



A UNIVERSITY STUDENT WAS ARRESTED FOR ALLEGEDLY FALSELY ACCUSING HER BOYFRIEND OF RAPE AFTER HE FAILED TO FULFILL A PROMISED GIFT

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PORTUGUESE AUTHORITIES INVESTIGATE DISMISSAL OF FIVE EPM STAFF

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AP PHOTO



France voters are surging to the polls for the first round of high-stakes legislative elections, with turnout an unusually high 59% and three hours to go before polls close yesterday. That's 20 percentage points higher than turnout at the same time in the last first-round vote in 2022. President Emmanuel Macron called the surprise vote just three weeks ago after European elections showed a collapse in support for his centrist party and a sharp rise for the far-right National Rally. [More on p12](#)

AP PHOTO



Ukraine Drone footage from military released yesterday has shown what appears to be bodies in a civilian area in the embattled town of Toretsk in the east of the country. The town in the war-torn Donetsk region has come under heavy Russian bombardment in recent days, prompting a scaled-up evacuation effort by Ukrainian rescue services. Local officials said that powerful Russian glide bombs have also been used in the town, the latest eastern front flash point as Russian attacks continue to put stretched Ukrainian front-line units on the defensive.

AP PHOTO



Nigeria Female suicide bombers targeted a wedding, a funeral and a hospital in coordinated attacks in northern Nigeria that killed at least 18 people, local authorities said yesterday. The first suicide bomber detonated an explosive device during a marriage celebration in the northeastern town of Gwoza at about 3 p.m., Barkindo Saidu, director-general of Borno State Emergency Management Agency, told reporters

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EURO APPEAL

Attracting European tourists to Macau remains a challenge amid gov't roadshows as connectivity and costs continue to be obstacles, the Times learned

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CELEBRITY CHEF BRINGS FLAVORS OF JORDAN TO MACAU STUDENTS

Internationally renowned chef Sara Aqel introduced students in Macau to authentic Jordanian cuisine today in a demonstration sponsored by MGM Macau. Aqel's demonstration filled the sensory space at Macau University of Tourism (UTM) with aromas of olives, olive oil and garlic from her home country. "I wanted to give the students flavors they don't experience here," Aqel said. After demonstrating Jordanian dishes, Aqel participated in a seminar on women pioneers in the industry. She stressed the importance of female empowerment in the male-dominated field. The event concluded with another seminar featuring Aqel and cookery masters from India, Thailand and Macau. The UTM Culinary Club president expressed support for greater gender equality in the kitchen.

SAR PASSPORT HOLDERS GRANTED VISA-FREE ACCESS TO GEORGIA

The government of Macau has received confirmation that passport holders can now visit Georgia without a visa for trips lasting 30 days or less. The Embassy of Georgia to China's notification means Macao Special Administrative Region travelers can access yet another country visa-free, raising the total to 146. The city-state has also negotiated e-visa or online visa application programs with 25 countries. Streamlining travel requirements benefits Macau's economy as it seeks to diversify beyond gaming. The additional destination will be a welcome option for the territory's residents and tourists as international travel gradually resumes in the post-pandemic period.

CROSS-BORDER TRAFFIC, AIRPORT ARRIVALS ON THE RISE

Cross-border vehicular traffic in May grew 23.6% year-on-year to 758,865 trips. Macau single-plate vehicle trips to and from Hengqin (127,000), trips made under the "Northbound Travel for Macau Vehicles" policy (122,000) and Macau vehicle trips to and from Hong Kong (22,000) increased 14.6%, 11.8% and 54.8% respectively, according to government data. In the first five months of 2024, cross-border vehicular traffic (3.55 million trips) climbed 32.2% year-on-year. Also, arriving and departing commercial flights at the Macau International Airport totaled 4,926 trips in May, a rise of 55.2% year-on-year. In the first five months of 2024, the number of arriving and departing commercial flights rose 87.2% year-on-year to 23,098 trips.

GOV'T CONDEMNS TAIWAN'S TRAVEL ALERT ON MACAU

STAFF REPORTER

THE Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) government has strongly condemned Taiwan's "defamation and smearing" in relation to the issuance of a travel warning concerning Macau last week.

The MSAR government sees Taiwan's actions as an attempt to "arbitrarily discredit Macau's legal system for safeguarding national security" and distort the city's political and social development.

In a statement, the MSAR government called on the authorities in Taiwan to stop using Macau for political manipulation that harms others, condemning Taiwan's "sinister intentions and despicable methods."

The statement emphasized that the improvement of Macau's legal system for safeguarding national security has played a positive role in promoting the city's development.

"Macau remains one of the safest and most economically dynamic international tourism and leisure destinations," the government said.

The MSAR government urged Taiwan to show "sincere care for the well-being of its people" and "cherish the feelings between the two places."

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council advised its citizens last week to avoid unnecessary travel to mainland Chi-



na, Hong Kong, and Macau.

The heightened travel warning, raised to the second-highest level, comes in response to Beijing's new legal guidelines that threaten "diehard separatists" from Taiwan with penalties.

The Mainland Affairs Council cited the increased risks to personal safety for Taiwanese travelers under these rules.

"In response to the new guidelines, [...] the government has the responsibility to remind citizens that there are genuine risks involved" in such visits, spokesperson and deputy head of the island's Mainland Affairs Council Liang Wen-chieh said during a press briefing last week.

The government is not banning visits, but those that

do travel should not express political opinions or carry books or post online about topics that the Communist Party may use to detain and potentially prosecute them.

Hundreds of thousands of Taiwanese live in China or travel their for business, tourism or family visits each year. China has also hosted visits by local Taiwanese officials and leaders of the opposition Nationalist Party, which backs eventual unification between the sides.

Further, a mainland spokesperson slammed Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) authorities' practice of political manipulation in the name of upgrading cross-strait travel alert.

The DPP authorities are undermining the Taiwan

people's legal rights and interests and obstructing exchanges across the Taiwan Strait, said Zhu Fenglian, spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council.

Zhu made the remarks in response to a media query about the DPP authorities' recent move to upgrade the travel alert regarding the mainland.

This is a defamation of the mainland and a blatant intimidation against the people of Taiwan, she said.

The DPP authorities have disregarded the facts and intentionally distorted the judicial guidelines recently issued to impose criminal punishments on diehard "Taiwan independence" separatists for conducting or inciting secession, Zhu said.

CRIME

Alleged false rape claim arrest

A mainland university student has been arrested for allegedly falsely accusing her boyfriend of rape after he failed to fulfill a promised gift and payment.

The Judiciary Police spokesman, Ho Chan Nam, said the suspect, a student from main-

land China, met the victim online in early June and they began a relationship. The pair traveled to Macau June 21 and stayed in a hotel room together.

While both confirmed a consensual sexual encounter on June 22 and again on June 24, the suspect later

claimed she was raped in the hotel room.

However, police investigations revealed the suspect contacted the victim after the alleged rape, requesting a promised gift and HKD6,000.

Further investigation revealed the suspect and victim met again

after the alleged rape, with the victim providing the suspect with a new hotel room card.

No signs of struggle or injuries were found on the suspect's body, leading authorities to conclude the accusation was false.

The Judiciary Police charged the suspect

with making a false accusation and sent her to the public prosecutor's office June 25.

The case highlights the potential for false accusations to disrupt the justice system and underscores the importance of thorough investigations.

The suspect's alleged actions could have serious consequences, potentially impacting the victim's reputation and future. VC

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Duty-free limit raised for Macau and Hong Kong

VICTORIA CHAN

To stimulate the economies of Macau and Hong Kong, the Chinese government announced Friday it will raise the duty-free shopping allowance for mainland Chinese visitors to these two special administrative regions (SAR).

Starting July 1, mainland residents returning from the two SARs will see their duty-free allowance increased to RMB15,000 per trip for purchases at border crossing duty-free stores, up from RMB5,000.

The allowance for shopping elsewhere in the city will also rise, to RMB12,000.

Chief Executive, Ho Iat Seng, praised the measure, saying it would "help drive consumption in Macau's tourism market" and provide "new impetus" to the city's overall economic development.

The Macao Government Tourism Office said the change is "conducive to increasing the desire of mainland visitors to visit and spend money in Macau, and injecting impetus into Macau's tourism economy."

This policy shift is part of broader efforts by mainland authorities



to support the economies of Macau and Hong Kong.

Earlier this year, the government allowed group tours to travel between Hengqin and Macau and expanded the Individual Visit Scheme for the two regions, which are important drivers of economic growth.

The new duty-free allowance

will initially be implemented at six border crossings and then extended to all except the Hengqin crossing from August 1.

However, some Hong Kong industry members were disappointed the new limit falls short of the RMB30,000 figure they had sought.

Tai Kin Ip, director of Macau's Economic and Technological De-

velopment Bureau, said businesses must change to reap the benefits of the revised policy.

"What we should focus on now is enhancing the variety of products offered by community businesses and improving their service quality," Tai said.

He said business associations and enterprises need to prepare

for welcoming customers and expressed hope the policy can "boost their sales and bring in more business opportunities."

By encouraging greater tourism consumption, the duty-free allowance increase provides a much-needed boost to local businesses and the broader economies of Macau and Hong Kong.

Overall, the Chinese government's decision is seen as a positive step in supporting the economic development of these two important regions.

Andy Wu, president of Macau's Travel Industry Council, said the policy adjustment by Beijing comes as a welcome measure ahead of summer vacation season. Raising the tax-exempt limit on goods carried by cross-boundary visitors will likely increase tourism and spending in Macau during peak travel months, benefiting small- and medium-sized businesses in the retail sector.

Wu noted the industry stands ready to promote the policy update and encourage tourists "to increase their spending in Macau." The higher tax threshold, he believes, will strengthen travelers' "desire to visit and spend" in the Special Administrative Region.

AD



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TOURISM

Strategy to draw in int'l tourists proving to be

RENATO MARQUES

THOUGH the idea of attracting more foreign visitors from long-haul markets to Macau is not new, it has recently become a government plan.

While official statistics have been showing long-haul visitor numbers are increasing, particularly from some Asian markets, it is unlikely there will be an increase from other markets such as Europe, European visitors interviewed by the Times said.

Macau is an unappealing destination to European tourists because of the travel distance, the difficulties in flight connections, and, more importantly, the costs.

The Times interviewed two Portuguese nationals traveling in Macau, Ana and Sofia.

They were in the region for a brief stay after an Asian tour that took them to Thailand, Laos, Malaysia and Vietnam.

The two women in their early 60s agree on something – “Macau is expensive!”

Confronted with the government plan to attract more foreign visitors, including visitors from Portugal, the pair believes it will be “very unlikely” that Macau will appeal to the “average Portuguese.”

This is despite the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) having taken a Roadshow to Portugal and established several partnerships to expand local promotion to neighboring Spain.

“We might believe that Macau, due to its historical relation with Portugal, could be appealing to the Portuguese but I doubt many will venture here, particularly due to the prices,” Ana said.

“Just minutes ago we were commenting that in some of the more touristic areas [in] Portugal, we are easily driven off a certain restaurant or bar just because a glass of wine costs EUR3 (MOP26),” said Ana.

“Well, the cheapest one that we have had over the past two days in Macau was about EUR8 (MOP68). This might not be such a big deal if we are talking about France or Germany, maybe, but for most Portuguese, it would be outrageous and unacceptable.”

The same feeling extended to accommodation. They do not believe the cost matches the quality.

“We were kind of lucky to have had a friend that came to Macau some time ago and pointed out some places [hotels] where we could potentially



stay on a budget. It's not too pricey but the quality is pretty bad,” Sofia said, identifying a hotel on Taipa Island.

As for the rest, “It's nice, has some interesting historical places but I would say there is not so much to see or do here to justify staying more than two days,” Ana said, supplemented by Sofia's, “We should have left yesterday.”

The pair said they were “quite surprised” by the prices charged by “street restaurants.”

“We were expecting the restaurants in the casinos to be expensive, they are everywhere in the world, including in Portugal, but we were surprised by the prices charged by the regular ones, the small and more traditional-looking ones on the

streets,” Sofia said. “It is way too expensive for the kind of food they serve,” she said, giving the Times a rough calculation of about MOP1,000 per person per day for lunch, dinner and a snack.

“This is about 40-50% more than we spend for the two of us eating at similar places in Portugal, even in tourist areas,” she said.

Expanding on her comments, she said it would be difficult for Macau to attract Portuguese visitors.

Sofia said it only makes sense to visit Macau as they did it, as part of a longer trip, with multi-destinations and never coming to visit Macau alone.

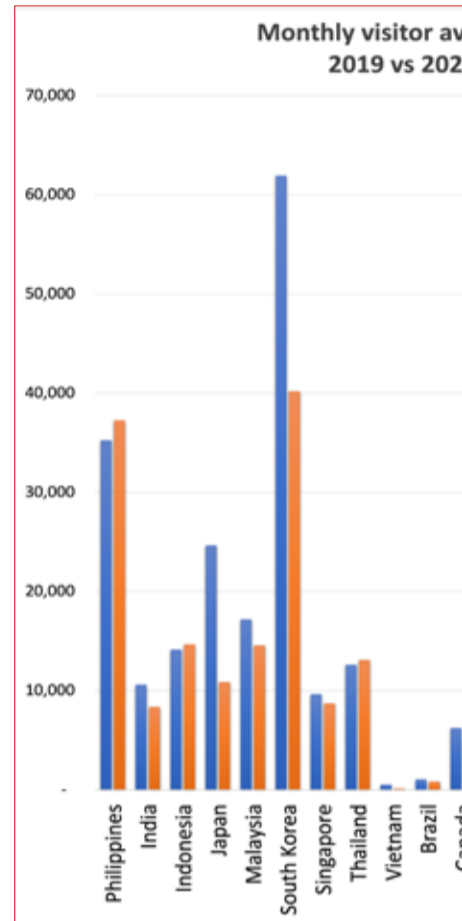
Besides, she said, “Most Portuguese when planning trips

find locations where the costs of living are either similar to or lower than Portugal to compensate for the money spent on airfares and accommodation. Which is not the case in Macau.”

Also in Macau for a short stay was Francesca, a 46-year-old from Bologna, Italy, whom the Times found exploring the center.

Francesca said she had visited Macau to fill “free time” in a longer trip that took her to the neighboring cities of Hong Kong and Shenzhen for professional purposes.

“I knew that I had two days off in between some tasks and I planned to come to Macau since it is near [Hong Kong],” she said.



She found the city generally interesting and easy to navigate, particularly the tourist sites that are well-identified but, like Ana and Sofia, also found “not many things to see.”

“In just half a day I went to the Cathedral [Ruins of St. Paul's], some smaller churches, and the main square area. After that, I went to the Macau Tower and visited the casinos in the downtown area, Lisboa, Wynn, etc. After that, I crossed the bridge and I went to the other area of the Venetian and Parisian, which I found horrible,” she said with a laugh.

“I liked the Taipa village more, it is more interesting than the fake things,” she said.

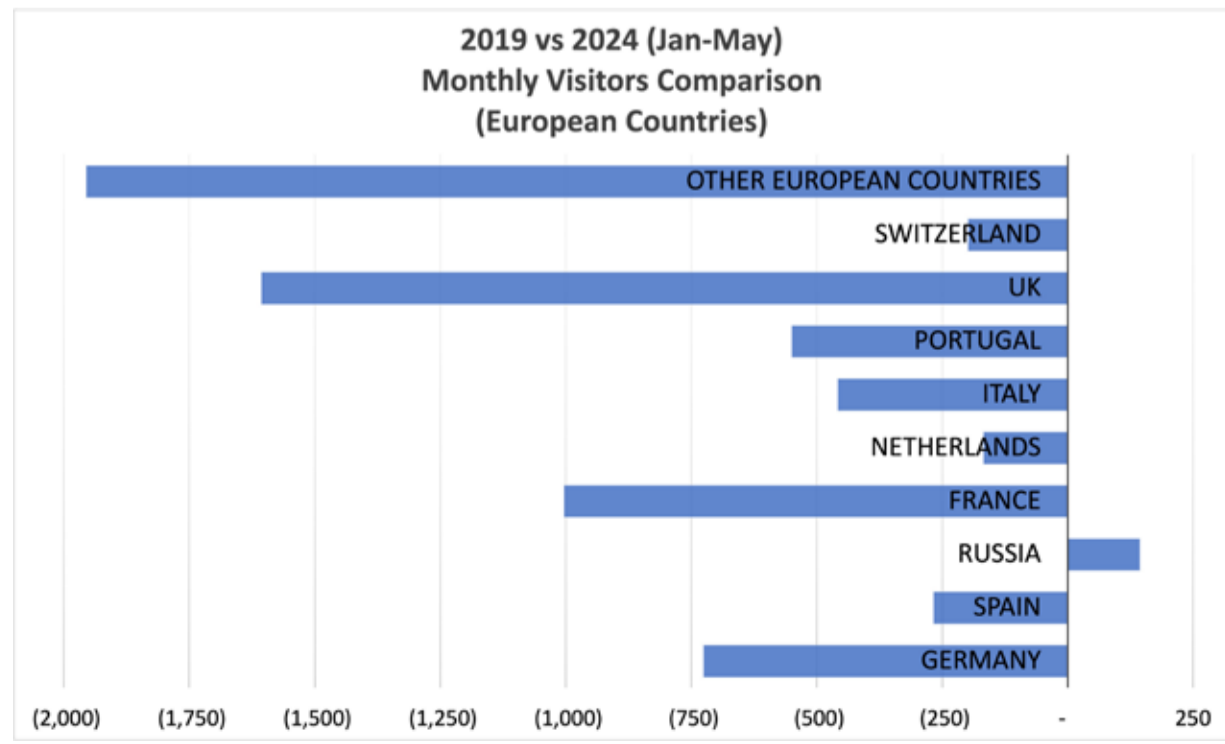
Francesca found the local food a little too expensive, noting Macau was more expensive than Hong Kong for food.

“In Hong Kong in the Central district, we have a lot of restaurants from all kinds of cuisines and local cafes where you can have a set lunch for about HKD128 or even HKD108.”

“But in Macau, the ones I found were serving similar food for about HKD168 or even higher prices and some did not even include any drinks,” she said, adding, “I also find the Chinese-style eateries more expensive here than in Hong Kong, and with a more limited menu on offer.”

Asked if she found Macau attractive for Italian visitors, she said, “I think only for those that are coming here for some particular purpose, like work or visiting friends,” she said.

“But I did notice that Macau



challenging



visitor numbers between 2023 and 2024 is significantly higher. UK (+38%, + 918 people); France (+44.6%, +631 people); Russia (137.1%, +1,592 people); Germany (+85.2%, +810 people); Portugal (+55.8%, +280 people); Italy (+66%, +330 people).

However, of this group, only Russia has recorded visitor growth when compared with 2019. Over the first five months of this year, Russia contributed 144 visitors more than it did in 2019.

In all other cases, the balance is still negative, especially from the UK (-1,607 visitors per month) and France (-1,003 visitors per month), when compared with 2019.

After Russia, the European country that is closer to reaching the pre-pandemic level is the Netherlands, which is currently 168 visitors per month lower than the 2019 level.

In the global analysis, Vietnam is the only country this year that has supplied fewer visitors to Macau than in the previous year, with an average of 136 per month (-16 compared to 2023).

Several countries have already surpassed previous visitor numbers to Macau from the pre-pandemic times, including the Philippines (+5.7%, +2,007 visitors per month); Indonesia (+3.6%, +512 visitors per month); and Thailand (+4%, +499 visitors per month).

GOV'T PROJECTS SIX MILLION SUMMER TOURISTS

The government is projecting tourist arrivals this summer will exceed six million.

Acting director of the Macao Government Tourism Office Cheng Wai Tong said that along with the implementation of a series of measures to benefit Macau, including the mainland increasing the tax exemption for luggage items for resident passengers entering from Hong Kong and Macau, arrivals in both July and August will exceed last year's numbers.

The hotel occupancy rate will also maintain a good momentum. It is projected occupancy will reach 90%. Macau's travel industry is anticipating a summer spike in Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) tourists from mainland China, according to Andy Wu Keng Kuong, president of the Macau Travel Industry Council.

Wu cites several factors as contributing to the expected surge, including the recent addition of eight new mainland cities to the IVS scheme.

has a potential for niche market particularly in luxury goods. Some of the shops I have visited have products from famous European labels and brands that are significantly cheaper than in Europe."

"But with Hong Kong so close and better served by connections [air links] I am not sure if many people would make the extra effort just to come to Macau for those, but maybe it is possible if it is marketed in this way. To be honest I had no idea there were so many luxury brand stores in Macau until I came here."

"In Hong Kong, Macau is marketed as the place of the Portuguese custard cake, the Pork Chop Sandwich, and the old Lisboa Casino, that's all. If you ask me, if Macau wants to attract more non-Chinese visitors as you said, it probably should start [promoting] in Hong Kong rather than in other countries."

WHAT THE FIGURES SHOW

A Times analysis of Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) data shows that while Macau is receiving this year a monthly average of more visitors from almost every country and region in the world, when compared year-on-year with 2023, in most cases this variation is not significant.

Taking as an example some of the European countries that have contributed over the years with larger shares of visitors to Macau, such as the UK, France, Russia, Germany, Portugal and Italy, the variation in monthly

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MGM Promotes Macau as an Art and Culture Destination

With a commitment to connecting the world through art, MGM has been striving to promote Macau as a cultural art destination and enhance public interest in the city's arts & culture, positioning Macau as an international metropolis with its rich culture and heritage background. Since 2013, MGM started to nurture arts & culture docents, making it the only integrated resort (IR) operator offering regular art tours for the public. MGM also customizes study tours for groups that aspire to explore more in MGM and Macau, including intangible cultural heritage, cultural tourism development and so on. These endeavors allow students to discover MGM's innovation and breakthroughs in arts & culture, offering a field learning opportunity to nurture future talents in this sector.



In the first half of 2024, MGM has collaborated with different schools and organizations in both Macau and Hong Kong, providing study tours related to arts & culture in MGM for nearly 361 students. Earlier, the Company arranged a dedicated "Study Tour on Intangible Cultural Heritage" for a total of 160 teachers and students from Hong Kong's St. Paul's School (Lam Tin). They went on a journey to appreciate MGM's art collections and special exhibitions on intangible heritage, as well as how the Company integrated intangible cultural heritage like Guangzhou clay sculpture and Cantonese embroidery into art of living. Besides, 83 Primary 3 students focusing on experiential learning at Pui Ching Middle School, came to MGM in June to learn more about Macau's role as a hub for tourism and leisure. During this study tour, they were exposed to MGM's creativity of arts & culture while experiencing the synergy of "tourism+".

In addition, MGM organized a tour for a total of 35 Form 4 students and teachers from Hong Kong's St. Rose of Lima's College. The tour comprised the introduction of MGM's arts & culture development and the revitalization initiatives in the Barra district, raising public enthusiasm for the city's history and culture. To further assist students in developing their future career paths, MGM also hosted a "Career Lead" study tour for over 80 Year 2 students majoring in design at Macau Polytechnic University, together with a "behind the scenes" introduction of IR operation and tourism industries.



Moving forward, MGM will continue to underline Macau as an educational tourist destination, while expanding its range of "tourism+" offerings, further advancing Macau's diverse development.

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Henk Hofstra

ART

DUTCH ARTIST BRINGS 'EGGSPRESSION' TO MACAU

HOWARD TONG

GALAXY Macau has unveiled a new art exhibition, partnering with renowned Dutch artist Henk Hofstra, presenting the "Eggspression" installation inside a venue in the Pearl Lobby.

This marks the first time Hofstra has presented his work indoors, and he is elated with the results.

While most of Hofstra's works are in outdoor public spaces arou-

nd the world, this indoor exhibition in Macau still embodies his signature style and thought-provoking themes.

Regardless of the location, Hofstra's artistic vision remains consistent, as all his projects encourage viewers to contemplate important societal issues and our relationship with the planet.

"All my projects have something to do with how we see things. What is happening, where we came from, what we do and what

we do with our planet," he said.

This art installation holds dual meanings for Hofstra.

"First of all, an egg, it is a symbol of the beginning. It's not only a symbol, it is the beginning of life. It's fugal and it mostly arises out of love."

However, the fried egg imagery also serves as a metaphor for the effects of global warming.

"A lot of years ago, we went in our holidays to the south of France. And when we are there, it's so

hot the last years, we can fry an egg on the hood of our car. And that's also the meaning of these eggs. It's so hot, we can do it on the hood of a car. But nowadays, with global warming, we can fry an egg on the streets, on the roads, on the squares," Hofstra said.

Through his installations, Hofstra wants visitors to reflect on these environmental and societal issues, while also promoting unity and compassion.

"So let us think about each other, think about the people we love, think about our neighbors, think about other countries and work together for a better and beautiful world full of love," the artist said.

Hofstra's art aims to encourage people to think about important issues and address public topics,

presenting familiar elements of life in unexpected and thought-provoking ways.

His early project "The Blue Road" in the Netherlands in 2007 reimagined a former waterway as a public installation, while "Invasion of Ants" earned him the prestigious Sign+ Award in 2010.

His ongoing "Eggs Fall from the Sky" series has traveled from the Netherlands to Chile, Brazil, Portugal, Sao Paulo, Bilbao, Wuhan, Beijing, and now to Macau, providing audiences with an immersive experience that transcends barriers and inspires positive change.

Hofstra believes the true measure of success is people's reaction, and his goal is to bring joy and a fresh perspective to those who experience his large-scale public art installations.

OVER 7,000 INDIVIDUALS REPAYING STUDENT LOANS

lun Pui lun, deputy director of the Education and Youth Development Bureau, said there are still over 7,000 individuals repaying student loans as of the 2023/2024 school year. Occasionally, the authorities receive requests from beneficiary students for a "temporary suspension" of repayment, usually due to reasons like pursuing further studies or health-related issues preventing them from making monthly repayments. Repayers are required to provide evidence of their circumstances, such as health or education, and the authorities will promptly approve and notify them of a new repayment plan. In cases where income has decreased due to unemployment or underemployment, individuals can submit an employment certificate to request a reduced monthly repayment amount.

CRIME GANG FIGHT OVER MONEY AT COTAI HOTEL

Police officers intervened to stop an alleged fight involving multiple individuals at a Cotai hotel during the weekend. The officers used batons and shields to separate and subdue those involved. One of the mainland men reported being injured and was taken to the hospital. Nine mainland men believed to be involved in the altercation were taken to the police station for further investigation. Initial findings suggested the incident stemmed from a dispute between two groups, consisting of four and five individuals respectively, possibly related to financial matters.

GBA

Life science industrial park construction underway in Hengqin

NADIA SHAW

A new life science industrial park is under construction in Hengqin. It is situated on Qinghai West Road and is expected to significantly boost Macau's technology and life sciences sectors.

The biopharmaceutical industrial park is part of a broader effort to establish Hengqin as a "science city" and solidify the GBA's status as a leading innovation hub in China, according to the Hengqin Qinao

Innovation Industrial Park Development and Construction (Hengqin IDC) company.

With a total floor area of 400,000 square meters, the three-phase project will receive RMB60 billion in investment and is scheduled for completion in the second half of 2025.

Ng Hong Kei, the general manager of a Macau-funded technology firm in the area told TDM, "the various science-related enterprises already established in Hengqin

would greatly enhance the clustering effect sparked by new additions built as part of the science city."

Under the terms of the project, Hengqin IDC must recruit eligible Macau-funded businesses to the development and ensure the occupancy level does not fall under 80% within five years after the park comes into operation.

The park is set to receive substantial government subsidies, with up to RMB600 million

available for major projects with global significance.

The government estimates the number of Macau residents living in Hengqin will rise significantly from 20,000 by the end of this year to around 120,000 by 2035 as integration between the two regions deepens.

While no specific timeline has been announced for the completion of the new industrial park in Hengqin, construction is ongoing according to Hengqin IDC.

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RENATO MARQUES

EPM SAGA

PORTUGUESE AUTHORITIES INVESTIGATE DISMISSAL OF FIVE EPM STAFF

PORTUGUESE Education authorities are investigating the dismissal of five staff members from the Portuguese School of Macau (EPM), the Office of the Minister of Education, Science, and Innovation of Portugal (MECI), Fernando Alexandre, has told the Times.

According to the communication, at the request of Minister Alexandre the Inspectorate-General of Education and Science (IGEC) has opened an investigation into the EPM "to determine the circumstances the director [Acácio de Brito] dismissed four teachers and one senior technician," the MECI said.

The matter involves four teachers and one psychologist who are part of a larger group of staff members (most of whom are teachers) that earlier on had received notification from the school that their contract had been terminated.

MECI also said the start of the investigation has immediate effects on the dismissal of the staff members who will now stay on duty at the school, at least until the investigation is concluded.

"Instructions were also given, during the EPM Foundation Board of Directors meeting held on Thursday [June 27], for these teachers and senior technicians to remain at the school until the investigation

RENATO MARQUES



process is completed."

The MECI said that "if the investigation from IGEC concludes that there were no grounds for dismissing those 5 workers,

their replacement will not be authorized."

As the Times reported last week, at least six of the staff members dismissed from the

EPM have filed complaints with the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) following their dismissal from the school claiming unruly procedures.

DSAL has not yet confirmed if there is also an investigation into the cases of the EPM staff members by local labor authorities.

VICTORIA CHAN

LABOR

Unemployment rate approaches 2019 levels

THE general unemployment rate for March-May 2024 stood at 1.9%, while the unemployment rate for local residents was 2.5%, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

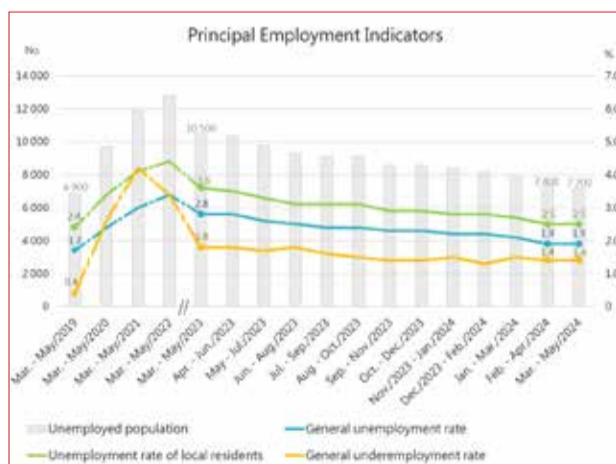
The latest government data indicates the unemployment rate has remained steady, approaching the levels seen in the same period in 2019.

Both indicators remained unchanged from the previous period (February-April 2024) after falling for two consecutive periods and are approaching their corresponding levels in the same period in 2019.

The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.4%.

The labor force living in Macau totaled 379,300, with a labor force participation rate of 67.4%.

Total employment



(372,100) and the number of employed residents (283,600) both experienced slight declines from the previous period.

Analyzed by industry, employment in the Financial Activities and Construction sectors decreased, while employment in Hotels, Restaurants & Similar Activities increased

further, owing to a continued rise in the number of visitors.

The number of unemployed persons (7,200) declined by 200 from the previous period, marking the fifth consecutive period of decline.

Underemployment also decreased further, with the number of underemployed (5,200)

falling by 200 from the previous period, primarily in the Construction and Transport & Storage sectors.

This comes as the government, associations and big six operators have held multiple job-matching sessions.

However, earlier this year, lawmakers were skeptical that the "job-matching sessions" model promoted by the government with the gaming concessionaires will be effective. They said the existing model is saturated and unlikely to alleviate unemployment of residents any further.

Lawmakers noted that some of those employed through the job matching model only remained in their roles for brief periods.

MACAO WATER PROMOTES WATER CONSERVATION

MACAO Water has hosted its annual open day event to educate the public on the importance of water conservation.

The company highlighted Macau residents' relatively low daily water consumption compared to neighboring cities, which it attributed to successful education initiatives.

The event featured a range of interactive activities, including laboratory tests and workshops, designed to give the community a deeper understanding of the company's daily operations and the significance of using water responsibly.

"We have some lab tests for people to know what are the major parameters we check daily to ensure clean, safe drinking water," said Oscar Chu, the deputy general manager of Macao Water.

"We show them our daily work like meter reading, leak detection and more."

Chu said the open day presents a valuable opportunity,

especially for younger generations, to learn more about Macau's water supply.

Despite forecasting a 5.5% increase in total water consumption this year, Macao Water remains confident the local population is well-educated on the importance of conservation.

"I think most of the young generation today realize the importance of using water wisely, not wasting any water," Chu said.

He said Macau residents already use less water per capita than neighboring cities, with an average usage of 152 liters per person daily, compared to the surrounding area's average of 160 to 180 liters.

With the company's treatment plants capable of producing 520,000 cubic meters of water daily, nearly 300,000 of which are currently used on average, Macao Water ensures the population's water needs will be met for over a decade. VC

EDUCATION

Navigating college admissions another challenge for students

CHINA'S grueling national college entrance exam, the gaokao, may have concluded, but the pressure is far from over.

As scores for the all-important exam become available nationwide, students and their parents find themselves facing a new source of tension — navigating the complex university application process.

The race for coveted university spots has fueled a booming market for college application advisory services.

Even before the exam concluded earlier this month, the high demand for application services was evident. A service priced at 17,999 yuan (\$2,480) offered by Zhang Xuefeng, an influential online education adviser, sold out in three hours during a livestream. Anxious parents flooded the livestream with questions about applying to suitable majors and universities based on their children's preferences and performance.

According to iiMedia Research, the market for gaokao application services in China reached 880 million yuan in 2022 and around 950 million yuan last year. China has over 1,850 companies involved in "university application services", with 80.4 percent established in the past five years, according to database query platform TianYanCha.com.

A college application adviser in Henan province surnamed Xu, who spoke to the Yitiao social media



platform, said that while advisers require few professional qualifications, they must have extensive knowledge of admission procedures and university plans.

Xu, an adviser with 10 years of experience, said he provides targeted suggestions based on exam performance and career preferences, rather than recommending specific majors, to help clients avoid pitfalls and irrational trends.

Even though they meet the needs of many students and parents, concerns have been raised about the quality of services provided by some institutions with limited educational expertise. The concerns include potentially unprofessional advice and mis-

guided recommendations during a crucial decision-making period.

The Ministry of Education recently disclosed various fraudulent cases involving people posing as college application experts and conducting scams under the guise of consulting. Some institutions claimed "100 percent guaranteed admission" or promised to "not waste a point", but then encouraged students to apply to colleges or programs with lower cutoff scores to inflate their success rates.

Chen Jiankun, the founder of ChatEDU, an online education consultancy tool, advised students to be cautious and not blindly trust institutions or consultants. He emphasized the importance of un-

derstanding one's personality and career plans.

ChatEDU is a free AI-powered tool that provides tailored college application plans based on algorithms and data. Users input information such as their province, chosen subjects and gaokao scores. The tool then offers "high risk", "safe" and "guaranteed" recommendations for universities

and majors, explaining the reasons behind each suggestion.

Users can also inquire about specific schools or majors and request recommendations within a particular region or field.

ChatEDU has reviewed all public undergraduate institutions and majors, focusing on regular universities and newly established majors to address students' concerns.

"Providing students with free college application consulting can bridge their information gap and help them find the most suitable universities and majors," Chen said, highlighting the importance of offering equal educational resources to students from disadvantaged families.

Wang Changbin, the father of an examinee in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, decided against using any agency for his daughter's

college applications due to the high prices and varying quality of services.

"I don't think it's necessary to get involved in the anxiety raised by the competitive environment," he said. "There's enough time to make choices after gaokao scores come out."

On Monday night, his daughter Wang Ziyu checked her results, and they plan to fill out her college application using a free information service system launched by the Ministry of Education.

The system, accessible through the "Sunshine Gaokao" platform on the Smart Education of China website, integrates extensive data on university admissions and employment prospects. It aims to assist students by providing reliable and comprehensive resources for choosing their academic paths. **CHINADAILY**

Pair of giant pandas from China arrive safely at San Diego Zoo

TWO giant pandas from China have safely arrived in Southern California, where they will be cared for as part of an ongoing conservation partnership, the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance said Friday.

The pandas, Yun Chuan and Xin Bao, will spend the next several weeks acclimating to their new home in a private habitat at the San Diego Zoo and will not be viewable by the public, the alliance said in a brief statement.

"They are being monitored closely by expert wildlife health and care teams who will determine when the pair are ready to meet the public," the alliance said.

A farewell ceremony was held earlier this week before the pandas departed from China.

Yun Chuan, a mild-mannered male who's nearly 5 years old, has connections to California, the wildlife alliance said previously. His mother, Zhen Zhen, was

born at the San Diego Zoo in 2007 to parents Bai Yun and Gao Gao.

Xin Bao is a nearly 4-year-old female described as "a gentle and witty introvert with a sweet round face and big ears."

The San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance has a nearly 30-year partnership with leading conservation institutions in China focused on protecting and recovering giant pandas and the bamboo forests they depend on.

MDT/AP

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DISPUTED SEA

JAPAN AND PHILIPPINES TRYING TO FINISH DEFENSE PACT FOR SIGNING IN MANILA AS ALARM GROWS OVER CHINA

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

TOP defense and foreign affairs officials of Japan and the Philippines will meet in Manila next month to strengthen strategic ties and discuss regional concerns, the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs said Friday at a time of escalating concerns over China's actions in the disputed South China Sea.

Details of the agenda of the July 8 meetings of Japanese Foreign Minister Kamikawa Yoko and Defense Minister Kihara Minoru with their Philippine counterparts were not immediately made public, but two officials of both countries told The Associated Press that efforts were underway to finalize a key defense pact which they hope could be signed during the meetings.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authority to discuss the issue publicly.

During a visit to Manila last year, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida agreed with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos to start negotiations on a reciprocal access agreement which would allow troops to enter each other's territory for joint military exercises and strengthened defense cooperation. The move is part of efforts to strengthen their alliance in the face of what they regard as China's growing assertiveness in the region.

Marcos said last year that the



Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, right, and Philippines' President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

proposed defense pact would be beneficial "both to our defense and military personnel and to maintaining peace and stability in our region." Kishida announced during the Manila visit that a coastal surveillance radar would be given to the Philippines through a grant, making it the first Southeast Asian nation to become a beneficiary of a newly launched Japanese se-

curity assistance program for allied militaries in the region.

Additional Japanese patrol vessels, defense equipment and radars will be provided to strengthen the Philippines' law enforcement capability at sea, Kishida said last year. Japan has supplied a dozen patrol ships in recent years to the Philippines, which is now largely using them to defend its territorial interests

in the contested waters.

Japan has had a longstanding territorial dispute with China over islands in the East China Sea. Meanwhile, Chinese and Philippine coast guard and navy ships have been involved in a series of tense confrontations in the South China Sea, a key global trade route.

In the worst confrontation so far, Chinese coast guard person-

nel armed with knives, spears and an axe aboard motorboats repeatedly rammed and destroyed two Philippine navy supply vessels at disputed Second Thomas Shoal last week, injuring several Filipino sailors. Chinese sailors seized at least seven Philippine navy rifles.

The Philippines strongly protested the Chinese coast guard's actions and demanded payment for the damage and the return of the rifles. China accused the Philippines of instigating the violence, saying the Filipino sailors strayed into what it called Chinese territorial waters despite warnings, prompting its coast guard to take action.

Japan, along with the United States and its Asian and Western allied countries and security partners, expressed concern over the Chinese actions.

"Japan reiterates serious concern over repeated actions which obstruct freedom of navigation and increase regional tensions, including recent dangerous actions that resulted in damage to the Filipino vessel and injuries to Filipinos onboard," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo said after the confrontation.

Washington renewed its warning that it is obligated to defend the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia, if Filipino forces, ships and aircraft come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea.

Marcos and other Philippine officials said the Chinese assault on the Filipino navy personnel last week, which was caught on video and photographs that were made public by the Manila government, was "illegal" and "deliberate," but did not amount to an armed assault that would activate the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty with the U.S. **MDT/AP**

PHILIPPINES

Troops kill 10 communist rebels in a clash, in the latest blow to decades-long insurgency

PHILIPPINE troops killed at least 10 suspected communist guerrillas in a clash in a remote northern area in the latest blow to a decades-old insurgency that has weakened considerably, with only about a thousand guerrillas remaining, military and security officials said Friday.

Army troops caught up with about 20 New People's Army guerrillas who were withdrawing from an earlier clash with government forces

last week, sparking a firefight Wednesday that killed 10 rebels, including three commanders, near a village in Pantabangan town in Nueva Ecija province, the army said.

Thirteen rifles and a pistol were recovered from the area of the fighting, which was near a key dam, it said. Troops were pursuing about 10 other guerrillas who withdrew from the remote area, regional army spokesperson Maj. Jimson Masangkay said by



Bags from suspected communist rebels are placed together after an encounter with Philippine troops near a village in Pantabangan town in Nueva Ecija province, Philippines, last week

telephone.

Brig. Gen. Norwin Joseph Pasamonte, an army infantry brigade commander, commen-

ded the troops but expressed sadness over the rebel deaths. "The government did not fail in appealing to them to

surrender and return to normal life," Pasamonte said in a statement, adding that the deaths should help convince the remaining guerrillas to give up.

Nueva Ecija, a rice-growing region in the north, used to be a hotbed of the communist insurgency decades ago, but less than 50 Maoist guerrillas remain in the area, Masangkay said.

Last November, the government and the communist rebels agreed to resume talks

aimed at ending the armed insurgency, one of Asia's longest, after meeting in the Norwegian capital of Oslo to address key obstacles to intermittent peace negotiations, according to Norwegian mediators.

Actual peace talks, however, have not restarted under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

Philippine officials say about 1,000 communist fighters remain after years of rebel setbacks, surrenders and factionalism. Peace talks brokered by Norway collapsed under previous President Rodrigo Duterte after both sides accused the other of continuing deadly attacks despite the negotiations. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Waste pickers Salmaa and Usmaan Shekh, right, search for recyclable materials during a heat wave at a garbage dump on the outskirts of Jammu, India



Waste pickers Arjun, 6, sorts recyclable items with his parents at a garbage dump site during a heat wave on the outskirts of Jammu, India

For India's garbage pickers, a miserable and dangerous job made worse by extreme heat

CHANNI ANAND, PIYUSH NAGPAL & SIBI ARASU, JAMMU

THE putrid smell of burning garbage wafts for miles from the landfill on the outskirts of Jammu in a potentially toxic miasma fed by the plastics, industrial, medical and other waste generated by a city of some 740,000 people. But a handful of waste pickers ignore both the fumes and suffocating heat to sort through the rubbish, seeking anything they can sell to earn at best the equivalent of \$4 a day.

"If we don't do this, we don't get any food to eat," said 65-year-old Usmaan Shekh. "We try to take a break for a few minutes when it gets too hot, but mostly we just continue till we can't."

Shekh and his family are among the estimated 1.5 to 4 million people who scratch out a living searching through India's waste — and climate change is making a hazardous job more dangerous than ever. In Jammu, a northern Indian city in the Himalayan foothills, temperatures this summer have regularly topped 43 degrees Celsius (about 110

Fahrenheit).

At least one person who died in northern India's recent heat wave was identified as a garbage picker.

The landfills themselves seethe internally as garbage decomposes, and the rising heat of summer speeds and intensifies the process. That increases emissions of gases such as methane and carbon dioxide that are dangerous to breathe. And almost all landfill fires come in summer, experts say, and can burn for days.

At the Jammu landfill, small fires dotted the massive pile, sending up plumes of smoke as two men hauled a frayed tarp loaded with garbage on the day Associated Press journalists visited. A 6-year-old boy clutched an armful of plastic sandals. As other pickers occasionally sheltered from the heat, birds wheeled overhead, occasionally touched down in their own search for scraps.

India generates at least 62 million tons of waste annually, according to federal government records, and some of its landfills are literal mountains

of garbage, like the Ghaziabad landfill outside New Delhi. And while a 2016 law made it mandatory to segregate waste so that hazardous material doesn't make its way to landfills, the law has been poorly enforced, adding to the risk of waste pickers.

"Since they mostly just use their hands, they are already contaminated by touching everything from diapers to diabetes syringes," said Bharrati Chaturvedi, founder of

This year's heat has 'been the most catastrophic thing one could imagine'

the New Delhi-based Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group.

Chaturvedi, who has worked with waste pickers for more than two decades, said extreme heat has added new risks to waste pickers who are already victims of social discrimination and appalling work conditions.

"It's been a terrible, terrible, terrible year," she said. "They

already expect to suffer from the heat and that gives them a lot of anxiety, because they don't know if they'll make it, if they'll survive it (the summer)."

Chaturvedi said this year's heat has "been the most catastrophic thing one could imagine" adding that "It's really very sad to look at how the poor are trying to live somehow, just take their bodies and try to reach the end of this heat wave in some form of being intact."

Heat planning and public health experts say that people who are forced to work outdoors are at most risk due to prolonged heat exposure. Heatstroke, cardiovascular diseases and chronic kidney diseases are some of the risks from working outdoors during high heat.

Waste pickers "are among the most vulnerable and highly exposed to heat," said Abhiyant Tiwari, who leads the climate resilience team at the Natural Resources Defense Council's India program.

In New Delhi, some people who work the capital city's

estimated 4.2 million annual tons of garbage have cut back from two meals a day to just one, said Ruksana Begum, a 41-year-old waste picker at the Bhalswa landfill in the city.

"They are trying to avoid work because of the heat since if they go to work they end up spending more at the hospital than for their food," Begum said.

Tiwari and Chaturvedi both said it's essential to give waste pickers access to a regular water supply, shade, or a relatively cool building near the landfills. They should also be encouraged to avoid working at high heat and given prompt medical care when they need it, they said.

Tiwari said India has taken significant steps to devise heat action plans but implementing the plans all across the country is a challenge.

"As a society, we have a responsibility to protect them (garbage pickers)," said Tiwari. Simple steps can help, such as offering them water if they're standing outside people's homes, rather than asking them to leave, he said.

Geeta Devi, a 55-year-old garbage picker also at the Bhalswa landfill in New Delhi, says when she feels dizzy in the heat she takes shelter and sometimes someone gives her water or food. But she has to work to earn the 150-200 rupees (\$1.80 to \$2.40) per day that puts food on the table for her children.

"It is difficult to do my job because of the heat. But I have no other job," she said. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



French President Emmanuel Macron, right, meets French far-right Rassemblement National (National Rally) leader Marine Le Pen at the Elysee Palace, 2022

FRANCE

Exceptionally high-stakes election has begun. The far right leads preelection polls

BARBARA SURK & HELENA ALVES, PARIS

VOTERS across mainland France began casting ballots yesterday in the first round of an exceptional parliamentary election that could put France's government in the hands of nationalist, far-right parties for the first time since the Nazi era.

The outcome of the two-round election, which will wrap up July 7, could impact European financial markets, Western support for Ukraine, and how France's nuclear arsenal and global military force are managed.

Many French voters are frustrated about inflation and economic concerns, as well as President Emmanuel Macron's leadership, which they see as arrogant and out-of-touch with their lives. Marine Le Pen's anti-immigration National Rally party has tapped and fueled that discontent, notably via online platforms like TikTok, and dominated all preelection opinion polls.

A new coalition on the left, the New Popular Front, is also posing a challenge to the pro-business Macron and his centrist alliance Together for the Republic.

There are 49.5 million registered voters who will choo-

se 577 members of the National Assembly, France's lower house of parliament, during the two-round voting.

After a blitz campaign marred by rising hate speech, voting began early in France's overseas territories, and polling stations opened in mainland France at 8 a.m. (0600 GMT) Sunday. The first polling projections are expected at 8 p.m. (1800 GMT), when the final polling stations close, and early official results are expected later Sunday night.

In the restive French Pacific territory of New Caledonia, polls already closed at 5 p.m. local time due to an 8 p.m.-to-6 a.m. curfew that authorities on the archipelago have extended until July 8.

Nine people died during a two-week-long unrest in New Caledonia, where the Indigenous Kanak people have long sought to break free from France, which first took the Pacific territory in 1853. Violence flared on May 13 in response to attempts by Macron's government to amend the French Constitution and change voting lists in New Caledonia, which Kanaks feared would further marginalize them.

Voters in France's other overseas territories from Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, Saint-Barthélemy, Saint-Mar-

tin, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyana, French Polynesia and those voting in offices opened by embassies and consular posts across the Americas cast their ballots on Saturday.

Macron called the early election after his party was trounced in the European Parliament election earlier in June by the National Rally, which has historic ties to racism and antisemitism and is hostile toward France's Muslim community. It was an audacious gamble that French voters who were complacent about the European Union election would be jolted into turning out for moderate forces in a national election to keep the far right out of power.

Instead, preelection polls suggest that the National Rally is gaining support and has a chance at winning a parliamentary majority. In that scenario, Macron would be expected to name 28-year-old National Rally President Jordan Bardella as prime minister in an awkward power-sharing system known as "cohabitation."

While Macron has said he won't step down before his presidential term expires in 2027, cohabitation would weaken him at home and on the world stage.

The results of the first round will give a picture of

overall voter sentiment, but not necessarily of the overall makeup of the next National Assembly. Predictions are extremely difficult because of the complicated voting system, and because parties will work between the two rounds to make alliances in some constituencies or pull out of others.

In the past such tactical maneuvers helped keep far-right candidates from power. But now support for Le Pen's party has spread deep and wide.

Bardella, who has no governing experience, says he would use the powers of prime minister to stop Macron from continuing to supply long-range weapons to Ukraine for the war with Russia. His party has historical ties to Russia.

The party has also questioned the right to citizenship for people born in France, and wants to curtail the rights of French citizens with dual nationality. Critics say this undermines fundamental human rights and is a threat to France's democratic ideals.

Meanwhile, huge public spending promises by the National Rally and especially the left-wing coalition have shaken markets and ignited worries about France's heavy debt, already criticized by EU watchdogs. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1997 HONG KONG HANDED OVER TO CHINESE CONTROL



Hong Kong has been handed back to the Chinese authorities - ending more than 150 years of British control.

The British flag was lowered over Government House - home to the last Governor Chris Patten for the past five years - at midnight last night.

The flag was presented to Mr Patten who was then driven off in his official Rolls Royce, before the car was handed over to Tung Chee-hwa, the territory's Chief Executive.

In his farewell speech, Mr Patten said: "The story of this great city is about the years before this night and the years of success that will surely follow it."

Britain has controlled Hong Kong island since 1842 - apart from a brief period during World War II when the Japanese took over.

A huge fireworks display lit up Victoria Harbour at 2000 local time. One hour later, 4,000 guests sat down to a banquet in the Convention Centre on the harbour front, while 509 Chinese troops crossed the land border into Hong Kong.

Among the guests for the final handover ceremony at the Convention Centre were Prince Charles, Prime Minister Tony Blair, Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and Chris Patten. Chinese dignitaries included President Jiang Zemin, Premier Li Peng, Foreign Minister Qian Qichen and military leader General Zhang Wannian.

In Beijing the ceremony was watched on giant screens erected in Tiananmen Square.

At the stroke of midnight, the red digits of the countdown clock turned to zero and the handpicked crowd roared its approval.

Shortly afterwards, Prince Charles and Mr Patten boarded the Royal Yacht Britannia and waved a final farewell to the strains of Rule Britannia and Land of Hope and Glory.

Just half an hour after the handover, there was a demonstration by the Hong Kong Democratic Party outside the Legislative Council building - but it did not delay the inauguration of the new Special Administrative Region government.

Tung Chee-hwa was sworn in as Hong Kong's new leader.

"This is a momentous and historic day ... Hong Kong and China are whole again," said Mr Tung.

But he promised, "We value this empowerment and we will exercise our powers prudently and responsibly."

CourtesyBBCNews

IN CONTEXT

Discussions between Britain and China on the future of Hong Kong began in 1982. After 22 rounds of formal talks, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and her Chinese counterpart, Zhao Ziyang, signed the Joint Declaration in 1984. In 1992, Chris Patten was sworn in as the last governor of Hong Kong with a remit to prepare for the colony's democratic future under Chinese rule. Democratic elections were held in 1995 for the new Legislative Council.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Disorganization could get expensive. The trouble's in the details. Upgrade the integrity of your financial situation. Patiently maintain communication.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Nurture yourself. Don't get sidetracked by controversy. Focus on a personal presentation. If you break your word, apologize and recommit. Dress for success.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Rest and reconsider your upcoming plans. An obstacle requires thoughtful strategies. Avoid travel or crowds and find a peaceful place to meditate and imagine.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Support your team to stay on task. Patiently navigate confusion, chaos or a conflict of interests. Practice compassionate listening, tact and diplomacy.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 A professional challenge takes focus. Check data and reservations. Reinforce foundational support structures. Gentle pressure works better than force.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Obstacles and traffic could cause delays. Plan long-distance moves in advance. Or explore your own neighborhood. Learn through the experience of another. Connect remotely.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Opposites attract. You can provide what your partner lacks. This can be especially useful with shared finances. Patiently collaborate. Plant seeds for later harvest.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Coordinate actions to manage shared responsibilities. Focus on practical priorities with your partner. Keep your patience with delays or obstacles. Support each other.

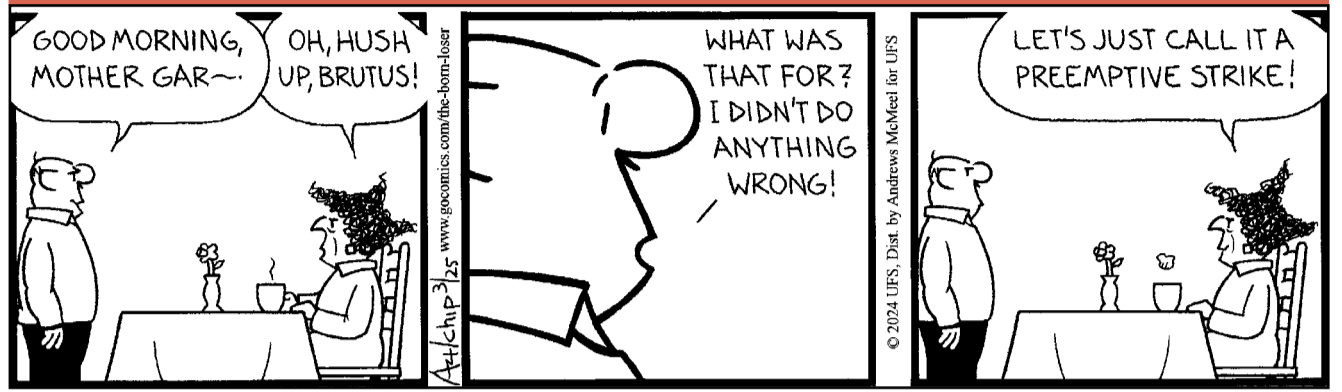
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Anticipate resistance. A barrier to your physical labor or health arises. Maintain practices for strength and endurance. Energize with extra rest and good food.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Handle chores and obligations before going out to play. Pay extra attention to a loved one with a breakdown. Contribution benefits your heart.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Prioritize home and family. Reinforce domestic structures. Make repairs and upgrades. Handle chores and clean a mess. Discipline is required. Stir love into comfort food.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 A challenge with a creative project requires patient review. You're learning what doesn't work. Strengthen foundational structures and polish later.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY					EASY+								
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	8	3			9					
9			5	8						

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	22	29	rain
Changchun	16	27	cloudy
Chengdu	22	33	cloudy
Chongqing	25	31	cloudy
Fuzhou	28	36	cloudy
Guangzhou	27	35	thunderstorms
Guiyang	19	24	rain
Haikou	28	37	cloudy
Hangzhou	24	32	rain
Harbin	14	27	fine
Hefei	24	30	rain
Nanjing	25	27	rain
Shanghai	24	27	rain
Taipei	26	33	cloudy
Wuhan	24	27	rain
Hong Kong	29	32	showers
WORLD			
Moscow	22	32	cloudy
Frankfurt	13	21	thunderstorms
Paris	15	22	sunny
London	13	20	cloudy
New York	18	27	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Mariners can sail on seven of these; 5- Committee type; 10- Hats; 14- Org. co-founded by Helen Keller; 15- Ragu competitor; 16- Like the Sabin vaccine; 17- Give ___ for one's money; 18- Trimmed; 19- Fiddling emperor; 20- Striped buzzer; 22- Frighten; 23- Motorists' org.; 24- Enemy; 25- Make good as new; 29- Residence of the popes; 33- Vows; 34- Farrow and Hamm; 36- Tropical tuber; 37- It's a free country; 38- With ___ of thousands; 39- L.A. clock setting; 40- Eye problem; 42- Russo of "The Thomas Crown Affair"; 43- Cream-filled cookies; 45- Spirit; 47- Italian seaport; 49- Grande; 50- VCR button; 51- Thin as ___; 54- Interpret; 60- ___-majesté; 61- Not tied down; 62- Anatomical passage; 63- Consumes; 64- Cafeteria items; 65- Bar ___; 66- Revise; 67- Small change; 68- Winds up;

Friday's solution

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AP PHOTO



Germany's Jamal Musiala celebrates after scoring his side's second goal during a round of sixteen match between Germany and Denmark at the Euro 2024 soccer tournament in Dortmund, Germany, Saturday

Fans at a fan fest in Berlin celebrate

EURO 2024 | REVIEW

GERMANY BEATS DENMARK TO ADVANCE TO QUARTERFINALS AFTER STORM STOPS PLAY

STEVE DOUGLAS

GERMANY 2, DENMARK 0

LET that patriotic fervor soar. Host nation Germany is headed to the quarterfinals at the European Championship after

a wet and wild win over Denmark on Saturday.

"We're going to Berlin," sang the jubilant Germany fans who were first battered by rain and hail after a thunderstorm that stopped play for 25 minutes, then saw their team

benefit from back-to-back video review calls that helped to set up a 2-0 victory in Dortmund.

Two more wins will take Germany to the capital for the July 14 final, in what could yet turn into a summer fairy tale for a

nation whose soccer team is coming out of a sorry run of performances in major tournaments.

It could have been so different against the Danes, though.

The host-nation buzz was burst when, with the score at 0-0, Denmark defender Joachim Andersen swept home a close-range finish that looked to have put his team ahead in the 50th minute. The Video Assistant Referee spotted an offside in the buildup, a free kick was awarded and the ball was played downfield immediately, leading to a cross by David Raum hitting the outstretched right arm of — who else? — Andersen.

The VAR got involved again and a penalty was awarded. Kai Havertz converted the spot kick and Jamal Musiala added a second goal — his third of the tournament, which is tied for the most with Georgia's Georges Mikautadze — in the 68th.

"We played a super game — we had crazy fans again today," Germany defender Nico Schlotterbeck said. "We're playing with euphoria, we're playing with fun, and that's what the most beautiful thing about football is."

It was Germany's first win in the knockout stage of a major tournament since 2016, since when the national team has failed to advance from the group stage at back-to-back World Cups and lost

in the last 16 of the last Euros in 2021 to England.

Germany will play Spain or Georgia next and became the second team to advance from the round of 16, after Switzerland beat defending champion Italy 2-0 earlier Saturday.

Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann told German broadcaster ZDF that he used the rain delay to show his players incidents from the first half-hour of the game which his team dominated, playing the most soccer of the tournament, in his opinion.

Indeed, the players were able to head into the confines of the locker room while thunder, lightning and torrential rain struck, leaving spectators in the front rows particularly exposed as they scrambled higher in the stands. Many used black-yellow-and-red flags they had waved before the match, to welcome the players onto the field, as makeshift umbrellas.

"Oh, how lovely it is," some sang, and a few Danish supporters danced in waterfalls in the stands.

There was about a 20-minute delay before the rain relented and players re-emerged, undertaking warmups before play resumed a few minutes later. The pitch held

up well in the circumstances.

Denmark coach Kasper Hjulmand was left to rue those crucial couple of minutes when the big VAR decisions were made.

"I have the photo here," he said, whipping out his phone at the post-match news conference. "It was one centimeter (offside). In terms of statistics and data, it doesn't make sense. This is not how we are supposed to be using VAR."

"And I am so tired of the ridiculous handball rule. Joachim was running normally. It's a normal situation."

Nagelsmann sympathized with Hjulmand, saying: "I would also be annoyed if it was the other way round."

However, it's Denmark going home and Germany heading to Stuttgart on Friday.

"It was a wild game altogether," Nagelsmann said.

"We came through adversity in those seconds where it was, 'Was it a goal or not a goal?' and 'Was it handball or not a handball?' That makes me proud. The team deserves it and hopefully we are getting rid of the old memory stick and understand how good we actually are."

MDT/AP

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SCOREBOARD

Round of 16	Switzerland	2	0	Italy
Round of 16	Germany	2	0	Denmark



STEVE DOUGLAS,
DORTMUND

EURO 2024 | ANALYSIS

Could Ronaldo be dropped again by Portugal after not scoring at Euro 2024? Here's why it's unlikely

CRISTIANO Ronaldo has been a showstopper, as expected, at the European Championship.

Just not necessarily in the way he'd like to be.

The Portugal superstar with 632 million followers on Instagram and a never-ending stream of endorsement deals has had to deal with a raft of on-field selfie-seekers, during matches and in training. One presumed super-fan even leapt from the stands over the players' tunnel toward a startled-looking Ronaldo as he headed to the locker room after Portugal's match against Georgia.

He's raged at a referee (earning a yellow card), booted away a water bottle, and angrily remonstrated in the dugout. He's also had 12 shots, more than anyone else at Euro 2024.

What Ronaldo hasn't done is score — and that's the currency he deals in, at least in soccer.

OK, there was that moment he passed up a golden chance to score by passing unselfishly to Bruno Fernandes for Portugal's third goal in the 3-0 win over Turkey. A double-stepper that befuddled Abdulkemir Bardakci and left the Turkey center back on his back has proved a hit on social media and gave the world a reminder of the Ronaldo of 10, 15, even 20 years ago.

Ronaldo, though, is 39 now. Those big moments have beco-

me fleeting, especially when it comes to the big tournaments and when he's playing against top-level defenses.

Make that seven straight matches in which he has failed to score at a major tournament, covering the 2022 World Cup and Euro 2024. For the first time in his 21-year international career taking in five World Cups and six European Championships, he has ended a group stage without a goal.

So, with the powers of this undoubted soccer great on the wane, the question will again be asked heading into the knockout stage: Will the constant drama surrounding Ronaldo wind up being a distraction for Portugal in its bid for another big soccer title, eight years after winning its only one at Euro 2016?

Roberto Martinez clearly doesn't think so.

The Portugal coach is in thrall with Ronaldo, as shown by his reaction to the striker's assist — his record-tying eighth at the European Championship — against Turkey.

"It should be shown in every academy in Portugal and wor-

ld football," Martinez said, purring at this "spectacular" piece of play

A day earlier, he'd got into an exchange with a journalist who questioned whether Ronaldo could handle the intensity of a major tournament at age 39.

"All you need to do is look at what he has done in the last 12 months," Martinez proffered, pointing to his record in the Saudi league with Al-Nassr, for whom he started 31 of 34 games and scored a league-high 35 goals, and his 10 goals in Euro 2024 qualifying — second only to Belgium's Romelu Lukaku.

Before the tournament, Martinez lauded Ronaldo by saying he "approaches every day as a new way to be the best" and his stats "are better than anything, subjectively, that you can say."

Maybe to justify his arguments — or who knows, to keep in Ronaldo's good books — Martinez started the striker against Georgia despite resting all of his other key outfield players for a game that meant little for Portugal, which had already qualified as group

winner.

It was at this stage at the last World Cup where Ronaldo lost his place in Portugal's team, to the shock and anger of his millions of fans who might not see him play as much these days because of his move to the Middle East. He started all three of the group games, scoring only a penalty, and reacted poorly to being substituted by then-coach Fernando Santos against South Korea in the third.

Ronaldo didn't start the 6-1 win over Switzerland in the round of 16 — his replacement, Goncalo Ramos scored a hat trick — nor the quarterfinal loss to Morocco, after which he left the field in tears.

Given his public comments, it's unlikely Martinez will follow Santos' path and drop his captain in the knockout stage, starting against Slovenia on Monday, for what may pro-

ve to be Ronaldo's last matches at a major tournament.

Nor do his teammates, who have grown up idolizing Ronaldo, want that to happen.

"We want to be side by side with our captain," Portugal defender Diogo Dalot said, while midfielder Vitinha has spoken of the "privilege to be able to share moments with him on and off the pitch."

Ronaldo's desire and passion clearly remains. He is still a prolific scorer, albeit mostly against weak opposition these days, even if his mobility and, in particular, his pressing isn't at the level of a top-notch striker. It would be no surprise to see the top scorer in men's international soccer — with 130 goals — get off the mark against Slovenia.

Whether his continued selection is beneficial for Portugal is another thing entirely.

UPCOMING GAMES

	Date	Time	Home	Away	ODDS
Tue	Jul 2	0:00	France	Belgium	H1.98, D3.3, A5
		03:00	Portugal	Slovenia	H1.4, D5, A11

OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

**BEIJING AND HANOI
 UNITED IN THEIR DESIRE TO
 ENSURE STABLE REGIONAL
 ENVIRONMENT**

President Xi Jinping's meeting with visiting Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh in Beijing on Wednesday again sent a strong message to the outside world that Beijing and Hanoi are intent on consolidating their unity and friendship.

Chinh is on a four-day working visit to China starting Monday, and his itinerary includes attending the 15th Annual Meeting of the New Champions in Dalian, Liaoning province. His visit is the latest in a series of recent high-level exchanges between the two neighbors, and underscores their mutual efforts to continuously inject fresh vitality into bilateral ties and stand together in the face of the complex and challenging global situation.

In December last year, during a visit to Hanoi, President Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, and Nguyen Phu Trong, general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee, announced the building of a China-Vietnam community with a shared future, elevating bilateral ties to a new stage.

Since then, relations between the two parties and the two peoples have taken big strides in many fields. With their economies highly complementary, the two countries also have broad prospects for expanding their economic and trade cooperation, not least the digital economy, so as to bring more tangible benefits to the two peoples.

It is also commendable that Hanoi, deeming its relations with Beijing as the top priority and a strategic choice in its foreign policy, has consistently supported China's position on the Taiwan question and firmly adheres to the one-China principle and opposes the politicization of economic, trade and sci-tech issues.

Against the backdrop of the profoundly changing international landscape, stable and robust China-Vietnam ties not only cater to the modernization needs of the two socialist countries but also help contribute to maintaining peace and stability in the region and beyond.

Sharing similar views on regional and global issues, the two countries have everything to gain from setting a good example in properly handling their differences and jointly safeguarding peace and stability in the South China Sea and the region at large. This is especially true given the current rising tensions in the waters because of the Philippines' provocative antics with the encouragement of the United States.

Needless to say Vietnam occupies a special niche in the US playbook in the Asia-Pacific. Thanks to its special geopolitical position in Southeast Asia and its close ties with big countries including China and Russia, the country has long been perceived by Washington to be of strategic importance.

That may well explain why the US, despite old grudges stemming from the Vietnam War, has increasingly tried to solicit Vietnam as a participant in its geopolitical maneuvering. Washington has repeatedly tried to cozy up to Hanoi in recent years in the hope that Vietnam will act as a US bridgehead in its geopolitical confrontation with China.

But by trying to use the maritime disputes in the region to its advantage and making waves over them, the US is damaging the very fabric of peace and stability in the South China Sea and the region at large. The US' attempts to manipulate the South China Sea disputes for its own ends pose a threat to not only China's external environment, but also that of other countries in the region, Vietnam included.

Hence, it is crucial that Beijing and Hanoi join hands to actively promote mutually beneficial cooperation at sea, prevent external forces from meddling in the South China Sea issue and help accelerate regional efforts to make it a sea of peace and cooperation for all. **MDT/AP**

Canada's second largest airline, WestJet, said it canceled 407 flights affecting 49,000 passengers after the maintenance workers union announced it went on strike.

The Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association said its members started to strike Friday evening because the airline's "unwillingness to negotiate with the union" made it inevitable.

The surprise strike affecting international and domestic flights came after the federal government issued a ministerial

order for binding arbitration on Thursday. That followed two weeks of turbulent discussions with the union on a new deal.

WestJet said it will continue to park aircraft through Sunday for the long weekend culminating in Canada Day today. The airline has about 200 aircraft and says they'll operate approximately 30 by Sunday evening.

The airline's CEO, Alexis von Hoensbroech, put the blame for the situation squarely on what he said was a "rogue union from the U.S." that was trying to make inroads in Canada.



The heavily damaged al-Nuri mosque

IRAQ

**UNESCO FINDS
 ISLAMIC STATE GROUP-
 ERA BOMBS IN MOSUL
 MOSQUE WALLS, YEARS
 AFTER THE DEFEAT OF IS**

**ABDULRAHMAN ZEYAD,
 BAGHDAD**

THE U.N. cultural agency has discovered five bombs hidden within the walls of the historic al-Nouri Mosque in the city of Mosul in northern Iraq, a remnant of the Islamic State militant group's rule over the area, UNESCO said in a statement Saturday.

The mosque, famous for its 12th-century leaning minaret, was destroyed by IS in 2017 and has been a focal point of UNESCO's restoration efforts since 2020.

The U.N. agency said that five large-scale explosive devices, designed for significant destruction, were found inside the southern wall of the Prayer Hall last week.

"These explosive devices were concealed within a specially rebuilt section of the wall," the statement said. "Iraqi authorities were promptly notified, secured the area, and the situation is now fully under control."

It added that "one bomb has been defused

and removed, while the remaining four are interconnected and will be safely disposed of in the coming days."

Iraqi authorities have requested that UNESCO halt all reconstruction operations at al-Nouri mosque and evacuate the entire complex until the devices are disarmed.

IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared an Islamic caliphate from the mosque a decade ago on June 29, 2014, leading to its destruction when extremists blew it up during the battle to liberate Mosul in 2017.

The discovery of these bombs underscores ongoing challenges in clearing Mosul of explosives and revitalizing its devastated urban areas.

International efforts, supported by the United Nations, focus on mine clearance and aiding in the city's recovery. Despite progress, much of Mosul's old city remains in ruins, marked by minefield warning signs, highlighting the complexity of post-conflict reconstruction.

UNESCO aims to complete the full reconstruction of al-Nouri Mosque by December, "finally erasing the stigma of the Daesh occupation," the statement said, using the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State group's name.

A decade after the Islamic State group declared its caliphate in large parts of Iraq and Syria, the extremists no longer control any land, have lost many prominent leaders and are mostly out of the world news headlines.

Still, the group continues to recruit members and claim responsibility for deadly attacks around the world, including lethal operations in Iran and Russia earlier this year that left scores dead. Its sleeper cells in Syria and Iraq still carry out attacks against government forces in both countries as well as U.S.-backed Syrian fighters, at a time when Iraq's government is negotiating with Washington over a possible withdrawal of U.S. troops. **MDT/AP**



Puerto Rico Hurricane Beryl is forecast to strengthen into a powerful Category 4 storm as it approaches the southeast Caribbean, which began shutting down yesterday amid urgent pleas from government officials for people to take shelter. Hurricane warnings were in effect for Barbados, St. Lucia, Grenada, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Beryl's center is expected to pass about 70 miles south of Barbados on Monday morning, said Sabu Best, director of Barbados' meteorological service.



USA In the first presidential debate, Republican Donald Trump skimmed over the Jan. 6, 2021, attack at the Capitol, shifted blame for the violent mob siege and declined repeatedly to state unequivocally that he will accept the results of this year's White House election. And President Joe Biden, who has said the work of his presidency is to restore the soul of the nation, flubbed and floundered, failing to forcefully confront, contradict and hold Trump, the indicted former president, accountable for the attack on the election — and democracy.



Space Two NASA astronauts will stay longer at the International Space Station as engineers troubleshoot problems on Boeing's new space capsule that cropped up on the trip there. NASA on Friday did not set a return date until testing on the ground was complete and said the astronauts were safe. "We're not in any rush to come home," said NASA's commercial crew program manager Steve Stich.