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AP PHOTO



Iran A tragic bus accident resulted in the deaths of 28 Shiite pilgrims from Pakistan, with another 23 injured. The bus, traveling to Iraq for religious commemorations, met with disaster in Yazd province due to brake failure, underlining ongoing concerns over road safety in the region.

AP PHOTO



India-Malaysia Bilateral relations are set to strengthen their economic and defense ties, as announced yesterday during Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's visit to India. This move aims to counteract China's growing influence in the region, fostering closer collaboration between the two nations in various sectors, including technology and traditional medicine.

AP PHOTO



Nepal In a historic move for LGBTQ+ rights, same-sex couples participated in the annual Pride parade in Kathmandu this week, celebrating recent legal advancements allowing for the registration of same-sex marriages. This marks a significant step forward in the fight for equality in the Himalayan nation.

AP PHOTO



Middle East Lebanon's Hezbollah escalated regional tensions yesterday by launching over 50 rockets into the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights, responding to prior Israeli strikes. This increase in hostilities comes amid ongoing efforts by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and other mediators to secure a cease-fire in the volatile Gaza conflict.

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HIS OUT

Ho Iat Seng announces he is not running for re-election, opening the way for a potentially competitive Chief Executive's election with top judge Sam Hou Fai standing out P3



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FISCAL RESERVE REBOUNDS TO 91% OF PEAK AT MOP602.74 BILLION

Macau's fiscal reserve bounced back to over MOP602.74 billion in June, reaching 91% of its record high of MOP663.56 billion in February 2021, according to the Monetary Authority (AMCM). The reserve decreased to MOP557.96 billion in December 2022 due to pandemic-related withdrawals but has since recovered with the border reopening and gaming industry's rebound, yielding MOP17.48 billion in investment returns. As of June, the reserve is divided into MOP153.394 billion in the Basic Reserve and MOP431.862 billion in the Extraordinary Reserve, gaining MOP36.9 billion compared to June 2023.

RETAIL SALES DROP SHARPLY IN FIRST HALF

Retail sales totaled MOP36.85 billion in the first six months of 2024, a decline of 17.5% from the same period a year earlier, according to government data. The drop was due mainly to high comparisons in early 2023 as spending recovered from the pandemic. Sales of communication equipment plummeted by 39.4% while watches, jewelry and leather goods also fell sharply. In contrast, motor vehicles saw a slight gain of 0.8% while food sales increased by 3%.

SICHUAN GOLDEN MONKEYS RETURN TO MAINLAND

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has returned two male Sichuan golden monkeys to the mainland after their loan period expired. In 2017, the IAM signed an agreement with the Qinhuangdao Wildlife Rescue Center to borrow the monkeys for conservation and educational purposes at Seac Pai Van Park in Coloane. Originally scheduled to return in 2022, the plan was delayed due to the pandemic. Following extensive monitoring and evaluation, the monkeys, named Sanhei and Liansheng, were safely transported to Shenzhen Wildlife Park for continued breeding efforts to support their species' conservation.

BURNED BEEHIVE SPARKS ARSON INVESTIGATION

Police are investigating a suspected arson incident at a pedestrian bridge near Taipa Lake. The fire, reported around 10 p.m. on August 20, caused burn marks on a beehive located under the overpass opposite Estrada Padre Estevão Eusébio Situ. Witnesses reported seeing ashes falling from the beehive, which was approximately three meters above the ground. Fire officials confirmed no injuries occurred, and initial inspections revealed no other signs of burning on the bridge.

'NEW HOPE' LAWMAKERS WANT GOV'T TO INCREASE CIVIL SERVANTS WAGES FOR 2025

RENATO MARQUES

THE directly elected lawmakers from the group "New Hope," which primarily represents civil servants, are hopeful that the government will increase the wages of civil servants next year, José Pereira Coutinho and Che Sai Wang said during a media briefing yesterday where they reviewed the legislative work at the Legislative Assembly (AL).

Regarding the upcoming Chief Executive (CE election), Pereira Coutinho stated that he is not currently supporting any candidate but emphasized the need for a new CE to provide a "change in attitude" from their predecessors.

Pereira Coutinho, who maintains close ties with some factions within the Portuguese community in Macau, also highlighted the importance of ensuring that the Macau Basic Law enshrines the customs and traditions of the community of Portuguese descent in Macau. He urged the new CE to ensure that these traditions are upheld and respected, and that no discrimination occurs against residents of Portuguese descent in Ma-



cau.

He specifically called for the regulation of Article 42 of the Basic Law, which mandates that "The interests of the residents of Portuguese descent in Macau shall be protected by the Macau Special Administrative Region following the law, and their customs and cultural traditions shall be respected."

Pereira Coutinho noted that, despite this legal provision that clearly stipulates the need to protect this heritage, there are no concrete rules to ensure its implementation in practice, lea-

ding to potential abuses and discrimination. For example, he cited issues with accessing subsidies and reserving venues for Portuguese community celebrations.

Looking ahead to the new Macau government, which will follow the election of the new CE on Oct. 13, Pereira Coutinho urged a focus on improving the populace's quality of life, guaranteeing that basic needs are met, and resolving transportation issues.

He also called on the new government to consider the public's opinions and to

communicate more directly with citizens.

Reflecting on the legislative year, the lawmaker expressed disappointment with the administration, noting a weakening of the AL's supervisory powers over government activities and decisions.

He noted the constant vetoing of debate motions from the government-appointed lawmakers, and the lack of transparency in the responses from government officials to the lawmakers' inquiries and requests for clarification, with many inquiries remaining unanswered.

According to recent statistics, during the last legislative year, both Pereira Coutinho and Che Sai Wang submitted a total of 119 inquiries on matters relating to government supervision and 634 inquiries to the CE and various government departments on social issues.

Both Pereira Coutinho and Che Sai Wang have expressed the belief that the government's response to lawmakers' inquiries has been inadequate, and called for greater transparency in governance and improved governance capabilities.

EPM parents raise concern over teacher departures and new hires

VICTORIA CHAN

THE Macau Portuguese School's (EPM) recent announcement of hiring five new teachers has raised questions about recent departures from the institution, according to Diogo Baptista, president of the General Assembly of the Association of Parents of the Portuguese School in Macau.

The hiring notice was

published on the school's website on Tuesday, seeking candidates to teach math, physics, chemistry, computer science and French to high school students. The application period runs from Aug. 20 to 26.

"What worries us is whether this indicates that classes might not resume as normal," said Baptista in an interview with TDM. He noted that

the hiring comes just days before the new school year is set to begin on Sep. 5.

The association is uncertain if the new hires are related to the departure of 10 teachers, a process initiated by school director Acácio de Brito at the end of May. That process concluded with the revocation of special licenses for four teachers and a psychologist by the Portuguese

Ministry of Education.

It also remains unclear if the 10 replacements Brito mentioned have arrived in Macau. The Portuguese government's dispatch orders the immediate hiring of any new teachers needed to ensure classes start on time. Brito was unavailable for comment.

Baptista praised the public announcement and selection process,

which involves representatives from the school board and parents' association. "This is the first time that we, as the Association of Parents, have been informed of an announcement posted on the website to recruit in this manner. It is the first time that we have been involved in the recruitment process in this way," he said.

Experience outside Portugal is also seen as a plus, Batista noted, given Macau's specific cultural context and student body, which is not primarily made up of native Portuguese speakers.

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CE ELECTIONS

Ho Iat Seng will not seek re-election due to health issues

LYNZY VALLES

CHIEF Executive Ho Iat Seng has announced yesterday that he will not run for re-election due to health issues. This decision comes just a month after the government extended his leave, which began on June 21. This leave marks his first significant break since he took office on Dec. 20, 2019.

In a statement from the Government Information Bureau (GCS), Ho clarified that his health "has not been fully restored" and expressed his gratitude for the support he has received throughout his term.

"I have profound feelings for Macau and have done my utmost for Macau's development, but due to the fact that my health has not been fully restored, for the sake of Macau's long-term development and from the perspective of the overall situation, I have decided not to participate in the election for the sixth-term Chief Executive," he said.

"As the term of office of the fifth Chief Executive of the Macao Special Administrative Region is coming to an end, I, Ho Iat Seng, sincerely thank the Central Government, all sectors of Macau society, and our residents for their full trust and steadfast support over the past five years. I would also like to thank all the civil servants for their close collaboration and coordination," he added.

Ho Iat Seng is notable for being the first Chief Executive to serve only one term.

RENATO MARQUES



In May, following a visit from Xia Baolong, the top official for Hong Kong and Macau affairs, questions arose about Ho's potential re-election.

However, Ho clarified that no discussions regarding his replacement took place during Xia's inspection of the SAR.

Last weekend, Shi Taifeng, a 68-year-old official who sits on the Politburo — the country's top decision-making body — was in town for a two-day visit. He was said to have met with all the key officials and conveyed the messages of the resolution adopted at the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee held in mid-July.

SAM HOU FAI ON QUEUE

A source familiar with the process, who requested anonymity, told the Times earlier this week

that if Ho decided not to seek re-election, top judge Sam Hou Fai would run for the top post.

On Dec. 20, 1999, Sam was appointed by the then-Chief Executive as the president of the Court of Final Appeal of the SAR. He also serves as the President of the Council of the Judicial Magistrates.

Born in May 1962 in China and raised in Zhongshan, he began university in 1978 and attended law school in 1981, eventually earning his bachelor's degree in law from Peking University. After practicing law in China, he moved to Macau in 1986, studied at the University of Coimbra, and joined the Public Prosecutions Office of Macau in 1995.

Other personalities being touted as potential nominees include members of Ho's government, André Cheong, Wong Sio Chak and

Prosecutor General Ip Son Sang.

According to political scientist Sonny Lo, the new Chief Executive is expected to continue focusing on economic and livelihood issues, similar to Ho.

"But the election will be more competitive as we can expect more than one candidate," Lo told the Times.

"An interesting factor is the youthfulness of some members of the Election Committee and their orientation will make the election quite uncertain and competitive. Given China's concern about national security, any candidate from a disciplinary and legal background may have a competitive edge," he added.

So far, Jorge Chiang, the president of the Macau Lotus Chamber of Commerce and the Macau Society of Institutional Studies, is

the only individual who has announced his intention to run.

In a Facebook post last month, Chiang pledged to establish a responsible and clean government, governed by the rule of law, with people as the priority.

ELECTORAL PROCESS

The Electoral Affairs Commission for the Chief Executive (CAECE) of Macau announced last week that the official period for the nomination of candidates for the Chief Executive Election will run from Aug. 29 to Sep. 12.

During this period, potential candidates must submit their applications in person or through a designated representative at the Electoral Affairs Service Counter located in the Public Administration Building. They will need to collect and submit the "Nomination Form for the Chief Executive Election" within the specified period.

All candidates must "affirm their commitment to the Basic Law and their loyalty to the People's Republic of China and the Macau SAR," according to the commission's statement.

With input from the State Security Commission of the Macau SAR (CDSE), the CAECE will verify the eligibility of all candidates.

The nomination process requires the support of at least 66 members of the Electoral Commission, as stipulated by the Chief Executive Electoral Law. The CAECE's decisions regarding candidate eligibility are final, with no recourse for appeal.

According to Executive Order No. 40/2024, published in the Official Gazette on Aug. 12, the election date for the Chief Executive has been set for Oct. 13, 2024.

CRIME

Macau, mainland authorities disrupt RMB3 billion illicit forex trading

LYNZY VALLES

IN a significant crackdown, China's Ministry of Public Security announced that joint operations with Macau authorities have led to the detention of 252 suspects involved in unauthorized currency exchange activities. The ministry estimates that the illicit trading network was valued at approximately RMB3 billion.

According to a press release from the ministry, these operations targeted 19 suspected syndicates operating across Nan-



chang city in Jiangxi province, Zhuhai in Guangdong, and Macau.

Authorities believe around 300 individuals are linked to these criminal groups, which reportedly include family and friends working together.

The suspects are accused of executing remote orders to withdraw cash from banks and connect with underground financial networks, facilitating currency trading in and around Macau's casinos and hotels.

The ministry noted that these criminal activities have been ongoing for years, with an escalation in recent years posing a serious threat to Macau's security. Reported crimes associated with the illicit forex trading network include scams, robberies, and illegal immigration.

The recent enforcement actions, described by the ministry as analogous to an "ant eradication," underscore the

extensive efforts being made to dismantle these criminal enterprises. Of the detained individuals, 57 were identified by Macau police as mainland residents and have since been handed over to their respective authorities.

In response to the ongoing issue of unauthorized money exchange, the Macau government is proposing legislation to criminalize such activities within all casino areas. Discussions on this proposal are set to continue in the Legislative Assembly. This initiative aims to enhance regulatory control and combat the rising tide of illicit financial transactions in the region.

TABLE TENNIS

CHINA'S GOLDEN TRIO WITHDRAWS FROM WTT CHAMPIONS

CHINESE table tennis champions Fan Zhendong, Ma Long, and Chen Meng, who recently secured gold medals at the Paris Olympic Games, have withdrawn from next month's World Table Tennis (WTT) Champions tournament in Macau, according to an announcement made by WTT yesterday.

Their absence has opened the door for fellow Chinese players Lin Gaoyuan, Lin Shidong, and Chen Xingtong to take their places, based on current world rankings.

At the Paris Olympics, Fan Zhendong made history by winning the men's singles title, joining an elite group of just eleven players who have achieved a career Grand Slam, which includes victories at the Olympic Games, World Championships, and World Cup.

He also contributed to China's team gold alongside Ma Long, another Grand Slam champion, and Wang Chuqin. Meanwhile, Chen Meng successfully defended her women's singles title and claimed team gold with partners Sun Yingsha and Wang Manyu.

The upcoming WTT Champions tournament is scheduled for September 9 to 15, where both men's and women's champions will earn 1,000 world ranking points. China clinched an impressive five

out of five gold medals, along with one silver.

The round of 32 is set for September 9-10, with the first session on September 11. The round of 16 will take place during the first session on September 11 and throughout September 12. The semi-finals are scheduled for September 14, while the finals for both men's and women's singles categories will be held on September 15.

In a press conference yesterday, the Sports Bureau (ID) confirmed that the tournament will feature 64 of the world's top players, including Olympic stars Wang Chuqin and Sun Yingsha. Scheduled from September 9 to 15 at the East Asian Games Stadium in Cotai.

Additionally, the winner of the WTT Champions Macau 2024 will earn 1,000 world ranking points, significantly boosting their chances in the global table tennis rankings and heightening the stakes for the competing athletes.

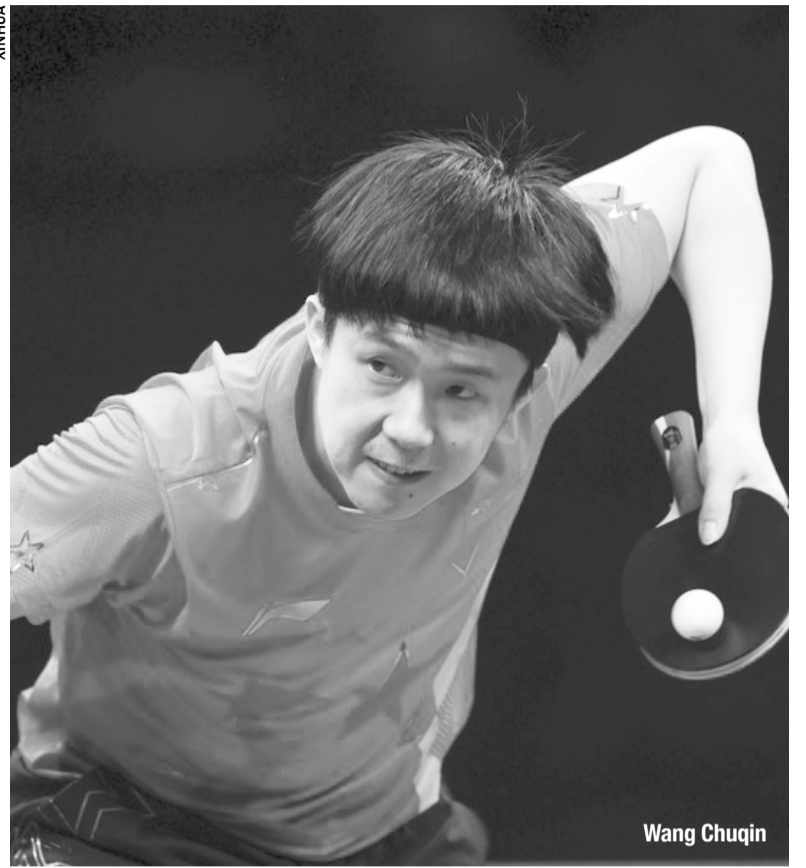
Luís Gomes, the acting head of the Sports Bureau (ID), expressed his excitement at the press conference, about the tournament, which will showcase 32 male and 32 female competitors. "We are grateful to the players for coming to Macau to showcase their tremendous skills," Gomes said

to local press. "This championship is expected to spark a table tennis craze in our city."

The Tap Seac Multi-Sports Pavilion has been the primary venue for the WTT Macau events from 2020 to 2023.

However, for the upcoming WTT Champions Macau 2024, the event will be held at the larger East Asian Games Stadium in Macau, which can accommodate more spectators – with each session accommodating up to 4,700 spectators.

LV/NS



LUÍS GOMES APPOINTED AS ACTING HEAD OF ID AS PUN TAKES OVER NEW ROLE

Luís Gomes has been appointed the acting head of the Sports Bureau, taking over from Pun Weng Kun, who has exited the position to take on new responsibilities related to the upcoming National Games.

In his new role, Pun will lead the preparatory office for the National Games, as detailed in a recent dispatch from the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture published in the Official Gazette. He will oversee the coordination of the Macau leg of the 15th National Games, the 12th National Games for People with Disa-

bilities, and the 9th Special Olympics Games.

His new assignment commenced on August 15 and will continue until June 30, 2026.

Macau will co-host the National Games with Guangdong province and Hong Kong, scheduled for November 2025.

The city will serve as a venue for several events, including table tennis, women's volleyball, three-on-three basketball, men's under-18 basketball, and karate. Additionally, the three regions will collaborate on the National Games for People with Disabi-

lities and the Special Olympics from December 8-15, 2025.

Gomes, who joined the ID as deputy president in November 2023, is now stepping into Pun's role. He holds a bachelor's degree from the Macau Polytechnic Institute and a master's from the University of Macau.

The Times has learned that Gomes will also take on the role of coordinator for the Macau Grand Prix Organizing Committee.

In a related move, Fu Si Na was reassigned as deputy head of the preparatory office. LV

Macau joins 2025 world match racing tour calendar

NADIA SHAW

MACAU is set to make waves in the sailing world as it hosts the Macao Match Cup, a new addition to the World Match Racing Tour (WMRT) calendar, from Jan. 8 to 12, 2025.

The Macao Match Cup is organized in collaboration with the Sports Bureau (ID), MGM and Ursa Major Sailing Event Management.

It will coincide with the annual MGM Macao International Regatta, which has drawn over 300 competitors since its launch in



2019.

"We are thrilled to welcome the Macao Match Cup to the World Match Racing Tour," said WMRT Executive Director James

Pleasance in a recent announcement. He said this will be the second championship stage in Asia, following the WMRT Final in Shenzhen.

Participants will compete in state-of-the-art Far East 28R match racing boats, with a total prize purse of USD100,000 (approximately MOP799,377).

The races will take place in the waters between the Governor Nobre de Carvalho Bridge and the Amizade Bridge, with spectators able to watch from the shoreline near Fishermen's Wharf and Macau's Outer Harbour.

Organizers anticipate the dry weather and mild temperatures typical of January will provide ideal racing conditions.

PUBLIC WORKS

ELDERLY CARE HOME IN ZONE A SET FOR CONSTRUCTION

THE government has announced plans to construct two residential care homes in Zone A, which will provide approximately 1,000 beds for elderly residents.

This initiative is intended to address the growing need for specialized housing and care options for Macau's aging population.

Valued at approximately RMB540 million, construction is expected to take six months, comprising 130 working days, with work anticipated to begin in the fourth quarter of this year.

The facility will cover around 2,840 square meters and feature 15 floors, alongside a three-story basement, totaling approximately 47,168 square meters of construction area.

Designed primarily as a social facility for the elderly, the building will offer essential services to support the aging population.

The basement will be used for public parking, while the ground floor will include a lobby entrance and dedicated minibus parking to facilitate access for residents and visitors. LV

GAMING

Hospitality workers at Venetian Las Vegas reach tentative deal on first-ever union contract

THOUSANDS of hospitality union workers on the Las Vegas Strip have reached a tentative deal with the Venetian and Palazzo resorts, a first for employees at the sprawling Italian-inspired complex that opened 25 years ago and quickly became a Sin City landmark.

The Culinary Workers Union announced Tuesday on the social platform X that the deal came together around 6:30 a.m. after a year of negotiations. It covers over 4,000 hotel and casino workers, from housekeepers and cocktail servers to bartenders and porters.

In a short video shared by the union, a housekeeper at the Venetian said the pending contract is proof that "things change if we actually voice our concern and have a group of people that back us up."



"First-time contract for Venetian," she said, smiling. "It's a very historical event. It's something we can be proud of."

The deal needs to be approved by the union's rank and file. Bethany Khan, a union spokesperson, said it mirrors the major wins secured

in recent contracts awarded to 40,000 hospitality workers at 18 Strip properties owned or operated by casino giants MGM Resorts International, Caesars Entertainment and Wynn Resorts.

Those wins included a 32% pay increase over five years,

housekeeping workload reductions and improved job security amid advancements in technology and artificial intelligence.

The bump in pay under those contracts will amount to an average \$35 hourly wage by the end of the contracts, according to the union. Workers at these properties were making about \$26 hourly with benefits before winning their latest contracts in November.

Described by the Culinary Union as their "best contracts ever," the deals ended lengthy labor disputes that had brought the threat of a historic strike to the Strip as the city prepared to debut its new Formula One racetrack.

Patrick Nichols, Venetian's president and CEO, said in a statement that the company looks forward to its workers ratifying the contract.

"The Venetian Resort Las Vegas has a long history of respecting our Team Members and putting their needs and interests at the center of our decision-making process," Nichols said.

The Venetian opened in 1999 and the adjoining Palazzo in 2007. Gondolas gliding through canals both outside near Las Vegas Boulevard sidewalks and indoors through a plaza with stores and restaurants have made it a Sin City landmark.

The union says it is now turning its attention to winning five-year contracts for workers at the massive Sphere venue and at Fontainebleau Las Vegas, the Strip's newest megaresort. Negotiations just off the Strip at the nearby Virgin Hotels are also ongoing.

The Venetian Las Vegas is a luxury hotel and casino resort located on the Las Vegas Strip owned by Vici Properties and operated by Apollo Global Management. It was developed by businessman Sheldon Adelson through his company, Las Vegas Sands.

In February 2022, Apollo Global Management acquired the operations of the Venetian, Palazzo, and Venetian Expo for \$2.25 billion, while Vici Properties purchased the land beneath the facilities for \$4 billion. **MDT/AP**

IAM removes 54 tonnes of rubbish from empty land

VICTORIA CHAN

THE Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) removed 54 tonnes of trash from unused land and private sites by the end of June, according to the Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) in response to a written inquiry from lawmaker Leong Hong Sai.

Leong expressed concern about public health issues on undeveloped plots, citing a location next to the Cotai Mount-Peak Building in Coloane. This location has had "stagnant water for a long time, which is an excellent breeding ground for mosquitoes and rats," causing disturbances to nearby residents for years.



"The government needs to actively and effectively demand that land concessionaires assume responsibilities and resolve problems like stagnant water, environmental hygiene issues, potential fire risks," Leong said.

DSSCU clarified that concessionaires must improve sanitary conditions on granted land and maintain close communication with agencies to monitor issues on unused state land. The Health Bureau

conducts regular inspections and mosquito control measures, helping inspected parties eliminate potential breeding sites that encourage mosquito proliferation "to detect and deal with the vector source risk to public health in a timely manner," the government said.

Regarding the issue of vacant private land, IAM stressed it will "actively collaborate" to clean up containers and rubbish to prevent the spread of disease. Leong also inquired whether inert materials could be used to fill other unused land. Authorities noted that this could alleviate construction waste landfill pressure.



TELECOM

SMARTONE TO CEASE OPERATIONS IN MACAU

LYNZY VALLES

MOBILE phone operator SmarTone has announced that it will discontinue services in Macau.

In a statement on its website, the company explained that the decision followed extensive business evaluation. To ensure continuity of service, SmarTone has partnered with Companhia de Telecomunicações de Macau (CTM). Customers will be able to rely on CTM for the duration of their existing contracts and can opt for new service plans available through the provider.

Starting yesterday, SmarTone began individually notifying customers via SMS about the timeline for SIM card replacement and other re-

lated details. The replacement process will occur from Aug. 22 to Oct. 31.

The Macau Post and Telecommunications Bureau has acknowledged SmarTone's application to abandon its 4G license and its decision not to renew its 3G license upon expiration.

The bureau confirmed that SmarTone and CTM have reached an agreement for customer transfers.

Regarding staffing, SmarTone is dedicated to handling employee arrangements in accordance with the Labour Relations Law. The company stated that it will collaborate with CTM to offer suitable employment opportunities to current employees, aiming to retain talent within the telecommunications sector.

TRADE

Indonesia searches for ways to balance domestic industries with surging Chinese imports

EDNA TARIGAN, JAKARTA

A flood of Chinese products into Indonesia has hit local manufacturers hard, prompting the government to look for ways to placate domestic producers while avoiding angering the country's biggest trading partner.

Garment makers — both home-based piece work producers and factories — have appealed for help as they lose market share to low-cost apparel and textiles from China. A surge of products bought online has added to the problem.

A protest by workers in Jakarta prompted Indonesian Minister of Trade Zulkifli Hasan to announce in July that the government will impose import tariffs of up to 200% on some products from China, particularly textiles, clothing, footwear, electronics, ceramics and cosmetics, to try to protect local businesses and prevent layoffs.

"The United States can impose a 200% tariff on imported ceramics or clothes, so we can do it as well," Zulkifli said, to ensure micro, small,



and medium-sized enterprises and industries "survive and thrive."

But China is Indonesia's largest trading partner, with two-way trade exceeding \$127 billion in 2023. Imposing higher tariffs could prompt Chinese manufacturers to invest in more in factories in Indonesia, but could also backfire, leading Beijing to retaliate. As a result, the government announced in July that it was setting up a task force to monitor and handle problems related to certain imports.

It's an urgent matter, Hasan said, given the flood of imported products that has caused closures of textile factories and mass layoffs. From January to July 2024, at least 12 textile factories shut down ope-

rations, causing more than 12,000 workers to lose their jobs, according to the Nusantara Trade Union Confederation.

In Bandung district in Indonesia's West Java province — an area famous for textiles such as batiks, handwoven fabrics and silks — imports of Chinese products have left thousands of workers idle and without regular incomes, said Neng Wati, a manager at manufacturing company Asnur Konveksi.

"Now they take turns. The number of workers stays the same, but the work is divided up and not all get some. Some of them have been off for two weeks, some of them haven't gotten work for a month," Wati said.

That's a hard blow coming after the slow days of the COVID-19 pandemic, when many workers were shifted to e-commerce to make ends meet, said Nandi Herdian, head of a local organization of small- and medium-sized entrepreneurs. Only 60% of the 8,000 members of the association kept working after the pandemic.

Now, the biggest challenge is cheap imports from China. In the past two months, output from home-based industries has fallen by 70%, the industry organization says.

The uptick in imports of Chinese products is partly seen as the result of trade friction between the U.S. and China, which has led to increased American tariffs on Chinese goods. But it also reflects rising trade within Asia as the region implements various free trade pacts, as well as weakening demand in Western markets for Chinese exports.

Industry groups in Thailand have also expressed increasing concern about an influx of cheap products from China, which they say have greatly hurt sales by do-

mestic producers who are unable to compete.

In what it called an urgent measure, the Thai government imposed a 7% value-added tax on all imported products, a change from the previous rule that only collected taxes on imported products that cost more than 1,500 baht (\$44). The policy is only in effect from July until December this year to give the government time to study the issue before a longer-term solution can be applied.

In December, Indonesia issued a regulation to tighten monitoring of more than 3,000 imported goods, including food ingredients, electronics and chemicals. But the regulation was reversed after domestic industry said it hindered the flow of imported materials needed for local production, and the government began considering steep tariff hikes instead.

While smaller manufacturers have suffered the greatest setbacks, big factories are also hurting.

Jany Suhertan, managing director of PT Eksonindo Multi Product Industry, which makes clothing and accessories like backpacks and handbags in West Java, wants the government to raise import duties on finished goods from China but not on raw materials needed to make products in Indonesia.

Nearly half of the materials his company uses are from China.

"I don't agree with imposing (higher tariffs) on raw products, since the government should protect the supply chain. If it is not secure, it will impact production," Suhertan said. **MDT/AP**

European milk and cheese producers have become the latest target in a simmering trade war with China

THE Chinese Commerce Ministry said yesterday that it would launch an investigation into subsidies given by the European Union and EU member countries for dairy products that could lead to tariffs on their export to China.

The announcement came one day after the EU released a draft decision to finalize tariffs on electric vehicles made in China, in a follow-up to provisional tariffs announced last month. The tariffs have been denounced by the Chinese government and automakers and threaten to set back the industry's efforts to go global.

The dairy investigation will cover a range

of products including fresh and processed cheese, blue cheese and milk and cream with a fat content of more than 10%, a Commerce Ministry notice said. It will look at subsidies under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy as well as those given by eight European Union countries including Italy, Finland and Croatia.

The Commerce Ministry previously opened investigations into European brandy and pork exports at various stages of the EU investigation into Chinese subsidies for electric vehicles. The tit-for-tat investigations have raised fears that a full-blown trade war could be gra-

dually emerging.

"Regrettably, the use of trade defense instruments by one government is increasingly being responded to seemingly in kind by the recipient government," the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China said in a statement.

China also filed a complaint with the World Trade Organization after the EU announced the provisional tariffs on China-made EVs. The EU Commission said Tuesday that it is confident that its investigation and provisional tariffs comply with WTO rules.

The EU's draft decision on final EV tariff-

fs made mostly minor modifications to the provisional rates. Autos exported by BYD, the largest EV maker in China, would face a 17% tariff, while those from Shanghai-based SAIC Motor would be hit with the highest rate of 36.3%. Tesla, which exports autos from China, was given a tariff of 9% "at this stage" after it requested an examination of the specific subsidies it had received, the EU Commission said.

The tariffs are subject to the approval of the EU member states. A final decision must be made by early November, four months after the July 5 effective date of the provisional tariffs. **MDT/AP**

DAY AFTER PUTIN'S VISIT, AZERBAIJAN APPLIES TO JOIN RUSSIA AND CHINA IN THE BRICS ALLIANCE

AZERBAIJAN formally applied to join the BRICS bloc of developing economies, a day after Russian leader Vladimir Putin's visit to the oil-rich South Caucasus country to shore up regional ties and secure Moscow's under-pressure trade routes.

The announcement from the foreign ministry in Azerbaijan's capital, Baku, comes as the BRICS alliance has seen a major expansion. For over a decade, the bloc included just five nations: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates joined in January, and Saudi Arabia has said it's considering doing so as well.

The club already includes some of the world's biggest oil producers, and accounts for well over a quarter of the world's GDP. Its members Russia

and Iran have had their relations with the West stretched to breaking point over Moscow's war on Ukraine and Iran's regional policies.

Business ties were high on the agenda during the meeting between Putin and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on Monday, with Aliyev announcing that \$120 million had been earmarked to boost cargo transport between the two countries.

Putin increasingly depends on countries such as Azerbaijan to access global markets because of sanctions imposed on Moscow over its actions in Ukraine, according to political scientist Zardusht Alizade.

For Azerbaijan, retaining Moscow's good-will is important for national security over tensions with neighboring Armenia, said Alizade. **MDT/AP**



The Williamsdale Solar Farm, shown from the air and located south of Canberra

AUSTRALIA

World's 'largest solar precinct' approved by Canberra

KEIRAN SMITH, NEWCASTLE

AN ambitious plan to build a massive solar farm in remote northern Australia that would transmit energy by submarine cable to Singapore is a step closer after the Australian government granted environmental approvals for the 30 billion Australian dollar (\$19 billion) project yesterday.

Australian company

Sun Cable plans to build a 12,400-hectare solar farm and transport electricity to the northern Australian city of Darwin via an 800-kilometer (497-mile) overhead transmission line, then on to large-scale industrial customers in Singapore through a 4,300-kilometer (2,672-mile) submarine cable.

The Australia-Asia PowerLink project aims to deliver up to six gigawatts of green electricity each year, which accor-

ding to Australian Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek will "help turn Australia into a renewable energy superpower" and boost its economy.

"This massive project is a generation-defining piece of infrastructure," Plibersek said in a written statement yesterday. "It will be the largest solar precinct in the world – and heralds Australia as the world leader in green energy."

The project was initially backed by Australian mining

magnate Andrew Forrest and Atlassian co-founder Mike Cannon-Brookes. The plans were highlighted during a state visit by then Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese as part of a 'Green Economy' agreement in 2022.

In January 2023, the project collapsed when Sun Cable entered voluntary administration due to a funding dispute between Forrest and

Cannon-Brookes. By May of that year, a consortium led by Cannon-Brookes' Grok Ventures acquired the company, finalizing the takeover in September 2023.

SunCable Australia's managing director Cameron Garsworthy said it was pleased to have cleared a major regulatory hurdle "and will now focus its efforts on the next stage of planning to advance the project towards a Final Investment Decision targeted by 2027."

The company said electricity supply would commence in the early 2030s.

Energy has been a politically charged issue for nearly two decades in Australia, which is reliant on coal and gas as well as royalties from exporting those fuels to help underpin its economy.

This reliance on fossil fuels has historically made it one of the world's worst greenhouse gas emitters on a per capita basis.

Australia's main opposition party in June announced plans to build the country's first nuclear power plants as early as 2035, ensuring the major parties will be divided on how Australia curbs its greenhouse gas emissions at elections due within a year.

The parties haven't gone to an election with the same carbon reduction policies since 2007.

"Australians have a choice between a renewable energy transition that's already underway creating jobs and driving down prices; or paying for an expensive nuclear fantasy that may never happen," Plibersek said. **MDT/AP**

JAPAN

Country records trade deficit as surging global prices pushes imports higher

JAPAN racked up a 621 billion yen (\$4.3 billion) trade deficit in July, as prices of imports surged, according to government data released yesterday.

Japan's imports grew nearly 17% from a year ago to 10.2 trillion yen (\$70.6 billion), while exports grew 10% to 9.6 trillion yen (\$66 billion), the Finance Ministry said.

Imports grew in meat and other food, as well as iron, underlining a relatively healthy domestic economy, where consumer spending improved amid rising wages.

Exports grew to the U.S., China and Brazil, but auto exports continued to suffer amid a scandal involving falsified testing that stalled production at some manufacturers, including Japan's top automaker Toyota Motor Corp.

Earlier, auto production was hit from parts shortages caused by production disruptions from the coronavirus pandemic.

Japan's exports in July grew from a year ago in plastic, paper products and computer parts.

"Exports slightly mis-



sed the market consensus, but showed a robust acceleration, suggesting the economy is in recovery," said Robert Carnell, regional head of Research Asia-Pacific at ING Economics.

"It is also encouraging to note that exports grew across all major categories. Technology exports were particularly strong."

Although Japan recorded a trade surplus in June, the world's fourth

largest economy has consistently been in the red in trade data, logging trade deficits for six straight fiscal half-years, starting with the final half of 2021. Japan's fiscal year runs from April to March.

July's data showed a reversal from the perk observed in June. The weak yen works as a negative for Japan's imports, especially amid inflationary trends and rising global costs, including energy prices.

Resource-poor Japan imports almost all its energy. Energy prices are volatile recently because of uncertainty in the Middle East, and the ceasefire talks on Gaza are critical.

Daisuke Karakama, chief market economist at Mizuho Bank, believes the trade deficit reflects not only a weakening yen but also new trends like Japa-

nese people's spending on overseas digital streaming services. He noted, in a recent interview with Japan's Economist magazine, that more dealers are seeking to sell yen, not buy it.

The U.S. dollar rose earlier this year to 160-yen levels, but has settled recently, trading at about 145 yen yesterday.

Currency fluctuations, like those that gyrated wildly in recent weeks, are caused by a variety of factors. Still, much of the focus is centered around the upcoming moves from the U.S. Federal Reserve and the Bank of Japan. The Fed is expected to further cut rates, as soon as next month, while Japan's central bank is looking to gradually raise them after keeping them extremely low for years. **MDT/AP**

ANALYSIS

Putin's slow response to Kursk attack could test the patience of some of his backers

EMMA BURROWS
ASSOCIATED PRESS

A year ago this week, President Vladimir Putin strode onto a stage in the Kursk region to commemorate the 80th anniversary of one of the Soviet army's proudest moments in World War II.

Addressing a rapt audience that included soldiers fresh from fighting in Ukraine, Putin called the decisive victory in the Battle of Kursk "one of the great feats of our people."

Now, as Russia prepares to celebrate the 81st anniversary of that 1943 battle on Friday, Kursk is again in the news — but for a very different reason.

On Aug. 6, Ukrainian forces made a lightning push into the region, seizing villages, taking hundreds of prisoners and forcing the evacuation of tens of thousands of civilians. Russia was caught unprepared by the offensive and reportedly is drafting conscripts to repel some of Ukraine's most battle-hardened units.

Putin has a history of responding slowly to various crises in his tenure, and he has so far played down the attack. But 2 1/2 years after launching a war in Ukraine to remove what he called a threat to Russia, it is his own country that seems more turbulent.

He appeared uneasy at an Aug. 12 televised meeting of his security staff about Kursk, cutting off the acting regional governor who had started listing the settlements seized by Ukraine. The president and his officials referred to "the events in the Kursk region" as a "situation," or "provocation."

State media fell into line, showing evacuees queuing for aid or donating blood, as if the events in Kursk were a humanitarian disaster and not the largest attack on Russia since World War II.

In his 24 years in power, Putin has portrayed himself as the only person who can guarantee Russia's security and stability, but that image has suffered since the war began.

Russian cities have come under drone attacks and shelling from Kyiv's forces. Mercenary chief Yevgeny Pri-



AP PHOTO
Putin speaks during an event to mark the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Kursk in WWII at a memorial near Kursk, on Aug. 23, 2023

gozhin launched a brief uprising last year to try to oust his military leaders. Gunmen stormed a Moscow concert hall and killed 145 people in March.

The Kremlin has given tacit approval to a wide-ranging purge of Defense Ministry officials, with many facing corruption charges.

In another reminder that fortunes in Russia can change quickly, authorities started criminal cases against other officials and are seeking to confiscate land from some of the country's wealthiest people in a posh area outside Moscow near a Putin residence.

While state TV drives the still-strong support for Putin despite setbacks like the Kursk incursion, it's harder to gauge the opinions of his key constituency — Russia's elites.

Putin is dependent on their acquiescence, said Ekaterina Schulmann, a nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center in Berlin.

"The calculation that's going on in their heads 24/7 is whether the status quo is to their advantage or not," she said.

Since the war began, life for those elites — Putin's inner circle, top bureaucrats, security and military officials, and business leaders — has gotten worse, not better. While many have been enriched by the war, they have fewer places to

spend their money because of Western sanctions.

The question they are asking themselves about Putin, Schulmann said, "is whether the old man is still an asset or already a liability."

Russia's elites could be described as being in a state of "unhappy compliance," said Nigel Gould-Davies, senior fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. They are discontented with the status quo, he said, but fearful about who would win if there were to be a leadership struggle.

They could be hoping, the analysts said, that Putin's reaction to the events in Kursk fits a pattern in which he is initially slow to respond to a crisis before eventually managing to prevail.

On Aug. 19, 2000, less than a year after Putin became president, the Kursk sank in the Barents Sea after one of its torpedoes exploded, killing all 118 sailors aboard. Putin stayed on vacation early in the crisis — setting off widespread criticism — and waited five days before accepting Western offers of help that might have saved some sailors who initially survived the explosion.

Putin also appeared sluggish in responding to the June 2023 uprising by Wagner chief Prigozhin in what became the most serious challenge to his authority yet.

After the mutiny fizzled, Prigozhin initially was allowed to remain free, but Schulmann said Putin eventually "got the last laugh" when the mercenary leader was killed a month later in a still-mysterious crash on his private plane.

As the Ukrainian offensive enters its third week, Putin sought to keep to his schedule and even embarked on a two-day trip to Azerbaijan, without mentioning the crisis. On Tuesday he briefly referred to it, promising "to fight those who commit crimes in the Kursk region."

With domestic dissent stifled and with the media firmly under his control, Putin can afford to make the "absolutely cynical" decision to ignore what is happening in the Kursk region, Schulmann said.

Still, Putin's hold on power "is unlikely to be weakened as a result of this humiliation," wrote Eugene Rumer, senior fellow and the director of the Carnegie Russia and Eurasia Program, in a commentary. "The entire Russian political and military establishment is complicit in his war and responsible for this disaster."

The longer the Ukrainian offensive goes on, however, the more military and political challenges it presents.

Russia appears to be struggling to find suitable forces to repel the Ukrainian assault. MDT/AP

this day in history

1978 KENYA'S FOUNDING FATHER DIES



Kenya's president, Jomo Kenyatta, has died at his home in Mombasa.

An official announcement on Voice of Kenya radio said Mr Kenyatta died peacefully in his sleep on Tuesday morning.

Shops and offices in the capital, Nairobi, and other cities have closed for the day as a mark of respect.

In public appearances yesterday, Mr Kenyatta, 89, appeared to be in good health so news of his death has come as a shock to most Kenyans.

However, last week he called a family conference in Mombasa leading to speculation about his health.

Mr Kenyatta was widely seen as the founding father of his nation which he had led since its independence in 1963.

A member of Kenya's largest tribe, the Kikuyu, he was one of the first and best-known African nationalist leaders.

Baptised Johnstone Kamau, he changed his name to Kenyatta - Swahili for "light of Kenya" in the 1920s.

After spending 15 years in London promoting the cause of Kenya's independence from Britain, he returned to his homeland in 1946.

In 1952 he was imprisoned by the British and spent the next nine years in captivity.

In spite of his time in prison, Mr Kenyatta was regarded as the most pro-British of African presidents and under his leadership the Kenyan economy prospered.

But he was intolerant of dissent in Kenya and outlawed some opposition parties in 1969.

The Queen has sent a message of sympathy to Mr Kenyatta's wife and the Kenyan people.

The Commonwealth Secretary General, Shridath Ramphal, said Mr Kenyatta's death had deprived Kenya of a great leader.

"We have lost a major figure of our time," Mr Ramphal said.

Mr Kenyatta's deputy, Daniel arap Moi, has assumed the office of president for 90 days during which time new elections must be held.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Jomo Kenyatta is still revered in Kenya and has a public holiday in October named in his honour.

Daniel arap Moi took over as president after Jomo Kenyatta's death. A one-party state was created in 1982.

External pressure led to elections in 1992 and 1997 but they were marred by widespread violence and fraud and President Moi remained in power.

Under President Moi, Kenya's economic situation deteriorated and was exacerbated by the worst drought in 30 years.

In December 2002 Mwai Kibaki and his National Rainbow Coalition party swept to victory in Kenya's elections.

Mr Kibaki defeated Daniel arap Moi's chosen successor, Jomo Kenyatta's son, Uhuru.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Take a private moment to review dreams, plans and revise for changes. New circumstances require alterations. Mistakes could get expensive. Discover unexpected options.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Friends provide answers. Discuss dreams, obstacles and challenges. Don't get sidetracked by an attractive nuisance. Keep promises. Connections open unexpected doors.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Patience pays. If one door doesn't open, try another. Don't forget old obligations. You may need to disrupt the status quo. Listen to unconventional suggestions.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Monitor conditions carefully. Traffic or roadblocks could alter your itinerary. Find a spot with a view to consider options. Interesting opportunities hide under changes.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Align on financial priorities with your partner. Focus on shared objectives. Mistakes could get expensive. Contribute extra effort for a beautiful compromise.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

You get more with honey than with vinegar. It's not a good time to be flippant. Patiently share support around obstacles. Avoid an expensive mess.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Follow rules carefully and watch your step. Move carefully to avoid accidents. Patiently sidestep obstacles, barriers or delays. Nurture your health and energy.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Romantic dreams may not match the current situation. Choose practical actions. Simplify expectations. Abandon preconceptions. Keep your sense of humor.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Discipline can realize domestic dreams. Clear clutter for new space. Give away stuff you no longer need. An improvement may require making a mess.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Think carefully before speaking. Mistakes can get costly. Organize and edit. Polish your presentation. Close files on completed projects to prepare for new.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Challenges could affect your income. Don't throw your money around. Work your plan and grow steadily despite obstacles or changes. Discover hidden gold.

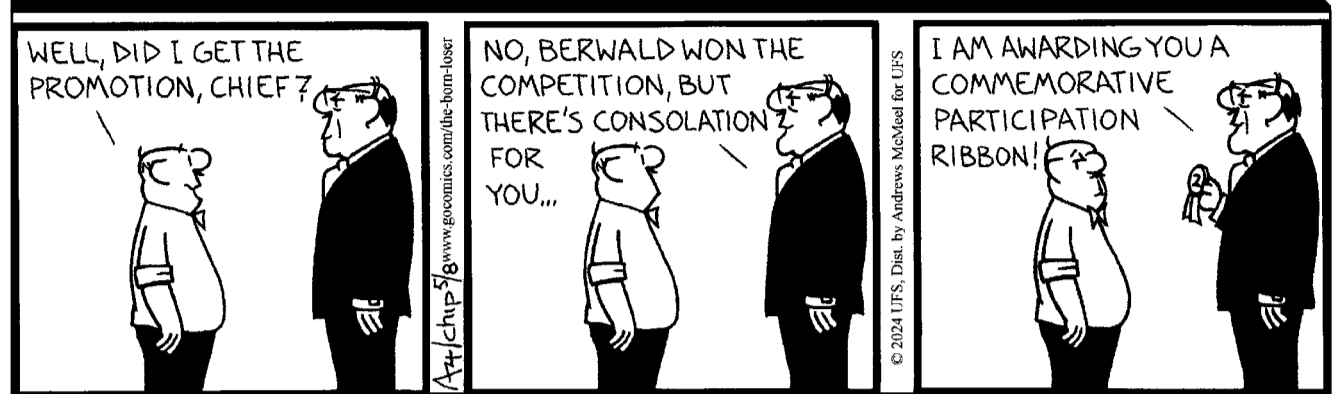


PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Guard your feelings. Don't take another's words personally. They're not responding to you. They have their own circumstances. Nurture yourself around a challenge.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

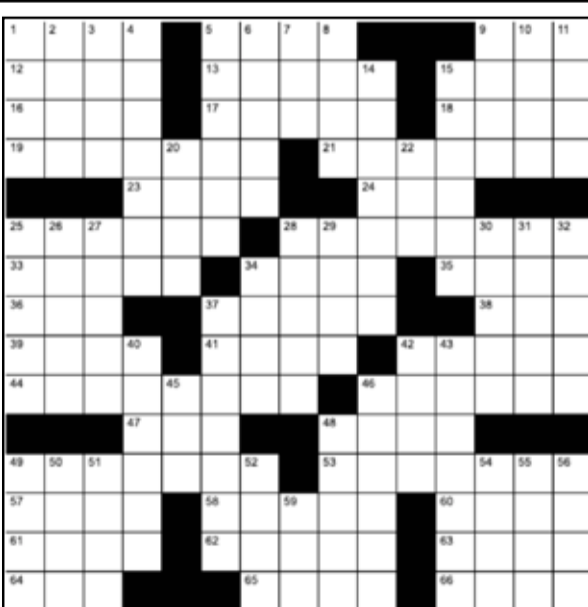
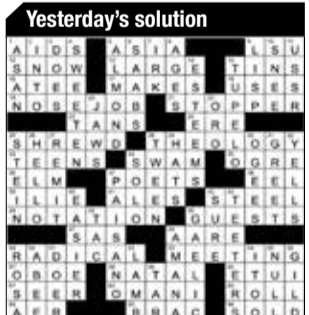
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	23	33	fine
Changchun	22	26	cloudy
Chengdu	26	36	cloudy
Chongqing	29	41	fine
Fuzhou	26	34	rain
Guangzhou	25	33	rain
Guiyang	22	31	cloudy
Haikou	26	34	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	25	34	cloudy
Harbin	20	25	rain
Hefei	25	36	fine
Nanjing	26	35	fine
Shanghai	27	35	fine
Taipei	25	31	rain
Wuhan	27	37	fine
Hong Kong	28	31	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	16	27	fine
Frankfurt	13	26	overcast
Paris	17	27	overcast
London	16	19	cloudy
New York	17	26	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Italian wine town; 5- ____ - a -Sketch; 9- AWOL pursuers; 12- Actor Connerly; 13- Rest atop; 15- ____ yellow ribbon...; 16- Screws up; 17- Run away to get married; 18- Raw materials; 19- Prisoner; 21- Teachers in habits; 23- More than one female sheep; 24- Foot digit; 25- Acquire; 28- Barbaric; 33- "Surprise Symphony" composer; 34- Zip-____-Doo-Dah; 35- Editor's note; 36- Inquire of; 37- More competent; 38- Burma's first prime minister; 39- Spool; 41- Hill toy; 42- Blew it; 44- Aided; 46- In ____ (sort of); 47- Impair; 48- Formerly, formerly; 49- Puzzling; 53- Quantities; 57- Have ____ in one's bonnet; 58- Judicial rulings; 60- Classic autos; 61- Discover; 62- Dog-____ (like some used books); 63- Badgers; 64- Snaky curve; 65- A Chaplin; 66- Sp. ladies;

DOWN 1- Just ____!; 2- Blood fluids; 3- Diamond protection; 4- In the place of; 5- Cricket team; 6- Roofing items; 7- Corp. bigwig; 8- Jumps on one leg; 9- Bog down; 10- Jury member; 11- Talk back; 14- Nor's partner; 15- Clan emblems; 20- Victor's cry; 22- Old French coin; 25- Scarlett of fiction; 26- Foundations; 27- Wee ones; 28- Ran in neutral; 29- Requirement; 30- Take ____ for the worse; 31- Hawaiian state birds; 32- Chopin composition; 34- Talented; 37- Straddling; 40- Walked lamely; 42- Exxon, once; 43- Comes back; 45- Posed; 46- Spanish fleet; 48- Consumed; 49- Bistro; 50- Baseball stats; 51- Hankerings; 52- Later!; 54- At hand; 55- Forum wear; 56- Flat sound; 59- ____-Magnon man;



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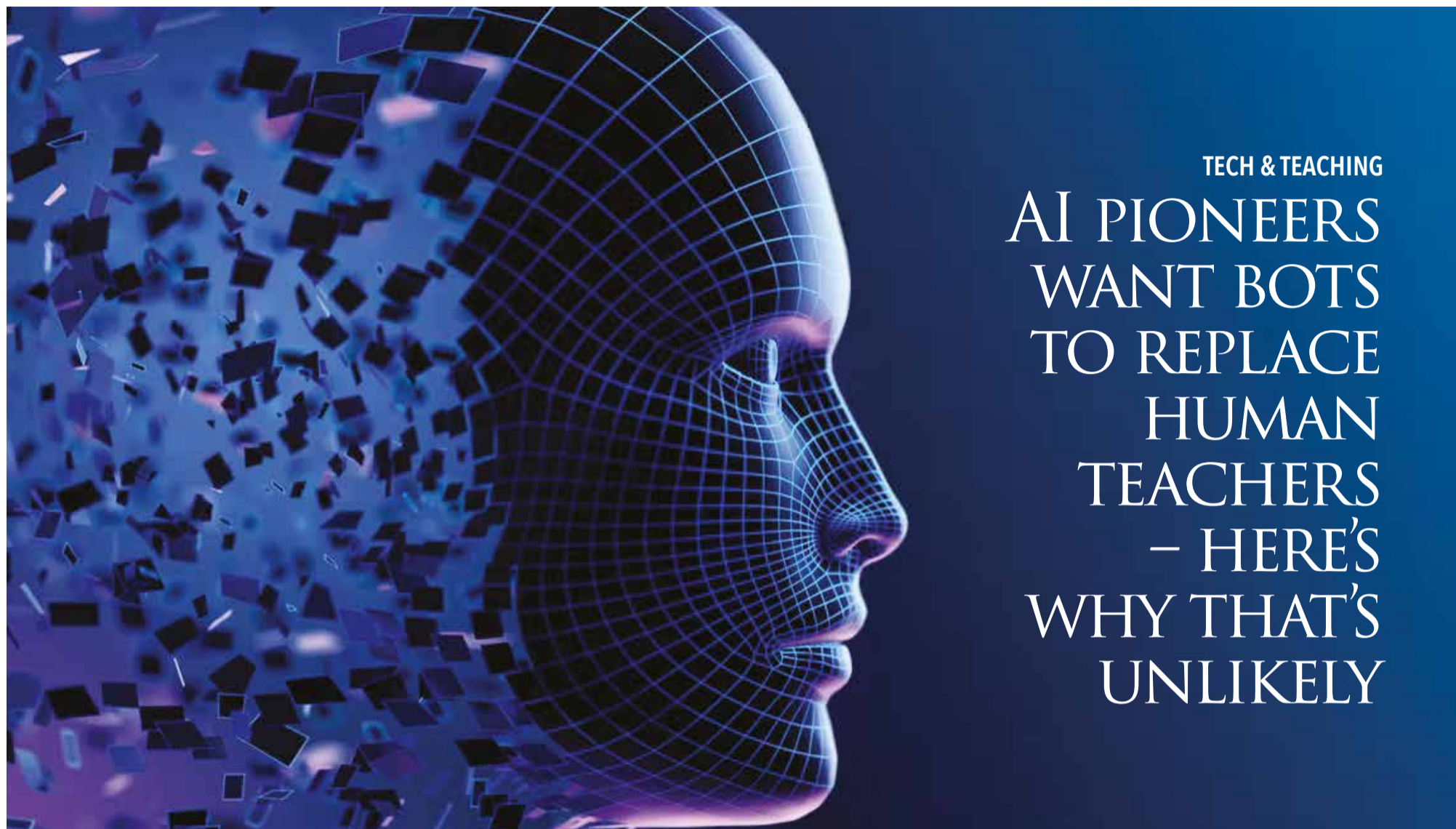
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Hoi Wan Retail (Taipa)
HKD 12,980,000

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

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

AD



TECH & TEACHING

AI PIONEERS WANT BOTS TO REPLACE HUMAN TEACHERS – HERE'S WHY THAT'S UNLIKELY

ANNETTE VEEM
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

OPENAI co-founder Andrej Karpathy envisions a world in which artificial intelligence bots can be made into subject matter experts that are “deeply passionate, great at teaching, infinitely patient and fluent in all of the world’s languages.” Through this vision, the bots would be available to “personally tutor all 8 billion of us on demand.”

The embodiment of that idea is his latest venture, Eureka Labs, which is merely the newest prominent example of how tech entrepreneurs are seeking to use AI to revolutionize education.

Karpathy believes AI can solve a long-standing challenge: the scarcity of good teachers who are also subject experts.

And he’s not alone. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, Khan Academy CEO Sal Khan, venture capitalist Marc Andreessen and University of California, Berkeley computer scientist Stuart Russell also dream of bots becoming on-demand tutors, guidance counselors and perhaps even replacements for human teachers.

As a researcher focused on AI and other new writing technologies, I’ve seen many cases of high-tech “solutions” for teaching problems that fizzled. AI certainly may enhance aspects of education, but history shows that bots probably won’t be an effective substitute for humans. That’s because students have

long shown resistance to machines, however sophisticated, and a natural preference to connect with and be inspired by fellow humans.

THE COSTLY CHALLENGE OF TEACHING WRITING

As the director of the English Composition program at the University of Pittsburgh, I oversee instruction for some 7,000 students a year. Programs like mine have long wrestled with how to teach writing efficiently and effectively to so many people at once.

The best answer so far is to keep class sizes to no more than 15 students. Research shows that students learn writing better in smaller classes because they are more engaged.

Yet small classes require more instructors, and that can get expensive for school districts and colleges.

RESUSCITATING DEAD SCHOLARS

Enter AI. Imagine, Karpathy posits, that the great theoretical physicist Richard Feynman, who has been dead for over 35 years, could be brought back to life as a bot to tutor students.

For Karpathy, an ideal learning experience would be working through physics material “together with Feynman, who is there to guide you every step of the way.” Feynman, renowned for his accessible way of presenting theoretical physics, could work with an unlimited number of students at the same time.

In this vision, human teachers still design course materials, but they are supported by an AI teaching assistant. This teacher-AI team “could run an entire curriculum of courses on a common platform,” Karpathy wrote. “If we are successful, it will be easy for anyone to learn anything,” whether it be a lot of people learning about one subject, or one person learning about many subjects.

OTHER EFFORTS TO PERSONALIZE LEARNING FALL SHORT

Yet technologies for personal learning aren’t new. Exactly 100 years ago, at the 1924 meeting of the American Psychological Association, inventor Sidney Pressey unveiled an “automatic teacher” made out of typewriter parts that asked multiple-choice questions.

In the 1950s, the psychologist B. F. Skinner designed “teaching machines.” If a student answered a question correctly, the machine advanced to ask about the problem’s next step. If not, the student stayed on that step of the problem until they solved it.

In both cases, students received positive feedback for correct answers. This gave them confidence as well as skills in the subject. The problem was that students didn’t learn much – they also found these nonhuman approaches boring, education writer Audrey Watters documents in “Teaching Machines.”

More recently, the world of education saw the rise and fall

of “massive open online courses,” or MOOCs. These classes, which delivered video and quizzes, were heralded by The New York Times and others for their promise of democratizing education. Again, students lost interest and logged off.

Other web-based efforts have popped up, including course platforms like Coursera and Outlier. But the same problem persists: There’s no genuine interactivity to keep students engaged. One of the latest casualties in online learning was 2U, which acquired leading MOOC company edX in 2021 and in July 2024 filed for bankruptcy restructuring to reduce its US\$945 million debt load. The culprit: falling demand for services.

Now comes the proliferation of AI-fueled platforms. Khanmigo deploys AI tutors to, as Sal Khan writes in his latest book, “personalize and customize coaching, as well as adapt to an individual’s needs while hovering beside our learners as they work.”

The educational publisher Pearson, too, is integrating AI into its educational materials. More than 1,000 universities are adopting these materials for fall 2024.

AI in education isn’t just coming; it’s here. The question is how effective it will be.

DRAWBACKS IN AI LEARNING

Some tech leaders believe bots can customize teaching and replace human teachers and tutors, but they’re likely to

face the same problem as these earlier attempts: Students may not like it.

There are important reasons why, too. Students are unlikely to be inspired and excited the way they can be by a live instructor. Students in crisis often turn to trusted adults like teachers and coaches for help. Would they do the same with a bot? And what would the bot do if they did? We don’t know yet.

A lack of data privacy and security can also be a deterrent. These platforms collect volumes of information on students and their academic performance that can be misused or sold. Legislation may try to prevent this, but some popular platforms are based in China, out of reach of U.S. law.

Finally, there are concerns even if AI tutors and teachers become popular. If a bot teaches millions of students at once, we may lose diversity of thought. Where does originality come from when everyone receives the same teachings, especially if “academic success” relies on regurgitating what the AI instructor says?

The idea of an AI tutor in every pocket sounds exciting. I would love to learn physics from Richard Feynman or writing from Maya Angelou or astronomy from Carl Sagan. But history reminds us to be cautious and keep a close eye on whether students are actually learning. The promises of personalized learning are no guarantee for positive results. **MDT/THE CONVERSATION**

FOOTBALL

Conor Gallagher joins Atletico Madrid from Chelsea as Joao Felix moves in opposite direction

STEVE DOUGLAS

ENGLAND midfielder Conor Gallagher finally completed his move to Atletico Madrid yesterday, ending a weeks-long saga that required a move by Joao Felix in the opposite direction to facilitate the deal.

Gallagher joined Atletico for a reported 36 million pounds (\$47 million) on a five-year deal. Hours later, Chelsea announced the signing of Felix, the Portugal forward, for a reported 45 million pounds (\$59 million).

Chelsea wanted to sell Gallagher, an academy product and the team's vice-captain last season, to help the club meet the Premier League's financial requirements that are being more strictly applied in recent seasons.

Chelsea and Atletico reached an agreement on his transfer but it was in jeopardy last week, reportedly because of the collapse of a deal that would



AP PHOTO
Chelsea's Conor Gallagher: on the way to Atletico Madrid

have seen Atletico striker Samu Omorodion move in the opposite direction.

That meant Gallagher had to return to Chelsea and train alone but a solution was reached, with Felix instead making the

switch from Atletico to Chelsea.

Felix spent the second half of the 2022-23 season on loan at Chelsea, having previously become the third most expensive player of all time when Atletico triggered the 126 million euro

(around \$140 million) buyout clause in his contract in 2019 to sign him from Benfica.

"I'm really happy to be back at Chelsea and I can't wait to get started," he said. "I can see some familiar faces from the last time

I was here, which is always nice.

"I loved my time here before and I told my friends and family that I'd love to return to the Premier League one day. To do that with Chelsea is a great feeling and I'm excited to be back."

Felix was on loan at Barcelona last season.

Gallagher played for England at the recent European Championship and was one of Chelsea's best players last season. He has played 95 times for a club he joined as a 6-year-old, scoring 10 goals in total.

It continues a frenzied summer of transfer activity for Chelsea, which continues to overhaul its squad under its American owners.

Ten players have been signed in this transfer window at a cost of more than \$250 million. Before that, Chelsea spent \$280 million in the summer of 2022, \$350 million in January 2023 and more than \$400 million in the offseason of that year. **MDT/AP**

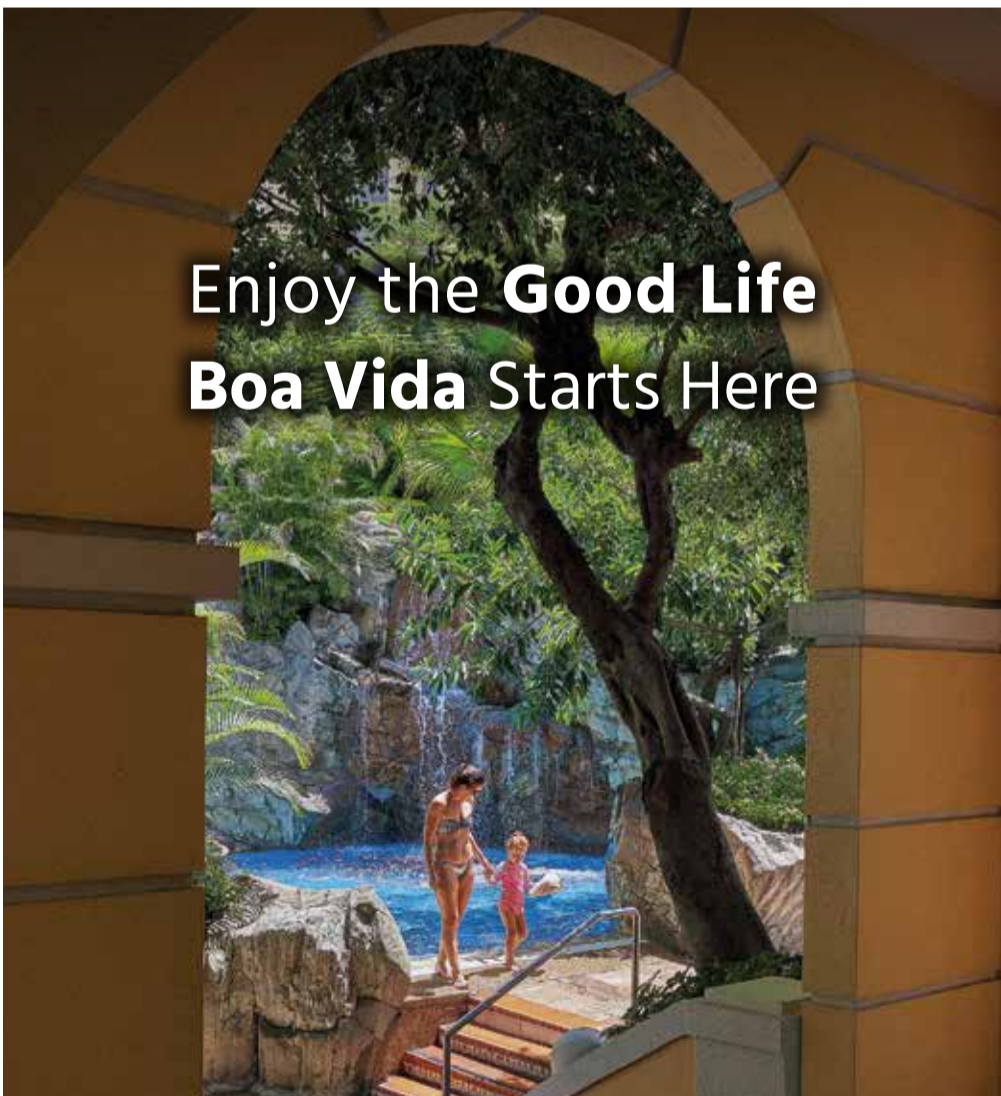
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OPINION

Multipolar World

Jorge Costa Oliveira



THE PAPER BEAR

Russia has 5,977 nuclear warheads, of which 1,500 are past their expiration date, according to estimates from the Federation of American Scientists. Of the remaining 4,500, most are strategic nuclear weapons. Among these, experts estimate that only about 1,500 Russian warheads are currently “deployed” (ready to be used) at missile bases, on bombers, or on submarines. Additionally, Russia is believed to possess a large number (2,000?) of tactical nuclear weapons—smaller and less destructive, designed for short-range use on battlefields or at sea.

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, every time the Russian armed forces find themselves in a difficult situation — whether during the initial, feeble advance on Kyiv, the defeats suffered in the battles of Kyiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and on Ukraine’s southern coast, during Ukrainian advances, or following the destruction of Russian fleet ships in the Black Sea — or when international sanctions increase, beyond the growling of various siloviki, henchmen, and regime thugs, Putin repeats the mantra of threatening to use nuclear weapons (tactical ones, presumably).

Russian military doctrine states that nuclear weapons will only be used if the Russian state itself is threatened. Western countries seem to believe that Putin will neither violate nor alter this doctrine. The U.S. has issued multiple warnings, indicating there would be serious consequences, though without specifying what they would be. China, for its part, has already informed the Russian president that it considers the use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine unacceptable.

Part of Russia’s threat is also to remind us that a power without nuclear weapons cannot militarily defeat a superpower that possesses them. But in this case, the issue at hand is whether Ukraine maintains its territorial integrity or cedes part of its territory in exchange for a lasting peace (?), as well as the [neutral?] military status of Ukraine. Ukraine neither has the military capability nor the intent to invade and defeat Russia or to pose a threat to the Russian Federation.

Putin’s threats to use nuclear weapons in the war in Ukraine have not been and are not considered serious, and their use in this conflict would constitute a violation of Russian military doctrine and would tarnish Russia’s international image for generations.

Interestingly, much like in Aesop’s fable “The Boy Who Cried Wolf,” this repeated outcry of “Putin and the nuclear weapons” ends up undermining the credibility of the Russian leadership and the might of the Russian armed forces. Combined with the fiasco that the “special military operation” in Ukraine has turned out to be, it is transforming the Russian Federation into a ‘paper bear.’

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Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Chinese premier Li Qiang yesterday, hailing growing trade relations as Moscow becomes increasingly dependent on Beijing for political and economic support.

“Our trade relations are developing, developing successfully ... The attention that the governments of the two countries on both sides are paying to trade and economic ties is yielding results,” Putin said at the meeting in the Kremlin.

He also said that Russia and China have developed “large-scale plans” for economic and other projects.

“Chinese-Russian relations are at an unprecedentedly high level,” said

Li, who earlier had met with his Russian counterpart, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin.

The meeting took place as Russia struggled to push back an incursion by Ukrainian forces into the Kursk region that began more than two weeks ago. Moscow saw overnight drone attacks that officials said were one of the largest wave of drones on the Russian capital since the start of the Ukraine conflict.

Russian news reports did not indicate whether Putin and Li discussed Ukraine.

China has tried to position itself as neutral in the Ukraine conflict.

AP PHOTO



Taylor Swift performs at Wembley Stadium as part of her Eras Tour, Tuesday

TRUMP POSTS FAKE TAYLOR SWIFT ENDORSEMENT

FORMER President Donald Trump has been active on his social accounts as Democrats gather for their convention in Chicago, but some of his posts don’t have much to do with reality.

Ahead of the Democratic National Convention, he posted a fake image of someone who looks like Vice President Kamala Harris addressing what appears to be a communist rally in Chicago with a depiction of a red banner with a communist symbol. That followed his repost of a phony video of himself dancing next to billionaire Elon Musk, one of his most vocal supporters.

Just before the convention kicked off, he reposted an image of Taylor Swift in an Uncle Sam outfit and accepted her endorsement for his campaign, which she had never given.

They’re the latest examples of how Trump is promoting images produced by artificial intelligence tools to attack his opponents or create illusions of support around his own campaign. It’s in keeping with a long-standing strategy in which Trump amplifies messages – from QAnon adherents to those who deny the results

of fair elections -- to score political points and satisfy his base by promoting alternate realities.

Some of the images and videos Trump has shared are cartoonish or obviously fake. Yet the rise in AI-generated content across political social media concerns experts who say it can be used to push more insidious and believable disinformation. As fake images, videos and audio clips created by generative AI models begin to saturate social media, they also risk eroding people’s trust in what they see and hear.

“The AI-generated deepfakes of Taylor Swift are yet another example of AI’s power to create misinformation that deceives and defrauds voters,” said Lisa Gilbert, co-president of Public Citizen, a progressive consumer rights advocacy group that has pushed for legislation to regulate AI. “The potential harms to our society that could result from such misinformation, including abuses of our elections, are wide-reaching and immensely damaging.”

One AI-generated image in Trump’s Truth Social post, shared on Sunday, showed women in “Swifties for Trump” shirts, a reference to the artist’s devout fans.

The fake image showing Swift dressed as Uncle Sam included text saying, “Taylor wants YOU to VOTE for DONALD TRUMP.” In his repost of the image, Trump added, “I accept!”

One of the images Trump shared included a small satire label, though he didn’t clarify whether he meant his post was in jest.

Swift, who remains on her world tour and had a record-breaking concert at Wembley in London Tuesday night, has made no endorsement in this year’s U.S. presidential race. Her spokesperson did not return multiple messages seeking comment.

To Republicans outside Trump’s orbit, the focus on someone like Swift — one of the most talked about artists in the world — is all about garnering attention for Trump at a time when much of the focus is on Harris and Democrats.

“This is how he and the campaign can wrest back news cycles,” said Doug Heye, a longtime Republican spokesperson and operative. “I hesitate to say to their credit, but I think we all know, if you want to be talked about, Taylor Swift is a great way to do it.”

MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



USA Alaska Air is poised to merge with Hawaiian Airlines after the U.S. Department of Justice did not challenge the \$1 billion acquisition. This merger aims to bolster competition against America’s largest carriers, ensuring both brands continue to operate independently, enhancing service and connectivity for travelers.

USA Boeing Safety Issues The FAA yesterday [Macau time] has mandated inspections for Boeing 787 Dreamliners’ cockpit seats after an incident where a seat malfunction led to a sudden dive. Boeing also halted tests on its new 777 model due to structural issues, underscoring ongoing challenges in maintaining safety and reliability in its aircraft designs.

AP PHOTO



USA The Democratic National Convention spotlighted Vice President Kamala Harris and Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, focusing on their campaign against Donald Trump. With endorsements from figures like former President Bill Clinton, the event aimed to unify diverse party factions and energize voters ahead of a closely contested election.

AP PHOTO



Hollywood Jennifer Lopez has filed for divorce from Ben Affleck, ending their high-profile marriage after two years. The split, marked by Lopez’s filing in Los Angeles, concludes a storied chapter for the couple famously dubbed “Bennifer,” stirring significant media and public interest in their relationship saga.