



RESIDENTS ARE FACING NEARLY 50% INCREASE IN FUNERAL TRANSPORT FEES, RAISING CONCERNS ABOUT POTENTIAL EXPLOITATION BY THE INDUSTRY P5

NEW ACADEMIC COMPETENCIES ‘PROMOTE LOVE FOR MOTHERLAND’ P4

COMMUNIST PARTY WILL SIGNAL ITS APPROACH TO THE COUNTRY’S CHALLENGES AT A MEETING THIS WEEK P6



AP PHOTO



Nepal Rescuers have recovered a total of 11 bodies from the river that two buses full of people were swept into by a landslide, officials said yesterday. Rescuers found the bodies in different spots along the riverbanks as they searched for the missing buses and some 50 people who were on board. Government administrator Khima Nanda Bhusal said seven bodies were identified and relatives contacted. Three of the dead are Indians and the remaining four are Nepali nationals.

AP PHOTO



Germany One of the busiest railway lines, the 70-kilometer stretch between Frankfurt and Mannheim, is closing for five months starting yesterday as the country launches an effort to get its notoriously disruption-prone network into shape. State-owned railway operator Deutsche Bahn is closing the route until Dec. 14 and plans a full overhaul of the tracks, stations and other infrastructure. More than 300 trains per day use the stretch, part of a main north-south route that connects Hamburg and Cologne with Stuttgart and Basel, Switzerland.

AP PHOTO



Hamas said Sunday that Gaza cease-fire talks were ongoing and the group’s military commander was in good health, a day after the Israeli military targeted Mohammed Deif with a massive airstrike that local health officials said killed at least 90 people, including children. Deif’s condition was still unclear after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Saturday night “there still isn’t absolute certainty” he was killed.

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MAINLAND BOOM

Fresh report suggests the tourism market is further poised for a swift rebound, thanks to various factors such as backing from mainland authorities P3



ECONOMY

THINKTANK FORECASTS 17.5% GDP GROWTH IN H1

P3

CRIME

SUSPECTED KILLER OF CHINESE TIKTOKER ARRESTED IN MACAU

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ELECTORAL COMMISSION'S GENERAL ACCOUNTING COMMITTEES ANNOUNCED

The Electoral Affairs Commission for the Chief Executive (CE) Election has announced the appointment of members to the Chief Executive Election Committee and General Accounting Committee for the upcoming election. The General Accounting Committee comprises five members who will oversee the election process. Chief prosecutor Kuok Kin Hong will serve as the chairman. The other members include deputy director of the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP) Joana Maria Noronha, chief prosecutor Cheong Kuok Chi, deputy director of the Statistics and Census Service Lai Ka Chon, and Cheong Sek Lun, director of the Election Technical Assistance Division of the SAFP.

NUMBER OF YOUNG OFFENDERS DROPS TO 11

The Correctional Services Bureau has reported the number of residents at the Youth Correctional Institution decreased to eleven in 2023, following an increase from eight in 2019 to 15 in 2021. The majority of the juvenile residents were involved in offenses such as drug trafficking, child sexual abuse, sexual harassment, theft, and robbery, as cited in a TDM report. Data on young offenders under educational supervision showed 18 individuals were released from 2017 to 2021. At least one of them re-offended within two years of their release.

MAN ARRESTED FOR ATTEMPTED CASINO ROBBERY

A 53-year-old mainland man was apprehended by the Judiciary Police on suspicion of attempting to rob a casino of HKD2 million using a power bank as a "bomb" and causing injury to a casino security guard. The investigation revealed the man had entered the casino's account office at noon, placed a plastic bag on the counter, falsely claimed that it contained explosives, and demanded HKD2 million in cash from staff. The staff promptly alerted security, who subdued the man and discovered that the bag actually contained power banks.

GOV'T CREATES PUBLIC ARCHIVES WORKGROUP

By order of the Chief Executive published yesterday, a new governmental workgroup will be established to handle matters related to Macau's Public Archives. Published in the government's official gazette, the order lists nine members, including the president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), Deland Leong, as coordinator. Other members include the director of the Archive of Macau, who will serve as the deputy coordinator, along with the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau, Justice Affairs Bureau, Financial Services Bureau, Judiciary Police, Public Security Forces Affairs Bureau, Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau, and the University of Macau. This workgroup has the authority to create sub-groups based on specific tasks or topics. All logistics and support for this group will be funded by the IC.

GAMING

PREMIUM MASS MARKET RESILIENT AMID REGULATORY CRACKDOWN

VICTORIA CHAN

DESPITE concerns over Beijing's intensified efforts to curb illicit cross-border capital flows, Macau's premium mass gaming segment has continued to demonstrate remarkable resilience, according to a recent study by Citibank.

The investment bank's monthly Macau table survey for July 2024 revealed a significant uptick in the number of premium mass players and total wagers observed in the city's high-limit gaming areas.

Analysts George Choi and Ryan Cheung noted the number of premium mass players increased 61% year-on-year to 575 individuals, while total wagers surged 34% to reach HKD12.2 million.

"Our July 2024 table survey suggests that concerns by some investors about a crackdown on illegal cross-border fund flows and its negative impact on Macau's gross gaming revenue (GGR) are likely overstated," the analysts stated in their report.

Choi and Cheung said most of Macau's high-end players have legitimate means to bring funds into the city, enabling them to place bets as high as HKD1 million per hand.

Their on-the-ground observations underscored this trend, with the analysts spotting 23 players wagering HKD100,000 or more during the survey period – an increase from 19 such players a year earlier.

One particularly notable player was observed at the high-limit area of MGM Cotai, wielding a HKD6 million chip stack and placing bets of up to HKD1 million per hand. This marked the second consecutive month the analysts witnessed a player engaging in high-stakes gaming activity.

Beyond the impressive betting volumes, Citibank's survey also provided insights into the growing adoption of smart gaming tables across Macau's casino floors.

Galaxy Macau's Pavilion South room features 43 such technologically advanced tables, while Sands China's Apex



Room at Plaza has equipped all 18 of its tables with smart technology. At The Venetian Macao, 73 of 414 baccarat tables in the mass market area are now smart tables, and Wynn has added six more smart tables at Encore, bringing its total to 30 of 199 baccarat tables.

Choi and Cheung's findings underscore the continued resilience of Macau's premium mass market, effectively dispelling concerns raised by China's

crackdown on illicit currency exchange activities.

"We continue to believe that most players in Macau have their own legitimate ways to get their funds over to Macau, sufficient for them to bet as much as HKD1 million a hand," the analysts stated.

In terms of market performance, Galaxy Entertainment Group Ltd and Sands China Ltd emerged as the top-ranking operators in Citibank's pre-

mium mass survey, collectively accounting for approximately 25% of the total wagers observed. Notably, 11 of the 23 'whale' players spotted were gaming at casinos operated by these two industry giants.

Citibank's latest Macau table survey paints a picture of a gaming market that remains buoyant, with the premium mass segment continuing to defy the regulatory headwinds imposed by Beijing.

CASINO REVENUES EXPECTED TO DIP SLIGHTLY IN JULY: JP MORGAN

MACAU is expected to generate MOP18.5 billion in gross gaming revenue this month, slightly below the original forecast of MOP19 billion. According to JP Morgan Securities Asia Pacific, the downward revision is attributed to a "slower start to the month."

"This implies that last week's run-rate improved 15% week-on-week to MOP635 million per day (from only MOP550 million per day in week 1) as summer holiday demand gradually kicked in," analysts DS Kim, Mufan Shi and Selina Li wrote in a recent note.

The first 14 days of the month saw about MOP8.3 billion in revenue, or MOP593 million per day, the analysts reported. They also noted that a gradual improvement in

casino revenues is also expected following the recent conclusion of the UEFA European Championship.

"This is a little softer than the trends in Q2, but this is a weekly trend that can be very volatile either way and we wouldn't read too much into the print just yet," the analysts added.

In terms of the mass market, the current level is between 105% and 110% of pre-Covid levels, while the VIP sector is around the low to mid-20% range.

Authorities expect rising tourism over the summer holidays to boost visitation and hotel occupancy in Macau to pre-pandemic levels, which should further aid the casino revenue recovery from its pandemic lows. VC

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DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR Lynzy Valles
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS Alex Torrão, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Jorge Costa Oliveira, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Sérgio de Almeida Correia, Viviana Seguí DESIGNER Rebeca Almeida | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES Associated Press, MacauHub, MacaoNews, Xinhua SECRETARY Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com
OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com
ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84
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NADIA SHAW

A recent report from the Asia Tourism Exchange Center (ATEC) suggests the tourism markets in Macau and Hong Kong are poised for a swift rebound in 2024. This anticipated recovery is driven by several key factors, including support from mainland authorities, a diverse array of cultural and tourism events, and a swift rebound in the aviation sector.

According to the report, mainland Chinese visitor arrivals to Macau are projected to recover to 91% of pre-pandemic levels this year, marking a notable 62.18% year-on-year increase.

This surge is largely credited to effective promotional campaigns, such as special travel offers on airfare, cross-border transport, accommodation, dining, entertainment and show tickets.

Furthermore, the report underscores that Macau residents' willingness to travel to mainland China has exceeded pre-pandemic levels, facilitated by convenient immigration procedures, efficient transport links, and favorable exchange rates. Mainland China is expected to welcome at least 32.5 million visitor arrivals from Macau residents in 2024, amounting to 121% of 2019 levels.

"The state fully supports the return of the tourism industry to Hong Kong and Macau, with the addition of two batches of ten cities for individual travel to Hong Kong and Macau, and an increase in tax-free shopping quotas for tourists," the report states. Both Hong Kong and Macau have launched a series of cultural and tourism events to further stimulate interest among international travelers and mainland residents alike.



RENATO MARQUES

Mainland tourists projected to recover 91% of pre-pandemic levels

Further, the report notes that the Macau International Airport will also be provided with the aim of encouraging tourists arriving in Hong Kong to extend their visit to Macau.

The rapid growth in mainland tourism to Hong Kong and Macau is also attributed to the accelerated recovery of the air transport industry, characterized by more direct routes and increased high-speed rail services connecting the regions. Both cities have also invested in improving their service environment and reputation, further enhancing their appeal to travelers.

Looking ahead, the revised forecast data suggests the number of Hong Kong visitors to the mainland will approach pre-pandemic levels, while Macau's outbound visitor numbers to the

mainland are expected to surpass them in 2024. Compared to 2023, mainland visitor arrivals to Macau are projected to increase by 33.9%, with Hong Kong expecting a 38.2% rise in visitors.

FORECAST FOR MACAU TOURISM

Travel Route	Adjusted Forecast	YoY 2018	YoY 2019
Mainland to Hong Kong	37,000,000	73%	85%
Mainland to Macau	25,500,000	100%	91%
Hong Kong to the Mainland	77,000,000	97%	96%
Macau to the Mainland	32,500,000	129%	121%

ECONOMY

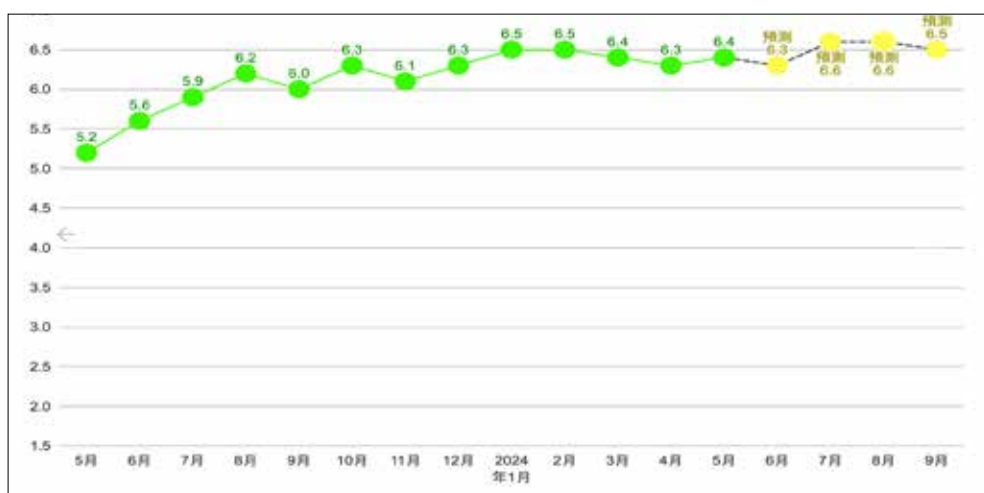
MEA forecasts 17.5% GDP growth in first half

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macau Economic Association (MEA) has forecast the local economy will post year-on-year growth of about 17.5% in the first semester (H1) of this year, according to the association's latest release on the trend of the Macau Economic Prosperity Index.

Despite uneven economic development in the first half of this year, the MEA concluded overall economic growth was stable, driven by factors such as increased tourist arrivals and service exports.

In the second quarter (Q2), gross gaming revenue (GGR) recorded 56.43 billion patacas, a year-on-



Economic Prosperity Index from May 2023 to September 2024

-year increase of 24%. The GGR for the first half of the year reached 113.75 billion patacas, a year-on-year increase of 41.9%, achieving 52.7% of the full-year budget target of 216 billion patacas.

"Based on the currently published data, comprehensive analysis, and calculation, due to the slightly higher base number in the second quarter of last year, Macau's GDP growth rate in the second quarter

of this year is predicted to be about 10%, with a forecast for the first half of the year of about 194.5 billion patacas," the association noted.

"The annual growth rate is approximately 17.5%,

which amounts to an approximately 87.5% recovery to the pre-pandemic period (2019)."

However, the MEA cautioned that "based on the effect of Macau's higher GDP base in the second quarter of last year, it is expected that the GDP growth rate may slow down."

The MEA also highlighted the polarization of individual indicators within the Economic Prosperity Index system.

"On the one hand, indicators such as the number of guests, hotel occupancy rate, total employed population, unemployment rate, and money supply M2 have performed satisfactorily and are at the 'hot' or 'overheated' level of the

prosperity indicator system."

"But, on the other hand, the mainland consumer confidence index and stock prices of the six major comprehensive tourism and leisure companies have remained at the 'downbeat' level for a long time, reflecting that Macau's external environment is still unclear and there are still many uncertainties."

The association also noted a drop in GGR in June, which fell to the lowest level this year at 17.69 billion patacas. The average daily gross revenue also fell below 600 million patacas, slightly lower than market expectations.

Considering these factors, the MEA has predicted the values of the Macau Economic Prosperity Index in May and June this year will be 6.4 and 6.3 points respectively, and will maintain a 'stable' level.



EDUCATION

NEW ACADEMIC COMPETENCIES 'PROMOTE LOVE FOR MOTHERLAND'

RENATO MARQUES

THE Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong, has published amendments to the basic academic competencies for primary and secondary education.

The changes, published in yesterday's official government

gazette, amended the academic competencies for Moral and Civic Education, History, Information Technology, Arts, Society, and Humanities, among other subjects.

The new rules take effect today and will impact the P1 and P3 levels from the first day of the new academic year 2024/2025.

All other levels of primary education and the junior years of secondary education will be affected from the first day of the academic year 2025/2026.

For senior secondary education, the rules will be enforced starting in the 2026/2027 academic year.

However, the dispatch notes

that if conditions allow, the new competencies should be implemented as early as possible from the upcoming academic year.

The changes aim to promote love for the motherland and Macau, as well as deepen knowledge about Macau's history, the Basic Law, and the "One Coun-

try, Two Systems" principle.

The changes include several new topics related to the internet, such as promoting the understanding that the internet world is fictional and recognizing the physical and mental health harms associated with obsessive internet gaming.

Another major focus is on competencies related to national security. These include fostering understanding of national identity and pride in being Chinese, along with the understanding that one's personal life is closely related to national security.

The new competencies also address Macau's history, including the Portuguese presence in Macau.

For example, students should be able to address the settlement process until the occupation by the Portuguese in Macau and the respective influences through analysis of various sources of historical data, and understand the historical evolution of the establishment of the administrative bodies of China and Portugal in Macau after the Portuguese acquired the right to live in Macau.

Another important competency will be to be able to describe the process and meaning of Macau's return to China's sovereignty.

VICTORIA CHAN

THREE Indonesian men have been arrested on charges of aggravated theft after allegedly stealing 50,000 patacas from a local shop near the Gongbei border. The suspects, identified as Andre, 47, Bayu, 52, and Santoni, 49, were apprehended by local authorities on July 14 following a thorough investigation.

According to the police report, the incident occurred around 8:25 p.m. on July 13, 2024, when the shop owners reported a bag containing 50,000 patacas had gone missing. The owners immediately contacted the police, who launched an investigation to track down the perpetrators.

After tracing the suspects' movements, the police arrested Andre and Bayu at their residential unit in the Central District on July 14. During the search, the authorities confiscated the clothes the suspects were allegedly wearing during the theft, as well as a sum of money totaling 26,000 patacas in various currencies, including Hong Kong dollars, RMB and US

CRIME

Trio arrested for aggravated theft at local shop



dollars.

Later that day, the police apprehended the third suspect, Santoni, as he was preparing to leave the city via the Macau-Hong Kong-Zhuhai Bridge. Through their investigation, the police revealed that on the night of the incident, the three suspects had gone to the shop in the North District, with Andre and Santoni guarding the entrance while Bayu allegedly stole the shopkeeper's bag.

After the theft, they fled

the scene separately, then met again nearby to take a taxi together to leave the area. Santoni later went to a casino and lost a portion of the stolen money. All three suspects have admitted to their involvement in the crime, though they claimed they had only stolen 12,500 patacas each, for a total of 37,500 patacas, which is significantly less than the 50,000 patacas reported missing by the shop owners.

The police are conti-

nuing their investigation to determine the exact amount stolen and whether the suspects were part of a larger criminal activity.

The suspects, identified as tourists, resided in a residential area around the time of the incident.

The three suspects are currently in custody and facing charges of aggravated theft. The case has been handed over to the public prosecutor's office for further legal proceedings.

CRIME

SUSPECTED KILLER OF CHINESE TIKTOKER ARRESTED IN MACAU

A 34-year-old man has been arrested in Macau on suspicion of pawning a counterfeit watch, leading to the discovery of his alleged involvement in a high-profile kidnapping, murder and dismemberment case in Thailand.

According to authorities, the incident began July 10 when the suspect, identified as Ma Qingyan, was allegedly caught pawning a counterfeit watch at a pawnshop in Macau's Central district.

The pawnshop staff reported the incident to the police, who intercepted Ma as he tried to leave Macau for Hong Kong at the Taipa Ferry Terminal.

During the investigation, Macau police received a notification from mainland Chinese authorities that the suspect they were searching for in connection with the kidnapping, murder, and dismemberment of a mainland Chinese woman in Thailand might be hiding in

Macau.

After confirming Ma's identity, Macau police handed the case to the mainland police.

The victim has been identified as 38-year-old Yan Ruimin, a Chinese TikToker who had traveled to Bangkok from Malaysia alone.

According to Thai police, Yan was killed, and her body dismembered sometime on July 1, about 50 kilometers east of Bangkok. One of Yan's relatives in mainland China, her brother-in-law, said he had received a ransom demand of RMB1 million.

Investigators found records of purchases made by Ma in Macau on the victim's WeChat account, suggesting the suspect may have spent several days in the city before trying to flee to Hong Kong.

The Macau authorities have transferred Ma to the Chinese mainland for further investigation and legal proceedings. VC

Funeral costs soar amid hospital service shift

VICTORIA CHAN

MACAU residents are facing a nearly 50% increase in funeral transport fees due to the transfer of legal medical services and mortuary homes to the Islands Hospital, raising concerns about transparency and potential exploitation by the funeral services industry.

The transfer of services to the Islands Hospital, which occurred in early May, has allowed for a doubling of the capacity to store bodies and the provision of more modern facilities. However, the cost of removing corpses from the Kiang Wu Hospital's mortuary homes has risen from 1,500 to 2,200 patacas, an increase of almost 50%.

Despite the government's denial of responsibility for the price hike, the Health Bureau (SSM), in a reply to lawmaker Ron Lam's written inquiry, acknowledged that



the body did not increase the fees for the use of refrigerated chambers due to this transfer of services. The director also stated that the performance of the funeral services is in the private sphere.

The Consumer Council, noted that the council can investigate cases of unjustifiably high price variations or sharp fluctuations. In 2022 and 2023, the council received five complaints re-

lated to funeral services, but no complaints have been registered this year.

The issue has also sparked concerns over the lack of transparency in funeral service fees. Lam recently presented a request for debate in the Legislative Assembly to discuss the construction of a public crematory, as cremating a body in Hong Kong costs around MOP1,300, while residents of Macau pay more than MOP15,000, or 10

times more, due to the need to send bodies to mainland China.

The SSM revealed that a website dedicated to funeral affairs is to be launched, which will take into account the enforcement of the alteration to the Civil Code. The issue was particularly debated during the Covid-19 pandemic, when there was a lack of response capacity to deal with the significant increase in deaths in the territory.



OPERATION THUNDER

Police intercept 171 people

AS part of "Operation Thunder 2024," the Public Security Police (PSP) has intercepted and identified 171 people during the latest inspection of entertainment venues in Macau. Coordinated by police authorities, the operation has been inspecting various establishments and increasing patrols in key areas.

No crimes were detected during the operation. PSP officers inspected massage parlors, clubs, bars and karaoke establishments. Additional checks were conducted on public transport.

On July 14, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., the PJ dispatched 25 criminal investigators to the tourist area of St. Paul's in Central District and bus stations from Nan Van to San Ma Lo. A total of 123 people (72 men and 51 women) were intercepted and investigated, with no suspicious persons brought back to the PJ for further investigation. NS

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IN MACAU (2023)



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HUIZHONG WU, BEIJING

PARTY PLENUM

COMMUNIST PARTY WILL SIGNAL ITS APPROACH TO THE COUNTRY'S CHALLENGES AT A MEETING THIS WEEK

CHINA'S ruling Communist Party started a four-day meeting yesterday that is expected to lay out a strategy for self-sufficient economic growth in an era of heightened national security concerns and restrictions on access to American technology.

While the meeting typically focuses on such long-term issues, business owners and investors will also be watching to see if the party announces any immediate measures to try to counter a prolonged real estate downturn and persistent malaise that has suppressed China's post-COVID-19 recovery.

"There's a lot of unclarity of policy direction in China," which is weighing on consumer and investor confidence, said Bert Hofman, the former World Bank country director for China and a professor at the National University of Singapore. "This is a point in time where China needs to show its cards."

Economic growth slowed to 4.7% on an annual basis in the April to June quarter, the government reported yesterday.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping addressed the closed-door meeting on yesterday, expounding on a draft of its coming decision on "deepening reform and advancing Chinese modernization," the official Xinhua News Agency said.

Security was tightened in central Beijing, as it generally is for major government events, with uniformed guards posted in some subway stations and neighborhood-watch people wearing red armbands stationed in public areas.

The decision will send a message to local government officials and others about the future direction of policy. The general expectation is that it will confirm a path laid out by Chinese leader Xi Jinping, though some hope for some fine-tuning to address concerns that increasing government control over business and society is stifling economic growth.

WHAT IS THE "THIRD PLENUM" AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The Communist Party's 205-member Central Committee is holding its third plenum, or the third plenary session of a five-year term that started in 2022. This year's meeting was expected to be held last year, but was delayed.

Historically, this third meeting has emerged as one at which major economic and policy decisions have been set, though not every time. Analysts say the plenum often sets longer-term

AP PHOTO



directions impacting the economy.

In 1978, the meeting endorsed the "reform and opening up" of former leader Deng Xiaoping, the transformation from a planned economy to a more market-based economy that propelled China's growth in the ensuing decades.

In 1993, it endorsed a "socialist market economy" that sealed the victory of reformers battling against conservatives warning about the dangers of economic liberalization.

In 2013, in another endorsement of reform, it said that the market would become the decisive force in the allocation of resources.

The last pronouncement, made a year after Xi became leader, didn't come to be. Within a couple of years, the party began backtracking before setting off in a new direction in 2017, Hofman said.

WHAT ISSUES ARE AT STAKE?

Under Xi, the Communist Party has decided that the party needs to be at the center of efforts to take China to the next level of development. China is the world's second-largest economy, but with a population of 1.4 billion people, it is also still

a middle-income country.

The government has reined in China's high-flying tech giants, such as Alibaba, the fintech and e-commerce giant. As the United States became more adversarial, Xi pushed Chinese companies and universities to try to develop the high-end semiconductors and other technology that is being blocked by U.S. restrictions on exports to China.

Free-market advocates are

concerned this government-led approach is discouraging the entrepreneurial spirit. Another worry is that the rising importance of national security will take a toll on economic growth. The government has investigated companies that transferred economic data overseas in what appears to be a widening definition of what constitutes a breach of the law.

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A major change in direction is not expected and would be momentous if it were to ha-

WHAT POLICY SHIFTS MIGHT HAPPEN?

Further support for high-tech industries that are considered vital for national security and future growth is all but cer-

tain, along with related industrial policies.

But the party faces demands on other fronts. Alexander Davey, an analyst at the Mercator Institute for China Studies in Germany, said they are watching how the government will balance two major prerogatives: economic growth and social equity.

Local governments are heavily in debt, with multiple cities suspending transit services because they could not afford

to keep running them. In February last year, the city of Shangqiu, home to more than 7 million people, temporarily shut down bus lines.

"There may be a bit of a shift, does the central government issue more debt to local government so they can run their services?" Davey said. The trade off will be between vast resources poured into science and tech development, areas deemed vital to national security, and social services.

Investors will be on the lookout for indications that the government, having increased its control over the economy, will take any steps to create a more favorable environment for private companies.

Then, there is the real estate market. In April, the government announced policies that signaled a shift in its approach by funding direct purchases of unsold homes.

"A notable first-half shift in China's property stance," said Yifan Hu, chief investment officer for greater China at UBS bank, in a statement. "This ongoing pressure underscores the need for additional easing, which we think will be forthcoming given the supportive policy tone." MDT/AP

Economy slowed in the last quarter as weak consumer demand dragged on growth

ELAINE KURTENBACH,
BANGKOK

CHINA'S economy expanded at a slower-than-forecast 4.7% annual rate in the last quarter, the government reported yesterday, while emphasizing signs of improvement in factory output, income and investment.

The expansion was sharply below the 5.3% annual pace of growth seen in the first quarter of the year.

The progress this year, after growth slowed sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic, has been "hard won," the National Bureau of Statistics said.

"Since the beginning of this year, global economic growth momentum has been weak, inflation is sticky, geopolitical conflicts, international trade frictions and other problems have occurred frequently, domestic demand is insufficient, enterprises are under great operating pressure, and there are many risks and hidden dangers in key areas," it said in a statement.

"There are many difficulties and challenges in promoting the stable operation of the economy," it said.

Economists say weak consu-

AP PHOTO



mer demand and reduced government spending are dragging on growth in the world's No. 2 economy.

The statistics bureau said the economy grew at a 5% pace in the first half of the year, at the target set by the government for around 5% growth.

In quarterly terms, the way many countries report their growth, the economy grew 0.7%.

The update came as leaders of the ruling Communist Party gathered for a once-a-decade conclave to set economic policy that was expected to focus on self-

sufficient strategies for growth in an era of tensions over trade and technology.

The four-day meeting of the Communist Party's 205-member Central Committee is the third plenary session of a five-year term that started in 2022. This year's meeting was expected to be held last year, but was delayed.

The policies resulting from the closed-door meetings are likely to come days after it ends.

Party plenums usually focus on long-term issues, but business owners and investors are

watching for any immediate measures to counter a prolonged downturn in the property market and persistent malaise that has suppressed China's post-COVID-19 recovery.

Recent bright spots suggest growth has stabilized.

On Friday, the government reported higher than expected exports in June that further boosted China's trade surplus.

Exports grew 8.6% from the same time a year earlier, though imports fell 2.3%. The trade surplus widened to \$99 billion, up from \$82.6 billion in May.

The statistics bureau said Monday that factory output rose 5.3% in June.

Retail sales, a measure of consumer demand, were up 4.1% in January-May, while nominal disposable income, not adjusted for inflation, grew 5.4%, it said.

But that level of retail sales is well below expectations, noted Yeap Jun Rong of IG.

"Retail sales may be the biggest disappointment, with its significant underperformance reinforcing the weak state of consumer spending, in line with recent subdued price data and imports figure," he said in a report.

Expanding consumer demand is seen as key to supporting sustained strong growth, but has proven difficult as companies shed jobs during and after the pandemic, causing many Chinese families to tighten their purse strings.

Despite the strong start to the year, policies to address the problems have been cautious and ineffective, as the property market continued to weigh on the economy, Louise Loo of Oxford Economics said in a commentary.

"Stagnating household credit growth, consumer confidence, and personal savings rates hint at no sign of a genuine recovery yet," she said.

Although exports jumped in recent months, rising tariffs on imports of Chinese electric vehicles to the United States and Europe will add to obstacles facing Chinese manufacturers that are being encouraged to ramp up investment and production at a time of weak demand in the home market. **MDT/AP**

JOINT EXERCISE

China, Russia start joint naval drills, days after tensions with NATO allies

CHINA and Russia's naval forces on Sunday kicked off a joint exercise at a military port in southern China on Sunday, official news agency Xinhua reported, days after NATO allies called Beijing a "decisive enabler" of the war in Ukraine.

The Chinese defense ministry said in a brief statement forces from both sides recently patrolled the western and northern Pacific Ocean and that the operation had nothing to do with international and regional situations and didn't target any third party.

The exercise, which

AP PHOTO



Russian military sailors attend a welcome ceremony of their joint naval forces exercise in Zhanjiang, Guangdong province, China, Sunday

began in Guangdong province yesterday and is expected to last until mid-July, aimed to demonstrate the capabilities of the navies in addressing

security threats and preserving peace and stability globally and regionally, state broadcaster CCTV reported Saturday, adding it would include an-

ti-missile exercises, sea strikes and air defense.

Xinhua News Agency reported the Chinese and Russian naval forces carried out on-map military

simulation and tactical coordination exercises after the opening ceremony in the city of Zhanjiang.

The joint drills came on the heels of China's latest tensions with NATO allies last week.

The sternly worded final communiqué, approved by the 32 NATO members at their summit in Washington, made clear that China is becoming a focus of the military alliance, calling Beijing a "decisive enabler" of Russia's war against Ukraine. The European and North American members and their partners in the Indo-Pacific increasingly see shared security concerns coming from Russia and its Asian supporters, especially China.

In response, China accused NATO of seeking security at the expense of others and told the alliance not to bring the

same "chaos" to Asia. Its foreign ministry maintained that China has a fair and objective stance on the war in Ukraine.

Last week, a U.S. Coast Guard cutter on routine patrol in the Bering Sea also came across several Chinese military ships in international waters but within the U.S. exclusive economic zone, American officials said. Its crew detected three vessels approximately 124 miles (200 kilometers) north of the Amchitka Pass in the Aleutian Islands, which mark a separation and linkage between the North Pacific and the Bering Sea.

Later, a fourth ship was spotted approximately 84 miles north of the Amukta Pass.

The U.S. side said the Chinese naval vessels operated within international rules and norms. **MDT/AP**

Treason and espionage cases are rising in Russia since the war in Ukraine began

DASHA LITVINOVA, TALLINN

WHEN Maksim Kolker's phone rang at 6 a.m., and the voice on the other end said his father had been arrested, he thought it was a scam to extort money. A day earlier, he had taken his father, prominent Russian physicist Dmitry Kolker, to the hospital in his native Novosibirsk, when his advanced pancreatic cancer had suddenly worsened.

The phone kept ringing and Kolker kept hanging up until finally his father called to confirm the grim news. The elder Kolker had been charged with treason, the family later learned, a crime that is probed and prosecuted in absolute secrecy in Russia and punished with long prison terms.

Treason cases have been rare in Russia in the last 30 years, with a handful annually. But since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, they have skyrocketed, along with espionage prosecutions, ensnaring citizens and foreigners alike, regardless of their politics.

That has brought comparisons to the show trials under Soviet dictator Josef Stalin in the 1930s.

The more recent victims range from Kremlin critics and independent journalists to veteran scientists working with countries that Moscow considers friendly.

These cases stand out from the crackdown on dissent that has reached unprecedented levels under President Vladimir Putin. They are investigated almost exclusively by the powerful Federal Security Service, or FSB, with specific charges and evidence not always revealed.

The accused are often held in strict isolation in Moscow's notorious Lefortovo Prison, tried behind closed doors, and almost always convicted, with long prison sentences.

In 2022, Putin urged the security services to "harshly suppress the actions of foreign intelligence services, promptly identify traitors, spies and saboteurs."

The First Department, a rights group that specializes in such prosecutions and takes its name from a division of the security service, counted over 100 known treason cases in 2023,



lawyer Evgeny Smirnov told The Associated Press. He added there probably were another 100 that nobody knows about.

The longer the war goes on, "the more traitors" the authorities want to round up, Smirnov said.

Treason cases began growing after 2014, when Russia illegally annexed Crimea from Ukraine, threw its weight behind a separatist insurgency in the eastern part of the country and fell out with the West for the first time since the Cold War.

Two years earlier, the legal definition of treason was expanded to include providing vaguely defined "assistance" to foreign countries or organizations, effectively exposing to prosecution anyone in contact with foreigners.

The move followed mass anti-government protests in 2011-12 in Moscow that officials claimed were instigated by the West. Those changes to the law were heavily criticized by rights advocates, including those in the Presidential Human Rights Council.

Faced with that criticism at the time, Putin promised to look into the amended law and agreed "there shouldn't be any broad interpretation of what high treason is."

And yet, that's exactly what began happening.

In 2015, authorities arrested Svetlana Davydova, a mother of seven in the western region of Smolensk, on treason charges in accordance with the new, expanded definition of the offense.

She was charged over contacting the Ukrainian Embassy in Moscow in 2014 to warn officials there that she thought

Russia was sending troops into eastern Ukraine, where the separatist insurgency against Kyiv was unfolding.

The case drew national attention and public outrage. Russia at the time denied its troops were involved in eastern Ukraine, and many pointed out that the case against Davydova contradicted that narrative. The charges against her were eventually dropped.

That outcome was a rare exception to the multiplying treason and espionage cases in subsequent years that consistently ended in convictions and prison terms.

Paul Whelan, a United States corporate security executive who traveled to Moscow to attend a wedding, was arrested in 2018 and convicted of espionage two years later, and sentenced to 16 years in prison. He denied the charges.

Ivan Safronov, an adviser to the Roscosmos space agency and a former military affairs journalist, was convicted of treason in 2022 and sentenced to 22 years in prison. His prosecution was widely seen as retaliation for his reporting exposing military incidents and shady arms deals.

"It's a very good cautionary tale case for them that journalists shouldn't write anything about the defense sector," his fiancée and fellow reporter Ksenia Mironova told AP.

The FSB also went after scientists who study aerodynamics, hypersonics and other fields that could be used in weapons development.

Such arrests swelled after 2018, when Putin in his annual state-of-the-nation address touted new and unique hyper-

sonic weapons that Russia was developing, according to Smirnov, the lawyer.

In his view, it was the security services' way of showing the Kremlin that Russian scientific advances, especially those used to develop weapons, are so valuable that "all foreign intelligence services in the world are after it."

He stressed that all the arrested scientists were civilians, and that "they practically never go after military scientists."

Many of the scientists denied the charges. Their families and colleagues insisted they were implicated over something as benign as giving lectures abroad or working with foreign scientists on joint projects.

Kolker, the son of the detained Novosibirsk physicist, said that when the FSB searched his father's apartment, they looked for several presentations he had used in lectures given in China.

The elder Kolker, who had studied light waves, gave presentations that were cleared for use abroad and also were given inside Russia, and "any student could understand that he wasn't revealing anything (secret) in them," Maksim Kolker said.

Nevertheless, FSB officers yanked the 54-year-old physicist from his hospital bed in 2022 and flew him to Moscow, to the Lefortovo Prison, his son said.

The ailing scientist called his family from the plane to say goodbye, knowing he was unlikely to survive prison, the son said. Within days, the family received a telegram informing them he had died in a hospital.

MDT/AP

this day in history

1969 APOLLO 11 TAKES OFF FOR THE MOON

The Apollo 11 space rocket has taken off successfully from Cape Kennedy, Florida, at the start of the first attempt to land a man on the Moon.

An estimated one million people gathered from all over the state to see the giant Saturn 5 booster rocket blast off.

The launch was on schedule, at 1432 BST (1332 GMT).

Nine seconds before lift-off, the rocket's five engines ignited, sending a sheet of flame over the launch pad and about 20 acres of the surrounding marshland.

Then with an immense roar, the booster rocket took off into the sky, taking Apollo 11 and the hopes of the world with it.

It is the first time human beings have attempted to land on another heavenly body.

Almost 12 minutes later, Apollo 11 went into orbit around the Earth.

On board are three astronauts, Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins, and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin. All have already flown in space during the Gemini manned space missions, and have been intensively training as a team for many months.

They carry with them goodwill messages from the heads of the member states of the United Nations and their flags.

Two hours and 44 minutes after take-off, the engine of the third-stage booster was fired for five minutes and 47 seconds, and the speed increased to 24,545mph (39,500 km/h) to take the astronauts out of orbit and shoot them off to the Moon.

Neil Armstrong, the flight's commander, reported: "We have no complaint with any of the three stages on that ride. It was beautiful."

The launch was watched by US Vice-President Spiro Agnew, who said it marked a "new era of civilization".

"With the lift-off of Apollo 11, America enters a new age of discovery," he said.

Apollo 11 is scheduled to touch down on the Moon on Sunday 20 July if all goes well.

Speaking at a news conference before the launch, Neil Armstrong said the landing on the Moon and the take-off from it were "the big unknowns".

The lunar module, known as Eagle, is scheduled to land on the Moon at 2100 BST (2000 GMT).



Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

On 21 July 1969, right on schedule, Neil Armstrong became the first man to set foot on the Moon, stepping onto the Moon's surface in the Sea of Tranquility at 0256 GMT.

He was joined by Buzz Aldrin 20 minutes later. The entire event was watched avidly by millions live on television across the world.

The Apollo 11 crew returned safely on 24 July and spent the next 21 days in quarantine at an American military base - a procedure dropped in subsequent missions since no alien organisms were found.

The Moon landing marked the pinnacle of the space race and American investment in the space programme declined accordingly.

The last three of the original 20 Apollo missions were cancelled, and the last lunar module, Apollo 17, landed in December 1972.

In January 2004 however, interest in missions to the Moon was rekindled when US President George Bush announced American astronauts would return to the Moon by 2020 as the launching point for journeys further into space.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Patience with finances pays off. Discover unexpected savings. Determine practical priorities with your partner. Work out expenses and consider new potential income sources.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Work together in unexpected ways. Grab a spontaneous opportunity for partnership without being reckless. A creative spark ignites. Stay objective. Research before committing.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Prioritize health and wellness. Slow to avoid accidents. Strengthen support structures. Allow time for rest and energizing exercise, with nurturing foods and company.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Relax with your loved ones. Take a break to figure out where your heart lies. Others can see your blind spots. Get their feedback.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Take care of practical domestic chores and responsibilities. An unplanned visitor or household surprise requires adaptation. Shop carefully. Keep systems functional and clean.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Your research is bearing fruit. Consider the situation from another vantage point. Hold your temper. Reserve judgment. Walk your talk. Listen and learn.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Your head is full of ways to make money. Don't force things or jump the gun. Watch to avoid breakage. Keep your cool.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Discover something surprising about yourself. Avoid overindulgence and overspending. Stifle automatic reactions or harsh words. Consider consequences before taking action. Wait for developments.

SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Consider current circumstances from a higher perspective. Ignore old worries and fears. Don't disturb a watchdog. Keep a low profile. Let things settle down.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Talk with friends to find surprising solutions. Check out an interesting suggestion. Go for distance rather than speed. Strategize for the long haul.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Discover an unexpected career opportunity. An unusual yet fascinating option appears. Adapt plans and coordinate with the team to take advantage. Rising status tempts.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 New destinations, classes, seminars and conferences bustle with great networking opportunities. Connect with someone who sparks your creativity. Look before leaping. Investigate unconsidered options.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	22	31	rain
Changchun	22	30	cloudy
Chengdu	23	31	rain
Chongqing	27	38	cloudy
Fuzhou	28	38	cloudy
Guangzhou	27	34	showers
Guiyang	23	29	cloudy
Haikou	26	30	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	26	37	fine
Harbin	23	31	cloudy
Hefei	25	33	overcast
Nanjing	26	33	overcast
Shanghai	28	34	overcast
Taipei	26	33	fine
Wuhan	28	36	cloudy
Hong Kong	28	32	showers
WORLD			
Moscow	19	29	cloudy
Frankfurt	14	25	cloudy
Paris	14	23	cloudy
London	13	21	showers
New York	26	36	sunny

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Study at the last minute; 5- Transpire; 10- Ran, as colors; 14- Pro ___; 15- Unfettered; 16- Crowd sound; 17- Slightly open; 18- Fencing swords; 19- Memo starter; 20- African language group; 22- Salad sauce; 24- URL starter; 27- Attempt; 28- Lat. "Strange bird"; 32- Dish of raw vegetables; 36- Beer; 37- Devastation; 39- Night noise; 40- Do a number; 42- "Tiny Bubbles" singer; 44- Breaks off; 45- For ___ sake!; 47- Jeweled crown worn by women; 49- A mouse!; 50- It's a trap; 51- Interests; 53- Stable mate; 56- Walkman maker; 57- Long-distance race; 61- Creepy; 65- Son of ___!; 66- Movie award; 69- Stow, as cargo; 70- Former French colony of northwestern Africa; 71- Electron tube; 72- Daredevil knivel; 73- A Baldwin brother; 74- Baseball Hall of Famer Cap; 75- Afternoon affairs;

DOWN 1- Pinchy crustacean; 2- Indian chief; 3- ___ impasse; 4- Stewart of home tips; 5- Flamenco cry; 6- Peace officer; 7- Like some dorms; 8- Software buyers; 9- Bowling lane button; 10- Capital of Queensland Australia; 11- Anderson of "WKRP in Cincinnati"; 12- Work for; 13- Remnant; 21- Four Corners state; 23- Mouth off; 25- Spot on the tube; 26- Hinge; 28- Rough files; 29- Sci-fi character; 30- ___-car; 31- ___ boom; 33- Hermit; 34- Shakespearean forest; 35- Student tables; 38- Pandemonium; 41- Relating to the Teutons; 43- Yes ___?; 46- Usher's offering; 48- Skin eruption; 52- Grommet; 54- Role for Valerie; 55- Red fluorescent dye; 57- Baby's cry; 58- I've Got ___ in Kalamazoo; 59- Govern; 60- Sgts., e.g.; 62- Four-star review; 63- Conception; 64- Snakelike fishes; 67- Tumult; 68- Stimp's pal;

Yesterday's solution

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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

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 HKD 2,750,000 1 bed 1 bath

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

AD

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

EURO 2024

Spain wins record fourth European Championship

STEVE DOUGLAS,
BERLIN

SPAIN is the king of European soccer for a record fourth time. For England, it's another agonizing near-miss in the team's decades-long tale of underachievement.

Completing a tournament the team dominated from start to finish, Spain beat England 2-1 in the European Championship final on Sunday with Mikel Oyarzabal the unlikely match-winner in the 86th minute.

Oyarzabal, a backup striker who came on as a substitute for captain Alvaro Morata, slid in to poke home a left-wing cross by Marc Cucurella, just when the game at Berlin's Olympiastadion seemed destined for extra time.

England, the bir-

thplace of soccer, is still without a major title in the men's game since winning the 1966 World Cup and its players watched on forlornly as Morata raised aloft the silver trophy to backdrop of confetti and fireworks inside the stadium built for the 1936 Olympics.

Add 2024 to the titles won by Spain in 1964, 2008 and 2012.

"Here we are, champions of Europe," said Nico Williams, whose opening goal for Spain in the 47th minute was canceled out by England substitute Cole Palmer in the 73rd. "We are thrilled and hope this can keep going and we can go for the (2026) World Cup."

Lamine Yamal, the prodigy who turned 17 on Saturday and is the youngest player to have appeared at a European Championship, set up Williams' goal

with an inside run before passing across the face of the area. The two wingers have become the poster boys of an exciting, multicultural team that reflects Spain's changing demographics.

Yamal's mother is from Equatorial Guinea and his father is from Morocco, while the 22-year-old Williams has Ghanaian parents who made the long journey to Europe looking for a better life. To make it to Spain, they had to ride on the back of a crowded truck and walk barefoot through the Sahara desert.

"I believe there is a historical change, we are really grateful," said Williams, the player of the match with his darting runs and his second goal of Euro 2024.

"My parents have suffered a lot to get here. They are the ones who

have suffered the most and they have instilled this sort of respect and loyalty in me," he said. "I'm really happy because we are making history."

Unlike his brother Inaki, who is a Ghana international, Nico chose to play for Spain and will now be regarded as a national hero there.

Spain is back as a major player in senior soccer after winning both the Women's World Cup — also against England — and the men's UEFA Nations League in 2023.

Since 2001, Spanish men's teams have won 23 consecutive major finals in club and international soccer.

"I said before the tournament, nobody can hang with us," Williams said.

Spain won all seven games at this European Championship

Birthday boy Lamine Yamal wins Euro 2024 and best young player award

SPAIN'S teenage phenom Lamine Yamal won the European Championship and the tournament's best young player award just a day after he turned 17.

Yamal earned it mostly while he was still 16, but he crowned his contribution to Spain's success by setting up Nico Williams' opening goal in a 2-1 win over England in the final on Sunday.

"This is the best (birthday) gift I could have asked for. It's a dream come true," Yamal said. "It got tough when they tied the score, but I don't know what this team is made of because we always fight back."

England substitute Cole Palmer had equalized for England, but Mikel Oyarzabal clinched Spain's win in the 86th.

Yamal set up Williams

to score in the 47th by drifting inside Luke Shaw and playing the ball across to the left for the Athletic Bilbao winger to hit first time inside the far post. Yamal also brought two good saves from England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford.

"Lamine is incredible, as you've all seen during this tournament," Williams said. "The sky's the limit for him. As well as being a good player, he's also a great person."

Yamal became the youngest player to appear at the European Championship, the youngest to score in the tournament, and the youngest to play in a final.

Yamal plays for Barcelona, following in the footsteps of his idol, Lionel Messi, after coming through the

club's famed La Masia training academy. He's also the youngest goalscorer in the Spanish league.

He finished with four assists and one goal in his debut European Championship. **MDT/AP**



AP PHOTO

AP PHOTO

title by inflicting another painful loss on England

— an unprecedented feat — and broke the record for goals scored in a single tournament, with 15.

There were joyous scenes after the final whistle, with defender Dani Carvajal piled on by jubilant teammates after slumping to the ground. Spain coach Luis de la Fuente was thrown into the air by his players. Both Cucurella and Yamal led Spain's players in jumping over the advertising boards to reach the red-and-yellow-clad Spanish fans in the stadium's east end.

"This is the best (birthday) gift I could have asked for," Yamal said. "It is a dream come true."

After getting his medal, the teenager turned and shook his fist in celebration, stuck his tongue out and showed off a beaming grin. By then, Yamal and his

team mates were wearing Spain jerseys with "Kings of Europe" and the number "4" on the back.

Meanwhile, fans who had watched the game on a big screen in Madrid celebrated wildly, chanting "champions, champions" in Spanish. It was a great sporting day for the nation, with Carlos Alcaraz winning the Wimbledon men's singles title for a second straight year hours before the Euro 2024 final.

As for England, the men's team has now lost back-to-back Euro finals — it was defeated in a penalty shootout by Italy on home soil in the final in 2021 — and this was another painful loss for a team that will have gone six decades without a major title by the next World Cup.

England's women have been more

successful, though, winning the European Championship in 2021 and reaching the World Cup final two years later.

"This time it just wasn't meant to be," Prince William, who attended the final alongside other dignitaries including Spain's King Felipe, wrote on social media. "We're all still so proud of you."

It was the fourth straight game that the English came from behind since the group stage, but their resilience wasn't rewarded this time.

A team that has produced big moments when it really mattered at Euro 2024 — including Jude Bellingham's 95th-minute overhead kick against Slovakia in the round of 16 — couldn't deliver another one, with Spain midfielder Dani Olmo clearing the ball off the line

at a corner in the 89th minute.

"It has been a difficult ride, we have done extremely well to get here, but ultimately we are going to be judged on this game," England captain Harry Kane said.

"It's extremely painful," he added. "It's going to hurt for a long, long time."

England coach Gareth Southgate, who has been in charge for eight years and also led the team to the World Cup semifinals in 2018, said it wasn't the time to make a decision on his future. His contract expires in December.

"Most of this squad are going to be around not just for the World Cup but the next Euros as well," Southgate said. "There's a lot to look forward to but at this moment that's not any consolation." MDT/AP



AP PHOTO

AD



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OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

KEY MEETING WILL GIVE FRESH IMPETUS TO CHINA'S REFORM AND OPENING-UP

The third plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee, convened this week in Beijing, is viewed as one of the most important meetings of the central leadership this year as it is expected to study key issues concerning further comprehensively deepening reform and advancing Chinese modernization.

According to the main agenda of the session, the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee will report its work to the CPC Central Committee.

The CPC Central Committee will also analyze the current economic situation and economic work and deliberate on a document detailing policies and measures intended to continuously advance the high-quality development of the country in the face of the increasingly complex internal and external development environments.

These policies and measures are all necessary to help the nation cope with major risks and challenges, and win the strategic initiative in the increasingly fierce international competition. China's reform drive must continue as the current and future periods are critical for building a strong country and realizing national rejuvenation on all fronts through a Chinese path to modernization.

As the country's fast socioeconomic development over the past more than 40 years indicates, reform and opening-up have become effective instruments for the cause of the Party and the people to make great strides in keeping up with the times.

The plenum is problem-focused and results-oriented, as it sets the stage to pool the wisdom of the Party for intensive, open and constructive discussions on workable solutions to help the country overcome some major hindrances in its pursuit of sustainable growth while upholding its long-term strategic autonomy.

The problems that have appeared in the process of development should and can only be resolved through deepened reform and higher-level opening-up. The plenum has sufficient lessons and experience to draw from the country's development since 2012 when it started implementing a more open, inclusive and flexible development philosophy to crack some of the knotty issues related to the balancing of social efficiency and fairness, long-term and immediate interests and the quality and speed of development.

This is not the moment for the country to rest on its laurels, but there is no reason for it to be intimidated by the challenges it faces, as it has faced and overcome challenges before, and the challenges always harbor opportunities and new possibilities.

A few years back, reducing emissions and pursuing green development seemed to be a daunting task for the nation that relied heavily on fossil energy to fuel its growth. Now China has not only controlled its emissions increase but it has also proved that it can strike a balance between energy consumption and growth. In doing so, it has developed one of the most robust new energy industries and green economies in the world.

China's development has never been plain sailing. Yet the headwinds that have been encountered have always inspired the Party and the nation to double down on efforts to explore the country's future development path.

The plenum will prove again that the Party's leadership and the socialist path with Chinese characteristics, featuring stability, unity and institutional strengths, are central to the endeavors to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation in the foreseeable future.

Thus it is expected that the plenum will prove to be another critical milestone invigorating the Party to keep the country's development on the right track.

The former fire chief who was killed at a Pennsylvania rally for Donald Trump spent his final moments diving down in front of his family, protecting them from the gunfire that rang out Sunday (Macau time) during an assassination attempt against the former president.

Corey Comperatore's quick decision to use his body as a shield against the bullets flying toward his wife and daughter rang true to the close friends and neighbors who loved and respected the proud 50-year-old Trump supporter, noting that the Butler County resident was a "man of conviction."

"He's a literal hero. He shoved his family out of the way, and he got killed for them," said Mike Morehouse, who lived next to Comperatore for the last eight years. "He's a hero that I was happy to have as a neighbor."

Comperatore died Saturday during an attempt to kill Trump at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. At least two other people were injured: David Dutch, 57, of New Kensington, Pennsylvania, and James Copenhaver, 74, of Moon Township, Pennsylvania, according to the Pennsylvania State Police.



IMMIGRATION

BEIJING EXPANDS VISA-FREE TRANSIT POLICY TO MORE PORTS

CHINA'S National Immigration Administration (NIA) announced yesterday that the country's 144-hour visa-free transit policy has been expanded to three more entry ports, taking the number of ports covered by the policy to 37.

The three new ports are Zhengzhou Xinzheng International Airport in central China's Henan Province, Lijiang Sanyi International Airport in southwest China's Yunnan Province, and the Mohan railway port in Yunnan, the administration said in a statement.

Starting yesterday, eligible foreign nationals can enter China through Zhengzhou aviation port visa-free, with the stay limited within Henan Province. Also, people entering Yunnan visa-free are allowed to stay in more areas of the province. Previously, they could only stay in Kunming whereas now, they can visit nine city or prefecture-level areas including Kunming, Lijiang, Dali and Xishuangbanna, according to the NIA.

At present, foreign nationals from 54 countries such as the United States, Canada, and Britain are eligible for the 144-hour visa-free policy for purpose of short-term activities such as travel and business visits.

The NIA statement said the expansion of the visa-free policy is expected to provide more choices for foreign nationals traveling and doing business in China.

It said the 72/144-hour visa-free transit policy has played an important role in the country's high-level opening-up, facilitating the exchange of people between China and other countries, and promoting exchanges and cooperation. It pledged to continue to improve and optimize the policy and welcome foreign visitors with a more open mind.

The NIA said earlier this month that China had recorded 14.64 million inbound trips made by foreigners in the first half of this year, up 152.7 percent year on year. Among them, 8.54 million entered China

visa-free, accounting for 52 percent of the inbound trips and representing a year-on-year surge of 190.1 percent.

In addition to the expanded visa-free policies, China has also launched a series of other measures to facilitate the entry of foreign nationals and their stay in China, including relaxed visa application requirements and simplified procedures, exemption of border checks for certain transit passengers and more convenient mobile payment for foreigners.

The NIA expects the number of foreigners visiting China to continue to rise in the second half of this year.

As measures are making visits to China increasingly easier, the country has become a popular destination for overseas tourists. With more people posting their travel experiences in China on social media, "China Travel" has become a top trending search term on multiple global social media platforms. XINHUA



Estonia's Prime Minister Kaja Kallas (pictured) has stepped down as the leader of the Baltic country to become the foreign policy chief of the European Union later this year. Kallas, Estonia's first female prime minister, handed in her formal resignation to President Alar Karis during a brief meeting at the Presidential Palace in the capital, Tallinn, yesterday. Estonia under Kallas, 47, has been one of Europe's most vocal backers of Ukraine following the full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022.

Syrians voted for members of a new parliament in an election yesterday that was expected to hold few surprises but could pave the way for a constitutional amendment to extend the term of President Bashar Assad. The vote is the fourth in Syria since mass anti-government protests in 2011 and a brutal crackdown by security forces spiraled into an ongoing civil war and comes as an economic crisis grips the country, fueling demonstrations in the south.



UK A 34-year-old man was charged yesterday with murdering two men whose remains were found in two suitcases in southwest England. London's Metropolitan Police said Yostin Andres Mosquera has been charged with murdering Albert Alfonso, 61, and Paul Longworth, 71. Police said the victims had previously been in a relationship and still lived together, and that the suspect had been staying with them at their west London apartment.



UK British luxury fashion house Burberry said yesterday it has appointed Joshua Schulman, formerly head of Michael Kors and Coach, as its new chief executive officer as the company warned it expected to record an operating loss in the first half of the year amid slumping retail sales. Burberry said Schulman, 52, replaces Jonathan Akeroyd, who would step down and leave the firm with immediate effect "by mutual agreement with the board."