

**17 YEARS**  
A-CHANGIN'  
Advertise with us  
+853 287 160 81

**MacauDaily** 澳門每日時報®  
**Times**

FOUNDER & PUBLISHER Kowie Geldenhuys EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Paulo Coutinho www.macaudailytimes.com.mo

**CTM 5.5G**  
is the first to launch 5.5G in Macau  
**Speed Power Up**  
Experience hassle-free travel  
FREE upgrade automatically to all 5G customers

www.ctm.net.mo  
MULTI-PLAYSIM: 1000

N.º 4640 **MONDAY** T. 12 °/ 19° Air Quality Moderate  
13 Jan 2025

"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN' "

MOP 8.00  
HKD 10.00 2305 4271

**THE IAM ANNOUNCED PLANS TO DEPLOY TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS THE GROWING PROBLEM OF RAT INFESTATIONS**

P4

**WILLIAMS AND PINDAR BY MANUPT LOGISTICS CROWNED WINNERS OF MACAO MATCH CUP**

P4

**THE RATE OF HMPV INFECTIONS IN NORTHERN CHINA IS DECLINING, OFFICIAL SAYS**

P6



**Japan's** Cabinet on Friday approved additional sanctions against Russia over its war on Ukraine, including freezing the assets of dozens of individuals and groups and banning exports to dozens of organizations in Russia and several other countries that have allegedly helped it evade sanctions.



**Japan and Indonesia** pledged on Saturday to deepen economic and defense ties during a visit by the Japanese prime minister, seen as promoting regional cooperation as China flexes its muscle and Donald Trump prepares to take over as the next U.S. president.



**South Korea's** acting leader on Friday accepted the resignation of the chief of the presidential security service, Park Jong-joon (pictured), as he faced police questioning over how his forces blocked law enforcement efforts to detain impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol last week. The acting leader, Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok, called for lawmakers to reach a bipartisan agreement to launch an independent investigation.



**Croatia's** incumbent President Zoran Milanović was the overwhelming favorite to win reelection as he faced a candidate from the ruling conservative party in a runoff presidential vote yesterday. The left-leaning Milanović comfortably won the first round of voting on Dec. 29, leaving his main challenger, Dragan Primorac.

More on backpage

# COTAI FUTURE

**Unused Cotai land is designated for commercial use, with no gaming developments planned, DSSCU said in a reply to the Times** P3



**SURVEY**  
**FIRMS PLAN A SALARY INCREMENT OF 2.7% IN 2025**

P2

**PUBLIC WORKS**  
**ROAD PROJECTS FACE DELAYS AMID INCREASED EXCAVATION ACTIVITY**

P3



SURVEY

# FIRMS PLAN A SALARY INCREMENT OF 2.7% IN 2025

LYNZY VALLES

**T**HE recent survey reveals that the average planned salary increment across participating organizations is 2.72%, reflecting a decline of 0.26% from the previous year's average of 2.98%.

According to the "2025 MSS & Hello Jobs Macau Salary Increment and Annual Bonus Survey," this downward trend suggests a more cautious approach by employers in response to economic uncertainties.

In addition to salary increments, the survey highlights that 83.87% of organizations plan to implement raises, down from 89.33% last year, while 16.13% have indicated



no plans for salary increases, up from 10.67% in 2024.

On the bonus front, the survey indicates that 90.32% of organizations intend to

offer bonuses for fiscal year 2024 performance, an increase from 88% in the previous year. However, 9.68% of companies reported no plans for

bonuses, a decrease from 12% in 2023.

Jiji Tu, executive director of MSS Recruitment and hello-jobs.com, commented on

these findings, noting that while planned salary increments and bonuses are slightly lower than in previous years, there remains hope for improved conditions in 2025.

"Similarly, the planned annual bonus by organizations for FY2024 is also slightly lower than the planned annual bonus for FY2023, as per the survey conducted a year ago, reflecting that the actual performance of many organizations in 2024 was slightly below expectations," Tu added.

Recently, lawmakers José Pereira Coutinho and Ella Lei have urged the government to update the salaries of civil servants.

In their statements, the two lawmakers noted that the government should follow the example set last week by the gaming concessionaire Sands China Ltd (SCL), which announced increases in the salaries of their workers to take effect in March this year.

STATS

# Zhuhai checkpoints leading to Macau, Hong Kong report record high 2024 passenger flows

**A** record-breaking 203 million inbound and outbound passenger trips were made in 2024 via checkpoints in the Chinese mainland city of Zhuhai leading to Macau and Hong Kong, an increase of 22% year on year, official data showed.

These checkpoints include the ports of Gongbei, Hengqin, Qingmao and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. Gongbei, an over-land border crossing between Zhuhai in Guangdong Province and the Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR), was the busiest port, recording approximately 110 million inbound and outbound trips last year.

Macau last month celebrated the 25th anniversary of its return to the motherland. Macau and



its neighbor Hong Kong are China's two SARs governed under the 'One country, two systems' policy since China resumed the exercise of sovereignty over them following long periods of Portuguese and British colonial rule, respectively.

The policy allows them to maintain their capitalist systems and ways of life within socialist China.

China aims to develop the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), an area encompassing Hong Kong and Macau along with nine cities in Guangdong, into a world-class city cluster, a global technology and innovation center, a livable, business-friendly location, an exchange hub for the cultures of the East and the West, and a

world-class tourism destination.

Interconnectivity has improved within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao GBA, with customs clearance procedures simplified.

As a result, the flow of both passengers and vehicles at ports adjacent to Hong Kong and Macau is experiencing a rapid uptick, according to Zhuhai border inspection authorities.

In 2024, Zhuhai border inspection authorities recorded a record high number of 11 million entries and exits involving vehicles. Among them, approximately 3.1 million entries and exits were made by vehicles traveling from Hong Kong and Macau to the mainland -- accounting for about 28% of the total. XINHUA

ROAD SAFETY

# PSP INTENSIFIES CRACKDOWN ON JAYWALKING, OVER 100 FINES ISSUED WEEKLY

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Public Security Police Force (PSP) has announced that it will continue to pay special attention to cases of jaywalking in Macau.

One of the priority issues to address last year, the PSP promises to continue to penalize those caught crossing the streets and roads of Macau unlawfully, particularly in areas where proper pedestrian crossings are in operation.

According to the latest report from PSP, between December 30 last year and January 5 this year, 109 people were found to have committed this type of traffic infraction and fined by the force.

The figures add to those released last week when the same force reported issuing fines to some 391 pedestrians during the Christmas and New Year holidays.

Although the final data for the whole year of 2024 has not yet been made available, data from the first three quarters of 2024 indicate an incidence of around 23 daily fines.

The PSP noted that infractions, including crossing roads at locations not designated as crossings (e.g., when a zebra crossing is within 50 meters) or ignoring red pedestrian signals, are liable to an MOP300 fine.

At the end of 2024, the PSP met with the Macau General Union of Neighborhood Associations (Kai Fong) to analyze several jaywalking "blackspots."

The PSP stated that this strict enforcement of the rules ensures the safety of pedestrians and vehicles following many complaints from residents and road users, as well as several accidents caused by illegal road crossings.

www.macaudailytimes.com.mo

**REACHING OUT!**

**+25,000**

Like us on facebook.com/mdtimes

MacauDaily 澳門每日時報

**Times**

DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF\_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com  
ASSISTANT EDITOR\_Lynzy Valles  
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS\_Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS\_Alex Torrão, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Jorge Costa Oliveira, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Sérgio de Almeida Correia, Viviana Seguí  
DESIGNER\_Rebeca Almeida | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS\_JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES\_Associated Press, MacauHub, MacaoNews, Xinhua  
SECRETARY\_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

A MACAU TIMES PUBLICATIONS LTD PUBLICATION

ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
Kowie Geldenhuis kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER\_Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS\_Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR  
Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

Advertisement\_advertising@macaudailytimes.com

For subscription and general issues:  
general@macaudailytimes.com | Printed at Welfare Printing Ltd



URBAN PLAN

# Remaining land plots in Cotai reserved for commercial use, DSSCU clarifies

RENATO MARQUES

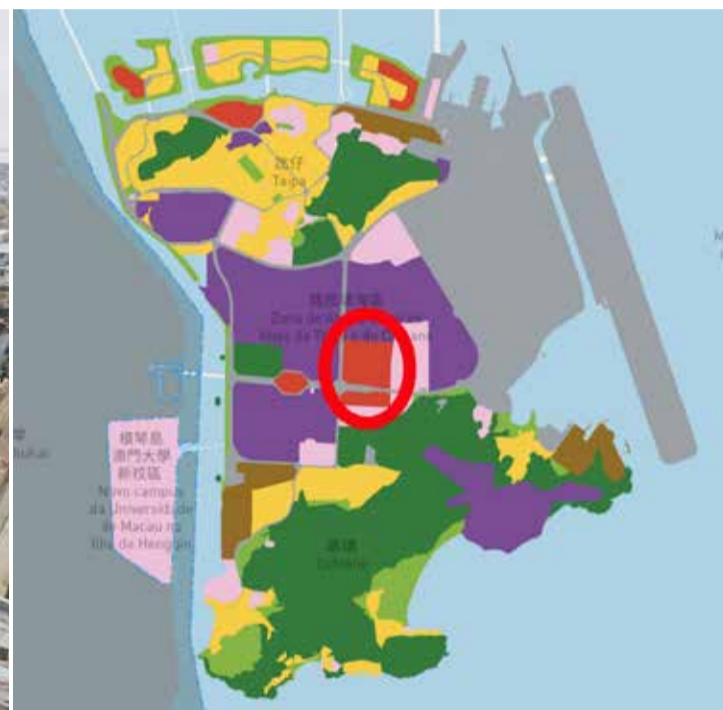
**T**HE Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) told the Times that the remaining unused land plots in the Cotai area are designated for commercial use. This information was provided in response to an inquiry from the Times.

The area includes several land parcels near the Rotunda Flor de Lotus, between the Macao Union Hospital and the developments of gaming concessionaires.

In its response, the DSSCU cited the Urban Master Plan, stating: "According to the 'Urban Master Plan of the Macau Special Administrative Region (2020-2040),' the land in question is located in an area designated for commercial use. Detailed plans have not yet been drawn up."

Although DSSCU noted that the final purpose of the land has not been determined, it emphasized that none of these plots will be used for gaming-related developments.

"The land in question is part of the Macau SAR's land reserves and will therefore be studied in the future to define its purpose in line with the policies of the Macau SAR Go-



vernment and considering the needs of social development and general urban planning," the bureau said.

At this stage, the DSSCU declined to comment on the current earthworks being carried out in the larger portion of the area, which include the construction of land terraces as part of the land preparation process.

Research conducted by the Times revealed that only one of the land parcels has been identified and has an Official Alignment Plan (PAO).

This PAO, dating back to July 2006, described the parcel as having a total area of 62,150 square meters and classified it for the construction of a hotel and casino with a maximum height of 68 meters. However, PAOs are valid for only 12 months after issuance, making this document long expired.

The remaining three parcels have not been identified, and no information is available about them in the Cartography and Cadastre Bureau's cadastral information network.

Currently, the parcels sou-

th of Estrada Flor de Lotus are being used to support the construction of the Light Rapid Transit extension lines to Seac Pai Van and Hengqin, as well as their respective connection stations and the construction of the Macao Union Hospital.

The Urban Master Plan, valid until 2040, came into effect almost three years ago, on February 15, 2022, dividing Macau into 18 zones. According to the plan, Macau's territorial area is expected to grow to 36.8 square kilometers by 2040.

The plan is complemented by detailed plans for each of the 18 zones.

So far, only one of these detailed plans, related to the East-2 area, has been addressed and approved (on February 28, 2024). This plan covers Zone A of the new landfills.

The new government, led by Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai, is expected to announce the start of procedures for creating at least one more detailed plan in its 2025 policy address.

PUBLIC WORKS

# Road projects face delays amid increased excavation activity

VICTORIA CHAN

**M**ORE than half of the 69 large-scale road projects in the region this year have exceeded their expected completion time by over a month, highlighting growing concerns over construction delays and coordination inefficiencies.

The Road Projects Coordination Group reported a 15% year-over-year increase in road engineering plans, with 39 major projects involving main roads taking longer than 30 days to



finish—an alarming 39% rise compared to the previous year. This spike has raised questions about the management of roadworks, particularly as 39 instances of

road excavation on main roads were recorded, reflecting a 40% increase.

To address these challenges, the Transport Bureau has emphasized the importance

of streamlined management and improved coordination among various engineering units.

Their analysis of interdepartmental coordination in road projects seeks to optimize processes and enhance the completion rate, which stood at approximately 75% for large-scale projects last year.

In a bid to mitigate disruptions, the government introduced a regulation that aims to reduce repeated excavations, requiring that any necessary re-excavation be justified and appro-

ved by a dedicated department, ensuring that public safety remains a priority.

As authorities continue to strengthen coordination efforts, they are also urging project owners to conduct work during off-peak hours to minimize traffic disruptions.

With approximately 7,000 inspections of temporary traffic measures conducted in the past year, the focus remains on enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of road construction across the region.

## NEW APPROVALS OF COMMERCIAL LOANS SURGE

New approvals of commercial real estate loans (CRELs) increased by 38.1% month-over-month in November 2024, while new residential mortgage loans (RMLs) decreased by 5.3% during the same period. According to the Monetary Authority of Macau, the monthly average of new CRELs approved between September and November 2024 was MOP 854.40 million, down 2.6% compared to the previous period. In contrast, the monthly average of new RMLs approved during the same period was MOP 1.86 billion, down 0.5% compared to the prior period.

## TAIPA PEDESTRIAN CAMPAIGN RETURNS FOR LUNAR NEW YEAR

Macau is set to reintroduce a pedestrian campaign in the Taipa Village district for the upcoming Lunar New Year. A government-led consultation on Friday gathered insights from local associations and businesses. The campaign, well-received during last year's Lunar New Year and National Day celebrations, is returning due to positive feedback from residents, tourists, and business owners. Government representatives are collaborating with local groups to refine plans addressing traffic flow, pedestrian safety, and promotional efforts.



# DELIC ACHIEVES NATIONAL HIGH-TECH ENTERPRISE CERTIFICATION

VICTORIA CHAN

**D**ELIC Beijing Energy Management Co., Ltd. has been awarded the National High-Tech Enterprise Certification, marking a milestone in its commitment to technological innovation and leadership in the urban heating sector.

The certification recognizes companies that exhibit exceptional innovation capabilities and contribute significantly to key industries. It affirms DELIC's robust research and development efforts and grants the company strategic advantages, including potential tax benefits and greater access to national projects.

As António Trindade, CEO of local firm CESL Asia, noted, "Locally, I think this is an incentive to show that Macau companies actually have some nationally recognized capabilities. Of course, this is done within our operations in China, but in Macau, we have been doing similar things at the same level or higher for the past 30 years."



António Trindade, left

DELIC is renowned for integrating advanced technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), big data, and artificial intelligence into its heating systems.

These innovations allow for

real-time monitoring and intelligent regulation, enhancing energy efficiency and user satisfaction. Key features include smart heating control systems that dynamically adjust to environmental data and big

data platforms that facilitate predictive analysis for optimal system performance.

Trindade further commented, "Unfortunately, in Macau, the government is not very supportive. They try to support

efforts through things like the Science and Technology Fund, but the support is either with some seed money or by trying to arrange meetings with the gaming operators, which really is not very effective. We really need to have specific programs that support qualified local companies in doing what they are doing in Beijing, where they are recognizing us at the national level. This implies that we immediately have access to higher-level operations and projects of special national importance."

As a certified National High-Tech Enterprise, the company aims to drive the future of urban heating, fostering a warmer, eco-friendly environment for cities and households alike.

Trindade concluded, "In Macau, we develop tools and AI capabilities, but it's very difficult to go to the market because we don't have any mechanism to show that we are a Macau company doing good work that has been certified by the government. In Macau, almost anybody can bid for government contracts, and there's no specific knowledge or verification process. Most of the time, it's not local companies but foreign companies that come in and do the work."

## REGATTA

# Williams and Pindar by Manuport Logistics crowned winners of Macao Match Cup

RENATO MARQUES

**L**ED by skipper Ian Williams, the Pindar by Manuport Logistics team was crowned champion of the 2025 Macao Match Cup, the most highlighted race of this year's MGM Macao International Regatta.

The event, which took place over four days between January 8 and 12, featured an event from the World Match Racing Tour for the first time, with 12 elite sailing teams competing for victory in the waters of Macau.

Ultimately, the British team, consisting of Ian Williams, Richard Sydenham, Jon Gundersen, and Gerry Mitchell, won the final round (3-1) against the New Zealanders of the Knots team, led by Nick



Egnot-Johnson.

Riptide Racing (USA) claimed third place after defeating their compatriots from True Blue Racing in the Petit-final (2-0).

The event format featured one-on-one matches, with all boats used in the competition being of the same model and design (Fareast 28R) to ensure a level playing field.

In the other two events that composed the regatta, the Ravenol Sailing Team, led by Türkiye's Yury Firsov, took first place in the Lotus Cup with a narrow 0.3-point advantage over second-placed Big Boys Sailing Team from China, headed by Shen Sheng.

Another competitor racing under the Türkiye flag, Vadim Popov, secured third place for the

Amigos Sailing Team.

In the most localized regatta, Hong Kong's "Capitano" team (skipped by Denis Martinet and Drew Taylor) dominated the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Cup, finishing with a significant lead over the second-place team, China's Wavy Life Sailing Team. Rampage, another Hong Kong team, earned third place overall.

The only Macau team participating in this event, Macao Lorcha, finished fifth overall.

The 2025 MGM Macao International Regatta, organized by the Sports Bureau, MGM, and Ursa Major Sailing Event Management, also included a "Family Fun Day" as a side event. This featured free sailing experiences and family workshops.

## FOOD SAFETY

# IAM TO INVEST IN TECHNOLOGY TO COMBAT RAT INFESTATIONS

VICTORIA CHAN

**T**HE Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has announced plans to deploy technological solutions to address the growing problem of rat infestations in the city.

Chao Wai Ieng, the new president of the IAM, revealed that the organization is aware of the issue and has already taken action.

The number of locations where traps have been set has increased from 200 to 1,400, and the IAM is now exploring technology to enhance the effectiveness of its rodent control efforts.

The IAM is considering technological methods to optimize these traps, such as tracking bait consumption at each location. This data-driven approach aims to provide better insights into rodent activity and improve the overall management of infestations.

Chao elaborated that the IAM intends to monitor the amount of poison used at each trap site. This will allow

the organization to gather crucial data and better understand patterns of rat activity. He believes this approach will enable the IAM to refine its strategies and improve the efficiency of its rodent control operations.

The urgency of this initiative was underscored when three supermarkets and a restaurant were temporarily closed due to rodent infestations. Investigations by the IAM's Food Safety Department revealed that these establishments lacked adequate rodent prevention measures and proper food handling facilities.

"Given the risk to food safety, the IAM took immediate prevention and control measures and ordered the three Royal Supermarket establishments involved to suspend their activities," the bureau said in a statement.

The IAM has assured the public that it will continue to monitor the situation and intensify inspections of local supermarkets.



# Surging job market could prove costly for households, businesses as odds of quick rate cuts fade

PAUL WISEMAN,  
WASHINGTON

**U**.S. job growth surged and unemployment fell last month, an unexpected show of strength that may prove costly to homebuyers and businesses who were counting on sharply lower interest rates to lower the cost of buying everything from refrigerators to homes.

Employers added 256,000 jobs last month, up from 212,000 in November, the Labor Department reported Friday.

Unemployment, which was expected to hover around 4.2%, fell to 4.1% last month. Health care companies added 46,000 jobs, retailers 43,000 and government agencies at the federal, state and local levels 33,000.

The final jobs report of 2024 underscores that the economy and hiring were able to grow at a solid pace even with interest rates much higher than they were before the pandemic. As a result, the Federal Reserve could be much less likely to cut borrowing costs again in the coming months. The Fed cut its rate three times last year in part out of concern that hiring and growth were flagging.

Overall, the solid jobs figures suggest the economy is entering a post-COVID period of steady growth, higher interest rates, low unemployment, and slightly elevated inflation.

"There's just no need for additional cuts in the Fed's rate any time soon," said Joe Brusuelas, chief economist at RSM, an accounting



and tax advisory firm.

Brusuelas says that the economy, fueled in part by greater productivity, can grow at a steadily faster rate than it has since the Great Recession 16 years ago. Low unemployment can fuel healthy consumer spending. Yet greater demand can also push up inflation.

"The economy is going to grow at a much higher equilibrium level, which implies higher inflation and higher interest rates relative to what we got used to from 2000 to 2020," he said.

The U.S. continued to create jobs steadily throughout 2024, 2.2 million in all. That is down from job growth of 3 million in 2023, 4.5 million in 2022 and a record 6.4 million in 2021 as the economy bounced back from massive COVID-19 layoffs. But last year's average

of 186,000 new jobs a month still slightly exceeds the pre-pandemic average of 182,000 from 2016-2019, solid years for the economy.

U.S. markets tumbled on the release of December's jobs numbers as investors sensed the odds of further interest rate cuts have faded. But rates are still painfully high for Americans trying to buy a house, a car, or even a kitchen appliance. Mortgage rates have risen for four consecutive weeks to reach the highest level since July.

Average hourly wages rose 0.3% from November and 3.9% from a year earlier. The year-over-year wage gain was slightly less than economists had forecast.

Over the past few years, the strength of the U.S. economy and the job market have surprised almost everyone. Responding to in-

flation that hit a four-decade high two and a half years ago, the Fed raised its benchmark interest rate -- the fed funds rate -- 11 times in 2022 and 2023, pushing it to the highest level in more than two decades.

A much-anticipated recession never happened. Companies kept hiring, consumers kept spending, and the economy continued to roll. In fact, U.S. gross domestic product -- the nation's output of goods and services -- has expanded at a robust annual pace of 3% or more in four of the last five quarters.

Inflation has come down, too, from a peak of 9.1% in June 2022 to 2.7% in November. The drop in year-over-year price increases gave the Fed enough confidence to cut rates three times in the last four months of 2024.

But Fed officials signaled in December that they planned to be more cautious about rate cuts this year. They now project just two rate reductions in 2025, down from the four they envisioned back in September. Progress against inflation has stalled in recent months, and it remains stuck above the Fed's 2% target.

"There is more to do to lower costs, but we've taken action to lower prescription drug prices, health insurance premiums, utility bills, and gas prices that will pay dividends for years to come," President Joe Biden said Friday. "This has been a hard-fought recovery, but we've made progress for working families, showing what can be accomplished when we build from the middle out and bottom up."

Biden is handing a largely solid economy to his successor, President-elect Donald Trump, though many Americans have been hit hard by the price spikes of the past three years and have generally been pessimistic about the economic outlook.

Many businesses are still scrambling to find workers.

Optimistic about 2025, Matt Harding, chief concept officer at Piada Italian Street Food, plans to open seven new stores and hire another 250 people this year. The fast casual restaurant chain, based in Columbus, Ohio, now operates 58 stores in seven states and has 1,200 employees. Hourly pay has risen 35% to 40% since 2020 to a starting wage as high as \$16.45 for typical workers, helping to reduce turnover. MDT/AP

## CORPORATE BITS

### Philip Colbert to bring back Lobster exhibition



Sands China is set to bring back Philip Colbert's Lobster exhibition in Macau, titled Coastal Fantasia: The Lobster King's Vacation in Macau. The exhibition will run

from January 15 to March 16, 2025, across five key locations in the city, showcasing large-scale installations that celebrate Macau's coastal charm.

Visitors can expect a striking 15-meter-high inflatable piece called Lobster Submarine and a 7-meter-high Lobster Flamingo at The Venetian Macau, among other artistic displays.

According to the gaming operator, the exhibition aims to enhance Macau's cultural tourism and provide an engaging experience for both locals and tourists.

Colbert, known for his playful lobster persona and vibrant pop art style, has gained international recognition and will be present at the opening ceremony on January 15 at the Macao Science Center waterfront.

### The Ritz-Carlton announces CNY offerings



From January 28 to February 4, guests at The Ritz-Carlton, Macau can indulge in Michelin-starred dining at Lai Heen, featuring a special lunch and an opulent eight-course dinner

that highlights traditional flavors with modern twists.

The lunch menu includes dishes such as Steamed Antarctic Shrimp Dumpling and Deep-fried Codfish Fillet, while the dinner

features Braised Whole Abalone and Pan-seared French Quail Breast.

For those seeking lighter options, the Good Fortune Dim Sum Menu offers handcrafted delights like Lobster Dumplings. Additionally, guests can purchase a limited-edition Rice Pudding Treasure Box as a festive gift.

The hotel also invites guests to embrace the spirit of renewal this Chinese New Year with a luxurious spa experience. The New Year Indulgence -- Body Rejuvenation Treatment features a 90-minute session that includes a stress-relieving body massage and a personalized facial.



# China and the UK restart economic and financial talks after a six-year hiatus

SIMINA MISTREANU, TAIPEI

**C**HINA and Britain restarted economic and financial talks on Saturday after a six-year hiatus during a visit by Britain's Treasury chief to Beijing, as the U.K.'s Labour government seeks to reset strained ties with the world's second-largest economy.

Accompanied by a delegation of British business executives and finance officials, Chancellor Rachel Reeves met with Chinese leaders, including Vice Premier He Lifeng and Vice President Han Zheng.

Reeves emphasized the need for a "stable, pragmatic" U.K.-China relationship as she wrapped up talks in Beijing.

"Our two countries can work together on areas of mutual interest in the interests of our citizens, whilst also being frank and open with each other when we disagree," she said.

The Sino-British ties have soured following a series of spying allegations from both sides.

British officials said Reeves will also urge Beijing to stop its material and economic support for the Russian war effort in Ukraine and raise the issue of rights in Hong Kong.

The two sides inked agreements on Saturday in areas such as finance "worth 600 million pounds (\$732 million) over the



Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves and Chinese Vice President Han Zheng attend a meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Saturday

next five years for the U.K. economy," Reeves said without outlining the specifics of the deals.

"Overall, this government's re-engagement with China already sets us on course to deliver up to 1 billion pounds of value for the UK economy," she said.

Reeves' three-day trip has been clouded by upheaval in the bond markets, which has pushed borrowing costs to their highest level since the 2008 financial crisis. The opposition Conservative Party has accused her of having "fled to China," rather than addressing ease market concerns about inflation and economic stagnation.

In an op-ed piece in the Times of London, Reeves insis-

ted that China offers Britain an opportunity to bolster growth. The nation cannot ignore the fact that China is its fourth-largest trading partner, with exports supporting close to half a million jobs in the UK, she said.

"Choosing not to engage with China is therefore no choice at all," she wrote.

Reeves' visit marked the revival of the China-U.K. Economic and Financial Dialogue — annual bilateral talks that have been suspended since 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and deteriorating relations. London hopes renewed dialogues will help bring down barriers that U.K. businesses face when looking to export or expand to China.

Britain seeks to improve ex-

changes in areas such as sustainable finance, capital markets connectivity, pensions and regulatory alignment, as well as trade and investment, Reeves added.

"As part of this, it is important to prevent economic links weakening our national security and economic resilience," she said.

She said she welcomed China's plans to issue its first overseas sovereign green bond in London this year.

The meeting also focused on finding ways to lift market access barriers for goods and services, "including unlocking a package in agrifood which is set to boost U.K. trade with China," Reeves added.

Vice Premier He said China and Britain agreed to remove barriers to investment in areas such as clean technology, life sciences, digital technology and financial services.

The delegation included Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey and the CEOs of the U.K. Financial Conduct Authority and the London Stock Exchange Group. Senior executives from some of Britain's biggest financial services firms, including the group chairs of HSBC and Standard Chartered, were also included.

Reeves' visit comes after Foreign Secretary David Lammy traveled to China in October and Prime Minister Keir Star-

mer met with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Brazil in November.

It's all part of a bid by Starmer, elected as leader in July, to strengthen political and economic ties with China, the U.K.'s fourth-largest single trading partner, according to the Treasury.

Officials said Starmer wanted a "pragmatic" approach to working with Beijing on global stability, climate change and the transition to clean energy. But some in the opposition Conservative Party have criticized his stance and said trade ties should not come at the expense of national security and human rights concerns.

British political leaders and intelligence chiefs have repeatedly warned that China poses security threats. Calls to tackle the challenge grew louder last month when it emerged that an alleged Chinese spy had cultivated close ties with Prince Andrew and carried out "covert and deceptive activity" for China's ruling Communist Party, according to officials.

"National security is the foundation of what any government acting in the national interest will prioritize," Reeves said. "But we need to make sure that we have pragmatic and good relations with countries around the world. That is in our national interest." **MDT/AP**

## HEALTH

# The rate of HMPV infections in northern China is declining, official says

**T**HE rate of infections with the flu-like human metapneumovirus (HMPV) in northern China is declining, a health official said yesterday, amid some international concern over a potential pandemic.

HMPV, which belongs to the same family as the respiratory syncytial virus, causes flu or cold-like symptoms including fever, cough and nasal congestion. The symptoms often clear up by themselves, though they can cause lower respiratory tract infections among children, older adults and those im-

munocompromised.

"The human metapneumovirus is not a new virus, and has been with humans for at least several decades," said Wang Liping, a researcher at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, during a press briefing by China's National Health Commission.

Wang added that the increase in recent years in the number of cases of the virus, first detected in the Netherlands in 2001, is due to better detection methods.

"At present, the rate of positive cases in human metapneumovirus detec-



Wang Liping, left, researcher for the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention

tion is fluctuating, and the rate of positive cases in northern provinces is de-

clining, and the rate of positive cases among patients aged 14 and below has star-

ted to decline," she said.

Concerns surfaced in recent days over a surge in HMPV infections in northern China after images circulated online of hospitals overrun with masked patients. The World Health Organization said it has not received reports of unusual outbreaks in China or elsewhere.

Experts say HMPV is unlike COVID-19 in that it has been around for decades and there is some built-in immunity to it. Most children are infected with the virus by the age of 5.

Wang said respiratory diseases currently affecting people in China are caused by known pathogens, and no new infectious diseases have emerged.

The number of patients in fever clinics and emergency departments across

the country has been rising but is still generally lower compared to the same period last year, said Gao Xinqiang, deputy director of the Department of Medical Emergency Response of the health commission.

"There is no obvious shortage of medical resources," Gao said.

Flu infections across the country are expected to gradually decline in mid-to-late January, said commission spokesperson Hu Qiangqiang.

There are no vaccines or drugs available for HMPV. Experts recommend precautions against catching the virus and other respiratory diseases including washing one's hands regularly, avoiding crowds if possible, and wearing a mask in crowded places. **MDT/AP**



# North Korean troops in Ukraine gain battlefield experience, cementing alliance with Russia

HANNA ARHIROVA, KYIV, UKRAINE

**F**OR weeks, Ukrainian troops braced for an unfamiliar enemy: North Korean soldiers sent to bolster Moscow's forces after Ukraine launched a lightning-fast incursion and seized territory in Russia's Kursk region over the summer.

Their arrival marked a new and alarming phase in the war. And while initially inexperienced on the battlefield, North Korean troops have adapted quickly — a development that could have far-reaching consequences as they gain combat knowledge in the war against Ukraine.

Unlike the Russian troops Ukraine has been battling for nearly three years, Kyiv's forces were uncertain about what to expect from this new adversary, drawn into the war after Moscow and Pyongyang signed an agreement pledging military assistance using "all means" if either were attacked.

One Ukrainian soldier who has witnessed North Koreans in battle described them as disciplined and highly methodical, saying they were more professional than their Russian counterparts. The soldier spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the sensitive military issue.

However, other soldiers, including Ukrainian special forces, have shared battlefield drone footage on the Telegram messaging app mocking their tactics as outdated.

Nevertheless, there is consensus among Ukrainian soldiers, military intelligence and others monitoring developments on the ground: While Pyongyang's troops lacked battlefield experience when they arrived, that has been changing quickly.

With 1.2 million troops, North Korea's military ranks among the largest standing armies globally. But its post-Korean War foreign engagements have been limited, leaving them inexperienced with modern warfare technologies like drones.

"For the first time in decades, the North Korean army is gaining real military experience," said Andrii Yusov, spokesperson for Ukraine's military intelligence agency. "This is a global challenge — not just for Ukraine and Europe, but for the entire world."

## IDENTIFYING THE PRESENCE OF NORTH KOREAN TROOPS

Despite Ukrainian, U.S. and South Korean assertions that



Pyongyang has sent 10,000-12,000 troops to fight alongside Russia in the Kursk border region, Moscow has never publicly acknowledged the North Korean forces.

While reports of their presence first emerged in October, Ukrainian troops only confirmed engagement on the ground in December.

Analysts say that without the influx of North Korean troops, Russia would have struggled to pursue its strategy of overwhelming Ukraine by throwing large numbers of soldiers into the battle for Kursk.

While Moscow's counterattack in Kursk has inflicted thousands of Ukrainian casualties, Kyiv's overstretched forces have managed to hold on to about half of the 984 square kilometers seized in August, though the situation remains dynamic. Besides the symbolic impact of Ukraine's success capturing Russian territory, control of Kursk could also be a bargaining chip in any ceasefire negotiations.

According to Ukraine's intelligence agency, the North Korean soldiers are operating alongside Russian units, with the latter providing reconnaissance and electronic warfare support.

The North Koreans wear Russian military uniforms with fake military IDs in their pockets, according to a report by a Ukrainian military unit that has observed them on the ba-

ttlefield, and they could easily be mistaken for Russian soldiers.

The subterfuge means Moscow and "its representatives at the U.N. can deny the facts," said Yusov, the Ukrainian military intelligence spokesperson.

Among the things proving their presence is that they have been

## The North Koreans wear Russian military uniforms with fake military IDs in their pockets

heard speaking Korean with North Korean accents in intercepted communications, Yusov said.

He said the North Korean troops are using their own weapons and equipment and have learned to cope with the improvised explosives-laden drones that have become emblematic of the war, first-hand experience even some NATO-member countries don't have.

"This is a new level of threat," Yusov said. "Regional countries must prepare for what this means in the future."

## NORTH KOREANS GAIN INVALUABLE EXPERIENCE ON THE BATTLEFIELD

The North Koreans' early missteps were largely caused by inex-

perience, such as moving in large groups in open terrain, making them easy targets for drones and artillery strikes.

According to the Ukrainian military unit's report, the North Korean soldiers were spotted easily as they moved in single-file columns through forest in groups of three, with 3 to 5 meters (yards) between soldiers. On open terrain, they moved in dispersed formations of five to 15 soldiers, making them vulnerable and leading to heavy losses.

However, during night operations, their movements were swift and units oriented themselves using red flashlights along routes, the report said.

"They're fast, physically well-prepared, and act strictly according to their algorithms," said the Ukrainian soldier who spoke to the AP. "If you drill the same routines for years, to the point where they can be executed blindfolded, it will yield results."

Despite their discipline, their lack of combat experience hindered their effectiveness. The Ukrainian military reported that North Korean troops often sustained heavy losses, with many killed by drones.

On Thursday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy put the number of killed or wounded North Koreans at 4,000, though U.S. estimates are lower, at around 1,200.

"Much of their military doctrine and training is based on strategies and experiences from over half a century ago," said Glib Voloskyi, a military analyst with the Ukrainian think tank CBA Initiatives Center.

The large-group formations date to when artillery accuracy was significantly lower, and observing troop movements much more difficult. Today, reconnaissance and so-called first-person view drones, or FPVs, that transmit video allowing soldiers to strike targets in real time have made the battlefield highly transparent, and anyone stepping onto it without cover, let alone moving in groups, is immediately spotted.

"But it is only a matter of time before they acquire the necessary skills to improve their combat effectiveness, which, combined with their discipline and training, could make them a significant military force," Voloskyi said.

## NO SURRENDER POLICY MEANS FEW NORTH KOREAN POWS

After weeks of fighting, Ukrainian soldiers have taken only two prisoners of war. In announcing the capture Saturday, Zelenskyy said taking them alive "was not easy" because of efforts to conceal the North Koreans' presence and avoid their interrogation by Ukraine.

North Korean soldiers avoid surrendering at all costs, Zelenskyy said.

This may stem from North Korean internal propaganda that portrays capture as the ultimate disgrace, analysts said.

"To be captured alive is considered a betrayal of the country, the leader and everything they stand for," said Seongmin Lee of the New York-based Human Rights Foundation, who defected from North Korea in 2009.

This belief is instilled from a young age and reinforced throughout military training, he said. "Because of the disgrace associated with the capitulation, heroic soldiers are supposed to save the last of their bullets to kill themselves," Lee said.

Lee said he shared photos of dead North Korean soldiers with contacts back home. "Most North Koreans don't even know what is going on," he said.

Dorothy Camille Shea, the deputy U.S. ambassador to the U.N., warned of the dangers posed by the rapidly improving battlefield skills the North Korean troops are gaining fighting in Kursk.

North Korea "is significantly benefiting from receiving Russian military equipment, technology and experience, rendering it more capable of waging war against its neighbors," Shea told the 15-member U.N. Security Council on Wednesday.

As an added potential benefit, she said, North Korea "will likely be eager to leverage these improvements to promote weapons sales and military training contracts globally." MDT/AP



# Los Angeles wildfires death toll rises as crews fight heavy winds to save homes and landmarks

JAE HONG, HOLLY RAMER & MICHAEL R. BLOOD, LOS ANGELES

AP PHOTO

**T**HE death toll from the wildfires ravaging the Los Angeles area rose to 16 as crews battled to cut off the spreading blazes before potentially strong winds return that could push the flames toward some of the city's most famous landmarks.

Five of the deaths were attributed to the Palisades Fire and 11 resulted from the Eaton Fire, the Los Angeles County coroner's office said in a statement Saturday evening.

The previous number of confirmed fatalities before Saturday was 11, but officials said they expected that figure to rise as teams with cadaver dogs conduct systematic grid searches in leveled neighborhoods. Authorities have established a center where people can report the missing.

There were fears that winds could move the fires toward the J. Paul Getty Museum and the University of California, Los Angeles, while new evacuation warnings left more homeowners on edge.

By Saturday evening, Cal Fire reported the Palisades, Eaton, Kenneth and Hurst fires had consumed about 62 square miles, an area larger than San Francisco. The Palisades and Eaton fires accounted for 59 square miles.

In a briefing posted online Saturday evening, Michael Traum of the California Office of Emergency Services said 150,000 people in Los Angeles County were under evacuation orders, with more than 700 people taking refuge in nine shelters.

Crews from California and nine other states are part of the ongoing response that includes 1,354 fire engines, 84 aircraft and more than 14,000 personnel, including newly arrived firefighters from Mexico, he said.

With Cal Fire reporting containment of the Palisades Fire at 11% and the Eaton Fire at 15% on Saturday night, the fight is set to continue.

"Weather conditions are still critical and another round of strong winds is expected starting Monday," Traum said.

Fighting to save public and private areas

A fierce battle occurred Saturday in Mandeville Canyon, home to Arnold Schwarzenegger and other celebrities not far from the



Pacific coast, where swooping helicopters dumped water as the blaze charged downhill. Firefighters on the ground used hoses in an attempt to beat back leaping flames as thick smoke blanketed the chaparral-covered hillside.

CalFire Operations Chief Christian Litz said Saturday that a main focus was the Palisades Fire burning in the canyon area, not far from the UCLA campus.

New evacuations were ordered Friday evening after a flare up on the eastern side of the Palisades Fire.

The National Weather Service warned that strong Santa Ana winds could soon return. Those winds have been largely blamed for turning the wildfires into infernos that leveled entire neighborhoods around to city where there has been no significant rainfall in more than eight months.

The fire also threatened to jump over Interstate 405 and into densely populated areas in the Hollywood Hills and San Fernando Valley.

## HISTORICAL COST

The fires that began Tuesday just north of downtown LA have burned more than 12,000 structures.

Firefighters for the first time made progress Friday afternoon on the Eaton Fire north of Pasadena, which has burned more than 7,000 structures, a term that includes homes, apartment buildings, businesses, outbuildings and vehicles. Most evacuation

orders for the area were lifted, officials said.

No cause has been determined for the largest fires and early estimates indicate the wildfires could be the nation's costliest ever. A preliminary estimate by AccuWeather put the damage and economic losses so far between \$135 billion and \$150 billion.

## OVERFLOWING KINDNESS

Volunteers overflowed donation centers and some had to be turned away at locations including the Santa Anita Park horse racing track, where people who lost their homes sifted through stacks of donated shirts, blankets and other household goods.

Altadena resident Jose Luis Godinez said three homes occupied by more than a dozen of his family members were destroyed.

"Everything is gone," he said, speaking in Spanish. "All my family lived in those three houses and now we have nothing."

## OFFICIALS WARN AGAINST RETURNING

Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna warned residents against venturing back to destroyed homes to sift through rubble for keepsakes.

"We have people driving up and around trying to get in just to look. Stay away," Luna said, urging people to abide by curfews.

Officials on Saturday warned

the ash can contain lead, arsenic, asbestos and other harmful materials.

"If you're kicking that stuff up, you're breathing it in," said Chris Thomas, a spokesman for the unified incident command at the Palisades Fire who warned the material was "toxic."

Residents will be allowed to return with protective gear after damage teams evaluate their properties, Thomas said.

## LEADERSHIP ACCUSED OF SKIMPING

LA Mayor Karen Bass faces a critical test of her leadership during the city's greatest crisis in decades, but allegations of leadership failures, political blame and investigations have begun.

Gov. Gavin Newsom on Friday ordered state officials to determine why a 117 million-gallon reservoir was out of service and some hydrants had run dry.

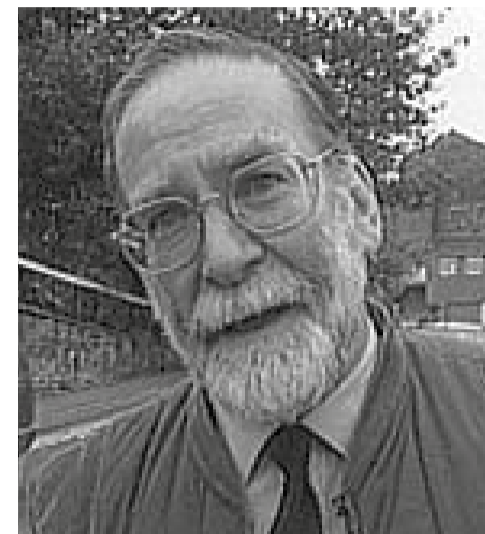
Los Angeles Fire Chief Kristin Crowley said city leadership failed her department by not providing enough money for firefighting. She also criticized the lack of water.

"When a firefighter comes up to a hydrant, we expect there's going to be water," Crowley said.

The level of devastation is jarring even in a state that regularly confronts massive wildfires. Traum of the state Office of Emergency Services said those impacted by the fires can apply online for immediate government assistance. MDT/AP

## this day in history

### 2004 SERIAL KILLER SHIPMAN FOUND HANGED



Harold Shipman, the former GP who is believed to have killed more than 200 people, has been found dead in his prison cell.

He was found hanging by a bed sheet strung around the bars of his cell at Wakefield Prison at 0620 GMT. Prison staff tried to revive him but he was pronounced dead at 0810 GMT.

Shipman, who hanged himself in his cell on the eve of his 58th birthday, was one of 563 inmates at the jail, regarded as one of the UK's best high-security prisons.

Prison officials have described his death as an "apparent suicide" and added he was taken off suicide watch 18 months ago. Shipman was on a standard security watch at the West Yorkshire jail at the time of his death.

The Prison Service said Shipman was "showing no signs whatsoever of pre-suicidal behaviour at all". The 57-year-old was behaving normally and there was "absolutely no indication" of the events to come, according to a spokeswoman.

Shortly after 1100 GMT, an undertaker's van took Shipman's body from Wakefield prison to the Medico Legal Centre in Sheffield for a post-mortem and formal identification.

Prisons Minister Paul Goggins said prisons ombudsman Stephen Shaw would carry out an investigation into Shipman's death. A separate police and coroner inquiry will also be carried out.

Shipman was jailed for life at Preston Crown Court in January 2000 for murdering 15 patients.

The murders took place between 1975 and 1998 with the victims dying from lethal injections administered by the doctor. His oldest victim was a 93-year-old woman and the youngest a 41-year-old man.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

An inquest into the death of mass murderer Harold Shipman is due to be held in April 2005.

A spokesman for the coroner said the resumed inquest would be at Leeds Crown Court on April 11, and was expected to last two weeks.

Two post-mortems have provisionally concluded Shipman's death was consistent with being hanged by a ligature.

His body was released for cremation but it has never been retrieved from a mortuary in Sheffield.

Shipman's family are understood to have doubts that he took his own life and believe his corpse has unexplained injuries. But a Home Office spokesman said: "We can't comment until we receive the results of the coroner's inquest and independent investigation into Harold Shipman's death."



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
 Get into a household project. Invest in fixing up your place. Listen before advancing to avoid communication breakdowns. Clean messes and make practical upgrades.

**TAURUS**  
 Apr. 20-May. 20  
 Discover something new about the past. Sift through facts and data. Put together a compelling report. The truth gets revealed. Prepare your case.

**GEMINI**  
 May. 21-Jun. 21  
 Focus on lucrative pursuits. Avoid distractions or arguments. Get expert support as needed. Action gets farther than words. Push to advance a dream.

**CANCER**  
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
 Take charge. You're the boss of your own decisions. Choose what you want and go for it. You can persuade a skeptic. Use charm and compassion.

**LEO**  
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
 Review priorities and plans. Think things over. Rest and recharge while considering upcoming plans. Some worries are well-founded. Listen to intuition. Stick to tested methods.

**VIRGO**  
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
 Public obligations interfere with private time. New possibilities stretch old boundaries. Friends can be especially helpful. Adapt to changing circumstances. Recharge with hot water.

**LIBRA**  
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
 Work takes priority. A rise in status is possible. Assume more responsibility. Follow an elder's advice. Do what you said. Make a good impression.

**SCORPIO**  
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
 Reduce the amount of stuff you're carrying to travel with more freedom. Your research reveals unexplored terrain. Pack light. Observe, listen and learn.

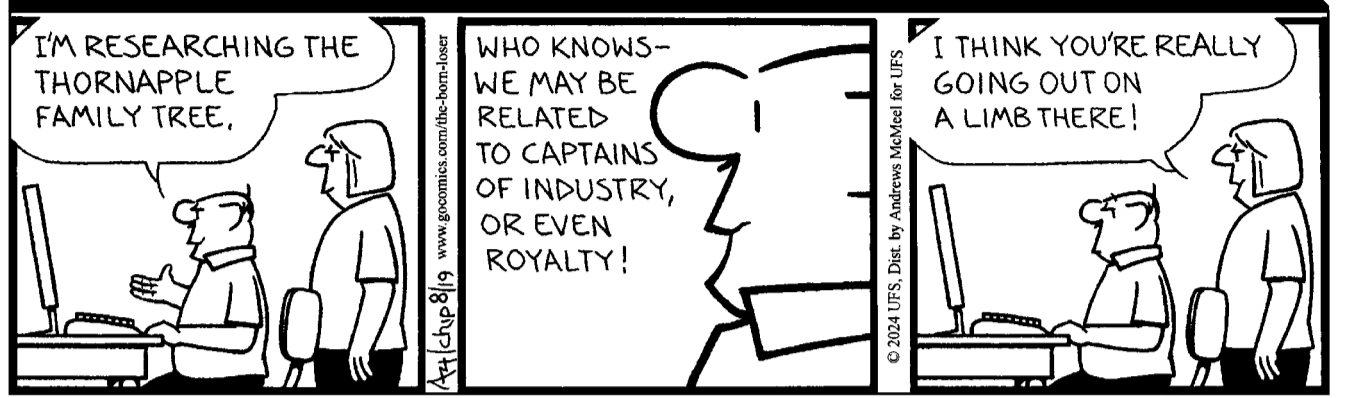
**SAGITTARIUS**  
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
 Stand outside a controversy. Balance shared accounts to maintain positive cash flow. Save for something special. Minimize risk. Continue contributing to the family pot.

**CAPRICORN**  
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
 Pay attention to the machinery. Notice how things work. Collaborate for effective strategies. It's easier to ride the horse in the direction it's going.

**AQUARIUS**  
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
 Just keep showing up. Make your appointments and workout sessions. Rituals and routines comfort and build strength. Nurture your physical health and wellness.

**PISCES**  
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
 Relax with people you love. Someone nearby looks especially good. Avoid expense or controversy. Find simple fun. Practice your arts. Go play outside.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sanson**



**SUDOKU**

**EASY**

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

**EASY+**

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

**MEDIUM**

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

**HARD**

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

**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	-5	6	cloudy
Changchun	-17	-6	snow
Chengdu	3	13	overcast
Chongqing	4	13	cloudy
Fuzhou	6	18	fine
Guangzhou	5	21	cloudy
Guiyang	0	12	fine
Haikou	13	21	cloudy
Hangzhou	1	14	fine
Harbin	-22	-8	snow
Hefei	-1	14	overcast
Nanjing	0	13	cloudy
Shanghai	3	12	fine
Taipei	10	18	fine
Wuhan	0	16	fine
Hong Kong	18	19	cloudy
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-2	-1	cloudy
Frankfurt	-5	0	sunny
Paris	-4	3	sunny
London	2	4	cloudy
New York	-2	14	cloudy

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Jessica of "Dark Angel"; 5- Born, in France; 8- German river; 12- Fights; 14- Sun, speeches; 15- Scat queen Fitzgerald; 16- Go along; 17- Frat party purchases; 18- Teen follower; 19- Unduly suspicious; 21- Fancy home; 23- Align the cross hairs; 24- Explosive initials; 25- Corn unit; 26- "Fiddler on the Roof" setting; 30- Sticker; 32- Norman Vincent \_\_\_; 33- Surmountable; 37- Humorist Bombeck; 38- Sporting blades; 39- Psychic; 40- Enchant; 42- Aromatic wood; 43- Utopias; 44- Destroys, as documents; 45- Puncture sound; 48- Mos. and mos.; 49- Shoebox marking; 50- Tidily; 52- Delay; 57- Jocular Johnson; 58- Has a mortgage; 60- Simmons rival; 61- Folk singer Burl; 62- Prying; 63- Blue book filler; 64- For fear that; 65- Supplement, with "out"; 66- Hardy girl;


DOWN 1- Pronto!; 2- Annika Sorenstam's org.; 3- Roseanne, once; 4- Territory; 5- Require; 6- Work unit; 7- Concentrated extracts; 8- Show to a table; 9- Aquarium buildup; 10- Prince Valiant's wife; 11- Harder to find; 13- House in D.C.; 14- Milk choice; 20- Texas tea; 22- Asterisk; 24- Conical shelter; 26- Blueprint detail, for short; 27- Zeus's wife; 28- Pack down; 29- Tickle pink; 30- Songs for two; 31- Coherent light beam; 33- Bridges; 34- "Venerable" English monk; 35- Be in front; 36- Commits a faux pas; 38- Each person; 41- Pastoral poem; 42- Curd stuff; 44- A collection of articles; 45- Slow mover; 46- Open a tennis match; 47- Satisfies; 49- New Orleans is The Big \_\_\_; 51- Lab procedure; 52- \_\_\_ majesty; 53- Catbird seat?; 54- Gaelic tongue; 55- RR stops; 56- Utters; 59- Large bowl-shaped pan;

**Friday's solution**

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

**USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

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



**It's prime time to BUY & RENT!**

有關樓宇廣告法例查詢詳情請向職員查詢  
 For more information on advertising laws, please speak to one of our representatives.



**CONTACT US & SEIZE THIS OPPORTUNITY!**

hello@jmlproperty.com  
 www.jmlproperty.com

f jmlmacau @jmlproperty



**Hoi Wan Retail (Taipa)**  
 HKD 12,980,000



**Tou Un (Taipa)**  
 HKD 2,750,000 1 bed 1 bath



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



info@jmlproperty.com

jmlmacau jmlproperty



Cabana Verde (Taipa Village)  
Studio & 1 bath  
41.80 m<sup>2</sup> / 450 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD2,800,000



VA FAT (Taipa Village)  
2 bed 1 bath  
77.10 m<sup>2</sup> / 830 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD3,980,000



Nam Long (Taipa Village)  
2 bed 1 bath  
59.92 m<sup>2</sup> / 645 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD3,650,000



Jade Garden (Taipa)  
4 bed 3 bath  
379.04 m<sup>2</sup> / 4,080 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD 11,880,000



Ocean Garden Cattleya Court (Taipa)  
2 bed 2 bath  
73.95 m<sup>2</sup> / 796 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD6,980,000

**BUY & RENT!  
MACAU & HK**

[www.jmlproperty.com](http://www.jmlproperty.com)  
[www.ariapropertyltd.com](http://www.ariapropertyltd.com)

有關樓宇廣告法定資訊資料請向職員查閱  
For more information on advertising laws, please speak to one of our representatives.

Call us!

(853) 2835 2699

有關樓宇廣告法定資訊資料請向職員查閱  
For more information on advertising laws,  
please speak to one of our representatives.



Juliet Risdon  
(853) 6680 9804  
juliet@jmlproperty.com  
AI-1003469-6



Windy Lam  
(853) 6881 1007  
windy@jmlproperty.com  
AI-10010081-9



AUSTRALIAN OPEN

# Olympic champ Zheng Qinwen starts her bid for another final on a rainy Day 1

HOWARD FENDRICH,  
MELBOURNE

**Z**HENG Qinwen's tennis resume is quite different from what it was when she showed up at the Australian Open a full year ago. No matter everything she accomplished in 2024 — a runner-up finish at Melbourne Park; an Olympic gold medal for China — she felt jitters before entering Rod Laver Arena yesterday.

After overcoming some hiccups late in the opening set of her first-round match on a stormy Day 1 at the season's first major tennis tournament, Zheng came through with a 7-6 (3), 6-1 victory against Anca Todoni, a 20-year-old qualifier from Romania who has won one Grand Slam match in her career.

"Actually, I feel really nervous," said Zheng, who is seeded No. 5. "I started to feel



Zheng Qinwen

nervous already since yesterday, 'cause I felt special emotion for the Australian Open. ... I really like it here."

As well she should.

It was 12 months ago on Melbourne's hard courts that

Zheng made it all the way to the final before losing to Aryna Sabalenka. The two-time champion began her bid for a third consecutive title with a 6-3, 6-2 victory over 2017 U.S. Open title winner Sloane Ste-

phens. Alexander Zverev, the men's No. 2 seed, faced Lucas Pouille in the last match at Rod Laver Arena.

Two of the first three men's contests to conclude both went five sets. Kei Nishikori, the 2014 U.S. Open runner-up, saved a pair of match points in the third set and came all the way back to beat qualifier Thiago Monteiro 4-6, 6-7 (4), 7-5, 6-2, 6-3, while No. 6 Casper Ruud, a three-time finalist at majors, defeated Jaume Munar 6-3, 1-6, 7-5, 2-6, 6-1.

Nishikori, competing in Melbourne for the first time in four years after a series of hip, ankle and knee injuries, raised his arms and threw his head back, causing his black hat to fall off, after improving to 29-8 in five-setters, including 8-1 at the Australian Open.

Before her run in Australia last January, Zheng had only played in eight major tournaments, making one quarter-final. Her big-hitting break-

through opened a season in which she wound up with a gold draped around her neck at the Paris Games in August.

The 22-year-old Zheng's power-based game is best suited for hard courts, and playing indoors doesn't hurt, either, so she eventually was quite comfortable against Todoni under a closed retractable roof, while thunder and lightning and a serious downpour suspended action on the courts that can't be covered.

Still, Zheng frittered away set points while serving for the opener at 5-4, then was forced to save set points for Todoni later. Afterward, Zheng said that being nervous usually makes her focus better, but this time, it didn't make "me play my best tennis out there."

Maybe that's because it was her first match of the season. Still, she was good enough on this day. **MDT/AP**

AD

**仁德** CENTRO MEDICO PEDDER  
• 仁德醫療中心 •

*We bring high quality of medical service to Macau*

**General Surgery** : Dr. Fok Manson, Dr. Lai Cheuck Seen Edward, Dr. Lau Wing Kee Peter, Dr. Kwong Man, Dr. Nie Fu Zhong, Dr. U Chong San, Dr. Lei Chin Chong

**Breast Surgery** : Dr. Leong Iat Lun

**Urology** : Dr. Lo Kwong Yin Richard, Dr. Zhao Yun Qiao

**Paediatric Surgery** : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong

**Paediatrics** : Dr. Zhang Zhiqin

**Obstetrics & Gynaecology** : Dr. Fong Kuan Io

**Plastic & Aesthetic Surgery** : Dr. Lam U Lin

**Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine** : Dr. Lam Kun Kuan

**ENT** : Dr. Cheng Zheng Ang

**Cardiology** : Dr. Jin Chun, Dr. Leong Man Kin

**General Medicine** : Dr. Ng Kam Hong, Dr. Lam Weng Chio

**Dietitian** : Chan Lai U Joey

Avenida da Praia Grande No 599, Edifício Comercial Rodrigues 14 e 15 Andar, em Macau  
T. 2832 2298 / 2832 2229 Website: www.peddermacau.com  
Opening Hours: Mon - Fri 10:00 - 19:00 Sat 10:00 - 14:00 Sun & PH closed

Enjoy the **Good Life**  
**Boa Vida** Starts Here

Discover Now T +853 2856 7888  
Terms & conditions apply

**ARTYZEN**  
GRAND LAPA MACAU  
澳門雅辰酒店



**OPINION**

**China Daily**  
 Editorial, China Daily

**POSITIVE POINTER TO HOW TO SHAPE A BETTER YEAR**

The only thing certain about 2025 is uncertainty. And uncertainty poses the foremost threat to countries' economic health, which thrives on optimistic anticipations, and deteriorates otherwise.

The revival of the China-United Kingdom Economic and Financial Dialogue over the weekend, after its suspension since 2019, was a choice of strategic foresight by the two countries that promises profound mutual benefits.

Under consecutive years of Conservative leadership in the UK, economic and trade relations between the two countries had been hijacked by a "national security" narrative, echoing that of the Joe Biden administration in the United States, resulting in a frosty overall relationship. Even as Chancellor Rachel Reeves of the UK Treasury came to Beijing for the Dialogue, her visit was caricatured by the opposition as a return to "operation kowtow".

But, unlike her critics back home, Chancellor Reeves and her government colleagues know the need for a "stable, pragmatic" China-UK relationship. While those people accused her of having "fled to Beijing" instead of staying home to address the upheaval in domestic bond markets, her eyes were on the long-term, strategic dividends this critical relationship promises.

In contrast to the Conservatives, Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government has demonstrated conspicuous pragmatism in its China policy. Chancellor Reeves' China visit, following that by Foreign Secretary David Lammy in October, and Starmer's meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Brazil in November, is considered a part of the Labour leadership's efforts to repair strained ties.

In that meeting, the leaders of the two countries agreed that China and the UK share extensive common interests and bear significant responsibilities in addressing global challenges and safeguarding world peace and development. They concurred on the need to strengthen dialogue, enhance mutual understanding and carry out exchanges and cooperation in a wide range of areas.

Despite the clamor about China being a national security threat, the Starmer Cabinet has seen room for cooperating on such subjects as global stability, climate change and the green transition. And these are only some of the most obvious areas of mutual benefit.

Unlike the Conservative marionettes of Washington, the Labour government has a more rational and objective perspective of China's development and the benefits of cooperation.

"... growth is the number one mission of this government to make our country better off. And that is why I'm in China to unlock tangible benefits for British businesses exporting and trading around the world," said Reeves.

In an article in The Times, Reeves argued China offers the UK an opportunity to bolster growth. Her country cannot ignore the fact that China is its fourth-largest trading partner, with exports supporting close to half a million jobs in the UK, she wrote. "Choosing not to engage with China is therefore no choice at all," she said.

She brought to China a delegation of British business executives and finance officials, and is taking home a substantial package of "tangible benefits".

"Overall, this government's reengagement with China already sets us on course to deliver up to 1 billion pounds of value for the UK economy," she announced at a news briefing after meetings with Chinese Vice-Premier He Lifeng. Their talks touched upon exchanges in such areas as sustainable finance, capital markets connectivity, pensions and regulatory alignment, trade and investment, as well as market access for goods and services. During which they agreed to remove barriers to investment in areas such as clean technology, life sciences, digital technology and financial services.

In choosing to work with China for common growth rather than erecting further barricades in a bid to "de-risk", as the US-led exclusionary efforts are euphemistically described, the UK has set a positive example for other countries at the start of what promises to be another tumultuous year.

**BLACK BOXES FROM SOUTH KOREA PLANE CRASH FAILED TO RECORD FINAL FOUR MINUTES, OFFICIALS SAY**

**THE BUZZ**

The black boxes of a Boeing jetliner that crashed in South Korea last month stopped recording about four minutes before the accident, South Korean officials said Saturday, possibly complicating investigations into the cause of the disaster that killed 179 people.

After analyzing the devices, the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board concluded that both the flight data and cockpit voice recorders stopped working about four minutes before the crash, the South Korean Transportation Ministry said.

After initially analyzing the black boxes, South Korean officials sent

the devices to the NTSB for closer examination after discovering that some of the data was missing. The transportation ministry said it wasn't immediately clear why the devices failed to record data in the last four minutes.

"Data from the CVR (cockpit voice recorder) and FDR (flight data recorder) are crucial in investigating accidents, but such investigations are conducted through the examination and analysis of various sources of information, and we plan to do our utmost to determine the cause of the accident," the ministry said in a statement.



AP PHOTO

**WARM CLOTHING, HOT POT AND EVEN ICE CREAM BARS FEATURE AT CHINA'S ICE CAPITAL**

**ANDY WONG, HARBIN**

**F**ACED with temperatures dipping to -30 Celsius, visitors to China's wintertime resort city of Harbin often make a beeline for stalls selling padded clothing to augment their wardrobes.

Oddly perhaps for some, frozen ice cream bars are also considered a key part of the visit.

Each winter, the industrial city in China's northeast turns into a magnet for those from China's balmy regions wanting to experience the extreme cold and take in the sculptures built from ice blocks carved from the Songhua River, which freezes from late October to late March.

"I searched for tips on the internet and am now wearing knitted wool pants and the thickest sweater possible," said Jin Yiting, who was visiting with her parents from the financial hub of Shanghai, where a light jacket is usually sufficient winter garb.

Jin Yanlong runs a stall selling winter hats, gloves and boots in the park.

He said that most of his customers are tourists from southern China who underestimate the frigid weather in Harbin.

"Some of the tourists wear 'too thin.' They come here immediately from the airport. They would find us to buy warm trousers padded with cotton," Jin said.

Despite the freezing weather, some curious tourists are brave enough to taste the cold itself. Zhuang Chang and his friend enjoyed their Madie'er ice cream bars while strolling on a commercial street whose architecture reflects the Russian influence on the city. The brand was established in 1900s by a Russian company and has steadily grown in popularity among tourists.

"It's cold, but my heart is warm," Zhuang said. He also compared the humid cold months of his hometown in Zhejiang province, where "people would be frozen to the core when being hit by wind."

"But here only my hands and face feel cold," Zhuang said.

For those seeking a warmer alternative, there are hot drinks and steaming hot pot, a kind of stew mixing meat, vegetables, tofu and other favorites.

Restaurant owner Chi Xuewen claims to own the world's largest hot pot, where 18 individual pots featuring a variety of flavors circle the giant bowl.

"Eating anything in a hot pot makes people warm," Chi said.

Li Long's restaurant uses wood both to cook the food and warm the air in the ice block structure.

"The pot also radiates heat," Li said. "Once the pot cover is lifted, customers see the hot food. In one word, it just feels hot."

Prolonged cold has left local residents with few options for fresh vegetables, so frozen food has become an alternative. Frozen tofu left outside overnight becomes porous and is particularly good at soaking up soup and flavor, local resident Liu Xiaohui said.

**MDT/AP**



AP PHOTO

**Czech Republic** A fire broke out in a restaurant in the northern region, killing six people and leaving six others with serious injuries, officials said yesterday. Firefighters said the U Kojota restaurant in the city of Most, some 100 kilometers north of Prague, was still open when the fire started before midnight Saturday.



AP PHOTO

**Germany** Thousands of people demonstrated against a convention of the far-right Alternative on Saturday, blocking some roads and delaying the meeting's start as parties launched their campaigns for the country's election next month. A heavy police presence was in place in Riesa and officers cleared some protesters from the streets.



AP PHOTO

**USA-Canada** President-elect Donald Trump's remarks that Canada should become the 51st state drew condemnation and a patriotic outburst on Saturday from a former Canadian prime minister who offered blunt advice to the incoming U.S. leader: "Give your head a shake!" Jean Chrétien, who was Canada's prime minister from 1993 to 2003, joined a chorus of officials from who say Trump's remarks are no longer a joke.



AP PHOTO

**Mid-East** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is sending the director of the Mossad foreign intelligence agency to ceasefire negotiations in Qatar, his office said Saturday, in a sign of progress in talks on the war in Gaza. There is U.S. pressure for a deal before the presidential inauguration on Jan. 20. Barnea's presence means high-level Israeli officials who would need to sign off on any agreement are now involved.