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DISCOVER
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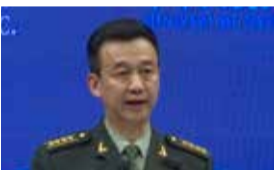
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AP PHOTO



China A court in Beijing on Friday sentenced a prominent Chinese journalist to seven years in prison for espionage, his family said. Dong Yuyu (pictured), a commentator and editor, was taken away by police while meeting a Japanese diplomat at a restaurant in February 2022. He has been in police custody since then.

AP PHOTO



China A member of the country's powerful Central Military Commission has been suspended and put under investigation, the country's Defense Ministry said last week. Miao Hua (pictured) was director of the political work department on the commission, which oversees the People's Liberation Army, the world's largest standing military.

AP PHOTO



Indian tycoon Gautam Adani (pictured) said his conglomerate is committed to "world-class regulatory compliance" after being indicted in the U.S. on fraud charges and an alleged bribery scheme worth millions of dollars, his first remarks since the accusations surfaced. Adani, 62, is one of Asia's richest men and perceived as close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Vietnam on Saturday approved the construction of a high-speed railway connecting the capital Hanoi in the north to Ho Chi Minh city in the south at an estimated cost of \$67 billion. The ambitious railway line will stretch 1,541 kilometers between the Vietnamese capital and the financial capital in the south.

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ENTREPRENEURSHIP & INNOVATION

Sam Hou Fai to adopt 'reform mindset' as he

NADIA SHAW & VICTORIA CHAN

SAM Hou Fai yesterday introduced the 10 newly appointed officials who will join his administration, following the State Council's approval of their nominations for the sixth term of the local government.

The officials will be inaugurated Dec. 20, marking a transition in leadership.

China's State Council, the country's cabinet, appointed the principal officials for the sixth-term government, as well as the prosecutor general of the Public Prosecutions Office.

These appointments were made in accordance with the Basic Law and based on Sam's nominations, the State Council said in a statement.

Sam held his first press conference with his cabinet yesterday, outlining a vision centered on patriotism, service and innovation.

During the two-hour press event, the CE designate emphasized the importance of "entrepreneurship and solidarity," saying these principles would guide his

administration.

"We are all patriotic and love Macau," he said, highlighting the shared commitment among his cabinet members to serve the population effectively.

"They have served society in various positions, so they have accumulated a wealth of experience in the administration and are familiar with the internal workings and the needs and expectations of citizens, which is advantageous for the transition process and the new work of the new mandate," he said.

The new government comprises of seasoned officials, chosen for their "dedication to long-term development and governance capabilities."

Sam's administration is particularly focused on diversifying Macau's economy beyond its heavy reliance on the gaming industry.

"We will focus on innovation, starting with the work the public is most concerned about and pays the most attention to," he said.

"At the same time, we will continuously promote priority long-term development work, including continuing to optimize and raise the population's welfare, develop and diversify the economy,

build the area of deepened cooperation, raise the level of public governance capacity, safeguard national security"

He said many of his team hail from civil service backgrounds, bringing years of experience in administrative management.

For Sam, his team "has demonstrated good professional training and a spirit of serving society."

"They all come from the civil service and have held senior positions in the last term or even in previous terms. The new appointments have been directors and have a good technical and professional track record," he said.

The CE-elect announced that among the new appointees, Tai Kin-ip will take over as Secretary for Economy and Finance, succeeding Lei Wai Nong, overseeing tourism and economic diversification – key areas Sam has said he will target to reduce reliance on gaming revenue.

The CE-elect is confident of Tai's ability to lead Macau's tourism sector toward significant advancements.

With experience in government administration, Tai is expected to



drive initiatives that align with the casino hub's ambition to establish itself as a "world center of tourism and leisure," said Sam.

This vision includes plans to strengthen ties and foster cooperation with Portuguese-speaking

countries.

Sam said his administration would adopt a "reform mindset," prioritizing policies that address residents' concerns of, enhance their livelihoods, and ensure long-term economic development.



ECONOMY AND FINANCE

Tai Kin Yip commits to economic recovery

NADIA SHAW

THE newly appointed Secretary for Economy and Finance, Tai Kin Yip, outlined a comprehensive plan for economic diversification during a press conference yesterday.

He expressed gratitude to the Central People's Govern-

ment and the incoming Chief Executive for their trust.

"I will continue to serve the nation, the SAR government and the citizens of Macau with all my efforts," he said.

Tai highlighted the challenges of the past few years, particularly during the pandemic.

He said significant work has been done to support economic recovery and promote a diversified economy.

"We have laid a solid foundation for Macau's next phase of moderate diversification," he said.

The current director of the Economic and Technological Development Bureau em-

phasized the importance of collaboration across various sectors to achieve these goals.

Tai said a thorough review of previous strategies would be conducted to ensure adaptability to changing circumstances.

"Our future objectives will involve mobilizing more resources to accelerate the im-

plementation of established plans in various fields."

The government remains committed to fostering community development Tai said, responding to media questions about support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

"We have assisted over 1,600 SMEs in their digital

transformation over the past three years."

He also mentioned plans to enhance support for these businesses in upgrading their competitiveness through modernization initiatives.

"In the future, we will continue in this direction."

As part of his vision, Tai aims to integrate Macau's institutional advantages with mainland resources to enhance economic cooperation.

"We hope to facilitate the smooth flow of production factors between Macau and mainland China through improved regulatory frameworks," he said.

In closing, he reiterated his commitment to leading efforts that align with the new administration's goals.

"Together, we will work tirelessly to develop our economy and improve living standards."

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places confidence in new cabinet



"We will implement pragmatic and effective measures to tackle deep-seated issues in response to the new requirements and expectations of the public for a better life," he said.

In addition, two of the five cur-

rent secretaries have been reappointed: André Cheong as Secretary for Administration and Justice, and Wong Sio Chak as Secretary for Security.

For Sam, this continuity will provide stability as the new admi-

nistration prepares to tackle pressing challenges facing Macau.

The CE-elect said O Lam will become Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, while Tam Wai-man will be Secretary for Transport and Public Works.

Ao Ieong Seong will become head of the Commissioner Against Corruption.

Elsie Ao Ieong will transition from her current position as Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture to serve as Audit Commissioner.

She acknowledged the challenges of her new role but expressed confidence in her ability to succeed, drawing on her 30 years of public service experience.

She said her understanding of government operations and the need for improvements, particularly in budget applications and departmental efficiency, will be central to her audit focus.

Elsie Ao Ieong also emphasized that public expectations for auditing, especially regarding performance, have risen significantly.

The official pledged the audit work will "maintain high standards, adhering strictly to ethical guidelines and codes of conduct."

"The government has always

been entrusted with a great responsibility for auditing, and we are committed to enhancing transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness," said the official.

"In my future role, I will lead my team to enhance the standard of governance of the government and continuously improve the performance of the government in accordance with the requirements of the central government and under the leadership of the Chief Executive," she added.

Additionally, Leong Man Cheong has been named Commissioner General of the Unitary Police Service, Adriano Marques Ho will become director general of Customs, and Chan Tsz-king is set to assume the role of Prosecutor-General.

Ho Hou Hon will be director general of the Macau Customs.

Sam also introduced his chief of staff, Chan Kak, the deputy chief of office of the Office of the President of the Court of Final Appeal (TUI).

Looking ahead, Sam wants to collaborate closely with Hong Kong, aiming to leverage the strengths of both regions for mutual benefit.

He plans to meet with Hong

Kong Chief Executive John Lee after taking office to discuss strategies for enhancing cooperation and integration into national development plans.

The Central People's government said over the weekend the new governance team has a "heavy responsibility and a glorious mission".

The government expressed confidence that under Sam's leadership, the team will work to fully implement the 'One country, two systems' policy, improve governance efficiency, diversify the economy, and enhance residents' quality of life.

The current Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng has also expressed hopes the "new appointees would strive to perform to the best of their capabilities and – under the leadership of Sam – serve the country and serve Macau in accordance with a spirit of unity and innovation."

The Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council also congratulated the official formation of the new governance team.

They published an article titled "Strong and Powerful Governance Team Promoting a New Development Situation" that highlighted the team's qualifications and the central government's expectations for their leadership.

NEW CCAC HEAD TO STRENGTHEN TRUST IN GOV'T

THE newly appointed commissioner of the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC), Ao Ieong Seong, said she is committed to social justice and enhancing public trust in government operations.

Addressing the media yesterday, Ao pledged to continue the organization's mission of integrity and accountability.

The newly appointed official is the first woman to head the bureau.

"CCAC aims to foster a clean and fair society under the rule of law, focusing on thorough investigations into corrupt practices," she said.

The commissioner said the corruption watchdog "would operate within its statutory duties, ensuring that all actions are legally compliant."

The official also addressed concerns about administrative appeals and governance, asserting that effective com-



Ao Ieong Seong

munication with executive authorities is vital for addressing systemic issues.

She noted that while past interactions have been productive, dialogue will be essential for refining processes and addressing any legal loopholes that may hinder transparency.

She said CCAC will

maintain its close cooperation with the Public Prosecutor's Office, particularly in anti-corruption cases.

The commissioner called upon the community for continued support and constructive feedback, emphasizing collective effort is necessary to promote a transparent government. LV

TRANSPORT AND PUBLIC WORKS

NEW TRANSPORT CHIEF PLANS LRT EXPANSION TO ALLEVIATE TRAFFIC

THE incoming Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raymond Tam, has unveiled ambitious plans to tackle the city's traffic congestion.

In a press conference yesterday, Tam expressed his commitment to extending the light rail system into the heart of Macau Peninsula, a move he believes is essential for modern urban development.

"Based on the extension of the eastern light rail line (LRT) to Qingmao, I will explore further extension of the LRT line to the heart of the Macau Peninsula to solve the core traffic congestion problem," he said.

Tam said enhancing rail transit is vital for any progressive city, he stressed the need for improved rail infrastructure.

"To develop effective rail transit, relevant parties will strengthen the promotion in the future, with light rail as the mainstay and other transportation systems as supple-



Raymond Tam

ments," he said.

Asked about alternative traffic solutions at yesterday's press conference, such as ride-hailing and taxi services, Tam maintained an open-minded stance.

"I would keep an open mind and study and explore any means that can effectively solve traffic problems," he said.

He aims to integrate the LRT with other forms of transport to not only alleviate congestion but also to promote sustainable urban mobility.

In a separate note, the

Transport Bureau (DSAT) has said the LRT has submitted reports summarizing two train system failures in September and October.

The bureau has mandated a technical analysis from the company to identify the causes of these incidents and to propose measures to prevent future occurrences. In response to lawmaker Ron Lam's inquiry, the bureau noted most of the LRT system is exposed to outdoor conditions. During typhoons, debris can obstruct tracks, and infrastructure may suffer damage. NS



WORLD AIDS DAY

HIV/AIDS CASES FALLING, SSM CALLS FOR TESTING THOSE AT 'RISK'

RENATO MARQUES

THE Health Bureau (SSM) is calling on those considered at risk to be tested for HIV/AIDS.

The call comes again against the background of "World AIDS Day," established by the World Health Organization (WHO) and observed worldwide.

According to SSM, in the 10 years to 2023, 283 cases of people infected with HIV among local residents were recorded.

The figure is 10 cases lower than when compared to the 10 years ending 2022, in which 293 cases were discovered, a downtrend that has been continuing for several years.

According to SSM's HIV monitoring report, the "main route of infection was through sexual interactions (93%), with more infections happening through homosexual and bisexual relations, with a higher incidence among men."

SSM noted that although it is dropping continuously, AIDS is far from being eradicated, and there is no vaccine, calling for prevention as the only way to avoid infections.

At the moment, SSM has launched a campaign and is calling on all those considered at risk to get tested. The tests are fast, with results obtained in just 30 minutes, and are free during this

campaign.

SSM held a testing activity yesterday, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., on the first floor of the Ilha Verde Health Center, with a testing session, including not only the rapid AIDS but also the hepatitis B test, allowing some 60 people to take part.

SSM said that "Risk behaviors for AIDS include men who have sex with men, unprotected sexual intercourse, multiple sexual partners, sex workers, and their clients, infected sexual partners and those using injected drugs," adding, "SSM recommends that individuals with ongoing risk behavior should be tested periodically (at least once a year) for HIV."

GAMING

Casino revenues up 15% to MOP18.44 billion in November

RENATO MARQUES

LOCAL casinos' gross gaming revenues (GGR) reached MOP18.438 billion last month the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau has announced.

The results, published yesterday, show an increase of 14.9% when compared year-on-year with the same month last year.

In the first eleven months of this year casinos generated an accumulated GGR of MOP208.58 billion, that is, just MOP1.42 billion short of the government's forecast for the whole year.

Casinos were up 26.8% up year-on-year by the end of November.

Last year, December (MOP18.57 billion) was the second-highest GGR month, only surpassed by October (MOP19.5 billion).

Historically, and particularly in the pre-pandemic period, December GGR results were often similar to November.

If that trend persists, this year's final revenue result will be around MOP227 billion.

Late last month, the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, defended next year's gaming

industry GGR forecast of MOP240 billion, during discussions about next year's basic government budget.

Lawmakers had mixed feelings about the figure.

While some considered the amount "very conservative," others worried the government could be overestimating receipts and underestimating regional competition and other external factors.

As on many occasions in the past, Lei did not elaborate much on how the government arrived at its forecast.

He said only that it was related to an estimated growth percentage for the industry based on the this year's results as well as the forecast number of inbound visitors for 2025 that he said would potentially grow around 9% when compared to this year.

Citigroup analysts last week also believed next year's GGR might be underestimated, forecasting the gaming industry could be worth some MOP243 billion next year.

They noted that by default, the government has consistently applied conservative estimates for the industry over the past decade.

LYNZEY VALLES



RENATO MARQUES

LRT

HENGQIN LINE OPENS TODAY

THE Hengqin Line of the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) opens today, the Macao Light Rapid Transit Corporation, Limited (MLM) has announced.

The first train will depart the Lotus station (connecting station of the Taipa Line) to the Hengqin Port station at 1:11 p.m., according to the news release.

The journey takes about two minutes, and MLM has said trains will run every six minutes.

The MLM said the opening will provide citizens and tourists "with comfortable and fast travel to the

Macao border checkpoint area at the Hengqin border checkpoint, facilitating their use of the checkpoint and closely linking Macau and Hengqin."

The company said it is calculating fares based on the Chief Executive's Dispatch 188/2023.

The Dispatch said that when calculating fares that include a sea crossing, the same method should be used when calculating the journey as in between Barra station and Ocean station (of Taipa Line).

That is, one station is added for each sea crossing in either direction between Hengqin station and Lotus station, being the fare calculated in the equivalent of two stations.

The Hengqin LRT Line is 2.2km long, serving all passengers who travel to and from the mainland via the Hengqin Border checkpoint.

Starting at Lotus station, the line goes through an underwater tunnel in the Shizimen Canal to reach Hengqin station, loca-

ted on the basement floor of the Hengqin port.

Authorities said visitors can use the new line as an alternative for commutes between Macau and the mainland.

This may lead to more passengers using the LRT.

The authorities also hope the new line advances links between the Macau and Chinese railway system, thus creating connections one hour away within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area.



Ethiopian, Russian wins in Macau marathon

RENATO MARQUES

ETHIOPIAN Fikadu Debele and Alexandra Morozova from Russia won the men's and women's 43rd Galaxy Entertainment Macau International Marathon.

In the men's marathon, Debele defended his title from last year, shaving almost two minutes off last year's time.

Debele crossed the finish line in 2:12:16 ahead of Anderson Seroi from Kenya and Mesfin Bekele also from Ethiopia, who completed the top three.

In the women's marathon, Morozova won the title for the first time in 2:34:22, ahead of Rodah Tanui and Tecla Kirongo from Kenya.

In the local athletes' category, the top three in the men's marathon were Wang Kun, Fong Ieng Wai and Leong Kin Kei. Wang Kun also smashed the Macau re-

cord with a time of 2:24:35.

In the women's marathon, the top three local athletes were Wu Yangyang (3:10:46), Chio Tong Tong, and Xu Zhonghuang.

In the half-marathon distance (men's), Mathew Samperu from Kenya won in 1:04:50 followed by his compatriots Eston Mwangi, and Joseph Ngare.

In the women's half-marathon Emebet Getawy Beyene from Ethiopia was the fastest, followed by the Chinese Liya Guo and Muriuki Wambui from Kenya.

In the local athletes' category, the top three in the men's half-marathon were Wong Chin Wa, Ip Weng Tou, and Ip Seng Tou, while in the women's Wong San San, Chao Hang Fa, and Kong Kuan Wai topped the classification, respectively.

This year, the Senior Trophy was won by 73-year-old Qi Zhirong.



Fikadu Debele



Alexandra Morozova



Sri Lankan team denied over visa concerns

IMMIGRATION officials have denied entry to the Sri Lankan team, which was to participate in the Galaxy Entertainment Macau International Marathon.

The team departed Sri Lanka Wednesday for yesterday's marathon.

Saman Kumara Gunawardana, Secretary of the Sri Lanka Athletics (SLA), said the team was invited by the event organizers

through the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka (NOCSL).

According to multiple media reports, the organizers had provided written confirmation to NOCSL that the Sri Lankan team would receive on-arrival visas and that its accommodation would be funded.

NOCSL arranged air tickets and provided USD900 for visa

fees, which included a USD300 fee for the on-arrival visa.

However, upon arrival, immigration officials told the team Sri Lanka is not listed among the countries eligible for on-arrival visas.

Despite multiple attempts by NOCSL and SLA to rectify the situation, their efforts were unsuccessful, resulting in the team's return to Sri Lanka. LV

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MACAU CELEBRATES HEALTH TOURISM FORUM AMID GBA DEVELOPMENT

The "Greater Bay Area Health Tourism, Services, and Integrated Logistics Development Forum" was recently held at the Macao University of Tourism (UTM). Organized by the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, the forum attracted over 120 participants, including government officials and industry experts. Discussions focused on the rapid growth of health tourism and logistics, emphasizing the need for advanced medical services and comprehensive facilities. Keynote speakers included Dr. Edmundo Patricio Lopes Lao, who highlighted opportunities in medical tourism, while UTM announced a new Master's program in Luxury Hospitality and Health Service Management for 2025/26.

DSAL SUPPORTING JOB SEEKERS 45 AND OVER

The Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) has prioritized the re-employment of job seekers aged 45 and above by providing personalized employment support and dedicated services. From January to October, the bureau assisted 1,878 older job seekers, representing 15% of successful placements. In response to lawmaker Leong Sun lok's inquiry, DSAL confirmed its commitment to offering diverse vocational training courses. By September, over 2,500 participants aged 45 and older had engaged in these courses, accounting for approximately 32% of total attendees, further promoting a friendly workplace for those 45 and over through various initiatives.

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NEW TRAVEL POLICIES TO BOOST TOURISM IN MACAU AND HONG KONG

VICTORIA CHAN

CHINA'S National Immigration Administration announced new travel policies Friday, to bolster tourism and economic integration between the mainland and the special administrative regions of Macau and Hong Kong.

Starting Dec.1, residents with household registration or hukou in Shenzhen's Special Economic Zone will be granted unlimited access to Hong Kong.

Similarly, starting January 2025, residents with hukou in the Guangdong-Macau In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin will receive multiple entry permits to travel to Macau, with each stay limited to one week.

Additionally, Zhuhai residents will be able to apply for a "one trip per week" permit to visit Macau beginning next year.

Approved by the State Council, China's cabinet, these measures are intended to facilitate seamless travel between the mainland and



VICTORIA CHAN

the two special administrative regions.

Hong Kong's Chief Executive, John Lee, expressed gratitude to the central government, anticipating a boost to the city's tourism, catering, and retail industries.

"I am grateful to the central government for actively researching, accelerating and implementing measures in this short period of time, bringing good news to Hong Kong," Lee said.

The new measures will add

momentum to Hong Kong's tourism, catering and retail industries, a news release from the HKSAR government information service said.

The Hong Kong government has instructed all departments to collaborate closely to ensure a smooth implementation of the new policies.

As cited in a China Daily report, Peng Peng, executive president of the Guangdong Society of Reform, said the policies will have a "direct stimulating effect" on Macau's tourism market and revitalize the economies of both Macau and Hengqin.

He said the convenient transportation between Macau and Hengqin will also benefit the real estate industry and local residents working across the border.

"The new Macau permit policy will also help Hengqin to attract talent and play a role in promoting the integrated development of Macao and Hengqin," he added.

VICTORIA CHAN

OFFICIALS have expressed optimism Macau will reach its goal of 33 million visitors this year.

This comes as the Tourism Development Committee (CDT) last week convened its second plenary meeting of 2024, presided over by Secretary for Economy and Finance and committee chairperson Lei Wai Nong.

In the first 10 months of this year, Macau welcomed over 29 million visitors, marking a 28.1% increase compared to the previous year and reaching 87% of pre-pande-

TOURISM

Gov't optimistic about achieving 33 million visitor goal in 2024

mic levels in 2019.

With central government support, the Macau administration is actively advancing the '1 + 4' development strategy aimed at fostering adequate diversification, the official said.

According to Lei, this initiative offers "vast potential" for the growth of Macau's tourism industry.

Deputy director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Ricky



Hoi painted a glowing picture of tourism's recovery.

Average lengths of stay for all visitors, overnight-stay visitors, and hotel guests have reached or surpassed 2019 levels.

Between January and October, Macau registered an average of 95,000 daily visitors, with the daily average even exceeding 110,000 in February and August - surpassing 2019 levels.

International visitors amounted to 1.89 million, or 73.1% of the corresponding period in 2019. The daily average of international visitors ranged be-

tween 5,000 and 6,000, indicating a steady rebound.

The meeting also featured an update on the second-phase review of the Macao Tourism Industry Development Master Plan.

Recommendations included promoting diverse leisure tourism, expanding visitor source markets, deepening regional integration, and leveraging AI for tourism innovation.

Committee members discussed various ideas to enhance further the city's tourism development, including promoting new visitor markets, improving

airport connectivity, and introducing Muslim-friendly facilities and high-end transfer services.

Through the committee's mechanism, MGTO will continue to collaborate with the travel trade in capitalizing on the central government's preferential measures for Macau to deepen integration across 'Tourism +'.

In a budget presentation recently at the Legislative Assembly, Lei projected the number of visitors expected this year to "36 million or more," an increase of 9% when compared to last year.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

TAIWAN'S LEADER ARRIVES IN HAWAII FOR A STOP IN THE US

TAIJING WU, HUIZHONG WU & AUDREY MCAVOY, HONOLULU

TAIWAN'S leader Lai Ching-te arrived Saturday in Hawaii to begin a two-day transit in the U.S. as part of a trip to the South Pacific, his first since assuming office.

The stopover in Hawaii and one planned for the territory of Guam have drawn fierce criticism from Beijing, which claims Taiwan as its own territory and objects to official exchanges between the self-ruled democracy and the U.S., the island's biggest backer and military provider.

There were no high-ranking U.S. or Hawaii state officials to greet Lai at the Honolulu hotel where supporters cheered in Mandarin, some waving Taiwanese flags. He visited Hawaii's leading museum of natural history and Native Hawaiian culture, Bishop Museum. Later, he was expected to attend a banquet with supporters.

Lai is on a weeklong trip to visit the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Palau — three diplomatic allies of the self-governed island in the Pacific. Though Taiwan retains strong contacts with dozens of other nations, it has only 12 formal diplomatic allies.

Bishop Museum CEO Dee Jay Mailer presented Lai with a red lei lulu, or feather garland, made by master featherwork artist Kawika Lum-Nelmida. Lai gave Mailer a headdress, made by Paiwan Indigenous people of Taiwan, and neck and shoulder decorative pieces made by Atayal Indigenous people, also of Taiwan.

Lai's visit shows that Taiwan and the United States have a very strong relationship, said Arthur Chen, the president of the Taiwanese Chamber of Commerce of North America. He flew to Hawaii from his home near Dallas to welcome the president to the U.S.

Chen said he understood the U.S. has its own foreign policy

but he said Lai should be treated as a head of state during his stay.

Taiwan and the U.S. share common values like a belief in democracy and human rights, Chen said. "So we should help each other," he said.

Lai didn't make any public remarks at his initial engagements in Hawaii, but spoke before his departure from Taiwan.

"I want to use the values of democracy, peace, and prosperity to continue to expand our cooperation with our allies, to deepen our partnership and let the world see Taiwan not just as a model of democracy, but a vital power in promoting the world's peace and stability, and prosperous development," he said at Taoyuan International Airport.

It is unclear whether Lai will meet with any members of the incoming U.S. administration during his transit.

President-elect Donald Trump said in an interview with Bloomberg in July that Taiwan should pay for its defense. The island has purchased billions of dollars of defense weaponry from the U.S.

Trump evaded answering whether he would defend the island from Chinese military action. On Friday, the U.S. State Department said it approved the sale of \$385 million in spare parts and equipment for a fleet of F-16s, as well as support for tactical communication system to Taiwan.

While the U.S. is obligated to help the island defend itself under the Taiwan Relations Act, it has maintained a position of strategic ambiguity over whether it would ever get involved if Taiwan were to be invaded by China.

A second Trump administration is expected to test U.S.-China relations even more than the Republican's first term, when the U.S. imposed tariffs on more than \$360 billion in Chinese products. **MDT/AP**

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MGM Organizes "Double Celebration of Love and Community Care" to Promote Inclusive Society



To celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Macao SAR, MGM organized the event "Double Celebration of Love and Community Care" earlier, aiming to foster connections between people from different backgrounds and cultivate a harmonious and happy community. The event featured a series of activities to promote an inclusive society, including wedding photos taken for elderly couples, scarves hand-knitted by volunteers for people in need, and free haircuts provided to senior citizens by youths and MGM Volunteer Team members. The MGM Golden Lion Volunteer Team, along with senior citizens, youths, and people with disabilities also presented music and dance performances during the event. The Company hopes to fulfil its social responsibility by partnering with local social service organizations to show support and care for people of all generations, while building a happier Macau together.



LOVE MOMENTS: MAKING DREAMS COME TRUE

This year sees the return of "Love Moments", a cherished MGM occasion. To echo the double anniversary, MGM invited 25 couples with an average age of 75 to participate in this event. Firstly, they took their first Western wedding photos at the romantic and picturesque Grande Praça of MGM MACAU and the Spectacle of MGM COTAI, which made their lifelong dreams come true. After that, the couples,

accompanied by a group of adorable children, entered the Ballroom in their wedding suits and dresses and were welcomed by the guests with applause and blessings, resembling a grand wedding ceremony.

SPREADING WARMTH DURING THE WINTER

In June, MGM gathered over 500 team members, students and volunteers to knit more than 2,500 scarves by hand, which will be given to people in need to provide warmth and care this winter. At the event, some of the scarves were presented to participants, including senior citizens and people with disabilities, accompanied by warm greetings from MGM team members. Meanwhile, the MGM Golden Lion Hairdressing Team led a new cohort of the Teenagers Hairdressing Team to give free haircuts to more than 100 senior citizens, promoting the spirit of respect and care for the elderly among the younger generation.

PROMOTING INTERGENERATIONAL AND INCLUSIVE HARMONY

In a bid to promote intergenerational harmony and connections through the arts, MGM Golden Lion Volunteer Team, along with senior citizens, youths, and individuals with disabilities, performed a musical and dance show, a martial arts demonstration, and a group choir during the event.



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AP PHOTO



Taiwan's Lai Ching-te greets people at the Kahala Hotel and Resort, Nov. 30

AP PHOTO



Zelenskyy says NATO offer for Ukraine-controlled territory could end 'hot stage' of war

SUSIE BLANN, KYIV

AN offer of NATO membership to territory under Kyiv's control would end "the hot stage of the war" in Ukraine, but any proposal to join the military alliance should be extended to all parts of the country that fall under internationally recognized borders, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a broadcast interview.

Zelenskyy's remarks on Friday signaled a possible way forward to the difficult path Ukraine faces to future NATO membership. At their summit in Washington in July, the 32 members declared Ukraine on an "irreversible" path to membership.

However, one obstacle to moving forward has been the view that Ukraine's borders would need to be clearly demarcated before it could join so that there can be no mistaking where the alliance's pact of mutual defense would come into effect.

"You can't give an invitation to just one part of a country," Zelenskyy said in an excerpt of the interview with Sky News. "Why? Because thus you would recognize that Ukraine is only that territory of Ukraine and the other one is Russia."

Under the Ukrainian Constitution, Ukraine can't recognize territory occupied by Russia as Russian.

"So legally, by law, we have no right to recognize the occupied territory as territory of Russia," he said.

Since the start of the war in 2022, Russia has been expending huge amounts of weaponry and human life to make small-but-steady territorial gains to the nearly one-fifth of Ukraine it already controls in east and southern Ukraine.

"If we want to stop the hot stage of the war, we should take under the NATO umbrella the territory of Ukraine that we have under our control. That's what we need to do, fast. And then Ukraine can get back the other part of its territory diplomatically," he said.

An invitation for Ukraine to join NATO is one key point of Zelenskyy's "victory plan," which he presented to Western allies and the Ukrainian people in October. The plan is seen as a way for Ukraine to strengthen its hand in any negotiations with Moscow.

Earlier this week, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte said that the alliance "needs to go further" to support Ukraine in its fight against Russia's invasion. Military aid to Kyiv and steps toward ending the war are expected to be high on the agenda when NATO members' foreign ministers meet in Brussels for a two-day gathering starting on Dec. 3.

However, any decision for Ukraine to join the military alliance would require a len-

ghier process and the agreement of all member states.

There is also uncertainty as to the foreign policy stance of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump. While Trump vowed on the campaign trail to end Russia's invasion of Ukraine in a single day, he hasn't publicly discussed how this could happen. Trump also announced Wednesday that Keith Kellogg, an 80-year-old, highly decorated retired three-star general, would serve as his special envoy for Ukraine and Russia.

In April, Kellogg wrote that "bringing the Russia-Ukraine war to a close will require strong, America First leadership to deliver a peace deal and immediately end the hostilities between the two warring parties."

Meanwhile, during his only campaign debate with U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris, Trump twice refused to directly answer a question about whether he wanted Ukraine to win the war — raising concerns that Kyiv could be forced to accept unfavorable terms in any negotiations.

Zelenskyy's statement comes as Ukraine faces increasing pressure along the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line. In its latest report, Washington-based think tank the Institute for the Study of War said Saturday that Russian forces had recently advanced near Kupiansk, in Toretsk, and near Pokrovsk and Velyka No-

vosilka, a key logistics route for the Ukrainian military.

At least four people were killed Saturday when a Russian missile hit Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region, Zelenskyy said in a post on Telegram. Dnipropetrovsk Gov. Serhiy Lysak said that the strike also wounded at least 21 people, of which eight were in a serious condition.

Ukraine's air force announced Saturday that the country had come under attack from 10 Russian drones, of which eight were shot down over the Kyiv, Cherkasy, Kirovohrad, Dnipropetrovsk and Kherson regions. One drone returned to Russian-occupied territory, while the final drone disappeared from radar, often a sign of the use of electronic defenses.

Meanwhile, the Russian Defense Ministry said that 11 Ukrainian drones had been shot down by the country's air defense systems. Both the mayor of Sochi, Andrey Proshunin, and the head of Russia's Dagestan region, Sergey Melikov, both in Russia's southwest, said that drones had been destroyed in their regions overnight. No casualties were reported.

On Friday, the Ukrainian president announced a number of changes to military leadership, saying that changes in personnel management were needed to improve the situation on the battlefield. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1954 US PLEDGES TO DEFEND NATIONALIST CHINA



US President Dwight D Eisenhower has announced the signing of a pact of mutual security with the Nationalist Chinese Government.

Secretary of State John Foster Dulles concluded the agreement with Chinese foreign minister George Yeh for the defence of the islands of Formosa (Taiwan) and Pescadores.

At a news conference, Mr Dulles made it clear that any attack on the two islands from the mainland would result in a "state of war" with the Chinese Communists.

He was asked whether the US would retaliate if Formosa was attacked.

Mr Dulles replied: "That would be a probable result. There must be a certain liberty for mobile forces to retaliate at places of their own choosing, though, this would not necessarily mean general war and the use of atomic bombs."

Negotiations for the defence pact between the US and head of the Nationalist Chinese Government, Chiang Kai-Shek, have been in progress for many months but there was no indication that the agreement would be completed so quickly.

The secretary of state's formal announcement declared that the pact would follow the pattern of other security treaties concluded by the US in the Pacific area.

This pact, the statement added, would forge another link in the system of collective security, and provide the essential framework for the defence of the Western Pacific against communist aggression.

The agreement comes as 11 American soldiers and two civilians remain imprisoned in China.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Nationalist Government, under the leadership of Chiang Kai-Shek, fled from mainland China in 1949 to Taiwan (formerly Formosa), after the Chinese Communists defeated the Chinese Nationalists in a long civil war and established the People's Republic of China.


With the help of American aid in the form of the mutual security pact in 1954, he succeeded in setting Taiwan on the road to economic development over the next 20 years.

The 11 US soldiers and two civilians that were imprisoned for alleged espionage were released on 1 August 1955 and China agreed to negotiate over Taiwan. Chiang died in 1975 and the US broke diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 1979 to establish full relations with the People's Republic.

Taiwan has made great economic progress over the years and is now one of the wealthiest and most industrialised nations in Asia.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

 ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Educational opportunities arise after tonight's New Moon. The next two-week phase favors study, investigation and exploration. Consider new perspectives.	 TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20 Find creative ways to grow your family nest egg. A lucrative two-week phase dawns with tonight's New Moon. Launch valuable initiatives with your partner.
 GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21 Collaboration comes naturally, especially over two weeks following tonight's Virgo New Moon. You're on the same wavelength. Take your partnership to the next level.	 CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Energize your physical moves. This New Moon initiates two weeks of strengthening work and health. Put your heart into your actions. Practice makes perfect.
 LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Enjoy yourself. Stir up some romance. The New Moon begins a two-week family, fun and passion phase. Make connections, contributions and discoveries.	 VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22 Realize domestic visions with upgrades over a two-week New Moon phase. Get creative. Improve the beauty and functionality of your home. Nurture your family.
 LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22 Profit through communications. Possibilities spark in conversation over this two-week New Moon phase. Creative projects flower. Express, share and connect.	 SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21 Begin a lucrative New Moon phase. Discover fresh markets and rising prosperity. Strengthen financial foundations for growth. Rake in and conserve a healthy harvest.
 SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Pursue personal dreams. Expand talents, capacities and skills over two weeks, with the New Moon in your sign. Grow and develop. Shine your light.	 CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Dreams seem within reach. Insights, breakthroughs and revelations sparkle with tonight's New Moon. Enjoy a two-week creative, imaginative and organizational phase.
 AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Connect shared support for big results. This New Moon phase benefits team efforts. Grow through friendships, social networks and community participation.	 PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20 This New Moon illuminates career opportunities. Develop interesting projects over the next two weeks. Pursue exciting possibilities.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	0	6	fine
Changchun	-13	1	fine
Chengdu	6	15	cloudy
Chongqing	10	14	overcast
Fuzhou	14	24	fine
Guangzhou	11	25	fine
Guiyang	7	14	overcast
Haikou	19	25	cloudy
Hangzhou	9	20	fine
Harbin	-17	-15	cloudy
Hefei	2	18	fine
Nanjing	6	19	fine
Shanghai	9	19	fine
Taipei	17	23	fine
Wuhan	5	21	fine
Hong Kong	21	22	fine
WORLD			
Moscow	-2	0	snow
Frankfurt	4	7	cloudy
Paris	7	11	overcast
London	4	9	cloudy
New York	-1	4	fine

CROSSWORDS


ACROSS 1- Museum artifact; 6- ___ Alto; 10- Charge per unit; 14- Archie Bunker's wife; 15- Greenspan of the Fed; 16- Gen. Robert ___; 17- Thick; 18- Costa ___; 19- Narrate; 20- Ropelike hairstyle; 22- Whizzes; 23- Miami's county; 24- ___ Beta Kappa; 26- Cradlesong; 30- Igneous rock; 34- Light ___; 35- Can't do without; 36- Prefix with profit or fiction; 37- Knitting stitch; 38- Coeur d'___; 40- Sock ___ me!; 41- Slump; 42- Too; 43- Let's Make ___; 44- Voted into a seat; 46- Food flavoring; 48- Sound at a spa; 49- Tidy; 50- Breakfast chain, for short; 53- Sydney has a famous one; 59- Kid's building block; 60- Applies; 61- Listlessness; 62- Make money; 63- "The Sweetest Taboo" singer; 64- Alma ___; 65- Sheltered; 66- JFK postings; 67- Night noise;

DOWN 1- Comedian Foxx; 2- Fulda tributary; 3- ___ dancing is popular with cowboys; 4- ___ girl; 5- Cheese; 6- Travesty; 7- Wonderland girl; 8- Deficiency; 9- Carousing; 10- Keep; 11- One of the Baldwins; 12- Prefix with conference; 13- Congers; 21- Research site; 25- Owned; 26- Memory failure; 27- Customary; 28- More than medium; 29- Dogpatch adjective; 30- ___-X; 31- Chip maker; 32- Bottom line; 33- ___ Gay; 35- Classical beginning; 38- Tavern; 39- Leary's drug; 40- Despot Amin; 42- ___ glance; 43- National songs; 45- U.S. gangster; 46- Stanzas; 47- Highest bond rating; 49- ___ lift?; 50- Intestinal sections; 51- Get better; 52- Monster; 54- Jr.'s exam; 55- ___ epic scale; 56- Golden rule word; 57- Litigant; 58- Irish homeland;

Friday's solution

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PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
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VA FAT (Taipa Village)
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77.10 m² / 830 ft² | HKD3,980,000



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



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



Ocean Garden Cattleya Court (Taipa)
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F1

Norris defies orders to help Piastri and Verstappen loses the Qatar pole to Russell

JAMES ELLINGWORTH, LUSAIL

LANDO Norris ignored team orders and handed his McLaren teammate Oscar Piastri the sprint race in Qatar on Saturday, while Formula 1 champion Max Verstappen was stripped of the pole position.

His penalty elevated George Russell to first on the grid.

With McLaren eyeing its first F1 constructors' title in 26 years and Russell close behind for Mercedes, Norris was told by the team over the radio to "finish in this order," ahead of Piastri.

He chose to gift his teammate the win anyway, easing off to the right on the exit of the final corner and then swooping back across in front of Russell, who finished third.

"The team told me not to do it, but I thought I could get away with it and we did," Norris said. "Honestly, I don't mind. I'm not here to win sprint races. I'm here to win races and the cham-



McLaren driver Oscar Piastri of Australia is flanked by his teammate Lando Norris of Britain after the sprint race at the Formula One Qatar Grand Prix, at the Lusail International Circuit in Lusail, Qatar, Saturday

pionship, but that's not gone to plan."

Norris was paying Piastri back for doing the same in the sprint race in Brazil when Norris was still fighting Verstappen for the drivers' title.

"I made my mind up in Brazil when it happened," Norris said. "I needed to do something to

give it back."

Piastri said he hadn't expected Norris to take the risk.

"I was aware it could happen. I was a bit surprised that with George half a second (away) it did," Piastri said. "It just shows off our teamwork and the lack of egos within the team."

It continues a season where

McLaren's race tactics have often been a talking point, such as when Norris and Piastri swapped for the lead in Hungary after a lengthy and often awkward radio exchange with the team.

On Saturday, Norris started on pole position and kept the lead at the start as Piastri squeezed past Russell for second. As Russell repeatedly attacked Piastri, Norris dropped back instead of building a lead. That put Piastri within one second of Norris, allowing the Australian to use the DRS overtaking aid for extra speed.

Russell said he found the McLaren teamwork "pretty infuriating" while stuck behind Piastri and also objected to what he saw as late moves from Piastri to defend the position.

"Hopefully we can have a proper race (on Sunday) rather than this team orders stuff," Russell said.

VERSTAPPEN PENALIZED

The F1 champion thought he'd secured his first pole position since

the Austrian GP in June, but a lengthy stewards' inquiry gave him a one-place penalty for driving "unnecessarily slowly" in an incident with Russell, who moved up to first on the grid.

The Mercedes driver complained over the radio that it was "super dangerous" that he'd had to avoid Verstappen, who was ahead of him on the racing line as both drivers prepared for their final runs of qualifying.

The stewards agreed Verstappen was going too slowly as he tried to cool his tires but didn't apply the usual three-place penalty because neither driver was trying to set a fast time.

Verstappen hadn't been much of a factor in the sprint but he returned to form in qualifying, beating Russell by just .055 of a second on his last run.

"Crazy. I mean, honestly, I didn't expect that," Verstappen said. "We did change a bit on the car but I never thought it would make such a swing in performance." **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

The Conversation

Jay L. Zagorsky Boston University



TO CONTROL YOUR SPENDING THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, STICK WITH CASH

The holiday shopping season is now here, and Americans are ready to splurge. The average U.S. shopper expects to spend more than US\$1,000 on gifts for Christmas and other winter holidays this year, surveys show.

These days, consumers have no shortage of payment options, each seemingly more enticing than the last. Do you swipe your credit card and pick up “free” miles? Do you use buy-now-pay-later and spread the payments out over time? Do you use a debit card to avoid going into debt?

As a business school professor who writes about the holiday shopping season, I’ve been thinking about the best way to pay for holiday gifts without breaking the bank. My advice, found in my forthcoming book *The Power of Cash*, is counterintuitive. Don’t use any of these things. Instead, use good old-fashioned paper money.

Yes, using cash instead of paying electronically is a simple way to control your holiday spending while even helping others. And I speak from personal experience.

Why cash is less likely to set you back

Before spending any money, it is important to set a holiday budget. The problem is that while everyone thinks setting a budget is a good idea, few people do it, and even fewer stick to it.

Budgeting is like dieting: Temptation and time pressure cause the best intentions to fail.

I’ve seen this in my own life. One holiday season I carefully set a budget. However, with only hours left before exchanging presents, I didn’t have anything for three nieces. In my desperation, I wildly overspent on gifts I doubt they ever used.

Using cash can help you avoid making the same mistake I did. It works for some simple reasons:

First, committing to just using paper money provides an automatic method of budgeting. When you’re out of cash, you’re done shopping. Now I don’t recommend putting all of your money into your wallet at once. Instead, take only a portion of your budgeted cash when going shopping, or if you are taking all of it, split the money up and keep some in a separate reserve.

Second, using cash helps you spend less because of the “pain of paying.” Spending paper money causes a momentary feeling of regret, research in consumer psychology shows. This in turn helps slow down purchases. People don’t feel the same pain when they use credit cards, because the bill comes due in the future.

Third, in the long run, paying cash for things is cheaper because you don’t have to pay interest on purchases. About half of all credit card users carry a balance each month. With the average balance currently over \$6,000, the interest alone on charging gifts can cost you hundreds of dollars.

And one more point: Many people buy holiday gifts for themselves, and research shows that paying cash makes you initially treasure a purchase more than when paying with electronic means. Cash payers feel stronger ownership because they made a “mental investment” in the item.

Using cash while shopping online

It’s easy to use cash for in-person purchases, but you can’t stick paper money through a computer or phone screen to make online purchases. Yet this holiday shopping season, online purchases are expected to break \$240 billion.

It is possible to use cash only, even if you’re relying on e-commerce. A simple method is to purchase an online retailers’ gift card using cash and add that gift card to your account’s balance. If you want to spend more, you will need to physically get out to a place selling cards like your local supermarket and spend cash.

[Abridged]

RUSSIAN POLICE RAID MOSCOW NIGHTCLUBS IN LGBTQ+ CRACKDOWN

Russian police raided several bars and nightclubs across Moscow on Saturday as part of the government’s crackdown on “LGBTQ+ propaganda,” state media reported.

Smartphones, laptops and video cameras were seized, while clubgoers had their documents inspected by officers, Russia’s Tass news agency said, citing sources in law enforcement.

The raids come exactly a year since Russia’s Supreme Court ruled that the “LGBTQ+ movement” should be banned as an “extremist organization.”

Its decision followed a decades-long crackdown on LGBTQ+ rights in

Russia, where President Vladimir Putin has touted “traditional family values” as a cornerstone of his quarter-century in power.

Footage shared on social media appeared to show partygoers being ordered by police to lie on the floor as officers moved through Moscow’s Arma nightclub.

The capital’s Mono bar was also targeted, Russian media reported. In a post on Telegram on Saturday, the club’s management didn’t directly reference an incident with law enforcement, but wrote, “Friends, we’re so sorry that what happened, happened. They didn’t find anything forbidden. We live in such times, but life must go on.”

THE BUZZ

AP PHOTO



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, left, meets Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov in Pyongyang, North Korea, Nov. 29

NORTH KOREA

KIM VOWS STEADFAST SUPPORT FOR RUSSIA’S WAR IN UKRAINE

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

NORTH Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed his country will “invariably support” Russia’s war in Ukraine as he met Russia’s defense chief, the North’s state media reported Saturday.

A Russia military delegation led by Defense Minister Andrei Belousov arrived in North Korea on Friday, amid growing international concern about the two countries’ expanding cooperation after North Korea sent thousands of troops to Russia last month.

The official Korean Central News Agency said that Kim and Belousov reached “a satisfactory consensus” on boosting strategic partnership and defending each country’s sovereignty, security interests and international justice in the face of the rapidly-changing international security environments in a Friday meeting.

Kim said that North Korea “will invariably support the policy of the Russian Federation to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity from the imperialists’ moves for hegemony,” KCNA said.

North Korea has support

ted Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, calling it a defensive response to what both Moscow and Pyongyang call NATO’s “reckless” eastward advance and U.S.-led moves to stamp out Russia’s position as a powerful state.

Kim slammed a U.S. decision earlier in November to let Ukraine strike targets inside Russia with U.S.-supplied longer-range missiles as a direct intervention in the conflict. He called recent Russian strikes on Ukraine “a timely and effective measure” demonstrate Russia’s resolve, KCNA said.

According to U.S., Ukrainian and South Korean assessments, North Korea has sent more than 10,000 troops to Russia and some of them have already begun engaging in combat on the frontlines. U.S., South Korean and others say North Korea has also shipped artillery systems, missiles and other conventional weapons to replenish Russia’s exhausted weapons inventory.

Both North Korea and Russia haven’t formally confirmed the North Korean troops’ movements, and have steadfastly denied reports of weapons shipments.

South Korea, the U.S.

and their partners are concerned that Russia could give North Korea advanced weapons technology in return, including help to build more powerful nuclear missiles.

Last week, South Korean national security adviser Shin Wonsik told a local SBS TV program that that Seoul assessed that Russia has provided air defense missile systems to North Korea. He said Russia also appeared to have given economic assistance to North Korea and various military technologies, including those needed for the North’s efforts to build a reliable space-based surveillance system.

Belousov also met North Korean Defense Minister No Kwang Chol on Friday. During a dinner banquet later the same day, Belousov said the two countries’ strategic partnership was crucial to defend their sovereignty from aggression and the arbitrary actions of imperialists, KCNA said.

In June, Kim and Putin signed a treaty requiring both countries to provide immediate military assistance if either is attacked. It’s considered the two countries’ biggest defense deal since the end of the Cold War. **MDT/AP**

Indonesian fishermen on Saturday rescued 116 Rohingya refugees, mostly hungry and weak women and children, after their rickety boat sank, officials said. The group had sailed from the Cox Bazar refugee camp in Bangladesh hoping to reach to Indonesia or Malaysia in search of a better life, when it became stranded on an island in Indonesia’s northern province of Aceh.

AP PHOTO



Japan’s popular Princess Aiko turned 23 yesterday, as she takes on more official duties even while her future in the imperial family remains in doubt. Aiko, the only child of Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako, graduated from university earlier this year and has since been participating in official duties and palace rituals while working at the Red Cross Society.

Russian President Vladimir Putin approved budget plans, raising 2025 military spending to record levels as Moscow seeks to prevail in the war in Ukraine. Around 32.5% of the budget posted on a government website yesterday has been allocated for national defense, amounting to 13.5 trillion rubles (over \$145 billion), up from a reported 28.3% this year.

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Syrian military rushed in reinforcements yesterday to push back insurgents from advancing farther into the northern Hama countryside after they seized Aleppo and surrounding strategic locations in an adjacent province in a surprise offensive. The insurgents led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham took over most of Aleppo on Saturday and claimed to have entered the city of Hama

AP PHOTO



UN The top United Nations court will take up the largest case in its history today, when it opens two weeks of hearings into what countries worldwide are legally required to do to combat climate change and help vulnerable nations fight its devastating impact.