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**IN A BID TO DEVELOP CULTURAL AND SPORTING INDUSTRIES, MELCO IS CO-HOSTING MACAU'S FIRST-EVER MOTOSURF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP** P7

**WONG SIO CHAK EMERGES AS KEY SURVIVOR IN NEW GOVT: REPORTS** P6

**VISITOR ARRIVALS REBOUND TO 98% OF 2019 LEVELS IN OCTOBER** P7



AP PHOTO



**Denmark-China** Danish authorities are monitoring the Chinese ship Yi Peng 3 near ruptured undersea cables between Finland, Germany, Lithuania, and Sweden. Investigations are underway into the incidents, with NATO members raising concerns about potential sabotage in a region critical for European communications.

**Pakistan** Gunmen ambushed vehicles in Kurram, northwest Pakistan, killing 28 Shiite Muslims and injuring 30. The attack follows rising sectarian tensions between Sunni and Shiite communities in the region, where clashes and targeted violence have escalated in recent months. No group has claimed responsibility.

AP PHOTO



**New Zealand** A law banning public displays of gang insignia took effect yesterday, with fines up to NZ\$5,000 or six months' jail for violations. The law aims to disrupt gang activity but has sparked criticism over civil liberties and potential marginalization of Māori communities.

AP PHOTO



**India** Shares of Adani Group plunged 20% yesterday after U.S. prosecutors indicted Gautam Adani for alleged securities fraud involving a solar energy project. The indictment accuses Adani of concealing a bribery scheme, reigniting concerns over his business practices and political ties in India.

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# BRICK TO BRICK

**Lula welcomes Xi for state visit as ties between China and Brazil strengthen in a bid to shape a new global order** P10



AP PHOTO

**GBA VIEWS | STUDY**  
**BIG-SIX ARE THE MAIN 'COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS IN QUEST TO DIVERSIFY' ECONOMY**

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## TASTE OF EDESIA



P15





GRAND PRIX

# MAY 2025 ARRIVE QUICKLY, DRY AND BRIGHT

SÉRGIO DE ALMEIDA CORREIA,  
MDT

**W**EATHER conditions posed challenges, but not even an unseasonal typhoon could dim the shine of the FIA event that wrapped up the WTRC, GT, and Formula Regional seasons.

The 71st Macau Grand Prix (MGP) had it all: sun, rain, wind, thrilling and lackluster races, drama, speed, edge-of-your-seat overtaking, avoidable crashes, and, incredibly, even a competition without a race that ended with trophies and prizes being awarded.

The MGP continues to be cherished by the FIA, the local community, and the thousands of visitors it attracts. However, that doesn't mean some decisions shouldn't be reconsidered or that the organization can't continuously improve. Let's break it down:

## 1. THE MOTORCYCLE GRAND PRIX

This race is as spectacular as it is dangerous. Although requested by some riders and teams, it was reintroduced to the program but didn't take place due to weather conditions. I still disagree with its inclusion. The risks to riders and organizers are immense. Accidents are often severe and dramatic. This time, the motorcycles didn't even make

it to the race, with only brief practice sessions held. There was no actual competition, yet a podium ceremony crowned a champion without a single race—a fiasco that still sent a rider to the hospital.

## 2. LOCAL AND REGIONAL DRIVERS

Drivers from Macau, Hong Kong, and mainland China were once again given opportunities. While talent levels varied, they delivered decent performances. Congratulations to the RAEM contingent for dominating the Macau Roadsport Challenge. Special mentions go to veteran Lei Kit Meng and the fast, reliable Jerónimo "Noni" Badaraco, who had plenty of reasons to celebrate another strong showing.

## 3. GT4 AND MACAU ROADSPORT RACES

The GT4 (Greater Bay Area GT Cup) and Macau Roadsport races added little overall. They contributed to the spectacle and provided entertainment for spectators with plenty of bent metal. While they serve the dual purpose of being part of the show and of the business, promoting brands that sponsor cars and drivers, they don't go much beyond that.

## 4. TCR WORLD TOUR

The TCR World Tour races did not disappoint, despite the

inexperience and lack of skill from some backmarkers, which caused too many interruptions. It's always a treat to see touring cars racing around the Guia Circuit, piloted by fast and seasoned drivers. While team strategies dulled some of the excitement, they were understandable. Congratulations to the affable Norbert Michelisz, Mikel Azcona, and Néstor Girolami. Special acknowledgment goes to Gabriele Tarquini for leading Hyundai, Thed Bjork for his resilience, and Borkovi and Honda's squad. It would be great to see more manufacturers join the WTRC in the future.

## 5. FORMULA REGIONAL WORLD CUP

Billed as the main race, the FRWC demonstrated, for anyone still in doubt, that its cars don't match the level of the former F3. The inexperience of many drivers racing in Macau was also evident. While the FRWC is a sensible FIA initiative as a developmental formula, but it doesn't have the capability to replace the F3.

The F3 World Cup was a competition where drivers arrived well-prepared. That cannot be said of the FRWC. For instance, in the 2023 F3 race, winner Luke Browning set a fastest lap of 2:06.257 on a dry track. This year, Oliver Goethe's best was 2:19.599—a

difference of over 13 seconds.

The MGP's premier race should not showcase the fledgling skills of inexperienced drivers. Too many crashes and constant red flags make for poor entertainment and harm the event's international reputation. Young drivers should be supported, but the MGP must remain a stage for confirming great talents, as it was in the past with legends like Patrese, Senna, the Schumacher brothers, Brabham, Max Verstappen, André Couto, Félix da Costa, and Pedro Lamy, runner-up in 1992.

If that standard cannot be upheld, the race program should be reevaluated.

## 6. WHAT SPECTATORS WANT

Fans come to see thrilling races, top drivers, breathtaking overtakes, and fast, impressive cars. The FIA GT World Cup delivers all that, and this year was no exception. The event stood out for its top-tier racing, driver skill, car quality, and, above all, the absence of red flags, even under adverse track conditions.

In recent years, the GT3 races have consistently provided the best spectacle. The FIA and the MGP Organizing Committee should consider making the FIA GTWC the main event while keeping the FRWC on the program. GTWC brings the best drivers and

machines to Macau.

## 7. SHOUT-OUTS FOR THE GTWC

Congratulations to Maro Engel and Mercedes for their patience and luck, culminating in another victory. Kudos to Augusto Farfus for returning to the podium and to South Africa's Van Der Linde. A word of encouragement goes to Antonio Fuoco, whose talent was evident. Representing Ferrari, he showed why he was part of the winning team at the 2024 Le Mans 24 Hours. Unfortunately, a rear-end collision at the Lisboa Corner knocked him off the track, costing him the victory. It is important to note that the Ferrari went off course while braking. The track conditions were difficult, and it would have been impossible for the BMW to overtake it. Let's hope Fuoco returns next year.

## 8. FINAL THOUGHTS ON ORGANIZATION

While the event was well-organized overall, improvements are urgently needed to enhance spectator comfort and movement, especially given ticket prices. Additionally, journalists covering the event need better access, as was the norm in the past and is standard at any circuit.

With that said, bring on the next MGP!

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GOVERNANCE

# Pereira Coutinho urges new gov't to raise civil servant pay 3.2%

RENATO MARQUES

**L**AWMAKER José Pereira Coutinho has urged the new government to increase the salary of all civil servants by 3.2% in 2025.

The lawmaker sent this message to the government during yesterday's plenary session of the Legislative Assembly in a speech delivered in the period before the agenda.

Pereira Coutinho urged the new government to increase the salaries of all civil servants by three points on the civil servants' salary index, that is, from the current 94 to 97 points, explaining that this must be done "taking into account the continuing loss of purchasing power of the majority of civil service workers."

Pereira Coutinho added that, in the past five years, civil servants, especially those on the front line, have been asked to carry out all kinds of tasks that were not part of their official duties, which was reflected "in the brutal increase in overtime work, much of which has been paid with years of delay and only after several complaints."

The lawmaker claimed that many workers have also been forced to be "on standby" with their mobile phones available 24 hours a day, including weekends and public holidays, and even been prevented from leaving Macau due to the demands of specific jobs. According to the lawmaker, the compensation for this constant availability is just MOP47 per day on weekends and public holidays.



Pereira Coutinho noted that some public service employers have continued to exploit workers using this availability regime, which is affecting their ability to rest and limiting sleep. He said that although they are being harmed, workers do not dare to refuse these tasks or make official reports of these cases due to the fear of retaliation.

"It is worth mentioning that the vast majority of public administration workers, especially frontline workers, are disappointed, saddened, and demoralized by the continuous and gradual loss of purchasing power due to the increase of prices [for] essential goods," he said, adding that, contrary to Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng's affirmation earlier this week, the fulfillment of the goals proposed in his political program back in 2019 are far from having been accomplished.

"We note that, over the last

five years, there has been a low rate of implementation of the 2019 Political Program called 'Synergies and Advancement, Change and Innovation,' especially concerning Increasing the Level and Quality of Public Governance and the Accountability of Government Officials," he remarked. The lawmaker added that "public services are created, or people are appointed to management and leadership positions to their own 'liking,' in a sort of 'Jobs for the Boys and Girls' [scenario], in which they 'handpick' certain people of their preference, bypassing the meritocracy and professional experience of more competent workers."

In addition to increasing civil servants' salaries, Pereira Coutinho also called for reform of the general and special careers of civil service workers to be implemented as a matter of utmost priority, noting that there

is a special urgency for "those careers with extremely low salary rates which are unsuited to the volume, complexity and responsibilities of the tasks they are obliged to perform."

Finally, the lawmaker wants to see "more transparent governance and greater accountability for those in power."

## 'WORKERS' ALSO CALL FOR A SALARY UPDATE

During the AL debate for the approval of the 2025 budget proposal, lawmakers Leong Sun lok and Ella Lei, both representing the interests of workers, also reinforced some of the requests made by Pereira Coutinho, especially concerning the salary increase for civil servants. Leong noted that during the five-year term of Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng, the salaries of these workers were only increased once and workers have been losing purchasing power. Lei added a reminder that "society follows the government: the government is an indicator for private companies," noting that it is very important that the government considers this salary increase as a reference for the whole of society and not just for the civil servants. Another lawmaker, Lo Choi In, also addressed the topic, although taking a more conservative approach. Lo called for an indexing of the salary update to a ceiling so that at least the workers with lower salaries can see some increase.

## TEMPERATURES TO DROP TO 13 DEGREES NEXT WEEK

The Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) forecasts that a strong northeasterly monsoon will reach the southern coast of China next Tuesday (Nov. 26), leading to a gradual drop in temperatures. By Nov. 28, temperatures are expected to plummet to a low of 13 degrees Celsius. In the days leading up to this event, the bureau anticipates a slight rise in temperatures as the northeast monsoon eases. The seven-day weather forecast indicates that on Nov. 27 the minimum temperature will be around 15 degrees.

## COMMITTEE PROPOSES MOP900 FINE FOR MOBILE USE WHILE DRIVING

The First Standing Committee is reviewing a road traffic bill that proposes increased penalties for various violations. Committee chairwoman Ella Lei highlighted concerns over stricter fines, including a rise from MOP600 to MOP900 for using mobile phones while driving and for failing to maintain a safe distance from the vehicle ahead. Additionally, fines for violating minimum speed limits on general roads will increase from MOP300 to MOP600, with higher penalties of MOP900 applicable in bridges and tunnels.

# Increase in domestic violence cases raises concerns

**T**HE Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) reported a troubling increase in domestic violence incidents during the first half of the year, with 29 cases documented.

This figure includes 16 cases involving spouses, 10 concerning children, and three related to elderly individuals. Notably, authorities classified these incidents as 23 physical violence cases and 23 mental violence cases, alongside four violations and two instances



of inappropriate care.

Despite this uptick, IAS reaffirmed its commit-

ment to existing domestic violence laws, which have generally led to a decline

in reported incidents since their implementation eight years ago. However,

the recent rise—an increase of 11 cases compared to the same period last year—has raised alarm among officials.

Previously, Lei Lai Peng, head of IAS's Department of Family and Community Services, highlighted issues managing emotions among many abusers as a significant factor contributing to these incidents.

Earlier stating, "Over the years, we have seen that many abusers likely have emotional manage-

ment problems and resort to violence."

While IAS maintains that domestic violence rates are decreasing overall, only 8% of reported cases have resulted in formal accusations, with many downgraded to lesser offenses. This has prompted some lawmakers to advocate for legislative changes.

However, IAS insists that the current framework is effective and does not require amendments. NS



BUDGET 2025

# GOVERNMENT GAMING FORECAST OF MOP240B TOO HIGH AND TOO LOW FOR LAWMAKERS

RENATO MARQUES

**L**AWMAKERS are confused about the government's prediction that gross revenue from casinos will be MOP240 billion in 2025, as expressed yesterday during a Legislative Assembly (AL) session where next year's budget proposal was debated and voted on.

While some considered the amount "a very conservative" forecast, others expressed fears that the government could be overestimating receipts and underestimating regional competition and other external factors.

The Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, was at the AL to present the bill and, as usual, did not elaborate much on how the government arrived at this forecast.

The first concerns were expressed by lawmaker Leong Sun Iok, who noted that the estimate of MOP240 billion represents an average of MOP20 billion a month over the next year, a figure that has only been reached in two months this year so far (May and October), with the current average for the first 10 months of the year being MOP19 billion.

The same lawmaker also noted that there are increasing challenges to this industry as other areas in the region are legalizing gaming activities.

Lawmaker Ngan Iek Hang agreed, noting that the figure reached in October this year (MOP20.8 billion) was already very high and surpassed the highest amount obtained in any month in 2023.

Ngan expressed concerns about whether it would be possible to ensure that every month in 2025 will be as profitable as October this year.

Ron Lam took the opposite view, noting that the government systematically chooses



Lei Wai Nong



Leong Sun Iok



Lo Choi In



Ngan Iek Hang

to present very conservative forecasts for gaming industry results, hinting that there are potential other interests on the line. Lam said that by presenting a conservative forecast, the government easily dismisses the idea of increasing social benefits, subsidies and other governmental support to the population and businesses.

Also commenting on the topic was Lo Choi In, who did not take a side but said only that the "government needs to have a more global perspective of the gaming numbers and should not base the annual budget on just this factor but on others too."

Jose Pereira Coutinho also shared fears of increased competition from neighboring regions, noting that Macau has seen a very large number of visitors, but these visitors are spending a lot less and in an imbalanced manner which is mostly benefiting big companies and not small businesses.

Leong also noted that claiming that tourists' spending does not equally benefit everyone in society, with most people earning less than before. He called on the government to "correct this imbalance."

In response, Secretary Lei excused himself from answering most of the questions, ar-

guing that "this budget is not for the current government but for the next. It's a basic budget to ensure the payment of contracted expenses and the normal functioning of services," he remarked, deferring the majority of the questions and skepticism from the lawmakers to March or April next year when it is expected the new government will present its policy address for the year.

Trying to explain how the government reached its figure of MOP240 billion, Lei said only that it was based on the previous results and the results obtained over the past 10 months, together with the forecast

increase in the number of visitors expected this year to "36 million or more," an increase of 9% when compared to this year.

"With the increase of patrons [to the casinos], the tax collected over the gaming revenues will also increase, and that is the calculation we have made," the Secretary said, adding that the government also expects better performance from the non-gaming sectors next year.

"I believe that the next government will discuss with you your questions. We can't do this. We are not in a position to do so. This should be a discussion to have at the Policy Address for 2025," he concluded.

## RON LAM UNHAPPY WITH BUDGET PRIORITIES

During the brief discussion over the 2025 budget proposal, lawmaker Ron Lam expressed his dissatisfaction with the government's budgetary priorities. "The benefits stay the same, the pensions for the elderly are unchanged, but the budget of TDM [public broadcaster] is going to grow over 35%," he said, adding, "I fail to understand the priorities of this government." Also unhappy with the cash handouts system being kept "as it was" was lawmaker Leong Hong Sai, linked with the Macau General Union of Neighborhood Associations (commonly referred to as Kai Fong). The lawmaker said that society is not happy with the mechanism and asked if the government is expecting "to change the criteria mechanism to prevent people that do not reside in Macau and that have left for a long period receiving this subsidy."

# Citi: Gov't underestimates gaming revenue, poised to surge

**T**HE Macau government's recent estimate that industry gross gaming revenue (GGR) will reach MOP240 billion in 2025 could be significantly underestimated according to Citigroup.

Citi analysts George

Choi and Timothy Chau suggest that Macau's industry GGR could reach MOP243 billion (USD30.4 billion)

in 2025, up 7% year-on-year, with EBITDA growing by 13% to USD9 billion. This forecast is

higher than the Macau government's recent estimate of MOP240 billion (around USD30 billion) for 2025.

Citi's more optimistic projections are driven by expected increases in visitation, the rollout

of smart gaming tables and the rising popularity of new side bets. The analysts note that the government has underestimated GGR in nine of the past 10 years by 10-60%, suggesting there could be "significant upside risk"

to their own forecast.

Growth in 2025 is expected to come from a combination of factors, including organic visitation increases and new cities added to the Individual Visit Scheme.

Widespread adoption of smart gaming tables is set to play a crucial role, as these technologies enable more targeted player marketing and lead to a reduction in comp wastage. Citi calculates that

a player's theoretical GGR could increase by 5.9% on efficiency alone.

Furthermore, the growing popularity of side bets, which are also easier to offer with smart table technology, can significantly enhance a player's value. Citi estimates that "a player with a tendency to place 10% of their wager on Lucky 6 is worth 125.5% more than a player who bets strictly on main bets." VC



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

# Sands China co-organizes exhibition celebrating dual anniversaries

**I**N a significant move to commemorate the rich cultural heritage of Macau, Sands China is hosting an exhibition at Sands Macao, serving as a reminder of Macau's dynamic history and its promising future as a cultural hub in Asia.

The exhibition, titled "Art of Prosperity: An Invitational Exhibition of Macao Artists," is set to celebrate significant milestones in Chinese history, specifically the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland.

The exhibition showcases a diverse range of artistic expressions and features a total of 250 masterpieces spanning various forms, including Chinese painting, oil painting, watercolor, calligraphy, seal carving, digital drawing, print-making, sculpture, clay, and others.

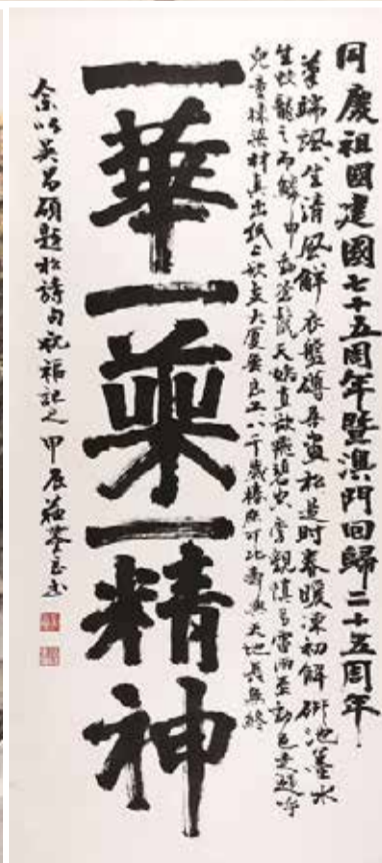
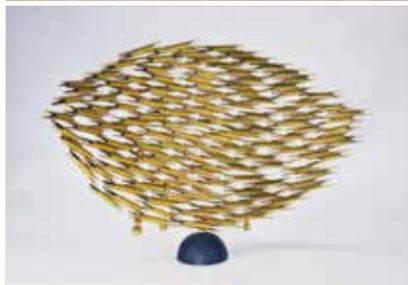
The exhibited works were created by 230 invited artists from Macau and 20 from Hong Kong.

Lok Hei, head of the exhibition's preparatory committee, said: "75 years is just a flick of a finger in the vast expanse of human history; but for our country and for the Chinese people, it heralds a new world with great changes."

He added, "Macau's artists have established themselves in the local art scene with their remarkable achievements. Through this exhibition, we would like to share in the joy of this year of dual celebrations with their exquisite works and extend our best wishes for the prosperity and strength of our nation, as well as for the peace and happiness of people across the country."

Dr. Wilfred Wong, executive vice chairman of Sands China Ltd., reflected on the importance of Sands Macao as the venue, stating, "This coincides with the 20th anniversary of Sands Macao, the property that laid the foundation for our company's growth on the Cotai Strip 20 years ago."

Dr. Wong expressed that the exhibition's variety of works from Macau and Hong Kong showcases the solidarity and deep friendship of the two special administrative regions under the care of the motherland. "You can feel the energy and vibrancy of the local art scene," he noted, highlighting how these artworks reflect Macau's



transition towards a diversified economy and a robust cultural industry.

The 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland is a momentous occasion that underscores its unique identity as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) with a rich blend of Portuguese and Chinese influences.

Dr. Wong remarked on the significance of returning to the roots of Sands Macao for this celebration: "The exhibition not only serves as a retrospective journey through art but also as a testament to Macau's commitment to enhancing its cultural landscape."

That landscape is set to be

enriched by the unique vision of calligraphy artist Sou Kam Leong.

"The works exhibited in this exhibition are all of high quality. I hope that through this special opportunity, we can communicate with different calligraphy circles in Macau and Hong Kong, and to mutually advance. The theme of my calligraphy work on display is evergreen trees. With the evergreen leaves all year round, we wish the motherland and Macau continued prosperity."

Meanwhile, artist Lei Tak Seng explained that the theme of the exhibition reflects not only the artistic prowess of the

region, but also celebrates the rich traditions associated with autumn in Chinese culture. "Autumn represents a time of harvest—a poetic moment in our history," Lei noted, connecting the season of the National Day, which also falls in autumn.

As visitors explore this vibrant showcase, they are reminded of Macau's dynamic history and its promising future as a cultural hub in Asia. The event stands as a celebration not just of art, but also of community growth and resilience over two decades.

Under the guidance of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the

Macao SAR, **Art of Prosperity: An Invitational Exhibition of Macao Artists** is organized by Macao Artist Society and the Yu Un Chinese Calligraphers and Painters Association of Macao, co-organized by Sands China Ltd. and the Macao Foundation, and is sponsored by the Cultural Development Fund of the Macao SAR, with the support of the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao SAR and the Federation of Associations of Cultural Sectors of Macao.

"Art of Prosperity: An Invitational Exhibition of Macao Artists" runs until November 28 at the Sands Macao 4/F Ballroom.



## HENGQIN ROLLS OUT NEW RESIDENTIAL PURCHASE CRITERIA

The criteria for purchasing residential units at the Macau New Neighbourhood in Hengqin have been adjusted significantly, effective immediately. These changes include the removal of the age limit for buyers, lifting the five-year resale restriction and modifying the calculation method for determining how many units a buyer can purchase. Notably, married couples are no longer counted as a single unit in these calculations. This initiative has been approved by the Executive Committee of the Guangdong-Macau In-Depth Cooperation Zone. As of mid-November, over 750 households have moved into the neighborhood.

## FIVE INJURED IN DRUNK DRIVING CAR RAMPAGE

A car accident occurred early yesterday morning on Avenida da Amizade, injuring five people. According to the Public Security Police, a female driver in her 30s is suspected of drink driving, dangerous driving, evading responsibility and negligent injury. Her husband, in his 40s, is accused of "backing up" and aiding her in attempting to evade legal consequences. The incident began when the driver was spotted going against traffic near Bai Yun Garden and collided with three motorcycles before crashing into a taxi. The driver's blood alcohol level was recorded at 1.51 grams per liter. All injured parties are reported to be in stable condition.

## WOMAN ARRESTED FOR USING FAKE ID TO GAMBLE

Authorities have arrested a 46-year-old Hong Kong woman suspected of illegally using a mainland friend's ID card to enter a casino for gambling. The Public Security Police yesterday reported that the woman was classified as undesirable by the casino, prompting her to impersonate someone else to gain entry. She allegedly paid around RMB2,400 to unknown individuals within the casino to obtain six forged stay permit receipts, which she used to apply for casino membership cards and check into hotel rooms. The scheme was uncovered when police identified discrepancies in the stay permit system linked to her hotel check-in records.

RENATO MARQUES



## GOVERNMENT RESHUFFLE

# WONG SIO CHAK EMERGES AS KEY SURVIVOR: REPORTS

PAULO COUTINHO &  
LYNZY VALLES

**W**ong Sio Chak stands out as the key survivor from the current administration, positioned to play the much-ceremonial role of Number 2 in the new government that will be sworn in in December, according to a report by Plataforma yesterday.

Wong's continuity in the government was previously hinted by the Macau Daily Times.

On November 1, the Times, citing sources familiar with the matter, predicted a government of continuity that would maintain its key policy secretaries, with the

exception of Raimundo do Rosário (Transportation and Public Works) and Lei Wai Nong (Economy and Finance).

On Wednesday, Ho Iat Seng said that he and Raimundo do Rosário would be "among the few changes in the new administration."

It seems that the changes may be wider than predicted, following the Plataforma report, which was essentially confirmed by sources heard by the Times yesterday.

At 56, the Secretary for Security, who has held the position since 2014, brings a decade of experience to his new role overseeing the Administration and Justice sectors.

Wong has served in the govern-

ment's security department since 1994.

If it happens, he will serve as a vital link to the Executive Council and act as a substitute for the Chief Executive, Sam Hou Fai, in his absence.

As cited in the report, among the reshuffle's highlights are two notable female figures: O Lam and former secretary Sonia Chan. Lam, a granddaughter of Ke Lin—a former director of the Kiang Wu Hospital and an influential figure within the Communist Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party—was previously the chief of office under former Chief Executive Chui

Sai On.

Initially considered a solid candidate for the Social Affairs and Culture portfolio, Lam may pivot to the Economy and Finance sector.

On the other hand, Sonia Chan, director of the Public Assets Supervision Administration Bureau, is also being speculated upon.

Her term is valid until Dec. 19, a day before the new government takes office. However, sources close to Chan assert she intends to remain in her current position, according to Plataforma.

The reshuffle also signals that Lam Wai Hou, the current director of Public Works Bureau, is expected to succeed Raimundo do Rosário, confirming a previous report by the Times.

Meanwhile, Chan Tsz King, the Commissioner Against Corruption, has emerged as a "credible alternative" for the Security portfolio, with the Commissioner for Audit, Ho Veng On, also considered for the Economy and Finance role.

Notably absent from the list of nominations are representatives from Macau's local business elite or heirs of the territory's most powerful families, marking a departure from previous appointments that often-favored entrenched interests.

Observers expressed to the Times their "surprise" with the possible nomination of O Lam and Sónia Chan, seen as "too close to Chui."

A name that has also been touted for Economy and Finance head is Tai Kin Ip, the current director of the Economic and Technological Development Bureau.

An announcement by Chief Executive-designate Sam Hou Fai is expected within this month.

## EDUCATION

# Macao Foundation commits RMB1.1 billion to UM's Hengqin campus

STAFF REPORTER

**T**he Macao Foundation has signed an agreement with the University of Macau (UM) to provide over RMB1.1 billion for land acquisition in Hengqin, intended for the university's new campus.

This funding commitment follows UM's recent announcement to invest MO946 million in the same initiative.

The land spans roughly 375,600 square



UM rector Yonghua Song (left) and Wu Zhiliang, president of Macao Foundation

meters and will feature a complex with an architectural area of 710,000 square meters.

A government statement highlighted the foundation's long-standing support for higher

education in Macau, tracing back to the university's origins as the University of East Asia.

UM plans to establish new faculties focused on medicine, information technology, engineering, and design at the Hengqin site.

Rector Song Yonghua indicated that these developments aim to increase student enrollment to at least 25,000, with over half pursuing master's or doctoral degrees.

The new campus is

projected to be operational by 2028.

Additionally, in October, UM established a new company with a registered capital of RMB50,000, with Song appointed as chair of its board of directors.

Earlier this year, the Zhuhai UM Institute of Science and Technology has received more than 150 government-funded science and technology projects.

These include 96 projects funded by the National Natural Science Foundation, 11 key projects and projects of the National Ministry of Science and Technology, six other national projects, and 43 provincial and municipal scientific research projects.



EVENTS

# Magical illuminated installations at 'Light Up Macao 2024'

NADIA SHAW

**T**HE "Light Up Macao 2024" event is set to run from December 7 to February 28, 2025, starting with an opening ceremony that showcases the city's cultural diversity and artistic expression.

Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), emphasized the collaborative spirit of this event during yesterday's press conference.

"We are thrilled to partner with various government departments and major resort enterprises to present the 'Symphony of Time and Space,' a themed experience that reflects our aspirations as an international metropolis," she stated.

The event will feature six thematic activities spread across six districts in the Macau Peninsula, Taipa and Coloane. Attendees can expect an



array of artistic displays, light installations, interactive exhibits and light sculpture performances.

Among the highlights are two outstanding local works

selected through an open call and three themed performances by a renowned Japanese

team. The artistic contributions will come from a diverse group of creators hailing from regions including Macau, Hong Kong, mainland China, and several countries in the Asia Pacific, Europe, North America and Latin America.

For the event's 84 days, spectators will be taken on a mesmerizing journey of light and art that transcends time and space.

In a blend of "Tourism +," the event promises memorable nights for residents and visitors on major festive occasions, including the anniversary of the establishment of the Macau SAR, winter solstice, Christmas, new year's eve, new year's day, Chinese new year, Chinese lantern festival and Valentine's day.

In addition to the artistic showcases, each district will offer exclusive souvenirs and lively activities tailored to enhance visitor experiences.

Every Saturday night during the event there will be leisure activities to amplify the festive atmosphere.

"We sincerely hope that Macau's brand events and community activities will continue to give full play to the synergistic effect of 'Tourism +' cross-sector integration," Senna Fernandes added.

SPORTS

# Melco co-hosts first MotoSurf world championship

VICTORIA CHAN

**I**N a bid to develop cultural and sporting industries, Melco Resorts & Entertainment is co-hosting Macau's first ever MotoSurf World Championship from today until Sunday (Nov. 24) at the Hac Sa beach, in collaboration with the Macau MotoSurf Association (MMSA).

MotoSurf is one of the fastest growing and safest water sports in the world.

Announced yesterday at the press conference, the "2024 UIM Macao Grand Prix MotoSurf World Championship Finale" features 120 elite racers from 22 countries and regions competing.

Melco board director Clarence Chung expressed the company's dedication to promoting Macau's cultural and sports industries, saying it is "honored to be bringing the esteemed MotoSurf World Championship to the city



for the first time."

Chung added that the company "will continue to support the SAR government's economic diversification initiatives, including contributing through the launch of world-class sports events to bring into play the cross-border integration linkage effect of "Tourism + Sports."

Martin Janálek, director of the MotoSurf World Championship, expressed his excitement about the event. "We cannot wait to hit the waters of Macau for the first time in MotoSurf history," he said, adding that "it truly feels great that MotoSurf

will join other major motorsports like the FIA TCR World Tour in the city of James Bond."

Meanwhile, Irene Nga Ieng Ho, chair of the Macau MotoSurf Association, highlighted the event's potential to boost awareness of Macau as a destination for water sports on the international stage, showcasing the city's blend of culture, tourism and sports.

"As a thrilling and new addition to Macau's sports calendar, the MotoSurf World Championship Finale highlights the exciting possibilities of motorsurfing and Macau's

capability to host premier water sports events."

The event will also serve as a qualifier for the 2025 Chengdu World Games, further boosting MotoSurf's presence on the international sports stage.

Officially recognized by UIM in 2019, MotoSurf has become a global sensation since its emergence in 2012.

The sport is set to make its debut at the 12th edition of the World Games in Chengdu, People's Republic of China, in August 2025, marking powerboating's first appearance at the international multi-sport event.

TOURISM

# VISITOR ARRIVALS REBOUND TO 98% OF 2019 LEVELS IN OCTOBER

**M**ACAU'S visitor arrivals bounced back strongly in October 2024, reaching 97.7% of the level seen in October 2019, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service.

The total number of visitor arrivals in October 2024 stood at 3,135,358, a 13.7% year-on-year increase and 24% month-on-month growth.

The recovery was driven by a 23.2% surge in same-day visitors to 1,789,072, while overnight visitors grew by a more modest 3.1% to 1,346,286. However, the average length of stay of visitors shortened by 0.1 days year-on-year to 1.1 days, with that of overnight visitors remaining unchanged at 2.3 days.

Mainland China remained the primary source market, with visitors from the mainland increasing by 16.1% year-on-year to 2,263,443.

International visitor arrivals also rebounded, climbing 31.2% year-on-year to 212,284, which was 98.8% of the October 2019 level. Key source

markets like the Philippines, Malaysia and India all posted solid gains, while Thailand saw a 14.5% drop.

In the first 10 months of 2024, total visitor arrivals went up by 28.1% year-on-year to 29,056,272, which was 87% of the figure in the same period in 2019. International visitor arrivals increased 85% year-on-year, 73.1% of the 2019 level.

The total number of visitor arrivals in Macau is projected to exceed the official target of 33 million, potentially reaching 34 million, according to Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, director of the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO).

Her remarks to the press are aligned with outgoing Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng's indication in a Legislative Assembly address earlier this week that visitor arrivals could indeed reach 34 million this year.

This updated projection follows the government's announcement that Macau had welcomed over 30 million tourists by Nov. 10. VC



BRIEFS

**HONG KONG:  
TOP IN FINANCE,  
TRADE, AND  
TOURISM**

Hong Kong leads the Greater Bay Area in financial services, trade, logistics, and tourism, according to the 2024 Greater Bay Area Industry Development Index. The city scored highly in its financial sector (82.6), trade and logistics (83), and culture and tourism (79.4), reflecting its global connectivity, efficient logistics, and cultural heritage.

**GUANGZHOU:  
\$31M INVESTMENT  
AT CONFERENCE**

The 2024 Global Investment Promotion Conference in Guangzhou saw 1,933 projects signed, totaling 2.26 trillion yuan (\$313.5 billion). A list of the top 100 foreign-invested enterprises in Guangdong was revealed, with investments totaling \$36.6 billion, each contributing over \$100 million to the province's economy.

**SHENZHEN:  
FORUM  
STRENGTHENS  
GBA-ASEAN TIES**

The 2024 ASEAN-China GBA Economic Cooperation Forum in Qianhai focused on "Technological Leadership, Industrial Synergy." The event featured discussions, networking, and cultural exchanges, culminating in 15 agreements worth nearly 30 billion yuan (\$4.14 billion) between GBA and ASEAN businesses and chambers of commerce.

**ZHUHAI:  
AIRSHOW SEES  
GUN SALE,  
SECURITY BREACH**

The 15th China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition, held in Zhuhai, concluded on November 17. A limited-edition semi-automatic firearm sold out in three days, reflecting demand for military memorabilia. However, the event was marred by a security breach involving a suspected spy who entered a restricted area with scanning equipment and examined military hardware before being escorted out.

# DIVERSIFYING BEYOND GAMING – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN REBRANDING MACAO

ANALYSIS  
BY CALVIN K IAO\*

As the city approaches the quarter-century mark of its return to China and prepares to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the SAR, it is worth examining the progress to-date and the challenges ahead. Macao's gaming sector has long been the backbone of its economy, fueling astonishing financial growth and shouldering the socio-economic development of the city for the past twenty plus years. The objective for Macao, since the liberalization of the gaming license back in 2002, has always been balancing moderate development with appropriate diversification. Where the need for diversification, in public opinion, was simply a slogan before, it has become a mandate more recently. With Macao looking to secure a more sustainable future, the government is pushing an ambitious agenda to diversify Macao's economy with the "1+4" strategy and rebrand Macao into a "World Centre of Tourism and Leisure". All in the name of reducing dependency on gaming and reliance on Mainland Chinese tourists.

Aligned with the re-opening of Macao's borders after the pandemic, the new 10-year casino concession started in 2023 on a high note. Unlike the first concession period, the requirement for diversification was loud and clear by the government administration. The strategy to get there, however, was debatable based on a recent set of interviews conducted for a doctoral thesis study.

The gaming industry has made Macao one of the wealthiest regions in the world, but the city's economy is highly susceptible to fluctuations in gaming revenue. In 2019, before the pandemic, more than 47% of the workforce was employed directly in the gaming industry, and another 34% worked in industries supporting the gaming sector, such as hotels and restaurants (Macao Statistics and Census Service [DSEC], 2020).

The government's vision for Macao includes expanding the meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions (MICE) sector, promoting sports, cultural and creative industries, and enhancing its appeal as a family-friendly destination. The vision also includes developing modern finance, high technology, and big health. This vision is a tall order, but the key questions remain: Who is responsible for fulfilling them? What are the expectations in terms of results, including the timeline and measurement?

Macao's transformation will not be without its hurdles. The city's strong brand as the gaming capital of the world has been deeply ingrai-



ned in the global consciousness. In just a few years after Macao was liberalized from the gaming monopoly, it had surpassed Las Vegas as the world's top gaming destination. Changing this perception will require a multifaceted approach, and it demands significant investment in non-gaming activities, infrastructure, and marketing. While the government's plans are well-intentioned, the challenges lie in how effectively

and efficiently these plans can be rolled out, and how competent the existing set of resources are to realize the government's vision. Improving infrastructure, expanding non-gaming sectors, and shifting public perception require a more coordinated execution and collaborative decision from all stakeholders. This is not a mission that can be fulfilled by one entity, or led by a single authority; the reality is that the skills

and experiences required cannot be found in one place.

The biggest contributors to the government's tax revenue are going to be the biggest collaborative partners in Macao's quest to diversify its economy, the six gaming concessionaires. This collaboration should be hand in glove, a well-orchestrated, financially rewarding, and mutually respectful partnership. Like a champion sports team, the concessionai-

## Hong Kong eyes growth in gold trading

ON THE AGENDA

Hong Kong is positioning itself as a global gold trading hub to diversify its financial landscape and capitalize on the precious metal's enduring appeal as a safe-haven investment. This move, announced by Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu, comes at a time of heightened geopolitical tensions and growing global demand for gold as a reserve asset.

As China Daily highlights, gold has long served as "a key safe-haven investment and an important anchor in the precious metals category."

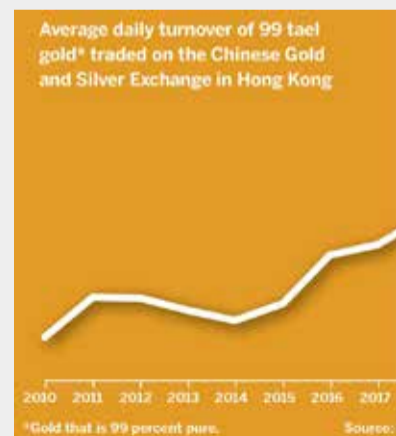
Beyond its value as jewelry and coins, it plays a critical role in reserve assets and fi-

ancial trading, enabling investors to manage risk through spot and futures contracts.

Hong Kong's Legislative Council member Tan Yueheng sees the initiative as a strategic opportunity to strengthen the city's position as a comprehensive financial center.

Tan notes that while Hong Kong has robust stock, bond, and currency markets, its commodity trading sector remains underdeveloped. Expanding the city's role in gold trading could attract investors and position Hong Kong as a critical node in the global gold market.

A cornerstone of the plan involves expanding the Hong Kong International Airport



(HKIA) Precious Metals Depository.

The facility's current capacity of 150 metric tons will be increased to 200 tons initially, with a long-term goal of reaching 1,000 tons. This expansion is expected to



# CHANGES AND



gaming for at least the duration of the current 10-year concession.

One of the most critical challenges in Macao's diversification efforts is the development of human capital. The gaming industry, while providing abundant low-skill, high-wage jobs, has inadvertently discouraged further education and skill development among locals. High wages for casino jobs have led many to forgo higher education, resulting in a lack of skilled professionals for other industries. This talent gap poses a significant barrier to the city's diversification ambitions.

Using Human Capital Theory (HCT) and Dynamic Capability Theory (DCT) to explore how Macao can address the skilled talent issue suggests that investing in education and creating professional development opportunities are crucial for equipping the local workforce with the skills needed to support a diversified economy. The government has already taken some steps in this direction. However, more proactive efforts are needed to foster a culture of knowledge acquisition and lifelong learning, and create pathways for local talent to thrive in non-gaming sectors. While these initiatives are important in developing local talents in the mid to long-term, policy changes that are more welcoming of international talents are necessary to address immediate talent shortage issues.

Finally, Macao's diversification efforts must also contend with increasing regional and global competition. Countries like Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam are rapidly

developing their own gaming and tourism industries, targeting the same high-spending clientele that Macao has traditionally relied on. As an opportunity to strengthen its competitiveness, Macao's pursuit of collaboration with its Greater Bay Area neighbors may open up new opportunities for MICE tourism, cultural exchanges, and cross-border investment. However, while regional collaboration is a promising approach, Macao's

## "The biggest contributors to the government's tax revenue are going to be the biggest collaborative partners in Macao's quest to diversify its economy, the six gaming concessionaires.

ability to foster independent growth will likely be tested as it continues to rely heavily on external partnerships to fuel its diversification efforts.

The doctoral study is rooted in Macao's long track record of heavy dependence on the gaming industry, which posed substantial risks to its economic and social stability. A downturn in this sector could have widespread consequences, making it crucial to understand the risks of such a concentrated economic model (Sheng & Gu, 2018; Hao et al., 2017). Diversifying the economy through strategic planning, infrastructure improvements, and addressing talent shortages is essential to reducing vulnerability to external threats (Greenwood & Dwyer, 2017; Wan

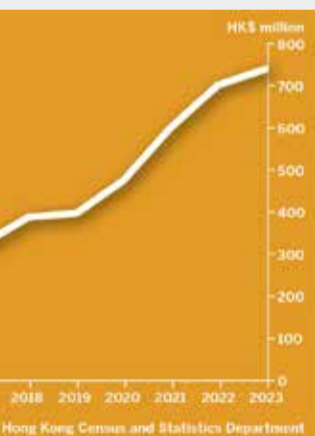
& Li, 2013).

The study will highlight several structural barriers such as competency gaps, infrastructure limitations, and talent shortage challenges that have stalled the diversified development of non-gaming sectors in the past and will likely continue inhibiting the city's ability to attract visitors from a wider set of international markets in the future. Macao must prioritize investments in infrastructure, develop targeted education and training programs, and foster stronger collaboration between the government and private sector. It should also leverage regional cooperation within the GBA while preserving Macao's unique cultural identity.

A strategic, integrated approach that aligns policy reforms, infrastructure development, and workforce training with the needs of emerging industries is vital. This will not only mitigate vulnerabilities tied to over-reliance on a single industry but also position Macao as a more dynamic, globally competitive economy. Success will ultimately depend on the government's ability to implement cohesive, long-term strategies that balance economic growth with social and cultural sustainability, securing prosperity for future generations.

\*Doctoral Candidate for Doctoral of Business Administration, Macau University of Science and Technology. This article is a summary of his research.

## amid global shifts



for Financial Services and the Treasury, stated that the initiative would enable "comprehensive multicurrency trading, clearing, and delivery," bolstering Hong Kong's regulatory framework and integrating advanced financial technologies.

Global demand for gold has surged amid concerns over geopolitical stability.

According to the World Gold Council, central banks purchased 1,037 tons of gold in 2022, the second-largest annual acquisition on record.

Many central banks,

wary of over-reliance on the U.S. dollar, continue to increase their gold reserves. In a recent survey, 29% of central banks planned further purchases within the next year, citing rising inflation and financial market uncertainties.

Goldman Sachs has projected that gold prices could soar to \$3,000 per troy ounce by the end of 2024, driven by growing concerns over U.S. debt sustainability.

Hong Kong's open and tax-friendly financial environment makes it an attractive hub for investors seeking geographic diversification of their gold assets.

Vivian Cheung Kar-

-fay, acting CEO of the Airport Authority, noted that Hong Kong's secure storage facilities have seen heightened interest in recent years.

The city's proximity to major gold consumption markets like mainland China and India strengthens its strategic position. Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po added that turnover of 99% pure gold on the Chinese Gold and Silver Exchange has achieved an 18% annual growth rate over the past decade.

To address logistical challenges, Tan suggested building internationally recognized warehouses and collaborating with mainland institutions like the Shanghai

Gold Exchange.

Fang Zhou, of the One Country Two Systems Research Institute, emphasized the importance of complementing mainland futures markets and proposed creating a special cooperation zone near the Hong Kong-Shenzhen border to facilitate physical delivery.

As geopolitical uncertainties drive up demand for gold, Hong Kong's initiative could cement its status as a global gold trading hub. By leveraging its strategic location and financial infrastructure, the city aims to establish itself as a key player in the international gold market.

MDT/CHINA DAILY

### BRIEFS

#### FOSHAN: GLOBAL WING CHUN COMPETITION

The 2024 International Wing Chun Competition will take place in Foshan starting Dec 12. This year's event introduces standardized rules, with five categories including routines, Chi Sao, power skill, combat, and the all-around competition. It's organized by the International Wushu Federation and China's Wushu Administration.

#### HUIZHOU: THIRD TALENT WEEK FOR PROFESSIONALS

Huizhou's third Talent Week, starting Nov 11, connects professionals from diverse fields with career opportunities in the city. Activities include a satellite event at Hong Kong Science Park on Nov 25, designed to foster innovation and technology collaboration between Hong Kong and Huizhou.

#### DONGGUAN: BANK ISSUES \$552M I&T BONDS

The Bank of Dongguan issued 4 billion yuan (\$552.27 million) in innovation and technology-themed bonds, marking a new financial approach for the city. The bonds, with a three-year maturity and a 2.3% coupon rate, demonstrate strong market acceptance, helping support I&T sector development.

#### ZHONGSHAN: INVESTMENT PUSH IN YANGTZE DELTA

Zhongshan's recent Business Environment Promotion Conference in Shanghai led to 17 project contracts with Shanghai companies. The projects span sectors such as new energy, biomedicine, and the low-altitude economy, aiming to bolster Zhongshan's manufacturing industry and regional investment.

#### JIANGMEN: MOTORCYCLE RESEARCH AND MANUFACTURING HUB

Jiangmen is investing 1 billion yuan (\$139 million) in a new motorcycle research and manufacturing base, set to produce 200,000 motorcycles annually in its first phase. The project will help boost the city's economy, which already hosts two of China's top 10 motorcycle exporters.

#### ZHAOQING: EUROPEAN-STANDARD CHARGING STATION

A new multi-functional charging station in Zhaoqing, which meets European standards, began operations on Nov 7. Located near the Seven Star Rocks tourist spot, the station offers ultrafast charging and battery swapping for electric vehicles, enabling full charges in 10 minutes or swaps in three minutes.

enhance services like insurance, testing, certification, and logistics, creating a comprehensive ecosystem for gold trading and storage.

Joseph Chan Holim, Undersecretary



DIPLOMACY

# Lula welcomes Xi for state visit as ties between countries strengthen

ELÉONORE HUGHES,  
RIO DE JANEIRO

**B**RAZILIAN President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva yesterday [Macau time] welcomed President Xi Jinping for a state visit at the Alvorada Palace in Brasilia, the latest sign of deepening ties between the two countries that analysts say may accelerate as Donald Trump returns to the White House in 2025.

China overtook the U.S. as Brazil's biggest export market in 2009. Since then, the links between the two nations have strengthened in trade and investment — and yesterday the two leaders signed 37 agreements in areas ranging from trade and tourism to agriculture, industry, science and technology, health, energy, culture and education.

That reflects a broader trend, experts said. Last week, Xi inaugurated a \$1.3 billion megaport in Peru, perhaps the clearest sign of Latin America's reorientation.

"Latin America has always been forgotten by the United States and the European Union. Who fills that void? China," said Flavia Loss, an international relations professor at Foundation School of Sociology and Politics in Sao Paulo.

"Donald Trump's election is



Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, center, stands alongside China's President Xi Jinping during a welcoming ceremony at the Alvorada palace in Brasilia

already accelerating this proximity. We're clearly seeing it happening now, live," she added.

The state visit by the Chinese leader comes more than a year after Lula visited China seeking to strengthen ties and mend relations with its biggest trade partner after a rocky period under his predecessor, Jair Bolsonaro.

Repairing relations with China is also part of his strategy to replace Brazil on the international scene after a

period of isolation under Bolsonaro who showed little interest in global affairs.

In remarks to journalists, Lula said that what China and Brazil do together "reverberates around the world" highlighting the collaboration of both countries within the United Nations and BRICS group of developing nations.

Xi referred to China and Brazil as "reliable friends with a shared destiny and positive forces to promote peace."

From January to October

2024, trade between the countries amounted to \$136.3 billion, according to a Nov. 13 statement from Brazil's presidential palace.

"Since 2004, when President Lula visited China for the first time, bilateral trade has grown more than 17 times. Exports to China were greater than the sum of our sales to the United States and the European Union," Eduardo Saboia, secretary for Asia and the Pacific at the ministry of foreign affairs, said in the sta-

tement.

China has been pressuring Brazil to join its Belt and Road Initiative, BRI, which started as a program for Chinese companies to build transportation, energy and other infrastructure around the world.

While initially cautious, Brazil has considered the idea and is seeking partners in areas such as funds to limit human-caused climate change and finance adaptation measures, said Pedro Brites, an expert on China at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, a university and think tank in Sao Paulo.

"But Brazil, as this state visit shows, has managed to seal good agreements with China without having joined, so I don't know if the gain is still worth it in Brazil's calculation," he added.

While Trump's return to the White House may accelerate the proximity between China and Brazil, adhering too much to Chinese leadership could come with a cost for the South American nation, causing rifts with Washington and European nations, said Brites.

"Brazil will maintain its rapprochement and bargain to a certain extent, but I think there will be a limit," he added.

MDT/AP

HONG KONG

# Lai denies he asked a newspaper colleague to draft list of sanction targets

**F**ORMER publisher Jimmy Lai denied that he asked a colleague to draft a list of potential sanction targets in his second day of testimony yesterday at his landmark national security trial in Hong Kong.

The 77-year-old founder of the now-shuttered Apple Daily pro-democracy newspaper is being tried on charges of colluding with foreign forces to endanger national security and conspiring with others to issue seditious publications. He was arrested in 2020 in a politi-

cal crackdown following massive anti-government protests in 2019. If convicted, he faces up to life in prison.

The testimony highlighted WhatsApp conversations between Lai and Apple Daily's ex-associate publisher Chan Pui-man. She was one of six former Apple Daily executives who pleaded guilty to conspiring with Lai to call for sanctions or a blockade or to engage in other hostile activities against Hong Kong or China.

Lai's lawyer Steven Kwan showed the mes-



sages in court after Chan earlier in the trial said that Lai had suggested the newspaper prepare a sanction list after then-

-President Donald Trump signed a directive seeking to punish those the U.S. government determines have helped to curtail

Hong Kong's civil liberties.

Lai said Thursday he did not write that message and had just copied and pasted the text he received from a person he suspected was connected with the White House. He said he did not read the full text thoroughly before forwarding it. He said the text "sounds so foreign to me."

Kwan said Lai sent the same message to several pro-democracy politicians, including Lee Wing-tat. Asked whether he intended to ask Lee to work up such a list, Lai answered "that would be ridiculous."

After the security law was enacted in June 2020, the Trump administration imposed sanctions on Hong Kong officials, accusing them of cooperating

with Beijing's effort to undermine autonomy and crack down on freedom in the city.

Authorities have used the law to prosecute Lai and other leading activists. Under the threat of the law, dozens of civil society groups disbanded and some other activists were forced into self-exile. Apple Daily closed in 2021 following the arrests of some of its senior managers.

The court also heard Lai had reminded his staff working on international news not to go against Trump in 2020 when they were hoping Trump would do something to stop the national security law. Lai said he did not interfere with the way those journalists worked until the law loomed. MDT/AP



ASEAN

# Defense chiefs discuss regional security with China, US and other partner nations

JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI,  
VIENTIANE

**S**OUTHEAST Asian defense chiefs met yesterday with China, the United States and other partner nations in Laos for security talks, which come as Beijing's increasingly assertive stance in its claim to most of the South China Sea is leading to more confrontations.

The closed-door talks put U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun in the same room a day after Dong refused a request to meet with Austin one-on-one on the sidelines of the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meetings.

The U.S. and China have been working to improve frayed military-to-military communications and Austin said he regretted Dong's decision, calling it "a setback for the whole region."

The ASEAN meetings come as member nations are looking warily toward the change in Ame-



rican administrations at a time of increasing maritime disputes with China. The U.S. has firmly pushed a "free and open Indo-Pacific" policy under outgoing President Joe Biden and it is not yet clear how the incoming administration of President-elect Donald Trump will address the South China Sea situation.

In addition to the United States and China, other nations attending the ASEAN meeting from outside Southeast Asia include Japan, South Korea, India, Russia,

Australia and New Zealand.

The meetings with the ASEAN dialogue partners were also expected address tensions in the Korean Peninsula, the Russia-Ukraine war, and wars in the Middle East.

Before heading to Laos, Austin concluded meetings in Australia with officials there and with Japan's defense minister. They pledged to support ASEAN and expressed their "serious concern about destabilizing actions in the East and South China Seas,

including dangerous conduct by the People's Republic of China against Philippines and other coastal state vessels."

Along with the Philippines, ASEAN members Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei have competing claims with China in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims almost entirely as its own territory.

Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos are the other ASEAN members.

As China has grown more assertive in pushing its territorial claims in recent years, it and ASEAN have been negotiating a code of conduct to govern behavior in the sea, but progress has been slow.

Officials have agreed to try to complete the code by 2026, but talks have been hampered by thorny issues, including disagreements over whether the pact should be binding.

Chinese and Philippine vessels have clashed repeatedly this year,

and Vietnam in October charged that Chinese forces assaulted its fishermen in disputed areas in the South China Sea. China has also sent patrol vessels to areas that Indonesia and Malaysia claim as their exclusive economic zones.

Another thorny regional issue is the civil war and humanitarian crisis in ASEAN member Myanmar. The group's credibility has been severely tested by the war in Myanmar, where the army ousted an elected government in 2021, and fighting has continued with pro-democracy guerillas and ethnic rebels.

More than a year into an offensive initiated by three militias and joined by other resistance groups, observers estimate the military controls less than half the country.

Myanmar military rulers have been barred from ASEAN meetings since late 2021, but this year the country has been represented by high-level bureaucrats, including at the summit in October. **MDT/AP**

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





HAITI

# Russia and China oppose changing the Kenya-led force for UN mission

EDITH M. LEDERER,  
UNITED NATIONS

**R**USSIA and China yesterday [Macau time] opposed a U.S.-led campaign to transform the Kenya-led multinational force in Haiti helping police to tackle escalating gang violence into a U.N. peacekeeping mission.

The two allies called a U.N. Security Council meeting as gangs have intensified attacks, shooting at four aircraft which has shut the airport in the capital Port-au-Prince, and attacking its upscale neighborhood Petionville on Tuesday. The U.N. estimates the gangs control 85% of the capital and have spread into surrounding areas.

The United States proposed a U.N. peacekeeping mission in early September as one way to secure regular financing for the U.N.-backed multinational force, which faces a serious funding crisis.

The U.S. tried to get the 15-member U.N. Security Council to sign off on a draft resolution last week to start the transformation. But Russia and China refused to discuss the resolution and instead called for the council meeting where they made their opposition clear.

China's Deputy U.N. Ambassador Geng Shuang said the council extended the mandate of the multinational force only a month ago, and discussing its transformation to a peacekeeping operation now "will only interfere" and make it harder to tackle its funding shortfall and get all the police pledged to Haiti.

Peacekeepers should only be deployed when there is peace to keep, and there is no peace in Haiti, Geng stressed. "Deploying a peacekeeping operation at this time is nothing more than putting peacekeepers into the front line of the battles with gangs."

The multinational force was supposed to have 2,500 international police but the head of the U.N.'s political mission in Haiti, Maria Isabel Salvador, told the council late last month that only around 430 are deployed — some 400 from Kenya and the rest from the Bahamas, Belize and Jamaica.



Police officers man a checkpoint checking for weapons, in the Petion-Ville of Port-au-Prince

She said the U.N. trust fund that finances the multinational force and relies on voluntary contributions, "remains critically under-resourced." By last week, the trust fund had received \$85.3 million of the \$96.8 million pledged. The U.S. agreed to contribute \$300 million to the force, but that total is still far below the \$600 million cost to deploy a 2,500-strong force for a year.

Russia's Deputy U.N. Ambassador Dmitry Polyansky, expressing "shock and horror" at what's happening on the streets of Port-au-Prince, accused the U.S. and other countries that initially supported the multinational force of failing to fund it.

"Conditions on the ground in Haiti are not appropriate for U.N. peacekeepers," he said. "Their role is to maintain peace and not to fight crime in urban areas or to save a dysfunctional state that has been plunged into domestic conflict."

Whatever the future international presence in Haiti, Polyansky said Haitians need urgent assistance immediately which means providing the multinational force with the necessary materiel, funding and technical expertise. "Otherwise, quite simply, there will be just nobody left to host any future peacekeepers," he said.

Haiti's leaders have asked for a U.N. peacekeeping force,

and the permanent council of the Organization of American States adopted a resolution on Nov. 13 entitled "In Support of Haiti's Request for a United States Peacekeeping Operation."

At the council meeting, there was also strong support for the transformation.

Monica Juma, national security adviser to Kenya's president, told the council that joint operations by the multinational force and the Haitian police have secured critical infrastructure including the police academy, national palace, national hospital and port.

But it's evident the multinational force urgently needs "a surge," she said, and Kenya looks forward to additional deployments in the shortest possible time along with contributions of equipment and logistical support.

At the same time, Juma said, Kenya "strongly supports" the Haitian government's appeal to the Security Council to authorize planning for the transformation of the multinational force to a U.N. peacekeeping force.

U.S. deputy ambassador Dorothy Shea told the council that with Haitian, regional and Kenyan support, "it is time for the Security Council to act to take the initial steps to realize Haiti's request to help reestablish security for the people of Haiti."

Transitioning to a U.N. pea-

cekeeping mission, she said, would facilitate the multinational force and the countries supporting it "to take advantage of existing U.N. financial, personnel, and logistical support structures as well as predictable and sustainable financing."

The most poignant appeal for a peacekeeping force came from Haitian Dr. Bill Pape, who left Port-au-Prince about two weeks ago where he works to combat infectious and chronic diseases. He is also a professor at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York.

Pape said he came with a message to the Security Council: The Haitian police and multinational force "are outgunned and outnumbered."

He said he recognized the controversies of previous peacekeeping missions in Haiti. The most recent, from 2004-2017, was marred by allegations of sexual assault and the introduction of cholera, which killed nearly 10,000 people.

But Pape stressed that during previous foreign interventions, which date to the early 1900s, "insecurity did not exist at this scale."

"I trust that seeking your support to restore security in my country is not asking too much," he told council members. "It is a difficult task for any Haitian to request foreign troops on our soil. But there is no alternative." **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1963 KENNEDY SHOT DEAD IN DALLAS



The President of the United States has been assassinated by a gunman in Dallas, Texas.

John F. Kennedy was hit in the head and throat when three shots were fired at his open-topped car.

The presidential motorcade was travelling through the main business area of the city.

Texas Governor John Connally was also seriously injured when one of the unknown sniper's bullets hit him in the back.

The men were accompanied by their wives, who were both uninjured.

Vice-president Lyndon Johnson - who was following in a different car - has been sworn in as the new US leader.

The presidential party was driving from Dallas airport to the city centre when witnesses said shots were fired from the window of a building overlooking the road.

The president collapsed into Jackie Kennedy's arms, who was heard to cry "Oh no". Seconds later Governor Connally was also hit.

Dallas Times Herald photographer Bob Jackson was in the motorcade close behind the Democrat leader's car and heard the shots as it entered Dealey Plaza.

"As I looked up I saw a rifle being pulled back from a window - it might have been resting on the windowsill - I didn't see a man," he said.

Mr Kennedy's limousine was driven at speed to Parklands Hospital immediately after the shooting.

The president was alive when he was admitted, but died at 1400 local time (1900 GMT) - 35 minutes after being shot.

Police and Secret Service agents stormed the School Book Depository building moments after the shots were fired and recovered a rifle with a telescopic sight, said to be the assassination weapon.

The mood of shock in the US was echoed by Senator Mike Mansfield in an emergency forum of the senate.

"This is terrible - I cannot find words," he said.

CourtesyBBCNews

## IN CONTEXT

A little under an hour after the shooting, a policeman approached Lee Harvey Oswald, believing he recognised his description.

The policeman was shot dead. Oswald was arrested almost immediately under suspicion of murder.

Shortly afterwards, he was also charged with the assassination of President Kennedy.

The suspect was never tried as he was shot dead himself two days later by nightclub owner Jack Ruby.

The Warren Report, commissioned to investigate the president's death, concluded he had been killed by shots fired by Mr Oswald from the School Book Depository building. But conspiracy enthusiasts quickly turned the assassination into one of the most disputed events in modern history, with theories ranging from claims it was an elaborately staged suicide to the driver being the murderer.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

## YOUR STARS

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Consider educational matters. Exploration entices over the next month, with the Sun in Sagittarius. Discover new ideas, flavors and cultures. Expand your sphere of influence.

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20  
Prioritize financial collaboration. Work together to manage resources over the next month. It's easier to make money with your partner under the Sagittarius Sun.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21  
You're energized! Collaboration, fun and romance flower as you begin a four-week partnership phase. Build for a future together. Discuss the possibilities. Coordinate actions.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
There's plenty of work and it pays. You're especially busy this next month under the Sagittarius Sun. Practice healthy exercise routines. You're growing stronger.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
You're especially attractive, and attracted. Prioritize fun, romance and passion. Love energizes your actions under the Sagittarius Sun for the next month. Creativity flourishes.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
Fix up your place. Household revisions take priority this month. Domestic renovation and reorganization benefit your home and family under the Sagittarius Sun.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
Follow your curiosity over the next month. The Sun in Sagittarius inspires creativity and communication. Write, craft and shape your story. Network and connect.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
Take care of business. It's easier to make money under the Sagittarius Sun. Energize lucrative actions. Your work's in demand. Take advantage of profitable opportunities.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
Explore possibilities. Enjoy an advantage, with the Sun in your sign for a month. Cloak yourself in confidence and power, piloting your own ship.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
Think things over. This month under the Sagittarius Sun favors peaceful planning and reflection. Enjoy a contemplative phase. Listen to your own spirit.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
Connect and collaborate. Your team is red hot over the next month, with the Sun in Sagittarius. Networking presents exciting opportunities. Share with friends.

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
Maintain healthy practices despite a busy work schedule. Your career takes off with the Sun in Sagittarius for a month. Reduce stress with exercise.

## The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



## SUDOKU

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

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

## WEATHER

|              | MIN | MAX | CONDITION |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----------|
| <b>CHINA</b> |     |     |           |
| Beijing      | 1   | 11  | fine      |
| Changchun    | -8  | 1   | fine      |
| Chengdu      | 8   | 17  | cloudy    |
| Chongqing    | 12  | 16  | overcast  |
| Fuzhou       | 15  | 21  | fine      |
| Guangzhou    | 15  | 23  | cloudy    |
| Guiyang      | 7   | 12  | overcast  |
| Haikou       | 20  | 23  | rain      |
| Hangzhou     | 9   | 16  | fine      |
| Harbin       | -9  | -2  | fine      |
| Hefei        | 4   | 17  | cloudy    |
| Nanjing      | 6   | 16  | cloudy    |
| Shanghai     | 10  | 17  | fine      |
| Taipei       | 18  | 20  | rain      |
| Wuhan        | 7   | 18  | cloudy    |
| Hong Kong    | 21  | 24  | sunny     |
| <b>WORLD</b> |     |     |           |
| Moscow       | 0   | 1   | snow      |
| Frankfurt    | 2   | 4   | snow      |
| Paris        | 1   | 3   | snow      |
| London       | 2   | 6   | cloudy    |
| New York     | 4   | 7   | showers   |

## CROSSWORDS

**ACROSS** 1- Vessel; 5- Male voice; 10- Some are pale; 14- Captain of the Nautilus; 15- Boxing venue; 16- Precisely; 17- Sea east of the Caspian; 18- Jockey; 19- Deep affection; 20- Parcel; 22- Legislative bodies; 24- "Wheel of Fortune" buy; 25- Fuel type; 26- Abilities; 30- Unidentified woman; 34- Put \_\_\_ on it!; 35- Begets; 37- E-mail command; 38- Great Lakes canals; 39- Immediately; 40- \_\_\_ kwon do; 41- Color quality; 43- Curved moldings; 45- "\_\_\_ Brockovich"; 46- Trap; 48- Correspondences; 50- Curved bone; 51- Dead heat; 52- Swampfever; 56- Began; 60- All-male; 61- Wave-related; 63- Writer Ephron; 64- Bestow; 65- Battery pole; 66- Years in old Rome; 67- Prepared to drive; 68- Enticed; 69- Untruths, tells falsehoods;

**DOWN** 1- Ginger cookie; 2- Zeus's wife; 3- Colorful computer; 4- Danced to the accordion, perhaps; 5- Goals; 6- Pennsylvania port; 7- Beatty of "Superman"; 8- Singles; 9- Krypton, for one; 10- Books of maps; 11- Booty; 12- Gutter location; 13- Canonized Fr. women; 21- \_\_\_Margret; 23- Bert Bobbsey's twin; 26- Flavor; 27- Crazy as \_\_\_; 28- Big cats; 29- Burn slightly; 30- Gem; 31- Reason \_\_\_; 32- TV studio sign; 33- Perfect places; 36- Caviar; 42- Livid; 43- Describing the path of a satellite; 44- Colonized; 45- Endless; 47- Publicize; 49- Acapulco aunt; 52- High-ranking NCO; 53- End in \_\_\_ (draw); 54- Wash, in France; 55- Hokkaido native; 56- "Smooth Operator" singer; 57- Author Morrison; 58- Fish-eating eagle; 59- Orator station; 62- Type of mouse;



## 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

# NETFLIX'S 'JOY' IS A LOUD CHEER FOR FERTILITY, FOR NEVER GIVING UP — AND SCIENCE

MARK KENNEDY, MDT/AP  
ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

TOWARD the end of Netflix's "Joy," the muffled cry of a newborn baby prompts a man and woman in a hospital to embrace out of pure bliss. They aren't the parents, but they had as much to do with the birth as the mom and dad.

This charming and winning movie charts the decade-long true story of how the world's first IVF baby was born in England in 1978 — a 5-pound, 12-ounce girl who paved the way for millions more. It's an upbeat, very English affair, mixing sober discussion of endometriosis with chocolate biscuits.

The couple embracing that day were pioneering scientist Robert Edwards and Jean Purdy, a young nurse and embryologist. Together with surgeon Patrick Steptoe, the trio succeeded with in vitro fertilization. Edwards would go on to win the Nobel Prize.

"Joy" has been birthed at a time when science is under threat in America — even IVF — so it's downright inspiring to see plucky, smart



James Norton, from left, Bill Nighy and Thomasin McKenzie in a scene from "Joy" (Netflix)

scientists working hard to change the world. "What we're doing, it matters," says Steptoe, played with quiet economy by Bill Nighy.

"Joy" is the personal stories of the three scientists — mostly through the eyes of Purdy, a polite lab-coated warrior. "If I hear a commotion, I'm not very good at staying out of it," she says. Perfectly played by Thomasin McKenzie, Purdy is both vulnerable and strong, learning throu-

gh the process to be a better human. James Norton plays Edwards with charm, self-doubt and calm spirit.

Jack Thorne's script nicely explains the massive pressure the trio faced. IVF may have become common and uncontroversial over the last decades, but back in the late '70s it was experimental and shunned. The Anglican church called it a sin, the newspapers labeled it Frankenstein-ish and other scientists warned

of freak babies.

Purdy, a single woman as the swinging '60s lead to the '70s, is exiled by her own pious mother — "You can't play God with this," the elder woman tells her daughter — and disinvited by her church. No matter. "This fight is ours. We don't have a choice," Purdy says. The film also celebrates the brave would-be mothers who volunteered their bodies to be poked and prodded at the

edge of science.

Director Ben Taylor keeps the story small and intimate, a series of vignettes adding up to almost like a play. It features moments of quiet and polite bravery, and small conversations over a pint of ale — a reminder of the power of performances and that changing the world doesn't need a muscle-bound bro with X-ray vision.

It's held together by a superb soundtrack with witty selections like "Yes We Can Can" by Lee Dorsey, "Nobody But Me" by The Human Beinz and "Here Comes the Sun" by George Harrison, each song encapsulating the moment in time, like pearls on a strand.

"Joy" is not all joy. There is frustration and loss and tears along the way, but it is a triumphant film about the way humans can make the world better and how a baby's cry can be a priceless gift.

"Joy," a Netflix release, is rated PG-13 for "thematic material brief strong language, some sexual references and surgery images." Running time: 115 minutes. ★★★★★

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TASTE OF EDESIA

# Authentic Italian

IRENE SAM, MDT

**V**ISTA, Hong Kong's premier destination for authentic Italian cuisine, announces an exciting update to its à la carte fixed-price menu, offering an elevated dining experience against the stunning backdrop of glittering panoramic views of Victoria Harbour and Hong Kong Island.

Nestled high above the city atop One Peking in Tsim Sha Tsui, Vista continues to epitomise 'The Real Italian Deal' with the best Italian cuisine crafted by Italians. The refreshed fixed-price menu showcases this unwavering commitment to authentic Italian gastronomy through carefully curated dishes that emphasise traditional ingredients with contemporary culinary techniques and theatrical table-side preparations.

One can choose from two, three or four courses from an extensive menu of crowd-pleasing starters, pasta and risotto, main dishes and dessert. Each course includes at least five options, so guests are guaranteed to find their favourites.

To elevate this culinary experience, Vista is delighted to welcome Chef Matteo Caripoli, the renowned Head Chef from its sister restaurant Cantina. With his deep passion and commitment to Ita-

lian cuisine, Chef Matteo will bring his expertise to Vista, crafting a menu that celebrates the richness of Italian culinary traditions.

Among the standout offerings is the Tableside Fassona beef tartare, featuring premium organic Italian Fassona beef from Piedmont, known for its exceptional flavour profile. This signature dish is expertly prepared before guests' eyes, seasoned with a captivating blend of quail egg, lemon peel, anchovy, capers, shallot and chives, finished with extra virgin olive oil and white balsamic vinegar and then served alongside house-baked sea salt potato crisps.

Highlights from the pasta and risotto selection include the rich Risotto with saffron and osso buco, where the precious spice imparts its distinctive golden hue and exotic flavour to perfectly cooked risotto. The intense flavour of the braised veal shanks further elevates the dish, which is best enjoyed by digging out the bone marrow and mixing it with the risotto.

The luxurious Lobster and lime linguine showcases daily house-made pasta tossed with Canadian Boston lobster and Sicilian cherry tomatoes, punctuated by fresh lime zest for the ultimate umami experience. Main courses feature the impressive 450g breaded veal "Elephant ear" cutlet with semi-

-dried tomato, fried rosemary and smoked salt, a classic Veal Milanese that undergoes a meticulous preparation – first hand-massaged for tenderness and then deep-fried with clarified butter for a distinctive nutty flavour.

The Flaming salt-baked sea bass with vegetable caponata and salmoriglio sauce is a whole wild Italian fish with a firm texture marinated with rosemary and lemon to elevate its umami flavour. Smothered in sea salt, the fish is encrusted and deboned in front of guests, accompanied with a side of caponata, a traditional Italian assorted vegetable stew.

The dining experience reaches a sweet crescendo with Vista's signature Tableside tiramisu, offered in three variations – Classic, Pistachio and Hazelnut – with freshly brewed espresso-soaked ladyfingers and mascarpone cream.

The authentic Sicilian cannoli presents a perfect harmony of crispy house-made pastry with rich ricotta cheese, Italian Bronte pistachios and premium cocoa powder.

Guests are also invited to stay tuned for an upcoming selection of specially crafted non-alcoholic drinks and signature cocktails to complement the comprehensive wine list of New and Old World favourites.



Chef Matteo Caripoli

BOOK IT

## 'How to Think Like Socrates' leaves readers with questions

**T**HE lessons of Socrates have never really gone out of style, but if there's ever a perfect time to revisit the ancient philosopher, now is it.

In "How to Think Like Socrates: Ancient Philosophy as a Way of Life in the Modern World," Donald J. Robertson describes Socrates' Athens in terms that seem all too familiar: a society recovering from a pandemic where people's trust in government is shaken, and an extremely polarized split between political factions.

Despite its title, Robertson's book isn't so-

lently a self-help guide based on ancient philosophy. Robertson's book is certainly easier than slogging through Plato and multiple volumes of ancient Greek history.

But the book is inconsistent and difficult to follow sometimes, as it bounces from an easy distillation of Socrates' philosophy to an all-too-detailed history of ancient Greece. Some of the history is understandably needed to give context to Socrates, but often it feels as though Robertson is writing two separate books for two different audiences.

The explanation of

Socrates, particularly a section walking readers through the Socratic Method — the question-based method Socrates used to teach students — is the strongest portion of Robertson's book. The book offers a solid biography of Socrates and his times, but it could use some work weaving in the modern-day application of his lessons.

Robertson easily demonstrates throughout the book how Socratic philosophy can be used for addressing fear, including anxiety over death. His lessons on how to defend ourselves against rhetoric are par-

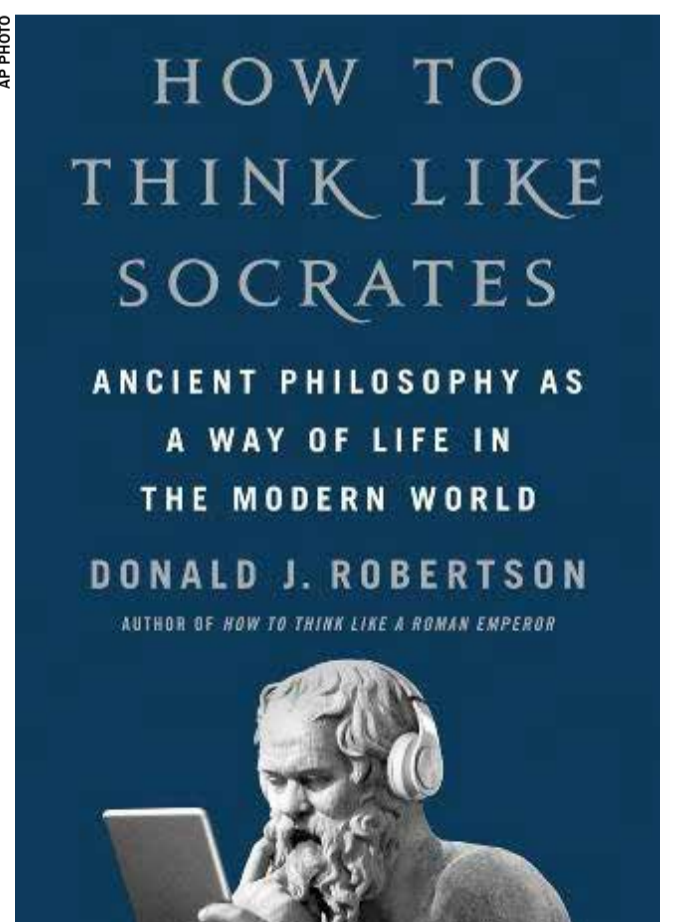
ticularly timely in an era of rampant misinformation.

Robertson also successfully explains to readers why they should be skeptical of the sweeping generalizations offered by self-help books.

"Wisdom requires being able to identify when a rule no longer holds true, and good advice becomes bad advice," he writes.

Through Robertson is able to underscore how timeless Socrates' advice remains, his book could stand to be more accessible for readers hoping to find that advice. **ANDREW DEMILLO, MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



"How to Think Like Socrates: Ancient Philosophy as a Way of Life in the Modern World" by Donald J. Robertson (St. Martin's Press)



**OPINION**

**Business Views**

Shuli Ren, Bloomberg



**No, China Doesn't Really Have a Debt Crisis**

China is sitting on a lot of debt after a multi-decade infrastructure boom. Public borrowings hover at around 120% of gross domestic product, while a broad measure of the fiscal deficit exceeds 10%. These statistics, coupled with a slowing economy, have ignited anxiety in Beijing over whether a debt crisis is looming. Any large-scale stimulus will only lead to more buildups and ultimately threaten financial security, the thinking goes.

As a result, Beijing has been gun-shy even while recognizing in late September that more fiscal spending is needed to meet its growth target. Since then, only a 10 trillion yuan (\$1.4 trillion) local debt swap program has been announced. Regional governments will be able to save some money on interest payments, which in turn allows them to settle overdue bills to suppliers and unpaid salaries to civil servants. But this initiative offers no new borrowings and therefore should not be counted as fiscal stimulus.

Indeed, economists have stepped back their stimulus expectations. For next year, Goldman Sachs Group Inc. sees China's total fiscal deficit, including off-balance-sheet municipal borrowings, widening by only 1.8 percentage points to 13%. Net bond issuance from local government financing vehicles will likely continue to shrink, as Beijing reins in hidden municipal debt.

But worrying over deleveraging now is bad fiscal management. In a recession, households save for a rainy day, which means the public sector must spend to avoid a deflationary spiral. China is doing the very opposite.

The central government has limited infrastructure spending in 12 provinces that it deems as high risk and prone to defaults, as a quick and easy fix to slow their debt increases. However, this measure alone can drag an entire region into a deep recession while local officials are still figuring out ways to diversify their economy.

In southwestern Yunnan province, over 30% of GDP was propped up by infrastructure investment in 2023, which fell 11.4% last year and 9% in the first half this year, according to Moody's Investors Service. New to high-end manufacturing, which Beijing is keen to cultivate and willing to fund, Yunnan hasn't found another growth engine. As a result, its economy grew only 3.5% in the first half, well below the national average. The central government's austerity measure is counterproductive and only worsening the province's ability to service debt.

It's also ludicrous to judge whether a debt crisis is looming based purely on simple accounting metrics such as debt-to-GDP ratios, which reflect what happened in the past. Instead, Beijing should think about what to do with the asset side of its balance sheet in the future.

Unlike Western nations that borrowed to fund recurrent government expenditures — think of the Greek pension system in the 2000s — the Chinese government has a different calculus. It levered up to build infrastructure and big corporations. As a result, Beijing owns a lot of stuff, from toll roads to hospitals to banks. Its net book equity might be as high as 170 trillion yuan, or about 140% of GDP, according to Gavekal Dragonomics. Now whether the book value of these assets can be realized is debatable, but a deflationary environment is definitely not good for asset sales.

This time, the interests of private enterprises and the state are well-aligned. Deflation is hard on businesses and the indebted. Both debt servicing and asset disposals become difficult. Tax revenue is falling, but municipalities have the same nominal amount to repay. So why is Beijing still hesitating?

Courtesy Bloomberg/Shuli Ren

**\$344 FOR A COFFEE? SCOTTISH FARM IS SELLING UK'S MOST EXPENSIVE CUP**

It's an enormous price to pay for a little cup of coffee, but the man behind the pitch promises it won't leave a bitter taste behind as it comes with the sweetener of a share of a dairy farm.

A Scottish dairy is offering what it bills as the U.K.'s most expensive cup o' joe: 272 British pounds (\$344) for a flat white — a double shot of espresso topped with a layer of steamed milk and a fleeting work of foam art.

The costly cup is actually a perk for purchasing shares in Mossgiel Organic Dairy's crowdfunding campaign to enlarge its sus-

tainable operation and produce more milk. Investors who buy 34 shares in the farm get a certificate for a flat white that can be redeemed starting this weekend at one of 13 coffee shops in Scotland that use the dairy's milk.

"This coffee costs nearly 80 times the price of an average flat white in the U.K. — but it's much more than just a lovely drink," said owner Bryce Cunningham. "We know it sounds crazy, but when you break it down, it's a pretty good deal. How much is the future of farming worth?"

THE BUZZ



Foreign tourists have a drink at a night club at Nana Backpacker hostel in Vang Vieng

**AUSTRALIAN TOURIST DIES AFTER DRINKING TAINTED ALCOHOL IN LAOS**

DAVID RISING, VIENTIANE

An Australian teenager has died after drinking tainted alcohol in Laos in what Australia's prime minister yesterday called every parent's nightmare. An American and two Danish tourists also died, officials said after reports that multiple people had been sickened in town popular with backpackers.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told Parliament that 19-year-old Bianca Jones had died after being evacuated from Vang Vieng, Laos for treatment in a Thai hospital. Her friend, also 19, remains hospitalized in neighboring Thailand.

"This is every parent's very worst fear and a nightmare that no one should have to endure," Albanese said. "We also take this moment to say that we're thinking of Bianca's friend Holly Bowles who is fighting for her life."

They are believed to have consumed drinks tainted with methanol, which is sometimes added to mixed-drinks at disreputable bars as a cheaper alternative to ethanol, but can cause severe poisoning or death.

Telephone numbers listed for Laos' Health Ministry did not work and police refused to com-

ment on the incident.

Australia said "several foreign nationals" had also been victims of methanol poisoning. The U.S. State Department confirmed that an American had also died in Vang Vieng, and Denmark's Foreign Ministry said two of its citizens had also died in "the incident in Laos," but neither would comment directly on a link to the methanol poisoning that killed Jones.

Shaun Bowles told reporters outside Bangkok Hospital on Wednesday that his daughter remained in critical condition and on life support.

"We just like to thank everyone from back home for all of the support and love that we're receiving," he said. "But we'd also like the people to appreciate right now, we just need privacy so we can spend as much time as we can with Holly."

In a statement to the Melbourne Herald Sun newspaper, Jones' family asked for privacy in their grief.

"She was surrounded by love, and we are comforted by the knowledge that her incredible spirit touched so many lives during her time with us," the family wrote.

"We want to express our deepest gratitude for the overwhelming support, love, and prayers we've received from across Australia."

The U.S. State Department said local authorities were investigating the case and were responsible for providing any details, and that the U.S. was providing consular assistance.

"We offer our sincerest condolences to the family on their loss," the State Department said in an emailed statement to The Associated Press.

Landlocked Laos is one of Southeast Asia's poorest nations and a popular tourist destination. Vang Vieng is particularly popular among backpackers seeking partying and adventure sports.

Details on the alcohol poisoning began trickling out about a week after the two Australian women fell ill on Nov. 13 following a night out drinking with a group in the remote town.

Thai authorities confirmed that Jones had died by "brain swelling due to high levels of methanol found in her system."

"Drink spiking and methanol poisoning are far too common in many parts of the world," Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong said after receiving news of Jones' death.

New Zealand's Foreign Ministry said yesterday that one of its citizens was also unwell in Laos and could be a victim of methanol poisoning. MDT/AP



Ukraine claims Russia fired an intercontinental ballistic missile at Dnipro, wounding two and damaging facilities. If confirmed, it marks the first ICBM use in the war, intensifying fears of nuclear escalation. The attack followed Moscow's lowered nuclear response threshold under revised doctrine.



The Netherlands The International Criminal Court yesterday issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, his ex-defense minister, and Hamas officials, alleging war crimes in Gaza. While symbolic, the move complicates efforts to end the 13-month conflict and isolates those accused amid ongoing hostilities.



Azerbaijan At COP29, nations criticized a vague draft on climate financing for lacking a specific funding commitment from wealthy countries. Developing nations demand at least \$1 trillion for clean energy transitions and climate adaptation, as frustration over delays mounts in Baku's talks.



Serbian prosecutors arrested 11 people over the Novi Sad train station roof collapse that killed 15 on November 1. Suspects face charges related to construction flaws, as protests accuse authorities of corruption and negligence in the station's recent renovation.