



THE PUBLIC SECURITY POLICE FORCE HAS REPORTED A RISE IN TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS IN JULY, WITH 1,400 INCIDENTS RECORDED

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HONG KONG, MACAU ARREST SEVEN IN ALLEGED HKD120M FRAUD

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CONCERNS OVER BEIJING'S NEW RESTRICTIONS ON FOREIGN CONSULAR VISITS

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AP PHOTO



India A devastating explosion at a pharmaceutical plant in Andhra Pradesh, India, killed at least 18 workers and injured dozens. The incident, caused by a suspected electrical fault, occurred at the Escientia Company, highlighting ongoing safety issues in industrial sectors.

AP PHOTO



Middle East A French destroyer in a European Union mission rescued 29 mariners from an oil tanker attacked in the Red Sea, suspected to be by Yemen's Houthi rebels. The incident underscores the escalating maritime threats in the region amid the Israel-Hamas conflict, affecting vital international trade routes.

AP PHOTO



Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited the northeastern Ukrainian region of Sumy, marking his first trip to the border since Ukrainian forces entered Russia's Kursk region. The visit comes as Ukraine continues to push its offensive, capturing more territory and prisoners, despite setbacks in other areas.

AP PHOTO



Canada A labor dispute has halted operations at Canada's two major freight railroads, potentially causing significant economic disruptions in both Canada and the U.S. The deadlock comes after failed contract negotiations, affecting billions of dollars worth of goods transported monthly between the two countries.

More on backpage

SAM HOU FAI CONSIDERS RUNNING FOR TOP JOB

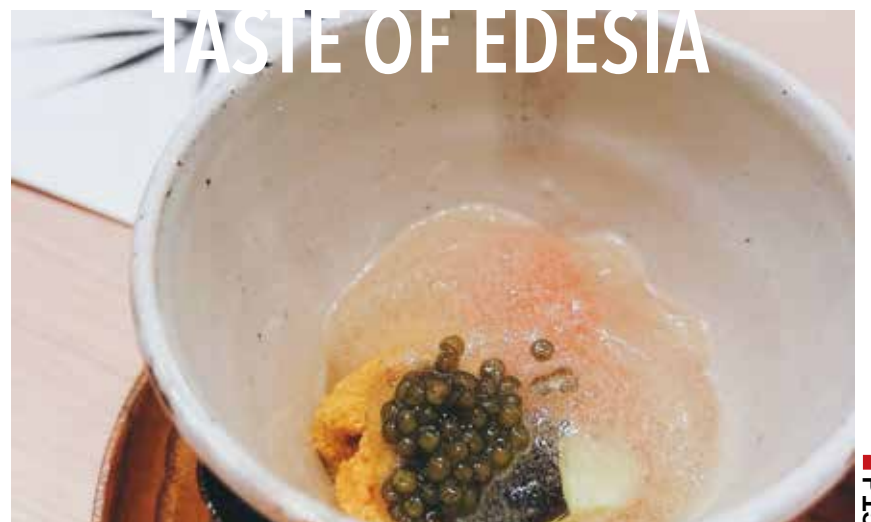
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GAMING BROKERAGE PREDICTS SECTOR STABILITY POST-CE ELECTION

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TASTE OF EDESIA



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ELDERLY MAN DIES AFTER FALL

Authorities are investigating the death of an elderly man found lying on a platform on Rua da Bacía Sul in the Macau Peninsula yesterday at 7:07 a.m. Firefighters confirmed the man was deceased, with injuries consistent with a fall from a height. No evidence of foul play or a suicide note was discovered at the scene. Residents reported hearing a loud noise before the discovery. The victim, who lived alone, was located near a building's canopy, prompting firefighters to use a ladder truck for recovery. The incident has been classified as a body discovery, with forensic investigations underway.

INT'L FIREWORKS CONTEST KICKS OFF SEPTEMBER

The 32nd International Fireworks Display Contest will illuminate the Macau skyline from Sept. 7 to Oct. 6, celebrating the 75th anniversary of the People's Republic of China and the 25th anniversary of Macau's return to the mainland. Fireworks teams from 10 countries will showcase their artistry and technical expertise through choreographed displays synchronized to music. Performances will occur at 9 p.m. and 9:40 p.m. on select dates. The Macau Government Tourism Office encourages spectators to enjoy the shows from prime viewing spots, including Avenida Sun Yat-sen, the Macau Science Center and Avenida do Ocean in Taipa.

GREEN SCHOOLS AND SHOPS HONORED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORTS

The Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) has announced the winners of its annual Green Schools and Green Supermarkets Award Scheme for sustainability. A total of 54 schools participated in the Green School Award Scheme, with 39 winning awards – the most in the program's history. Lou Hau School Middle School received the top honor, the "Green School Platinum Award." While the Green Supermarket Recognition Scheme awarded San Miu Supermarket's Shek Pai Wan and Lang Yue Ju branches Gold, while 15 supermarket branches won Silver and 40 earned Bronze. The full list of winners is available on the bureau's website

CONCERNS OVER BEIJING'S NEW RESTRICTIONS ON FOREIGN CONSULAR VISITS

VICTORIA CHAN

Foreign consulates based in Hong Kong will need to seek approval from Chinese authorities 10 days in advance of any visits by officials to Macau or other cities in the Greater Bay Area, according to a new directive.

The Commissioner's Office of China's Foreign Ministry in Hong Kong has informed consulates that if foreign officials need to perform duties outside their consular districts in the Greater Bay Area, they must obtain "prior consent" from Chinese authorities, according to the Hong Kong Free Press.

To seek approval, consulates must submit, in detail, a note explaining the reason for travel, personnel involved, dates and locations to be visited, and any mainland departments they intend to meet with.

Three consulates in Hong Kong confirmed receiving the letter and said it instituted a new process for regulating consular activities.

"Many consulates in Hong Kong also oversee Macau, and therefore we need go to Macau

VICTORIA CHAN



from time to time," said Mandy, a senior staff member at a local consulate (offering comment under a pseudonym).

"We also visit Shenzhen, Guangzhou, or other cities in Guangdong province to attend activities like opening ceremonies, or for visiting businesspeople from the country of our consulate."

Mandy expressed concerns about the new measure, noting it raises questions over whether visit applications could be rejected by Chinese authorities.

"Besides, we're required to share details of our trips, but we can't be sure whether the parties we're visiting feel comfortable being identified by Chinese authorities," Mandy said.

The Portuguese Consulate-General in Macau, however, told Ponto Final that the directive does not apply to the Portuguese diplomatic mission, since Macau and Hong Kong are part of its consular jurisdiction.

The letter cites Article 6 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, which allows

consular functions outside districts with host state consent. Applications must go to foreign affairs offices in Guangdong or the commissioner's office in Macau.

The implications of this new directive for regional cooperation and consular independence remain unclear.

As Mandy noted, the move raises concerns about the autonomy of foreign diplomatic missions and their ability to effectively serve their citizens in the Greater Bay Area.

Brokerage predicts gaming sector stability post CE election

NADIA SHAW

SEAPOST Research Partners has indicated the upcoming election for a new Chief Executive is unlikely to bring significant changes to the region's gaming industry.

The firm said it does not expect "any material changes" in the operational landscape, suggesting a continuity in policies and market dynamics that have historically characterized Macau's gaming environment.

This perspective aligns with the broader sentiment among analysts who anticipate the established gaming frameworks will remain intact, allowing operators to continue their current strategies without major disruptions in the wake of the election later this year.

Analysts noted Wednesday that incumbent leader Ho Iat Seng's health concerns were not unexpected, given his recent leave.

Analyst Vitaly Umansky said, "At this

stage, there is no clear obvious candidate for the job," but emphasized the new leader will likely maintain the status quo, focusing on supporting the gaming and hospitality sectors.

"It is most certain that the status-quo will likely be the main driver of the new Chief Executive, with the primary policy goals being continued," including "support for the [city's] gaming and hospitality industry," 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 publicly announced his intention to run.

The nomination period for candidates runs from Aug. 29 to Sept. 12, with the election scheduled for Oct. 13 – according to Executive Order No. 40/2024, published in the Official Gazette on Aug. 12.

The new Chief Executive is expected to be sworn in by December.

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng announced Wednesday he would not run for re-election in the upcoming October poll, citing unresolved health problems.

This decision follows an extended leave that began on June 21, marking his first significant break since taking office on Dec. 20, 2019.

In a statement from the Government Information Bureau, Ho said his choice was made in the best interests of Macau's long-term development.

"Due to health problems that have not yet been fully resolved, I have decided not to run... to ensure the long-term development of Macau," he said.

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

STATS

Traffic accidents on the rise

THE Public Security Police Force has reported a rise in traffic accidents in July, with 1,405 incidents recorded, marking a 24% increase compared to the same month last year.

Among these accidents, 49 involved pedestrians, highlighting ongoing safety concerns.

Particularly alarming is 784 cases involving pedestrians crossing roads illegally, a staggering 47% rise from June and nearly double the figure from the previous year.

The broader context reveals a growing disregard for road regulations, with 70,000 violations logged in July, reflecting a

slight month-on-month increase of 1.2%.

The total fines imposed exceeded 18.77 million yuan, with over 61,000 incidents related to illegal parking, which rose by 11% from June.

Additionally, law enforcement intensified efforts against taxi violations, addressing 52 cases in July.

This included 20 instances of taxi drivers refusing to pick up passengers, as well as one case of a driver charging an extortionate fare.

The crackdown also identified 11 unauthorized taxis operating with white plates. **LV**

CE ELECTIONS

Sam Hou Fai confirms he's considering top job

LYNZY VALLES

JUDGE Sam Hou Fai has confirmed news about a potential run for Chief Executive in the upcoming election.

Following incumbent Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng's announcement he will not seek re-election, the president of Macau's Court of Final Appeal has been floated as one of the likely successors to the top post.

When asked about his intentions at a public event yesterday, Sam expressed gratitude for the public's concern and emphasized the importance of the Chief Executive position in serving the SAR and its residents.

While he declined to definitively confirm his candidacy, he said the matter is under his consideration and he would soon provide further clarity.

"The role of Chief Executive is highly esteemed and comes



with significant responsibilities, as it allows me to contribute to the SAR and its residents. I have always had a desire to serve Macau."

"Some friends have encouraged me to keep contributing to the SAR, and I am currently considering it. If I have any updates, I will share them with everyone," the judge said, as cited in multiple reports.

Ho announced Wednesday he would not pursue another

term, citing health concerns. The election for the city's top official commences in just under two months.

In July, the government announcement regarding Ho's decision to extend his leave to 39 days raised concerns about his health.

However, his administration maintained Ho was in good health, undergoing routine medical check-ups and receiving treatment.



AD

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HO IAT SENG'S SON LEAVES FDCT BOARD

Jason Ho Kin Tong's tenure as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Fund for the Development of Science and Technology (FDCT) will come to an end this month, as his father, Ho Iat Seng, chose not to renew his mandate. In addition to the renewal not being announced in the Official Gazette, FDCT also confirmed Ho's departure to Portuguese newspaper *Hoje Macau*, citing "personal reasons" as the basis for his decision not to continue. Ho's appointment to FDCT by his father in September 2022 garnered controversy amidst suggestions that it created a conflict of interest.

NEARLY 16,000 STILL NEED TO APPLY FOR PENSION FUND PAYOUT

Funds for the extraordinary distribution of budget surpluses from Macau's non-mandatory central pension scheme for 2024 will be deposited Sept. 25 at the earliest, according to the Social Security Fund. Around 95,000 people have registered to withdraw funds this year, with around 71,000 elderly automatically getting deposits in their old-age pension accounts if requirements are met. However, the remaining 24,000 must withdraw funds on their own. To receive the Sept. 25 deposit, the approximately 16,000 still needing to apply must submit forms through the Macau Single Account or kiosks in August. Later applications or paper forms in September will see deposits on Oct. 23 instead.

MGM ADDS HOSPITALITY VETERAN TO BOARD

MGM Resorts International has appointed Keith Barr, former CEO of IHG Hotels & Resorts, to its Board of Directors. With over 30 years in the industry, Barr is recognized globally for his leadership transforming IHG through innovation and a customer-centric approach. As CEO from 2017 to 2023, he drove revenue growth, operational efficiency and culture changes. MGM Chair Paul Salem said Barr's experience in areas like technology, sales and marketing will be invaluable in advising MGM Resorts. CEO Bill Hornbuckle agreed, stating Barr's insights obtained through building an international business would support MGM's own international expansion plans.

MASS WEDDING IN BEIJING TO INCLUDE COUPLES FROM SARs

A mass wedding ceremony will see 5,000 couples, including newlyweds from Macau, Hong Kong and Taiwan, participating in Beijing on Sept. 22. Organized by the All-China Women's Federation and five other organizations, the event encourages simplified weddings and discourages outdated practices like extravagant betrothal gifts. The ceremony will feature simultaneous celebrations nationwide via video. According to the Ministry of Civil Affairs, China recorded 7.68 million marriage registrations in 2023, a year-on-year increase of 12.4%, following recent reforms that simplify the registration process.

STATE COUNCIL AFFIRMS 25 YEARS OF PROSPERITY UNDER 'ONE COUNTRY, TWO SYSTEMS'

NADIA SHAW

THE Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council (HMO, formerly known as HKMAO) looks back on the history, governance, industries and development in the region since its return to Chinese sovereignty in 1999.

Macau, a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, is marking a significant milestone: 25 years of thriving under the 'One country, two systems' principle.

Over the past quarter-century, the region has achieved remarkable success across various sectors, fully embracing the 'One country, two systems' policy and establishing a "robust constitutional order while continuously enhancing its governance system," said the HMO in a WeChat post, uploaded Wednesday evening.

As nominations for Chief Executive candidates open on August 29, the HMO believes it is "an opportune moment to reflect on Macau's achievements and challenges."

The recent completion of the 6th Chief Executive Election Committee highlights Macau's ongoing commitment to the 'One country, two systems' framework – shaping the region's unique political and economic landscape, according to the council.

Since 1999, Macau was described in the post as "integrating its governance with the central government's jurisdiction while maintaining a high degree of autonomy" by the HMO. Drawing on previous praises from President Xi Jinping, commending the SAR for its impressive progress – noting that collaboration between the central government



and local authorities has created an environment conducive to these unprecedented developments.

Economically, Macau has witnessed transformation in this quarter-century, with its GDP increasing from MOP51.9 billion in 1999 to MOP444.5 billion in 2019, reflecting an average annual growth rate of 11%. This economic growth has positioned Macau among the world's wealthiest regions, with per capita GDP soaring from USD15,000 to USD69,000. The economy has diversified beyond gaming, with significant advancements in finance, healthcare, and technology. The development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the Hengqin Guangdong-Macao Deep Cooperation Zone further underscores Macau's strategic integration into national development plans.

Socially, the HMO described the quality of life for residents as "improving significantly." The government has prioritized edu-

cation, implementing 15 years of free schooling and enhancing the standards of both basic and higher education. Cultural initiatives have flourished, with Macau recognized as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy and its Historic District designated as a World Heritage Site. Additionally, the SAR's social security system, characterized by a two-tier structure and free medical services, has been lauded for its effectiveness, contributing to Macau's reputation as one of the safest cities globally.

While the Covid-19 pandemic posed significant challenges, the HMO noted "the government's swift response demonstrated resilience." By activating public health measures and ensuring medical resource availability, "the SAR effectively controlled the outbreak and facilitated economic recovery." Initiatives like the "consumption card" program were regarded as having helped stimulate the economy, showcasing the government's commitment to maintaining social stability during turbulent times.

As Macau enters its new chapter, the newly elected Chief Executive and the SAR government face the task of continuing development while navigating internal and external challenges. The recently introduced "Macao Special Administrative Region Economic Moderate Diversification Development Plan (2024-2028)" aims to guide the region's economic strategy, focusing on sustainable growth and innovation.

The principle of "patriots governing Macau" will remain pivotal. The government is undertaking legislative revisions to ensure that those in power align with national interests, reinforcing the political foundation necessary for sustained success.

Macau is poised to continue its remarkable trajectory, and the upcoming elections will be crucial in shaping the future of the region as it strives to write a new chapter in its ongoing story of success and resilience under the 'One country, two systems' principle, stated the HMO.

CRIME

Authorities warn about theft on planes rising

THEFTS on airplanes in Macau have increased 187% in the first half of 2024 compared to the same period last year, according to the Office of the Secretary for Security.

A total of 23 cases of airplane theft were recorded between January and June, up from just eight cases in the first six months of 2023, the office said in response to a question from lawmaker Lo Choi In.

Despite the significant in-

crease, the number remains four cases lower than in the first half of 2019, before pandemic border restrictions were implemented.

Most perpetrators and victims have been mainland Chinese residents, the office said, attributing the rise to more flights and travelers as well as passenger negligence in securing their belongings.

Authorities have ramped up prevention efforts, including

distributing pamphlets to passengers and holding an industry meeting to discuss cooperation.

Specialized training will also be provided to aviation sector staff, while police disseminate crime information online and offline, and publish case studies as reminders.

Lo warned that summer often presents more opportunities for so-called "airplane rats" due to increased travel. She cri-

tized authorities for not doing enough to reinforce awareness campaigns and measures at entry points like airports.

With modern criminals employing more advanced means and citizens focused on other forms of fraud prevention, Lo said the public is neglecting the long-standing threat of theft on airplanes. She called on authorities to combat the crime through heightened promotion and prevention efforts. VC

CRIME

Hong Kong watchdog arrests seven in alleged HKD120m fraud

LYNZY VALLES

HONG Kong's corruption watchdog has apprehended seven individuals suspected of engaging in fraudulent transactions and false accounting totaling HKD120 million.

Included among those arrested were the company's chairperson and an executive director.

In a move to combat cross-boundary fraud and misconduct, the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), the Securities and Futures Commission (SFC), and the Macau Judiciary Police (PJ) conducted a joint operation known as "Demarcation" on Aug. 19 and 20.

This operation centered on allegations involving senior executives of a Hong Kong-listed company suspected of engaging in fictitious transactions and false accounting practices amounting to about HKD120 million.

The operation saw investigators jointly search six premises



associated with the company, leading to the arrest of seven individuals, including the company's chairman and an executive director.

The charges against the arrestees pertain to the use of forged documents with the intent to deceive under the Prevention of

Bribery Ordinance.

Investigations have revealed troubling details regarding the activities of the company's leadership.

Allegations indicate they falsified business documents and accounting records for subsidiaries situated in both Hong Kong

and Macau.

Notably, the company's trade receivables were reportedly reduced by over MOP113 million.

Additionally, authorities uncovered evidence suggesting more than HKD9 million of the company's funds may have been misappropriated through these

fraudulent activities.

Hong Kong media identified the company as Wai Hung Group Holdings Ltd, which has vast interests in Macau's engineering and interior design activities.

Wu Chou Kit, an appointed lawmaker at the Legislative Assembly and Rita Santos, counselor for Portuguese Communities for Asia and Oceania, sit on the board of the cited companies as independent non-executive directors, according to the company's website. However, Santos has publicly denied any involvement in the matter. "I heard about it in the news today (Thursday)," she told the Plataforma outlet.

Given the cross-boundary nature of the crimes, the Macau Judiciary Police also launched an investigation into related fraud offenses in Macau.

This marks the first concurrent law enforcement action of its kind between the two jurisdictions, according to regulators.



CHILDREN'S ARTS FESTIVAL

Music camp concludes with concert

THE inaugural Macau International Children's Arts Festival Music (MICAF) camp finished on a high note at the Macao Cultural Centre, showcasing the talents of young musicians from various regions.

The event featured an Open Rehearsal, a Closing Ceremony, and an Achievements Concert, where students demonstrated their skills developed over the six-day camp.

A total of 29 young violinists from different regions were admitted to the music camp.

The Achievements Concert was a highlight, featuring renowned violinist Joshua Bell alongside students performing classical pieces, including Tchaikovsky's "Serenade for Strings

in C major."

Notable performances included a duet of Bach's "Concerto for Two Violins in D minor" by students Sabrina Wang, Zhang Hanyue, and Cheong Tin Ut, with Bell.

The concert concluded with Bell's captivating rendition of Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons."

During the Closing Ceremony, attended by dignitaries including Cultural Affairs Bureau president Deland Leong, certificates were awarded to instructors and participants.

The festival, co-hosted by the Cultural Affairs Bureau and Wynn Resorts, is intended to enrich Macau's youth with musical education and performance opportunities. **NS**

CRIME

MAINLAND MAN DETAINED FOR BUS THEFT

AN unemployed man from mainland China has been detained by police in Macao for allegedly stealing passengers' belongings from buses, resulting in losses exceeding MOP10,000 for multiple victims. The case was forwarded to the Public Prosecutions Office for further legal proceedings.

Authorities report that the suspect exploited crowded bus conditions, using his backpack to conceal stolen items. This modus operandi has raised concerns about public safety in the region, prompting officials to remind citizens and tourists to remain vigilant in crowded areas.

The suspect faces charges under Article 198, paragraph 1, b) of the Criminal Code, which pertains to aggravated theft. If con-



victed, he could face up to five years in prison. However, if evidence reveals that the thefts involved a "considerable amount" or were part of a criminal group, the sentence could be extended to 10 years.

In light of the seriousness of the crimes, the courts have ordered the suspect's detention to prevent further offenses and maintain

public order. The public prosecutor's office outlined in a statement earlier this week that it is committed to pursuing all necessary investigative measures to ensure justice is served.

Authorities urge the public to report any thefts immediately to help combat crime and protect the safety of Macau's residents and visitors. **NS**

GAMING

MOODY PROJECTS MELCO EARNINGS TO CONTINUALLY IMPROVE

VICTORIA CHAN

MOOODY'S Investors Service has assigned a stable outlook to Melco Resorts Finance Ltd. and Studio City Finance Ltd., signaling its belief earnings and financial leverage at the casino-linked financing entities will continue improving over the next 12 to 18 months.

The ratings agency has assigned Melco Resorts Finance, wholly owned by Melco Resorts & Entertainment Ltd., a "Ba3" corporate family rating.

Moody's expects Melco Resorts' adjusted debt-to-EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization) to improve between 5.2x and 6.2x over the next year and a half, down from 8.6x in 2023.

"The recovery in Macau's gaming market after China's reopening in early 2023 will drive higher earnings and debt reduction," said Moody's.

This projected improvement is driven by expectations Macau's gaming market will see hi-

VICTORIA CHAN



gher earnings and debt reduction following the mainland's reopening.

Studio City Finance was assigned a "B1" rating with a stable outlook.

Moody's anticipates its adjusted debt to EBITDA will drop six to seven times by 2025 amid the market recovery in Macau, supporting the rating.

However, Moody's noted Studio City Finance "will not pay dividends for at least the next one to two years" due to high leverage from debt used for capital spending during the pandemic.

"Studio City Finance has never paid dividends in its history," the agency conceded.

Moody's observed Melco Resorts has "very good" liquidity, with USD1.1 billion in cash and a USD1.9 billion revolving credit facility to cover needs for at least 18 months.

The agency also said Melco Resorts has extended the maturity of its USD1.92 billion credit facilities by two years to April 2027 and issued USD750 million in eight-year bonds, fully addressing its debt maturities through the end of 2025.

LABOR

DSAL to enhance safety for construction workers

THE Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) says it will continue reviewing and updating occupational safety and health courses to keep pace with evolving industry developments and safety measures, a move aimed at better protecting workers in the construction sector.

The commitment comes as the bureau reported that its "Construction Industry Occupational Safety Card System" has trained over 470,000 people since its inception in 2014.

As of July, more than 440,000 workers have been issued safety cards, with over 120,000 currently holding valid certifications.

In addition to the core safety card program, the bureau has also launched specialized safety training on working at heights, electrical work, and the

use of lifting equipment.

Since June 2018, over 10,000 workers have obtained the "Construction Safety Specific Training Certificate."

To further support workplace safety, DSAL has also dispatched nearly 700 sets of safety equipment, including seat belts, fall arrest devices, and mobile temporary fall prevention tools, to small and medium-sized enterprises.

The bureau has organized 145 more occupational health lectures this year, already reaching over 6,600 workers to boost safety awareness across changing industries.

It aims to regularly modernize courses for Macau's 470,000-strong construction workforce. VC

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C&C RECEIVED THE 1ST SILVER
"DEIGNAN AWARD"
FOR RESPONSIBLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP
IN MACAU (2023)



FASHION

Shein sues Temu over copyright infringements as a legal feud heats up

HALELUYA HADERO

ONLINE fast-fashion giant Shein has filed another lawsuit against competitor Temu, accusing the China-founded shopping platform of stealing its designs, copying its product images and engaging in other types of fraud.

The complaint filed in a Washington federal court this week alleges that Temu, which has grown in popularity in the U.S., has subsidized its low prices

by encouraging sellers to offer counterfeit items, stolen designs and sub-standard products.

The allegations come as Shein itself is the target of lawsuits from brands and designers that have accused the company of stealing their designs and selling copycat items on its e-commerce site.

Asked for comment about the new lawsuit, a Temu spokesperson said in a prepared statement that Shein's "audacity is unbelievable."

"Shein, buried under its own mountain of IP lawsuits, has the

nerve to fabricate accusations against others for the very misconduct they're repeatedly sued for," the spokesperson said.

The new lawsuit against Temu represents an escalation of the ongoing feud between the two companies, which have sued each other in U.S. courts before.

Temu, a platform owned by Chinese e-commerce company PDD Holdings, alleged in a previous lawsuit that Shein compelled clothing manufacturers to submit to unfair supply chain arrangements in order to prevent

them from working with Temu.

Shein, which was founded in China but is now based in Singapore, accused Temu in court of engaging in deceptive business practices and misleading consumers by creating impostor accounts on social media that used Shein's name but directed people to Temu's platform.

The companies dropped those lawsuits in October. Temu sued Shein again in December, accusing its rival of employing "mafia-style intimidation" of suppliers to hamper its growth in

the U.S.

Attorneys for Shein wrote in the new complaint that at least one Temu employee stole "valuable trade secrets" from Shein that identify best-selling products and internal pricing information.

They also claimed again that Temu falsely presented itself as Shein through impostor X accounts that directed customers to Temu's site. They further alleged Temu has engaged in similar practices through sponsored Google ads. **MDT/AP**

MINING

Judge blocks Arizona lithium drilling that tribe says is threat to sacred lands

Afederal judge has temporarily blocked exploratory drilling for a lithium project in Arizona that tribal leaders say will harm land they have used for religious and cultural ceremonies for centuries.

Lawyers for the national environmental group Earthjustice and Colorado-based Western Mining Action Project are suing federal land managers on behalf of the Hualapai Tribe. They accuse the U.S. Bureau of Land Management of illegally approving drilling planned by an Australian mining company in the Big



Sandy River Basin in northwestern Arizona, about halfway between Phoenix and Las Vegas.

The case is among the latest legal fights to pit Native

American tribes and environmentalists against President Joe Biden's administration as green energy projects encroach on lands that are culturally significant.

U.S. District Judge Diane Humetewa granted a temporary restraining order late Monday, according to court documents. Humetewa is suspending the operation

until she can hear initial arguments from the tribe, Arizona Lithium Ltd. and the bureau at a hearing in Phoenix on Sept. 17.

The tribe wants the judge to issue a preliminary injunction extending the prohibition on activity at the site pending trial on allegations that federal approval of the exploratory drilling violated the National Historic Preservation Act and National Environmental Policy Act.

"Like other tribal nations who for centuries have stewarded the lands across this country, the Hualapai people are under siege by mining interests trying to make a buck off destroying their cultural heritage," Earthjustice lawyer Laura Berglan said in a statement yesterday [Macau time].

The tribe says in court documents that the bureau

failed to adequately analyze potential impacts to sacred springs the Hualapai people call Ha'Kamwe, which means warm spring. The springs have served as a place "for healing and prayer" for generations.

The tribe and environmental groups also argue that a 2002 environmental review by the bureau and the U.S. Energy Department determined that the land was eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as a traditional cultural property.

Arizona Lithium plans a total of 131 drilling sites across nearly 2.6 square kilometers to obtain samples to help determine if there's enough lithium to construct a mine and extract the critical mineral needed to manufacture batteries for electric vehicles, among other things. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau to host Malaysian-themed buffet



Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau is hosting a "Malaysian BBQ Garden Buffet Night"

on August 30 at its Naam restaurant. Guests can savor a selection of Malay-

sian-style grilled meats and seafood, along with durian desserts, Malaysian street foods, and Indian delicacies.

Set in an outdoor lawn, this summer night event invites the public to explore the multicultural richness of Malaysian cuisine, all while enjoying a flavorful barbecue buffet.

To elevate the experience, attendees will have access to free-flow draught beers and soft drinks. Additionally, an exclusive "buy 4, get 1 free" promotion is available.

Artyzen Grand Lapa joins Galaxy Macau and Studio City in offering a Malaysian-themed buffet, in bid to enhance the culinary landscape in the region.

Hins Cheung returns to The Londoner Arena with 12 concerts



Hong Kong singer-songwriter Hins Cheung will perform 12 shows titled "Dahlia Blossom"

at The Londoner Macao's The Londoner

doner Arena this October and November.

Cheung's return follows his successful performances at London's Royal Albert Hall and a series of 14 sold-out concerts in Macau last December, highlighting his immense popularity. The upcoming "Dahlia Blossom" chapter promises fans a vibrant experience filled with Cheung's classic songs and greatest hits.

With over 20 years in the music industry, Cheung has consistently topped Hong Kong radio charts with hits such as "My Way" and "Forever Young." His recent single, "Imaginary Fairground," has also enjoyed remarkable success, further solidifying his status as a Cantopop icon.



PHILIPPINES ENCOURAGED TO PURSUE TECH COLLABORATIONS IN SOUTHERN CHINA

ON THE AGENDA

THE Board of Investments (BoI) has emphasized the need for the Philippines to explore potential partnerships in technology and innovation with companies in Macau, Hong Kong, and Guangdong Province. At the Manila Forum for Philippines-China Relations, BoI Executive Director for Investment Promotions Services, Evariste M. Cagatan, highlighted the advanced industrial capabilities of these regions as a significant opportunity for collaboration, Business World has reported.

“There are clear opportunities for synergy in the areas of technology and innovation,” stated Cagatan during a panel discussion on Wednesday. She pointed to the Guangdong Greater Bay Area (GBA) as a cluster of cities around the Pearl River Delta, which China is developing for greater economic integration.

The GBA, comprising cities such as Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Zhuhai, is recognized as a global hub for technological development. This positioning aligns well with the Philippines’ growing information technology

and business process management sectors, which present “huge growth opportunities,” according to Cagatan, as cited in the report.

Moreover, Hong Kong’s role as a global financial center offers significant prospects for Philippine banks seeking international partnerships. In the realm of advanced manufacturing,

According to Business World, Cagatan suggested that the Philippines could benefit from partnering with Guangdong, a leader in global manufacturing during the outsourcing boom. “Integrating our capabilities in electro-

tics and semiconductors with Guangdong’s high-tech industry could drive innovation and boost productivity,” she added.

Jeffrey Ng, Vice-President of the Federation of Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Inc., also underscored the potential benefits of importing Chinese electric vehicles (EVs) into the Philippines, especially amid trade restrictions from the US and Europe. “The GBA can significantly contribute to the Philippines’ development in the coming years,” he remarked in the report. **MDT/AGENCIES**

86,000 relocated, transport disrupted due to heavy rain in south Guangdong

IN THE NEWS

DUE to heavy rainfall this week, China’s economic powerhouse of Guangdong Province has transferred over 86,000 people in advance as a preventive measure, while relevant railway services have been suspended and

flights delayed.

From 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday, 65 townships and sub-districts in Guangdong experienced torrential rain, with precipitation exceeding 100 millimeters, while the maximum accumulated rainfall reached 247.9 millimeters in a sub-district

of the city of Dongguan, according to local meteorological and hydrological monitoring.

As of 11 a.m. Wednesday, services were suspended for some trains on the railway line connecting Guangzhou and Shenzhen, two megacities in China, and a line linking Guangzhou and

Shantou.

Meanwhile, as of 8:38 p.m. Wednesday, 55 flights had been delayed for more than an hour at Guangzhou Baiyun Airport.

The rainfall is forecast to weaken from Thursday to Friday, according to the Guangdong meteorological observatory. **XINHUA**

WORK IN PROGRESS

NOTES ON ACADEMIC STUDIES

AI-GENERATED ILLUSTRATION



“Spatial Characteristics and Influencing Factors of Night Cultural and Tourism Consumption Agglomeration Areas in China”

Kun Shang, Yuqing Zhang, Xueming Li, Wansheng Li, Guangyu Zhou
IEEE Journal of Selected Topics in Applied Earth Observations and Remote Sensing (2024)

This study explores the spatial distribution and influencing factors of night cultural and tourism consumption areas across China, with implications for economic development and urban renewal. The authors use spatial analysis methods to evaluate the distribution characteristics of these agglomeration areas, finding that the spatial distribution is unbalanced, with a combination of regional clusters and single nucleus aggregation points. The study identifies eight different types of night agglomeration areas, each with distinctive features and varying spatial densities, driven by factors such as resource endowment, economic level, transportation location, and policy environment. This research provides a foundation for future studies on the spatiotemporal evolution of China’s night tourism economy and offers insights for urban renewal efforts in other regions facing economic challenges, including implications for the Greater Bay Area.

AI-GENERATED ILLUSTRATION



“The ‘Chinese Path’: Uneven Development, Projectment, and Socialism”

Elias Jabbour, Vitor Boa Nova, Javier Vadell
Cadernos Metrópole (2024)

This paper investigates the unique trajectory of China’s development, emphasizing the concepts of uneven development, projectment, and socialism as key factors that differentiate China’s growth path from other Asian economies like Japan and South Korea. The authors argue that China’s success cannot be solely attributed to catching up economically but must be understood within the context of its historical and socialist foundations. The study discusses how these factors have enabled China to move from being one of the poorest countries in 1949 to becoming a global competitor, particularly in technology. The paper suggests that these elements are crucial in explaining the robustness and resilience of China’s development process, offering a deeper understanding of the Chinese model of economic growth.

AI-GENERATED ILLUSTRATION



“How Does Industrial Intellectualization Affect Energy Intensity? Evidence from China”

Haitao Wu, Ruohan Zhong, Zhen Wang, Yuanfeng Qu, Xiaodong Yang, Yu Hao
The Energy Journal (2024)

This research examines the relationship between industrial intellectualization and energy intensity in China, particularly focusing on the impact of the digital economy and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The study constructs an industrial intelligent system and analyzes data from 2006 to 2018, finding that industrial intellectualization significantly improves energy efficiency, thereby reducing energy intensity, albeit with a notable lag effect. The research also highlights the spatial autocorrelation and agglomeration of energy intensity in China, with a negative spatial spillover effect observed from industrial intellectualization. Additionally, the study considers the non-linear effects of various economic factors, such as technological progress and environmental regulation, on energy intensity. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers in regions like the GBA to enhance industrial efficiency and achieve sustainable economic growth through industrial intellectualization.

ON THE 120TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF DENG XIAOPING

Xi urges advancing socialism with Chinese characteristics

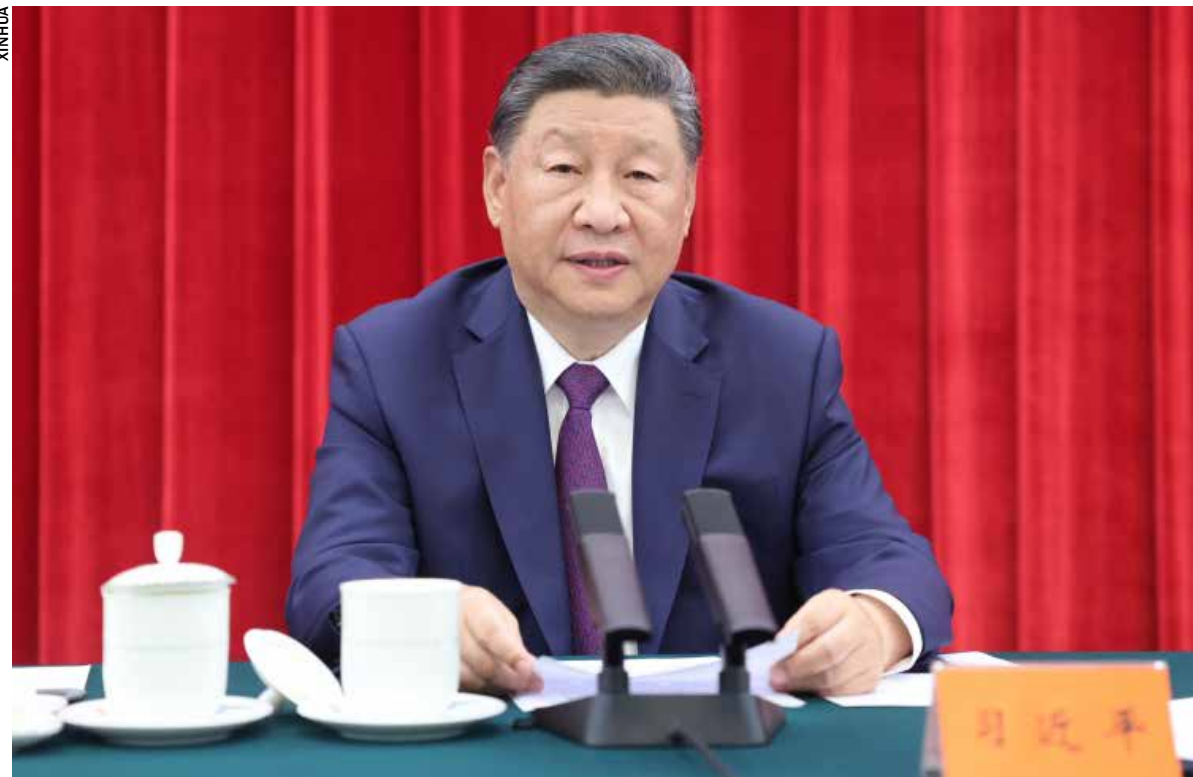
PRESIDENT Xi Jinping lauded the "outstanding contributions" of late leader Deng Xiaoping and urged advancing socialism with Chinese characteristics initiated by Deng, as the country marked Deng's 120th birth anniversary yesterday.

Addressing a meeting held to mark the anniversary, Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, said the country must continue to thoroughly study and apply Deng Xiaoping Theory.

"Deng made outstanding contributions to the Party, the people, the country, the nation and the world," Xi said, adding that Deng's achievements have been immortalized in history and will always inspire future generations.

Deng was the core of the second generation of the Party's central collective leadership, the chief architect of China's socialist reform, opening up and modernization, and the trailblazer of socialism with Chinese characteristics, Xi said, adding that Deng was also a great internationalist who made major contributions to world peace and development.

"Comrade Deng Xiaoping



had lived a glorious, fighting and extraordinary life," he said.

Xi noted that, after the Cultural Revolution, a decade-long turmoil that ended in 1976, Deng had led the Party and the people in achieving China's historic transformation.

Deng pushed China to achieve a new breakthrough in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context, break new ground in socialist modernization, and set a correct path for the country's complete reunification, Xi said.

Deng's historical achievements are comprehensive and groundbreaking, with profound and lasting impacts on both China and the world, Xi said.

"We will forever remember his great historical achievements and forever revere his noble revolutionary conduct," Xi said.

The most important intellectual legacy left by Deng is Deng Xiaoping Theory, Xi said, calling for thoroughly studying and applying the theory to address real-world problems.

"The best way to honor

Deng is to continue advancing the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics that he initiated," Xi said.

Xi called for further comprehensively deepening reform to continuously provide strong momentum and institutional safeguards for Chinese modernization.

He urged moving faster to build a modernized economy, working toward greater self-reliance in the science and technology sector, and developing advanced socialist culture.

Xi also urged efforts to

achieve more notable and substantive progress in promoting common prosperity for all.

Realizing China's complete reunification has long been the aspiration of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and other members of the older generation of revolutionaries, Xi said.

He urged resolute efforts to promote the peaceful development of relations across the Taiwan Strait, and demanded firm opposition to "Taiwan independence" to safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Stressing that China has always been a staunch force for world peace, Xi called for unremitting efforts to uphold peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit.

Xi said China will take an active role in the reform and development of the global governance system, and create new opportunities for the world with new progress in Chinese modernization.

Senior leaders Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Ding Xuexiang, Li Xi and Han Zheng attended the meeting, which was presided over by Cai Qi.

Zhao, Wang, Ding, Li and Cai are all members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee. Han is the country's vice president. XINHUA

BUSINESS

PwC loses largest China client in wake of Evergrande storm

PRICEWATERHOUSE-COOPERS LLP (PwC) has lost its largest client in the Chinese mainland amid a wave of client departures triggered by a regulatory probe into the auditing firm's work with scandal-hit developer China Evergrande Group.

Bank of China, one of the country's biggest four state lenders, said it will hire EY as its auditor for 2024, replacing PwC China. The bank will also hire domestic audit firm BDO China Shu Lun Pan CPAs LLP as the secondary auditor, Caixin learned.

Bank of China joined



a growing list of Chinese companies terminating contracts with PwC as the collapse of China Evergrande put the auditor's work in doubt.

In June, two state-owned giants, PetroChina and China Railway Group, said they had decided to stop working with PwC, following five other com-

panies that had done the same the previous month. Over the past two years dozens of firms have either dropped PwC as their auditor or canceled plans to hire the firm.

In 2023, Bank of China paid PwC 193 million yuan (\$27 million) in auditing fees, marking the third consecutive year of using its services. In March, the bank announced plans to reappoint PwC as its auditor for 2024. However, according to a June filing, the bank later revised its decision, opting to retain PwC only for its mid-term report while seeking new auditors for the future.

The wave of contract terminations comes as China's securities regulator examines PwC's auditing role for China Evergrande. In June, the China Securities Regulatory Commission annou-

nced a \$577 million fine on China Evergrande's major domestic subsidiary, Hengda Real Estate Group, for fraudulent bond issuance and breaking information disclosure rules.

Regulators found that Hengda had inflated its revenue and profits in 2019 and 2020 by recognizing sales in advance. The company was alleged to have exaggerated its 2019 revenue by 214 billion yuan and again by 350 billion yuan the next year. The inflated figures accounted for half of Hengda's total revenue in 2019, and 79% in 2020, according to the statement. Hengda also inflated its profits by 63% and 87% in 2019 and 2020.

The CSRC said in June that relevant intermediary agencies were under investigation. Sources close to the matter told Caixin that

the decisions on penalties for PwC are likely to be announced soon.

In August, China Evergrande's liquidators launched court proceedings against PwC, criticizing it for "negligence" and "misrepresentation" in its auditing work.

After Bank of China's auditor change, three of the country's six largest state banks have hired EY as their auditor, while two are currently using KPMG. The Postal Saving Bank of China Co. Ltd., which is set to announce a new auditor soon, is likely to appoint KPMG to replace Deloitte as it has reached its maximum hiring duration, sources said.

Chinese rules stipulate that state-owned firms should not employ the same auditor for more than eight consecutive years. MDT/CAIXIN

LGBTQ+ RIGHTS

ONE WOMAN'S CUSTODY BATTLE HIGHLIGHTS THE CHALLENGES FACING SAME-SEX COUPLES

HUIZHONG WU, BANGKOK

IT'S been more than four years since Zhang Peiyi last saw her son, one of two children from her former marriage.

Denied custody of both kids, Zhang finally settled in June for visitations with her daughter. But after seeing her only once, Zhang's ex-wife called the meetings off indefinitely. What Zhang thought was the end of a yearslong legal battle is facing yet another hurdle, as she has to go through court again to ask them to enforce her visitation rights.

"These types of disputes are not well protected in our country," said Gao Mingyue, the lawyer representing Zhang. "This is a reminder that we have to be self-sufficient."

LGBTQ+ families like Zhang's have no law to cite when faced with situations like custody or divorce, as same-sex marriage is not recognized in China, meaning the outcome of each case is uncertain and inconsistent.

For straight couples — regardless of marriage status — both are recognized as custodians by law. If the two split, the court decides who gets custody based on factors like the parent's financial resources, the child's desire and the home environment — operating from the principle of making the best decision for the child.

But for same-sex couples who have children via surrogacy or in vitro fertilization, nothing is guaranteed.

Zhang, a Shanghai resident, knows this firsthand. She's been fighting to see her children since 2020, after a difficult separation.

The two women went to the United States to be legally married and give birth to their children. Zhang's ex provided the eggs, and Zhang gave birth to a girl and her ex birthed a boy. Back in China, a few years later when the relationship ended, Zhang's ex took both children and cut off all communication.

NO LEGAL PROTECTION

When Zhang turned to the law, she discovered just how little protections there were for LGBTQ+ couples in China, where there's no legal standard for two mothers or two fathers. The law around families is written exclusively for cases of a mother and a father.

While surrogacy is not illegal, hospitals are forbidden from selling eggs or sperm, so laws don't address issues of parentage where surrogacy is involved. And the courts have so far avoided making any legal precedent;

AP PHOTO



Zhang Peiyi, a Shanghai resident, tears up during an interview at her home in Shanghai, last month

Zhang's court granted custody to the biological mother, while another court in another case denied custody to the biological mother.

Gao represented both cases.

Zhang's case, which landed in a Beijing court, granted her ex custody and Zhang visitation of the child she birthed. But because the outcome was reached through a settlement, there is no legal precedent set. Although China is not a precedent-dependent country in the way the U.S. is, legal judgements can still have an impact that lawyers and academics cite.

In the other case, in the southern coastal city of Xiamen, the court's 2020 ruling said the woman suing, who provided the egg that her partner carried, "had no legal basis" for her argument and that it could not affirm that she was the child's mother. Further, it said, "the defendant and plaintiff are same-sex partners, and this is not regulated by our country's marriage law or any other civil laws."

No DNA testing was done for the case, but Gao wanted to prove that his client was the genetic mother. They provided medical evidence and the opposing side admitted it was his client's egg, but the court didn't want to make a ruling, he said. "They just said there's no way to prove you're the genetic mother, but even if you had no way to affirm the paren-

t-child relationship, the law actually allows the court to make this judgement," he said.

"It's quite messy, and different courts at different times and different places have come to different solutions," said Darius Longarino, a senior fellow at the Paul Tsai China Center at Yale Law School.

CRITICISM FROM TOP LEGAL EXPERT

The case drew criticism from one of China's top legal experts on civil law.

"We can put aside the issue of surrogacy or same-sex couples, when a child is born, that's a human being," Yang Lixin, a professor at Renmin University's law school in Beijing said in an online commentary when the Xiamen case issued a first judgement in 2020.

He said that the court's decision was basically "nonsense," adding that the child's "rights and his position must be protected."

Some LGBTQ+ couples are trying to stave off the legal ambiguities with a legal agreement, similar to how a prenup works, outlining what would happen to their children if they broke up.

"For same-sex partners, when they decide to have kids, we advise them to sign an agreement on the births," said Gao. He said some 30 couples have come to his practice inquiring about draf-

ting agreements that establish the identity of the parents, their mutual agreement to have children, and the responsibility, financial and otherwise, to raise the kids.

He's drafted eight or nine, but none have had a chance to be tested yet, so it's unclear how the courts will receive them.

In July, when Zhang got her first legally guaranteed visit to see her daughter for the first time in more than four years, it was a subdued occasion.

"I felt very calm, in those four hours," she said. "I couldn't cry then. I didn't even have time to have a happy reaction, but I was satisfied that at least in those four hours, I was in the same space as her."

FOUR HOURS A MONTH

The People's Court in Beijing's Fengtai district granted Zhang the right to see her daughter once a month, four hours per visit, which is common in cases with young children. Zhang traveled up from Shanghai and then drove to Hebei province, two hours outside of Beijing, to a home that her ex-partner owns.

Her ex-partner, the only other person present during the visit, required their daughter to wear a face mask, and the girl spent the time doing homework, Zhang recalled. But there were moments when the little girl would sneak

looks at the woman sitting with her in the quiet house. They didn't talk at all, Zhang said, partly because she didn't know what to say.

It was only after Zhang walked out of the house, she said, that she burst into tears.

Now, Zhang doesn't know when she'll see her daughter again. Her ex-partner is denying visitation on the claim that Zhang violated the children's privacy. The woman's lawyer, Tian Yuanyuan, said his client would not give any interviews as the court requested that both sides refrain from talking to media. He also said The Associated Press was violating their privacy by calling.

"We'll be telling the court about this," he said.

With few options left, Zhang says she will keep fighting by recording all that has happened to her, while taking what precautions she can such as keeping the children's names and ages private.

"The children have the right to know what happened. And so I wanted to give my greatest effort. One day, maybe after they know, they know, 'Our mom really tried her best and gave it her all,'" Zhang said. "I want to take 99 steps forward, and the children, after they see I've taken these 99 steps, they can take one step toward me." MDT/AP

AFGHANISTAN

UAE accepts credentials of Taliban ambassador in a major diplomatic win for rulers

THE United Arab Emirates accepted the credentials of the Taliban's ambassador to the oil-rich Gulf Arab state, the biggest diplomatic coup for Afghanistan's rulers who are not officially recognized as the country's legitimate government.

The development, the first Taliban ambassador since one was appointed to China last December, underscored the international divide over how to deal with the government now in Kabul.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul confirmed the news about Badruddin Haqqani in a post on the social media platform X. The ministry did not respond to requests for information about Haqqani, who

was previously the Taliban's envoy to the UAE.

Haqqani is not related to the Acting Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani, who in June met the UAE leader, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, but he is from his team.

Sirajuddin Haqqani is the current leader of the powerful Haqqani network, a militant movement allied with the Taliban, and a designated global terrorist. He is wanted by the United States for his involvement in deadly attacks and is also on several sanctions lists.

Even though the Taliban remain isolated from the West, they have pursued bilateral ties with major regional powers. Last week, Uzbek Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov arrived in Afghanistan in the highest-



Afghan Taliban Envoy to the United Arab Emirates Badruddin Haqqani

level visit by a foreign official since the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan three years ago.

The United Nations says that official recognition of the Tali-

ban-run Afghanistan is "nearly impossible" while restrictions on women and girls are in place.

In a separate development yesterday [Macau time], a

U.N.-appointed rights expert decried the Taliban's decision to bar him from Afghanistan. The special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan Richard Bennett has frequently criticized the Taliban's treatment of women and girls.

Bennett said the Taliban's announcement that they would no longer grant him access to Afghanistan was "a step backwards and sends a concerning signal" about their engagement with the U.N. and the international community on human rights.

"I urge the Taliban to reverse their decision and reiterate my willingness and availability to travel to Afghanistan," Bennett said.

A spokesman for the Foreign Ministry in Kabul warned that Bennett's activities were detrimental to the interests of Afghanistan and the Afghan people.

"It was deemed appropriate that Bennett continue his unprofessional conduct from the comfort of his office instead of tiring himself with needless travels," the spokesperson, Abdul Qahar Balkhi, told The Associated Press in a message. **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

Man opens plane's door and walks on wing at airport before he's arrested

A passenger was arrested at an Australian airport after he left a stationary airliner through an emergency exit, walked along a wing, and then climbed down a jet engine to the tarmac yesterday, officials said.

Jetstar Flight JQ507 had arrived at Melbourne Airport from Sydney and had parked at a terminal gate when the man left the plane by the right-side exit, officials said.

Opening the exit automatically deployed a slide from the back of the wing at the fuselage to the ground, a Jetstar statement said. But the man instead walked along the wing and climbed down one of the Airbus A320's two engines, an official said.

Passenger Audrey Varghese said passengers screamed and shrieked as the man began "erratic" behavior shortly before he opened the hatch.

"The man was exhibiting

some quite strange behavior," Varghese told Melbourne Radio 3AW.

"As soon as the plane had started coming to a stop, he immediately got up and basically charged to where the emergency exit row is, and in the process shoving people, causing a bit of commotion, (and) ripped open the emergency door," Varghese said.

Another passenger, identified as Maddison, told Nine News television the man had been vaping, which is not allowed, during the 90-minute mid-morning flight and had unsuccessfully demanded the air crew provide him with alcohol.

Australian Federal Police officers had been alerted by Jetstar staff and arrested the man for "alleged aggressive behavior and breaching aircraft safety protocols," a police statement said.

He was assessed by paramedics and taken to a

hospital, where he remains for further assessment, the police statement said.

Police were continuing to investigate and charges were likely to be laid at a later date, they said.

Melbourne Airport said the man was detained by aircrew and ground staff before police arrested him.

Social media images showed at least three ground staff restraining the man on the tarmac.

"Melbourne Airport is proud of the exceptional response from ground crew, which meant there was no immediate danger to other passengers or airport staff," an airport statement said.

Varghese spoke from the baggage collection area of the airport an hour after the landing and said passengers had been told the deployed slide had delayed the unloading of their luggage. Nine News reported the baggage was released hours later. **MDT/AP**

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INDIA | EXPLAINER

Modi visits Ukraine this week, after a recent trip to Moscow

KRUTIKA PATHI, NEW DELHI

INDIAN Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in a historic visit today to Ukraine, a month and a half after he traveled to Moscow to hold talks with President Vladimir Putin.

Officials in India and Ukraine have said the visit will focus on boosting economic ties and cooperation in defense, science and technology.

But analysts say the visit could also be an attempt to have India strike a more neutral stance after what has been seen as a lean toward Russia, given Modi's recent Moscow visit, his country's historic, Cold War-era relationship with Russia and New Delhi's avoidance of directly criticizing Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

WHY IS MODI VISITING UKRAINE?

Modi's landmark visit is the first to Ukraine from a prime minister of India since the country established diplomatic relations with Ukraine over 30 years ago. He will arrive in Kyiv after a two-day visit to Poland.

Analysts say the timing of the trip is aimed at controlling fallout from the Indian leader's July 8-9 trip to Russia.

That trip coincided with a NATO leaders gathering in Washington and Russian missile strikes on a hospital in Ukraine that killed scores of people, drawing strong criticism from Zelenskyy. The Ukrainian leader called Modi's meeting "a

huge disappointment" and "a devastating blow to peace efforts" after the Indian leader was seen hugging Putin.

While Modi did not address the missile strikes directly, he alluded to the bloodshed while sitting next to Putin, and condemned any attack that harms innocent people.

This week's Ukraine trip represents India "trying to balance the situation" after being seen as "tilting towards Russia," said K C Singh, a strategic affairs expert and former diplomat.

Indian officials are downplaying any connections with the Moscow trip. "This is not a zero-sum game ... these are independent, broad ties," Secretary (West) Tanmaya Lal said this week.

Despite pressure from the West, New Delhi has refrained from condemning Russia's invasion or voting against it in U.N. resolutions. It has avoided taking sides and urged Ukraine and Russia to resolve the conflict through dialogue.

"Modi's visit is designed to some extent to show that New Delhi's strategic orientation remains non-alignment, and as such, to keep balance in its foreign policy," said Derek Grossman, an Indo-Pacific analyst at the RAND Corporation.

WHAT ARE INDIA'S TIES TO RUSSIA?

India and Russia have had strong ties since the Cold War, and New Delhi's importance as a key trading partner for Moscow has grown since the

Kremlin sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022.

India has joined China in becoming a key buyer of Russian oil following sanctions imposed by the United States and its allies that shut most Western markets off to Russian exports.

Modi's visit to Moscow was seen by analysts as reinforcing their partnership, especially since Russia remains a crucial trade and defense partner. Some 60% of India's military systems and hardware is of Russian origin, and New Delhi now gets more than 40% of its oil imports from Russia.

Trade between the two has also seen a sharp increase, touching close to \$65 billion in the 2023-24 financial year, according to India's foreign ministry.

WHAT ABOUT INDIA'S TIES TO UKRAINE?

Bilateral trade between India and Ukraine is much lower, at about \$3 billion before the invasion, but Modi and Zelenskyy have interacted since at the sidelines of global events and the Ukrainian foreign minister also visited New Delhi earlier this year.

India has also provided several consignments of humanitarian assistance to Ukraine since the invasion.

Analysts say Zelenskyy is unlikely to raise Modi's meeting with Putin - at least publicly.

But Modi's Moscow visit and the India-Russia relationship will be a "strong undertone" to his Ukraine trip, even if it not explicitly mentioned in public statements, added Chietig

Bajpae, who researches South Asia at the Chatham House think tank.

HOW WILL THIS TRIP BE PERCEIVED?

The trip is likely to be well-received in the U.S. and other Western countries that had been critical of Modi's meeting with Putin in July, Grossman said.

For Modi, this trip is an opportunity "to engage Zelenskyy and secure Indian interests there, push back against Russian overreach and placate the West," Grossman added.

But while the trip will offer some reassurance to the West, it will remain clear that India maintains a closer relationship with Moscow and "Modi's visit will not change this perception," Bajpae said.

Modi is unlikely to use this visit to seek a role for India as a peacemaker in the conflict, which some had speculated it would do at the onset of the war given New Delhi's ties to Russia and emerging stature globally.

"Indian behavior... has been to try to stay out of resolving it, and to only occasionally comment against further aggression," said Grossman, adding that India — unlike China or Turkey — hasn't come forward with a peace plan, for example.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin will be observing Modi's visit, "but short of any statements that are highly critical of Russia, it is unlikely to be concerned," Bajpae said. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1991 GORBACHEV PUNISHES COUP PLOTTERS



Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev has begun his purge of cabinet members and officials involved in the failed coup four days ago.

Two of the three ministers who signed the committee's takeover decree, defence minister Dmitry Yazov and KGB chief Vladimir Kryuchkov, have been arrested.

The third, interior minister Boris Pugo, committed suicide to avoid arrest.

Mr Gorbachev also sacked his prime minister, Valentin Pavlov, and foreign minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh. Dozens of other party officials and senior army officers resigned or were dismissed.

During an address to the Russian Parliament, the leader said his "entire government" should resign for failing to oppose the takeover.

But Mr Gorbachev was unable to prevent his political rival, Russia's president Boris Yeltsin, capitalising on support he gained from opposing the coup and suspending the Russian Communist Party.

The exchanges between the Russian President and Soviet leader in parliament appeared to indicate that the balance of power in post-coup Moscow is rapidly shifting away from Mr Gorbachev.

Mr Yeltsin forced him to read out a list of those who had supported the takeover, taken from notes of the cabinet meeting on the morning of the coup.

When Mr Gorbachev had finished reading the notes, the president said: "Now, on a lighter note, I will sign this decree suspending the Russian Communist Party."

Mr Gorbachev pleaded with him not to sign the document, telling parliament he would never agree to something that infringed the interests of "millions of workers and peasants".

"You can't say that the whole Communist party supported the conspirators - if we do things like this it will be a witch hunt," he added.

But Mr Yeltsin responded by saying he was not banning the party, merely suspending it "prior to investigation of its involvement in the coup" - and signed the document to loud applause.

Mr Gorbachev praised the Russian Parliament and Mr Yeltsin for their role in defeating the coup, but was frequently heckled during his speech.

During his description of what happened during the takeover attempt one member of the parliament shouted: "We all know that. Talk about the reasons."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Soviet Union collapsed four months later and Mr Gorbachev resigned on 25 December 1991. Russia, Ukraine and Belarus formed the Commonwealth of Independent States, an alliance which was eventually joined by all the former Soviet republics except the Baltic states. In 1992, Russia took the former USSR's seat at the United Nations. Mr Yeltsin's path to democracy was far from smooth. In 1993 he suspended parliament and called for new elections after a series of disagreements with his MPs. When they barricaded themselves into the parliament building, he was forced to order the army in to recapture it. Mr Yeltsin resigned in 2000 and was replaced by Vladimir Putin. The 1991 coup plotters were pardoned in 1994.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Prioritize health, with the Sun entering Virgo for a month. Exercise builds energy. Adjust fitness goals, practices and supports. Work with your heart.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Learn from children. Craft works of beauty. You're especially lucky with love, creativity and romance this month, with both the Sun and Venus in Virgo.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Beautify your surroundings. Energize domestic renovation and arts this month, with the Sun in Virgo. Prioritize family matters. Nurture the ones you love.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Articulate your work. Research and share what you're learning. This month, under the Virgo Sun, favors communication. Write, record and express your views.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
You're on fire this month! Generate rising cash flow under the Virgo Sun. Put your heart into your work and it returns multiplied.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
You're the star, with the Sun in your sign this month. Take charge. Use your power and confidence to get the results you're after.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Savor peaceful privacy, with the Virgo Sun for a month. Clean, organize and review the past. Clear clutter. Create space for what's ahead.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Share team support, with the Sun in Virgo for the next month. Community efforts thrive. Benefit from public relations and social participation.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Step into greater leadership. Dress for success. Take care of business under the Virgo Sun. A professional challenge offers a fine prize this month.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Explore new flavors and cultures. Study and investigate. Get out into the world this month, with the Sun in Virgo. Discover unimagined wonders.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Monitor finances for growth. Collaborate to benefit shared accounts this month under the Virgo Sun. Organize and budget. Wheel and deal.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Your partnership grows. Creative and romantic collaborations thrive over a month, with the Sun in Virgo. Encourage each other to flower. Provide the missing link.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

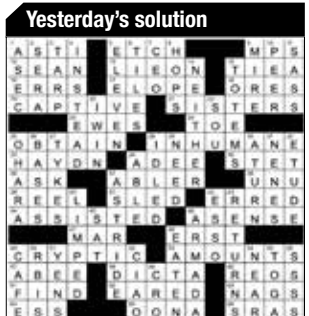
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	24	33	cloudy
Changchun	18	29	fine
Chengdu	26	38	cloudy
Chongqing	31	40	fine
Fuzhou	28	35	rain
Guangzhou	26	34	cloudy
Guiyang	22	31	cloudy
Haikou	25	35	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	26	37	fine
Harbin	17	26	fine
Hefei	26	35	cloudy
Nanjing	25	35	cloudy
Shanghai	28	36	cloudy
Taipei	26	31	cloudy
Wuhan	28	38	fine
Hong Kong	27	31	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	13	24	thunderstorms
Frankfurt	16	29	overcast
Paris	18	27	overcast
London	13	23	overcast
New York	19	28	fine

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Mediterranean juniper; 5- Editor's note; 9- Intense anger; 12- Grand Ole ____; 13- Creates; 15- ____ about (approximately); 16- Got it; 17- Tatum or Ryan; 18- Fiber source; 19- Paper carrier; 21- Correspondences; 23- "Jaws" boat; 24- ____ de Cologne; 25- Enthusiastic; 28- Counselors; 33- Up ____ (trapped); 34- Singer Brickell; 35- ... ____ saw Elba; 36- Pal in the 'hood; 37- Stage items; 38- Ballad ending; 39- Not acid; 41- Televises; 42- Hard to call; 44- Dissemination; 46- Drunk; 47- ____ room; 48- Voting group; 49- Ladies of Spain; 53- Least difficult; 57- Riding; 58- Young purrer; 60- Type of market; 61- Few and far between; 62- Maternally related; 63- Israeli airline; 64- This ____ stickup!; 65- Cabinet dept.; 66- Appraise;

DOWN 1- Quarter, e.g.; 2- Church area; 3- A Barrymore; 4- Billboards, some say; 5- Kiss; 6- Country singer Tucker; 7- Supplement, with "out"; 8- Greenish blue; 9- Memo starter; 10- Surf sound; 11- Sea birds; 14- Arm coverings; 15- Dull; 20- Highland hillside; 22- Mai ____ (drink); 25- Jewish scholar; 26- Gillette razors; 27- ____ Perot; 28- Worship; 29- Immerses; 30- Cream-filled cookies; 31- Witherspoon of "Legally Blonde"; 32- Fathered; 34- Clapton of rock; 37- Flapjack; 40- The continent; 42- Dove sounds; 43- Satan; 45- ____ Lingus; 46- Killer; 48- Davis or Midler; 49- Delhi wrap; 50- Greek letters; 51- Nick Charles's wife; 52- Trig function; 54- First name in jazz; 55- Senate position; 56- Yarn; 59- Shade at the beach?;



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- 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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DRIVE IN

'CUCKOO' IS A STYLISH NIGHTMARE, WITH A WONDERFULLY SINISTER DAN STEVENS

LINDSEY BAHR,
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

LET'S get one thing out of the way first: I did not entirely understand everything that happens in "Cuckoo," a new indie horror in theaters Friday.

This could be more of a me problem than with the storytelling, but there are a lot of strange things happening at this particular Alpine resort. It's run by a bespectacled German hotelier named Herr König, played with an off-kilter menace by Dan Stevens.

Some of the occurrences are underexplained, others underexplored. Herr König seems particularly worried about things that happen after dark, but not so much about guests wandering into the reception and general store in a wobbly stupor and vomit. Are they drunk? Sick? Should someone help them? All we get is: "It happens." The hospital, too, is eerily empty. Sonic vibrations often ripple through the land, causing scenes to repeat until reaching a violent crescendo. And no one seems to listen to or care about anything 17-year-old Gretchen (Hunter Schafer) has to say, no matter how banged up she gets. The quick escalation of her injuries, and the widening disinterest of her father, approaches comedy.

Ambiguity can be wonderful for mystery and worldbuilding; it can

AP PHOTO



also be frustrating. And more often than not, detailed explanations just make everything lamer. "Cuckoo" dips into all of the above. Even so, it is undeniably fascinating, original and even occasionally fun, in a very twisted and deranged way in which laughter is your involuntary response to something horrifying. In her captivating lead performance, Schafer really goes through it, both physically and emotionally.

It also features Stevens sporting tiny, rimless glasses with sinisterly scandi-cool monochrome outfits, and a screaming ghoul with Hit-

chcockian glamour in a hooded trench and white-framed oval sunnies. Rarely is it a bad idea for a horror film to lean into style, and "Cuckoo" fully commits.

"Cuckoo" is the brainchild of German director Tilman Singer, but credit also goes to Singer's predecessors: The works of David Lynch and Dario Argento among them. Gretchen is a reluctant resident in the idyllic, modern home with her detached father (Martin Csokas), stepmother (Jessica Henwick) and mute half-sister Alma (Mila Lieu). She leaves in-

creasingly desperate messages on her mother's answering machine in America.

It's certainly an exaggerated but apt portrait of a new family where the remnants of the old are treated like a nuisance. When Alma starts having seizures during the vibrations, which no one but Gretchen seems to remember or acknowledge, the parents' attention turns fully to the young girl. They can barely be bothered to care about Gretchen's miraculous survival of a horrifying car wreck; Alma is in

the same hospital because of the episodes.

As with many horrors, the big reveals were, for this critic, a little underwhelming — a strained attempt at a unifying theory for this weird place that doesn't add much ultimately. And yet the emotional connection to Gretchen and her complex relationship with Alma does pay off in unexpected ways.

Also, Stevens deserves special acknowledgement for his contributions to "Cuckoo." This is a man who could have easily languished in blandly handsome leading man roles and instead is becoming one of our great character actors. He is regularly the best and most memorable part of whatever he's in just by his sheer commitment to going there, whether it's his Hawaiian shirt wearing titan veterinarian in "Godzilla x Kong," his Russian pop star in "Eurovision" or any number of his deranged horror characters. He and Schafer, always a compelling presence, make "Cuckoo" very much worth it. They exist far too comfortably in this dreamy, nightmarish world dreamt up by Singer that is well worth a watch.

"Cuckoo," a Neon release in theaters Friday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for "language, brief teen drug use, bloody images, violence." Running time: 102 minutes. ★★☆☆

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**MACAU
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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

BOOK IT

A New York writer finds solace in a Northern Irish town

CAN what looks like running away from grief and sadness actually be a way to heal?

In "The Slow Road North," writer Rosie Schaap chronicles her circuitous route from spending most of her life as a dyed-in-the-wool New Yorker to finding herself settling down far away in a small town in Northern Ireland.

Schaap, an established journalist, teacher and occasional bartender in Brooklyn with a cozy apartment she'd lived in for decades, seemed set as a New York lifer.

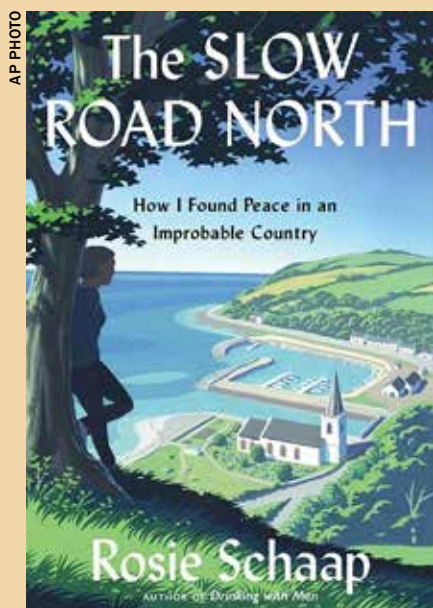
But she is dealt a crushing loss when her husband dies of cancer in 2010, leaving her a widow at 39. A little more than a year later, her mother, with whom she had a complicated relationship, dies, too. Faced with conflicted feelings that she isn't dealing with her grief in the "right" way, she begins to ache for change.

Schaap has a longtime fascination with Ireland and its poets, writers and history, and after returning there over several years, she decides to attend a creative writing program in Belfast in 2019. She soon settles in Glenarm, a coastal town north of Belfast.

Facing loads of skepticism — from her friends wondering why she would give up her perfect Brooklyn apartment, from Irish neighbors wondering why an American would move to Glenarm, and even her own fear that she might be running away from her problems — Schaap dedicates herself to becoming involved with Glenarm's community. She finds solace in the people, the countryside, and establishes her place among new friends. She even embarks on a new love.

Peppering her own story with snippets of Irish poetry, folktales, colorful descriptions of small-town characters, and the history of Irish travesties like the potato famine of the 1800s and the later decades of the sectarian conflict known as The Troubles, Schaap's memoir details how Glenarm and Northern Ireland's nuanced relationship with grief helps her face her own.

"Moving would not 'fix' me, but another way of living, here, in this quiet and healing place, might start to heal me, too," she writes. MAE ANDERSON, MDT/AP



"The Slow Road North: How I Found Peace in an Improbable Country" by Rosie Schaap (Mariner Books)



TASTE OF EDESIA

Art of Sushi

IRENE SAM, MDT

THIS summer, the highly anticipated Sushi Kissho is finally opened at Raffles. Led by Executive Chefs Hironori Satake and Norihisa Maeda, each visit to **Sushi Kissho by Miyakawa** promises an exclusive experience, where service is attuned to the preferences of every guest. At Sushi Kissho by Miyakawa, the art of sushi transcends sustenance; it is a celebration of the profound connection between nature, tradition, and the human spirit. We are invited to embark on a gastronomic journey that transports us to the very heart of Japan, guided by the

masterful touch of one of the world's most highly renowned sushi chefs.

With over 35 years of experience in top sushi establishments across Tokyo and Osaka, Chef Hironori Satake has earned a stellar reputation for his precision and innovation in crafting exceptional sushi. He brings his wealth of expertise to delight diners with Chef Masaaki Miyakawa's seasonal omakase menu, sourced meticulously with ingredients from the finest legacy growers and generational fisherman in Japan. Having honed his skills under the tutelage of Master Chef Miyakawa, Chef Satake's journey includes notable roles such as Head Chef at

Sushi Shin by Miyakawa and Head Chef at Sushi Ukiyo. His commitment to utilising the freshest ingredients at their peak ensures a constantly evolving and delightful dining experience.

Sushi Kissho by Miyakawa embodies the ethos of wabi-sabi, the Japanese aesthetic philosophy that cherishes the beauty found in simplicity and imperfection. The restaurant's interiors are thoughtfully designed to reflect this principle, creating a serene and harmonious atmosphere that resonates with the soul of traditional Japanese culture. The intimate dining space features an authentic 10-seat counter setting – crafted from 300-year old Kiso Hinoki Cypress – where lucky few can witness the meticulous artistry of the team up close, fostering a deep connection between the diner and

the culinary experience. Additionally, a 10-seat private room offers a secluded retreat for those seeking an exclusive and personalised dining encounter.

Sushi Kissho by Miyakawa also offers a curated selection of rare and premium sake, including four acclaimed labels such as Kokuryu Crystal Dragon, Tate-nokawa 33% Junmai Daiginjo, Mutsu-Hassen V1116 Junmai, and Haku-rakusei Junmai Ginjo. Additionally, the Wa8 private label sake, a collaboration between Sumikawa Shozo Brewery and Wa Creations, is exclusively available at select restaurants including Sushi Kissho by Miyakawa. Crafted with meticulous detail, the junmai daiginjo sake features elegant labels by acclaimed artist Yasumichi Morita, showcasing exceptional craftsmanship and quality.

OPINION

World Views

Josh Boak, MDT/AP



DEMOCRATS TURN THEIR ROLL CALL INTO A DANCE PARTY

Convention roll call votes can be staid and cheesy, but Democrats turned theirs into the ultimate dance party on Tuesday.

DJ Cassidy stood onstage in what appeared to be a double-breasted satin suit of royal blue, spinning a special song for each state and territory awarding their delegates to Vice President Kamala Harris at the Democratic National Convention. What America got was a mashup of an elite karaoke night: Detroit native Eminem's "Lose Yourself" for Michigan, Dropkick Murphys' "I'm Shipping Up to Boston" for Massachusetts and Tupac Shakur's "California Love" for California.

Georgia brought out one of its natives in person: Atlanta's Lil Jon striding through Chicago's United Center to the beats of "Turn Down for What," his song with DJ Snake.

In short, Democrats were determined to put the party in political party, part of their broader effort to project joy and positive energy even as they issue dire warnings about the need to beat Republican nominee Donald Trump.

The party last used a video roll call during the pandemic -restricted 2020 convention that famously had Rhode Island featuring its state dish, calamari, creating the pressure to do something bigger this year. (The chef holding that iconic tray of calamari later turned out to be a Trump supporter.)

This year's roll call vote featured the party's emerging political stars like Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, Maryland Gov. Wes Moore and Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear. Movie director Spike Lee was there for New York, while the actor Sean Astin, who starred in the Notre Dame-set football movie "Rudy," was with the Indiana delegation.

The musical choices were something of a risk. The 1996 Democratic convention in Chicago infamously featured delegates gyrating awkwardly to "Macarena (Bayside Boys Remix)" by the Spanish pop duo Los del Río. Video of the Macarena still circulates among political diehards nearly three decades later.

Florida's delegation played Tom Petty's anthem to hard-headedness, "I Won't Back Down," in casting its delegates for Harris — a not-too-subtle jab at the state's Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis. Petty was born in the Florida city of Gainesville. DeSantis used the song as the theme of his failed Republican presidential primary this cycle, and it was part of the name of a super PAC that spent lavishly in his losing cause.

Alabama, obviously, got "Sweet Home Alabama" by Lynyrd Skynyrd. Alaska announced their backing of Vice President Kamala Harris to "Feel It Still" by Portugal. The Man, a band from Wasilla, where Republican Sarah Palin was once mayor.

Minnesota went with "1999" by Paisley Park's own Prince. Indiana, with Astin by the microphone, went with Gary native Michael Jackson's "Don't Stop 'til You Get Enough." Nevada played "Mr. Brightside" by The Killers, the synth pop band from Las Vegas. Kansas went with "Carry On My Wayward Son" by the rock band Kansas. New Jersey went with Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the USA."

"Under one groove nothing can stop us now," DJ Cassidy said over Springsteen's anthem.

Despite the festive mood, the roll call announcements did contain some serious moments.

Under Democratic Party rules, only Harris garnered enough signatures to be entered into nomination. Votes for any other person or uncommitted votes were tallied as "present" during the virtual roll call earlier this month. Tuesday night's "celebratory" vote is following that earlier roll call's vote total. [Abridged]

REPORT SAYS FLUORIDE AT TWICE THE RECOMMENDED LIMIT IS LINKED TO LOWER IQ IN KIDS

THE BUZZ

A U.S. government report expected to stir debate concluded that fluoride in drinking water at twice the recommended limit is linked with lower IQ in children.

The report, based on an analysis of previously published research, marks the first time a federal agency has determined — "with moderate confidence" — that there is a link between higher levels of fluoride exposure and lower IQ in kids.

While the report was not designed to evaluate the health effects of fluoride in drinking water alone, it is a striking acknowledgment of a potential neurological risk from high levels of fluoride.

Fluoride strengthens teeth and reduces cavities by replacing minerals lost during normal wear and tear, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The addition of low levels of fluoride to drinking water has long been considered one of the greatest public health achievements of the last century.

"I think this (report) is crucial in our understanding" of this risk, said Ashley Malin, a University of Florida researcher who has studied the affect of higher fluoride levels in pregnant women on their children. She called it the most rigorously conducted report of its kind.



SWIFT CALLS CANCELLATION OF VIENNA SHOWS 'DEVASTATING', EXPLAINS HER SILENCE

Two weeks after organizers scrubbed Taylor Swift's concerts in Vienna amid a foiled terror plot, the singer issued her first statement on the cancellations.

"Having our Vienna shows cancelled was devastating," she wrote in a statement posted to Instagram yesterday [Macau time]. "The reason for the cancellations filled me with a new sense of fear, and a tremendous amount of guilt because so many people had planned on coming to those shows."

She thanked authorities — "thanks to them, we were grieving concerts and not lives," she wrote — and said she waited to speak until the European leg of her Eras Tour concluded to prioritize safety.

"Let me be very clear: I am not going to speak about something publicly if I think doing so might provoke those who would want to harm the fans who come to my shows," she wrote.

In the wake of the cancellations, Swift's representatives did not respond to multiple requests for comment from The Associated Press and other news organiza-

tions and her social media pages had gone dormant.

"In cases like this one, 'silence' is actually showing restraint, and waiting to express yourself at a time when it's right to. My priority was finishing our European tour safely, and it's with great relief that I can say we did that," she added.

Concert organizer Barracuda Music had said it canceled the three-night Vienna run that would have begun Aug. 8 because the arrests made in connection to the conspiracy were too close to showtime. Authorities said a 19-year-old suspect had planned to target spectators outside the Ernst Happel Stadium with knives or homemade explosives, hoping to "kill as many people as possible." Austrian officials said they appeared to have been inspired by the Islamic State group and al-Qaida.

That suspect and another 17-year-old were taken into custody on Aug. 6, the day before the shows were announced as canceled. A third suspect, 18, was arrested Aug. 8. The 19-year-old's lawyer has said the allegations were "overacting

at its best," and contended Austrian authorities were "presenting this exaggeratedly" in order to get new surveillance powers.

Tens of thousands of Swifties from around the world had traveled to Vienna for the shows.

Swift's Instagram post also commemorated the end of the European leg with a tribute to her five nights at London's Wembley Stadium, which she said factored into her decision to wait to speak out and ultimately "felt like a beautiful dream sequence."

The shows in London, the next stop scheduled after Vienna, also came on the heels of a stabbing at a Swift-themed dance class that left three little girls dead in the U.K. In a statement issued after the Southport attack, Swift said she was "just completely in shock" and "at a complete loss for how to ever convey my sympathies to these families." News outlets reported that Swift met with some of the survivors backstage in London.

The record-smashing tour is on hiatus until October, when it resumes in Miami. MDT/AP



USA FBI Director Christopher Wray highlighted the simultaneous rise in multiple threats against the U.S., including terrorism and cybercrime. Wray emphasized the importance of collaboration across law enforcement agencies to manage these escalating risks effectively.



Mexico In Mexico City, Carlos CGH, a Triqui rapper, uses his music to embrace and promote his indigenous roots through contemporary rap. Addressing both social issues and cultural pride, he performs in both Spanish and Triqui, aiming to preserve his native language and celebrate his heritage amid ongoing community challenges.



Guatemala Guatemalan police arrested seven individuals linked to the tragic death of 53 migrants who asphyxiated in a tractor-trailer in Texas in 2022. This arrest is part of a broader effort to dismantle human trafficking networks responsible for one of the deadliest migrant smuggling incidents in U.S. history.

Botswana announced the discovery of one of the largest diamonds ever found, weighing 2,492 carats. This significant find at the Karowe Mine underscores the country's status as a major player in the global diamond industry, with the stone being the second-largest ever unearthed.