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THE OVERALL RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY PRICE INDEX FOR JUNE - AUGUST FELL 0.9% COMPARED WITH THE PREVIOUS THREE-MONTH PERIOD

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MACAU CASINOS THRIVE DURING GOLDEN WEEK FESTIVITIES

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CHINA ANNOUNCES MORE SUPPORT BUT HOLDS BACK ON MAJOR SPENDING PACKAGE

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AP PHOTO



Hong Kong The Hang Seng index plunged over 9% yesterday as investors reacted to Beijing's underwhelming economic rescue plans. Despite initial rallies in mainland China, shares like Alibaba and JD.com fell sharply, and markets in Asia and Europe also experienced declines, reflecting global uncertainty.

Philippines Saudi Arabia has put to death a Filipino citizen convicted of murder despite years of efforts by the Philippines to prevent the execution, including a presidential appeal, officials said. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and other officials did not provide details, including the identity of the Filipino and the nature of the case, citing a family request for privacy.

AP PHOTO



Nepal Five Russian climbers died on Mount Dhaulagiri, the world's seventh-highest peak. They had been missing since Sunday, and their bodies were located by a rescue helicopter. The group was climbing during Nepal's autumn season, with a decision on retrieving the bodies still pending.

AP PHOTO



Lebanon Hezbollah's acting leader, Sheikh Naim Kassem, declared that more Israeli towns will face rocket fire as their offensive continues. The group replaced all senior commanders lost to Israeli airstrikes, and both sides continue heavy exchanges of fire in the ongoing conflict.

SARS ON THEIR MINDS

Beijing officials are stepping up their efforts to support the economies of Macau and Hong Kong with a targeted economic stimulus package aimed at revitalizing growth

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GAMING

MACAU CASINOS THRIVE DURING GOLDEN WEEK FESTIVITIES

VICTORIA CHAN

DURING this year's Golden Week holiday, Macau's gaming industry surpassed all expectations, achieving daily gaming revenues averaging over MOP1 billion in the first six days. This outstanding performance nearly matched 2019 levels and surpassed 2023 figures by an impressive 30%.

Analysts reported that the

total gross gaming revenue (GGR) for the period from Oct. 1 to 6 reached MOP6.5 billion, with a daily average of MOP1.08 billion. JP Morgan analysts DS Kim, Mufan Shi, and Selina Li noted that these numbers far exceeded market expectations of MOP850 million to MOP900 million per day, marking the highest run-rate since the 2019 October Golden Week.

The exceptional results were

propelled by both the mass and VIP segments, with mass GGR hitting up to 140% of pre-pandemic levels and VIP reaching up to 35%. Additionally, per capita spending witnessed a notable increase of around 25% compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Citigroup also celebrated a record-breaking performance in Macau's casino sector during the recent Golden Week holiday. George Choi and Timothy Chau

highlighted a surge in premium mass wagers and player numbers, signaling a highly successful period for the market.

Their latest survey revealed a total wager of HKD27.2 million, an 81% increase over the same period last year and 18% higher than during the Chinese New Year in February. The number of premium mass players reached a record high of 966, a 90% year-on-year increase, albeit with

a slight drop in the wager per player to HK28,150.

Premium mass table utilization peaked at around 52%, the highest since Citi began tracking these statistics. The analysts credited this robust performance to a "recently announced policy combo from the Chinese government," which they believe has further fueled gaming enthusiasm among players.

Citi also identified a record number of 62 high-rollers during Golden Week, marking an 88% year-on-year increase and a 51% rise compared to Chinese New Year. Galaxy Macau notably stood out in the survey, capturing 29% of the total observed wagers, partly due to the popular Andy Lau concerts at the Galaxy Arena from Oct. 3 to 6.

Vitaly Umansky from Seaport Research Partners hailed the Golden Week as a "test case for Macau's resilience," emphasizing that not only did the industry pass the test, but it also generated revenue that far exceeded expectations during the holiday period.

Umansky maintained his GGR forecast for October at MOP21.5 billion, predicting a 10.3% year-on-year increase and a 24.6% month-on-month rise. Looking ahead, he anticipates November and December to follow historical trends, with December potentially slightly weaker due to an anticipated brief visit from General Secretary Xi. Overall, the industry seems poised for recovery, with Q4 GGR forecasted to reach MOP59.9 billion, up 10.6% year-on-year and 7.6% quarter-on-quarter.

TOURISM

June to August property index down 13.6% y-o-y

RENATO MARQUES

THE overall residential property price index for June - August fell 0.9% compared with the previous three-month period (May - July) to 214.5 points, the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) has reported.

The indices for the Macau Peninsula (211.3) and Taipa & Coloane (227.3) also fell 1% and 0.2%, respectively.

The index for existing

residential units (230.4) decreased 1.1% from the previous period while the indices for those in the Macau Peninsula (220.0) and Taipa & Coloane (271.9) dipped by 1.3% and 0.5% respectively.

The indices for residential units of buildings five years old or less and for those over 20 years old fell by 1.7% and 1.4% respectively.

The index for those between six and 10 years old grew 0.8%.



Concurrently, the index for pre-sale residential units (273.2) decreased 0.1%.

The indices for residential units with a usable floor area between 50 and 74.9

square meters and for those with a floor area of less than 50 square meters decreased

by 1.2% and 0.3%, respectively, from the previous period.

However, the index for those with a floor area of 100 square meters and over increased 0.6%.

In comparison year-on-year with June - August 2023, the overall residential property price index fell by 13.6% with the indices for the Macau Peninsula and Taipa & Coloane registering respective decreases of 13.9% and 12.1%.

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ANALYSIS

Beijing unveils stimulus measures to revitalize the SARs economy

NADIA SHAW

BEIJING is stepping up its efforts to support the economies of Macau and Hong Kong with a targeted economic stimulus package aimed at revitalizing growth amid ongoing financial challenges. This initiative reflects the central government's commitment to bolster economic activity in these Special Administrative Regions (SARs) as part of a broader strategy to address nationwide economic concerns.

On Sept. 24, prominent Chinese financial leaders—including Pan Gongsheng, governor of the People's Bank of China (PBOC), Li Yunze, Minister of the National Financial Regulatory Administration (NFRA), and Wu Qing, Chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC)—unveiled a comprehensive stimulus plan. This marks one of the most substantial economic interventions since the COVID-19 pandemic began, addressing both deflation fears and sluggish growth.

The stimulus measures announced by the Chinese government include several key financial adjustments aimed at revitalizing the economy. These measures feature a 0.5 percentage point reduction in the bank Reserve Requirement Ratio (RRR) and a decrease in the seven-day reverse repurchase agreement rate from 1.7% to 1.5%. Additionally, a RMB500 billion structural monetary policy facility has been established to allow financial institutions to purchase stocks by pledging lower-quality assets. Furthermore, a RMB300 billion relending facility at a rate of 1.75% is designed to encourage banks to support share buybacks by listed companies.

To further stimulate the real estate sector, authorities have announced several supportive measures, including a 0.5% cut in mortgage rates, enhanced bank lending for developers' land purchases, and reduced down payment ratios. There are also incentives for local governments to acquire unsold homes, all aimed at bolstering the housing market and overall economic activity.

Additionally, the government extended its plan for commercial property loans until December 2026. The plan aims to stabilize the struggling real estate sector, which is grappling with defaults, declining sales, and a mortgage boycott. It seeks to enhance liquidity for developers and ensure the completion of unfinished housing projects.



Key measures of the "16-point plan" include equal treatment for private and public developers, extending outstanding loans due within six months by an additional year, and encouraging trust companies to fund mergers and acquisitions in the sector.

Both measures have already influenced market sentiment, with the Hang Seng Index in Hong Kong surging 6.2% on Oct. 2, 2024—the highest level since January 2023—before experiencing slight corrections. Markets in Shanghai and Shenzhen also reported significant gains leading up to the National Golden Week holiday.

Despite these positive developments, analysts caution that further reforms are essential for sustainable recovery. Alicia Garcia Herrero, chief economist for Asia-Pacific at Natixis, stated, "Unless China introduces structural reforms to really jump-start consumption, I just don't think that we will see a major change." She warned that ineffective stimulus measures could exacerbate existing economic challenges.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office indicated that "more policies and measures" will be introduced to benefit both SARs during a national policy briefing held recently. The briefing aimed to outline how newly announced stimulus packages will promote economic activity across China.

According to comments from the Office, the central government has actively provided opportunities and support for both regions, stating that it "has been providing

the two cities with precious opportunities, continuous momentum, and huge space for development." This proactive approach aims to address local economic concerns effectively.

Bloomberg reported that China's capital infusion comes as banks face tightening profit margins and increased demands for national service in stimulating recovery. The injection seeks not only to stabilize the banking system but also to encourage continued lending amid challenging economic conditions.

In a notable shift from previous policies, Chinese officials have announced plans for direct cash handouts aimed at assisting vulnerable segments of society. While specific amounts remain unclear, these handouts are intended to benefit approximately 4.7 million individuals classified as 'extremely poor' in China, aligning with efforts to boost retail spending during the October Golden Week holiday.

As these fiscal measures unfold, analysts express cautious optimism regarding their potential effectiveness in stimulating consumer spending and supporting broader economic recovery. The combination of capital injections into banks and direct cash assistance is designed to revitalize economic activity. However, uncertainties persist regarding their actual impact on retail sales and GDP growth.

MARKET REACTIONS AND LOOKING AHEAD

Following recent announcements, stock market reactions have been mixed. A rally in Chinese stocks fizzled out after investors

expressed disappointment over insufficient details regarding government support for economic growth. Yesterday, the Shanghai Composite Index closed 4.6% higher, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index slumped by 9.4%.

European stocks also declined following China's latest pledge for economic support, as investors had anticipated more substantial stimulus measures. Despite this caution in European markets, shares of major casino operators in Macau surged amid expectations of increased business activity resulting from improved economic conditions.

Looking ahead, the National People's Congress is expected to play a pivotal role in shaping future policies affecting both Macau and Hong Kong. With meetings scheduled later this month, stakeholders are keenly observing how legislative actions align with central government objectives.

While recent announcements may provide a much-needed boost for Macau's economy, their effectiveness will ultimately depend on implementation and adaptability in addressing ongoing challenges. Investors and residents alike hope this new wave of stimulus will pave the way for sustainable growth in the region.

Steve Vickers, CEO of SVA—a specialist Political & Corporate Risk Consultancy—reminded stakeholders that "investors need to be mindful that these shifts will affect companies and investments differently." The upcoming weeks will be crucial for determining the effectiveness of these stimulus measures and their implications for China's broader economy.

JOINT FIRE DRILL ON MACAU LRT'S SEAC PAI VAN LINE

The Fire Department conducted a joint fire drill with the Macau Light Rail Transit Co., Ltd. early yesterday to improve emergency response protocols. The exercise simulated a scenario where a train traveling from Union Hospital Station to Seac Pai Van Station experienced a short circuit, causing smoke and power loss approximately 100 meters from the station.

Firefighters swiftly responded with six rescue vehicles and 23 personnel, instigating evacuation procedures and providing medical care to three injured passengers. The drill, which lasted about an hour, involved around 60 participants and successfully met its emergency coordination effort objectives.

UTM HOSTS NATIONAL SECURITY LAW LECTURE

The Macau University of Tourism (UTM) held a lecture last week aimed at enhancing faculty understanding of the National Security Law. Over 150 faculty members attended the event, which featured Wong Kin Hon, Head of the State Security Information Division of the Judiciary Police.

Wong explained the law's fundamentals and recent revisions, emphasizing its significance in education. UTM states it aims to strengthen national security awareness among faculty and students, fostering patriotism and social responsibility to contribute to Macau's stability and prosperity. Future initiatives will continue to prioritize national security education.

The Labor Bureau held three matching sessions in the third week of October, offering 556 job vacancies.

DSAL TO HOST JOB MATCHING SESSIONS IN OCTOBER

The Labor Affairs Bureau (DSAL) of Macau will conduct three job matching sessions in the third week of October, aiming to connect residents with employment opportunities. A total of 556 vacancies will be available across the hotel and cleaning sectors.

The first session on Oct. 16 will feature 414 positions at Galaxy Macau, including roles for restaurant managers and front desk attendants. The second session on Oct. 17 will offer 83 jobs at the MFTU, while the final session on Oct. 18 will present 59 vacancies.

Registration opens on Oct. 9 and closes on Oct. 15, with limited spots available. Interested applicants can register online or contact DSAL for inquiries.

SAM HOU FAI RULES OUT NEW PUBLIC HEARING SESSION, CITING 'LACK OF TIME'

RENATO MARQUES

SAM Hou Fai, the sole candidate in Macau's sixth Chief Executive elections, has dismissed the possibility of hosting another public hearing open to the general population.

Speaking on the sidelines of his current tour across Macau, Sam said that there was not enough time to host more public hearing sessions. He noted that his focus is now on engaging with different sectors of society and connecting with local communities.

"As everyone knows, I only announced my candidacy on Aug. 28, and there is a lot of work to complete between now and the elections. I am doing my best to understand the concerns and worries of the population and residents. They can still share their opinions through different channels, such as e-mails or letters," he said.

During a visit to Taipa



yesterday, Sam highlighted the need for the new government to make better use of the area's land resources, acknowledging the lack of leisure spaces throughout Macau and particularly in areas with a higher population density.

Another issue raised by the community is deficiencies in local public transportation, which Sam also acknowledged as a reality.

When asked whether he would consider extending the pedestrian flyover of Taipa Central District to Edifi-

cio do Lago, Sam said that it is on the agenda for future discussion, along with traffic optimization and improvements to public transport.

Despite these challenges, Sam believes that Taipa has developed well over the past few decades, noting that it has become a new center for social and economic activities, helping to decentralize from the Peninsula.

Today, the CE candidate will continue to tour Macau, extending his visit to Coloane Island and the Seac Pai Van area.

GBA Cultural Heritage Forum to promote cultural assets

EXPERTS from across the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area will gather in Macau later this month to discuss the integration and sharing of cultural heritage in the region.

The "Greater Bay Area Cultural Heritage Forum" runs from Oct. 31 to Nov. 1 at the Macau Cultural Centre Small Auditorium.

The forum will bring together representatives from various Bay Area cities as well as cultural heritage experts from China, Macau, Hong Kong, the UK, and Portugal. Panels will address topics including revitalizing historic buildings, using technology in archaeology, and preserving revolutionary relics. Experts will also share experiences on cultural exchanges and cooperation across the region.

As a city with deep cultural roots in the Lingnan region, Macau aims to work with other Bay Area governments to protect, inherit, revitalize, and utilize shared heritage in line with China's development strategy. The forum provides a platform for leveraging



Macau's role in facilitating Chinese and multicultural exchanges.

A limited number of public seats will be available at the forum venue. Others can watch the livestream online from Oct. 8. If registrations exceed capacity, participants will be selected by lottery. Accompanying activities include heritage site tours, workshops, and an exhibit on restored historical buildings. VC

MIF HIGHLIGHTS OPPORTUNITIES IN LUSOPHONE MARKETS

VICTORIA CHAN

MORE than 180 government bodies, businesses, and trade associations from Portuguese-speaking countries will gather in Macau for the 29th Macau International Trade & Investment Fair (MIF) to showcase opportunities in their respective economies.

The 29th MIF, taking place from Oct. 16 to 19 at the Cotai Expo at The Venetian Macao, marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the 25th anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland, making it a significant milestone.

A central feature of the fair is the "Portuguese-Speaking Countries Market Zone," which will feature over 200 booths from diverse sectors such as agriculture, technology, wine and spirits, food, coffee, finance, and logistics. This dedicated zone will provide attendees with the opportunity to explore new business prospects tied to the economic



and commercial growth of Lusophone nations and foster increased cooperation.

The fair will also host over 10 business events focusing on fostering investment cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking nations. On the first day, a products and services matching session will connect buyers and sellers, while other conferences such as the "14th Industrial and Commercial Summit between Jiangsu-Macau-Portuguese Speaking Countries" and the "Fujian-Macau-Portuguese-Speaking Countries Economic and Trade Exchange Conference," will present forward-looking perspectives and

investment prospects in Lusophone nations.

To further enrich the participant experience and maximize opportunities for them, the fair will also feature professional competitions judging Portuguese wines, spirits, and coffee, with over 20 suppliers from Portuguese-speaking regions and Macau showcasing more than 40 products.

Organizers have also introduced three new initiatives through a revised schedule, newly designed exhibition zones, and new activities to boost international trade cooperation and foster shared prosperity between Chinese and Lusophone businesses.



BAD AIR DAYS: SMG WARNS OF PROLONGED BAD AIR QUALITY

THE Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) has issued ongoing warnings about Macau's deteriorating air quality, cautioning that poor conditions may persist for some time.

The warning was issued several days ago, according to SMG, who stated that "The air quality level is expected to be bad."

The SMG further advised that individuals with existing heart or respiratory illnesses, pregnant women, children, and the elderly minimize outdoor strenuous activities and limit time spent outdoors in areas with heavy traffic.

Over the last couple of days, the Air Quality Index has been 'orange' (indicating bad air quality), with roadside indexes ranging between 150 and 180.

The most relevant air pollutants contributing to these ratings found were respirable suspended particulate (PM10), fine suspended particulate (PM2.5), nitrogen dioxide (NO2), and ozone (O3).

SMG information also shows that the areas most affected include Coloane, the Eastern side of Taipa, and the Northern District of the Peninsula. Since 2021, Macau has used an Air Quality Index standard from World Health Organization Air Quality Guidelines (WHO AQG). Under other more strict indexes such as the US AQI, levels such as those currently seen in Macau fall under the 'red' category, indicating an unhealthy level of air pollutants. RM

33 cases of alleged taxi malpractice recorded during 'Golden Week'

AUTHORITIES have reported 33 cases of suspected unlawful conduct by taxi drivers during the Golden Week holiday.

According to police and transport authorities, all cases involved illegal surcharges, with drivers allegedly claiming that certain locations such as the Border Posts, the airport, and ferry terminals, required a special surcharge.

The Transport Bureau (DSAT) confirmed that these cases have been forwarded to the Public Security Police Force (PSP) for further investigation.

Additionally, DSAT reported a daily average of almost 80,000 taxi trips during the holiday

period, a significant increase of around 10,000 trips compared to typical weekends.

The two public bus operators also saw increased activity, carrying some 3.62 million passengers between Oct. 2 and Oct. 6 - an increase of approximately 10% more than the same period last year.

The daily average number of passengers during the week was 723,000, peaking on Oct. 1 and Oct. 2, when the number exceeded 800,000 passengers per day.

DSAT added that during the Golden Week period, the two operators conducted an average of more than 9,600 bus trips per day. **RM**

Junket landscape evolves and grows with new licenses and tighter regulations

MACAU'S gaming regulator, the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ), has reported an increase in licensed junkets and approved agents following the implementation of the amended gaming laws dedicated to gaming promoters' activity.

According to DICJ data, the number of junkets in Macau has risen to 24, up from 18 at the start of the year, while the number of approved agents has grown to 12. The amended law has introduced several changes, including a requirement for each licensed junket to work with only one concessionaire, a ban on revenue-sharing agreements, and a cap on commissions at 1.25% of rolling.

The new regulations have also established minimum capital requirements for junkets, agents, and casino management com-

VICTORIA CHAN



panies. Junkets must provide a guarantee of MOP1.5 million, agents must have MOP500,000, and casino management companies must have MOP1.5 million. Additionally, gaming intermediary companies must have a registered capital of at least MOP10 million.

Earlier this year, the number of

licensed junkets had fallen to 18, down from 35 in 2023. However, recent figures show that this number has now risen, with new additions such as VEGA STAR Ltd and Companhia De Ensemble Ltd. The DICJ has announced that the maximum number of junket licenses on offer in 2025 will remain at 50, the same as this year. **VC**

ADVERTORIAL

GALAXY MACAU PRESENTS 'GALAXY OPERA GALA', AN UNPRECEDENTED OPERA EXTRAVAGANZA FEATURING PLÁCIDO DOMINGO AND GUESTS

THE LEGENDARY OPERA SINGER PLÁCIDO DOMINGO RETURNS TO MACAU FOR THE FIRST TIME IN NINE YEARS, ALONGSIDE A WORLD-CLASS LINEUP OF EXCEPTIONAL MUSICAL TALENT PERFORMING FAMOUS OPERAS AT GALAXY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER

Building on its commitment to enhance Macau's status as a vibrant international metropolis, Galaxy Macau™ continues its mission to bring unique global events to the city with the announcement of 'Galaxy Opera Gala', a once-in-a-lifetime opera extravaganza featuring legendary Spanish tenor Plácido Domingo. Taking place at the state-of-the-art Galaxy International Convention Center (GICC) on October 20, 2024, the event will see the iconic opera singer teaming up with the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra and three rising talents for a musical celebration that bridges cultures while underlining Macau's status as a "City of Performing Arts".

Hosted by Galaxy Macau and sponsored by ICBC (Macau) as the designated bank partner, this opera gala will feature Plácido Domingo, who will be making his debut at the Galaxy International Convention Center, delivering a world-class opera experience to Macau.

Recognized as one of the finest and most influential singing actors in the history of opera, Plácido Domingo was catapulted to global superstardom as one third of the famed "Three Tenors" alongside Luciano Pavarotti and José Carreras in the 1990s, while he has also carved out a distinguished reputation as a conductor and opera administrator. The winner of 12 Grammy Awards, among countless other accolades, the 83-year-old maestro has a repertoire that spans more than 150 roles across over 4,000 career performances, and has been celebrated at the Operas of New York, Vienna, Verona, Milan, Buenos Aires, and many more.

Accompanying Plácido Domingo will be the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra,

one of China's most celebrated symphony orchestras, and trailblazing Italian conductor Beatrice Venezi, who is Principal Conductor of the Orchestra Milano Classica and of the Orchestra Scarlatti Young, Naples. Completing the bill are two exciting rising stars of the opera world: China-born, Italy-based soprano Bingbing Wang, who holds the distinction of being the first Chinese person to graduate with a Master's Degree from the prestigious Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory of Music in Milan; and Italian German mezzo-soprano Anna-Doris Capitelli, who joined the illustrious Accademia Teatro alla Scala in Milan in 2017. Guests will be able to enjoy a program that includes arias and duets from famous operas such as La Traviata, The Merry Widow, The Marriage of Figaro, Carmen, and more.

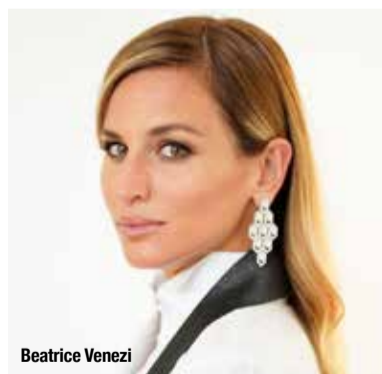
Combining musical virtuosity, timeless melodies and state-of-the-art audio technology, the event will take place at GICC, which opened in December 2023. Marking a new chapter for Macau's exhibition industry and expanding Galaxy Entertainment Group's resort landscape in the region, GICC is a world-class venue complex boasting a total exhibition space of 40,000 square meters, accommodating up to 8,500 guests for banquet events or approximately 16,000 for cocktail receptions. The center features a 10,000-square-meter column-free exhibition hall on the ground floor, hosting up to 7,000 exhibition guests, or nearly 6,500 for banquets and around 8,500 for cocktail receptions. Macau's largest indoor venue, Galaxy Arena features seating, sound, and lighting facilities that meet international standards, making it an ideal choice for world-class concerts and major sporting events.

'GALAXY OPERA GALA' WITH PLÁCIDO DOMINGO AND GUESTS

Date	20 October, 2024
Time	5:00pm - 6:30pm
Venue	Galaxy International Convention Center
Ticket Price	MOP/HKD 1,680 / 1,080 / 880 *Currency settled based on the ticketing platform
Ticket Purchase Date & Channels:	Now available on Macau Ticketing, Damai APP, and Cityline.
Promotion	Pay with your ICBC Galaxy Macau Credit Card to enjoy exclusive 15% off on Galaxy Opera Gala with Plácido Domingo and Guests concert ticket.



Bing Bing Wang



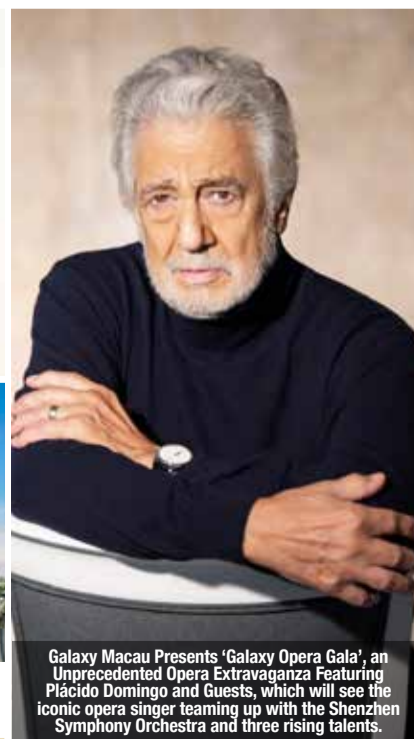
Beatrice Venezi



Anna-Doris Capitelli



Building on its commitment to enhance Macau's status as a vibrant international metropolis, Galaxy Macau™ continues its mission to bring unique global events to the city.



Galaxy Macau Presents 'Galaxy Opera Gala', an Unprecedented Opera Extravaganza Featuring Plácido Domingo and Guests, which will see the iconic opera singer teaming up with the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra and three rising talents.

ECONOMY

China announces more support but holds back on major spending package

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

CHINA'S economic planning agency outlined details of measures aimed at boosting the economy, but refrained from major spending initiatives.

The piecemeal nature of the plans announced yesterday appeared to disappoint investors who were hoping for bolder moves, and Shanghai's benchmark gave up a 10% initial gain as markets reopened after a weeklong holiday to trade just 3% higher.

The head of the National Development and Reform Commission said the government will frontload 100 billion yuan (\$14.1 billion) in spending from the government's budget for 2025 in addition to another 100 billion yuan for construction projects.



The scale of spending overall was well below the multi-trillion yuan levels that analysts said might be expected.

The NDRC's chairman, Zheng Shanjie, said China was still on track to attain its full-year economic growth

target of around 5%. But he acknowledged the economy faces difficulties and an increasingly "more complex and extreme" global environment.

China's leaders have been struggling to rev up growth since the COVID-19 pande-

mic ended. A downturn in the property market has deepened that challenge, as consumer spending has lagged and global demand also has slowed.

In a note, UBS chief China economist Tao Wang said that the market was "likely expecting a significant fiscal stimulus."

A modest package of 1.5 to 2 trillion yuan (\$210 billion to \$280 billion) is more reasonable to expect in the near-term, she said, with another 2 to 3 trillion yuan (\$280 billion to \$420 billion) in 2025.

In September, China unveiled a monetary stimulus package including cuts to mortgage rates and in the amount of reserves are required to keep on deposit with the central bank. Those and other measures were the most aggressive efforts so far to try to pull the property industry out of the doldrums

and spur faster growth.

Yesterday, the NDRC said that new measures would focus on boosting investment and spending and supporting small and medium-sized businesses that operate at a disadvantage to large, state-corporations.

But much of the information focused on technical issues such as payment regulations, management of projects and deployment of bonds for financing.

To counter falling housing sales and home prices, Zheng said there would be "comprehensive policy measures to help stop the decline in the real estate market."

"In response to volatility and declines in the stock market, we will introduce a series of powerful and effective measures to strive to boost the capital market," he said, without giving details. **MDT/AP**

TIT FOR TAT

Beijing provisional tariffs on brandy after EU OKs duties on EVs

CHINESE drinkers may pay more for Remy Martin and other European brandies after the government announced provisional tariffs of 30.6% to 39% on those liquors yesterday, four days after a majority of European Union countries approved duties on electric vehicles made in China.

The tit-for-tat move potentially gives Chinese negotiators leverage in talks with the EU on reducing or eliminating the tariffs of up to 35.3% on Chinese EVs, which would take effect at the end of this month.

The brandy tariffs are provisional and require importers to make a deposit with the Chinese customs agency for the amount of the tariff, starting Friday.

The announcement followed a preliminary finding by China's Commerce Ministry in late August that European brandy was being dumped in China,



Bottles of brandy are seen on a shelf at a supermarket in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province yesterday

threatening "substantial damage" to domestic producers.

China has opened a series of anti-dumping investigations into European brandy, pork and dairy products as a now year-old EU investigation into Chinese EV exports has progressed through various stages.

The brandy probe was the first and targeted mainly French makers of cognac and similar spirits such as Armagnac. France

has supported the investigation into Chinese-made EVs, while Germany, whose automakers fear retaliation in the Chinese market, has opposed it.

China is studying whether to raise tariffs on imported cars with large engines, a Commerce Ministry spokesperson confirmed Tuesday in an online report from state broadcaster CCTV.

The provisional tariffs on brandy vary by brand, similar to the EU duties

on electric cars made in China. For example, Martell products face a 30.6% tariff versus 38.1% for Remy Martin and 39% for Hennessy. The tariffs are being imposed on dozens of companies, including some Spanish makers.

French President Emmanuel Macron presented Chinese leader Xi Jinping with two bottles of cognac when the two exchanged gifts during Xi's state visit to France in May. **MDT/AP**



Film posters at a cinema in Tancheng county, Shandong province

FILM

CHINA RECORDS 2.1 BILLION YUAN BOX OFFICE FOR NATIONAL DAY HOLIDAY

CHINA recorded 2.1 billion yuan (about \$297 million) in box office takings for the 2024 National Day holiday, the China Film Administration said yesterday.

A total of 52.09 million movie tickets were sold during the holiday. Domestic films raked in 2.02 billion yuan at the box office, accounting for 95.87 percent of the total, the administration said.

Domestic production "The Volunteers: The Battle of Life and Death" led the charts with a box office re-

venue of 805 million yuan during the holiday. Directed by Chen Kaige, the film is the second installment in his "The Volunteers" trilogy.

The second and third highest-grossing films on the leaderboard are crime drama "Tiger Wolf Rabbit" and sci-fi offering "Bureau 749," which grossed over 359 million yuan and 356 million yuan, respectively.

The National Day holiday, which ran from Oct 1 to 7, is traditionally one of China's most lucrative moviegoing periods. **MDT/CHINA DAILY**

INDIA

Biggest Kashmir opposition party wins most seats in election

AIJAZ HUSSAIN, SRINAGAR

KASHMIR'S biggest political party opposed to India's stripping of the region's semi-autonomy won the most seats in a local election, official data showed yesterday, in a vote seen as a referendum against the move by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government.

National Conference, or NC, won 42 seats, mainly from the Kashmir Valley, the heartland of the anti-India rebellion, according to the data. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party secured 29 seats, all from the Hindu-dominated areas of Jammu.

India's main opposition Congress party, which fought the election in alliance with the NC, succeeded in six constituencies.

"People have supported us more than our expectations. Now our efforts will be to prove that we are worth these votes," Omar Abdullah, the NC leader and the region's former chief minister, told reporters in the main city of Srinagar.

His father and president of the party, Farooq Abdullah, said that the mandate was to run the region without "police raj (rule)" and try freeing people from jails. "Media will be free," he said. "People have given their mandate, they have proven that they don't accept the decision that was taken on August 5," he added referring to India's move in Aug. 2019.



National Conference party leader Farooq Abdullah (center) wearing black cap, is surrounded by journalists as party celebrates early leads in the election

The vote will allow Kashmir to have its own truncated government and a regional legislature, called an assembly, rather than being directly under New Delhi's rule.

However, there will be a limited transition of power from New Delhi to the assembly as Kashmir will remain a "union territory" — directly controlled by the federal government — with India's Parliament as its main legislator. Kashmir's statehood must be restored for the new government to have powers similar to other states of India.

Hundreds of the NC workers gathered outside counting centers and at the homes of the winning

candidates to celebrate the party's victory.

It was the first such vote in a decade and the first since Modi's Hindu nationalist government scrapped the Muslim-majority region's long-held semi-autonomy in 2019.

The unprecedented move downgraded and divided the former state into two centrally governed union territories, Ladakh and Jammu-Kashmir. Both are ruled directly by New Delhi through its appointed administrators along with unelected bureaucrats and security setup. The move — which largely resonated in India and among Modi supporters — was mostly opposed in Kashmir as an assault on its identity and au-

tonomy amid fears that it would pave the way for demographic changes in the region.

The region has since been on edge with civil liberties curbed and media gagged.

India and Pakistan each administer a part of Kashmir, but both claim the territory in its entirety. The nuclear-armed rivals have fought two of their three wars over the territory since they gained independence from British colonial rule in 1947.

Authorities tallied votes as thousands of additional police and paramilitary soldiers patrolled roads and guarded 28 counting centers. Nearly 8.9 million people were eligible to vote in the election, which

began on Sept. 18 and concluded on Oct. 1. The overall turnout was 64% across the three phases, according to official data.

In the region's legislature, five seats are appointed and 90 elected, so a party or coalition would need at least 48 of the 95 total seats to form a government. The alliance of the National Conference and the Congress have 48 seats combined.

Authorities have said the election will bring democracy to the region after decades of strife, but many locals viewed the vote as an opportunity not only to elect their own representatives but also to register their protest against the 2019 changes.

Except for the BJP, most parties who contested the election campaigned on promises to reverse the 2019 changes and address key issues like rising unemployment and inflation. The Congress party favored restoring the region's statehood. The BJP has also stated that it will restore statehood, but has not told when it would do.

The BJP has vowed to block any move aimed at undoing most of the 2019 changes but promised to help in the region's economic development.

Meanwhile, Modi's BJP appears to be heading for a victory in the northern state of Haryana, bordering New Delhi, which it has ruled for 10 years, leading in 50 constituencies and the Congress in 35 out of 90. **MDT/AP**

SAMOA

No evidence of major fuel spill on Samoan reef where New Zealand navy ship sank

DIVERS and marine experts found no evidence of a major fuel spill on a Samoan reef yesterday after a New Zealand navy ship ran aground and sank, Samoa's deputy prime minister said.

All 75 people on board the HMNZS Manawanui evacuated safely as the boat foundered about a mile off the coast of Upolu, Samoa, early Sunday. The ship was one of only nine in New Zealand's navy and was the first the country lost at sea since World War II.

Samoan Deputy Prime Minister Tuala Tevaga Iosefo

Ponifasio had earlier said a fuel spill was "highly probable." But he said yesterday there was no evidence of oil spilling onto the reefs, ashore and nearby area, except for "small leakages of oil coming from the vessel." That had been contained using specialized equipment, Ponifasio said in a statement.

The vessel's passengers — including civilian scientists and foreign military personnel — left the vessel on life boats in "challenging conditions" and darkness, New Zealand's Chief of Navy Rear Admiral Garin Golding told reporters. It took five



This image released by New Zealand Defence Force, shows HMNZS Manawanui at the Three Kings islands off the coast New Zealand, last December

hours for the first survivors to reach land, he said.

One person was treated in a hospital for minor injuries and has been discharged, the military said.

Up to 17 others sustained cuts, bruises or suspected concussions. An Air Force plane carrying 72 people from the ship landed at an air base in Auckland on

Monday night.

New Zealand will hold a court of inquiry into the loss of the ship. The cause of the accident is not known, but Defense Minister Judith Collins told INews on Monday that she had been told a loss of power to the vessel had led to its grounding.

The specialist dive and hydrographic vessel had been in service for New Zealand since 2019, but was 20 years old and had previously belonged to Norway, Collins said. It was surveying a reef off the coast of Upolu, Samoa's most po-

pulous island, when it ran aground on the reef and began taking on water.

Photos and videos taken from the shore appeared to show the ship listing before disappearing completely below the waves, with a large plume of smoke rising where it sank.

Manu Percival, a surfing tour guide who works in the area where the ship sank, told The Associated Press by phone that oil was not visible from the ship but debris had littered the water and shoreline, and locals were not gathering shellfish as they normally did. It was too soon to know if the "fragile" reef ecosystem had been damaged, he said.

Ponifasio said marine scientists were testing water samples from nearby beaches for any traces of oil. **MDT/AP**

UNITED STATES

More top aides to NYC mayor resign as federal investigations swirl

JAKE OFFENHARTZ & KAREN MATTHEWS, NEW YORK

EMBATTLED New York City Mayor Eric Adams said yesterday [Macau time] that he had accepted the resignation of his deputy mayor for public safety, Philip Banks, the latest senior official to leave as the mayor fends off an indictment and calls to step down.

Adams' director of Asian affairs, Winnie Greco, also resigned and the city fired another former aide, Rana Abbasova, who previously served as the mayor's liaison to the Turkish community, a spokesperson for City Hall said yesterday.

Federal investigators have seized devices from all three officials — along with several other high-ranking city appointees — as part of apparently separate investigations that have engulfed the Democrat's administration and prompted an exodus of top officials in recent weeks.

Adams said on TV station NY1 that Banks had told him Sunday that "he wants to transition to some other things" and "doesn't want this to be a constant burden on the work that we're doing in the city." The mayor added, "I wish my good friend well."

Banks' resignation comes days after his brother, the city's schools chancellor David Banks, announced he was stepping down months earlier than planned at the direction of the mayor.

Federal prosecutors have said they are pursuing "several related investigations" in addition to the case against the Adams, who was indicted late last month on charges of accepting illegal campaign contributions and bribes from foreign nationals. He has pleaded not guilty.

In a separate probe, federal prosecutors are scrutinizing whether a consulting firm run by a third Banks brother, Terence, broke the law by leveraging his family connections to help private companies secure city contracts, according to a person familiar with the matter. The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because



New York City Police Dept. Chief of Department Philip Banks

they were not authorized to disclose information about the investigations.

All three Banks brothers have denied wrongdoing. An attorney for Philip Banks, Benjamin Brafman, said that federal prosecutors had assured him his client was not a target of the investigation. He said prosecutors were initially scrutinizing "insignificant" Zelle payments between the brothers that were actually related to poker games.

Adams has rebuffed calls to resign, brushing off concern about his ability to govern as he mounts his legal defense and reshapes his administration. "I am confident when the true story gets out and not a one-sided version, New Yorkers are going to see that we can stay focused and get the job done," he said.

But he has faced mounting pressure to sever ties with those caught up in the investigations, including from Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Democrat who has the power to remove him from office. The city's police commissioner, Edward Caban, and a top mayoral advisor, Timothy Pearson, have also stepped down.

Adams appointed Philip Banks in 2022 as deputy for public safety, a role that gave him wide influence over the nation's largest police and fire departments. Banks, a longtime friend of Adams, had previously served as the NYPD's highest-ranking uniformed member, but resigned abruptly in 2014 after beco-

ming ensnared in another corruption scandal that shook City Hall.

Banks was not charged in that incident but was named as an unindicted co-conspirator. He later acknowledged that he accepted undisclosed gifts from two businessmen — including overseas travel, meals and cigars — who were convicted of bribing police officers and other officials.

Greco, meanwhile, had served as Adams' conduit to the city's Chinese American communities for close to a decade, organizing campaign fundraisers that brought in tens of thousands of dollars and traveling with Adams to China on multiple occasions when he was Brooklyn borough president.

She was hired as the city's director of Asian American affairs soon after Adams took office, most recently earning a salary of \$196,000 a year, records show.

In November, the city's Department of Investigation opened a probe into Greco following a report in the local news outlet The City that raised questions about her political fundraising and whether she used her position in the administration to obtain personal benefits.

Then, this past February, federal agents searched two properties belonging to Greco, as well as the New World Mall, a popular Asian food court in Flushing, Queens. Campaign records show Adams held at least three fundraisers at a

restaurant inside the mall, receiving dozens of donations that were \$249 — the maximum amount that qualifies for the city's generous matching funds program.

Adams' alleged manipulation of the matching funds program is at the center of the federal charges brought against him last month. Among other things, the indictment accuses him of directing a different former aide to solicit campaign cash from Turkish nationals, which was then funneled to his campaign under the names of American citizens, allowing him to unlock public funds that provide an eight-to-one match for small dollar donations.

That former aide described in the indictment matches the description of Abbasova, who was put on leave in November 2023, when the federal probe first became public. A spokesperson for City Hall did not provide a reason for her termination Monday.

An attorney for Adams, Alex Spiro, has accused the former aide of misleading prosecutors for her own benefit.

"They're hiding that their key witness lied," Spiro said following Adams' arraignment. "The main lie is that Eric Adams knew about anything having to do with this."

An attorney for Greco did not immediately return a request for comment. A voice-mail left at a phone number listed for Abbasova was not returned. MDT/AP

this day in history

1967 CHE GUEVARA 'SHOT DEAD'



Marxist revolutionary Ernesto 'Che' Guevara has reportedly been killed during a battle between army troops and guerrillas in the Bolivian jungle.

A statement issued by the commander of the Eighth Bolivian Army Division, Colonel Joaquin Zeniteno Anaya, said the 39-year-old guerrilla leader was shot dead near the jungle village of Higuera, in the south-east of the country.

Guevara, former right-hand man to Cuban prime minister, Fidel Castro, disappeared from the political scene in April 1965 and his whereabouts have been much debated since.

His death has been reported several times during the past two-and-a-half years, in the Congo and in the Dominican Republic, but has never been proven.

In his statement, Colonel Anaya said Guevara was one of six guerrillas killed in today's battle. It is understood five Bolivian soldiers were also killed in the clash.

Guevara's body is due to be flown by helicopter to La Paz later today. It is understood that his hands have been amputated for identification purposes.

Argentine-born Che Guevara, an experienced guerrilla leader, was a member of Fidel Castro's "26th of July Movement" which seized power in Cuba in 1959.

He rose quickly through the political ranks, becoming head of the National Bank and ultimately Minister of Industries, and many saw him as the intellectual force behind Castro's government.

But amid rumours of differences with Castro, largely on guerrilla warfare policies, and a desire to further his revolutionary ideals in other parts of Latin America, he resigned in April 1965 and disappeared. Some say he was dismissed although there has never been evidence of this.

It is known he still maintained ties with the Organisation for Latin American Solidarity (OLAS), a group dedicated to "uniting, coordinating and stepping-up the struggle against United States imperialism on the part of all the exploited peoples of Latin America."

His death comes less than two months after an OLAS conference in Havana which highlighted the need for further armed guerrilla action in South America.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

A post mortem examination on Che Guevara's body, carried out two days after his death, suggested he had not in fact been killed in battle but had been captured and executed a day later.

His body was buried in an unmarked grave near Valle Grande and his remains were not found until June 1997, when they were returned to Cuba.

Following his death, Guevara became a hero of Third World socialist revolutionary movements and remains a much-admired romantic figure to this day.

He was born Ernesto Rafael Guevara de la Serna in Rosario, Argentina on 14 June 1928.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Travel, research and investigation reveal new worlds. You can profit from a dreamer's vision. Consider all options and choose the most practical. Heed experience.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Handle financial administrative matters for greater peace and freedom. Review the facts and get creative to discover simple solutions. You can realize a dream.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Work out an inventive strategy to surmount a challenge together. Minimize risks and avoid obvious pitfalls. Share thoughts and dreams. Collaborate with someone special.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Guard time for yourself. Prioritize physical wellness with exercise, rest and good food. Disciplined practices build strength, endurance, capacities and energy.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Relax, get playful and have fun with someone adorable. Practice your creative arts, games and skills. Weave a seductive spell. Enchant and be enchanted.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Household improvement projects provide satisfying, practical results. Make repairs and upgrade your space to nurture your family, friends and self. Share comfort food.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Push a dream closer to realization. Creativity and communication open unexamined doors. Write, paint and publish. Express an enticing possibility.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Profit through your own initiative and efforts. Don't rely on luck. You're a force of nature. Maintain practical priorities. Grow and tend lucrative fruit.

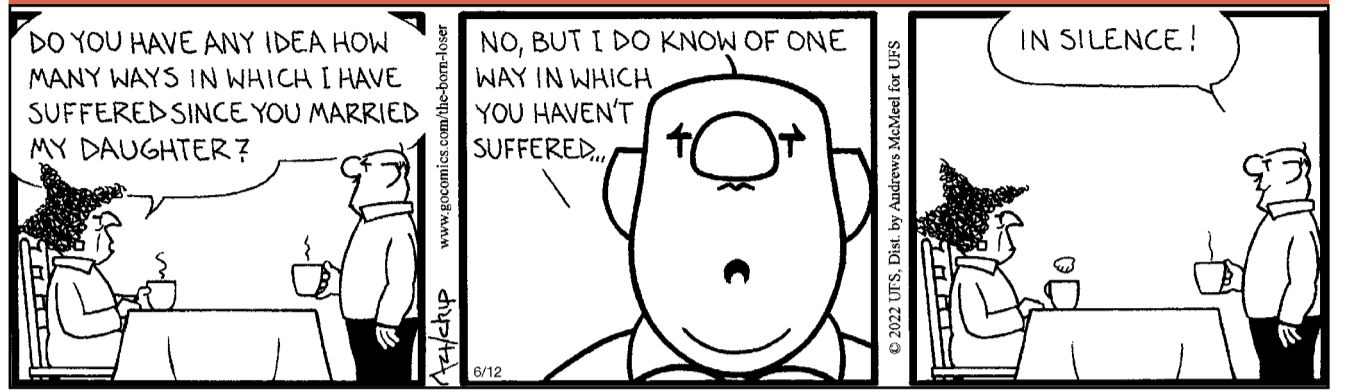
SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Take charge. How do you want things to go? Assertiveness works well now. Ask for what you want. You can make it happen. Share a persuasive invitation.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Get privately productive. Organize and clear out clutter. Consider the past, present and future. Meditate and listen for what your heart wants. Lay plans.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Take action on a group project. Something doesn't go as planned. Adapt for practical priorities. Discover possibilities. Find needed resources in your community.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Professional responsibilities take priority. Navigate unstable conditions. Ignore illusions. Take care of business. Monitor as you go.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

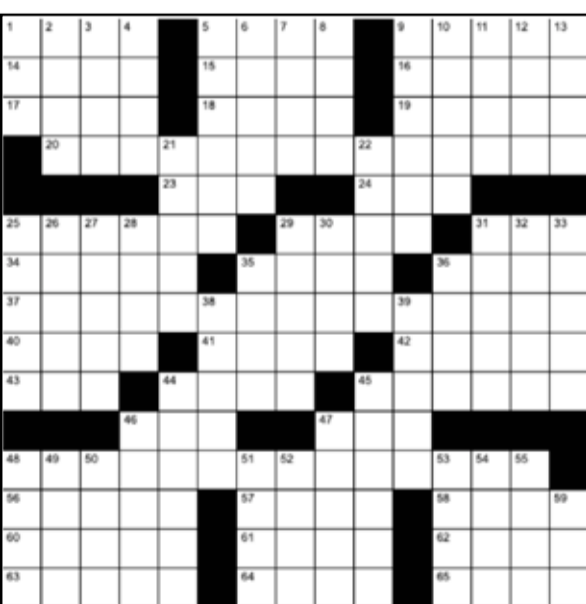
	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	11	21	overcast
Changchun	5	20	cloudy
Chengdu	14	24	rain
Chongqing	17	24	cloudy
Fuzhou	20	24	cloudy
Guangzhou	21	31	cloudy
Guiyang	12	22	cloudy
Haikou	24	30	cloudy
Hangzhou	14	23	fine
Harbin	6	18	cloudy
Hefei	10	23	fine
Nanjing	12	22	fine
Shanghai	15	22	fine
Taipei	22	24	rain
Wuhan	13	27	fine
Hong Kong	25	29	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	3	7	cloudy
Frankfurt	13	15	rain
Paris	12	16	rain
London	8	16	cloudy
New York	11	21	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Scarf; 5- Dog star; 9- Tiffs; 14- Sound rebound; 15- Soul singer Redding; 16- Aquarium buildup; 17- Numbered rds.; 18- Floating platform; 19- Moto portrayer; 20- One purpose of a driver's license; 23- Decoration at the top of a chair leg; 24- Holds; 25- Parenthetical comments; 29- Fedora feature; 31- Freddie Krueger roamed ___ Street in the movies; 34- Rose; 35- James of "The Godfather"; 36- Et ___; 37- In spite of; 40- Pizazz; 41- Ceremonial act; 42- Devoured; 43- Hi ___ monitor; 44- Starchy food grain; 45- Mother of Calcutta; 46- Actress Charlotte; 47- Helping hand; 48- Comprehensible; 56- Italian white wine; 57- Simple rhyme scheme; 58- Spelunking site; 60- Lucy's landlady; 61- Highway hauler; 62- Conks out; 63- Inspire anew; 64- Editor's note; 65- Screws up;

DOWN 1- Sun. delivery; 2- Play opening; 3- Molt; 4- Stockings; 5- Main arteries; 6- Flight of steps; 7- Spat; 8- Italian wine town; 9- Low bow; 10- Schemes; 11- Farming prefix; 12- Poi ingredient; 13- Caught in the act; 21- ___ say more?; 22- Porcelain tableware; 25- "Lou Grant" star; 26- Ripped off; 27- Bits; 28- Feathers; 29- Moistened while cooking; 30- Appraise, charge per unit; 31- Select group; 32- Queues; 33- ___ Carta; 35- In vogue; 36- Hebrew month; 38- Attempts; 39- ___ lift?; 44- Seldom; 45- Delicate morsel of food; 46- Live it up; 47- Make ___ for oneself; 48- Computer operator; 49- ___ chance!; 50- Wonka's creator; 51- Soviet news agency; 52- Help a hood; 53- A followers; 54- Lion's den; 55- At any time; 59- Pothook shape;

Yesterday's solution



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

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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Jade Garden (Taipa)
HKD 11,880,000 4 bed 3 bath

AD

WRESTLING

NETFLIX SERIES EXPLORES WOMEN'S DREAMS IN THE BODY-SLAMMING WORLD OF JAPANESE PROS

YURI KAGEYAMA, TOKYO

THE "Queen of Villains" is a typical coming-of-age tale about a young woman's road to empowerment and self-discovery — except it all takes place in the body-slaming, arm-twisting world of Japanese professional wrestling.

The Netflix series, which began airing last month, tells the story of Dump Matsumoto, a real-life wrestling legend from the 1980s who grew up poor with a father who was often absent or abusive.

Matsumoto grew up angry, she said, and went on to create in her wrestling persona a ferocious, almost camp villain character, known in the sport as a "heel," complete with outlandish Kabuki-like facial makeup, chains, sticks and a grotesque scowl. She loomed large as a symbol of fearless and defiant womanhood.

"I gave it my all to be evil," Matsumoto said.

A hefty woman with a friendly smile, Matsumoto makes a point even now to adamantly deny that she was ever a nice person or acknowledge that many people in Japan, especially women, love her.



Yuriyan Retriever in a scene from the film "The Queen of Villains." (Netflix Series The Queen of Villains)

"I still beat people up in matches. I stuck forks in them and made them bleed," she said, adding, "All the people who pretend to be good are the truly evil ones."

"The Queen of Villains" follows the friendship between Matsumoto and Chigusa Nagayo of the popular wrestling tag team known as the Crush Gals. Nagayo served as an adviser, trainer and choreographer for the series' dramatized

wrestling scenes.

Japanese professional wrestling fans still talk about the matches between Matsumoto and the Crush Gals, including the ones they fought in the U.S.

The actresses in the series spent two years training for their roles. They gained weight and muscle, and learned techniques like the "giant swing," in which a wrestler grabs her opponent's legs

and moves in a dizzying circle, or the "flying knee kick," which involves a jump and kick to the body while airborne.

The trick in professional wrestling is to execute the punches and body slams convincingly but in a controlled way to avoid serious injuries. A wrestler also must know how to fall properly.

One key fight scene took a

month to film as the actors went over each move, again and again.

"Dump played a role to be hated by the entire nation," said Yuriyan Retriever, a professional comedian who stars as Matsumoto in the series.

"Previously, there was a limit, maybe even unintentionally, beyond which I couldn't go. But when I played Dump, all those emotions had to come out and be expressed," she said.

She felt like she was no longer playing a role, she said, but that she had become Dump Matsumoto.

"It's frightening to be hated, and I don't think anyone wants to be hated," Retriever said.

The series not only presents a women-beating-the-odds story against a backdrop of sexism and abusive management but it also captures the postwar period of the Showa-era in a way that feels authentic. The scenes used thousands of extras, many of them serious wrestling fans.

Some viewers say the real-life wrestling was more intense than the dramatized version in the new series. **MDT/AP**

AD



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FOOTBALL

Australia and China seek first wins in third round of Asian World Cup qualifying

JOHN DUERDEN

AUSTRALIA hosts China in Adelaide tomorrow as both sides seek their first wins in the third round of Asian qualification for the 2026 World Cup.

The Socceroos are in fifth place in Group C, with one point in two games, with China in sixth and last after losing both matches.

After a shock 1-0 home loss to Bahrain and a surprise 0-0 draw with Indonesia in September, Graham Arnold stepped down as Australia coach after six years in the job. Tony Popovic was swiftly appointed.

"This campaign hasn't started the best, but I know there's enough time and enough games to really be aiming for that top spot to go through automatically," Popovic, who led Western Sydney Wanderers to the 2014 Asian Cham-



Qarabag's Julio Romao (left) and Tottenham's Son Heung-min fight for the ball

pions League title, said. Popovic has promised improvements as Australia chase a sixth successive World Cup appearance.

"The team maybe looked a little bit flat," he said. "I don't think it'll take too much to change the way we play ... we

do it with the energy, we do it with the desire, and we do it with a speed and dynamic type of play that I think the players will enjoy."

China, seeking a return to the World Cup since its first and only appearance in 2002, is in a worse position.

A 7-0 thrashing in Japan was followed by a home defeat to Saudi Arabia, despite the visitors playing with 10 men for most of the game. China has dropped to 91st in the world rankings, its lowest in eight years, and will be without injured star forward Wu Lei in Australia.

The top two teams in the group meet when Saudi Arabia hosts Japan in Jeddah. Japan then returns home to take on Australia five days later.

"We have games against two of the strongest teams in Asia awaiting," Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu said. "As we've always done, we'll prepare the best we can to win each match."

Despite winning both games so far, 7-0 against China and 5-0 against Bahrain, Japan has lost all previous three games in Saudi Arabia.

"The hardest thing is the battle against the heat. Whether we can perform to our

level will be key," Moriyasu said.

The top two from each of the three six-team groups qualify automatically for the 2026 tournament while the third- and fourth-place finishers progress to a fourth round to compete for two more places.

In Group B, South Korea travels to Amman to take on Jordan for the third time in 2024. The first was a 2-2 draw in the group stage of the Asian Cup and then Jordan won 2-0 in the semifinal. Jurgen Klinsmann was then fired as South Korea coach and succeeded by Hong Myung-bo.

South Korea will be without captain Son Heung-min. The Tottenham Hotspur star has a hamstring injury which means the goal-scoring burden is likely to fall on Hwang Hee-chan, another English Premier League attacker who plays for Wolverhampton. **MDT/AP**

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- Breast Surgery** : Dr. Leong Iat Lun
- Urology** : Dr. Lo Kwong Yin Richard, Dr. Zhao Yun Qiao
- Paediatric Surgery** : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong
- Paediatrics** : Dr. Zhang Zhiqin
- Obstetrics & Gynaecology** : Dr. Fong Kuan lo
- Plastic & Aesthetic Surgery** : Dr. Lam U Lin
- Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine** : Dr. Lam Kun Kuan
- ENT** : Dr. Cheng Zheng Ang
- Cardiology** : Dr. Jin Chun, Dr. Leong Man Kin
- General Medicine** : Dr. Ng Kam Hong, Dr. Lam Weng Chio
- Dietitian** : Chan Lai U Joey

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OPINION

The Conversation

Lauran Neergaard, MDT/AP Medical Writer



A PEEK INSIDE HUMAN
BRAIN SHOWS A WAY IT
CLEANS OUT WASTE

A unique peek inside the human brain may help explain how it clears away waste like the kind that can build up and lead to Alzheimer's disease.

Brain cells use a lot of nutrients which means they make a lot of waste. Scientists have long thought the brain has special plumbing to flush out cellular trash, especially during sleep – they could see it happening in mice. But there was only circumstantial evidence of a similar system in people.

Now researchers have finally spotted that network of tiny waste-clearing channels in the brains of living people, thanks to a special kind of imaging.

"I was skeptical," said Dr. Juan Piantino of Oregon Health & Science University, whose team reported the findings Monday. "We needed this piece to say this happens in humans, too."

The study was published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The brain is remarkably active during sleep. One reason seems to be that's the time it does a deep clean. And that's gotten attention because while losing a good night's sleep muddles people's thinking, chronic sleep deprivation also is considered a risk factor for dementia.

So how does the brain cleanse itself?

Over a decade ago, scientists at the University of Rochester first reported finding a network they dubbed the "glymphatic system." Cerebrospinal fluid uses channels surrounding blood vessels to get deep into tissue and move waste until it exits the brain. When mice were injected with a chief Alzheimer's culprit named beta-amyloid, it cleared away faster when the animals were sleeping.

It's not clear exactly how that network works although some research has shown the pulsing of the blood vessels helps move the waste-clearing fluid where it needs go.

But it's been hard to find that system in people. Regular MRI scans can spot some of those fluid-filled channels but don't show their function, Piantino said.

So his team in Oregon injected a tracer into five patients who were undergoing brain surgery and needed a more advanced form of MRI. The tracer "lit up" under those scans and sure enough, 24 to 48 hours later, it wasn't moving randomly through the brain but via those channels just like prior research had found in mice.

It's a small but potentially important study that Rochester's Dr. Maiken Nedergaard predicted will increase interest in how brain waste clearance connects to people's health.

But to test if better sleep or other treatments might really spur waste clearance and improve health, "I have to be able to measure glymphatic function in people," added Dr. Jeff Iliff of the University of Washington, who helped pioneer waste-clearance research. The question is whether the new study might point to ways of measuring.

Sleep isn't the only question. For example, animal studies show an old blood pressure drug now used to treat PTSD may improve glymphatic function, and Iliff and colleague Dr. Elaine Peskind are about to study it in certain patients.

Additional larger studies in healthy people are needed and Piantino, whose lab focuses on sleep health, wants to find an easier, more noninvasive test.

"We cannot study all these questions by injecting people," he said.

Former Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen is to visit Czech Republic, and other European destinations, drawing China's ire.

During Tsai's two terms, which ended in May, she came under relentless attack from China for her refusal to concede to Beijing's demands that Taipei recognize China's sovereignty over it.

At a briefing yesterday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning restated China's opposition to "any Taiwan independence elements visiting countries that establish diplomatic relations with China in any name. We urge the Czech Republic and other relevant countries to ... respect China's sovereignty and

territorial integrity."

It wasn't clear what other countries Tsai would visit on the trip that begins Saturday, but speculation has focussed on France and Belgium. Taiwan's only formal diplomatic ally in Europe is the Vatican City, but it has robust unofficial ties with all other major nations in the region.

Ahead of the trip, Tsai met with her successor William Lai. Details of their talks were not revealed, but maintaining Taiwan's participation in international institutions from which China has worked to shut it out is a key priority.



STATES SUE TIKTOK,
CLAIMING ITS PLATFORM
IS ADDICTIVE AND HARMS
THE MENTAL HEALTH OF
CHILDREN

HALELUYA HADERO,
NEW YORK

MORE than a dozen states and the District of Columbia have filed lawsuits against TikTok yesterday, alleging the popular short-form video app is harming youth mental health by designing its platform to be addictive to kids.

The lawsuits stem from a national investigation into TikTok, which was launched in March 2022 by a bipartisan coalition of attorneys general from many states, including California, Kentucky and New Jersey. All of the complaints were filed in state courts.

At the heart of each lawsuit is the TikTok algorithm, which powers what users see on the platform by populating the app's main "For You" feed with content tailored to people's interests. The lawsuits also emphasize design features that they say make children addicted to the platform, such as the ability to scroll endlessly through content, push notifications that come with built-in "buzzes" and face filters that create unattainable appearances for users.

In its filings, the District of Columbia called the algorithm "dopamine-inducing," and said it was created to be intentionally addictive so the company could trap many young users into excessive use and

keep them on its app for hours on end. TikTok does this despite knowing that these behaviors will lead to "profound psychological and physiological harms," such as anxiety, depression, body dysmorphia and other long-lasting problems, the complaint said.

"It is profiting off the fact that it's addicting young people to its platform," District of Columbia Attorney General Brian Schwab said in an interview.

Keeping people on the platform is "how they generate massive ad revenue," Schwab said. "But unfortunately, that's also how they generate adverse mental health impacts on the users."

TikTok does not allow children under 13 to sign up for its main service and restricts some content for everyone under 18. But Washington and several other states said in their filing that children can easily bypass those restrictions, allowing them to access the service adults use despite the company's claims that its platform is safe for children.

Their lawsuit also takes aim at other parts of the company's business.

The district alleges TikTok is operating as an "unlicensed virtual economy" by allowing people to purchase TikTok Coins – a virtual currency within the

platform – and send "Gifts" to streamers on TikTok LIVE who can cash it out for real money. TikTok takes a 50% commission on these financial transactions but hasn't registered as a money transmitter with the U.S. Treasury Department or authorities in the district, according to the complaint.

Officials say teens are frequently exploited for sexually explicit content through TikTok's LIVE streaming feature, which has allowed the app to operate essentially as a "virtual strip club" without any age restrictions. They say the cut the company gets from the financial transactions allows it to profit from exploitation.

Many states have filed lawsuits against TikTok and other tech companies over the past few years as a reckoning grows against prominent social media platforms and their ever-growing impact on young people's lives. In some cases, the challenges have been coordinated in a way that resembles how states previously organized against the tobacco and pharmaceutical industries.

Both TikTok and ByteDance are challenging the law at an appeals court in Washington. A panel of three judges heard oral arguments in the case last month and are expected to issue a ruling, which could be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. **MDT/AP**



Sweden John Hopfield and Geoffrey Hinton were awarded the Nobel Prize in physics for their groundbreaking work in machine learning. Their research in statistical physics and neural networks has significantly impacted both academic and everyday applications like facial recognition and language translation.



United States President Biden set a 10-year deadline for U.S. cities to replace lead pipes, addressing lead contamination in drinking water. This ambitious plan, supported by new EPA regulations, aims to prevent health risks such as brain damage and low birth weights caused by lead exposure.



United States A federal judge ordered Google to allow third-party app stores on its Android platform, breaking its Play Store monopoly. The decision, which comes after a court battle with Epic Games, is expected to disrupt Google's revenue model, with long-term impacts on competition.



Obituary Cissy Houston, Grammy-winning gospel singer and mother of Whitney Houston, has died at 91. A prominent figure in music, Houston sang with stars like Aretha Franklin and Elvis Presley and was the matriarch of a musical legacy that deeply influenced American popular culture.