

**NEW APPROVALS OF RESIDENTIAL MORTGAGE LOANS INCREASED MONTH-TO-MONTH IN JUNE WHILE COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE LOANS DECLINED**

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**UM AND MACAO UNION HOSPITAL LAUNCH JOINT RESEARCH CENTER**

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**FOUNDER OF VOTING MACHINE COMPANY CHARGED WITH PAYING BRIBES FOR PHILIPPINE CONTRACTS**

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AP PHOTO



**Brazil** In Sao Paulo, families of the victims of a plane crash that killed 62 people are gathering for identification of the deceased. The crash involved an ATR 72 operated by Voepass, crashing near Sao Paulo. Efforts to identify the victims are underway at local morgues, where families bring medical records to assist forensic experts.

AP PHOTO



**Israel** has issued further evacuation orders after an airstrike on a Gaza school, used as a shelter, killed at least 80 Palestinians. Israel's military claims it targeted a militant command post. The ongoing conflict has displaced a significant portion of Gaza's population.

AP PHOTO



**USA** Vice President Kamala Harris vows to eliminate taxes on tips for service industry workers, mirroring a promise by Donald Trump. She announced this during a rally in Las Vegas, emphasizing support for working families and the hospitality sector. This policy statement comes amid a series of campaign stops aimed at boosting voter support.

**USA** Donald Trump's presidential campaign said that it has been hacked and suggested Iranian actors were involved in stealing and distributing sensitive internal documents. The campaign provided no specific evidence of Iran's involvement, but the claim comes a day after Microsoft issued a report detailing foreign agents' attempts to interfere in the U.S. campaign in 2024.

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**CE Election Committee elections recorded the highest turnout ever, with participation reaching 88%. However, in most cases, the votes were merely endorsements of single candidates**

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### IAM URGES CAUTION OVER DRIED FRUIT SNACKS

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has detected excessive amounts of the sweetener aspartame in two pre-packaged sugared fruit snacks during a routine inspection. IAM told the businesses to stop selling and recall the products, and warned the public to avoid consuming them. The two affected products are "Seedless Dried Sour-Sweet UME" and "Dried Plum," both imported from Japan. The "Seedless Dried Sour-Sweet UME" weighing 160 grams and expiring Nov. 5, 2025, contained 6.2 grams of aspartame per kilogram. The "Dried Plum" weighing 160 grams and expiring Feb. 24, 2025, contained 2.59 grams of aspartame per kilogram. Both products exceed the permitted levels set by Macau's "Standards on the Use of Food Additives in Foodstuffs."

### MACAU TO CRIMINALIZE UNLICENSED MONEY EXCHANGE IN CASINOS

The government is set to criminalize unlicensed money exchange activities in casinos to curb illicit financial practices linked to gambling. The new provision, introduced in the draft of the Law to Combat Gambling Crimes, imposes penalties of up to five years in prison for offenders and bans them from casinos for two to ten years. Legislator Chan Chak Mo announced the change following a committee meeting Friday, highlighting a shift in the government's stance after initial reluctance to impose such measures. The bill's final reading is expected by year-end, reflecting continuing efforts to enhance regulatory integrity in the gaming industry.

### GUANGZHOU PLANS MAJOR PORT EXPANSION

Guangzhou is set to enhance its port capacity with a significant investment of over 15 billion yuan, as announced by the Guangzhou Port Authority. The three-year plan will increase annual handling of standard shipping containers to 27 million and boost cargo capacity to 700 million tons by 2026. This initiative marks Guangzhou's fourth action plan since 2015 to strengthen its position as an international shipping hub. In 2023, the port ranked fifth and sixth globally for cargo and container handling, respectively. The expansion will incorporate smart technologies and drones to improve logistics efficiency and promote sustainable practices in port operations.

### TOURISM

# WEEKEND TRAVEL BOOM: CUSTOMS HITS RECORD HIGH

NADIA SHAW

**M**ACAU'S Public Security Police Force (PSP) has reported that a record-breaking day for travel occurred Saturday, Aug. 10, with 717,197 entries and exits.

This marks a 0.04% increase from the previous Saturday, underscoring the region's ongoing recovery in tourism following the pandemic.

The travel surge was primarily via the Border Gate with Zhuhai, accounting for approximately 53% of the total traffic, or about 380,000 individuals.

Qingmao Port contributed nearly 15% with 105,000 travelers, while over 92,000 people crossed the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HKZMB).

To manage the increased volume, authorities implemented additional channels to ensure efficient customs clearance across all ports, according to local media.



This uptick in activity aligns with a broader trend in Macau's tourism sector.

Visitor arrivals for 2024 have already surpassed 20 million, two months earlier than last year.

Between January and June, Macau welcomed 16.72 million visitors, reflecting a robust re-

covery. The average daily visitor count now stands at 93,116, a 36% increase from the same period in 2023, reaching nearly 83% of pre-pandemic levels from 2019.

In response to the surge, authorities have deployed personnel to maintain order during peak hours and are prepared to

open additional channels as needed to manage the flow of travelers and vehicles.

The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Emergency Rescue Command Center has also advised that the Zhuhai Highway Port will operate from 4 p.m. to midnight, with specific entry and exit times for vehicles and passengers.

The Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has set an ambitious target of welcoming 33 million visitors by the end of 2024, aiming to attract two million overseas tourists.

With the recent record-breaking numbers, Macau is on track to achieve this goal, further solidifying its status as a key destination in the region.

The effective management of customs operations and strategic planning has been crucial in accommodating the growing influx of travelers, showcasing the resilience of Macau's tourism infrastructure.

### BANKING

# June's mortgage loans see mixed results

NADIA SHAW

**T**HE Monetary Authority (AMCM) reported that new approvals of residential mortgage loans (RMLs) increased in June compared to the previous month, while commercial real estate loans (CRELs) declined.

Outstanding balances for both RMLs (Regional Multiple Listing Services) and CRELs (Commercial Real Estate Loans) decreased on a monthly basis.

According to figures the AMCM released Friday, new RMLs approved by Macau banks rose 17.1% month-over-month to MOP1.20 billion in June.

New RMLs to residents, which made up 97.6% of the total, grew 16.8% to MOP1.17 billion. The average of new RMLs approved between April



and June was MOP1.20 billion, up 8.9% from the prior period.

In contrast, new CRELs decreased 24% month-over-month to MOP2.20 billion.

New CRELs to residents, 99.5% of the total, fell 24.1% to MOP2.18 billion. The average of new CRELs approved between April and June was MOP2.11 billion, up 30.6% from the

previous period.

During its mid-year press conference last month, Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) said the anticipated revitalization following the lifting of government cooling measures has not materialized.

Home prices have dropped as potential buyers contend with rising borrowing costs and tightened mortgage conditions,

which have particularly impacted first-time buyers.

Mark Wong, director of Value and Risk Advisory at JLL, noted last month that high-interest rates are constraining short-term property investment returns, leading to a cautious approach among investors.

The residential sector's transaction volumes fell 12.7% year-over-year, with only 172 presale homes recorded in the first half of 2024.

While gaming revenue surged 41.9% year-over-year, nearing pre-pandemic levels, this economic rebound has yet to translate into a recovery for the property market.

JLL's general manager in Macau and Zhuhai, Oliver Tong, told a press conference developers

are adopting conservative pricing strategies to stimulate sales, aligning new property prices with those in the secondary market.

As of end-June, the outstanding value of RMLs was MOP224.67 billion, down 0.5% from the prior month and 3.9% year-over-year. Outstanding CRELs fell 1.2% month-over-month and 5% year-over-year to MOP154.03 billion.

The delinquency ratio for both RMLs and CRELs was 3.5% at the end of June.

Despite the challenging real estate market, there are signs of recovery in other areas, such as improving employment rates and a rebound in tourism, which could eventually benefit the property market.

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CE ELECTION COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

# Highest turnout ever with participation reaching 88%

RENATO MARQUES

A total of 88.12% of the voters (5,521) have exercised their right to vote for the representatives for the Chief Executive (CE) Election Committee.

This preliminary result was announced by the president of the Electoral Affairs Commission for the Chief Executive Election (CAECE), Judge Song Man Lei, at a press conference organized at the

headquarters of the CAECE to present the preliminary results of the balloting that closed 6 p.m. yesterday.

While presenting the results, Song said the CAECE was happy that this was the highest turnout ever for this type of election, proving the new law is having positive effects.

"We managed to have a high level of participation and support from legal entities and voters in different sectors or subsectors for this

election," she said.

"This symbolizes, at the same time, that the new electoral law for the Chief Executive, that is, the amended law, is being fully implemented."

Previously, the highest turnout for an election for the CE Election Committee was five years ago (in 2019) with the participation of 87.20% of the voters.

In 2014, the total turnout was 82.69%.

Speaking to the media, Song said that, according

to data collected at the closing of the polls, the sectors and subsectors with higher turnout were the "Labor" (96.85%), followed by the "Industrial, Commercial and Financial" (92.08%), "Education" (91.77%), "Social Service" (91.18%), "Professional" (87.27%), "Cultural" (74.67%) and "Sports" (73.44%).

Song said all work was carried out in an orderly manner with no reports of wrongdoing.

Asked by the media about the low competitiveness of the elections which, in most sectors and subsectors, have an equal number of candidates to the number of seats available, Song said, "Well, in reality, we also did a lot of publicity and promotion work."

"We would like to have had more candidates for each subsector, more voters, more

candidates, to participate in the elections for members of the electoral commission. For this year's edition, we can see that the list of candidates already includes some new faces."

"After this edition we will also evaluate all the work and also try [to find ways] to do more and better in terms of publicity or promotion," she said.

Questioned on the lack of interest and knowledge of the population for this election, the president of the CAECE said not to ignore where such information comes from.

She said she believes Macau residents are well aware the election for members of the CE Election Committee took place yesterday, adding that is also part of the CAECE work to keep optimizing the work and general awareness and participation.



Song Man Lei, center

## ELECTED MEMBERS CAN SIGN THE OATH DECLARATION STARTING TODAY

At the same press conference, Song said after this morning's final presentation and confirmation of the election results, all the elected members would be able to immediately collect a pre-made declaration at the CAECE service counter and sign it, thus making their oaths official.

The declaration already includes the statutory oath according to the legal provisions of the new law for the election of the CE, she said. This will be the next step in the Commission's work to prepare the CE election that should take place in October this year, she added. **RM**

# More an endorsement than an election

RENATO MARQUES

THE election for the Chief Executive (CE) Election Committee happened yesterday with some 6,265 registered voters representing over 500 local associations and groups being called to vote.

The balloting occurred between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. Sunday (Aug. 11) with many voting in the first half of the nine-hour period.

Until 2 p.m. the Electoral Affairs Commission saw a turnout of 70.55% of voters (4,420) with this figure increasing to 83.64% (5,240 voters) by 4 p.m.

Over the whole day, the sub-sector of "Labor" saw a higher turnover, reaching about 84% by 2 p.m.

At closing time (6 p.m.) 88.12% (5,520) had voted, making it the highest turnout for this type of election.

RENATO MARQUES



Although there was a very high participation rate, these elections served mostly to endorse many of the candidates as the number of candidates equaled the number of seats in all the sectors and sub-sectors but two.

Only the sub-sectors of "Education" and "Labor" had a real election, as there were four candidates more than the number of seats available.

In total, 344 of 348

candidates were elected.

From these, as the CAECE had previously noted, almost 35% (120 candidates) were newcomers to this election, although they were not unknown.

Among those running for the first time were the former CE, Chui Sai On, the president of the Macau Institute of Management, Samuel Tong, as well as the president of the Macau Catering Industry Association, Lei

Iam Leong, the lawyer Jorge Neto Valente, former public broadcaster TDM executive committee chairman Manuel Pires and emcee, presenter, and entertainer José Chan Rodrigues.

The president of the Confraria da Gastronomia Macaense [Macanese Cuisine Confraternity], Carlos Anok Cabral was another new name, as were architect André Ritchie and translator Manuela de Sousa Aguiar.

João Paes d'Assumpção, Eurico de Jesus, and Daniela de Souza Fão were also on the list of candidates for the first time.

Besides the members elected yesterday, the CE Election Committee also includes 12 local delegates to the National People's Congress (NPC) and 14 representatives to the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, names that include the former CE, Edmund Ho, and businessmen Lawrence Ho and Lao Nga Wong.

The Election Committee also includes representatives from religious associations and municipal bodies as well as 22 of the 33 Legislative Assembly (AL) members who were chosen in an internal election.

Considering that the AL's president, Kou Hoi In, is already a member via the NPC seat as are the lawmakers Chui Sai Peng, and Si Ka Lon, very few of AL lawmakers were left out.

Among those who will not be part of the CE Electoral Committee is lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho.

## FINAL RESULTS WILL ONLY BE KNOWN TODAY

Although the election and the vote counting happened yesterday, with a preliminary result already revealed, the elections for the members of the CE Election Committee will only become final today, being presented in a ceremony at the CAECE headquarters. Present at the ceremony will

be representatives from all the associations and groups that listed candidates but that will not have voting rights on any of the CAECE decisions. At the event, they may present complaints, protests, or counter-protests related to the work of CAECE concerning vote counting.



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**MEDICINE**

# UM and Macao Union Hospital launch joint research center

**T**HE University of Macau (UM) and the Islands Healthcare Complex – Macao Medical Center of Peking Union Medical College Hospital (Macao Union Hospital) have formalized a collaboration by signing a framework agreement and unveiling a plaque for the University of Macau–Macao Union Hospital Joint Research Centre for Clinical Medicine, on Friday.

The new center aims to advance innovative research in biomedicine, clinical medicine, critical diseases, Chinese medicine and overall health. It will also train professionals in clinical medicine and related fields.

Rector Yonghua Song of UM and Director Wu Wenming of the Macao Union Hospital signed the agreement in the presence of key officials, including Ao Ieong U, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, and Lam Kam Seng Peter, Chair of the University Council.

In his remarks, the rector emphasized UM's role in enhancing research quality and social services in Macau, while Wu highlighted the center's potential to elevate medical education and healthcare quality in the

Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA).

Following the ceremony, attendees visited the Macao Centre for Testing of Chinese Medicine, which aims to bolster the development and internationalization of Chinese medicine in Macau.

The collaboration is expected to significantly enhance the GBAs clinical research and healthcare services. **NS**



Director Wu Wenming delivers a speech

**CULTURE**

# FM CELEBRATES 5TH ANNIVERSARY OF MACAU MEMORY

NADIA SHAW

**T**HE Macau Foundation (FM) is celebrating the 5th anniversary of its Macau Memory website with a series of activities from now until December.

The Macau Memory website, launched in 2019, is an online platform providing public access to various forms of historical materials about Macau, including files, documents, books, newspapers, magazines, poems, inscriptions, pictures, maps, photographs, postcards, posters, stamps, audios and videos.

The website is available in Macau's two official languages: Chinese and Portuguese.

To mark the milestone, the foundation has planned a range of activities, including talks on topics such as customs, traditions, urban planning, religious culture and community development.

Additionally, there will be a lucky draw for internet users who like, comment on, and subscribe to



the Macau Memory's Facebook page and YouTube channel.

Winners will receive two limited edition Macau Pass cards featuring the Macau Memory design, according to local media reports.

In a recent achievement, the Macau Memory website was recognized by the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (WHITRAP).

The project received the Star of Discovery award in the 2024 Global Awards for World Heritage Education Innovative Cases (AWHEIC), making it the only project from Macau to receive this prestigious

accolade.

"Winning an AWHEIC award is a testament to the Macau Memory project's innovative approach and international recognition," said a spokesperson from the Macau Foundation.

"This achievement further solidifies Macau's reputation as a culturally renowned city and serves as a shining example of its commitment to preserving and sharing its rich history with the world."

For more information about the upcoming activities and to explore the vast collection of historical materials, visit the Macau Memory website at <https://www.macaumemory.mo>.

**BASKETBALL**

# Zamboanga Valientes wins Asian tournament title, beating Macau Black Bears

NADIA SHAW

**T**HE Zamboanga Valientes emerged victorious in The Asian Tournament finals, defeating the Macau Black Bears 81-65 over the weekend.

The game, played at the Valientes' home court in the Philippines, showcased the exceptional talent of former NBA star DeMarcus Cousins, who led his team with 21 points, 13 rebounds, and eight assists.

The Valientes secured their title with a strong 25-15 run in the fourth quarter, pulling ahead by as much as 20 points after a dunk by Cousins with less than two minutes remaining on the clock.

Rickey Brice was named Finals MVP, contributing 25 points, 10 rebounds, and two blocks to the



team's success.

Head coach Bobidick Delos Santos expressed his pride in the team's achievement to the media, stating, "I'm very, very proud! Thank God, first of all. We had lots of ups and downs from the first leg until here, but we stuck together."

Brice echoed these sentiments, saying, "This is life-changing. This is something that I will remember for the rest of my life."

Despite a strong start from Macau, which led 39-29 at halftime, the Valientes rallied.

Cousins and Brice's relentless performance cut the deficit to two points by halftime and propelled Zamboanga to a commanding lead in the second half.

Other notable contributions came from Mike Tolomia, who scored 11 points, and Franky Johnson, who added 13.

The Valientes' victory marks a perfect tournament run, winning all three games leading up to the finals, including a decisive win against the Naic Aces in the semifinals.

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SOUTH CHINA SEA

# China says a Philippine air force jet entered illegally its airspace, Manila calls Chinese maneuvers 'dangerous'

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

**T**HE Philippine military chief condemned what he said was "the provocative actions" of two Chinese air force aircraft that executed a dangerous maneuver and dropped flares in the path of a Philippine air force plane on routine patrol in the South China Sea.

All those aboard the Philippine air force NC-212i light transport plane were unharmed and returned safely to Clark Air Base north of Manila after Thursday morning's incident over the Scarborough Shoal, Gen. Romeo Brawner said, without providing other details.

A top Philippine security official told The Associated Press that the Chinese jets flew at a "very close distance" to the Philippine air force turbo-prop plane and "put the lives of our pilots in real risk and danger." Another security officer said at least eight flares came from the Chinese fighter jets.

Both spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the incident.

The Southern Theater Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army said in a statement Saturday that a Philippine Air Force aircraft on Thursday had "illegally" ente-



AP FILE PHOTO

red the airspace above Huan-gyan Island — the Chinese name for Scarborough Shoal, which China claims — and disrupted its training activities.

The command sent jets and ships to identify, track and drive away the Philippine aircraft, the statement added.

"The on-site operation was professional, standardized, le-

gitimate and justified," it said, adding that forces remained on high alert and ready to defend China's national sovereignty and security.

The command has warned the Philippines to "stop its infringement, provocation, distortion and hyping-up," the statement added.

The Philippines' Brawner

said in a statement that "the incident posed a threat to Philippine air force aircraft and its crew, interfered with lawful flight operations in airspace within Philippine sovereignty and jurisdiction and contravened international law and regulations governing safety of aviation."

He said the incident has

been reported to Manila's Department of Foreign Affairs, which has filed numerous diplomatic protests against China's increasingly aggressive actions in the disputed waters.

Brawner suggested the incident would not stop the Philippines from undertaking such patrols in the contested region.

"We reaffirm our commitment to exercise our rights in accordance with international law," Brawner said.

Aside from China and the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand have overlapping territorial claims in the busy sea passage, a key global trade and security route, but hostilities have particularly flared since last year between Chinese and Philippine coast guard and navy forces in the Scarborough Shoal and another hotly disputed atoll, the Second Thomas Shoal.

The U.S. military has reported encountering such dangerous maneuvers by Chinese air force planes in the past over the disputed waters, where it has deployed fighter jets and navy ships to promote freedom of navigation and overflight. China has bristled at U.S. military deployments in the disputed region, saying these have endangered regional security. **MDT/AP**

## China launches ambitious green transition guidelines

CHENG SI,  
CHINA DAILY

**C**HINA'S central government has unveiled a new state-level guideline aimed at achieving a comprehensive green transition across the nation's economy and society over the next decade. The move is part of China's broader effort to address ecological and environmental challenges while promoting sustainable development.

The guideline emphasizes the importance of transforming China into a greener, low-carbon nation, a crucial step



XINHUA

Aerial photo taken on Aug 19, 2020 shows wind turbines in Jiucaiping scenic spot in Southwest China's Guizhou province

toward ensuring the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature.

The document outlines targets for significant progress in green pro-

duction and lifestyles by 2030, with the ultimate goal of establishing a

green and low-carbon circular economy by 2035.

Key sectors covered by the guideline include agriculture, transportation, and energy. Among the specific goals are increasing the scale of the energy-saving industry to approximately 15 trillion yuan (\$2.09 trillion) and boosting the consumption of non-fossil energy to 25 percent of the nation's total energy use by 2030.

The guideline also calls for a substantial increase in the use of clean and new energy in public transportation, inclu-

ding buses and ships. By 2035, new energy vehicles are expected to dominate the automotive market.

To support the green transition, the government plans to promote a more sustainable lifestyle among the public, encouraging resource conservation, such as saving food and water. Additionally, the government aims to increase investment in cutting-edge technologies and develop new talent strategies to provide intellectual support for the nation's green transformation.

**CHINA DAILY**



THAILAND

# Reformist Move Forward Party, dissolved by court order, regroups as People's Party

JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI,  
BANGKOK

**J**UST two days after being disbanded by court order, Thailand's main progressive political party regrouped under a new name and vowed to continue its fight for reforms despite continuing opposition from the conservative establishment that blocked the party from taking power despite finishing first in last year's election.

Leaders of the dissolved Move Forward Party announced they were forming a new party to be called the People's — or Prachachon — Party.

Critics say the party's dissolution was the latest attack on the country's progressive movement in a yearslong legal campaign by conservative forces.

Thailand's Constitutional Court on Wednesday unanimously ruled that the Move Forward Party violated the constitution by proposing to amend a law that criminalizes insulting the royal family.

It also banned former Move Forward executives, including popular former chief Pita Limjaturat, from politics for 10 years.

Move Forward won the most seats in the 2023 general election, but conservative, military-appointed Senators voted down its candidate for prime minister. The party's surprise victory was seen as reflecting widespread desire for democratic reforms, espe-



Natthaphong Ruengpanyawut (front right) a member of the disbanded Move Forward Party at a rally on Friday

cially among younger voters, after years of military rule.

Lawmakers of a dissolved political party who are not banned from politics can keep their seats in Parliament if they join another party within 60 days. Move Forward had 148 lawmakers in Parliament, but five are now-banned executives who cannot continue to serve.

Speaking at the new party's inaugural meeting, attended by the 143 remaining MPs and other party members, lawmaker Parit Wacharasindhu announced that the reformed party would be na-

med the People's Party because it wants to be "a party from the people and for the people, and to work on creating a Thailand where absolute power belongs to the people."

He named five new executive board members, including the new party's leader 37-year-old IT expert Natthaphong Ruengpanyawut.

Natthaphong told the crowd the party would pursue the ambitious goal of winning enough seats to form a single-party government in the next elections in 2027.

Wednesday's court ruling drew international concern.

"This decision disenfranchises the more than 14 million Thais who voted for the Move Forward Party in the May 2023 election and raises questions about their representation within Thailand's electoral system," said U.S. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller. "The Constitutional Court's decision also jeopardizes Thailand's democratic progress and runs counter to the aspirations of the Thai people for a strong, democratic future."

"The United States does not

take a position in support of any political party, but as a close ally and friend with deep and enduring ties, we urge Thailand to take actions to ensure fully inclusive political participation, and to protect democracy and the freedoms of association and expression," he said.

The European Union issued a similar statement.

Volker Türk, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights said the court's ruling "was deeply troubling and undermines democratic processes and restricts political pluralism."

"This decision seriously impacts fundamental freedoms of expression and association, and people's right to participate in public affairs and political life in Thailand," said Türk. "No party or politician should ever face such penalties for peacefully advocating legal reform, particularly in support of human rights."

Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin told reporters on Thursday that he expects Move Forward to respect the court's ruling and to find an appropriate way to continue its work.

When asked about the international reaction to the party's dissolution, Srettha said he understood that concerns were expressed in a spirit of goodwill, but "they don't mean anything, because we have sovereignty and our own ways in terms of political and democratic developments."

MDT/AP

KOREAS

# Seoul says the North has flown more trash balloons toward South Korea

**SOUTH KOREA'S** military says North Korea is again flying balloons likely carrying trash toward the South, adding to a bizarre psychological warfare campaign amid growing tensions between the war-divided rivals.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said over the weekend that the winds could carry the balloons to regions north of the South Korean capital, Seoul. Seoul City Hall and the Gyeonggi provincial government issued text alerts urging citizens to beware of objects dropping from the sky

and report to the military or police if they spot any balloons.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or property damage.

North Korea in recent weeks has flown more than 2,000 balloons carrying waste paper, cloth scraps and cigarette butts toward the South in what it has described as a retaliation toward South Korean civilian activists flying anti-Pyongyang propaganda leaflets across the border.

Pyongyang has long condemned such activities as it is extremely sensitive to any



outside criticism of leader Kim Jong Un's authoritarian rule.

North Korea last flew balloons toward the South

on July 24, when trash carried by at least one of them fell on the South Korean presidential compound, raising worries about the

vulnerability of key South Korean facilities. The balloon contained no dangerous material and no one was hurt, South Korea's presidential security service said.

South Korea, in reaction to the North's balloon campaign, activated its front-line loudspeakers to blast broadcasts of propaganda messages and K-pop songs. Experts say North Korea hates such broadcasts because it fears it could demoralize front-line troops and residents.

The Korea's tit-for-tat Cold War-style campaigns are inflaming tensions, with the rivals threatening stronger steps and warning of grave consequences.

Their relations have worsened in recent years as Kim continues to accelerate the North's nuclear weapons

and missile program and issue verbal threats of nuclear conflict toward Washington and Seoul. In response, South Korea, the United States and Japan have been expanding their combined military exercises and sharpening their nuclear deterrence strategies built around U.S. strategic assets.

Experts say animosity could further rise later this month when South Korea and the United States kick off their annual joint military drills that are being strengthened to deal with the North's nuclear threats.

The resumption of the balloon campaign comes as North Korea struggles to recover from devastating floods that submerged thousands of homes and huge swaths of farmland in areas near its border with China. MDT/AP



USA

# Co-founder of Smartmatic voting machine company charged with paying bribes for Philippine contracts

JOSHUA GOODMAN, MIAMI

**A** U.S. federal indictment has charged three current and former executives of Smartmatic in a scheme to pay more than \$1 million in bribes to put its voting machines in the Philippines, a setback for a company that has been feuding with allies of Donald Trump over unsubstantiated claims that it manipulated the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

The Justice Department in a statement last week said Smartmatic's Venezuelan-born co-founder Roger Piñate and a colleague at the Boca Raton, Florida-based company funneled bribes to the chairman of the Philippines' electoral commission through a slush fund created by overcharging for the cost of each voting machine it supplied authorities.

The payments, between 2015 and 2018, were made to obtain business with the Philippines and secure the timely payment for its work, the Justice Department said in a statement, which, like the indictment, does not mention Smartmatic by name.

To hide the corrupt payments to Juan Donato Bautista, the former chairman of the Commission on Elections in the Philippines, the co-conspirators allegedly created a slush fund — codenamed the "Philippines Pot," according to investigators — and sham loan agreements to justify transfers to bank accounts located in Singapore, Hong Kong, Switzerland, New York and Florida. Nearly \$1 million of the illegal payments were used by a family member of Bautista to purchase property in San Francisco.

The investigation of the Smartmatic executives started in 2017, when the wife of Bautista informed investigators in the Philippines that her husband had obtained \$20 million in unexplained wealth, some of it in stacks of cash found at their home.

Bautista was arrested last year on a criminal complaint from Miami that accuses him



of taking the bribes in exchange for awarding an unnamed company nearly \$200 million in contracts to supply tens of thousands of Taiwanese-manufactured voting machines and related services for the 2016 presidential elections. Before his arrest he denied ever taking money from Smartmatic or any other entity. Nonetheless authorities in the Philippines banned Smartmatic from bidding on a contract to provide election technology for the 2025 election.

Smartmatic in a statement said it had placed the two employees on leaves of absence, effective immediately.

"No voter fraud has been alleged and Smartmatic is not indicted," the company said in a statement. "Voters worldwide must be assured that the elections they participate in are conducted with the utmost integrity and transparency."

Piñate co-founded Smartmatic more than two decades ago and its initial success is partly attributable to major contracts from the government of Hugo Chavez, an early devotee of electronic voting, in Piñate's native Venezuela. It has since expanded globally and helped carry out elections in 25 countries, from Argentina to Zambia as well as several European countries.

In 2017, Smartmatic broke all ties with Venezuela when it accused President Nicolas Maduro's government of manipulating turnout figures in the

country's election for a national constituent assembly. Smartmatic said that the turnout announced by the government was inflated by about 1 million votes.

Piñate, who was also serving as Smartmatic's president, and Jorge Miguel Vasquez were each charged with one count of conspiracy to violate the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, which carry a maximum penalty of five years in prison. Both reside in south Florida. Along with Elie Moreno, a dual citizen of Venezuela and Israel who managed Smartmatic's relations with the Philippines, they were also charged with several money laundering charges that carry a maximum penalty of 20 years.

Piñate on his LinkedIn profile touts Smartmatic's corporate motto: "Protecting election integrity is at the core of what we do."

Smartmatic sued Fox News for airing false claims that software it developed altered the outcome of the 2020 U.S. presidential election. In April, another conservative media outlet, One America News Network, settled with Smartmatic similar allegations for undisclosed terms.

Reportedly funding Smartmatic's costly defamation suit is LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman, who did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the indictment against the Smartmatic executives.

Smartmatic has also sued several Trump allies, including his personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani, but the claims against him are on hold while his bankruptcy case plays out.

Fox News earlier tried unsuccessfully to get dismissed out of the case, which also named hosts Maria Bartiromo and Jeanine Pirro and former host Lou Dobbs. An appeals court threw out claims against network parent Fox Corp., but Smartmatic refiled them.

All software accused of altering the outcome of the 2020 U.S. election was developed a decade ago by a U.S. affiliate of Smartmatic.

Fact-checkers at the AP and other outlets have debunked the far-fetched claims. But Trump attorney Sidney Powell nonetheless appeared on Fox News shortly after the election accusing Maduro's former chief of staff of being the ringleader of what she called a "Cyber Pearl Harbor" involving Smartmatic.

In the 2020 U.S. election, Smartmatic technology was used in a single district: Los Angeles County, California. It also doesn't have any existing ties to Dominion Voting Systems, a rival that the Trump team has accused of being part of the plot.

Fox countersued under a New York law against lobbying frivolous litigation to try to silence reporting or commentary on public matters. Smartmatic tried in vain to get those counterclaims tossed out. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 2003 GILLIGAN LANGUAGE 'WASN'T PERFECT'

The journalist at the centre of the controversy surrounding the death of weapons expert Dr David Kelly has admitted that his language "wasn't perfect" when he reported the government had "sexed up" its weapons dossier on Iraq.



Andrew Gilligan, defence correspondent for the BBC Radio 4's Today programme, was giving evidence to the Hutton Inquiry on its second day.

He stood by the main thrust of his report - that the government had exaggerated Iraq's weapons capability to make the case for war.

But it emerged during four hours of questioning by Lord Hutton that his reporting had been criticised in an internal BBC email as "flawed".

The inquiry is looking into the circumstances surrounding the death of Dr Kelly, who apparently committed suicide in July after being named as the possible source for Mr Gilligan's report.

A transcript of the notes Mr Gilligan made from his last meeting with Dr Kelly on 22 May said the government's dossier was "transformed a week before publication to make it sexier... a classic was the 45 minutes" [referring to a claim that Iraq could launch weapons of mass destruction within 45 minutes.]

It went on, "Most people in intelligence weren't happy with it, because it didn't reflect the considered view they were putting forward."

The transcript then showed a single word, "Campbell".

The prime minister's director of communications, Alastair Campbell, has vigorously denied ordering the dossier to be changed.

Andrew Gilligan was then asked about the controversial live report for the Today programme, broadcast at 0607 on 29 May.

In it, he said a "senior official" had told him that the government had "sexed up" its dossier with a claim which it "probably knew was wrong".

Mr Gilligan admitted he had not used exactly the right language.

The inquiry was then shown an internal BBC email from Mr Gilligan's editor on the Today programme, Kevin Marsh, a month after the controversial report was broadcast.

It said: "The story was a good piece of investigative journalism marred by flawed reporting. Our biggest millstone has been his [Andrew Gilligan's] loose use of language and lack of judgement in some of the phraseology." [...]

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Lord Hutton published his report on 28 January 2004.

It was highly critical of the BBC, saying the key allegations reported by Andrew Gilligan were "unfounded", and criticising "defective" BBC editorial processes.

Lord Hutton absolved the government of any kind of "dishonourable, underhand or duplicitous strategy" in the leaking of Dr Kelly's name to the press.

But he said the Ministry of Defence was "at fault" for failing to tell Dr Kelly that his identity as the suspected source would be confirmed to journalists who suggested it.

Shortly after the report was published, BBC chairman Gavyn Davis and the corporation's Director General Greg Dyke resigned.

Andrew Gilligan handed in his resignation on 30 January, describing the BBC as the victim of a "grave injustice".



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
 You're more patient with numbers and finances. Talk with your partner and family about shared goals. Write down your commitments and follow through.

**TAURUS**  
 Apr. 20-May. 20  
 Collaborate with your partner. Share tasks and responsibilities. Physical magnetism is part of the fun. Make a lovely discovery together.

**GEMINI**  
 May. 21-Jun. 21  
 You're getting busy. Make a plan and write it down. Put on some good dancing music and get moving. Physical action gets results.

**CANCER**  
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
 Relax and enjoy time with family and friends. Pay attention to someone attractive. Share delicious flavors and experiences. Send love letters. Make poetry.

**LEO**  
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
 Domestic comforts draw you in. Clean and beautify your space before settling into it. Savor simple homemade pleasures. Share treats with your family.

**VIRGO**  
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
 Get into a fascinating conversation. Brilliant ideas arise and surprise. Passion energizes the discourse. Talk about a subject you love. Word travels fast.

**LIBRA**  
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
 Use your persuasive charms. Wheel and deal. Promote your wares and services. Generate income by connecting and communicating. Follow up by providing excellent work.

**SCORPIO**  
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
 Get into a personal project. Polish your brand, appearance and image. Update your profile. Get feedback from respected allies and friends. Dress for success.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
 Find a quiet space to strategize and make plans. Get productive in peaceful privacy. Imagine perfection. Share thanks with your angels and ancestors.

**CAPRICORN**  
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
 Teamwork gets results. Share leadership tasks. Plug a financial leak. Meetings and gatherings provide useful solutions. Come together for shared commitments and fun.

**AQUARIUS**  
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
 A professional challenge has your attention. Actions get farther than expected. Get moving. Figure out what needs to be done. Someone important is watching.

**PISCES**  
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
 Classes, seminars and trips invite discovery. Explore your subject in depth. Long-distance travel and cultural exchange open your heart and mind. Try something new.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

**WEATHER**

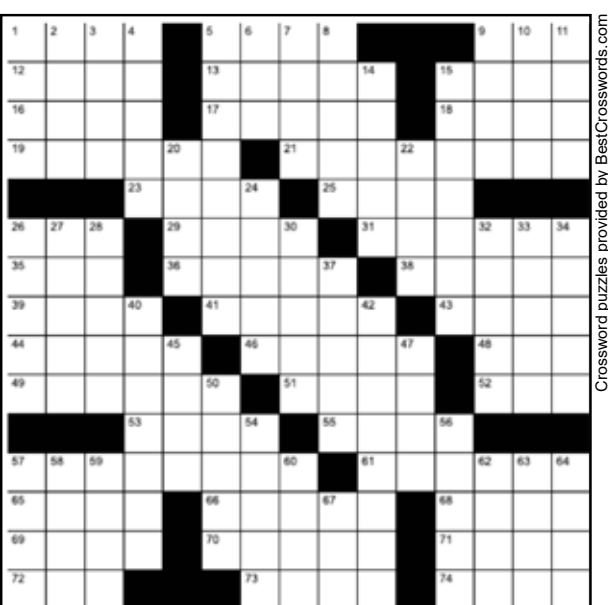
	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	23	30	rain
Changchun	22	27	cloudy
Chengdu	23	36	fine
Chongqing	25	36	fine
Fuzhou	28	37	cloudy
Guangzhou	26	33	rain
Guiyang	20	26	showers
Haikou	26	34	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	28	36	thunderstorms
Harbin	22	25	thunderstorms
Hefei	24	38	fine
Nanjing	28	38	cloudy
Shanghai	29	35	rain
Taipei	26	31	rain
Wuhan	28	38	fine
Hong Hong	29	32	thunderstorm
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	12	18	showers
Frankfurt	21	24	cloudy
Paris	20	38	sunny
London	16	33	cloudy
New York	18	27	cloudy

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Horned vipers; 5- Go it alone; 9- Big Apple sch.; 12- Rich soil; 13- Reverse; 15- Courts; 16- Venus de \_\_\_\_; 17- Started; 18- Torah holders; 19- Sound system; 21- Veteran; 23- Blues singer James; 25- Shipped off; 26- "Lord, is \_\_\_\_?"; Matthew; 29- Astronaut's insignia; 31- All the while; 35- Sticky stuff; 36- Encore!; 38- Bottom line; 39- Musical Horn; 41- Down source; 43- Hawaii's state bird; 44- Rubber gasket; 46- Beat back; 48- Hightailed it; 49- Speaks publicly; 51- Comic Carvey; 52- Nine-digit ID; 53- Med. school course; 55- Knowledge; 57- Wrist band; 61- Disappear; 65- Anklebones; 66- Smell, usually a pleasant one; 68- Dorothy's dog; 69- Barely managed, with "out"; 70- Legal right; 71- LAX guesstimates; 72- Genealogy word; 73- Caesar's wings; 74- \_\_\_\_ and rave;

**Friday's solution**

M	E	S	A	S	O	E	A	R	K	M	T	S		
A	L	O	H	A	E	D	G	E	L	A	I	T		
D	E	C	A	F	E	D	I	T	E	R	T	E		
E	M	I	A	K	R	O	N	A	V	I	A	N		
E	M	A	G	R	E	O	C	E	A	N				
O	I	L	R	I	G	S	A	L	O	N				
O	H	I	O		S	A	N	E	R	R	E	O		
N	O	T	W	I	T	H	S	T	A	N	D	I	N	G
A	P	E	M	O	O	S	E	R	V	I	L			
T	E	N	S	A	N	D	I	R	E	C	E			
L	U	I	G	I		A	R	M	O	R				
T	E	N	S	E		R	E	U	S	E				
E	M	I	T		R	E	N	D	E	R	E			
T	O	T	E		M	I	D	I		G	R	A	T	A
T	E	N	E		R									



**USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

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



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 HKD 11,880,000 4 bed 3 bath



OLYMPICS 2024

# CHINA BECOMES FIRST NON-EUROPEAN COUNTRY TO CLAIM GOLD IN RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS

**C**HINA pulled off a stunner in rhythmic gymnastics Saturday, becoming the first non-European country to win Olympic gold in the group event by finishing just ahead of Israel and Italy.

The five-woman Chinese team of Ding Xinyi, Guo Qiqi, Hao Ting, Huang Zhangjiayang and Wang Lanjing posted a total of 69.800 points in the final, which was divided into two routines: one using hoops, the other with the athletes using ribbons and balls. China topped the eight-team final in hoops and ranked third in the other portion of the final to edge Israel by 0.950 points.

Italy earned the bronze, 1.700 points behind China.

The silver is the first in rhythmic gymnastics for Israel, which won

the world championship last fall.

Bulgaria, the defending Olympic champion, slipped to fourth.

Russia has dominated the team competition since it made its Olympic debut at Atlanta in

1996, winning five golds. Yet Russia's absence in Paris due to the war in Ukraine opened the door for others.

China arrived at the Olympics as the only non-European team to medal in the group final,

earning silver at Beijing in 2008. It doubled its medal total over two hours at Porte de La Chapelle Arena, hinting at the expanding footprint of a sport whose center of power has been concentrated for decades.

"We have been looking for this moment for a long time," China coach Sun Dan said. "As it's Rhythmic Gymnastics, art has no frontiers. In this discipline, we should be inspired by the richness of all cul-

tures and we wanted to showcase the Chinese style. Here we have an association of art and sport, and I'm so happy because after so many years of effort we finally have a good result."

MDT/AP



Team China performs with ribbons and balls in the group all-around rhythmic gymnastics final at La Chapelle Arena

## CHINA EARNS A 300TH OLYMPIC GOLD MEDAL WITH WOMEN'S TEAM VICTORY IN TABLE TENNIS

**C**HINA won the women's team event in table tennis at the Paris Games on Saturday for the country's 300th gold medal in Olympic history.

China beat Japan 3-0 in the final for its fifth consecutive gold in the women's team event, a feat that the men had also achieved on Friday.

"Each of us went all out today and played every position well," No. 1-ranked Sun Yingsha said.

South Korea took the bronze with a 3-0 win over Germany, its

first medal in the team event since the Beijing Games in 2008.

China is the dominant force in table tennis, sweeping the five Olympic gold medals in Paris, with the other victories coming in the men's and women's singles tournaments and in the mixed doubles event.

China has won 37 of the 42 gold medals awarded in table tennis since the sport was added to the Olympic program at Seoul in 1988.

MDT/AP

AD

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ANALYSIS

# Paris and the Olympics have changed each other during their summer fling

JOHN LEICESTER, PARIS

**I**N French, there are no goodbyes.

Instead, Olympic crowds from Paris to the surfing venue in Tahiti were saying “au revoir” — see you again — as the 2024 Games drew to a close yesterday.

After the 100-year wait since Paris' last Games, no one can say when France's capital and the Olympics will next embrace. But this much is certain: They're both emerging changed — in some ways for the better — from their summer romance.

Paris' third Games — it also hosted in 1900 — have been filled with passion. French fans surprised even themselves with their enthusiasm for two and a half weeks of sports, plunging into the party like Léon Marchand parting the waters for his four swimming golds.

Marchand, in particular, stopped time with his feats — forcing pauses in play at other Olympic venues because spectators cheered so intensely when France's new darling won again and again. Other French medal winners like judo icon Teddy Riner and mountain biker Pauline Ferrand-Prevot also whipped up hometown joy.

Initial grumbling about barricades and other intense security measures that disrupted locals' lives — not to mention arson attacks on France's high-speed rail network — gave way to choruses of “Allez les bleus!” or “France, let's go!”

There were uplifting stories galore for non-French fans, too. Quite literally in the case of Armand Duplantis, the Swedish pole vaulter who broke his own world record in winning Olympic gold.

Simone Biles shone, again. Having set the brave example of prioritizing mental health over competition at the 2021 Tokyo Games, she came back to win three gymnastics golds and a silver.

The Eiffel Tower peering over beach volleyball made that arena Ze Place To Be. Celine Dion's musical comeback at the Olympic opening, belting out Edith Piaf's “Hymne à l'amour” (“Hymn to Love”) from the tower's first floor, was high in emotion.

Rain drenched VIPs and fans alike but didn't dampen the wacky and wonderful opening ceremony. Its displays of LGBTQ+ pride and French humor were too much for some: Donald Trump and French bishops were among those who took offense.



As well as many highlight-reel moments, the Games also experienced lows. The ugliest were torrents of online vitriol targeting female boxers Imane Khelif and Lin Yu-Ting as well as the opening ceremony's creative teams.

Still, like all good romances, the Paris-Olympics affair left fans yearning for more. That couldn't be said of all Games of late.

China — as host of the Summer Games in 2008 and Winter Games in 2022 — faced accusations of human rights abuses. There was Russia's doping cover-up at its Sochi Winter Games in 2014, quickly followed by the beginnings of its land grabs in Ukraine. All left stains on the Olympic brand.

So, too, did the wastefulness and corruption of the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro that made authorities in Paris determined to do things differently.

“Breaking the norms” became the unofficial motto of Paris Olympic organizers, who worked to slash the Games' carbon emissions and revamp the Olympic model to make it less anachronistic.

The results were evident. The Paris Games weren't perfect — can flying thousands of athletes across the world ever be with the climate in crisis? But the French capital provided new examples of how the Olympics can be improved.

Take the Olympic cauldron, for

example: Paris' use of electricity and LED spotlights to make it seem that its cauldron was ablaze puts pressure on Los Angeles, the next host city, and Brisbane, Australia, in 2032 to not go back to burning tons of fossil fuels.

Also gone? Expensive new venues that don't get used much, or at all, once the Olympics have left town. Paris instead widely used existing or temporary arenas.

Marchand and other swimmers raced in a came-as-a-kit pool that will be dismantled and rebuilt in a Paris-area town where kids can't wait to splash around in it. Breaking (another innovation) and other urban sports played out on Concorde Plaza, where French revolutionaries removed King Louis XVI's head.

When the lawns have grown back, there will mostly be only memories of other temporary arenas where archery, equestrian events and other sports looked as glamorous as Paris catwalk shows, set against iconic backdrops.

The Eiffel Tower, Versailles Palace, the domed Grand Palais (turned into a breathtaking arena for fencing and taekwondo) and other monuments became Olympic stars in their own right. The use of Paris' cityscape showed that the Olympics can — and should — adapt to their hosts, not the other way around.

The sole purpose-built signatu-

re sports venue was the new aquatics center in Seine Saint-Denis, where China won all eight diving golds, an unprecedented sweep.

The northern suburb of Paris is mainland France's poorest region and had such a shortage of pools that many of its kids can't swim. Regional leader Stéphane Troussel told The Associated Press that thanks to Games-related refurbishments and newly built swim centers that teams used for Olympic training, much of Seine Saint-Denis has now largely caught up — in pools at least — with better-off parts of France.

But the city's ambitions flirted at times with an excess of zeal.

Making triathletes and marathon swimmers do something that many Parisians recoil at themselves — plunge into the murky River Seine — proved problematic. Its waters were repeatedly deemed too dirty for training swims and forced a postponement of the men's triathlon — moved to the same day as the women's race, near the majestic Pont Alexandre III.

The mayor of Paris, who took a pre-Games dip in the Seine to demonstrate that its long-toxic waters are now swimmable, says 1.4 billion euros (\$1.53 billion) plowed into a cleanup of the river is one of the Games' most transformative legacies. Still, the water quality concerns raised questions

about whether many Parisians will dive in when City Hall plans to open the Seine for public swimming next summer.

Massive security required to safeguard the opening ceremony along the river — in a city hit repeatedly by extremist attacks in 2015 — proved financially painful for nearby businesses that were sealed inside the security cordon and lost customers.

French authorities also made unprecedentedly broad use of discretionary powers under an anti-terror law to keep hundreds of people, often minorities, they deemed to be potentially dangerous away from the biggest event modern France has ever organized. The use of AI-assisted surveillance also fueled critics' complaints that the Games are leaving an unwanted legacy of police repression.

Inside the high-security bubble of the athletes' village, some complained about the eco-friendly cardboard beds, rooms that weren't air-conditioned and shortages of some foods — byproducts of Paris' drive for sustainability and waste reduction. Squaring the circle of how the Olympics can be viable in a warming world is going to be an ever-increasing challenge for hosts.

Still, the joyful crowds showed that the popular verdict was more positive than negative. The organizers' slogan was “Games Wide Open.” Seeing such happiness on streets that felt so unsafe when al-Qaida and Islamic State gunmen and suicide bombers sowed terror in 2015 seemed to complete Paris' long recovery.

After the Paralympics from Aug. 28 to Sept. 8, normal life will resume. But the Games will keep ringing in Paris.

A victory bell in the Olympic stadium that winning athletes rang in celebration will get a new home — a restored Notre Dame. The cathedral's planned reopening in December, following more than five years of rebuilding after its 2019 fire, is the next big milestone on Paris' horizon.

The cathedral's rector, Rev. Olivier Ribadeau Dumas, said the bell will hang in the roof above the altar and be rung whenever Mass is celebrated.

The chimes will serve as lasting reminders of the Games' “extraordinary atmosphere” and Olympic-inspired “unity of the French people that was very beautiful,” he said.

“This bell will be the sign of how these Games have left an imprint on France,” Dumas said. “That really makes me happy.” MDT/AP



**OPINION**

**World Views**

Editors, Associated Press

**UKRAINE'S FORAY INTO  
 RUSSIA'S BORDER REGION  
 EMBARRASSES PUTIN**

Ukraine's recent cross-border raid into Russia's Kursk region marks a significant escalation in the nearly 2½-year war, revealing vulnerabilities in Russia's defenses and embarrassing the Kremlin. The surprise attack, the largest of its kind by Kyiv's forces, prompted a civilian exodus and exposed the Russian military's struggle to respond effectively.

For Ukraine, this operation serves as a morale booster at a crucial time. Ukrainian forces have faced relentless Russian attacks along a vast front line, stretching over 1,000 kilometers. The incursion into Kursk, involving several battle-hardened Ukrainian army brigades, contrasts sharply with previous smaller raids by Russian volunteers allied with Ukraine. This time, Kyiv's troops overwhelmed lightly armed Russian border guards and infantry units, quickly advancing deep into Russian territory and sowing panic.

Reports suggest Ukrainian forces pushed up to 35 kilometers into Russia, bypassing fortifications and demonstrating how poorly defended the region is. Ukrainian troops utilized drones and electronic warfare to strike Russian military vehicles and suppress communications, further debilitating the Russian response. Despite these advances, Ukrainian forces did not aim to consolidate control but have dug in around strategic locations, such as the town of Sudzha, near the border.

Russia's military response was sluggish. With its primary forces engaged in eastern Ukraine, only poorly trained conscripts were available to defend the Kursk region. These conscripts were easily overrun, with some captured by Ukrainian forces. The shortage of manpower forced Russian commanders to rely initially on air power, but this was not entirely effective, as at least one Russian helicopter was downed.

As reinforcements arrived, including elite special forces and Wagner Group veterans, they struggled to dislodge Ukrainian forces. The chaotic Russian response included instances of poorly coordinated troop movements, leading to further casualties. Russian state media has focused on the humanitarian response rather than the military's failure to prevent the incursion, with President Vladimir Putin condemning the attack as a "large-scale provocation."

Ukrainian officials have been tight-lipped about the operation, with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy avoiding direct mentions of the Kursk raid in his public addresses. However, the raid underscores Kyiv's ability to challenge Russia on its own soil, shifting the psychological dynamics of the conflict. Adviser Mykhailo Podolyak hinted that such incursions could force Moscow to reconsider its war strategies, suggesting that the war is creeping into Russian territory.

From Russia's perspective, the raid is a stark reminder of the war's reach and the Kremlin's unpreparedness. Putin's administration has declared a federal emergency in Kursk, granting local authorities enhanced powers to manage the crisis. The incursion has also reignited calls from Russian hardliners, such as Dmitry Medvedev, to expand Moscow's war goals, potentially escalating the conflict further.

For Ukraine, the raid into Kursk might have multiple objectives. It could force Russia to redirect resources away from its ongoing offensive in eastern Ukraine, where it has made slow but steady gains. However, the operation also risks stretching Ukraine's resources thin, potentially exposing Kyiv's forces to counterattacks as they attempt to maintain a presence in hostile territory.

The long-term impact of this raid on the war's trajectory remains uncertain. Analysts like Michael Kofman emphasize that much will depend on Ukraine's capacity to sustain the operation and Russia's ability to organize an effective counter-response. Regardless, the Kursk raid marks a bold and potentially game-changing move by Ukraine, challenging Russia's narrative and revealing cracks in its defense.

Days after Ukraine began a surprise military incursion into Russia's Kursk border region, Zelenskyy broke the government's silence on it yesterday [Macau time] by indirectly acknowledging ongoing military actions to "push the war out into the aggressor's territory" in his nightly address.

Overnight into Sunday, a Russian drone and missile barrage on Kyiv killed two people including a 4-year-old boy, while in Russia, Kursk's regional governor said 13 people were wounded when a Ukrainian missile shot down by Russian air defenses fell on a residential building.

The bodies of a 35-year old man and his son were found under rubble after fragments of missiles fell on a residential area in Kyiv's suburban Brovary district, according to Ukraine's State Emergency Service on Sunday. Another three people in the district were also injured in the attack.

Serhii Popko, head of the Kyiv City Military Administration said the it was the second time this month Kyiv was targeted.

Popko said ballistic missiles did not reach the capital but that suburbs took the hit, while drones aiming for the capital were shot down.



Craftsman Katsunori Suzuki

**172-YEAR-OLD JAPANESE  
 FACTORY PRESERVES  
 TRADITIONAL WAY OF  
 MAKING COOKWARE**

HIRO KOMAE, OSHU

**KATSUNORI** Suzuki is one of a few craftsmen in Japan still producing cast iron cookware by hand using laborious traditional techniques. The president of the 172-year-old foundry where he works says she wants to keep the tradition alive, even if it costs much more to produce.

Suzuki uses moist sand and a few other ingredients to make the molds using a method called "tegome," or "hand stuffing." He spends hours tamping the sand in an iron frame to compress it just the right amount to create the mold, in which he carves detailed designs for the pot.

When the mold is ready, Suzuki fetches buckets of molten iron and hurriedly carries them back to his workspace so the temperature remains at about 1,450 degrees Celsius when it's poured into the mold.

After the iron cools and solidifies, the sand mold is broken into pieces with a hammer and the cookware is removed. Any extraneous pieces are cut off.

Suzuki, 59, who has worked in the Oigen cast iron foundry for 40 years, then follows the same pro-

cess to make a mold for a smaller piece of cookware, such as a lid. Making one pot and a lid takes him an entire day.

In the following days, the cookware, still rough, will be sent to other workers who grind off smaller burrs, polish the surface and bake it at a high temperature to make it rust resistant.

In addition to the strength and dexterity needed to make the molds, the traditional method requires experience to condition the sand with just the right amount of moisture to match the weather conditions.

At the end of the day, Suzuki waters the sand that was used for the mold to begin reconditioning it to make new molds.

Kuniko Oikawa, Oigen's president, said the traditional tegome method is considered inefficient and costly, and most foundries have abandoned it. Instead, they use molds made from other materials and mechanize the pouring of molten iron for mass production.

Like the other foundries, the Oigen factory until recently had only a mechanized production line. Oikawa, however, didn't want the traditional method to die out.

The fifth president of the family-owned company, founded in 1852 in Iwate prefecture near the iron-rich Kitakami Mountains in northeastern Japan, decided to bring back the tegome method after talking to a retired craftsman who still knew how to do it. The area is famous for cast iron products, with its techniques believed to have been introduced over 900 years ago.

Oikawa said she doesn't know of anyone else currently using the tegome method for cast iron cookware.

"There may be retired cast iron craftsmen who know how, but I don't know anyone who is still working at a foundry that uses tegome," she said.

In 2022, Oikawa created a new brand, Mugu, to offer high-end cast iron cooking pots designed by an artist who has been with the Oigen foundry for over 50 years. The name is derived from the local pronunciation of the Japanese word muku, which means pure.

Suzuki is training Seksuk Suebsai, a Thai citizen who began learning tegome after moving to the area in 2023. Suzuki, Seksuk and a few others make the sand molds for the Mugu pots.

MDT/AP



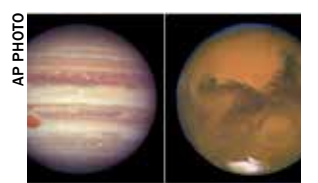
**Serbia** Tens of thousands protested in Belgrade against lithium mining, which they believe will cause environmental damage. President Vučić claimed the protests were part of a plot to oust him, influenced by foreign powers. The demonstrations reflect widespread opposition to mining in agriculturally rich areas, despite government assurances of economic benefits.



**France** World Boxing, the new governing body aiming to keep boxing in the Olympics, anticipates a significant increase in membership post-Paris Olympics. Despite controversies involving its predecessor, the International Boxing Association, World Boxing is striving to unite the sport's national federations to secure its Olympic future.



**Congo** In eastern Congo, a chess club in a refugee camp offers solace and distraction to children displaced by ongoing conflicts. Despite minimal resources, the Soga Chess Club provides an outlet for kids to engage in strategic thinking and escape the trauma of displacement, highlighting a small beacon of hope amid harsh conditions.



**Space** A rare celestial event features Mars and Jupiter appearing extremely close in the night sky, viewable best before dawn in the eastern sky. This conjunction, where the planets appear just a moon-width apart, won't occur again until 2033, offering a unique viewing opportunity alongside the Perseid meteor shower.