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AP PHOTO



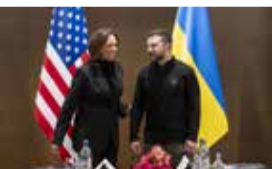
Pakistan A Japanese climber (pictured) has died while trying to scale one of the highest mountains in northern Pakistan and a search is still underway to find his missing colleague, officials said Saturday. Karrar Haidri, who is the secretary of the Alpine Club of Pakistan, said that rescuers retrieved the body of one of the two missing Japanese climbers after a dayslong search operation on the Spantik Peak, which is also known as Golden Peak. The climbers were scaling the mountain when they went missing early last week.

AP PHOTO



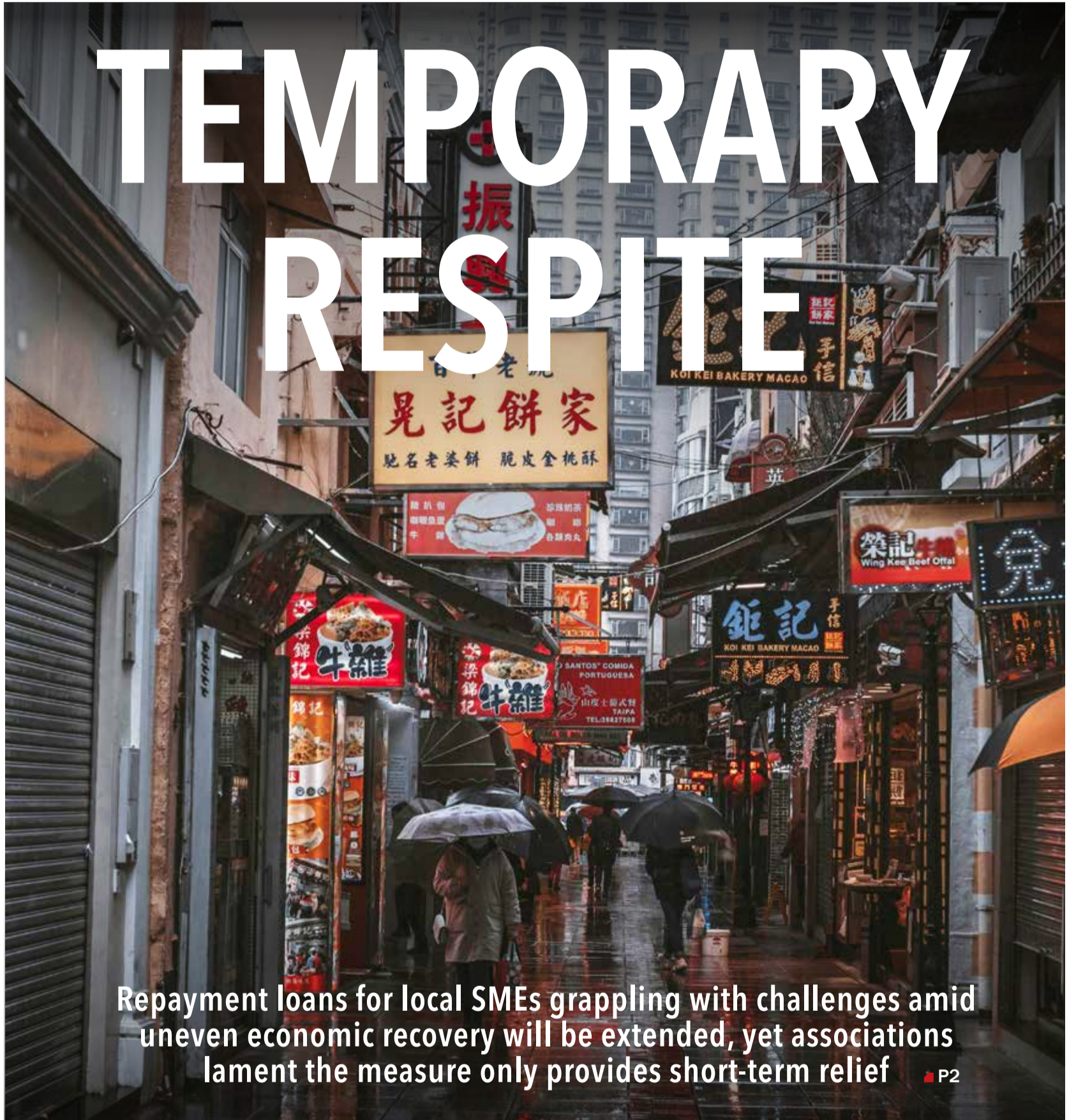
Singapore An oil spill caused by a dredger boat hitting a stationary cargo tanker has blackened part of the country's southern coastline, including the popular resort island of Sentosa, and sparked concerns it may threaten marine wildlife as a clean-up operation was underway yesterday. The Netherlands-flagged dredger Vox Maxima struck the Singaporean fuel supply ship Marine Honor on Friday. It damaged the cargo tank on Marine Honor, which leaked oil into the sea.

AP PHOTO



Russia-Ukraine Dozens of world leaders converged on a Swiss resort Saturday to discuss how to bring peace to war-ravaged Ukraine, though any hopes of a real breakthrough were muted by the absence of Russia. Despite Russia's absence from the conference at the Bürgenstock resort overlooking Lake Lucerne, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy suggested that one measure of the two-day event's success was «bringing back to the world the idea that joint efforts can stop war and establish a just peace.”

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TEMPORARY RESPITE

Repayment loans for local SMEs grappling with challenges amid uneven economic recovery will be extended, yet associations lament the measure only provides short-term relief

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GOV'T EXTENDS REPAYMENT PERIOD FOR SMES' ENTREPRENEURSHIP ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

LYNZY VALLES & HOWARD TONG

THE SAR government's Executive Council has concluded its revisions to assistance programs in a bid to provide continued support for beneficiary enterprises and young entrepreneurs who are still facing operational difficulties in the uneven economic recovery following the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the pandemic, temporary measures were introduced to support beneficiary enterprises overcome difficulties.

In a press conference Friday, ExCo spokesperson and Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong said the SAR government provided repayable services to small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurial young people in need through the "Small and Medium Enterprise Assistance Program" and the "Youth Entrepreneurship Assistance Program."

The objective was to support the enterprises to improve their operating conditions and cope with financial difficulties, and to encourage and support young people to start their own businesses, he said.

However, following the pandemic and uneven economic recovery, business operations will still be difficult.

Therefore, the ExCo has drafted changes that include the extension of the maximum repayment period for both programs from eight to 10 years, as well as the automatic two-year extension of the repayment period for enterprises currently under the programs, by amending Administrative Regulation No. 9/2003 and Administrative Regulation No. 12/2013.

These measures are intended to alleviate the loan repayment pressure on small and medium-sized enterprises as well as young entrepreneurs, allowing them more time to stabilize their operations and financial situations, said Cheong.

Regulations take effect from the day after they are promulgated.

Tai Kin Yip, the director of the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED), said there are currently approximately 12,000 small and medium-sized enterprises and young entrepreneurial enterprises still in the interest-free loan repayment period who are beneficiaries of this measure.

Due to the two-year extension of the repayment period, the bureau was originally expected to receive MOP500 million in repayment income this year.

Now it will receive MOP200 million less in repayments, which means it is expected to collect MOP300 million in repayments this year. Repayments collected next year are also expected to decrease.

EXTENSION TO RESTORE MARKET CONFIDENCE

Frederico Ma Chi Ngai, President of the Macao Youth Association and vice president of China Youth Entrepreneurs Association, is in favor of extending the repayment period by two years for the two assistance programs for small and medium-sized enterprises and youth entrepreneurship.

He is confident the government will carefully consider the views of various sectors of society, including the business communi-

ty and members of the Legislative Assembly. Acting promptly on this matter will have a positive impact on stabilizing society and boosting corporate confidence in the

market, he said.

Ma said the current economic recovery is uneven, with residents displaying cautious consumption behavior. Additionally, there

is increased pressure on industrial and commercial operations, particularly for businesses in the northern district, who are facing significant challenges.



'TEMPORARY SOLUTION TO PROVIDE RELIEF'

The extension of the repayment period for the assistance programs from eight years to 10 years will only provide a "temporary relief" to local SMEs.

Although the extension is anticipated to benefit around 12,000 local small and medium-sized enterprises, associations view these measures as a temporary solution to provide relief to struggling businesses facing repayment pressures.

For sustainable growth, business chambers said the government must adopt a comprehensive approach to attract individuals to the community and stimulate the local economy.

Wong Kin Chong, president of the Industry and Commerce Association of Macao Northern District remarked that while the current two-year repayment period under the assistance programs provides temporary relief, the "interest-only repayment" scheme is set to conclude by year-end.

The business chamber has urged the government to consider extending these measures to

provide enterprises with more breathing room.

"In addition to delaying the repayment period to help small and medium-sized enterprises with capital turnover, the government must also take a multi-pronged approach to revitalize the community economy," the president told local media outlet Macao Daily.

Although some landlords are willing to reduce rents, it is difficult to reduce labor costs, and most catering industries also must bear the cost of food delivery platforms.

Therefore, many companies have chosen to shut down their business due to "unsatisfactory performance" and uncertain business prospects.

The current two-year repayment period for the two assistance programs is believed to be a "relief" for small and medium-sized enterprises that have applied for assistance. However, the "interest-only repayment" measure will end at the end of the year.

Gov't to provide financial support for students in Hengqin

HOWARD TONG

IN a move to deepen education cooperation between Guangdong and Macau, the Executive Council has formulated new administrative regulations to provide financial support for Macau students studying in Guangdong pro-

vince during the 2024/2025 school year.

This also extends to local students studying in Hengqin.

According to Secretary for Administration and Justice and Executive Council spokesperson, André Cheong, there will be tuition and related fee

subsidies for students attending schools run by local school-running entities in Shenzhen, with priority given to Macau residents in admissions.

However, school-running entities must submit accounting and audit reports, and ensure curriculum and student evalua-

tions comply with Macau regulations.

Also, the official said high school students must attend 80% of summer courses organized by the Education and Youth Development Bureau from June to August 2025 to receive the subsidies.

Tuition subsidies main-

tain the previous year's upper limits - MOP8,000 for preschool to high school, while school supplies subsidies range from MOP1,150 for preschool to MOP1,700 for high school.

SUBSIDIES INCREASED BY MOP12 MILLION

The total amount of

the above two subsidies is approximately MOP49.8 million, an increase of MOP12 million compared with last year. This is mainly due to the overall increase of more than 300 students in the number of students and the opening of a school for Macau children in Hengqin.

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TOURISM

Hotel occupancy to surpass 90% by the year-end, MGTO claims

RENATO MARQUES

THE occupancy rate of the local hotels should surpass 90% by the end of this year, the director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, told the media on the sidelines of the opening ceremony of the "International Cities of Gastronomy Fest, Macao" at the Macau Fisherman's Wharf.

Senna Fernandes said that while the current hotel occupancy rate is about 85-86%, there are indicators that this rate will grow further in the second half of this year and surpass 90% by the year-end.

The same official also noted the important results obtained so far in the reattraction of foreign visitors to Macau in the first five months of this year.

According to Senna Fernandes who cited provisional data collected up to May this year, the number of international tourists visiting Macau was approximately 978,000, with an average of more than 6,400 visitors per day. This figure represents a year-on-year increase of 1.75 times and a recovering to nearly 67% of the 2019 figure.

Some 14 million tourists have entered Macau from January to May this year, more than 93,000



tourists per day on average, which is an 82.5% recovery from 2019.

Hong Kong tourism numbers have recovered the fastest with 2.98 million visitors, a recovery rate of 97.1% of the pre-pandemic level, followed by those from the mainland (9.90 million), which has recovered some 81%.

The number of tourists from Taiwan has reached some 324,000, recovering to 73.4%.

Addressing the recent promotion campaign by Macau in Thailand, the same official no-

ted that in this year alone there has been an influx of about 65,000 tourists from Thailand, a figure that corresponds to over 80% of 2019 data.

She said the return of 45 weekly flights between Macau and Thailand contributed to this excellent result, adding that if airlines increase the frequency of flights this year, there will be an increase in Thai tourists to Macau.

Commenting on the recent news of limits to the distribution of free snacks and drinks by the gaming concessionaires, Senna

Fernandes said that stopping this practice would not impact visitor figures. She said it is not the purpose of the government to "attract tourists that come to receive gifts."

Recently speaking about hotel occupancy, Senna Fernandes said that Macau would start promoting stays in hotels in Hengqin, namely to mainland groups, to tackle the issue of local hotel units reaching full capacity and to offer this type of visitors accommodation options that better suit their purpose and budget.

RESIDENTS OPT TO EAT OUT IN ZHUHAI

A recent survey conducted by the Macau University of Science and Technology has found Macau residents are more satisfied with dining and shopping experiences in Zhuhai compared to Macau. The survey, which polled 919 local residents, revealed that Zhuhai scored 75.4 points out of 100 for food and beverage offerings, while Macau scored 71.2 points. Zhuhai also outperformed Macau in clothes shopping, with a score of 74.2 points compared to Macau's 75.4 points. The study attributed Zhuhai's advantages to factors such as the exchange rate, improved transport links, and a diverse range of goods and dining options.

GAMING CRIME BILL OMITTS MONEY TOUTS

A recent draft of Macau's "Law to Combat Gambling Crimes" does not specifically address the issue of unauthorized money change touts operating in or around casinos. Despite this omission, Chan Chak Mo, president of the Second Standing Committee, said Macau authorities are paying close attention to the matter due to its negative impact on society, security and the economy. The bill does cover illegal lending for gambling purposes, which can result in imprisonment for one to five years. The omission of money touts has raised concerns about the potential for these illegal activities to continue, particularly given the significant involvement of money touts in helping individuals circumvent cash transfer limits and engage in illicit cross-border transactions.

HZMB ATTRACTS 149,000 TOURISTS IN FIRST HALF-YEAR

The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) welcomed more than 149,000 tourists on guided tours in its first six months of limited operations, customs officials have said. The world's longest sea crossing opens to visitors views of its iconic cable-stayed towers from Zhuhai to Blue Dolphin Island, a trip of over 140 minutes. Customs officer Hu Zhengyu said strict health and security screening ensures tourist safety. "The entire customs process was very smooth," one tourist said. Daily numbers have averaged over 800 since December 15 with peaks of 1,200.

WEATHER

Severe rainstorms to ease this week

RENATO MARQUES

MACAU suffered severe rainstorms over the weekend with some areas recording over 100 mm of rainfall in a single day, the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) has noted.

Particularly on Saturday, strong winds also affected some areas with the SMG stating that gusts reached 125 kilometers per hour (hurricane level) in some cases.

According to the SMG, rain is expected to ease over the next few days giving way to very hot weather conditions.

The bureau noted that last Saturday, the rainfall was mainly concentrated

on the Peninsula with the maximum daily cumulative rainfall recorded reaching nearly 100 mm.

On the same day, Taipa registered a maximum rainfall of nearly 40 mm and Coloane about 20 mm.

In the Peninsula, as often occurs in this type of situation, several areas of the city have reported minor flooding.

The bureau has reminded residents that although Macau is small in area, the distribution of rain, particularly during heavy rainfalls and thunderstorms, can be very different area to area.

In addition to the heavy accumulated rainfall, strong gusty winds have

been felt in several areas of Macau and islands with gusts exceeding 110 kilometers per hour on the eastern part of the Peninsula. The higher-speed wind gusts were recorded by the weather station of the Amizade Bridge, exceeding 125 kilometers per hour, which is considered to be hurricane level.

According to the forecast from the bureau, the rainy and unstable weather of the past few weeks will gradually stop, giving way to very hot weather conditions later this week and potentially next week, with SMG advising the public of the sudden weather changes.



MACAU, HONG KONG REJECT EU'S 'BASELESS' ANNUAL REPORT

NADIA SHAW

THE Macau government has issued a strong statement criticizing the European Union's (EU) 2023 annual report on Macau, calling the contents "baseless" and accusing the EU of interfering in China's domestic affairs.

The EU report claims the following specific freedoms are under strain in Macau: freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and national security.

The Macau government has strongly disputed these allegations.

The government has claimed the report is factually incorrect, and that the EU has no right to interfere in China's internal affairs.

The report has claimed Macau's "continuously increasing focus on national security" risked "weakening fundamental freedoms" and eroding "Macau's usually high degree of autonomy." It has also claimed "freedom of the press remained under strain" and "freedom of assembly continued to suffer."

The MSAR government has firmly rejected these assertions, stating the successful



implementation of the "one country, two systems" principle has been effective in maintaining Macau's long-term prosperity and producing various social developments. The government stressed that the rights and freedoms enjoyed by the Macau public, as stated in law, have been protected.

In a statement, the MSAR government expressed "strong opposition" to the EU report, which it said contained "grou-

ndless and baseless claims" and made "biased comments" about Macau's political, social and economic achievements.

Regarding the revisions to the SAR's Law on Safeguarding National Security, the government said the amendments drew from legislative experience in other jurisdictions, while fully considering Macau's legal traditions and social realities, and adhering to international human rights conventions.

The changes were also made to fulfill the "patriots governing Macau" principle, safeguard national security, and enhance the electoral system to protect residents' voting rights.

The MSAR government emphasized that over the 25 years since Macau's return to China, the region has successfully implemented the 'One country, two systems' principle and the Basic Law, which are facts

the EU cannot deny.

In the same statement, the local government urged the EU to take an objective and fair approach when assessing these matters, as they are part of China's domestic affairs in which the EU has no right to intervene.

In a separate statement, the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its "strong dissatisfaction" with the EU report, accusing it of making "irresponsible remarks" and interfering in "China's internal affairs."

The Hong Kong SAR government also expressed its strong disapproval and rejection of the EU report regarding the its efforts in safeguarding national security, human rights and other important matters.

The government said the EU has intentionally overlooked the positive impact of the National Security Law on restoring normalcy to the lives of Hong Kong residents, economic activities and the business environment.

The spokesperson of the Hong Kong SAR government emphasized the EU's "hypocrisy and double standards."

The Macau SAR government hopes the EU will take a more constructive approach and promote the development of its bilateral relations, keeping with those pledges of support, and match those positive words with actions.

Macau denies entry to Hong Kong journalist citing 'public security'

STAFF REPORTER

MACAU has denied entry to a Hong Kong journalism lecturer traveling to the casino hub to host a news writing workshop, citing concerns over potential threats to "public security," a move that has drawn strong criticism from a local journalism association, reports South China Morning Post.

Vivian Tam Wai-wan, a lecturer at the Chinese University of Hong Kong's journalism school, was barred from crossing the border into Macau Friday morning after reaching the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal, the Macau Journalists Association has said.

The association expressed "extreme regret

and strong protest" over the decision, accusing local authorities of "abusing the law" based on "one-sided speculation" about Tam's intended activities.

"The authorities are abusing their power based on one-sided speculation with unbelievable law enforcement standards, seriously affecting normal professional exchange activities in the community," the association said. "We demand the authorities explain the legal basis for this decision."

Tam had planned to host a two-and-a-half hour workshop on responsible interviewing techniques and media ethics, according to the association. The group said the workshop information had already



been made public on social media platforms.

"In the name of 'public security', authorities are actually abusing the law, adding to Macau residents' concerns that their basic freedoms and rights are being further weakened," the association said.

Tam, who previously worked as a journalist in

Hong Kong before transitioning to academia, declined to comment further on her experience beyond the association's statement.

The Public Security Police Force of Macau has formerly maintained that it "always strictly followed the laws and established procedures" when screening travelers.

DSAMA CLOSES BEACHES DUE TO E. COLI BACTERIA OUTBREAK

RENATO MARQUES

THE Marine and Water Bureau (DSAMA) has closed Hac Sa and Cheoc Van beaches in Coloane due to high levels of Escherichia coli (E. coli) bacteria.

In a statement late last week, DSAMA said recent seawater analysis has detected high concentrations of the coliform bacterium, which poses a significant public health risk.

Test results by the Municipal Affairs Bureau have shown E. coli content is present at both Hac Sa and Cheok Van beaches in a concentration that exceed the standard.

DSAMA has hoisted red flags and posted notices at the two beaches

to inform citizens and beachgoers to stay away from the sea.

The bureau said "abnormal beach water quality usually occurs after heavy rain or severe weather and may persist for some time," adding it is closely monitoring the situation.

There have been prior reports of excessive concentrations of bacteria on Macau's beaches. In July 2019, DSAMA issued a similar warning due to concentrations of vibrio cholerae, the bacteria responsible for cholera.

The contamination of the seawater at Macau's beaches has prompted lawmakers to query the government, including about the increase in E. coli in coastal waters between 2015 and 2018.

GAMING

MGM explores potential casino investment in Thailand

STAFF REPORTER

MGM China is reportedly searching for new investment options in Thailand's proposed entertainment complex.

This potential move comes as Macau's gaming operators seek to capitalize on the burgeoning Thai tourism market.

The revelation surfaced during a meeting between Thapanee Kiatphaibool, the governor of Thailand's Tourism Authority (TAT), and Pansy Ho, the chairperson and executive director of MGM China, as cited in a report by the Bangkok Post.

The meeting took place last week as part of the Macao Government Tourism Office's "Experience Macao Roadshow in Bangkok."

According to Thapanee, the Macau subsidiary of global casino giant MGM Resorts In-



AP PHOTO

ternational "wants to promote Macau tourism to the Thai market, while also searching for new investment options in Thailand's proposed entertainment complex." However, it remains unclear whether MGM

China would lead a consortium or take a minority stake in partnership with its parent company.

Thailand is drafting new legislation to regulate entertainment complexes, which will

include legal casinos.

As cited in the report, Thapanee said the TAT plans to hold discussions with MGM over possible collaboration to improve Thailand's competitiveness through new touris-

m-related products, including man-made attractions, which will be promoted alongside regular activities throughout the year.

MGM Resorts' CEO and president, Bill Hornbuckle, has already expressed interest in the Thai market, describing it as "interesting" during the company's recent 1Q24 earnings call.

"Obviously, it's fully within the government's control at this point. The dialogue to date has been encouraging," Hornbuckle said. "We will see. The cost to do business there, the margins that could be had would be compelling [but] I don't want to get ahead of that curve."

Macau's gaming operators have been actively targeting the Thai market, which the MGTO has revealed to be the eighth-largest source of tourists for the special administrative region.

Previously, Galaxy Entertainment Group announced plans to open a new office in Bangkok as soon as it ramps up its marketing efforts to attract Thai players, further underscoring the industry's keen interest in tapping into the country's burgeoning tourism potential.

Registration period for candidates to the CE election committee to kick off

RENATO MARQUES

THE Electoral Affairs Committee of the Chief Executive (CAECE) has announced that those interested in taking part in the elections for members of the CE Electoral Commission can present their candidacy from tomorrow (June 18) until July 2, the president of CAECE, Song Man Lei, has said.

In a media briefing after a meeting of the CAECE, she also appealed to eligible legal-person voters to register for the right to have a role in the selection process regarding the formation of the CE Election Committee, whose deadline is today (June 17).

According to Song up to Friday noon, the CAECE had received 369 copies by eligible legal-person voters of the "registration form for assigning representatives to sign the nomination form" for candi-

dates to the CE Election Committee, a figure that represents 48% of the aggregate number of eligible legal-person voters.

Those eligible legal-person voters who have not yet filed the relevant registration form should submit one before 5:45 p.m. today, to the Public Administration Building on Rua do Campo.

The legal-person voters are registered associations with voting power for the CE Election Committee. The representative chosen by each legal-person voter will then be authorized to nominate candidates for the CE Election Committee.

Song also said the date for the CE Election Committee polling, which will choose most of the Committee's members, has been set for August 11.

A 400-member CE Election Committee will then be formed to subsequently elect the sixth-



-term CE.

The same official also said that all electoral work and election procedures have been progressing in a smooth and orderly manner, and as scheduled.

The CAECE has gradually published, after verifying their eligibility, the names of the representatives chosen by each legal-person voter, with the full list being available on the CE Election website (www.ece.gov.mo).

Addressing the new rules established by the recent approval of the Law on Oath of Office, Song said the law stipulated that CE Election Committee members must take an oath by signing a declaration to assume their duties. Elected members would be required to submit to the CAECE a signed declaration incorporating the statutory oath that will be prepared by the CAECE according to the legal provisions.

PUBLIC FUNDS

MACAU SEES SURGE IN REVENUE, INCREASED PUBLIC SPENDING

STAFF REPORTER

MACAU'S current revenue has witnessed a 64.7% year-over-year increase during the first five months of 2024, driven by a robust rebound in gaming taxes.

Concurrently, the government has ramped up public spending by 9.2%, signaling a positive economic trajectory for the region.

From January to May, current revenue reached MOP43.6 billion, the highest level since 2020, at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Gaming taxes, which comprise a significant portion of the city's revenue, amounted to MOP37 billion.

The surge in revenues has led to a corresponding increase in public expenditure.

In the first five months of 2024, public spending

rose 9.2% to MOP31.3 billion. This increase can be attributed to a 5% rise in infrastructure investment, amounting to MOP7.16 billion, as well as a 7.9% increase in current spending, driven by a 10% boost in social support and subsidies to the population and a 4.3% rise in public employee expenses.

Macau's budget for 2024 anticipates a return to surpluses in public accounts, "with no need to resort to financial reserves" after three years of economic crisis due to Covid-19.

Furthermore, the University of Macau's Centre for Macau Studies and the Department of Economics has predicted that government revenues could reach MOP109.6 billion, 7.5% higher than the authorities' estimate, further solidifying the region's economic recovery.

DIPLOMACY

Chinese premier promises more pandas and urges Australia to put aside differences

ROD MCGUIRK, MELBOURNE

CHINESE Premier Li Qiang's visit to Australia yesterday focused on positive aspects of the bilateral relationship including shared giant pandas and a rebounding wine trade as he promised a new breeding pair of the rare bears and urged both countries to put aside their differences.

China's most powerful leader after President Xi Jinping arrived late Saturday in Adelaide, the capital of South Australia state, which has produced most of the Australian wine entering China since crippling tariffs were lifted in March that had effectively ended a 1.2 billion Australian dollar (\$790 million) a year trade since 2020.

Li visited Adelaide Zoo, which has been home to China-born giant pandas Wang Wang and Fu Ni since 2009, before he was to have lunch at a restaurant at Adelaide winery Penfolds Magill Estate.

He announced that the zoo would be loaned another two pandas after the pair are due to return to China in November.

"China will soon provide another pair of pandas that are equally beautiful, lively, cute and younger to the Adelaide Zoo, and continue the cooperation on giant pandas between China and Australia," Li said in Mandarin, adding that zoo staff would be invited to "pick a pair."

Li was impressed by the 18-year-old male Wang Wang's appetite and indifference to his high-ranking visitors.



Chinese Premier Li Qiang during a visit to Adelaide Zoo, Australia, yesterday

"The panda is very obsessed with eating and doesn't pay attention to us even when we are the people from its hometown visiting," Li said at the panda enclosure.

"It has completely treated here as its second hometown," Li said. "Very pretty, adorable, with charming naivety."

The pair are the only pandas in the Southern Hemisphere and failed to produce offspring in Australia.

Foreign Minister Penny Wong thanked Li for ensuring that pandas would remain the zoo's star attraction.

"It's good for the economy, it's good for South Australian jobs, it's good for tourism, and it is a signal of goodwill, and we thank you," Wong said.

Tom King, the managing direc-

tor of Penfolds, one of Australia's oldest wineries, told Chinese state media ahead of Li's arrival that such visits helped strengthen economic and cultural ties.

"It's pleasing to see the stabilizing of relations between the Australian and Chinese governments, including regular high-level visits between the two countries," King was quoted as saying by the Global Times newspaper last week.

Li's visit is the first to Australia by a Chinese premier in seven years and marks an improvement in relations since Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's center-left Labor Party was elected in 2022.

Li noted that Albanese in November was the first Australian prime minister to visit China since 2016.

"China-Australia relations were back on track after a period of

twists and turns, generating tangible benefits to the people of both countries," Li said, according to a translation released by the Chinese Embassy in Australia yesterday.

"History has proven that mutual respect, seeking common ground while shelving differences and mutually beneficial cooperation are the valuable experience in growing China-Australia relations, and must be upheld and carried forward," Li added.

Hundreds of pro-China demonstrators, human rights protesters and democracy activists gathered outside the zoo before Li's visit.

Among the protesters was former Hong Kong lawmaker Ted Hui, who fled to Australia three years ago to avoid a prison sentence for his activism.

Hui and other protesters were able to shout slogans at Li from a distance inside the zoo.

China initiated a reset of the relationship after the previous conservative administration's nine years in power ended.

Relations collapsed over legislation that banned covert foreign interference in Australian politics, the exclusion of Chinese-owned telecommunications giant Huawei from rolling out the national 5G network due to security concerns, and Australia's call for an independent investigation into the causes of and responses to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Beijing imposed an array of official and unofficial trade blocks in 2020 on a range of Australian exports including coal, wine, beef, barley and wood that cost up to

AU\$20 billion (\$13 billion) a year.

All the trade bans have now been lifted except for Australian live lobster exports. Trade Minister Don Farrell predicted that impediment would also be lifted soon after Li's visit with Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao.

Wong said Li's visit was the result of "two years of very deliberate, very patient work by this government to bring about a stabilization of the relationship and to work towards the removal of trade impediments."

"We will cooperate where we can, we will disagree where we must and we will engage in our national interest," Wong told Australian Broadcasting Corp. before joining Li for lunch.

Li's agenda becomes more contentious after he left Adelaide late Sunday for meetings in the national capital, Canberra, today and a Chinese-controlled lithium processing plant in resource-rich Western Australia state tomorrow.

Albanese has said he will raise with Li during an annual leaders' meeting recent clashes between the two countries' militaries in the South China Sea and Yellow Sea that Australia argues endangered Australian personnel.

Meanwhile, asked if Chinese companies could invest in processing critical minerals in Australia, Wong replied that Australia's foreign investment framework was "open to all."

"We want to grow our critical minerals industry," Wong said.

Australia is the second stop of Li's tour after New Zealand, and will end in Malaysia. **MDT/AP**

Chinese journalist who promoted #MeToo movement sentenced to five years in prison

SUPPORTERS say a Chinese journalist who promoted women's rights as part of the country's nascent #MeToo movement has been sentenced to five years in prison on charges of incitement to subvert state authority, almost three years after she and an activist were detained.

The verdict provided to The Associated Press stated that Huang Xueqin would also face a fine of 100,000 yuan (\$14,000),

underscoring the ruling Communist Party's intolerance of any activism outside its control.

Huang's release date was listed as Sept. 18, 2026, accounting for her earlier detention.

Co-defendant Wang Jianbing was sentenced to three years and six months on the same charge.

Wang is more known for his labor rights activity but also helped women report sexual harassment.

Huang and Wang's ca-

ses appear to have become intertwined as part of the most recent wave of a general crackdown on rights advocates, a trend that predates the #MeToo movement and includes previous incidents such as the 2015 detentions of women distributing pamphlets against sexual harassment on public transport.

Working as a freelance journalist, Huang helped spark China's first #MeToo case in 2018 when she pu-

blicized allegations of sexual harassment made by a graduate student against her Ph.D. supervisor at one of China's most prestigious universities.

Friends say that Huang and Wang disappeared on Sept. 19, 2021, a day before Huang was scheduled to fly to the United Kingdom to start a master's degree program on gender violence and conflict at the University of Sussex. They went on trial in September 2023. **MDT/AP**



In this photo released by Free Huang Xueqin & Wang Jianbing, Chinese journalist Huang Xueqin holds up a #METOO sign for a photo in Singapore in Sept. 2017

Philippines seeks UN confirmation of its vast continental seabed in the disputed sea

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

THE Philippines has asked a United Nations body to formally recognize the extent of its undersea continental seabed in the South China Sea, where it would have the exclusive right to exploit resources, the Department of Foreign Affairs said Saturday, in a move that rejects China's vast territorial claims to the region.

The Philippine government submitted information to the U.N. Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf on the extent of its undersea shelf in the South China Sea, off western Palawan province, after more than a decade and a half of scientific research, the department said.

China did not immediately comment but it will likely contest the Philippine move.

The undersea region where the Philippines seeks to formally establish its sovereign rights under the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, or UNCLOS, covers the Spratlys, a chain of islands, islets, reefs and atolls that has been fiercely contested over the years by China, the Philippi-

nes, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan. Indonesia has also confronted Chinese coast guard and fishing fleets in the gas-rich Natuna sea in the fringes of the South China Sea.

"Incidents in the waters tend to overshadow the importance of what lies beneath," Philippine Foreign Assistant Secretary Marshall Louis Alferes said. "The seabed and the subsoil extending from our archipelago up to the maximum extent allowed by UNCLOS hold significant potential resources that will benefit our nation and our people for generations to come."

"Today, we secure our future by making a manifestation of our exclusive right to explore and exploit natural resources in our extended continental shelf entitlement," Alferes said.

Under the 1982 U.N. convention, a coastal state could have exclusive rights to exploit resources in its continental shelf, a vast stretch of seabed that can extend up to 350 nautical miles, including the right to authorize and regulate any kind of drilling.

The Philippines' undersea continental shelf could potentially overlap with those of other

AP PHOTO



In this image taken from a video released by Philippine Coast Guard, a Chinese coast guard vessel sails along a Philippine boat, bottom, to block off the Waters of Second Thomas Shoal, on May 19

coastal states in the South China Sea, including that of Vietnam. Philippine officials expressed readiness to hold talks to resolve

such issues based on UNCLOS. Philippine permanent representative to the U.N. Antonio Lagdameo said the move "can

reinvigorate efforts of states to demonstrate their readiness to pursue UNCLOS processes in the determination of maritime entitlements and promote a rules-based international order."

Hostilities and tensions in the disputed waters have alarmingly escalated particularly between China and the Philippines over two disputed shoals since last year. Chinese coast guard ships and suspected militia vessels have used powerful water cannons and dangerous blocking maneuvers against Philippine coast guard patrol ships and navy boats that have injured Filipino navy personnel, damaged their supply boats and strained diplomatic relations between the two countries.

After a tense standoff between Philippine and Chinese ships near a shoal in 2012, the Philippines brought its disputes with China the following year to international arbitration. The arbitration panel invalidated China's claim to virtually the entire South China Sea in a 2016 ruling but Beijing refused to participate in the arbitration, rejected the decision and continues to defy it. **MDT/AP**

Myanmar's embattled military government cracks down on free flow of news by blocking VPNs

GRANT PECK, BANGKOK

MYANMAR'S military government has launched a major effort to block free communication on the Internet, shutting off access to virtual private networks, or VPNs, which can be used to circumvent blockages of banned websites and services.

The attempt to restrict access to information began at the end of May, according to mobile phone operators, internet service providers, a major opposition group and media reports.

The military government that took power in February 2021 after ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi has made several previous fitful attempts to throttle traffic on the internet, especially in the months immediately after their takeover.

AP PHOTO



Reports in local media say the attack on internet usage includes random street searches of people's mobile phones to check for VPN applications, with a fine if any are found, though it is unclear if payments are an official measure.

On Friday, the Burmese-language service of U.S. Government-funded Radio Free Asia reported

that about 25 people from Myanmar's central coastal Ayeyarwady region were arrested and fined by security forces this week after VPN apps were found on their mobile phones.

As the army faces strong armed challenges from pro-democracy guerrillas across the country in what amounts to a civil war, it has also made a regular

practice of shutting down civilian communications in areas where fighting is going on. While this may serve tactical purposes, it also makes it hard for evidence of alleged human rights abuses to become public.

According to a report released last month by Athan, a freedom of expression advocacy group in Myanmar,

nearly 90 of 330 townships across the country have had internet access or phone service — or both — cut off by the authorities.

Resistance that arose to the 2021 army takeover relied heavily on social media, especially Facebook, to organize street protests. As nonviolent resistance escalated into armed struggle and other independent media were shut down or forced underground, the need for online information increased.

The resistance scored a victory in the cybersphere when Facebook and other major social media platforms banned members of the Myanmar military, because of their alleged violations of human and civil rights, and also blocked ads from most military-linked commercial entities.

This year, widely used free VPN services started

failing at the end of May, with users getting messages that they could not be connected, keeping them from social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp and some websites. VPNs connect users to their desired sites through third-party computers, effectively making it almost impossible for internet service providers and snooping governments to see what the users are actually connecting to. Internet users, including online retail sellers, have been complaining for the past two weeks of major slowdowns, saying they were not able to watch or upload videos and posts or send messages easily.

Operators of Myanmar's top telecom companies MPT, Ooredoo, Atom and the military-backed Mytel, as well as fiber internet services, told The Associated Press on Friday that access to Facebook, Instagram, X, WhatsApp and VPN services was banned nationwide at the end of May on the order of the Transport and Communications Ministry. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Muslim pilgrims gather at top of the rocky hill known as the Mountain of Mercy, on the Plain of Arafat, during the annual Hajj pilgrimage, near the holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, Saturday

RELIGION

Pilgrims commence the final rites of Hajj as Muslims celebrate Eid al-Adha

SAMY MAGDY, MINA

MASSES of pilgrims yesterday embarked on a symbolic stoning of the devil in Saudi Arabia. The ritual marks the final days of the Hajj, or Islamic pilgrimage, and the start of the Eid al-Adha celebrations for Muslims around the world.

The stoning is among the final rites of the Hajj, which is one of the Five Pillars of Islam. It came a day after more than 1.8 million pilgrims congregated at a sacred hill, known as Mount Ararat, outside the holy city of Mecca, which Muslim pilgrims visit to perform the annual five-day rituals of Hajj.

The pilgrims left Mount Arafat on Saturday evening to spend their night in a nearby site known as Muzdalifa, where they collected pebbles to use in the symbolic stoning of pillars representing the devil.

The pillars are in another sacred place in Mecca, called Mina, where Muslims believe Ibrahim's faith was tested when God commanded him to sacrifice his only son Ismail. Ibrahim was prepared to submit to the command, but then God stayed his hand, sparing his son. In the Christian and Jewish versions of the story, Abraham is ordered to kill his other son, Isaac.

Yesterday morning, crowds headed on foot to the stoning areas. Some were seen pushing disabled pilgrims on wheelchairs on a multi-lane road

leading to the complex housing the large pillars. Most pilgrims were seen sweltering and carrying umbrellas to protect them against the burning summer sun.

An Associated Press reporter saw many pilgrims, especially old ones, collapsing on the road to the pillars because of the burning heat. Security forces and medics were deployed to help, carrying those who fainted on gurneys out of the heat to ambulances or field hospitals.

Many pilgrims will spend up to three days in Mina, each casting seven pebbles at three pillars in a ritual to symbolize the casting away of evil and sin.

While in Mina, they will visit Mecca to perform their final "tawaf," or circumambulation, which is circling the Kaaba in the Grand Mosque counter-clockwise seven times. The Farewell Tawaf marks the end of Hajj as pilgrims prepare to leave the holy city.

The rites coincide with the four-day Eid al-Adha, which means "Feast of Sacrifice," when Muslims with financial means commemorate Ibrahim's test of faith through slaughtering livestock and animals and distributing the meat to the poor.

Most countries marked Eid al-Adha on Sunday, others, like Indonesia, will celebrate it Monday.

Once the Hajj is over, men are expected to shave their heads and remove the shroud-like white garments worn

during the pilgrimage, and women to snip a lock of hair in a sign of renewal and rebirth.

Most of the pilgrims then leave Mecca for the city of Medina, about 340 kilometers (210 miles) away, to pray in Prophet Muhammad's tomb, the Sacred Chamber. The tomb is part of the prophet's mosque, one of the three holiest sites in Islam, along with the Grand Mosque in Mecca and the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

All Muslims are required to make the Hajj once in their lives if they are physically and financially able to do so. Many wealthy Muslims make the pilgrimage more than once. The rituals largely commemorate the accounts of Prophet Ibrahim and his son Prophet Ismail, Ismail's mother Hajar and Prophet Muhammad, according to the Quran, Islam's holy book.

More than 1.83 million Muslims performed Hajj in 2024, Saudi Hajj and Umrah Minister Tawfiq bin Fawzan al-Rabiah said in a briefing, slightly less than last year's figures when 1.84 million made the rituals.

Most of the Hajj rituals are held outdoors with little if any shade. It is set for the second week of Dhu al-Hijjah, the last month in the Islamic lunar calendar, so its time of the year varies. And this year the pilgrimage fell in the burning summer of Saudi Arabia. The heat soared to 47 C at Mount Arafat on Saturday.

This year's Hajj came against the backdrop of the devastating

Israel-Hamas war, which has pushed the Middle East to the brink of a regional conflict.

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip weren't able to travel to Mecca for Hajj this year because of the closure of the Rafah crossing in May when Israel extended its ground offensive to the city on the border with Egypt. And they will not be able to celebrate the Eid al-Adha as they used to do in previous years.

Dozens of Palestinians gathered Sunday morning near a destroyed mosque in Gaza's southern city of Khan Younis to perform the Eid prayers. They were surrounded by debris and rubble of collapsed houses. In the nearby town of Deir al-Balah in central Gaza, Muslims held their prayers in a school-turned shelter. Some, including women and children, went to cemeteries to visit the graves of loved ones.

"Today, after the ninth month, more than 37 thousand martyrs, more than 87 thousand wounded, and hundreds of thousands of homes were destroyed," Abdulhalim Abu Samra, a displaced Palestinian, told the AP after wrapping up the prayers in Khan Younis. "Our people live in difficult circumstances."

There is also the conflict between rival generals in Sudan that has raged unabated for 14 months. The conflict killed thousands and created the world's largest displacement crisis with over 10 million forced to flee their homes. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1980 GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES MISSILE SITES



The locations for the first US nuclear cruise missiles to be stored on British soil have been revealed by the government.

Secretary of State for Defence Francis Pym told the House of Commons the 160 missiles would be located at RAF Greenham Common, Berkshire, and the disused RAF Molesworth in Cambridgeshire.

Mr Pym said neither of the bases would be used as a launch site. In times of crisis the American-owned warheads will be moved to secret launching sites within 50 miles (80 km) of their storage silos.

Although there is no "dual-key" system to launch the weapons, the minister assured the Commons the United States would not use them in an attack without Britain's assent.

The ground-launched missiles will be stored in purpose-built shelters and security will be considerably upgraded at both sites.

The UK will contribute 220 personnel to help guard the bases and the cost to the country will be £16m.

In an attempt to reassure local communities, Mr Pym said nuclear warheads would not be carried on exercises and no test flying would take place.

But the military would regularly practice the dispersal of the weapons to their launch sites after consultation with local authorities.

Most of the missiles will be stored at the Greenham Common base.

Residents in nearby Newbury vigorously opposed the basing of noisy tanker aircraft so close to them, but seemed resigned to the arrival of the American arms.

"If it has to be - so be it," said the District Council Chairman.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Protests against the decision to use the base for cruise missiles began in the summer of 1981.

The women's peace camp that remained there for almost 20 years became one of the most enduring symbols of the campaign against nuclear weapons.

Missiles were kept at the base from November 1983 to March 1991 when the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty started a gradual process of nuclear disarmament. The women finally dismantled their peace camp in September 2000.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Beautify your surroundings, with Venus in Cancer over the next month. Focus on home and family. Make household improvements. Enjoy domestic comforts and joys.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 You especially love learning over the next month, with Venus in Cancer. Research and studies reveal fascinating discoveries. Share your ideas and theories.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Keep practicing. The next month can get especially profitable, with Venus in Cancer. It's easy to make money. Get into a productive groove.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Have fun while following your heart. Your luck in love improves immensely, with Venus in your sign. Develop a passion project over the next month.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Home has a magnetic pull today. Peaceful reflection produces valuable plans over the next month, with Venus in Cancer. Develop a dream into reality.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Connect and network. You're especially popular, with Venus in Cancer for a month. Get public. Social activities benefit your career. Enjoy parties with friends.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Grab a lucrative break. Your professional status rises naturally over a month, with Venus in Cancer. Your work is gaining recognition. Infuse it with love.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Follow your heart. Study, investigate and embark on an adventure this month, with Venus in Cancer. Travel comes easier. Get involved in a fascinating study.

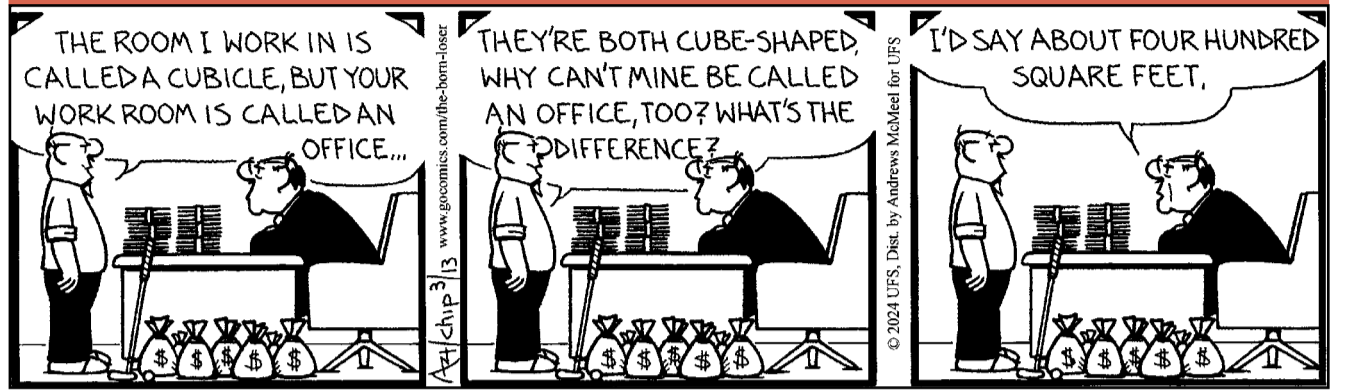
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Consider options. Make shared financial plans together, with Venus in Cancer. Find ways to increase assets and save. Together, you can find necessary resources.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Partnership and romance surge naturally over the next month, with Venus in Cancer. Compromise comes easier. Rely on mutual support. Share your heart.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Get your heart pumping to reduce stress. Physical practices grow satisfying results this month. Infuse love into your work. Healthy routines pay lovely dividends.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Explore, investigate and push your own boundaries. You're especially lucky in love, with Venus in Cancer this next month. Creativity, fun and romance abound.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

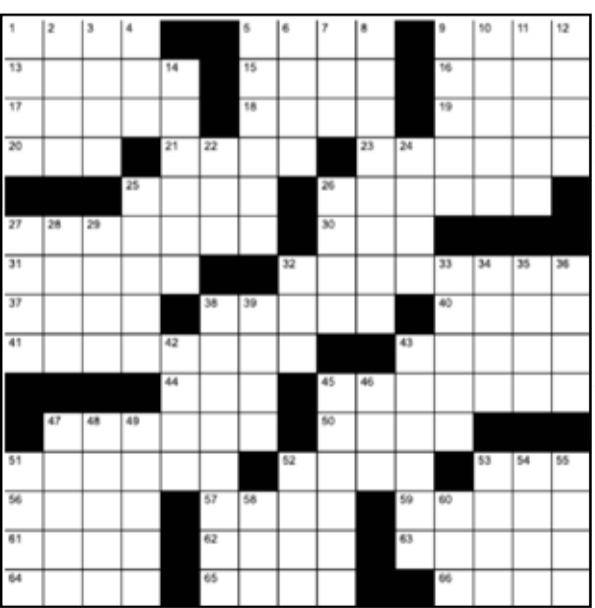
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	22	37	fine
Changchun	19	27	fine
Chengdu	23	34	rain
Chongqing	27	32	rain
Fuzhou	25	32	rain
Guangzhou	26	34	thunderstorms
Guiyang	21	24	rain
Haikou	27	37	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	22	29	cloudy
Harbin	16	24	fine
Hefei	24	34	fine
Nanjing	25	33	cloudy
Shanghai	23	30	cloudy
Taipei	25	30	overcast
Wuhan	25	33	cloudy
Hong Kong	28	31	showers
WORLD			
Moscow	18	26	thunderstorms
Frankfurt	14	24	cloudy
Paris	16	23	showers
London	12	22	cloudy
New York	22	29	sunny

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- 1492 vessel; 5- "Power Lunch" network; 9- ___ Camera; 13- Speechify; 15- Dynamic beginning; 16- Delighted; 17- Babbled; 18- "Hud" star Patricia; 19- First name in jazz; 20- 6, on a phone; 21- Tailless amphibian; 23- High regard; 25- Parched; 26- Compositions; 27- Antipartheid activist; 30- Literary monogram; 31- Toastmaster; 32- Collecting; 37- Implement; 38- Relative by marriage; 40- Final Four org.; 41- Concentrated extracts; 43- Raccoon relative; 44- Velvet add-on; 45- Small crown; 47- Penetrate; 50- Rapper born Tracy Marrow; 51- Abject fear; 52- Mex. miss; 53- Launch site; 56- China setting; 57- Rocker Clapton; 59- Psychics claim to have a sixth one; 61- Improvised bed; 62- Org. co-founded by Helen Keller; 63- A-list; 64- 1975 Wimbledon champ; 65- Wrestling surfaces; 66- Put a lid ___.

DOWN 1- "Cheers" regular; 2- Rafsanjani's home; 3- Second start?; 4- From ___ Z; 5- Alberta's home; 6- Have to have; 7- Bikini top; 8- Cabbage salad; 9- ___ Kick Out of You; 10- Narrow street; 11- Men; 12- First man; 14- Main course; 22- Black gold; 24- Flat sound; 25- Designer Simpson; 26- Humorist Bombeck; 27- Dole (out); 28- Singer Tori; 29- Sgts., e.g.; 32- Gore and Hirt; 33- Snob; 34- Volunteer's words; 35- ___ Dogg; 36- Canter or trot; 38- Frozen dessert; 39- Hawaii's state bird; 42- Sleuth Wolfe; 43- Wrinkle; 45- Performing animal show; 46- World Series mo.; 47- Mexican moola; 48- Whiskey type; 49- Wipe out; 51- And here it is!; 52- Delta deposit; 53- Nabokov novel; 54- Piedmont wine center; 55- Insect-repelling chemical; 58- Nipper's co.; 60- "Hold On Tight" band;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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Jade Garden
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55.74 m² / 600 ft² | HKD2,600,000



VA FAT (Taipa Village)
2 bed 1 bath
77.10 m² / 830 ft² | HKD3,780,000



Nam Long (Taipa)
2 bed 1 bath
59.92 m² / 645 ft² | HKD3,650,000



Jade Garden (Taipa)
4 bed 3 bath
379.04 m² / 4,080 ft² | HKD 11,880,000



Grand Oasis Residence Amber (Coloane)
Studio
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EURO 2024 | REVIEW

Italy concedes goal after 23 seconds but recovers to beat Albania

STEVE DOUGLAS, DORTMUND

ITALY 2, ALBANIA 1

BY conceding a goal after just 23 seconds, Italy made the worst possible start to its European Championship title defense.

Thankfully for the Azzurri, it soon got much better.

Italy recovered from letting in the quickest goal in the tournament's 64-year history to beat Albania 2-1 in Dortmund early yesterday [Macau time] in an atmospheric Adriatic derby that immediately threatened an upset.

Nedim Bajrami thrilled a heavily pro-Albanian crowd at Westfalenstadion by pouncing on a throw-in by Italy left back Federico Dimarco that failed to reach teammate Alessandro Bastoni, before taking a touch and smashing a rising shot inside the near post.

Within 16 minutes, the Italians were ahead as Bastoni headed in



Albania's Nedim Bajrami, back, scores his side's opening goal during a Group B match between Italy and Albania at the Euro 2024 soccer tournament in Dortmund

Lorenzo Pellegrini's cross to the back post in the 11th then Nicolo Barella struck home a swerving first-time shot from the edge of the area.

Barella was one of five survivors from the team that started for Italy in the penalty-shootout win over England in the 2021 European Championship final.

The pressure was on Italy's

new-look side under Luciano Spalletti to win its opener given the other teams in Group B are three-time champion Spain and Croatia, a World Cup semifinalist in 2022. Spain beat Croatia 3-0.

Bajrami's goal gave the Azzurri a jolt and created some history — it was much quicker than the previous fastest in the tournament's lifespan, which was 67 seconds by

Russia's Dmitri Kirichenko in 2004.

Yet they controlled the game after that, dominating possession to a backdrop of jeers and boos from a sea of Albanian red in the crowd.

"They showed there was a gulf in class by playing good football... we played the game the right way," Spalletti said.

"The scoreline doesn't reflect the difference between the two teams."

It's now just one loss in 12 matches under Spalletti, who took over last August — three months after leaving Napoli following its Italian league triumph — and was tasked with restoring national pride after Italy failed to qualify for the World Cup for a second straight time.

Italy is clearly more at home in the European Championship these days as it goes for a record-tying third title.

Making its second appearance at a European Championship, Albania — coached by former Barcelona and Arsenal defender Sylvinho — nearly grabbed a draw in stoppage time only for Rey Manaj's deft chip to deflect just wide off the back of Gianluigi Donnarumma, Italy's goalkeeper and captain.

"We need to play in lots of Euros and World Cups so we can get better," Sylvinho said. "The first 25 minutes were tough but we were up against one of the favorites to win the comp."

"We didn't play those first 25 minutes well but we stayed in the game."

Euro 2024 has gotten off to a fast start with Switzerland beating Hungary 3-1 in Cologne and that, after host Germany's opening-night 5-1 thrashing of Scotland on Friday, means there has been 16 goals so far — an average of four a game. MDT/AP

UPCOMING GAMES

	Date	Time	Home	Away	ODDS
Mon	Jun 17	21:00	Romania	Ukraine	H 4.33, D 3.55, A 2
Tue	Jun 18	0:00	Belgium	Slovakia	H 1.5, D 4.8, A 7.5
	Jun 18	03:00	Austria	France	H 6.5, D 4.75, A 1.55

ODDSCHECKER.COM

EURO 2024

German police shot a man allegedly threatening them with an ax in host city Hamburg

GERMAN police said yesterday [Macau time] they shot and wounded a man who was threatening them with an ax and a Molotov cocktail in the northern city of Hamburg, hours before it hosted a match in the European Championship soccer tournament.

Police officers opened fire after the man refused to put down the ax and a Molotov cocktail, hitting him in the leg, police spokesman Thilo Marxsen said. The man was hospitalized with injuries, Marxsen said. No one else was hurt.

The incident occurred in the St. Pauli area of the northern port city, which was thronged with fans before Sunday's Group D match between the Netherlands and Poland. Marxsen said



Police cordon off an area near the Reeperbahn in Hamburg, Germany, Sunday

that there was no initial indication that it was related to the Euro 2024 game.

German authorities have put police on high alert during the tournament, which began on Friday and runs through July 14, for fear of possible fan violence and extremist attacks.

On Friday, police fatally shot an Afghan man after he killed a compatriot and later wounded three people watching the televised game between Germany and Scotland in a town in eastern Germany. Police said that the motive for that attack was still unclear. MDT/AP



BENFICAMACAU
ACADEMY
澳門賓菲加體育學校



FOOTBALL

BASKETBALL

DAILY TRAININGS

OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

CANBERRA TAKING STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Premier Li Qiang's ongoing visit to Australia, which started on Saturday following his successful visit to New Zealand, looks set to further strengthen Beijing and the Anthony Albanese government's consensus that maintaining the healthy development of bilateral ties serves the two countries' common interests.

In 2014, the two countries established a comprehensive strategic partnership, and mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation became the general theme of bilateral relations after that until the previous Scott Morrison government, under the sway of Washington, took a confrontational approach to relations. Australian Prime Minister Albanese's successful visit to China last year helped return bilateral ties to the right track, and practical cooperation is again the focus of China-Australia relations.

The face-to-face exchanges between Li, who is making the first visit by a Chinese premier to Australia since 2017, and Australian political and business leaders and representatives from different sectors of the Australian society over issues of common concern provide a good opportunity for the two sides to deepen their mutual understanding and explore ways to tap the full potential of their economic and trade cooperation.

The fast recovering curve of Sino-Australian ties over the past two years should prompt both Beijing and Canberra to foster a more mature, stable and fruitful partnership that is resistant to outside interference. Canberra has already demonstrated that it is not willing to unreservedly follow Washington's lead having expressed critical views on the US' tariff attack on Chinese goods and export restrictions targeting Chinese technology development.

The op-ed by Albanese, "Working productively with China will benefit everyone in the region", published by The Australian three days prior to Li's visit, shows clearly Canberra's willingness to meet Beijing halfway in that direction.

Although he said that "Australia's approach has been consistent and clear: co-operate with China where we can, disagree where we must and engage in our national interest", which sounds familiar to Beijing as Washington has said a similar thing, it should be noted that the Albanese government has replaced competition and confrontation with disagreement and engagement.

That is similar to China's equally "consistent and clear" principle in handling relations with all countries, including Australia and the US, of seeking common ground while reserving differences.

The confidence the Australian leader has displayed in the article that Canberra can balance relations with Beijing and Washington, and the progress his government has made in this regard should serve as an example to others that it doesn't have to be an either-or choice as Washington proposes. There is always broad space for countries to develop ties with both China and the US.

Upholding strategic autonomy and focusing on common interests while managing differences, as Australia is doing, is the best way for countries to protect their own interests and get along with others. In the process, it is always better to work on differences by dealing with each other directly through dialogue. As Albanese observed in his article: "In a world of increasing complexity, the true measure of foreign policy strength is the ability to effectively manage differences, not manufacture confrontations. That's why as well as reminding ourselves of the benefits we have been able to secure through dialogue we must always remember the potentially devastating cost of the alternative."

Issuing threats and ultimatums, as the Australian leader indicated, is an easy road to take, but it doesn't go very far. It is better to take the road that goes the farthest, even if that does require more effort. [Abridged]

FERRARI OVERCOMES LATE DRAMA TO HANG ON FOR SECOND CONSECUTIVE 24 HOURS OF LE MANS VICTORY

THE BUZZ

Ferrari made it two in a row as it outlasted Toyota to win a weather-affected 24 Hours of Le Mans yesterday with the trio of Nicklas Nielsen, Antonio Fuoco and Miguel Molina crossing the line in the No. 50 car 14 seconds ahead of the No. 7 of Nyck de Vries, Kamui Kobayashi and Jose Maria Lopez.

The No. 51 Ferrari helmed by Alessandro Pier Guidi, James Calado and Antonio Giovinazzi rounded out the top three in the latest running of the most iconic

sports car race in the world.

Rain and fog brought out the safety car in the early hours of the morning with Ferrari jostling with Toyota and Porsche for top spot. But with dawn breaking, the racing resumed under a green flag with several teams in contention.

With less than six hours remaining the No. 50 Ferrari made its move just before more rain fell with Fuoco moving up the grid.



AP PHOTO



ISRAEL'S ARMY PAUSES DAYTIME FIGHTING ALONG A ROUTE IN SOUTHERN GAZA TO HELP RAMP UP AID

JOSEF FEDERMAN, WAFAA SHURFA & JULIA FRANKEL, JERUSALEM

ISRAEL'S military announced yesterday that it would pause fighting throughout daytime hours along a route in southern Gaza to free up a backlog of humanitarian aid deliveries destined for desperate Palestinians enduring a humanitarian crisis sparked by the war, now in its ninth month.

The "tactical pause" announced by the military, which applies to about 12 kilometers (7.4 miles) of road in the Rafah area, falls far short of a complete cease-fire in the beleaguered territory that has been sought by the international community, including Israel's top ally, the United States. If it holds, the limited halt in fighting could help address some of the overwhelming needs of Palestinians that have surged even more in recent weeks with Israel's incursion into Rafah.

The army said the pause would begin at 8 a.m. (0500 GMT) and remain in effect until 7 p.m. (1600 GMT). It said the pauses would take place every day until further notice.

The pause is aimed at allowing aid trucks to reach the nearby Israel-control-

led Kerem Shalom crossing, the main entry point for incoming aid, and travel safely to the Salah a-Din highway, a main north-south road, the military said. The crossing has suffered from a bottleneck since Israeli ground troops moved into Rafah in early May.

COGAT, the Israeli military body that oversees aid distribution in Gaza, said the route would increase the flow of aid to other parts of Gaza, including Khan Younis, Muwasi and central Gaza. Hard-hit northern Gaza, which was an early target in the war, is being served by goods entering from a crossing in the north.

The military said the pause came after discussions with the United Nations and international aid agencies.

Aid agencies, including the U.N., did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The pause along the southern route comes as Israel and Hamas are weighing the latest proposal for a cease-fire, a plan that was detailed by President Joe Biden in the administration's most concentrated diplomatic push for a halt to the fighting and the release of hostages taken by the militant group. While Biden described the proposal as an Israeli one, Israel

has not fully embraced it and Hamas has demanded changes that appear unacceptable to Israel.

Israel's eight-month military offensive against the Hamas militant group, sparked by the group's Oct. 7 attack, has plunged Gaza into a humanitarian crisis, with the U.N. reporting widespread hunger and hundreds of thousands of people on the brink of famine. The international community has urged Israel to do more to ease the crunch and has said the ongoing fighting, including in Rafah, has complicated aid deliveries throughout the war.

From May 6 until June 6, the U.N. received an average of 68 trucks of aid a day, according to figures from the U.N. humanitarian office, known as OCHA. That was down from 168 a day in April and far below the 500 trucks a day that aid groups say are needed.

The flow of aid in southern Gaza declined just as the humanitarian need grew. More than 1 million Palestinians, many of whom had already been displaced, fled Rafah after the invasion, crowding into other parts of southern and central Gaza. Most now languish in ramshackle tent camps, using trenches as latrines, with open sewage in the streets. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



USA Donald Trump on Saturday night suggested President Joe Biden "should have to take a cognitive test" only to confuse who administered the test to him in the next sentence. The former president and presumptive Republican nominee referred to Texas Republican Rep. Ronny Jackson, who was the White House physician for part of his presidency, as "Ronny Johnson." The moment came as Trump was questioning Biden's mental acuity.

AP PHOTO



UK Britain put on a display of birthday pageantry Saturday for King Charles III, a military parade that marked the Princess of Wales' first appearance at a public event since her cancer diagnosis early this year. The annual event was also a show of stability by the monarchy after a testing few months in which both the king and Kate, wife of heir to the throne Prince William, have been sidelined by cancer treatment.

AP PHOTO

Brazil Thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of Sao Paulo on Saturday as protests sweep across Brazil in opposition to a bill that would further criminalize abortions. If passed, the law would equate the termination of a pregnancy after 22 weeks with homicide. The bill, proposed by conservative lawmakers and heading for a vote in the lower house, would also apply in cases of rape. Critics say those who seek an abortion so late are mostly child rape victims, as their pregnancies tend to be detected later.

AP PHOTO



Israel-Hamas An explosion in southern Gaza killed eight Israeli soldiers, the military said Saturday, making it the deadliest attack on Israeli forces in months. The attack, coming more than eight months into a grinding war that shows few signs of ending soon, was likely to fuel new calls for a cease-fire by Israeli protesters. It also came as the government confronts widespread anger over exemptions from military service for young ultra-Orthodox men.