



FOUNDER & PUBLISHER Kowie Geldenhuys EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Paulo Coutinho www.macaudailytimes.com.mo

N.º 4675 **FRIDAY** T. 10°/ 15° Air Quality Good  
07 Mar 2025

“THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’”

MOP 8.00  
HKD 10.00 2305 4271

**THE CLOSURE OF THE CITY'S SATELLITE CASINOS UNDER SJM HOLDINGS' CONCESSION COULD PROVIDE A BOOST TO THE GRAND LISBOA PALACE**

P5

**11 LOCAL ESTABLISHMENTS RECOGNIZED BY MICHELIN, ONE NEW ENTRANT**

P3

**HK TOP COURT OVERTURNS CONVICTIONS OF FORMER ORGANIZERS OF VIGILS**

P7



AP PHOTO



**Japan** Shitsui Hakoishi, 108, was named the world's oldest female barber by Guinness World Records on Wednesday. She began her career at 14, survived wartime losses, and still works in her salon. Hakoishi, from Nakagawa, aims to continue cutting hair until she turns 110.

AP PHOTO



**Philippines** Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro warned that the Philippines and allies will respond if China imposes an air defense zone over the South China Sea. He cited increasing Chinese military confrontations and said contingency plans with like-minded nations are in place to counteract Beijing's actions.

AP PHOTO



**United States** The Justice Department announced yesterday [Macao time] that 12 Chinese nationals, including hackers and law enforcement officers, were charged in global cybercrime campaigns. The accused targeted dissidents, news organizations, and U.S. agencies. The indictment details China's use of private contractors to conduct state-sponsored cyber operations.

AP PHOTO



**United States** The U.S. State Department confirmed it has stopped sharing global air quality data from embassies due to funding cuts. Scientists warn this move reduces monitoring in pollution-prone regions. The decision, criticized internationally, affects air quality research and local policymaking in many developing countries.

More on backpage

# STRATEGIC MACAU

**Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang highlights Macau and Hong Kong's strategic role in China's development**

P4



XINHUA

**TOURISM**  
**MACAO INTERNATIONAL PARADE TO FEATURE EXPANDED ELEMENTS**

P2

**TASTE OF EDESIA**



P15

### COLOANE SEWAGE TREATMENT UPGRADE TO BEGIN THIS Q1

The Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) announced that upgrading works for the Coloane sewage treatment facility will begin in the first quarter of 2025. Efforts are also underway to finalize the award for sewage treatment works on the artificial island of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. In response to Ella Lei's inquiry, the DSPA reported 14 coastal odor cases in 2024, mainly caused by sewer misconnections and illegal discharges. Authorities pledged to continue inspections and make improvements to enhance the drainage network.

### ELDERLY ACCUSED OF REPEATED SEXUAL HARASSMENT

A man in his 60s is under investigation for allegedly sexually harassing a woman on three separate occasions. Police received a report from the victim, a woman in her 20s, on Tuesday, claiming the suspect slapped her thigh while she walked near Kiang Wu. She reported similar incidents between December 2024 and January 2025. Officers detained the suspect for questioning, and the case has been forwarded to the Public Prosecutions Office for further investigations.

### HONG KONG MAN ARRESTED IN MOP100,000 PHONE SCAM

Police uncovered a "Guess Who" telephone scam and arrested a 46-year-old Hong Kong man suspected of receiving fraudulent payments. An elderly resident lost MOP100,000 after a caller pretending to be his son claimed he needed money for compensation. The victim handed over the cash in the northern district, later realizing the fraud. Police identified the suspect, intercepting him at the Outer Harbor Ferry Terminal. Authorities urge the public to verify suspicious calls before making payments.

### MACAU AND THAILAND STRENGTHEN COOPERATION TO EXPAND JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Macau and Thailand have announced an expanded collaboration to increase employment opportunities for Thai workers in the SAR's hospitality, gaming, and wellness sectors. Recently, the Minister of Labour, Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn, held discussions with Secretary of Economy and Finance, Tai Kin Ip, to address the growing demand for Thai workers in various industries, including hotels, casinos, restaurants, and spas. Currently, Macau employs approximately 1,040 Thai workers. Thailand's Ministry of Labour is enhancing training programmes focused on language proficiency and industry-specific skills. These initiatives aim to prepare Thai workers before deployment to Macau.

### ARTS & CULTURE

# MACAO INTERNATIONAL PARADE TO FEATURE EXPANDED ELEMENTS UNDER 'CULTURE CITY OF EAST ASIA' INITIATIVE

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), Deland Leong, announced yesterday that the Macao International Parade will incorporate additional elements this year, aligning with Macau's designation as the "Culture City of East Asia" in 2025.

Scheduled for March 23, the parade will feature contributions from three Asian cities: mainland China, South Korea, and Japan.

"We will integrate more East Asian cultural elements into the performances and events, including inviting renowned productions from China, Japan, and South Korea to be showcased in Macau, along with exchange sessions," Leong said.

She further noted that outreach programs aimed at strengthening Macau's cultural ties with these three Asian cities will extend throughout the year, featuring prominently in major local events such as the Dragon Boat Races, the International Fireworks Contest, the Grand Prix, and the International Marathon.

At a press conference held to announce the parade's activities, the IC estimated that the event will reach approximately 150,000 viewers both online and in person, a figure similar to that of 2024.

Leong also confirmed that the six gaming concessionaires will fully cover the costs associated with the parade. Due to this private sponsorship, she declined to disclose a budget, stating that it would not be appropriate given the confidentiality of the event's financial backers.

This year's parade will feature 23 international teams from countries including Argentina, Italy, Bosnia, Egypt, Portugal, and Germany, alongside participants from mainland China, South Korea, and Japan. Local participation will consist of 60 groups selected from a pool of 90 applicants.

The IC estimates that approximately 1,800 performers will take



part in total.

As in previous editions, the parade will begin at the Ruins of St. Paul's and conclude at Sai Van Lake Square. Special performances will take place at both the starting and finishing points.

Organizers have also announced that, due to the parade's scale and expected audience, parking restrictions will be enforced along the parade route from March 22.

Leong highlighted that Macau's designation as the "Cultural City of East Asia 2025" complements the city's existing international accolades, including World Heritage status, the Memory of the World Register, and recognition as a Creative City of Gastronomy. These designations, she said, contribute to Macau's increasing global cultural presence.

"This will help establish Macau as a key platform for China's

high-level engagement with the world, while also serving as an important window for cultural exchange and mutual understanding between Chinese and Western civilizations," she stated.

Reflecting on Macau's historical role in global trade and culture, the 'Culture City of East Asia' initiative will be themed "East-West Encounter, Asia in Harmony" and will focus on the Maritime Silk Road. The program will be structured around four key sections symbolizing maritime exploration: "Setting Sail," "Riding the Waves," "Chasing the Moon," and "Returning with Abundance." These themes, Leong explained, emphasize Macau's rich maritime heritage.

The initiative will include an opening and closing ceremony, large-scale cultural expos, international conferences, intangible

cultural heritage exhibitions, and a range of cultural, sports, and tourism events.

Leong added that the IC will encourage Macau's integrated resorts to leverage their high-quality facilities to host internationally appealing cultural exhibitions and exchange programs, providing both residents and tourists with immersive cultural experiences featuring Chinese, Japanese, and Korean traditions.

The parade is set to begin at 3 p.m. on March 23 (Sunday), concluding at approximately 6:30 p.m. when all participating groups will come together for a grand finale celebrating "Love, Peace, and Cultural Integration."

In addition to the parade, a series of promotional activities will be held, including outreach performances, a photography contest, prize giveaways, and more.

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

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

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

# Gaming tax revenue surges to MOP88b 2024

**T**HE gaming tax revenue soared to nearly MOP88.13 billion in 2024, marking a 35% increase from the MOP65.26 billion collected the previous year, according to the latest figures from the Financial Services Bureau.

The amount also surpassed government projections by 5.4%, as officials had initially estimated revenue at MOP83.61 billion.

Under the 10-year license, casinos face an effective tax rate of 40% on gross gaming revenue (GGR).

Tax revenue figures cannot be directly compared because there is usually a delay between when GGR is documented and when the government recognizes the tax as being paid.

Despite the rebound, 2024's gaming tax revenue remains lower than pre-pandemic levels. In 2019, the year before Covid-19 disrupted the city's economy, gaming tax collections had reached MOP112.71 billion—21.8% higher than last year's total.

The city's 2025 budget plan estimates that casino GGR will reach MOP240 billion this year. Gaming taxes are expected to reach MOP93.12 billion.

## F&B

# 11 local establishments recognized by Michelin, one new entrant

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Michelin Guide Hong Kong & Macau has unveiled the 77 food and beverage establishments awarded the "Bib Gourmand" recognition this year.

Macau accounts for 11 of these awards, with 10 establishments retaining their previous recognition and one new entrant.

The new Bib Gourmand in Macau is "Justindia," a 20-seat restaurant with a bar counter, opened by Kerala-born chef Justin Paul after 16 years managing the Michelin-starred Indian restaurant "Golden Peacock" at The Venetian Macau.



Located in the NAPE district on Rua de Bruxelas, the restaurant offers set lunch menus featuring dishes from across India, spanning both northern and southern regions.

At dinner, it transitions into a more formal dining experience, offering various à la carte options and a 10-course tasting menu showcasing the chef's creativity.

The list of 11 recognized establishments in Macau includes returning awardees: Chan Seng Kei, Cheong Kei, Din Tai Fung (City of Dreams), Kapok, Lok Kei Noodles (Patane), Lou Kei, O Castiço, Restaurant Litoral (Taipa), Son Tak Kon, Shun Tak, and the Educational Restaurant at the Macao University of Tourism.

"In this year's selection, Hong Kong and Macau's dining scene once again demonstrates its unique diversity and vitality, offering a wide variety of cuisines," Gwendal Poullennec, International Director of the Michelin Guide, said.

He added, "The Bib Gourmand dining establishments not only reflect the vibrant food culture of Hong Kong and Macau but also highlight the diverse opportunities available for gourmets seeking exceptional culinary experiences at affordable prices."

The complete restaurant selection for the 17th edition of the Michelin Guide Hong Kong & Macau will be revealed on March 13 at an in-person ceremony at the Grand Lisboa Palace Resort.

AD

**海濱奇想**  
The Lobster King's Vacation in Macao  
龍蝦國王暢「游」澳門  
COASTAL FANTASIA  
2025 Philip Colbert in Macao  
15/01 - 16/03

Macao Science Center Waterfront  
Venetian Macao Outdoor Lagoon

World-Renowned Pop Artist  
**PHILIP COLBERT**

First Debut in Macao, Come & Visit

Supporting Units:  
澳門科學館  
文化局  
澳門科學館

Organizer:  
金沙中國  
SANDS CHINA

TWO SESSIONS

# VICE PREMIER HIGHLIGHTS MACAU AND HONG KONG'S STRATEGIC ROLE IN CHINA'S DEVELOPMENT

STAFF REPORTER

**V**ICE Premier Ding Xuexiang emphasized the importance of Macau and Hong Kong in China's broader development strategy, describing them as "diamonds" during a meeting with delegates from the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) yesterday.

The session, held in Beijing as part of the "Two Sessions" political gathering, focused on strengthening the two Special Administrative Regions' (SARs) economic integration with the mainland.

Attended by key officials, including Xia Baolong, director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, and CPPCC vice chairmen Leung Chun-ying and Edmund Ho Hau-wah, the meeting provided a platform for delegates to discuss opportunities and challenges facing the SARs.

Ho, who hosted the session, noted that Ding's participation underscored Beijing's commitment to the 'One country, two systems' fra-



Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang

mework and its continued support for the regions.

Ding also called for strong backing of Macau's new Chief Executive, stressing the importance of a stable and effective administration as the city navigates a crucial phase of economic development.

Speaking at the joint meeting, Ding outlined national achievements in 2024 despite global and

domestic challenges. He also emphasized future expectations for both Special Administrative Regions.

Macau delegate Ho Ion Sang, who attended the session, said Ding acknowledged the country's resilience in driving economic growth and meeting key development targets.

He highlighted the need for Ma-

cau to capitalize on opportunities in the Greater Bay Area and Heng-qin to accelerate economic diversification.

Following the meeting, CPPCC member Peter Douglas Koon Ho-ming shared Ding's remarks, emphasizing that Hong Kong and Macau serve as vital connectors between China and the global community.

"The Vice Premier described us not only as a pearl but also as a diamond, symbolizing our importance in bridging East and West," Koon said.

Beyond economic growth, Ding urged delegates to remain vigilant in the face of external pressures and geopolitical risks.

According to CPPCC standing committee member Ko Wing-man, Ding stressed that while stability has been maintained, national security threats persist. "There are still internal and external forces seeking to challenge our 'one country, two systems' principle," Ko warned.

Ding outlined three key expectations for delegates: promoting the "Two Sessions" policy agenda, supporting the leadership of the Chief Executive and SAR governments, and fostering regional unity for economic and social advancement. He also encouraged the business sector to invest in long-term innovation and technology development to enhance Hong Kong and Macau's competitiveness.

CPPCC standing committee member Pansy Ho noted that Ding commended Hong Kong's efforts in economic advancement.

During the discussion, CPPCC delegate Yiu Chi-shing proposed that Hong Kong should work toward surpassing London as the world's second-largest international financial center, aligning itself more closely with China's status as the world's second-largest economy.

He called for the development of a structured reform plan to enhance the city's financial infrastructure and ensure it meets the highest global standards.

Ding responded by reaffirming Hong Kong's distinctive position as a financial hub, citing its strong ties to both the mainland and international markets.

He expressed support for expanding the city's professional service industries and further integrating its economy with national development goals.

律師事務所



C&C  
LAWYERS  
& NOTARIES  
SINCE 1996



合夥人 PARTNERS:

官樂怡 Rui José da Cunha ° 山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues ° 馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata ° 趙魯 Zhao Lu \* 馬傑安 João Nogueira Marques

大律師 ASSOCIATES:

高文軒 Adelino Correia °  
羅善齡 Zelina Rodrigues  
馬潔冰 Maria João Marques  
陶義德 António Isóo de Azeredo  
白穎怡 Iclia Berenguel  
冼玲鳳 Mariana Afonso Esteves  
馬秀文 Sofia Mendes Martins  
飛嘉華 Carlos dos Santos Ferreira °  
莫永誠 Rui Velez de Moura  
安東尼 António Manuel dos Santos  
巴慧雅 Vera Bastos  
歐文傑 Miguel Evaristo  
陳芷喬 Joana Chan

大律師 ASSOCIATES:

顏曉蓉 Teresa Xiaorong Yan  
諾瑪莉 Maria Noras  
康靜雅 Viviana Hong  
梁淑嵐 Ana Leon  
黃瀚賢 Frederico Vong  
斐彥德 Gonçalo Figueiredo  
吳靈鋒 Ng Teng Fong

實習律師 TRAINEE LAWYERS:

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

法律專家及外地註冊律師

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

法律專家 JURISTS:

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

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

° 私人公證員 Notary Public \* 中國委託公證人 China Appointed Attesting Officer



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



# Lawmaker worries over satellite workers' prospects amid SMEs' deteriorating business environment

STAFF REPORTER

**S**MALL and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are warning of a deteriorating business environment, stating that the region has "lost competitiveness" largely due to the slowdown in the gaming market. Lawmaker José Maria Pereira Coutinho expressed concerns over the city's diminishing competitiveness, citing a "wave of bankruptcies" as one of the most pressing issues.

"The current situation is deeply concerning," Coutinho said in a statement to the press.

"The slowdown in the gaming industry has created a domino effect, impacting not just casinos but businesses that rely on the sector. We need effective measures to improve the business environment and strengthen the fight against corrupt practices."

One of the most immediate concerns remains the employment crisis among satellite casino workers.

In the statement, the lawmaker recalled that in October 2024, the association had formally inquired about the fate of thousands of employees who lost their jobs due to the closure of satellite casinos, which also had a significant impact on sur-



rounding businesses.

In response, the director of the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) assured that the government remained "attentive to the possible impact on workers resulting from changes in company activities."

"We have made available various support measures, including consultations on employment rights, career advice, vocational training information, and job application assistance," the DSAL director noted in a written statement on November 21, 2024.

"Additionally, we continue to organize pairing sessions with integrated tourism and leisure companies to help job seekers reintegrate into the labor market." Despite these assurances, many

affected workers remain uncertain about their future.

There are growing concerns over employees being reassigned to roles that may not suit their physical abilities or skill sets, such as hotel housekeeping, security, or catering. Coutinho has called for more concrete measures to ensure these workers are placed in suitable employment without long periods of joblessness.

Coutinho is urging the government to amend current unemployment benefit legislation, extending the eligibility period from 90 to 360 days to provide better financial security for displaced workers.

"Both young and middle-aged employees are facing signi-

ficant employment difficulties," the lawmaker emphasized. "An extension of unemployment benefits is necessary to prevent a worsening social crisis." Another issue under scrutiny is the disparity in benefits between different sectors.

Cleaning, security, and construction workers employed by some casino concessionaires currently have access to an early retirement program, enabling them to spend more time with their families.

Calls have been made for this program to be extended to casino workers, including croupiers, who face similar working conditions. Additionally, labor representatives are advocating for improved shift and night allowances, as well as a more humane scheduling system to combat stress, burnout, and health issues such as insomnia and cardiovascular diseases.

"The well-being of workers should be a priority," said the lawmaker. "We need better working conditions in casinos, where employees often face long and irregular hours. The government should take action to ensure shift work environments are healthier and more sustainable."

Beyond the gaming sector, the rising number of non-resident workers (TNRs) has also drawn scrutiny.

In 2009, Macau had 75,000 non-resident workers; by 2024, this number had surged to nearly 221,000—a staggering increase of 180%.

Questions have been raised about how this rise has affected employment opportunities for local workers and whether stricter supervision and penalties should be implemented to ensure non-resident employees only perform the jobs for which they were originally hired.

"So, what are the main reasons for this increase, and what impact has it had on the reduction of local workers? What concrete measures will be implemented to reduce the high number of TNRs and improve the supervision of TNRs who perform functions other than those for which they were authorized to work in the SAR?" Coutinho questioned.

For the lawmaker, the increase in non-resident workers has undoubtedly influenced the job market. "We need to understand the reasons behind this surge and ensure that local workers are not being displaced.

Additionally, oversight needs to improve to prevent violations, particularly in sectors like transportation, where non-resident drivers are often found operating heavy vehicles without proper authorization," he added.

## GAMING

# Potential satellite casino closures could boost business at Grand Lisboa Palace

LYNZY VALLES

**T**HE possible closure of the city's satellite casinos under SJM Holdings' concession could provide a boost to the company's flagship resort in Cotai, the Grand Lisboa Palace, according to a report from CBRE Equity Research.

As the city nears the end of its three-year transition period for satellite casinos, concerns over the viability of these establishments have grown.

Satellite casinos, which operate under the license of a major concessionaire but are run by indepen-

dent third parties, have faced significant changes under Macau's amended gaming laws.

Since the law came into effect in 2022, satellite casinos have been prohibited from sharing gaming revenue with concessionaires and may only earn a management fee.

The government granted a transition period until the end of 2025 to allow these casinos time to adjust.

However, analysts John DeCree and Max Marsh from CBRE noted that uncertainty remains over how the new operating



structure will function and whether satellite casinos will remain financially sustainable in the long run.

In a recent note following SJM Holdings' latest financial results,

CBRE analysts highlighted the potential impact of satellite casino closures.

"Any closures could open the door for SJM to reallocate some of that table capacity—and po-

tentially customers—to Grand Lisboa Palace," they stated.

If Grand Lisboa Palace succeeds in attracting more visitors, the additional table capacity could help strengthen its mass-market gaming business, the report suggested.

Macau is home to 30 casinos, among which 11 are satellite casinos. Nine of these operate under SJM Holdings' concession, while the other two are linked to Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) and Melco Resorts & Entertainment.

Additionally, seven satellite casinos ceased operations in 2022, primarily due to regulatory shifts and the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As previously reported, workers are bracing for potential job losses and

reduced benefits amid significant industry changes.

Many workers, some with nearly two decades of experience in the gaming sector, fear that these changes will adversely affect their welfare.

Lawmaker Lei Leong Wong recently emphasized the broader implications, noting that the closure of satellite casinos could impact not only employees but also surrounding small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

"Business owners near the satellite casinos are also worried," Wong said.

Wong urged the government to announce a clear plan to safeguard job opportunities for affected workers and to consider the economic ripple effects on the community.

AP PHOTO



Alexis Ohanian, Digg

SOCIAL MEDIA

# DIGG TO RELAUNCH WITH FOCUS ON 'HUMANITY AND CONNECTION'

**B**EFORE Reddit there was Digg, which popularized up- and down-votes on online posts. Now the founders of both platforms — social media veterans Kevin Rose and Alexis Ohanian — are relaunching the early Reddit rival with a focus on “humanity and connection” they hope will be boosted by the use of artificial intelligence.

Rose founded Digg, which launched in 2004 and let people up- and down-vote (“Digg” or “bury”) content from users

and from sources around the web. At its peak, it had 40 million monthly users — a high number for the time considering that Facebook only hit 100 million in 2008.

Digg was divvied up and sold in 2012, with many of its assets and patents acquired by LinkedIn. Reddit, which launched in 2005 and was co-founded by Ohanian, took a similar approach to let users vote on what they thought was the best and worst content on the site.

But much has changed since 2012 — not just when it comes to advances in artificial intelligence but also how people treat each other online.

“The social space online is definitely harsher, it feels like, than it’s ever been before,” said Justin Mezzell, who will serve as the new company’s CEO. “It feels really difficult to connect. I think the platforms have gotten more disconnected. You know, if ever there was a true town hall of the internet, it feels like it has been decons-

tructed in a pretty big way.”

Digg’s new leaders say they want to use artificial intelligence to “handle the grunt work” of running a social media site while allowing humans to focus on building meaningful online communities. The question, Mezzell said, is how to get people to “show up and have conversations, to learn from each other, to share something they’re passionate about and do it earnestly?” Especially when some of today’s social media algorithms “exist

really just optimize for outrage.”

Rose said Digg will take a more nuanced approach to content moderation than banning or not banning content, which is a process that can be easy to get around.

“There is a world where, you know, you show up in (a) meditation (group) and you’re swinging four-letter words all over the place, and you hit submit,” he said. And “we come back and we say, hey, you can post this, of course, but only 2% of the audience is going to see it, because the way that the moderator set the tone.”

“That is unique. That is different. That’s not like a hard-defining rule,” Rose added “It’s more like just sensing the voice and how it fits within the entire ecosystem and the model that’s behind the scenes for that community.”

Sarah Gilbert, research manager of the Citizens and Technology Lab at Cornell University and an expert on content moderation, said much of the moderation that social media platforms like Reddit do is already automated and moderators typically have a lot of control over the automation tools they use.

“The challenge is that a lot of AI isn’t context-dependent, and models built for moderation tend to focus on toxicity, which is only a small portion of what mods deal with,” she said. “The other problem is that these models can be discriminatory and overly censorious of historically marginalized people. So, any AI-assisted moderation tools would need to be able to account for community specific rules and context, as well as keep a human in the loop.”

The new Digg will launch in the coming weeks as a website and mobile app. **MDT/AP**

## CORPORATE BITS

### Diva at W Macau - Studio City unveils seasonal spring menu



W Macau - Studio City's signature restaurant, Diva, has introduced a new seasonal menu celebrating freshness and vitality this spring.

Curated by Chef Yap, the hotel's Chinese Executive Chef, the 'Spring Seasonal Treat' menu showcases a blend of seasonal ingredients and refined

culinary techniques.

The menu highlights delicate flavors, featuring ingredients such as spring bamboo for a touch of elegance, baby geoduck as a prized seafood delicacy, and the subtle sweetness of river shrimp and baby oysters.

According to a statement issued by the gaming operator, Chef Yap's creations offer a nostalgic yet innovative dining experience, combining tradition with contemporary influences.

Inspired by the glamour of silver screen divas, Diva's design is bold and sophisticated, featuring a main dining area and three private rooms.

### Four Seasons Macao to host exclusive culinary collaboration



This March, Four Seasons Hotel Macao presents the Four-Hands Culinary Extravaganza, an exclusive dining experience featuring two esteemed chefs: Chef Wang Yong, Senior Executive Chinese Chef at Four Seasons Hotel Hangzhou at West Lake, and

Chef Anthony Ho Yam To, Executive Chinese Chef at Four Seasons Hotel Macao.

Taking place on March 28 and 29, this collaboration brings together the expertise behind four Black Pearl diamonds and two Michelin stars, offering an exceptional

gastronomic experience.

Chef Wang Yong, a specialist in Zhejiang cuisine, has led Jin Sha at Four Seasons Hangzhou to great acclaim, earning three Black Pearl diamonds for eight consecutive years and a Michelin star.

For this event, he will showcase Jiangzhe cuisine with signature dishes such as Braised Pork Belly with Fresh Abalone and Coddled Egg with Sea Urchin.

At Zi Yat Heen, Chef Anthony Ho will present Cantonese specialties, including Kristal Caviar with Chilled South Australian Lobster and Double-Boiled Canadian Geoduck Soup with Italian Basil.

HONG KONG

# Top court overturns convictions of three former organizers of Tiananmen vigils

KANIS LEUNG, HONG KONG

**H**ONG Kong's top court yesterday overturned the convictions of three former organizers of an annual vigil in remembrance of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown over their refusal to provide information to police, marking a rare victory for the city's pro-democracy activists.

Chow Hang-tung, Tang Ngok-kwan and Tsui Hon-kwong — core members of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China — were convicted in 2023 during Beijing's crackdown on the city's pro-democracy movement. They received a sentence of 4 1/2 months and have already served their terms.

The alliance was long known for organizing candlelight vigils in the city on the anniversary of the Chinese military's crushing of the 1989 pro-democracy protests in Beijing. But it voted to disband in 2021 under the shadow of a sweeping national security law.

Before the group dissolved, police had sought details about its operations and finances in connection with alleged links to pro-democracy groups overseas, accusing it of being a foreign agent. But the group refused to cooperate, insisting it was not.

Yesterday, judges at the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal unanimously ruled in the trio's favor. Chief Justice Andrew Cheung an-



Tang Ngok-kwan, a former organizer of an annual vigil marking the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, leaves the court in Hong Kong yesterday

nounced the decision in court.

The prosecution needed to prove that the alliance was a foreign agent, the judges wrote, adding that the lower courts "fell into error" in holding that it was sufficient merely that the police commissioner said he had reasonable grounds to believe the alliance was a foreign agent.

In their appeal, the appellants also took issue with crucial details that were redacted, including the names of groups that were alleged to have links with the alliance.

The top court's judges ruled that by redacting the only potential evidential basis for establishing that the alliance was a foreign agent, the prosecution disabled itself from

proving its case.

"Non-disclosure of the redacted facts in any event deprived the appellants of a fair trial so that their convictions involved a miscarriage of justice," they wrote.

After the ruling, Tang told reporters outside the court that he hoped the top court's ruling proved that the alliance was not a foreign agent and that in the future they could prove that the 1989 movement was not a counter-revolutionary riot.

"Justice lives in people's hearts. Regardless of the outcome, everyone knows the truth in their hearts," he said.

During an earlier hearing at the top court in January, Chow, who represented herself and prepared

the appeal in prison, said her case highlighted what a police state is.

"A police state is created by the complicity of the court in endorsing such abuses. This kind of complicity must stop now," she said.

Since the security law was introduced in 2020, several non-permanent overseas judges have quit the top court, raising questions over confidence in the city's judicial system. In 2024, Jonathan Sumption quit his position and said the rule of law was profoundly compromised.

But Cheung in January said the judges' premature departures did not mean the judiciary's independence was weakening.

The annual vigil at Hong Kong's

Victoria Park was, along Macau's, was one of the two public commemoration of the June 4 crackdown on Chinese soil for decades.

After COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, the park was occupied instead by a carnival organized by pro-Beijing groups. Those who tried to commemorate the event near the site were detained.

Chow and two other former alliance leaders, Lee Cheuk-yan and Albert Ho, were charged with subversion in a separate case under the security law. They remain in custody, awaiting the beginning of their trial.

In a separate yesterday, judges at the top court dismissed jailed pro-democracy activist Tam Tak-chi's bid to overturn his sedition convictions in a landmark case brought under a colonial-era law that was used to crush dissent.

Tam Tak-chi was the first person tried under the sedition law since the 1997 handover and was found guilty of 11 charges in 2022, including seven counts of "uttering seditious words." The judges ruled that the prosecution was not required to establish that the words uttered by the appellant were intended to incite violence or public disorder.

The colonial-era law was repealed last year after the government introduced a new, home-grown security law that it said was necessary for stability. Critics worry the law will further curtail freedoms. MDT/AP

OVERSEAS CHINESE

# Chinese student found guilty in British court of drugging and raping 10 women

**A** Chinese PhD student was found guilty yesterday [Macau time] in a London court of drugging and raping 10 women in England and China, as police warned there could be more than 50 other victims.

Zhenhao Zou, 28, was convicted of the attacks between 2019 and 2023 following a monthlong trial at the Inner London Crown Court. He was convicted of 11 counts of rape, with two of the offenses relating to one victim.

After more than 19 hours of deliberations, jurors concluded Zou raped three

of the women in London and seven in China.

Police have only been able to identify two of the victims and said after the verdict that more than 50 other women may have fallen victim to Zou, which would make him one of the worst sex offenders in U.K. history.

Using hidden or handheld cameras to record the attacks, Zou filmed nine of the attacks as "souvenirs" and often kept a trophy box of women's belongings.

Zou, a mechanical engineering student who was



Court artist sketch by Elizabeth Cook of Zhenhao Zou appearing at Inner London Crown Court

doing his PhD at University College London, claimed that the sexual interactions

were consensual. He will be sentenced on June 19.

Jurors, who had to wa-

tch footage of the attacks during the trial, were given regular breaks.

Judge Rosina Cottage described the defendant as a "dangerous and predatory sexual offender" and that his sentence will be "very long."

Zou, who showed no emotion as the verdicts were read out in court, was also convicted of three counts of voyeurism, 10 of possession of an extreme pornographic image, one of false imprisonment and three of possession of a controlled drug with intent to commit a sexual offense,

namely butanediol.

He was cleared of two further counts of possession of an extreme pornographic image and one of possession of MDMA with intent to commit a sexual offense.

Zou, who also used the name Pakho online, befriended fellow students of Chinese heritage on WeChat and dating apps, before inviting them for drinks and drugging them at his apartments in London or an unknown location in China.

"He has done all that he can in these offenses to incapacitate his victims to the point where they could not resist his attack, and in many instances may not even remember what has occurred to them," said Metropolitan Police Commander Kevin Southworth. MDT/AP

ANALYSIS  
BY LEANDA LEE, MDT

# OPENING OPS: A PLACE FOR CROSS-BOR

No one reading anything about China this week could escape the news that local representatives from the GBA and across China were off to Beijing for the Two Sessions from 4th March. The public relations operations leading up to the Two Sessions have been in full swing. There is a simple and informative video on “What to expect at this year’s two sessions? [sic]” in English with Chinese and English subtitles. It clarifies the roles of the National People’s Congress (China’s top legislature) and the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference National Committee, the NPC’s top political advisory body. High on the agenda is the government’s Work Report, a review of last year and socio-economic development goals for the next. Heartening is the emphasis on more than economic goals with proposals to be put forward by representatives and members on critical topics covering people’s well-being, high quality growth, the curiously worded “new quality productive forces”, innovation in science and technology, and ecological conservation: high humanity-based values.

This is the last year of the 14th five-year plan (2021-25) and these sessions are important for the development of the next five-year plan (2026-2030). Worth highlighting is a statement underlying the government’s visualised context of the country’s near future, “as China moves closer to the center of the global stage and becomes more interconnected with the world.”

Success depends upon ability, motivation, and environmental opportunities. Regarding opportunities, the USA is showing strong signs of nationalism and an insular focus. The comparison of the actions and announcements, particularly in this last month, between these two largest country economies offer a deeper insight into the potential opportunities for China than would have been discernible without the juxtaposition. The recent shift in geopolitics opens the window wider for China to be an inviting and trustworthy nation open to the world.

The groundwork to create the talent, capacity and infrastructure for China’s opening up has been laid over previous years and likely to be reviewed in favourab-

le terms in the Work Report. For a number of years, the publicity and ongoing strategic announcements about China’s direction on the global stage proves the existence of motivation. Opportunities are often said to be created, but changes to the environmental context can have exponential effect on the possibilities, which we can expect to see taken advantage of in this next 5-year plan.

A litany of positive results has been reported this week: restrictions lifted on foreign investment in manufacturing, further expansion of opportunities for those from outside in education, the healthcare sector and parts of telecommunications. Investment by foreign firms increased 9.9 percent in 2024 (to 59,080 firms). Foreign trade also increased 5 percent over 2023, although recovery through Covid would have influenced the denominator. Environmental and ecological conservation is also emphasised with improvements in air quality and surface water quality numbers being presented. On the human side, the opening of visa access was a success, with 112.3 percent increase in foreign national visitation – again



Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference’s o

those numbers come off almost non-existent travel exiting Covid. However, the fact is the official publication of these figures provides cues as to what is meaningful to the authorities.

On the first day of the Two Sessions, promises of more to come were expounded upon: The China Daily reported reforms in foreign trade, lowering costs and increasing trade security; foreign invest-

## CPPCC National Committee vows support for GBA integration

ON THE AGENDA

The country’s top political advisory body signaled strong support for deepening ties among cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), and pledged to help Hong Kong and Macau achieve better development by integrating them into the overall national strategy.

Liu Jieyi, spokesperson for the third session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, made the remarks at a news conference earlier this week.

2024 marked the 25th anniversary of Macau’s return to the motherland, and the development of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin achieved new progress, Liu said.

“Hong Kong’s integration into the country’s overall development continues to deepen and becomes more substantial. The high-quality development of the Greater Bay Area is constantly enriching the practice of ‘one country, two systems’ (guiding principle),” he said.

During the Spring Festival, Macau and Hong Kong residents made more than 2.6



million visits to the mainland. Last year, mainland visitors made 34 million trips to Hong Kong and nearly 24.5 million trips to Macau, representing a year-on-year growth of about 27 percent and 29 percent respectively, he said.

He also said the passenger and vehicle flow through the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge set new records in 2024, while the Shenzhen-Zhon-

ghshan Link and the Huangmao Sea Channel Bridge were completed and opened to traffic.

A series of measures benefiting residents and businesses have been carried out, making the flow of personnel, goods, capital, data, and other factors more efficient and convenient, Liu said. “Cross-border direct ambulances in the Greater Bay Area are now transporting patients on a point-to-point ba-

sis,” he added.

Liu highlighted the contributions of CPPCC National Committee members from the two special administrative regions, saying, “More than 230 Hong Kong and Macau members have played an active role in the country’s economic and social development and the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong and Macao.”

They visited businesses, associations and universities, conducted research in mainland provinces and cities, while engaging in in-depth discussions on topics such as leveraging the role of Hong Kong and Macau in building a new open economic system at a higher level.

“They have offered advice in areas including financial trade, technological innovation, and business environment,” Liu said.

He said the CPPCC National Committee has conducted in-depth work to promote Hong Kong and Macau’s integration into the national development.

The top political advisory body has provided suggestions on building the Greater Bay Area into an international technology and innovation hub, helping to promote technological cooperation, innovation resource flow, and international talent recruitment across the region.

According to the Guangdong provincial government website, the Greater Bay Area’s total economic output surpassed 14 trillion yuan (\$1.92 trillion) in 2023, continuing its steady growth after exceeding 13 trillion yuan in 2022. MDT/CHINA DAILY



# CROSS-BORDER EXPERTISE



Opening session in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing

ment reforms; and higher quality Belt and Road Initiative development. To facilitate the broader vision of opening-up, human-level and institutional openness and removing red-tape are mentioned.

Spokesman for the 3rd session of the National Committee, Liu Jieyi, spoke of active global economic cooperation, globalization and shared prosperity.

Whilst the Chinese govern-

ment is presenting the details of the policies, strategies, directions, incentives and measures of the economic opening up, it is in the realities on the ground, in communities and workplaces that we see evidence of the sincerity and success of those policies.

Under the policies and promises, economic and well-being measures of government announcements there are real human actors. To accomplish such an opening, innovation, cooperation and collaboration which is spoken of at these sessions requires the movement of individuals from their home bases whether inwards or beyond China's shores. There are adjustment challenges in these cross-border activities which need to be met to achieve the desired outcomes.

Fortunately, over the last couple of decades I have been involved in academic publishing on global mobility, including papers which never make the cut – actually the greater proportion of submitted papers are culled. What has been noticeable has been the rise in manuscripts given to the rigorous double-blind review process dealing with expatriates into China as well as flows from China to other nations for work. Many of the latter studies describe the increase in Chinese labour mobi-

lity to places outside China which only now is beginning to be reflected in research and publications. The prevalence of this type of research is a good sign because what we learn from one context is not necessarily the case in another: for instance, a highly efficient government bureaucrat may be an abject failure as a tech start-up CEO, and cultural and institutional distances between countries potentially widen the performance gap. Over the last decade we are just starting to see an uplift in non-western context research in global mobility studies.

We are dealing with psychological and socio-cultural issues in these papers: language skills, cultural intelligence, feelings of isolation, loneliness, organisational and family support structures as well as institutional safety-nets. Chinese work mobility is of particular intellectual interest due to unique aspects of Chinese culture (such as reciprocal networks) and psychological schema based upon filiality and community bonding. These cultural foundations have implications in cross-cultural work contexts as they influence how organisational citizenship behaviours, reciprocity, engagement and acceptance of responsibility and empowerment in the workplace are exhibited. Execu-

tives manage people based upon the working theories they hold about what motivates people to work well, and this can backfire badly when staff come from different cultural backgrounds.

In the context of the governmental discussions in Beijing this week this might seem all too academic. Opening up economically, however, requires and will continue to demand an openness of mindset to different ways of achieving outcomes across borders by unskilled labour and blue-collar workers through to senior executives and bureaucrats. Take the UAE for instance, in the year 2000 there were only 7,000 Chinese living there; in 2023 over 400,000 were recorded. The demands of such mobility are not small and they will influence our cultures in multiple ways and directions.

The success of the economic and social policies in the global context will depend upon whether the people involved will hinder or advance those goals. Drawing upon experts who study and understand people in cross-border organisational contexts, and how to get the best from them whilst supporting their well-being will be critical to achieving China's 2030 economic and social goals and beyond.

## GBA offers strong basics for 'AI+ cross-border e-commerce': HK political advisor

INTERVIEW  
BY DING YAZHI & XING  
XIAOJING, GLOBAL TIMES

**L**in Long'an, a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, proposed to further promote the cross-border e-commerce development of South China's Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) based on local industrial advantages as well as assistance with artificial intelligence (AI) technologies.

Lin, also the chairman of the GBA Importers and Exporters Association, told the Global Times on Wednesday during the annual two sessions that the GBA, boasting abundant industrial cluster resources and a well-established cross-border e-commerce foundation, provides immense

potential for the foreign trade development of the area, while noting that the construction of the GBA brings both opportunities and challenges for the foreign trade sector.

As Hong Kong's manufacturing industry is relocated to the Chinese mainland, Lin noted that the integration of resources in the GBA and leveraging their respective advantages has become a crucial issue concerning Hong Kong's status as a trade hub.

"Hong Kong's financial settlement facilitation and international client networks constitute unique strengths, while the manufacturing foundation within the GBA provides solid support for trade," said Lin. He emphasized that by pooling resources and forming synergies within the GBA, Hong Kong could secure a more advantageous position in international

trade.

Over the past year, Lin visited multiple industrial clusters in the GBA, conducted meetings with local enterprises and relevant government departments and collected first-hand information regarding the current development status, strengths and challenges of these industrial clusters.

Lin noted that some enterprises he had visited expressed a desire to leverage cross-border e-commerce platforms to expand their overseas markets, while facing challenges due to a shortage of professional e-commerce operation talent and insufficient brand-building capabilities. Lin added relevant suggestions to support talent training and brand-building in his proposal this year.

With the rise of AI technologies represented by DeepSeek, Lin keenly recognized the emerging



An aerial drone photo shows a view of a mangrove wetland in Futian of Shenzhen

opportunities that AI brings to cross-border e-commerce, including cost controls, precision marketing, and an expanding customer base. AI technologies can also support international logistics and avoid a rat-race within the industry, said Lin.

Lin's association has connected to DeepSeek, which helps him access key information on the demand for Chinese products across diverse markets and countries, as well as insights into local business environments.

"In the past, this might

have required significant time and effort - potentially even a month to fully grasp. Now, with the powerful big data analytics support of the DeepSeek, such information can be instantly visualized with clarity, providing a solid and robust support for precision marketing initiatives," said Lin.

Since the Outline Development Plan for the GBA was released in February 2019, the region has become an important engine of China's trade growth. In 2024, the foreign trade of the nine cities of the GBA

hit a record of 8.75 trillion yuan (\$1.2 trillion), up by 10.1 percent year-on-year, according to data from Guangdong customs.

Speaking of the future development of the GBA's foreign trade sector, Lin noted that the "One Country, Two Systems" principle, plus three different customs regions and three currencies, can better align the GBA with international rules and standards, enabling it to serve as a vital gateway for economic exchanges and cooperation between China and the global economy.

MDT/GLOBAL TIMES

ANALYSIS

# CHINESE PREMIER AND THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT: TWO LEADERS, TWO SPEECHES, TWO DIFFERING WORLD VISIONS

KEN MORITSUGU & DIDI TANG,  
BEIJING

AP PHOTO

**T**HEIR words came just an hour apart this week — two major speeches by two of the world's most powerful leaders, delivered on opposite sides of the planet. Together, they illustrate the very different approaches the world's 21st-century powers are taking to achieve their respective national ambitions.

For China, it was a call for unity to overcome obstacles through innovation and "opening up" — a time-honored phrase in Chinese politics — to eventually accomplish national rejuvenation. It came from Chinese Premier Li Qiang in Beijing as he delivered an annual work report to the National People's Congress, nearly 3,000 representatives from a nation of 1.4 billion people.

Seven thousand miles away and an hour later, at 9 p.m. in Washington, President Donald Trump addressed both chambers of the U.S. Congress, more than 500 lawmakers representing a nation of 340 million, as he vowed to levy tariffs on imports and defeat inflation to "make America great again" — an equally resonant phrase for many in the United States.

From setting to speaking style, the speeches were an ocean apart. Yet they struck a similar tone — that of a desire for greatness at a moment when the reigning superpower and its biggest challenger are seeing their interests increasingly at odds.

The paths their leaders choose will shape both countries' futures — and the rest of the world's, too.

## DIVIDED DEMOCRACY VS CENTRALIST UNITY

Li's speech was a set piece delivered to a loyal audience. For 55 minutes, he read a condensed version of a mostly dry and laudatory report on the government's performance last year and its plans for 2025.

He spoke from the stage of a grand, theater-like chamber in the Great Hall of the People, a monumental edifice on Beijing's Tiananmen Square. China's top leader, Xi Jinping, sat on the dais behind him. The thousands of delegates arrayed before them politely applauded at the appropriate junctures.

Trump's address, which clocked at about an hour and 40 minutes, took place in the white-domed Capitol on the eastern end of the National Mall, dotted



Chinese Premier Li Qiang, right, chats with Chinese President Xi Jinping after the opening session of the National People's Congress

with national monuments. With his vice president and the Republican House speaker behind him, Trump delivered a longer, more theatrical speech to a divided Congress reflecting a divided nation.

Republicans clapped and cheered robustly at times. Democrats mostly sat in stony silence and occasionally shouted in protest. One, Rep. Al Green of Texas, was ejected from the chamber early on after he stood up and interrupted the president.

Such unscripted moments — and the high emotions visible behind them — are rare in China. It is a one-party state, and the Communist Party brooks no dissent in public. It strives to present a facade of unity. In his remarks, Li praised unity and urged the country to "rally more closely" around Xi's leadership.

In Washington, Trump lamented that "there is absolutely nothing I can say to make" Democrats "happy or to make them stand or smile or applaud" and called his Democratic predecessor, Joe Biden, "the worst president in American history."

## TARIFFS VS. GLOBALIZATION

Trump was upbeat about the economy, in the cheerleading way of American politicians pumping up support for their policies. He promised steps — including cutting energy costs — to defeat inflation, a pain point for many Americans. And he pledged to put more tariffs on imports, a move he claimed would boost U.S. in-

dustries but threatens to upset the global trade order and inflict pain on China and its export-dependent economy.

"Plants are opening up all over the place. Deals are being made like never seen. That's a combination of the election win and tariffs. It's a beautiful word, isn't it?" Trump said.

China is more worried about deflation than inflation. But Li acknowledged the other challenges the economy faces, chiefly falling real estate prices and depressed consumer spending. He reaffirmed Beijing's "unswerving commitment" to opening up.

"Regardless of changes in the external environment, we should remain steadfast in our commitment to opening up," Li said. "We will continue to expand our globally oriented network of high-standard free trade areas."

In a statement that no doubt referred in large part to the United States, he cautioned that "an increasingly complex and severe external environment may exert a greater impact on China in areas such as trade, science and technology."

## LEAVING CLIMATE ACCORD VS. GREEN TRANSITION

Trump touted his move to withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord and described his energy policy with the moniker "drill, baby, drill." He boasted of ending the previous administration's environmental restrictions and (incorrectly) its electric vehicle mandate, "saving our auto workers

and companies from economic destruction."

Beijing, on the contrary, is betting on a greener economy. Li said it would be a priority to accelerate "green transition" for "all areas of economic and social development". China already has the world's largest electric vehicle industry. Echoing earlier pledges by Xi, Li said China would "actively and prudently" work towards carbon peak and carbon neutrality.

Li stressed the importance of innovation and of developing the tech economy in China, including artificial intelligence. It's a push that many U.S. policymakers worry could challenge America's lead in technology, with impacts on both the economic and military rivalry between the two.

Trump made no mention of technology except to say that it would help build "a golden dome" missile defense shield over the U.S. He declared his focus as commander-in-chief to be "building the most powerful military of the future." One measure, he said, was to resurrect the American shipbuilding industry. Li's report touched on defense only briefly but said China would "speed up the development of new combat capabilities."

## MAGA VS. CHINESE 'REJUVENATION'

There's something in common, too: Both countries are yearning for greatness again.

The United States, as a rising and then reigning power, dominated the second half of the 20th

century and the start of the 21st. Its economy and military are still the world's most powerful. As China emerges as a rising power, its interests increasingly and inevitably collide with those of Americans and their allies over trade, technology and far-flung Pacific islands.

Today, through China's control of its domestic media, it plays up America's divisions and violent crimes. The message to its people: It offers a better choice for their future than the messiness of democracy.

Trump presented a different view. He opened his speech much as he spent great parts of his inaugural address in January: by declaring that "America's momentum is back."

"Our spirit is back. Our pride is back. Our confidence is back. And the American Dream is surging bigger and better than ever before," Trump said. "Our country is on the verge of a comeback."

Xi has fashioned what has been called the "Chinese Dream," by which the nation would be rejuvenated or restored to a position of greatness it held in centuries past.

China doesn't necessarily want to be a leader in the U.S. sense, but it wants to be considered an equal. Concretely, China wants a greater say in setting rules in a global system long dominated by the United States.

Trump appears more intent on freeing the U.S. from global rules. Aside from the Paris agreement, he has pulled the U.S. from other global groups including the World Health Organization and the U.N. Human Rights Council — withdrawals that he held up as accomplishments in his speech.

As Trump pulls the United States back from international involvement, it creates an opportunity for China to fill the void. What's unclear is to what extent the Communist Party thinks that doing so is in its interest and is able and willing to do so.

At the start of his speech, Li told the delegates that China has made "solid new strides" in advancing its modernization — an echo of the "Four Modernizations" that became a mantra during the rule of the late Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s and 1980s.

In ending his report, Li, as expected, made the call that so many Chinese leaders do at these annual March meetings: "Build a great country," he said, "and advance national rejuvenation."

MDT/AP

VIETNAM

# Coral reefs in Vietnam face collapse – can conservation efforts turn the tide?

YANNICK PETERHANS &  
ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL,  
NHA TRANG

**T**HE gentle waves off the coast of central Vietnam's Nha Trang obscure an open secret: The life-giving coral reefs below are dying. The waters are eerily devoid of fish. The bounty of the ocean is coming to an end.

This is why Binh Van — who fished in these waters for over two decades — now charters his boat to Vietnamese tourists wanting to experience the thrill of fishing in the deep waters of the South China Sea. But there is only squid, which is flourishing in oceans warmed by climate change, to catch. His passengers don't mind as the boat moves away from Nha Trang's twinkling beach resorts. But Van is pensive.

It wasn't always like this. There was a time when he'd catch 70 kilograms of fish, like tuna and grouper, in one night. He can't make money on the squid.

"Now I usually go home empty-handed," he said.

Southeast Asia's coral reefs make up over a third of the world's coral reefs and are part of the 'Coral Triangle', a richly biodiverse marine area that generally stretches from the Philippines to Indonesia to the Solomon Islands. But most of these are now at risk of being destroyed. Only 1% of Vietnam's reefs are still healthy, and in those cases it's because of their remoteness, according to the World Resources Institute.

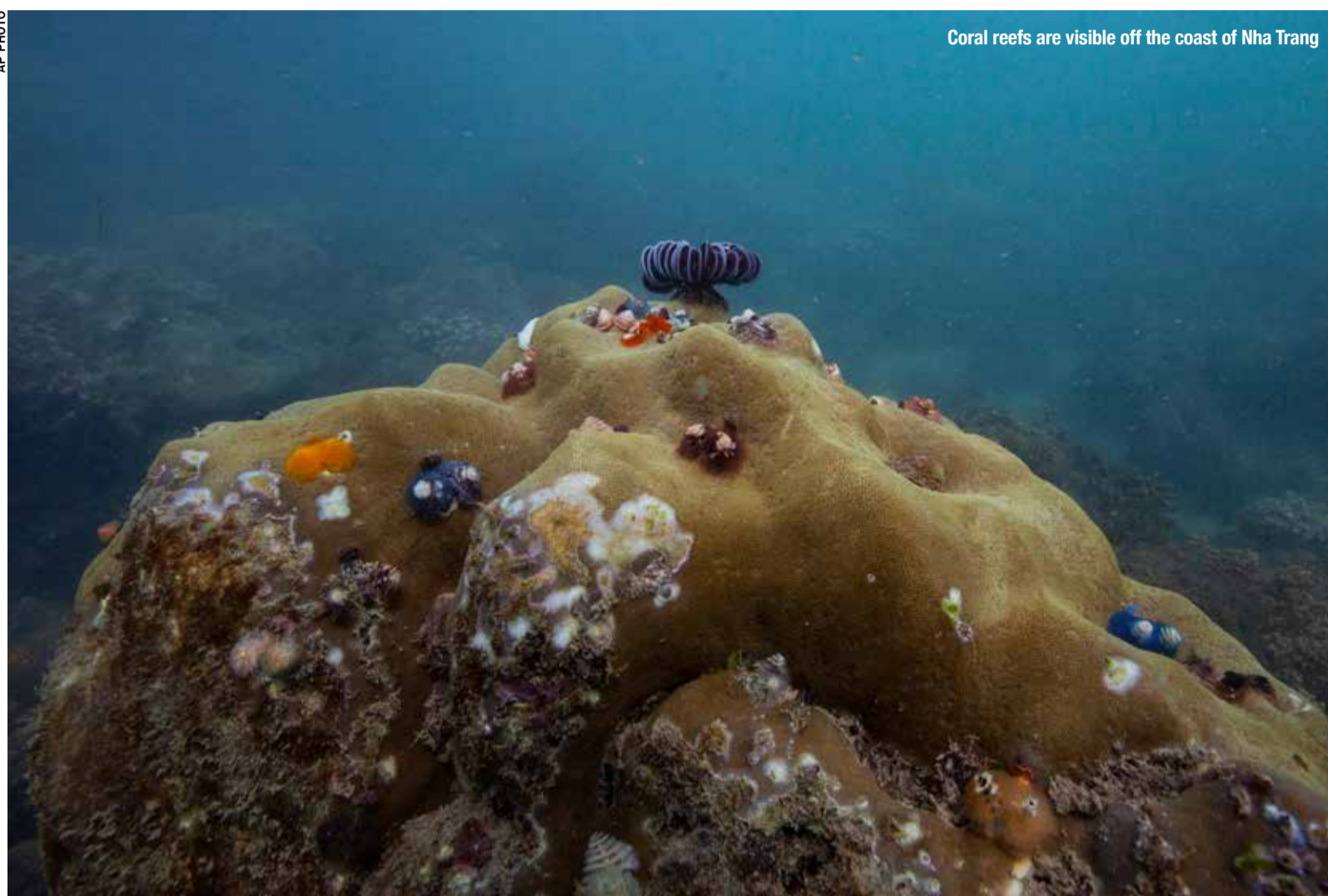
## REEFS AT RISK WORLDWIDE

Reefs worldwide are at risk from warmer and more acidic waters that weaken coral reefs and result in them bleaching because they've expelled the algae that helps them survive. Bleached corals need time to recover but bleaching events — when many corals lose color at the same time — are happening more frequently because of climate change, said Clint Oakley, who studies corals at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand.

"It's a compounding problem. It takes more than a year for them to fully recover," he said.

The coral reefs of Nha Trang have also had to contend with local pressures as Vietnam's economy boomed and coastal towns grew. Sediment from

AP PHOTO



Coral reefs are visible off the coast of Nha Trang

construction harms corals. Runoff from agriculture, sewage and booming aquaculture trigger algal blooms that block sunlight and choke corals. Intense overfishing killed off fishes that support reef health. By 2019, an outbreak of a predatory, thorny starfish — made likelier because of the reef's disturbed ecological balance — had killed nearly 90% by eating corals of the surviving reefs by 2019, said Konstantin S. Tkachenko, a professor of marine ecology at Russia's Samara University who has been studying Vietnam's reefs for years.

This has affected not only the local fishing industry — reefs provide food, shelter, and breeding grounds for fish — but also Vietnam's tourism industry, especially among divers from all over the world who flock to the Southeast Asian country because of its long coastline. The underwater landscape is becoming infamous for different types of waste: Glass bottles where revelers party, nylon fishing lines where fishing boats lurk and plastic everywhere. Fish that clean reefs and keep them healthy by eating algae or parasites, like the distinctive Picasso triggerfish and the beaked Indian parrotfish, have disappeared, said Michael Blum of Rainbow Divers, a di-

ving company in Vietnam.

"When you don't have the cleaners, the (reefs) suffocate," he said.

He and others have been diving every Friday to collect waste since October, bringing up more than 100 kilograms of trash.

Niecey Alexander, a tourist who began diving in December, said that it wasn't until she was underwater that she realized how small the world above water is compared to the vast ocean and the life it sustains. After her first dive to collect waste she said that it was mostly from tourism. "People not really thinking about waste when they're going into these adventures," she said.

## TOURISM AND REEFS HAND-IN-HAND

Tourism and reefs can go hand in hand if they're well-managed, said Emma Camp, a coral expert at the University of Technology Sydney in Australia. She said that there are instances of tourism supporting marine conservation and programs to help reefs recover. But unsustainable tourism practices — too many people, or people doing things like dropping their anchors on the reefs — can cause harm.

"They can be very posi-

ve for an area, allowing people to fall in love with a reef by allowing them to experience it firsthand," she said.

Preserving the tourism brochure image of its natural beauty will be crucial for Vietnam as it tries to compete with its neighbors to boost post-pandemic revenue from tourism to \$42 billion. It wants to attract 23 million international tourists and over 120 million visits by domestic tourists in 2025. For context, the region's most popular destination, Thailand, wants 40 million international visitors and 200 million domestic visits in 2025.

And in cities like Nha Trang, its long stretches of golden sand beaches and traditional fishing villages now coexist with the rapid construction of resorts, restaurants and bars.

Vietnam insists that it is making efforts to make tourism sustainable. In 2001, it established 160 square kilometers (61 square miles) of land and water as its first protected marine area. But problems have persisted, from destructive practices that used explosives or poison to excessive tourism and coastal construction, said Vietnamese state media. In 2022, local authorities paused tourism to give the reef time to recover while removing preda-

tory starfish and cleaning the seabed. The government has also approved a coral nursery project to support the recovery of the ecosystem.

But even though a marine patrol was established to protect the waters to ensure that fishermen don't enter the marine park, Blum said fishing in the protected area was continuing.

"We go out in the morning, we are chasing the fishing boats away. We leave in the afternoon, and the fishing boats are coming back in," Blum said.

Tkachenko, the Russian scientist, said the Southeast Asian country could do more to protect them. It could create more marine parks where protections are actually enforced, obligate the tourism industry to restore vegetation on the coasts to reduce sediment pouring into the ocean, restore degraded reefs through coral culture and by introducing animals that balance reef ecosystems, and regulating fisheries.

He pointed to the scores of fishing vessels that dot the coasts of Nha Trang.

"What do you think is the chance to survive for any tiny fish or sea bottom inhabitant under such tremendous fishing pressure daily?" he said. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



From left, European Council President Antonio Costa, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen arrive the summit at the European Council building in Brussels, yesterday

EUROPEAN UNION

# UE leaders meet for emergency summit on defense and Ukraine

RAF CASERT & LORNE COOK, BRUSSELS

**F**ACING the prospect that the United States might cut them adrift under President Donald Trump, European Union leaders launched a day of emergency talks in a bid to beef up their own security and ensure that Ukraine will still be properly protected.

Friedrich Merz, the likely next chancellor of Germany, and summit chairman Antonio Costa discussed over breakfast in Brussels ways to fortify Europe's defenses on a short deadline. Merz pushed plans this week to loosen the nation's rules on running up debt to allow for higher defense spending.

Meanwhile, the 27-nation bloc was waking up to news that French President Emmanuel Macron would confer with EU leaders about the possibility of using France's nuclear deterrent to protect the continent from Russian threats.

It all underscored the sea change that has taken place in the two months since Trump took office and immediately started upending the cornerstones of cooperation between the United States and Europe that had been the bedrock of Western security since World War II.

"Spend, spend, spend on defense and deterrence. That's the most important

message," said Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen.

The call is a sharp departure from decades of decline in military spending in Europe, where defense often came last in many budgetary considerations.

The bloc will "take decisive steps forward," Macron told the French nation Wednesday evening. "Member states will be able to increase their military spending" and "massive joint funding will be provided to buy and produce some of the most innovative munitions, tanks, weapons and equipment in Europe," he said.

Adding to the ebullient message, he said that "Europe's future does not have to be decided in Washington or Moscow."

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who was attending the summit, received warm bonhomie from most leaders — a stark contrast with the verbal lashing the Ukraine president got from Trump less than a week ago.

"I want to thank all our European leaders," Zelenskyy said. "Strong support from the very beginning of the war. During all this period, and last week, you stayed with us."

Helping EU members increase spending

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has proposed a plan to loosen budget rules so countries that are willing can

spend much more on defense. Her proposal is underpinned by 150 billion euros (\$162 billion) worth of loans to buy priority military equipment.

Most of the increased defense spending would have to come from national budgets at a time when many countries are already overburdened with debt.

Part of von der Leyen's plan includes measures to ensure struggling member states won't be punished for going too deep in the red if the spending is earmarked for defense.

"Europe faces a clear and present danger, and therefore Europe has to be able to protect itself, to defend itself," she said.

France is struggling to reduce an excessive annual budget deficit of 5% of GDP, after running up its total debt burden to 112% of GDP with spending on relief for businesses and consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic and the energy crisis that followed Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Five other countries using the euro currency have debt levels over 100% of GDP: Belgium, Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal.

Europe's largest economy, Germany, has more room to borrow, with a debt level of 62% of GDP.

Pressing security needs  
Part of any security plan is also to protect the increas-

gly beleaguered position of Ukraine.

A Russian missile killed four people staying at a hotel in Zelenskyy's hometown overnight. He said that a humanitarian organization's volunteers had moved into the hotel in Kryvyi Rih, in central Ukraine, just before the strike. The volunteers included Ukrainian, American and British nationals, but it wasn't clear whether those people were among the 31 injured.

Early this week, Trump ordered a pause to U.S. military supplies to Ukraine as he sought to press Zelenskyy to engage in negotiations to end the war with Russia, bringing fresh urgency to the summit.

The meeting is unlikely to address Ukraine's most pressing needs. It is not aimed at urgently drumming up more arms and ammunition to fill any supply vacuum created by the U.S. freeze. Still, the Europeans underlined the importance of the moment.

"This is a watershed moment for Europe and Ukraine as part of our European family. It's also a watershed moment for Ukraine," von der Leyen said, as she stood alongside Zelenskyy before striding together into the summit.

But perhaps the biggest challenge for the EU will be taking a united stance at a moment when it's fractured, since much of the bloc's actions requires unanimous support. Hungary is threatening to veto part of the summit statement on Ukraine, as is Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico.

The summit is unlikely to produce immediate decisions on spending for Ukraine or its own defenses. Another EU summit where the real contours of decisions would be much clearer is set for March 20-21. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1945 BLACK SEA TALKS PLAN DEFEAT OF GERMANY



Plans are being drawn up by London, Washington and Moscow for the final phase of the war against Germany.

Leaders of the three countries, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Marshal Joseph Stalin, have been meeting at a secret location in the Black Sea area.

A statement issued this evening is the first official confirmation of the talks which are said to have begun three days ago.

According to the statement issued by the Ministry of Information in London the purpose of the meeting is to complete plans for the defeat of the "common enemy" and to build firm foundations for a lasting peace.

The three leaders, who are also accompanied by their chiefs of staff, foreign secretaries and other advisers, are said to have reviewed the latest information from all the battle fronts in Europe.

The statement continued: "There is complete agreement for joint military operations in the final phase of the war against Nazi Germany. The military staffs of the three governments are now engaged in working out jointly the detailed plans."

Discussions on how to secure a lasting peace have also been held. Topics likely to be considered are the occupation and control of Germany, the political and economic problems of a liberated Europe and proposals for an international organisation to maintain peace.

A further communiqué is to be issued at the conclusion of the talks. [...]

There has been some speculation the three leaders might appeal over the heads of the German leadership to the people themselves to get out of a "lost war". The German media has already issued warnings that any such appeal should be ignored as an attempt to undermine the fighting will of its forces. [...]

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

What became known as the Yalta or Crimea Conference ended on 11 February. Its location was revealed to be the former imperial palace at Livadia in Yalta. An official agreement was published in which the three leaders declared their intention to combine their military plans and work in close partnership to defeat Germany.

They also drew up plans for the occupation of Germany and agreed France should be a fourth occupying power.

The leaders announced their determination to stamp out Nazism and to disarm and disband all German armed forces and bring all war criminals to justice.

All liberated territories in Europe were to have democratic government.

On the question of Poland, they agreed on plans for a provisional government until a free election could be held and also on where the border should lie between Poland and the USSR.

An agreement was reached, without Churchill's knowledge, on the Soviet Union's territorial demands for joining the war against Japan.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES** Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Listen to the news. Adapt to plot twists and a shifting story. Gather information and prepare your response. Consider the situation from another perspective.

**TAURUS** Apr. 20-May. 20  
Consider upcoming changes and financial impacts. Don't rush into anything. Slow and easy does it. Discover silver linings under a cloud. Strategize to maximize.

**GEMINI** May. 21-Jun. 21  
Reconsider a personal dream, goal or ambition. Chaos, unmet expectations or thwarted intentions could be frustrating. Reassess options to discover hidden new doors.

**CANCER** Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
Rest and recharge. Review the past. Consider future plans. Recharge with hot water, good food and soft music. Enjoy a great movie or story.

**LEO** Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
A team effort requires your attention. Adapt to recent changes. Get expert advice. Take on extra responsibility temporarily. Support each other and pull together.

**VIRGO** Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
A disruption at work could reveal another career direction. Consider the fun factor among others in sifting your options. Review, reassess and revise plans.

**LIBRA** Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
Slow down and consider where you're going. Does this direction still take you to your objective? At a roadblock, another way might look brighter.

**SCORPIO** Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
Listen to advice from elders and experts. Review your situation and determine your direction. Take stock and reassess your shared assets. Contribute for growth.

**SAGITTARIUS** Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
Discover a structural breakdown with your partner. Consider long-term dreams and goals. Come up with areas of shared commitment and passion. Refine your collaboration.

**CAPRICORN** Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
Something you try now doesn't work. Consider long-term dreams and goals. Come up with areas of shared commitment and passion. Refine your collaboration.

**AQUARIUS** Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
Proceed with caution. Things could get chaotic. Prioritize matters of the heart. Consider what you most want. How can you create more of that?

**PISCES** Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
Adjust to a shifting domestic situation. Structural breakdowns require attention. Make necessary repairs and upgrades. Save time and money through quick planning and action.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

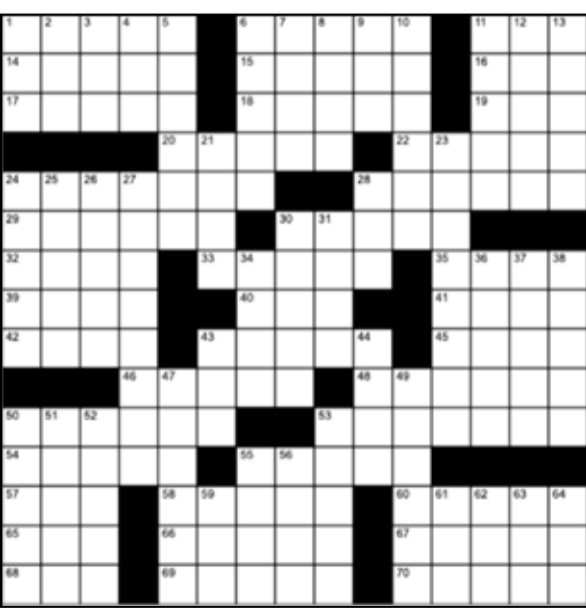
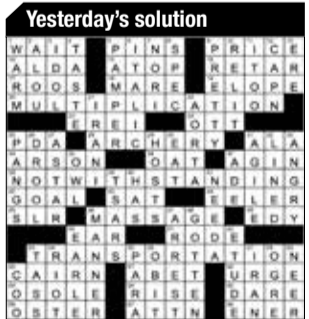
**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	1	10	overcast
Changchun	-5	5	fine
Chengdu	5	12	rain
Chongqing	9	14	overcast
Fuzhou	8	12	rain
Guangzhou	9	14	rain
Guiyang	1	10	overcast
Haikou	14	16	rain
Hangzhou	3	10	cloudy
Harbin	-12	4	cloudy
Hefei	1	12	cloudy
Nanjing	3	9	cloudy
Shanghai	5	10	cloudy
Taipei	13	15	rain
Wuhan	3	14	cloudy
Hong Kong	16	17	cloudy
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-1	7	cloudy
Frankfurt	1	15	snow
Paris	8	16	sunny
London	7	14	cloudy
New York	3	10	cloudy

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Like most movies; 6- Actress Burstyn; 11- Gear tooth; 14- Disputed matter; 15- Monetary unit of Oman; 16- You \_\_\_ here; 17- Verdi work; 18- Command; 19- AFL affiliate; 20- Discovers; 22- Copter part; 24- Shaggy; 28- Affectionate; 29- Pacific weather phenomenon; 30- \_\_\_ having fun yet?; 32- March Madness org.; 33- Adored; 35- Civil rights leader Parks; 39- Ripped; 40- Prefix with profit or fiction; 41- Ladies of Sp.; 42- Shaker contents; 43- More frigid; 45- Wyatt of the West; 46- Goofed up; 48- Citrus fruit; 50- Timmy's dog; 53- Cock; 54- At \_\_\_ for words; 55- Prince Valiant's wife; 57- Fall from grace; 58- Ran in neutral; 60- Satan; 65- Compass point opposite WSW; 66- Boisterous; 67- Pisa place; 68- Hi-\_\_\_ monitor; 69- V-formation fliers; 70- First name in cosmetics;

DOWN 1- \_\_\_ Grande; 2- Viper; 3- Mao \_\_\_ -tung; 4- Where It's at; 5- Destroy hearing; 6- Deep black; 7- Pie crust ingredient; 8- Covers; 9- End for Siam; 10- Of little width; 11- Desert plants; 12- Rigel's constellation; 13- Conductor Soltz; 21- Object of devotion; 23- Abroad; 24- Leases; 25- Big name in foil; 26- Knot; 27- Very large woman; 28- Conducted; 30- Shun; 31- Russo of "Ransom"; 34- Fairy tale opener; 36- Praying figure; 37- Beetle Bailey's boss; 38- According to; 43- Wrath; 44- Underground part of a plant; 47- Ascending; 49- Band aide; 50- Coherent light beam; 51- Skirt style; 52- Loudness units; 53- Color anew; 55- That's \_\_\_; 56- Minus; 59- Female deer; 61- Aliens, briefly; 62- Large container; 63- \_\_\_ du Diable; 64- Strong alkali;



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

jmlmacau jmlproperty

**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

DRIVE IN

# A RECKONING IN SURREAL, RIVETING 'ON BECOMING A GUINEA FOWL'

LINDSEY BAHR,  
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

**SHULA** is driving home from a fancy dress party one night when she encounters an unusual sight in the middle of a country road: her Uncle Fred's dead body.

But Shula, portrayed by Susan Chardy, does not behave in a way that we would expect. She doesn't cry out in horror or appear the least bit upset or shocked by the sight. Instead, we sit there with her in silence, her in sunglasses and a silver helmeted mask adorned with sparkling rhinestones. Shula looks straight out of a music video as she stares off into the distance. This, we realize quickly, is going to be a thing. At the very least, it's an inconvenience, ripping her out of her independent life and back into the throes of her traditional family, their patriarchal ways and all their crippling secrets.

This is the opening scene of "On Becoming a Guinea Fowl," Rungano Nyoni's darkly comedic, stylish and hauntingly bizarre portrait of a Zambian family funeral. It is perhaps the first great film of 2025 — though it's techni-

AP PHOTO



Susan Chardy in a scene from "On Becoming a Guinea Fowl" (Chibesa Mulumba/A24)

cally been awaiting its moment in the United States since 2024. It premiered last year at the Cannes Film Festival and has already had a run in the U.K.

And it's a post-Oscars treat to have something this great in the cinemas to shake audiences out of their end-of-the-road awards contender boredom. What better

way to do it than with something so different, so vibrant and so unforgettable as "On Becoming a Guinea Fowl," only the second feature from the self-taught filmmaker.

Nyoni centers this story around a dayslong funeral for this predominantly Bemba family.

The elder women cry and wail

and are cruel to Uncle Fred's widow for not taking care of him. But there is an open secret that's bubbling up to the surface now that Fred is dead: He was a predator and a pedophile whose abuse of the young women in his family stretches back decades. This is, most of the elders agree, something that should just be forgotten

and buried along with Fred.

This is a society that remains bound to protecting the reputation and memory of a man whose actions continue to affect the women he violated: His wife; his young niece; Shula's grown, often drunk cousin (Elizabeth Chisela). The women are just supposed to compartmentalize and move on — something the matriarchs seem largely on board with.

"On Becoming a Guinea Fowl" shares some spiritual DNA with "Women Talking," in which mothers pass on traumas and secrets and the cycle goes on, despite even the best of intentions. Nyoni and her cinematographer David Gallego make this a transportive, stylish and unforgettable experience that powerfully transcends the specifics of its setting, while also taking audiences into a culture that's likely unfamiliar.

The ending is not what one might call conclusive, but perhaps a litmus test for the individual viewer as to whether or not they'll exit with hope or dread for what's to come. And regardless, when you take a step back, "Guinea Fowl" cements the exciting arrival of a true filmmaker.

**"On Becoming a Guinea Fowl," an A24 release in theaters Friday, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for "thematic material, sexual abuse, suggestive references and some drug use." Running time: 95 minutes. ★★★★★**

**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

WWW.MACAUCLOSER.COM  
生活藝術雜誌 LIVING & ARTS MAGAZINE

蛇年帶來挑戰與變革，但亦有新機遇！  
THE YEAR OF THE SNAKE BRINGS CHALLENGES AND CHANGES, BUT NEW OPPORTUNITIES AS WELL!

知得更多，活得更好 KNOW MORE, LIVE BETTER

TUNES

# Blackpink star Lisa's 'Alter Ego' is an ambitious, chameleonic solo debut

LISA, one-fourth of the K-pop juggernaut Blackpink, has officially stepped out on her own — releasing her first solo album “Alter Ego.” Across rap, dance and pop, the project shows off a versatile artist ready to embrace her time alone in the spotlight.

The Thai rapper is the second member of Blackpink to release a full-length solo project after Rosé's sweet side-step from the band, “Rosie.” The album arrives as Lisa makes her acting debut in Season 3 of “The White Lotus” and prepares to perform at the Oscars — high-profile outings that will further her status as a global phenomenon.

After a series of single releases, “Alter Ego” is the climax of those introductions — an evolution from the hip-hop-pop self-starter heard on her solo debut EP 2021's “LALISA.” It's an ambitious pursuit, with mostly successful results.

As the title suggests, Lisa creates space for experimentation by adopting separate personas — Roxi, Sunni, the '00s pop-channeling Kiki, Speedi and the ferocious rapper Vixi — who appear across the high-concept songs. They allow the artist to jump between sonic languages, with varied attitudes of her vocals and productions.

Coupled with Blackpink's history as a cross-genre powerhouse, Lisa's genre-spanning foray into solo pop feels earned. And it works — mostly.

Like the band's discography, the tracks are upbeat and self-assured, with edge unique to Lisa: “Elastigirl” and “Thunder” are sensual and bold, the former punchy and light to the latter's moody groove. “F— Up The World,” featuring Future, is quick and aggressive, with an empowered message akin to some of Blackpink's hits. “Badgrl” assures that this Lisa isn't to be messed with: “I can be your bad girl,” she raps. “Don't treat me like a lady.”

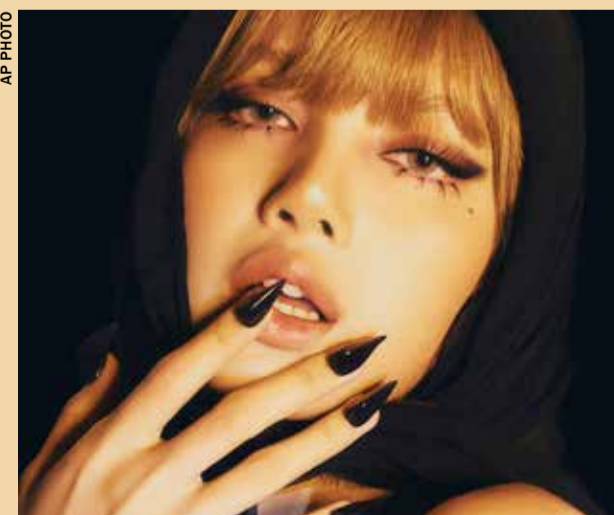
The dreamy “Moonlit Floor (Kiss Me)” interpolates alt-rock band Sixpence None the Richer's 1998 hit “Kiss Me,” lyrics reimagined to depict a Paris romance for a Gen Z audience. Lisa's “Kiss Me” is glittery and sweet — losing some of the charm of the original, but fitting for a young audience that seeks fresh, catchy soundbites and feels nostalgic for a time before their own.

On five of the tracks, Lisa and her alter egos are supported by the hit-makers of the genres they inhabit. Along with Future, Raye and Doja Cat appear on the lush “Born Again.”

And when she does make herself known, she succeeds. “Make way, make way, make way/Taking space up in the sky,” Lisa sings on “Thunder.”

“I'll take my place up ahead.”

That's the confident, independent Lisa we're looking for.  
ELISE RYAN, MDT/AP



“Alter Ego” by LISA (RCA Records)

TASTE OF EDESIA

# Cantonese Four-hand Lunch at Lai Heen

IRENE SAM, MDT

CHEF Paul Lau, Director of Culinary from the illustrious two MICHELIN-starred **Tin Lung Heen** in The Ritz-Carlton, Hong Kong, and Executive Chef Jackie Ho, from the acclaimed one MICHELIN-starred Lai Heen in The Ritz-Carlton, Macau, join hands to present their first collaborative culinary event - Elevated Epicurean Journey.

With more than forty years of culinary experience, both chefs share a rich history that began under the guidance of the same mentor. Their journeys have led them across the globe: Chef Lau has honed his skills in Hong Kong, Beijing, and Dubai, while Chef Ho has excelled in Beijing and spent over a decade in Thailand. This diverse exposure has allowed Chef Lau to blend traditional and contemporary techniques, creating his distinctive style, and Chef Ho shining in the realm of seafood preparation and the artful use of spices. Together, they will craft innovative dishes featuring time-honoured cooking methods in this iconic collaboration.

The Elevated Epicurean Journey four-hand event showcases a six-course lunch menu for MDT. The lunch menu celebrates the chefs' affinity for sumptuous seafood, creatively infused into a variety of delectable dim sums.

During lunch, Chef Ho stirs up guests' appetites with a three-item dim sum course featuring delicate, mild flavors. The Steamed Crabmeat with Egg White Dumpling consists of delicate dumplings filled with succulent crabmeat and silky egg white, steamed to perfection. Each bite re-



veals the sweetness of the crabmeat, balanced by the smooth texture of the egg white. The Baked Wagyu Beef Scallion Puff is a play on Lai Heen's signature Crispy Wagyu Beef Puff Pastry with Homemade Black Pepper Sauce. The golden, flaky crust encases tender, flavorful beef, infused with the subtle sharpness of scallions, resulting in a delightful and savory treat. In the Steamed Sarcodon with Precious Yunnan Mushrooms Dumpling, the combination of these rare mushrooms creates luxurious yet delicate and light flavors, all encased in a tender dumpling wrapper.

To complement, Chef Lau hand-picks various luxurious seafood to

enhance the flavors to the next level in his version of the three-item dim sum course. The Baked Lobster Puff is a symphony of flavors, where succulent lobster meat meets a delicate, flaky pastry shell. The Deep-Fried Mantou with Sea Urchin is a golden-brown delight that encapsulates the ocean's bounty. Each fluffy bun is perfectly crisp on the outside, revealing a luscious center of fresh sea urchin that melts in your mouth.

The Steamed Seabass Dumpling with X.O Sauce introduces a masterful blend of fresh seabass and fragrant herbs, served with a luxurious homemade X.O sauce, elevating the flavours of the dumpling.

# No Pain All Gain Skin Rejuvenation

FOR those looking for effective facial rejuvenation with minimal pain, OligioX is a professional-grade radio frequency (RF) machine designed for aesthetic and dermatological treatments. Since its launch, it has been widely used in clinics for non-invasive skin tightening and rejuvenation. The device utilises advanced RF technology to deliver controlled thermal energy to the skin's deeper layers, stimulating collagen production and improving skin elasticity.

Dr Cynthia Wong,

Life Medical Centre in Macau is a specialist of anti-aging and skin rejuvenation. She points out that OligioX is the best option for those wanting a natural skin tightening result without downtime and much discomfort.

“This is a very special machine as it offers customisable energy levels and treatment parameters to suit different skin types and concerns. It also has built-in temperature control and safety mechanisms to prevent overheating or skin damage, which ensures a comfortable and safe experience for patients,”



Dr Cynthia Wong

she says.

The OligioX is ideal for individuals looking for non-invasive solutions to tighten loose or sagging skin, reduce the appearance of wrinkles and fine lines, enhan-



cing overall skin texture and tone. MDT's first-hand experiences it to be extremely effective right after treatment as the result will continue to improve over months. IS

**OPINION**

**Business Views**

Elaine Kurtenbach, MDT/AP Business Writer



**CHINA SLAMS US TARIFFS, SAYS THERE ARE NO WINNERS IN A TRADE WAR**

China will not yield to bullying and its economy can weather higher tariffs imposed by U.S. President Donald Trump and other challenges, the Chinese commerce minister said Thursday, though he added that there are “no winners in a trade war.”

Speaking on the sidelines of the annual session of China’s national congress, Wang Wentao reiterated Beijing’s calls for talks.

Coercion and threats are bound to fail, he said, noting that China’s role as a main trading partner of 140 nations means it has plenty of options. Wang and other officials outlined Beijing’s strategies for building its economy and financial markets, but did not announce any major new initiatives.

The Trump administration has raised tariffs on imports from China twice since taking office in January. China has hit back with duties and other restrictions on American goods and companies. Wang said China expects mutual respect in its dealings with other countries.

“Coercion and threats will not work on China, nor will they scare China. China’s determination to defend its own interests is unswerving,” Wang said, adding that “there are no winners in a trade war.”

“If the American side goes further down this wrong path, we will continue to respond in kind,” he said. “We will fight to the end.”

Still, he stressed that China is open to resolving differences over trade. “Our two sides can meet at an appropriate time and our teams can also have communication as early as possible,” he said.

Blaming China for the U.S. fentanyl problem — Trump’s stated reason for imposing 20% tariffs on all imports from China — won’t solve the problem, he said.

China is the main trading partner of 140 countries and regions and has free trade agreements with more than 30 countries, Wang said.

“We are ready to sign more FTA,” he added.

Wang acknowledged that Chinese exporters face serious challenges but said Beijing is encouraging companies to participate in trade shows and to expand globally. The Chinese government is also expanding its financial support for export credit and hopes to increase trade in services and e-commerce.

“We do not put all our eggs in one basket,” he said.

A slump in China’s housing market and lackluster share prices, scant social welfare and job losses since the COVID-19 pandemic have weighed on China’s economy, dragging on growth.

Zheng Shanjie, head of the National Development and Reform Commission, China’s main national planning agency, acknowledged that forecasts for economic growth for 2025 tend to be around 4.6% to 4.8%, below the government’s target of “around 5%.”

Zheng said the government is drafting a “specialized plan of action” to encourage more consumer spending and investment. He did not provide specific details.

China will spend more on “livelihood and consumption,” Finance Minister Lan Fo-an said, promising more help for deeply indebted local governments and bigger investments in education, social security and public health.

“We will make sure that every coin is well spent,” Lan said, adding that “the central government has left ample room for policy to be implemented.”

As it has with other government agencies, the Trump administration is moving swiftly to assert its vision at the Voice of America.

As it does so, a question hangs in the air: Is the news organization’s journalistic mission, which dates to World War II, in for some fundamental changes?

Within the past week, VOA placed veteran U.S.-based journalist Steve Herman on an extended absence to investigate his social media activities, and moved to reassign White House bureau chief Patsy Widakuswara, who had been disciplined during the first Trump administration.

President Donald Trump’s choice to lead VOA, unsuccessful Arizona gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake, joined the organization as a special adviser while awaiting the approval necessary to take over.

Voice of America beams audio and online news reports about the United States throughout the world, typically in the native languages of countries where it operates.

The agency’s charter requires that its journalists deliver independent news and information, and not be a government mouthpiece.

At birth, Voice of America told stories about democracy to people in Nazi Germany.

AP PHOTO



A cargo ship goes through the Panama Canal’s Cocoli locks in Panama City

**PANAMA PRESIDENT CALLS TRUMP’S TALK OF ‘RECLAIMING’ THE PANAMA CANAL A LIE**

PANAMA President José Raúl Mulino yesterday [Macau time] accused U.S. President Donald Trump of lying when he said in his address to Congress that his administration was “reclaiming” the Panama Canal.

Trump was referencing a deal announced Tuesday for a consortium led by the U.S. investment management company BlackRock Inc. to buy a controlling stake in the company held by a Chinese group that operates ports at both ends of the Panama Canal.

Panama maintains that it has full control over the canal and that the Hong Kong-based group’s operation of the ports did not amount to Chinese control over the waterway, and that therefore the sale to a U.S.-based company would not represent any U.S. “reclaiming” of the canal. Panama’s government on Tuesday called the sale a private transaction.

Mulino in a message posted to X on Wednesday, rejected that the deal came about because of U.S. pressure. “I reject in the name of Panama and all Panama-

nians this new affront to the truth and our dignity as a nation,” he wrote. He accused Trump of “lying again.”

Trump has talked about retaking the Panama Canal since his campaign, arguing that the U.S. should have never turned control over to the Panamanians and that the U.S. was being overcharged for using it.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio met with Mulino in early February and insisted that China was exerting influence over the canal’s operations. The focus was the Chinese consortium running the ports. Panama rejected that China had any influence over canal operations.

“Cooperation between our governments passes through clear understandings in terms of issues of mutual interest,” Mulino wrote. “It doesn’t have anything to do with ‘reclaiming the canal’ nor with tarnishing our national sovereignty.”

In a filing, CK Hutchison Holding said Tuesday that it would sell all shares in Hutchison Port Holdings and in

Hutchison Port Group Holdings to the BlackRock consortium in a deal valued at nearly \$23 billion, including \$5 billion in debt.

The deal has to be approved by Panama’s government.

The United States built the canal in the early 1900s as it looked for ways to facilitate the transit of commercial and military vessels between its coasts. Washington relinquished control of the waterway to Panama on Dec. 31, 1999, under a treaty signed in 1977 by President Jimmy Carter. Trump has claimed that Carter “foolishly” gave the canal away.

Frank Sixt, co-managing director of CK Hutchison, said in a statement that the transaction was “the result of a rapid, discrete but competitive process in which numerous bids and expressions of interest were received.”

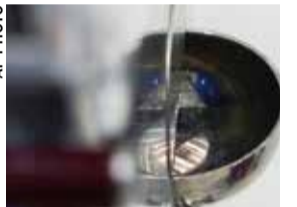
“I would like to stress that the transaction is purely commercial in nature and wholly unrelated to recent political news reports concerning the Panama Ports,” Sixt said. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



**Canada** Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said yesterday [Macau time] that Canada will not lift retaliatory tariffs unless the U.S. removes all its import tariffs. Trump imposed duties on Canadian goods Tuesday, sparking concerns of a trade war. Canadian officials insist on full tariff removal before negotiations proceed.

AP PHOTO



**United States** Trump ordered the U.S. Mint to stop making pennies on February 10, citing costs. The decision impacts souvenir penny-press machine operators who rely on uncirculated cents. Collectors and businesses worry about supply shortages. The Mint has not confirmed whether production will officially cease.

AP PHOTO



**Turkey’s** central bank lowered its key interest rate by 2.5 percentage points yesterday, reducing it to 42.5%. The decision follows official inflation figures showing a slowdown. Economists remain skeptical, saying true inflation rates may be higher. The government continues its policy of gradual rate cuts.

AP PHOTO



**Haiti** Les Cayes’ Antoine Simon Airport is ready for international flights, officials announced yesterday [Macau time]. The airport offers an alternative to gang-violence-affected Port-au-Prince. Some aid groups welcome the development, while others say the crisis in the capital still hampers essential humanitarian operations.