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**STAR ENTERTAINMENT'S FINANCIAL TROUBLES TOOK A TWIST AS A MACAU BUSINESSMAN RAISED HIS STAKE FOR THE SECOND TIME THIS WEEK**

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**GOV'T INTRODUCES NEW TESTING PARAMETERS FOR PUBLIC HEALTH ASSESSMENT**

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**TAIWAN IPHONE MAKER FOXCONN SETS ITS SIGHTS ON THE EVER MORE CROWDED EV MARKET**

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AP PHOTO



**South Korea** The top aide of impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol pleaded with law enforcement agencies yesterday to abandon their efforts to detain him over his imposition of martial law last month, as authorities prepared a second attempt to take him into custody.

AP PHOTO



**Japan** A tsunami advisory was issued for part of the southwest after a magnitude 6.6 earthquake struck Monday, but the warnings to stay away from coastal areas were later lifted. A few instances of minor damage were reported. Japan's Meteorological Agency initially estimated the magnitude was 6.9 but later revised it to 6.6.

AP PHOTO



**Poland** The defense ministers of Europe's five top military spenders they want to continue increasing their investments in defense but described meeting President-elect Donald Trump's challenge for them to raise spending to 5% of their overall economic output as complicated. The defense ministers of Germany, France, Britain, Italy and Poland came together near Warsaw for a meeting in a new format that they established after Trump was re-elected.

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# USE SPARINGLY

Amid influenza peak, gov't admits it has no solutions for the excessive use of emergency services, urging the public to use them only in severe cases

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HEALTH

# GOV'T TO ENFORCE SPECIAL MEASURES TO ADDRESS FLU 'PEAK SEASON' DESPITE HIGH VACCINATION RATE

RENATO MARQUES

**A**N interdepartmental group comprised of the Health Bureau (SSM), the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS), and the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) has announced that it will enforce special measures to address the peak season of the flu in Macau.

The measures, announced yesterday in a press conference organized by the SSM, aim to prepare a response from the different services for a potential increase in severe cases, mainly affecting those whose immune systems are compromised, and to avoid the overcrowding of emergency rooms.

At the press conference, SSM director Alvis Lo noted that the bureau is allocating resources and considering the Lunar New Year holidays, which he said could promote more infections due to increased travel and gatherings.

Among the measures is a guide to inform residents about when they should wear a mask, among other recommendations.

On the topic, Lo also ur-



ged those with mild symptoms to resort to private medical services and only seek emergency services in cases where the symptoms are severe, such as breathing difficulties.

Such a plan is being enforced even though the vaccination rate for seasonal flu is high in Macau, the coordinator at the local Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Leong Iek Hou, said, noting that the general rate of vaccination is about 50%, with a higher rate among people considered at risk and those living in

institutions such as elder care facilities.

Leong noted that around 170,000 people in Macau (6.7% more than last year) have already been vaccinated against the seasonal flu and advised others, particularly those considering traveling to the mainland during the Chinese New Year season, to get vaccinated.

When questioned by the media about the topic, she also stated that this year's incidence of group infections is much lower than last year's, with only six cases reported so far,

compared to the 43 that occurred last year.

According to the SSM's analysis, she remarked that the strain affecting Macau the most is the Influenza A virus subtype, which is also prevalent in mainland China and in the neighboring region of Hong Kong. This fact confirms the forecast previously made by the health authorities.

Leong noted that the vaccine distributed in Macau is highly effective against this strain and three other variants.

This is why residents

should consider taking it, particularly those aged 65 years and older, although the vaccination rate for this group is also only around 50%.

As part of the joint efforts, Hon Wai, the president of IAS, will meet with all institutions that support children, senior citizens, and people with disabilities to discuss the contingency plans.

"This is a normal meeting that usually happens in January. On Thursday, we will meet again to coordinate the measures to ensure the efficiency of the mechanism for epidemic prevention," he said, noting that, if justified, the measures to be enforced at the facilities might include the isolation of the infected and suspension of visits, among others.

Representing DSEDJ, the acting director, Wong Ka Ki, said that the measures for schools are also not new and include the reinforcement of cleaning and disinfection protocols as well as reporting any cases and absences from class due to illness.

He also called on schools to compensate

## TNR CAN ONLY ACQUIRE FLU VACCINE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Questioned by the media on the topic, Leong Iek Hou noted that non-resident workers (TNR) who wish to be vaccinated must seek such a service in the private sector.

Leong noted that the rules establish that only residents are entitled to receive free vaccinations in the public sector, while TNRs must pay for the service.

"We have established a mechanism to allow this to happen [vaccination of TNR]. The SSM provides the vaccines without yielding any profit.

Medical institutions, such as Kiang Wu Hospital, and clinics, such as the Worker's Medical Clinic, can provide this service at a low cost," she remarked, adding that the SSM ordered some 198,000 doses of the vaccine, and there is still plenty of stock available.

students who might miss some classes and exams due to illness so that their academic performance would not be affected.

According to Leong, the peak of flu incidence in Macau should extend until February.

CENTALINE

# 'U-shaped' recovery anticipated for the property market in 2025

LYNZY VALLES

**C**ENTALINE Property expects the Macau property market to follow a "U-shaped" recovery in 2025.

The forecast was shared during an event earlier this week, where the group highlighted both challenges and opportunities ahead.

Shih Wing Ching, founder of Centaline Group, attributed early-year pressure on the market to uncertainties surrounding the US presidential transition and lingering pessimism among investors.

"The property market will likely remain under pressure through the first quarter of 2025," he said,

as cited in the group's statement released yesterday.

However, he added that clearer policy directions and potential interest rate cuts by the U.S. Federal Reserve are expected to stabilize conditions by mid-year, with signs of recovery emerging by the fourth quarter.

Centaline also reflec-

ted on its performance in 2024, noting a significant turnaround.

Shih revealed that the company reversed losses last year and achieved profitability across all major sectors, including operations in mainland China, which faced the toughest environment," Sze stated.

Addy Wong, chairman and CEO of Centaline Asia Pacific, praised the strong performance of the Macau and Hengqin teams.

He described their ability to deliver results despite challenging circumstances as "small but mighty." Wong expressed optimism about Macau's prospects, particularly under its new governing team.

Stanley Poon, managing director of Centaline Macau and Hengqin Property, highlighted the positive impact of relaxed property restrictions and mortgage policies

introduced in 2024. "These measures have helped boost confidence in the market and set the stage for an improved outlook in 2025," Poon said.

Macau's property market recorded an annual turnover of HKD 138 million in 2024, a 21% increase from 2023 and approaching pre-pandemic levels.

The group anticipates that renewed buyer interest and supportive government measures will sustain the market's recovery and stability in the coming year.

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SICK LEAVE

# SSM without solutions to address the excessive use of emergency services

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Health Bureau (SSM) has no solutions for the excessive use of Macau's emergency services other than asking the population to avoid using them unless they are in severe condition.

This realization comes from the response of the SSM director, Alvis Lo, to a Times inquiry during the press conference held to discuss the government response to the peak of flu season in Macau.

In response to a question by the Times on the matter of people resorting to emergency services simply because they need a medical certificate attesting to their condition and temporary incapacity to perform work duties, Lo said that only civil servants are legally required to provide such documents according to their statutes.

According to the SSM director, if private-sector companies require such documents, "this is a matter of the companies' responsibility and not of the SSM or related to our hospitals."

Earlier in the press conference, Lo urged citizens not

to use the public hospital's emergency services unless they experience severe symptoms related to respiratory diseases, such as shortness of breath.

This call came as the SSM reported a large influx of people with cold or flu-related symptoms into the emergency services, particularly at the Conde de São Januário Hospital Center (CHCSJ).

Lo noted that the emergency services have an average capacity to attend to about 800 people.

However, last week, the influx was about 1,100, forcing the SSM to adjust the allocation of human resources.

On the same topic, the head of the CHCSJ's emergency service, Chang Tam Fei, added that although the services have been overwhelmed with demand, the CHCSJ has been trying to ensure that the waiting time to see a physician stays within a maximum of two hours.

"We are trying to ensure a waiting time below two hours. Last week, the average was about one hour, but during peak hours, such as around lunchtime and in the evening, it can reach two hours,"



Chang explained.

Data from the SSM, disclosed by Lo, also show a significant increase (over 6%) in the incidence of flu among those who went to the public hospital compared to last week. According to Lo, the rate of positive flu cases rose to 22.3%, compared to around 16% last week. He also added that 50% of cases involved children, while the other 50% involved adults.

While Macau regulations requiring medical certificates

with sick notes only apply to civil servants, the Times learned that many private companies and entities in Macau also demand the same standard for their workers.

Thus, many people resort to emergency services even when they do not require special medical care.

The Times asked Lo if the government would consider extending the issuance of medical certificates to physicians practicing in private clinics to avoid overcrowding in emer-

gency services. Lo said only that the services would take note of this opinion.

In May last year, the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau announced strengthening sick leave regulations following the case of two Macao Customs Service officers who fraudulently obtained over 2,300 sick leave days, costing the government over MOP3 million in wages. The case was unveiled after an investigation by the Commission Against Corruption.

## Gov't introduces new testing parameters for public health population assessment

VICTORIA CHAN

**T**HE government officially introduced the "Macao Citizens' Physical Fitness Monitoring Study 2025" during a ceremony yesterday. The initiative, which will run from January to April, aims to improve residents' health and well-being, aligning with the government's vision of a "dynamic and happy" Macau.

Cao Jingwei, president of the Science and Education Department of the General Administration of Sport of China, underscored the growing importance of physical fitness. "With social progress and economic development, our

lifestyles have fundamentally changed, and the focus on health has never been more critical," he remarked at the press conference.

This fifth iteration of the assessment will evaluate four age groups: children, adolescents, adults, and seniors.

Luís Gomes, president of the Sports Bureau (ID), revealed the study will involve approximately 10,000 participants. "We aim to collect scientific data to understand the current physical conditions and development trends of our citizens in different age groups," he explained.

To enhance the study, new testing parameters



have been added, such as a 15-meter obstacle course for children and blood glucose measurements for adults.

These updates aim to provide a more com-

prehensive analysis of public health. Upper limb muscle strength and blood sugar levels will also be measured, helping to identify potential health concerns,

especially in children and middle-aged adults.

The initiative is a collaborative effort involving the Education and Youth Development Bureau, Health Bureau, and ID. It seeks to refine policies related to sports, education, elder care, and healthcare.

Gomes emphasized the importance of early intervention, stating, "We want to ensure young people have better physiques and detect spinal diseases early for effective treatment."

Participation will be based on a scientifically stratified sampling method to ensure representation across age and gender.

Over 70 primary and

secondary schools, along with higher education institutions, will assist in the data collection. The results are expected to be analyzed and published by early 2027.

This effort aligns with the broader "Healthy China 2030 Planning Program" and the "Healthy Macau Action Plan," both aimed at enhancing health literacy and encouraging healthier lifestyles.

Previous surveys reveal the urgency of the initiative.

Lawmaker Kou Kam Fai highlighted that 90% of local secondary students engaged in insufficient physical activity.

The 2020 population fitness report also showed fewer than 40% of students in primary, secondary, and higher education regularly participated in physical activity.



GAMING

# MACAU-BASED INVESTOR INCREASES STAKE IN STAR ENTERTAINMENT AMID FINANCIAL STRUGGLES

LYNZY VALLES

**S**TAR Entertainment's financial woes have taken a curious turn as Macau-based businessman Xingchun Wang increased his stake in the company for the second time in a week.

Wang, who reportedly became the second-largest shareholder, now owns nearly 7% of the struggling casino operator after spending over AUD38 million on shares.

This comes as Star warned last week that it could collapse within weeks without securing additional financing.

Wang initially acquired a stake in Star in September, investing around AUD13 million (around MOP64 million).

Despite his growing influence, Star has not disclosed whether it has contacted him or understands his intentions.

As cited in multiple media reports, sources close to the company suggest Wang may be linked to large stakes in resource firms and could be connected to E-Commodities Holdings, a Hong Kong-listed coal trading business led by his daughter, Amy Wang.

Under casino regulations, individual shareholders cannot own more than 10% of Star without gaming regulator



approval.

Combined with holdings by Far East Consortium International and Chow Tai Fook Enterprises, Wang's stake could help the trio control up to 20% of the company, according to a report by the Australian Financial Review.

Star, which operates casinos in Sydney, Brisbane, and the Gold Coast, has faced mounting financial strain due to declining patronage, high debts, and substantial regulatory fines.

The company reported just AUD79 million in cash as of December 31, after burning through AUD100 million in the pre-

vious quarter.

Regulators are expected to impose more than AUD300 million in fines on Star for money laundering failures, including concealing a criminal gang-linked junket operator and allowing it to run a secret gambling room.

With AUD330 million in loans due for covenant tests by March and June, and AUD1.6 billion in debt tied to the Queen's Wharf development needing re-financing next year, lenders are increasingly concerned about Star's viability.

To raise funds, Star has offloaded assets, including a Gold

Coast hotel for AUD192 million and its leasehold interest in the Treasury Brisbane casino building for AUD67.5 million. However, efforts to sell additional properties, including Treasury's accompanying hotel and car park, have faltered.

Angus Hewitt, a Morningstar analyst, warned last week that Star's situation is dire, estimating a 50% chance of administration without immediate intervention.

"At the current cash burn, the company would be lucky to make it to its interim results on February 28 without a lifeline," he wrote.

ROBBERY IN COTAI

# TWO SUSPECTS ARRESTED AFTER HKD300,000 HEIST

STAFF REPORTER

**T**WO mainland men are suspected of robbing a money changer of HKD300,000 in a hotel room in Cotai, under the guise of a currency exchange.

The incident occurred on January 12, when one of the suspects, identified as 37-year-old Zhang, contacted the victim through a messaging app to arrange a meeting for the exchange.

Upon the victim's arrival at the hotel room, Zhang and an accomplice, 41-year-old Cai, allegedly overpowered him after Cai emerged from the bathroom. They forcibly took the HKD300,000 in cash and subsequently fled the scene.

Following the robbery, the police were notified and initiated an investigation. They quickly identified the suspects and learned that they had crossed back to the mainland via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB). The Macau police collaborated with mainland authorities through a liaison mechanism to pursue the suspects.

Zhang was arrested at Zhuhai Airport while attempting to leave the city, and Cai was apprehended later that same day upon re-entering Macau via the HZMB. Authorities indicated that the stolen money was divided equally between the two men.

The case has been forwarded to the Public Prosecutions Office, where both suspects may face charges of robbery.

In another case, a local man is facing legal consequences after driving while under a ban and crashing into two parked vehicles.

The incident occurred on January 9, around 4:45 a.m. in Areia Preta.

The suspect, a male in his 20s and a resident of Macau, allegedly borrowed a car from a friend to drive despite his license being revoked.

The owner of one of the damaged vehicles reported the incident to the Public Security Police after discovering extensive damage to his car, including broken mirrors and doors. Surveillance footage revealed that the suspect had first hit a taxi before crashing into the parked vehicle.

Upon investigation, police contacted both vehicle owners, confirming the extent of the damage. The police traced his whereabouts and, fearing exposure for driving during his ban, he initially left the scene. However, he later turned himself in at the Transport Bureau around 8 a.m. on January 11.

The suspect had previously been banned from driving for 1.5 years due to speeding violations. His decision to drive under these conditions has led to charges of evasion of responsibility and driving while prohibited. The case has been referred to the Prosecutor's Office for further action.

IAM

# Urban space violations decline by 23% over the last decade

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) recorded 17,736 violations of urban space regulations, which include offenses such as littering and spitting on the ground in 2024.

While this figure aligns with the past two years, it marks a 23% decrease from a decade ago, highlighting a decline in such violations over the past 10 years.

According to data published on IAM's website, between 2014 and 2019, violations ranged from 23,000 to 28,000



annually, with the highest number recorded in 2018 at 28,362.

However, the number of offenses began to drop significantly starting in 2020, when the pandemic triggered

border and social restrictions.

In 2020 and 2021, the violations fell to just over 19,000. By 2022, the number decreased further to 16,564, and the trend continued

into 2023 and 2024, with 17,046 and 17,736 violations, respectively.

The most common offenses over the years have been related to littering and spitting, which remained the top violations last year.

Specifically, there were 8,211 cases of waste abandonment, 2,408 cases of improperly placing or abandoning objects, and 2,700 instances of spitting or throwing nasal mucus in public spaces. Additionally, 539 offenses involved water dripping from air conditioners, while 81 cases were re-

lated to animal waste.

These violations are governed by urban space regulations that outline the responsibilities of individuals in public areas.

The rules aim to maintain cleanliness, public health, and safety, prohibiting behaviors that could harm public hygiene, obstruct pedestrian or vehicle traffic, or damage the environment. The IAM also emphasizes the importance of protecting various habitats and preventing unauthorized activities in restricted areas.



TECH

# Biden's administration proposes new rules on exporting AI chips, provoking an industry pushback

JOSH BOAK & MATT O'BRIEN, WASHINGTON

**T**HE Biden administration is proposing a new framework for the exporting of the advanced computer chips used to develop artificial intelligence, an attempt to balance national security concerns about the technology with the economic interests of producers and other countries.

But the framework proposed yesterday (Macau time) also raised concerns of chip industry executives as well as officials from the European Union over export restrictions that would affect 120 countries. Mexico, Portugal, Israel and Switzerland are among the nations that could have limited access to chips needed for AI data centers and products, though much of the underlying focus is aimed at China.

"If it's China and not the United States determining the future of AI on the planet, I think that the stakes of that are just profound," said White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan on Monday.

With just a week before President-elect Donald Trump takes office, Biden officials made clear it would be up to Trump to follow through with or drop an approach that Sullivan said "shouldn't be a partisan issue at all."



AP PHOTO

Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said that it's "critical" to preserve America's leadership in AI and the development of AI-related computer chips. Fast-evolving AI technology enables computers to produce novels, make scientific research breakthroughs, automate driving and foster a range of other transformations that could reshape economies and warfare.

Raimondo said the framework "is designed to safeguard the most advanced AI technology and ensure that it stays out of the hands of our foreign adversaries but also enabling the broad diffusion and sharing of the benefits with partner countries."

While the Biden administration had already restricted exports to adversaries such as China and Russia, some of those controls had loopholes and the new rule would set limits on a much broader group of countries. Data centers built in the Middle East and Southeast Asia are of particular concern to U.S. officials, said Ed Mills, an analyst at Raymond James.

"Chinese companies have used those data centers to build AI models with technology that they would not be able to import to China itself," Mills said.

A tech industry group, the Information Technology Industry Council, warned Rai-

mondo in a letter last week that a hastily implemented new rule from the Democratic administration could fragment global supply chains and put U.S. companies at a disadvantage. Another group, the Semiconductor Industry Association, said Monday it was disappointed that the policy was being "rushed out the door" before a presidential transition.

"The new rule risks causing unintended and lasting damage to America's economy and global competitiveness in semiconductors and AI by ceding strategic markets to our competitors," said SIA President and CEO John Neuffer.

One industry executive, who is familiar with the framework and insisted on anonymity to discuss it, said the proposed restrictions would limit access to chips already used for video games, despite claims made otherwise by the government. The executive said it would also limit which companies could build data centers abroad.

Among those expected to be affected was the China-based data center developer GDS Holdings. Its stock dropped more than 18% Monday.

Because the framework includes a 120-day comment period, the incoming Republican administration could ultimately determine the rules for the sales abroad of ad-

vanced computer chips designed mostly by California companies like Nvidia and AMD.

Government officials said they felt the need to act quickly in hopes of preserving what is perceived to be America's six- to 18-month advantage on AI over rivals such as China, a head start that could easily erode if competitors were able to stockpile the chips and make further gains.

Ned Finkle, vice president of external affairs at Nvidia, said in a statement that the prior Trump administration had helped create the foundation for AI's development and that the proposed framework would hurt innovation without achieving the stated national security goals.

"While cloaked in the guise of an 'anti-China' measure, these rules would do nothing to enhance U.S. security," he said. "The new rules would control technology worldwide, including technology that is already widely available in mainstream gaming PCs and consumer hardware."

Under the framework, roughly 20 key allies and partners would face no restrictions on accessing chips, but other countries would face caps on the chips they could import, according to a fact sheet provided by the White House.

The allies without restrictions include Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan and the United Kingdom. But the limits to other countries within the European Union raised objections from EU officials Monday who said selling advanced AI chips to EU members represents an economic opportunity for the U.S. and "not a security risk."

MDT/AP

## CORPORATE BITS

### MGM symposium explores intersection of technology and cultural heritage



MGM recently held a Museums Exchange Program titled the "Cultural Inheritance Through Technology" Symposium, bringing together cultural experts and representatives from various institutions.

The event focused on ex-

ploring how technological advancements can enhance the understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage. Attendees included members from national museums, scholars, and cultural heritage organizations, all eager to dis-

cuss the intersection of technology and culture.

The symposium featured presentations that addressed modern audience expectations and the potential of technologies like virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) in transforming traditional exhibitions.

The gaming operator stated that the Poly MGM Museum receives up to 7,000 visitors per day. "As one of the opening activities of the inaugural exhibition, the symposium fully utilized its powerful network to promote technological innovation and cultural inheritance," the gaming operator said in a statement.

### Sands China launches Alipay Tap! service



Sands China Ltd., in collaboration with Alipay and Macao Pass, recently launched the Alipay Tap! service at Sands Resorts Macao.

This payment technology

aims to enhance the visitor experience in Macao and foster new digital business opportunities.

Alipay Tap!, introduced in July 2024 in the mainland, allows users to comple-

te transactions by simply tapping their phones on a merchant's payment device, eliminating the need to open the app.

Currently available in over 100 cities, the service has gained popularity among both users and merchants.

In its initial phase, Sands China has implemented Alipay Tap! across 300 merchants in its resorts, facilitating payments for accommodations, dining, and shopping.

The launch also includes promotional offers for Chinese mainland tourists, enhancing operational efficiency and digital transformation for local businesses.



# Taiwan iPhone maker Foxconn sets its sights on the ever more crowded EV market

ELAINE KURTENBACH,  
BANGKOK

**A**UTO industry newcomers like Taiwan-based iPhone maker Foxconn and China's Huawei Technologies are maneuvering to gain an edge in the electric vehicle sector, prompting automakers like Japan's Nissan and Honda to announce plans to join forces against a flood of ambitious competitors.

Also known as Hon Hai Precision Industry, Foxconn has been snapping up links in the automotive supply chain, one of a growing number of technology companies that are leveraging their knowhow in electronics and communications.

Foxconn's auto venture with Taiwan automaker and importer Yulon Motor Co., Foxtron, showcased its Model B, a sleek EV hatchback, as well as its automotive electronics, at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas last week.

Honda and Nissan announced in December that they plan to seek a merger, a move that reports said may have partly been driven by Foxconn's interest in Nissan.

Here's an update on Foxconn's auto ambitions.

## FROM IPHONES TO ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Whether or not Foxconn wanted to make a bid for Nissan, it has big ambitions, saying it eventually intends to make four of every 10 EVs sold in the world. The contract manufacturer has invested nearly \$1.3 billion in auto-related acquisitions in the past decade, according to Mergermarket, a merger and acquisitions research firm.

In addition to Foxtron, its auto-

AP PHOTO



making joint venture with Taiwan's Yulon Motor, it has a 50% joint venture with Stellantis NV to design and sell automotive semiconductors and a 50% joint venture with Germany's ZF Friedrichshafen AG, a major auto supplier, to make passenger car chassis. It has invested in Indigo Technologies, which is commercializing a road sensing system developed at MIT. It also has a collaboration agreement with Blue Solutions to develop solid state batteries and has a collaboration with Italian auto designer Pininfarina.

Foxconn holds a 34% stake in Japanese electronics company Sharp, which has been inching toward the automotive sector. This year, Foxconn and Sharp introduced an LDK+ (living, dining, kitchen) concept vehicle, a boxy minivan that converts to a living space with solar and storage battery and a big LCD screen.

"Leveraging a plug-and-play strategy similar to its electronics

operations, Foxconn's foray into electric vehicles is a pre-emptive move in anticipation of the increasing convergence of electronics and automotive technologies," Vivian Wong, head of Mergermarkets' M&A Analytics for the Asia Pacific, said in an emailed comment.

## OTHER NEW TECH COMPANIES TURNED AUTOMAKERS

China's Huawei Technologies, smartphone and appliance maker Xiaomi and e-commerce giant Alibaba and Baidu also are scaling up their EV operations, relying on their scale and strength in advanced technologies as vehicles become ever more computerized.

Huawei has several EV joint ventures in what it has dubbed its Harmony Intelligent Mobility Alliance, including Luxeed brand EVs with Chery Automobile and Aito brand EVs with Seres Group. Its joint venture with JAC Motor, an automaker based in eastern China's Anhui province, has announced plans to

compete with luxury brands such as Rolls-Royce and Mercedes Benz AG.

Some Japanese electronics companies also are jumping on the bandwagon. Apart from Sharp's partnership with Foxconn, entertainment and technology giant Sony Corp. has an EV joint venture with Honda that plans to introduce the EV Afeela sedan for pre-sale this year.

The increasing reliance on connectivity between cars, phones, laptops and televisions has lured such companies into a market that is quickly being transformed by electrification, even if inroads into some markets have stalled due to tariffs and other factors.

## WHAT ABOUT NISSAN?

Nissan introduced the Leaf, the first mass-market EV, in 2010 and has strong EV technology, vehicle platforms and sales capacity that would appeal to a newcomer like Foxconn.

Reports by Japanese media and by Taiwan's Central News Agency said Hon Hai's chief strategy officer, Nissan veteran executive Jun Seki, visited France for talks with France's Renault SA, which holds a 15% stake in Nissan and more shares held in a French trust. Seki is a former chief operating officer of Nissan and former president of Dongfeng Nissan, a joint venture in China.

In formally announcing plans to attempt a merger with Honda, Nissan Motor Corp. CEO Makoto Uchida said Foxconn had not directly approached his company about a possible merger. Foxconn did not respond to requests for comment.

Nissan's internal woes are a small part of the bigger challenge posed to all major automakers by the ascent of Tesla, which makes more than half of its EVs in China, and Chinese automakers like BYD in an industry so competitive that more than a dozen Chinese EV makers have already folded, beset by bigger and stronger companies that got into the game before them.

## SO FAR, THE ROAD'S NOT BEEN SMOOTH

As the pace of sales growth slows, with car buyers questioning the affordability and convenience of switching to electrics, the going has been rough, and Foxconn has a long way to go before it can compete with industry leaders like BYD and Tesla.

It was set to manufacture the Endurance battery EV truck at a former General Motors plant in Lordstown, Ohio, which it acquired in 2023. Lordstown Motors Corp. then filed for bankruptcy. Foxconn also set up a partnership in 2021 with Fisker Inc., maker of the Ocean EV truck, that called for making up to 250,000 vehicles. Fisker filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in June.

But the company appears undaunted.

Foxconn lists six models of EVs on its website, including its Model T bus, Model V pickup truck, Moden N van, its Model B, and its "luxury flagship" Model E sedan. **MDT/AP**

## SECURITY

# Police vow to crack down on telecom fraud

**C**HINESE police will maintain harsh response to telecommunications fraud, and keep up international law enforcement cooperation to dismantle fraud dens abroad and hunt down major fugitives, said Zhang Ming, spokeswoman of the Ministry of Public Security.

Zhang, who made the remarks at a news conference last week, said the situation

of telecommunications fraud "remains serious and complicated".

The offenses are usually carried out by highly organized groups, some of which place their lower-level members under false imprisonment through violence, Zhang said.

The fraudsters have sped up creating new schemes to cheat people of different ages, engaging in different

professions and with different academic backgrounds, Zhang said, adding that they are using emerging technologies, such as blockchain, virtual currency and artificial intelligence to upgrade their tools.

The spokeswoman's remarks came as the public is getting increasingly alarmed by the frequent occurrence of telecommunications fraud in recent years.

China's Ministry of Public Security launched a special campaign in July 2023 to crack down on telecommunications fraud organizations in northern Myanmar targeting Chinese people.

By the end of 2024, the Chinese police have captured more than 53,000 Chinese suspects, dismantling all major fraud dens in northern Myanmar near Chi-

na's border.

Despite the progress made, there is still a large number of so-called "science and technology parks" and "development zones" overseas housing the fraudsters, Zhang said.

The ministry has said fraudsters are relocating to other areas in Myanmar, including Myawaddy, because of the special campaign.

Many telecommuni-

cations fraud groups stationed abroad also have members in China, who are directed by the group leaders to develop smartphone applications for committing fraud and to launder money, according to Zhang.

The police will continue its operations to crack down on money laundering and other illegal businesses in China which are linked to telecommunications fraud, and enhance alert to prevent Chinese people from being defrauded of their money, Zhang said.

**CHINADAILY**



DISPUTED SEA

# China is pushing the Philippines 'to the wall' with aggression in the South China Sea, Manila says

JIM GOMEZ & JOEAL CALUPITAN, MANILA

A Philippine security official said yesterday that China is "pushing us to the wall" with growing aggression in the disputed South China Sea and warned that "all options are on the table" for Manila's response, including new international lawsuits.

Yesterday, a large Chinese coast guard ship patrolled hotly disputed Scarborough Shoal and then sailed toward the northwestern coast of the Philippines, coming as close as 77 nautical miles, Philippine officials said in a news conference.

"The presence of the monster ship in Filipino waters ... 77 nautical miles from our shoreline, is unacceptable and, therefore, it should be withdrawn immediately by the Chinese government," Jonathan Malaya, assistant director-general of the National Security Council, said at the news conference alongside senior military and coast guard officials.

"You're pushing us to the wall," Malaya said of China.

Two Philippine coast guard ships, backed by a small surveillance aircraft, repeatedly ordered the 165-meter Chinese



Members of the National Task Force West Philippine Sea, Roy Trinidad, from left, Philippine Navy spokesperson, Jonathan Malaya, assistant director general of the National Security Council, and Jay Tarriela, Philippines Coast Guard, hold a news conference in Manila, Philippines yesterday

coast guard ship to withdraw from the Philippines' exclusive economic zone, a 200-nautical mile stretch of water, Philippine coast guard Commodore Jay Tarriela said.

"What we're doing there is, hour-by-hour and day-to-day, (we're) challenging the illegal presence of the Chinese coast guard for the international community to know that we're not going to allow China to normalize the illegal deployment," Tarriela said.

There was no immediate comment from Chinese officials. In the past, they have repeatedly accused the Philippines and other rival claimant states including Vietnam and Malaysia of encroaching on what they say are "undisputed" Chinese territorial waters.

Under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who took office in mid-2022, the Philippines has aggressively defended its territorial

interests in the South China Sea, a key global trading route. That has brought Philippine forces into frequent confrontations with China's coast guard, navy and suspected militia boats and sparked fears that a bigger armed conflict could draw in the United States, the Philippines' longtime treaty ally and China's regional rival.

The lopsided conflict has forced the Philippines to seek security arrangements with other Asian

and Western countries, including Japan, with which it signed a key agreement last July which would allow their forces to hold joint combat training. The pact, which must be ratified by lawmakers of both countries before it takes effect, was the first such agreement to be forged by Japan in Asia.

China surrounded Scarborough Shoal with its coast guard and other ships after a tense territorial standoff with the Philippines in 2012. The Philippines responded by bringing its disputes with China to international arbitration in 2013 and largely won three years later when an arbitration panel in The Hague invalidated China's expansive claims in the busy sea passage under the 1982 United Convention on the Law of the Sea.

China has rejected the 2016 arbitration ruling and continues to openly defy it.

"Will this lead to another case?" Malaya said. "All options are on the table because the closer the monstership is in Philippine waters, the more it makes tensions high and the more that the Philippine government contemplates things it was not contemplating before."

China has warned the Philippines from pursuing another legal case in an international forum after the arbitration, preferring bilateral negotiations, which give Beijing an advantage because of its size and clout, a senior Philippine official has said on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authority to discuss such sensitive issues publicly.

The two countries have also been discussing their territorial conflicts under a bilateral consultation mechanism to avoid an escalation of the disputes. The next round of talks will be hosted by China, the official said. MDT/AP

KOREAS

# North Korea launches missiles toward eastern waters in second launch of year, South says

KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

NORTH Korea yesterday test-fired multiple missiles toward its eastern waters, South Korea's military said, as it continued its weapons demonstrations ahead of Donald Trump's return to the White House.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the short-range ballistic missiles were fired from a northern inland area and flew about 250 kilometers before landing in waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

The joint chiefs said

the South Korean military has strengthened surveillance while sharing the launch information with the U.S. and Japanese militaries. It said it strongly condemns the test, describing it as a "clear provocation" that poses a serious threat to the region's peace and stability.

It was North Korea's second launch event of 2025, following a ballistic launch last week.

North Korea said the Jan. 6 test was a new hypersonic intermediate-range missile designed to strike remote targets in the Pacific as lea-



A TV screen shows a report of North Korea's missiles launch with file footage during a news program at the Seoul Railway Station in Seoul, South Korea, yesterday

der Kim Jong Un vowed to further expand his collection of nuclear-capable weapons to counter

rival nations.

North Korea is coming off a torrid year in weapons testing. The sys-

tems it demonstrated in 2024 included solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missiles designed to strike the U.S. mainland and various shorter-range missiles designed to overwhelm missile defenses in South Korea. There concerns that its military capabilities could advance further through technology transfers from Russia, as the two countries align over the war in Ukraine.

At a year-end political conference, Kim 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."

North Korean state media did not specify Kim's policy plans or mention any specific comments about Trump. During his first term as president, Trump met Kim three times for talks on the North's nuclear program.

Even if Trump returns to the White House, a quick resumption of diplomacy with North Korea could be unlikely. Kim's strengthened position — built on his expanded nuclear arsenal, deepening alliance with Russia and the weakening enforcement of U.S. international sanctions — presents new challenges to resolving the nuclear standoff, experts say. MDT/AP



AP PHOTO



DEMOGRAPHICS

# Multiracial boom in 2020 census was mostly an illusion, researchers say

MIKE SCHNEIDER

**W**HEN the 2020 census results were released, they showed a boom in the number of people classified as multiracial in the United States since 2010. Two Princeton sociologists now say that jump was mostly an illusion.

The 276% increase largely happened because of a change in how people were classified by the U.S. Census Bureau rather than strong shifts in racial or ethnic identity or major growth, according to a paper published last month by Paul Starr and Christina Pao. The Census Bureau for the first time provided space on the census form for people to write-in their families' origins, which guided how the statistical agency categorized them.

People who were classified as being two or more races rose from 2.9% to 10.2% of the U.S. population from 2010 to 2020, and the increase was most noticeable among Hispanic people. The share of the white alone population dropped from 72.4% to 61.6%, provoking handwringing among some conservative commentators about what they called a loss of white power.

The Princeton researchers argued that anyone who marked themselves as Black or as white on the 2020 census form but then wrote that they were of Latin American origin was reclassified by a computerized algorithm as multiracial

even though they had marked themselves as a single race. The same multiracial reclassification appeared to have been made for people who self-identified as white only but then wrote that their origins were from an African country, according to the researchers.

"So the 2020 census produced a sudden jump in the multiracial count and a precipitous decline in the count of the white population, contributing to an unwarranted panic among white conservatives about demographic change," Starr said in an email. "The procedure was misleading, and the public was misled about the extent of racial change."

When the figures were released in mid-2021, Census Bureau officials said the new method was an improvement that did a better job of capturing the complexities of how people identify their race and ethnicity in the 21st century. At the same time, they acknowledged that some of the dramatic growth likely came from their changes.

For the first time, empty spaces were left on the 2020 census form so that respondents could write in their "origins," such as "German" or "Jamaican," when answering the race question. The detailed answers guided the Census Bureau in classifying the respondents and members of their households into race and ethnicity categories.

"These improvements reveal that the U.S. population is much more multiracial and di-

verse than what we measured in the past," Census Bureau officials said at the time.

The official numbers on multiracial people are important because they are used for redrawing political districts, civil rights enforcement, labor data, health statistics and distributing federal funding. As the daughter of a Jamaican father and an Indian mother, Vice President Kamala Harris' run for the White House as the 2024 Democratic presidential nominee put multiracial identity in the spotlight.

The Princeton researchers said the Census Bureau mistakenly mixed up ancestry with race, and they believe the agency should abandon using "origins" to categorize people.

The issue flew under the radar because of other distractions surrounding the 2020 census, such as the Trump administration's unsuccessful attempt to add a citizenship question, a controversial new data-privacy method and the COVID-19 pandemic, which threw the nation's head count off schedule. Black, Hispanic and American Indian residents on reservations were undercounted in the 2020 census.

Researchers have been asking the Census Bureau since 2021 to rerun the 2020 data using 2010 methods so that an "apples to apples" comparison of demographic changes can be made, but the agency hasn't done it yet, said historian Margo Anderson, who served on a

National Academies panel that reviewed the quality of the census.

"It's 2025 and people have been asking since 2021, 'What the hell did you do?'" Anderson said. "There is a lot of frustration there because we can't know."

The Census Bureau has historically struggled to classify multiracial people, said Susan Graham, an advocate for multiracial representation in official statistics. Respondents weren't allowed to check more than one race until the 2000 census

"Was the 2020 Census subjected to a fictitious multiracial boom? Possibly," Graham said. "As always, answers only get more confusing when the federal government goes back and tries, one more time, to get it right."

Race and ethnic categories used by the federal government are changing further to combine questions about race and ethnicity instead of asking about them separately. A Middle Eastern and North African category also is being added which will reduce the number of respondents identifying as white.

Not all demographers think the Census Bureau's methodological change was that profound.

"I don't think it's that big of a deal for most people using the data," said William Frey, a demographer at The Brookings Institution. "I think that the Census Bureau is trying hard to get this right." MDT/AP

## this day in history

### 1973: NIXON ORDERS CEASEFIRE IN VIETNAM



President Nixon has ordered a halt to American bombing in North Vietnam following peace talks in Paris.

The decision comes after Dr Henry Kissinger, the president's assistant for National Security Affairs, returned to Washington yesterday from France with a draft peace proposal.

Representatives from North and South Vietnam and the United States have been at the negotiating table and reports from Paris say progress has been made with compromises on all sides.

But many political issues remain to be resolved.

Although attacks against the North have been halted, air assaults are continuing against communist forces in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Communist negotiators in Paris are now calling for the ceasefire to be extended to these areas.

President Nixon's special envoy to Saigon, General Alexander Haig, is in the South Vietnamese capital briefing the president on the 25 article peace agreement worked out in Paris.

Initial discussions with President Nguyen Van Thieu lasted nearly three hours.

Afterwards, the president ordered a five-man delegation to fly to France to consider the proposals in more detail.

Reaction in Washington has been cautious.

Senator Barry Goldwater, who previously supported the American role in Vietnam, said: "I can't say peace is at hand, but I feel that we're making progress."

The Daily Telegraph correspondent in Saigon says President Thieu may feel it is unwise "to jeopardise further American support by holding out against an agreement which Washington considers just".

Killed in action: Americans, 45,933  
South Vietnam armed forces: 181,483  
Foreign Allies: 5,224  
North Vietnamese and Vietcong: 922,290

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

A week later, Dr Kissinger returned to Paris for further meetings with the North Vietnamese delegation.

On 23 January, a ceasefire was agreed to take effect from midnight on 27 January. The settlement called for the eventual reunification of Vietnam, permitted the South Vietnamese and Vietcong troops to remain in place and provided for the release of all American prisoners of war within 60 days - on condition American troops withdrew within the same period of time.

No mention was made of the presence of North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam. It spelled the end of American involvement in the Vietnam war - which had begun on 12 February 1955. American statistics published by the US Defence Department in January showed the cost in human terms:



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

 <b>ARIES</b> <b>Mar. 21-Apr. 19</b> Domestic chores call. Clean, sort and organize possessions and household goods. Restore order to a chaotic situation. Provide soothing comforts to your family.	 <b>TAURUS</b> <b>Apr. 20-May. 20</b> Capture a dream into words and images. Edit, polish and revise the story for clarity and relevant message. Brevity is the soul of wit.
 <b>GEMINI</b> <b>May. 21-Jun. 21</b> Worrying makes zero difference. Release negative emotions around money, abundance or prosperity. Consider a dream with potential. Listen for what's possible. Take action.	 <b>CANCER</b> <b>Jun. 22-Jul. 22</b> Treat yourself with kindness. Overcome an old fear for a dream. Changes outside stir things up. Postpone self-doubt or worries. Stand for love.
 <b>LEO</b> <b>Jul. 23-Aug. 22</b> Revise plans around challenging conditions. How would you love things to be? Imagine and meditate. Peace, nature and silence are restorative and energizing.	 <b>VIRGO</b> <b>Aug. 23-Sep. 22</b> A community project could stall for lack of vision or clear goals. Adapt for changing conditions. Postpone important decisions. Hunt for silver linings.
 <b>LIBRA</b> <b>Sep. 23-Oct. 22</b> Career developments have your attention. Avoid drama or controversy. Bring your social skills and graciousness to the forefront. Soothe irritation with peaceful calm.	 <b>SCORPIO</b> <b>Oct. 23-Nov. 21</b> Make long-distance connections. Imagine the delights ahead. Avoid a conflict of interests. Stick to reliable routes and routines. Monitor changing conditions. Research and prepare.
 <b>SAGITTARIUS</b> <b>Nov. 22-Dec. 21</b> Protect family interests. Contribute to shared resources. Keep accounts positive and bills paid despite challenges. Moderate a disagreement by listening to all concerns. Compromise.	 <b>CAPRICORN</b> <b>Dec. 22-Jan. 19</b> Clean messes with your partner. Clarify misunderstandings. Hidden truths may appear. Have a conversation for creative collaboration. Create a vision that inspires you both.
 <b>AQUARIUS</b> <b>Jan. 20-Feb. 18</b> Prioritize physical, mental and spiritual health. Exercise releases tension. Rest deeply to balance busy activities. Take a walk outside to unplug and recharge.	 <b>PISCES</b> <b>Feb. 19-Mar. 20</b> Love is your secret power. Reality doesn't always match fantasy. Clean, rebuild and repair. Creativity can paint romance into a plain room.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sanson**



**SUDOKU**

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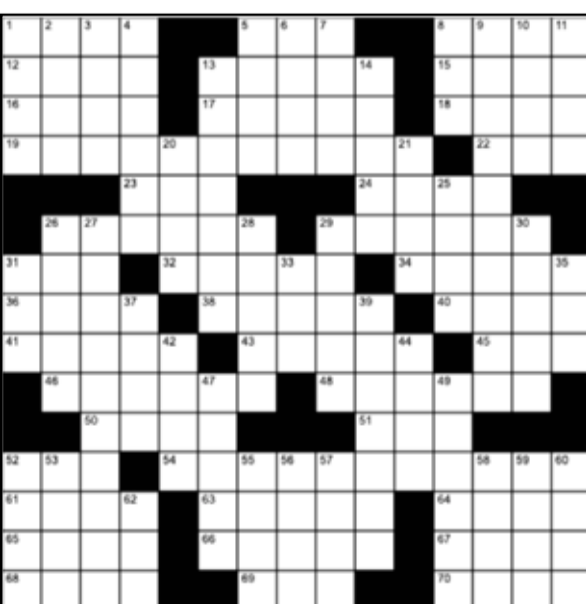
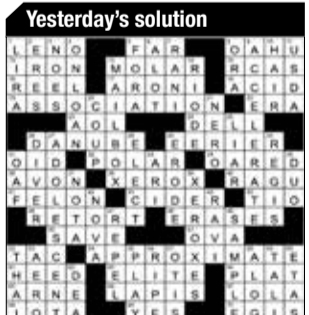
**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	-8	3	fine
Changchun	-19	-8	fine
Chengdu	3	12	overcast
Chongqing	8	11	cloudy
Fuzhou	10	17	cloudy
Guangzhou	12	18	cloudy
Guiyang	2	9	overcast
Haikou	16	18	cloudy
Hangzhou	3	6	fine
Harbin	-25	-11	cloudy
Hefei	-4	6	fine
Nanjing	-2	4	fine
Shanghai	2	6	fine
Taipei	14	15	rain
Wuhan	0	9	fine
Hong Kong	16	22	sunny
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-4	2	snow
Frankfurt	1	3	snow
Paris	2	4	snow
London	5	9	cloudy
New York	-5	1	cloudy

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Chicago paper, for short; 5- Partially opened flower; 8- Garage sale sign; 12- Arthur Ashe's alma mater; 13- Hawaiian state birds; 15- Completely without madness; 16- Latvian, e.g.; 17- Elite group; 18- Winter fall; 19- An organization; 22- Ques. response; 23- Neither here \_\_\_ there; 24- Beef cut; 26- Universe; 29- Handled; 31- Dallas player, briefly; 32- Red as \_\_\_; 34- Replay option; 36- Iowa city; 38- That is to say...; 40- Med. school subj.; 41- Slender gulls; 43- How some losses are shown; 45- Wrath; 46- Vast seas; 48- Fit with clothes; 50- Illustrious warrior; 51- Foot digit; 52- 7th letter of the Greek alphabet; 54- Yearly celebration; 61- Sailors; 63- Watering hole; 64- Word that can succeed building, web or burial; 65- Strongly advise; 66- Used up; 67- Pulitzer-winning biographer Leon; 68- Thing; 69- Shoebox letters; 70- Coarse file, angry tone of voice;

DOWN 1- Orchestral heavyweight; 2- Some DVD players; 3- Woes; 4- Conductors' rods; 5- Actor Lugosi; 6- Ton, for one; 7- He loved Lucy; 8- Beast of burden; 9- Site of the Alamo; 10- Party to; 11- Stitches; 13- Capital of Kenya; 14- Ripped off; 20- Deep unconscious state; 21- Denials; 25- To Live and Die \_\_\_; 26- Brief appearance; 27- Gouge; 28- Big rigs; 29- Begin; 30- Astrologer Sydney; 31- Floor covering where the cat sat; 33- Dusk, to Donne; 35- Suffix with Capri; 37- Dagger of yore; 39- Most tidy; 42- Franklin D.'s mother; 44- Designer Christian; 47- Taboos; 49- Children of a \_\_\_ God; 52- Toiletries case; 53- Fruit-filled pie; 55- Scruff; 56- Words of comprehension; 57- Grape plant; 58- Opera set in Egypt; 59- Numbered rds.; 60- Quick sharp bark; 62- Religious sch.;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

**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                              |                                 |



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 <p><b>Hoi Wan Retail (Taipa)</b> HKD 12,980,000</p>	 <p><b>Tou Un (Taipa)</b> HKD 2,750,000 1 bed 1 bath</p>	 <p><b>Jade Garden (Taipa)</b> HKD 11,880,000 4 bed 3 bath</p>
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AUSTRALIAN OPEN

# MONFILS OUTDUELS FELLOW FRENCHMAN IN FIRST-ROUND MATCH FOR THE AGES

**T**HE pragmatic pro in Gael Monfils would like to have finished off his first-round win in straight sets against up-and-coming fellow Frenchman Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard at the Australian Open.

The entertainer's instinct in him got a lot of value out of clinching it in five.

In a duel between the 38-year-old Monfils and 21-year-old Mpetshi Perricard, it was age, experience and endurance that outweighed power and youth on yesterday — helping nullify one of the biggest serves in tennis.

Days after Monfils became the oldest player to win an ATP Tour title by beating Zizou Bergs the final in Auckland, New Zealand, Monfils wasted match points in the third set and on Mpetshi Perricard's serve in the fifth before finally closing out a 7-6 (7), 6-3, 6-7 (6), 6-7 (5), 6-4 victory.

Monfils said he usually tries to avoid thinking about age gaps with com-



Gael Monfils of France plays a forehand return to Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard of France during their first round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, yesterday

petitors, "but I can tell you that tomorrow morning I will be (feeling) more 48

than 38." "I know ... I can sometimes have the double of the

age of the guy. I have, yeah, I think 21 years of career, and he's 21 years old, Giovanni," he added. "Of course numbers are there, but I'm fighting, so I try not to put any number in my head."

Monfils and Mpetshi Perricard entered the match at opposite ends of the career spectrum, but share a passion for their sport. Both use between-the-legs shots at times during rallies — in one case, both in the same rally in the fourth-set tiebreaker — and sometimes take the unconventional approach to setting up points.

With a career record of 34-18 at the Australian Open, where he reached the quarterfinals in 2016 and 2022, Monfils had the advantage against a player on debut at Melbourne Park.

Mpetshi Perricard had never advanced beyond the first round at any major other than Wimbledon (where he reached the fourth round as a lucky loser last year) but he was seeded 30th after a breakout year in 2024 that included two titles.

Monfils, who has won more Grand Slam singles matches than any other French man, now also has a 20-19 win-loss record in five-set matches.

He didn't face a break point against Mpetshi

Perricard in five sets, and coped with what is widely regarded as the best second-serve in tennis. He converted two of 12 break-point chances.

But he also had 18 double-faults, including one when he was serving for the match in the third set, and another on a match point in the third-set tiebreaker that let his younger rival back into the match, and extended it by 1 1/2 hours.

Afterwards, the pair cooled down and stretched together in the locker room.

"Sometimes on the bench I say to myself, 'He is not 38,'" Mpetshi Perricard said. "Physically I don't think he's 38, but yeah, I mean, I'll have to be better on some part to win this kind of match. I'm still young. I still can learn."

There were some other dramatic five-setters, with fifth-seeded and tempestuous Daniil Medvedev, a former U.S. Open champion and three-time finalist in Australia, edging Grand Slam rookie Kasidit Samrej 6-2, 4-6, 3-6, 6-1, 6-2 and No. 13 Holger Rune beating Zhang Zhizhen 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 3-6, 6-4.

No. 4 Taylor Fritz, runner-up at the U.S. Open and the ATP Finals and part of the U.S. team that won the United Cup last week, needed less than two hours

for a 6-2, 6-0, 6-3 win over Jenson Brooksby.

No. 8 Emma Navarro needed 3 hours and 20 minutes and rallied from 5-3 down in the third set to beat fellow American Peyton Stearns 6-7 (5), 7-6 (5), 7-5 in the women's first round.

By contrast, sixth-seeded Elena Rybakina overpowered 16-year-old Emerson Jones 6-1, 6-1 and No. 9 Daria Kasatkina advanced in straight sets.

Navarro, a semifinalist at the U.S. Open last year, described her win as "one of the more unique matches I've played in a while — it was just relying a lot, I guess, on my grit and toughness and fight."

Emma Raducanu, the 2021 U.S. Open champion, had a 7-6 (4), 7-6 (2) win over No. 26-seeded Ekaterina Alexandrova, setting up a second-round match against Amanda Anisimova.

In her first match since November, the 22-year-old British player had 15 double-faults, made 30 unforced errors and won just 30% of points on her second serve. But she was good enough in the big moments.

"I'm very proud of how I fought and how I overcame certain situations in that match," Raducanu said. **MDT/AP**

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# Ukraine holds first soccer tournament for war-wounded amputees – and plans to go international

SAMYA KULLAB & ALEX BABENKO, KYIV

**T**HE players were chosen from among the thousands of Ukrainians wounded in the war. With limbs lost to Russian attacks, they gathered at a stadium in Kyiv over the weekend, ready to embark on a new contest: a soccer tournament.

Organized by Ukraine's Association of Football, the "League of the Mighty" is Ukraine's first soccer championship for amputees. Over the past year, the association has invested in local communities to establish teams, recognizing the growing number of war-wounded citizens as a result of the nearly three-year war.

With six outfield players and one goalkeeper on each side, they engaged in intense matches. Outfield players, all lower-limb amputees, and



Soccer players of Shakhtar Stalevi and Pokrova FC-2 play during Ukraine's first soccer tournament for war-wounded amputees in Kyiv, Ukraine, Jan. 11

goalkeepers with upper-limb amputations, played without prostheses, relying on wrist clutches for control.

Pokrova AMP won the tournament, with captain Valentyn Osovskyi describing the triumph as exhilarating. "We're really glad that we had to work

our way through, it was interesting," he said, adding that the goal is to have their own championship and to create a strong team to represent Ukraine on the international level.

"This will be a priority for the next few years for us," said

Andriy Shevhenko, president of the Ukrainian Association of Football, noting there are more than 100,000 amputees in the country, most of them "soldiers who defended our country."

For Olena Balbek, adviser to the president of the association, the sport is one way to provide mental and physical rehabilitation for amputees while also normalizing their growing presence in society.

"This is a societal effort," she said. "We're focusing on sports because it's our area of expertise, to make sure this is normalized."

Citing their own research, Balbek said the association boasts at least 60 professional amputee players in Ukraine – a significant number considering there are around 1,000 worldwide.

Though the reasons are unfortunate, Balbek said, "We have

a huge potential in terms of engaging people in the sport."

Featuring five teams from across Ukraine, the weekend's championship served as a testament to the association's success in developing grassroots amputee football across the country since the full-scale invasion began. A dedicated department within the association assists local groups in creating teams.

The work is multifaceted, said Balbek, involving communication with veteran's groups, local initiatives and football clubs underscoring the importance of establishing amputee teams.

"Football is the best rehabilitation for me," said Mykola Gatala, captain of the Pokrova AMP-One team. "It has helped me both physically and mentally. I'm doing it with my brothers in arms who went through the same things I did. We understand each other." **MDT/AP**

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**OPINION**

**The Conversation**

Collin J. Meisel, University of Denver



**FROM MYANMAR TO GAZA, UKRAINE TO SUDAN - 2024 WAS ANOTHER GRIM YEAR, ACCORDING TO OUR MASS ATROCITY INDEX**

With major conflicts in Africa, the Middle East, Europe and Southeast Asia, 1 in 8 people worldwide were exposed to conflict in 2024 – proving another fraught year in terms of human suffering on a mass scale. In fact, 111 countries around the world experienced some form of mass atrocity during the year.

That's what colleagues and I at the University of Denver's Pardee Institute confirmed when analyzing our updated global dataset on recent and ongoing mass atrocities.

Covering nearly 200 countries, the goal of the project is to go beyond any single tragedy or conflict and objectively try to determine the level of humanitarian suffering in places around the world. Each country is then assigned a 0-100 score on our Atrocities Scope and Scale Heuristic – providing a single metric for the breadth and severity of atrocities committed within a certain year.

In the project, we define mass atrocity as an act of violence against 25 or more defenseless members of a social, cultural, ethnic, religious or political group — or threats to the group's survival.

Although we saw fewer atrocities globally in 2024 than in 2023, there were still more than in any other year since 2018. And while lethal atrocities were fewer in number in 2024 relative to the previous year, several types of “less lethal” atrocities – actions involving gross, intentional violations of human rights on a mass scale short of murder – were more numerous.

From worst to still bad

In 2023, the situation was bleak across the board. More than 1 million people were forcibly displaced from their homes in war-torn Ukraine and the Gaza Strip. Tens of thousands of civilians were killed across Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. And in the first few months of Israel's war in Gaza, the daily death rate was higher than any other conflict in the 21st century.

In 2024, there was a slight decrease in the total magnitude of atrocities relative to the prior year, though much of the worldwide suffering continued. By the end of the year, roughly 19 in 20 Palestinians living in Gaza had been forcibly displaced at least once, and most, several times. After nearly four years of civil war, mass murder of civilians in Myanmar's ongoing conflict continued apace. The country's ruling junta tortured and reportedly burned people alive, and both the military and rival Arakan Army rebel group are alleged to have engaged in ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims, with ethnic tensions rippling across the border into India.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the humanitarian situation also remained grim. The Congolese government began to eject United Nations peacekeepers and those of a regional African peacekeeping force after getting fed up with the U.N.'s inability to quell the violence in Congo's North Kivu and Ituri provinces – northeastern regions of the country plagued by murder and rape from groups like the Rwanda-backed M23 militia.

Sudan provided another egregious example of the escalation of atrocities in 2024. As the civil war raged on, the Rapid Support Forces paramilitary group committed numerous extrajudicial executions of Sudanese military forces. This came against the background of widespread sexual slavery and other atrocities within Sudan's combat zones – including those perpetrated by the Sudanese military itself, like the bombing of civilian targets.

Incidents of what my team deem to be lower-level atrocities persisted elsewhere and outside of active humanitarian crisis zones, from groups in South Africa attacking Zimbabwean migrants for suspected “witchcraft” to German police beating Palestinians during last spring's international protests against the war in Gaza. [Abridged]

**153 WINNERS OF NOBEL AND WORLD FOOD PRIZES SEEK NEW WAYS TO GROW FOOD TO MEET SURGING GLOBAL NEED**

**THE BUZZ**

More than 150 recipients of the Nobel and World Food prizes released an open letter yesterday calling for a dramatic increase in research and a commitment to new food distribution efforts with a goal of producing more crops and avoiding a global hunger crisis in coming decades.

The letter notes that an estimated 700 million people now are “food insecure and desperately poor.”

“As difficult and as uncomfortable as it might be to imagine, humanity is headed towards an even more food insecure, unstable world by mid-century than exists today, worsened by a

vicious cycle of conflict and food insecurity,” states the letter, signed by 153 recipients of the two prizes. “Climate change is projected to decrease the productivity of most major staples when substantial increases are needed to feed a world which will add another 1.5 billion people to its population by 2050.”

Corn production in Africa is expected to decline and much of the world could see more soil degradation and water shortages, the letter says.

“We are not on track to meet future food needs. Not even close,” it adds.

AP PHOTO



Professor Anthony Blunt, former surveyor of the Queen's pictures, photographed at the Courtauld Institute with Queen Elizabeth II on Nov. 15, 1979

**QUEEN ELIZABETH II WASN'T TOLD ABOUT SOVIET SPY IN HER PALACE, DECLASSIFIED MI5 FILES SHOW**

JILL LAWLESS, LONDON

Queen Elizabeth II wasn't told details of her long-time art adviser's double life as a Soviet spy because palace officials didn't want to add to her worries, newly declassified documents reveal.

The files about royal art historian Anthony Blunt are among a trove from the intelligence agency MI5 released yesterday by Britain's National Archives. They shed new light on a spy ring linked to Cambridge University in the 1930s, whose members spilled secrets to the Soviet Union from the heart of the U.K. intelligence establishment.

Blunt, who worked at Buckingham Palace as Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures, was under suspicion for years before he finally confessed in 1964 that, as a senior MI5 officer during World War II, he had passed secret information to Soviet agents.

In one of the newly released files, an MI5 officer notes that Blunt said he felt “profound relief” at unburdening himself. In return for information he provided, Blunt was allowed to keep his job, his knighthood and his social standing – and the queen was apparently kept

in the dark.

In 1972, her private secretary, Martin Charteris, told MI5 chief Michael Hanley that “the queen did not know and he saw no advantage in telling her about it now; it would only add to her worries and there was nothing that could be done about him.”

The government decided to tell the monarch in 1973, when Blunt was ill, fearing a media uproar once Blunt died and journalists were able to publish stories without fear of libel suits.

Charteris reported that “she took it all very calmly and without surprise,” and “remembered that he had been under suspicion way back” in the early 1950s. Historian Christopher Andrew says in the official history of MI5 that the queen had previously been told about Blunt “in general terms.”

Blunt was publicly unmasked as a spy by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the House of Commons in November 1979. He was finally stripped of his knighthood, but never prosecuted, and died in 1983 at the age of 75.

Files held by Britain's secretive intelligence services usually remain classified for several decades, but the

agencies are inching toward more openness. Some of the newly released documents will feature in an exhibition, entitled “MI5: Official Secrets,” opening at the National Archives in London later this year.

Two of the Cambridge spies, Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess, fled to Russia in 1951. A third, Kim Philby, continued to work for foreign intelligence agency MI6 despite falling under suspicion. As evidence of his duplicity mounted, he was confronted in Beirut in January 1963 by his friend and fellow MI6 officer Nicholas Elliott.

The declassified files include Philby's typed confession and a transcript of his discussion with Elliott.

In it, Philby admitted he had betrayed Konstantin Volkov, a KGB officer who tried to defect to the West in 1945, bringing with him details of moles inside British intelligence – including Philby himself. As a result of Philby's intervention, Volkov was abducted in Istanbul, taken back to Moscow and executed.

Elliott reported that Philby said that if he had his life to lead again, he would probably have behaved in the same way. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



France's new prime minister, François Bayrou (pictured), faced his first major test at parliament yesterday as his government has no majority amid unprecedented political instability. Bayrou will address lawmakers through a general policy speech meant to outline his top priorities, including key budget decisions, one month after he was appointed by President Emmanuel Macron.

AP PHOTO



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that he has held further discussions with French President Emmanuel Macron about the possibility of Western troops deploying in Ukraine to safeguard any peace deal ending the nearly three-year war with Russia. Zelenskyy's disclosure came before an official visit to Kyiv yesterday by German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius (pictured).

AP PHOTO



Uganda A prominent opposition figure will stand trial on the serious charge of treachery, a military court ruled yesterday, escalating the legal trouble Kizza Besigye faces ahead of presidential elections scheduled for 2026. Treachery carries the death penalty for those convicted.

AP PHOTO



South Africa Rescuers sent a cage-like structure down into one of its deepest gold mines yesterday to bring out survivors among hundreds of illegal miners trapped for months in an abandoned shaft. Groups representing the miners say that at least 24 bodies and 34 survivors have been brought out of the Buffelsfontein Gold Mine since Friday, but more than 500 miners are still believed to be underground.