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LAWMAKER RON LAM WORRIES WITH WAY GOV'T IS RUNNING ITS NEW TALENT RECRUITMENT SYSTEM, WHICH GRANTS RESIDENCY TO QUALIFIED PROFESSIONALS

P4

FIRST TOUR WITH MULTIPLE ENTRY VISAS BETWEEN MACAU AND HENGQIN ARRIVES

P3

GRAFT BUSTER CONCLUDES PUBLIC HOUSING PRICES COMPLY WITH LEGAL PROVISIONS

P3



AP PHOTO



Philippines U.S. Marines and their Filipino counterparts darted out of Black Hawk helicopters during combat drills yesterday in the Philippines' northernmost island town along the strategic Bashi Channel off southern Taiwan. The show of allied battle readiness in Itbayat in Batanes province is part of annual military exercises that started last month, dubbed Balikatan, Tagalog for "shoulder-to-shoulder," and involving more than 16,000 American and Philippine military personnel.

AP PHOTO



USA The judge presiding over Donald Trump's hush money trial fined him \$1,000 yesterday for violating his gag order once again and sternly warned the former president that additional violations could result in jail time. The fine marks the second time since the trial began that Trump has been sanctioned for violating the gag order, which bars him from making incendiary comments about jurors, witnesses and other people closely connected to the case. He was fined \$9,000 last week, \$1,000 for each of nine violations.

'CHARME' OPERATION

At the beginning of a European tour in Paris, President Xi told Macron that 'as two important forces in the world, China and Europe should make new contributions to world peace and development'

P6,7

AP PHOTO



GAMING FIRST
SOUTH KOREAN HIGH ROLLER TAKES TOP SPOT IN GOLDEN WEEK

TOURISM
ALIPAY FUELS SURGE IN OUTBOUND AND INBOUND TRAVEL TO MACAU

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

DEPOSITS DECREASE NEARLY 5%

Currency in circulation and demand deposits dropped 1.5% and 4.7% respectively in March, according to data from the Monetary Authority of Macao, causing M1 to decrease 3.8% from the month prior. Resident deposits remained stable at MOP724.4 billion in light of the preceding month, whereas non-resident deposits decreased 1.8% to MOP316.3 billion. On the other hand, public sector deposits with the banking sector increased 2.5% to MOP192.9 billion. Domestic loans to the private sector grew 0.5% from a month ago to MOP537.4 billion.

Q1: NEW FIRMS RISE TO 1,117

The number of newly incorporated companies in Macau rose by 12 quarter-on-quarter to 1,117 in the first quarter of 2024, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). The number of companies in dissolution decreased by three to 228. The number of companies showed a net increase of 889. Among the newly incorporated companies, 372 were operating in Wholesale & Retail Trade and 339 in Business Services. The total value of registered capital of the new companies fell by 15% quarter-on-quarter to MOP203 million, of which the capital of those engaged in Research, Development & Sale of High-Tech Products and Provision of Information Technology Services totaled MOP47 million (23% of total).

SENIORS' PUBLIC HOUSING PRICE STARTS AT MOP5,400

Units at the elderly public housing are divided into four areas, of which area A has the highest usage fee and area D has the lowest. The usage fees for the four areas range from MOP5,410 to MOP6,370 from the 4th floor to the 21st floor, and from MOP5,670 to MOP6,680 from the 22nd floor to the 37th floor. The deposit amount for each unit is equivalent to the unit's two-month usage fee; the first three-year usage fee for the first batch of more than 1,500 qualified applicants is calculated at a 20% discount on the original price.

CURB CALLS FOR PARTICIPANTS IN PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

The Center for Architecture and Urbanism (CURB) is hosting the third iteration of the Macau Architectural Photography Competition, challenging photography enthusiasts to embark on a journey of rediscovery in Macau. Participants are encouraged to explore the city's buildings and spaces, seeking out evidence of contrast in this architecture. There are two categories available: the open group and the student group. Cash prizes and certificates will be awarded to the winners. The submission deadline for entries to the competition is June 16.

SOUTH KOREAN HIGH ROLLER TAKES TOP SPOT IN GOLDEN WEEK GAMING

STAFF REPORTER

FOR the first time ever, the top player in Macau's premium mass gaming rooms during the Golden Week holiday period was not Chinese. According to a report by Citibank, the biggest spender was a South Korean high roller, Macau's first-ever "player of the month" to be a non-Chinese customer. This further highlights potential progress in the city's efforts to diversify its high-end clientele.

The South Korean player, "apparently taken care of by a Korean host," was among three "whales" – individuals betting HKD100,000 or more per hand – spotted in Galaxy Macau's Horizon Room. All three individuals wagered between HKD250,000 and HKD399,000 during their play.

This shift in demographic comes as Macau actively seeks to attract a wider range of high-end gamblers. While Chinese players still dominate the premium mass market, the presence of a top-spending South Korean player suggests potential inroads in diversifying the customer base.



Overall, the Golden Week holiday period saw a significant increase in gambling activity compared to the same period in 2023. Total wagers were 144% higher, the player count increased by 119%, and wager per player rose by 11% year-on-year.

"Unsurprisingly, Galaxy and Sands China, the two operators with the most hotel rooms, seemed to benefit the most from the holiday crowd," Citi

analysts George Choi and Ryan Cheung noted in their report.

The analysts also observed the first utilization of a new side bet, Small 6/Big 6, recently approved by the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ).

"Based on our observations, Small 6/Big 6 has already become a popular side bet among players because of its high payout," they added.

As Macau continues to di-

versify its gaming market, the presence of high-rolling players from diverse backgrounds, like the South Korean player during Golden Week, could signal a positive shift in the industry's future.

REVENUE TO RISE 6% IN MAY

Analysts at CLSA have forecast the city's gross gaming revenue (GGR) could grow by 6% in May.

CLSA analysts Jeffrey Kiang and Leo Pan estimate GGR will reach MOP19.7 billion for the month. Their outlook falls below the consensus estimate of MOP19.9 billion from analysts polled by Citigroup.

In a recent report, the analysts noted heavy casino foot traffic observed over the Labor Day Golden Week holiday in early May. They visited casinos like Grand Lisboa Palace and saw minimum bets on baccarat tables ranging from MOP1,000 to MOP1,500, as well as higher limits from MOP3,000 to MOP10,000 in private rooms. Morgan Stanley also forecasts Macau's May GGR will reach MOP19.7 billion.

TurboJET plans packages with casinos to boost visitors

STAFF REPORTER

MACAU ferry operator TurboJET is planning to collaborate with the city's six casino operators to increase visitors to the city by offering boat-plus-show ticket packages on Hong Kong routes, according to a director at the company.

Wong Man Chung, a TurboJET director, told Macau Daily News the company is "planning" to collaborate with casinos. Casinos have been investing in non-gaming attractions, like concerts,



in line with the government's goal of building a "city of performing arts."

One operator, Sands China Ltd., already

provides ferry services through its Cotai Water Jet and offers facilities for cultural events. But

Wong provided no details on how ferry-show packages might work. TurboJET is owned by Shun Tak Holdings Ltd., founded by late Macau casino mogul Stanley Ho, and China Travel International. It currently runs over 60 services daily between Hong Kong and Macau. This amount constitutes about half the number of pre-pandemic services; staffing issues limit round-the-clock services, Wong said.

Competition from buses that use the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge persists as a fac-

tor, he added.

In the first quarter of 2022, Macau saw nearly 1.12 million visitor arrivals by ferry, with 42.7% from the mainland and 38.4% from Hong Kong, government data shows. That accounted for 62% of arrivals during the same period in 2019, before the pandemic.

The packages aim to further tap the Hong Kong market and support Macau's economic recovery as it diversifies from casinos towards arts and culture. If realized, they could provide a new model for ferry-casino cooperation.

However, key details, including operator participation, ticket pricing, and launch timelines, remain unclear.

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New multiple entry visas with Hengqin to promote hotel occupancy out of Macau, MGTO says

RENATO MARQUES

THE new measure enforced today, with multiple entry visas to be issued to tour groups from the mainland to visit Hengqin and Macau, aims to promote greater hotel occupancy in Hengqin, the director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Maria Helena de Senna de Fernandes, said to the media on the sidelines of the event that celebrated the arrival of the first tour group to Macau under this new scheme.

"In recent history, or at least in the past four months, our hotels have been registering a high occupancy rate, so I believe that this is a way for us to use more of our hotels in Hengqin, expanding our tourism sources and providing for patrons, through combined itineraries, to stay for longer," Senna Fernandes said. She noted that, while this measure, for the time being, only applies to tour groups from the mainland, work would be done to attract more foreign tourists to Hengqin.

The MGTO director noted that this was not the first time local authorities had collaborated with Hengqin.

"We did this even last week during the MITE (Macao International Travel Industry Expo).



MGTO's Helena de Senna Fernandes welcomes first mainland tour group with multiple entries in Hengqin Port, yesterday

We organized some buyers' groups to stay over in Hengqin and to host these activities in collaboration with Hengqin. This collaborative nature will continue."

According to the MGTO director's statement, the new visa measure completely overhauls the previous policies and direction of the local tourism industry. This industry, in the last few years, has chiefly aimed to extend the short stays of those visiting Macau, in the hope that visitors spend at least one night in the city. This serves to boost

not only the hotel industry but other sectors as well, such as the food and beverage industry and other related services.

NO CAP ON VISITOR ENTRIES

Asked about several other cities and popular tourism destinations enforcing a limit on the number of visiting tourists at any one time, Senna Fernandes said the government is not aiming to establish such practices in Macau.

"I believe that these measures are discriminatory. Macau is a tourism city, and it would not make sense to draw distinctions between those who can enter the city and those who cannot," she said. However, she noted that establishing such a system would not at all be impossible, noting a previous attempt to restrict the number of visitors to Macau. Senna Fernandes claimed that attempt "did not yield good results."

The idea of capping the number of visitors to ensure community safety, as well as the operationality of the city at

several levels, including transportation and crowd control, has been on the agenda for several members of the public. Lawmakers have equally expressed wishes of restricting the free flow of visitors, arguing the city might become overcrowded, negatively impacting locals and Macau's image.

LABOR DAY GOLDEN WEEK FIGURES 'QUITE GOOD'

On the same occasion, the director of MGTO commented on the results obtained during the Labor Day Golden Week that came to an end Sunday.

Senna Fernandes noted that although the number of visitors reached was slightly lower than the forecast (120,879 on daily average instead of 130,000), the result can be considered "quite good, taking into consideration the bad weather that affected not only Macau but the whole Guangdong province" during the five-day holiday.

FIRST TOUR WITH MULTIPLE ENTRY VISAS ARRIVES

THE first mainland tour group granted multiple entries to and from Macau and Hengqin via Hengqin Port arrived yesterday late morning.

Officials from the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) organized a welcoming reception for the group of 16 visitors from Guangdong province.

The MGTO noted this measure will expand the visitor market from the mainland to Macau and Hengqin, benefit the business of travel agencies and the activi-

ties of tour guides on both sides, as well as accelerate integrated development between both the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin and Macau's tourism industry.

According to the MGTO, the group has a three-day and two-night itinerary, including several attractions in Macau and Hengqin. For the two-night stays, one night will be spent in a hotel unit in Macau, while the other night will be spent in Hengqin.

PUBLIC HOUSING

CCAC finds no issues with housing prices

THE Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) investigation into complaints about the Chief Executive's Instruction No. 57/2024 has concluded the instruction's housing pricing and subsidy ratios comply with legal provisions.

The anti-corruption watchdog opened a special investigation after several complaints about the selling prices and subsidies for housing units in Lots B4, B9 and B10 of Zone A. After analysis, CCAC determined the issues raised did not relate to administrative procedures or the legality of

government actions.

"The content of the complaints seems to confuse prerequisites for application approval, such as the applicant's lower monthly income limit, with the housing price standards," the graft buster said in its report disclosed yesterday.

"In fact, there is no legally mandatory linkage between the two."

CCAC said the selection of the minimum monthly income amount for housing applicants, the timing of price announcements, and the market price considered in subsidy rates are all subject to the discretion of

administrative authorities.

When the housing bureau announced the 2019 application requirements, the minimum monthly income for a two-person family was set at 17,680 patacas. For the 2024 price announcements, that figure was updated to 19,270 patacas, as a purchasing power parameter.

"The administrative authorities believe it is appropriate to seamlessly connect the lower limit of income from affordable housing with the upper limit of income from social housing," CCAC said. "The purpose is to comply with

the supplementary principle given by the law to social housing and affordable housing."

Regarding housing subsidies, CCAC found the market prices used in calculations were assessed by three professional property valuers and comprehensively reviewed by the housing bureau. CCAC deemed this a reasonable exercise of administrative discretion.

Looking ahead, The anti-graft watchdog noted the new housing law has shifted the pricing methodology away from purchasing power standards, which can be subjective, towards

a focus on land grant premiums, construction costs, and administrative expenses. This is intended to better align prices with actual costs and reduce potential disputes over subjective factors.

CCAC has submitted its findings to the Chief Executive, closing its investigation whilst advising that continued efforts to inform the public on housing policies and regulations are undertaken.

The commission has recommended that relevant departments provide more early information and education to the public about

Macau's laws surrounding housing, to enhance understanding of the purpose and positioning of public housing initiatives.

Recently, several residents have submitted letters to the CCAC, alleging that the housing prices per square foot in 2019 were unreasonably high with an increase of over 70% compared to the previous period.

They believe the MOP3,300 per square meter price is unreasonable and does not account for purchasers' ability to pay. In that letter, signatories expressed hope CCAC would investigate potential mismanagement by the government administration. The complaint questions whether the more than 70% price rise from the prior period violates housing laws.

LAWYERS ASSOCIATION PLANS DELEGATION TO VISIT PORTUGAL, FOSTER EXCHANGES

THE Macau Lawyers Association will lead a delegation of approximately 18 individuals on a visit to Portugal, scheduled from late June to early July, president Vong Hin Fai announced yesterday in a press conference.

During the visit, there are preliminary arrangements to meet with the Portuguese Lawyers Association, explore arbitration centers, and engage with prominent universities.

Vong stated, "We will take the opportunity to cooperate with the SAR's positioning as a China-Portuguese platform and strengthen cooperation and exchanges with local industries."

Over the past three years, the number of registered lawyers in Macau has remained stable at around 450, while approximately 70 individuals have expressed their intent to cease practicing, many of whom have transitioned to government departments or the judicial sector.

The association currently trains around 25 lawyers annually and aspires to create favorable conditions for expanding Macau's legal scope.

Furthermore, the group has organized a series of Lawyers Day activities, scheduled from May 11 to May 19. On the upcoming Saturday and Sunday (May 18 and 19), a free legal consultation counter will be established on the ground floor of the Macau Business Tourism Centre. Additionally, four mainland lawyers will participate in the event, providing free advisory services to the public. **HT**

CRIME SHOP LOSES MOP18,000, WINDOWS AND DOORS LEFT OPEN

POLICE have apprehended a 34-year-old unemployed man from the mainland at the Border Gate. They suspect him of being involved in the robbery of a shop located at the Ruins of St. Paul's.

The stolen amount was reported to be MOP18,000 in cash.

The suspect was later transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office on charges of aggravated theft. The police said that, in April, a clerk at a handicraft shop reported the theft of MOP18,000 from the store's cash register. Through investigations, the police were able to identify the suspect who entered the store when its doors and windows were left unlocked.

The stolen cash was taken from the cashier before the suspect left Macau through the border crossing. On May 2, the suspect was intercepted upon re-entering the border port and was brought in for questioning.

During the interrogation, the suspect admitted to spending all the stolen money on the mainland.

TALENT RECRUITMENT SYSTEM

RON LAM CALLS FOR MORE TRANSPARENCY AND LOGIC

RENATO MARQUES

LAWMAKER Ron Lam has issues with the way the government is running its new Talent Recruitment System, which grants residency to several categories of qualified professionals based on a series of criteria.

In question is the second phase of this program, which Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng announced mid-April should start this month.

At the same time, the CE noted some changes in the program's second phase to allow applications from non-resident university students who have completed their studies at local tertiary education institutions.

In a written inquiry to the government, Lam expressed his worries, noting the number of unemployed local graduates has been significantly higher over the last few years, contributing significantly to the local unemployment rate.

For this reason, Lam does not see feasibility in

allowing non-resident graduates to apply to the program when local graduates are finding it difficult to enter the job market after concluding their tertiary education studies. Lam noted the general rules of Macau state local graduates should have priority in accessing jobs.

In the same inquiry, the lawmaker also noted that, during a discussion of the rules that legalize the "Talent Recruitment System," when the Legislative Assembly addressed this bill it was stated the government would disclose the types, quantities, industry scope, and educational backgrounds of all those accepted under the program for public information and supervision. Lam claims this has not been done in as clear manner as previously advertised.

Lam wants the government to add transparency to the program and to publish the lists of all those accepted under the scheme, as well as all the criteria that justified the recruitment of



these people, calling also on the officials to make a proper and analytical evaluation of the results of the first phase before "rushing" to launch the second.

The same lawmaker also called on officials to pon-

der measures that would attract local residents working abroad due to lacking opportunities in Macau, instead of striving to attribute residency to those who have no connection to the city at all.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Macau rising temperatures set new April records

HOWARD TANG

THE average temperature in Macau is consistently increasing, and the city has broken three average temperature records for April.

Data from the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau shows that last month, Macau recorded an average monthly temperature of 25.3 degrees Celsius, making it the hottest April on record since data collection began in 1952.

Furthermore, the average maximum and minimum temperatures in April were 28 degrees and 23.4 degrees respectively, surpassing previous records for that month.



Macau is not the only region facing record-breaking temperatures. The Hong Kong Observatory has reported Macau's neighboring SAR also experienced its hottest April, with an average monthly temperature

of 26.4 degrees.

Across Asia, countries like the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia are grappling with unprecedented heatwaves, with temperatures soaring as high as 45 degrees.

South and Sou-

theast Asian countries have been coping with a heat wave lasting several weeks, rendering record high temperatures that have posed a severe health risk.

Umbrellas to shield against the blazing sunlight are popular

and air-conditioned malls are serving as urban oases. Schools in Cambodia have been reducing teaching hours. In the Philippines, India and Bangladesh, officials have told students to stay home and take their lessons remotely.

A UNICEF statement said that in the Asia-Pacific region, "around 243 million children are exposed to hotter and longer heatwaves, putting them at risk of a multitude of heat-related illnesses, and even death."

Further, a report published by local meteorologists earlier this year suggests that the frequency of hot days in Macau could double by the middle of the century. Additionally, international reports indicate the temperature in 2024 may surpass that of 2023, which was already recognized as the warmest year globally.

Alipay fuels surge in outbound and inbound travel to Macau

STAFF REPORTER

AS the world emerges from the shadow of the pandemic, the Chinese tourism market is roaring back to life – and digital payment platforms are playing a central role in fueling this recovery. New data from Ant Group, the parent company of Alipay, offers a glimpse into the tectonic shifts reshaping travel patterns across Asia and beyond.

Alipay, China's digital wallet, saw a remarkable 77% year-over-year surge in overseas transactions during the recent Golden Week holiday.

Total spending by Alipay users also climbed 10% compared to the previous year's holiday period. This surge in outbound travel was led by destinations within the region, with Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, South Korea, the United States and Thailand emerging as the top

RENATO MARQUES



spots for Chinese tourists.

Since Macau, as a gaming and entertainment hub, was hit particularly hard by pandemic restrictions, Macau stands to be a major beneficiary of this travel rebound. Spending in the special administrative re-

gion skyrocketed compared to 2023, as visitors from the mainland flocked back to the world's largest gambling market. Given that mainland tourists typically account for over 80% of Macau's arrivals, this influx is a clear harbinger of the city's

tourism revival.


But the tourism resurgence is not limited to outbound travel from China. Inbound visits to the mainland have also soared, with Alipay data showing a remarkable 700% increase in spending by international tra-

velers. This influx of foreign visitors is expected to further bolster Macau's position as a premier travel destination, given its proximity to the Chinese market and its reputation as a hub for gaming, entertainment and luxury shopping.

Data shows that partnerships between Alipay and regional e-wallet providers, such as the integration of 14 Hong Kong wallets onto the Alipay platform, are enhancing the payment experience for travelers moving between mainland China and nearby destinations. This seamless digital payment continuity is poised to drive increased visitor convenience and spending, whether tourists are traveling from Hong Kong to Macau, or vice versa.

Beyond Macau, the surge in Alipay-facilitated travel is benefiting other regional hubs as well. Thailand saw a 52% increase in Alipay spending, while Malaysia experienced a near-doubling of transactions. The integration of Alipay+ solutions, which support 12 leading e-wallets and payment apps across Asia, is enabling international travelers to pay with their preferred digital wallets at merchants throughout the region, further boosting tourism activity.

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3. Request for Tender Document:	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.
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5. Tender closing time and date:	At 12:00 (noon) on 5 June 2024 (Macau Local Time)

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

ANALYSIS

HUNGARY AND SERBIA'S LEADERS TO ROLL OUT RED CARPET FOR XI DURING EUROPE TOUR

JUSTIN SPIKE &
JOVANA GEC, BUDAPEST

CHINESE leader Xi Jinping will spend the bulk of his five-day tour in Europe this week in two small countries at the continent's eastern half, a region that Beijing has used as a foothold for its expanding economic ambitions in Europe.

Following a stop in Paris to kick off his first European trip in five years, Xi will then travel to Hungary and Serbia, two nations with autocratic leaders that are seen as China-friendly and close to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

As mainstream European leaders have pursued more protectionist policies to limit Beijing and Moscow's reach on the continent, the governments of nationalist conservative leaders Viktor Orbán of Hungary and Aleksandar Vuc of Serbia have vigorously courted economic ties with China, inviting major investments in infrastructure, manufacturing, energy and technology.

As the first European Union country to participate in Xi's signature Belt and Road Initiative, 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.

Tamás Matura, a China expert and associate professor at Corvinus University in Budapest, said that Hungary's hosting of major Chinese investments and production sites — and its agnosticism on doing business with countries with spotty democratic records — has opened a crucial door to China within the EU trading bloc.

"The Hungarian government is the last true friend of China in the whole EU," Matura said. "It is very important now to the Chinese to settle down in a country that is within the boundaries of the EU ... and is friendly to the Chinese political system."

One of the major benefits to China of establishing bases within the EU: avoiding costly tariffs. The European Commission, the bloc's executive arm, is mulling raising duties on the import of Chinese electric vehicles (EVs) from its current 10% to protect the European auto manufacturing market — a mainstay for Ger-

AP PHOTO



Chinese and Serbian flags fly on lampposts, days before the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping in Belgrade

many, the 27-member EU's largest economy.

Yet in December, Hungary announced that one of the world's largest EV manufacturers, China's BYD, will open its first European EV production factory in the south of the country — an inroad into the EU that could upend the competitiveness of the continent's auto industry.

That shift is already visible in Budapest, where one car dealership has begun scaling down its supply of European vehicles and instead introducing models produced by BYD.

Márk Schiller, the strategy and marketing director for the family-owned Schiller Auto Group, said he believes that European carmakers are "already behind" China in transitioning to EV production. His company recently stopped selling cars made by German carmaker Opel, and switched to BYD.

"This was a huge shift," Schiller said.

Unconfirmed reports suggest that during Xi's visit to Hungary from Wednesday to Friday, he and Orbán will announce another EV manufacturing investment involving China's Great Wall Motor. Orbán's office didn't respond to multiple requests for infor-

mation on the schedule of the visit.

In Serbia, to Hungary's south, China runs mines and factories across the Balkan country, while billions more in infrastructure loans have funded roads, bridges and new facilities.

Hungary and Serbia have an agreement with Beijing to modernize the railway between the countries' capitals of Budapest and Belgrade, part of a Belt and Road plan to connect with the Chinese-controlled port of Piraeus in Greece as an entry point for Chinese goods to Central and Eastern Europe.

The bulk of the project, which after numerous delays is expected to be completed in 2026, is financed through loans from Chinese banks — the kind of capital that Hungary and Serbia have been eager to utilize.

According to the AidData research lab at William & Mary, a public university in Virginia, Chinese lenders have issued loans worth more than \$22 billion to nine countries in Central and Eastern Europe between 2000 and 2021.

Of that sum, \$9.4 billion has gone to Hungary and \$5.7 billion to Serbia, dwarfing the totals of other regional countries.

Vuc has said he is "honored" that Xi — whom he often describes as a "friend" — is visiting on Tuesday. He said before the visit that Serbia would seek further Chinese investment, particularly when it comes to advanced technologies.

But economic analyst Mijat Lakievi said he didn't expect any major new investment deals, because "everything that Serbia does with China has already been agreed."

Hungary, too, has created a favorable investment environment for China, providing generous tax breaks, subsidies and infrastructural assistance to Chinese companies, as well as helping them navigate Hungarian bureaucracy.

"They get the red carpets rolled out and they get everything tailor-made by the government. And that is a huge advantage," said Matura, the China analyst.

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.

Orbán's government hopes the factory, run by Chinese battery giant CATL, will make the country a global hub of lithium-ion battery manu-

facturing in an era where governments are increasingly seeking to limit greenhouse gas emissions by switching to electric cars.

Such investments are coming at a time when Hungary's sluggish economy has been further hindered by record-setting inflation and the freezing of billions in EU funding that has been withheld over Orbán's track record on democracy standards and the rule of law.

With EU money at a standstill, Matura said, China has been willing to fill in the gaps in Hungary's budget.

"EU funds have almost come to full stop flowing into the Hungarian economy, so now there is a desperate need in Hungary to turn towards other alternatives, other sources of financial capital," he said.

Orbán has been open about why he has prioritized Chinese investment: his belief that Western economies are declining, and that China is on the rise.

During a recent speech at the CPAC Hungary conservative conference, Orbán outlined a vision of a "global economy that will be organized according to the principle of mutual benefit, free of ideology." **MDT/AP**

DIPLOMACY

Macron sets trade, Ukraine as top priority as President Xi pays a state visit to France

SYLVIE CORBET, PARIS

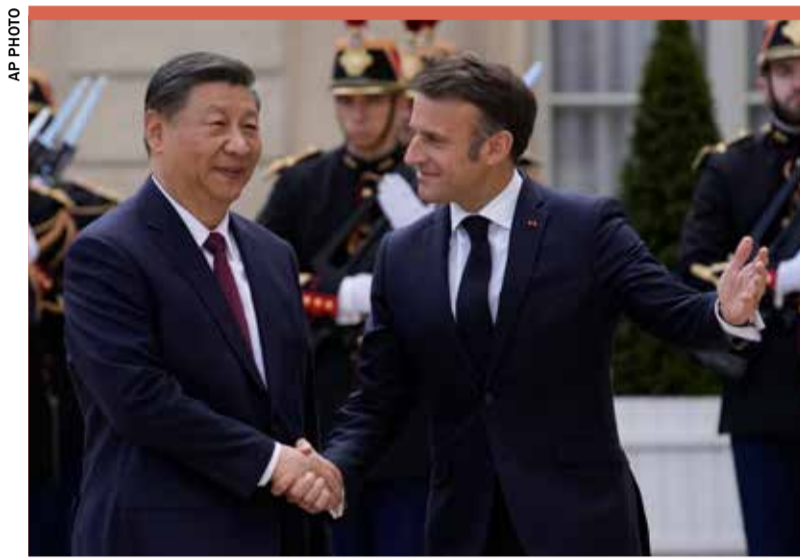
CHINA'S President Xi Jinping arrived at the French presidential palace yesterday for a two-day state visit that is expected to focus both on trade disputes and diplomatic efforts to convince Beijing to use its influence to move Russia toward ending the war in Ukraine.

In Paris, Xi first joined a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen meant to address broader EU concerns. Macron said in his introductory remarks the meeting would first address trade issues and how to ensure "fair competition," then the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East.

"We are at a turning point in our history" as the Europe-China relationship is faced with challenges, Macron said.

The talks are aimed at sharing "both our shared positions and our concerns, to try to overcome them, because the future of our continent will very clearly also depend on our ability to develop balanced relations with China," he said.

Macron, a strong advocate of Europe's economic sovereignty, wants to raise French concerns about a Chinese antidumping investigation into cognac and other European brandy, and tensions over French cosmetics



Bienvenue à Paris, Monsieur Xi!

and other sectors.

At the start of the meeting in Paris, Xi said "the world today has entered a new period of turbulence and change."

"As two important forces in the world, China and Europe should ... continuously make new contributions to world peace and development," he said.

The EU launched an investigation last fall into Chinese subsidies and could impose tariffs on electric vehicles exported from China.

"The European Union and China want good relations," von der Leyen said. "We have a substantial EU-China economic relationship. ... But this relationship is also challenged, for example, through state-induced overcapacity, unequal

market access and overdependencies."

Paris is the first stop on Xi's European trip, seeking to rebuild relations at a time of global tensions. After France on Monday and Tuesday, he will head to Serbia and Hungary.

France hopes the discussions will help convince China to use its leverage with Moscow to "contribute to a resolution of the conflict" in Ukraine, according to a French presidential official. Russian President Vladimir Putin recently announced plans to visit China this month.

Macron will press Xi over supplies from Chinese companies supporting the Russian war effort despite EU sanctions, he said. China claims neutrality in the Ukraine conflict. France

also wants China to maintain a dialogue with Kyiv, added the official, who was not authorized to be identified according to presidential policy.

Last year, Macron appealed to Xi to "bring Russia to its senses," but the call was not followed by any apparent action by Beijing.

"French authorities are pursuing two objectives that are ultimately contradictory," said Marc Julienne, director of the Center for Asian Studies at the French Institute of International Relations. "On the one hand, to convince Xi that it's in his interest to help Europeans to put pressure on Putin to end the war and, on the other hand, to dissuade the Chinese president from delivering arms to his Russian friend."

"In short, we think that Xi can help us, but at the same time we fear that he could help Putin," Julienne wrote.

As France prepares to host the Summer Olympics, Macron said he would ask Xi to use his influence to make the Games "a diplomatic moment of peace."

The discussions will also be closely watched from Washington, a month before President Joe Biden is expected to pay his own state visit to France.

Xi's visit marks the 60th anniversary of France-China diplomatic relations, and follows Macron's trip to China in April 2023. Macron prompted controversy on that trip

after he said France wouldn't blindly follow the U.S. in getting involved in crises that are not its concern, apparently referring to China's demands for unification with Taiwan.

Several groups — including International Campaign for Tibet and France's Human Rights League — urged Macron to put rights issues at the heart of his talks with Xi.

Media watchdog Reporters Without Borders staged a protest in front of the Arc de Triomphe monument to denounce Xi's visit. The group says 119 journalists are imprisoned in the country.

Macron said in an interview published Sunday that he will raise human rights concerns.

A formal ceremony is to take place at the Invalides monument before bilateral talks at the Elysee presidential palace. Macron and Xi will conclude a nearby French-Chinese economic forum and then join their wives for a state dinner.

The second day of the visit is meant to be a more personal moment.

Macron has invited Xi to visit the Tourmalet Pass in the Pyrenees mountains tomorrow, where the French leader spent time as a child to see his grandmother. The trip is meant to be a reciprocal gesture after Xi took Macron last year to the residence of the governor of Guangdong province, where his father once lived. **MDT/AP**

DEFENSE

Australia accuses Chinese fighter jet of 'unsafe behavior'

AUSTRALIA has protested to Beijing that a Chinese fighter jet endangered an Australian navy helicopter with flares in international waters, officials said yesterday.

The incident occurred on Saturday as the Australian air warfare destroyer HMAS Hobart was enforcing United Nations Security Council sanctions against North Korea in international waters in the Yellow Sea, the Defense Department said in a statement.

A Chinese Chengdu J-10 fighter jet released fla-

res in the flight path of an Australian navy Seahawk deployed from the Hobart 300 meters in front of the helicopter and 60 meters above, Defense Minister Richard Marles said.

"This was an incident which was both unsafe and unprofessional," Marles told Nine News television.

"We will not be deterred from engaging in lawful activities and activities which are there to enforce U.N. sanctions in respect of North Korea," Marles added.

There were no injuries or damage, the Defense Department said, adding

the Australian government expressed concerns to the Chinese government. There was no immediate comment from Beijing yesterday.

It was the most serious encounter between the two nations' forces since Australia accused the Chinese destroyer CNS Ningbo of injuring Australian navy divers with sonar pulses in Japanese waters in November last year. Australia said China disregarded a safety warning to keep away from the Australian frigate HMAS Toowoomba.

China maintains that



Australia's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles (left) and Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong

the encounter happened outside Japanese territorial waters and that the Chinese warship caused no

harm.

Chinese President Xi Jinping plans to visit Australia this year for the first

time in a decade as bilateral relations have improved in recent years from unprecedented lows. **MDT/AP**

USA | GEOPOLITICS

As China, Iran allegedly hunt for dissidents, the FBI is racing to counter the threat

ERIC TUCKER,
WASHINGTON

AFTER a participant in the historic Tiananmen Square protests entered a 2022 congressional race in New York City, a Chinese intelligence operative wasted little time enlisting a private investigator to hunt for any mistresses or tax problems that could upend the candidate's bid, prosecutors say.

"In the end," the operative ominously told his contact, "violence would be fine too."

As an Iranian journalist and activist living in exile in the United States aired criticism of Iran's human rights abuses, Tehran was listening too. Members of an Eastern European organized crime gang scouted her Brooklyn home and plotted to kill her in a murder-for-hire scheme directed from Iran, according to the Justice Department, which foiled the plan and brought criminal charges.

The episodes reflect the extreme measures taken by countries like China and Iran to intimidate and sometimes plot attacks against political opponents and activists who live in the U.S. They show the frightening consequences that geopolitical tensions can have for ordinary citizens as governments historically intolerant of dissent inside their own borders are increasingly keeping a threatening watch on those who speak out thousands of miles away.

"We're not living in fear, we're not living in paranoia, but the reality is very clear — that the Islamic Republic wants us dead, and we have to look over our shoulder every day," the Iranian journalist, Masih Alinejad, said in an interview.

The issue has grabbed the attention of the Justice Department, which has built cases against dozens of suspects. Senior FBI officials say the tactics have grown more sophisticated, with countries more willing to cross "serious red lines" from harassment into violence as they seek to project power abroad.

"This is a huge priority for us," said Assistant Attorney General Matthew Olsen, the Justi-



A van parked outside Bob Fu's home in Midland, Texas in the Fall of 2020

ce Department's top national security official.

The trend is all the more worrisome because of an ever-deteriorating relationship with Iran and tensions with China "over everything from trade and theft of intellectual property to election interference."

"A leading culprit," officials and advocates say, has been China. The Chinese Embassy in Washington disputed that the country engages in the practice and said in a statement that the government "strictly abides by international law."

"We resolutely oppose 'long-arm jurisdiction,'" the statement said.

Yet U.S. officials say China created a program to do exactly that, launching "Operation Fox Hunt" to track down Chinese expatriates wanted by Beijing, with a goal of coercing them into returning to face charges.

Though most defendants charged in transnational repression plots are based in their home country, making arrests and prosecutions rare, that particular case led to U.S. convictions of the private investigator and two Chinese citizens.

Bob Fu, a Chinese American Christian pastor whose organization, ChinaAid, advocates for religious freedom in China, said he has endured far-ranging harassment campaigns for years. Large crowds of demonstrators have amassed for days at a time outside his West Texas home in well-coordina-

ted actions he believes can be linked to Chinese entities.

Phony hotel reservations have been made in his name, along with bogus bomb threats to police stating that he planned to detonate explosives. Flyers depicting him as the devil have been distributed to neighbors. He said he's learned to take precautions when he travels.

"I'm not really feeling safe," Fu told AP.

Wu Jianmin, a former student leader in China's 1989 pro-democracy movement, was targeted in 2020 by a group of protesters outside his home in Irvine, California.

"They shouted slogans outside my home and made verbal abuses," he said. "They paraded in the neighborhood, distributed all sorts of pictures and flyers, and put them in the neighbors' mailboxes."

Last year, the Justice Department charged about three dozen officers in China's national police force with using social media to target dissidents inside the U.S. and arrested two men who it says had helped establish a secret Chinese police outpost in Manhattan's Chinatown neighborhood.

The year before, federal prosecutors disclosed a series of wide-ranging plots to silence dissidents.

Besides the little-known and unsuccessful congressional candidate about whom China wanted to dig up dirt, other victims of harassment in the case included American figure skater Alysa Liu and her

father, Arthur, a political refugee who prosecutors say was surveilled by a man who posed as an Olympics committee member and asked them for their passport information.

"We should be under no illusion that somehow these are rogue actors or people that are unaffiliated with the Chinese government," Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, an Illinois Democrat and member of a special House committee on China, said of the Chinese operatives who have been charged.

Alinejad, the Iranian journalist, was targeted even before the Justice Department last year revealed the plot against her involving the organized crime proxies. Prosecutors in 2021 charged a group of Iranians said to be working at the behest of the country's intelligence services with planning to kidnap her.

She remains active as a journalist and activist and says she's determined to keep speaking out. But the details of the crime are chillingly etched in her mind, with the criminal cases laying bare the gravity of the threat.

The FBI disrupted the plot but also encouraged her to move, which she has done. But that also meant saying goodbye to her garden, which had brought her joy as she gave homegrown cucumbers and other vegetables to neighbors.

"They didn't kill me physically, but they killed my relationship with my garden, with my neighbors," she said.

MDT/AP

this day in history

1984 MOSCOW PULLS OUT OF US OLYMPICS



Twelve weeks before the opening ceremony of the Los Angeles Olympic Games, the USSR has announced it is boycotting them. It is expected most of the Eastern Bloc will follow suit.

The announcement, which was made on Russian TV this afternoon, blamed the commercialisation of the games and a lack of security measures, which amounted to a violation of the Olympic charter.

The Soviet Union accused the United States of using the games "for political purposes" and "stirring up anti-Soviet propaganda" and of having a "cavalier attitude to security of Russian athletes".

In 1980 the USA and more than 60 other countries boycotted the Moscow Olympics in protest at the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

The Russians' withdrawal will devalue the Los Angeles Games far more than the US boycott as it seems certain that top-class athletes from the Eastern Bloc will also be prevented from taking part.

The White House denounced the move calling it a "blatant political act".

John Hughes, a State Department spokesman, said the USA had "gone the extra mile" to ensure adequate security measures were in place.

He took the opportunity to attack the USSR for its "barbarous behaviour" in Afghanistan and its persecution of Russian dissidents such as Dr Andrei Sakharov living in forced exile in the Russian town of Gorky.

Moscow has still not officially told the IOC of its boycott but there is little hope that the decision will be reversed.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

With the exception of Romania, the entire Eastern bloc and Cuba joined the boycott - 14 countries in all.

Although a record 140 nations did turn up - including China which had not taken part since 1932 - the level of competition was somewhat lopsided with the absence of so many world-class athletes.

As a result the USA won a record 83 gold medals.

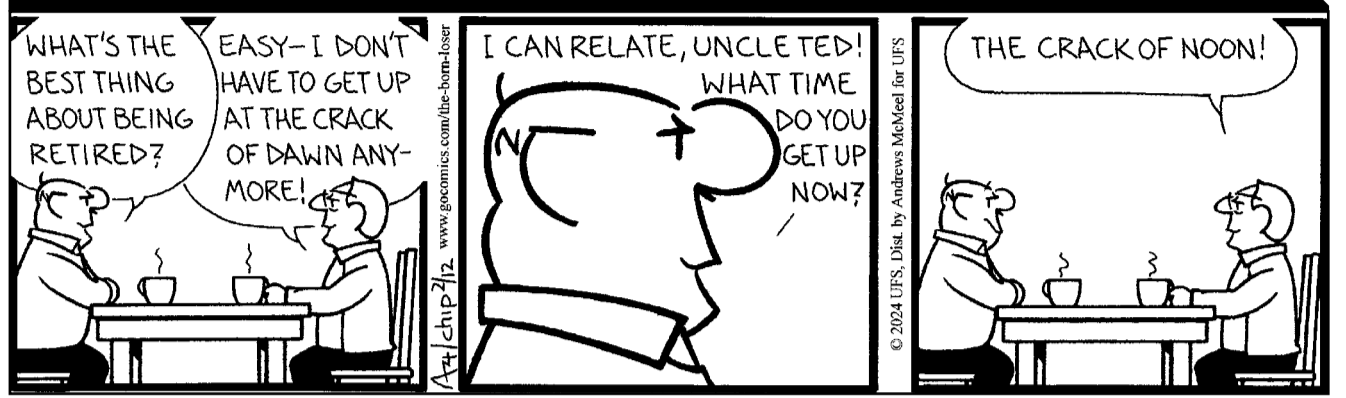
The Los Angeles Summer Games were highly commercialised - they were the first privately financed games ever and made a profit of \$225m thanks to corporate sponsorship and extensive use of unpaid volunteers. Forty-three companies were licensed to sell "official" Olympic products. Los Angeles launched a bid to host the Olympic Games for a record third time in 2012 but the US Olympic Committee chose New York as its candidate. LA will however host the 2006 athletics world cup.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

<p>ARIES  Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Focus on here and now. Unexpected news opens financial opportunities. Prepare to leap. Monitor conditions. Hustle for a lucrative gig. Dreamy results are possible.</p>	<p>TAURUS  Apr. 20-May. 20 You're getting stronger. A personal dream lies within reach. Abandon a preconception. Change what you tell yourself. Try something new. Follow your curiosity.</p>
<p>GEMINI  May. 21-Jun. 21 Your imagination runs wild. Take good notes. Capture your visions and dreams and mold them into action plans. Sort and organize. Inspiration recharges you.</p>	<p>CANCER  Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Pull with your team to take advantage of a lucky break. Quick action can get especially far. A friend's crazy idea could work. Collaborate.</p>
<p>LEO  Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Career opportunities appear unexpectedly. Crazy dreams seem possible. If you can move quickly now you can advance double. Coach your team to victory.</p>	<p>VIRGO  Aug. 23-Sep. 22 Discover fresh terrain. New travel or educational opportunities present themselves. Do the homework. Study, research and explore the options. Coordination saves time and money.</p>
<p>LIBRA  Sep. 23-Oct. 22 Collaborate with your partner. Manage shared financial accounts for growth. An opportunity is worth investigating. Monitor cash flow. Encourage each other into lucrative action.</p>	<p>SCORPIO  Oct. 23-Nov. 21 Join forces with someone clever and interesting. Don't worry about the future. You and a partner can expand your operations. Share the love and goodness.</p>
<p>SAGITTARIUS  Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Disciplined efforts realize dreams. Focus on your work, health and fitness. A goal is within reach. Maintain practices. Nurture yourself with good food and rest.</p>	<p>CAPRICORN  Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Tap into creativity. Advance a passion project. Connect with family and friends. Have fun with people you love. Romance is a distinct possibility.</p>
<p>AQUARIUS  Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Domestic matters take your focus. Share support with your family. Make messes and clean them. Fill your home with love, good food and beauty.</p>	<p>PISCES  Feb. 19-Mar. 20 Creative projects can advance by leaps and bounds. Follow a brilliant hunch. An old dream inspires you again. Communicate changes in real time.</p>

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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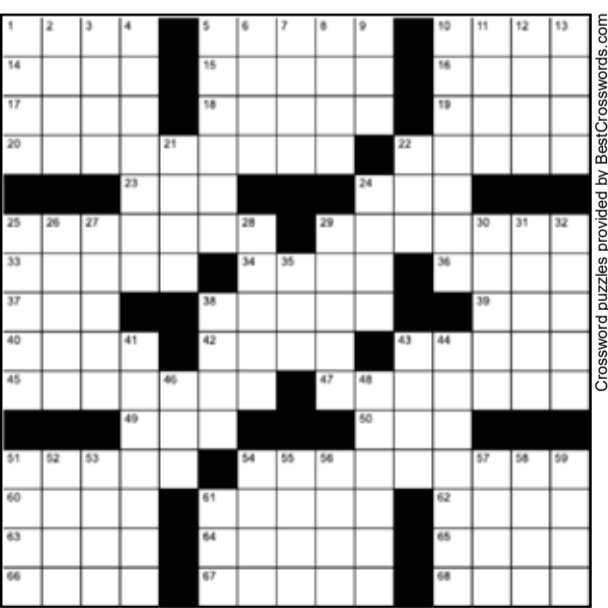
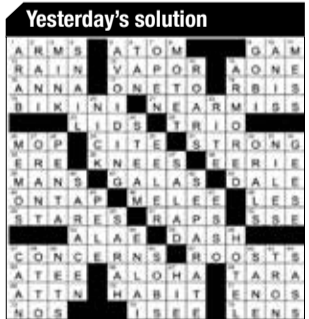
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	14	28	cloudy
Changchun	10	24	fine
Chengdu	17	27	overcast
Chongqing	19	27	overcast
Fuzhou	20	27	overcast
Guangzhou	22	29	thunderstorms
Guiyang	16	20	rain
Haikou	26	33	cloudy
Hangzhou	17	26	rain
Harbin	6	21	fine
Hefei	16	28	fine
Nanjing	17	26	thunderstorms
Shanghai	17	27	rain
Taipei	22	26	rain
Wuhan	18	29	rain
Hong Kong	24	28	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	0	5	rain
Frankfurt	10	18	cloudy
Paris	9	20	cloudy
London	8	19	sunny
New York	15	24	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Church section; 5- Jazz pianist Art; 10- Milky gem; 14- Planted; 15- Wipe off; 16- Appraise; 17- Get better; 18- Insurgent; 19- Diner orders; 20- Disconcert; 22- Shoot for; 23- Kanga's kid; 24- Gallery offering; 25- Republic in central Europe; 29- Fugitive; 33- Willow branch; 34- Snake-like fishes; 36- In ___ land; 37- Feel bad about; 38- Washbowl; 39- ___ Safari (Haile Selassie); 40- Pouches; 42- Exxon predecessor; 43- Starbucks order; 45- Rudimentary component; 47- Locks; 49- Canadian prov.; 50- Small batteries; 51- Best of the best; 54- Game bird; 60- Pulverize potatoes; 61- Nun wear; 62- Chimney residue; 63- Silent performer; 64- Licorice-like flavoring; 65- Jog; 66- Super server; 67- Unit just above a yard; 68- Capital of Yemen;

DOWN 1- 1968 U.S. Open champ; 2- Composition in verse; 3- Large mop; 4- Blow up; 5- Abject fear; 6- Base times height; 7- Bar bills; 8- Applications; 9- Actor Gibson; 10- Describing the path of a satellite; 11- Inner surface of the hand; 12- ___ boy; 13- ___ we forget...; 21- Jungle warning; 22- Circle segment; 24- Org.; 25- Stallion, e.g.; 26- Run-of-the-mill; 27- Bridget Fonda, to Jane; 28- You can get a rise out of it; 29- "Silas Marner" author; 30- Components; 31- Overjoy; 32- Alleviates; 35- Serpentine shape; 38- Crooked; 41- Suffocate; 43- Cordelia's father; 44- Aids; 46- Vane dir.; 48- Hunting cat; 51- Madame Bovary; 52- Not of the cloth; 53- Woe ___; 54- Window piece; 55- Some; 56- Greet the judge; 57- "David Copperfield" wife; 58- Continue; 59- Jazzy James; 61- Stage hog;



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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 <p>Va Fat HKD 3,780,000 2 bed 1 bath</p>	 <p>Tou Un HKD 2,980,000 1 bed 1 bath</p>	 <p>Jade Garden HKD 11,880,000 4 bed 3 bath</p>
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BADMINTON

DOUBLE DELIGHT FOR CHINA WITH WINS IN BOTH UBER AND THOMAS CUPS

CHINA underlined its badminton supremacy as it beat Indonesia in the final of both the Uber Cup and Thomas Cup last weekend.

China, which lost the women's Uber final to South Korea in Bangkok two years ago, routed Indonesia 3-0. Indonesia was playing its first final since 2008.

Olympic champion Chen Yu Fei provided China with a perfect start when she defeated Gregoria Mariska Tunjung 21-7, 21-16. The Chinese pair of world No. 1 Chen Qing Chen and Jia Yi Fan then outplayed Siti Fadia Silva Ramadhanti and Ribka Sugiarto 21-11, 21-8 for a commanding 2-0 lead.



China's Chen Yu Fei holds up the Uber Cup after leading Team China 3-0 to win over Team Indonesia in the final of the Uber Cup held in Chengdu

Teenager Ester Nurumi fought hard for Indonesia before He Bing Jiao recovered to win 10-21, 21-15, 21-17.

"Last time it was a shame that we couldn't win

the Uber Cup, so over the last two years we were always ready, and we were playing at home," said He.

China ended its six-year wait to reclaim the

Thomas Cup as it beat 14-time champion Indonesia 3-1.

No. 2-ranked Shi Yu Qi gave China a blazing start with his dominating 21-17, 21-6 win over Anthony Sinisuka Ginting.

"I have a lot of responsibility and pressure as captain, but fortunately I made a good start," Shi said after his win in 43 minutes.

Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang doubled the lead when the Chinese pair beat Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Rian Ardianto 21-18, 17-21, 21-17 in just over an hour.

Jonatan Christie then gave Indonesia glimmer of hope with a 21-16, 15-21, 21-17 win over Li Shi Feng before He Ji Ting and Ren Xiang Yu ran away with a 21-11, 21-15 win over Muhammad Shohibul Fikri and Bagas Maulana in straight sets to give China its 11th Thomas Cup title in the biennial tournament.

It was the first time since 2012 that the same countries played in both the men's and women's finals. MDT/AP

GOLF

Adrian Otaegui makes up five shots to win China Open

ADRIAN Otaegui overturned a five-shot deficit to win the China Open over the weekend, the Spanish golfer's fifth tour title.

Otaegui had been trailing the in-form Sebastian Söderberg after Friday's round - Saturday's was cancelled because of thunder and lightning - and he shot 7-under 65 in his final round to win by one shot from Guido Migliozzi, who finished runner up with a 67.

"I was starting five shots back and I tried not to look at the leaderboard, not think about the result,"

Otaegui said. "I knew if I had birdie chances that I could potentially hole a few. I think I was actually feeling more calm through the round."

The No. 143-ranked Otaegui stayed flawless and holed seven birdies to finish at 18 under par overall. He earned a spot in the PGA Championship later this month.

Söderberg finished in third alongside Englishman Paul Waring and Switzerland's Joel Grrrbach at 16 under.

The China Open was back on the European tour schedule after an absence of five years. MDT/AP

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IN MACAU (2023)



FOOTBALL

Mbappé plays his final CL game in Paris with PSG, defense is in the spotlight

No doubt Kylian Mbappé will be greeted with loud cheers and applause when he takes to the Parc des Princes pitch today [Wednesday, 02:45].

It will be his final Champions League match in the French capital in a Paris Saint-Germain shirt.

Mbappé is leaving the club this summer after a seven-season stint, hoping that the journey concludes with a Champions League triumph in Wembley on June 1.

But first things first as Mbappé tries to engineer a fightback in the second leg of their semifinal against Borussia Dortmund, trailing 1-0 from the first leg in Germany last week.

The France striker was a disappointment in the first leg and PSG now expects a strong reaction from the club's all-time leading scorer to overturn the deficit, especially after he failed to score in his last two appearances against Dortmund.

"We're confident we'll come back from that score and qualify for the final," Mbappé said on Sunday, as



quoted by French media.

In support of Mbappé, PSG has plenty of firepower upfront, with the likes of Ousmane Dembele, Bradley Barcola, Gonçalo Ramos or Randal Kolo Muani available.

Coach Luis Enrique has more worries in defense after former Bayern Munich defender Lucas Hernandez was ruled out for the remainder of the season with an anterior cruciate ligament rupture that required surgery.

The injury was a tough blow for PSG, which has conceded 14 goals in the competition this season but finally stabilized the heart of its defense with the pairing of Marquinhos and Hernandez.

After Hernandez came off injured last week against Dortmund and was replaced by Lucas Beraldo, the Brazilian substitute's lack of experience was obvious.

Luis Enrique will, however, have

to consider giving him a starting role, or put his trust in Milan Skriniar, who is back from injury and lacks both competition and rhythm. Another option would be to pair Danilo Pereira with Marquinhos to add strength and presence in the air, particularly on Dortmund's set pieces.

Solid defending will again be crucial for PSG, which faces a team with great attacking qualities and 11 different scorers on the European stage this season.

The winner will play Real Madrid or Bayern Munich in the final in London. The old rivals drew 2-2 in their semifinal first leg in Germany.

PSG, which enjoyed a rest day over the weekend after wrapping up the French league title, has never won Europe's top club competition. Dortmund claimed the 1997 title.

MDT/AP

CHAMPION'S LEAGUE

	Date	Time	Home	Away	ODDS
Wed	May 8	03:00	PSG	Borussia Dortmund	H 1.5, D 5, A 7.5
Thu	May 9	03:00	Real Madrid	Bayern Munich	H 1.91, D 4, A 4.25

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OPINION

THE CONVERSATION

Ted Olson, East Tennessee State University



BEETHOVEN'S NINTH SYMPHONY AT 200: A REVOLUTIONARY WORK OF ART

In early 1824, 30 members of Vienna's music community sent a letter to Ludwig van Beethoven petitioning the great composer to reconsider his plans to premiere his latest work in Berlin and instead debut the symphony in Vienna.

Beethoven had lived in Vienna since 1792, when he left his hometown of Bonn, Germany, to pursue a career as a composer. Beethoven rose to world renown, but by the 1820s he had fallen out of favor with Viennese arts patrons who, at the time, were drawn to the sounds and styles of Italian composers.

Beethoven had not appeared before a Viennese audience in a dozen years, but he was moved by the letter's sentiment and agreed to debut his new work, Symphony No. 9 in D minor, in the city. The premiere performance was on May 7, 1824, at Kärntnertor Theater.

Concert promoters promised the public that the legendary – and legendarily antisocial – composer would be present at the performance of his latest symphony. Indeed, during the entirety of the performance, he was on stage, his back to the audience, as described by Maynard Solomon in his acclaimed biography of Beethoven.

The composer insisted upon conducting the symphony from a conductor's stand. The official conductor at the concert, Michael Umlauf, had instructed the musicians – a Viennese orchestra and choir – to ignore Beethoven, who was completely deaf and who theoretically could not be relied upon to keep time.

The performance was interrupted several times by rapturous applause from the approximately 2,000 attendees, but Beethoven could not hear the reaction. According to eyewitnesses, the composer “threw himself back and forth like a madman” and fell several bars behind in his “conducting.”

The enthusiastic response to the symphony's debut performance presaged its reception in the European music community, globally and across time.

Symphony No. 9, sometimes referred to as the Choral Symphony, was the capstone to Beethoven's extraordinary career. In the 200 years since its debut, the symphony has become an essential composition in the orchestral repertoire and is often cited as the crowning achievement of Western classical music.

A central reason for the symphony's accessibility to a broad audience was Beethoven's incorporation of the 1785 poem “An die Freude,” or “Ode to Joy,” by Friedrich Schiller, a leading German author, historian and philosopher. Matched to a memorable melody in the fourth movement, this text – with its uplifting, humanitarian sentiment – contributed to the symphony's character as an anthem.

Widely interpreted as Beethoven's plea for a global “brotherhood,” the fourth movement has been incorporated into ceremonial events sponsored by international organizations such as UNESCO, the Olympics, the Council of Europe and the European Union. Given the work's fame the Ode to Joy section of the symphony has also been appropriated for propaganda by supporters of Nazism, Bolshevism, Maoism and other ideologies.

Symphony No. 9 is extraordinary in many ways, according to Teddy Abrams, music director of the Louisville Orchestra and a Grammy Award-winning conductor.

The Ninth Symphony was not the first long piece of music at the time, but the others were generally built by stringing together many shorter sequences. In contrast, Beethoven crafted the Ninth Symphony – a 74-minute work – out of just four long movements. “The proportions alone are staggering,” Abrams said in an interview for this article.

Each of the Ninth's four movements is a single cohesive, coherent musical statement. This, more than the innovation of using a chorus in a symphony, was what made Beethoven's Ninth revolutionary, according to Abrams.

[Abridged]

The Pulitzer Prizes are set to be announced today (Macau time), traditionally the most anticipated day of the year for those hoping to earn print journalism's most prestigious honor.

Along with honoring winners and finalists in 15 journalism categories, the Pulitzer Board also recognizes distinguished work in areas including books, music and theater.

The awards, which will honor work from 2023, are scheduled to be announced via livestream at 3 p.m. Eastern time.

While forecasting potential winners is a guessing game, the Pulitzers often go to coverage of the year's biggest stories. In this case, the Oct.

7 attack on Israel and subsequent war in Gaza is a possibility and may engender controversy.

With the Committee to Protect Journalists estimating at least 97 journalists and media workers have been killed in Gaza, many observers will be interested to see if the Pulitzers recognize work by Palestinian reporters.

The prizes are administered by Columbia University in New York, which itself has been in the news for student demonstrations against the war in Gaza. The Pulitzer board met away from Columbia this past weekend to deliberate on its winners.

AP PHOTO



In this photo provided by the Prado Museum in Madrid, Caravaggio's “Ecce Homo” is pictured

SPAIN'S PRADO MUSEUM CONFIRMS REDISCOVERY OF LOST CARAVAGGIO

CIARÁN GILES, MADRID

SPAIN'S Prado Museum confirmed that a painting that was due to be auctioned in Madrid in 2021 is in fact a work by Italian Baroque master Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio that was considered lost. It will be unveiled to the public for the first time in the museum later this month.

The Prado said in a statement yesterday the work titled “Ecce Homo” (Latin for Behold The Man) will go on display from May 27 until October as a special one-piece exhibition following an agreement with its new owner, who has not been identified.

“Since its reappearance at an auction three years ago, Ecce Homo has represented one of the greatest discoveries in the history of art,” the museum said.

“Painted by the great Italian artist around 1605-09 and believed to have once been part of the private collection of Phillip IV of Spain, the painting is one of around only 60 known works by Caravag-

gio in existence, and thus one of the most valuable old master artworks in the world,” the Prado added.

In April 2022, Spanish authorities halted an auction of the work, which was then attributed to a disciple of a 17th-century Spanish painter, José de Ribera. They also put an export ban on it after the museum alerted the government it could be a Caravaggio.

The painting was due to be auctioned with a starting price tag of 1,500 euros (\$1,600).

The value of an authentic Caravaggio would stretch into tens of millions of euros (dollars), if not more.

Prado Museum Director Miguel Falomir said that since then the owners carried out studies and proceeded with the painting's restoration, which led to the discovery “that it is, in fact, a work by Caravaggio and a work that arrived in Spain in the 17th century.”

He said that since the 19th century it had been in the hands of a family in Madrid who recently sold

it to an individual who wanted the public presentation to take place in the Prado Museum.

“For our part, we are more than happy to be the stage to present this new unshown work of Caravaggio to the public and critics,” Falomir said in a video statement released by the museum.

The oil-on-canvas work depicts the Biblical passage of the Ecce Homo, in which Jesus Christ is presented to the crowds before being crucified. The work measures 111 by 86 centimeters.

Although now owned by a private individual, the painting will not be allowed to leave Spain without government permission.

The Prado said that since April 2021, the work has been under the custodianship of the Colnaghi art gallery in collaboration with experts. The painting was restored by specialist Andrea Cipriani and his team under the supervision of experts from the Madrid regional government.

AP PHOTO



Panama José Raúl Mulino (pictured), the stand-in for former President Ricardo Martinelli in Panama's presidential election, was set to become the new leader of the Central American nation as authorities unofficially called the race Sunday night after his three nearest rivals conceded. The 64-year-old former security minister had nearly 35% of the votes with more than 92% of the votes counted, giving him a nine-point lead over his nearest competitor.

AP PHOTO



Mexico Relatives have identified three bodies found in a well as those of two Australian surfers and one American who went missing last weekend. Baja California state prosecutors said the relatives had viewed the corpses recovered from a remote well about 50 feet deep and recognized them as their loved ones. Thieves apparently killed the three to steal their truck because they wanted the tires. They then allegedly got rid of the bodies by dumping them in a well near the coast.

AP PHOTO



Cinema Actor Bernard Hill, who delivered a rousing cry before leading his people into battle in “The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King” and went down with the ship as the captain in “Titanic,” has died. Hill, 79, passed away Sunday. Hill joined “The Lord Of The Rings” franchise in the second film of the trilogy, 2002's “The Two Towers,” as Théoden, King of Rohan. The following year, he reprised the role in “Return of the King,” a movie that won 11 Oscars.