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MORGAN STANLEY: GAMING SECTOR SHOWING SIGNS OF RESILIENCE AS MARKET CAPITALIZATION HOVERS NEAR HISTORICAL LOWS

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THE TIMES DIVES DEEP INTO THE LRT SERVICE AND ITS STANDING AMONG TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

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THE US CALLS THE ISRAELI STRIKE KILLING HEZBOLLAH'S NASRALLAH A 'MEASURE OF JUSTICE'

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AP PHOTO



China Satellite imagery showed that China's newest nuclear-powered attack submarine sank alongside a pier while under construction, a senior U.S. defense official said last week. The sinking of China's first Zhou-class submarine represents a setback for Beijing as it continues to build out the world's largest navy. Beijing has become increasingly assertive in pursuing its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea, which is crucial to international trade.

AP PHOTO



Indonesia Mud, rugged terrain and lack of telecommunications hampered rescue efforts Saturday after a landslide set off by torrential rains smashed down into an unauthorized gold mining operation on Sumatra Island, killing at least 12 people. Villagers had been digging for grains of gold in the remote village in the Solok district of West Sumatra province when mud plunged down the surrounding hills and buried them last week.
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AP PHOTO



Nepal The death toll from flooding and landslides has reached at least 100, with dozens of people still missing. Police on yesterday morning warned the death toll was expected to rise further as reports come in from villages across the mountainous country. The weather in Nepal was improved yesterday and rescue, recovery and clean-up efforts were underway.

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MDT/AP PHOTO

SAM CITY

Sole Chief Executive candidate Sam Hou Fai unveiled an ambitious vision for the city, spotlighting economic diversification and stricter gaming regulations

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TAXI REFORMS A TOP PRIORITY FOR INCOMING ADMINISTRATION

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STATEMENT

Liu Xianfa*



BUILDING ON 75 YEARS OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND OPENING UP A NEW CHAPTER IN MAJOR-COUNTRY DIPLOMACY WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. For the past 75 years, the Communist Party of China (CPC) has united and led the Chinese nation in successfully finding the Chinese path to modernization, and in creating the two major miracles of fast economic development and long-term social stability. China has seen a substantial rise in its composite national strength, becoming a pivotal player in the global economic landscape while achieving a historic leap towards a moderately prosperous society in all respects for its people. China has successfully accomplished the daunting task of eliminating absolute poverty, contributing to over 70% of poverty reduced globally. Infrastructure construction has expanded rapidly, with significant advancements in transportation. Remarkable progress have been made in scientific and technological development, and high-tech innovation has yielded fruitful results. Cultural undertakings have also flourished, with the country's soft power substantially enhanced. A range of green-development initiatives has been successfully implemented, promoting harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature. China's contribution to global economic growth has exceeded 30% for multiple years in a row. These constitute not only China's major achievements, but also great contributions to the world.

Over the past 75 years, China has unwaveringly pursued peaceful development and made important contributions to world peace and development. Committed to its foreign policy goal of safeguarding world peace and promoting common development, China has actively advanced world multipolarity and democracy in international relations, unequivocally opposed hegemonism and power politics, and worked to make the international order more just and equitable. Our external environment has been historically improved, our core interests strongly safeguarded, our cooperation with other countries greatly expanded and our international status and influence remarkably enhanced.

In the new era, under the strong leadership of the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core and the scientific guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy, China's diplomacy has upheld fundamental principles while breaking new ground and forged ahead. We have created a favorable environment for building a great modern socialist country and advancing the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and made new contribution to maintaining world peace and promoting common development.

In pursuit of building a community with a shared future for mankind and lending new impetus to the building of a brighter future for humanity. Faced with

intertwined traditional and non-traditional security issues and sluggish world economic recovery, China has given its answer—building a community with a shared future for mankind. Since the vision put forth by President Xi Jinping in 2013, building a community with a shared future for mankind has developed from a conceptual proposition to a scientific system, from a Chinese initiative to an international consensus, and from a promising vision to substantive actions. It has been included in resolutions of the U.N. General Assembly for 7 consecutive years. Extending to various regions and covering various areas, it has served as a glorious banner leading the progress of the times.

Staying committed to dialogue and cooperation and setting an example of healthy interactions between major countries. Relations among major countries bear on the stability of the world. China has continued to deepen its comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era with Russia, with a view to boosting our respective development and revitalization, and promoting world multipolarity and greater democracy in international relations. China-US relations have weathered winds and rains but mainstream public opinion has not changed. The meeting between President Xi Jinping and President Joe Biden last November shaped the San Francisco vision and stabilized the bilateral relationship, which met the shared expectations of the world. China and Europe have been deepening dialogue and cooperation and reached consensus on jointly safeguarding multilateralism.

Being dedicated to building a new type of international relations and consolidating and expanding the global network of partnerships. President Xi Jinping has pointed out: "Solidarity brings strength, and confidence is more precious than gold." China stands firmly against small circles that seek geopolitical purposes and small blocs that undermine stability. Over the 75 years, the number of the countries which has established diplomatic relations with China has grown to 183. China has acted on the principle of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness and proven a reliable partner in jointly building the Asian home. China-ASEAN cooperation has made solid progress. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has continued to grow. China has also pursued progress for all and stayed a steadfast member of the Global South. We have been working for the historic expansion of the BRICS mechanism. The FOCAC Beijing Summit was successfully held this year and China-African cooperation is getting new fruits year by year. China has established collective cooperation mechanism with all developing countries having diplomatic ties with China. We are making every efforts to give a strong boost to the representa-

tion and voice of developing countries.

Working to promote multilateralism and being a strong supporter for global governance. From the first day of the establishment of the PRC, China firmly upholds the UN-centered international system and the basic norms of international relations underpinned by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. China holds that global governance is the way to surmount global challenges and put forward the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI), and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI). Over 80 countries have joined the Group of Friends of the GDI. The GSI has garnered support from over 100 countries and international and regional organizations, and is written into a host of bilateral and multilateral documents. The GCI has turned from vision to practice and the increased communication, mutual learning and appreciation between the Chinese and other civilizations have added new splendor to world civilizations.

Focusing on open development and serving as a powerful engine of global recovery. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has produced fruitful outcomes and become the most popular global public goods and the largest platform for international cooperation. Over 150 countries and more than 40 international organizations jointly ushered in another golden decade of Belt and Road cooperation. The China International Import Expo, the China International Fair for Trade in Services, the China International Consumer Products Expo, and the China International Supply Chain Expo were held in succession. It has become an established consensus of the global business community that "the next China is still China." This year, China rolled out a series of major steps to expand high-standard opening up and promote high-quality development, including streamlining visa procedures and granting unilateral visa exemption to citizens of a number of foreign countries, which are set to bring more benefits to investors and partners from across the world. It has been proven that openness brings progress and cooperation creates a bigger pie.

Remaining devoted to justice and fairness and acting as a critical force for world peace. Over the past 75 years, China, as a responsible major country, has always upheld justice and stood up for fairness. We have resolutely opposed hegemonism and power politics and pushed back against a handful of countries' attempt to dominate international affairs. At the same time, China has been actively exploring and applying a Chinese approach to addressing hotspot issues, and played a constructive role in upholding international peace and security. We have been working hard for the cessation of hostilities and for peace talks in the

Ukraine crisis, made unremitting efforts for the de-escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and played a constructive role in addressing regional issues such as Afghanistan and Myanmar. Defending justice in defiance of hegemonic power is certainly also about safeguarding China's sovereignty, national dignity and territorial integrity. In the face of external interference and provocation, we fought back resolutely and forcefully. In response to various acts of unjustified suppression, we took legitimate and reasonable countermeasures. The international community's commitment to the one-China principle has been further cemented and the 1.4 billion Chinese people's resolution to advance national reunification remains rock-solid.

The CPC held successfully in July the Third Plenary Session of its 20th Central Committee, laying out systematic plans for further deepening reform comprehensively to advance Chinese modernization. This will profoundly further transform China. Standing at this new start point, China is going all out to build a great modern socialist country in all respects and pursue national rejuvenation through a Chinese path to modernization. This will create new opportunities for world peace and development. China will work hand in hand with countries around the world to advance the building of a community with a shared future for mankind and create a more peaceful and better tomorrow.

This year also marks the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland. Macao has been an important node city of the Maritime Silk Road since ancient times. During the past 25 years, with its special geographic location and the great advantage of "One Country, Two Systems", as well as its close links with the Portuguese-speaking countries in language, regulations, laws and culture, Macao has played an irreplaceable role in China's diplomatic undertaking and made impressive achievements in its external relations. Going forward, Macao will be able to derive more opportunities from the country's new development strategy, the Belt and Road Initiative, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and Hengqin In-depth Cooperation Zone, and continue to strengthen its role as a world center of tourism and leisure, a commercial and trade cooperation service platform for China and Portuguese-speaking countries and an exchange and cooperation base with Chinese culture as its mainstream and co-existence of different cultures. I believe that with our joint efforts, China's major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics will continue to pursue progress in the new era and bring about a brighter future of peace, security, prosperity and progress for the whole world!

***Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macau Special Administrative Region**

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CE POLICY PRESENTATION

Sam Hou Fai pledges to regulate gaming, diversify the economy

LYNZY VALLES &
VICTORIA CHAN

MACAU'S sole candidate for Chief Executive, Sam Hou Fai, unveiled a comprehensive policy agenda Saturday morning aimed at regulating the gaming sector while fostering development in other industries.

Speaking at his policy platform presentation, he emphasized the importance of "strict enforcement" of the law to ensure orderly growth in the city.

Sam, the former head of the Court of Final Appeal, stated that the implementation of a new gaming law will be crucial for maintaining a healthy and regulated industry. He expressed a commitment to combat illegal activities and prioritize the development of non-gaming elements in Macau's economy.

"We will strictly implement a new gaming law to regulate the industry and ensure its healthy, orderly development," said Sam, poised to be the next city leader.

In addition to regulating gaming, Sam aims to broaden the city's appeal to international tourists. He highlighted the potential of attracting middle-class visitors from Southeast Asia and South America, describing them as a market of "one billion" potential spenders who typically enjoy extended stays and contribute to cultural exchange.

Currently, visitors from outside mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan make up only 7% of the 16.7 million tourists who visited Macau in the first half of this year.

To enhance this, Sam proposed that Macau's gaming operators—who have committed around USD 13 billion to non-gaming investments—should establish tourism promotion offices in key markets, including Brazil and other Southeast Asian countries.

"These gaming firms, including global players like MGM, Wynn, and Sands China, have extensive networks. We need to leverage these connections to encourage them to invest in tourism promotion alongside the Macau government," said Sam.

During his inaugural press briefing last month, he stated that the "wild" expansion of casino resorts had depleted Macau's resources. Sam said that just relying on the gaming industry is not enough. "Otherwise, how could we handle it if big disasters

MDT/AP PHOTO



arise?" he asked.

Sam, 62, is widely expected to secure the leadership in next month's vote, during which a 400-member committee—mostly dominated by establishment figures—will pick the leader.

In late August, Sam articulated his vision for a balanced economic future, stating that "having only the gaming industry dominate" is detrimental to Macau's development. He highlighted the necessity of integrating into the national development blueprint, asserting that the Special Administrative Region (SAR) must capitalize on its unique advantages as the "One Centre, One Platform, and One Base." He underscored that economic diversification is a critical issue that "cannot be ignored," adding that "there is no turning back" and emphasizing the importance of developing in a diversified manner.

Sam reiterated that his vision seeks not only to regulate the gaming industry but also to position Macau as a vibrant hub for international tourism and trade, particularly in promoting exports from the Greater Bay Area to Portuguese-speaking nations.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Laying out an ambitious agenda to transform the region's economic landscape, with a central focus on cultivating a "multidimensional economic system" – Sam believes the system is a strategic move that will safeguard both personal interests and long-term stability.

With the slogan "Entrepreneurship and Solidarity, Persistence and Innovation," Sam emphasized the importance of taking active measures to confront national development strategies.

He stressed the need to implement a comprehensive economic development plan for the region.

His proposed plan aims to boost support for small and medium-sized (SMEs) businesses, seen as an important part of the local economy.

The plan would also enhance the area's tourism industry, another sector considered vital for revitalizing economic growth.

These two areas are priority pillars in Sam's strategy to strengthen the regional economic performance.

Recognizing the catalytic role of SMEs, Sam vowed to "support SMEs to innovate and develop."

By nurturing these businesses, he aims to create new opportunities and foster a more "vibrant, diversified market."

Sam's vision for Macau's tourism industry is equally comprehensive.

He plans to provide a "rich supply of tourism products" and improve "the quality of tourism services" to attract a larger influx of international visitors.

This, he believes, will not only boost the region's economic prowess but also strengthen its global presence.

Alongside these efforts, Sam intends to promote "1+4 industrial multidimensional development," focusing on sectors such as Chinese pharmaceuticals, finance and high-tech industries.

This targeted approach seeks to cultivate a well-rounded economic foundation, reducing Macau's historical reliance on the gaming and hospitality sectors.

GOVERNANCE AND COLLABORATION

Sam described his "transparent public service system" to be achieved through the importan-

ce of legislative cooperation and modernizing Macau's legal system.

His aim is to "promote the modernization of the legal system and establish a mechanism for cooperation between the government and the Legislative Assembly."

Sam also pledged to "strengthen the authority of civil servants" as part of his plan to improve governance efficiency.

This includes clarifying the "rights and obligations of leaders" and enhancing the qualifications of public sector employees.

Sam said developing strong dispute-resolution processes would be important for enhancing future governance.

He expressed a desire to bolster the role of civil servants, stating that a key priority is to "improve the qualifications of civil servants to enhance governance efficiency."

QUALITY OF LIFE IMPROVEMENTS

The candidate underscored the necessity of "strengthening and improving people's lives," describing this as a foundational component of his government's policy.

Proposed initiatives include optimizing social security systems, enhancing employment services, and improving healthcare access through collaboration with mainland institutions.

Sam plans to "build a strong social security system" and optimize the "system of social assistance," ensuring residents have access to necessary support.

Additionally, he aims to perfect the "system of training and employment services for professional skills" to create better job opportunities for locals.

Sam also envisions deepening cooperation with high-level medical institutions in mainland China and enhancing the medical insurance system to improve public health services.

"Strengthening and improving people's lives," he said, is essential for fostering a harmonious and prosperous Macau.

COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING

For the candidate, promoting community harmony and environmental protection are also key priorities.

Regarding community well-being, Sam acknowledged the need to optimize the "ecological environment" and "improve the ability of comprehensive environmental governance."

When addressing the diverse territory's racial harmony, the candidate vowed to "promote racial harmony" among all cultural groups.

He specifically mentioned safeguarding the rights of "Portuguese descendants in Macau," acknowledging the region's colonial history.

Turning to environmental protection, a critical issue as the SAR continues to develop, the candidate outlined plans to "strengthen the protection of the ecological environment."

He stated improving resources for urban environmental governance will be crucial.

Q&A SESSION WITH THE PUBLIC OCT. 5

Sam Hou Fai will host a public session this Saturday, Oct. 5, to engage with citizens and gather their opinions and suggestions. According to a statement, he aims to "discuss his governance ideas with the community." There are 400 free seats available for the event. Registration is open to Macau residents aged 18 and older who wish to attend. Interested participants can sign up on the website (<https://www.macauticket.com/enrollment>). Attendees will be selected via a lottery system, and those chosen will receive a notification to collect their tickets at the specified time.

CE POLICY PRESENTATION

SAM HOU FAI TO STUDY FEASIBILITY OF NEW ROUND OF CONSUMPTION VOUCHERS

LYNZY VALLES &
VICTORIA CHAN

CHIEF Executive candidate Sam Hou Fai has pledged to evaluate the continuation of consumption vouchers if elected, planning to collaborate with the new-term SAR government team to assess feasibility and explore potential issuance methods.

During Sam's policy platform presentation earlier Saturday, Lo Choi In, lawmaker and a member of the Election Committee, expressed hopes that the new administration would maintain city-wide concessions and distribute consumption vouchers to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

In his response, Sam emphasized that during the three years of the SARS outbreak, the current government had bolstered community spending power and ensured social stability through the distribution of consumption vouchers and other pandemic-related measures, amounting to approximately MOP160 billion.

He noted that the tourism and gaming sectors have shown a rapid recovery, with visitor arrivals from January to August 2024 surpassing 23 million. In August alone, arrivals reached 3.65 million, exceeding figures from the same period in 2019 by 0.8%.

"The current government has implemented consumer reward initiatives to attract spending from tourists and support SMEs." He reiterated his commitment to



carefully study the potential for future consumption vouchers with his team.

Earlier this week, Lo recalled that Macau's economy has shown signs of recovery since the pandemic, but warned that this rebound is uneven across various sectors, highlighting that many residents are struggling financially, particularly those in small and medium-sized enterprises.

Lo pointed out that a decline in private consumption and a drop in consumer numbers have negatively impacted all sectors, including SMEs.

"The private consumption market has been declining and falling. We've seen all sectors, including SMEs, struggling to do business, so I've been pushing the government over the past session

to come up with ways, effective measures, to revitalize the economy and help our SMEs," Lo recently told the press.

During his presentation, Sam also faced a barrage of questions from community members on his plans to diversify the economy away from reliance on gaming.

Sam emphasized the need to pursue "economic multilateralism" and leverage the city's unique position for trade and tourism.

Central to Sam's platform is the "1 + 4" strategy focusing on health tourism, finance, technology and engineering.

He touted significant growth since 2015 across over 360 industries. When pressed on leading industries, Sam stressed the government's guiding role in developing

new sectors.

Acknowledging concerns over gaming dependence, Sam pointed to sizable investments in health, noting this year's budget tops 1.9 billion patacas.

He argued Macau must use international connections to create jobs and revitalize industries impacted by the pandemic like tou-

risms and small businesses.

Collaboration with neighboring Guangdong Province was elevated as essential for mutual prosperity.

Sam also highlighted the 2003 Chinese-Macau trading platform that has facilitated over 140 meetings across economic sectors.

The role of the platform is not only business but other areas, he said, hinting at opportunities in manufacturing and high-tech.

Workforce development is another critical area of focus for Sam.

He highlighted the gaming industry, which employs around 23,000 people, as a vital sector for job security.

"Their employment protection is very important here," he said, stressing the importance of training to enhance employee skills.

He recalled that the pandemic has revealed the vulnerabilities associated with dependence on the gaming industry, prompting government action to stabilize the economy.

SIX KEY POLICY DIRECTIONS AIMED AT DIRECTING THE SAR'S DEVELOPMENT

Adherence to governance principles

Enhancement of governance team

Leveraging unique advantages

Economic diversification

Comprehensive social welfare

Safeguarding national interests

GAMING

Casinos poised for growth amid market challenges

NADIA SHAW

THE gaming sector is showing signs of resilience, with a recent Morgan Stanley report highlighting potential growth as market capitalization hovers near historical lows.

The report indicates that despite macroeconomic challenges in mainland China, Macau's fundamentals remain strong.

Macau's market capitalization stands at approximately USD45 billion (MOP360 billion), while its enterprise value is around USD65 billion (MOP520 billion).

This positions the sector at levels previously seen during recovery phases in

2011, 2012, 2016, and 2022, each time rebounding to at least double the prior market cap.

The analysts said visitation and gross gaming revenue (GGR) have rebounded to nearly 80% of pre-pandemic levels, driven by robust consumer interest.

"We compared Macau's casino revenue with retail sales and found a similar resilience," they said.

This suggests that even as consumer spending on jewelry, tobacco and cosmetics has slowed, gaming revenue remains stable.

Analysts noted Sands China Ltd is likely to resume dividend payments in 2025, as business performance is ex-



pected to improve from the fourth quarter of this year.

Before the pandemic, Sands China consistently paid out dividends of HKD1.99 (USD0.256) annually.

Their net debt-to-EBITDA ratio has improved significantly, declining from 5.7 times at the end of 2022 to 2.8 times by mid-2024.

Analysts predict dividends could range from

HKD 0.70 to HKD 1.00 per share in 2025, translating to a yield of 4.4% to 6.3%.

Sands China is also investing heavily in non-gaming projects, committing approximately USD13 billion (MOP104 billion) to diversify its offerings and attract international tourists.

The firm late last week opened its remodeled Pacifica casino, now branded as The Londoner Grand Casino, and is renovating hotel spaces to enhance guest experiences.

As the industry evolves to meet changing consumer behaviors, diversification is becoming increasingly crucial.

Sam Hou Fai, a candidate

for Chief Executive, has stressed the importance of regulated growth in the gaming sector while promoting non-gaming investments.

His vision aims to attract international tourists and enhance Macau's appeal beyond its gambling reputation.

With ongoing investments from major operators like Sands China and MGM, operators have committed approximately USD13 billion (MOP104 billion) to non-gaming projects.

These investments see the gaming sector depending more on balancing traditional revenue streams with attractions that appeal to a broader audience.

'No blind spots' on Macau Bridge with 200 monitoring systems: DSAT

NADIA SHAW

THE soon to be inaugurated Macau Bridge has advanced safety features, including over 200 monitoring systems to ensure driver safety and efficiency, according to the Transport Bureau's (DSAT) Kelvin Lam Hin San.

"There are almost no blind spots," Lam said during yesterday's bridge fun walk, urging drivers to adhere strictly to traffic regulations once the bridge opens.

The Macau Bridge is expected to alleviate congestion at the Rotunda da Amizade by providing a direct route for vehicles traveling from Taipa to Macau.

Lam was optimistic this new route will significantly ease traffic flow.

He mentioned ongoing infrastructure projects, such as the A2 and A3 flyovers, which aim to further enhance connectivity between the Peninsula and the New Urban Reclamation Zone A.

In response to rising traffic



More than 20,000 residents participated in the fun walk at the Macau Bridge yesterday

volumes at Rotunda da Amizade, authorities are exploring adjustments to improve traffic management.

Proposed changes may include eliminating certain overpass ramps and optimizing traffic light deployment during peak hours.

The highly anticipated Macau Bridge will officially open Oct. 1.

This new infrastructure marks the fourth road link between the

Macau Peninsula and Taipa Island, offering a significant improvement in connectivity.

Scheduled for inauguration at 11 a.m. on China's National Day, the bridge will allow vehicles to cross from 2 p.m., as reported by local media outlets.

DSAT has confirmed the bridge has multiple entrances and exits, facilitating smoother travel between key areas, including Urban Zone A and the Macau Port

of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge.

GROWING TAXI PROBLEM

Additionally, Lam addressed the growing number of taxis in Macau, currently about 1,500.

Plans are underway for an additional 500 taxis, with one company set to invest in 50 new vehicles soon.

As discussions continue re-

garding amendments to the Road Traffic Law, Lam reaffirmed the government's commitment to engaging with community feedback.

Chief Executive candidate Sam Hou Fai said addressing traffic issues will be a priority for the incoming administration.

"Taking a cab in Macau is a struggle," Sam said during his policy presentation for Saturday's Chief Executive election.

"We have residents here who work, who live, who want to take a cab, which is a legitimate right, but it's very difficult. I'm completely willing to listen to opinions from different sectors to offer good suggestions to solve this problem," he said.

"We are a small territory, not like our neighboring region, Hong Kong. [...] We can't copy their measures, because they have different cab systems depending on different zones, but that's not replicated here," he added.

AD

In Celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China and the 25th Anniversary of Macao's Return to the Motherland

ECHOES OF A GOLDEN AGE

MACRO EVENTS THROUGH THE MICRO VISIONS OF MACAO'S LEGENDARY CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

Sands Gallery, Level 6, The Grand Suites at Four Seasons
Exhibition Period: September 21, 2024 - January 5, 2025 | 11:00 - 19:00

Lai Teng	Ung Vai Meng	Chan Hin io
Lok Hei	Lio Man Cheong	Ao Kuan Kin
Ng Wai Kin	Li Tak Seng	Lam Chi Ian

Organizer: 金沙中國 **Sands China Ltd.**

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Co-Organizer: 澳門旅遊協會 **MACAU TRAVEL ASSOCIATION**

Curator: 澳門博物館 **MACAU MUSEUM**

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY?

Results confirmed: LRT's inefficiency

RENATO MARQUES

GIVEN recent developments and strategies in both the local tourism and transport sectors, the Times has decided to conduct an in-depth investigation of the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) service and how it compares to other mass transportation options available in Macau, specifically the shuttle buses operated by the gaming concessionaires.

The goal is to compare trips between the same locations using the LRT alone where possible, or in combination with public buses when necessary. For comparison, the same journeys will be assessed using shuttle buses provided by various gaming concessionaires.

The purpose of this investigation is to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each transportation system and to determine which option best serves both residents and the millions of tourists who visit Macau each year.

This feature focuses exclusively on pedestrian routes and public mass transportation, as these have been prioritized by the government for commuting in Macau.

CITY CENTER <-> TAIPA OLD VILLAGE

One of the more frequent and major commuting needs for both locals and tourists is to travel to Macau's city center from Taipa Island, and vice versa. So that this research could cater to both categories of travelers, we decided to link the Public Buses Hub of the Ferreira do Amaral Square (Praça de Ferreira do Amaral) with the Pai Kok area in Taipa Old Village.

On the first trip, we walked from the Ferreira do Amaral Square to the StarWorld Hotel, where we took a Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) Shuttle



Bus to the Galaxy Macau resort, completing the route to Taipa Old Village on foot.

On the second trip, we did a short walk from the same location in Taipa Old Village and took the LRT at Pai Kok Station to Barra Station, taking the Bus Route 6B to complete the journey reaching Ferreira do Amaral Square.

THE FINDINGS:

Although the LRT is, by far, the fastest way to travel between Taipa Old Village and the Macau Peninsula, taking us only 14 minutes to reach the Barra Station (including the time spent walking, waiting and boarding the LRT), the whole trip took

50 minutes, five minutes more than the same trip via the GEG Shuttle Bus.

This was due to the slow and long route of the public bus route 6B – we have also tested Route 11, achieving similar results – that took us exactly 30 minutes to complete the section between Barra Transport Hub and Ferreira do Amaral Square.

In this case, the shuttle bus had the advantage, although during our test, we experienced significant delays due to high demand, having to wait up to 14 minutes (and for three buses) at the StarWorld Hotel.

It's worth noting that while the shuttle buses are scheduled to run "every 15 minutes,"

the company adjusted this frequency to approximately "every six minutes" in response to the increased demand, demonstrating their ability to quickly adapt to changing conditions.

For those who prefer a longer journey over walking, taking the public bus combined with the LRT might be a better option. During our test with the shuttle bus, we had to walk a total of 15 minutes (1,162 meters), whereas the combined public bus and LRT trip reduced the walking time to just six minutes (350 meters).

Another factor favoring the shuttle bus is that it was free of charge, compared to the 7 patacas it cost to use the public

transport system (with resident discounts).

Additionally, the bus route choice was based on recommendations from the Transport Bureau's (DSAT) mobile app, which indicated that both bus routes 11 and 6B would take about 11 minutes. The travel time was nearly three times longer.

TAIPA FERRY TERMINAL <-> NEW CONCERTS VENUE

Taking also into account the recently announced and continuing construction of a large-scale facility to host concerts and outdoor events at the southeasternmost section of Cotai, the Times also decided to test the connection times and possibilities to link to this new attraction, which is said to have a capacity of over 50,000 spectators.

We simulated a potential visitor that arrives at the Taipa Ferry Terminal and wants to reach this concert venue, as well as vice-versa. On the first trip, we did a short walk from the Taipa Ferry Terminal to the LRT Taipa Ferry Terminal Station. This took us to LRT East Asian Games Station, from which we walked to our final destination.

On the second trip, we did a short walk from the concert venue to the Grand Lisboa Palace Hotel, using a SJM shuttle bus

SCOREBOARD

Route		Total Time	Walking time (Distance)	Waiting time	Price	Result
City Center <-> Taipa Old Village	Shuttle Bus	45 min	15 min (1,162m)	14 min	Free	🏆
	LRT + Public Bus	50 min	6 min (350 m)	3 min	MOP7	
Taipa Ferry Terminal <-> Cotai Outdoor Arena	LRT	28 min	17 min (1,389 m)	3 min	MOP4	🏆
	Shuttle Bus	35 min	14 min (952 m)	8 min	Free	
Taipa Old Village <-> Cotai Outdoor Arena	LRT	28 min	16 min (1,320 m)	5 min	MOP3	🏆
	Shuttle Bus	39 min	10 min (683 m)	9 min	Free	

under scrutiny

RENATO MARQUES



to return to the Taipa Ferry Terminal.

THE FINDINGS:

In this case, even though walking from the East Asian Games LRT Station to the new concert venue takes a significant amount of time (13 minutes or 1,120 meters), using the LRT system is still more time-efficient overall. The total trip with the LRT took 28 minutes, whereas the return trip by shuttle bus took about 35 minutes.

When it comes to walking distance, both the LRT and

the shuttle bus involve similar amounts of walking. The LRT trip requires about 17 minutes of walking (1,389 meters), while the shuttle bus trip involves a slightly shorter walk of about 14 minutes (952 meters).

For those who prefer to walk less, waiting a bit longer for the shuttle bus might be a viable option. Additionally, it seems that if the LRT had a better connection to the Grand Lisboa Palace and Lisboeta Macau hotels, its advantages would be even more apparent.

To further reduce walking

time and distance, we also considered taking a shuttle bus from Lisboeta Macau directly to the Taipa Ferry Terminal. However, at the time of our test, we were informed that the next available bus would require a wait of about 1 hour and 45 minutes.

TAIPA OLD VILLAGE <-> NEW CONCERT VENUE

As mentioned above, in a last attempt to discover how long it would take someone to reach the new concert venue and how much they would have to spend if their journey began at the Taipa Old Village, the Times undertook one last round-trip, comparing, once again, the LRT and shuttle buses.

For this trip, we took the LRT from the Pai Kok Station in Taipa to the East Asian Games Station in Cotai and, on the return trip, we took another SJM shuttle bus at the Grand Lisboa Palace Hotel back to the Taipa Old Village.

THE FINDINGS:

This was the most unbalanced of all the trips tested, with the LRT making the most of the lack of traffic and the short number of stations between the starting point and destination. The trip from Taipa Old Village to the new concert venue took just 28 minutes, whereas the return trip by shuttle bus took 39 minutes, 11 minutes longer.

As noted in the previous test route, the LRT could perform even better if the walking distance of 1,120 meters (13 minutes) between the East Asian Games LRT Station and the concert venue could be reduced. Of the total 28 minutes for the LRT trip, 16 minutes were spent walking.

For the shuttle bus, the trip duration was influenced by two main factors: nearly 10 minutes of waiting time at the Grand Lisboa Palace (where the bus frequency is stated as

15 to 30 minutes) and, more significantly, the 22 minutes spent on the road between the starting point and Taipa Old Village.

On the positive side, this shuttle bus route is convenient for travelers as it connects not only to Taipa Old Village but also makes stops at Studio City, Venetian Macau and Galaxy Macau before reaching the final destination. This makes it a useful option for those looking to connect different resorts in Cotai to the concert venue.

In conclusion, the LRT does facilitate transportation across Taipa Island, offering viable options to commuters, particularly if their trips connect destinations that are in closer proximity to the Taipa Ferry Terminal, the Macau International Airport, and the sports facilities at or around the East Asian Games Dome.

The LRT becomes less efficient when commuters try to use it to reach the Peninsula (at Barra). The transport network has not been adjusted to easily and quickly connect the Barra Station to Macau's Central district, with the most of the bus routes taking very long and slow routes through the Inner Harbour district to reach the Central area – not, for example, using the Nam Van area.

It is also important to consider that the shuttle buses operated by Macau's gaming concessionaires help alleviate pressure on the public bus system and generally offer convenient door-to-door alternatives. This becomes particularly valuable in extreme weather conditions, where walking routes can be inconvenient due to heat or rain.

Additionally, some shuttle buses offer extra services for passengers, such as free Wi-Fi, mobile phone charging stations, and other amenities. While these features are quite common nowadays, they are currently lacking in the LRT system.

MGTO AND TENCENT LAUNCH ELECTRONIC COUPONS TO BOOST TOURISM

The Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has partnered with Tencent to unveil the "Double Celebrations in Macao" campaign, running from Sept. 26 to Dec. 31. This initiative offers electronic coupons and free dining orders via the WeChat Pay platform to encourage mainland tourists to spend locally. Tourists can earn up to RMB75 in coupons when spending at local merchants, excluding major resorts. The campaign seeks to enhance the local economy by promoting small and medium-sized enterprises whilst also showcasing Macau as a vibrant tourist destination. Participants can only redeem each offer once during the promotional period.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS DISABLED PARTICIPATION IN BRIDGE WALK

The government has promoted inclusivity by supporting individuals with disabilities in the "Walk to celebrate the Opening of the Macau Bridge." Held yesterday, this event commemorated the 75th anniversary of the People's Republic of China and the 25th anniversary of Macau's return to China. Around 80 participants from eight disability groups took part, encouraging social interaction and mass sports. The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) collaborated with various organizations to facilitate registration, allowing families to join in the celebration. This initiative highlights the government's commitment to integrating disabled individuals into community life and creating equal and inclusive opportunities for all.

FREE LIGHT RAIL, BUS RIDES CELEBRATE NATIONAL DAY

The Light Rail Transit (LRT) operator is offering free rides from Sept. 29 to Oct. 1 to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the PRC and the opening of the Macau Bridge. This initiative allows both residents and visitors to enjoy complimentary access, with no tickets required. The LRT will also extend its operating hours from Oct. 1 - 7 to accommodate increased visitor traffic during the National Day holiday. Both residents and visitors may take advantage of the fare-free period, with the operator noting that passengers "do not need to buy tickets but they should follow the instructions of the LRT staff to enter and exit the gates." Additionally, on Oct. 1, public buses will be free of charge.

INDUSTRIAL SECTOR REVENUES UP AMID DECLINE IN FIRMS.

The city's industrial sector faced challenges in 2023, with the number of establishments in related activities, including Electricity, Gas & Water Supply and Manufacturing, dropping to 861—a decrease of 30 from the previous year. However, total employment in these sectors increased by 306, reaching 10,925. The sector's financial performance improved, with receipts rising 15% to MOP12.11 billion and expenditures increasing by 6.6% to MOP8.25 billion. Gross surplus surged by 38.5% to MOP3.86 billion, while gross value added rose 23.1% to MOP5.97 billion. In the Electricity, Gas & Water Supply sector, the number of establishments remained stable at five, although employment fell by 13 to 1,082.

LABOR

Local residents unemployment remains 2.3%

MACAU'S unemployment rate has held steady at 1.7% for the period of June to August, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

The unemployment rate for local residents remains 2.3%, both figures reflecting stability compared to the previous period (May - July).

Notably, these rates represent a slight improvement, decreasing by 0.1 percentage points from the same period in 2019.

The total labor force in Macau has grown to 383,400, with total employment rising by 400 to 376,800.

However, the number of employed residents fell by 400 to

285,900.

The Gaming sector has seen an increase in employment, while the Hotels, Restaurants and Similar Activities have declined.

The number of unemployed individuals remained at 6,700, consistent with the previous period but down by 400 from 2019.

Interestingly, the proportion of new entrants to the labor market seeking their first job has risen to 14.7%, indicating a growing pool of fresh graduates.

Most of the unemployed were previously engaged in the Gaming and Retail sectors.

The underemployment rate has also im-

proved, dropping to 1.2%.

There are currently 4,500 underemployed individuals, primarily in Construction and Retail.

Compared to June-August 2023, both the labor force participation and underemployment rates have seen notable declines.

LV

A PHILIPPINE ACCOUNT OF THE GBA

PEARL RIVER DELTA OUTPACES TOKYO, SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREAS

ANALYSIS

CARRYING mostly “Tsino” tourists and some Philippine-based journalists, the chartered bus has traversed about 17 kilometers of the newly opened sea bridge across the foggy Pearl River estuary. And then the mist parted to reveal the diamond-shaped island in the middle of the water ahead, recalls a Philippine Daily Inquirer’s reporter in a detailed account of the tour here abbreviated.

Named as West Artificial Island, it is shaped like the body of a kite, with the bridge representing its lengthy tail. The island serves as the mouth of a 6.8-kilometer under-sea tunnel, the other end of which emerges onto Shenzhen. This is the Shenzhen-Zhongshan Link, tagged at more than \$6 billion and opened to traffic last June 30.

The Pearl River Delta region in China, home to the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), is emerging as a formidable global economic powerhou-

se, surpassing even renowned metropolitan hubs like Tokyo and the San Francisco Bay Area.

During the tour organized for Filipino-Chinese tourists and journalists, the visitors crossed the newly opened Shenzhen-Zhongshan Link, a sea bridge and tunnel system stretching across 17 kilometers.

The Shenzhen-Zhongshan Link connects two key cities in Guangdong province. The tollway complements the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, a similar bridge-tunnel complex completed in 2018. Together, these projects symbolize the economic might of the Pearl River Delta, often called the “factory of the world” for its massive industrial output.

Situated just a short flight away from the increasingly contested South China Sea, the GBA encompasses nine cities, including Guangzhou and Shenzhen, along with the two special autonomous regions of Hong Kong and Macau.

This region plays a significant role in China’s economy, accoun-

COURTESY RONNEL DOMINGO/PDI



Formally named Guangzhou TV Astronomical and Sightseeing Tower, Canton Tower is seen with the Liede Bridge on the foreground, during a night cruise along the Pearl River

ting for about 11% of the nation’s \$17.8 trillion GDP. In comparison, the GBA’s economic output of \$2 trillion in 2023 surpassed that of both the Tokyo Bay Area (\$1.8 trillion) and the San Francisco Bay Area (\$1.3 trillion), according to DBS Bank.

The region’s economic clout, driven by infrastructure, high-tech manufacturing, trade, finance, and resilient property markets, positions it as a top global player alongside America’s Silicon Valley.

During the tour this month, which covered five of the GBA’s nine cities, visitors witnessed firsthand the scale of development and modernization. Shenzhen, in particular, stands out as a city that has rapidly evolved from a small fishing village in the 1980s to a bustling metropolis with a skyline dominated by skyscrapers. The city boasts more high-rise buildings

than any other in the world, including the Ping An Finance Centre, one of the tallest structures globally at 599 meters.

Meanwhile, Guangzhou, the capital city of Guangdong province and a historical trading hub, blends its rich past with a modern skyline. The iconic Canton Tower, standing at 604 meters, is the second-tallest tower in the world, only behind Japan’s Tokyo Skytree. The city is also home to some of the world’s tallest buildings, such as the Guangzhou CTF Finance Centre, which ranks eighth globally at 530 meters.

The sheer scale of ongoing development across the GBA is hard to miss. The tour’s participants, including some who had visited Shenzhen in the 1980s, marveled at the transformation. Back then, the city was a modest fishing village, far removed from the industrial juggernaut it is today. Shenzhen

has since become a global hub for manufacturing and innovation, producing a wide array of goods, from electronics to appliances. The transformation is particularly striking for those who, like Robin Tan, witnessed Shenzhen’s humble beginnings firsthand.

Tan recounted how, during his visit in the 1980s, Shenzhen locals prized goods imported from nearby Hong Kong, then still under British rule. Today, however, the GBA, particularly Shenzhen, manufactures much of what the world needs and wants. The biannual Canton Fair, held in Guangzhou, remains a key event for showcasing the region’s manufacturing prowess, attracting buyers and businesses from across the globe.

The rapid development of the GBA is supported by a growing population, now approaching 90 million—around four-fifths of the Philippines’ population. The sight of construction cranes scattered across the region underscores its continued growth, with new infrastructure and residential developments rising at a brisk pace. The ongoing urbanization and economic expansion of the GBA signal China’s ascent as a global economic player, further solidifying its influence on the world stage.

For tourists, the GBA offers a unique blend of historical significance and modernity. While China’s other cities like Beijing and Shanghai are renowned for their historical and cultural attractions, the Pearl River Delta region is emblematic of China’s contemporary rise as an economic superpower. As China continues to develop, the GBA stands as a key driver of this growth, offering a glimpse into the future of global commerce and industry. **MDT/PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER**

SNAPSHOT

Indicator	Value
Economic Output (2023, USD trillions)	2
Population (millions)	90
Proportion of National GDP (%)	11
Shenzhen-Zhongshan Link Cost (USD billions)	6
HKZM Bridge Cost (USD billions)	5

Universal Music launches label division in GBA

ON THE AGENDA

UNIVERSAL Music Greater China, a division of Universal Music Group, announced the launch of Universal Music China Greater Bay Area, a new label division covering the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area in China.

The new division, headquartered in Shenzhen, marks the first time a major international music company has established an office specifically focused on serving the Greater Bay Area, home to over 86 million people and one of the world’s most populous urban areas,

according to a company statement last week.

Gary Chan, managing director of Universal Music Hong Kong and senior vice president of Universal Music Greater China, will lead the new division, aiming to enrich the area’s music scene. By embracing its economic and cultural vibrancy, this initiative aims to elevate both the local and global appeal of the region’s diverse musical heritage.

“The launch of Universal Music China Greater Bay Area represents a strategic expansion, leveraging the vast market potential and unique cultural atmosphere of the Greater Bay Area,”

said Timothy Xu, chairman and CEO of Universal Music Greater China. “We eagerly anticipate welcoming the outstanding talents from this region to join us in driving forward the next era of Chinese pop music. In this pursuit, we are setting our sights on transforming the Greater Bay Area into a trendsetting hub that epitomizes creativity, vitality, and connectivity, crafting fresh musical expressions and innovative entertainment experiences.”

The region’s rich Cantonese cultural heritage has profoundly shaped local and Asian pop culture, resonating with audiences worldwide.

The announcement stated that the new label would assemble a “robust” local team to handle marketing, talent scouting and artist management in the area. Its

XINHUA



Night view of Luohu district in Shenzhen, Guangdong province

mission is to transform the local music scene “by blending global musical trends with the Greater Bay Area’s vibrant and youthful energy.” The company noted that this approach leverages the region’s musical heritage and entertainment industry, aiming to create unique “experiences that captivate audiences worldwide.”

Adam Granite, executive vice president of Market Development at Universal Music Group, said: “Our commitment to the Greater Bay Area is part of Universal Music Group’s global strategy to invest in local and regional music scenes, particularly in rapidly growing markets like China. By deepening our roots in local cultures and

enhancing support for local artists, we aim to elevate the Chinese music landscape and introduce its unique sounds on the world stage.”

Regarding China as a key music market, Universal Music Greater China has already established offices in Beijing, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Taiwan to support growth across the region.

FINANCE

Australian treasurer, visiting Beijing, welcomes Chinese efforts to stimulate its economy

EMILY WANG FUJIYAMA & ROD MCGUIRK, BEIJING

AUSTRALIAN Treasurer Jim Chalmers on Friday welcomed Chinese efforts to stimulate its slowing economy, noting that its recent weakness has hurt Australia.

Chalmers was wrapping up a two-day visit to Beijing, the first to China by an Australian treasurer in seven years, as strained bilateral relations mend.

He told reporters that Australia's economy was slowing because of global economic uncertainty, high interest rates and China's slowdown.

"Those three things are combining to slow our own economy considerably and when steps are taken here to boost economic activity and to boost growth in the Chinese economy, subject to the details that will be released in good time, we see that as a very, very good development for Australia," Chalmers said.

China is the biggest buyer of Australia's most lucrative exports: iron ore and coal.

"Our resilience and prosperity are closely connected to China's economy and the global economy," Chalmers wrote in an opinion piece published Friday in The Australian newspaper. He noted that his department forecasts Chinese annual economic growth at below 5% for the next three years, the weakest expansion since the late 1970s.



In this photo released by Australian Treasury, Australia's Federal Treasurer Jim Chalmers speaks during a press conference in Beijing, last week

While in Beijing the two sides held meetings for the Australia-China Strategic Economic Dialogue, reviving the once annual talks aimed at growing trade and investment after a seven-year hiatus.

In 2020, China introduced a series of official and unofficial trade bans on Australian commodities, including coal, that cost Australian exporters more than 20 billion Australian dollars (\$14 billion) a year.

Such "trade impediments" now cost Australian exporters less than AU\$1 billion (\$690 million) a year, Chalmers says.

At the outset of Thursday's meetings, Zheng Shanjie, chair of China's National Development and Reform Commission, noted how relations had improved since Chalmers' center-left Labor Party govern-

ment was elected in 2020, ending nine years of conservative rule in Australia.

"Our development represents opportunities rather than challenges with each other," Zheng said through an interpreter.

"At a time when the international situation is intricate and turbulent, it is of great significance for both countries to discuss economic development and cooperation opportunities together," Zheng added.

Two-way bilateral trade reached a record AU\$327 billion (\$225 billion) last year, more than double its value when a free trade deal was struck in 2015.

During his visit, Chalmers was expected to raise with the Chinese restrictions on imports of Australian lobsters and red meat from two

Australian processors.

Chalmers confirmed he had raised the lobster trade in discussions and said Australia was seeking a "speedy resolution of the restrictions." He blamed "technical issues" between bureaucracies of the two nations for the delay.

China raised concerns about Australian foreign investment rules.

Chalmers said he had explained to Zheng that Australia's regulations did not target China and had agreed to further discuss the restrictions.

"Ours is a non-discriminatory regime which is about managing risks in foreign investment," Chalmers said.

"Rejecting proposals is a very rare thing and it isn't just (proposals) from one country," Chalmers added.

China wants to invest in Australian critical minerals, but Australia shares U.S. concerns over China's global dominance in critical minerals and control over supply chains in the renewable energy sector.

Citing Australia's national interests, in June Chalmers ordered five Chinese-linked companies to divest their shares in the rare earth mining company Northern Minerals.

China has been grappling with a lagging economy post-COVID, with weak consumer demand, persistent deflationary pressures and a contraction in factory activity.

Earlier this week, China announced a series of new measures to boost the economy and revive its ailing property sector. The central bank lowered bank reserve requirements by 0.5% as of Friday. It also has slashed interest rates on its loans to commercial banks and lowered the minimum down payments for some mortgages.

Unconfirmed reports Thursday by the South China Morning Post and Bloomberg said the government plans to spend about 1 trillion yuan (\$142 billion) on recapitalizing six big state-owned banks.

While China is growing economically closer to Australia, Beijing is becoming militarily more belligerent in the Asia-Pacific region.

On security issues, Chalmers said he raised in his discussions a Chinese aircraft carrier accompanied by two destroyers entering an area near Japan's shores for the first time last week.

He also raised international concerns over China test-firing an intercontinental ballistic missile into the Pacific Ocean this week.

"I was able to reiterate in the meetings yesterday afternoon our expectations of safe and professional conduct of all militaries operating in our region," Chalmers said.

"But as you would expect, the overwhelming focus of our discussions here have been the economy," he added. **MDT/AP**

Japanese fans bid farewell to beloved panda pair before their return to China

AYAKA MCGILL, TOKYO

THOUSANDS of Japanese fans bid tearful farewell to their beloved panda couple that made their final public appearance at Tokyo's Ueno Zoo on Saturday before returning to China for medical treatment.

The pair, Ri Ri and Shin Shin, are the parents of Xiang Xiang, the park-born idol that had returned home last year.

More than 2,000 visitors, many wearing



Visitors watch the giant panda Shin Shin at Ueno Zoo, a day before giant panda couple Ri Ri and Shin Shin's return to China, Saturday

T-shirts and carrying items decorated by panda motifs, queued outside

the zoo hours before the opening. Some said they camped out overni-

ght to secure their chance.

The pandas, both 19

years old, arrived at the Ueno Zoo in 2011. Although their lease is good through 2026, Japan and China agreed to their return home as the aging couple need treatment for high blood pressure, according to the zoo.

Hirono Sasaki, who waited to enter the zoo since 5 a.m., was crying. "They were always my source of comfort, so I'm feel extremely sad," she said. "I loved seeing Ri Ri climbing trees in her old enclosure. I hope she can climb trees again when she is back in China."

After their hours long wait, visitors were given only a few minutes inside their hut to view the black-and-white animals.

Lucky ones could get a glimpse of them nibbling on bamboo branches, but others could only catch them during their naps.

China sends pandas abroad as a sign of goodwill but maintains ownership over the animals and any cubs they produce. The animals are native to southwestern China and are an unofficial national mascot.

Pandas, which reproduce rarely in the wild and rely on a diet of bamboo, remain among the world's most threatened species. An estimated 1,800 pandas live in the wild, while another 500 are in zoos or reserves, mostly in Sichuan. **MDT/AP**

NORTH KOREA

GOV'T HAS ENOUGH URANIUM TO BUILD A 'DOUBLE-DIGIT' NUMBER OF BOMBS, SEOUL'S SPY AGENCY SAYS

KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

NORTH Korea has likely enriched enough uranium to build a "double-digit" number of bombs and is making progress in its efforts to develop more powerful and accurate missiles targeting rival South Korea, Seoul's spy agency told lawmakers last week.

The closed-door parliamentary briefing by the National Intelligence Service came after North Korea offered a rare glimpse into a secretive facility to produce weapons-grade uranium earlier this month as leader Kim Jong Un reiterated his goal to "exponentially" increase his stock of nuclear weapons.

The South Korean agency assessed that Kim's disclosure of the facility was likely a statement of defiance toward Washington ahead of the U.S. presidential election and meant to domestically showcase his military accomplishments amid deepening economic struggles, according to Lee Seong-kweun, one of the lawmakers who attended the briefing.

When asked about North Korea's bomb fuel capacity, the agen-



cy said North Korea likely has about 70 kilograms (154 pounds) of plutonium and an unspecified but considerable amount of weapons-grade uranium that would be enough to build "at least a double-digit number" of weapons, Lee said.

While North Korean state media did not disclose the location of the uranium enrichment facility

that Kim visited on Sept. 13, the South Korean agency said it was likely to be a site in Kangson, near the North Korean capital of Pyongyang, said Park Sun-won, another lawmaker who attended the briefing.

Along with the North's main nuclear complex in the town of Yongbyon, the Kangson plant is one of two known sites in North Korea

that has been linked to uranium enrichment activities. Some analysts say North Korea likely has other hidden sites for enriching uranium.

Kim's visit to the uranium enrichment site was followed by a North Korean missile test days later, as the country continues to flaunt its weapons capabilities in the face of deepening confrontations with

Washington and Seoul.

North Korean state media said the test launches on Sept. 18 involved two types of new missiles — one designed to deliver "super-large" conventional warheads and the other a "strategic" cruise missile, a term that implies it was developed for nuclear strikes.

North Korean state media reports on the tests suggested that North Korea was improving the capabilities of the weapons, which are designed for delivering precision strikes on South Korean targets, the lawmakers paraphrased the South Korean spy agency as saying.

Some analysts speculate that North Korea could attempt to dial up pressure on Washington by conducting a nuclear test ahead of the U.S. presidential election.

But the South Korean spy agency assessed that North Korea could wait on a nuclear test until after the election since there are other steps it may want to try first, such as test-firing a long-range missile targeting the U.S. mainland or launching a military reconnaissance satellite, Lee said. **MDT/AP**

INDONESIA

Landslide triggered by rain leaves 12 dead and 2 missing at an illegal gold mine

JOHN NEDY, SUNGAI ABU

MUD, rugged terrain and lack of telecommunications hampered rescue efforts Saturday after a landslide set off by torrential rains smashed down into an unauthorized gold mining operation on Indonesia's Sumatra Island, killing at least 12 people.

Villagers had been digging for grains of gold in the remote village in the Solok district of West Sumatra province when mud plunged down the surrounding hills and buried them on Thursday.

Several people managed to escape and some were pulled out by rescuers, said local search and rescue agency chief Abdul Malik. Eleven people were injured.

Malik said rescuers recovered 12 bodies, revising an earlier death



Rescuers transfer a survivor into an ambulance after the landslide, in Solok, West Sumatra, Indonesia, Saturday

toll of 15 after officials discovered that lack of communications and the remoteness of the village had affected the counting of the victims. Two other people are believed still missing under tons of mud, he said.

Rescuers earlier said the devastated area could only be reached by walking for four hours from the nearest settlement.

"Relief efforts for the dead and missing were

hampered by rugged terrain and blocked roads covered by thick mud and debris," Malik said, adding that many residents also did not want outsiders, including search and rescue officers, to enter their traditional mining areas.

Informal mining operations are common in Indonesia, providing a tenuous livelihood to thousands who labor in conditions with a high risk of serious injury or

death.

Landslides, flooding and collapses of tunnels are just some of the hazards facing miners. Much of gold ore processing involves highly toxic mercury and cyanide and workers frequently use little or no protection.

The country's last major mining-related accident occurred in July when a landslide crashed onto an illegal traditional gold mine in Gorontalo province on Sulawesi island, killing at least 23 people.

In April 2022 a landslide hit another gold mine in North Sumatra's Mandailing Natal district, killing 12 women.

In February 2019, a makeshift wooden structure in an illegal gold mine in North Sulawesi province collapsed partly due to shifting soil. More than 40 people were buried. **MDT/AP**

INDIA

DOZENS OF CHILDREN DROWN WHILE BATHING DURING THREE-DAY HINDU FESTIVAL

INDRAJIT SINGH, PATNA

DOZENS of children drowned while bathing in rivers and ponds in rituals that were part of a three-day Hindu festival in eastern India's Bihar state, officials said.

Heavy monsoon rains recently had raised the levels of waterways across the state.

At least 46 people, including 37 children, drowned in separate incidents across the state's 15 districts, a statement from Bihar's disaster management department said. Authorities have recovered 43 bodies so far, and the three missing people are presumed to be dead.

During the annual

festival, mothers fast for 24 hours for the well-being of their children. The women are sometimes accompanied by their children when they visit rivers and ponds for cleansing rituals. The festival concluded late last week.

The state government has announced a compensation of 400,000 rupees (\$4,784) for the families of each of the dead.

Deadly accidents like drownings and stampedes during religious festivals are common in India.

In July, at least 121 people were killed after severe overcrowding and a lack of exits contributed to a stampede at a religious festival in northern India. **MDT/AP**

Biden and Harris call the Israeli strike killing Hezbollah's Nasrallah a 'measure of justice'

AAMER MADHANI & MATTHEW LEE, REHOBOTH BEACH

THE Israeli strike that killed Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrallah was a "measure of justice" for victims of a four-decade "reign of terror," President Joe Biden said yesterday (local time).

The comments came after Lebanon's Hezbollah group confirmed Saturday that Nasrallah, one of the group's founders, was killed in an Israeli airstrike in Beirut the previous day.

Biden noted that the operation to take out Nasrallah took place in the broader context of the conflict that began with Hamas' massacre of Israelis on Oct. 7, 2023.

"Nasrallah, the next day, made the fateful decision to join hands with Hamas and open what he called a 'northern front' against Israel," Biden said in a statement.

He also noted that Hezbollah under Nasrallah's watch has been responsible for the deaths of thousands of Americans, Israelis and Lebanese.

Hezbollah attacks against U.S. interests include the truck bombing of the U.S. Embassy and multinational force barracks in Beirut in 1983 and the kidnapping of the Central Intelligence Agency chief of station in Beirut, who died while held captive. The U.S. said Hezbollah leaders armed and trained militias that carried out attacks on American forces during the war in Iraq.

The White House sees the death of Nasrallah as a huge blow to the group. At the same time, the administration has sought to tread carefully as it has tried to contain Israel's war with Hamas, which, like Hezbollah, is backed by Iran, from exploding into an all-out regional conflict.

The White House and Pentagon were quick on Friday, shortly after the strike, to say publicly that Israel offered it no forewarning of the operation.

"President Biden and I do not want to see conflict in the Middle East escalate into a broader regional war," Vice President Kamala Harris said in a statement that echoed Biden's description of a "measure of justice." She added, "Diplomacy remains the best path forward to protect civilians and achieve lasting sta-



Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah

bility in the region."

The confirmation of Nasrallah's death comes during a week that began with Biden's top national security aides working on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly to build support for a 21-day Israel-Hezbollah cease-fire that they hoped might also breathe new life into stalled efforts to secure a truce in Gaza.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivered a defiant speech Friday to the United Nations, vowing to keep up operations against Hezbollah until tens of thousands of Israeli citizens displaced by rocket attacks can re-

turn home. Shortly after, Israel carried out the strike killing Nasrallah.

Biden reiterated that he wants to see cease-fires both in Gaza and between Israel and Hezbollah.

"It is time for these deals to close, for the threats to Israel to

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vow[ed] to keep up operations against Hezbollah until tens of thousands of Israeli citizens displaced by rocket attacks can return home

be removed, and for the broader Middle East region to gain greater stability," Biden said.

Iranian President Masoud

Pezeshkian accused the United States of supporting the killing that took out Nasrallah and dozens of others.

"The world community will not forget that the order of the terrorist strike was issued from New York and the Americans cannot absolve themselves from complicity with the Zionists," Pezeshkian was quoted as saying in a statement read on Iranian state television.

The State Department yesterday ordered the departure of the families of U.S. diplomats who are not employed by the embassy in Beirut and authorized the departure of those who are, as well as nonessential employees because of "the volatile and unpredictable security situation" in Lebanon's capital.

The U.S. embassy in Beirut also posted a link to an online form that Americans in Lebanon can complete if they are interested in possible assistance leaving the country.

The embassy stressed that it was not organizing evacuations and that there are still commercial means to leave, but the request for information appeared to suggest that such plans may be in the works.

The State Department has

previously advised American citizens to consider leaving Lebanon and reiterated its warning against all travel to the country.

"Due to the increased volatility following airstrikes within Beirut and the volatile and unpredictable security situation throughout Lebanon, the U.S. Embassy urges U.S. citizens to depart Lebanon while commercial options still remain available," the department said in a statement yesterday.

The State Department routinely orders or authorizes the departure of nonessential embassy staffers and the families of diplomats when security conditions deteriorate in the country where they are posted.

An ordered departure is not technically an evacuation but does require those affected to leave. An authorized departure allows those affected to leave the country voluntarily at government expense.

Biden, who was spending the weekend at his vacation home in Delaware, and Harris, who was campaigning in California, held a call with national security aides to discuss the situation in the Middle East.

In a brief exchange with reporters as he left church yesterday, Biden did not directly respond to questions about the conflict potentially escalating further.

"It's time for a cease-fire," he said.

The president on Friday directed the Pentagon to assess and adjust as necessary the U.S. force posture in the region to enhance deterrence, ensure force protection and support the full range of U.S. objectives.

He called for the assessment after the Pentagon earlier in the week announced it was sending an unspecified number of additional U.S. troops to the region because of rising tensions.

MDT/AP

IRAN REVOLUTIONARY GUARD GENERAL DIED IN ISRAELI STRIKE THAT KILLED HEZBOLLAH LEADER, REPORTS SAY

A prominent general in Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard died in an Israeli airstrike that killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut, Iranian media reported Saturday.

The killing of Gen. Abbas Nilforushan marks the latest casualty suffered by Iran as the nearly yearlong Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip teeters on the edge of becoming a regional conflict. His death further ratchets up pressure on Iran to respond, even as Tehran has signaled in recent months that it wants to negotiate with the West over sanctions crushing its economy.



Nilforushan, 58, was killed Friday in the strike in Lebanon in which Nasrallah died, the state-owned newspaper Tehran Times reported.

Ahmad Reza Pour Khaghan, the deputy head of Iran's judiciary, also confirmed Nilforushan's death, describing him as a "guest to the people

of Lebanon," the state-run IRNA news agency said.

Khaghan also reportedly said that Iran had the right to retaliate under international law.

Nilforushan served as the deputy commander for operations in the Guard, a role overseeing its ground forces. What he was doing in Lebanon on Friday wasn't immediately clear. The Guard's expeditionary Quds Force for decades has armed, trained and relied on Hezbollah as part of its strategy to rely on regional militias as a counterbalance to Israel and the United States.

MDT/AP

ANALYSIS

What is the 2006 UN resolution that some hope could help to end the Israel-Hezbollah conflict?

KAREEM CHEHAYEB, BEIRUT

IN 2006, after a bruising monthlong war between Israel and Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah militant group, the United Nations Security Council unanimously voted for a resolution to end the conflict and pave the way for lasting security along the border.

But while there was relative calm for nearly two decades, Resolution 1701's terms were never fully enforced.

And now, after nearly a year of low-level clashes, Israel and Hezbollah appear on the verge of another all-out war. As Israeli jets pound deep inside Lebanon and Hezbollah fires rockets deeper into northern Israel, U.N. and diplomatic officials have again turned to the 2006 resolution in a bid to end the conflict.

Years of deeply divided politics and region-wide geopolitical hostilities have halted substantial progress on its implementation, yet Resolution 1701 is still considered the brightest prospect for long-term stability between Israel and Lebanon.

WHAT IS UNSC RESOLUTION 1701?

In 2000, Israel withdrew its forces from most of southern Lebanon along a U.N.-demarcated "Blue Line" that separated the two countries and the annexed Golan Heights. U.N. peacekeeping forces in Lebanon, known as UNIFIL, increased their presence along the line of withdrawal.

Resolution 1701 was supposed to finish the incomplete work from 2000 and end the 2006 war; Israeli forces would fully withdraw while the Lebanese army and UNIFIL — Hezbollah excluded — would be the exclusive armed presence south of Lebanon's Litani River.

The Lebanese state was to have full sovereignty over its south.

Meanwhile, up to 15,000 U.N. peacekeepers would help to maintain calm, return displaced Lebanese and secure the area alongside the Lebanese military.

The goal was long-term security, with land borders even-



Lebanese soldiers cordon off the area at the site of an Israeli airstrike in Beirut's southern suburbs, last week

tually demarcated to resolve territorial disputes.

"It was made for a certain situation and context," Elias Hanna, a retired Lebanese army general, told The Associated Press. "But as time goes on, the essence of the resolution begins to hollow."

HAS IT BEEN IMPLEMENTED?

For years, Lebanon and Israel blamed each other for countless violations along the tense frontier. Israel says Hezbollah's elite Radwan Force and growing arsenal remain, and accuses the group of using a local environmental organization to spy on troops. Lebanon complains about military jets and naval ships entering Lebanese territory even when there is no active conflict.

"You had a role of the UNIFIL that slowly eroded like any other peacekeeping with time that has no clear mandate," said Joseph Bahout, the director of the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy at the American University of Beirut. "They don't have permission to inspect the area without coordinating with the Lebanese army."

UNIFIL for years has urged Israel to withdraw from some territory north of the frontier, but to no avail.

Hezbollah's power has meanwhile grown, both in its arsenal and as a political influence in parliament.

The Iran-backed group was essential in keeping Syrian President Bashar Assad in power when armed opposition groups

view the resolution as key. For almost a year, Washington has promoted various versions of a deal that would gradually lead to its full implementation.

But the circumstances now are far more complicated than in 2006.

Israel says its aerial bombardments aim to push Hezbollah back and allow its northern residents to return home safely. He-

The goal was long-term security, with land borders eventually demarcated to resolve territorial disputes

zbollah says it will stop firing rockets only once there is a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, where Israel continues to battle Hezbollah's key ally Hamas. Negotiations for a ceasefire there are gridlocked.

"You're tying 1701 with a hundred things," Bahout said. "A resolution is the reflection of a balance of power and political context."

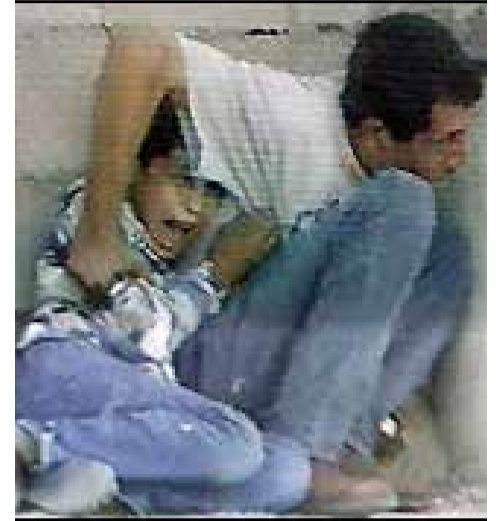
HOW RELEVANT IS 1701 TO ENDING THE CURRENT HOSTILITIES?

So while the Security Council resolution's goals are still relevant, new issues have emerged that have sidelined its implementation.

Between the warring parties, you have to make each party feel that they achieved something," Hanna said. "Otherwise, you won't come to the table unless you are defeated or annihilated." MDT/AP

this day in history

2000 SHOCKING IMAGES OF BOY SHOT IN GAZA



There has been a shocked and angry reaction around the world to TV pictures showing the death of a 12-year-old Palestinian boy caught in Israeli-Palestinian cross-fire on the Gaza Strip.

The footage shows the boy, Muhammad al-Durrah, shot in the arms of his father who was trying to shield him.

His terrifying last moments were captured by French television.

The shocking images, played repeatedly on television, show Muhammad and his father, Jamal, cowering behind a small metal barrel as bullets rain around them.

Jamal can be seen waving desperately at the Israeli soldiers on the other side of the road, as his son screams, obviously terrified, by his side.

Eventually both were hit - Muhammad four times. His father survived but was also critically wounded.

An ambulance driver who came to their aid 45 minutes later was also reported to have been shot and killed.

Flashpoint

The tragedy happened at Netzarim junction, one of the worst flashpoints on the Gaza Strip, on the intersection between a Palestinian-controlled main road and a route controlled by the Israeli army leading to a Jewish settlement.

The father and his son were unarmed, and appear not to have been part of the rioting.

Relatives say they were returning from Gaza's popular used-car market and were trying to get home to the Buriej refugee camp where they live.

The boy's death came at the height of clashes between Palestinian and Israeli police in Jerusalem and throughout the occupied territories.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Images of the killing of Muhammad al-Durrah caused an international outcry.

Israel expressed sorrow at the death but accused the Palestinians of making "cynical use" of children in clashes with Israeli troops. The Israeli Defence Force's subsequent investigation into the killing found that Mohammad and his father could not have been within range of the Israeli soldiers.

There have been other investigations since which have looked at claims the shooting was faked and even that the boy was never killed. The incident is still the subject of great controversy.

In the following five days of bloodshed, two more Palestinian children, one 10 years old, the other just two, were killed.

On October 12 two Israeli reservists were beaten to death and their bodies mutilated by a Palestinian mob in Ramallah. In revenge Israel sent in helicopter gunships to attack the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It was the beginning of a wave of violence which became known as the second Palestinian intifada (uprising), or by some as the Al Aqsa intifada.

By the end of the first year of the intifada, more than 800 people had died.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Build strength, health and fitness through regular practice. Discipline and experience raise your performance level. To really learn something, teach. Listen to your intuition.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
 Fall into unexpected delights with family, friends and someone special. Discover beauty, fun and romance. Share an entertaining diversion with people you love.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
 Dive into a household project. Make decisions to advance your agenda. Home and family demand more attention. Reward domestic chores with delicious treats.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Catch up on the reading. Words flow with greater ease. Recognize valuable lessons from the past. You're especially charming and persuasive. Reaffirm a commitment.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Your profit potential is on the rise. Replenish reserves. Exchange services and talents. Provide leadership and tally up your silver. Track income and outflow.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Consider your passions for fresh energy. State your intentions and go for them. Start small. Power and confidence rise with every completed promise.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Get some down time. Find a quiet spot for imagining. Inspiration flowers in a peaceful setting. Schedule the steps to realize a dream.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Share your energy, love and resources with a group project that inspires you. Social connections forge and deepen bonds. Have fun with friends.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Use your hidden talents for a professional edge. Don't give away your secret sauce. You can find the funding for the changes you want.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Investigate possibilities and explore. You can learn what you need to know. Travel and studies are favored. Do the homework. Make an amazing discovery.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Lucrative opportunities abound. It's a good time to ask for money. Collaborate to make deals, work out terms and send invoices for work completed.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Romantic conditions flower naturally. Plot a shared tryst or rendezvous. Discover another commonality. Invent an exciting possibility together. Plot and strategize. Share something delicious.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	15	21	rain
Changchun	10	21	rain
Chengdu	17	24	rain
Chongqing	18	21	rain
Fuzhou	24	31	cloudy
Guangzhou	25	35	cloudy
Guiyang	15	16	showers
Haikou	26	34	cloudy
Hangzhou	23	30	rain
Harbin	10	13	cloudy
Hefei	21	27	rain
Nanjing	23	30	rain
Shanghai	24	30	overcast
Taipei	25	28	rain
Wuhan	23	31	cloudy
Hong Kong	28	34	sunny
WORLD			
Moscow	8	13	cloudy
Frankfurt	13	15	showers
Paris	12	17	showers
London	11	16	rain
New York	17	23	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Light gas; 5- ___ Arbor; 8- Zip-___-Doo-Dah; 12- Aquarium buildup; 14- Curved molding; 15- Metallica drummer Ulrich; 16- Garr and Hatcher; 17- BMW competitor; 18- Med. school course; 19- Capsize; 21- Lubricant; 23- Horse-like animal, term of insult; 24- Common article; 25- A really big shoe?; 26- California peak; 30- Big brass; 32- Slender boat; 33- Aircraft with one set of wings; 37- Put ___ on it; 38- Elector; 39- Pack ___ (quit); 40- Kinfolk; 42- Climb; 43- "The Crucible" setting; 44- Wobble; 45- One ___ time; 48- Windy City trains; 49- Little spasm; 50- Bassett or Lansbury; 52- Arterial dilatation; 57- Bar mitzvah dance; 58- Mentor; 60- Baseball's Pee Wee; 61- Hot times abroad; 62- Coup d'___; 63- Related on the mother's side; 64- Insect-repelling chemical; 65- Snitch; 66- Prefix for while;

DOWN 1- Defense grp. since 1949; 2- Hgt.; 3- Shrek, for one; 4- Neet rival; 5- Son of ___; 6- Homer's TV neighbor; 7- Person who lives near another; 8- Wings; 9- Mother of Perseus; 10- Clear the board; 11- Cosmetician Lauder; 13- Fancy home; 14- Crew needs; 20- Mex. neighbor; 22- Cut the crop; 24- Melodies; 26- Injury reminder; 27- Patriot Nathan; 28- Indigo source; 29- Fountain treats; 30- Tribal symbol; 31- Pizzeria order; 33- Shifts; 34- Rat-___; 35- World's longest river; 36- Cabinet dept.; 38- Hamlet resident; 41- Chinese weight; 42- Safe; 44- Neckwear; 45- Oohed and ___; 46- Govt. security; 47- See eye to eye; 49- Hardware fastener; 51- ___ of Eden; 52- I smell ___; 53- Russo of "Ransom"; 54- Calendar span; 55- Retired fliers; 56- Get together; 59- Actress Hagen;

Friday's solution

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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77.10 m² / 830 ft² | HKD3,980,000



Nam Long (Taipa Village)
2 bed 1 bath
59.92 m² / 645 ft² | HKD3,650,000



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



Ocean Garden Cattleya Court (Taipa)
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RUGBY

Springboks win first Championship title since 2019 in style

SOUTH Africa won its first Rugby Championship title since 2019 in style by blowing away contender Argentina 48-7 over the weekend.

In a strange quirk, while the Springboks have owned the last two Rugby World Cups, they haven't been able to win the trophy for southern hemisphere supremacy.

Until now.

They capped a tournament they led from day one — Aug. 10 — with a handsome last-round victory by seven tries to one that exceeded expectations and celebrated lock Eben Etzebeth becoming outright the most capped Springbok in his 128th test.

South Africa was prevented from clinching the title last weekend in Santiago del Estero, where Argentina ended the Springboks' unbeaten run 29-28. But the world champions needed only a single bonus point to finish the job when they returned home.

A side of 10 changes and restocked with World Cup winners led



South Africa's Eben Etzebeth, right, is tackled by Argentina's Joel Sclavi during a rugby championship test match at Mbombela stadium in Nelspruit

by a commanding 27-7 at halftime, weathered an attempted Pumas comeback, and finished with three converted tries in the last 11 minutes.

"We've used 35 (players), but when you get to these crunch games it's the older heads and the calmer heads that sometimes pull it through," coach Rassie Erasmus said.

South Africa made its mood known in the second minute when it waived off a kickable penalty and forced a five-meter lineout. That didn't work, so it forced three straight five-meter scrums. Finally, center Damian de Allende was first receiver, Manie Libbok ran back door and fullback Aphelele Fassi straightened and busted through two de-

fenders to cross.

Libbok, who missed a late penalty last weekend for the win and title, was relieved of goalkicking duty but had a starring role. His distribution, vision and defense were top-notch.

Scrumhalf Jaden Hendrikse, combining with Libbok for the first time, nailed the conversion and the next two goalkicks.

Another penalty kicked to the corner finished with flanker Pieter-Steph du Toit leaping over the ruck NFL-style to score.

Trailing 14-0 after 14 minutes, Argentina reminded of its qualities when flyhalf Tomas Albornoz converted his own try.

But after winger Mateo Carreras was sin-binned for recklessly taking out an aerial Fassi, Fassi scored after a du Toit turnover and Jesse Kriel break.

Right on halftime, Libbok and Fassi set up wing Cheslin Kolbe to step one defender and crash through a second to score and make it 27-7.

In a first half which flew by, the

Pumas struggled to hold back the Springboks and took hits. Backs Santiago Chocobares and Rodrigo Isgro — the sevens star — and flanker Juan Martin Gonzalez had already been forced off.

But the Pumas fought back in the new half with more possession. But the Boks defense was too good.

Matera reduced the Pumas to 14 again after his yellow card for a shoulder to the head of Vincent Koch. That turned into a red card. And when they dropped to 13 men when fullback Santiago Carreras was yellow-carded for a deliberate knock-on in the 68th, the Springboks showed no mercy.

Malcolm Marx scored from a lineout maul, du Toit crossed for his second try after a Kurt-Lee Arendse break, and Jesse Kriel scored from a Handre Pollard chip.

Pollard converted all three tries after replacing Libbok, who was cheered off for leading the Springboks to only their second Rugby Championship title in 15 years. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

COMMITTED TO A HIGHER CAUSE IN NATION'S PURSUIT FOR REJUVENATION

The stories of the national medal and honorary title winners, most of them in their 80s with a few in their 90s, should inspire people across the country to contribute their bit to the development and prosperity of the country.

President Xi Jinping presented the medals to the 14 winners of national medals and honorary titles, the highest state honors, just a couple of days before the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

The award winners, all role models in their own fields, have one thing in common: they have ensured their work improves the lives of the people and contributes to the progress of the country.

Lu Shengmei, who was awarded the national honorary title, is a medical practitioner, who worked in Jiaxian county hospital, Shaanxi province, for more than 50 years since graduating from a medical college in Beijing in 1968. She retired in 1999 and could have returned to Beijing or joined another hospital as an expert and earned a handsome salary.

But she chose to stay in the county hospital and continue providing medical services for local residents. She continued treating patients three times a week for free till 2019 when she reached the age of 75. Such was her commitment to the medical profession and the passion to serve the people.

Li Zhensheng, 96, winner of the national medal, worked as a wheat geneticist throughout his long working life, making great contributions to the development of agriculture in China.

As Xi said in his speech at the medal conferring ceremony on Sunday, China can be proud of maintaining a high growth rate for decades while ensuring long-term political and social stability, but the country could not have become what it is today, the world's second-largest economy and a global manufacturing powerhouse, without the contributions of people who have devoted their life to a bigger cause just like the top national medal and honorary title winners have done.

A country needs role models in every field to motivate others to promote the development of the country. The contributions of the 14 outstanding figures who have devoted their life to their work, contributing to the development of the country in the process, should inspire others to follow in their footsteps.

China is going through a crucial period of building a great modern socialist country and achieving national rejuvenation through Chinese modernization. As Xi said, the Chinese people should strive for extraordinary achievements even while doing ordinary jobs and make contributions to overcome development and reform challenges, and safeguard social harmony and stability.

CONTENDERS TO LEAD BRITAIN'S DEFEATED CONSERVATIVES WOO MEMBERS AT A KEY PARTY CONFERENCE

THE BUZZ

Members of Britain's defeated and divided Conservative Party gathered yesterday for an annual conference dominated by the search for a new leader capable of bringing the right-of-center party back from a catastrophic election defeat.

U.K. voters ousted the Tories in a July election, leaving the party that had governed since 2010 with just 121 seats in the 650-seat House of Commons. The center-left Labour Party won more than 400 seats and returned to office under Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

The day after the election, defeated ex- Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said he would quit, remaining caretaker leader until his replacement is chosen.

The four candidates still in the race to replace him – whittled down by lawmakers from an initial six – will spend the four-day conference in Birmingham, central England speaking to as many party members as possible.

Former Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick, ex-Business Secretary Kemi Badenoch, former Foreign Secretary James Cleverly and ex-Security Minister Tom Tugendhat make their final pitches from the conference stage on Wednesday, before Conservative lawmakers will eliminate two candidates in a vote the following week.



GAMING

SANDS CHINA UNVEILS REVAMPED LONDONER GRAND CASINO

NADIA SHAW

SANDS China Ltd. has officially opened the remodeled Londoner Grand Casino, formerly known as the Pacifica, at The Londoner Macao resort.

The grand unveiling occurred late last week, marking a significant milestone for the casino operator amid a competitive gaming landscape.

A spokesperson for Sands China expressed excitement about the Sept. 26 opening, stating, "We are pleased to confirm The Londoner Grand Casino opened to the public at noon today," as cited in a GGR Asia report.

This revitalization aligns with the concessionaires gearing up for the upcoming Golden Week holidays from Oct. 1 - 7, a peak period for tourism and gaming revenue.

The renovation of the casino space was antici-

pated by industry analysts, including in a recent note from Goldman Sachs (Asia) Ltd., which suggested the revamped area might open just in time for Golden Week.

The report indicated the former Pacifica gaming area had been closed while preparations were underway to enhance its offerings.

The Londoner Grand Casino said it will cater to both premium and mass-market customers, incorporating over 20 gaming tables previously relocated to a temporary premium mass area during renovations.

This strategic shift is part of Sands China's broader USD1.2 billion (MOP9.6 billion) investment plan to transform the Londoner Macao - as part of its ongoing capital reinvestment program.

In addition to the casino, the hotel component of The Londoner Macao is undergoing significant

changes.

Approximately 2,500 to 3,000 rooms from the former Sheraton hotel are being renovated and rebranded as part of The Luxury Collection Hotels & Resorts by Marriott International Inc.

This rebranding effort will increase the number of suites from 360 to 1,500.

"This extraordinary hotel will serve as a gateway to Macau's fascinating cultural heritage," said Grant Chum, CEO and president of Sands China Ltd.

Sands China said its accommodation will feature "an elegant townhouse atmosphere inspired by the prestigious Mayfair district of London."

Certain suites will include "private terraces, dedicated children's rooms, state-of-the-art media rooms, and exclusive private plunge pools," according to the announcement.



Australia A museum was within its rights to bar men from a controversial art exhibit for women meant to underscore their exclusion from segments of the male-dominated society, a top regional court said on Friday. The development is the latest in the long-running saga of the "Ladies Lounge" exhibition that has provoked an uproar in the art world. Its curator, Kirsha Kaechele, admitted in June she had created all the art, including the paintings she had billed for years as works by Spanish master Pablo Picasso without anyone noticing they were fake.

Germany A man has been arrested after allegedly setting two fires in the western German city of Essen that left 30 people injured and driving a van into two shops, authorities said Sunday. Emergency services were alerted to two fires in residential buildings in quick succession shortly after 5 p.m. Saturday, police said. The injured people included eight children who were seriously hurt, and two of them were in a life-threatening condition after inhaling smoke.



SpaceX launched a rescue mission for the two stuck astronauts at the International Space Station on Saturday, sending up a downsized crew to bring them home but not until next year. The capsule rocketed into orbit to fetch the test pilots whose Boeing spacecraft returned to Earth empty earlier this month because of safety concerns. The switch in rides left it to NASA's Nick Hague and Russia's Alexander Gorbunov to retrieve Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams.



South Africa 17 people, including 15 women, were killed in two mass shootings that took place at two homes on the same street in a rural town, police said Saturday. A search was underway for the suspects, national police spokesperson Brig. Athlenda Mathe said in a statement. The victims were 15 women and two men, she said. One other person was in critical condition in the hospital.