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“THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’”

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CHINA TO BOOST FINANCING FOR APPROVED HOUSING PROJECTS TO \$560 BILLION

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CHINA DAILY



Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu revealed reforms to transform the city into a global talent hub. His policy address includes initiatives to boost the economy, simplify business procedures, attract talent, and expand the “Study in Hong Kong” program for foreign students.

Japan-Turkey A bus carrying Japanese tourists yesterday crashed into a ditch in Afyonkarahisar province, Turkey, injuring 22 people. The accident’s cause remains unknown. One passenger is in critical condition, and the injured were taken to local hospitals for treatment, according to state-run Anadolu Agency.

AP PHOTO



Bangladesh A Bangladesh court yesterday issued an arrest warrant for former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on charges related to crimes during protests. She fled to India after the 2023 uprising, and the current government, led by Muhammad Yunus, seeks her extradition for further investigation.

AP PHOTO



North Korea revised yesterday its constitution to define South Korea as a “hostile state,” following the destruction of inter-Korean road and rail links. This marks a significant escalation in tensions, with concerns over increased military confrontations at the border.

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JUDICIARY CONCERNED ABOUT RISING SCAMS

RENATO MARQUES

THE Courts and the public prosecutions office (MP) are increasingly concerned by the rise in scams in Macau in recent years.

The issue was raised as a major challenge by both the interim president of the Court of Final Appeal, Judge Song Man Lei, and the Public Prosecutor General, Ip Son Sang, during their speeches at the opening of the new judiciary year yesterday afternoon at the Macao Cultural Center.

Song described the various types of scams, particularly those carried out over the phone or the internet, as highly problematic, stressing their serious consequences for society.

“Taking the example of first judicial interrogations, statements for future memory, and the application of coercive measures, these three types of judicial processes within the Criminal Investigation Court registered an increase of 94.12% (from 85 to 165 cases), 77.46% (from 244 to 433 cases) and 65.38% (from 156 to 258 cases) respectively, compared to the previous judicial year. Scams ranked first in all three types,” she said.

She added, “Among them, telecommunication scams stand out – carried out by fraudsters pretending to be employees of the police, Public Prosecutor’s Office, and the courts, as well as ‘guess who I am’ phone scams that mainly target the elderly.”

Song noted these types of scams employ varied techniques, with each victim losing sums ranging from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of patacas.

“Due to the cross-border nature of most telecommunications crimes, it becomes increasingly difficult to carry out a criminal investigation. It is often difficult to trace the origin of criminal associations to bring them to justice, with many victims losing their life savings. Therefore, it is essential to continue promoting awareness and prevention efforts,” she added.

Public Prosecutor General Ip Son Sang echoed these concerns, stating that despite several attempts to crack down on such crimes, fraud cases continue to proliferate. In the last judicial year, 2,979 fraud investigations were reported, an increase of



more than 50% for the second consecutive judicial year compared to the same period in the previous judicial year. Fraud investigations now account for nearly one-fifth of the total number of charged investigations, making it the most common crime for the third consecutive year. He emphasized the need for society to strengthen both prevention and enforcement efforts.

The session opened with a speech from the Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng, who stressed the importance of improving the efficiency of the judiciary, combating judicial corruption, and maintaining high standards of judicial work.

Ho also noted the need to improve dispute resolution mechanisms, optimize the legal business environment, and provide more powerful judicial protection for economic and social development.

Ho said the judiciary is one area in which Macau has the potential to expand its international presence, and this should be pursued.

Citing president Xi Jinping, he also noted that “Reform and the rule of law are like the two wings of a bird or the two wheels of a cart,” emphasizing that reform must be pursued based on the rule of law. Similarly, improving the rule of law is also an important aspect of reform.

NEW BLOOD IN THE JUDICIARY WAS WELL-NEEDED

Summarizing the recent developments and work of the MP, the Public Prosecutor General noted that since 2017, the number of permanent magistrates has decreased from 41 to 34 due to retirements and dismissals,

among other departure reasons.

The number of magistrates working in the criminal service as well as civil, labor, and minors courts has fallen from 17 and 6, to 12 and 5 respectively, contributing to increased workloads and pressure on the MP team.

He concluded by describing the recently appointed 18 new judges and eight new MP prosecutors as a welcome addition. He hoped these additions would uphold the concept of “justice serves the people,” and act with honesty, dedication and a sense of duty.

VONG HIN FAI HIGHLIGHTS OBSTACLES TO ARBITRATION

RENATO MARQUES

AT the opening of the new judiciary year, Vong Hin Fai, president of the Macau Lawyers Association (AAM), said the association is currently struggling with limited space, posing obstacles to its mediation and arbitration services.

“The current space of the association is limited and insufficient for the installation of arbitration courts, mediation rooms, related equipment, and facilities, which constitutes a certain obstacle to the provision of efficient and professional arbitration and mediation services,” Vong said. He said the AAM also needs additional space to host training



courses and related activities assigned to the association by law.

Echoing the sentiments of Public Prosecutor General Ip Son Sang and the interim president of the Court of Final Appeal before him, Song Man Lei, Vong noted the significant increase in case numbers

and volume of judiciary work in recent years. He pointed out a small decline in the number of lawyers in Macau, which fell from 446 in 2022 to 444 in 2023.

He said there are currently 170 trainee lawyers in Macau, with 84 lawyers serving as private notaries and ano-

ther 16 acting as certified China notaries.

However, Vong also highlighted growing opportunities for local lawyers to work in the Greater Bay Area (GBA).

“Since mid-2022, the first group of lawyers from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area have started practicing in the GBA. A total of 82 Macau lawyers have officially registered as GBA lawyers and practice in the nine cities, which not only brings new opportunities for Macau’s legal profession but also provides a wider space for the development of young lawyers and promotes the development of high-quality legal services in the GBA.”

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



Mass baccarat revenue strong despite quarterly dip

MASS baccarat revenue reached MOP34.09 billion in the third quarter of 2024, according to figures released by the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DIC), comprising 61% of total gaming revenues for the period.

While the latest mass baccarat figure represents a slight 1.6% decline from the previous quarter, it was still 11.5% higher than the same period in 2019 and up 14.5% year-over-year. Total gross gaming revenue (GGR) for the quarter reached approximately MOP55.7 billion, down sequentially but higher than both 2019 and 2023 levels.

In contrast, the VIP baccarat

segment continues its multi-year decline, generating just MOP13.08 billion in the third quarter, accounting for 23.5% of total revenues. This figure was down 57.9% from pre-pandemic levels in 2019, despite an 11.2% increase from the third quarter of 2023.

Mass-market casino gambling, such as slot machine play, brought in revenue of MOP42.52 billion in the third quarter, accounting for 76.5% of the total GGR of MOP55.60 billion. Slot machine revenue stood at almost MOP3.12 billion, representing a 5.6% market share, down 2.9% sequentially but up 9.3% year-over-year. VC

Foreign residents' stays on mainland extended up to six months

VICTORIA CHAN

FOREIGN residents of Macau will now be able to apply for longer-term, multi-entry visas to mainland China, extending their stay from 90 to up to 180 days, according to an announcement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In a move to further facilitate personnel exchanges between Macau and the mainland, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced foreign Macau residents will be granted more convenient visa policies to travel to the mainland.

Under the new policy, foreign Macau residents, including permanent and non-permanent residents, can apply for multiple-entry visas valid for 5 years, with a maximum stay of 180 days per visit. This is an expansion from the previous travel permit, which



only allowed a 90-day stay.

Additionally, applicants will no longer need to submit round-trip air, train, or boat tickets, as well as hotel reservations, when applying for visas. The policy of "one-time collection and long-term exemption" of fingerprints will also be implemented, allowing those who have already provided fingerprints at Chinese overseas visa agencies to skip this step.

The measure, announced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aims to further facilitate entry into mainland China for the non-Chinese population of Macau. It is the third such policy introduced by the central government this year, following the 15-day visa-free entry for Portuguese and other European passport holders, and the 90-day travel permit for foreign permanent residents of Macau.

AD

慶祝中華人民共和國成立75周年
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澳門當選中國2025年「東亞文化之都」
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the 25th Anniversary of Macao's Return to the Motherland and
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LAWMAKER LAM CONCERNED ABOUT YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

RENATO MARQUES

LAWMAKER Lam Lon Wai has expressed concern about the mental health of people in Macau, particularly among Macau youth, during a speech at the Legislative Assembly prior to the agenda.

While acknowledging the government's efforts in this area, Lam emphasized that much work remains as requests for help continue to rise.

"According to data from the World Health Organization, in recent years, about 3.8% of the world's population suffers from depression, and about a billion people suffer from mental disorders," Lam said.

"A recent survey on mental health, carried out by a local association, identified a trend of increasing mental health issues among young people. Local youth are encountering increasing psychological pressure stemming, in part, from social and family challenges arising from socioeconomic changes."

RENATO MARQUES



Lam highlighted a societal need for greater attention to mental health challenges among young people and further efforts to develop more

effective and comprehensive prevention strategies.

To address these issues, Lam recommended the government

establish additional psychological support services for young people.

Lam suggested implementing a combination of online and offline

services to provide "online counseling work, emotional management, mental health workshops, and voluntary services, among others, to create a psychological support community."

Lam also called for strengthening the "guardianship role of schools," calling on the institutions to provide education on psychological health, particularly in higher education institutions as well as primary and secondary schools. He also recommended the authorities strengthen their cooperation mechanisms with schools, social workers, and psychological consultants, to create a better system of counseling and support for students.

Lastly, he highlighted the importance of fostering community solidarity, noting that many individuals suffering emotionally do not ask professionals for help, stressing the need to foster a positive social environment."

He called for short training courses in mental health first aid to raise the level of public knowledge and awareness on mental health, while establishing a mental health support system in the community and cultivating more "seeds of protection."



Local associations promote youth mental health

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macau Speaker Association, the Rotary Club of Macau, and the YMCA of Macau have co-organized the 2024 "We Care, We Share" Mental Health Youth Ambassador Programme and Macau Secondary School Mental Health Speech Contest.

The program focuses on the issue of mental health in society, aiming to cultivate young people's interest in public speaking, improve their communication skills, and disseminate positive mental health knowledge.

According to the organizers, the contest seeks to enhance parti-

cipants' understanding of mental health and help them face psychological challenges positively.

The event attracted nearly 200 students, social organizations, and members of the public from all walks of life.

In his opening speech of the ceremony, So Io Kuong, President of the Macau Speaker Association, said last year's program had enabled many secondary school students to gain a deeper understanding of mental health and to face various psychological challenges, expressing their thoughts and feelings to the public through speeches.

This year, the orga-

nizers will build on the success of the previous event and use the power of words to promote the importance of mental health.

Twenty schools and over 70 students are participating in this year's Mental Health Youth Ambassador Programme and Speech Contest.

Through a series of mental health talks, speech workshops, group coaching, and competitions, the organizers hope to enhance the psychological well-being, communication, and presentation skills of secondary school students and promote a positive attitude toward life.

DSEDJ PROMOTES MACAU HIGHER EDUCATION ON MALAYSIA STUDY TOUR

VICTORIA CHAN

THE Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) has been actively promoting the high-quality development of higher education in Macau, strengthening student recruitment and promotion in Portuguese-speaking countries and Southeast Asia. As part of this effort, the bureau is encouraging excellent international students to study in the region.

Recently, the DSEDJ supported a study tour organized by The United Chinese School Committees' Association of Malaysia (Dong Zong) for 27 students from 10 independent Chinese secondary schools in Malaysia. The week-long visit focused on tourism management, with students attending courses at the City University of Macau and visiting other higher education institutions in the city.

"Macau is an internationally oriented city with a diverse, tolerant and open culture," said Shim Boon Haw, Head of the Student Affairs Department of Dong Zong, during the closing ceremony.

He believes this visit can increase students' knowledge of Macau's higher education institutions and support Malaysian sec-

ondary school students to study in Macau.

The students expressed enthusiasm for Macau's educational offerings and cultural richness. Chong, a student from Keat Hwa High School in Alor Setar, said the tour "deepened her knowledge of Macau's higher education institutions" and increased her desire to study there in the future. Lee, from Chong Hwa Independent High School in Kuala Lumpur, was impressed by Macau's unique culture and architecture and is also considering pursuing her studies in the city.

The DSEDJ has been actively promoting Macau's higher education institutions in Malaysia, signing cooperation agreements and organizing visits. Macau higher education institutions have also signed several cooperation agreements with Dong Zong, and are continuing to promote further education and related services to Malaysian students, said Deputy Director Teng Sio Hong of the DSEDJ.

The bureau aims to continue strengthening educational ties with Malaysia and encourage more international students to study in Macau, contributing to the city's transformation into a hub for innovation in higher education.



Wynn Builds Regional Sports Exchanges and Boosts Macao Tourism

JOINTLY organized by the Sports Bureau of the Macao SAR Government and StarMac Entertainment & Production Limited, with additional support from the Macau-China Basketball Association (MCBA) and the Chai Yu Sports Events Company as well as sponsorship from Wynn Resorts (Macao), S.A., the “Wynn Presents – 3x3 Greater Bay Area Tour 2024” basketball tournament successfully took place from September to October in five cities across the Greater Bay Area – Shenzhen, Hong Kong, Hengqin, Guangzhou, and Macao, with three thrilling days of final matches also held in Macao. The Macao finals featured a total of 32 men’s teams and 16 women’s teams, with the winner of the men’s category earning a coveted spot in the FIBA 3x3 WORLD TOUR MACAU 2024.

Sanctioned by the International Basketball Federation (FIBA), this year’s tournament, with a prize pool exceeding MOP800,000, was upgraded to a Quest competition which attracted more professional players such as Tokyo Olympic Games gold medalist Agnis Čavars and silver medalists Stanislav Sharov and Alexander Zuev. Following the ceremonial kickoff, BIONARD WOLF UNITED with players Sharov and Zuev, competed against Team Hong Kong which featured Čavars, in the opening match.

After the opening match on October 11, more round-robin games for both the men’s and women’s groups of the 3x3 Greater Bay Area Tour 2024 took place at the Ruins of St. Paul’s and Tap Seac Square across two days. Then on the final day – October 13 – the quarterfinals, semifinals, and finals were held at the Ruins of St. Paul’s, a renowned UNESCO World Heritage Site in Macao.

BIONARD WOLF UNITED clinched the men’s title and TongJia JianShe won the women’s title in a thrilling series of matches on October 13. On the heels of their victory, BIONARD WOLF UNI-



The “Wynn Presents – 3x3 Greater Bay Area Tour 2024” takes place at the Ruins of St. Paul’s, a UNESCO World Heritage Site



BIONARD WOLF UNITED clinch the “Wynn Presents – 3x3 Greater Bay Area Tour 2024” Men’s Championship Title



TongJia JianShe win the “Wynn Presents – 3x3 Greater Bay Area Tour 2024” Women’s Championship Title

TED have now secured a place in the FIBA 3x3 WORLD TOUR MACAU 2024, the top men’s 3x3 basketball circuit organized by FIBA, which is scheduled for October 19-20.

The tournament concluded with a trophy ceremony, where prize cheques ranging from MOP10,000 to MOP100,000 were awarded to the top four teams in both the men’s and women’s categories. Guests attending the award ceremony included Mr. Luís Gomes, President of the

Sports Bureau of the Macao SAR Government; Mr. Lou Kit Long, CEO of StarMac Entertainment & Production Limited; Ms. Linda Chen, President, Vice Chairman, and Executive Director of Wynn Macau, Limited; Mr. Wu Chong Fai, President of the Macau-China Basketball Association; Mr. Chan Chak Mo, Secretary General of the Sports and Olympic Committee of Macau, China; as well as a number of sports committee members and sponsors.

The goal of this year’s “Wynn

Presents – 3x3 Greater Bay Area Tour 2024” event, was to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the People’s Republic of China and the 25th Anniversary of the Establishment of Macao Special Administration Region; better showcase the city of Macao with the Greater Bay Area (GBA) community; promote sports-based exchanges throughout the GBA region and further solidify Macao’s role as a ‘City of Sports’.

To help boost enthusiasm for

basketball on a local community level, Wynn collaborated with the organizers of the tournament to invite the winner of the 48th “The King of Underdogs” title – Hao Tianji, better known as “Helmet” by his fans – to visit three Macao middle schools - Colégio Diocesano de São José 5 and 6 as well as Hou Kong Middle School. During his school visits, he took the time to interact with students who were very excited to get to meet him face-to-face. They also held a friendly 3x3 basketball match, a 1x1 shoot-out and posed for group photos together.

Beyond promoting regional and local sports exchanges, the “Wynn Presents – 3x3 Greater Bay Area Tour 2024” was also designed to prepare Macao for the upcoming National Games, particularly with respect to establishing training opportunities for volunteers. Scheduled for November 9-21, 2025, Macao will co-host the Chinese National Games with the Greater Bay Area, featuring several events such as 3x3 basketball.



Hengqin stop of the 3x3 GBA basketball tour



Guangzhou stop of the 3x3 GBA basketball tour

MIF SHOWCASES PORTUGUESE CRAFTSMANSHIP AND INNOVATION

NADIA SHAW

THE 29th Macao International Trade and Investment Fair (MIF) kicked off Oct. 16, featuring over 1,300 exhibitors from around the globe. Running through Oct. 19, this year's event is themed "Economic Diversification and Development Opportunities" for MIF and "Brands Gathering with Business Opportunities" for the concurrent Macao Franchise Expo (MFE). Both fairs aim to foster collaboration and innovation across various industries.

Held over 38,000 square meters across six exhibition halls, the fair is divided into ten distinct zones, including a new smart exhibition area with cutting-edge technology. Notably, the event is hosting 183 exhibitors from Portuguese-speaking countries this year, demonstrating the fair's international appeal.

In the Portuguese-speaking countries market zone, the Portugal-China PME Chamber of Commerce - SMEs is showcasing esteemed fashion brands and manufacturers from Por-



tugal, such as Boogie'Woogie, SICI93 - Nextil Group Luxury Division, and Isabel Perreira. Speaking with the Times, Pereira expressed her excitement about participating in the MIF, saying she feels "honored and grateful" to showcase the exceptional quality of Portuguese products. She highlighted that Portuguese craftsmanship rivals that of Italian brands, stating, "Italian brands are renowned for their craftsmanship, as we should be too."

Brazilian exhibitors also

brought their offerings to the fair, primarily focusing on food products like honey, meat, goat's cheese, nuts, coffee, and cachaça - a Brazilian distilled spirit made from fermented sugarcane juice.

Paola Comin, secretary of commerce and international relations at the Global ESG Institute, highlighted the role of CONAF (the National Confederation on Family Farming) to the Times in supporting family farmers through discussions on sustainable agricultural practi-



ces and food security.

"It is crucial to promote Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices among businesses through resources and training," Comin said.

Paulo Dinis, Executive Director of the AEP Foundation, also shared insights with the Times about his efforts to promote the internationalization of Portuguese companies through the Global Diaspora Network. He emphasized AICEP's critical role in assisting companies to enter the Macau market.

"Portuguese companies benefit from support for internationalization, which helps them get closer to this market," he said.

Dinis outlined a long-term vision for sustainable economic growth in Macau, noting its historical significance as a gateway for Portuguese products.

"Macao represents an opportunity to take Portuguese products further in a constantly growing market," he said. He underscored the importance of innovation and knowledge transfer in strengthening bilateral relations and discussed investment potential in tourism and sustainability sectors.

Two exclusive livestream sales sessions titled "Macao Premium Goods" are scheduled for Oct. 17 and 18. These sessions will feature over 100 products from nearly 20 exhibitors across various categories, from health foods to cultural items. Both the public and merchants are encouraged to participate in these online sales events.

The MIF is open to the public free of charge from Oct. 17 to 19. Four shuttle bus routes will facilitate transportation between the event venue and various locations in Macau. For more information about the event schedule or exhibitors, interested parties may visit the official MIF or MFE websites.

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Local brands seek gov't help to boost visibility at MFE

NADIA SHAW

LOCAL heritage brands have called on the government to enhance promotional efforts during the Macao Franchise Exhibition (MFE), where innovative strategies for revitalizing traditional businesses were a central theme. The MFE hosted the Macao Heritage Brands Theme Forum, which focused on integrating technology into marketing and celebrated 13 brands with histories spanning 20 to 100 years.

At the forum, a representative from Medan Snacks highlighted the company's recent upgrades, including semi-automatic production machines and smart cashier systems aimed at improving inventory management and cost control. He emphasized the need for government-sponsored training programs to equip industry



professionals with essential knowledge. Another local business owner, representing Lai Kee ice cream shop, noted an uptick in tourists from Southeast Asia, Japan, and South Korea, who are eager to explore Macau's rich history through its traditional shops. He echoed the call for increased government support in promoting these local brands.

Exhibitors at the MFE included popular beverage and tea brands CHU-CHAT and CHAGEE. While neither

brand currently operates in Macau, CHAGEE expressed interest in entering the market but has not provided a specific timeline for expansion. Since its establishment in 2017, CHAGEE has rapidly grown to over 5,000 locations worldwide, including in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. Rex Ho, Deputy General Manager of CHAGEE (Hong Kong and Macau), said the brand focuses on creating a comfortable tea-drinking experience while fostering cultural appreciation.

Ho Iat Seng hosts Portuguese delegation

CHIEF Executive Ho Iat Seng welcomed a delegation from Portugal's Douro and Tâmega e Sousa municipalities, aiming to explore avenues for enhanced cooperation between China and Portugal. This meeting took place during the ongoing Macao International Trade and Investment Fair (MIF), where the AEP Foundation has facilitated the participation of businesses from Portugal.

During the gathering,

Ho underscored Macau's pivotal role as a cultural and economic bridge connecting China and Portuguese-speaking nations.

"Macau has long-standing ties with Portugal, and we are committed to preserving our shared cultural heritage," he said.

He highlighted the success of the recent 6th Ministerial Conference of the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation, which showcased fruitful ex-

changes among China and nine Portuguese-speaking countries.

Pedro Daniel Machado Gomes, Mayor of Lousada and President of the Tâmega e Sousa Intermunicipal Community emphasized the Douro region's commitment to innovation alongside its esteemed wine production.

"We aim to leverage our participation in the MIF to strengthen trade relations with China and showcase

our development potential," Gomes said.

Gomes expressed his appreciation for the Macau government's efforts to preserve Portuguese history and culture, stating that this cultural inheritance makes Macau a unique and beautiful city.

The delegation included mayors from several municipalities, including Penafiel and Cinfães, as well as Luís Miguel Magalhães Ribeiro, President of the AEP Foundation. Ribeiro acknowledged that the fair serves as a crucial platform for fostering business opportunities and cultural exchanges. **NS**

CORPORATE BITS

Asia Wine Institute partners with SJM for Asian sommelier summit



The Asia Wine Institute has again partnered with SJM Resorts for the "SJM Asia Top Sommelier Summit 2024," taking place in Macau from 14 to 18 October, a statement yesterday from the gaming operator said.

The event brings together somme-

liers from across Asia and leading wine experts to promote the development of the wine industry and Macau's "gastro-tourism" initiative. The summit aims, according to SJM, "to foster knowledge exchange and create a platform for sommeliers to expand their

global reach," reinforcing Macau's role as a Creative City of Gastronomy.

An opening ceremony at the Macau Tower Convention & Entertainment Centre drew over 300 industry professionals, including students from the Court of Master Sommeliers Accreditation. Key attendees included government officials, wine experts, and industry leaders.

Daisy Ho, Managing Director of SJM, said the event "is a key part of SJM's commitment to offering exceptional culinary experiences in Macau."

The summit, which ends today, has been featuring forums, masterclasses, and tastings, including the "Asia Wines & Spirits Awards: Chinese and Portuguese Wines Carnival." It will also host the 16th edition of the "China National Sommelier Competition" and the "12th China's Wine List of the Year Awards," celebrating achievements in wine excellence.

ADVERTORIAL

GREAT TIMES

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Coffee Lam



Emi Wong



Gun Gun



JYAN

The "Yo~ga Wellfest 2024" boasts an impressive lineup of over 30 celebrity instructors from across Asia, including Hong Kong's celebrity yoga instructor Coffee Lam, Asian fitness influencer Emi Wong, Singapore's renowned yoga instructor JYAN, Thailand's trendsetting dance coach Gun Gun, and Taiwan's celebrated Zumba master J-Lin. With one single ticket, you can indulge in a diverse array of activities, from yoga, fitness and dance classes to stand up paddleboard (SUP) yoga experience. Meanwhile, the "hush! Beach Concerts" features a diverse music lineup spanning various genres, from rock to electronic, hip-hop to jazz, ensuring a music feast like no other, and admission is free.

Experience a perfect weekend escape as you dive in the one-of-a-kind outdoor experience that celebrates the fusion of music, sports, and wellness against the picturesque backdrop of Hac Sa Beach. Secure your tickets now at mgm.mo or https://www.icm.gov.mo/hush.



VISA CHAMPIONS FINANCIAL LITERACY IN THE

ANALYSIS
BY NADIA SHAW, MDT

VISA is celebrating a decade of commitment to financial education with the 10th anniversary of the Hong Kong Financial Literacy Championship. This year, the Championship expanded its reach to secondary schools across the Greater Bay Area (GBA), culminating in an inaugural pitch competition that showcased innovative fintech solutions aimed at promoting sustainable economic development and tourism.

Financial literacy is essential for the youth in Macau, equipping them with skills to navigate a complex financial landscape. Understanding basic concepts like budgeting, saving and investing fosters responsible money management and empowers young people to make informed decisions that greatly impact their future economic stability.

As the GBA integrates its economies, fostering a financially literate population is vital for building a resilient workforce capable of contributing to sustainable developments. In a region marked by rapid economic growth and innovation, financial literacy acts as a foundational tool, to avoid pitfalls such as debt accumulation and financial in-

security. By learning these skills early on, today's youth are better equipped to become the financially savvy leaders of tomorrow.

Since its inception in 2014, the Championship has impacted over 90% of secondary schools in Hong Kong. In 2024, it "attracted a record-breaking 18,000 student participants, reflecting a remarkable 53% increase from the previous year," according to Paulina Leong, General Manager of Visa Hong Kong and Macau. The event featured a three-week online financial knowledge quiz and a Young Financial Talent Runway that provided students with career skills training, mentorship, and opportunities for corporate visits.

The GBA-wide pitch competition included 15 student teams from Hong Kong, Macau, and other GBA cities, each presenting creative ideas to address local economic challenges through fintech. The Grand Pitch event on July 13 was attended by notable figures such as Dr. Choi Yuk-lin, Secretary for Education, and Darryl Chan, Deputy Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority.

EMPOWERING YOUNG MINDS
DMHC Siu Ming Catholic Secondary School from Hong Kong emerged as the overall champion, with their project titled



Hong Kong Financial Literacy Championship, supported by Visa for a decade, celebrates its 10-year milestone with 20 partner organisations in attendance and over 150 students and teachers from Hong Kong, Macau and other GBA cities

"Find Your Own Kwun Tong," which proposed innovative methods for community development. The team from Dongguan's Jinan University School for Children of Hong Kong and

Macau secured first runner-up with their "Dongguan Roast Goose CITY GO" proposal aimed at supporting local restaurants. Guangzhou No.3 Middle School rounded out the top three with

their "NovaSpark" initiative focused on promoting historical sites.

Leong, emphasized the significance of this milestone, stating, "This year's Championship

Housing market in major Chinese cities heating up over stimulus

ON THE AGENDA
BY XINHUA

HOME sales in major Chinese cities are ticking up this month, as a series of recent stimulus measures have boosted homebuyer sentiment.

The early signs of recovery in the housing market in big cities offer some relief as Chinese authorities seek to stimulate the world's second-largest economy by stabilizing the property market.

The struggling property sector has been a major drag on China's economy over the past few years, with cash-strapped developers and high inventories of unsold homes and unfinished projects.

In a bid to prop up the housing market, Chinese authorities in late September ordered to cut mortgage rates for existing loans, lower down payment ratios and relax purchase restrictions.

The cities of Beijing, Shan-

ghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen introduced their versions of stimulus measures for local housing markets just before the National Day holiday.

This came in late September, when a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee underlined the need for efforts to reverse the real estate market downturn and stabilize the market.

The stimulus package has proven effective in boosting homebuyer sentiment in big cities quickly. This month, many housing sales centers in major cities are packed with clients as many once hesitant homebuyers are again jumping into the market.

On Sunday, 744 customers signed up to vie for 332 flats in a Shenzhen housing project, and all the flats were sold out in three and a half hours, a rarity before the stimulus package was announced.

The market rebound star-

ted with the week-long National Day holiday from Oct. 1 to 7. According to Leyoujia, a housing agency in Shenzhen, the conversion rate of home buyers for new homes -- the ratio of finalized deals to all customers who have visited a real estate project -- jumped to 12 percent from 2 percent.

Liu Xiaofei, a sales manager at property developer LVGEM Group in Shenzhen, said the new stimulus has greatly boosted the market and confidence, helping to increase the conversion rate and shorten the decision-making process.

During the holiday, buyers in Shenzhen signed initial purchase contracts for 1,841 new homes, up 664.1 percent from a year earlier, local data showed. Meanwhile, homebuyers signed contracts for 2,316 second-hand homes last week, a weekly transaction record in nearly three years, according to housing agency Leyoujia.



Shenzhen (pictured above) and Guangzhou introduced their versions of stimulus measures for local housing markets

Liu believes the housing market is stabilizing after hitting a trough, but more measures are needed to further boost consumer confidence.

In Guangzhou, capital of south China's Guangdong Province, homebuyers had signed initial purchase contracts for 6,687 new homes, up 137 percent year on year, after home purchase restrictions were lifted on Sept. 29, the Guangzhou Municipal Housing and Urban-Rural Development Bureau said on Oct. 12. The bureau attributed the strong growth to policy incentives and sales promotions by developers.

In Shanghai, 1,334 second-hand homes were traded on Sunday, the daily record in

more than a year, according to the website of the Shanghai Real Estate Trading Center.

The daily number of more than 1,000 shows that second-hand home transactions are very active in Shanghai, said Lu Wenxi, an analyst with real estate agency Centaline Property.

A Shanghai homebuyer, surnamed Zhang, was a beneficiary of the stimulus. The down payment ratio for second-home purchases was lowered to 25 percent, allowing him to improve his living conditions much sooner, Zhang said.

The market also heats up in Beijing. The number of second-hand home transactions here nearly doubled from the previous month and surged more than 150 percent year on

year from Oct. 1 to 15, according to Leng Hui, an analyst with the research institute of Lianjia, a major second-home realtor.

Li Yifeng, deputy research chief at China Index Academy, said Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen still have room to loosen housing policies to further stabilize the property market in the future.

Economic fundamentals are key to stabilizing the property sector and expectations, and if the economic recovery accelerates in the fourth quarter with stimulus measures, the property market in key cities could stabilize, and a similar result could even be expected for the market nationwide, Li said.

GREATER BAY AREA



Paulina Leong, General Manager of Visa Hong Kong and Macau

ge and presented its business case in a concise three-minute pitch format to judges from Visa and various financial institutions.

A crucial aspect of this year's Championship was its mentorship component. Fourteen industry professionals from organizations such as DBS Bank and KPMG China guided student teams throughout their preparation, providing insights into real-world business challenges while honing presentation skills.

Annie Cheng, Head of Corporate Communications at Visa Greater China, remarked on the program's evolution, stating, "From humble beginnings, it has blossomed into something extraordinary. The program has become a beacon of financial education."

PUI CHING MIDDLE SCHOOL: A NEW CONTENDER

Pui Ching Middle School represented Macau with their crowdfunding platform proposal called "M FUND," aimed at supporting local small and medium-sized enterprises by providing alternative funding options outside traditional banking channels.

"M Fund is structured to provide variable returns on investments, enabling businesses to repay their supporters in various ways—whether through cash, equity, discounts, or even gifts," explained a team member. This flexibility not only in-

creases accessibility for investors but also allows a broader range of community members to participate in the funding process. The students believe that this approach creates a win-win situation, with some commenting that "Investors can support their favorite local businesses while receiving desirable returns, and businesses gain new opportunities to secure the financial backing they need to thrive."

Maggie Leung, a teacher at Pui Ching Middle School, expressed pride in her students' participation, saying, "Through this competition, we've ignited our students' passion for finance while deepening their understanding of the financial sector."

In addition to guidance from their schoolteacher, student teams were mentored by industry experts who offered insights into the latest developments in finance and provided one-on-one support for their innovative projects.

"The role of mentors has been pivotal in preparing students for the GBA Invitational Match, significantly shaping their presentations and overall performance," said a representative from Pui Ching Middle School.

Under the mentorship of Nixon, students focused on the feasibility of their ideas, balancing the interests of small and medium-sized enterprises with those of investors to enhance

Macau's economic landscape.

"Our mentor, Nixon, played a crucial role in helping students define the direction of their projects," the representative added. An emphasis was placed on "creating financial products that benefit society as a whole," ensuring that the students' proposals would not only be viable but also socially responsible.

The school emphasized its commitment to enhancing students' financial literacy in alignment with the Macau SAR Government's initiative to develop modern finance. Ms. Leung stated that they have established four key objectives: providing fundamental business knowledge through regular curriculum; fostering critical thinking; bridging theory with practice; and instilling social responsibility. Collaborating with industry professionals through interviews and site visits gives students firsthand insights into financial operations.

Looking ahead, Visa plans to integrate emerging topics such as digital economies and sustainable development into future competitions. By fostering collaboration among young leaders across the GBA, Visa aims to build a smarter, more inclusive financial ecosystem. With initiatives like these paving the way for future leaders in finance, Visa is laying down the foundations for a more financially literate society.

underscores our commitment to nurturing the next generation of talent. The expanded network of participating schools has created lasting friendships and learning opportunities for

students across the GBA."

The competition not only fosters financial literacy but also encourages critical thinking about community issues. Each team identified a local challenge

《〈內地與澳門關於建立更緊密經貿關係的安排〉服務貿易協議》的簽署儀式



Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng witnesses the signing of the second agreement on amendment to the Mainland and Macau CEPA

TRADE & INVESTMENT

CEPA opens doors for local businesses diversifying into new markets in GBA

IN THE NEWS

THE Office of the Secretary for Economy and Finance (GSEF) has announced that an updated Closer Economic Part-

nership Arrangement (CEPA) with mainland China was signed earlier this week. This agreement aims to enhance economic exchanges and cooperation, marking a significant milestone

as Macau celebrates the 25th anniversary of its handover to China.

Scheduled to take effect on March 1, 2025, the new CEPA introduces liberalization mea-

asures across various sectors, including technology, finance, and cultural enterprises. These changes are expected to facilitate easier access to the vast mainland market for local firms. Notably, tech companies certified under the 'Technology Enterprise Certification Scheme' will be treated equally to their mainland counterparts, gaining access to the same tax benefits from the start date.

In a significant shift, financial

services providers will no longer be required to demonstrate five years of substantial commercial activity before entering the mainland market. This opens opportunities for newer businesses to expand their operations. Furthermore, cultural enterprises will benefit as co-produced films and television shows with mainland firms will be classified as domestically produced, easing broadcasting and distribution processes.

The agreement also eliminates a prior requirement for Macau service suppliers to have engaged in substantial business activity for at least three years before entering the mainland market. This change is particularly advantageous for younger Macau businesses looking to tap into new markets.

The signing ceremony was attended by key officials, including Macau's Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong and Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng. This updated CEPA not only strengthens Macau's integration with mainland China but also supports its broader economic diversification strategy within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. **MDT/NS**

DIPLOMACY

UK top diplomat to visit China in an attempt to reset frosty relations

BRITISH Foreign Secretary David Lammy is making his first trip to China in office this week in an attempt to reset the U.K.'s ties with Beijing and seek "pragmatic engagement" despite human rights and other concerns.

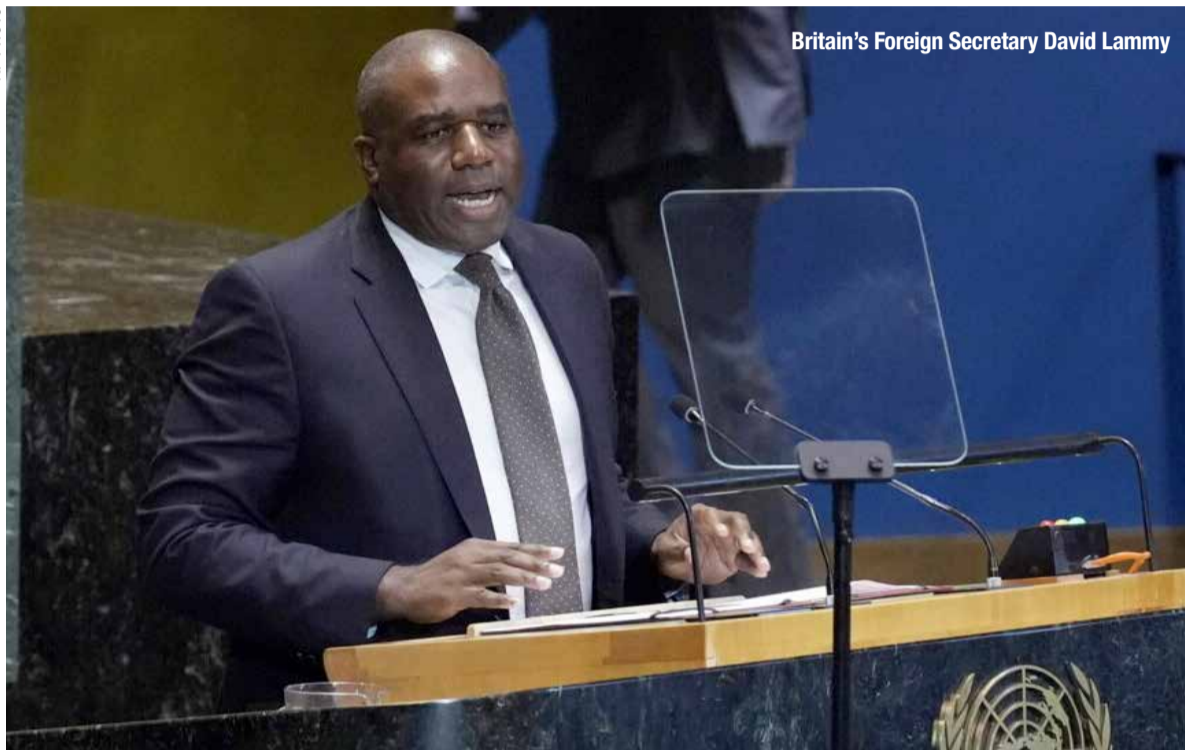
Relations between Britain and China have turned increasingly frosty in recent years over a series of spying and cyberespionage allegations, Beijing's crackdown on civil liberties in Hong Kong, a former British colony, and China's support for Russia in the Ukraine war.

Lammy is expected to visit Beijing and Shanghai during a two-day trip that starts Friday, U.K. officials said yesterday.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer's spokesperson, Dave Pares, said Britain wants to engage China but would challenge Beijing over issues including the jailing of Jimmy Lai, the Hong Kong activist and publisher of the now-shuttered Apple Daily newspaper who has been in custody since 2020.

Pares said securing Lai's release was a "priority" for Britain's government. Lai, 76, has British citizenship and his legal team has been pressing British authorities to do more

AP PHOTO



Britain's Foreign Secretary David Lammy

to help him.

"We are calling on the Hong Kong authorities to end their politically motivated prosecution and immediately release Jimmy Lai," Pares said. He added that Lammy had raised the case during a meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at a gathering of Southeast Asian leaders in Laos in July, "and will continue to raise it."

"What the U.K. wants to have with China is pragmatic engagement. That is in the

"What the UK wants to have with China is pragmatic engagement."

DAVID LAMMY
BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY

U.K.'s interest and in the world's interest," he said.

China's Foreign Ministry said yesterday it is "ready to work with the British side" to boost cooperation and promote stable relations.

"China and the U.K. are both permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and major economies in the world," said Foreign Ministry spokesperson

Mao Ning.

"The long-term and sta-

ble development of the relationship between the two countries is in the common interest of both sides and is conducive to the international community's unity in addressing global challenges and promoting peace and development around the world," she said.

British PM Starmer, who led his Labour Party to a landslide election victory in July, has not made any major statements on how he aims to manage the U.K.-China relationship.

His predecessor, Rishi Sunak, had resisted heavy pressure from some members of his Conservative party to take a tougher stance on China over security concerns and the country's human rights record. Instead, Sunak favored a non-confrontational approach, stressing the need to engage with China despite it becoming an increasing "systemic challenge" to British values and interests.

The last British foreign secretary to visit China was James Cleverly in 2023, when he underlined the importance of maintaining regular dialogue with Beijing despite differences.

Earlier this year, four men in Britain were charged in two separate cases with allegedly spying for China and helping Hong Kong authorities gather intelligence in the U.K. The suspects included a former researcher working in the U.K. Parliament, and the office manager of the Hong Kong trade office in London.

Beijing, in turn, has accused Britain's MI6 intelligence agency of recruiting a Chinese couple as spies. **MDT/AP**

ECONOMY

Beijing to boost financing for approved housing projects to \$560 billion

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

CHINA will expand the amount of financing available for housing projects on a "white list" to 4 trillion yuan (\$562 billion), officials said yesterday in Beijing's latest moves to reverse a slump in the property industry.

Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development Ni Hong said during a news conference in Beijing that measures will also be taken to redevelop 1 million urban villages across the country. Ni stopped short of elaborating on the scale of the

funding for the redevelopment.

He said that the housing market had "bottomed out" after three years, with October data showing a spike in property sales.

The government has been redoubling efforts in recent weeks to stabilize the real estate market after a downturn triggered by a crackdown on excess borrowing. Once a bright spot in China's economy, the property market has since become a drag.

On Saturday, authorities announced that they would allow local governments to use funds from

AP PHOTO



A luxury housing construction site in Beijing

unallocated government bond quotas and to raise debt ceilings to help prop up the property market.

In late September, the outstanding mortgage rates for individual borrowers were also cut by an

average of 0.5 percentage points, and the minimum down payment ratio on purchases of second ho-

uses was also lowered to 15% from 25%.

In January, officials announced a list of housing projects that would be eligible for financing. Loans for such projects had reached 2.23 trillion yuan (\$313 billion) as of Wednesday, said Xiao Yuanqi, deputy director of the National Financial Regulatory Administration.

Some analysts however say that measures implemented so far will not be enough to solve China's property crisis in the near term.

"It's a ticking time bomb that will take years, maybe even decades, to defuse," said Stephen Innes, managing partner at SPI Asset Management. "No matter how much money or effort they throw at it, this problem isn't going away anytime soon." **MDT/AP**

VIETNAM

Real estate tycoon sentenced to life for billions in fraud in gov't graft crackdown

HAU DINH & DAVID RISING,
HANOI

A Vietnamese real estate tycoon was convicted yesterday of fraudulently obtaining property worth billions of dollars and sentenced to life in prison, in a case that has been a centerpiece of the government's crackdown on corruption.

Truong My Lan was already convicted in April by the same Ho Chi Minh City court of fraud amounting to \$12.5 billion — nearly 3% of the country's gross domestic product — in a separate case and sentenced to death by lethal injection.

The trials were broken into two parts due to the number of allegations against her, and Thursday's verdict adds to Lan's legal troubles as she awaits the appeal of her death sentence to be heard.

Vietnam has handed down more than 2,000 death sentences in the past decade and executed more than 400 prisoners. It is a possible sentence for 14 different crimes but is generally only applied in cases of murder and drug trafficking.

"Standing here today is a price too expensive for me to pay. I consider this my destiny and a career accident," the VNexpress online newspaper quoted Lan, the chairwoman of property developer Van Thinh Phat, as telling the judges in her closing statement last week.

"For the rest of my life, I will never forget that my actions have affected tens of thousands of families."

Nguyen Hieu, a schoolteacher whose life savings of \$36,000 is tied



Real estate tycoon Truong My Lan (center) is escorted to a trial in Ho Chi Minh City, yesterday

up in illegal bonds issued by Lan's company, said the life sentence was fair.

"She deserves the punishment," he said, adding that he hoped the death sentence from the first trial is commuted so that Lan has the opportunity to pay back her victims.

All other 33 co-defendants were found guilty of various charges and received sentences ranging from two to 23 years in prison. They included Chu Nap Kee, Lan's husband, who was sentenced to two years for money laundering.

In addition to obtaining property by fraud, Lan was also convicted of money laundering and illegal cross-border money transfer charges, according to state-run media.

She was accused of raising \$1.2 billion from nearly 36,000 investors by issuing bonds illegally through four companies, according to state media reports.

She was also found guilty of si-

phoning off \$18 billion obtained through fraud and for using companies controlled by her to illegally transfer more than \$4.5 billion in and out of Vietnam between 2012 and 2022.

It was not immediately clear if Lan would appeal the verdict and no date has yet been set for her appeal of her death penalty conviction to be heard.

In the April conviction, she was found to have orchestrated financial fraud amounting to \$12.5 billion for illegally controlling a major bank allowing loans that resulted in losses of \$27 billion, according to state media reports.

Lan's arrest in October 2022 was among the most high-profile in an ongoing anti-corruption drive in Vietnam that has intensified since 2022.

The Communist Party's "blazing furnace" campaign has also touched the highest echelons of Vietnamese politics.

Former President Vo Van Thuong resigned in March after being implicated in the campaign. Since 2016, thousands of party officials have been disciplined, including former President Nguyen Xuan Phuc and the former head of parliament, Vuong Dinh Hue, both of whom resigned.

In all, eight members of the powerful Politburo have been ousted on corruption allegations, compared to none between 1986 and 2016.

The anti-corruption drive began in 2013, but it wasn't until 2018 that authorities began scanning the private sector. Since then, several owners of Vietnam's fast-growing businesses have been arrested.

The campaign had been the hallmark of Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, Vietnam's top politician, who died earlier this year at age 80.

The ideologue had called corruption a grave threat to the par-

ty and vowed that the campaign would be a "blazing furnace" in which no one was untouchable.

In another high-profile case, business tycoon Trinh Van Quyet was found guilty in August of defrauding stockholders of nearly \$150 million by falsely inflating the value of his company.

The Hanoi People's Court sentenced Quyet to 21 years in prison and convicted 49 co-defendants on a variety of charges, with sentences ranging from probation to multiple years in prison.

Lan and her family established the Van Thinh Phat company in 1992 after Vietnam shifted from a state-run economy to a more market-oriented approach that was open to foreign investors. She started out helping her mother, a Chinese entrepreneur, sell cosmetics in Ho Chi Minh City's oldest market, according to the state media outlet Tien Phong.

Van Thinh Phat became one of Vietnam's richest real estate companies, with projects including luxury residential buildings, offices, hotels and shopping centers. This made her a key player in the country's financial industry.

Lan's first trial shocked many Vietnamese.

Analysts said the scale of the scam raised questions about whether other banks or businesses had similarly erred, dampening Vietnam's economic outlook and making foreign investors jittery at a time when Vietnam is trying to position itself as the ideal home for businesses trying to diversify supply chains away from China. MDT/AP

NEPAL

Youngest female climber to scale 14 tallest peaks calls for novices to be regulated

A British mountaineer who set the record as the youngest female to climb all the 14 tallest mountains in the world said yesterday that inexperienced climbers should not be allowed to climb the highest peaks because they run the risk of endangering their lives and others.

Adriana Brownlee, 23, climbed Mount Everest at 20 in 2021 and earlier this month climbed Mount Shishapangma in China, comple-

ting her endeavor to scale all 14 peaks over 8,000 meters (26,247 feet) high.

She said she has seen numerous climbers who lack training in basic skills and in coping with the unpredictable slopes of the high peaks.

"I have seen many examples of people in the mountains that should not really be there, that should have more training beforehand," Brownlee told The Associated Press in Kathmandu yesterday. "We have had to

support them and have had to help with like small things like how to put on crampons, how to put on harness."

She said that mountaineering authorities should ensure that climbers attempting to scale the highest peaks have at least climbed smaller mountains to ensure they can handle the altitude and have the proper skills.

Brownlee flew to Nepal this week alongside other climbers from Tibet including Nima Rinji Sherpa, who

is now the youngest person to climb the 14 peaks at age 18.

There are generally no rules besides age restrictions on people who want to climb mountains as long as they are able to pay their permit fees. In Nepal, climbers need to be at least 16 years old.

Brownlee said she was just 8 years old when she began dreaming of becoming a mountaineer like her father, who she said was her main inspiration. MDT/AP



Adriana Brownlee, 23, youngest woman to scale all the world's 14 highest peaks

AP PHOTO



Ukraine Ambassador to UK, Valerii Zaluzhnyi, speaks at a Chatham House event in London, yesterday

PUTIN WAR

Zaluzhnyi endorses 'victory plan' in first speech since his dismissal

SUSIE BLANN & HANNA ARHIROVA, LONDON

UKRAINE'S former commander-in-chief, Valerii Zaluzhnyi, yesterday expressed his support for President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's "victory plan," despite the tensions between the two that led to his dismissal.

"Ukraine must clearly follow the plan," Zaluzhnyi said in his first public appearance since his appointment as ambassador to the U.K.

He told an audience at London's Chatham House think-tank: "But this list of steps primarily concerns those countries that should ultimately be interested in stopping the war."

The plan lays out Ukraine's view on how to strengthen its positions before any potential negotiations with Russia to end the conflict. After briefing U.S. and other Western officials, Zelenskyy presented the key points publicly during a speech to the Ukrainian parliament on Wednesday.

The plan includes a formal invitation for Ukraine to join NATO and permission to use Western-supplied longer-range missiles to strike military targets deep inside Russian territory — steps that have been met with reluctance by Kyiv's allies so far.

Zaluzhnyi asserted that NATO membership is the only viable security guarantee for his country, fully backing President Zelenskyy's call for the alliance to extend an invitation to Kyiv. But the prospect of Ukraine joining NATO has left the alliance in a bind, with some members concerned it could escalate the conflict and risk direct confrontation with Russia.

"Declaring yet another freeze in the situation with Ukraine will not work," said Ukraine's former commander-in-chief. "We want to have guarantees of security for ourselves and our children," he said.

Zaluzhnyi, who was in charge of armed forces during Ukraine's failed counter-offensive in the summer of 2023, said a shortfall in Western support during that period meant that Ukraine lost its chance to fend off Russia on its own.

He said that missed opportunity turned the war into a protracted conflict where the way out "seems rather doubtful and almost impossible," and allowed Russia the chance to form an alliance with North Korea, Iran and China which Ukraine now cannot defeat without the help of Western partners.

"Against Ukraine now stands not only Russia, but also a quite powerful coalition of strong sta-

tes," he said. Such an "alliance of authoritarian countries" may pose a security threat to the democratic world and the West "should have made a plan to protect its democratic institutions," he said.

During the presentation of his plan in Brussels yesterday, Zelenskyy said Kyiv has intelligence information that 10,000 troops from North Korea are being prepared to join Russian forces fighting against his country, warning that a third nation wading into the hostilities would turn the conflict into a "world war." Zelenskyy did not go into further details about the claim.

As the war grinds through its third year, the mood in Ukraine is grim as its outmanned troops face difficulty holding back Russian advances, especially in the east. Although Moscow's gains are incremental, the steady forward movement is making Kyiv feel it needs more large-scale Western help.

The former armed forces chief stressed that Ukraine is battling Russia, which significantly outweighs it in resources, including in manpower.

"The only thing which works in the war is mathematics," he said.

Zaluzhnyi acknowledged the challenges his country faces with mobilization, emphasizing the need to reform recruit-

ment practices inherited from the times Ukraine was a part of the Soviet Union. Despite his popularity, he has faced widespread criticism for failing to meet the army's need for more troops.

Conscription has become a sensitive issue as infantry shortages grow, which became one of the factors that allowed Russia to gain the initiative on the battlefield.

"We had to change it (the system)," he said but adding that Ukraine doesn't have enough time to do it while the war with Russia lasts.

"The material side does not depend entirely on us, but in working with human resources, everything completely depends on Ukraine," he said.

Tensions between Zaluzhnyi and President Zelenskyy escalated following Ukraine's 2023 counter-offensive, which failed to achieve significant territorial gains. In February, Zelenskyy dismissed Zaluzhnyi as military commander-in-chief in a move to revitalize efforts in the stalled war.

Zaluzhnyi is widely respected among Ukrainian troops and considered a national hero. He is credited with stalling Russia's full-scale invasion in the early days of the war and expertly pushing back Moscow's troops. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1989 EAST GERMANY LEADER OUSTED



The Communist leader of East Germany, Erich Honecker, has been forced to step down as leader of the country.

After 18 years in power he will be replaced by Egon Krenz, currently the head of internal and external security for the Politburo.

The official reason for his departure is said to be "ill health" but failure to deal with the tide of discontentment sweeping the country and the party is thought to be the real reason.

Up to 120,000 people marched in Leipzig on Monday to protest against a lack of political reforms and thousands of people are continuing to leave the country in search of better opportunities.

The recent visit of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev is also being seen as a contributing factor to the downfall of Mr Honecker.

The Soviet leader was highly critical of the East German leadership saying there was a need for people to feel involved with their country and to have their opinions taken seriously.

The placement of Mr Krenz is being seen by the opposition as a change of tactics rather than a change of direction.

The banned opposition movement New Forum said: "Krenz's appointment shows the Communist party has no intention of sharing power. Reform under him is unlikely."

Mr Krenz, who at 55 is the youngest member of the Politburo, has been groomed to take over for more than a decade by Mr Honecker.

The news has so far received mixed reactions.

Student Steffi Muller, referring to the official announcement that "health reasons" were the cause for the departure said: "They were really referring to the health of the country - we were dying on our feet under Honecker."

Rainer Eppelmann, an East Berlin vicar said: "Krenz must show that he has the will to change things, and not only cosmetically."

Mr Honecker was expected to retire next year, following the country's 40th anniversary celebrations.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

In November 1989, in a bid to bolster the political regime, the Berlin Wall, set up under the personal supervision of Erich Honecker, was torn down on the orders of Egon Krenz.

It was not enough to stop people leaving East Germany and on 3 October 1990 the two Germanys merged to form a new united country.

A new administration took over in the reunified Germany, led by Helmut Kohl. In 1990 Mr Honecker was charged with high treason, abuses of power and corruption. Proceedings against him were suspended, due to his ill health, and he was allowed to go into exile in Chile where he died in 1994.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

A challenge reorients you. This Full Moon in your sign illuminates new personal directions. Expand boundaries over the next two weeks. Develop an inspiring possibility.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Review priorities privately. This Full Moon illuminates a dawning two-week introspective phase. Balance old responsibilities with new. Process transitions.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

One social door closes and another opens under this Full Moon. Adapt with community and team changes over two weeks. Share appreciation and salutations.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Make professional changes under this Full Moon. Redirect efforts over the next two weeks toward your talents, passions and purpose.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Your exploration changes. The Full Moon illuminates a fork in the road. Experiment with new concepts over two weeks. Adapt for shifting conditions.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Collaborate for financial growth over the next two weeks following tonight's Aries Full Moon. Shift directions for changing conditions. Deepen bonds by pulling together.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Make adjustments together. Collaborate for shared commitments around changes over two weeks following this Full Moon. Adapt for solutions.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Begin another physical health, work and fitness phase. Adapt practices for changing conditions over the next two weeks illuminated by today's Aries Full Moon.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Express your heart, imagination and artistry. This Full Moon shines on a transition. Adapt directions with a romance, passion or creative endeavor. Shift perspectives.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Make repairs. Renovate, remodel and tend your garden. Adapt with domestic changes over two weeks. Nurture your home and family with this Full Moon phase.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Start another chapter. A two-week Full Moon phase highlights communications, connection and intellectual discovery. Adapt around challenges. Keep channels open.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Make a shift around income and finances. Discover profitable opportunities in new directions under this Aries Full Moon. Redirect attention toward fresh potential.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

EASY

		2		7	
1	9	4		6	
	6				5
9			4		8
	7			1	
5		8			4
2				8	
	7		5	1	9
9		7			

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

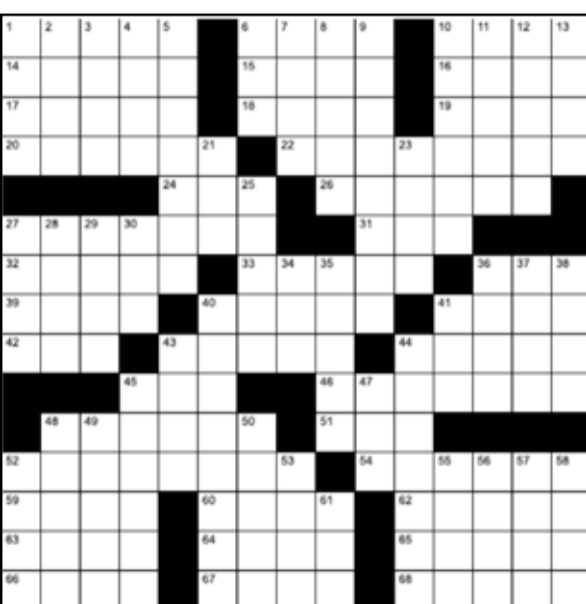
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	14	18	rain
Changchun	3	14	rain
Chengdu	17	26	rain
Chongqing	17	26	fine
Fuzhou	23	33	cloudy
Guangzhou	24	30	showers
Guiyang	15	21	showers
Haikou	24	29	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	20	29	rain
Harbin	7	8	fine
Hefei	18	25	cloudy
Nanjing	20	26	thunderstorms
Shanghai	22	30	rain
Taipei	24	29	cloudy
Wuhan	20	27	cloudy
Hong Kong	26	29	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-2	7	overcast
Frankfurt	13	18	cloudy
Paris	11	16	cloudy
London	12	16	cloudy
New York	10	21	fine

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Cut at an angle; 6- Run into; 10- Damon of "Good Will Hunting"; 14- Cheri of "Saturday Night Live"; 15- Hamburg's river; 16- "The Time Machine" people; 17- ___ a million; 18- Revenuers, for short; 19- Elderly, matured; 20- Package; 22- Commonplace; 24- Guys; 26- Bank employee; 27- Violent whirlwind; 31- Negative vote; 32- Rice unit; 33- Actor Keach; 36- Henri's here; 39- "Bus Stop" playwright; 40- Daybook; 41- Tenn. neighbor; 42- Enemy; 43- ___ cotta; 44- ___ evil...; 45- Black gold; 46- Stupid; 48- Like some rebates; 51- Grassland; 52- Tramway vehicle; 54- River in N South America; 59- Let ___; 60- Alamo rival; 62- Take the honey and run; 63- Recipe direction; 64- Story; 65- Trig functions; 66- Summer shirts; 67- Model Macpherson; 68- Perfect places;

DOWN 1- Betty of cartoons; 2- Sicilian volcano; 3- Swerve; 4- Clapton of rock; 5- Person who repairs telephone wires; 6- Assembled; 7- Red Muppet; 8- Movie critic Roger; 9- Inclination; 10- Humbly; 11- Aquarium buildup; 12- ___ is human...; 13- Neat; 21- Spearheaded; 23- Now ___ me down to sleep...; 25- Polite refusal; 27- End-of-workweek shout; 28- Yes ___?; 29- Fury; 30- Never, to Nietzsche; 34- Cigarette ingredient; 35- Thin as ___; 36- "Rhyme Pays" rapper; 37- Child's plea; 38- Camaro model; 40- Fragile; 41- Prefix with classical; 43- Roofing item; 44- Like some cats; 45- Edmonton team; 47- Narc's employer; 48- Dull finish; 49- "Steal This Book" author Hoffman; 50- Maritime; 52- Prehistoric sepulchral tomb; 53- Small stream; 55- Put ___ on it; 56- Area; 57- Not closed; 58- Capone's nemesis; 61- Go out with;



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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DRIVE IN

IS THE KILLER BACHELOR ONE OR TWO? ANNA KENDRICK'S CHILLING 'WOMAN OF THE HOUR'

JAKE COYLE,
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

IN Anna Kendrick's "Woman of the Hour," a chilling, based-on-a-true-story drama about when a 1970s serial killer appeared on an episode of "The Dating Game," one of the most telling images isn't a grisly murder scene (though there are those). It's Pete Holmes' face.

Kendrick, making her directorial debut, stars as an aspiring actor named Cheryl Bradshaw who ultimately winds up a contestant on that particular "Dating Game" episode. Early in the film, she's venting about her audition frustrations with a neighbor (Holmes) over drinks. After he makes an awkward pass, she recoils and he sits heavily, staring forward in disappointment.

The tension of those encounters, and how women are forced to handle, and suffer, the bruised egos of men, fuels "Woman of the Hour," a sometimes awkwardly plotted but consistently insightful thriller about the anxiety of the female experience and the grim game of constantly weighing the threat of potential danger in men.



Tony Hale and Anna Kendrick in a scene from "Woman of the Hour" (Netflix)

AP PHOTO

The film begins streaming Friday on Netflix.

Kendrick, working from a script by Ian McDonald, opens "Woman of the Hour" with a scene in the remote foothills of Wyoming. There, Rodney Alcalá (Daniel Zovatto) is playfully photographing a young woman (Kelley Jakle) but soon has his hands around her throat.

Though the film then shifts primarily to Cheryl taping "The Dating Game," "Woman of the Hour" is interspersed with similarly gruesome encounters between Alcalá and women. They follow a similar pattern. He's charming and even sensitive, but turns vio-

lent at the first sign of rejection.

"Woman of the Hour" isn't your standard true crime dramatization. The perspective of Alcalá, who was convicted in 1980 of killing seven women and girls and died on death row in 2021, isn't the one that matters here. It's the women he targeted.

Kendrick's movie might have been a better, more suspenseful film if it could have stayed in one timeline and teased all of the drama out of the "Dating Game" taping. But in unmasking Alcalá from the start, "Woman of the Hour" becomes more about the horror of a killer who thrived out

in the open, even on national television. We watch in dread at just how easily he blends in next to bachelor one and bachelor two — and even seems like the most appealing of the bunch.

When Cheryl is thrust into the showbiz swirl of "The Dating Game," all of the sexist remarks and misogynistic underpinnings of the show appear only more sinister given Alcalá's presence. The host, a fictionalized Jim Lange named Ed Burke, is played with expert, flippant sleaze by Tony Hale. Kendrick keeps the camera on Cheryl's face in the makeup chair while Ed, just before showtime, tells her not to act too smart. "I just need you to laugh and smile over and over," he says.

Plenty more sexism is baked into the show. (One of Cheryl's cue cards reads: "My favorite hobby is kissing.") The juxtaposition of a serial killer of women with Hollywood misogyny adds a potent layer. (Kendrick has said an audition exchange early in the film about doing on-camera nudity is taken verbatim from her own experience as a young actor.) That's particularly true when an audience member, Laura (Nico-

lette Robinson), recognizes Alcalá as the man who killed her friend. Her attempts to warn producers are met predictably.

Though Zovatto's performance is compellingly unsettling without being over-the-top, the dark, disturbed nature of Alcalá is too much for "Woman of the Hour" to reckon with. This was a killer whose path of heinous violence included the rape and near-murder of an 8-year-old girl and the killing of a 12-year-old biking home from ballet class. The years of police and judicial failure that allowed Alcalá to avoid imprisonment for so long are only hinted at here.

"Woman of the Hour" will surely send many looking up this stranger-than-fiction story. But Kendrick's achievement is in capturing, from a woman's point of view, just how hard it can be to pick a serial killer out of an all-male line-up.

"Woman of the Hour," a Netflix release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for language, violent content, some drug use and a sexual reference. Running time: 94 minutes. ★★☆☆

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

tTUNES

Dua Saleh's debut, 'I Should Call Them' is arty, experimental pop

THE Sudanese-American actor/artist Dua Saleh, best known for their work as Cal Bowman on Netflix's "Sex Education," mesmerizes within the first few seconds of their experimental debut album, "I Should Call Them."

The opening track "Chi Girl" lays the foundation for the rest of Saleh's infectious project. A haunting string arrangement echos, melting into the background of Saleh's ethereal vocals. Then, a transition: electronic percussion introduces a tale of desire.

"Baby going down/Now I'm drunk off of your touch," Saleh sings in a laidback falsetto. "I throw it down/Looking down when we downtown/If it ain't love, then what's up?"

An intoxicating blend of indie pop and electronica bleeds effortlessly in "Want" — a track that parallels the moody, sensuality of Saleh's sonic contemporaries, like Amaarae or Majid Jordan. But Saleh avoids being derivative by infusing elements of rock, R&B, and rap — offering their unique edge to familiar sounds.

On "I Should Call Them," Saleh's avant-pop doesn't play it safe, using complex instrumentation and poetic lyricism worthy of repeat listens.

Even though they are best known as an actor, Saleh has been releasing music since 2017, garnering attention in certain sections of the internet for their inventive rap and pop tracks, "Sugar Mama" and "Macro dosing." Even then, they weren't afraid to take risks. And on this genre-fluid album, they've managed to sharpen their craft.

Tracks like "Time & Time Again," featuring Indian R&B artist Sid Sriram, find Saleh effortlessly stepping into alt-R&B, with a sexy-and-slow blend of strings and percussion, amplified by Sriram and Saleh's breathy harmonies.

"Bo Peep" blends elements of rap, electronica and Latin instruments, genre-agnostic production that allows their vocal range to shine.

Thematically, it moves from sweet and suggestive to laidback bravado. Saleh raps, "Thinking 'bout her body got me swimmin' she the truth/I ain't had to think about the dip into the pool."

The album wraps with the chaotic punk of "2excited" — a seductive closure with saxophone and snapping. It is the final stop on the emotional rollercoaster, and an ideal reminder that this debut album is full of surprises. What most new artists are afraid to attempt, Saleh runs toward.

LESLIE AMBRIZ, MDT/AP



TASTE OF EDESIA

Hennessy with Huaiyang Cuisine

IRENE SAM, MDT

PROUDLY showcasing the exceptional craftsmanship of artist Jean-Michel Othoniel, Hennessy collaborated with Sands Lifestyle to host an exclusive Hennessy Tasting Dinner for esteemed VIP guests at The Londoner Macao. This exquisite event featured a bespoke menu in partnership with Michelin Two-Starred **Huaiyang Garden**, allowing guests to savour the essence of Huaiyang cuisine through innovative culinary techniques. Highlights included Braised Pork Belly with Black Truffle in Soya and Braised Hokkaido Sea Cucumber with Shrimp Roe, expertly paired with a selection of classic Hennessy Cognacs.

The Hennessy X.O Masterpiece showcases a Baccarat crystal decanter adorned with multi-fa-

cets, embodying Othoniel's love for light and reflections. Encased in hand-carved oak wood, reminiscent of Hennessy's iconic barrels, the decanter is protected like a precious stone. Meanwhile, the Hennessy X.O Limited Edition presents the decanter as if it is a vibrant ruby red gem encased in a golden metal structure, with intricate angles and facets which catch and reflect light. It has a unique opening feature that allows for bottle replacement or refilling, in alignment with Hennessy's sustainability commitments.

Laurent Boillot, Hennessy's CEO, underlines "Working with esteemed artists, designers, and architects worldwide is an integral part of Maison's identity and history. It reaffirms our dedication to creativity and craftsmanship. Our collaborating with Jean-Michel Othoniel elevates

our X.O collection, infusing it with his masterful use of light, color, and crystal." In closing, Jean-Michel Othoniel reflects, "Through this collaboration, we've created two distinct limited-edition carafes, each a testament to the power of reimagining familiar objects with new meaning and beauty. Immersing myself in the artistry of barrel-making and cognac production was a profound experience, reinforcing my admiration for Hennessy's legacy of craftsmanship and dedication."

Hennessy X.O, the first Extra Old cognac, stands as a testament to the brand's unparalleled expertise in blending and aging fine spirits. Since its inception in 1870, Hennessy X.O has been celebrated for its complexity and depth of flavor. This iconic blend has become a symbol of sophistication and refinement, cherished by connoisseurs worldwide for its unparalleled quality and timeless elegance. In collaboration with Jean-Michel Othoniel, Hennessy X.O continues to push the boundaries of excellence, offering collectors and enthusiasts a unique sensory experience that transcends tradition and ignites the imagination.

AP PHOTO



"I Should Call Them" by Dua Saleh (Ghostly International)

OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

THRIVING BRICS ANSWER TO BLOC POLITICS

The expansion of BRICS grouping from five to 10 member countries has successfully pushed it onto the fast track of becoming a "Greater BRICS" cooperation mechanism. Riding the momentum of deepening Global South solidarity this year, countries from all over Asia and even beyond have applied to join the grouping, indicating the wide recognition of its more prominent role on the world stage and its growing international clout.

With the 16th BRICS summit, which is scheduled to be held in Kazan, Russia, from Oct 22 to 24, drawing near, a number of countries have expressed their desire to join the grouping, demonstrating the mechanism's growing appeal.

The upcoming summit in Kazan, themed "Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security", will be the first summit after BRICS' expansion from five to 10 members last year, when Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Iran and Ethiopia were admitted at the Johannesburg summit as new BRICS members, effective on Jan 1, although Saudi Arabia is yet to complete the formalities to become a full member.

On Monday, Sri Lankan Foreign Affairs Minister Vijitha Herath said his country is to place on record its request for membership of BRICS at the upcoming Kazan summit, citing the grouping as an effective partnership for mutually beneficial cooperation, peace and development, and inclusive multilateralism.

It joins Cuba, Syria, Malaysia, Thailand, Belarus and Pakistan in seeking membership of the grouping, as they have all applied to join it. Russia has already confirmed that along with the 10 members more than two dozen other countries that have applied for or are considering membership will participate in this year's summit. The high number of new applications suggests another expansion of the grouping may be underway.

There are some countries that are less than happy that BRICS should prove so appealing. Japan is one such country that has reportedly expressed concerns over Malaysia and Thailand applying to join BRICS.

Western countries, including Japan, should grasp the fact that the popularity and strong appeal of BRICS is because of the many injustices in the world order today that BRICS is viewed by countries of the Global South as having the potential to change. Exacerbating these in-built injustices in the global governance system, the Western countries have been sparing no effort to create divisions and confrontations among the countries of the Global South in pursuit of selfish gains.

The BRICS mechanism has thrived to become an increasingly important cooperation platform for countries of the Global South because of its spirit of openness, inclusiveness and emphasis on win-win cooperation. Rather than being a means for Beijing and Moscow to exploit some countries' resentment against the United States and its wealthy allies in service to their efforts to overcome the Western countries' endeavors to constrain their development, the still-expanding BRICS grouping is simply a natural manifestation of the dissatisfaction with and determination to challenge the structural advantages in the international system that enable the Western countries to enjoy unfair and exorbitant privileges.

But BRICS is not, as Western countries seek to portray, an assault on the global order. Instead, it is a means for the countries of the Global South to pursue measured and incremental changes in the global governance system to shape and build a just and equitable world. [Abridged]

JAPAN RECORDS TRADE DEFICIT ON WEAK YEN, SLOWING EXPORTS

Japan racked up a trade deficit of 294.3 billion yen (\$2 billion) in September, according to Finance Ministry data released yesterday, as exports fell to key destinations like China.

For the first half of the April to March fiscal year, Japan's trade deficit, or its imports subtracted from exports, was 3.1 trillion (\$21 billion), the preliminary report showed.

Japan's exports in September fell 1.7% from the same month a year earlier in the first such decline in 10 months. Imports grew 2.1% from the previous year, on the back of a weak yen, which inflates their value.

It was unclear if the drop, which was unexpected, reflected weaker demand in other major economies, since exports to other Asian countries rose. It also could be partly due to temporary disruptions like a recent typhoon.

But slowing global demand remains a long-term worry for export-dependent Japan.

The U.S. dollar has been trading at 149 yen Japanese yen levels recently, not far from its level a year ago but up from about 120 yen two years ago. Inflation and rising energy prices have also pushed up import costs.

THE BUZZ

AP FILE PHOTO



Yahya Sinwar, head of Hamas in Gaza

MIDDLE EAST

ISRAEL'S LOOKING INTO WHETHER HAMAS LEADER SINWAR WAS KILLED IN GAZA

THE Israeli military said yesterday it was looking into whether Hamas' top leader Yahya Sinwar was killed in a military operation in Gaza, while an Israeli air strike on a school sheltering displaced Palestinians killed at least 15 people, including five children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

The military did not give any details on the military operation.

The military said in a statement that three militants were killed during operations in Gaza, without elaborating. It said the identities of the three were so far not confirmed, but it was "checking the possibility" that one of the three was Sinwar.

Sinwar was one of the chief architects of Hamas' attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. He was chosen as the group's top leader following the assassination of Ismael Haniyeh in July in an apparent Israeli strike in the Iranian capital Tehran.

15 KILLED IN GAZA

Palestinian officials in Gaza reported at least 15 dead, including five children, after a strike on a school being used as a shelter, while Syria's military said an Israeli strike early yesterday wounded two ci-

vilians and damaged a military post.

Israel regularly targets military sites in Syria linked to Iran and to Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group and has escalated its campaign against Hezbollah in recent weeks, after a year of near-daily exchanges of cross-border fire.

Lebanon says more than 2,300 people have been killed in the past year and 77% of public schools are out of service, either due to their use as shelters or their location in areas directly affected by the war.

On Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas-led militants blew holes in Israel's security fence and stormed in, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting another 250. Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, who do not distinguish combatants from civilians. The war has destroyed large areas of Gaza and displaced about 90% of its population of 2.3 million people.

Israel's military says it has allowed 50 trucks of humanitarian aid into northern Gaza on Wednesday, after the United States warned it to boost aid efforts or risk losing weapons funding. The region has suffered heavy destruction and

has been completely encircled by Israeli forces for nearly a year.

PHILIPPINES EVACUATE WORKERS FROM LEBANON

The Philippine government has evacuated dozens of Filipino workers from Lebanon — including one who urged thousands of compatriots to leave the war-hit nation before it's too late.

The 45 Filipino workers and two children who arrived yesterday in Manila were a fraction of about 10,000 to 11,000 Filipinos, many of whom have refused to leave their jobs in Lebanon for their poverty-stricken homeland.

"I hope they would return home because it has become too dangerous there," Felicilda Aboc, a 56-year-old who has worked for 18 years as a house helper in Lebanon, told reporters at Manila's international airport. She recounted how a powerful blast two days ago shook the house where she worked.

The Philippine government has offered free chartered flights, cash and new livelihood training to encourage Filipinos in Lebanon to return home but has yet to issue a mandatory evacuation order. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Ukraine President Zelenskyy claimed that 10,000 North Korean soldiers are preparing to join Russian forces in Ukraine. He raised the stakes with his "victory plan," which includes NATO membership for Ukraine, during meetings with European Union and NATO leaders, warning of potential world war.

AP PHOTO



Australia will donate 49 M1A1 Abrams tanks to Ukraine, valued at AU\$245 million. Defense Minister Richard Marles announced the decision, reversing a previous stance, to support Ukraine's defense against Russia. The tanks will be replaced by next-generation M1A2 tanks in Australia.

AP PHOTO



England German coach Thomas Tuchel was appointed yesterday as the head coach of England's national football team. Despite initial skepticism from fans preferring an Englishman, Tuchel assured his commitment to the team, reflecting the increasing trend of international coaches in top national squads.

AP PHOTO



Mozambique's ruling party candidate, Daniel Chapo, leads in early election results. Opposition candidate Venancio Mondlane, running as an independent, has called for protests, accusing the government of election fraud. Frelimo has been in power since independence in 1975 and denies the claims.