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# Times

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**CUSTOMS OFFICERS SEIZED ABOUT 56,000 COUNTERFEIT ITEMS WORTH HKD17 MILLION DURING A JOINT OPERATION IN HONG KONG, MACAU AND CHINA**

**MACAU DRIVERS SCORE GOOD RESULTS IN LAMBORGHINI SUPER TROFEO ASIA KICKOFF**

**ABOUT 25% OF MACAU RESIDENTS USE GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE PLATFORMS LIKE CHATGPT: REPORT**

**China** The chief of staff of a Chinese businessman sought by the government pleaded guilty to conspiracy charges on Friday, weeks before her boss goes to trial in New York in a \$1 billion fraud case. Yvette Wang entered the plea in Manhattan federal court three weeks before she was to stand trial with Guo Wengui. Guo has pleaded not guilty to defrauding hundreds of thousands of followers in the U.S. and around the world of over \$1 billion.



**Australia** A 16-year-old boy armed with a knife was shot dead by police after he stabbed a man in the west coast city of Perth, officials said yesterday. The incident occurred in the parking lot of a hardware store in suburban Willetton on Saturday night. The teen attacked the man and then rushed at police officers before he was shot. Western Australian Premier Roger Cook (pictured) told reporters yesterday.

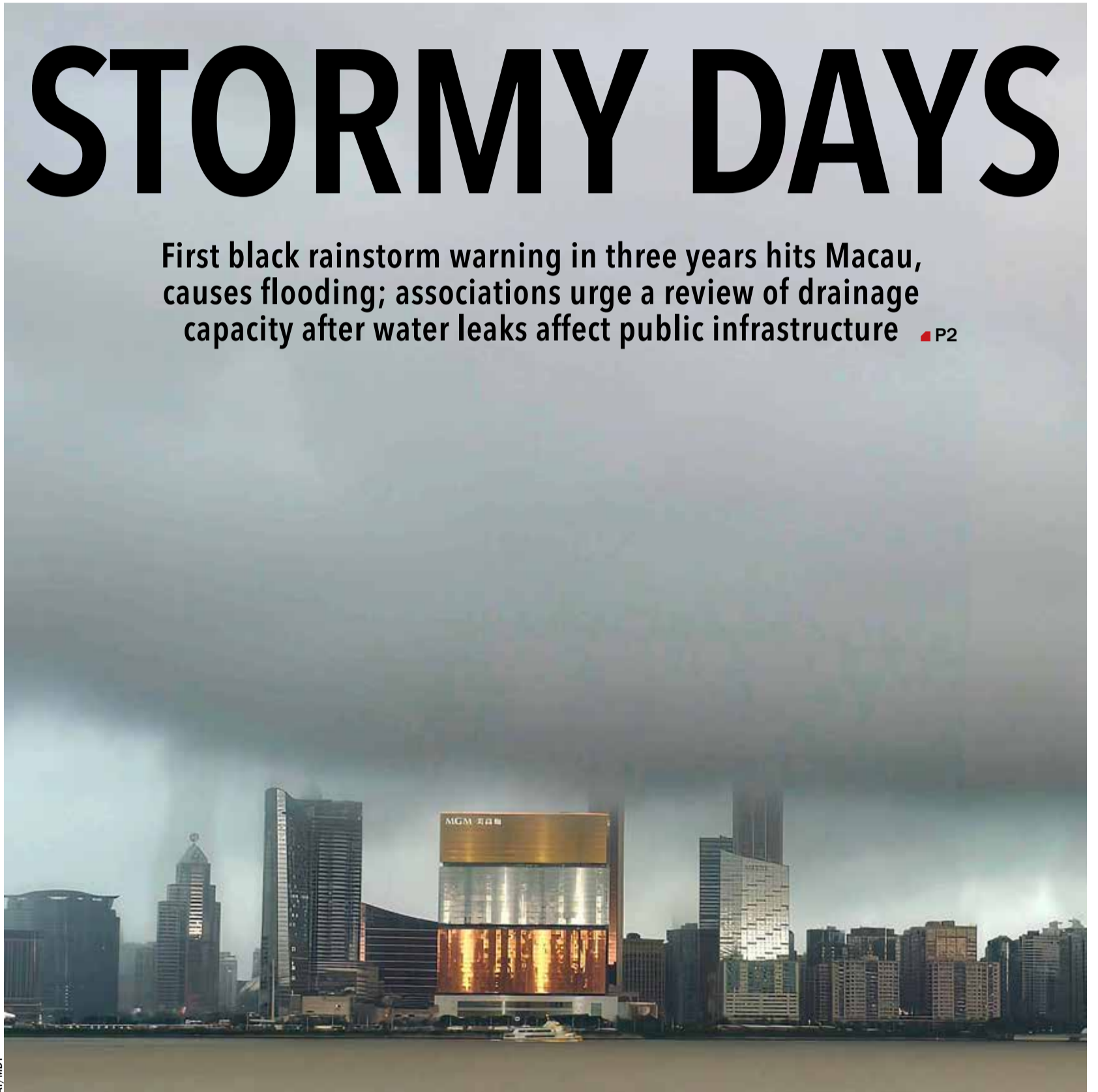


**Indonesia** A flood and a landslide hit Sulawesi island, killing 14 people, officials said Saturday. Torrential rain pounding the area since Thursday triggered a landslide in Luwu district in South Sulawesi province, said local rescue chief Mexianus Bekabel. Floods up to 3 meters have affected 13 sub-districts as water and mud covered the area. More than 1,000 houses were affected, with 42 of them swept off their foundations.

More on backpage

# STORMY DAYS

**First black rainstorm warning in three years hits Macau, causes flooding; associations urge a review of drainage capacity after water leaks affect public infrastructure**



AT/MDT

RENATO MARQUES



**GOLDEN WEEK**  
**VISITOR INFLUX**  
**HIGH DESPITE**  
**WEATHER WOES**

# FIRST BLACK RAINSTORM WARNING IN THREE YEARS IN MACAU, CAUSES FLOODS

STAFF REPORTER

MACAU experienced its first black rainstorm warning in three years on Saturday as heavy downpours caused widespread flooding in various areas of the city.

The warning, issued by the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG), urged residents to take precautionary measures as torrential rains lashed the region. This comes just days after Macau was hit by its first hailstorm in over a decade.

The black rainstorm warning, the highest tier in the city's weather alert system, was raised at 11:37 a.m. Saturday after earlier yellow and red warnings as intense rainfall pounded the Macau peninsula.

Meteorologists said a low-pressure trough was responsible for the unstable weather, which also included strong winds and lightning.

According to the SMG, Macau's northern district saw the heaviest rain, with nearly 80mm of rainfall recorded in one hour.

The rainfall was highly concentrated in the Macau peninsula, with the weather station at Sun Yat Sen Memorial Park recording 76.2mm in an hour. In contrast, the Cotai district only saw 24.8mm of rain during the same period.

"Heavy rain generally has three characteristics: short-term, localized and highly random," the SMG



said, noting the challenge of providing accurate, quantitative forecasts for such weather events in the compact territory.

The heavy rain led to the suspension of afternoon classes for all non-tertiary education institutions, while several major roads and the underground tunnel at the Border Gate checkpoint were temporarily closed due to flooding.

Videos on social media showed water gushing into the immigration hall at the Border Gate, forcing authorities to divert passengers to manual channels.

"The rain is intense. In Zhuhai, the water was up to my waist," one resident told reporters after being forced to turn back from trying to

cross the border, as cited in local media reports.

"It's useless to use an umbrella. Suddenly it rained a lot," he added.

The downpours also caused significant disruption in the neighboring city of Zhuhai, where a red rainstorm warning was issued, and classes were suspended.

According to Xinhua, three areas in Zhuhai, have issued red alerts for rainstorms, which is the highest level in China's weather warning system.

Zhuhai has experienced heavy rainfall, with 24-hour precipitation exceeding 250mm at eight stations, five of which have surpassed 300mm, as of 1 p.m. Saturday, according to the city's meteorological

bureau.

In Doumen District, one-hour rainfall had exceeded 100mm by 8 a.m., while two other locations in the city – Xiangzhou District and the Zhuhai National Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone – have also issued red alerts for rainstorms. The extreme weather led Zhuhai authorities to suspend all shuttle buses at the city's bus and tourist terminals, while passenger ferries from Xiangzhou Pier and Hengqin Pier to the estuary islands were also temporarily halted.

"The entry lane had to be temporarily closed and some passing vehicles had to turn back temporarily," the report stated, noting the accumulation of water on the roads

had affected customs clearance at the Gongbei Port.

The bus terminal at the Border Gate also saw water coming down from the ceiling.

Meanwhile, despite the harsh weather, some drivers were spotted trying to cross the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao bridge, though authorities urged the public to avoid peak hours.

The black rainstorm warning in Macau was downgraded to a yellow warning at 12:15 p.m. as the rain eased, but the city's weather bureau warned unstable conditions could persist until yesterday, with the possibility of more thunderstorms.

Yet yesterday was the first time in over two weeks that the sun shone.

The intense rainfall came just days after Macau experienced its first hailstorm in more than a decade.

Last Tuesday, a hailstorm hit the city for the first time since 2011, with social media posts showing ice pellets raining on the city – the first to be recorded since 2011 according to the SMG.

Hailstorms are extremely rare in Macau, with the SMG noting that there were only four recorded cases of hail between 1952 and 2011 before this week's event.

Also in Hong Kong Saturday, the region also experienced a tumultuous weather journey as the observatory initially cautioned about a potential black rainstorm alert.

However, after a few hours, the forecaster downgraded the red warning to amber as thunderstorms and flooding caused hikers to be stranded, schools to suspend classes, traffic to be disrupted and businesses to close.

STAFF REPORTER

As heavy rains caused flooding in parts of Macau over the weekend, some residents are calling on officials to evaluate the drainage capacity of the city's infrastructure and strengthen maintenance efforts.

On Saturday, water leaked from the ceiling of the Border Gate underground bus terminal as drainage lines at the nearby border checkpoint backed up during downpours. Wu Chou Kit, president of the Macau Institution of Engineers, said aging pipes at the bus termi-

## Officials urged to review infrastructure drainage capacity after heavy rain floods

nal may be to blame and that the broader canal network was not at fault.

However, Wu believes Macau should review drainage systems in each district to prepare for increasingly frequent severe weather. He suggested utilizing "V-shaped land" near the under-construction light rail line to simultaneously expand pipes across the northern region, as cited in a TDM report.

Deputy convener Kou Ngon Fong of the North District Community Service Advisory Committee also wants authorities to comprehensively inspect for leaks. Flooding has occurred in renovation works at Fai Chi Kei District during rains. He hopes officials implement response plans to ensure projects do not hinder drainage and reduce disruption to local residents.



Underground bus terminal at Border Gate

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LABOR DAY GOLDEN WEEK

# Visitor influx high despite weather woes

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE number of visitors to Macau over the five-day Golden Week of the Labor Day holiday can be considered significantly high, particularly after the bad weather in the whole South China region in the last few days.

Even if the conditions were not ideal, with several areas of the Guangdong province, including the neighboring city of Zhuhai, registering major disruption as a consequence of the severe rainfall, the figures recorded by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) show the number of visitors entering Macau over the five days of the "Golden Week" was in line with the forecasts.

In total, Macau received 604,395 visitors, a

daily average of 120,879, close to the 130,000 per day forecasted by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO).

The single day with a higher influx of visitors was May 3 (Friday) when 154,006 crossed the border into Macau, followed by the previous day (May 2) in which 150,862 arrived.

Other than these, the figures recorded over the other three days can be considered normal, like any other weekend or public holiday.

On Saturday (May 4) the severe rainstorm that affected Macau and the neighboring regions caused the suspension of most public transport and even the access of private vehicles to the major border checkpoint, the Border Gate, from the Zhuhai side.

Concurrently, the peak

of visitors entering and exiting Macau was May 3, with 159,446 visitors leaving Macau, exceeding arrivals by over 5,000.

The PSP recorded 36,189 foreign visitors over the five days, with a daily average of 7,238, 5.99% of the total arrivals. The figure is 2% higher compared to the recent Easter and Ching Ming Festival.

May 5 (Sunday) recorded the largest influx of foreign visitors in the whole period, with 9,046 entering Macau.

When compared year-on-year with last year, the number of arrivals during the first four days of the Labor Day Golden Week is some 22% higher than in 2023 when, during the first four days, Macau received some 435,808 in contrast with the 532,761 recorded this year.

The most popular border checkpoint continues to be the Border Gate, followed by Hengqin Port and Qingmao Port.

The Macau Port of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge comes only in fourth with fewer than half the entries registered at the Qingmao Port and only around 11.1% of the entries registered at Border Gate.

# IC head: New visas will help artistic and cultural activities

RENATO MARQUES

**M**ACAU'S artistic and cultural activities will benefit from the new visa schemes with the mainland, which start today, according to the president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), Deland Leong.

On the sidelines of a public event organized by a gaming concessionaire at the Rua da Felicidade over the weekend, Leong told the press she was happy with the new multiple entry visas and other changes for mainland residents accessing Macau.

"Artists will be able to circulate several times between Macau and the mainland so this will contribute to some programs since several shows are repeated several times," she said.

"We also need help from several mainland artistic consultants so this measure



will help us a lot when we develop some special programs."

The National Immigration Administration of China last week implemented six new measures to facilitate border crossings between the mainland, Macau and Hong Kong.

The changes include the extension of business visas from seven to 14 days and a facilitation of the movement of highly qualified staff from Beijing and Shanghai, who can apply for "talent visas" for Hong Kong and Macau.

This measure applies to

six different categories including outstanding talent, scientific research talent, cultural and educational talent, health talent, legal talent and management talent.

These people can apply for multiple visas with validity periods ranging from one to five years, individually or at the same time, based on their qualifications.

Those approved under this scheme will be able to extend the length of their stays in Hong Kong or Macau for up to 30 days at a time.

## MAY GGR TO REACH MOP20 BILLION

**CITIGROUP** has predicted Macau will achieve a gross gaming revenue (GGR) of MOP20 billion in May, recovering to 77% of the pre-Covid level. According to analysts George Choi and Ryan Cheung, this estimate translates to a daily run-rate of MOP645 million. In April, Macau's GGR exceeded expectations, reaching MOP18.55 billion, surpassing Citigroup's estimate of MOP18 billion and the consensus forecast of MOP18.1 billion.

This resulted in a daily run-rate of MOP672 million for the final nine days of the month, representing a 12% increase compared to the previous week. The analysts believe this higher daily run-rate suggests some visitors arrived in Macau even before the start of the Labor Day Holidays. Meanwhile, Morgan Stanley has projected Macau's May GGR will reach MOP19.7 billion, reflecting a 6% month-on-month increase and a recovery to 76% of the 2019 level.

**AD**

**醫療券**  
Vale de Saúde

### Healthcare Subsidy Scheme 2024

**Electronic vouchers accepted in In-Depth Cooperation Zone via Macao One Account**

**Eligibility and period of use**

- Beneficiaries: residents who, as of 30<sup>th</sup> April 2025, hold a valid or renewable Macao Special Administrative Region Permanent Resident Identity Card
- Amount: MOP600.00 per beneficiary (distributed in the form of electronic healthcare vouchers)
- Validity period: 2 years (from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026)
- Eligible transferees: beneficiaries' parents, children and spouse who hold a Macao Permanent Resident Identity Card

**Use of vouchers**

**In Macao:**

- Beneficiary logs into his electronic identity in the Macao One Account to use his electronic healthcare vouchers without presenting his Macao SAR Permanent Resident Identity Card.
- If a beneficiary doesn't have or fails to use the Macao One Account, he may still present his Macao SAR Permanent Resident Identity Card to use electronic healthcare vouchers.

**At the In-Depth Cooperation Zone:**

- Macao residents seeking medical attention at a clinic in the In-Depth Cooperation Zone must utilise their "Macao One Account" in order to spend the healthcare vouchers.

**Health professionals who join the Scheme at the In-Depth Cooperation Zone**

- Must have already enrolled in the Healthcare Subsidy Scheme in Macao (Macao residents).
- Their practising clinic at the Cooperation Zone must be opened by Macao residents on a sole proprietorship or joint venture basis, and comply with relevant regulations of the Mainland.

**Transfer of vouchers**

Transfer can be made through the Macao One Account, a self-service kiosk, the Health Bureau website or Health Bureau mobile app, or with assistance by the health professional at the time of consultation or by the support centre staff.

**Enquiry**

Website: [www.vs.gov.mo](http://www.vs.gov.mo) Hotline: 2822 5050 Facsimile: 2822 3030 E-mail: [vs@ssm.gov.mo](mailto:vs@ssm.gov.mo)

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### DSAT ADDS SPACE TO TAIPA PUBLIC CAR PARK

The Transport Bureau (DSAT) has recently modified the allocation of parking spaces Taipa outdoor car park on Estrada Governador Albano de Oliveira. Specifically, seven parking spaces designated for heavy cars have been converted into parking spaces for light cars. Consequently, the total number of parking spaces available for light cars will rise from 41 to 61, while 10 parking spaces for heavy cars will be retained. This new arrangement will come into effect May 14.

### MAN EMBEZZLES HKD350,000, CLAIMS CASH WAS LOST

A mainland man involved in currency exchange has been accused of embezzling HKD350,000 from an accomplice and confessed the money was lost, police said. Authorities revealed that in March, the victim collaborated with the suspect in an illegal foreign exchange, contributing HKD810,000 while the suspect found customers. Although the victim received some exchange money, the suspect later took HKD350,000 and became uncontactable. In April, the victim's friends found the suspect in a Cotai hotel. During a conversation outside, the suspect claimed he was threatened and asked an officer for help. He was subsequently exposed by police and transferred to the procuratorate on suspicion of credit abuse.

### RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY SALES RISE IN APRIL

The number of residential properties purchased in Macau during the first half of April increased compared to the previous period, according to government figures. 101 units were sold, up 31% or 24 transactions from the second half of March. While sales rose, the average price per square meter fell over the same period. Data from the Finance Bureau showed the average price in April was MOP80,220, down 7.2% from MOP86,460 in late March.

### MIP

## QUARTER OF LOCAL RESIDENTS USE AI: STUDY

STAFF REPORTER

**A**BOUT 25% of Macau residents use generative artificial intelligence (AI) platforms like ChatGPT, according to the 2024 "Internet Usage Trends in Macao" report recently published by the Macao Internet Project (MIP).

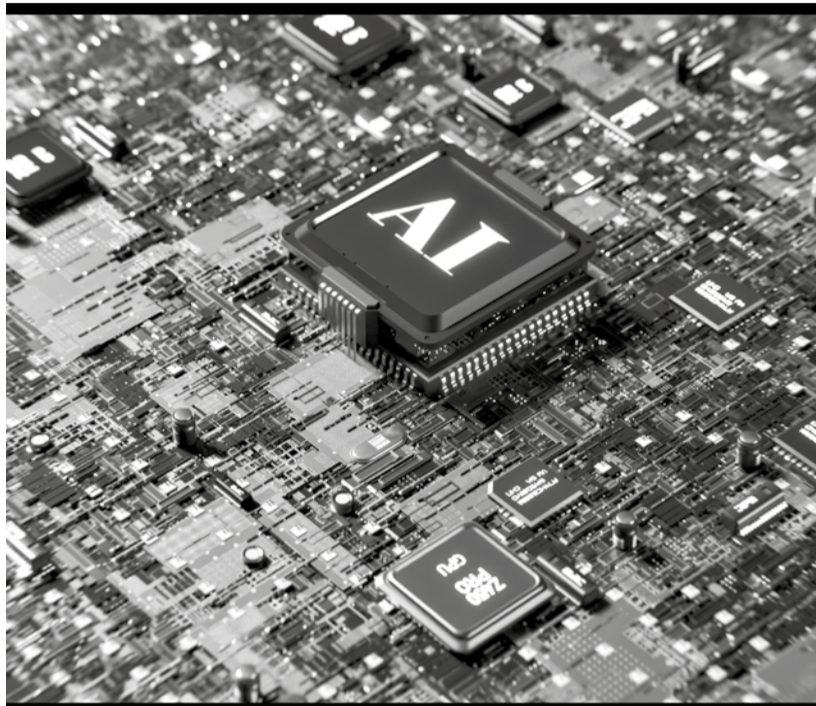
Among these users, about 23% use the technology at least once a week.

"Since 2001, the MIP has been researching the use and impact of the internet and other ICT among Macau residents," the report noted.

"For the past 24 years, large-scale random telephone surveys and special studies have been conducted, with data collected from a representative sample of the Macau population," it said.

"The annual survey results show the statistical data and development trends of internet usage."

"Nearly half of netizens are willing to use generative AI in the future, with the rate of willing



to use higher than in 2023. Netizens most expect generative AI to enhance learning and working efficiency," MIP said.

Generative AI can produce new text, images, code and other data in response to simple prompts.

While it offers various practical applications and potential technological opportunities for Macau, the report cautions it should be approached with care.

Fact distortion is not uncommon, and people should learn to evaluate the accuracy of the ge-

nerated content.

The report further highlights Macau internet access is now equally available to residents across the board, with the majority accessing the internet via smartphones.

The internet adoption rate in 2023 was 93%, which has remained consistent over the past five years.

Lack of knowledge and skills is cited as the primary barrier preventing non-users from going online.

In terms of internet activities, 91% of the population uses social media, with WeChat being the most popular platform, followed by YouTube, Facebook and WhatsApp.

Additionally, 84% of people use the internet to watch videos, 76% to listen to music, 54% to play online games and 36% to listen to podcasts.

The report said 46% of Macau residents have experienced internet privacy and security issues, with internet fraud being the most common concern.

Moreover, 67% of residents shop online, with the average monthly expenditure decreasing from 1,438 patacas in 2023 to 1,383 patacas in 2024.

MIP's report is based on a survey conducted in January, involving over 1,500 residents.



### TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION

## UM breaks into Top 200 in world university rankings

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE University of Macau (UM) has climbed into the top 200 of the 2024 Times Higher Education World University Rankings, coming in at number 193. This is an improvement from last year when it was ranked between 201-250. UM also moved up one spot in the Asian University rankings

to number 36 from 37.

Meanwhile, the University of Science and Technology Macau fell to between 251-300 this year after being ranked 201-250 in 2023. The University of St. Joseph Macau was also included but did not receive a specific ranking.

The University of Oxford in the United Kingdom held onto the top spot for the

seventh consecutive year since 2017. China's highest-ranked schools were Tsinghua University at 12th and Peking University at 14th. The University of Hong Kong dropped four places to 35th.

13 Chinese universities now rank in the worldwide top 200, nearly double the seven from four years ago in 2020.

### CRIME

## JOINT OPERATION SEIZES COUNTERFEIT ITEMS WORTH HKD17 MILLION

STAFF REPORTER

**C**USTOMS officers have made two arrests and seized about 56,000 counterfeit items worth HKD17 million during a three-week joint operation in Hong Kong, Macau and China.

The seized goods included counterfeit watches from renowned luxury brands such as Rolex, Cartier, and Patek Philippe.

This operation, conducted between April 9 and April 30, marked the first collaborative effort of 2024 between customs authorities from the three regions.

Hong Kong customs, through intelligence analysis and thorough investigations, identified 15 cases involving local express couriers and logistics companies.

In addition, two containers arriving from Nansha, Guangdong, at the Tuen Mun River Trade Terminal Customs Cargo Examination Compound on April 15 and April 16 were found to contain counterfeit goods.

Customs officers detected two more cases and intercepted two incoming trucks at the

Shenzhen Bay Control Point on April 12 and April 28, resulting in the seizure of batches of counterfeit goods.

Subsequently, two male truck drivers, aged 49 and 55, were arrested. They have been released on bail pending further investigation. Customs authorities have stated that ongoing investigations may lead to additional arrests.

The counterfeit goods confiscated during the operation included luxury handbags, smartphones and accessories, luxury watches, and sneakers, with an estimated market value of approximately HKD16.9 million.

To enhance their profits, criminals used high-quality chests for the counterfeit luxury watches, along with forged certificates, warranty cards and user manuals.

Customs authorities have issued a warning about the Trade Descriptions Ordinance, stating that importing or exporting goods bearing forged trademarks is an offense. Upon conviction, individuals may face a maximum penalty of a HKD500,000 fine and five years' imprisonment.

# Macau drivers score good results in Lamborghini Super Trofeo Asia kickoff

RENATO MARQUES

**M**ACAU drivers André Couto and Charles Leong scored good results at the start of this year's Lamborghini Super Trofeo Asia (LSTA) over the weekend.

In the first round, consisting of two races, Leong, teaming up with Japanese former W Series driver Miki Koyama, scored two second positions overall, being beaten in both races by New Zealand's duo Marco Giltrap and Clay Osborne (Absolute Racing).

Leong told the Times that although the weekend went "relatively well" he wants more.

"I am still learning that the car is very different from the single-seaters (Formula cars) and even quite different from other GT3 cars."

"This car has a lot of weight in the rear and a lot of horsepower, so it takes some time to learn how to balance this car," Leong said.

He expects his performance to improve further during the upcoming second round, scheduled to take place at Australia's The Bend



Motorsport Park in Adelaide in a month.

"We'll bring all our experience together for the next race and aim for the top step," Leong remarked while thanking the SJM, Iron Lynx Theodore Racing, for its efforts over the weekend.

The other local racer in this

year's LSTA, Couto, racing with China's Jason Chen (Madness Racing), scored two wins in the Pro-Am category, which resulted from a 5th and a 7th position overall, in Race 1 and 2 respectively.

After the first round in Sepang, Malaysia, the LSTA moves to Australia for the second round from

June 7-9, followed by the third round in mid-July at Inje Speedium, South Korea.

The series ends at the Spanish circuit of Jerez de la Frontera in mid-November for the sixth round after the fifth round at Shanghai International Circuit, China between Sept. 13 and 15.

The last round precedes the Lamborghini Super Trofeo World Finals (Nov. 16-17), which joins the best from the three series including North America, Europe and Asia.

## LAST ROUND CLASH WITH MACAU GP

Leong noted that while the intention for this year is to race the whole season of the LSTA, there is an issue related to the last round of the series, during the same interview with the Times.

As mentioned, the last round is scheduled for Spain on Nov. 14 and 15, followed by the World Finals (Nov. 16-17), which clashes with the Macau Grand Prix weekend, scheduled between Nov. 14 and 17.

"At the moment we are planning to do the full year but let's see because we have one race [the last] that clashes with the Macau GP schedule so the future is still a bit unsure as anything can happen and change the plan. Let's see how everything goes until then," Leong told the Times.

AD



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<b>2. Scope of Services:</b>	Provision of Management and Maintenance Services of the Installation, Systems and Equipment owned by Macau International Airport Co. Ltd. Electrical & Mechanical Systems
<b>3. Request for Tender Document:</b>	The interested Bidders shall call the Senior Secretary of the Engineering and Maintenance Branch (E&M) of the Airport Operations Department of CAM at (853) 88982386 and collect the tender document at the following location until 13 May 2024 before 13:00 (Macau Local Time). <u>Location for collecting the tender document</u> CAM – Macau International Airport Co. Ltd. Macau International Airport Engineering and Maintenance Branch E&M Building 1st Floor, Office 41020 Taipa, Macau For any enquiry regarding the Tender Procedure, please reach our Engineering and Maintenance Branch at (853) 88982386.
<b>4. Location for Submission of Proposals:</b>	CAM – Macau International Airport Co. Ltd. Av. De Wai Long CAM Office Building, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor Reception Taipa, Macau Attention: Mr. Chu Tan Neng – Executive Director
<b>5. Tender closing time and date:</b>	<b>At 12:00 (noon) on 5 June 2024</b> (Macau Local Time)

**CAM reserves the right to reject any Proposal in whole or in part without stating any reason.**

DIPLOMACY

# Xi says China-France ties are win-win cooperation between countries with different systems

**O**VER the past 60 years, China-France relations have long been at the forefront of China's ties with major Western countries, setting a good example for the international community of peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation between countries with different systems, Chinese President Xi Jinping said in a written speech yesterday upon his arrival in Paris for a state visit to France, Xinhua reported.

Xi will start official contacts today, meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron, who has been stressing the idea of European strategic autonomy from the U.S. On a visit to Beijing last year, Macron courted controversy by saying France would not necessarily always align with the U.S. in foreign policy, an apparent reference to American support for the self-governing island of Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory to be annexed by force if necessary.

After leaving France, Xi will visit Hungary and Serbia, both seen as China-friendly and close to Russian President Vladimir Putin, rebuffing Western criticism of his full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Xi's European visits will be closely followed in Washington for signs of diminishing support for its key foreign policy goals.

The Chinese leader arrived in France just as Paris is putting the finishing touches on its preparations for hosting the Summer Olympics, an event in which China invests huge amount of national prestige.

France sees Xi's visit, which officially marks 60 years of French-Chinese diplomatic relations, as an important diplomatic moment, and wants to focus on China's broader relations with the EU. Macron invited European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to the talks today.

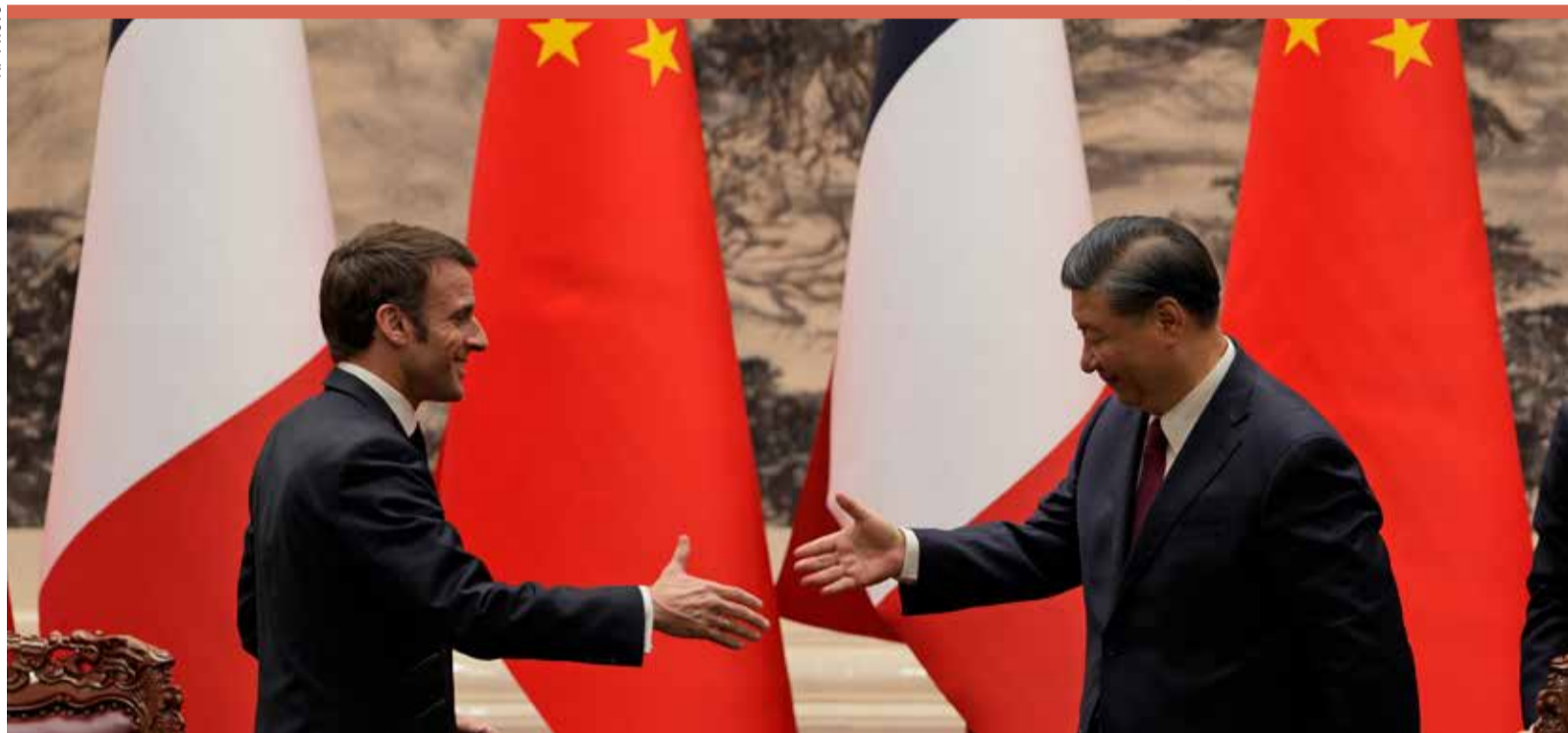
It comes a month before Macron, who positions himself as the diplomatic leader of Europe, hosts Biden for a similar state visit.

It is also a sign of "the good vibes from Macron's visit to China in April last year," said Kerry Brown, professor of Chinese Studies and director of the Lau China Institute at King's College London.

"This is a highly strategic visit to Europe by Xi. And in his itinerary you can divine the runes of Chinese policy on Europe now, bolstering the traditional links as far as possible, and reinforcing new ones," Brown said, according to an Associated Press dispatch.

Xi's is also visiting Budapest, where Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, in power

AP PHOTO



French President Emmanuel Macron, left, shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping after meeting the press at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, last year

for 14 years, is facing political challenges from the opposition over his authoritarian style.

Hungary has straddled a middle ground between its membership in the EU and NATO and an unusual openness to diplomatic and trade relationships with eastern autocracies such as Russia and China.

Orbán, a right-wing populist who has forged close ties with Russia, delayed Sweden's entry into NATO for months. China has cited NATO expansion as provoking Russia to invade Ukraine.

Hungary is the first EU member to participate in Xi's signature Belt and Road Initiative that seeks to build billions of dollars of roads, ports, power plants and other infrastructure across Asia, Africa and beyond.

Orbán was the only EU leader to attend a conference in Beijing on the BRI, which has been criticized for burying participating countries in debt and failing to deliver on promised investments, something that prompted Italy to drop out last year.

Despite that, Hungary's government has deepened its economic ties with China, with the proliferation of Chinese electric vehicle (EV) battery factories across the country gaining the most attention. Near Debrecen, Hungary's second-largest city, construction is underway of a nearly 550-acre, 7.3 billion euro (\$7.9

billion) EV battery plant, Hungary's largest-ever foreign direct investment.

According to AP, China has also invested heavily in infrastructure to link Hungary with its southern neighbor Serbia, Xi's next stop on his European tour.

In 2014, Hungary and Serbia concluded an agreement with Beijing to modernize the railway between their capitals of Budapest and Belgrade, part of a Belt and Road plan to link up with the Chinese-controlled port of Piraeus in Greece, to the south, an entry point for Chinese goods to Central and Eastern Europe.

The more than \$2 billion project is expected to be completed in 2026, after numerous delays.

In Serbia, Xi will hold talks with President Aleksandar Vucic, with whose government China has built strong relations.

The two countries have a long history of friendship, particularly since 1999, when NATO bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, killing three Chinese nationals, during the

air war to end Serbia's brutal crackdown on ethnic Albanian separatists in Kosovo.

The U.S. apologized, saying faulty target selection was to blame, but the incident led to violent attacks on U.S. diplomatic installations in China and fueled anti-American sentiment in both countries that endures to this day.

In 2022, shortly after the Russian assault on Ukraine,

to call the Russian assault an invasion and has been accused of bolstering Russia's capacity to produce weapons and its military advantage against Ukraine, which is awaiting tens of billions in Western military aid, AP said.

A U.S. military aid bill passed last week allots \$61 billion for Ukraine, as well as \$8 billion to counter Chinese threats in Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific,

which China has condemned as a dangerous provocation.

China's foreign minister said the U.S. position on Chinese defense trade with Russia was hypocritical

when considered alongside the amount of military assistance Washington is providing to Kyiv.

China denies selling arms to Russia and the U.S. says it has found no direct evidence of such. However, China does sell machine tools, microelectronics and other technology that Moscow in turn is using to produce missiles, tanks, aircraft and other weaponry for use in its war against Ukraine, according to a U.S. assessment.

MDT/AGENCIES

**"In his itinerary you can divine the runes of Chinese policy on Europe now, bolstering the traditional links as far as possible, and reinforcing new ones**

KERRY BROWN  
DIRECTOR OF THE LAU CHINA INSTITUTE  
KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

Serbia took semi-secret delivery of a sophisticated Chinese anti-aircraft system flown in on six Chinese Air Force Y-20 transport planes. The arms delivery over the territory of at least two NATO member states, Turkey and Bulgaria, was seen by experts as a demonstration of China's growing global reach.

China claims neutrality in the Ukraine conflict but Xi and Putin declared their governments had a "no limits friendship" before Moscow's attack on Ukraine. China has refused



DISPUTED SEA

# CHINA PUBLICIZES FOR THE FIRST TIME WHAT IT CLAIMS IS A 2016 AGREEMENT WITH PHILIPPINES

CHRISTOPHER BODEEN,  
TAIPEI

**F**OR the first time, China has publicized what it claims is an unwritten 2016 agreement with the Philippines over access to South China Sea islands.

The move threatens to further raise tensions in the disputed waterway, through which much of the world's trade passes and which China claims virtually in its entirety.

A statement from the Chinese Embassy in Manila said the "temporary special arrangement" agreed to during a visit to Beijing by former president Rodrigo Duterte allowed small scale fishing around the islands but restricted access by military, coast guard and other official planes and ships to the 12 nautical mile limit of territorial waters.

The Philippines respected the agreement over the past seven years but has since reneged on it to "fulfill its own political agenda," forcing China to take action, the statement said.

"This is the basic reason for the ceaseless disputes at sea between China and the Philippines over the past year and more," said the statement posted to the embassy's website last week, referring to the actions of the Philippines.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Duterte have denied forging any agreements that would have supposedly surrendered Philippi-

ne sovereignty or sovereign rights to China. Any such action, if proven, would be an impeachable offense under the country's 1987 Constitution.

However, after his visit to Beijing, Duterte hinted at such an agreement without offering details, said Collin Koh, senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies based in Nanyang Technological University, Singapore and an expert on naval affairs in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly Southeast Asia.

"He boasted then that he not only got Chinese investment and trade pledges, but also that he secured Philippine fishermen access to Scarborough Shoal," Koh said, referring to one of the maritime features in dispute.

Beijing's deliberate wording in the statement "is noteworthy in showing that Beijing has no official document to prove its case and thus could only rely mainly on Duterte's verbal claim," Koh said.

Marcos, who took office in June 2022, told reporters last month that China has insisted that there was such a secret agreement but said he was not aware of any.

"The Chinese are insisting that there is a secret agreement and, perhaps, there is, and, I said I didn't, I don't know anything about the secret agreement," said Marcos, who has drawn the Philippines closer to its treaty partner the U.S. "Should there be such a secret agreement, I am now rescinding it." **MDT/AP**

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## MGM 2049 Global Recruitment Program Awaits Talents



MGM has joined hands with world-renowned Chinese filmmaker Zhang Yimou to present an unprecedented residency show MGM 2049 at the MGM Theater. This serves not only as a grand tribute to the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the 25th anniversary of Macau's return to the Motherland, but also as a catalyst to propel the city's cultural and entertainment sectors towards new heights.

The "MGM 2049: Symposium and Global Recruitment Program Kick-off Ceremony" was held successfully – where Zhang Yimou, Chief Director of MGM 2049, together with the show's top-notch global creative team, came together in Macau to

unveil MGM 2049 and share insights into the residency show's concept and breakthroughs. Pansy Ho, Chairperson and Executive Director of MGM China Holdings Limited, said, "What makes MGM 2049 more far-reaching and pioneering is that it enables the participation of the younger generation, as we aspire to take the leading role to develop original content and distinct standards, while injecting vitality and sustainability into Macau's entertainment sector. We wish to extend Macau's influence of 'City of Performing Arts' into the GBA, and promote Chinese culture further afar to the rest of the world."

The "Global Recruitment Program" offers over 200 job opportunities to aspiring young people worldwide interested in pursuing a career in performing arts. The objectives are to tap into youth power to further foster the development of Macau as the "City of Performing Arts", establishing an epitome of cultural tourism within the Greater Bay Area (GBA), and promoting Chinese culture to the world. The on-the-job training opportunities cover several scopes, including performers, artistic instructors, performance management and stage technical roles.



On May 10, MGM will host a career sharing session followed by a casting call for MGM 2049, at MGM Theater, MGM COTAL. Any local talents aspiring to pursue an entertainment career with top-notch masters, be sure to grasp this opportunity to become the rising stars to light up the stage. For detailed information about MGM 2049 and online application, please refer to <https://show-recruitment.mgm.mo/en/>.

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AP PHOTO



President Vladimir Putin

RUSSIA

# As Putin begins another six-year term, he is entering a new era of extraordinary power

JIM HEINTZ

**J**UST a few months short of a quarter-century as Russia's leader, Vladimir Putin tomorrow will put his hand on a copy of the constitution and begin another six-year term as president wielding extraordinary power.

Since becoming acting president on the last day of 1999, Putin has shaped Russia into a monolith — crushing political opposition, running independent-minded journalists out of the country and promoting an increasing devotion to prudish “traditional values” that pushes many in society into the margins.

His influence is so dominant that other officials could only stand submissively on the sidelines as he launched a war in Ukraine despite expectations the invasion would bring international opprobrium and harsh economic sanctions, as well as cost Russia dearly in the blood of its soldiers.

With that level of power, what Putin will do with his next term is a daunting question at home and abroad.

The war in Ukraine, where Russia is making incremental though consistent battlefield gains, is the top concern, and he is showing no indication of changing course.

“The war in Ukraine is central to his current political project, and I don't see anything to suggest that that will change. And that affects everything else,” Brian Taylor, a Syracuse Uni-

versity professor and author of “The Code of Putinism,” said in an interview with The Associated Press.

“It affects who's in what positions, it affects what resources are available and it affects the economy, affects the level of repression internally,” he said.

In his state of the nation address in February, Putin vowed to fulfill Moscow's goals in Ukraine, and do whatever it takes to “defend our sovereignty and security of our citizens.” He claimed the Russian military has “gained a huge combat experience” and is “firmly holding the initiative and waging offensives in a number of sectors.”

That will come at huge expense, which could drain money available for the extensive domestic projects and reforms in education, welfare and poverty-fighting that Putin used much of the two-hour address to detail.

Taylor suggested such projects were included in the address as much for show as for indicating real intent to put them into action.

Putin “thinks of himself in the grand historical terms of Russian lands, bringing Ukraine back to where it belongs, those sorts of ideas. And I think those trump any kind of more socio-economic-type programs,” Taylor said.

If the war were to end in less than total defeat for either side, with Russia retaining some of the territory it has already captured, European countries fear that Putin could be encouraged

toward further military adventurism in the Baltics or in Poland.

“It's possible that Putin does have vast ambitions and will try to follow a costly success in Ukraine with a new attack somewhere else,” Harvard international relations professor Stephen Walt wrote in the journal Foreign Policy. “But it is also entirely possible that his ambitions do not extend beyond what Russia has won — at enormous cost and that he has no need or desire to gamble for more.”

But, Walt added, “Russia will be in no shape to launch new wars of aggression when the war in Ukraine is finally over.”

Such a rational concern might not prevail, others say. Maksim Samorukov, of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center, said that “driven by Putin's whims and delusions, Moscow is likely to commit self-defeating blunders.”

In a commentary in Foreign Affairs, Samorukov suggested that Putin's age could affect his judgment.

“At 71 ... his awareness of his own mortality surely impinges on his decision-making. A growing sense of his limited time undoubtedly contributed to his fateful decision to invade Ukraine.”

Overall, Putin may be heading into his new term with a weaker grip on power than he appears to have.

Russia's “vulnerabilities are hidden in plain sight. Now more than ever, the Kremlin makes decisions in a personalized and arbitrary way that lacks even basic controls,” Samorukov wrote.

“The Russian political elite have grown more pliant in implementing Putin's orders and more obsequious to his paranoid worldview,” he wrote. The regime “is at permanent risk of crumbling overnight, as its Soviet predecessor did three decades ago.”

Putin is sure to continue his continue animosity toward the West, which he said in his state of the nation address “would like to do to Russia the same thing they did in many other regions of the world, including Ukraine: to bring discord into our home, to weaken it from within.”

Putin's resistance to the West manifests not only anger at its support for Ukraine, but in what he sees as the undermining of Russia's moral fiber.

Russia last year banned the notional LGBTQ+ “movement” by declaring it to be extremist in what officials said was a fight for traditional values like those espoused by the Russian Orthodox Church in the face of Western influence. Courts also banned gender transitioning.

“I would expect the role of the Russian Orthodox Church to continue to be quite visible,” Taylor said. He also noted the burst of social media outrage that followed a party hosted by TV presenter Anastasia Ivleeva where guests were invited to show up “almost naked.”

“Other actors in the system understand that that stuff resonates with Putin. ... There were people interested in exploiting things like that,” he said.

MDT/AP

## this day in history

### 1966 MOORS MURDERERS JAILED FOR LIFE



Ian Brady and his lover Myra Hindley have been sentenced to life imprisonment for the so-called Moors murders at Chester Assizes.

Judge Fenton Atkinson imposed three concurrent life sentences on Ian Brady, aged 28, for what he called “three calculated, cruel, cold-blooded murders”.

The couple were tried for the killing of Edward Evans, 17, Lesley Ann Downey, aged 10, and 12-year-old John Kilbride - a case that has shocked the nation.

Hindley, 23, was sentenced to two concurrent life sentences for the murder of Edward Evans and Lesley Ann Downey and found not guilty of the killing of John Kilbride.

The bodies of the three children were found on Saddleworth Moor in the Pennines seven months ago.

Brady, a stock clerk from Glasgow and Hindley, a shorthand typist from Manchester, lured the children into their home in Manchester, tortured, then killed them.

It was Hindley's brother-in-law, 17-year-old David Smith, who called the police after witnessing the brutal murder of Edward Evans at the couple's home in Hattersley, East Manchester. He told them that Brady had boasted that he had buried other victims at the moors.

The judge praised the “utmost skill and thoroughness” of the police working on the case. They had discovered a left-luggage ticket in Hindley's communion prayer book.

This led them to a suitcase containing pornographic photographs and tapes that proved to be valuable evidence against the pair. One of the photos showed Hindley posing with her dog at what turned out to be the site of John Kilbride's grave.

The Home Office has said that anyone sentenced to life imprisonment is liable to be held for the whole of his or her natural life but the Home Secretary could release a prisoner on licence.

Two children believed to be victims of Brady and Hindley - Pauline Reade and Keith Bennett - are still missing.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Both Brady and Hindley were taken back to the moors, separately, in the 1980s, when Greater Manchester Police began a new search for bodies. They discovered the remains of Pauline Reade in 1987 but failed to find any trace of Keith Bennett's grave.

Ian Brady has been on hunger strike at high-security Ashworth psychiatric hospital since October 1999.

The High Court in London rejected his appeal for “the right to die” in April 2001. Later that year American publishers controversially released a book by Brady analysing serial killers.

Myra Hindley's original 30-year sentence expired in 1996 and she has tried to win her release since then. But successive home secretaries have ruled that “life should mean life”.

Hindley's last appeal for freedom failed in the House of Lords in March 2000.

She died on 15 November 2002 from a severe chest infection aged 60.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
 Rest, eat well and pamper yourself. Dress for success. Polish your image with a new style. Grab a lucky break. Smile for the cameras.

**TAURUS**  
 Apr. 20-May. 20  
 Consider old dreams and future possibilities. Check any considerations and then choose your action plan to fulfill what you want. Completions are especially satisfying.

**GEMINI**  
 May. 21-Jun. 21  
 Communication channels flow with ease. Connect with your crew. Develop and refine your team strategy. Friends provide the missing links. Have fun together.

**CANCER**  
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
 A professional opportunity requires a cool head and quick action when the timing's right. Pay attention and stay ready. Listen for the gold.

**LEO**  
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
 Get ready to move. You can take wide ground once you get going. Prepare and pack lightly. Organize for greater ease. Explore new territory.

**VIRGO**  
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
 Collaborate to grow shared financial accounts. Coordinate actions. Send invoices and pay bills. Sign contracts and budgets. Get terms in writing. Provide excellent service.

**LIBRA**  
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
 Rely on the support of a reliable partner. Repay the favor with a thoughtful gesture or valuable contribution. Share resources, connections and comfort.

**SCORPIO**  
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
 Physical exercise energizes you. Maintain healthy practices to keep growing strength and endurance. Score extra for reconnecting with nature. Rest and enjoy the view.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
 Prioritize love, family and fun. Get organized and coordinate plans for maximum ease and efficiency. Persuade someone sweet with treats and good music.

**CAPRICORN**  
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
 Focus on domestic priorities. Make repairs, changes and upgrades. Quick action saves a bundle. Discover new options and choose the best with family.

**AQUARIUS**  
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
 Connect, discuss and coordinate. You're building for the future. Strengthen foundations with creative projects. Research story details. Put together a clear timeline. Share discoveries.

**PISCES**  
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
 Monitor cash flow to maximize gains. Find efficiencies to conserve resources. Use old stuff in a new way. Creativity gets lucrative. Plan for the future.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sanson**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	15	26	cloudy
Changchun	13	22	cloudy
Chengdu	16	26	rain
Chongqing	16	23	rain
Fuzhou	20	32	cloudy
Guangzhou	22	29	cloudy
Guiyang	10	20	rain
Haikou	24	33	cloudy
Hangzhou	17	27	overcast
Harbin	12	21	cloudy
Hefei	13	27	cloudy
Nanjing	15	26	cloudy
Shanghai	17	27	overcast
Taipei	22	27	rain
Wuhan	15	28	fine
Hong Kong	24	28	cloudy
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	2	11	showers
Frankfurt	9	16	rain
Paris	9	18	cloudy
London	10	16	rain
New York	15	22	showers

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Prepares for battle; 5- Energy source; 9- Leg, slangily; 12- Shower; 13- Visible exhalation; 15- Top of the line; 16- Sigmund's daughter; 17- \_\_\_ a customer; 18- Baseball stats; 19- Two-piece bathing suit; 21- Not a direct hit; 23- Covers; 25- The Supremes, e.g.; 26- Cleaning implement; 29- Refer to; 31- Powerful; 35- Before, of yore; 36- Leg joints; 38- Weird; 39- \_\_\_ best friend; 41- Festive occasions; 43- Roy's 'singin' pardner'; 44- Available; 46- Free-for-all; 48- Guitarist Paul; 49- Gazes fixedly; 51- Emulates Eminem; 52- U-turn from NNW; 53- Winglike parts; 55- Morse element; 57- Interests; 61- Perches; 65- Fit to \_\_\_; 66- Hilo hello; 68- Scarlett's home; 69- Envelope abbr.; 70- Nun wear; 71- Slaughter of baseball; 72- Rejections; 73- Got it!; 74- Optical device;

DOWN 1- Bedouin; 2- Rajah's wife; 3- Lustrous fur; 4- Slow mover; 5- Evading; 6- Light brown color, common to pale sunworshippers; 7- Ready for business; 8- Sacred song; 9- Asian desert; 10- Black cuckoos; 11- Untidy condition; 14- Lion sounds; 15- Like an armadillo?; 20- Shaving mishap; 22- Solemn ceremony; 24- Water vapor; 26- Office notes; 27- Praying figure; 28- Five; Prefix; 30- Conger catcher; 32- Some exams; 33- Frasier's brother; 34- Gaggle members; 37- Cobb, e.g.; 40- Muslim opponent of the Crusaders; 42- Divide; 45- Soccer legend; 47- Exxon predecessor; 50- Mother of Isaac; 54- Zhou \_\_\_; 56- Monopoly buy; 57- James of 'The Godfather'; 58- Conductor Klemperer; 59- Trawler equipment; 60- Weeps; 62- Completely without madness; 63- 1982 Disney film; 64- Impudence; 67- Get a move on;



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Nam Long (Taipa)  
2 bed 1 bath  
59.92 m<sup>2</sup> / 645 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD3,650,000



Jade Garden (Taipa)  
4 bed 3 bath  
379.04 m<sup>2</sup> / 4,080 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD 11,880,000



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**RUGBY ACADEMY**

# Macau Mini-Rugby Festival scores big with visiting teams

DONALD SHAW

**S**ATURDAY, April 27 saw the return of the Macau mini-rugby festival. Held in Taipa, the event attracted 40 teams from Hong Kong, Guangdong and Macau. Close to 1,500 people converged on the TIS playing field as teams from 6 to 10 years old competed for their respective age group championship. Fortunately, the weather was relatively fine, with the recent heavy rain holding off so that the competition could take place in near ideal conditions.

The competition saw a debut by the Macau Saints, a new team formed by pupils of the San Jose school, while the more established Macau Bats entered 6 teams across

the age groups.

Another team making its Macau debut was the Guangzhou Juniors. They entertained the crowd with some fast and effective rugby but fell short of the final. USRC Tigers from Hong Kong came out on top of both the U6 and U7 age groups while Hong Kong Football Club claimed the U8 and U9 competitions, with the U10 championship being won by Sandy Bay in a tightly fought final.

The Macau Bats placed a very respectable 3rd in the U8s, 4th in U7s and 5th in the U9s.

Most visiting teams were complimentary towards the festival organisation and looked forward to returning to Macau for next year's edition.



USRC Tigers U6 winners



Guangzhou Juniors



Macau Bats match v USRC Tigers



Sandy Bay U10 winners



Hong Kong Football Club



Macau Bats



Macau Saints match v HKFC



AD



**BENFICAMACAU**  
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**FOOTBALL**

**BASKETBALL**

**DAILY TRAININGS**

OPINION

China Daily

Christine Bierre\*

GOOD SINO-FRENCH PAST OFFERS GREAT FUTURE

Over the years, France-China relations have been steadily improving. The announcement that the Chinese leader will pay a state visit to France in early May amid one of the worst strategic crises since the end of World War II is a sign of trust that France and China can, as in other crises in the past, work together to promote global peace.

Despite the United States' hostility toward China in recent years, France has upheld its freedom to cooperate with China and called for "European strategic autonomy", which would allow the European Union to avoid being drawn into a US war over the Taiwan question.

Negotiations to end the Russia-Ukraine conflict will be high on the agenda of the French and Chinese leaders following the talks held by Li Hui, China's special envoy on Eurasian affairs. No doubt, following German Chancellor Olaf Scholz' successful visit to China, Beijing will try to boost ties with those EU countries that want to boost trade with China.

The France-China relationship goes back centuries, especially the scientific and cultural collaboration between Louis XIV of France and Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) in the 17th century, via Jean-Baptiste Colbert, controller-general of finances during Louis XIV's reign, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, German polymath and logician, and has steadily grown since.

What reinforced that cooperation is the consensus between former French prime minister Pierre Mendes France and former Chinese premier Zhou Enlai in 1954 to bring the "Indochina war" to an end.

However, it was former French leader Charles De Gaulle's decision in 1964 to establish diplomatic relations with China that opened the way to high-level collaboration between both countries. De Gaulle justified his decision, by saying: "China is gigantic ... To live as if it didn't exist, would be to be blind, especially since it exists more and more."

What a difference from the Joe Bidens and the Antony Blinkens of today! And how right De Gaulle was!

In the 60 years since then, China has become a great power, and the largest economy in the world, if GDP is calculated in terms of purchasing power parity.

As for the changes that have occurred in the past 60 years, bilateral trade increased from \$100 million in 1964 to \$78.9 billion in 2023, France has become the third-largest trade partner of China in the EU, and China the largest trade partner of France in Asia.

The fact that 7,000 French companies are operating in China shows that Sino-French trade and economic ties have not been affected by external factors. Besides, cooperation between the two sides on the ecology and digital technology is deepening. Cultural centers have started a high-level of people-to-people dialogue through local institutions on education and tourism, promoting the enrichment of both civilizations. For example, France and China have 111 pairs of sister cities and provinces, and there are 14 Alliances Française centers in China and 18 Confucius Institutes in France.

To mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of Sino-French diplomatic relations, China and France will offer to their respective nationals the chance to discover the great works of French and Chinese artists, architects, theater personalities, dancers, musicians and filmmakers.

Given the Sino-French history of independence, we can only hope the meeting between the two countries' leaders contributes to world peace. Therefore, this is the right time for other countries to join China in calling for regional and global peace.

[Abridged]

\*The author is editor-in-chief of Nouvelle Solidarité, the organ of the Solidarity.

KING CHARLES III'S OPENNESS ABOUT CANCER HAS HELPED HIM CONNECT WITH PEOPLE

THE BUZZ

King Charles III's decision to be open about his cancer diagnosis has helped the new monarch connect with the people of Britain and strengthened the monarchy in the year since his dazzling coronation at Westminster Abbey.

Charles has used his illness to highlight the need for early diagnosis and treatment, showing leadership at a time of personal hardship. And in the process, people have begun to see him as a more flesh-and-blood character who faces the same challenges as them, not just an archetype of wealth and privilege.

"Ultimately, the great leveler is health," said Anna Whitelock, a professor of the history of the monarchy at City University, London. "And the fact is, the royal family, like so many other families, are coping with a cancer diagnosis. And I think that has ... taken the energy out of big challenges to the king."

Questions still remain. Can a 1,000-year-old inherited monarchy represent the people of modern Britain? How will the institution address concerns about its links to empire and slavery? Should the monarchy be replaced with an elected head of state?

AP PHOTO



A Long March-5 rocket, carrying the Chang'e-6 spacecraft, blasts off from its launchpad at the Wenchang Space Launch Site in Wenchang, south China's Hainan Province, last week

CHINA SENDS A PROBE TO GET SAMPLES FROM THE LESS-EXPLORED FAR SIDE OF THE MOON

CHRISTOPHER BODEEN, TAIPEI

China last week launched a lunar probe to land on the far side of the moon and return with samples that could provide insights into differences between the less-explored region and the better-known near side.

It is the latest advance in China's increasingly sophisticated space exploration program, which is now competing with the U.S., still the leader in space.

China also has a three-member crew on its own orbiting space station and aims to put astronauts on the moon by 2030. Three Chinese lunar probe missions are planned over the next four years.

Free from exposure to Earth and other interference, the moon's somewhat mysterious far side is ideal for radio astronomy and other scientific work. Because the far side never faces Earth, a relay satellite is needed to maintain communications.

The rocket carrying the Chang'e-6 lunar probe — named after the Chinese mythical moon goddess — lifted off Friday at 5:27 p.m. as planned from the Wenchang launch center on the island province of Hainan. About 35 minutes later it

separated entirely from the massive Long March-5 rocket — China's largest — that had slung it into space, as technicians monitoring the launch from ground control smiled and applauded.

Shortly afterward, launch mission commander Zhang Zuosheng took to a podium at the front of the room and said the launch had gone off exactly as planned and the spacecraft was on its set trajectory. "I declare this launch mission a complete success," Zhang said to further applause.

The Philippine Space Agency issued a statement saying expected debris from the rocket launch was "projected to have fallen within the identified drop zones."

China in 2021 was forced to defend its handling of a rocket booster that burned up over the Indian Ocean after the administrator of the American space agency and others accused Beijing of acting recklessly by allowing its rocket to fall to Earth seemingly uncontrolled after the mission.

Huge numbers of people crowded Hainan's beaches to view the launch, which comes in the middle of China's five-day May Day holiday. As with previous recent launches, the event was televised live by state broadcaster CCTV.

After orbiting the moon to reduce speed, the lander will separate from the spacecraft and within 48 hours of setting down it will begin drilling into the lunar surface and scooping up samples with its robotic arm. With the samples sealed in a container, it will then reconnect with the returner for the trip back to Earth. The entire mission is set to last 53 days.

China in 2020 returned samples from the moon's near side, the first time anyone had done so since the former Soviet Union in 1976. Analysis of the samples found they contained water in tiny beads embedded in lunar dirt.

Also in the past week, three Chinese astronauts returned home from a six-month mission on the country's orbiting space station after the arrival of its replacement crew.

China built its own space station after being excluded from the International Space Station, largely because of U.S. concerns over the Chinese military's total control of the space program amid a sharpening competition in technology between the two geopolitical rivals. U.S. law bars almost all cooperation between the U.S. and Chinese space programs without explicit congressional approval. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Japan, India decried remarks by U.S. President Joe Biden describing them as "xenophobic" countries that do not welcome immigrants, which the president said during a campaign fundraising event earlier in last week. Japan said Biden's judgment was not based on an accurate understanding of its policy, while India rebutted the comment, defending itself as the world's most open society.

Germany Friday accused Russian military agents of hacking the top echelons of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's party and other sensitive government and industrial targets, and was joined by NATO and fellow European countries in warning that Russia's cyberespionage would have consequences. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock (pictured) said Russian military cyber operators were behind the hacking of emails of the Social Democrats.

AP PHOTO



Paris A well-known British Palestinian surgeon who volunteered in Gaza hospitals said he was denied entry to France on Saturday to speak at a French Senate meeting about the Israel-Hamas war. Dr. Ghassan Abu Sitta (pictured) was placed in a holding zone in the Charles de Gaulle airport and will be expelled, according to French Sen. Raymonde Poncet-Monge, who had invited him to speak at the Senate. "It's a disgrace," Poncet-Monge posted on X.

AP PHOTO



Brazil Madonna put on a free concert on Copacabana beach Saturday night, turning Rio de Janeiro's vast stretch of sand into an enormous dance floor teeming with a multitude of her fans. It was the last show of The Celebration Tour, her first retrospective, which kicked off in October in London. An estimated 1.6 million people attended the show, G1 reported, citing Rio City Hall's tourism agency. That is more than 10 times Madonna's record attendance of 130,000 at Paris' Parc des Sceaux in 1987.