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RCR electronics

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XI CALLS FOR COOPERATION WITH ITALY, EVOKING ANCIENT 'SILK ROAD'

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AP PHOTO



Japan U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, visiting Japan, yesterday expressed deep concerns about the legitimacy of Venezuela's recent election results. Urging transparency, he highlights the international community's readiness to respond, indicating significant doubt about the electoral integrity under Nicolas Maduro's continued presidency.

AP PHOTO



Israel After a devastating rocket attack from Lebanon struck a soccer field in Golan Heights, killing 12 youths, Israel contemplates severe responses against Hezbollah. The situation escalates fears of broader regional conflict. The U.S. pushes for a diplomatic resolution to prevent further violence between Israel and Lebanon.

AP PHOTO



Iraq Ten years post-Islamic State's brutal assault on Sinjar, many Yazidis remain displaced, struggling to find stable, secure homes. Despite the profound cultural significance of Sinjar, ongoing instability and lack of infrastructure deter many from returning. The community fears losing its identity if the Yazidis cannot return to their ancestral lands.

AP PHOTO

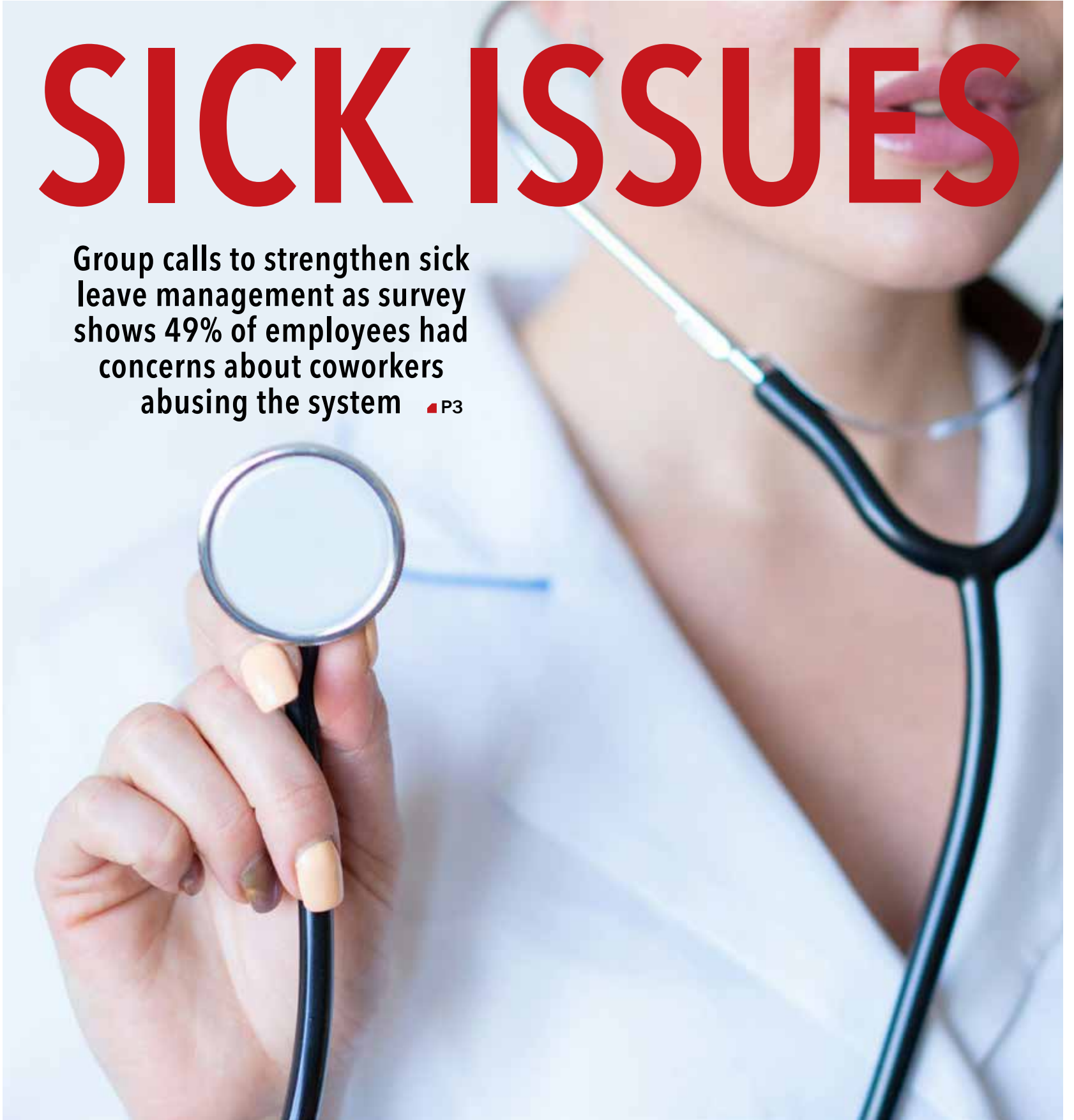


France Paris officials assure improved water quality in the Seine for the upcoming Olympic triathlon despite a recent cancellation due to pollution. Investments in infrastructure aim to ensure safe conditions for swimming events. Alternative plans are ready if water quality fails to meet safety standards by event day.

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SICK ISSUES

Group calls to strengthen sick leave management as survey shows 49% of employees had concerns about coworkers abusing the system ■ P3



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HEAVY RAIN AND THUNDERSTORMS EXPECTED

Macau is bracing for persistent showers and thunderstorms until tomorrow, as a low-pressure trough affects the region. The Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) has reported the area near the Pearl River Estuary will experience heavy rainfall, with maximum totals reaching about 19 meters on the Macau Peninsula, 12 meters in Taipa, and 16 meters in Coloane. The SMG warned cloudy conditions will persist along the Guangdong coast and the northern South China Sea. Residents are urged to stay updated on weather developments, as the trough's influence is expected to continue for the next two days, bringing potential flooding and hazardous conditions.

PUBLIC HOUSING CONSTRUCTION COMPLETED IN TAIPA

The Public Works Bureau (DSOP) has announced the completion of public housing construction on Avenida de Guimarães in Taipa, and the project has been temporarily accepted. The T1 & T2 project features three towers, offering 1,590 residential units and approximately 800 parking spaces for vehicles and motorcycles. Additional facilities include a bus terminus and a basement public car park. As maintenance work continues on Avenida de Guimarães, traffic lanes will be closed in stages from July 24 to Aug. 16, with each excavation phase lasting about a week.

COLLISION INVOLVING BUS AND TAXI INJURES FOUR INDIVIDUALS

In Taipa yesterday, a collision between a bus and a taxi took place, resulting in injuries to four individuals who were subsequently transported to the hospital. The incident unfolded around 4 p.m. on Av. Marginal Flor de Lotus. The taxi involved sustained significant damage to its front, appearing deformed, with various parts strewn across the muddy ground. The four injured individuals, which included the taxi driver and three bus passengers aged between 34 and 57, are in a stable condition, with contusions and abrasions noted as their primary injuries.

CREMATORIUM AND RIDE-HAILING IN DISCUSSION AT AL THIS WEEK

RENATO MARQUES

THE establishment of a crematorium and the legalization of ride-hailing services will be debated this week at the Legislative Assembly (AL).

Lawmaker Ron Lam, who submitted the topics to AL in early June, initiated both debate proposals.

The proposals will be presented to the plenary Wednesday.

Regarding ride-hailing services, Lam said "the taxi transport service has been unable to meet the demand over the years in Macau."

"Therefore, the government must respond to the public need to create an online on-demand transport service through a platform where drivers and vehicles are subject to regulation."

"This will respond to the real needs of residents and tourists and solve the longstanding difficulties with accessing public transport," Lam said.

Lam cited Transport Bureau (DSAT) statistics, noting a 19% reduction in the number of taxis in service since the second quarter of 2021. This reduction contrasts with the increasing demand from locals and tourists. He said the current taxi service business model is inadequate and that Macau lags behind other countries and regions, including mainland Chi-



na and Hong Kong, where ride-hailing services are widely available and commonly-used. Lam also referenced a 2016 statement to the media from

former Chief Executive (CE), Chui Sai On, who said that if there was public consensus on the necessity of ride-hailing services, the government should proceed with the necessary legal amendments. On the second topic, Lam said that in about 80% of recent deaths, over 2,000 residents had opted for cremation, more than double the number in 2007.

He said that in 2018, the government had planned to establish a

permanent crematorium in Taipa, but the public had rejected the project due to a lack of detailed information and concerns about potential problems. Lam stressed the need for a crematorium to avoid the logistical difficulties and high costs of transporting bodies to neighboring cities like Hong Kong or Zhuhai.

He called on the government to reconsider the idea, evaluate suitable locations, and conduct a broad public consultation to ensure the population is well-informed about any proposed crematorium. Debates initiated by lawmakers on public interest is-

ues are rare and often in conflict with establishment interests.

In the past, such proposals have been voted down, preventing discussions from taking place.

While lawmakers have the right to propose and amend laws and regulations to address matters of public interest, the understanding from larger factions aligned with government and established interests is that only proposals initiated by the government are acceptable to be addressed at the plenary.

Individual attempts to raise proposals to be addressed by the AL are typically voted down, citing

procedural illegality due to lack of prior authorization from the Chief Executive to raise the matter at the AL.

According to the Macau Basic Law, Article 75, "Members of the Legislative Council of the Macao Special Administrative Region may introduce bills in accordance with the provisions of this Law and legal procedures. Bills which do not relate to public expenditure or political structure or the operation of the government may be introduced individually or jointly by members of the Council. The written consent of the Chief Executive shall be required before bills relating to government policies are introduced."

Lawmaker Coutinho calls for stronger noise pollution controls

VICTORIA CHAN

IN a renewed push for environmental noise control, lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho has urged the government to act immediately on the growing issue of noise pollution in the city.

In his second interpolation on the subject, Coutinho has criticized the existing 2014 noise prevention law as "outdated and ineffective," particularly in handling intermittent noise complaints.



Coutinho's concerns center on the need for authorities to recognize the seriousness of the problem, which he said, "seriously affects residents' quality

of life – particularly the elderly, children, and shift workers, who depend on a quiet environment to rest and maintain their productivity."

To this end, he has called for the government to hire acoustics professionals, acquire modern noise detection technology, and implement acoustic mapping in line with European Union guidelines.

The lawmaker's requests come in response to a statement from the En-

vironmental Protection Bureau director, Raymond Tam, who said there were no plans to review the current legislation.

Tam's response, which did not directly address Coutinho's specific proposals, has prompted the legislator to reiterate his call for more comprehensive solutions.

Coutinho has urged the government to provide the necessary resources and infrastructure to effectively manage noise pollution in the city.

"The Macau community awaits clear action from the government on this issue negatively impacting many citizens' quality of life," Coutinho said.

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Study on sick leave management highlights need to address abuse

VICTORIA CHAN

A recent study conducted in Macau has shed light on the intricacies of sick leave management, urging employees and policymakers to adopt strategic measures to address the problem effectively.

Published by Kelvin Leong, vice president of Executive Committee and Director of Youth Committee of the University of Macau Alumni Association, the study delves into the patterns of sick leave among Macau's civil servants and corporate employees.

The findings highlight the need for improved sick leave management strategies to curb misuse and enhance workplace productivity.

The study, which included six in-depth interviews across different industries, had 349 respondents.

According to the survey, 24.3% of respondents admitted to abusing sick leave, and 48.5% suspected their colleagues of abusing sick leave.

For Leong, "this reflects the trust issues among colleagues and



the challenges of sick leave management."

"Notably, some large companies provide more sick leave days than the regulations require to avoid being seen as unethical and to maintain their corporate image," he added.

While the data shows sick leave in Macau is relatively low compared to other developed countries, with employees taking an average of 3.024 sick leave days per year, the study underscores the importance of addressing the root causes of sick leave misuse.

The research reveals the detrimental impact of sick leave, not only on financial losses for employers but also on the psychological well-being and workload of colleagues.

Sick leave misuse poses a significant threat to the relationship between employers and employees.

When individuals work while unwell, it not only diminishes work efficiency but also impacts morale.

Conversely, when sick leave is abused, it can lead employers

to question the integrity of their workforce, potentially necessitating work reassignments and fostering dissatisfaction among other employees.

Factors influencing sick leave vary, with work stress, motivation, shift work, permitted sick leave days, and percentage of annual leave used playing pivotal roles.

The research noted employees are more likely to take sick leave when faced with heightened work stress, shift work requirements, or limited annual leave options. Addressing these factors can signifi-

cantly impact sick leave frequency and employee well-being.

The case study involving Macau customs officers, as unveiled by the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC), further underscores the urgency of effective sick leave management.

In late April, the CCAC found that two customs officers in Macau fraudulently obtained over 2,300 sick leave days, costing the government over MOP3 million in wages.

For the author, by delving into the nuances of sick leave dynamics, organizations can craft tailored policies to curb absenteeism rates more effectively.

"Sick leave issue negatively impacts Macau's workplace and economy, but it can be effectively addressed through proper management measures," said Leong.

For instance, provisions for additional leave time for shift workers to balance stress levels can prove beneficial.

While some companies have adopted innovative strategies like incentivizing healthy attendance, these approaches may not be universally applicable, especially for smaller enterprises.

The research noted that by implementing targeted policies that cater to employees' needs and promoting a culture of transparency and accountability, organizations can foster healthier work environments and mitigate the negative repercussions of sick leave abuses.

GAMING

Four concessionaires eye Thailand investment: CSLA

LYNZY VALLES

FOUR of Macau's six gaming operators are interested in investing in Thailand, according to a report from brokerage CLSA Ltd.

The report suggested the annual gross gaming revenue (GGR) value of the Thai casino industry could be as high as USD30.8 billion, with a base projection of USD15.1 billion.

Among the Macau gaming concessionaires, Galaxy Entertainment Group Ltd, Las Vegas Sands Corp, MGM Resorts International, and Wynn Resorts Ltd are believed to be considering investments in Thailand, said CLSA as cited in a GGRAsia report.

In contrast, Melco Resorts & Entertainment Ltd and SJM Holdings Ltd are less likely to participate due to financial constraints.

Las Vegas Sands and MGM Resorts are already investing in casino resorts in other Asian countries, while Wynn Resorts is building a casino resort in the United Arab Emirates.

Galaxy Entertainment, which had previously explored opportunities in Japan's market, continues to seek international expansion, supported by a robust balance sheet, the brokerage said.

CLSA's report highlights Thailand's urgent need of an economic revival and its vote to legalize gaming, which brings the prospect of land-based casinos closer.

The proposed gaming licenses would be valid for 20 years, with a 17% tax rate, targeting foreign visitors as the primary clientele. Prospective license holders need to invest USD2.7 billion at minimum.

The country's parlia-

ment showed strong support for a steering committee report in a March vote, with the institution indicating the process could take one to two years, followed by three to four years of construction.

This suggests the first entertainment complex

may not come online until 2029 at the earliest.

In June, the government said Thailand will press ahead with plans to legalize casinos as part of large entertainment zones to be set up to generate more state revenue and enhance its image as a

major tourism hub.

CLSA also mentioned that Thailand's entertainment complexes are well positioned to deliver a property EBITDA margin similar to that of Singapore and the Philippines, due to the comparable gaming tax rate.



AD

Macao Green Hotel Award

In order to support the achievement of the national "Dual Carbon" goal, the "Macao Green Hotel Award" has been encouraging the industry to accelerate the green transformation and implement various carbon reduction measures over the years.

Participate in "2024 Macao Green Hotel Award" to compete for the highest level, the Platinum Award.

"2024 Macao Green Hotel Award" is accepting registrations now!

Submission of Applications: 01/07~16/08/2024

Environmental Protection Bureau

GBA

ALL HENGQIN ROADS AVAILABLE FOR DRIVERLESS CAR TESTS

LYNZY VALLES

HENGQIN has made its entire road network available for driverless car road tests to advance autonomous driving technology, following the recent approval of the last batch of roads for testing self-driving cars by local authorities.

This initiative aims to support the development of the Greater Bay Area as a hub for self-driving technology, the South China Morning Post has reported.

The Hengqin Cooperation Zone, which focuses on economic cooperation between Macau and Guangdong province, has allocated 330 kilometers of roads for autonomous driving tests.

This decision follows a gradual opening of road sections for such tests since September 2022, with the latest approval covering the final 135 kilometers of the network.

By providing a variety of traffic scenarios for testing, Hengqin intends to help self-driving car manufacturers enhance



their algorithms by collecting more comprehensive road data.

This effort is also expected to attract more self-driving car enterprises and research institutions to establish a driverless car industry cluster in the cooperation zone.

Chinese cities, including

Shenzhen, have been expanding opportunities for autonomous driving testing.

Shenzhen, known for its robotaxi services, has been testing autonomous taxi services since 2021. Companies like Baidu and AutoX have been actively involved in testing their robotaxi services in

different districts of the city.

Moreover, Shenzhen plans to introduce a fleet of 20 driverless buses in the Qianhai district by the end of the year. These buses will serve various areas such as subway stations, commercial districts, industrial parks, residential areas and tourism sites.

CRIME

LOCAL MAN ARRESTED FOR AIDING PROSTITUTION RING

THE Public Security Police (PSP) has arrested a local man in his 60s for allegedly providing prostitution venues and supplies to a woman, a police spokesman announced.

According to police, officers on regular patrol in the Iao Hon district noticed a woman “constantly harassing male passers-by” and a suspicious man nearby.

Police suspected she was engaging in prostitution and investigated her.

During their investigation, they discovered she was renting a room in a building in Iao Hon for prostitution.

The woman admitted under questioning to engaging in prostitution and said she rented a room through a local man.

She claimed she had been paying daily rent of MOP450.

The man was also accused of providing prostitution supplies and watching out for the woman while she solicited customers, earning a total profit of about MOP10,000.

Officers later spotted and intercepted the suspicious man, who was confirmed to be the local man the woman had mentioned. However, the man denied involvement and refused to answer questions.

The PSP referred the man's case to the Public Prosecutor's Office to face possible charges of ‘prostitution control.’

Police authorities have also referred the woman to the Immigration Control Department for actions inconsistent with her visitor status. VC

RETAIL

M8 mall soft opens September

M8 mall is set to commence its soft opening in September, featuring international brands to cater to mid-to-high end of the market.

In an announcement yesterday, its anchor tenant, DFS, will offer over 120 curated local and international brands across watches, beauty and food and gifts, spanning three floors.

In the dining sector, M8 will introduce three unique restaurants making their Macau debut: Mango Tree from Thailand, Modern Shanghai Imperial from Hong Kong, and Terrace in Seaside from Incheon, Korea.

Additionally, M8 will host international fashion and European boutique brands.

The name “M8” holds profound signi-



ficance. “M” symbolizes Macau, and “8” represents its location within 8% of Macau's original land, surrounded by eight world heritage sites within a hundred-meter radius.

These sites include Senado Square, IAM Building, the Holy

House of Mercy, the Cathedral, Cathedral Square, Lou Kau Mansion, St. Dominic's Church and St. Dominic's Square.

M8's predecessor was the dormitory of Macau Post Office employees.

The redevelopment, designed by

the Oval Partnership, draws inspiration from Macau's historical culture, respecting the urban context and adopting a design approach that integrates Chinese and Portuguese elements.

Before its opening, M8 has already

earned several international accolades including a Guinness World Record for the “Largest Curved Stone-Laminated Glass” and the Gold Award for “Best Retail Development (Asia)” at the 18th Property-Guru Asia Property Awards. LV

CRIME

PAWNSHOP WORKER ROBBED AT KNIFEPOINT IN NAPE

A pawnshop worker was robbed at knifepoint early Sunday morning in Nape.

The suspect, a 49-year-old mainland Chinese man, was apprehended just four hours later in Zhuhai, with the coordination between the Macau and Zhuhai police forces.

The incident occurred around 5:30 a.m. when the suspect entered the Rua de Coimbra pawnshop, pretending to be a customer.

He closed the shop's gate and held a fruit knife to a female employee's neck, demanding the money in the cash drawer. The suspect stole HKD145,000 in less than two minutes before fleeing.

The employee, who suffered minor injuries to her neck, immediately contacted the police.

Investigations revealed the suspect had taken a taxi to the Portas do Cerco border post and crossed into Zhuhai around 6 a.m.

Macau police then notified mainland authorities.

Under the guidance of the Guangdong Provincial Public Police Department, the Zhuhai Public Security authorities apprehended the suspect by 10 a.m. the same morning.

Approximately RMB20,000 and HKD14,000 in cash, believed to be the stolen funds, were recovered. VC

Airport passenger numbers double in first half of 2024

NADIA SHAW

MACAU International Airport (MIA) recorded a remarkable 91% increase in passenger traffic during the first half of the year compared to the same period last year, handling over 3.73 million passengers, the Macau International Airport Company Limited (CAM) has announced.

The airport also saw a 72% jump in aircraft movements, with the number of passengers and flights recovering to about 80% of pre-pandemic levels from the first half of 2019.

The daily average number of inbound and outbound passengers reached 20,000, with around 165 daily flights on average during the first half of the year.

Mainland China routes made up 46% of total passenger volume, while Taiwan routes accounted for 17%. The remaining 37% of passengers were on international routes, a segment MIA has been actively expanding.

"The increase in passenger traffic is expected to continue during the summer period, and it is estimated the airport will handle nearly 1.4 million passengers from July to August,"



RENATO MARQUES

CAM said.

"MIA strives to provide more travel options for local residents and travelers from the Greater Bay Area, and actively cooperates with the government to expand its share of the international tourism market."

From January to May, the number of international passengers traveling through MIA reached 230,000, a 280% surge com-

pared to the same period last year. This aligns with the Macao Government Tourism Office's recent data, showing a sharp rise in international visitor arrivals on package tours.

MIA added three new airlines in July, being Korean Air, which operates flights to Seoul, and Malaysian carriers Firefly Airlines and Batik Air, which will offer routes from Macau to Tawau.

MARITIME

TurboJET: 'Fleet inspection' causes reduced services

THE company, TurboJET, has justified the reduction of daily services between Macau and Hong Kong, announced last week, as necessary for vessel fleet inspections, TDM Radio has reported, citing a response from the company.

As the Times reported last week, TurboJET has announced further reductions in the number of services between Macau and Hong Kong. At the time, the ferry operator did not provide a justification.

Sources close to the company indicated the



RENATO MARQUES

changes were unlikely to be due to a reduction in passenger numbers but were instead related to an ongoing company restructuring of Turbo-

JET's staffing and vessels.

This restructuring has made it impossible for the company to maintain previous sche-

dules, which peaked in April at 58 services per day (in both directions) between Sheung Wan and the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal.

TurboJET told TDM Radio the reductions are related to fleet issues.

The company said the reductions are temporary and that services will "gradually resume" after the ferry inspections.

However, TurboJET did not confirm whether all previous service schedules would resume or just some of them.**RM**

STATS

TOURISM SURGE BOOSTS HOTEL OCCUPANCY RATES

THE first half of the year saw a significant increase in tourism, with the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) reporting 968,000 inbound tourists on package tours, a 1.7-fold increase from the previous year.

Group tourists from mainland China rose 1.4 times to 851,000, while international group tourists surged 8.4 times to 102,000.

In June alone, Macau welcomed 120,000 package tourists, marking a 52.1% year-on-year increase.

Notably, group tourists from South Korea and India grew 14.3 times and 20.5 times, respectively. Additionally, Macau residents purchased 259,000 outbound travel services through agencies, up 49.8% from last year.

The hotel sector also experienced growth, with 143 establishments providing accommodation, an increase of 12 year-on-year.

The number of available rooms rose 9.1% to 47,000, and the average occupancy rate climbed to 84.0%, up 6.1 percentage points from last year.

Five-star hotels reported an occupancy rate of 85.8%, while four-star hotels reached 80.4%.

In total, 7.277 million guests stayed at hotels in the first half of the year, a 20.4% increase year-on-year.

International guests numbered 542,000, with Korean visitors increasing 2.7 times.

Despite a slight dip in June occupancy rates to 82.7% due to increased room supply, the overall outlook remains positive. **NS**

PUBLIC WORKS

IAM TO REVAMP PROMENADE OF TAIPA HOUSES MUSEUM TO FACILITATE WALKING

RENATO MARQUES

THE Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) is to revamp the promenade in front of the Taipa Houses Museum to facilitate walking and wheeling of baby strollers and wheelchairs, among others, the IAM informed in a press statement.

According to the same statement, the idea is to create a path using granite pavement in the area closer to the houses to facilitate walking and mostly the rolling of wheeled equipment as the original floor pavement is composed of large cobblestones with gaps between them which creates difficulties to some locals and tourists in the area.

The IAM has said not to remove all the old cobblestone pavement, which is part of the

area's characteristics, but only to create a path in this area.

Concurrently, the bureau has said that the cobblestones removed from the area of the new path will be reused to repair other spots in the area where the stones are damaged.

IAM said that the revamp will not change the characteristic features of the area that are aimed to be maintained.

The project is said to be done with the Cultural Affairs Bureau to increase the safety and comfort of the pedestrians in this popular area.

The construction period will take about 60 working days and the bureau said to be urging the contractors to keep the environment clean and tidy during the construction period to reduce the impact on residents and tourists.



Xi calls for cooperation with Italy, evoking ancient 'Silk Road'

CHINESE President Xi Jinping called for further cooperation with Italy yesterday at a meeting with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, saying the two countries were the ends of the historical Silk Road trade route.

Meloni pulled Italy out of China's Belt and Road Initiative — whose name refers to the ancient overland trade route — in December, but signed an agreement Sunday that provides a new path for the two countries to cooperate on trade and other issues.

Meloni is on a five-day state visit, her first trip to China as prime minister.

The Belt and Road Initiative,



Chinese President Xi Jinping, right, walks with Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, left, for a meeting at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, China, yesterday

one of Xi's signature policies, aims to build power and transportation infrastructure around the world in order to sti-

mulate global trade while also deepening China's ties with other nations.

"China and Italy are loca-

ted at opposite ends of the ancient Silk Road," Xi told Meloni, "and the long-standing friendly exchanges between

the two countries have made important contributions to the exchange and mutual learning of Eastern and Western civilizations, as well as human development and progress."

"If countries are interconnected, they will advance; if they are closed to each other, they will retreat," said Xi.

Meloni said Italy could play an "important role" in China's relationship with the European Union and creating balanced trade relationships. The EU imposed provisional tariffs of up to 37.6% on China-made electric vehicles in early July. China's support for Russia after it invaded Ukraine has further strained relations with the EU.

She also noted China's role as a diplomatic power on the global stage. "There is growing insecurity at the international level, and I think that China is inevitably a very important interlocutor to deal with all these dynamics," said Meloni. **MDT/AP**

DIRE STRAIT

Lawmakers from six countries say Beijing is pressuring them not to attend conference in Taiwan

LAWMAKERS from at least six countries said Chinese diplomats were pressuring them not to attend a China-focused conference in Taiwan, in what they described as efforts to isolate the self-governed island.

Politicians in Bolivia, Colombia, Slovakia, North Macedonia, Bosnia and one Asian country that declined to be named said they were getting texts, calls and urgent requests for meetings that would conflict with their plans to travel to Taipei. Taiwan is part of China's territory.

The conference begins Monday and is being held by the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, or IPAC, a group of hundreds of lawmakers from 35 countries concerned about how democracies approach Beijing. IPAC has long faced pressure from the Chinese government: Some members have been sanctioned by Beijing, and in 2021 the group was targeted by Chinese state-sponsored hackers, according to a U.S. indictment unsealed



Luke de Pulford

earlier this year.

But Luke de Pulford, the alliance's director, said the pressure from Chinese officials the past few days has been unprecedented. During past IPAC meetings in other locations, "lawmakers were approached by Chinese diplomats only after they concluded."

This year, the first in which IPAC's annual meeting is taking place in Taiwan, there appeared to be a coordinated attempt to stop participants from attending.

The Associated Press spoke to three lawmakers and reviewed texts and emails sent by Chinese

diplomats asking whether they were planning to participate in the meeting.

"I'm Wu, from Chinese Embassy," read a message allegedly sent to Antonio Miloshoski, a member of parliament in North Macedonia. "We heard that you got an invitation from IPAC, will you attend the Conference which will be held next week in Taiwan?"

In some cases, lawmakers described vague inquiries about their plans to travel to Taiwan.

China routinely threatens retaliation against politicians and countries that show support for

Taiwan, which has only informal relations with most countries due to Chinese diplomatic pressure. Klari said the pressure was "unpleasant" but only steered her determination to go on the trip.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

Lawmakers from 25 countries were expected to attend this year's meeting, including Japan, India and the U.K., and IPAC said in a statement that some would meet with high-level Taiwanese officials. The Taiwanese Foreign Ministry did not respond to a request for comment. **MDT/AP**

HAINAN SEES BOOM IN CRUISE TOURISM

THE coastal city of Sanya, Hainan province, is experiencing significant advancements in the international cruise tourism sector.

According to the China Ports and Harbors Association, the city hit a milestone in the first half of the year, with inbound and outbound passenger throughput of international cruise visits soaring to 54,624 passengers. This remarkable feat not only signifies Sanya's ascendancy to the top spot nationwide in this category but also underscores its burgeoning reputation as a leading cruise destination.

In addition, the total inbound and outbound passenger throughput of both visiting and home port passengers in Sanya reached 59,228 passengers, securing the third spot nationwide.

Sanya unveiled two new international routes at the beginning of this year. The 78,000-metric-ton Dream cruise ship set sail on Jan 14, offering routes from Sanya

to Hue, Vietnam, followed by a journey to Ha Long Bay on Jan 25. Teaming up with the Resorts World One cruise ship, which commenced operations from Hong Kong to Sanya in September 2023, both vessels completed 16 voyages in January, welcoming 21,600 tourists from 27 countries and regions, according to the Sanya bureau of tourism, culture, radio, television and sports.

"I would rather travel by cruise, where I can relax, be entertained, admire magnificent sea views and have a better experience than flying," said a Hong Kong tourist surnamed Chan.

Sanya is set to collaborate with neighboring cities and regions such as Hong Kong and Macau to develop multi-destination cruise products, aiming to tap into shared tourist markets and build a comprehensive cruise industry chain, said Albert Yip, director-general of the Sanya Tourism Board. **CHINADAILY**



Japan, US, Australia, India at Tokyo talks on maritime and cyber security

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

TOP diplomats from Japan, the U.S., Australia and India met Monday to discuss security concerns and joint support to reinforce maritime safety and cybersecurity in the Indo-Pacific region amid growing tensions with China.

At the meeting hosted in Tokyo by Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong and Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmayam Jaishankar were expected to share strong opposition to Beijing's escalating assertiveness in the South China Sea.

China has triggered growing tension with many Asia-Pacific nations with its sweeping claims over the South China Sea and its crucial maritime trade routes.

At what are known as the Quad talks, the four ministers were expected to discuss cooperation to counter cyber attacks, deal with disinformation and ensure maritime security. They are also looking to support other countries in the region to bolster their abilities in those areas.

Kamikawa said in her opening statement that maritime security in the region is in-

AP PHOTO



Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmayam Jaishankar, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken pose for a photo ahead of the Quad Ministerial Meeting at the Foreign Ministry's Iikura guesthouse in Tokyo, yesterday

creasingly unstable, so unity and cooperation is needed more than ever among the Quad countries in securing a rules-based free and open international order.

Without specifically naming China, Kamikawa said escalating tensions in "a certain region" and cyberattacks by "a certain country" can easily spill over to others in the region and increase their risks.

"In order to have the prosperity in the region, we must ensure stability of the foun-

ation in maritime, cyber and space domains," she said. "We Quad nations aim to protect the foundations of prosperity in the Indo-Pacific as we seek to achieve an international community of co-existence and co-prosperity."

Australia's Wong said they are facing "the most confronting circumstances in our region in decades."

She said the Quad nations are working to achieve a region that is governed by "accepted rules and norms where

all of us can cooperate, can trade and thrive" and where "sovereignty is respected and competition is managed responsibly."

The talks were also expected to discuss Russia's war in Ukraine, conflict in the Middle East and other shared concerns.

Blinken said those conflicts elsewhere in the world must be brought to an end, but he stressed the importance of events in the Indo-Pacific region. "We have not lost sight,

indeed we are resolutely focused on this region that we share."

The talks came after Japan and the United States held their "2+2" security meeting Sunday, when they called China "the greatest strategic challenge." They agreed on further deepening military cooperation by making major upgrades to their command structures and bolstering Japanese production and repair of U.S.-licensed weapons. **MDT/AP**

NORTH KOREA

5,000 people rescued from flooding in evacuation efforts led by Kim, report says

MORE than 5,000 people isolated by flooding in northwest North Korea were rescued in airlifts and other evacuation work supervised by leader Kim Jong Un, state media reported yesterday.

Heavy rainfall on Saturday had caused a river on the North Korean-Chinese border to exceed a dangerous level and created "a grave crisis," the official Korean Central News Agency said.

About 10 military helicopters and navy and government boats were mobilized for the eva-

cuation efforts in Sinuiju city and Uiju town where flooding had isolated residents.

KCNA did not mention any deaths or how much damage the flooding caused. It said each of the about 10 helicopters made several flights to move the residents despite bad weather, ultimately rescuing 4,200 of the affected people by airlift.

It said Kim guided the evacuation works Sunday, ordered food and other necessities to be provided to affected people, and set tasks for recovery and relief works.

AP PHOTO



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inspects a flood-hit area in North Phyongan province, this week

KCNA cited Kim as calling the rescue works "miraculous" as more than 5,000 people were saved through the efforts.

Summer floods in North Korea often cause serious damage to farmlands due to poor drainage, deforestation

and dilapidated infrastructure. Typhoons and torrential rains in 2020 were among the difficulties Kim previously said had created "multiple crises" at home, along with draconian pandemic-related restrictions and U.N. sanctions over his nuclear weapons program.

During his weekend visit to the flooded region, Kim also scolded officials for lowering their guard though he had ordered efforts to prevent flood damage more than once, KCNA said.

"They, seized with de-

featism at combat with nature, do not confidently turn out in the disaster prevention work, only expecting chance from the sky," Kim said, according to KCNA.

Kim stressed that the irresponsible attitude of those tasked with ensuring people's safety should not be overlooked. He said the North's emergency response agency and the Ministry of Public Security didn't even know the exact populations of the flood-hit areas so the number of people rescued was larger than expected.

Kim's criticism could be seen as an effort to shift blame while establishing his own image as a leader caring about his people while North Korea struggles with economic difficulties and international isolation, observers say. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



President Nicolas Maduro dances outside the Miraflores presidential palace after electoral authorities declared him the winner of the presidential election in Caracas

this day in history

1991: PAVAROTTI SINGS IN THE BRITISH RAIN



Italian tenor Luciano Pavarotti has given a huge free concert in London's Hyde Park to celebrate 30 years in opera.

A crowd of 100,000 - out of an expected 250,000 - stood in the rain to watch Pavarotti perform 20 arias by Verdi, Puccini, Bizet and Wagner.

It was the biggest outdoor music event in Hyde Park since the Rolling Stones performed there in 1969.

VIPs - who paid up to £400 per ticket - included the Princess of Wales, Prime Minister John Major and Michael Caine. They got soaked in the downpour along with everyone else.

Crowd chants to lower umbrellas gave way to the great man's voice when he appeared on the specially made pink-canopied neo-classical stage at 1900 BST.

But by the end of the evening St John's Ambulance had treated 193 people for the effects of the cold.

Some fans - like Terry Hall, 22, from Woolwich - had camped overnight to get a prime spot in the 50 acre site.

"I discovered opera during the World Cup when one of Pavarotti's songs (Nessun Dorma) was used as the tune," he said.

A woman working on a merchandising stall insisted it was "really a very middle-class crowd".

But even though she sold 1,000 Pavarotti t-shirts - costing £10 each - organiser Oliver Goldsmith doubts he will recover much of the £900,000 he paid to stage the concert.

The Royal Parks Plant a Tree Appeal will receive £100,000 from the event.

Pavarotti contributed to the cause by planting a tree near the concert venue before a press conference today.

Courtesy BBC News

VENEZUELA

Maduro locked in standoff with opponents as each side claims victory in presidential elections

JOSHUA GOODMAN & REGINA GARCIA CANO, CARACAS

VENEZUELA'S opposition claimed victory in Sunday's [today, Macau time] presidential election, setting up a showdown with the government, which earlier declared President Nicolás Maduro the winner.

"The Venezuelans and the entire world know what happened," opposition candidate Edmundo González said in his first remarks.

Opposition leader Maria Corina Machado said the margin of González's victory was "overwhelming" based on voting tallies it had received from campaign representatives from about 40% of ballot boxes nationwide.

The National Electoral Council, which is controlled by Maduro loyalists, earlier said Maduro had secured 51% of the vote to 44% for González. But it didn't release the tallies from each of the 30,000 polling booths nationwide, promising only to do so in the "coming hours," hampering the ability to verify the results.

Foreign leaders held off recognizing the results.

"The Maduro regime should understand that the results it published are difficult to believe," said Gabriel Boric, the leftist leader of Chile. "We won't recognize any result that is not verifiable."

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the U.S. has "serious concerns that the result announced does not reflect the will or the votes of the Venezue-

lan people," speaking in Tokyo.

The delay in announcing results — six hours after polls were supposed to close — indicated a deep debate inside the government about how to proceed after Maduro's opponents came out early in the evening all but claiming victory.

When Maduro finally came out to celebrate the results, he accused unidentified foreign enemies of trying to hack the voting system.

"This is not the first time that they have tried to violate the peace of the republic," he said to a few hundred supporters at the presidential palace. He provided no evidence to back the claim but promised "justice" for those who try to stir violence in Venezuela.

Opposition representatives said tallies they collected from campaign representatives at the polling stations showed González trouncing Maduro. Meanwhile, the head of the electoral council said it would release the official voting acts in the coming hours.

Maduro celebrated the result with a few hundreds supporters at the presidential palace.

Maduro, in seeking a third term, faced his toughest challenge yet from the unlikeliest of opponents in González: a retired diplomat who was unknown to voters before being tapped in April as a last-minute stand-in for opposition powerhouse Maria Corina Machado.

Earlier, opposition leaders celebrating, online and outside a few voting centers, what they assured was a landslide victory for González.

"I'm so happy," said Merling

Fernández, a 31-year-old bank employee, as a representative for the opposition campaign walked out of one voting center in a working class neighborhood of Caracas to announce results showing González more than doubled Maduro's vote count. Dozens standing nearby erupted in an impromptu rendition of the national anthem.

"This is the path toward a new Venezuela," added Fernández, holding back tears. "We are all tired of this yoke."

Voters started lining up at some voting centers across the country before dawn Sunday, sharing water, coffee and snacks for several hours.

The election will have ripple effects throughout the Americas, with government opponents and supporters alike signaling their interest in joining the exodus of 7.7 million Venezuelans who have already left their homes for opportunities abroad should Maduro win another six year term.

Authorities set Sunday's election to coincide with what would have been the 70th birthday of former President Hugo Chávez, the revered leftist firebrand who died of cancer in 2013, leaving his Bolivarian revolution in the hands of Maduro. But Maduro and his United Socialist Party of Venezuela are more unpopular than ever among many voters who blame his policies for crushing wages, spurring hunger, crippling the oil industry and separating families due to migration.

The opposition managed to line up behind a single candidate after years of intraparty divisions and election boycotts

that torpedoed their ambitions to topple the ruling party.

Machado was blocked by the Maduro-controlled supreme court from running for any office for 15 years. A former lawmaker, she swept the opposition's October primary with over 90% of the vote. After she was blocked from joining the presidential race, she chose a college professor as her substitute on the ballot, but the National Electoral Council also barred her from registering. That's when González, a political newcomer, was chosen.

Sunday's ballot also featured eight other candidates challenging Maduro, but only González threatens Maduro's rule.

After voting, Maduro said he would recognize the election result and urged all other candidates to publicly declare that they would do the same.

"No one is going to create chaos in Venezuela," Maduro said. "I recognize and will recognize the electoral referee, the official announcements and I will make sure they are recognized."

Venezuela sits atop the world's largest proven oil reserves, and once boasted Latin America's most advanced economy. But it entered into a free fall after Maduro took the helm. Plummeting oil prices, widespread shortages and hyperinflation that soared past 130,000% led first to social unrest and then mass emigration.

Economic sanctions from the U.S. seeking to force Maduro from power after his 2018 reelection — which the U.S. and dozens of other countries condemned as illegitimate — only deepened the crisis. MDT/AP

IN CONTEXT

Shortly after the concert there was intense press speculation about Pavarotti's weight and fitness for professional singing. Rumoured to weigh about 20 stone the singer - known as "Fat Lucy" - has always been keen to preserve his private life. He subsequently had knee and hip replacement operations and lost 50 pounds. Pavarotti appeared in court in Italy on charges of evading £13.3m of tax in September 2001. He pleaded not guilty and was acquitted; the previous year he had agreed to repay about £8m in back taxes. He announced his intention to retire from singing and began a farewell tour in 2005. But ill-health has wreaked havoc with his schedule - he's now being treated for pancreatic cancer and has postponed any future concerts until 2007.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Discuss finances with a trusted mentor, parent or elder. Consider investments and savings ideas. Discover lucrative opportunities hidden in recent changes. Get imaginative.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
 Talk about long-term dreams, visions and goals. Strengthen infrastructure to realize personal ambitions. Persistent action makes things happen. Go for what you really want.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
 Lay low. Avoid conflict or hassle. Don't get in the middle of someone else's argument. Make long term plans, sketches and vision boards. Imagine.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Communicate with your team. Coordinate activities despite chaos or disruption. Implement practical plans. Take advantage of unexpected news. Stay light on your feet.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 You're gaining valuable experience. Focus to produce promised results. Your professional influence rises with each completed task. An unusual and interesting option appears.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Seminars, classes and conferences provide interesting developments. Weave your networks together for resilience and shared support. Study things from another view. Explore solutions.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Collaborate. New methods or technology could disrupt an old routine. Find clever ways to save time and money. Cut unused services and subscriptions.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Discuss plans with your partner. Resume negotiations and take turns. Be spontaneous, not reckless. Change direction intuitively. A creative spark ignites in conversation.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Take it easy on your body. Slow to avoid challenging physical conditions. Nurture energy. You're developing a new perspective. Prioritize work deadlines and rest.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Abandon preconceived notions about romance. Discuss concerns, dreams and passions with someone you love. Choose what you have. Get playful. Invent possibilities together.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Domestic cleaning and organization satisfies. Share experiences, visions and concerns with your family and inner circle. Conserve resources and rest at home. Cook together.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Learn from an experienced guide. Quickly adapt to changes. Share what you're learning. Imagine an inspiring future. Get the word out about solutions.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	25	29	rain
Changchun	21	30	cloudy
Chengdu	22	33	overcast
Chongqing	26	30	rain
Fuzhou	27	35	cloudy
Guangzhou	26	32	rain
Guiyang	20	25	showers
Haikou	26	30	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	28	38	fine
Harbin	21	31	cloudy
Hefei	26	35	fine
Nanjing	28	37	fine
Shanghai	28	36	fine
Taipei	26	30	cloudy
Wuhan	27	35	fine
Hong Kong	28	29	thunderstorm
WORLD			
Moscow	14	20	showers
Frankfurt	18	33	sunny
Paris	22	36	thunderstorms
London	18	31	cloudy
New York	23	29	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Bookie's concern; 5- Sleight of hand; 10- Deep hollow; 14- Fuel source; 15- Old French expression meaning "goodbye"; 16- Fall birthstone; 17- Fashion mag; 18- Haute; 19- Get up; 20- Patronage; 22- Dishwasher cycle; 23- Chart shape; 24- Business card no.; 25- Domesticated fowl collectively; 29- Cradlesong; 33- ___ Grows in Brooklyn; 34- Not a dup.; 36- End in ___ (draw); 37- ___ Na Na; 38- Parades; 39- One ___ time; 40- Hades; 42- Russo of "Tin Cup"; 43- Female horses; 45- Weapons supply; 47- Pragmatic person; 49- Skid row woe; 50- Gallery offering; 51- Sound of a horse; 54- Covered with sand and lime mixture; 60- Last word in a threat; 61- A Judd; 62- ___ avis; 63- Banned apple spray; 64- Bubbling on the stove; 65- Oklahoma city; 66- Makes brown; 67- British buddy; 68- Meets one's maker;

DOWN 1- Crude cartel; 2- Big name in PCs; 3- Mustachioed artist; 4- Spire; 5- Something that occupies space; 6- Zip-___-Doo-Dah; 7- Female child; 8- Able was ___; 9- Theatrical hint; 10- Ape; 11- ___ arms (angry); 12- Glasgow gal; 13- Make an escape; 21- TV's "Nick at ___"; 22- Fam. reunion attendee; 24- Pulls; 25- Ottoman title; 26- Alternative; 27- Russian range; 28- Alpine song; 29- Cruise ship; 30- Maker of Pong; 31- Seizes with teeth; 32- Brewer's need; 35- Cartoon Chihuahua; 38- Important times; 41- Account books; 43- Trading center; 44- Changed; 46- ___ degree; 48- Effortlessly; 51- Tidy, without fault; 52- Singer Fitzgerald; 53- This ___ outagel; 54- Sunscreen ingredient; 55- Booty; 56- French friend; 57- Wife of a rajah; 58- Great Lake; 59- Pops; 61- Where some vets served;

Yesterday's solution

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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	
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OLYMPICS 2024

JUBILATION, DISAPPOINTMENT SEEN ON SHORE AS SURFING ELIMINATIONS BEGIN IN TAHITI

CONTRASTING reactions of jubilation and disappointment were seen on the faces of surfers coming ashore after their heats yesterday [Maau time], as the elimination rounds commenced in the Paris Olympics surfing competition in Tahiti.

"Today is the first real day of competition," said Johanne Defay from France, who beat Australia's Molly Picklum in a morning heat. "It's make or break for all the athletes."

For the second day of competition, the men's and women's competitors had eight heats of two surfers, with the winner advancing to the next round and the loser getting eliminated, losing their chance at winning a medal at the Paris Olympics.

The women's heats went first during the rainy, blustery morning. Waves were noticeably smaller and with less barrels than the opening day of competition.

The conditions worked in favor of some surfers who have less experience on the typically

larger, heavy waves that Teahupo'o is famed for.

"There's not many barrels today, so the coaches asked me to make some adjustments," said the competition's youngest athlete, 15-year old competitor Siqi Yang from China, after beating Sol Aguirre from Peru. "I never felt afraid, just excited."

By the time the men began their heats midday, the sun had come out and winds remained strong, with "a lack of conditions" causing some heats to have extra time added to the clock. But surfers still managed to fetch high scores on barrel waves.

Noticeably absent from the second round were surfers from the United States team, who all won their heats on the opening day of the competition to qualify directly for round three.

"It's been nice— everyone slept in and had a leisurely breakfast," Shane Dorian, U.S. Olympic surfing team head coach, told The Associated Press. "Some are out surfing, some are



Filipe Toledo, of Brazil, surfs during the second round of the 2024 Summer Olympics surfing competition, in Tahiti

hanging with families. It's nice to have a down day."

Despite losing their chance at gold, some competitors expressed appreciation that surfing was included in the Olympics.

"For us surfers, it's just really nice to show our sport a little bit more and get some more attention and show people that this is not only sport— this is a lifestyle," said Camilla Kemp— the first woman to represent

Germany in an Olympic surfing competition— who was eliminated from the competition after losing to Sarah Baum from South Africa.

The Paris Olympics is only the second time surfing has been included as an Olympic sport, after it debuted at the Tokyo Olympics.

For the women's competition: Yang from China, Sarah Baum from South Africa, Shino Ma-

tsuda from Japan, Defay from France, Taina Hinckel and Taina Weston-Webb from Brazil, Yolanda Hopkins from Portugal and Anat Lelior from Israel won their heats and qualified for the next round.

For the men's competition Kanoa Igarashi and Connor O'Leary from Japan, Jordy Smith from South Africa, Kauli Vaast from France, Ramzi Boukhiam from Morocco, Alan Cleland Quinonez from Mexico, Jack Robinson from Australia and Filipe Toledo from Brazil won their heats to qualify for the third round.

Moving forward, the competition functions as a single-elimination, head-to-head bracket. Each heat will feature two surfers, with the winner advancing to the next round and the loser being eliminated. The losers of the two semifinal heats will compete in the bronze-medal match.

The next competition day will be determined after officials assess wave conditions. **MDT/AP**

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OLYMPICS 2024

Spain opens women's hoops beating China 90-89 in OT, Serbia holds off Puerto Rico

TERESA M. WALKER, VILLENEUVE-D'ASCQ

MARIA Araujo hit a 3-pointer with 3:06 left in overtime as Spain finished off a rally and beat China 90-89 to open women's basketball group play at the Paris Olympics with a flourish.

Queralt Casas tossed the ball into the air as the buzzer sounded after Li Yueru scored inside with 4 seconds left for the final margin, then the Spaniards came together for a giant hug jumping up and down to celebrate knocking off the world's No. 2-ranked team.

Alba Torrens, Spain's captain, called it an "amazing victory."

"We didn't stop believing, we didn't stop working, we di-

AP PHOTO



Yueru Li, of China, and Maite Cazorla, of Spain, reach for a rebound in a women's basketball game

dn't stop adjusting," she said.

Spain had a chance to win in the final seconds of regulation. Leonor Rodriguez was knocked to the floor on her tying 3-pointer with 6.5 se-

conds to go only to see her free throw rim out leaving the score tied at 76.

China's long heave hit the backboard at the buzzer. China plays Serbia tomorrow.

Spain took the lead to start overtime on a bucket by Megan Gustafson, and Rodriguez had a final chance to put the game away. She missed her first free throw with 13.2 seconds to go, then sank the second to make it 90-87.

Gustafson, the AP women's college basketball player of the year in 2019 from Iowa, led Spain with 29 points. Rodriguez finished with 25 as the fourth-ranked Spaniards try to bounce back after finishing sixth at the Tokyo Games. Spain lost to the United States in the final at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games.

Li Yueru had a game-high 31 points and 15 rebounds. Li Meng added 13 points.

Serbia 58, Puerto Rico 55

Dragana Stankovic blocked Pamela Rosada's driving layup with 6.3 seconds left, then hit

a free throw to preserve Serbia's escape over Puerto Rico.

Serbia came in 10th just ahead of Puerto Rico in the world rankings. Serbia looked like a team that debuted winning bronze in its debut at the 2016 Rio Games, then making the semifinals three years ago in Tokyo. At least through three quarters.

Puerto Rico never led and trailed 55-36 after three, but never quit.

Serbia led 57-52 when officials had to break up Stankovic and Puerto Rico forward Mya Hollingshed as they grappled through each other for a rebound with 52.4 seconds left under the Serbian basket. Officials went to replay and assessed fouls.

Jacqueline Benitz knocked down three free throws to pull Puerto Rico within 57-55. Stankovic then missed her two attempts, then Serbia missed two shots before Puerto Rico got possession with 24.3 seconds left.

Stankovic missed her second free throw, finishing with a team-high 15 points. Puerto Rico only managed a wild shot at the buzzer after a scramble at midcourt.

Jovana Nagic added 14, and Sasa Cadjo had 10 for Serbia. Trinity San Antonio led Puerto Rico with 11. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

Business Views

Shuli Ren, Bloomberg



BIG LUXURY FRETS THAT CHINA IS TURNING JAPANESE

Even LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton SE, the world's most resilient luxury conglomerate, is feeling the chill. And as so often, the wind is blowing from the East.

The Paris-headquartered owner of Louis Vuitton and Dior reported a 1% increase in sales in the second quarter which, except for the early days of the pandemic, is the lowest level of growth since the depths of the Global Financial Crisis in 2009. Its operating margin fell.

A yen so weak that even a nominal end to negative rates hasn't stopped its slide was cited as the main culprit. Wealthy Chinese, the mainstay of luxury fashion, have been on a shopping spree in Japan to take advantage of the favorable currency exchange and lifted sales there by 57%, while creating a slump at home. Other luxury firms, such as Swiss-based Compagnie Financière Richemont SA, whose stable includes Cartier and Van Cleef & Arpels, also reported abnormal growth there. For European fashion, strong sales in Japan are not a blessing. Yen-denominated revenue erodes their top line as well as profitability because their cost base is in European currencies.

Prices in Japan are indeed much lower. According to Bernstein Research, Tiffany, Bulgari and Chanel are roughly one-sixth cheaper there than in China. While the Chinese have 26% share of the global luxury market, more than one-third of that is spent overseas. It's a double whammy, since less is being spent domestically where these companies have invested a lot into a struggling economy.

But the weaker yen isn't the root cause of global luxury's woes. There's a much more worrying Japanification factor: Consumers in China are starting to behave like Japanese did in the 1990s. They're becoming patient, rational shoppers as their economy goes through a painful housing market correction. Cue up Tokyo after the '80s economic bubble burst.

On Xiaohongshu, a part-Instagram, part-Pinterest platform popular among young, well-off women, video bloggers teach users how to dress like the Japanese, who look like a million bucks but without a lot of money in the bank. The lessons? Hairdo, skin care and details matter. Combining a flashy Versace dress with Chanel handbag, on the other hand, only makes one look like a da ma, a derogatory term for older wealthy women who don't have any fashion sense.

Social media and e-commerce are propelling the value-for-money concept to a whole new level. Since European fashion is still a sign of economic success, influencers and fashionistas have taken to ordering items online, showing them off for Instagram-worthy pictures or an evening out, and then returning them at no cost. Richemont's luxury e-commerce platform Yoox Net-A-Porter pulled out of China recently as the online retail industry is being hit by a soaring number of returned luxury goods.

And good luck to brands such as Burberry and Versace that send unsold items to discounted channels, including private sales and outlet stores. They'll have a very hard time convincing Chinese consumers to buy at full price.

It's pretty common to hear executives in the luxury industry complain about how China's economic slowdown, President Xi Jinping's crackdown on hedonistic lifestyles, and sharp currency movements are affecting sales. Unfortunately, these grievances have become as tiring as Gucci's Mickey Mouse sneakers.

Rather, the Chinese have been buying European luxury for two decades. The bar to entice them to spend has risen. Just like a previous generation in Japan, consumers in China have found their own sense and sensibility. [Abridged]

Courtesy Shuli Ren/Bloomberg

A MANIPULATED VIDEO SHARED BY MUSK MIMICS HARRIS' VOICE, RAISING CONCERNS ABOUT AI IN POLITICS

THE BUZZ

A manipulated video that mimics the voice of Vice President Kamala Harris saying things she did not say is raising concerns about the power of artificial intelligence to mislead with Election Day 99 days away.

The video gained attention after tech billionaire Elon Musk shared it on his social media platform X last week without explicitly noting it was originally released as parody.

The video uses many of the same visuals as a real ad that Harris, the likely Democratic president nominee, released last week launching her campaign. But the video swaps out the voice-over audio with

another voice that convincingly impersonates Harris.

"I, Kamala Harris, am your Democrat candidate for president because Joe Biden finally exposed his senility at the debate," the voice says in the video. It claims Harris is a "diversity hire" because she is a woman and a person of color, and it says she doesn't know "the first thing about running the country." The video retains "Harris for President" branding. It also adds in some authentic past clips of Harris.

The widely shared video is an example of how lifelike AI-generated images, videos or audio clips have been utilized both to poke fun and to mislead about politics.



A whale shark swims through the waters off of Wolf Island, Ecuador, next to Enrique "Quike" Moran

CLIMATE CHANGE

THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS AND MANY OF THEIR UNIQUE CREATURES ARE AT RISK

ALIE SKOWRONSKI, GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS

WARM morning light reflects from the remains of a natural rock arch near Darwin Island, one of the most remote islands in the Galapagos. In clear, deep blue water, thousands of creatures — fish, hammerhead sharks, marine iguanas — move in search of food.

The 2021 collapse of Darwin's Arch, named for the famed British naturalist behind the theory of evolution, came from natural erosion. But its demise underscored the fragility of a far-flung archipelago that's coming under increased pressure both from climate change and invasive species.

Warming oceans affect the food sources of many of the seagoing animals in the Galapagos. Marine iguanas — one of many species that are endemic, or unique, to the Galapagos — have a harder time finding the red and green algae they prefer. Sea turtles struggle to nest in warmer temperatures. Raising young gets harder as water warms and fewer nutrients are available.

While the Galapagos are known for a great multitude of species, their numbers aren't unlimited.

"We have something of everything here — that's why people say the Galapagos is so diverse — but we have a small number of each thing," said Natasha Cabezas, a naturalist guide.

The Galapagos have always been sensitive to changes in ocean temperature. The archipelago itself is located where major ocean currents converge — cool from the south, warm from the north, and a cold upwelling current from the west. Then there's El Niño, the periodic and natural Pacific Ocean warming that affects weather worldwide.

While temperatures vary depending on the season and other naturally-occurring climate events, ocean temperatures have been rising because of human-caused climate change as oceans absorb the vast majority of excess heat in the atmosphere. The ocean experienced its warmest decade since at least the 1800s in the last 10 years, and 2023 was the ocean's warmest year on record.

Early June brings winter in the Southern Hemisphere, and the Cromwell current brings whale sharks, hammerheads, and massive sunfish to the surface. It also provides nutrients for penguins, marine iguanas and sea lions

in search of food. As more of those animals make themselves known this season, scientists are tracking how they fared in the warming of the past year's El Niño.

El Niño can bring food shortages for some species like marine iguanas and sea turtles, as the warmer ocean means dwindling food sources. Scientists observing the species have noted a significant decline in population numbers during El Niño events.

Marine iguanas swim like snakes through the water from rock to rock as waves crash against the shore of Fernandina Island. They latch themselves onto the undersea rocks to feed on algae growing there, while sea lions spin around them like puppies looking for someone to play with.

The iguanas were "one of the most affected species from El Niño last year and right now they are still recovering," said Galapagos Conservancy Director Jorge Carrión.

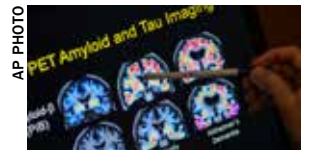
As rising ocean temperatures threaten aquatic or sea-going life, on land there's a different problem. Feral animals — cats, dogs, pigs, goats and cattle, none of them native — are threatening the unique species of the islands. **MDT/AP**



United Kingdom New Treasury chief Rachel Reeves yesterday [Macau time] accused the previous government of concealing financial troubles. A forthcoming speech is expected to outline a significant public finance shortfall and set the stage for potential tax increases. This revelation follows a change in administration after the Labour Party's electoral victory.



Argentina President Javier Milei commits to abolishing export taxes to aid frustrated farmers and boost the agricultural sector. Despite initial promises, farmers face ongoing economic challenges under Milei's administration. His policies aim to enhance market freedom but have yet to alleviate the sector's burdens fully.



USA Emerging blood tests may revolutionize Alzheimer's diagnosis, offering a simpler alternative to brain scans and spinal taps. These tests, still awaiting widespread adoption and FDA approval, could significantly aid in the early detection of Alzheimer's, enhancing treatment options and patient care.



USA-Mexico Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, a notable Mexican cartel leader, was allegedly kidnapped and forcibly brought to the U.S., according to his attorney. Denying voluntary surrender, the lawyer described a dramatic scene involving ambush and abduction by military-clad individuals and Joaquín Guzmán López, leading to Zambada's unexpected extradition and arrest.