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# Times

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AP PHOTO



**China** Revelations of positive doping tests for nearly two dozen Chinese swimmers that went unpunished sparked an intense flurry of accusations and legal threats between the World Anti-Doping Agency and the head of the U.S. drug-fighting organization, who has long been one of WADA's fiercest critics. WADA said Saturday it was turning to legal counsel to address a statement released by Travis Tygart, the CEO of the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, who said WADA and anti-doping authorities in China swept positive tests "under the carpet by failing to fairly and evenly follow the global rules that apply to everyone else in the world."

AP PHOTO



**Thailand** About 1,300 people have fled from eastern Myanmar into Thailand, officials said Saturday, as fresh fighting erupted at a border town that has recently been captured by ethnic guerillas. Fighters from the Karen ethnic minority last week captured the last of the Myanmar army's outposts in and around Myawaddy, which is connected to Thailand by two bridges across the Moei River.

AP PHOTO



**North Korea** said Saturday it tested a "super-large" cruise missile warhead and a new anti-aircraft missile in a western coastal area as it expands military capabilities in the face of deepening tensions with the United States and South Korea. North Korean state media said the country's missile administration on Friday conducted a "power test" for the warhead designed for the Hwasal-1 Ra-3 strategic cruise missile and a test-launch of the Pyolji-1-2 anti-aircraft missile. It said the tests attained an unspecified "certain goal."

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CLIMATE

# MACAU SAW WARMER WEATHER IN 2023 WITH MORE BAD AIR QUALITY DAYS

LYNZY VALLES

MACAU saw slightly warmer weather last year as the mean temperature stood at 23.4 degrees Celsius in 2023, 0.6 degrees above the climatological normal (1991-2020).

Data from the the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), shows the monthly temperature of 35.2 degrees was recorded in October, breaking the record for the month.

The numbers of hot days (with maximum temperature at or above 33 degrees) and hot nights (with minimum temperature at or above 28 degrees) were 32 and 15 respectively, up by 0.7 days and 3.5 nights compared with the climatological normal (1991-2020).

This comes as global climate agencies have reported that Earth last year shattered global annual heat records, flirted with the world's agreed-upon warming threshold and showed more signs of being a hotter planet.

The European climate agency, Copernicus, said the year was 1.48 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times, which barely below the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit that the world hoped to stay within in the 2015 Paris climate accord to avoid the most severe effects of warming.

Meanwhile, the number of cold days in the SAR – with a minimum temperature at or below 12 degrees – decreased 13.1 to 26 days.

Earlier this year, the group leader of international climate scientists who calculate global warming's role in extreme weather, Imperial College climate scientist Friederike Otto, said, "We definitely see in our analysis the strong impact of this being the hottest year."

2023 has shattered climate records, accompanied by extreme weather which has left a trail of devastation and despair, according to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).



Meanwhile, in the same statement, the DSEC reported that air quality in 2023 ranged from "Good" to "Very Bad".

The number of "Good" air quality days recorded at each moni-

toring station decreased year-on-year, while the number of "Moderate" air quality days increased.

Among all stations, the ambient station in Taipa had the highest number of "Bad" air quality days

(32 days) and recorded one "Very Bad" air quality day. This station also registered the highest air quality index of the year, at 209 ("Very Bad" level), with ozone (O3) being the main pollutant.

WEATHER

# Heavy rainfall and rough sea conditions cause sailing cancellations

STAFF REPORTER

THE rough sea conditions caused by bad weather yesterday led authorities to suspend the maritime connection between Macau and Shekou Port (Shenzhen), as well as Guishan Island (Zhuhai), according to the Marine and Water Bureau (DSAMA).

DSAMA has called on citizens and tourists to note ferry companies' updated information on sailing statuses and make the necessary travel arrangements in advance to avoid being surprised by service suspensions.

The whole Pearl River Delta area has been affected since last Friday by



thunderstorms and heavy rainfall that have caused delays and increased travel times (but without major disruption) between Macau and other destinations, such as Hong Kong.

According to the Me-

teorological and Geophysical Bureau, similar weather conditions will remain for the upcoming days, as, "under the persistent influence of a low-pressure trough, showers will become frequent,

heavy at times with thunderstorms from Sunday to Tuesday (April 21 to 23)."

Yesterday, stations on the Macau Peninsula recorded an average of more than 40mm of rainfall yesterday.

Among them, the Sun Yat Sen Memorial Municipal Park had the highest rainfall of 50.8mm; stations in the Cotai District recorded more than 40mm.

The East Asian Games station recording the highest rainfall of 36.6mm.

A thunderstorm warning was only canceled yesterday at 9:30 p.m.

Meanwhile, China's water resource ministry has issued an emergency advisory about rising water levels in major rivers, waterways, and reservoirs in Guangdong province.

The government has enacted emergency response plans to protect over 127 million people from the threat of dangerous floods.

Local weather officials have described the situation as "grim", highlighting the rare spike in water levels at the Xijiang and Beijiang river basins, which has only a one-in-50 chance of occurring in

any given year, state broadcaster CCTV news said yesterday.

## TAP SEAC ART MARKET AFFECTED

The Tap Seac Art Market entered its fourth day yesterday, with vendors reporting mixed experiences as the event continues to draw crowds despite periodic showers.

Yesterday afternoon, many merchants took advantage of the cancellation of a heavy rain warning to reopen their stalls, leading to a gradual increase in foot traffic. However, some stall owners noted that weekends tend to see fewer visitors than weekdays.

A snack stall owner, surnamed Li, said this year's market situation has been worse than previous years. She said the average daily turnover is only around MOP2,000 to MOP3,000, which is barely enough to cover labor costs, according to a TDM report.

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FORUM MACAU

# Ho Iat Seng pledges robust solidarity as 6th Ministerial Conference begins today

RENATO MARQUES

**D**ELEGATIONS from the governments of Portuguese-speaking countries arrived in Macau over the weekend for the 6th Ministerial Conference of the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries – Macau (Forum Macau) that officially kicks off today and runs until Tuesday.

The occasion includes a series of activities besides the main ministerial conference, with several bilateral meetings and an entrepreneur conference to be held.

In total, nine delegations from Portugal and Portuguese-speaking countries, together with China will discuss cooperation, trade and cultural exchange, seeking to deepen relations between all sides.

All participating countries have sent high level delegates who represent the economy, as well as the finance, trade and commerce and entrepreneurship sectors.

The Forum Macau was founded in 2003 from an initiative by China's Central Government, via the country's Ministry of Com-



merce, with collaboration from the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) government.

Nine Portuguese-speaking countries are involved: Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Timor-Leste.

São Tomé and Príncipe and Equatorial Guinea are the latest additions, joining Forum Macau respectively in 2017 and 2022.

The 6th Ministerial Conference will mark the first time that gover-

ment delegations from all 10 Forum Macau countries will gather physically in Macau.

One of the initiatives related to the Forum Macau was the establishment of the Cooperation and Development Fund between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries.

According to the Forum Macau Secretary-General, Ji Xianzheng, the Fund has over the past ten years financed ten projects worth around USD500 million (MOP4 billion).

China will be represented at the Ministerial Conference by the vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Li Hongzhong, who will deliver a keynote speech at the Conference's opening ceremony this morning.

Last night, at the welcome dinner, the Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng, noted that "in the current times, when the world economy is facing profound changes, solidarity, mutually beneficial cooperation, and a joint response to challenges are even more important [than in the past]."

Looking back at the over two decades since the Forum Macau was created, Ho noted the support and promotion of the central government, the Ministry of Commerce, the Portuguese-speaking Countries, and the several leaders of the Permanent Secretariat of Forum Macau, economic and commercial cooperation between China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries, which have "achieved encouraging results and cooperation in various sectors".

"Forum Macau is an efficient cooperation mechanism and a

good service platform that has played an important role in strengthening economic and commercial cooperation and cultural exchange between China and Portuguese-speaking countries," the CE said.

He said the local government would remain faithful to its platform role as well as to the implementation of the guidelines that resulted from the "two sessions."

Echoing similar sentiments, Minister of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, Wang Wentao, remarked, "Today, changes in the world and in our times are unfolding in an unprecedented way, with historic significance."

"Looking forward, we are willing to work together with Portuguese-speaking countries to promote partnerships and respond to challenges, taking advantage of this Ministerial Conference to raise the level of Sino-Lusophone economic and trade cooperation to a new level. [...] In this sense, the China's Ministry of Commerce will continue to support Macao in developing its role as a Sino-Lusophone Platform," he added.

## Portuguese Minister of Economy meets CE and community representatives ahead of forum conference

RENATO MARQUES

**P**ORTUGAL'S Minister of Economy, Pedro Reis, over the weekend met the Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng, and representatives of the local Portuguese Community.

Reis and his delegation were briefed on Macau's current development strategies, including the "1+4" economic diversification strategy as well as the development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

At the meeting, Ho remarked on the long-standing relations between China and Portugal, and Macau's deep-rooted connections with Portugal.

The CE noted Macau's role as a platform that has facilitated Portugal's ac-



cess to the mainland China market, including the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA).

He also spoke on several topics raised with the previous Portuguese government when Ho visited the country last year.

Ho encouraged Portuguese companies to increase investment in Macau and expand their bu-

sinesses to the GBA, particularly in the health sector.

The recently inaugurated Portuguese Economy Minister stated his high expectations for the Ministerial Conference (which continues until Tuesday), which he said would deepen relations between Portugal and China, and broaden the potential for bilateral economic and trade cooperation.

Reis also noted Portugal's interest in participating in Macau's new developments, particularly in the financial industry.

The head of Portuguese government economy office also believed Macau will continue to assist Portuguese companies in their participation in the development of the GBA and entering the mainland market.

He said tourism and exhibition were important industries in Portugal, and in recent years, Portugal had hosted various major exhibitions.

He hoped there could be opportunities in these fields with Macau and the mainland, particularly for joint organization of large-scale exhibition projects, promoting cultural exchanges and eco-

nomic development.

The meeting with the CE came ahead of the Portuguese delegation's attendance at the 6th Ministerial Conference of the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries -Macau.

### DIFFERENT OFFICIAL, REPEATED COMPLAINTS

In a separate meeting, held at the Consulate-General of Portugal, Reis gathered with representatives of the Portuguese community, where he heard about several concerns that have been on the agenda.

These included the pensions of former civil servants linked to the Portuguese system as well as broader topics that affect

the whole community.

He heard there is a lack of staff to process the many requests for the renewal of Portuguese passports and identity cards, as well as other services.

Also discussed was the issuance of visas for both Chinese citizens to visit Portugal as well as Portuguese citizens to easily access the mainland, a statement from the Council of Portuguese Communities from China Circle noted.

The Economy Minister said the complaints would be forwarded to the relevant people in the new Portuguese government.

He also highlighted the role of the Portuguese living and working in Macau, noting that their presence contributed to the continued Portuguese presence in Macau.



## UM INCUBATES OVER 50 START-UPS

The University of Macau (UM) has successfully incubated more than 50 start-ups, helping them establish a foothold in Macau and mainland China. These start-ups cover a wide range of fields, such as culture and creativity, environmental protection, new materials, information technology, medicine, and biotechnology. In 2017, the UM established the Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE) to provide an environment for UM students, faculty, and alumni to "foster their innovative thinking and capabilities, and to help transform their creative ideas into viable businesses."

## MORE JAYWALKERS IN Q1

The police recorded 3,005 cases of jaywalking during this year's first quarter, according to data from the Public Security Police (PSP). This is an increase of 6% compared to the same period last year. At the beginning of this year, authorities announced new rules for these cases, which led to a greater focus on offenders. The PSP has appealed to road users to follow Article 70 of the Road Traffic Law strictly, which states pedestrians should cross roads at indicated locations, such as zebra crossings.

## NATIONAL SECURITY TEACHING MATERIALS READY: DSEDJ

The national security education supplementary teaching materials are planned to be launched in the new semester in September this year and are divided into six volumes, mainly covering universities, middle schools, primary schools and kindergartens. The Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) has commissioned relevant professional institutions in the mainland to compile teaching materials and integrate them into different education stages to enhance students' awareness of national security and their sense of identity with the country. The authorities also have relevant support facilities, including teacher training.

## F&B SECTOR SEES 20% SALES SURGE

Revenues of the interviewed restaurants & similar establishments rose 19.6% year-on-year in February 2024, with receipts of Chinese Restaurants and Local Style Cafes, Congee & Noodle Shops rising 31.5% and 12.7% respectively. By contrast, receipts of Japanese & Korean Restaurants dropped 19.2%. Meanwhile, sales of the interviewed retailers dropped slightly by 0.8% year-on-year in February, data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) shows. Sales of Cosmetics & Sanitary Articles Retailers and Motor Vehicle Retailers fell 19.6% and 14.4% respectively, while sales of Supermarkets grew 21.9%.

# MACAU IC2 ASSOCIATION HOSTS GREEN INITIATIVE FOR EARTH DAY

STAFF REPORTER

**I**n celebration of World Earth Day, the Macau IC2 Association, a local non-profit group promoting the rights of neurodivergent individuals, organized a series of eco-friendly activities at the Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau yesterday.

The event, themed "Planet vs. Plastic," aimed to raise awareness about the impact of using disposable plastic utensils and similar tools on the environment. This year marked the fourth consecutive year that the association has hosted the green initiative.

"We hope more people can come to our event and learn more about how we can practice a green lifestyle, such as how to recycle things in daily life," said António Luís Leong, president of the Macau IC2 Association.

The event started with a demonstration of pickleball, followed by a fashion show using recycled materials, a choral performance, and a green talk. All activities were planned and executed with the assistance of members from the Macau IC2 Association, who are neurodivergent individuals.

"The reason is that the Ma-



cau IC2 association is the only organization specifically created by and for neurodivergent individuals," said Ada Lo, an IC2 Association course instructor.

"This event is actually their graduation project, and if they succeed, they graduate. If they don't, they fail. It has been three months since they started."

The Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau and the Macau IC2 Association "share the belief and concept of sustainability" and are committed to doing their part in protecting the environment, according to a press release from the hotel.

"It's fantastic. It couldn't be any better. It really aligns with our core values," said Rutger Verschuren, Artyzen Area vice president. "We stand for art, culture, and heritage, but also inclusion. Today is all about inclusion, bringing the whole community together."

The hotel has implemented various sustainable practices, including reducing plastic waste, using glass bottles instead of plastic ones in restaurants, and eliminating plastic straws.

"Our focus is on going green, and it's not just because of legal requirements," Verschuren

added. "It aligns with our commitment to combating climate change and being more responsible for our planet."

The Macau IC2 Association faces various challenges, such as the lack of government funding and a fixed location for their activities. However, the association remains determined to empower neurodivergent individuals and promote environmental awareness in the community.

"The main message I want to convey is that they are capable individuals who should not be feared," Lo said.

## SEAC PAI VAN-HENGQIN LINE

# LRT awards MOP21 million for traffic system equipment

STAFF REPORTER

**T**he Public Works Bureau's website has revealed that the contract for the supplementary service of the Hengqin Line's channel traffic system equipment has been awarded to companies Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Top Builders and Hou Chon Consortium.

The LRT awarded 20.8 million patacas for the installation of circulating system equipment for the Seac Pai Van line and the Hengqin line.

The award also includes the complementary service of equipment for the circulating access system connecting the Hengqin line.

Installation of this equipment is scheduled to conclude

by September.

Significant progress has been made in the construction of the Hengqin LRT Line project. In late March, authorities announced a test train had successfully journeyed the Hengqin line, and subsequent tests on the system and trains were conducted.

The Hengqin LRT Line will provide an interchange connection with the Taipa Line. The interchange platform is situated within the Lotus Complex in Cotai, specifically in the podium section.

This platform will link the Hengqin Line's HE1 station with the Lotus Border Station of the Taipa Line. The Public Works Bureau's website states the contractual completion date for the LRT Taipa Line and Hengqin Line Station Link is set for July this year.

## WYNN: PROMISING RESULTS FOR RUA DA FELICIDADE PEDESTRIAN AREA

STAFF REPORTER

**S**INCE the Rua da Felicidade pedestrian area was established last year, more than 10 new shops have been added, and several others are preparing to open soon.

There are plans to incorporate additional elements of the night-time economy and provide support to small and medium-sized enterprises to enhance their business envi-

ronments, according to president and vice chairman of the Wynn Macau's board of Directors, Linda Chen.

Speaking on the sidelines of a recent event, the executive said that before the Labor Day Golden Week, Rua da Felicidade will host local brand fashion shows and a music festival.

Additionally, concerts and food promotions will occur at the gaming operator's properties to enrich tourists'

experiences.

Chen said organizing various activities and adornments during holidays, as well as promoting small and medium-sized enterprises through online platforms, will contribute to raising awareness of the new street.

Gaming operators are revitalizing historic neighborhoods and landmarks as part of their commitment and pledge to the government following the gaming law overhaul.



AL PLENARY

# Lawmaker calls for gov't to integrate fresh graduates in '1+4'

STAFF REPORTER

**L**AWMAKER Cheng On Ting has called for optimization in the implementation of the "1+4" economic development strategy in the SAR.

In an interpellation, lawmaker called for the government to help fresh graduates to effectively participate in the "1+4" development.

He recommended the government take the lead and encourage universities to cooperate with enterprises and associations to provide corresponding internship plans and vocational and technical training courses.

"The government should systematically conduct research on talent needs and industry needs in the four key industries, actively promote the construction of a talent information registration



system and establish a complete talent demand database so that all sectors of society can understand changing trends in talent," said Cheng.

"They should also provide a reference for the majority of mi-

ddle school graduates to study further, helping them understand social development conditions, make early career plans, and cope with future challenges," he added.

Meanwhile, suggested su-

pporting small, medium, and micro enterprises in various districts, revitalizing the community economy and providing opportunities for fresh graduates via internships.

He also suggested reviewing and adjusting the plan based on the current social situation, particularly focusing on supporting small businesses and revitalizing the economy in the Northern Districts.

"Although the number of tourists in Macau is basically close to the pre-pandemic level, the main beneficiaries are concentrated in tourist areas and resorts, while merchants in livelihood areas and some small, medium and micro enterprises are [finding it] more difficult to benefit, and the economy has not recovered in a balanced manner," he said.

"The overall purchasing power is weak, and residents

travel northward for consumption, which makes it difficult for many small, medium and micro enterprises in the Northern Districts to survive; at the same time, the continuous decline of the real estate industry has also impacted the related supply chains," the lawmaker said.

He said a government pilot consumption incentive program in the Northern District, which yielded relatively positive results is a good step. He hoped this initiative would be extended to other communities to support small, medium and micro enterprises in the district and revitalize the community economy.

However, he said the current programs only provided short-term support and that long-term support needs to be considered in the implementation of "1+4" diversification strategy.

"I recommend that the government intensify efforts to launch support measures for the transformation and upgrading of small- and medium-sized enterprises, popularize and promote digital tools, improve operating efficiency and competitiveness and assist enterprises in integrating online and offline operations and help them modernize."

# Sun Yingsha, Ma Long crowned champions at ITTF World Cup



Ma Long and Sun Yingsha

STAFF REPORTER

**C**HINA'S Sun Yingsha made history at the ITTF Men's and Women's World Cup Macao 2024 by clinching the prestigious Women's Single gold medal and the Hammarslund Cup yesterday. Sun Yingsha and Wang

Manyu, two exceptional Chinese players, showcased their determination and tenacity in their debut at the Women's World Cup.

World No.1 Sun clinched victory with a hard-fought 4-3 triumph (8-11, 5-11, 11-4, 5-11, 11-8, 11-5, 11-9). This thrilling

final that went all the way, showcased the incredible talent and resilience of both players, with Sun making up for her 2020 Women's World Cup final loss. China has now emerged victorious in all 24 out of 25 Women's World Cup titles since its debut in 1996 in Hong Kong.

Meanwhile, Ma Long secures third Men's World Cup title as he emerged victorious as the champion of the ITTF Men's World Cup.

Defeating his compatriot Lin Gaoyuan in an

intense gold medal match, the World No. 4 secured his third Men's World Cup title.

The rivalry between Ma Long and Lin Gaoyuan, who have faced each other nine times on the international stage, was once again on display, showcasing their deep understanding of each other's playing styles.

He secured the championship in a captivating manner, building on the momentum of his last three wins (9-11, 9-11, 5-11, 11-8, 11-6, 11-4, 11-8).

## CORPORATE BITS

### Galaxy launches Kidz Edutainment Center



Galaxy Kidz, the family program at Galaxy Macau Integrated Resort, has recently undergone a comprehensive upgrade, launching the newly designed Galaxy Kidz Edutainment Center by Manfred Yuen,

a young architect from Hong Kong SAR.

Situated on the second floor of the Galaxy Hotel, the center aims to "become the ultimate party destination for children in the heart of the city."

It provides an ideal venue for children's birthday celebrations and other special occasions.

Booking Galaxy Kidz Parties also grants a five-hour complimentary access to an array of facilities and themed workshops at the Galaxy Kidz Edutainment Center. Inspired by Wavey the Peacock, the center is festooned with vibrant decorations and offers themed activities and workshops tailored to each child's interests, providing experiences in S.T.E.A.M. subjects. From scientific experiments in Wavey's Lab to culinary adventures in Wavey's Kitchen, the center offers a range of activities for children.

### MGM team members visit National Security Education Exhibition



MGM has organized annual visits for its management and team members to the National Security Education Exhibition - co-organized by the SAR Government and the Liaison Office of the

Central People's Government in the SAR.

MGM team members have made over 2,400 visits to the exhibition, both online and in person, according to a statement from

the gaming operator.

This year, MGM will arrange for 300 team members to visit the exhibition on-site, intending to reinforce the team's grasp of national development and security, empowering them to further contribute to the nation's stability and the successful implementation of 'One country, two systems'.

"During the visit, MGM team members gained a thorough understanding that the national security regime has attained historical achievements in the ten years since President Xi Jinping introduced a holistic approach to national security, providing a bedrock for the nation to flourish," the gaming operator said in a statement.



DIPLOMACY

# Blinken will be the latest top US official to visit China in a bid to keep ties on an even keel

MATTHEW LEE,  
WASHINGTON (AP)

**S**ECRETARY of State Antony Blinken will travel to China this week as Washington and Beijing try to keep ties on an even keel despite major differences on issues from the path to peace in the Middle East to the supply of synthetic opioids that have heightened fears over global stability.

The rivals are at odds on numerous fronts, including Russia's war in Ukraine, Taiwan and the South China Sea, North Korea, Hong Kong, human rights and the detention of American citizens. The United States and China also are battling over trade and commerce issues, with President Joe Biden announcing new tariffs on imports of Chinese steel this past week.

The State Department said Saturday that Blinken, on his second visit to China in less than a year, will travel to Shanghai and Beijing starting Wednesday for three days of meetings with senior Chinese officials, including Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Talks between Blinken and Chinese President Xi Jinping are expected, although neither side will confirm such a meeting is happening



Secretary of State Antony Blinken, right, accompanied by China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, walk to meet the media after a bilateral meeting at the State Department in Washington last year

until shortly before it takes place. The department said in a statement that Blinken would "discuss a range of bilateral, regional, and global issues," including the Middle East, the war in Ukraine, the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait.

He will also talk about progress made in "resuming counternarcotics cooperation, military-to-military communication, artificial intelligence, and strengthening people-to-people ties" and will reaffirm how important it is for the U.S. and China to be "responsibly managing

competition, even in areas where our two countries disagree," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said.

The trip follows a phone call this month between Biden and Xi in which they pledged to keep high-level contacts open, something they had agreed to last year at a face-to-face summit in California. Since that call, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has visited China and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has spoken by phone with his Chinese counterpart. Meetings at lower le-

vels also have taken place.

Despite those encounters, relations are rocky. The U.S. has recently become more vocal in its calls for China to stop supporting Russia's military-industrial sector, which Washington says has allowed Moscow to boost weapons production to support the war against Ukraine.

"We see China sharing machine tools, semiconductors, other dual-use items that have helped Russia rebuild the defense industrial base that sanctions and export controls

had done so much to degrade," Blinken said Friday. "Now, if China purports on the one hand to want good relations with Europe and other countries, it can't on the other hand be fueling what is the biggest threat to European security since the end of the Cold War."

Blinken also has pushed for China to take a more active stance in pressing Iran not to escalate tensions in the Middle East. He has spoken to his Chinese counterpart several times since the Israel-Hamas war began six months ago as he has sought China's help in getting Iran to restrain proxy groups it has supported, armed and funded in the region.

That topic has taken on new urgency since direct back-and-forth attacks by Iran and Israel on each other's soil in the past week.

Also high on the agenda for Blinken will be Taiwan and the South China Sea.

The U.S. has strongly condemned Chinese military exercises threatening Taiwan, which Beijing regards as a renegade province and vowed to reunify with the mainland by force if necessary. Successive U.S. administrations have steadily ramped up military support and sales for Taipei, much to the anger of Chinese officials.

In the South China Sea, the U.S. and others have become increasingly concerned by provocative Chinese actions in and around disputed areas. In particular, the U.S. has voiced objections to what it says are Chinese attempts to thwart legitimate activities by others in the waterway, notably the Philippines and Vietnam.

That was a major topic of concern earlier this month when Biden held a three-way summit with the prime minister of Japan and the president of the Philippines.

MDT/AP

## San Francisco mayor announces the city will receive pandas from China

**S**AN Francisco is the latest U.S. city preparing to receive a pair of pandas from China, in a continuation of Beijing's famed "panda diplomacy."

San Francisco Mayor London Breed announced the panda loan in Beijing on Friday, alongside officials from China Wildlife Conservation Association, or CWCA. It will be San Francisco's first time hosting the beloved animals long-term — the result of a year-long advocacy campaign, Breed said.

San Diego previously announced it was recei-



London Breed, left, Mayor of San Francisco and Wu Minglu, Secretary General of China Wildlife Conservation Association (CWCA)

ving two pandas back in February.

China is home to the only natural habitat for pandas and owns most of the black-and-white bears in the world. Beijing loans the animals to

other countries as a tool for diplomacy and wildlife conservation.

"San Francisco is absolutely thrilled to be welcoming giant pandas to the San Francisco Zoo," Breed said after signing

a letter of intent for international cooperation on giant panda conservation.

Breed said the city had been working with its Chinese and Asian communities to advocate for the pandas for almost a year leading up to an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation leaders' meeting in San Francisco last November, during which the U.S. and Chinese presidents met.

CWCA Secretary General Wu Minglu said the association will work with San Francisco officials to prepare for the pandas' arrival and to ensure the

technical standards for their conservation.

"We look forward to a pair of giant pandas being in San Francisco in 2025," he said.

When San Diego broke the news in February that it would receive a pair of pandas, it was the first time in more than two decades that China had agreed to send pandas to the United States.

Only four giant pandas are currently in the U.S., all at the zoo in Atlanta. China in recent years has not renewed loan agreements at zoos in Washington, D.C., and Memphis, Tennessee, sparking fears it was ending its historic panda diplomacy with Western nations due to geopolitical tensions.

The black-and-white bears have been a symbol of U.S.-China friendship

ever since Beijing gifted a pair of pandas to the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., in 1972, ahead of the normalization of bilateral relations. China later loaned pandas to zoos to help breed cubs and boost the population.

Friday's announcement comes ahead of a planned visit to China next week by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Washington and Beijing have boosted their diplomatic exchanges in recent months, in an effort to ease escalating tensions. But frictions remain on trade, national security and the countries' diverging stances on conflicts such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war. MDT/AP



# Two Japanese navy helicopters crash in the Pacific Ocean during training, leaving one dead and seven missing

MARI YAMAGUCHI,  
TOKYO

**T**WO Japanese navy helicopters carrying eight crew members crashed in the Pacific Ocean south of Tokyo during a nighttime training flight after possibly colliding with each other, the country's defense minister said yesterday. One crew member who had been recovered from the waters was later pronounced dead, while rescuers searched for seven others who were still missing.

The two SH-60K choppers from the Maritime Self-Defense Force were carrying four crew each and lost contact late Saturday near Torishima island about 600 kilometers south of Tokyo, Defense Minister Minoru Kihara told reporters.

The cause of the crash was not immediately known, but officials believe the two helicopters "highly likely" collided with each other before crashing into the water, Kihara said.

He added his ministry will suspend training flights for all SH-60s for now.

The navy chief of staff, Adm. Ryo Sakai, said the trainings will be suspended until the accident's cause is determined and preventive measures are adopted.

Rescuers have recovered a flight data recorder, a blade from each helicopter, and fragments believed to be from both choppers in the same area, signs that the two SH-60Ks were flying close to each other, Kihara said. Officials will analyze the flight data to try to determine what led to the crash.

Search and rescue efforts for the missing crew were expanded Sunday, with the MSDF and Air Self-Defense Force together deploying 12 warships and seven aircraft.



Japan Coast Guard patrol boats and aircraft also joined the operation.

U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel said in a message on social platform X that the U.S. had offered to help with the search and rescue.

"We will stand together, side by side, with our friend and ally, Japan. My thoughts are with the crew members, and their families and friends during this challenging time," he said.

The helicopters, twin-engine, multi-mission aircraft developed by Sikorsky and known as Seahawks, were modified and produced in Japan by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. They were on nighttime anti-submarine training in the waters, Kihara said. One lost contact at 10:38 p.m. (1338 GMT) and sent an automatic emergency signal a minute later. They lost contact about 270 kilometers east of Torishima island.

Only one distress signal called an emergency locator transmitter was heard — another sign the two helicopters were near the same place, because their signals use the same frequency and could not be differentiated, Kihara said.

One helicopter belonged

to an air base in Nagasaki, and the other to a base in Tokushima prefecture.

The SH-60K aircraft is usually deployed on destroyers for anti-submarine warfare, but is also used for search and rescue and other missions. Japan has about 70 of the modified helicopters.

Saturday's training only involved the Japanese navy and was not part of a multinational exercise, defense officials said. They said no foreign aircraft or warships were spotted in the area.

Japan, under its 2022 security strategy, has been accelerating its military buildup and fortifying deterrence in the southwestern Japanese islands in the Pacific and East China Sea to counter threats from China's increasingly assertive military activities. Japan in recent years has conducted its own extensive naval exercises as well as joint drills with its ally the United States and other partners.

The navy chief of staff said Saturday's training was part of routine anti-submarine warfare drills involving MSDF warships, submarines and Seahawks.

The crash comes a year after a Ground Self-Defense Force UH-60 Blackhawk

crashed off the southwestern Japanese island of Miyako, due to an engine output problem known as "rollback," leaving all 10 crew members dead, which shocked the nation. In 2017, a Japanese navy SH-60J, an earlier generation Seahawk, crashed during a nighttime flight training off Aomori due to human error.

Saturday's crash and possible collision also recalled a July 2021 nighttime training off the southern island of Amamioshima, where two SH-60s had a minor collision, both suffering blade damage, but causing no injuries.

Following that collision, the MSDF introduced a set of preventive measures. Sakai said Saturday's crash could have been prevented if all those measures were adequately followed.

In the U.S., a fatal crash of a MH-60S Seahawk during training off California in 2021 was attributed to mechanical failure from unsuspected damage during maintenance, according to the Navy.

Japan's NHK public television said no weather advisories were issued in the area at the time of Saturday's crash. **MDT/AP**

## ADVERTORIAL

# GREAT TIMES

**Chef Olivier Elzer Curates Three-Day-Only French Degustation for Aux Beaux Arts at MGM MACAU**



**M**GM once again surprises connoisseurs with its limited-time guest chef collaboration. MICHELIN-starred Chef Olivier Elzer, founder of the esteemed French restaurant Clarence in Hong Kong, will bring a three-day exclusive gastronomic experience to the elegant French establishment Aux Beaux Arts at MGM MACAU from May 10 to 12, all in an elegant ambiance reminiscent of a 1930's French brasserie.



Chef Olivier Elzer have been recognized with a total of 28 MICHELIN stars over the years. With a profound understanding of French cuisine and a flair for East Asian culinary artistry, Chef Elzer will present special degustation menus curated exclusively for MGM with his stellar team, including Executive

Chef Simon So, Chef Pâtissier Steven Jin, Chief Sommelier Tristan Pommier, and Head of Mixology Maxence Traverse. Each creation showcases the best of modern French delicacies with an enticing and innovative Asian twist.

Prepare to be delighted by a unique culinary fusion of ultimate freshness, diverse flavors and delicate aesthetics. In addition to the set menu options, an à la carte menu is also available. To elevate the gastronomic indulgence, multi-award-winning sommelier and mixologist from the Clarence team will ensure a harmonious symphony of flavors with impeccable tipple pairings. For reservations, please call (853) 8802 2319 or visit [mgm.mo](http://mgm.mo).





PUTIN'S WAR

# Ukrainian and Western leaders laud US aid package while the Kremlin warns of 'further ruin'

SAMYA KULLAB & ELISE MORTON, KYIV

**U**KRAINIAN and Western leaders welcomed a desperately needed aid package passed by the U.S. House of Representatives, as the Kremlin claimed the passage of the bill would "further ruin" Ukraine and cause more deaths.

The House swiftly approved \$95 billion in foreign aid for Ukraine, Israel and other U.S. allies in a rare Saturday session as Democrats and Republicans banded together after months of hard-right resistance over renewed American support for repelling Russia's invasion.

With an overwhelming vote, the \$61 billion in aid for Ukraine passed in a matter of minutes. Many Democrats cheered on the House floor and waved Ukrainian flags.

Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who had warned that his country would lose the war without U.S. funding, said that he was grateful for the decision



AP PHOTO

of U.S. lawmakers.

"We appreciate every sign of support for our country and its independence, people and way of life, which Russia is attempting to bury under the rubble," he wrote on social media site X.

"America has demonstrated its leadership since the first days of this war. Exactly this type of leadership is required to maintain a rules-based international order and predictability for all nations," he said.

The Ukrainian president noted that his country's "warriors on the front lines" would feel the benefit of the aid package.

One such "warrior" is infantry soldier Oleksandr, fighting around

Avdiivka, the city in the Donetsk region that Ukraine lost to Russia in February after months of intense combat.

"For us it's so important to have this support from the U.S. and our partners," Oleksandr told The Associated Press. He did not give his full name for security reasons.

"With this we can stop them and reduce our losses. It's the first step to have the possibility to liberate our territory."

Ammunition shortages linked to the aid holdup over the past six months have led Ukrainian military commanders to ration shells, a disadvantage that Russia seized on this year

— taking the city of Avdiivka and currently inching towards the town of Chasiv Yar, also in the Donetsk region.

"The Russians come at us in waves — we become exhausted, we have to leave our positions. This is repeated many times," Oleksandr said. "Not having enough ammunition means we can't cover the area that is our responsibility to hold when they are assaulting us."

Other Western leaders lauded the passing of the aid package.

"Ukraine is using the weapons provided by NATO Allies to destroy Russian combat capabilities. This makes us all safer, in Europe & North America," NATO Secre-

tary-General Jens Stoltenberg wrote on X.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that "Ukraine deserves all the support it can get against Russia."

In Russia, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov called the approval of aid to Ukraine "expected and predictable."

The decision "will make the United States of America richer, further ruin Ukraine and result in the deaths of even more Ukrainians, the fault of the Kyiv regime," Peskov was quoted as saying by Russian news agency Ria Novosti.

"The new aid package will not save, but, on the contrary, will kill thousands and thousands more people, prolong the conflict, and bring even more grief and devastation," Leonid Slutsky, head of the Russian State Duma Committee on International Affairs, wrote on Telegram.

The whole aid package will go to the U.S. Senate, which could pass it as soon as Tuesday. President Joe Biden has promised to sign it immediately. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1997 TROOPS STORM EMBASSY IN PERU



Troops have stormed the Japanese embassy in Peru and freed all but one of 72 hostages held inside, ending a four-month siege of the building by anti-government rebels.

All 14 Tupac Amaru rebels were killed, including their leader, Nestor Cerpa Cartolini.

One hostage - supreme court judge Carlos Giusti Acuna - died, as well as two Peruvian soldiers.

The end to the hostage crisis came at 1530 local time (2030 GMT) as about 15 soldiers in ski masks swarmed over the roof of the building.

A series of explosions shortly afterwards left a gaping hole in the roof of the embassy. Several smaller explosions were said to be caused by booby traps left by the rebels.

The assault lasted 40 minutes. As gunfire echoed around the compound, the hostages staggered, crawled or were carried out of the embassy. Several were injured.

They included the Peruvian Foreign Minister, Francisco Tudela, and the Japanese Ambassador, Morihta Aoki.

As the gunfire died away, jubilant soldiers tore the Tupac Amaru rebel flag from the roof of the embassy and the Peruvian President, Alberto Fujimori, joined some of the former hostages in singing the national anthem.

The president has taken sole responsibility for the surprise decision to send in the troops.

It was a massive risk: the Japanese government, one of Peru's main trading partners, had been pressing him for a negotiated settlement to the crisis.

In the end, he went ahead without even letting them know.

The Japanese Prime Minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, expressed regret at that decision, but also thanked President Fujimori.

"It is not important whether we had prior knowledge of the move. The important thing is that the hostages were freed," he said.

The siege began on 17 December when the Marxist rebels stormed a diplomatic cocktail party, seizing more than 400 guests, most of whom were freed in the next few days.

Courtesy BBC News

## PANAMA PAPERS

# Trial's public portion comes to an unexpectedly speedy end

JUAN ZAMORANO, PANAMA CITY

**T**HE public portion of a trial of more than two-dozen associates accused of helping some of the world's richest people hide their wealth came to an unexpectedly speedy conclusion Friday when a Panamanian judge said she would take the two weeks of trial arguments and

testimony under advisement.

The trial came eight years after 11 million leaked secret financial documents that became known as the "Panama Papers" prompted the resignation of the prime minister of Iceland and brought scrutiny to the then-leaders of Argentina and Ukraine, Chinese politicians, and Russian President Vladimir Pu-

tin, among others.

Judge Baloisa Marquinez noted Friday that the case included more than 530 volumes of information. The public trial had been expected to run to the end of the month. The judge has 30 working days to issue a verdict.

Those on trial include the owners of the Mossack Fonseca law firm that was at the heart of the

2016 massive document leak. Jürgen Mossack attended the trial, while his partner Ramón Fonseca did not for health reasons, according to his counsel.

Panamanian prosecutors allege that Mossack, Fonseca and their associates created a web of shell companies that used complex transactions to hide money linked to illicit activities

in the "car wash" corruption scandal of Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht.

"This whole process from eight years ago until now ... has had a lot of consequences for my family, on my personal situation and truly has been a great injustice not just for me but for all of the people who have worked with me," Mossack testified Friday. "I trust your honor will know how to evaluate all that has been said here."

Mossack had said at the start of the trial, as he has for years, that he was not guilty of the money laundering charges. **MDT/AP**

## IN CONTEXT

It emerged that security forces - helped by the British SAS - had prepared for the attack up to two weeks in advance.

They dug a network of tunnels under the embassy to install surveillance equipment, pinpointing the whereabouts and movements of both hostages and rebels.

Most of the guerrillas were killed when a tunnel packed with explosives blew up under their feet as they played football.

Alberto Fujimori resigned in November 2000 after a bribery scandal involving his former intelligence chief, Vladimiro Montesinos.

Montesinos himself went into hiding for eight months.

During this time, in March 2001, the bodies of all 14 rebels involved in the Japanese embassy siege were exhumed amid allegations that troops shot some of them after they had surrendered.

The subsequent investigation concluded that at least three of the rebels were executed.

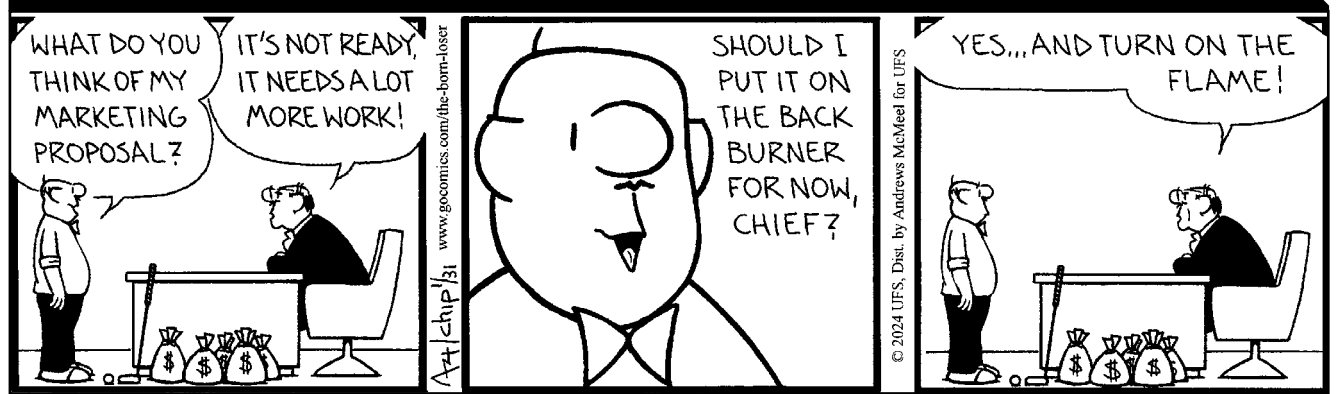


MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

 <b>ARIES</b> <b>Mar. 21-Apr. 19</b> Settle into the comfort of your partnership. Listen to your heart. You can get what you need. Spend unscheduled time together. Lucky surprises abound.	 <b>TAURUS</b> <b>Apr. 20-May. 20</b> Maintain healthy practices for growing strength. Balance work with exercise, good food and rest. Invest effort now for lasting gain. Gentleness gets farther than force.
 <b>GEMINI</b> <b>May. 21-Jun. 21</b> Romantic and creative projects flower. Stay flexible. Allow for spontaneous detours and unexpected connections. Play your favorite games. Enjoy the company of someone sweet.	 <b>CANCER</b> <b>Jun. 22-Jul. 22</b> Imagine the domestic upgrades you'd love. Envision your perfect rooms. Clear clutter. Discuss ideas with housemates. Research and plan. Consider colors and evaluate options.
 <b>LEO</b> <b>Jul. 23-Aug. 22</b> Creative projects can lead to lasting benefits. A fascinating puzzle hooks you. Indulge your latest obsession or curiosity. Write and share your views.	 <b>VIRGO</b> <b>Aug. 23-Sep. 22</b> Take advantage of lucrative conditions. Conserve resources. Plant seeds for future growth. Develop opportunities into fruition. Focus on short-term objectives. Protect what you have.
 <b>LIBRA</b> <b>Sep. 23-Oct. 22</b> Pamper yourself with special alone time. Relax and recharge. Include hot water and bubbles. Put your own oxygen mask on before caring for others.	 <b>SCORPIO</b> <b>Oct. 23-Nov. 21</b> Envision perfection. Imagine future possibilities as already realized. What would need to happen for that to occur? Notice logical steps. Plot your course.
 <b>SAGITTARIUS</b> <b>Nov. 22-Dec. 21</b> Savor time with old friends. Pull together for common cause. Remind each other about past good times, as you plan upcoming adventures. Have fun.	 <b>CAPRICORN</b> <b>Dec. 22-Jan. 19</b> Pursue a career dream with consistent small steps. Envision possibilities and imagine them realized. Schedule regular tasks. Take charge for what you want.
 <b>AQUARIUS</b> <b>Jan. 20-Feb. 18</b> Imagine a possibility to learn and discover. Consider options and explore potential destinations. Research and study. Do the homework. Don't venture forth before preparing well.	 <b>PISCES</b> <b>Feb. 19-Mar. 20</b> Save for a rainy day. Rake in an abundant harvest. Take advantage of lucrative conditions. Collaborate to get farther, faster. Together, you can accomplish wonders.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sanson**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

**WEATHER**

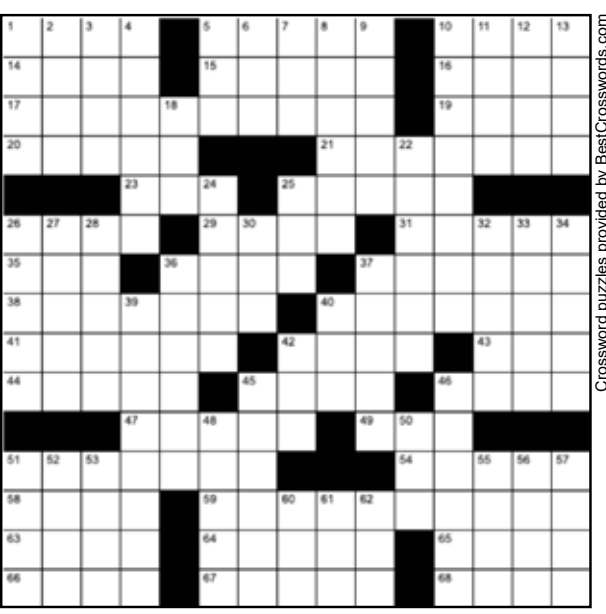
	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	13	28	cloudy
Changchun	9	19	cloudy
Chengdu	16	25	rain
Chongqing	17	27	rain
Fuzhou	20	22	rain
Guangzhou	20	29	rain
Guiyang	12	27	overcast
Haikou	26	34	cloudy
Hangzhou	15	22	overcast
Harbin	9	17	showers
Hefei	12	22	cloudy
Nanjing	13	22	cloudy
Shanghai	14	21	overcast
Taipei	22	24	overcast
Wuhan	17	26	cloudy
Hong Kong	25	30	thunderstorm
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	5	17	cloudy
Frankfurt	-1	10	cloudy
Paris	2	13	cloudy
London	6	10	cloudy
New York	7	17	sunny

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Vipers; 5- Swerves; 10- Receptacle for holy water; 14- Festive; 15- Tree-lined walk; 16- Butter substitute; 17- Without a job; 19- Baltic feeder; 20- Wide open; 21- Portable lamp; 23- Fond du \_\_\_\_ Wisconsin; 25- Horne and Olin; 26- Fencing sword; 29- Ardent; 31- Male deer; 35- Precious stone; 36- Fail to mention; 37- Polar cover; 38- Fugitive; 40- Power plug transformer; 41- Sound system; 42- Large jug or pitcher; 43- Cheer for Manolete; 44- It's human; 45- Boxer Oscar \_\_\_\_ Hoya; 46- Gaelic language of Ireland or Scotland; 47- Stand used by painters; 49- Pasture; 51- Locks; 54- Sailing; 58- Mickey's creator; 59- Suppression of information; 63- To \_\_\_\_ (perfectly); 64- Tendency; 65- Actress Skye; 66- Highly ranked competitor in sporting events; 67- Rose; 68- Denials;

DOWN 1- Water. Sp.; 2- Squealed; 3- "Not guilty," e.g.; 4- Specimen; 5- Kilmer of "The Saint"; 6- "Hold On Tight" band; 7- Tarzan portrayer Ron; 8- Staggered; 9- Family car; 10- The sound of somebody walking; 11- Like some shoppes; 12- At no time, poetically; 13- Ripped; 18- Pod occupant; 22- Winston Cup org.; 24- Brief appearance; 25- Ignited; 26- Discharge; 27- Green pasta sauce; 28- Toastmaster; 30- Compete; 32- Thespian; 33- Some Celts; 34- Binge; 36- Musical dramas; 37- Perfect, something to aspire to; 39- Apprehended; 40- Hole-boring tool; 42- Lamprey; 45- Barren place; 46- Dines at home; 48- Religious offshoots; 50- Musical gift; 51- "\_\_\_\_ the night before Christmas..."; 52- Appraise, charge per unit; 53- Waiting for the Robert \_\_\_\_; 55- Drive away; 56- Mozart's "\_\_\_\_ kleine Nachtmusik"; 57- Mimics; 60- Opposite of paleo-; 61- \_\_\_\_ Cat; 62- Eccentric;

**Friday's solution**



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Grand Oasis Residence Amber (Coloane)  
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CHINESE GP

# Another race, another victory for Red Bull's Max Verstappen

STEPHEN WADE, SHANGHAI

**A**NOTHER Formula 1 race. Yet another victory for Red Bull's Max Verstappen.

The three-time defending champion won the Chinese Grand Prix yesterday starting from pole, his fourth victory in five races this season and his 23rd in the last 27 extending through last season.

Only a brake failure last month at the Australian GP in Melbourne probably kept him from sweeping all five.

Verstappen trailed for only a few laps following a pit stop. Lando Norris of McLaren was about 14 seconds behind Verstappen in second — the eighth time he has been No. 2 in his career as he still seeks his first victory. Verstappen's Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez was third.

"It felt amazing," Verstappen said. "All weekend we were incredibly quick and it was just enjoyable to drive. The car was basically on rails and I could do whatever



Red Bull driver Max Verstappen of the Netherlands

I wanted to with it. Those kind of weekends are amazing to feel."

The safety car came out twice in the middle of the race. Once after

Sauber's Valtteri Bottas stalled at the edge of the track with a blown engine, and again with two nearly simultaneous incidents.

In one, Kevin Magnussen clipped Yuki Tsunoda, and in the other, Lance Stroll ran into the back of Daniel Ricciardo.

Verstappen's rule in F1 also extended to Saturday when he took the inaugural sprint race of the season.

This was the first F1 in China since 2019 when the COVID-19 pandemic and China's clampdown wiped out four races. Shanghai-born Zhou Guanyu finished 14th for Sauber, perhaps his last chance to race at home as teams next season will shuffle their driver lineups.

The real competition in F1 for the rest of the season appears to be for the half-dozen places behind Verstappen and Perez. Mercedes' George Russell called it "a fight" for places No. 3 through No. 8.

"Small differences can have a major impact," Russell said.

Domination is nothing new to F1. Michael Schumacher, Sebastian Vettel and Lewis Hamilton ruled before Verstappen came along — Schumacher and Hamilton winning seven season titles and Vettel four.

It's a good bet that Verstappen and Red Bull will rule next season. That might change in 2026 when new engine and chassis regulations take effect in F1.

The next GP is Miami on May 5 where it's often a celebrity show. There was also a parade of celebrities in China with former basketball star Yao Ming and double Olympic champion skier Eileen Gu posing for photos in the paddock and on the track before the start of the race. **MDT/AP**

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**OPINION**

**China Daily**  
 Editorial, China Daily

**AID BILLS' INTENTION TO  
 CONTAIN CHINA BELIES  
 US' COMMITMENT TO  
 REPAIRING BILATERAL TIE**

Although the two military aid bills regarding Ukraine and Israel caught the attention of the world, the two other bills in the aid package the United States House of Representatives passed on Saturday also deserve attention as they concern the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

The so-called "Indo-Pacific" Security Supplemental Bill includes \$8.1 billion to counter Beijing's "actions" in the "Indo-Pacific" region, \$3.3 billion to develop submarine infrastructure, \$2 billion in military financing for Taiwan and other key allies, and \$1.9 billion to replenish defense items and services provided to Taiwan and regional partners.

The so-called 21st Century Peace through Strength Act, meanwhile, includes a measure that could lead to a nationwide ban in the US on TikTok, a short-form video hosting service owned by Chinese internet company ByteDance.

In his speech on the aid package on Saturday shortly after its passing, House Speaker Mike Johnson didn't mince his words in claiming that China is one of the three primary "adversaries" to the US, along with Russia and Iran, that threatens the "free world".

Both the content of the two China-related bills and the remarks of Johnson constitute grave violations of the series of statements the Joe Biden administration has made on Sino-US relations, and threatens to ruin the efforts that are being made to repair the fraught relationship.

In their talk by telephone on April 2, US President Joe Biden reiterated to his Chinese counterpart that the US does not seek a new Cold War, its objective is not to change China's system, its alliances are not targeted against China, it does not support "Taiwan independence", it adheres to the one-China policy and it does not seek conflict with China.

As agreed by the two leaders, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen concluded her second China trip since July earlier this month, and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is the next senior member of the Biden administration due to visit China to strengthen dialogue and communication, avoid miscalculation and promote cooperation, so as to advance the relationship on a stable path and jointly respond to global challenges.

Yet, with the Taiwan separatists hailing the US side's "rock solid" commitment to their cause and Chinese companies complaining about politicized and unfair treatment, the onus is on the US side to explain how the two China-related bills conform to Biden's multiple "does not", and how they can help the US manage differences with China "in a responsible way", as President Biden has vowed to.

The bills are highly likely to be passed in the US Senate and signed by President Biden into law. If so, almost all aforementioned China-related statements the US leader has kept reiterating since his first exchange with the Chinese leader will prove to be empty talk, and the Sino-US relations will suffer a heavy blow rendering the efforts the two sides have made together to promote communications since the two leaders' meeting in San Francisco in November in vain.

Those in the US holding the view that the US can cooperate with China where they should, keep communication where they can, and confront China where it has no choice should realize that the Taiwan question concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and core interests, and any careless move by Washington would lead to catastrophic consequences.

US House Speaker Mike Johnson quoted an old US military adage to conclude his speech on the aid package: "We would rather send bullets to the conflicts overseas than our own boys or troops." That should be a direct reminder to the intended receivers of the aid to Taiwan of what their US ally is asking from them in return.

Organizers have revoked He Jie's first place in the Beijing Half Marathon last weekend after an investigation confirmed that three other runners had slowed down to let him win the race.

All four runners were disqualified and had to return their medals and award money.

Chinese online users had shared the video from the final moments of last Sunday's race out of suspicion that it had been rigged. The footage showed three African runners letting He, China's top long-distance runner, move ahead of them shortly

before they were about to reach the finish line.

The three runners deliberately reduced their pace, according to a statement from a committee set up to investigate the race.

"We deeply and sincerely apologize to the world and to every part of society, that we did not discover and correct the mistakes in time at this race," the committee said. Zhong'ao Lupao Sports Management Co, the main organizer, is losing its right to host the Beijing Half Marathon as punishment.



SOCIAL MEDIA

**APPLE PULLS WHATSAPP  
 AND THREADS  
 FROM APP STORE  
 ON BEIJING'S ORDERS**

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

Apple said it had removed Meta's WhatsApp messaging app and its Threads social media app from the App Store in China to comply with orders from Chinese authorities.

The apps were removed from the store on Friday after Chinese officials cited unspecified national security concerns.

Their removal comes amid elevated tensions between the U.S. and China over trade, technology and national security.

The U.S. has threatened to ban TikTok over national security concerns. But while TikTok, owned by Chinese technology firm ByteDance, is used by millions in the U.S., apps like WhatsApp and Threads are not commonly used in China.

Instead, the messaging app WeChat, owned by Chinese company Tencent, reigns supreme.

Other Meta apps, including Facebook, Ins-

stagram and Messenger remained available for download, although use of such foreign apps is blocked in China due to its "Great Firewall" network of filters that restrict use of foreign websites such as Google and Facebook.

"The Cyberspace Administration of China ordered the removal of these apps from the China storefront based on their national security concerns," Apple said in a statement.

"We are obligated to follow the laws in the countries where we operate, even when we disagree," Apple said.

A spokesman for Meta referred to "Apple for comment."

Apple, previously the world's top smartphone maker, recently lost the top spot to Korean rival Samsung Electronics. The U.S. firm has run into headwinds in China, one of its top three markets, with sales slumping after Chinese government agencies and employees of state-owned companies were ordered not to bring Apple devi-

ces to work.

Apple has been diversifying its manufacturing bases outside China.

Its CEO Tim Cook has been visiting Southeast Asia this week, traveling to Hanoi and Jakarta before wrapping up his travels in Singapore. On Friday he met with Singapore's deputy prime minister, Lawrence Wong, where they "discussed the partnership between Singapore and Apple, and Apple's continued commitment to doing business in Singapore."

Apple pledged to invest over \$250 million to expand its campus in the city-state.

Earlier this week, Cook met with Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh in Hanoi, pledging to increase spending on Vietnamese suppliers. He also met with Indonesian President Joko Widodo. Cook later told reporters that they talked about Widodo's desire to promote manufacturing in Indonesia, and said that this was something that Apple would "look at". MDT/AP



South Korea's

government said late last week it will slow down a plan to admit more students to the country's medical schools from next year as authorities are desperate to end a weeks-long strike by thousands of doctors. More than 90% of the country's 13,000 medical interns and residents have been on strike since late February, when the government announced a plan to recruit 2,000 more students next year. That would have increased the current cap of 3,058, which has been the same since 2006, by about two-thirds.



Ukraine

launched a barrage of drones across Russia overnight, the Defense Ministry in Moscow said Saturday, in attacks that appeared to target the country's energy infrastructure. 50 drones were shot down by air defenses over eight Russian regions, including 26 over the country's western Belgorod region close to the Ukrainian border.



Maldivians

voted in parliamentary elections yesterday, in a ballot crucial for President Mohamed Muizzu, whose policies are keenly watched by India and China as they vie for influence in the archipelago nation. Both countries are seeking a foothold in the Maldives, which has a strategic location in the Indian Ocean. Muizzu's election as president last year sharpened the rivalry between India and China, with the new leader taking a pro-China stand and acting to remove Indian troops stationed on one of the country's islets.