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**THE MACAU NEW NEIGHBORHOOD IN HENGQIN HAS SOLD 1,300 UNITS; RESIDENTS PRAISE DEVELOPMENT'S AMENITIES AND CONVENIENCE**

P3

**WEIXIN PALM PAY LAUNCHES IN MACAU, ITS FIRST APP OUTSIDE THE MAINLAND**

P3

**CHINA'S FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION BANS 43 PEOPLE FOR LIFE AFTER CORRUPTION INVESTIGATION**

P6



AP PHOTO



**Singapore** Pope Francis is set to visit Singapore, marking his second papal visit there and the first in nearly four decades. His three-day stay will address themes like human dignity and environmental care and include meetings with the President and Prime Minister, a public Mass, and visits to local religious and social institutions.

# THE DEBATE

The first debate between Harris and Trump - set to start this morning at 9 a.m., less than two months before election day in November - will be closely watched here and in mainland China, where the implications of American policies are strongly felt

P8

AP PHOTO



**East Timor** faces an energy crossroads as it looks to transition from diesel to renewable energy sources amidst economic pressures. The country aims to increase renewable energy to 50% of its mix by 2030, exploring solar, wind, and hydropower potentials to enhance its agricultural sector and reduce dependency on depleting gas fields.

AP PHOTO



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**North Korean** leader Kim Jong Un has vowed to advance his nuclear capabilities to full combat readiness against the United States, amid growing regional military tensions. Kim's declaration follows increased weapon tests and comes ahead of potential provocative actions expected before the U.S. presidential election.

**GAMING**  
**LAS VEGAS SANDS TO BOOST MACAU STAKE**

P5



**CE ELECTION**  
**SAM HOU FAI SET TO BECOME NEXT BOSS**

P5

CITY OF SPORTS

# MACAU WELCOMES WORLD'S BEST BADMINTON PLAYERS

VICTORIA CHAN

**T**HE annual Sands China Ltd. Macau Open badminton tournament is set to return in September, promising a world-class competition and community celebrations in the city.

The tournament, co-organized by Sands China and the Badminton Federation of Macau (BFM), will take center stage from Sept. 24 to 29, at the Macau East Asian Games Dome.

This event marks a dual celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China and the 25th Anniversary of Macau's Return to the Motherland.

As part of the HSBC BWF World Tour Super 300, the annual tournament will feature around 400 of the world's top badminton players from 20 countries and regions.

A record-breaking 375 players from 30 nations have applied, with 259 qualifying for the competition.

The tournament will include five events: Men's Singles, Women's Singles, Men's Doubles, Women's Doubles, and Mixed Doubles, with a total prize money of USD210,000 (about MOP1.68 million).

Sands China, the first integrated resort operator to jointly organize the Macau Open, aims to enhance the cross-sector integrated deve-



lopment of "tourism+" and "sports+" in Macau.

The event will offer early bird ticket discounts to local residents to promote badminton within the community, and there will also be related community events where local badminton enthusiasts can interact closely with elite players.

Grant Chum, CEO of Sands China Ltd., said, "Badminton enjoys widespread popularity in Macau. This world-class tournament provides both locals and visitors with a chance to savor the city's diverse allure and enhances the integrated development of tourism and sports in the city."

Kong Tat Choi, president of the Badminton Federation of Macau, added, "This tournament is our 15th year of hosting, and we hope to attract top badminton players and supporters

from around the world, promoting Macau's culture and tourism industry."

Tickets for the tournament will be on sale from Sept. 11 through the Macau Ticketing network, with prices ranging from MOP150 for matches from Sept. 24 to 27, to MOP400 for the semi-finals and finals on Sept. 28 and 29.

Discounts of up to 50% are available for Macau residents and 20% for non-residents for early bird purchases by Sept. 22.

The Badminton Federation of Macau, established in 1982, has been actively promoting and supporting the long-term development of local badminton.

Since 2006, the Macau Open has been an annual international badminton event, hosting over 300 players from more than 20 countries every year.



## LOCAL BADMINTON PLAYER WONG 'VERY EXCITED' TO PLAY AT HOME

**T**HE Macau Open Badminton Tournament has returned after a hiatus due to the pandemic, and local player Wong Kok Weng is eager to represent his home team.

"I hope I can show my local spirit," said Wong, who has participated in previous tournaments like the Kowloon 100 and Taipei 300.

"Because I am a sportsman in Macau, I hope I can achieve positive results in my home city."

Wong's teammates went to Thailand for training during the summer, but he stayed in Macau due to school commitments. Despite the separation, he is confident in their teamwork.

"In terms of teamwork, we have been partners for a long time, so there should be no problem," Wong said. "As long

as we can do our best, we can do our best on the field."

This year's Macau Open marks the first time the tournament has been held since the pandemic. Wong sees it as an opportunity to find his rhythm after intensive training.

"Slowly find the results of the training, go to the competition, and find the feeling of the competition," he said.

"I hope we won't be too nervous at the beginning of the game during the competition, and we get into our groove. Step by step, play our normal rhythm, and get a good result."

For Wong, the Macau Open is more than just a tournament; it's a chance to perform in front of his hometown crowd.

"Actually, I am very excited," he said. "Because everyone lives here, and I want to perform well here."

# WTT Champions Macau 2024 kicks off with exciting matches

**T**HE WTT Champions Macau 2024, presented by Galaxy Entertainment Group began Monday at the Macau East Asian Games Dome.

On Day One, defending Women's Singles champion Wang Manyu of China, currently ranked No. 3 played Monday afternoon.

Wang, 25, began her title defense with a solid 3-1 victory over Romania's Berna-

dette Szocs.

Meanwhile, Macau's Zhu Yuling, returning to international competition after a four-year break, showcased her skills with a convincing 3-0 win against Poland's Natalia Bajor.

As the tournament progressed into its second day, the competition intensified.

Notable matches included Denmark's Jonathan

Groth facing Taiwan's Lin Yun-Ju, who has had a strong season, winning the WTT Champions Frankfurt 2023.

Groth, yet to secure a victory this year, will be looking to turn his luck around against the formidable Lin, currently ranked No. 13 in the Race to WTT Finals standings.

Lin Yun-Ju secured a 3-0 victory over the Dane.

In the Women's Singles, yesterday, Puerto Rico's Adriana Diaz, ranked No. 11 globally, competed against Egypt's Hana Goda.

Diaz, who has a strong track record against younger players, aimed to maintain her dominance as she seeks to advance further in the tournament.

Diaz advanced with her 3-2 victory against Goda to round of 16. NS



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# Weixin palm pay launches in Macau, its first app outside the mainland

NADIA SHAW

**W**EIXIN Pay, in collaboration with ICBC (Macau) and Galaxy Macau, has launched its palm scan payment service at the integrated resort, marking the first application of Weixin's palm payment services outside the mainland.

Yesterday's launch event was attended by Tai Kin Ip, Director of Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) and Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, Director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO).

The launch not only represents a milestone for technological innovation in Macau but also promotes the digital transformation of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area.

MGTO and Weixin Pay believe this offering will allow for more payment options for mainland tourists, as well as create more business opportunities for local merchants, driving development in Macau's tourism industry and financial space.

Kai Xia, Head of Weixin Pay Hardware Innovation, said yesterday the underlying technology relies on the recognition of both palmprint and palm vein to create a touchless and high-accuracy user experience.

"The user's identity can be detected and payment can be



NADIA SHAW

completed within one second. What is the technology behind it? In fact, it is based on the identification of tens of millions of users, and then accurately finds who you are, with an accuracy rate of over 99%," said Xia.

Weixin Pay has jointly developed and issued China's first palm payment standard at the industry level, leading the industrial application of the technology, as well as exploring overseas adoption.

#### CONVENIENCE AND SECURITY

Weixin Palm Pay utilizes palmprint and palm vein recognition technology to provide a

touchless and "high-accuracy user experience".

The payment solution incorporates advanced security measures and financial risk control from Tencent, ensuring a safe transaction experience.

Weixin's pioneering palm payment technology has passed the tests of China's National FinTech Evaluation Center and has jointly developed the first palm payment standard at the industry level.

In the initial phase, more than 60 shops and retail locations at StarWorld Hotel, Galaxy Macau, Broadway Macau,

and Galaxy Arena have integrated the Weixin Palm Pay solution.

This allows users who have activated their Weixin Pay RMB e-wallet and Weixin Palm Pay features to make convenient purchases with a wave of their palms.

Weixin Pay said they will continue working closely with partners to expand payment scenarios in Macau.

"Weixin Palm Pay is already widely used in the retail, dining, transportation, power bank rental, and other sectors on the mainland," said Xia.

"Now, with its launch in Macau, we hope to use technology to bring more convenience to users at Galaxy Macau and enhance their shopping and payment experiences."

Wayne Chen, General Manager of Weixin Pay Cross-Border Business Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, said Weixin Palm Pay has now been implemented across various industries on the mainland, significantly improving user experience in payment, as well as other aspects like security access.

In other use cases such as power bank rentals, the lending process for users has been streamlined from four steps to two; in campus cafeterias, serving efficiency has increased by over 60%; and the repeat usage rate surpasses 70% in multiple scenarios.

"Therefore, we hope to help overseas merchants improve their operational efficiency through the implementation of Weixin Palm Pay," Chen said.

He added, "the biggest difference is contactless, which actually makes a big difference in hygiene."

By bringing this technology to Macau, Weixin Pay aims to help overseas merchants improve their operational efficiency and provide a more convenient payment experience for tourists and expand into the payment landscape in Macau and beyond.

## HENGQIN

# Macau New Neighborhood enticements see 1,300 units sold

**A**CCORDING to Macau Urban Renewal Limited, the Macau New Neighborhood in Hengqin has sold 1,300 units, with residents praising the development's amenities and convenience.

"Swimming, gym and yoga. I can do them conveniently here. Hiking, also," said Jessica, a resident who owns a three-bedroom unit in the Macau New Neighborhood.

"There is also a beautiful park. It's a very good place. The air is fresh. I feel relaxed here."

The project, a joint venture between the



Macau and Guangdong governments, aims to provide Macau residents

with residential spaces, education, health, and social services, offering

a similar living environment to Macau but with more greenery and lei-

sure facilities.

"There are health centers. Next to them is the 24-hour service center. I thought it is very convenient. The elderly are also very happy," Jessica said.

"Some supporting facilities will be opened gradually, including the swimming pool and sports facilities," said Chan Ioe Kei, project manager of the Macau New Neighborhood.

"Concerning the shuttle bus, we have increased the frequency and extended the operating hours based on the residential density."

The project service center helps property owners with various issues when they move in, such as applying for water and electricity, to make the process faster. VC

## HEALTH BUREAU SEARCHES DOOR-TO-DOOR FOR DENGUE CASES

The Health Bureau (SS) today searched door-to-door on Rua da Erva and surrounding streets in Macau for dengue fever cases. This comes after the bureau was notified of three confirmed imported dengue cases from neighboring regions. A temporary blood collection station was also set up to test those with symptoms. Health bureau staff emphasized the risk of the mosquito-borne virus spreading and appealed to the public to eliminate mosquito breeding sites. Preventive work focusing on where the imported cases have been detected is ongoing.

# LOCAL LUXURY MARKET FACES CHALLENGES DESPITE IVS EXPANSION

NADIA SHAW

MACAU'S luxury market is experiencing a significant downturn, even as China's Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) expands.

Once a catalyst for high-end tourism, the IVS is now struggling to maintain its previous momentum in the rapidly changing consumer landscape.

The IVS, introduced in 2003, allowed affluent mainland Chinese tourists to visit Macau frequently, indulging in its casinos, luxury retail outlets and fine dining.

However, according to industry observers cited by Asia Gaming Brief, the benefits of this scheme are diminishing due to shifts in the economic environment in China.

Consumers are increasingly gravitating toward more affordable luxury options and local brands.

Johnson Ian, president of the Synergy of Macau political party, emphasized the urgency for businesses catering to high-end consumers to adapt to the decline in luxury spending.

"They have no choice but to



adapt," he said, highlighting the sluggish sales at luxury T Galleria stores within Macau's integrated resorts.

This downturn has led to salary cuts and unpaid leave for frontline staff.

In July, Chinese visitors were permitted to spend up to RMB15,000 (\$2,064) in duty-free shopping across both Hong Kong and Macau, nearly doubling the previous limit.

This policy aims to stimulate economic recovery in the two Special Administrative Regions post-pandemic.

However, Ian remains doubtful

about its long-term effectiveness.

"While easing the IVS restrictions will help to some degree, it won't have a significant impact," he said.

"As China's economy faces downward pressure and declining incomes, consumer spending is bound to shrink."

Ian also pointed to rising competition from regions like Hainan, which is quickly becoming a luxury shopping hub due to its tax-free policies.

"By 2025, Hainan will become a zero-tariff zone, posing stiff competition for Macau and Hong Kong's high-end retail markets,"

he noted.

"Mainland Chinese consumers no longer need to wait months to shop in Macau; they can easily visit Hainan or even Europe, where prices may be more favorable."

Declining Consumer Spending and Business Adjustments

The enthusiasm for spending in Macau is waning, as evidenced by statistical data and retail trends.

Ian noted average tourist spending has dropped significantly since the pandemic.

"Before the pandemic, in 2019, spending was lower than during the pandemic when Macau was the only 'foreign' destination available to mainland visitors. Now, that high spending has dropped, impacting multiple sectors."

In a stark illustration of these challenges, luxury retailer DFS Group laid off approximately 80 frontline sales employees in late August, marking its first significant workforce reduction since entering the Macau market in 2008.

DFS attributed this decision to the rapid changes in Macau's luxury retail landscape, resulting in

a 5% workforce cut.

The company reported a nearly 40% revenue drop compared to both last year and pre-pandemic levels.

In June, DFS began trimming expenses due to the revenue slump, cutting salaries of frontline employees by nearly 50%.

The cosmetics segment has been particularly hard-hit, with sales plummeting since the latter half of the previous year.

Macau's luxury market is also contending with increased competition from destinations like Europe and Hainan, which have eased visa requirements for Chinese nationals.

Additionally, the government's crackdown on VIP gaming and the decline of junket operators has shifted visitor preferences toward shorter, more affordable stays and experience-focused activities.

Billy Song, president of the Macau Responsible Gaming Association, believes Macau must enhance its marketing strategies to attract affluent tourists beyond mainland China and reduce its reliance on the IVS.

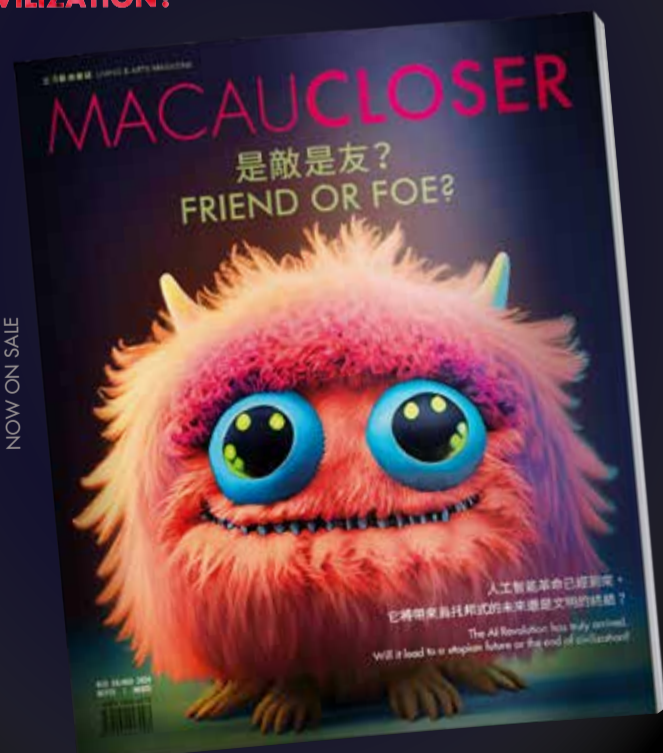
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## Las Vegas Sands to boost Macau stake

**L**AS Vegas Sands Corp (LVS) is set to further increase its controlling interest in Macau-based subsidiary Sands China Ltd., investing up to HKD800 million to boost its stake to nearly 72%.

In a filing to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange yesterday [Macau time], Sands China announced its U.S.-based parent company, LVS, plans to acquire additional shares in the Macau casino operator.

The transaction will be carried out through Venetian Venture Development Intermediate II, an indirect wholly owned subsidiary of LVS.

According to the filing, Venetian Venture will pay up to HKD800 million to purchase approximately 59.6 million Sands China shares, representing 0.74% of the company's total outstanding shares.

This will increase LVS's stake in Sands China from the current 71.02% to nearly 72%.

The latest announcement comes after LVS invested HKD1.95 billion (USD250 million) in December 2023 to lift its stake in Sands China to around 71%.

The casino giant first hinted at increasing its Macau presence in 2021, following the sale of its Las Vegas gaming assets for USD6.25 billion.

Sands China, which operates multiple integrated resorts in Macau, including Sands Macao, The Venetian Macao, and The Parisian Macao, said it "will continue to maintain sufficient public float of the shares" following the share purchase transaction.

The move comes as Moody's Investors Service Inc. noted that "share repurchases and the payment of dividends" remain a credit constraint for the LVS group. **VC**

### CE ELECTION

# Sam Hou Fai set to become Macau's next boss

NADIA SHAW

**S**AM Hou Fai, a 62-year-old former judge, is poised to become Macau's next Chief Executive after securing an unprecedented 96% of nominations from the 400-member Chief Executive Election Committee.

With 383 endorsements, Sam will run unopposed in the Oct. 13 election, as no other potential candidates will be able to get the minimum 66 votes required to stand.

Sam, who resigned from his position as President of Macau's Court of Final Appeal last month to run for the top job, submitted his nomination form to the Electoral Affairs Commission yesterday morning.

In a statement, he expressed his intention to continue gathering support from the remaining committee members and soliciting opinions from the local community.

The lack of competition in Macau's CE elections is not uncommon, as all but the inaugural election in 1999 have featured a single candidate.



Edmund Ho emerged victorious in the 1999 election, capturing nearly 82% of the votes.

He subsequently became Macau's first Chief Executive after the territory's handover from Portugal to China. Stanley Au was the other candidate in that election.

Sam has received overwhelming support from the committee, which highlights strong backing from the pro-establishment figures who make up the electorate.

In recent days, Sam has met with representatives from various business associations to discuss the current state and future development of small- and

medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The associations suggested the need for more measures to boost the economy in neighborhood areas and support struggling SMEs, as well as establishing a dedicated body for grassroots economic development.

If elected, Sam would become Macau's first Chief Executive with a legal background, in contrast to his predecessors who all hailed from the business sector.

As the city looks to diversify its casino-dependent economy and address the challenges posed by the pandemic, Sam's leadership will be crucial in shaping Macau's future.

ADVERTORIAL

## GALAXY MACAU UNVEILS 'DOUBLE ANNIVERSARIES' CELEBRATIONS, SHOWCASING NATIONAL INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE TO HIGHLIGHT TRADITIONAL CHINESE CULTURAL

A SERIES OF CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND ENGAGING EXPERIENCES FROM NOW UNTIL OCTOBER 20, CULMINATING IN A HANFU PARADE TO ILLUMINATE THE MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL

**A**s the golden autumn moon graces the night sky, China prepares to celebrate two significant milestones - the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Macau Special Administrative Region. In honor of these "Double Anniversaries", Galaxy Macau™ Integrated Resort (hereafter referred to as "Galaxy Macau") is hosting an extraordinary celebration until October 20, featuring a series of captivating Chinoiserie activities that immerse guests in the rich tapestry of traditional Chinese culture.

This year, the "Double Anniversaries" are a key highlight in Macau. In collaboration with the "National Cultural Industry Demonstration Base" - Foshan Folk Art Research Institute, Galaxy Macau presents a series of magnificent art installations crafted from Foshan Lanterns, a national intangible cultural heritage. These installations illuminate the resort in a breathtaking display, supporting the Macau SAR Government's "Travel +" initiative, which promotes the appreciation and preservation of China's intangible cultural heritage among both locals and tourists.

The centerpiece, "The Splendor of China", located in the Diamond Lobby, draws inspiration from an ancient Chinese masterpiece. This exquisite installation features a serene, multi-colored lotus pond meticulously crafted on an elegantly unfurled scroll, with a central lantern symbolizing prosperity, wealth, and peace. This lantern takes the form of a magnificent peony, its petals gracefully opening and closing, evoking the grandeur of a bygone era when "the lanterns shine all night, and the city



"The Splendor of China", the centerpiece located in the Diamond Lobby, vividly recreates the grandeur of a bygone era, where "the lanterns shine all night, and the city blooms in beauty".



On the evening of MidAutumn Day (September 17th) at 8:45 PM, the highly anticipated Hanfu Parade will debut at Galaxy Macau.



At the entrance of the Crystal Lobby, the "Jumping Fish, Blooming Lotus" installation, featuring two giant goldfish, brings to life a poetic scene of "dancing fish" from a famous poem by Song dynasty poet Xin Qiji.



On September 15 and 16, an open-top bus, carrying dozens of enthusiasts dressed in Hanfu, will tour the city, inviting Macau citizens and tourists to engage with and appreciate the timeless beauty of traditional Chinese attire.

blooms in beauty". Guests can further engage with this masterpiece through a WeChat mini-program, enhancing their experience with the enchanting interplay of light and shadow, and winning instant prizes, including tickets to the "Love Between Fairy and Devil" VR Immersive Experience Center during the Mid-Autumn Festival holiday. Every Saturday and Sunday in September at 3 PM, models in traditional attire will also be available for guests to take photos

with, adding a vibrant touch to the celebration. At the entrance of the Crystal Lobby, the "Jumping Fish, Blooming Lotus" installation features two giant goldfish, bringing to life the poetic imagery of "dancing fish" from the famous Song dynasty poet Xin Qiji. Intricately crafted by artisans of intangible cultural heritage, every detail of these lanterns captures the fluidity of the goldfish's movements as they emerge from a lotus-filled pond, reflecting the

full moon's shadow. The blooming lotus holds special significance as it celebrates the 25th anniversary of Macau SAR, adding an air of elegance to the festival.

Following the recent launch of the world's first "Love Between Fairy and Devil" VR Immersive Experience Center at Galaxy Macau, a wave of Chinoiserie fervor has swept through the city. In addition to the VR interactions, guests can enjoy a Hanfu costume experience,

allowing them to don elegant traditional attire as they explore the resort and Macau's major attractions. Galaxy Macau continues to embrace this cultural wave by hosting a series of Hanfu-themed activities. On September 15 and 16, an open-top bus carrying Hanfu enthusiasts will tour the city, starting at the Crystal Lobby and passing through popular landmarks, offering both locals and tourists a unique opportunity to appreciate the timeless beauty of traditional Chinese attire. The celebration will culminate in a grand Hanfu Parade on September 17, from 8:45 PM to 10:00 PM, beginning at the East Square and progressing to the Diamond Lobby. Guests are invited to join the procession, fully immersing themselves in the beauty of Guofeng through the elaborate Hanfu costumes, while the Macao Youth Chinese Orchestra performs traditional Chinese music at the Diamond Lobby at 9:30 PM, making this Mid-Autumn Festival truly unforgettable.

Throughout the celebration, Galaxy Macau's renowned restaurants, such as Bei Shan Lou, Tam Chai Yu Chun, and Pak Loh Chiu Chow Restaurant, will offer a curated selection of seasonal delicacies, allowing guests to savor the authentic flavors of China. Children can participate in traditional Mid-Autumn games, such as riddle-solving, with the chance to win small gifts upon check-in. They will also encounter Wavey, the peacock mascot of Galaxy Kidz, dressed in Hanfu, adding to the festive joy. At Galaxy Promenade, guests will enjoy cash vouchers with no minimum spending requirements, while several new flagship and pop-up stores from top brands are expected. In October, the celebrations will reach their zenith with a series of breathtaking performances at Galaxy Arena by legendary singer Andy Lau and the world-renowned tenor Plácido Domingo, providing a grand finale to these festivities.

For more information on Galaxy Macau's celebratory activities and offerings during the Mid-Autumn Festival and National Day holidays, please visit official website at [www.galaxymacau.com](http://www.galaxymacau.com), or follow Galaxy Macau on Facebook, Instagram, WeChat, Xiaohongshu, and Douyin.



Supporters for Chinese team cheer during a World Cup and AFC Asian Qualifier between Japan and China

SPORTS

# Football Association bans 43 people for life after corruption investigation

CHINA'S Football Association has banned 43 people for life over allegations of match-fixing and other forms of corruption in the latest effort to weed out graft in the country's notoriously underperforming team sport.

The official Xinhua News Agency yesterday reported that Zhang Xiaopeng, a top police official, attended a news conference at Dalian to release details of a "two-year investigation that uncovered a series of online gambling, match-fixing and bribery ca-

ses."

Xinhua said 120 matches in domestic leagues, 128 criminal suspects, and 41 clubs were implicated in the investigation. Of those banned, 38 were players and five were officials working for various clubs.

Former Chinese internationals Jin Jingdao, Guo Tianyu, and Gu Chao were among those to receive life bans from the sport.

Other players and officials were given shortened bans, including foreign players lured to China by the promise of

high salaries.

South Korean Son Jun-ho, who played for China's Shandong Taishan FC, and Ewolo Donovan of Cameroon, who formerly played for Heilongjiang Ice City, were given five-year bans.

Son's activities "seriously violated sports ethics and sportsmanship, causing a significant negative impact on society," according to the federation's statement.

President Xi Jinping has pledged to make China a football superpower, but the men's teams haven't found

much traction. Pledges to build new pitches and hire staff have fallen short as the economy struggles to regain its feet following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Japan trounced China 7-0 last week to open the third round of Asian qualifying for the 2026 World Cup. It was China's most lopsided loss against Japan, a geopolitical rival in Asia.

The Chinese men's team was playing Saudi Arabia at Dalian yesterday in its second World Cup qualifier in five days.

China still has a shot at reaching the expanded, 48-team World Cup in 2026, hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada. But even with the larger field, China still might not make it past the continental qualifying stage.

China has qualified only once for the World Cup, losing all three group games in 2002.

China was No. 87 in the latest FIFA world rankings for men's national teams, just below Curaçao (population 150,000), and just above Equatorial Guinea (1.7 million). **MDT/AP**

TRADE

# August exports grow a robust 8.7%, beating forecasts while imports soften

CHINA'S exports grew for a fifth consecutive month, in a sign of growing demand abroad even as imports fell amid a slowing Chinese economy.

Exports in August expanded by 8.7% to \$308.65 billion compared to the same period last year, according to data released by China's customs office yesterday, beating economists' estimates of about 6.5%. The export figures for August were also up from the 7% rise in July.

The reading in August is the strongest in 18 months,

thanks in part to a low base in August 2023, when exports declined 8.8%.

By comparison, imports grew just 0.5% compared to a year ago, falling short of the approximately 2% estimate by economists.

Chinese leaders have ramped up investment in manufacturing to rev up an economy that stalled during the pandemic and is still growing slower than hoped.

"Export values grew year-on-year at the fastest pace in 17 months, with export volumes hitting re-



cord highs. We expect exports to remain robust in the near term, supported

by the decline in China's real effective exchange rate," said Zichun Huang

of Capital Economics.

"Imports volumes fell last month, but they will probably rebound in the coming months, with strong external demand lifting imports for processing and re-export, and increased fiscal spending boosting industrial commodities demand," Huang said.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations remained China's largest trading partner, and exports to ASEAN, the United States and the European Union have expanded compared to the same period last year.

China's trade surplus widened to \$91.02 billion in August, up from \$84.65 billion in July.

While the demand for exports is on the rise, China struggled with boos-

ting demand domestically.

The consumer price index rose 0.6% in August, missing forecasts according to data released Monday. Officials attributed the higher CPI to an increase in food prices due to bad weather.

But the core CPI, which excludes food and energy prices, rose by just 0.3% in August, the slowest in over three years.

In August, China's manufacturing activity fell to a six-month low according to an official survey of factory managers, with the Purchasing Managers' Index slipping to 49.1 according to official data released last week. A reading below 50 indicates a contraction of manufacturing activity. **MDT/AP**

EAST TIMOR

# Francis' Mass draws 600,000 people, nearly half the population

HELENA ALVES, TASITOLU

**A**n estimated 600,000 people — a figure nearing half of East Timor's population — packed a seaside park yesterday for Pope Francis' final Mass, held on the same field where St. John Paul II prayed during the nation's fight for independence from Indonesia.

While other papal Masses have drawn millions of people in more populous countries and there were certainly other nationalities attending the Mass, the crowd in small East Timor was believed to represent the biggest turnout for a papal event ever, in terms of the proportion of the population.

The Tasitolu park was a sea of yellow and white umbrellas — the colors of the Holy See flag — as Timorese shielded themselves from the afternoon sun awaiting Francis' arrival for the afternoon service. They got occasional spritzes of relief from water trucks that plied the field with hoses.

"We are very happy that the pope came to Timor because it gives a blessing to our land and our people," said Dirce Maria Teresa Freitas, 44, who arrived at the field at 9 a.m. from Baucau, more than seven hours early.

Tasitolu is said to have been a site where Indonesian troops disposed of bodies killed during their 24-year rule of East Timor. Now it is known as the "Park of Peace" and features a larger-than-life-sized statue of John Paul to commemorate his 1989 visit, when the Polish pope shamed Indonesia for its human rights abuses and encouraged the overwhelmingly Catholic Timorese faithful.



East Timorese crowd Tacitolu park for Pope Francis' Mass in Dili, yesterday

Francis was following in John Paul's footsteps to cheer on the nation two decades after it became independent in 2002. East Timor, known also as Timor-Leste, remains one of the poorest countries, with some 42% of its 1.3 million people living below the poverty line, according to the U.N. Development Program.

But the Timorese are deeply faithful — the territory has been overwhelmingly Catholic ever since Portuguese explorers first arrived in the early 1500s and some 97% of the population today is Catholic. They have turned out in droves to welcome the first pope to visit them as an independent nation.

Government authorities said some 300,000 people had registered through their dioceses to attend the Mass, but President Jose Ramos-

Horta said he expected 700,000 and the Vatican had predicted as many as 750,000.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Brunni cited crowd estimates by local organizers that 600,000 people were attending in the Tasitolu park and surrounding areas.

They lined up before dawn to enter the park, on the coast about 8 kilometers from downtown Dili. With hours to go until the service, the roads leading to it were jammed by cars, trucks and buses packed with people; others walked down the middle of the street, ignoring the sidewalks. Temperatures reached 31 degrees Celsius (88 degrees Fahrenheit), and felt even hotter with humidity over 50%.

"For us, the pope is a reflection of the Lord Jesus, as a shepherd who wants to see his sheep, so we

come to him with all our hearts as our worship," said Alfonso de Jesus, who also came from Baucau, the country's second-largest city after Dili, about 128 kilometers east of the capital.

De Jesus, 56, was among the estimated 100,000 people who attended John Paul's 1989 Mass, which made headlines around the world because of a riot that broke out just as it was ending. John Paul looked on as baton-wielding Indonesian plainclothes police clashed with some 20 young men who shouted "Viva a independência" and "Viva o Papa!"

Many of the reports at the time quoted Dili Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo in trying to draw attention to the plight of the Timorese people. Belo would go on to win the Nobel Peace Prize with Ramos-Horta for

their efforts to peacefully resolve the Timorese conflict.

But Belo has since had his reputation discredited, at least outside of East Timor, after the Vatican revealed in 2022 that he had been sanctioned for sexually abusing young boys. Now living in Portugal and blocked by the Vatican from having contact with East Timor, Belo's historic role has been seemingly erased from any official mention during Francis' visit, even while ordinary Timorese still revere him as a hero.

Sister Maria Josefa, a nun from Cape Verde who has lived in Dili for five years, said Francis was right to speak out generally about "abuse" when he arrived in Dili on Monday, saying his were words of compassion, even if he didn't mention Belo by name. **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

# Albanese proposes legal minimum age for children accessing social media

**T**HE Australian government yesterday promised to legislate this year to enforce a minimum age for children to access social media, but it has yet to announce how ages will be verified.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the government would soon trial age verification technology with a view to banning children from

opening social media accounts. The line would be drawn between the ages of 14 and 16.

Several countries and U.S. states are attempting to legislate to spare children harm from social media, including bullying.

The Australian move comes as parents increasingly call for their children to be protected online



Australian PM Anthony Albanese

and with the opposition under 16 if it wins elections due by May next year.

"We've committed to introducing legislation before the end of this year for age verification to make sure that we get young people away from this social harm," Albanese told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

"This is a scourge. We know that there is mental health consequences for what many of the young people have had to deal with. The bullying that can occur online, the access to material which causes social harm, and parents are wanting a response," Albanese added.

Lisa Given, an information technology expert at

the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, said the government's plan would prevent children accessing useful content as well.

"This is actually a very problematic move," Given said.

"This is a very blunt instrument that's going to potentially exclude children from some very, very helpful supports on social media."

South Australia state has recently proposed a law that would fine social media companies that did not exclude children under the age of 14 from their platforms. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Harris



Trump

USA ELECTIONS

# Harris and Trump to debate in pivotal campaign test

MICHELLE L. PRICE,  
WASHINGTON

**K**AMALA Harris and Donald Trump will meet for the first time face-to-face today [Macau time] for perhaps their only debate, a high-pressure opportunity to showcase their starkly different visions for the country after a tumultuous campaign summer.

The event, at 9 p.m. Eastern in Philadelphia [9 a.m. today, Macau time], will offer Americans their most detailed look at a campaign that's dramatically changed since the last debate in June. In rapid fashion, President Joe Biden bowed out of the race after his disastrous performance, Trump survived an assassination attempt and both sides chose their running mates.

Harris is intent on demonstrating that she can press the Democratic case against Trump better than Biden did. Trump, in turn, is trying to paint the vice president as an out-of-touch liberal while trying to win over voters skeptical he should return to the White House.

Trump, 78, has struggled to adapt to Harris, 59, who is the first woman, Black person and person of South Asian descent to serve as vice president. The Republican former president has at times resorted to invoking racial and gender stereotypes, frustrating allies who want Trump to focus instead on policy differences with Harris.

The vice president, for her part, will try to claim a share

of credit for the Biden administration's accomplishments while also addressing its low moments and explaining her shifts away from more liberal positions she took in the past.

The debate will subject Harris, who has sat for only a single formal interview in the past six weeks, to a rare moment of sustained questioning.

"If she performs great, it's going to be a nice surprise for the Democrats and they'll rejoice," said Ari Fleischer, a Republican communications strategist and former press secretary to President George W. Bush. "If she flops, like Joe Biden did, it could break this race wide open. So there's more riding on it."

Tim Hogan, who led Sen. Amy Klobuchar's debate preparations in the 2020 Democratic presidential primaries, said Harris, a former California attorney general, would bring a "prosecutor's instincts to the debate stage."

"That is a very strong quality in that setting: having someone who knows how to land a punch and how to translate it," Hogan said.

The first early ballots of the presidential race will go out just hours after the debate, hosted by ABC News. Absentee ballots are set to be sent out beginning Wednesday in Alabama.

Trump and his campaign have spotlighted far-left positions she took during her failed 2020 presidential bid. He's been assisted in his informal debate prep sessions by Tulsi Gabbard, the former Democratic congresswoman and presidential

candidate who tore into Harris during their primary debates.

Harris has sought to defend her shifts away from liberal causes to more moderate stances on fracking, expanding Medicare for all and mandatory gun buyback programs — and even backing away from her position that plastic straws should be banned — as pragmatism, insisting that her "values remain the same." Her campaign on Monday published a page on its website listing her positions on key issues.

The former president has argued a Harris presidency is a threat to the safety of the country, highlighting that Biden tapped her to address the influx of migrants as the Republican once again makes dark warnings about immigration and those in the country illegally central to his campaign. He has sought to portray a Harris presidency as the continuation of Biden's still-unpopular administration, particularly his economic record, as voters still feel the bite of inflation even as it has cooled in recent months.

Trump's team insist his tone won't be any different facing a female opponent.

"President Trump is going to be himself," senior adviser Jason Miller told reporters during a phone call Monday.

Gabbard, who was also on the call, added that Trump "respects women and doesn't feel the need to be patronizing or to speak to women in any other way than he would speak to a man."

His advisers suggest Harris

has a tendency to express herself in a "word salad" of meaningless phrases, prompting Trump to say last week that his debate strategy was to "let her talk."

The former president frequently plows into rambling remarks that detour from his policy points. He regularly makes false claims about the last election, attacks a lengthy list of enemies and opponents working against him, offers praise for foreign strongmen and comments about race, like his false claim in July that Harris recently "happened to turn Black."

The vice president, who has been the Biden administration's most outspoken supporter of abortion access after the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, is expected to focus on calling out Trump's inconsistencies around women's reproductive care, including his announcement that he will vote to protect Florida's six-week abortion ban in a statewide referendum this fall.

Harris was also set to try to portray herself as a steadier hand to lead the nation and safeguard its alliances, as war rages in Ukraine more than two years after Russia's invasion and Israel's war with Hamas in Gaza drags on with no end in sight.

She is likely to warn that Trump presents a threat to democracy, from his attempts in 2020 to overturn his loss in the presidential election, spurring his angry supporters to attack the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

MDT/AP

## this day in history

### 2001 US ROCKED BY DAY OF TERROR



The United States is in a state of shock after a day of attacks which have left thousands dead and New York's World Trade Center destroyed.

The Pentagon was also severely damaged by one of the three civilian airliners which hijackers turned into flying bombs. A fourth plane crashed in a field near Pittsburgh.

A state of emergency has been declared in Washington D.C. and the US has closed its airspace and its borders with Mexico and Canada.

American forces are on one of their highest states of alert and the Pentagon has deployed a naval battle group off the country's east coast to bolster air defences.

American Airlines Flight 11 was hijacked at 0825 Eastern Daylight Time (1225 GMT) and 18 minutes later crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center.

United Airlines Flight 175 - which had been hijacked within minutes of the first plane - was flown into the south tower at 0903 EDT (1303 GMT) causing another devastating explosion.

The second crash was captured live on news cameras trained on the burning north tower.

At 0940 EDT (1340 GMT) a third hijacked airliner - American Airlines Flight 77 - was flown into the side of the Pentagon in Washington.

An hour after the Boeing 767 slammed into the south tower of the World Trade Center the 110-storey building collapsed.

The north tower followed minutes later, compounding the destruction and loss of life.

Witnesses reported seeing people jumping from the towers just before they collapsed.

President Bush was reading to pupils at a Florida school when his chief of staff whispered news of the attacks to him.

He was flown to the US Strategic Command Centre at Nebraska - where the country's nuclear weapons are controlled - but is now on his way back to Washington.

He is expected to address the nation later this evening.

New York mayor Rudy Giuliani said the final number of dead may be "more than any of us can bear".

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The final number of people killed in the suicide attacks on 11 September was about 3,000.

It took almost nine months to clear the millions of tons of rubble at "Ground Zero" where the World Trade Center had stood.

The biggest criminal investigation in history quickly identified the hijackers, and linked them to al-Qaeda - the Islamic militant group set up by Osama Bin Laden. <br> President Bush declared a worldwide war on terror, and on 8 October the United States and Britain hit targets in Afghanistan, where Bin Laden was believed to be hiding.

The regime in Afghanistan fell quickly in the face of American military might, but Osama Bin Laden remained at large for years. President Bush extended his global campaign against terror to Iraq in March 2003, when a coalition dominated by US and UK forces invaded.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Classes, seminars, explorations and adventures engage you. You're building toward a turning point in your studies. What do you want to learn next?

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20  
Compute expenses. Review your budget to reassess financial priorities with your partner. Adapt to recent changes. Adjust plans to fit the current reality.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21  
A collaboration is getting interesting. Consider solutions. Speculate on intriguing possibilities together. Imagine the fun you could get into. Make plans and bargains.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
Get your heart pumping. Don't try to lift more than you can carry. Go slow. Step around obstacles. Put love into your work.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
Let your creative talents play. Art, music, sports, games and recreational activities delight. Simplify to avoid complications. Have fun with friends and family.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
The love that you put into your home comes back multiplied. Soap, water and fresh paint works wonders. Nurture your family with domestic comforts.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
Connect and network to adapt around an obstacle. Get creative for solutions. Share discoveries. Practice your communicative arts. Get to the heart of the story.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
A lucrative opportunity reveals itself. Determine costs and benefits before agreeing. Shuffle your schedule to take advantage. Resolve a financial puzzle for a valuable prize.

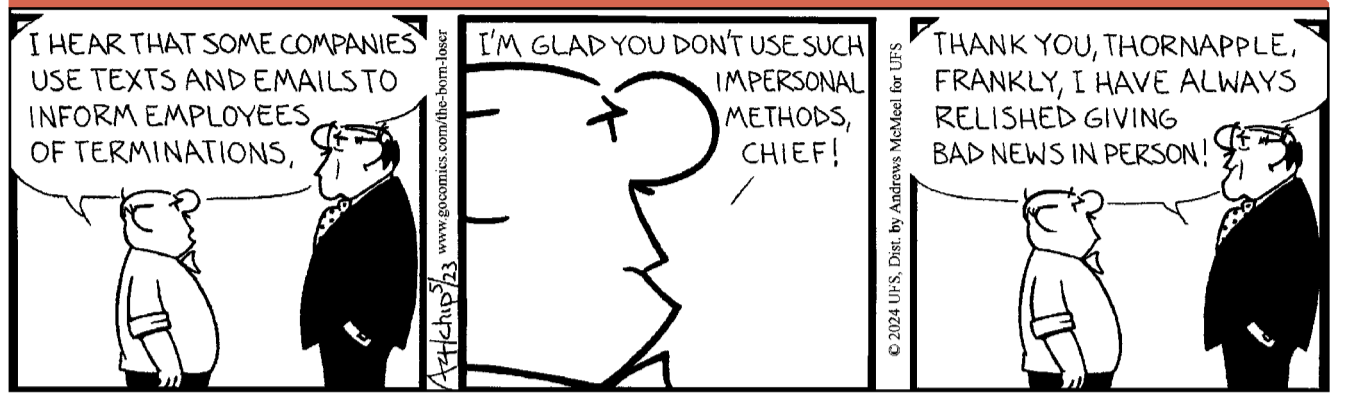
**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
A challenge stalls a personal project. Necessity is born of invention and innovation. Analyze what's missing and what might work. Use your talents.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
Slow for peaceful introspection. Let your mind wander. Meditate on your own breath. Float away on a cloud. Find spiritual connection in the stillness.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
Friends are your true wealth. Collaborate on a group effort for a common prize. Professional and personal benefits arise through social engagement.

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
Enticing professional opportunities are developing, despite a hitch in plans. Advance the most urgent or promising. Take charge and tap a new resource.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	20	28	cloudy
Changchun	13	23	cloudy
Chengdu	26	37	rain
Chongqing	29	37	cloudy
Fuzhou	26	36	fine
Guangzhou	25	34	showers
Guiyang	20	28	cloudy
Haikou	25	31	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	23	30	rain
Harbin	12	24	fine
Hefei	25	27	rain
Nanjing	26	27	rain
Shanghai	27	32	rain
Taipei	25	31	cloudy
Wuhan	26	35	cloudy
Hong Kong	28	33	cloudy
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	17	27	cloudy
Frankfurt	6	16	rain
Paris	6	16	cloudy
London	7	15	cloudy
New York	7	26	fine

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- The King \_\_\_; 5- This is only \_\_\_; 10- Sky color; 14- Show the way; 15- "Til \_\_\_ do us part"; 16- Evict; 17- Dole (out); 18- So spooky as to be frightening; 19- Approved; 20- Let's Make \_\_\_; 22- Giggie; 24- Speech problem; 27- Increase in size; 28- Throbs; 32- Night noise; 35- \_\_\_-pitch softball; 36- Cowboy display; 38- Writer Jong; 40- Eyelid irritation; 42- Where the action is; 44- Heath; 45- Wall Street transaction; 47- Musical drama, usually sung in Italian; 49- Modern-day evidence; 50- Reunion attendees; 52- Source of caviar; 54- Quote; 56- \_\_\_ about (approximately); 57- Subsiding; 60- Approaches; 64- Be that \_\_\_ may...; 65- Atty.-to-be exams; 68- Encourage in wrongdoing; 69- Canoeing body; 70- Pull on; 71- Marine mammal, secure something; 72- Parroted; 73- Chairs; 74- Ticklish Muppet;

DOWN 1- \_\_\_ mater; 2- Can't do without; 3- Go with; 4- Standards of perfection; 5- Summer drink; 6- Ball holder; 7- "...countrymen, lend me your \_\_\_"; 8- Undercover operation; 9- Belonging to them; 10- Person devoted to reading; 11- Third Gospel; 12- Computer owner; 13- LAX posting; 21- Tale teller; 23- Spumoni or vanilla holder; 25- Greek portico; 26- Pitcher Martinez; 28- Hey, you!; 29- Extreme; 30- Faithful; 31- Oozes; 33- \_\_\_ Janeiro; 34- Low-budget prefix; 37- \_\_\_ a customer; 39- Irish island group; 41- Learned; 43- Make \_\_\_ for it; 46- Discharge; 48- Elvis's middle name; 51- Circus props; 53- Lubricant; 55- Come after; 57- Quickly, briefly; 58- Bicycle; 59- Infatuated; 61- Cain's brother; 62- Paper purchase; 63- WWII battle site; 64- \_\_\_ king; 66- Rat-a- --; 67- Ave. crossers;

**Yesterday's solution**

Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

**USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Emergency calls 999                            | Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283     |
| Fire department 28 572 222                     | Water Supply - Report 2822 0088 |
| PJ (Open line) 993                             | Telephone - Report 1000         |
| PJ (Picket) 28 557 775                         | Electricity - Report 28 339 922 |
| PSP 28 573 333                                 | Macau Daily Times 28 716 081    |
| 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                              |                                 |



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AD

## SURF &amp; JESUS

# AT THIS CHURCH IN PORTUGAL, PARISHIONERS SURF BEFORE THEY WORSHIP

LUIS ANDRES HENAO,  
PORTO

**P**ORTO takes pride in its beaches, old churches covered in blue-and-white tiles and its famous port wine named after the city in northern Portugal.

It's also home to a different kind of church — located on its beachfront suburbs along the Atlantic coast near a fishing town known for some of the world's largest waves. Parishioners attend in boardshorts, T-shirts, flip flops — even barefoot.

They surf before they worship.

Surf Church was established by a Brazilian-born Portuguese surfer and ordained Baptist pastor to spread the Gospel in a once-devoutly Catholic country — and top surfing destination — where about half of young people today say they have no religion.

In less than a decade, it has grown from a few families to dozens of parishioners representing more than a dozen nationalities from across the world. Their motto: “We love waves. We love Jesus.”

“When you're waiting for the right wave it's the calm before the swell, and that's a peaceful moment that sometimes is seconds, sometimes minutes,” said the Rev. Samuel Cianelli, Surf Church's pastor. “This peaceful moment is, for me, my deepest connection with God.”

On a recent Sunday, he wore a bright orange wetsuit — instead of traditional priestly vestments — and lay belly down on a surfboard on the powdery sand of Matosinhos beach to show young parishioners huddled around him how to paddle, “pop up” and catch a wave.

“I always loved waves, and when I see people learning how to surf, it makes my heart so happy,” said Uliana Yarova, 17, after she walked out of the same waters where — a week later — Cianelli baptized her and her brother in a joyous ceremony. They wore matching white T-shirts that read: “I chose Jesus.”

The Ukrainian teenager fled her war-torn country



AP PHOTO

with her family after Russia's invasion and found refuge in Porto and the Surf Church.

“When you're paddling on the surfboard waiting for the wave, and you stand, you might start to doubt and feel like you'll fall,” she said. “And then, when it goes right, you feel confidence and peace — you feel nature and how God is holding you on that wave.”

The church members — mostly Generation Z and millennials — walked in and out of the waters smiling, carrying red and turquoise surfboards branded with Surf Church stickers. Some sported tattoos of the cross — the only other visible sign that set them apart from other surfers who shared the waves.

In preparation for worship, they rinsed the surfboards and carried them to a white van that a few missionaries in bathing suits drove to nearby Surf Church.

## SURF CHURCH'S 'CATHEDRAL'

Churches in Porto, Portugal's second-largest city, include the majestic cathedral with its silver altar, the so-called “Chapel of the Souls” with its façade of thousands of illustrated white and blue tiles, and São Francisco, with its intricate wood carvings covered in gold dust.

Surf Church's garage is instead painted with a mural of a gold-colored Volkswagen camper van with a blue surfboard str-

apped to its roof.

After surfing, sandal-wearing members of the church hung wetsuits next to a rack lined with boards. Some rinsed their feet with a garden hose or took a quick shower before they gathered to pray and sing in a cozy living room decorated with roof-hanging surfboards and a mural of surfers riding waves.

Church member Hannah Kruckels said she never felt as welcome attending a much larger traditional church in her native Switzerland. That changed when she arrived as an intern in 2020 to Surf Church, where she feels at home and where she learned how to surf.

“It's an important part of spirituality to be connected to something bigger. In this case for us, it's God, but it can be the ocean, too,” she said after a Sunday service that she attended with her Portuguese boyfriend, who is also a surfer. “That's what makes surfing a spiritual experience.”

Surfing had religious significance in Hawaii, where it was born long before the arrival of Europeans.

“After prayers and offerings, master craftsmen made boards from sacred koa or wililili trees, and some had heiaus (temples) on the beach where devotees could pray for waves,” William Finnegan writes in “Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life.”

Men and women of all ages and from all social levels — from royalty to

commoners — surfed. But when 19th century Calvinist missionaries arrived in the islands, they were appalled by what they believed was a barbaric spectacle and banned surfing.

It only reemerged decades later thanks to Hawaiians like Duke Kahanamoku, the Olympic gold medal swimmer who is regarded as the father of modern surfing.

Surfers were still “typecast as truants and vandals,” Finnegan wrote. Even in modern era, some beach towns banned surfing.

For long, surfing continued to be frowned upon as a counterculture movement or a mere pastime — and for decades it remained little-known outside California and Hawaii.

But the tides have changed. Surfing has spread across the globe as a professional and most recently an Olympic sport, as well as a multibillion-dollar industry.

Portugal has emerged as one of the world's top sur-

ring destinations — home to some of the biggest waves for pros in the fishing hamlet of Nazaré and for uncrowded waves for beginners along the beaches near Porto.

“People from all over come to Portugal because they want to experience what the beaches of Portugal have to offer,” said Cianelli, wearing a loose shirt covered with designs of palm trees. “We found in this a good strategy to start a church that combines Jesus and surf.”

He grew up swimming competitively in the Brazilian port city of Santos, where soccer legend Pele played most of his career. After an injury kept Cianelli from competing at the age of 15, he took up surfing.

At the same time, he grew closer to his Christian faith. He attended seminary, was ordained and served as a youth pastor.

During a conference a 2013 in Brazil, he met Troy Pitney, an American missionary and surfer. They began to dream about planting churches in Portugal.

They wanted to use Portugal's growing surf culture to attract members in the once fiercely Catholic country where religious practice is falling, especially among the young, while a rising wave of migrants from Brazil and other South American countries continues to plant evangelical churches.

## FOUNDING FATHERS

After moving with their families to Porto, they launched Surf Church in April 2015. Their strategy was simple: catch waves and invite other surfers and beach lovers to read the Bible,

sing and pray.

“We didn't know what we were doing,” Cianelli said. “We just had a love for Jesus. We were all surfers.”

They began to meet in an apartment, and from 2016-2020 they worshipped at a gym near the beach, “just to break the concept of what church means,” Cianelli said.

“The building is about the people. You could be in the ocean, you could be at the beach, you could be inside of a gym or someone's living room. Or now, where we are in the space that belongs to us. It doesn't matter the place, what is important is the people — this is the real meaning of church.”

They were also intentional in their words: They still don't use the word “igreja” — Portuguese for church — to avoid connotations of the cavernous spaces with emptying wooden church pews.

There's plenty of “gorgeous, historical” church buildings in Porto, Cianelli said. He respects their historical role, but says that what his congregation seeks is a modern-day “living church made by people.”

The pillars of his church remain the same: surfing, community and the Bible. It took them nine years to go over the New Testament, word-by-word, and they've recently started with the Old Testament.

Their dream, he said, is to plant surf churches — or churches linked to mountain biking, soccer or any passion that brings people together in sport and prayer — across the world.

“We're not just surfers anymore,” he said. **MDT/AP**



AP PHOTO

AP PHOTO



Olympic champion Imane Khelif

**BOXING**

# Algeria joins global body trying to save Olympic status

**T**HE Algerian boxing federation that is home to Olympic champion Imane Khelif yesterday joined the World Boxing group that wants to save the sport's place at the 2028 Los Angeles Games.

Algeria and Japan joining World Boxing increases the organization's membership to 44 federations, with applications from more countries being processed.

Boxing's Olympic status is uncertain. The International Olympic Committee has set a deadline of early next year for a credible governing body to be in place after years of turmoil with the International Boxing Association.

The Russian-led IBA was formally banished by the IOC in June 2023 and their years-long dispute flared at the Paris Games. Khelif and another female gold medalist, Lin Yu-ting of Taiwan, were caught up in a global furor and misinformation about their gender.

Khelif and Lin had been disqualified by the IBA ahead of medal bouts at the 2023 women's world championships over claims they failed eligibility tests. The boxers qualified for the Olympics, where they were supported by the IOC. Details of the IBA's claims remained murky. **MDT/AP**

**FOOTBALL**

# Australia held by Indonesia in World Cup qualifying, China loses to Saudi Arabia

**A**USTRALIA'S stuttering start to the third round of World Cup qualifying hit another bump yesterday with a 0-0 draw against Indonesia in Jakarta.

The result follows a 1-0 loss at home to Bahrain last week and leaves the Socceroos still without a goal in Group C as they aim for a sixth successive World Cup appearance.

Australia had 20 shots but was unable to convert and silence the 78,000 home fans at the Gelora Bung Karno Stadium.

"Vastly improved performance and the boys showed that," Australia coach Graham Arnold said. "But very disappointed. How many chances do we create? How many chances do we get? It has been a common theme for over a year."

Australia still moved one point ahead of China, which fell to a last-minute 2-1 loss to Saudi Arabia in Dalian despite taking an early lead and then playing most of the match against 10 men.

China took the lead from a corner in the 14th minute when Saudi Arabia's Ali Lajimi put the ball



Australia's Samuel Silvera, right, battles for the ball against Indonesia's Rizki Ridho Ramadhani during the FIFA World Cup 2026 qualifier

into his own net, and the visitors then went a man down five minutes later when Mohamed Kanno was sent off for kicking out at Jiang Shenglong.

But a bad week for Chinese soccer — which saw China lose 7-0 to Japan last week and the country's Football Association ban 43 people for life over allegations of match-fixing and other forms of corruption — only got worse.

Defender Hasan Kadesh helped Saudi Arabia turn the game around as he first equalized seven minutes before the break by heading home a corner for his

first international goal and then added a second in the 90th to give Roberto Mancini's team a vital win to stay on course for a seventh World Cup appearance.

The 18 teams in the third round of qualifying have been divided into three groups of six. The top two from each automatically qualify for the 2026 World Cup. The teams that place third and fourth will advance to a fourth qualifying round to compete for two more places.

In Group A, North Korea and Qatar drew 2-2 in a game played in Laos after being moved from Pyongyang. **MDT/AP**

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**OPINION**

**The Conversation**

Valerie Thomas, Ga Institute of Technology



**UNDER BOTH TRUMP AND BIDEN, US OIL AND GAS PRODUCTION SURGED TO RECORD HIGHS**

The U.S. is producing more oil and natural gas today than ever before, and far more than any other country. What roles did the Trump-Pence and Biden-Harris administrations play in this surge?

The answer might surprise you, given the way each has publicly addressed fossil fuels: former President Donald Trump embraced them, while President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris focused on reducing fossil fuel use to fight climate change.

Under each of the three most recent presidencies, U.S. oil and gas production was higher at the end of the administration's term than at the beginning.

That production has both pros and cons. Oil and gas account for nearly three-quarters of U.S. energy consumption. Producing oil and gas domestically provides energy security and helps keep prices down. However, burning oil and gas releases carbon dioxide, contributing to climate change, and natural gas is mostly methane – a potent greenhouse gas.

Both the Trump-Pence and Biden-Harris administrations supported additional oil and gas drilling but also took actions to restrict it.

Trump, aggressively pro-fossil fuels, expanded drilling opportunities. The federal government leased more land for drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, and Utah wilderness areas. Trump also urged agencies to waive environmental reviews and loosen regulations to speed up permits for pipeline construction and other infrastructure.

The Trump administration opened more U.S. coastal waters for oil and gas leasing but later banned coastal drilling for 10 years in the eastern Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic coasts of Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. Opposition to drilling in those states threatened several Republican candidates' 2020 election bids.

The Biden-Harris administration focused on clean energy and climate change. It issued regulations targeting fossil fuels, including efforts to reduce methane leaks and increase royalties for drilling on federal lands. In 2021, it issued a moratorium on new federal leases for oil and gas, but that was blocked by a federal judge.

However, Biden's administration approved ConocoPhillips' Willow project, the nation's largest oil drilling operation in Alaska. The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, Biden's signature climate law, also included oil and gas leasing and incentives for capturing carbon dioxide for enhanced oil recovery.

When land is leased for drilling, production takes time to begin. Increased oil and gas production during the Biden administration is partly due to leases issued during the Trump administration. Trump auctioned off the leases, and the Biden administration signed the permits.

Global events have also influenced production. The COVID-19 pandemic reduced U.S. oil demand in 2020. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 increased energy demand from Europe. However, the U.S. has limited natural gas export capacity, and gas has to be liquefied for overseas shipping. The Biden-Harris administration paused approvals for additional liquefied natural gas terminals in 2024, but a federal judge blocked the move.

Drilling technology has been a key driver of the industry's success. U.S. oil production peaked in 1970 and declined for more than three decades, as it was widely believed the U.S. had tapped its best reservoirs. But in the early 2000s, hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling opened up previously unreachable fossil fuels, driving a surge in oil and gas production since 2009.

The decrease in coal production is a major reason U.S. carbon dioxide emissions have fallen, even as fossil fuel production rises. Renewable energy production and efficiency improvements have also helped cut emissions. [Abridged]

**A WOMAN IS KILLED NEAR MOSCOW AS OVER 140 UKRAINIAN DRONES TARGET RUSSIA, OFFICIALS SAY**

**THE BUZZ**

Over 140 Ukrainian drones targeted multiple Russian regions overnight, including Moscow and surrounding areas, killing at least one person and injuring eight, officials said yesterday, in one of the biggest drone attacks on Russian soil in the 2 1/2-year war.

A woman died in the town of Ramenskoye, just outside Moscow, where drones hit two multistory residential buildings and started fires, Moscow region Gov. Andrei Vorobyov said. Five residential buildings were evacuated due to falling drone debris, Vorobyov said.

The attack also prompted the authorities to shut three airports just outside Moscow — Vnukovo, Domodedovo and Zhukovsky — forcing 48 flights to be diverted to other airports, according to Russia's civil aviation authority, Rosaviatsia. The first two airports reopened in the morning but Zhukovsky was still closed in the afternoon because law enforcement officers were dealing with drone debris there, an airport spokesperson told the Interfax news agency.

It was the second massive Ukrainian drone attack on Russia this month.



A pile of garbage at a landfill in Depok on the outskirts of Jakarta

**POLLUTION OF THE POTENT WARMING GAS METHANE SOARS, PEOPLE ARE MOSTLY TO BLAME**

**SETH BORENSTEIN, MDT/AP SCIENCE WRITER**

**T**HE amount and proportion of the powerful heat-trapping gas methane that humans spew into the atmosphere is rising, helping to turbocharge climate change, a new study finds.

Tuesday's study finds that in 2020, the last year complete data is available, the world put 670 million tons (608 million metric tons) of methane in the air, up nearly 12% from 2000. An even more significant finding in the study in Environmental Research Letters was the source of those emissions: those from humans jumped almost 18% in two decades, while natural emissions, mostly from wetlands, inched up just 2% in the same time.

Methane levels in the air are now 2.6 times higher than in pre-industrial times, the study said. Methane levels in the air had plateaued for a while in the early 2000s, but now are soaring. Humans cause methane emissions by burning fossil fuels, engaging in large-scale agriculture and filling up landfills.

"Methane is a climate

menace that the world is ignoring," study lead author Rob Jackson, head of the Global Carbon Project, which is a group of scientists who monitor greenhouse gas emissions yearly. "Methane has risen far more and much faster than carbon dioxide."

Carbon dioxide is still the biggest threat, said Jackson, a Stanford University climate scientist. Humans, mostly through the burning of coal, oil and natural gas, put 60 times more carbon dioxide in the air than methane and it lasts thousands of years.

Because methane leave the atmosphere in about a decade, it's a powerful "lever" that humans can use to fight climate change, Jackson said. That's because cutting it could yield relatively quick benefits.

In 2000, 60% of the methane spewed into the air came from direct human activity. Now it's 65%, the study found.

"It's a very worrying paper, but actually not a big surprise unfortunately," said climate scientist Bill Hare, CEO of Climate Analytics, who wasn't part of the research. He said for the world to keep warming to an agreed-upon limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) since

pre-industrial times, the world needs to cut carbon dioxide emissions nearly in half and methane by more than one-third.

But Jackson said the current trend with methane emissions has the world on target for warming of 3 degrees Celsius (5.4 degrees Fahrenheit), twice the goal of the 2015 Paris climate agreement.

Jackson's study mostly focused on where the methane is coming from, both by location and source.

Geographically, everywhere but Europe is increasing in human-caused methane emissions, with large jumps in Asia, especially China and India, Jackson said.

In the last 20 years, methane emissions from coal mining, oil and gas have jumped 33%, while landfill and waste increased 20% and agriculture emissions rose 14%, according to the study. The biggest single human-connected source of emissions are cows, Jackson said.

Cornell University climate scientist Robert Howarth faulted the study for not sufficiently emphasizing methane emissions from the boom in shale gas drilling, known as fracking.



**Japan** A specialized robot has begun a mission to retrieve melted nuclear fuel from one of the reactors at Fukushima Daiichi, marking a critical phase in the nuclear plant's decommissioning process. The operation aims to collect vital data to facilitate the cleanup efforts following the 2011 disaster that significantly damaged the facility.



**Afghanistan** The Taliban's repressive control over women and girls in Afghanistan is unparalleled and will jeopardize the country's future, the U.N. rights chief warned. Volker Türk said new morality laws that ban women's voices and bare faces in public, along with sweeping bans on education and most jobs, were outrageous and amounted to systematic gender persecution. London and Oslo closed their embassies in Kabul yesterday.



**Germany** has announced expanded temporary border controls to curb irregular migration and protect against extremism. The new measures include increased checks at all land borders and are part of broader efforts to strengthen internal security and manage migration effectively amidst rising political and social pressures.



**Poland** is officially recognizing military dogs for their service by assigning them army ranks. This new program celebrates the contributions of dogs in explosive detection and other critical military roles, emphasizing their integral part in national security and the deep bond they share with their handlers.