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# Times

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AP PHOTO



**Philippine** President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. was to deliver a state-of-the-nation speech yesterday after his first year in office, which saw him allow an expanded U.S. military presence and refuse to rejoin the International Criminal Court in a move aligned with his predecessor, whose bloody anti-drugs crackdown was under an ICC investigation. More than 20,000 police, backed by other security forces and army troops, were deployed to keep order amid protests and secure the House of Representatives, where Marcos will deliver his speech before a joint session of Congress.

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AP PHOTO



**Indonesia** An overloaded passenger boat capsized off Indonesia's Sulawesi island, killing 15 people, rescuers said yesterday. Authorities said that the 33 other passengers survived. The vessel was traveling from Lanto village in Buton Central regency in Southeast Sulawesi province to nearby Lagili village when it capsized. The wooden boat was designed to carry 20 people.

AP PHOTO



**Cambodia's** longtime ruling party yesterday lauded its landslide victory in weekend elections as a clear mandate for the next five years, but the United States said its stifling of the opposition meant the vote could not be considered free or fair and that Washington was taking punitive measures. Autocratic leader Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party won 120 of 125 available seats in Sunday's elections, according to preliminary results. More on p7

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# STATUE DOWN

Under heavy public criticism, gov't decides to scrap Kun lam statue from the Hac-Sa Reservoir project

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**ARTS & CULTURE**

**BARBIE CONQUERS SOUTH AMERICA**

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### FSS REMINDS ON PAYMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY INSTALMENT

The Social Security Fund has reminded local employers and workers to settle payable instalments for the second quarter. The fund also recommends payers utilize e-payment channels for improved convenience. Failure to pay an instalment on time will subject the payers to interests and fines. Failure to make payments related to hiring non-resident workers may result in an employer's loss of the quota for employment. The fund recommends payers use the government's Macao One Account app, banking counters or e-channels, ATMs or certain government self-service kiosks.

### IC: RUA DOS PESCADORES TEMPLE'S RESTORATION TO START SOON

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) disclosed to local media All About Macau that the restoration of the roof of the Tin Hau temple on Rua dos Pescadores will commence "in foreseeable months." The roof of the temple has been damaged by the fallen canopy of a banyan tree that is over 200 years old. The tree became diseased and the canopy could not stand its own weight. As the tree and the temple is privately owned, the IC noted that it would "exercise support" to the restoration project.

### IPIM TEACHES LUSOPHONE PRODUCTS TRADERS TO USE "THE LITTLE RED BOOK"

The Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) has organized two workshop sessions to teach traders of lusophone products to market in mainland China using Xiaohongshu – literally translated as The Little Red Book. The "book" is a mainland social e-commerce platform with over 200 million active users. The over 1,000 people were taught how to use topic selection and soft writing skills to increase views (CTR) and conversion rate (CVR) to achieve a successful brand marketing, to help enterprises promote and sell the PSCs products in the mainland market in more effectively.



### RESERVOIR

# NEARLY 9,000 SIGNATURES AGAINST PROJECT HAC-SA SUBMITTED TO GOV'T

ANTHONY LAM

**A**n online petition that has collected nearly 9,000 signatures in little more than three days was submitted to the government yesterday morning in the hopes of calling off the project at Hac-Sa Reservoir.

The Association of Synergy of Macao initiated the petition, questioning the government's proposal on the Hac-Sa Beach and Reservoir overhaul project – colloquially referred to as Project Hac-Sa. The signatures and a petition letter, were submitted to the Chief Executive yesterday morning.

The association listed three demands in the petition letter: suspension of the inauguration of a proposed Kun Iam statue at the reservoir, retention of the scrapped barbecue stoves and grass skiing range, as well as an explanation about why the budget soared from MOP230 million to MOP1.6 billion.

With so many signatures, the petition acted as an example of the people monitoring the govern-

ment, lawmaker Ron Lam, part of the management of the association, said.

In response to questions from the press, he added that accounts and corruption watchdogs should "proactively" intervene to investigate if any malpractices exist.

Johnson Ian, president of the association, said the core of the demands is to ask the government for the detailed budget, so that there is information for public discussions and evaluations.

Lam highlighted that this petition is a vivid example that "whatever people in Macau have gone through, they still have the right to speak up for social issues."

The main argument of the public has revolved around the need for another Kun Iam mega statue in Macau. In March 1999, the then Portuguese-Macao government inaugurated the Kun Iam Ecumenical Centre, which comprises a 20-meter-tall and 50-ton Kun Iam statue and a multipurpose hall at the foundation that resembles a lotus flower on the outside.

"It is understandable that the

government strives hard to install new facilities in the hopes of attracting tourists, but inaugurating a Kun Iam statue at Hac-Sa Reservoir has no clear use," Agnes Lam, former lawmaker and director at the Centre for Macau Studies, University of Macau, told local media Exmoo.

The academic added that the post-commencement mode of leakage of project details was not ideal. "There were procedural flaws," she said, emphasizing that the public has the right to know.

For three projects in a row within two weeks, the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has commenced projects of high public relevance without prior announcement to the public.

On the other hand, urban planner Manuel Iok Pui Ferreira criticized the government for skipping legal steps in the now-withdrawn inauguration of the Kun Iam statue, according to local media Shimin Daily. The urban planner highlighted that the project concerns a hillside, natural environment and an original

ecology, but the government had not applied for a Planning Condition Draft or allowed discussions at the Urban Planning Committee. This is a violation of the principal of the Urban Planning Law.

Ferreira emphasized that previous municipal constructions, such as the panda pavilion at Seac Pai Van Park, as well as other government projects, such as meteorological projects on Taipa Grande, had Planning Condition Drafts issued before commencement.

He further noted that the fact that a mega project concerning "the backyard of Macau" had not had Planning Condition Drafts issued for discussions is unacceptable. The urban planner added that even in mainland China, project proposals are publicized for the public to discuss and make choices. He emphasized whatever is proposed for Hac-Sa, the people should have the right to know. He was also dissatisfied with the lack of public consultation before identifying the use of the land retrieved at Hac-Sa as a youth campsite.

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## REACHING OUT!

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# Gov't scraps Kun lam statue at Hac-Sa Reservoir Park, bids to undo the damages

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE government has decided to suspend the project of building a Kun lam statue at the Hac-Sa Reservoir Park in the face of public opinion against the project, the Secretary for Administration and Justice, André Cheong, said yesterday at a press conference to address the recently presented projects.

Cheong said that while the intention was good, in the light of public criticism of the project the government had decided to suspend the construction of the controversial statue and adjacent structures, vowing to redo the areas damaged by the construction that was already started on the site.

The press conference was held yesterday afternoon at the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM), just a few hours after the Association of Synergy of Macau handed in a petition with nearly 9,000 signatures from residents opposed to the project (see page 2).

Several other sectors of society have also in the last few days expressed opinions against the development of the area and the placement of the statue.

"Some residents have opinions on the statue. We have been communicating with several organizations and heard



Secretary for Administration and Justice Andre Cheong

these opinions. There are many different opinions. We had the intention of building a larger space to provide better conditions [for] the residents," Cheong said while advancing that the construction has been

suspended.

Cheong also took the opportunity to do a mea culpa in what concerns the communication between the entities responsible for the project, namely the IAM and the public, stating, "We

have and we will reinforce work related to the communication."

To the many questions from the media, Cheong explained, that the reason that led to the decision to build the statue was as a part of the revamp of this

public space, noting, "We choose Kun lam for a symbol of fortune and tranquility. We hoped to bring calm and hope to some residents, namely the elderly," the Secretary remarked, adding that the decision to suspend the project immediately aims to prove that the government is not against peoples' opinions.

"We heard all the opinions because this is related to the life of the people and we need to hear them. If they don't agree we need to accept that and that's why we decided to suspend [the project]. We don't want something that was being done for the benefit of the population to become a negative thing," Cheong further explained, noting that for the time being they will redo the "Plant Labyrinth" area at the top of the park and also fix the grass slide zone. Later on, the IAM will come up with a new plan on how to improve the area following the public opinions collected, the Secretary said, advancing that the expansion of the barbecue area is potentially one of the targets.

The government is now studying the best way to terminate the contract with the company that was supposed to revamp the park, a matter that according to Cheong, should not be a big problem as "all the contracts have provisions for these cases."

## CRIME

# Septuagenarian woman loses MOP200K to impersonator

ANTHONY LAM

**A** local woman has lost MOP200,000 to a man whom she thought she knew, who requested loans from her, the Judiciary Police (PJ) announced yesterday.

According to the police, on July 21, the female victim, 70, reported that she got a call from a man on the evening of July 19. Upon answering the call, she thought the man was an interior refurbishment worker whom she knew. The man requested to continue communicating with her over WeChat, which she accepted.

The next day, the man asked the woman on WeChat for a loan of

MOP100,000. The woman said she did not have enough money and could only lend him MOP20,000. She then transferred the money to a designated bank account.

Later, the man asked for another MOP130,000 as loan, and the woman lent him MOP100,000. On July 21, the man asked for MOP130,000 and she lent him MOP80,000. Later that day, the man asked for MOP200,000, and the woman started to feel strange and called the real worker whom she knew. The worker told her that he had never added her on WeChat. Thinking that she might have been scammed, she approached the police.

In another case, two lo-

cal university students in their twenties came across a post on Chinese social media platform Xiaohongshu (The Little Red Book) that claimed to be selling tickets to the show of G Idol.

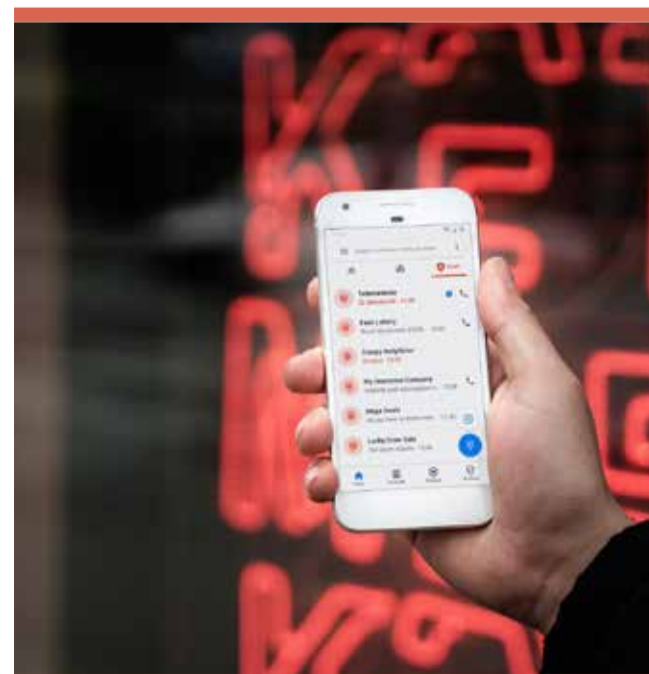
The two girls decided to buy two tickets for RMB3,500 and made the transfer on Alipay. However, the alleged seller said that they had typed the wrong information in the remark section, and asked them to make the transfer again. The alleged seller promised that they would be refunded after the second transfer.

The two girls believed this and so made another transfer. Again, the alleged seller said there was another problem with the remarks and requested ano-

ther transfer. The two girls then suspected they had been scammed, so they contacted the PJ.

The Public Security Police Force (PSP) managed to apprehend a Korean man, 34, who allegedly stole a handbag from a woman in a shopping mall in the NAPE district on July 20. According to the police, the woman was working on setting up a store at the mall and placed her bag somewhere on the ground. When she finished working, she realized that the bag had disappeared. The woman said that there were HKD3,000 and MOP500 cash in the bag, as well as a pair of headphones.

After viewing surveillance camera footage, the po-



lice found a suspect and apprehended the man in the same afternoon at a

shopping mall in Taipa, and seized HKD400 and MOP160 cash.

# MOP1.4B "ADVENTURE PARK" NOT THE SAME ITEM PREVIOUSLY BUDGETED AT MOP229M

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE previously presented budget of MOP1.4 billion for the new Hac Sa "Adventure Park" is not a mere increase on the 2020 revamp project budgeted at MOP229 million, the Secretary for Administration and Justice, André Cheong, said yesterday in a press conference organized to explain the project in more detail.

Cheong said that contrary to what has been aired in some comments from several members of the public, these are different projects with very different budgets. He explained that back in 2020 the budget approved and listed on the Macau government's Investment and Development Expenditure Plan (PIDDA) in 2021 was just for a "beautification" of an area of around seven hectares of a land area that was abandoned and in bad shape.

At the time there were several works done to improve the condition of the land and open it for public use with some new facilities and spaces that can be seen currently at Hac Sa.

Cheong said that the "Adventure Park" comes precisely from the gathering of public opinions on the space and on how to improve it and make better use of it, which, in time, created the idea of the "Adventure Park" that spans over an area of 10 ha and will have numerous facilities and venues for the public, he explained.

The new project is completely different from the previous one, but it will take advantage of the earthwork and other basic preparations made for the first one.

According to the long explanation made, the new area will be divided into 12 sections and will comprise over 200 different components that include not only the adventure areas but also grass areas, concert and events zone and camping sites.

Additionally, the area will also

include a new parking lot with an estimated capacity of over 200 cars and also over 100 motorcycles.

"It's an Adventure camp for everyone. It's dedicated to the mental and physical health of the population which are part of this government's policies. We have built public areas before but they were mostly directed to children only. With this 10-ha space in Hac Sa we hope finally to have a place for everyone, including schools," Cheong said, noting that this space is expected to be open 24H per day "to be like a garden of the city."

## MOP1.4B IS JUST A ROUGH ESTIMATE THAT WILL WORK AS THE MAX. CEILING

Answering the many questions from the media, Cheong also explained that the MOP1.4B that has been aired by the design company is "just a rough estimation," with the final price of the project to be known only at the time of the adjudication after the public tender.

Still, Cheong said that the figure will work as a maximum ceiling for the government in an attempt to save the public purse but, "without jeopardizing the quality and the safety of the project," he noted.

Considered overpriced by some, the IAM representatives also explained that the factor of proximity to the sea and the corrosive effects of it are also being taken into account with the government aiming to ensure durability.

The Park will be managed by a private entity that will be under the supervision of the IAM, a fact that is justified by the degree of specialization needed to run such a space.

Unclear also is the fact that users might have to pay a fee for some of the attractions with Cheong noting that the goal of the government is "to make it afford-



able for everyone," by opposition to some entertainment parks located at the integrated resorts that charge very high prices for entry fees, he said.

When questioned on the environmental impact of the project the Secretary said that to move "from a vacant lot full of rubbish and weeds for what we have today

is already a significant improvement of the quality of the environment in the area."

Also questioned on the timeline for the project, the vice president of IAM, Lo Chi Kin, said that it is estimated that the final plans will be concluded by the end of this year, with the construction and opening to the public of some

"simple areas" to happen by the end of 2024. As for the completion of the park, this will be only in 2025.

On the topic, Cheong said that a "slight delay" might occur due to the current "hearing of public opinion" on the project but he said he believed this process to be necessary.

## GAMING

# Cheng family takes over Hoiana Resort in Vietnam from Alvin Chau

**H**ONG Kong's billionaire Cheng family has taken control of Hoiana Resort & Golf in Vietnam's central Quang Nam province from Macau gambling kingpin Alvin Chau, who was sentenced to 18

years in prison in early 2023, Bloomberg reported.

LET Group Holdings, which used to be part of Chau's business empire Suncity Group, has withdrawn from the management of the Hoiana

casino resort, located in southern Hoi An city near the beach city of Danang, Vietnam news has reported.

The Cheng family's flagship investment firm Chow Tai Fook Enterprises now oversees

the resort's operations, people familiar with the matter said.

The Hoiana resort, a joint venture between Chow Tai Fook, LET Group, and investment management firm VinaCapital, features a casino

with 140 gaming tables and over 350 gambling machines, a golf course, and luxury hotels under the Cheng family's New World and Rosewood brands. More facilities are under construction to complete the resort, with a total expected investment of around \$4 billion.

In its 2022 financial report, LET Group announced that Hoiana posted \$36.7 million in revenue and incurred adjusted

earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) loss of \$38.69 million.

Vietnam is one of the top destinations thanks to more relaxed rules and the prospect of sharing VIP revenue with casinos, Bloomberg commented. Casinos in the country rely heavily on big gamblers from overseas, because local residents are banned from entering most gambling facilities. **MDT**

TECH

# Salesforce CEO shares his predictions for AI and the future of work

**S**ALESFORCE founder and CEO Marc Benioff has become something of a vanishing breed during the nearly quarter century he has been running the company that pioneered the concept of selling software as an online subscription. While Benioff remains in charge at Salesforce, other billionaire founder/CEOs such as Amazon's Jeff Bezos, Google's Larry Page and Netflix's Reed Hastings have all stepped away from groundbreaking companies born during the 1990s.

AP PHOTO



Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff

Benioff, 58, isn't ready to leave Salesforce yet, even though he has amassed an \$8 billion fortune and just went through a challenging stretch that might have caused many CEOs to head for the exit. In January, Benioff decided to lay off 8,000 Salesforce employees after overseeing a pandemic-driven expansion that included a nearly \$28 billion acquisition

of the popular workplace tool Slack and then grappled with an investor backlash triggered

by a nearly 50% drop in the company's stock price last year. The shares have recovered most of their losses so far this year on the strength of a revived revenue growth.

The Associated Press recently sat down with Benioff for an interview that has been lightly edited for clarity.

**- How does the landscape look to you as the pandemic fades into the rearview mirror?**

**Mark Benioff (MB)** - When I look back at 2019, we had really gone through three huge waves of technology: cloud computing, mobile and social. And now we are going into the fourth wave, which is probably the most important one in AI (artificial intelligence), which is not just the most important technology of our lifetime, but probably the most important in any lifetime. It's going to be a new world of technology that's

as exciting as all the other worlds put together.

**- Is this on the scale of the development of nuclear bombs back in World War II?**

**MB** - Technologies are never good or bad, it's what we do with them that matters. Nobody wants a Hiroshima moment to understand how dangerous AI is. We want to be able to kind of get our heads around the tremendous consequences of the technology that we are working with. And that's going to require a multi-stakeholder approach — companies, governments, non-governmental organizations and others to put together the guidelines for this technology.

**- Have you been surprised or alarmed by how quickly things seem to be advancing since the release of the ChatGPT bot late last year?**

**MB** - We are moving from the generative ChatGPT phase,

which is phase one, into a stage where we are about to see agents that are quite alive and aware and able to take these kinds of massive actions. These are called multimodal agents, that is they can move from text to speech to video. And then we are going to move into something that is maybe more multisensory, where these agents are going to be more aware of us and we are going to be more aware of them.

**- Salesforce is one of many tech companies that now allow employees to work remotely at least a few days a week. How has the pandemic changed the nature of work?**

**MB** - We are all using technology to find more freedom in our lives. Things are back to normal, but people do go to the office less. And that is not going to change. We are never going back to they way it was. **MDT/AP**

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"DEIGNAN AWARD"  
FOR RESPONSIBLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
IN MACAU (2023)



# TECH

## China urges Japan not to disrupt chip industry after curbs take effect

**C**HINA'S government appealed to Japan yesterday not to disrupt the semiconductor industry after curbs on exports of Japanese chip-making technology took effect, adding to technology restrictions Washington and its allies have imposed on China on security grounds.

The Japanese restrictions that took effect Sunday limit Chinese access to tools for etching microscopically small circuits on advanced chips for smartphones, artificial intelligence and other applications. The Netherlands also joined the United States in limiting access to chipmaking tools that Washington says could be used to develop weapons.

"We are deeply dissatisfied and regret the act," said a foreign ministry spokesperson, Mao Ning. She urged Japan to "prevent relevant measures from interfering with the normal semiconductor industry cooperation between the two coun-

tries."

The ruling Communist Party has invested billions of dollars in building Chinese chip foundries but needs Western and Japanese technology to produce the most advanced chips. That threatens to delay Beijing's efforts to develop tech industries.

The United States imposed curbs on Chinese access to chips and chipmaking technology under then-President Donald Trump in 2019. The Biden administration broadened those controls to block access to chip design and manufacturing tools.

Chinese government has been slow to respond, possibly to avoid disrupting its fledgling tech industries. Last month, Beijing rattled Japanese and Korea chip manufacturers by announcing an export review process and possible restrictions for gallium and germanium, two metals used in making semiconductors. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



# E-COMMERCE

## Alibaba says it will not sell shares in Ant's buyback program

**C**HINESE e-commerce giant Alibaba says it does not plan to sell any shares in its one-third shareholding in financial technology company Ant Group because it wants to retain its stake in an "important strategic partner."

Alibaba Group Holdings said in a filing last weekend that it will not participate in Ant's share buyback program. It allows shareholders to sell back up to 7.6% of their holdings at an unspecified price that values the company at 567.1 billion yuan (\$78.8 billion).

Ant, which operates one of China's leading mobile payments services Alipay, has seen its valuation fall nearly 70% from about \$280 billion (\$38.9 billion) at the time it was planning an IPO in 2020. That was derailed by regulators who conducted an investigation into the firm and then fined it nearly \$100 billion for violating laws and regulations in the payments sector.

Given the plunge in Ant's

AP PHOTO



valuation, investors who sell their shares to Ant will likely get far less than they would have gotten in 2020.

"Given that Ant Group continues to be an important strategic partner to Alibaba Group's various businesses, Alibaba Group has decided that it will not sell any shares to Ant Group under the proposed share repurchase, so as to maintain its shareholding in Ant Group," Alibaba

said in the filing.

Alibaba had said earlier that it might sell shares during the program. Singapore state-owned investment firm Temasek Holdings also said it was considering selling some of its shares.

Founded by Alibaba co-founder Jack Ma, Ant Group's Alipay is the primary payment method on Alibaba's Taobao and Tmall e-commerce platforms. It

serves over a billion users.

Alibaba earlier this year split its businesses into six business groups to try to increase shareholder value. It plans to spin off those businesses into companies that could eventually go public and raise funding.

In May, Alibaba said that its cloud unit, headed by Alibaba's former CEO Daniel Zhang, is expected to list within a year. **MDT/AP**

# QIQIHAR

## 11 KILLED AS ROOF COLLAPSES AT MIDDLE SCHOOL GYM, OFFICIALS SAY

**E**LEVEN people were killed when a roof collapsed at a middle school gymnasium in China's far northeast, authorities said yesterday.

The incident occurred Sunday in the city of Qiqihar and the last victim was pulled from the wreckage yesterday morning. The official Xinhua News Agency said construction work at the school was the likely cause, after workers stored materials on the gym's roof that absorbed rain water.

Nineteen people had been in the gymnasium of the No. 34 Middle School, Xinhua said, but gave no details on how many were students. Social media and the Baidu news website

carried footage of angry parents complaining about what they said was a lack of communication from authorities.

Construction and industrial accidents "are regular occurrences in China, largely resulting from companies ignoring safety standards and corruption or a lack of diligence on the part of local government agencies," observers say.

Those problems are especially acute in second- and third-tier cities such as Qiqihar, which lies in the Chinese rustbelt province of Heilongjiang bordering Russia that has seen large-scale economic decline and outward migration in recent years. **MDT/AP**

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



Protesters burn a two-faced gold coin effigy of President Ferdinand Marcos during a rally in Quezon City, yesterday

PHILIPPINES

# President to deliver state-of-the-nation speech amid protests

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

**P**HILIPPINE President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. was to deliver a state-of-the-nation speech yesterday after his first year in office, which saw him allow an expanded U.S. military presence and refuse to rejoin the International Criminal Court in a move aligned with his predecessor, whose bloody anti-drugs crackdown was under an ICC investigation.

More than 20,000 police, backed by other security forces and army troops, were deployed to keep order amid protests and secure the House of Representatives, where Marcos will deliver his speech before a joint session of Congress.

Marcos, 65, rose to power in June last year in a landslide victory that was among the most dramatic political comebacks in recent history. His father was ousted as a dictator accused of widespread human rights violations and plunder in a 1986 pro-democracy uprising that became a harbinger of change at the time in authoritarian regimes worldwide. The president has refused to apologize and has steadfastly defended his father's legacy.

Marcos told reporters last week that his speech would be "a performance report for Filipinos to see

if the flurry of pronouncements, the many words, had an impact or were just mere words."

"That's what I want to explain to people — that we have made significant progress. We can see the difference now not only in terms of how the systems work, how the government works. It is also in how we are now seen or judged in the international community," Marcos said.

He was expected to press his campaign call for national unity, although deep divisions remain.

About 6,000 left-wing, labor and human rights groups staged protests ahead of his speech in Congress with diverse demands, including for wage increases, to address attacks against political activists and journalists, and to recall a government program to phase out traditional but aging passenger jeepneys. A group of drivers began a three-day strike yesterday to protest the jeepney phase-out, but no major transport paralysis was reported by midday, police said.

Marcos approved the suspension of school classes and government work in metropolitan Manila due to the planned transport strike and an approaching typhoon.

Despite a police restriction on the burning of effigies, left-wing activists bur-

ned a mock giant coin that depicted a smiling Marcos flashing the peace sign with his fingers on one side and as a thief holding a gun and bag of cash in the other.

Pro-Marcos groups separately held a musical concert and displayed congratulatory streamers.

Since assuming the presidency, Marcos has embarked on more than a dozen foreign trips, including to the United States and China, to seek investments and boost trade. He was scheduled to leave for Malaysia today for a three-day visit.

The government said the foreign trips are crucial to drum up economic reforms and initiatives, including a bill that Marcos signed into law last week creating the country's first sovereign wealth fund, which aims to pool money for infrastructure and other projects. But opponents said the trips, including one that brought him to Singapore to watch Formula One races in October, reflected the president's misplaced priorities given problems at home, including soaring food prices early in his presidency.

Marcos made himself agriculture chief to directly deal with what he said last year was a looming food crisis caused in part by the war in Ukraine. He has held the post until now despite calls for him to appoint

another official so he can focus on other concerns.

In February, Marcos approved an expansion of the U.S. military presence in the Philippines to add four new bases from five existing sites under the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement between the longtime treaty allies. The move, which Marcos said would help boost the Philippines' coastal defense, dovetails with the Biden administration's efforts to strengthen an arc of military alliances in the Indo-Pacific to better counter China.

China warned the move "will drag the Philippines into the abyss of geopolitical strife and damage its economic development at the end of the day." But Philippine officials said the move was not aimed at China.

Marcos's moves to reaffirm ties with Washington was a key turnaround from the often-hostile approach his predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte, took toward Manila's treaty ally.

In a decision that clearly favored Duterte but came under attack from human rights activists and Marcos' opposition, he refused to take steps to bring the Philippines back to the ICC and said his administration would not cooperate with its investigation into thousands of killings under Duterte's campaign against illegal drugs.

Duterte withdrew the Philippines from The Hague-based court in 2019 in a move rights activists said was an attempt to evade accountability and prevent an international probe into the killings in his anti-drugs crackdown. The ICC, however, has jurisdiction over alleged crimes committed when the Philippines was still a member state of the court. MDT/AP

CAMBODIA

## US ANNOUNCES PUNITIVE MEASURES OVER CONCERNS ELECTIONS WERE 'NEITHER FREE NOR FAIR'

**C**AMBODIA'S longtime ruling party yesterday lauded its landslide victory in weekend elections as a clear mandate for the next five years, but the United States said its stifling of the opposition meant the vote could not be considered free or fair and that Washington was taking punitive measures.

Autocratic leader Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party won 120 of 125 available seats in Sunday's elections, according to preliminary results.

The 70-year-old, who has been in power for 38 years, has said he plans to hand the prime minister's job off to his oldest son, 45-year-old Hun Manet, who is Cambodia's army chief and won his first parliamentary seat Sunday.

It is part of what is expected to be a broad generational change in top positions for the CPP. And while it is not yet clear exactly when Hun Manet might take over, Hun Sen

has suggested it could be as early as within the next month.

On his Facebook page Monday, Hun Manet said the election result showed that the "Cambodian people have clearly expressed their wills through votes," adding that he thanked Cambodians for their "love and confidence in the CPP" and pledged that the party would "continue to serve Cambodia and Cambodian people better and better."

Following a challenge from the opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party in 2013 that the CPP barely overcame at the polls, Hun Sen responded by going after leaders of the opposition, and eventually the country's sympathetic courts dissolved the party.

Ahead of Sunday's election, the unofficial successor to the CNRP, known as the Candlelight Party, was barred on a technicality from running in the election by the National Election Committee. MDT/AP



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RUSSIA-AFRICA SUMMIT

# Putin wants allies at meeting: Food security, Wagner are key questions

CARA ANNA, NAIROBI

**A**S Russia seeks more allies during its invasion of Ukraine, longtime U.S. security partner Kenya might not be an obvious choice. But hours after Russia terminated a deal to keep grain flowing from Ukraine, Moscow's ambassador saw an opening to appeal to one of the African countries that would feel the effects the most.

In an opinion piece for two of Kenya's largest newspapers, Ambassador Dmitry Maksimychev blamed the United States and European Union for the deal's collapse, asserting they had "used every trick" to keep Russian grain and fertilizer from the global markets.

"Now, my dear Kenyan friends, you know the whole truth about who is weaponizing food," he wrote.

It's the kind of brash outreach expected this week at the second Russia-Africa Summit. Grain supplies are in question. The future of the Wagner military group is, too. It's a notable time for Russia to host nearly 50 African countries that rely heavily on Moscow for agricultural products and security. It's not clear how many heads of state will attend.

President Vladimir Putin's government is under new pressure to show its commitment to a continent of 1.3 billion people that is increasingly assertive on the global stage.

Africa's 54 nations make up the largest voting bloc at the United Nations and have been more divided than any other region on General Assembly resolutions criticizing Russia's invasion. If they leave the two-day summit on Friday feeling unheeded, they might distance themselves from Russia, said analyst Cameron Hudson with the U.S.-based Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"I think you could see Africans beginning to vote with their feet," he said. "This is a decisive moment for both



Maliens demonstrate against France and in support of Russia on the 60th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Mali (Sept. 2020)

Africa and Putin in their relationship."

Putin has repeatedly said that Russia would offer free grain to low-income African countries now that the grain deal has been terminated. "I want to give assurances that our country is capable of replacing the Ukrainian grain both on a commercial and free-of-charge basis," Putin said in a statement yesterday, asserting that Russia shipped almost 10 million tons of grain to Africa in the first half of this year.

The Russian military company Wagner, after its brief rebellion against Moscow, will be an urgent issue for countries like Sudan, Mali and others who contract with the mercenary group in exchange for natural resources like gold. Russia's foreign minister has said Wagner's work in Africa will continue.

As for a peace proposal for Ukraine that African leaders have tried to pursue, that "could be discussed" at the summit, Russian ambassador-at-large Oleg Ozerov told the Kommersant newspaper.

Putin himself is a question. He has visited sub-Saharan Africa only once in more than two decades in power. Last week, after considerable diplomatic pressure, South Africa announced that Putin had agreed not to

attend an economic summit there in August because of an arrest warrant for him by the International Criminal Court over Ukraine.

South Africa's debate over whether to arrest him was another sign of the ambivalence toward Moscow by a once-steady U.S. ally. But President Cyril Ramaphosa's office on Friday made clear that African leaders are working "for an end to the destabilizing Ukraine-Russia war," saying it would be in the continent's economic interests.

The U.S.-backed Africa Center for Strategic Studies has predicted that Russia will try to pull other influential countries including Ethiopia, Congo, Nigeria and Senegal into its orbit. Africa is "the most welcoming region for Russia of any other region in the world," the center's Joseph Siegle said.

Like China, Russia tries to appeal to African nations' distaste at feeling dictated to by global powers.

A busy tweeter, Russia's ambassador to Kenya drew the praise of that country's foreign minister last week when he objected to a statement by the U.S. and allies expressing concern about live bullets used against Kenyan protesters over the rising cost of living. "If it is

not interference in internal affairs, what is it?" Maksimychev asked.

"Thank you @russembkenya for this principled position," Kenya's foreign minister, Korir Sing'Oei, replied — just a day after he called Russia's decision to end the grain deal a "stab on the back."

Despite its high profile in Africa, Russia invests relatively little in it. At the first Russia-Africa Summit in 2019, Putin vowed to double Russia's trade with the continent within five years. Instead, it has stalled at around \$18 billion a year. Moscow offers less than 1% of what goes to Africa in foreign direct investment, with almost no humanitarian aid.

But Russia can connect with African nations in ways that the West cannot, said Tim Kalyegira, a Ugandan analyst and writer. "Russia is one of the few European countries allied with Africa in views about homosexual relations: 'We are a traditional Christian country. Every time you have an anti-gay bill, we're with you,'" he said.

That could play to U.S. allies like Nigeria and Ghana as well, Kalyegira said.

Uganda faced Washington's criticism this year for a new law that prescribed the death penalty for "aggravated homosexuality." President Joe Biden threatened sanctions amid "democratic backsliding" by a longtime partner.

Now Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni is listed as a panelist at the Russia-Africa Summit for a discussion on "What forms of new colonialism are being imposed on the global majority by the West today?"

Uganda also has been one of the largest buyers of weapons from Russia, Africa's top arms supplier, along with Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Ethiopia, Angola and Burkina Faso.

Kalyegira said Russia now could broker grain supply deals with individual African nations, weakening any continental stance on the war. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1978 FIRST 'TEST TUBE BABY' BORN



The birth of the world's first "test tube baby" has been announced in Manchester.

Louise Brown was born shortly before midnight in Oldham and District General Hospital.

Weighing 5lb 12oz (2.61 kg) the baby was delivered by caesarean section because her mother, Lesley Brown, was suffering from toxæmia.

The consultant in charge of the case, Mr Patrick Steptoe, said: "All examinations showed that the baby is quite normal. The mother's condition after delivery was also excellent."

Mrs Brown, 29, has blocked fallopian tubes so she and her husband, 39, have been undergoing in vitro fertility treatment.

Last November Mrs Brown had an embryo - of her egg and her husband's sperm - implanted in her womb after it had been fertilized in a laboratory.

The technique is being pioneered by consultant gynaecologist Patrick Steptoe and Cambridge research physiologist Robert Edwards.

"This work may be developed in other respects. It may include the reversal of sterilization," Dr Edwards told a press conference at Prestwich Hospital, Manchester.

More than 5,000 couples have applied for the new fertility treatment already and there are 20,000 women in the UK with blockages similar to that experienced by Lesley Brown.

None of the main religions have an official policy on artificial insemination, but the Roman Catholic Church has raised the strongest objection.

The Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh, Cardinal Gordon Gray said: "I have grave misgivings about the possible implications and consequences for the future."

Louise Brown's financial future has been assured by the sale of newspaper rights for her story worth about £300,000.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Louise Brown celebrated her 21st birthday in 1999, by which time 300,000 women worldwide had conceived through IVF.

Louise's younger sister, Natalie, also born through IVF, became the first test tube baby to give birth - naturally - in 1999.

The success rate for IVF treatment has remained at 17%.

Doctors say social rather than medical factors are the major determinant of success.

More than 70% of IVF clinics are in the UK and 80% of them charge £3,000 for each cycle of treatment.

The process has attracted concern because embryos have been mixed up in the laboratory and the chance of multiple IVF births increased in the 1990s from one in 200 to one in 20.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
 You can help them more than they can help you. Use your quick wit to win points with friends. Don't donate more than you can afford in order to impress others.

**TAURUS**  
 Apr. 20-May. 20  
 Your involvement in sports or entertainment will lead to new romances. Rewards, gifts, or money from investments or taxes can be expected.

**GEMINI**  
 May. 21-Jun. 21  
 Tell it like it is. You may find your self in a romantic situation. Avoid lending or borrowing. Don't jump into investments too quickly.

**CANCER**  
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
 You could find that children will be a handful. Put your thoughts into action. Try to do things with children that will enable you to bond closer to them.

**LEO**  
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
 If possible, rely on coworkers to back your objectives, and talk to superiors in order to get approval. Don't hesitate to voice your ideas and opinions.

**VIRGO**  
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
 Your ability to organize and get everyone together will enhance your popularity and bring interest from potential mates. You will be emotional about family matters.

**LIBRA**  
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
 Your involvement in sports or entertainment will lead to new romances. Look out for yourself today. You can buy or sell if you're so inclined.

**SCORPIO**  
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
 You may want to get a little extra rest. You are prone to infections and fevers. Try not to jump to conclusions. You will easily capture the interest of those you talk to.

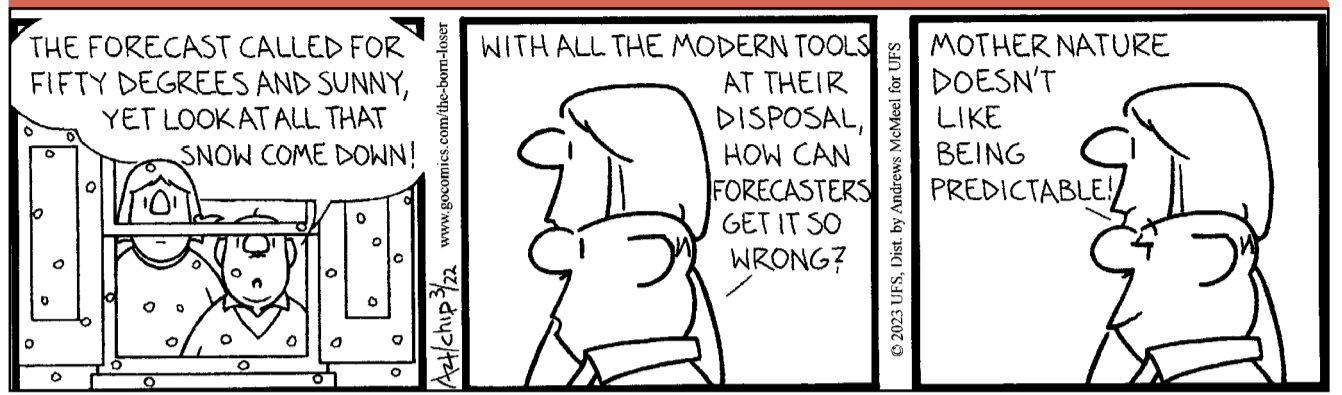
**SAGITTARIUS**  
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
 Partnerships may be plentiful. You may experience financial loss if you don't use good judgment. The talk you have may be eye-opening with regard to your present situation.

**CAPRICORN**  
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
 Opportunities to make advancements through good business sense are apparent. People you live with will not be terribly happy with you regardless of what you do today.

**AQUARIUS**  
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
 Take a different approach; make an offer they just can't refuse. Don't be too quick to spend money. Avoid any confrontations with colleagues.

**PISCES**  
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
 If you have treated them equitably, you might be able to count on their loyalty. Don't be too eager to cut those who have disappointed you from your life.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

**WEATHER**

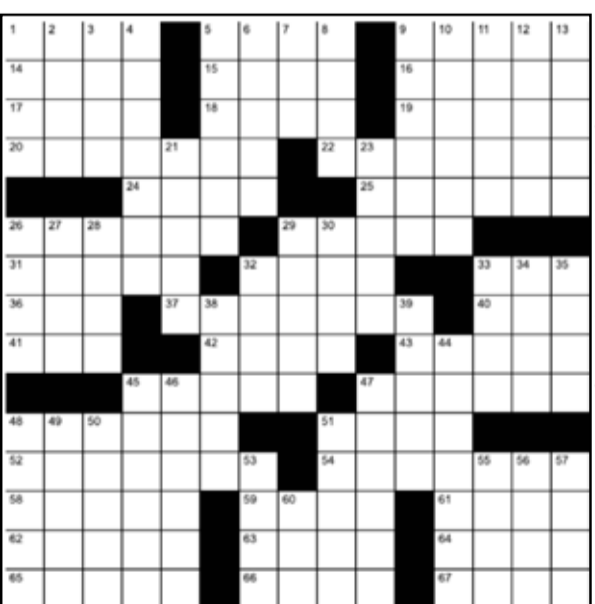
	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	24	32	rain
Changchun	21	27	thunderstorms
Chengdu	23	31	showers
Chongqing	28	32	rain
Fuzhou	27	34	cloudy
Guangzhou	27	37	fine
Guiyang	22	30	cloudy
Haikou	26	34	cloudy
Hangzhou	25	35	cloudy
Harbin	19	29	thunderstorms
Hefei	26	32	cloudy
Nanjing	26	34	rain
Shanghai	27	33	cloudy
Taipei	26	31	cloudy
Wuhan	27	34	cloudy
Hong Kong	29	33	cloudy
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	18	23	rain
Frankfurt	10	19	rain
Paris	13	22	rain
London	11	21	overcast
New York	23	30	thunderstorms

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Soccer star Mia; 5- Son of Isaac and Rebekah; 9- Steeps; 14- Dies \_\_\_; 15- Tar; 16- One of Chekhov's "Three Sisters"; 17- Dweeb; 18- Record with a VCR; 19- Street urchin; 20- Public passenger vehicle; 22- Capital of New Mexico; 24- Farm dwellers; 25- Move unsteadily; 26- Walk stealthily; 29- Reposes; 31- Trapshooting; 32- "\_\_\_ Rider" starred Clint Eastwood; 33- Use, consume; 36- \_\_\_ Lingus; 37- Side covering on a hat; 40- No-win situation; 41- Deserter; 42- Bristle; 43- Piece of music written for a solo instrument; 45- Remains; 47- Disunion; 48- Outcast; 51- Baht spender; 52- Flexible; 54- Christens anew; 58- Best of a group; 59- Impersonator; 61- Clublike weapon; 62- Stair part; 63- Laugh loudly; 64- Spillane's "\_\_\_ Jury"; 65- Prophets; 66- Crying shame; 67- Dodge model;

DOWN 1- Clue; 2- Carpenter's measurement; 3- German economist and socialist; 4- Intervene; 5- Fancy home; 6- Swedish imports; 7- Swiss peak; 8- Western Native Americans; 9- Sigil; 10- Speaks publicly; 11- Draw a bead on; 12- Cutting instrument; 13- Less loony; 21- Benjamin; 23- Puzzled; 26- Nicholas II was the last Russian one; 27- Home furnishings chain; 28- Chipper; 29- Floating platforms; 30- Raines of film; 32- One hunted; 33- Sewing case; 34- Helps; 35- Overflow; 38- Japanese beer brand; 39- Hickory-nut; 44- Vitamin B1; 45- Female sibling; 46- Spuds; 47- Fortified wine; 48- Nobles; 49- Kate & \_\_\_; 50- Worker's reward; 51- Rare delight; 53- Bellyache; 55- Spouse; 56- Bounce back; 57- Observed; 60- Starchy dish;

**Yesterday's solution**



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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	
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## POP CULTURE

# Barbie mania sweeps Latin America, but sometimes takes on a macabre tone

MARK STEVENSON,  
MEXICO CITY

**L**ATIN America is taking Barbie mania to an extreme, with everything from pink-colored tacos and pastries, commercial planes bearing the Barbie logo, political ads and even Barbie-themed protests.

But it's not all high heels and pom-poms: Barbie mania in the region has taken on a darker, macabre tone.

In Peru, anti-government demonstrators this week dressed up two women in pink and put them in giant Barbie boxes in the main square of Lima, the capital, to protest current President Dina Boluarte, under whose administration police have often clashed with protesters.

One actress, whose box was labeled "Barbie Dictator," held a pink gun. The doll, according to the box legend, "includes tear gas and dum-dum bullets." Another protester's box was labeled "Genocidal Barbie."

Meanwhile, stores, street vendors and restaurants throughout Latin America are offering up all sorts of Barbie-themed goodies.

In Mexico, there are Barbie tortillas (the corn dough is colored pink with beet juice, with some imprinted with an edible-dye pony-tailed Barbie silhouette); Barbie pastries and Barbie tacos (marinated pork meat served in pink tortillas and accompanied by a strawberry milkshake).

An entire Barbie-themed restaurant opened this week in Guayaquil, Ecuador; it is — of course — built to resemble Barbie's house.

Volaris, a Mexican airline, has painted one of its jets with a Barbie logo and, according to a promotional video, the plane will be piloted by Barbie, not Ken.

The pink craze in the region is such that Barbie mania has now spread into politics.

In Guatemala, presidential candidate Sandra Torres shared a musical TikTok video pitching her as a Barbie who "wants prosperity for all."

Mexican street sellers are peddling a Barbie doll modeled on presidential hopeful Claudia Sheinbaum, a real-life scientist-turned-politician whose own (real) ponytail has become her branding trademark.

The office of Colombian President Gustavo Petro recently raised hackles with a Barbie-theme video — including clips from the film's trailer — to promote an in-

AP PHOTOS



A family visits a Barbie-themed restaurant in Guayaquil, Ecuador



An anti-government protester, dressed as Barbie holding a fake gun, takes part in a demonstration in Lima, Peru



A cook prepares a taco with a Barbie theme pink tortilla at a restaurant in Mexico City

dependence day tour of the country. His office quickly removed the poorly made video.

Beyond the pony tails and fun food, there is a darker undercurrent.

In Mexico, a Barbie homage doll sparked controversy when a sister of one of Mexico's 111,000 missing people began sewing Barbie outfits to costume the doll as a "Searching Mother" — a member of a group of volunteers who fan out across Mexico's dusty plains to search for gravesites that might contain their children's remains. Most of the missing appear to have been abducted — and killed — by drug cartels or kidnapping gangs.

This Barbie is clad in a wide-brimmed hat and a sun hood, wears a T-shirt bearing the photo of a missing man and camouflage pants and comes equipped with

a shovel. Her creator, volunteer searcher Delia Quiroa, hopes to publicize the plight of mothers who have to carry out the searches and investigations police won't do, and at the same time raise money to continue searching.

One group of volunteer searchers in the western state of Jalisco — the state with the highest number of missing people — questioned whether casting Barbie as the victim of a horrible crime is appropriate.

Barbie "has evolved into a representation of strong, independent women who can do what they want and chase their dreams," the volunteer search group Light of Hope wrote in a statement. "Nobody who is searching for a missing child, spouse or a sibling is doing what they want to do, much less chasing a dream."

"It seems to us an abomination that girls see being a Searching Mother as something normal," the group added.

Quiroa, from the northern border state of Tamaulipas, said her creation is almost an anti-Barbie.

"Barbie is everything a person wants to be, but this is a Barbie who doesn't want to be," she said. "She is what nobody wants to be. Nobody wants to be a searcher, nobody wants to be looking for a family member."

Quiroa has been looking for her brother Roberto since he was kidnapped by drug cartel gunmen in March 2014. Despite carrying out its own searches and pressuring authorities to investigate, the family knows nothing about his whereabouts.

"I think of this as a doll more directed to women, to us, not for girls to play with," Quiroa said.

Vanessa Munguía, widely regarded as Latin America's leading Barbie collector — she numbers her collection in the thousands — says Barbie is particularly popular in Latin America because, until a couple of decades ago, most girls' toys here depicted maternal, home-maker roles.

"Barbie was the only toy I found that told me that there were a million other possibilities. I could be an astronaut, I could be a teacher," said Munguía, who became lawyer.

Asked about depicting Barbie as a "Searching Mother" or any of the other incarnations of the doll, Munguía says she finds it a very valid expression.

"I think that's exactly what what we like in Barbie, that we can make her out to be whatever we need her to be at that moment," she said. MDT/AP

FOOTBALL | PENALTY PAIN

# Players converted just 4 of the first 8 penalty kicks at the Women's WC

**H**OW'S this for a pair of stats? The first eight matches of the Women's World Cup each included a penalty kick – and the attacking team converted just four times from the spot.

Some of the attempts were turned away by goalkeeping heroics, others were clean misses and all four denials had some of the game's biggest names on the short end.

Longtime New Zealand striker Ria Percival missed high off the crossbar with a chance to extend the lead in the Football Ferns' eventual opening-match upset of Norway. Spain's all-time top scorer Jennifer Hermoso's kick was saved by Costa Rica's Daniela Solera.

Canada captain Christine Sinclair was stopped by Nigeria captain Chiamaka Nnadozie to hold an unlikely draw between the world's sixth-ranked and 39th-ranked teams.

And finally, the U.S. co-captain Alex Morgan was denied on



Nigeria's goalkeeper Chiamaka Nnadozie saves a penalty kick by Canada's Christine Sinclair

a strike to the left side of the net by Vietnam's Tran Thi Kim Thanh, leading to jubilation from the Vietnamese.

"I felt confident, stepped up and it wasn't the penalty that I

wanted," Morgan said after the defending champion U.S. team won 3-0. "It wasn't a good penalty for me, and I know that, but I'm glad the team put three goals away and that we're on to the

next one."

A mere 50% conversion rate, if it continued through the 2023 tournament, would be notably low. Norwegian psychologist Geir Jordet reported a near-80% success rate across 409 chances in top senior international competition in his 2006 research on the penalty kick.

This year's start could have been even worse. Japan's Riko Ueki and England's Georgia Stanway were each turned away on penalty attempts in different games on Saturday night, but scored on retakes after match officials tagged Zambia and Haiti with goalkeeper encroachment.

Japan's 5-0 win over Zambia was already decided. For England, the ruling, helped by a video assistant referee, played a major factor in scraping by 1-0 over Haiti.

Japan manager Futoshi Ikedda acknowledged postgame that VAR, being used for the second time in the Women's World Cup, can introduce some variation in

the way games are called and the way players react.

"This kind of impact on their mental balance, we try to control and concentrate, and I think we were successful in that," Ikedda said through translation. "This experience will be very useful for the other matches."

VAR seems to have led to more by-the-book rulings on penalties, with soccer fans perceiving that borderline calls are now more often going in favor of the attackers.

Vietnam's foul on Trinity Rodman in the 39th minute Saturday was far from malicious, but the light contact clearly caused Rodman to lose her footing inside of the box.

"I don't know if it happened too easily or not," U.S. coach Vlatko Andonovski said of the call. "With all the cameras, VAR and all the angles that the referees are reviewing, I'm sure they're doing the right call."

"If it's a foul in the box, it is a penalty. Going forward, I don't know what is going to happen. If they're fouls in the box, they should call the penalties. If they're not, they shouldn't. It's very simple."

The penalty kick is a profoundly psychological event, according to Jordet's research. Outcomes are more dependent on psychological factors such as the relative importance of the kick than anything else. **MDT/AP**

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**OPINION**

**China Daily**  
 Editorial, China Daily

**JUSTIFIED  
 COUNTERMEASURES TO  
 'COERCIVE' PRACTICES**

Some US lawmakers have recently accused Beijing of using "coercive economic practices" to achieve worldwide dominance over the United States.

These accusations were reiterated at a hearing of the US House of Representatives days after US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen wrapped up her trip to Beijing to discuss the nations' economic relations. Witnesses testified the environment in China is becoming increasingly "restrictive" for US entities.

It is these US lawmakers that have played key roles over the past few years in getting more than 1,300 Chinese entities on various US blacklists. Yet despite such attempts, US investment in and trade with China has maintained stable growth. The affected US companies have never ceased trying to persuade Washington to weigh the country's losses against the gains, and expressed their confidence in the Chinese market by continuing to expand their operations and increase their investment in China.

However, the US politicians, who are gripped with an anti-China frenzy, continue to regard the long-term systematic attack on Chinese enterprises in the high-tech sector as necessary. They continue to ignore the fact that, while the US government and legislature are trying to demarcate more and more fields as forbidden zones for Chinese companies' operations in the US and dramatically increase the bureaucratic hurdles for them and their US partners, China is doing the opposite, welcoming companies from around the world to the country and granting them equal treatment.

As a matter of fact, most examples the US lawmakers provided in the recent hearing on China's alleged "coercive economic practices" are nothing but countermeasures the Chinese side has been forced to take to safeguard its core interests against the US' provocations, ranging from sanctioning the few US companies selling weapons to secessionists on the Taiwan island to its latest anti-dumping investigation into imported propionic acid originating in the US announced on Friday.

The anti-dumping probe into the US propionic acid that was launched on the same day was in response to the US House of Representatives' Thursday banning of releases of oil from the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve from being exported to China.

China's welcome to foreign companies and investment is heartfelt and that should be evident to the whole world. Foreign direct investment in China increased 5 percent year-on-year to a record \$189.1 billion in 2022. From January to June this year, 24,000 new foreign-invested enterprises were established nationwide, an increase of 35.7 percent year-on-year, and investment in high-tech industries increased by 7.9 percent.

It is suggested that the US politicians stop dismantling the foundations of Sino-US relations, and accept that the US has to co-exist with China.

**MACRON PROMOTES FRENCH INTERESTS ON A TRIP TO SOUTH PACIFIC WHERE US-CHINA RIVALRY IS INTENSIFYING**

**THE  
 BUZZ**

The French president is heading to the South Pacific to make France's voice heard in a region shaping up as a prime geopolitical battleground for China and the U.S.

President Emmanuel Macron's trip to Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and New Caledonia comes as French forces take part in massive U.S.-Australian-led military exercises in the region. With French troops, citizens and resources spread across its Pacific territories, France wants to protect its own interests and project its power alongside like-minded democracies.

Macron starts today [Macau time] in the French archipelago of New

Caledonia, trying to rebuild trust after voters rejected a string of independence referendums that exposed entrenched frustrations of native Kanaks and inequalities with the mainland, and divisions over management of the region's rich nickel reserves. Negotiations are underway for a new status for the territory and its institutions.

After Vanuatu, Macron's last and most strategically important stop is Thursday in Papua New Guinea, which has seen growing Chinese influence and signed a new security cooperation pact with the U.S. in May. The most populous Pacific Island nation is also negotiating a security treaty with Australia.

AP PHOTO



Workers remove an electoral poster showing Alberto Feijoo, leader of the mainstream conservative Popular Party

**ANALYSIS**

**ELECTION LEAVES SPAIN IN POLITICAL DISARRAY WITH NO PARTY TO FORM A GOVERNMENT**

**S**PANIARDS woke up yesterday to find their country in political disarray after a general election a day earlier left no party with a clear path to forming a government.

The uncertainty deepened as both of Spain's two main parties indicated that they hope to take power. The only sure thing seems to be that the country faces weeks, perhaps months, of political negotiations and possibly a new election to sort out the mess.

Alberto Nuñez Feijóo 's right-of-center Popular Party, or PP, won the most votes and finished with 133 seats. But contrary to nearly every preelection opinion poll, it fell far short of the 176 seats a party needs to secure a majority in the 350-seat Spanish parliament.

Even if it joins forces with the extreme right party Vox, which garnered 33 seats, it won't reach that threshold.

In a nutshell, the PP's decision to consider forming a coalition with Vox didn't pay off with voters.

**COULD THERE BE ANOTHER LEFTIST COALITION?**

Despite all predictions, Sánchez has an outside chance of staying in office. His Socialist party won 122

seats and his main potential partner, Sumar, has 31.

Since 2019, his leftist minority coalition government has relied on the support of small regional parties in the Basque and Catalonia regions. He could try to repeat that balancing act.

But even if he managed to round up the regional troops again, one major hurdle looms: He would need the support or abstention of the Catalan secessionist party Junts.

The party's leader, Carles Puigdemont, is a member of the European Parliament, living in Belgium. But he is also a fugitive from Spanish justice and faces possible extradition to stand trial for staging an independence push in 2017.

Junts officials have already said they will want something in return for doing a deal with Sánchez. The specter of them demanding an independence referendum for Catalonia as their price would open up a Pandora's box for both Spain and Sánchez.

**WHO ARE THE OTHER MAIN PLAYERS?**

Besides the conservative Popular Party and the center-left Socialists, the two other principle players are Vox, led by Santiago Abas-

cal, and the leftist Sumar movement, headed by acting second deputy prime minister, Yolanda Díaz.

The prospect of Spain having a far-right party in power for the first time since Gen. Francisco Franco's dictatorship has diminished for the moment after Vox lost 19 of its parliamentary seats to finish with a total of 33. Even so, it remains the country's third political force.

Sumar, with 31 seats, failed to pip Vox for third place, but has said it will seek to form another leftist progressive government with Sánchez.

**WILL THERE BE ANOTHER ELECTION?**

Spain's new parliament will meet in a month. In accordance with official procedure, King Felipe VI is then expected to invite one of the party leaders, Feijóo or Sánchez, to try to form a government.

That leader would then put his candidacy to parliamentary votes. Any candidate getting sufficient support can form a government.

The 350 lawmakers have up to three months to reach an agreement. Otherwise, a new election would be triggered. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



**Pakistan** Landslides triggered by torrential rains have blocked several key roads in northern Pakistan, stranding tourists and disrupting traffic, officials said, as the death toll from weather-related incidents in the past month rose to at least 133. Thousands of tourists have thronged scenic tourist destinations in the north in recent days, ignoring warnings from the disaster management agency, which asked people last week to avoid unnecessary trips as ongoing monsoon rains can cause landslides and flash floods.

AP PHOTO



**Russian** authorities accused Ukraine of launching a drone attack on Moscow yesterday that saw one of the aircraft fall near the Defense Ministry's main headquarters and striking Crimea, while the Russian military unleashed new strikes on port infrastructure in southern Ukraine. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said there were no casualties when the drones struck two nonresidential buildings. The Defense Ministry claimed that the military jammed both attacking drones, forcing them to crash.

AP PHOTO



**Sweden** Climate activist Greta Thunberg will appear in court on a charge of disobeying police at a protest in southern Sweden last month. Local newspaper Sydsvenskan reported that Thunberg and other activists were detained after they stopped traffic in the oil terminal of the port in Malmö on June 19. Thunberg was charged because she refused to comply with police orders to leave the scene during the protest.