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Japan-Belarus Belarus courts sentenced Masatoshi Nakanishi, a Japanese national, to seven years in prison yesterday [Macau time] after a closed trial found him guilty of photographing sensitive military and civilian facilities for Japanese intelligence. Authorities fined him approximately \$6,700 amid ongoing political prisoner concerns in harsh verdict.

AP PHOTO



Indian authorities imposed an indefinite curfew in Nagpur yesterday following sectarian clashes incited by Hindu nationalist groups demanding demolition of Aurangzeb's tomb. Police reported dozens injured, multiple arrests, and significant property damage as communal tensions intensified amid growing inter-religious discord in Maharashtra, sparking nationwide unrest.

AP PHOTO



India In New Delhi yesterday, U.S. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard stated that President Trump remains committed to peace through realism and pragmatism. Gabbard emphasized deepening the strategic India-US partnership during her remarks at the Raisina Dialogue conference, boosting ties amid challenges.

AP PHOTO



Dominican Republic In Punta Cana, Dominican authorities intensified the search for 20 year old Sudiksha Konanki, a U.S. college student and Indian citizen who vanished before dawn on March 6. Officials are scouring waters while detaining the last witness, with a judge expected to rule today [Macau time].

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PROPERTY
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TEACHER-STUDENT RATIO FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IMPROVES

The teacher-to-student ratio in early childhood education classes has steadily improved in recent years, according to the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ). From the 2011/2012 school year, where the ratio stood at 1:1.6, it has now reached 1:2.3 for the 2024/2025 school year. At the same time, the teacher-to-student ratio has decreased from 1:16.7 to 1:11.7. For DSEDJ, these improvements are expected to allow schools to deploy staff more effectively based on the varying needs of children.

UM TEAM WINS SECOND PRIZE AT HUAWEI ICT COMPETITION

A student team from the Faculty of Science and Technology (FST) at the University of Macau (UM) won second place in the Computing Track at the Asia-Pacific Regional Final of the Huawei ICT Competition 2024-2025. Competing against over 8,000 students from over 20 countries, the UM team, consisting of Tan Hongye, Lei Wai Hong, and Ho Ka Meng, stood out for their teamwork and expertise. This marks the first time UM has earned an award in the competition's computing track. The team will now advance to the Global Final in Shenzhen.

MACAO PAVILION PROMOTES LOCAL FILM INDUSTRY AT FILMART

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) has organized Macau's participation in the Hong Kong International Film and TV Market (FILMART) 2025, setting up a "Macao Pavilion" to promote the region's film and television services. Held from March 17 to 20 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, FILMART is Asia's largest trade fair for film and entertainment. The event aims to encourage more film projects in Macau and create development opportunities for the local industry. An introduction to the "Subsidy Programme for Cinematographic and Television Filming in Macau" was also presented.

NEW LEADERSHIP AT DSAL SWORN IN

Chan Un Tong, director of the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL), and Chan Tze Wai, deputy director, took their oaths of office yesterday, in a ceremony presided over by the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Tai Kin Ip. In his speech, Tai highlighted that DSAL's work is closely tied to public welfare and socio-economic development. He expressed hope that both Chan Un Tong and Chan Tze Wai, with their professional expertise, would lead DSAL's team to effectively implement the government's policies in the economic and financial sectors.

PUBLIC HOUSING CRISIS EASING AS NEW HOMES BECOME AVAILABLE, GOV'T DATA SHOWS

STAFF REPORTER

THE long-standing demand for public housing is seeing a significant shift as new data shows an improvement in housing availability.

Last month, the government noted that the number of applications for public housing in Macau has seen a sharp decline over the past three application periods.

This marks the first time that the number of applications has fallen short of the available housing units.

According to new data from the Housing Bureau (IH), 1,166 homes are currently available to accommodate families in need, covering nearly 70% of the 1,675 applicants awaiting social housing.

This marks a contrast from the previous year when the waiting list for affordable homes was exponentially higher than the available housing stock.

Among the available homes, the distribution varies based on family size.

The largest portion of applicants consists of single-person households, numbering 890, yet only 88 one-bedroom (T1) apartments are available.

On the other hand, there is a surplus of two-bedroom (T2) units, with 957 available to accommodate 567 two-person hou-

RENATO MARQUES



seholds.

Also, there are 203 families with three members on the waiting list. The options expand slightly, while larger families—comprising four or more members—will have access to 121 three- and four-bedroom (T3 and T4) homes.

Age-wise, individuals between 23 and 44 make up the largest group of applicants, representing 41% of those waiting, followed closely by those aged 45 to 64 at 40%.

A smaller portion, 312 individuals, are over 65, while only seven applicants fall within the 18-22 age range.

ONGOING REPAIRS

In addition to the current stock of homes ready for occupancy, 275 units are still undergoing renovations.

These repairs include essential updates such as painting, replacing doors and windows, and fixing electrical and plumbing systems.

Once these renovations are completed, the waiting list is expected to shrink considerably, leaving over 200 families still in need.

However, social housing applications remain an ongoing process, meaning new applicants continue to join the list as existing cases are resolved.

Furthermore, a major housing project is currently underway, with over 4,000 new units under construction in Zone A.

However, despite the improvements, many applicants are still awaiting further processing.

Out of the 1,675 families on the waiting list, 1,444 have yet to be

notified for document submission, while only 231 have advanced in the process.

Official figures indicate that 5,978 applications have been approved from a total of 8,510 submissions.

Among the remaining cases, 1,574 were rejected due to ineligibility, 265 applicants withdrew, and 602 remain under review.

Meanwhile, authorities are monitoring potential misuse of social housing units.

In the past year, 13 cases were filed against tenants suspected of not using the homes as their primary residence or unlawfully subletting them.

Additionally, one case involved a voluntary return of a home following an administrative review.

The Housing Affairs Committee last month held its first regular meeting of 2025 to gather opinions and suggestions on public housing policies for the year.

During the meeting, members discussed proposed amendments to the economic housing ordinance's replacement system, which would allow one-room flats to be exchanged for two-room flats.

Some members supported the initiative, believing it could encourage childbirth and help low-income families improve their living conditions.

RESIDENTIAL

Property market faces continued struggles despite modest February gains

LYNZY VALLES

MACAU'S property market is experiencing ongoing challenges, despite a small improvement in prices and sales in February compared to previous lows.

Recent figures from the Financial Services Bureau (DSF) show that the average price of residential property in Ma-

cau rose to MOP76,243 per square meter in February, marking an 11.6% decline from the previous year.

This is a 6% increase from January's MOP71,917 per square meter, the lowest price since August 2013.

However, the number of home sales in February was 176, reflecting a 34.8% drop from

January but a 33.3% increase from the same month a year ago.

The downturn in the market has persisted since the Covid-19 pandemic, despite government measures aimed at boosting market confidence.

These include interest rate cuts and the removal of long-standing property cooling mea-

sures, such as special stamp duties on property resales and purchases by non-residents.

Despite these efforts, the residential property price index hit a six-year low between November 2024 and January 2025.

Most homebuyers in February were locals, with first-time buyers making up a significant portion of the market.

Earlier this year, the Association of Property Agents and Realty Developers of Macau said that the city's property sector is grappling with its worst downturn in four decades, as house prices plummet to levels not seen since 2012.

"Real estate is in the worst environment in 40 years," said Ung Choi Kun, head of the association.

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AL ELECTIONS

Electoral commission investigates allegations of nomination pressure

LYNZY VALLES

THE Legislative Assembly Electoral Affairs Commission (CAEL) is looking into allegations that individuals were pressured into signing nomination forms for the formation of a nominating committee.

Chairman Seng Ioi Man stated that gathering details on the case has proven challenging but assured the public that the commission would continue its investigation.

The commission is investigating reports that an individual was allegedly asked to sign a nomination form while replacing his or her Elderly Macau Pass at a service point.

"The commission is concerned about this incident, and we are trying to find out more about it," Seng told the press.

"However, at present, through various channels, there is no way to gather more information about this specific case. This has made it more difficult for us to



follow up. However, it does not mean that we are not concerned about it. We are very concerned about all issues related to this in society," he added.

Concerns were also raised on social media by individuals claim-

ing to be teachers, who alleged that their schools had asked them to collect signatures.

"We have also received feedback from a member of an organization who was pressured to submit a specified number of

nomination forms," Seng said.

"I am not saying that I have received an overwhelming number of complaints, [...] but since we currently have limited information to inquire about and reflect on, we need to further unders-

tand the details," he added.

Seng also announced that the CAEL would hold a briefing session with school representatives to address the issue.

"Voters and all those who assist in soliciting voters to form the nominating committee should sign voluntarily and clearly," he stated.

"Coercing or defrauding others into signing is a criminal offense. If an investigation confirms wrongdoing, the nomination forms will be invalidated. Anyone who feels they have been coerced or deceived into signing should report the matter to the CAEL or the Commission Against Corruption."

Seng also addressed questions regarding candidates previously disqualified from the seventh Legislative Assembly election. According to the election law, individuals who are deemed not to support the Basic Law and who lack loyalty to the Macau Special Administrative Region (SAR) are ineligible to run for election again for five years.

CRIME

Police crack down on illegal gambling operation in NAPE

STAFF REPORTER

A police operation uncovered a large-scale illegal gambling operation in an apartment in NAPE area.

Authorities discovered two gambling tables, a poker machine, a large quantity of chips, and several decks of beer cards.

Seven individuals were found playing poker at one of the tables. The group had reportedly met in an online forum specifically for gambling.

A Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesperson, Chau Ting Kim, revealed that the flat, rented for HKD13,000 a month, had been used since August last year to run a gambling operation.

"The total amount of bets placed in each game ranged from HKD1,000 to HKD1,500, and the daily profit was estimated at HKD4,000 to HKD5,000," said Chau.

The man who rented the flat had reportedly taken 5% of the betting pool for each game as



his personal profit.

The spokesperson added that one suspect, a second man hired to handle the cards, received a daily salary of MOP500.

The suspects are believed to have made approximately MOP400,000 in profits since the operation began.

In addition to the seven gamblers, a man who claimed to be a bystander was arrested on suspicion of involvement in the operation.

In a separate case, a young woman has reported a loss of HKD 894,000 in a scam involving a phone call from someone claiming to be from the

Shanghai Public Security Bureau, demanding her cooperation in an investigation.

"The victim was tricked into sharing her banking details, realizing only later that her online bank account had been compromised," Chau explained.

Additionally, a middle-aged woman fell victim to a virtual currency investment scam.

Persuaded by an online acquaintance, she invested in a virtual currency platform, eventually losing HKD647,000. She later reported the scam to the police after realizing she had been deceived.

TWO EXPERTS NAMED 'MACAU CONFERENCE AMBASSADORS' TO BOOST LOCAL INDUSTRY

THE Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) has recently appointed two experts from the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST), according to a statement released yesterday.

Manson Fok, director of the MUST Hospital and the Faculty of Medicine, and Francis Ting Ming Lui, director of the Center for Economic Development and Professor of Business at the MUST, were named "Macau Conference Ambassadors."

Both are renowned experts in the fields of big health and economics.

With these new appointments, the number of Convention Ambassadors in Macau has risen to 26.

The Macau Conference Ambassadors program aims to leverage the influence of industry leaders and academics to promote the region's strengths in hosting conventions and exhibitions.

According to IPIM, the goal is to enhance the city's reputation as a convention destination and attract high-quality international conferences, exhibitions, and business events.

Since its launch, the program has been successful in securing 15 international conferences in Macau, covering sectors such as big health, cutting-edge technology, commerce, culture, and sport. LV



IPIM director Vincent U and Manson Fok



Francis Ting Ming Lui

GAMING

CASINO REVENUES IN MARCH SHOW SEASONAL DECLINE: HSBC

LYNZY VALLES

MACAU'S gross gaming revenue (GGR) for the first 16 days of March totaled MOP10.1 billion, according to a report by HSBC Global Research.

This equates to a daily average of MOP631 million, reflecting a 2% year-over-year increase but a 10% decline compared to February's daily average of MOP705 million.

The research noted that the drop in revenue aligns with seasonal patterns, influenced in part by a lower VIP win rate, which ranged from 2.8% to 3.1%, down from 3% to 3.3% the previous week, according to AASTocks Financial News.

This fluctuation contributed to the month's softer performance.

HSBC estimates that if the daily GGR remains between MOP580 million and MOP640 million for the rest of March, the total



monthly GGR could fall between MOP18.8 billion and MOP19.7 billion.

This would translate to a year-over-year growth rate of -3.5% to +1% for March, and -1% to +0.6% for the first quarter of 2025.

Despite the short-term fluctuations, HSBC remains optimistic about the gaming sector, particularly for MGM China and Galaxy Entertainment.

Both stocks have been assigned

a "Buy" rating, with target prices of HKD14 and HKD41.5, respectively.

The report highlighted MGM China's strong return on invested capital and efficient operations as key strengths.

Meanwhile, Galaxy is expected to benefit from its Phase 3 expansion and the anticipated mid-year opening of the Capella Hotel, which could provide support for its stock price.

GBA

Hengqin Port hits 2.59 million vehicles in one year of 'one-stop' operations

STAFF REPORTER

HENGQIN Customs reported that as of 3 p.m. yesterday, more than 2.59 million vehicles had passed through the port.

It has been a year since the port's "one-stop" inspection lane began operating.

On March 18 last year, 30 "one-stop" inspection lanes for passengers and commercial vehicles began operating at Hengqin Port.

The daily maximum flow has exceeded 9,100 vehicles.

Zhang Xi, head of the Regulatory Division of Hengqin Customs, stated that the new lane processes over 7,000 vehicles daily, improving overall traffic efficiency.

During peak hours, vehicles are now able to pass through the port almost immediately. Additionally, the shared vehicle inspection image data between Guangdong and Macau, along with joint radiation detection efforts for cargo, has further reduced cargo clearance times, enhancing the efficiency of logistics between the two regions.

Hengqin Customs emphasized that the port's one-year operation of its differentiated clearance management policy has been smooth, and efforts to improve regulatory services will continue, "optimizing the crossing experience and expanding high-quality living spaces for Macau residents in Hengqin."

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AUTHORITIES TO STRENGTHEN FILMING SAFETY REGULATIONS FOLLOWING TRAFFIC INCIDENT

LYNZY VALLES

AUTHORITIES are tightening regulations on filming safety after a theater crew violated driving requirements, leading to traffic accidents.

Cultural Affairs Bureau director Deland Leong confirmed to the press yesterday that multiple departments are reviewing the incident and will introduce clearer guidelines to ensure compliance.

According to Leong, theater crews planning complex filming projects—such as those involving road closures or moving vehicles—must submit detailed filming plans.

The bureau will also consult relevant departments to safeguard public safety and environmental protection while "maintaining the city's appeal as a filming destination."

In response to the incident, the bureau has suspended the group's filming and is gathering



feedback from various departments.

If the group is found to have violated filming commitments, authorities may cancel the project entirely.

Addressing concerns about the potential impact on the city's attractiveness to foreign filmmakers, Leong noted that over 300 overseas film crews applied to shoot in the city last year, the highest number on record.

The official stated that the incident provides an

opportunity to review and improve policies to enhance safety and efficiency for both local and international film productions.

Last month, the IC has suspended the filming permit for a project following a traffic accident that injured 12 crew members.

The incident occurred during a high-speed driving sequence, which the Public Security Police (PSP) had previously deemed unsafe for filming at Rua do Seminário.

EV

China's BYD launches charging system it says works nearly as fast as a fill up

ELAINE KURTENBACH,
BANGKOK

CHINA'S energy and auto giant BYD has announced an ultra fast EV charging system that it says is nearly as quick as a fill up at the pumps.

BYD, China's largest EV maker, said that its flash-chargers can provide a full charge for its latest EVs within five to eight minutes, similar to the amount of time needed to fill a fuel tank. It plans to build more than 4,000 of the new charging stations across China.

Charging times and limited ranges have been a major factor constraining the switch from gas and diesel vehicles to EVs, though Chinese drivers have embraced that change, with sales of battery powered and hybrid vehicles jumping 40% last year.

BYD's news appeared to give Tesla a jolt yesterday



[Macau time], as the U.S. EV maker's share price sank 4.8%. BYD, which stands for build your dreams, began pre-sales of its Han L and Tang L models, which are upgraded versions of earlier models.

The Chinese company started out making batteries and

has been refining its battery and energy storage technology while building an auto empire that is expanding outside China. It says its 1 megawatt flash chargers can provide power for 400 kilometers (nearly 250 miles) in five minutes.

Ultra-high voltage and a

large current are required to maximize charging speeds, BYD's founder Wang Chuanfu said in a statement.

"To completely solve users' anxiety over charging, our pursuit is to make the charging time for EVs as short as the refueling time for fuel vehicles," Wang said.

The company also said that its flash-charging system relies on silicon carbide power chips with voltage levels of up to 1,500V that it developed on its own. Its Blade lithium-ion phosphate battery is perhaps the world's safest and most efficient EV battery, with Tesla opting to use it in some of its EVs, industry analyst Michael Dunne said in a recent report.

BYD reported it made just over 4.3 million "new energy vehicles" last year, up 41% from a year earlier, including 1.8 million battery electric vehicles and 2.5 million plug in hybrids. The price of its shares traded on China's

smaller market in Shenzhen has surged nearly 50% in the past six months.

While BYD's fanciest, latest premium models are expected to sell for up to about \$40,000, it also makes much less expensive EVs including the Seagull, which sells for around \$12,000 in China.

BYD barely nudged ahead of Tesla in production of battery-powered EVs in 2024, making 1,777,965 compared with Tesla's 1,773,443.

In early January, Tesla said its sales dropped in 2024, a first in more than a dozen years, as rivals such as BMW, Volkswagen and BYD gained market shares with competitive EVs.

But BYD has weaknesses as well, Dunne said, noting that JD Power's 2024 China New Energy Vehicle Initial Quality Study ranked the BYD Seal and BYD Song Plus battery electrics at the bottom of its rankings. **MDT/AP**

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DIRE STRAIT

Beijing conducts air and sea drills near Taiwan in response to US, Taiwanese statements

CHRISTOPHER BODEEN,
TAIPEI

AN unusually large number of Chinese military ships, planes and drones entered airspace and waters surrounding Taiwan between Sunday and Monday, the self-governing island's Defense Ministry said.

China said the drills were a response to recent statements and actions by the U.S. and Taiwan.

The ministry yesterday published on its social media several images of Chinese drones and ships and said 43 out of 59 of them entered Taiwan's air defense identification zone but that no confrontations were reported. Taiwan monitored the situation and deployed aircraft, navy ships and coastal anti-ship missile defenses in response, the ministry said.

China launches such missions on a daily basis in hopes of wearing down Taiwanese defenses and morale, although the majori-



This photograph released by Taiwan government taken from a Taiwan anti-submarine aircraft, shows a Chinese Cloud Shadow WZ-10 drone near Taiwan, Monday

ty of the island's 23 million people reject Beijing's claim of sovereignty over Taiwan and its threat to use force to assert its control.

It's unclear what prompted the large Chinese deployment. Daily figures often vary widely based on statements by the Taiwanese authorities or their U.S. partners.

China Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said

Monday the drills were "a resolute response to foreign connivance and support to Taiwan independence, and a serious warning to Taiwan separatist forces."

China's military actions are "necessary, legal and justified measures to defend national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity," Mao said.

"In particular, the United Sta-

tes deleted the literal expression that reflected the one-China principle and that did not support Taiwan independence on the website of the U.S. Department of State, which indicates wrong signals to Taiwan separatist forces," Mao was quoted as saying.

Taiwanese leader William Lai Ching-te also raised Beijing's hackles last week when he said that

Taiwan law designates mainland China as a "foreign hostile force" and said tougher measures were being taken to prevent Chinese subversion through the media and civic exchanges. Lai also warned of the danger of influential figures and current and retired military members selling secrets to China.

The Taiwan Strait is an international body of water and one of the most important channels for global trade. While China does not interfere with civilian shipping in the Strait — or in the South China Sea to the south that it claims almost in its entirety — it routinely objects to actions by the U.S. and other foreign navies in the area.

China on Saturday lashed out at accusations by top diplomats from the Group of 7 industrialized democracies who said Beijing is endangering maritime safety.

The G7 had said in a joint statement: "We condemn China's illicit, provocative, coercive and dangerous actions that seek unilaterally to alter the status quo in such a way as to risk undermining the stability of regions, including through land reclamations, and building of outposts, as well as their use for military purpose."

China called the G7 statement "filled with arrogance, prejudice and malicious intentions."

Faced with the rising threat from China, Taiwan has ordered new missiles, aircraft and other armaments from the U.S., while revitalizing its own defense industry with submarines and other key items. **MDT/AP**

HONG KONG

Lee swipes at Trump but avoids criticism of tycoon's deal to sell Panama Port assets

HONG KONG'S leader has waded into a controversy over a prominent conglomerate's decision to sell its Panama Canal port assets to a consortium including American investment bank BlackRock Inc., a deal that has angered Beijing and highlights how escalating tensions between Beijing and Washington can leave the Chinese financial center's business leaders trapped in the middle.

Chief Executive John Lee told reporters at a weekly news briefing that CK Hutchison Holdings' in-principle agreement to sell its controlling stake in a company operating ports at both ends of the Panama Canal was being discussed extensively and concerns raised about the deal deserve serious at-

tention. He did not specify what the concerns were.

"(The) government urges foreign governments to provide a fair and just environment for enterprises," he said. "We oppose the abusive use of coercion or bullying tactics in international economic and trade relations."

Lee avoided a direct mention of U.S. President Donald Trump and also stopped short of criticizing CK Hutchison or tycoon Li Ka-shing's family, which owns a controlling stake in the conglomerate.

His comments followed a somewhat veiled backlash from Beijing.

Since last Thursday, Beijing's offices handling Hong Kong affairs have re-posted two commentaries by a Beijing-backed local newspaper that blasted



Cranes load a cargo ship at the Panama Canal's Balboa Port

the deal. That has raised questions over the sale.

One of the newspaper commentaries suggested the deal is a betrayal to all Chinese and disregards national interests. The other described great entrepreneurs as patriots, but suggested that businesspeople who "dance with" predatory American

politicians to reap quick profits were doomed to infamy.

The articles signaled Beijing's disapproval of the deal, though its actual impact remains unclear.

Posting of the articles has been seen as an indirect attack on the conglomerate by Chinese leaders. Trump, who has alle-

ged Chinese interference with the operations of the critical shipping lane, hailed the deal, saying his administration would "reclaim" the Panama Canal. Panama President José Raúl Mulino accused him of lying.

Lee said any business transaction must comply with Hong Kong's laws. The city will handle it according to the law, he said without elaborating.

CK Hutchison did not comment on Lee's remarks or the articles. It was due to report its 2024 financial results on Thursday, but said it did not plan a news conference.

In Beijing, when asked about reports that China authorities are investigating the potential sale, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning

said reporters should ask other Chinese authorities.

The company surprised market watchers when it announced March 4 that it would sell all shares in Hutchison Port Holdings and in Hutchison Port Group Holdings to the consortium in a deal valued at nearly \$23 billion, including \$5 billion in debt. Hutchison said the transaction was purely commercial and unrelated to other developments surrounding the Panama Ports.

The deal, if approved, will give the BlackRock consortium control over 43 ports in 23 countries, including the ports of Balboa and Cristobal, located at either end of the Panama Canal. Other ports are in Mexico, the Netherlands, Egypt, Australia, Pakistan and elsewhere.

The transaction requires approval by Panama's government. It does not affect a trust that operates ports in Hong Kong or any other ports in mainland China. **MDT/AP**

CAMBODIA

Officials say expanded port funded by China opening next month - with first call from Japanese navy

SOPHENG CHEANG,
PHNOM PENH

A Cambodian naval port expansion funded by China that has raised concerns over Beijing's growing military reach in the region has been completed. The port will host a Japanese vessel as the first foreign warship to make a port call, officials said yesterday.

The Ream Naval Base — with a new pier to accommodate much larger ships, a dry dock for repairs and other features — will be inaugurated on April 2 by Prime Minister Hun Manet, according to Maj. Gen. Thong Solimo, spokesman for Cambodia's armed forces.

"Giving priority to Japanese warships ... is a tribute to the high level of openness in cooperation, relations and mutual trust," Thong said

China and Cambodia broke ground on the port project in 2022, prompting the United States to express concerns that it could become a strategically-important outpost for the Chinese navy on the Gulf of Thailand.

The Gulf is adjacent to the South China Sea, a key waterway that China claims almost in its entirety. The U.S. has refused



Cambodian navy crew stand on a patrol boat at the Ream Naval Base in Sihanoukville

to recognize China's sweeping claim and routinely conducts military maneuvers there to reinforce that they are international waters.

Last year, Chinese warships docked at the newly built pier for months, and two Japanese destroyers that made a Cambodia port call were routed to a different facility nearby.

With the announcement about Japan's planned port call, Cambodia is likely trying to project that it's open to countries other than China, said Euan Graham, a senior defense analyst with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

"This would appear to be a conscious demonstration by Cambodia, that Ream is not ex-

clusively for" China's military, he said.

Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force confirmed Cambodia's invitation to Japanese ships, but refused to give any specifics, citing regular operational security regulations.

China is Cambodia's biggest investor and closest political partner, and in recent years has

been rapidly expanding its navy and becoming growingly assertive in pressing its vast maritime claims.

Concerns over China's activity at the Ream base arose in 2019 when The Wall Street Journal reported that an early draft of an agreement seen by U.S. officials would allow China 30-year use of the base, where it would be able to post military personnel, store weapons and berth warships.

Cambodia's government has denied such an agreement or any intention to grant China special privileges at the base, though Beijing has funded its expansion and docked its warships there for months at a time.

In September, Cambodia's Defense Ministry said that China would give Cambodia's navy two warships of the type docked there while the expansion project was still underway.

Defense Ministry spokesman Gen. Chhum Socheat said yesterday that Cambodia intends the facility to be open to the U.S. and others.

"All warships from friendly countries are allowed to dock at the new pier but they must comply to our conditions first," he said, without specifying what those conditions might be. **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

Strange foam and dead fish wash ashore at two beaches as surfers fall sick

AN Australian state closed two beaches after dead fish and an unusual off-white foam washed ashore while surfers reported feeling unwell, officials said on yesterday.

A microalgal bloom created by unusual weather conditions was suspected to have sickened humans and marine life as well as creating the foam that has covered hundreds of meters (yards) of coastline, South Australian Environment Protection Authority principal scientific officer Sam Gaylard said.

"It is very concerning," Gaylard told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

"It is unusual at this scale. At this time of year, when the weather conditions allow, we do occasionally get isolated blooms, but something of this scale is definitely a little bit unusual," Gaylard added.

Waitpinga Beach and neighboring Parsons Beach, both south of the South Australia state capital Adelaide, have been closed to the public since Monday in response to a "fish mortality event



Foam washing up on a beach in Waitpinga, near Adelaide

in the area," the Department for Environment and Water said in a statement.

"The beaches will be re-opened as soon as pos-

sible," the department said.

Dozens of dead fish have reportedly been washed shore.

Surfers have been

complaining since the weekend of getting sore eyes, sore throats and coughing after contact with the water, said local Anthony Rowland, who surfed at Waitpinga on Saturday.

"While we were out there, we started coughing," Rowland said, referring to his surfing comrades. He said he was overwhelmed by the response from other surfers after posting his experience online.

"Lots of people reached out — so many people have said they're had

exactly the same symptoms," Rowland said.

Marine scientists took water samples from the foam, which is a byproduct of the toxic organisms' decay, on Monday, but it could take until the end of the week to identify the organism, Gaylard said.

A bloom of microalgae — microscopic, single-celled organisms — could have been caused by a recent extended period of hot and dry weather with little wind and low tides, Gaylard said.

A swell has picked up in the area since Sunday, and the turbulence could break up the algae while generating more foam, he said.

"At the moment, we're not sure how long this will last," Gaylard said. **MDT/AP**

MIDDLE EAST

Israeli strikes across Gaza kill at least 413 Palestinians, and shatter ceasefire

WAFAA SHURAF, DEIR AL-BALAH

ISRAEL launched airstrikes across the Gaza Strip yesterday, killing at least 413 Palestinians, including women and children, according to hospital officials. The surprise bombardment shattered a ceasefire in place since January and threatened to fully reignite the 17-month-old war.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the strikes after Hamas refused Israeli demands to change the ceasefire agreement. Officials said the operation was open-ended and was expected to expand. The White House said it had been consulted and voiced support for Israel's actions.

The Israeli military ordered people to evacuate eastern Gaza, including much of the northern town of Beit Hanoun and other communities further south, and head toward the center of the territory, indicating that Israel could soon launch renewed ground operations.

"Israel will, from now on, act against Hamas with increasing military strength," Netanyahu's office said.

The attack during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan could resume a war that has already killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and caused widespread destruction across Gaza. It also raised questions about the fate of the roughly two dozen Israeli hostages held by Hamas who are believed to still be alive.

A senior Hamas official said Netanyahu's decision to return to war amounts to a "death sentence" for the remaining hostages. Izzat al-Risheq accused Netanyahu of launching the strikes to try and save his far-right governing coalition and called on mediators to "reveal facts" on who broke the truce. Hamas said at least four senior officials were killed in yesterday's strikes.

There were no reports of any attacks by Hamas se-



veral hours after the bombardment, indicating it still hoped to restore the truce.

The strikes came as Netanyahu comes under mounting domestic pressure, with mass protests planned over his handling of the hostage crisis and his decision to fire the head of Israel's internal security agency. The main group representing families of the captives accused the government of backing out of the ceasefire, saying it "chose to give up on the hostages."

A strike on a home in the southern city of Rafah killed 17 members of one family, including at least 12 women and children, according to the European Hospital, which received the bodies. The dead included five children, their parents, and another father and his three children.

In the southern city of Khan Younis, Associated Press reporters saw explosions and plumes of smoke. Ambulances brought wounded people to Nasser Hospital, where patients lay on the floor, some screaming. A young girl cried as her bloody arm was bandaged.

Many Palestinians said they had expected a return to war when talks over the second phase of the ceasefire did not begin as scheduled in early February. Israel instead embraced an alternative proposal and cut off all shipments of food, fuel and other aid to the territory's 2 million Palestinians to try to pressure Hamas to

accept it. "Nobody wants to fight," Palestinian resident Nidal Alzaanin told the AP by phone from Gaza City. "Everyone is still suffering from the previous months," he said.

Gaza's Health Ministry said at least 413 people were killed in the strikes and hundreds more wounded. Rescuers were still searching the rubble for dead and wounded as the strikes continued. It was among the deadliest days of the war.

The White House sought to blame Hamas for the renewed fighting. National Security Council spokesman Brian Hughes said the militant group "could have released hostages to extend the ceasefire but instead chose refusal and war."

An Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the unfolding operation, said Israel was striking Hamas' military, leaders and infrastructure and planned to expand the operation beyond air attacks. The official accused Hamas of attempting to rebuild and plan new attacks. Hamas militants and security forces quickly returned to the streets in recent weeks after the ceasefire went into effect.

Netanyahu's office said the Israeli leader held security consultations with senior officials. It did not provide further details.

The strikes came two months after a ceasefire

was reached to pause the war. Over six weeks, Hamas released 25 Israeli hostages and the bodies of eight more in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners in a first phase of the ceasefire.

But since that ceasefire ended two weeks ago, the sides have not been able to agree on a way forward with a second phase aimed at releasing the 59 remaining hostages, 35 of whom are believed to be dead, and ending the war altogether.

Hamas has demanded an end to the war and full withdrawal of Israeli troops in exchange for the release of the remaining hostages. Israel says it will not end the war until it destroys Hamas' governing and military capabilities and frees all hostages — two goals that could be incompatible.

Netanyahu's office yesterday said Hamas had "repeatedly refused to release our hostages and rejected all offers it received from the U.S. presidential envoy, Steve Witkoff, and from the mediators."

Israel wants Hamas to release half of the remaining hostages in return for a promise to negotiate a lasting truce. Hamas instead wants to follow the ceasefire deal reached by the two sides, which calls for negotiations to begin on the ceasefire's more difficult second phase, in which the remaining hostages would be released and Israeli forces would withdraw from Gaza. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1964 'AMBITIOUS' PLANS FOR SOUTH EAST



Three new cities are proposed for south east England as part of the largest regional expansion plan in Britain.

A study, published today, estimates the country's population will increase by three million by the early 1980s.

The South East study is a blueprint for the south east of England, which could see an overhaul of public transport services in the area and of the road network.

The research shows that in an area to the south east of a line drawn from the Wash in Lincolnshire, to Dorset, the population will rise from between 18 million and 21 million between 1961 and 1981.

It is expected to lead to 350,000 London families needing re-housing outside the capital and could cripple services and employment if plans are not in place for the overflow.

New cities are planned near Southampton, Bletchley and Newbury and six large new expansions will be carried out at Ashford, Ipswich, Northampton, Peterborough, Swindon and Stansted.

There will also be smaller expansions in other towns across the country.

Public consultations are expected to be held before planning gets the go-ahead.

Funding has not been outlined in the study and the government insists payment and timing depends on "national priorities".

Most of the building is expected to take place in the 1970s, with smaller building in the 1980s.

A group of civil servants from several departments completed the study, which accepts as a basic assumption London's growth will be contained and the green belt preserved.

An accompanying White Paper accepts the basic objectives of the study but final decisions will not be taken until local authorities have been consulted.

Minister of Housing and Local Government Sir Keith Joseph has written to local authorities and expects preliminary reactions by May.

In an interview with the BBC he said: "This plan is to allow for the orderly planning and finding of homes and jobs."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The three "new towns" created were Milton Keynes, Havant and Basingstoke. There were widespread fears the creation of new communities in the south east of England would destroy the green belt. But government calculations insisted that by 1981 more than 83% of the green belt area would be open space and green areas would be preserved.

At the heart of the plans was the premise the population of London would not increase because the city would not be able to cater for millions more.

Sir Keith Joseph became secretary of state for social services in 1970 until the defeat of the Conservative government in 1974.

He is best remembered as the author of the Conservative Party's "New Right" ideology which led to Thatcherism. He died in 1994.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Family fortunes and shared finances grow with tending. Discuss plans and motivate action. Action gets farther than words. Discipline makes dreams come true.

TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20
Advance shared dreams with your partner. Deepen your affinity. Inspire each other to take action and get farther. Collaboration can get especially fruitful.

GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21
Focus on your work, physical activities and health. You're building long-term strength. Get coaching from someone you admire. Tweak to refine your performance.

CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Team up with a creative genius. Disciplined moves can realize dreams. It's all for love. Take action together to further your shared vision.

LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Keep checking items off your list. Close a deal or sign papers. Home renovation or relocation projects produce satisfying results. Surround your family with love.

VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Make an artistic beginning. Pour creativity and charm into your expression. Interesting developments grow. Keep long-term goals in mind. Gain valuable insight and results.

LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Show up and follow through on lucrative opportunities. Articulate your intended outcomes and nail your goals. Get your team excited about the possibilities.

SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Keep digging. Make new inroads toward a personal dream that seemed previously impossible. You can accomplish great things. Follow through. Persistently show up.

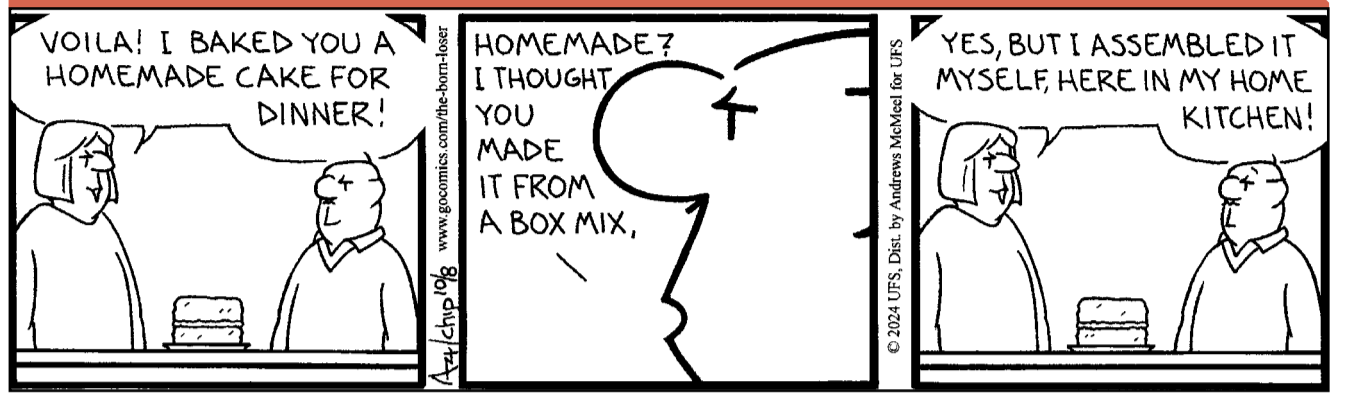
SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Consider spiritual inquiries and mysteries. Contemplate and meditate. Review and revise your plans. Rest and take good care of yourself. Choose the high road.

CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Get into a fun conversation with friends. Team efforts reach new levels. Inspire and motivate each other to contribute for the common good.

AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Professional projects solidify. Direct creative energy into action. Follow your hunches. Look at what you have differently. Your faithful efforts can realize an ambition.

PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Invent a most excellent adventure. You can adapt as you go along. Brilliant discoveries abound. Seek a harmonious path to realize a profitable initiative.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

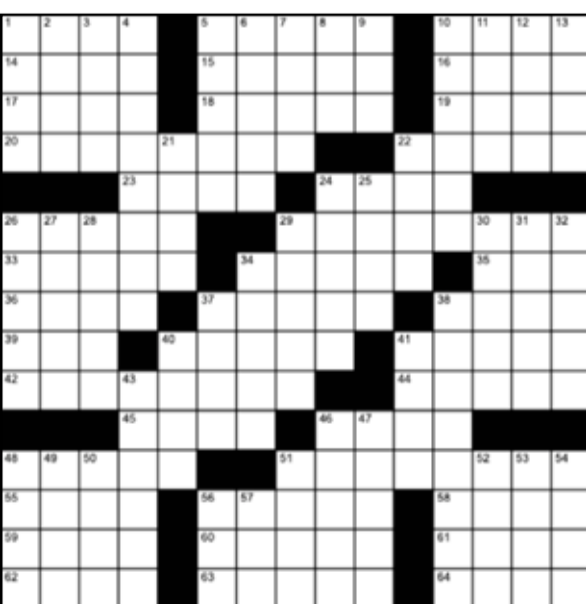
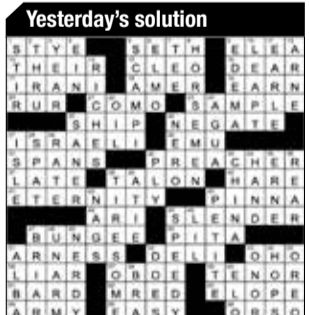
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	1	20	fine
Changchun	-7	9	fine
Chengdu	7	15	overcast
Chongqing	6	16	cloudy
Fuzhou	9	18	fine
Guangzhou	11	22	cloudy
Guiyang	2	11	overcast
Haikou	14	20	cloudy
Hangzhou	5	14	cloudy
Harbin	-4	8	fine
Hefei	1	18	fine
Nanjing	2	15	fine
Shanghai	3	13	fine
Taipei	11	15	rain
Wuhan	1	19	cloudy
Hong Kong	18	21	sunny
WORLD			
Moscow	-1	3	snow
Frankfurt	0	13	sunny
Paris	6	17	cloudy
London	7	16	cloudy
New York	7	16	sunny

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- ___ about (roughly); 5- Oscar de la ___; 10- Some DVD players; 14- Challenge to complete a task; 15- Healing plants; 16- Switch ending; 17- October stone; 18- Look happy; 19- Tins; 20- Fireplace alternative; 22- Brief appearance; 23- Cries of discovery; 24- Big name in PCs; 26- Brazilian dance; 29- Some Annapurna climbers; 33- Toothbrush brand; 34- Sharpened; 35- Explosive initials; 36- Make angry; 37- High home; 38- Ayatollah's predecessor; 39- ___ kwon do; 40- Koran religion; 41- He-Man's twin sister; 42- Aided; 44- Femme fatale; 45- Equestrian's control; 46- URL starter; 48- From head ___; 51- Language bit for entry; 55- Astronaut Shepard; 56- Sporty Mazda; 58- Follow orders; 59- River to the Ubangi; 60- Snoop; 61- Trevi Fountain site; 62- Auctioneer's cry; 63- Dispatches; 64- Gola of Israel;

DOWN 1- Dumpster emanation; 2- Wine valley; 3- Toward the mouth; 4- Dependable; 5- Dreadlocks wearer; 6- St. ___ fire; 7- Pinot ___ (wine); 8- Aviv preceder; 9- Peer Gynt's mother; 10- Remember; 11- Pull an all-nighter; 12- Top-rated; 13- Nothing special; 21- Captain of the Pequod; 22- Decked out; 24- Fabric of jeans; 25- Duel tool; 26- Somewhat colloquially; 27- Met highlights; 28- Men; 29- "WarGames" org.; 30- Early anesthetic; 31- Entrap; 32- Hawke of "Reality Bites"; 34- Troy beauty; 37- ___ spumante; 38- Teredo; 40- Words of understanding; 41- Grounded fleet; 43- Pressed; 46- Despised; 47- Autocratic Russian rulers; 48- Greek T's; 49- Butter alternative; 50- Hard to believe; 51- Physical suffering; 52- It's blown among the reeds; 53- Do followers; 54- Textile worker; 56- AWOL chasers; 57- Intense anger;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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仙
真



A sketch of Empress Dowager Ling from 1793

HISTORY

REMEMBERING CHINA'S EMPRESS DOWAGER LING, A BUDDHIST WHO PAVED THE WAY FOR FUTURE FEMALE RULERS

STEPHANIE BALKWILL
 UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LA

In sixth-century China, a woman known to history as Empress Dowager Ling ruled over an empire called the Northern Wei. Historians do not know her birth name or in what year she was born, but they do know that she served as empress dowager between 515 and 528. As the spouse of a ruling emperor prior to his death, she retained the title of empress dowager in her widowhood.

She ruled on behalf of her young son, the heir to the throne; however, her regency was interrupted by a coup d'état from 520 to 525. Although the empress dowager was expected to rule only as a regent, historical records indicate that she administered court in her own name. These same records also reveal that she adopted a personal pronoun—*zhen*, otherwise known as the Chinese “royal we”—that was reserved for the exclusive use of the emperor.

In my recent book, “The Women Who Ruled China,” I offer an overview of these historical sources and records that document her life, including a translation of her biography retained in the official chronicle of the Northern Wei. Using these sources, I argue that even though the Empress Dowager’s rule was problematic and short—resulting in her assassination—she laid the foundation for other, more successful female rulers across medieval East Asia.

CAPITALIZING ON DIFFERENT CULTURAL TRADITIONS

In the late fifth century, the capital city of the Northern Wei was moved from its northern location in modern-day Datong, China, to its southern

location in Luoyang, a city at the very heart of Han Chinese culture and history; however, the people who ruled the empire were not ethnically Han Chinese.

Known as the Taghbach, this group migrated south from the Mongolian steppe and ruled a multiethnic and multicultural empire from Luoyang, the world’s largest city and the former capital of the Eastern Han dynasty. The Northern Wei empire adopted laws, institutions and policies from both Taghbach and Han Chinese traditions.

This cultural hybridity enabled the empress dowager to rule directly: On one hand, the Chinese court system rooted in the Han dynasty had long included the position of empress dowager, even though none of the women who held it had ruled directly. On the other, Taghbach culture had no formal position of empress dowager prior to its adoption of court ranks in the Northern Wei, but it did have a long tradition of women in public life. These women served in the military and advised on political matters.

Multiple sources of evidence indicate that Taghbach women had a high degree of personal autonomy and political power, with no source suggesting otherwise.

A well-known story about Taghbach woman appears in the legend of Mulan, who is said to have dressed as a man so that she could serve in the military in place of her father. The Mulan legend is widely

recounted in Chinese literature and inspired a fictional character in two Walt Disney movies based on the Chinese fable.

As a historian of gender in this period, I believe that the Mulan legend does not accurately depict Taghbach women. Instead, it is a Chinese story that emphasizes a form of gender transgression that makes sense only within Chinese and Confucian culture. Unlike Chinese culture, Taghbach culture had long known women warriors who could ride horses and shoot arrows without concealing their gender.

Empress Dowager Ling was not a warrior, but she embraced martial symbols of her own power that were available to women in Taghbach culture but not in Chinese culture. For example, she was an accomplished archer and famously drove her own horse cart, which was just as splendid and imposing as was the emperor’s cart.

In the Confucian culture of Han China, such actions were considered highly inappropriate for women, but Empress Dowager Ling carried them out while holding the Chinese title of empress dowager. Her rule, like her empire, was culturally hybrid. That blend of cultural traditions enabled her to take power in a way that neither Chinese nor Taghbach women had done before.

A BUDDHIST RULER

By the time of the reign of the Northern Wei empire, both Taghbach and Chinese cultures had

become deeply familiar with Buddhism, a religion that they had inherited from India in a long process of cultural exchange along the Silk Road. The empire had integrated methods of Buddhist statecraft into its own forms of governance.

Simply put, what this meant was that the ruler of the empire legitimized his reign through Buddhism, portraying himself either as a Buddha or as a patron of Buddhists—their texts and institutions. This was a type of governance that was widely practiced in premodern East Asia.

Even though Buddhist statecraft was widespread in the empress dowager’s time, she was the first woman to directly legitimate her independent rule through Buddhism. As a patron of Buddhism, she commissioned majestic Buddhist architecture. Perhaps seen by her populace as a Buddhist figure herself, she symbolized her co-rule with her son by using a Buddhist visual motif of two Buddhas sitting side by side, a representation that came to be known as the rule by “Two Sages,” meaning tandem rulers depicted in the guise of buddhas. The source for the image was the popular Buddhist text, the “Lotus Sutra.”

She also attempted to put her own granddaughter on the throne after the death of her son. As I argue in my book, she did so by capitalizing on the idea that first her son, and then her granddaughter, were thought of as the bodhisattva Maitreya, a being of infinite compassion who is believed to be the future Buddha.

THE EMPRESS DOWAGER'S LEGACY

Empress Dowager Ling was

largely unsuccessful in her bid for power. Her rule was short and contested. She was murdered, and her empire was toppled within 13 years of her rule. For five of those years, she was not in power because of a coup d'état.

However, about 150 years after the assassination of the empress dowager, another woman would rise to rule China independently, this time taking the title of “emperor.” That woman is known as Empress Wu, or Emperor Wu Zhao, and she is undoubtedly the most famous woman in all of Chinese history. Numerous historical sources attest to her life, work and rule.

What those sources tell us, however, is that she ruled using the very same strategies as Empress Dowager Ling. Investing her own family heritage in distant links to the Taghbach, she also positioned herself as a “Two Sage” ruler alongside the emperor in precisely the same way that Empress Dowager Ling did. She was also able to successfully establish herself as the bodhisattva Maitreya by using Buddhist texts known to Empress Dowager Ling and her court.

She patronized the very same Buddhist structures as did Empress Dowager Ling, including the Buddhist caves at Longmen, just outside of Luoyang. However, she accomplished what Empress Dowager Ling could not—holding onto power successfully. I argue her success was possible because Empress Dowager Ling had paved the way. **MDT/THE CONVERSATION**

OLYMPICS

'Chariots of Fire' runner connects with IOC candidate Coe through England's history

GRAHAM DUNBAR,
COSTA NAVARINO

ONLY one Englishman who had a great Olympic career ever stood for the IOC presidency before Sebastian Coe, and Coe will try to win that job Thursday.

The previous candidate lost his election — in 1952 — yet his Olympic achievements spanned the 1920s to the 1980s, including 48 years as a member of the International Olympic Committee.

David Burghley ran at the 1924 Paris Olympics and was portrayed in the Oscar-winning movie of the games, Chariots of Fire, and in 1968 he presented medals to Tommie Smith and John Carlos seconds before their iconic raised-fist salutes on the podium in Mexico City.

Burghley also presented a gold medal to Coe at the 1980 Moscow Olympics when a then 23-year-old track star won the first of back-to-back titles in the 1,500 meters.

"He is a large figure in my life," Coe said last week before traveling to Greece for the IOC election. "When I was forging



AP PHOTO

English athlete Lord David Burghley (1926)

my career we met on a couple of occasions."

The overlap between their respective careers is almost comprehensive.

Olympic champion runners. World record holders. Elected members of the British parliament. Organizers of a London Olympics. Presidents of track and field's world governing body.

IOC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

Burghley ran to lead the Olympic body against Avery Brundage of the United States in 1952 in Helsinki. Brundage won a 30-17 vote to become the first, and still only, IOC leader from outside Europe.

In 1964, the English aristocrat who had inherited the

title of 6th Marquess of Exeter challenged Brundage again in Rome though withdrew before a unanimous vote for the American.

ORGANIZING AN OLYMPICS

Burghley had been elected to lead the world track body then known as the IAAF in 1946 and two years later had overseen organizing the first post-World War II Olympics in London.

When the Summer Games returned to London 66 years later, it was because Coe had led the bid to an unexpected win — edging out Paris — then led the project through the entire next seven years.

Coe said the commemorative Olympic torch he was given from London was later gifted to his predecessor.

"That sits in the Olympic museum at Burghley House," he said. "His family I'm very close to still."

OLYMPIC MEDALS

The 16th century stately home about 80 miles north of London is home to Burghley's memorabilia including his 400-meter hurdles gold medal from the 1928 Amsterdam

Olympics.

Burghley, the "Leaping Lord," had run in the 110 hurdles at Paris where his British teammates Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell won the 100 and 400, respectively. Burghley was depicted in the 1981 film Chariots of Fire as the character Lord Lindsay.

In 1932, Burghley took silver for Britain in the 4x400 relay in the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum where 52 years later Coe won his second 1,500 title.

FINAL LAP

Their paths would cross at one more Olympic gathering after Moscow, at the 1981 Congress in West Germany, were Coe was among the pioneering athlete representatives.

They exchanged "passing pleasantries," Coe recalled last week, back then in Baden-Baden where Burghley was made an IOC honorary vice president weeks before his death aged 76.

Near the site of Ancient Olympia this week, Coe aims to ascend one step higher than perhaps the most eminent of English Olympians to go before him. **MDT/AP**

AD

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- Co-operation
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OPINION

Business Views

Shuli Ren, Bloomberg



HOW TO MAKE BILLIONS SELLING \$1 LEMONADE

One can become a billionaire selling ice cream, lemonade and fruit smoothies — all for less than \$1. Zhang Hongchao and Zhang Hongfu, two brothers who founded China's largest freshly made drinks chain, are making a fortune by taking advantage of China's fast-shifting labor dynamics.

Mixue Group's blockbuster HK\$3.5 billion (\$444 million) public listing is a marvel for a difficult food and beverage industry where even the likes of Starbucks Corp. and McDonald's Corp. are revamping their operations. With its share price surging, the Zhang brothers are now richer than Starbucks' founder Howard Schultz.

Fast-growing cash cows are hard to find in this uncertain world. By number of stores, Mixue has become bigger than McDonald's. It has over 45,000 outlets after more than doubling its locations in just three years. There's no cash burn either. In the first nine months of 2024, revenue grew 21% to 18.7 billion yuan (\$2.6 billion), while net profit came in at 3.5 billion yuan, a 42% year-on-year gain.

Behind Mixue's growth is an army of franchisees. The company barely manages any stores itself. Rather, almost all of its revenue came from selling store supplies, including syrup, milk and fruit, as well as equipment such as refrigerators and ice-cream makers, to its franchisees.

Faced with weak job prospects, many Chinese might find Mixue's business proposition palatable. The initial investment for opening a shop is only about 210,000 yuan. One doesn't need much expertise to run a business either. Mixue's corporate headquarters have standardized everything, including advertising campaigns. For an aspiring entrepreneur, the only trick is spotting a site that can break even quickly.

Mixue is expanding just when China's labor market is changing shape. Because of automation, even the world's largest factory can't provide so many manufacturing jobs. In 2023, wholesale and retail sectors employed 135 million people, 12 million more than manufacturing, according to the latest census. Many Chinese choose to be self-employed or work for family members, as larger companies lay off people and cut salaries. Ultimately, Mixue is not selling \$1 lemonade, but an entrepreneurship dream.

But online complaints are growing louder, with many claiming that Mixue is making money at the expense of franchisees, that the company is shifting operational risks to small business owners.

By now, Mixue's stores are peppered across China. Even in small towns, one street can have multiple outlets — some only 200 meters (656 feet) away from each other — competing for the same customers. There's already a hint of cannibalization in the company's financials: In the first nine months of 2024, the latest data available, the average daily gross merchandise value per store fell by 5% to 4,184 yuan.

In its franchise agreements, Mixue doesn't require newly opened stores to keep a minimum distance from existing ones. Increasingly, for franchisees, it is hard work mixed with financial anxiety. On average, each store can expect to make 367 orders a day, or every 2 minutes for 12-hour days. But operators dare not slack off. It would take some shops two to three years to break even, much higher than what some company employees suggested, according to local media.

So far, Mixue is opening outlets a lot faster than it closes them, and people are only disgruntled online. Unfortunately, in a weak economy, small businesses have no power and the platform holds all the cards. But Mixue's capital market success is exacerbating an economy driven by hyper competition, and portends the burnout that will eventually follow.

Courtesy Bloomberg/Shuli Ren

FROM FRANCE COMES A CALL FOR TRUMP'S AMERICA TO RETURN LADY LIBERTY - IT WON'T HAPPEN

THE BUZZ

Hey, America: Give the Statue of Liberty back to France.

So says a French politician who is making headlines in his country for suggesting that the U.S. is no longer worthy of the monument, which was a gift from France nearly 140 years ago.

Raphaël Glucksmann, as a member of the European Parliament and co-president of a small left-wing party in France, can't claim to speak for all of his compatriots.

But his assertion in a speech this weekend that some Americans "have chosen to switch to the side of the tyrants" reflects the broad shockwaves that U.S. President Donald Trump's seis-

mic shifts in foreign and domestic policy are triggering in France and elsewhere in Europe.

"Give us back the Statue of Liberty," Glucksmann told supporters of his Public Place party, who applauded and whistled, on Sunday.

"It was our gift to you. But apparently you despise her. So she will be happy here with us," Glucksmann said.

UNESCO, the United Nations' cultural arm that has the statue on its list of World Heritage treasures, notes that the iconic monument is U.S. government property.

AP PHOTO



A female Lau banded iguana in Fiji

IGUANAS LIKELY CROSSED THE PACIFIC MILLIONS OF YEARS AGO ON A RECORD-SETTING RAFTING TRIP

ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN, NEW YORK

RESEARCHERS have long wondered how iguanas got to Fiji, a collection of remote islands in the South Pacific. Most modern-day iguanas live in the Americas — thousands of miles and one giant ocean away.

They thought maybe they scurried there through Asia or Australia before volcanic activity pushed Fiji so far away.

But new research suggests that millions of years ago, iguanas pulled off the 8,000 kilometer odyssey on a raft of floating vegetation — masses of uprooted trees and small plants. That journey is thought to be a record — further than any other land-dwelling vertebrate has ever traveled on the ocean.

Scientists think that's how iguanas got to the Galapagos Islands off of Ecuador and between islands in the Caribbean. Initially they thought Fiji might be a bit too far for

such a trip, but in a new study, researchers inspected the genes of 14 iguana species spanning the Americas, the Caribbean and Fiji.

They discovered that Fijian iguanas were most closely related to desert iguanas from North America, and that the two groups split off around 31 million years ago.

The researchers created a statistical model

Figuring out where Fiji iguanas came from can equip scientists with the tools to better protect an endangered species

using that information and other tidbits about where iguanas live today and how they may spread. It suggested that the iguanas most likely floated to Fiji from North America.

"Given what we know now, their result is by far the most strongly supported," said Kevin de Queiroz, an evolutionary biologist at the Smithsonian National

Museum of Natural History, who was not involved with the new study.

The research was published Monday (yesterday, Macau time) in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The journey from North America to Fiji could have taken a few months, but these desert iguanas would have been ideal passengers because they were adept at resisting dehydration and could have snacked on the plants underfoot.

"If you had to pick a vertebrate to survive a long trip on a raft across an ocean, iguanas would be the one," said study author Simon

Scarpetta from the University of San Francisco, in an email.

Many Fijian iguana species are endangered, and an invasive green iguana roams the islands today, said study author Robert Fisher of the United States Geological Survey. Figuring out where these creatures came from can equip scientists with the tools to better protect them in the future. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Peruvian President Dina Boluarte declared a state of emergency in Lima, deploying soldiers to support police amid surging violence after lead singer Paul Flores was fatally shot. Congress debates no-confidence motions as public outrage grows over escalating urban crime, prompted protests yesterday.

AP PHOTO



Haiti In Port-au-Prince, Doctors Without Borders reported that four vehicles evacuating medical staff were fired upon amid surging gang violence. Minor injuries were sustained, forcing the aid group to suspend hospital operations, worsening security yesterday severely.

AP PHOTO



Vatican Pope Francis penned a reflective letter to the editor yesterday from Rome's Gemelli hospital, emphasizing his lucid understanding of war's absurdity and urging media to use words responsibly. The 88 year old pontific is still scheduled to welcome King Charles III on a visit.

AP PHOTO



Poland and the Baltic states announced yesterday they plan to withdraw from the Ottawa Convention, citing increased military threats from Russia. Defense ministers claim that deteriorating security along NATO's eastern flank necessitates abandoning the treaty while still upholding humanitarian law during a cold Monday.