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AP PHOTO



Hong Kong will continue to actively collaborate with Shenzhen to promote the advantages of the Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation Zone under the principle of “one zone, two parks” underpinned by the “one country, two systems” principle. CE John Lee also said that the HKSAR will support the development of the GBA international innovation and technology center, and build an international innovation talent port for the GBA, according to Lee at the forum.

AP PHOTO



Mongolia Pope Francis wrapped up the first-ever papal visit to Mongolia yesterday by inaugurating a church-run homeless clinic and shelter, insisting that such initiatives aren't aimed at winning converts but are simply exercises in Christian charity. Francis toured the House of Mercy, a three-story structure housed in an old school, which the local church has opened as an expression of the roots that it has taken in the three decades that the Catholic Church has had an official presence in Mongolia.

AP PHOTO



USA An unusual late-summer storm turned a week-long counterculture fest into a sloppy mess with tens of thousands of partygoers stuck in foot-deep mud and with no working toilets in the northern Nevada desert. But some Burning Man revelers said yesterday [Macau time] that their spirits remained unbroken. Organizers closed the festival to vehicles after one death was reported. Officials provided no details of the fatality. The annual gathering in the Black Rock Desert about 110 miles north of Reno usually attracts 80,000 artists, musicians and activists.

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MACAU TO SEE THUNDERSTORMS THIS WEEK DUE TO HAIKUI

The local weather bureau has warned that during the middle and later period of this week, Macau will see more showers with thunderstorms due to Typhoon Haikui. The typhoon, currently located in the Taiwan Strait, will move west-northwest towards Fujian or the eastern coast of Guangdong and make landfall today. According to the forecast track last night, it will gradually weaken after moving inland.

RESIDENTS DEPOSIT RECORD SLIGHT INCREASE

Resident deposits increased 1.2% from the preceding month to MOP705.1 billion while non-resident deposits rose 1.0% to MOP297.2 billion. Meanwhile, public sector deposits with the banking sector grew 0.2% to MOP221.6 billion. As a result, total deposits in the banking sector increased 1.0% from a month earlier to MOP1,223.9 billion, the Monetary Authority of Macao has said in a statement.

DSAT RECORDS OVER 124,000 BUS PASSENGERS ON FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

About 90% of Macau's non-tertiary schools started yesterday. According to the Transport Bureau (DSAT), 124,791 people took buses in Macau from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m., an average increase of 10% compared with the same period last year, with 15,875 people using student cards. The period with the most people taking the bus is from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m., with more than 54,000 passengers. According to DSAT, the five routes with the most passengers are MT4, 33, 3, 25 and 10.

CUSTOMS BUSTS COUNTERFEIT BRANDED CLOTHING SALES

Two shops have been found selling counterfeit branded clothing, with two shopkeepers and a staff member apprehended on Aug. 30. Macao Customs has announced in a statement. Earlier, Customs inspectors had discovered inexpensive branded clothing with rough finishing in a shop in Praia Grande District. Further investigations led Customs to a shop in the Pedro do Nolasco District. Inspectors suspected both shops of selling counterfeit products. On the day of the operation, inspectors found and seized 42 allegedly counterfeit clothing products, where the original products would have been valued at about MOP520,000. Copyright owners confirmed some of the products were counterfeit.



TOURISM DIRECTOR SHARES IN BEIJING MACAU'S EXPERIENCE IN TOURISM+

ANTHONY LAM

MACAU will use the Tourism+ concept to attract more tourists and to encourage them to extend their stays, director of Tourism Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes has said at a Beijing conference.

The local tourism official was speaking at the 2023 World Conference on Tourism Cooperation and Development, held in Beijing by the Beijing government and World Tourism Cities Federation.

Senna Fernandes focused on the city's development concept

of Tourism+, noting her bureau would employ a multitude of forms to attract tourists to Macau, to encouraged visitors to extend their stay in the city, explore foreign source markets, revive the community's economy, and participate in the development of the Greater Bay Area and Hengqin.

The tourism official also introduced Macau's courtesy campaign based on the slogan Be My Guest, Feel at Home, which aims to encourage local residents to treat visitors courteously. In this way, Senna Fernandes believes, Macau will become

a key tourism destination and march towards becoming a world tourism and leisure center.

The conference saw about 400 participants representing nearly 40 jurisdictions. The federation has 239 member entities representing 83 jurisdictions.

In the meantime, 100 or so kilometers southeast of Beijing, a roadshow promoting Macau concluded yesterday in Tianjin.

Led by Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), a delegation of the Macau government held a five-day roadshow in the municipality, presenting 57 booths organized by Macau

government departments and businesses. They showcased elements of tourism, trade and commerce, culture and creativity and sports and entertainment, among other areas.

During the roadshow, the band Tuna Macanese and Macau singers performed songs imbued with Sino-Portuguese styles from Macau. There were dragon and lion dances, Portuguese folk dance and more.

In addition, the six integrated resorts each arranged performances in different music and dance styles, such as a peacock dance, a love-themed dance, a British-style dance, a modern street dance, a Lingnan lion dance crossover Hip-hop dance and a water sleeve and ribbon dance, which exude Macau's warm hospitality.

Since comic dialogue shows are widely popular in Tianjin, sessions were held as well. The comic dialogue show "Joyful Journey in Macao" is scheduled once daily during the roadshow, presented by comic dialogue artists Wang Haijie and Duan Juncheng, whose witty dialogues took audiences onto an imaginative journey around Macau's beautiful cityscape, diverse cultures and unique charm as a destination.

For this Macao Week, participating tourism businesses presented over RMB40.4 million's worth of special travel offers, including air tickets, hotel stay, dining and more, for sale at the roadshow and on different platforms.

PUBLIC WORKS

No parking lot for Central Library

RENATO MARQUES



RENATO MARQUES

THE new Central Library, to be built on the site of the former Hotel Estoril at Tap Seac, will have no public parking lot, representatives from the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) said late last week during the fifth ordinary plenary meeting of the Consultative Committee for Cultural Development.

The topic was on the agenda at the meeting presided over by the Se-

cretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Else Ao leong, held Friday.

IC representatives presented the new Central Library's final design works to the Committee members, noting the final decision of not having a parking lot in the basement level was due to "existing limitations on the land plot."

According to IC, "It would be very difficult, in technical terms, to build a public parking lot that complies with

current standards and norms, while, on the other hand, and in addition to not being able to offer a reasonable number of parking spaces, some spaces [initially thought] for the library's functions need to give away [to other purposes] or cannot be used [as expected], which has an impact on the overall layout of functions and circulation."

The IC added that after evaluation, the government considered that the need for the parking lot is secondary to the cultural space and decided to scrap the parking lot from the final project.

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ENVIRONMENT

Gov't to ban import of non-biodegradable plasticware, environmentalist questions biodegradable standards

LYNZY VALLES

MACAU will ban the import of single-use non-biodegradable plastic plates, cups, and polystyrene food containers from January 1, 2024, according to an official dispatch from the Chief Executive (CE) published yesterday in the government's official gazette.

The Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) has stated that a follow-up briefing will be held to further explain the measures to the industry.

Earlier this year, the government banned the import of single-use non-biodegradable plastic cutlery from Jan. 1.

The CE has increased the number of prohibited products to include all disposable plastic cutlery except for those made from biodegradable plastics.

However, an environmental organization expressed concerns regarding the move.

Joe Chan, vice president of Green Future Macau, remarked that the group always supports government regulation on the reduction of plastic waste as banning of single use plastic is the start of cutting plastic pollution.

However, he expressed concerns over the fact that the standard of so-called biodegradable material is not standardized yet.



According to Chan, most of those materials are made of polylactide (PLA) selling in China which is only degraded in certain conditions.

"It means the biodegradable material is not really naturally degraded [...]. We raise the question here: how to define biodegradable? How could restaurants recognize which is really biodegradable since biodegradable plastic is ca-

tegorized as number seven which is non-recyclable," the environmental activist questioned.

"If the so-called biodegradable plastics that come to Macau don't have the condition to be degraded, then they are also not for recycling. How would government deal with all these types of plastic?" he added.

Last year the government added plastic straws and swizzle sti-

cks to the same list. The import of these products has been banned since January this year.

Among the products already banned from import to Macau are Styrofoam tableware, which includes the boxes used for takeaway food as well as trays used for the packaging of fresh food items such as meat, fish, fruit and vegetables.

Amid the government's move

on the reduction of plastic waste, Chan recommends the government encourage people to use plant-based materials to replace plastic rather than PLA.

"PLA is fine providing that we have the right facility to digest the waste, otherwise the banning of single use plastic next year will raise many problems by increasing the burden of incineration," he said.

Education director: National security, patriotism in new curriculum



ELEMENTS of national security and patriotism will be added to curriculum framework, the director of Education and Youth Development, Kong Chi Meng, disclosed yesterday.

Following his observation during yesterday's opening of the new school year, the education official said his bureau is conducting research with the education sector on the "basic direction" for adjustments of the curriculum framework for formal education in the local schooling system.

He added that while fo-

cus on education about patriotism, supplementary materials related to national security, among other changes, will be "presented" in the new framework and as part of the basic education threshold.

A new framework is expected in a year or two, the education official said.

In addition, more technological elements will be introduced in the contemplated curriculum framework, such as technological and AI elements to further enhance students' aptitude.

Kong guaranteed the new framework would not lengthen the duration of studies nor increase the number of subjects. The key is to incorporate technological and AI elements into existing subjects or

align certain subjects with technological reality.

The official further guaranteed his bureau would stay firm in enriching multifaceted learning and alleviating educational stress, as well as ensuring basic quality of education.

Kong also said over 20 schools had joined the smart campus pilot program, through which they have receive subsidies to develop IT facilities and equipment.

Yesterday saw the new school year opening with 90% of the city's non-tertiary education sector. Kong described the opening as "generally smooth." He said meetings had been held with various bureaus to ensure the smoothness of school reopening. **AL**

PHOTO EXHIBITION OF RELICS FROM CPC WAR WITH JAPAN OPENS

An exhibition of photos about relics from the Communist Party of China's (CPC) war with Japan decades ago has opened in the SAR. The exhibition was co-organized by the Museum of the War of Chinese People's Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the Oral History Association of Macau in commemoration of the 78th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese people's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. The exhibition features over 40 photos about Macau compatriots' resistance. The exhibition continues until Sept. 22.

SCIENCE MUSEUM SEES NEARLY 100,000 VISITORS IN AUGUST

The Macau Science Museum saw more than 473,000 admissions from January to August, returning to the level of the same period in 2019 before the pandemic. In August, according to the museum, it saw nearly 100,000 visitors daily. The museum has pledged to continue to improve facilities, update other long-term exhibition halls and introduce more popular science education exhibitions and programs.

HENGQIN PORT EXCEEDS 10 MILLION PASSENGERS IN ANNUAL TRAFFIC

According to the Hengqin Immigration Inspection Station, as of Aug. 29, the number of inbound and outbound travelers through Hengqin Port surpassed 10 million, with over 1.27 million vehicles. This marks the first time in the history of Hengqin Port that it has had over 10 million travelers in a calendar year.

OVER 43,000 COMPUTER ACCESSORIES SMUGGLED

Cross-border private cars smuggled 43,000 pieces of computer accessories to Zhuhai via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. According to Gongbei Customs, the driver involved in the case was investigated on the eve of Typhoon Saola in the early morning of last Friday. Customs officers seized many computer accessories from the front and rear of the car, including more than 41,000 CPUs. The case has been referred to the anti-smuggling department.



GLUTEN-FREE: A DIETARY NEED OR A TREND?

RENATO MARQUES

Glutin-free dietary requirements have quickly become popular in our daily lives with a growing range of food products as well as restaurant menus offering "Gluten-Free" options.

Macau is no exception, and more people are requesting gluten-free food options from both retailers and the food and beverage industry. But is it a need or an internet-fueled diet trend? Who needs to go gluten-free and why and what are the risks of an unnecessary no-gluten diet?

A gluten-free diet is only a requirement for those diagnosed with celiac disease (CeD), a chronic auto-immune enteropathy that occurs in genetically predisposed individuals who ingest gluten proteins present in wheat, barley and rye.

While the global pooled prevalence of CeD is 0.7%, the percentage varies according to different regions, according to researchers worldwide in a broad study entitled *Global Prevalence of Celiac Disease: Systematic Review and Meta-analysis*.

In the study, scientists mapped the prevalence of the CeD in different regions of the world and compared it by age and gender.

Published by the Celiac Disease Foundation, the meta-analysis found the current worldwide prevalence of celiac disease is 0.7%, based on biopsy results.

It also concluded the disorder's prevalence is higher in Europe and Oceania (0.8%), followed by Asia (0.6%), Africa and North America (0.5%) and South America (0.4%).

It concluded the prevalence was higher in females than males, and was significantly greater in children than adults, leading to the conclusion that the prevalence of CeD varies with sex, age and location.

The study also indicated a significant difference between tests made by biopsy and those by blood sampling, which several other studies have reported is related to the fact that many people possess the genes that trigger the disease but, in many cases, they never develop symptoms.

The disease is considered a "major public health problem worldwide" by scientists Prashant Singh, Ananya Arora, Tor A. Strand, Daniel A. Leffler, Carlo Catassi, Peter H. Green, Ciaran P. Kelly, Vineet Ahuja, and Govind K. Makharia.

To understand the disorder's prevalence in Macau, the Times contacted the Health Bureau (SSM) about the local reality, the prevalence of the disease and the number of people diagnosed with the disorder. However, after almost a month of repeated contact, the SSM has not provided any information.

Considering that academic studies show the disorder's prevalence in Asia is 0.6%, and considering the fact that, according to the Statistics and Census Service Bureau, Macau's population was 678,800 at the end of the first half of this year, it can be extrapolated that about 4,073 people in Macau should have CeD and need a restrictive gluten-free diet, to avoid the risk of severely damaging their small intestine.

With repeated attacks caused by the ingestion of even small quantities of gluten, the small intestine loses its ability to absorb vital nutrients, such as calcium and iron, as explained in a different article by gastroenterologist Shannon Lewis.

According to Lewis, "Over time, people with untreated celiac disease can develop severe nutritional deficiencies, such as osteoporosis and iron-deficiency anemia, as well as other autoimmune disorders, extreme fatigue,

infertility, neurological problems and, in a very small percentage of cases, lymphoma of the small intestine."

Lewis adds that besides CeD there are other reasons to go gluten-free such as to "control dermatitis herpetiformis (DH) - a form of celiac disease that triggers the immune system to attack the skin, rather than the small intestine."

Finally, the gastroenterologist noted there are people who although not diagnosed with CeD have "gluten sensitivity," which, unlike celiac disease and DH, is not an autoimmune disease.

It is "like lactose intolerance - the inability to process or metabolize lactose - except that it's gluten that can't be metabolized. People with gluten sensitivity experience gastrointestinal distress - ranging from diarrhea, gas and bloating to constipation and irritable bowel symptoms - when they eat gluten."

GLUTEN-FREE DIET FOR THOSE WITHOUT A MEDICAL REASON CAN POSE RISKS

Lewis warns of the potential risks of the growing trend of going "gluten-free" without a medical condition that justifies it.

"Don't give up gluten because you think it's a healthier way to eat. Unless you have to go gluten-free to manage a medical condition, it isn't. Carbohydrates should make up 55 to 60% of a healthy diet, and that's where gluten is found. Cutting out wheat, rye, barley and the other grains that provide gluten eliminates some of the key sources of complex carbohydrates needed in a balanced diet," Lewis notes, adding, "There are also significant losses of fiber, B vitamins, and folate, as well as the iron, calcium and vitamin D, provided by fortified breads and cereals."

Lewis explains that gluten-free

bread, cereals and crackers, widely available in the market, may help people to "fill the void," but these food substitutes tend to be lower in fiber and often contain more sugar and fat to compensate for the texture and flavor lost when gluten is left out.

Acknowledging that there are also supplements that can help to replenish some of the lost nutrients, Lewis says, "People tend to absorb nutrients best when they come from food."

Another good reason not to go gluten-free simply "to lose weight" is, according to Lewis, because "As we've seen with numerous fad diets, anyone can lose weight when cutting an entire food group from their diet - the trick is how to keep it off once the food restriction gets old. A gluten-free diet is not easy to stick with, it's expensive and puts you at risk of missing out on important nutrients."

The gastroenterologist also warns of the risks of a gluten-free diet with the aim of self-diagnosing CeD.

"If you think you may have CeD, DH, or gluten sensitivity, don't go gluten-free on your own to try to find out. It's important to see a doctor for an accurate diagnosis while you are still eating a normal diet. The blood test used to help diagnose celiac disease and DH depends on finding an antibody to gluten in your blood. If you have been avoiding gluten, the antibodies may not show up in your blood test, which could yield a false negative."

She also mentioned that there is currently a perceived high number of people worldwide engaging in unsolicited gluten-free diets due to the fact they tried it and they believe they "felt better" after doing so. She notes that on many occasions, a thorough assessment finds that most of these people are "simply avoiding bread, pasta and pizza," which is very different from going gluten-free.

She concludes by calling on people to search for a physician and find an informed opinion before attempting to go gluten-free on their own.

Journalist group dissatisfied with police manner of crime announcement

ANTHONY LAM

IN a statement on its Facebook page, Macau Journalists Association (AJM) has called for improvements in the way in which police release information concerning crimes and accidents.

The statement came after an announcement issued by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) following a car accident in the pedestrian area in front of the main entrance of Hotel Lisboa.

According to videos that have gone viral over social media platforms, the car was captured squeezing through a gap between a minibus and a seven-seater vehicle, running a red traffic signal, almost hitting a moving taxi at the Grand Lisboa Hotel crossroad, before crashing against a greening area near Hotel Lisboa.

What is dissatisfying, the AJM said, is that after the almost-fatal accident, the PSP only issued a text message minimizing the severity of the car crash. The text message read: "Unverified information: A traffic accident involving two private vehicles and a bus happened near Hotel Lisboa on Avenida de Lisboa. No injured were sent to the hospital [and] nobody was trapped. The PSP is handling the matter."

Announcements of crime and



public security incidents by the police to the press are normally conveyed through text messages.

The AJM also noted that the police released more information 15 hours after the accident and only after journalists inquired about the matter. The supplementary message sent by the police provided some extra details: the vehicle had in fact run two red signals and crashed while making a turn; the driver is a local aged about 30, surnamed Fong and was referred to the Public Prosecutions Office for further investigations.

Amid netizens accusing local

media outlets of self-censorship as news reports were not publicized shortly after the crash, the AJM defended the industry's professionalism by explaining that journalists can receive as many as 50 messages from the city's two police authorities per day, making it impossible for journalists to investigate each and every case.

The statement said that improvements should be made by the police in the manner of release, including by not oversimplifying details, which could influence journalists' judgment about the newsworthiness of each notification.



EDUCATION

MUST opens new space research institute

ANTHONY LAM

THE Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) inaugurated a new institute for space research and application on Sept. 1, the university has announced in a statement.

Named the Macau Institute of Space Technology and Application, the new research body is a new platform for space research, according to the university.

At the opening ceremony, the director of Economy of the Macau government, Tai Kin Ip, said that after more than four years of joint effort by the local government, the China National Space Administration and MUST, the Macau Science-1 artificial satellite was launched in May this year.

The satellite, he added, is a powerful symbol of Macau's integration into the country's technological development plan, and an important carrier for developing international aerospace cooperation by leveraging Macau's advantages as a cooperation pla-

tform and in line with the direction of national construction.

He hoped the institute can play a positive role in the development of Macau's aerospace science and technology in the future.

Meanwhile, the Shanghai Astronomical Observatory director, Shen Zhiqiang, said in his online speech that the establishment of the institute is not only a highlight of scientific and technological cooperation between Macau and the mainland, but also an important symbol of Macau's blueprint for planning a technological innovation layout and upgrading its industrial structure.

MUST vice president He Jun said that the new institute would contribute wisdom and strength to building a world-class scientific and technological power and promote Chinese-style modernization.

The ceremony also saw the signing of a cooperation memorandum and a cooperation agreement.

CORPORATE BITS

MGM's 'Lion IP' won PATA Grand & Gold Awards



MGM's international brand engagement program "Lion IP" has been honored by the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Awards 2023, with the "Grand Title" in Marketing and the "Gold Award" in Heritage.

This year marks the second time MGM received the top prize at the PATA Award.

Pansy Ho, chairperson & executive director of MGM China, said, "We have incorporated Lingnan culture into our tourism product development

and ushered in Lion IP as an international cultural tourism brand. The program reinvigorates the image of Macau, while also fosters Macau's development.

"In Lion IP, we have harnessed the power of originality and technology to create a wide range of events including sports contests, art exhibitions, high-tech theatrical performances," Ho added.

In this year's PATA Gold Awards, MGM's two Lion IP-focused entries - "Turning A Traditional Cultural Symbol Into A Marketing Catalyst" and "Rejuvenating and Appreciating" clinched "Grand Title" in Marketing and the "Gold Award" in Heritage, respectively.

Cantopop sensation Terence Lam to stage concerts at The Londoner Macao



Cantopop singer-songwriter, Terrance Lam, is staging his 'L*underground

SNEAK PEEK Terence Lam Live at The Londoner Arena' concerts on Oct. 6 to 7.

Terence Lam started out as a composer in 2014 and has written over 100 songs for some of the biggest names in Cantopop and Mandopop, including Eason Chan, Joey Yung, Hins Cheung and Yoga Lin.

His career as a singer-songwriter began in 2019 with his debut single 'Next', which achieved commercial success and critical acclaim.

Just four years into the transition, the artist has won the hearts of Cantopop fans with more chart toppers including 'Solitude', 'If I Could Go Back in Time', 'The Magical Confused Potion' and 'Regression'.

Public sales will commence at 12 p.m. today via Cotai Ticketing.

G20

Premier Li to represent China at summit in India during a period of soured bilateral relations

CHINESE President Xi Jinping is apparently skipping this week's Group of 20 summit in India as bilateral relations remain icy.

Instead, Premier Li Qiang will represent China at the Sept. 9-10 gathering, the Foreign Ministry said yesterday in a one sentence notice on its website.

Relations between China and India have grown frosty over their disputed border, and three years ago the tensions resulted in a clash in the Ladakh region that killed 20 Indian and four soldiers. It turned into a long-running standoff in the rugged mountainous area, where each side has stationed tens of thousands of military personnel backed by artillery, tanks and fighter jets.

Frictions have also risen over trade and India's growing strategic ties with China's main rival the United States. Both India and China have expelled the other's journalists.

India recently overtook China as the world's most populous nation and the two are rivals in technology, space exploration and global trade.

Asked why Xi would not be



Premier Li Qiang

attending the summit, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning declined to answer.

"The G20 is a major forum for international economic cooperation. China has always attached great importance to and actively participated in relevant activities," Mao told reporters at a daily briefing.

"Premier Li Qiang will elaborate

on China's views and propositions on G20 cooperation, promote the G20 to strengthen solidarity and cooperation and work together to address global economic and development challenges," she said.

She said China is ready to work with all parties "to jointly promote the success of the G20 summit and "make positive

contributions to promoting the stable recovery of the world economy and promoting sustainable development."

Chinese and Indian military commanders met just last month and pledged to "maintain the peace and tranquility" along their disputed border, in an apparent effort by the sides to stabilize the situation.

The Line of Actual Control separates Chinese- and Indian-held territories from Ladakh in the west to India's eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims in its entirety. India and China fought a war over their border in 1962. As its name suggests, the line divides the areas of physical control rather than territorial claims.

According to India, the de facto border is 3,488 kilometers long, but China promotes a considerably shorter figure.

In all, China claims some 90,000 square kilometers of territory in India's northeast, including Arunachal Pradesh with its mainly Buddhist population.

India says China occupies 38,000 square kilometers of its territory in the Aksai Chin Plateau, which India considers part of Ladakh, where the current fa-

ceoff is happening.

China, in the meantime, began cementing relations with India's archrival Pakistan and backing it on the issue of disputed Kashmir.

Firefights broke out again in 1967 and 1975, leading to more deaths on both sides. They've since adopted protocols, including an agreement not to use firearms, but those protocols have fractured.

Other than the potential effects on China-India relations, Xi's absence at the summit will also eliminate the possibility of an interaction with U.S. President Joe Biden. China-U.S. relations remain at a historic low despite recent visits by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and other officials to Beijing.

Xi has accumulated more power at home than any Chinese leader since Mao Zedong, and has adopted an increasingly aggressive approach to what he views as China's territorial interests in the South China Sea and toward self-governing Taiwan, which China threatens to annex by force if necessary.

At the same time, China has struggled to recover economically from the hard-line policies it took to control COVID-19. Foreign businesses also have complained of an increasingly difficult environment in which to invest in and trade with the country.

Xi will not be the only foreign head of state absent from the summit. Russian President Vladimir Putin, who faces war crimes charges over Russia's invasion of Ukraine, will also be skipping the summit, although he does plan to visit close partner China next month. **MDT/AP**

WAR GAMES

Seoul's spy agency says Russia has likely proposed N.Korea to join three-way drills with China

RUSSIA has likely proposed that North Korea participate in three-way naval exercises with China, according to a lawmaker who attended a closed-door briefing with the director of South Korea's top spy agency yesterday.

The briefing came days after Russia's Ambassador to North Korea, Alexander Matsegora, told Russian media that including North Korea in joint military drills between Russia and China "seems appropriate." Matsegora added it was his own point of view and that he wasn't aware of any preparations, according to Russia's Tass news agency.



Kim toasts with Shoigu at a banquet in Pyongyang last July

According to lawmaker Yoo Sang-bum, when South Korean National Intelligence Service Director Kim Kyou-hyun was asked about the possibility of such drills, he said Russian

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu likely proposed holding trilateral naval exercises with North Korea and China while meeting North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in July.

Kim Jong Un invited Shoigu to a major military parade in Pyongyang in July while vowing to expand military cooperation with Moscow, which U.S. officials say could involve North Korean supplies of artillery and other ammunition as Russian President Vladimir Putin reaches out to other countries for support in his war against Ukraine. Last week, the White House said Kim and Putin exchanged letters as Moscow looked to Pyongyang for more munitions.

Amid deepening nuclear tensions with Washington, Seoul and Tokyo, Kim Jong Un has been trying to boost

the visibility of his partnerships with Moscow and Beijing as he seeks to break out of diplomatic isolation and have Pyongyang be a part of a united front against the United States.

Diplomacy between Pyongyang and Washington has stalled since 2019 over disagreements over the crippling U.S.-led sanctions against North Korea and the North's faltered steps to wind down its nuclear weapons and missiles program.

In the briefing, the service director Kim Kyou-hyun also said that North Korea's recent testing activities suggest its warplanes were

highly reliant on its tactical nuclear systems as its aims to achieve swift victory over the South if war breaks out, as its otherwise ill-equipped military would struggle to handle a prolonged war, according to lawmaker Yoo.

Kim has used the international focus on Russia's war on Ukraine to dial up his weapons demonstrations, which have included more than 100 missile launches since the start of 2022. Kim's testing spree has been punctuated by verbal threats of pre-emptive nuclear attacks against South Korea and other rivals if the North perceives its leadership as under threat. **MDT/AP**

SOUTHEAST ASIA SUMMIT

Vice President Kamala Harris to face doubts and dysfunction at meeting

CHRIS MEGERIAN,
WASHINGTON

VICE President Kamala Harris will deepen her outreach to Southeast Asia this week at an international summit in Jakarta, Indonesia, where she'll try to erase doubts about U.S. commitment to the region stirred by President Joe Biden's absence.

It's Harris' third trip to Southeast Asia and fourth to Asia overall, and she's touched down in more countries there than any other continent. The repeat visits, in addition to meetings that she's hosted in Washington, have positioned Harris as a key interlocutor for the administration as it tries to bolster a network of partnerships to counterbalance Chinese influence.

This latest journey is another opportunity for Harris to burnish her foreign policy credentials as she prepares for a bruising campaign year. She's already come under attack from Republican presidential candidates who say she's unprepared to step up if Biden — the oldest U.S. president in history — can't finish a second term.

John Kirby, a White House national security spokesman, said Harris has "made our alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific a key part of her agenda as vice president," and he described her itinerary as "perfectly in keeping with the issues that she's been focused on."

But Biden's decision to skip the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, known as ASEAN, has



caused some frustration, particularly because he's already going to be in India and Vietnam around the same time. The president's proximity makes his no-attendance "all the more more glaring than would otherwise be the case," said Marty Natalegawa, Indonesia's former foreign affairs minister.

However, Natalegawa conceded that ASEAN is struggling to convince world leaders that it deserves to play a central role in the region. That's even though the alliance represents more than 650 million people across 10 nations that collectively have the world's fifth largest economy.

The organization has not resolved civil strife in Myanmar, which saw a military coup two years ago and has been disinclined from meetings. A peace plan reached with the country's top general did not lead to any progress.

Negotiations over territorial claims in the South China Sea remain bogged down as well, and ASEAN faces internal disagree-

ments over global competition between the United States and China. Some members, such as the Philippines and Vietnam, have sought closer ties with Washington, while Cambodia remains firmly in Beijing's orbit.

"We can complain all we want about other countries not respecting us or not coming to our summits," Natalegawa said. "But ultimately, it is actually a point of reflection."

Unless ASEAN becomes more effective, Natalegawa said, "we may end up with less and less leaders turning up."

Kirby, the national security spokesman, rejected the idea that Biden was snubbing the organization or the region.

"It's just impossible to look at the record that this administration has put forward and say that we are somehow walking away," Kirby said, noting that Biden already hosted the first-ever Washington summit with ASEAN leaders last year.

Ja-Ian Chong, an associate pro-

fessor of political science at the National University of Singapore, said Harris' presence helps the U.S. cover its bases at an event that may not prove productive on key issues.

"You want to show that you're paying attention, you send the vice president," he said.

Harris departed yesterday and will spend two days enmeshed in meetings in Jakarta. Her office has not yet detailed her schedule, but she's expected to attend summit events and hold individual talks with some foreign leaders.

Soon after Harris returns from Indonesia, Biden is headed to India for the annual Group of 20 summit, which pulls together many of the world's richest countries and is a staple of any presidents' calendar. Then he plans to stop in Vietnam, where he's focused on strengthening ties with a country that is an emerging economic power.

"I don't fault the administration for the choice that they made. It's just unfortunate that they had to

make that choice," said Gregory B. Poling, who directs the Southeast Asia program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Leaders are gathering in Jakarta amid heightened tension over the South China Sea after Beijing released a new official map that emphasizes its territorial claims there.

The map has angered other nations that consider the waters to be part of their own territory or international byways. The South China Sea is a critical crossroads for global trade.

U.S. officials and analysts believe "Beijing's aggressive approach to the region has created an opening for Washington to forge stronger partnerships."

Although much of Biden's recent attention has been on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, he's left no doubt that he considers China to be the top foreign policy challenge for the U.S. He's described much of his agenda, both domestic and overseas, as an effort to deter Beijing from supplanting Washington as the most powerful worldwide force.

Sometimes his warnings take a darker turn. During a recent fundraiser for his reelection campaign in Park City, Utah, Biden described China as a "ticking time bomb" because of its economic and demographic challenges.

Harris has previously visited Singapore and Vietnam, Japan and South Korea, and the Philippines and Thailand. Many of her travels have been geared toward the global rivalry with China. **MDT/AP**

JAPAN

Top court orders Okinawa to allow a divisive gov't plan to build US military runways

JAPAN'S Supreme Court yesterday dismissed Okinawa's rejection of a central government plan to build U.S. Marine Corps runways on the island and ordered the prefecture to approve it despite protests by locals who oppose the American troops' presence.

The ruling upheld a high court ruling in March that the central government's plan and its instruction for

Okinawa's approval are valid. It will move forward the suspended construction at a time Okinawa's strategic role is seen increasingly important for the Japan-U.S. military alliance in the face of growing tensions with China.

Japan's central government began the reclamation work at the Henoko area on the eastern coast of Okinawa's main island in 2018 to pave the way for

the relocation of the Marine Corps Futenma air station from a crowded neighborhood on the island.

The government later found out about 70% of the reclamation site is on soft ground, and submitted a revision to the original plan with additional land improvement. The Okinawa prefectural government rejected the revision as insufficient and suspended the reclamation work.

The ground improvement plan requires tens of thousands of pillars and massive amounts of soil, which opponents say would damage the environment.

Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki has called for a significant reduction of the U.S. military in Okinawa, the immediate closure of the Futenma base and the scrapping of a base construction in Henoko.

The Japanese and U.S. governments initially agreed in 1996 to close the Futenma air station, a year after the rape of a schoolgirl by three U.S. military personnel led to a massive anti-base movement. But persistent protests and lawsuits between Okinawa and Tokyo have held up the plan for nearly 30 years.

Tokyo and Washington say the relocation within Okinawa, instead of

moving it elsewhere as demanded by many Okinawans, is the only solution.

Okinawa, which accounts for only 0.6% of Japanese land, is burdened with the majority of the 50,000 American troops based in the country under a bilateral security pact, and 70% of U.S. military facilities are in Okinawa.

The Japanese government in recent years has increasingly stepped up its own defenses to deal with China's growing assertiveness, "triggering fear among Okinawan residents" that they will be the first to be embroiled in a potential conflict. **MDT/AP**

RUSSIA

Putin says there will be no new grain deal until the West meets his demands

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that the grain deal that allowed Ukraine to export grain safely through the Black Sea won't be restored until the West meets its obligations to facilitate Russian agricultural exports.

Putin made the statement after talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who along with the U.N. brokered the deal seen as vital for global food supplies, especially in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Ukraine and Russia are major suppliers of wheat, barley, sunflower oil and other goods that developing nations rely on.

But Russia refused to extend the deal in July, complaining that an agreement promising to remove obstacles to Russian exports of food and fertilizer hadn't been honored. It said restrictions on shipping and insurance hampered its agricultural trade even though it has shipped record amounts of wheat since last year.

Putin said that if those commitments were honored, Russia could return to the deal "within the nearest days."

He also said that Russia is close to finalizing an agreement to provide free grain to six African countries. The Russian leader added that Russia will ship 1 million metric tons (1.1 million tons) of cheap grain to Turkey for processing and delivery to poor countries.

Since Putin withdrew from the grain initiative, Erdogan has repeatedly pledged to renew arrangements that helped avoid a food crisis in parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

A lot is riding on the talks for the world food supply, and beforehand analysts predicted Putin would drive a hard bargain.

"My gut feeling is that Putin recognizes the leverage he has by using food as an economic weapon, and thus will fight for all he can get in terms of concessions on his wish-list," said Tim Benton, a food security expert at the



Russian President Vladimir Putin greets Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan upon his arrival at Russia's Black Sea resort of Sochi, yesterday

Chatham House think tank.

Those may include Russia's grains, or fertilizer exports, or wider issues, he said.

Data from the Joint Coordination Center in Istanbul, which organized the Ukraine shipments, shows that 57% of the grain from Ukraine went to developing nations, with the top destination being China, which received nearly a quarter of the food.

The meeting took place against a backdrop of Ukraine's recent counteroffensive against the Kremlin's invasion forces.

In the latest development, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Sunday that Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov would be replaced this week. The job requires "new approaches," Zelenskyy said, without elaborating. Reznikov yesterday published a photo of his resignation letter.

In addition to pulling out of the grain deal, Russia has repeatedly attacked the Odesa region, where Ukraine's main Black Sea port is. Yesterday, the Ukrainian air force said it intercepted 23 of 32 drones that targeted the Odesa and Dnipropetrovsk regions but did not specify damage caused by the dro-

nes that got through.

The Turkish president has maintained close ties with Putin during the 18-month war in Ukraine. Turkey hasn't joined Western sanctions against Russia following its invasion, emerging as a main trading partner and logistical hub for Russia's overseas trade.

Opening the talks, Putin mentioned various areas of bilateral cooperation, such as a proposed Russian gas hub in Turkey and the construction of the first nuclear power plant there, in which Moscow is actively involved.

NATO member Turkey, however, has also supported Ukraine, sending arms, meeting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and backing Kyiv's bid to join NATO.

Erdogan angered Moscow in July when he allowed five Ukrainian commanders to return home. The soldiers had been captured by Russia and handed over to Turkey on condition they remained there for the duration of the war.

Putin and Erdogan — authoritarian leaders who have both been in power for more than two decades — are said to have a close rapport, fostered in the wake of a fai-

led coup against Erdogan in 2016 when Putin was the first major leader to offer his support.

The Sochi summit follows talks between the Russian and Turkish foreign ministers on Thursday, during which Russia handed over a list of actions that the West would have to take in order for Ukraine's Black Sea exports to resume.

Erdogan has indicated sympathy with Putin's position. In July, he said Putin had "certain expectations from Western countries" over the Black Sea deal and that it was "crucial for these countries to take action in this regard."

U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres recently sent Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov "concrete proposals" aimed at getting Russian exports to global markets and allowing the resumption of the Black Sea initiative. But Lavrov said Moscow wasn't satisfied with the letter.

Describing Turkey's "intense" efforts to revive the agreement, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said it was a "process that tries to better understand Russia's position and requests, and to meet them." **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1997 MOTHER TERESA DIES



Mother Teresa, the Nobel Peace Prize winner who devoted her life to helping the sick and the poor, has died at the age of 87.

She died of a heart attack at the headquarters of the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta shortly before 1700 BST.

The nun from Skopje, Macedonia, had been battling ill health for some years, and in March stepped down as head of the order of nuns she founded.

She was revered by many around the world as a living saint for her work with the dispossessed.

The Pope often praised her work and a Vatican spokesman told reporters he was "deeply hurt" by the news of her death.

"The Pope believes she is a woman who has left her mark on the history of this century," he said.

The head of the Catholic church in England and Wales, Cardinal Hume, said she was an "enormously significant figure - everyone knows who Mother Teresa is".

Born Agnes Bojaxhiu in Skopje, then part of the Ottoman Empire later Macedonia, she took the name Sister Teresa in Ireland, where she began her training as a nun with the Loreto Sisters.

She founded her order in 1948 and went out to work in the slums of Calcutta.

She was sometimes accused by Hindus in her adopted country of trying to convert the poor to Catholicism by "stealth" and criticised by liberals who disliked her conservative stance on abortion and contraception.

But her biographer and friend Navin Chana said she would be remembered as someone who "gave the word compassion a new dimension".

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Tens of thousands of people lined the route of Mother Teresa's funeral procession in Calcutta a week later.

Her successor as head of the Missionaries of Charity was Sister Nirmala.

In 1997 the order which Mother Teresa had run for almost half a century was 4,000-strong and established in 130 countries.

It cared for 7,000 children and treated about four million sick people each year.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Try to avoid functions that will bring you in contact with those you find difficult to get along with. You can make progress if you deal with the right individuals.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 It's time to let loose. You will get great satisfaction from your efforts. Don't let coworkers get wind of your ideas or they might try to take credit for your hard work.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Don't let others know about your private affairs. Be prepared for an active but rewarding day. You need to spend less time daydreaming and more time accomplishing.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Toning, fitness, pampering should all be scheduled. Your family may be feeling neglected and unloved. Personal problems may be hanging over your head but don't confront the situation.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 You should get out and meet new people today. Try not to upset others with your plans. Take your time and try not to overload yourself.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Do not be surprised if your partner doesn't understand your needs. This may not be the day to get involved in risky joint financial ventures.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Social events will lead to a strong and stable relationship. Don't blow situations out of proportion or you could find that others will misinterpret what really happened.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Your main concern will be to spend as little as possible of your own cash in the process. Travel should be on your agenda. Expect problems with settlements that you are trying to resolve.

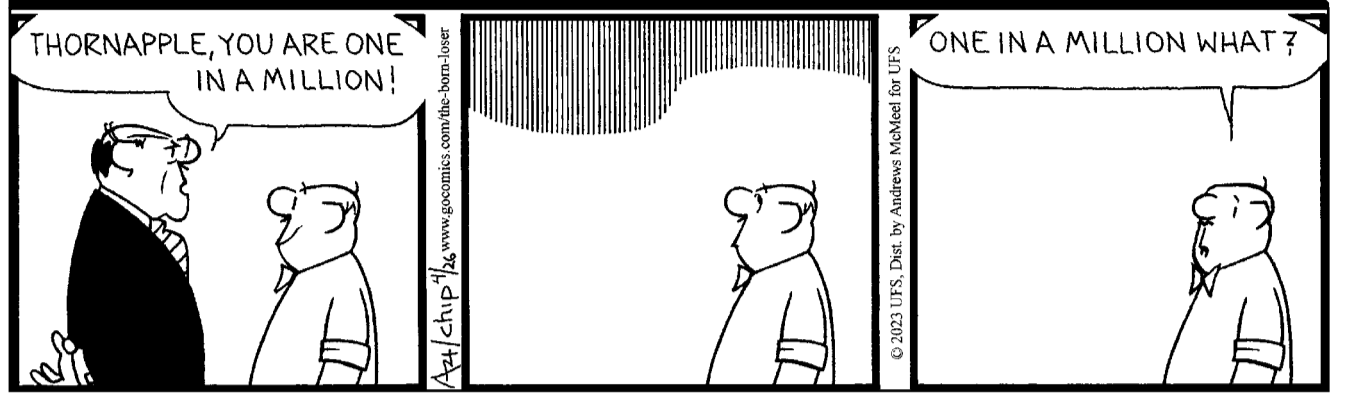
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Your ability to be a self starter will help get things done and motivate others. You might not be as reserved on an emotional level as you'd like.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Talk to others about your plans. If you are in the midst of a financial deal, this is your lucky day. You can make new connections through friends or relatives.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 You may have the opportunity to get involved in some interesting conversations. Control your temper when dealing with your emotional partner.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Offer consolation, but don't give them any direction. You should be putting your cash into long-term investments like real estate.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

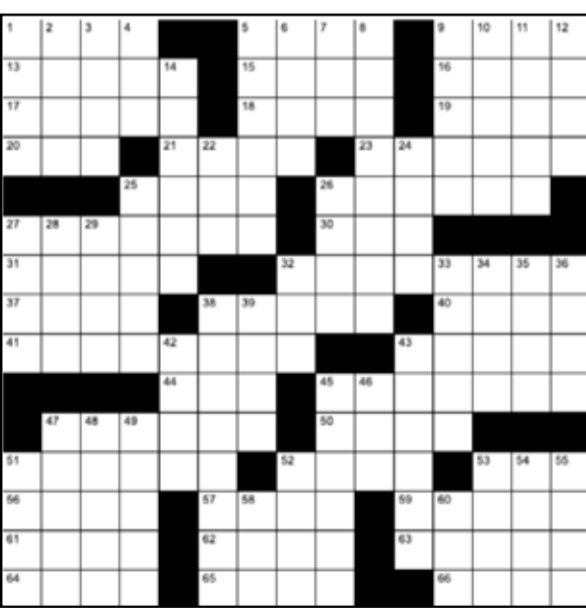
	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	22	31	fine
Changchun	16	26	fine
Chengdu	22	31	showers
Chongqing	25	36	fine
Fuzhou	24	29	rain
Guangzhou	26	33	cloudy
Guiyang	18	26	cloudy
Haikou	25	32	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	24	28	rain
Harbin	12	22	fine
Hefei	21	31	thunderstorms
Nanjing	25	31	overcast
Shanghai	26	30	overcast
Taipei	26	30	rain
Wuhan	22	33	rain
Hong Hong	28	32	thunderstorms
WORLD			
Moscow	13	22	overcast
Frankfurt	13	28	overcast
Paris	19	34	clear
London	17	28	fine
New York	24	34	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Must've been something ____; 5- Romantic couple; 9- Four-sided fig.; 13- Shut; 15- Royal Indian; 16- Historical periods; 17- John of England; 18- Scraps; 19- I did it!; 20- ____ Tafari (Haile Selassie); 21- Kemo ____; 23- Hockey player, e.g.; 25- Kind of wrestling; 26- Faucet; 27- Most feeble; 30- Driving aid; 31- Having auricular protuberances; 32- Like a well-edited puzzle; 37- Corner; 38- Frown; 40- Duo; 41- Harlot; 43- Carousal; 44- Comedian Philips; 45- Dismal; 47- Semitic language; 50- Quarry; 51- Seaport in N France; 52- Operatic solo; 53- Bee follower; 56- Pound sounds; 57- Spanish snack; 59- Small hill; 61- Hula hoops?; 62- Catch a view of; 63- Warble; 64- ____ expert, but...; 65- Phooey!; 66- One of the Three Bears;

DOWN 1- Bakery worker; 2- ____ breve; 3- Small children; 4- That, in Tijuana; 5- Asimov classic; 6- Shipping deduction; 7- Med. specialty; 8- Get a letter off?; 9- Put a new price on; 10- Muse of poetry in Greek mythology; 11- A trainee in a profession; 12- Boris Godunov, for one; 14- Followed; 22- Mornings, for short; 24- Capital of the Ukraine; 25- Trapshooting; 26- Pack away; 27- Antiprohibitionists; 28- British nobleman; 29- Region; 32- Sean, to John; 33- To put to use; 34- Uncovered; 35- Falsehoods; 36- " ____ Tu"; 1974 hit; 38- Academic session; 39- Black bird; 42- Actress Hatcher; 43- Furtive; 45- Squirts; 46- One of the Four Forest Cantons; 47- Seraglio; 48- Pixyish; 49- Ezio Pinza, for one; 51- Colombian city; 52- PDA entry; 53- Musical epilogue; 54- K-6; 55- Raines of film; 58- Simile center; 60- ____ de guerre;

Yesterday's solution



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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AD

BASKETBALL

World Cup quarterfinals bring a second chance

TIM REYNOLDS, MANILA

IF there was a silver lining to the U.S. World Cup team losing to Lithuania, it's this: The Americans now truly know how painful it is to watch another national team line up against a nation that has won four consecutive Olympic gold medals and celebrate in its face.

As one might guess, they didn't enjoy that feeling.

And if it happens again at this World Cup, it'll be much, much worse.

Yesterday was a back-to-reality day for the U.S., one day after its undefeated summer run ended with a 110-104 loss to Lithuania to end the second round of the World Cup.

A quarterfinal game against Italy awaits today, with the U.S. — like all the teams in the Round of 8 — knowing the only way to win gold in Manila is to win every game the rest of the way.

"It makes it real," U.S. guard Austin Reaves said. "Obviously, now, it's lose or go home. We see the reactions. We obviously know that everybody wants to beat us in par-

ticular. We see the joy that they get from that. That taste in your mouth, it don't feel good."

There was much to work on and much to critically discuss yesterday. Another bad start — these have been a trend for the U.S. throughout the tournament, and none was worse than falling behind 31-12 after one quarter Sunday — was lamented, as was another night where rebounding was a problem.

"We need to jump on guys early like they jump on us," U.S. forward Bobby Portis said. "That's a big thing. It's a grown-man game here. A dog-eat-dog world. Got to get off to a better start."

The Americans have talked plenty about what must change. Talk needs to become action now, or else. The U.S. saw medal hopes end in China four years ago with a loss in the World Cup quarterfinals, and Italy will try to make the Americans face that same fate today.

"Every player that plays for USA Basketball, they have to recognize what they're up against and it's not enough for us to just tell them. They've got to feel it," U.S. coach Steve Kerr said. "I think they've felt



AP PHOTO

it in the last couple games."

Kerr has experienced this before. As an assistant coach under Gregg Popovich for the 2019 World

Cup and the Tokyo Olympics that were delayed a year until 2021, Kerr was on the staff for losses in both tournaments. The World Cup team

lost in the quarterfinals and sputtered to a seventh-place finish. The Olympic team lost its tournament-opener to France and won gold

AD

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



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

for USA

after never losing again.

Kerr's experience is that U.S. teams come out with "a little more edge" after losses, he said, and he's hoping to see that mentality against Italy.

"There's a little more 'appropriate fear,' as Pop likes to say," Kerr said. "And that's what's needed."

And even though the scenario would be the same even if the U.S. beat Lithuania — a 3-0 record the rest of the way is still the only way to win gold — a loss could serve as the proverbial wake-up call that some teams tend to need.

"It has to be," U.S. captain and point guard Jalen Brunson said. "We have no other choice."

PAOLO VS. ITALY

There is a subplot for the U.S.-Italy quarterfinal game, that being American forward Paolo Banchemo going up against the team that wanted him to play in their colors this summer. Banchemo, whose father has Italian heritage, ultimately decided to play for the U.S. — in large part because his mother also played for the U.S. national team.

"I'll treat it like any other game," Banchemo said.

OTHER QUARTERFINALS

Lithuania (5-0) vs. Serbia (4-1), today: The Lithuanians are trying to go undefeated in a major international tournament for the first time since winning EuroBasket in 2003, and will be riding high after topping the Americans. Serbia is shooting 55% to lead the World Cup, just ahead of No. 2 Lithuania (53.8%). Winner here gets the Canada-Slovenia winner in Friday's semifinals. Loser gets the Canada-Slovenia loser in a consolation playoff game Thursday.

Germany (5-0) vs. Latvia (4-1), Wednesday: Germany is one of only two teams to get this far unbeaten in this World Cup, and will take on a Latvian team that is on a dream run through its first appearance in FIBA's biggest event. Winner here gets the U.S.-Italy winner in Friday's semifinals. Loser gets the U.S.-Italy loser in a consolation playoff game Thursday.

Canada (4-1) vs. Slovenia (4-1), Wednesday: The only two All-NBA players in this tournament from last season will go head-to-head, with Canada's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander facing off against Slovenia's Luka Doncic. Canada is already assured of its best World Cup finish since at least 1994. Winner here gets the Lithuania-Serbia winner in Friday's semifinals. Loser gets the Lithuania-Serbia winner in a consolation playoff game Thursday. **MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL | EPL

SANCHO SAYS HE IS A 'SCAPEGOAT' IN ANGRY REACTION TO COMMENTS BY UNITED MANAGER TEN HAG

MANCHESTER United manager Erik ten Hag said Jadon Sancho was dropped for the Premier League game at Arsenal on Sunday because of below-par displays in training, sparking an angry reaction from the winger in a social media post in which he claimed he was being made a "scapegoat."

The 23-year-old Sancho did not travel to north London for the match at Emirates Stadium, where two stoppage-time goals by Arsenal consigned United to a 3-1 loss.

Ten Hag said after the match that Sancho, who came off the bench in United's first three matches of the season, was left out because of "his performances in training."

"You have to reach a level every day at Manchester United and we can make choices in the front line," the Dutch coach said. "So for this game he was not selected."

Sancho took to X, formerly known as Twitter, to say he has "conducted myself in training very well this week" and he didn't want to let "people saying things that (are) completely untrue."



Manchester United's Jadon Sancho (right) and Tottenham's Pedro Porro during a recent match

"I believe there are other reasons for this matter that I won't go into," Sancho wrote. "I've been a scapegoat for a long time which isn't fair!"

"All I want to do is play football with a smile on my face and contribute to my team. I respect all decisions that are made by the coaching staff, I play with fantastic players and (am) grateful to do so which I know every week is a

challenge. I will continue to fight for this badge no matter what!"

Sancho has struggled for consistent form since moving to Old Trafford from Borussia Dortmund in 2021.

He did not feature from Oct. 22 until Feb. 1 last season, a period that saw him watch the World Cup from afar and undertake an individual winter fitness program in the Netherlands. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE BETWEEN CHINA AND AUSTRALIA CAN HELP CONSOLIDATE IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS

Since Australia's Labor government took office last year, Canberra has made a departure from its predecessor's anti-China stance and sought to mend fences with Beijing. Thanks to the efforts of both sides, bilateral ties have not only witnessed a thaw but seen a significant uptick.

The upcoming high-level dialogue between China and Australia is the first since 2020. It will provide a good opportunity for both sides to continue to build on the current upward momentum in bilateral ties. By deepening mutual understanding, the two sides can build a meaningful consensus on bringing bilateral cooperation to a higher and more stable terrain.

An Australian delegation with representatives from industrial sectors, government agencies, academia and media are heading to China for the highly anticipated dialogue with their Chinese counterparts, which is scheduled for Thursday.

By reviving the dialogue mechanism established in 2014, both Beijing and Canberra clearly want to send a message that they now want to consolidate the improvement in relations in such areas as the economy and trade ties and people-to-people exchanges.

With the thaw in relations, bilateral trade, which was frosty in 2020 and 2021, has seen signs of a turnaround. In April, China and Australia reached an agreement in their barley dispute, and Canberra subsequently suspended its World Trade Organization complaint against China.

In a media release on Saturday, Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs Penny Wong said the upcoming dialogue "represents another step towards increasing bilateral engagement and stabilizing our relationship with China". That speaks volumes about Canberra's strong political will to join hands with the Chinese side and build on the current good momentum in bilateral relations.

China and Australia have no fundamental disputes. For years, China has remained Australia's largest trading partner, export market, source of imports, source of tourism revenue and source of international students. Hence, Canberra has everything to gain from working with Beijing to put bilateral ties back onto the right track.

Canberra should not let itself be swayed by Washington. If it views China objectively, it will recognize China's development presents an opportunity, not a threat, to Australia.

Canberra needs to know no matter how close it draws to Washington, it should not let the US dictate its relations with China. Developing China-Australia ties caters to the fundamental interests of both peoples. It is natural for the two countries to have differences in various fields, and efforts such as the upcoming dialogue is the right approach for the two countries to reduce misunderstandings, deepen mutual understanding and build more mutual trust.

UN NUCLEAR WATCHDOG REPORT SEEN SAYS IRAN SLOWS ITS ENRICHMENT OF NEAR-WEAPONS-GRADE URANIUM

THE BUZZ

Iran has slowed the pace at which it is enriching uranium to nearly weapons-grade levels, according to a report by the United Nations' nuclear watchdog seen by The Associated Press yesterday. That could be a sign Tehran is trying to ease tensions after years of strain between it and the U.S.

The confidential report comes as Iran and the United States are negotiating a prisoner swap and the release of billions of dollars in Iranian assets frozen in South Korea. However, international inspectors also noted new challenges in trying to monitor Iran's program.

In an effort to ensure Iran could not develop atomic weapons,

world powers struck a deal with Tehran in 2015 under which it agreed to limit enrichment of uranium to levels necessary for nuclear power in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. U.N. inspectors were tasked with monitoring the program.

Then-President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled the U.S. out of the accord in 2018.

The International Atomic Energy Agency said in its report that Iran has 121.6 kilograms of uranium enriched up to 60%. That means its stockpile of the fuel is growing at its slowest pace since 2021.

AP FILE PHOTO



BIDEN AND TRUMP ARE KEEPING LIGHT CAMPAIGN SCHEDULES AS RIVALS RACK UP THE STOPS

JILL COLVIN & WILL WEISERT, WASHINGTON

Their rivals are busy answering voters' questions at town halls across South Carolina, glad-handing with business owners in New Hampshire and grinding to hit every one of Iowa's 99 counties.

But the front-runners for their party's nomination, former President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden, are barely campaigning in crucial early-voting states as the primary season enters the fall rush.

Biden is attending a union parade in Philadelphia today [Macau time]. But he has held just one campaign rally in the four-plus months since he formally launched his 2024 reelection bid. Trump, who complained of his Biden's "basement strategy" in 2020, has not campaigned for three weeks now, last appearing at the Iowa State Fair on Aug. 12.

The schedules underscore the reality that Democrat Biden and Republican Trump, despite underwater approval ratings nationally, are the dominant front-runners. Biden faces only token opposition in anti-vaccine activist Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who is viewed more favorably by Republicans than Democrats, while Trump is

currently beating his closest rival by large margins, according to recent polls.

"When you have a massive lead over your primary opponents, it doesn't seem like a lot of point," said veteran Republican pollster Whit Ayres, speaking about the early-state campaigning typical at this stage of a race.

Biden and Trump have worked to project an air of inevitability four months before voting begins in 2024. Biden has focused on governing and traveling the country to promote his policy accomplishments. Trump repeatedly skips events with other candidates and passed on the first Republican primary debate last month.

But both have different reasons for their relative absence from campaigning.

Trump's team has been consumed by the criminal charges he now faces in four separate jurisdictions accusing him of illegally trying to overturn the results of the 2020 election, improperly classifying hush money payments in business records, mishandling classified documents after leaving office and trying to obstruct that investigation.

Trump has complained that the looming trials will force from campaigning.

"I'm sorry, I won't be

able to go to Iowa today, I won't be able to go to New Hampshire today because I'm sitting in a courtroom on bull—," he said during his last visit to New Hampshire, in August.

For now, Trump's bookings and arraignments have actually served as his highest-profile campaign events.

His trips to jails and courthouses in New York, Miami, Washington and Atlanta have dominated coverage of the race, with his movements tracked by news helicopters and broadcast live on television and across the internet. His historic mug shot, now featured on T-shirts, mugs and posters, helped his campaign raise more than \$20 million in August alone.

Aides say his schedule will ramp up after the Labor Day weekend, with trips this coming week to Iowa and South Dakota — neither is a key primary or general election state — and California after that. He has also been busy behind the scenes. Beyond golfing and meetings with his lawyers, Trump has called into conservative podcasts, taped videos he releases on his Truth Social network and attended fundraisers, both at his club in Bedminster, New Jersey, and in other states. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Ecuador Men walk through a lush plantation between Ecuador's balmy Pacific coast and its majestic Andes, lopping hundreds of bunches of green bananas from groaning plants twice their height. Workers haul the bunches to an assembly line, where the bananas are washed, weighed and plastered with stickers for European buyers. Owner Franklin Torres is monitoring all activity on a recent morning to make sure the fruit meets international beauty standards — and ever more important, is packed for shipment free of cocaine.

AP PHOTO



Gabon's new military leader was sworn in as the head of state yesterday less than a week after ousting the president whose family had ruled the Central African nation for more than five decades. Gen. Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema, took the oath in the presidential palace in front of a packed, boisterous room of government officials, military and local leaders in Gabon's capital, Libreville. Oligui is a cousin of the ousted President Ali Bongo Ondimba, served as a bodyguard to his late father and is head of the republican guard, an elite military unit.

AP PHOTO



Music Aerosmith is one of the best things to come out of Boston, and soon it will exist only in memories and playbacks — like Tom Brady, "Cheers" and Larry Bird. The quintet has given the world 50 years of classic rock and some of the most enduring songs of all time, including "Dream On," "Walk This Way" and "Sweet Emotion." Aerosmith began its farewell "Peace Out" tour Saturday in Philadelphia with a two-hour set spanning its voluminous catalog.