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FOUNDER & PUBLISHER Kowie Geldenhuys EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Paulo Coutinho www.macaudailytimes.com.mo

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TAIWAN AFFAIRS: MAINLAND SAYS LAI SENDS 'DANGEROUS SIGNAL'

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AP PHOTO



China The Ministry of Commerce announced sanctions against Boeing and two other defense companies yesterday for arms sales to Taiwan, on the day of Taiwan's leader inauguration. The ministry placed Boeing's Defense, Space & Security unit, General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, and General Dynamics Land Systems, on what is called an "unreliable entities" list, forbidding their further investment in China, in addition to travel bans on senior management for the companies.

AP PHOTO



Israel-Hamas Israel's defense minister said yesterday the military would expand its operations in the southern Gaza city of Rafah while the chief prosecutor of The Hague International Criminal Court Karim Khan said that he believes Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and three Hamas leaders — Yehia Sinwar, Mohammed Deif and Ismail Haniyeh — are responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip and Israel. Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz and Hamas militant leaders each denounced the move in separate statements.

AP PHOTO



European Union Europe's far-right political parties unofficially launched their campaign for EU elections in Spain with strong messages against illegal migration and the bloc's climate policy while declaring their support for Israel in its war against Hamas. French National Rally party leader Marine Le Pen (pictured) and Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni tried to rally voters at an event organized by Spain's far-right Vox party in Madrid ahead of the parliamentary elections June 6-9. Analysts say the vote across the bloc's 27 nations could see a strong rise of the far right.

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IRAN CRASH

AP PHOTO



People mourn in Tehran, express mixed reactions after death of President Ebrahim Raisi and other high officials in a helicopter crash

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RED MARKET REOPENS NEXT THURSDAY

The iconic Red Market will reopen to the public next Thursday after a MOP12 million renovation project was completed ahead of schedule, officials said. Vendors will start moving back into their stalls beginning next Tuesday to resume business at the 120-stall market by the reopening date, according to a statement from the Municipal Affairs Bureau. The six-month revamp strengthened the building's structure and replaced wall and floor tiles, ceilings, plumbing and electrical systems. Entrances and passages were redesigned for easier navigation. Vendor spaces and restrooms were also upgraded for modern operations and accessibility.

WOMAN ACCUSED OF HELPING STRANGER FRAUDULENTLY MORTGAGE MOTHER'S HOME

Police are investigating a 33-year-old woman for allegedly collaborating with an online stranger to fraudulently obtain a HKD1 million loan using her mother's home as collateral without her permission. The woman met two people on social media who promised her MOP450,000 if they used her mother's identity to get the loan, police said. Police have arrested the daughter and another suspect. They are tracking at least two fugitives and have opened another investigation to assist affected lenders.

MAN USES SEX VIDEO TO COERCE EX-GIRLFRIEND INTO REKINDLING RELATIONSHIP

A 29-year-old local man is suspected of pressuring his ex-girlfriend into rekindling their relationship by using a video of them engaging in sexual activity. The couple began their relationship towards the end of 2021, but the woman decided to end it in 2024. Subsequently, the man resorted to threats of releasing compromising material and personal details unless she agreed to get back together with him. Fearing for her safety, the victim sought assistance from authorities over the weekend. Upon receiving the complaint, law enforcement officers apprehended the suspect at his place of work and discovered several incriminating videos on his phone.

LOCAL STUDENTS GAIN ACCESS TO 18 MAINLAND UNIVERSITIES

Macau students can now apply to 18 mainland Chinese universities using their results from the Four-University Joint Entrance Examination, according to the Education and Youth Development Bureau. South China Agricultural University will join the program this year, allowing Macau students direct entry. Students who hold a Macau ID card and return permit for the joint exam between May and June can submit their scores and documents to the universities of their choice. Professional programs may require subject exams or interviews. Admission decisions are expected in mid-to-late July. The program gives Macau students expanded access to a mainland Chinese higher education based on a common entrance assessment.

STATS

PER-CAPITA VISITOR SPENDING IN Q1 SURPASSED PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS BY 40%

RENATO MARQUES

VISITORS' per-capita spending during the first quarter (Q1) of this year has reached MOP2,293, the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) has noted in a release.

In the same statement, the DSEC also noted that such an amount is 40.3% more compared year-on-year to the same period in 2019; that is, pre-pandemic levels.

Yet the figure showed a y-o-y drop of 24.3%, owing to visitors' high spending in Q1 of 2023 when economic activity initially returned to Macau after the COVID years.

Per-capita spending of overnight visitors (MOP4,024) and same-day visitors (MOP817) recorded drops of, respectively, 14% and 28.4% y-o-y in Q1 of 2024.

The DSEC also indicated that the total spending of visitors, excluding gaming expenses, stood at MOP20.35 billion in Q1 this year, a figure that represents an increase of 35.9% y-o-y when compared to 2023 and 20.2% from the same quarter in 2019.



Total spending of overnight visitors was MOP16.43 billion, while same-day visitors spent some MOP3.92 billion, amounts that represent increases of, respectively, 33.1% and 48.5% y-o-y.

Data analyzed which takes into account the origins of visitors shows that the per-capita spending of visitors from the mainland (MOP2,665) and Hong Kong (MOP1,071) showed, respectively, decreases of 31.6% and 14.4% y-o-y in the first quarter, while the

spending of those visitors from Taiwan (MOP2,040) went up by 10.6%.

Compared with the same quarter of 2019, per-capita spending of visitors from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan all increased, respectively, by 44.1%, 19%, and 39.8%.

Concurrently, spending of those from Singapore (MOP2,556), the Republic of Korea (MOP2,452), Thailand (MOP2,365), Japan (MOP1,964) and Malaysia

(MOP1,821) recorded varying degrees of growth.

The report shows that visitors spent mainly on shopping (48% of the total), followed by accommodation (23.3%) and food & beverages (20.9%).

The expenditure per capita of most of those visiting Macau in this period for vacation and shopping purposes have recorded drops y-o-y of, respectively, 27.3% and 2%, having reached the sums of MOP2,798 and MOP2,539.

Growth was recorded in the spending of those who came to Macau to attend performances and competitions (MOP5,877), as well as and those coming for MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions) events (MOP5,148). The spending of these visitors increased, respectively, by 106.3% and 18.2%.

According to the DSEC, the Visitor Expenditure Survey was conducted at major departure points, collecting data from visitors on their expense items and the amount they spent during their stay in Macau.

Gov't data paints challenging picture for the city's restaurant industry

HOWARD TONG

RECEIPTS for interviewed restaurants and similar establishments dropped 2.7% year-over-year, with Japanese and Korean restaurants seeing a significant 21.2% decline. In contrast, local-style cafes, congees, and noodle shops managed a 2.8% increase. The data also showed month-over-month declines, with restaurant receipts dipping 17.2%

after the Lunar New Year holiday, led by a 26.4% fall for Chinese restaurants.

Looking ahead to April, the outlook remains gloomy. 37% of interviewed restaurants forecast a month-over-month drop in their receipts, including over half of Chinese restaurants. On the retail side, 29% of respondents expected sales to decline further, with the future sales of cosmetics, mo-

tor vehicles, watches and jewelry, and department store goods viewed as particularly pessimistic.

The Business Outlook Index, which reflects anticipated month-over-month changes, was below 50 for both restaurants (36.6) and retail (42.9), indicating respondents foresee less favorable conditions in April compared to March.

While the DSEC survey represents a si-



zable portion of each industry's receipts, the results were not extrapolated across the full market. Nevertheless,

the data points to persistent challenges facing Macau's consumer-facing businesses in the near future.

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DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR_Lynzy Valles
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS_Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS_Alex Torrão, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Jorge Costa Oliveira, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Sérgio de Almeida Correia, Viviana Segui DESIGNER_Rebeca Almeida | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS_JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES_Associated Press, MacauHub, MacaoNews, Xinhua SECRETARY_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com
OFFICE MANAGER_Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com
ADDRESS_Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84
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Traffic advisors want EV chargers moved under overpasses

RENATO MARQUES

A task force for the simplification of procedures and road safety from the Traffic Advisory Committee (CCT) has proposed to move the charging stations for electric vehicles (EVs) from roadside parking to under the overpasses, the Transport Bureau (DSAT) reported.

The proposal came during a recent meeting from the group and aims to keep the charging equipment safer and more durable as well as create less visual impact and provide more charging spaces.

According to DSAT, the matter has already been addressed with the Macau Electricity Company (CEM), and with the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) which is studying the matter.

Preliminary findings point to several pros and cons of this idea. While the move has the advantages



of reducing equipment wear, maintenance, and visual obstruction for pedestrians and vehicles and the street landscape, these locations are in the central area of roads where there are generally no electrical cable boxes, necessary for the installation of the charging equipment.

If the decision is reached to proceed with this plan, there will be unavoidable road excavation

works to connect electrical cables, which will affect traffic.

Furthermore, considering that CEM is still studying the implementation of a charging system for electric motorcycles suitable for outdoor use, it was decided to prioritize the issue with the possible change of location of charging equipment for light vehicles.

At the meeting, some of the members expressed their satisfaction

with the government's bid to increase electrical charging facilities, considering that charging equipment must be located close to community neighborhoods, otherwise, they will not be able to meet the urgent need for charging.

Some members also said that different types of charging stations and locations should also be considered to respond to the needs of different people.

The development of the EVs as well as the tariffs for charging, among other related aspects were also on the agenda.

CALL FOR MORE BUSES TO PUBLIC HOSPITAL

Another topic on the agenda was a proposal to amend some bus routes so that more buses pass through and serve the Conde de São Januário Hospital Center (CH-CSJ).

The group members considered that there is a considerable number of users of the current routes, namely those that want to reach the public hospital as well as the many schools in that area. They agreed that it is necessary to consider increasing the transport capacity of the respective bus routes based on the assumption that the current one is inadequate. Some members expressed particular concerns about the needs and travel habits of the elderly, people with disabilities, and students, and consider that DSAT should launch more flexible optimization measures to meet the real needs of passengers.

DSAT will summarize the opinions of the members and proposals for further follow-up and study.

Authorities offer subsidies and vouchers to boost domestic tourism

STAFF REPORTER

In a bid to revive the local economy, Macau authorities are urging community organizations to promote day tours to Hengqin with the help of subsidies and spending vouchers.

Under a new initiative launched by the Macao Foundation, eligible community groups can apply for financial support to organize tours to the neighboring city until May 31. Each participant will receive a maximum grant of MOP200, as well as MOP100 in electronic vouchers to be used at participating F&B outlets.

"There are a large number of tourists coming to Macau, but we need to study what industries will enable them to stay and spend in Macau," said Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng at a press conference on Sunday. "We hope to work with small and medium-sized enterprises on this."

The tours, which are



scheduled to start on June 15, will have a maximum of 40 participants each. Each joiner will receive a pair of MOP50 coupons, which are valid for 30 days, and will be expected to spend more than the face value of each coupon.

The initiative is the latest effort by officials to stimulate spending in Macau, as an ongoing exodus of consumers seeking more favorable prices across the border continues.

"In order to celebrate

the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Macao Special Administrative Region and the 3rd anniversary of the establishment of the Hengqin Guangdong-Macao Deep Cooperation Zone, we will promote the integrated development of Macau and Hengqin and boost the community economy of Macau," the Macao Foundation said in a statement.

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4. Location for Submission of Proposals:	CAM – Macau International Airport Co. Ltd. Av. De Wai Long CAM Office Building, 4 th Floor Reception Taipa, Macau Attention: Mr. Chu Tan Neng – Executive Director
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CAM reserves the right to reject any Proposal in whole or in part without stating any reason.	



STUDY

GAMING STAFF FACE CHALLENGES OVER ENDING PROBLEMATIC GAMING BEHAVIOR

HOWARD TONG

THE majority of frontline casino staff in Macau face various obstacles that impede their capacity to intervene effectively in problematic gaming behaviors despite having a comprehensive grasp of responsible gambling principles.

A recent academic paper carried out by Manian Wongkun and Liu Shuang, two researchers from the Centre for Gaming and Tourism Studies at Macao Polytechnic University, found that “most frontline casino employees understand responsible gambling clearly, but a few employees have significant cognitive biases.”

The study, titled “The Perceptions and Practical Dilemmas of Responsible Gambling Faced by Frontline Casino Employees in Macao”, employed a semi-structured approach, interviewing 49 frontline casino employees from six gaming companies in Macau.

Employees were generally able to identify problem gamblers, but rarely intervened proactively, the study suggested.

“Problem gambling has not been significantly reduced, whether from the perspective of gamblers as a whole or as a group of non-resident gamblers. If not handled properly, the problem could jeopardize the long-term viability of Macau’s gaming industry,” stated the study.

The reason the researchers decided to focus on non-resident gamblers in Macau was due to the lack of analytical studies surrounding these gamblers over the last 20 years, since

Macau liberalized its gambling industry. It has also been inferred that problematic gambling may be more common among overseas gamblers, which the researchers sought to investigate.

Despite the establishment of a Responsible Gambling Working Group by the Macau government in 2009 to oversee and advance responsible gaming policies, the majority of promotional efforts are primarily targeted towards Macau residents, neglecting the non-resident gamblers.

The key barriers preventing staff from proactively addressing problem gambling were identified as: role ambiguity and conflict; fear of offending clients or getting themselves (the staff) into trouble; concerns about misidentifying problem gamblers; and the lack of adequate support, guidance, and knowledge on appropriate intervention methods

The scholars noted that Macau’s responsible gambling policies have had some success in terms of employee awareness, but there are substantial challenges when it comes to practical intervention.

Notably, the paper concludes that the issue of problem gambling has not seen significant reduction in Macau, potentially due to a disproportionate focus on educating local residents versus the much larger population of mainland Chinese tourists who make up the majority of the region’s gambling revenue.

The researchers recommend several improvements to responsible gambling practices in Macau, including increased employee training,

clearer definitions of intervention responsibilities and scope, and enhanced responsible gambling resources for patrons.

For the scholars, strengthening staff training, clarifying the responsibilities and scope of intervention, and improving responsible gambling resources for non-local gamblers are all key to improving responsible gambling practices in Macau.

As Macau continues to develop its gaming industry, addressing these practical challenges will be crucial for minimizing the societal impacts of problem gambling.

The researchers also recommend that Macau look to regulatory approaches in other jurisdictions, such as Australia, New Zealand, and parts of Europe, that mandate the gaming industry develop robust policies, training programs, and strategies to identify and assist individuals experiencing gambling-related difficulties.

“Macau can also learn from foreign practices and impose legislative requirements on its gaming industry. The content of the legislation could include implementation standards, clearly defined responsibilities for all parties, and whether and how casino employees can appropriately intervene in problem gambling cases. Implementing this legislation would require extensive and in-depth discussion,” the study suggested.

The scholars believe strengthening responsible gambling resources for both employees and the broader gambling customer base could help enhance Macau’s overall responsible gambling practices.

GAMING

Citigroup raises Macau casino revenue forecast for May

STAFF REPORTER

MACAU’S casino gross gaming revenue (GGR) is estimated to have reached MOP20.50 billion in May, according to a memo from Citigroup. This revised estimate is up from the firm’s previous forecast of MOP20.0 billion, driven by higher month-on-month mass and VIP gaming volumes.

“The implied daily-run rate of last week was approximately MOP686 million, about 19% higher versus [the] prior week at approximately MOP579 million a day,” said George Choi, analyst at Citigroup, as cited in a GGRAsia report.

“We believe the improved daily-run rate was mainly visitation driven.”

Choi attributed the increase in visitation to concerts by the Hong Kong Cantopop group Mirror at the Galaxy Arena from May

16 to May 19, as well as the recent introduction of the Small 6/Big6 side bets by Sands China Ltd and Galaxy Entertainment Group Ltd.

If the MOP20.5 billion figure is realized, it would represent around 79% of the same month in 2019, the immediate pre-pandemic trading year.

“Macau’s market-wide GGR reached approximately MOP13.4 billion in the first 19 days of May, according to industry sources,” Choi noted in the memo.

Citigroup also expects daily casino GGR of MOP592 million for the rest of this month in Macau. The firm’s latest estimate reflects a 15% to 18% month-on-month increase in Macau’s VIP gaming volumes and a 13% to 15% sequential increase in the mass gaming segment.

“VIP hold rate appears to be slightly higher than normal,” Citigroup added.

GOV’T LAUNCHES NEW PHASE OF TALENT RECRUITMENT PROGRAMS

THE SAR government has launched a new phase of its talent recruitment programs, accepting applications for nine different talent plans from today until Nov. 20.

The Talent Development Committee will evaluate applicants based on their potential to improve Macau’s innovation, competitiveness, international reputation, and economic diversification.

The Chief Executive, Ho Iat Seng, has approved updated standards, scoring tables, and application conditions for these talent plans. The revisions align the plans with Macau’s current industry needs, optimizing the sought after target professions and positions.

The committee reported that the previous phase of the talent program, which ended in Q1 2024, received 1,107 valid applications. As of April 30, 387 individuals have been recommended as talent, including 22 high-end talents, 83 outstanding talents, and 282 senior professionals.

According to a statement issued by the Talent Development Committee, the six programs include the High-end Talents Programme, the Outstanding Talents Programmes and the Advanced Professionals Programmes for the Big Health Industry, the High-Tech Industry, the Modern Finance Industry, as well as the Culture, Sports and Others Industries. **HT**

Sands Macao Celebrates 20 Years in Macao

A five-part series on the growth of Sands China since 2004



PART 2: Having welcomed 950M visitors, Sands China confident in Macao's future

As the city's first international integrated tourism and leisure enterprise, Sands China has been rooted in Macao for 20 years now, since the opening of Sands Macao in 2004. After introducing Las Vegas Sands' successful integrated resort model to Macao – combining entertainment, retail, MICE, food & beverage, and accommodation all under one roof – the company continues to invest and actively contribute to the development of Macao into a world centre of tourism and leisure.

In May 2004, Sands Macao opened to great anticipation. Crowds of visitors flocked to the unprecedented grand event, symbolising the arrival of the golden age of Macao's tourism industry and witnessing the history of Macao's new gaming concessions. Under the "Sands Effect" triggered by the extraordinary success of Sands Macao, the number of tourists visiting Macao surged. The number of local integrated tourism and leisure enterprises also stepped up their development plans and bloomed,

injecting strength into Macao's economy.

THE INTEGRATED RESORT MODEL

Nowadays, 20 years later, Sands Macao attracts millions of tourists annually from all over the world. The opening of Sands Macao formed a foundation for Sands China's integrated resorts on the Cotai Strip in the years that followed. In 2007, the first ever large-scale integrated resort, The Venetian Macao, successfully opened on the Cotai Strip, ushering Macao's tourism

development into a new chapter and completely altering the skyline of Cotai, where visitors can enjoy the romantic atmosphere of Europe in just one stop.

The Plaza Macao, consisting of the Four Seasons Hotel Macao; Sands Cotai Central (now transformed into The Londoner Macao); and The Parisian Macao opened one after another, forming an interconnected integrated resort city. Sands China's properties currently offer over 12,000 rooms and suites, more than 150 dining outlets, and 150,000 square metres of meeting space, enhancing Macao's capability to host all kinds of large-scale events and laying a solid foundation for the development of the MICE industry in the future. Moreover, the interconnected Shoppes at Venetian, Shoppes at Four Seasons, Shoppes at Parisian and Sho-

ppes at Londoner constitute Sands Shoppes Macao – largest indoor shopping mall in Macao, boasting over 720 shops. Sands China has become the backbone of Macao's moderate economic diversification with its outstanding facilities and services.

Today, the group has realised Sheldon G. Adelson's vision of the Cotai Strip as one of the world's most spectacular leisure destinations. The late Chairman and CEO of Las Vegas Sands Corp. saw Cotai's enormous potential and invested in its development. To this date, Sands China's five properties have accumulated over 950 million visitors since 2004 and the group has invested more than US\$15 billion in Macao's development into a world centre of tourism and leisure.

performances from around the world, including ushering in unique themed performances at each resort, attracting tourists to make wonderful memories.

What's more, Sands China is determined to leverage renowned art exhibitions to diversify its foreign customer base. This includes opening teamLab SuperNature Macao, an interactive art experience at The Venetian Macao, in May last year. This permanent exhibition is a "body immersive" art space centred around a group of artworks allows visitors to explore new perceptions of the world and the continuity between humans and nature. The long-awaited Harry Potter: The Exhibition premiered in Asia Pacific for the first time, opening at The Londoner Ma-

"Twenty years have passed, and Macao has evolved into a premier tourism and leisure destination in its own right. Today, the city boasts having the most Forbes-recognised five-star hotels worldwide, proudly holds the distinguished designation as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, and thrives as a bustling hub for world-class entertainment shows and MICE events. As the construction of the Greater Bay Area continues to progress, I'm confident Macao will capitalise on the new wave of development opportunities arising, and strive toward its goal of becoming a world centre of tourism and leisure"

GRANT CHUM

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SANDS CHINA LTD.

WHAT THE INDUSTRY LEADERS SAY



"Sands China has undoubtedly played a crucial role in promoting and enhancing Macao's exhibition industry, bringing positive contributions to Macao by introducing its abundant exhibition experience. Over the past 20 years, Sands China has developed large conference and exhibition venues, and other supporting facilities in Macao, significantly increasing Macao's capacity to host exhibitions and making it a destination capable of hosting large international MICE events. The introduction of these facilities has created more development opportunities for the local exhibition industry. Besides, Sands China has brought international exhibition management experience and standards, improving the overall service level and competitiveness of the industry. At the same time, as a globally renowned integrated resort operator, Sands China's investment and development in Macao have further enhanced Macao's reputation and attractiveness as an exhibition destination."

Alan Ho, President of Macao Association of Convention, Exhibition and Tourism Sectors



"Over the past 20 years, Sands China has played a pivotal role in enriching Macao's non-gaming sector, particularly through the expansion of the retail industry. Their investment in large themed shopping malls has brought a diverse retail experience to Macao, catalyzing the growth of the retail sector, meeting the demand for varied goods, and creating employment opportunities for retail professionals. Additionally, their efforts have significantly contributed to the enhancement of Macao's international reputation, attracting a greater influx of international brands seeking to invest and expand their businesses in the region. This, in turn, has attracted a rising number of domestic and foreign tourists, stimulating tourism and bolstering the local economy."

Terry Sio, president of Macao International Brand Enterprise Commercial Association and Macau Rainbow Group

INTRODUCING FAMILY ELEMENTS, DIVERSIFYING FOREIGN CUSTOMER BASE

The family-friendly element is key to attracting visitors to extend their stays in Macao. For this reason, Sands China actively adds and expands its family-friendly facilities, including at Londoner Court and the Grand Suites at Four Seasons, carefully curated with expansive space to meet our guests' needs. The group also introduced facilities such as Qube, Macao's first indoor kids play zone, and The Parisian Macao's Aqua World, which have become weekend hotspots for many families. In addition, Sands China has brought outstanding

cao. The all-new, interactive touring exhibition is the most comprehensive exhibition ever presented on Harry Potter and the entire Wizarding World, appealing to a broad audience of all ages. The exhibition spans more than 2,700 square metres, with over 20 celebratory galleries – perfect for both hardcore fans and those just starting to experiencing the charm of the wizard world.

With these and other attractions, events, and facilities over the years – and more to come – Sands China is always at the forefront of bringing exciting experiences to Macao for its visitors and residents to enjoy.

TAIWAN AFFAIRS

New leader Lai urges Beijing to 'choose dialogue over confrontation'

SIMINA MISTREANU & CHRISTOPHER BODEEN, TAIPEI

TAIWAN'S new leader, Lai Ching-te, said in his inauguration speech yesterday that he wants peace with China and urged it to stop its military threats and intimidation of the self-governed island that Beijing claims as its own territory.

"I hope that China will face the reality of (Taiwan)'s existence, respect the choices of the people of Taiwan, and in good faith, choose dialogue over confrontation," Lai said after being sworn into office.

Lai pledged to "neither yield nor provoke" Beijing and said he sought peace in relations with China. But he emphasized the island democracy is determined to defend itself "in the face of the many threats and attempts at infiltration from China."

Lai's party, the Democratic Progressive Party, doesn't seek independence from China but maintains that Taiwan is already a sovereign nation.

The Chinese office in charge of Taiwan affairs criticized Lai's inauguration speech as promoting "the fallacy of separatism," inciting confrontation and relying on foreign forces to seek independence.



Lai Ching-te waves during his inauguration ceremonies in Taipei, yesterday

The Chinese Ministry of Commerce yesterday also announced sanctions against Boeing and two other defense companies for arms sales to Taiwan.

Lai, 64, takes over from Tsai Ing-wen, who led Taiwan through eight years of economic and social development despite the COVID-19 pandemic and China's escalating military threats. Beijing views Taiwan as a renegade province and has been upping its threats to annex it by force if necessary.

Lai is seen as inheriting Tsai's progressive policies, including

universal health care, backing for higher education and support for minority groups, including making Taiwan the first place in Asia to recognize same-sex marriages.

In his inauguration speech, Lai pledged to bolster Taiwan's social safety net and help the island advance in fields such as artificial intelligence and green energy.

Lai, who was the No 2 during Tsai's second term, came across as more of a firebrand earlier in his career. In 2017, he described himself as a "pragmatic worker for Taiwan's independence," drawing Beijing's

rebuke. He has since softened his stance and now supports maintaining the status quo across the Taiwan Strait and the possibility of talks with Beijing.

Thousands of people gathered in front of the leader's office building in Taipei for the inauguration ceremony. Donning white celebratory hats, they watched the swearing-in on large screens, followed by a military march and colorful performances featuring folk dancers, opera performers and rappers. Military helicopters flew in formation, carrying Taiwan's flag.

Lai accepted congratulations from fellow politicians and delegations from the 12 nations that still maintain official diplomatic relations with Taiwan, as well as politicians from the U.S., Japan and various European states.

Lai, also known by his English name William, has vowed to continue his predecessor's push to maintain stability with China while beefing up Taiwan's security through imports of military equipment from close partner the U.S., the expansion of the defense industry with the manufacture of submarines and aircraft, and the reinforcing of regional partnerships with unofficial allies such as the U.S., Japan, South Korea and the Philippines.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken congratulated Lai on his inauguration. "We look forward to working with Lai and across Taiwan's political spectrum to advance our shared interests and values, deepen our longstanding unofficial relationship, and maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," Blinken said in a statement from his office.

The U.S. doesn't formally recognize Taiwan as a country but is bound by its own laws to provide the island with the means to defend itself.

Lai's relatively conciliatory tone will come across as reassuring to foreign governments that may have been concerned about his past reputation as a firebrand, said Danny Russell, vice president of the Asia Society Policy Institute.

"There is virtually nothing that Lai could have said, short of 'unconditional surrender,' that would satisfy Beijing," he said. **MDT/AP**

REUNIFICATION

Fact of both sides of Taiwan Strait belonging to one China will not change: spokesperson

XINHUA REPORTERS

NO matter how the political situation on the Taiwan island changes, it will not change the historical and legal facts that both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one China, and the historical trend that China will eventually be reunified and will inevitably be reunified, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said yesterday.

Spokesperson Wang Wenbin made the remarks at a daily press briefing in response to a related query.

He said that the vast majority of countries and international and regional organizations in the wor-

ld stand firmly with the Chinese government and people, and support China's just cause of opposing "Taiwan independence" and promoting reunification.

Certain politicians from a few countries engage in political manipulation and "personal shows" on Taiwan-related issues, which has seriously interfered in China's internal affairs and violated the one-China principle, said Wang. "China strongly condemns such moves and will take all necessary measures to firmly safeguard its national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

Wang said the general trend of history in un-



Spokesperson of Chinese foreign ministry Wang Wenbin

toppable, and "Taiwan independence" is doomed to run into a dead end. There is no way out for external forces to interfere in China's internal affairs and condone and support "Taiwan independence," and "using Taiwan to contain China" is bound to fail.

"The day will come when China is comple-

tely reunified," said the spokesperson.

MAINLAND SAYS LAI SENDS 'DANGEROUS SIGNAL'

A spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council said Lai Ching-te has sent "a dangerous signal" of seeking "Taiwan independence" and making provocations

to undermine cross-Strait peace and stability in his speech upon assuming the role of Taiwan region's new leader.

Chen Binhua described Lai's speech as one that stubbornly followed the "Taiwan independence" stance, wantonly advocated separatism, incited cross-Strait confrontation and sought independence by relying on foreign support and by force.

Chen said the mainstream public aspiration on the island is for peace and development, instead of war and recession, while Lai has ignored the public opinion, exposing his nature of being "a worker for Taiwan independence."

PLATO COUNTER ALL 'INDEPENDENCE' ACTIVITIES

Last week, the Ministry of National Defense said China will resolutely and decisively counter all activities and external support of "Taiwan independence."

Spokesperson Zhang Xiaogang made the remarks on Friday in response to a media query about recent military interactions between the United States and China's Taiwan region.

Zhang urged the United States to be fully aware of the sensitivity of the Taiwan question, cease any form of official exchanges and military contacts with the Taiwan region, and refrain from sending wrong signals to the separatists advocating "Taiwan independence."

He also warned that the attempts made by Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party authorities to seek independence with the support of the United States and resist reunification with force are doomed to fail. **XINHUA**

SOUTH CHINA SEA

Philippines blames China for loss of giant clams in disputed shoal, urges inquiry

THE Philippines blamed Chinese fishermen yesterday for a massive loss of giant clams in a disputed shoal controlled by China's coast guard in the South China Sea and urged an international inquiry into the amount of environmental damage in the area.

The Philippine coast guard presented surveillance photographs of Chinese fishermen harvesting large numbers of giant clams for a number of years in a lagoon at Scarborough Shoal, but said signs of such activities stopped in March 2019.

Parts of the surrounding coral appeared to be badly scarred, in what the coast guard said was apparently a futile search by the Chinese for more clams. The lagoon is a prominent fishing area which Filipinos call Bajo de Masinloc and the Chinese call Huan-gyan Dao off the northwestern Philippines.

"Those were the last remaining giant clams that we saw in Bajo de Masinloc," Philippine coast guard spokesperson Commodore Jay Tarriela said at a news conference.

"We are alarmed and worried about the situation that's happening there," National Security Council Assistant Director General Jonathan Malaya said. He said China should allow an independent inquiry by experts from the United Nations and environmental groups.

The Chinese Embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Beijing has repeatedly asserted its sovereignty over much of the busy South China Sea. The territorial disputes involve China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan. The Indonesian navy has also been involved in skirmishes with the Chinese coast guard and fishing vessels in the Natuna waters in the margins of the South



In this April 22, 2019 handout photo provided by the Philippine Coast Guard, Chinese service boats scour the seabed as they search for giant clams in the Scarborough shoal

China Sea.

The Philippines has adopted a policy of publicizing China's

increasingly assertive actions in the contested waters to gain international support, and the news

conference was its latest effort to condemn China's stewardship of Scarborough Shoal. **MDT/AP**

ANALYSIS

Things to know about an AI safety summit in Seoul

HYUNG-JIN KIM & KELVIN CHAN, SEOUL

SOUTH Korea is set to host a mini-summit this week on risks and regulation of artificial intelligence, following up on an inaugural AI safety meeting in Britain last year that drew a diverse crowd of tech luminaries, researchers and officials.

The gathering in Seoul aims to build on work started at the U.K. meeting on reining in threats posed by cutting edge artificial intelligence systems.

Here is what you need to know about the AI Seoul Summit and AI safety issues.

INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS MADE

The Seoul summit is one of many global efforts to create guardrails for the rapidly advancing technology that promises to transform many aspects of society, but has also raised concerns about new risks for both everyday life such as algorithmic bias that skews search results and potential existential threats

to humanity.

At November's U.K. summit, held at a former secret wartime code-breaking base in Bletchley north of London, researchers, government leaders, tech executives and members of civil society groups, many with opposing views on AI, huddled in closed-door talks. Tesla CEO Elon Musk and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman mingled with politicians like British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

Delegates from more than two dozen countries including the U.S. and China signed the Bletchley Declaration, agreeing to work together to contain the potentially "catastrophic" risks posed by galloping advances in artificial intelligence.

In March, the U.N. General Assembly approved its first resolution on artificial intelligence, lending support to an international effort to ensure the powerful new technology benefits all nations, respects human rights and is "safe, secure and trustworthy."

Earlier this month, the U.S. and China held their

first high-level talks on artificial intelligence in Geneva to discuss how to address the risks of the fast-evolving technology and set shared standards to manage it. There, U.S. officials raised concerns about China's "misuse of AI" while Chinese representatives rebuked the U.S. over "restrictions and pressure" on artificial intelligence, according to their governments.

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION AT THE SEOUL SUMMIT

The May 21-22 meeting is co-hosted by the South Korean and U.K. governments.

On day one, today, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Sunak will meet leaders virtually. A few global industry leaders have been invited to provide updates on how they've been fulfilling the commitments made at the Bletchley summit to ensure the safety of their AI models.

On day two, digital ministers will gather for an in-person meeting hosted by South Korean Science Minister Lee Jong-ho and

Britain's Technology Secretary Michelle Donelan. Participants will share best practices and concrete action plans. They also will share ideas on how to protect society from potentially negative impacts of AI on areas such as energy use, workers and the proliferation of mis- and disinformation, according to the organizers.

The meeting has been dubbed a mini virtual summit, serving as an interim meeting until a full-fledged in-person edition that France has pledged to hold.

The digital ministers' meeting is to include representatives from countries like the United States, China, Germany, France and Spain and companies including ChatGPT-maker OpenAI, Google, Microsoft and Anthropic.

PROGRESS OF AI SAFETY EFFORTS MADE

The accord reached at the U.K. meeting was light on details and didn't propose a way to regulate the development of AI.

"The United States and

China came to the last summit. But when we look at some principles announced after the meeting, they were similar to what had already been announced after some U.N. and OECD meetings," said Lee Seong-yeob, a professor at the Graduate School of Management of Technology at Seoul's Korea University. "There was nothing new."

It's important to hold a global summit on AI safety issues, he said, but it will be "considerably difficult" for all participants to reach agreements since each country has different interests and different levels of domestic AI technologies and industries.

The gathering is being held as Meta, OpenAI and Google roll out the latest versions of their AI models.

The original AI Safety Summit was conceived as a venue for hashing out solutions for so-called existential risks posed by the most powerful "foundation models" that underpin general purpose AI systems like ChatGPT.

Pioneering computer

scientist Yoshua Bengio, dubbed one of the "godfathers of AI," was tapped at the U.K. meeting to lead an expert panel tasked with drafting a report on the state of AI safety. An interim version of the report released on Friday to inform discussions in Seoul identified a range of risks posed by general purpose AI, including its malicious use to increase the "scale and sophistication" of frauds and scams, supercharge the spread of disinformation, or create new bioweapons.

Malfunctioning AI systems could spread bias in areas like healthcare, job recruitment and financial lending, while the technology's potential to automate a big range of tasks also poses systemic risks to the labor market, the report said.

South Korea hopes to use the Seoul summit to take the initiative in formulating global governance and norms for AI. But some critics say the country lacks AI infrastructure advanced enough to play a leadership role in such governance issues. **MDT/AP**

IRAN

President, foreign minister and others found dead at helicopter crash site

JON GAMBRELL, DUBAI

IRANIAN President Ebrahim Raisi, the country's foreign minister and several other officials were found dead yesterday, hours after their helicopter crashed in a foggy, mountainous region of the country's northwest, state media reported.

The crash comes as the Middle East remains unsettled by the Israel-Hamas war, during which Raisi, who was 63, under Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei launched an unprecedented drone-and-missile attack on Israel just last month.

Khamenei announced that Iran's first vice president, Mohammad Mokhber, would serve as the country's acting president until elections are held.

During Raisi's term in office, Iran enriched uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels, further escalating tensions with the West as Tehran also supplied bomb-carrying drones to Russia for its war in Ukraine and armed militia groups across the region.

Meanwhile, Iran has faced years of mass protests against its Shiite theocracy over the ailing economy and women's rights — making the moment that much more sensitive for Tehran and the future of the country.

Among the dead was Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, 60. The helicopter also carried the governor of Iran's East Azerbaijan province, a senior cleric from Tabriz, three crew members and a Revolutionary Guard official, the state-run IRNA news agency reported. IRNA said the crash killed eight people in all, including three crew members, aboard the Bell helicopter, which Iran purchased in the early 2000s.

Aircraft in Iran face a shortage of parts, often flying without safety checks against the backdrop of Western sanctions. Because of that, former Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif sought to blame the United States for the crash in an interview yesterday.

"One of the main culprits of yesterday's tragedy is the United States, which ... embargoed the sale of aircraft and aviation parts to Iran and does not allow the people of Iran to enjoy good



In this photo provided by Moj News Agency, rescue team members work at the scene of a crash of a helicopter carrying Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in Varzaghan in northwestern Iran, yesterday

aviation facilities," Zarif said. "These will be recorded in the list of US crimes against the Iranian people."

State TV gave no immediate cause for the crash that occurred in Iran's East Azerbaijan province.

The U.S. has yet to comment publicly on Raisi's death. Ali Bagheri Kani, a nuclear negotiator for Iran, will serve as the country's acting foreign minister, state TV said.

Early yesterday, Turkish authorities released what they described as drone footage showing what appeared to be a fire in the wilderness that they "suspected to be wreckage of helicopter." The coordinates listed in the footage put the fire some 20 kilometers, south of the Azerbaijan-Iranian border on the side of a steep mountain.

Footage released by IRNA showed what the agency described as the crash site, across a steep valley in a green mountain range. Soldiers speaking in the local Azeri language said: "There it is, we found it."

Condolences started pouring in from neighbors and allies after Iran confirmed there were no survivors from the crash. Pakistan announced a day of mourning and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a post on X that his country "stands with Iran in this time of sorrow." Leaders of Egypt and Jordan also offered condolences, as did Syrian President Bashar Assad. Lebanon and Syria both declared

three days of mourning.

Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev said he and his government were "deeply shocked" — Raisi was returning on Sunday after traveling to Iran's border with Azerbaijan to inaugurate a dam with Aliyev when the crash happened.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and China's Xi Jinping conveyed their condolences. Russian President Vladimir Putin, in a statement released by the Kremlin, described Raisi "as a true friend of Russia."

Khamenei, who had himself urged the public to pray Sunday night, stressed the business of Iran's government would continue no matter what.

Under the Iranian constitution, Iran's vice first president takes over if the president dies, with Khamenei's assent, and a new presidential election would be called within 50 days. Khamenei's condolence message yesterday over Raisi's death, declared five days of public mourning and acknowledged Mokhber had taken the role of acting president.

Mokhber had already begun receiving calls from officials and foreign governments in Raisi's absence, state media reported.

An emergency meeting of Iran's Cabinet was held as state media made the announcement yesterday morning. The Cabinet issued a statement afterward pledging it would follow Raisi's path and that "with the help of God and the people, the

re will be no problem with management of the country."

A hard-liner who formerly led the country's judiciary, Raisi was viewed as a protégé of Khamenei and some analysts had suggested he could replace the 85-year-old leader after Khamenei's death or resignation.

With Raisi's death, the only other person so far suggested has been Mojtaba Khameini, the 55-year-old son to the supreme leader. However, some have raised concerns over the position being taken only for the third time since 1979 to a family member, particularly after the Islamic Revolution overthrew the hereditary Pahlavi monarchy of the shah.

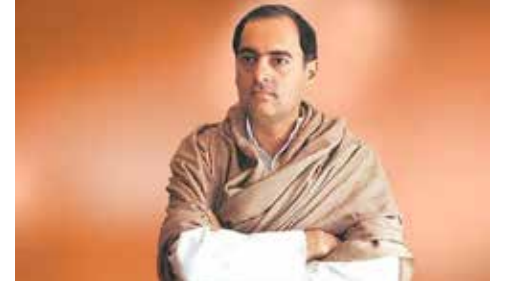
Raisi won Iran's 2021 presidential election, a vote that saw the lowest turnout in the Islamic Republic's history. Raisi is sanctioned by the U.S. in part over his involvement in the mass execution of thousands of political prisoners in 1988 at the end of the bloody Iran-Iraq war.

Under Raisi, Iran launched a massive drone-and-missile attack on Israel amid its war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. It also has continued arming proxy groups in the Mideast, like Yemen's Houthi rebels and Lebanon's Hezbollah.

Raisi is the second Iranian president to die in office. In 1981, a bomb blast killed President Mohammad Ali Rajai in the chaotic days after the country's Islamic Revolution. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1991 BOMB KILLS INDIA'S FORMER LEADER RAJIV GANDHI



Rajiv Gandhi, the 46-year-old former Indian prime minister, has been assassinated.

He was campaigning for the Congress Party on the second day of voting in the world's largest democratic election when a powerful bomb, hidden in a basket of flowers, exploded killing him instantly.

At least 14 other people were also killed in the attack in the town of Sriperumbudur, about 30 miles from Madras, the capital of the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

No-one has admitted carrying out the murder but it is being blamed on Mr Gandhi's arch enemies, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a violent guerrilla group fighting for a separate homeland for Tamils on the island of Sri Lanka.

Rajiv Gandhi's death has shocked the world and marks the end of the Nehru dynasty that had led India for all but five years since independence from Britain.

After his brother Sanjay was killed in an air crash in 1980, he gave up his job as an airline pilot and was elected to Sanjay's parliamentary seat.

He became prime minister after his mother, Indira Gandhi, was assassinated by her own Sikh bodyguards in 1984.

Often seen as a reluctant leader, he and his Congress Party won a record majority later that year.

He encouraged foreign investment, a freer economy and rejuvenated his own party, ridding it of his mother's unelected cronies.

After he lost the election in 1989, Rajiv Gandhi resigned.

This time, the Congress Party was expected to win the largest number of parliamentary seats - but not overall control - against the Hindu BJP Party and the Janata Dal, now split into two parties.

The campaign has been marred by sectarian violence between Hindus and Muslims in what has proved to be the most violent election in Indian history. Two hundred people have already been killed.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

It later emerged that a female Tamil Tiger (LTTE) suicide bomber had assassinated Rajiv Gandhi. In 1987 Mr Gandhi, then prime minister, had sent Indian peacekeeping forces to Sri Lanka in a disastrous attempt to impose peace in the country. The move proved unpopular both at home and abroad and his troops pulled out in 1990.

A year after Mr Gandhi's death, the Tamil Tigers were outlawed in India.

PV Narasimha Rao, succeeded Gandhi as Congress leader and became India's prime minister later that year.

After a number of bribery scandals, the party was heavily defeated in the 1996 elections. But its popularity was revived in 1998 by Mr Gandhi's Italian-born widow Sonia who took over as leader and returned the party to power in the 2004 elections. She refused to become prime minister herself, however, and the job went to former finance minister Manmohan Singh.

Eventually, the BJP returned to power and is currently run by the Hindu fundamentalists.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19, TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20, GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21, CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22. Horoscope text for each sign.

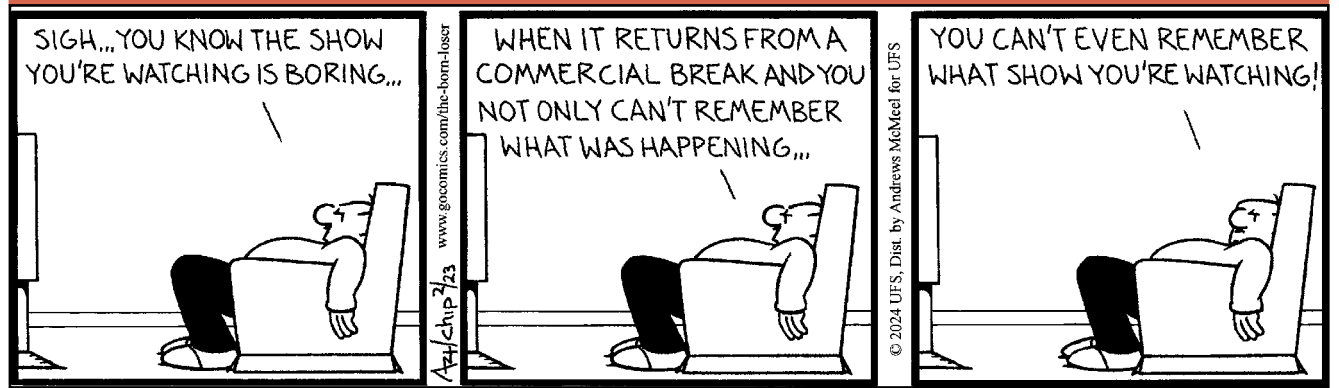
LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22, VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22. Horoscope text for each sign.

LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22, SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21. Horoscope text for each sign.

SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21, CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19. Horoscope text for each sign.

AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18, PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20. Horoscope text for each sign.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Sudoku puzzles categorized by difficulty: EASY, EASY+, MEDIUM, and HARD. Each puzzle is a 9x9 grid with some numbers pre-filled.

WEATHER

Weather forecast table with columns for MIN, MAX, and CONDITION. Includes sections for CHINA and WORLD with cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and New York.

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Highbrow; 5- Morse element; 9- ___ Alto, CA; 13- Breakfast fruit; 15- Robt. ___; 16- Self-images; 17- Corpulent; 18- Peddle; 19- I smell ___; 20- Miracle-___ (plant food); 21- To ___ (perfectly); 23- Tranquil; 25- Celestial body; 26- Bridal paths; 27- Lighted by Earth's satellite; 30- Blasting material; 31- Bother; 32- Cocaine addict; 37- Skin marking, often due to injury; 38- A Judd; 40- ___ Romeo; 41- Pre-war apartment; 43- Lieu; 44- Attack a sub?; 45- Becomes visible; 47- Adventurous expedition; 50- Glass ornament; 51- Smell in 'Apocalypse Now'; 52- Liberal ___; 53- '___ Believer' (Monkees hit); 56- Fluid-filled sac; 57- ___ way (not at all); 59- Doc; 61- Work without ___; 62- ___ good example; 63- Of the sun; 64- Promising; 65- Highly ranked competitor in sporting events; 66- Zaire's Mobutu ___ Seko;

DOWN 1- Air pollution; 2- Wyo. neighbor; 3- Margarine; 4- Diddley and Derek; 5- Barren place; 6- Nautically sheltered; 7- Poivre's partner; 8- Capital of Finland; 9- Bit of wisdom; 10- Concur; 11- Bank offerings; 12- Bone; Prefix; 14- Tidily; 22- Mai ___ (drink); 24- Ferrara family; 25- Night noise; 26- Energy source; 27- Sail support; 28- Tale starter; 29- ___ epic scale; 32- Camp bed; 33- Despised; 34- Zeno's home; 35- A long way off; 36- Pops; 38- Not a direct hit; 39- Opponent; 42- Kind of ticket; 43- Cramps, e.g.; 45- Overseas; 46- Teacher's favorite; 47- Decline; 48- Church recesses; 49- Containing lard; 51- Tenn. neighbor; 52- Start the pot; 53- Doing nothing; 54- Farrow and Hamm; 55- Land unit; 58- Genealogy word; 60- Dawn deity.

Yesterday's solution crossword puzzle grid with filled-in words.

A crossword puzzle grid with some numbers and letters pre-filled.

Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999, Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283, Fire department 28 572 222, Water Supply - Report 2822 0088, PJ (Open line) 993, Telephone - Report 1000, PJ (Picket) 28 557 775, Electricity - Report 28 339 922, PSP 28 573 333, Macau Daily Times 28 716 081, 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



Real estate advertisement for JML Property. Includes text 'It's prime time to BUY & RENT!', contact information, and three photos of properties: Va Fat (2 bed 1 bath), Tou Un (1 bed 1 bath), and Jade Garden (4 bed 3 bath).

PARALYMPICS

PARIS ORGANIZERS ARE LAUNCHING A CAMPAIGN TO BOOST TICKET SALES

JEROME PUGMIRE, PARIS

WITH 100 days until the Paralympics begin, Paris organizers are delivering a message from the athletes in a bid to boost ticket sales: I am not missing anything, except you.

The countdown campaign for the Aug 28-Sept. 8 Paralympic Games begins Monday. It features three Paralympic athletes, each of them alone in an empty stadium. The campaign slogan — “Il ne me manque rien, sauf vous” (I’m not missing anything, except you) — is a rallying call to get people to come along and watch them competing.

The French athletes featured in the campaign are Arnaud Assoumani, a long jump and triple jump specialist who won gold at the 2008 Games in Beijing; wheelchair tennis player Pauline Déroulède, and blind soccer player Gaël Rivière who was a European championship winner



France's Arnaud Assoumani competes in the men's T47 long jump final during the 2020 Paralympics at the National Stadium in Tokyo

two years ago. He plays at club level for Bondy Cécifoot Club — in the same suburb where France star Kylian Mbappé grew up.

National broadcaster France Télévisions will show the campaign in a bid to raise awareness and — ultimately — boost sales. So far, 900,000

of the 2.8 million tickets have been sold.

A total of 4,400 athletes will take part in the Paralympics. Tickets are available from 15

euros (\$16) for track and field sessions at Stade de France, wheelchair tennis at Roland Garros, or blind soccer at the foot of the Eiffel Tower. The finals cost from 25 (\$27) euros and it's 45 euros (\$49) to watch the closing ceremony.

Ticket sales could escalate once posters start appearing around Paris, with organizers aiming to raise awareness and increase fan engagement and solidarity.

There will be 651 posters dotted around the city, 972 on the subway and a further 2,520 on the sides of buses.

Today, four Paralympic athletes will walk up the famed steps at the Cannes Film Festival along with Paris 2024 Olympic head Tony Estanguet.

Of the tickets sold so far, organizers said 300,000 have been bought by the state and 150,000 by the International Olympic Committee and National Paralympic Committee.

Organizers haven't released details for the amount of tickets sold for the opening ceremony, which takes place along a section of the famed Champs-Élysées.

The Paralympics will have a record 164 broadcasters worldwide covering 549 events across 22 sports. MDT/AP

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"DEIGNAN AWARD"
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IN MACAU (2023)



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

PARALYMPICS

MCCARTNEY SONG STARTS ON COUNTDOWN TO OPENING CEREMONY IN PARIS

WITH an assist from Paul McCartney the Paralympic Games starts its 100-day race yesterday to the opening ceremony in Paris in August.

The former Beatle has let "We All Stand Together" — the signature tune from an award-winning animated film he wrote and produced 40 years ago — be used in a promotional film for the International Paralympic Committee.

"Sir Paul really understands what we stand for as a movement and he was so generous to us," IPC president Andrew Parsons told The Associated Press. "He was not difficult to convince, it was something that came very naturally."

In 100 days from yesterday, the Summer Paralympics opening ceremony on Aug. 28 will play out along a section of the Champs-Élysées and Place de la Concorde.

"We have probably the most famous avenue in the world," Parsons said in a recent interview. "That is really exciting. The city is really embracing Paralympic athletes, athletes with disabilities." **MDT/AP**

**JAMES ROBSON,
MANCHESTER**

MAN CITY 3, WEST HAM 1

MANCHESTER City won a record fourth straight Premier League title yesterday [Macau time] by beating West Ham 3-1 in the final game of the season.

City is the first team to be crowned champion of English soccer's top division four years in a row after holding off the challenge of second-place Arsenal, which beat Everton 2-1.

Two goals from Phil Foden in the first half set Pep Guardiola's team on course for its latest title. Mohammed Kudus pulled a goal back for West Ham with a stunning overhead kick, but Rodri restored City's advantage as it marched toward a sixth title in seven seasons.

Guardiola's team needed to beat West Ham at Etihad Stadium to be certain of the title, having gone into the game two points clear at the top of the standings.

Foden helped ease any potential nerves among the home fans when firing City ahead with a brilliant goal inside two minutes.

Receiving a pass from Bernardo Silva, Foden side-ste-

FOOTBALL | EPL

Man City wins record fourth straight title after win against West Ham



Manchester City's Haaland (right) and Doku celebrate at the end of the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester City and West Ham

pped West Ham midfielder James Ward-Prowse and unleashed a left-foot shot outside the area that rocketed into the top corner. The goal was timed at just under 80 seconds.

Foden, England's footballer of the year, added a second in the 18th minute when conver-

ting Jeremy Doku's cross from close range.

Kudus produced a moment of magic in the 42nd with an acrobatic overhead kick that might have given Arsenal hope of an unlikely comeback.

But it didn't take City long to extend its lead again after

the break as Rodri fired low a effort from the edge of the box that West Ham goalkeeper Alphonse Areola could not keep out despite getting a hand to the ball.

City ended the season with 91 points — two more than Arsenal. **MDT/AP**

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Business Views

Shuli Ren, Bloomberg



WHAT IS CHINA'S \$138 BILLION BOND BAZOOKA AIMING AT?

China [began] selling 1 trillion yuan (\$138 billion) special sovereign bonds Friday, the fourth such sale in past 26 years.

These offerings are special in that the government can use them for any purpose. They are not part of the fiscal deficit, so they are not constrained by any budgetary rules.

Indeed, the last three issues showcase the versatility and strategic importance of such bonds. The first was launched in 1998 to recapitalize the big four state-owned banks. The second one seeded the nation's sovereign wealth fund in 2007. And the third issue was used in 2020 for Covid control and relief measures. That Beijing is reaching out for a

There's rampant expectation that a big chunk of the money will be used to reduce excess supply in China's troubled property sector. Investors got excited by the latest Politburo readout, released on April 30, that called for coordinated measures to digest existing housing stock. A few models have been proposed, all of which essentially involve the government buying apartments from homeowners who are looking to upgrade, or from troubled developers.

Has the market raced ahead of reality? China is vague on how the 1 trillion yuan will be used. President Xi Jinping's new slogans, such as "new productive forces," were mentioned, which seem to suggest that housing — a legacy business — will not be a main beneficiary. But then the government also highlighted the need to stimulate "still-weak domestic demand," a rare admission from top policymakers, who have been more focused on the supply side. Those may be code words for helping the real-estate industry, giving some legitimacy to traders' speculations. A majority of Chinese wealth is tied to property, which is in the third year of an unprecedented downturn.

And then there's the question of who will end up holding these ultra-long bonds. Commercial banks own about 65% of China's sovereign notes, with roughly half coming from the six biggest state-owned lenders, according to Bloomberg Intelligence estimates. However, since China plans to sell these notes via a public auction in the interbank market, small regional lenders will likely be jostling for a piece of the pie.

China's treasury bond market has been on a tear, especially on the ultra-long end. The 30-year is yielding 50 basis points less than a year ago. Smaller lenders, flush with deposits and short on investment opportunities, have been piling in, igniting regulatory concerns that they are speculating on the securities and exposing themselves to potential duration risk.

Will this whale-sized auction sow the seeds for China's version of the Silicon Valley Bank debacle? SVB Financial Group's failure in 2023 offers a cautionary tale. The US lender had pumped billions of dollars into long-term Treasuries on expectations that rates would remain steady — only to see its massive wager fall apart as the Federal Reserve embarked on a steep hiking cycle. While not as volatile as the US, China's Treasury market also has episodes of sell-offs.

That China is willing to tap into a special tool in order to stimulate growth is an encouraging sign. It might just remind global investors that Beijing has a track record of shock-and-awe interventions. Whether the government can pull off another one will depend on how exactly it executes and utilizes this bond sale.

Courtesy Bloomberg/Shuli Ren

TWO MACAU RESIDENTS SUFFER CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Two local residents suffered carbon monoxide poisoning over the weekend, causing the Health Bureau (SSM) to warn residents about preventive measures.

A statement from the bureau said that it received a report regarding a case of carbon monoxide poisoning at the Macau Drug Rehabilitation Association, affecting two residents aged 46 and 50. At approximately 7 a.m. on May 18, the two individuals went to their kitchen and turned on a gas stove to prepare breakfast.

After about thirty minutes, they noticed a strange odor and experienced dizziness and nausea. One of them even fainted momentarily but regained consciousness soon afterwards.

According to the provided information, the kitchen in question was equipped with two gas stoves, windows, and an extractor fan. At the time of the incident, the kitchen windows and doors were open, but the extractor fan was turned off.

The two are currently both in a stable condition.



People in both New York and Dublin, Ireland, wave and signal at each other while looking at a livestream view of one another as part of an art installation on the street in New York

NEW YORK-DUBLIN VIDEO LINK IS BACK UP AFTER SHUTDOWN FOR BAD BEHAVIOR

A video link between New York City and Dublin that was shut down due to inappropriate behavior on both sides of the Atlantic has reopened with new security measures.

The open-air video link between the two cities, which opened May 8 and was taken offline last week, reopened yesterday [Macau time] and will operate between the hours of 6 a.m. and 4 p.m. in New York, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. in Dublin.

The Dublin City Council and Manhattan busi-

ness group Flatiron NoMad Partnership organized the livestreaming public art installation called the "Portal." They said they have installed more fencing on the New York side and taken steps to prevent people from stepping on the sculpture and holding their phones up to the camera lens.

"Now, if individuals step on the Portal and obstruct the camera, it will trigger a blurring of the livestream for everyone on both sides of the Atlantic," the organizers said in a statement.

The organizers had billed the exhibit as a way to "embrace the beauty of global interconnectedness." It was paused after videos popped up on social media of bad behavior including an OnlyFans model in New York baring her breasts and Dubliners holding up swastikas.

Organizers said their tweaks "will ensure that thousands of Portal fans will enjoy the experience on both sides of the Atlantic."

The exhibit is scheduled to be up through the fall. MDT/AP



South Africa Former President Jacob Zuma (pictured) was disqualified from running for a seat in Parliament in a national election next week because of a previous criminal conviction. The decision by the country's highest court is bound to raise political tensions ahead of what might be a pivotal vote for Africa's most advanced economy. The Constitutional Court said that a section of the constitution disqualifying people from standing for Parliament if they've been sentenced to more than 12 months in prison without the option of a fine does apply to the 82-year-old former leader.



Brazil People in the heartland Brazilian city of Pirenopolis took to the streets yesterday [Macau time] in a procession of the traditional Cavalcadas festival. The tradition began in the 1800s with a Portuguese priest who wanted to celebrate the Holy Spirit — one of the entities of the Roman Catholic Church's trinity — and also commemorate the victory of Iberian Christian knights over the Moors.



Sports Jim Otto, the Hall of Fame center known as "Mr. Raider" for his durability through a litany of injuries, has died, the team confirmed Sunday night (yesterday, Macau time). He was 86. The cause of death was not immediately known. "The Original Raider," the club said in a statement posted on the social platform X. "The personification of consistency, Jim's influence on the American Football League and professional football as a whole cannot be overstated. His leadership and tenacity were a hallmark of the dominant Raider teams of the 1960s and 70s."

THE DECISIVE MOMENT



TDM x 40. Veteran TDM-TV anchor Jorge Silva is congratulated by long time fellow journalist Rosa Serrano, after receiving a medal of honor for his decades-old contribution to the company. Other four TDM veterans were awarded in an event marking the public broadcaster's 40th anniversary, last night.