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INFLATION DROPS SLIGHTLY IN FEBRUARY, INCREASING BY 0.57% OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS, OFFICIAL STATISTICS REVEAL

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SCIENCE AND TRADITION HELP RESTORE RELICS IN THE FORBIDDEN CITY

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CHINADAILY



China's low-altitude economy grew rapidly, with civil drone output rising 91.5% year-on-year. Projected to reach \$207 billion in 2025, the sector boosts multiple industries. Authorities emphasize safe, regulated growth, balancing innovation with public safety, flight control, and consumer rights protections.

Japan A car struck four children on bicycles in Hamamatsu yesterday. Two sustained serious injuries. The elderly driver was arrested for negligence. This incident renews concerns over accidents involving older drivers, prompting further attention to road safety in an aging population.

AP PHOTO



Japan Tokyo's cherry blossoms officially began blooming, marking the start of Japan's beloved spring season. The phenomenon, tracked by the weather agency, also offers climate data. The fragile blossoms remain a key symbol of life and change in Japanese culture.

AP PHOTO



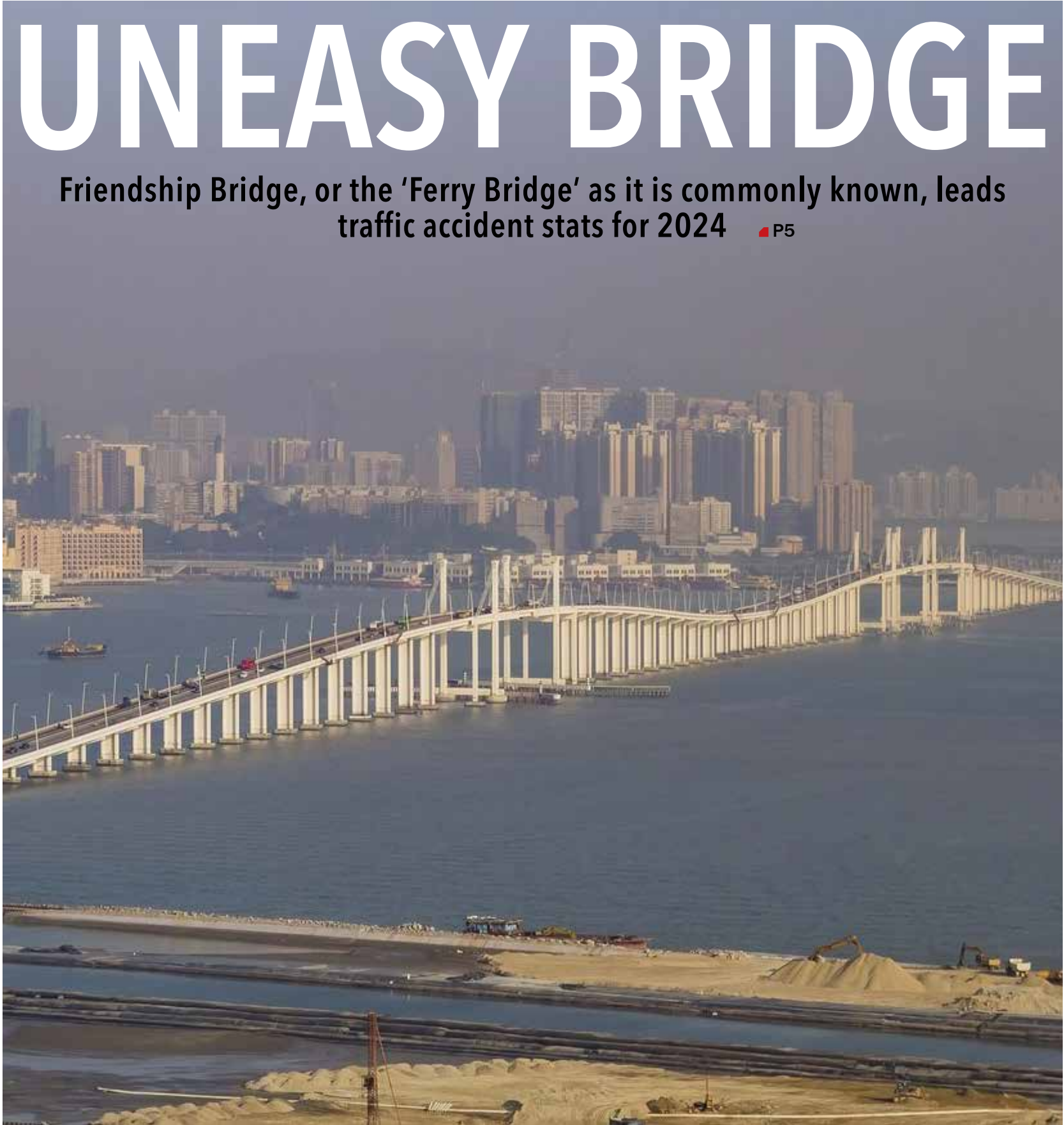
Japan Wildfires in western Japan damaged homes and injured at least two people. Fires in Okayama and Imabari burned hundreds of hectares. Authorities yesterday cite dry weather and leaf buildup as causes. Firefighters and helicopters continue battling the flames amid evacuation efforts.

More on backpage

UNEASY BRIDGE

Friendship Bridge, or the 'Ferry Bridge' as it is commonly known, leads traffic accident stats for 2024

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14TH EDITION
FOCUSES ON
ART, TECH, AND
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EVENTS

14TH MACAU LITERARY FESTIVAL FOCUSES ON ART, TECHNOLOGY, AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

STAFF REPORTER

THE 14th edition of the Macau Literary Festival is slated to run until March 30, bringing together different forms of artistic expression and exploring the role of literature and the arts in a changing world.

The festival opened last week with a pre-opening event and features a range of activities, including panel discussions, exhibitions, performances, and workshops.

According to organizers, this year's event offers a wide range of events over the 10-day program, including workshops on photography, illustration, and creative writing.

Notable events include film screenings of critically acclaimed works and book launches by authors such as Sonia Leung, Valério Romão, and Tony Banham.

Music and poetry performances will also be featured throughout the festival, highlighting the integration of different art forms.

The literary festival hopes to provide an opportunity for reflection on the past while addressing the future of literature and the arts in a rapidly evolving world.

Last week, the festival began with an opening ceremony at the Former Barra Slaughterhouse.



During the ceremony, festival director Ricardo Pinto outlined the festival's objective to connect various forms of art.

For Pinto, "Poetry, music, photography, cinema, history, and fiction bring us together once again for this 14th edition of The Script Road," he said, as cited in a Ponto Final report.

Vice-director of the festival, Yao Jingming, spoke about the role of literature in shaping human experience.

"Literature is a beacon of the human spirit that guides us in our search for the meaning of

life," Yao said. He emphasized that despite advancements in science and technology, literature's humanistic and spiritual values remain unchanged. Yao also noted how literature can bridge gaps between different cultures, promoting empathy and understanding.

After the opening ceremony, the festival continued with the inauguration of New Independences, a photography exhibition by Alfredo Cunha.

The exhibition marks the 50th anniversary of independence for Portuguese-speaking African countries, showcasing images from Angola, Mozam-

bique, and other nations.

Curated by João Miguel Barros, the exhibition is organized into five themes, offering a visual exploration of the history and cultural identity of these nations.

The day also featured a panel discussion on the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on literature, titled Poetic Writing in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Challenges and Opportunities.

Poets Xu Jinjin, Zang Di, Chan Ka Long, and Shanshan Wang took part in the conversation.

From March 25 to 27, the

festival offers a range of film screenings and discussions, with highlights including Luís Filipe Rocha's Amor e Dedinhos de Pé and Sinais de Fogo, along with documentaries such as À Medida que Fomos Recuperando a Mãe and A Mulher que Morreu de Pé.

The festival will culminate in a series of closing events on March 29 and 30, featuring debates on topics like women's novel writing, social changes in 2025, and the relationship between poetry and music.

Discussions will also cover subjects from the history of Angola to climate change and Lusophone literature.

A book launch will showcase works by Marina Pacheco, Lin-Tchi-Fá, Tony Banham, Paul French, and Thomas DuBois. Additionally, an illustration and short story session will include participants Catarina Mesquita, Lydia Jeong, and Rodrigo de Matos.

The festival will conclude with A Banquet of Stories - Seven Dishes, Seven Traditions, a sensory experience combining storytelling and gastronomy.

This Saturday, the festival will host a concert featuring "Writing Myth" and "The Surrealists" at the Dom Pedro V Theater at 8:30 p.m., while on March 30, a guided walk workshop will be hosted by Jason Wordie, where they will explore the historical Barra District.

CE meets China's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs to discuss Macau's internationalization

THE Chief Executive (CE), Sam Hou Fai, met with the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hua Chunying, on Sunday.

In a press statement, the Government Information Bureau said both sides exchanged views on topics such as Macau's further enhancement of its external contacts and advancing appropriate eco-

nomics diversification in the meeting at the government's headquarters.

At the meeting, the CE noted Macau's roles and advantages: "Macau enjoys prosperity, stability, peace, and harmony and is a successful example of the 'One country, two systems' principle. Macau has a rich historical and cultural heritage and serves as

a platform for exchanges and cooperation between China and the rest of the world."

Sam also added that the local government would strengthen its external contacts, especially in Portuguese—and Spanish-speaking countries and Southeast Asian markets, to promote economic diversification.

Sam hoped the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would help and support Macau during this process.

The Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the MSAR, Liu Xianfa, and the Secretary for Administration and Justice of the MSAR, André Cheong, were also present at the meeting. RM



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SOCIETY

SSM and Customs investigate case of illegal import of cigarettes and e-cigars

RENATO MARQUES

THE Health Bureau (SSM) has reported that the Office for the Prevention and Control of Tobacco and Alcoholism of the SSM was notified by the Customs Service (SA) that a batch of suspected illegally imported tobacco products was found in a shop located on Rua Dois do Bairro Vá Tai in Macau.

The SSM dispatched staff to the shop to conduct an inspection, which revealed that the products did not comply with legal labeling requirements. The inspectors also found that the e-cigarette products imported into Macau were prohibited.

After the investigation, authorities discovered 300 packs of cigarettes (6,000 units) whose packaging did not bear the labeling required by Law No. 5/2011 (Smoking Prevention and Control Regime), as well as 265 e-cigarettes.

According to the SSM, there is evidence that these products were imported after the law prohibiting the import and export of e-cigarettes took effect on December 5, 2022.

The SA has seized the cigarettes and e-cigarette products, and the SSM will initiate the respective sanctioning procedure. Once the violations are confirmed, the culprits may face a fine of up to



MOP200,000, and the seized products will be destroyed.

The SSM recently announced that Macau has already surpassed the World Health Organization (WHO) goal of reducing tobacco consumption.

Since the tobacco control law was introduced in 2011, tobacco consumption has fallen by 31.4%, surpassing the 30% reduction target proposed by the WHO.

According to the SSM survey results, consumers of tobacco and related products over the age of 15 represent 11.6% of this population, a relative reduction of 31.4% compared to the 16.9% recorded in 2011.

This figure means that 64,700

of the 559,900 people over 15 years old living in Macau are smokers. Of these, the vast majority (86%) smoke daily and prefer conventional cigarettes (96.8%). The use of e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products in Macau is almost negligible (0.6% and 0.2%, respectively) due to the restrictions on the import of these products that are in force.

2023: A YEAR OF EXCEPTIONS

The SSM report also noted that the consecutive decline in the rate of tobacco product consumption in Macau was interrupted in 2023 when consumption increased.

The results show an increase of 0.5% from 2022 (11.1% to

11.6% in 2023).

According to the health authorities, this increase was attributed to the smoking habits of non-resident workers and non-resident students in Macau. During the same period, tobacco consumption among residents still recorded a drop.

Addressing measures that may be enforced soon, the SSM noted the intention to implement a complete ban on e-cigarettes, including the use and possession of these types of products, along with stricter regulations for other tobacco products.

Despite these expressed intentions, there is not yet a concrete timeline for these regulatory amendments.

FIVE ARRESTED FOR ILLEGAL MONEY EXCHANGE AFTER CASINO THEFT REPORT

Police have arrested five mainland men suspected of illegal money exchange, seizing over MOP140,000 in cash and chips. The investigation began after a mainland gambler reported that MOP200,000 of her MOP750,000 winnings was stolen by a friend. When police arrived, they found three "money changers" in a hotel room, leading to their arrest, while two more were caught in another room. The suspects admitted to operating illegal exchanges since March, earning HKD60 per MOP10,000 exchanged. Aggravated theft is still under investigation.

NEW LEISURE AREA IN SEAC PAI VAN OPENS TO THE PUBLIC

The new Leisure Area in Alameda da Harmonia, Seac Pai Van, officially opened yesterday. Spanning around 2,730 square metres, the area features outdoor facilities for all age groups, including a children's play zone with climbing structures and a 24-hour fitness area for adults. "The Municipal Affairs Bureau hopes to create diverse leisure environments with rich elements that meet the demands of the people living in the neighborhoods for leisure facilities," the bureau said.

MACAU-HENGQIN MICE INDUSTRY SHOWCASES STRENGTHS IN HONG KONG

A delegation of nearly 30 MICE industry players from Macau and Hengqin visited Hong Kong recently to attend the inaugural "Connect Marketplace Hong Kong." The visit aimed to showcase the strengths of the Macau-Hengqin MICE industry. Over 40 domestic and foreign participants also joined the "Macau MICE Environment Experience Tour" on March 21. The initiative sought to expand international MICE clientele, promote the city's economy, and strengthen collaboration across the Greater Bay Area.

BUS STOP AT D. JOÃO IV/MATA E OLIVEIRA SUSPENDED DUE TO ROADWORKS

The Transport Bureau (DSAT) has announced the temporary suspension of the M261 Av. D. João IV/Rua do Comandante Mata e Oliveira bus stop in the city center due to ongoing roadworks. The construction has also led to the suspension of nearby street parking spots. According to DSAT, the bus stop and parking spaces are expected to resume operations on April 9. The suspension impacts bus routes 2A, 7, and 12, which will use a temporary stop located 50 meters ahead during this period.

SECURITY

Three police cadets dismissed from public service for indecent behavior

THE Office of the Secretary for Security (GSS) has announced the conclusion of internal disciplinary procedures regarding a case of indecent behavior involving three students from the Academy of Public Security Forces.

The incident, which occurred in September 2023, involved two police trainees touching each other inappropriately, while a third person recorded the activity with a



mobile phone.

The footage was subsequently released to the public via social media,

with users able to identify the location as well as the uniforms identifying those involved as police

academy recruits.

Following an internal review, the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, approved the decision to terminate the public employment of all three students.

According to the Secretary, the students were dismissed shortly after the video was released due to their failure in the "Personal Performance" module, attributed to their misconduct.

The GSS emphasized

its commitment to maintaining discipline and professionalism in training security personnel, reaffirming that any actions violating the standards of conduct and integrity expected of future security officers would be addressed strictly and promptly.

The GSS also expressed a zero-tolerance approach to behavior that could compromise the reputation and credibility of the institution. LV

GBA

COOPERATION ZONE'S ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE REVIEWS 2024, PUTS 2025 PLAN FORTH

RENATO MARQUES

THE Administrative Committee of the Guangdong-Macau Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin held its ninth meeting over the weekend. The meeting reviewed the 2025 work report of the Cooperation Zone's Executive Committee and the annual report on key tasks.

It also included a review of the execution of the 2024 budget, a draft of the 2025 budget, the 2025 governmental investment project plan for the Cooperation Zone, and the industrial development plan of the Cooperation Zone (2025-2029).

The meeting was co-chaired by Sam Hou Fai, Chief Executive (CE) of the Macau Special Administrative Region, and Wang Weizhong, Governor of Guangdong Province.

At the meeting, Sam noted various work within the Cooperation Zone that had made positive progress over the past three years, with the integration level between Hengqin and Macau gradually increasing. He emphasized that this integration has enhanced support for Macau's appropriate economic diversification.

During the meeting, both sides also studied President Xi's important directives, further clarifying the work plan for the second phase of the Cooperation Zone.

Sam stressed the need to focus primarily on the key tasks for this year, consolidate consensus between Guangdong and Macau, and ensure the successful implementation of the work in Hengqin.

The CE also proposed four aspirations for the next stage of development in the Cooperation Zone.

First, he emphasized the need to



study and adhere to President Xi's important proposition of "Macau + Hengqin", aiming to understand its deeper meanings and practical implications fully. He expressed the hope that this approach would help create new opportunities for constructing the Cooperation Zone.

Second, he called for intensified efforts in reform and innovation, advocating for a bolder and more

proactive approach to policy innovation.

He stressed the importance of aligning rules and developing an effective integration mechanism to overcome deep-rooted constraints hindering Hengqin's development.

Third, he urged further enhancement of work-style development, encouraging diligence and initiative while fostering a pragmatic and

proactive work ethos.

He also highlighted the significance of cultivating a work environment characterized by unity and progress.

Lastly, Sam proposed increasing local support through closer coordination between Hengqin and Macau, aiming to advance various aspects of the Cooperation Zone and achieve significant

breakthroughs.

Sam recalled that the MSAR government had established a leading group to construct the Guangdong-Macau Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin and enhance support for it in various areas, including policy, law, personnel, and resource allocation.

He also stated that specific measures would be introduced in the future regarding industry, people's livelihoods, legal revisions, and policy coordination between Hengqin and Macau.

These measures are intended to encourage increased investment in Cooperation Zone projects, particularly from Macau capital.

On his part, Governor Wang noted that during President Xi's inspection of Hengqin, he outlined the "three key points" and "three have-nots" assessment criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of the Cooperation Zone's development and construction.

Wang highlighted that these guidelines offer direction for advancing the Cooperation Zone's construction from a new starting point and serve as a foundation for further development.

He also emphasized that this year marks the beginning of the second phase of construction in the Cooperation Zone and stressed the importance of studying and adhering to the significant speeches and directives of Xi.

Wang noted that the initial purpose of developing Hengqin was to support Macau's economic diversification.

In line with this objective, Wang stressed the need to make more significant efforts to develop the "four new industries" while advancing the construction of key industrial platforms.

These include the Guangdong-Macau Integrated Circuit Design Industrial Park, the Traditional Chinese Medicine Technology Industrial Park of Cooperation between Guangdong and Macau, the Cross-boundary E-commerce Industrial Park, and the Hengqin-Macau Innovation Industrial Park.

EMPLOYMENT

DSAL launches plan to hire 30 tour guides for activities with SJM

RENATO MARQUES

THE Labor Affairs Bureau (DSAL) has announced a new plan with SJM Resorts, S.A. (SJM) to employ 30 people as tour guides for the cultural and creative activities promoted by the gaming operator.

According to the information provided by DSAL, the plan aims to

offer the selected candidates a specific "Employment + Training Program," in which the company will first hire the candidates and then train them to acquire the necessary skills for the job.

The application period starts from today until April 1.

The plan aims to fill 30 job vacancies for



"activity tour guides." Candidates admitted to the plan are expected

to receive 18 months of professional training. Nine months of the to-

courses. In addition, SJM will also provide employees with opportunities to participate in various guided tours, study visits, and cultural exchange sessions.

Workers who demonstrate exemplary performance after completing the assessments, training, and practical experience in the workplace will have the opportunity to continue developing their professional careers in the Hotel Operations Department or the Activity Planning Department, according to their interests and capabilities.

tal training time will focus on hotel operations, while the other nine months will be in the Activity Planning Department.

The program covers aspects such as arts and culture training, practical conversational English, Forbes Travel Guide basic training in service excellence, and specific guided tour



ECONOMY

Inflation drops slightly in February, influenced by CNY prices

RENATO MARQUES

INFORMATION from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) indicated that the Composite Consumer

Price Index (CPI) for February 2025 decreased by 0.16% year-over-year.

Like other statistical indicators related to February, DSEC noted that the decrease is due to the high

comparison base resulting from increased prices of some goods and services amid the Chinese New Year, which fell in February last year.

DSEC also noted that due

to the same reasons related to the Chinese New Year holidays being split between January and February this year, the Composite CPI for February this year fell by 0.19% month-over-month compared to January.

More relevantly, for the 12 months ending February 2025, the average Composite CPI grew by 0.57% from the previous period (March 2023 - February 2024).

In comparison with February last year, the price indices of Recreation, Sport, and Culture (-5.03%), Transport (-4%), Information and Communication (-2.83%), and Clothing and Footwear (-1.98%) saw a marked year-over-year decline in February 2025 among the various sections of goods and services.

On the other hand, the price indices of Miscellaneous Goods and Services — such as personal care products, insurance, jewelry, clocks, and watches (+2.05%) — Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco (+2.03%), and Education (+1.17%) increased.

Additionally, the price index of Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages (+0.69%) recorded year-over-year growth due to higher charges for eating out and takeout, as well as higher prices for bread and biscuits. Concurrently, rising rentals for dwellings drove up the Housing and Fuels price index (+0.31%).

HIGHER DROP MONTH-OVER-MONTH

Compared month-over-month with January 2025, the price index of Recreation, Sport, and Culture (-3.6%) decreased owing to lower package tour charges and hotel room rates after the Chinese New Year holiday.

Additionally, the price indices of Transport (-1.64%) and Clothing and Footwear (-0.93%) registered a month-over-month decline.

Meanwhile, the price indices of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco (+1.1%) and Education (+0.46%) recorded growth.

Regarding the sections of goods and services closely linked to livelihoods, the price index of Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages (+0.15%) increased due to rising charges for eating out and takeout.

For the 12 months ending February 2025, the average Composite CPI grew by 0.57% from the previous period. Among the various sections of goods and services, the price indices of Education (+2.84%), Miscellaneous Goods and Services (+2.54%), and Health (+1.97%) saw notable increases, while the index of Transport (-3.19%) fell.

DSEC also noted that for the first two months of 2025, the average Composite CPI climbed by 0.2% year-over-year, with the average CPI-A and CPI-B rising by 0.16% and 0.21%, respectively.

Friendship Bridge leads traffic accident stats for 2024

STAFF REPORTER

THE Public Security Police Force has reported that the Friendship Bridge recorded the highest number of traffic accidents in 2024, with a total of 476 incidents.

In response, authorities plan to analyze traffic accident data, evaluate the on-site environment, and provide recommendations to relevant departments aimed at optimizing road facilities, as cited in a

TDM report.

Following the Friendship Bridge, Avenida do Dr. Rodrigo Rodrigues ranked second with 389 traffic incidents, while the south main road of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Port saw

303 accidents.

Notably, in January 2025, the Friendship Bridge remained the most accident-prone location, recording 37 cases.

Among the top 10 accident-prone areas

in the past year, Avenida Dr. Sun Yat Sen experienced the highest number of pedestrian injury accidents, with six reported cases.

Regarding safety measures for traffic blackspots, the authorities

expressed their commitment to analyzing traffic accident data to identify high-risk locations. They also plan to assess on-site conditions and recommend infrastructure improvements to mitigate safety risks.

CORPORATE BITS

Artyzen Hospitality Group joins Earth Hour 2025



Artyzen Hospitality Group in Macau participated in Earth Hour 2025, embracing the global theme, "Give an Hour for Earth, doing something you love."

On March 22, from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., both Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau and Grand

Coloane Resort dimmed or switched off non-essential lighting across various areas, including exterior buildings, landscapes, and resort spaces.

Earth Hour, organized by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), encourages individuals, businesses, and communities to

switch off lights for one hour, raising awareness about sustainability and environmental conservation.

Guests were also invited to participate by turning off lights in their rooms.

As part of the celebration, special treats were offered, including complimentary handcrafted strawberry mochi at Kam Lai Heen and cocktails at Panorama Lounge.

"Earth Hour is more than just switching off the lights—it's a symbol of our ongoing commitment to sustainability," said Rutger Verschuren, area vice president of Macau & Hengqin of Artyzen Hospitality Group and general manager of Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau.

Sands China celebrates 17th year of Earth Hour participation



For the 17th consecutive year, Sands China Ltd. participated in Earth Hour 2025 on March 22, turning off exterior and non-essential indoor lights across its properties for one hour.

Sands Macao, The Venetian Macao, The Plaza Macao, The Parisian Macao, and The Londoner Macao joined the global initiative.

In addition to its annual Earth Hour participation,

Sands China has observed the event monthly since 2013 by turning off lights, signage, and marquees on the first Tuesday of each month.

This ongoing commitment aims to raise awareness about energy conservation and climate change.

This year, Sands China introduced a creative eco-friendly experience with its "Pedal for Your Smoothie" activity, where guests powered stationary bikes to generate energy for blending smoothies.

According to the gaming operator, their sustainability efforts have saved 42 million kWh of energy since 2019, contributing to their recognition in global sustainability indices.

ANALYSIS

Beijing an upholder of trade system centered on WTO

KONG QINGJIANG*

UNILATERAL measures, be they tariffs or economic sanctions against a particular country or particular countries, are often not compatible with World Trade Organization rules. Among all the countries, the United States has taken by far most of the unilateral measures against other countries, be they its perceived adversaries or longstanding allies like Canada and the European Union.

On Feb 1, for example, the US imposed sweeping tariffs on imports from Canada, Mexico and China. These include 25 percent tariffs on most goods from Canada and Mexico, 10 percent on energy imports from Canada, and 10 percent on all Chinese goods. In March the US administration announced to double tariffs on all Chinese imports to 20 percent in excuse of so-called fentanyl abuse.

The moves are in violation of the US' obligations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 of the WTO. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 as specified in Annex 1A of the WTO is legally distinct from the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade established in 1947, which was replaced by the WTO in 1994.



The unilateral imposition of punitive tariffs by a WTO member is against its binding tariff obligations under the Schedules of Concessions of GATT 1994. According to their binding commitments, WTO members can only reduce their tariff rates. The exorbitant tariffs imposed by the US on Canada, Mexico and China therefore contravene its tariff commitments to the WTO.

What's more, the US' unilateral tariffs violate the principle of most-favored-nation under GATT 1994. The principle of most-favored-nation requires WTO members to treat products from all other members equally. By impos-

ing tariffs on specific countries, the US has denied their products from enjoying the same tariff rate as products from other WTO members, which is discriminatory and a contravention of this principle.

GATT 1994 allows a WTO member to deviate from its obligations on the ground of national security, provided the member proves that certain products are a threat to its national security, the imposition of tariffs is necessary to safeguard national security, and there is no moderate but equally effective means to deal with the issue.

But without making the slightest of efforts in this regard, the

US has imposed unilateral tariffs, thereby violating the WTO agreement. Any other WTO member would have meticulously elaborated the applicability of the GATT 1994 exception clause before citing the exception. For example, such a member would have carefully examined what the real cause of the so-called fentanyl abuse crisis is and whether the fentanyl crisis is relevant to national security according to WTO rules before claiming the selected countries are responsible for fentanyl trafficking, and the national security exception clause is applicable.

The US did not bother doing so. In fact, the US imposed tariffs on Canada and Mexico as they have long been "abusive" of US, referring to the US' trade imbalance with the two countries. But a trade imbalance is the result of trade among countries based a trading system promoting free trade, the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement in this case.

It is clear that national security is merely a pretext for the US administration to ignore its obligations toward Canada and Mexico according to the USMCA, and launch a tariff war against them. As a matter of fact, the US administration is using tariffs as a means to address domestic issues, including illegal immigration and fentanyl trafficking.

The US is hell-bent on ruling the world, by ruthlessly resorting to unfair measures to target other countries, especially those that it perceives as "rivals" or "competitors". This US logic, which has shaped the country's approach to international trade, is facing a legitimacy crisis now.

In contrast, Beijing, despite Washington imposing punitive tariffs on Chinese goods, has approached the WTO dispute settlement mechanism to resolve the issue. China has taken countermeasures against the US, though, just in accordance with general international law.

When a WTO member facing an unjustified trade war launched by another member turns to the WTO dispute settlement mechanism, instead of taking unilateral measures, to resolve the issue, it actually lends the biggest support to the WTO system. As a major player in the WTO, China has always emphasized that trade disputes be resolved through the WTO dispute settlement mechanism and opposed taking unilateral measures.

At a time when the US is out to wreck the multilateral trading system, China's upholding of the WTO rules will inspire other WTO members to adhere to the established trade rules. One has reason to believe that other WTO members will stand up to the US' unilateral trade measures and work together to reform the WTO and reenergize the WTO dispute settlement mechanism, and ensure the US' unilateral tariffs do not undermine the foundation of the multilateral trading system.

CHINA DAILY

* The author is dean of the Academy for the Foreign-Related Rule of Law at China University of Political Science and Law

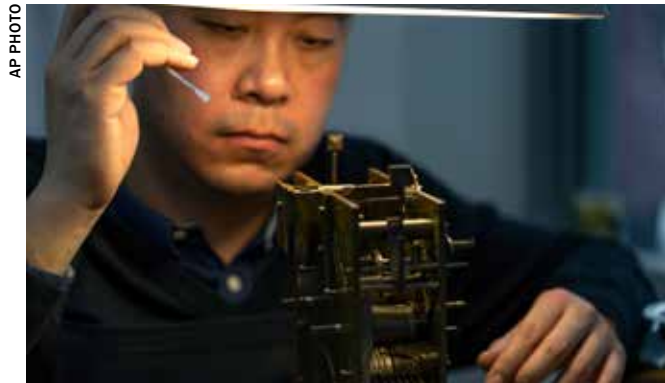
ARTIFACTS

Mix of science and tradition helps restore relics in the Forbidden City

KEN MORITSUGU,
BEIJING

IT'S highly technical work in what looks more like a lab than a museum: A fragment of a glazed roof tile from Beijing's Forbidden City is analyzed in a state-of-the-art X-ray diffraction machine that produces images, which are then projected onto computer screens.

The fragment being examined has a dark area on its surface that restorers want to understand. Their objective is to better preserve the artifacts at the sprawling imperial palace, the former home of China's emperors and its



A restorer works on the mechanism of an antique clock in a workshop on the sprawling compound of the Forbidden City also known as the Palace Museum in Beijing

seat of power for hundreds of years.

"We want to learn what the black material is," said Kang Baoqiang, one of the

restorers at the complex, today a museum that attracts tourists from all over the world. "Whether it's atmospheric sediment or the result

of substantial change from within."

About 150 workers on the team fuse scientific analysis and traditional techniques to clean, patch up and otherwise revive the more than 1.8 million relics in the museum's collection.

They include scroll paintings, calligraphy, bronzes, ceramics — and, somewhat unexpectedly, ornate antique clocks that were gifted to emperors by early European visitors.

Down the hall from the X-ray room, two other restorers patch up holes on a panel of patterned green silk with the Chinese character

for "longevity" sewn into it, carefully adding color in a process called "inpainting."

The piece is believed to have been a birthday gift to Empress Dowager Cixi, the power behind the throne in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Much of the work is laborious and monotonous — and takes months to complete.

"I don't have the big dreams of protecting traditional cultural heritage that people talk about," said Wang Nan, one of the restorers. "I simply enjoy the sense of achievement when an antique piece is fixed."

Now a major tourist site in the heart of Beijing, the Forbidden City is the name that was given to the sprawling compound by foreigners in imperial times because entry was forbidden to most outsiders. It's formally known as

the Palace Museum.

Many of its treasures were hurriedly taken away during World War II to keep them from falling into the hands of the invading Japanese army. During a civil war that brought the Communist Party to power in 1949, the defeated Nationalists took many of the most prized pieces to Taiwan, where they are now housed in the National Palace Museum.

Beijing's Palace Museum has since rebuilt its collection.

Restoration techniques have also evolved, said Qu Feng, head of the museum's Conservation Department, though the old ways remain the foundation of the work.

When we preserve an antique piece, we "protect the cultural values it carries," Qu said. "And that is our ultimate goal."

MDT/AP

SOUTH KOREA

PM Han reinstated as acting president after impeachment overturned

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

SOUTH Korea's Constitutional Court overturned the impeachment of Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, reinstating the nation's No. 2 official as acting leader yesterday while not yet ruling on the separate impeachment of President Yoon Suk Yeol over his shocking imposition of martial law late in December.

Many observers said the 7-1 ruling in Han's case did not signal much about the upcoming verdict on Yoon, as Han wasn't a key figure in imposing martial law. But the ruling could still embolden Yoon's staunch supporters and ramp up their political offensive on the opposition.

Speaking with reporters following his reinstatement, Han thanked the court for what he called "a wise decision" and promised to focus on tackling "urgent matters," including a fast-changing global trade environment, in an apparent reference to the Trump administration's aggressive tariffs policy. He also called for national unity, saying: "There's no left or right — what matters is the advancement of our nation."

South Korea has been thrown into huge political turmoil, since Yoon, a conservative, declared martial law on Dec. 3 and sent hundreds of troops to the liberal-controlled National Assembly and other places in Seoul. Yoon's decree lasted only six hours as



South Korean acting President Han Duck-soo

enough lawmakers managed to enter an assembly hall and voted it down quickly.

THE IMPEACHMENT ARGUMENTS

The assembly impeached Yoon on Dec. 14, alleging he violated the constitution and other laws by suppressing assembly activities and trying to detain politicians. Yoon's impeachment made Han acting president until he was impeached in late December.

The unprecedented, successive impeachments that suspended the country's top two officials intensified domestic division and deepened worries about the country's diplomatic and economic activities.

Han, who attempted to reassure diplomatic partners and stabilize markets during his time as acting president, was accused in the impeachment motion of abetting Yoon's martial law declaration and obstructing efforts to restore the Constitutional Court's full membership and investigate Yoon's alleged rebellion.

The nine-member court at the time had three vacancies, but ousting Yoon would require support from at least six justices. After Han was suspended, his successor as acting president, Choi Sang-mok, appointed two new justices but left the ninth seat vacant.

Seven of the Constitutional Court's eight justices ruled to overturn or dismiss Han's impea-

chment. They ruled the accusations against him weren't against the law or weren't serious enough to remove him from office or his impeachment motion didn't even meet a required quorum when it passed thorough the assembly. One justice upheld Han's impeachment.

The Democratic Party expressed regret over the court's decision to reinstate Han and urged it to dismiss Yoon's case quickly. Yoon's office welcomed Monday's ruling, saying it shows again the opposition's abuse of impeachment motions were "reckless, malicious political offensive."

WHAT'S NEXT?

Observers earlier had predicted the Constitutional Court would rule on Yoon's case in mid-March, but it hasn't done so, sparking varied speculation on possible reasons.

"Today's verdict will give hope to Yoon's supporters for a similar fate and hope for Yoon's opponents for his ouster," said Duyeon Kim, a senior analyst at the Center for a New American Security in Washington. "But it's too soon to predict the court's verdict on Yoon because the specific details of both cases and allegations are different."

Kim said the the reinstatement of Han, a career bureaucrat, will bring more stability to South Korea compared to when his powers as acting president

were suspended.

Massive rival rallies backing Yoon or denouncing Yoon have divided the streets of Seoul and other major cities in South Korea. Earlier surveys showed that a majority of South Koreans were critical of Yoon's martial law enactment, but those supporting or sympathizing with Yoon have later gained strength.

Yoon argues that his martial law introduction was a desperate attempt to bring attention to the "wickedness" of the main liberal opposition Democratic Party which obstructed his agenda and filed many impeachment motions against senior officials. Yoon critics counter he likely tried to use military rule to frustrate possible special investigations into scandals involving him and his wife.

Senior military and police officers sent to the assembly have said that Yoon ordered them to drag out lawmakers to prevent a floor vote to overturn his decree. Yoon says the troops' deployment was designed to maintain order.

If the court upholds Yoon's impeachment, South Korea must hold a presidential election to choose his successor. If it rules for him, Yoon will regain his presidential powers.

Yoon has separately been charged with rebellion in connection with his martial law decree, a charge that carries the death penalty or a life sentence if he is convicted. **MDT/AP**

INDIA

Comedian's jokes about a state leader are being investigated as defamation

A comedian popular for his biting political humor is being investigated for possible defamation over jokes made about an Indian state leader who is an ally of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in yet another case raising questions over freedom of speech in the country.

Police in the western city of Mumbai opened the investigation yesterday against Kunal Kamra over a comedy skit referring to Eknath Shinde, the second highest elected leader of Maha-

rashtra state, following a complaint filed by a politician from Shinde's Shiv Sena party.

Kamra had made the remarks in a comedy skit, but it was unclear when the performance took place.

A video clip of the skit Kamra posted on his Instagram profile on Sunday showed him taunting Shinde in a parody song. Kamra's use of the term "traitor" particularly triggered Shiv Sena party workers and on Sunday they ransacked the studio where he had



Police officers gather outside the studio where Indian comedian Kunal Kamra allegedly made "defamatory" remarks

performed the skit.

Police are also investigating the vandalism.

One lawmaker from the party Sunday threa-

tened Kamra, saying he would be chased by the party workers throughout the country. "You will be forced to flee In-

dia," lawmaker Naresh Mhaske warned Kamra in a video message.

Shinde has not commented about the matter, but Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said Kamra should apologize for his remarks.

"We respect freedom of expression, but recklessness will not be tolerated," Fadnavis told reporters.

Kamra has made no comment on the investigation, but late Sunday he shared on his Instagram a picture of himself holding the Indian Constitution with caption: "The only way forward."

The Habitat Comedy Club, where Kamra had performed, said it was shutting down following the vandalism.

"We are shocked, worried and extremely broken by the recent acts of vandalism targeting us," it said in a statement Monday, adding that the club will remain shut "till we figure out the best way to provide a platform for free expression without putting ourselves and our property in jeopardy."

Kamra has faced the ire of Hindu nationalist groups and political parties in the past, particularly for jokes about Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party politicians.

Other Indian comedians have been arrested or had shows canceled for making fun of politicians or making references to the Hindu religion or national icons. **MDT/AP**

CEASEFIRE TALKS

US holds separate talks with Russian and Ukrainian representatives

JON GAMBRELL &
ILLIA NOVIKOV, DUBAI

US negotiators worked to hammer out details of a proposed partial ceasefire in Ukraine yesterday, meeting with representatives from Russia a day after holding separate talks with the Ukrainian team. Each side has accused the other of undermining efforts to reach a pause in the 3-year-old war.

Kyiv and Moscow agreed in principle Wednesday to a limited ceasefire after US President Donald Trump spoke with the countries' leaders, but the parties have offered different views of what targets would be off-limits to attack.

While the White House said "energy and infrastructure" would be covered, the Kremlin declared that the agreement referred more narrowly to "energy infrastructure." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said he would also like to see railways and ports protected.

Talks are expected to address some of those differences, as well as a potential pause in attacks in the Black Sea to ensure the safety of commercial shipping.

US and Russian representatives began meeting in the morning in the Saudi capital, Russia's state Tass and RIA-Novosti news agencies reported. The U.S. and Ukrainian teams met on Sunday in Riyadh, and more contacts were expected, though it was not clear when.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday the Russian military is fulfilling President Vladimir Putin's order to halt attacks on energy facilities for 30 days.

Peskov accused Ukraine of derailing the partial ceasefire with an attack on a gas metering station in Sudzha in Russia's Kursk region. Ukraine's military General Staff rejected Moscow's accusations and bla-



In this image taken from a video distributed by Russian Defense Ministry yesterday, a Russian Army 2S5 howitzer fires towards Ukrainian positions

med the Russian military for shelling the station, a claim Peskov called "absurd."

Meanwhile, Russian troops launched a new barrage of drones, including decoys, into Ukraine overnight into Monday, according to Ukraine's air force, causing some damage and injuries.

Before the latest attack, Zelenskyy said in a televised statement Sunday evening that "since March 11, a proposal for an unconditional ceasefire has been on the table, and these attacks could have already stopped. But it is Russia that continues all this."

He added that Ukraine's partners — "the US, Europe, and others around the world" — should step up pressure on Russia "to stop this terror."

Zelenskyy has emphasized that Ukraine is open to a full, 30-day ceasefire that Trump has proposed. But Putin has made a complete ceasefire conditional on a halt of arms supplies to Kyiv and a suspension of Ukraine's military mobilization — demands rejected by Kyiv and its Western allies.

Speaking on "Fox News Sunday," Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff said he expected "some real pro-

gress" at the talks in Saudi Arabia, and that a pause in hostilities between both countries in the Black Sea would "naturally gravitate into a full-on shooting ceasefire."

Serhii Leshchenko, an adviser to the Ukrainian presidency, said the delegation remained in Riyadh yesterday and expected to meet again with the Americans.

Asked about reports speculating that China might send peacekeepers to Ukraine to enforce any future peace deal, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun responded yesterday with an unequivocal no.

"Let me stress that the report is completely false. China's position on the Ukraine crisis is clear and consistent," Guo said at a daily briefing.

China has provided Russia with trade earnings from oil and other natural resources, along with diplomatic backing, but has not given any weapons or sent any personnel. China is, however, on close terms with North Korea, which has sent troops to fight alongside the Russian army.

A "massive targeted cyberattack" hit Ukrainian state railway operator Ukrzaliznytsia on Sunday, the

company wrote on Telegram, adding that the restoration of its systems was ongoing as of Monday morning.

The company said the attack did not affect train movements or schedules, but that the online booking system was currently unavailable.

"The railway continues to operate despite physical attacks on the infrastructure, and even the most vile cyberattacks cannot stop it," the company wrote.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's Special Operations Forces claimed to have destroyed four military helicopters in Russia's Belgorod region with the use of American-supplied HIMARS rocket systems.

The special forces published drone footage of what they said was the attack on their Telegram page yesterday.

The group wrote that the strikes had occurred at a concealed "jumping-off point" for Russian aircraft used in surprise attacks on Ukrainian forces.

Russian troops, meanwhile, fired 99 attack and decoy drones into Ukraine overnight Sunday, according to Ukraine's air force, of which 57 were shot down and 36 were lost from radar. MDT/AP

this day in history

1975 SAUDI'S KING FAISAL ASSASSINATED



King Faisal of Saudi Arabia has died after a gun attack in Riyadh despite the efforts of doctors to save him.

The king was rushed to hospital still alive and doctors massaged his heart and gave him a blood transfusion but they were unable to save him.

King Faisal was fatally wounded when his nephew Prince Faisal Ibu Musaed allegedly fired three bullets at him with a pistol at point blank range during a royal audience.

According to eyewitnesses, Prince Musaed was waiting in the ante-room and talking to a Kuwaiti delegation who were waiting to meet the king.

King Faisal had bent forward to kiss his nephew but Prince Musaed was reported to have pulled out a pistol and shot him under the chin and then through the ear.

One of the king's bodyguards hit the prince with his sword, although it was still sheathed.

Oil minister Sheikh Yamani is reported to have shouted to the guard not to kill the prince.

Prince Faisal Ibu Musaed was seized immediately after he attacked his uncle and is being questioned by Saudi police about the assassination.

Doctors and psychiatrists have confirmed that they believe he is "mentally unbalanced".

Both before and after the assassination Prince Musaed was reported to be calm.

Since the killing, Riyadh has closed down completely for three days of mourning.

King Khalid, the brother of the assassinated king, has taken his place by agreement of the Saudi royal family.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Prince Faisal bin Musaed was later found guilty of regicide and in June 1975 he was executed for the murder of his uncle King Faisal.

The prince was beheaded in the public square in Riyadh. This is the traditional method of execution in Saudi Arabia under Islamic law.

The prince's motives are still not clear. There has been speculation that he sought to avenge the death of his elder brother Khalid, who died in a clash with security forces in 1966.

At the time of the assassination there were some conspiracy theories although an investigation later found that Prince Faisal bin Musaed acted alone.

Prince Musaed was declared officially insane, according to a "settlement issued by the royal cabinet" following the assassination of King Faisal.

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Throw your energy behind a team project. Hold meetings, parties and gatherings. Public participation benefits you professionally. Get out and mingle with friends.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

An interesting professional opportunity beckons. Organize, schedule and prepare. Begin a testing phase. Consider the possibilities. Go for excellence. Imagine winning. Do the work.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Plan your next adventure. Study the options and stay open for late-breaking opportunities. Educational pursuits provide valuable skills and resources. Expand your boundaries.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Collaborate to grow a shared enterprise. Handle financial management, accounting and bookkeeping tasks. You're building something valuable. Keep current with bills and processing.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Get moving for love. Take action for a possibility created with your partner. Let your heart propel you into generating results. You're powerful together.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Prioritize health and wellness, even as demand for your work rises. Exercise builds energy, strength and endurance. Feed yourself and rest well. Maintain practices.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Take action for love. Connect with family, friends and someone special. Go for fun, romance and relaxation. Relax and recharge. Share something delicious together.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Home and family have your heart. Follow up words and promises with concrete action. Do what you said. Clean house and beautify your space.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Use your creative powers of expression. Communication projects come together. Back up words with solid results. Utilize relevant facts to make your case.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Profit from your words and actions. Make sure your team has what's needed. Keep spending tuned to your budget. Make bargains, deals and agreements.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Pamper yourself with extra time and attention to personal priorities. Try a new style or cut. Prepare for the spotlight. Smile for the cameras.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Gain a sense of relief and freedom with each project completed. Make plans and dreams for the future, while recharging batteries. Rest and relax.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

5		1						
			7					4
						8		
					5	3	1	
	4							6
2								
	7		6	4				
3						5	2	

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	7	22	cloudy
Changchun	-1	4	rain
Chengdu	10	26	fine
Chongqing	11	27	fine
Fuzhou	16	33	fine
Guangzhou	15	30	fine
Guiyang	10	27	fine
Haikou	18	29	cloudy
Hangzhou	16	32	fine
Harbin	-3	4	cloudy
Hefei	12	29	fine
Nanjing	16	30	fine
Shanghai	16	30	fine
Taipei	16	27	fine
Wuhan	12	31	fine
Hong Kong	20	25	sunny

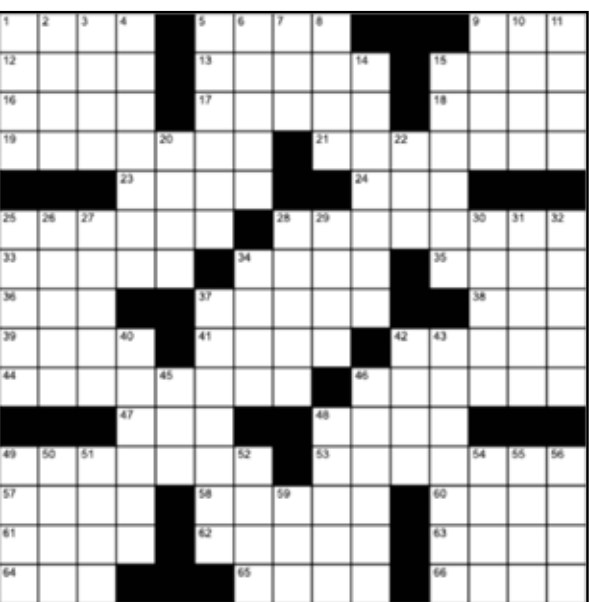
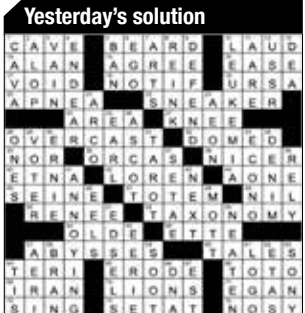
WORLD

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
Moscow	3	6	rain
Frankfurt	8	16	cloudy
Paris	8	16	cloudy
London	7	14	cloudy
New York	5	14	sunny

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Scarf; 5- An apple ____; 9- HST's successor; 12- Ballet skirt; 13- Alabama city; 15- Moderately cold; 16- Greek war god; 17- Kick out; 18- Hades; 19- Baby; 21- Books of maps; 23- Org.; 24- Author Fleming; 25- River of song; 28- Beautiful; 33- Eat away; 34- Ye ____ Shoppe; 35- Turner of "Peyton Place"; 36- Neither's partner; 37- Shun; 38- NL cap monogram; 39- Ed and Mel of baseball; 41- Garage job; 42- Understand?; 44- Actual elapsed period; 46- Contemptibly small; 47- Align the cross hairs; 48- Slippery swimmers; 49- Left out; 53- Aids; 57- Hawaii's state bird; 58- Approaches; 60- Sicilian peak; 61- Coffee servers; 62- Wigwag; 63- Redding's genre; 64- French possessive; 65- Cincinnati team; 66- London art gallery;

DOWN 1- Thrust with a knife; 2- Charisma, atmosphere; 3- Goblet part; 4- Married man; 5- In ____ (sort of); 6- English cattle breed; 7- Boxing legend; 8- Village People hit; 9- Female deer; 10- Pineapple vendor; 11- Architectural annexes; 14- Clad; 15- French fashion designer; 20- Palmist's words; 22- Fall back; 25- Mexican mister; 26- Penned; 27- Main artery; 28- Sphere; 29- "Garfield" canine; 30- Brewery kilns; 31- Wait ____ Dark; 32- Saline; 34- Egg; 37- Something nutritious; 40- Schedules; 42- Hair goops; 43- Least difficult; 45- ____ for tat; 46- Untidy states; 48- Dog-____ (like some used books); 49- Burden of proof; 50- A ____ formality; 51- Roadside rests; 52- Doe or fawn; 54- Greek portico; 55- Hardware fastener; 56- Ad word; 59- King Kong, e.g.;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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PJ (Picket) 28 557 775

PSP 28 573 333

Customs 28 559 944

S. J. Hospital 28 313 731

Commission Against
Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300

IAM 28 387 333

Tourism 28 333 000

Airport 59 888 88

Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283

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HKD 7,500,000 4 bed 3 bath

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

RUGBY ACADEMY

MACAU BATS WIN CUP IN HONG KONG

DONALD SHAW, MDT

MACAU Bats U12s went looking for cup success in Hong Kong at the Richard Hawkes Tournament on Sunday (23rd). Expectation was high but the team got off to an inauspicious start, going down 1-3 to a very good Valley Fort team in their first match. That result effectively made all subsequent games sudden death - they needed to win all games to

make the final or return home empty handed.

A step up in performance resulted in a win over Shatin Shpei by 3 tries to 1 and the mood in the Macau team lifted. The Bats then followed this up with further wins against Tai Hang Tung (3-2) and USRC Tigers (1-0) to book their place in the Division B final where they would once again come up against Valley Fort.

Keen to turn around their

earlier defeat, The Bats took an early 1-0 lead and then had to show resilient defence to withstand some strong attacking play from Valley. The Bats scored a second breakaway try to secure the win and the Shield.

This fine success capped a strong set of performances from the team across the season in Hong Kong. A tired but very happy team of players, coaches and parents returned to Macau with the Cup.



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IN MACAU (2023)



FOOTBALL

China facing a reality check in World Cup qualifying

JOHN DUERDEN

Tuesday, 19:00
China PR v Australia
H 7, D 4.5, A 1.48

ODDSCHECKER.COM

BRANKO Ivankovic's China lineup faces another reality check in World Cup qualifying, with the national team risking falling further behind the global ambitions it promoted a decade ago.

China hosts Australia at Hangzhou in Asian qualifying today with its hopes of a direct entry to the 2026 World Cup hanging precariously on the outcome. A loss will end those hopes, leaving China with another, more tense route through a fourth-round of Asian qualifying.

A decade ago, as the Chinese Super League was spending hundreds of millions of dollars on big-name foreign players, the national soccer federation released a plan laying out a route to a status of international powerhouse by

AP PHOTO



Australia beat Indonesia last week

2050 and one of the best teams in Asia by 2030.

As clubs faced financial problems, the foreign stars departed and the league started to struggle. In terms of continental strength, there's still a long way to go. A 1-0 loss to Saudi Arabia last week was China's fifth in seven games in the third round of Asian qualification,

where it is in last place in Group C.

Only the top two teams in each of the three Asian qualifying groups will progress to the World Cup automatically. Japan secured the first of those direct World Cup spots with a 2-0 win last week over Bahrain lifting it to 19 points, nine ahead of second-place Australia and 10

clear of the third-place Saudis.

Bahrain, Indonesia and China are on six points.

After this week, there's only two more match days in June to determine the standings.

"We played well against Saudi Arabia but now we have to focus on the next game," said Ivankovic, who will be without the injured

Jiang Guangtai and Gao Zhunyi and Lin Liangming, sent off in Riyadh. "We will assess who is fit and then give our all to win."

The 2002 edition co-hosted by South Korea and Japan remains China's only appearance at the World Cup finals. But even if it loses to Australia, all is not lost for China as Asia now has eight guaranteed places at the expanded 48-team World Cup tournament. The third- and fourth-place finishers in each group this round will go into another stage to compete for two spots in the tournament co-hosted by Canada, the U.S. and Mexico.

Australia's Socceroos have grown in confidence following last week's 5-1 win over Indonesia in Sydney.

"It's full focus on China," Australia coach Tony Popovic said. "They haven't changed too much in how they've been playing, whether it's home or away. They sit in their block. They're very dangerous on the break. And we just have to be prepared."

Patrick Kluivert is already under pressure as Indonesia head coach after that thrashing in his first game in charge, and needs a win against Bahrain in Jakarta to stay in touch.

"The positive is that we kept on going and the spirit of the team will always be there," said Kluivert, who was appointed in January. "We will react absolutely against Bahrain." **MDT/AP**

AD



FOOTBALL

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OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

COOPERATION THE
GUARANTEE FOR
PROSPERITY

Embracing the ancient wisdom that “close neighbors are better than distant relatives” China has long championed a philosophy of fostering strong ties with its neighboring countries. Despite trilateral relations encountering some disruptions due to the changing dynamics in the international terrain in recent years, China has constantly kept the door open to warmer relations with Japan and the Republic of Korea, along with its other neighbors. It is beyond doubt that a strong trilateral partnership is in the interest of all three parties. Greater trilateral cooperation among China, Japan, and the ROK has, as all three have acknowledged, the potential to bring about significant economic, political, and social benefits for not only them, but the region at large. By leveraging their complementary strengths and addressing common challenges, the three neighbors can not only produce direct tangible benefits for themselves but also consolidate a more stable, prosperous and interconnected region as a whole.

The high-level engagements between China, Japan, and the ROK over the past few days represent a significant step toward renewed and enhanced trilateral cooperation that promises to give a shot in the arm to their trilateral cooperation and thus a boost to regional development.

Commencing on Friday, a series of diplomatic dialogues were held in Tokyo, bringing together the top diplomats of China, Japan, and the ROK for substantive talks on the current state of trilateral relations and ways to inject vitality into their trilateral partnership to maintain the positive momentum that has been generated. The discussions included the 11th China-Japan-ROK Trilateral Foreign Ministers’ Meeting and the Sixth China-Japan High-Level Economic Dialogue, alongside a meeting hosted by Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba.

The productive conversations among Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Japanese counterpart Takeshi Iwaya and ROK counterpart Cho Tae-yul resulted in a consensus on bolstering communication, fostering mutual trust, and deepening collaboration among the three nations.

Amid the complex global landscape and sluggish economic recovery, deepening trilateral cooperation is undoubtedly the logical and responsible choice for the three neighbors. Despite disruptions in recent years and the subsequent deterioration of relations among them, the overall trajectory of China-Japan-ROK trilateral cooperation over the past few decades has been one of growth and accompanying increased influence on certainly the Asian, and arguably the global, economy.

As major economies collectively accounting for a significant portion of the global population and GDP, China, Japan, and the ROK are pivotal economic engines in East Asia and beyond. Amid the global volatility, their strengthened trilateral cooperation stands to instill confidence and certainty and thus has a positive and fundamental impact on regional and global development.

To fortify the East Asia cooperation framework, the three neighbors must nurture a cycle of mutual reinforcement, starting with bolstering bilateral relations. Respect for core interests, adept management of differences, and cultivating a cooperative spirit are essential. The suggestions put forward by Wang emphasize deepening economic ties, reviving negotiations on the China-Japan-ROK Free Trade Agreement, fostering innovation, expanding cultural exchanges, addressing common challenges, and collaborating on nontraditional security issues.

The tripartite cooperation mechanism of East Asia is poised to make significant advancements. By building on the existing positive momentum, fostering mutual trust, and solidifying their consensus with practical efforts and initiatives, the three nations can ensure that not only is it a platform for regional peace and stability but it also serves as a driving force for global prosperity and development. [Abridged]

ANOTHER MASSIVE DEAL IN THE BUILDING SUPPLY SECTOR, JAMES HARDIE OFFERS AZEK \$8.75 BILLION

THE
BUZZ

Australian building products company James Hardie Industries is buying the U.S. outdoor products maker AZEK in a cash-and-stock deal valued at approximately \$8.75 billion, including \$386 million in debt.

It’s the second major acquisition in the building supplies sector in less than a week, with QXO Inc. announcing that it was buying Beacon Roofing Supply Inc. in a deal worth about \$11 billion, including debt.

The U.S. housing market has been in a slump since 2022, when mortgage rates began to climb from pandemic-era lows. Sales of pre-

viously occupied U.S. homes fell last year to the lowest level in nearly 30 years.

The average rate on a 30-year mortgage in the U.S. rose slightly for the second week in a row to 6.67%, mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said.

Raymond James analyst Sam Darkatsh said in a client note that the uncertainty in the housing market makes Beacon’s acquisition a positive for its shareholders. Beacon is based in Herndon, Virginia.

Under the James Hardie deal, shareholders of The AZEK Company Inc. will receive \$26.45 in cash and 1.034 ordinary shares of James Hardie for each share of AZEK stock that they own.

AP PHOTO



Usha Vance

US SECOND LADY USHA VANCE WILL VISIT GREENLAND AS TRUMP TALKS UP TAKEOVER

WILL WEISSERT,
WASHINGTON

SECOND lady Usha Vance plans a trip to Greenland, at a time when President Donald Trump has suggested the United States should take control over the self-governing, mineral-rich territory of American ally Denmark.

Vance will leave on Thursday and return Saturday, according to her office. Vance and one of her three children will be part of a U.S. delegation that will “visit historic sites” and “learn about Greenlandic heritage.”

Media outlets in Greenland and Denmark reported that Vance would be accompanied by Trump’s national security adviser, Mike Waltz. The White House and the National Security Council did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Trump had mused during his first term about buying the world’s largest island, even as Denmark, a NATO ally, insisted it wasn’t for sale. The people of Greenland also have firmly rejected Trump’s plans.

Vice President JD Vance said Sunday that Trump “doesn’t care” what the Eu-

ropeans think.

He said Denmark is “not doing its job” with Greenland and “not being a good ally,” and “if that means that we need to take more territorial interest in Greenland that is what President Trump is going to do,” Vance said on Fox News’ “Sunday Morning Futures.”

“Because he doesn’t care about what the Europeans scream at us, he cares about putting the interests of American citizens first,” Vance said.

Since returning to the White House, Trump has repeatedly said that the U.S. will come to control Greenland while insisting he supports the idea for strategic national security reasons — not with an eye toward American expansionism.

“I think we will have it,” Trump said of Greenland shortly after beginning his second term on Jan. 20. The U.S. already has a military base on Greenland and the president’s eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., visited it in January.

On her visit, Usha Vance will attend the Avannaata Qimussersu, Greenland’s national dogsled race, featuring about 37 mushers and 444 dogs. The statement said Vance and the

U.S. delegation “are excited to witness this monumental race and celebrate Greenlandic culture and unity.”

During a recent Oval Office meeting with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, Trump said “Denmark’s very far away” from Greenland, and questioned whether that country still had a right to claim the world’s largest island as part of its kingdom.

“A boat landed there 200 years ago or something. And they say they have rights to it,” Trump said. “I don’t know if that’s true. I don’t think it is, actually.”

All five parties in Greenland’s parliament issued a joint statement last week rejecting Trump’s remarks. Denmark has recognized Greenland’s right to independence at a time of its choosing.

Beyond his focus on Greenland, Trump has refused to rule out military intervention in Panama to retake that country’s canal, said that Canada should be America’s 51st state and suggested that U.S. interests could assume control of the war-torn Gaza Strip from Israel and redevelop it as a “Riviera”-like seaside resort. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



USA Wildfires forced evacuations in North and South Carolina. In New Jersey, a large forest fire is partially contained. Officials attribute the challenges to dry conditions, terrain, and hurricane debris. A state of emergency has been declared in South Carolina.

AP PHOTO



Canada’s Prime Minister Mark Carney launched an election campaign amid trade tensions with President Trump, who has threatened annexation. Both major parties stress sovereignty. Nationalist sentiment is rising, shifting focus from domestic issues to defending Canada’s independence from U.S. interference.

AP PHOTO



Gaza Strip Israeli airstrikes in Gaza killed at least 25 Palestinians after ending a ceasefire. Egypt proposed a new truce involving hostage and prisoner exchanges. Hamas reportedly responded positively. Talks aim to restore humanitarian aid and a temporary halt to fighting.

AP PHOTO



Germany yesterday marked 10 years since the Germanwings Flight 9525 crash, caused by a suicidal co-pilot, killing 150. Victims’ families gathered in France and Haltern am See to remember the dead, including 16 students. Memorial services honored their legacy and loss.

AP PHOTO



Comedy Conan O’Brien received the Mark Twain Prize at the Kennedy Center amid leadership upheaval following Trump’s takeover. The ceremony mixed comedy with concerns over political influence. O’Brien thanked staff, invoked Twain’s legacy, and ended the night with a musical performance.