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DOZENS INJURED YESTERDAY AFTER A MULTI-VEHICLE COLLISION ON ESTRADA DA PONTE DE PAC ON, NEAR FERRY BRIDGE IN TAIPA

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HK TRANSGENDER ACTIVIST RECEIVES ID CARD REFLECTING GENDER CHANGE

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AP PHOTO



South Korea Emboldened by his party's recent election win, opposition leader pressured President Yoon Suk Yeol (pictured, right) to accept special investigations into allegations involving top officials and his wife, as they met yesterday for talks on bipartisan cooperation. The meeting was their first since Yoon took office in 2022 after defeating Lee in the country's closest presidential election. During their 2022 campaigns, Yoon, Lee and their supporters demonized each other and filed dozens of lawsuits against one another.

AP PHOTO



Australia Four teenagers plotted to buy guns and attack Jewish people days after a bishop was stabbed in a Sydney church, according to police documents cited in news reports yesterday. Five teens, aged 14 to 17, were charged in a Sydney court on Thursday last week with a range of offenses including conspiring to engage in or planning a terrorist act. Police alleged they all "adhered to a religiously motivated, violent extremist ideology"

AP PHOTO



Pakistan Born and raised in Pakistan to parents who fled neighboring Afghanistan half a century ago, an 18-year-old found himself at the mercy of police in Karachi who took his cash, phone and motorbike, and sent him to a deportation center. He spent three days there before he was sent back to Afghanistan. The youth is one of at least 1.7 million Afghans who made Pakistan their home as their country sank deeper into decades of war.

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CONSERVATION GROUP CALLS FOR WASTE PROCESSING PLANTS OVER ARTIFICIAL ISLAND

STAFF REPORTER

THE Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society is urging Macau authorities to build construction waste screening and processing facilities instead of an artificial island made from the debris.

In a statement, the group has said the ecological island proposal is not an effective solution to Macau's waste issues.

The society argues the government should recycle and reuse inert waste like concrete and rubble, which has a recycling rate of over 95%.

The conservation group, after contacting a Chinese builder of waste processing plants, has found a single facility could process one-fourth of Macau's construction waste from last year if operating continuously for a year.

The society is calling on authorities to build four such plants on a 10-hectare plot near the existing landfill.

The group notes the four facilities would require only 1.6 hectares of land and cost around MOP13.2 million.

In comparison, the artificial island requires 245 hectares of marine area and MOP15.6 billion. The plants could be operational by 2025, according to the Society.

It warns the island threatens the habitat of endangered Chinese white dolphins and blocks their movement in the Pearl River estuary.

An earlier study found Macau's entire marine area is important for the dolphin population. The NGO last week launched a campaign urging public opposition to the government's island proposal in letters to environmental authorities. A decision on the project is pending.

Meanwhile, yesterday, the government announced the ecological island project's public consultation period has been extended by 11 days.

Originally scheduled to end Sunday, the deadline will now be extended until May 9.

The Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) said this extension is to gather more opinions from various sectors of society.

Currently, most opinions support construction of the new landfill for urban waste, the DSPA claimed.

However, there have been requests to relocate the site and establish protection zones for Chinese white dolphins.

The SAR government has reiterated that Chinese central authorities will make the ultimate decision.

The controversial ecological island has been a concern for environmentalists since its announcement because of the presence of Chinese white dolphins in the area.

Lawmaker Ron Lam has previously alleged the government is withholding information concerning the effects of a landfill island on the white dolphins' survival.

Lam has said the authorities' scientific research has shown



the existence of these marine mammals in the region where the government is evaluating the construction of the aforementioned ecological island.

However, lawmaker Ma Chi Seng said that should the ecological survey teams conducting a feasibility

survey greenlight construction of the ecological island, the government can continue to improve the protection of Macau's natural ecology and cultural landscape, and build a low-carbon, high-quality, livable and tourist-friendly ecological environment for Macau.

Gov't mulls over demolition of five-decade old public housing in Toi San

LYNZY VALLES

THE government is considering demolishing the social housing in Toi San, as the building has been standing for decades and its condition is in a bad state, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo Arrais do Rosário, has disclosed.

Speaking to the press yesterday, the official said the Housing Bureau (IH) is currently working on relocating residents and shops, which involves 200 to 300 households.

These will be moved to other social housing units.

Only two to three households have not been moved out owing to the fact that most of these residents are disabled or hearing-impaired and require gradual assistance from social organizations.

The public housing estate, built in the 1970s, used to be a house for fire victims.

In 1995, the IH renovated the estate into housing suitable for the elderly. In 2010, the government de-

molished and refurbished block A, leaving out blocks B and C.

In August last year, a shop owner from blocks B and C received a notice from the IH that they must move out before the end of September this year, according to a Macao Daily report.

However, according to that report, the bureau did not explain whether there was a reconstruction or restoration plan, although it did pledge to refund one year's rent after the shop owner had moved out.

30 INJURED IN THREE-VEHICLE COLLISION IN TAIPA

STAFF REPORTER

APPROXIMATELY 30 people suffered minor injuries after a multi-vehicle collision on Estrada da Ponte de Pac on, near the Amizade Bridge in Taipa yesterday, according to multiple media reports.

The incident involved a casino shuttle bus, a van and a truck. Photos show the casino bus's windscreen shattered and caved in.

According to the local Fire Services Bureau, a 38-year-old bus driver was trapped in the vehicle and had to be rescued. He was taken to the Kiang Wu Hospital with a bruised, swollen and slightly injured right knee, but was conscious and stable.

Additionally, 12 male and 17 female passengers between the ages of 22 and 68 were transported to the Conde São Januário Hospital with minor injuries.



The passengers consisted of Macau residents, non-resident workers, and visitors from Hong Kong and the mainland.

Officials have yet to release a statement about the cause

of the incident, although a preliminary investigation has ruled out the possibility of drunk driving.

Macau police and firefighters are currently investigating the cause of the accident.

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Times

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Casino stocks surge on new travel permits

STAFF REPORTER

SHARES in Macau casino operators rallied yesterday after Chinese authorities introduced new travel permits to boost the special administrative region's tourism industry.

Melco International Development Ltd. jumped 14% in Hong Kong trading, while Sands China Ltd. rose 7.1% and Galaxy Entertainment Group Ltd. climbed 4.8%. A Bloomberg gauge of the six Macau gaming operators gained 3.7%.

Starting May 6, mainland Chinese citizens can apply for a multiple-entry permit allowing visits to Macau for purposes such as attending exhibitions or seeking medical care.

The permit, announced Sunday by China's National Immigration

FRENATO MARQUES



Administration, allows year-round entry instead of the current quota system.

The NIA will implement several

policies to ease residents' overseas trips, including the extension of the period of stay from seven to 14 days for holders of an exit endorse-

ment for business travel to Hong Kong and the expansion of application of the exit endorsement for talents to Beijing and Shanghai.

The easing comes as Macau's gaming revenue recovery from the pandemic loses momentum, reaching just 75% of 2019 levels in March.

New permits are expected to boost visitor arrivals vital to the territory's casinos, which previously relied on high rollers before Beijing's crackdown.

"The mainland is fully supportive of Macau's economy and travel and leisure industry," said analysts of JPMorgan Chase & Co. in a note, adding the support is in contrast to China's increasing scrutiny on cross-border or illegal gambling in other parts of Asia.

Those joining guided Macau-Hengqin Island tours will receive special permits for multiple entries between the two places within seven days if traveling together, according to the announcement.

The measures aim to support Macau's struggling economy as Beijing clamps down on illegal offshore gambling elsewhere in the region.

HOTEL CENTRAL SOFT OPENING MAY 1

Iconic Hotel Central will have a soft opening on May 1 after roughly five years of renovations, according to a press release. The hotel, located on Macau's main street, Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro, was built in 1928 and fell into disrepair until purchased in 2016 for over MOP2 billion by Lek Hang Group chairman Simon Sio. The newly renovated hotel has 114 rooms styled after different decades from the 1920s to 1940s. As part of the soft opening from April 30 to June 30, the hotel is offering a two-night promotional package for 1,576 patacas including breakfast and mini-bar services.

TRADE DOWN 7% IN Q1

External merchandise trade totaled MOP35.89 billion in the first quarter of 2024, down 7% compared to the same period last year (MOP38.60 billion), according to data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). The total value of merchandise exports grew 4.5% year-on-year to MOP3.29 billion, while imports dropped 8.1% year-on-year to MOP32.60 billion. Analyzed by destination, merchandise exports to the Belt and Road Countries (MOP166 million) and the EU (MOP63 million) increased 39.6% and 133.4% respectively year-on-year in the first quarter.

SSM WARNS ON RISING FLU CASES

The latest data from the Health Bureau (SSM) indicated a 14.9% increase in flu cases last week, signaling an outbreak of the influenza virus. The bureau has emphasized the importance of safeguarding vulnerable populations, including pregnant women, children, the elderly, and individuals with chronic illnesses. Last week, a 79-year-old man with underlying chronic illnesses and no vaccination history succumbed to the virus at the public hospital.

AS the five-day Labor Day holiday for the mainland approaches, the Macau government is taking measures to cope with the expected surge in cross-boundary passenger and vehicle traffic.

According to Lei Tak Fai, the director of Public Relations of the Public Security Police, the daily average number of cross-boundary passenger trips from May 1 to May 5 is expected to exceed 680,000, with peaks on May 2 and May 3 when the daily average is expected to reach around 700,000.

It is expected the Border Gate, Qingmao Port, followed by the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB), will see the most people, Lei said yesterday

MAY GOLDEN WEEK

Authorities brace for 680,000 daily cross-boundary travel surge

during a press briefing at the Border Gate.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong's Customs and Excise Department expects the cross-boundary vehicular flow during the May 1 holiday this year to be lower than past long holidays, but the passenger flow will be higher than the previous May 1 holiday.

The peak of the vehicular flow is expected to be on May 1, May 4, and May 5.

To cope with the anticipated busy traffic, the

government will deploy internal staff to support frontline work at the control points.

Additional counters and lanes will be opened where necessary to ease the flow of immigration and customs traffic.

The government will also maintain close communication with the mainland and Hong Kong border control authorities to coordinate the clearance situation.

The Macao Government



Tourism Office estimates there will be an average of 130,000 arrivals during the Labor Day Golden Week.

The police will closely

monitor the flow of people and vehicles in tourist areas and adopt temporary traffic control or crowd control measures if necessary.

STATS

HOTEL OCCUPANCY BOUNCES BACK Q1, CITY TO SEE MORE HOTEL ROOMS

STAFF REPORTER

MACAU'S tourism industry has experienced a robust recovery in the first quarter of 2024, as evidenced by hotel occupancy rates.

Data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) indicates total available guest rooms increased

19.6% to 47,000.

The average occupancy rate of guest rooms rose 9.9 percentage points to 84.8% in the first quarter, with 5-star, 4-star, and 3-star hotels seeing significant increases.

The number of guests at hotel establishments totaled 3,779,000, up 39.7% year-on-year and 8.4%

compared to 2019.

Visitors from the mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea all recorded substantial growth. The average length of stay remained stable at 1.7 nights.

In March 2024, the average occupancy rate increased 6.4 percentage points to 83.5%, and the

number of guests grew 26.3% to 1,235,000.

Meanwhile, the number of hotel establishments offering accommodation services grew by 15 year-on-year, reaching 141.

Data from the Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) yesterday shows there are currently six hotels under construc-

tion during the first quarter of 2024, with a combined capacity of 3,021 rooms.

Additionally, there are also seven hotel projects at the initial phase, which are expected to provide 851 rooms.

The tourism industry has also seen a surge in package tours and outbound services booked through travel agencies.

The number of visitors on package tours rocketed by 329.9% year-on-year, and Macau residents booking outbound services increased by 71.5%.

GOV'T APPROVES FIVE PRIVATE HOUSING PROJECTS IN Q1

During the first quarter of 2024, five private housing developments have been granted the necessary licenses for construction, which will provide 266 housing units. Data from the Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) revealed there are 56 private housing developments, with some still under construction and awaiting inspection, while others have already been completed and are currently undergoing inspection. These 56 developments are expected to provide 2,379 housing units. Furthermore, there are 88 housing developments currently in the design phase, which are projected to offer 6,645 housing units.

FUNDING FOR VOLUNTARY CENTRAL PENSION SCHEME SIGNED

A total of 7,000 patacas will be disbursed in 2024 to eligible individuals with individual accounts under the non-mandatory central pension scheme, according to the Official Gazette. This decision comes after the proposal to reinstate funding for the pension scheme was included in the approved budget for the SAR in 2024. The allocation has been halted since 2020, primarily due to the pandemic. This marks the 12th instance of the government's injection of funds into the scheme.

MACAU PARTNERS WITH MEITUAN FOR 'JOYFUL MEETING' PROMOTION

The Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) and e-commerce platform Meituan yesterday launched the 'Joyful Meeting' initiative to promote Macau's tourism and community economy both online and in-person. The promotion created a thematic page on the apps Meituan and Dianping called "Macao Community Tourism", which disseminates information on community tourism strategies, as well as coupon discounts at restaurants and hotels. The MGTO and Meituan will distribute RMB2.5 million in discounts for both gastronomy and hotel vouchers to boost spending in neighborhoods.

FIVB

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL RETURNS TO MACAU WITH ADDED CAPACITY, BETTER CONDITIONS

RENATO MARQUES

THE Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) Women's Volleyball Nations League (VNL) competition is returning to Macau after a four-year break motivated by the pandemic and related border restriction measures.

The competition's return to Macau has been known since late last year, as the Times reported.

Yesterday the organizers confirmed, as the Times also noted at the time, that the competition will move from its previous venue at Macau Forum into the new Galaxy Arena in Cotai.

The president of the Sports Bureau (ID), Pun Weng Kun, said the Galaxy Arena was a very good place with excellent conditions that will please both participants and spectators.

He was speaking on the sidelines of a press conference held yesterday at the Galaxy International Convention Center, where the arena is located.

Pun said that this is not the first time the arena has been used, having already hosted several events, including the recently-held ITTF World Cup.

"I believe that, for fans and participants, this will be an ideal place for the event," Pun said.

Questioned by the Times about expected spectator turnout for the six-day event, Pun said, "I can't say



how many people will be able to attend this event, because we are still evaluating the number of tickets that will be made available."

"We will consider the fans' demands as well as visual satisfaction, so we will still decide on the number of people who will be able to attend this event. Probably it will be similar to the spectators in the ITTF."

Although no official figures have been released for the ticket sales during the ITTF, it is expected the VNL will be able to cater to a much larger audience than in previous events when it was restricted by the fewer seats (around 4,000) available at the Macau Fo-

rum venue.

The Galaxy Arena venue, which seats 16,000, is the largest of its kind in Macau.

Its use will enable more spectators to watch the games, providing more comfortable amenities and incorporating all the modern features expected from such a venue.

SIX DAYS WITH EIGHT TOP TEAMS

From May 28 to June 2, the VNL will present in Macau the third pool of the second week of the worldwide tournament.

It includes eight national teams: China, the Dominican Republic, Italy, the Netherlands, Bra-

zil, Thailand, Japan and France.

Teams will use this year's VNL event as preparation for the Paris 2024 Olympics, which starts a few weeks after the VNL finals in late June.

In line with its tradition of 14 years, Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) will sponsor the Macau VNL 2024 round.

For the first time, it will be part of the organization of the event as the director of GEG, Philip Cheng, said at the same press conference, noting the company's efforts to contribute to Macau becoming a "City of Sports."

The event starts May 28 with the first two matches between Thailand vs Dominican Republic (4 p.m.) and Brazil vs Japan (7:30 p.m.).

From the third day (May 30) a third match per day will be added at 12:30 p.m. until the final day (June 2).

Meanwhile, in a statement sent by the ID, it was unveiled that tickets will go on sale from May 6 at 3 p.m. through the usual online platforms including the mCoin from MPay, Cityline, and MacauTicket.com. Ticket prices will vary between MOP180 and MOP1,380, depending on the seat location and match session.

Each person can purchase a maximum of four tickets per session. Children under 1.2m tall and not occupying a seat will be able to enter the venue free of charge when accompanied by an adult throughout the event, with each adult only allowed to bring one child.

Local residents can benefit from a 10% discount, while those holding student or elderly cards can benefit from a 20% discount for the matches between May 28 and May 30.

CRIME

Suspect faces charges in breach of trust case involving HKD4.76 million

STAFF REPORTER

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) has recently announced an investigation into an alleged breach of trust case involving a substantial sum of money.

The suspect at the center of the investigation, a 38-year-old man named Zhao, is alleged to have played a key role in the transshipment of electronic parts through Macau, leading to the victim losing about HKD4.76 million.

According to reports, the victim had colla-



bored with mainland friends to order electronic parts worth around HKD4.76 million from

Hong Kong.

Zhao, who had assisted in the transshipment process, received the

goods in Macau. However, suspicions arose when Zhao failed to deliver the items to the mainland.

Authorities became involved when the victim spotted Zhao on a street in the Central District on the evening of April 27 and promptly notified the police, who apprehended Zhao for questioning.

However, during the interrogation, Zhao refused to admit to the crime and withheld information about the location of the missing items.

The case has raised

suspicious about the authenticity of Zhao's claims that he was able to transport the goods.

It was discovered Zhao did not represent a company but rather made verbal promises regarding his capabilities.

This has led investigators to broaden their scope and consider the involvement of the victim's friends, who may also be implicated in the case.

Further inquiries into the shipping process have revealed the goods were received and signed for by Zhao at an industrial building in Macau.

Zhao has remained uncooperative, failing to disclose how he intended to transport the items back to the mainland. He also has not yet revealed the items' whereabouts.

AGRICULTURE

Hawaii is known for its macadamia nuts, lawmakers want to keep it that way

AUDREY MCAVOY,
HONOLULU

FOR decades, tourists to Hawaii have brought home gift boxes of the islands' famous chocolate-covered macadamia nuts for friends and family, but these days many of the kernels in the package might not be Hawaii-grown.

This little-known fact is surfacing at the state Legislature as lawmakers wrestle over legislation that would force macadamia-nut processors of iconic brands like Mauna Loa to disclose whether their products contain nuts from outside the islands.

Growers want the measure to protect their crops and farms, while commercial nut brands say what Hawaii needs is more capacity to process mac nuts locally.

It's the latest tussle over labels for agricultural products from a specific geographic area, a topic familiar

to Hawaii due to long-running disputes over Kona coffee. It echoes similar challenges faced by maple syrup producers in Vermont and distilleries in Champagne, which have had to fend off sparkling wine producers from other places trying to appropriate the French region's name.

Foreign nuts are being "marketed cleverly as Hawaiian," said Jeffrey Clark, chief operating officer of a trust that owns Hamakua Macadamia Nut Company.

"It's not clear to consumers what is Hawaii grown and what is foreign grown," Clark told state lawmakers during a recent committee hearing. "It creates a problem for the farmers here in Hawaii."

The stakes are high for Hawaii's 600-plus macadamia nut farmers, many of whom have small operations. Combined, they produced \$62.7 million in nuts in 2021, just ahead of coffee in value and second only to seed farms that research ge-

netically engineered corn.

Growers say they can't find buyers for their kernel and unharvested nuts are falling from their trees. Some farmers are giving up and trying to sell their equipment.

In response, state lawmakers are due to vote on legislation tomorrow that would require consumer packages to disclose when they contain macadamia nuts grown outside of Hawaii. The measure would take effect on Jan. 1, 2026, if it becomes law. The governor has not indicated whether he will sign it.

Macadamia nut trees are native to Australia and were introduced to Hawaii in 1881 by a Scotsman who managed a Big Island sugar mill. The first major attempt at commercial planting dates to 1948. Chocolate-covered macadamia nuts took off the following decade. In the 1970s and '80s, Hawaii harvested more than 10 times the amount of the next four major producers combined.



Packages of macadamia nuts are displayed on store shelves in Honolulu

But today, Australia, South Africa, China and Kenya all grow more than Hawaii. In 2022, the state's production plummeted 29% from the year before, according to industry data.

Hawaiian Host Group sells macadamia nuts under some of the state's most venerable brands. Their rectangular boxes of Hawaiian Host chocolate-covered macadamia nuts are favorites of tourists and locals alike. Their blue-colored Mau-

na Loa cans and bags are among the most recognizable macadamia products on store shelves.

The company's chief administrative officer told lawmakers in a Senate committee hearing that the amount of foreign macadamia nuts the company buys varies depending on the Hawaii crop.

"We try to purchase as much local macadamias as the growers will sell to us," Michelle Leon-Guerrero said. MDT/AP

AD



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"TIME TRAVEL" Macallan 200 Years Young Exhibition in Galaxy Macau
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HONG KONG

Transgender activist gets ID card reflecting gender change after years long legal battle

KANIS LEUNG, HONG KONG

A Hong Kong transgender activist yesterday received a new ID card reflecting his gender change, after a yearslong legal battle to change the document, and he vowed to continue working for equality for the LGBTQ+ community.

Henry Tse won his appeal over the government's refusal to change the gender on his ID card in February 2023. Previously, Tse was not able to make the change because he did not undergo full gender-affirmation surgery.

Last year, the city's top court said the government's policy was unconstitutional in a landmark ruling, arguing it imposed an unacceptably harsh burden. The judgment prompted an easing of rules earlier this month.

Tse's victory is seen as an important step forward for the city's LGBTQ+ community, many of whose transgender members consider the operation unnecessary and risky.

After obtaining his new ID card,



Activist Henry Tse, who won an appeal to change the gender on his ID card, speaks to the media after receiving the new document in Hong Kong, yesterday

Tse told reporters that life has not been easy since he lodged a judicial review in 2017. In addition to the legal challenges, he has also faced obstacles from the government and attacks from others.

"What is normal for many peo-

ple has finally become normal for us," Tse said.

Public sentiment in Hong Kong has become increasingly welcoming to the LGBTQ+ community, but many still face challenges in daily life.

Tse said bank staff told him he did not match his ID card and asked him to resubmit documents. He also could not change the gender on his travel permit to mainland China, which caused him a delay when crossing the border.

Immigration officials searched their computer for 15 minutes, he said, before finally letting him enter.

In April, the Hong Kong government revised its policy to allow people who have not completed full gender-affirmation surgery to change their genders on ID cards as long as they fulfill certain conditions. The conditions include the removal of breasts for transgender men, the removal of the penis and testes for transgender women, and having undergone continuous hormonal treatment for at least two years before applying.

Applicants also have to continue their hormonal treatment and submit blood test reports for random checks upon the government's request.

Tse, after receiving his new ID card, said he would start changing his other documents, including his passport and bank details. The activist, who was previously active in sports, said he might sign up for a gym membership too.

"It's a return to normal life," he said. **MDT/AP**

TRADE

Musk visits China as competitors show off new electric vehicles at Beijing auto show

TESLA founder and CEO Elon Musk met with top government leader in the Chinese capital over the weekend, just as the nation's carmakers are showing off their latest electric vehicle models at the Beijing auto show.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang told Musk that he hopes the U.S. will work more with China on "win-win" cooperation, citing Tesla's operations in China as a successful example of economic cooperation, China's state broadcaster CCTV said

on its main evening news program.

For China, Musk is a welcome antidote to the tough talk from U.S. officials, which played out most recently during a visit by Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Li's remarks also reflect China's efforts to attract foreign investment to boost its flagging economy.

It wasn't clear whether Musk would visit the auto show, which runs through this week. Chinese automakers and startups have launched a bevy of electric cars in recent years, some going head-to-head with Tesla and undercutting the American maker on price.

An earlier CCTV online report said that Musk had come at the invitation of the China Council for the

Promotion of International Trade and met with its president, Ren Hongbin, to exchange views on further cooperation and other topics.

Tesla has a major manufacturing base in Shanghai for both domestic sales in China and exports to Europe and other regions. It cut prices in China a week ago, dropping the Model 3 to 231,900 yuan (\$32,700) and the Model Y to 249,900 yuan (\$35,200), following similar reductions in the U.S.

The European Union has launched an investigation into Chinese subsidies for the EV industry that could lead to tariffs on electric vehicles made in China, potentially including Tesla cars.

The green energy subsidies have helped transform the Chinese auto market, with EVs reaching about a quarter of new car sales last year, eating into demand for gasoline-powered vehicles.

Foreign automakers such as Volkswagen and Nissan are scrambling to develop new EV models to hold onto or claw back market share in China, the world's largest automobile market. **MDT/AP**

CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP

PAIR OF GIANT PANDAS SET TO TRAVEL FROM CHINA TO SAN DIEGO ZOO

A pair of giant pandas will soon make the journey from China to the U.S., where they will be cared for at the San Diego Zoo as part of an ongoing conservation partnership between the two nations, officials said yesterday.

The San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance said its caretakers recently visited China to meet the giant pandas, Yun Chuan and Xin Bao, ahead of their planned trip to Southern California. An exact date for the handoff hasn't been set.

Yun Chuan, a mild-mannered male who's nearly 5 years old, has "deep connections" to California, the wildlife alliance said. His mother, Zhen Zhen, was born at the San Diego Zoo in 2007 to parents Bai Yun and Gao Gao.

Xin Bao is a nearly 4-year-

old female described as "a gentle and witty introvert with a sweet round face and big ears."

"Our conservation partners in China shared photographs and personality traits of Yun Chuan and Xin Bao, but meeting them in person was so special," said Dr. Megan Owen, the alliance's vice president of conservation science. "It's inspiring as people from around the world come together to conserve, protect, and care for these special bears, and we can't wait to welcome them to San Diego."

The San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance has a nearly 30-year partnership with leading conservation institutions in China focused on protecting and recovering giant pandas and the bamboo forests they depend on. **MDT/AP**



Tesla founder and CEO Elon Musk (left) meets with Chinese Premier Li Qiang in Beijing

JAPAN

Documentary focuses on man behind a cruelly bizarre 1990s reality show

YURI KAGEYAMA, TOKYO

NAKED and frail, a shaggy-haired man films himself as he endures solitude in a tiny room for months, and months more.

"The Contestant," directed by Clair Titley, explores the story behind the late 1990s hit reality TV show from Japan, "A Life in Prizes," in which a comedian nicknamed Nasubi is forced to survive on whatever he can redeem from mail-in coupons, as he is denied contact with the outside world.

The film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2023 and will stream on Hulu from May 2.

Tomoaki Hamatsu — whose nickname "Nasubi," meaning eggplant in Japanese, refers jokingly to his long chin — never manages to clothe himself and remains naked throughout the show. But he dances to celebrate the things he does obtain, especially food, even if it's just a pot of kimchi.

Canada's National Post, in a review of Titley's documentary, described the TV show as "The Truman Show' meets 'OldBoy,'" referring to the 1998 American film starring Jim Carrey about a man who unwittingly stars in a reality TV show about his own life and the 2003 Cannes-winning Korean film about an imprisoned man.

The British director Titley said she chanced upon the reality show and reached out to Nasubi because she felt no



This image provided by Hulu shows Nasubi in 2021 in a scene from the documentary film "The Contestant"

one had ever told his side of the story.

"I felt that they were kind of dismissive and even derogatory to an extent about, you know, look at those crazy Japanese. And I really wanted to know Nasubi's story. I really wanted to know what had happened to him, why he'd stayed in there," she said in a recent Zoom interview with The Associated Press.

What makes her documentary more than a just-for-laughs, big-in-Japan satire are the interviews Titley conducts with Hamatsu's mother, sister and friend, who express outrage, sorrow, pride and a mix of other emotions as the show grew into

a prime-time hit. They said they felt sorry for what he endured, including his nudity.

The film also explores Hamatsu's childhood experience of being bullied because of his long chin and how he turned to laughter to protect himself.

Hamatsu says the hardest part of the show was the solitude, although being without clothing — and very little food — for a year and three months also took a toll on him. The comedian was moved to tears when he received a standing ovation at a New York screening of the documentary.

"I feel I was able to relay a positive message through the do-

documentary," he said.

"The Contestant" raises serious questions about how far society might go for entertainment, and the big audiences and money it represents.

The show's producer said in the documentary he just wanted to "capture the moment" and did not mention any reservations about producing the show.

"I think to an extent we are all complicit in these narratives. I think that's something to be aware of. It's very easy to stand back and look at all of this, and sort of think, 'Oh, look at what those producers did.' But, you know, as viewers we need to

take some responsibility," Titley said.

The film explores the various emotions of being trapped in different ways, including in relationships, hardships or just feelings of meaninglessness.

Hamatsu is from Fukushima in northeastern Japan, which was hit by the March 2011 triple disaster, when a giant tsunami followed a 9.0 magnitude quake and devastated the coastline, setting off the world's worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl.

Hamatsu, who still works as an actor, also devotes his time to the reconstruction of Fukushima and raising awareness about the region.

"I want everyone to know the people of Fukushima are working hard," he said.

"Life is gradually returning to what used to be in the exclusion zones. Of course, I realize the road to decommissioning the nuclear plants is still a long battle. But I would like people to know the Fukushima of today, feel hope by visiting Fukushima and watch Fukushima rebuild."

In a vindication of sorts at the end of the documentary, Hamatsu becomes a climber and conquers Mount Everest, a feat he dedicates to Fukushima.

Many people think the famous show 25 years ago was the high point of Hamatsu's life, since he is not on TV much anymore, he said.

"But it's just the opposite. That was the worst point in my life. I overcame that. And now I am free to do what I want." **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

Prime minister describes domestic violence as a 'national crisis' after protests

AUSTRALIA'S Prime Minister Anthony Albanese yesterday described domestic violence as

a "national crisis" after thousands rallied around the country against violence toward women.

Thousands protested in cities around Australia on Sunday to draw attention to the deaths of 27 women

so far this year allegedly caused by acts of gender-based violence in a population of 27 million.

Albanese said the rallies were a call to action for all levels of Australian government to do more to prevent gender-based violence.

"Quite clearly, we need to do more. It's not enough to just have empathy," Albanese told Nine Network television.

"The fact that ... a woman dies every four days on average at the hand of a partner is just a national crisis," he added.

There were 17 rallies held across Australia over the weekend, with an estimated 15,000 people demonstrating in the city of Melbourne.

Albanese said he will host a meeting of Australian state and territory leaders on Wednesday to

discuss a coordinated response.

Albanese, his Women's Minister Katy Gallagher and Social Services Minister Amanda Rishworth received a hostile response when they attended a rally in the capital Canberra on Sunday.

Protesters yelled at the government leaders, "we want action" and "do your job."

Albanese said there needed to be more focus on perpetrators and prevention of violence. "We need to change the culture, we need to change attitudes — we need to change the legal system," Albanese told the rally. **MDT/AP**



People march and shout slogans during a protest against gender-based violence in Melbourne, Sunday



The presidential candidate Jose Raul Mulino addresses supporters during a campaign rally in Panama City, Sunday

PANAMA

Leading presidential candidate is a late entry promising return to better times

JUAN ZAMORANO,
PANAMA CITY

THE leading candidate to be Panama's next president is a last-minute stand-in who promises to return the Central American country to a boom time that experts say will be difficult to recapture.

José Raúl Mulino, a maritime lawyer and former security minister, was thrust to the top of the presidential ticket after Panama's electoral authorities ruled former President Ricardo Martinelli ineligible following his money laundering conviction and sentencing.

Lacking Martinelli's charisma and popular appeal, but benefitting from the supermarket magnate's vociferous support, Mulino has maintained a healthy lead in the field crowded with eight candidates ahead of the May 5 election.

The remaining field features a couple of also-rans from previous elections — Ricardo Lombana and Rómulo Roux — as well as former President Martín Torrijos. Those three are in a virtual tie for second behind Mulino, according to recent polls. Mulino skipped all three presidential debates.

Mulino has campaigned with promises to create jobs and stop migration through Panama's Darien jungle, where more than a half million people trekked last year. The message has resonated with an electorate tired of the country's political establishment, but nostalgic for the days of a humming economy.

Panama, however, is not growing like it was during Martinelli's 2009-2014 presidency, and experts expect the economy to slow next year.

A factor in the economic deceleration is the Supreme Court's decision to declare as unconstitutional legislation that granted a 20-year concession to a huge copper mine. The decision came after weeks of street protests by a wide slice of Panamanian society roiled by concerns over water access — amid a troubling drought — and nationalist fervor about the deal with a Canadian mining company.

The extended drought has also reduced traffic through the Panama Canal, a critical economic engine for the country.

There is a constitutional challenge to Mulino's candidacy because he was not selected through a party primary and does not have a running mate. The Su-

preme Court has not made clear when it will rule on that challenge.

The rise of Mulino's candidacy has unfolded as Martinelli's own legal saga plays out.

Already banned by the U.S. government, Martinelli was convicted of money laundering in Panama last July and this March electoral authorities disqualified him from the election, launching Mulino into the top spot on the Achieving Goals party ticket.

By then Martinelli was already holed up the Nicaraguan embassy, where he fled as Panamanian authorities planned to take him into custody to serve out his 10-year sentence.

Martinelli has campaigned for Mulino via social media platforms from behind the embassy's walls, infuriating the Panamanian government, which has refused Nicaragua's requests to let him leave the country.

At his final campaign event on Sunday (yesterday, Macau time), Mulino played a video that Martinelli had made from inside the Nicaraguan Embassy. In it, Martinelli said he was politically persecuted and urged his supporters to vote for Mulino.

Martinelli "can't be here with us because of the un-

just political persecution against him," Mulino told the crowd.

"Most Panamanians are angry and mad at the country's political class," said Michael Shifter, adjunct professor for Latin American Studies at Georgetown University. "Mulino benefits from Martinelli's image and the perception that the country was much better off during the former president's term."

That fact is not lost on Mulino, who is seldom seen without his blue "Martinelli Mulino 2024" cap and who has promised to help Martinelli if elected.

At a recent campaign rally on the outskirts of Panama City, Mulino emphasized his message of bringing Panama "an administration of hope, of employment ... because we're going to work, work and work bring back the faith and confidence in our system and reinforce our democracy."

"Mulino is someone who can pull the country out of the scourge of crime and this downturn we have, which is the lack of jobs," said Adriano Cueto Valencia, a 61-year-old worker walking with Mulino through a working class neighborhood of the capital.

Fidedigna Pérez, a 73-year-old retiree living with her son, agreed. "This man is serious. People think he's arrogant, but I know that he can help us bring down food prices, help the poor. That's why Martinelli made him the candidate."

Mulino says that when he was Martinelli's security minister he managed to expel the now extinct Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia guerrilla group from Panama's territory along the dense Darien jungle shared with Colombia. But experts say that's the same time that immigration through that shared border began picking up, in addition to a busy illicit trade in drugs and weapons.

Nonetheless, Mulino promises without providing details that he will stop the migration, which last year hit the historic high of more than half a million people.

"We are going to close the Darien and we are going to repatriate all of these people, respecting human rights," Mulino said at one recent campaign event. Panamanian authorities with the support of the U.S. government made similar claims more than a year ago before crossings doubled again. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1975 SAIGON SURRENDERS



The war in Vietnam ended today as the government in Saigon announced its unconditional surrender to North Vietnamese forces.

The President, Duong Van Minh, who has been in office for just three days, made the announcement in a radio broadcast to the nation early this morning. He asked his forces to lay down their arms and called on the North Vietnamese Army and Vietcong to halt all hostilities.

In a direct appeal to the Communist forces, he said: "We are here to hand over to you the power in order to avoid bloodshed."

The announcement was followed swiftly by the arrival of North Vietnamese troops. Their entrance was virtually unopposed, confounding predictions of a bloody and protracted last-ditch battle for the city.

The front line of tanks smashed through the gates of the presidential palace within minutes, and at 1130 local time (0330 GMT), decades of war came to an end.

Vietcong troops, many barefoot and some no more than teenagers, rounded up government soldiers, and raised their red and blue flags. The looting which has ravaged the city over the last 24 hours stopped, and power was restored later in the day. Only the United States embassy remained closed and silent, ransacked by looters.

Saigon was immediately renamed Ho Chi Minh City. A statement by the Provisional Revolutionary Government, or PRG, in Paris, promised a policy of non-alignment, and the peaceful reunification of Vietnam.

The British government is now urgently reviewing the possibility of recognising the PRG. France has already recognised the new regime, and other Western countries are preparing to follow suit.

The capitulation of the South Vietnamese government came just four hours after the last frenzied evacuation of Americans from the city. President Ford, who has requested humanitarian aid for the Vietnamese, let it be known that he was proud to have saved what Vietnamese he could in the last, frantic helicopter evacuation.

But there is said to be deep humiliation in the United States government at the desperation and chaos of the final hours of America's presence in Vietnam.

The President ordered United States ships to remain indefinitely off the Vietnamese coast to pick up refugees: but even this gesture has been snubbed by the North Vietnamese, who have prevented any more refugees from fleeing.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

In the immediate aftermath of the fall of Saigon, the Communist forces held victory parades and placed posters of Ho Chi Minh, the leader of the Viet Minh, on public buildings. While most South Vietnamese were relieved at the end of the war, some who remained loyal to President Thieu committed suicide. North and South Vietnam were reunified under communist rule in 1976. Ten years later, the government relaxed its regime, allowing elements of market forces and private enterprise to flourish. There is still, however, opposition within the Vietnamese government to too much economic liberalisation. In November 2000, President Bill Clinton visited Vietnam. It was hoped that this would be the culmination of US efforts to normalise relations with its former enemy.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Positive cash flow increases naturally. Find your lucrative comfort zone, with Venus in Taurus for a month. Put your heart into your work.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Your luck in love improves immensely over the next month, with Venus in your sign. Pamper yourself with a new style or look. You're beautiful.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Savor peaceful privacy, with Venus in Taurus. Meditation, contemplation and organization provide the answers you're looking for. Make plans to realize a beautiful dream.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Grow through social activities. You're especially popular, with Venus in Taurus for almost a month. Share your heart with friends. Support important community causes.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Your professional status rises this next month, with Venus in Taurus. Watch for career advances. Put love into your work and it flowers.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Follow your heart where it leads. The next month is good for traveling, with Venus in Taurus. Class convenes and studies get interesting.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 It's all for home and family. Collaborate for shared financial gain over the next month, with Venus in Taurus. Protect your interests. Invest for growth.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Share your heart. Collaborate for fun and ease. Partnerships flower anew, with Venus in Taurus this month. Fall in love all over again.

SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Get your heart pumping, with Venus in Taurus for almost a month. Your work, health and energy grow with physical action. Shine, beautiful diamond.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 You're especially lucky with games and romance this month, with Venus in Taurus. Artistic efforts produce satisfying results. Creativity, fun and beauty flower naturally.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Fill your home with beauty, fun and laughter. Enjoy your lovely nest, with Venus in Taurus. Make valuable improvements. Savor domestic bliss with family.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Savor what you're learning, with Venus in Taurus. Dig into fascinating research. Explore a passion. Express from your heart. Write about what you love.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

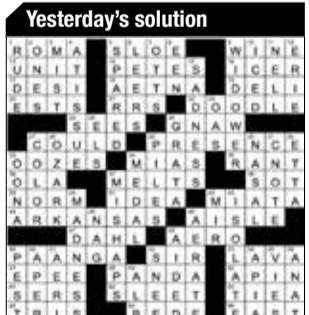
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	9	18	fine
Changchun	2	12	fine
Chengdu	15	26	rain
Chongqing	17	25	overcast
Fuzhou	22	31	rain
Guangzhou	22	29	rain
Guiyang	14	28	cloudy
Haikou	27	38	cloudy
Hangzhou	15	26	rain
Harbin	2	15	cloudy
Hefei	12	21	rain
Nanjing	12	24	rain
Shanghai	15	22	rain
Taipei	23	29	rain
Wuhan	17	25	rain
Hong Kong	26	29	thunderstorms
WORLD			
Moscow	12	22	cloudy
Frankfurt	13	26	cloudy
Paris	12	19	showers
London	9	18	cloudy
New York	12	19	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Summary; 6- Give eats; 10- Skilled; 14- Lout; 15- Entice; 16- Security problem; 17- Ring-shaped island; 18- Burnoose wearer; 19- "___ quam videri" (North Carolina's motto); 20- Defense advisory grp.; 21- Corporate symbols; 23- ___ Perot; 24- Smells; 26- ___ lunch; 27- Offshore sight; 29- Chambers; 31- March Madness org.; 32- State Farm rival; 33- ___ de cologne; 36- In spite of; 40- Single; 41- Castle water pits; 42- Object of worship; 43- Gentle ones; 44- Lustrous; 46- Proverb; 48- Finely ground meal of grain; 49- Wear down; 50- Mistake; 52- ___ es Salaam, Tanzania; 55- Take care of; 56- "Not guilty." e.g.; 57- Nary a soul; 59- London art gallery; 60- Slippery ___ eel; 61- Newsmen Newman; 62- The Beatles' "Back in the ___"; 63- Bust maker; 64- High-strung.

DOWN 1- Tatum's dad; 2- Chows down; 3- Cacao candy; 4- Popular ISP; 5- Hoi ___; 6- National symbols; 7- Currency unit of France and Germany, among others; 8- Periods of history; 9- Ball belle; 10- Warns; 11- Intoxicate; 12- Cowboy's tool; 13- Squeezes (out); 22- Assn.; 23- Pertaining to people; 25- Sketch; 26- A Chaplin; 27- ___ account (never); 28- Computer image; 29- Takes five; 30- Ed and Mel of baseball; 32- Captain of the Pequod; 33- Heavy quilt; 34- Prolific author, briefly; 35- Unattractive; 37- Icon; 38- Heavy reading?; 39- Mon ___; 43- Climbing device; 44- ___-no replay; 45- Large stinging wasp; 46- Bailiwicks; 47- No-nos; 48- Former monetary unit of France; 49- Words to Brutus; 50- Literary lioness; 51- Backside; 53- Black cuckoos; 54- Russo of "The Thomas Crown Affair"; 56- Bad review; 58- Lyric poem;



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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Jade Garden
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OLYMPICS

HORSES SHOW OFF IN VERSAILLES, KEEPING ALIVE ROYAL TRADITION ON EQUESTRIAN VENUE

SYLVIE CORBET, VERSAILLES

THE historic Versailles Palace Gardens will soon host the Paris Olympics equestrian sports.

Meanwhile, the select number of riders of the National Equestrian Academy handling the palace's famed royal stables continue to care for their beloved horses: Almost every day at dawn, they enjoy the quietness and splendor of grass lawns and woods of the park of the Versailles Palace, before thousands of visitors from across the world spread in.

The elite academy — founded by French horse trainer and impresario Bartabas who decided to revive the splendid building in 2003 — has only 12 riders. After years of hard work, they take part in a prestigious show at the Great Stables of Versailles every weekend to the delight of spectators.

While the Academy is open to



both genders, women form the majority of applicants.

"We are only women here now," said one of those experienced riders, Fanny Lorré, gleefully smiling as she noted how big of a change it was from the once male-dominated world of equestrianism.

Lorré, 28, is known as an 'ecuyères' — the French word for squire or horse rider, and

has a vast knowledge of the royal stables' history.

Commissioned by France's King Louis XIV, or Sun King, the stables were built between 1679 and 1682 opposite the palace's main entrance. They once housed more than 2,000 horses during the 18th century. Now, the Academy's riders train about 40 horses, notably including Lusitanos, a Portuguese

breed known to be a favorite of Louis IV.

The Great Stables were built "just before the King arrived here in Versailles. He wanted very big and wonderful stables because he had a lot of horses," Lorré said. "Horses at that time were very important in the court and in the everyday life."

"They built it in only three years, which is quite amazing when you see how big the building is," she added. "And it was also a school for the people at that time (who wanted to) learn how to ride ... a little bit of philosophy, mathematic and everything so they can become the best person in the kingdom."

Under the monarchy, horses were used by the royal family, its entourage and visitors to go hunting, show their equestrian skills and enjoy rides in the Versailles gardens. They were an essential part of the festivities and a symbol of the King's power.

After the French Revolution, in the 19th century, the army took over the stables, using them for its cavalry regiments until World War II. They were then used as a storage facility for the Versailles district's archives and later for horse carriages until Bartabas stepped in and formed the academy.

Its members are known for their contemporary take on equestrian art. They receive fencing, dancing and Japanese archery classes to help them hone skills used in their weekly shows.

As the Paris Games approach, the palace — which will host equestrian and modern pentathlon events during the July 26 - Aug. 11 — is starting to buzz with excitement.

The Academy members, though not participating in the games, are looking forward to seeing Olympic riders galloping in the gardens of the Versailles Palace, Lorré said. **MDT/AP**

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C&C RECEIVED THE 1ST SILVER
"DEIGNAN AWARD"
FOR RESPONSIBLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP
IN MACAU (2023)



FOOTBALL | EPL

Arsenal and Man City both win to keep it tight at the top

JAMES ROBSON

TOTTENHAM 2, ARSENAL 3

ARSENAL survived a late scare at Tottenham to stay narrowly ahead in the race for the Premier League title yesterday [Macau time].

A 3-2 win at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium ensured Mikel Arteta's team remained at the top of the standings, ahead of defending champion Manchester City, which won 2-0 at Nottingham Forest.

But Arsenal had to endure a nervous finish despite powering to 3-0 lead in a London derby that was supposed to be one of its biggest tests in the title chase.

"The last 20 minutes wasn't nice, but it was worth it," Arsenal forward Bukayo Saka said afterward. "We know it is a big derby and they don't want to lose 3-0 at home. Momentum shifted their way, but I am

AP PHOTO



Arsenal's Gabriel celebrates with team mates at the end of the soccer match at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London

proud of the boys — we managed to get the three points."

An own-goal from Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg and further strikes from Saka and Kai Havertz put Arsenal into a commanding position at the break. But in the face of a potential rout, Tottenham responded in the second half through Cristian Romero and a penalty from Son Heung-min in the 87th minute.

Under pressure, Arsenal held on and remains one point clear at the top, having played a game more than City.

The advantage is still with Pep Guardiola's team, which will clinch a fourth-straight title if it wins its remaining games this season and responded to Arsenal's win with victory of its own at relegation-fighting Forest.

With Liverpool's title hopes further diminishing after dropping five points in two games this week, it is down to Arsenal to challenge City's domestic dominance.

Having collapsed late on in last season's title race, Arteta's players look more capable of going the distance this time around.

An away fixture against its fiercest rival, Tottenham, was a major

test of its credentials at this stage of the campaign. And while Arsenal was guilty of letting Spurs back into a game that should have been killed off much earlier, victory when tension was high was a test of character.

"Maybe last season that could have ended in a draw and we showed we have the experience," Saka said. "We know City are an amazing team, but they are not perfect, we just need to do our job."

Arsenal's win meant the pressure was on City to keep the heat on its title rival.

It was always favorite to beat a Forest team that is desperately fighting for survival but without Phil Foden, who was ill, and Erling Haaland on the bench, Guardiola was without two of its big match-winners in the starting 11.

An injury to goalkeeper Ederson also forced City into a change at halftime.

But Guardiola's team looks to be in unstoppable form and a 2-0 win extended its unbeaten record in the league to 19 games, dating back to a 1-0 loss to Aston Villa at the start of December.

Back then there were questions about City's ability to win a sixth title in seven years. While Arsenal may lead the way, City's title-winning know-how could make the difference. **MDT/AP**

AD



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銀河娛樂集團
Galaxy Entertainment Group

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OPINION

Multipolar World

Jorge Costa Oliveira



SANCTIONS ON BANKS FACILITATING RUSSIA'S WAR MACHINE

The limited effectiveness of various measures, including sanctions, to curb the supply of dual-use goods (and other critical items) to Russia's war machine led the U.S. President to issue an Executive Order in December 2023, imposing new sanctions on foreign financial institutions that facilitate the supply of such goods.

Many banks from key countries (India, UAE, Turkey) that had been enabling these supplies began to refuse to conduct financial transactions related to them. Increasingly, banks, fearing sanctions—especially being cut off from the global dollar payments system—have heightened their compliance requirements and started requesting their clients guarantee that no individuals or entities on the U.S. SDN (Special Designated Nationals) list are involved in a business or benefiting from a payment.

Since early April 2024, the U.S. government has been issuing warnings that Chinese banks will not be exempt from these new sanctions, as evidenced by recent visits to China by the U.S. Secretary of State and the Treasury Secretary. China is Russia's largest supplier, with Sino-Russian trade, according to Chinese customs data, reaching a record \$240 billion in 2023 (+26.3% compared to 2022). According to American authorities, in 2023, 90% of Russia's microelectronics imports, crucial for missile, tank and aircraft production, came from China, also attributing to Beijing the improvement of Russia's satellite capabilities for use in the war in Ukraine. Blinken made a veiled threat: "If China does not act, we will."

The April 24 edition of The Wall Street Journal, discussing potential new sanctions on Chinese banks, cites a recent report from CSIS, an American think tank, which states that Russian imports of high-priority Tier 3 (specific electronic and mechanical components used in Russian weapons systems) and Tier 4 items (CNC machines, used to provide precise parts for various weapon systems, from ammunition to aircraft) supplied by Chinese companies increased from 1,000-3,000 per month between September 2022 and February 2023 to 30,000 per month starting in March 2023, linking this surge to the meeting between Putin and Xi in Moscow that month.

However, although the CSIS report's illustrative charts show this significant increase occurred on that date and that Chinese companies are the main suppliers (approx. 50%), they also show that roughly the same amount (collectively) is sold by companies from India, Turkey, Vietnam, the EU, the U.S., and other countries; demonstrating the lack of a causality nexus with the said meeting between the Chinese and Russian leaders.

The same report also highlights that "some of the same Chinese and Hong Kong companies that trade with Russian military suppliers also supply Ukrainian companies that supply the Ukrainian armed forces." This poses a potential dilemma in the current sanctions strategy. Adding the significant increase in indirect exports to Russia via Central Asia, applying these new sanctions will not be easy.

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DEFORESTATION IN INDONESIA SPIKED LAST YEAR, BUT RESOURCES ANALYST SEES BETTER OVERALL TREND

THE BUZZ

From trees felled in protected national parks to massive swaths of jungle razed for palm oil and paper plantations, Indonesia had a 27% uptick in primary forest loss in 2023 from the previous year, according to a World Resources Institute analysis of deforestation data. But the loss is still seen as historically low compared to the 2010s.

"Deforestation has been declining from six or so years ago, when there were peak rates," said Rod Taylor, global director of the forests program at WRI. "It's good news and commendable for Indonesia."

But others saw cause for concern in the uptick, and tied some of the more recent deforestation to the world's appetite for mining Indonesia's

vast deposits of nickel, which is critical for the green energy transition.

The latest data from the University of Maryland's Global Land Analysis and Discovery laboratory was shared on Global Forest Watch — a platform run by WRI that provides data, technology and tools for monitoring the world's forests.

Since 1950, more than 74 million hectares of Indonesian rainforest — an area twice the size of Germany — have been logged, burned or degraded for development of palm oil, paper and rubber plantations, nickel mining and other commodities, according to Global Forest Watch.

AP PHOTO



Meryl and Nicole at the Dolby Theatre in LA, last weekend

NICOLE KIDMAN, WHO 'MAKES MOVIES BETTER,' GETS AFI LIFE ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

ANDREW DALTON, LOS ANGELES

MORGAN Freeman spoke the words, but pretty much everyone who took the stage at the presentation of the AFI Life Achievement Award agreed: "Nicole Kidman. She makes movies better."

The line came in a video parody of Kidman's AMC Theatres "we make movies better" ad that opened the Saturday night ceremony at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood. It got huge laughs from the crowd of multigenerational A-listers there to honor the 40-year career of the 56-year-old Australian that has included roles in "Moulin Rouge," "Eyes Wide Shut" and an Oscar-winning turn in "The Hours."

Meryl Streep, Kidman's "The Hours" co-star who presented to Streep the Life Achievement Award that she won herself in 2004, got laughs nearly as big when, in a mock-boastful voice, she described the hardest part of being "incessantly called the greatest actress of my generation."

It's when you come up against someone else who is "really, really,

really, really, really, really great" and you realize they did things you couldn't do, as happened with Kidman the first day they worked together on the HBO series "Big Little Lies," Streep said.

Streep and their "Big Little Lies" co-star Reese Witherspoon both did spot-on, Australian-accented impressions of Kidman that had the audience in stitches.

Streep also drew tears from Kidman when describing what she believed motivated her.

"People call it bravery when an actress bares all and leaps off into the unknown and she dives deep into the darker parts of what it is to be a human being," Streep said. "But I don't think it's bravery. I think it's love. I think she just loves it."

Kidman teared up for the first time in the evening when her husband and fellow Australian, singer Keith Urban, said she showed him "what love in action really looks like" when his substance abuse problems emerged almost immediately after they wed in 2006.

Kidman said the night was the first time she allowed their teena-

ge daughters to join her on a red carpet. She also has two children with her first husband, Tom Cruise.

She accepted the AFI award in the same venue where she accepted her Oscar in 2003 for playing Virginia Woolf in "The Hours."

She thanked by name every director she has worked with, including Stanley Kubrick, Jane Campion, Baz Luhrmann, Sofia Coppola, Yorgos Lanthimos, Sydney Pollack and Lars von Trier.

"It is a privilege to make films. And glorious to have made films and television with these storytellers who allowed me to run wild and be free and play all of these unconventional women," Kidman said, wearing a floor-length, glittering-gold gown. "Thank you for making me better at my craft and giving me a place, however temporary, in this world."

Others honoring her included Zac Efron, Miles Teller, Zoe Saldana and Mike Myers, who came on stage in disguise in one of the eerie orgy masks from "Eyes Wide Shut." **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Middle East U.S. Secretary of State said that Israel must still do more to increase the flow of humanitarian aid into the besieged Gaza Strip and that he would use his current Middle East trip to press that case with Israeli leaders. Speaking in Riyadh, Blinken said best way to ease the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza would be to conclude an elusive cease-fire agreement that would release hostages held by Hamas. But, in the meantime, he said it was critical to improve conditions now.

AP PHOTO



Gulf of Aden A suspected missile attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels targeted a container ship in the Red Sea, authorities said, the latest assault in their campaign against international shipping in the crucial maritime route. The attack happened off the coast of Mokha, Yemen, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said, without offering any other immediate details. It urged vessels to exercise caution in the area.

AP PHOTO



Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez (pictured) said yesterday he will continue in office "even with more strength" after days of reflection. Sánchez shocked the country last week, announcing he was taking five days off to think about his future after a court opened preliminary proceedings against his wife on corruption allegations. "I have decided to continue on with even more strength at the helm of the government of Spain," he said in a televised speech.