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**KIANG WU HOSPITAL REPORTS A 53% RISE IN FLU-RELATED EMERGENCY CONSULTATIONS LAST WEEK COMPARED TO THE PRIOR WEEK**

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**GAMING: CASINO REVENUE FORECAST TO SURGE IN JANUARY**

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**STRONG EARTHQUAKE KILLS AT LEAST 95 PEOPLE IN WESTERN CHINA NEAR MOUNT EVEREST**

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AP PHOTO



**Indonesia's** government said it agreed with Japan yesterday to resume talks on the joint development of naval vessels that have stalled in recent years. Visiting Japanese Defense Minister Gen. Nakatani discussed ways to deepen a defense partnership with his Indonesian counterpart, Sjafrie Sjamsuddin, and agreed to continue negotiations on joint development of naval ships and other military equipment and on technology transfer.

AP PHOTO



**India** At least nine workers are trapped inside a coal mine in the northeastern Assam state as authorities summoned the army to help in the rescue operation. The workers are “feared trapped 300 feet below the ground after water gushed in from a nearby unused mine.”

AP PHOTO



**Mexico** About 100 migrants from various countries wandered directionless and disoriented through the streets of the troubled Pacific coast resort of Acapulco. After walking for a couple weeks through southern Mexico with hundreds of other migrants, they accepted an offer from immigration officials to come to Acapulco with the idea they could continue their journey north toward the U.S. border.

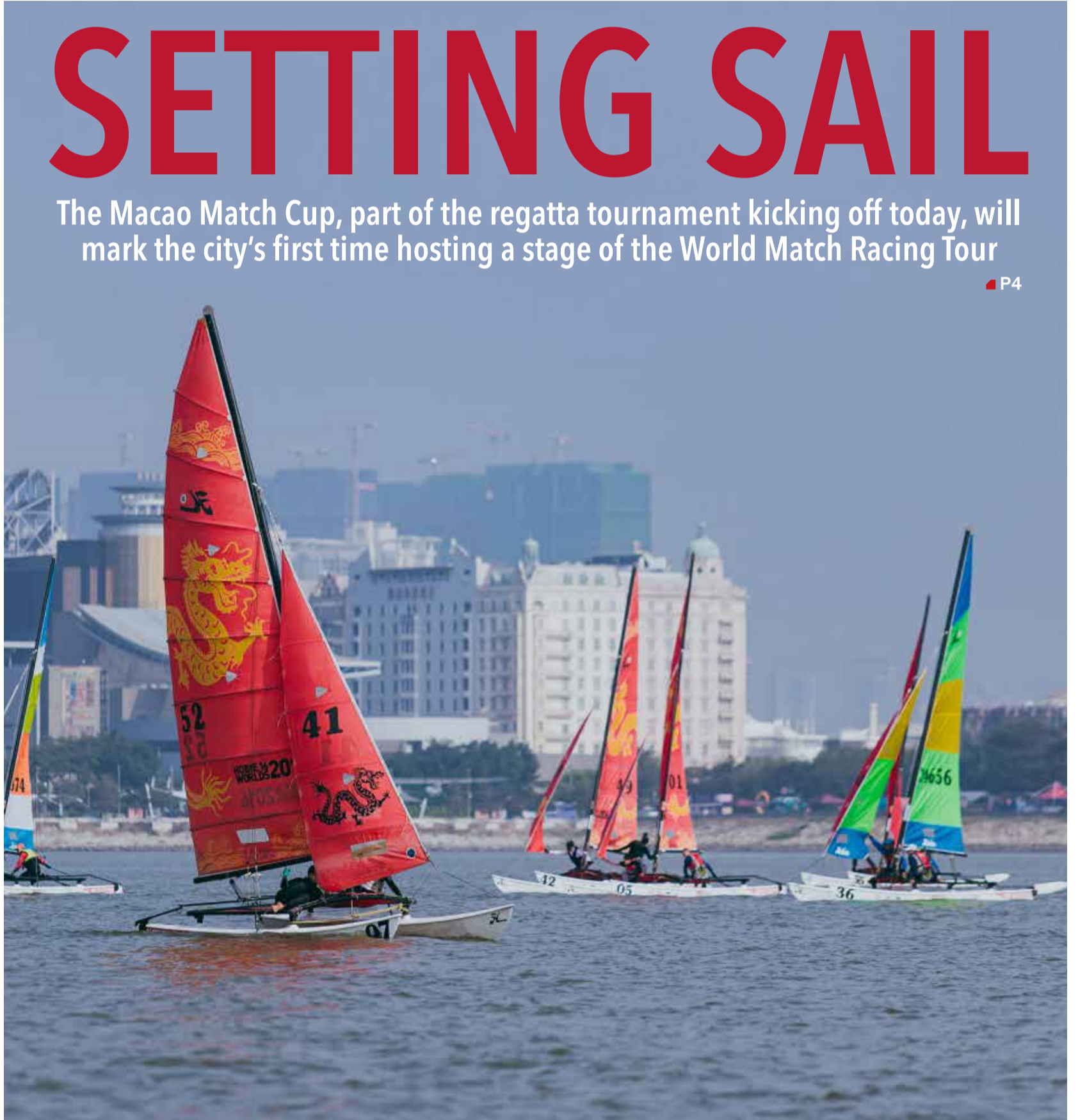
**Pakistan** Hundreds of protesters angered by power outages have blocked a key highway in northern Pakistan, officials said yesterday. The blockade is disrupting bilateral trade with neighboring China and forcing tourists to take longer routes to visit the region. The protest initially began with a rally over the weekend and expanded the following day.

More on backpage

# SETTING SAIL

The Macao Match Cup, part of the regatta tournament kicking off today, will mark the city's first time hosting a stage of the World Match Racing Tour

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**ELDERLY APARTMENTS RESIDENTS SEEK LEASE TERMINATIONS AMID ODOR ISSUES**

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**PUBLIC WORKS GRANDE TUNNEL CONSTRUCTION BEGINS IN 2H**

P3





### RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY PRICES SLIGHTLY DECLINE

The overall residential property price index in Macau for September to November 2024 stands at 206.5, reflecting a 1.7% decline from the previous period, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). The Macao Peninsula's index dropped to 200.8, while Taipa & Coloane saw a smaller decrease to 229.1. Existing residential units also experienced a downturn, with their index falling by 1.5% to 222.8. Notably, properties in buildings less than five years old decreased by 1.9%, while those between six and 10 years old saw a slight increase of 0.3%.

### PSP CRACKS DOWN ON THEFT

The Public Security Police (PSP) has resolved two cases involving unreported found items. In the first case, a male dealer in his 40s was suspected of taking a smartwatch from a public toilet in Coloane and selling it on the mainland for a profit of MOP200, despite the victim reporting a loss of MOP2,000. The police identified the suspect through the city's surveillance cameras. In another incident, a man in his 30s from the mainland allegedly found a mobile phone worth approximately MOP8,000 left in a taxi, an act captured by the taxi's surveillance footage. The police apprehended him near Cotai.

### SAM HOU FAI TO LEAD DELEGATION TO GUANGZHOU CONFERENCE

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai will lead a delegation from the SAR government to Guangzhou tomorrow for the 2025 Guangdong-Macao Cooperation Joint Conference. The meeting aims to implement President Xi Jinping's key speeches and enhance cooperation across various fields, further developing the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Several cooperation agreements are set to be signed. The delegation includes Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong and Secretary for Economy and Finance Tai Kin Yip. Secretary for Transport and Public Works Tam Wai Man will serve as acting Chief Executive during this time.

### HEALTH

## FLU CONSULTATIONS SURGE BY 53% AT KIANG WU

LYNZY VALLES

**K**iang Wu Hospital has reported a significant increase in flu-related consultations at its emergency department, with visits rising by 53% last week compared to the previous week. The surge in cases is attributed to influenza A, which accounts for 94% of infections, while influenza B makes up the remaining 6%.

According to the hospital, the rise in flu cases comes as influenza-like symptoms were reported in 20% of outpatient visits and 48% of emergency department consultations during the past two weeks, up from 15% and 38%, respectively, earlier in December. The hos-



pital's emergency department saw an average of 520 visits per day in the past two weeks, with the number jumping to around 610 visits during the holidays.

Health authorities have said in a press conference earlier this week that Macau has entered the peak period of influenza, with the number of consultations for the illness

increasing significantly in recent weeks.

Last week, the number of influenza consultations among adults and children increased by 39% and 23% week-on-week at the public hospital, respectively.

Authorities expect the influenza virus to remain active in the next few weeks, and different influenza viruses may circulate alternately.

Also, the average daily number of consultations at Conde de S. Januário has continued to rise since late last month, with the average follow-up time reaching 71 minutes.

The hospital has used 800 consultations as a warning line, and it has seen numbers consistently exceed this threshold.

Manpower and hospital beds have been allocated according to the situation, and authorities urged patients with mild symptoms to make use of community medical facilities to reduce the burden on hospitals.

## PSP cracks down on illegal use of scooters, 37 users fined in Q4 2024

RENATO MARQUES

**T**he Public Security Police Force (PSP) has continued to crack down on offenses committed by citizens using motorized and non-motorized scooters on public roads.

According to the latest report, in the last quarter of 2024 (Q4), officers from the PSP identified and fined a total of 37 people for committing this type of traffic violation.

The force justified the actions with their commitment to maintaining safety and public order for both drivers and pedestrians.

According to Article 12, Paragraph 4, of the Road Traffic Law, it is prohibited for motorized or non-motorized scooters to be used on public roads. This rule has only one exception: places where the competent authorities have



expressly permitted the use of such vehicles.

Violations of this law are punishable by a fine of MOP600.

In a statement, the PSP stated it would continue deploying officers to combat such offenses, noting that the use of these vehicles is also prohibited when used on sidewalks or other pedestrian areas.

According to previous reports, the fines collected for this traffic infringement are estimated to have earned the public purse

around MOP100,000 during the whole year of 2024.

The number and popularity of these vehicles have been increasing in Macau in the last few years, with several models being sold in local stores, notably those powered by an electric motor.

In many parts of the world, including mainland China, commuting on scooters is common, with the vehicles even being available for rental in many tourist locations and major cities.

### GAMING

## CASINO REVENUE FORECAST TO RISE IN JANUARY

VICTORIA CHAN

**C**asino gross gaming revenue (GGR) is expected to rise 6.6% year-over-year and 13.3% month-over-month in January, fueled by the upcoming Lunar New Year holiday, according to a forecast by Seaport Research Partners.

According to the research firm, last month's GGR totaled approximately MOP 18.2 billion, which is about 80% of the comparable 2019 level. This represents a decline of 2% year-over-year and 1.3% month-over-month, falling short of Seaport's early-month estimate of a 5% year-over-year increase.

"December was soft during the three weeks of the month and was negatively impacted by the three-day visit to Macau by China President Xi Jinping," said analyst Vitaly Umansky in a Monday report. "However, the last 10 days of the month improved materially as hi-

gher spending customers began to return."

For the first quarter of 2025, Seaport expects a rise of 4.2% from last year and 4% from the previous quarter. "The Q1 4.2% year-over-year increase is weaker than the 6.1% year-over-year in Q4 2024 as year-over-year comparisons are becoming more difficult," the analyst noted.

Seaport's forecast suggests continued growth in the Macau gaming industry throughout 2025, with an estimated 8% year-over-year increase. The firm believes fiscal stimulus and regulatory easing measures in China will help improve consumer and business confidence, leading to a stronger recovery in the base mass segment.

"If the Chinese economy improves more than expected and/or if base mass recovers more strongly, the year-on-year growth would be higher," Umansky stated.

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HOUSING

# Residents seek lease terminations amid odor issues at elderly apartments

VICTORIA CHAN

**T**HREE residents of the newly completed elderly apartments have expressed their intention to terminate their leases due to unpleasant odors, while seven others are seeking to change units due to persistent foul odors affecting their living conditions.

The first phase of move-ins to the senior apartment complex has been completed, but the ongoing second phase is encountering significant challenges.

Hon Wai, director of the Social Affairs Bureau, announced that over 520 households have already moved into the complex, bringing the current population to more than 780 residents. The next wave of residents is expected to move in after the Lunar New Year. However, the process has been



overshadowed by complaints about unpleasant odors originating from the construction site.

“Three households have decided to cancel their leases,” Hon Wai confirmed to the press yesterday. “While the

odor is one factor, there are additional reasons, which we will not disclose out of respect for their privacy.”

Hon Wai also reported that 10 residents had officially lodged complaints about the smell, with seven of them applying to transfer to different units.

In response, the government is collaborating with the construction team and relevant departments to mitigate the issue. Measures include improving sealing during the cleaning process and installing activated carbon filters to reduce odors.

“We need time to monitor the situation,” Hon Wai said. “If the smell persists across multiple units, moving residents may not resolve the problem.”

The foul odor at Av. Norte do Hipódromo in Areia Preta and the elderly housing facili-

ty originates from unpleasant smells overflowing from the drainage channels associated with the Lot P temporary housing project.

In a joint statement Monday, the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) and the Public Works Bureau (DSOP) said that the issue has been worsened by ongoing cleaning operation.

Residents have complained that the sewage interception pipes and the drainage outlet of the pumping station are clogged with stones and waste, causing the accumulation of sludge and the release of a foul smell.

To address the complaints, the government convened a cross-departmental coordination meeting. Officials anticipate completing a channel cleaning project aimed at resolving the odor problem by the end of the week.

PUBLIC WORKS

# Four-year timeline for Taipa Grande Tunnel construction begins in 2H

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Taipa Grande Tunnel, the project that will link Avenida de Wai Long to the Pac On area in Taipa, is expected to take about four years to complete. This announcement was made during the opening of bids received by the Public Works Bureau (DSOP) for the design and construction of the project, which will be completed in three phases.

The government received five bids for the tender, which included a pre-selection stage. The construction time for the five bids varies between 1,048 and 1,049 working days, roughly equivalent to four years.

The proposal with the highest price was MOP1.11 billion, while the lowest bid proposed a sum of MOP790



million.

At the bids opening, officials from DSOP told the media that construction is expected to begin in the second half of this year (2H).

The first phase of the project will include the construction of the tunnel section and access roads on both sides.

The tunnel will be approximately 600 meters long, with a two-way, four-lane road,

while the access roads will span 400 meters on the south side (Wai Long) and about 160 meters on the north side (Pac On).

The bureau has stated that the tunnel will facilitate travel between the Peninsula and Cotai (via the Macau Bridge) and is also expected to ease traffic congestion in the Pac On area (near the Taipa Ferry Terminal and Airport) and Cotai.

Currently, these

areas experience frequent stops due to traffic lights, particularly at the Airport roundabout.

The next phases of the project will involve connecting the northern section of the tunnel's access roads directly to the Macau Bridge.

However, DSOP noted that this phase has not yet been budgeted, nor does it have a concrete timeline for execution.

# GRAVEL FALL SUSPENDS RECONSTRUCTION WORK ON HOUSING INSTITUTE BUILDING

VICTORIA CHAN

**R**ework on the Housing Bureau (IH) building on Rua Norte do Patane has been suspended following an incident involving falling gravel and paint stains on nearby parked motorcycles, the Public Works Bureau (DSOP) announced.

According to DSOP, the issue came to their attention through social media posts by residents. The bureau stated that it is “paying close attention to this situation” and has immediately ordered the suspension of all cleaning work on the scaffolding surrounding the building's exterior walls.

DSOP explained that at the time of the incident, workers were cleaning and removing materials from the scaffolding to prepare for its dismantling. During this process, mortar, paint, and dust fell from the scaffolding, which the department suspects was due to “failures in the protective

measures during the procedure.”

The bureau has instructed the contractor to cooperate fully with an ongoing investigation, which includes a thorough review of on-site safety protocols and the submission of a detailed report. DSOP emphasized that construction will only resume once safety conditions are reassessed and deemed adequate to prevent similar incidents.

Notably, a resident previously complained on social media about being struck on the head by a piece of gravel, reportedly the size of a coin, while passing the construction site. Fortunately, no injuries were reported.

The reconstruction of the IH building was awarded to the De Top Design – Kwong Kian Heng – Man Kin Consortium at a cost of 257 million patacas, with an execution period of 707 working days. The project was originally scheduled for completion this month.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



SPORTS

# MGM INT'L REGATTA TO OPEN WORLD MATCH RACING TOUR SEASON

VICTORIA CHAN

**T**HE 2025 MGM Macao International Regatta, featuring international sailors and regional champions, will kick off today, with event organizers highlighting cultural exchange opportunities and the growth of maritime sports.

Luís Gomes, president of the Sports Bureau (ID), emphasized the significance of the event as one of the tournaments opens the 2025 World

Match Racing Tour season.

The regatta, organized by the ID, MGM, and Ursa Major Sailing Event Management, will feature three major events: the World Match Racing Tour - Macao Match Cup, the Lotus Cup Regatta, and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Cup Regatta.

The Macao Match Cup will kick off the 2025 World Match Racing Tour (WMRT) season, featuring 12 elite international

teams.

Among the sailors are Ian Williams, an eight-time world champion from the UK; Chris Poole from the U.S.; Nick Egnot-Johnson from New Zealand; and Pauline Courtois from France, the world's top-ranked women's match racer.

The Lotus Cup and Greater Bay Area Regattas will feature top teams from China and the region, including Olympic gold medalist Xu Lijia, who will debut with Team Nin-

gbo One, as well as defending champions Big Boys Sailing Team and Canados Sailing Team.

"We hope that all sailors will experience Macau's unique culture during their stay and engage with local and other participating teams to promote the development of maritime sports," said Gomes in a press conference yesterday.

The Macao Match Cup marks the first time Macau

has hosted a stage of the prestigious World Match Racing Tour, which has been running for 25 years, according to event organizer Alfred Ma.

"This is a very high-level event. It is one of the three largest events in the world and also the oldest match racing event," Ma said.

The event format will feature one-on-one matchups, with the top finishers advancing through a knockout round. All boats used in the competition will be the same standardized "Fight 28" design, ensuring a level playing field.

Ian Williams, the eight-time WMRT champion, expressed confidence in his team's preparation for the Macao Match Cup.

"At my age, in sailing, you have to be strategic, and with the experience we have on board, we're here to try to win the regatta," Williams said.

In addition to the regattas, organizers have planned a variety of activities to increase the event's appeal, including two fleet parades, a "Family Fun Day" featuring sailing experiences and workshops, and a photography competition.

"We hope the event will be a complete success, leveraging the synergistic effects of this sporting spectacle to promote the integrated development of the leisure, tourism, and sports industries," said Gomes.

The tournament will run until January 12.

TOURISM

# MGTO estimates nearly 35 million visitors in 2024

RENATO MARQUES

**W**HILE the figures are not yet final, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has stated that it expects 34.9 million visitors entered Macau in 2024.

This estimate is based on data collected by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) at various border posts, which still needs to undergo verification before being published by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

If confirmed, this would mean that December accounted for more than three million visitors, as official figures released by DSEC up to November 2024 show



that by the end of that month, there had been a total of 31.9 million visitor entries.

These results exceed the MGTO's forecast, which initially predicted around 33 million

visitors for the year, later revising that estimate to approximately 34 million.

As reported by the Times, before the Christmas and New Year holiday season, the general

visitor goal for the year was expected to be surpassed, based on figures released during the Macau handover holiday on Dec. 20.

At that time, the Times predicted that, with a monthly average of around 2.9 million visitors, it was likely that 2024 would end with a figure close to 35 million visitors.

The figure now released by MGTO represents a 23.7% year-on-year increase compared to 2023, and is 11.4% lower than the figure reached in 2019 (pre-pandemic).

The 2024 figure falls between the results recorded in 2017 (32.6 million) and 2018 (35.8 million).

STATS

# AIRPORT RECORDS 7.6M PASSENGERS IN 2024

LYNZY VALLES

**M**ACAU International Airport (MIA) has marked a significant milestone in 2024, recording over 7.64 million passengers, an increase of 48% compared to the previous year.

Flight movements also surged, exceeding 59,000, reflecting a 41% rise. December proved to be a particularly busy month, with passenger traffic reaching 680,000 and 5,280 flight movements, showcasing annual increases of 14% and 9.6%, respectively.

During the holiday season from Dec. 20 to Dec. 25, MIA handled an average of over 22,000 passengers daily, peaking on Dec. 22 with a record 25,000 passengers in a single day.

Currently, 27 airlines ope-

rate at MIA, connecting the region to approximately 41 destinations across Mainland China, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, and Northeast Asia.

In addition to passenger growth, MIA's cargo operations also flourished, achieving a volume of 108,000 tonnes, which marks a substantial year-on-year increase of about 70%.

The recent implementation ceremony for the Hengqin Upstream Cargo Terminal Project signals ongoing efforts to enhance local aviation logistics capabilities.

Looking ahead to 2025, MIA said in a statement that it plans to align with the government's tourism development strategy by consolidating its market in mainland China while exploring new international opportunities.



# Chinese tech giants Tencent, CATL and others protest US listings as army-linked companies

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

**U**.S. Defense Department has added dozens of Chinese companies, including games and technology company Tencent, artificial intelligence firm SenseTime and the world's biggest battery maker CATL, to a list of companies it says have ties to China's military, prompting some to protest and say they will seek to have the decision reversed.

The U.S. has in recent years sought to restrict sharing of advanced technology, including semiconductors and artificial intelligence, deeming it to be a threat to national security. The Defense Department updates its list of "Chinese Military Companies," or CMC list, annually. With the latest revision it includes 134 companies. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2024 bans the

Department of Defense from dealing with the designated companies beginning in June 2026.

Tencent's Hong Kong-traded shares fell 7.3% yesterday and the company said it would "initiate a reconsideration process to correct this mistake," seek talks with the Defense Department and if need be take legal measures to get it removed from the list. Tencent is the world's largest video gaming company and operates Chinese messaging platform WeChat.

"As the company is neither a Chinese military company nor a military-civil fusion contributor to the Chinese defense industrial base, it believes that its inclusion in the CMC List is a mistake," Tencent said in an announcement to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. "Unlike other lists maintained by the U.S. Government for sanctions or export control measures, in-



clusion in the CMC List relates only to U.S. defense procurement, which does not affect the business of the Group," it said.

Battery maker CATL said in a statement posted on its website that the company "has

never engaged in any military-related business or activities" and said the designation would not have adverse impact on its operations.

Like Tencent, CATL maintains that its inclusion to the list was a "mistake" and that it

would proactively engage with the DoD to "address the false designation" and take legal action if necessary to protect company and stakeholder interest. CATL's stock fell 2.84% in Shenzhen.

AI company SenseTime said in a statement that the decision to include it on the list had "no factual basis."

"We firmly disagree with it," SenseTime's statement read, adding that the decision has "no material impact on our global operations."

"SenseTime remains firmly committed to working collaboratively with the relevant stakeholders to address this matter, and to safeguarding the interests of the company and our shareholders," the company said.

During a daily news briefing, Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Guo Jiakun urged the U.S. to "immediately correct its wrong practices, and lift the illegal unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction on Chinese companies."

"China consistently and firmly opposes the U.S. overstretching the concept of national security, creating discriminatory lists under various pretexts, and unwarrantedly suppressing Chinese companies, hindering China's high-quality development," Guo said. **MDT/AP**

# Nippon Steel stands firm on a US Steel takeover and denies risks cited by Biden

YURI KAGEYAMA, TOKYO

**N**IPPON Steel was standing firm on its proposed \$15 billion acquisition of U.S. Steel, Chief Executive Eiji Hashimoto said yesterday after President Joe Biden's blocked the top Japanese steelmaker's move.

"There is no reason or need to give up," he told reporters at company headquarters in Tokyo. "We are convinced it's clearly beneficial for both nations."

While acknowledging the effort may take time, he stressed the companies' latest legal action in the U.S. was a key development.

Nippon Steel Corp. and U.S. Steel filed federal lawsuits Monday challenging the Biden administration's decision as ignoring "the rule of law."

In separate lawsuits in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia and the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania, the steelmakers challenged the Biden administration's move, noting the acquisition will "enhance, not threaten, United States national security."

In blocking the transaction Friday, Biden said U.S. companies producing steel need to "keep leading the fight on behalf of Ameri-

ca's national interests."

Proponents of the takeover, which surfaced more than a year ago, say Japan is a U.S. ally, as well as a top investor in American companies.

They also argue Nippon Steel and U.S. Steel coming together makes for a viable force in an industry now dominated by the Chinese, creating jobs and economic impact of up to \$1 billion.

Hashimoto reiterated that Nippon Steel and U.S. Steel were "united as one" in wanting the deal. They both feel Biden's decision is unlawful and invalid, and hope to win understanding for their effort, he told reporters.

The U.S. market remains a key part of Nippon Steel's global strategy, said Hashimoto.

U.S. Steel Corp. has accused the Biden administration of interference. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO

Eiji Hashimoto, chairman and CEO of Nippon Steel Corporation



## PUI CHING MIDDLE SCHOOL (COLOANE CAMPUS)

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AD



TIBET

# Strong earthquake kills at least 95 people in western China

KEN MORITSUGU, BEIJING

A strong earthquake killed at least 95 people in Tibet yesterday and left many others trapped as dozens of aftershocks shook the high-altitude region of western China and across the border in Nepal.

Officials in the region said at a brief news conference that 130 others were injured, state broadcaster CCTV said.

Video on CCTV showed orange-suited rescue workers climbing piles of debris blocking homes in a heavily damaged village, while chunks that had been knocked off buildings littered streets and crushed cars in other areas.

State media reported that about 1,000 houses were damaged and 130 people were injured in addition to the deaths, citing the Tibet earthquake relief headquarters.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the earthquake measured magnitude 7.1 and was relatively shallow at a depth of about 10 kilometers. China recorded the magnitude as 6.8.

The epicenter was about 75 kilometers northeast of Mount Everest, which straddles the China-Nepal border.

AP PHOTO



The area is seismically active and is where the India and Eurasia plates clash and cause uplifts in the Himalayan mountains strong enough to change the heights of some of the world's tallest peaks.

About 50 aftershocks were

recorded in the three hours after the earthquake, and the Mount Everest scenic area on the Chinese side was closed after the quake.

About 1,500 fire and rescue workers were deployed to search for people, the Mi-

nistry of Emergency Management. Two hundred soldiers joined the search, CCTV said.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping called for all-out efforts to rescue people, minimize casualties and resettle those whose homes were damaged.

Vice Premier Zhang Guoqing, was dispatched to the area to guide the work.

CCTV said there are a handful of communities within 5 kilometers of the epicenter, which was 380 kilometers from Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, and about 23 kilometers from the region's second-largest city of Shigatse, known as Xigaze in Chinese.

The average altitude in the area around the epicenter is about 4,200 meters, the China Earthquake Networks Center said in a social media post.

In Nepal, authorities asked officials in the mountainous area near the epicenter to search for any casualties or damage.

The National Emergency Operation Center in Kathmandu said people in northeastern Nepal strongly felt the earthquake but there were no immediate reports of injuries or damage to houses.

A police officer in Solukhumbu district, where Mount Everest is located, said by telephone that there were no reports of damage. The area, often crowded with climbers and hikers, was empty in the depth of winter. Many residents move to the south to avoid the harsh winter.

About 230 kilometers from the epicenter in Nepal's capital, Kathmandu, the earthquake woke up residents and sent them running out of their homes into the streets.

There have been 10 earthquakes of at least magnitude 6 in the area where yesterday's quake hit over the past century, the USGS said. **MDT/AP**

# Taiwan holds military drills as concerns rise over possible defense budget cut

TAIJING WU, HSINCHU

Taiwan began three days of military drills yesterday as concerns rose over potential cuts to the defense budget due to legislative wrangling between the island's two major political parties.

The drills began in the north with tank maneuvering at a base in Hsinchu featuring outmoded CM-11 tanks, which are gradually being replaced by newly purchased Abrams M1A2T from the U.S. The replacement marks a huge upgrade despite some complaints over the weight of the new tanks and their likely effectiveness at preventing a possible Chinese landing.

Troops arrived on armored personnel carriers, while Apache and S-70 helicopters whirled overhead, providing reconnaissance and covering fire.

With the equipment Taiwan currently operates, the communication officer is on the ground to coordinate airborne attacks, said Army Captain Chuang Yuan-cheng of the 542 Armored Brigade in Hsinchu county just south of the capital of Taipei. That allows them to guide the helicopters so that "ground fire and airborne fire are synchronized," Chuang said.

Today, the army will show off its Patriot III anti-missile system aimed at countering one of China's most potent

AP PHOTO



weapons against the island of 23 million.

And tomorrow, anti-submarine exercises will be held off of Taiwan's largest port of Kaohsiung, considered China's best conduit for resupplying its troops should it establish a beachhead

in the heavily defended region.

The annual drills are held in the run-up to the Lunar New Year holiday to reassure the population of Taiwan's ability to meet China's threats and to boost recruitment. Taiwan has a backlog of or-

ders from the U.S. for about \$20 billion in weapons systems, while it upgrades its M-16 fighters and develops its own submarines. It has also extended compulsory military service to one year.

However, the government has warned that new legal amendments being considered could force a 28% cut in the defense budget by altering the way funds are distributed between the central and local governments.

That in turn could reduce the willingness of the U.S. and its allies such as Japan and the Philippines to assist Taiwan in the event of an armed clash with China, National Security Council Secretary-General Joseph Wu told legislators last month.

The legislation is being pushed by the main opposition Nationalist Party, which has joined with the tiny Taiwan People's Party to

oppose the ruling Democratic Progressive Party's legislative agenda.

Taiwan currently spends about 2.4% of its GDP, or roughly \$20 billion, on the military annually.

China has responded furiously to all U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, saying unification with the island is inevitable and warning that Washington is "playing with fire." However, apart from regularly sending planes and warships into areas near the island, it has done little more than blacklist companies and executives involved in the production and sales of such equipment.

Neither military intimidation, economic coercion nor appeals to their common Chinese ancestry seem to be working on Taiwan's population, the vast majority of whom favor the current status of de-facto independence. **MDT/AP**



# North Korea says it tested hypersonic intermediate range missile aimed at remote Pacific targets

KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

**N**ORTH Korea said Tuesday its latest weapons test was a new hypersonic intermediate-range missile designed to strike remote targets in the Pacific as leader Kim Jong Un vowed to further expand his collection of nuclear-capable weapons to counter rival nations.

The North Korean state media report came a day after South Korea's military said it detected North Korea launching a missile that flew 1,100 kilometers before landing in waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan. The launch, conducted weeks before Donald Trump returns as U.S. president, came off a torrid year in weapons testing.

North Korea demonstrated multiple weapons systems last year that can target its neighbors and the United States, including solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missiles, and there are concerns that its military capabilities could advance further through technology transfers from Russia, as the two countries align over the war in Ukraine.

North Korea in recent years has flight tested various intermediate-range missiles, which if perfected, could reach the U.S. Pacific military hub of Guam. In recent months, North has been testing combining these missiles with purported hypersonic warheads to improve their survivability.

North Korea since 2021 has been testing various hypersonic weapons

AP PHOTO  
A test fire of new type intermediate-range hypersonic ballistic missile at an undisclosed place in North Korea, Monday



designed to fly at more than five times the speed of sound. The speed and maneuverability of such weapons aim to withstand regional missile defense systems. However, it's unclear whether these missiles are consistently flying at the speeds the North claims.

The North's state media said Kim supervised Monday's launch, and that the weapon traveled 1,500 kilometers, during which it reached two different peaks of 99.8 kilometers and 42.5 kilometers and achieved a speed amounting to 12 times the speed of sound, before accurately striking a sea target.

Lee Sung Joon, spokesperson of

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the South Korean military believes North Korea was exaggerating capabilities of the system, saying the missile covered less distance and that there was no second peak.

Lee said the test was likely a followup to another hypersonic intermediate-range ballistic missile test last April and said it would be difficult to use such systems in a relatively small territory like the Korean Peninsula. He said the South Korean and U.S. militaries were continuing to analyze the missile.

Kim described the missile as a crucial achievement in his goals to

bolster the North's nuclear deterrence by building an arsenal "no one can respond to," according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

"The hypersonic missile system will reliably contain any rivals in the Pacific region that can affect the security of our state," the agency quoted Kim as saying.

Kim reiterated that his nuclear push was aimed at countering "different security threats the hostile forces posed to our state," but KCNA didn't mention any direct criticism toward Washington, Seoul or Tokyo.

The launch took place whi-

le U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was visiting Seoul for talks with South Korean allies over the North Korean nuclear threat and other issues.

In a news conference with South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul on Monday, Blinken condemned North Korea's launch, which violated U.N. Security Council resolutions against the North's weapons programs. He also reiterated concerns about the growing alignment between North Korea and Russia in Moscow's war on Ukraine. He described the military cooperation between Pyongyang and Moscow as a "two-way street," saying Russia has been providing military equipment and training to the North and "intends to share space and satellite technology."

According to U.S., Ukrainian and South Korean assessments, North Korea has sent more than 10,000 troops and conventional weapons systems to support Moscow's war campaign. There are concerns that Russia could transfer to North Korea advanced weapons technology in return, which could potentially enhance the threat posed by Kim's nuclear-armed military.

At a year-end political conference, Kim Jong Un vowed to implement the "toughest" anti-U.S. policy and criticized the Biden administration's efforts to strengthen security cooperation with Seoul and Tokyo, which he described as a "nuclear military bloc for aggression." MDT/AP

# Malaysian and Singapore agree to launch a special economic zone in a rare move to attract investors

**M**ALAYSIA and Singapore leaders signed an agreement yesterday to create a special economic zone to attract global investment and ease the cross-border flow of goods and people.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim called the Johor-Singapore special economic zone a "unique initiative" that harnesses each other's strengths and deepens linkages in a world that is becoming more polarized.

"Very rarely you find

two countries working together as a team," he told a joint news conference after the signing ceremony. "These two countries have a common strategy, to assist one another, to work and benefit from each other's strengths... This is the new attitude we must have other than talking always in terms of rivalry and unnecessary conflicts."

The zone, in Malaysia's southernmost Johor state, will offer tax breaks and include several flagship areas for various sectors,



AP PHOTO  
Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, right, speaks during a press conference with Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong at the prime minister's office in Putrajaya, Malaysia, yesterday

from manufacturing and aerospace to tourism, energy and healthcare. Officials are targeting to

attract 50 projects within the economic zone in the first five years, creating 20,000 skilled jobs. The

move is a boon to Singapore, a global financial hub with scarce natural resources and land.

Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong said the neighbors' strong linkages are an important foundation and building block for an integrated region. Malaysia is the chairman this year of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

"Where ASEAN is concerned, we are talking about not just more trade and investment linkages,

but infrastructure linkages including the ASEAN power grid. These are all good projects that Singapore will support and we hope under Malaysia's leadership, we can make good progress," Wong said.

"The greater competition we face is not among ourselves within ASEAN, it's outside of the region... so ASEAN has to come together, look at ways in which we can enhance our value proposition and be competitive together," he said. MDT/AP



MACHINE OF DEATH

# Long silenced by fear, Syrians now speak about rampant torture under Assad

SARAH EL DEEB & MALAK HARB, DAMASCUS

**H**ANDCUFFED and squatting on the floor, Abdullah Zahra saw smoke rising from his cellmate's flesh as his torturers gave him electric shocks.

Then it was Zahra's turn. They hanged the 20-year-old university student from his wrists and electrocuted and beat him for two hours. They made his father watch and taunted him about his son's torment.

That was 2012, and the entire security apparatus of Syria's then-President Bashar Assad was deployed to crush the protests against his rule.

With Assad's fall a month ago, the machinery of death that he ran is starting to come out into the open.

It was systematic and well-organized, growing to more than 100 detention facilities into which tens of thousands disappeared over more than a decade. Torture, sexual violence and mass executions were rampant, according to rights groups and former prisoners.

A blanket of fear kept Syrians silent about their experiences or lost loved ones. But now, everyone is talking. After the insurgents who swept Assad out of power on Dec. 8 opened prisons and detention facilities, crowds swarmed in, searching for answers, bodies of loved ones, and ways to heal.

The Associated Press visited seven of these facilities in Damascus and spoke to nine former detainees. Some details of the accounts by those who spoke to the AP could not be independently confirmed, but they matched past reports by former detainees to human rights groups.

Days after Assad's fall, Zahra — now 33 — came to visit Branch 215, a detention facility run by military intelligence in Damascus where he was held for two months.

There, he said, he was kept in a windowless underground cell, 4-by-4-meters and crammed with 100 other inmates. When ventilators were cut off -- either intentionally or because of a power failure -- some suffocated. Men went



Abdullah Zahra demonstrates how he was tortured in a cell at Branch 215, a detention facility run by military intelligence during Bashar Assad's regime, in Damascus, Syria, yesterday

mad; torture wounds festered. When a cellmate died, they stowed his body next to the cell's toilet until jailers collected corpses, Zahra said.

"Death was the least bad thing," he said. "We reached a place where death was easier than staying here for one minute."

Assad's system of repression grew as civil war raged

After he and his father were released, Zahra fled to opposition-held areas. Within a few months, security agents returned and dragged off 13 of his male relatives, including a younger brother and, again, his father.

All were killed. Zahra later recognized their bodies among photos leaked by a defector showing thousands killed in detention. Their bodies were never recovered.

Rights groups estimate at least 150,000 people went missing since anti-government protests began in 2011, most vanishing into detention facilities. Many were killed, either in mass executions or from torture and prison conditions. The exact number remains unknown.

Even before the uprising,

Assad had ruled with an iron fist. But as protests turned into a civil war that would last 14 years, Assad expanded his system of repression. New detention facilities run by military, security and intelligence agencies sprung up in security compounds, military airports and under buildings.

At Branch 215, Zahra hoped to find some sign of his lost relatives. But there was nothing. At home, his aunt, Rajaa Zahra, looked at the leaked pictures of her killed children for the first time -- something she had long refused to do. She lost four of her six sons in Assad's crackdowns. Her brother, she said, lost two of his three sons.

"They were hoping to finish off all the young men of the country."

Syrians were tortured with 'the tire' and 'magic carpet'

The tortures had names. One was called the "magic carpet," where a detainee was strapped to a hinged wooden plank that bends in half, folding his head to his feet, which were then beaten.

Abdul-Karim Hajeko said he endured this five times. His torturers stomped on his back during interrogations at the

Criminal Security branch, and his vertebrae are still broken.

"My screams would go to heaven. Once a doctor came down from the fourth floor (to the ground floor) because of my screams," he said.

He was also put in "the tire." His legs were bent inside a car tire as interrogators beat his back and feet. Afterward, they ordered him to kiss the tire and thank it for teaching him "how to behave."

Many prisoners said the tire was inflicted for rule violations -- like making noise, raising one's head in front of guards, or praying -- or for no reason at all.

Saleh Turki Yahia said a cellmate died nearly every day during the seven months in 2012 he was held at the Palestine Branch, a detention facility run by the General Intelligence Agency. He said he was given electric shocks, hanged from his wrists, beaten on his feet. He lost half his body weight and nearly tore his own skin scratching from scabies.

"They broke us," he said, breaking into tears as he visited the Palestine Branch. "A whole generation is destroyed." MDT/AP

## this day in history

### 1979 VIETNAM FORCES KHMER ROUGE RETREAT



Hundreds of Khmer Rouge troops have fled Cambodia after being crushed by Vietnamese-led rebel forces.

The capital, Phnom Penh, has been seized and Pol Pot and many of his soldiers forced to retreat into the countryside.

It signals the end of nearly four years of brutal domination by the guerrillas.

Defeated soldiers crossed the border into Thailand where they were taken to prison as illegal immigrants.

The Thai authorities have said they will not be forcibly returned to Cambodia.

Thousands more are reported to be seeking refuge in an enclave of North West Cambodia.

The retreat is a serious blow for the Khmer Rouge, which having itself captured Phnom Penh four years ago began torturing and killing its opponents.

Fall of Phnom Penh is critical  
An intelligence source said there was little evidence of an organised defence between the Cambodian capital and the Thai border - and that Phnom Penh was taken almost without a shot being fired.

It has been suggested that the Khmer Rouge decided to pull out of positions around the capital when they realised they would have little chance at beating the superior armed opposition.

The Vietnamese invasion came after a fierce year-long border war between Vietnam and Cambodia.

Vietnam launched its offensive on Christmas Day, with the help of pro-Vietnamese rebels in Cambodia assembled a few weeks earlier under the banner of the Front for National Salvation.

The fall of Phnom Penh is regarded by analysts as critical to the power balance in South East Asia.

Russia has firmly supported Vietnam while China has backed Cambodia.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The Khmer Rouge's reign of terror began in 1975 in the aftermath of the American bombing of Cambodia, which had increased the guerrillas' initial popular support. For the next four years Leader Pol Pot oversaw the deaths of an estimated 1.7 million people, by execution, forced labour and starvation.

In 1979, Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge were forced from power by the invading Vietnamese.

Pol Pot officially resigned the leadership in 1985 but appears to have retained considerable influence.

Pol Pot was convicted of treason by a "people's tribunal" in 1997, and was sentenced to life under house arrest.

He died in April 1998.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Your path ahead looks clear. You can see what worked and what didn't. Discover more options than you saw before. Let bygones be bygones.

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20  
Rest and review your circumstances and options. Take time to process recent changes. Private introspection yields valuable results. Imagine winning what you've always wanted.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21  
Friends share their wisdom, humor and compassion. Come together to adapt to community changes. Investigate new options and possibilities. Share resources and inspiration.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
Push for a big professional prize. Take charge and go for it! Restore integrity where missing to advance. Persistence pays. Get farther than imagined.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
Plan for the next destination. Study and research to advance your educational agenda. Gracefully navigate changes. Adapt to current realities on the ground.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
Monitor the budget for financial strength. Good luck expands your well-laid plans. Keep your objectives in mind and find ways to ease pressure points.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
Together you can get whatever you need. Support your partner with what they're up to. Nurture love to expand it. Collaborate for shared gain.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
Allow extra time for health and fitness routines. You're surrounded by love. Get support with work and outside demands for your attention. Pamper yourself.

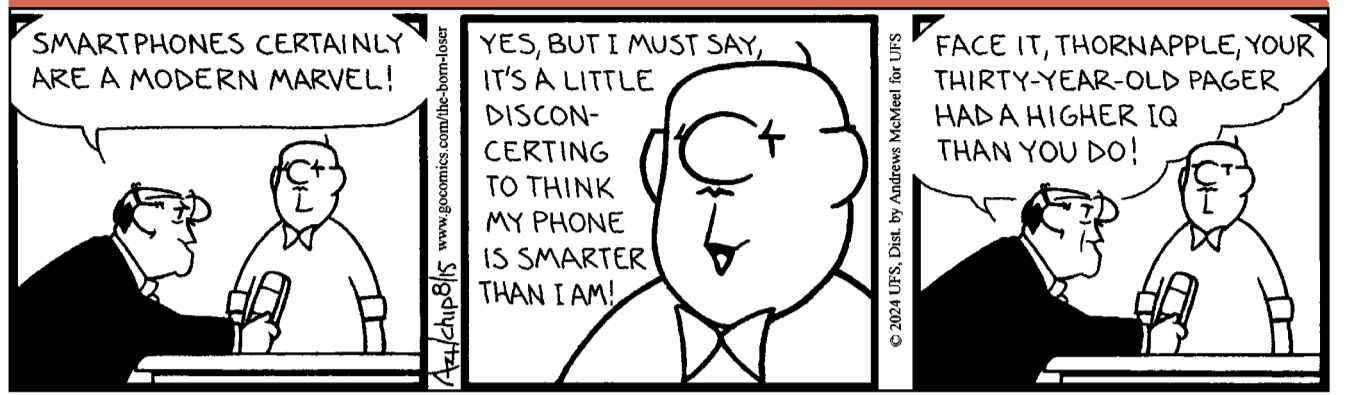
**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
Relax and notice feelings as they pass. Beauty flits by, outshining momentary irritations. Follow a passionate thread. Patiently persist despite obstacles. Have fun.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
Prepare your home to support your family for another season. What's needed? Plant seeds and tend them carefully. Mulch and weed. Nurture your seedlings.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
Notice a philosophical shift. A fascinating conversation offers new possibilities. Participate and offer your own perspectives. Maintain and upgrade your communications tech. Reach out.

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
Personal financial stakes could seem high. Shake off temporary feelings of overwhelm. Take one step and then another. You can get what you need.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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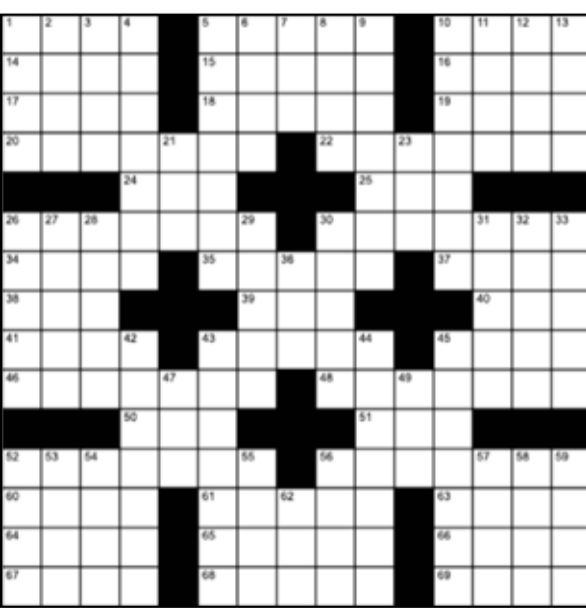
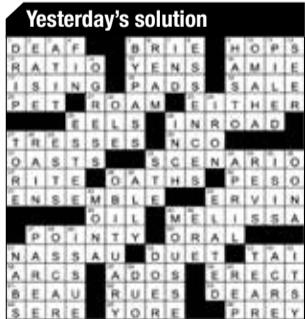
**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	-4	1	fine
Changchun	-22	-15	snow
Chengdu	3	9	rain
Chongqing	7	9	rain
Fuzhou	7	19	fine
Guangzhou	10	21	cloudy
Guiyang	1	3	rain
Haikou	17	21	overcast
Hangzhou	2	11	cloudy
Harbin	-28	-20	snow
Hefei	-2	9	fine
Nanjing	1	11	cloudy
Shanghai	2	11	cloudy
Taipei	13	17	cloudy
Wuhan	3	12	overcast
Hong Kong	18	21	sunny
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	1	3	snow
Frankfurt	2	6	snow
Paris	6	11	rain
London	-1	2	cloudy
New York	-6	-1	cloudy

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Former Russian ruler; 5- Jack Sprat could \_\_\_ fat; 10- Greek vowels; 14- Church area; 15- European kingdom; 16- Microscopic arachnid; 17- What's left; 18- Office subs; 19- Zeno's home; 20- Tenth month of the year; 22- Abbreviate; 24- Whiskey grain; 25- Suffix with pay; 26- Methods; 30- Erin; 34- Breaks bread; 35- Strike; 37- Designer Christian; 38- Ask invasive questions; 39- Exist; 40- School of the future?; 41- Inactive; 43- Camel's cousin; 45- Tuneful Horne; 46- Neuter; 48- Scoffed; 50- Pompous sort; 51- ... man \_\_\_ mouse?; 52- Send to school; 56- Endless; 60- Catalog; 61- Notre Dame's Fighting \_\_\_; 63- Evening, informally; 64- Like Nash's lama; 65- Gallows loop; 66- Baseballer Slaughter; 67- Meddlesome; 68- Dead duck; 69- Depression in a surface;

DOWN 1- Poi ingredient; 2- Blueprint detail; 3- Type of D.A.; 4- Snappy comebacks; 5- Values highly; 6- Impersonator; 7- Scot's topper; 8- Bites; 9- Like lighthouses; 10- Green beryl; 11- Slant; 12- Fit to \_\_\_; 13- Actor Connerly; 21- Ciao!; 23- Flamenco cry; 26- Early photo color; 27- Fenced areas; 28- Fashion; 29- Little; 30- Units; 31- Broadcaster; 32- Nary a soul; 33- Fear greatly; 36- 401(k) relative; 42- Precisely; 43- Enduring; 44- One more; 45- Having knowledge; 47- Country bordered by Canada and Mexico; 49- Before, in poetry; 52- North Carolina university; 53- Pebbles's pet; 54- Manipulates; 55- Switch ending; 56- "\_\_\_ quam videri" (North Carolina's motto); 57- Baseball team; 58- Like \_\_\_ of bricks; 59- \_\_\_ we forget...; 62- Cyclotron bit;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

**USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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



FOOTBALL

# CHINA'S MOST SUCCESSFUL CLUB FOLDS UNDER WEIGHT OF DEBTS

JOHN DUERDEN

**G**UANGZHOU FC, the most successful soccer club in Chinese history, disbanded on Monday due to crippling debts.

The club, formerly known as Guangzhou Evergrande, has been unable to meet the Chinese Football Association's financial entry requirements needed to compete in the 2025 domestic season.

"Due to heavy financial burdens resulted from previous seasons, the club could not pay off all the debt by the deadline," Guangzhou said in a statement. "We express our sincere apology to all the supporters from across the community and we appreciate the understanding and forgiveness of all the fans very much."

After being taken over by property developer Evergrande in 2010, the club started the spending spree in China that made headlines around the world.

Helped by players such as Brazilian international Paulinho and elite coaches such as Marcello Lippi of Italy



and Brazil's Luiz Felipe Scolari, Guangzhou won eight Chinese Super League titles from 2011 to 2019. The team triumphed also won the Asian Champions League in 2013 and 2015.

Other clubs followed with world-famous stars such as Carlos Tevez, Nicolas Anelka, Oscar, Didier Drogba and others heading to China.

In 2021 however, Evergrande reported debts of over \$300 billion and, as key players left the club due to financial issues, it was relegated to China's second tier in 2022.

On the same day, Chinese Super League club Cangzhou Mighty Lions also announced its disbandment, as did third tier club Hunan Billows.

"Only by setting sights on the long term, keeping the financial operation in a healthy status and investing in youth with patience should clubs build a robust future," the Chinese Football Association said in a statement, adding that 49 teams had been deemed financially ready to compete in the top three tiers of the league system in 2025. **MDT/AP**



Dallas Mavericks' Kyrie Irving (11) is defended by Houston Rockets' Dillon Brooks during the first half of an NBA basketball game last week

BASKETBALL | MAVERICKS

## Kyrie Irving out due to bulging disk in his back, no timeline for return

**D**ALLAS guard Kyrie Irving is expected to miss one to two weeks with a bulging disk in his back, and Mavericks coach Jason Kidd said a timeline for his return was not immediately known.

Kidd, speaking before the Mavericks take on the Memphis Grizzlies on Monday night, didn't shed much light on the injury or when Irving could return.

"He's out, so there's nothing I can speculate or comment (on)," Kidd said. "It's been reported he's out a week or two."

When asked a timeline for Irving's recovery, Kidd said: "Give me 48 hours to get that answer."

Irving is the Mavericks' second-leading scorer at 25.6 points per game, shooting close to 50% from the field, including 41.1% from 3-point range.

Irving's injury is yet another blow to the Dallas attack.

Leading scorer Luka Doncic, who is averaging 28.1 points, 8.3 rebounds and 7.8 assists, is also out Monday, missing his sixth game due to a left calf strain. **MDT/AP**

AD

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**MLB PLAYERS**

# Association affiliate withdraws image lawsuit against Pirates' parent company

**A**N affiliate of the Major League Baseball Players Association withdrew its lawsuit against the parent company of the Pittsburgh Pirates and the convenience store chain Sheetz Inc. that alleged unlicensed use of players' names and images on social media.

MLB Players Inc., a union business subsidiary, filed a complaint on Aug. 14 in U.S. District Court in Pittsburgh claiming violation of Pennsylvania law regarding the unauthorized use of name and likenesses, common law misappropriation of identity and unjust enrichment. MLB Players Inc. asked for an injunction against the team

and Sheetz in addition to damages.

The team said the following day that a verbal agreement had been reached. MLB Players Inc. filed a notice of voluntary dismissal on Dec. 23 in the suit, which named Pittsburgh Associates and Sheetz as defendants.

The Pirates announced a jersey patch sponsorship deal with Sheetz on June 21. The suit alleged posts on Instagram, X and Facebook by the team and Sheetz improperly used the images of Paul Skenes, Oneil Cruz, Andrew McCutchen, Nick Gonzales, Carmen Mlodzinski and Connor Joe. **MDT/AP**

**AUCKLAND ATP**

# Cameron Norrie accidentally hits spectator with thrown racket

**B**RITISH tennis star Cameron Norrie apologized and avoided disqualification when a racket he tossed in the air struck a spectator at the ATP Tour tournament in Auckland yesterday.

Auckland-born Norrie was facing match point against Facundo Diaz Acosta of Argentina when he lightly tossed his racket into the air. The racket struck a woman in a court-side box who was unhurt.

Norrie received a warning from the chair umpire and went on to lose 6-2, 6-3 in the first round of the tournament. He reached the final in Auckland in 2023.

"I wasn't meaning to do that but it's still not ideal to be doing that and I've never done something like that," Norrie said. (The spectator) "was laughing and I just said 'so sorry, I didn't mean to do that.' And she said 'yeah, I'm completely OK.'"

"That was not a big deal. But as



AP PHOTO

Cameron Norrie

we saw with some other players, you can easily be defaulted if it catches them in the wrong spot or they're not looking or something.

"I was not meaning to do that and it is completely not me to do something like that. I apologized very quickly and I want to apologize in general. I'm not happy with how I behaved."

Novak Djokovic was disqualified from the 2020 US Open after acci-

dently hitting a line judge with a ball and at the 2023 French Open Miyu Kato and Aldila Sutjiadi were defaulted from the women's doubles after a ball hit by Kato struck a ball girl.

Also in 2023, Australian tennis player Marc Polmans was defaulted from the final round of qualifying at the Shanghai Masters after hitting a ball into the face of the chair umpire. **MDT/AP**

AD



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OPINION

**The Conversation**

Patrick James, University of Southern California



**TRUDEAU TAPS OUT: HOW TRUMP'S TAUNTS AND TARIFF THREATS ADDED TO DOMESTIC WOES CONFRONTING CANADA'S LONG-STANDING PM**

After weeks of speculation over his future, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his intention to resign on Jan. 6, 2025.

His departure will bring an end to more than a decade of power for the progressive politician and once-darling of the liberal left. It follows infighting in his own party and a slump in Trudeau's popularity to the point where he trails the leading opposition candidate by over 20 percentage points. But it can't escape notice that the resignation comes just weeks ahead of a Trump administration – and after a barrage of personal slights and threats of punishing tariffs directed at Canada by the incoming Republican president.

The Conversation turned to Patrick James, an expert on Canadian-U.S. relations and Dean's Professor Emeritus at USC Dornsife, to explain why Trudeau chose now to bow out – and what role Trump played in his departure.

The first thing to note is that Trudeau's resignation is no real surprise to anyone following Canadian politics – the only real surprise is the timing.

At its heart, this is a personal political decision; the reality is Trudeau's party was doomed in the next election – which is due to take place before the end of October 2025.

Barring any wild changes between now and the vote, the chances of Trudeau's Liberal Party winning are as dead as a doornail. The opposition Conservative Party, also known as the Tories, are up in the polls by some 24 points.

The Tory leader, Pierre Poilievre, has done a reasonably good job at moderating his image from that of a hard right-winger – narrowing any chance Trudeau had of capturing enough of the center he needed.

My best guess is that, faced with this imminent defeat, Trudeau believes getting out now will insulate him and make it more likely that he can return to front-line Canadian politics further down the line, after a period of time in the wilderness.

While in the U.S. figuratively dead presidents rarely come back to life – with Grover Cleveland and Trump the only ones to return after a reelection loss – in Canada, there is a bit more of a tradition of political resurrection.

This stretches back to the country's first prime minister, John A. MacDonald, who resigned in 1873 amid scandal only to be reelected five years later. William Mackenzie King served three nonconsecutive terms as prime minister in the first half of the 20th century. And Trudeau's father, Pierre Trudeau, came back after losing the 1979 election to serve a fourth and final term in 1980.

But I feel with Justin Trudeau it is different. At this moment in time, his parliamentary career looks beyond rehabilitation. He is deeply unpopular and has enraged many of his loyal lieutenants – with the resignation of longtime ally and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland in December adding to the pressure on Trudeau to resign.

And while inflation – a scourge of left, right and center incumbents the world over – no doubt played a role in Trudeau's declining popularity, other factors are at play, too. Canadians generally feel that given the cards he was dealt, Trudeau still played a bad hand. Under Trudeau, immigration to Canada increased massively – and many blame this for a housing affordability crisis.

More generally, it seems like Trudeau, despite being the relatively young political age of 53, is out of step with politics at this precise moment in time. Trudeau, much like his father before him, is very much associated with identity politics, focusing on the perceived needs of certain groups over others. [Abridged]

Pope Francis on Monday named the first woman to head a major Vatican office, appointing an Italian nun, Sister Simona Brambilla, to become prefect of the department responsible for all the Catholic Church's religious orders.

The appointment marks a major step in Francis' aim to give women more leadership roles in governing the church. While women have been named to No. 2 spots in some Vatican offices, never before has a woman been named prefect of a dicastery or congregation of the Holy See Curia, the central governing organ of the Catholic Church.

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The historic nature of Brambilla's appointment was confirmed by Vatican Media, which headlined its report "Sister Simona Brambilla is the first woman prefect in the Vatican."

The office is one of the most important in the Vatican. Known officially as the Dicastery for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, it is responsible for every religious order, from the Jesuits and Franciscans to the Mercy nuns and smaller newer movements.



CANADA

**LIBERALS LOOK FOR A NEW PRIME MINISTER AS TRUMP THREATENS TARIFFS AND AN ELECTION LOOMS**

ROB GILLIES, TORONTO

CANADIAN Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his resignation after facing an increasing loss of support both within his party and in the country.

Now Trudeau's Liberal Party must find a new leader while dealing with U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's threats to impose steep tariffs on Canadian goods and with Canada's election just months away.

Trudeau said Monday he plans to stay on as prime minister until a new party leader is chosen.

He could not recover after Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, long one of his most powerful and loyal ministers, resigned from the Cabinet last month.

Trudeau, the 53-year-old scion of Pierre Trudeau, one of Canada's most famous prime ministers, became deeply unpopular with voters over a range of issues, including the soaring cost of food and housing as well as surging immigration.

**WHAT'S NEXT FOR CANADA?**

A new Canadian leader is unlikely to be named before Trump is inaugurated on Jan. 20.

The political upheaval comes at a difficult moment for Canada. Trump keeps calling

Canada the 51st state and has threatened to impose 25% tariffs on all Canadian goods if the government does not stem what Trump calls a flow of migrants and drugs into the U.S. — even though far fewer of them cross the border from Canada than from Mexico, which Trump has also threatened with tariffs.

Trump also remains preoccupied with the U.S. trade deficit with Canada, erroneously calling it a subsidy. Canada's ambassador to Washington, Kirsten Hillman, has said the U.S. had a \$75 billion trade deficit with Canada last year. But she noted that a third of what Canada sells to the U.S. are energy exports and that there is a deficit when oil prices are high.

If Trump applies tariffs, a trade war looms. Canada has vowed to retaliate.

**WHEN WILL THERE BE A NEW PRIME MINISTER?**

The Liberals need to elect a new leader before Parliament resumes March 24 because all three opposition parties say they will bring down the Liberal government in a no-confidence vote at the first opportunity, which would trigger an election. The new leader might not be prime minister for long.

A spring election would very likely favor the opposing

Conservative Party.

**WHO WILL BE THE NEXT PRIME MINISTER?**

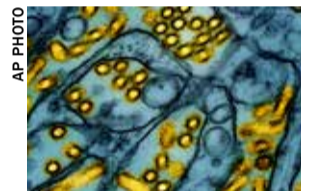
It's not often that central bank governors get compared to rock stars. But Mark Carney, the former head of the Bank of Canada, was considered just that in 2012 when he was named the first foreigner to serve as governor of the Bank of England since it was founded in 1694. The appointment of a Canadian won bipartisan praise in Britain after Canada recovered faster than many other countries from the 2008 financial crisis. He gained a reputation along the way as a tough regulator.

Few people in the world have Carney's qualifications. He is a highly educated economist with Wall Street experience who is widely credited with helping Canada dodge the worst of the 2008 global economic crisis and helping the U.K. manage Brexit. Carney has long been interested in entering politics and becoming prime minister but lacks political experience.

Freeland is also a front-runner. Trudeau told Freeland last month he no longer wanted her to serve as finance minister but that she could remain deputy prime minister and the point person for U.S.-Canada relations. **MDT/AP**



**USA** Joining law enforcement officials to update the public in the hours after a man killed 14 people and injured dozens of others in New Orleans, Louisiana's junior Republican senator, John Kennedy, implored the FBI to "catch these people" — and then added one more eyebrow-raising request of the federal government.



**USA** The first US bird flu death has been reported — a person in Louisiana who had been hospitalized with severe respiratory symptoms. State health officials announced the death on Monday, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed it was the nation's first due to bird flu.



**UK** Dozens of people were rescued Monday from flooded homes and stranded cars as a soggy and cold spell continued to disrupt life across parts of the UK and more wintry weather was expected. Hundreds of schools were closed for the first day of classes of 2025, trains were halted and commuters experienced headaches as sections of highways and major roads were closed.



**West Bank** The Israeli military launched a wave of raids across the occupied West Bank overnight, killing at least three Palestinians it said were militants after a deadly shooting attack the day before. The army said it killed two Palestinian militants in an airstrike after they fired at troops in the area of Tamun, a village in the northern West Bank.