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**SOUTH SHORE GREEN PROMENADE ZONE 2 OPENS, ADDING WATERFRONT LEISURE SPACE WITH CYCLING TRACK, SEATING AREAS AND SCENIC COASTAL VIEWS** P6

**MACAU AND VIETNAM ENDORSE CRIMINAL JUDICIAL ASSISTANCE DRAFT AGREEMENT** P8

**MACAU ORCHESTRA POSTS MOP56 MILLION DEFICIT AS LOSSES WIDEN AND ATTENDANCE FALLS DESPITE MORE PERFORMANCES AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORT** P8



**South Korea** Thousands of Samsung workers rallied yesterday in Pyeongtaek demanding higher bonuses, with unions threatening an 18-day strike from May 21. The protest comes as AI-driven chip demand boosts profits, but workers say compensation lags despite record earnings across South Korea's semiconductor sector.



**Vietnam** Estonia's foreign minister said his country aims to deepen trade and digital cooperation with Vietnam, offering e-governance expertise as Hanoi pursues high-income status by 2045. Talks also touched on EU agreements, seafood export restrictions and geopolitical concerns over Russia's war in Ukraine.



**Turkey's** parliament passed a bill yesterday [Macau time] restricting social media access for under-15s, requiring age verification, parental controls and faster removal of harmful content. The move follows a deadly school shooting and mirrors global trends, though critics warn bans may undermine rights-based approaches to child protection.



**Slovenia's** broadcaster said yesterday it will not air the Eurovision Song Contest after withdrawing over Israel's participation. The boycott, joined by several European countries, underscores how geopolitical tensions linked to the Gaza war continue to spill into cultural events traditionally framed as apolitical.

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# HOLA MADRID

**48 cooperation agreements lift Macau-Spain ties to a new level as Chief Executive highlights tourism, trade and platform role expansion in Europe** P3



SAM HOU FAI WITH VP OF SPANISH GOVERNMENT YOLANDA PÉREZ

**TOURISM**  
**MACAU EXPECTS VISITOR GROWTH, BUT LEGISLATORS PUSH FOR UPGRADES, BETTER DISTRIBUTION OF BENEFITS**

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TOURISM

# MACAU EXPECTS VISITOR GROWTH, BUT LEGISLATORS PUSH FOR TOURISM UPGRADES

YUKI LEI

MACAU is forecasting continued growth in visitor arrivals, supported by rising international tourist numbers, but lawmakers are pressing the government to enhance the city's tourism offerings and better distribute economic benefits across local communities.

During his European visit, Chief Executive (CE) Sam Hou Fai summarized his itinerary in Spain on Wednesday, local time, addressing media concerns over the impact of the global situation on Macau's tourism industry.

"Our assessment is that Macau's tourism sector continues to move forward steadily," he told accompanying reporters. "In the first quarter, we welcomed 750,000 international visitors, representing a 10% increase compared to the same period last year," he reportedly said, expressing optimism about Macau's annual visitor growth.

As reported, amid concerns that international oil prices could impact Macau's tourism industry, the CE responded: "The current global situation remains complex and volatile." He further noted that when it comes to attracting international visitors, "Macau's tourism market is significantly affected by fluctuations in the status of Middle Eastern aviation hubs" – adding that this

is due to the Middle East's aviation hub status being impacted to some extent.

Notably, Macau welcomed more than 40 million visitors last year, with international arrivals from Spain and across Europe registering double-digit year-on-year growth.

With Macau's tourism industry now fully recovered, inbound visitor arrivals during the 2026 Lunar New Year holiday set a new record, reaching 1.212 million during the first seven days of the mainland Chinese Spring Festival Golden Week – averaging over 173,000 per day. From the third to the fifth day of the Lunar New Year, daily visitor numbers exceeded 210,000.

However, some legislators have expressed concern that, with hotels nearing full occupancy, relying solely on visitor growth is no longer sufficient to fully reflect the benefits of tourism. Local businesses continue to report that "more people do not necessarily mean more revenue."

Citing feedback from community merchants, lawmaker Chan Lai-kei noted that many residential districts have failed to fully benefit from the tourism boom, creating a structural imbalance of "uneven distribution" – with visitor traffic heavily concentrated in traditional core areas such as the Ruins of St. Paul's and integrated resort complexes.

She suggested that the govern-



LYNZY VALLES

ment should leverage the resources of integrated resort operators to provide dedicated incentives for tourists to venture into local communities, thereby "bringing tourists into the neighborhoods."

Chan also proposed enhancing payment convenience and language services for international visitors. In response, the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) stated that authorities are studying improvements to mobile payment services, including allowing international visitors to directly link overseas bank cards to local payment apps or top up local stored-value cards. Meanwhile, bus and light rapid transit (LRT) systems are being optimized to support a wider range of payment tools.

Concurrently, lawmaker Ella Lei has raised concerns over the carrying capacity of Macau's old dis-

tricts as tourist numbers increase. She hopes authorities will build on a plan announced Wednesday – which involves collaborating with integrated resort operators to launch leisure shuttle buses directing tourists into local communities – by strengthening ties with the "Walking Through Macau's Streets" initiative and district revitalization projects.

Measures such as streetscape enhancements, improved guided tours, and better pedestrian signage could further develop distinctive tourism routes, creating synergies and enhancing the overall visitor experience.

Lei noted that some shuttle bus drop-off points are surrounded by relatively few shops, leaving room for improvement in supporting amenities. Using the Inner Harbour as an example, she called

for the development of a themed route stretching from the Patane area, through Praça Ponte Horta, to the Barra area – with the waterfront near the Patane Market as its backbone – integrating Macau's former fishing port culture and historical narratives.

Lei also urged authorities to carefully assess the scale of such routes, recommending cautious observation of their impact on local traffic during the initial phase.

She suggested optimizing bus stops, strengthening data collection and analysis – including tourist flows, movement patterns, traffic conditions, and holiday variations – and dynamically adjusting shuttle bus frequencies and routes based on real-world conditions to achieve a balance between tourism development and the needs of local residents.

COOPERATION

# Gov't secures 43 trade deals in Spain mission

RICAELA DIPUTADO

MACAU'S first economic and trade mission to Spain has resulted in 43 cooperation agreements and 104 business matching sessions during a one-day conference in Madrid.

The "Macau-Spain Economic and Trade Cooperation Conference," held on April 22 local time, brought together about 170 government and business representatives from mainland China,

Spain, Macau, and the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

Central to the conference was the positioning of Macau as a "precise connector" between China and the Spanish-speaking world. While the city has traditionally been associated with its Portuguese heritage, the Madrid mission reflected an effort to expand its bridging role to include Spain and broader Spanish-speaking markets.

The conference was or-

ganized by the Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) and the Spanish Chamber of Commerce, with support from the Spanish Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Representatives from both sides held discussions on industry matchmaking and regional economic strengths.

Discussions focused on expanding Macau-Hengqin services to Spanish-speaking markets and broadening economic and trade cooperation between China and

those countries.

The 43 agreements involved entities from Mainland China, Spain, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Macau, covering sectors including high-tech, healthcare, trade, culture and tourism, convention and exhibition industries, cross-border investment, and legal professional services.

A Spanish business representative at the event expressed interest in China's artificial intelligence sector and held initial face-to-face

discussions with a Macau technology company, describing the meeting as a potential starting point for cooperation.

In addition to the conference, a delegation of around 120 participants attended a Macau SAR Government reception later that day.

During the reception, IPIM signed memoranda of understanding with the Spanish Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Spanish Chinese Commercial Federation, establishing a

framework for closer trade cooperation.

A representative from the Macau Live Streaming Association also presented industry trends and digital transformation opportunities, highlighting potential areas for business expansion.

The mission emphasized Macau's role as a "precise connector" between China and Spanish-speaking economies, aiming to support overseas expansion and create additional international cooperation opportunities.

The delegation is scheduled to depart Madrid today (local time) and return to Macau.

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### BEIJING TALKS HIGHLIGHT MACAU DIVERSIFICATION PUSH

The director of the Hong Kong and Macao Work Office of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and the State Council's Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office, Xia Baolong, met in Beijing on Wednesday with a delegation led by the president of the Macau Legislative Assembly, André Cheong. According to a report on the office's website, discussions during the meeting focused on Macau's proactive alignment with the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan and the promotion of the city's appropriate economic diversification.

### OVER-HEIGHT TRUCK STRIKES TUNNEL CEILING, ROOF DETACHES

An over-height truck entered the underground tunnel on Avenida do Dr. Rodrigo Rodrigues, first striking a height restriction sign before colliding with the tunnel ceiling and causing part of the roof to detach. The Public Security Police (PSP) dispatched a tow truck to the scene to handle the situation. The driver, a 40-year-old local resident, had briefly exited the vehicle to inspect the damage, police said. He has been fined for failing to comply with height restrictions, as well as for failing to adjust his speed, stop safely, and avoid obstacles. Following an inspection, authorities confirmed that no structural hazards were identified in the tunnel.

### DSAL WARNS OF SCAM CALLS SPOOFING HOTLINE NUMBER

The Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) has warned the public about scam calls falsely using its hotline number "2833 8808." Authorities said several Hong Kong residents recently reported receiving calls from individuals claiming to be DSAL staff, speaking in Mandarin and citing personal details such as names and birth dates while inquiring about overseas recruitment. DSAL stressed it has not made such calls and has reported the case to police. Residents are urged not to disclose personal or financial information.

# IC GOV'T LAUNCHES 2026 READING WEEK WITH EXPANDED CULTURAL ACTIVITIES ACROSS THE CITY

NADIA SHAW

**T**HE Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) launched "Macao Just Read – National Reading Campaign Week 2026" on Thursday, promoting 10 minutes of daily reading through more than 100 activities, including new "10-Minute Reading Corners" and collaborations across the Greater Bay Area (GBA).

Unveiled at a 10 a.m. ceremony in the Macau Cultural Centre's Small Theatre, the program aligns with the mainland's 15th Five-Year Plan. It aims to brand Macau as a "City of Reading" and bolster public cultural services, IC president De-land Leong said.

Led by the IC alongside the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) and the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS), the initiative fosters lifelong reading habits through enhanced library facilities, targeted activities, and community outreach.

"This year's National Reading Activity Week [...] advocates '10 minutes of reading' every day, during which more than 100 diverse reading activities will be launched," Leong said. The effort includes expanded demonstration sites with partner departments.

The citywide Reading Week extends beyond Macau's borders by establishing "reading points" in Hengqin's Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone, along with cross-border initiatives.

Leong noted, "The IC will join forces with seven major cities, including Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Dongguan, Hong Kong, Nanning and Haikou, to hold a 'half-hour reading together' activity."

"Reading promotion is not only a cultural work, but also an important



way to improve the city's humanistic literacy and enhance citizens' sense of cultural gain and well-being," she added.

To address residents' reading needs across all age groups, the IC will host book exchanges, journal bestsellers, parent-child activities, reading experiences, book exhibitions and lectures at the Macau Cultural Centre and Plaza this weekend.

### CENTRAL LIBRARY UPDATE

Regarding the new Central Library, Leong said construction is progressing smoothly, with basement works completed late last year and superstructure work starting in March 2026. Completion is expected in 2028.

She described progress as proceeding in an "orderly manner" as planned. The four-storey library, designed by Dutch firm Mecanoo, will cater to all age groups with an open lobby, lounge, light dining area, ac-

tivity spaces and a multifunctional lecture hall. Dedicated zones will serve children, teens, adults and seniors.

Further details remain under refinement.

On hiring practices for cultural activities, Leong assured the media of strict oversight for outsourced events. She said all official events and tendered projects explicitly require the use of legally employed Macau workers in contracts, supported by follow-up mechanisms. She added that no cases of illegal employment of undocumented workers have been found so far, and authorities will continue to closely monitor the situation.

### SIMPLE STAGE IN OUTDOOR VENUE FOR LOCAL ARTS

On the sidelines of the Reading Week launch, the IC president also addressed plans to optimize Macau's outdoor

performance area. She said the venue has hosted temporary attractions since March, including a children's mini non-motorized kart track and a three-on-three basketball court.

"We plan to set up an area there, with a simpler stage, so that local community groups, artists, or troupes can make better use of it and hold performances there. We hope that by outsourcing the operation of the entire venue in the future, we can better meet market needs and have more flexibility," Leong said.

Leong noted that another performance is scheduled at the venue for June 2, with applications already received by an organization.

The bureau also said it plans to put the venue's operation out to public tender in the second half of 2026 to enhance flexibility.

### SOCIETY

## SSM eyes covered smoking areas in NAPE

**M**ORE than two months into a no-smoking zone pilot around Dr. Carlos d'Assumpção Park in NAPE, Health Bureau director Alvis Lo reported satisfactory results and announced plans to introduce covered smoking areas next month.

Speaking at the Cultural Centre during the launch of the Cultural Affairs Bureau's (IC) "Macao Just Read – National Reading Campaign Week 2026," Lo said the mid-February program has

operated smoothly.

Lo said residents, tourists, and commuters have adapted well, with daily advisories dropping from about 40 people initially to one or two now, mainly due to lack of awareness or negligence. No penalties are in place yet, as measures are still being studied.

"Currently, within the no-smoking area, there is an open-air area with an ashtray where smoking is permitted," Lo said. "We will try a covered model to

test the acceptance of different smoking areas within the no-smoking zone, and to assess the impact on nearby shops and residents."

The bureau will add covered areas in May in more open spaces within the district and will gather feedback from residents and stakeholders alongside results from recent public consultations.

Once refined, the model is expected to seek legislative backing and expand



first to high-traffic areas to strengthen public smoking controls across Macau. "We are trialing different models and will make adjustments

based on the opinions from all parties after completing a public consultation on the legislative amendment," Lo said. NS

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



**T**HROUGH its dedicated “Splendors of China” initiative, Melco Resorts & Entertainment fosters cultural engagement and heritage appreciation among colleagues and the community. 2025 saw record participation with over 31,000 engagements in multifaceted learning activities. Post-event feedback highlights the program’s success, with 93% of participants expressing increased pride in Chinese culture and a desire for further exploration.

As a core component of “Splendors of China” to foster national pride and patriotism among Colleagues through education and awareness, on March 25, Melco hosted a national affairs forum at City of Dreams to share the spirits of the fourth session of the 14th National People’s Congress (NPC) and the fourth session of the 14th Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), also known as the 2026 “Two Sessions”.

The forum welcomed prominent delegates from the NPC and the CPPCC to share key insights on national development, the Greater Bay Area integration, and Macau’s role in the country’s modernization. Guest speakers included Mr. José Chui Sai Peng, Deputy Head of the Macau Delegation to the NPC, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Macau; Ms. Ho Sut Heng, Member of the NPC, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the Macao Federation of Trade Unions; Mr. Ip Sio Kai, Member of the CPPCC National Committee, Member of the Executive Council and Legislative Assembly of Macau; Mr. Lam Lon Wai, Member of the CPPCC National Committee, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Macau; and Mr. Lawrence Ho, Member of the CPPCC National Committee, Chairman & CEO of Melco.

The event was attended by guests of honor including Mr. Sun

# Melco's 'Splendors of China' program fosters cultural engagement and national pride



Yaohua, Director of the Economic Affairs Department of the Liaison Office of the Central People’s Government in the Macau SAR, and Mr. Kenny Lai, Acting Head of Gaming Inspection Department of the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau of the Macau SAR Government. They were joined by Melco management and non-management Colleagues, and representatives from Macau’s academic community, including professors and students.

To maximize impact, the event was streamed live to Melco’s regional offices in Macau, Hong Kong, Manila, Cyprus, and Sri Lanka. A highlight reel is also to be displayed in Melco’s “Heart of House” employee-areas to continue promoting the spirits of the “Two Sessions”.

At the event, Mr. Lawrence Ho shared, “This year’s ‘Two Sessions’ has put forward new expectations for Hong Kong and Macau, encouraging us to leverage our unique advantages in becoming

an important force on the path of national progress. Let us contribute towards the call to serve national development, which marks a proactive shift for Macau. As a local enterprise, Melco must evolve from a recipient of support into a ‘super connector’ and ‘demonstration zone’ for innovation. By integrating ‘New Productivity’—such as high-end medical tourism and tech-driven culture—we will bridge international resources with the Mainland. Through Hengqin-Macao integration and a commitment to patriotism, we aim to lead regional growth and share the fruits of national progress with our community.”

Also as part of “Splendors of China”, Melco senior executives and management members, led by Melco Chief Advisor Dr. Kent Wong, attended the first day of the public opening of the annual National Security Education Exhibition on April 16. Approximately 180 colleagues and their families are expected to attend

the exhibition across six sessions during its month-long duration. Highlighting the company’s focus on multi-generational awareness, two sessions are specifically tailored for parent-child learning as part of Melco’s “Teaching Children Values” initiative.

Since 2019, Melco’s engagement with this annual National Security Education Exhibition has seen significant growth. To date, nearly 1,900 colleagues have visited the exhibition in person, with online participation figures now at almost 19,000, reflecting the company’s sustained efforts to deepen colleagues’ understanding of national security.

Furthermore, to foster patriotism among the community, Melco co-organized the “Melco Star Macau Youth Talent Competition” with the National Conditions Education (Macau) Association for the third year. Under the theme “China in Childhood” and aligned with Melco’s “Splendors of China” program, the competition aims to

instill national pride and patriotism through early childhood education on Chinese culture. The 2025 competition attracted nearly 1,300 youth from 60 schools and art institutions across Macau. From more than 190 submitted entries, 50 performances involving 525 performers were shortlisted for the finals, which were hosted at City of Dreams.

The young finalists showcased their performances before a distinguished panel of judges from the arts and entertainment fields, including Mr. Shanqi, renowned Chinese musician and producer; Professor Xu Qing, former associate professor of the People’s Liberation Army Art College; Mr. Vincent Lu Jia, principal cello of the Macao Orchestra; Ms. Hu Chengfeng, former judge of elite projects of the China National Arts Fund; the creative direction team of “House of Dancing Water” from Peparini Studios; and Mr. Kriman Benbella, Founder and Creative Director of The Planet Entertainment.



Mr. José Chui Sai Peng



Ms. Ho Sut Heng



Mr. Ip Sio Kai



Mr. Lam Lon Wai



Mr. Lawrence Ho

**COLD FRONT TO BRING RAIN AND THUNDERSTORMS THIS WEEKEND**

The Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) said a cold front has crossed the Pearl River Estuary, bringing northerly winds and falling temperatures to Macau. Heavy rain and several thunderstorms are expected to persist today, with temperatures ranging between 18 degrees Celsius and 22 degrees. Conditions are expected to improve slightly by Sunday. Authorities added that a trough early next week will likely bring another round of showers and thunderstorms.

**WOMAN LOSES HKD20,000 IN FAKE 'POLICE-PROSECUTOR-COURT' SCAM**

A woman has lost HK\$20,000 after falling victim to a suspected fake "police-prosecutor-court" scam, the Judiciary Police (PJ) said. The victim received a call on Monday from someone claiming to be from the "Wuhan Public Security Bureau," alleging her phone number was linked to fraud cases in mainland China. She was told to cooperate with an online investigation and provide banking details and passwords. She later found her account locked and funds transferred. PJ also reported another similar case on April 22 involving losses of more than HK\$470,000.

**SOCIETY**

**SOUTH SHORE GREEN PROMENADE ZONE 2 OPENS TO PUBLIC**

**TIMES REPORTER**

**T**HE Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has opened Zone 2 of the second phase of the South Shore Waterfront Green Promenade to the public, marking another milestone in the city's ongoing waterfront enhancement project.

The newly accessible zone, located between Macau Tower and Portas do Entendimento, spans about 17,000 square meters along the coast and offers a long, narrow leisure space designed for both recreation and scenic enjoyment.

Its opening follows the launch of Zone 1 in November last year, as authorities continue to advance construction works in phases.

Zone 2 features a waterfront trail and a cycle track stretching more than 600 meters, separated by landscaped green belts. Residents may bring their own bicycles to use the track at this stage, while IAM said it will assess the feasibility of introducing bicycle rental services upon completion of the entire promenade.



The area is richly landscaped with layered vegetation, including large shade trees and flowering species.

Additional facilities include waterfront steps and seating areas for relaxation, offering views of the coastline and Sai Van Bridge.

A fishing platform has also been installed near the bridge approach, featuring decorative

dragon boat-style seating. Existing sports amenities, including basketball and badminton courts, have been retained, alongside fitness equipment and newly added chess tables to support a range of recreational activities.

The public can access Zone 2 via Portas do Entendimento, the footbridge along Avenida Panorâmica do Lago Sai Van, or

from parking areas beneath Sai Van Bridge.

The second phase of the promenade covers approximately 60,000 square meters from Ponte Governador Nobre de Carvalho to Portas do Entendimento. While Zones 1 and 2 are now open, construction of Zone 3 began late last year, with full completion targeted for the first half of 2027.

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GBA

# Scholars suggest sports, trade shows to boost Hengqin amid 'lack of sufficient foot traffic'

YUKI LEI

**A**s the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin marks the fifth anniversary of its establishment, some scholars have acknowledged that its first phase of development indeed "lacked sufficient foot traffic," adding that hosting major sporting events and trade shows is an effective way to boost visitor numbers in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area.

During public broadcaster TDM's radio program on Macau-Hengqin cooperation, a listener suggested that sports events could drive tourism between the two regions, citing the successful combination of the "Craft Market" and the FIBA 3x3 international basketball tournament held in Hengqin in early April. She noted that the event attracted athletes from various countries, helping showcase Hengqin's development while revitalizing the local economy.

Pointing out that hotel occupancy in Hengqin remains low, she said the arrival of athletes has stimulated consumption, while also serving as an entry point for the international community to understand China's development and addressing Macau's long-standing shortage of sports venues.



Describing tickets as sold out on the day, she expressed the belief that leveraging sports to drive Hengqin-Macau tourism is a "promising direction."

In response, Yu Wai Hang, president of the Macau Regional Economic Research Association and one of four panelists, noted that the enthusiastic response to recent sports events in Hengqin demonstrates the local government's active promotion of major events.

He said that Macau – a world-class tourism and leisure hub with

a vibrant performing arts and cultural scene – could consider extending its events to Hengqin in the future, including holding the same event in both locations simultaneously or organizing touring exhibitions.

Yu pointed out that Hengqin possesses unique natural resources that Macau lacks, giving Hengqin's events a distinct appeal. He described Macau's limited urban space as a constraint that Hengqin can complement, adding that the two regions can "complement

each other" in cultural and tourism development through differentiation.

Regarding conventions, exhibitions, performances and festive events, he said a "joint organization across both locations" model could be adopted – for example, holding an event in Macau before moving it to Hengqin. He expressed confidence that this approach will promote economic activity and exchanges between the two regions, jointly expanding the market.

Separately, some listeners inquired

whether vehicles with Hengqin license plates will soon be allowed to travel north from the island.

According to the latest information shared during yesterday's program, the State Council has approved a policy exempting Hengqin single-plate vehicles from guarantee requirements when traveling northbound, though the initial phase will be limited to eligible individuals. Specific implementation details are still pending announcement from relevant mainland authorities.

Lao Chi Long, a member of the Guangdong Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said the northbound travel policy for Hengqin single-plate vehicles must be implemented in phases.

He noted that the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge experiences severe congestion whenever Macau vehicles are allowed to travel north during weekends or holidays, with relevant departments still addressing the situation. If the policy were fully opened at once, Hengqin Port's capacity would be questionable; therefore, space and time must be reserved for all sectors to gain experience and make adjustments.

He further emphasized a fundamental difference between single-plate vehicles and Macau vehicles traveling north – single-plate vehicles can enter Hengqin at any time once they obtain the necessary permit, with the main issue being how to exit the island and continue north.

He said phased implementation is the appropriate approach, allowing authorities to gradually optimize the system based on capacity and actual conditions so that more residents can benefit in the future and more convenient cross-border arrangements can be achieved.

SECURITY

# Police complaints rise to 1,143 cases in 2025

**C**OMPLAINTS and reports involving the Public Security Police Force rose to 1,143 in 2025, continuing an upward trend over the past four years, according to the force's annual report.

Of the total cases, 836 involved police officers, leading to 23 disciplinary proceedings. Authorities said the increase reflects both higher public reporting and continued scrutiny of law enforcement conduct.

The number of complaints and reports has steadily grown from 718 in 2022, to 991 in 2023, and 1,101 in 2024. Officials



described the latest rise as gradual but consistent.

In 2025, 315 cases were classified as reports and 828 as complaints. While reports increased year over year, complaints saw

a slight decline.

Cases involving police personnel rose 6% compared with 2024, continuing a multi-year upward trend. Earlier increases were more

pronounced, including double-digit growth between 2022 and 2024.

The PSP said 23 disciplinary proceedings were opened following internal reviews. However, 669 cases were deemed to have insufficient evidence or unclear grounds for further action.

By year's end, 1,037 cases had been processed, while 106 remained under investigation.

The force operates an electronic system allowing the public to submit complaints, feedback, and commendations covering areas such as officer conduct, traffic enforcement,

immigration services, and public safety operations.

Authorities noted that submissions without identification are treated as anonymous reports and may not receive responses. Some anonymous filings may also be discarded under existing rules.

Separately, the Commission for Disciplinary Supervision of Security Forces and Services received 132 complaints in 2025, with the PSP accounting for 105 of them, or 80.5%.

The commission said most complaints involved allegations of improper procedures, misconduct,

poor attitude, or abuse of authority.

The report also showed the PSP had 4,955 active officers at the end of 2025, including 4,660 rank-and-file personnel and 295 officers in command roles. About 61.4% held at least a bachelor's degree.

On operations, the force handled 8,202 criminal cases in 2025, the highest in five years, with 1,921 referred to prosecutors as suspected crimes.

Emergency hotline calls fell to 247,000, a five-year low and a 9.8% year-on-year decline.

Separately, 20,303 people were repatriated in 2025, down 8.8% from the previous year, mainly for overstays, illegal entry, or other administrative reasons. LV



COOPERATION

# Macau and Vietnam endorse criminal judicial assistance draft

RICAELA DIPUTADO

MACAU and Vietnam have initialed a draft criminal judicial assistance agreement following two days of consultations held in Macau, marking progress toward formal cross-border legal cooperation.

A Vietnamese delegation visited Macau on April 20 and 21 at the invitation of the Macau government to negotiate the agreement, which is intended to strengthen cooperation in criminal judicial matters and facilitate exchanges between the two sides.

Both sides held detailed discussions on the provisions of the draft during the talks and reached consensus on the text, according to officials. The heads of the two delegations subsequently initialed the agreement, concluding the negotiation stage.

During the talks, both delegations conducted detailed and in-depth discussions on each provision of the draft, ultimately reaching a full consensus.

The heads of the two delegations then initialed the draft, marking a substantial outcome in the negotiation process.

Following the meeting, both sides signed a minute of talks, committing to take

necessary measures to advance their respective internal procedures with the goal of formally signing the agreement as soon as possible.

While the initialing indicates that the text has been agreed upon at the negotiator level, the agreement will only enter into force after both sides complete their domestic legal requirements and formally sign the document.

The deepening of legal cooperation between Macau and Vietnam comes amid increasing economic integration and cross-border travel across Southeast Asia.

A formal criminal judicial assistance framework allows authorities to share evidence, execute search warrants, and facilitate witness testimony across jurisdictions.

The Macau government has been pursuing the negotiation and signing of mutual legal assistance agreements with foreign jurisdictions, with the assistance and authorization of the Central People's Government.

The completion of consultations with Vietnam is expected to help strengthen joint efforts to combat cross-border criminal activities and provide better legal safeguards for economic cooperation and personnel exchanges between the two sides.

# MACAU ORCHESTRA POSTS MOP56 MILLION DEFICIT AS FINANCIAL PRESSURE PERSISTS

RICAELA DIPUTADO

MACAO Orchestra Company Limited, which manages the city's two flagship orchestras, remained in the red for the fourth consecutive year in 2025, posting a loss of nearly MOP56 million, according to an annual report released yesterday.

The government-backed company, established in early 2022 to professionalize operations and reduce reliance on public funds, saw its losses widen 3.3% from MOP54.22 million in 2024. The deficit has grown 27.9% since 2022, when the firm recorded a MOP43.8 million loss in its first year of operation.

Annual income fell 4.3% year-on-year to MOP67.12

million. While the city's six gaming operators contributed MOP30 million in sponsorship, ticket revenue dropped 11% to just MOP1.71 million. Expenditure edged down 1% to MOP123.1 million.

The company also received MOP49.8 million in government subsidies to support development and day-to-day operations.

Both orchestras were founded in the 1980s and were previously managed directly by the government. The company was created to adopt professional orchestra-management practices and pursue more market-oriented operations aimed at reducing dependence on public funds.

The two ensembles staged 275 concerts last year – a

19.6% increase from 2024. Total audience numbers rose 9.6% to 103,781.

However, average attendance per performance fell 8.3% to just over 377. The Macao Orchestra saw a sharper decline, with average attendance down 18.1% to 460 per concert.

Despite the weak financial results, the company said it will continue expanding performances and international exchanges. It added that it will stage high-caliber concerts in collaboration with international musicians and arts groups, actively pursue improvements in artistic standards, and work through various channels to cultivate local musical talent – aiming to further strengthen Macau's reputation as a "City of Performing Arts."



## CORPORATE BITS

### MGM hosts China's 'Two Sessions' seminar



MGM hosted its annual sharing session on the National People's Congress and National Political Consultative Conference, known as the "Two Sessions," to help team members and young people understand the nation's development direction.

The event drew nearly 400

MGM team members, students and professors from local higher education institutions, and members of the General Association of Macau Beijing Organization. MGM noted that the event reached more than 4,000 participants online and offline.

Pansy Ho, chairperson and

executive director of MGM China, addressed China's 15th Five-Year Plan in her opening remarks, which for the first time sets building a strong tourism nation as a national strategic goal. She said the plan provides guidance for Macau's cultural and tourism sectors.

Ho said Macau should promote "Macau + Mainland China" cultural exchanges and encourage youth to advance Chinese culture.

As Macau's integration with Hengqin deepens, she said the city should pursue a "Tourism +" model, integrating MICE, culture, innovation, and technology, and extending industry chains into Hengqin.

### Wynn launches 2026 Healthy Enterprise Program



Wynn Resorts kicked off its 2026 Wynn Healthy Enterprise Program (HEP) on Tuesday with a launch and appreciation ceremony at Wynn Palace Macau's Grand Theater.

The initiative aims to pro-

mote healthy habits among employees and build a wellness-oriented corporate culture. The program coincides with Wynn Health Month, held this month in partnership with the Health

Bureau (SSM), community health organizations, and a medical center.

Activities over the four weeks in April addressed physical and mental health, diet, exercise, and medical checkups. Key elements of HEP 2026 include the "Wynn Talent Club," where employees display skills and build connections; the yearlong "Healthy from the Start" missions with monthly challenges; and "Workplace Stretching" sessions across departments to encourage breaks.

Demonstrating the program's focus on practical wellness, health ambassadors led stretching exercises at the launch ceremony.

DATA PRIVACY

# UK Biobank data listings in China trigger probe, no personal identifiers exposed

TIMES REPORTER

**T**HE UK government has confirmed that health data linked to 500,000 volunteers in the UK Biobank was briefly advertised for sale on a Chinese e-commerce platform, prompting an investigation and political scrutiny.

Technology minister Ian Murray told MPs, as reported by BBC News, that “information of all members of the database was found listed for sale on the website Alibaba,” referring to Alibaba. He added that the charity running the Biobank alerted the government earlier in the week.

Murray emphasized that the dataset did not include direct identifiers. According to BBC News, he said the information “did not include names, addresses, contact details or telephone numbers,” though it could contain details such as “gender, age, month and year of birth, socioeconomic status, lifestyle habits, and measures from biological samples.”

The listings have since been removed, and Murray said authorities were informed that “no purchases were made from the



GETTY IMAGES

three listings on the website.” He also thanked Chinese authorities for their cooperation in resolving the issue.

In a message to participants cited by BBC News, Biobank chief executive Professor Sir Rory Collins acknowledged concerns, stating: “We understand that the existence of these listings, even temporarily, will be concerning to you.” He added reassurance that “all the data are

de-identified; they do not contain any personally identifying information.”

However, Collins described the incident as serious, saying the data’s appearance online amounted to “a clear breach of the contract signed by these academic institutions.” The dataset had been legitimately accessed by researchers at three institutions, but their access has now been suspended.

The Biobank has responded by tightening controls, including temporarily suspending access to its research platform, limiting file exports and introducing daily monitoring “for any suspicious behaviour,” BBC News reported. A “comprehensive and forensic Board-led investigation” is also underway.

The Information Commissioner’s Office confirmed it is examining the case. In com-

ments reported by BBC News, a spokesperson said: “People’s medical data is highly sensitive information... organisations also have a responsibility under the law.”

Political reaction has been swift. Liberal Democrat technology spokesperson Victoria Collins described the situation as a “profound betrayal,” calling for accountability. Meanwhile, Richard Tice labeled the episode a “China data theft scandal.”

Murray rejected that framing, stressing the breach was not the result of hacking. “This was not a leak or cyber-attack,” he said, according to BBC News. “This was a legitimate download by a legitimately accredited organisation.”

He also defended international research ties, noting that “thousands of Chinese researchers” have worked with Biobank data “safely and securely” since 2012.

Some participants appear unconcerned. Biobank volunteer Polly Toynbee told BBC News she believed the anonymised nature of the data would limit risks, saying she did not think the incident would “rattle all the magnificent volunteers.”

HONG KONG

# Regulators fine PwC \$166M over China Evergrande audit

**P**Wc, one of the world’s biggest accounting firms, is paying HK\$1.3 billion (\$166 million) in fines and compensation in Hong Kong over its audit work for the failed Chinese property developer Evergrande, which was said to have overstated revenues.

Hong Kong’s accounting regulator yesterday also announced a six-month ban on PwC from working for new clients and said it had issued a public reprimand to two of its former partners for misconduct, fining each of them a separate HK\$5 million.

China Evergrande, one of China’s biggest property developers and once deemed “too big to fail,” defaulted in 2021 and became the world’s most indebted developer with roughly \$300 billion in liabilities. Its rapid downfall



AP PHOTO

was the most prominent case of failure in China’s property sector, which was embroiled in a liquidity crisis after authorities cracked down on excessive borrowing in the industry as many other developers had also defaulted or underwent restructuring.

The property sector slump in China has still not yet fully recovered, which has weighed on home pri-

ces across the country and impacted consumption and investment sentiment, dragging on China’s broader economic growth.

In 2024, PwC was fined by mainland Chinese authorities 441 million yuan (\$62 million) over its Evergrande audit. Chinese authorities also imposed a six-month ban on the accounting firm over “false” conclusions in its audit

reports for Evergrande and “serious defects” in its auditing procedures.

Hong Kong’s Securities and Futures Commission said yesterday it had investigated PwC’s work relating to Evergrande’s financial statements for 2019 and 2020 and found that its annual revenue and profits were “substantially overstated.”

It said Evergrande had manipulated annual revenue and profits by “prematurely recognising revenue from property sales before the completion and delivery of properties to buyers.” Revenues were overstated by roughly 564 billion yuan (\$83 billion) over the two years, it said, after Chinese authorities reached a similar conclusion in September 2024 when it imposed its fine and ban on PwC.

The Hong Kong commission also said there were “serious breaches” of professional duties by PwC. It said it had reached an agreement with PwC — without an admission of liability by the firm — under which PwC would be setting aside HK\$1 billion for compensating minority shareholders of Evergrande.

Hong Kong’s accounting regulator, the Accounting and Financial Reporting Council, said in a separate statement that PwC’s audit deficiencies for Evergrande were “particularly egregious” and that the accounting firm had “knowingly permitting” unsupported or unjustified adjustments in the financial statements.

“We acknowledge that the work on the Evergrande audits fell well below

our high expectations and the expectations of our stakeholders,” PwC Hong Kong said in a statement. “Resolving these regulatory matters is an important step for the firm.”

PwC had lost dozens of clients and many of its staff following Evergrande’s downfall and in the months after China Evergrande was ordered by a Hong Kong court to be liquidated in 2024. Liquidators of China Evergrande were also pursuing legal action against PwC separately in Hong Kong in an attempt to recover what it could for creditors.

Evergrande founder Hui Ka Yan, once one of Asia’s richest persons, this month pleaded guilty to charges including fraud and bribery in a mainland Chinese court after being detained in China. **MDT/AP**

## INDIA

# VOTING BEGINS IN WEST BENGAL STATE AFTER A NATIONAL VOTER LIST PURGE

ROMITA DATTA, KOLKATA

**V**OTING in one of India's most closely watched state elections began yesterday after a national voter roll revision removed millions of names and raised concerns over disenfranchisement in West Bengal, one of the few large states not governed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party.

The election has national implications. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party is seeking gains in a state long dominated by a regional opposition party, while a victory for West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee would bolster her position as a leading opposition figure.

A second phase of polling is scheduled for next week. Voting also was taking place Thursday in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

The voting was part of a wider round of state elections testing the BJP's reach in opposition strongholds. The results of the latest elections and the earlier polls in Kerala and Assam states and the federally administered territory of Puducherry were expected May 4.

The election is taking place after a sweeping revision of electoral rolls by the Election Commission of India aimed at removing duplicate, deceased and ineligible voters. Officials say about 9



million names — roughly 12% of the electorate — were deleted, including 6.3 million listed as deceased or absent and 2.7 million marked “doubtful” and pending verification.

Some affected voters said they had voted in previous elections and hold valid identification but were removed without clear explanation.

Sheikh Najrul Islam, a 53-year-old paramilitary officer on election duty in West Bengal, said he last voted in 2021 and holds

valid identification documents, yet his name no longer appears on the voter list.

“The Election Commission has deputed me to ensure free and fair polls. Yet, it does not consider me a citizen of this country,” he said.

In another case, Taibunessa Begum, a 62-year-old retired school administrator, said she was shocked to find her name deleted despite having a passport, pension records and earlier voter registration.

“It felt like being told I don't

exist,” she said.

Opposition leaders allege the deletions disproportionately affect Muslims and other marginalized communities.

The Election Commission of India has denied the allegations, saying the exercise eliminated dead, duplicate and fake voters on the electoral roll.

Modi's party said the revision was a routine administrative exercise carried out across multiple states and argued that any disproportionate impact in West

Bengal reflects the presence of undocumented migrants. They say many Hindu voters were also removed.

Critics, however, link the deletions to broader political messaging by Modi and some BJP leaders, who have repeatedly suggested the revisions of the voter lists targeted people who immigrated illegally from neighboring Bangladesh. Opposition leaders said such rhetoric has deepened fears among minority communities, particularly Muslims, that the voter roll revision is being used to exclude them.

Derek O'Brien, of the opposition Trinamool Congress, called the exercise “invisible rigging.”

“The motive is to disenfranchise voters,” he said.

Analysts warn the deletions could fuel fears of longer-term consequences.

“Losing one's place in the electoral roll can be deeply unsettling. It is not only about voting rights; it is about dignity, recognition, and the assurance that one counts as a citizen,” political analyst Iman Kalyan Lahiri said.

For many affected voters, however, the issue is more immediate.

“This is not just about politics,” said Begum. “It is about identity, about whether we belong to this country.” **MDT/AP**

## PHILIPPINES

# Ex-President Duterte to face trial on crimes against humanity charges

**J**UDGES at the International Criminal Court yesterday confirmed crimes against humanity charges against former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte for deadly anti-drugs crackdowns he allegedly oversaw while in office.

A three-judge panel found unanimously there were “substantial grounds” to believe the ex-leader was responsible for dozens of murders, first as mayor of the southern Philippine city of Davao and later when he was president from 2016 to 2022.

Duterte, 80, was arrested in the Philippines last year. He denies the charges against him.

In their 50-page deci-



sion, judges found that the evidence shows that Duterte “developed, disseminated and implemented” a policy “to ‘neutralize’ alleged criminals.”

According to prosecutors, police and hit squad members carried out dozens of murders at Duterte's behest starting in 2011, motivated by the promise

of money or to avoid becoming targets themselves.

“For some, killing reached the level of a perverse form of competition,” deputy prosecutor Mame

Mandiaye Niang told the court in pretrial hearings in February.

Estimates of the death toll during Duterte's presidential term vary, from the more than 6,000 that the national police have reported to up to 30,000 claimed by human rights groups.

Duterte's lead defense lawyer Nick Kaufman told The Associated Press he was disappointed in the decision, saying it “is based on the uncorroborated statements of vicious self-confessed murderers acting as cooperating witnesses.”

A date for the start of the trial has not yet been set.

Duterte has not been present in the courtroom for any hearings, having waived his right to appear. Last month judges found he was fit to stand trial, after postponing an earlier hearing over concerns about his health.

Human rights groups

praised the decision.

“Duterte's trial will send a powerful message that no one responsible for grave crimes is above the law, whether in the Philippines or elsewhere, and that justice will eventually catch up with them,” Maria Elena Vignoli, senior international justice counsel at Human Rights Watch, said.

ICC prosecutors said in 2018 that they would open a preliminary investigation into the violent drug crackdowns. In a move that human rights activists say was aimed at avoiding accountability, Duterte, who was president at the time, announced a month later that the Philippines would leave the court.

On Tuesday, appeals judges rejected a request from Duterte's legal team to throw out the case on the grounds that the court did not have jurisdiction because of the Philippine withdrawal. **MDT/AP**

ANALYSIS

# Nuclear energy is having a global revival 40 years after Chernobyl

VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV

**T**HE 1986 Chernobyl disaster fueled global fears about nuclear power and slowed its development in Europe and elsewhere. Four decades later, however, there's a revival around the world, a trend that has been given a big boost by war in the Middle East.

Over 400 nuclear reactors are operational in 31 countries, while about 70 more are under construction. Nuclear power accounts for producing about 10% of the world's electricity, equivalent to about a quarter of all sources of low-carbon power.

Nuclear reactors have seen steady improvements, adding more safety features and making them cheaper to build and operate.

While Chernobyl and the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan diminished the appetite for such power sources, it was clear years ago that there probably would be a revival, said Fatih Birol, executive director of the International Energy Agency.

With the war in the Middle East, "I am 100% sure nuclear is coming back," he added.

"It's seen as a secure electricity generation system, and we will see that the comeback of nuclear will be very strong, both in (the) Americas, in Europe and in Asia," Birol told The Associated Press.

## NUCLEAR ENERGY RELIANCE STAYS STRONG

The United States is the world's largest producer of nuclear power, with 94 operational reactors accounting for about 30% of global generation of nuclear electricity. And it is increasing efforts to develop nuclear energy capacity with a goal to quadruple it by 2050.

"The world cannot power its industries, meet the demands of artificial intelligence, or secure its energy future without nuclear power," U.S. Undersecretary of State Thomas DiNanno said last month.

China operates 61 nuclear reactors and is leading the world in building new units, with nearly 40 under construction with a goal to surpass the U.S. and become the global leader in nuclear capacity.

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen has acknowledged that it was Europe's "strategic mistake" to cut nuclear energy and outlined new



The Chernobyl nuclear plant is seen in an aerial view, showing the damage from an explosion and fire on April 26, 1986, that sent a radioactive plume over Europe

initiatives to encourage building power plants.

Russia, meanwhile, has taken a strong lead in exporting its nuclear know-how, building 20 reactors worldwide.

Chernobyl's Reactor No. 4 exploded on April 26, 1986, while Ukraine was still part of the Soviet Union. The accident contaminated nearby areas and spewed radiation across Europe.

Ukraine still relies heavily on nuclear plants to generate about half of its electricity. Those plants have played a vital role after Russia sent troops into Ukraine in 2022. Moscow's forces have captured Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, and Kyiv accused Russia of a drone attack on the protective containment structure covering the damaged Chernobyl reactor.

Japan has restarted 15 reactors after reviewing the lessons of the earthquake and tsunami that damaged the Fukushima plant, and 10 more are in the process of getting approval to restart.

South Africa has the only nuclear power plant on the African continent, although Russia is building one in Egypt, and several other African nations are exploring the technology.

"The momentum we are seeing today is the result of a growing recognition that reliable, low-carbon electricity will be essential to meet the world's rising energy demand," said Ra-

fael Grossi, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

## EU EYES NUCLEAR EXPANSION

Europe sought to wean itself off Russian energy after the Ukraine conflict, but its dependence on hydrocarbons was underlined by the war in the Middle East.

The European Commission has shifted its perception of nuclear energy and views it as part of clean energy, along with wind and solar power, to achieve climate goals.

In 1990, nuclear energy accounted for about a third of Europe's electricity; now it's only about 15%, and von der Leyen has acknowledged that its reliance on imported fossil fuels puts it at a disadvantage.

"I believe that it was a strategic mistake for Europe to turn its back on a reliable, affordable source of low-emissions power," she said recently. "In the last years, we see a global revival of nuclear energy. And Europe wants to be part of it."

The EU is considering the development of Small Modular Reactors. Expected to become operational in the early 2030s, they are seen as cheaper and faster to build and more flexible than traditional reactors.

France and a few other EU members, including Sweden and

Finland, have spearheaded nuclear power. On the other hand, Germany, Austria and Italy are among the EU members that outlawed its use.

In a major policy reversal last year, Belgium repealed a law that demanded the closure of its reactors and extended their lifespan. Spain, meanwhile, still plans to phase out its nuclear capacity and shut down its seven operational reactors between 2027 and 2035.

## FRANCE REMAINS A NUCLEAR POWERHOUSE

With 57 reactors at 19 plants, France relies on nuclear power for nearly 70% of its electricity.

Successive governments have backed nuclear power as central to France's energy independence, undeterred by the Chernobyl disaster. In 2022, President Emmanuel Macron announced plans to build six new pressurized water reactors, aiming to cut greenhouse gas emissions and support the transition to low-carbon energy.

The COVID-19 pandemic, combined with the gas supply crunch triggered by the conflict in Ukraine, "revealed the limits of deploying renewable electricity and Europe's dependence on gas," said Nicolas Goldberg, a partner at Paris-based Columbus Consulting.

"France has therefore been reinforced in its strategy of maintaining its existing nuclear plants,

which means extending their lifespan as much as possible," he said.

## GERMANY STANDS FIRM IN PHASING IT OUT

Decades of anti-nuclear protests in Germany, stoked by past accidents, had pressured successive governments to end using a technology that critics saw as unsafe and unsustainable. Germany switched off its last three nuclear reactors in 2023, the final step in plans that had been drawn up by governments of various political stripes over two decades.

A significant nuclear revival in Europe's biggest economy still looks far-fetched, despite recent talk among some in Chancellor Friedrich Merz's center-right bloc about being open to a possible future generation of small modular reactors.

"The decision is irreversible—I regret it, but that's how it is," Merz said, noting the plant operators's "consistent answer was: 'We are too far along with demolition.'"

## RUSSIAN DOMESTIC NUCLEAR EXPANSION

Russia has aggressively expanded its nuclear power capacity both domestically and internationally.

It has 34 operational reactors, including eight Chernobyl-type RBMK reactors, known as the light water graphite reactors, which account for about a quarter of all nuclear power generation. They have seen extensive modernizations, adding safety features to fix the inherent design flaw that, coupled with human error, triggered the Chernobyl disaster.

Key projects under construction include new units at the Kursk, Leningrad and Smolensk sites, a prospective plant in the Far East, and prospective floating nuclear units.

Russia also is building 20 reactors in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East, and has signed contracts to launch construction in several other countries.

Russia has built the first nuclear reactor for neighboring ally Belarus, which has seen a third of its territory contaminated from the Chernobyl accident.

"Belarusian authorities are using the changed context and the so-called 'nuclear renaissance' to claim that we are acting like everyone else in the world, rather than solving the problems of Belarusians in the contaminated territories," said Irina Sukhiy, founder of the Belarus ecological group Green Network. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Britain's Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood (right) meets French police officers with France's Interior Minister Laurent Nunez on the site of a new detention center in Dunkirk, yesterday

UK-FRANCE

# ALLIES SIGN A 3-YEAR DEAL TO CURB SMALL-BOAT CHANNEL CROSSINGS

SYLVIE CORBET, ZUYDCOOTE

**B**ritain and France signed yesterday a new multi-million-euro deal aimed at reducing the number of migrants crossing the English Channel in small boats, with increased police patrols and enhanced surveillance in northern France.

Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood and French Interior Minister Laurent Nunez formally endorsed the three-year agreement during a joint visit to the region.

"This new agreement provides our security forces with the means to continue their decisive efforts to combat dangerous Channel crossings," Nunez said.

Under the deal, the U.K. will provide 500 million pounds (\$675 million) to strengthen measures in northern France, with an additional 160 million pounds (\$216 million) depending on the success of new tactics to curb Channel crossings. If those efforts fail, the additional funding will be halted after one year, Britain's Home Office said.

The agreement provides for boosting the number of officers deployed on the ground from 907 now to 1,392 for the 2026–2029 period, along with the creation of an additional police unit dedicated to combating irregular migration, funded by France, the French

Interior Ministry said.

It will also include the deployment of new technologies aimed at reducing departures of so-called "taxi boats," the term authorities use for small motorized vessels, usually inflatable, used by smugglers to pick up migrants along long stretches of the northern French coast.

Unlike boats that migrants carry into the water themselves, "taxi boats" typically set off largely empty from secluded coastal areas and pick up migrants at prearranged meeting points on beaches.

The deal also expands surveillance capabilities through drones, helicopters and electronic monitoring, to better prevent crossing attempts.

## STARMER FOR TOUGHER MIGRATION CRACKDOWN

"Our work with the French has already stopped tens of thousands of crossings and this government has deported or returned nearly 60,000 people with no right to be here," said British Prime Minister Keir Starmer. "This historic agreement means we can go further: ramping up intelligence, surveillance and boots on the ground to protect Britain's borders."

Since taking office nearly two years ago, Starmer's center-left Labour government has pushed through a series of policies that it hopes will sharply reduce im-

migration, both legal and illegal.

Small boat crossings have become a potent political issue in the U.K. over recent years. Anger at the seeming inability of successive governments to get a handle on the issue has been behind a series of demonstrations and riots over the past few years and fueled the rise of the hard-right Reform U.K., which has been leading in opinion polls for more than a year and is predicted to make sweeping gains in a raft of elections on May 7.

Under the measures adopted, the government now has powers to seize the assets of people-smugglers, beefed up U.K. border surveillance and increased law-enforcement cooperation with France and other countries to disrupt the journey.

It's unclear whether the policies are working.

So far this year, more than 6,000 migrants have reached the U.K. after crossing the Channel, down 36% from the same period last year, a drop that may partly reflect more unsettled weather.

The real evidence will emerge over the coming months as the weather turns warmer and the Channel turns less choppy. In 2025, a total of 41,472 made the crossing that way—the second-highest annual figure since records began in 2018, after a peak of 45,755 in 2022.

Police operations led to the

arrest of 480 smugglers last year, the French Interior Minister said.

A large share of the resources provided under the new deal will be deployed from early summer, traditionally the busiest period for crossing attempts as weather conditions improve.

## CRITICS WARN POLICY FAILS

Earlier this month, two men and two women died as they were trying to board an inflatable boat off the coast of northern France. British authorities arrested a man from Sudan on Friday on suspicion of endangering life in that case.

The week before, two other people died in similar circumstances off the coast north of Calais.

Critics say the new deal, which builds on the Sandhurst Treaty, first signed in 2018 and renewed in 2023, is not addressing the underlying issue.

"Policing alone will not prevent desperate people from turning to dangerous small boats in the first place," said Imran Hussain from the Refugee Council, a U.K. charity that aims to promote the rights of refugees.

Campaign groups for migrant rights have long warned that increasingly vigorous efforts by French police to prevent boat departures from beaches, including using knives to hack and puncture inflatable boats to render them unusable, are encouraging the use of "taxi boats," which increases the risks of drownings, injuries and the need for rescues.

Before this month's deadly incidents, migrant aid group Utopia 56 said at least 162 people have lost their lives at the Franco-British border over the past three years. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1975 BAADER-MEINHOF BLOW UP EMBASSY



A tense stand-off at the West German embassy in Stockholm has ended in violence, with the death of at least three people.

Five Baader-Meinhof guerrillas had been holding 11 people hostage, including the German ambassador to Sweden, for almost 12 hours.

Shortly before midnight, a cache of dynamite detonated, setting the building on fire. Staff in the embassy could be seen at the windows, calling for help.

Journalist Roger Schoter described the scene as one of "turmoil and confusion".

"From what we can see the entire first floor of the embassy is ablaze," he said. "Flames are shooting out of the windows."

The extent of the injuries suffered by those inside the embassy is still not clear, although at least one of the guerrillas is believed to have died.

The group are thought to have shot dead two of the hostages, both attachés at the embassy, during the 11-hour siege.

Military attaché Colonel Andreas von Mirbach died soon after the embassy was seized. The economics attaché, Heinz Hallagaart, was also shot shortly before the blaze which destroyed the four-storey building.

The guerrilla group were demanding the release of the 26 Baader-Meinhof group members currently in prison in Germany.

Among them are four of the founders of the group: Gudrun Ensslin, Andreas Baader, Ulrike Meinhof and Jan-Karl Raspe, due to go on trial in Stuttgart next month.

The German government were anxious to avoid a second humiliation after being forced to release five Baader-Meinhof prisoners in exchange for the kidnapped opposition leader Peter Lorenz two months ago, and refused the demands point-blank. [...]

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Four of the five Baader-Meinhof members were immediately deported back to West Germany. The fifth was too badly injured to be moved, and later died in hospital.

The German ambassador and the remaining nine hostages escaped from the embassy, most with only light injuries.

The trial of the 26 Baader-Meinhof prisoners began in 1976 and lasted almost two years in all, the longest and most expensive trial in West German history.

Three of the four main defendants were sentenced to life imprisonment. The fourth, Ulrike Meinhof, committed suicide in prison during the trial.

The other three hardliners also committed suicide in 1977, bringing to an end the "German Autumn", in which the country was gripped by a series of terrorist attacks.

The Baader-Meinhof gang continued to be active until the early 1990s, when it was finally disbanded.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Keep your eyes open, it's possible that you can get richer today. It might be in a tiny way, but it could be in a bigger way. The bottom line is that unexpected gifts, goodies and favors from others will come your way today.

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20  
This is a favorable day because the Sun, Venus and Uranus are all in Taurus, and your ruler Venus is lined up with unpredictable Uranus. Unexpected events and exciting new experiences might occur!

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21  
Even though you feel keen to talk to others, and you also might feel competitive, you're a bit unsure of your direction. Unusual moneymaking ideas might occur to you.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
This is the classic day to meet someone unusual – perhaps a friend or an acquaintance in a group setting. This person could be a romantic interest, or not. Quite likely, they will introduce something unusual.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
Today you might encounter an unusual authority figure. Quite possibly, this conversation will make you feel restless. But it also might inspire you. An unexpected advantage might be the result.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
Unexpected opportunities to travel might fall in your lap today. If so, act quickly. Someone unusual might enter your world who introduces you to new ideas, new knowledge and a greater sense of freedom.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
You're high-viz today, so people notice you more than usual. Quite possibly, something unexpected will occur that causes this. Certainly, this is the kind of day where you can benefit from the wealth and resources of someone else.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
Don't be surprised if someone close to you makes an unusual suggestion today. They might have news about potential travel plans or something to do with higher education, medicine or the law.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
Your work routine will be interrupted today by something unexpected. New equipment, unexpected assistance, work-related travel or unusual people appearing in your world are just some examples.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
New romance or an unexpected flirtation with someone who is "different" might occur today. Meanwhile, today holds all kinds of fun-loving opportunities. Accept invitations to socialize.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
Stock the fridge, because spontaneous get-togethers and surprise entertaining might occur for you. You also might buy something beautiful, artistic or high-tech for where you live.

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
Keep your wits about you today, because this is a mildly accident-prone day. However, it's an exciting day. You will see new places, meet new faces and have thrilling new ideas.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

  

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

**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	13	26	cloudy
Changchun	8	22	cloudy
Chengdu	15	28	fine
Chongqing	17	28	cloudy
Fuzhou	17	20	overcast
Guangzhou	18	23	rain
Guiyang	11	19	showers
Haikou	23	28	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	12	22	fine
Harbin	3	20	thunderstorms
Hefei	7	21	fine
Nanjing	8	21	cloudy
Shanghai	12	23	cloudy
Taipei	18	20	rain
Wuhan	9	21	overcast
Hong Kong	21	22	rain
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	0	6	cloudy
Frankfurt	3	19	sunny
Paris	8	22	sunny
London	4	18	sunny
New York	9	18	sunny

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- "Chicken of the sea"; 5- Mustachioed artist; 9- Captain of the Pequod; 13- Diciembre follower; 15- Oomph; 16- Country singer McEntire; 17- Had dinner at home; 18- Quartz grains; 19- Robert of "The Sopranos"; 20- Curtain holder; 21- Some Feds; 23- Grommet; 25- Designer Christian; 26- Leopardlike cat; 27- Try; 30- Not pos.; 31- Mother of Perseus; 32- Eyeglasses with tinted lenses; 37- Stuck in \_\_\_; 38- Raise a glass to; 40- Busy as \_\_\_; 41- Maternal; 43- Glowing remnant; 44- Nectar collector; 45- Montgomery's state; 47- Seaport in N Spain; 50- Tennis units; 51- Fondle; 52- Blunted blade; 53- Aliens, briefly; 56- On the ocean; 57- Impulse to act; 59- Color anew; 61- Triumphs; 62- Horse color; 63- Ginger cookies; 64- Dagger; 65- Winds up; 66- Book after Joel;

DOWN 1- Eye drop; 2- Golden Rule word; 3- Have to have; 4- Jackie's second; 5- Barren place; 6- Astronaut Shepard; 7- PC linkup; 8- Unseemly; 9- Disney mermaid; 10- Greeting; 11- Red as \_\_\_; 12- Milhouse's pal; 14- Punctual; 22- Cleaning implement; 24- Safecracker; 25- \_\_\_ of a Salesman; 26- Burden of proof; 27- According to the Bible, he was the first man; 28- Poi ingredient; 29- Hardware fastener; 32- Speak; 33- Gentle ones; 34- "Dancing Queen" group; 35- Appear to be; 36- Antitoxins; 38- Cherish; 39- Toast topper; 42- Declines; 43- Diners; 45- Quaking trees; 46- Golfer Trevino; 47- Washbowl; 48- Goodnight girl of song; 49- Rental agreement; 51- Cornfield cacophony; 52- Holy smokes!; 53- Cheese; 54- Word processing error; 55- Cong. meeting; 58- Wood of the Rolling Stones; 60- Bambi's aunt;

**Yesterday's solution**

H	I	R	E	E	C	H	O	E	L	I	D	E
A	S	A	N	N	E	A	P	A	I	D	A	N
A	L	I	T	T	A	P	E	S	T	A	R	T
G	E	N	E	S	I	S		N	E	I	T	H
R	R	A	R	E	M	E	L	O	D			
C	H	E	E	S	E	S	A	C	R	E		
H	E	E	D	S		S	H	O	E		A	A
A	L	L	Y	C	A	R	N	E	D		G	R
R	M	S		C	L	U	E		E	J	E	C
			G	U	L	A	G		M	A	O	T
S	T	E	R	N	A		L	I	L	I		
P	E	N	A	L	T		O	S	T	R	I	C
I	R	A	T	E		C	R	U		I	D	E
E	R	T	E	S		A	R	E	S		D	O
S	E	E	R	S		H	O	N	E		E	L

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Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply – Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone – Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity – Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731	
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333	
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DRIVE IN

# ODENKIRK'S RELUCTANT LAWMAN BRINGS GRIT – AND CHAOS – TO 'NORMAL'

JAKE COYLE,  
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

**WE'VE** seen this setup before: a stranger drifts into a small, suspicious town and finds trouble waiting. Usually, the menace wears a badge. But in Ben Wheatley's *Normal*, the outsider is the sheriff – and that small twist carries the film further than expected.

Ulysses (Bob Odenkirk) arrives in snowbound Normal, Minnesota, to replace a recently deceased sheriff. Whether traveling substitute sheriffs exist is beside the point. *Normal* operates with a deliberately loose grip on reality, leaning into its oddball premise and emerging as a gory, offbeat thriller ride. It's also Odenkirk's most convincing turn yet as an action lead.

When Ulysses wakes in a modest motel, he feels like a man only marginally better off than Saul Goodman at his lowest. He calls his estranged wife and meets Deputy Mike Nelson (Billy MacLellan), who introduces him to town life. Odenkirk's strength lies in playing worn-down men clinging to scraps of purpose. Ulysses isn't chasing justice – he's barely chasing any-  
**AD**



AP PHOTO  
Brendan Fletcher, Bob Odenkirk and Reena Jolly in a scene from "Normal" (Magnolia Pictures)

thing. "Life's a lot easier when you care a little less," he shrugs, aiming simply to leave Normal as he found it.

Of course, *Normal* isn't normal. The town looks prosperous – suspiciously so. A banner boasts \$16.8 million raised for an unspecified initiative. The police station is unusually well-armed. A hardware store hides a locked room. Even the local yarn shop doubles as an amateur surveillance hub. The late sheriff's large home and murky death deepen the unease.

Meanwhile, his transgender teenage child, Alex (Jess McLeod), exists uneasily on the margins, hinting at a community that tightly controls who belongs.

Ulysses' detached approach clashes with a mayor (Henry Winkler) who prefers a "light touch." That tension ignites when a botched bank robbery spirals into something stranger. What follows is less a standoff than a full unraveling, with deputies, officials and townspeople turning against the sheriff. Midwestern politeness e-

porates fast, replaced by escalating violence.

Written by Derek Kolstad, creator of the John Wick franchise, *Normal* knowingly plays in familiar territory. There are nods to *Fargo* – even the former sheriff's name, Gunderson, tips its hat – but Wheatley doesn't aim for the Coens' dark wit. Instead, he embraces something pulpier, closer to the stylized chaos of John Wick. The early appearance of the Japanese yakuza signals how far the film will stretch its premise.

As the story unfolds, *Normal* morphs into an exaggerated siege film, turning quiet streets into a battleground. Many twists are predictable, and the film occasionally lacks the scale to fully deliver. Still, it hardly matters. Odenkirk, mustached and armed with a shotgun, supplies enough presence to carry the mayhem.

Wheatley, whose recent work has veered between misfires and grindhouse excess, is in more comfortable territory here. He stages action with confidence, even if the story treads familiar ground. Like other small-town thrillers, *Normal* filters broader tensions through a local lens, suggesting authority can tilt toward order or menace depending on who holds it.

It may not reinvent the genre, but *Normal* doesn't need to. It's messy, violent and knowingly absurd – anchored by an unlikely action hero who makes exhaustion look dangerous. [Abridged]

**"Normal," an Magnolia release opening in theaters Friday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for strong bloody violence and language. Running time: 90 minutes. ★★★★★**

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

tTUNES

# Kahan's 'The Great Divide' meets the moment

**G**ATHER around. Singer-songwriter Noah Kahan is leading his audience to therapy — or a walk in the woods.

Kahan's fourth studio album, "The Great Divide," out Friday, picks up where "Stick Season" left off with folksy, introspective hooks and catchy choruses that hit like a windows-down drive on a cool summer night.

Recorded primarily in Nashville and upstate New York and produced by Gabe Simon with Aaron Dessner, the 17-track album finds Kahan reaching for new insights on familiar themes like family trauma, sobriety and home. The album sounds similar to its predecessor, but here, Kahan explores perspectives outside of his own. It's as if he asked himself: What if "Stick Season" had a different point of view?

The result is "The Great Divide" — not a radical departure from the 2022 record that won him a best new artist Grammy nomination, but an enjoyable listen nonetheless. Anyone hoping for a new style should look elsewhere. Though there are some new features, notably piano and some rock-pop detours that stand out in "American Cars," a sound best described as Taylor Swift's "Love Story" meets Don Henley's "The Boys of Summer."

"Doors," the second track, is all the best parts of Kahan: Blistering guitars, searching lyrics, heavy subject matter. "Have you ever stared directly at the sun? / Have you ever shared some closeness, so exposed, to have it spit back by someone?"

"The Great Divide," the title track and lead single, has an aching humanity in its lyrics and a searing juxtaposition inviting the listener to view haunting spirits, killers and illness as, well, not the worst things. "I hope you're scared of only ordinary s—" / Like murderers and ghosts and cancer on your skin / And not your soul, and what he might do with it."

But it's the pre-chorus that resonates deeply. Rhythmic guitar chord changes come into the foreground, adding a layer to the quicker strumming that carries throughout the song. The effect is like a building wave.

"You know I think about you all the time," he sings, "And my deep misunderstanding of your life."

It's impossible to recreate "Stick Season," but the album doesn't endeavor to rehash the past. It carries on, a kindred spirit to its predecessor, and why not? Seasons change, but they come back again.

MIKE CATALINI, MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



"The Great Divide" by Noah Kahan (Mercury Records)



TASTE OF EDESIA

# Grand Bombana Feast

IRENE SAM, MDT

**L**AST week, to celebrate Italian cuisine as UNESCO heritage - in a rare convergence of culinary mastery, Chef Umberto Bombana gathers his protégés—now helming Michelin-starred kitchens across Macau, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Bangkok—for an unprecedented gastronomic summit. Revered as the King of White Truffles and the maestro behind the first three-Michelin-starred Italian restaurant

outside Italy, **Bombana** has long championed the country's storied tradition and native produce, now recognized by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Each chef presents a personal expression of Italian cuisine—rooted in heritage, shaped by mentorship, and refined by global perspective. Each course is a dialogue between timeless Italian tradition and creative sparks, where classical techniques meet contemporary sensibilities, and terroir converses with innovation.

Together, they compose a multi-city, multi-star narrative—Italy's culinary legacy speaking in a modern, global language. It is indeed a once-in-a-lifetime feast, a living legacy unfolding course by course. During the night, MDT's favourite dish is Nicoló Rotella's New Zealand Scampi. The Shanghai-based chef served a delicately steamed New Zealand scampi wrapped in crunchy sand chives. The flavours are enriched with a unique Thai basil-infused scampi bisque, adding an aromatic and modern touch.

# Rebirth of The Classic Candle

**R**ECENTLY, Diptyque unveils a refined evolution of the Classic Candle, an icon first imagined in 1963 as an extension of the founders' shared interest in the decorative arts. Ever since, the scented candle has been far more than a mere object, an illuminator of light and scent that creates a poetic interlude where time is suspended. Over the decades, the transparent glass vessel, white wax and black and white oval label with dancing letters have become signature codes of the Maison, embodying the liberated yet precise vision of founders Desmond Knox-Leet, Christiane Montadre-Gautrot, and Yves Coueslant. In 2026,



this vibrant object, with its lively dialogue between flame and fragrance, enters a refined evolution - a reimagining of the candle's timeless character that carries forward a fragrance experience that is renewable and poetic.

The classic vessel has been subtly reinvented by Franco-Swiss designer Julie Richoz, who adjusted the contours to maintain the integrity of the object while bringing a new level of emphasis and prestige. The emblematic label highlights

this timeless character, extending an identity that evolves without ever turning its back on its past. This exceptionally delicate reworking retains the signature oval outline and monochrome print, though a new oval-shaped ridge of glass now delineates the perimeter creating an interplay of graphic resonances where light dances within the sublimated glass. While the distinctive typeface remains intact, the "dancing letters"—originally inspired by cryptography and the free spirit of Desmond Knox-Leet—now feature a more assertive presence and an understated element of sharpness. IS

OPINION

China Daily

Li Yang, China Daily



IS THE CHICKEN BEING RAISED FOR ITS OWN SAKE, OR SOMEONE ELSE'S TABLE?

There is something almost tender about the way Washington worries about China's Taiwan island — like an ardent salesman who tries hard to peddle his goods but forgets to ask what the customer actually needs. Testifying before Congress, Samuel Paparo, head of the US "Indo-Pacific" Command, offered a homespun warning: the United States "can't want Taiwan's defense more than they want it itself". It was meant as "tough love". It landed more like a bill.

Because in Washington's ledger, the island increasingly looks less like a partner and more like a procurement problem. Another \$14 billion in arms sales is another nudge, another reminder that deterrence, like charity, begins with writing checks — preferably large ones, preferably to US defense contractors.

In Taipei, the secessionist-minded leader of the Democratic Progressive Party authorities Lai Ching-te, finds himself caught between a legislature that balks at "blank checks" and an "ally" that seems to specialize in them.

The opposition Chinese Kuomintang party insists on fiscal prudence; the ruling camp hypes up so-called "security urgency". Hovering above it all is the quiet, unmistakable demand from Washington: spend more. It is a curious form of support — one that must be constantly demonstrated through one-sided purchases.

Then came Lai's aborted African trip. Overflight permissions from Seychelles, Mauritius, and Madagascar evaporated, leaving Lai grounded before he could reach Eswatini, Taiwan's last "diplomatic" foothold on the continent.

As the spokeswoman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, Zhang Han, said on Wednesday, the several African countries' refusal to grant flight permits to Lai for a planned visit to Eswatini reflects broad international support for the one-China principle.

This has once again shown that the one-China principle is a basic norm governing international relations and a prevailing consensus of the international community, Zhang added.

These should bring the Lai authorities to the fundamental question: Who exactly is treating Taiwan as what?

In Washington, the language is all about "interests", with subtext humming with urgency about budgets and spending. It is hard to escape the impression that Taiwan, in this framing, is a place where "resolve" is purchased American-made.

Among some US allies, Taiwan is invoked in communiqués, referenced in security dialogues, and quietly factored into negotiations with Beijing. It is treated by the US allies as a bargaining chip — and its value fluctuates with the temperature of larger relationships.

Beijing, for its part, offers a different script of support. Early this month, it has rolled out a suite of policies and measures aimed at promoting cooperation between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait: economic incentives, commercial measures and cultural exchanges packaged as benefits extended to compatriots of the big family of the Chinese nation.

The truth, as ever, lies in the tension between these competing visions.

As Washington's pressure mounts for Taiwan to purchase more US weapons, the Lai authorities owe the Taiwan compatriots clear answers: Who is asking Taiwan to spend — and to what end? Who ultimately pockets the benefits, and on what terms? These are not abstract questions; they define the contours of Taiwan's future.

In the end, Paparo's metaphor might need revising. The issue is not whether the chicken is being fed. It is who is feeding it — and whether the bird is being raised for its own sake, or for someone else's table.

2021 COLLISION OF SOUTH KOREAN WARPLANES CAUSED BY PILOTS TAKING VIDEO, REPORT SAYS

THE BUZZ

A 2021 midair collision of two South Korean fighter jets happened because a pilot made an abrupt maneuver to get a better angle for videos of the flight, a government report said.

The Board of Audit and Inspection said in a report this week that the pilot, now a civilian, must pay about 88 million won (around \$60,000) to compensate for the damage inflicted on the fighter jets.

The report said that the pilot, then a major, first filmed himself with a camera to mark his final flight with his unit

when he was returning to his base after a training mission in December 2021. He then suddenly banked his jet after one of two fellow pilots on the other jet was trying to film him with a mobile phone, according to the report.

His maneuver was made without consultation with the pilots in the other jet, resulting in the collision, the report added.

Both fighter jets safely returned to their base, but the report said that the collision caused about 878 million won (nearly \$600,000) in repair costs.

AP PHOTO



NEW LEAK

THE GATES FOUNDATION IS REVIEWING ITS EPSTEIN TIES

JAMES POLLARD, NEW YORK

THE Gates Foundation is reviewing its ties to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, the organization confirmed yesterday [Macau time], as chairman Bill Gates faces mounting scrutiny over his appearances in Justice Department documents related to its investigation of the disgraced financier.

Gates, who founded Microsoft, reportedly spoke "candidly" about his relationship to Epstein in a February town hall meeting of the influential foundation he started with his ex-wife Melinda French Gates. But the external probe marks the nonprofit's plainest attempt yet to address associations that have cast a pall over its efforts to end preventable maternal and child deaths and control infectious diseases.

The Gates Foundation said in a statement that CEO Mark Suzman, with support from Gates, commissioned an external review in March to assess past foundation engagement with Epstein and look at current policies for vetting and developing new partnerships. The Wall Street Journal first reported news of the staff memo detailing the review.

The philanthropic giant has already undergone a

period of change. The Gates Foundation shared plans in January to cap operating costs and incrementally cut as many as 500 positions, or about 20% of its staff, by 2030. The move follows last year's announcement that the foundation would close in 2045, earlier than previously expected.

The Justice Department's files include email correspondence between Gates and Epstein about philanthropic projects, calendar entries documenting dates they held meetings, and photos of Gates at events also attended by Epstein. Gates has not been accused of any wrongdoing regarding their connection, denies knowledge of Epstein's crimes and claims they met only to discuss philanthropy.

The foundation acknowledged in a February statement that "a small number" of employees met with Epstein based on his "claims that he could mobilize significant philanthropic resources for global health and development." They never created a fund together and the foundation made no payments to Epstein, according to the previous release.

"The foundation regrets having any employees interact with Epstein in any way," the statement read.

The files' disclosures are being closely followed by

one of the Gates Foundation's earliest and most ardent supporters. Investor Warren Buffett, who donates a portion of his annual Berkshire Hathaway shares to the nonprofit, told CNBC's "Squawk Box" last month that it's clear "there was a lot I didn't know."

Buffett, who resigned as the foundation's trustee in 2021, has completed his donation every year around the end of June. But he said he will "wait and see what unfolds" in the Justice Department's documents and congressional hearings on their contents. He noted the foundation is "sitting" on a large endowment, which totals \$86 billion, and said Gates has "plenty of his own money."

"So, in any event, I'll just wait and see. And there's three and a half million, or whatever it is pages — I mean, it is astounding," Buffett said of the Epstein files.

A Gates Foundation spokesperson described Buffett as "an extraordinarily generous partner" for nearly two decades in a statement Wednesday to the Associated Press.

"We are deeply grateful for his support, which has enabled us to accelerate progress on some of the world's toughest challenges that would not otherwise have been possible," the spokesperson said. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Italy The European Commission is cutting €2 million in funding for the Venice Biennale after Russia's return to the art exhibition, officials said yesterday. The move highlights tensions over cultural participation since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, with organizers defending inclusion as artistic openness rather than endorsement.

AP PHOTO



Belgium The European Union approved a €90 billion loan for Ukraine yesterday after Hungary lifted its veto, following resumed oil flows through the Druzhba pipeline. The package, alongside new sanctions on Russia, aims to stabilize Ukraine's economy and sustain its defense amid the ongoing war.

AP PHOTO



Hollywood Warner Bros. Discovery shareholders vote yesterday on an \$81 billion sale to Paramount that could reshape Hollywood. The merger would combine major studios, streaming platforms and news outlets, prompting industry backlash over consolidation risks, potential layoffs and concerns about cultural and editorial concentration.

AP PHOTO



Brazil Archaeological discoveries along a highway in Brazil's Amazon are revealing complex Indigenous societies that shaped the region long before European colonization. Findings include ancient pottery, burial sites and road networks, challenging the notion of the rainforest as sparsely inhabited and highlighting long-standing human influence.