



**THE 6TH EDITION OF THE 'VOCATIONAL SKILLS' OF INTEGRATED RESORTS COMPETITION IS SET TO TAKE PLACE ON JUNE 27 AT THE GRAND LISBOA PALACE RESORT**

P4

**PROPERTY: GROUP URGES FURTHER CUT TO 15% DOWN PAYMENT REQUIREMENT**

P3

**FRESH MALAYSIAN DURIANS WILL MAKE THEIR WAY TO CHINA AS TRADE DEALS SIGNED DURING LI'S VISIT**

P6



AP PHOTO



**Thailand** Former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra yesterday was indicted for defaming the monarchy and granted bail. Thaksin, who returned from self-imposed exile last year, continues to influence Thai politics despite his ousting in a 2006 coup. The indictment signals ongoing political tensions and scrutiny of the Pheu Thai government amid several legal challenges.

AP PHOTO



**India** A U.S. congressional delegation met with the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala, India, sparking anger from China. The delegation, led by Rep. Michael McCaul and including Nancy Pelosi, discussed the Resolve Tibet Act, aimed at encouraging dialogue between the Dalai Lama and China. Beijing views the Dalai Lama as a dangerous separatist. See opinion on p12

AP PHOTO



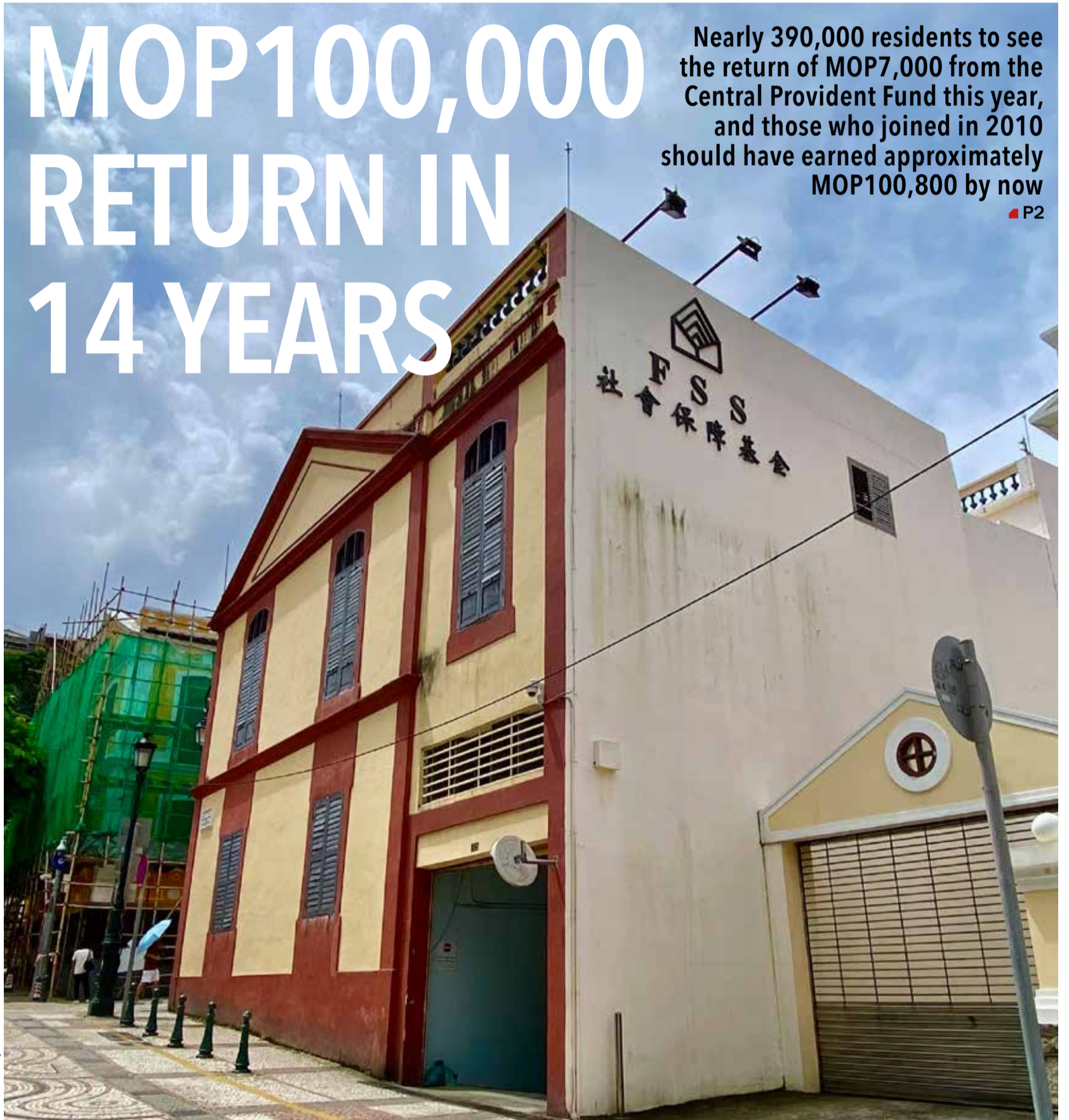
**Yemen** A bulk carrier, the Tutor, yesterday [Macau time] sank in the Red Sea days after being attacked by Yemen's Houthi rebels, killing one mariner. The incident marks an escalation in the rebels' campaign targeting shipping. The U.S. Navy has been trying to halt these attacks amid the Israel-Hamas war, but the Houthis continue their assaults.

More on backpage

# MOP100,000 RETURN IN 14 YEARS

Nearly 390,000 residents to see the return of MOP7,000 from the Central Provident Fund this year, and those who joined in 2010 should have earned approximately MOP100,800 by now

P2



RENATO MARQUES



## ACPA STRIKES AGAIN?

IC admits pre-screening of films 'for age classification,' not censorship

P4



### HENGQIN RECRUITS 90 MACAU RESIDENTS FOR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Hengqin is now accepting applications from Macau permanent residents for the 90 positions available on its Executive Committee. The registration period will remain open until June 27. The recruitment process will encompass various fields such as legal affairs, industrial development, supervision and management, construction engineering, and people's livelihood services. A total of 90 individuals will be selected for these positions. Successful candidates can expect an annual income of up to RMB520,000, along with benefits, such as 22 days of paid annual leave, social insurance and corporate annuity.

### OVER 900 LOCAL RESIDENTS WORK IN HENGQIN

Data from Hengqin's tax bureau shows that more than 900 Macau residents work in the region and enjoy the preferential personal income tax policies that are available to them. Data from the region's 2023 personal income tax final settlement shows a year-on-year increase of approximately 80%. In 2024, the tax revenue generated by Macau-funded enterprises engaged in technological research and development and high-end manufacturing in the Cooperation Zone will account for 76% of the total tax revenue generated by Macau-funded enterprises.

### THREE INDIVIDUALS INVESTIGATED FOR ILLEGAL CURRENCY EXCHANGE

One of the individuals allegedly received 346 RMB transfers from the mainland through "WeChat" and "Alipay" over a span of five months, commencing from November of last year. Subsequently, this individual promptly provided the corresponding amount in Hong Kong dollars to customers in Macau, totaling MOP3.81 million. These actions are suspected to be in violation of the established financial regulations. The Hong Kong Monetary Authority has issued a public notice in the SAR Gazette, mandating the three individuals to present written defenses within a specified timeframe.

### SOCIAL SECURITY

# ALMOST 390,000 RESIDENTS TO SEE RETURN OF MOP7,000 FROM THE PROVIDENT FUND

RENATO MARQUES

In late September, some 389,346 residents will see the return of the injection of funds from the government in their individual accounts, the vice president of the Social Security Fund's (FSS) administrative committee, Chan Pou Wan said yesterday.

Chan was speaking at a press conference organized by the FSS to introduce the return of the MOP7,000 of special allocation from the government surplus to the Non-Mandatory Central Provident Fund.

Such an injection of funds has been stopped since 2020 due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the local economy which ultimately resulted in a deficit budget for three years with the government having to resort to the Financial Reserves to balance the accounts.

As in the past, the beneficiaries of the fund injection need to be Permanent Residents of Macau over 22 years of age.

Only those over 65 years old or special cases of people below 65 but are recipients of the Social Welfare Bureau pensions can withdraw these funds. As for most residents, the funds will be kept in an individual account from which the FSS makes annual applications and investments to earn interest.

According to Chan, since the program started in 2010, the government has injected a total of MOP31.8 billion in total with the maximum amount injected into each individual account being MOP84,000. The same official said that according to the calculations of interests earned and added to the basic value, those who started to benefit from the program should have earned approximately MOP100,814.

Additionally, those residents who are eligible to have an account for the first time this year total 9,178. In this case and since it is the first time that the government injects funds, these over 9,000 residents will get MOP10,000 instead of the MOP7,000.

In total the government is investing some MOP2.817 billion

RENATO MARQUES



Vice president of the FSS's administrative committee, Chan Pou Wan

in this program this year.

Chan also noted that in line with the government's bid to promote electronic services, the FSS has also launched several electronic services this year, including the possibility of the beneficiaries of the funds inquiring about the fund allocation list, inquiries about registration for automatic withdrawal and the payment eligibility, filing of an objection statement and application for fund withdrawal, all provided via the Macao One Account.

The same official also informed that among the almost 390,000 beneficiaries, 93,314 are senior citizens age 65 and above, from which the FSS estimates that approximately 71,591 are eligible for automatic withdrawal and payment, that is, will receive and be able to use immediately the funds.

The funds will be automatically transferred on September 25, to the bank account where they are currently receiving old-age or disability pension. Other eligible persons who are not eligible for automatic payment must go through the fund withdrawal procedures.

The Special Allocation from Budget Surplus for the Non-Mandatory Central Provident Fund System is a policy that embodies a combination of the government's sharing of economic

results with residents and the retirement security of residents.

The purpose of this initiative is to strengthen the retirement security of local residents and to build the foundation for the Central Provident Fund System.

### 183,181 PEOPLE EXCLUDED FROM THE BENEFICIARY LIST

At the same press conference, the FSS also noted some 183,181 people were not included in this year's list due to a series of factors that might be related to the time of permanence in Macau (minimum 183 days) or other aspects.

Today, via SMS the FSS will notify all those who have been included in the list of beneficiaries from 2024 with others being able to appeal the decision of exclusion based on a series of valid justifications.

Among them, those who attended tertiary education level courses outside Macau, those who attained age 65 and habitually resided in the mainland, and those who worked outside Macau to bear the main living expenses of relatives in Macau can file an objection statement via the Macao One Account.

Questioned on the topic by the media, Chan noted that although the investments made by the government from individual accounts have had negative results in 2022 due to the global

economic crisis, in 2023 such applications have already recorded a revenue of MOP7.4 billion. The same official noted also that, so far, the revenue from the first months of this year is about MOP2.7 billion. In total, the fund has an accumulated sum of MOP94.4 billion.

## MANDATORY SYSTEM WILL HAVE TO WAIT

Questioned on the sidelines of the press conference, the vice president of the Social Security Fund's (FSS) administrative committee, Chan Pou Wan said that the Covid-19 pandemic has caused "some delays" in what concerns the idea of turning the Non-Mandatory Central Provident Fund into a Mandatory one, which would include all companies operating in Macau. Chan said that due to the effects of the pandemic on the economy namely on the smaller enterprises, it is not yet possible to enforce the mandatory system, adding that the FSS continues to issue annual reports on the matter as well as conducting studies with the local universities to obtain scientific evidence of when this could be a reality.

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## PROPERTY

# Group urges further cut to 15% down payment requirement

STAFF REPORTER

A Macau property group is calling on the government to reduce the general down payment requirement for local homebuyers to 15%, saying recent signs point to stabilization in the city's cooling real estate market.

The Macau General Association of Real Estate believes lowering financing barriers could further stimulate activity.

"The current property market in Macau is characterized by low risk and abundant options for buyers," president Chong Sio Kin told media recently. He said property owners are becoming financially stronger as inventory shifts between them. This can result to reducing systemic financial risks.

"Properties are shifting from 'weaker owners' to 'stronger owners', leading to a reduction in systemic financial risks," he



pointed out.

Recent data shows some easing of market pressures. The price index for residential property dipped 2% from February to April after peaking at 265.9 in early 2019 before the pandemic. It now stands at 222, according to government figures.

The association argues Macau should follow steps taken recently by large mainland cities. Shanghai lowered its stan-

dard down payment for first-time buyers to 20% from 30%. Guangzhou set the minimum at 15% while removing an interest rate floor. Shenzhen also dropped the minimum to 20% and established a 3.5% interest rate floor.

Currently, Macau maintains a 70% maximum loan-to-value ratio instituted at the start of 2024. This year saw the elimination of stamp duties on multiple

property purchases and non-local buyers, measures aimed at propping up home prices.

Chong said further reductions in financing barriers, such as lowering the general down payment to 15%, could inject more momentum into Macau's property sector by increasing affordable options. The association stated this could stimulate the local real estate market.

## 750 NEW HZMB VEHICLE PERMITS AWARDED

The Transport Bureau (DSAT) has allocated 750 new three-year quotas for private Macau vehicles to travel between Macau and Hong Kong via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HZMB). The quotas, including 650 private individual and 100 company vehicles, were distributed based on the 2024 allocation list, which was determined by lucky draw. Selected applicants have until Sept. 25 to complete additional forms and provide necessary documents. Individuals are also required to sign an agreement form at the DSAT headquarters and make a payment of MOP1,000 by Oct. 9, 2024.

## ARUZE GAMING GLOBAL GRANTED LICENSE TO OPERATE

Aruze Gaming Global, a newly formed slot machine manufacturer, has been granted gaming licenses to operate in six jurisdictions, including the Philippines and Macau. The company has now secured over 160 gaming licenses worldwide, up from just 76 in August 2023. Aruze's Global COO, Kelcey Allison, stated that the timing of these new licenses "could not be better" as the company has recently released several new game titles performing at two to three times the house average. This will allow Aruze to provide "amazing new content" for its existing and newly accessible markets.

AD



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FILMS

## IC: ALL PUBLIC SCREENINGS REVIEWED FOR AGE RATING

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) said last night in response to an inquiry from the Macau DailyTimes that, "all public screenings, performances, and public entertainment must go through the process of age classification by the Assessment Committee of the Performing Arts (ACPA)."

The response came after a source familiar with the event last week told the Times that the movies to be screened at the "6th

Portuguese Cinema Showcase in Macau" had been subjected to a review which had resulted in the dropping of "one or more films."

The allegations have not been confirmed nor dismissed by the organizers or the IC that, when questioned about the matter, only responded that the reviewing of films is a common procedure that applies not only to movies but to all kinds of cultural and artistic performances and screening before these are shown to the public.

To the question of whether

any of the films proposed had been rejected or replaced, the IC said only that "screening arrangements are determined by the organizers."

The Times also reached out to the organizing entity, Fundação Oriente (Orient Foundation), which chose not to make any comments on the matter.

The activity of the ACPA was at stake during this year's Arts Festival drawing criticism namely from Doci Papiaçã drama troupe.



WEATHER

## SMG ISSUES FIRST YELLOW HOT WEATHER WARNING THIS SUMMER

**T**HE Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) issued a yellow hot weather warning yesterday morning.

According to weather forecasters, Macau is expected to experience very hot conditions over the next few days as a southerly airflow moves through the region. Temperatures may reach as high as 33 degrees Celsius in some areas.

As of 11:00 a.m. yesterday, the temperature had already exceeded 32 degrees Celsius in parts of the Macau peninsula and Coloane, with the highest reading being 32.8 degrees Celsius recorded at the Mount Fortress weather station.

Weather forecasters

say Macau will continue to feel the heat today as the thermometer ranges between 28 and 32 degrees Celsius.

Temperatures may even climb higher by one or two degrees in urban areas.

The Education and Youth Development Affairs Bureau is calling on schools, educational institutions, and youth organizations to avoid organizing outdoor activities under the scorching sun.

In a statement, the education authority advised schools to replace outdoor activities with indoor ones and to remain vigilant if they have already scheduled outdoor activities. **HT**

# Macau to host sixth edition of vocational skills competition among gaming ops

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE 6th edition of the Macao Integrated Tourism and Leisure Enterprises Vocational Skills Competition 2024 is set to take place on June 27 at the Grand Lisboa Palace Resort, highlighting the city's commitment to developing a skilled workforce in its key economic sectors.

Organized by the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) and the Macau Federation of Workers' Associations (FAOM), the competition aims to inspire employee innovation, increase skills, and promote a culture of respect for work and appreciation of qualified staff.

"Qualified staff are a major driving force behind industrial development," said an organizer from FAOM in the press conference yesterday.



"As Macau implements its '1 + 4' strategy for economic diversification, the training of high-quality, professional employees is particularly important to support the growth of the tourism and leisure industries."

The competition will feature three main events: the "Ga-

ming Professional Skills Competition," the "Hotel Services Professional Skills Competition," and the "World Cuisine City Professional Skills Competition." These events will allow participants to showcase their expertise in areas such as casino operations, hotel housekeeping and culinary arts.

New additions to this year's competition include an assessment of "occupational health and safety" in the hotel services event, as well as the introduction of novel maintenance techniques. The world cuisine competition will also feature a focus on "the spirit of craftsmanship" in the creation of Chinese-Cantonese and dim sum dishes.

The competition has garnered the support of major industry players, including Galaxy Entertainment Group, MGM, Melco Resorts & Entertainment, Sands China, Wynn Macau, and SJM Resorts, who will send teams to participate and contribute to the preparatory work.

This professional skills competition "aims to fully demonstrate the level of professional aptitude of workers,

raise the quality of services, and promote exchange and development within the sector," according to the FAOM representative.

As the representative from the Hong Kong-Taiwan Association of Tourism Organization stated, "Human resources are the driving force of our industrial development."

For many years, the Hong Kong-Taiwan Association of Tourism Organization has been paying close attention to the performance of the competition and has taken the initiative to capitalise on its economic advantages to start various types and levels of business activities, supporting employees to improve their professional qualities and expertise."

The jury for the competition is composed of experienced industry professionals and trainers from Macau, Hong Kong and the mainland, as well as representatives from local universities and the Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Center.



EDUCATION

# Local students lag significantly behind top scorers in Singapore on creative thinking

LYNZY VALLES

**M**ACAU students lagged significantly behind the leading students in Singapore in a worldwide study on creative thinking.

In its first assessment of creative thinking, the Programme for International Student Assessment (Pisa) found that 15-year-old students in Macau fell below the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average.

In the report, most regions and economies that scored above the OECD average in creative thinking outperformed the OECD average in mathematics, reading and science.

Only Portugal performed above the OECD average in creative thinking (34 points) but not significantly different from the average in the three PISA core domains.

"The Czech Republic, Hong Kong (China), Macau (China), and Taipei performed at or be-

RENATO MARQUES



low the OECD average in creative thinking despite scoring above the OECD average in mathematics, reading, and science," the report stated.

In mathematics, Singapore scored significantly higher than all other regions in mathematics (575 points) and, along with Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Macau, and

Taiwan, outperformed all other economies in mathematics.

Another 17 economies also performed above the OECD average (472 points), ranging from Estonia (510 points) to New Zealand (479 points).

An average of 69% of students are at least basically proficient in mathematics in OECD regions.

This means they are beginning to demonstrate the ability and initiative to use mathematics in simple real-life situations, the report stated.

In reading and science, Singapore also scored significantly higher than all other regions in reading (543 points) and science (561 points).

Behind Singapore, Ireland performed as well as Estonia, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, while another 14 education systems performed above the OECD average in reading (476 points), ranging from Macau (510 points) to Italy (482 points).

In science, the highest-performing education systems were Singapore, Japan, Macau, Taiwan, Korea, Estonia, Hong Kong and Canada.

Four regions and economies are bucking this trend of long-term decline: Colombia, Macau, Peru and Qatar.

"Their results have improved on average in all three subjects over the full period they have participated in PISA. Four other countries (Israel, Moldova, Singapore and Türkiye) have improved in two out of three subjects," the report stated.

In terms of equity in education systems, Macau is considered highly equitable by PISA's standards, along with Canada, Denmark, Finland, Hong Kong and Japan, among other regions.

## Mario Ho leads China's bid for first US-listed esports company

NADIA SHAW

**M**ARIO Ho Yau-Kwan, the youngest son of the late Macau casino tycoon, Stanley Ho Hung-sun, is spearheading NIP Group's initial public offering (IPO) in the United States.

Ninjas in Pyjamas (NASDAQ:NIP), a Cayman Islands-based holding company, filed for an IPO on the Nasdaq Stock Exchange on June 12. The company aims to become the first US-listed Chinese company in the esports industry.

Ho, co-founder, chairman and co-chief executive, holds a 14.2% stake in NIP alongside his co-chief executive, Hicham Chahine.

NIP operates through two wholly owned subsidiaries: Ninjas in Pyjamas Gaming in Sweden, which is engaged in esports teams; and Wuhan Xing Jing Wei Wu Culture & Sports Development Co, which is involved in esports



teams, talent management and event production.

According to the filing yesterday, the company plans to issue no more than 26.9 million common shares on the Nasdaq. Investments are intended for developing working capital, expanding esports teams, marketing and IP licensing.

Despite recording USD83.7 million (MOP671.8 million) in

revenue last year, NIP remains a loss-making enterprise. Net losses widened to \$13.3 million (MOP106.7 million) in 2023 from \$6.3 million (MOP50.6 million) the prior year, due to substantial investments to grow the business.

A Frost & Sullivan report foresees global esports reaching \$102.4 billion (MOP821.89 billion) by 2027, up from \$57.9 billion (MOP464.72 billion) in

2022.

Authorities in Shanghai, Shenzhen and Hangzhou have also pledged funding and resources to promote the industry – in line with growing the popularity and commercial opportunities of esports globally.

NIP's planned IPO comes as local governments in China are ramping up support for esports as part of efforts to develop the digital economy.

## STUDIO CITY'S NEW CINEMA TO FEATURE ADVANCED DOLBY TECHNOLOGY

**M**ELCO Resorts & Entertainment has announced the cinema at its Studio City property in Macau, the first Dolby cinema in Macau and Hong Kong, will open June 26.

The Studio City Cinema is a part of the \$1.2 billion Phase 2 development of Studio City, which also features two luxury hotel towers, a 10,000-square-meter water park, and 1,100 square meters of MICE space.

Melco says the 770-seat cineplex will comprise nine houses, including five VIP suites and a screening house with paired seating.

"The centerpiece is the Dolby Cinema, which combines the immersive sound of Dolby Atmos and the remarkable picture of Dolby Vision in a special theater designed by Dolby to deliver the most immersive experience possible," said the operator in a press release. The other houses are

equipped with Reallaser 4K projection, with three also supporting Dolby Atmos sound.

"The new movie theatre destination will complement Studio City's collection of incredibly diverse and cosmopolitan contemporary leisure and lifestyle experiences," said Kevin Benning, senior vice-president and property general manager of Studio City.

He added, "Melco will continue to contribute towards the city's economic diversification initiatives and support the government in promoting Macau as the world center of tourism and leisure through the delivery of innovative and world-class entertainment and hospitality experiences."

The announcement establishes June 26 as the official opening date of Studio City Cinema following Melco Resorts' \$1.2 billion Phase 2 expansion.



DIPLOMACY

# Fresh Malaysian durians make their way to China as trade deals signed during Li's visit

EILEEN NG, KUALA LUMPUR

**F**RESH Malaysian durians will soon make their way to China as the two countries signed a slew of trade and economic deals yesterday during a visit by Premier Li Qiang to celebrate a half-century of diplomatic relations.

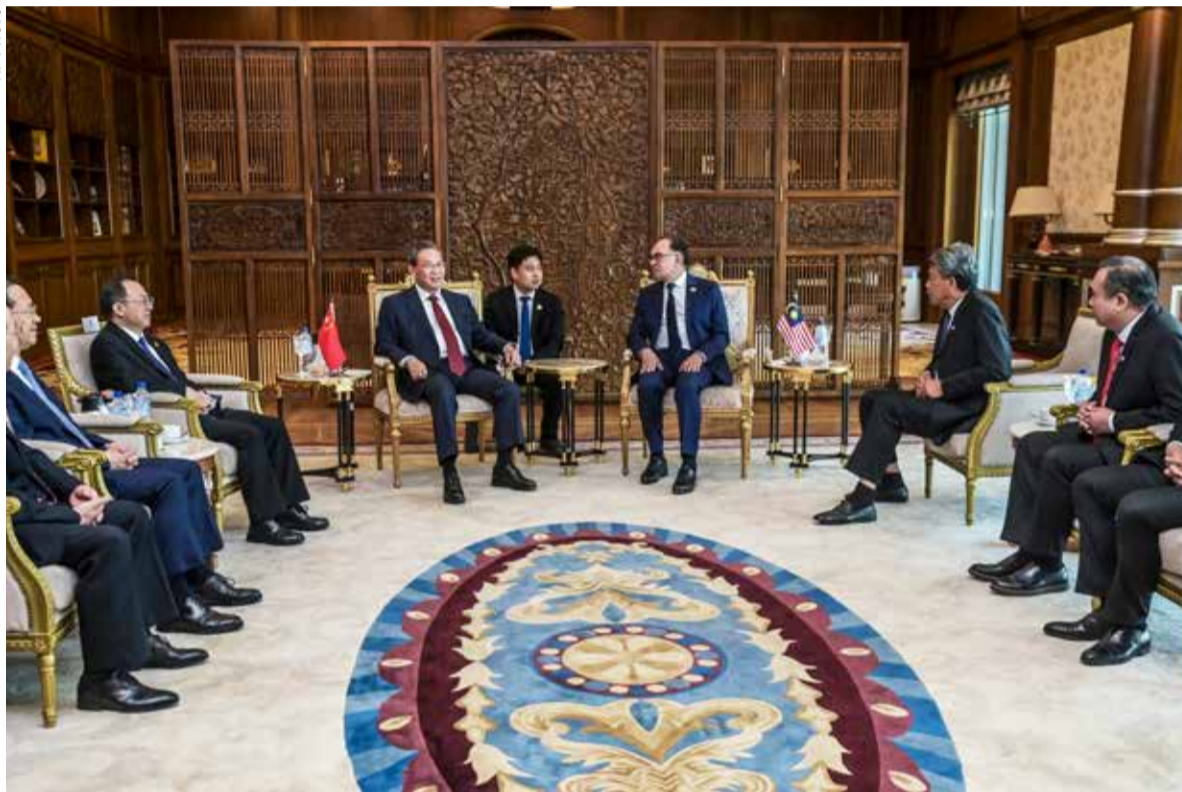
Li held private talks with Malaysia Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in the government administrative capital of Putrajaya before they met with their delegations. The two leaders witnessed the signing of various pacts, including a new five-year deal for economic and trade cooperation that officials said would bolster links between industries in priority sectors like high-level manufacturing and the digital economy.

They also inked a protocol on measures that will allow Malaysia to export to China fresh durian, the spiky tropical fruit with a strong odour and known for its creamy pulp, Anwar's office said.

Exporting fresh durians to China will open a new market for Malaysia, which began selling durian pulp and paste to China in 2011 and frozen durian whole fruits in 2018. Malaysia's frozen durian export value to China has surged from 170 million ringgit (\$36 million) in 2018 to nearly 1.2 billion ringgit (\$255 million) last year, it said.

Li, the first Chinese premier to visit Malaysia since 2015, flew in for a three-day visit late Tuesday from Australia. Li, who was given a red carpet welcome, said upon his arrival that the two nations' 50-year anniversary

AP PHOTO



Premier Li Qiang meets with Malaysia Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in Putrajaya yesterday

sary was a new starting point to deepen links and increase exchanges.

"China is ready to work with Malaysia," Li said in a statement published by the national Bernama news agency.

Li, China's No. 2 leader after President Xi Jinping, last week also became the first Chinese premier to visit New Zealand and then Australia in seven years.

**DIPLOMATIC WATERS**

While trade dominated the talks, the prickly issue of territorial claims in the South China Sea was also raised.

The two leaders agreed China and claimant countries in Southeast Asia should tackle the maritime dispute "independently and properly" through dialogue and cooperation, and via bilateral settlement, China's Xinhua news agency reported.

No details were given but the statement came amid concerns that the sea row could escalate and put the U.S. and China in a larger conflict following a fresh confrontation this week between Manila and Beijing.

The U.S. renewed a warning Tuesday that it is obligated to defend treaty ally Philippines, after Chinese forces seized two Philippine boats delivering food and supplies to a military outpost in a disputed shoal and injured several Filipino navy personnel.

Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Taiwan all dispute Beijing's claims to almost the entire South China

Sea. Malaysia's government prefers the diplomatic channel and rarely criticizes Beijing, even though Chinese coast guard ships have sailed near Malaysia's waters. This is partly to protect economic ties between the trade partners.

**ASIA AND BEYOND**

Other agreements signed aim to promote investment in the digital economy and green development, combat transnational crime, and boost housing and urban development, higher education, people-to-people exchanges in science and technology, tourism and cultural cooperation, Anwar's office said.

Trade with China — Malaysia's No. 1 trading partner since

2009 — made up 17% of Malaysia's global trade, valued at \$98.8 billion last year, Trade Minister Zafrul Aziz was quoted as saying by Bernama last week.

Anwar, who visited China twice last year, has sought to move closer to Beijing even while engaging the U.S. as a key ally. While speaking at a forum in Tokyo in May, Anwar stressed that Beijing is too close, too important and too strategic to ignore.

Ahead of Li's visit, Anwar told Chinese media that Malaysia planned to join the BRICS bloc of developing economies but didn't give details. The plan was confirmed by Malaysian officials on Monday.

The bloc's core members are Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, who seek a fairer world order currently dominated by Western nations. The bloc expanded with Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates invited to become members this year. Some 40 countries have also expressed interest.

"Joining BRICS doesn't mean Malaysia will lose its strategic ambiguity between Beijing and Washington. It merely means an additional platform to give it a bigger voice as a middle power," said James Chin, professor of Asian studies at Australia's University of Tasmania.

Li also had an audience with King Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar. He and Anwar later broke ground for a terminal station for the East Coast Rail Link, which connects Malaysia's west coast to eastern rural states and is a key part of China's Belt and Road infrastructure initiative.

Li said at the ceremony that the railway was the largest single transportation infrastructure project undertaken by a Chinese company overseas. Once it is completed, he said China is willing to work with Malaysia to develop projects along the railway line to drive more commerce, logistics and tourism. Li said the rail line also could potentially be linked to Thailand, and subsequently to southern China. **MDT/AP**

DIRE STRAIT

# US approves new \$360 million arms sale to Taiwan

**T**HE Biden administration yesterday [Macau time] approved a new \$360 million weapons sale to Taiwan, sending the island hundreds of armed drones, missile equipment and related support material, the State Department said in a statement that is sure to draw condemnation from

China. The announcement was not unexpected but it comes at a time of high tension between Washington and Beijing.

The sale includes 291 Altius-600M systems, which are unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, with warheads. It also includes

720 Switchblade drones known as "extended-range loitering munitions," the State Department said.

It said the sale "serves U.S. national, economic, and security interests by supporting the recipient's continuing efforts to modernize its armed forces and to maintain a credible

defensive capability." It will "help improve the security of the recipient and assist in maintaining political stability, military balance, and economic progress in the region," the department said.

Taiwanese leader Lai Ching-te thanked the U.S. for approving the latest

arms sale to Taiwan during a press conference yesterday in Taipei. He said such authorizations help to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

"In the future, we will continue to strengthen Taiwan's national defense strength, whether through ... military purchases or our

own efforts," he said.

The U.S. statement claimed that the latest weapons transfer would not affect the military balance in the region. The announcement was not unusual, although the U.S. and China have in recent months sought to smooth tense relations. **MDT/AP**



JAPAN

# Cheap yen, strong demand in US, Asian markets helps exports surge

YURI KAGEYAMA, TOKYO

**J**APAN'S exports surged 13.5% in May, faster than expected growth helped by a weak yen and strong demand in the U.S. and Asia.

Finance Ministry data reported yesterday showed that the trade deficit totaled 1.22 trillion yen (\$7.7 billion), down nearly 12% from 1.38 trillion yen a year earlier. Imports grew 9.5%, year-on-year, to nearly 9.5 trillion yen (\$60 billion).

Exports totaled 8.3 trillion yen (\$53 billion) and grew at the fastest since November 2022. Shipments to the United States were up nearly 24% and those to the rest of Asia rose more than 13%, led by double-digit growth in shipments of vehicles, electronics and machinery.

Trade with Europe mostly fell.

The value of Japan's imports tends to grow when the Japanese yen loses value against the U.S. dollar and other major currencies. The dollar is trading at nearly 158 yen, up from 140-yen levels a year ago.

Japan is a resource-poor nation that imports almost all its oil, and higher imports of oil, gas and other fuels are a

MDT/BLOOMBER ARCHIVE



big factor behind the deficit in May, for the second month in a row. Fruit imports also gained in May.

But a large factor behind the increases in both exports

and imports was rising prices overall, which inflated their value compared with a year earlier, Marcel Thieliand of Capital Economics said in a report.

That can be seen in the muted impact of trade on the economy, which contracted at a 1.8% pace in the first quarter of the year.

In fact, "most of the increa-

se in trade values over the past year reflects rising prices due to the sharp weakening of the yen rather than any marked improvement in volumes," it said.

Still, trade with China, Japan's second-largest single export market after the United States, has been reviving as its economy slowly recovers from the shocks of a meltdown in its property sector and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Shipments of machinery and manufacturing components as well as vehicles showed strong growth.

Also, the U.S. economy has remained resilient even as the Federal Reserve has kept interest rates at record levels to try to tame stubbornly high inflation.

The yen's weakness is the cause for some angst among Japanese policy makers. The Bank of Japan's meeting minutes released Wednesday showed its decision makers debating about the weak yen's impact on inflation, which has remained relatively low compared with other major economies.

The larger fear for Japan is deflation, when prices keep falling. That's a sign of a weakening economy, and the central bank has been trying to set off a gradual rise in prices.

"But trade data today also highlighted that it is having a positive impact on exports," Yeap Jun Rong, market analyst at IG, said in a commentary.

MDT/AP

AUSTRALIA

# Opposition puts nation's first nuclear power plants in electoral platform

**A**USTRALIA'S main opposition party yesterday announced plans to build Australia's first nuclear power plants as early as 2035, arguing the government's policies for decarbonizing the economy with renewable energy sources including solar, wind turbines and green hydrogen would not work.

The policy announcement ensures the major parties will be divided on how Australia curbs its greenhouse gas emissions at elections due within a year. The parties haven't gone to an election with the same carbon reduction policies since 2007.

"I'm very happy for the election to be a referendum

AP PHOTO



Opposition Leader Peter Dutton unveils details of proposed nuclear energy plan during a press conference at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Offices in Sydney, yesterday

on energy, on nuclear, on power prices, on lights going out, on who has a sustainable pathway for our country

going forward," opposition leader Peter Dutton told reporters.

Seven government-ow-

ned reactors would be built on the sites of aging coal-fired electricity plants in five of Australia's six states, Dut-

ton said. The first two would be built from 2035-to-2037 and the last in the 2040s. The estimated costs would be announced at a later date, he said.

The current center-left government has rejected nuclear power generation in Australia as too expensive. Too many coal-fired generators would have been decommissioned before nuclear power could fill the gap.

Climate Change and Energy Minister Chris Bowen accused the conservative opposition Liberal Party of serving Australia's influential coal and gas industry lobbies.

"It's not really an announcement. We know that Mr. Dutton wants to slow down the rollout of renewables and he wants to introduce the most expensive form of energy that's slow to build," Bowen told reporters.

"But today, we've seen no costs, we've seen no gigawa-

ts, we've seen no detail. This is a joke. It's a serious joke because it threatens our transition" from fossil fuels, Bowen added.

Bowen's Labor Party came to power in the 2022 elections promising deeper cuts to Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 than the previous coalition government had committed to.

The previous Liberal Party-led government promised to reduce emissions by between 26% and 28% below 2005 levels by the end of the decade.

Labor promised a 43% reduction and the Parliament enshrined that target in law, creating difficulties for any future government that wanted to reduce it and offering certainty for investors.

Dutton has ruled out announcing a new 2030 target before the next election. But the major parties have agreed on a net-zero emissions target by 2050. MDT/AP



AP PHOTO



Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un during a signing ceremony of the new partnership in Pyongyang yesterday

RUSSIA-N.KOREA

# Putin, Kim sign the strongest partnership deal since Cold War

KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

**R**USSIAN President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un signed a new partnership that includes a vow of mutual aid if either country is attacked, during a yesterday summit that came as both face escalating standoffs with the West.

The deal, which the leaders said covered areas including security, trade, investment, and cultural and humanitarian ties, could mark the strongest connection between Moscow and Pyongyang since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. Both leaders described it as a major upgrade of their ties.

The two met as Putin visited North Korea for the first time in 24 years. The summit came as the U.S. and its allies express growing concerns over an arms arrangement in which the country provides Moscow with badly needed munitions for its war in Ukraine in exchange for economic assistance and technology transfers that could enhance the threat posed by Kim's nuclear weapons and missile program.

Kim said that the deal was the "strongest ever treaty" between the two nations, putting the relationship at the level of an alliance, and vowed full support for Russia's war in Ukraine. Putin said that it

was a "breakthrough document" reflecting shared desire to move relations to a higher level.

The North Korean leader gave Putin a lavish welcome, meeting him at the airport Tuesday night, where the two shook hands, hugged twice and then rode together in a limousine in a huge motorcade that rolled through the capital's brightly illuminated streets, where buildings were decorated with giant Russian flags and portraits of Putin.

After spending the rest of the night at a state guest house, Putin attended a welcoming ceremony at the city's main square, filled with what appeared to be tens of thousands of spectators, including children holding balloons and people wearing coordinated t-shirts in the red, white and blue of the Russian and North Korean flags. Huge crowds lined up on the streets to greet Putin's motorcade, chanting "Welcome Putin" and waving flowers and North Korean and Russian flags.

Putin and Kim saluted an honor guard and walked across a red carpet. Kim then introduced key members of his leadership including Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui; top aide and ruling party secretary Jo Yong Won; and the leader's powerful sister, Kim Yo Jong.

As the talks began, Putin thanked Kim for North Korea's

support for his war in Ukraine, part of what he said was a "fight against the imperialist hegemonistic policies of the U.S. and its satellites against the Russian Federation."

Putin hailed ties that he traced back to the Soviet army fighting the Japanese military on the Korean Peninsula in the closing moments of World War II, and Moscow's support for Pyongyang during the Korean War.

Kim said Moscow and Pyongyang's "fiery friendship" is now even closer than during Soviet times, and promised "full support and solidarity to the Russian government, army and people in carrying out the special military operation in Ukraine to protect sovereignty, security interests and territorial integrity."

It wasn't immediately clear what that support might look like. Kim has used similar language in the past, consistently saying North Korea supports what he describes as a just action to protect Russia's interests and blaming the crisis on the U.S.-led West's "hegemonic policy."

North Korea is under heavy U.N. Security Council sanctions over its weapons program, while Russia also faces sanctions by the United States and its Western partners over its aggression in Ukraine.

Along with China, Russia has provided political cover

for Kim's continuing efforts to advance his nuclear arsenal, repeatedly blocking U.S.-led efforts to impose fresh U.N. sanctions on the North over its weapons tests.

Putin's foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov told reporters in Pyongyang that the two leaders exchanged gifts after the talks. Putin presented Kim with a Russian-made Aurus limo and other gifts, including a tea set and a naval officer's dagger. Ushakov said that Kim's presents to Putin included artworks depicting the Russian leader.

Russia media said earlier that Kim will host a reception, and Putin is expected to leave for Vietnam after that.

In addition to security, Putin said the partnership includes cooperation in political, trade, investment, cultural and humanitarian fields, as well as security. He added that Russia would not rule out developing military-technical cooperation with North Korea under the deal.

According to the Kremlin's website, the two leaders also signed an agreement on building a road bridge on their shared border, and another on cooperation in healthcare, medical education and science.

Kim was quoted as saying that the agreement was of a peaceful and defensive nature. "I have no doubt it will become a driving force accelerating the creation of a new multipolar world," he was quoted to say.

In Washington, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Putin's visit to North Korea illustrates how Russia tries, "in desperation, to develop and to strengthen relations with countries that can provide it with what it needs to continue the war of aggression that it started against Ukraine." **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1965 STUDENTS PROTEST AFTER ALGIERS COUP



Police in the Algerian capital Algiers have broken up demonstrations by hundreds of people who have taken to the streets chanting slogans in support of deposed President Ben Bella.

The protests began with an orderly march by students but police attempts to disperse the crowds turned them into rioting groups running through the streets.

Ex-president Ahmed Ben Bella is being held prisoner in a remote Sahara outpost. He has been deposed by chief of the armed forces Colonel Houari Boumedienne and his National Revolutionary Council.

Communications cut off  
In the early hours of yesterday morning, two tanks moved into position at the presidential villa in Algiers. Police guards were quietly relieved by soldiers. There was a sound of breaking glass and a light was briefly seen before being turned off again.

By the time dawn broke, tanks had moved into various strategic points throughout the city, the airport was under military control and all communications with the outside world were cut off.

After several hours of military music on the radio, Colonel Boumedienne broadcast a long statement accusing Ahmed Ben Bella of treason and promising him the "fate of all despots".

The statement broadcast in the name of the Revolutionary Council also pledged to work for a "democratic, serious state" and the recovery of the economy.

One of the colonel's first actions has been to order the release of political prisoners held on "arbitrary" grounds.

He has also given assurances no French people or property in the country will be harmed.

The coup has taken place 10 days ahead of an Afro-Asian Conference due to be held in Algiers. There is some speculation it may have been inspired by the Russians to prevent the meeting - from which they were excluded - from taking place.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Ahmed Ben Bella was brought to power after leading the struggle for independence from France, which was finally achieved in July 1962. He was dependent on Colonel Boumedienne then chief of staff of Algeria's 60,000-strong army.

He failed to build up a political force to act as a counterweight to the military and took control of many key ministries himself.

After the coup, he was held under house arrest for 15 years. On release, he lived in exile in Switzerland. He continued to instigate unrest in Algeria and in 1990 returned to stand for the presidency at the head of the Mouvement Democratique Algerien (MDA). The 1991 election was won by an Islamist party but the result was annulled and Ben Bella was sent back into exile. The MDA was one of a number of parties banned in 1997.

In December 1976, Colonel Boumedienne was elected president and served for two years until he died. Under the tight reins of his control, the country did begin to develop its oil resources and industrial sector.

Since his death, various attempts have been made to establish a multi-party democracy, but violence has continued between government and Islamic militants.



YOUR STARS

ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Engage in an exploration. Consider long-term implications and consequences of different ideas and views. What might be the impacts? Investigate. Look before leaping.

TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20 Review the numbers. Pay bills and manage accounts. Fix an error and save. Keep cash flowing in a positive direction. Budget for a dreamy possibility.

GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21 Pull with your partner. A challenging moment reignites collaboration. Patiently clarify. Exchange agreements and promises for shared commitments. You're realizing a dream.

CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22 With a busy schedule, slow to avoid accidents or mistakes. Prioritize healthy practices and exercise routines. Recharge with music, good food and rest.

LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Communication could seem stuck. Don't get pushy. Apologize when appropriate. Wait for better conditions to talk. Share support with complications.

VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22 Home draws you in. Settle into your sanctuary. Clean and clear clutter. Contribute to a family project. What you're building has long-term value.

LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22 Discover an exciting possibility within a chaotic situation. Articulate it for others. Use your communicative arts and skills to share the story. Get creative.

SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21 Follow the money. Do the research and backstage preparations for a later performance. A profitable opportunity is within reach with a polished presentation.

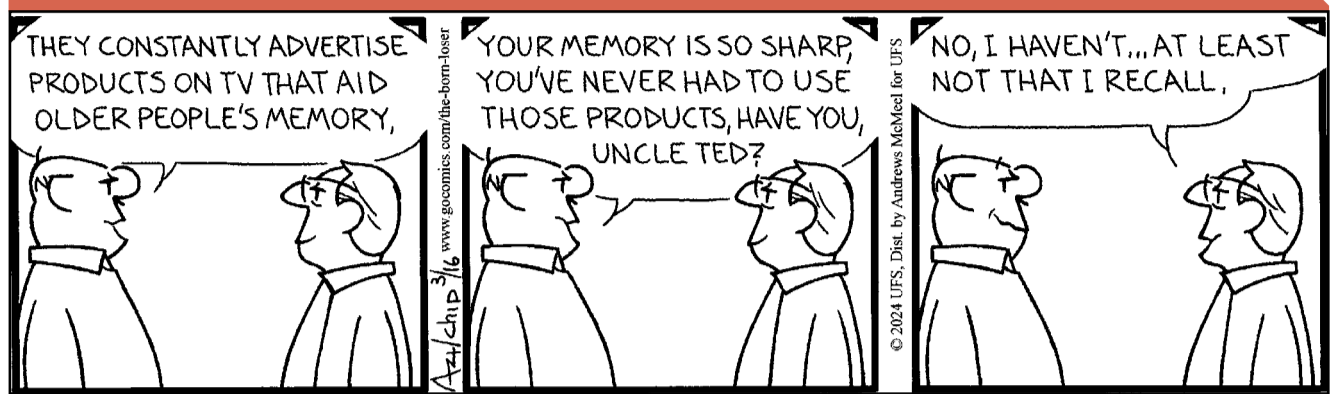
SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Slow to review personal plans before taking action on them. Consider alternatives and options. Breakdowns could require a different route. Discover buried treasure.

CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Find a private, peaceful spot to review. Consider things from a higher perspective. Look for hidden opportunities. Rest and make plans for later implementation.

AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Coordinate and strategize with your team. Get into a huddle and resolve who's doing what. Go for distance, not speed. Practice for performance later.

PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20 A professional responsibility requires your focus. All is not as it appears. It's easier to ride a horse in the direction it's going.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Sudoku puzzles: EASY and EASY+ grids with numbers 1-9.

Sudoku puzzles: MEDIUM and HARD grids with numbers 1-9.

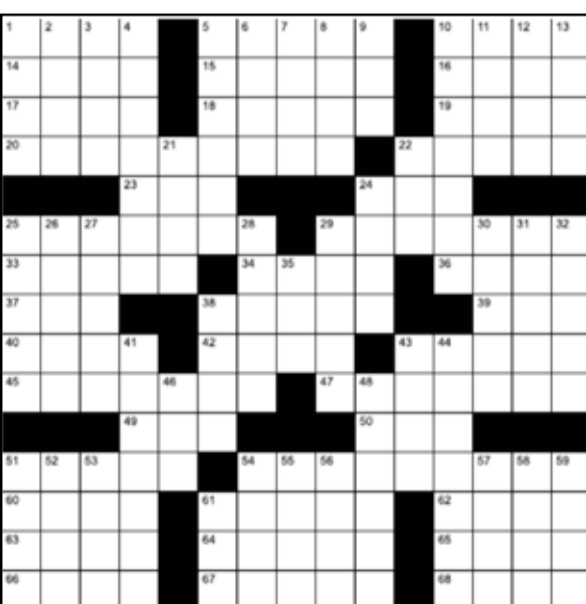
WEATHER

Weather forecast table with columns: MIN, MAX, and CONDITION. Rows include CHINA (Beijing, Changchun, Chengdu, Chongqing, Fuzhou, Guangzhou, Guiyang, Haikou, Hangzhou, Harbin, Hefei, Nanjing, Shanghai, Taipei, Wuhan, Hong Hong) and WORLD (Moscow, Frankfurt, Paris, London, New York).

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- It's blown among the reeds; 5- Copycats; 10- Sounds of disgust; 14- Wrestling surfaces; 15- "West Side Story" song; 16- Nair rival; 17- Some; 18- Rubber gasket; 19- Tortoise's rival; 20- Kentucky Derby oval; 22- Home run king Hank; 23- Division of geologic time; 24- High mountain, as found in central Europe; 25- Creatures; 29- Tool to break solid water; 33- Aromatic herb; 34- Time for lunch; 36- Spoollike toy; 37- Picnic pest; 38- "Inferno" writer; 39- ATM maker; 40- Infrequent; 42- Vicinity; 43- Walled Spanish city; 45- Quarantine; 47- Muslim opponent of the Crusaders; 49- Extra-wide shoe size; 50- Addams family cousin; 51- Eyeglasses, for short; 54- Bandages; 60- Lash mark; 61- Experiment; 62- "Barton Fink" director; 63- Woe \_\_\_; 64- Win by \_\_\_; 65- \_\_\_ boy; 66- Well-behaved; 67- Spoils, with "on"; 68- Tide type;

DOWN 1- General Bradley; 2- Ali \_\_\_; 3- Ear-related; 4- Values highly; 5- Without principles; 6- Graph prefix; 7- Actor Stoltz; 8- Skating area; 9- Slump; 10- Sad; 11- Equipment; 12- Illustrious warrior; 13- Type of gun; 21- Cafeteria carrier; 22- Pub order; 24- Teen spots?; 25- Video game pioneer; 26- Grandmas; 27- Emcee's job; 28- Entrap; 29- Bits; 30- Column style; 31- Recurring series; 32- Sacred text of Islam; 35- We're number \_\_\_; 38- Go with; 41- Voted into a seat; 43- \_\_\_ and crafts; 44- Residence of the popes; 46- DDE opponent; 48- Bridal paths; 51- Gulp from a flask; 52- Cuban coin; 53- Patron saint of sailors; 54- First James Bond film; 55- Public disturbance; 56- Alleviate; 57- Short letter; 58- "\_\_\_ grip!"; 59- Break sharply; 61- Bit;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



Advertisement for 'BUY & RENT!' with contact information for jml property.

Advertisement for 'CONTACT US & SEIZE THIS OPPORTUNITY!' with contact information for jml property.

Advertisement for 'Va Fat' property: HKD 3,780,000, 2 bed 1 bath.

Advertisement for 'Tou Un' property: HKD 2,980,000, 1 bed 1 bath.

Advertisement for 'Jade Garden' property: HKD 11,880,000, 4 bed 3 bath.



EURO 2024 | REVIEW

# CONCEIÇÃO SCORES IN STOPPAGE TIME TO GET PORTUGAL OFF TO WINNING START

CIARÁN FAHEY, LEIPZIG

PORTUGAL 2, CZECHIA 1

PORTUGAL substitute Francisco Conceição scored in stoppage time for a 2-1 win over the Czech Republic in their European Championship opening game yesterday [Macau time].

Conceição, who only made his entrance in the 90th minute, fired the ball home in the 92nd after Robin Hranac's attempted

block of fellow substitute Pedro Neto's shot fell kindly for the Porto winger to shoot inside the left post.

"The players that came off the bench showed that the team has a lot of options," Portugal coach Roberto Martínez said.

Conceição wheeled away in delight and was booked for taking off his jersey.

It comes almost 24 years to the day since Conceição's father, Sérgio Conceição, scored



Portugal's Francisco Conceicao (26) scores his side's second and decisive goal

## SCOREBOARD

Germany	5	1	Scotland
Hungary	1	3	Switzerland
Spain	3	0	Croatia
Italy	2	1	Albania
Poland	1	2	Netherlands
Slovenia	1	1	Denmark
Serbia	0	1	England
Romania	3	0	Ukraine
Belgium	0	1	Slovakia
Austria	0	1	France
Turkey	3	1	Georgia
Portugal	2	1	Czech Republic
Croatia	2	2	Albania

a hat trick to knock defending champion Germany out of Euro 2000.

Czech Republic goalkeeper Jindrich Stanek had thwarted Cristiano Ronaldo as the Portugal star became the first to play at six European Championship tournaments. The 39-year-old Ronaldo was unable to add to his record 14 goals in his record-extending 26th appearance at the tournament.

Portugal's 41-year-old defender Pepe became the oldest player to play at the tournament, though he had little to do

as the 2016 champions dominated ball possession and chances.

"We won because the group is united. We became resilient in the last few days," said Martínez, who praised his team for fighting back after conceding first.

It came as a shock when Lukas Provod broke the deadlock at the other end with a fierce strike inside the far post after Vladimir Coufal laid the ball back in the 62nd minute.

Portugal drew level in the 70th when Stanek's save of

Nuno Mendes' header rebounded off the luckless Hranac's shin and in.

Hranac was also involved when Conceição scored the winner.

"It was very unlucky, but it was a fast terrain, very wet. These unlucky things can happen," Czech coach Ivan Hasek said. "I have to thank my players for their hard work. Portugal was better, they deserved to win."

Turkey defeated tournament debutant Georgia 3-1 in the other Group F game earlier. MDT/AP

AD



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EURO 2024

# Spain and Italy meet for the fifth championship in a row and the record is tight

JAMES ROBSON,  
DUSSELDORF

**D**EFENDING champion Italy plays Spain today (Friday, 03:00) in one of the most anticipated games at Euro 2024. Spain leads Group B ahead of Italy on goal difference after both teams won their opening games. Croatia and Albania are the other teams in the group. Kickoff is at 9 p.m. local in Gelsenkirchen. Here's what to know about the match:

Match facts— Italy survived a scare against Albania when Nedim Bajrami scored after 23 seconds - the fastest goal

in Euros history. A 2-1 come from behind win avoided embarrassment for Luciano Spalletti's team.

— There were no such concerns for Spain after a dominant 3-0 win against World Cup semifinalist Croatia.

— Italy beat Spain on penalties in the semifinals of the last Euros after a 1-1 draw through extra time at Wembley Stadium. The team, then coached by Roberto Mancini, also needed penalties to beat England in the final.

— Build up to the last game in Gelsenkirchen - Serbia vs. England - had been overshadowed by concerns about fan violence. Eight people

were temporarily detained following a brawl between fans. There has been less focus on potential security issues ahead of this game.

Team news— Spain defender Aymeric Laporte has resumed training with the squad following a muscular issue.

— Italian media has speculated about Spalletti making changes ahead of the Spain game and the potential for Gianluca Mancini and Bryan Cristante to be brought into his starting line up.

By the numbers— This is the fifth Euros in a row that Spain and Italy have met, with two wins each going into Friday's match.

— With 46% of possession against Croatia, Spain failed to dominate the ball for the first time in 136 competitive games.

— Italy is going for a record-equalling third European Championship title. Spain and Germany have also won three titles. Italy could also become only the second team to win back-to-back Euros af-

ter Spain in 2008 and 2012

— At 16 years, 338 days, Spain's Lamine Yamal became the youngest player to appear at a European Championship in his team's 3-0 win over Croatia.

What they're saying "Right now Spain, are better than us in terms of individual players. We will have to bring the Italian spirit into play; we will need to struggle together." - Italy midfielder Davide Frattesi.

"I remember a friendly against Portugal before the last Euro and there was a part of the fanbase who weren't happy and whistled us.... Now we, the media and the fans all share a lot of pride and ambition in what we're doing. We're all rowing in the same direction." - Spain goalkeeper Unai Simon. MDT/AP

## UPCOMING GAMES

	Date	Time	Home	Away	ODDS
Thu	Jun 20	21:00	Slovenia	Serbia	H 5, D 3.6, A 1.86
Fri	Jun 21	00:00	Denmark	England	H 6.1, D 3.75, A 1.73
		03:00	Spain	Italy	H 2.2, D 3.45, A 3.9

ODDSCHECKER.COM

## EURO 2024 | MASSIVE RECORDS

# Ronaldo becomes first to play six Euros, Pepe the oldest ever

**CRISTIANO** Ronaldo became the first player to feature at six European Championship tournaments when he captained Portugal to a 2-1 win over the Czech Republic in their opening game yesterday [Macau time].

The 39-year-old Ronaldo, who made his tournament debut at Euro 2004 where Portugal reached the final, already had the records for the most goals (14) at the tournament, while he extended his appearance record to 26 games. He hel-



Pepe & Ronaldo: the oldest and the longest

ped Portugal win the title at Euro 2016.

He warmed up for this

edition with two goals as Portugal defeated Ireland 3-0 in its final preparation

games.

"Another chapter in our history begins today," Ro-

naldo wrote on X before the match. "I fondly remember my first day with the national team, a journey full of challenges and victories. Now I have the honor of being alongside a team of champions, full of talent and determination. With everyone's strength and support, we're turning dreams into reality. Together let's fight for another triumph. United, we're unstoppable."

At the same time, Portugal veteran defender Pepe became the oldest player to feature at a European Championship after helping his team to a win in their opening game.

Pepe was 41 years and 113 days old, taking the record from the previous holder, Hungary goalkeeper Gábor Király. Király was 40 years and 86 days old when

he played against Belgium in the round of 16 at Euro 2016.

It came just days after Spain's Lamine Yamal became the youngest player to feature at the tournament.

The Brazil-born Pepe was 24 when he made his Portugal debut under Brazilian coach Luiz Felipe Scolari in November 2007 when he was still a Real Madrid player. He has made 138 appearances for Portugal, scoring eight goals, getting 25 yellow cards. His one red card came in Portugal's opening game at the 2014 World Cup against Germany.

Pepe has played in 20 games at five European Championships, a record only bettered by international teammate Cristiano Ronaldo. MDT/AP



OPINION

China Daily  
Editorial, China Daily

**US LAWMAKERS' TRIP MADE WITH TROUBLEMAKING INTENT**

A US bipartisan delegation of seven lawmakers, headed by Republican representative Michael McCaul and including former House speaker Nancy Pelosi of the Democratic Party, arrived in the Himalayan town of Dharamshala on Tuesday for a meeting with the Dalai Lama, who has lived in exile there since 1959 after he fled Xizang in the wake of a failed armed rebellion.

The US politicians, of course, are fully aware of the provocative nature of the ongoing visit, given the 88-year-old Dalai Lama's experience over the past several decades of colluding with external forces to compromise China's sovereignty by pushing for "the independence" of the autonomous region.

As a Foreign Ministry spokesman put it, the Dalai Lama is not a purely religious figure, but "a political exile engaged in anti-China separatist activities under the cloak of religion". Yet the anti-China US politicians still went ahead with the visit, trying to use Xizang as a pretext to disrupt social stability and hinder the country's development.

It should be noted that the visit came shortly after the US Congress passed legislation last week called "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act", which China hawks in Washington claim seeks to encourage Beijing to speak with the Dalai Lama clique and reach a negotiated agreement. US President Joe Biden is expected to sign it into law soon.

The rising frequency with which the anti-China forces have sought to play the "Xizang card" in a renewed smear game against Beijing reflects how desperate they have become to use whatever remaining value the Dalai Lama clique has to create trouble for China. The clique, representing the feudal serfdom ruling class of old Xizang, is fast fading into history.

That US lawmakers have passed a bill dictating what the government of another sovereign country should do in terms of its internal affairs is absurd enough. That it is based on lies, such as Beijing has refused to talk with the Dalai Lama, makes it even more preposterous. The central government received 13 visits by private representatives of the Dalai Lama between 1979 and 2002, and it is his consistent denials that Tibet is an integral part of China, and refusal to stop his attempts to separate it from the country that has shut the door on negotiation.

The US has played a despicable role in the Dalai Lama clique's separatist activities. In the mid-1950s, the Central Intelligence Agency helped to train Tibetan separatists to carry out subversive activities in Xizang. During the armed rebellion in Xizang in 1959, the CIA helped the Dalai Lama to flee, and supported rebel forces with weapons and ammunition.

Today Xizang enjoys social stability and harmony, with sound economic performance, and local people's well-being is well protected. The autonomous region also keeps making fresh progress in achieving high-quality development. Any attempt by separatists and their foreign masters to destabilize Xizang and contain and suppress China is doomed to failure.

**SINGER JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE CHARGED WITH DRIVING WHILE INTOXICATED IN THE HAMPTONS**



THE BUZZ

Pop star Justin Timberlake was charged yesterday [Macau time] with drunken driving in a village in New York's Hamptons, after police said he ran a stop sign and veered out of his lane in the posh seaside summer retreat.

The boy band singer-turned-solo star and actor was driving a 2025 BMW in Sag Harbor around 12:30 a.m. when an officer stopped him and determined he was intoxicated, according to a court document.

"His eyes were bloodshot and glassy, a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage was emanating from his breath, he was unable to divide atten-

tion, he had slowed speech, he was unsteady afoot and he performed poorly on all standardized field sobriety tests," the court papers said.

Timberlake, 43, told the officer he had one martini and was following some friends home, according to the documents. After being arrested and taken to a police station in nearby East Hampton, he refused a breath test, said the court papers, which listed his occupation as "professional" and said he's "self-employed."

The 10-time Grammy winner was released without bond later after being arraigned in Sag Harbor.

AP FILE PHOTO



**ECUADOR STOPS WAIVING VISAS FOR CHINESE NATIONALS DUE TO INCREASE IN IRREGULAR MIGRATION**

GONZALO SOLANO & DIDI TANG, QUITO

**E**CUADOR yesterday [Macau time] announced the suspension of an agreement with China that had waived visas for Chinese citizens traveling to the South American country, citing a "worrying" increase in irregular migration.

Ecuador's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the suspension of the bilateral agreement is temporary and would start on July 1. It added that the measure was taken after authorities saw that around 50% of Chinese nationals entering Ecuador didn't leave the country "through regular routes" nor within the permitted 90 days they were allowed to stay under the waiver agreement.

The development would effectively mean that Ecuador was reinstating visas for Chinese citizens, but the Foreign Ministry did not provide any details.

Since 2023, people from China are among the top nationalities of migrants reaching the United States.

Ecuador, one of the only two mainland countries

in the Americas that offer visa-free entry to Chinese nationals, has become a popular starting point for Chinese migrants who would then trek northward through Central America before entering the United States. The other country is the Republic of Suriname.

The Washington-based think tank Niskanen Center, citing official data by the Ecuadorian government, said that Chinese nationals entered Ecuador 48,381 times in 2023 but only left 24,240 times. The difference of 24,141 was the highest of any nationality, according to Niskanen.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said at a daily briefing this week that Beijing "firmly opposes all forms of human smuggling" and that the country's law enforcement has been "tough on all kinds of human smuggling groups and individuals engaged in illegal immigration."

China also has been working with other countries to "jointly tackle human smuggling activities, repatriate illegal immigrants and maintain a good order in cross-border travel,"

Lin said.

Lin said the mutual visa exemption agreement between China and Ecuador first came into effect in 2016.

As bilateral relations are stabilizing, Beijing has resumed cooperation with Washington to repatriate Chinese nationals who are in the United States illegally.

The number of Chinese immigrants entering the United States rose drastically last year, when U.S. border officials arrested more than 37,000 Chinese nationals on the southern border, 10 times the number during the previous year.

The monthly tally fell in the first three months of this year, but it rose to 3,282 arrests in April. Former President Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, has suggested that the Chinese migrants, mostly men, could be building an army on the U.S. soil.

The Chinese migrants and their advocates have rejected Trump's claims, saying they have left China for better economic prospects. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



**USA** This week marks the first anniversary of the Titan submersible disaster. The U.S. Coast Guard investigation into the incident, which killed five people, is ongoing. The Titan's unconventional design and lack of standard checks are under scrutiny. The tragedy hasn't deterred deep-sea exploration, with future missions planned despite the risks involved.

AP PHOTO



**Saudi Arabia** Hundreds died during this year's Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia due to intense heat. The kingdom has not officially commented on the death toll. The Hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam, saw over 1.8 million pilgrims. The extreme temperatures highlight the challenges of hosting the annual religious event.

AP PHOTO



**Russia** A Russian court convicted U.S. soldier Staff Sgt. Gordon Black of theft and making threats of murder, sentencing him to nearly four years in prison. Black was arrested in Vladivostok after being accused by his girlfriend. His case adds to the tension between the U.S. and Russia amid the ongoing Ukraine conflict.

AP PHOTO



**Japan** Kazuko Shiraishi, a leading Japanese "beat" poet known for her dramatic readings, died at 93. Dubbed the "Allen Ginsberg of Japan," Shiraishi was a pioneer of modern performance poetry, often accompanied by jazz music. Her work defied traditional Japanese literature, embracing a modern and experimental style that resonated globally.