



THE ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP WILL RETURN TO MACAU FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 10 YEARS WITH A NIGHT EVENT IN NOVEMBER

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AL PRESIDENT KOU HOI IN FINISHES LEGISLATIVE YEAR WITH 'SERMON'

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CHINA OUTLINES KEY TASKS FOR ECOLOGICAL CONSERVATION

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AP PHOTO



India Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday expressed concerns over the political unrest in Bangladesh and attacks on Hindus and other minorities. Speaking during India's 78th Independence Day, Modi highlighted India's commitment to supporting Bangladesh's development and hoped for a swift resolution to the current turmoil.

AP PHOTO



Afghanistan The Taliban's educational bans have deprived 1.4 million Afghan girls of schooling, according to UNESCO. This alarming figure underscores the severe restrictions placed on female education in Afghanistan, highlighting a significant setback in gender equality and educational access.

AP PHOTO



Turkey-Palestinians Turkish President Erdogan yesterday met with Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas to discuss the ongoing conflict in Gaza and strategies for achieving a cease-fire. Erdogan reaffirmed Turkey's support for Palestine and called for increased international pressure on Israel.

AP PHOTO



Russia U.S.-Russian dual national Ksenia Khavana was convicted yesterday of treason in a Russian court and sentenced to 12 years in prison on charges stemming from a \$51 donation to a charity aiding Ukraine. Khavana, identified by Russian authorities by her maiden name of Ksenia Karelina, was arrested in the Ural Mountains in February and pleaded guilty in a closed trial last week.

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The Macau One mobile platform has launched its 'One-Stop Marriage' and 'One-Stop Birth' services, revolutionizing how residents handle key life events

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WEATHER ROAD AND TREE DAMAGE FOLLOWING STORM

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TASTE OF EDESIA



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HIGH-RISK WORK SAFETY AND HEALTH PROTECTION EMPHASIZED BY LABOR BUREAU

Some 110 industry professionals attended a lecture hosted by the Labor Bureau to discuss safety measures for exterior wall work and working at heights. Representatives from the bureau and industry delivered talks on accident causes and guidelines. Industry speakers shared key safety points for exterior wall repair, with an emphasis on the importance of comprehensive safety planning. The bureau distributed sun protective gear and encouraged small- and medium-sized firms to apply for its safety promotion program for training and gear, including workbenches and harnesses. The Labor Bureau plans ongoing safety sessions to boost worker knowledge and improve measures across industries.

HONG KONG-MACAU BRIDGE TRAVEL EASES WITH ADDITIONAL QUOTAS

The government will begin a new phase today, allocating additional regular quotas for Macau private vehicles to travel between Hong Kong and Macau via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, including 810 quotas for private entities and 190 for commercial entities. To simplify and speed up the assessment and approval process, the Hong Kong Transport Department will no longer require vehicle registration documents and Macau driving licenses, submitting documents electronically to Macau instead. Interested applicants can find the eligibility requirements on DSAT's website and sign up online by Nov. 21 to reserve an in-person appointment between Aug. 29 and Dec. 5 to finalize their applications. DSAT aims to streamline the process further with Hong Kong and increase the number of approved licenses.

LAWMAKERS EXPANDS CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES LIST

The Macau Legislative Council passed emergency amendments yesterday to add five internationally controlled substances to its Anti-Drug Law. Secretary for Security Wong, Sio Chak, said the addition of four opioid analgesics and one synthetic cannabinoid aligns Macau's banned substances with UN conventions. Only one newly banned synthetic cannabinoid has been linked to 17 local drug cases from 2021 to 2023, according to Wong. Some legislators worry about illicit drugs in e-cigarettes locally, though Wong noted several confirmed local cases involving e-cigarettes. The changes expand Macau's banned drug lists to match those of neighboring regions and the international community.

GAMING

GALAXY ENTERTAINMENT REPORTS STRONG Q2 PERFORMANCE

NADIA SHAW

GALAXY Entertainment Group (GEG) has announced impressive financial results for the second quarter and first half of 2024, demonstrating a 37% year-on-year increase in net revenue to HKD21.5 billion. Adjusted EBITDA for the first half reached HKD6 billion, also up 37%, reflecting the company's robust recovery following the pandemic.

In Q2 2024, GEG reported a group net revenue of HKD10.9 billion, a 26% increase compared to the same period last year. The group's adjusted EBITDA for the quarter was HKD3.2 billion, reflecting a 28% rise year-on-year. These results underscore GEG's strong market position and operational efficiency.

Galaxy Macau was the primary driver of GEG's success, generating net revenue of HKD17 billion in the first half, up 43% year-on-year. The property's adjusted EBITDA reached HKD5.4 billion, marking a 34% increase, highlighting Galaxy Macau's crucial role in the group's overall financial health.

StarWorld Macau also demonstrated positive growth,



with a 25% increase in net revenue to HKD2.7 billion for the first half. Broadway Macau reported an adjusted EBITDA of HKD12 million, a significant turnaround from a loss in the previous year, indicating recovery in the entertainment sector.

Mass table games contributed HKD8.29 billion, a 31.9% increase, while rolling chip wins surged by 49.4% to HKD1.39 billion. Slot machine revenues also saw robust growth of 48.5%, totaling HKD658 million.

Adjusted EBITDA for the quarter rose 28.4% year-on-year to HKD3.18 billion, reflecting the company's effective management and operational strategies. StarWorld Macau also contributed positively, with gross gaming revenue increasing by 13.6% to HKD1.42 billion.

As of June 30, 2024, GEG maintained a strong balance sheet with cash and liquid investments totaling HKD29.0 billion. The company announced an interim dividend of

HKD0.50 per share, reflecting confidence in its long-term growth prospects and commitment to returning value to shareholders.

In addition to strong financial results, GEG is advancing its technological capabilities with the rollout of smart table technology, expected to be fully implemented by year-end. The company is also preparing for the mid-2025 opening of its new hotel, Capella at Galaxy Macau, as part of its ongoing expansion efforts.

Wynn opens medical center expanding wellness options

WYNN Palace has launched the EliteKinesio Medical Centre, the first full-service medical facility within a Macau spa.

Located at The Spa at Wynn Palace, the center is a first-of-its-kind in the territory. Managed in collaboration with physical therapist Cary Lam, it provides customized treatment plans focusing on areas such as pain management, injury prevention, and improved sleep quality.

Therapies at the Eli-



teKinesio Center include musculoskeletal care, injury rehabilitation, fascia manipulation and programs

for strengthening core muscles and cardiovascular fitness. All services are conducted individually under an on-site

therapist's supervision. In addition to expanded health offerings, The Spa at Wynn Palace has also introduced four

new "touchless well-being enhancements," being float therapy, red light therapy, vibration and sound therapy, and cryotherapy.

A Wynn Macau spokesperson said the upgrades aim to support Macau's developing "Big Health" industry as part of the economy's medical tourism diversification.

The facilities provide Macau residents and international visitors with specialized care options. They mark Wynn's continuing efforts to advance health and wellness in Macau through innovative programs and collaborations with entities like the University of Macau. VC

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MACAOONE

Marriage and birth just went digital

VICTORIA CHAN

THE Macau One mobile platform has launched its innovative "One-Stop Marriage" and "One-Stop Birth" services, revolutionizing how residents handle key life events. By integrating various government departments and automating processes, the new systems provide a more convenient and efficient experience.

These "One-Stop" services are part of Macau's broader initiative to digitize public administration and improve service delivery for locals. Revisions to the Civil Registration Code and the reconstruction of the civil registration operating system have laid the legal and technical foundations for online civil registration services.

The "One-Stop Birth" function allows eligible parents to complete procedures related to their newborn's birth via an application, including automatically transmitting identity information to the Health Bu-



reau and updating the registration card, eliminating the need for in-person visits. In 2023, around 3,700 newborns were born under this system, with thousands of families benefiting from the improved convenience. Electronic birth registration has also streamlined the process, reducing the time from four working days down to one.

The new system allows for the electronic transmission of birth notification information directly from hospitals to the Civil Registry, fully automating the process. Parents can now use a mobile app to conveniently register their newborn's birth, apply for an ID card, update health insurance information, and apply for birth allowance all in a sin-

gle transaction. The Identification Bureau has optimized the process, allowing either parent to apply for the newborn's ID card at the same time as the birth registration.

Similarly, the "One-Stop Marriage" service integrates the procedures for marriage registration, date appointment, identity card update, and marriage allowance appli-

cation across multiple departments. Couples can now submit applications electronically without visiting the Civil Registry, and they can even select a private notary to officiate the wedding. The updated procedures enable same-day marriage certificate issuance and on-the-spot ID card updates.

The integration of social security services means eligible applicants for marriage and birth allowances no longer need to submit supporting documents, as the system can automatically verify their eligibility and process the applications upon completion of the civil registration steps.

Through these comprehensive "One-Stop" services, Macau has streamlined and digitized the key life event processes of marriage and birth, providing a more convenient and efficient experience for its residents. The government's commitment to using e-government as an entry point for public administration reform is evident in these innovative initiatives.

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AL PLENARY

MORE DEBATE PROPOSALS VOTED DOWN; PROPOSERS NOT HAPPY

RENATO MARQUES

AFTER lawmaker Ron Lam saw two of his debate proposals voted down at the Legislative Assembly (AL) late last week, the same thing happened to José Pereira Coutinho. His two debate proposals were voted down by the plenary on Wednesday evening.

Pereira Coutinho had moved lawmakers to debate with the government over two matters. The first concerned the need to update the hardware of gaming concessionaires, as well as the need for concessionaires to hire more staff in light of increased customer demand, and increase employees' wages. The second concerned Macau International Airport (MIA) and how the airport should better use its resources and improve its routes to attract more international visitors.

Both proposals were voted down by a majority of lawmakers, with the first proposal gathering 21 votes against and the second 25 votes against.

In response to the proposal related to the gaming concessionaires, several lawmakers spoke about their decision to vote against it, including Wu Chou Kit, Pang Chuan, Chui Sai Peng, and Ma Io Fong. Those lawmakers tied to the Macau Federation of Trade Unions mostly abstained from the vote.

PRO-GOV'T LAWMAKERS AGAINST INTERFERENCE

According to those who voted against it, the general feeling was that the debate proposal "directly interfered" in the affairs of private enterprises.

Lawmaker Wu noted that discussing such matters would be viewed as "excessive intervention" by the government on Macau's market economy, stating that each company has its own rules and management styles and that government should not impose upon these.

Concurring with Wu's response, Pang noted the government was only "the regulator of the economy" and should not interfere with decisions made by companies, particularly when those involve an aggravation of operation costs.

Siding with those who voted against the proposal, Chui invoked a different approach, saying that the matters it related to were ongoing and would



Pang Chuan



Pereira Coutinho



Wu Chou Kit

be actioned when necessary.

Among those who abstained, lawmakers Leong Sun Iok and Ella Lei said that they had reservations on the matter. Leong Sun Iok observed that regardless of whether he agreed with the proposal's content, he believed that it should have been communicated to the government rather than debated by lawmakers, as such a debate would not be productive.

Lei added that what Pereira Coutinho sought was ultimately "a duty of the concessionaires to their workers" and not a matter worthy of debate."

LAM CLAIMS LAWMAKERS LACK STATUTORY KNOWLEDGE

On the side of those voting in favor was Lam, who reaffirmed the impossibility of lawmakers bringing debates in the public interest to the AL.

Lam declared that according to his calculations, this was the 27th consecutive time that a debate proposal had been voted down by the plenary. The lawmaker openly accused his colleagues of lacking knowledge about the AL's statutes

and the duties of lawmakers, suggesting that they dedicate more time to upskilling and familiarizing themselves with the relevant laws and regulations.

Lam criticized those pro-government lawmakers for spending time debating and

expressing opinions considering the debate proposal, when this is in fact what should have occurred during the very debate that they were obstructing.

Visibly upset, Lam also added that the government's

"excessive interference" in the economy should not be provided as an excuse. Lam stated, "We know that the government does interfere with the economy too much, either through specific policy actions or a lack thereof."

BUSINESS STRATEGY OF MIA WITH GOV'T

Even less interaction occurred in relation to the following proposal, which gathered an even higher number of votes against it.

Among the few lawmakers who stepped up to justify their votes were Iau Teng Pio and Cheung Kin Chung, both of whom were directly appointed by the Chief Executive, although Cheung has more professional involvement with the topic at hand.

Both lawmakers said they were refusing to debate matters related to the management and direction of MIA as it is a "subsidiary of the government," meaning that it is exclusively the government's prerogative to plan and direct measures to improve the airport. Iau downplayed the role of the local airport structure, citing the facility's "small size and capacity" and its lack of competitiveness when compared to other airports in neighboring cities and regions. He added, "To attract international visitors, we need to cooperate [instead of compete] with them."

KOU HOI IN FINISHES LEGISLATIVE YEAR WITH 'SERMON'

RENATO MARQUES

IN the last plenary session of the calendar year at the Legislative Assembly, the assembly president, Kou Hoi In, took the last few minutes of Wednesday's session to deliver a "sermon" to lawmakers.

In a speech that seemed to pick up from earlier words offered by Ron Lam, Kou noted that the AL had received several requests for debate proposals, the contents of which had prompted doubts and questions in his mind, leading him to request the opinion of the AL's legal advisors.

Kou said that for the time being, he had allowed all these proposals to rise to the plenary and be voted on by lawmakers.



Kou Hoi In

He noted that in some cases, it was necessary to make adjustments to various motions so that they would not be considered inappropriate and consequently prohibited.

Without mentioning names, Kou called on lawmakers to engage with more friendliness and cooperation, accepting the different views and opinions expressed across the plenary.

Wishing all the lawmakers a relaxing holiday break, he expressed his hope that the time off would help them to "freshen up" their ideas.

Lawmakers' holidays in Macau take place usually between mid-August up and mid-October. In some cases, lawmakers have been called to urgent debates and votes during this period.

Authorities respond to road and tree damage following storm

NADIA SHAW

YESTERDAY'S heavy rainstorm caused a significant road subsidence in the New Urban Zone District A, near the Rotunda de Hou Kong. Local authorities responded promptly, with the fire department confirming that no injuries or vehicles were involved in the incident. The incident affected the section of Avenida Doutor Ma Man Kei that was already closed for a pipeline project.

The Public Development Bureau quickly dispatched staff Thursday morning to assess the situation. Initial investigations suggest that the subsidence, measuring approximately three meters deep and six by six meters wide, was caused by the heavy showers. Fortunately, there were no reports of injuries or damage to construction machinery. The contractor has implemented safety measures at the site, and the Public Construction Authority has



instructed them to remain vigilant regarding weather conditions. The area remains fenced off as the joint pipeline project continues.

In a separate incident, a large branch from an ancient banyan tree at the Tin Hau Ancient Temple on Ma Kau Seac Hill, collapsed, damaging a concrete shrine but leaving the temple's main structure intact. Director of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), Deland Leong, noted that the tree's condition had worsened due to recent heavy

rains, likely leading to its fall.

The banyan tree, classified as an ancient specimen, has shown signs of weakening, including infections and fungal growth. The IC expressed its plans to oversee repairs to the damaged shrine while closely monitoring the tree's health, around noon yesterday.

Both incidents highlight the necessity for regular maintenance and inspection of public structures and natural landmarks during extreme weather events.

CRIME

Authorities warn of phone scams impersonating police

THE Public Security Police are cautioning the public about a concerning trend of phone scams in which scammers pose as law enforcement officers to obtain personal information.

The scammers are able to generate caller ID numbers that appear to be from the police hotline, making the calls seem more convincing. The callers claim to be involved in a criminal investigation and inform the victim that their phone has been misused.

According to authorities, the police have received multiple reports from members of the public claiming to have received calls from individuals claiming to be police officers. The authorities suspect that these fraudsters

are attempting to gather sensitive personal data from unsuspecting victims.

The Public Security Police emphasize that no legitimate government agency will ever ask for personal information over the phone. They also state that so-called "telephone case handling" or "online case handling" are clear indications of fraud.

The police are urging the public to be wary of the caller ID on their phones, as scammers can use software to disguise the number and make it appear to be from a government agency or a known contact.


Anyone who has fallen victim to these scams is advised to report the incident to the police as soon as possible. VC


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LEGISLATION

AL GREENLIGHTS NEW ORGANIC CCAC LAW, FIRST READING INTO 'NEW DRUGS' LIST

RENATO MARQUES

THE Legislative Assembly (AL) has unanimously passed the new organic law of the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) in its first reading.

The law incorporates new provisions related to the fight against economic and financial crimes, especially money laundering-related crimes.

The new law aims to widen the commission's scope, giving it the power as a comprehensive body to address broad cases that concern government institutions and departments as well as the private sector.

More than addressing any flaws in the commission's work, lawmakers wanted to know how the new provisions would confer the entity enough power to compel government entities to change their procedures, after the CCAC or audit reports alerted them to procedural flaws.

The Commissioner Against



Corruption, Chan Tsz King, responded that it was possible to have a follow-up mechanism to ensure that recommendations and guidelines for procedural changes are effected. Chan noted that such a follow-up mechanism is included in the amendment.

The new law is scheduled to

take effect from October this year.

FIVE NEW DRUGS PROHIBITED

Also approved unanimously was the first reading of the amendment to law 17/2009, which regulates the prohibition of narcotic and psychotropic

substances' production, trafficking, and consumption in Macau.

As explained by the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, the changes are mostly related to the introduction of new drugs to the list of illegal substances, following anti-drug work undertaken by international part-

ners, he said.

The new list will prohibit five new substances. Of these, four are included in the I-A table (opium, alkaloids, and similar substances) and one is included in the II-B table (amphetamine-type substances and central nervous system stimulants).

Substances added to the I-A list are 2-Methyl-AP-237 (2-MAP), Etazene, Etonitazepyne, and Protonitazene. The substance added to table II-B is the synthetic cannabinoid ADB-BUTINACA.

Questioned by lawmakers, Wong said that from 2021 to 2023, a total of 17 cases of synthetic cannabinoids were found and seized in Macau.

Still, the number of drug-addicted individuals in Macau is not considered to be concerningly high, based on data from the Social Welfare Bureau.

In the first half of this year, there were 96 cases of people in Macau registered as drug addicts, including five cases of young people aged 21 and below.

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SPORTS

Basketball Super League expands with new teams in Macau, HK for 2024-25 season

THE East Asia Super League is expanding to Hong Kong and Macau for its 2024-25 season, increasing the professional basketball league to 10 teams.

League officials said in a statement that Hong Kong Eastern and the Macau Black Bears would join the league which also features teams from Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and the Philippines.

Hong Kong Eastern won its third domestic A1 Division title in 2023 and is a two-time winner of the ASEAN Basketball League in 2016-17 and 2023.

The Black Bears were formed in 2018 as Macau's first-ever professional team. The team is the reigning Macau league champions and has also represented the region in the ASEAN Basketball League.



MDT FILE PHOTO

gue.

EASL officials said they plan to announce the schedule soon and that the season will begin in early October.

"It was always our ambition to expand and bring in more leagues, representing more regions in Asia,"

said league chief executive Henry Kerins. "We have accelerated those plans due to the strong demand from the regional leagues to join, and their readiness to do so."

Japan's Chiba Jets won the 2023-24 title, the league's second season. **MDT/AP**

MDT FILE PHOTO



SPORTS

UFC to return to Macau with November card

THE Ultimate Fighting Championship will return to Macau for the first time in 10 years with a Fight Night event on Nov. 23, the mixed martial arts promotion said yesterday, according to a Reuters dispatch.

The UFC last held an event in Macau in August 2014. The event in November will be its fourth in the special administrative region of China.

"We are ecstatic to be back at

this incredible destination city," said Kevin Chang, UFC's senior vice president and head of Asia, told Reuters.

The event will take place in the Galaxy Arena, Macau's largest indoor stadium, with a seating capacity of 16,000.

The UFC, which has also held events in Shanghai, Beijing and Shenzhen, unveiled an MMA training center in Shanghai in June 2019. **MDT/AGENCIES**

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BRIEFS



GBA ECONOMY TO GROW OVER 5% THIS YEAR

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is expected to achieve over 5% GDP growth in 2024, according to a report by Guangzhou University and Social Sciences Academic Press China. The region's economic recovery is driven by strong performance in Hong Kong and Macao and a resurgence in foreign trade. Despite challenges due to weak overseas demand, the GBA has outperformed Guangdong province, which has been struggling with slower growth. Notably, foreign trade in the nine Guangdong cities within the GBA reached a record high of CNY4.96 trillion in the first seven months of 2024, marking a significant 14.3% increase from the previous year. This robust trade activity, combined with supportive policies, is expected to help the GBA meet China's national economic growth target of 5%, although the report notes that this target may be harder to achieve than last year due to higher comparative baselines.



COURTESY SING TAO

EXCITED ETHNIC STUDENTS RUSH TO GBA WITH NEW PERMITS

A group of ethnic minority students from Hong Kong embarked on their first exchange tour to the Greater Bay Area (GBA) following the issuance of new mainland travel permits for non-Chinese permanent residents, The Standard reported. The three-day trip, involving 28 pupils from Yaumati Kaifong Association School, includes visits to Guangzhou and Foshan, where they will explore cultural sites and engage in traditional Chinese arts. This initiative follows recent policy changes allowing non-Chinese residents in Hong Kong and Macau to obtain permits for multiple visits to mainland China over five years, aimed at fostering deeper integration and cultural understanding. The program is designed to broaden students' perspectives and enhance their knowledge of Chinese culture and the GBA's economic development. Participants, including 10-year-old Nepalese student Gurung Shristy, expressed excitement about the opportunity to make new friends and learn more about China. The school plans to expand the program, expecting more students to join future exchanges.

HK'S FINTECH BODY EYES BIGGER PLANS IN GREATER BAY

Hong Kong's FinTech Association (FTAHK) is expanding its role within the Greater Bay Area (GBA), seeking to strengthen ties with Shenzhen's fintech community. Under the leadership of new chair Lareina Wang, the association aims to leverage the GBA's growing opportunities and the cross-border investment Connect schemes to enhance collaboration and influence. FTAHK is planning joint events with Shenzhen counterparts, including a visit to Huawei's R&D institute in Dongguan. The association, which has seen rapid growth, is also focused on attracting more mainland Chinese members, offering more events in Mandarin, and launching a WeChat account to better connect with the GBA fintech ecosystem. The association's efforts align with broader governmental initiatives to facilitate fintech development in the region, including a pilot trial for cross-border credit checks between Hong Kong and Shenzhen. Wang's leadership marks a continued push to position Hong Kong's fintech sector as a global player with deep regional ties, SCMP noted in a report this week.

ARTISTS FROM GREATER BAY AREA COMIC BOOK PRODUCT

REVIEW BY NADIA SHAW, MDT

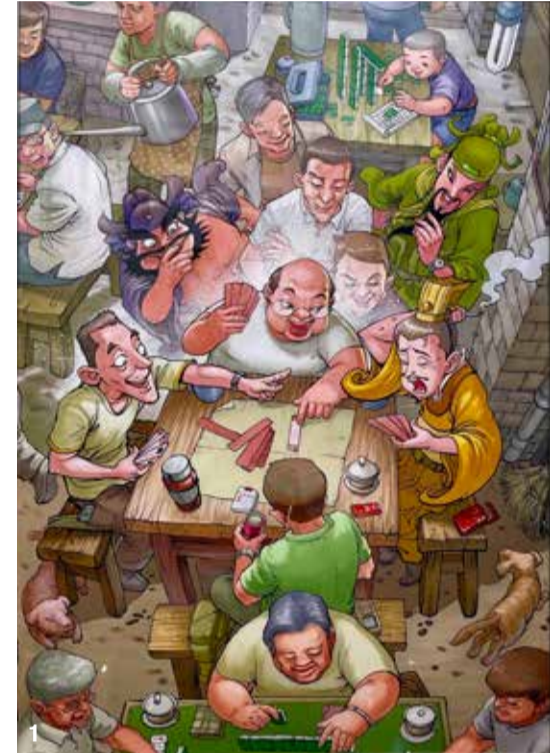
In a vibrant showcase of creativity, artists from the Greater Bay Area (GBA) are taking center stage at the Rui Cunha Foundation (FRC) Gallery in Macau. The exhibition, titled "Comics 2024 + Armour-Man 2024," features 60 comic book productions from talented artists across the GBA, running from Aug. 13 to Aug. 24. This event not only highlights the dynamic art scene within the region but also underscores the potential for cross-border collaboration in the creative industries.

The exhibition is part of the Greater Bay Area Manga Artists Exhibition 2024, organized by the Association of Promoting Macau Comics and Animation Cultural Exchange (APMCACE). It includes works from notable artists such as Chen Wei and Lin Min from mainland China, as well as Wai On and Linus Liu from Hong Kong. Local talents like Vincent Ho and Jet Wu from Macau are also prominently featured, sharing their creative journeys and offering their comic books for sale.

A significant highlight of the exhibition is "ArmourMan," a popular comic series by Hong Kong artist James Khoo Fuk Lung, which has seen remarkable success since its release over a

year ago. To commemorate its first anniversary, a special segment will run at the FRC gallery

from Aug. 20 to Aug. 24, showcasing the original manuscript along with selected cover art and



Rising medical expenses challenge

ON THE AGENDA

A recent published survey by Prudential Hong Kong Limited highlights that an alarming 98% of Macau residents are concerned about achieving medical freedom, surpassing the Greater Bay Area (GBA) average of 94%. The findings shed light on the pressing issues of rising medical costs, limited access to quality healthcare, and an inadequate

medical network. Conducted in May 2024, the survey gathered responses from 750 individuals, aged 18 to 54, through online questionnaires and street interviews. Among the participants, 300 were from Hong Kong, 300 from mainland GBA cities – including Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Zhuhai – and 150 from Macau. The survey reveals that achieving medical

freedom in Macau is estimated to cost residents approximately MOP5.6 million, which equates to about 16 years of household income. This financial burden poses a significant challenge, with 55% of respondents citing high medical costs as their foremost concern. In comparison, GBA residents estimate the cost of medical freedom at around MOP4.7 million (RMB4.2 million) and MOP6.9

ART SHOWCASE EXHIBITIONS

text.

The APMCACE aims to nurture local comic talent and foster growth

in the comic, animation and manga industry in Macau. By creating avenues for technical ex-



1. Lin Guan Zhang Tour of Mountain City-Old Teahouse, Lin Min
2. Cyber Fisherman 2077
3. My Soul Mate Cover, Wah Kee
4. 19. What Have I Seen?, Jet Wu
5. The Next Stop of Freedom
6. Linus Liu
7. Wishing in a Snowy Night, Lin Seng

changes and collaboration between local and international artists, the association seeks to enhance the quality of comic art in the region. Future plans include organizing large-scale cultural exchange events, publications, and seminars to strengthen ties among artists across borders.

Comic art and animation are two distinct yet interconnected forms of visual storytelling that utilize images and text to convey narratives. Comics are primarily a sequence of panels that combine illustrations with textual elements like speech balloons and captions, allowing readers to interpret the story through a unique interplay of images and words. This medium has evolved over centuries, with its origins traced back to ancient art, and has expanded into various formats, including comic strips, graphic novels, and webcomics. The artistic techniques in comics often involve cartooning, where artists use ink and digital tools to create dynamic visuals that guide the reader's experience through encapsulated moments of action and emotion.

The first half of the exhibition, which concludes on Aug. 17, features 30 works from nine artists, and presents a diverse array of new comics, manga, and animation pieces. This segment showcases a collective edition of "Comics 2024," highlighting the creative output of members of the Macau Comics and Animation Cultural Exchange Promotion Association.

A notable artist present in this comic showcase is Jet Wu, a Macau-based comic artist. Wu has made notable strides in his career, winning the Story Comic Finalist Award at the "First China Golden Dragon Award Original Animation and Comic Art Competition." His work "Chinese Boxing Champion," based on Chinese Olympic gold medalist Zou Shiming, was officially authorized for publication.

Another artist from the mainland, Chen Wei, a renowned fantasy art illustrator and associate professor at the Chengdu Academy of Fine Arts, has made significant contributions to the field. With a strong international reputation, he has worked with notable clients such as Blizzard Entertainment and has received numerous accolades, including two Golden Dragon Awards. His artistic journey, inspired by Japanese games and manga, reflects a blend of Eastern and Western influences.

Howard Chan, the Chairman of the APM-CACE, has played a pivotal role in curating and promoting Macau's comic art scene. His efforts have helped Macau comics gain increasing attention on the international stage. Chan has curated numerous exhibitions and produced several notable comic works, representing Macau at events like the Penang Asia Comic Cultural Museum opening and the Tokyo International Comic Festival. He has also played a pivotal role in curating this exhibit.

WORK IN PROGRESS NOTES ON ACADEMIC STUDIES

AI-GENERATED ILLUSTRATION



"Boosted Multi-Task Learning for Inter-District Collaborative Load Forecasting"

Haizhou Liu, Xuan Zhang, Hongbin Sun, M. Shahidehpour
IEEE Transactions on Smart Grid (2024)

This paper introduces a novel framework for collaborative load forecasting across different districts, focusing on Zhuhai city as a case study. The proposed framework operates in two distinct stages: initially, districts collaborate under a federated learning scheme to capture global load patterns, followed by local training to refine district-specific predictions. The framework leverages a probabilistic Gradient-Boosted Regression Tree (GBRT) as the core machine learning algorithm, enabling effective multi-task learning. The study also explores two district withdrawal mechanisms—simultaneous withdrawal for accuracy and dynamic withdrawal for efficiency and incentivization. The results demonstrate the superiority of this collaborative approach, showing significant improvements in forecasting performance across all districts involved.

AI-GENERATED ILLUSTRATION



"Regional Integrity and Corporate Green-Technology Innovation: Evidence from Deadbeat Borrowers in China"

Qihang Xue, Caiquan Bai, Jinmeng Shi, Dequn Cui
Emerging Markets Finance and Trade (2024)

This study investigates the role of regional integrity—an informal institutional factor—in influencing corporate green-technology innovation (GTI) in China. Utilizing data from individuals who defaulted on court orders and green patent-licensing information from listed companies, the researchers find that lower levels of regional integrity significantly impede GTI. The study employs an instrumental-variable approach to address potential endogeneity and confirms the robustness of its findings. The analysis reveals that lower regional integrity reduces firms' willingness to disclose environmental information and weakens the impact of environmental regulations. This effect is more pronounced in firms where directors and general managers do not hold concurrent posts, in state-owned enterprises, and for utility patents. The paper highlights the importance of enhancing regional integrity to foster corporate innovation in green technologies.

"Influence and Mechanism of Traditional Chinese Medicine Intervention on Cognitive Dysfunction in Patients with Schizophrenia"

Ningbo Yang, Hongxia Hu, Jie Li, Shaoli Shi, Yuling Wei, Yanhong Li, Wenwen Sun
Journal of Biobased Materials and Bioenergy (2024)

This research examines the efficacy of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) in treating cognitive dysfunction among schizophrenia patients. The study involved both animal experiments and clinical trials. In animal studies, rats treated with Albizia flower flavonoids (AFFG) showed significant improvements in cognition and hippocampal pathology compared to controls. In clinical trials, patients treated with a combination of aripiprazole and a self-formulated TCM decoction exhibited lower PANSS scores and improved quality of life compared to those receiving only aripiprazole. The study suggests that AFFG modulates protein expression, enhances cognitive function, and reduces pathological symptoms, making it a promising adjunctive treatment for schizophrenia. The findings support the potential clinical application of TCM in improving cognitive outcomes in patients with schizophrenia.

GBA resident's health aspirations, survey finds

million (HKD6.7 million), reflecting about 10 years of household income.

Notably, 86% of GBA respondents define medical freedom as the ability to choose medical resources freely, while 85% associate it with receiving prompt and adequate medical aid. In contrast, Macau residents express a strong desire for services such as traditional Chinese medicine and second medical opinions.

However, respectively, only 33%, 29%, and 17% of the insurance plans of these residents cover these services, significantly lower than coverage levels in mainland China and Hong Kong. Additionally, despite a high demand for cross-border medical services, only 44% of Macau residents' medical plans provide such coverage.

Edward Dai, General Manager of Prudential's

Macau Branch, emphasized the ongoing challenges residents face in achieving true medical freedom. "While government subsidies have improved access to public healthcare, significant obstacles remain," he stated. "With rising medical inflation and considerable gaps in local medical coverage, residents encounter numerous challenges in realizing medical freedom, with an

alarming 98% expressing concerns."

In response to these challenges, Prudential's new plan aims to enhance healthcare access in Macau by providing comprehensive coverage that includes outpatient care and telemedicine services. This initiative seeks to alleviate some of the financial pressures and improve the overall healthcare experience for residents. **NS**

XINHUA FILE PHOTO



Zhao Chenxin, deputy director of the National Development and Reform Commission

ENVIRONMENT

China outlines key tasks for ecological conservation

CHINA'S National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the country's top economic planner, outlined key tasks for ecological conservation during an event marking National Ecology Day, as reported by Xinhua.

Speaking in Sanming, Fujian Province yesterday, Zhao Chenxin, deputy head of the NDRC, emphasized the commission's commitment to advancing reforms in ecological conservation while promoting green, low-carbon, and high-quality development.

Zhao stated that the NDRC is focused on achieving carbon peak by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2060, along with strengthening international cooperation in green and low-carbon development.

According to Xinhua, to support these goals, the commission plans to implement a range of policies, including fiscal, tax, financial, investment, and pricing measures, specifically designed to facilitate green development.

Additionally, Zhao highlighted the NDRC's efforts to refine mechanisms for realizing the market value of ecosystem goods and services, and to improve both comprehensive and trans-regional compensation mechanisms for ecological conservation.

The NDRC will also deepen international cooperation in the circular economy, promote the export of green technologies, and actively participate in global climate governance. This initiative aligns with China's broader strategy to enhance public awareness and actions for ecological protection, following the designation of August 15 as National Ecology Day last year by the country's top legislature. **MDT/XINHUA**

DIPLOMACY

Wang visits Myanmar as civil war strains bilateral relations

GRANT PECK, BANGKOK

CHINA'S top diplomat visited Myanmar and met with the leader of its military government as growing instability from the neighboring country's civil war causes concern in Beijing.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit came after Myanmar's army has suffered unprecedented battlefield defeats from powerful ethnic militias, especially in the northeast along the border with China.

This week's visit also came a week after Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, head of Myanmar's ruling military council, alleged that foreign countries were backing the militias with arms, technologies and other assistance. He did not name them but was understood to be referring to China, which has long had close relations with ethnic militias operating along the border.

Myanmar state television MRTV said Wang told Min Aung Hlaing that China is cooperating seriously for stability and peace in Myanmar, and that it opposes the attacks by ethnic militias on army-controlled areas in northern Shan State. It said Wang and top officials exchanged views on bilateral relations, stability of the border region and cooperation in eliminating cybercrime and other illegal activities.

Chinese state media cited Wang as saying China "opposes chaos and war in Myanmar, interference in Myanmar's internal affairs by extra-territorial

AP PHOTO



Myanmar's military leader Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing (right) talks with Foreign Minister Wang Yi, during their meeting this week, in Naypyitaw

forces and any attempts to drive a wedge between China and Myanmar and smear China." It said Wang also expressed hope that Myanmar "will effectively safeguard the safety of Chinese personnel and projects" there.

China's government has maintained good working relations with Myanmar's ruling military, which is shunned and sanctioned by many Western nations for seizing power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021 and for major human rights violations.

The takeover led to the organization of armed resistance to military rule, which has grown increasingly strong.

China is Myanmar's biggest trading partner and has invested billions of dollars in its mines, oil and gas pipelines and other infrastructure. Along with Russia, it is a major arms supplier to Myanmar's military.

But the army's unexpected failure to contain the resistance from militias threatens the stability essential for protecting China's interests.

Analysts who follow Myanmar believe that China's relations with its ruling military, and Min Aung Hlaing in particular, are severely strained.

"There is a deep well of anti-Chinese sentiment in Myanmar, particularly in the military, and Min Aung Hlaing is known to harbor particularly strong anti-Chinese views," Richard Horsey, senior adviser for Myanmar with the Crisis Group, told The Associated Press by email.

"The main issue with the regime, in Beijing's view, is that it is headed by someone they distrust and dislike, and who they see as fundamentally incompetent," Horsey added.

When Min Aung Hlaing's army held the upper hand in the

conflict against pro-democracy guerrillas and their allies among the ethnic armed organizations, Beijing appeared to see the balance of power ensured enough stability to safeguard its substantial strategic and economic interests in Myanmar, its southern neighbor.

But in October, a group of powerful militia groups calling themselves the Three Brotherhood Alliance launched a joint offensive against the army in the northeast along the Chinese border.

Beijing brokered a cease-fire in January, but hostilities revived in June as the alliance claimed the army attacked it and pushed back, seizing more territory.

The crisis grew when the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army recently seized Lashio, about 110 kilometers south of the Chinese border, which hosted a strategically important military regional headquarters.

Analysts such as Priscilla Clapp, a senior advisor at the United States Institute of Peace, believe that time favors the resistance forces and that Beijing will adjust its policies as necessary.

"China will continue its efforts to preserve its investments and strategic interests in Myanmar with whatever combination of forces emerges successful from this conflict," said Clapp, who led the U.S. Embassy in Myanmar in 1999-2002. "But it is too early yet to say what this will look like, except that the military will no longer be in the lead." **MDT/AP**

ECONOMY

RECOVERY DRAGGED DOWN BY PROPERTY SLUMP AND WEAK CONSUMPTION IN JULY

A continued property crisis and weak consumption dragged on China's economic recovery in July, according to data released yesterday by the National Bureau of Statistics.

Unemployment rose for the first time since February, clocking in at 5.2%, compared to 5% in June.

Industrial production also rose more slowly than the previous month, showing a 5.1% year-on-year increase in July,

AP PHOTO



compared to a 5.3% rise in June.

Retail sales grew slightly more than analysts had expected, rising 2.7% year-on-year in July, compared to 2% in June.

Statistics bureau spokesperson Liu Aihua

said the recovery in consumption will be further consolidated given recent government policies to boost consumer spending.

Beijing announced plans last month to use 150 billion yuan (\$20.9

billion) in government debt to finance trade-ins for consumer goods such as appliances and cars to stimulate spending.

Consumption contributed around 60% of China's economic growth in the first half of the year and is expected to assume an even bigger role in supporting the world's second-largest economy. Exports, traditionally China's strongest engine for economic growth, are dampened by frictions with the United States

and other Western countries.

Regarding urban unemployment — a ticklish problem for the ruling Communist Party — Liu said the 0.2 percentage-point rise over the previous month was due to the impact of the graduation season.

Investment in real estate dropped 10.2% year-on-year in the first seven months of the year, after decreasing 10.1% in the January-June period. **MDT/AP**

MONGOLIA

Country in the tourism spotlight and making it easier to visit

OLIVIA ZHANG & DAVID RISING, ULAANBAATAR

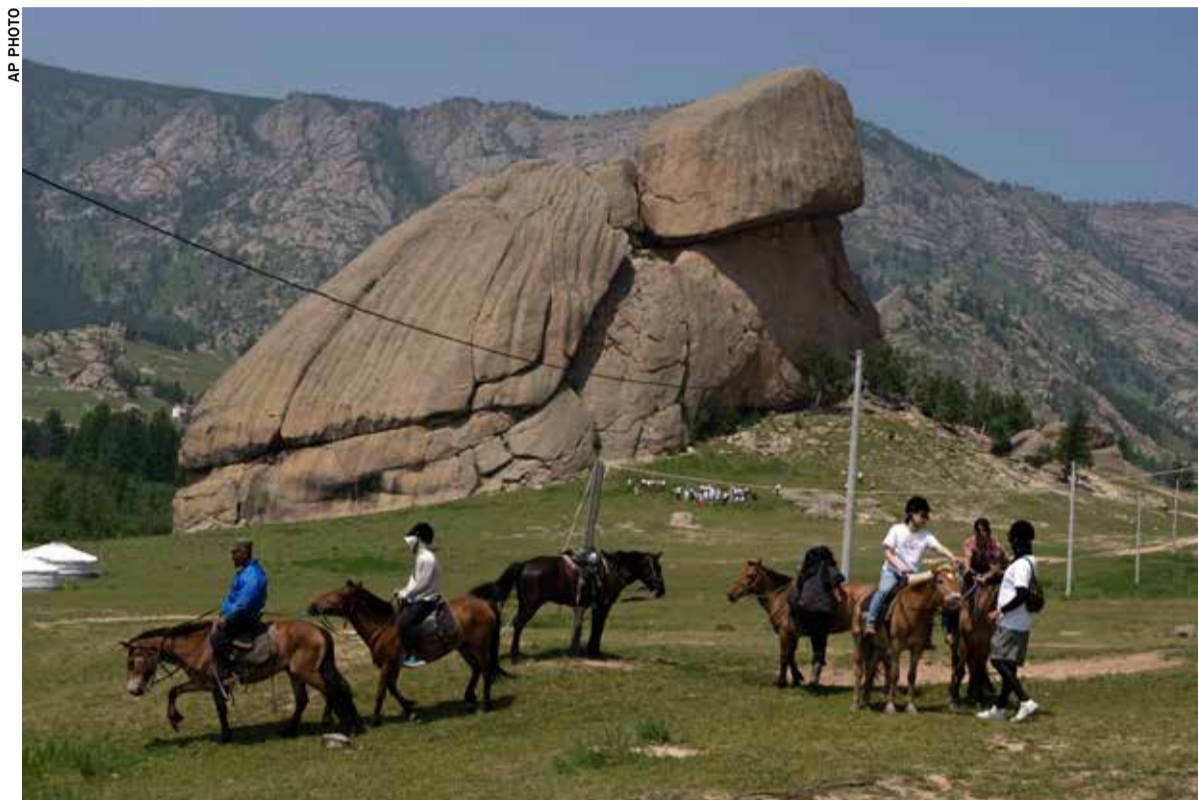
WITH its reindeer sleigh rides, camel racing and stunning landscapes with room to roam, Mongolia is hoping to woo visitors who are truly looking to get away from it all.

Like most countries, its tourism industry was devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and it has launched a "Welcome to MonGOlia" campaign to win people back. The government has added flights and streamlined the visa process, offering visa-free visits for many countries.

At least 437,000 foreign tourists visited in the first seven months of this year, up 25% over the same period last year, including increasing numbers from Europe, the U.S. and Japan. Visitors from South Korea nearly doubled, thanks in part to the under-four-hour flight.

Despite the gains, Mongolia's government is still short of its goal of 1 million visitors per year from 2023-2025 to the land of Genghis Khan, which encompassed much of Eurasia in its 13th-century heyday and is now a landlocked nation located between Russia and China.

With a population of 3.3 million people, about half of them living in the capital, Ulaanbaatar, there's plenty of open space for the



Tourists enjoy horseback riding near the iconic Turtle Rock outcrop at the Tereji National Park outside Ulaanbaatar

adventure tourist to explore, said Egjima Battsoj, who works for a tour company. Its customized itineraries include horseback trips and camping excursions with the possibility of staying in gers, the felt-covered dwellings still used by Mongolia's herders.

There's little chance of running across private property, so few places are off-limits, she said.

"You don't need to open a gate, you don't need to have permission from anyone," she said, sit-

ting in front of a map of Mongolia with routes marked out with pins and strands of yarn.

"We are kind of like the last truly nomad culture on the whole planet," she added.

Lonely Planet named Mongolia its top destination in its Best in Travel 2024 report. The pope's visit to Mongolia last year also helped focus attention on the country. Its breakdancers became stars at last year's Asian Games. And some local bands have developed

a global following, like The Hu, a folk-metal band that incorporates traditional Mongolian instruments and throat singing with modern rock.

Still, many people know little about Mongolia. American tourist Michael John said he knew some of the history about Genghis Khan and had seen a documentary on eagles used by hunters before deciding to stop in Ulaanbaatar as part of a longer vacation.

"It was a great opportunity to learn more," the 40-year-old said.

Tourism accounted for 7.2% of Mongolia's gross domestic product and 7.6% of its employment in 2019 before collapsing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the World Bank. But the organization noted "substantial growth potential" for Mongolia to exploit, with "diverse nature and stunning sceneries" and sports and adventure tourism possibilities.

Mongolia tourism ads focus on those themes, with beautiful views of frozen lakes in winter for skating and fishing, the Northern Lights and events like reindeer sledding and riding, camel racing and hiking.

Munkhjargal Dayan offers rides on two-humped Bactrian camels, traditional archery and the opportunity to have eagles trained for hunting perch on a visitor's arm.

"We want to show tourists coming from other countries that we have such a way of life in Mongolia," he said, waiting for customers by a giant statue of Genghis Khan on the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar.

Outside the lively capital, getting around can be difficult in summer as the steppes become waterlogged, and there is limited infrastructure, a shortage of accommodation and a deficit of skilled labor in tourism destinations.

It is also easy for foreigners to get lost, with few signs in English, said Dutch tourist Jasper Koning. Nevertheless, he said he was thoroughly enjoying his trip.

"The weather is super, the scenery is more than super, it's clean, the people are friendly," he said. **MDT/AP**

JAPAN

Kishida will not seek another term, new prime minister in September

JAPANESE Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, in a surprise move, announced he will not run in the upcoming party leadership vote in September, paving the way for Japan to have a new prime minister.

Kishida was elected president of his governing Liberal Democratic Party and became prime minister in 2021. His three-year term expires in September and whoever wins the party vote will succeed him as prime minister because the LDP controls both houses of parliament. A new face is a chance for the party to show that it's changing for the better, and Kishida said

he will support the new leader.

"We need to clearly show an LDP reborn," Kishida told a news conference on Wednesday. "In order to show a changing LDP, the most obvious first step is for me to bow out."

"I will not run for the upcoming party leadership election," he said this week.

Stung by his party's corruption scandals, Kishida has suffered dwindling support ratings that have dipped below 20%.

Regaining public trust in politics is crucial for tackling difficult situations in and outside Japan, he said and called on aspiring



party lawmakers to run for leadership and hold active policy debates during the campaign.

"Once a new leader is decided, I hope to see everyone unite and form a dream team to achieve politics that can gain public understanding," he said.

Kishida said he has been mulling the resignation for some time but waited to put his key policies on track, including an energy policy that calls for a return to nuclear power, a drastic military buildup to deal with security threats in the region, and improving ties

with South Korea, as well as political reforms.

President Joe Biden lauded Kishida's leadership as historic, saying the two of them have worked together to take the U.S.-Japan alliance "to new heights."

"Guided by unflinching courage and moral clarity, Prime Minister Kishida has transformed Japan's role in the world," Biden said in a statement, adding that Kishida's "courageous leadership will be remembered on both sides of the Pacific for decades to come."

The U.S. Ambassador to Japan, Rahm Emanuel, also praised Kishida's effort in elevating the U.S.-Japan alliance while also developing separate trilaterals, one with South Korea and another with the Philippines, in the face of China's growing influence.

Biden and Kishida "literally wrote the organizing

chapter of the next era," Emanuel said.

However, the leader of the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party, Kenta Izumi, said Kishida may have given up on pursuing party reforms and the investigation into the corruption scandals.

"Whenever the party is in crisis, LDP, for its own survival, has repeatedly changed prime minister and party leader to reset and have voters forget the past," Izumi said. "It's their strategy and people should not be tricked by it."

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had no comment on the announcement but U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said that "certainly, the secretary-general has been very pleased to be working with prime minister Kishida during his time in office." **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



IRAN

Police shot a woman while trying to seize her car over hijab law violation

ON a darkened road beside the Caspian Sea, Iranian police officers opened fire last month on a 31-year-old woman who had tried to speed away likely knowing they wanted to seize her vehicle, activists said yesterday [Macau time].

Police had been ordered to impound her car, activists say, because of an earlier violation of Iran's headscarf law for showing her hair in public while driving.

Now unable to walk and confined to a bed at a police hospital, Arezou Badri — a mother of two — is the latest casualty of Iran's renewed crackdown over headscarves, or hijabs. Her shooting occurred nearly two years after 22-year-old Mahsa Amini died while in police custody over an alleged headscarf violation, sparking nationwide protests over women's rights and against the country's theocracy.

As the Sept. 16 anniversary of Amini's death approaches, Iran's new reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian has promised to ease enforcement of the headscarf law. But the murky details of Badri's shooting and a recent video of a girl being manhandled in the streets of Tehran show the dangers still lurking for those willing to disobey it.

"They have elevated it to the most serious crime, where the police is allowed basically to shoot to kill," said Hadi Ghaemi, executive director of

the New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran. "That's really a war on women."

Badri's shooting occurred around 11 p.m. on July 22 along a coastal road in Iran's northern Mazandaran province as she drove home from a friend's house with her sister, activists say. A brief account published by Iran's state-run IRNA news agency quoted police Col. Ahmad Amini as saying patrol officers had ordered a vehicle with tinted windows to stop, but that it didn't. It made no mention of the hijab violation or impound notice.

Officers appear to have first fired at Badri's car's tires, according to the group Human Rights Activists in Iran, which spoke to people with knowledge of the shooting. As Badri continued driving, officers fired into the vehicle, the group said; the gunfire pierced her lung and damaged her spine.

Under Iranian law, police must fire a warning shot, then aim to wound below the waist before taking a potentially fatal shot at a suspect's head or chest. If the suspect is driving, officers typically aim first for the tires.

Why police initially stopped Badri's car remains unclear, though activists blame it on the impound alert over the hijab violation. It's also unknown whether any police vehicle at the scene had a camera that recorded the shooting or if any officer there wore a body camera.

There are no public statis-

tics of fatal police shootings in Iran. Police firearms training and tactics vary widely, as some officers face more paramilitary duties in areas like Iran's restive Sistan and Baluchestan provinces.

Iran's Interior Ministry, which oversees the country's police, did not respond to questions about the shooting from The Associated Press.

Authorities are holding Badri at a police hospital in Tehran under tight security, restricting her family's visits and stopping them from taking photographs of her, activists say. Despite that, an image of Badri was published by the BBC this week, highlighting her case.

"She has no sensation from the waist down and doctors have said that it will be clear in the coming months whether she is completely paralyzed," said one activist in Iran, who requested anonymity for fear of reprisal.

The hijab became a focal point of demonstrations after the death of Amini in 2022. She died after being arrested for not wearing her headscarf to the liking of police. A United Nations panel has found that Amini died as a result of "physical violence" used against her by the state.

Amini's death sparked months of protests and a security crackdown that killed more than 500 people and led to the detention of more than 22,000. After the mass demonstrations, police dialed down en-

forcement of hijab laws, but it ramped up again in April under what authorities called the Noor — or "Light" — Plan.

The hijab crackdown remains widely discussed in Iran, even as police and state media rarely report on it. Many women continue to wear their hijabs loosely or leave them draped around their shoulders while walking in Tehran. Women driving without wearing hijabs are believed to have been tracked via surveillance camera technology provided by Chinese firms, matching their faces against a government-maintained photo database, Ghaemi said.

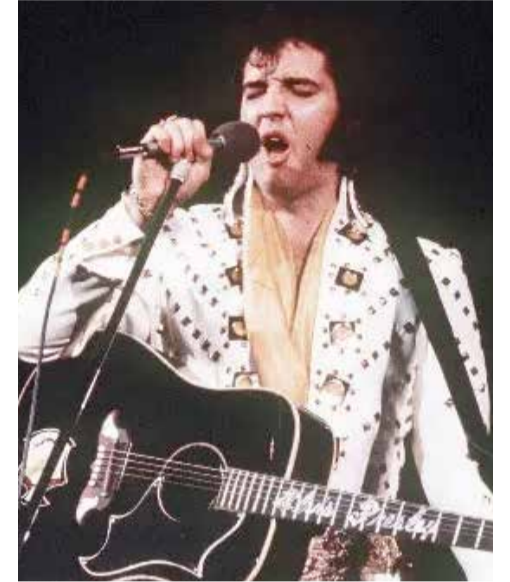
If they are stopped, that can lead to physical altercations between women and the police.

Surveillance footage published last week by the Iranian reformist news website Ensaf showed a 14-year-old girl manhandled by the morality police in Tehran. Her mother described her daughter's head as being rammed into an electrical box, a female officer pulling her hair and another putting their foot on her neck. Police described the officers' behavior as unprofessional, but also accused the girl of using bad language.

"I saw my daughter with a wounded face, swollen lips, a bruised neck, torn clothes and she couldn't even speak," her mother, Maryam Abbasi, told the website. "Her eyes were so swollen from crying that they wouldn't open." MDT/AP

this day in history

1977 ROCK AND ROLL 'KING' PRESLEY DIES



Elvis Presley, whose singing and style revolutionized popular music in the 1950s, has died.

Presley, 42, was discovered slumped in a bathroom at his mansion in Memphis, Tennessee on Tuesday.

He was rushed to the Baptist Memorial Hospital in Memphis but was pronounced dead on arrival.

The Tennessee state pathologist, Dr. Jerry Francisco, said a post mortem examination of the singer's body had revealed he died of cardiac arrhythmia - a form of heart attack.

"The precise cause has not yet been determined for the cardiac arrhythmia," Dr Francisco said.

"It may take several days to several weeks to determine that specific cause and in some cases it never is determined."

The three-hour examination uncovered no sign of any other diseases or any drug abuse, Dr Francisco added.

Presley was divorced from his wife Priscilla in 1973 but it was rumoured that he had recently become engaged to Ginger Alden, 20.

She was reportedly spotted wearing a \$50,000 (£20,315) diamond engagement ring from Presley.

Ms Alden and other members of his entourage were at Graceland when he collapsed.

There had been indications of Elvis Presley's declining health for some time.

Earlier this year the singer had cancelled several performances in Louisiana and returned to Memphis suffering what his doctors termed "exhaustion".

No arrangements have been announced yet for his funeral which is scheduled for Friday.

CourtesyBBCNews

IN CONTEXT

Thousands gathered to file past Elvis Presley's body which lay in state at his mansion, Graceland, the day after his death.

Although it was officially stated that he died of heart failure there has always been speculation that an overdose of cocaine and barbiturates also played a part.

Since his divorce from Priscilla in 1973 he had relied heavily on prescription drugs and was known to be a junk-food addict, gaining a considerable amount of weight. During his lifetime he sold over 300 million albums and made 33 films.

His death has been lucrative for the "Elvis industry".

In 2001 he came top in US magazine Forbes' poll of "Richest Deceased Celebrities".

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Navigate a professional challenge by focusing on organization, disciplined and coordinated action. Work completed now can have long-term benefits.

TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20
You can get what you need to take a trip. Investigate an interesting proposition. Don't overlook what loved ones need. Check reservations before moving.

GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21
Coordinate finances with your partner. Save for a shared dream. Grow by reinforcing foundations and supports. Disciplined actions pay extra.

CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Collaborate with your partner to realize a shared vision. Coordination, passion and inspiration keep you in action despite roadblocks or challenges.

LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Keep your fitness goals despite distractions. Disciplined action builds strength and fitness. Demands for your attention abound. Prioritize your health.

VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Keep practicing to improve your game. Focus on technique and learn through repetition. Get coaching from a trusted expert. Pursue a passion.

LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Coordinate with your family on priorities. Get creative with domestic arts. Use high-quality materials for long-lasting household improvements. Share comfort foods.

SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Capture brilliant ideas onto paper or screen. Your research leads to fascinating discoveries. What you uncover has long-term implications. Take notes.

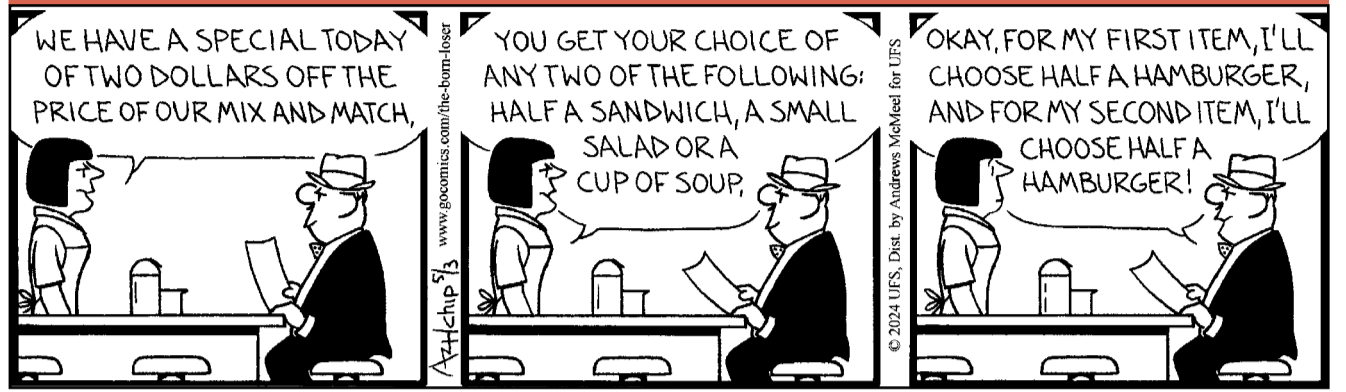
SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Disciplined efforts pay off. Abundance is available. Monitor to maintain positive balances. Make agreements and sign contracts. Keep feeding savings. It adds up.

CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Take ground advancing a personal project. Actions now can have lasting benefits. Provide leadership. Challenges block the road. Strategize to adapt plans.

AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Make plans and reservations. Do the groundwork to realize a vision. Strategize for fundamental priorities. Postpone travels and take care of business behind the scenes.

PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Friends help out. Collaborate on structural and logistical details. Make sure you've handled the basics before adding elaborations. A tricky situation requires coordination.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

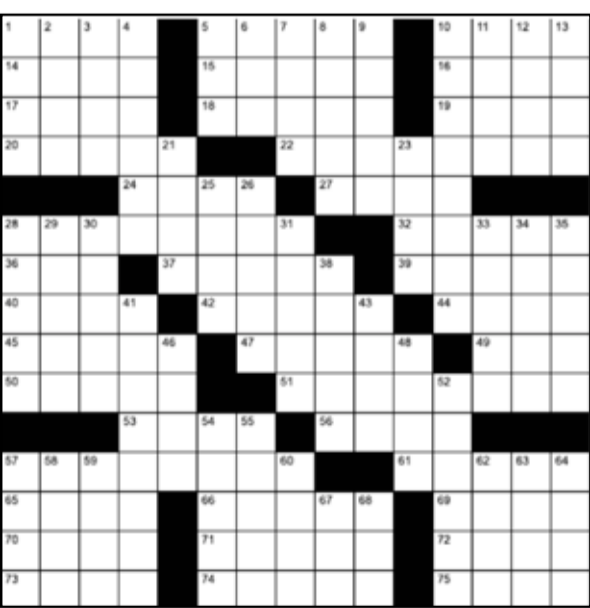
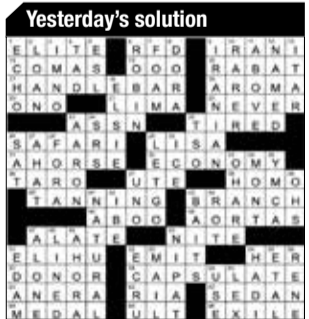
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	23	31	cloudy
Changchun	21	30	cloudy
Chengdu	23	30	rain
Chongqing	28	36	cloudy
Fuzhou	27	34	rain
Guangzhou	25	33	rain
Guiyang	20	27	cloudy
Haikou	26	32	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	26	34	cloudy
Harbin	20	29	cloudy
Hefei	24	33	cloudy
Nanjing	26	34	cloudy
Shanghai	27	34	fine
Taipei	25	30	rain
Wuhan	26	36	fine
Hong Kong	28	31	thunderstorms
WORLD			
Moscow	14	25	overcast
Frankfurt	17	30	fine
Paris	19	27	overcast
London	13	25	overcast
New York	22	31	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Sunset direction; 5- Plant again; 10- Strip of wood; 14- Dull pain; 15- The end of ___; 16- Gap; 17- Take ___ Train; 18- Calls for; 19- Initial stake; 20- Browned sliced bread; 22- Prayer; 24- 3:00; 27- Take ten; 28- Dauntless; 32- Strange and mysterious; 36- Bridal bio word; 37- Get to know; 39- Standing up; 40- Makes brown; 42- Weeps; 44- Editor's mark; 45- Siouan speakers; 47- Aquarium buildup; 49- 401(k) kin; 50- Language elements; 51- Unfortunate; 53- Bit of gossip; 56- ___-Ball; 57- More awkward; 61- Mother of Isaac; 65- Appraise, charge per unit; 66- Salivate; 69- Prone to prying; 70- Cooking appliance; 71- Low-budget prefix; 72- Pigeon-___; 73- Dramatic troupe; 74- Rudner and Moreno; 75- Bone: Prefix;

DOWN 1- Power unit; 2- Reflected sound; 3- Queens stadium; 4- One making fun; 5- Campaigned for office; 6- Compass point opposite WSW; 7- Leak slowly; 8- Command; 9- Squander; 10- Breaks; 11- Actress Anderson; 12- Choir voice; 13- New driver, often; 21- Chinese weight; 23- Got it; 25- Job detail, briefly; 26- Jewelled crown worn by women; 28- Following; 29- Keen!; 30- Barbershop quartet member; 31- Hand tool; 33- Knot again; 34- Champagne buckets; 35- Kett and James; 38- Old Ethiopian emperor; 41- Dregs; 43- Large bag; 46- Retired fliers; 48- Stretches (out); 52- Simple shed; 54- Down source; 55- Paris "thanks"; 57- Gator's cousin; 58- Hot rock; 59- Salt Lake City students; 60- Pull (for); 62- Outback hoppers; 63- I'd hate to break up ___; 64- Jekyll's alter ego; 67- ___ roll; 68- ___ Alamos, NM;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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Hoi Wan Retail (Taipa)
HKD 12,980,000

Tou Un (Taipa)
HKD 2,750,000 1 bed 1 bath

Jade Garden (Taipa)
HKD 11,880,000 4 bed 3 bath

DRIVE IN

'JACKPOT!' HAS A WINNING STAR IN AWKWAFINA BUT NEVER PAYS OFF

JAKE COYLE,
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

FINALLY, a movie for everyone who read Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" and wished it had been a comedy.

Paul Feig's "Jackpot!" is a farcical twist on an old story that, if it doesn't remind people of Jackson's short story will surely sound familiar to those who enjoyed "The Purge" and its sequels. In a near-future California, buying a lottery ticket enters you a chance to win billions. But there's a catch.

Everyone else is free to try to kill the winner and take the prizemoney. The "winner" has until sundown to survive and keep their money. The only rule: No guns. Hovering drones keep an eye on winners, helping violent mobs find their way to him or her. This state-sponsored Hunger Game is the new low for a government depleted of funds. Meanwhile, the local TV news chipperly announces a few new billionaires every day.

My principle disappointment with "Jackpot!" is that they didn't go with a title like "Mega Murders" or its original name: "Grand Theft Lotto." This is a very high concept for a comedy, one that Feig and screenwriter Rob Yescombe lean into to craft a mildly entertaining,



Awkwafina in a scene from "Jackpot!" (Prime Video)

streaming-only comedy that's only a touch less disposable than a losing Powerball ticket.

Mostly, "Jackpot!" is an action-comedy vehicle that pairs Awkwafina and John Cena for a romp through a few clever economic inequality gags and a lot of cartoonish mayhem. At the least, it's a more satirical, silly take on a dystopian genre that usually receives more somber treatments. "Mockingjay — Part 1" certainly never had John Cena trying to stomp out a groin on fire.

"Jackpot!," which debuts Thursday on Prime Video, stars

Awkwafina as Katie Kim, a former child actor who, out of midlife desperation, has returned to Los Angeles in 2030 to try to break back into the movie business. A Hollywood where half the town is out for blood is, of course, not such a far-fetched, futuristic concept. That backdrop of raging competitiveness is a running gag in "Jackpot!" Katie is at an audition when she's announced as the lottery winner, immediately sending the other auditioning actors after her head.

As the quickly forming mob closes in on Katie, a pinstripe sui-

t-clad man comes to the rescue, pledging to protect her for a 10% fee. Noel Cassidy (John Cena) is his name, and, as the two make their getaway, a buddy comedy ensues. Aside from the main task of staying alive, the abiding tension of the movie is how much Katie can trust Noel, and why this very sincere special agent is so dedicated to saving lives. Not only does Noel keep Katie from harm, he makes sure to put a helmet on anyone's head before kicking them out of a moving car.

Awkwafina's sarcasm plays well off Cena's nice-guy earnestness. In

one scene, she says he looks like "a bulldog that a witch cast a spell on and turned into a human." Any comedy with her in the lead role has a fairly high floor, yet "Jackpot!" never pays off. It's amiably disordered but the high-concept always feels like a ridiculous goof, and its predictable machinations grow increasingly tiresome. Still, this is the rare film where you can say Machine Gun Kelly (whose panic room comes in handy for Katie and Noel) is a surprisingly perfect tonal fit. (Later, a turtle-necked Simu Liu turns up as the smarmy head of a larger, better funder protection agency.)

Feig, the director of "Bridesmaids," "Spy," "The Heat" and 2016's "Ghostbusters," may be more adept at balancing broad comedy and action sequences than any other working filmmaker. But the big-screen comedy heyday he was once so central to has largely faded in recent years, as studios have grown disappointingly reluctant to gamble with laughs in theaters. It's hard not to see "Jackpot!" — which pales next to Feig's better films — as an example of this diminished era for theatrical comedies. Then again, as Awkwafina notes in "Jackpot!" Hollywood stardom isn't what it once was. Now, she says, even wrestlers and YouTubers can do it.

"Jackpot!" an Amazon Studios release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for pervasive language, violence, and sexual references. Running time: 104 minutes.
★★★★

AD

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TASTE OF EDESIA

British Heritage and Delicious Delights

IRENE SAM, MDT

ONE of only one hundred declared monuments in Hong Kong, The Magistracy has been given a new life by Black Sheep Restaurants after 40 years of dormancy. Steeped with history and once an annex to Hong Kong's Supreme Court, the Magistracy Dining Room, Prince and the Peacock and **BOTANICAL GARDEN** pay homage to a piece of the city's history, connecting Hong Kong's present and future to its past through thoughtful hospitality stories.

This summer, guests are invited to embark on an exquisite journey at the enchanting Botanical Garden outside Magistracy Dining Room, where culinary excellence meets botanical beauty in a celebration of British heritage and gin tradition. Spilling out onto the terrace alongside Magistracy Dining Room, Botanical Garden offers a

lush and vibrant space inspired by iconic British heritage gardens, providing guests with an oasis to revel in premium gin and tonics from afternoon until evening.

From now until end of this month, one can indulge in the new Mad Dogs & Englishmen at Botanical Garden, where the evocative words of Rudyard Kipling, immortalised in song by Noël Coward, set the scene for an unforgettable early evening of culinary delights and handcrafted cocktails — as they saying goes, “Only mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun.” Snacks include Gillardeau Speciale No. 3 oysters, Cheese Gougeres and Quality Chop House Confit Potatoes, designed to pair perfectly with expertly crafted cocktails such as the Bramble with tarragon gin, blackberry and lemon, the Enzoni featuring spiced gin, Campari, red grape and lemon, as well as the Gin Fizz Tropical with Plymouth and pineapple,

and Garden Highball, featuring zero-proof gin.

To immerse in the rich history of gin, one can trace its origins from a humble medicinal remedy to its rise as a beloved libation in England amidst trade wars. Botanical Garden pays homage to gin's storied past by spotlighting the transformation of this once-stigmatised spirit into a revered classic. The venue's gin programme focuses on the timeless London Dry style, dividing its G&T menu into four distinct categories: Citrus, Floral, Herbal and Spiced, each offering a unique botanical experience for the drinker.

Savour the Sipsmith London Dry with a lime wheel and aromatic tonic from the Citrus selection or opt for the Mermaid featuring cucumber and elderflower tonic from the Florals. For an Herbal twist, indulge in the Martin Miller infused with thyme and Indian tonic, or explore Spiced options with

the Oxley, garnished with a grapefruit wheel and light tonic. This curated selection of classic gin and tonics, paired with premium tonics and traditional garnishes, promises a sensory delight for aficionados of this versatile spirit.

For lunch, a tantalising menu of small bites awaits, featuring an array of dishes such as oysters with mignonette, caviar, steak tartare and the ever-classic endive & stilton salad. Brand new offerings by Executive Chef Alyn Williams include Gillardeau Spéciale No.3 served with chilled Granny Smith apple, cucumber and chervil; a succulent Smoked Haddock, paired with leek fritters and East London chip shop-style spiced mayo; Smokin' Brother Thick Cut Scottish Smoked Salmon served with crème fraîche and dill; the exclusive The Beefeater sandwich, featuring prime rib, melted Gruyère, caramelised onions and horseradish cream; Prawn Mayo Toas-

ted Brioche with butter lettuce and smoked paprika; Ploughman's Toasted Sandwich, which offers a comforting harmony of mature cheddar, salad and Branston pickles; Cheese Gougères, light and fluffy choux pastry puffs filled with a blend of Stilton and Parmesan cheeses; and finally, MDT's favourite, Quality Chop House Confit Potatoes, featuring the signature crispy exterior and fluffy interior of Quality Chop House's famous potatoes, seasoned with malt vinegar and sea salt.

Whether for lunches or shared evening bites, the garden's meticulously crafted design by Joyce Wang echoes the splendor of British heritage gardens, with dusty rose pinks, muted greens and vibrant orange umbrellas adorning marble tables and plush seating amidst carefully selected botanicals like Hydrangeas, Maidenhair Ferns and English Ivy, creating a vibrant outdoor sanctuary.

THIS should be automatic. An effortlessly cool English alt-pop performer who has opened for Taylor Swift releases an album produced by the legendary Rick Rubin, and the rest falls in place. But the best laid plans sometimes fall short and beabadoobee's third studio album, “This Is How Tomorrow Moves,” doesn't quite move the needle.

Beabadoobee, whose real name is Beatrice Kristi Laus, worked with Rubin in his legendary Shangri-La studio in Malibu for the 14-track

tTUNES

BEABADOOBEE'S THIRD ALBUM OFFERS UP BREEZY POP BASICS

aural exploration — a far cry from the London bedroom where she started her career. The album covers themes of self-acceptance and personal growth. While the songwriting is smart, the delivery feels a bit disconnected and vexed. Often, her voice is too slight against the sounds around her.

In track order, we'll quickly move past the opener, “Take A Bite,” which frankly sounds too

much like Incubus' “Drive” in both lyric structure and musical phrasing to be merely referential.

The good stuff begins on “One Time,” “Tie My Shoes,” and “Girl Song.” Here, beabadoobee hits her sweet spot. “One Time” is a medium-paced track wherein the songwriter casts a bit of shade and judgement about a paramour who faked it a little too much. She sings out here, loudly, and it sounds more

earnest in emotion than the preceding tracks mirrored in a wall of guitar.

“Girl Song” could be brushed aside as a low-rung soft piano ballad, but it deserves a deeper listen. It's slow, it's introspective and it is guaranteed to unleash a tear or two when beabadoobee sings at the end of the chorus, “And there's something I can't say in an ordinary way,” leading to the refrain: “Day like no other, and just another

AP PHOTO



“This Is How Tomorrow Moves” by Beabadoobee (Dirty Hit Records)

bad day.”

This is an OK album with some excellent songs and a fair bit of filler.

At the end of it all, beabadoobee remains a musical force to be respected.
RON HARRIS, MDT/AP

OPINION

The Conversation

Dudley L. Poston Jr., Texas A&M University



RAISING RETIREMENT AGE WON'T SOLVE CHINA'S DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEM, IMMIGRATION MIGHT

China's recent decision to raise the retirement age is a response to its looming demographic crisis, driven by an aging population and shrinking workforce. The Communist Party's move, expected to set the retirement age at around 65, may slightly extend the viability of China's pension system, but it does little to address the root of the problem.

China's population has been on a steady decline since peaking at 1.43 billion in 2021. With a fertility rate of just 1.1 children per woman — far below the 2.1 needed to maintain the population — China is facing a future where deaths outnumber births.

Projections suggest that if current trends continue, the population could fall below 1 billion by 2070 and down to 633 million by 2100. This drastic decline would not only reduce the total population by more than half but also drastically alter the population's composition, leading to significant economic and social challenges.

The proportion of elderly citizens is expected to surge from 20% in 2023 to over 52% by 2100, creating a massive imbalance between working-age adults and dependents. Simultaneously, the workforce will shrink, with the proportion of young workers aged 20 to 29 expected to drop from 12% to just 7%. This shift will place an enormous strain on China's economy, as fewer workers are available to support an increasing number of retirees.

One potential solution to this demographic "time bomb" is immigration. Many countries with low fertility rates have turned to immigration to replenish their workforces. For example, the U.S. and Germany have significant foreign-born populations, at 14% and 18% respectively, which help to sustain their economies. Even Japan and South Korea, which are also grappling with aging populations, have higher percentages of foreign-born residents than China, where just 0.1% of the population is foreign-born.

China has long been resistant to immigration, partly due to a deeply ingrained belief in racial homogeneity and a lack of experience with integrating foreign populations. This resistance poses a significant challenge to implementing an effective immigration policy. However, without a significant influx of young workers, China faces a future of economic stagnation and a rapidly aging population that could cripple its social systems.

Past efforts by the Chinese government to boost the birth rate through policies encouraging larger families have largely failed. Experts agree that these pronatalist policies are unlikely to reverse the demographic decline. This leaves immigration as one of the few viable options to address the shrinking workforce and growing number of dependents.

Adopting a more open immigration policy would not be without its challenges. In the short term, an influx of immigrants could lead to job competition and displacement for young Chinese workers. However, immigrants often take on jobs that are less desirable to the local population, a trend observed in many other countries. Over time, the benefits of a larger, younger workforce would likely outweigh the initial disruptions.

Without a significant shift in immigration policy, China risks becoming one of the oldest and most economically strained countries in the world by the next century.

Raising the retirement age is a necessary but insufficient step. To truly mitigate the impending demographic disaster, China must consider embracing immigration, despite the cultural and political hurdles it presents. The alternative is a future marked by economic decline and a rapidly aging society that is increasingly difficult to support. [Abridged]

CHINA WILL LIMIT EXPORTS OF ANTIMONY, A MINERAL USED IN BATTERIES, WEAPONS

THE BUZZ

China's Commerce Ministry announced yesterday that it will restrict exports of a mineral used in a wide range of products from batteries to weapons.

Export controls will be placed on antimony starting Sept. 15 to safeguard China's security and interests and fulfill its international non-proliferation obligations, the ministry said. Anyone wishing to export the mineral in various forms will have to apply for a license.

It wasn't immediately clear to what extent exports would be blocked, though the "non-proliferation" wording suggested it could include weapons-related uses.

A brief explanation issued by the Commerce Ministry said ex-

ports that comply with regulations would be permitted, but that the government opposes any country using items from China "to engage in activities that undermine China's national sovereignty, security, and development interests."

The controls also cover smelting and separation technology and machinery and other items related to what the notice called super-hard materials.

China imposed export curbs last year on gallium and germanium, two metals used in computer chips and solar cells, to "safeguard national security."

The United States has restricted China's access to advanced semiconductors and other technology on security grounds.

AP FILE PHOTO



AP PHOTO



Puerto Rico Hurricane Ernesto barreled toward Bermuda yesterday after leaving hundreds of thousands of people in Puerto Rico without power or water as sweltering heat enveloped the U.S. territory, raising concerns about people's health. A hurricane warning was in effect for Bermuda, with Ernesto expected to pass near or over the island on Saturday.

AP PHOTO



Venezuela Political unrest in Venezuela following disputed election results is expected to trigger another mass exodus, impacting the entire region. Countries like Peru, Chile, and Brazil are enhancing border security in anticipation of increased migration flows, which could strain regional resources and exacerbate tensions.

AP PHOTO



Stonehenge New research published yesterday suggests that Stonehenge's central "altar stone" originated from Scotland, not Wales. This discovery adds a layer of complexity to our understanding of Stonehenge's construction and the extensive networks that existed in Neolithic Britain.

AP PHOTO



Hollywood Acting icon Gena Rowlands has passed away at 94. Known for her compelling roles in films directed by her husband John Cassavetes, Rowlands' work in movies like "A Woman Under the Influence" earned her critical acclaim and a lasting legacy in independent cinema.

LESSONS CAN BE LEARNED

SURVEY SHOWS DISASTER-PRONE SOUTHEAST ASIA IS ALSO BEST PREPARED

DAVID RISING, BANGKOK

SOUTHEAST Asia is among the regions most prone to natural disasters, but a new analysis released yesterday shows its people also feel the best equipped to deal with them.

It seems logical that the countries in and around the Pacific Ring of Fire, vulnerable to earthquakes, typhoons, storm surges and other dangers, are also the best prepared, but the survey by Gallup for the Lloyd's Register Foundation shows that's not always the case in other regions.

"Frequent exposure to hazard isn't the only factor that determines how prepared people feel," Benedict Vigers, a research consultant with Gallup, told The Associated Press.

The report found the Association of Southeast Asian Nations has played a key role in disaster risk reduction, and Vigers said the region's wider approach includes widespread and effective early-warning systems, scaled-up community approaches and regional cooperation, and good access to disaster finance.

"Southeast Asia' success in feelings of disaster preparedness can be linked to its high exposure to disasters, its relatively high levels of resi-

lience - from individual people to overall society, and the region's approach to — and investment into — disaster risk management more broadly," he said.

Forty percent of people surveyed in Southeast Asia said they had experienced a natural disaster in the past five years, while a similar number — 36% — in Southern Asia said the same. But 67% of Southeast Asians felt among the best prepared to protect their families and 62% had emergency plans, while Southern Asians felt less ready, with 49% and 29% respectively.

Respondents from North America, which is significantly less disaster-prone than Southeast Asia, said they only felt slightly less prepared, while those in Northern and Western Europe were in the middle of the pack.

The results from Southeast Asia, primarily made up of lower-middle-income countries, suggest wealth is not a deciding factor in disaster response and preparation, said Ed Morrow, senior campaigns manager for Lloyd's Register Foundation, a British-based global safety charity.

Southeast Asia is "a region that clearly has much to teach the world in terms of preparing for disasters," he said.

Globally, no country ranked higher than the Philippines for having experienced a natural disaster in the past five years, with 87% of respondents saying they had.

It was also among the top four countries where the highest proportion of households have a disaster plan. All were in Southeast Asia: the Philippines (84%), Vietnam (83%), Cambodia (82%) and Thailand (67%), followed by the United States (62%).

Those with the the lowest proportion were Egypt, Kosovo and Tunisia, all with 7%.

The data were drawn from the World Risk Poll, conducted every two years, with the main results from the 2023 survey published in June. Questions on disasters focused on natural hazards instead of conflicts or financial disasters, and excluded the coronavirus pandemic.

Surveys were conducted of people aged 15 and above in 142 countries and based on telephone or face-to-face conversations with approximately 1,000 or more respondents in each country with the exception of China, where some 2,200 people were contacted online.

Margin of error ranged from plus or minus 2.2 to 4.9 percentage points, for an overall 95% confidence level. **MDT/AP**