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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN' "

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CHINA'S ECONOMY GREW 5.3% IN FIRST QUARTER, BEATING EXPECTATIONS

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AP PHOTO



India Rescuers scrambled yesterday to find three missing people after a boat carrying at least 15 capsized in a river in Indian-controlled Kashmir, killing six of them, officials said. Many of the passengers were children and six people were rescued, said Bilal Mohiuddin Bhat, a civil administrator. The boat capsized in Jhelum river in Srinagar, the region's main city. Heavy rains fell over the region in the past few days, leading to higher water levels in the river.

AP PHOTO



USA Nearly three weeks since Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge collapsed under the impact of a wayward cargo ship, crews are using the largest crane on the Eastern Seaboard to haul the wreckage to a nearby salvage yard. The heaviest section so far weighed about 450 tons. In the salvage yard, workers disassembled the metal trusses by attacking them with propane torches and a pair of giant shears that sliced them into more manageable pieces.

AP PHOTO



USA In Salman Rushdie's first book since the 2022 stabbing that hospitalized him and left him blind in one eye, the author wastes no time reliving the day he thought might be his last. "At a quarter to eleven on August 12, 2022, on a sunny Friday morning in upstate New York, I was attacked and almost killed by a young man with a knife just after I came out on stage at the amphitheater in Chautauqua to talk about the importance of keeping writers safe from harm," Rushdie writes in the opening paragraph of the memoir "Knife," published yesterday.

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THE BIG VENUE

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AL PLENARY

CE advises lawmakers of the need to 'find

RENATO MARQUES

TWO of the most repeated phrases from Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng during his visit yesterday to the Legislative Assembly (AL) were "the need to find balance" and "the need to be patient."

At the AL, taking part in a question and answer session with the lawmakers on matters related to this year's Policy Address, as well as other social matters, Ho repeated the phrases whilst responding to the many requests from the lawmakers.

The CE called on lawmakers to be patient and wait for new developments, particularly when addressing inquiries related to policies related to, among other things: Hengqin, the expansion of visas and the types of visas for mainland residents, unbalanced economic recovery, and the development of policies to attract foreign investment.

The CE explained that most of these policies and suggestions are intimately related to the Macau's development. Such policies, he said, are established by the central government and are not required by law to be de-



bated or amended.

Concerning Hengqin, the CE concluded that the local government's "main priority is the work related to the life of the population." By this he meant those people who will

soon occupy the Macau New Neighborhood in Hengqin and making the necessary adjustments so that "they can feel that they are in Macau."

On the topic, the CE advanced a pilot project of allowing

the recruitment of domestic helpers for local families living in Hengqin, as happens in Macau. This would be rolled out, as well as policies easing cross-border procedures for pets.

Earlier, Lawmaker Chui Sai

Peng called on the need to recognize some professions in Hengqin, as well as projects from the government, related to the construction sector. Ho explained that, for the time being, the only related project

GOV'T AIMS FOR MACAU TO HOST A LARGE-SCALE

MACAU is keen to host, by the end of this year, a large-scale musical concert for an audience of around 50,000 people, said Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng.

Ho's announcement came in response to an inquiry by lawmaker Ella Lei at the Legislative Assembly (AL), where he took part yesterday in the question and answer session with lawmakers on topics related to this year's policy address and other social matters.

According to the CE, the government is keen to fulfil this goal before the year's end and is currently focused on finding the right venue to host the event.

"Taipa [island] satisfies conditions for a 50,000-person

event, but after the concert that we held at the stadium [in late January this year], which caused many problems regarding noise, we have now ruled out the Taipa Stadium [Olympic Sports Center]. It is not suitable for concerts. But we are not giving up. We are determined. In Hong Kong, there is an indoor facility that holds 50,000 people. We do not have that in Macau, but we are not going to stop," the CE said, noting that the larger outdoor event used for concerts in Macau to date has been the Sai Van Lake Square, in front of the Macau Tower. The square is only suitable for some 10,000 people, Ho contends.

Ho said that, currently, Macau has some great indoor ve-

nues, namely within the gaming concessionaires, but that these can only take up to 16,000 people.

JOCKEY CLUB TO BE A MULTIPURPOSE VENUE

In the inquiry, lawmaker Lei suggested the use of the Macau Jockey Club (MJC) venue to host large-scale events.

In response, the CE said: "regarding the MJC, we already have the land in our possession, and have had since April 1. We are now considering it for shows, but we are still to decide if it will be [the government] developing it, or if we will hand it to private enterprises to explore. We need to have a long-term plan for it."

The CE noted that the decision to use the MJC for concerts and other shows was not as simple and immediate as some thought. There are, he said, many factors to take into consideration when revamping the space.

"We know the area of the land, but what about parking spaces? What is the size of the parking area we need and have to build for this place to be suitable for this kind of event?" he rhetorically questioned. "Maybe we need the support of a renowned company to develop these resources, although we don't have this kind of company here," he said, hinting that the management or development of the MJC space should be handed to

an entity from outside Macau.

In response to a question from Lei about what the venue will eventually be used for, Ho said only, "I can't tell you yet exactly what will be done there, but we will use it as a multipurpose venue. Not for housing, that is for sure. We will create there a stage for the development of these activities [related to the bid of Macau as a City of Shows and Sports]."

TWO LARGE EVENTS PER MONTH THIS YEAR IS THE GOAL

In response to a different question on a similar topic, this time from lawmaker Chan Chak Mo, the CE added that currently under consideration is the crea-

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'balance' and be 'patient'

is the Macau Neighborhood. He advised professionals who want to work in Hengqin to bear in mind the many present challenges and difficulties between it and Macau.

The need to "strike a balance" was also the phrase used in response to economy-related inquiries. Lawmakers drew attention to what they described as an unbalanced economic recovery that is providing no aid to anyone.

On that topic, the CE noted that the government is aware of such issues and is working on them, but that it is impossible for any government to "continuously rescue and support everyone" when businesses inevitably struggle economically.

"We know that economic development is not balanced. We are aware. During the pandemic, we also had the issue of people not being able to go out. Most stayed and consumed in Macau. So there are fluctuations," he said, adding, "it is not always possible for the government to support everyone every time or issue consumption cards or vouchers. Resources are scarce and to support development is not just to issue consumption cards. Such was

an extreme solution during the pandemic."

Ho noted that now that the economy has recovered, there remain problems, namely with rents as landlords try to make up their losses from the pandemic period.

"We are in a transition period and we need to bear this for a time until we reach a balance," he concluded, recalling that Macau has passed through similar and harsher difficulties and has always survived.

"We are studying measures. The Secretary for Economy and Finance is working on it. We have decided on the consumption carnival in the northern district [recently] and we need to evaluate the results of it to understand its feasibility and see if we can expand this idea to other areas. But we cannot apply this method to all areas."

"We hope that landlords don't raise their rents too much so that shop owners can breathe a little," the CE said, noting that the government would not cap rent prices.

Ho blamed the lack of control in the past for over-speculation in the property sector which, according to his understanding, is now the cause of the problem;

landlords have acquired their properties at very high prices and need to pay their mortgages.

Patience and balance were again argued for in responses to lawmakers Wang Sai Man and Wu Chou Kit. The former called for yet another special visa dedicated to residents of the Greater Bay Area (GBA) cities to use on weekends. The latter wanted to increase trade and cooperation with Portuguese-speaking countries.

In response to Wang, Ho noted, once again, that visas are a national policy and depend on the positions attributed to Macau by the central government. It is, he said, not a topic for discussion, and he advised the lawmaker to wait for new policies on the matter, which are currently being developed by the central government.

As for Wu's question, the CE noted that, due to next week's 6th Ministerial Conference of Forum Macao, some advances would be made in this field.

According to the CE, "A new document of cooperation is to be signed at the Ministerial Conference in a couple of days, and this will expand cooperation at several levels."



SECOND PHASE OF TALENT SCHEME TO INCLUDE NON-LOCAL STUDENTS

THE second phase of the government's "Talent Recruitment System" will permit applications from non-resident university students who have completed their studies at local tertiary education institutions, the Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng, announced yesterday at the Legislative Assembly (AL).

The announcement came during a question and answer session between the CE and lawmakers about this year's policy address and other social matters that took place yesterday at the AL.

In response to an initial question from lawmaker Ma Chi Seng on the talent acquisition programs, echoed later by other lawmakers, Ho revealed that, during the meeting of the Talents Development Committee (CDQQ) held last Friday week, the committee members approved a resolution to make the change. The change will come into effect during the second phase of the scheme, which is due to start next month.

"During the last meeting [of the CDQQ], we approved this [resolution] so that, from May [this year], we can start accepting applications from [non-local university graduates]," Ho said, reaffirming that the scheme aims to attract highly qualified professionals from top areas worldwide.

"We can see, for example, that we now have local universities that rank among the top 200 universities in the world, and we know that these institutions have a lot of students who are non-residents. Can these students be integrated? It is our wish that excellent students can be included and contribute more to local development,"

the CE said. He added, "they already know Macau and have been here for some time. They also have already developed an attachment to our city. We believe that they have the profile that we are looking for."

Nonetheless, Ho warned that, in the case of the general program, Macau cannot "take them all."

"Some people, due to their specialties, are not needed. It will depend on the industries and needs," the CE remarked, adding also that Macau residents returning from abroad remain the priority to fill the city's preexisting job vacancies.

In his reply, Ho also noted that the aim of the scheme is never to "import labor on a large scale but rather in accordance with the developmental needs of industries included into the '1+4' development scheme."

"When we import labor, we need to make sure job vacancies do, in fact, exist. We won't allow imported labor to come to Macau without having first secured an opportunity," Ho noted, reaffirming that those approved will receive a Macau ID and come to Macau to work for local companies or institutions, or to establish their own business.

"We will also support their families to relocate to Macau, integrating them into local schools and others. This is all part of our program," he concluded, noting that this measure would also help with the current lack of local students in the non-tertiary sector. In the long run, lacking numbers in this sector can jeopardize the life of some educative institutions, due also to the drop in the local birthrate over the last decade and longer. **RM**

CONCERT BY END OF THIS YEAR



tion of a whole new industry in Macau, which is a project that should be not abandoned.

He noted that, in 2023 and with the support from the six gaming concessionaires, Macau

hosted a total of 17 large-scale sports events, a figure that will be raised this year to a total of 24.

"This year, we will have two large-scale sporting events each month. That is 24 for the whole

year. These are big sports events with complex organization requirements; not small football matches. This makes our goals more difficult, but we will achieve them." **RM**

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

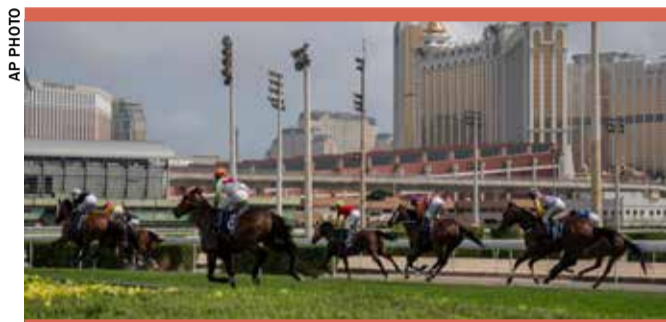
34 RACEHORSES FROM MACAU JOCKEY CLUB IN QUARANTINE IN ZHUHAI

STAFF REPORTER

AS Macau's horse racing industry comes to a close, 34 racehorses from the city have commenced a 30-day quarantine period in Zhuhai, reports TDM.

According to Gongbei Customs, the horses crossed into mainland China via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, undergoing infrared temperature checks and clinical exams before being transported to Zhuhai.

The horse industry company operating the quarantine site said it plans to host approximately 150 former Macau racehorses in total, working with the Macau Jockey Club (MJC) as the city's controversial decision to shutter the racetrack leaves nearly 300 horses in need of



new homes by 2025.

After the 30-day quarantine, the animals will be sent to locations across China, including Guangzhou, Beijing, Shanghai, Inner Mongolia, and Shandong, for use in "competitions, shows, performing arts and other purposes."

Many of Macau's racehorse owners have expressed frustration with the MJC's decision to call it quits and the abrupt way in which the industry has

been wound up. They have repeatedly called for more compensation from the MJC, to help cover the costs of shipping their horses to countries such as the US and New Zealand.

A previous petition urged the government to provide retirement care for some horses at Coloane Island's Seac Pai Van Park. As the racing era ends, the quarantine program aims to facilitate the horses' transition to new roles.

AVIATION

More flights underway this quarter

STAFF REPORTER

THE Civil Aviation Authority of Macau (AACM) has approved additional scheduled flights to Beijing and Ningbo in mainland China starting from April.

Moreover, during the summer school holiday season, which commences in July, the AACM will allow supplementary services on existing regional routes, as well as the introduction of new regional routes.

Effective from April 25, China Southern Airlines will operate seven flights per week between Macau and Beijing starting from the end of April.

Starting from April 28, Air Macau will be permitted to operate 14 weekly flights on the Ningbo route. Presently, Air Macau is the only airline providing



direct flights between Macau and Ningbo, with a frequency of seven flights per week.

From July 1, Korean Air will be able to enter the Macau-Seoul service market with seven weekly flights. Air Macau, Jin Air, and Jeju Air already offer services to the South Korean capital.

Also starting from July 1, Air Macau will increase its flights between Macau and Kuala Lumpur to se-

ven per week, increased from the current four. AirAsia is the only other airline currently operating this service, with daily flights on the route.

New regional routes include a Macau-Clark service in the Philippines, operated by Philippines AirAsia, starting from June 1. Additionally, Air Macau will introduce a Macau-Fukuoka route in Japan, commencing from July 1.

AD



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UTM launches rebrand and introduces new programs at Career Day

STAFF REPORTER

THE Macao University of Tourism (UTM), previously known as the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM), hosted its annual Career Day, offering a platform for students to connect with prospective employers and explore diverse job opportunities. The university will introduce several new academic programs in the upcoming 2024/2025 academic year to expand opportunities for students, Fanny Vong, rector of UTM said.

These programs include the Bachelor of Science in International Business and Innovative Communication, two Master's Degrees in Events Management, and the Doctor of Business Administration programme. Furthermore, the legacy Tourism Retail and Marketing Management Bachelor's Degree Programme will undergo rebranding, featuring a refreshed curriculum.

Ongoing redevelopment at UTM's Taipa campus includes improvements to the Silver Jubilee Building and Accommodation Building, with the latter focused on hospitality training.

"Our overarching objective remains unchanged: to equip the tourism and hospitality industry with graduates possessing relevant, often pioneering, skills and knowledge," Vong emphasized.

The annual Career Day serves



as a vital platform for connecting UTM students with a diverse array of employer partners.

"By engaging with representatives from various recruiting organizations, students can explore potential career paths, discover current job opportunities, gain insights into hiring processes, and expand their professional networks," Vong explained.

This year's Career Day boasts the participation of nearly 65 organizations, collectively offering approximately 1,500 job positions spanning a broad spectrum of industries, including hospitality, tourism, travel, retail, food and beverage, financial services, and information technology.

"I am confident that the UTM 2024 Career Day will be a resounding success, as past editions

have been, and that this event will facilitate students' initial steps towards successful careers and assist participating organizations in meeting their human resource needs," Vong said.

She expressed hope that Ca-

reer Day would bolster UTM's new identity whilst also building on the legacy of IFTM.

"In doing so, the UTM Career Day will honor the legacy of IFTM, laying the groundwork for the University's future successes," Vong concluded.

For UTM students, the Career Day event offers a valuable opportunity to explore employment prospects and connect with industry leaders.

Oscar Chan, a Year 4 student and president of the UTM Business Club, expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "absolutely, Career Day aims to bring together industry partners and company leaders, providing us with the opportunity to directly engage with them. We can discuss industry trends, employment prospects, and gain valuable insights."

Meanwhile, Hailey Lao, vice president of the UTM Business Club and a fellow Year 4 student, acknowledged the event's value even for those pursuing further education. "Well, even though I have plans to pursue a master's degree, I believe that staying informed about the current job market and employment situation is crucial. By attending Career Day, I can gain a better understanding of the current landscape and make more informed decisions."

LAWMAKERS URGE GOV'T TO SUPPORT YOUNG JOB-SEEKERS

SEVERAL lawmakers have been urging the SAR government to continue to provide employment assistance services for the youth as job hunting season begins again for Macau's undergraduates and postgraduates. At a recent plenary meeting, members of the Legislative Assembly noted that fresh graduates struggle to find their preferred jobs.

Additionally, the competition has intensified, as an increasing number of mainland Chinese graduates are seeking job opportunities in Macau and the Greater Bay Area. Lawmakers have suggested launching internship training for young people, mock interview workshops, and organizing youth employment expos and job fairs for fresh graduates.

MACAU LEGEND EXTENDS LAOS CASINO SALE DEADLINE AGAIN

Macau Legend has once again extended the deadline for the sale of its casino resort in Laos. The original deadline was in February but was extended to March 31 and then further extended to April 15. It has now been pushed to May 3. Last June, Macau Legend announced its intention to sell Savan Legend, with a Japanese citizen named Shundo Yoshinari named as the potential buyer. According to a filing made by Macau Legend on December 21, 2023, the entire equity interest in Savan Legend will be sold for an initial amount of USD39 million.

GOV'T: MICE TRAINING SESSIONS ATTRACTED OVER 240 PARTICIPANTS IN Q1

During the first quarter of 2024, the Macau Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) organized and presented five MICE training sessions that successfully drew participation from more than 240 individuals, both online and offline. These five training programs encompassed a range of subjects, such as the process of bidding for international conferences, configuring equipment, import and export procedures for exhibitions, and the implementation of environmentally friendly conferences and exhibitions.

COURT OF FINAL APPEAL NEW BUILDING FOUNDATIONS COMPLETED

The basement and external wall supports for the new Court of Final Appeal building have been completed, the Public Works Bureau. The design project specifies that the facade of the old courthouse will be conserved and a portion of the venue will be adapted to serve its new functions. Only the front-facing section of the eastern wing of the former Judicial Police building will be preserved while the rest of the structure will be demolished to create space for a new three-story building with a basement. Construction work is projected to be completed by January 2026.

CRIME

MAN SCAMMED HKD6.85 MILLION BY SUSPECT CLAIMING TO BE 'SHANGHAI PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU'

STAFF REPORTER

A young local man has fallen victim to a scam involving people claiming to be the "Shanghai Public Security Bureau" and has lost HKD6.85 million. The police investigated and uncovered that the money was transferred to three bank accounts in Hong Kong and was subsequently withdrawn.

One of the account holders, a 40-year-old unemployed woman from mainland China, was apprehended upon entering Macau on Monday, authorities re-

ported yesterday. HKD1.65 million was transferred to a Hong Kong bank account under the name of a suspect named Tang.

On April 15, early in the morning, the suspect was intercepted at the border. The suspect admitted to opening a bank account in Hong Kong at the request of an individual who promised to reward them with 20% of the received funds.

The suspect was transferred to the procuratorate and is accused of committing significant fraud, money laundering, and participating in criminal

group activities.

The incident began when the victim received a phone call on August 24, 2023 from someone claiming to be from the "Shanghai Public Security Bureau." The caller alleged that the victim's mainland phone number was associated with a significant gambling fraud case and was under investigation.

Following the caller's instructions, the victim provided their bank account details and password for a fund review. After more than 10 days without any updates, the victim grew



suspicious and reported the case to the police on September 5, 2023.

The police determined that HKD1.65 million from the victim's bank account had been transferred to the suspect's account in Hong Kong. The suspect said that

she had not received any payment yet.

The suspect is accused of being involved in large-scale fraud, money laundering, and criminal group activities. She has been transferred to the procuratorate for further legal proceedings.

DIPLOMACY

On a China visit, Scholz says Russia's invasion of Ukraine threatens global security

GERMAN Chancellor Olaf Scholz told Chinese leader Xi Jinping who hosted him in Beijing yesterday that Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine threatens global security, in an apparent call for China to apply greater pressure on its neighbor and close strategic partner to resolve the conflict.

Scholz also told Xi at their meeting that the use of nuclear weapons in the 2-year-old war should not even be threatened, German media reported. Russian President Vladimir Putin warned last month that Russia is ready to use nuclear weapons if its sovereignty or independence is threatened, his latest such threat since invading Ukraine.

Scholz told Xi that Germany's "core interests" were impacted by the war against Ukraine, which has threatened to spread into a regional conflict and has disrupted energy and global food supplies and other trade.

Russia's actions "violate a principle of the United Nations Charter and the principle of the inviolability of national borders," Scholz was quoted as saying by German media.

China has refused to criticize



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz takes part in a dialogue with students at Tongji University's Jiading Campus in Shanghai

the invasion and has maintained ties with Russia. While China is not sending military aid to Moscow, it has provided it with an economic lifeline to help it cope with sanctions from the West.

Beijing has also been urging peace talks between Ukraine and Russia, offering a proposal that says nothing about the settlement of the key territorial disputes between them and which has received a tepid response from the two countries or the international community. Despite that, China continues to insist that the United Nations charter should prevail in international affairs and that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all na-

tions be respected, in apparent contradiction with Russia's military agenda.

China's official Xinhua News Agency quoted Xi as saying the two leaders discussed Ukraine among other issues. "China encourages and supports all efforts that are conducive to the peaceful resolution of the crisis, and supports the timely convening of an international peace conference recognized by Russia and Ukraine, with equal participation by all parties, and fair discussion of all peace options," Xi said.

"China is willing to maintain cooperation with all relevant parties, including Germany, in

this regard," Xi was quoted as saying.

Scholz on Monday called for fair competition in trade relations while warning about dumping and overproduction during a talk to college students in the financial hub of Shanghai, where German companies have major investments.

His visit has underscored trade-related tensions as the European Union and other nations complain that China is competing unfairly through the use of tariffs, intellectual property theft and political interference.

The European Union is mulling tariffs to protect its producers against cheaper Chi-

nese electrical vehicle imports, which some fear will flood the European market.

Scholz began his three-day China trip on Sunday in the industrial hub of Chongqing, where he and his delegation of ministers and business executives visited 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 met Premier Li Qiang later yesterday in Beijing before returning to Berlin in the late evening.

Along with Russia, China is one of five permanent veto-wielding members of the U.N. Security Council, and a U.S. intelligence report last week found Beijing has increased equipment sales to Moscow to indirectly boost its war effort against Ukraine.

Despite the political and trade frictions, China was 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.

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**

OFFICIAL DATA

Economy grew 5.3% in first quarter, beating expectations

CHINA'S economy expanded at a faster than expected pace in the first three months of the year, helped by policies aimed at stimulating growth and stronger demand, the government said yesterday.

The world's second-largest economy expanded at a 5.3% annual pace in January-March, beating analysts' forecasts of about 4.8%, official data show. Compared to the previous quarter, the economy grew 1.6%.

China's economy has struggled to bounce back from the COVID-19 pandemic, with a slowdown in demand and a property crisis weighing on its growth.

The better-than-expected data yesterday came

days after China reported its exports sank 7.5% in March compared to the year before, while imports also weakened. Inflation cooled, reflecting deflationary pressures resulting from slack demand amid a crisis in the property sector.

Industrial output for the first quarter was up 6.1% compared to the same time last year, and retail sales grew at an annual pace of 4.7%. Fixed investment, in factories and equipment, grew 4.5% compared to the same period a year earlier.

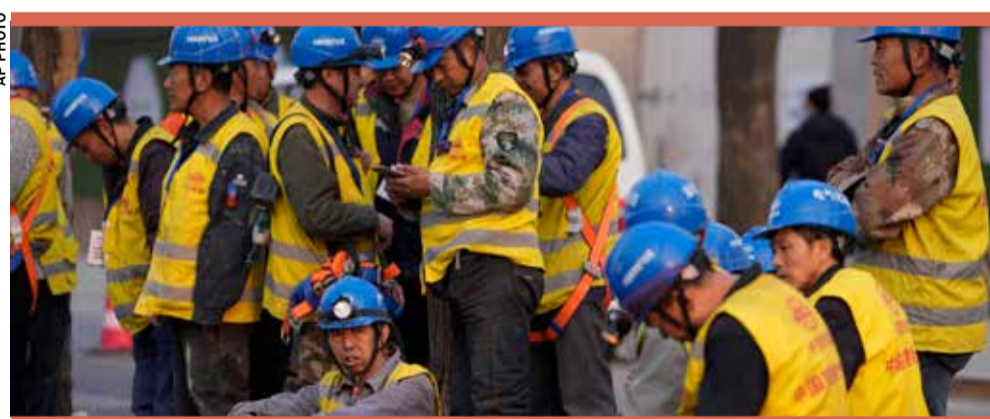
The strong growth in January-March was supported by "broad manufacturing outperformance," festivities-boosted household spending due to the Lunar New Year holidays and po-

licies that helped boost investments, according to China economist Louise Loo of Oxford Economics.

"However, 'standalone' March activity indicators suggest weakness coming through post-Lunar New Year," she said. "External demand conditions also remain unpredictable, as seen in March's sharp export underperformance."

Loo noted that an unwinding of excess inventory, normalization of household spending after the holidays and a cautious approach to government spending and other stimulus will affect growth in this quarter.

Policymakers have unveiled a raft of fiscal and monetary policy measures



as Beijing seeks to boost the economy. China has set an ambitious gross domestic product (GDP) growth target of about 5% for 2024.

Such strong growth usually would push share prices across the region higher. But yesterday, Asian shares fell sharply after stocks retreated on

Wall Street.

The Shanghai Composite index lost 1.4% and the Hang Seng in Hong Kong lost 1.9%. The benchmark for the smaller market in Shenzhen, in southern China, lost 2.8%.

Stronger growth in the region's biggest economy

normally would be seen as a positive for its neighbors, which increasingly rely on demand from China to power their own economies. However, strong growth figures are also viewed as a signal that the government will hold back on further stimulus. **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

Tensions rise after a bishop and priest are wounded in a knife attack in a church

MARK BAKER &
ROD MCGUIRK, SYDNEY

A teenager has been accused of wounding a Christian bishop and priest during a church service in a second high-profile knife attack to rock Sydney in recent days, leaving communities on edge, leaders calling for calm and a besieged church urging against retaliation.

The 16-year-old was overpowered by the shocked congregation at Christ the Good Shepherd Church after he allegedly stabbed Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel and Fr. Isaac Royel during a service on Monday night that was being streamed online.

Police have not commented on reports that the boy's fingers were severed by parishioners in the Orthodox Assyrian church in suburban Wakeley, but confirmed his hand injuries were "severe."

Video of the attack spread quickly on social media and an angry mob converged on the church demanding vengeance. They hurled bricks, bottles and fence boards at police, who temporarily barricaded the boy inside the church for his own safety. Many in the crowd chanted "an eye for an eye" and "bring him out."

Several people including

police officers required hospital treatment following the hourslong riot.

The church said in a statement yesterday it "denounced retaliation of any kind." Police stood guard around mosques in parts of Sydney yesterday after reports that text messages were circulating urging the Assyrian Christian community to retaliate against Muslims.

Police and community leaders said public anxiety had been heightened by a lone assailant's knife attack in a Sydney shopping mall on Saturday that killed five women and a male security guard who attempted to intervene. The 40-year-old assailant, Joel Cauchi, had a history of mental illness and trouble with women and a fascination with knives. He was shot dead by police.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese urged the public not to take the law into their own hands.

"We understand the distress and concerns that are there in the community, particularly after the tragic event at Bondi Junction on Saturday," Albanese told reporters, referring to the Westfield Bondi Junction shopping mall.

"But it is not acceptable to impede police and injure police doing their duty or to

damage police vehicles in a way that we saw last night," Albanese added.

News South Wales Police Commissioner Karen Webb yesterday declared the church attack a terrorist incident, but not the shopping mall rampage.

The terrorism categorization allows more law enforcement resources to be focused on the crime. The declaration also gives police expanded powers to stop and search people, premises and vehicles without a warrant.

Webb said the teen's comments and actions pointed to a religious motive for the attack. She didn't detail the wording of the comments that led her to believe he had been religiously motivated.

Ten Network television reported the boy had told churchgoers who restrained him in Arabic: "If they didn't insult my Prophet, I wouldn't have come here."

The Australian Security Intelligence Organization, the nation's main domestic spy agency, and Australian Federal Police have joined state police in a counterterrorism task force to investigate who else was potentially involved.

ASIO Director-General Mike Burgess agreed with Webb that the mall attack was not terrorism as defined



by Australian authorities.

To call it a terrorist attack, there must be "information or evidence that suggests actually the motivation was religiously motivated or ideologically motivated," Burgess said. "In the case of Saturday, that was not the case. In this case, the information we and the police have before us ... would indicate strongly that that is the case and that's why it was called an act of terrorism."

A coronial inquest will investigate the circumstances of the six knife deaths in the mall attack and what policy changes could be made to prevent similar attacks from occurring in the future. The coroner will also consider whether security guards should be armed. Westfield

Bondi Junction mall guards, including knife victim Faraz Tahir, do not carry guns.

New South Wales Premier Chris Minns said he was reviewing government restrictions on how security guards could be armed following the knife attack. But he has ruled out allowing them to carry guns, saying the fewer firearms in the community, the better.

Mass killings are relatively rare in Australia because assault rifle-style semi-automatic firearms are banned from public ownership under tough national gun laws.

Webb said the teen suspect in the church attack had been known to police, but was not on a terror watch list. He had been convicted in January for a range of offenses including possession

of a switchblade knife, being armed with a weapon with an intention to commit an indictable offense, stalking, intimidation and damaging property, Australian Broadcasting Corp. reported.

A Sydney court released him on a good behavior bond, ABC reported.

The boy used a switchblade, which is an illegal weapon in Australia, in Monday's attack, ABC reported.

Juvenile offenders cannot be publicly identified in New South Wales.

The church in a message on social media said the bishop and priest were in stable condition and asked for people's prayers. The church said in a statement yesterday the 53-year-old Iraq-born bishop's condition was "improving." MDT/AP

PHILIPPINES

Marcos says 'not one person died' as police make huge drug bust

PHILIPPINE President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said yesterday police seized the largest haul of methamphetamine in the country in years without anybody being killed, in a subtle criticism of his predecessor's notoriously deadly crackdown on illegal drugs.

Police seized nearly 1,630 kilograms of methamphetamine Monday from a van and arrested its driver at a checkpoint in Alitagtag town in Ba-

tangas province south of Manila. Intelligence operations were underway to arrest other suspects, officials said without elaborating.

Locally known as shabu, the powerful stimulant had a street value of more than 13 billion pesos (\$228 million), officials said.

"This is the biggest shipment of shabu that we've seized, but not one person died. No shots were fired and nobody

was injured because we operated slowly," Marcos told reporters in Alitagtag, where he presented the boxloads of seized drugs to the press.

"This should be the approach in the drug war for me and the most important objective is to stop the smuggling of illegal drugs into the Philippines," Marcos said, adding that the newly seized drugs came from outside the country.

Marcos, who took office

in mid-2022, has vowed to continue the crackdown on illegal drugs launched by his predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte, but said it would be done differently and focus more on rehabilitating drug addicts.

Under Duterte, more than 6,000 mostly poor suspected drug dealers were killed in reported clashes with law enforcers. The widespread killings alarmed Western governments, including the United States, and



sparked an ongoing International Criminal Court investigation as a possible crime against humanity.

Police say there have been considerably fewer killings of drug suspects under Marcos. MDT/AP

USA

Only one in three adults think Trump acted illegally in hush money case, poll shows

THOMAS BEAUMONT,
WASHINGTON

THE first criminal trial facing former President Donald Trump is also the one in which Americans are least convinced he committed a crime, a new AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll finds.

Only about one-third of U.S. adults say Trump did something illegal in the hush money case for which jury selection began this week, while close to half think he did something illegal in the other three criminal cases pending against him. And they're fairly skeptical that Trump is getting a fair shake from the prosecutors in the case — or that the judge and jurors can be impartial in cases involving him.

Still, half of Americans would consider Trump unfit to serve as president if he is convicted of falsifying business documents to cover up hush money payments to a woman who said he had an affair with her.

While a New York jury will decide whether to convict Trump of felony charges, public opinion of the trial proceedings could hurt him politically. The poll suggests a conviction could hurt Trump's campaign. Trump enters a rematch with President Joe Biden as the first presumptive nominee of a major party — and the first former president — to be under indictment. A verdict is expected in roughly six weeks, well before the Republican National Convention where he will accept the GOP nomination.

Trump has made the prosecutions against him a centerpiece of his campaign and argued without evidence that Biden engineered the cases. That argument helped him consolidate GOP support during the Republican primary, but a conviction might influence how many Americans — including independent voters and people long skeptical of Trump — perceive his candidacy.

"Any conviction should disqualify him," said Callum Schlumpf, a 31-year-old engineering student and political independent from Clifton,



In this courtroom sketch, former President Donald Trump turns to face the audience at the beginning of his trial

Texas. "It sets a bad example to the rest of the world. I think it misrepresents us, as a country, as to what we believe is important and virtuous."

Yet, a cloud of doubt hangs over all the proceedings. Only about 3 in 10 Americans feel that any of the prosecutors who have brought charges against Trump are treating the former president fairly. And only about 2 in 10 Americans are extremely or very confident that the judges and jurors in the cases against him can be fair and impartial.

"It's very obvious political persecution," said Christopher Ruff, a 46-year-old political independent and museum curator from Sanford, North Carolina. "I'm no fan of Trump in any way, shape or form. Didn't vote for him, never will. But it's obviously all political."

Consistent with AP-NORC polls conducted over the past year, the new poll found that about half of Americans say Trump did something illegal regarding the classified documents found at his Florida home, and a similar share think he did something illegal regarding his alleged attempt

to interfere in Georgia's vote count in the 2020 presidential election. The poll also found that nearly half of Americans believe he did something illegal related to his effort to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

Prosecutors in New York will argue that Trump falsified his company's internal records to hide the true nature of a payment to his former lawyer, Michael Cohen. Cohen alleges he was directed by Trump to pay adult film actress Stormy Daniels \$130,000 one month before the 2016 election to silence her claims about an extramarital affair with Trump.

Trump has pleaded not guilty to the 34-count indictment and denied any affair with Daniels.

The poll found that 35% of Americans say Trump has done something illegal with regard to the hush money allegations. Slightly fewer, about 3 in 10, think he did something unethical without breaking the law. Fourteen percent think he did nothing wrong at all. Those numbers haven't shifted meaningfully in the year since he was first charged

in the case.

Republicans are much less likely than Democrats and independents to say Trump committed a crime in the hush money case.

"He's done nothing wrong," said Louie Tsonos, a 43-year-old sales representative and Republican from Carleton, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit. "Because Trump has a lot of money and fame, they want to destroy his reputation. Or at least they are trying to."

Fewer than one in 10 Republicans say Trump did something illegal in the case, while 4 in 10 Republicans think he did something unethical but did not break the law. About 3 in 10 Republicans, like Tsonos, say he did nothing wrong.

By contrast, about 6 in 10 Democrats and roughly 3 in 10 independents believe he did something illegal.

Monica Brown, a Democrat from Knoxville, Tennessee, thinks Trump did something unethical, though not illegal, in the New York criminal case under way. But a conviction would ruin his credibility to serve as president, she said. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1969 DEVLIN IS YOUNGEST-EVER WOMAN MP



A 21-year-old woman, Bernadette Devlin, has become Britain's youngest ever female MP and the third youngest MP ever.

Standing as an independent Unity candidate, Miss Devlin wrested the seat of Mid-Ulster in Northern Ireland from the Ulster Unionists.

In a straight fight she defeated Anna Forrest, the widow of the late MP George Forrest, by more than 4,000 votes.

At the last general election Mr Forrest had a majority of just over 2,500.

It was only Miss Devlin's second foray into politics after standing against Northern Ireland's agriculture minister, James Chichester-Clark, in February's Stormont elections.

She polled nearly 6,000 votes against Major Chichester-Clark's 9,000.

In Mid-Ulster Miss Devlin was helped by the constituency's natural Catholic majority of about 4,000 and the fact that Mrs Forrest did not campaign at all.

The young MP, a Catholic, has declared her sympathies with the IRA and her win has dismayed Northern Ireland's Protestant community.

However, the Queen's University psychology student has always said her approach is non-sectarian and she wants to promote unity among the people of Ireland.

A leading figure in the student civil rights movement, Miss Devlin said her political ambitions were only awakened last October after she took part in a march that was violently suppressed by the police.

After her victory, Miss Devlin who turns 22 next Wednesday, said she would raise issues concerning Ulster in the House of Commons.

"I was elected by the oppressed people of Ulster and I shall work for them," she said.

She did not yet know when she would take her seat in Westminster or where, as an independent, she would sit, Miss Devlin added.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Bernadette Devlin took her seat in Westminster on her 22nd birthday.

Her maiden speech was described as "electrifying" by the Conservative MP Sir Norman St John Stevas. Her time in the House of Commons was eventful. She once assaulted Home Secretary Reginald Maudling and accused him of flying over the events of Bloody Sunday.

She received a nine-month prison sentence for taking part in the sectarian riots in Londonderry in August 1969.

However, Bernadette Devlin lost much Catholic support following the birth of an illegitimate daughter in 1971.

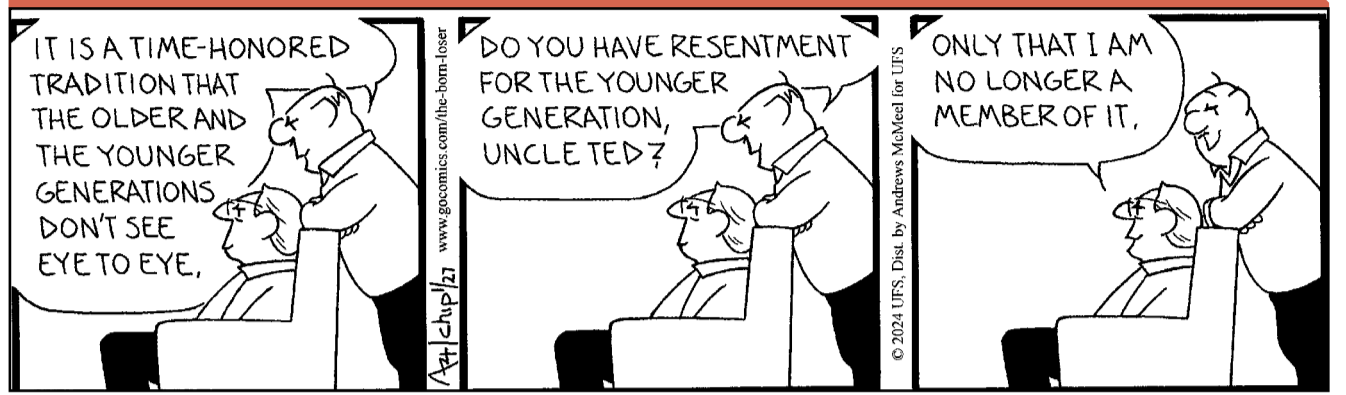
She did not stand for re-election in 1974 but continued to support republican causes.

In 1981 she and her husband, Michael McAliskey, survived an assassination attempt when gunmen burst into their house and shot them.

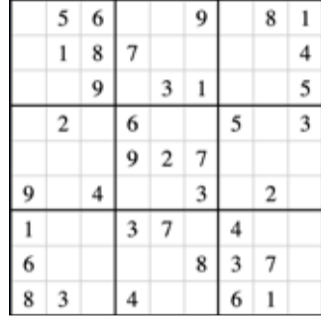
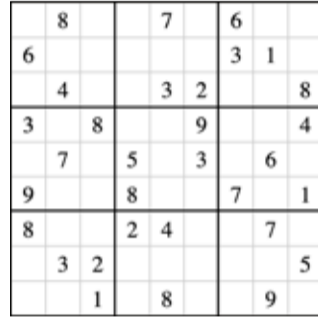

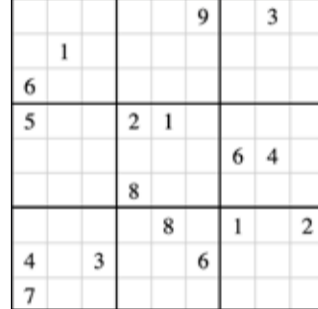
YOUR STARS

 ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Creativity and inventiveness arise from curiosity or necessity. Enjoy games, sports and hobbies, romance and family fun. Love, art and beauty provide soul food.	 TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20 Inspiration motivates domestic renovation. Speculate and imagine with housemates and family. Dreamy results are possible. Review plans and research options before beginning.
 GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21 Reach out to reinforce connections and communication channels. Share news, resources and information. Help others find each other. Participate in a larger conversation.	 CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Brilliant ideas lead to lucrative opportunities. Get creative. Provide products and services that fill a niche demand. Share and coordinate distribution of resources.
 LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22 You're a star. Take advantage of the spotlight to promote a personal cause. Take extra time for yourself. Dress for the role you want.	 VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22 Retreat to reassess the situation. What's working and not? Restore integrity wherever missing. Recharge before taking care of everyone else. Peace and tranquility refreshes.
 LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22 Friends benefit your heart and health. Support each other. Participate with a community effort. Share laughter and tears, victories and losses. You're better together.	 SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21 Your work is gaining respect. Investigate a career opportunity and imagine the potential. A dreamy assignment offers exciting connections. Develop possibilities for growth.
 SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Consider other views and cultural perspectives. Try on new ideas and ways of thinking. Explore and investigate. Study and learn. Expand your horizons.	 CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Resources are available for shared ventures. It could include applications, paperwork and dedication. Stay in communication and cooperate for common gain.
 AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Partnership flowers. Find thoughtful ways to share your appreciation. Provide support. Small gestures go a long way. Weave romance from kindness and care.	 PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20 Get moving! Physical action gets results. Exercise clears your head and keeps your body energized. You're growing stronger. Keep practicing for strength and endurance.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY 	EASY+ 
MEDIUM 	HARD 

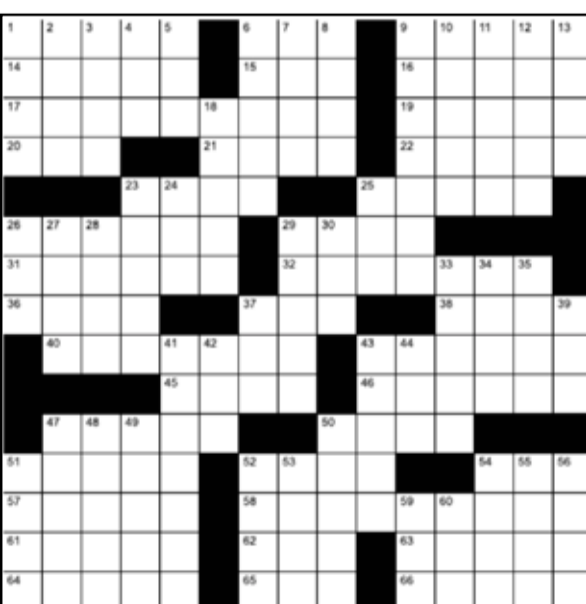
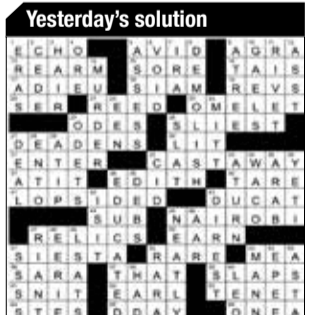
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	11	27	fine
Changchun	4	22	fine
Chengdu	18	27	rain
Chongqing	20	29	cloudy
Fuzhou	22	30	cloudy
Guangzhou	24	32	rain
Guiyang	18	26	showers
Haikou	25	36	cloudy
Hangzhou	15	18	rain
Harbin	1	21	cloudy
Hefei	16	21	cloudy
Nanjing	16	19	overcast
Shanghai	15	17	rain
Taipei	21	29	fine
Wuhan	17	22	rain
Hong Kong	26	29	thunderstorm
WORLD			
Moscow	4	14	showers
Frankfurt	3	11	cloudy
Paris	4	12	showers
London	4	12	showers
New York	9	16	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Bellowing; 6- Bro or sis; 9- Yoga posture; 14- Tending to droop; 15- Get thee nunny; 16- Frame; 17- Mutual arrangement; 19- Snow conveyances; 20- Bridal bio word; 21- Cong. meeting; 22- Icon; 23- Comic Fox; 25- Glass marble; 26- To a greater extent; 29- Stitched; 31- Biases; 32- Gift; 36- Human bone, located in the arm; 37- Blemish; 38- Poor grades; 40- Books of maps; 43- Takes by theft; 45- Junk e-mail; 46- Zit; 47- Tortilla chip dip; 50- District; 51- Red Sea peninsula; 52- Prefix with dexterity; 54- Spring mo.; 57- Single things; 58- Ridiculous; 61- Do-over button; 62- Spots on TV; 63- Composer Berg; 64- Pitchers; 65- Shoe width; 66- Peachy!

DOWN 1- Strong ox; 2- Fury; 3- Fiend; 4- Word that can succeed old, ice and bronze; 5- The Catcher in the ___; 6- Warhorse; 7- They're charged; 8- Cave dwellers; 9- Apportions; 10- Alabama city; 11- Bothered; 12- Elbow; 13- Church nook; 18- Windows predecessor; 23- Pertaining to the kidneys; 24- Body shop fig.; 25- Wonder; 26- East Lansing sch.; 27- Casa cookware; 28- ___ and rave; 29- Muscle contraction; 30- Drift, make a mistake; 33- Abnormal plant swelling; 34- Low high tide; 35- Narrate; 37- Oh, give ___ home...; 39- Opposite of NNW; 41- Aids; 42- Relaxing resort; 43- Parsley piece; 44- Reason for overtime; 47- Tendon; 48- Liqueur herb; 49- "See ya!"; 50- Mistreat; 51- Free from doubt; 52- Wings; 53- Created; 54- "Dancing Queen" group; 55- Land map; 56- Gambling mecca; 59- Solo of "Star Wars"; 60- Bar order;



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



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

CARTOONS

CHARACTERS ENTER THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: WHERE IS REMIX CULTURE GOING?

ANDREW DALTON,
LOS ANGELES

THE giant stuffed bear, its face a twisted smile, lumbers across the screen. Menacing music swells. Shadows mask unknown threats. Christopher Robin begs for his life. And is that a sledgehammer about to pulverize a minor character's head?

Thus unfolds the trailer for the 2023 movie "Winnie the Pooh: Blood and Honey," a slasher-film riff on A.A. Milne's beloved characters, brought to you by ... the expiration of copyright and the arrival of the classic children's novel into the American public domain.

We were already living in an era teeming with remixes and repurposing, fan fictions and mashups. Then began a parade of characters and stories, led by Winnie the Pooh and Mickey Mouse with many more to follow, marching into the public domain, where anyone can do anything with anything and shape it into a new generation of stories and ideas.

After a two-decade drought brought on by congressional extensions of the copyright period in 1998, works again began entering the public domain — becoming available for use without licensing or payment — in 2019. The public began to notice in 2022, when Winnie the Pooh was freed for use as the 95-year copyright period elapsed on the novel that introduced him.

That made possible "Blood and Honey" — not to mention a sequel that dropped last month, a forthcoming third and plans for a "Poohniverse" of twisted public domain characters including Bambi and Pinocchio. Pooh going public was followed this year by a moment many thought would never come: the copyright expiration on the original version of Mickey Mouse, as he appeared in the 1928 Walt Disney short, "Steamboat Willie."

The mouse and the bear are but the beginning. The heights of 20th century pop culture — Superman among them — lie ahead.

Classic characters, new stories, fresh mashups. Will it be all be a bonanza for makers? Are we entering a heyday of cross-generational collaboration or a plummet in intellectual property values as audiences get sick of seeing variations of the same old stories?

Does a murderous Pooh bear have something to show the 21st century entertainment world?

AP PHOTO



COULD THIS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE?

Films from Hollywood's early talkie era have started to become public. King Kong, who has one of his enormous feet in the public domain already because of complications between companies that own a piece of him, will shed his remaining chains in 2029. Then, in the 2030s, Superman will soar into the public domain, followed in quick succession by Batman, the Joker and Wonder Woman.

The possibility of new stories is vast. So is the possibility of repetition. Classic stories and characters could get, well a bit tiresome.

"I don't feel like it's going to make that big a difference," says Phil Johnston, an Oscar nominee who co-wrote Disney's 2011 "Wreck-It-Ralph" and co-wrote and co-directed its sequel, 2018's "Ralph Breaks the Internet."

"Like, 'Winnie the Pooh Blood and Honey' was a novelty, made a bit of a splash, I guess. But if someone makes 'Steamboat Willie' (into) a jet ski movie or something, who cares?" he says. "If there's some great new idea behind it, maybe. But there's nothing I'm looking at where I'm thinking, 'Oh, my God, now that 'The Jazz Singer' is available, I'm going to redo that.'"

Many creators were clearly anxious to do something with "The Great Gatsby," which has been subject to several reinterpretations in very different flavors since it became public in 2021, says Jennifer Jenkins, a professor of law and director of Duke's Center for the Study of Public Domain.

"We have our feminist retellings of 'The Great Gatsby,' where

Jordan gets to tell the story from her perspective, Daisy gets to tell the story from her perspective," Jenkins says. "We got prequels, we got sequels, we've got musicals, TV shows, we've got the zombie version because we always do. These are things that you can do with public domain work. These are things that you can do with Mickey Mouse."

But the newly available works and characters are arriving after years of parent corporations demanding that every creation be tied to their intellectual property. And with some big, "Barbie"-sized exceptions, the returns are growing thinner, and artists themselves are a little sick of it.

"The biggest limiting factor right now is that almost everything that anyone wants is has to be from existing IP," says Johnston, whose newest project is an animated adaptation of Roald Dahl's "The Twits" for Netflix. "And that that the notion of an original idea is somehow scary, certainly to a marketing entity, because they just have to work harder to get it into the public's consciousness. That's the bummer."

And while Shakespeare, Dickens and Austen have been public-domain gold mines at various times, other properties have proven more problematic. The forthcoming "Wicked," starring Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo, will be yet another attempt at using the public-domain work of author Frank Baum's Oz — filtered through a hit novel and Broadway show — to glom onto the classic status of the 1939 "Wizard of Oz" film. Previous tries led to little success, and most were outright flops,

most recently 2013's "Oz the Great and Powerful," from Disney.

(In an odd quirk of the "Wizard of Oz" rights, the film's most famous artifact, Dorothy's ruby slippers, are still the intellectual property of MGM via the 1939 film. In Baum's book, the shoes were silver.)

DISNEY LED THE WAY WITH PUBLIC DOMAIN

Some of the most effective use ever of public domain properties came from Disney itself in its early decades, turning time-tested folktales and novels into modern classics with "Snow White," "Pinocchio" and "Cinderella." It would later become the primary protector of the most valuable rights in entertainment, from the Marvel universe to the Star Wars galaxy to its homegrown content.

That has meant a major flowering through the years of fan art and fan fiction, with which the company has a mixed relationship.

"When you look at how the Disney organization actually engages with fan art, there's a lot of looking the other way," says Cory Doctorow, an author and activist who advocates for broader public ownership of works. "I always thought that there was so much opportunity for collaboration that was being missed there."

He gives as an example binders full of fan-fiction biographies of the ghosts at Disney World's Haunted Mansion, maintained by the teens who work there, which he observed when working on a project with the company's so-called Imagineers.

"Some of it actually is now

part of the lore," Doctorow says. "I think that creatively that is an organization that really embraces that. I think commercially it's an organization that has really struggled with it."

When the law extending copyright by 20 years passed in 1998, musicians including Bob Dylan were among the key figures who had implored Congress to act. Younger generations of musicians, who came up awash in sampling and remixing, made no discernible outcry for another extension. In part this could be because in the streaming era, many of them make little off recorded music.

Jimmy Tamborello, who records and performs electronic music under the name Dntel and as part of The Postal Service — a group whose very name caused trademark headaches with the official version at its inception — says artists are generally happy to allow others to turn their work into new things. The problem is companies that come between them, and get most of the financial benefit.

"There's always a corporation involved," Tamborello says. "I think no one would care if it was just artists to artists. I feel like it would be nice if it was more open, more free. It seems like it has more to do with respecting the original work."

He says it was "really exciting" when the rapper Lil Peep used his hook from The Postal Service's best known song, "Such Great Heights" on a track released on YouTube and Soundcloud even before he made the proper legal arrangements to use it on an album.

Johnston says age and experience have made him feel less possessive about his own work.

"Earlier in my career, everything was an affront. Everything made me angry and like, 'That was that was my idea! I should have had credit for that!'" he says. "I don't want to say I'm just easy and breezy about it, but I think there are so few truly original ideas. We all kind of will have similar thoughts at a certain point. So it doesn't particularly bother me."

His attitude changes if the re-maker is not an artist but artificial intelligence. That was a key issue in last year's Hollywood writers and actors strikes — and is yet another facet of remix culture that, alongside copyright expirations, could change the faces of some of history's most renowned characters in ways no one has ever considered.

"If a writer feels for me, it's fine," Johnston says. "If an AI steals from me, that sucks." **MDT/AP**

OLYMPICS

Despite weather glitch, Paris Olympics flame is lit at cradle of ancient games

NICHOLAS PAPHITIS,
ANCIENT OLYMPIA

EVEN without the help of Apollo, the flame that is to burn at the Paris Olympics was kindled yesterday at the site of the ancient games in southern Greece.

Cloudy skies prevented the traditional lighting, when an actress dressed as an ancient Greek priestess uses the sun to ignite a silver torch — after offering up a symbolic prayer to Apollo, the ancient Greek sun god.

Instead, a backup flame was used that had been lit on the same spot Monday, during the final rehearsal.

Normally, the foremost of a group of priestesses in long, pleated dresses dips the fuel-filled torch into a parabolic mirror which focuses the sun's rays on it, and fire spurts forth.

But this time she didn't even try, going straight for the backup, kept in a copy of an ancient Greek pot.

AP PHOTO



Ironically, a few minutes later the sun shone forth.

From the ancient stadium in Olympia, a relay of torchbearers will carry the flame more than 5,000 kilometers through Greece until the handover to Paris Games organizers in Athens on April 26.

International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach said

the flame lighting combined “a pilgrimage to our past in ancient Olympia, and an act of faith in our future.”

“In these difficult times ... with wars and conflicts on the rise, people are fed up with all the hate, the aggression and negative news,” he said. “We are longing for something which brings us together;

something that is unifying; something that gives us hope.”

Thousands of spectators from all over the world packed Olympia for yesterday's event amid the ruined temples and sports grounds where the ancient games were held from 776 B.C.-393 A.D.

The sprawling site, in a lush valley by the confluence of two

rivers, is at its prettiest in the spring, teeming with pink-flowering Judas trees, small blue irises and the occasional red anemone.

The first torchbearer was Greek rower Stefanos Douskos, a gold medalist in 2021 in Tokyo. He ran to a nearby monument that contains the heart of French Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the driving force behind the modern revival of the games.

The next runner was Laure Maunaudou, a French swimmer who won three medals at Athens in 2004. She handed over to senior European Union official Margaritis Schinas, a Greek.

The flame will travel from Athens' port of Piraeus on the Belem, a French three-masted sailing ship built in 1896 — the year of the first modern games in Athens.

According to Captain Ayméric Gibet, it's due on May 8 in the southern French port of Marseille, a city founded by Greek colonists some 2,600 years ago. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

CHINA-VIETNAM HOTLINE SETS EXAMPLE FOR HANDLING OF MARITIME DISPUTES

That China and Vietnam have agreed to establish a hotline between the Chinese People's Liberation Army's Southern Theater Command and the Vietnamese navy reflects the strategic mutual trust that exists between the two countries. The latest development indicates that the two sides do not want their territorial disputes in the South China Sea to impinge on their friendly relations, as the Philippines has allowed to happen.

The move comes at a time when tensions are high in the South China Sea, mainly because Manila, supported and encouraged by Washington, has been taking increasingly aggressive actions to challenge China's territorial sovereignty over Ren'ai Reef and Huangyan Island. The provocative and confrontational trespassing of the Philippines in the surrounding waters has led to several standoffs between Philippine and Chinese coastguard vessels in recent months.

On Thursday, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. took part in trilateral talks with the US and Japanese leaders in Washington, during which US President Joe Biden once again hyped up the Mutual Defense Treaty between the US and the Philippines. Notably, the summit was held just days after the three countries and Australia carried out joint military drills in the South China Sea. The Philippine leader should understand that, as Vietnam has shown, it is a common aspiration of regional countries to make the South China Sea one of peace and cooperation, and stirring up trouble by seeking help from external forces only jeopardizes regional peace and stability.

The China-Vietnam "theater-level" hotline was announced after the eighth border defense friendship exchange that took place near the two countries' border from Thursday to Friday, which Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun and his Vietnamese counterpart Phan Van Giang attended. Dong, during his talks with Giang, had called on the two sides to "make maritime cooperation a new highlight of cooperation between the two militaries".

The move comes after Chinese and Vietnamese navy chiefs agreed three years ago to set up a hotline as part of efforts to improve information sharing and manage the risk of conflict. A direct line between the countries' defense ministries was established at the end of 2015, and the new naval hotline points to the close ties that have been forged between the two militaries.

China and Vietnam have competing claims in the South China Sea. But the consensus reached between the top leadership of the two countries holds that the maritime disputes are only a small part of bilateral relations, and the two sides should properly handle them in the spirit of mutual trust and mutual respect and focus on the opportunities of bilateral maritime cooperation.

As comprehensive strategic cooperative partners, China and Vietnam have seen the sound and steady development of friendly and mutually beneficial relations in recent years. China has long been the largest trading partner of Vietnam, and Vietnam is China's largest trading partner among the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and its fourth-largest trading partner in the world.

Thus the two countries share far more common interests than differences. It serves the two countries' interests if they work together to find long-term and mutually acceptable solutions to their maritime disputes. The establishment of high-level contacts between the two countries and the two militaries enables them to conduct timely communication, avoid misunderstandings and strengthen mutual trust and cooperation.

The Philippines should stop playing the role of a pawn in Washington's geopolitical games, which is to the detriment of its own interests, and instead take a leaf out of Vietnam's book and work with China to properly manage their differences, and not let their territorial disputes undermine the potential for cooperation.

Plans to stop young people born since 2009 ever smoking being debated at the U.K.'s Parliament.

According to BBC News, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's bill aims to create the UK's first smoke-free generation in a major public health intervention.

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill would ensure anyone turning 15 from this year would be banned from buying cigarettes, and also aims to make vapes less appealing to children.

A number of Tory MPs have told the BBC they won't back the bill.

Conservative MPs will get a free vote on it so they won't be ordered to vote with the government, but the bill is likely to pass as it has Labour support.

The bill would make the sale of tobacco products, rather than the act of smoking, illegal.

Opponents include former prime ministers Johnson, who has called the plans "barmy", and Truss, who is expected to warn against "banning things" in the Commons debate.

Truss told that plans to phase out smoking over time were "unconservative".

She said "we should absolutely protect children from damage and danger while they are developing decision-making capabilities", but added: "We're a free country."

AP PHOTO



This undated photo taken by Cameron Clifford, shows Terrance, the pet octopus his son Cal adopted at their home in Edmond, Oklahoma

BOY'S PET OCTOPUS IS A SENSATION AS THOUSANDS FOLLOW TERRANCE'S STORY ONLINE

ANITA SNOW

The one thing 9-year-old Cal Clifford wanted more than anything since he was a toddler was a pet octopus.

The boy's family in rural Edmond, Oklahoma, humored him with toy versions of an eight-legged mollusk, but as Cal got older it became clear that only the real thing would do.

The child's father, 36-year-old dentist Cameron Clifford, researched the possibility with a local aquarium store and before long Terrance the California two-spot octopus, also known as a bimac, was living in a watery enclosure at the family home southwest of Oklahoma City.

"We really like to encourage our children's interests," said the older Clifford. "It's magical to see a kid embrace their dreams and bring them to fruition. Cal has been infatuated with the natural world and with marine biology since he was very little."

A popular TikTok saga was launched with the father narrating the tale

of Terrance the cephalopod, using a faux British accent generated by the social media app. Eventually, hundreds of thousands of people were following.

Within weeks, the tale took an surprise twist when it was learned Terrance was actually a female as it laid some 50 eggs that the family initially assumed were unfertilized. Several weeks after that, teeny near-transparent octopus babies began hatching and were given names like Rocket Larry, Squid Cudi, Swim Shady, Jay-Sea and Sea-Yoncé

Cal had burst into tears at the family dinner table when his father first announced that the local aquarium store had told him adopting an octopus would be possible.

Father and son together researched what was needed, deciding on a saltwater tank and water cycling system and ensuring they would be able to source food for the soft-bodied sea creature.

The family's younger son Lyle and mom Kari also joined the project in

their own ways. A family friend who is a reptile scientist has provided support and advice.

While female octopuses usually die soon after laying their eggs, Clifford said Terrance remains alive four months later.

Clifford said the family has gained much from the experience.

"Aside from the physical, financial and emotional requirements of owning a species such as a bimac, you will learn a lot about yourself in the process," the Arizona-born Clifford told TikTok followers in his app-generated accent. "There's always some valve or seal that's not completely closed, and your storm resistant carpet isn't rated for gallons and gallons of seawater. You'll learn that seawater and electricity don't always get along."

"You will learn new things and meet incredible people and will learn that wildlife is magnificent," he added. "But most of all, you'll learn to love a not-so-tiny octopus like Terrance."

MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Russia and Ukraine traded blame before the United Nations Security Council for the attacks on Europe's largest nuclear power plant, which the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency said have put the world "dangerously close to a nuclear accident." Without attributing blame, IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said his agency has been able to confirm three attacks against the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant since April 7.

AP PHOTO



Denmark A fire raged through one of Copenhagen's oldest buildings yesterday, causing the collapse of the iconic spire from the 17th-century Old Stock Exchange as passersby rushed to help emergency services save priceless paintings and other valuables. Danish Culture Minister Jakob Engel-Schmidt said it was "touching" to see how many people lent their hand "to save art treasures and iconic images from the burning building."

AP PHOTO



Brazilian police investigating the grim discovery of a boat full of corpses say the dead were likely African migrants from Mali and Mauritania. Fishermen off Brazil's northern coastal state of Pará found the boat adrift last weekend in the Atlantic ocean. Brazil's Federal police said in a statement yesterday [Macau time] it had recovered nine dead in total.