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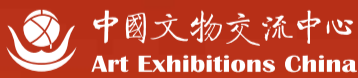
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China The Shandong Provincial High People's Court has upheld the convictions of Hu Fuji and Tang Lixia for child trafficking. Initially sentenced by a lower court, Hu received a death sentence with reprieve, and Tang was sentenced to life imprisonment. The case gained attention as it involved Guo Gangtang's son, who was abducted in 1997 and reunited with his family in 2021.

XINHUA



China The remnants of Typhoon Trami have caused significant flooding in Hainan, claiming three lives, according to China Daily. Authorities yesterday have raised emergency responses in affected areas, as more rain and rising water levels hinder mobility. Typhoon Kong-rey, expected to reach Taiwan soon, further heightens flood risks.

AP PHOTO



Philippines With Typhoon Kong-rey approaching, northern Philippines provinces brace for further damage. Still recovering from last week's deadly Tropical Storm Trami, evacuation efforts are underway for thousands already in crowded shelters. Forecasts warn of potential storm surges and severe flooding.

AP PHOTO



Philippine authorities yesterday arrested three individuals in connection with the abduction of an American in Zamboanga del Norte, believed to be alive despite being shot. Additional suspects remain at large as authorities continue their investigation into the kidnapping incident.



GEN Z REDEFINES AFFLUENCE

Generation Z, those born between 1997 and 2012, is emerging as a significant force in high-net-worth consumption, according to expert

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HERITAGE
UNESCO APPROVES NEW PROJECT FOR CALÇADA DO GAIO BUILDING

BASKETBALL
MACAU BEARS SLIPS IN FIRST HOME MATCH



ALL HALLOWS' EVE

THE ANCIENT IRISH GET FAR TOO MUCH CREDIT FOR HALLOWEEN

LISA BITEL

USC DORNSIFE COLLEGE OF LETTERS, ARTS AND SCIENCES

THIS time of year, I often run across articles proclaiming Halloween a modern form of the pagan Irish holiday of Samhain – pronounced SAW-en. But as a historian of Ireland and its medieval literature, I can tell you: Samhain is Irish. Halloween isn't.

The Irish often get credit – or blame – for the bonfires, pranks, witches, jack-o'-lanterns and beggars who wander from house to house, threatening tricks and soliciting treats.

The first professional 19th-century folklorists were the ones who created a through line from Samhain to Halloween. Oxford University's John Rhys and James Frazer of the University of Cambridge were keen to find the origins of their national cultures.

They observed lingering customs in rural areas of Britain and Ireland and searched medieval texts for evidence that these practices and beliefs had ancient pagan roots. They mixed stories of magic and paganism with harvest festivals and whispers of human sacrifice, and you can still find echoes of their outdated theories on websites.

But the Halloween we celebrate today has more to do with the English, a ninth-century pope and America's obsession with consumerism.

A CHANGING OF THE SEASONS

For two millennia, Samhain, the night of Oct. 31, has marked the turn from summer to winter

on the Irish calendar. It was one of four seasonal signposts in agricultural and pastoral societies.

After Samhain, people brought the animals inside as refuge from the long, cold nights of winter. Imbolc, which is on Feb. 1, marked the beginning of the lambing season, followed by spring planting. Beltaine signaled the start of mating season for humans and beasts alike on May 1, and Lughnasadh kicked off the harvest on Aug. 1.

But whatever the ancient Irish did on Oct. 31 is lost to scholars because there's almost no evidence of their pagan traditions except legends written by churchmen around 800 A.D., about 400 years after the Irish started turning Christian. Although they wrote about the adventures of their ancestors, churchmen could only imagine the pagan ways that had disappeared.

AN OTHERWORLD MORE UTOPIAN THAN TERRIFYING

These stories about the pagan past told of Irish kings holding annual weeklong feasts, markets and games at Samhain. The day ended early in northwestern Europe, before 5 p.m., and winter nights were long. After sundown, people went inside to eat, drink and listen to storytellers.

The stories did not link Samhain with death and horror. But they did treat Samhain as a night of magic, when the otherworld – what, in Irish, was known as the "sí" – opened its portals to mortals. One tale, "The Adventure of Nera," warned that if you went out on Samhain Eve,

you might meet dead men or warriors from the sí, or you might unknowingly wander into the otherworld.

When Nera went out on a dare, he met a thirsty corpse in search of drink and unwittingly followed warriors through a portal into the otherworld. But instead of ghosts and terror, Nera found love. He ended up marrying a "ban sídh" – pronounced "BAN-shee" – an otherworldly woman. But here's the medieval twist to the tale: He lived happily ever after in this otherworld with his family and farm.

The Irish otherworld was no hell, either. In medieval tales, it is a sunny place in perpetual spring. Everyone who lives there is beautiful, powerful, immortal and blond. They have good teeth. The rivers flow with mead and wine, and food appears on command. No sexual act is a sin. The houses sparkle with gems and precious metals. Even the horses are perfect.

CLAMPDOWN ON PAGAN CUSTOMS

The link between Oct. 31, ghosts and devils was really the pope's fault.

In 834, Pope Gregory IV decreed Nov. 1 the day for celebrating all Christian saints. In English, the feast day became All Hallows Day. The night before – Oct. 31 – became known as All Hallows Eve.

Some modern interpretations insist that Pope Gregory created All Hallows Day to quell pagan celebrations of Samhain. But Gregory knew nothing of ancient Irish seasonal holidays. In reality, he

probably did it because everyone celebrated All Saints on different days and, like other Popes, Gregory sought to consolidate and control the liturgical calendar.

In the later Middle Ages, All Hallows Eve emerged as a popular celebration of the saints. People went to church and prayed to the saints for favors and blessings. Afterward, they went home to feast. Then, on Nov. 2, they celebrated All Souls' Day by praying for the souls of their lost loved ones, hoping that prayers would help their dead relatives out of purgatory and into heaven.

But in the 16th century, the Protestant rulers of Britain and Ireland quashed saints' feast days, because praying to saints seemed idolatrous. Protestant ministers did their best to eliminate popular customs of the early November holidays, such as candle-lit processions and harvest bonfires.

In the minds of ministers, these customs smacked of heathenism.

A MISHMASH OF TRADITIONS

Our Halloween of costumed beggars and leering jack-o'-lanterns descends from this mess of traditions, storytelling and anti-quarianism.

Like our ancestors, we constantly remake our most important holidays to suit current culture.

Jack-o'-lanterns are neither ancient nor Irish. One of the earliest references is an 18th-century account of an eponymous Jack, who tricked the devil one too many times and was condemned to wander the world forever.

Supposedly, Jack, or whatever the hero was called, carved

a turnip and stuck a candle in it as his lantern. But the custom of carving turnips in early November probably originated in England with celebrations of All Saints' Day and another holiday, Guy Fawkes Day on Nov. 5, with its bonfires and fireworks, and it spread from there.

As for ancient bonfires, the Irish and Britons built them to celebrate Beltaine, but not Samhain – at least, not according to the medieval tales.

In 19th-century Ireland, All Hallows Eve was a time for communal suppers, games like bobbing for apples and celebrating the magic of courtship. For instance, girls tried to peel apples in one long peel; then they examined the peels to see what letters they resembled – the initials of their future husbands' names. Boys crept out of the gathering, despite warnings, to make mischief, taking off farm gates or stealing cabbages and hurling them at the neighbors' doors.

HALLOWEEN WITH AN AMERICAN SHEEN

Across the Atlantic, these customs first appeared in the mid-19th century, when the Irish, English and many other immigrant groups brought their holidays to the U.S.

In medieval Scotland, "guisers" were people who dressed in disguise and begged for "soul cakes" on All Souls Day. These guisers probably became the costumed children who threatened – and sometimes perpetrated – mischief unless given treats. Meanwhile, carved turnips became jack-o'-lanterns, since pumpkins were plentiful in North America – and easier to carve.

Like Christmas, Valentine's Day and Easter, Halloween eventually became a feast of consumerism. Companies mass-produced costumes, paper decorations and packaged candy. People in Britain and Ireland blamed the Americans for the spread of modern Halloween and its customs. British schools even tried to quash the holiday in the 1990s because of its disorderly and demonic connotations.

The only real remnant of Samhain in Halloween is the date. Nowadays, no one expects to stumble into a romance in the sí. Only those drawn to the ancient Celtic past sense the numinous opening of the otherworld at Samhain.

But who's to say which reality prevails when the portals swing open in the dark of Oct. 31? **MDT/THE CONVERSATION**

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Kai Fong meets PSP to address jaywalking 'blackspots'

RENATO MARQUES

THE Public Security Police Force (PSP) and the Macau General Union of Neighborhood Associations (Kai Fong) met yesterday to analyze several jaywalking "blackspots."

The meeting comes after several media reports noted the ineffective measures the police and the Transport Bureau (DSAT) have implemented to stop jaywalking in locations such as the Rua de Ferreira do Amaral in Central Macau.

At the meeting, Kai Fong called on the PSP to enforce stricter measures at the stop to prevent jaywalking, which has caused several accidents, as previously reported by the Times.

The meeting occurred on the same day the PSP released its latest report, which noted a spike in jaywalking offenses in the first nine months of this year.

According to PSP, 6,173 fines have been issued for jaywalking from January to September, an increase of 2.3 compared with the same period last year.

The PSP issued 5,273 jaywalking fines in 2023.

The figure for the first three quarters of this year is an average of 23 fines per day.

In January, when the PSP increased its focus on jaywalking, the offence accounted for an average of 57 fines per day.



The PSP report said jaywalking fines alone have raised about MOP1.85 million for the government's purse over the same period.

In September alone, the PSP issued 291 jaywalking fines, with additional data on traffic accidents noting there were 38 accidents involving pedestrians.

The PSP report said jaywalking

In total, the police detected over 52,000 road traffic violations last month, a decrease of 6.9% month-on-month, yielding some MOP14.62 million.

Most of the infractions (around 45,000) were related to illegal parking.

In the same month, the PSP found taxi drivers committed 61 offences, including 14 cases of refusing to provide transportation, and four cases of overcharging.

The PSP also recorded 13 cases of private vehicles providing illegal transport services.

Gov't mulls stiffer fines for unlicensed tour guides

VICTORIA CHAN

THE Legislative Assembly (AL) is reviewing the city's tour guide regulations proposing to significantly increase penalties for unlicensed tour guides.

The proposed changes aim to strengthen the oversight and professionalism of the tourism industry in Macau.

Under the current law, the fine for unlicensed tour guides ranges from MOP20,000 to MOP30,000.

The proposed amendments would raise the penalty to a range of MOP30,000 to



MOP50,000.

Additionally, licensed tour guides who fail to wear their permits while working could face

fines of MOP10,000 to MOP20,000, a significant increase from the previous MOP1,000 to MOP5,000 penalty.

The proposed law also introduces a code of conduct for licensed tour guides and says only those with permits from the Tourism Office can legally operate tours.

Furthermore, the bill requires tour operators to exclusively assign guides with the appropriate credentials.

At a recent committee meeting, some lawmakers expressed concerns that the fines for permit infringements were too harsh.

However, committee chairman Chan Chak Mo said tour guides represent Macau's tourism industry, making tour guide regulation a necessity to maintain the city's reputation.

The push for these regulatory changes comes amidst a tourism surge after the reopening of the

borders in January 2023.

In the first three quarters of this year, the city welcomed 1,497,000 tour group visitors, a 100% increase year-on-year.

Last week, a disturbing incident occurred where mainland tourists were falsely charged RMB200 entrance fees at The Venetian Macao by a tour group operator lacking proper permits.

This incident has further highlighted the need to crack down on unauthorized guiding practices and ensure only qualified, licensed tour guides are providing services.

The new law is intended to address these issues and reinforce the professionalism of Macau's tourism industry, ensuring visitors have a positive and authentic experience in the city.

SAM HOU FAI TO ACCEPT CE APPOINTMENT IN BEIJING

The Chief Executive-elect, Sam Hou Fai, will visit Beijing from today until Nov. 2 to receive the Order of the State Council confirming his official appointment as the sixth-term Chief Executive. Last week, China's State Council appointed Sam as the city's sixth-term Chief Executive. His tenure begins Dec. 20, following a decision made at a State Council meeting presided over by Premier Li Qiang. The State Council's appointment confirms the Oct. 13 election results, in which Sam secured the top post with 394 of 398 possible votes.

7,200 PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN Q3

During the third quarter (Q3), six private residential projects received occupation permits, adding a total of 266 units to the market, according to data from the Land and Urban Construction Bureau. Currently, there are 52 private residential projects either under construction or undergoing inspection, which will provide an additional 2,140 units. Additionally, 77 residential projects are in the design phase, contributing 5,113 future units. In terms of hospitality, four hotel projects are currently under construction, offering 2,928 rooms. Furthermore, there are eight more hotel projects in the design stage.

TRANSPORT, STORAGE SECTOR GROWS SIGNIFICANTLY IN 2023

A total of 3,073 establishments were in the Transport, Storage & Communications Sector, down 220 from the previous year. However, employment rose 2,100 to 21,079, the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) has reported. The sector's receipts reached MOP27.43 billion, increasing by 62.9%, while expenditures rose 43.7% to MOP21.8 billion, yielding a gross surplus of MOP5.62 billion, up 237%. Gross Value Added surged 77.1% to MOP10.9 billion. The Transport & Storage Sector saw 3,044 establishments, with receipts soaring 112.9% to MOP20.41 billion, driven by passenger and cargo transport growth, while air and sea transport receipts increased over 200%.

TOURISM DRIVES WATER CONSUMPTION UP 8% IN OCTOBER

VICTORIA CHAN

WATER consumption surged in October, rising 8% compared to the same period last year, according to Nacky Kuan, executive director of Macao Water.

Speaking to Radio Macau, Kuan said water usage had also risen 6% year-on-year from January through October.

The primary driver behind this growth was the commercial sector, with Kuan attributing the double-digit expansion to increased activity in the tourism industry.

As integrated resorts and hotels ramped up their water consumption, the commercial segment witnessed a significant uptick. In contrast, domestic water usage remained relatively flat compared to 2023 levels.

Last year, Macau's total annual water consumption climbed by



7.1%, reaching 89,164 cubic meters.

The commercial and domestic sectors accounted for the largest shares, at 45% and 42% respectively. Government use stood at 7%, while industry consumption made up 6%.

However, the customer base was predominantly domestic, with 87.8% of customers being households, compared to 11.3% for commercial and industrial users, and the remaining 0.9% being government accounts.

Despite this, the daily per capita consumption rose 5.4% to an average of 357.3 liters, though domestic per capita usage fell 5.9%, settling at 151.2 liters.

Kuan also discussed a recent press conference, where she tou-

ched on a drama filmed in both Macau and mainland China that focused on water supply.

Additionally, she mentioned the extension of the financial support plan for repairing water facilities in low-rise buildings until March 31, 2025. According to Kuan, around 600 eligible buildings have applied for this program so far, with 80% having completed the necessary maintenance work.

Separately, Macao Water announced the extension of the Subsidy Program for Repairing Service Connections of Low-Rise Buildings until next March.

This program, launched in 2021, encourages building owners to maintain common water systems.

The company estimates approximately 800 buildings still need repairs to their water supply systems.

So far, 80% of the applications under this program have been completed, though new applicants are still signing up.

The extension of the program will provide the remaining buildings with the opportunity to access subsidies for critical water pipe maintenance.

Forum on sustainable finance and ESG promotes global cooperation

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macau Institute for Corporate Social Responsibility in Greater China (MICSRCG), together with the Macao University of Tourism have co-organized a forum on sustainable finance and environmental, social and governance (ESG).

The forum, held last weekend, debated the importance of sustainable finance in the current global environment and called for concerted efforts to achieve sustainable development goals.

During her opening remarks, the president of the MICSRCG, Sandy Sio, said last year's forum explored nature-related financial and reporting frameworks.

Sio said that under the "1+4" diversification development strategy, Macau's ecological conservation efforts deserve more attention.

She also noted that as the various industries have been recovering rapidly, the city



Sandy Sio, president of the MICSRCG

confronts the dual challenges of increased human traffic and environmental pressure.

She said sustainable finance and ESG are not only catalysts for growth and value creation but also key to protecting biodiversity and driving climate action.

During the forum, professor Jill Atkins explored agendas on biodiversity protection and nature restoration, emphasizing the accounting, accountability, and finance for rewilding and de-extinction, and proposed the necessity of the de-

velopment of new forms of finance, such as nature fintech and biodiversity credits.

Martina Macpherson introduced an innovative financing method, namely the "extinction bond," and discussed species extinction accounting mechanisms and financial solutions through specific case studies, aiming to protect species and enhance biodiversity while maintaining financial market stability.

Additionally, Atkins, Macpherson and other panelists, including professor Carlos Noronha, Pedro Theotónio,

and professor Morris Liu, discussed the latest topics in sustainable finance and ESG.

Noronha, from the University of Macau, highlighted the profound impact of these topics in the fields of sustainability, accounting, finance, corporate social responsibility, and corporate governance and looked forward to participants gaining insights and further exploring related topics in sustainable finance.

*The Macau Daily Times was a collaborating partner of the event.

IAS RULES OUT ESTABLISHING A CANTEEN FOR SENIORS

VICTORIA CHAN

THE Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) has ruled out establishing a dedicated canteen for the elderly, citing the existing network of support services.

In a reply to lawmaker Che Sai Wang, the IAS said the "network of caring services for the elderly" currently serves over 4,800 registered elderly individuals, a 15% increase from the previous year.

This network organizes volunteer teams to provide personalized support through phone calls, home visits, and community activities, targeting isolated elderly people and couples.

Regarding medical services, the IAS highlighted the crucial role of community health centers in delivering comprehensive care, including regular check-ups and mental health consultations.

Medical social workers also play a key part, formulating personalized support plans and providing emotional, medical, and referral services to elderly residents and their families.

The IAS emphasized the importance of family doctors in conducting regular

screenings to assess the physical, mental, and social well-being of at-risk seniors.

These individuals are then referred to medical social workers, who create tailored support plans and offer ongoing assistance.

Furthermore, the IAS and the Health Services have established a cooperation mechanism to identify and assess elderly patients upon hospital discharge, ensuring the provision of appropriate monitoring and support to reduce the risk of complications at home.

IAS president Wilson Hon Wai has acknowledged efforts to identify and integrate "hidden" elderly, particularly those living alone in older buildings, through collaboration with private institutions, referrals from neighbors, and targeted outreach in areas with higher concentrations of isolated elderly residents.

While the government has decided against a dedicated elderly canteen, the expansion of the community support network and the integration of comprehensive medical services suggest a proactive approach to addressing the needs of Macau's growing elderly population.

Changing luxury markets: How Gen Z is redefining affluence

NADIA SHAW

AS the luxury market evolves, a new generation of consumers is reshaping its landscape.

Generation Z (Gen Z), those born between 1997 and 2012, is emerging as a significant force in high-net-worth consumption.

This demographic shift is not merely about increased spending; it involves a fundamental transformation in how luxury is perceived and experienced.

Luca Deplano, director of Agility Research and Strategy, yesterday addressed these changes in a talk hosted by the France Macau Chamber of Commerce (FMCC), emphasizing the rise of "quiet luxury."

This trend reflects a preference for understated displays of wealth and a focus on experiences rather than material possessions.

As Deplano points out, understanding the mindset of affluent consumers - especially in markets like China - is crucial for brands aiming to thrive in this new environment.

Deplano's insights reveal China's affluent market is experiencing substantial growth.

Despite recovering to pre-pandemic spending levels - 117% compared to 2019 - China still trails behind other regions like the U.S., which saw a 367% increase.

This discrepancy highlights a nuanced recovery, with ultra-high-net-worth individuals leading the charge in luxury spending globally.

"Nowadays, most brands have some sort of presence in China,



Luca Deplano (right), director of Agility Research and Strategy, and Rutger Verschuren, FMCC president

but the Chinese consumer still enjoys traveling and shopping for luxury much more than other consumer," said Deplano.

"Where do they go to purchase luxury goods? For the affluent Chinese, Hong Kong remains the most important destination for luxury shopping, followed by Europe," said Deplano, adding, "Sanya [Hainan Island] ranked 4th and Macau 16th."

Recent studies conducted with affluent Chinese consumers indicate a shift in purchasing motivations.

Initially optimistic post-Covid-19, many people of affluence now express concerns about disposable income and property investments.

The focus has shifted from displaying status to enhancing perso-

nal quality of life and enjoyment. This change underscores a broader trend where experiences are increasingly valued over traditional luxury goods.

"Fine dining and alcohol are big categories on the rise in China too, and we see a clear trend where tier one and tier two cities are holding up better than tier three cities. And this is a global phenomenon," said Deplano.

Looking to 2025, affluent Chinese consumers are adopting a more cautious outlook regarding economic well-being.

Travel remains important, but there is a marked preference for domestic trips over international travel.

Data suggests affluent individuals are more inclined to spend on travel-related categories such

as accommodation and airline tickets rather than on traditional luxury products.

Deplano's presentation also highlighted differences in consumer behavior based on city tiers in China.

Tier one and two cities exhibit stronger economic prospects compared to tier three cities, indicating wealth accumulation and spending habits vary significantly across regions.

"Tier one cities are becoming wealthier compared to second tier and third tier cities. And that is the same also in China."

CONTRASTING CONSUMER SEGMENTS

Deplano distinguishes between affluent consumers and high-net-worth individuals.

The latter group tends to engage in exclusive activities such as country club memberships and fine dining experiences, while affluent individuals favor more accessible leisure activities. This differentiation is essential for brands aiming to target specific segments in the luxury market effectively.

The rise of Gen Z as a consumer group also brings new expectations for brands.

They prioritize authenticity, sustainability and personalized experiences over mere product ownership.

A recent survey indicated Gen Z consumers made 63% of luxury purchases, valuing how a product makes them feel rather than its price tag.

THE FUTURE OF LUXURY CONSUMPTION

As brands adapt to these changing dynamics, they must consider the implications of social media and digital engagement.

With Gen Z heavily influenced by platforms like TikTok, brands need to create immersive and interactive shopping experiences that resonate with this digital-native audience.

The growing interest in local Chinese luxury brands among younger generations reflects a desire for authenticity and cultural relevance.

While international brands still hold sway, local offerings are gaining traction, particularly in categories like skincare and high-end fashion.

UNESCO approves new project for Calçada do Gaio building

VICTORIA CHAN

THE president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau, Deland Leong, has said the addition of a rooftop access structure on the high-rise project at Calçada do Gaio 18-20 will not exceed the world heritage height limit and has been approved by UNESCO.

In a written inquiry, lawmaker Ron Lam had expressed concerns from residents that the addition of such rooftop structures on high-rise developments could potentially

surpass the world heritage height restriction.

However, in an interview yesterday, Leong clarified that during the project's planning process, the authorities have maintained communications with the State Administration of Cultural Heritage and invited professional organizations to conduct World Heritage impact assessments on the cultural heritage site.

Leong said the authorities have submitted detailed drawings of the building, including the rooftop access structure

and equipment room, to relevant organizations and the UNESCO World Heritage Center.

She said UNESCO is aware of the rooftop structure's height and has agreed the project will adhere to the existing 19-story height of 81.32 meters above sea level, without any additional construction exceeding the original height.

This announcement comes as a relief to the local Concern Group for the Protection of the Guia Lighthouse, which had previously voiced con-

cerns about the ongoing reconstruction of the building and advocated for a reduction in its height.

The group had also unsuccessfully requested access to the government's report on the project and for UNESCO to send a team of experts to assess the situation.

With UNESCO's approval of the rooftop access structure, the high-rise project at Calçada do Gaio 18-20 can now proceed within the established world heritage height limits, addressing the concerns raised.

RENATO MARQUES





ECONOMY

FITCH FORECASTS ECONOMIC RESURGENCE UNTIL 2025

LYNZY VALLES

MACAU is experiencing a notable economic resurgence, bolstered by its robust

public and external finances. Fitch Ratings Inc. has projected solid economic expansion in 2024 and 2025, projecting the city's gross domestic

product (GDP) to grow 15% year-on-year for this year, followed by an 8% increase in 2025. This optimistic outlook is

largely fueled by broader economic growth and new policies aimed at stimulating visitor numbers.

"This will be supported by the ongoing revival in the gaming tourism sector, expanded handling capacity and favorable policy initiatives," said analysts George Xu and Jeremy Zook.

Recent policy updates have introduced new visa rules that allow eligible mainland travelers to participate in multiple group tours between Macau and Hengqin.

Moreover, mainland residents holding business visas can now enjoy extended stays of up to 14 days, effectively doubling the previous one-week limit.

These changes are expected to significantly enhance accessibility for tourists and contribute to the region's economic revival, according to the institution.

Meanwhile, the gaming sector is showing signs of robust recovery, with gross gaming revenue soaring 31% year-on-year to approximately MOP170 billion in the first nine months of 2024.

This figure represents a return to 77% of pre-pandemic levels.

Particularly during the re-

cent week-long National Day holidays, Macau saw a surge in tourist arrivals, surpassing daily averages recorded in the same period of 2019.

The positive trends extend to the job market as well.

Employment numbers in the recreational, cultural, gaming, and other service sectors have rebounded to 85% of 2019 levels by the first half of 2024.

The institution has reaffirmed Macau's long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating (IDR) at 'AA' with a stable outlook.

In a memo released earlier this week, Fitch analysts said Macau's ratings reflect its exceptionally strong public and external finances, along with a commitment to fiscal prudence, even during periods of economic fluctuation and gaming revenue challenges.

"Strong year-to-date gaming tax revenue aligns with our projection that the budget will revert to a surplus of 3.8% in 2024," the analysts said.

Additionally, fiscal reserves have shown significant recovery, increasing from MOP558 billion at the end of 2022 to over MOP600 billion by the end of the first half of 2024. This amount is equivalent to 6.5 times the projected expenditure.

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C&C RECEIVED THE 1ST SILVER
"DEIGNAN AWARD"
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IN MACAU (2023)



TRADE

The EU is imposing duties on electric vehicles from China after talks fail

LORNE COOK, BRUSSELS

THE European Union is imposing duties on imports of electric vehicles from China starting yesterday after talks between Brussels and Beijing failed to find an amicable solution to their trade dispute.

Electric vehicles have become a major flashpoint in a broader trade dispute over the influence of Chinese government subsidies on European markets and Beijing's burgeoning exports of green technology to the bloc.

"By adopting these proportionate and targeted measures after a rigorous investigation, we're standing up for fair market practices and for the European industrial base," European Commission Executive Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis said on Tuesday.

"In parallel, we remain open to a possible alternative solution that would be effective in addressing the problems identified and (World Trade Organization)-compatible," he added. The duties would stay in force for five years, unless an amicable solution is found.

According to the commission, which manages trade disputes on behalf of the 27 EU member countries, sales of Chinese-built



electric cars jumped from 3.9% of the EV market in 2020 to 25% by September 2023, in part by unfairly undercutting EU industry prices.

The duties on Chinese manufacturers will be 17% on cars made by BYD, 18.8% on those from Geely and 35.3% for vehicles exported by China's state-owned SAIC. Geely has brands including Polestar and Sweden's Volvo, while SAIC owns Britain's MG, one of Europe's bestselling EV brands.

Other EV manufacturers in China, including Western companies such as Volkswagen and BMW, would be subject to duties of 20.7%. The commission has an "individually calculated" rate for Tesla of 7.8%.

China's Commerce Ministry objected to the measures as protectionist and unfair.

"China does not agree with it and will not accept the ruling" the ministry's statement said. "China will continue to take all necessary

measures to resolutely safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies."

The EU's retaliatory duties have run into opposition in Germany, which has Europe's biggest economy and is home to major automakers.

The head of Germany's auto industry association, VDA, said the imposition of the tariffs is "a setback for free global trade and so for prosperity, the preservation of jobs and Europe's growth." Hil-

degard Müller said the move increases the risk of a far-reaching trade conflict.

"The industry is not naive in dealing with China, but the challenges must be resolved in dialogue," Müller said in a statement.

The measures were published in the bloc's legal Official Journal late Tuesday, meaning duties enter into force as of midnight, said EU spokeswoman Arianna Podesta.

The commission says China boosted its EU market share with the help of subsidies across the production chain. These ranged from cheap land for factories provided by local governments, to cut-price supplies of lithium and batteries from state-owned enterprises, to tax breaks and easy financing from state-controlled banks.

The rapid growth in China's market share has sparked concern in the EU that Chinese cars will eventually threaten the EU's ability to produce its own green technology to combat climate change. Business groups and unions also fear that the jobs of 2.5 million auto industry workers could be put in jeopardy, as well those of 10.3 million more people whose employment depends indirectly on EV production. **MDT/AP**

SPACE

New crew has arrived at space station in sign of growing influence in space field

NG HAN GUAN, JIUQUAN

A Chinese space ship carrying a three-person crew docked with its orbiting space station Tuesday as the country seeks to expand its exploration of outer space in competition with the United States, even as it looks for cooperation from other nations.

The team of two men and one woman will replace the astronauts who have lived on the Tiangong space station for the last six months, conducting a variety of experiments and maintaining the structure.

They are expected to stay until April or May of next year. The new mission

commander, Cai Xuzhe, went to space in the Shenzhou-14 mission in 2022, while the other two, Song Lingdong and Wang Haoze, are first-time space travelers. Song and Wang were born in the 1990s and are graduates of the third wave of Chinese astronaut recruitment, having undergone a rigorous testing and training process taking years.

Early yesterday morning, China declared the launch and entry into outer space a "complete success."

The Shenzhou-19 spaceship carrying the trio blasted off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China at

4:27 a.m. local time atop a Long March-2F rocket, the backbone of China's crewed space missions.

"The crew condition is good and the launch has been successful," the state broadcaster China Central Television announced.

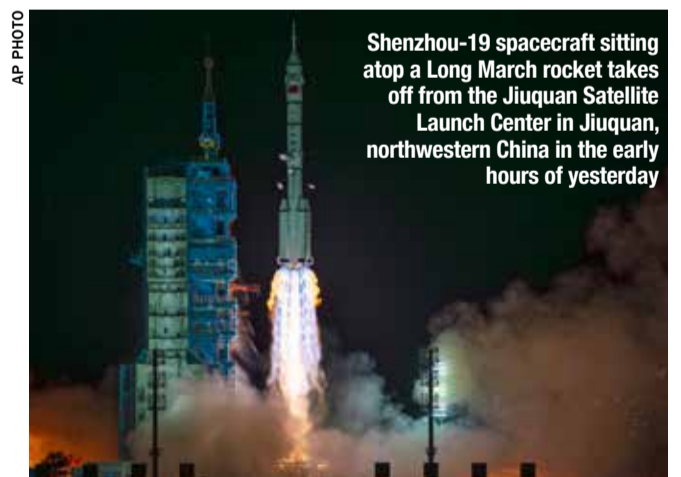
China built its own space station after being excluded from the International Space Station, mainly because of U.S. concerns over the People's Liberation Army, the Chinese Communist Party's military arm's overall control over the space program. China's moon program is part of a growing rivalry with the U.S. and others, including Japan and India.

The new team will re-

place the astronauts who have lived on the Tiangong space station for the last six months and will overlap with them for a couple of days or more. They are expected to stay until April or May of next year.

The new mission commander, Cai Xuzhe, went to space in the Shenzhou-14 mission in 2022, while the other two, Song Lingdong and Wang Haoze, are first-time space travelers, born in the 1990s.

Song was an air force pilot and Wang an engineer with the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation. Wang will be the crew's payload specialist and the third Chinese woman aboard a



Shenzhou-19 spacecraft sitting atop a Long March rocket takes off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Jiuquan, northwestern China in the early hours of yesterday

crewed mission.

Besides putting a space station into orbit, the Chinese space agency has landed an explorer on Mars.

It aims to put a person on the moon before 2030, which would make China the second nation after the United States to do so. It also plans to build a research station on the moon and has already transferred rock and soil samples from the moon in a first for any nation in decades, and placed a rover on the little-ex-

plored far side of the moon in a global first.

The U.S. still leads in space exploration and plans to land astronauts on the moon for the first time in more than 50 years, though NASA pushed the target date back to 2026 earlier this year.

The new Chinese crew will perform spacewalks and install new equipment to protect the station from space debris, some of which was created by China. **MDT/AP**

NORTH KOREA

TROOPS SENT TO RUSSIA MAY BE PLEASED TO BE THERE, EVEN AS THEY FACE FEROCIOUS FIGHTING

HYUNG-JIN KIM,
SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

THE thousands of young soldiers North Korea has sent to Russia, reportedly to help fight against Ukraine, are mostly elite special forces, but that hasn't stopped speculation they'll be slaughtered because they have no combat experience, no familiarity with the terrain and will likely be dropped onto the most ferocious battlefields.

That may be true, and soon. Observers say the troops are already arriving at the front. From the North Korean perspective, however, these soldiers might not be as miserable as outsiders think. They may, in fact, view their Russian tour with pride and as a rare chance to make good money, see a foreign country for the first time and win preferred treatment for their families back home, according to former North Korean soldiers.

"They are too young and won't understand exactly what it means. They'll just consider it an honor to be selected as the ones to go to Russia among the many North Korean soldiers," said Lee Woong-gil, a former member of the same special forces unit, the Storm Corps. He came to South Korea in 2007. "But I think most of them won't likely come back home alive."

Worries about North Korea's likely participation in the Russian-Ukraine war were highlighted this week when the Pentagon said North Korea has sent about 10,000 troops to Russia, and that they will likely fight against Ukraine "over the next several weeks."

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte said earlier this week that some North Korean military units were already in Russia's Kursk border region, where Russia has been struggling against a Ukraine incursion.

North Korea's troop deployment could mark a serious escalation of the almost three-year war. It caught many outside observers by surprise because North Korea has its own security headache, a festering standoff with the United States and South Korea over its nuclear program.

Large North Korean troop casualties would be a major political blow for the country's 40-year-old ruler, Kim Jong Un. But experts say Kim may see this as a way to get much nee-



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, center, meets soldiers who took part in a training in North Korea, March 13

ded foreign currency and security support from Russia in return for joining Russia's war against Ukraine.

"Kim Jong Un is taking a big gamble. If there are no large casualty numbers, he will get what he wants to some extent. But things will change a lot if many of his soldiers die in battle," said Ahn Chan-il, a former North Korean army first lieutenant who is now head of the World Institute for North Korean Studies think tank in Seoul.

The Storm Corps, also known as the 11th Corps, is one of Kim's top units. Its main missions would be infiltrating agents into South Korea, blowing up important facilities in the South and assassinating key figures in the event of war on the Korean Peninsula.

Lee, who served in the Storm Corps in 1998-2003, recalled that his unit received better food and supplies than other units, but many members still suffered from malnutrition and tuberculosis.

Despite a gradual economic recovery in North Korea over

the past 30 years, defectors say the average monthly wage for ordinary North Korean workers and soldiers is less than \$1.

They say many people engage in capitalist market activities to make a living because the country's state rationing system remains largely broken.

Russia is expected to pay all the costs related to the deployment of North Korean troops, including their wages, which observers estimate will be at least \$2,000 per month for each person. About 90% to

soldiers to volunteer for risky Russian tours, former soldiers say.

Ahn said North Korea will likely offer other incentives meant to elevate the social standings of soldiers, such as membership in the ruling Workers' Party and the right to move to Pyongyang, the country's showcase capital.

Kang Mi-Jin, a defector who runs a company analyzing North Korea's economy, said even family members of soldiers sent to Russia could be given benefits such as good houses or entrance to good universities.

Choi Jung-hoon, a former first lieutenant in North Korea's army, said serving on foreign soil will attract many soldiers who are eager to see other countries for the first time.

North Koreans are barred from accessing foreign news and need state approval to move from one province to another within the country.

North Korean construction, logging and other workers sent abroad to bring in foreign currency have often been cal-

led "slaves" by international human rights groups. But defectors testify that such overseas jobs are often better than staying in North Korea, and many used bribery and family connections to get them.

"North Korean soldiers would see going to Russia as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Ahn said.

Ahn and other observers say such views could change if the soldiers see colleagues dying in large numbers. They say many North Korean soldiers could surrender to Ukraine forces and ask for resettlement in South Korea.

North Korean soldiers have been trained on the Korean Peninsula's mountainous terrain and are not familiar with the largely flat plain battlefields in the Russian-Ukraine war. They also don't understand modern warfare, including drone use, because North Korea hasn't fought a big battle since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War, experts say.

"My heart ached," said Choi, now leader of an activist group in Seoul, when he saw a Ukraine video purportedly showing undersized North Korean soldiers believed to be in their late teens or early 20s.

"None would think they are going to Russia to die," Choi said. "But I think they're cannon fodder because they will be sent to the most dangerous sites and will surely be killed."

Leader Kim Jong Un may also be hoping that his troop offer will push Russia to share sophisticated and highly sensitive technology that he needs to perfect his nuclear-capable missiles. That transfer could depend on how long the war continues and how many more troops Kim will send.

Nam Sung-wook, a former director of a think tank run by South Korea's spy agency, said North Korea will likely get hundreds of millions of dollars because of the soldiers' wages. The soldiers will get direct experience of modern warfare but will likely die in large numbers, and Russia will be reluctant to hand over its high-tech missile technology, he said.

"North Korea will continue to hide its troop dispatches from its own people because the public will be agitated if they know their soldiers are being sent abroad to be killed," said Nam, who is now a professor at Korea University in South Korea. **MDT/AP**

"They are too young and won't understand exactly what it means. They'll just consider it an honor to be selected as the ones to go to Russia among the many North Korean soldiers"

LEE WOONG-GIL
FORMER MEMBER OF STORM CORPS

95% of their stipends will likely go to Kim's coffers, and the rest to the soldiers. This means one year of service in Russia would earn a North Korean soldier \$1,200 to \$2,400. That's big enough to prompt many young

JAPAN

A second high court rules that the ban on same-sex marriage is unconstitutional

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

AP PHOTO

A second Japanese high court ruled yesterday that the government's policy against same-sex marriage is unconstitutional, the latest in a series of decisions upholding plaintiffs' demands for marriage equality.

The Tokyo High Court called the ongoing ban "a groundless legal discrimination based on sexual orientation," saying it violates the constitutional guarantee of right to equality, as well as individuals' dignity and equality between sexes. It was a clearer statement than the 2022 lower court decision that described the situation as "an unconstitutional state."

The Sapporo High Court ruling in March said not allowing same-sex couples to marry and enjoy the same benefits as straight couples violates their fundamental right to equality and freedom of marriage. Wednesday's ruling is the seventh overall that found the ongoing ban to be unconstitutional or nearly so, against only one district court decision that found it constitutional. The rulings can still be appealed to the Supreme Court.

In yesterday's ruling, Presiding Judge Sonoe Taniguchi also wrote that the purpose of marriage is not only to produce offspring but also to ensure sta-



ble legal status for the partners, and that there is no rational reason to justify excluding same-sex couples. She said there is a shared international consensus against discriminating based on sexual orientation.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said yesterday's ruling has not been finalized and that his government will continue to watch other pending court cases.

Still, the winning streak has raised hopes among the LGB-

TQ+ community.

Plaintiffs cheered outside of the court Wednesday, while their supporters held banners carrying messages such as "Further advance toward marriage equality!" and "No more waiting for legal revision!"

Makiko Terahara, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, welcomed the ruling, calling it historic. She and her fellow lawyers in a statement demanded the government immediately take steps "to open the door for marriage

equality."

"I felt grateful to be alive when I heard the word 'unconstitutional' from the judge," said Yoko Ogawa, a plaintiff in her 60s. She said she worries about a lack of legal protection for her and her partner as they age, and that "I hope to see progress toward legalization as soon as possible."

Their main obstacle, Japan's conservative Liberal Democratic Party's ruling coalition, lost a parliamentary majori-

ty in Sunday's election and is likely to have to compromise on more liberal policies pushed by the opposition parties such as marriage equality, which is largely supported by the general public.

Japan is the only member of the Group of Seven industrialized countries that does not recognize same-sex marriage or provide any other form of legally binding protection for LGBTQ+ couples.

Six lawsuits on marriage equality have been filed at five regions across Japan since 2019. LGBTQ+ activists and their supporters have stepped up their efforts, and in 2023, the government adopted a law that is not legally binding that states discrimination is unacceptable.

Hundreds of municipalities have issued partnership certificates as a workaround for same-sex couples to lower their hurdles in renting apartments and facing other forms of discrimination, but it does not provide the same legal benefit as heterosexual couples, Wednesday's ruling said.

The court, however, rejected a request by the seven plaintiffs that the government pay them 1 million yen (about \$6,500) each in compensation for damages suffered under the current system that does not recognize them as legally married. **MDT/AP**

MALAYSIA

Court orders Najib to enter defense in his second graft trial linked to 1MDB scandal

MALAYSIA'S High Court yesterday ordered imprisoned former Prime Minister Najib Razak to enter a defense in his second corruption trial over the multibillion-dollar looting of the 1MDB state investment fund.

Najib set up the 1Malaysia Development Berhad state fund shortly after taking power in 2009 to promote economic development, but the fund amassed billions in debt. Investigators allege more than \$4.5 billion was stolen from the fund and laundered by his associates to finance

Hollywood films and extravagant purchases.

The prosecution established its case on four charges of abuse of power to obtain over \$700 million from the fund that went into Najib's bank accounts between 2011 and 2014, and 21 counts of money laundering involving the same amount, trial judge Collin Lawrence Sequerah said Wednesday.

He said evidence showed Najib had a vested interest in 1MDB, and his pivotal role in all relevant transactions that eventually plunged the fund



Malaysian former Prime Minister Najib Razak

into debt. Testimony by witnesses also contradicted Najib's claim that the funds in his bank accounts were a donation from the Saudi Arabia royal family, the judge said.

The court called on Najib to make his defense, with the trial set to resume Dec. 2. Calm in a blue suit throughout the proceedings, Najib, 71, told the court he would testify under oath.

Defense lawyer Mohamed Shafee Abdullah told reporters that Najib was disappointed with the court ruling.

"We are not giving up and we are going to fight this case," he added.

The 1MDB scandal upended Najib's government and he was defeated in the 2018 election. He faces a slew of legal cases and started serving time in 2022 after losing his final appeal in his first graft case linked to 1MDB.

Najib's current trial began in August 2019. It ties him directly to the scandal

and involved 50 witnesses testifying over more than 230 days of hearing.

On Oct. 24, Najib issued a rare apology for the scandal "under his watch" but reiterated his innocence.

Najib faces up to 20 years in prison for each count of abuse of power and up to five years for each of the money laundering charges. In addition, Najib still has a pending case involving a criminal breach of trust and another money laundering trial. His wife Rosmah Mansor and other senior government officials also face corruption charges. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



US Jobs report on eve of election will be among the most distorted in years

CHRISTOPHER RUGABER,
WASHINGTON

FIVE days before Election Day, the government will issue its final snapshot of hiring and unemployment in the United States after a presidential race in which voter perceptions of the economy have played a central role.

Yet last week's report will include some of the most distorted monthly employment figures in years, with job growth having been held down temporarily in October by hurricanes and worker strikes.

So just as voters, politicians and Federal Reserve officials are looking for a clear read on the economy, they instead will get a muddled one. The report arrives as Republican allies of Donald Trump, seeking to cast doubt on the economy's health, have sought to undercut confidence in the credibility of the monthly jobs reports.

Trump and his supporters have repeatedly attacked the Biden-Harris administration for the spike in inflation that peaked two years ago before steadily cooling. Despite healthy job growth, few layoffs and low unemployment, Trump has also charged that the United States is a "failing nation" and has vowed that his plan to implement sweeping tariffs on all imported goods would restore millions of manufacturing jobs.

Typically, the monthly jobs

data helps clarify how the economy is faring. But economists estimate that Hurricanes Helene and Milton, combined with the effects of the ongoing strike by Boeing machinists, will have reduced hiring last month by a significant number — roughly 60,000 to 100,000 jobs, most of them only temporarily.

All told, economists have estimated that last Friday's report will show that just 120,000 jobs were added in October, according to the data provider FactSet. That is a decent number, though less than half of September's unexpectedly robust 254,000 gain. The unemployment rate is expected to remain at a low 4.1%.

Once the impact of the hurricanes and strikes are considered, those figures would still point to a solid job market, one that has shown surprising durability, buoyed by healthy consumer spending, in the face of the Fed's high interest rates.

"This is a really incredibly resilient economy," said Jane Oates, a former Labor Department official during the Obama administration. "People are spending. That's what's keeping this economy going."

Yet there may be other effects that the government has a harder time measuring. The Labor Department, for example, has said it thinks the strike by Boeing machinists, along with a smaller walkout by some hotel workers, reduced job growth by 41,000 in October. But some

of Boeing's suppliers may also have shed jobs as the strike cut into their sales. It's not clear how much of an impact those job losses might have had on the October employment figures.

At the same time, the hurricane might have cost fewer jobs than economists expect. A worker would have to lose pay for an entire pay period — often two weeks — for their job to be considered lost in the government's data. Though many workers in North Carolina were likely out of work that long, it's not clear that in Florida, which has had more experience with hurricanes, employees would have missed that much work, Oates said.

Economists at UBS noted that the big amusement parks in Orlando — Walt Disney World, Sea World and Universal — were closed only for two days after Hurricane Milton hit. And in some states, people will be hired as part of the cleanup and rebuilding efforts.

Friday's jobs report will be the last major snapshot of the economy before the Fed's next meeting Nov. 7, two days after the election. Most economists expect the Fed to reduce its benchmark rate by a quarter-point, after an outside half-point cut in September.

If the jobs report suggests that hiring stayed healthy in October excluding the effects of the hurricanes and strike, Republican political figures may

question its credibility again. Last month, when the government reported that hiring had jumped unexpectedly in September, Sen. Marco Rubio, a Republican from Florida, made the baseless charge that the report was "fake."

Yet no mainstream economists share such skepticism. Other indicators — such as the number of people seeking unemployment benefits, data that is compiled mostly by the states — also point to a still-solid job market.

"I've been horrified by the degree to which politicians have made that argument," said Julia Pollak, chief economist at ZipRecruiter. The Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics, which produces the jobs report, "is the most transparent government agency on the planet," she said.

Trump and other critics have seized on the revisions that are often made to the government's initial estimates as evidence for their false claim that the Biden-Harris administration has manipulated the data. In August, the BLS said it expected to downgrade its estimate of total jobs in the United States as of last March by 818,000, or about 0.5% of the total. During the presidential debate in September, Trump asserted that the revision reflected "fraud" in the employment data. Yet under his own administration, the BLS revised job counts downward in 2019, by 514,000. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1984 INDIAN PRIME MINISTER SHOT DEAD



Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, has been killed by assassins in New Delhi.

Mrs Gandhi was thought to have been walking through her gardens this morning when she was shot. She was taken to the All India Medical Hospital where she underwent an emergency operation to remove the bullets but died an hour and a half later.

Initial reports suggest the two attackers were guards at her home who were then shot by other security officers.

No exact motive is known but it is believed the pair were Sikh extremists acting in retaliation for the storming of the Sikh holy shrine of the Golden Temple in Amritsar in June.

Mrs Gandhi had been receiving death threats since the attack on the temple in which 1,000 people died.

The night before her death she told a political rally: "I don't mind if my life goes in the service of the nation. If I die today, every drop of my blood will invigorate the nation."

Security throughout the country has been stepped up. Roads to the hospital and the home of the prime minister have been sealed off and borders around Delhi have been closed.

The Indian cabinet has started an emergency meeting to choose a successor.

India's High Commissioner, Prakash Mehrotra, said: "Democracy is very deep rooted in our country and the country is prepared to face any situation. A meeting is being called in Delhi, it is usual that the number two man in the cabinet takes charge for the time being."

Mrs Gandhi first became prime minister in 1966 and again in 1980 and was praised for her battle against famine in rural areas.

Stan Orme from the Anglo Indian Parliamentary Association said: "It is a very terrible thing. She was a very impressive person, very strong-willed. It is a real tragedy."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Riots erupted across India following the murder of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, as Hindus took their revenge on Sikhs who were blamed for the assassination. In the days following the death of the prime minister up to 1,000 people are thought to have died. The army were ordered to go into the cities and quell the violence. Mrs Gandhi's son, Rajiv, was sworn in as her successor within hours of her death. He went on to win a landslide victory in the general election in December 1984. On 6 January 1989, Satwant Singh and Kehar Singh were hanged for killing Mrs Gandhi. Balbir Singh was acquitted. Rajiv Gandhi was himself assassinated by a suicide bomber on 21 May 1991.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
You and a partner kick into high gear. Motivate each other to higher performance. You can get whatever you need. Soak up the love.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
The pace picks up. Get moving! Practice your routine until it's second nature. Refine and adjust technique. Each move grows muscle memory, strength and ease.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Are you having enough fun? Let someone attractive show you new tricks. Romance unfolds in a delightful fashion with little provocation. Share what you love.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Take care of home and family for unexpected rewards. Discuss changes. Listen for what's missing. Clean house and clear out clutter. Add comforting flavors.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Write, edit and publish. Broaden your reach and audience. Let others know what's needed to generate support and resources. Strengthen connections.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Fake it until you make it. Focus on making money. Learn new tricks and apply them to a lucrative opportunity. Make an amazing discovery.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
You can do more than you thought. Grab a lucky opportunity. Use your confidence to make a positive difference for yourself and others.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
You're especially sensitive. Take time for yourself. Find a peaceful spot for productive contemplation. Recharge out in nature. Get quiet and answers reveal themselves.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Confer with allies creating positive growth. Your friends are your inspiration. Discover wisdom, compassion and fresh perspectives.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Immerse yourself in a professional project. Polish your presentation and pay extra attention to details. Your work earns respect and your influence rises.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Embark on an adventure. Take an interesting trip. Study new cultures and views. Learn the most from those who see things differently. Explore.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Rake money into your shared accounts. Luck amplifies your communication skills. Sell, market and promote. Sign contracts. Produce valuable work.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	10	16	cloudy
Changchun	3	16	cloudy
Chengdu	15	21	overcast
Chongqing	19	22	rain
Fuzhou	20	25	rain
Guangzhou	19	29	fine
Guiyang	11	22	cloudy
Haikou	22	27	cloudy
Hangzhou	15	21	rain
Harbin	3	12	rain
Hefei	11	22	cloudy
Nanjing	13	22	rain
Shanghai	17	22	rain
Taipei	22	26	rain
Wuhan	11	24	fine
Hong Kong	24	31	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	1	4	cloudy
Frankfurt	7	14	cloudy
Paris	8	14	overcast
London	9	14	cloudy
New York	21	27	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Mil. addresses; 5- Conspiration org.; 8- Castaway's home; 12- ___ majesty; 13- Posters; 15- Palindromic address; 16- Simplicity; 17- "Silas Marner" author; 18- Sometimes you feel like ____; 19- Leaping insect; 22- NFL scores; 23- Mon. follower; 24- Hayworth or Moreno; 26- Consisting of flowers; 29- Punctual; 31- Guadalajara gold; 32- Prepares for publication or release; 34- Elude; 36- Plunge head-first; 38- Gastropod mollusk; 40- Not a dup.; 41- Caterpillar competitor; 43- Fencing swords; 45- How was ___ know?; 46- Moisture; 48- Enthusiastic; 50- Free from bias; 51- Korean auto; 52- Stumblebum; 54- Gadget; 61- Quarrel; 63- Rid of insect pests; 64- Hammock holder; 65- Fragrant neckwear; 66- Wipe out; 67- Optical device; 68- Fiend; 69- Scrap; 70- Those, to Juan;


DOWN 1- Shake ___ (hurry); 2- Bosc; 3- Greek peak; 4- Handles; 5- Farm structure; 6- Fall prey to a banana peel, say; 7- Sow chow; 8- The Monkees' "___ Believer"; 9- Flagship of Columbus; 10- Praise; 11- CPR experts; 13- Decapitates; 14- Severe; 20- Free from doubt; 21- Ceremonial act; 25- VCR alternative; 26- Exhausted (slang); 27- Romantic relationship; 28- Fabric woven from flax yarns; 29- Willow branch; 30- Archie Bunker's wife; 31- Offbeat; 33- Faucet; 35- Freudian concern; 37- Humorist Bombeck; 39- Escaping liquid; 42- Larger-than-life; 44- Vessel; 47- Eat away at; 49- Child's toy; 52- Scandinavian capital; 53- Take down ___ (humble); 55- Pianist Peter; 56- Ski lift; 57- Corrosion; 58- Angers; 59- Vintner's prefix; 60- Capone foe; 62- Mao ___ -tung;

Yesterday's solution

C	R	I	S	A	P	R	I	L	A	D	O	S	
H	O	A	R	S	A	I	S	O	N	I	N	A	
A	L	M	A	S	C	A	N	S	I	S	M	S	
R	E	S	I	L	I	E	N	T	E	M	C	E	
S	L	E	O	S	P	A							
S	C	A	L	E	N	T	R	A	I	L	W	A	Y
W	A	T	E	R	V	I	E	R	G	A	N	E	
E	N	O	M	E	C	C	A	S	A	B			
E	O	N	S	O	N	E	A	S	A	T	I	E	
P	E	T	T	L	E	R	P	O	E	T	S		
C	H	E	S	E									
S	C	A	N	T	C	A	B	D	R	I	V	E	R
A	L	I	O	B	A	S	I	L	E				
C	A	N	E	A	S	I	D	E	S	E	L	A	
S	P	U	R										
T	E	T	E	S									
T	S	A	R										

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Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731	
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BASKETBALL

BEARS SLIPS IN FIRST HOME MATCH

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macau Black Bears lost by just 3 points (93-96) in their second East Asia Super League game against the Ryukyu Golden Kings.

Playing for the first time on

home ground at Studio City Macau, the Bears dominated—albeit by a small margin—the first three quarters of the game. However, a series of errors at the start of the fourth quarter jeopardized the consistent performance they had established

in the earlier periods.

Arriving at the end of the third quarter with a narrow advantage of just 1 point (73-72), the Bears began the last period with a series of mistakes that contrasted sharply with the focused and efficient play of the

Golden Kings.

In just a few minutes, the Golden Kings overcame the 1-point deficit and took a 10-point lead on the scoreboard. Eventually, the Bears regrouped and began to chip away at the deficit, but motivated by their advantage

and with only a few minutes left to play, the Golden Kings managed to maintain their lead until the end, although it was reduced to just 3 points (93-96).

With only eight players on their roster, the Bears were forced to give extended minutes to their best players, with Damian Chongqui and William Artino each logging over 39 minutes on the court.

Team captain Jeantal Cylla also played over 38 minutes.

The standout player for the Macau team was Chongqui, who scored a total of 24 points, contrasting with the less inspired Cylla, who had scored a game-high 32 points in the first match against the New Taipei Kings.

In this game, Cylla managed only 16 points and missed all 4 of his attempts from long range.

On the Golden Kings' side, Keve Aluma was the standout performer with a game-high 29 points, followed by teammate Jack Cooley with 24.

Playing primarily a six-man rotation, the Bears felt the strain in the second half after controlling the first half, where they led by 5 points at half-time (53-48). The Golden Kings dominated the second half, recovering 4 points in the third quarter and adding 4 more in the last.

Still, there is much left to play for the Bears, who will continue their home games, meeting the Busan KCC Egis from Korea on Nov. 6.

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FOOTBALL

FIFA announces first Club World Cup sponsor with Chinese electronics firm branding VAR checks

FIFA finally announced a first sponsor for its revamped Club World Cup yesterday in a deal that will brand video review checks at the tournament in the United States next year.

Chinese consumer electronics firm Hisense will have "branding appearing in the video operation room and on pitchside screens," FIFA said in a statement, when match officials study key incidents in the 32-team tournament being played in 11 American cities from June 15 to July 13.

Though no previous FIFA tournament has had a sponsor for video reviews since the technology was approved before the men's 2018 World Cup in Russia, Hisense was the official "VAR Screen Provider" for this year's European Championship organized by UEFA in Germany.

Less than eight months before the Club World Cup opens — with Lionel Messi's Inter Miami hosting the first game of a tournament that sees Real Madrid, Manchester City and Bayern Munich play their first competitive games in the U.S. — it now has one sponsor but still lacks any broadcast deals.

FIFA's talks for a global streaming deal with Apple+ stalled several months ago and U.S. sponsors have been more focused on deals for the men's 2026 World Cup that will be co-hosted with

Canada and Mexico.

Saudi Arabian sponsors are expected to sign soon and help FIFA President Gianni Infantino fulfil promises to clubs that the tournament's total prize money will run to hundreds of millions of dollars every four years. FIFA is set to confirm Saudi Arabia as the 2034 World Cup host on Dec. 11.

The new Hisense deal "paves the way for further sponsorship deals for FIFA's new flagship club competition to be announced in the coming weeks," soccer's world body said.

FIFA did not specify the value of the deal sealed with Infantino at a signing ceremony in Shanghai.

Reviews of referee decisions in key incidents — for goals, penalty awards and red cards — can extend to at least two minutes, despite FIFA's aim during trials



Inter Miami forward Lionel Messi, left, shakes hands with FIFA President Gianni Infantino, right, during a ceremony for the team winning the Supporters' Shield after an MLS soccer match against the New England Revolution, Oct. 19

in 2016 of completing checks in about 10 seconds.

Hisense first signed up as a FIFA sponsor for the 2018 World

Cup and it renewed for the 2022 edition in Qatar.

The television and laptops manufacturer also signed its first

sponsor deal with UEFA, when Infantino was still the European soccer body's general secretary, ahead of Euro 2016. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

Business Views

Shuli Ren, Bloomberg



**TRUMP MUDDIES AN
 ALREADY-CHAOTIC
 DEBATE IN CHINA**

They might have to meet again. As President Xi Jinping decides on the size of China's stimulus package, he has to consider the possibility that Donald Trump, who started a trade war in 2018, may soon be in the White House for a second term.

After Xi's policy pivot in late September to meet his economic growth target of 5%, investors are looking at the gathering of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, usually held in late October. Concrete details have so far been largely lacking, pausing the enthusiasm of markets. In 2023, Chinese legislators increased the government's fiscal deficit, the first intra-year revision since 2000, in a tacit acknowledgment that the post-Covid economic recovery was stalling. Investors will be hoping for considerably more this year.

That this year's NPC will convene from Nov. 4 to 8, which means policy details are unlikely to emerge until after we get some clarity on the US election, might be a sign that Beijing is on high alert. A possible Trump win will only muddy the already-chaotic debate among senior officials on the size of fiscal borrowing as well as how the money should be spent.

Until recently, Xi's stimulus was entirely a domestic affair. Ministry-level officials have promised the largest one-time debt swap in recent years to improve municipal finances. The state will also buy unsold housing to stabilize property prices, as well as boost banks' capital buffer to increase their willingness to lend in a weak economy. All these are sensible blueprints to lift China out of deflation.

But a Trump win can change Beijing's priorities again. His hawkish rhetoric on Chinese imports, as well as the wide latitude that the US president enjoys in setting and imposing tariffs, directly threatens Xi's ultimate passion of transforming China into a high-end manufacturing powerhouse.

China has certainly reacted to Trump's moves before. After Huawei Technologies Co. was placed on the US trade blacklist in 2019, state resources were poured into industrial upgrades. Huawei alone received over \$1 billion in government grants last year, more than quadruple the amount in 2019, in part a reflection that President Joe Biden has furthered Trump's tough trade policies. Bank lending to industrial firms has also soared in that time.

As such, it's possible that Xi will bring out a bigger bazooka if he has to deal with Trump again. Nomura Securities economist Lu Ting reckons that Beijing's stimulus could be 20% greater under this election outcome.

Senior officials are starting to give us the impression that the government is reluctant to resolve the core tensions ailing the economy. In a recent media briefing, the Ministry of Finance commented that local governments still had unused 2.3 trillion yuan bond quota to tap this year. It's as if their funding gap wasn't an urgent issue and that municipal fiscal austerity wasn't a key reason behind this year's slowdown. Lately, state media has gone quiet over what Beijing's stimulus might look like, while diligently broadcasting the three-day BRICS Summit that Xi attended in Russia with great fanfare.

It's understandable that Xi wants to fight back against Trump's unpredictable bullying. But without a solid domestic economy and buoyant consumers flexing their muscles to multinationals, what leverage does he have? China's president needs to stay focused on his internal affairs. [Abridged]

Bloomberg/Shuli Ren

Afghan women are forbidden from praying loudly or reciting the Quran in front of other women, according to a Taliban government minister.

It's the latest restriction on women following morality laws that ban them from raising their voice and baring their faces outside the home. They are already excluded from education after sixth grade, many public spaces and most jobs.

Nobody from the Vice and Virtue Ministry was immediately available Wednesday to clarify the official's remarks or confirm if the prohibition

would also become part of the morality laws.

During an event in eastern Logar province on Sunday, Vice and Virtue Minister Khalid Hanafi said: "It is prohibited for a grown woman to recite Quranic verses or perform recitations in front of another grown woman. Even chants of takbir (Allahu Akbar) are not permitted."

He said that uttering similar expressions like "subhanallah," another word central to the Islamic faith, was also not allowed. A woman was not permitted to perform the call to prayer, he told the gathering. "So, there is certainly no permission for singing."



An unidentified person wearing a hood is escorted by police officers to a park for video reconstruction of the crime scene at a waterfall inside the park in Hong Kong, yesterday

HONG KONG

**A MAN IS ARRESTED ON
 SUSPICION OF KILLING A
 WOMAN IN A PARK**

KANIS LEUNG,
 HONG KONG

A foreign man living in Hong Kong has been arrested on suspicion of killing a Southeast Asian woman at a waterfall inside a park in the Chinese territory.

The woman, who was about 25 years old, was a domestic worker in Hong Kong but did not work for the suspect, police superintendent Sin Kwok-ming told reporters Tuesday night.

The woman went to the waterfall inside a park in Pok Fu Lam on Hong Kong Island on Sunday night with the suspect, but he rushed off alone in a taxi after staying there for about half an hour,

police said.

On Monday morning, residents spotted the woman's body floating in the pond below the waterfall, Sin said.

An initial autopsy showed the woman drowned after being hit in the head with an unspecified hard object. Sin said the woman had injuries to her head and limbs.

The suspect and his wife, a Hong Konger, had gone to mainland China before officers arrested them when they returned to the city on Tuesday, Sin said. The man was detained on suspicion of murder and his wife was held on suspicion of assisting offenders.

The man holds a Hong Kong identity card, but

police did not specify which country he or the victim was from.

"We found so many unreasonable things related to the arrested man. He didn't report to the police and immediately left Hong Kong after the incident. Some evidence related to him had disappeared too," Sin said.

The investigation was continuing. The man and his wife were still in detention and have not been charged as of Wednesday morning, police said.

"This case involves a person's life, and we take that very seriously. We will carefully unravel every detail to uncover the truth and to bring justice to the deceased," Sin said. MDT/AP



New Zealand A giant hand sculpture, "Quasi," has been removed yesterday from Wellington after five years atop an art gallery. The controversial sculpture had divided residents, with some finding it unsettling and others viewing it as iconic. It will be relocated to an undisclosed location in Australia.



Australia Police in Sydney yesterday recovered over 40,000 stolen limited-edition coins based on the children's series Bluey. The coins were stolen from a warehouse in July, and authorities have now detained three suspects, with investigations ongoing.



Myanmar New sanctions from the EU, UK, and Canada target suppliers of aviation fuel and equipment to Myanmar's military. These sanctions come amid heightened airstrikes against civilians and armed ethnic groups resisting the military's 2021 coup.



United States For the first time in its nearly 20-year history, Reddit has reported a profit of \$29.9 million, largely driven by a 47% growth in daily users, reaching 97.2 million. Key factors include an AI translation feature, popular among international users, and data licensing deals with Google and OpenAI. Reddit's shares have also surged to \$110.20 following this growth.