



**SSM ISSUED A WARNING OVER THE RISING THREAT OF A DENGUE FEVER OUTBREAK, AS MOSQUITO BREEDING HAS SURGED TO HIGHER LEVELS**

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**LABOR SHORTAGE IN Q2 DRIVES UP DEMAND FOR MANPOWER**

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**US NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER VISITS BEIJING IN A BID TO MANAGE STRAINED RELATIONS**

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AP PHOTO



**China-Ukraine** China urged more countries to support its Ukraine peace plan yesterday, following discussions with Indonesia, Brazil, and South Africa. The plan, crafted with Brazil, suggests a conference involving Ukraine and Russia to halt battlefield expansion.

AP PHOTO



**China-Canada** China yesterday accused Canada of protectionism after PM Trudeau's government imposed a 100% tariff on imports of Chinese-made electric vehicles. The Chinese Commerce Ministry said in a statement the tariffs would disrupt the stability of global industrial and supply chains.

AP PHOTO



**Malaysian** Former Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin was charged with sedition for allegedly questioning the integrity of the country's former king. This charge stems from comments made during a by-election campaign, raising significant legal and political ramifications in Malaysia's system of constitutional monarchy.

AP PHOTO



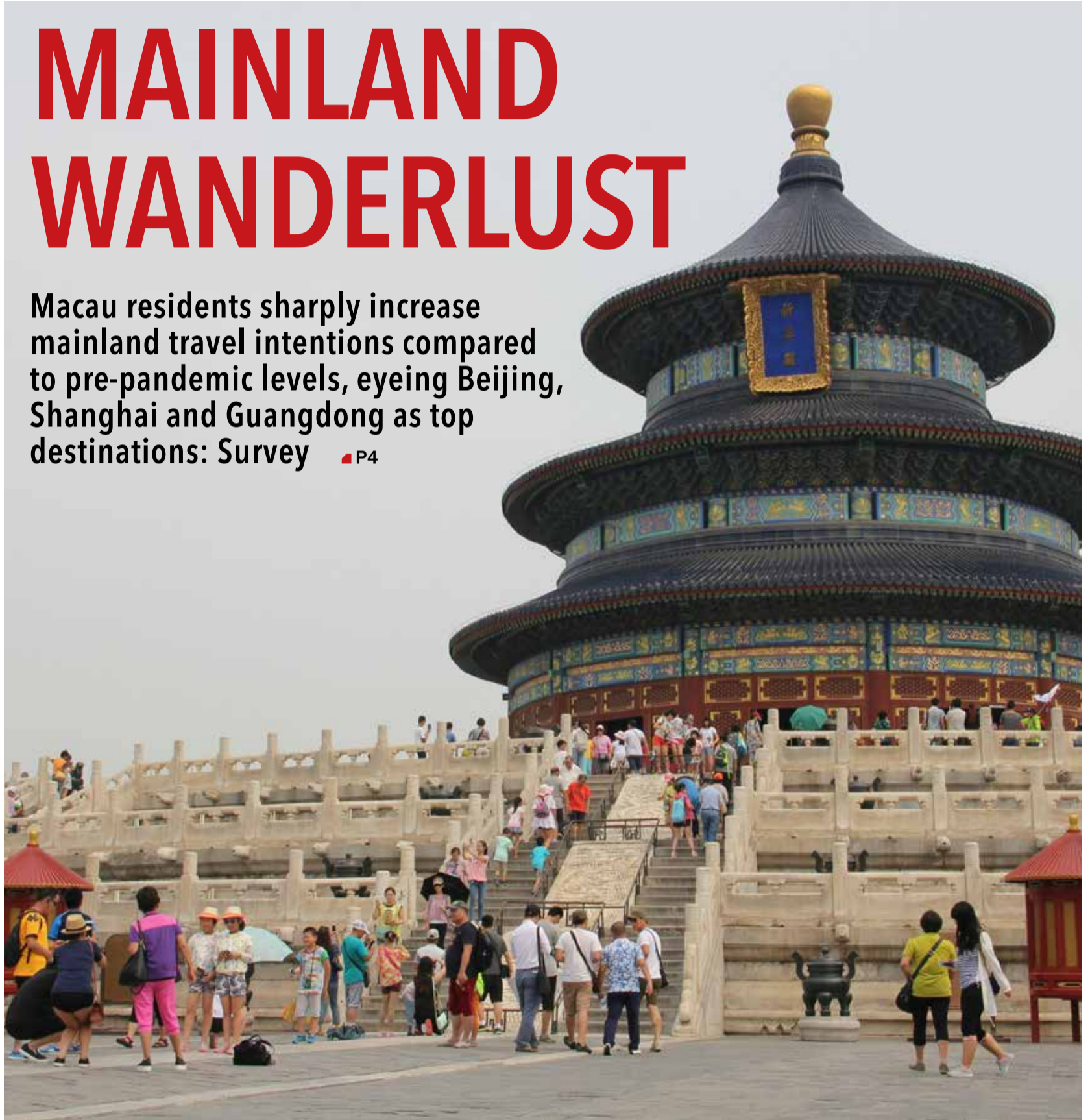
**Pakistan** A separatist group claimed responsibility for attacks that killed over 40 people. The Baluchistan Liberation Army, asserting no civilians were harmed, warned of more severe actions ahead. These incidents occurred as part of a conflict affecting southwestern Pakistan.

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# MAINLAND WANDERLUST

Macau residents sharply increase mainland travel intentions compared to pre-pandemic levels, eyeing Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong as top destinations: Survey

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### SAM HOU FAI ANNOUNCES CE CANDIDACY

Top judge Sam Hou Fai will officially declare his candidacy for Chief Executive (CE) at a press conference scheduled for 11 a.m. today at the Macao Science Museum. His announcement follows his resignation from judicial posts, effective Aug. 28, which allows him to enter the race. Analysts predict that if elected, Hou will maintain the current political status quo, relying on experienced advisors to navigate economic challenges. The nomination period for candidates runs from Aug. 29 to Sep. 12, with the election set for Oct. 13.

### JELLYFISH WARNING ISSUED AT LOCAL BEACHES

The Marine and Water Bureau (DSAMA) has issued a warning after jellyfish were spotted at both Hac Sa and Cheoc Van beaches, prompting the immediate posting of yellow flags indicating that the water is "not suitable for swimming." Officials urge beachgoers to avoid contact with jellyfish, whether in the water or washed ashore. Lifeguards are on duty daily to assist swimmers and provide rescue services. Visitors are encouraged to check the Marine and Water Bureau's website or mobile app for real-time beach conditions. Safety remains paramount; beachgoers are recommended to observe all posted warnings and advice from on-site staff to ensure a safe beach experience.

### TRAFFIC ADVISORY: COTAI ROAD CLOSURES SCHEDULED FOR BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION

The Transport Bureau (DSAT) announced yesterday that Av. da Nave Desportiva in Cotai will be closed to traffic from midnight to 6 a.m. daily, starting Aug. 30 through Sep. 1. This closure is part of a pedestrian bridge construction project. During these hours, the "Cotai East/City of Dreams" bus station will not operate. Passengers on bus route 701X can board at the Av. Dr. Henry Fok/C.O.D. station, while those heading to Praça de Ferreira do Amaral should use the "Wai Long/M.U.S.T." or "Av. Do Aeroporto/Wynn Palace" stations.

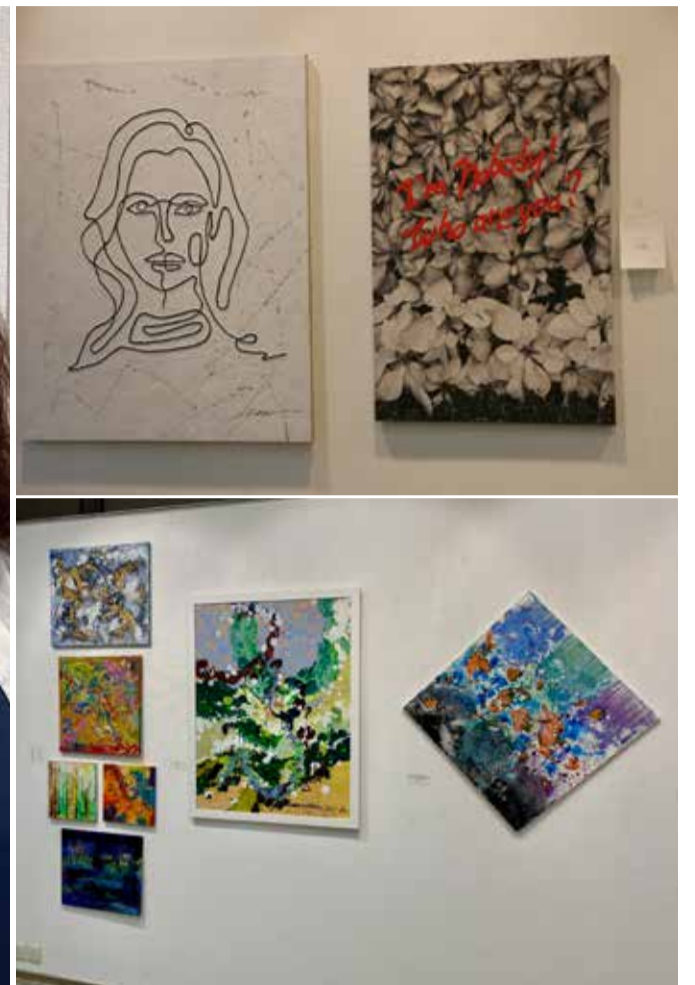
### TRANSPORTATION ARRANGEMENTS MADE FOR BACK TO SCHOOL

As the new school year approaches, local transportation authorities are gearing up to ensure a smooth start for students. At a meeting, held yesterday, involving the Transportation Bureau (DSAT), Public Security Police Force (PSP), and Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) focused on enhancing bus services and traffic management as approximately 80% of schools reopen on Sep. 2. Additional personnel will be deployed at busy traffic points, and bus schedules will be adjusted to accommodate increased demand. Key road projects are expected to be completed by Aug. 31, minimizing disruptions.

NADIA SHAW



The Midnight Reader, IoKin Ng



### ARTS

# CREATIVE MACAU CELEBRATES 21 YEARS WITH COLLECTIVE EXHIBITION

NADIA SHAW

**C**reative Macau marked its 21st anniversary with the launch of the "21st Century Members Collective Exhibition" yesterday. This exhibition highlights the artistic contributions of various members and celebrates two decades of nurturing creativity and collaboration in Macau.

The exhibition, open until Sep. 28, features a wide array of works from artists such as Ada Mok Keng Kio, IoKin Ng, and Alice Leonor das Neves Costa. The opening ceremony attracted a distinguished audience, including Paulo de Castro, the center's president, and coordinator Margarida Cheung.

This year's theme, "Creative Network in the 21st Century," underscores the transformative role of the internet in the art world. Over the past 21 years, Creative Macau has been a platform for artists to connect, share their work, and engage with a wider audience.

The internet has reshaped how artists communicate and collaborate, enabling them to blend diverse cultural influen-

ces into their creations and reach global audiences.

"Art has evolved through various movements, from the Renaissance to contemporary styles, often reflecting the societal changes of their times," Cheung said during her opening remarks. "Today, the internet acts as a new medium, connecting artists and audiences like never before."

The exhibition not only showcases the talents of its members but also highlights the significance of community in the creative process. Each displayed piece represents the unique perspectives and experiences of the artists, creating a rich tapestry of creativity that resonates both locally and globally.

In an interview with The Times, exhibiting artist IoKin Ng shared her creative process and inspiration. She often finds solace in the quiet of the night, working on her watercolor pieces well past midnight. Overwhelmed by the brightness and activity of daytime, she aims to create calming works that evoke tranquility. Ng utilizes social media to

connect with others who share her late-night creative energy, hoping her art fosters comfort and understanding of the inner child, symbolized by a boy in her pieces—representing a universal childhood experience.

The Times explored upcoming exhibitions and current trends in the art world in a conversation with Margarida Cheung at the event.

Cheung hinted at the possibility of another collective exhibition before the year's end, pending confirmation. She also mentioned the Short Film Festival scheduled for late this year and plans for one to two additional collective exhibitions. Negotiations for more exhibitions are already underway for the next year, ensuring a vibrant schedule through mid-2025.

Cheung discussed contemporary art trends, particularly the intersection of technology and artistic expression. She highlighted a female artist whose work reflects feelings of stagnation and isolation experienced during the pandemic. The exhibition features a di-

verse range of artistic styles, including painting and installations.

Addressing the membership structure of the art collective, Cheung noted a steady influx of new artists, providing them with a platform to showcase their work without the financial burdens often associated with renting exhibition spaces.

Reflecting on her journey as a former jewelry artist, Cheung expressed her admiration for the arts and the courage it takes to pursue an artistic career. She emphasized the financial challenges artists face and the importance of offering both support and encouragement, which the center strives to provide.

In addition to the exhibition, Creative Macau plans to host various workshops and events throughout the month to encourage public participation and interaction with artists. These initiatives aim to deepen the understanding of the creative process and the role of art in society.

The exhibition is open daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at Creative Macau.

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## REACHING OUT!

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# Portugal considers Macau and Portuguese living in the SAR a priority: José Cesário

RENATO MARQUES

**P**ASSING through Macau in a visit that was extended to Guangzhou and Hong Kong, the Secretary of State for Portuguese Communities, José Cesário has said that Macau and the Portuguese living in Macau are a priority for the new Portuguese government.

Speaking on the sidelines of a series of events held at the Portuguese Consulate-General yesterday evening, Cesário noted that the Portuguese government is paying attention to the situation of Macau and of the Portuguese and their problems, including the high demand for service from the Consulate and the situation at the Macau Portuguese School (EPM).

Refusing to comment on the school, Cesário said to the media that he would not be visiting the institution this time, but promised to return soon for a visit "when the situation is more peaceful."

Questioned on what he expects from the new Chief Executive (CE) of Macau, to be elected later this year, the Portuguese government official said he expects no change, no-



ting that Portugal has maintained great relations with Macau governments and with the Chinese authorities, noting that the same "good relationship" is expected to continue.

After a first visit to Guangzhou on Tuesday, to take the pulse of the new consulate, Cesário was in Macau yesterday, having had several meetings including with the Council of the Portuguese Communities, the CE, Ho Iat Seng, the Portugal-China Chamber of Commerce

and Industry, and the Association of Retirees and Pensioners of Macau (Associação dos Aposentados, Reformados e Pensionistas de Macau) as well as a visit to the Consulate-General of Portugal in Macau and Hong Kong.

In the last of the events, Cesário witnessed the signing of a support contract to the local association "Silaba" for the production of a project that involves learning Portuguese language, history, and culture

through pedagogical materials; as well as the Ceremony of Awarding of two Communities Medals of Merit, attributed by the Portuguese government to Wu Zhilei (posthumously) and Tony da Cruz.

During the meetings with the Council of the Portuguese Communities and the Association of Retirees and Pensioners of Macau, topics said to have been in discussion included the waiting time for several services at the Consulate, namely

for the renewal of Portuguese Identification Cards and Passports as well as matters related to the update of the retirement pensions, among others of concern to the community.

According to information from the Council of the Portuguese Communities, Cesário accepted that the services of the consulate-general need to improve and indicated that changes have been ongoing and that more will come soon. He also called for time to enforce the new plans and measures that have already been decided, noting that these changes need time for implementation and to prove themselves effective.

Today, Cesário will continue his tour through several institutions of the Portuguese matrix including the BNU Bank, the Holy House of Mercy, Orient Foundation, and International Institute of Macau.

For tomorrow, the Secretary of State for Portuguese Communities has scheduled a visit to the University of Saint Joseph in the morning, traveling in the afternoon to the neighboring region of Hong Kong for a series of events at the Club Lusitano.

## HEALTH

# Mosquito activity leads to growing risk of Dengue fever

VICTORIA CHAN

**T**HE Health Bureau (SSM) has issued a warning over the rising threat of a dengue fever outbreak, as mosquito breeding has surged to higher levels across the region.

The warning comes as the mosquito propagation rate in Macau reached 59.8% in July, a level higher than the same period last year. This "demonstrates a wide distribution of 'Aedes Albopictus' mosquitoes in Macau and a high risk of spreading dengue fever," the authorities said.

The dengue fever situation has also been described as "very serious" in several countries or regions in Sou-

theast Asia, with soaring case counts reported in Singapore, Malaysia, and Vietnam, with a 44% rise in cases compared to last year. In neighboring Guangdong province, the first local case was detected in Zhuhai City on Aug. 1, while Hong Kong has reported 51 cases, including four local transmissions.

To combat the issue, the bureau has stepped up efforts, including doubling the frequency of larvicidal oil application in drains and increasing chemical mosquito spraying in high-risk areas. However, the health services emphasize that an integrated approach is needed, with the public playing a crucial role.

"The prevention and treatment of mosquito proliferation must be carried out in an integrated manner, with the elimination of the sources of proliferation being the most effective measure," they said.

Residents are urged to maintain environmental hygiene, eliminate stagnant water, use mosquito nets or air conditioning, and seek medical attention immediately if they suspect dengue fever symptoms.

"The Health Bureau urges residents to reinforce mosquito prevention measures and seek medical advice as soon as possible if they present suspicious symptoms," the authorities said in a statement.



## GOV'T LAUNCHES WEBSITE SOLELY DEDICATED TO 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HANDOVER

**T**HE government has launched a website dedicated to the celebration of 25th anniversary of the Macau handover.

Titled "Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR)," the website, coordinated by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) is said to have been established to "concentrate in one place all the information related to the 'Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Establishment of the MSAR,'" as well as to "simplify the consultation of the related information by residents and tourists."

The interface supports three languages,

including the official languages and English.

The website gathers information on the latest related news, pictures, videos, and live broadcasts, among other things. More information on the commemorative activities will be published in the "Events" section of the website in due course, IC announced. Residents and tourists can browse the website and, through it, participate in the various activities and share them on social media, helping to further promote them.

The website is already available at [www.macao25.gov.mo](http://www.macao25.gov.mo). **RM**



TOURISM

# SURVEY: RESIDENTS SHOW INCREASED INTEREST IN MAINLAND TRAVEL

LYNZY VALLES

A survey shows that Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong province emerged as the top three most popular destinations among Macau and Hong Kong residents.

Conducted by the Asian Tourism Exchange Center, the survey revealed that other up-and-coming hotspots include Chong-

qing, Guizhou, and Tibet.

This diversification is partly fueled by reduced international travel options and savvy mainland tourism promotion.

Though the pandemic disrupted travel in 2020 to 2022, the numbers have started to rebound - Hong Kong has recovered to at least 93.7% of 2019 levels, and Macau has increased by over 20%.

Questionnaire data, which involved 1,160 valid questionnaires, indicates that about half of respondents from both cities expect to travel to the mainland more often than in 2019, driven by pent-up demand, the appeal of China's cultural attractions, and the favorable Hong Kong dollar exchange rate.

Sightseeing, healthcare, shopping, and leisure remain the

primary motivations, with over 80% of travelers citing these as their main purposes. Notably, visiting friends and family constitutes a relatively small portion of trips.

Meanwhile, the survey has revealed striking differences in the travel patterns of Hong Kong and Macau residents to mainland China over the past year.

Data shows that 61% of Ma-

cau residents and more than 82% of Hong Kong residents expect to visit the mainland one to 10 times.

In 2019, Macau residents visited 40.4 times on average, while Hong Kong residents visited the mainland an average of 10.7 times.

Compared to 2019, the number of Hong Kong visitors to the mainland has recovered to at least 93.7% as of May 2024. For Macau, the number has increased by more than 20% over the same period.

Moreover, according to the survey, the information-gathering habits of the two populations differ - 29% of Macau residents trust recommendations from family and friends, while 26% of Hong Kong travelers rely on TV programs.

Travel agencies also play a significant role, with 24% to 37% of travelers booking through group tours and other agency services.

According to data from the Macau Hong Kong SAR governments, travel to mainland China through agency services has surged in the first five months of 2024. During this period, a total of 150,000 Macau residents traveled to the mainland via travel agencies. Of these, 47,000 Macau residents participated in group tours - an 80.7% increase from the same period in 2023. Moreover, 31,000 of these group tourists visited Guangdong Province specifically.

Despite the surge in mainland visits, the survey shows that Macau and Hong Kong residents still face challenges in trip planning, unfamiliarity with locations, and booking tickets for attractions.

CRIME

# Fraudulent BOC text scheme scams over MOP74,000

SIX Macau residents lost over MOP74,000 to credit card theft stemming from fake "Bank of China" phishing websites between Jan. 24 to 27, Judiciary Police (PJ) reported yesterday.

According to police, three men and three women received text messages claiming their points were expiring, tricking them to enter credit card information into fraudulent Bank of China websites. During the process, victims were enticed to enter credit card details and exchange points for cheap gifts, allowing scammers to steal the cards and make unauthorized large purchases.

One of the larger cases involved a young woman

who had 6.93 million in Tanzanian currency stolen, equivalent to about MOP22,000.

PJ has identified this as the first instance where fraudsters have posed as the "Bank of China" and sent random fake messages to citizens, a concerning trend that has also seen the emergence of similar phishing scams from other large companies.

To prevent further incidents, with fake SMS messages impersonating large companies on the rise, PJ Fraud Prevention Coordination Center warns citizens not to click unknown links, carefully verify website authenticity when providing personal details, and use the "Anti-Scam" app or hotlines if uncer-

tain. Citizens are advised to be vigilant of phishing attempts via text.

In a different case, the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) announced that three Hong Kong men have been detained in connection with a phone scam that defrauded an elderly Macau citizen of approximately MOP150,000.

According to authorities, the scheme involved dividing the criminal labor.

One suspect first called the victim, posing as the victim's son-in-law. The imposter claimed to have been arrested for drunk driving and in need of bail money.

The victim withdrew the funds from the bank and handed them over to

a second suspect, who had posed as a legal assistant. Becoming suspicious, the victim then verified the story with his actual son-in-law, thereby exposing the scam.

The MP urges the public to always verify the authenticity of calls or messages, and never provide money or make fund transfers to strangers.

Last week, the PJ reported that the three men were directed by a telecom fraud group, operating under the guise of a "guess who I am" scheme, to travel to Macau. Their task was to collect MOP150,000 from an elderly local woman, with the promise of receiving a commission ranging from MOP3,000 to MOP5,000 each. VC



STATS

# Labor shortage in Q2 drives up demand for manpower

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE survey on manpower needs and wages for the second quarter (Q2) of 2024 has shown that the demand for manpower continued to increase amid the recovery of the local economy, the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) said in a release note.

According to the survey that covered Wholesale & Retail Trade; Transport, Storage & Communications; Security Activities, and Public Sewage & Refuse Disposal Activities, at the end of Q2, the number of persons engaged in Wholesale & Retail Trade (68,846) grew by 7.7%



year-on-year, with those working in Retail trade (44,013) rising by 8.9%. Concurrently, the number of persons engaged in the Transport,

Storage & Communications sector (14,505), Security Activities (13,033), and Public Sewage & Refuse Disposal Activities (964) also

went up by 0.8%, 1.9%, and 2%, respectively.

At the end of this period, the average earnings (excluding irregular remuneration) of full-time employees in Security Activities rose by 9.2% y-o-y to an average of MOP13,550. This was justified mainly by the increases in salaries and working hours.

In addition, earnings of those in the Transport, Storage & Communications sector, and Public Sewage & Refuse Disposal Activities went up by 3.5% to MOP21,990 and 3% to MOP19,740 respectively.

On the other hand, the earnings of those engaged in Wholesale &

Retail Trade activities decreased by 1.6% to an average of MOP14,570 per month.

Regarding job post vacancies at the end of Q2, the Retail Trade had some 1,627 vacant posts, a figure that represented a decrease of 911 y-o-y. The same sector showed a job vacancy rate of 4.3%, an employee recruitment rate of 3.9%, and an employee turnover rate of 6.1%, dropping by 2.9, 2.1, and 0.1%, respectively. This result implies that the vacant posts in Retail Trade have been gradually filled over the past year.

As for the Transport, Storage & Communications sector, the number of job vacancies was 913, increasing by 128; the job vacancy rate was 6.5%, the employee recruitment rate 8.6%, and the employee turnover rate was 9.2%, showing respective growth by 0.7, 2.3 and 3.4%. These figures indicate that at the end of June this year there were still many vacant job posts to be filled in the sector.

GAMING

# SJM Holdings reports 47% rise in H1 revenues

LYNZY VALLES

**C**ASINO operator SJM Holdings has announced a significant increase in net revenue for the first half of 2024, reporting a year-on-year growth exceeding 47%, along with a 50% rise in gross gaming revenue (GGR).

The results were cited in an unaudited statement released yesterday, revealing that the total net revenue for the first half reached HKD13.8 billion,

compared to HKD9.36 billion during the same time frame in 2023.

When evaluating the results against the same period in 2019, the figures indicate a recovery of 81%.

The "hotel, catering, retail and leasing operations" segment also posted a promising growth of 35.7% in revenue, vis-à-vis the last six months of 2023. The average occupancy rate for the period was 94.2%, and 85.9% for the last

six months of 2023.

Daisy Ho, chairman of SJM Holdings Limited and managing director of SJM Resorts, S.A., remarked: "Throughout the first half of 2024, the Group made significant progress in both gaming and non-gaming sectors, achieving steady growth through continuous innovation and service optimization.

"Moving into the latter part of the year, we will intensify our efforts to broaden our food and beverage portfolio, launching a variety of new destination dining outlets and exclusive gastronomic events, alongside advancing the initial phase of the Kam Pek Market revitalization plan," she added.

The gaming operator added it will be hosting various branded sporting competitions, in the realms of wushu, golf, and tennis.

CRIME

# PJ WARNS NEW SCAM RELATED TO GALA OF CHINA OLYMPIC ATHLETES

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Judiciary Police (PJ) has issued a warning about a new online scam exploiting the upcoming gala event, "Our Pride! - Meeting with the National Olympic Athletes Delegation in Macau," scheduled to take place at the East Asian Games Dome on Sept. 1.

According to the PJ, a new fraudulent scheme that offers tickets for this event has emerged.

The PJ has reminded the public tickets for the gala event are distributed free of charge by the Sports Bureau solely through the official channels.

Police urged the public to avoid scams involving the sale of tickets from unknown sources.

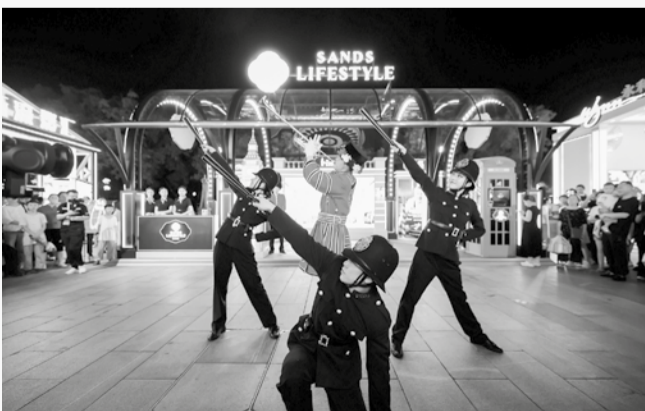
They also reminded citizens these tickets are non-transferable and cannot be sold, exchanged, or transferred to anyone other than the original recipient, who obtained the ticket through the official lucky draw system.

Fraud and unlawful sales of event tickets is common in Macau, especially during major local organized events.

The PJ has reported losses amounting to tens of thousands of patacas in similar scams, especially those involving concerts.

## CORPORATE BITS

### Sands participates in 'Macao Week in Shaanxi-Xi'an'



Sands Resorts Macau participated in the 'Macao Week in Shaanxi-Xi'an' mega roadshow through Aug. 26 to promote Macau's tourism offerings and experiences available

at its properties. The event aimed to diversify Macau's tourism market and attract more visitors from Shaanxi.

A product seminar was also held on Aug.

22 to introduce dining, accommodation, shopping, entertainment and meeting options to tourism professionals and partners. Attendees discussed developing tourism and convention industries in Macau and Shaanxi.

The Sands Resorts Macau booth spotlights its European-inspired resorts - The Venetian Macao, The Parisian Macao and The Londoner Macao - with iconic displays and performances that transport guests to Britain. Visitors explored the properties on a large LED screen, collect souvenirs and enter prize drawings.

### Melco's elderly talent show brings joy



A total of nine performance teams took to the stage at Melco Resorts & Entertainment's City of Dreams recently to participate in the "Melco Simple Acts of Kindness 2024 - Elderly Got

Talent" event.

The show, co-organized by Melco and the General Union of Neighbourhood Associations of Macau, aimed to provide seniors an opportunity to show-

case their talents. A crowd of around 500 community members turned out to support the 75 performers.

Melco Chairman and CEO Lawrence Ho said it was "a joy to see our [older folk] enjoying themselves." Chan Ka Leong, director-general of UGAMM, said the event aimed to "strengthen the gathering of [senior]s in Macau, to showcase their talent, vitality, and vibrant style."

The diverse performances included dramas, cheongsam shows, sign language songs, dances and more. Participants expressed elements of patriotism and love for Macau through their passionate performances.

DIPLOMACY

# US national security adviser visits Beijing in a bid to manage strained relations

**A** top White House official has arrived in China for talks on a relationship that has been severely tested during President Joe Biden's term in office.

Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser, has been Biden's point person for often unannounced talks with the Communist Party's top foreign policy official to try to manage the growing differences between Washington and Beijing.

On landing, Sullivan was greeted by Yang Tao, the Chinese foreign ministry's chief for the North America and Oceanian department, and the U.S. ambassador to China, Nicholas Burns.

The goal of Sullivan's visit, which lasts through Thursday, is limited — to try to maintain communication in a relationship that broke down for the better part of a year in 2022-23 and was only nursed back over several months.

No major announcements are



White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan (right) talks with U.S. Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns upon arriving at the Beijing airport, yesterday

expected, though Sullivan's meetings could lay the groundwork for a possible final summit with Chinese leader Xi Jinping before Biden steps down in January.

Sullivan will hold talks with Wang Yi, the foreign minister who also holds the more senior title of the director of the Communist

Party's Central Foreign Affairs Commission Office.

It's unusual to hold both positions. Wang had initially stepped down as foreign minister, but he returned about seven months later, in July 2023, after his successor was removed for reasons that have not been made public.

The Biden administration has taken a tough line on China, viewing it as a strategic competitor, restricting the access of its companies to advanced technology and confronting the rising power as it seeks to exert influence over Taiwan and the South China Sea.

Already frosty relations went into a deep freeze after then-Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, a senior U.S. lawmaker, visited Taiwan in August 2022. Hopes of restoring ties were dashed the following February when a suspected Chinese spy balloon drifted across the United States before being shot down by the U.S. military.

At a meeting between Sullivan and Wang in Vienna in May 2023, the two countries launched a delicate process of putting relations back on track. Since then, they have met two more times in a third country, Malta and Thailand. This week will mark their first talks in Beijing.

China's Foreign Ministry said this week that relations with the U.S. remain at "a critical juncture." It noted that the two sides are talking on climate and other issues, but it accused the U.S. of continuing to constrain and suppress China. **MDT/AP**

SOUTH CHINA SEA

# Philippine defense chief calls for 'stronger censure' over China's actions

**T**he Philippine defense chief said yesterday that China is "the biggest disruptor" of peace in Southeast Asia and called for stronger international censure over its "aggression in the South China Sea," a day after China blocked Philippine vessels from delivering food to a Coast Guard ship at the Sabina Shoal.

Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. spoke at an international military conference organized in Manila by the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command amid a spike in clashes between China and the Philippines in the disputed South China Sea and in its airspace. The conference was attended by military officials and senior diplomats from the U.S. and allied countries.

He later told reporters on the sidelines of the conference that international statements of concern against China's increasingly assertive actions in the disputed waters and elsewhere were "not enough."

"The antidote is a stronger collective multilateral action against China," Teodoro said, adding that diplomats and defense officials should determine those stronger steps.

Pressed by reporters to be more specific, Teodoro said a U.N. Security Council resolution condemning and ordering a stop to Chinese acts of aggression would be a strong step but acknowledged the difficulty of pursuing that. "The world is not that perfect," Teodoro said.

There was no immediate reaction from Chinese officials.

China, like its geopolitical rival the U.S., is one of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and has power to veto such an adversarial step.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations has paid "attention" to China's aggressive actions but should do much more, Teodoro said. The 10-na-



Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr.

tion Southeast Asian bloc includes the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei, which have South China Sea claims that overlap with each other, as well as China's and Taiwan's.

"ASEAN, to remain relevant and credible, cannot continue to ignore what China is doing in the South China Sea," Teodoro said.

In the latest incident in the South China Sea, Philippine officials said China deployed "an excessive force" of 40 ships that blocked two Philippine vessels from delivering food and other supplies to Manila's largest coast guard ship in the disputed Sabina Shoal in the

latest flare-up of their territorial disputes in the busy sea passage.

China and the Philippines blamed each other for the confrontation on Monday in Sabina Shoal, an uninhabited atoll both countries claim that has become the latest flashpoint in the Spratlys, the most hotly disputed region of the sea passage that is a key global trade and security route.

China and the Philippines have separately deployed coast guard ships to Sabina in recent months on suspicion the other may act to take control of and build structures in the fishing atoll.

The hostilities have particularly intensified between China and the Philippines since last year and Monday's confrontation was the sixth the two sides have reported in the high seas and in the air. The confrontations have sparked concerns of a larger conflict that could involve the United States, the longtime treaty ally of the Philippines.

Sabina is near the Second Thomas Shoal, another flashpoint where China has hampered the Philippine delivery of supplies for Filipino forces aboard a long-grounded navy ship, the BRP Sierra Madre. Last month, China and the Philippines reached an agreement to prevent increasingly hostile confrontations at the Second Thomas Shoal, allowing a Philippine vessel to deliver food supplies a week later without any hostilities.

The Philippine coast guard said Chinese coast guard and navy ships, along with 31 suspected militia vessels, illegally obstructed the delivery, which including an ice cream treat for the personnel aboard the BRP Teresa Magbanua as the Philippines marked National Heroes' Day on Monday.

In Beijing, China's coast guard said that it took control measures against two Philippine coast guard ships that "intruded" into waters near the Sabina Shoal. It said in a statement that the Philippine ships escalated the situation by repeatedly approaching a Chinese coast guard ship. The Chinese coast guard did not say what control measures it took.

China has rapidly expanded its military and has become increasingly assertive in pursuing its territorial claims in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety. The tensions have led to more frequent confrontations, primarily with the Philippines, though the longtime territorial disputes also involve other claimants, including Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei.

Japan's government also protested to Beijing yesterday, saying that a Chinese reconnaissance plane violated its airspace and forced it to scramble fighter jets.

Sabina Shoal lies about 140 kilometers west of the Philippine province of Palawan, in the internationally recognized exclusive economic zone of the Philippines. **MDT/AP**

TONGA | PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

# How a summit for the world's tiniest nations became a global draw

CHARLOTTE  
GRAHAM-MCLAY,  
NUKU'ALOFA

**A**S leaders of Pacific nations were welcomed to their annual meeting in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, yesterday [Macau time], they were greeted first by torrential rain and then by an earthquake.

The magnitude 6.9 quake was deep enough not to cause damage, but the long shudder and ankle-deep water served as a reminder of the natural vulnerabilities of many of the member countries of the Pacific Islands Forum, who are locked in an existential struggle for economic and environmental survival.

It also underscored the tension at the heart of an event that once barely captured the world's notice and now draws delegations from dozens of countries across the globe — the way a fierce skirmish for geopolitical influence in the South Pacific among major powers further afield threatens to overtake local concerns, often to island leaders' dismay.

"We don't want them to fight in our backyard here. Take that elsewhere," Baron Waqa, the forum's secretary-general and a former president of Nauru, told reporters last month.

Still, there are more than 1,500 delegates from more than 40 countries at this year's meeting of Pacific member states, all hoping to further their agendas in a region where oceans, resources and strategic power have grown increasingly contested.

Founded in 1971, the Pacific Islands Forum brings together 18 member states to discuss and coordinate responses to the issues confronting a remote and diverse region, who know that their countries — with populations as small as 1,500 people — attract more notice on the global stage when they speak with one voice. Its leaders — from Pacific Island nations, some of them among the world's most imperiled by rising seas, as well as Australia and New



Leaders assemble for a photo at the opening of the annual Pacific Islands Forum leaders meeting in Nuku'alofa, Tonga

Zealand — have long been at the forefront of urging action on climate change.

For the first few decades of the forum's existence, the annual meetings of its leaders largely escaped wider notice. In recent years that has changed, regular forum-goers say: China's campaign of aid, diplomacy and security agreements with leaders across the Pacific has prompted a rapid expansion of the size and scope of the organization and its meetings.

This week's summit features the forum's largest ever delegation from China and a sizeable deputation from the United States, led by Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell.

Both countries are among 21 "dialogue partners" — a group of nations with interest in the region — in the forum. There is a waiting list for entry, but applications are currently closed while the forum reviews its structure. Observers said that a tiered system — reflecting partners' genuine interests and involvement in the Pacific — was a possibility.

"We've been mindful that our region is of great interest from a geopolitical perspective over the last few years or so," Mark Brown, the Cook Islands prime minister and outgoing chair of the forum, told Islands Business this month. "But the security issues that are seen by our bigger development partners are not the same security issues that we con-

sider as important."

Where large powers might attend the forum seeking to curry influence while undermining others' sway, the focus of the region's leaders sits squarely where it always has been: the perils of climate change and rapidly rising seas.

Reminders are everywhere in the Tongan capital, Nuku'alofa — metal water bottles supplied as keepsakes to delegates are labeled "one less plastic bottle," but at each meeting and meal, plastic bottles of water are distributed. Rising seas and natural disasters, as in many Pacific Island nations, have contaminated rainwater and groundwater and made them unsafe to drink.

This year, the topic has another champion — the United Nations secretary-general, António Guterres, who in a speech at the opening ceremony decried "humanity treating the sea like a sewer" and applauded Pacific leaders and young people for declaring a climate emergency and calling for action.

Some leaders tried to bring pressing issues at home to center stage: The Tongan prime minister and incoming forum chair, Sioosi Sovaleni, spoke yesterday of the health and education challenges confronting his country — and echoed throughout the Pacific.

Other topics include the legacy of nuclear horrors in the region, the cost of living and debt, and regional se-

curity — including a Pacific police training center scheduled for construction in Brisbane, Australia, that is seen as a direct challenge to China's eagerness to equip the law enforcement agencies of some island nations.

Fiji's prime minister, Sitiveni Rabuka, in June referred to the confluence of problems — also including transnational drug trafficking in his assessment — as a "polycrisis," with each challenge ex-

acerbating others.

But the Forum's most fraught matter is likely to be the ongoing unrest in New Caledonia. Deadly violence flared in the French territory in May over a longstanding independence movement and Paris' efforts to quash it. A failed attempt by Pacific leaders to visit the capital, Noumea, ahead of the summit has further inflamed tensions.

Longtime forum watchers say the test for major powers at the event is whether their leaders can engage in the "Pacific way," a kind of humble consensus politics that centers on relationships and holds at its heart the idea of the so-called Blue Pacific family — island nations linked by shared culture and heritage, and distinct from the wider Indo-Pacific, whose interests are seen as more disparate and remote. **MDT/AP**

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GERMANY

# Elections in eastern states could make life harder for Black migrants

KIRSTEN GRIESHABER,  
ERFURT

It was a balmy summer night in 2020, shortly after the lifting of Germany's first COVID-19 lockdown, and Omar Diallo and two friends from his home country of Guinea wanted to celebrate Eid al-Adha, the Muslim festival of sacrifice.

"We were enjoying life, playing music, walking through the city at night — we just wanted to be together again and have a good time," Diallo, 22, told The Associated Press in Erfurt, in the eastern state of Thuringia.

He was not prepared for how the day would end. Suddenly Diallo and his friends were confronted by three black-clad white men.

"They were shouting: 'What do you want here, f— foreigners, get out!'" Diallo remembered.

"First there were three, then five, seven — they were surrounding us from all sides. We couldn't run away, and then they started chasing us," he said.

At some point Diallo managed to call the police, and when the officers finally arrived, the attackers ran away. One of his friends was beaten up so badly that he had to be hospitalized.

"I simply tried to survive," Diallo said. "I hadn't done anything wrong. It all happened only because of my skin color."

Being Black in Germany has always meant exposure to racism, from everyday humiliations to deadly attacks. In eastern Germany, the risk can be even greater.

After World War II, West Germany became a democratic, diverse society but in East Germany, which was run by a communist dictatorship until the end of 1989, residents barely had any contact with people of different ethnicities and were not allowed to travel freely abroad.

Experts say that specifically in Thuringia, radical far-right forces have created an environment that's hostile toward minorities, including Black people.

Now, with the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany, or AfD, Black Germans and



Omar Diallo, a 22-year-old migrant from Guinea poses for a portrait near a dilapidated storage building where he and two friends were hunted and beaten up in 2020, in Erfurt

African migrants like Diallo are growing increasingly concerned.

Thuringia, which has a population of 2.1 million, holds state elections on Sept. 1, and the fiercely anti-immigration AfD is leading the polls, on 30%.

In 2023, the NGO Ezra, which helps victims of far-right, racist and antisemitic violence, documented 85 racist attacks in Thuringia, down only slightly from 88 attacks in 2022, which Ezra described as "an all-time high of right-wing and racist violence" in the state.

"In recent years, an extreme right-wing movement has formed in Thuringia, which has contributed to a noticeable ideological radicalization of its followers. Politically, the Alternative for Germany party is the main beneficiary," Ezra and a consortium of organizations tracking racism wrote in their annual report.

AfD's Thuringia branch is particularly radical and was put under official surveillance by the domestic intelligence service four years ago as a "proven right-wing extremist" group.

"Authoritarian and populist forces, which are becoming very strong here now, harbor a great danger in Thuringia," says Doreen Denstaedt, Thuringia's minister for migration, justice and consumer protection.

Denstaedt, the daughter of a Black father from Tanzania and a white German mother, was born and grew up in Thuringia.

The 46-year-old member of the Green party said that growing up in Communist East Germany, she was "always the only Black child." As a teenager, she was never allowed to go home on her own because of the risk of racist attacks, and she sometimes suffered racist slurs in her school.

"I actually experienced myself that people called me a foreigner, which really confused me at first, because I was born in Saalfeld" in Thuringia, Denstaedt said.

She fears that in the current political climate, racist narratives will become acceptable in the middle of society.

"My biggest concern is that people do not question (these prejudices), especially if they are not affected themselves," she said.

It's not exactly clear how many Black people live in Germany nowadays, as different ethnicities are not documented in official statistics, but estimates put the number of people of African descent at 1.27 million. More than 70% were born in Germany, according to Mediendienst Integration, which tracks migration issues in the country.

Germany's history of racial discrimination begins long before the Nazis began excluding, deporting and ultimately murdering Black people in the 1930s and 1940s.

The German Empire held numerous colonies in Africa from 1884 until the end of World War I. These included territories in present-day Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Namibia, Cameroon, Togo and Ghana.

The German government has only recently started dealing with the injustices committed during that period. In 2021, President Frank-Walter Steinmeier called on Germans to face the country's cruel colonial past, and in 2023, he apologized for colonial-era killings in Tanzania over a century ago.

Daniel Egbe, a 58-year-old chemist from Cameroon who moved to Thuringia in 1994 to study, says he's shocked how little Germans know about their colonial history. He says this ignorance may also factor into the unequal treatment of Black people.

"I've been teaching classes in school," Egbe told the AP. "I tell them a bit about myself and especially the fact that Cameroon was a German colony. Many students don't know anything about Africa or about the German past and it must be put on the map." MDT/AP

## this day in history

### 1963 KING'S DREAM FOR RACIAL HARMONY



The fight for racial equality in the United States moved a step closer to victory today as Martin Luther King spoke of his dream for freedom in an address to thousands of Americans.

Reverend King was greeted with rapturous applause as he delivered his heart-felt words to a 250,000-strong crowd of civil rights protesters at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC.

He spoke of the need "to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice".

He promised that the struggle for equality would continue until "justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream".

Rev King, who has worked tirelessly for an end to racial discrimination through non-violent means, spoke repeatedly of his dream for equality.

"I have a dream," he said. "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character."

"I have a dream today.

"I have a dream that one day every valley shall be engulfed, every hill shall be exalted and every mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plains and the crooked places will be made straight and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together."

Dr King, who is president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) first came to prominence in 1955 when he led a 382-day bus boycott in an attempt to end segregation on city buses.

Since then he has endured numerous arrests, violent harassment and a bomb attack on his home.

But his struggle continues and it is believed today's speech will have a lasting impact on all who heard it.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The Rev Martin Luther King spearheaded the campaign against segregation and racial discrimination in the United States. But his crusade was cut dramatically short, when he was assassinated on 4 April 1968 in the southern US city of Memphis, Tennessee, aged 39.

He was shot in the neck by a rifle bullet as he stood on a balcony from where he was to lead a march of sanitation workers protesting against low wages and poor working conditions.

James Earl Ray was convicted of his murder and sentenced to 99 years in prison. But he later retracted his confession and said he had been only a minor player in a conspiracy.

However, his appeals for a new trial were rejected and he died in prison in 1998.





## HEALTH

# BRAZILIAN MOMS ARE LEADING THE CHARGE TO SECURE MEDICAL MARIJUANA FOR SICK KIDS

GABRIELA SÁ PESSOA,  
SAO PAULO

**T**HE 4-year-old boy struggled to balance while walking through the living room. His mother's eyes attentively followed his every move. Then a seizure knocked him to the ground, the dull thud of his small body echoing through the home.

On this July morning in Guarujá, a coastal city in Brazil's state of Sao Paulo, Murillo quickly regained his senses as his mom, Janaina Silva, cradled him.

"From five minutes of agony, it's now just seconds," Silva said, recalling how only three months ago her son's seizures would have lasted much longer. Murillo was diagnosed as a baby with Lennox-Gastaut syndrome, a type of epilepsy with multiple types of seizures that cause stiffening and dropping of the head and limbs.

His shorter — and less intense — seizures are a result of a steady dose of liquid cannabidiol (CBD) that Silva can acquire for free through the state public health system. It's a step the federal government has failed to take, as legislation to regulate medical cannabis at the national level has stalled in Congress for years.

In drugstores, a 30 milliliter bottle of the CBD that Murillo's pediatrician prescribed for his condition costs as much as 900 reais (\$180) — more than half Silva's monthly wages as an office assistant. Since June, she has spent zero on Murillo's CBD medication. Twice a day, she drips the oil into the boy's mouth, and each bottle lasts about 45 days.

Sao Paulo, Brazil's most populous state with over 44 million people, was the first to enact legislation making CBD available for free.

The law was a win for Brazilian moms who have led a decade-long campaign to secure access for their sick children. They have fought through civil disobedience, court petitions, marches and political pressure.

## GROWING MARIJUANA AT THE COURTYARD

One of the mothers leading the charge is Maria Aparecida Carvalho, 56, a former bank employee. Her daughter, Clárian, was diagnosed at age 10 with Dravet Syndrome, a severe form of epilepsy that can cause cardiorespiratory arrest and lead to sudden death. Her medication caused severe side effects — once she nearly needed hemodialysis from poisoning — and her seizures could last up to one hour. Carvalho and her husband took turns sleeping for

AP PHOTO



Janaina Silva watches over her four-year-old son Murillo after an epileptic seizure at her parents' home in Guarujá

fear they could lose their child in the night.

Then they heard of Charlotte Figi, an American girl suffering from the same disease who became the global poster child for medical cannabis. When Carvalho read about her in 2013, she rushed to tell her husband.

"The first thing I said to him was, 'Let's go get (cannabis) from drug dealers,'" said Carvalho.

Instead, she was able to obtain some CBD months later, when her daughter's neurologist smuggled it inside her luggage when returning from an overseas trip. Later on, with the help of a lawyer, she obtained special court permission to start growing marijuana in her backyard in Sao Paulo city, and has been producing the extract for her daughter and 200 other patients.

Existing legislation in Brazil allows the use of cannabis for scientific and medicinal purposes, said Emílio Rodrigues, a lawyer and member of the National Council on Drug Policy. However, cultivating marijuana is still illegal, pushing the industry to import raw materials, such as cannabis oil, causing prices to rise dramatically.

When Caio França, a center-left state lawmaker met Neide Martins, a mother who struggled to secure CBD to treat her son's rare form of epilepsy, he realized families needed help, particularly those unable to afford medication.

In 2019 França drafted the country's first bill aiming to allow families to request medication through the public health care system. For three years, he worked to convince his overwhelmingly conservative counterparts, one

by one, using testimonials from families who needed marijuana extract as the most effective alternative for their kids' treatment.

"The political environment was uninformed and prejudiced against cannabis. It was surprising how little my fellow deputies knew about it," França said.

## LEGISLATION PASSED FOR MEDICAL CANNABIS

The bill passed in late 2022, with nearly two-thirds support from the state's legislature. It was signed into law in January 2023 by an unlikely figure: Gov. Tarcísio de Freitas, a former Cabinet member of former far-right President Jair Bolsonaro who is often floated as a possible new standard-bearer

for the political right.

He restricted the bill to patients with three rare medical conditions, including Dravet and Lennox-Gastaut syndromes, citing research showing those were the only ones where cannabis use was proven effective.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, de Freitas said he has a nephew with Dravet who uses medicinal cannabis. Before, he said, the boy would wear a helmet in public, in case a sudden seizure should strike him down.

"Each seizure takes away a little bit of life. And it's very sad to witness," the governor said, clutching the podium in both hands. "And then, when you receive this bill, you think: Oh my... finally. This

had to be done."

Recreational marijuana is still prohibited in Brazil, but following years of deliberations, the Supreme Court in June decriminalized it for personal use, up to a maximum-allowed quantity. In response, Brazil's conservative Congress started pushing for tougher drug legislation.

Even if Congress tightens drug laws for recreational use, that shouldn't affect access for patients, said Rodrigues, the lawyer. A 2023 poll by Datafolha concluded that opinions about medical cannabis transcend the nation's deep political polarization.

Use of medicinal cannabis in Brazil is on the rise. In 2023 more than 430,000 Brazilians received cannabis treatment, up nearly 130% from the previous year, according to a survey by Kaya Mind, a business intelligence firm.

Sidarta Ribeiro, a leading Brazilian neuroscientist and founder of the Brain Institute at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte, said mothers of sick children have been at the forefront of the struggle. He recently published a book on the subject, titled "The Flowers of Good: the Science and History of Marijuana Liberation."

"All of this came together over the past ten years to turn the tide, but the game is far from won," said Ribeiro.

Coming from a conservative family, Silva, Murillo's mom, says she used to be prejudiced against marijuana, but she changed her mind after seeing how it has benefited her son.

"It's a medication that can give him a better quality of life," she said. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Maria Aparecida Carvalho tends to her marijuana plants that she cultivates for medicinal purposes, in the backyard of her home in Sao Paulo

FOOTBALL

# New CL format promises more of almost everything storied clubs wanted from UEFA

GRAHAM DUNBAR,  
GENEVA

**T**HE new Champions League format this season will see more teams playing more games for more prize money.

On Thursday, UEFA makes the draw in Monaco for the match schedule of the new single-standings league phase that replaces the traditional group stage.

The first new Champions League format since 2003 promises more of almost everything that Europe's wealthiest and most influential clubs wanted from UEFA.

There are four more places in a 36-team lineup; at least eight games each instead of six; Champions League games scheduled in January for the first time; a prize money rise of at least 25% to a minimum 2.5 billion euros (\$2.8 billion).

There also was more evidence, at UEFA's European Championship this summer, that constant expansion of international competitions is leaving players tired and unable to perform at their best year-round.

The new league phase in European club soccer's marquee event will have 144 total games compared to 96 in the group stage last season.

The "key aims," UEFA said, is to "improve competitive balance and sporting interest and in the process increase the number of meaningful matches — matches with something at stake for both sides — throughout the competition."

In the eighth and final round, all 36 teams play on the same Jan. 29 evening to finalize the standings which will decide which eight teams advance directly to the round of 16 — and with what seedings in a tennis-like knockout bracket — as well as which 16 go into a new knockout playoff round in February, and which 12 are eliminated.

"We simulated that qualification should be possible with an average of 7.6 points, which means two victories and two draws," said UEFA's head of competitions strategy,

Stéphane Anselmo.

## WHY CHANGE SUCH A SUCCESSFUL COMPETITION?

Money, mostly, though that's not the only reason.

The Champions League in Europe has for the past 32 years showcased the highest quality play in world soccer. It let UEFA steer billions of euros (dollars) of prize money to clubs who pay the highest transfer fees and salaries.

Still, influential officials at the European Club Association (ECA) got bored of the group stage, saying it was too repetitive and lacked drama. They wanted more games against stronger opponents that would be more valued by broadcasters, viewers and new fans worldwide. Their leverage over UEFA was potentially launching their own breakaway competition.

The road to agreeing the format was rocky. A controversial first proposal in 2019, favoring storied clubs, was stopped by a backlash from mid-ranked clubs and domestic leagues.

There was intense turmoil sparked by the failed Super League launch in April 2021 by most of the same club officials who negotiated Champions League reform with UEFA.

Final format approval came in May 2022 — when Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus were exiled from the talks and still pursued UEFA in court — and it was broadly what the rebel Super League clubs had negotiated.

## WHAT IS THE NEW FORMAT?

Out goes the group-stage format played for 21 seasons where 32 teams were put into eight groups of four teams from a seeded draw. The top two in each group advanced to the round of 16. Groups gave each team six games from September into December, playing each rival once at home and once away.

In comes a single-standings league — 36 teams each playing eight games against eight different opponents through January.

The top eight in the stan-



dings go direct to the round of 16 in March. Teams ranked ninth to 24th go into the knockout playoffs in February. The bottom 12 teams are eliminated.

In the playoffs, teams ranked Nos. 9-16 are seeded in the draw to play second legs at home against unseeded teams Nos. 17-24.

## WHO GETS THE FOUR EXTRA PLACES?

Two for countries whose teams collectively had the best record in UEFA club competitions in the previous season. That was Italy and Germany so the fifth-placed teams in Serie A and the Bundesliga qualified: Bologna and Borussia Dortmund.

The fifth-ranked national league (based on five years of results in UEFA club competitions) gets a third direct entry. That is currently France and Brest was third in Ligue 1.

An extra place goes to the qualifying rounds path for national champions from lower-ranked countries. They now play for five total qualifying places instead of four last season.

## HOW WILL THE DRAW BE DONE?

The 36 teams come out of four seeding pots graded by each team's "UEFA club coefficient" — its ranking by results in five years of European competitions. The top-seeded pot contains recent Champions League winners and beaten finalists, plus

Leipzig and Barcelona.

When a team's ball is drawn, its slate of eight opponents — two from each seeding pot, one to play at home and one away — will be allocated by a software program and dis-

played within seconds.

Match dates will be confirmed Saturday, to avoid city clashes with Europa League and Conference League games being drawn Friday in Monaco. Those lower-tier competitions also

are a 36-team single-standings league. Conference League teams play just six games.

## BILLION-DOLLAR PRIZE MONEY FUND

Winning the Champions League title in 2023 earned Manchester City 135 million euros (\$151 million) from UEFA. This season's winner can reach 150 million euros (\$168 million), with total competition revenue boosted by selling 189 total games instead of 125.

Commercial strategy is managed by a UEFA-ECA joint venture, and new sponsors for the Champions League include a cryptocurrency trading platform and a betting site.

Each of the 36 teams gets a basic 18.6 million euros (\$20.8 million), then 2.1 million euros (\$2.35 million) for each game won and 700,000 euros (\$782,000) per draw. **MDT/AP**

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**OPINION**

**Multipolar World**

Jorge Costa Oliveira



**GO DIE FAR AWAY**

The Israeli government is not interested in peace, does not want an agreement to free hostages and end the war in Gaza, nor does it want to de-escalate the conflict there or in the north with Hezbollah. Netanyahu and his radical Jewish allies have worked for decades to eliminate Fatah and supported the creation of the monster that is Hamas, betting on the radicalization and polarization of the “Palestinian issue.” Netanyahu and his government of radicals, for whom a “two-state solution” is anathema, are using the October 7 massacre to promote the war in pursuit of “total victory.”

Furthermore, Netanyahu desperately wants to remain in office to avoid the continuation of the corruption trial against him, which could lead to his [likely] conviction.

Palestinian leadership today is radicalized and continues to reject a “two-state solution.” They prefer to keep fighting for the destruction of Israel, to educate their children for “martyrdom,” and to create terrorist militias.

The current leadership of Iran finances terrorist movements like Hamas, Hezbollah, and AnsarAllah, amid growing unpopularity of the theocratic regime. A Gamaan survey from February 2024 of the adult Iranian population shows that in a referendum asking, “Islamic Republic: yes or no?” only 16.5% of respondents supported maintaining an Islamic republic, whilst 74.6% were against it.

The assassination of the Hamas leader in Tehran provides the Iranian leadership with an excuse to ride the anti-Western histrionic rhetoric, using external enemies as a way to re-legitimize an unpopular regime, trying to divert attention from internal repression. But they must be careful not to spark a new war that could increase popular discontent and be fatal to the radical theocratic regime.

Interestingly, in the same Gamaan survey, respondents were also asked who they considered to be the primary party at fault in the Israel-Hamas conflict, with about 35% blaming Hamas, 20% blaming Israel, and 31% blaming both sides.

Neither Israel, Hamas, nor Iran want peace. Part of Western public opinion demands efforts in that direction, while another part is fed up with this charade. The American government, on the eve of elections, wants to capitalize on any agreement—whether it be a truce, a ceasefire, or whatever—that it can politically leverage for the Democratic candidacy.

Radicalization and polarization will certainly continue to dominate Israeli and Palestinian politics. Soon, we will all lose patience with this endless hyped excitement over what has no solution and will wish that the parties in this conflict go die far away.

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**FRENCH JUDGE EXTENDS POLICE CUSTODY FOR TELEGRAM CEO PAVEL DUROV**

THE BUZZ

A French investigative judge extended police custody for the CEO of the popular messaging app Telegram, Pavel Durov, prosecutors said yesterday.

Durov was detained Saturday at Le Bourget airport as part of a judicial inquiry opened last month involving 12 alleged criminal violations.

They include complicity in selling child sexual abuse material and in drug trafficking, fraud, abetting organized crime transactions and refusing to share information or documents with investigators when required by law.

A statement from the Paris prosecutor’s office said Durov’s police

custody order was extended on Monday evening for up to 48 hours. After that, authorities must release or charge him, the prosecutor’s office said in an earlier statement.

Durov is a citizen of Russia, France, the United Arab Emirates and the Caribbean island nation of St. Kitts and Nevis.

Russian government officials have expressed outrage at his detention, with some calling it politically motivated and proof of the West’s double standard on freedom of speech.

The outcry has raised eyebrows among Kremlin critics because in 2018, Russian authorities themselves tried to block Telegram but failed, withdrawing the ban in 2020.

AP FILE PHOTO



Liam Gallagher and Noel Gallagher

15 YEARS AFTER

**OASIS REUNITES FOR TOUR AND ENDS GALLAGHER BROTHERS’ FEUD**

DANICA KIRKA, LONDON

OASIS, the Britpop band known for timeless hits like “Wonderwall” and “Don’t Look Back in Anger,” is reuniting for a tour of the British Isles next summer, ending a 15-year hiatus and, presumably, the long-held feud between brothers Liam and Noel Gallagher.

The guitar band will play 14 dates in Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland next July and August, Oasis said yesterday. Tickets go on sale at 9 a.m. Saturday.

“This is it. This is happening,” the band said.

Oasis split in 2009 after many years of infighting, with Noel Gallagher officially leaving the band just before a performance at a festival near Paris. Even before the dissolution, the brothers had long had an antagonistic relationship and reportedly did not speak to each other for years after the breakup.

“People will write and say what they like, but I simply could not go on working with Liam a day longer,” Noel Gallagher, the band’s guitarist and

songwriter, wrote in a statement at the time.

While the Gallagher brothers haven’t performed together since, both regularly perform Oasis songs at their solo gigs. They’ve also each fired off criticisms of the other in the press.

Noel Gallagher accused his younger brother of having a hangover that forced them to cancel a 2009 concert. The frontman disputed the accusation and sued, later dropping the lawsuit.

But now the brothers are preparing to reunite, with the band saying fans would experience “the spark and intensity” that occurs only when they appear on stage together.

The tour will begin July 4 and 5 at Principality Stadium in Cardiff, Wales. Oasis will also perform at Heaton Park in Manchester, England, on July 11, 12, 19 and 20; Wembley Stadium in London on July 25 and 26 and Aug. 2 and 3; Scottish Gas Murrayfield Stadium in Edinburgh on Aug. 8 and 9; and Croke Park in Dublin on Aug. 16 and 17.

The band alluded to past tensions in the tour announcement.

“The guns have fallen

silent,” Oasis said. “The stars have aligned. The great wait is over. Come see. It will not be televised.”

In 2011, Noel Gallagher told The Associated Press in an interview that he left the band after an incident where Liam Gallagher started wielding a guitar “like an axe ... and he’s swinging this guitar around and he kind of you know, he took my face off with it, you know?”

In 2019, Liam Gallagher told the AP he was ready to reconcile.

“The most important thing is about me and him being brothers,” he said. “He thinks I’m desperate to get the band back together for money. But I didn’t join the band to make money. I joined the band to have fun and to see the world.”

“I don’t know what his problem is,” he continued. “I think he just wanted to go away and do his solo career, get all the coin and be surrounded by all the yes men you can fire and hire whenever he wants. You can’t do that with me.”

With the announcement, the Britpop progenitors ended a few days of fan speculation. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



**Sri Lanka** Anura Kumara Disanayake, leading the National People’s Power alliance, is a significant contender in the presidential race. Positioned as an agent of change, Disanayake focuses on addressing public disillusionment following a severe economic crisis.

AP PHOTO



**Vatican** Pope Francis is set to visit Indonesia’s Istiqlal mosque as part of his Asian interfaith tour. This marks a significant step in promoting religious dialogue, with the Pope meeting representatives of all six officially recognized religions in Indonesia.

AP PHOTO



**USA** In 2021, Latinas contributed \$1.3 trillion to the U.S. GDP, a figure comparable to Florida’s economy. This report highlights the rapid economic ascent of Latinas, who are increasingly influential in various sectors, significantly outpacing the growth rates of their peers.

AP PHOTO



**USA** Mariah Carey announced the death of her mother and sister on the same day, describing her heartbreak and the support she has received. This personal tragedy highlights the emotional strain on public figures, with Carey expressing gratitude for the support during this challenging time.