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MAN VICTIM TO A SCAM ORCHESTRATED THROUGH A PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT WEBSITE, RESULTING IN A SUBSTANTIAL LOSS OF MOP13,000

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ELLA LEI CALLS FOR CRACKDOWN ON ILLEGAL FOREIGN WORKERS

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XI ARRIVES IN HUNGARY FOR TALKS ON EXPANDING CHINESE INVESTMENTS

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China A truck crashed into a passenger van on a highway in Ningxia region yesterday morning, killing nine people. Two others were injured in the crash that occurred at 7:40 a.m. outside the city of Qingtongxia, according to the state-owned Ningxia Daily. The injured people were in stable condition at a hospital. The driver of the van was among the dead.

ROAD TO GP

The path to this year's Macau Grand Prix starts this weekend, as the season kicks off with the first round of qualifying races P2



Australia struck a new security deal with Tuvalu yesterday after critics complained that a previous pact created an Australian veto power over any other agreement the tiny South Pacific island nation pursued with a third country, such as China. Tuvalu Prime Minister Feleti Teo (pictured) and Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong committed to a new memorandum of understanding that addresses the sovereignty concerns of Teo's government, which was elected in January.



France Joyful crowds gathered along the streets of France's southern port of Marseille yesterday to see torchbearers carrying the Olympic flame through the city's most emblematic sites, a day after it arrived on a majestic three-mast ship for a welcoming ceremony. It was the first leg of an 11-week journey across the country for the torch, which will be carried by about 10,000 bearers as it passes through more than 450 towns until the Games' opening ceremony in Paris on July 26.

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AOFW
NEW FILIPINO ASSOCIATION TO BE 'BEACON OF HOPE' AMONG FELLOW MIGRANTS

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RENATO MARQUES

ROAD TO GP STARTS THIS WEEKEND FOR LOCAL RACERS

FOR local racers, the path to this year's Macau Grand Prix (GP) starts this weekend, as the season kicks off with the first round of qualifying races.

Drivers and vehicles from the Macau Roadsport Challenge as well as the Greater Bay Area (GBA) GT Cup converge, for the first time, at the Zhuzhou International Circuit (ZZIC) in Hunan for the first two races of the local championship 2024 Macau Touring Car Series (MTCS).

The race results will determine this year's local champions, but more importantly will allow them to showcase at the 71st Macau GP event this November.

The weekend at ZZIC not only features local races but also marks the start of the season for the China Touring Car Championship (CTCC) and TCR China, alongside other local racing events.

Similar to last year, the Macau Roadsport Challenge category will be divided into two groups (A and B), each with separate races. Like last season, they will be using the same vehicles (Toyota GR86 or Subaru BRZ) running as a single-make series.

In the GBA GT Cup category, cars under GT4 specifications will be used, as was the case last year.

In addition to participants from Macau and Hong Kong, the MTCS will also see entries from the mainland and Singapore, with 58 racers listed on the provisional entry list published by the



Automobile General Association Macau-China.

The GBA GT Cup appears less crowded, with the provisional entry list showing only 14 racers from Macau, Hong Kong, Taiwan and New Zealand.

Various car models, including the Ginetta G55, BMW M4, Toyota GR Supra, Mercedes AMG, McLaren 570S and Audi R8, will race in the GT4 category this season.

Some racers previously in the GT4s field have swapped to the Roadsport Challenge this year.

The ZZIC is the first track in Hunan Province to meet international qualification standards.

With a total length of 3.77 km, it has a layout with 14 corners and various layouts allowing multiple combinations of track use, including an F2 standard track.

The longest straight section is

about 645 meters and the height difference of the track reaches 26 meters, featuring undulations and slopes.

Owners and designers said the track layout has been designed to be purposely challenging and enjoyable to drive. The circuit was completed in October 2019 from an investment of nearly RMB 1.4 billion.

The circuit is strategically loca-

ted between the G4 Beijing-Hong Kong-Macau Expressway and Wuhan-Guangzhou High-speed Railway, and it is part of the Zhuzhou Automobile Expo Park, the first automobile life experience center in China.

The complex includes two commercial spaces and more than 10 hotels, including five-star, four-star, and budget hotel units within a 5-kilometer radius.

LYNZY VALLES

SJM Holdings saw a significant increase of 74.5% in its net gaming revenue, amounting to HKD6.46 billion.

In an announcement, the gaming operator highlighted that the group's Adjusted EBITDA rose from HKD31 million in 1Q23 to HKD864 million in 1Q24.

The financial results show that the adjusted EBITDA Margin for 1Q24 showed notable improvement, rising from 0.8% in 1Q23 to 12.5% in the previous quarter.

Meanwhile, the average occupancy rate for the period was 92.5%, compared to 85.5% for the full year of 2023.

The "hotel, catering, retail and leasing operations" segment also posted a promising growth of 54% in revenue, vis-à-vis the first quarter of 2023.

During the period, market share in terms of gross gaming revenues for Grand Lisboa Palace Resort Macau stood at 2%, and 3.4% for Grand Lisboa Macau, signifying a 1.1% and 0.6% gain respectively year-on-year.

Of particular focus, 1Q2024 Non-Rolling GGR for self-promoted casinos reached 134% of 1Q2019 Non-Rolling GGR.

According to SJM, these robust results not only signal a strong recovery, but also "reflect the group's continuous efforts in ramping up its

GAMING

SJM revenue surges 74.5% in Q1

Non-Rolling market segments, as well as the initial promising outcomes from the 'One Platform' initiative launched in late December 2023," which is a new centralized operating and service platform that aims to better manage operating costs and improve cross-property synergies.

"The quarter was characterised by strong performance across all our self-promoted properties, in both gaming and non-gaming sectors, remarked Daisy Ho, chairman of SJM Holdings and



managing director of SJM Resorts.

"We have a full calen-

dar of large-scale international events in the pipeline, designed to am-

plify SJM and the Lisboa brand's visibility on the global stage," she added.

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New Filipino women's association aims to be beacon of hope among fellow migrants

LYNZY VALLES

A group of Filipino women has created an association with the shared desire for change and to create a platform for strengthening community support amongst women.

Recent tragedies late last year and earlier this year claimed the lives of two Filipino workers by suicide, leaving a void in the lives of the association's founders.

While two Filipino workers tragically lost their lives, another two had attempted suicide but were saved.

As the community grieved, they came to the realization that as women, they had a responsibility to protect and empower one another to prevent such tragedies from occurring again.

Thus, the seed for the Association of Overseas Filipino Women (AOFW) was sown by founders Lulu Portuguese, Myla Lang-ayan and Mia Villanueva.

"We cannot stand idly by," said Portuguese. "We must take action to ensure that our sisters abroad are safe and supported."

"We are much affected by the fact that since December 2023 up to February 2024, there were four cases of suicide. Four during that period is already an alarming number. So somehow, we were thinking like, what if these women had people to talk to them?" Villanueva questioned.

"We thought, what can we do? How can we help these Filipino women who are probably suffering from depression? We are not professionals. But a little

gesture of encouragement such as a tap on the shoulder would make a difference," she added. The AOFW is derived from the acronym OFW, which means Overseas Filipino Workers.

The founding members believed the name encapsulated their mission to serve and empower Filipino women in Macau.

In recognition of the impor-



tance of prevention, the association intends to create programs to foster women's abilities, talents and confidence.

"We want to break down walls and create an inclusive community," said Portuguese.

They envisioned a space where women could connect with new friends, share experiences, and create a sense of family away from home. They have planned training seminars and workshops to enhance women's personal and professional development.

"As women abroad, we face

AOFW envisioned a space where women could connect with new friends, share experiences, and create a sense of family away from home

unique challenges," said Villanueva. "We must prioritize our health and wellbeing to thrive in this demanding environment," she added.

AOFW's mission extends beyond individual empowerment. The organization aims to raise awareness about the challenges faced by Filipino women abroad and advocate for their rights and protection.

"That is the bread and butter of the OFW – to support the family. Their purpose is to come to work. We, as AOFW, will be here for you while you're here and while you're working," said Portuguese.

Portuguese said the group appreciates that "violence is very rare" against Filipino workers in Macau.

"There are some instances, but it is very rare. This is unlike other countries that I've heard of, especially low-income jurisdictions, where employees are mistreated. That is a blessing already for the 30,000 [Filipino] workers," she added.

The association seeks to be a beacon of hope and resilience for Filipino women in Macau, ensuring the tragedy that brought them together would serve as a catalyst for change.

Meanwhile, Villanueva hopes the association can exemplify what can be achieved when people come together for a common cause.

With over 100 members since its inception in late April, the association's first event, scheduled for June 2, will be a forum on violence against women and children.



Indonesian gov't committed to protecting migrant workers in Macau

HOWARD TONG

THE Minister of Manpower, Ida Fauziyah, has reaffirmed the Indonesian government's commitment to improving the safety and security of Indonesian migrant workers in Macau.

Fauziyah recently visited Macau to meet with Yul Edison, the Indonesian Consul-General to Hong Kong and Macau, to enhance cooperation between Indonesia and the governments of Hong Kong and Macau, particularly in safeguarding Indonesian migrant workers.

Macau is a popular destination for Indonesian migrant workers. Fauziyah emphasized the crucial need to strengthen safeguards for these workers, according to a recent statement issued by the Ministry of

Manpower.

Data from March 2024 indicates the Ministry of Manpower has registered 6,501 Indonesian migrant workers in Macau, employed across various sectors including hotels, real estate, business activities, recreation, culture and gaming.

"In this regard, during our visit to Macau, we will meet with the Chief Executive of Macau to ask for support for the strengthening of the protection for Indonesian migrant workers in Macau," she stated.

In addition to meeting with the Chief Executive, Fauziyah is scheduled to attend a business-matching event in Hong Kong and disseminate information on job markets and social security programs to Indonesian migrant workers.

NON-RESIDENT WORKERS DRIVE POPULATION GROWTH

STAFF REPORTER

MACAU'S population reached 686,400 by the close of the first quarter of 2024, according to figures released Wednesday by the Statistics and Census Service (DCSEC).

The population uptick was largely driven by an increase in the number of non-resident workers living in Macau. By the end of the quarter, the number of non-resident workers stood at 179,469, up 2,808 from the previous quarter.

The female population (366,200) continued to outnumber the male population (320,200), accounting for 53.4% of the total.

Although birth rates declined, with 856 live births recorded – a drop of 105 compared to the previous quarter – marriages

rose by 96 to 937 in the first three months of the year.

Population movement data showed a decrease of 251 in new arrivals from mainland China with one-way permits, totaling 726. However, the number of individuals newly granted the right of abode increased by 54 to 272 during the period.

Non-resident workers, the largest contributor to Macau's expanding population, benefited the city's labor force but intensified housing demand.

Their growing numbers highlight the city's heavy reliance on migrant labor to power its casino and tourism industries. Experts suggest the trend of increasing non-resident workers is likely to continue, as Macau's robust economy and infrastructure projects drive demand for labor from outside the region.

LABOR

ELLA LEI CALLS FOR CRACKDOWN ON ILLEGAL FOREIGN WORKERS

STAFF REPORTER

LAWMAKER Ella Lei has called on the Macau government to take stronger action against a troubling rise in illegal employment of non-resident workers, including cross-border truck drivers and unauthorized photography services.

In a written inquiry, Lei cited complaints from the transportation and logistics sectors about mainland Chinese drivers being employed to carry out delivery work within Macau, despite not holding the proper permits.

"This practice affects the operations of local sectors," Lei said, explaining that cross-border driving qualifications only allow workers to transport goods between mainland China and Macau, not within the territory itself.

Lei also highlighted a



RENATO MARQUES

complaint from a local wedding photographer about non-resident "illegal photographers" from mainland China and elsewhere openly advertising makeup and photography services in Macau on social media.

"This violates the purpose of entering the territory, constituting illegal work," Lei said.

"It seriously affects the income of local sectors, such as makeup artists and pho-

tographers."

Stressing that such illicit employment undermines local businesses and resident workers, Lei warned it could also lead to "other security problems."

The deputy urged the government to increase monitoring and inspection of these "hotspots" of illegal work and consider revising the law to impose more severe penalties.

"The relatively light pu-

nishments applied to hiring illegal workers have a limited deterrent effect," Lei said, noting that cases of unlawful employment have spread to more sectors beyond the traditional industries.

The government must act quickly, Lei said, to safeguard the livelihoods of Macau residents and local companies in light of this escalating problem.

Lei has requested the government provide details on measures taken to address illegal cross-border drivers and photographers, including the number of inspections conducted and penalties imposed. She has also called for a review of the law to increase the penalties for illegal hiring.

"We need to respond to residents' demands to reinforce the fight against illegal work," Lei concluded.

Border Gate bus terminal undergoes maintenance after storm

STAFF REPORTER

HEAVY rain last Saturday resulted in the Border Gate Terminal resembling a "water curtain hole," with leaks reported in the ceiling of the underground bus station. While the Transport Bureau (DSAT) initially responded that bus services and passenger boarding were unaffected, they have since announced a comprehensive inspection and maintenance plan in collaboration with relevant departments.

The leaks occurred at the connection points of drainage facilities on both sides of the terminal

and in the ceiling of the spare parking area. While only minor water accumulation was reported on the ground, the incident highlights the need for improved infrastructure maintenance.

The bureau has assured the public the damaged ceiling was repaired the same night, and is currently coordinating with relevant departments for a thorough investigation and further repairs.

It also pledged stronger inspection and maintenance efforts at all bus stops to ensure a safe and comfortable waiting environment for passengers.

AD



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Notice

In accordance with articles 24 and 25 of the Charter of Anima - Society for the Protection of Animals (Macau), the Annual General Meeting will take place on Saturday, 1 June 2024, at 4:00 p.m. in Anima Cats' Paradise At Estrada do Campo, N.16, ground floor, Coloane, with the following agenda:

1. Discussing and passing of the Report and the Statement of Accounts and the Written Opinion of the Supervisory Body for 2023;
2. Elections;
3. Any other subjects.

In case it is not present in the first call at least half of the members of the Association, the General Assembly will meet in the same place half an hour later on second call with any number of members.

All members attending the meeting should sign the attendance members list and produce evidence of their identity (through Anima ID card or any ID card or passport).

Ana Soares
The Chairman
Board of General Assembly



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- Obstetrics & Gynaecology** : Dr. Fong Kuan Io
- Plastic & Aesthetic Surgery** : Dr. Lam U Lin
- Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine** : Dr. Lam Kun Kuan
- ENT** : Dr. Cheng Zheng Ang
- Cardiology** : Dr. Jin Chun, Dr. Leong Man Kin
- General Medicine** : Dr. Ng Kam Hong, Dr. Lam Weng Chio
- Dietitian** : Chan Lai U Joey

HOWARD TONG

AN individual fell victim to a scam orchestrated through a part-time employment website, resulting in a substantial loss of MOP13,000, the Judiciary Police (PJ) has reported.

The victim, in pursuit of prospective job opportunities, ventured into an online chat group known as "Macau Resident Part-time Workers." Within this group chat, the victim stumbled upon a seemingly promising job posting. The job appeared to be straightforward, merely requiring the victim to provide their personal phone number for registration purposes, followed by engagement with a website to perform various actions.

Following the instructions provided, the victim actively participated on the website by liking posts and following the specified page. After completion, the website claimed the victim had successfully earned RMB450, purportedly slated for transfer to the victim's account. However, an additional step was presented before the transfer could be initiated.

The website requested the victim's personal information from their MPay account, including sensitive details such as their password and payment code, along with their personal banking information. The victim complied with the requests, believing this would facilitate the transfer of the promised RMB450.

However, upon checking their account the next day, it became apparent that an alarming sum of MOP13,000 had been illicitly siphoned away from their account

CRIME

Man loses MOP13,000 in employment website scam



and redirected to an unknown recipient.

WORKER ARRESTED FOR STEALING JEWELRY

A female worker in her fifties was arrested May 7 by Public Security Police (PSP) for stealing a gold ring from a jewelry shop.

According to the shop keeper, on the afternoon of May 6, the suspect entered the store and claimed she wanted to buy a ring for her daughter. The shop keeper took a gold ring from the display and let the suspect inspect it.

The suspect said she wanted to wait for her daughter

to reply to see if she liked the ring and the shop keeper left her alone to attend to other customers. While waiting, the suspect took the ring and fled the scene.

After the shop keeper reported the incident to the police, officers reviewed the shop's security footage. They identified the suspect and arrested her on the afternoon of May 7. The suspect admitted she intentionally stole the ring for her daughter. The ring was recovered from her residence and the suspect has been taken into custody to be charged.



MACAU ARTS FESTIVAL

THEATRE IN PATUÁ WITH TICKETS FOR BOTH SHOWS ALMOST SOLD OUT

RENATO MARQUES

The theatre in Macau's Creole language "Patuá" is back and will present two performances this weekend as part of the Macau Arts Festival program.

Titled "A Star is Arriving," the performances are scheduled for 8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday (May 11 and 12).

According to the Times' review of ticket sales with the Macau Ticketing network yesterday, there were less than a dozen tickets available for the Saturday evening show, with a considerable number of tickets also sold for Sunday, indicating a near sell-out for this rare opportunity to experience a theatrical performance in Patuá.

As usual, the Doci Papiçám Di Macau group will present a play commenting on the significant issues of Macau in a humorous and somewhat provo-

cative way.

The play revolves around Délia, a substitute drama teacher, and Giselda, a former gambling promoter on the verge of poverty, whose lives intersect when Délia accepts the seemingly childish challenge of getting a shy, stuttering girl on stage.

The challenge then becomes a public bet that Giselda desperately wants to promote. While Giselda sees the opportunity as a new lease on life, for Délia, it represents an unprecedented act of courage.

The performances will be held at the Grand Auditorium of the Macao Cultural Centre and about 2 hours and 30 minutes long, including one interval.

The play is performed mostly in Patuá, with subtitles in Chinese, Portuguese and English to cater to all audiences.

IC OFFERS 30% DISCOUNT ON MAF SHOWS

The Cultural Affairs Bureau is launching the "Final Surprise Flash Sale Offer," a 30% discount on tickets for a selection of shows as part of the 34th Macao Arts Festival (MAF). "The Chairs" by the Shanghai Kunqu Opera Troupe will be staged at the Mandarin's House May 25 and 26, while "Macbettu" will be played on the same dates at the Cultural Center. The contemporary ballet "Sleeping Beauty" will be presented from May 24 to 26 at the Macao Cultural Centre Grand Auditorium. The "Fury of My Thoughts" will be staged May 31 and June 1 at the Macao Cultural Center.

20 MUSEUMS TO HOST ACTIVITIES ON MAY 18

To celebrate International Museum Day May 18, 20 museums in Macau will co-organize the annual event of the museum sector, the "Macao International Museum Day Carnival 2024." The opening ceremony will be held Sunday at the Mount Fortress Garden. The event will feature a range of intriguing activities, including game booths, workshops and guided tours. For this year's International Museum Day, themed "Museums for Education and Research," the Macau museums will launch a variety of online and offline activities, showcasing the highlights of museums and the cultural heritage of Macau.

SSM LOWERS AGE REQUIREMENT FOR ELDERLY DENTAL PROSTHESIS

The Health Bureau has decided to lower the age requirement for the "Dental Prosthesis Installation Program for the Elderly" to individuals over 65 years starting May. Initiated in 2019 in collaboration with non-profit medical organizations, the "Elderly Dental Prosthetics Pilot Program" offers financial assistance to individuals aged 80 and above in need of dental prosthetics. The program was expanded in 2020 to include individuals aged 75 years and above. Subsequently, in the same year, the age requirement for beneficiaries was further reduced to individuals aged 70 years and above.

LOCALS ACCOUNT FOR LESS THAN ONE-THIRD

Over 2,700 Urbanism and Urban Construction professionals registered in Macau

RENATO MARQUES

IN the past nine years, Macau has witnessed the registration of 2,748 professionals in the field of Urbanism and Urban Construction under the new regime established by Law 1/2015, the Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) has noted in a press statement.

The regime applies to the registration for obtaining professional titles of architects, landscape architects, engineers or urban planners, as well as qualifications for project preparation, direction, or supervision of works.

According to DSSCU, 92.7% of such professionals have had their applications for professional

titles approved during the transitional period between 2015 and June 2017.

Only 7.3% were required to go through an internship program and approval via an admission examination.

Local residents accounted for less than one-third (27%) of the total, followed closely by individuals from the mainland (25%) and Taiwan (22%). Those from

foreign countries accounted for 26%, the second largest group, with 8% originating from Portugal.

According to the Council of Architecture, Engineering and Urbanism (CAEU), which is responsible for the accreditation, registration, and training of professionals across 13 categories, the CAEU has conducted four exami-

nations thus far, with 742 candidates. Of these, 207 candidates (42%) were approved.

Currently, the CAEU is organizing the fifth examination, accessible only to those who have completed an internship of at least two years full-time or five years part-time, supervised by one of the 706 registered supervisors.

AUTOMAKERS

JAPANESE NISSAN REPORTS 92% JUMP IN PROFIT AS SALES SURGE

YURI KAGEYAMA, TOKYO

NISSAN'S profit for the fiscal year through March jumped 92% to 426.6 billion yen (\$2.7 billion) as sales grew in all major global markets except China, the Japanese automaker said yesterday.

Annual sales surged nearly 20% to 12.7 trillion yen (\$81.5 billion), Nissan Motor Co. said.

For the January-March quarter, profit at Nissan, based in the port city of Yokohama, edged down slightly to 101.3 billion yen (\$650 million) from 106.9 billion yen.

Quarterly sales rose 13% to 3.5 trillion yen (\$22 billion) for the maker of the Leaf electric car, Infiniti luxury models and Z sportscars.

Chief Executive Makoto Uchida said Nissan was aiming for further growth under a strategy called "The Arc," kicking in from last month, focusing on electric vehicles to boost sales.

"We will do this step by step with a balanced product portfolio and by implementing optimal business strategies," he told reporters.



Nissan hopes to maintain its leadership in electric vehicles in the Japanese market with its Ariya sports-utility vehicle. Its new U.S. models include the Armada and Murano SUVs, and the Infiniti QX80 luxury model.

Nissan has said it will mass produce electric vehicles powered by next-generation batteries by early 2029, offering solid-state batteries in a range of models, including pickup trucks.

In March, Nissan and domestic

rival Honda Motor Co. said they will work together in developing electric vehicles and auto intelligence technology. When asked by a reporter, Uchida said he could not comment yet beyond the announcement.

Nissan is projecting a 380 billion

yen (\$2.4 billion) profit for the year through March 2025, down 11% on year, because of development costs that will include support for suppliers.

The cheap yen has generally been a plus for Japanese exporters, including automakers, by raising the value of its overseas earnings when translated into yen.

But Nissan played down the perk, stressing a steady exchange rate was desirable. The cheap yen boosted Nissan's operating profit for the fiscal year ended in March by nearly 13%.

Nissan sold 3.44 million vehicles globally for the fiscal year, slightly lower than its projections but better than the 3.3 million vehicles for the year before.

By region, Nissan sales grew in the U.S., Japan and Europe, but dove 24% in China. The Chinese auto market has been challenging amid a price war in a market dominated by locals like BYD, with its strong EV offerings.

Still, Nissan is expecting its global sales to rise to 3.7 million vehicles for the year through March 2025, with sales recovering in China while continuing to grow in North America, Japan and Europe.

Nissan shares finished 0.9% higher in Tokyo trading, which closed before earnings were announced.

MDT/AP

AD

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EUROPEAN TOUR

Xi arrives in Hungary for talks on expanding Chinese investments

BELA SZANDELSKY, BUDAPEST

PRESIDENT Xi Jinping arrived in Hungary yesterday [Macau time], the final stop on his five-day European tour, where he's expected to finalize a number of agreements with Prime Minister Viktor

Orbán that will deepen China's economic footprint in the region.

Xi is set to spend two nights in the Hungarian capital Budapest where he will meet with Orbán and Hungarian President Tamás Sulyok. Talks will center on future Chinese investments in the Central European country, which has

courted deep economic ties with Beijing even as mainstream European leaders have pursued more protectionist policies to limit its reach on the continent.

Orbán, a nationalist populist whose illiberal policies have pushed him to the fringes of the European Union, made his coun-

try the first in the 27-member bloc 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 a willingness to establish diplomatic and trade relationships with autocratic governments outside those groupings.

Hungary's foreign minister, Péter Szijjártó, told a news conference earlier this week that Xi and Hungarian officials would sign at least 16 bilateral agreements during the visit, Xi's first to the country as president.

Szjártó called the visit "historic," and pointed out that China had provided more foreign investment to Hungary than any other country in 2023. He added that some of the agreements to be signed would involve expansion of Belt and Road in Hungary, and could include investments in infrastructure and energy.

Xi's arrival in Budapest came after a two-day visit to Serbia's capital Belgrade, where he signed an agreement on building a "shared future" with the Balkan country which, like Hungary, is considered friendly to Russia's Vladimir Putin.

China has claimed neutrality in the Ukraine conflict, but has refused to call the Russian assault an invasion and has been accused of bolstering Russia's military capacity. Hungary has condemned the Russian invasion but threatened to block EU sanctions against Moscow and refused to provide Kyiv with military support.

Xi and Orbán are likely to discuss the war in Ukraine, Hungary's neighbor to the east. Hungary's government has vocally urged China to take a leading role in brokering peace talks between Russia and Ukraine, and expressed its support for a China-proposed peace plan.

Before Xi's arrival, a number of demonstrators gathered in central Budapest to protest his visit and call for autonomy for Tibet, which lies under Chinese control.

"We need a good relationship with a great empire, that's not a problem. The problem is that China has a completely different culture, a completely different approach to human rights," Hendrey said. MDT/AP



President Xi Jinping arrives in Budapest for a state visit to Hungary at the invitation of Hungarian President Tamas Sulyok and Prime Minister Viktor Orban

WEATHER

Heavy rains may lead to floods in South, Southwest China

HOU LIQIANG,
CHINA DAILY

TORRENTIAL rains from Thursday to Sunday may leave more than a dozen rivers in southern China swollen above their flood warning levels, according to the Ministry of Water Resources.

Moderate to heavy rains are expected to fall in some parts of South and Southwest China during the period, as well as some areas in the region south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, the ministry said in a news release yesterday.

The rainfall may result in deluges in at least five natural water body systems, including the Yangtze and Pearl rivers and the Dongting and Poyang lakes.

The Ganjiang, Fuhe and Xinjiang rivers that empty into the Poyang, for example, are forecast to experience significant increases in their water levels, the ministry noted.

The Xijiang, Liujiang and Guijiang rivers in the Pearl River Basin may also be affected, it added.

The ministry has asked flood control authorities in these areas to roll out

precautionary measures, the release said. In particular, they have been asked to take action to cope with floods in medium and small-sized rivers and mountain torrents.

According to the National Meteorological Center, some parts of Hunan, Jiangxi and Fujian provinces may see 40 to 80 milliliters of precipitation from Friday to Sunday. Some areas may experience brief, but heavy downpours, with a maximum hourly precipitation of 20 to 50 mm.

CHINA DAILY



BRIEFS

CHINA EXTENDS VISA EXEMPTIONS UNTIL 2025

This week, during a state visit to Paris, President Xi Jinping announced the extension of visa exemptions for citizens holding ordinary passports from 12 countries until December 31, 2025. The countries included are Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Spain, and Switzerland. This policy allows these nationals to visit China for purposes such as business, tourism, visiting relatives, or transit for up to 15 days without a visa. However, citizens from Portugal, a historic diplomatic partner of China, are yet to be included in the visa-free scheme, which has led to complaints from Lisbon.

HONG KONG AND SHENZHEN PILOT CROSS-BORDER CREDIT CHECKS

Hong Kong and Shenzhen have initiated a pilot program testing a new cross-border data verification platform within the financial sector. This platform, developed by Shenzhen's WeBank, allows the verification of corporate and personal credit information across the border. The program involves entities like Shenzhen Credit Services, Nova Credit, Baihang Credit Services, Fusion Bank, and the Bank of East Asia. This initiative is part of a broader effort to establish a legal and regulatory framework for managing cross-border data flows, aiming to support the digital infrastructure for the Greater Bay Area and facilitate smoother business and financial operations.

AUTHORIZED ECONOMIC OPERATORS DRIVE CHINA'S FOREIGN TRADE

In 2023, Authorized Economic Operators (AEOs) accounted for 37.1% of China's foreign trade value and a similar percentage of total tax payments, as revealed at the 6th World Customs Organization Global AEO Conference in Shenzhen. China boasts over 5,800 AEOs that benefit from streamlined customs procedures such as priority processing and reduced inspections, which enhance their international competitiveness. The conference, attended by over 1,200 delegates from various global regions, focused on leveraging AEO programs to promote sustainable and inclusive global trade. This conference is a biennial event, previously hosted by countries including the Republic of Korea and Spain.

ZONG QIUGANG, DIRECTOR OF SKLPLANETS

INTO THE FAR SIDE OF THE MOON, DEVELOPING BEYOND GAMING WITHIN GBA'S DEVELOPMENT

INTERVIEW BY
HOWARD TONG

THE State Key Laboratory of Lunar and Planetary Science (SKLPlanets) at the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) was officially established in 2018 with the approval of the Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China. The SKLPlanets focuses on three research directions: the study of planetary environment and habitability, planetary formation and evolution, and space/surface exploration.

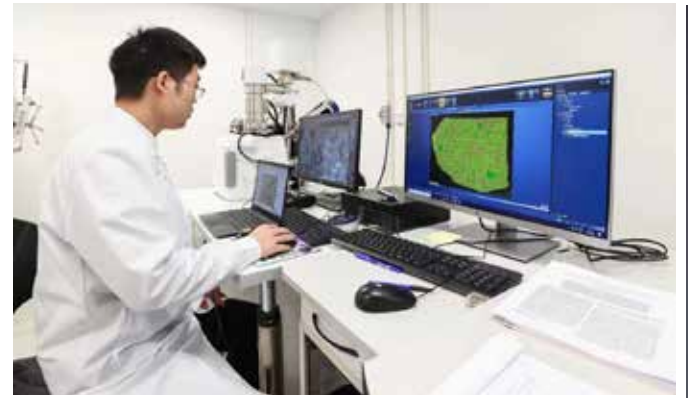
The establishment of the SKLPlanets is part of the promotion of technological innovation within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and the promotion of the science and technology sectors in Macau.

In the past, SKLPlanets has undertaken several basic research projects in lunar and planetary science and achieved significant results. In 2020, the research project "Study of Surface Features and Internal Structures of the Moon, Asteroids, and Gas Giant Planets"

won the first prize in the Natural Science Award of Macau Science and Technology Awards. In 2022, the research project "Scientific Discoveries in the Study of Lunar and Martian Surface Environments" won the second prize in the Natural Science Award of Macau Science and Technology Awards.

Chair Professor Zong Qiu-gang serves as the director of the SKLPlanets and this week gave an exclusive interview to Macau Daily Times to further elaborate on the laboratory's work with the uncrewed rocket carrying the Chang'e-6 probe that launched from Wenchang Space Launch Center, Hainan last week.

"The goal of the Chang'e-6 probe is to go to the far side of the moon, collect samples, and return. There are several technical challenges we face, with the first one being communication. In the past, we didn't have direct contact with the far side, because the moon is tidally locked to the Earth. On the far side of the moon, we don't have any way to communicate between Earth and the probe," Professor Zong said.



"The reason why we chose to land on the far side of the moon is due to the far side having much more craters, as they impact more frequently on the far side. Additionally, because it is a lot colder, that side preserves a lot of water, all of which can provide information on how the moon was

formed, and also maybe information about the Earth," he added.

To overcome communication limitations, the professor said, "we first had to establish a communication system using satellites as a bridge to relay signals. Then we can control the spacecraft, finally making

Shenzhen housing policy changes may spur demand

ON THE AGENDA

THE new policy package for the technology hub of Shenzhen, Guangdong province, to ease its homebuying rules will be a significant step toward a more flexible and responsive approach to high-quality development of the property sector in China, experts said amid policies primarily focused on inventory reductions and stimulating demand, but also incorporating elements of social support and market revitalization.

"Since the previous policy adjustment by the city in July 2021, a certain level of pent-up demand has accumulated and the new policy is expected to unleash some of this demand, including from multi-child families seeking larger homes, enterprises purchasing homes for employees, and nonlocal residents and singles seeking to enter the

Shenzhen housing market," said Li Yujia, chief researcher at the Guangdong Planning Institute's residential policy research center.

Li's remarks came a day after Shenzhen joined other major cities in China in easing homebuying rules to stimulate demand. The new package, which was issued on Monday by the Shenzhen Municipal Housing and Construction Bureau, highlighted several changes including reduced social security requirements for nonlocal residents, additional home purchase quotas for families with multiple children, relaxed purchase policies for enterprises and support for "trade-ins" and "old-for-new" deals.

Yan Yuejin, director of the Shanghai-based E-house China Research and Development Institution, praised Shenzhen's policy changes and their alignment with a recent meeting of the Poli-

tical Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, which demanded "research on policies to reduce housing inventory and improve the quality of newly added housing".

"The release of this policy in Shenzhen aligns with expectations and indicates a wave of policy relaxations across various localities in May. The old-for-new program will revitalize the secondary housing market and expand developers' business opportunities," said Yan.

While both Yan and Li recognized the innovative aspects of the policy changes and their alignment with broader market trends, they differed in their assessment of the impact on nonlocal residents.

"The purchasing power of nonlocals is significantly lower than that of locals, so the overall impact of the policy should not be overesti-

mated," Li said, adding that, "If the market continues to weaken, further adjustments may be implemented, such as complete removal of purchase restrictions on nonlocals and a reduction in the value-added tax exemption period from five years to two years. Ultimately, the key to a sustainable housing market lies in boosting purchasing power through improved income, employment and consumption."

To this, Bai Wenxi, vice-chairman of the China Enterprise Capital Union, provided a more nuanced perspective, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges associated with the new measures.

"The package will undoubtedly increase market confidence, boost transaction activity and expand opportunities for capital operations, but it's also important to note that the impact of policies is uncertain especially on the

DEVELOPING MACAU DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Chair Professor Zong Qiugang

system, and space exploration. They focus on data collection about the lunar and planetary environment, the formation and evolution of planets and moons. The director emphasized that their work has two main focal points; conducting research on space exploration and development of hardware for Chinese spacecraft missions.

“As you may know, last year we launched the Macau Science 1 satellite and got almost one year’s data collection,” Professor Zong highlighted. “This data is very high quality and can help us actually to form a paper on space exploration and we are planning to publish two volumes of paper on Chinese science journals.”

Another direction they are focusing on is the development of science payloads and hardware for future Chinese spacecraft missions such as Chang’e-7 or 8 “and maybe even the Tianwen series that go to Mars and even Jupiter.”

In addition to their research endeavors, SKLPlanets aims to foster top-tier talents in planetary sciences, build a globally competitive research team,

and contribute to Macau’s technological advancement through diversified development.

They participate in major national deep space exploration projects and provide scientific support. The director believes that their program has positively impacted Macau by demonstrating its potential in the field of science and technology, showcasing its ability to conduct high-quality research and develop advanced instruments.

The MUST professor was adamant about the fundamental role his lab plays in the context of Macau, its economic diversification, and its integration in the overall GBA’s technological innovation and development plans.

“We have demonstrated that Macau is not only for gambling, but also we could do serious science. The program wanted to show we have the capability, we have the interest to do the science and technology and we can help the international scientific community conduct interplanetary research.”

SKLPlanets has cemented itself as a vital hub for lunar and planetary research, with its focus on studying planetary environments, formation and evolution, and development of science payloads for future spacecraft missions to showcase Macau’s capabilities beyond its gambling reputation by contributing to the international scientific community.

WORK IN PROGRESS

NOTES ON ACADEMIC STUDIES

The Impact of Different Terrains in The Greater Bay Area on The Local Economy

Author: Jin Deng

Journal: *Frontiers in Business, Economics and Management*, 2023

This study explores the economic effects of geographic diversity within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), analyzing economic indicators such as GDP, industrial output, and population density across 11 administrative regions. The research categorizes these regions into three developmental levels, highlighting the diminished economic radiation from central to peripheral cities as distances increase. The findings emphasize the need for improved transportation links and industrial realignment to enhance regional connectivity and economic integration. Such strategies are suggested to promote balanced economic growth and facilitate the expansion of industry and capital, particularly in peripheral cities less influenced by central economic hubs. **FROM THE ABSTRACT**



Business credit network characteristics and impact on green economy efficiency: Evidence from the Greater Bay Area around Hangzhou Bay of China

Authors: Haisheng Chen, Shuang Chen, Di Wang, Manhong Shen

Journal: *PLOS ONE*, 2023

This research examines the structure and evolution of business credit networks within the Hangzhou Bay Greater Bay Area and their influence on sustainable economic development. The study identifies a robust, dense network of business credit that plays a critical role in regional economic activities, promoting private and overall economic growth. However, the alignment of these credit networks with green economy goals remains challenging. The study reveals a departure from the typical financial development paradox in China, suggesting that while business credit has significantly supported economic advancement, its integration with environmental sustainability goals requires strategic adjustments. Recommendations include enhancing policy frameworks to better integrate financial development with green economic practices. **FROM THE ABSTRACT**



Research on the Evolution and Driving Factors of the Economic Spatial Pattern of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area in the Context of the COVID-19 Epidemic

Authors: Xiaojin Huang, Renzhong Guo, Xiaoming Li, Minmin Li, Yong Fan, Yaxing Li

Journal: *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information*, 2023

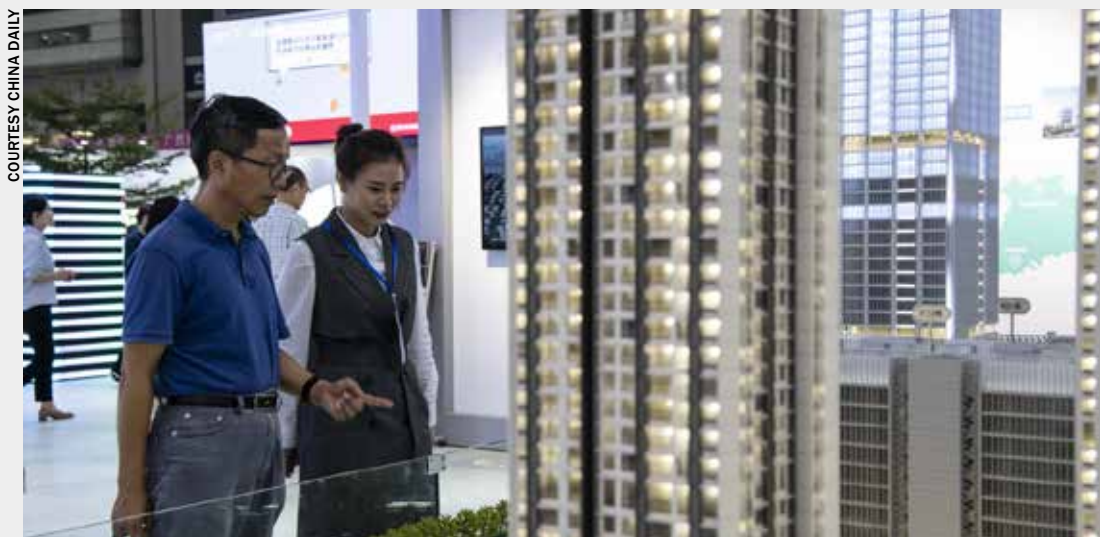
This study analyzes the shifting economic landscape of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) amidst the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Using data from 2017 to 2022, the study employs spatial analysis tools to assess changes in economic indicators such as investment, consumption, and exports. Results indicate a reconfiguration of economic activities, with a “core-edge” structure becoming prominent. The analysis reveals significant spatial spillovers and the differential impacts of various economic drivers on growth, highlighting the need for region-specific recovery strategies. This paper provides crucial insights for policymakers to formulate interventions that capitalize on investment and innovation while mitigating the adverse impacts of the pandemic on economic distribution and growth. **FROM THE ABSTRACT**



Note: Illustrations are AI-generated artistic renditions.

the landing on the far side of the moon possible. So, if we don’t have that kind of system, it would be an impossible mission.”

In terms of the role of SKL-Planets, it serves as a key laboratory of lunar and planetary science, conducting research related to the moon, the solar



A prospective homebuyer looks at a property model during an expo in Shenzhen, Guangdong province

capital market,” Bai said.

According to China Daily’s research, approximately 35 cities across China have relaxed purchase restrictions since last year, with 22 cities — including Hefei, Anhui province; Kunming, Yunnan province; Suzhou, Jiangsu province; and Changsha, Hunan province, completely removing purchase restrictions. However, core cities, including the four first-tier cities and Han-

gzhou, Zhejiang province (for new homes); Tianjin, and Xi’an, Shaanxi province (core area), still maintain purchase restrictions.

The recent policy changes in Shenzhen, along with comprehensive policy packages announced by Beijing and Chengdu, Sichuan province, suggest a growing focus on easing restrictions and promoting a stable and healthy housing market in major Chi-

nese cities.

As a result, data from the Shenzhen Zhongyuan Research Center showed that last week 615 new homes were sold in Shenzhen, which was 6.8 percent more than the previous week. The total area of these sales was 62,665 square meters. In addition, during the same period, 1,040 pre-owned homes were sold in the city. **MDT/CHINA DAILY**

DIRE STRAIT

CHINA SLAMS US FOR SHIP'S PASSAGE WEEKS BEFORE NEW LEADER TAKES OFFICE

CHRISTOPHER BODEEN, TAIPEI

CHINA'S military criticized a U.S. destroyer's passage through the Taiwan Strait less than two weeks before the island's new leader takes office and while Washington and Beijing are making uneven efforts to restore regular military exchanges.

Navy Senior Capt. Li Xi, spokesperson for China's Eastern Theater Command, accused the U.S. of having "publicly hyped" the passage of the USS Halsey this week. In a statement, Li said the command, which oversees operations around the strait, "organized naval and air forces to monitor" the ship's transit.

The U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet said the Halsey "conducted a routine Taiwan Strait transit on May 8 through waters where high-seas freedoms of navigation and overflight apply in accordance with international law."

The guided-missile destroyer transited through a corridor in the strait that is "beyond the territorial sea" of any coastal state, the fleet

said in a statement.

"Halsey's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the United States' commitment to upholding freedom of navigation for all nations as a principle," it said. "No member of the international community should be intimidated or coerced into giving up their rights and freedoms. The United States military flies, sails, and operates anywhere international law allows."

China's accusation that the transit was "publicly hyped" — essentially meaning it was played up for maximum political effect. There was no indication the U.S. Navy had operated any differently in the latest case, nor that the Chinese response was any more strong.

Taiwan's Defense Ministry said it was fully aware of the destroyer's passage.

"Throughout the transit, the Taiwanese military was closely monitoring the surrounding sea and airspace, and the situation remained normal," the ministry said.

The last such passage was on April 17, a day after U.S. and Chi-

nese defense chiefs held their first talks since November 2022 in an effort to reduce regional tensions. Military-to-military contact stalled in August 2022, when Beijing suspended all such communication after then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan. China responded by firing missiles over Taiwan and staging a surge in military maneuvers, including what appeared to

be a rehearsal of a naval and aerial blockade of the island.

The critical strait is 160 kilometers wide and divides China from Taiwan, the self-governing island democracy where leader-elect William Lai Ching-te will be inaugurated on May 20. Lai's Democratic Progressive Party favors Taiwan's de facto independent status under which it maintains strong unof-

ficial relations with the U.S. and other major nations.

Taiwan's military heightens its alert status around sensitive dates, such as this January's elections, wary that China might use its vastly more powerful military to attempt to intimidate voters and sway public opinion in favor of Beijing's insistence that unification between the sides is inevitable. **MDT/AP**



In this photo provided by the U.S. Navy, the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Halsey conducts routine underway operations while transiting through the Taiwan Strait Wednesday

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IN MACAU (2023)



MYANMAR

Civilian casualties rise in civil war as resistance forces tighten noose around military

DAVID RISING, BANGKOK

SIX months into an offensive against Myanmar's military government, opposition forces have made massive gains, but civilian casualties are rising sharply as regime troops increasingly turn toward scorched-earth tactics in the Southeast Asian country's bitter civil war.

There is pressure on all fronts from powerful militias drawn from Myanmar's ethnic minority groups and newer resistance forces. Troops are retaliating with air, naval and artillery strikes on hospitals and other facilities where the opposition could be sheltered or aided.

"When the mass of people rise up against them, I think it terrifies them," said Dave Eubank, a former U.S. Special Forces soldier who founded the Free Burma Rangers, a humanitarian aid organization that has provided assistance to both combatants and civilians in Myanmar since the 1990s.

"They know that hospitals, churches, schools and monasteries are important places for human care, and gathering, and symbols — and they hammer them," said Eubank. "That's new."

Military forces now control less than half the country, but are holding on tenaciously to much of central Myanmar including the capital, Naypyidaw — recently targeted by drone attacks — and largest city, Yangon, and is far better armed than the resistance forces, with support from Russia and China.

"People have been saying that the regime was on the brink of collapse since two weeks after the coup," in February 2021, said Morgan Michaels, an analyst with the International Institute of Strategic Studies who runs its Myanmar Conflict Map project.

"On the other hand, obviously the regime is weaker than it's ever been.... so there's no doubt that it's in serious, serious trouble," he said.

Thet Swe, a spokesman for the military government, denied that troops were targeting buildings and areas where civilians were sheltering, blaming their destruction instead on the opposition forces, without citing evidence.



A monastery destroyed by a Burmese military airstrike on March 31

"The military never harmed hospitals, churches and civilians in our country," he told The Associated Press in an email. "They did not use that strategy and are fighting the rebels only for the sovereignty of our country."

As the fighting has moved into more populated areas, about 1 million people have been forced to flee their homes since the start of the offensive in October, contributing to the more than 3 million internally displaced people in the country of some 56 million, according to the U.N.'s humanitarian aid agency.

With the collapse of its health care system and food supplies dwindling, 18.6 million people are in need, up 1 million from a year ago, including 6 million children, the agency said.

HOW IT BEGAN

Opposition in Myanmar, also known as Burma, had been growing since the army seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021, but it gained new momentum in October when major militias known collectively as the Three Brotherhood Alliance launched a joint offensive.

Together, the Arakan Army, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army — among the most powerful militias formed by Myanmar's ethnic minorities — made quick

advances.

As they captured huge swaths of territory largely in the north and northeast, including economically important border crossings with China and several major military bases, other ethnic armed groups sensed momentum and joined the fighting.

At the same time, People's Defense Forces — armed resistance groups that support the shadow National Unity Government, which views itself as Myanmar's legitimate administration — have been increasing in number and launching their own attacks, often supported and trained by the ethnic armed militias.

Both sides claim they have inflicted heavy tolls. And the military government under Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing has acknowledged it is under pressure, recently reintroducing conscription to increase its ranks.

That has pushed some young people into the resistance. Many more have fled to rural areas or neighboring countries to avoid fighting.

With the violence across its border, China helped broker a cease-fire in Myanmar's north in January with the Three Brotherhood Alliance. But the alliance's Arakan Army continues to fight in its home Rakhine state in the west and has made significant gains, while PDFs and other ethnic armed groups continue their own attacks elsewhere.

THE LATEST FIGHTING

The fiercest fighting in recent weeks has been in the southeast, where the main ethnic Karen fighting force, the Karen National Liberation Army, claimed in early April to have seized all the military bases in Myawaddy, the main town on the border with Thailand in Kayin state, also known as Karen state.

One army battalion clung to a position beside one of Myawaddy's two bridges, assisted by the Border Guard Force, a rival Karen group that had been in charge of border area security for years, conducting lucrative business by providing protection to area casino resorts with links to organized crime.

The force, which declared itself neutral in January, now controls the town with military government administrators still in place, highlighting how some militia groups still prioritize their own interests.

"This is not a black and white situation. This is not the regime reconquering and reconsolidating control," Michaels said of the fighting in the area. "This is the regime hanging on, keeping a foothold by the razor's edge."

Meanwhile, the military has pushed KNLA and People's Defense Forces out of Kawkaik, a strategically important town along the road that connects Myawaddy with the rest of the country.

Thousands of civilians have fled Myawaddy and Kawkaik. But many civilians haven't managed to escape.

At least 1,015 civilian deaths have been documented from Nov. 1 through May 1, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, a watchdog group that tracks political arrests, attacks and casualties. It says 4,962 civilians have been killed overall since the military took power three years ago.

The watchdog blamed the deaths on the military's increasing use of scorched-earth tactics and fighting moving into more populated areas.

"The military has increasingly lost areas of control in recent months, which has only increased their use of this strategy, responding with airstrikes, shelling and so on in civilian areas," the AAPP said in an email.

The group added that the number of civilian deaths in the recent months of fighting is likely double what it reported, if not more, but that it can't document the numbers due to the intensification of the conflict.

Kyaw Zaw, a spokesperson for the shadow National Unity Government, said the military had destroyed 343 hospitals and clinics since it took power, and that those attacks had accelerated in the last two months, though he didn't have specific details.

Eubank, with the Free Burma Rangers, said he and his teams operating near the front lines have witnessed the military, known as the Tatmadaw, fighting with a "speed and force and a viciousness that we've never seen."

But in fighting a common enemy, the resistance is showing growing unity, he said.

"The Burma army is still stronger than any of these resistance groups, and if they want to bring a division or two to bear, they will win the battle, but they're not stronger than everybody else together," he said.

WHAT COMES NEXT

Whether that unity will continue if the regime falls, and if the disparate resistance forces can agree on a common path ahead for Myanmar, is an open question, Michaels said.

"On one hand, Myanmar is not Syria — there is common cause in fighting the regime," Michaels said. "But at the same time, as the regime has receded from some areas, there are at least indicators of potential future conflicts between groups."

He noted an incident in northern Shan state last month in which troops from two members of the Three Brotherhood Alliance — the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army — traded fire over a territorial dispute. One person was injured.

MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



RUSSIA

Celebration of victory in World War II is a key pillar of Putin's rule

RUSSIA yesterday wrapped itself in patriotic pageantry for Victory Day, a celebration of its defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II that President Vladimir Putin has turned into a pillar of his nearly quarter-century in power and a justification of his military action in Ukraine.

Even though few veterans of what Russia calls the Great Patriotic War are still alive 79 years after Berlin fell to the Red Army, the victory over Nazi Germany remains the most important and widely revered symbol of the country's prowess and a key element of national identity.

Yesterday's festivities across Russia, led by Putin who this week began his fifth term in office, recall that wartime sacrifice in what has become its most important secular holiday.

"The Victory Day unites all generations," Putin said in a speech at Red Square parade held in shivering cold with snow flurries. "We are going forward relying on our centuries-old traditions and feel confident that together we will ensure a free and secure future of Russia."

He hailed the troops fighting in Ukraine for their courage and blasted the West, accusing it of "fueling regional conflicts, inter-ethnic and inter-religious strife and trying to contain sovereign and independent centers of global development."

Amid Russia-West tensions that soared to the highest level since the Cold War times over Ukraine, Putin also issued another stark reminder about Russia's nuclear might.

"Russia will do everything to prevent global confrontation, but will not allow anyone to threaten us," he said. "Our strategic forces are in combat readiness."

The Soviet Union lost about 27 million people in the war, an estimate that many historians consider conservative, scarring virtually every family.

Nazi troops overran much of the western Soviet Union when they invaded in June 1941, before being driven back all the way to Berlin, where the USSR's hammer and sickle flag was raised above the ruined capital. The U.S., U.K, France and other allies mark the end of the war in Europe on May 8.

The immense suffering and sacrifice in cities like Stalingrad, Kursk and Putin's native Leningrad — now St. Petersburg — still serve as a powerful symbol of the country's ability to prevail against seemingly overwhelming challenges.

Since coming to power on the last day of 1999, Putin has made May 9 an important part of his political agenda, featuring displays of military might. Columns of tanks and missiles roll across Red Square and squadrons of fighter jets roar

overhead as medal-bedecked veterans join him to review the parade. Many wear the black-and-orange St. George's ribbon that is traditionally associated with Victory Day.

About 9,000 troops, including some 1,000 who fought in Ukraine, took part in the parade.

Putin, 71, talks frequently about his family history, sharing memories of his father, who fought on the front during the Nazi siege of the city and was badly wounded.

As Putin tells it, his father, also named Vladimir, came home from a military hospital during the war to see workers trying to take away his wife, Maria, who had been declared dead of starvation. But the elder Putin did not believe she had died — saying she had only lost consciousness, weak with hunger. Their first child, Viktor, died during the siege when he was 3, one of more than 1 million Leningrad residents who died in the 872-day blockade, most of them from starvation.

For several years, Putin carried a photo of his father in Victory Day marches — as did others honoring relatives who were war veterans — in what was called the "Immortal Regiment."

Those demonstrations were suspended during the coronavirus pandemic and then again amid security concerns

after the start of the fighting in Ukraine.

As part of his efforts to burnish the Soviet legacy and trample on any attempts to question it, Russia has introduced laws that criminalized the "rehabilitation of Nazism" that include punishing the "desecration" of memorials or challenging Kremlin versions of World War II history.

When he sent troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, Putin evoked World War II in seeking to justify his actions that Kyiv and its Western allies denounced as an unprovoked war of aggression. Putin cited the "denazification" of Ukraine as a main goal of Moscow, falsely describing the government of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who is Jewish and lost relatives in the Holocaust, as neo-Nazis.

Putin tried to cast Ukraine's veneration of some of its nationalist leaders who cooperated with the Nazis in World War II as a sign of Kyiv's purported Nazi sympathies. He regularly made unfounded references to Ukrainian nationalist figures such as Stepan Bandera, who was killed by a Soviet spy in Munich in 1959, as an underlying justification for the Russian military action in Ukraine.

Many observers see Putin's focus on World War II as part of his efforts to revive the USSR's clout and prestige and his reliance on Soviet practices.

"It's the continuous self-identification with the USSR as the victor of Nazism and the lack of any other strong legitimacy that forced the Kremlin to declare 'denazification' as the goal of the war," Nikolay Epplee said in a commentary for Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center.

The Russian leadership, he said, has "locked itself up in a worldview limited by the Soviet past." **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1994 MANDELA BECOMES SA'S FIRST BLACK PRESIDENT



Nelson Mandela has become South Africa's first black president after more than three centuries of white rule.

Mr Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) party won 252 of the 400 seats in the first democratic elections of South Africa's history.

The inauguration ceremony took place in the Union Buildings amphitheatre in Pretoria today, attended by politicians and dignitaries from more than 140 countries around the world.

As part of the ceremony he pledged his allegiance to South Africa and his determination to continue his work for reconciliation.

"I do hereby swear to be faithful to the Republic of South Africa and do solemnly and sincerely promise to promote that which will advance and to oppose all that may harm the republic... and to devote myself to the well-being of the republic and all its people."

Jubilant scenes on the streets of Pretoria followed the ceremony with blacks, whites and coloureds celebrating together.

When the new president, flanked by First Deputy President Thabo Mbeki and Second Deputy President FW de Klerk, appeared on the Botha Lawn beneath the Union Buildings the crowd went wild.

More than 100,000 South African men, women and children of all races sang and danced with joy.

Addressing the crowd President Mandela paid tribute to outgoing president Mr FW de Klerk: "He has made for himself a niche in history."

"He has turned out to be one of the greatest reformers, one of the greatest sons of South Africa."

He also spoke of the "human disaster" of apartheid.

"We saw our country tear itself apart in terrible conflict... The time for healing of wounds has come... Never, never again will this beautiful land experience the oppression of one by another."

And urging forgiveness he said in Afrikaans: "Wat is verby verby" - "What is past is past"

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Following the inauguration ceremony, President Mandela entrusted his deputy, Thabo Mbeki, with the day-to-day business of the government.

Mandela himself concentrated on the ceremonial duties of a leader, building a new international image for South Africa. Mandela stepped down as South Africa's president after the ANC's landslide victory in the national elections in the summer of 1999, in favour of Mr Mbeki. Since his retirement he has continued travelling the world, meeting leaders, attending conferences and collecting awards.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Develop creative projects. Advance practical priorities, especially where stuck. Learn from elders and young people. Write, edit and express your ideas. Connect and share.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20

It's money-making time. Disciplined efforts pay off. Do the homework to lay foundations for a successful venture. Good news comes from far away.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21

Take charge and push for the results you want. Make a choice or commitment. Confirm your intentions with your team. You can do it.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Consider a future worth creating. Imagine, dream and envision how you would love it to be. Craft long term plans. Rest and recharge.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Teamwork propels a community effort to victory. Perform your part for shared gain. Actions taken now can have long-lasting benefits. Go for your goal.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22

A professional challenge takes focus. An opportunity to realize an old dream tempts. Secure the ground already taken. Get support. The tide is in your favor.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Get out and explore new horizons. Long-distance travel delights. Or rediscover your own backyard. Study with a master. Get advice from someone with experience.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Find and implement profitable solutions for a shared venture. Review budgets. Work out the financial details together. Figure out who will do what.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Collaborate with your partner to get farther. Distractions abound. Don't be afraid if you don't know how to do something. Work it out together.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Practice to build capacities. Action gets results. As you gain strength, confidence and energy rises naturally. Prioritize mental, physical and emotional health. Nurture yourself.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Lose yourself in the pursuit of happiness. Practice your artistry. Avoid distractions and illusions. Discover unexpected fun or romance. Laugh with your people.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Home and family take priority. Fill yours with love. Reduce noise, chaos and clutter. Invite people over and share some home-cooked goodness together.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

2		7	3						
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					1	8			
						5			
	9					6			
					7			3	
1									

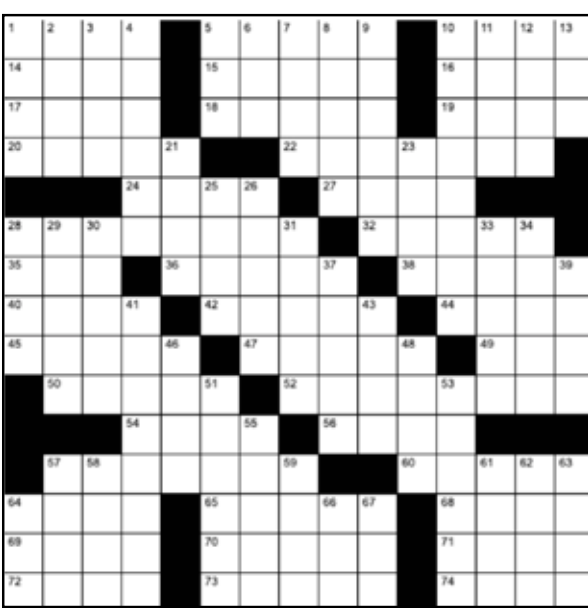
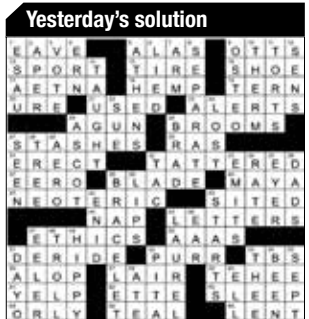
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	19	28	rain
Changchun	15	23	rain
Chengdu	17	26	rain
Chongqing	20	27	rain
Fuzhou	17	28	cloudy
Guangzhou	22	28	thunderstorms
Guiyang	14	26	showers
Haikou	25	31	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	15	28	cloudy
Harbin	12	20	rain
Hefei	13	29	cloudy
Nanjing	14	29	cloudy
Shanghai	17	25	overcast
Taipei	20	27	cloudy
Wuhan	17	28	fine
Hong Kong	25	27	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	4	10	showers
Frankfurt	10	23	sunny
Paris	12	24	sunny
London	11	24	cloudy
New York	9	13	showers

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Trial; 5- Bobby of the Black Panthers; 10- This can be guilty or not guilty; 14- Vogue rival; 15- Home run king Hank; 16- Curtain holders; 17- From the U.S.; 18- Teacher; 19- Baa maids?; 20- Cowboy display; 22- Very small amount; 24- Scotch partner; 27- Read quickly; 28- Ancient military engine; 32- Hilton competitor; 35- Suffix with pay; 36- Tennis's Monica; 38- Twisted expression?; 40- Price tag; 42- Polynesian porch; 44- Skater Lipinski; 45- Blender brand; 47- Accord maker; 49- ___ Lanka; 50- Thick sweet liquid; 52- Top of a metal fastener; 54- Urban uprising; 56- Juan's water; 57- Artist; 60- Thin fogs; 64- Wild guess; 65- The end of ___; 68- Harvest; 69- Satirist Mort; 70- Pavarotti, e.g.; 71- Roy's "singin' pardner"; 72- "___ quam videri" (North Carolina's motto); 73- Aquatic mammal; 74- Ear-related;

DOWN 1- Drop of water expelled by the eye; 2- Sailor's saint; 3- Arctic transport; 4- Mother of Calcutta; 5- Warmed the bench; 6- ___ de Cologne; 7- Liberal pursuits; 8- Weaving machines; 9- Add vitamins to flour, e.g.; 10- With child; 11- Actor Rob; 12- First place?; 13- Donkey's uncle; 21- "My fault!"; 23- 24 hour periods; 25- Shootout; 26- God of Islam; 28- Designer Chanel; 29- At ___ for words; 30- Delicious; 31- Mortise insert; 33- Fluff, as bangs; 34- ___ firma; 37- Capital city of Yemen; 39- Sudden assault; 41- Awful; 43- Gotcha; 46- Destroy; 48- Reunion attendee; 51- Edible tuber; 53- Coiffure; 55- Belief; 57- School orgs.; 58- Contented sighs; 59- Lease; 61- Show to a table; 62- Anklebones; 63- Blueprint detail; 64- U-turn from NNW; 66- ___ v. Wade; 67- Sheet music abbr.;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



Noa, played by Owen Teague (from left), Freya Allan as Nova, and Raka, played by Peter Macon, in a scene from "Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes" (20th Century Studios)

MARK KENNEDY, MDT/AP
ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

DRIVE IN

PLANET OF THE APES FINDS A NEW HERO AND WILL BLOW YOUR MIND

FANS of the "Planet of the Apes" franchise may still be mourning the 2017 death of Caesar, the first smart chimp and the charismatic ape leader. Not to worry: He haunts the next episode, the thrilling, visually

stunning "Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes."

We actually start with Caesar's funeral, his

body decorated with flowers and then set alight like a Viking, before fast-forwarding "many

generations later." All apes talk now and most humans don't, reduced to caveman loin cloths and running wide-eyed and scared, evolution in reverse.

Our new hero is the young ape Noa (Owen Teague) who is like all young adult chimps — seeking his father's approval (even chimp dads just don't understand) and testing his bravery. He is part of a clan that raises pet eagles, smokes fish and lives peacefully.

That all changes when his village is attacked not by humans but by fellow apes — masked soldiers from a nasty kingdom led by the crown-wearing Proximus Caesar (Kevin Durand, playing it to the hilt). He has taken Caesar's name but twisted his words to become a tyrannical strongman — sorry, strongape.

Unlike the last movie which dealt with man's inhumanity to animals — concentration camps included — ape-on-ape violence is in the cards for this one, including capturing an entire clan as prisoners. Proximus Caesar's goons use makeshift cattle prods on fellow apes and force them to work while declaring "For Caesar!"

Screenwriter Josh Friedman has cleverly created a movie that

examines how ancient stories can be hijacked and manipulated, like how Caesar's non-violent message gets twisted by bad actors. There's also a lot of "Avatar" primitive naivete, and that makes sense since the reboot was shaped by several of that blue alien movie's makers.

The movie poses some uncomfortable questions about collaborationists. William H. Macy plays a human who has become a sort of teacher-prisoner to Proximus Caesar — reading Kurt Vonnegut to him — and won't fight back. "It is already their world," he rationalizes.

Along for the heroic ride is a human young woman (Freya Allan, a budding star) who is hiding an agenda but offers Noa help along the way. Peter Macon plays a kindly, book-loving orangutan who adds a jolt of gleeful electricity to the movie and is missed when he goes.

The effects are just jaw-dropping, from the ability to see individual hairs on the back of a monkey to the way leaves fall and the crack of tree limbs echoing in the forest. The sight of apes on horseback, which seemed glitchy just seven years ago, are now seamless. There are also inside jokes, like the use of the name Nova again

this time.

Director Wes Ball nicely handles all the thrilling sequences — though the two-and-a-half hour runtime is somewhat taxing — and some really cool ones, like the sight of apes on horseback on a beach, a nod to the original 1968 movie. And like when the apes look through some old illustrated kids' books and see themselves depicted in zoo cages. That makes for some awkward human-ape interaction. "What is next for apes? Should we go back to silence?" our hero asks.

The movie races to a complex face-off between good and bad apes and good and bad humans outside a hulking silo that holds promise to each group. Can apes and humans live in peace, as Caesar hoped? "Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes" doesn't answer that but it does open up plenty more to ponder. Starting with the potentially crippling proposition of a key death, this franchise has somehow found new vibrancy.

"Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes," a 20th Century Studios release that is exclusively in theaters May 10, is rated PG-13 for "intense sequences of sci-fi violence and action." Running time: 145 minutes.★★★★

AD

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MARTA PEREIRA DA COSTA

亮起今年澳門文學節

MARTA PEREIRA DA COSTA COMES TO SCENE FOR THIS YEAR'S MACAU LITERARY FESTIVAL

創刊17周年

17 YEARS OF PUBLISHING

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

tTUNES

Sebastian Bach's 'Child Within the Man' makes case for Skid Row reunion

SEBASTIAN Bach's latest solo album, "Child Within the Man," is a reminder that every once in a while, a man and a moment meet.

This is that time for Bach and his former band Skid Row. The vintage-sounding album has everything that made Bach a force and offers a tantalizing glimpse into what he could bring to a reunited Skid Row.

Together, Bach and Skid Row were fixtures of hard rock radio in the late '80s and early '90s with songs like "Youth Gone Wild," "18 And Life" and "I Remember You." But since parting ways in 1996, neither has had anything close to the level of success they had together.

The lead singer job in Skid Row is currently vacant; Halestorm's Lzzy Hale is filling in on a handful of shows in the coming weeks, but she has her own career to tend to.

The timing of Bach's solo album could not be better, and it shows a fierce performer in prime fighting form. It's not hard to picture the opening track "Everybody Bleeds" being belted out at a packed stadium by a reunited Skid Row.

His vocals remain sharp and his songwriting talents as cunning as ever.

Bach has new, creative ammunition that he could bring to a Skid Row reunion on tracks like "Crucify Me" and "Hard Darkness." They're the sort of hard, tightly played rockers at which the band excelled, signs of what once was and could be again.

Bach calls in favors from Mötley Crüe guitarist John 5 on "Freedom" and guitar virtuoso Orianthi on "Future of Youth." Billy Idol guitarist Steve Stevens adds a particularly combustible solo on "E.U."

And it all ends with an honest-to-Bach, '80s-esque hair metal power ballad on "To Live Again," proving that this guy remembers where he came from and where his bread is buttered.

WAYNE PARRY, MDT/AP



"Child Within the Man" by Sebastian Bach (Reigning Phoenix Music)



TASTE OF EDESIA

Unprecedented Hot Pot Broth

IRENE SAM, MDT

ONE of the most exciting F&B event this month is a hot pot experience not to be missed. Globally renowned Chef André Chiang, Wynn Culinary Ambassador, unveils his latest pop-up project "BROTH by André Chiang" at Mizumi, Wynn Macau, starting from May 11. "BROTH by André Chiang" is a brand-new, personalised hot pot experience that focuses not only on the abundance of ingredients, but a celebration of the broth, the true soul of hot pot.

Having excelled with unrivalled success for decades and awards won in the world of hospitality, Chef André Chiang channels his worldly horizon and exposure to global cuisines, shatters geographical barriers as he presents new culinary ideas fusing Chinese culinary traditions, Pan-Asian varieties and French precision with his new BROTH. Chef André's eight signature Asian-inspired broths highlight the best of broth-making, from

long-simmering Chinese double-boiled soups to Japanese nabes, and French bouillons, developing unique flavor profiles such as Sichuan, Taiwanese, Southeast Asian into bespoke options for guests' full enjoyment. "BROTH by André Chiang" unleashes a brand-new structure for hot pot, where fresh ingredients and homemade treats are cooked in designated broths to highlight their textures, elevating their optimal doneness with full satisfaction and accompaniment to the broths. The BROTH experience brings unprecedented depth to the conventional hot pot experience.

Each of the eight signature broths is meticulously prepared by slow-cooking bone broth daily. Sauerkraut (Gao-Liang Sour Cabbage Broth), one of Chef André's personal favorites from the array – rides on the Taiwanese tradition of pairing Sorghum spirit from Kinmen with sour cabbage and pork bone broth. Chef André recreates his hometown's signature with the addition of the high-proof spi-

rit into a comforting broth showcasing refreshing lacto-fermented cabbage and the lingering aroma of the grain spirit.

In true innovation to the modern-day hot pot, Chef André designed a new sequence that focuses on the high levels of comfort brought by flavorful broths. Unlike a traditional hot pot where broths take a secondary, supporting role, Chef André elevates the broth back to its primary spotlight through a creative flow of courses in his dining experience, starting with a presentation of fresh seafood, fresh meat, followed by seasonal vegetables. Following the showcase is a 'Broth Tasting' where guests can indulge in a sample flight of all eight broth varieties, learning their compositions to familiarize themselves to help with choosing one for their individual hot pot to come. The selected broths are prepared as guests are presented with an onslaught of Japanese appetizers, made in-house with the season's optimal harvests, as well as an amuse bouche to whet the appe-

tite. Guests are presented with a sharing seafood tower for their hot pot, together, served alongside a special dipping sauce developed with Chef André's house-guarded secret recipe. The hot pot experience begins with seafood and vegetables, followed by a table-side personalized preparation of meats, where portions of meat will be prepared by skilled servers designating each type of meat with their respective meat bouillon. A true effort to enhance the meaty flavors of the unctuous meat, the table-side preparation also guarantees maximal enjoyment through the optimal doneness of each meat offering.

The experience is complete with a starch course, where a selection of noodles and rice is prepared with a pure dashi, a palate-cleansing final offering that concludes the hot pot experience. The new "BROTH by André Chiang" experience elevates the hot pot tradition with the soul of the comfort broth. Elevating the enjoyment of Chinese double-boiled broth, French meat bouillon and Japanese nabe dashi, each bearing their own respective characteristics, in a new take on hot pot that brings unprecedented satisfaction and true enjoyment of the hot pot experience that celebrates flavor and comfort, crafted by a true, seasoned master of gastronomy.

OPINION

Business Views

Shuli Ren, Bloomberg



BEHIND THE HONG KONG MARKET'S FAST AND MYSTERIOUS RALLY

All of a sudden, the mood in Hong Kong seems to have shifted.

The \$5.2 trillion stock market is on its longest winning streak since 2018, with Chinese technology giants Tencent Holdings Ltd. and Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. among the top contributors. Notably, the sharp advance took place in the first few days of May, when mainland bourses were closed for public holidays and Chinese investors were away. It was a clear sign that foreigners were the buyers.

Is this bull market for real? It's a trillion-dollar question.

First, coming into May, investors were heavily exposed to Japan and Taiwan, a chip proxy. They were by far the most-loved markets in Asia, even more than a fast-growing India, according to the latest Bank of America Merrill Lynch fund managers' survey. Sector-wise, a whopping 60% were net overweight semiconductor companies.

But as the earnings season unfolded and Japan's golden week holiday approached, asset managers started having second thoughts. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. on April 18 cast doubt over investors' bullish view that big tech's AI infrastructure spending alone could propel a chip upcycle. During its earnings call, TSMC, the world's largest maker of advanced chips, scaled back its outlook, citing weak smartphone and personal-computing demand. Foreign money promptly fled Taipei.

That yen's slide past 160 on April 29 was also a shocker. It eroded dollar-based investors' total returns. While the Nikkei 225 has gained about 14% this year, the US-listed iShares MSCI Japan ETF returned only 8%.

Even though the Bank of Japan has intervened since, Tokyo's intensified battle to shore up its currency turned out expensive and the yen remains under pressure amid hedge fund short bets.

At the same time, unloved Chinese assets got a rare boost from Beijing. There's now hope that the government's policy paralysis is finally behind us.

Investors were encouraged by the latest readout from the 24-man Politburo meeting, released on April 30. The top policymakers seemed open to taking a different approach to resolving the property crisis, calling for coordinated measures to digest existing housing stock. The last time inventory was mentioned by the Politburo was in mid-2016. A massive stimulus in the form of shantytown redevelopment, a poverty alleviation program that replaced older, rundown dwellings with new, affordable housing, was still in the early stages.

The People's Bank of China unleashed more than 3 trillion yuan (\$416 billion) in pledged lending in support of the program and pulled China's stock market out of a 2015 slump. Beijing has been floating the idea of urban village renovation, or refurbishing rundown areas, over the last year.

The Politburo also addressed the other big policy disappointment — the lack of follow-through on fiscal stimulus. The pace of government bond sales, a major source of infrastructure spending, has been unusually slow this year. "We should avoid slacking off," the top politicians warned.

We've been seeing real money — from less speculative asset managers such as mutual funds — buying Hong Kong-listed shares, according to conversations I've had with multiple brokers on trading desks in the city.

Right now, there's a zero-sum game being played out in northern Asia. Earlier in the year, Japan, Taiwan, and to a lesser extent South Korea, benefited from the pervasive bearish sentiment toward China and thus Hong Kong-listed stocks. Now, many are scrambling to rebalance.

This geographical diversification is likely to stay. After all, just like China, Japan also has a track record of disappointing investors, chip cycles are notoriously volatile, and Beijing has a history of shock and awe.

The China trade is back on. [Abridged]

Courtesy Bloomberg/Shuli Ren

China's exports and imports returned to growth in April, suggesting that demand is improving despite an uneven economic recovery, according to customs data released yesterday.

The report showed exports grew 1.5% in April compared to a year earlier, after falling 7.5% in March, the first contraction since November. Imports surged 8.4% in April, beating analysts' expectations and up from a 1.9% decline in March.

China has introduced various policy support measures in recent months to support growth and boost confidence in the world's second-largest economy. China's trade surplus grew to \$72.35 billion, up from \$58.55 billion in March.

However, the outlook is not entirely positive given broader global trends, analysts said.

"We think export volumes will retreat over the coming months due to cooling consumer spending in advanced economies and the diminishing tailwind from lower export prices," Zichun Huang of Capital Economics said in a note.

Export growth was mainly due to a lower base of comparison in the previous year, Huang said. She said that import volumes were likely to bounce back further in the near future due to "fiscal spending supporting import-heavy construction."

AP PHOTO



A group of people, including many from China, walk along the wall after crossing the border with Mexico to seek asylum, Oct. 24, 2023, near Jacumba, California

CHINA, US RESUME COOPERATION ON DEPORTATION AS CHINESE IMMIGRANTS RUSH IN FROM SOUTHERN BORDER

DIDI TANG, WASHINGTON

BEIJING and Washington have quietly resumed cooperation on the deportation of Chinese immigrants who are in the U.S. illegally, as the two countries are reestablishing and widening contacts following their leaders' meeting in California late last year.

After China suspended cooperation in August 2022, the United States saw a drastic surge in the number of Chinese immigrants entering the country illegally from Mexico. U.S. border officials arrested more than 37,000 Chinese nationals on the southern border in 2023, 10 times the number during the previous year, further exacerbating tensions over immigration going into the presidential election.

In a statement sent to The Associated Press this week, the Chinese foreign ministry said Beijing was "willing to maintain dialogue and cooperation in the area of immigration enforcement with the U.S." and would accept the deporta-

tion of those whose Chinese nationality has been verified.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas last month told the U.S. House during a budget hearing that he had "an engagement" with his Chinese counterpart to ensure that China would begin to accept removal flights so "we can deliver a consequence" for Chinese immigrants who do not have a legal basis to remain in the U.S.

Mayorkas also said there was one deportation flight to China, for "the first time in a number of years."

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement did not respond to an AP request for details on the cooperation and the number of Chinese nationals who have been deported or await deportation. Without cooperation from the Chinese government, the U.S. cannot send back Chinese immigrants who have no legal status to stay in the country.

It is unclear when cooperation resumed, but a charter flight carrying a small but unknown number of deportees landed in

the northeastern Chinese city of Shenyang on March 30, according to Thomas Cartwright of Witness at the Border, an advocacy group that tracks deportation flights.

The group has not detected other flights to China, but it's possible that some immigrants could have been deported on commercial flights, Cartwright said.

The number of Chinese deportees was certainly small on the March 30 flight because the Gulfstream V, which took off from Arizona and stopped in Texas and Alaska before reaching China, typically has a seating capacity of 14. It also made a stop in South Korea before heading back to the U.S., according to Cartwright.

But it was a sign that Beijing and Washington are once again cooperating on deportation, after the Chinese government stopped the cooperation in response to a visit by Nancy Pelosi, then the House speaker, to Taiwan. Beijing claims sovereignty over the island and strongly opposes any official contact between the island and the U.S. MDT/AP

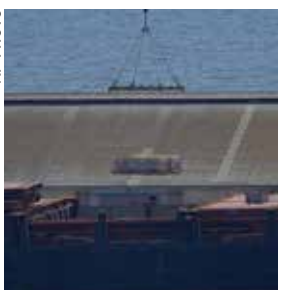
Puerto Rico's governor has declared a state of emergency following heavy rains, widespread flooding and landslides in the U.S. territory. One person has been reported missing. Gov. Pedro Pierluisi also activated the National Guard to help 22 of the island's 78 municipalities that were hardest hit by incessant rains. More than 10 inches of rain were reported over two days in Puerto Rico's interior.

AP PHOTO



US Stormy Daniels returned to the witness stand in Donald Trump's hush money trial yesterday, two days after she spent hours recounting in sometimes graphic detail the alleged 2006 sexual encounter with the former president that she was eventually paid to keep quiet about during the 2016 presidential election. The former president's attorneys aggressively sought to poke holes in Daniels' credibility during cross-examination on Tuesday and on Thursday, accusing the porn actor of — among other things — trying to extort Trump and rehearsing her testimony, which she forcefully denied.

AP PHOTO



Israel-Hamas A shipment of humanitarian aid left a port in Cyprus yesterday and was on its way to the U.S.-built pier in Gaza, the first delivery to the newly built ramp, Cyprus' foreign minister said. The relief is desperately needed, with the United Nations saying people in Gaza are on the brink of famine and as Israeli troops have ordered the evacuation of 100,000 Palestinians from Gaza's southern city of Rafah.