



**BUS OPERATOR TRANSMAC RECORDED A DAILY AVERAGE OF 300,000 PASSENGERS IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF THIS YEAR, REPRESENTING A 4% INCREASE**

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**FIRST ALL-MACAU DRIVER LINE-UP TO RACE IN GT WORLD CHALLENGE ASIA**

P2

**US NAVY FLIES AIRCRAFT THROUGH TAIWAN STRAIT**

P6



AP PHOTO



**Myanmar's** jailed former leader Aung San Suu Kyi has been moved from prison to house arrest as a health measure due to a heat wave, the military government said as it freed more than 3,000 prisoners under an amnesty to mark this week's traditional New Year holiday. Suu Kyi, 78, and Win Myint, the 72-year-old former president of her ousted government, were among the elderly and infirm prisoners moved to house arrest because of the severe heat.

AP PHOTO



**Thailand** and New Zealand yesterday vowed to boost economic cooperation with an aim to triple two-way trade by 2045, as the New Zealand leader visited Thailand for the first time in 11 years. New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon met with his Thai counterpart Srettha Thavisin at the government house yesterday. They discussed trade, education, investment, visa arrangements, tourism, transnational crime and cybersecurity.

AP PHOTO



**India** Police killed at least 29 suspected Maoist rebels in the central state of Chhattisgarh, authorities said, three days ahead of the start of a national election in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a third term. According to a statement, police launched a raid after a tipoff about the presence of Maoists in the Kanker district. Three members of the security forces were wounded in the gunfight, after which police seized several weapons. Indian soldiers have been battling Maoist rebels across several central and northern states since 1967. *More on p7*

# MILLIONS IN CHANGE

RENATO MARQUES



Nearly 14 million patacas processed through coin exchange machines since November 2021

P4

**PROPERTY**

**REMOVAL OF COOLING MEASURES MAY ATTRACT BUYERS IN AILING MARKET**

P3

**REPORT**

**IMF AFFIRMS MACAU ECONOMY WILL GROW 14% THIS YEAR**

P2

### MAN STOPPED FROM ENTERING MAINLAND WITH 50 SECOND-HAND MOBILE PHONES

Gongbei Customs apprehended an individual who was in possession of 50 used mobile phones affixed to his body as he entered the mainland through Gongbei Port Wednesday. The man, dressed in loose attire, chose the "nothing to declare" channel at the Gongbei Port Passenger Inspection Hall for entry. When a Customs officer asked him to present for inspection, he hastened his pace and attempted to merge with the crowd. The Customs officer managed to intercept him and discovered 50 mobile devices secured to various parts of his body including his chest, ribs, waist, abdomen and both of his thighs.

### TRANSPORT BUREAU TO ADJUST RATIO OF ELECTRIC CAR PARKING SPACES

The current ratio of general parking spaces to charging spaces in public car parks is approximately 10 to 1, according to the Transport Bureau. The authorities committed to monitoring the occupancy rates of different public car parks and exploring the possibility of adjusting these ratios based on the usage patterns and needs of users. As an illustration, the authorities referred to the month of February, where the occupancy rate for parking spaces designated for private cars in public car parks was approximately 17%, while the occupancy rate for parking spaces for motorcycles was roughly 11%.

### UM ORGANIZES HEALTH SCIENCES WORKSHOP

The University of Macau has organized a two-day workshop entitled "Understanding Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Medicine" for over 20 science teachers from Yuet Wah College. The workshop aimed to enhance the teachers' professional knowledge and broaden their horizons as part of the Faculty of Health Sciences' training programs for in-service teachers. During the workshop, Associate Professor Poon Chuen Wai discussed the concept of precision medicine and the significance of big data. He highlighted various applications of artificial intelligence (AI) in the future of public healthcare, including genetic data analysis, new drug development, disease prediction and diagnosis, deep phenotyping, treatment response prediction and the development of wearable smart devices.

# IMF AFFIRMS ECONOMY WILL GROW 14% THIS YEAR IN FRESH REPORT

LYNZY VALLES

**T**HE International Monetary Fund (IMF) has affirmed its prediction that the local economy will grow by 13.9% this year and 9.6% next year, according to its World Economic Outlook report.

Providing a comprehensive assessment of the SAR's economic situation in the report, released recently in Washington as part of the Annual Meetings of the IMF and the World Bank, the IMF said that strong growth is expected to continue in 2024.

The IMF noted that the economic growth is bolstered by further recovery in the gaming sector and solid private investments, partly linked to the commitment of gaming concessionaires to invest in non-gaming sectors.

This comes as all six gaming operators pledge a significant amount to diversifying the city's economy by hosting non-gaming activities in town to support the government's aim of moving away from gaming.

As the gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to regain its pre-pandemic level in 2025, the medium-term growth trajectory

RENATO MARQUES



hinges on the pace of Macau SAR's integration with the Greater Bay Area (GBA) and the success of economic diversification efforts.

"Growth is projected to converge to 3% over the medium term. With narrowing output gap and increasing wages, inflation is projected to accelerate to 1.7% in 2024 and stabilize around 2.5 percent in the medium term," the IMF said in its initial report.

"Sharper than expected slowdown in the property sector, local government financing stress and decline in investment, or rising geopolitical tensions will slow economic activity in Mainland China, with knock-on effects on Macau SAR's financial system and

economy," the IMF said.

Recently, the Macau Economic Association announced its predictions for Macau's first-quarter economic performance, indicating a promising recovery for the region.

According to the association's forecast, GDP for the first quarter is expected to reach approximately MOP92 billion, reflecting a significant year-on-year increase of approximately 19%.

This surge in GDP signifies a recovery of approximately 82.8% compared to the same period in 2019.

The University of Macau (UM) revised its economic projection for the SAR last week, predicting a growth of 16.8% to MOP415.3 billion (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 minor 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%.

On the mainland, 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 recently said.

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.

RENATO MARQUES

**F**OR the first time, a team composed of all Macau drivers is competing at the Fanatec GT World Challenge Asia (GTWC Asia) series.

The Team Elegant (Mercedes AMG GT3) will present a duo that includes local drivers André Couto and Alex Liu.

Couto broke the news on his social media platforms, announcing that he will join Liu at the wheel of the Mercedes AMG GT3 under the orange banner.

"I am very happy to announce that I will be racing in the Fanatec GT World Challenge Asia with Mercedes AMG GT3 Team Elegant! It's been a crazy last month and now

## First all-Macau driver line-up to race in GT World Challenge Asia

I'm here, back to GTs," Couto said, revealing that he is teaming up with Liu to make a 100% Macau team for the first time.

Couto also noted the very high level of competition in this event, which is currently the largest and most significant for GT cars in all of Asia, adding that just to be part of this competition is reason enough for Macau pride.

"We are a small team but we will do our best," he concluded.

The GTWC Asia series will start this weekend at

the Malaysian circuit of Sepang for the first two rounds, heading next to Chang International Circuit in Thailand in May.

The championship has a total of 14 rounds (2 per weekend) and it will race in seven different circuits including, besides Malaysia and Thailand, a total of eight races in Japan (in 4 different circuits), coming to a close in mid-September at the Chinese circuit of Shanghai.

The championship includes a total of 33 cars from eight different manufacturers who will ba-



ttle each other over the 14 rounds. There will be a Japan Cup (races held in Japan only) in which organizers expect at

least 50 GT cars (including the GT4 category) will compete across that weekend's four one-hour races.

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HOUSING | CENTALINE

# Cooling measures unlikely to cause sharp spike but would attract buyers in ailing market

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE removal of cooling measures is unlikely to cause a sharp spike in property prices. Rather, according to realtor Centaline, it should attract more buyers into the market.

This comes as the government announced its plans to lift real estate cooling measures as the market has been failing to improve transactions. The proposed scrapping of these measures includes exempting second homes from a 5% stamp duty and reducing the residential mortgage cap to 70%.

"The withdrawal of the cooling measures in Macau is primarily an adjustment in response to market developments," Stanley Poon, managing director at Centaline Macau, told the Times yesterday on the sidelines of a press conference.

"The Macau government ini-



tially introduced these measures with the intention of removing them, but the market did not respond very strongly to the initial steps," Poon explained.

Poon believes the new, more comprehensive plan to remove the cooling measures is expected to have a greater impact, providing a boost to investor-buyers.

"Buyers will be able to save on stamp duty, the caps on bank mortgages have been adjusted, and some additional stress tests have been cancelled. This will provide a good opportunity for many people who want to enter the Macau property market, including foreign buyers, local residents and non-Macau residents."

"The removal of the cooling measures is likely to release pent-up purchasing power and attract external investment into the Macau real estate market," Poon added. "This will give developers and property owners a chance to sell their properties, even if they have to accept lower prices or some losses."

The property market in Macau has been sluggish in the first quarter of 2024, with transaction volumes declining 44% year-over-year. Prices have also come under pressure, with the average price per square meter dropping by 2% compared to the previous year.

"Many developers took advantage of this slowdown to offer discounted sales and promotions to clear inventory," said Roy Ho, principal director at Centaline Macau.

"For example, one developer launched new 'metalworking' units in March with prices starting at 7,700 yuan per square meter, a sig-

nificant 30% reduction compared to the same type of unit two years ago," he added.

These price cuts have helped stimulate some market activity, but the overall outlook remains cautious. The potential removal of the cooling measures could have a more significant impact on the Macau property market in the coming months.

"This policy decision indicates that the Macau government is cognizant of the current state of the overall society and market and has chosen to act by removing the cooling measures," Poon concluded.

The news comes as the property market in the neighboring Zhuhai Hengqin area has shown signs of a strong recovery. In the first two months of 2024, the total pre-sale area of commercial buildings in Zhuhai Hengqin increased by around 28.2% year-on-year, while residential pre-sale area decreased by 5.4%.

"The sales area of commercial housing in Zhuhai also saw increases in various sectors (residential +20.1%, office +178.4%, commercial +231.7%) during the same period," said Ho.

However, the impact of the proposed abolition of the real estate demand management measures in Macau remains to be seen and could affect the overall property market trend in the second quarter.

TRANSPORT

# Public buses undergo adjustments as passengers increase in Q1

STAFF REPORTER

**B**US operator Transmac recorded an average of 300,000 passengers per day in the first quarter of this year, representing a 4% increase compared to the same period in 2019.

Speaking in yesterday's TDM Radio Forum, the bus firm also noted that the number of passengers transported during the first quarter was similar to the corresponding period in 2019, while the number of passengers paying in cash increased by 4.5% compared to the pre-pandemic period.

As a result, Transmac's overall capacity has increased by over 10% compared to the pre-pandemic period.

Deputy general manager Lei Kai Kin mentioned that, during peak hours on weekdays, the level of



crowding in bus compartments is only 80% of what it was in 2019, indicating that current capacity is sufficient to meet demand.

Lei emphasized that the public bus operator has implemented several measures in response to the increased number of passengers crossing various border checkpoints. These include route adjustments and the introduction of different bus models.

Also, during the forum, Mayling Leong, the general

manager of TCM, said that more than 40 bus routes are undergoing trial adjustments, accounting for half of the bus routes in Macau. Among them, 37 will be adjusted starting from this month.

The bus firms' officials said that with the adjustments, they hope to reduce the difficulties of citizens during peak hours.

Previously, the Transport Bureau (DSAT) has claimed that buses with a stated capacity of 65 pas-

sengers may not be overloaded even if "the buses are circulating carrying over 100 passengers."

According to DSAT, "As loading and unloading of passengers may occur in the course of transporting passengers on public buses, even for a public bus with a capacity of 65 passengers, the total number of passengers carried on a bus trip may exceed 100, but this is not overloading."

The reply comes following a Times inquiry as it was noted by several readers that several bus routes have been circulating with vehicles full, carrying many more passengers than their stated capacity.

Readers reported, in some cases, as many as 100 passengers on board buses at the same time, namely those en route to the Border Gate.

ELDERLY HOUSING

# FIRST PHASE EXPANSION BRINGS RELIEF AND HOPE

STAFF REPORTER

**M**ACAU'S government has significantly increased the number of units available in the first phase of a new housing project for seniors, nearly doubling the original quota in an effort to better accommodate the territory's growing elderly population.

The expansion adds over 1,500 units to the initial phase, increased from the original 759 units, according to Lawmaker Wong Kit Cheng who also serves as vice-chair of the Women's Federation.

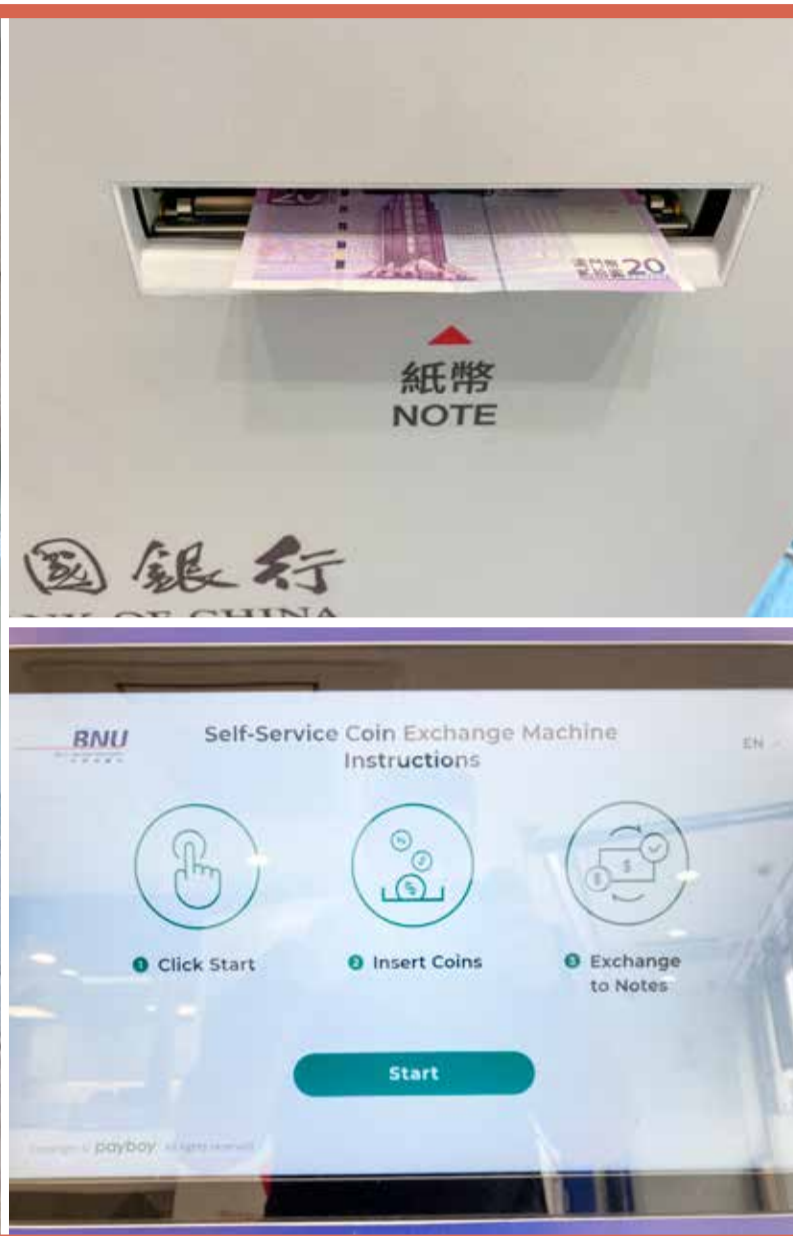
Wong expressed hope that the additional units will allow more qualified seniors to move in as soon as possible, as cited in a TDM report.

Social Welfare Bureau director Hon Wai said the expansion aims to meet the "pressing need" for senior housing as Macau's aging population has increased in recent decades.

One 76-year-old applicant, surnamed Chen, said that she is satisfied with the flat facilities and looks forward to making new friends. She and her husband had applied earlier to take advantage of the 20% discount on the first three years' occupancy fees for eligible applicants.

Chen also hopes the authorities will ensure there are sufficient bus routes to the senior housing to facilitate travel. Wong emphasized the importance of timely completion of the supporting facilities to ensure a smooth transition for the new residents.

The decision to nearly double the initial quota of units underscores the government's commitment to providing accessible and comfortable living spaces for Macau's elderly citizens. This initiative aims to not only meet the current demand but also anticipate the future needs of the territory's aging population.



The interface is very user-friendly and is available in Chinese, Portuguese and English, catering to a broad audience.

The machines only accept Macau patacas and it is very likely that among the small change are also HKD coins which, in most cases, appear physically similar to MOP coins. If you insert HKD coins, the machine will automatically reject them and return them to the refund box.

Another thing to consider is the total amount that you insert into the machine as there are limits (500 pieces of coins) and it is convenient to introduce an exact amount each time so the machine can process the value and transform it into bank bills.

Unless the aim is to collect MOP1 coins, the user should introduce fractions of MOP10, 20, 50, or 100.

The first step to operate the machine includes entering a valid mobile phone number to identify the user. Later, the machine will use this number (or, alternatively, an email address) to send the user a receipt.

Damaged coins that are, for example, bent and rusty should not be inserted into the machines.

At least in the locations that the Times visited, the coin exchange machines are located in the main public areas of the bank branches, which means that they can only be operated during the banks' office hours.

The machines accept all coins in circulation, including the now rare MOP2 and MOP10 denominations.

## ALMOST MOP14 MILLION PROCESSED THROUGH COIN EXCHANGE MACHINES

RENATO MARQUES

IN November 2021, the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM), in coordination with the two note-issuing banks (BNU and Bank of China), launched the first six automatic coin exchange machines in Macau aiming to facilitate citizens exchanging small change into larger bills or coins.

Since then, a total of 20.49 million coins with a total value of MOP13.69 million have been processed through these machines, the AMCM said in a written response to an inquiry from the Times.

The number and value ex-

changed also led the AMCM to affirm that this measure has proven efficient.

The AMCM said that, currently, there are a total of 10 machines throughout the Peninsula and Islands, indicating that the decision to add four more machines took into account factors such as the distribution of the machines through the whole territory and social development.

The four additional machines were installed in the northern district as well as in Taipa and Coloane in December 2022.

The same authority told the Times that with the placement of the current 10 machines, it is believed

that they can service all major liveli- hood and commercial districts in Macau.

According to the monetary authorities, at present, the most common denomination exchanged is the MOP0.1 (10 avos), followed by the MOP1 coins, accounting respectively for 52% and 27% of the total number of coins exchanged.

Of the 10 existing machines, five are in BNU branches, and the other five are in Bank of China (BOC) branches.

Locations in the Peninsula are BOC (San Ma Lou), BOC (Red Market), BOC (Rua de 5 de Outubro), BOC (Villa de Mer), BNU (Iao

Hon), BNU (Fai Chi Kei) and BNU (NAPE).

In Taipa, there are coin exchange machines in the BNU (Nova City) and BNU (Kinglight Garden) and, in Coloane, there is a machine at BOC (Praia Park).

### FAST AND EFFICIENT BUT ATTENTION IS NEEDED

The Times has personally tested several automatic coin exchange machines at both BNU and BOC branches.

The machines and operation interfaces are the same between the two banks as both use Payboy technology equipment and software.

### COINS ARE LESS POPULAR BUT NOT OBSOLETE

Despite the growing popularity of electronic payment methods, the AMCM says that there is still demand for the use of MOP coins as a legal medium of exchange. In that sense, the authority said it will "continue to monitor changes in public demand for coins to ensure that the distribution, collection, and circulation of coins meet the payment needs of the public."

AMCM also advised it will keep track of coin recycling status as well as the coins inventory level regularly, clarifying that, until now, the usage frequency of the machines has remained stable.

## GAMING

# VIP revenues reach 25% of Q1

STAFF REPORTER

VIP baccarat revenue in Macau for the first quarter of 2024 reached approximately MOP14.38 billion, according to data from the Gaming Inspection and Coordination

Bureau (DIC).

The figure accounted for a 25.1% share of overall gross gaming revenue (GGR), which amounted to nearly MOP57.33 billion during the same period.

Compared to the pre-

vious quarter, revenue in the VIP segment experienced growth of 13.2%, and it saw an impressive increase of 67.9% compared to the same period of the previous year.

In terms of mass-market baccarat, reve-

nue reached approximately MOP34.59 billion during the first quarter, marking sequential growth of 3.1% and representing around 60.3% of the market share. Year-on-year, mass-market baccarat revenue surged by

68.7% and surpassed the first-quarter 2019 result by about 115.7%, a period prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Revenue from slot machines amounted to nearly MOP3.2 billion, accounting for approximately 5.6% of the market share. It demonstrated quarter-on-quarter growth of 8.4% and a year-on-year increase of 31.5%.

When considering the

overall mass-market segment, which includes slot machines, aggregate revenue for the first quarter stood at just under MOP42.95 billion. This represented a significant 74.9% share of Macau's casino GGR during the January to March period. Notably, this quarterly result exceeded the achievement of the comparable period in 2019 by 110.3%.

RETAIL

# Dr. Martens shares plunge to record low after weak US revenue outlook

**C**HUNKY bootmaker Dr. Martens is warning of a tough year ahead.

The London-based company's footwear became a symbol of youthful rebellion in the 1960s and has remained popular with a string of subcultures, from punk to goth since. But the business got tripped up with overexpansion and brand mismanagement in recent years.

Shares in Dr. Martens PLC, known as Doc Martens, plunged Tuesday after the iconic brand forecast wholesale revenue in the U.S., its largest market, would decline by double-digits compared with last year.

Dr. Martens also announced a leadership shakeup. After six years at the helm of the company, CEO Kenny Wilson will step down. Ije Nworie, Dr. Martens' chief brand officer, will take his place.

Trading in Dr. Martens stock was temporarily halted on the London Stock Exchange Tuesday as it



sank to a record-low 0.62 pounds, according to FactSet. It closed at 0.67 pounds, down more than 29%. Its U.S.-traded shares suffered a similar decline and are down 55% in the past year.

The revenue forecast could translate into a sizeable hit to profits, with the company pointing to a

base projected impact of 20 million pounds (\$24.9 million) on pretax earnings year-over-year. In-season orders from wholesale customers could help ease U.S. revenue expectations, the company noted, but those are difficult to predict.

Beyond weakening revenue, Dr. Martens said it anticipates other

hefty expenses related to the company's employee retention plans as well as inflation. Unlike years past, the company said it does not plan to increase prices to offset those costs.

Dr. Martens has had a long history. The shoe's roots date back to post-World War II Munich — when

Dr. Klaus Maertens, a doctor in the German army, developed a unique air-cushioned sole, rather than the traditional hard leather version, to aid in his recovery from a broken foot in 1945, according to the brand's website.

Dr. Martens has garnered a wide range of customers and associations over the years. Beyond fashion statements across numerous subcultures, some controversial ties include neo-Nazis who allegedly signaled hateful affiliations through specific lace colors on their boots.

The brand has also not been without financial woes. It underwent a series of design changes amid sales declines and flirted with bankruptcy in 2003. It was purchased by a private company called Permira in early 2014, and the business went public in 2021.

Neil Saunders, a managing director with research firm GlobalData, blamed Dr. Martens' woes on overexpansion at a time when the brand has faced competition from sleeker comfort wear that became more popular during the pandemic.

"They were too bullish with their expansion," he said. "All their products are kind of big and clunky and black. And that is not so much in demand at the moment. People want much sleeker and slimmer styles in pastel shades." **MDT/AP**

## CEM NOTICE

### Temporary traffic control measures for cable and pipeline laying

In conjunction with the cable laying works by Companhia de Electricidade de Macau - CEM, S.A. (CEM) at Rua Um do Bairro da Concórdia, Rua do Comandante João Belo and Rua da Bacia Sul, CEM, Macao Water, CTM and private company will conduct the laying of cable, water pipe and pipeline as well as sewer connection at Rua do Patane and Rua da Pedra from 22 April (Monday). Please refer to the following table for details of the temporary traffic control measures. Bus services will not be affected during the period.

Temporary measures	Date and time	Road section
Limited access	9:30am to 4:30pm daily during 22 to 30 April	The section of Rua da Bacia Sul near Precious Jade Garden (Lei Iu Kok)
Limited access	22 April to 6 May	The section of Rua do Comandante João Belo near Rua Um do Bairro da Concórdia
No parking		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part of the metered parking spaces and the loading and unloading area on Rua Um do Bairro da Concórdia</li> <li>The motorcycle parking spaces and the loading and unloading area on Rua do Comandante João Belo near Edf. To Pou</li> </ul>
No exit	22 April to 16 May	The section of Rua Um do Bairro da Concórdia between Rua do Comandante João Belo and Rua do General Castelo Branco
Closed to traffic		The section of Rua do Patane near Rua da Pedra
No exit		The section of Rua da Pedra between Pátio do Alfinete and Rua do Patane
No parking		The loading and unloading area on Rua do Patane near Beco da Lavra



FMCC masters the Breakfast Talk Rendez-Vous in town with key speakers sharing their views on current business affairs. Our monthly events take place every last Wednesday of the month at Sofitel Macau at Ponte 16. Open to all!

### Leveraging Space Technology for Industry Innovation

Speaker: Chair Prof. Zong Qiangang  
Director of the State Key Laboratory of Lunar and Planetary Sciences

The FMCC Breakfast Talk Rendez-Vous  
Wednesday, 24 Apr 2024



#### Introduction:

Embark on a journey into the world of space technology with FMCC and CanCham. Discover the pioneering research of M.U.S.T. State Key Laboratory of Lunar and Planetary Sciences (SKLPlanets) in leveraging satellite data and space-based technologies for market research, environmental monitoring, communication systems, and space tourism. Join us and hear from Chair Professor Zong Qiangang as we explore the untapped potential of data from space missions. Plus, don't miss the exclusive lab tour arranged right after the breakfast talk.

Date: **Wednesday, 24 Apr, 2024**

#### Schedule:

9:00am - 10:30am @Sofitel Macau at Ponte 16  
- Optional:  
10:30am - 11:00am Transport to M.U.S.T  
11:30am - 12:00pm Onsite Tour at SKLPlanets  
12:00pm - 13:30pm Lunch @Season (optional at your own expense)

RSVP before 2p.m. on 22 Apr  
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TRADE

# Biden is seeking higher tariffs on Chinese steel as he courts union voters

CHRIS MEGERIAN & WILL WEISSERT, SCRANTON (PA.)

AP PHOTO



**T**HE U.S. PRESIDENT Joe Biden is calling for a tripling of tariffs on steel from China to protect American producers from a flood of cheap imports, an announcement he planned to roll today [Macau time] in an address to steelworkers in the battleground state of Pennsylvania.

The move reflects the intersection of Biden's international trade policy with his efforts to court voters in a state that is likely to play a pivotal role in deciding November's election.

The White House insists, however, that it is more about shielding American manufacturing from unfair trade practices overseas than firing up a union audience.

In addition to boosting steel tariffs, Biden also will seek to triple levies on Chinese aluminum. The current rate is 7.5% for both metals. The administration also promised to pursue anti-dumping investigations against countries and importers that try to saturate existing markets with Chinese steel, and said it was working with Mexico to ensure that Chinese companies can't circumvent the tariffs by shipping steel there for subsequent export to the U.S.

"The president understands we must invest in American ma-

nufacturing. But we also have to protect those investments and those workers from unfair exports associated with China's industrial overcapacity," White House National Economic Adviser Lael Brainard said on a call with reporters.

Biden was set to announce that he is asking the U.S. Trade Representative to consider tripling the tariffs during a visit to United Steelworkers union headquarters in Pittsburgh. The president is on a three-day Pennsylvania swing that began in Scranton yesterday and will include a visit to Philadelphia on Thursday.

The administration says "China is distorting markets and eroding competition by unfairly flooding the market with below-market-cost steel."

"China's policy-driven overcapacity poses a serious risk to the future of the American steel and aluminum industry," Brainard said. Referencing China's economic downturn, she added that Beijing "cannot export its way to recovery."

"China is simply too big to play by its own rules," Brainard said.

Higher tariffs can carry major economic risks. Steel and aluminum could become more expen-

sive, possibly increasing the costs of cars, construction materials and other key goods for U.S. consumers.

Inflation has already been a drag on Biden's political fortunes, and his turn toward protectionism echoes the playbook of his predecessor and opponent in this fall's election, Donald Trump.

The former president imposed broader tariffs on Chinese goods during his administration, and has threatened to increase levies on Chinese goods unless they trade on his preferred terms as he campaigns for a second term. An outside analysis by the consultancy Oxford Economics has suggested that implementing the tariffs Trump has proposed could hurt the overall U.S. economy.

Senior Biden administration officials said that, unlike the Trump administration, they were seeking a "strategic and balanced" approach to new tariff rates. China produces around half of the world's steel, and is already making far more than its domestic market needs. It sells steel on the world market for less than half what U.S.-produced steel costs, the officials said.

Biden's announcement follows his administration's efforts to provide up to \$6.6 billion so that a Taiwanese semiconductor giant can expand facilities that it is already building in Arizona and

better ensure that the world's most-advanced microchips are produced in the U.S. That move could be seen as working to better compete with China chip manufacturers.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, during a recent visit to China, warned against oversaturating the market with cheap goods, and said low-cost steel had "decimated industries across the world and in the United States." The Chinese, in turn, expressed grave concern over American trade and economic measures that restrict China, according to the China's official news agency. U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken also has an upcoming visit to China.

Also potentially shaking up the steel industry is Japanese Nippon Steel's proposed acquisition of Pittsburgh-based U.S. Steel. Biden said last month that he opposed the move.

"U.S. Steel has been an iconic American steel company for more than a century, and it is vital for it to remain an American steel company that is domestically owned and operated," Biden said then.

At a rally last weekend in Pennsylvania, Trump tore into Biden over Nippon Steel's efforts to buy U.S. Steel, ignoring the president's objections to the merger.

"I would not let that deal go through," Trump said. **MDT/AP**

DIRE STRAIT

# US navy flies aircraft through Taiwan Strait a day after US-China defense chiefs hold rare talks

**T**HE U.S. 7th Fleet said a Navy P-8A Poseidon flew through the Taiwan Strait yesterday, a day after U.S. and Chinese defense chiefs held their first talks since Nov. 2022 in an effort to reduce regional tensions.

The patrol and reconnaissance plane "transited the Taiwan Strait in international airspace," the 7th Fleet said in a news release.

"By operating within the Taiwan Strait in accordance with international law, the United States upholds the navi-

gational rights and freedoms of all nations," the release said.

Although the critical 160 kilometer-wide strait that divides China from the self-governing island democracy is international waters, China considers the passage of foreign military aircraft and ships through it a challenge to its sovereignty.

China had no immediate response to the report, but has in past issued stern protests and activated defenses in response to the passage

of ships and military planes through the straight, particularly those from the U.S. China also regularly sends navy ships and warplanes into the strait and other areas around the island to wear down Taiwan's defenses and seek to intimidate its 23 million people, who firmly back their de-facto independence.

"By operating within the Taiwan Strait in accordance with international law, the United States upholds the navigational rights and free-

doms of all nations. The aircraft's transit of the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the United States' commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific. The United States military flies, sails and operates anywhere international law allows," the 7th Fleet statement said.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke with his Chinese counterpart Adm. Dong Jun earlier this week in the latest U.S. effort to improve communications with the Chinese military and reduce the chances of a

clash in the region.

It was the first time Austin has talked to Dong and the first time he has spoken at length with any Chinese counterpart since November

2022. The call, which lasted a bit more than an hour, came as Secretary of State Antony Blinken is expected to travel to China this month for talks. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



**E**VERY five years, the world's most populous democracy holds a giant election for millions of Indians to cast their vote on a new parliament.

And it does so in its usual flamboyance — with a spectacle of dance, drumbeats and firecrackers echoing across India as candidates march in processions to canvass for votes.

Colorful convoys of motorbikes, jeeps and autorickshaws have been navigating narrow streets in cities and towns as people line up to glimpse the contestants.

The six-week national election will start Friday with polling scheduled in 21 states in the first phase.

From April 19 to June 1, nearly 970 million Indians — or over 10% of the global population — are eligible to vote to elect a total of 543 lawmakers in the lower house of parliament.

Among the states voting on Friday is southern Tamil Nadu, where mega cardboard cutouts of political leaders are a common sight during the election season.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party has been trying to make inroads in the state where regional parties have dominated for decades. Among the issues dominating the campaign are the rising cost of living, corruption, federalism and minority rights.

The ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam party is hoping to retain its influence. In the 2019 elections, DMK won 38 out of 39 parliamentary seats

INDIA

# Colorful roadshows and rallies mark election season



in Tamil Nadu.

DMK President and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has been campaigning for his party, which is part of the opposition INDIA alliance aiming to unseat Modi and to weaken his government's increasingly powerful sway. The acronym INDIA, which stands for Indian National Develop-

mental Inclusive Alliance, includes the main opposition Congress party.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, daughter of Congress party leader Sonia Gandhi, has been campaigning in eastern Assam state where some districts will go to the polls in the first phase.

In neighboring West Bengal,

the ruling Trinamool Congress party led by the state chief minister Mamata Banerjee is facing a stiff challenge from the BJP. In the districts voting Friday, the campaign has centered around the distress of tea garden workers, who are demanding higher wages.

Modi has been travelling extensively across the country,

holding road shows and rallies to campaign for the local BJP candidates, and promising voters that his party will make India a 'developed nation' by 2047.

Modi and BJP are widely expected to return to power for a third term. The results will be announced on June 4. **MDT/AP**

INDONESIA

# Apple CEO says company will 'look at' manufacturing in Indonesia

**A**PPLE CEO Tim Cook said the company will "look at" manufacturing in Indonesia as he met with Indonesian President Joko Widodo yesterday.

"We talked about the president's desire to see manufacturing in the country, and it's something that we will look at," Cook told reporters after the meeting.

Widodo's administration has worked for years to bring manufacturing to the country to power economic development, while Apple is seeking to diversify its supply chains away from China, where

most of its smartphones and tablets are assembled.

The company began moving some production to countries like Vietnam, and more recently India, after shutdowns to fight COVID-19 in China repeatedly disrupted the company's shipments.

"I think the investment ability in Indonesia is endless. I think that, there is a lot of great places to invest, and we're investing. We believe in the country," Cook said.

The previous day, Cook met Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh in Hanoi, where he

said Apple plans to invest more in Vietnam and increase spending on suppliers in the Southeast Asian manufacturing hub.

"Given the slowing Chinese economy as well as the Chinese government's ongoing efforts to squeeze out foreign companies and replace them with domestic brands, Apple wants alternatives for manufacturing," said Chris Miller, an associate professor at Tufts University whose work focuses on technology and geopolitics.

"It has already invested more in India and

Vietnam, but it is likely looking at other partners in South East Asia to additional manufacturing and assembly operations," Miller said.

Cook's visit to Indonesia came after Apple announced its fourth Apple Developer Academy in the country, to be located in Bali. The company first launched the program to train app developers in Indonesia in 2018, in the capital Jakarta.

Apple has no manufacturing facilities in Indonesia, but the company says it has invested 1.6 trillion rupiah (\$99 million) in its

app developer ecosystem in the country.

Widodo's government has sought to leverage the country's reserves of nickel and other raw materials to bring in manufacturing, banning export of raw commodities such as nickel and bauxite to oblige companies to build refineries domestically.

After the meeting with Widodo, Cook also met

Indonesia's president-elect Prabowo Subianto, who is currently defense minister, in Jakarta. He's set to take power in October.

Indonesia's minister of communication and information, Budi Arie Setiadi, said Wednesday that Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella would visit Indonesia at the end of April. **MDT/AP**



Apple CEO Tim Cook (right) walks with Indonesia's Minister of Communication and Information Technology Budi Arie Setiadi after a meeting with President Joko Widodo in Jakarta yesterday

AP PHOTO



CLIMATE CHANGE

# 2023 was a record year for wind installations: report

CARLOS MUREITHI

**T**HE world installed 117 gigawatts of new wind power capacity in 2023, a 50% increase from the year before, making it the best year for new wind projects on record, according to a new report by the industry's trade association.

The latest Global Wind Report, published yesterday [Macau time] by the Global Wind Energy Council, explores the state of the global wind industry and the challenges it's facing in its expansion.

The increase in wind installations "shows that the world is moving in the right direction in combating climate change," the report said.

But the authors warned that the wind industry must increase its annual growth to at least 320 gigawatts by 2030 in order to meet the COP28 pledge to triple the world's installed renewable energy generation capacity by 2030, as well as to meet the Paris Agreement's ambition of capping global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit).

"It's great to see wind industry growth picking up, and we are proud of reaching a new annual record," said GWEC CEO Ben Backwell, "however much more needs to be done to unlock growth."

Still, the report shows that

wind is becoming "better understood and appreciated across the globe for the value it brings as a renewable energy source," said George Aluru, CEO of the Electricity Sector Association of Kenya, an industry body for private investors in electricity.

"This increased renewable energy supply supports climate goals in line with ensuring sustainable development," he said.

With the growing impacts of climate change, wind power and other renewable energy sources are seen as a key to reducing electricity generation from fossil fuels and mitigating climate change. Renewables are the cheapest form of electricity in many parts of the world and among the cheapest in most others.

The global cumulative wind power capacity now totals 1,021 gigawatts.

Christian Andresen, research manager at SINTEF Energy Research, a Norway-based independent institute for applied research in the energy sector, said the report shows that the wind industry is "picking up pace" by attracting investments and gaining maturity, and that may lead to a snowball effect leading to future growth.

For the planet, he said, it indicates that it is possible to ramp up to reach climate targets.

"This is an important building block in the transition towards a net-zero emission

society," said Andresen.

As was the case in 2022, China led all other countries for both new onshore and offshore wind power installations in 2023. It had 65% of new installations, and was followed by the U.S., Brazil and Germany, respectively. Together, these four countries accounted for 77% of new installations globally last year.

The report notes that growth in wind power installations is highly concentrated in a few big countries and links that to strong market frameworks to scale wind installations in those countries. The top five markets at the end of last year remained as China, the U.S., Germany, India and Spain.

Still, some other countries and regions are coming up, having witnessed record levels of growth in 2023.

Africa and the Middle East installed nearly 1 gigawatt of wind power capacity in 2023, almost triple that of the previous year. With upcoming projects in South Africa, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the report predicts that new onshore wind additions for Africa and the Middle East will grow fivefold by 2028 compared with 2023.

Some of the markets to watch include Kenya, where windpower provides around 17% of electricity, the report said. The country has the largest wind farm in Africa, the 310-megawatt Lake Turkana

Wind Power Project, and the report notes new planned large-scale wind projects in the country, including a 1-gigawatt wind park by local power generator KenGen.

But building wind power installations is expensive and entails high up-front investments, and emerging and developing countries face higher cost of capital and pay higher loan rates to build out their wind.

Wind energy also faces supply chain and grid challenges, and innovation in the electricity system is needed to integrate intermittent wind energy onto the grid while retaining reliability, said Erin Baker, a professor of industrial engineering and operations research at the University of Massachusetts. Offshore wind, she said as an example, has some very specialized equipment and manufacturing, and also requires expertise in finance and business models.

But the accelerating growth of wind energy, as shown in the report, means that countries are developing the supply chains needed to keep this growth up, and it will "almost certainly" lead to reductions in cost and improvements in the technology as more and more is built around the world, she said.

"The recent growth, and nations support for the wind industry, are hopeful signs that the supply chain is being established," said Baker. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history



### 1955 ALBERT EINSTEIN DIES

Albert Einstein has died in hospital in Princeton, New Jersey, aged 76.

The eminent scientist and originator of the theory of relativity was admitted to hospital three days ago with an internal complaint.

In recent years Dr Einstein had lived a secluded life although he was still a member of staff at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University.

In a statement issued following the scientist's death, US President Dwight Eisenhower said: "No other man contributed so much to the vast expansion of the 20th century knowledge.

"Yet no other man was more modest in the possession of the power that is knowledge, more sure that power without wisdom is deadly.

"To all who live in the nuclear age, Albert Einstein exemplified the mighty creative ability of the individual in a free society."

Albert Einstein was born on 14 March 1879 to Jewish parents at Ulm, Wurttemberg in Germany.

Soon afterwards the family moved to Munich where the young Einstein began his education at the Luitpold Gymnasium.

His early academic career was notable only for the fact he was asked to leave his school for "disruptive" behaviour.

But he had always excelled at mathematics - a subject which would later make him the most renowned scientist in the world.

In 1896 Einstein entered the Swiss Federal Polytechnic School in Zurich to train as a physics and maths teacher.

But he struggled to get a job, largely due to the fact he was German, so, in 1902, he accepted a job as a technical assistant in the Swiss Patent Office.

It was during his seven years at the Patent Office that, in his spare time, he worked on his mathematical theories which would eventually take the world by storm.

The Special Theory of Relativity, which describes the motion of particles moving close to the speed of light, was published in 1905.

In the years that followed, Einstein took up senior academic posts in Berne and Zurich. In 1911 he became Professor of Theoretical Physics in Prague but returned to Zurich a year later.

However, well-known German physicists, Walter Nernst and Professor Planck, were eager for Einstein to return to Berlin.

In 1913 they persuaded him to take up the position of director of the projected research institute for physics in the University of Berlin and become a member of the Royal Prussian Academy of Science.

Einstein's General Theory of Relativity was published in 1916. In 1921 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for physics.

He kept the positions in Berlin until 1933, when he accepted a part-time post at Princeton University in America.

His plan was to divide his time between Germany and America but in the same year the Nazis came to power and Einstein, being a Jew, never returned to his birthland.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Albert Einstein's work laid the groundwork for many modern technologies including nuclear weapons and cosmic science.

After his death, Einstein's brain was removed and preserved for scientific research by Canadian scientists.

It was found that the part of Einstein's brain responsible for mathematical thought and the ability to think in terms of space and movement was 15% wider than average.

It also lacked a groove which normally runs through this region suggesting that the neurons were able to communicate.

In 1999 Albert Einstein was named "person of the century" by Time magazine.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

## YOUR STARS

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Romantic plans could take an unexpected twist. Even with breakdowns, others are willing to help. Connect anew. Intuition boosts insight. Create something beautiful.

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20

Work closely with your partner. You don't have to share everything, but listen. Avoid travel, expense or hassle. Invest in your family with love.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21

Your persuasive arts and skills with communication can pass formidable barriers. Use gentle pressure rather than force. Charm and inform. Get the word out.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Avoid risky business, and focus on generating stable income. Pay attention to your intuition. Postpone travel for now. You can find what you need.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Focus on a personal project. Changes affect your circumstances in unexpected ways. What you thought was stable now seems shaky. Prioritize practicalities.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Don't let circumstances get you down. Focus on rest, growth and development. Replenish your reserves. Your intuition seems strong and sensitive. Seek peace.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22

A team effort comes together. Participate to advance a shared cause. Distractions abound. Help out and be richly rewarded. Together, you're more powerful.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You're especially persuasive and creative. Navigate an unexpected professional situation. Come up with a solution that works for everyone. Your work is gaining attention.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Set your goals high and explore educational possibilities. Your curiosity keeps you nimble. Investigate your latest fascination. Research the back story. Write your discoveries.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Collaborate for shared gain. Review family accounts. Financial surprises require adaptation. Shift and revise to suit new markets. Coordinate to save and conserve resources.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Together, you're a formidable team. Collaborate to adapt to unforeseen circumstances. Get creative. Coordinate your response. Rely on each other. Express your gratitude.

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Though your work responsibilities won't disappear, approaching them from a more grounded and graceful place will allow you to feel calmly supported as you complete tasks.

## The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



## SUDOKU

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

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

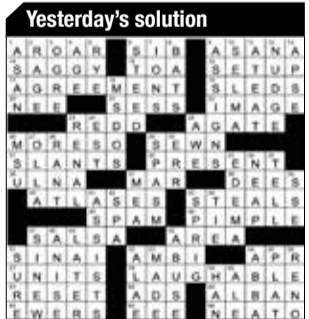
## WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	12	28	fine
Changchun	8	19	fine
Chengdu	18	25	rain
Chongqing	19	27	rain
Fuzhou	20	22	overcast
Guangzhou	23	29	rain
Guiyang	16	27	cloudy
Haikou	25	34	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	13	22	fine
Harbin	6	17	thunderstorms
Hefei	9	22	overcast
Nanjing	10	22	fine
Shanghai	11	21	fine
Taipei	21	24	rain
Wuhan	14	26	cloudy
Hong Kong	27	30	thunderstorms
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	7	11	rain
Frankfurt	3	13	cloudy
Paris	7	14	cloudy
London	8	14	cloudy
New York	8	11	showers

## CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- \_\_\_ go brag; 5- Departs; 9- Over-50 org.; 13- Pave over; 15- Part of A.D.; 16- Woody plant; 17- Sun-dried brick; 18- Coral habitat; 19- Neighbor of Sask.; 20- Craggy hill; 21- Triumphs; 23- Clawed; 25- \_\_\_ dancing is popular with cowboys; 26- Re-fluent; 27- Initially; 30- Chinese "way"; 31- As such; 32- Levy on deals?; 37- Leak slowly; 38- In any way; 40- Bristol baby carriage; 41- Unequal; 43- Hi hi; 44- Buck's mate; 45- Austrian composer; 47- Mistakes; 50- Mother of Jesus; 51- \_\_\_ by Starlight; 52- Sneaky guy?; 53- Process leather; 56- Crescent-shaped figure; 57- Ringing instrument; 59- Stagnant; 61- Contributes; 62- Booty; 63- Exhausted; 64- Pigsty; 65- Tolkien tree creatures; 66- Falls behind;

DOWN 1- QED middle; 2- Overhaul; 3- Like \_\_\_ not; 4- Capture; 5- January birthstone; 6- Till bills; 7- Vane dir.; 8- Form of baseball; 9- Maker of Pong; 10- Senator Specter; 11- Put a new price on; 12- \_\_\_ moss; 14- Replace the electrical conduits; 22- \_\_\_ and outs; 24- It's blown among the reeds; 25- Has "s" trouble; 26- List ender; 27- Lhasa \_\_\_; 28- High schooler; 29- At liberty; 32- In a funk; 33- Spread apart; 34- Drop \_\_\_ (moon); 35- Contented sighs; 36- Dec. holiday; 38- Awww! Cute!; 39- Golf pegs, northern English river; 42- Billy \_\_\_ had a hit song with "White Wedding"; 43- Take into custody; 45- Separates metal from ore; 46- Tit for \_\_\_; 47- Chopin composition; 48- Tears apart; 49- Like non-oyster months; 51- Close with force; 52- Story line; 53- Skater Lipinski; 54- Shake \_\_\_ (hurry); 55- Sparks and Beatty; 58- Long, long time; 60- Up to, in ads;



## 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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Vy Le in a scene from the HBO television mini series "The Sympathizer"

## TV MINI SERIES

# IN WAR SAGA 'THE SYMPATHIZER,' VIETNAMESE VOICES ARE NO LONGER STUCK IN THE BACKGROUND

TERRY TANG

VIETNAMESE journalist-turned-filmmaker Phanxinê remembers exactly when he decided to make movies in his native country rather than Hollywood.

It was in 2008 but it could have been a satirical scene out of the Vietnam Era-novel "The Sympathizer." Someone from a movie studio visiting his University of Southern California film class told him his story pitch about a Vietnamese American woman traveling the U.S. would

only work if the heroine was white.

Having a white star would give the film "a broader audience," Phanxinê recounts being told.

"It is the moment I realized that if I want to stay in America, I have to do a movie about Caucasian people," said Phanxinê, who goes by a one-name moniker professionally. The reason I want to be a filmmaker is because I want to tell the story that I know the story about my people, my country, my culture."

Now, over 15 years later, Phan-

xinê is doing his first U.S.-side professional acting job in HBO's adaptation of "The Sympathizer" with an ensemble of fellow Vietnamese actors.

For decades, Vietnamese people often have been relegated to the background in popular cinematic depictions of the Vietnam War. Films like "Full Metal Jacket" and "Apocalypse Now" typically only examined the price the U.S. and its soldiers paid.

In the adaptation of Viet Thanh Nguyen's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel that premiered

Sunday, it is South Vietnamese and Viet Cong soldiers' struggles with loss, loyalty and identity that take center stage. For some cast members, there were initial concerns about stirring up what was a traumatic time even for their own families. But, they are not shying away from feeling a sense of responsibility in shaping the narrative.

Sprinkled with drama, comedy and espionage, the series follows a half-French, half-Vietnamese spy for the Viet Cong known as The Captain. Played by Hoa Xuande, Captain embeds himself with South Vietnamese people, even becoming part of a post-war refugee community that settles in Los Angeles. Robert Downey Jr., who is also a producer, plays four different white antagonists. Sandra Oh also co-stars.

Phanxinê, who plays Major, an assistant to a South Vietnamese general who also relocates to the U.S., actually wanted to keep his involvement with the series private for as long as possible to put off any political backlash. Even now in Vietnam, any media touching on the war is scrutinized heavily. The book faced difficulties getting published in Vietnam because of its portrayal of what Vietnamese see more as "The American War." Even some friends advised him not to take part in the project.

"During the shoot, I met several people really upset about how the Vietnamese American (are) portrayed in this series. And I totally understand that," Phanxinê said. "I think what comes will come."

Fred Nguyen Khan plays Bon, a South Vietnamese soldier whose character suffers a great loss. He was among several who filmed a harrowing re-enactment of the fall of Saigon. Khan, 41, acknowledged the show could be triggering for some of his relatives. But, that doesn't have to be a bad thing.

"I think it's going to be a real cathartic moment for a lot of them. And if we can just talk about it afterwards and start healing that, I think that that's a win," Khan said.

The production actually helped him connect more with his heritage. The Canadian-born actor refreshed his knowledge of

the Vietnamese language. When Khan returned from the eight-month shoot in Thailand, he threw his parents with his heightened fluency.

"It was like I got so much better. It's like I went through this training montage from the 'Rocky' movies," Khan said. "I felt a really new appreciation to the Vietnamese culture by being exposed around all these amazing Vietnamese actors. And that's something that I never felt before — coming from Montreal, Quebec."

Vietnamese people are almost erased in a lot of movies, documentaries and history books on the war, said Long T. Bui, a professor of global and international studies at the University of California, Irvine. They also fail to show how perspectives can vary within the community between those who identify as South Vietnamese versus the North.

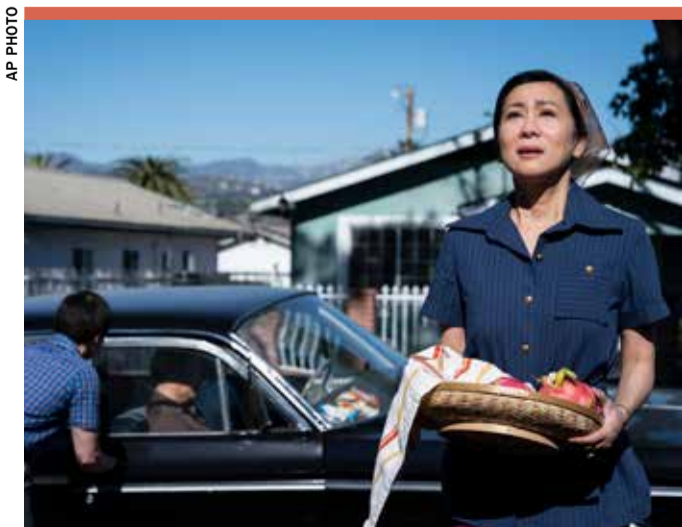
"People are hoping that 'The Sympathizer' is a success, but also that it will open the doors for more movies and TV shows about the Vietnamese American experience," said Bui, who is acquainted with Nguyen, the author. "So people are hoping that this is this is the gateway."

Phanxinê, who is a well-known filmmaker in Vietnam, has watched several Hollywood pictures like "Apocalypse Now," "Born on the Fourth of July" and, more recently, "Da 5 Bloods." Some of them seemed "ridiculous" to him.

"I can see still American filmmakers, when they do a movie about Vietnam War, they still don't really look at the world like how Vietnamese people look at it," he said.

For Khan, the only Vietnamese actors he can recall seeing growing up were Thuy Trang, who was the yellow Power Ranger, and Dustin Nguyen ("21 Jump Street"). He knows some Vietnamese viewers and actors may be looking to this show to push progress forward with fleshed-out, flawed characters.

"They should have expectations. If you have no expectations, then you're not excited about it," Khan said. "I have expectations, too." **MDT/AP**



Ky Duyen



Hoa Xuande, Fred Nguyen Khan, and Duy Nguyen



Robert Downey Jr. and Hoa Xuande

OLYMPICS

# US and China are expected to win the most medals at Paris games

STEPHEN WADE

**T**HE United States and China are expected to finish 1-2 in the gold and the overall medal counts at the Paris Olympics, which open in 100 days.

The United States is projected to win 123 medals overall, including 39 golds. China is projected to win 35 gold and 89 medals overall. The two also finished 1-2 in both categories three years ago in the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Olympics.

This forecast is done by Nielsen's Gracenote Sports, which supplies statistical analysis for sports leagues around the world. It also tracks major competitions involving Olympic sports leading up to the Games.

Gracenote's rankings are based on overall medals won, although others focus the rankings on gold totals.

This would be the eighth straight time the United States has won the most overall medals in

AP PHOTO



the Summer Games. In 1992 at Barcelona, the so-called Unified team topped the overall count. Those athletes were from the former Soviet Union, which had just broken up as a sovereign state.

The last time the United States did not top the gold-medal count in the Summer Games was in the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, where

China invested heavily and saw dividends.

Next in line with overall and gold totals are: Britain (66-13), France (55-28), Australia (50-13), Japan (49-13), Italy (47-12), Netherlands (38-18), Germany (36-9), South Korea (24-9).

The next 10 are: Canada (22-6), Spain (20-5), Hungary (19-5), Bra-

zil (18-9), Turkey (13-4), Ethiopia (13-3), Uzbekistan (13-3), Ukraine (13-3), Georgia (12-3) and Denmark (11-5).

Host nations always get a bump in medals, and France is expected to get a big one and increase its overall total from 33 in Tokyo. France is forecast to nearly triple its gold-medal output from

Tokyo, where Japan picked up a record haul.

Performing at home is an advantage, partly because host nations invest more heavily in training athletes. Then, of course, there are adoring home crowds.

France is also competing in 25 different sports in Paris, far above its average in recent Olympics of between 15 and 19, according to Gracenote's analysis.

The unknown factor is the presence of Russian and — to a lesser extent — Belarussian athletes. They have been absent from most international competitions over the last two years because of the war in Ukraine. Their influence is difficult to factor into the forecast, Gracenote acknowledges.

"It appears that there will be limited participation of these athletes (Russian and Belarussian)," Gracenote said. It said it expects its predictions to be accurate "based on the data that we have."

Russia and Belarus are barred from team sports at the Olympics because of the war in Ukraine and the International Olympic Committee has laid out a two-step vetting procedure for individual athletes from those countries to be granted neutral status.

Those athletes must first be approved by the governing body of their individual sport and then by an IOC-appointed review panel. **MDT/AP**

AD



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**OPINION**

**Multipolar World**

Jorge Costa Oliveira



**DO NOT FORCE  
SOUTHEAST ASIAN  
COUNTRIES TO  
CHOOSE SIDES**

Against a historical backdrop where the U.S. (and much of the West) have aimed to contain China's rise, starting in Asia, the analysis of China's and the U.S.'s (and other Western countries') relationships with Southeast Asian nations is of particular importance. These countries formed the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which is now a free trade area with nearly 700 million inhabitants.

The increase in foreign trade and investment between China and ASEAN countries shows a gradual economic integration. Trade between ASEAN and China has significantly increased, from \$235.5 billion in 2010 to \$878 billion in 2022, with China being ASEAN's top trading partner since 2009. Chinese investment flows to ASEAN reached \$15.5 billion in 2022, making China the fourth largest source of FDI in ASEAN (6.9% of the total). ASEAN is now China's main trading partner, surpassing the U.S. and the EU.

On the other hand, China's claim and effective occupation of almost the entire South China Sea conflicts with the claims of other coastal countries, which have sought military partners (especially the U.S.) to counterbalance China's growing naval power.

Successive U.S. administrations and analysts have highlighted the "upward trend of unhelpful and coercive and irresponsible Chinese actions in the South China Sea" and their threat to the maritime interests of Southeast Asia. In turn, Chinese analysts and policymakers emphasize to Southeast Asian officials the dangers associated with the "provocations" of the so-called "new Cold War" by the U.S. This battle in which U.S. and Chinese officials are clashing is still in its early stages.

However, ASEAN countries wish to have the best of both worlds.

On one hand, they want to maintain access to the vast Chinese market and benefit from Chinese investments, especially in infrastructure (largely under the BRI); on the other hand, they wish to maintain close relations with Western countries - particularly with the United States - whether due to the relevance of these markets or military cooperation, in order to mitigate the centripetal effect of China's growing economic, commercial, and military power in the region.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Hsien Loong, warned that "Indo-Pacific cooperation" proposals are welcome if they are inclusive and deepen regional integration, but they should not undermine ASEAN agreements or "create rival blocs, deepen divisions, or force countries to take sides." And the former Indonesian president, Joko Widodo, called for a vision of the Indo-Pacific that includes China, stating that ASEAN and China have no alternative but to collaborate.

Moreover, attention should be paid to the 2024 Survey-Report of the ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute. This survey-report reveals that Japan, the U.S., and the EU are trusted more than China. However, it also shows that when asked which country they would prefer to align with if forced to, for the first time, China (slightly) surpasses the U.S. in preference.

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**IMF: OUTLOOK FOR WORLD ECONOMY IS BRIGHTER,  
THOUGH STILL MODEST BY HISTORICAL STANDARDS**

**THE  
BUZZ**

The International Monetary Fund has upgraded its outlook for the global economy this year, saying the world appears headed for a "soft landing" — reining in inflation without much economic pain and producing steady if modest growth.

The IMF now envisions 3.2% worldwide expansion this year, up a tick from the 3.1% it had predicted in January and matching 2023's pace. And it foresees a third straight year of 3.2% growth in 2025.

In its latest outlook, the IMF, a 190-country lending organization, notes that the global expansion is being powered by unexpectedly strong grow-

th in the United States, the world's largest economy.

The IMF expects the U.S. economy to grow 2.7% this year, an upgrade from the 2.1% it had predicted in January and faster than a solid 2.5% expansion in 2023.

Though sharp price increases remain an obstacle across the world, the IMF foresees global inflation tumbling from 6.8% last year to 5.9% in 2024 and 4.5% next year. In the world's advanced economies alone, the organization envisions inflation falling from 4.6% in 2023 to 2.6% this year and 2% in 2025, brought down by the effects of higher interest rates.

AP PHOTO



**PROHIBITION?**

**UK LAWMAKERS BACK  
LANDMARK BILL TO  
PHASE OUT SMOKING  
FOR GOOD**

SYLVIA HUI, LONDON

**T**HE British government's plan for a landmark smoking ban that aims to stop young people from ever smoking cleared its first hurdle in Parliament yesterday [Macau time] despite vocal opposition from within Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservative Party.

The bill, a key policy announced by Sunak last year, would make it illegal to sell tobacco products to anyone born after January 1, 2009. If passed, the bill will give Britain some of the toughest anti-smoking measures in the world. Authorities say it will create modern Britain's "first smoke-free generation."

Under the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, children turning 15 this year or younger will never be legally sold tobacco. Once implemented — officials are aiming for 2027 — the legal age of sale that people in England can buy cigarettes will be raised by one year, every year until it is eventually illegal for the whole population.

The bill also includes measures to crack down on youth vaping, such as banning the sale of cheap disposable vapes and restricting their flavors to pre-

vent children from becoming addicted to nicotine.

It is currently illegal for anyone to sell cigarettes or tobacco products and vapes to people under 18 years old throughout the U.K.

During the bill's second reading, 383 lawmakers voted in favor while 67 opposed it after an afternoon of debate. Although the bill was widely praised by health experts and had the support of the opposition Labour Party, Sunak faced rebellion from more libertarian-minded members of his party, who criticized the proposals as "unconservative."

Opponents, such as the smokers' rights lobbying group FOREST, said the move risks creating a black market and will "treat future generations of adults like kids." Prominent voices within the Conservative Party, including two of Sunak's predecessors Boris Johnson and Liz Truss, said the plans went against conservative values by limiting people's personal freedoms.

The bill was a "virtue-signaling piece of legislation about protecting adults from themselves in the future," Truss told Parliament during the debate.

Other high-profile To-

ries, including business secretary Kemi Badenoch, a Cabinet minister, also opposed the bill or abstained.

Conservative lawmakers were granted a free vote, meaning they could vote with their personal conscience rather than follow the official party line.

The plans were believed to have been inspired by similar policies proposed by New Zealand under former Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, but the country's new coalition government repealed the bill earlier this year.

The government said that smoking won't be criminalized, and the phased changes mean that anyone who can legally buy cigarettes now won't be prevented from doing so in the future.

The number of people who smoke in the U.K. has declined by two-thirds since the 1970s, but some 6.4 million people in the country — or about 13% of the population — still smoke, according to official figures.

Authorities say smoking causes some 80,000 deaths a year in the U.K., and remains the number one preventable cause of death, disability and poor health. MDT/AP

**USA** China is "fueling the fentanyl crisis in the U.S." by directly subsidizing the manufacturing of materials that are used by traffickers to make the drug outside the country, according to a report released by a special U.S. House committee focused on countering the Chinese government. Committee investigators said they accessed a government website that revealed tax rebates for the production of specific fentanyl precursors as long as those companies sell them outside of China.

AP PHOTO



**German** authorities conducted a large-scale raid against an international human smuggling gang yesterday, police said in a statement. More than 1,000 police officers searched dozens of homes, stores and offices across western and southern Germany and arrested 10 suspects, including two lawyers. The suspects are accused of having illegally procure residency permits for around 350 mostly Chinese nationals in exchange for hundreds of thousands of euros.

AP PHOTO



**Ukraine** Three Russian missiles slammed into a downtown area of the northern Ukrainian city of Chernihiv yesterday, hitting an eight-floor apartment building and killing at least 11 people, authorities said. At least 22 people were wounded in the morning attack, Ukraine's Interior Ministry said. Chernihiv lies about 150 kilometers north of the capital, Kyiv, near the border with Russia and Belarus, and has a population of around 250,000 people.

AP PHOTO



**Italy** Group of Seven foreign ministers are meeting on the Italian resort island of Capri, with calls for new sanctions against Iran over its attack against Israel and more aid to Ukraine to fight Russia's war topping the agenda. Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani (pictured) said he had spoken to his Israeli counterpart, Israel Katz, and urged Israel to not only de-escalate any reaction to Iran's attack but to stave off a planned offensive into the southern Gaza city of Rafah.