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**MSAR IS PLAYING A POSITIVE ROLE HELPING CHINESE EV MAKERS ENTER LUSOPHONE COUNTRIES, SAYS DELOITTE IN A REPORT**

P4

**GAMBLING VICE EPIDEMIC: URGENT NEED FOR TAILORED INTERVENTIONS**

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**TAIPA GRANDE TUNNEL EXCAVATION UNDERWAY**

P4



AP PHOTO



**East and Southeast Asia** saw record methamphetamine seizures in 2023, primarily from the Golden Triangle. The UNODC reports that the region's meth production generated \$80 billion annually. Political instability in Myanmar has exacerbated the situation, with increased drug trafficking and production in lawless areas. Synthetic drug trafficking routes have expanded, reaching countries as far as South Korea and Australia.

AP PHOTO



**Japan** Nissan is urging owners of 84,000 older vehicles to stop driving due to defective Takata air bag inflators that could explode. Models affected include 2002-2006 Sentras, 2002-2004 Pathfinders, and 2002-2003 Infiniti QX4 SUVs. Free repairs, towing, and mobile services are offered to affected owners. The inflators pose a risk of serious injury or death from shrapnel during airbag deployment.

**Papua New Guinea**

Authorities are relocating thousands of landslide survivors at risk from a second landslide in Enga province. The unstable ground and delayed arrival of heavy equipment complicate rescue efforts. The disaster buried hundreds in Yambali village, with up to 8,000 people potentially needing evacuation. Tribal warfare in the region further challenges relief operations.

AP PHOTO



**USA** More than 4 million chickens in Iowa will be culled due to a bird flu outbreak at a large egg farm. The highly pathogenic virus has also affected dairy cattle. The outbreak, ongoing since 2022, has led to the culling of over 92 million birds nationwide. Health officials assert the public risk remains low, and beef remains safe to eat.

More on backpage

# THEY ♥ MACAU

Outbound mainland tourists favor Macau as top destination so far this year P3



**GAMING**

## PREMIUM MASS PLAYERS UP: CLSA

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**SECURITY**

## DNA DATABASE 'NEEDS LEGAL GUARANTEES': WONG

P2

RESEARCH

# GAMBLING ADDICTION EPIDEMIC: URGENT NEED FOR TAILORED INTERVENTIONS

STAFF REPORTER

A recent study by scholars from Macau and mainland universities has shed light on the alarming trend of problem gambling in Macau, Hong Kong and mainland China.

The study, based on data collected from gambling helpline callers between 2015 and 2021, reveals stark differences in the characteristics and struggles of gamblers across the three regions.

It highlights the limited support measures available to gambling addicts in these regions and emphasizes the need for tailored interventions and prevention efforts to address this pressing issue.

A study conducted by professors from Macao Polytechnic University, Macao University of Tourism, and Guangzhou Xinhua University has provided insights into the distressing characteristics of problem gamblers reaching out to helplines in Macau, Hong Kong and mainland China, according to



a TDM report.

The study surveyed 943 gamblers seeking assistance through local helplines, with the majority originating from Macau (27.3% from mainland China and 12.3% from Hong Kong).

One of the most concerning trends is the level of debt among problem gamblers. The study revealed 73% of those surveyed were in debt, with 9% having debts exceeding 1 million patacas.

In Macau, 33% of the gamblers

had debts exceeding 200,000 patacas, a figure that surpassed those in other gambling regions due to the high minimum bets in Macau casinos.

The situation is even more dire for mainland gamblers, with 16.8% having debts exceeding 1 million patacas and 11% accumulating debts ranging from 501,000 to 1 million patacas. In contrast, more than 23% of Hong Kong gamblers reported debts between 200,000 and 500,000 patacas.

Suicidal ideation is another alarming issue, with 40% of the surveyed gamblers reporting feeling extremely distressed during phone calls, and over 5% admitting to having suicidal thoughts. The study found 10.3% of mainland helpline callers reported suicidal ideation, significantly higher than the percentage of callers in Macau. The researchers emphasized the urgent need to address the high rate of suicidal ideation and implement effective preventive measures.

The scholars emphasized the need for a more tailored approach to gambling helpline services, as researchers uncovered significant regional disparities in caller preferences and accessibility needs.

Data revealed a notably longer history of addiction in Macau, where the average gambler reported eight consecutive years struggling with the problem, yet a sizable 21% of local gamblers expressed openness to seeking treatment - contrasting sharply

with close to 60% of those from outside Macau who declined additional assistance, underscoring the importance of considering these differing needs and exploring alternative support options.

The study also highlighted the necessity of cross-border collaboration and establishing financial counseling services beyond just Macau to address the alarmingly high debt levels documented among mainland Chinese gamblers.

It indicated flexible, regionally-customized approaches will be essential to effectively support this diverse population across the three territories.

The study highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to tackle the growing problem of gambling addiction in Macau, Hong Kong, and mainland China, addressing the unique challenges faced by each region and fostering a collaborative approach to support those affected.

# DNA database is a very sensitive matter and needs legal guarantees, Security Chief says

RENATO MARQUES

THE establishment of a DNA database in Macau involves basic rights such as personal freedom, physical and mental integrity and privacy, the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, has stated.

Legislation is needed for all aspects of the database to ensure individual rights are protected, said Wong, responding to a written inquiry from lawmaker Lam Lon Wai.



Wong's office said the regulations need to include strict provisions on procedures, and the preservation and destruction of biological samples, as

well as security management of DNA databases such as data access rights to eliminate all potential risks of abuse or infringement. For this reason,

the Office said that although it is proceeding with the legal framework related to DNA databases, it is working with extreme care and not in a rushed manner.

In the inquiry, lawmaker Lam had asked the Secretariat for Security about the timetable for the establishment of a DNA database in Macau.

The same office said recent developments about privacy concerns have forced the Judiciary Police, which was developing the legal framework in the past, to start again and consider new requirements and new norms for data security management and protection.

CRIME

# FOUR ELDERLIES DEFRAUDED OF RMB270,000

HOWARD TONG

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) has arrested two 17-year-olds from Hong Kong suspected of committing fraud against older adult residents of Macau.

The case came to light Friday when an older woman reported being defrauded of RMB200,000 through the "guess who I am" technique.

A caller claiming to be a relative or friend of the victim falsely said they had injured someone and demanded "settlement money" as compensation. A person posing as a "paralegal" later arrived to collect the payment.

Further investigation revealed a further three older Macau residents, men and women, had fallen victim to the same scam, losing between RMB10,000 to RMB40,000 each.

The police apprehended two suspects near the border gate and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, recovering RMB8,900 in stolen money, as well as mobile phones and tablets connected to the case.

According to the alleged suspects' confessions, a Hong Kong criminal group had instructed them to travel to Macau four times between May 19 and May 27 to collect the funds, which they would then hand over to the group in mainland China and Hong Kong.

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RENATO MARQUES



## TOURISM

# Macau mainland tourists' favorite destination in Q1

RENATO MARQUES

**M**ACAU was the most satisfactory destination for outbound mainland travelers in the first quarter (Q1), the China Tourism Academy (CTA) has revealed via its official WeChat broadcast channel.

With a score of 83.49 points,

Macau jumped from the third to first, for the first time, although this is not Macau's highest ever score.

Macau scored 84.09 points in Q1 last year, seizing the current top spot because other regions dropped out, rather than because of an improvement of satisfaction with Macau.

The CTA survey showed many

mainland residents were enthusiastic about traveling to both Macau and Hong Kong, while there has also been an increase in the number of residents of the two Special Administrative Regions visiting the mainland.

Hong Kong dropped from the fifth (82.86 points) to the seventh place of the ranking in Q1 2024 with a score of 81.77.

The CTA report noted the Hong Kong drop is related to a fall in mainland tourists visiting Hong Kong over the past decade, because of social movements, Covid-19, and negative public opinion about tourism.

The Association said it is hoped the Hong Kong SAR government and the tourism industry "will step up efforts to fully restore the confidence of mainland tourists in the Hong Kong market."

The report also noted the recovery of China's tourism and "a new cycle of prosperity and development" after the sharp decline caused by the pandemic.

"Promoting the steady growth of mutual visits between mainland China and Hong Kong and Macau should become a long-term issue and a policy guideline for tourism exchanges and cooperation between China and Hong Kong and Macau," the report said.

It noted there is growing tourist demand from both urban and rural residents in the mainland who are the "most reliable market force for tourist exchanges between mainland China and Hong Kong and Macau."

The news was received with praise by several tourism-related associations and operators, who noted that Macau topping the ranking is encouraging but is also a call to action, with the officials saying that "Macau should not rest on its laurels" and should work harder to keep the position.

The Macau Economic Association president, Lau Pun Lap, said in an interview with public broadcaster TDM Chinese Channel that he expects visitors to Macau this year will surpass the government forecast of 30 million and may reach 35 million.

STAFF REPORTER

**P**REMIUM mass players from mainland China are increasingly making multiple trips to Macau, solidifying the Special Administrative Region's (SAR) resilience against an uncertain Chinese economy, according to a survey from investment group CLSA.

The survey has revealed mainland tourists continue to view Macau as an attractive travel destination, with 78% intending to visit by 1Q24.

The China Reality Research (CRR) surveyed 800 Chinese nationals with gambling experience in Macau and has indicated that despite a slight decrease from the previous year's survey, with 78% of respondents planning a visit, the premium mass segment displayed greater

CLSA

## Premium mass players up



strength. Within this segment, 70% intended to visit Macau twice or more in the next 12 months, compared to 57% in 2019.

"We continue to note high willingness to visit and spend money in the

city, with notable strength among our premium panelists," CLSA analysts Jeffrey Kiang, Lance Noble and Leo Pan wrote.

"This aligns with our view that premium mass visitors are generally more

immune to any macro slowdown, given Macau is a niche market targeting the wealthier ones."

The survey also revealed premium mass players are more inclined to stay in Macau for extended

periods, with 96% indicating plans to spend two or more nights compared to 93% of base mass players.

The analysts also observed a positive response to Beijing's recent announcement expediting the visa application process.

"The government's expansion of eligible cities under IVS will likely offer support too," they said.

Approximately 45% of respondents said they would expedite their trip plans to Macau as a result.

Macau's proximity continues to play a crucial role in attracting mainland players, with 48% expressing no intention to gamble elsewhere.

Among those who indicated a desire to gamble abroad, Singapore emerged as the top choice, with 20% of respondents naming it as their preferred overseas destination.

## ESTORIL POOL TO CLOSE OVER NEW LIBRARY CONSTRUCTION

The Estoril swimming pool will be closed from June 1, the Sports Bureau (ID) has announced. This comes after the Public Works Bureau awarded the New Central Library construction project scheduled to commence soon. "A series of improvement works of the swimming pool will be carried out during the closure of the facility to better meet the needs of users," the ID said.

## MORE SHOWERS THIS WEEKEND

The Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau has forecast that a wide trough of low pressure in the central South China Sea will gradually approach the South China coast in the upcoming week. It is expected Macau will experience more showers and thunderstorms starting tomorrow. Authorities will closely monitor the potential development of a low-pressure area above the existing low-pressure trough, the bureau said.

## GUIA HILL CABLE CAR RENOVATIONS EXTENDED

The project to renovate the Guia Hill cable car and conduct annual safety inspections will need to be extended. The Municipal Affairs Bureau has announced the extension is due to recent unstable weather conditions. The bureau aims to reopen the cable car to the public mid-June. As a result, the free cable car rides originally planned for June 1 and June 2 will be canceled. The renovation and maintenance work will cover the ceiling, floor, walls, guardrails and steps of the cable car, as well as the upper and lower stations.

## MAN IN BAD MOOD VANDALIZES CARS

Police have investigated vandalism affecting several private cars parked at the metered parking spaces. The suspect, in his 50s, admitted to damaging the vehicles with his car keys because he was in a negative emotional state. One of the car owners reported the incident, saying repairs cost MOP30,000. Police contacted the other car owners who all want to press charges.

PUBLIC WORKS

# TAIPA GRANDE TUNNEL EXCAVATION UNDERWAY

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE Public Works Bureau (DSOP) has begun construction of a major tunnel project to divert traffic from the Macau Bridge to the Cotai region via Taipa Grande.

The tender process is underway to pre-qualify potential contractors, with the screening process set to be completed by the end of July. Only a shortlist of five candidates will be invited to bid for the project, which is estimated to take 1,165 working days to complete.

Once finished, the approximately 600-meter-long, four-lane tunnel will provide quicker access for vehicles traveling between the Macau Peninsula and the Cotai casino district through the Macau Bridge, the city's newest link between the peninsula and Taipa.

In response to a written question from lawmaker Ella Lei, the government justified the need for the tunnel, saying it will "provide quick access for vehicles traveling between the Macau Peninsula and Cotai" and help "alleviate traffic pressure in the vicinity of the Taipa Ferry Terminal and Macau International Airport, as well as on the roads in the Pac-

On area."

While the project was first proposed more than 10 years ago, its construction was only recently scheduled to begin this year, in line with the government's most recent plan.

According to Lam Wai Hou, DSOP director, the project will be divided into two phases for the purposes of competition and construction. The official did not provide a specific timeline for the completion of the work, but said the competition schedule and project details will be announced "in due time."

Lei has also asked the government to publicly announce the findings of the environmental impact study conducted for the project.

Lam said an assessment was completed this year looking at factors such as air and noise pollution as well as landscape impacts. Mitigation plans will be implemented with approval from the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA), though no assessment results were released.

"A mitigation plan was formulated, and the DSPA provided a technical opinion on the environmental assessment", said the official.

The Taipa Grande hill tunnel



project is expected to play a crucial role in improving traffic flow and accessibility between the Macau peninsula and the rapidly developing Cotai region, which has become the

city's main entertainment and gaming hub.

"The assessment of the environmental impact for the Taipa Grande tunnel project was completed in 2022. It involved

comprehensive analysis and evaluation of air, noise, water quality, landscape, waste management, and the potential impacts during the project's execution," said Lam.

## Macau facilitating Chinese EV entry into Portuguese markets

STAFF REPORTER

**M**ACAU is playing a positive role in helping Chinese electric vehicle makers enter Portuguese-speaking countries, according to a recent report from accounting firm Deloitte.

The report examines the growing presence of Chinese cars globally and Macau's strategic position in enabling this expansion. At the expo, GAC's EV unit Aion showcased new models as its state-owned parent company, which is a partner of Toyota and Honda in China, aims for 1.1 million annual brand sales.

Deloitte noted that Macau could leverage local talents with Portuguese language skills and legal knowledge to facilitate the entry



of Chinese new energy vehicle companies into Portuguese-speaking markets. Additionally, Macau's exhibition facilities and experience could provide a platform for cooperation between China's EV industry and overseas markets, said Norman Sze, vice chair of Deloitte China.

As Chinese giants push into international markets, these com-

panies take on new significance. BYD, for instance, is making plans for local EV production in Brazil, Latin America's largest economy and major Portuguese-speaking country. Rival Great Wall Motor also commenced operations in Brazil this month. Meanwhile, Chery, a major Chinese exporter, has been operating a factory in Brazil since 2014.

Deloitte projected that Latin America, which accounts for 6% of worldwide car sales, could reach roughly 7.2 million annual passenger car sales by 2030 with a growth rate of 5%. Electric vehicles may comprise around 5% of regional sales in 2025 versus today's 2%, thanks to incentives and a growing middle-class buyer base.

## Q1 FINANCIAL RESERVES ALMOST MOP600B

RENATO MARQUES

**M**ACAU'S financial reserves grew 2.81% during the first quarter (Q1) of this year, according to a Q1 report from the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM) in the government's official gazette.

At the end of March, the government's reserve accounts held MOP596.79 billion.

This was composed of the Basic Reserve of MOP153.40 billion, the Extraordinary Reserve of MOP431.86 billion and investment earnings during the period of MOP11.53 billion.

At the end of 2023, the financial reserves totaled MOP580.47 billion, which

means that from January to March the reserves grew some MOP16.32 billion.

Considering the government's current annual expenditure, the reserve funds would be enough to cover five years of the government's budget.

The maximum sum ever reached by the financial reserve accounts was of MOP663.56 billion.

The 2024 budget is the first from the term of Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng not to be in deficit and so not needing to use the financial reserves to balance the accounts, which is what has happened since 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### COMPARISON OF RESERVES

	End of 2023	End of Q1 2024	Difference
Financial Reserves	580.47	596.79	16.32
Basic Reserve	152.06	153.40	1.34
Extra Reserve	428.41	431.86	3.45
Investment Results	28.98	11.53	

\*ALL FIGURES IN MOP BILLION



## SJM FOOTBALL FRIENDLY WITH PORTUGAL ICONS SHOWCASES EXPERTISE IN HOSTING WORLD-CLASS EVENTS

The match attracted over 4,000 spectators to the Macau Dome, creating a cheerful and joyous atmosphere for fans to watch a masterful display of high football from Figo and other legends

**C**ELEBRATING the 25th anniversary of the establishment of Macau SAR, SJM Resorts, S.A. brought to Macau the “SJM Five-a-side Football Friendly: Portugal Icons vs. GBA Flying Dragon.” The event, jointly organized by the Sports Bureau (ID) and supported by the Macao Government Tourism Office and the Macau Football Association (MFA), not only celebrated the one-quarter century of the SAR but also highlighted Macau’s role as a cultural link between China and Portugal, while celebrating the 45th anniversary of Sino-Portuguese diplomatic relations.

Focusing on Macau’s commitment to developing “Sports + Tourism” activities and enhancing the city’s reputation as a “City of Sports,” the event saw 11 legendary players from the “golden era” of Portuguese football take on a team from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area (GBA). Among the event’s notable guests were the Chief Executive, Ho Iat Seng, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong, and the Director of the Department of Publicity and Culture of the Liaison Office of the Central People’s Government.

Daisy Ho, Managing Director of SJM, said, “SJM has always attached great importance to the development of sports culture in Macau. In addition to promoting a variety of sports activities, we will continue to leverage ‘Sports + Tourism’ to enrich the SAR’s tourism

landscape and facilitate the diversified development of our tourism and leisure industry, to bolster our reputation as a ‘City of Sports,’ and to attract more overseas visitors to Macau.”

The president of ID, Pun Weng Kun, also added, “By building a cooperation platform through large-scale sports events and collaborative sports exchange activities, the goal is to promote the development of the sports industry, leverage the synergies of major sports events, stimulate the growth of the local sports industry, and drive economic development in sports tourism and related sectors.”

The highly anticipated match attracted over 4,000 passionate spectators, creating a cheerful and joyous atmosphere. Upon the arrival of the Portugal Icons players, they engaged in a series of activities to experience the welcoming spirit of Macau. Local fans welcomed their longtime idols at the airport and Grand Lisboa Palace, eagerly sharing a moment and a photo with them.

Fans are excited to have more opportunities to meet and greet the following day as the football stars embarked on a tour of Macau in an open-topped bus. The tour started from Grand Lisboa Palace and passed through several famous landmarks, including the iconic Hotel Lisboa.

Those who desired closer interaction with the football stars had a golden opportunity to join the fan meeting at Grand Lisboa Palace be-

fore the match to get close to their favourite idols, collect signatures, and take selfies.

Portugal Icons captain, Luís Figo, said about the visit, “I find it most interesting to see the blend of Portuguese influence in Macau’s architecture. Many locals also greeted us in Portuguese, it makes me feel right at home.” Hélder Postiga echoed similar sentiments, “The hospitality extended to us from Macau and SJM has been impeccable - everything from hotel reception to food is easily one of the best we have experienced. I’m impressed by Macau’s vibrant cityscape - it exudes an energy and aura that sets it apart from other Asian cities.”

An array of sideline activities took place at the outdoor plaza of the Ponte 16 Resort, including football-themed games, exclusive merchandise booths, photo oppor-

tunities, and chances to win match tickets and other prizes.

One of the highlights of the event was a special-themed exhibition showcasing personal collections on loan from Portugal Icons, which was held at Grand Lisboa Palace’s West Lobby on May 18 and 19. Fans could also indulge in football-themed cocktails and food at Mesa by José Avillez and The Grand Buffet for a special culinary experience. For those who preferred a more laid-back experience, the match was also broadcast live at The Terrace Bar.

SJM launched a series of promotions all over Macau, including limited-edition sportswear and souvenirs available at Grand Lisboa Palace and the match venue, such as SJM’s mascot “Sam the Rooster” plush toy dressed in the Portugal Icons team uniform or referee’s outfit, as well as a range

of football-themed merchandise, like t-shirts, scarves, caps, and footballs.

As part of SJM’s efforts in Corporate Social Responsibility, the Portugal Icons and the MFA hosted the “Legends of Tomorrow - Football Camp,” where football stars shared tricks and skills with the local youth, who treasured the opportunity to learn from the renowned players’ expertise. Additionally, SJM invited over 300 underprivileged students, grassroots families, disadvantaged groups, and college football team members to attend the match.

To fully engage overseas football fans, SJM also introduced the “Football Match Packages” with special rates on accommodation, food and beverage, and match tickets. Some of the packages included exclusive access to the players’ welcome dinner and limousine services.



ECONOMY

# IMF upgrades its forecast for Chinese economy, but says reforms are needed

ELAINE KURTENBACH

**T**HE International Monetary Fund has upgraded its forecast for China's economy, while warning that consumer-friendly reforms are needed to sustain strong, high-quality growth.

The IMF's report, issued yesterday [Macau time], said the world's second-largest economy will likely expand at a 5% annual rate this year, based on its growth in the first quarter and recent moves to support the property sector. That is a 0.4 percentage point above its earlier estimate.

But it warned that attaining sustained growth requires building stronger social safety nets and increasing workers' incomes to enable Chinese consumers to spend more.

The IMF also said Beijing should scale back subsidies and other "distortive" policies that support manufacturing at the expense of other industries such as services.

The ruling Communist Party has set its annual growth target at "around 5%," and the economy grew at a faster-than-expected 5.3% in the first quarter



of the year, boosting the global economy.

The IMF said its upgraded forecast also reflects recent moves to boost growth, including fresh help for the property industry such as lower interest rates and smaller down-payment requirements on home loans.

But it said risks remained,

with growth in 2025 forecast to be 4.5%, also up 0.4% from an earlier forecast.

The IMF praised the Chinese government's focus on what it calls "high quality" growth, including increased investment in clean energy and advanced technology and improved regulation of financial industries.

But it added that "a more

comprehensive and balanced policy approach would help China navigate the headwinds facing the economy." Job losses, especially during the pandemic, and falling housing prices have hit the finances of many Chinese.

The report echoes opinions of many economists who say more must be done to provide

a social safety net and increase incomes for workers so that Chinese families can afford to save less and spend more.

The IMF report's longer-term assessment was less optimistic. It said it expected China's annual economic growth to fall to 3.3% by 2029 due to the rapid aging of its population and slower growth in productivity as well as the protracted difficulties in the housing sector.

Use of industrial policies to support various industries such as automaking and computer chip development may waste resources and affect China's trading partners, it said, alluding to a key point of contention between Washington and Beijing.

U.S. officials contend that China is providing unfair support to its own industries and creating excessive manufacturing capacity that can only be absorbed by exporting whatever cannot be used or sold at home.

China rejects that stance, while protesting that the U.S. and other wealthy nations have invoked false national security concerns to impose unfair restrictions on exports of technology to China. **MDT/AP**

TAIWAN

# Legislature passes changes seen as favoring China, reducing Lai's power

**T**AIWAN'S opposition-controlled legislature passed changes yesterday that are seen as favoring China and diminishing the power of the island's executive leader, sparking protests by thousands of people.

The changes pushed by the opposition Nationalist Party and its allies would give the legislature greater power to control budgets, including defense spending that the party has blocked in what many see as a concession to China.

It remains unclear whether the package of bills will become law. The Executive Yuan, the executive branch of government headed by

the premier, may veto legislation or pass it on to the leader, who has to proclaim bills into law within 10 days. If the Executive Yuan or its leader does not comply, the bills will not become law.

Thousands of people gathered outside the legislature to protest the changes. The legislative chamber was festooned with banners promoting both sides in the dispute, while arguments on the floor broke into shouting and pushing matches.

The Nationalists, also known as the KMT, officially back unification with China, from which Taiwan separated during

a civil war in 1949. They took control of the legislature with a single-seat majority after elections in January, while the executive leadership went to Lai Ching-te of the Democratic Progressive Party, which favors Taiwan's de facto independence from China and is hated by Beijing.

"People must stand up at this time, and we must let those legislators know that the laws they are enacting are not what we want," said Huang Hong-wei, a protester. "That's why so many people are taking to the streets to protest, because we used to believe in these legislators, but they didn't do what

they promised, so the people got angry."

DPP legislators accused deputies from the KMT and the minority Taiwan People's Party of undermining Taiwan's democracy by expan-

ding the legislature's oversight of the executive branch. They denounced the legislation as creating a "black box" for what the KMT has portrayed as reforms.

While the KMT controls the legislature, its speaker and its allies in the TPP were elected on party lists, meaning they answer to no actual constituents.

Taiwan was governed under martial law

for 40 years under the Nationalists, who have lost three consecutive elections but still hold power on the local level through well-entwined networks of business and social interests. Pro-China business groups have also captured a major share of Taiwan's media market, even as the younger generation turns to social media for its information.

**MDT/AP**

## US APPOINTS A NEW REPRESENTATIVE TO TAIWAN

**THE** United States has appointed a new representative to Taiwan, as China boosts its threats against the self-ruled island following the election of a new leader who wants the territory to maintain its de-facto independence. China claims Taiwan as its own territory and this week staged naval and air force drills that surrounded the island in a simulated blockade. The American Institute in Taiwan said yesterday that veteran diplomat Raymond Greene would take over from Sandra Oudkirk beginning in the summer of 2024. The U.S. cut formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan in

1979 and established official relations with the People's Republic of China, then a Cold War ally against the Soviet Union. Despite an absence of formal relations with Taiwan, the U.S. is the island's strongest ally. Life carried on as usual in Taiwan, with politics dominated by arguments over legal changes that could make it easier for the minority Nationalist Party to cut deals with China's ruling Communist Party, potentially undercutting Taiwan's international competitiveness, financial advantages and high-tech economy based on its production of the most advanced computer chips.

THAILAND

# Former PM Thaksin will be indicted for royal defamation, prosecutors say

JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI,  
BANGKOK

**T**HAI prosecutors said former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra will be indicted for defaming the monarchy, three months after he was freed on parole on other charges.

Thaksin will not yet be indicted because he had filed a request to postpone his original appointment yesterday with proof that he has COVID-19, Prayuth Bejraguna, a spokesperson for the Office of the Attorney General, said at a news conference.

The attorney general's office scheduled a new appointment for Thaksin's indictment on June 18, Prayuth said, adding that Thaksin will also be indicted for violating the Computer Crime Act.

The law on defaming the monarchy, an offense known as lese majeste, is punishable by three to 15 years in prison. It is controversial not only because critics consider it harsh, but also because they charge it is used for political purposes to punish government critics.

Thaksin was ousted by a military coup in 2006. His opponents then had accused him of disrespecting King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who died in 2016. Thaksin's ouster set off years of struggle between his supporters and his opponents, who were generally staunch royalists. The political



Thailand's former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, arrives at Don Muang airport in Bangkok, last August

polarization led to unprecedented public debate about the monarchy's role, which sharpened when student-led protests for greater democracy took the streets in 2020.

Thaksin had been in self-imposed exile since 2008, but returned to Thailand in August last year to begin serving an eight-year sentence on charges related to corruption and abuse of power. He was released on parole in February from the hospital in Bangkok where he spent six months serving time for corruption-related offenses.

On his return, he was moved almost immediately from prison to the hospital on grounds of ill health, and about a week after that King Maha Vajiralongkorn reduced his sentence to a single year. Thaksin was granted parole

because of his age — he is 74 — and ill health, leaving him free for the remainder of his one-year sentence.

Thaksin's return was interpreted as part of a political bargain between the Pheu Thai Party, the latest in a string of parties that he has supported, and their long-standing rivals in the conservative establishment to stop the progressive Move Forward Party from forming a government after its victory in last year's general election.

But shortly after his return, the attorney general's office said it had revived an investigation into whether Thaksin almost nine years ago violated the law against defaming the monarchy.

Thaksin was originally charged in 2016 with violating the law for remarks he made to journalis-

ts when he was in Seoul, South Korea, a year before that, but the investigation could proceed only after he was presented with the charge in person in the hospital in January, officials said. Thaksin had denied the charges and submitted a statement defending himself.

Prosecutor's spokesperson Prayuth said there is enough evidence for the attorney general to indict Thaksin. He said the prosecutors have already prepared their statement and documents to present to the court next month.

Thaksin's lawyer Winyat Chantmontree said he is confident he has a strong defense for his client.

"We have been working on this for several months, since we submitted the statement of defense," he told The Associated Press. "But whether we will win the case, it's

up to the court's discretion based on the evidence."

Winyat also noted that the video of Thaksin's comments that investigators used as evidence might have been manipulated.

Since his release, Thaksin has maintained a high profile and is believed to be wielding influence in the government led by Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin. He has traveled the country making public appearances and was reportedly involved in an attempt to broker peace talks for neighboring war-torn Myanmar.

One analyst believes Thaksin's growing influence has angered the ultra-conservatives and that the indictment is their response.

"It is designed to keep Thaksin under control. This is keeping him on a leash. If he doesn't behave then this charge can be activated and could land him in jail. This is to curtail his movement and his maneuvers and to remind him, sending him a signal in a way, to know who's in charge and to know he should not overstep the boundary," said Thitinan Pongsudhirak, at professor at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University.

The lese majeste law came under the spotlight again earlier this month when 28-year-old activist Netiporn "Bung" Sanesangkhom died in a prison hospital after going on a hunger strike. She had been jailed on a lese majeste charge.

The death sparked fresh calls for reviewing the judicial process that allows political offenders accused of nonviolent offenses to be denied bail and be held for extended periods in prison ahead of being tried. Netiporn had been accused of conducting polls in public spaces in 2022 asking people's opinions about the royal family. **MDT/AP**

SINGAPORE

# Rapid gravitational changes caused 178-foot drop of Singapore Airlines jet that hit turbulence

**R**APID changes in the gravitational force led to a 178-foot altitude drop of a Singapore Airlines flight that left one passenger dead and many others who were not buckled up injured in extreme turbulence last week, a preliminary investigation by Singapore's Transport Ministry said yesterday.

Singapore's Transport Ministry said investigators, including those from the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board, Federal Aviation Administration and Boeing, had com-

pleted a chronology of events based on the preliminary analysis of the flight's data and cockpit voice recorders.

Early findings showed the aircraft was passing over the south of Myanmar at 37,000 feet when it began to experience vibration due to changes in the gravitational force, the ministry said. The plane then climbed to an altitude of up to 37,362 feet (11,387 meters) and increased speed possibly due to an updraft, it said. The plane's autopilot then sought to pitch the jet

downwards to its earlier altitude.

"The aircraft experienced a rapid change in G (gravitational force) ... this likely resulted in the occupants who were not belted up to become airborne" before falling back down later as the plane rose and fell, the ministry said. "The rapid changes in G over the 4.6 second duration resulted in an altitude drop of 178 feet ... this sequence of events likely caused the injuries to the crew and passengers."

During the turbulence,

it said a pilot was heard calling out saying the fasten seat belt sign had been switched on. It said recorded data indicated the pilots manually controlled the plane for 21 seconds to stabilize it before reengaging the autopilot.

The plane made a normal, controlled descent and didn't encounter further turbulence until it landed in Bangkok almost an hour later, the ministry said, adding that investigations are ongoing.

Passengers have described the "sheer terror"



The Boeing 777-300ER aircraft is parked after the SQ321 London-Singapore flight at Bangkok Airport

of the aircraft shuddering, loose items flying and injured people lying paralyzed on the floor of

the plane.

Twenty-six people remained hospitalized in Bangkok yesterday. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



HAITI

# Transitional council selects PM for a country under siege by gangs

DÁNICA COTO, PUERTO

**U**.N. development specialist Garry Conille was named Haiti's new prime minister yesterday (Macau time), nearly a month after a coalition within a fractured transitional council sought to choose someone else for the position.

The long-awaited move comes as gangs continue to terrorize the capital of Port-au-Prince, opening fire in once peaceful neighborhoods and using heavy machinery to demolish several police stations and prisons.

Council member Louis Gérard Gilles told The Associated Press that six out of seven council members with voting power chose Conille earlier Tuesday. He said one member, Laurent St. Cyr, was not in Haiti and therefore did not vote.

Conille has been UNICEF's regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean since January 2023 and previously served as Haiti's prime minister from October 2011 to May 2012 under then President Michel Martelly. He replaces Michel Patrick Boisvert, who was named interim prime minister after Ariel Henry resigned via letter in late April.

Henry was on an official trip to Kenya when a coalition of powerful gangs launched coordinated attacks Feb. 29, seizing control of police stations, shooting at Haiti's main international airport and storming the country's two biggest prisons, relea-

sing more than 4,000 inmates.

Henry was locked out of the country by the attacks, with the airport in the Port-au-Prince capital remaining shuttered for nearly three months.

Gang violence is still surging in parts of Haiti's capital and beyond as Conille takes over the helm of the troubled Caribbean country awaiting the U.N.-backed deployment of a police force from Kenya and other countries.

Conille studied medicine and public health and helped develop health care in impoverished communities in Haiti, where he helped coordinate reconstruction efforts after the devastating 2010 earthquake. The gang violence has taken a toll on that system, however.

He worked for several years at the United Nations before Martelly designated him as prime minister in 2011. Conille resigned less than a year later following clashes with the president and his Cabinet over an investigation into government officials who have dual nationality, which is not allowed by Haiti's constitution.

Conille could not be immediately reached for comment. UNICEF said in a brief statement to late Tuesday that he was stepping down from his role as regional director: "We are working closely with Garry to ensure a smooth transition at this time."

Conille has an arduous task ahead of him, having to quell rampant gang violence while helping lift Haiti out of deep

poverty, with inflation reaching a record 29%, according to the latest data available. In recent years, gangs that control at least 80% of Port-au-Prince have forced more than 360,000 people from their homes, and they continue to control key routes from the capital to Haiti's northern and southern regions, often paralyzing the transportation of critical goods.

The selection of Conille as prime minister comes just weeks after former Haitian sports minister Fritz Bélizaire was chosen for the post in late April by a four-member coalition within the nine-member transitional council in a surprise announcement that angered many. Critics said proper procedure was not followed as dictated by the framework that established the council, so a new process was started to choose a prime minister, with dozens of names submitted for the post.

The drawn-out process has been criticized by many, including the Montana Accord, a Haitian civil society group that has a representative on the council.

In a statement Tuesday, the group accused the council of not taking any "consequential measures" since being installed as "the suffering of the people is getting worse, while the gangs are taking control of more territory and committing more crimes."

It also accused the council of not being transparent while choosing a new prime minister, saying it did not publicly share

the criteria used or the names submitted, among other things.

Liné Balthazar, president of the Tet Kale party, called on the council to be transparent in an interview Monday with Magik9, a local radio station, and said the selection of a prime minister appeared improvised.

In addition to selecting a new prime minister, the nine-member council, of which seven have voting powers, also has to appoint a provisional electoral commission, a requirement before elections can take place. The council's non-renewable mandate expires Feb. 7, 2026, at which date a new president is scheduled to be sworn in.

In addition to picking a new prime minister, the council also is responsible for selecting a new Cabinet and holding general elections by the end of next year.

The council members are Emmanuel Vertilaire for Petit Desalin, a party led by former senator and presidential candidate Jean-Charles Moïse; Smith Augustin for EDE/RED, a party led by former Prime Minister Claude Joseph; Fritz Alphonse Jean of the Montana Accord; Leslie Voltaire for Fanmi Lavalas, the party of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide; Louis Gérard Gilles for the Dec. 21 coalition that backs former Prime Minister Ariel Henry; Edgard Leblanc Fils for the Jan. 30 Collective, which represents parties including that of former President Michel Martelly; and Laurent Saint-Cyr for the private sector. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 2001 FRENCH EX-MINISTER JAILED OVER SLEAZE



Former French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas has been jailed for six months in the country's biggest sleaze scandal in recent history.

The 78-year-old judge and close confidant of the late President Francois Mitterrand was found guilty of illegally receiving funds from oil giant Elf Aquitaine between 1989 and 1992.

His ex-lover, Christine Deviers-Joncour, and two top Elf executives were also jailed for misusing funds in the embezzlement scandal.

Ms Deviers-Joncour sank into her chair, head in hands, as the sentence was announced - three-years' imprisonment, half of which is suspended.

Former company president Loik Le Floch-Prigent, 57, was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison. Alfred Sirven, 74, his former second-in-command and controller of the company slush fund - got four years.

Both men were also ordered to pay fines of two million French francs (\$270,000). Mr Dumas must pay one million francs.

The trial that has gripped the nation focused on allegations of corruption arising from the \$9m which Elf is said to have paid to Ms Deviers-Joncour for her work as a consultant and lobbyist in support of the firm's world-wide sales effort.

Mr Dumas has said he played a part, for the sake of France, in what he called "a subtle game of shadows and light", but denied that he made any personal gain.

The trial produced more headline-grabbing details about the lavish lifestyles of the accused, and the many gifts allegedly given to Mr Dumas by his lover in an attempt to influence government decisions.

And in a major dramatic twist Sirven, on trial in his absence, was captured in the Philippines after four years on the run. He was brought back amid fevered expectation of what he might reveal about the affair, as the former controller of the Elf purse-strings. But in the end he refused to testify.

The ripples from the case have spread across the border into Germany, where Elf embarked on controversial expansion projects in Helmut Kohl's era as Chancellor.

Both Dumas and his former lover will remain free while their appeals are heard - which could take years.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Roland Dumas was cleared in January 2003. His initial trial and sentence were widely regarded in France as a sign the French government was ready to rid itself of corruption. But subsequent attempts to prosecute politicians collapsed. In October 2001 President Jacques Chirac won his right to maintain immunity from prosecution on allegations of misappropriating public funds. In the same month prosecutors dropped their case against Dominique Strauss-Kahn - the popular former finance minister in Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin's cabinet - for forgery and misappropriation of funds. In February 2002 French magistrates published a report ending an eight-year investigation led by magistrate Eva Joly into corruption involving French politicians and the once state-owned company Elf Aquitaine. In 2003 37 people, including three senior Elf executives, were sentenced to spend up to five years in prison for their part in the corruption scandal.



## CINEMA

# ALBERT RUDDY, OSCAR-WINNING PRODUCER OF 'THE GODFATHER' AND 'MILLION DOLLAR BABY,' DIES AT 94

HILLEL ITALIE, NEW YORK

**A**LBERT S. Ruddy, a colorful, Canadian-born producer and writer who won Oscars for "The Godfather" and "Million Dollar Baby," developed the raucous prison-sports comedy "The Longest Yard" and helped create the hit sitcom "Hogan's Heroes," has died at age 94.

Ruddy died "peacefully" Saturday at the UCLA Medical Center, according to a spokesperson, who added that among his final words were, "The game is over, but we won the game."

Tall and muscular, with a raspy voice and a city kid's swagger, Ruddy produced more than 30 movies and was on hand for the very top and very bottom, from the "Godfather" and "Million Dollar Baby" to "Cannonball Run II" and "Megaforce," nominees for Golden Raspberry awards for worst movie of the year.

Otherwise, he had a mix of successes such as "The Longest Yard," which he produced and created the story for, and such flops as the Arnold Schwarzenegger thriller "Sabotage." He worked often with Burt Reynolds, starting with "The Longest Yard" and continuing with two "Cannonball Run" comedies and "Cloud Nine." Besides "Hogan's Heroes," his television credits include the movies "Married to a Stranger" and "Running Mates."

Nothing looks better on your resume than "The Godfather," but producing it endangered Ruddy's job, reputation and his very life. Frank Sinatra and other Italian Americans were infuriated by the project, which they feared would harden stereotypes of Italians as criminals, and real-life mobsters let Ruddy know he was being watched. One night he heard gunfire outside his home and the sound of his car's windows being shot out.

On his dashboard was a warning that he should close the production, immediately.

Ruddy saved himself, and the film, through diplomacy; he met with crime boss Joseph Colombo and a couple of henchmen to discuss the script.

"Joe sits opposite me, one guy's on the couch, and one guy's sitting in the window," Ruddy told Vanity Fair in

AP PHOTO



Producer Albert S. Ruddy accepts the Oscar for best picture for "The Godfather" at the 45th Annual Academy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles, Calif., on March 27, 1973

2009. "He puts on his little Ben Franklin glasses, looks at it (the script) for about two minutes. What does this mean 'fade in?'" he asked."

Ruddy agreed to remove a single, gratuitous mention of the word "mafia" and to make a donation to the Italian American Civil Rights League. Colombo was so pleased that he urged Ruddy to appear with him at a press conference announcing his approval of the movie, a gathering that led to Ruddy's being photographed alongside members of organi-

zed crime.

With the stock of parent company Gulf & Western dropping fast, Paramount fired Ruddy, only to have director Francis Coppola object and get him rehired. In the end, mobsters were cast as extras and openly consulted with cast members. Ruddy himself made a cameo as a Hollywood studio guard.

"It was like one happy family," Ruddy told Vanity Fair. "All these guys loved the underworld characters, and obviously the underworld guys

loved Hollywood."

With a cast including Marlon Brando, Al Pacino and Robert Duvall, "The Godfather" was a critical and commercial sensation and remains among the most beloved and quoted movies in history. When Ruddy was named winner of the best picture Oscar at the 1973 ceremony, the presenter was Clint Eastwood, with whom he would produce "Million Dollar Baby," the best picture winner in 2005. Upon the 50th anniversary of "The Godfather," in 2022, Ruddy him-

AP PHOTO



Clint Eastwood (center) who won two Oscars for "Million Dollar Baby" poses with presenters Barbra Stresand and Dustin Hoffman, and producers Albert S. Ruddy (right) and Tom Rosenberg at the 77th Academy Awards Sunday, Feb. 27, 2005, in Los Angeles

self became a character. Miles Teller played him in "The Offer," a Paramount+ miniseries about the making of the movie, based on Ruddy's experiences.

"Al Ruddy was absolutely beautiful to me the whole time on 'The Godfather'; even when they didn't want me, he wanted me," Pacino said in a statement. "He gave me the gift of encouragement when I needed it most and I'll never forget it."

Ruddy was married to Wanda McDaniel, a sales executive and liaison for Giorgio Armani who helped make the brand omnipresent in Hollywood, whether in movies or at promotional events. They had two children.

Born in Montreal in 1930, Albert Stotland Ruddy moved to the U.S. as a child and was raised in New York City. After graduating from the University of Southern California, he was working as an architect when he met TV actor Bernard Fein in the early 1960s. Ruddy had tired of his career, and he and Fein decided to develop a TV series, even though neither had done any writing.

Their original idea was a comedy set in an American prison, but they soon changed their minds.

"We read in the paper that ... (a) network was doing a sitcom set in an Italian prisoner of war camp and we thought, 'Perfect,'" Ruddy later explained. "We rewrote our script and set it in a German POW camp in about two days."

Starring Bob Crane as the wily Col. Hogan, "Hogan's Heroes" ran from 1965-71 on CBS but was criticized for trivializing World War II and turning the Nazis into lovable cartoons. Ruddy remembered network head William Paley calling the show's concept "reprehensible," but softening after Ruddy "literally acted out an episode," complete with barking dogs and other sound effects.

While Fein continued with "Hogan's Heroes," Ruddy turned to film, overseeing the low-budget "Wild Seed" for Brando's production company. His reputation for managing costs proved most useful when Paramount Pictures head Robert Evans acquired rights to Mario Puzo's bestselling novel "The Godfather" and sought a producer for what was supposed to be a minor, profit-taking gangster film.

"I got a call on a Sunday. 'Do you want to do The Godfather?'" Ruddy told Vanity Fair. "I thought they were kidding me, right? I said, 'Yes, of course, I love that book' — which I had never read." MDT/AP

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

FOOTBALL | CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

# Rodrygo attracts unwanted attention by saying he is open to leaving Madrid

**R**EAL Madrid forward Rodrygo has attracted unwanted attention just days before the Champions League final by saying he is open to leaving the Spanish powerhouse.

The Brazil international went on social media yesterday to reiterate his allegiance to the club and say that his words were taken out of context.

"Something very annoying happened, as one of my interviews was completely taken out of context,"



Rodrygo said on X, formerly known as Twitter. "To be very clear: I'm VERY happy at Real Madrid. I'm living my dream here. I'm NOT thinking about leaving

the club of my life. We still have history to make. Let's go after the 15th (Champions League title)..."

Madrid will face Borussia Dortmund

in Saturday's final in London.

In edited excerpts of an interview he gave to DAZN, Rodrygo had said that "anything can happen" despite him having a contract with Madrid through the 2028 season. Using the past tense, he said that his "years with Madrid were a pleasure." He reiterated that he has always wanted to be with the club, then added: "But we'll see..."

In a separate interview with Brazil's Placar magazine, Rodrygo said he doesn't want "to close any doors" and talked about how much he enjoys the English Premier League. He reiterated his desire to stay with Madrid, but only while he feels he is important for the club, which he thinks "is the case right now."

Spanish media was quick to pick up on Rodrygo's comments and start speculating about his future. Some criticized him for talking about the subject so close to Saturday's final. **MDT/AP**

BOXING

# Usyk-Fury heavyweight rematch set for Dec. 21 in S. Arabia

**T**HE heavyweight rematch between undisputed world champion Oleksandr Usyk and Tyson Fury will take place on Dec. 21 in Saudi Arabia, according to the advisor who organizes boxing events in the kingdom.

Turki Alalshikh, chairman of Saudi Arabia's General Entertainment Authority, confirmed the date of the fight on X, formerly Twitter, yesterday. He said it will take place in Riyadh, the location of the first fight on May 19.

"The world will watch another historical fight again," he wrote. "Our commitment to boxing fans continues ... We hope you enjoy it."

Usyk became the first undisputed heavyweight champion since 2000 when he defeated Fury by split decision, earning a narrow win on two scorecards. The 37-year-old Ukrainian is the first heavyweight to hold every major title belt since Lennox Lewis.

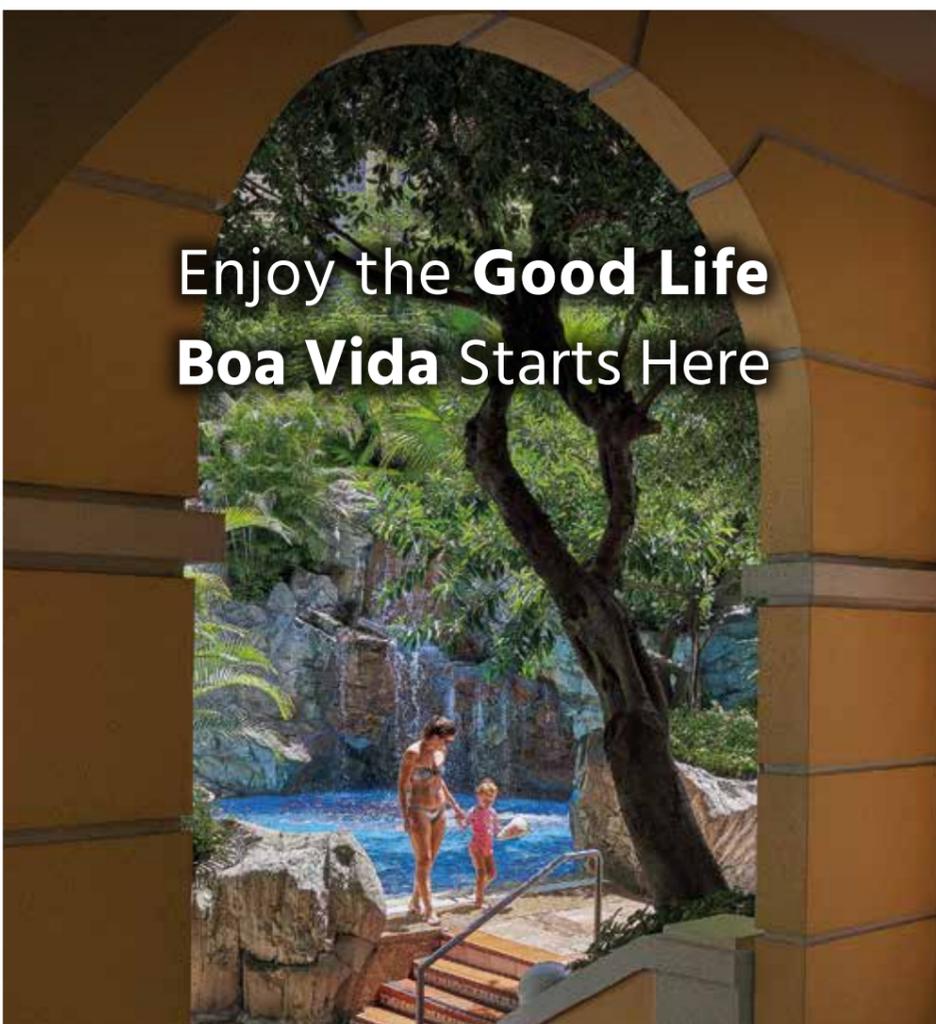
It was Fury's first loss as a professional. **MDT/AP**



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**OPINION**

**Multipolar World**

Jorge Costa Oliveira



**OVERCAPACITY OF CHINESE EVS AND THEIR PENETRATION INTO EUROPE**

U.S. officials have been insisting on the need for China to curb the “industrial overcapacity” of photovoltaic products, electric batteries, and electric vehicles (EVs), whose exports are estimated to have reached 127 billion euros in 2023 (+30% compared to 2022).

In a recent interview with *The Economist*, Macron stated that “today China has an overcapacity of vehicles and exports them on a massive scale, particularly to Europe.” Let’s examine whether this is indeed the case, focusing on the aspect of “massive scale exports [to Europe].”

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), in 2024, the market share of EVs could reach 45% in China, 25% in Europe, and >11% in the U.S. The vast majority of EV sales in 2023 occurred in China (60%), Europe (25%), and the U.S. (10%). Comparatively, these three major markets represent 65% of total global automobile sales.

According to KPMG, BEVs manufactured in China accounted for only 10% of the 1.1 million BEVs sold in Europe in 2022.

According to the European Automobile Manufacturers’ Association (ACEA), China maintained its position as the leading source of new car imports to the EU in terms of value, with a growth of 37.1% and a market share of 17.7%. A significant portion of this growth is due to EVs. According to the European Federation for Transport and Environment (T&E), EVs manufactured in China are expected to account for 25% of total EV sales in Europe in 2024 (+5% compared to 2023).

T&E projections estimate that [among the EVs manufactured in China] Chinese brands will progressively gain larger market shares – 11% by 2024 and 20% until 2027. But it is important to clarify what “Chinese brands” means. In 2023, Chinese brands only represented a 2.5% market share of the European market last year, with 72% of that share belonging to MG, a British car brand controlled by the Chinese group SAIC Motor, MG being today a fully Chinese brand from production to design.

Without MG, Chinese brands have only a 0.6% market share in Europe. This discrepancy arises from the fact that most vehicles imported from China to Europe are not Chinese brand vehicles but rather vehicles manufactured in China by foreign brands. Tesla alone accounts for 68% of the EVs imported from China and registered in Western Europe.

It is possible that there is overproduction of Chinese EVs. Although it is doubtful that this is the main reason for the recent significant increase in EVs imported from China, there are reports of over 100,000 Chinese EVs currently parked in European ports. The main reasons are: (i) fear of the imposition of high tariffs or non-tariff obstacles by the EU; (ii) very difficult access to the U.S. market; and (iii) higher margins on sales in Europe.

The narrative of European political leaders combating Chinese “overcapacity” echoes the concerns of European manufacturers. The truth is that neither European manufacturers planned the transition well, nor did European politicians promptly define public policies for the sector and the EVs value chain, nor can the European public opinion free itself from the entropies of radical environmentalism. It is high time for European political and business leaders to stop looking for excuses for what they should have done and did not do.

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**CHINA AND EGYPT DEEPEN COOPERATION DURING EL-SISSI’S VISIT TO BEIJING**

**THE BUZZ**

Egypt and China yesterday signed agreements deepening their cooperation during President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi’s visit to Beijing. El-Sissi, accompanied by Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, witnessed the signing together with Chinese President Xi Jinping in a ceremony that coincided with the 10th anniversary of the Egypt-China comprehensive strategic partnership.

The Egyptian delegation discussed bilateral relations and bringing stability to the Middle East in light of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, according to a statement released by the Egyptian presidency.

The agreements include collaboration in China’s Belt and Road Initiative, which brings Chinese companies to build Chinese-funded transportation, energy, and infrastructure projects overseas.

China invested billions of dollars in Egyptian state projects, including the Suez Canal Economic Zone and the new Administrative Capital east of Cairo.

Investments between Egypt and China amounted to around \$14 billion in 2023, compared to \$16.6 billion in 2022, according to the latest data released by Egypt’s statistics agency.

AP PHOTO



This photo provided by the South Carolina Department of Corrections shows the state’s death chamber in Columbia

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**

**EXECUTIONS WORLDWIDE JUMPED LAST YEAR TO THE HIGHEST NUMBER SINCE 2015**

SYLVIA HUI, LONDON

**T**HE number of executions recorded worldwide last year jumped to the highest level since 2015, with a sharp rise in Iran and across the Middle East, Amnesty International said in a report released yesterday.

The human rights group said it recorded a total of 1,153 executions in 2023, a 30% increase from 2022. Amnesty said the figure does not include thousands of death sentences believed to have been carried out in China, where data is not available.

The group said the spike in recorded executions was primarily driven by Iran, where authorities executed at least 853 people last year, compared to 576 in 2022.

Those executed included 24 women and

five people who were children at the time the crimes were committed, Amnesty said, adding that the practice disproportionately affected Iran’s Baluch minority.

“The Iranian authorities showed complete disregard for human life and ramped up executions for drug-related offences, further highlighting the discriminatory impact of the death penalty on Iran’s most marginalized and impoverished communities,” Agnès Callamard, Amnesty’s secretary general, said in a statement.

The group said China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and the United States were the five countries with the highest number of executions in 2023. The total number cited in Amnesty’s annual report was the highest it recorded since 2015, when

1,634 people were known to have been executed.

Callamard said progress faltered in the U.S., where executions rose from 18 to 24 and a number of states “demonstrated a chilling commitment to the death penalty and a callous intent to invest resources in the taking of human life.”

The report cited the introduction of bills to carry out executions by firing squad in Idaho and Tennessee, and Alabama’s use of nitrogen gas as a new, untested execution method in January.

Amnesty said that despite the setbacks, there was progress because the number of countries that carried out executions dropped to 16, the lowest on record since the group began monitoring.

MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



**USA** A new poll by AAPI Data and AP-NORC reveals that most Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders support teaching the history of racism in U.S. schools. They oppose restrictions on classroom discussions about race and gender. The poll indicates that efforts to politicize education through culture war issues have not resonated strongly within these communities.

AP PHOTO



**Portugal** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy secured a second \$1 billion military aid promise from Belgium, including F-16 jets, amid a European tour. He visited yesterday Portugal, which pledged €126 million in additional military and financial aid. Putin warned of severe consequences if Russian soil is hit with Western-supplied weapons. The aid follows Spain’s commitment, with Hungary blocking further EU military support. NATO and EU partners are bolstering Ukraine’s defenses.

AP PHOTO



**South Africans** voted in a crucial election that could end the African National Congress’ (ANC) 30-year dominance. President Cyril Ramaphosa expressed confidence in the ANC’s victory despite challenges. High unemployment and poverty remain significant issues. The election might force the ANC into a coalition government for the first time if they lose their parliamentary majority.

AP PHOTO



**Algeria** proposed a U.N. Security Council resolution for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and to halt Israel’s offensive in Rafah. The draft demands humanitarian access and the release of hostages taken during the Hamas attack. The resolution highlights Gaza’s dire situation as a threat to regional peace. The U.S. has vetoed similar resolutions previously.