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RESULTS OF APP FOR MENTAL HEALTH INTERVENTION SHOW IT EFFECTIVELY REDUCES DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS IN CHINESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, SURVEY FINDS

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FIVE ZONE A PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECTS ON HOLD, SAYS SECRETARY RAIMUNDO

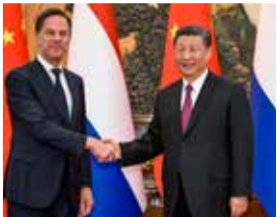
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XI SENDS POSITIVE MESSAGE IN MEETING WITH US BUSINESS LEADERS

P6



AP PHOTO



China Chinese leader Xi Jinping told visiting Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte yesterday that attempts to restrict China's access to technology will not stop the country's advance. The Netherlands imposed export licensing requirements in 2023 on the sale of machinery that can make advanced processor chips. The move came after the United States blocked Chinese access to advanced chips and the equipment to make them, citing security concerns, and urged its allies to follow suit.

Pakistani authorities will perform DNA testing on the remains of the suicide bomber who rammed his explosive-laden car into a vehicle in the country's northwest, killing five Chinese nationals and their local driver, officials said yesterday. The attack occurred in Shangla, a district in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province where thousands of Chinese nationals work on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor which includes a multitude of megaprojects such as road construction, power plants and agriculture. The CPEC is a lifeline for Pakistan.

AP PHOTO



Thailand Lawmakers lower house of Parliament overwhelmingly approved a marriage equality bill yesterday that would make the country the first in Southeast Asia to legalize equal rights for marriage partners of any gender. The bill passed its final reading with the approval of 400 of the 415 members of the House of Representatives in attendance, with 10 voting against it, two abstaining and three not voting.

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NAM KWONG BLUES

Pandemic challenges behind premature closure at Delta bridge checkpoint shopping center

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MACAU TALENT SINGER GERMAN KU 'FEELING GOOD' AFTER WIN AT HK POPULAR CONTEST

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GRAND PRIX LATE MIKE TRIMBY NAMED MOTO GP LEGEND

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MPU CAREER DAY OFFERS 4,000 JOB, INTERNSHIP VACANCIES

The recent Career Day of the Macao Polytechnic University (MPU) offered 4,000 job vacancies and internship opportunities, according to data provided by the university. The event, held at the university campus, saw the participation of over 140 institutions and companies from Macau and the Greater Bay Area. The program included 16 specialized seminars and workshops focused on interview skills and job search strategies, corporate visits, and an exhibition showcasing the achievements of the Art Talent Development Showcase.

MACAU CASINOS TURN TO RFID TO TRACK FOREIGN BETTORS

Facing failure to attract foreign gamblers, Macau casinos are turning to radio frequency identification (RFID) technology to track non-Chinese players' bets and claim tax deductions as permitted under new legislation. Last year, the government announced an up to 5% tax break for casinos able to boost foreign gaming revenue, but initial efforts at isolating foreigner-only areas were unappealing to foreign gamblers. Now casino operators are installing smart table systems, and the government is providing equipment to facilitate tracking of foreign bettors' wagers using RFID, said Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong.

MIRROR MAKES COMEBACK WITH MACAU SHOWS

Boy band Mirror will take the stage in Macau next month as part of its first world tour since a 2022 on-stage accident. The May 17-18 shows at Galaxy Arena aim to help the 12-member act bounce back, after dancer Mo Li suffered serious injuries when a screen fell during a previous concert. While prosecutors have not charged concert producers or the band over the incident, staff from the involved engineering firm still face trial in October. The tour - spanning the UK, U.S., Canada, Malaysia and Singapore - follows solo shows by bandmates last summer as Li remains hospitalized. Representatives for Mirror have not publicly addressed the accident.

CE TO ATTEND AL PLENARY APR. 16

The Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng will attend a plenary session of the Legislative Assembly (AL) on April 16 to answer Legislative Assembly members' questions on Government policy and social issues. The CE attends question-and-answer sessions at the AL in order to "enhance communication with AL members, optimise administrative transparency, and update the public with the progress of Government work." The session will start at 3 p.m. and will be broadcast live on television and radio channels of public broadcaster TDM.



Champion of the "Midlife, Sing & Shine! 2" competition, German Ku

GERMAN KU

SINGER EXPRESSES FAITH LOCAL TALENT WILL CONTINUE TO GAIN RECOGNITION AMID GOV'T SUPPORT

STAFF REPORTER

GERMAN Ku, a Macanese singer, has last weekend achieved great success by winning the "Midlife, Sing & Shine! 2" competition in Hong Kong. This victory has ignited his passion to promote and elevate local musical talent in his hometown of Macau. In an interview with the Times, Ku shared his personal journey and expressed his hopes for the future of Macau's music scene.

Ku's love for singing was inspired by the legendary Hong Kong icon, Anita Mui, from a young age. Although he was initially shy, Ku gradually gained confidence by performing locally during his late teenage years. Over the past decade, he has garnered valuable experience through numerous performances in Macau.

One of the key factors contributing to Ku's success has been the support he has received from organizations such as the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) and the local community.

"Most of my performances have been arranged through MGTO and other government departments. They have given local talent like myself many opportunities to perform at openings and closings of events," Ku told the Times.

The government's backing has provided him with opportunities to produce his own music and perform at prestigious events in Macau. However, winning the competition in Hong Kong this year, with the song "Feeling Good", has been his most significant achievement to date.

Through this remarkable accomplishment, Ku aspires to bring greater attention to the abundance of musical talent present in Macau.

When asked about government support for the arts, Ku expressed his gratitude for regular bookings and high-profile performances. Nevertheless, he dreams of a future where Macau-based musicians can hold their own headline concerts in the city's venues.

"I believe the support is growing and, in the future [and] besides just performing

in Macau, we'll start holding our own concerts here," Ku said.

"People will realize that Macau singers can headline and open shows at venues like Studio City Arena. Being able to do that in Macau is one of my dreams. So the government is providing opportunities, and I have faith that local talent will continue to gain recognition," he added.

With the existing platforms and foundations in place, Ku remains optimistic that continued recognition of homegrown talent will follow as opportunities expand in the coming years.

Although establishing Macau's arts scene has presented challenges in the past, Ku takes pride in his contributions.

"Macau is a very small market as a singer. Through all these years, Macau artists have fought hard to establish the Macau music industry. I'm glad I was part of it," he said.

With increased support from the local community, Ku dreams of fostering a thriving music industry in Macau that empowers hometown stars.

After months of performances in the "Midlife, Sing & Shine! 2" competition, Ku, also known as Germano Guilherme, emerged victorious as the winner of this popular singing reality television series hosted by Hong Kong's TVB. Throughout the competition, Ku received unwavering support from his loyal fan base, particularly among the Macanese community, which has been a source of immense pride for both Ku and Macau.

"It's a competition so there is a lot of pressure, both from the other contestants who are really powerful, and the pressures around you. Even though it was really hard, I did enjoy my moments during the eight months with all the colleagues," Ku recalled.

Meanwhile, Valentina Oane Marques, a fellow Macanese supporter who has been avidly following Ku's journey since the show's inception, expressed her admiration for his hard work and growth throughout the competition. She described Ku's triumph in the final as a "momentous occasion for Macau and its people."

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'Pandemic challenges' behind Nam Kwong premature closure at HZMB

ANTHONY LAM

THE early termination of the contract for retail space leasing services at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge was caused by challenges amid the post pandemic period, a security forces official has told the parliament.

The contract was between Beijing-financed Nam Kwong Group and the government and concerned leasing retail space at the Macau checkpoint of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge.

The contract was not set to expire until next year.

There was no prior explanation from the government. Lawmaker Si Ka Lon has questioned the Security Forces at a recent parliamentary interpellation session. Lawmakers Pereira Coutinho and Ron Lam also criticized the government for its lack of transparency in its handling of the matter.

Coutinho questioned the rationale behind the early termination of the contract and asked who initiated the termination.



He further questioned how public interests can be protected when early contract terminations have happened twice in several months.

Coutinho was referring to the

early closure of the Macau Jockey Club when the license was valid until 2042.

Additionally, while agreeing that business under the pandemic was difficult, Lam questioned why the government had chosen to simply terminate the contract rather than pursuing other options, such as lowering the service charge on Nam Kwong.

The government recently started leasing commercial spaces at the Qingmao Border Checkpoint building. Lam said that he worried the same would happen at this border checkpoint.

Lao Sio Leng, department head for land borders at the Public Security Forces Affairs Bureau (FSM), said that measures such as lease reduction and advertising had taken place, but the situation did not improve.

A total of 19 lease persuasion sessions were held between December 2019 and August 2023, she said.

While acknowledging that Nam Kwong had made significant efforts, she disclosed that the enterprise had decided to terminate the contract before its expiry, and this decision was approved by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng.

The original expiration date of the contract was May 31, 2025.

AD

2024MIECF

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2024MIECF Event Programme

28/3/2024 (Thursday)

10:30 - 12:00	2024MIECF Opening Ceremony (By Invitation Only)	Sicily Meeting Room
11:00 - 18:30	Green Showcase and Green Matching	Expo Hall A
12:30 - 13:00	Protocol Signing Ceremony	Green Conference Zone, Expo Hall A
14:30 - 18:00	Green Business Co-operation Day: Green Forum Session 1 New Business Opportunities in ESG - Building a Circular Economy Ecosystem (Co-hosted with PricewaterhouseCoopers, co-organised by the Greater Bay Area Green Finance Alliance and the Macau Association of Banks)	Sicily Meeting Room
16:30 - 18:00	Green Forum Session 2 Pan-Pearl River Delta Environmental Protection Industry Conference for Co-operation and Exchange (Internal Meeting)	Guangdong Pavilion, Expo Hall A

29/3/2024 (Friday)

09:30 - 12:15	Green Forum Session 3 Creating a Blueprint for a Carbon Neutral City to Tackle Climate Change	Sicily Meeting Room
15:00 - 17:30	Green Forum Session 4 Implementing Green Development Solutions to Promote Urban Transformation	Sicily Meeting Room
10:00 - 18:00	Green Showcase and Green Matching	Expo Hall A

30/3/2024 (Saturday)

10:00 - 17:00	Green Showcase and Green Matching	Expo Hall A
10:00 - 17:00	Green Public Day	Green Conference Zone, Expo Hall A
10:00 - 11:00	Technical Visit (By Registration) (1) Cotai Ecological Zones (2) Macao Electronic and Electrical Equipment Recycling Treatment Facility	

2024MIECF Keynote Speaker



Mr. Ruihe Tu

- Head of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) China Office
- Co-chair of Res'U Group of the Planet in UN-China Sustainable Development Co-operation Framework

Keynote Speech:
Global Environmental Governance: Progress and Outlook

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Free shuttles will be provided for the public on 30 March (Saturday). Please refer to the following link for the route: <https://www.macaomiecf.com/miecf2024/overview/shuttle>

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

RENATO MARQUES

MIKE Trimby, a former long-term co-organizer of the Macau Grand Prix event, has been named a MotoGP Legend, the Fédération Internationale de Motocyclisme (FIM) and the organizer and commercial rights owner of MotoGP championship Dorna Sports announced.

He will become the first non-rider to be inducted into the Hall of Fame, honoring his off-track contributions to the sport.

Trimby, who passed away in September last year, had played a major role in the organizing of the local Motorcycle GP over 34 years. In 2011, he decided to abandon the organizing committee of the Macau GP, citing internal disputes with other members of the local committee.

In November 2011, Trimby announced the news of his departure in a personal letter addressed to all the riders who joined that year's event.

Although Trimby always refused to comment on the matter to the media, the letter cited problems with an unnamed member of the Macau GP organizing committee, "who clearly does not like me and goes to great lengths to cause trouble for me."

He further elaborated on the topic by referring to an accusation that claimed he profited from sponsorship arrangements that he claimed to be out of his scope of work and that he "had nothing to do with."

In addition to being a co-organizer of the Macau GP, Trimby was the founder and CEO of the International Road Racing Teams Association (IRTA), the association that continues to represent the interests of the riders with the organizers of the championship races.

He had been involved with the local GP since 1978 when he

MIKE TRIMBY

FORMER GP CO-ORGANIZER NAMED MOTOGP LEGEND

BARRY RUSSELL



Mike Trimby (left) and Micheal Rutter

raced in the event and finished on the podium behind Sadeo Asami and Steve Parrish.

In the same year, he began work with the organizers to gather a contingent of foreign riders to compete in Macau, an arrangement that lasted until 2011.

He is credited for using his influence and knowledge over more than 30 years to bring superstars of the motorcycle championships worldwide to Macau, including names such as 500cc category world champions Kevin Schwantz and Wayne Gardner, Superbike world title winners Carl Fogarty, and the Macau GP and Road Racing stars such as Ron Haslam, Joey, and Robert Dunlop.

TRIMBY'S EXIT CARRIED CONSEQUENCES

Apart from being a shocking revelation at the time, the departure of Trimby also brought consequences that outshone the GP event itself, due to the extent of Trimby's influence. Probably the biggest example of this was the removal of American racer Kevin Schwantz's motorcycle from the collection of the Macau GP Museum, arguably the most valuable piece that has ever been on display in the local museum that is dedicated to the over 70-year-old event.

Although, according to an official response from the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), the famous motorcycle of the "wheelie-king" was removed due

to the end of the loan agreement with Suzuki who owned the piece, sources close to the matter told the Times that the motorcycle was removed shortly after the relationship of Trimby and the local GP ended. They claim the motorcycle was, until some time ago, in the possession of Trimby's family.

Concurrently with the removal of Schwantz's motorcycle from the museum, at least one other motorcycle was also removed from the collection, being the one that Trimby rode during the 1978 Macau GP.

AMONG THE BIG NAMES

With Trimby as a MotoGP Legend in 2024, Dorna and FIM expressed the desire to honor a life dedicated to motorcycle Grand Prix

racing. They said Trimby was one of the most important figures in the history of motorcycle Grand Prix racing, having played a pivotal role in shaping the sport.

In the announcement, Trimby's wife, Irene, said, "Mike would have been very honored to receive this prestigious award. Everyone who knew him knows he never would have expected it either. It's wonderful for his work and legacy to be acknowledged in this way, although I'm sure he might also have been a little embarrassed to see us putting on a ceremony and giving him a trophy! It's also something very special for me, for everyone who worked closely with him, and for everyone who continues to miss him very much. Thank you very much."

CEO of Dorna Sports, Carmelo Ezpeleta, added, "Mike's contribution to motorcycle Grand Prix racing is truly monumental, and we're proud to name him a MotoGP Legend. Since the concept of MotoGP Legends was born, it has always been about more than numbers. There are no criteria based on simple race wins or number of championships. It's about contribution to the sport – be it off-track, on-track, or a combination of the two. Mike should become the first figure honored purely for his off-track impact, as his work in this sport was truly second to none. It will be an honor for us, and for me, to induct Mike into the Hall of Fame. He is greatly missed and we race on in his memory."

Trimby will join the list of his fellow MotoGP Legends in the Hall of Fame, which includes names such as Giacomo Agostini, Max Biaggi, Alex Crivillé, Mick Doohan, Andrea Dovizioso, Geoff Duke, Wayne Gardner, Mike Hailwood, Nicky Hayden, Jorge Lorenzo, Daijiro Kato, Eddie Lawson, Randy Mamola, Jorge 'Aspar' Martinez, Angel Nieto, Dani Pedrosa, Wayne Rainey, Kenny Roberts, Kenny Roberts Jr, Valentino Rossi, Kevin Schwantz, Marco Simoncelli, Freddie Spencer, Casey Stoner and Franco Uncini.

STEP-BY-STEP

RESEARCH SHOWS APP AIDS REDUCTION OF DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS AMONGST UNIVERSITY STUDENTS



STAFF REPORTER

RESULTS of a mobile health intervention indicated that it effectively reduces depressive symptoms in Chinese university students in the short term and improves for psychological well-being in the long term.

The study was done collaboratively by the University of Macau (UM) and New York University Shanghai (NYU Shanghai). They recently announced their research findings, which

was initially a randomized controlled trial of 'Step-by-Step' (SbS) conducted on UM students.

Before the trial, the research team conducted interviews with focus groups to enhance the elements of SbS, such as stories, visuals, and language, and made necessary adaptations to suit the Chinese context. A feasibility study was then carried out to gather feedback and ensure the smooth implementation of the subsequent large-scale randomized controlled

trial. The trial lasted for one year and involved a total of 371 participants.

The intervention process lasted eight weeks, with weekly assessments of its effectiveness. Post-intervention assessments and follow-up interviews were conducted at the end of the intervention and then again three months later.

The study data reveals that participants rated the intervention's effectiveness in reducing stress at seven out of ten. The majority of

participants expressed that the content and presentation of SbS exceeded their expectations. Over half of the participants reported acquiring new knowledge and skills in managing emotions, making plans, and overcoming negative emotions.

The study provides empirical evidence supporting SbS as an evidence-based mental health intervention, highlighting its potential to improve the mental well-being of Chinese university students and its applicability in broader clinical settings. The research findings were also published in the medical journal *Translational Psychiatry*.

Proposed Coloane landfill to impact dolphin habitats: study

ANTHONY LAM

LANDFILL off the coast from Coloane will quite certainly jeopardize the habitats of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins living around Macau.

The proposed landfill will measure a total of 2.5 square kilometers. In contrast, New Urban Zone A measures 1.38 square kilometers, meaning the proposed landfill will be equivalent to approximately two Zones A located 1 km off the coast of Coloane.

A study commissioned by the former Civil and Municipal Affairs Bureau (IACM) – now the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) – and conducted by Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou has concluded that a protection zone measuring 36 square kilometers should be established to conserve the endangered species known as Chinese white dolphins, TDM reported.

The report has not been publicly released despite the conclusion of the study, and has been labelled by the government. The study commenced following Beijing's extension of Macau's jurisdiction over 85 square kilometers of waters in 2015.

The public broadcaster compared the proposed conservation



zone and the proposed landfill location, identifying overlap. According to the university's report, the activities associated with the proposed landfill will likely be disruptive to the dolphins.

Counting at least 144 dolphins in Macau waters, the university also reported (as cited by TDM English and Portuguese) that "investigations indicate that a large amount of wastewater with hea-

vy metals, organic contaminants and antibiotics is discharged into the Pearl River Estuary, and these can enter the dolphins' bodies through the skin and absorption of food."

About a year ago, Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo Rosário first disclosed the government's intention to build a landfill near Macau's waters. However, at that time, he said it

was premature to disclose the specific location.

The location was then discreetly included in a public consultation document on marine policies late last year.

The university noted that "the maritime area managed by Macau is the only overlapping area between two crucial habitats of the communities of dolphins residing in the Lingding Channel and the Muodaomen area. Therefore, it is the most important maritime area to guarantee the integrity of Chinese white dolphins in the Pearl River Estuary."

To support its proposal, the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) has claimed that the species mainly reside and are active around the southern tip of the Macau International Airport runway.

It assured that the landfill will only take up 0.2% of the dolphins' habitats.

Ever since, environmentalists within the Greater Bay Area have voiced opposition to the proposed landfill, citing various studies, reports and documentary evidence to prove that the dolphins need a wide space to survive, and that they roam around the area for food and as part of their normal activities.

The Sun Yat-sen University report, now publicized by TDM English and Portuguese, adds to this body of literature.

At a recent parliamentary interpellation, lawmaker Ron Lam requested the government provide sufficient evidence and data to support the proposed landfill.

In response, do Rosário made it clear that the decision to create a landfill – and if so, where and by what means – was not within the remit of local government. He said that all decisions were made based on mainland expert studies.

When Lam criticized the small size of the government-proposed marine conservatory, which will not meet UN requirements, Director for Marine and Water Susana Wong said that UN requirements are to be complied with on a national rather than regional scale.

Director for Environmental Protection Tam Wai Man attributed to lack of marine space to the necessity of supporting the proposed landfill's location. He said that due to geographical and natural constraints, no further landfills can be built east of the city. Therefore, the proposed location is the only suitable option.

He assured the public that further studies would be conducted to assess the environmental impact.

There has been at least one instance of the government planning certain plant species in Macau that, according to environmentalists, jeopardized the city's biodiversity.



Five Zone A public housing projects on hold

CONSTRUCTION of the five economic housing projects that were to commence this year has been suspended, Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo do Rosário has told the parliament.

The senior official made the announcement during a recent speech. The cur-

rent round of applications for housing ended yesterday. The suspended projects consist of 5,700 residential units.

At the parliamentary session, Rosário was asked by lawmaker Nick Lei and his other colleagues to reconsider the structure or need for the five-tier hou-

sing hierarchy.

The property market has entered tougher times in the post-Covid resumption of normalcy. Not only are real estate agencies calling for the lifting of cooling measures, the Economic Housing round of applications that ended yesterday was not as po-

pular as its predecessors. Analysts and members of the public believe that reductions in the investment value of that housing type is a key cause of the unpopularity.

In response to Lei, Rosário emphasized that housing policies are long-term policies and should not be altered on a whim. Accordingly, there is no timetable for the review of the five-tier hierarchy and the Economic Housing Law. The constant rounds of applications for Economic Housing will not be reviewed because the government is uncertain about how long the type of housing will remain unpopular, Rosário added.

In response to earlier inquiries about the government's decision to change 411 Economic Housing units to Social Housing units, Rosário said that "it wasn't a new practice and is completely legal." He did not rule out the possibility of a repeat of this practice in future. **AL**

CCAC DETECTS ALLEGED FALSE ASSET DECLARATIONS OF TWO CIVIL SERVANTS

STAFF REPORTER

THE Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) has recently received a report alleging that two public servants from the Social Welfare Bureau violated the provision of exclusivity by engaging in unauthorized part-time work and providing false information in their declarations of assets and interests.

The two public servants in question have been employed in the public service for over a decade.

Following an investigation by the CCAC, it was revealed that both individuals had been involved in providing wedding services for financial gain and operating a related busi-

ness privately without obtaining prior permission from their department.

The investigation findings indicate that the duo knowingly took risks and deliberately made false declarations, despite being aware of the requirement to seek permission for part-time work and accurately disclose details of their income in their asset and interest declarations.

The two public servants are suspected of committing the offense of providing "inaccurate data," as outlined in the Legal Regime of Declaration of Assets and Interests.

The case has been referred to the Public Prosecutions Office for further handling.

DIPLOMACY

Xi issues a positive message in meeting with US business leaders as relations improve

CHINA'S leader Xi Jinping has called for closer trade ties with the U.S. during a meeting with top American business leaders in Beijing that comes amid a steady improvement in relations that had sunk to the lowest level in years.

Xi emphasized yesterday the mutually beneficial economic ties between the world's two largest economies, despite heavy U.S. tariffs on Chinese imports and Washington's accusations of undue Communist Party influence, unfair trade barriers and theft of intellectual property.

China's economy has struggled to recover from severe self-imposed restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic that it lifted only at the end of 2022, but Xi said China was again contributing to world economic growth in the double digits percentage-wise.

"Sino-U.S. relations are one of the most important bilateral relations in the world. Whether China and the United States cooperate or confront each other has a bearing on the well-being



President Xi Jinping walks with representatives from American business, strategic and academic communities at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, yesterday

of the two peoples and the future and destiny of mankind," Xi was cited as saying by China's official Xinhua News Agency.

Participants at the meeting included Stephen A. Schwarzman, the billionaire head of investment firm Blackstone.

Trade and tariffs have increasingly drawn attention in the runup to the U.S. presidential election, and the Biden administration has shown little sign of

moderating punitive measures against Chinese imports imposed by his predecessor and assumed rival in the November polls, Donald Trump.

U.S. officials have renewed concerns over Chinese industrial policy practices and overcapacity, and the resulting impact on U.S. workers and companies, that they blame in part on China's massive trade surplus that amounted to more than \$279

billion last year, its lowest level in about a decade.

China's formerly highly abrasive tone toward the U.S. has softened in recent months, particularly since Xi and Biden met in San Francisco in November. Officials such as Secretary of State Antony Blinken have visited, and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is reportedly due to travel to China again to meet top leaders next month.

But Xi's administration has maintained a hard line on issues it considers its "core interests." An ardent nationalist and son of one of the founders of the People's Republic, Xi appears determined to maintain strict party control while drawing in foreign investment to shore up the economy.

"The respective successes of China and the United States create opportunities for each other," Xi was cited as saying by Xinhua. "As long as both sides regard the other as partners, respect each other, peacefully coexist and join together for win-win results, China-U.S. relations will improve." **MDT/AP**

TRADE

China wins WTO dispute with Australia over steel products

CHINA has won a nearly three-year-long dispute with Australia at the World Trade Organization over tariffs on steel products that began during a low point of bilateral relations between the countries, and Australia's trade minister said yesterday his government accepted the ruling.

Beijing took its complaint to the WTO in June 2021 over Australia's extra duties on railway wheels, wind towers and stainless steel sinks imported from China. Trade in these products was worth 62 million Australian dollars (\$40.4 million) in 2022.

On Tuesday, the WTO panel adjudicating the case in Geneva, Switzerland, found that Australia's investigating authority, the Anti-Dumping Commission, had acted inconsistently with some articles of the anti-dum-



A coal train travels through the Hunter Valley near Muswellbrook, Australia, in 2021

ping agreement.

Australia's Trade Minister Don Farrell said in a statement yesterday that Canberra accepted the WTO's ruling and supported a rules-based trading system.

"Australia will engage with China and take steps to imple-

ment the panel's findings," Farrell said.

"Australia remains committed to a fully functioning WTO dispute settlement system so that the rights and obligations of all WTO members can be enforced," he added.

Trade tariffs have been a

hot topic between Beijing and Canberra in recent years after China imposed a raft of sanctions on Australian goods in 2020 during the most recent nadir in the bilateral relationship. It is estimated that the tariffs cost the Australian economy 20 billion Australian dollars (\$13 billion).

Most of the tariffs have since been lifted as the relationship thawed, but tariffs on wine, rock lobster and some abattoirs still remain.

In April, Australia suspended a complaint to the WTO in a bid to reopen the Chinese market to Australian barley, which had been one of the products targeted by the tariffs and was widely seen as the new Australian government's attempts to repair relations with Beijing.

The Australian government has also halted another WTO dispute against China over sanctions on Australian wine worth about 1.1 billion Australian dollars (\$720 million) in exchange for a review by China to be completed by the end of March. **MDT/AP**

DIRE STRAIT

TAIWAN COMMISSIONS TWO NEW NAVY SHIPS

TAIWAN has commissioned two new navy ships as a safeguard against the rising threat from China, which has been ratcheting up its naval and air force missions around the island that it claims as its own territory to be annexed by force if necessary.

The pair of Tuo Chiang class corvettes completes the first order of six of the domestically produced catamarans with stealth capabilities. The ships are relatively small, capable of carrying just 41 sailors and officers, but are fast and highly maneuverable and carry a range of missiles and deck guns aimed at countering larger Chinese vessels and rocketry.

Outgoing leader Tsai Ing-wen oversaw the commissioning on Tuesday at the northern port of Suao, emphasizing her push to revitalize Taiwan's defense industries, alongside extensive arms purchases and support from key ally the United States.

Ma Ying-jeou, former Nationalist leader is reportedly planning a visit to China next month that could include a meeting with Communist Party leader Xi Jinping.

China boasts the world's largest standing military and biggest navy — with three aircraft carriers — but has not fought in a major conflict since its brief 1979 invasion of Vietnam. Since then, its military budget has ballooned to the world's second largest behind the U.S., alongside a huge expansion of its economy, which is now showing signs of losing steam.

While vastly outgunned, Taiwan's military has been bolstered by new weaponry and an extension of the universal period of national service for men from four months to one year. Its air force, navy and missile corps also respond to near-daily incursions by Chinese ships and planes.

Taiwan's Defense Ministry says it is on alert for a Chinese sneak attack, possibly targeting Tsai or William Lai, who will take over the top office in May. Both are despised as separatists by Beijing. Recent Taiwanese media reports have shown satellite photos of Chinese People's Liberation Army training grounds including mock-ups of the neighborhood surrounding Taipei's cabinet premises.

The ministry said it detected nine Chinese planes and six ships operating around the island between Tuesday afternoon and yesterday morning.

In Beijing yesterday, a spokesperson for the Cabinet's Taiwan Affairs Office criticized live-firing exercises by the Taiwanese military planned for next month near the Taiwan-held island group of Kinmen just off the Chinese coast.

"Any provocative move Taiwan's military takes is doomed to fail," Chen Binhua said at a biweekly news conference. **MDT/AP**

BRIDGE AND PORT: THE NORTHBOUND TRAVEL AND TRADE

ANALYSIS

IN the vibrant nexus of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, a transformative movement in cross-border exchange and economic integration is unfolding, propelled by the facilitation of northbound travel for Macau and Hong Kong vehicles. This initiative has significantly augmented connectivity and fostered economic synergy within the region.

Since the implementation of the "northbound travel" policy in January 2023 for Macau and subsequently in July 2023 for Hong Kong, the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Zhuhai Port has witnessed a staggering influx of over 2 million vehicles. This increase is attributed to streamlined application processes and the convenience of travel, with daily clearance volumes reaching nearly 4,000 for Macau vehicles and over 3,200 for Hong Kong vehicles. During weekends and holidays, these figures soar above 10,000 vehicles, highlighting the predominance of single-plated vehicles from these areas in the mainland's inbound traffic.

This surge in vehicular movement has been mirrored by unprecedented traffic volumes at Zhuhai Port, recording over 5.58 million passengers and 1.08 million vehicles this year alone. The port's capacity to accom-



modate the highest single-day vehicle volume of 18,200 shows its strategic importance as one of China's leading ports.

The Hengqin Port's phase two has ushered in a new era of customs clearance efficiency through a Guangdong-Macau joint one-stop system, significantly simplifying the process. This innovation has enabled over 1 million vehicle clearances since its partial opening in September 2023, streamlining the commute for Macau residents. In fact, since September 26, over 660,000 Macau single-plate vehicles have passed through Hengqin Port, accounting for approximately 66.5% of the total vehicle clearances.

The deputy director of the Hengqin Border Inspection Station highlighted efforts to enhance traffic management and

emergency response mechanisms, ultimately doubling the vehicle customs clearance capacity. This has significantly improved the efficiency of handling approximately 16,000 vehicles per day.

"It's much faster to pass the customs now than before." Ms. Zhao, a Macau resident living in Hengqin, told this week to GD-Today that she used to have to go through the customs twice, but now it can be done once.

Parallel to the increase in vehicular traffic, trade through the Zhuhai checkpoint of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge has seen a notable rise, with imports and exports reaching RMB31.07 billion in just the first two months of 2024. This 24.8% year-on-year increase not only underscores the bridge's crucial role in regional trade but also showcases the diversified nature of

the exchanged goods, including construction materials, electric vehicles, and jewelry.

The economic implications of these developments are extensive, with growth seen across tourism, logistics, retail, and other sectors within the Greater Bay Area. For instance, Xiangzhou District has witnessed significant increases in tourism revenue and hospitality profits, indicative of the broader economic benefits stemming from improved connectivity.

Moreover, the facilitated movement of goods across the bridge has supported the construction industry and reflects the growing adoption of electric vehicles, signaling a shift towards sustainability. Additionally, the booming jewelry trade through the bridge underscores the region's capability in handling high-value goods, further enriching the local economic landscape.

Collectively, the policies and infrastructural enhancements promoting "northbound travel" and trade across the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge are emblematic of a broader strategy for regional integration and economic advancement. By reducing barriers to mobility and trade, the Greater Bay Area is not only fostering closer regional ties but is also establishing itself as a dynamic hub of economic activity and innovation in Asia.

Portuguese companies seek cooperation with Hengqin in scientific research

ON THE AGENDA

FRANCISCO Rocha Gonçalves, Deputy Mayor of Oeiras, Portugal, led this week a delegation of enterprises to visit the Guangdong-Macao In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin to learn about the zone's business environment and pursue further cooperation between the two regions.

Located in the coastal area west of Lisbon, Oeiras covers an area of 45.88 square kilometers and is known as Portugal's benchmark city for sci-tech innovation,

with a number of industrial parks and a total of 25,095 companies.

Oeiras has achieved remarkable results in the fields of scientific research, start-up incubation, as well as medical and healthcare, which align with the industrial layout of Hengqin. Therefore, these two regions enjoy a good foundation for economic and trade cooperation.

In recent years, Hengqin has been focusing on boosting technological research and development, high-end manufacturing, traditional Chinese medicine, and

other Macau-branded industries, cultural tourism, exhibition and trade, as well as modern finance, in order to diversify Macau's economy.

Lei Chi Wai, Director of the Economic Development Bureau of the zone, said that the cooperation zone has launched a series of preferential policies to support industrial development and provide convenient investment services for overseas enterprises, gradually improving the business environment and supporting facilities. Hengqin welcomes the delegation to invite more

enterprises to invest in the zone and explore the Chinese mainland market through Hengqin.

Francisco Rocha Gonçalves hopes to deepen the cooperation between Oeiras and Hengqin in the field of scientific research. He said that Oeiras is an important platform for the cooperation and exchange of high-tech enterprises between China and Portugal. He looks forward to promoting the development of more high-quality enterprises, cultivating more young talent, and working with the coope-

ration zone to seek new opportunities for development.

António Martins da Cruz, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Oeiras Valley Investment Agency, said that this visit is a good start to build a bridge for dialogue and exchanges between Oeiras and Hengqin. He looks forward to exploring more cooperation channels to promote exchanges between the two sides, and he welcomes more investors in the cooperation zone to visit Oeiras to promote economic and trade cooperation. **MDT/GDTODAY**

BRIEFS

REGULAR PASSENGER FLIGHTS HK-TAIYUAN RESUME

Regular passenger flights between Taiyuan, the capital of Shanxi Province in North China, and Hong Kong have recommenced, as announced by Taiyuan Wusu International Airport. Scheduled for Mondays and Fridays, these flights aim to enhance cultural, tourism, and economic exchanges between the two regions. The initiative, welcomed by Wang Jihong from the Shanxi Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, is expected to significantly boost Shanxi's cultural and touristic appeal in Hong Kong and Macau. This resumption marks a significant step in facilitating the movement of people and fostering closer ties, promoting mutual understanding and cooperation.

HK EXPRESS AIMS TO DOUBLE FLIGHTS TO MAINLAND CHINA

HK Express, a subsidiary of Cathay Pacific Airways, plans to double its flight operations to mainland China within the next two years and expand its fleet and destination coverage significantly. CEO Jeanette Mao anticipates a 20-30% capacity increase by the year's end, aiming for 170% of pre-pandemic levels. The airline, which turned profitable last year, intends to grow its fleet from 35 to 60 by 2028 and increase its destinations from 24 to 30 by the end of 2024. This ambitious expansion underlines HK Express's commitment to enhancing its presence in the Asian aviation market, focusing on short-haul flights amidst a recovering travel industry.

INAUGURAL AI HEALTH CEREMONY IN NANSHA

The first Affiliated Nansha Hospital of Sun Yat-sen University hosted the inaugural ceremony of "AI Health," alongside the Guangdong Health Management Association's meeting and the Chronic Disease Management Innovation Workshop. Held in Nansha, Guangzhou, the event witnessed participation from leading medical experts globally, discussing advancements in health management. Professor Colin Greaves from the University of Birmingham shared insights into the potential of AI in revolutionizing healthcare practices. This initiative symbolizes a significant leap towards integrating artificial intelligence in healthcare, aiming to enhance disease management and patient care through innovative technologies.

USA

Who is Nicole Shanahan, the philanthropist picked by Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as running mate?

MEG KINNARD,
COLUMBIA (S.C.)

NICOLE Shanahan, Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s pick to be his running mate in his independent bid for president, brings youth and considerable wealth to Kennedy's long-shot campaign but is little known outside Silicon Valley.

Shanahan, 38, is a California lawyer and philanthropist. Shanahan leads the Bia-Echo Foundation, an organization she founded to direct money toward issues including women's reproductive science, criminal justice reform and environmental causes. She also is a Stanford University fellow and was the founder and chief executive of ClearAccessIP, a patent management firm that was sold in 2020.

Yesterday [Macau time], Shanahan talked about her hardscrabble upbringing in Oakland, the daughter of a mother who immigrated from China and an Irish and German-American father "plagued by substance abuse" who "struggled to keep a job." Touching on her family's reliance on government assistance, Shanahan said that, although she had become "very wealthy later on in life," she felt she could relate to Americans being "just one misfortune away from disaster."

"The purpose of wealth is to help those in need. That's what it's for," Shanahan said. "And I want to bring that back to politics, too. That is the purpose of privilege."

She also referenced discredited theories about vaccines as Kennedy and his allies have been accused of doing.

The attorney talked about her overall passion to help fight "chronic disease," referencing her own struggles with fertility and her five-year-old daughter, who she said has autism. Shanahan cited "toxic substances in our environment," "electromagnetic pollution" from devices like cellphones and — drawing her largest applause of the day — the lack of re-



Nicole Shanahan waves from the podium during a campaign event for Presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. this week

search surrounding long-term effects of childhood vaccinations.

"Our children are not well, our people are not well, and our country will not be well for very much longer, if we don't heed this desperate call for attention," she said.

Any link between vaccines and autism has long been debunked, and repeated scientific studies in the U.S. and abroad have found no evidence that vaccines can cause autism. Research has also discredited concerns that children get too many vaccines at once.

Vaccines have been proven to be safe and effective in laboratory testing and in real world use in hundreds of millions of people over decades. The World Health Organization credits childhood vaccines with preventing as many as 5 million deaths a year.

While no medical intervention is risk-free, doctors and researchers have proven that risks from disease are generally far greater than the risks from vaccines.

Shanahan was married to Google co-founder Sergey Brin from 2018 to 2023, and they have a young daughter. She was raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, where Kennedy made his announcement.

Before the announcement, Kennedy's campaign manager and daughter-in-law, Amaryllis Fox Kennedy, praised Shanahan's work on behalf of "honest governance, racial equity, regenerative agriculture and children's and maternal health." She said the work "reflects many of our country's most urgent needs."

Kennedy, who said in an interview Monday with "The State of California" on KCBS radio that his VP search placed a priority on "somebody who could represent young people," said yesterday that Shanahan — who he said, like him, has "left the Democratic Party" — also shares his concerns about government overreach and his distrust in major political parties' abilities to make lasting change.

"She'll tell you that she now understands at the defense agencies work for the military industrial complex, that health agencies work for big pharma and the USDA works for big ag and the processed food cartels," Kennedy said at his Oakland rally. "The EPA is in cahoots with the polluters, that the scientists can be mercenaries, that government officials sometimes act as censors, and that the Fed works for Wall Street and allows millionaire bankers to prey upon on Main Street and the Ameri-

can worker."

Kennedy also said that, in part, Shanahan's heritage played at least some role in his selection of her.

"I wanted someone who would honor the traditions our nation, as a nation of immigrants, but who also understands that to be a nation, we need to secure borders," he said.

Kennedy had previously signaled interest in picking a celebrity or a household name such as NFL quarterback Aaron Rodgers, "Dirty Jobs" star Mike Rowe or former Minnesota Gov. Jesse Ventura, who was a wrestler and actor.

According to campaign finance records, Shanahan has long donated to Democratic candidates, including giving the maximum amount allowed to Kennedy when he was still pursuing that party's nomination before switching to an independent bid in October.

It was unclear if Shanahan would use her own money on the campaign, but she has already opened her wallet to back Kennedy.

She was a driving force and the primary donor behind a Super Bowl ad produced by a pro-Kennedy super PAC, American Values 2024, for which she contributed \$4 million. MDT/AP

this day in history

1965 THOUSANDS JOIN DR KING IN ALABAMA RALLY



Dr Martin Luther King has taken a crowd of nearly 25,000 people to the steps of the state capital of Montgomery, Alabama to highlight black grievances.

The procession marks the end of a five-day march which started in Selma last week and it brings to a close a month of civil rights protests in Alabama.

Troops policed the roads surrounding the capital and army helicopters hovered overhead as the crowd swelled to nearly 25,000.

Dr King, who addressed the protesters from a podium in the square, described the trek as "one of the greatest marches in the history of America".

"Our aim is not to humiliate and defeat the white man, but to win his friendship and understanding," he added.

Dr King tried to present a petition of black grievances to Governor George Wallace but he refused to meet the delegation.

The civil rights leader said he would ask trade unions to refuse to transport or use the state's products and he urged the Federal Government and the Treasury to withdraw all assistance from the area.

Dr King also said that demonstrations would have to continue where essential conditions remained unmet.

When the march began last week, large bombs were planted at a black church, a funeral parlour and a leading black lawyer's home.

They were later discovered and detonated by experts from the army base at Anniston, Alabama.

To prevent further attacks, US President Lyndon Johnson gave the marchers the protection of nearly 3,000 troops, plus FBI and local police assistance.

But three days ago Viola Liuzzo, a white civil rights advocate who had been ferrying demonstrators to their homes, was shot dead on a lonely stretch of road near the route of the march.

Meanwhile, leaders of the Ku-Klux-Klan movement have reportedly tried to contact President Johnson to discuss his aversion to their organisation.

There was no immediate response from the US President, who recently launched a scathing attack on the group, describing it as "a band of hooded bigots, whose loyalty was not with the United States".

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The protests came just months after the signing of the Civil Rights Bill which created equal rights regardless of race, colour, religion or national origin. The Voting Rights Act, which banned literacy tests and poll taxes which had previously been used to prevent black people from voting, was introduced in August 1965. But many states acted quickly to circumvent the law and most of the decade was marked by race riots and assassinations. Further riots followed in Los Angeles in August 1965. They lasted six days and left 34 dead and a further 1,000 people injured. Dr King was assassinated in April 1968 and this led to riots in 100 US cities. Black people continued to remain at a disadvantage when looking for work, and programmes of "affirmative action" were introduced during the 1970s under President Nixon.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Attend to shared finances. Plan for an upcoming job. Let your partner take the lead. Prepare well so you can move quickly later.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Collaborate on practical projects with your partner. Share ideas and resources. Have patience with temporary confusion. Strengthen foundational matters. Celebrate the results together.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Physical action gets results. Keep objectives in mind. Listen to your intuition. Prioritize your own health and wellness. Sometimes the best move is none.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Follow your heart where it leads. Advance a romantic or creative dream. Share your passions. You can make things happen. Make a lovely connection.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Tend your garden with love. Nurture growth and harmony. A domestic dream is within reach. Get family on board. Many hands make light work.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
You're especially brilliant. Study, write and research about a fascination. Present your argument tactfully. Anticipate some resistance or controversy. Get creative with a challenge.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
A surprising opportunity could be worth pursuing. Focus on profitable actions and practical priorities. Check orders for changes. Compute expenses and adjust budgets.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Imagine what you want. You can find what you need. Things may not go as planned. A personal dream lies within reach. Go for it.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Slow to reconsider. Sidestep a controversy. Hide out in your private cocoon. Peace feeds your spirit. So does connection with nature, art and music.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Confer with friends and allies. Conversation provides insight. Monitor a situation in real time to navigate changes. Teamwork makes a complex job easy.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Consider a professional opportunity. Stick to practical objectives. Face a challenge or test. Figure out what you need to advance. Persistence pays off.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
An adventure takes shape. Study maps and charts. Imagine your route and destination. Explore off the beaten path to discover hidden treasure. Investigate.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

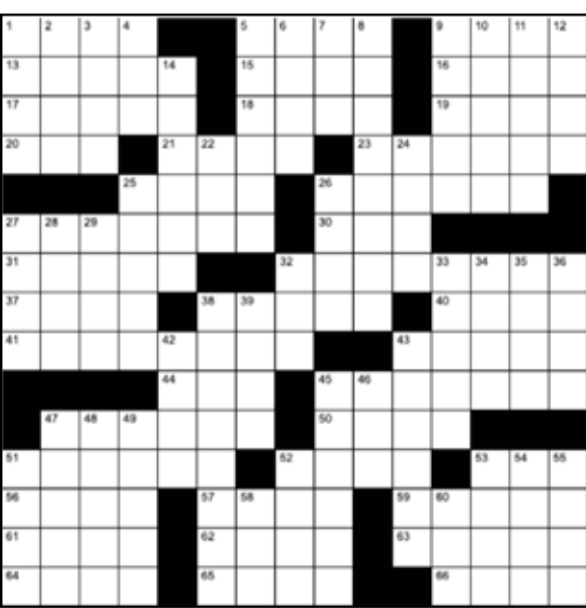
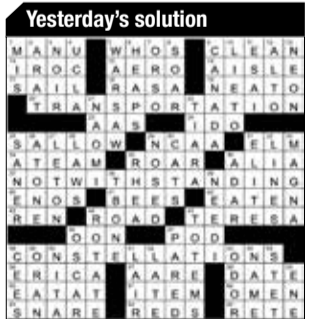
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	8	17	sandstorm
Changchun	14	23	cloudy
Chengdu	12	27	fine
Chongqing	15	27	cloudy
Fuzhou	15	29	overcast
Guangzhou	22	30	cloudy
Guiyang	10	20	overcast
Haikou	22	30	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	11	18	rain
Harbin	3	10	cloudy
Hefei	8	21	cloudy
Nanjing	11	19	cloudy
Shanghai	11	16	rain
Taipei	18	27	overcast
Wuhan	12	24	cloudy
Hong Kong	23	26	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	3	7	overcast
Frankfurt	6	11	rain
Paris	8	11	rain
London	7	12	rain
New York	4	11	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Departs; 5- Shade trees; 9- In order (to); 13- Black cattle breed; 15- Work up lather; 16- Story; 17- Viscid; 18- Garr of "Tootsie"; 19- Nick and Nora's pouch; 20- Horace's "___ Poetica"; 21- Nose-in-the-air type; 23- Country; 25- Word on a red sign; 26- Evaluate; 27- Affairs; 30- Mil. officers; 31- What you put on snooze; 32- Mall-goer, often; 37- Must've been something ___; 38- One on slopes; 40- Singer Amos; 41- Tyrannic; 43- Polio vaccine developer; 44- Pen name; 45- Naming; 47- On the job; 50- Hard to find; 51- More spine-tingling; 52- Top-rated; 53- Gerund maker; 56- Wrinkle remover; 57- Division reposition; 59- Cosmetician; 61- World's longest river; 62- Tide type; 63- Unit of heat; 64- Congers, e.g.; 65- Obtains; 66- Book after Joel;

DOWN 1- Infatuated; 2- ___ about; 3- Self-images; 4- Take to court; 5- Bars legally; 6- "Stay" singer Lisa; 7- Damage; 8- Unmarried woman; 9- Ohio, e.g.; 10- Watering hole; 11- Choir section; 12- Playwright O'Casey; 14- Method; 22- Hide-hair connector; 24- Org.; 25- Throat bug; 26- Away from the gusts; 27- Female servant; 28- Winglike parts; 29- Makes lace; 32- ___-tac-toe; 33- ___ of Two Cities; 34- Mongolian desert; 35- ___ Brockovich; 36- Circular band; 38- Rousing; 39- Strike with foot; 42- Woodwind instrument; 43- Thoroughfare; 45- Soldiers; 46- McKellen or Holm; 47- Eagle's nest; 48- Cave-dwelling dwarf; 49- Fermented grape juices; 51- ___ kleine Nachtmusik; 52- Rat-___; 53- Tabloid twosome; 54- Roman emperor; 55- Precious stones; 58- Miss-named?; 60- ___ Na Na;



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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Va Fat
HKD 3,780,000 2 bed 1 bath

Tou Un
HKD 2,980,000 1 bed 1 bath

Jade Garden
HKD 11,880,000 4 bed 3 bath

AD

AP PHOTO



Mariama Sonko Mariama Sonko poses in the seed hut of her agro-ecological training center in the Casamance village of Niaguis, Senegal

PHILANTHROPY

WOMEN FARMERS ARE INVISIBLE: A WEST AFRICAN PROJECT HELPS THEM CLAIM THEIR RIGHTS — AND LAND

JACK THOMPSON,
ZIGUINCHOR

MARIAMA Sonko's voice resounded through the circle of 40 women farmers sitting in the shade of a cashew tree. They scribbled notes, brows furrowed in concentration as her lecture was punctuated by the thud of falling fruit.

This quiet village in Senegal is the headquarters of a 115,000-strong rural women's rights movement in West Africa, We Are the Solution. Sonko, its president, is training female farmers from cultures where women are often excluded from ownership of the land they work so closely.

Across Senegal, women farmers make up 70% of the agricultural workforce and produce 80% of the crops but have little access to land, education and finance compared to men, the United Nations says.

"We work from dawn until dusk, but with all that we do, what do we get out of it?" Sonko asked.

She believes that when rural women are given land, responsibilities and resources, it has a ripple effect through communities. Her movement is training women farmers who traditionally have no access to education, explaining their rights and financing women-led agricultural projects.

Across West Africa, women usually don't own land because it is expected that when they marry, they leave the community.

But when they move to their husbands' homes, they are not given land because they are not related by blood.

Sonko grew up watching her mother struggle after her father died, with young children to support.

"If she had land, she could have supported us," she recalled, her normally booming voice now tender. Instead, Sonko had to marry young, abandon her studies and leave her ancestral home.

After moving to her husband's town at age 19, Sonko and several other women convinced a landowner to rent to them a small plot of land in return for part of their harvest. They planted fruit trees and started a market garden. Five years later, when the trees were full of papayas and grapefruit, the owner kicked them off.

The experience marked Sonko. "This made me fight so that women can have the space to thrive and manage their rights," she said. When she later got a job with a women's charity funded by Catholic Relief Services, coordinating micro-loans for rural women, that work began.

WHEN WOMEN EARN MONEY

"Women farmers are invisible," said Laure Tall, research director at Agricultural and Rural Prospect Initiative, a Senegalese rural think tank. That's even though women work on farms two to four hours longer than men on an average day.

But when women earn money, they reinvest it in their community, health and children's education, Tall said. Men spend some on household expenses but can choose to spend the rest how they please. Sonko listed common examples like finding a new wife, drinking and buying fertilizer and pesticides for crops that make money instead of providing food.

With encouragement from her husband, who died in 1997, Sonko chose to invest in other women. Her training center now employs over 20 people, with support from small philanthropic organizations such as Agroecology Fund and CLIMA Fund.

In a recent week, Sonko and her team trained over 100 women from three countries, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau and Gambia, in agroforestry — growing trees and crops together as a measure of protection from extreme weather — and micro gardening, growing food in tiny spaces when there is little access to land.

One trainee, Binta Diatta, said We Are the Solution bought irrigation equipment, seeds, and fencing — an investment of \$4,000 — and helped the women of her town access land for a market garden, one of more than 50 financed by the organization.

When Diatta started to earn money, she said, she spent it on food, clothes and her children's schooling. Her efforts were noticed.

"Next season, all the men accompanied us to the market garden because they saw it as valuable," she said, recalling how they came simply to witness it.

Now another challenge has emerged affecting women and men alike: climate change.

In Senegal and the surrounding region, temperatures are rising 50% more than the global average, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and the UN Environment Program says rainfall could drop by 38% in the coming decades.

Where Sonko lives, the rainy season has become shorter and less predictable. Saltwater is invading her rice paddies bordering the tidal estuary and mangroves, caused by rising sea levels. In some cases, yield losses are so acute that farmers abandon their rice fields.

But adapting to a heating planet has proven to be a strength for women since they adopt climate innovations much faster than men, said Ena Deroncourt, an investment specialist for women-led farming projects at agricultural research agency AICCRA.

"They have no choice because they are the most vulnerable and affected by climate change," Deroncourt said. "They are the most motivated to find solutions."

On a recent day, Sonko gathered 30 prominent women rice growers to document hundreds of local rice varieties. She bellowed out the names of rice — some hun-

dreds of years old, named after prominent women farmers, passed from generation to generation — and the women echoed with what they call it in their villages.

This preservation of indigenous rice varieties is not only key to adapting to climate change but also about emphasizing the status of women as the traditional guardians of seeds.

"Seeds are wholly feminine and give value to women in their communities," Sonko said. "That's why we're working on them, to give them more confidence and responsibility in agriculture."

The knowledge of hundreds of seeds and how they respond to different growing conditions has been vital in giving women a more influential role in communities.

Sonko claimed to have a seed for every condition including too rainy, too dry and even those more resistant to salt for the mangroves.

Last year, she produced 2 tons of rice on her half-hectare plot with none of the synthetic pesticides or fertilizer that are heavily subsidized in Senegal. The yield was more than double that of plots with full use of chemical products in a 2017 U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization project in the same region.

"Our seeds are resilient," Sonko said, sifting through rice-filled clay pots designed to preserve seeds for decades. "Conventional seeds do not resist climate change and are very demanding. They need fertilizer and pesticides."

INDIGENOUS WISDOM

The cultural intimacy between female farmers, their seeds and the land means they are more likely to shun chemicals harming the soil, said Charles Katy, an expert on indigenous wisdom in Senegal who is helping to document Sonko's rice varieties.

He noted the organic fertilizer that Sonko made from manure, and the biopesticides made from ginger, garlic and chilli.

One of Sonko's trainees, Soukharou Kébé, recounted her experiments against parasites in her tomato plot. Instead of using manufactured insecticides, she tried using a tree bark traditionally used in Senegal's Casamance region to treat intestinal problems in humans caused by parasites.

A week later, all the disease was gone, Kébé said.

As dusk approached at the training center, insects hummed in the background and Sonko prepared for another training session. "There's too much demand," she said. She is now trying to set up seven other farming centers across southern Senegal.

Glancing back at the circle of women studying in the fading light, she said: "My great fight in the movement is to make humanity understand the importance of women." **MDT/AP**

TENNIS

Medvedev, Alcaraz advance to Miami Open quarterfinals

DEFENDING Miami Open champion Daniil Medvedev won his 350th career match to move into the quarterfinals for a fourth straight year, beating Dominik Koepfer 7-6 (5), 6-0 yesterday [Macau time].

Top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz also advanced with ease in a 6-3, 6-3 win over No. 23 seed Lorenzo Musetti.

Alcaraz, who beat Musetti in less than 90 minutes and looked comfortable as ever on the court, said he's "probably" playing his best tennis since last summer. That ankle injury from last month is no longer a concern, he said.

"I don't know if this is the best game that I'm playing, but without a doubt it's the best feeling," the Wimbledon champion said. "I'm feeling great on the court. I'm moving great. ... I'm not thinking about the ankle anymore on the court."

Alcaraz will face No. 11 seed Grigor Dimitrov on Thursday in the quarterfinals. Dimitrov beat No. 8 seed Hubert Hurkacz 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (3) after a tiebreaker in which Hurkacz was penalized for touching the net with his foot.

Tied at 2-2 in the tiebreaker, the match referee said Hurkacz's foot touched the net as he charged forward on a return. It cost him a point. Hurkacz slammed his racket in protest.

In a match that lasted well into

Wednesday morning, 2018 finalist and No. 4 seed Alexander Zverev reached his fourth Miami Open quarterfinal with a 6-1, 6-4 win over 15th-seeded Karen Khachanov 6-1, 6-4.

No. 3 seed Medvedev, after a tight opening set, pulled away to win his ninth straight match in south Florida and continue his run at back-to-back titles.

Medvedev trailed 4-0 in the tiebreaker before rallying to take the set. He said he used that momentum to get out to a fast start and finish his milestone victory.

"I would say before the match, the desire to win is the same, but for sure, the feeling of winning, and during the match while you're winning, is different," he said. "The feelings are different, but the desire is the same and that's what keeps me going."

Medvedev goes for victory No. 351 on Wednesday against Nicolas Jarry, the No. 22 seed who ousted No. 7 seed Casper Ruud 7-6 (3), 6-3.

Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner, seeded No. 2, im-

proved to 19-1 in matches this year with a 6-4, 6-3 victory over Christopher O'Connell to reach the quarterfinals.

In the middle of the match, commentators said a spectator had fainted in the 82 degree temperatures and play was stopped. Sinner came to the sideline and passed up drinks and towels to the person.

Also advancing was Tomas Machac, who reached the quarterfinals to face Sinner with a 6-3, 6-3 win over Matteo Arnaldi.

On the women's side, No. 4 seed Elena Rybakina outlasted No. 8 seed Maria Sakkari 7-5, 6-7 (4), 6-4 in a grueling match that lasted 2 hours and 48 minutes to earn a spot in the semifinals.

Two-time Grand Slam champion Victoria Azarenka defeated Yulia Putintseva 7-6 (4), 1-6, 6-3 to also make the semifinals. It was the second time that Azarenka, 34, has made it to the semifinals this season after going that far just once in 2023. She has won the Miami Open three times. **MDT/AP**



Carlos Alcaraz, of Spain



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China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

**SERIES OF UNFOUNDED
 CYBERATTACK CLAIMS
 LATEST SMEAR CAMPAIGN**

In a new smear campaign against China, the United States and some of its key allies have accused the country of being responsible for a series of hackings over the last decade or more targeting officials, journalists, parliamentarians and institutions in the US and the United Kingdom, with the authorities in the two nations filing charges or imposing sanctions against what they perceive to be Chinese culprits involved in the “malicious” cyber activities.

The US Justice Department on Monday announced charges against seven hackers who it claims are living in China. And on the same day, the UK government imposed sanctions on a company and two individuals that it claims are connected to a breach in the country's cyber defenses that it alleges may have given the Chinese intelligence agency access to information on tens of millions of UK voters held by the Electoral Commission. New Zealand joined the anti-China witch hunt the following day, with its security minister claiming that hackers linked to the Chinese government launched a State-sponsored operation that targeted its parliament in 2021.

Such claims are unwarranted and unfounded. They have zero credibility as they are unsubstantiated. The concerted efforts of three of the so-called Five Eyes to sling mud at China have drawn a strong rebuke from Beijing, with a Foreign Ministry spokesman on Tuesday calling the US and UK moves targeting Chinese individuals and other entities nothing but “pure political maneuvering”. In London, Charge d’Affaires at the Chinese embassy Yang Xiaoguang urged the UK government on Tuesday to stop its “self-staged anti-China farces, and refrain from going further down the wrong path”.

The US has in recent years drip-fed accusations of China hacking into US businesses working in the defense, telecommunications and manufacturing sectors to steal business and trade secrets. Microsoft said in May last year that State-backed Chinese hackers were targeting the US’ critical infrastructure. Yet not one of these claims has had the support of any evidence.

In stark contrast, there is a mountain of evidence proving that it is the US that poses the biggest cybersecurity threat globally. WikiLeaks has published thousands of secret CIA files detailing some of the hacking tools the US government employs to gain access to the information on computers, smartphones and even smart TVs. Cyber Command, the US military's hacking unit, has made no secret of it being ready to conduct “offensive” cyber operations if need be. Not to mention the massive surveillance activities conducted by the National Security Agency that targeted prominent figures such as former German chancellor Angela Merkel, whose personal cellphone was tapped.

China has also fallen victim to cyberattacks from the US. For example, while investigating a cyberattack on Northwestern Polytechnical University in Xi’an in 2022, China's National Computer Virus Emergency Response Center extracted spyware called Second Date, which is “cyber espionage malware developed by the NSA”. The center and the Chinese cybersecurity company 360 also detected a cyberattack on the Wuhan Earthquake Monitoring Center last July, with preliminary evidence indicating that the attack had come from the US.

China firmly opposes, and fights against, all forms of cyberattacks. The US should stop hyping up the “China hacking theory” and refrain from politicizing cybersecurity, so that countries can work together to deal with the challenges cybersecurity faces globally by strengthening their capacity to defend against malicious cyber activities for the common good of humanity.

Someone in New Jersey overcame the odds Tuesday night (yesterday, Macau time) and won the \$1.13 billion Mega Millions jackpot, breaking a winless streak that dated to last December.

The numbers drawn were: 7, 11, 22, 29, 38 and the gold Mega Ball 4. The winning ticket was sold in New Jersey, according to the Mega Millions website.

Until the latest drawing, no one had matched all six numbers and won the Mega Millions jackpot since Dec. 8. That amounted to 30 straight drawings without a big winner.

It's tough to win the Mega Millions jackpot because the odds are

so long, at 1 in 302.6 million.

The prize is the 8th largest in U.S. lottery history.

The \$1.13 billion jackpot is for a winner who is paid through an annuity, with an initial payment and then 29 annual payments. Most winners choose a cash payout, which would be \$537.5 million.

The next big U.S. lottery drawing will be Wednesday night for an estimated \$865 million Powerball jackpot. No one has won that prize since New Year's Day, making for 36 drawings without a winner.

AP PHOTO



French President Emmanuel Macron flies a drone, accompanied by Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and first lady Rosangela da Silva on Combu Island, near Belem

**PRESIDENTS OF FRANCE
 AND BRAZIL MEET AND
 ANNOUNCE A \$1.1B
 INVESTMENT PLAN FOR
 THE AMAZON**

**MAURICIO SAVARESE,
 SAO PAULO**

The Brazilian and the French presidents yesterday [Macau time] announced a plan to invest 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion) in the Amazon, including parts of the rainforest in neighboring French Guiana.

The two countries' governments said in a joint statement the money will be spread over the next four years to protect the rainforest. It will be a collaboration of state-run Brazilian banks and France's investment agency. Private resources will also be welcomed, Brazil and France said.

French President Emmanuel Macron and his Brazilian counterpart Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva are meeting this week to revive the relationship between the countries after years of frictions with former President Jair Bolsonaro, deepen cooperation to protect the rainforest and boost trade.

Macron started his three-day visit to Brazil in the Amazon city of Belem, where he met his long-time ally Lula. The French pre-

sident then took a boat to the Combu island to meet with Indigenous leaders.

Both Macron and Lula saw a protest by Greenpeace Brazil with banners that read “No oil in the Amazon.” Brazil's government has contemplated allowing the tapping of oil in a region close to the Para state, where Belem lies.

Lula said during a speech that Macron's visit is part of a global effort to beef up rainforest protections.

“We want to convince those who have already deforested that they need to contribute in an important way to countries that still have their forests to keep them standing,” Lula said in a speech next to the French president.

Macron's office prior said to the trip that a potential European trade deal with the South American bloc Mercosur won't be on the agenda. The French president is an opponent of such an agreement as long as South American producers don't respect the same environment and health standards as Europeans, after farmers raised concerns during protests across France and Europe.

The French president decorated Indigenous leader Raoni Metuktire with the prestigious Legion of Honor medal for efforts at conserving the rainforest.

“You were in Europe and I promised to come here to your forest and be with your people in this forest that is coveted,” Macron told the Indigenous leader, according to French radio RFI. “President Lula and I have a common cause for one of our friends in this land that belongs to you.”

Lula and Macron will seek to “set a common course” to fight both climate change and poverty, Macron's office said, as Brazil is to host the summit of the Group of 20 leading economies in Rio de Janeiro in November and UN climate talks in Belem next year.

On Wednesday, Macron and Lula will launch a diesel-powered submarine built in Brazil with French technology at the Itaguaí shipyard outside Rio de Janeiro. The French president will then head to metropolis Sao Paulo to meet with Brazilian investors. On Thursday, the French president will head to Brasilia to again meet with Lula. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Indonesia's top court heard appeals lodged by two losing presidential candidates who are demanding a revote, alleging widespread irregularities and fraud at the polls in appearances before the judges yesterday. Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto won the election with an overwhelming margin: 58.6%, or more than 96 million votes, according to the General Election Commission — more than twice the runner-up's share in the three-way race.

Middle East Around 30 rockets were launched from Lebanon toward northern Israel yesterday, according to the Israeli military. Hezbollah took responsibility for the launches and said they were in response to an Israeli airstrike on a paramedic center linked to a Lebanese Sunni Muslim group in south Lebanon that killed seven of its members overnight. Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group began launching rockets toward Israel one day after Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7.

AP PHOTO



France will soon be able to deliver 78 Caesar howitzers to Ukraine and will boost its supply of shells to meet Kyiv's urgent needs for ammunition to fight Russia's full-scale invasion, the defense minister said. Defense Minister Lecornu said at a news conference that an agreement was reached among France, Ukraine and Denmark to finance the Caesar self-propelled 155 mm howitzers, which will enable France to “quickly deliver” them.

Croatia With vigils outside clinics, marches drawing thousands and groups of men kneeling to pray in public squares, religious and neo-conservative groups have been ramping up pressure to ban abortions in staunchly Catholic Croatia. The fierce debate has fueled divisions in the European Union nation of about 3.9 million people where abortion remains legal but access to the procedure is often denied, sending many women to neighboring Slovenia to end a pregnancy.