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NEWS

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VALUE OF REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS IN PRIVATE SECTOR LAST YEAR ROSE BY 20.7% YEAR-OVER-YEAR TO MOP28B, ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL STATS

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EVENTS INCREASED BY 30% IN 2024, BUT ATTENDANCE DROPPED 21%

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AP PHOTO



Philippines Former Rodrigo Duterte faces a criminal complaint for inciting to sedition after remarks suggesting 15 senators be killed. Filed by police Maj. Gen. Nicolas Torre III, the case underscores ongoing political tensions as the Philippines prepares for its May 12 mid-term elections.

AP PHOTO



India At the Maha Kumbh festival in Prayagraj, millions of Hindu pilgrims take ritual dips in the Ganges, with women drying saris along the riverbanks. The event, held every 12 years, symbolizes purification and attracts over 400 million attendees seeking spiritual renewal.

Pakistan The ICC Champions Trophy returns to Pakistan for the first time in nearly three decades. Security concerns led to a hybrid hosting model, with India playing in the UAE. The tournament, featuring eight teams, begins February 23 and concludes with the final in Lahore on March 9.

AP PHOTO



Middle East Israel will retain five military positions in southern Lebanon beyond the agreed withdrawal deadline. The move, criticized by Hezbollah and Lebanon's government, comes amid ongoing ceasefire tensions and continued indirect negotiations over a lasting resolution.

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REAL ESTATE

PRIVATE SECTOR TRANSACTION VALUE GROWS 20.7% IN 2024

RENATO MARQUES

THE total value of real estate transactions in the private sector in Macau in 2024 increased by 20.7% year-over-year to MOP 28.04 billion, according to official statistics released by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). In total, 5,197 building units and parking spaces were bought and sold in 2024, according to the Stamp Duty record, an increase of 17.7% year-on-year.

The purchase and sale of residential units rose by 501 year-on-year to 3,380 units, with the total transaction value swelling by 11.1% to MOP 20.33 billion. The transaction values of existing residential units (3,023 units) and pre-sale residential units (357 units) amounted to MOP 18.48 billion and MOP 1.85 billion, respectively.

The number of residential units issued a license of use was 640. On the other hand, DSEC also noted that the overall average price per square meter of usable area for residential units (MOP 85,114) dropped by 9% year-on-year.

Units located on the Peninsula contributed most to this price drop, with the average price per square meter at MOP 78,751, representing a 12.5% drop.



Units in Coloane also saw their average price per square meter drop by 7.3% to MOP 99,617, while in Taipa, prices remained more stable, decreasing just 3.6% to an average of MOP 93,896.

The average price of existing residential units (MOP 83,126) dipped by 10% year-on-year, while that of pre-sale residential units (MOP 124,323) increased by 1.2%. In non-residential units, the average

prices of office units (MOP 69,729) and industrial units (MOP 39,268) decreased by 21.7% and 16.9%, respectively, in 2024.

SMALL UNITS DOMINATE NEW RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION

Regarding new construction in the private sector in 2024, there were 5,192 residential units in the design stage, 1,771 under construction, and 298 under inspection.

For the entire year of 2024, 640 residential units were issued a license of use, 235 of which were in the Macau Peninsula and 396 in Coloane. Meanwhile, 107 residential units were issued construction permits.

Almost all of them (106) were located on the Peninsula. According to the fourth-quarter (Q4) statistics of 2024, most residential units that received a use license were studio apartments

(82.5%), while 13.4% were two-bedroom units.

DECREASED INTEREST IN EXISTING UNITS BUT A RISE IN PRE-SALE

The last quarter (Q4) of 2024 saw a drop in transactions of existing residential units but a rise in pre-sale residential units. Analyzed by quarter, the purchase and sale of residential units dropped by 13% quarter-on-quarter to 884 units in Q4 2024, with the total transaction value falling by 3.5% to MOP 5.08 billion. The total number of existing residential units transacted was 782, a decrease of 39 units quarter-on-quarter.

The transaction value slid by 7.8% to MOP 4.51 billion. On the other hand, the number of pre-sale residential units transacted rose by 26 quarter-on-quarter to 102, while the transaction value grew by 51.8% to MOP 575 million. The units transacted were mainly in Taipa Downtown (131 units), Areia Preta New Landfills (81 units), and Areia Preta & Iao Hon (64 units).

The average prices per square meter were MOP 81,905, MOP 83,563, and MOP 57,983, respectively. The average price per square meter of pre-sale residential units dipped by 10.7% quarter-on-quarter to MOP 118,424. The average price per square meter of office units decreased by 18.8% quarter-on-quarter to MOP 65,234, whereas that of industrial units increased by 3.2% to MOP 32,566.

MICE

Events surge by 30% in 2024, but attendees drop 21%

RENATO MARQUES

THE number of Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) events increased by 31.4% (+364) year-on-year, reaching 1,524 in 2024, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) in a recent release.

The report also highlighted that events focused on "Commerce & Management" and "Tourism" saw increases of 140 and 78, respectively.

However, the total number of MICE participants and attendees fell by 17.1% year-on-year, to 1,332,000, driven by a decrease in



exhibition attendees. MICE-driven receipts in Macau's non-gaming industries were estimated at approximately MOP 5.48 billion in 2024, a decrease

of 8.2% from the revised 2023 figure of MOP 5.97 billion.

The vast majority of MICE events in 2024 (93.4%) were meetings and

conferences (1,423), reflecting a year-on-year increase of 32.2% (+347). Conferences accounted for the most significant increase compared to the previous year, rising by 61.1%.

The drop in participants and attendees (17.1%) was primarily attributed to the decrease in attendees, who fell by 20.5%. This was partially offset by a rise in participants, which increased by 8.2% year-over-year to 185,000.

Additionally, the number of exhibitions declined, with a total of 61 events, down by three from the previous year.

These exhibitions at-

tracted 7,093 exhibitors and 52,651 professional visitors, representing year-on-year decreases of 1.5% and 12.1%, respectively. Over half of the exhibitors (51.9%) and professional visitors (51.5%) were non-locals.

A positive trend was observed in incentive events, which increased by 100% (+20) year-on-year to 40, with the number of participants rising by 22.5% to 13,000.

MEETINGS ACCOUNT FOR 92% OF MICE EVENTS

The 2024 MICE statistics report noted that "Association Meetings"

(586) and "Corporate Meetings" (584) dominated the top spots, with "Government Meetings" (224) coming third. These three types of meetings accounted for 91.5% of all MICE events in 2024, compared to just 4% for "Exhibitions" (61).

MICE events themed around "Commerce & Management" made up 42% of the total (640), followed by "Information Technology" (164), which accounted for 10.8%. Events focused on "Medical & Health" numbered 154, making up 10.1% of the total.

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ECONOMY

Association warns of declining tourist purchasing power

STAFF REPORTER

THE Macau Economic Association has raised concerns over a decline in tourist purchasing power, citing global economic uncertainties and weakening spending by visitors.

In its latest economic study, the association pointed to a drop in gaming revenues and the impact of high interest rates and trade policies on the Chinese yuan, which could further affect Macau's tourism sector.

"High interest rates and changes in international trade policies pose risks to the RMB currency, which could impact the purchasing power of Chinese tourists visiting Macau," the association stated.

Recent economic pressures have already affected visitor spending.

According to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), the per capita expenditure of visitors last year was MOP 2,157, a 14.6% decrease compared to 2023. The per capita expenditure of overnight visitors in Macau stood at MOP 3,884, while day-trippers spent an average



of MOP 691—declining by 8.2% and 12.7%, respectively.

Joey Lao, president of the Macau Economic Association, also pointed to international trade tensions as a contributing factor. "The United States has recently imposed new tariffs on goods from various countries, including China, exacerbating ongoing trade tensions. In January, production indexes for several major nations remained be-

low the average Purchasing Managers' Index," Lao said.

The effects of these economic headwinds are visible in Macau's tourism and gaming sectors. During the recent Lunar New Year holiday, visitor arrivals dropped by 3.5%, and gaming revenues failed to meet market expectations, according to the association.

The average daily gross revenue from gaming activities remained below MOP 600 million in both Decem-

ber 2024 and January 2025, with figures of MOP587 million and MOP589 million, respectively. Additionally, local banks' loan-to-deposit ratio declined from 100% in June 2023 to 79.3% in December 2024.

Despite these challenges, the association highlighted positive employment indicators and a stable unemployment rate.

Lao expressed optimism that new monetary and consumer incentive policies

from mainland authorities could help boost Macau's economy.

Meanwhile, the government also said that is exploring additional campaigns aimed at boosting community neighborhoods.

The Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) confirmed that it is considering implementing initiatives similar to the citywide consumption program to further stimulate economic activity in these areas, in response to lawmaker Ella Lei's interpellation.

The response highlighted that these new efforts aim to attract more visitors to community neighborhoods, which have experienced slower-than-expected economic recovery.

Looking ahead, the association expects the region's economic outlook to remain stable over the next three months, though concerns over visitor spending and external economic pressures persist. The economic climate indices for December 2024 and January 2025 were recorded at 6.5 and 6.3, respectively, reflecting a stable outlook.

MAN SENTENCED TO ONE YEAR FOR ARSON SPREE

A local man was sentenced to one year in prison by the Court of Second Instance (TSI) for a series of arsons outside the Judiciary Police headquarters and the Public Prosecution Office in January 2024. Initially given a sentence of one year and three months, his appeal resulted in a conviction for attempted arson and a reduced penalty of ten months, alongside four months for aggravated damage. The court emphasized the need to deter crime, stating that the sentence could not be suspended or replaced with a fine.

TOURIST DETAINED FOR KEEPING HKD12,000 FOUND IN MALL

A male tourist in his 40s from the mainland was detained after being found with HKD12,000 that he had not reported after finding it at a Macau shopping mall in January. The money was dropped by the owner in Taipa, and a security guard noted it was short after being returned. The suspect, who fled Macau, claimed he could not find the owner and kept the money at his home. The case was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office for further investigation.

HENGQIN PORT SETS NEW SINGLE-DAY TRAFFIC RECORDS

Hengqin Port set new single-day traffic records on Friday, with 4,400 vehicles exiting and 4,700 arriving. Over 6,100 vehicles, or 66.5% of the total, were from Macau. The port has seen increased traffic in recent years, with daily vehicle crossings rising from an average of 5,200 in 2023 to 6,500 in 2024. A significant growth of 22.2% year-on-year was recorded in 2025. The introduction of 30 "one-stop" lanes has streamlined border crossings, boosting efficiency.

EVENTS

IC: Macau International Parade set to foster local participation

VICTORIA CHAN

THE 2025 Macau International Parade, scheduled for March 23, will feature over 50 local groups and several international performers, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) announced.

Director Deland Leong revealed that nearly 90 applications were received for the event, with selections based on established criteria to ensure a vibrant and diverse celebration.

In an interview,



Leong shared details about the upcoming parade, which aims to showcase Macau's cultural richness and community spirit.

"There should be more than 80, close to 90 applications. We will follow the

previous selection criteria. We also hope that many local school groups can participate in the parade. We will select according to our plan. We may have more than 50 to 60 local groups par-

ticipating. In addition, we will also add some foreign groups to form our parade together," she said.

The parade, a highlight of Macau's cultural calendar, emphasizes local participation, particularly from school groups, while also incorporating international performers to enhance its global appeal.

In addition to the parade, the IC is organizing outdoor concerts in March and May. Leong noted that the bureau has received nume-

rous proposals for these performances.

"In fact, we have received a lot of applications, some of which may have been received in May or other months, but we also have to look at our previous plans, such as the number of our visitors, which we also hope to increase gradually.

So, we may not necessarily receive them, and we can also include them in one of our plans, but we are doing the relevant work, and we will announce them to the public later," she said.

When asked about expanding revitalization efforts to other old districts, Leong explained that

the current focus remains on the six designated districts.

She highlighted the bureau's ongoing work to transform short-term activities into medium- and long-term initiatives, aiming to improve community living spaces and support local economies through cultural and artistic projects.

Leong highlighted the bureau's dedication to partnering with various government departments and stakeholders.

She mentioned that they actively seek feedback and implement policies designed to benefit residents, small and medium-sized businesses, and arts organizations.

TOURISM CRISIS TEAM COMPLETES FIRST PHASE OF AID IN TAICHUNG INCIDENT

The tourism crisis assistance team, in collaboration with the Macau Red Cross, has completed its first phase of support for a Macau family affected by a gas explosion in Taichung, according to a statement. On Sunday, the team met with the family to review ongoing assistance efforts. They visited the injured in the hospital and coordinated arrangements for the deceased. The team will continue to support the family and maintain communication as they address the aftermath.

WOMAN ARRESTED IN HONG KONG FOR 'SPACE OIL' POSSESSION

Hong Kong Customs made its first arrest under new drug regulations on Saturday after apprehending a woman in possession of a "space oil" vape at the Hong Kong-Macau Ferry Terminal. The arrest came just one day after the main ingredient in "space oil," etomidate, was added to the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance and classified as a controlled substance. During a routine inspection, customs officers stopped a 28-year-old woman arriving from Macau and found a vape suspected to contain the banned substance. She was taken into custody and later released on bail pending further investigation.

MACAU-HONG KONG CROSS-BORDER AMBULANCE SERVICE USED FOR FIRST TIME

A 79-year-old man from Hong Kong became the first patient to use the newly launched cross-border ambulance service between Hong Kong and Macau. The man, who had been treated for heart issues at Conde S. Januário Hospital in Macau, was later stabilized and transferred to Princess Margaret Hospital in Hong Kong for further care. The cross-border ambulance service, which began operations in late 2024, is designed to assist patients traveling from Macau to Hong Kong for non-emergency treatments. It does not handle emergency cases or transfers of patients from Hong Kong back to Macau.

SPORTS

SJM INTRODUCES NEW MIXED CATEGORY TO ENRICH DRAGON BOAT RACES

VICTORIA CHAN

THE 2025 SJM Macao International Dragon Boat Races, which will take place on May 24, May 25, and May 31 at the Nam Van Lake Nautical Centre will introduce a new mixed category alongside its established Open and Women's events, organizers announced.

Vong Ka Hou, president of the Macao Dragon Boat Association (CMDDB), highlighted the event's growth and efforts to attract elite international competitors while maintaining its traditional appeal.

In an interview with the press yesterday, Vong revealed that this year's event will introduce a mixed category with 18 teams, marking a significant addition to the competition. "In order to enrich the content of the event, we strive to add a mixed group this year," he said.

Vong noted that the total number of teams will also increase, though the schedule remains unchanged, with international races set for May 31.

16 foreign teams have been invited to compete, with Thailand, Indonesia, China, and Hong Kong expected to participate, as in previous years. Vong expressed hope to attract teams from South Korea and the Philippines to elevate the competition's international profile.

"We are still communicating and no team can be confirmed



for the time being, but we hope to attract some teams of relatively high level to participate," he added.

The mixed category, however, will be limited to local teams due to its first-come, first-served registration format. "Yes, because the mixed group competition is first-come, first-served, local teams will strive for mixed group competitions," Vong explained.

He noted that future editions may expand the mixed category to include international teams, depending on resources and conditions.

Despite the addition of new categories, the budget remains largely unchanged. "The budget is basically not much different from the past, except that this

time there are more groups, but there will not be much adjustment in terms of personnel, because it may be the same group," Vong explained. He emphasized the association's long-term vision to grow the event further, offering more opportunities for local and international participants.

"In the future, we also hope that the competition can be bigger and richer, providing more competition opportunities for our citizens and other international friends who come to participate," Vong said. "We hope to provide more competition opportunities for our citizens and international friends, making the event bigger and richer," Vong concluded.

The festivities will kick off on

May 24 with local small dragon boat races. On May 25, the Macao Standard Dragon Boat Race will debut a mixed category alongside its existing Open and Women's categories.

On May 31, during the Duanwu Festival, the event will host the Macao International Invitation Standard Dragon Boat Race and the Macao University Student Invitation Standard Dragon Boat Race, featuring elite teams from mainland China and overseas.

Luis Gomes, president of the Sports Bureau, emphasized the dual purpose of the event: promoting dragon boat racing and celebrating Chinese traditions. "The Macao International Dragon Boat Races are a significant international sporting event that not only advances dragon boat racing but also commemorates traditional Chinese customs, inviting both residents and visitors to experience the Dragon Boat Festival together," he said.

In addition to the races, the event will feature cultural performances, creative product booths, and food stalls to enhance the carnival atmosphere.

Ho noted, "Our dragon boat races carnival serves as a platform for cultural exchange and friendship, bringing together local residents and friends from around the world to this joyous experience."

Registration for local races, including categories for government departments and university students, opened on February 5 and closes on February 19. Teams can register online from February 20 to 26, with priority given to last year's top performers.

Training periods have been extended to February 27 to ensure teams are well-prepared.

GAMING

Wynn expands offerings with new food hall

STAFF REPORTER

WYNN Resorts has announced a series of developments aimed at enhancing customer experience and driving visitation to its properties in Macau.

As part of their ongoing improvements, the company revealed plans to introduce a variety of food and beverage offerings at Wynn Palace with the opening of a new destination food hall.

This addition is expected to generate increased footfall to the resort and further enrich the dining



options available to guests.

In an earnings call with analysts last week, Craig S. Billings, chief executive officer of Wynn Resorts, emphasized the impor-

tance of maintaining a disciplined focus on EBITDA while continuing to invest in improvements.

Despite competitive market conditions, the company posted a 1%

year-over-year decline in EBITDA for the fourth quarter, reaching \$293 million.

However, it saw an 11% increase sequentially. Billings noted that the rollout of digital tables at Wynn Palace and Wynn Macau, along with the integration of advanced data science and machine learning tools, will enhance operational efficiency.

In addition to the food hall, Wynn Resorts is advancing the design and approval stages of various projects, including an expansion of the Chairman's

Club at Wynn Macau and new entertainment offerings at Wynn Palace.

These efforts include a new event center, theater, and production show.

January's performance reflected strong visitor demand, with notable growth in mass table drop and direct VIP turnover, along with full hotel occupancy. Looking ahead, the company expects its capital expenditure in Macau to range between \$250 million and \$300 million in 2025, continuing its commitment to reinvesting in the region's growth and development.

FILM

Captain America soars toward a \$100 million holiday weekend

LINDSEY BAHR

CAPTAIN America: Brave New World" infused some blockbuster cash into the North American box office, bringing in \$88.5 million in ticket sales over the weekend, according to studio estimates yesterday [Macau time]. The Walt Disney Co. release is by far the biggest opener of 2025 and the company predicts it will hit \$100 million domestically and \$192.4 globally by the end of Monday's Presidents' Day holiday [Tuesday, Macau time].

It's Marvel's first major release since "Deadpool & Wolverine" broke records last summer and re-energized a Marvel fanbase that some worried was weakening after the poor showing for "The Marvels."

Playing in 4,105 locations in the U.S. and Canada, "Brave New World" is also a major transition for the "Captain America" brand: Anointing Anthony Mackie's Sam Wilson as the new Cap, officially taking over from Chris Evans, who played the character for almost a decade. Harrison Ford co-stars as the U.S. President who transforms into the Red Hulk.

But "Brave New World," directed by Julius Onah, had a bit of a handicap going into the weekend: Poor reviews, though superhero movies can soar without the stamp of approval from critics. The film is currently sitting at 51% "rotten" on Rotten Tomatoes. It's not the worst in the Marvel Cinematic Universe — "Eternals" has a 47% rating and "Ant-Man and The Wasp: Quantumania" has a 46% — but the la-



test film is definitely on the very low end of the spectrum.

In his review for The Associated Press, Mark Kennedy wrote that it is, "a highly processed, empty calorie, regret-later candy of a movie."

Audiences were more generous in their opinions. The "verified audience score" from Rotten Tomatoes was 80% and its CinemaScore was a B-. Exit polls showed that men made up 63% of the opening weekend audience.

The bar for biggest opening of the year wasn't terribly high: "Dog Man" held the title for two weeks with its \$36 million launch.

And "Brave New World's" showing is the middle range for an MCU film. Not accounting for

inflation, it sits between "Guardians of the Galaxy" and "Thor: The Dark World."

It also cost significantly less than many of the big budget Marvel movies, with a reported production price tag of \$180 million, excluding the millions spent on marketing and promotion.

After only one Marvel movie in 2024, "Brave New World" is the first of three major theatrical releases set for 2025. It is to be followed by "Thunderbolts (asterisk)" in May and "The Fantastic Four: First Steps" in July.

"The superhero genre has taken a hit over the past few years, but audiences still have a huge interest in seeing them on the big screen," said Paul Der-garabedian, the senior media

analyst for Comscore.

Second place at this week's box office went to "Paddington in Peru," the third installment in the beloved franchise, which finally opened in North America this weekend. Released by Sony, it earned an estimated \$13 million and should hit \$16 million by Monday. The StudioCanal film opened in the United Kingdom in early November 2024 and went into the weekend with \$104 million from its international run.

Dougal Wilson took over directing duties for Paul King for this film, which also recast Emily Mortimer as Mrs. Brown, originally played by Sally Hawkins. The other main cast, including Ben Whishaw as Paddington's voice, remained intact. **MDT/AP**

Sony and Screen Gems' slasher "Heart Eyes" landed in third place with \$10 million, up 20% from its opening last weekend. Fourth place went to "Dog Man" with \$9.7 million.

The Chinese blockbuster "Ne Zha 2" rounded out the top five. It opened on 660 screens in North America and made \$7.2 million. Overall, the box office is up 20% from last year.

This weekend also saw the release of a new "Bridget Jones" movie, subtitled "Mad About the Boy," which went straight to Universal's streaming service Peacock, forgoing theaters in the U.S. In the U.K. and Ireland it made an estimated \$14.9 million, out-grossing "Captain America: Brave New World." Universal Pictures International reported \$32.3 million in grosses from all 70 territories.

Final domestic figures will be released Tuesday.

WEEKEND'S TICKET SALES

1. "Captain America: Brave New World," \$88.5 million.
2. "Paddington in Peru," \$13 million.
3. "Heart Eyes," \$10 million.
4. "Dog Man," \$9.7 million.
5. "Ne Zha 2," \$7.2 million.
6. "Love Hurts," \$4.4 million.
7. "Mufasa: The Lion King," \$4.2 million.
8. "One of Them Days," \$3 million.
9. "Companion," \$1.9 million.
10. "Becoming Led Zeppelin," \$1.8 million.

CORPORATE BITS

Poly MGM Museum welcomes 500,000 visitors in three months



Poly MGM Museum has reached a major milestone, welcoming its 500,000th visitor within three months of its opening in November 2024.

Since its launch, the museum has attracted an average

of over 10,000 daily visitors during peak periods, including Chinese New Year.

The institution showcases Chinese cultural heritage alongside contemporary art, reinforcing Macau's role as a

center for global cultural exchange.

Pansy Ho, chairperson & executive director of MGM China Holdings Limited, highlighted the museum's commitment to innovation, announcing plans for a second exhibition by year's end.

"Looking towards the future, we are currently preparing the second exhibition for the museum set to debut before the end of the year. We will continue to evolve the Museum with innovation and creativity, bringing even more diverse experiences to our visitors and polishing Macau's 'golden business card' as a cultural tourism metropolis," said Ho.

The museum also offers guided tours, digital self-service options, and cultural workshops.

Melco earns global recognition for corporate sustainability



Melco Resorts & Entertainment has earned global recognition for its sustainability efforts, being included in the prestigious S&P Global Sustainability Yearbook 2025.

The company was named an "Industry Mover" in the Casi-

nos & Gaming sector, reflecting its outstanding performance in the S&P Corporate Sustainability Assessment (CSA).

To be listed, companies must score within the top 15% of their industry and

meet rigorous sustainability standards.

In addition to this honor, Melco's Studio City Phase 2 development has achieved the BREEAM New Construction "Excellent" rating.

This marks the first BREEAM-certified project in Macau, following its previous design-stage "Excellent" rating. The BREEAM certification underscores Melco's commitment to incorporating high sustainability standards in its developments, fostering both environmental and social impact.

Lawrence Ho, chairman and CEO of Melco, expressed pride in the recognition, emphasizing the company's dedication to sustainable practices across all operations.

DIRE STRAIT

China says US has 'gravely backpedaled' on Taiwan

CHINA'S Foreign Ministry took issue yesterday with a revised U.S. government fact sheet that removed a line on American opposition to independence for Taiwan.

The United States has "gravely backpedaled" on its position on Taiwan and sent the wrong message to "separatist forces" on the island, ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said.

Taiwan and China split in 1949 during the civil war that brought the communists to power in China. The defeated Nationalists fled to Taiwan and set up a rival government there. Taiwan has its own government and military but has never declared formal independence from China.

"We urge the U.S. to ... stop emboldening and supporting Taiwan independence and avoid further damaging China-U.S. relations and the peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait," Guo said when asked about the revision at a daily media briefing.

The Taiwan Strait is a narrow waterway that separates the island of Taiwan from China's east coast.

The U.S. State Department

removed the phrase "we do not support Taiwan independence" from the fact sheet last week. The document on America's relations with the self-governing island is posted on its website.

Taiwan's government welcomed the move, though a statement sent to The Associated Press yesterday did not mention the language specifically.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has noted that the U.S. State Department up-

dated the 'Current State of U.S.-Taiwan Relations' page ... with text that is positive and friendly toward us, reflecting the close and amicable partnership between Taiwan and the United States," it said.

It's not the first time the State Department has removed the phrase. It did so in May 2022 but restored it a few weeks later after a strong protest from China.

It's unclear why the State Department changed the language again and

whether it signals any shift in policy under President Donald Trump, who returned to the White House last month.

The government in Taiwan is worried that Trump might not be as steadfast a supporter of the island as his predecessor, former President Joe Biden.

The U.S. does not recognize Taiwan as a country but is its strongest backer and biggest arms supplier.

Trump said last week that Taiwan, a leading

maker of semiconductors, had taken the chip business away from the U.S. and that he wants it to come back.

China, which says that Taiwan must come under its control, has stepped up military exercises around the island of 23 million people in recent years. The U.S. government fact sheet says that it expects "differences to be resolved by peaceful means, free from coercion, in a manner acceptable to the people on both sides."

MDT/AP



ECONOMY PRESIDENT XI MEETS WITH TECH BUSINESS LEADERS

PRESIDENT Xi Jinping met with private sector business leaders yesterday, state media reported, as government officials work to revive an economy disrupted by a pandemic, regulatory crackdowns and a real estate crisis.

Among the delegates was Jack Ma, who founded e-commerce firm Alibaba in the 1990s and was once China's richest man. He has kept a low profile with few public appearances in recent years after he publicly criticized China's regulators and financial systems during a speech in Shanghai.

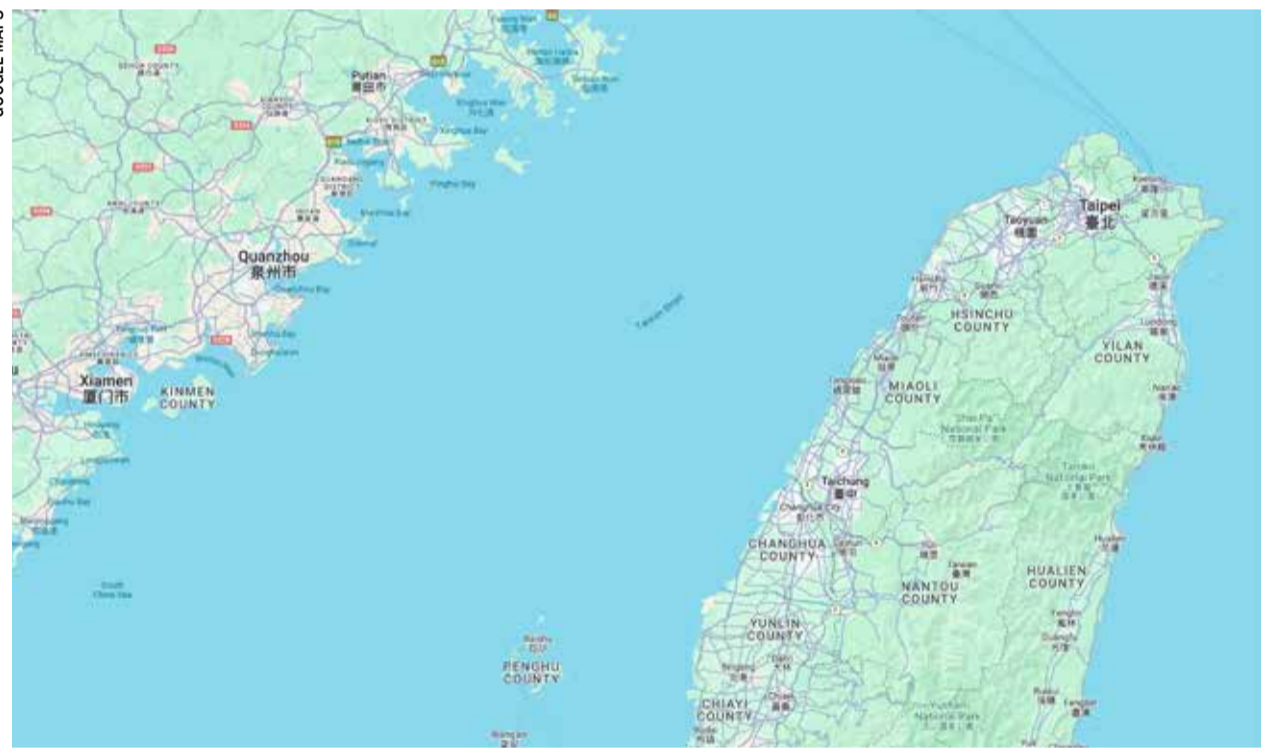
Other business leaders at yesterday's meeting in Beijing were Zeng Yuqun, the chairman of battery developer CATL, Wang Chuanfu, chairman of electric cars manufacturer BYD, and Pony Ma, the CEO of Tencent, which owns WeChat, according to a video of the meeting from state broadcaster CCTV and a state media report.

According to the state media report, Xi made "important remarks" to the gathered delegates.

The president said the government would "sincerely protect the legal rights of private businesses and entrepreneurs, according to the law." But, "at the same time, we must realize that our country is a socialist country ruled by law, and any type of illegal activities by enterprises cannot avoid investigation and punishment."

Ma, one of the wealthiest men in the country, gave a speech in Oct 2020 in which he said regulators were too conservative. The government responded by scuttling his plans for Ant Group's stock market debut, the finance-focused business which grew out of Alipay, the popular digital payments system. They also then forced Ant Group to restructure, dividing it into multiple independent businesses.

Alibaba was also investigated and fined \$2.8 billion for breaching antitrust rules. MDT/AP



TECH

Downloads of DeepSeek's AI apps paused in S.Korea over privacy concerns

DEEPSEEK, a Chinese artificial intelligence startup, has temporarily paused downloads of its chatbot apps in South Korea while it works with local authorities to address privacy concerns, according to South Korean officials yesterday.

South Korea's Personal Information Protection Commission said DeepSeek's apps were removed from the local versions



of Apple's App Store and Google Play on Saturday evening and that the company agreed to work with the agency to strengthen privacy protections before

relaunching the apps. The action does not affect users who have already downloaded DeepSeek on their phones or use it on personal com-

puters. Nam Seok, director of the South Korean commission's investigation division, advised South Korean users of DeepSeek to delete the app from their devices or avoid entering personal information into the tool until the issues are resolved.

Many South Korean government agencies and companies have either blocked DeepSeek from their networks

or prohibited employees from using the app for work, amid worries that the AI model was gathering too much sensitive information. The South Korean privacy commission, which began reviewing DeepSeek's services last month, found that the company lacked transparency about third-party data transfers and potentially collected excessive per-

sonal information, Nam said.

Nam said the commission did not have an estimate on the number of DeepSeek users in South Korea. A recent analysis by Wi-seapp Retail found that DeepSeek was used by about 1.2 million smartphone users in South Korea during the fourth week of January, emerging as the second-most-popular AI model behind ChatGPT. MDT/AP



Nauru President David Adeang and Australian PM Anthony Albanese shake hands at Parliament House in Canberra

SOUTH PACIFIC

Australia plans to deport three violent criminals to Nauru

ROD MCGUIRK, MELBOURNE

AUSTRALIA will soon deport three violent criminals including a convicted murderer to Nauru even though they are not citizens of the tiny Pacific atoll, after an Australian court ruled that dangerous immigrants can no longer be imprisoned indefinitely.

Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke said that three “violent offenders” had been issued 30-year Nauru visas on Saturday.

Opposition leader Peter Dutton said yesterday that more than 200 immigrants with criminal records who could not be deported would remain in Australia despite the Nauru deal.

“The government’s claiming they’re going to get rid of three criminals, but there’ll still be more than 200 left,” Dutton told reporters.

Nauru’s President David Adeang was due to give a statement to local news outlets yesterday about “new arrangements

with Australia on the resettling of non-citizens,” according to a post on the government’s Facebook page on Sunday.

The statement was not available online yesterday afternoon and Adeang’s office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Australian High Court forces the release of more than 200 immigrants

An Australian High Court decision in 2023 overturned the government’s policy of leaving in

detention immigrants who failed Australia’s character test, usually because of criminal conduct. The government said they could not be deported.

Countries including Afghanistan are considered unsafe for their nationals to be repatriated. Iran refuses to accept Iranians who are not returning voluntarily.

The test case was brought by a member of Myanmar’s persecuted Rohingya Muslim minority identified in court as NZYQ. NZYQ was brought to Australia in a people

smuggler’s boat in 2012 and raped a child soon after being released into the Australian community.

He served a prison sentence and was then transferred into indefinite immigration detention until he won his court case.

More than 200 immigrants who cannot be deported have been released from detention as a result of the NZYQ case. Some have committed more crimes and have returned to prison.

The opposition has accused the government of failing to protect the community by freeing dangerous immigrants.

The issue has damaged the government’s popularity and elections are due by May 17.

Three immigrants plan to fight deportation to Nauru in court

Ian Rintoul, the Sydney-based director of the Australian advocacy group Refugee Action Coalition, said the three men scheduled to be sent to Nauru received lawyers yesterday.

They intended to challenge their deportations in court, Rintoul said.

One was an Iraqi and another an Iranian. Rintoul did not know the nationality of the third, but did not think he was NZYQ.

Australia pays Nauru, a nation of 13,000 people, to house asylum seekers who attempt to reach Australia by boat.

Australia has all but ended the trafficking of asylum seekers from Southeast Asian ports by refusing to resettle any who arrive by boat.

Rintoul said almost 100 asylum seekers who remain Australia’s responsibility are in Nauru waiting to be resettled.

Burke declined to say how much Australia was paying Nauru to resettle the three criminals. Nauru had chosen them, and Burke declined to say why they were selected.

Burke said more immigrants that Australia cannot deport could be sent to Nauru. **MDT/AP**

JAPAN

Economy grows more than expected on strong exports and moderate consumption

JAPAN’S economy grew at a better-than-expected annual rate of 2.8% in October-December, underlined by steady exports and moderate consumption.

On a quarter-to-quarter basis, the world’s fourth largest economy grew 0.7% for its third straight quarter of growth, the Cabinet Office reported yesterday in its preliminary data.

For 2024, the Japanese economy eked out 0.1%



growth in seasonally adjusted real GDP, or gross domestic product, which measures the value of

a nation’s product and service. That’s the fourth straight year of expansion.

Private consumption grew at an annual rate of 0.5% during the three months through December, holding up while losing momentum. Exports jumped 4.3%, and capital investment increased 0.5%.

The positive data sent Japan’s benchmark Nikkei 225 higher, as well as other Asian markets.

Some analysts think the anticipation of President Donald Trump’s tariffs may have lifted

trade.

Unlike the U.S. and some other nations, Japan has been dogged by deflation, and these lower prices stifle growth. But recent wage growth has kept deflationary trends in check.

Recent data show inflation is at about the Bank of Japan’s target of 2%. Higher prices are crimping consumer spending, which makes up for more than half the economy.

The central bank may move to further raise interest rates, which were at zero or below zero for years to wrest the economy out of deflation. It raised its key interest rate to about 0.5% from 0.25% last month, noting that inflation is holding at a desirable target level. The next monetary policy meeting is in March.

“Stronger growth may reinforce expectations for the Bank of Japan to push through with further hikes, while the slowdown in private consumption growth may be addressed by the prospects of higher wages ahead,” said Yeap Jun Rong, market strategist at IG. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



WAR IN UKRAINE

Europe tries to muscle up as US plots mediation

EMMA BURROWS, MUNICH

EUROPEAN leaders took steps yesterday [Macau time] to answer assertive U.S. efforts to end Russia's war against Ukraine, as France announced a meeting of continental leaders and Baltic countries called for new steps to strengthen Kyiv's hand in any future talks.

The jockeying for position by Europe, Ukraine's top military and financial backer along with the U.S., comes as the Trump administration has quickly sought to mediate an end to the fighting three years after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

With Moscow's forces making some territorial gains in eastern Ukraine in recent months, Finnish President Alexander Stubb on the last day of the Munich Security Conference called for "maximum pressure on Russia" through sanctions and asset freezes in the lead-up to any talks.

He laid out three phases: "pre-negotiation," ceasefire and long-term peace talks.

"The first phase is the pre-negotiation, and this is a moment when we need to rearm Ukraine and put maximum pressure on Russia, which means sanctions, which means frozen assets, so that Ukraine begins these negotiations from a position of strength," Stubb said.

Macron mobilizes European leaders

French President Emmanuel Macron is rallying Euro-

pean leaders, with his foreign minister announcing an emergency "working meeting" on Ukraine's next steps after recent U.S. announcements.

Speaking to France-Info, Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot sought to project a united front: "A wind of unity is blowing over Europe, as we perhaps have not felt since the COVID period."

Macron had called for "consultations between European leaders on the situation in Ukraine and the security challenges in Europe."

He will host an informal afternoon meeting Monday with the leaders of Germany, the U.K., Italy, Poland, Spain, the Netherlands and Denmark, as well as European Council President Antonio Costa, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte.

The discussions could continue in other formats, according to the French statement, with the goal of "bringing together all partners interested in peace and security in Europe."

News reports said British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk were among those expected in Paris.

Trump's diplomatic push setting a pace

U.S. President Donald Trump's push for a quick way out of Russia's all-out war in Ukraine stirred concern and uncertainty in Munich.

After a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin last week, Trump said that he

and Putin would likely meet soon to negotiate a peace deal over Ukraine. Trump later assured Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy he also would have a seat at the table. U.S. officials have indicated that European nations, however, wouldn't be involved.

"Don't underestimate Trump as a negotiator. I genuinely believe that Putin is baffled and afraid what might be coming from there," Stubb said. "Right now, the ball is in our court here in Europe. We need to convince the Americans where's the value added, and then get back into the table."

"I think in Europe we need to talk less and do more," he said later.

President Edgars Rinkvis of Latvia, which like Finland borders Russia, agreed that "if we are strong, if we have something to offer ... then we are going to be interesting to the United States. If you just continue having those nice conferences, talking and whining, then we are not going to be interesting to our own publics very soon."

He also noted "a point that probably went unnoticed Friday" in Munich, which was European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's "important announcement" that she would propose a temporary waiver of EU budgetary rules in crisis situations — this time to allow for extra defense spending.

"I can announce that I will propose to activate the 'escape clause' for defense investmen-

ts," she said. "This will allow member states to substantially increase their defense expenditure. Of course, we will have to do this in a controlled and conditional way."

Much more at Munich: Tariffs and trade too

The three-day Munich conference was a hub of crisscrossing diplomacy on issues of politics, economics, and defense and security, with top envoys on hand from places as diverse as Syria and Saudi Arabia, and Japan and South Korea, as well as many European leaders.

On Saturday, Zelenskyy called for the creation of an "armed forces of Europe" to better stand up to an expansionist Russia that also could threaten the 27-nation EU.

In an interview with U.S. television network NBC that aired on Sunday [yesterday], Zelenskyy ratcheted up his warnings and said that Ukraine had shared intelligence with partners indicating that Putin was "preparing to train 150,000 people mostly on the territory of Belarus." He also said that Europe has fewer brigades than Russia.

"The risk that Russia will occupy Europe is 100%," he said in comments to the "Meet the Press" program recorded Friday.

On Saturday, Zelenskyy told The Associated Press that he had directed his ministers not to sign off on a proposed agreement to give the United States access to Ukraine's rare earth minerals, because the document was too focused on U.S. interests. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1954 McCARTHY HUNTS 'ARMY COMMUNISTS'



The Secretary of the US army has ordered two generals, subpoenaed by anti-Communist senator Joseph McCarthy, to ignore the summons.

The move by Robert T Stevens came on the first day of the hearings into communist activity in the US army.

Mr Stevens said he would speak on behalf of the army provided the session was in public.

His announcement came after a former army major summonsed by Senator McCarthy - head of the Senate's Permanent Investigations sub-committee - refused to answer questions.

Irving Peress, now a dentist, took advantage of the Fifth Amendment in the US' Constitution - the right to avoid self-incrimination - to justify his silence.

Mr Peress cited his honourable discharge from the army as proof of his "honest and loyal service" to his country.

Senator McCarthy has accused Mr Peress of communist activities at an army camp and has demanded that army authorities revoke his honourable discharge and court martial him.

The Wisconsin senator has also called for a list of all officers and civilians who had anything to do with Mr Peress' promotion and honourable discharge.

"Either the army will give the names of men codding Communists or we will take it before the Senate," he said.

However, Mr Steven's stand makes it unlikely a list will be forthcoming.

It is a rare challenge to the controversial senator who was virtually unknown before he took up the cause of rooting out Communists four years ago.

In a speech in West Virginia in February 1950 Mr McCarthy claimed to have the names of 205 "card-carrying Communists" in the State Department. [...]

But in March 1951 Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were convicted for passing atomic secrets to the Russians and this helped fuel popular support for his campaign.

Joseph McCarthy's committee works parallel to the House of Representatives' Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).

In 1947 the HUAC's high-profile investigation of the entertainment industry led to prison sentences for 10 Hollywood writers and directors who refused to answer questions and "blacklisting" for hundreds more.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The "Army-McCarthy" hearings proved to be Joseph McCarthy's undoing.

He found himself under investigation after army officials alleged he had tried to obtain preferential treatment for a former aide drafted into the army. A much-publicised investigation by the Senate ended inconclusively.

But in December 1954 the Senate voted to censure Mr McCarthy for abusing his power as a senator - only the fourth time in history a senator had received such a public mark of disapproval.

His career never recovered and he died in obscurity from an alcohol-related illness in 1957 aged 48. However his name lives on in the term "McCarthyism" defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as "the use of unfair investigatory or accusatory methods in order to suppress opposition".

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Try not to let the pressure of another work week put you into a frenzy. Use this energy to find a flow that suits you, making balance a top priority.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Be mindful of how you support and fuel your body during this time, prioritizing wellness over convenience.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Add playful and creative twists to your work when navigating these vibes, starting the week with vibrancy and increased motivation. Don't be afraid to promote your unique brand of genius.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 It may be difficult to find your workflow if you don't take proper steps to nurture the self. Be gentle and compassionate, trusting that you'll find your efficiency before too long.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Seeing challenging situations from multiple angles will be a gift others can rely upon, and demonstrating diplomacy will help those you encounter feel at ease.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Your connection with the material realms strengthens under this luminary placement, and you'll have much luck manifesting when you attempt to do so while using what you already have.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 A helpful connection between the sun and moon strengthens the imagination, offering support when you embrace creative thinking.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 You'll feel most comfortable when shrouded in mystery. Refine your message, holding back what you have to say until the words are guaranteed to come out right.

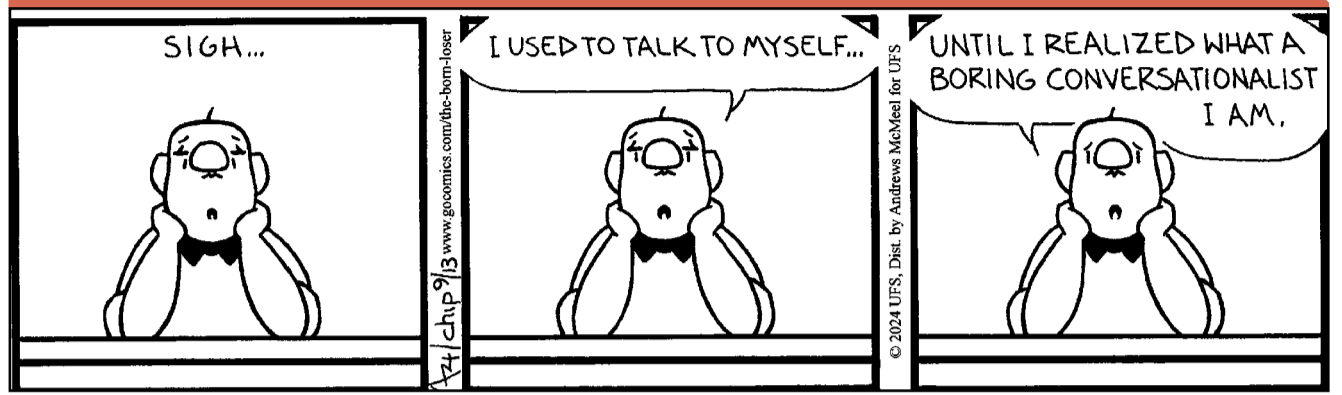
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Share your opinions. Just be respectful of other people's views, trying your best to gain a deeper understanding of ideologies that don't necessarily resonate with your own.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Bring big ideas to the table, backing them up with the expertise and refinement you've cultivated throughout the years. Check-in with your financial goals, outlining realistic long-term strategies.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Now is the time to make your ambitions known. Your popularity benefits you, marking the perfect occasion to stand in your power and take up space.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Notice who you draw in during this time, being mindful of the relationships you invest in. Share your secrets with a trusted ally, taking the advice you receive to heart.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

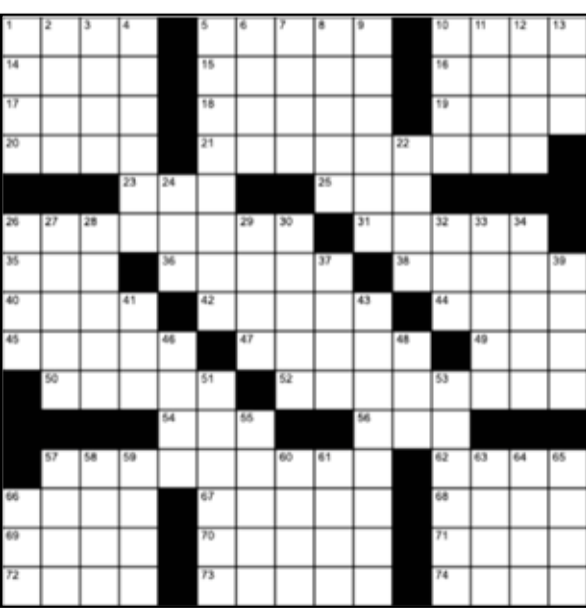
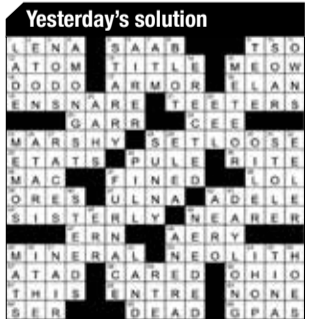
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-4	6	fine
Changchun	-16	-7	fine
Chengdu	8	12	rain
Chongqing	9	14	overcast
Fuzhou	9	12	cloudy
Guangzhou	15	24	cloudy
Guiyang	2	7	rain
Haikou	18	21	rain
Hangzhou	5	10	cloudy
Harbin	-18	-10	cloudy
Hefei	0	13	cloudy
Nanjing	2	12	cloudy
Shanghai	4	10	overcast
Taipei	14	15	rain
Wuhan	0	14	cloudy
Hong Kong	17	19	sunny
WORLD			
Moscow	-10	-7	showers
Frankfurt	-4	3	cloudy
Paris	2	8	cloudy
London	2	6	cloudy
New York	-8	-3	sunny

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Mouth off; 5- Castle water pits; 10- The Beatles' "Back in the ___"; 14- Treater's words; 15- The cruelest month?; 16- Jazzy James; 17- Back part of the foot; 18- Lasso; 19- Half-mask; 20- Was in the red; 21- Sugar candy with gel interior; 23- Yoko; 25- Snake-like fish; 26- Trade; 31- Mob scenes; 35- U-turn from SSW; 36- Merits; 38- Freedom from war; 40- Second letter of the Greek alphabet; 42- Lady of the house; 44- Numbered rds.; 45- Freight; 47- Free-for-all; 49- Tolkien tree creature; 50- It's human; 52- Sweets; 54- Small batteries; 56- Pampering place; 57- Lightweight carvas; 62- Bar bills; 66- It's owed; 67- Ancient region on the Aegean; 68- River of Spain; 69- Belinda Carlisle's "Should ___ You In?"; 70- Sales pitch; 71- Meander; 72- ___ May Clampett of "The Beverly Hillbillies"; 73- Dense element; 74- Indian exercise method;

DOWN 1- Manhattan neighborhood; 2- Freshly; 3- Captain Hook's sidekick; 4- Rarely; 5- Aromatic herb; 6- Mayberry lad; 7- Asia's ___ Sea; 8- Name; 9- Killer; 10- River to the Ubangi; 11- Greek portico; 12- Render speechless; 13- Music style performed by Dr Dre and Eminem; 22- Radar screen element; 24- Miss-named?; 26- "Power Lunch" network; 27- ___ a time (singly); 28- Paris subway; 29- Burn the midnight oil, studying; 30- Finished; 32- ___ the fields we go...; 33- Spud; 34- Hound's trail; 37- Shopaholic's delight; 39- Ballpark figs; 41- Mature, as wine; 43- Military cafeteria; 46- Word that can precede hygiene, tradition and agreement; 48- Paranormal letters; 51- Intolerance; 53- Diner; 55- Slant; 57- Put on the market; 58- Cain's victim; 59- ___-bitty; 60- Put a lid ___; 61- ___ yellow ribbon...; 63- Peek-___; 64- Boast; 65- Body of an organism; 66- Casino cube;



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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 HKD 7,500,000 4 bed 3 bath

Manhattan F Unit
 HKD 10,800,000 3 bed 2 bath

WINTER SPORTS

FRIEDRICH OF GERMANY LOCKS UP WORLD CUP BOBSLED 4-MAN, COMBINED SEASON TITLES AGAIN

FRANCESCO Friedrich won two more World Cup bobsled overall titles yesterday [Macau time], the 21st and 22nd of the German star's career.

Friedrich drove to a second-place finish in the World Cup four-man race, good enough to clinch his seventh consecutive season title in that sled and his eighth combined World Cup crown. He clinched the season title — his seventh — in two-man on Saturday.

His career numbers only get more absurd: 147 World Cup race medals, four Olympic gold medals and 14 gold medals in world championship races — a figure he'll look to improve when bobsled holds its world title races for 2025 over the first two weeks of March in Lake Placid, New York.

"The whole season was very good," Friedrich said. "We stand on the podium, we did a great job on the start. Sometimes I don't even get the best line, but yes, we were good the whole season."

Johannes Lochner of Germany drove to the four-man win, wrapping up his second-place finish in the season standings. Friedrich

AP PHOTO



was second and Brad Hall of Britain was third — the same spot he ended up in the four-man season-long chase.

"It's such a fantastic and beautiful sport," Friedrich said. "With the guys, it's so fun every week. We did our best every week."

In the two-woman race, Laura Nolte of Germany drove to the win — her fifth of the season —

to clinch the overall title in that event. Lisa Buckwitz of Germany was second and Melissa Lotholz of Canada was third.

LUGE

Germany and Austria swept all nine medals awarded yesterday on the final day of a World Cup in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

In women's singles, Lisa Schul-

nhardt and Cheyenne Rosenthal for the women — got the win. Austria was second, with Kindl and Thomas Steu on the men's sled and Selina Egle and Lara Kipp on the women's sled.

Germany 2 was third: Tobias Wendl and Tobias Arlt for the men and Dajana Eitberger and Magdalena Matschina for the women.

The U.S. had three sixth-place finishes: Zach Di Gregorio, Sean Hollander, Chevonne Forgan and Sophia Kirkby in mixed doubles, Tucker West and Ashley Farquharson in mixed singles, and Farquharson in the women's singles race.

UP NEXT

Luge — World Cup men's doubles, women's doubles and women at Yanqing, China, on Saturday; World Cup men's singles and team relay at Yanqing on Sunday.

Skeleton — Day 1 of men's and women's world championships at Lake Placid on March 6.

Bobsled — Day 1 of women's monobob and two-man world championships at Lake Placid on March 8. **MDT/AP**

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



FOOTBALL | CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Exit awaits Real Madrid or Man City and at least three more title holders

GRAHAM DUNBAR,
SPORTS WRITER

NOW the jeopardy really kicks in for the Champions League with a title chase, pride and hard cash on the line.

At least four former European champions will be among eight teams eliminated when the new knockout playoff round ends this week.

Real Madrid or Manchester City, Bayern Munich or Celtic, AC Milan or Feyenoord and PSV Eindhoven or Juventus.

Their European seasons will be over in February before even reaching the round of 16 that teams like Madrid and Man City, who meet in their second-leg game Wednesday (Thursday, Macau time), have come to expect.

Indeed, City coach Pep Guardiola has never failed in 16 seasons of coaching — four at Barcelona, three at Bayern

and nine in Manchester — to take his team to the round of 16 in the Champions League.

Advancing to the last-16 is worth 11 million euros (\$11.5 million) in prize money from UEFA. While that pays just a few months of salary for Kylian Mbappé or Erling Haaland, it is a path toward a bigger share of the 2.5 billion euros (\$2.6 billion) total prize fund shared by 36 teams that started in the league phase in September.

It took 152 games so far in the new expanded format — already 21% more than the entire 125-game competition in each of the past 21 seasons — just to reach this stage.

The business end of the Champions League arguably only starts now, with 37 games left through the May 31 final in Munich.

Real Madrid vs. Manchester City at the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium is a classic match in the modern Champions League: A 3-3 draw in the quarter-

finals last year and a thrilling 3-1 win for Madrid in extra-time to decide their semifinal in 2022. Each time coach Carlo Ancelotti's team went on to win the title, extending the record to 15 in the competition's 70-year history.

Their first meeting in Madrid, a group-stage game in September 2012, was a late comeback by Madrid with two goals after the 85th minute to win 3-2 — just as it was in Manchester last Tuesday in the first leg.

That 2012-13 season was the last time City did not play in the round of 16. The English champion's streak of 11 straight years, including finally lifting the trophy in 2023, is at serious risk Wednesday.

Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund start home games with leads from the first leg as they seek to join Bayer Leverkusen in the round of 16. Bayern hosts Celtic on Tuesday with a 2-1 lead and Dortmund starts 3-0 up on Sporting Lisbon in the early game Wednesday.

Paris Saint-Germain also has a 3-0 advantage at home, against Brest on Wednesday. It will be the clubs' third meeting in 19 days. Benfica also won on the road, 1-0 at Monaco, and hosts the return leg on Tuesday (Wednesday, Macau time).

Juventus takes a 2-1 lead to Eindhoven on Wednesday and Club Brugge is 2-1 up going to Atalanta on Tuesday in Bergamo. About 30 miles away, in Tuesday's early game, AC Milan hosts Feyenoord trying to overturn a 1-0 deficit. **MDT/AP**

CL PLAYOFFS

	Date	Time	Home	Away	ODDS
Wed	Feb 19	1:45	AC Milan	Feyenoord	H 1.44, D 5, A 8.5
Wed	Feb 19	4:00	Atalanta	Club Brugge	H 1.56, D 4.5, A 6.1
Wed	Feb 19	4:00	Bayern Munich	Celtic	H 1.18, D 9, A 18
Wed	Feb 19	4:00	Benfica	Monaco	H 1.85, D 4.2, A 4.25
Thu	Feb 20	1:45	Borussia Dortmund	Sporting Lisbon	H 1.95, D 4, A 3.85
Thu	Feb 20	4:00	PSG	Brest	H 1.2, D 7.9, A 15
Thu	Feb 20	4:00	PSV	Juventus	H 2.32, D 3.75, A 3
Thu	Feb 20	4:00	Real Madrid	Man City	H 1.88, D 4.5, A 3.75

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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

CHINA A SOURCE OF CERTAINTY IN WORLD OF TURBULENCE AND TRANSFORMATION

The world is rapidly changing, and it is once again experiencing the turbulence of transformation. As in days gone by, people are trying to read the signs to divine what shape the future will take.

For the authors of the Munich Security Conference report the auguries are clear, the world is becoming multipolar. But unlike those who see hope and promise in such a transmutation, the report offers a bleaker assessment, focusing on the birth pains that have become increasingly prominent, such as rising divisions between major powers and conflicts over differing order models that are hindering unified responses to global challenges.

In response, the report advocates for "depolarization", emphasizing the necessity for significant reforms within the international order to address these issues.

In his speech at the international security forum on Friday in Munich, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, offered a more sober view from Beijing's perspective, pointing out that it is the resistance to change that is the cause of the strife of upheaval.

Wang made it clear that it is "the we-first approach" adopted by some countries, which he politely didn't name, that is the cause of the current "incessant chaos and confusion" in the world, as "they believe might makes right and have opened a Pandora's box marked the law of the jungle".

For the benefits of multipolarity to be manifest, it is important, as the Chinese foreign minister said, that all countries practice true multilateralism.

China agrees that reform of the global system is needed. But the reforms should be to make it inclusive and fair, and to enable it to address the development, governance, security and trust deficits that plague the world.

Beijing has repeatedly called for the United Nations to be at the core of practicing multilateralism, and Wang said that it is essential to "cement its foundations rather than destroy its pillars".

As he pointed out, all countries, regardless of size or strength, are "stakeholders in the international rule of law". The multipolar paradigm will only be in a state of disarray if some countries adhere to double standard in observing international law, saying one thing and doing another.

Unlike the self-serving and exclusive security concept pursued by some Western countries, China points to the right direction for building a more secure world for all.

It upholds true multilateralism and advocates for the building of a community with a shared future for humanity.

China's goal is to build an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world of lasting peace, universal security and shared prosperity. The pathway to this is promoting global governance that features extensive consultation and joint contribution for shared benefit; with the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative providing the strategic guidance, and high-quality cooperation under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative the platform for action.

A multipolar world has become an unstoppable trend. For too long, the existing international order has been shaped disproportionately by a handful of Western powers, which have sidelined the voices and needs of developing nations.

By practicing true multilateralism, featuring extensive consultation and joint contribution for shared benefit, China is the source of the greatest certainty amid all the turbulence and uncertainty, as it is a "steadfast constructive force" upholding the trajectory toward an equal and orderly multipolar world. [Abridged]

AN INDIAN COURT SENTENCES A MAN TO LIFE IN PRISON FOR RAPING AND MURDERING AN IRISH BACKPACKER

THE BUZZ

A court in India's western Goa state yesterday sentenced a 31-year-old man to life in prison for raping and murdering an Irish woman at a popular tourist resort nearly eight years ago.

The body of 28-year-old Danielle McLaughlin was found by a farmer on a beach popular with holidaymakers in Goa in March 2017. An autopsy showed that cerebral damage and constriction of the neck caused her death.

Vikat Bhagat was found guilty of the crime on Friday. McLaughlin's family in a statement had said they and her friends were "thankful to

the public prosecutor and the investigating officer for justice."

Usually, rape victims cannot be named under Indian law. In this case, the victim's family spoke to the media to raise awareness of her case.

The crime highlighted persistent violence against women in India despite tougher laws against sexual assault imposed after the 2012 death of a young woman who was gang-raped on a bus in New Delhi.

Goa is a popular backpacking destination in India. Millions of tourists visit its numerous beach resorts every year.



Adrien Brody poses with the leading actor award for 'The Brutalist'

BAFTAS

'CONCLAVE' WINS BEST PICTURE AS 'THE BRUTALIST' TAKES DIRECTING AND ACTING PRIZES

PAPAL thriller "Conclave" won four prizes including best picture yesterday [Macau time] at the 78th British Academy Film Awards, where genre-bending musical "Emilia Pérez" proved that it's still an awards contender despite a multipronged backlash that looked to have dented its chances.

At a ceremony where no film dominated, "The Brutalist" equaled the awards tally of "Conclave," scooping four trophies, including best director for Brady Corbet and best actor for Adrien Brody. Mikey Madison won the best actress prize for Brooklyn tragicomedy "Anora."

"Conclave," which stars Ralph Fiennes as a cardinal corraling conniving clergy as they elect a new pope, beat "Anora," "The Brutalist," "Emilia Pérez" and Bob Dylan biopic "A Complete Unknown" to the top prize. "Conclave" was also named outstanding British film and took trophies for editing and adapted screenplay.

Supporting performer prizes went to Kieran Culkin for "A Real Pain" and Zoe Saldaña for "Emilia Pérez," which also won the award for best film not in the English language.

Karla Sofia Gascón, who stars as the titular transgender ex-cartel boss in "Emilia

Pérez," was a best-actress nominee but did not attend the ceremony. Gascón has withdrawn from promoting the film, which has 13 Oscar nominations, amid controversy over her social media posts disparaging Muslims, George Floyd and diversity at the Oscars.

The film's director, Jacques Audiard, has condemned those comments, but in an acceptance speech thanked Gascón along with her co-stars Saldaña and Selena Gomez.

"I am deeply proud of what we have all achieved together," he said.

Stars including Cynthia Erivo, Hugh Grant, Ariana Grande, Lupita Nyong'o, Timothée Chalamet and Saoirse Ronan walked the red carpet at London's Royal Festival Hall for the awards, known as BAFTAs. The British prizes often provide clues about who will triumph at Hollywood's Academy Awards on March 2, in an unusually hard-to-call awards season.

They also have a distinctly British accent. The ceremony kicked off with its kilt-wearing host, Scottish actor David Tennant, leading the audience in a rousing singalong of The Proclaimers' anthem "I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles)."

Madison won the female acting trophy for her

powerhouse performance as an exotic dancer entangled with a Russian oligarch's son in "Anora." She beat Gascón, Demi Moore for body-horror film "The Substance," Roman for "The Outrun," Erivo for "Wicked" and Marianne Jean-Baptiste for "Hard Truths."

In her acceptance speech, Madison sent a message to the sex worker community.

"You deserve respect and human decency. I will always be a friend and an ally and I implore others to do the same," she said.

Brody beat competition from Fiennes, Chalamet, who plays the young Dylan in "A Complete Unknown," Grant for the horror film "Heretic," Colman Domingo for prison drama "Sing Sing" and Sebastian Stan for his portrayal of a young Donald Trump in "The Apprentice."

Brody, who plays a Hungarian-Jewish architect in the postwar United States, said "The Brutalist" carried a powerful message for our divided times.

"It speaks to the need for all of us to share in the responsibility of how we want others to be treated and how we want to be treated by others," he said. "There's no place any more for antisemitism. There's no place for racism." MDT/AP



UAE Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met UAE leader Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi yesterday, discussing prisoner exchanges and economic ties. His visit comes amid growing diplomatic efforts for peace talks involving Russia, with Saudi Arabia emerging as a key mediation hub.



Syria Experts assess damage at heritage sites, including Palmyra and Crac des Chevaliers, after years of war. Restoration plans aim to revive tourism, but looting and military use of historical sites complicate efforts. Conservationists emphasize the urgency of preservation.



USA A polar vortex is bringing life-threatening cold to the Rockies and northern Plains, with temperatures as low as -45°F (-42.7°C). This follows deadly flooding in Kentucky, where nine people died. FEMA is coordinating emergency relief under a federal disaster declaration.



USA "Saturday Night Live" celebrated its 50th anniversary with a star-studded event featuring Steve Martin, Paul McCartney, and Miley Cyrus. The special, broadcast live from Studio 8H, honored the show's legacy of political satire, musical performances, and groundbreaking comedy.



Peru Colombian superstar Shakira canceled her Lima concert after being hospitalized with an abdominal condition. The singer, currently on her "Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran" tour, promised to reschedule. Fans had gathered in large numbers to welcome her to Peru.