



AN ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION PREDICTS AN ANNUAL GDP GROWTH OF 5% THIS YEAR, PROJECTING IT TO REACH MOP437.8 BILLION

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BIDEN WARNS THAT AN ‘OLIGARCHY’ OF ULTRARICH THREATENS FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY

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AP PHOTO



Taiwan Computer chip maker TSMC reported Thursday that its profit in the last quarter rose 57%, buoyed by the artificial intelligence boom. The world's biggest semiconductor manufacturer reported a net profit of 374.7 billion new Taiwan dollars (\$11.4 billion), higher than expected.

AP PHOTO



Thailand is experiencing an unusually cool stretch of weather that forecasters say could last until mid-February, leading many residents to dig out their sweaters and cardigans. Yesterday morning's forecast showed areas all over Thailand were feeling the cool, especially in the north.

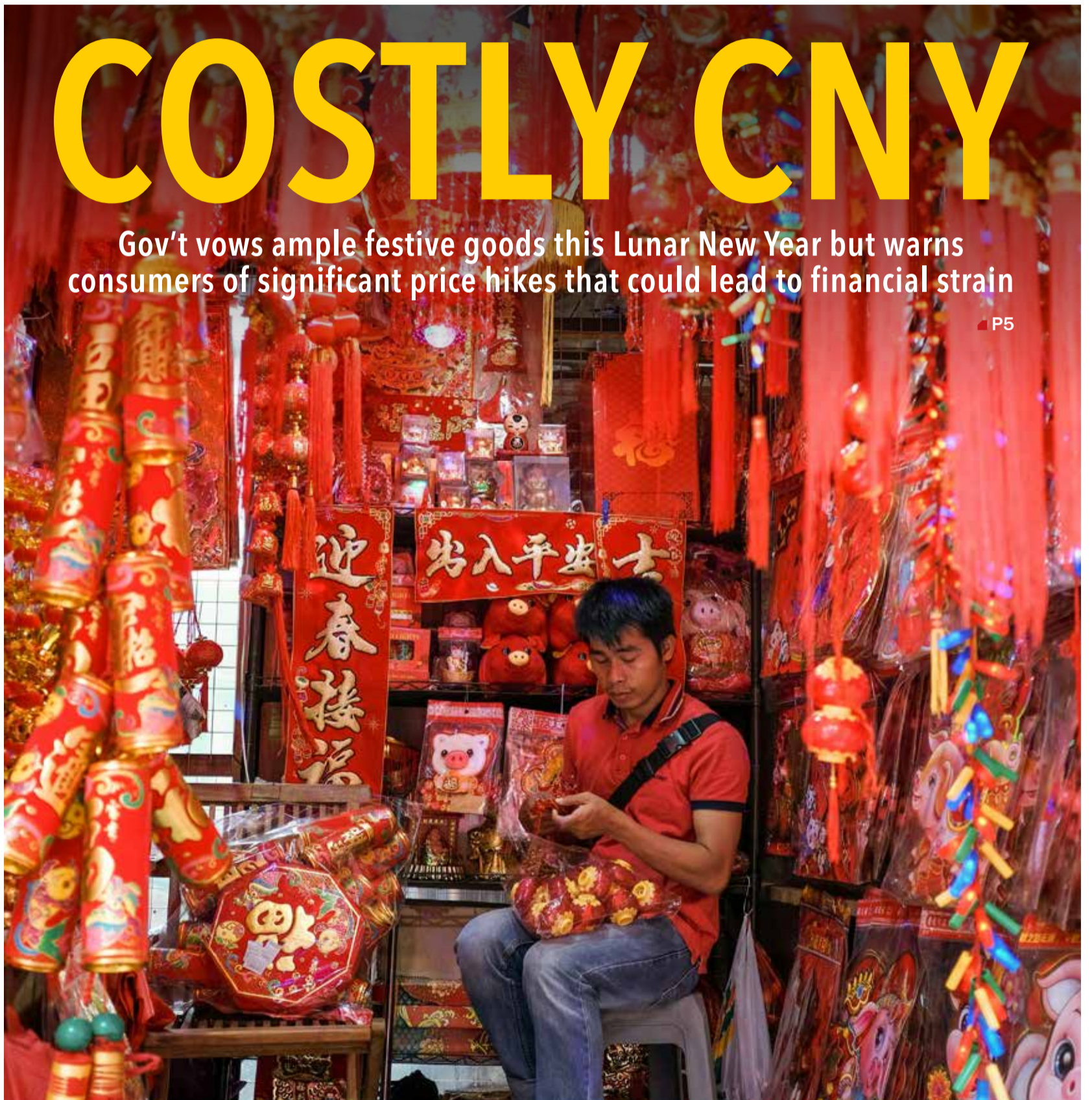
AP PHOTO



Japan Executives at a leading bank apologized and took pay cuts yesterday after police arrested an employee who allegedly stole about 1.4 billion yen (\$9 million) worth of valuables from customers' safe deposit boxes. The thefts at two branches of MUFG Bank spanned four years and were uncovered last October.

Pakistan A convoy of aid trucks carrying food and other relief supplies for hundreds of thousands of besieged residents in a sectarian-violence hit district in restive northwestern region came under a rocket attack yesterday, officials said. There were no immediate reports of casualties in the attack in Bagan, a city in the Kurram district where at least 130 people have died in recent months in clashes between rival Shiite and Sunni tribes.

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COSTLY CNY

Gov't vows ample festive goods this Lunar New Year but warns consumers of significant price hikes that could lead to financial strain

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NON-MANDATORY PROVIDENT FUND ACCOUNTS EARNED 4.43% IN 2024

The Social Security Fund (FSS) announced that the government-managed sub-accounts of the Non-mandatory Central Provident Fund accumulated a return of 4.4337% in 2024. This annual interest return has already been credited to the residents' individual accounts. The amount of interest distributed to account holders is calculated based on the daily balance of their government-managed sub-accounts, the number of days eligible for interest, and the rate of return. Those who have held accounts since the start of this program (from 2010) should have earned MOP 4,254 in interest for 2024, with a cumulative funds allocation and interest income totaling MOP 105,068.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES REACH MOP235 BILLION

The region's foreign exchange reserves reached MOP 235.0 billion at the end of December 2024, marking a 1.0% increase from MOP 232.6 billion the previous month, according to the Monetary Authority of Macao. These reserves are approximately 11 times the currency in circulation and account for 90.9% of the pataca M2 as of late November 2024. Additionally, the trade-weighted effective exchange rate index for the pataca rose to 106.6 in December, reflecting a month-on-month increase of 1.01 points and a year-on-year increase of 3.24 points against major trading partners' currencies.

ID ORGANIZES ACTIVE LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS

Macau is set to welcome the Year of the Snake with a series of recreational and sporting events organized by the Sports Bureau (ID) in collaboration with local associations. Scheduled for January 31 and February 9, the festivities will feature a cycling event and a classic car parade. The cycling tour, aimed at participants born from 1955 onwards, will cover 20 kilometers through Taipa and Coloane, with a limit of 300 registrants. Concurrently, a Sports Festival at Iao Hon Market will showcase traditional performances and entertainment. The celebrations will culminate on February 9 with a classic car and motorcycle parade, promoting healthy lifestyles through the initiative's motto: "Practice Sports, Strengthen Your Health."

LIAISON OFFICE CELEBRATES MACAU'S PROGRESS AND CHARTS VISION FOR 2025 AT CNY RECEPTION

STAFF REPORTER

THE Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in Macao hosted a 2025 Chinese New Year Reception yesterday, highlighting the achievements of the past year and outlining future plans for the Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR).

The event was attended by over 1,200 representatives from various sectors.

Deputy Director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council and Director of the Liaison Office of the Central Government in Macau, Zheng Xincong, delivered a keynote speech on behalf of Xia Baolong, director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council.

Extending his Lunar New Year greetings, Zheng highlighted the city's achievements in areas such as economic recovery, cultural development, and international exchanges, attributing these successes to the "SAR's unity and the steadfast support of the Central Government."

Zheng emphasized that President Xi Jinping's visit – last month – and his 2025 New Year Message reaffirmed the Central Government's commitment to the 'One country, two systems' principle, ensuring Macau's long-term prosperity and stability.

Looking ahead, Zheng outlined key priorities for Macau's development.

He said the SAR will focus on high-quality economic growth, leveraging supportive policies from the Central Government to promote diversified industries and strengthen the Hengqin Guangdong-Macao Deep Cooperation Zone.

Governance improvements also remain a top priority. Zheng called for adherence to the principle of "Macau governed by patriots" and full support for the SAR Government's efforts to deepen reforms and enhance administrative efficiency.

In the international arena, Macau is set to strengthen its role as a "World Centre for Tourism and Leisure" and a platform for Sino-Portuguese cooperation.



By advancing its positioning as "One Centre, One Platform, and One Base," Macau seeks to contribute more significantly to the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the Belt and Road Initiative.

Zheng stressed the importance of attracting international talent and capital to bolster the SAR's global influence and foster greater cultural and economic exchanges.

The reception also served as an opportunity to reflect on the broader progress of the nation.

Zheng noted that 2024 marked the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, a year characterized by steady economic growth and the advancement of Chinese-style modernization.

The accomplishments of the past year, including the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee, have laid a strong foundation for future collaboration between Macau and the mainland, according to the official.

Thus, the coming year "presents an opportunity for Macau to build on its achievements, seize new opportunities, and play a pivotal role in the nation's development strategy."

Meanwhile, Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai highlighted Macau's remarkable progress over the past year across political, economic, social, and cultural sectors, as well as urban development and international exchanges.

He attributed these achievements to the support of the Central Government and the motherland, as well as the "efforts of successive administrations, and the unity of all societal sectors."

Sam said the SAR government is committed to implementing President Xi's guidance, focusing on upholding the principle of 'One country, two systems' while safeguarding national security and Macau's stability.

"With a governance philosophy of 'Strive to Move

Forward and Innovate,' the government aims to drive moderate economic diversification, advance public administration reforms, and enhance governance efficiency. Special attention will be given to the Hengqin Guangdong-Macao Deep Cooperation Zone, fostering substantial progress in regional collaboration," said Sam said in Cantonese during his speech.

"Efforts will also prioritize improving residents' livelihoods, ensuring that development benefits the entire population," he added.

Furthermore, Macau will position itself as a key gateway for China's opening to the world, fostering cultural exchanges between Chinese and Western civilizations.

The event concluded with a renewed commitment to the principles of "Striving for Growth, Keeping Positive, and Renewing" and the collective aspiration to create a "brighter future for Macau and its people."

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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

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys 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

CITY OF SPORTS

EASL to hold Final Four in Macau this March

RENATO MARQUES

THE 2025 East Asian Super League (EASL) Final Four will be held in Macau from March 7 to 9, the basketball league organizer announced yesterday.

“This will be the first time the tournament will be held in Macau, underscoring the league’s commitment to expanding its footprint in the Greater Bay Area (GBA),” EASL noted.

The league and the local gaming operator, Melco Resorts & Entertainment, have partnered to host the Final Four at the Studio City Event Center.

Tickets for the Final Four will be available on the Studio City website from February 7 at noon CST, which is 2 a.m. on Feb. 8 local time.

On the event’s last day (March 9, Sunday), the winning teams from the previous games will compete for the title of champion, while the losing teams will compete for third place. The winners will receive USD1 million (over MOP8 million),



while the runner-up team will earn USD500,000 (over MOP4 million). The third-place team will receive USD250,000 (over MOP2 million).

Commenting on the announcement, Henry Kerins, Chief Executive Officer of EASL, said, “EASL is beyond excited to announce that the EASL Final Four 2025 will be held in Macau SAR, a region that has become a cornerstone of our expansion in the GBA.”

“This milestone reflects our deep commitment to the region and to showcasing premium basketball as a driver of economic growth, cultural vitality, and community engagement. Macau’s modern infrastructure and passionate fan base make it the perfect destination to host this high-stakes event, and we can’t wait to see the energy it will bring to the region,” he added.

On the same matter, Kevin

Benning, Melco’s senior vice president and general manager of Studio City, added, “Melco and Studio City are committed to offering innovative and inspirational tourism and entertainment experiences to residents and guests worldwide. We are thrilled to be collaborating with EASL to bring such top-tier Asian basketball matchups to Studio City Event Center once again. We look forward to continuing our support for EASL in elevating Asian basketball in the GBA.”

BLACK BEARS STILL IN THE GAME

The EASL Final Four, scheduled to take place in Macau in March, may still feature the Macau Black Bears, the team representing Macau in the EASL. The Bears defeated the Busan KCC Egis (89–78) on Wednesday evening in Korea, keeping the local team in contention for the final Group B Final Four spot.

The win over Busan KCC Egis temporarily placed the Bears in second place in Group

B, just behind the Ryukyu Golden Kings.

However, the Bears have already played six games, two more than their immediate challengers, the New Taipei Kings and Meralco Bolts. The victory also mathematically eliminated the Korean team from playoff contention, as the Busan KCC Egis suffered their fourth loss and are now placed last in the standings.

A highlight for the Bears was Samuel Deguara, who scored a total of 24 points, followed by captain Damian Chongqui and Adonis Thomas, both with 23 points.

In Group A, the Hiroshima Dragonflies lead the race to the Final Four, with four wins in five games, while the Taoyuan Pauian Pilots are in second place, with three wins in four games.

The upcoming EASL games will take place on January 21 and 22, respectively, in Busan and Fukuyama. The results of these games could determine the teams that will play in the final stage in Macau in March.

AD

金沙中國片區活化項目
Sands China's Community Revitalization Programme

PHILIP COLBERT

澳門MACAO

ART TOUR 藝術之旅

2025
15.01
16.03

Limited-Time CNY Activities at Former Iec Long Firecracker Factory and Taipa Houses

- 1 | Check out Philip Colbert's Macao Edition and Signature Sculptures
- 2 | Free lobster themed Fal Chun written by calligrapher on site
2025.01.25-26 15:00-18:00
Former Iec Long Firecracker Factory
- 3 | Chinese instrumental performances
2025.02.01 - 02.02 16:00-18:00
Former Iec Long Firecracker Factory

• Lobster Firecracker Macao Edition

• Lobster Cockerel Macao Edition

More details on Sands China's Community Revitalization Programme

Organizer: 金沙中國 Sands China Ltd.

Supporting Entity: 澳門特別行政區旅遊發展局 MACAO GOVERNMENT TOURISM OFFICE

文化局 INSTITUTO CULTURAL



ECONOMY

ASSOCIATION PROJECTS 5% GDP GROWTH THIS YEAR

STAFF REPORTER

THE Macau Economic Association (MEA) predicts an annual growth of 5% in this

year's GDP, projecting it to reach MOP437.8 billion. This represents a recovery of 90.8% of what was achieved during the same period in 2019.

According to the association, Zhuhai residents visiting Macau will continue to benefit from the new visa policy, which is expected to support

steady growth in the local economy and stimulate trade across retail, dining, and other tourism sectors.

The president of the association, Joey Lao, highlighted the economic performance of the past two months, pointing out that the economy has maintained a "stable" status.

He emphasized the significant role of the integrated tourism and leisure sector, noting that it has brought vitality and energy to Macau's economy.

Lao also cited key indicators—such as the volume of goods imported, the number of visitor arrivals, and hotel occupancy rates—that have displayed robust recovery, suggesting the region's economy is on an upward trajectory.

Despite these positive signs, Lao expressed concerns about inflationary pressures stemming from "the abundance of liquidity" available for economic activities. He addressed issues regarding domestic demand, noting that confidence indices for the restaurant and retail sectors are showing "no clear growth dynamics."

Meanwhile, the stock prices of the six major concessionaires in Macau, along with the Chinese consumer confidence index, remain low.

This situation highlights hesitancy among investors and consumers, reflecting ongoing uncertainties and pressures from the global economic environment.

Lao's observations paint a picture of cautious optimism, tempered by existing challenges that could impact Macau's economic future.

Furthermore, the potential for interest rate cuts in foreign markets adds another layer of macroeconomic uncertainty.

The association's analysis indicates that forecasting the pace of interest rate reductions is "challenging" due to the current global geopolitical landscape, the upcoming inauguration of US President Donald Trump next week and the associated rise in customs duties, fluctuations in energy prices, and overall market instability.

Despite these challenges, Joey Lao noted that China is set to adopt a "more proactive" fiscal policy and an "adequately flexible" monetary approach this year. These strategies are expected to result in interest rate reductions in response to external uncertainties and to stabilize economic growth.

Lao assured that these measures would have a "positive effect" on the development of the city's economy.

UM talk explores Asia's rising economic influence in global GDP

VICTORIA CHAN

OVER the past two centuries, the global economic landscape has undergone significant transformations, particularly with Asia's share of world GDP. Professor Lawrence Juen-ye Lau, a Doctor of Education honoris causa at the University of Macau (UM) and former vice-chancellor of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, shared insights on this topic during his lecture titled "China in the Global Economy" at UM.

In 1820, China accounted for nearly 30% of the world's GDP, while India represented about 15%. Together, they contributed to Asia's share of more than half of global GDP. At that time, the United States was a nascent nation, contributing only about 3%. By the mid-

-20th century, however, the US share had surged to roughly 30%.

China's economic resurgence is particularly noteworthy. After a period of decline until around 1850, China's GDP began a remarkable recovery, achieving parity with the US in purchasing power parity in 2014. "The performance of the Chinese economy since 1949 has been most impressive," Lau noted, highlighting an average annual growth rate of 8.35% from 1949 to 2023.

The economic reforms initiated in 1978 and China's entry into the World Trade Organization in 2000 have been pivotal. These developments facilitated the transfer of surplus labor from agriculture to urban centers, propelling rapid industrialization. As of now, China's GDP stands at approximate-



ly USD17 trillion, about two-thirds that of the US, though its per capita GDP remains significantly lower.

Meanwhile, East Asia, encompassing China, Japan, ASEAN countries, Korea, and Taiwan, now holds a larger share of global GDP than the US

Japan's share, however, has declined from around 18% to less than 5%. While the euro area and Japan have experienced slowing growth, the US is growing at about 3%, with China continuing to expand robustly and India emerging as one of the fastest-growing economies.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE TRENDS

In 1960, China's trade represented a minimal fraction of global trade. By 2023, it had grown to approximately 11%, matching the US share. East Asia has led this trade growth, with the US remaining China's largest trading partner, followed by Japan and Korea. Conversely, China has become the largest trading partner for many countries, including all ASEAN nations, underscoring its growing influence in global trade.

Lau emphasized, "East Asia actually has a higher share of GDP than the US today," and noted, "China has really grown in terms of its influence in the global economy... It is the most important trading partner of most countries in the world."

MANUFACTURING DOMINANCE

China now leads the world in manufacturing, surpassing major economies like the United States, the European Union, Japan, and India. This dominance is

a critical component of its economic strength. Lau stated, "China now has the highest share of world manufacturing... East Asia has the highest share of manufacturing in the world, but mostly because of China."

In response, the US has recognized the need to revitalize its manufacturing sector, with an increasing trend toward reshoring—bringing manufacturing back to the US to boost domestic production capabilities. "The US is working on reshoring to increase manufacturing inside the US itself," Lau added.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES

China holds the largest foreign exchange reserves globally, totaling about \$3.2 trillion, solidifying its position in international finance. Japan follows with nearly \$1 trillion, while the euro area and Russia also maintain substantial reserves. Lau stated, "China today has the largest foreign exchange reserves in the world, about \$3.2 trillion."

CNY

Gov't working to guarantee supply and prices of goods

IN a joint statement, the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) and the Consumer Council (CC) announced that representatives from the two entities met with major suppliers and wholesalers in Macau to review the supply and stock situation of key cereals and derivatives, essential daily goods, and products related to the Chinese New Year (CNY).

At the meeting, the government departments urged the sector to maintain product supply and price stability in preparation for the CNY.

The suppliers presented the supply and stock situation for sig-

nificant food products and daily necessities, stating that stock levels are sufficient and that there are no concerns regarding the product source, as the supply remains stable. The industry was also informed that it would mobilize human resources and stockpile goods during this festive season to meet the needs of the population and tourists.

DSED and CC emphasized the importance of maintaining close liaison and communication with suppliers and retailers to support them in their work and ensure that no issues arise in the market during the festive season. **RM**

CONSUMER RIGHTS

CC alerts for colossal price differences in some products

RENATO MARQUES

THE Consumer Council (CC) has published its latest update on the prices of a wide range of products found in local supermarkets.

This update is based on a comprehensive survey conducted by the CC, which involved visiting over 100 supermarkets and verifying the prices of 600 goods and products in 14 categories.

The council's findings reveal significant price disparities in certain products, potentially leading to financial strain for consumers.

Topping the list this time is "Lao Gan Ma Chili Black Bean Sauce (280g)," which the CC verified to have a price difference of 165.3% between different supermarket chains in Macau. According to the CC, the product costs MOP12.40 in San Miu Supermarkets, while in the ParknShop chain, it is priced at MOP32.90.

A similar issue was identified with the "Dove 3-in-1 Beauty Cream Bar (90g)," for which the CC found



nd a price difference of 135.6%. Again, the ParknShop chain offered the product at the higher price (MOP13.90), while the Seng Cheong Supermarket in Taip's Lei Man Building had it priced at MOP5.90.

Significant price differences were also found in "Knife Pure Canola Oil (2L)," with a price range reaching 117.9% (MOP39 to MOP85). In this case, the most affordable price was recorded at San Miu, while the pricier ones were found at several branches of Lee Fong Supermarket.

The CC found that at least 30 products showed a price variation of over 50%

between different establishments, and eight showed a variation of over 100%.

Generally, supermarkets from the Royal and San Miu chains ranked among those with the most affordable prices in Macau, while those of Van Kei, Sunco, and ParknShop chains occupied the bottom positions.

The CC's monthly investigations, which aim to enhance price transparency, cover a wide range of goods and products. The complete report, available on the CC's website, serves as a resource for consumers to compare prices and make informed purchasing decisions.

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大律師 ASSOCIATES:

高文軒 Adelino Correia °
羅善齡 Zelina Rodrigues
馬潔冰 Maria João Marques
陶義德 António Isóo de Azeredo
白穎怡 Iclia Berenguel
冼玲鳳 Mariana Afonso Esteves
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陳芷喬 Joana Chan

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黃瀚賢 Frederico Vong
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吳霆鋒 Ng Teng Fong

實習律師 TRAINEE LAWYERS:

陳健雄 Eurico Chan
戴博晴 Tai Pok Cheng
吳佩愉 Ng Pui U
陳子健 Kimi Chan

法律專家及外地註冊律師

JURISTS AND LAWYERS
QUALIFIED IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS:
林思潔 Jessie Lin
羅成軒 José J. Rodrigues
楊詩婷 Si Teng leong

法律專家 JURISTS:

張偉鴻 Cheong Wai Hong
伍福賢 Domingos Ng
許栢桓 Rui Fernandes Brás

WWW.CCADVOG.COM
TEL: (853) 2837 2642/ 2837 2623

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



ROAD TO LAG25

WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION ELECTS MORE PATRIOTIC EDUCATION AS A PRIORITY FOR 2025

RENATO MARQUES

THE Women's General Association of Macau has identified further advancements in patriotic education as one of the major priorities for this year's government policies (LAG25).

Representatives from the association expressed their views on the most pressing issues affecting the welfare of women in Macau during a meeting yesterday with the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, O Lam.

At the meeting, the association's president, Un Sio Leng, presented three suggestions to Secretary O Lam: "Continue to strengthen efforts related to the patriotic education of young people; reinforce awareness of important commemorations; and enhance regional cooperation in patriotic education."

Other members of the association's board also highlighted the need to establish a reserve of skilled personnel, support the diversified development of the economy, implement gender



mainstreaming, and encourage women's participation in politics.

Another topic raised by members was the call for increased government subsidies for families to alleviate the cost of living.

O Lam stated that the overall direction of the government aligns with President Xi Jinping's words, emphasizing "persistently focusing on the people, effectively solving the issues that concern residents most, addressing urgent and topical issues, creating more

and better development opportunities, fostering a fairer social environment, and realizing the better life that the people desire most."

The Secretary also addressed concerns related to the aging population, youth development, and the protection of women and children. He assured that a thorough analysis of the suggestions collected would be conducted and used as a reference in the preparation of this year's government's LAG.



CRIME

PJ arrests three in illegal currency exchange crackdown

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) have arrested three mainland men in connection with two separate incidents of illegal currency exchange, with one suspect assaulting a police officer during an attempted escape.

In the first incident, police were patrolling hotels and casinos in the Cotai area as part of a crackdown on illicit money exchanges. Officers observed two men acting suspiciously and approaching gamblers to facilitate currency exchanges.

When approached by police, one of the suspects fled the scene and punched a police officer in the back, causing injury. However, the officer was still able to assist in apprehending the suspect, along with

another man in his 30s. Both admitted to engaging in illegal exchanges at the casino since November of last year, with one claiming to have made profits of HKD50,000. Authorities seized HKD177,000 in total during the operation.

In a separate incident, a 40-year-old mainland man was arrested for allegedly conducting fraudulent money exchanges at a Cotai casino.

The suspect received HKD30,000 in casino chips from the victim, claiming to have transferred the money. However, the victim later discovered that no such transfer had been made and reported the crime to the authorities.

The PJ continue to investigate both cases. VC

GAMING OPS FILE RECORD NUMBER OF SUSPICIOUS TRANSACTION REPORTS IN 2024

STAFF REPORTER

MACAUP'S gaming operators reported a record 3,837 suspicious transaction reports (STRs) in 2024, an 11.8% increase from the previous year, according to the Financial Intelligence Office (GIF).

This marks the highest annual tally since the GIF's establishment in 2006. The office collects, analyzes, and forwards reports of suspected money laundering and terrorist financing to law enforcement.

Gaming operators accounted for 73.2% of the 5,245 STRs filed citywide in 2024, reflecting a 13.7% year-on-year increase.

This overall total also set a new annual record for Macau. Of these reports, 142 cases were referred to the Public Prosecutions Office for further investigation.

STRs are triggered by customer behaviors suggesting potential money laundering, such as chip conversions with minimal gambling activity. Casinos are also required to submit large-amount transaction reports for sums exceeding MOP500,000.

Beyond gaming, financial institutions and insurance companies significantly contributed to the rise, filing 1,097 STRs in 2024, a 23.7% increase from 2023. These submissions represented 20.9% of the total and marked the banking sector's highest volume of STRs since 2018.

The GIF did not specify reasons for the increase but noted in its 2023 report that common triggers in the gaming sector include chip conversions with minimal play, irregular large cash withdrawals, unexplained currency exchanges, and transactions linked to other crimes.

COURTS

TSI UPHOLDS SUSPENDED SENTENCE FOR FATHER CONVICTED OF ASSAULTING DAUGHTER

VICTORIA CHAN

THE Court of Second Instance (TSI) has dismissed an appeal filed by a father convicted of aggravated assault against his daughter.

The man was initially sentenced by the Court of First Instance (TJB) to two months in prison, suspended for two years, after causing significant emotional and physical harm to the minor.

Between late 2019 and November 2021, the father displayed behaviors that fostered "negative emotions" in his daughter, ultimately leading to her need for psychiatric treatment.

On December 2, 2021, after the girl sent a distressing message to her mother requesting a divorce from her father, he attacked her.

Reports indicated that he appeared "emotionally unstable," inflicting physical harm, including slapping and hair-pulling, which resulted in injuries.



As a consequence of her father's misconduct, the daughter experienced a decline in her mental health, resulting in anxiety and distress.

This deterioration necessitated her treatment at an outpatient child psychiatry clinic. Following a clinical evaluation, she was diagnosed with "physical abuse and adjustment disorders, characterized by mixed emotional disturbances of anxiety and depression."

Initially, the Public Prosecutions

Office charged her father with domestic violence, but the TJB ultimately settled on a lesser charge of aggravated assault.

In his appeal, the father contended that the TJB misapplied the law, asserting that his actions were necessary for his daughter's education.

However, the TSI rejected his arguments, stating that his behavior constituted "aggravated assault" and was not justified under any educational pretext.

FDA bans red dye No. 3 from foods

JONEL ALECCIA

US regulators yesterday (Macau time) banned the dye called Red 3 from the nation's food supply, nearly 35 years after it was barred from cosmetics because of potential cancer risk.

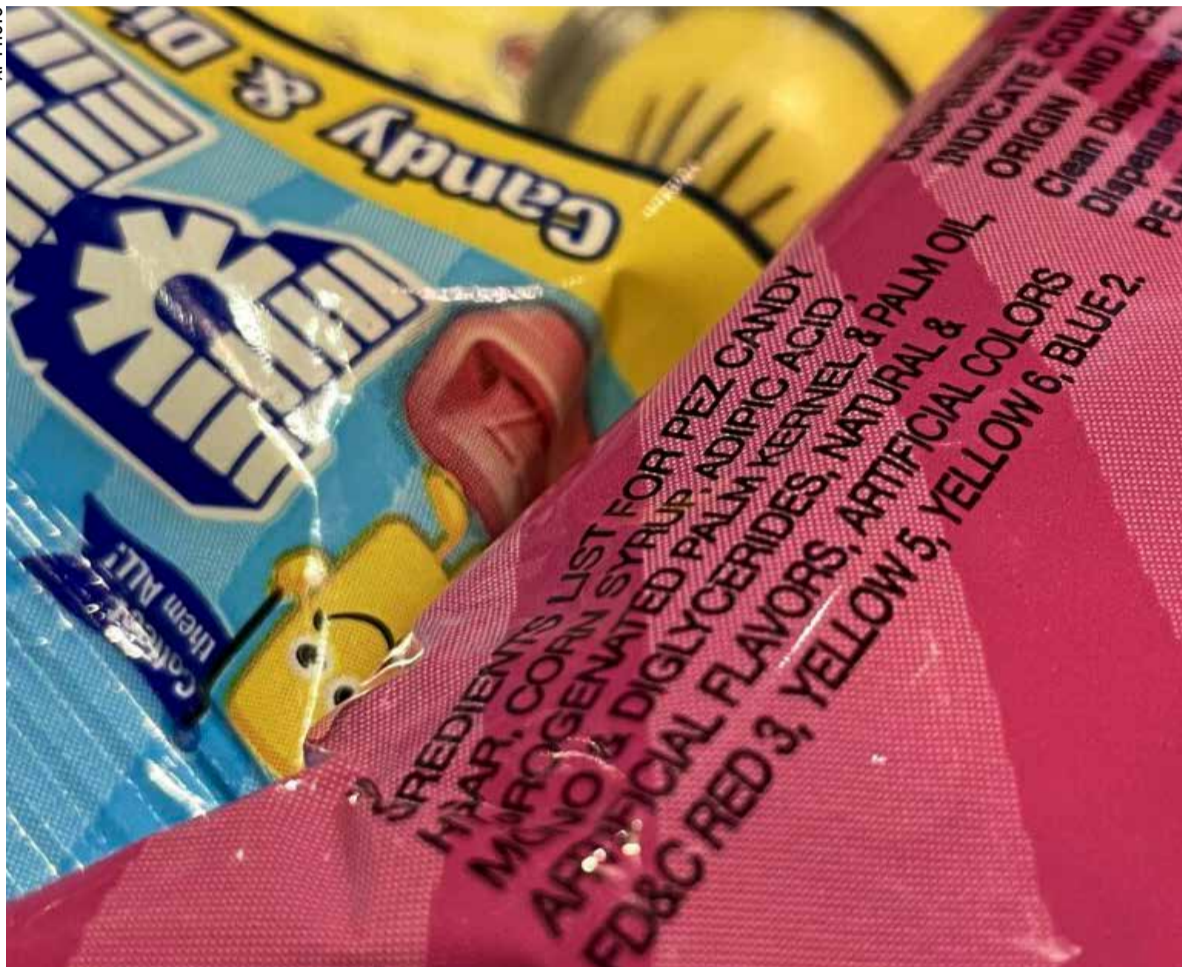
Food and Drug Administration officials granted a 2022 petition filed by two dozen food safety and health advocates, who urged the agency to revoke authorization for the substance that gives some candies, snack cakes and maraschino cherries a bright red hue.

The agency said it was taking the action as a "matter of law" because some studies have found that the dye caused cancer in lab rats. Officials cited a statute known as the Delaney Clause, which requires FDA to ban any additive found to cause cancer in people or animals.

The dye is known as erythrosine, FD&C Red No. 3 or Red 3. The ban removes it from the list of approved color additives in foods, dietary supplements and oral medicines, such as cough syrups. More than three decades ago, the FDA declined to authorize use of Red 3 in cosmetics and externally applied drugs because a study showed it caused cancer when eaten by rats.

"The FDA is taking action that will remove the authorization for the use of FD&C Red No. 3 in food and ingested drugs," said Jim Jones, the FDA's deputy commissioner for human foods. "Evidence shows cancer in laboratory male rats exposed to high levels of

AP PHOTO



FD&C Red No.3. Importantly, the way that FD&C Red No. 3 causes cancer in male rats does not occur in humans."

Food manufacturers will have until January 2027 to remove the dye from their products, while makers of ingested drugs have until January 2028 to do the same. Other countries still allow for certain uses of the dye, but imported foods must meet the new U.S. requirement.

Consumer advocates praised the decision.

"This is a welcome, but long overdue, action from the FDA: removing the unsustainable double standard in which Red 3 was banned from lipstick but permitted in candy," said

Dr. Peter Lurie, director of the group Center for Science in the Public Interest, which led the petition effort.

It's not clear whether the ban will face legal challenges from food manufacturers because evidence hasn't determined that the dye causes cancer when consumed by humans. At a hearing in December, FDA Commissioner Dr. Robert Califf suggested that's a risk.

"When we do ban something, it will go to court," he told members of Congress on Dec. 5. "And if we don't have the scientific evidence, we will lose in court."

When the FDA declined to allow Red 3 in cosmetics and

topical drugs in 1990, the color additive was already permitted in foods and ingested drugs. Because research showed then that the way the dye causes cancer in rats does not apply to humans, "the FDA did not take action to revoke the authorization of Red No. 3 in food," the agency has said on its website.

Health advocates for years have asked the FDA to reconsider that decision, including the 2022 petition led by CSPI. In November, nearly two dozen members of Congress sent a letter demanding that FDA officials ban Red 3.

Lawmakers cited the Delaney Clause and said the action was especially important to

protect children, who consume more of the dye on a bodyweight basis than adults, the lawmakers said.

"The FDA should act quickly to protect the nation's youth from this harmful dye, used simply to give food and drinks a bright red color," the letter said. "No aesthetic reason could justify the use of a carcinogen in our food supply."

About two-thirds of Americans favor restricting or reformulating processed foods to remove ingredients like added sugar or dyes, according to a new AP-NORC poll. Support is particularly high among U.S. adults with a college degree, as well as those with a higher household income.

About 8 in 10 with a college degree favor restricting or reformulating processed foods, compared with about 6 in 10 without a college degree, the poll showed. Roughly 7 in 10 adults with a higher household income support the restrictions, compared with about half of Americans with a household income of \$30,000 or below.

Red 3 is banned for food use in Europe, Australia and New Zealand except in certain kinds of cherries. The dye will be banned in California starting in January 2027, and lawmakers in Tennessee, Arkansas and Indiana have filed proposals to limit certain dyes, particularly from foods offered in public schools.

The International Association of Color Manufacturers defends the dye, saying that it is safe in levels typically consumed by humans. The group points to research by scientific committees operated by the United Nations and the World Health Organization, including a 2018 review that reaffirmed the safety of Red 3 in food. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

MGM unveils 'Barra Lucky Blessing Market' to celebrate Chinese New Year



MGM presents the "Barra Lucky Blessing Market" at Barra District, celebrating Chinese New Year with an innovative mix of tradition and modernity. Highlights include partner-

ships with Prince Kung's Palace Museum, showcasing 22 rare CNY paintings, and Japanese illustrator Shinri Murakami, featuring an exhibition and mural project.

"Together, we have created an innovative shared space where my art moves beyond traditional exhibitions, connecting with various activities and integrating into Macau's daily life. I believe this creative, energetic environment will become a new cultural landmark for the city," said the artist.

The market will host over 35 SMEs, blending cultural crafts, tech, and retail, complemented by a music festival with bands from Macau, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

Visitors can engage in a creative printmaking workshop and explore themed experiences at a Pop-up Cafe.

This pet-friendly event runs January 24-February 25.

Sands Resorts Macao announces lineup of offerings for CNY



Sands Resorts Macao invites locals and visitors to ring in the Year of the Snake with a lineup of festivities, culinary experiences, and artistic highlights.

From Jan. 28 to Feb. 5, signa-

ture restaurants, including Pin Yue Xuan and Lotus Palace, will offer traditional reunion feasts, while Churchill's Table Boutique features Chinese New Year puddings, cakes, and hampers.

The new Hampton Court at Londoner Grand opens Jan. 24, offering a luxurious dining experience inspired by British heritage.

Highlights include the Parade for Celebration of the Year of the Snake on Jan. 31 and Feb. 8, dazzling fireworks displays, and Philip Colbert's lobster-themed pop art installations.

From Jan. 24 to Feb. 12, Sands Shoppes Macao invites shoppers to enjoy the "Embrace Chinese New Year in Style" promotion where guests spending MOP8,000 or more across Shoppes at Venetian, Four Seasons, Parisian, and Londoner can earn up to MOP80,000 in Rewards Dollar Vouchers and complimentary stays at Sands Resorts Macao.

CHINA-US

MARCO RUBIO WARNS CHINA IS AMERICA'S 'BIGGEST THREAT,' AFFIRMS VALUE OF NATO ALLIANCE

FARNOUSH AMIRI, DIDI TANG & MATTHEW LEE, WASHINGTON

FLORIDA Sen. Marco Rubio Wednesday painted a dark vision of the consequences of America's "unbalanced relationship" with China, echoing President-elect Donald Trump's anti-globalist rhetoric as he vies to be confirmed as his secretary of state.

While touching on issues plaguing the Middle East, Latin America and eastern Europe, Rubio focused much of his five-hour Senate confirmation hearing warning that without swift and substantive policy shifts, China will remain the "biggest threat" to American prosperity in the 21st Century.

"If we don't change course, we are going to live in the world where much of what matters to us on a daily basis from our security to our health will be dependent on whether the Chinese allow us to have it or not," Rubio testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Asked about NATO, the 75-year-old security organization that Trump has repeatedly criticized, Rubio affirmed its value, calling it a "very important alliance." But Rubio endorsed Trump's view that some European allies should be contributing more to their collective defense, adding that the U.S. must decide whether it wants "a primary defense role" or to be a "backstop" against aggression.

The 53-year-old Republican made the case against China and other U.S. adversaries to his colleagues on the Foreign Relations panel where he served for 14 years. He received a warm welcome from both sides of the aisle, making jokes about how "surreal" it was to be on the other side of the dais.

"I hope I can earn your support, whether it's because you believe I would do a good job, or because you want to get rid of me," Rubio joked as part of his opening statement.

But in between the niceties, Rubio blamed America's vulnerability to China on the shift to globalism, which he says "is now a weapon being used against us." He said the U.S. must begin placing "our core national interests above all else."

It's a remarkable opening salvo from Rubio, who was born in Miami to Cuban immi-

AP PHOTO



Sen. Marco Rubio

grants and who, if confirmed, would become the first Latino to serve as the nation's top diplomat.

The confirmation hearing begins a new chapter in the political career of the third-term senator, whose relationship with Trump has evolved over the last decade. Once rivals trading schoolyard insults as they campaigned for president in 2016, the two men became close allies as Trump campaigned for another White House term last year.

Rubio first came to Washington as part of the "tea party" wave in 2010 and once advocated for allowing a path to citizenship for immigrants in the country illegally. But like other Republicans, Rubio's views on immigration have shifted toward the hardline stance of Trump, who has pledged to aggressively pursue deportations once he takes office on Monday.

Unlike many of Trump's Cabinet selections, Rubio is expected to easily win confirmation, notching support not only from Republicans but also Democrats who endorse him as a "responsible" pick to represent the U.S. abroad. Many expect he will be among the first of Trump's Cabinet picks approved.

Democratic Sen. Brian Schatz, who served alongside Rubio on the Foreign Relations Committee, said he has high hopes that the Florida

Republican will reject the isolationist approach of other Trump allies.

"I think Marco is a hawk, but he's also an internationalist, and I think the challenge for him will be to maintain the long bipartisan tradition of America being indispensable in world affairs," the Hawaii lawmaker told The Associated Press. "And there are people in the Trump world who want us to run away from being the leaders of the free world. And I'm hoping that Marco's instincts towards American strength will win the day."

Rubio's approach to foreign affairs is grounded in his years of service on the Foreign Relations committee and the Senate Intelligence panel. In his speeches and writings, he's delivered increasingly stern warnings about growing military and economic threats to the United States.

If confirmed, Rubio will become the leader of U.S. foreign policy — though his role will surely remain secondary to Trump, who relishes the global stage and frequently uses the bully pulpit against America's allies.

Even before taking office, Trump has stirred angst in foreign capitals by threatening to seize the Panama Canal and Greenland and suggesting he will pressure Canada to become the nation's 51st state.

When asked about the canal Wednesday, Rubio testified

that while he hasn't "looked at the legal research," he is "compelled to suspect that an argument could be made that the terms under which that canal were turned over has been violated."

But, he added, that "Panama is a great partner in a lot of other issues and I hope we can resolve this issue."

A Biden administration decision to rescind Cuba's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism with just days left in office is likely to have irked Rubio, who has long supported tough sanctions on the communist-run island.

When asked by Sen. Ted Cruz, Republican from Texas, if he believed Cuba should have remained on that list, Rubio replied: "without a question." He also indicated that the new administration would reverse plans by the Biden administration to remove Cuba from the state of sponsor of terrorism list.

"Nothing that the Biden administration has agreed to in the last 12 or 18 hours binds the next administration, which starts on Monday," Rubio said.

Secretaries of state have played a key role in formulating the foreign policy of the country since its founding, starting with the first one, Thomas Jefferson, who served in the top Cabinet position under President George Washington.

Since then, Jefferson, as well as his 19th century successors James Madison, James Monroe, John Quincy Adams, Martin Van Buren and James Buchanan, have all gone on to be elected president.

More recent secretaries of state have been less successful in their political ambitions, including John Kerry, who lost the 2004 presidential election to President George W. Bush before becoming the top diplomat, and Hillary Clinton, who lost the 2016 election to Trump.

The most successful secretaries of state have been known for their closeness to the presidents whom they serve, notably James Baker under George H.W. Bush, Condoleezza Rice under George W. Bush and, to some extent, Clinton under Barack Obama.

Like Clinton, Rubio was once a political rival to the president-elect who nominated them. However, the Clinton-Obama relationship during the 2008 Democratic primaries was not nearly as hostile as that between Trump and Rubio in the 2016 GOP primaries, which was marked by name-calling and personal insults.

Trump had an acrimonious relationship with his first secretary of state, Rex Tillerson. Trump fired him from the position via a social media post less than two years into his term. **MDT/AP**

TOURISM

Hainan sees over threefold rise in visa-free visitors

MORE than 350,000 international visitors entered Hainan province visa-free last year, a 283 percent increase year-on-year, according to Yu Wenzhong, deputy director of the Office of the Free Trade Port Working Committee of the Communist Party of China Hainan Provincial Committee.

Yu shared the data during a news conference during Hainan's annual sessions of people's congress and political consultative conference on Wednesday in Haikou, the provincial capital. The official attributed the spike to the nation's optimized and enhanced visa-free entry policy for foreign visitors.

On Feb 9 last year, the National Immigration Administration announced the new visa-free entry policy for citizens from 59 countries who want to visit Hainan, expanding the purposes of such visits from tourism to include short-term stays for business, trade, family visits, medical treatment, exhibitions and sports competitions.

Later, on July 30, the administration announced the implementation of a 144-hour visa-free policy for foreign tourist groups entering Hai-



nan from Hong Kong and Macao. According to the policy, citizens from countries with diplomatic relations with China and holding ordinary passports can enjoy visa-free travel to Hainan for up to 144 hours after arriving in either of the special administrative regions.

On Dec 17, the administration further relaxed and optimized transit visa-free policy, extending the duration of such stays for foreign nationals to

240 hours. Hainan became a beneficiary of this policy, with Haikou Meilan International Airport and Sanya Phoenix International Airport designated as additional entry ports. Eligible overseas travelers transiting through Hainan are permitted to engage in activities across the entire province during their stay.

Hainan Governor Liu Xiaoming highlighted the province's entry and exit policies,

describing them as "the most favorable nationwide" during his government work report on Tuesday.

Last year, Hainan unveiled 77 international air routes, with Qionghai Boao International Airport inaugurated as the third international airport in the island province.

These routes connect international passenger flights to nearly 40 cities across Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, the

Middle East, Australia, New Zealand and Europe.

Russian tourist Anastasia Smirnov, who is visiting Sanya with her family on a monthlong trip, praised the seamless travel experience facilitated by direct flights and visa-free policies.

"I truly adore the delightful weather, breathtaking beaches, delicious cuisine and welcoming locals here," she said. "I even experienced traditional Chinese acupuncture, which was both calming and beneficial for my well-being."

Since November last year, Hainan has hosted a series of sports events and entertainment activities. The inaugural marathon in Boao, Qionghai city, drew nearly 10,000 runners from nine countries, including the United States, Singapore and Malaysia. Foreign athletes and enthusiasts participating in these events can take advantage of the visa-free policies to explore and enjoy their time in the province.

"Over 80 percent of foreign visitors now enter the island province visa-free," said Rao Jun, deputy director of the exit-entry border inspection department at the Haikou General Station of Exit and Entry Frontier Inspection.

He emphasized efforts to enhance policy implementation through infrastructure upgrades at ports of entry.

"The number of passenger inspection channels has surged from 39 to 98, with 44 expedited immigration lanes currently in operation," Rao said. **CHINADAILY**

Xiaohongshu-linked stocks surge as app tops US download charts

THE shares of a group of companies associated with Xiaohongshu continued their upward momentum on Wednesday, buoyed by the Instagram-style Chinese app's ascent to the top of the download charts in the United States.

While the rally underscored investors' growing confidence in Xiaohongshu and companies linked to it, industry experts said it is more important for Chinese enterprises to seize this momentum to cement their foothold in the international market, particularly amid intensifying geopolitical uncertainties.

On Wednesday, more

than 10 companies that do business directly or indirectly with Xiaohongshu hit their daily limits on multiple stock markets. The standouts included Hangzhou Onechance Tech Corp, an e-commerce service provider in the A-share market, and Sunwave Communications, a wireless communication technology provider.

Inmyshow Digital Technology (Group), a provider of data-driven marketing solutions for brands on the platform, hit a daily limit by soaring 9.92 percent on the Shanghai Stock Exchange.

In response to the rally, Inmyshow noted



that with a strong foothold in the advertising and marketing industry, it maintained deep partnerships with major platforms such as Xiaohongshu.

Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Aca-

demy of Social Sciences, said, "The rally reflects investors' optimism about Xiaohongshu's potential to penetrate the global market and elevate its affiliated companies."

What's even more cri-

tical is how these companies capitalize on this opportunity to sustain international users over the long term and reshape the global social media landscape, Wang said.

In recent weeks, Xiaohongshu has seen a massive influx of users from TikTok amid fears of the app being banned in the US if the Supreme Court upholds the ban.

Data research firm Sensor Tower showed that Xiaohongshu's US downloads surged more than 200 percent year-on-year this week and 194 percent last week.

Xiaohongshu, also known as RedNote, was launched in 2013 and has grown into one of China's most popular social media and e-commerce platforms.

As consumers can also buy lifestyle items on

Xiaohongshu, a group of consumption-related stocks also surged. Snack chain Lyfen, for example, achieved a five-day streak on Wednesday of hitting the daily limit.

Pan Helin, a member of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy, said this trend of TikTok users seeking refuge in Xiaohongshu reflected the dissatisfaction of netizens, who often choose digital tools to amplify their voices.

"The platform will face several key challenges in the future including monetization. How it can harmonize domestic and international user experiences without running into a wall of cultural differences also remains to be seen," Pan added. **CHINADAILY**

RUSSIA SAYS IT WILL HELP VIETNAM BECOME A 'PARTNER COUNTRY' IN THE BRICS BLOC OF DEVELOPING NATIONS

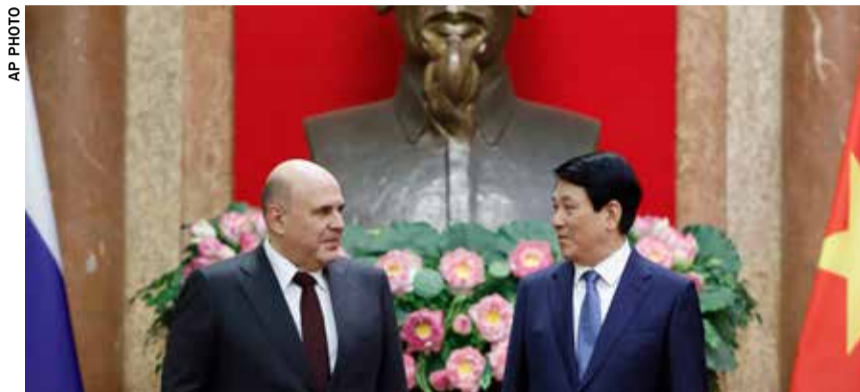
ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL, HANOI

RUSSIA will facilitate Vietnam's participation in the BRICS bloc of developing economies as a "partner country," the countries said in a joint statement on Wednesday after Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin's two-day visit to Hanoi.

"The Russian side welcomed Vietnam's active participation in BRICS events in 2024 and expressed its readiness to create favorable conditions if Vietnam joins BRICS as a partner country," the statement said.

BRICS was formed by Brazil, Russia, India and China in 2009, with South Africa added in 2010, as a counterweight to the Group of Seven leading industrialized nations. Last year, the bloc added Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates. Saudi Arabia has been invited to join. Turkey, Azerbaijan and Malaysia have formally applied to become members, and a few others have expressed interest.

Vietnam's Southeast Asian neighbor Indonesia was admitted as a full



Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, left, and Vietnamese President Luong Cuong pose for photos during their meeting in Hanoi, Vietnam

BRICS member this month.

But Vietnam remains reticent to join the bloc, said Nguyen Khac Giang, a visiting fellow in the Vietnam Studies Program at Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

"Hanoi is still cautious of what the Trump administration will think about BRICS and the potential consequences of becoming a full member in the worst-case scenario. Meanwhile, the benefits are not that substantial for Hanoi to take such a risk," he said.

Vietnam needs support from the U.S. to advance its economic ambitions and diversify its defense ties.

Russia has been trying to bolster ties in Asia to offset its growing international isolation over its war in Ukraine.

During Mishustin's visit to Hanoi, the countries agreed to expand their cooperation on nuclear power.

"Russia is ready to participate in building a national nuclear power industry in Vietnam," the joint statement said. **MDT/AP**

India docks two satellites in space, a milestone for its scientific ambitions

AIJAZ HUSSAIN, JAMMU

INDIA docked two satellites in space yesterday to become the fourth nation in the world to achieve the mission, officials said, in an ambitious milestone in its expansion of space technology.

The Indian Space Research Organization, or ISRO, maneuvered back together the two satellites, weighing 220 kilograms (485 pounds) each, during a "precision" space docking experiment, known as SpaDeX, the space agency said. It called the operation as a "historic moment."

In December, the satellites, Chaser and Target, blasted off on a single rocket from the Sriharikota

launch site.

"India docked its name in space history!" the ISRO said in a post on social media site X. "Post docking, control of two satellites as a single object is successful."

The mission was postponed twice earlier due to technical issues.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Indian scientists on the successful mission. "It is a significant stepping stone for India's ambitious space missions in the years to come," he said on the X platform. In 2023, Modi said that India's space agency will set up an Indian-crafted space station by 2035 and land an Indian astronaut on the moon by 2040. **MDT/AP**

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SOUTH KOREA

YouTube election fraud conspiracy theories fuel impeached president and his supporters

KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

THOUSANDS have braved the frigid January weather in Seoul protests, waving South Korean and American flags and shouting vows to protect their embattled conservative hero, the impeached South Korean president facing imprisonment over potential rebellion charges.

The swelling crowds in South Korea's capital are inspired by President Yoon Suk Yeol's defiance, but also by the growing power of right-wing YouTubers who portray Yoon as a victim of a leftist, North Korea-sympathizing opposition that has rigged elections to gain a legislative majority and is now plotting to remove a patriotic leader.

"Out with fraudulent elections and a fake National Assembly!" read one sign, brandished by an angry man in a fur hat during a recent protest near Yoon's presidential residence, the site of a massive law enforcement operation Wednesday that made Yoon the country's first sitting president to be detained in a criminal investigation.

Many at the pro-Yoon rallies, which are separated by police from anti-Yoon counter-protests, are significantly influenced by fictional narratives about election fraud that dominate conservative YouTube channels — claims that Yoon has repeatedly referenced in his attacks on election officials.

A placard hanging from an overpass read: "Martial law was declared to investigate election fraud; lawmakers impeached (Yoon) to stop it." There were also "Stop the Steal" signs, a slogan associated with the U.S. Capitol attack by a mob of Donald Trump supporters on Jan. 6, 2021, who were angry over false claims that Joe Biden had stolen the election.

There have long been worries about Yoon's close ties with right-wing YouTube personalities, some of whom were invited to his inauguration ceremony. One has even boasted that Yoon listens to his show "even while sleeping."

Those worries, however, have been heightened since Yoon's shocking martial law declaration on Dec. 3, which led to the dispatch of hundreds of troops



to encircle the legislature and the country's election commission — and which dredged up memories of military-backed dictatorships that ended in the 1980s.

Hundreds of citizens converged on parliament that night to help lawmakers break through the blockade so they could vote to lift martial law, a dramatic display of the country's democratic resilience.

The opposition-dominated National Assembly voted to impeach Yoon on Dec. 14, suspending his powers and putting his fate with the Constitutional Court, which will decide whether to formally remove him from office or reinstate him.

But the ensuing weeks of political paralysis have laid bare the nation's stark ideological divide and revealed the growing popularity of bizarre conspiracy theories that are now being amplified by mainstream conservative politicians, starting with the president himself.

In a message posted on his Facebook account following his detention Wednesday, Yoon claimed that there's "so much evidence of election fraud in our country." It's the latest of his erroneous claims meant to discredit the country's election process while defending his martial law decree.

Observers worry it might undermine future elections.

REALITY SHATTERED BY MARTIAL LAW

Lawmakers from Yoon's People Power Party are frequently seen at pro-Yoon rallies in close contact with far-right YouTube personalities.

Kim Min-jeon, a member of PPP's leadership council, went on YouTube to defend the president's decision to send troops to National Election Commission sites, saying that election integrity worries made "war-like emergency" steps necessary.

It's unclear whether Yoon and his loyalists genuinely believe the claims of rigged elections or are leveraging conspiracy theories to justify his imposition of martial law and rally his support base. It's also unclear whether those voicing the theories at protests represent mainstream conservative voters.

Conservatives, however, have been emboldened by recent polls, which show that Yoon and his party's approval ratings have risen since the martial law imposition.

The recent precedent of politicians undermining reality for their own personal gains threatens democracy because it adds false claims to already intense policy disagreements that make compromise unlikely, said Jinman Cho, a politics professor at Duksung Women's

University in Seoul.

"Parties are using conspiracy theories not to attack each other but to destroy each other," said Cho, who predicts that chaos will persist until Yoon's political fate is determined in court.

Yoon's actions could also scar a possible upcoming presidential by-election and legislative elections in 2028 by increasing voters' unwillingness to accept election results, said Han-Wool Jeong, director of the Korea People Research Institute.

METAL BATS, CABLE TIES AND ROPES

On the night of Dec. 3, as TV showed heavily armed soldiers backed by Blackhawk helicopters and armored vehicles swarming the National Assembly, a separate military operation, also involving hundreds of troops, was quietly underway at the headquarters of the National Election Commission in Gwacheon and two other NEC facilities.

According to prosecutors' indictment of Kim Yong Hyun, Yoon's now-arrested former defense minister, a search-and-seize squad was meant to arrest 30 NEC officials and find evidence of election fraud, a claim that remains unsubstantiated in South Korea. The soldiers were equipped with metal baseball bats, cable ties, ropes, blindfolds and head covers.

Other soldiers were instructed to copy data from NEC's computer servers and, "if difficult, just remove the servers themselves," according to the 83-page indictment obtained by The Associated Press. The plans weren't carried out because lawmakers first forced Yoon to lift martial law.

Kim's indictment says Yoon began floating the idea of using his emergency powers around late March or early April, shortly before the general elections, in which the liberals won by a landslide to extend their legislative majority.

In a fiery TV speech on Dec. 12, during which he defended his use of martial law against an "anti-state" opposition obstructing his agenda, Yoon said he needed to send troops to the NEC to investigate alleged vulnerabilities to its computer systems.

He referenced a debunked YouTube claim that NEC's status as an independent electoral body meant it could not be subjected to searches and seizures by law enforcement investigators.

When Seoul's spy agency examined government networks for possible North Korean cybertheft in 2023, it found no signs of NEC computer breaches. Even if hackers somehow gain access, rigging an election would still be virtually impossible, officials say, as it would require overriding the entire election management system, tampering with physical ballots and collusion among thousands of election workers.

"Every single allegation of election fraud raised during past elections was concluded as groundless in courts," the NEC said in a statement.

Yoon Kab-keun, one of the president's lawyers, said Yoon Suk Yeol was determined to "resolve suspicions and inadequacies" linked to the NEC's operations.

Some PPP lawmakers who met Yoon at his residence before his detention told reporters that the president urged the party to win future elections by embracing the voices of protesters, and to focus on the "well-organized information on YouTube" rather than the "biased" legacy media.

Yoon on Facebook accused the NEC of refusing to take accountability for huge numbers of fake ballots that had been discovered in unspecified past elections and for a network vulnerable to hacking and manipulation. NEC was possibly operating a "comprehensive election fraud system," he said.

While none of those claims are substantiated, the president maintained that, "We cannot dismiss this as a conspiracy theory." MDT/AP

US

Biden warns in farewell address that an 'oligarchy' of ultrarich threatens future of democracy

ZEKE MILLER, CHRIS MEGERIAN & COLLEEN LONG, WASHINGTON

AP PHOTO



PRESIDENT Joe Biden used his farewell address to the nation yesterday (Macau time) to deliver stark warnings about an “oligarchy” of the ultra-wealthy taking root in the country and a “tech-industrial complex” that is infringing on Americans’ rights and the future of democracy.

Speaking from the Oval Office as he prepares to hand over power Monday to President-elect Donald Trump, Biden seized what is likely to be his final opportunity to address the country before he departs the White House to spotlight the accumulation of power and wealth in the U.S. among just a small few.

“Today, an oligarchy is taking shape in America of extreme wealth, power and influence that literally threatens our entire democracy, our basic rights and freedoms, and a fair shot for everyone to get ahead,” Biden said, drawing attention to “a dangerous concentration of power in the hands of a few ultra-wealthy people and the dangerous consequences if their abuse of power is left unchecked.”

Invoking President Dwight Eisenhower’s warnings about the rise of a military-industrial complex when he left office in 1961, Biden added, “I’m equally concerned about the potential rise of a tech-industrial complex that could pose real dangers to our country as well.”

Biden used his 15-minute address to offer a model for a peaceful transfer of power and — without mentioning Trump by name — raise concerns about his successor.

It marked a striking admonition by Biden, who is departing the national stage after more than 50 years in public life, as he has struggled to define his legacy and to steel the country against

the return of Trump to the Oval Office. This time, the president, who has repeatedly called Trump a threat to the nation’s system of governance, went even further, warning Americans to be on guard for their freedoms and their institutions during a turbulent era of rapid technological and economic change.

Biden sounded the alarm about oligarchy as some of the world’s richest individuals and titans of its technology industry have flocked to Trump’s side in recent months, particularly after his November victory. Billionaire Elon Musk spent more than \$100 million helping Trump get elected, and executives like Meta’s Mark Zuckerberg and Amazon’s Jeff Bezos have donated to Trump’s inaugural committee and made pilgrimages to Trump’s private club in Florida for audiences with the president-elect as they seek to ingratiate themselves with his administration and shape its policies.

Biden’s speech in the Oval Office is the latest in a series of remarks on domestic policy and foreign relations he has delivered that are intended to cement his legacy and reshape Americans’ grim views on his term. Earlier in

the day, he heralded a long awaited ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, which could end more than a year of bloodshed in the Middle East.

“It’ll take time to feel the full impact of what we’ve done together but the seeds are planted and they’ll grow and they’ll bloom for decades to come,” Biden said. It was a tacit acknowledgment that many Americans say they have yet to feel the impact of his trillions of dollars spent on domestic initiatives.

At the same time that Biden was criticizing social media companies for retreating from fact-checking on their platforms, Trump’s incoming communications director and press secretary were sharing posts on X that falsely claimed the president had delivered a prerecorded speech. Biden has blamed his poor standing with the public on misinformation on social media and the challenges he has faced reaching voters in the disaggregated modern media ecosystem.

Biden offered his own set of solutions for the problems that he laid out: change the tax code to ensure billionaires “pay their fair share,” eliminate the flow of hidden sour-

ces of money into political campaigns, establish 18-year term limits for members of the Supreme Court and ban members of Congress from trading stocks. His policy prescriptions come as his political capital is at its nadir as Biden prepares to exit the national stage, and after he has done little to advance those causes during his four years in power at the White House.

Federal Reserve data shows the wealthiest 0.1% of the country combined holds more than five times the wealth of the bottom 50% combined.

Biden isn’t leaving the White House in the way that he hoped. He tried to run for reelection, brushing aside voters’ concerns that he would be 86 years old at the end of a second term. After stumbling in a debate with Trump, Biden dropped out of the race under pressure from his own party, and Vice President Kamala Harris became the Democratic nominee.

The speech capped not just Biden’s presidency but his five decades in politics.

He was once the country’s youngest senator at 30 years old after being elected to represent his home state of Delaware in 1972. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1994: MASSIVE EARTHQUAKE HITS LOS ANGELES



A huge earthquake has rocked Los Angeles, killing more than 20 people.

The earthquake, which measured 6.6 on the Richter scale and lasted for 40 seconds, struck at 0431 local time (1231 GMT).

More than 1,000 people have been injured and the death toll is expected to rise as rescuers continue to pull bodies from collapsed buildings.

Mayor of Los Angeles Richard Riordan has declared a state of emergency and an evening curfew has been imposed.

The airport has been closed due to a lack of power and doctors are having to perform surgery in the open air because hospital buildings are severely damaged.

The area worst hit is reported to have been the San Fernando Valley where the quake is likely to have affected up to three million people.

Los Angeles emergency services are stretched to the limit and using heat detecting cameras and listening equipment to trace signs of life beneath the rubble.

One of the city’s fire fighters, Grove Lumas, said it was fortunate the quake had struck during the night.

He said: “If this had happened in the middle of the day we would have been stacking up the bodies.”

Experts are warning of potential aftershocks and police have issued a statement warning of isolated cases of looting.

The authorities have told residents to “stay home” and “stay calm”.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The final number of dead was 60. The number of injured was 7,707 and more than 5,000 buildings were deemed to be unsafe. Repairing the damage to the city cost around \$30 billion. The earthquake was felt as far south as San Diego 200km away and as far north as Las Vegas, 440km to the north east. President Clinton visited the area in the week following the earthquake and immediately asked Congress to raise \$6.6 billion for an emergency relief fund. On the same date a year later and almost to the hour a massive tremor hit Kobe in Japan. Registering 7.0 on the Richter scale it killed more than 6,000 people.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Schedule carefully as demand for your energy rises. Slow to clarify miscommunications or adapt to surprising news. Anticipate resistance. The perfect solution appears.

TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20
Love blossoms as you avoid irritations or silly arguments. Adapt to surprises. Silence can speak volumes. Relax and keep your sense of humor.

GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21
Prioritize domestic harmony. Resolve conflicts before they happen. Household projects may take unplanned detours. Expect changes and chaotic moments. Take the gentle approach.

CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22
You're especially brilliant. Passions could be high. Look before leaping. Stay out of someone else's argument. Don't stomp on anyone's sensitivities. Express yourself thoughtfully.

LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Keep generating money. Resist the temptation to overspend. Grow savings instead. Financial arguments sprout easily. Silence can be golden. Focus on the job at hand.

VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Pamper yourself. Try a new look or style. Avoid procrastination and dive into personal projects. Smile for the cameras. You're creating a buzz.

LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Enjoy peaceful settings for thinking and planning. Consider plans to adapt for changes. Private meditation reveals useful solutions. Stay sensitive to what's needed. Relax.

SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Keep your cool. Follow through to manage your part of a team effort. Communication breakdowns cause delays. Patience and diplomacy get the job done.

SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Adjust with professional changes. Stay respectful, especially when others don't. Ignore gossip. Avoid risky propositions. Return communications. Gentle pressure works better than force.

CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Find a nice spot to rest and enjoy the scenery. Expect delays or surprises with traffic and transportation. Research options and alternative solutions.

AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Collaborate for shared gain, despite financial challenges. Hold your temper. Impulsive actions backfire. Ignore rumors and gossip. Clarify objectives and coordinate. Patiently advance.

PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Have patience with your partner. Adapt for unexpected plot twists. Don't get pushy. Clarify miscommunications immediately. Wait for developments. Share support and rest.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

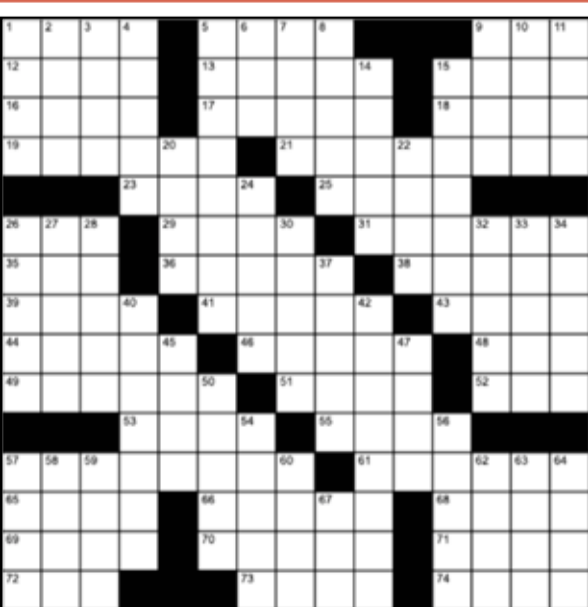
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-3	7	fine
Changchun	-11	0	fine
Chengdu	6	12	overcast
Chongqing	8	12	cloudy
Fuzhou	5	16	fine
Guangzhou	6	20	fine
Guiyang	2	12	cloudy
Haikou	12	20	cloudy
Hangzhou	0	10	fine
Harbin	-16	-4	fine
Hefei	-4	11	cloudy
Nanjing	-2	11	fine
Shanghai	0	10	overcast
Taipei	11	15	cloudy
Wuhan	-3	13	cloudy
Hong Kong	16	18	sunny
WORLD			
Moscow	1	3	cloudy
Frankfurt	-3	2	sunny
Paris	-2	2	cloudy
London	0	6	cloudy
New York	1	5	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Manhattan neighborhood; 5- Suffers; 9- ___ de cologne; 12- "Dilbert" intern; 13- Oktoberfest vessel; 15- Grounded jets; 16- Restaurateur Toots; 17- Gaze intently; 18- ___ Dogg; 19- Adventurous expedition; 21- Recently discovered; 23- Nothing special; 25- Fiddling emperor; 26- Mediterranean isl.; 29- Big name in razors; 31- Say again; 35- Shoebox marking; 36- Freshen, as a stamp pad; 38- Uncanny; 39- Woody's kid; 41- Spoils, with "on"; 43- Steak order; 44- Jam; 46- ___-foot oil; 48- One of a D.C. hundred; 49- Colonize; 51- Greek portico; 52- Mag. staffers; 53- Bubbly drink; 55- Skin marking, often due to injury; 57- So to speak; 61- Mythical sea monster; 65- Gossipy Barrett; 66- Hajj destination; 68- Bull; 69- Very small; 70- Oohed and ___; 71- Yalies; 72- ___-mo; 73- Boot bottom; 74- Rational.

DOWN 1- Disrespectful back talk; 2- Dept. of Labor div.; 3- Foot of a horse; 4- Gumbo pods; 5- Aided; 6- "The Addams Family" cousin; 7- Incline; 8- Femme fatale; 9- Isaac's eldest; 10- Envelope abbr.; 11- Secondhand; 14- More recent; 15- Meddling person; 20- Loud, deep utterance, especially used by lions; 22- At liberty; 24- Rigel's constellation; 26- Chairs; 27- High home; 28- Sublease; 30- Pays to play; 32- Rub out; 33- Ventilated; 34- Ages between 13 and 19; 37- "Endymion" poet; 40- Remain longer; 42- Enclosure; 45- Agricultural implement; 47- River to the Moselle; 50- Abnormal plant swelling; 54- Specific geographical places; 56- Gives a 9.8, say; 57- ___ and crafts; 58- Dirty; 59- ___ uncertain terms; 60- Bounce back; 62- Soft drink nut; 63- ___ go braght; 64- It runs in the cold; 67- Cartoon frame;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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AD

DRIVE IN

'WOLF MAN' IS A TOOTHLESS REBOOT THAT'LL MAKE YOU BARK AT THE MOON

MARK KENNEDY

BLAKE Lovell thinks taking his wife and young daughter to rural Oregon to pack up his dead father's belongings is a good idea. It's a break from their urban life, might help repair his fraying marriage and reconnect them all with nature. "It would be good for us," he argues.

It will not, of course, because this is a Blumhouse movie called "Wolf Man." It will not be good for Blake and it will not be good for the audience. That's because this film is a terrible misfire using a classic movie monster poorly rebooted by the modern home of horror.

Slack when it should be terrifying, "Wolf Man" suffers from cheap sentimentality, laughably obvious script reveals, poor continuity and a creature that is less predatory than painful. Pity comes to mind.

Christopher Abbott stars as Blake, a father and husband whose own estranged dad was a tad unstable, constantly drilling in his son a survivalist ethic. "It's not hard to die. It's the easiest thing in the wor-

AP PHOTO

This image released by Universal Pictures shows Julia Garner, left, and Christopher Abbott in a scene from "Wolf Man."



ld," his dad says. He being officially declared dead 30 years after he disappeared into the forest starts this sludgy movie off.

"The Invisible Man" writer-director Leigh Whannell — who co-wrote the story with Corbett Tuck — seems to be attempting a horror movie with his new message: Being

overprotective can lead to your family being assaulted by a deranged manbeast. Wait, that can't be right. Maybe it's about inheritance? It's all a little muddled.

A weird human-animal hybrid lurking in the Oregon wilderness — actually New Zealand pretending to be Oregon — kicks off what is su-

pposed to be the scary part of this movie, but so much time is spent on the domestic drama set-up that the audience will be bored by the time the supposed thrill ride shows up. When it does, the filmmakers lean on creepy sounds way too much.

There's a Wolf Man out there and he's, well, underwhelming. He is

largely unseen for most of the movie because seeing the monster is always a bad idea. At one, point, he attacks through the cabin's doggie door, one of the most disappointing assaults on film.

Now infected inside their barricaded cabin, Blake goes through a body-horror transformation, which includes the sweats, enhanced hearing, uncontrolled peeing, teeth readjustment, mottled skin, being made mute and hair loss. That's right, hair loss. This is the first Wolf Man movie that seems to endorse Rogaine.

His wife, played by Julia Garner, is left here to sniffle and shriek, going from life partner to potential dinner. That means a lot of running and panting with a flashlight in hand. Their daughter, played by Matilda Firth, earlier so precocious, now asks really stupid questions like "What's happening?" and "What's wrong with Daddy?"

So, outside the cabin lurks a Wolf Man. And inside is potentially another, but one still kind of trying to hold onto his humanity. "Mom, he wants this to be over," the girl says of her dad-wolf. We know the feeling.

"Wolf Man," a Universal Pictures release in theaters Friday, is rated R for "bloody violent content, grisly images and some language." Running time: 103 minutes. ★★★★★

AD

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Paediatric Surgery : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong

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TASTE OF EDESIA

Celebrate with Elegance

IRENE SAM, MDT

AS the Year of the Snake gracefully unfolds, Four Seasons Macao's Zi Yat Heen proudly celebrates its esteemed Black Pearl award. We are invited to be among the first to savor the exquisite Black Pearl And Moutai menu, a culi-

nary masterpiece crafted by Executive Chinese Chef Anthony Ho Yam To in collaboration with KweiChow Moutai.

The 7-course tasting indulgence showcases culinary excellence with premium dishes like Steamed Lobster Fillet with egg and Kristal Caviar, Braised South African Abalone with diced

chicken fried rice, paired with the Kweichow Moutai Tasting Flight.

This extraordinary occasion also marks the debut of the "One Zodiac, One Moutai" collection in Macau.

As the first hotel in Macau to showcase 12 Chinese Zodiac Moutai, including the unparalleled Year of the Snake Moutai, Four Seasons Hotel Macao is the premier destination for Lunar New Year celebrations.

To honor this festive season, traditional Chinese New Year puddings are available at Zi Yat Heen. The Classic Pudding with Coconut Milk delights the senses, while the Abalone and Tur-

nip Pudding with Conpoy promises an abundance of flavor.

For families seeking authentic Lunar New Year feasts, Chef Anthony Ho's artistry shines through auspicious dishes such as Stir-Fried Tiger Prawns with Salty Egg Yolk, Double-Boiled Abalone with Fish Maw, and Sautéed Lobster with Vermicelli.

Each dish reflects his mastery of umami and earthy flavors, ensuring a memorable dining experience.

Xiao Ting invites guests to explore new gastronomic endeavors, featuring Flying Fried Noodles with Boston Lobster, Double Boiled Chi-

cken Soup with Coconut, Red Date and Fish Maw, and the Snake of Fortune Afternoon Tea showcasing Lucky Choux, Golden Tartlet, Fortune and Lantern—perfect for sharing with loved ones during this festive time.

The Prosperity Buffet at Belcancao presents an array of culinary highlights, including Roasted Duck Peking Style, Spicy Lobster Risotto with Caviar, and Huadio Drunken Chicken, appealing to discerning palates.

For food enthusiasts, Ohte Abalone Jade Ramen offers a casual yet stylish dining experience, culminating in Orange Ice Cream Puffs for a refreshing finish.



BOOK IT

Kyle Paoletta's 'American Oasis' offers lessons for a hotter, drier world

ANITA SNOW

ALBUQUERQUE-born author Kyle Paoletta takes readers on a virtual road trip around his native region, transporting us across hundreds of years and thousands of miles in his new book "American Oasis: Finding the Future in the Cities of the Southwest."

As cities worldwide grapple with drought and rising temperatures from climate change, Paoletta describes how the Southwest developed a resilience that he says other regions will need as the globe grows hotter and drier.

He introduces us to what he calls the great cities of the arid

Southwest, places that already know much about survival: Las Vegas; Phoenix; Tucson, Arizona; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and El Paso, Texas. Las Vegas built a destination for international visitors in the middle of a scorching desert. Phoenix has embraced widespread air conditioning to keep people alive in triple-degree heat that would otherwise kill them.

"For so many Americans," he writes, "it is only in recent years that the climate has begun to be understood as a hostile force. To them, I say: Welcome. We Southwesterners have never known anything different."

Paoletta then recounts the

region's history and diverse culture, stretching back millennia to when Indigenous peoples adapted to the hot, arid land, building structures with the ribs of Saguaro cactus plants and digging canals to transport water for crops in the Phoenix valley.

Later, the tribes had to contend with Spanish conquistadores as much of the land in the Southwest came under the control of Spain dating back to years before the pilgrims set sail for Plymouth.

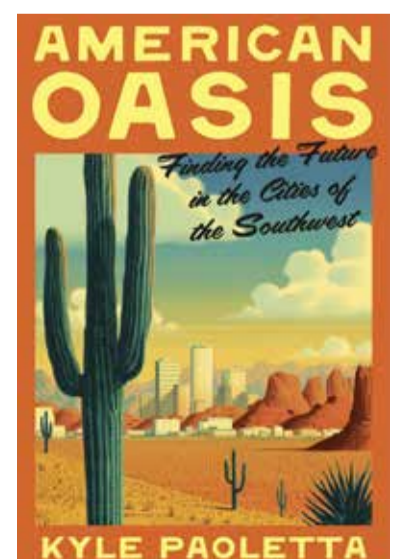
Most of the region eventually came under Mexican rule, until the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 gave the United States an area that today includes California, Ne-

vada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado.

Blacks in Phoenix were forced as late as the 1960s to live south of the railroad tracks by racist real estate covenants that barred them from owning property in white neighborhoods.

Latinos in Tucson suffered into the 1970s under municipal neglect that razed their barrios for highways or turned them into environmental disaster areas.

And along the U.S.-Mexico border, migrants continued to arrive in the sweltering heat in hopes of getting their own shot at the American Dream, many dying along the way. MDT/AP



This cover image released by Pantheon shows "American Oasis: Finding the Future in the Cities of the Southwest" by Kyle Paoletta

OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

AI CURBS SHOW BIDEN'S REJECTION OF COOPERATION

Looking back over the past four years, from its first sit-down with the Chinese side in Anchorage in March 2021, the Joe Biden administration has shown no qualms about carrying out its China policy from "a position of strength".

That explains why, even though it has repeatedly claimed that cooperation is one of the three pillars of its China policy, it has never worked with Beijing to leverage the strength of that pillar as a stabilizer of relations. Instead, it has focused on continually reinforcing the other two pillars, competition and confrontation.

Artificial intelligence is a good example of how the Biden administration has rejected cooperation in favor of competition and confrontation, although it has gone through the motions to make it look like it is cooperating with China on AI.

As agreed by the two heads of state in their San Francisco summit in November 2023, the US and China held the first meeting of intergovernmental dialogue on AI in Geneva in May.

The two sides exchanged views on the technological risks posed by AI, global governance of the technology and its use, as well as other issues of respective concern. They also agreed to promote the sustainable development of artificial intelligence on the basis of safety, reliability and controllability.

Later in June, carrying forward that consensus, the second China-US Track 1.5 Dialogue took place in Beijing, during which participants from both countries reached a consensus to further deepen their cooperation in the field of AI.

Yet, on Monday, one week before it leaves office, the administration unveiled sweeping export restrictions on artificial intelligence semiconductors and model parameters, with China being the main target.

The US' restrictive measures on AI chip exports, which extend its long-arm jurisdiction by setting obstacles in the way of normal trade between third parties and China, not only seriously hinder normal economic and trade exchanges between countries, affect global scientific and technological innovation, and damage the interests of companies in various countries around the world, but also divide the world on AI, pushing the technology to evolve in a direction opposite to what it agreed with China in Geneva.

No wonder many US high-tech companies and industry organizations have clearly expressed their dissatisfaction with the move through various channels, arguing that the measures have been hastily formulated and issued without sufficient discussion. Reportedly Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang is embarking on a trip to China this week, a visit apparently intended to figure out how to sidestep the Biden administration's latest AI chip curbs.

Beijing has responded to the move by adding seven US companies to the unreliable entity list on Tuesday. Although the Chinese measures are not equivalent in scale and consequence to the US moves, they show Beijing's firm resolve to safeguard its core interests.

The development of AI is a double-edged sword. While it can be a boon for social progress and international security, it can also aggravate unfairness and injustice and be a threat to peace and stability. Unlike the US, which is seeking to build a high fence around the technology to ensure it serves only itself, China is committed to ensuring that artificial intelligence technology is beneficial to humanity, safe and fair, and always developing in a direction that is conducive to the progress of human civilization [Abridged]

INDIAN BOLLYWOOD STAR SAIF ALI KHAN IS STABBED BY AN INTRUDER AT HIS HOME IN MUMBAI

THE BUZZ

Indian Bollywood star Saif Ali Khan was stabbed in a scuffle with an intruder at his home yesterday and underwent surgery at a hospital, media reports said.

The 54-year-old actor was taken to the hospital from his home in Mumbai, the country's financial and entertainment capital, where he lives with his movie star wife Kareena Kapoor and two sons.

Two of the six wounds were deep, with one near his spine, the Press Trust of India news agency cited a doctor at Mumbai's Lilavati Hospital as saying.

Indian media quoted police as saying the intruder barged into the house at about 2:30 a.m. and fled after stabbing Khan. A female employee at Khan's home was also injured during the attack and was being treated, they said.

Police are investigating and have launched a search for the attacker.

Kapoor, Khan's wife, said in a statement that his family was fine and requested "the media and fans to be patient and not speculate any further as the police is already doing their due investigations."



British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, left, is greeted by Ukrainian officials and the British ambassador to Ukraine Martin Harris, second right, in Kyiv, Ukraine, yesterday

UK'S STARMER ARRIVES IN UKRAINE FOR SECURITY TALKS WITH A PLEDGE FOR A '100-YEAR PARTNERSHIP'

JILL LAWLESS, KYIV

BRITISH Prime Minister Keir Starmer arrived in Ukraine's capital yesterday with a pledge to help guarantee the country's security for a century, days before Donald Trump is sworn in as U.S. president.

The British government says Starmer and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will sign a "100-Year Partnership" treaty in Kyiv covering areas including defense, science, energy and trade.

Starmer's unannounced visit is his first trip to Ukraine since he took office in July. He visited the country in 2023 when he was opposition leader, and has twice held talks with Zelenskyy in London since becoming prime minister.

On a gray and frosty morning, Starmer was greeted at Kyiv railway station by the U.K. ambassador to Ukraine, Martin Harris, and Ukraine's envoy to London, Valerii Zaluzhnyi.

The U.K., one of Ukraine's biggest military backers, has pledged 12.8 billion pounds (\$16 billion) in military and civilian aid since Russia's full-scale invasion three years ago, and has trained

more than 50,000 Ukrainian troops on British soil.

Starmer is to announce another 40 million pounds (\$49 million) for Ukraine's postwar economic recovery.

But the U.K.'s role is dwarfed by that of the United States, and there is deep uncertainty over the fate of American support for Ukraine once Trump takes office on Jan. 20. The president-elect has balked at the cost of U.S. aid to Kyiv, says he wants to bring the war to a swift end and is planning to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin, for whom he has long expressed admiration.

Kyiv's allies have rushed to flood Ukraine with as much support as possible before Trump's inauguration, with the aim of putting Ukraine in the strongest position possible for any future negotiations to end the war.

Zelenskyy has said that in any peace negotiation, Ukraine would need assurances about its future protection from its much bigger neighbor.

Britain says its 100-year pledge is part of that assurance and will help ensure Ukraine is "never again vulnerable to the kind of brutality inflicted on it by Rus-

sia," which seized Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and attempted a full-scale invasion in February 2022.

The deal commits the two sides to cooperate on defense — especially maritime security against Russian activity in the Black Sea, Black Sea and Sea of Azov — and on technology projects including drones, which have become vital weapons for both sides in the war.

The treaty also includes a system to help track stolen Ukrainian grain exported by Russia from occupied parts of the country.

"Putin's ambition to wrench Ukraine away from its closest partners has been a monumental strategic failure. Instead, we are closer than ever, and this partnership will take that friendship to the next level," Starmer said ahead of the visit.

"This is not just about the here and now, it is also about an investment in our two countries for the next century, bringing together technology development, scientific advances and cultural exchanges, and harnessing the phenomenal innovation shown by Ukraine in recent years for generations to come." MDT/AP



South Africa The death toll in a monthslong standoff between police and miners trapped while working illegally in an abandoned gold mine has risen to at least 87, police said yesterday as they wound down a rescue operation that has pulled more than 240 survivors out from deep underground.

Greek police say they have arrested two women for allegedly stealing other passengers' luggage from the baggage claim area in Athens' international airport. Airport police said in a statement yesterday the two Greek women were arrested Tuesday evening on suspicion of having stolen at least eight suitcases since last November.



Mideast Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said yesterday that a "last minute crisis" with Hamas was holding up Israeli approval of a long-awaited agreement to pause the fighting in the Gaza Strip and release dozens of hostages. Israeli airstrikes meanwhile killed dozens of people across the war-ravaged territory.



American tennis player Taylor Fritz said yesterday he is donating the prize money he earned for his first-round victory at the Australian Open — about \$82,000 — to relief funds to help people affected by the wildfires in the greater Los Angeles area. "I mean, I feel like it's really the least I can do," said Fritz.