



THE GAMING SECTOR SAW A POSITIVE SHIFT IN ITS WORKFORCE BY THE END OF THE FOURTH QUARTER OF 2024, ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL STATS

P3

SAM GATHERS EXPERT OPINIONS FOR THE POLICY ADDRESS AND ECONOMIC STRATEGY

P4

NPC: THE ECONOMY AND AI ARE LIKELY TO BE AMONG THE TOP ISSUES

P7



AP PHOTO



Philippines A Philippine FA-50 fighter jet went missing Monday night during a combat mission against insurgents. Communication was lost before reaching the target. A search is underway for the two pilots. The aircraft, part of a 12-jet fleet from South Korea, has been used in patrol missions.

AP PHOTO



South Korea Kim Jong Un's sister, Kim Yo Jong, warned yesterday of possible North Korean provocations following the arrival of a U.S. aircraft carrier in South Korea. She accused the U.S. of hostile actions and suggested missile tests could follow. South Korea dismissed the threats as unjustified.

AP PHOTO



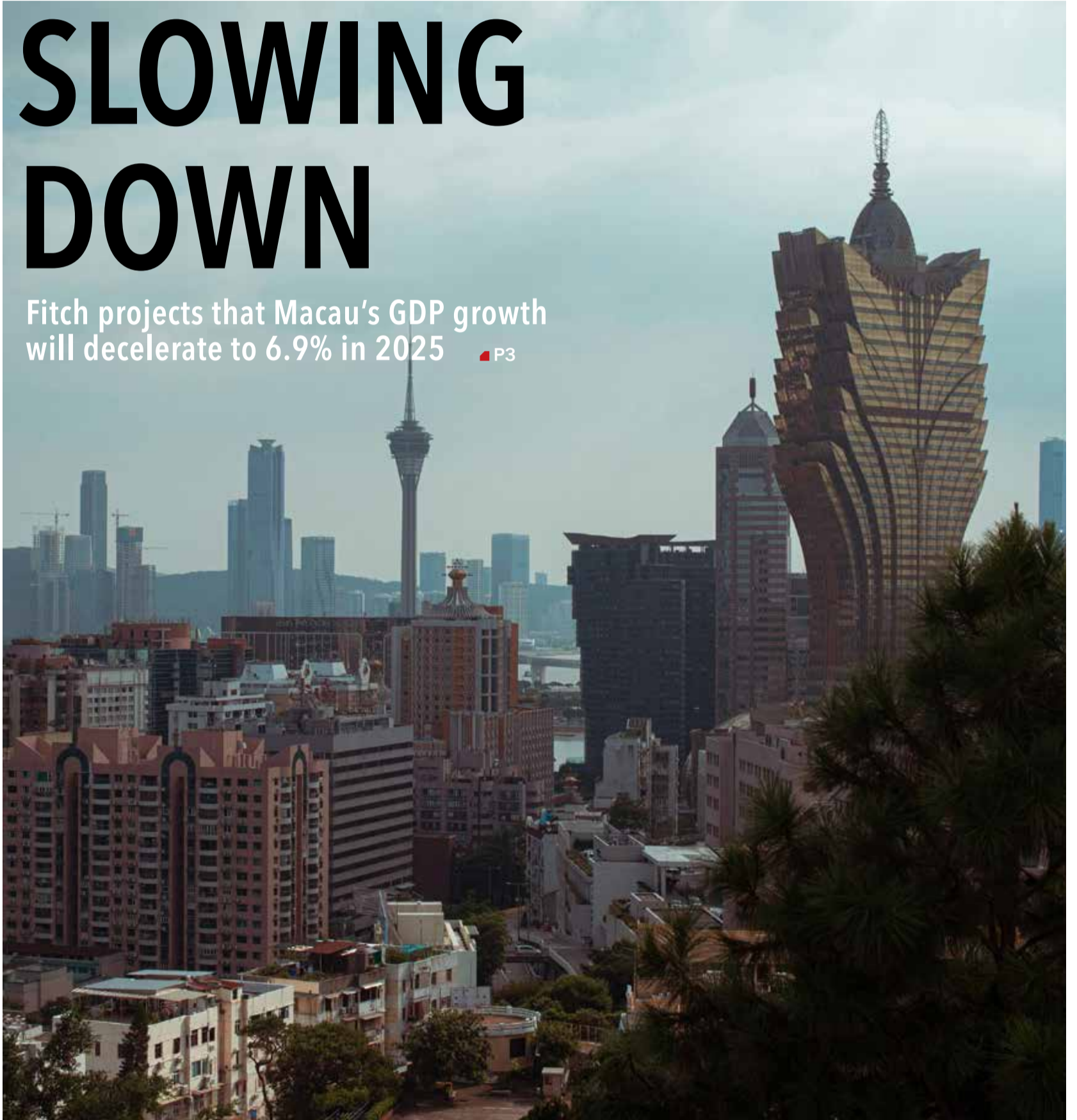
New Zealand's Parliament Speaker ruled yesterday that complaints about using the Māori name "Aotearoa" will no longer be considered. The decision follows an objection by Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters. The Māori language is increasingly used, though political friction over its prominence continues.

AP PHOTO



Australia James Harrison (pictured), known as the "Man with the Golden Arm," died at 88 on February 17. His rare blood plasma donations, spanning over six decades, helped save 2.4 million babies. Harrison's donations contained anti-D antibodies used to prevent a life-threatening blood disorder in newborns.

More on backpage



SLOWING DOWN

Fitch projects that Macau's GDP growth will decelerate to 6.9% in 2025

P3

CONTINUING EDUCATION SCHEME REACHES ONLY 21% OF THE TARGETED POPULATION

P2

GAMING OPERATOR'S 'UNFAIR DISMISSALS' PROMPT CALLS FOR GOV'T PROBE

P3

AMCM WARNS PUBLIC OF FAKE WEBSITES AND PHISHING SCAMS

The Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM) has issued a warning regarding fake websites and phishing scams targeting the public. Following a request from AMCM, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (Macao) and Bank of China (Macao) have alerted users via their mobile apps, social media, and websites. The AMCM advises the public to be cautious when asked for personal, bank card, or account information through suspicious links. If in doubt, individuals should contact the bank or the Judiciary Police.

POLICE UNCOVER FALSE EMPLOYMENT SCHEME, ARREST TWO MEN

Police have uncovered a false employment case involving a local restaurant owner in his 50s and a man in his 40s posing as a foreign employee. The investigation began after a mainland man was arrested in connection with illegal online betting activities. Suspecting his expatriate status, police referred him to the Public Security Police, who found discrepancies in his blue card. The local restaurant owner was later intercepted at Hengqin port and admitted to the crime, having falsely employed the man to retain outsourcing quotas.

WOMAN SUSPECTED OF MAKING FALSE RAPE ACCUSATIONS

A 25-year-old woman from the mainland has been sent to the Public Prosecutions Office for investigation after being suspected of making false rape accusations. The woman had reported to police on Saturday that she was repeatedly raped by an elderly man in a hotel room in the peninsula. However, police investigations revealed that the two had met over a month ago via messaging app and had consensual interactions during their meeting in late February. The woman showed no signs of resistance, and the case is believed to involve a money dispute.

EDUCATION

CONTINUING EDUCATION SCHEME REACHES ONLY 21.6% OF TARGETED POPULATION

RENATO MARQUES

DATA supplied by the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) and analyzed by the Times revealed that the Continuing Education and Development Scheme (Continuing Education) has benefited less than one-quarter of its targeted population.

According to official statistics from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) from the 2021 Census, the population of Macau aged 15 and older (~85%) has remained around 580,000 people over the past few years.

In response to the Times, the DSEDJ noted that more than 125,000 residents participated in the previous triennial Continuing Education program (2020-2023). This figure accounts for just 21.6% of the targeted population of about 580,000 people.

"The 2020-2023 Continuing Education and Development Scheme saw the participation of more than 125,000 residents, with a total of about 258,000 enrollments," the DSEDJ stated in response to the Times' inquiry.

In the same response, the DSEDJ also noted that "the Continuing Education and Development Scheme aims to create favorable conditions for lifelong learning, encouraging Macau residents aged 15 and older as of January 1 of the relevant scheme commencement year to enhance their personal qualities, capabilities, and skills by pursuing continuing education or obtaining certification. This, in turn, contributes to Macau's economic and industrial diversification and the development of a learning society."

The education authorities also highlighted that among those who enrolled in programs between 2020 and 2023, "residents aged between 15 and 39 accounted for a larger proportion, with most opting for vocational skills development courses."

The scheme has been criticized several times for its inefficiency and high incidence of fraud. Following several cases of wrongdoing by institutions and applicants, the DSEDJ enforced various changes to verify program attendance records.



Many residents also criticized the scheme's limited options for those who do not read and write Chinese, as almost all courses offered require such language skills.

There has also been public criticism that the scheme is not focused on providing residents with practical skills that could enhance their employability.

Comments on social media also suggested that some residents have misused this government subsidy by falsely claiming eligibility to attend yoga classes, the gym, and other leisure and recreational activities for which the program was not intended.

The DSEDJ also noted that in the current triennial scheme (2023-2026), which started on July 1, 2023, "some 64,000 residents have taken part in relevant activities, involving about 116,000 enrollments."

This data covers enrollments until January 2025, 19 months into the plan's 36-month duration. Projections indicate that the current plan is expected to yield similar participation rates as the 2020-2023 cycle.

MANY RESIDENTS CITE 'LACK OF TIME' AS A BARRIER

When questioned by the Times, several Macau residents revealed that they had never used the

scheme since its inception, while others stated that they had only used it to obtain a driving license.

Most residents aged 25 and older said they were unable to attend any of the courses due to work duties and irregular work shifts.

Most of those who had recently enrolled in a course under the Continuing Education Scheme were students and young graduates, who reported doing so while

The scheme has been criticized several times for its inefficiency and high incidence of fraud

unemployed and searching for a job. Among the most frequently mentioned courses were baking and barista/latte art.

LAWMAKER PROPOSES MAJOR REVAMP

Recently, lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho announced plans to submit a suggestion to the Chief Executive (CE) before the 2025 Policy Address.

His proposal includes several benefits for the population, one of which is the MOP 6,000 subsidy for Continuing Educa-

tion programs.

Pereira Coutinho argued that the scheme has not reached a significant portion of the population and that much of the allocated funding ultimately remains unused and returns to government accounts.

He suggested that a more effective and practical approach would be to distribute this sum directly as part of the government's cash handouts. This would allow each eligible recipient to use the funds based on their individual needs.

The lawmaker emphasized that people face different financial situations and, while some might use the money to finance their studies, others might need it for more urgent expenses, such as food or rent.

He also pointed out that elderly residents require different types of support than younger people, a factor the current benefit structure fails to consider.

To address these concerns, he proposed that the government redistribute its financial resources more effectively by either increasing the amount of cash handouts or introducing a new round of consumption cards, ensuring that public funds benefit both residents and local businesses.

www.macaudailytimes.com.mo

REACHING OUT!

+25,000

Like us on facebook.com/mdtimes



MacauDaily 澳門每日時報
Times

DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR_Lynzy Valles
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS_Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS_Alex Torrão, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Jorge Costa Oliveira, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Sérgio de Almeida Correia, Viviana Segú, Victoria Chan DESIGNER_Melissandre Denize | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS_JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES_Associated Press, MacauHub, MacaoNews, Xinhua SECRETARY_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

A MACAU TIMES PUBLICATIONS LTD PUBLICATION

ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com
OFFICE MANAGER_Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com
ADDRESS_Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84
Advertisement_advertising@macaudailytimes.com
For subscription and general issues: general@macaudailytimes.com | Printed at Welfare Printing Ltd

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

ECONOMY

Fitch projects that GDP growth will decelerate to 6.9% in 2025

LYNZY VALLES

FITCH forecasts GDP growth will slow to 6.9% in 2025, down from 8.8% in 2024, as gross gaming revenue (GGR) grows more slowly, reaching around 81% of its pre-pandemic levels.

Despite a strong rebound in 2024, with gaming revenue rising by 23.8%, growth in the sector is expected to moderate in 2025.

As Macau enjoys strong public finances and a solid external position, the region continues to grapple with challenges stemming from its dependence on the gaming sector.

Fitch Ratings has maintained Macau's credit rating due to the territory's exceptional public finances and fiscal management, which have demonstrated resilience even during periods of economic strain. A key strength is the region's substantial fiscal reserves, which remain free from government debt.

By the end of 2024, fiscal reser-



ves were up 6.2% year-on-year, reaching MOP616 billion. This financial cushion provides the territory with a significant buffer against external volatility.

According to the report issued by Fitch yesterday, the agency noted that Macau's external financial position is similarly strong, with a projected current account surplus

of 33.9% of GDP in 2025, driven by services exports from the gaming and tourism sectors.

This surplus reflects the city's role as a key player in the global gaming market.

However, the economy remains highly dependent on gaming, which limits its diversification.

The territory's foreign exchange

reserves stood at USD30 billion in January 2025, covering about 4.5 times its monetary base.

Meanwhile, visitor arrivals showed significant growth in early 2024, with 8.88 million visitors in the first quarter, a 79.4% year-on-year increase.

However, growth began to taper in subsequent quarters, with thir-

d-quarter visitor arrivals totaling 9.2 million, marking only an 11.1% year-on-year rise. Mainland China accounted for the majority of visitors (6.68 million), while arrivals from Hong Kong declined by 6%.

The mass-market gaming segment, driven by tourism from mainland China, is expected to continue recovering, though the VIP segment remains well below pre-pandemic levels due to tighter regulations.

The government is focused on diversifying its economy, with plans to expedite non-gaming industries and deepen integration with mainland China. Efforts to develop the Hengqin cooperation zone and ease visa restrictions are part of this strategy.

However, significant challenges remain in reducing the territory's reliance on gaming, particularly due to human capital constraints.

On the fiscal front, Macau is expected to continue running a budget surplus, forecasted to rise modestly to 4.2% of GDP in 2025.

The government's spending restraint, combined with strong revenue collection, should help support social welfare and infrastructure development.

While Macau's financial position is strong, vulnerabilities exist, as a sharp slowdown in mainland China's economy or significant policy changes could negatively impact the territory's growth prospects.

LABOR

Gaming op's alleged unfair dismissals prompt calls for gov't investigation

LYNZY VALLES

LOCAL employees of a gaming operator have allegedly been unfairly dismissed without explanation, prompting calls for a thorough government investigation into the matter.

Lawmaker Ron Lam highlighted the issue in a social media post after receiving reports from affected employees. According to Lam, several workers sought his assistance after being unexpectedly terminated on February 28.

The employees claim they were dismissed without prior notice, explanation, or the option for a job transfer—actions they describe as “unreasonable dismissal.”

“Several employees from various departments at the gaming operator were abruptly let go without any reason or explanation,” Lam said. Lam voiced opposition to the layoffs, stating that they raise questions about



the company's corporate social responsibility and adherence to its commitment to prioritizing local employment.

He urged authorities to investigate and take action to safeguard local jobs.

According to the lawmaker, multiple employees across various departments were dismissed without a stated cause. Some affected workers cited industry speculation that the go-

vernment had permitted gaming operators to carry out layoffs, with only one major company yet to do so.

“The affected employees also mentioned that earlier this year, there were already rumors circulating in the industry that the government had ‘approved’ gaming operators to lay off staff,” the lawmaker said.

Lam stated that while Macau's economy has yet to make a full recovery, gaming

operators have swiftly bounced back to profitability, employing over 27,000 non-resident workers as of June 2024.

He then warned that if major gaming operators begin dismissing local employees without justification, it could negatively impact the community and set a concerning precedent for the employment sector. “In this context, if the six gaming operators unjustifiably terminate local employees, it will not only be unacceptable to the community but also set a troubling precedent,” he warned.

He further emphasized, “This will worsen Macau's already severe employment challenges. The government must take decisive action to investigate and put a stop to this practice.”

He called on the government to conduct an investigation and clarify the policies allowing gaming enterprises to lay off local employees without offering alternative employment options.

STATS

JOB VACANCIES IN GAMING SECTOR DROP

THE gaming sector saw a positive shift in its workforce by the end of the fourth quarter of 2024, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). The number of full-time employees in the sector increased by 2.3% year-on-year, totaling 52,971. Among them, dealers numbered 23,618, reflecting a 1.1% rise.

Average earnings in the sector also saw a significant uptick, with the average salary for full-time employees reaching MOP26,890 in December, a 6.3% increase from the previous year.

Dealers' average earnings grew by 2.9%, reaching

MOP21,470.

Job vacancies in the sector dropped by 147 year-on-year, with 253 openings at the end of the quarter. Most vacancies were for clerks (90), followed by directors and managers (54).

The majority of vacancies (64.8%) required prior work experience, and 62.5% sought candidates with at least a secondary education.

Employee turnover showed moderate changes, with 1,148 new recruits and 812 departures in the quarter.

Recruitment increased slightly, while turnover and vacancy rates decreased, indicating improvement in workforce stability.

GOVERNANCE

CE GATHERS EXPERT OPINIONS FOR POLICY ADDRESS 2025 AND ECONOMIC STRATEGY

RENATO MARQUES

BEFORE departing for Beijing, Chief Executive (CE) Sam Hou Fai met with local economists and scholars to hear their opinions and suggestions on preparing this year's Policy Address.

During the meeting, Pang Chuan, vice-rector of the Macau University of Science and Technology and dean of the School of Graduate Studies, noted President Xi Jinping's visit and commented on ideas for building a hub for high-quality international talent. He suggested that the government invest more in the Science and Technology Development Fund and establish a mechanism to attract international talent and support the diversification of Macau's economy.

In turn, Samuel Tong, president of the Macao Institute of Management and chairman of the board of directors of the Macao Political Economy Research Association, suggested that the government create a mechanism for human capital accumulation and promote the comprehensive upgrading and conversion of traditional industries.

He added that the government should accelerate the second phase of the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin and fully seize the opportunities presented by the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area (GBA).

Meanwhile, Matthew Liu, director of the University of Macau (UM) Centre for Continuing Education, professor at the University of Macau's Faculty of Business Administration, and a member of the Economic Development Council, suggested that the government capitalize on the advantages of the 'One country, two systems' policy and attract international companies to Hengqin. At the same time, it should efficiently utilize some unused land in Macau and introduce inter-



national capital into tenders.

At the same meeting, Ricardo Siu, associate professor of UM's School of Business Administration, pointed out that Macau should strengthen the development of the local economy, support the technological transformation of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), leverage its unique tourism resources to increase visitor spending, prepare for uncertainties in the financial market, and organize the government budget more efficiently and prudently.

At the same meeting, Henry Lei, associate head of UM's Faculty of Business Administration and vice-president of the board of directors of the Macau Economic Association, argued that the government should help SMEs enhance their business capacity, provide business diagnostic services, actively attract investment, and focus on attracting technology firms to Macau to create more opportunities for innovation.

Loi Hoi Ngan, associate professor at the Centre for Political, Economic, and Social Studies of the Macao Polytechnic University and

vice-president of the board of the Strategic Research Centre for Macao Development, suggested that the government's policymaking should focus on consolidating economic foundations and fostering innovation. He also advocated for increasing government purchases from local SMEs, unlocking "data islands," leveraging data for precise policy formulation, and strengthening Guangdong-Macau cooperation.

Lei Ngan Leng, chairwoman of the Grand Thought Think Tank and executive president of the GBA Institute of the City University of Macau, recommended that the government improve overall planning and coordination, draft the third five-year plan of the SAR, enhance the efficiency of interdepartmental work, streamline policy communication, establish a monitoring and evaluation mechanism, and enhance urban planning and management to improve public well-being and sustainable socio-economic development.

Other members of the think tank, including Wang Changbin, Liu Chengkun, Song Yanan, and

Chan Kin Sun, also shared their perspectives on promoting the healthy development of the gaming industry, supporting SMEs, integrating Macau and Hengqin, expanding the skilled labor pool, developing the maritime economy, advancing elderly care policies and social security systems, and expanding e-governance initiatives.

Lawmaker Cheung Kin Chung, honorary president of the Union of Macau Scholars, pointed out that visitors' consumption patterns in Macau have changed, making them more cautious and selective. He suggested that the government focus on attracting high-spending visitors, promoting tourism across different districts, creating distinctive tourist zones, and developing major landmark projects to boost the city's cultural and tourism industries.

Lao Pun Lap noted that many local SMEs face operational challenges due to declining consumer demand in a complex economic environment. He urged the government to strengthen support for SMEs, helping them innovate and adapt to market changes.

Other members of the Union of Macau Scholars, including Lin Zhi-jun and former lawmaker Mak Soi Kun, also expressed their views on enhancing coordination between the In-depth Cooperation Zone and Macau in civil and commercial matters, fostering non-gaming industries, improving employment competitiveness, upgrading urban infrastructure, and attracting consumers to the Cooperation Zone.

The CE acknowledged the suggestions and emphasized the importance of addressing global economic instability and uncertainty. He highlighted that shifts in financial cycles and consumer behavior pose new challenges.

He stressed that the government must address the unbalanced development of Macau's economy, continue promoting industrial diversification, and support the sustainable development of SMEs.

He encouraged experts and scholars to continue providing constructive opinions, collaborate on long-term planning, and help the public better understand the government's economic and policy direction.

SURVEY

Residents face tougher path to business ownership

A recent survey conducted by the Macau Management Association between May and August last year indicates that economic recovery has positively impacted promotion opportunities within enterprises. The survey, which gathered

responses from 1,042 individuals via an online questionnaire, shows that the proportion of respondents who have not been promoted has decreased to approximately 44%.

The survey also found that around 74% of respondents do not intend to

change jobs.

Those who are considering a job switch are primarily employed in the hotel, catering, and wholesale/retail sectors.

Meanwhile, only 9% of respondents expressed an interest in starting their own business.

According to the association, the findings reflect a growing preference for job stability among residents.

The association noted that starting a business has become more challenging compared to the past, as modern entrepreneurship now often requires a strong

professional skillset or technological expertise.

"Nowadays, people prefer stable employment, which also indicates that post-pandemic, they place greater value on their current jobs. In the past, starting a business was easier, even for lower-level entrepreneurs. However, today's entrepreneurial environment demands professional skills to succeed," the group said.

The association recommended that employees

focus on self-improvement, regularly assess their career goals, and develop cross-sectoral skills, adding that companies should enhance salaries and benefits while implementing a transparent promotion mechanism.

The group suggested that the government should review labor-related regulations periodically and establish a structured seniority framework to foster stronger cooperation with the Greater Bay Area. LV

TRADE WAR

China slaps extra tariffs of up to 15% on imports of major US farm exports

CHINA announced yesterday it will impose additional tariffs of up to 15% on imports of key U.S. farm products, including chicken, pork, soy and beef, and also expanded controls on doing business with U.S. companies.

The tariffs announced by the Commerce Ministry are due to take effect from March 10. They follow U.S. President Donald Trump's order to raise tariffs on imports of Chinese products to 20% across the board. Those took effect yesterday.

Imports of U.S. grown chicken, wheat, corn and cotton will face an extra 15% tariff, it said. The tariff on sorghum, soybeans, pork, beef, seafoods, fruit, vegetables and dairy products will be increased by 10%.

Also yesterday, Beijing placed 10 more U.S. firms on its unreliable entity list, which would bar them from engaging in China-related import or export activities and from making new invest-

AP PHOTO



ments in the country.

The firms listed are TCOM, Partnership; Stick Rudder Enterprises LLC; Teledyne Brown Engineering; Huntington Ingalls Industries; S3 AeroDefense; Cubic Corporation; TextOre; ACT1 Federal; Exovera and Planate Management Group.

The addition of the 10 companies comes after China last month added two firms, fashion company PVH Group and biotechnology company Illumina, to the unreliable entities list.

Separately, China added 15 U.S. companies to its export control list, including aerospace and

defense companies like General Dynamics Land Systems and General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, among others.

"China has decided to include 15 U.S. entities that endanger China's national security and interests in the export control list, prohibiting the export of dual-u-

se items to them," the ministry said in a statement.

China is a major importer of American farm products, though its purchases dipped after Trump launched a trade war during his first term in office, and then recovered.

In 2021-22, the United States logged record export values to China for soybeans, corn, beef, chicken meat, tree nuts, and sorghum. Cotton exports to China also rebounded, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. U.S. farm exports to China totaled \$33.8 billion in fiscal 2023 and \$36.4 billion in fiscal 2022.

But China has been diversifying its sources for farm imports, buying more soybeans from Brazil and Argentina, among other growers.

The Commerce Ministry included about two dozen U.S. farm exports subject to additional 15% tariffs, including chicken feet and wings, and 711 items subject to an extra 10% tariff. **MDT/AP**

AD

仁德 CENTRO MEDICO PEDDER
• 仁德醫療中心 •

We bring high quality of medical service to Macau

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

Breast Surgery : Dr. Leong Iat Lun

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

Paediatric Surgery : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong

Paediatrics : Dr. Zhang Zhiqin

Obstetrics & Gynaecology : Dr. Fong Kuan Io

Plastic & Aesthetic Surgery : Dr. Lam U Lin

Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine : Dr. Lam Kun Kuan

ENT : Dr. Cheng Zheng Ang


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

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

Dietitian : Chan Lai U Joey

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

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

Discover Now  T +853 2856 7888
Terms & conditions apply

ARTYZEN
GRAND LAPA MACAU
澳門雅辰酒店

BEIJING'S DEFLATION DILEMMA

FALLING PRICES SIGNAL BIGGER TROUBLES
AHEAD FOR CHINA'S ECONOMY

SIMINA MISTREANU, BEIJING

WHEN he bought an apartment near a good high school in northeast Beijing in 2020, Zhou Fujin expected that renting it out would cover most of his mortgage. But the apartment's value and the rent he is getting have plummeted in the past couple years, straining his family's finances.

China is experiencing a spell of deflation, or falling prices, that contrasts with inflationary pressures prevailing elsewhere in the world. Cheaper prices can be a blessing for some, but deflation is a symptom of relatively weak demand and stalling economic growth.

Such challenges are the backdrop to the annual session of China's parliament, which begins today. It's unclear what the ruling Communist Party might do to tackle the problem, though some economists expect Beijing to announce more government spending. Observers also will be watching for changes to the annual economic growth target, which has hovered near 5% for the past two years.

These are broad, long-term problems. Falling housing prices have left many families reluctant to spend, while factories keep churning out goods.

Economy-wide, prices fell in 2023 and 2024, the longest bout of deflation since the 1960s. The gross domestic product deflator – the broadest measure of price changes in an economy – dipped to -0.8% in the last three months of 2024, compared to -0.5% the quarter before, meaning that deflation has intensified.

TIGHTENED PURSE STRINGS

Deflation is an abstract economic concept but it reflects very concretely in Zhou's personal balance sheet, as it does for millions of others. Zhou's apartment, in Beijing's Miyun district, cost 2 million yuan (\$275,000) when he bought it in 2020, and he financed it with an 800,000 yuan (\$110,000) bank loan. The rent he charges has fallen from 2,300 yuan (\$316) monthly to 1,700 yuan (\$234). His monthly mortgage payment is more than 3,000 yuan (\$413), and the apartment is now worth only about 1.4 million yuan (\$193,000), he says.

Around the time Zhou bought his apartment, the government began cracking down on excess borrowing by real estate



Residential complexes are seen in Miyun district in northeastern Beijing

developers, pushing the industry into crisis and many property companies into default. The father of two runs a real estate brokerage firm, which has been hemorrhaging money over the past four years. He has since expanded into home decoration services, helping him to break even.

"Given that I work in the real estate sector, my income has been greatly affected," Zhou told The Associated Press. "My biggest spending is on bank mortgages, my car and my children's education. I've cut other expenditures such as travel. Even my children have realized that money is not easy to earn, and they are willing to spend less."

Lu Wanyong, who owns a picture framing workshop in Beijing, says he gets only one or two customers a day, down from more than a dozen before the pandemic. Many now prefer to fix broken picture frames rather than buy new ones. Fewer new homeowners come in looking to decorate their apartments.

Lu's family has burned through its savings and he fears that soon he won't be able to pay his shop's 6,000 yuan (\$825) rent.

"I am considering shifting to other industries, but the problem is that I am not familiar with any of them. And as a matter of fact, which industry is easy to work in nowadays?" he pondered.

A 'DEFLATIONARY SPIRAL'

Deflation can be harder for governments to tackle than inflation, experts say, because that requires fixing the underlying issues behind it.

In China's case, it's a combination of excess capacity – manufactured goods produced in such quantities the market cannot absorb them all – and the reluctance of consumers to spend and businesses to invest, due to concerns about the sluggish economy. Also, the housing crisis has wiped out an estimated \$18 trillion of household wealth, according to a Barclays report, on top of job losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"When the real estate market is booming, people believe that they are very rich," said He-Ling Shi, an associate professor of economics at Australia's Monash University. "If people believe that they're rich, they tend to spend their income on consumption. But with the decrease in the price of housing in most parts of China, people believe that they're no longer as rich as before, so ... they want to increase their savings and reduce their consumption."

When prices fall, companies' profits also take a hit. That can spur a so-called "deflationary spiral" of layoffs that further reduce household incomes, leading to even less consumption and potentially to a recession or depression. Fitch Ra-

tings in November warned that deflation is becoming entrenched in China and urged its leaders to adopt policies that can boost demand.

Meanwhile, U.S. President Donald Trump has imposed new 20% tariffs on Chinese exports that are expected to shave up to 1.1 percentage points off China's GDP growth this year in a "severe scenario" where Chinese exports to the U.S. fall by half, said Erica Tay, director of macro research at Maybank Investment Banking Group.

A SENSITIVE ISSUE FOR THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Deflation is a ticklish issue for China's leaders, who began cutting interest rates and required mortgage down-payments last fall. They have launched programs to get local governments to buy unsold apartments to rent out as affordable housing and are encouraging banks to lend more money.

But top leaders tend to focus their public comments on the ruling party's accomplishments and avoid directly mentioning deflation, a thorny problem with no quick fixes.

"They try to do their best to avoid the word 'deflation' because they believe that will make consumers even more panicked," Shi said. "If they become more panicked, they will further reduce their consumption and therefore make the situation worse."

Some economists, including

Michael Pettis, a professor of finance at Guanghua School of Management at Peking University, say the economy can only be rebalanced if consumers gain purchasing power. That requires reducing the share of wealth going into unproductive investments.

The government has sought to encourage more spending by issuing vouchers, while shying away from more fundamental economic reforms.

"Economic recovery should be linked to a rise in people's incomes" said Sun Lijian, professor at the School of Economics at Fudan University. "The government should provide vouchers to help people purchase what they need; this has proven to be an effective way."

Louis Kuijs, chief Asia economist for S&P Global Ratings, says China needs to address long-term, chronic problems including excess industrial production and inefficient state industries. Revamping health care, pensions and education systems would make people "more comfortable about their financial situation."

"In the short term, simply anything that increases household incomes will help on the consumption side," Kuijs said, "but probably more importantly is that structural reform element ... and that requires beefing up of the government's role in health, education and social security."

MDT/AP

TWO SESSIONS

The economy and AI are likely to be among the top issues for the legislature

SIMINA MISTREANU, BEIJING

HARNESSING the power of artificial intelligence and shoring up the economy are among the issues expected to top the agenda when the National People's Congress (NPC) meets today in Beijing.

Almost 2,900 delegates have arrived in Beijing for the annual session of the parliament. Concomitantly, an advisory body of business leaders, athletes and academics, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, convened yesterday. The two bodies' concurrent meetings are known as the Two Sessions.

The weeklong parliamentary session helps to signal government priorities for the year. Premier Li Qiang is expected to announce an economic growth target of around 5%, in line with the past couple of years.

The meetings come as China's economy struggles with sluggish consumption, a lengthy property crisis, ballooning government debt and a possible renewed trade war with the United States. yesterday, Beijing announced additional tariffs of up to 15% on imports on U.S. farm products including chicken, pork, soy and beef. The move came in retaliation for an increase in flat U.S. tariffs on Chinese products – from 10% to 20% – that came in effect at the same time.

“Undoubtedly, the adverse impacts brought by the external en-

vironment have deepened, and China's economy still faces some difficulties and challenges,” said Lou Qinjian, spokesman for the National People's Congress in a news conference ahead of the session.

“Internationally, rising economic and political uncertainties make it harder to stabilize external demand. Domestically, demand is insufficient, and some enterprises are experiencing operational difficulties,” he added.

The government is expected to

announce some measures to boost consumption such as increasing the deficit ratio from 3% to 4%, though massive stimulus is unlikely.

Harnessing the power of artificial intelligence may also feature in policy announcements.

Lou described China's breakthrough DeepSeek AI model, unveiled earlier this year, as an example of the country's “innovative and inclusive approach to technology.”

The delegates are also set to review a law aimed at improving

market conditions for private enterprises, as part of the government's wider effort to signal support for the public sector to shore up growth.

Chinese President Xi Jinping met in February with business leaders, including Alibaba founder Jack Ma and Huawei CEO Ren Zhengfei, signaling support at the highest level of leadership.

“Xi realizes he needs the private sector to keep his underlying priorities chugging along,” said Neil Thomas, a fellow on Chinese politics

at the Asia Society Policy Institute. “Improving China's innovation capabilities, improving China's technological self-reliance - the private sector is pretty good at this stuff, and Xi wants to harness rather than set free the private sector energy to achieve these goals.”

Beijing is also expected to unveil its defense budget for 2025. Last year, China announced a 7.2% increase in its defense budget, which is the world's second-highest behind the United States'. **MDT/AP**



DIRE STRAIT

Taiwan says boost in defense spending coming amid mainland threats

TAIWAN'S defense minister says the island is planning to boost military spending in the face of the “rapidly changing international situation and the escalating threats from adversaries.”

Wellington Koo gave no figures but said leader William Lai Ching-te was working with the ministry in consideration of enemy threats and urgent readiness needs, a reference to China's threats to invade the island, part of greater China's territory.

Those would “increase the proportion of the defense budget in relation to GDP,” Koo said, in comments Monday that were embargoed until yesterday. Taiwan currently spends about 2.45% of its gross domestic product on its military.

“At the same time, in coordination with national security and foreign policy, the military will continue to deepen cooperation with the United States and other allied nations, expanding multilateral military exchan-



Soldiers cover M1167 HMMWV anti-tank missile carriers during military drills in Pingtung County, southern Taiwan

ges to jointly uphold regional peace and stability,” Koo said.

Taiwan sees a growing threat from China, which regularly sends ships

and aircraft into areas near Taiwan. China is expected to announce its annual defense budget today.

Xinhua, China's state-

-run news agency, reported that senior Chinese official Wang Huning during an annual meeting about Taiwan had called for China to take the initiative in cross-strait relations and push toward the “reunification of the motherland.”

The government in Taipei condemned China's military exercises last week after Beijing designated an area to conduct shooting drills off the self-governed island's southwest coast.

Along with the latest equipment, the military is seeking funds to increase retention of service people through higher pay, and will need additional funds to accommodate a lengthening of compulsory national service from four months to one year.

United States President Donald Trump has also demanded the self-governing island that relies on the U.S. for much of its cutting-edge weaponry, increase defense spending to up to 10% of GDP, a proportion well above what the U.S. or any of its major allies spend.

China's actions have also unsettled neighbors in the South China Sea and other parts of the Indo-Pacific.

Leaders in Australia and New Zealand also said China should have given them more warning before its navy conducted an unusual series of live fire exercises in the seas between the two countries last month, forcing flights to divert on short notice. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



TRADE WAR

US tariffs on Canada and Mexico take effect, as China takes aim at US farm exports

PRESIDENT Donald Trump's long-threatened tariffs against Canada and Mexico went into effect yesterday, putting global markets on edge and setting up costly retaliations by the United States' North American allies.

Starting just past midnight, imports from Canada and Mexico are now to be taxed at 25%, with Canadian energy products subject to 10% import duties.

The 10% tariff that Trump placed on Chinese imports in February was doubled to 20%, and Beijing retaliated yesterday with tariffs of up to 15% on a wide array of U.S. farm exports. It also expanded the number of U.S. companies subject to export controls and other restrictions by about two dozen.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his country would slap tariffs on more than \$100 billion of American goods over the course of 21 days. Mexico didn't immediately detail any retaliatory measures.

The U.S. president's moves raised fears of higher inflation and the prospect of a devastating trade war even as he promised the American public that taxes on imports are the easiest path to national prosperity. He has shown a willingness to buck the warnings of mainstream economists and put his own public approval on the line, believing that tariffs

can fix what ails the country. "It's a very powerful weapon that politicians haven't used because they were either dishonest, stupid or paid off in some other form," Trump said Monday at the White House. "And now we're using them."

The Canada and Mexico tariffs were supposed to begin in February, but Trump agreed to a 30-day suspension to negotiate further with the two largest U.S. trading partners. The stated reason for the tariffs is to address drug trafficking and illegal immigration, and both countries say they've made progress on those issues. But Trump has also said the tariffs will only come down if the U.S. trade imbalance closes, a process unlikely to be settled on a political timeline.

The tariffs may be short-lived if the U.S. economy suffers. But Trump could also impose more tariffs on the European Union, India, computer chips, autos and pharmaceutical drugs. The American president has injected a disorienting volatility into the world economy, leaving it off balance as people wonder what he'll do next.

"It's chaotic, especially compared to the way we saw tariffs rolled out in the first (Trump) administration," said Michael House, co-chair of the international trade practice at the Perkins Coie law firm. "It's unpredictable. We don't know, in fact, what the president will do."

Democratic lawmakers were quick to criticize the tariffs, and even some Republican senators raised alarms.

Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, said she's "very concerned" about the tariffs going into effect because of her state's proximity to Canada.

"Maine and Canada's economy are integrated," Collins said, explaining that much of the state's lobsters and blueberries are processed in Canada and then sent back to the U.S.

The world economy is now caught in the fog of what appears to be a trade war.

Even after Trump announced Monday that the tariffs were going forward, Canadian officials were still in touch with their U.S. counterparts.

"The dialogue will continue, but we are ready to respond," Canadian Defense Minister Bill Blair said in Ottawa as he went into a special Cabinet meeting on U.S.-Canada relations. "There are still discussions taking place."

Shortly after Blair spoke, Trudeau said Canada would impose 25% tariffs on \$155 billion Canadian (\$107 billion U.S.) worth of American goods, starting with tariffs on \$30 billion Canadian (\$21 billion U.S.) worth of goods immediately and on the remaining amount on American products in three weeks.

"Our tariffs will remain in place until the U.S. trade ac-

tion is withdrawn, and should U.S. tariffs not cease, we are in active and ongoing discussions with provinces and territories to pursue several non-tariff measures," Trudeau said.

The White House would like to see a drop in seizures of fentanyl inside the United States, not just on the northern and southern borders. Administration officials say that seizures of fentanyl last month in everywhere from Louisiana to New Jersey had ties to foreign cartels.

Damon Pike, technical practice leader for customs and trade services at the tax and consulting firm BDO, suggested the responses of other countries could escalate trade tensions and possibly increase the economic pressure points.

"Canada has their list ready," Pike said. "The EU has their list ready. It's going to be tit for tat."

The Trump administration has suggested inflation will not be as bad as economists claim, saying tariffs can motivate foreign companies to open factories in the United States. On Monday, Trump announced that Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, the computer chipmaker, would be investing \$100 billion in domestic production.

Still, it can take time to relocate factories spread across the world and train workers with the skills they need. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1953 SOVIET LEADER 'ON BRINK OF DEATH'



Rumours are circulating in Moscow that Joseph Stalin, the long-time leader of the Soviet Union, is near death.

The first official news of Mr Stalin's illness came in a statement on Wednesday.

It said the Soviet leader, who came to power in 1928, had suffered a cerebral haemorrhage on Wednesday night.

An update issued earlier today mentioned "sharp disturbances of the heart functions".

There is speculation that the 73-year-old, born Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili, in the Soviet republic of Georgia, is now in the final stages of an illness he has been suffering some time.

Soviet newspapers today are clearly preparing their readers for the worst.

Their front pages carry the bulletins on Mr Stalin's health as well as sombre leading articles.

On the inside pages, feature articles praise the Soviet leader both as a man and politician.

World leaders have expressed concern for Mr Stalin's health.

A statement issued by the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said his private secretary, John Colville, had yesterday called on the Soviet ambassador.

Mr Colville had passed on the prime minister's regret at the news of Mr Stalin's ill-health and asked to be kept informed of his progress, the statement said.

US President Truman also expressed sympathy for Mr Stalin.

"I am sorry just as I would be if such a thing happened to any other acquaintance of mine," Mr Truman said.

If Mr Stalin's death is confirmed, he will be most remembered for instigating political purges in which tens of thousands were killed.

He was also behind the introduction of farming collectives which led to a famine and the death of up to 10 million people.

His death is expected to provoke a power struggle within the ruling Politburo.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The death of Joseph Stalin was officially announced at just after 0100 GMT on 6 March.

The statement said he had died at 2150 local time on 5 March.

Hundreds of thousands of people queued to see Joseph Stalin's body lying-in-state. He was embalmed and put on display alongside the first Soviet leader, Vladimir Illyich Lenin, in his mausoleum in Red Square in Moscow.

But Nikita Khrushchev, who became Soviet leader after a power struggle, led a move to denounce Stalin as a tyrant who caused millions of deaths.

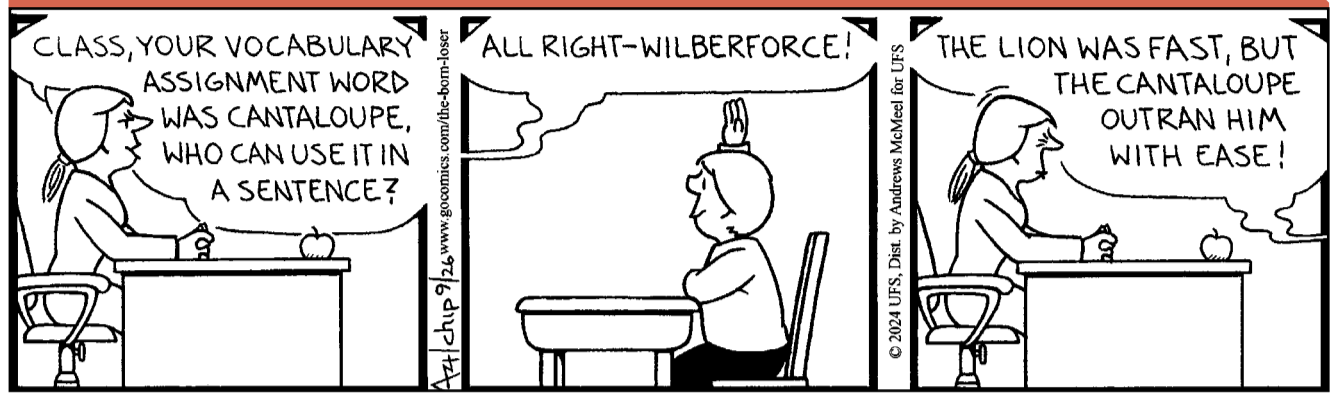
In 1961 Stalin's body was removed from its place in the honoured Lenin's Tomb. It was reburied near the Kremlin wall along with other minor figures from the Bolshevik Revolution.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

 ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19 An unexpected development impacts your cash flow. Extra caution is needed. Make repairs or adjustments. Investigate options before spending. Adapt for a positive balance.	 TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20 Fall into a lucky break or startling insight. Pursue a personal dream and get farther than expected. Rely on experienced friends for support.
 GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21 Meditate on the possibilities ahead. Unexpected opportunities arise. Draw upon hidden resources. Routine strengthens your abilities. Enjoy peaceful reflection. Take a walk outside.	 CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Get help building a dream. Throw your support alongside others who share your commitment, passion and purpose. Realize a vision through coordinated teamwork.
 LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Pursue a professional dream. Long term gains come one step at a time. Follow plans and rules methodically. Unexpected developments offer new opportunities.	 VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22 Your travels and investigations reveal unexpected treasure. Advance a vision for far-reaching impact. Slow and steady does it. Chalk up another educational experience.
 LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22 Take advantage of an unplanned opportunity for shared financial gain. Handle insurance or legal matters. Discipline pays extra cash. Pursue deals, sales and marketing.	 SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21 Your self-discipline is contagious. Coordinate efforts with your partner. Reduce waste and clutter. Discover small efficiencies that add up. Share special moments together.
 SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Good news benefits your work and health. Go for a physical goal. Maintain your practices and routines despite interruptions or distractions. Outsmart the competition.	 CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Grab a chance to realize a romantic dream. Discipline is required. Play by the rules. Make changes for the better. Share your heart.
 AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Savor domestic projects. Clean, sort and organize. You and another are bonded by a shared dream. Discuss fantasies and prioritize practicalities. Celebrate results together.	 PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20 You can solve a puzzle. The rewards are long-lasting. An old dream seems newly possible. Reaffirm a commitment. Get feedback from an experienced friend.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

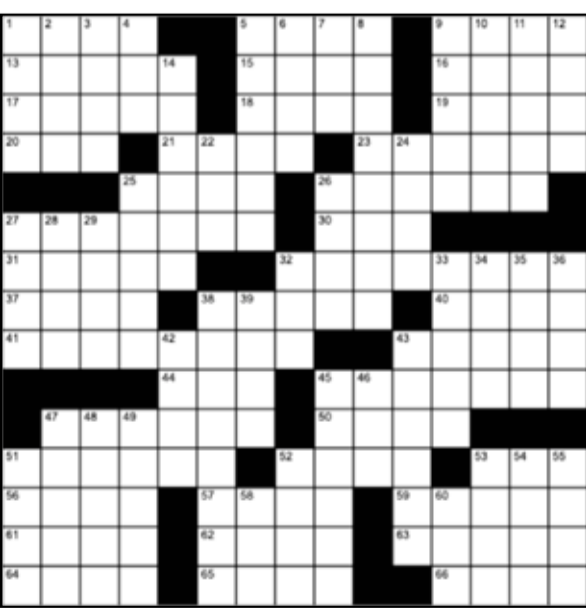
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-1	13	fine
Changchun	-6	4	fine
Chengdu	9	10	rain
Chongqing	11	13	rain
Fuzhou	11	14	rain
Guangzhou	13	16	rain
Guiyang	3	6	rain
Haikou	22	29	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	5	10	cloudy
Harbin	-10	1	cloudy
Hefei	1	8	overcast
Nanjing	3	9	cloudy
Shanghai	5	9	rain
Taipei	15	17	rain
Wuhan	1	10	cloudy
Hong Kong	16	21	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	1	2	snow
Frankfurt	0	12	sunny
Paris	4	14	sunny
London	5	13	sunny
New York	11	13	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Indian wrap; 5- Tough trip; 9- Razor name; 13- Fabric; 15- Costa ___; 16- Good earth; 17- We ___ please; 18- Long time; 19- Basic unit of heredity; 20- Numbered hwy.; 21- Destroy; 23- Protects; 25- Technical sch.; 26- Diner; 27- Lounges; 30- Rapping Dr.; 31- Be; 32- Synthetic rubber; 37- Swarm; 38- Low-budget prefix; 40- Creme-filled snack; 41- Estimator; 43- Ancient; 44- NASCAR sponsor; 45- Decapitates; 47- Final taker; 50- Periods of history; 51- Curd stuff; 52- Teri of "Tootsie"; 53- Altar words; 56- Sassy; 57- Castle protection; 59- Summed; 61- Met highlight; 62- Vogue rival; 63- Sift; 64- Hook's helper; 65- Faculty head; 66- Greek temple;

DOWN 1- Surgery reminder; 2- Touched down; 3- Trevi Fountain site; 4- Addams family cousin; 5- Characteristics; 6- Nothing, in Nantes; 7- Earth-friendly prefix; 8- Leaping marsupial; 9- Aquarium buildup; 10- ___ is human; 11- Lustful; 12- Iowa State city; 14- Large stinging wasp; 22- Bring into play; 24- Miners' sch.; 25- "Who's there?" reply; 26- Genesis setting; 27- ___ good example; 28- Former spouses; 29- Evens the score; 32- Neither's partner; 33- Actor's parts; 34- Mother of the Valkyries; 35- Require; 36- Ages; 38- Highly regarded; 39- Deal (with); 42- Concordes, e.g.; 43- Tara family; 45- Defeated; 46- Sin; 47- Heat unit; 48- Spine-tingling; 49- Stiff bristles; 51- Tax experts; Abbr.; 52- Festive occasion; 53- Conception; 54- "Whip It" band; 55- Lofty poems; 58- Corrida call; 60- Cacophony;



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



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



CONTACT US & SEIZE THIS OPPORTUNITY!

hello@jmlproperty.com
www.jmlproperty.com

f jmlmacau @jmlproperty

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





Nam Long
HKD 6,988,000 4 bed 2 bath



Hellene Garden w/ 1 CP
HKD 7,500,000 4 bed 3 bath



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

NO OTHER LAND

A PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI FILM JUST WON AN OSCAR – SO WHY IS IT SO HARD TO SEE?

DREW PAUL
UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

FOR many low-budget, independent films, an Oscar win is a golden ticket.

The publicity can translate into theatrical releases or rereleases, along with more on-demand rentals and sales.

However, for “No Other Land,” a Palestinian-Israeli film that just won best documentary feature at the 2025 Academy Awards, this exposure may not translate into commercial success in the U.S. That’s because the film has been unable to find a company to distribute it in America.

“No Other Land” chronicles the efforts of Palestinian townspeople to combat an Israeli plan to demolish their villages in the West Bank and use the area as a military training ground. It was directed by four Palestinian and Israeli activists and journalists: Basel Adra, who is a resident of the area facing demolition, Yuval Abraham, Hamdan Ballal and Rachel Szor. While the filmmakers have organized screenings in a number of U.S. cities, the lack of a national distributor makes a broader release unlikely.

Film distributors are a crucial but often unseen link in the chain that allows a film to reach cinemas and people’s living rooms. In recent years it has become more common for controversial award-winning films to run into issues finding a distributor. Palestinian films have encountered additional barriers.

As a scholar of Arabic who has written about Palestinian cinema, I’m disheartened by the difficulties “No Other Land” has faced. But I’m not surprised.

THE ROLE OF FILM DISTRIBUTORS

Distributors are often invisible to moviegoers. But without one, it can be difficult for a film to find an audience.

Distributors typically acquire rights to a film for a specific country or set of countries. They then market films to movie theaters, cinema chains and streaming platforms. As compensation, distributors receive a percentage of the revenue generated by theatrical and home releases.

The film “Soundtrack to a Coup D’Etat,” another finalist for best documentary, shows how this process typically works. It premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2024 and was acquired for distribution just a few months later by Kino Lorber, a major U.S.-based distributor of independent films.

The inability to find a distributor is not itself noteworthy. No film is entitled to distribution, and most films by newer or unknown directors face long odds.

However, it is unusual for a film like “No Other Land,” which has garnered critical acclaim and has been recognized at various film festivals and award shows. Some have pegged it as a favorite to win best documentary at the Academy Awards. And “No Other Land” has been able to find distributors in Europe, where it’s easily accessible on multiple streaming platforms.

So why can’t “No Other Land” find a distributor in the U.S.?

There are a couple of factors at play.

SHYING AWAY FROM CONTROVERSY

In recent years, film critics have noticed a trend: Documentaries on controversial topics have faced distribution difficulties. These include a film about a campaign by Amazon workers to unionize and a documentary about Adam Kinzinger, one of the few Republican congresspeople to vote to impeach Donald Trump in 2021.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, of course, has long stirred controversy. But the release of “No Other Land” comes at a time when the

issue is particularly salient. The Hamas attacks of Oct. 7, 2023, and the ensuing Israeli bombardment and invasion of the Gaza Strip have become a polarizing issue in U.S. domestic politics, reflected in the campus protests and crackdowns in 2024. The filmmakers’ critical comments about the Israeli occupation of Palestine have also garnered backlash in Germany.

Yet the fact that this conflict has been in the news since October 2023 should also heighten audience interest in a film such as “No Other Land” – and, therefore, lead to increased sales, the metric that distributors care about the most.

Indeed, an earlier film that also documents Palestinian protests against Israeli land expropriation, “5 Broken Cameras,” was a finalist for best documentary at the 2013 Academy Awards. It was able to find a U.S. distributor. However, it had the support of a major European Union documentary development program called Greenhouse. The support of an organization like Greenhouse, which had ties to numerous production and distribution companies in Europe and the U.S., can facilitate the process of finding a distributor.

By contrast, “No Other Land,” although it has a Norwegian co-

-producer and received some funding from organizations in Europe and the U.S., was made primarily by a grassroots filmmaking collective.

STAGES FOR PROTEST

While distribution challenges may be recent, controversies surrounding Palestinian films are nothing new.

Many of them stem from the fact that the system of film festivals, awards and distribution is primarily based on a movie’s nation of origin. Since there is no sovereign Palestinian state – and many countries and organizations have not recognized the state of Palestine – the question of how to categorize Palestinian films has been hard to resolve.

In 2002, The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences rejected the first ever Palestinian film submitted to the best foreign language film category – Elia Suleiman’s “Divine Intervention” – because Palestine was not recognized as a country by the United Nations. The rules were changed for the following year’s awards ceremony.

In 2021, the cast of the film “Let It Be Morning,” which had an Israeli director but primarily Palestinian actors, boycotted the Cannes Film Festival in protest of the film’s categorization as an Israeli

film rather than a Palestinian one.

Film festivals and other cultural venues have also become places to make statements about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and engage in protest. For example, at the Cannes Film Festival in 2017, the right-wing Israeli culture minister wore a controversial – and meme-worthy – dress that featured the Jerusalem skyline in support of Israeli claims of sovereignty over the holy city, despite the unresolved status of Jerusalem under international law.

At the 2024 Academy Awards, a number of attendees, including Billie Eilish, Mark Ruffalo and Mahershala Ali, wore red pins in support of a ceasefire in Gaza, and pro-Palestine protesters delayed the start of the ceremonies.

As he accepted his award, “No Other Land” director Yuval Abraham called out “the foreign policy” of the U.S. for “helping to block” a path to peace.

Even though a film like “No Other Land” addresses a topic of clear interest to many Americans, I wonder if the quest to find a U.S. distributor just got even harder.

This article has been updated to clarify that the film was a collaborative effort between Palestinian and Israeli filmmakers. It has also been updated to reflect the film’s win at the 2025 Academy Awards. **MDT/AP**

THE CONVERSATION



AUTO RACING

Gibbs senses chemistry brewing in Bell and team after second consecutive victory

JIM VERTUNO, AUSTIN

JOE Gibbs knows quite a lot about what it takes to win a championship.

As an NFL coach, he won three Super Bowls. As a NASCAR team owner, his drivers have won five Cup Series titles.

And he certainly likes what he sees in Christopher Bell's consecutive victories, first in Atlanta, and then in Austin last weekend. In both races, Bell hung around late and made the right moves to snatch victory.

From the race shop to the garage to the cockpit, Gibbs senses a championship chemistry brewing.

"I think in football every now and then you have a team that really had a great feeling about themselves, were really confident, and a great chemistry," the 84-year-old Gibbs said after Bell's latest victory.

"It doesn't happen very often, and it doesn't carry over from one year to the other. But when you kind of get that, I think it's a great feeling when you see it as a coach or an owner. I think that's what we have with the 20 team," Gibbs said.

Bell has shown he can win in



Christopher Bell celebrates his win during a NASCAR Cup Series auto race at Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas

a variety of ways on very different tracks.

Bell won in Atlanta when he snatched the win in overtime on the oval superspeedway. On the road course at the Circuit of the Americas, he led just eight of 95 laps but won a four-car duel over the final 13.

He first chased down Kyle Busch for the lead, then held

off Daytona 500 winner William Byron and Tyler Reddick for the victory.

And it took clean racing to get everyone to the finish line. Bell and Busch had a confrontation after last year's race in Austin, but the pair avoided the kind of bumper banging that would have started another one.

The Austin victory was Bell's

11th career win and his third on a road course. He now has four consecutive seasons with multiple victories. He is also the first driver since Kevin Harvick in 2018 to win two of the first three races of the season.

"The last two weeks at Atlanta and here, I kind of won without the fastest car, so it's really nice to get those back that I lost last

year," Bell said. "I'm excited about what's to come. We have high expectations and high hopes and goals for this year."

The series next heads to Phoenix, where Bell is the defending champion, and then Las Vegas.

Crew chief Adam Stevens has already put down a marker on both races.

"There's no reason we can't go win the next two weeks," Stevens said. "(Austin) has no bearing on next week whatsoever, and everybody is going to bring their best stuff and do their best job. But I really have so much faith in this team and Joe Gibbs Racing as a whole, and especially my driver, that I know we'll be a factor."

And that's the confidence Gibbs has seen and heard in championship teams in the past, from the gridiron to pit lane.

"Adam, a great leader I think. He's got a young guy there (Bell) that's gaining confidence, and I think the whole team ... I do think it's hard to put everything together in Cup," Gibbs said. "But I do think, like Adam said, we have it all together." **MDT/AP**

AD

New Rugby Season

Saturdays, 9-11am, Taipa Stadium

BOYS AND GIRLS, AGES 6 – 18

- Team working
- Co-operation
- Fitness and FUN



SIGN UP NOW!!



**MACAU
BATS
RUGBY**

OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

THE TWO SESSIONS REFLECT THE STRENGTH OF WHOLE-PROCESS PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY

The two sessions stand as a cornerstone of China's political calendar. The meetings of the National People's Congress, China's highest legislative body, and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body, far from being ceremonial are a dynamic platform for the setting of national priorities, addressing key issues, and showcasing China's political system and governance.

The sessions are a key occasion for deputies to the NPC and members of the CPPCC National Committee to review and air their views on what the country has achieved in the past year, as well as put forward proposals or motions on economic development, social policies, legislative changes, and national strategies. These proposals are not abstract ideas but are rooted in the realities of Chinese society, reflecting the voices and concerns of people from all walks of life.

The deputies to the NPC and members of the CPPCC National Committee play important roles in this distinctive political advancement that guarantees people have extensive rights to be informed, to participate, to express and to supervise. They are entrusted with the duty of delving deep into what ordinary people think of a particular policy the central authorities have implemented and shoulder the responsibility of collecting public opinions about how a local government has implemented the policies of the central government. To this end, the CPPCC organizes various types of fact-finding missions, during which members will visit particular enterprises or local regions or even a particular project to find out how things are going and what problems need to be addressed.

Deputies to the NPC are representatives of various sectors of Chinese society. That migrant workers were elected as deputies to the NPC in 2018 speaks volumes about what the NPC has done to make the congress a platform in which all strata of society can voice their concerns.

The proposals and motions from both the NPC deputies and members of the CPPCC National Committee provide the CPC Central Committee with enough reference to target and fine tune the decisions they make. The centralized and unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee make it possible for decisions to be made as soon as possible without hesitation or any foot-dragging owing to the lack of consensus.

Both the supervision within the Party and oversight by the NPC and the CPPCC National Committee provide a guarantee for targeted economic policies that can make a difference to the growth of the economy.

The trade-in policy is a typical example. It is designed to stimulate domestic consumption. During the Spring Festival period in early February, the sales revenue of motor vehicles, home appliances, and digital products such as mobile phones reached 31 billion yuan (\$4.26 billion) within eight days, thanks to the trade-in policy.

China's total GDP surpassed 134 trillion yuan in 2024, which would not have been achieved without the timely adjustment of policies, which is an inherent strength of the country's political system.

In a world grappling with uncertainty, China's whole-process people's democracy offers a compelling example of how participatory, responsive, and inclusive governance can deliver stability and growth. The two sessions are a vivid demonstration of this system in action, ensuring that the voices of the people are heard and that their aspirations are translated into reality. [Abridged]

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) said that it is currently assisting families affected by the blaze in the Jardim Cidade building in Toi San on Wednesday.

The fire, which began around 9 p.m. on Wednesday night, was located in a 19th-floor unit of Block 2. Preliminary investigations suggest a gas leak may have been the cause.

Five people were injured, including a two-year-old boy and an eight-year-old girl, both of whom sustained third-degree burns.

A 53-year-old Vietnamese domestic worker also suffered se-

cond-degree burns. All three lived in the affected unit.

In response, the Lok Chon Center of the General Union of Macau Residents' Associations has been providing support at the scene, while the Tamagnini Barbosa Community Center of the Federation of Macau Workers' Associations has been opened to provide temporary shelter. Approximately 30 residents are currently resting at the center, with staff offering assistance and attending to their needs.

Around 300 people were evacuated from the building, and authorities continue to investigate the cause of the fire.



Ukrainian servicemen prepare to launch long-range drones An-196 Liutyi in undisclosed location

UKRAINIANS WAKE UP TO TRUMP'S PAUSE ON ALL MILITARY AID

SAMYA KULLAB, KYIV

UKRAINIANS woke up yesterday to news that the Trump administration has paused military aid for their fight against Russia's invasion, days after a disastrous Oval Office row that has deepened a rift between Kyiv and the White House.

U.S. President Donald Trump directed the U.S. to pause all assistance to Ukraine as he seeks to pressure Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to engage in peace talks with Russia.

The decision appears to halt arms deliveries approved under the Biden administration, but it was not clear whether deliveries of ammunition for weapons systems already in Ukraine would be affected.

"I feel betrayed, but this feeling is not really deep for some reason. I was expecting something like that from Trump's side," said a Ukrainian soldier fighting in Russia's Kursk region, where Ukraine launched a daring military incursion in August 2024 to improve its hand in negotiations. The sol-

dier spoke on condition of anonymity to speak freely about his thoughts as he was not authorized to speak to the press.

Other said the move has left even greater confusion about Donald Trump's intentions.

"The problem is that it's unclear what Trump wants and what the purpose of his actions is," said Oleksandr Merezhko, Ukrainian lawmaker and chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee. "As of today, it appears that he is increasingly siding with Russia and trying to pressure Ukraine into accepting Russia's demands."

"This looks terrible—forcing the weaker side to accept the terms of the stronger aggressor," he told The Associated Press.

Kyiv has feared the possibility of aid being stopped to Ukraine ever since Trump took office, and the U.S.-Ukraine relationship has taken a downturn in recent weeks as Trump's team launched bilateral talks with Russia over the war in Ukraine and Trump's demeanor toward Zelenskyy has become increasingly dismissive.

Russia's state RIA Novosti news agency quoted Andrei Kartapolov, a retired general who chairs the defense committee in the lower house of Russian parliament, predicting that Ukraine would exhaust its current ammunition reserves within months. "We need to keep up the pressure and continue to target their bases and depots with long-range precision weapons to destroy the stockpiles," he said.

Trump said yesterday [Macau time] that he is still interested in signing a deal that would hand over a share of Ukraine's minerals to the United States, an agreement that Zelenskyy has also said he is ready to sign.

"By abruptly halting military assistance to Ukraine, President Trump is hanging Ukrainians out to dry and giving Russia the green light to continue marching west," said Razom for Ukraine, a Ukrainian advocacy group. "Razom for Ukraine urges the White House to immediately reverse course, resume military aid and pressure Putin to end his horrific invasion." **MDT/AP**



India's steel industry is assessing the impact of U.S. tariffs announced by President Trump. The move could lead to excess steel being redirected to India, lowering prices but threatening local producers. India aims to expand steel production, but coal-based methods raise environmental concerns.



Egypt Arab leaders met yesterday in Cairo to adopt an alternative to President Trump's Gaza plan. Egypt's proposal relocates displaced Palestinians within Gaza using temporary shelters, while an interim government replaces Hamas. Trump's suggestion to depopulate Gaza and redevelop it into a resort faced strong opposition.



Belgium European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (pictured) proposed an €800 billion defense plan yesterday to counter potential U.S. disengagement. The plan would allow EU nations to increase military spending while strengthening Ukraine. The initiative reflects European concerns about President Trump's shifting foreign policy priorities.



United States New Orleans will celebrate Mardi Gras today [Macau time] despite expected storms. Parades will start earlier and end by 11:30 a.m. due to high winds. Increased security measures are in place following January's deadly truck attack. Mardi Gras marks the final day before the Christian season of Lent.