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GREATER BAY AIRLINES ANNOUNCED THE CANCELLATION OF 128 FLIGHTS FOR FEBRUARY AND MARCH, AFFECTING APPROXIMATELY 5,500 PASSENGERS

AUTHORITIES EXPECT 670,000 DAILY BORDER MOVEMENTS DURING CNY

ANALYSIS: CHINA AND US ARE MOVING CLOSER AS TRUMP RETURNS TO THE WHITE HOUSE



AP PHOTO



Turkey A fire at a ski resort hotel in Kartalkaya yesterday killed 76 people, with victims including children and a columnist's family. Guests jumped to escape the flames. Investigations have detained nine people, including the hotel owner. Rescue teams continue searches amid mourning.

AP PHOTO



South Korea will phase out biomass energy subsidies amid criticism over deforestation links. The policy halts new projects and reduces subsidies over 15 years. Activists call for stricter measures, citing threats to forests and insufficient timelines for environmental goals.

AP PHOTO



South Korea Impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol denied yesterday obstructing lawmakers during martial law enforcement. Accused of deploying troops to block legislative votes, Yoon faced the Constitutional Court, which will decide his fate. Lawmakers overturned his decree, citing threats to democratic processes.

AP PHOTO



Australia Authorities investigate potential foreign payments to incite antisemitic crimes. Amid increased incidents since the Israel-Hamas war, detectives suspect criminals-for-hire may receive offshore funding. Recent attacks include arson at a Sydney childcare center and vandalism near Jewish sites.

NEW LEVEL UNLOCKED

International visitors rose by 66% y-o-y in 2024, surpassing the two million target by 21%



LYNZY VALLES

VASCO ROCHA VIEIRA
LAST PORTUGUESE GOVERNOR OF MACAU PASSES AWAY AT 85



GOVERNANCE
CE HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH MEDIA FOR INTERNATIONALISM

More on backpage

CRIME

SCAMS RESULTED IN A LOSS EXCEEDING MOP154 MILLION IN 2024

RENATO MARQUES

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) received reports of 354 phone scams and 906 internet scams in 2024. While the number of phone scams represents a 13% decrease from the previous year, internet scams saw a 4% increase.

In total, these scams resulted in losses exceeding MOP154 million. PJ director Sit Chon Meng shared this information during a press conference outlining the PJ's work in 2024.

Despite a decrease in the overall number of scams, the PJ noted that the values involved remain concerning.

As the Times reported yesterday, cybercrimes involving phishing sites have surged, leading to a significant rise in crimes related to the illegal use and theft of credit card data. These scams



also include the fraudulent acquisition of concert tickets and other goods or services through online transactions.

The PJ also reported that, thanks to a mechanism established with the banking sector, it was able to stop payments rela-

ted to scams in 597 cases, totaling approximately MOP110 million. Additionally, the PJ notified the banking sector about 680 bank

accounts suspected of being used for fraudulent activities.

Collaboration with the telecommunications sector enabled a rapid notification system that led to the blocking of 991 phishing websites, preventing further harm to the public.

Sit emphasized that combating these crimes is one of the PJ's most challenging tasks, as criminal groups involved in these scams now use highly advanced technology and tools, making it difficult to trace the origin of the threats.

Overall, criminal activity rose by 13.39% in 2024 compared to 2023, though it remains nearly 10% lower than in 2019.

The PJ also reported an increase in cases of rape, which rose from 41 to 48 year-over-year, as well as a rise in sexual harassment cases, from 20 to 31. Additionally, there was one case involving an individual who hired the services of an underage prostitute—an offense the PJ had not recorded in several years.

However, violent crime remained low, with only one murder and three cases of aggravated bodily harm reported in 2024.

GOVERNANCE

CE highlights importance of English media for Macau's internationalism

VICTORIA CHAN

CHIEF Executive (CE) Sam Hou Fai emphasized the significant role of Portuguese and English-language media in Macau, describing them as a crucial bridge for international communication and key to enhancing the city's global influence and appeal.

Sam made these remarks during his speech at a Lunar New Year dinner with Portuguese and English media organizations yesterday.

He expressed hope that the media would continue to leverage its language, culture, and international connections to showcase Macau's unique blend of Eastern and Western influences to the wor-



ld. He also encouraged local Portuguese and English-language outlets to grow and, in collaboration with the government, support Macau's internationalization and global presence.

Sam urged the media to promote "Macau experiences" and "Chinese wisdom" globally,

fostering stronger exchanges between Chinese and Western civilizations.

Referring to President Xi Jinping's speeches during his recent visit to Macau, Sam said that they "fully demonstrated his deep affection and profound care for Macau, providing strong encoura-

gement and confidence for the city's future development."

As he did in a similar meeting with Chinese-language media, Sam praised the Portuguese and English-language press in Macau for their professional integrity, commitment to social welfare, and active oversight of government affairs. He acknowledged their vital role in gauging public sentiment and expressed gratitude for their contributions.

The CE emphasized that the government will continue to support the press in performing its duties, facilitating access to information, and ensuring press freedom as guaranteed by Macau's Basic Law and the Press Law.

DSSCU CRACKS DOWN ON 838 ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTIONS

VICTORIA CHAN

THE Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) initiated 838 cases of illegal construction in 2024, marking an 85% increase in enforcement actions compared to previous years.

The crackdown led to 238 demolitions, and 39 cases were fined, totaling approximately MOP1.5 million.

Since the implementation of Law No. 14/2021, also known as the Urban Construction Law, the government has stepped up its efforts to combat illegal construction. The revised legislation increased fines for offenders and introduced new penalties for those who fail to comply with demolition orders. Additionally, the law now includes sanctions such as interrupting water and power supplies for violators.

In 2024, the DSSCU issued 39 fines for illegal construction. Eight cases remained unpaid after the deadline, prompting

the administration to initiate enforcement proceedings.

To encourage compliance, the DSSCU has introduced measures that offer fine reductions and exemptions for voluntary demolition of illegal structures. If an offender voluntarily demolishes an illegal structure during the hearing period and submits a request to the DSSCU, they may be fully exempt from fines. Alternatively, if they request voluntary demolition following a final decision and demolition order, their fine will be halved.

However, these benefits apply only once, and repeat offenders within five years will face a 25% penalty increase.

The DSSCU reiterated its commitment to combating illegal construction and ensuring the safety of buildings and the living environment. It urged citizens to refrain from engaging in illegal construction activities and to cooperate with the administration in addressing detected violations.

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TOURISM

International visitors leaped by 66% y-o-y in 2024

RENATO MARQUES

OFFICIAL statistics from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) noted that last year, there were 2,423,093 international visitors to Macau.

As the Times previously reported, the vast majority of these visitors arrived from Southeast Asian markets, led by those from the Philippines (493,399), Indonesia (183,062), and Malaysia (181,941). Compared to the previous year, these market sources grew by 57.1%, 28.1%, and 82.2%, respectively.

Visitors from Thailand (134,658) and Singapore (119,201) also increased significantly, rising by 31.8% and 29.8%, respectively.

In other Asian markets, visitors from India (103,817) grew by 76.5% year over year, and those from the Republic of Korea (492,184) and Japan (126,424) in-



creased by 140.6% and 68.2%, respectively.

The highlight of the long-haul markets was the USA, which contributed 147,941 visitors last year, an increase of 57.7% compared to 2023.

As previously reported, the Ma-

cao Government Tourism Office had set the goal of attracting at least 2 million international visitors in 2024, a target that was surpassed by 21.2%.

Also growing was the number of visitors from mainland China, which increased by 28.6% year-o-



RENATO MARQUES

ver-year to 24,491,424. Of these, those traveling under the Individual Visit Scheme (12,281,055) grew by 15.5%, while those traveling under the "tourist group multi-entry measure" totaled 17,078.

Visitors from the nine Greater Bay Area (GBA) cities increased by

28.8% to 11,985,383. Visitors from Taiwan (834,411) surged by 64.1% year-over-year.

Among the regular market sources of visitors to Macau, only those from the neighboring region of Hong Kong registered a downturn. In 2024, Hong Kong visitors to Macau totaled 7,179,722, decreasing slightly by 0.2%.

Analyzed by checkpoint, the number of visitor arrivals by land (27,769,490) represented 79.5% of the total, marking a year-over-year increase of 24.1%, while those arriving by sea (4,094,585) accounted for an 11.7% share and grew by 10.7%. Those arriving by air totaled 3,064,575, representing 8.8% of the total, and recorded the most significant year-over-year increase, growing by 43.9%.

Despite the positive results in total numbers and year-over-year growth, visitors' average length of stay was 1.2 days, shortening by 0.1 days year-over-year in 2024. The average length of stay for overnight visitors remained unchanged at 2.3 days.

Same-day visitors represented 54.1%, while overnight visitors accounted for 45.9%. This further highlights an imbalance between the two types: Same-day visitors grew by 35%, while overnight visitors grew less (12.8%) year-over-year.

SPRING FESTIVAL GOLDEN WEEK

Authorities expect 670,000 daily border movements during CNY

VICTORIA CHAN

DAILY traffic during the upcoming Lunar New Year is expected to reach between 630,000 and 670,000 crossings per day, representing a 3% rise compared to the previous year, according to Lei Tak Fai, a representative from the Public Security Police (PSP).

During a press conference at the Border Gate checkpoint yesterday, the official said that this surge anticipates that over five million people will enter and exit the region from January 28 to February 4.

The peak travel days are expected to fall on the fourth and fifth days of the New Year (February 1 and 2).

Lei reported that trends from the "one visa, multiple travels" and "one travel per week" schemes accounted for over 18,000 and 73,000 inbound tourists recorded between January 1 and 21, respec-



tively. This translates to an average of approximately 900 and 3,500 travelers per day.

To manage the expected surge, the PSP has implemented several action plans to maintain public safety and order. The "Winter Precaution Operation 2025" will include increased inspections at entertainment venues and enhanced patrols in tourist hotspots. Additional police officers will monitor crowd flow and initiate control measures

as needed. Customs operations will also be optimized, with extra personnel and inspection counters deployed to streamline the clearance process.

Authorities have coordinated with relevant immigration departments to address potential crowding issues preemptively.

Traffic management will be a priority. To discourage unsafe driving practices such as drunk driving, authorities will

introduce enhanced measures against illegal transport services and conduct random vehicle inspections.

Citizens are urged to remain vigilant in crowded areas, safeguard their belongings, and follow police instructions.

Authorities recommend that those crossing the borders utilize the PSP's "Real-time Information Platform" for up-to-date information to facilitate smoother travel during the holiday.

SOCIETY

MAINLAND OFFICIALS ENSURE AGRICULTURAL SUPPLY DURING CNY

VICTORIA CHAN

A delegation from the Department of Foreign Trade of the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China visited Macau to meet with local officials from the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) to discuss how to ensure a stable and safe supply of agricultural and sideline products during the Chinese New Year (CNY).

Their itinerary included site visits to the New Wholesale Market of Macau and the Pata-ne Market to assess the supply conditions for agricultural products.

The delegation also discussed the specific needs and conditions for guaranteeing fresh and live supplies in the city's markets.

During the visit, Li Na, the department's deputy director-general, emphasized that effective communication and coordination among various departments would be essential for maintaining a stable supply chain.

She highlighted the Central government's commitment to

ensuring a steady food supply for Macau, while underscoring the importance of maintaining high food safety and quality standards.

The visit was part of broader preparations for CNY, which included measures to ensure food security.

IAM officials expressed their gratitude for the ongoing support from the Ministry of Commerce and the General Administration of Customs.

This collaboration has allowed for rigorous controls over food supplies, ensuring that a wide range of products remains available at stable prices for residents.

In recent months, agricultural suppliers have faced challenges such as rising production costs and outbreaks of African swine fever.

From January to November last year, the volume of agricultural and sideline products shipped from the mainland to Macau reached 400,000 tons, marking a 9.4% increase from the previous year. This includes supplies of live pigs, live cattle, and other food items.

FDCT HIGHLIGHTS NEW SCI-TECH DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

The Science and Technology Development Fund (FDCT) held a briefing on the 2025 "Project Funding Plan" to clarify the funding strategy. The event drew about 300 attendees, including university representatives and technology firms. Chaired by administrative committee member Cheang Kun Wai, the session detailed six funding plans organized around four major themes: platform, research and development, talents, and cooperative research. The initiative promotes collaboration between industry, academia, and research institutions, enhances international partnerships, and fosters a robust innovation ecosystem.

SAM HOU FAI MEETS WITH CAEL, URGING FAIR ELECTIONS

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai met with Seng Ioi Man, the chairman of the Electoral Affairs Committee for the Legislative Assembly Elections (CAEL), and five other committee members. During the meeting, Sam expressed gratitude for their commitment to overseeing the upcoming elections for the eighth Legislative Assembly. He urged the committee to ensure the electoral process adheres to the principles of impartiality, fairness, transparency, and integrity. Seng provided a briefing on the committee's progress and planning, emphasizing the government's full support in facilitating their efforts.

MGTO REACHES OUT TO MAINLAND AUTHORITIES AHEAD OF CNY

The Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) is engaging with mainland tourism authorities to prepare for the Lunar New Year Golden Week, which runs from January 28 to February 4. MGTO has sent letters to assist mainland visitors and tour operators by providing essential information about Macau's tourism offerings. This includes real-time updates on border crossings, hotel accommodations, and group tour arrangements. The initiative seeks to ensure a smooth travel experience for guests during the holiday. Additionally, MGTO is collaborating with local tourism operators to optimize services and enhance visitor satisfaction throughout the festive period.

OBITUARY

LAST PORTUGUESE GOVERNOR OF MACAU VASCO ROCHA VIEIRA PASSES AWAY AT 85

STAFF REPORTER

VASCO Rocha Vieira, the last Portuguese governor of Macau, has passed away at the age of 85.

A retired lieutenant general, Rocha Vieira is remembered for his significant role in the transfer of Macau's sovereignty from Portugal to China in 1999. Before his tenure as governor, he

served as Chief of Staff of the Portuguese Army from 1976 to 1978 and as Minister of the Republic for the Azores from 1986 to 1991.

His time as Macau's governor from 1991 to 1999 was marked by his efforts to ensure the region's autonomy, preserve its identity, protect Portuguese interests, and champion religious freedom. Rocha Vieira was also vocal about

his views on the Portuguese government's handling of the transition.

As cited in a Lusa report, in an interview with Ponto Final, he remarked, "It was a chapter that closed. There were some things where I think Portugal didn't correspond as I thought it should, but I'm not the one who defines the national interest."

Despite the successful handover

of power, his tenure was marred by controversy over the irregular funding of the Jorge Álvares Foundation, an institution established toward the end of Portuguese rule.

In 2015, Rocha Vieira was awarded the Military Order of the Tower and Sword by President Cavaco Silva for his valor, loyalty, and merit.

Portugal's President, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, has expressed his "deepest sorrow" at the passing of Rocha Vieira, whom he described as "one of the most illustrious officers of the Portuguese Army" during the transition to democracy and the early years of its consolidation.

The statement, posted on the official website of the president, reflects on Rocha Vieira's significant role in the handover of Macau's sovereignty to China in 1999, calling it a defining moment in the history of the Portuguese state.

"The symbolism of the moment when the Portuguese administration was transferred to the Chinese will remain in the memory of many Portuguese as an example of a sense of state, service to the public cause, and patriotism," the statement reads.

Rebelo de Sousa also conveyed his personal condolences to Vieira's family, particularly his widow and children, acknowledging their loss with "much-missed friendship" and expressing Portugal's gratitude for Rocha Vieira's legacy.

The Lisbon City Council also mourned his death, praising the late general as a "man of courage" who played a pivotal role in consolidating democracy and was a key figure in the events of November 25, 1975, a critical moment in Portugal's political history. His funeral ceremonies will be held today and tomorrow.

COURTESY ANTIGO MACAU

Vasco Rocha Vieira during the 1999 handover



EDUCATION

UTM to launch Master in Luxury Hospitality and Health Service

RENATO MARQUES

IN line with the new aims of the local government, the Macao University of Tourism (UTM) is launching a Master of Science degree program in Luxury Hospitality and Health Service Management, UTM revealed.

The program, launched in the 2025-26 academic year, aims to meet the growing demand for high-end health service experiences and envisions turning Macau into a Medical Tourism destination.

In a press statement, the institution said a high-end health servi-



ce experience involves establishing a relaxing and healthy atmosphere through upscale facilities and surroundings. It also includes offering personalized services

to cater to customers' unique needs, enriching wellness experiences through value-added services and continuous care, and comprehensively integrating the con-

cept of hospitality services.

The program aims to nurture graduates capable of managing and leading successful luxury and health service businesses, contributing to the development of these industries.

UTM noted that exploring historical, cultural, social, and economic contexts alongside current trends and challenges will enhance students' understanding of the luxury hospitality and health industries. The program also equips students with essential management skills for relevant businesses and fosters critical thinking and

analytical abilities to assess industry challenges and propose solutions.

Upon completing the program, students will receive three certifications, including a Master's degree Certificate, a "Fitness and Sports Nutrition Professional Certificate," and a "Health Foods and Special Diets Instructor Certificate" awarded by the International Professional Training and Fitness Academy.

The same institution noted that besides providing practical skills in health services, the program also provides quality education and research opportunities for those aspiring to take on leadership and management roles in related service fields.

The application period for the Master's program is now open and will run until April 30, 2025.

AVIATION

Greater Bay Airlines cancels 128 flights amid aircraft delivery delays

HONG Kong-based budget carrier Greater Bay Airlines announced the cancellation of 128 flights, equivalent to 64 round trips, for February and March.

The cancellations, affecting approximately 5,500 passengers, were due to delays in new aircraft deliveries and routine inspections of its current fleet.

The airline, which operates an all-Boeing fleet of eight 737-800s, confirmed the disruptions after local media reported over 200 flight suspensions between January and March.

Although the airline did not specify the exact routes impacted, reports suggested that flights to destinations including Japan, South Korea, and Thailand were among those affected.

The airline stated that an internal review revealed negligence in its flight scheduling process and announced measures to tighten approval procedures.

Greater Bay Airlines reassured passengers that flights during the Lunar New Year holiday would remain unaffected.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong's Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mable Chan, confirmed that authorities had met with the airline's management and requested a detailed report within a week.

Additionally, the airline revealed it would suspend its Hong Kong-Seoul route due to weak demand, following a similar pattern of route cuts, including previous suspensions of services to Singapore and Vietnam. Greater Bay Airlines, founded in 2020 by mainland Chinese tycoon Bill Wong, started operations in 2022. **LV**

GAMING

Another three gaming ops announce salary increments

RENATO MARQUES

MGM, Melco, and SJM joined the previous announcements of Sands and Galaxy announcing their salary increments for their workers.

As expected, the three local gaming operators followed their counterparties' previous announcements and increased the salaries of their eligible staff members by 2.5%.

Those earning wages less than MOP16,000 will receive a standard salary increment of MOP600.

MGM announced that salary increments will take effect on March 24, 2025, for MGM and April 1, 2025, for SJM. The measure at Melco took effect on the same date.

Galaxy and Sands have previously presented salary increments under the same rules. The only difference is that Sands's increments



take effect on March 1, 2025, one month before the other four concessionaires.

For now, Wynn is the only gaming concessionaire that has not announced salary increments for this year, although this is also expected to happen soon.

The six gaming companies, which are among Macau's largest employers, and the government recently announced that they will distribute a pecuniary bonus equivalent to one month's salary to their

workers. Despite many calls from lawmakers and others in civil society, the new government led by Sam Hou Fai has not yet revealed its intention to increase the salary of civil servants this year.

When questioned about the matter, the previous Chief Executive, Ho Iat Seng, noted that Sam's government should evaluate and address it during his first Policy Address, expected to occur in March or April this year.

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From left, Biden, Modi, Lula da Silva, Ramaphosa and President Xi Jinping gather for a G20 Summit world leaders' group photo, in Rio de Janeiro, last November

ANALYSIS

China and US are moving closer as Trump returns to the White House

KEN MORITSUGU & DIDI TANG, BEIJING

CHINA'S relations are starting to improve with Japan, India and other countries that former U.S. President Joe Biden courted, just as Donald Trump brings his more unilateralist approach back to the White House.

The change of leadership in Washington this week could be an opportunity for China, which has long railed against Biden's strategy of building partnerships with "like-minded countries" aimed at countering its growing influence.

Biden reinvigorated a grouping known as the Quad — the United States, India, Japan and Australia. China's relations with all three of those U.S. partners are improving, as are its ties with Britain. The durability of Biden's legacy is now in question. During his first term, Trump didn't hesitate to challenge traditional U.S. partners.

"It is possible that Trump may drift away from U.S. allies, making them pay more attention to China's role and in fact it has provided a chance for China's diplomacy," said Wu Xinbo, dean of the Institute of International Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai. "I think we should grasp the chance."

But U.S. National Security Cou-

ncil spokesperson Brian Hughes said that Trump "has a record of rallying the world toward a more competitive stance with China." Trump agreed to a Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy that Japan introduced during his first term and backed excluding Chinese companies from telecom networks in the U.S. and many of its partners.

And yesterday, Secretary of State Marco Rubio — hours after he was sworn in — met with the foreign ministers of Australia, India and Japan in Washington, a move that suggested engaging the Quad countries and countering China's influence will remain a priority for Trump.

CHINA'S FENCE-MENDING HAS LIMITS

Beijing's rapprochement with the U.K. and Japan is in its early stages, and major differences remain that limit and could derail it.

India turned the page with China on a bitter border dispute last October, but protested when Beijing created two new counties in an area claimed by both nations.

Still, new leaders in Australia, the U.K. and Japan have shown a desire to warm relations with China,

the world's largest manufacturer and a source of strategic minerals.

The government in Beijing has reciprocated in part because it wants foreign investment to help revive its economy, which could be set back if Trump follows through on a threat to impose higher tariffs.

Chinese President Xi Jinping

"It is possible that Trump may drift away from US allies, making them pay more attention to China's role."

WU XINBO
FUDAN UNIVERSITY

told European Council President Antonio Costa in a phone conversation last week that both sides could bring more "stability and certainty" to the turbulent global situation. China and Britain restarted economic and financial talks after a six-year hiatus when the U.K. Treasury chief visited Beijing this month.

"From China's point of view, improving relations with American allies and increasing economic cooperation will offset the shock to China-U.S. economic relations," Wu said.

TRUMP'S STATEMENTS AGITATE U.S. ALLIES

In Washington, there's a strong bipartisan consensus that the U.S. must prevail in its economic and tech rivalry with China to maintain its global leadership.

During his confirmation hearing, Rubio called China "the most potent and dangerous near-peer adversary this nation has ever confronted." Biden kept the tariffs Trump levied on China and imposed more on Chinese electric cars and solar cells.

But unlike Biden, Trump has irked U.S. allies and partners with his recent remarks on possibly annexing Greenland, an autonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark, and making Canada the 51st American state.

Hal Brands, senior fellow at the Washington-based think tank American Enterprise Institute, said he believes some top strategists in Beijing are "salivating at the damage they think Trump is going to do to U.S. alliances and the opportunities this creates for Beijing to resurrect some of its relationships with other advanced democracies — Japan and Europe — that had moved in a very sharply anti-China direction since COVID."

Trump's rhetoric, and attempts by his adviser Elon Musk to interfere in British and German politics, "are certain to have a ripple effect," said Sun Yun, director of the China program at the Stimson Center in Washington.

"Countries want to at the minimum keep their options open," she said. "China is unlikely to be a better choice than the U.S., even under Trump, but it is important to find some counterbalance."

THE PHILIPPINES ISN'T MENDING FENCES

China's relations aren't improving with every U.S. partner. Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has aggressively resisted China's increasingly assertive stance in their territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

The Philippines complained recently about what it called a "monster" Chinese coast guard ship in nearby waters, and the foreign ministers of Japan and the Philippines said last week they would convey to Trump the urgent need for the U.S. to remain engaged in the region.

Uncertainty about Trump's policies is prompting both China and Japan to seek a stable relationship, said Taizo Miyagi, an expert on Japanese diplomacy at Chuo University in Tokyo.

A Japanese foreign minister visited Beijing last month for the first time in seven years, and Chinese military officials visited Tokyo last week to resume defense exchanges after a five-year hiatus.

"In a way it is a Trump effect," Miyagi said. "Many other countries are likely thinking the same and this could invigorate their diplomatic activities."

BRITAIN STEERS A NEW COURSE WITH CHINA

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has sought to rebuild ties with Beijing since his Labour Party's election victory last summer. It's a marked shift from predecessor Rishi Sunak, who in 2022 declared an end to his country's "golden era" of friendship with China.

In Britain's case, Trump's return may not be driving the rapprochement.

Many European leaders may not welcome Trump's America-first agenda, "but the idea that as a result they will all kowtow to Beijing for more trade is fanciful thinking on the part of some of our Chinese friends," said Steve Tsang, director of the SOAS China Institute at the University of London.

Most would prefer to remain partners with Washington. French President Emmanuel Macron, outlining his vision for global diplomacy in a New Year's speech, declared that his country was "a solid ally" of Trump.

He and others hope that Trump will respond positively to their outreach. Much will depend on what path the returning U.S. president takes, and how the rest of the world reacts. **MDT/AP**

INDO-PACIFIC

Rubio kicks off Trump foreign policy engagements in meetings with 'Quad'

MATTHEW LEE, WASHINGTON

SECRETARY of State Marco Rubio met yesterday [Macau time] with his counterparts from Australia, India and Japan as the Trump administration kicked off its formal foreign policy engagements in discussions with the Indo-Pacific "Quad." The ministers reaffirmed their countries' commitment to the format and its goals and indicated their leaders would meet in the coming months.

The grouping of the four countries has been seen by many as an initiative to counter or at least slow China's increasing assertiveness and aggressiveness in the region, something over which President Donald Trump and his predecessors, including former President Joe Biden, have all expressed deep concern.

The timing of Tuesday's meeting — on Trump's first full day in office and just hours after Rubio was sworn in as America's top diplomat — suggests it will remain a priority for Trump. And, in a joint statement released after the meeting, the ministers suggested a new Quad summit would be held this year in India, continuing an upgrade of the relationship from foreign ministers to leaders initiated by the Biden administration.

"Our four nations maintain our conviction that international law, economic opportunity, peace, stability, and security in all domains including the maritime domain underpin the development and prosperity of the peoples of the In-



Secretary of State Marco Rubio speaks after being sworn in by Vice President JD Vance in the Vice Presidential Ceremonial Office in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on the White House campus

do-Pacific," they said.

"We also strongly oppose any unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo by force or coercion," they said in a not-so-subtle reference to China.

The two-paragraph joint statement was the only indication of how the meeting unfolded as none of the ministers — Rubio, Australian Penny Wong, Indian S. Jaishankar or Japanese Iwaya Takeshi — spoke as they opened their meeting at the State Department.

Instead they stood silent and expressionless in front of their respective flags before journalists were ushered out. And, none of them spoke at photo opportunities before individual meetings that Rubio hosted afterward.

The Quad was established in

2007 to bring together countries that had worked together in response to the devastating 2004 earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean. Its members stress its diplomatic nature and broad focus on regional issues, including infrastructure, humanitarian aid, disaster relief, climate change and maritime security.

Even though security is only part of the mix, the Quad is a major component of the American strategy to counter China's growing assertiveness and vast territorial claims in the region, including to virtually all of the strategically important South China Sea and Taiwan.

The strategic element to the Quad has prompted China to accuse the four countries of attempting to form an "Asian NATO," though it

is a very different construction and has no mutual-defense pact, a key component to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization alliance.

During his time in the Senate, Rubio was a "China hawk" and he has been sanctioned by the Chinese government for outspoken remarks about the country's human rights record,

On Tuesday, Rubio made his first appearance at the State Department as secretary of state and called on U.S. diplomats to forcefully defend and execute Trump's "America First" policies.

"The voters decide the course of our nation, both domestically and abroad, and they have elected Donald J. Trump as our president when it comes to foreign policy on a very clear mission,"

Rubio told them.

"And that mission is to ensure that our foreign policy is centered on one thing, and that is the advancement of our national interest, which (was) clearly defined through his campaign as anything that makes us stronger or safer or more prosperous. And that will be our mission, that will be our job."

Trump has been publicly skeptical of the value of the State Department since his first term in office and, as he has done with other agencies, accused some in the diplomatic corps of working to blunt or derail his policy priorities.

Rubio paid tribute to the men and women of the State Department, calling them "the greatest, the most effective, the most talented, the most experienced diplomatic corps in the history of the world."

But, his arrival came amid a wave of resignations — demanded by Trump's team — of career diplomats from senior positions in the State Department bureaucracy and U.S. embassies around the world.

The full extent of the resignations sought by the incoming administration remained unclear yesterday but began in earnest on Friday when a large number of career diplomats holding politically appointed posts, such as undersecretaries and assistant secretaries of state, were told to resign. On Monday, the demand for resignations grew to include career diplomats serving as ambassadors as well as lower-ranking staffers. **MDT/AP**

INDONESIA

Search resumes after deadly flooding and landslides

INDONESIAN rescuers retrieved two more bodies after they resumed their search yesterday for people missing after floods and landslides on Indonesia's main island of Java, bringing the death toll to 19.

Waters from flooded rivers tore through nine villages in Pekalongan regency of Central Java province and landslides tumbled onto mountainside hamlets after the torrential rains Monday.

Videos and photos released by National Search and Rescue Agency showed

workers digging desperately in villages where roads and green-terraced rice fields were transformed into murky brown mud and villages were covered by thick mud, rocks and uprooted trees.

National Disaster Management Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari said flooding triggered a landslide that buried two houses and a cafe in the Petungkriyono resort area. The disasters all together destroyed 25 houses, a dam and three main bridges connecting villages in Pekalongan. At least 13



In this undated photo released by Indonesia's National Disaster Management Agency yesterday, rescuers carry the body of a victim of flash flood which triggered a landslide, in Pekalongan, Central Java

people injured and nearly 300 people were forced to flee to temporary govern-

ment shelters. The search and rescue operation that was hampe-

red by bad weather, mudslides and rugged terrain was halted Tuesday afternoon due to heavy rain and thick fog that made devastated areas along the rivers dangerous to rescuers.

Yesterday, they searched in rivers and the rubble of villages for bodies and, whenever possible, survivors in worst-hit Kasimpar village, said Budiono, who heads a local rescue office.

Scores of rescue personnel recovered two mud-caked bodies as they searched a Petungkriyono area where tons of mud and rocks buried two houses and

a café. Rescuers are still searching for seven people reported missing.

Landslides and floods were also reported in many other provinces, Muhari said. On Monday, a landslide hit five houses in Denpasar on the tourist island of Bali, killing four people and leaving one missing.

Heavy seasonal rain from about October to March frequently causes flooding and landslides in Indonesia, an archipelago of 17,000 islands where millions of people live in mountainous areas or near fertile floodplains. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



President Donald Trump speaks in the Roosevelt Room at the White House, as Softbank CEO Masayoshi Son, Oracle chief technology officer Larry Ellison and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, listen

this day in history

1973 NIXON ANNOUNCES VIETNAM PEACE DEAL



The US president, Richard Nixon, has appeared on national television to announce "peace with honour" in Vietnam.

Statements issued simultaneously in Washington and Hanoi confirmed the peace deal was signed in Paris at 1230 local time, bringing to an end America's longest war.

The ceasefire will begin at midnight Hanoi time on Saturday, 27 January, monitored by an international force made up of troops from Canada, Poland, Hungary and Indonesia.

President Nixon's speech from the Oval office at the White House was broadcast on national radio and television.

He said: "Throughout the years of negotiations, we have insisted on peace with honour. I set forth the goals that we considered essential for peace with honour.

"In the settlement that has now been agreed to, all the conditions that I laid down then have been met."

The conditions include the release of prisoners of war within 60 days and all American forces to be withdrawn within the same time period.

An international conference will be held within 30 days, probably in Vienna, to guarantee the peace.

American forces have been involved in the conflict in Vietnam for more than a decade. In 1967, there were 500,000 American troops deployed in Vietnam.

For the people of South Vietnam, the president had this message: "By your courage, by your sacrifice, you have won the precious right to determine your own future and you have developed the strength to defend that right.

"We look forward to working with you in future, friends in peace as we have been allies in war."

To the leaders of North Vietnam, the president said: "As we have ended the war through negotiations, let us now build a peace of reconciliation.

"For our part, we are prepared to make a major effort to help achieve that goal, but just as reciprocity was needed to end the war, so, too, will it be needed to build and strengthen the peace."

Courtesy BBC News

USA

Trump highlights partnership investing \$500 billion in AI

JOSH BOAK & ZEKE MILLER, WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT Donald Trump yesterday [Macau time] talked up a joint venture investing up to \$500 billion for infrastructure tied to artificial intelligence by a new partnership formed by OpenAI, Oracle and SoftBank.

The new entity, Stargate, will start building out data centers and the electricity generation needed for the further development of the fast-evolving AI in Texas, according to the White House. The initial investment is expected to be \$100 billion and could reach five times that sum.

"It's big money and high quality people," said Trump, adding that it's "a resounding declaration of confidence in America's potential" under his new administration.

Joining Trump fresh off his inauguration at the White House were Masayoshi Son of SoftBank, Sam Altman of OpenAI and Larry Ellison of Oracle. All three credited Trump for helping to make the project possible, even though building has already started and the project goes back to 2024.

"This will be the most important project of this era," said Altman, CEO of OpenAI.

Ellison noted that the data centers are already under construction with 10 being built so far. The chairman of Oracle suggested that the project was also tied to digital health records and would make it easier to treat diseases such as cancer by possibly developing a customized vaccine.

"This is the beginning of golden age," said Son, referencing Trump's statement that the U.S. would be in a "golden age" with him back in the White House.

Son, a billionaire based in Japan, already committed in December to invest \$100 billion in U.S. projects over the next four years. He previously committed to \$50 billion in new investments ahead of Trump's first term, which included a large stake in the troubled office-sharing company WeWork.

While Trump has seized on similar announcements to show that his presidency is boosting the economy, there were already expectations of a massive buildout in data centers and electricity plants needed for the development of AI, which holds the promise of increasing productivity by automating work but also the risk of displacing jobs if poorly implemented.

The initial plans for Stargate go back to the Biden administration. Tech news outlet

The Information first reported on the project in March 2024. OpenAI has long relied on Microsoft data centers to build its AI systems, but it has increasingly signaled an interest in building its own data centers.

OpenAI wrote in a letter to the Biden administration's Commerce Department last fall that planning and permitting for such projects "can be lengthy and complex, particularly for energy infrastructure."

Other partners in the project include Microsoft, investor MGX and the chipmakers Arm and NVIDIA, according to separate statements by Oracle and OpenAI.

The push to build data centers predates Trump's presidency. Last October, the financial company Blackstone estimated that the U.S. would see \$1 trillion invested in data centers over five years, with another \$1 trillion being committed internationally.

Those estimates for investments suggest that much of the new capital will go through Stargate as OpenAI has established itself as a sector leader with the 2022 launch of its ChatGPT, a chatbot that captivated the public imagination with its ability to answer complex questions and perform basic business tasks.

The White House has put an

emphasis on making it easier to build out new electricity generation in anticipation of AI's expansion, knowing that the United States is in a competitive race against China to develop a technology increasingly being adopted by businesses.

Still, the regulatory outlook for AI remains somewhat uncertain as Trump on Monday overturned the 2023 order signed by then-President Joe Biden to create safety standards and watermarking of AI-generated content, among other goals, in hopes of putting guardrails on the technology's possible risks to national security and economic well-being.

CBS News first reported that Trump would be announcing the AI investment.

Trump supporter Elon Musk, worth more than \$400 billion, was an early investor in OpenAI but has since challenged its move to for-profit status and has started his own AI company, xAI. Musk is also in charge of the "Department of Government Efficiency" created formally on Monday by Trump with the goal of reducing government spending.

Trump previously in January announced a \$20 billion investment by DAMAC Properties in the United Arab Emirates to build data centers tied to AI. MDT/AP

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Financial discipline pays off. Collaborate for a shared venture. Contribute what you can. Review budgets and plans together. Put your money where your heart is.

TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20
Coordinate efforts with your partner. Keep your side of the bargain. Go above and beyond. Handle practical priorities and then celebrate the results together.

GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21
Your work is in demand. Practice with mental and physical discipline. Build and strengthen foundational basics before advancing to more difficult moves. Step lively.

CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Experience is the best teacher. Listen to elders and young people. Investigate for deeper understanding. Learn about love. Creativity flowers with disciplined practice.

LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Take care of domestic chores and responsibilities. Enjoy simple pleasures like tea in your favorite spot. Cook up something wonderful and share with family.

VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Things may change. Monitor conditions closely. Context is decisive. Keep your word, and stay respectful. Share news and resources with friends and allies.

LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Stick to tested and reliable suppliers, methods and partners. Profit through providing excellent service. Keep your financial agreements. Deliver on time and on budget.

SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Rely on your own talents and efforts. Take charge and do what it takes. Use the best quality materials. Self-discipline serves you well. You're growing stronger.

SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21
You're especially sensitive. Take quiet time for yourself. Recharge and rest. Consider where you've been and where you're going. Update plans. Make lists.

CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Your team's discipline is admirable. Together, you're formidable. Keep your promises rigorously. Integrity provides optimal workability. Play your part with all your heart.

AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Keep practicing. Professional discipline builds the infrastructure for a successful career. Plan and do the homework. Take new territory. A revelation illuminates new possibilities.

PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Anticipate an educational change. Completing a project opens time for something more fun. Reinforce foundational structures. Learn the rules before attempting to break them.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

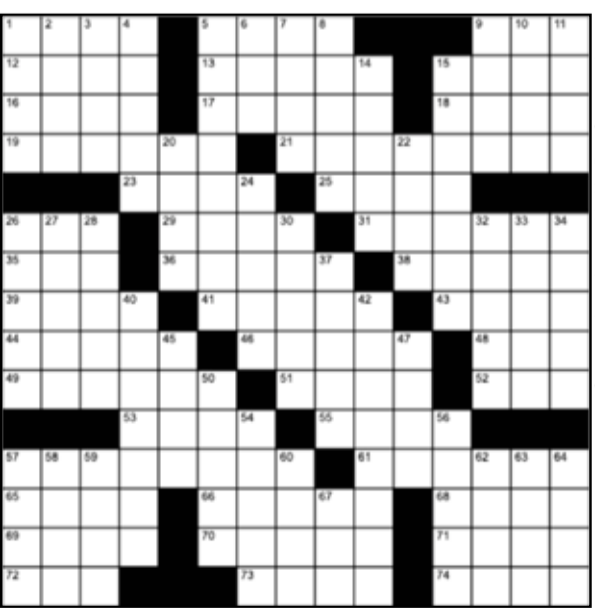
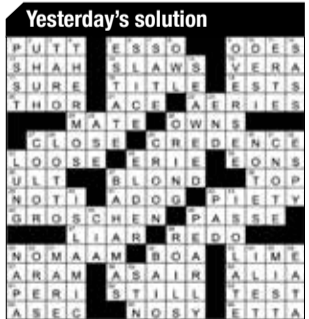
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-3	5	fine
Changchun	-15	-5	fine
Chengdu	7	13	overcast
Chongqing	11	13	overcast
Fuzhou	11	23	cloudy
Guangzhou	13	22	cloudy
Guiyang	9	15	overcast
Haikou	17	23	cloudy
Hangzhou	7	16	cloudy
Harbin	-21	-13	fine
Hefei	0	12	rain
Nanjing	6	14	cloudy
Shanghai	9	16	cloudy
Taipei	15	19	rain
Wuhan	5	11	fine
Hong Kong	19	21	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-3	-1	cloudy
Frankfurt	3	5	rain
Paris	4	7	cloudy
London	6	8	rain
New York	-8	-2	sunny

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Clearasil target; 5- Rock clinging plant; 9- Math subj.; 12- Rind; 13- Continental cash; 15- Black-and-white treat; 16-... saw Elba; 17- Kick off; 18- Clock face; 19- Some mattresses; 21- Norm; 23- Sound rebound; 25- Thick piece; 26- Back muscle, briefly; 29- Waterproof cover; 31- Rubs out; 35- Turkish honorific; 36- Trojan War epic; 38- Prince Valiant's wife; 39- Damon of "Good Will Hunting"; 41- Hermit; 43- Cowardly Lion portrayer; 44- Separated; 46- When pigs fly; 48- Fall back; 49- Scan again; 51-... dancing is popular with cowboys; 52- Opposite of WSW; 53- Bed support; 55- Ear part; 57- Propeller; 61- Depression between hills; 65- Zip-...-Doo-Dah; 66- Alpaca's cousin; 68-... majesty; 69- Woeful word; 70-... once; 71- The wolf... the door; 72- Poivre's partner; 73- Play to... (draw); 74- Needle case;

DOWN 1- Gorillas, chimpanzees and orangutans; 2- Part of a bird's beak; 3-...-do-well; 4- Best of a group; 5- Military cafeteria; 6- Not in; 7- Ladies of Sp.; 8- Arranges in groups; 9- Oratorio solo; 10- Cordelia's father; 11- Yellow metallic element; 14- No longer fresh; 15- Atypical; 20- Broadway beginning; 22- Japan's first capital; 24- Betelgeuse's constellation; 26- Truman's Missouri birthplace; 27- Wide open; 28- Golden Horde member; 30- Discussion group; 32- Bobby of the Black Panthers; 33- Patriot Allen; 34- Beetle Bailey's boss; 37- Satan; 40- Locks; 42- Restore to good condition; 45- Baby powder; 47- Country singer McEntire; 50- "Our Gang" girl; 54- I cannot... lie; 56- "Dallas" matriarch; 57- Small batteries; 58- Run in neutral; 59- Actual; 60- Mickey's creator; 62-... we forget...; 63- Son of Isaac; 64- Abominable Snowman; 67-... tai;



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

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

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

FOOTBALL | CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

BARCELONA WINS 9-GOAL THRILLER AGAINST BENFICA, LIVERPOOL REACHES LAST 16

JAMES ELLINGWORTH

BENFICA 4, BARCELONA 5

LIVERPOOL became the first team to guarantee a place in the last 16 of the new Champions League format by beating Lille 2-1 yesterday [Macau time], while Barcelona fought back from two goals down to stun Benfica 5-4 in a thriller.

Harvey Elliott's bouncing, deflected shot gave Liverpool its seventh win from seven games, just after 10-man Lille had equalized following Mohamed Salah's opening goal.

Liverpool needed a point at Anfield to be sure of reaching the round of 16 as one of the top eight teams in the league stage, skipping the playoff round for teams ranked ninth to 24th.

Salah raced through in the 34th minute to sweep Liverpool ahead with his 22nd goal in all competitions this season. And when Lille's Aissa Mandi was sent off just before the hour mark, Liverpool looked certain to extend its 100% record in the league phase.

But Anfield was stunned when Canada striker Jonathan David converted from close range to level the score in the 62nd. It didn't take long for Liverpool to regain the lead through Elliott's deflected effort five minutes later.

AP PHOTO



"All my life I've dreamt of playing Champions League football, not only for my boyhood club but to play here at Anfield in front of our fans and especially to score, it's kind of a pinch-me moment," Elliott said.

It was a night of high drama in the Champions League with 33 goals scored across nine games. Nine of them came in Barcelona's battle with Benfica.

Raphinha scored in stoppage time to complete a rousing comeback as Barcelona won in Lisbon

despite having been 4-2 down with less than a quarter of an hour remaining.

Benfica's Vangelis Pavlidis scored the third-fastest hat trick at the start of a Champions League game, with two of his goals coming after errors by Barcelona goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny. Barcelona stays second with 18 points from seven games, and is now unbeaten in six games in all competitions since the new year.

"We came with the mindset that we could turn the game," Ra-

phinha said. "We never gave up and managed to grab a win."

Robert Lewandowski scored two penalties for Barcelona to stay the Champions League's top scorer on nine goals, one ahead of Raphinha, who also scored twice.

Another Spanish club staged a comeback as Julian Alvarez scored a 90th-minute winner to lift Atletico Madrid past Bayer Leverkusen 2-1. Atletico lost Pablo Barrios to a 23rd-minute red card and went into half time 1-0 down to a Piero Hincapie header for Leverkusen.

Alvarez scored in the 52nd and had the momentum when Hincapie was sent off for a second yellow card, before Alvarez struck again to take the win and lift Atletico to third.

With Prince William watching on, Aston Villa's hopes of automatic qualification for the round of 16 took a blow after a 1-0 loss to Monaco.

Villa led the standings early in the league phase of the competition after winning its first three games. But defeat to Monaco left the Premier League club eighth. Wilfried Singo's goal at a corner in the eighth minute was enough to secure the win for ninth-place Monaco.

Borussia Dortmund's 2-1 loss at Bologna increased the pressure on coach Nuri Sahin in Dortmund's fourth consecutive loss at the start of the new year in all competitions.

Serhou Guirassy gave Dortmund, last season's runner-up, the lead with a chipped penalty and ran to celebrate with Sahin.

It looked like the Champions League could provide a much-needed boost for a team floundering in the Bundesliga, but two goals in two minutes from Thijs Dallinga and Samuel Iling-Junior changed the game for previously winless Bologna. **MDT/AP**

AD

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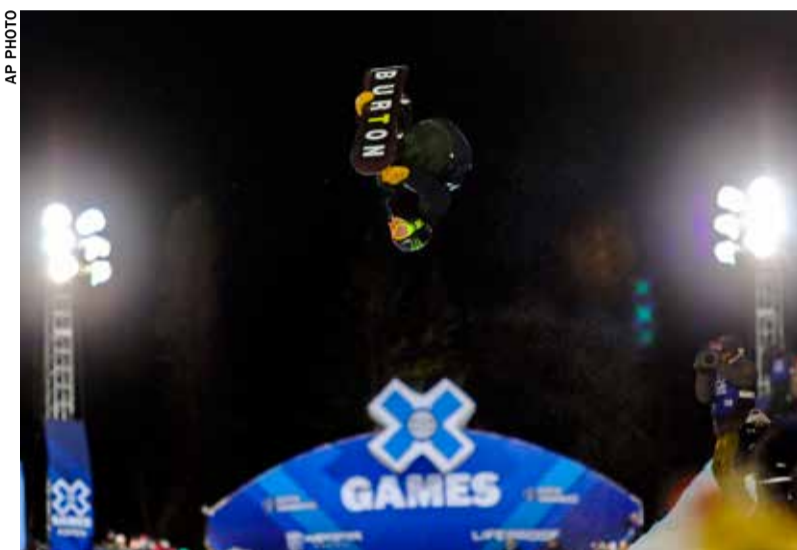
AI experiment in halfpipe judging at X Games will give snowboarders a glimpse into the future

THE X Games will experiment judging halfpipe runs this week in Aspen using artificial intelligence, the cutting-edge technology that could someday play a role in the way subjectively judged sports are scored.

Long a trendsetter in action sports, the X Games and its new CEO, freestyle skiing great Jeremy Bloom, teamed with Google founder Sergey Brin to build the technology.

Using Google Cloud tools including Vertex AI, Bloom thinks this experiment has potential to change the game on halfpipes, then maybe on slopestyle courses, skating rinks and anywhere a judge is used to score a contest.

“Part of subjective sports, we see it all over the place, is that even at their best, humans can get it wrong,” said Bloom,



who was a freestyle skier at two Olympics while also playing college football at Colorado. “Sometimes getting it wrong has huge implications. What if we could give judges superpowers and they could see things they couldn't see with the human

eye, and this technology could help inform them?”

The specter of a judging mistake lingers over every high-stakes contest, and even with its more laid-back vibe, snowboarding, which is now a fixture in the Olympic program, is no ex-

ception.

At the last Winter Games in Beijing, the sport narrowly avoided a potential scandal in the men's halfpipe final. Japan's Ayumu Hirano landed the most difficult trick in the sport — a triple cork — as part of a strong, top-to-bottom run, but was ranked behind another rider who didn't do the trick after two rounds.

Snowboarding experts were aghast on social media. Had Hirano not pulled off the trick again on his third round, his score from Round 2 wouldn't have been enough for the gold medal he eventually won.

In another episode, Canadian slopestyler Max Parrot acknowledged not grabbing his board on a run that earned him a gold medal, a key element that judges missed but that could be picked up on close review of the video.

The AI at the X Games this week won't have any impact on the official scoring, but will be a gauge of what's possible in the future. Bloom said thousands of hours of halfpipe footage, along with the judging criteria, have been loaded into a system that will be shown on the TV telecast and be made available to the live judges.

The AI will be programmed to watch halfpipe practice and predict the top three finishers. Then its powers will be used to judge and commentate on three different riders as they go down the halfpipe.

“It's early days, but the technology sort of blows your mind,” Bloom said. “It's the power of what it can do when you give it clear direction. It's pretty amazing what this thing can do.”

In snowboarding, judges look at elements like the height of the jumps, the difficulty of the tricks and how well they're executed. They ultimately deliver scores on a 100-point scale based on how runs stack up against each other.

It's a nuance unlike figure skating or gymnastics, where individual tricks have specific point values. Bloom says all that is being taken into account as they work through the experiment.

He does not envision a future with no human judges. **MDT/AP**

AD



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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

**CLIMATE PACT
 WITHDRAWAL BREAKS
 TRUST IN US**

This year will see countries finalize their national plans to meet their emissions reduction targets by 2035, the focus of this November's COP30 global climate talks in Brazil.

Many of those countries' 10-year climate strategies — which will guide how aggressively they can curb their greenhouse gas emissions — are dependent on the funding the developed countries have promised to provide.

The United States' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement that the new US administration announced on Monday shortly after President Donald Trump began his second term has therefore undoubtedly dealt a heavy blow to the world's efforts to fight climate change at this crucial stage.

Even though the US Climate Alliance, a coalition of governors from 24 states that represent nearly 60 percent of the US economy, has pledged to meet the previous US administration's climate target of cutting the country's emissions by 66 percent by 2035, the US walking away from the pact necessarily calls into question a host of other US commitments, such as providing billions of dollars to support the climate actions of poorer nations.

Trump accompanied his pullout from the global climate pact for the second time — which will take effect in a year, after the official notice period — with a barrage of executive orders, including one declaring a national energy emergency that Trump said would unlock what he called America's "liquid gold" by expanding drilling in the world's top oil and gas producer.

With his re-embracing of fossil fuels and revoking of his predecessor's climate actions, certain vested interest groups in related industries will benefit tremendously from his winding back of the clock. No wonder Manish Bapna, president of the Natural Resources Defense Council, accused the Trump administration of further enriching billionaire oil and gas donors, saying "the US is producing more oil and gas than any country in history", rightly pointing out that "There is no energy emergency. There is a climate emergency".

Trump tried to justify the move by claiming "the United States will not sabotage our own industries" while some major developing countries pollute "with impunity".

But as Ani Dasgupta, president and CEO of the World Resources Institute, said in a statement, "Walking away from the Paris Agreement won't protect Americans from climate impacts, but it will hand China and the European Union a competitive edge in the booming clean energy economy and lead to fewer opportunities for American workers."

The need to realize the global green transition means that the clean energy sector and the green economy have become engines of growth around the world, a central topic in the ongoing Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos.

That explains why about half of Americans "somewhat" or "strongly" oppose US action to withdraw from the climate accord, and even Republicans aren't overwhelmingly in favor, according to a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Only about 2 in 10 US adults are "somewhat" or "strongly" in favor of withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, while about one-fourth are neutral.

Although the US is the second-biggest source of carbon emissions after China, carbon dioxide lasts in the atmosphere for centuries, and the US has put more of the heat-trapping gas in the air than any other nation if its accumulative historical emissions are taken into account. The US is responsible for nearly 22 percent of the carbon dioxide put in the atmosphere since 1950, according to a Global Carbon Project report. And US carbon emissions fell just 0.2 percent last year. [Abridged]

Within hours of President Donald Trump's inauguration, the new administration took down the Spanish-language version of the official White House website.

The site — currently whitehouse.gov/es — now gives users an "Error 404" message. It also included a "Go Home" button that directed viewers to a page featuring a video montage of Trump in his first term and on the campaign trail.

The button was later updated to read "Go To Home Page".

Hispanic advocacy groups and others expressed confusion at the abrupt change and frustration at what some called the administration's

lack of efforts to maintain communication with the Latino community, which helped propel him to the presidency.

The Spanish profile of the White House' X, @LaCasaBlanca and the government page on reproductive freedom also were disbanded. Meanwhile, the Spanish versions of other government agencies such as the Department of Labor, Justice and Agriculture remained available for users on Tuesday.

Asked about the changes, White House principal deputy press secretary Harrison Fields said that the administration is "committed to bringing back online the Spanish translation section of the website."



Activists of Drop Fossil Subsidies protest after they sprayed an Amazon shop window with paint as a police officer cordons off the area, in Davos



New Zealand Former Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern will release her memoir, "A Different Kind of Power," in June. Its publisher announced yesterday The book explores her leadership journey, responses to crises, and decision to step down after six years in office.



New Zealand Mitten the cat accidentally traveled between New Zealand and Australia three times after being overlooked in a plane cargo hold. The pet was safely reunited with its owner in Melbourne, yesterday Air New Zealand apologized for the oversight.

DAVOS 2025

TRADE, TARIFFS, AI AND UN CHIEF GUTERRES DOMINATE FORUM AGENDA

JAMEY KEATEN, DAVOS

A speech by the U.N. chief, economic growth potential in places like China and Russia, the challenges of artificial intelligence, and appearances by leaders from Spain to Malaysia are set to headline the agenda at the World Economic Forum's annual event in Davos today [Macau time].

António Guterres, the United Nations secretary-general, has been one of the highest-profile advocates for the fight against climate change. That effort has been rattled by promises by U.S. President Donald Trump to "drill, baby, drill" and expand fossil-fuel production in the world's largest economy.

Here's a look at what's on tap at the annual meeting of elites in the Swiss Alps.

AI: PROMISE, PERIL OR BOTH?

The CEO of AI startup Groq and others take up the idea of artificial ge-

neral intelligence, a futuristic vision of machines that are as broadly smart as humans or at least can do many things as well as people can.

AGI has prompted concern for world governments and some top scientists have warned that unchecked AI agents with "long-term planning" skills could pose an existential risk to humanity.

A day earlier, Trump highlighted a joint venture that plans to invest up to \$500 billion for infrastructure linked to AI though a new partnership formed by Oracle, SoftBank and OpenAI, the maker of the ChatGPT — whose chatbot has led to fascination with its ability to perform basic business tasks and answer complex questions, albeit with varying degrees of accuracy.

The Stargate project plans to build out data centers and the electricity generation needed by voracious power needs of fast-evolving AI in Texas,

the White House said.

PRIME MINISTERS OF SPAIN AND MALAYSIA

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez will deliver an address as leaders of the European Union, a key U.S. trading partner, continues to assess the return to power of Trump, who has promised tariffs on goods from friend and foe alike in the coming months.

Trump appeared to mistakenly lump in Spain, one of the stronger economic performers in the EU last year, with the BRICS bloc of developing economies — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — on Tuesday. The U.S. leader has put pressure on Europe to spend more on defense.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim takes the podium after the southeast Asian nation and its neighbor Singapore struck a deal to create a special economic zone that would ramp up job creation and lure investment. MDT/AP



Syria New interim rulers face challenges unifying former rebel factions into a national army after a surprise offensive ousted Assad. Southern rebel groups remain cautious, reflecting differing ideologies and unresolved tensions, complicating efforts to stabilize the fractured nation.



Gaza A ceasefire has revealed immense destruction after 15 months of Israel-Hamas conflict. Entire neighborhoods lie in ruins, displacing 90% of Gaza's population. International critics allege war crimes, while Israel denies claims, citing military necessity in urban warfare.