earlier this week, the government reported that consumer prices grew only 0.1% in March while producer prices declined 2.8%, suggesting weakness in demand relative to supply.

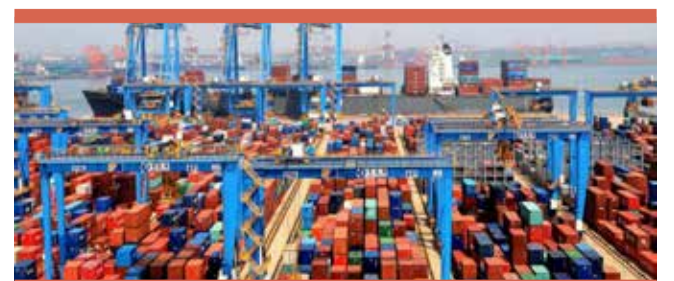
Wang Lingjun of the General Administration of Customs told reporters in Beijing that weak producer prices do not necessa-

rily indicate overcapacity.

"The decline in prices is often related to various factors such as fluctuations in raw material prices, technological updates and adjustments and efforts of manufacturers to improve their profits," Wang said.

Consumers worldwide favor Chinese products such as reliable and durable construction machinery and ceramics that are a "business card of Chinese civilization," Wang said.

"Chinese goods are widely welcomed in the global community, relying on innovation and quality," Wang said. **MDT/AP**



INDIA

Modi vows to boost social spending, make country into a manufacturing hub ahead of election

ASHOK SHARMA, NEW DELHI

INDIAN Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday vowed to boost social spending, develop infrastructure and make India into a global manufacturing hub as companies shift away from China, as he unveiled his Hindu nationalist party's election strategy.

Modi hopes to return to power for a third five-year term. He and other leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party unveiled their promises in the world's largest democracy days before the start of a multi-phase general election.

Modi promised to expand social programs introduced during his party's 10-year rule, including millions of free homes for the poor, along with health care, cooking gas and free grain. His government has been paying 6,000 rupees (\$73) a year to poor farmers.

He said his government's poli-



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, second right, releases his ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's manifesto for the upcoming national parliamentary elections in New Delhi, India, yesterday

cies have pulled 250 million people out of poverty since he came to power in 2014. India is the world's most populous country with over 1.4 billion people. The BJP's president, J.P. Nadda, said less than 1% of Indian people now live in extreme poverty.

India holds its elections on different days in different

parts of the country, stretching over weeks. Voting for the country's parliament will begin on April 19 and run until June 1, and results will be announced on June 4.

Most polls have predicted a victory for Modi and the BJP. But the opposition Congress Party argues that Modi has

undermined India's democracy and favored the interests of the rich.

Modi has been campaigning extensively across the country, promising to expand India's economy to \$5 trillion by 2027 from around \$3.7 trillion. He also promises to put India on track to become

a developed country by 2047, when the country celebrates 100 years of independence from British colonialists.

Yesterday, he said his party would develop India as a hub for the pharmaceutical, energy, semiconductor and tourism industries. He also said India will modernize its infrastructure, including its railways, airways, and waterways. And he said he will seek to increase jobs for young people and access to cheap loans for young entrepreneurs.

Modi is broadly popular in India, where he's considered a champion of the country's Hindu majority and has overseen rapid economic growth.

But critics say another term for the BJP could undermine India's status as a secular, democratic nation, saying its 10 years in power have brought attacks by Hindu nationalists against the country's minorities, particularly Muslims, and a shrinking space for dissent and free media. **MDT/AP**

Thai foreign minister urges Myanmar's military to avoid violent attack on border town its army lost

JERRY HARMER & JINTAMAS SAKSORN-CHAI, MAE SOT

THAILAND'S foreign minister late last week said he urged Myanmar's military authorities not to violently respond to its army's loss of an important border trading town to its opponents, and that so far they seemed to be exercising restraint.

Parnpree Bahiddha-Nukara spoke during a visit to Mae Sot, which lies directly across a river from Myanmar's Myawaddy, where army troops abandoned their last defensive position early Thursday.

Their hasty escape ceded virtual control of the busy trading town to guerrillas of the ethnic Karen National Union and its allies, including members of the pro-de-

mocracy People's Defense Forces.

Myanmar's once-mighty armed forces have suffered a series of unprecedented defeats since last October, losing swathes of territory including border posts to both ethnic fighters and guerrilla units. Civilians took up arms after the generals seized power in 2021 from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. The military has frequently hit back heavily, using air power.

Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun, spokesman for Myanmar's military government, told the BBC's Burmese language service Thursday night that the soldiers at the army's last base outside Myawaddy town abandoned the post for the safety of their families who were living with them. He said Myanmar

was in talks with Thailand about getting them safely back, and acknowledged that Karen guerrillas were inside the town.

There is concern that the Myanmar military might launch a concerted counter-attack against Myawaddy, which could send thousands fleeing into Thailand for safety and badly disrupt border trade.

Speaking to reporters after inspecting the area, Foreign Minister Parnpree said Thailand had already spoken with Myanmar's military and told them they did not wish to see violence, offering Thailand's help.

"Now, what we are most concerned about is that we want to see peace in Myawaddy, not only because of the trading, but it's our neighbor," he said. "We do not wish for



any violence to happen. If talks are possible, among their groups, we will be very welcoming of that, and if they want us to be the mediator, we are ready to help coordinating."

He said he hoped there could be talks between the opposing sides to prevent retaliatory attacks.

"We have already sent people to talk to them. And for the situation to-

day, they already said that there will not yet be any violent retaliation. If they wanted to be violent, they would have already done that days ago."

On Friday evening, however, there were at least two loud explosions emanating from the area on the Myanmar side of one of the two bridges connecting Myawaddy and Mae Sot. Their cause

could not immediately be discovered.

Residents from both sides of the river said earlier there have been frequent explosions in the past few days from airstrikes against captured positions outside Myawaddy town, but that Friday was quiet. Thai immigration officials said visitor numbers from Myanmar were unexceptional. **MDT/AP**

ISRAEL-HAMAS

Israel says Iran launched more than 300 drones and missiles, 99% of which were intercepted

JOSEF FEDERMAN &
JON GAMBRELL,
JERUSALEM

BOOMS and air raid sirens sounded across Israel early yesterday after Iran launched hundreds of drones, ballistic missiles and cruise missiles in an unprecedented revenge mission that pushed the Middle East closer to a regionwide war. A military spokesman said the launches numbered more than 300 but 99% of them were intercepted.

Calling the outcome “a very significant strategic success,” Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said Iran fired 170 drones, more than 30 cruise missiles and more than 120 ballistic missiles. Of those, several ballistic missiles reached Israeli territory, causing minor damage to an air base.

Rescuers said a 7-year-old girl in a Bedouin Arab town was seriously wounded in southern Israel, apparently in a missile strike, though they said police were still investigating the circumstances of her injuries.

In Washington, President Joe Biden said U.S. forces helped Israel down “nearly all” the drones and missiles and pledged to convene allies to develop a unified response.

The Iranian attack, less than two weeks after a suspected Israeli strike in Syria that killed two Iranian generals in an Iranian consular building, marked the first time Iran has launched a direct military assault on Israel, despite decades of enmity dating back to the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Condemnation from the United Nations chief and others was swift, with France saying Iran “is risking a potential military escalation,” Britain calling the attack “reckless” and Germany saying Iran and its proxies “must stop it immediately.”

Hagari said the vast majority of the intercepts came outside Israel's borders, including 10 cruise missiles that were intercepted by warplanes.

“A wide-scale attack by



Israeli Iron Dome air defense system launches to intercept missiles fired from Iran, in central Israel, yesterday

Iran is a major escalation,” he said. Asked whether Israel would respond, Hagari said only that the army “does and will do whatever is required to protect the security of the state of Israel.” He said the incident was not over, and dozens of Israeli warplanes remained in the skies.

Israel's military said its Arrow system, which shoots down ballistic missiles outside the atmosphere, handled most interceptions and noted that “strategic partners” were involved.

“At my direction, to support the defense of Israel, the U.S. military moved aircraft and ballistic missile defense destroyers to the region over the course of the past week,” Biden said in a statement. “Thanks to these deployments and the extraordinary skill of our service members, we helped Israel take down nearly all of the incoming drones and missiles.”

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a separate statement that U.S. forces “intercepted dozens of missiles and UAVs en route to Israel, launched from Iran, Iraq, Syria and Yemen.”

Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke early yesterday, Israeli time, their governments said. Biden said in his statement that he reaffirmed “America's ironclad commitment” to Israel's security — a departure from his growing criticism of Israel's conduct in its war on

Hamas in Gaza.

Iran had vowed revenge since the April 1 airstrike in Syria, which Tehran accused Israel of being responsible for. Israel hasn't commented on it.

Israel and Iran have been on a collision course throughout Israel's six-month war against Hamas militants in Gaza. The war erupted after Hamas and Islamic Jihad, two militant groups backed by Iran, carried out a devastating cross-border attack on Oct. 7 that killed 1,200 people in Israel and kidnapped 250 others. An Israeli offensive in Gaza has caused widespread devastation and killed over 33,000 people, according to local health officials.

Almost immediately after the war erupted, Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed militant group in Lebanon, began attacking Israel's northern border. The two sides have been involved in daily exchanges of fire, while Iranian-backed groups in Iraq, Syria and Yemen have launched rockets and missiles toward Israel.

In a statement carried late Saturday by Iran's state-run IRNA news agency, the country's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard acknowledged launching “dozens of drones and missiles towards the occupied territories and positions of the Zionist regime.”

In a later statement, the Revolutionary Guard issued a direct warning to the U.S.: “The terrorist U.S. government is warned any support or participation in harming

Iran's interests will be followed by decisive and regretting response by Iran's armed forces.”

IRNA also quoted an anonymous official saying ballistic missiles were part of the attack. A ballistic missile moves on an arch trajectory, heading up into space before gravity brings the weapon down at a speed several times faster than the speed of sound.

Israel has a multilayered air-defense network that includes systems capable of intercepting a variety of threats including long-range missiles, cruise missiles, drones and short-range rockets. However, in a massive attack involving multiple drones and missiles, the likelihood of a strike making it through is higher.

Iran has a vast arsenal of drones and missiles. Online videos shared by Iranian state television purported to show delta-wing-style drones resembling the Iranian Shahed-136s long used by Russia in its war on Ukraine. The slow-flying drones carry bombs. Ukraine has successfully used both surface-to-air missiles and ground fire to target them.

Some Israelis watched the interceptions light up the night sky.

Air raid sirens were reported in numerous places including northern Israel, southern Israel, the northern West Bank and the Dead Sea near the Jordanian border.

Israel's army ordered residents in the Golan Heights — near the Syrian and Lebanese borders — as well as the southern towns of Nevatim and Dimona and the Red Sea resort of Eilat into protective spaces. Dimona is home to Israel's main nuclear facility, and Nevatim has a major air base. Loud booms were heard in Jerusalem and northern and southern Israel.

The army's Home Front Command canceled school Sunday and limited public gatherings to no more than 1,000 people. Israel and some other countries in the region closed their airspace.

Earlier, Netanyahu warned: “Whoever harms us, we will harm them.” **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1986 US LAUNCHES AIR STRIKES ON LIBYA

At least 100 people have died after USA planes bombed targets in the Libyan capital, Tripoli, and the Benghazi region.

Around 66 American jets, some of them flying from British bases launched an attack at around 0100hrs on Monday.

The White House spokesman, Larry Speakes, has said that the strike was directed at key military sites but reports suggest that missiles also hit Bin Ashur, a densely populated suburb in the capital.

Colonel Muammar Gaddafi residential compound took a direct hit that killed Hanna Gaddafi, the adopted baby daughter of the Libyan leader.

President Reagan has justified the attacks by accusing Libya of direct responsibility for terrorism aimed at America, such as the bombing of La Belle discotheque in West Berlin 10 days ago.

President Reagan made a TV address to the American people two hours after the attack.

In it he said: “When our citizens are attacked or abused anywhere in the world on the direct orders of hostile regimes, we will respond so long as I'm in this office.”

He argued that America was exercising its right to self defence as defined by Article 51 of the UN charter.

The presidential spokesman, Larry Speakes, said, “US forces have executed a series of carefully planned air strikes against terrorist targets in Libya.”

He added: “Every effort has been made to avoid hitting civilian targets.”

The attacks began soon after an increase in coded radio traffic between US ships and planes off the Libyan coast had been noticed.

The fighter jets appear to have been both carrier based aircraft, operating in the Mediterranean and British based bombers which would have refuelled in mid air.

The Americans hit the harbour's naval academy, the capital's military airport and army barracks.

Tripoli's embassy area and residential districts also suffered extensive damage.

The Tripoli central hospital and two other medical centres say they have treated hundreds of injured people, including a number of Greeks, Italians and Yugoslavs.

Mobs of angry survivors have taken to the streets shouting: “Down, down USA. Death to all Americans.”

There are also fears that Britain may be subject to terrorist attacks because some of its involvement in the raids.

The Syrian based terrorist group, Arab Revolutionary Cells, has announced on Lebanese radio that it will target both British and American interests.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

President Reagan said he had irrefutable evidence that Libya was responsible for the West Berlin night club bombing on 5 April 1986 which killed two American servicemen and a Turkish woman.

The British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, justified Britain's involvement in the campaign by supporting America's right to self-defence under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

The extremist group Arab Revolutionary Cells said it murdered two British and one American hostage in Lebanon on 17 April 1986, in retaliation for the US attack.

Fifteen years after the air raids, a German court ruled that the Libyan secret service was responsible for the West Berlin bomb attack.

In September 2004, Libya agreed to pay \$35m to 150 non-US victims of the 1986 Berlin disco bomb. Libya said it will not pay for US victims until Washington compensates it for the lives and property lost in the subsequent US air strikes on Libya.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

 ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Fill your home with love. A practical domestic phase produces delightful flavors and comforts. Decorate with candles and natural touches. Relax with family.	 TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20 Creative expression flowers. Find the story, the thread that leads to the heart of the matter. Love is foundational. Think outside the box.
 GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21 Follow the money. Don't rely on luck. Discipline and experience make a valuable difference. Don't take on more than you can produce on deadline.	 CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22 You're a powerful force. You know what you want. Check your course and then full speed ahead. Practice makes perfect. Use your secret ingredient.
 LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Plan and organize in peace. A mess could seem overwhelming. Avoid controversy or hassle. Sort through what happened and prepare for what's ahead. Rest.	 VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22 Work with friends to tackle a challenge. Many hands make light work. Discuss possibilities and solutions. It could get messy. Disciplined action gets results.
 LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22 Accept a professional test or challenge. Take on new responsibilities. Discipline pays off. Gain strength from the past. You're building for the future.	 SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21 It's adventure time. Classes, seminars and educational travels open your horizons. Consider big picture goals and objectives. Unravel a mystery. Research and teach.
 SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Contribute to grow a lucrative collaborative venture. Get expert advice. Compromise on financial priorities. Simplify to reduce shared expenses. Build stable foundations together.	 CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Collaborate to clean a mess. Coordinate efforts with your partner. Provide a stabilizing influence. Keep things practical and positive. Disciplined work gets results.
 AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Practice your moves to build skills and techniques. Your performance level is on the rise. Put your heart into your work, health and fitness.	 PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20 Relax and enjoy the company of your dearest ones. Savor moments of sweetness, family and romance. Share loving support. Create works of beauty.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

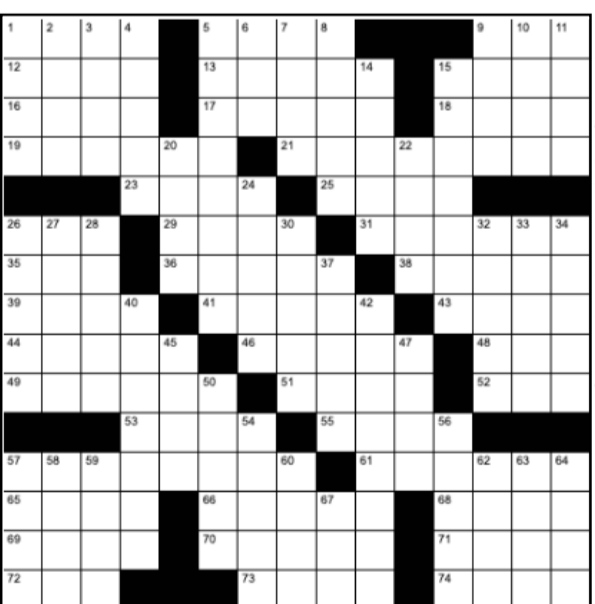
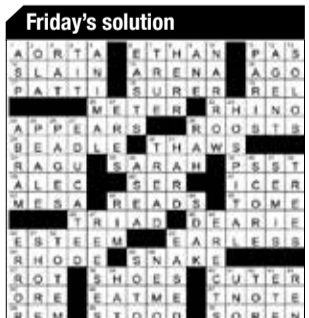
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	12	24	fine
Changchun	11	18	rain
Chengdu	19	30	overcast
Chongqing	21	33	cloudy
Fuzhou	20	33	rain
Guangzhou	23	31	cloudy
Guiyang	19	28	showers
Haikou	24	34	cloudy
Hangzhou	18	28	cloudy
Harbin	11	15	rain
Hefei	13	27	overcast
Nanjing	16	26	cloudy
Shanghai	16	26	overcast
Taipei	23	30	cloudy
Wuhan	17	30	fine
Hong Kong	24	28	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	4	10	showers
Frankfurt	4	16	showers
Paris	7	14	showers
London	7	11	rain
New York	11	24	sunny

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Kemo ___; 5- Some TVs; 9- French vineyard; 12- Son of ___; 13- Continental cash; 15- Farrow and Hamm; 16- He sang about Alice; 17- Scrub (a mission); 18- Will-___-wisp; 19- Simple song; 21- Proximity; 23- Hebrew month; 25- Ladies of Sp.; 26- ___-Foy, Quebec; 29- Kimono ties; 31- Hams it up; 35- Acapulco aunt; 36- High-fives; 38- ___ boom; 39- Sauce brand; 41- "Silas Marner" author; 43- Lymph ___; 44- You ___ right; 46- Grocery, e.g.; 48- Hamilton's bill; 49- Father or mother; 51- List ender; 52- Afore; 53- Currency of Turkey, and formerly of Italy; 55- First name in fashion; 57- And so forth; 61- Come out; 65- "Alice" diner; 66- Polite turndown; 68- Seasonal song; 69- Some nest eggs; 70- Romanov rulers; 71- Barbie, e.g.; 72- Gratuity; 73- Fencing blade; 74- Retired fliers;

DOWN 1- Swedish auto; 2- Taj Mahal town; 3- Male of a bovine mammal; 4- Name on a bomber; 5- Legible; 6- Young bear; 7- Elvis's middle name; 8- Sensitive spots; 9- Make reference to; 10- Stadium cheers; 11- Employs, consumes; 14- Gawki; 15- Rainy season; 20- Bustles; 22- Super Bowl XXXIV champs; 24- Iranian money; 26- Leash; 27- Miss America topper; 28- Enthusiastic; 30- Ill will; 32- Govt. security; 33- Pillow filler; 34- View; 37- Like a smokestack; 40- Serving no function; 42- Cross; 45- Put a lid ___; 47- K-6; 50- Lott of Mississippi; 54- Got up; 56- Transmits; 57- Expel gas or odor; 58- Garr of "Tootsie"; 59- Give it up for a performer?; 60- Pronto!; 62- Outback hoppers; 63- Moolah; 64- Building additions; 67- Strong feeling of anger;



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- 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
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Nam Long (Taipa)
2 bed 1 bath
59.92 m² / 645 ft² | HKD3,650,000



Jade Gardem (Taipa)
4 bed 3 bath
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BOXING

Holloway's last-second KO of Gaethje likely will be lasting memory of UFC 300

MARK ANDERSON, LAS VEGAS

ALLEX Pereira left no doubt he was the true light heavyweight champion in the main event, knocking out Jamahal Hill 3:14 of the first round Saturday night.

But the lasting image of UFC 300, one that likely will resonate for years to come, was Max Holloway's last-second knockout of Justin Gaethje for the ceremonial BMF title belt.

Holloway-Gaethje was arguably the most anticipated fight on the loaded card, and it not only lived up to expectations, but surpassed them before a sellout crowd of 20,067 that roared over the final seconds and its stunning conclusion.

"That fight sucked the life out of everybody tonight," UFC President Dana White said. "People ask me what I do. I sell holy (stuff) moments. That was the ultimate holy (stuff) mo-



UFC light heavyweight champion Alex Pereira

ment. Let's just talk about his fight for the rest of the press conference."

The UFC — which had its third-highest gate at \$16.5 million — awarded Holloway a \$600,000 bonus for his performance.

Even though Holloway (26-7) was well on his way to a victory by decision — two judges had him ahead 39-37 — the former featherweight champion could have run out the clock.

He instead pointed to the floor in the final seconds and

then traded blows with Gaethje (25-5). It was a tremendous combination of punches from both fighters before the one that sent the now ex-BMF champ to the mat with just one second remaining in the five-round fight.

"This is the moment," Holloway said about going for the KO. "This is what the BMF is known for. If that's not a BMF moment, I don't know what is. If Justin was up, he would've given me those 10 seconds."

"That's why Max Holloway is

beloved," White said. "He's got the fight won and in there with one of the most dangerous fighters in the business. That's like movie (stuff). It's the fight of the year. If something beats that as fight of the year, holy (stuff)."

Holloway, who also used a spinning kick at the end of the first round to bloody Gaethje's nose, was in control throughout most of the fight.

"I think it broke his nose. ... Any less of a man couldn't do what Justin Gaethje does," Holloway said.

In the evening's final fight, Pereira dropped Hill to the canvas with a straight left hand and then pounded him. Referee Herb Dean stepped in to stop the fight, giving the Brazilian the victory.

Pereira, 36, was a minus-132 favorite, according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

"I see myself as the champion. I didn't want to let the belt go to my head," Pereira said

through an interpreter. "I had to step in and win the championship."

Hill, 32, was the previous title holder, but a torn Achilles tendon forced him to vacate the championship last July. That put the belt in Pereira's hands, eventually setting up this matchup and his fourth pay-per-view event in 16 months.

As would be expected from a milestone card number, this was a strong lineup that included 12 current or former champions, and 11 who have headlined UFC pay-per-view events.

Zhang Weili (25-3) retained her women's strawweight championship in the co-main event, beating No. 1 challenger Yan Xiaonan (18-4) by unanimous decision. Each judge scored the fight 49-45.

Zhang nearly choked out Yan to end the first round. Yan, however, found a way to take the fight the five-round distance. **MDT/AP**



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OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

VISIT OPPORTUNITY
TO REINFORCE
COMMON GROUND

Strengthening Sino-German economic cooperation, rebalancing the trade relations between the European Union and China, and seeking solutions to hotspot issues are reportedly the three goals of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's ongoing visit to China from Sunday to Tuesday.

Although Berlin last year unveiled its first ever Strategy on China aimed at reducing Germany's dependence on the Chinese market in critical areas and aligning Germany with the EU's push for "de-risking", Scholz, during his reception of visiting Chinese Premier Li Qiang in June last year, reiterated that the German side welcomes China's development and prosperity, noting that Germany rejects all forms of decoupling and that "de-risking" should not be "de-sinicization".

That Germany is not looking to sever its links with China is also proved by the fast increase of German investment in the country, which is its largest trading partner. German direct investment in China reached nearly 12 billion (\$12.77 billion) in 2023, a record high. As a matter of fact, Germany invested more in China between 2021 and 2023 than in the five-year period between 2015 and 2020, according to the Cologne Institute for Economic Research, a leading economics institute of Germany.

The German economy shrank by 0.3 percent last year, battered by inflation, high interest rates and cooling exports, and this year, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action of Germany expects anaemic growth of 0.2 percent.

The large-scale high-level business delegation that is accompanying Scholz on his second trip to China since November 2022 — when he also led a big team of representatives of leading German companies — as well as the presence of three major Cabinet ministers in his entourage speak volumes of the Scholz government looking to deepen economic and trade relations with the world's second-largest economy. Given their common belief in free trade, economic globalization and multilateral global governance, China and Germany are natural partners in many sectors.

That Scholz talked with French President Emmanuel Macron via video link two days before departing for China shows that the German and French leaders want to coordinate their stance and take advantage of such face-to-face exchanges with Beijing to effectively lubricate ties that may be in danger of faltering due to the EU's anti-subsidy probes into China-made electric vehicles and solar panels.

That the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Middle East crisis were also covered in the virtual meeting between Scholz and Macron on Friday reflects the great significance Germany and France attach to the important role China is playing in seeking solutions to these hotspot issues, as well as the tremendous potential of the three countries' closer coordination and cooperation in this regard.

Scholz's visit therefore will not only help China and Germany enhance their mutual understanding and trust and deepen their practical cooperation, it also provides an opportunity to help steer China-EU relations on a more steady and stable course.

174 PEOPLE STRANDED IN THE AIR RESCUED, ALMOST A DAY AFTER A FATAL CABLE CAR ACCIDENT IN TURKEY

THE BUZZ

The last of 174 people stranded in cable cars high above a mountain in southern Turkey were brought to safety Saturday, nearly 23 hours after one pod hit a pole and burst open, killing one person and injuring seven when they plummeted to the rocks below.

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya announced the successful completion of the rescue operation on X Saturday afternoon.

A total of 607 search and rescue personnel and 10 helicopters were involved, including teams from Turkey's emergency response agency, AFAD, the Coast Guard, firefighting teams and mountain

rescue teams from different parts of Turkey, officials said. Helicopters with night-vision capabilities had continued rescuing people throughout the night.

The stranded people had been stuck on the Tunektepe cable car, just outside the Mediterranean city of Antalya, since 5:30 p.m. on Friday, when the accident occurred.

Istanbul resident Hatice Polat and her family were rescued seven hours into the ordeal. Speaking to the Anadolu agency, she said the power went out and the pod flipped four or five times.



AP PHOTO

AUSTRALIA

POLICE IDENTIFY THE SYDNEY STABBING ATTACKER WHO KILLED SIX PEOPLE

RICK RYCROFT & KEIRAN SMITH, SYDNEY

POLICE identified yesterday the assailant who stabbed and killed six people at a busy Sydney shopping center before a police officer fatally shot him.

New South Wales Police said that Joel Cauchi, 40, was responsible for the Saturday afternoon attack at the Westfield Shopping Centre in Bondi Junction, in the city's eastern suburbs and not far from the world-famous Bondi Beach.

NSW Assistant Police Commissioner Anthony Cooke told reporters at a media conference on yesterday that Cauchi suffered from yet unspecified mental health issues and police investigators weren't treating the attack as terrorism-related.

"We are continuing to work through the profiling of the offender but very clearly to us at this stage, it would appear that this is related to the mental health of the individual involved," Cooke said.

"There is still, to this point... no information we have received, no evidence we have recovered, no intelligence that we have gathered that would suggest that this was driven by

any particular motivation — ideology or otherwise," he added.

The attack at the shopping mall, one of the country's busiest and which was a hub of activity on a particularly warm fall afternoon, began around 1:10 p.m. (Macau time) and police were swiftly called.

Six people — five women and one man, aged between 20 and 55 — were killed in the attack. Another 12 were injured and remain in hospital, including a 9-month-old child whose mother was killed in the attack.

The male victim was a security guard at the shopping center and was later identified as 30-year-old Faraz Tahir from Pakistan.

According to a written statement yesterday from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of Australia, Faraz had been in Australia for a less than a year and was a "cherished member of our community."

Video footage taken by a witness showed many people fleeing as a knife-wielding Cauchi ran erratically through the shopping mall and lunging at people.

"When I took my footage it, was about 15 seconds maybe before he was shot by the police officer and he'd already killed a num-

ber of people at that point but we didn't know and we had no idea what was going on," said Rohan Anderson, who had entered the shopping center just moments before the attack. "We just saw a person on the level below us, with a knife, running around and you just sit in disbelief that this is happening in Australia, in Bondi," he said.

Other footage showed a man confronting the attacker on an escalator in the shopping center by holding what appeared to be a metal pole.

Inspector Amy Scott, who was the first emergency responder on the scene, shot and killed Cauchi.

Speaking to reporters on Sunday, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the officer was "certainly a hero" whose actions had saved many more lives.

"The wonderful inspector who ran into danger by herself and removed the threat that was there to others, without thinking about the risks to herself," he said.

"We also see the footage of ordinary Australians putting themselves in harm's way in order to help their fellow citizens. That bravery was quite extraordinary that we saw yesterday," he added. **MDT/AP**



AP PHOTO

Israel-Hamas More civilians died across Ukraine yesterday as analysts warned that delays in U.S. military assistance would see Kyiv struggle to fight off Russian offensives. One man was killed after a Russian drone hit the truck he was driving in the Sumy region, the local prosecutor's office said. Officials in the Kharkiv region also said that they had retrieved the bodies of a 61-year-old woman and a 68-year-old man killed by a Russian strike the previous day.

Holy See said Saturday it formally protested to France after a court there ruled that a former high-ranking Vatican official was liable for what the court determined to be the wrongful dismissal of a nun from a religious order. The Lorient tribunal on April 3 ruled in favor of the nun, Sabine de la Valette, known at the time as Mother Marie Ferréol. The court issued a scathing denunciation of the secretive process the Vatican used to kick her out of the order, the Dominicans of the Holy Spirit, after an internal investigation.



AP PHOTO

Chile Prosecutors said last week they plan to formally request that Venezuela extradite two of its citizens to stand trial for charges related to the abduction and killing of a Venezuelan dissident in Chile earlier this year, a case that has strained relations between the South American nations. Prosecutors ruled that the slaying of the activist and former army lieutenant was plotted in Venezuela. If proven, the grisly killing on Chilean soil could signal a new front in the widespread repression by the government of President Nicolás Maduro against the opposition ahead of his re-election contest later this year.