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KOREAN AIR WILL LAUNCH NEW DAILY SEOUL-MACAU FLIGHTS BEGINNING JULY 1, THE LATEST ADDITION OF THE AIRLINE EXPANDING ROUTES' NETWORK IN ASIA

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MACAU TAKES STRIDES TOWARDS INTELLIGENT CATERING WITH SUPPORT INITIATIVES

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XINHUA

AP PHOTO



Australia Prime Minister Anthony Albanese yesterday rejected China's argument that Australia was responsible for a dangerous weekend encounter between their military aircraft in international airspace over the Yellow Sea. Both China and Australia lodged official protests and blamed each other for a Chinese warplane's extraordinary use of flares against an Australian navy helicopter on Saturday.

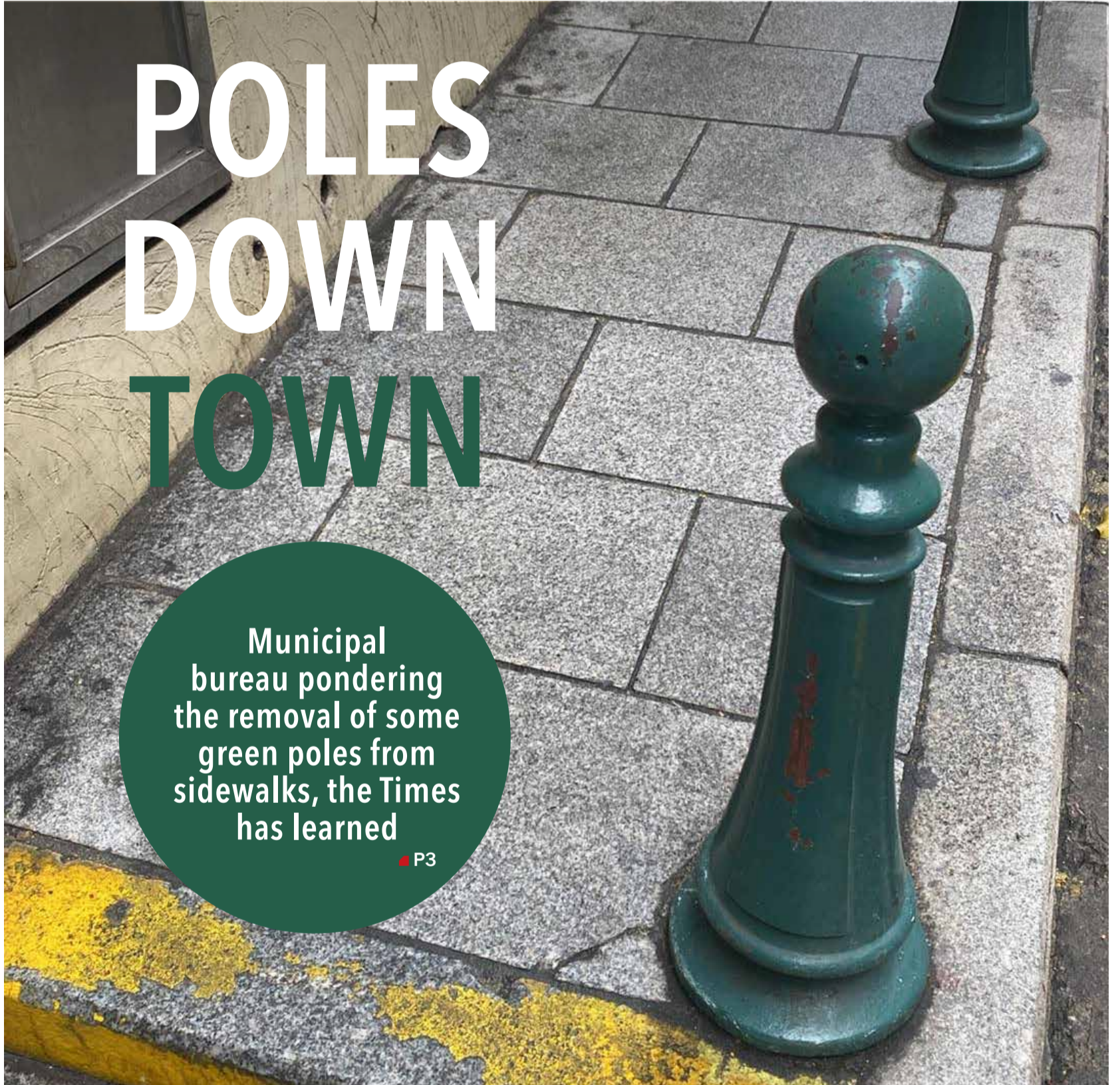
AP PHOTO



Cambodia's Defense Ministry insisted that the months-long presence of two Chinese warships in a strategically important naval base that is being newly expanded with funding from Beijing does not constitute a permanent deployment of the Chinese military in the country. Current satellite images confirm that the two ships remained there yesterday, more than five months since they initially appeared.

Pakistan The Taliban yesterday rejected claims of Afghan involvement in recent attacks in Pakistan, calling it "irresponsible and far from the reality." Pakistan's military said a suicide bombing that killed five Chinese engineers and a Pakistani driver in March was planned in neighboring Afghanistan and that the bomber was an Afghan citizen. Maj. Gen. Ahmad Sharif, a spokesman for Pakistan's army, has said that four men behind the March 26 attack in Bisham had been arrested.

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POLES DOWN TOWN

Municipal bureau pondering the removal of some green poles from sidewalks, the Times has learned

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STATUES OF IDENTITY

Gov't should extend efforts to maintain statues which are part of city's own identity: advisor

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RENATO MARQUES



GAMING WYNN EXTENDS STRONG MOMENTUM TO FIRST QUARTER

P4

PROPERTY PRICES CONTINUE DECLINE

Macau's overall residential property price index dropped 3.2% in the first quarter of 2024 compared to the previous quarter, according to data released by the Statistics and Census Service. Both the Macau Peninsula and Taipa/Coloane saw declines, falling 3.5% and 1.8% respectively. Existing unit prices dipped 3.3% overall, with the peninsula and Taipa/Coloane down 3.1% and 3.6%. Meanwhile, pre-sale unit prices rose slightly by 0.3%. On a quarterly basis, the overall index fell 1.3%, led by a 1.7% decline on the peninsula. Prices were down across age groups and floor areas.

BNU PROFITS RISE IN Q1

Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU) reported an after-tax profit of MOP163.2 million for the first quarter of 2022, an increase of MOP40.9 million from the same period last year. The bank attributed the gain to a 7.1% rise in net interest income and higher profits from financial operations. BNU saw its net loan impairment costs decrease sharply. However, investments in digitalization, staffing and advertising meant operating expenses grew despite cost-cutting efforts. BNU said these investments aim to boost customer experience and position the bank for long-term growth.

MPU LAUNCHES NEW TCM COURSES

In a bid to popularize the understanding and health cultivation of traditional Chinese medicine, the Centre for Continuing Education at Macao Polytechnic University is now offering the following courses in these areas: "Traditional Chinese Medicine and Health Management," "Health Cultivation of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Pain Management," and "Applying Traditional Chinese Medicine in Comprehensive Conditioning." These courses will be taught by a Macau-registered Chinese medicine practitioner and applications by interested individuals are now encouraged.

MACAU TAKES STRIDES TOWARDS INTELLIGENT CATERING WITH SUPPORT INITIATIVES

STAFF REPORTER

THE Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) has been spearheading the transformation of the city's catering industry, implementing a multifaceted approach to promote the adoption of intelligent technologies.

According to Lei Iam Leong, president of the Macau Catering Industry Association, the current ratio of intelligent equipment usage in the local catering industry stands at 6:4, with 60% still relying on manual labor. However, Lei believes that the integration of intelligent technology in the catering industry is an inevitable future trend, as the use of smart machines can help businesses reduce labor costs and redirect their focus towards enhancing the dining experience, such as through innovative dish design or maintaining an inviting ambiance, as cited in a report by Exmoo.

To support this transforma-



tion, the bureau has expanded the "2024 Digital Support Service for Small and Medium Enterprises" program, increasing the number of available spots to 600, split across two phases.

The program is open to businesses in the retail, catering, life services, wholesale and manufacturing sectors, providing them with comprehensive support, including digital operations aware-

ness training, operational model diagnosis and access to free digital solutions worth up to 18,000 patacas.

For DSED, the goal is to help local catering operators understand the current landscape of smart catering equipment and promote the upgrading and transformation of traditional catering stores through the integration of intelligent technology.

The ongoing "Smart Upgrading Solutions Exhibition for the Catering Industry" showcased the benefits of smart catering equipment, with exhibitors highlighting improvements in work efficiency, service quality and operational safety. Lei noted that the use of smart devices can reduce electricity and fuel consumption by up to 40% while also mitigating safety hazards in the kitchen, allowing businesses to focus more on front-end services and enhancing their overall competitiveness.

The smart catering equipment displayed at the exhibition will be relocated to the Commercial and Trade Cooperation Service Platform Complex between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries, where it will be on continuous display from May to July.

This move aims to further promote the adoption of intelligent technologies throughout Macau's catering industry, ensuring that local businesses have ample opportunities to explore and integrate cutting-edge solutions.

CRIME

University student caught smuggling THC and marijuana gummies at airport

HOWARD TONG

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) reported that yesterday they detained a 23-year-old male university student of Thai nationality due to his suspicious behavior in the arrivals terminal of the Macau International Airport.

The police immediately seized the suspect's luggage and conducted an examination, the PJ announced in a press conference yesterday.

During the examination, the X-ray image showed that the contents of the suspect's luggage had a moderate density, si-

milar to regular passenger luggage.

However, upon further inspection, it was revealed that the suitcase contained 31 bags of transparent plastic bags, including vacuum-sealed packaging bags containing cannabis, weighing approximately 10kg. Additionally, four bottles of THC-containing marijuana gummies, weighing about 110g each, totaling 60 gummies were also found. In total, the narcotics was confiscated with a total value of MOP10.8 million.

The suspect admitted that he had received money from a drug trafficking

group in Thailand and received these drugs at the Thai airport to be smuggled into Macau.

After arriving in Macau, he needed to transport the narcotics via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge to his final destination, Hong Kong.

Further questioning as to his modus operandi and the details of his employer was fruitless, as the suspect remained unresponsive.

The police said that the man was suspected of illegally selling narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and was transferred to the Public Prosecutions

Office for processing. A spokesperson from the PJ confirmed a follow-up investigation is ongoing and further details may emerge as the case progresses.

UNDECLARED HKD1.2 MILLION

A male mainland resident was apprehended by Gongbei customs officers while attempting to illegally enter the mainland from Macau with HKD1.2 million in cash.

The individual utilized the "nothing to declare" pathway at the Border Gate and traveled in a vehicle with cross-border licensed plates. He was

observed carrying a bag across his chest and was behaving suspiciously. The customs officers conducted an inspection and discovered the cash wrapped together tightly with rubber bands.

Gongbei customs advises travelers to actively declare any foreign currency cash that exceeds the value of USD5,000 (over MOP40,000) when entering the mainland. For subsequent entries within a 15-day period, the limit for foreign currency cash is set at USD1,000 (over MOP8,000). Amounts over these limits must be declared.

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Times

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For subscription and general issues:

general@macaudailytimes.com | Printed at Welfare Printing Ltd

IAM to study feasibility of removing some green poles from sidewalks

RENATO MARQUES

THE Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) is evaluating the feasibility of removing some bollards from the streets, mainly in the central district and other busy areas of the city where narrow sidewalks make pedestrian traffic difficult.

In response to an enquiry from the Times, the IAM noted, "The metal railings and pillars installed on the pavements in Macau are mainly for distinguishing pavements and roadways. Their other functions are to reduce impact force and prevent illegal parking of cars occupying the pavements."

The bureau noted that the railings and pillars were installed "after comprehensive consideration of actual environmental conditions."

It acknowledged that the "limited space of streets in the old districts and the locations of lanes and buildings have resulted in narrower and discontinuous pavements that may have different widths, making it difficult to meet the needs of all parties, such as those with baby strollers, wheelchair users, tourists, shop owners,



and so on."

As the IAM is responsible for the management of public roads as well as maintenance work,

improvement and optimization of public roads and related facilities, it is said to be taking that matter into account and car-

rying out research.

A Macau-born resident in his 60s, interviewed by the Times and requesting not to be named, had

previously informed the Times that the majority of the bollards in the central district had been placed in the late 1970s and early 1980s to prevent illegal parking of vehicles, which, he said, "was a very common issue at the time."

"Nowadays I don't think these poles are of any use anymore. They cannot effectively prevent any harm to pedestrians. As you can see, they can be pushed to the ground by hand and they take up a lot of [precious] space from the pedestrian walking zone, particularly on days with a lot of tourist traffic — and nowadays that's every day," the same resident said to the Times.

The resident, who also rents a commercial space in the area of the Rua de Pedro Nolasco da Silva, added that the "IAM [should consider removing the [bollards] on the side of the street in which the sidewalk is very narrow, between the corner across the old Capitol Theatre and the Consulate-General of Portugal in Macau, as well as the lower portion of the Calçada do Monte to, at least, allow people to walk more freely and without hitting each other, since it's impossible to fit a wheelchair or a baby stroller here and people need to go on the road out of necessity," he concluded.

In its statement to the Times, the IAM noted that the bureau always "strives to improve the overall environment of Macau and to provide a safe environment for the public to enjoy easy mobility."

Gov't should extend efforts to maintain all emblematic statues: Community Advisor

RENATO MARQUES

CENTRAL District Community Advisory Board member António Monteiro wants the government to extend its efforts in maintaining, cleaning and repairing statues and monuments of all public artifacts, especially those with significant cultural and historical value.

In a speech delivered yesterday at the Central District Community Advisory Board meeting, Monteiro noted that, while the government has recently expended significant effort to repair some monuments and statues, such as the Statue of Goddess Kun Iam in NAPE and the "Gate of Understanding" (Porta do Entendimento), some others re-

main in poor condition.

"Macau's statues and monuments are part of the memory and identity of its residents, as well as important cultural attractions for visitors to the city," Monteiro said, noting a list of other statues and monuments requiring urgent attention.

Among these is the Statue of Jorge Álvares, regarded as the first European to have reached China by sea, the image of Our Lady of Fátima at Estrada de D. Maria II, and the statues and memorial monuments to José dos Santos Ferreira (Adé), Vasco da Gama in Vasco da Gama Garden, and Xian Xinghai.

Without presenting an exhaustive list, Monteiro noted that these and many others have



received little to no attention in recent years, appearing in states inconsistent with their importance, as well as their importance to Macau's diverse communities.

In addition to improving maintenance, Monteiro also called for better information and promotion of the monuments to visitors and locals. "They are part of

Macau's memory and culture," he said, "as well as important cultural attractions in Macau, showcasing the harmony between Macau, China, and Portugal."

LRT COLLISION DURING TEST AT SEAC PAI VAN LINE

DURING the testing of trains on the Seac Pai Van LRT line, two trains collided at Union Hospital Station early yesterday, resulting in injuries to four train drivers. Three of the injured drivers underwent immediate examination at the hospital and were discharged shortly afterwards, while the fourth was discharged in the morning following further examination.

The accident has raised significant concerns, according to the Public Works Bureau. While initial investigations suggest that it was not a collision from behind while the train was in motion, investigators have not ruled out the possibility of human error as the cause of the incident. As a result of the incident, all testing on the Seac Pai Van and Hengqin lines has been temporarily halted. **HT**

GAMING

WYNN POSTS STRONG Q1 RESULTS AND PLACES FOCUS ON NEW PROJECTS

STAFF REPORTER

WYNN Macau Ltd. reported a 14.3% increase in adjusted property earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, amortisation, and restructuring or rent costs (EBITDAR) in the first quarter of 2024, reaching USD339.6 million as the casino operator's Macau properties continued to see strong momentum.

The Macau operations of U.S.-based Wynn Resorts Ltd. generated operating revenues of USD998.6 million in the first quarter, a 9.7% increase over the previous quarter and a 66.4% jump from a year earlier. Wynn Palace in Cotai remained the best-performing property, with operating revenues of USD586.9 million and adjusted property EBITDAR reaching USD202.4 million, up 11.9% and 18.3% quarter-on-quarter, respectively.

"The strong momentum we experienced in our business throughout 2023 continued to build during the first quarter with Adjusted Property EBITDAR reaching a new all-time record," said Wynn Resorts CEO Craig Billings. "The investments we have made in



our properties, our team and our unique programming continue to extend our leadership position in each of our markets," Billings said.

The group's Wynn Macau property on the Macau peninsula also saw a surge, with operating reve-

nues climbing 6.6% to USD411.7 million and adjusted property EBITDAR up 9% to USD137.2 million.

"In the casino, our mass drop per day in April increased 30% versus April 2019. And on the non-

-gaming side, our hotel occupancy was 99%. Overall, strong top-line performance, combined with disciplined [operating expense] control drove healthy margins during April," Billings commented in an earnings call with analysts.

The CEO also remarked that the group is pleased with its results during May Golden Week, particularly in light of unfavorable weather in the region.

In the casino, mass drop per day increased 30% versus the comparable 2019 holiday period and approached levels seen last Chinese New Year.

"On the development front in Macau, we began initial demolition and construction work on our second concession-related project, our destination food hall. We are well into design and planning for our other major concession-related [capital expenditure] commitments, including our new events and entertainment center and a unique theater and showroom," he added.

Looking ahead, Wynn Resorts said it expects to contribute around USD900 million to the development of its USD4 billion Wynn Al Marjan Island integrated resort project in the United Arab Emirates. Billings said the company is also "actively considering green-field development opportunities in New York City and, potentially, Thailand."

"In Thailand, it's early days and we have yet to see the regulatory and licensing structures," Billings noted. "Thailand is already a major tourism destination with significant tourism infrastructure and a world-class service culture. So, we will continue to closely monitor advancement of the legalization process," he concluded.

No plan for 'time bank' system, says Sports Bureau

HOWARD TONG

THE Sports Bureau (ID) has stated that it has no plan to implement a "time bank" system. Sports director Pun Weng Kun explained that "time banks" are typically operated by non-governmental organizations, with the government providing assistance, guidance, and supervision to ensure effective operation and sustainable development.

However, since the concept is not widely embraced in Macau, the government has no current plan for its implementation.

The topic of "time banks" was raised by lawmaker Lam Long Wai, who suggested studying their introduction to enhance volunteer services and address the issue of insufficient social service teams. Pun responded that establishing a "time bank" requires careful



consideration of practical experience from mainland China and other places. The success of a "time bank" relies on complex institutional guarantees and operational arrangements.

In terms of volunteer services, the ID has focused on professional development and collaboration. The bureau took advantage of its participation in the 15th National Games to create a platform for encouraging widespread participation in volunteer services. It col-

laborated with ten tertiary institutions and eight societies in Macau to recruit and train volunteers.

Over 9,000 volunteers have been successfully recruited for the National Games in Macau. These volunteers have participated in various sports activities and gained practical experience. The SAR government plans to evaluate the volunteer service experience from the National Games and use it as a reference for future similar events.

AVIATION

KOREAN AIR LAUNCHES DAILY SEOUL-MACAU FLIGHTS

STAFF REPORTER

KOREAN Air will launch a new daily service between Seoul and Macau beginning July 1.

The flights will depart Incheon International Airport at 9:15 p.m. and arrive at Macau International Airport at 11:55 p.m. Return flights will leave Macau at 1:10 a.m. and land in Incheon at 6 a.m. Korean Air will utilize its two-class Boeing 737-800 aircraft configured with 12 business class seats and 126 economy seats on the three-hour, 40-minute flights.

The Macau route is the latest addition to Korean Air's expanding network in Asia. The airline resumed flights to mainland China's Zhangjiajie and Zhengzhou at the end of April. Korean Air also aims to stimulate travel between Europe and Asia,



with scheduled charter flights between Seoul and Lisbon operating three times weekly from Sept. 11 through to Oct. 25. The airline will deploy 290-seat Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners on the Portugal route.

While the Lisbon fli-

ghts are currently scheduled through October, a Korean Air spokesperson noted the company "has plans to extend the operation of this route during the winter season," aiming to capitalize on the peak travel season between Asia and Europe.

TRAVEL

US fans are following Taylor to Europe after finding Eras Tour tickets less costly there

LISA LEFF, LONDON

THOUSANDS of ride-or-die Taylor Swift fans who missed out on her U.S. concert tour last year or didn't want to buy exorbitantly priced tickets to see her again found an out-of-the-way solution: Fly to Europe.

The pop star is scheduled to kick off the 18-city Europe leg of her record-setting Eras Tour in Paris on Thursday, and plane-loads of Swifties plan to follow Miss Americana across the pond in the coming weeks. The arena where Swift is appearing said Americans bought 20% of the tickets for her four sold-out shows. Stockholm, the tour's next stop, expects about 10,000 concertgoers from the U.S.

A concert might sound like an odd *raison d'être* for visiting a foreign country, especially when fans can watch the Eras Tour from home via the documentary now streaming on Disney+. Yet online travel company Expedia says continent-hopping by Swift's devotees is part of a larger trend it dubbed "tour tourism" while observing a pattern that emerged during Beyoncé's Renaissance world tour.

Some North American fans who plan to fly overseas for the Eras Tour said they justified the expense after noticing that tighter restrictions on ticket fees and resales in Europe made seeing Swift perform abroad no more costly — and potentially cheaper — than catching her closer to home.

"They said, 'Wait a minute, I



A Taylor Swift fan poses with a friend's dog next to a sign featuring Swift lyrics outside The Black Dog pub in London

can either spend \$1,500 to go see my favorite artist in Miami, or I can take that \$1,500 and buy a concert ticket, a round-trip plane ticket, and three nights in a hotel room," Melanie Fish, an Expedia spokesperson and travel expert, said.

That was the experience of Jennifer Warren, 43, who lives in St. Catharines, a city in the Niagara region of Ontario. She and her 11-year-old son love Swift but had no luck scoring what she considered as decently priced tickets in the U.S. Undeterred, Warren and her husband decided to plan a European vacation around wherever she managed to get seats. It turned out to be Hamburg, Germany.

"You get out, you get to see the world, and you get to see your favorite artist or performer at the same time, so there are a lot

of wins to it," said Warren, who works as the director of research and innovation for a mutual insurance company.

The three VIP tickets she secured close to the stage — "I would call it brute-force dumb luck" — cost 600 euros (\$646) each. Swift subsequently announced six November tour dates in Toronto, within driving distance of Warren's home. "Absolute nose-bleed seats" already are going for 3,000 Canadian dollars (\$2,194) on secondary resale sites like Viagogo, Warren said.

TOUR TOURISM: IS IT REALLY A THING?

Travel and entertainment analysts have spoken of a pent-up consumer demand for "experiences" over material objects since the coronavirus pandemic. Some think the willingness of music

lovers to broaden their fandom horizons is part of the same mass cultural correction.

"It does seem like it's more than a structural shift, maybe a personality transformation we all went through," said Natalia Lechmanova, the chief Europe economist for the Mastercard Economics Institute.

As Swift hopscotches across Europe, Lechmanova expects restaurants and hotels to see the same boost that Mastercard observed within a 2.5-mile radius of concert venues in the U.S. cities she visited in 2023. The U.S. dollar's strong value against the euro may also increase retail spending on apparel, memorabilia, beauty products and supplies for the friendship bracelets fans exchange as part of the Eras Tour experience, the economist said.

Former college roommates

Lizzy Hale, 34, who lives in Los Angeles, and Mitch Goulding, 33, who lives in Austin, Texas, already had tickets to see the Eras Tour in L.A. last summer when they decided to try to get ones for Paris, London or Edinburgh, Scotland, too. They saw a Europe concert trip as a makeup for travel plans they had in May 2020 to celebrate Goulding's birthday but had to cancel due to the pandemic.

Goulding managed to secure VIP tickets for one of Swift's three Stockholm shows. He, Hale and two other friends scheduled a 10-day trip that also includes time in Amsterdam and Copenhagen.

FOR STOCKHOLM, 120,000 SWIFTIES CAN'T BE WRONG

In Stockholm, 120,000 out-of-towners from 130 countries -- among them 10,000 from the U.S. — are expected to swarm Sweden's capital this month, Stockholm Chamber of Commerce Chief Economist Carl Bergqvist said. Stockholm is the only Scandinavian city on Swift's tour, and airlines added extra flights from nearby Denmark, Finland and Norway to bring people to the May 17-19 shows, he said.

The city's 40,000 hotel rooms are sold out even though prices skyrocketed for the tour dates, Bergqvist said. Concert visitors are expected to pump around 500 million Swedish kroner, or over \$46 million, into the local economy over the course of their stays, an estimate that does not include what they paid for Swift tickets or to get to Sweden, he said. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Artyzen Grand Lapa announces offerings for Mother's Day



In celebration of Mother's Day, Artyzen Grand Lapa announces its offers dedicated to honoring all moms.

Naam offers a sumptuous five-course lunch or dinner designed by Chef Suttha-

porn, which will comprise some of the most Thai gastronomic favorites, such as soft-shell crab with spicy fruit salad; spicy seafood soup, straw mushrooms and lemongrass; and green

curried chicken, among others.

Café Bela Vista, meanwhile invites all lovely mothers to immerse in festive celebration as it offers a "Mother's Day Lunch Buffet," offering international cuisine.

Kam Lai Heen has also composed an exclusive Mother's Day eight-course lunch and dinner menu featuring some of his most delectable creations.

Also, the hotel is offering two Mother's Day Special spa promotions: "Pamper & Relax" and "Mom & Me."

Both packages are inclusive of a glass of rosé sparkling wine for each person and a long-stem rose for each mother.

Louis Vuitton unveils pop-up store at The Londoner



Louis Vuitton introduces a new retail experience with the launch of a pop-up store as well as an exclusive kiosk at The Londoner Macao.

At the kiosk, client can dis-

cover a curated array of accessories and gifting items.

The main pop-up store features a curated collection of women's and men's travel luggage, leather goods, shoes, accessories

and fragrances, as well as jewelry.

A trendy new vanity, the Just In Case Monogram Reverse Canvas - part of the Spring-Summer 2024 Collection - is exclusively available in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan region.

The now-iconic Horizon collection, designed by renowned industrial designer Marc Newson, marked a true milestone in Louis Vuitton's luggage family for its "ingenious design, durability and superior functionality," the group said in a statement.

The collection finds its place within the pop-up store.

EUROPEAN TOUR

Xi and Serbian president Vucic hail 'ironclad' friendship

DUSAN STOJANOVIC AND JOVANA GEC, BELGRADE

CHINESE President Xi Jinping met yesterday with the Serbian president, with both sides expressing optimism that the visit will further boost the "ironclad" friendly relations between China and the Balkan country.

Xi arrived in Serbia to a warm welcome on Tuesday evening [yesterday, Macau time] from France, where he had a high-stakes state visit dominated by trade disputes and Russia's war in Ukraine.

Thousands of people chanting "China-Serbia" and waving flags were bused in from across Serbia to attend a welcoming ceremony for Xi yesterday in front of the Serbia Palace, in the new part of Belgrade where the talks are being held.

Serbia's populist President Aleksandar Vucic addressed the crowd from a balcony, calling Xi an "ironclad" friend. He said his visit to Serbia is "historic" because it opens the path for even closer ties.

"We are writing history to-

day although it doesn't seem so to many (people)," Vucic said. "We thank President Xi. He hasn't come to Europe in five years and he has again chosen our little Serbia."

At the start of the official meeting, Xi said "we are first-hand witnesses that the Serbian people view Chinese people as ironclad best friends."

"This is truly two-sided and truthful friendship ... I truly hail this and it really made an extremely deep impression on me," Xi said, according to the state RTS television.

Xi will proceed to Hungary today. Like Serbia, Hungary is seen as one of China's more friendly partners in Europe.

Signs of pro-China sentiments were clearly visible throughout the Serbian capital. A huge Chinese flag was placed on a skyscraper along a roadway leading into the city from the airport. Smaller Chinese and Serbian flags could be seen downtown and along a highway.

China has poured billions of dollars into Serbia in investment and loans, particularly in mining and infrastructure. The two countries signed an agree-

XINHUA



Crowd attends a welcome ceremony for President Xi Jinping held by Serbian president Aleksandar Vucic in Belgrade, yesterday

ment on a strategic partnership in 2016 and a free trade agreement last year.

Serbia, a landlocked nation in the heart of the Balkans, has been a key country in China's Belt and Road initiative designed to increase Beijing's influence in Europe through economic investment. Critics say it could serve as a "Chinese Trojan horse and gateway to Europe."

Xi also arrived in Serbia on a symbolic date — the 25th anni-

versary of the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade by U.S. jets during NATO's air war over Kosovo, when three Chinese citizens were killed.

The incident has helped forge close political ties between China and Serbia.

Chinese companies run Serbia's biggest copper mine and a steel mill, and are also building scores of roads and highways across the country, along with a railway toward northern neighbor Hungary.

"Our bilateral relationship has stood the test of changing international environment and become a fine example of state-to-state relations," Xi said in a statement published by China's Foreign Ministry.

"Standing at a new historical starting point, China will work with Serbia to jointly stay committed to the original aspiration and forge ahead together to open up a new vista in China-Serbia cooperation," added Xi. "I am confident that this visit will be a fruitful one and will open up a new chapter in China-Serbia relations."

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 2022, shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Serbia took semi-secret delivery of a sophisticated Chinese anti-aircraft system flown in on 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. **MDT/AP**

CHINA DAILY



[Courtesy China Daily] An aerial drone photo taken on May 1, shows China's third aircraft carrier, the Fujian, during its maiden sea trials. China's third aircraft carrier, the Fujian, returned to Shanghai Jiangnan Shipyard at around 3 pm yesterday after completing its maiden sea trials

DEFENSE

PLA Navy's third aircraft carrier ship successfully completes maiden voyage

ZHAO LEI, CHINA DAILY

THE CNS Fujian, China's third aircraft carrier, finished its maiden

sea trial and returned to the shipyard yesterday afternoon, according to the People's Liberation Army Navy.

The PLA Navy said in a brief news release that during the eight-day debut voyage that started on May 1, engineers and

Navy sailors tested the vast vessel's propulsion and electric power systems, and have achieved their goals.

Now, the Fujian has returned and berthed at the Jiangnan Shipyard in Shanghai, a subsidiary of the State-owned conglomerate China State Shipbuilding Corp.

Next, hardware and software tests will take place on the carrier in accordance with construction plan, the Navy said.

According to the PLA Navy, the new vessel had successfully completed its mooring tests and equipment installation process before the first sea trial.

As one of the most important pieces of military hardware China is working on, the Fujian was officially unveiled in June 2022 in Shanghai as it was towed out of China State Shipbuilding Corp's Jiangnan Shipyard.

When sailing, the gigantic vessel will displace more than 80,000 metric tons of water. It will be the largest and mightiest warship any Asian nation has ever built, as well as the world's biggest non-Ame-

rican aircraft carrier.

The ship will use an electromagnetic launch system, or electromagnetic catapult, to launch fixed-wing aircraft. This new system will give the carrier a much greater combat capability than its two predecessors, which use a ramp to launch jets.

Currently, the Navy operates two aircraft carriers — the CNS Liaoning and the CNS Shandong. Both with a standard displacement of around 50,000 tons and a conventional propulsion system, and they use a ski jump method for launching fixed-wing aircraft.

Compared with its two predecessors, the Fujian is much bigger and heavier, and has a larger flight deck and smaller superstructure.

The Liaoning underwent 10 sea trials before going into service, and the Shandong conducted nine before its commissioning.

MDT/CHINA DAILY

SOUTH CHINA SEA

US and Philippine forces sink a ship during largescale drills in disputed waters

JIM GOMEZ &
AARON FAVILA, LAOAG

UNITED States and Philippine forces, backed by an Australian air force surveillance aircraft, unleashed a barrage of high-precision rockets, artillery fire and airstrikes yesterday and sank a mock enemy ship as part of largescale war drills in and near the disputed South China Sea that have antagonized Beijing.

Military officials and diplomats from several countries watched the display of firepower from a hilltop along a sandy coast in Laoag City in Ilocos Norte, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s northern home province.

More than 16,000 military personnel from the United States and the Philippines, along with a few hundred Australian troops and military observers from 14 countries, were participating in annual combat-readiness drills called Balikatan, Tagalog for shoulder-to-shoulder. The drills, which started April 22 and end Friday, include a scenario of a foreign invasion of the Philippine archipelago.

It's the latest indication of how the United States and the Philippines have bolstered a defense treaty alliance that started in the 1950s amid their concern in recent years over China's increasingly aggressive actions in disputed territories in Asia.

Marcos has ordered his military to shift its focus to external defense from decades-long domestic anti-insurgency operations as China's actions in the South China Sea become a top concern. That strategic



Philippine Army fires ATMOS 155mm howitzers during a joint military exercise yesterday, in Laoag, Ilocos Norte

shift dovetails with the efforts of U.S. President Joe Biden and his administration to reinforce an arc of alliances in the Indo-Pacific region to counter China.

China has angered the Philippines by repeatedly repealing its navy and coast guard ships with powerful water cannons, a military-grade laser, blocking movements and other dangerous maneuvers in the high seas near two disputed South China Sea shoals. They have led to minor collisions that have injured several Filipino navy personnel and damaged supply boats.

"We're under the gun," Philippine Ambassador to Washington Jose Romualdez told The Associated Press in a telephone interview.

"We don't have the wherewithal to be able to fight all of this bullying coming from China so where else will we go?" Romualdez said. "We

went to the right party, which is the United States and those that believe in what the U.S. is doing."

China has accused the Philippines of setting off the hostilities in the disputed waters by encroaching in what it says are its offshore territories, demarcated by 10 dashes on a map. It says the Chinese coast guard and navy have been forced to take action to expel Philippine coast guard and other vessels from those areas. The Philippines has repeatedly cited a 2016 international arbitration ruling based on the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea that invalidated China's claim over virtually the entire South China Sea on historical grounds.

China did not participate in the arbitration complaint filed by the Philippines in 2013, and has rejected the ruling and con-

tinues to defy it.

After being hit repeatedly by missile and artillery fire and bombs dropped by U.S. and Philippine warplanes during the combat drills, the mock enemy ship sank as black smoke billowed from its stern. The target ship was made in China but decommissioned by the Philippine navy in 2020 due to mechanical and electrical issues, according to the Philippine military.

Philippine military officials said the drills were not directed at any country. China has opposed military drills involving U.S. forces as well as increasing U.S. military deployments in the region, which it warned would escalate tensions and endanger regional stability.

For the first time in years, the combat exercises were staged in and near the fiercely contested Spratly Islands area, which China

has closely guarded with its coast guard, navy and suspected militia flotillas.

On Monday, U.S. and Filipino marines transported by Black Hawk helicopters practiced securing an airfield in the country's northernmost town of Itbayat along the Bashi Channel near southern Taiwan. A small group of journalists, including from the AP, was invited to witness the air and ground combat maneuvers.

"They're not operating in safe areas. They're operating slightly further to the western bounds and they're doing that in order to practice in ways that they might have to work for real," said British Defense Attaché to Manila Bea Walcot, who watched the ship-sinking drill.

In February last year, Marcos approved a wider U.S. military presence in the Philippines by allowing rotating groups of American military forces to stay in four more Philippine military camps. That was a sharp turnaround from his predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte, who feared that a larger American military footprint would antagonize Beijing.

China strongly opposed the move, which allows U.S. forces to establish staging grounds and surveillance posts in the northern Philippines across the channel from Taiwan, and in western Philippine provinces facing the South China Sea.

China has warned that the deepening security alliance between Washington and Manila and their ongoing military drills should not harm its security and territorial interests or interfere in the territorial disputes. **MDT/AP**

THAILAND

PM wants to outlaw cannabis, two years after it was decriminalized

made it available to children and increased crimes.

Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin wrote on the social media platform X that he asked the Health Ministry to amend its list of narcotics to again include cannabis, and issue new rules to allow its use for medical purposes only.

Srettha also ordered lo-

cal authorities to suppress criminal activities linked to the illegal drug trade and demanded to see progress within 90 days.

After cannabis was decriminalized in 2022, it was initially said that it would be allowed only for medicinal use, but in practice the market was unregulated. It has prompted public backlash and concerns over

misuse and crime.

Decriminalization was spearheaded by the Bhumjaithai Party, whose stronghold is in the impoverished northeast where it promised farmers cannabis would be a new cash crop.

In the 2023 elections, all major parties — including Bhumjaithai — promised to restrict cannabis for medical use.

Cannabis advocates and entrepreneurs have opposed a radical rollback, which they claimed would be damaging to the economy. Legal cannabis has fueled Thailand's tourism and farming sectors and spawned thousands of cannabis retailers ranging from shops, trucks to market stalls all over the country. **MDT/AP**



THE prime minister of Thailand, the first country in Asia to legalize cannabis two years ago, said yesterday that he wants to outlaw the drug again amid concerns that the lack of regulation had

PUTIN'S WAR

Russia hits Ukraine's power grid on day marking WWII defeat of Nazism

ILLIA NOVIKOV, KYIV

RUSSIAN forces unleashed a nighttime barrage of more than 50 cruise missiles and explosive drones at Ukraine's power grid yesterday, targeting a wide area in what President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called a "massive" attack on the day the country celebrates the defeat of Nazism in World War II.

The bombardment blasted targets in seven Ukrainian regions, including the Kyiv area and parts of the south and west, damaging homes and the country's rail network, authorities said. Three people, including an 8-year-old girl, were injured, according to officials.

Russia has repeatedly pounded Ukraine's energy infrastructure during the war that is stretching into its third year and has claimed thousands of lives. By taking out the power, the Kremlin's forces aim to rob Ukrainian manufacturing of its energy supply, especially military plants, and crush public morale.

Russian attacks have damaged nearly half of Ukraine's power infrastructure since the start of the Kremlin's full-scale invasion in February 2022, of-

ficials say. The damage is estimated at \$12.5 billion, with \$1 billion inflicted during the past two weeks, according to the chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament's Committee on Energy and Housing Services, Andrii Herus.

The mass barrages also drain Ukrainian air defenses of ammunition as Kyiv's depleted forces await delivery of the latest batch of promised Western military support. Ukrainian officials have been pleading for more NATO-standard air defense systems, such as Patriots.

Zelenskyy noted that yesterday's attacks occurred on the day that Ukraine observes the end of European fighting in World War II and equated Ukraine's current struggle with that conflict, saying on social platform X that "only a united free world" can stop Russian President Vladimir Putin. Ukraine last year changed the date of the Day of Remembrance and Victory over Nazism to avoid it coinciding with Russia's own Victory Day commemorations on May 9.

Russia pummeled Ukraine's energy infrastructure during the "blackout winter" of 2022-23. In March, it launched a new wave of attacks, one of which completely destroyed the Trypilska

power plant near Kyiv, one of the country's biggest.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has framed the attacks as retaliation for Ukrainian long-range strikes on Russian oil refineries. Yesterday, a Ukrainian attack hit an oil terminal, injuring five workers and starting a fire, Russia-appointed authorities in the partially occupied Luhansk region said.

Russian bombardments, though frequent, have become less regular in recent weeks, and Ukrainian officials suspect Moscow is stockpiling resources ahead of a major battlefield offensive that could come within weeks.

The 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line has changed little since the early months of the war, but Russia has recently made small but steady gains in some areas as Ukraine battles with a lack of manpower and a shortage of weapons.

National electrical grid operator Ukrenergo said facilities were hit in the Vinnytsia, Zaporizhzhia, Kirovohrad, Poltava and Ivano-Frankivsk regions.

Two energy facilities were hit in the Lviv region, which is in the country's far west and distant from the fighting's front lines, according to regional Gov.

Maksym Kozytskyi.

DTEK, Ukraine's biggest private energy supplier, said the attack "seriously damaged" equipment at three of its thermal power plants.

The attack was the fifth in the last six weeks targeting the company's facilities, DTEK said. Overall, since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, the company's assets have come under attack nearly 180 times, injuring 51 workers and killing three, it said.

Russia launched 55 missiles and 21 Shahed drones overnight, the Ukrainian air force said. Air defenses downed 39 of the missiles and 20 of the drones, Ukrainian air force commander Mykola Oleshchuk said.

Russian forces also damaged the railway station building and train tracks in Kherson, national railway operator Ukrzaliznytsia said.

Also yesterday, five people including three children were injured in an attack that struck an educational facility in northeastern Kharkiv, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said on social media. City Mayor Ihor Terekhov said one of the children was in critical condition. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1972: ISRAELI COMMANDOS STORM HIJACKED JET



Twelve Israeli soldiers disguised as maintenance staff have stormed a hijacked Sabena Boeing at Lod airport in Tel Aviv and released the 100 people on board.

Two of the Arab hijackers were shot dead and their two female companions were captured, although one of them was injured in the attack.

Six of the passengers were also wounded in the gun battle. The 90 passengers and 10 crew had been held hostage for 23 hours.

The end to their ordeal came when two vans, said to be carrying repair men, drove onto the runway and approached the plane.

The men got out and pretended to begin work on the airliner but suddenly climbed onto the wings and opened the emergency doors.

The British pilot, Captain Reginald Levy, said: "Everyone of us is lucky to be alive. I have had some tough times but this was my toughest."

The airliner was hijacked after leaving Vienna, where it had made a stop on a flight from Brussels to Tel Aviv.

Capt. Levy said: "Two of the men burst into the cockpit and said they were taking over the jet."

He was ordered to fly the plane to Lod, where the gunmen offered to free the passengers in exchange for 100 Arab prisoners held by the Israelis.

While the plane was sitting on the tarmac, the Israelis managed to let down the tyres and empty the fuel tanks to prevent it taking off again. [...]

The gunmen belonged to the Black September Organisation of Palestine guerrillas, a splinter group of the PLO.

One of the rescued passengers, Mor Weiss, from Brooklyn, told The Times: "The soldiers opened the four doors, two on either side at the same time. Immediately the Arabs started shooting wildly."

"The troops fired back and I saw the younger of the two male hijackers fall with a bullet through his forehead. Seconds later the other one was shot."

Mr Weiss said he had been picked on because he was wearing a skull cap. He was sent to the back of the plane and made to sit with a stick of dynamite between his feet.

Captain Levy, who comes from Slough, told a news conference, the drama had happened on his 50th birthday. His wife had accompanied him on the flight so they could have a celebratory birthday meal in Tel Aviv.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The two women hijackers were jailed for life in August 1972. They were found guilty after boarding the Sabena aircraft with explosives packed into the lining of corsets they were wearing and also carrying a pistol and grenade concealed in cans of talcum powder.

They were jailed for life - although one of the three judges voted for the death penalty.

On 29 May 1972 three Japanese gunmen opened fire on crowds at Lod International Airport in Tel Aviv, killing 26 people and injuring dozens more. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine said they had recruited the gunmen from the Japanese Red Army. Two died in the attack, the third, Kozo Okamoto, was tried and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Lod, or Lydda airport, has since been renamed Ben Gurion Airport and has some of the strictest airport security in the world.

AP PHOTO



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, rescuers work at a damaged building after a Russian missile attack in Kyiv region yesterday

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Cash can fly into your pocket. Avoid spending it as fast as it comes in. Discipline pays double. Pursue and develop a dreamy opportunity.

TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You're especially popular. Dress to shine. Extra primping pays off on camera. Take advantage of lucky conditions to grow a personal project. Acknowledge supporters.

GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Invent and develop exciting possibilities. Disciplined efforts can realize the wildest dreams. Plot a reliable course. Schedule actions and deadlines. Include backup options.

CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You're on a winning team. Pull together for shared ease resolving a common problem. Many hands make light work. Play big games together.

LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Your work is in demand. Take advantage of favorable professional conditions. Develop projects with heart. Disciplined efforts bring a dream to life. Savor satisfaction.

VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Tap into fresh inspiration energizing your studies and exploration. Grab a rare opportunity. Investigate a fascinating subject. Discover unexpected treasure.

LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Work with your partner to manage shared finances. Push for extra positive cash flow. Take advantage of lucrative conditions to grab a prize.

SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Romantic possibilities kindle unexpectedly. Take initiative. Invent and speculate. Share delicious conversation, views and flavors. Express your heart. Discuss what you'd love to create.

SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You're growing stronger. Connect with nature. Physical efforts energize. The more action, the more gained. Dance, skate and run. Get your heart pumping.

CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Have fun with people, activities and flavors that you love. Creative ideas motivate action. Take advantage of an unexpected opportunity. Romantic surprises can unfold.

AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Domestic upgrades prepare your place for family fun. Savor homemade treats. Reconnect with pets. Whip up something delicious and share with your inner circle.

PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Savor creative rewards and accomplishments. One great project leads to another. Connect and network. Share resources, data and support. Communication reveals valuable solutions.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	16	30	fine
Changchun	12	23	cloudy
Chengdu	15	26	rain
Chongqing	21	25	rain
Fuzhou	17	23	overcast
Guangzhou	22	28	thunderstorms
Guiyang	14	20	showers
Haikou	25	30	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	14	23	cloudy
Harbin	10	24	cloudy
Hefei	13	24	overcast
Nanjing	13	25	cloudy
Shanghai	14	24	cloudy
Taipei	19	24	cloudy
Wuhan	19	27	fine
Hong Kong	25	27	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	1	7	cloudy
Frankfurt	9	22	sunny
Paris	11	23	cloudy
London	12	22	cloudy
New York	11	19	showers

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Gutter location; 5- Exclamation to express sorrow; 9- Ed and Mel of baseball; 13- Recreation; 15- Air-filled rubber hoop, become fatigued; 16- Sneaker or loafer; 17- MetLife competitor; 18- Rope material; 19- Gull's cousin; 20- Suffix with fail; 21- Not mint; 23- Tips off; 25- Son of ___; 26- Sweeping implements; 27- Squirrels away; 30- Dorm overseers, for short; 31- Set up; 32- Ragged; 37- Architect Saarinen; 38- Part of an ice skate; 40- Poet Angelou; 41- Modern; 43- Located; 44- Siesta; 45- Correspondences; 47- Morals; 50- Small batteries; 51- Mock; 52- Contented cat sound; 53- Basic cable channel; 56- Hanging to one side; 57- Hideaway; 59- Little laugh; 61- Quick sharp bark; 62- Kitchen addition; 63- Shut-eye; 64- French airport; 65- Greenish blue; 66- Pre-Easter period;

DOWN 1- Isaac's eldest; 2- Copycat; 3- Cast a ballot; 4- West end?; 5- Capital of Greece; 6- Fibbed; 7- Human limb; 8- Divide; 9- Bony prefix; 10- Unit of heat; 11- Legal wrongs; 12- Chamber workers; Abbr.; 14- Instructed; 22- Litigate against; 24- In need of directions; 25- Cravat; 26- Actor Pitt; 27- Witnessed; 28- Woody plant; 29- Dynamic opening?; 32- Tic ___ Dough; 33- Gives off; 34- Charge per unit; 35- Watchful one; 36- Pops; 38- Wrist band; 39- Kissers; 42- Oklahoma city; 43- Begins; 45- Hardy's partner; 46- Musical gift; 47- Sniggler; 48- Cave-dwelling dwarf; 49- Having big haunch; 51- Belafonte bellow; 52- Pocket bread; 53- Of ___ Sing; 54- "It's ___ real"; 55- Equinox mo.; 58- Did lunch; 60- Building annex;



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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HKD 2,980,000 1 bed 1 bath

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

AD

OLYMPICS

SHIP CARRYING THE TORCH ARRIVES IN MARSEILLE AMID FANFARE AND HIGH SECURITY

EXCITEMENT is building in the southern French city of Marseille, where a majestic three-mast ship carrying the Olympic torch arrived from Greece ahead of a welcoming ceremony at sunset yesterday.

Paris Games organizers have promised "fantastic" celebrations in the city, where the Old Port has been placed under high security.

The torch was lit in Greece last month before it was officially handed to France. It left Athens aboard a ship named Belem, which was first used in 1896, and spent twelve days at sea.

More than a thousand boats will accompany the Belem's parade around the Bay of Marseille. The ship will dock on a pontoon that looks like an athletics track in the Old Port.

The welcoming ceremony at dusk will include a demonstration by the jets of the Patrouille de France, the acro-



AP PHOTO

batic team of the French air force.

"The return of the Games to our country will be a fantastic celebration," said Paris 2024 Olympics Organizing Committee President Tony Estanguet.

"As a former athlete, I know how important the start of a

competition is. That is why we chose Marseille, because it's definitely one of the cities most in love with sports," added Estanguet, a former Olympic canoeing star with gold medals from the 2000, 2004 and 2012 Games.

Safety of visitors and resi-

dents has been a top priority for authorities in Marseille, France's second largest city with nearly a million inhabitants. About 8,000 police officers have been deployed around in the harbour where tens of thousands of spectators are expected to gather for the ceremony.

Thousands of firefighters and bomb disposal squads have been positioned around the city along with maritime police and anti-drone teams patrolling the city's waters and its airspace.

"It's a monumental day and we have been working hard for visitors and residents of Marseille to enjoy this historical moment," said Yannick Ohanessian, the city's deputy mayor.

The torch relay will start on Thursday in Marseille, before heading to Paris through iconic places across the country, from the world-famous Mont Saint-Michel to D-Day lan-

ding beaches in Normandy and the Versailles Palace.

Many people and families were strolling along the boardwalk on the Mediterranean, beaming with excitement and curiosity. A band of musicians, wearing T-shirts with the slogan "Marseille, proud to welcome the Olympics Flame," entertained tourists and residents as well as workers who were setting up the Olympic stage and the ponton bridge over which the Olympic flame is expected to be carried from the boat to France's mainland.

"I wanted to see how things are going and maybe come back later with the kids, if it's not too crowded, to see the flame arrive," said Paul Vaurambon, a Marseille resident, on a walk along the Old Port with his son. Despite high security and the overhaul of the entire city for yesterday's ceremony, Vaurambon said, "People here are pretty happy with the Olympics." **MDT/AP**

AD



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SUPPORTER:



PRINCIPAL MEDIA PARTNER:



FOOTBALL

Mbappé trudges off after another CL dream with PSG ends

JEROME PUGMIRE, PARIS

PSG 0, DORTMUND 1

KYLIAN Mbappé leaned forward with his head bowed and hands on his thighs.

Another Champions League dream with Paris Saint-Germain was over, ruined by the ruthless efficiency of a Borussia Dortmund team that stopped him scoring in both legs of their Champions League semifinal and recorded a 1-0 win in each.

"We always want to win at PSG, we feel sad," Mbappé said after yesterday's defeat [Macau time]. "We should have scored. We had the chances to score (and) when you don't, when you're not efficient at both ends, it's difficult to go through."

PSG coach Luis Enrique consoled Mbappé, and then his star striker trudged off the field and toward a new destination next season.

Mbappé didn't address ques-

AP PHOTO



tions about his future. Most observers expect his next club to be Real Madrid, which leads PSG 14-0 in European Cup trophies and could add a 15th should it get past Bayern Munich today [Thursday, 03:00] in the other semifinal.

Madrid has tried to lure Mbap-

pé before.

In 2021, PSG turned down a bid of 180 million euros (\$194 million) from Madrid for the 2018 World Cup-winning forward, who went on to sign a new contract with PSG — on which he didn't take up the option for an extra year. Ear-

lier this year he told PSG he's leaving at the end of the season.

Seven years ago, he joined amid huge hype as the best young player in France and maybe the world.

PSG paid a fee of 170 million euros (\$183 million) when Mbap-

pé joined from Monaco in the summer of 2017 along with Neymar, who cost a world record 222 million (\$239 million).

Others once on the list of PSG stars included Zlatan Ibrahimovic (156 goals for the club), Edinson Cavani (200 goals for PSG) and Lionel Messi (the men's record eighth-time Ballon d'Or winner).

None could win the Champions League with PSG, despite huge investment and massive wages.

Mbappé had starred for Monaco as an 18-year-old sensation when it reached the semifinals of the Champions League — knocking out Dortmund along the way with three goals in the quarterfinals.

He accepted his share of the blame for not being able to reproduce his magic in front of goal, seven years later, as a global superstar with 46 goals for France and the scorer of a hat-trick in a men's World Cup final to become the tournament's top scorer two years ago.

"I tried to help my team the best I could. It wasn't enough. When you're talking about efficiency at both ends, I think I'm the first in question," the 25-year-old said. "I'm the one who should score the goals and make the difference. I have no problem with that, the first person who should have scored tonight is me." **MDT/AP**

AD

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OPINION

Multipolar World

Jorge Costa Oliveira



RUSSIA DEPENDENCY ON CHINA, WAR AND PEACE IN EUROPE

Over the last decade, we have witnessed a significant shift in Russia's positioning. Part of this repositioning stems from the theories of "Russian exceptionalism," deeply imbued with the imperial ideology of a "Greater Russia" theorized by A. Dugin and executed by Putin.

This repositioning also results from the strong reaction of Europe, which has led to a reduction in trade between Russia and Europe; a reduction, but not a cut, since there are still EU countries that continue to import basic Russian products (such as oil and gas) and companies from nearly all European countries indirectly export to Russia, via Central Asia. However, the determination of European authorities and sanctions have forced the Russian government and businesses to seek other international trade partners and markets, particularly in Asia, with a focus on China and India.

Given the numbers involved, the intensification of trade with China, now by far Russia's main trading partner, deserves special attention.

Russia sells oil, natural gas, critical metals to China, and buys cars, machinery, and critical components for its defense industry from China (e.g., drone and missile engines, semiconductors). The growing interdependence between the two countries facilitates good trade deals for Chinese companies and is also causing some relocation to China of crucial parts of the value chains of strategically important products, such as the foundries of Norilsk Nickel. On the other hand, the progressive isolation from Western markets is making Russia and its companies dependent on Chinese firms or Chinese authorities.

In recent months, American think tanks have stated that Russia is increasing China's military capacity by providing Beijing with advanced aerospace technology, as well as advanced air defense systems and technology used in China's new and revolutionary silent submarines. Certainly, within the Shanghai Organization and other agreements, Moscow and Beijing already had good cooperation in the areas of security and defense. However, only in recent months has Russia provided advanced military and aerospace technologies.

The "unlimited friendship" between China and Russia is based on combating an international order dominated by the main Western powers. However, the confrontational path with the West is dangerous and entails costs that can be very burdensome, especially in terms of financial sanctions. China understands this, but does not want Russia to be too weakened and has been benefiting from the advantageous supply of goods and advanced technology.

The longer the war in Ukraine lasts, the more Russia is forced to cede goods and technology under disadvantageous conditions. It is no wonder, therefore, that Putin has reiterated his openness to a peace agreement in Ukraine. However, in the historical backdrop created, neither the USA nor China have an interest in a quick end to the war. Only Europe has an interest in this. It is important that European leaders act accordingly, with strategic autonomy and without subservience to the interests of others.

[linkedin.com/in/jorgecostaoliveira](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jorgecostaoliveira)

After more than three billion doses, the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid vaccine is being withdrawn.

AstraZeneca said it was "incredibly proud" of the vaccine, but it had made a commercial decision, BBC News reported.

The pharmaceutical company said the rise of new coronavirus variants meant demand had shifted to the newer updated vaccines.

According to BBC, Its vaccine was estimated to have saved millions of lives during the pandemic, but also caused rare, and sometimes, fatal blood clots.

In the race to lift the world out of pandemic lockdowns, the Covid vaccine was developed by scientists at the University of Oxford in record time.

A process that normally takes 10 years was accelerated down to about 10 months.

In November 2020, it was heralded as "a vaccine for the world" as it was far cheaper and easier to store than other Covid vaccines. The pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca had agreed to manufacture it on mass.

Initially, it was the cornerstone of the UK's plans to vaccinate our way out of lockdown.

"The truth is it made an enormous difference, it was what lifted us out of the catastrophe that was unfolding at the time, combined with the other vaccine from Pfizer," said Prof Adam Finn, from the University of Bristol.

AP FILE PHOTO



PROTEST SONG 'GLORY TO HONG KONG' NOW BANNED IN CITY AFTER APPEALS COURT OVERTURNS RULING

KANIS LEUNG, HONG KONG

An appeals court yesterday granted the Hong Kong government's request to ban a popular protest song, overturning an earlier ruling and deepening concerns over the erosion of freedoms in the once-freewheeling global financial hub.

"Glory to Hong Kong" was often sung by demonstrators during huge anti-government protests in 2019. The song was later mistakenly played as the city's anthem at international sporting events, instead of China's "March of the Volunteers," in mix-ups that upset city officials.

It was the first time a song has been banned in the city since Britain handed the territory back to Chinese rule in 1997.

Critics have said prohibiting broadcast or distribution of the song further reduces freedom of expression since Beijing launched a crackdown in Hong Kong following the 2019 protests. They have also

warned the ban might disrupt the operation of tech giants and hurt the city's appeal as a business center.

Judge Jeremy Poon wrote that the composer intended for the song to be a "weapon," pointing to its power in arousing emotions among some residents of the city.

"We accept the assessment of the executive that prosecutions alone are clearly not adequate to tackle the acute criminal problems and that there is a compelling need for an injunction," he said.

He said the injunction was necessary to persuade internet platform operators to remove "problematic videos in connection with the song" from their platforms. The operators have indicated they are ready to accede to the government's request if there is a court order, he added.

The ban would target anyone who broadcast or distributed the song to advocate for the separation of Hong Kong from China. It would also prohibit any actions that misrepresent the

song as the national anthem with the intent to insult the anthem.

The song can still be played if it's for lawful journalistic and academic activities.

Failure to comply with the court order may be considered as contempt of court and could be liable for a fine or imprisonment.

Authorities have previously arrested some residents who played the song in public under other offenses, such as playing a musical instrument in public without a permit, local media reported.

As of mid-afternoon on Wednesday, "Glory to Hong Kong," whose artist is credited as "Thomas and the Hong Kong people," was still available on Spotify and Apple Music in both English and Cantonese. A search on YouTube for the song also displayed multiple videos and renditions.

Google said in an email to the AP that it was "reviewing the court's judgment." Spotify and Apple did not immediately comment. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



USA Police began to clear a pro-Palestinian tent encampment at George Washington University early Wednesday and arrested dozens of protesters, hours after dozens left the site and marched to President Ellen Granberg's home. Officials at the university in Washington, D.C., had warned of possible suspensions for students engaging in protest activities on University Yard.

Brazil The mayor of a major city in southern Brazil yesterday [Macau time] pleaded with residents to comply with his water rationing decree, given that some four-fifths of the population is without running water, a week after major flooding that has left at least 90 people dead and more than 130 others missing. Efforts were continuing to rescue people stranded by the floods in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, as more rains were forecast for the region into next week.

AP PHOTO



Eurovision Competition in the 68th Eurovision Song Contest kicked off yesterday [Macau time] in Sweden, with the war in Gaza casting a shadow over the sequin-spangled pop extravaganza. Performers representing countries across Europe and beyond took the stage in the first of two semifinals in the Swedish city of Malmo. It and a second semifinal on Thursday will winnow a field of 37 nations to 26 who will compete in Saturday's final against a backdrop of both parties and protests.