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THE SOCIAL WELFARE BUREAU REPORTED A CONCERNING RISE IN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE SEEKING HELP FOR GAMBLING DISORDERS

P5

WAI HUNG CLEARS NAMES SURROUNDING CONTROVERSIAL FRAUD ARREST

P5

CHINA OPPOSES US SANCTIONS ON FIRMS OVER ALLEGED TIES TO RUSSIA'S WAR EFFORTS

P6



AP PHOTO



Taiwan-US Former US ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley (pictured) said on a visit to Taiwan Saturday that an isolationist policy isn't "healthy" and called on the Republican Party to stand with her country's allies, while still putting in good words for the party's nominee, Donald Trump. Haley, who ran against Trump for the Republican presidential nomination, told reporters in the capital, Taipei, that supporting U.S. allies, including Ukraine and Israel, is vital.

AP PHOTO



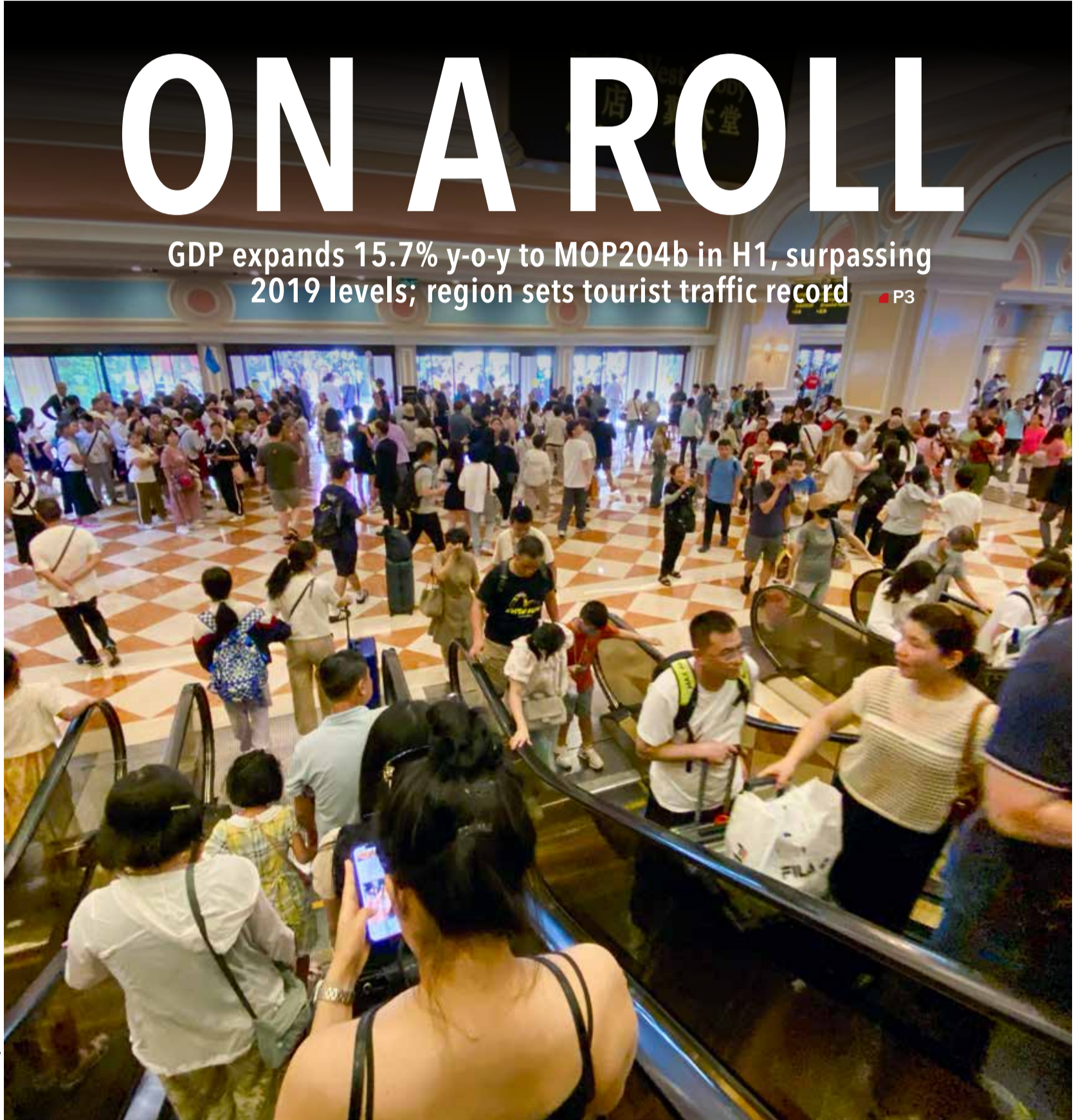
Indonesia A flash flood following torrential rains on the country's eastern Ternate Island left 11 people dead on yesterday. Search and rescue teams working with local residents recovered 10 bodies in Rua village in North Maluku province. The team was working to retrieve one more body, according to Bram Madya Temara, an official from the island's search and rescue agency. The flash flood swept away residential areas and cut off the main road and access to Rua. Dozens of houses and buildings were buried in mud.

AP PHOTO



Malaysia A woman from India disappeared in Malaysia's capital Friday when pavement collapsed beneath her and she fell into a sinkhole where she may have been swept away by an underground water current, police said. The woman plunged into the 8-meter-deep sinkhole in the Dang Wangi area of the Malaysian capital, where local police chief Sulizmie Affendy Sulaiman said witnesses saw the paved walkway suddenly collapse under her while she was walking. The woman was identified as a 48-year-old tourist from India.

More on backpage



RENATO MARQUES

ON A ROLL

GDP expands 15.7% y-o-y to MOP204b in H1, surpassing 2019 levels; region sets tourist traffic record P3

CAUGHT IN THE LENS
WORLD PRESS PHOTO WITHDRAWS FROM CHINA, THE TIMES LEARNED

P2





Mohammed Salem



Eddie Jim



Alejandro Cegarra



Anna Boyiazis



Lee-Ann Olwage

PHOTOGRAPHY

WORLD PRESS PHOTO EXITS CHINA DUE TO 'RISKS INVOLVED FOR LOCAL ORGANIZERS'

RENATO MARQUES

DISPUTABLY the best regarded and most famous international annual photo-journalism and documentary photography contest – World Press Photo (WPP) – has pulled out of China citing strict government regulations and the risks involved for the local organizers, Babette Warendorf, director of Exhibitions & Partnerships of the World Press Photo Foundation, has told the Times.

In response to a Times inquiry on the shrinking to almost zero of the number of exhibitions from this year's event in most of Asia and China, including Macau and Hong Kong, Warendorf said, "World Press Photo is feeling the consequences of declining press freedom worldwide, as reported by Reporters without Borders. In recent years, we've seen several incidents of go-

vernments restricting access or canceling exhibition[s], [such as] in Hanoi in 2022 and Budapest in 2023."

While noting that carrying out the annual exhibition in most locations in China carries the same risks, the same official explained, "As World Press Photo is considered controversial in China and due to strict government regulations, it is a challenge to find venues and partners who are willing to collaborate. We are still committed to finding a partner to organize the annual show, but we also realize there are risks involved for local organizers."

Nonetheless, WPP also said that in China as well as Mongolia, the organization is counting on the support of the Dutch embassy to carry out the "Resilience exhibition," a separate thing from the WPP annual contest.

This exhibition focuses on

stories of women inspiring change, presenting a selection of stories, awarded in the annual WPP contest from 2000 to 2021, highlighting the resilience and challenges of women, girls, and communities around the world.

According to Warendorf, this exhibition will be held this year, following the partnership with the Dutch embassies, in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia).

The same official also noted that for the usual 2024 WPP Contest exhibition, the only location confirmed so far is Taipei, Taiwan, which is scheduled to take place from Oct. 19 to Nov. 10 at Studio94, an art studio in Taiwan.

This year marks the 67th WPP Contest which has selected the winning works from more than 61,000 entries from all over the world.

Held in Macau since 2008,

the last WPP exhibition in Macau which counted on the organizational support of the Casa de Portugal em Macau (Portuguese Association in Macau) was held in 2020 and came to an unexpected close in early October after just a few days.

Macau was, at that time, the only city in Chinese territory to host such an exhibition which was considered particularly sensitive by some because it portrayed a story related to the social unrest in the region of Hong Kong.

As the Times also reported at the time, earlier speculation hinted that the Macau exhibition would not display these images, which was later proven false.

Over the years, many cities in China have held this exhibition including, Shanghai, Beijing, Chengdu and Nanjing.

The exhibition has also counted, over the years, with

numerous Chinese award winners.

This year's winner of the "World Press Photo of the Year" was Mohammed Salem, representing the Reuters news agency in Palestine.

The winning work portrays a Palestinian woman embracing the body of her niece, killed in the ongoing conflict with Israel.

The "World Press Photo Story of the Year" award was attributed to Lee-Ann Olwage, South Africa, for GEO Magazine, for the work titled Valim-babena.

2024 "World Press Photo Long-Term Project Award," was awarded to Alejandro Cegarra, Venezuela, The New York Times/Bloomberg with the work "The Two Walls."

Last but not least, the "World Press Photo Open Format Award" was granted to Julia Kochetova, Ukraine for the work "War Is Personal."

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ECONOMY

GDP soars 15.7% in H1

RENATO MARQUES

THE local gross domestic product (GDP) has recorded a significant growth of 15.7% in the first six months of this year, information from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) indicates.

According to DSEC, the GDP expanded by 15.7% year-on-year in real terms to MOP204.3 billion in the first half of 2024, surpassing for the first time the MOP200 billion mark since the first half (H1) of 2019.

In the same release, the DSEC noted the overall economic output had returned to 86.2% of the level seen in the first six months of 2019.

Exports of services and domestic demand (including private consumption expenditure, government final consumption expenditure, and investment) showed respective growth of 17.6% and 2.8% year-on-year, the same report said, adding that exports of services continued to thrive on account of the increases in the number of visitor arrivals and tourism activities.

Exports of gaming services and exports of other tourism services swelled by 39.9% and 2.8% year-on-year respectively, and exceeded their corresponding levels in the same period in 2019 by over 20%.

On the other hand, imports of services decreased by 6.2%.

Concerning merchandise trade, exports and imports of goods dropped by 15.9% and 3.3% year-on-year respectively.

As mentioned earlier, the private consumption expenditure has been accountable for the general growth, showing a y-o-y rise



of 7.8% in H1.

This was said to be driven by a rise in the income of residents amid the improving local economy and labor market.

Household final consumption expenditure in the domestic market and abroad grew by 7% and 13.5% respectively, while government final consumption expenditure was reduced by 14% y-o-y following the cessation of the livelihood subsidy scheme.

Net purchases of goods and services fell by 31.3% while compensation of employees went up by 1%.

In the same period, gross fixed capital formation rose by 9.8% y-o-y, as enterprises continued to step up their investments in Macau amid an improving business environment.

Private equipment investment recorded a growth of 29.8% y-o-y while private construction

investment went up by 14.7% owing to a continued rise in the investments in residential building construction and large-scale construction projects of integrated resort enterprises.

Concurrently, government equipment investment surged by 69.9% while public construction investment dipped by 10.8% due to the completion of several large-scale public works.

STEADY GROWTH QUARTER-TO-QUARTER

Analyzed by quarter, GDP expanded by 6.9% in the second quarter (Q2), when compared with the same quarter last year in real terms.

This happened due to a relatively high base of comparison in the same quarter last year; the overall economic output recovered to 85.2% of its size in the same quarter of 2019.

Exports of services, the key area of economic growth, increased by 6.1% y-o-y, with exports of gaming services rising by 22.6%.

On the other hand, exports of other tourism services fell by 9.5%, mainly due to a high comparison base resulting from the release of the contained demand of visitors amid the gradual relaxation of travel policies during the same period of the previous year.

Meanwhile, domestic demand rose by 2.2% with private consumption expenditure and gross fixed capital formation expanding by 4.8% and 6.7% respectively.

Contrasting with these results was the government's final consumption expenditure, which decreased by 7.3%.

The implicit deflator of GDP, which measures the overall changes in prices, went up by 0.9%.

CONSUMER INFLATION ACCELERATES TO 0.82%

Consumer prices rose 0.82% in July compared to the same month last year, government data shows. While prices for education, miscellaneous goods and health increased notably from July 2023, transport and household furnishings costs declined over the same period. The composite consumer price index climbed 0.24% month-over-month in July on stronger gains for recreation and culture as well as transport costs. Food prices fell in July versus June amid lower fruit costs. For the past 12 months, consumer prices were up an average 1.02% from the prior period, led by education, recreation and clothing.

80% OF SCHOOLS TO BEGIN NEW YEAR SEPT. 2

The Education and Youth Development Bureau has announced about 80% of non-tertiary schools will begin the new academic year on Sept. 2, with the remaining schools starting on Sept. 3. The bureau has coordinated with schools, uniform suppliers, and booksellers to ensure a smooth transition, including securing sufficient school uniform supplies and timely textbook deliveries. Authorities have also collaborated with the Transport Bureau to monitor traffic conditions and make necessary preparations for the start of the school year.

CUSTOMS CRACKS DOWN ON SMUGGLING

In the first 22 days of this month, Macao Customs intercepted eight cases of items being smuggled out of the city at the Qingmao and Border Gate checkpoints. A total of 176 old mobile phones and 15 beauty products were seized. The suspects, ranging from 35 to 66 years old, were residents of Macau and mainland China who had concealed the items on their bodies, causing them to move stiffly. One woman was caught smuggling 15 beauty products, while others had between 18 and 38 used mobile phones.

YOUNG MAN LOSES MOP6,000 IN CREDIT CARD FRAUD

A local resident has reported a significant financial loss after his credit card information was allegedly stolen and used for unauthorized purchases. The victim, a young man, reported a loss of over HKD6,000 in unauthorized transactions on his card. The incident occurred Aug. 22, when the victim received a bank notification of HKD6,022 in credit card purchases he had not made. Suspecting his card information had been compromised, the man promptly reported the fraud to authorities. The investigation into this credit card scam is ongoing.

TOURISM

Macau sees record tourist traffic as summer vacation ends

NADIA SHAW

AS summer break wraps up for many in the region, Macau is experiencing a surge in tourist traffic, with Saturday's numbers surpassing pre-pandemic levels. On August 24, Macau welcomed 166,562 visitors, marking the highest single-day influx since the start of the summer season and exceeding

the previous record of 154,957 set in 2019 by 7.5%.

This summer, from July 1 to August 24, Macau recorded a total of 5,902,213 inbound tourists, averaging 107,313 daily visitors. This figure represents a recovery of 91.9% compared to the same period in 2019, when the total was 6,419,942. Notably, international tourist numbers have rebounded

to 74.9% of 2019 levels, with an average of 5,495 international visitors per day.

The Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has attributed this growth to a series of initiatives aimed at revitalizing the local economy. These measures include increased tax-free allowances for travelers and enhanced travel options for mainland tourists. The

MGTO has also launched various promotional activities, such as the "Stay Chill, Play Cool" event, which has garnered significant interest among visitors.

The second stage of the "Stay Chill, Play Cool" project takes place from July 12 to December 1 to boost the community economy and integrate "tourism + culture and creativity." An installa-

tion is currently set up at the Ritz Building in Senado Square, while the Stay Chill Macau Market, featuring cultural products and performances, is held concurrently at the same venue.

Looking ahead, Macau is poised to host a series of celebrations marking the 75th anniversary of the People's Republic of China and the 25th anniversary of Macau's return to China. Events will include the 32nd Macau International Fireworks Display Contest and other festivities designed to attract even more tourists.

HONG KONG MAN RESCUED AFTER DROWNING INCIDENT

A 56-year-old man from Hong Kong is recovering after a near-drowning at the Parisian Hotel in Cotai. The incident occurred around 10:30 a.m. last Friday (23 Aug), when medical staff received an emergency call about a swimmer found unresponsive in the pool by hotel personnel. Firefighters arrived promptly and transported the man to Conde S. Januário Hospital, where he was initially in a coma. The Health Bureau (SSM) later reported his condition had stabilized, and he remains hospitalized for observation. The cause of the incident is under investigation, as authorities continue to gather information from witnesses and hotel staff.

UNIDENTIFIED BODY FOUND FLOATING IN MACAU WATERS

The Judiciary Police (PJ) reported that a body was discovered floating in the sea near the "Gate of Understanding" yesterday. According to authorities, the body was found around 8:20 a.m. Police examination of the corpse revealed no signs of criminal injury, and no identification documents were found on the individual. The deceased is described as a male between the ages of 20 and 30 years old. His identity has not yet been confirmed. The PJ classified this as a body discovery case, and the exact cause of death is pending the results of a forensic examination.

HK FASHION FAIR TO SHOWCASE MACAU TALENT

The CENTRESTAGE fashion show opening will occur Sept. 3 at the Hong Kong Palace Museum, featuring renowned designer Robert Wun. This year's CENTRESTAGE event, running from Sept. 4 to 7 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, will host 250 brands from 17 countries, the largest participation to date. For the first time, the event will be open to the public throughout its duration, allowing fashion enthusiasts to explore and purchase from a diverse array of brands. In addition, the Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Centre (CPTTM) has announced a delegation of Macau fashion brands will attend the event, where they will be able to showcase their collections and hopefully attract Asian and international buyers.

PILOT TRAINING PROGRAM BOOSTS LOCAL HIRING AT AIR MACAU

More than 40% of pilots at Air Macau are now locals, thanks to its pilot training program, according to data from the airline. This marks the seventh edition of Air Macau's local pilot training program, which offers subsidies of up to 2 million patacas for students to attend intensive training both in Macau and abroad. Since launching in 2016, the program has attracted about 40 young Macau residents. Of those, 33 have become pilots, including 10 currently in training. Six of the pilots are women. The training program runs annually and the airline aims to recruit at least 10 residents each year.

LAWMAKER: MACAU WEDDING INDUSTRY POTENTIAL UNTAPPED

VICTORIA CHAN

MACAU should take steps to improve its facilities and actively promote itself as a premier wedding destination to drive economic growth, according to local lawmaker Ngan Iek Hang.

In a written question submitted to the government, Ngan addressed the untapped potential of marriage tourism in Macau and drew comparisons to initiatives in other regions, both within mainland China and internationally.

The lawmaker highlighted the case of Taishan District in China, where its civil affairs department has established a specialized "marriage registration circuit" that leverages local culture.

The district has also collaborated with companies to create a wedding service brand called "Vows of Love - Love in Taishan," which offers a one-stop-shop for couples looking to tie the knot, including wedding registration, tourism packages, photography and even pre-marital counseling.

"Vows of Love - Dedicated to Taishan" is a comprehensive marriage service that caters to tourists from across the country," Ngan explained.

"The brand provides online consultations and specialized classes, and even



extends its reach to overseas markets."

In contrast, Ngan noted that while Macau's hospitality industry is well-equipped to host elaborate wedding ceremonies, the region currently lacks the necessary facilities and suffers from insufficient efforts in branding and advertising its wedding tourism offerings.

The lawmaker questioned the effectiveness of Macau's existing "Wedding Incentive Scheme," urging the government to take inspiration from other regions and make

better use of the city's rich and unique local culture.

He said Macau should encourage the industry to develop a strong brand identity for wedding tourism, potentially leveraging a "Tourism +" model to offer a more comprehensive suite of services to both residents and visitors.

The scheme was introduced in late 2012 to tap this market segment, to promote Macau's multi-faceted tourism image and to attract couples, wedding planners and companies to choose

Macau as a destination for overseas weddings.

To apply for the scheme, the wedding should have a minimum of 50 non-local guests with two consecutive nights of stay in Macau's hotels.

Ngan believes that by supporting the growth of related industries, the wedding and tourism sectors could experience a significant expansion, leading to new business opportunities and providing a much-needed economic boost to the region.

TRANSPORT

City welcomes new taxis amid ongoing shortage

NADIA SHAW

MACAU has introduced 50 new black taxis to its streets, a modest step towards addressing the city's significant taxi shortage.

With tourism rebounding post-Covid-19, the demand for cabs has surged, making the need for additional vehicles critical.

The new fleet, operated by Macau Yip Kai Kou Taxi Co., Ltd., includes the seven-seat Honda Stepwgn models, to accommodate larger groups.

The company has successfully comple-



ted all government approval procedures and will provide light taxi passenger transport services for eight years starting Aug. 23. This fleet includes 45 ordinary vehicles that

are now officially in operation.

The introduction of these new fleet additions received support from various government departments during the

preparation process, especially from the Transportation Affairs Bureau (DSAT), which provided operational guidance.

All drivers of the new taxis have completed the necessary training, and the vehicles are equipped with multiple electronic payment options.

Notably, five of the new taxis are barrier-free, catering to passengers with mobility challenges.

Those in need of these specialized vehicles can book them via a designated hotline, 6375-0099, with an additional customer ser-

vice hotline at 6375-0088.

The Transport Bureau's initiative to issue new taxi licenses aims to alleviate the pressure on Macau's transportation system, especially as ride-hailing services like Uber remain banned.

As of June 30, 2024, Macau had 1,127 regular black taxis, a number that is insufficient to meet the growing needs of residents and tourists alike.

An additional 400 taxis are expected to join the fleet in the coming months, pending formalities.

Wai Hung clears names surrounding controversial fraud arrest

FOLLOWING controversies surrounding the Wai Hung Group Holdings, the company has clarified that Rita Santos, president of the regional council of the Portuguese Communities for Asia and Oceania and lawmaker Wu Chou Kit "are absolutely not involved in the related case and have not been investigated or arrested by law enforcement agencies."

Santos and Wu are identified on the group's website as independent non-executive directors.

To Plataforma, Santos clarified she is "merely one of the three independent non-executive directors in office" and that she was only made aware of the



Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption

investigation by the authorities of Macau and Hong Kong, during an "online board meeting."

"I have nothing to do with this investigation," she stated. Wu has also denied involve-

ment in the fraud case.

The lawmaker issued a statement claiming recent media reports of his investigation or arrest related to the case are "untrue," and said he reserves the right to take legal action.

Meanwhile, the Hong Kong firms' statement said Lam Chi Wing, another non-executive director, was not involved either.

The statement comes after Hong Kong's corruption watchdog disclosed that it has apprehended seven executives suspected of engaging in fraudulent transactions and false accounting totaling HKD120 million.

Hong Kong sources said persons arrested include its chairman Li Kam-hung, executive di-

rector Yu Ming-ho, and accountants.

The company then clarified that the three non-executive directors, including Santos and Wu "had no knowledge of any actions related to the investigation and arrest of the Chairman, Mr. Li, and another executive director prior to the board meeting held on 22 August, 2024."

The company described itself as a contractor providing fitting-out, repair and maintenance services in Macau, with casinos and hotels among its clients.

The company said the three non-executive directors are only responsible "for overseeing our group with an independent perspective and judgment." LV/VC

IAS sees surge in gambling disorder cases, seeks to promote responsible gambling

LYNZY VALLES

THE Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) has reported a concerning rise in the number of people seeking help for gambling disorders.

In the first half of the year, the central registration system for those with gambling problems received 108 cases, marking an upward trend year-on-year.

The bureau's Problem Gambling Prevention and Treatment division head, Wu I Mui, said the majority of those seeking help are between the ages of 30 and 39, with 40% being tourists.

In response, the bureau plans to strengthen the promotion of responsible gambling messages, particularly in tourist areas, and cooperate with local merchants to raise awareness of gambling help services.

Additionally, the bureau has been working closely with schools to address the issue.



Parent groups have been established in junior and primary grades, as it was found that many families lack financial education and money management skills.

Wu said the bureau aims to cultivate healthy financial values from an early age through home-school collaboration, with plans to expand the program to upper primary grades.

The bureau's smart financial manage-

ment promotion program, implemented in partnership with private organizations and schools, has already attracted nearly 49 schools and 50,000 students to participate.

Last year, the IAS reported 119 individuals were using drugs. This figure indicates a 40% increase from the previous year, but a 65% decrease compared to 2019.

In June, the bureau announced plans to

improve the central registration system for drug abusers.

The goal is to finalize a comprehensive report by the end of this year and move forward with the next phase of the project.

IAS revealed over 80% of drug users reported using drugs either at home or in hotels last year, adding there has been a rise in drug abuse among Macau residents in the mainland and Hong Kong.



OPERATION THUNDER

ANTI-CRIME OPERATION LEADS TO PROSECUTION OF NEARLY 780 INDIVIDUALS

NADIA SHAW

AUTHORITIES have announced the results of a major law enforcement operation targeting cross-border organized crime, leading to the prosecution of 779 individuals.

The operation, dubbed "Operation Thunder 2024," was carried out by Macau's law enforcement agencies in collaboration with counterparts from Guangdong and Hong Kong.

According to officials, the individuals were referred to judicial authorities on a range of charges, including loan sharking, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and money laundering.

Officially initiated on June 22, the operation has mobilized over 12,000 police per-

sonnel and conducted more than 1,000 surprise inspections across various locations.

The operation's extensive reach included 2,895 locations, resulting in the identification of 92,070 individuals and the arrest of 2,651 suspected criminals.

On Aug. 15, a significant joint operation targeted entertainment venues in Macau, including casinos and nightclubs.

This coordinated effort involved 354 police and customs officers, supported by police dog teams and maritime patrols.

During this operation, 2,240 individuals were intercepted, leading to further investigations of 34 individuals, including five for overstaying their visas.

DISPUTED SEA

Philippines says flares fired from a Chinese island base threatened its fisheries plane

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

A Philippine fisheries bureau plane was threatened by flares fired from a Chinese island base while conducting a routine patrol in the South China Sea, Philippine officials said Saturday, the latest territorial spat between Beijing and Manila over one of the world's busiest trade routes, with confrontations spreading from the disputed waters to the airspace above.

China has been at odds with several other countries in the Asia-Pacific for years over its sweeping maritime claims, including almost all of the South China Sea.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources' Cessna 208B Grand Caravan plane was flying near Subi Reef last Thursday when it spotted flares being fired from the fishing atoll, which China has transformed into a militarized island base, a Philippine government interagency task force said in a statement.

No other details were provided, including the distance of the flares from the Philippine plane and if it proceeded with its patrol to monitor for poachers in the internationally recognized exclusive economic zone of the Philippines.

The same Philippine fisheries plane was subjected to "harassment" on Aug. 19 when a Chinese air force fighter jet "engaged in irresponsible and dangerous maneuvers, deploying flares



Filipino fishermen and activists wear boat costumes to protest against alleged Chinese aggression at the disputed South China Sea as they stage a rally in front of the Chinese consulate ahead of Independence Day in Makati, Philippines, June 11

multiple times at a dangerously close distance of approximately 15 meters" near the disputed Scarborough Shoal, the Philippine task force said.

"The Chinese fighter jet was not provoked, yet its actions demonstrated hazardous intent that jeopardized the safety of the personnel onboard the BFAR aircraft," according to the task force, which includes the Department of National Defense, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine coast guard.

Chinese officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment, but they have previously accused Philippine ships

and aircraft of encroaching into what they said was Chinese territory in the sea passage.

"We firmly reiterate our call on the government of the People's Republic of China to immediately cease all provocative and dangerous actions that threaten the safety of Philippine vessels and aircraft engaged in legitimate and regular activities within Philippine territory and exclusive economic zone," the Philippine task force said. "Such actions undermine regional peace and security and further erode the image of the PRC with the international community."

The United States, Manila's

longtime treaty ally, also condemned China over the firing of flares at Philippine aircraft over the two shoals. "We call on the PRC to cease provocative and dangerous actions that undermine a free and open Indo-Pacific," U.S. Ambassador to Manila MaryKay Carlson said in a statement posted on X.

In a separate Aug. 8 dispute over the Scarborough Shoal, Philippine officials said two Chinese jets flew dangerously close and fired a volley of flares in the path of a Philippine air force patrol plane. It was the first such aerial encounter since high-seas hostilities between Beijing and

Manila in the South China Sea began heating up in 2023.

Philippine military chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. did not report any injuries or damage then, but condemned the Chinese actions, which he said could have had tragic consequences. The Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila eventually filed a diplomatic protest against Beijing.

"If the flares came into contact with our aircraft, these could have been blown into the propeller or the intake or burned our plane," Brawner told reporters. "It was very dangerous."

The Southern Theater Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army said that a Philippine air force aircraft illegally entered the airspace above the Scarborough, which China also claims, disrupting its combat training activities at the time.

The command said it sent jets and ships to identify, track and drive away the Philippine aircraft, and warned the Philippines to "stop its infringement, provocation, distortion and hyping-up."

The United States, Australia and Canada have reported similar actions by Chinese air force aircraft in the South China Sea, where those nations have deployed forces to promote freedom of navigation and overflight.

China has bristled at military deployments by the U.S. and its allies in the disputed region, calling it a danger to regional security. **MDT/AP**

China opposes US sanctions on firms over alleged ties to Russia's war efforts

CHINA yesterday expressed its opposition to the latest U.S. sanctions on Chinese companies over their alleged ties to Russia's war in Ukraine, saying it will adopt necessary measures to safeguard the rights and interests of the country's businesses.

The U.S. on Friday announced sweeping sanctions on hundreds of firms in Russia and across Europe, Asia and the Middle East, accusing them of providing products and



services that enable Russia's war effort and aiding its ability to evade sanctions. The U.S. Department of State said it was concerned by "the mag-

nitude of dual-use goods exports" from China to Russia.

The Ministry of Commerce in China in its statement firmly opposed

the U.S. putting multiple Chinese companies on its export control list. The move bars such companies from trading with U.S. firms without gaining a nearly unobtainable special license.

The ministry said the U.S. action was "typical unilateral sanctions," saying they would disrupt global trade orders and rules, as well as affect the stability of the global industrial and supply chains.

"China urges the U.S.

to immediately stop its wrong practices and will take necessary measures to resolutely safeguard the legitimate rights and interest of Chinese companies," it said.

The U.S. action is the latest in a series of thousands of U.S. sanctions that have been imposed on Russian firms and their suppliers in other nations since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The effectiveness of the sanctions has been questioned, especially as Russia has continued to support its economy by selling oil and gas on international markets.

According to the U.S. State Department, some

China-based companies supplied machine tools and components to Russia companies.

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

After Western countries imposed heavy sanctions on Russian oil in response to Russia sending troops into Ukraine in February 2022, China stepped up its purchase of Russian oil, increasing its influence in Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin also underlined the importance of China by meeting in Beijing with Chinese leader Xi Jinping soon after being inaugurated for a fifth term in the Kremlin.

MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Apollo Quiboloy

PHILIPPINES

Hundreds of police raid a religious compound in search of preacher wanted for child abuse

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

HUNDREDS of police officers backed by riot squads raided a vast religious compound in a southern Philippine city Saturday in search of a local preacher accused of sexual abuse and human trafficking, police officials said.

A supporter of the group, called Kingdom of Jesus Christ, reportedly died due to a heart attack during the massive police raid that started at dawn in the group's compound in Davao city, livestreamed online by a local TV network owned by the group, police said, adding that the death was not related to the police operations.

Officers brought equipment that could detect people behind cement walls. But by mid-afternoon, they found no sign of Apollo Quiboloy in the compound—some 30 hectares that includes a cathedral, a school, a living area, a hangar and a taxiway leading to Davao International Airport.

Quiboloy and his lawyer have denied the criminal allegations against him and

his religious group, saying these were fabricated by critics and former members, who were removed from the religious group after committing irregularities.

Quiboloy's followers, many filming the police raid with their cellphones, yelled at the police, questioning the legality of the raid and pronouncing the innocence of Quiboloy, who was a close supporter and spiritual adviser of former President Rodrigo Duterte.

Duterte had criticized previous attempts by large numbers of police to arrest Quiboloy as overkill.

Quiboloy claims to be the appointed son of God. In 2019, he claimed he stopped a major earthquake from hitting the southern Philippines.

Police Brig. Gen. Nicolas Torre III, who led the raid, said officers wanted to serve warrants for the arrest of Quiboloy for various criminal cases, including child abuse and human trafficking. He justified the large deployment, saying there were more than 40 buildings and structures to be searched in the reli-

gious compound, where large numbers of Quiboloy's followers heckled and opposed the raid noisily.

"We won't leave here until we get him," Torre told reporters as sirens blared in the background. "We have no-bail warrants for Quiboloy and four others for very grave crimes, including human trafficking, child abuse and other cases."

In 2021, United States federal prosecutors announced the indictment of Quiboloy for allegedly having sex with women and underage girls who faced threats of abuse and "eternal damnation" unless they catered to the self-proclaimed "son of God."

Quiboloy and two of his top administrators were among nine people named in a superseding indictment returned by a federal grand jury and unsealed in November 2021.

The superseding indictment contained a raft of charges, including conspiracy, sex trafficking of children, sex trafficking by force, fraud and coercion, marriage fraud, money laundering, cash smuggling and visa fraud.

Quiboloy's group said

then that he was ready to face the charges in court, but he went into hiding after a Philippine court ordered his arrest and several others for child and sexual abuse. The Philippine Senate has separately ordered Quiboloy's arrest for refusing to appear in committee hearings that was looking into criminal allegations against him.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has urged Quiboloy to surrender and assured him of fair treatment by authorities.

When he was mayor of Davao city and later as president, Duterte appeared in Quiboloy's news program to promote his police-enforced drug crackdowns, which left thousands of mostly poor suspects dead. Duterte and his police officials have denied authorizing extrajudicial killings of drug suspects, but he openly threatened drug dealers with death when he was in office.

The International Criminal Court has been investigating the widespread killings under Duterte's campaign against illegal drugs as a possible crime against humanity. **MDT/AP**

ADVERTORIAL

GREAT TIMES

Barra District Transformed into Pet Lovers' Paradise with matsui "The Dog" Exhibition



Have you ever imagined taking your furkids to an exhibition? This summer, the holiday plan for pet lovers has taken an exciting turn with the launch of matsui "The Dog" 1st Overseas Solo Exhibition in Macau at Navy Yard in the Barra District, the city's unprecedented pet-friendly exhibition, alongside diverse lifestyle and retail experiences to create a pet-loving walkable spot for pet owners to explore with their furry companions.



The first overseas solo exhibition of world-renowned Japanese illustrator matsui jointly presented by MGM and local trendy retail brand THE BIG APPLE. With the exhibition theme "The Dog" extended to a pet-friendly lifestyle concept, the whole Barra District has transformed into a giant playground for humans and pets alike. Don't miss the limited-time pop-up store offering limited-edition merchandise in collaboration with Japanese fashion brand BEAMS including pet-themed apparel and accessories, as well as a pet-friendly themed café hosted by local brand COTIZ at Navy Yard No.2, DIY workshops and an outdoor dog park for the pups to play in.

To facilitate a hassle-free travel experience for pet owners, the organizer provides a free Pet Shuttle service from Taipa and Macau city center to Barra on weekends and public holidays. For more information, visit mgm.mo.



VENEZUELA

EU: Maduro has not shown 'necessary public evidence' to declare victory in elections

MEGAN JANETSKY,
MEXICO CITY

THE European Union's top diplomat on Saturday said that Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro has still "not provided the necessary public evidence" to prove he was the winner of July's elections, days after the country's Supreme Court backed the government's disputed claims of victory.

The bloc joined a slate of other Latin American countries and the United States in rejecting the Venezuelan high court's certification. Authorities repeated calls for Maduro to release the election's official tally sheets, considered the one verifiable vote count in Venezuela as they are almost impossible to replicate.

"Only complete and independently verifiable results will be accepted and recognized," Josep Borrell, the high representative of the EU, said in a statement.

Borrell's comments came as the leaders of Brazil and Colombia also demanded the release of the tallies, saying on Saturday the "credibility of the electoral



Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro

process can only be restored through the transparent publication of disaggregated and verifiable data."

The joint statement from Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Colombian President Gustavo Petro didn't go as far as to reject the court certification. Many had been waiting to see how the two leftist leaders would respond to the court because both are close allies of Maduro and have been working to facilitate talks with both sides.

Maduro claims that he won the presidential vote, but so far has refused to release the tallies.

Meanwhile, the main opposition coalition has accused Maduro of trying to steal the vote.

Opposition volunteers managed to collect copies of voting tallies from 80% of the 30,000 polling booths nationwide that show former opposition candidate Edmundo González won by a more than 2-to-1 margin. The Supreme Court and other government entities alleged those tallies were forged.

The Venezuelan government rejected Borrell's statements, calling them "interventionist." Its Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Saturday that the "continued disrespect" to Ve-

nezuela's sovereignty by the EU could "considerably affect diplomatic, political and economic relations."

Lula and Petro said they "take note" of the court's ruling, but added they are still awaiting release of the tallies.

The Brazilian and Colombian leaders also called on actors in Venezuela to "avoid resorting to acts of violence and repression" as security forces arrested more than 2,000 people and cracked down on demonstrations that erupted spontaneously throughout the country protesting the results. But the two leaders didn't directly accuse the Maduro government of carrying out the violence.

The arrests have again spread fear in a country that has seen other government crackdowns during previous times of political turmoil.

At the same time, key opposition figure Maria Corina Machado has since gone into hiding and the government said Friday it will order González to provide sworn testimony in an ongoing investigation, claiming he was part of an effort to spread panic by contesting the results of the election. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1994: MAN GETS 'BIONIC' HEART



A man has been given the world's first battery-operated heart in a pioneering operation in Britain.

The patient, an unnamed 62-year-old from the south of England, is now in a stable condition at the world-famous Papworth Hospital in Cambridgeshire.

He had only months to live when doctors offered him the chance of being a guinea-pig for the new titanium and plastic device, manufactured in America.

Known as the Left Ventricular Assist Device (LVAD) it is not a replacement for the human heart.

It is essentially an electrical pump which does most of the work of the pumping chamber of the heart, the left ventricle.

During the four-hour operation the LVAD was placed in the wall of the man's abdomen and connected to his heart.

The pump is powered by a battery pack which the patient will wear on his belt.

Trial
The operation was performed by an 11-man team led by top heart surgeons Sir Terence English and John Wallwork.

Sir Terence carried out Britain's first successful heart transplant on entertainer Keith Castle in 1979.

The pioneering procedure could provide a vital alternative to heart transplants.

The LVAD, which costs £40,000, has been used successfully in more than 200 patients to keep them alive until a donated heart became available.

However, a trial being carried out at Papworth will allow surgeons to see whether the device has a role in the long-term therapy of patients with cardiac failure.

Patients being considered suitable to take part in the trial are being randomly allocated to two groups.

One will have the device implanted and the remaining control group will continue with their usual drug treatment.

Courtesy BBC News

GERMANY

Police say 26-year-old man has turned himself in, claiming to be behind Solingen knife attack

GERMAN police said early yesterday that a 26-year-old man turned himself in, claiming to be behind the deadly Solingen knife attack that left three dead and eight wounded at a festival marking the city's 650th anniversary.

Düsseldorf police said in a joint statement with the prosecutor's office that the man "stated that he was responsible for the attack," adding he had been arrested before, but didn't provide details. "This person's involvement in the crime

is currently being intensively investigated," the statement said.

On Saturday the Islamic State militant group claimed responsibility for the attack, without providing evidence. The extremist group said on its news site that the attacker targeted Christians and that he carried out the assaults Friday night "to avenge Muslims in Palestine and everywhere." The claim couldn't be independently verified.

Officials had earlier said a 15-year-old boy was arrested on suspi-



People lay flowers near the scene of a knife attack in Solingen city center, Germany, Saturday

cion he knew about the planned attack and failed to inform authorities, but that he was not the attacker. Two female witnesses told police they

overheard the boy and an unknown person before the attack speaking about intentions that corresponded to the bloodshed, officials said.

People alerted police shortly after 9:30 p.m. local time Friday that a man had assaulted several people with a knife on the city's central square, the Fronhof. The three people killed were two men aged 67 and 56 and a 56-year-old woman, authorities said. Police said the attacker appeared to have deliberately aimed for his victims' throats.

Solingen, a city of about 160,000 residents near the bigger cities of Cologne and Düsseldorf, was holding a "Festival of Diversity" to celebrate its anniversary. It began Friday and was supposed to run through Sunday, with several stages in central streets offering attractions such as live music, cabaret and acrobatics. The attack took place in front of one stage. **MDT/AP**

IN CONTEXT

The recipient of the heart pump was later named as Arthur Cornhill. He died from kidney failure nine months after the operation. At the time of Mr Cornhill's death the LVAD had been implanted into two other British men, one of whom died shortly afterwards. In 2000 progress in LVAD technology allowed doctors in Oxford, England, to fit the first pump designed to be a permanent fixture inside a patient's failing heart. The patient, Peter Houghton, was on the brink of death before the operation that allowed to him to lead a fit and active life.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 An answer that you've been seeking is within reach. Keep digging to find an important clue. You're especially brilliant. Write down what you're discovering.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
 Build and grow. Gather resources. Process a fat harvest. Store provisions for the winter. Profitable opportunities abound. Choose the ones with future potential.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
 A personal project is taking off. Strengthen support structures. Assemble the perfect crew. Success comes through diversity. Spread your wings, launch and fly.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Meditate and rest in a peaceful spot. Contemplate your next moves before making any. Make preparations and lay foundations. Plan and strategize. Recharge your energy.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Your friends are your true wealth. Invest in your relationships with time together. Teamwork gets results with more fun. Group efforts get farther.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 A professional opportunity is worth pursuing. Develop possibilities into action items. Envision the results you want. You're building for the future. Mold and shape.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Explore new possibilities. Travels reveal mysterious discoveries. Mix business with pleasure if you can. Make long-distance connections. Expand your territory. Broaden your views.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Collaborate. Align priorities with your partner. Handle financial obligations and rest easier. Anticipate and budget for possible changes. Together you're a formidable team.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Listen to what your partner wants. Find ways to be thoughtful, generous and kind with someone you love. Romance is a distinct possibility.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 All the practice you've been doing is paying off. Prioritize your health, fitness and work. You're building long-term strength. Physical action gets satisfying results.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Relax and enjoy the company of friends, family and a special someone. You're especially lucky in love. Express your heart, dreams and creativity.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Consider long-term domestic plans. What do you envision? Imagine your dream home. Note your ideas. A collage or visual display inspires. Build and prepare.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	22	26	rain
Changchun	17	28	fine
Chengdu	25	38	overcast
Chongqing	32	41	overcast
Fuzhou	27	36	cloudy
Guangzhou	26	34	cloudy
Guiyang	21	32	cloudy
Haikou	26	33	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	27	37	fine
Harbin	17	26	cloudy
Hefei	26	36	overcast
Nanjing	27	37	cloudy
Shanghai	28	35	cloudy
Taipei	25	30	cloudy
Wuhan	29	38	fine
Hong Hong	33	29	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	17	29	sunny
Frankfurt	11	25	sunny
Paris	13	25	sunny
London	14	25	sunny
New York	21	31	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Each; 5- Sponge gently; 10- Kind of prof.; 14- Prefix with drama; 15- Silly; 16- Meets with; 17- Waste allowance; 18- Thermoplastic yarn; 19- Dance bit; 20- Sucrose; 22- Dressing choice; 24- Mambo king Puente; 27- Slaughter of baseball; 28- Continental inhabitant; 32- Spud; 35- Dr. of rap; 36- Founded; abbr.; 38- More recent; 40- Festive occasion; 42- Pavarotti, for one; 44- Ricky's portrayer; 45- Choose; 47- Charged; 49- Blushing; 50- Undercover operation; 52- Implies; 54- Blunt; 56- Interview-wear; 57- Pertaining to Mars; 60- Liberates; 64- Tailless rodent; 65- Falls; 68- ___ extra cost; 69- Opposed; 70- "Snowy" bird; 71- Slay; 72- Getting ___ years; 73- Chart anew; 74- Concludes;

DOWN 1- Tsp. and tbsp.; 2- South American country, famous for Macchu Picchu; 3- Couturier Cassini; 4- Edible tuber; 5- Cacophony; 6- ___ day now...; 7- Indonesian resort island; 8- Make ___ of (write down); 9- Occupant; 10- Aided; 11- ___ good example; 12- Visualized; 13- Recipe amt.; 21- Ready for picking; 23- Bank offering; 25- Exam; 26- Shoot-'em-up; 28- Outer boundary; 29- Russian range; 30- Sublease; 31- Grandmas; 33- Pitchers; 34- Bowling alley button; 37- Additional pay; 39- Frees (of); 41- Polluted precipitation; 43- Sauce brand; 46- Hardware fastener; 48- End-of-workweek shout; 51- Unpowered aircraft; 53- Online brokerage; 55- More than medium; 57- Jazz flutist Herbie; 58- Play opening; 59- Standard; 61- School on the Thames; 62- Oklahoma city; 63- Juniors, perhaps; 64- Kung ___ chicken; 66- Pod occupant; 67- NASCAR sponsor;

Friday's solution

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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77.10 m² / 830 ft² | HKD3,980,000



Nam Long (Taipa Village)
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59.92 m² / 645 ft² | HKD3,650,000



Jade Garden (Taipa)
4 bed 3 bath
379.04 m² / 4,080 ft² | HKD 11,880,000



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Nacer Zorgani, the voice of Olympic boxing, now targets Paralympic glory as a judoka

TOM NOUVIAN, PARIS

NACER Zorgani has had a busy summer. In July at the Paris Games, his captivating baritone voice gained him fans as the announcer at the Olympic boxing.

Now, the 38-year-old is preparing to make his mark as a fiercely dedicated Para-judo competitor, training tirelessly for the Paralympic Games that start Wednesday.

Zorgani will compete on Sept. 7 in the men's 90-kilogram, J2 classification for visually impaired athletes

For him, the sport is far more than just a competition; it is the embodiment of his lifelong commitment to the "way of the bushi," with the traditional Japanese martial art philosophy of bushido shaping his journey.

Before finding his calling in judo, Zorgani dabbled in various sports, including boxing and Brazi-



Nacer Eddine Zorgani

lian jiu-jitsu.

"It's all one thing for me," he said. "I follow the way of the bushi ... resilience, discipline, and an unwavering focus. Whether it's in the ring, on the mat, or in life, the principles are the same."

His transition to judo was a natural progression. The sport's emphasis on balance, technique, and

mental strength resonated with Zorgani, who found in judo not just a way to compete but a path to mastering his own limitations.

Zorgani was declared legally blind at 17 after a doctor diagnosed progressive deterioration of both retinas. By 20, he had lost most of his vision and could only see blurry shapes in very bright environmen-

ts. This did not deter him; instead, it fueled his determination to excel.

"I've lived through very dark moments, when I felt beat down by my disability," Zorgani said. "But combat sports really, really helped me."

In judo, the tactile nature of the sport can be useful for athletes like Zorgani. From the moment he co-

mes to grips with his opponent, he uses touch to sense their movements, balance, and intentions. The lack of sight can sharpen his other senses, allowing him to anticipate and react with split-second precision.

"Judo is about feeling your opponent's energy, their center of gravity, and their intentions," he said. "In that sense, my visual impairment has taught me to trust my instincts and my training even more."

Zorgani's training is as rigorous as it is unyielding. During the Olympics, he had to balance two training sessions in the day with sitting court side as a boxing announcer at night.

This will be his first Paralympic Games, where he joins 121 of the 237 athletes representing France for the first time on this global stage, according to Marie-Amélie Le Fur, the head of the French Paralympic delegation.

Zorgani is ready. "Doing the ring announcements — with the crowds, the lights, the people, the noise, the music, the ceremonies — it's a kind of training, mental training," Zorgani said.

Aware of the challenge ahead, he doesn't view the competition as added pressure. Instead, it's about testing the limits of his physical and mental endurance, and proving that his journey is far from over. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

Business Views

Shuli Ren, Bloomberg



XI'S SUPPLY-SIDE PANACEA HAS LOST ITS MAGIC

Many are worried that China is making way more than the world needs. From electric vehicles to solar panels, plunging prices at home and abroad are igniting a new round of trade wars. Even Beijing is concerned: In a top-level meeting late last month, policymakers pledged to curb "vicious competition" among businesses.

Industrial overcapacity has flared up in recent months. There isn't enough global demand to absorb all the lithium batteries, solar modules or steel that Chinese factories can produce. But this is happening at the painful expense of corporate profits. More than half of industry supply in solar, EV, steel, and construction machinery isn't making money, a sharp deterioration from a year earlier, according to Goldman Sachs Group Inc. Even those producing consumer staples are not spared. Fresh milk, for instance, is caught in its longest price slump in 14 years, exacerbating a deflationary gloom that's enveloping the economy.

We've been here before. China went through an extended producers' deflation between 2012 and 2016, caused by the same problem. As the economy slowed, the utilization rate in the steel and coal industries contracted from 79% and 90% in 2010 to 70% and 65% in 2015, according to the International Monetary Fund. Back then, excess capacity was also an international issue. About half of the anti-dumping and anti-subsidy investigations against China in 2016 were related to steel.

President Xi Jinping's solution then was a supply-side reform that aimed to rein in production. Starting in 2015, the government closed factories and deployed 100 billion yuan (\$14 billion) for severance pay to steel and coal workers. It was a success. By 2017, deflation was gone, and some big state-owned enterprises, such as Aluminum Corporation of China Ltd., swung to profit.

So it's only natural that some industry insiders are urging the government to tackle supply again. But there are at least three reasons to believe why that won't work this time.

Firstly, the government has less sway in sectors where overcapacity is the most acute. If steel, coal and, to a lesser extent, aluminum were the big headaches a decade ago, the international focus this time is on lithium batteries, solar and EVs. Unfortunately, unlike steel, where roughly half of the producers are state-owned, these new economy sectors are largely dominated by private businesses. The government can't really tell entrepreneurs what to do, unless Xi is prepared to return to the old days of a command economy.

Secondly, some industry leaders might see overcapacity as an advantage, in that it will force weaker ones to exit more quickly, leaving the survivors with a brighter future and fatter profits. Take lithium batteries, for instance. Contemporary Amperex Technology Co. is the biggest manufacturer. Contrary to its peers, CATL's profit margin has been on the rise despite falling battery prices. Scale and good cost control are helping.

In EV production, BYD Co. is China's largest manufacturer. One may argue that price cuts jump-started its sales. In the second quarter, the company sold 426,000 units, putting it within striking distance of Tesla Inc., the world's biggest EV seller. "Competition is the rule of nature" that businesses must embrace, Chairman Wang Chuan-Fu said in early June, when his peers complained bitterly about oversupply.

Thirdly, Xi's 2015 supply-side reform was a bit misleading in name because a major component ended up boosting demand — the other side of the equation. For the shantytown redevelopment program, the government bought old homes and relocated families, especially in smaller cities, and revamped these areas with new infrastructure spending. That explained 58% of improvement in steel prices, versus capacity cut's 42%, according to IMF estimates. [Abridged]

Courtesy Shuli Ren/Bloomberg

TWO SEPARATE BUS ACCIDENTS IN PAKISTAN LEAVE AT LEAST 36 PEOPLE DEAD, OFFICIALS SAY

THE BUZZ

Two separate bus accidents hours apart in Pakistan yesterday left at least 36 people dead and dozens more injured, officials said.

The first happened when a bus carrying Shiite Muslim pilgrims returning from Iraq through Iran fell from a highway into a ravine in southwest Pakistan, killing at least 12 people and injuring 32 others, police and officials said.

Hours later, 24 people were killed when a bus fell into a ravine in Kahuta district in the eastern Punjab province, police and officials said.

The first accident occurred on the Makran coastal highway after the

driver lost control of the bus when its brakes failed while passing through Lasbela district in Baluchistan province, local police chief Qazi Sabir said.

Bus accidents are common in Pakistan. The crash yesterday occurred days after 28 Pakistani pilgrims were killed in a bus crash in neighboring Iran while heading to Iraq.

The bodies of those victims were brought home on a Pakistani military plane on Saturday and buried in the southern Sindh province.

Sabir said the bus that fell into a ravine on Sunday was heading to Pakistan's eastern Punjab province.

AP PHOTO



Hundreds of Rohingyas gather in the rain to demand safe return to Myanmar's Rakhine state, in Cox's Bazar district, Bangladesh, yesterday

BANGLADESH

ROHINGYA REFUGEES MARK THE ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR EXODUS AND DEMAND A SAFE RETURN

SHAFIQR RAHMAN & JULHAS ALAM, COX'S BAZAR

TENS of thousands of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar who live in sprawling camps in Bangladesh yesterday marked the seventh anniversary of their mass exodus, demanding safe return to Myanmar's Rakhine state.

The refugees gathered in an open field at Kutupalong camp in Cox's Bazar district carrying banners and festoons reading "Hope is Home" and "We Rohingya are the citizens of Myanmar," defying the rain on a day that is marked as "Rohingya Genocide Day."

On Aug. 25, 2017, hundreds of thousands of refugees started crossing the border to Bangladesh on foot and by boats amid indiscriminate killings and other violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state.

Myanmar had launched a brutal crackdown following attacks by an insurgent group on guard posts. The scale, organization and ferocity of the operation led to accusations from the international community, including the U.N., of ethnic cleansing and genocide. Then-Bangladesh Pri-

me Minister Sheikh Hasina ordered border guards to open the border, eventually allowing more than 700,000 refugees to take shelter in the Muslim-majority nation. The influx was in addition to the more than 300,000 refugees who had already been living in Bangladesh for decades in the wake of waves of previous violence perpetrated by Myanmar's military.

Since 2017, Bangladesh has attempted at least twice to send the refugees back and has urged the international community to build pressure on Myanmar for a peaceful environment inside Myanmar that could help start the repatriation. Hasina also sought help from China to mediate.

But in the recent past, the situation in Rakhine state has become more volatile after a group called Arakan Army started fighting against Myanmar's security forces. The renewed chaos forced more refugees to flee toward Bangladesh and elsewhere in a desperate move to save their lives. Hundreds of Myanmar soldiers and border guards also took shelter inside Bangladesh to flee the violence, but Bangladesh later handed them over to Myanmar

peacefully.

As the protests took place in camps in Bangladesh yesterday, the United Nations and other rights groups expressed their concern over the ongoing chaos in Myanmar.

Washington-based Refugees International in a statement yesterday described the scenario.

"In Rakhine state, increased fighting between Myanmar's military junta and the AA (Arakan Army) over the past year has both caught Rohingya in the middle and seen them targeted. The AA has advanced and burned homes in Buthidaung, Maungdaw, and other towns, recently using drones to bomb villages," it said.

"The junta has forcibly recruited Rohingya and bombed villages in retaliation. Tens of thousands of Rohingya have been newly displaced, including several who have tried to flee into Bangladesh," it said.

UNICEF said that the agency received alarming reports that civilians, particularly children and families, were being targeted or caught in the crossfire, resulting in deaths and severe injuries, making humanitarian access in Rakhine extremely challenging. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Russia-Ukraine The two countries exchanged over 100 prisoners of war each on Saturday as Kyiv marked its third Independence Day since Moscow's full-scale invasion. Ukraine said the 115 Ukrainian servicemen who were freed were conscripts, many of whom were taken prisoner in the first months of Russia's invasion. Among them are nearly 50 soldiers captured by Russian forces from the Azovstal steelworks in Mariupol.

AP PHOTO



Nepal's government decided last week to lift the ban it imposed on the video-sharing app TikTok last November for disrupting "social harmony." The decision to lift restrictions was made by the government during a regular cabinet meeting Thursday, the state-run National News Agency quoted Information Minister Prithvi Subba Gurung as saying. The agency also said that it was under the initiative of the Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli, who issued a directive saying that all social networking sites should be treated equally.

AP PHOTO



USA Search and rescue crews at Grand Canyon National Park were searching for an Arizona woman nearly two days after she was swept into a creek during a flash flood, the woman's sister said on social media Saturday. Chenoa Nickerson of Gilbert was hiking in Havasu Creek, about a half-mile from where it meets up with the Colorado River, when the flash flood struck last week.

NASA's announcement Saturday that it won't use a troubled Boeing capsule to return two stranded astronauts to Earth is a yet another setback for the struggling company, although the financial damage is likely to be less than the reputational harm. Once a symbol of American engineering and technological prowess, Boeing has seen its reputation battered since two 737 Max airliners crashed in 2018 and 2019, killing 346 people. The safety of its products came under renewed scrutiny after a panel blew out of a Max during a flight this January.