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THE TSI REDUCED THE PRISON SENTENCES OF SEVERAL DEFENDANTS IN A HIGH-PROFILE CORRUPTION CASE, INCLUDING JAIME CARION

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MGTO: JULY A SUCCESSFUL MONTH FOR TOURISM

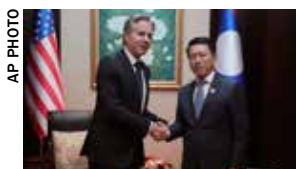
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2024 GUANGDONG & MACAO BRANDED PRODUCTS FAIR DREW IN A CROWD OF OVER 100,000 VISITORS

P4



China Eight people died after a vehicle hit pedestrians early Saturday in the central Chinese city of Changsha, police said. A statement from the Kaifu branch of the Changsha Public Security Bureau did not give a cause or any more details but said that a 55-year-old male suspect had been detained. Five other people were injured, two seriously, in the incident, which happened shortly after midnight, the statement said.



Laos Southeast Asian top diplomats on Saturday condemned violence in Myanmar's ongoing civil war and urged for "practical" means to defuse rising tensions in the South China Sea during the last of the three-day regional talks with allies including the U.S., Russia and China. Foreign Minister Saleumxay Kommasith (pictured, left) of Laos, which currently chairs the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), hailed dialogue partners for "frank, candid and constructive exchanges" on key issues revolving around regional security.



Lebanon-Israel A rocket strike Saturday at a soccer field killed at least 12 children and teens, Israeli authorities said, in the deadliest strike on an Israeli target along the country's northern border since the fighting between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah began. It raised fears of a broader regional war. Israel blamed Hezbollah for the strike in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights, but Hezbollah rushed to deny any role. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned that Hezbollah "will pay a heavy price for this attack, one that it has not paid so far."

BREAKING BORDERS

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PARIS' OLYMPICS OPENING WAS WACKY AND WONDERFUL — AND UPSET BISHOPS

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AP PHOTO

FALLING WINDOW INJURES ELDERLY RESIDENT AND CHILD

An elderly resident and a child were injured Saturday morning around 8:30 a.m. when a window fell from a fourth-floor apartment near the San Kio District basketball court. The Fire Services Bureau investigation found that the resident of a fourth-floor apartment was fixing a loose window, when it accidentally fell to the street below. The elderly person and child suffered injuries but are both in stable condition. It was reported they suffered hand lacerations and contusions. Both were transported to Kiang Wu Hospital for treatment.

CPI RISES 0.64% IN JUNE

The consumer price index (CPI) rose 0.64% year-on-year in June 2024, marking the fourth consecutive month of slower growth, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). Increases were noted in education (+5.06%), miscellaneous goods and services (+2.53%), and health (+2.41%). Food and non-alcoholic beverages (+0.99%) and housing and fuels (+0.59%) also rose, while transport (-3.60%) and recreation and culture (-0.65%) decreased. Compared to May, the composite CPI edged down 0.01% in June. For the 12 months ending June 2024, the average composite CPI grew 1.02%, with notable rises in education (+5.81%) and declines in transport (-3.19%).

TAIPA GRANDE TUNNEL COST REVEALED TOMORROW

The construction cost and details of the Taipa Grande tunnel will be revealed tomorrow when the Public Works Bureau (DSOP) announces the bids received for the project. As is frequently the case, this public tender was not an open tender but limited to pre-selected companies the government considered suitable for the task. The first phase of the work covers the construction of the tunnel section, southern connection and entrance and exit at the northern end of the section of the tunnel that will cross Taipa Grande Hill. The maximum design and execution period is 1,165 working days.

IAM FOOD SAFETY INSPECTIONS WITH A 99.8% APPROVAL RATE

The Municipal Affairs Bureau's (IAM) routine food safety inspections have returned an approval rate of 99.8%, the bureau has noted in a press statement. In the second quarter of this year, 537 food samples were randomly collected for testing, receiving an overall approval rate of 99.8%. Among the 537 food samples were 308 samples available on the market and 229 samples from the food and beverage sector. The sampling locations included restaurants, eateries, takeaway shops, supermarkets, frozen meat stores, grocery stores, cosmetics and drug stores. IAM conducted microbiological tests for common pathogenic bacteria such as Salmonella, Listeria monocytogenes, Bacillus cereus, and Pseudomonas aeruginosa.

CRIME

MACAU AND HONG KONG POLICE BUST LOAN SHARK ORGANIZATION

VICTORIA CHAN

In a joint operation, Macau and Hong Kong police authorities have cracked down on a criminal organization that has been operating between the two regions in a cross-border loan shark scheme, arresting several suspects and searching for additional fugitives.

The extortion targeted Hong Kong residents who gambled in Macau.

The Judiciary Police (PJ) announced yesterday it apprehended a Macau resident and a Hong Kong resident within Macau's jurisdiction.

Simultaneously, Hong Kong law enforcement apprehended five individuals in the neighboring region.

Efforts are underway to locate and apprehend the remaining fugitives associated with the illicit lending scheme.

The criminal group came to light after a Hong Kong woman borrowed HKD100,000 from the arrested Macau man for gambling purposes.

After losing all the borrowed money and returning to Hong



Kong, the woman was allegedly threatened by other suspects to pay HKD148,000.

The victim reported the case to the police after she had paid HKD80,000.

Members of the criminal group have backgrounds in underground organizations and the group has been active in both Hong Kong and Macau over the past year.

The group provides loans to Hong Kong residents specifi-

cally for gambling in Macau.

After the debtors lose all the borrowed money, they are secretly transported to Hong Kong by the group, where they are subjected to intimidation and extortion tactics to coerce the debtors into settling their debts.

The group will prevent debtors from contacting the police or escaping, and those who pick up the debtors at the port will collect the debts and extort

money, often demanding an amount twice the original loan.

The joint operation between Macau and Hong Kong police authorities has disrupted the activities of the cross-border loan shark organization, which had been exploiting Hong Kong residents through predatory lending and extortion practices.

Authorities are currently searching for the remaining suspects.

COURTS

TSI reduces Jaime Carion's sentence by four years

VICTORIA CHAN

The Court of Second Instance (TSI) has reduced the prison sentences of several defendants in a high-profile corruption case, including the former Public Works Bureau director, Jaime Carion.

The TSI ruling comes after the Court of Final Appeal (TUI) determined the TSI should "draw the necessary legal consequences" from its previous decision to acquit several defendants of the charge of "association or secret society."



Carion, who had been sentenced in absentia to 20 years in prison, now faces a reduced sentence of 16 years.

The TSI has also acquitted Carion, as well as Lei Wai Cheng, Kuong Wan Si, Man Lai Chung, and Li Han, of the crime

of "association or secret society."

The sentence reductions and acquittals stem from the TSI's decision in November 2023 to acquit several other defendants, including the former director of the Macau Land, Public Works, and

Transport Bureau (DSOPT), Li Canfeng.

Li Canfeng's sentence was reduced from 24 to 17 years in prison.

According to the TSI's supplementary judgment, the "crime of association or secret society" is a crime committed

with the participation of the group, and the acquittal decision related to other defendants was not based on "strictly personal reasons" particular to those defendants.

As a result, the acquittal and commutation decisions must benefit the remaining defendants in the same case who did not appeal.

In 2022, the Public Prosecutions Office accused Li Canfeng, Jaime Carion, and several businessmen of crimes including corruption, secret association, criminal association and money laundering.

Li Canfeng held the position of Public Works Bureau director between 2014 and 2019, and Jaime Carion retired in 2014.

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NADIA SHAW

CROSS-BORDER TRANSPORT

PLANS are in motion to launch a cross-border ride-hailing app to connect Hengqin and Macau, a move aimed at enhancing travel convenience and boosting tourism between the two regions.

The initiative, confirmed by Hao Jin, head of Hengqin's Transport Bureau, is expected to be operational by the end of this year.

During the recent Guangzhou International Expo on New Energy and Digital Technologies for Public Transportation, Jin said the new app will allow users to book a single ride that spans both territories, although passengers will still need to switch vehicles at the border.

The app promises to simplify the travel process, enabling a seamless transition between Hengqin and Macau with just "one click" for payment, as reported by Macau Daily News.

The collaboration will involve existing taxi services, specifically Macau Radio Taxi Services, which currently operates a central dispatch system for on-de-

Hengqin-Macau ride-hailing app on the horizon



mand bookings.

The authorities are also working on data sharing between Hengqin and Macau, with a dedicated map for the new system. This means passengers can select destinations directly, rather than

being limited to the Hengqin checkpoint.

Despite the anticipated benefits, the project faces challenges due to Macau's strict regulations on ride-hailing services.

Unlike mainland China, where

platforms like Didi and Uber operate freely, Macau has restricted these services, leading to a reliance on a limited number of taxis.

As of March, there were only 1,501 taxis available for nearly 700,000 residents, resulting in long

wait times, particularly during peak tourist seasons.

Lawmaker Ron Lam has been vocal about the need for reform, citing public dissatisfaction with the current taxi system.

The new app aims to alleviate the burdensome travel experience that currently exists between Hengqin and Macau, where residents often have to book separate rides to reach their final destinations.

Lam said the new ride-hailing service could effectively meet the needs of both residents and visitors, making travel smoother and more accessible.

This initiative is part of a broader trend of increasing collaboration between Hengqin and Macau, which includes projects like the Macau New Neighbourhood.

STATS

MGTO asserts July a successful month for tourism

RENATO MARQUES

JULY was a great month for local tourism, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has said in a press statement, with preliminary figures indicating nearly 96,000 visitors daily and a peak of over 135,000 on a single day.

From July 1 to July 25, some 2.399 million inbound tourists visited Macau; an average of 95,979 per day, and an increase of 9.5% compared to the same period in 2023. These figures represent a recovery of 85.6% when compared with 2019 levels.

"As Macau entered the summer vacation, tourist attractions and places in various districts have been presenting a busy flow of people," the MGTO said.

The MGTO said tourist numbers peaked on July 20, with over 135,000 visitors.

"The current passenger situation reflects



tourists' increasing interest in traveling to Macau, and [consequently] allowing Macau's tourism economy to grow steadily," the MGTO said.

The provisional data shows that from Jan. 1 to July 25 this year, inbound tourists numbers reached 19.119 million, while the number of international tourists was about 1.308 million. These figures correspond to year-on-year increases of 38.2% and 126.6% respectively, compared to 2023.

The MGTO said

provisional industry information showed the average hotel occupancy rate in the first half of 2024 was 88.5%, an increase of 10.6% from the same period last year (77.9%) and just 2.6% below 2019.

More visitors stayed overnight in the first half of the year – about 7.831 million in total – an increase of 29.1% year-on-year compared to 2023.

The average overnight stay was 2.3 days, which the MGTO said contributed to the increased spending by tourists.

88,000 VISIT GRAND PRIX MUSEUM

From Jan. 1 to July 25, the Macao Grand Prix Museum saw 87,902 visitors, a year-on-year increase of 26.02% compared with the same period last year.

The MGTO has launched several activities to increase the interest of locals and visitors to the museum, including free bus tour trips to the Guia Circuit for those with a GP Museum entry ticket.

The promotion will continue over the July and August weekends.

STATS

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE RETURNS TO PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

NADIA SHAW

THE latest employment survey from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) reveals the unemployment rate has dropped to levels not seen since the second quarter of 2019.

The general unemployment rate now stands at 1.7%, while the rate for local residents is at 2.3%, both reflecting a decrease of 0.4 percentage points from the previous quarter.

The number of unemployed individuals has declined for six consecutive periods, with 6,600 people currently seeking work, representing a reduction of 600 from the previous period.

This trend indicates a recovering job market, particularly in non-gaming sectors.

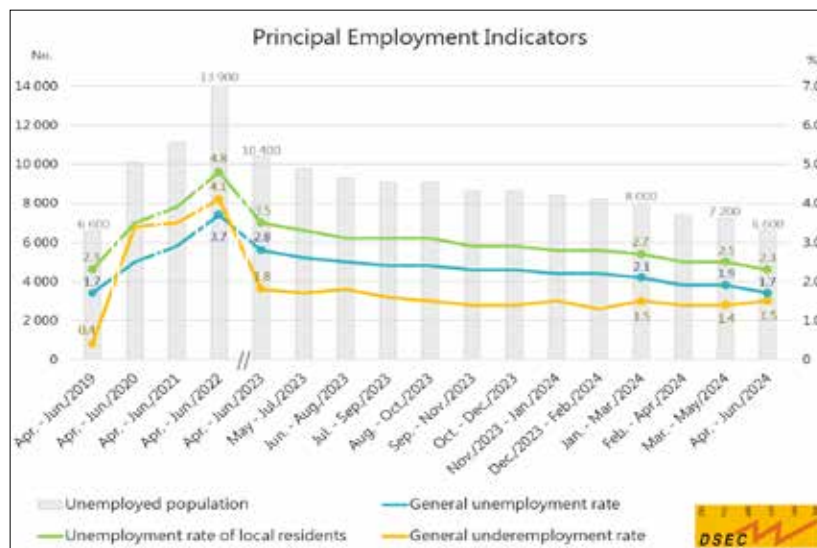
Total employment in Macau reached 376,400, with notable increases in the hotel and retail industries.

"Employment in Hotels and Similar Activities grew by 1,600, while Wholesale and Retail Trade saw an increase of 1,400 jobs," the report noted. However, the gaming sector experienced a slight decline, with 70,300 employed, down by 1,100.

Despite the positive employment trends, median monthly earnings for employed residents fell by MOP500 to MOP20,000, attributed to high bonuses paid in the previous quarter.

The employment survey encompasses all residential units in Macau, excluding collective living quarters.

The total labor force, including non-resident workers, has increased to 486,100, reflecting the region's economic recovery.





2024GMBPF

FAIR SEES RISE IN BUSINESS MATCHING SESSIONS

STAFF REPORTER

THE 2024 Guangdong & Macao Branded Products Fair (2024GMBPF) drew in a crowd of over 100,000 visitors throughout the four-day exhibition.

As per a report from the Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), close to 400 business matching sessions were organized at the 2024GMBPF, marking a 17% increase from the previous year.

This led to the finalization of 65 projects, boosting the efficiency and professionalism of the investment promotion at

the event. Furthermore, nearly 1,000 enthusiasts of Chinese traditional clothing introduced the “China chic” trend to the local community, encouraging consumption.

The Investor’s “One Stop Service” provided by IPIM attracted over 30 exhibitors, with some, including a listed company.

Alongside the fair, a local association arranged a parallel multi-venue event named “GBA Entrepreneur Forum”, where about 100 representatives from Guangdong and Macao enterprises gathered to

discuss strategies for enhancing economic development in GBA.

The event also saw the launch of the Hengqin blue paper—Report on the Development of Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Co-operation Zone in Hengqin (2023).

Livestreaming promotions and product marketing sessions were combined to ensure synchronized online and offline promotion of the event. IPIM reported that nearly 50 hours of livestreaming showcased over 200 exhibitors, attracting around 1.8 million viewers.

Gov't officials join UNESCO World Heritage Committee meeting

RENATO MARQUES

OFFICIALS from the Office of the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture as well as the president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), Deland Leong, have participated in the annual meeting of UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee in New Delhi, India, the Office of the Secretary, Elsie Ao Ieong, stated.

The World Heritage Committee’s annual meeting aims to assess the protection status of several World Heritage sites, as well as discuss the safeguarding of endangered sites and receive nominations of new items for World Heritage status, among other related topics.

This year’s meeting featured three new national nominations.

The first was for cultural heritage, “The Central Axis of Beijing: A complex of buildings showcasing the ideal order of the Chinese capital,” and two others were for natural heritage, being “Badain Jaran Desert—Towers of Sand and Lakes” and “Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Yellow Sea Coast – Bohai Gulf (Phase 2).”

According to the note, all the national nominations have received approval to be listed as World Heritage sites.

There was no mention of discussion on Macau’s heritage sites in the Office of the Secretary’s statement. However, several organizations and groups have been contesting certain government decisions that they claim to be endangering the protection status of the Guia Lighthouse and Fortress.



NIP Group becomes first Chinese esports company on Nasdaq

NIP Group (Nasdaq: NIPG) made history Friday as it rang the Opening Bell at Nasdaq, marking its public debut as the first Chinese esports company to list on the exchange.

Co-founders Mario Yau Kwan Ho, Hicham Chahine, and Liwei “xiaOt” Sun celebrated the milestone, which comes on the heels of the International Olympic Committee’s resolution to host the inaugural Olympic Esports Games in 2025.

NIP Group, which operates the Ninjas in Pyjamas teams in Sweden and Chi-



na, raised USD20 million by offering 2.3 million American depositary shares (ADSs) at USD9, the low end of the range.

The company, with a presence across Asia, Europe and South America, manages two brands:

Ninjas in Pyjamas (founded in 2000 in Sweden) and eStar Gaming (founded in 2014 in China).

At the opening of the bell, Bob Makoui introduced the two founders as the “two youngest founders of NASDAQ Listed

Companies from Asia and the Arab world.”

At 29, Mario Ho, the youngest son of the late Macau casino tycoon, Stanley Ho Hung-sun, is the controlling shareholder and now the youngest NASDAQ-listed company founder in Asia.

With 668 million gamers, China’s esports industry continues to grow.

NIP Group aims to bridge cultural exchanges between China and the world through esports.

“I hope NIP Group can connect more people with esports and Chinese culture,” Ho said. NS

ONE ACCOUNT

VEHICLE CANCELLATION AVAILABLE FROM TODAY

RENATO MARQUES

FROM today, vehicle cancellation can be processed via the Macao One Account platform, the Legal Affairs Bureau (DSAJ) and the Transport Bureau (DSAT) announced in a joint statement.

The bureaus said that vehicle cancellation is possible online via the Macao One Account platform, provided there are no outstanding debts or arrears related to traffic infringements, taxes, or other items.

Macao Resident Identity Card holders over 18 years of age can submit a request to cancel the ownership registration of their vehicle using this method without incurring any fees.

For the cases where the vehicle’s registration has already been canceled at the DSAT, owners can directly submit the request for cancellation of ownership re-

gistration via the ‘cancellation of vehicle ownership registration’ option in the Macao One Account platform.

The platform also allows users to check the progress of their applications.

Additionally, the DSAT has introduced a new service option that allows users who wish to cancel vehicles with DSAT to automatically allow the bureau to transfer the information to the Registry upon granting consent.

This will streamline the process and simplify procedures, as DSAT is responsible for the cancellation of the vehicle (and license plate), while the Registry is responsible for the ownership title.

The new services are part of several administrative measures aimed at simplifying services and procedures under the “government electronization” initiative.



Art exchange brings Macau children closer to mainland

ONCE the plane touched down, Ngan Chin Hong, 65, wasted no time in taking the art group straight to a children's art center in Tianjin, northern China, where she reunited with many old friends. Ngan, the chairperson of the Macao Children Arts Troupe, led two teams from Macau in participating in the five-day 2024 Tianjin International Children's Art Festival (TICAF), which concluded on Friday.

It is the 11th time they have participated in the event. "The children were eager to sign up, and we selected the best of the best, finally settling on 40 people from the art group of over 700 to rehearse new songs and dances,"

she said. On stage, the children took on the roles of little birds, sharing the story of Macau's efforts to protect its ecological environment and endangered species.

They also performed a variety of songs and dances to highlight the vibrant scenes of Macau since its return to the motherland in 1999. Team member Wong Hio Wai has made many new friends and swapped WeChat account details for future contacts.

"I have seen many performances by children from the Chinese mainland and abroad, and I have benefited a lot," said the 12-year-old.

Ngan believes that, through the festival, children from Macau can start a journey of friendship and

heart-to-heart interaction, promoting in-depth exchanges of artistic achievement between the two places, as well as appreciating the mainland's development.

Ngan said their artistic exchanges with the Chinese mainland started in the 1980s, when many Chinese mainland artists came to Macau, injecting momentum into the development of local arts and culture. In 1998, children's art troupes from Beijing, Tianjin, Yunnan, Guangdong and Jilin were invited to Macau to perform. In the same year, Ngan took members, including the singer Long Chi Lam, to attend the first edition of the TICAF.

"Many team members got more opportunities by

attending this art festival. Long was later invited to the Spring Festival Gala and became well-known on the Chinese mainland," Ngan said. Many former members of the troupe still maintain close connections with the mainland. Some of them have grown up, entered famous Chinese mainland schools and excelled in their respective fields, according to Ngan. During their trip, the Macau children also climbed the Great Wall, tasted Tianjin delicacies and learned how to make lacquer fans and fragrant sachets. "The experiences are novel and unforgettable," said Lei Chong Ian, a 12-year-old team member, who hopes to participate in the event again next time. XINHUA

Macau climbs to 32nd spot in latest Henley Passport Index

MACAU has seen steady gains in global passport power according to the latest Henley Passport Index. The special administrative region jumped to 32nd place with a visa-free access score of 143, up significantly from 40th place in 2016.

The Henley Passport Index, compiled by Henley & Partners using International Civil Aviation Organization data, considers 199 passports and 227 destinations. Singapore captured the top spot for the first time with a record high visa-free score of 195.

Trailing closely were Western European nations like France and Germany along with Japan.

Among regional neighbors, Hong Kong placed 18th with a score of 170. Taiwan dropped to 33rd position, granting access to 141 countries - four fewer than last year.

Meanwhile, mainland China has been steadily ascending the rankings, climbing five spots from last year to attain the 59th position in 2024. While China still lags behind at number 59th, it continues to narrow the gap as its passport access grows.

For Macau pass-

port holders, the gains have translated into easier travel. They can now enter 143 countries visa-free or with visas on arrival. An additional 25 countries offer e-visas. The territory also saw Georgia begin waiving visas for Macau residents last year. VC

ADVERTORIAL

GREAT TIMES

Authentic Portuguese Afternoon Tea at Rossio

There's no better way to spend your leisurely afternoons in Macau than savoring authentic Portuguese delights amidst the European garden-inspired courtyard beneath the glass canopy. This summer, Rossio at the Grande Praça of MGM MACAU has introduced an exquisite Portuguese Afternoon Tea Set featuring a selection of artisan teas from Madeira and Douro of Portugal, complemented by traditional Madeira Cake (Bolo de mel) and dainty homemade pastries. It is the first time this classic Portuguese pairing has graced any of the resorts in Macau.



Prepare to embark on a blissful journey through Portuguese tea traditions with the two local infusion tea brands, 1419 TEA® from Madeira, and Infusões com História from Douro. Both made their Macau debut at Rossio and embody the rich cultural heritage and natural beauty of their origins. You can select from eight unique and delightful flavors, which are organic, aromatic and meticulously curated to captivate your senses. 1419 TEA® offers four distinct flavors served hot or cold-brewed, while Infusões com História teas are served hot.

To elevate your tea experience, Rossio's professional beverage team will brew and serve your bespoke artisan teas with utmost authenticity and perfection. Make your reservation now and savor the timeless Portuguese delights. For reservations, please call (853) 8802 2372 or visit mgm.mo





US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, left, shakes hands with Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on the sideline of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Vientiane, Laos, Saturday

US AND CHINA AIR GLOBAL DIFFERENCES AS THEIR TOP DIPLOMATS MEET FOR SIXTH TIME SINCE LAST YEAR

MATTHEW LEE, VIENTIANE

THE United States and China on Saturday renewed their mutual grievances as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his Chinese counterpart held their sixth meeting since last year amid an uncertain political situation in the U.S. and growing concerns about China's increasing assertiveness in Asia and elsewhere.

Blinken and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met for roughly an hour and 20 minu-

tes on the sidelines of an annual Southeast Asian regional security forum in Vientiane, Laos, at which tensions between China and U.S. ally Philippines over disputes in the South China Sea were a prime focus of discussion.

U.S. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said Blinken and Wang had had "an open and productive" discussion but had not reached any significant agreements on the issues that divide them most in the Indo-Pacific, Europe and the Americas.

"The United States will continue to take necessary actions to safeguard our interests and values, and those of our allies and partners, including on human rights," Blinken told Wang, according to Miller.

Blinken "made clear that the United States, together with our allies and partners, will advance our vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific," he said, highlighting recently aggressive Chinese actions toward Taiwan, the self-governing island that Beijing claims as part of the mainland and

has vowed to reunify by force if necessary.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement that despite regular contacts, "the U.S. has not stopped its containment and suppression of China and has even further intensified it." The statement said the risks to China-U.S. ties "are still accumulating and the challenges are also rising" and that "it is necessary to constantly calibrate the direction, manage risks, properly handle differences, eliminate disturbance and promote cooperation."

Blinken "affirmed the United States' support for freedom of navigation and overflight and the peaceful resolution of disputes, consistent with international law," Miller said.

America's top diplomat did praise China and the Philippines for concluding an agreement earlier this week that allowed the Philippines on Saturday to make a supply trip to the disputed area without having to confront Beijing's forces, the first such trip since the deal was concluded.

"We are pleased to take note of the successful resupply today at the Second Thomas Shoal," Blinken told Association of Southeast Asian Nations foreign ministers before his meeting with Wang. "We applaud that and hope and expect to see that it continues going forward."

Prior to the deal, tensions between the Philippines and China escalated for months, with China's coast guard and other forces using powerful water cannons and dangerous blocking maneuvers to prevent food and other supplies from reaching Filipino navy personnel.

Still, Blinken, who will be in Manila this week as part of his current six-country tour of Asia, also deplored China's "escalatory and unlawful ac-

tions taken against the Philippines in the South China Sea over the last few months."

Blinken's Asia trip was announced just hours after President Joe Biden said he would step down as a candidate in November's election in favor of Vice President Kamala Harris. Although the senior official said that decision had not come up in Saturday's meetings, he said Blinken had pointed out to Wang that Harris had experience with China and had met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Bangkok in 2022.

Also present at the ASEAN meeting in Laos was Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, but the senior official said Blinken had no interactions with him.

From Laos, Blinken flew to Hanoi for a brief stop to offer condolences for the passing last week of Vietnam's powerful Communist Party chief and was to travel on to Japan, the Philippines, Singapore and Mongolia.

In Tokyo and Manila yesterday and today, Blinken will be joined by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin where they will meet with their Japanese and Filipino counterparts to shore up defense cooperation. Blinken will also meet in Tokyo with the Indian and South Korean foreign ministers.

For the past six decades, there have been large U.S. troop deployments in Japan and South Korea and a mutual defense treaty with the Philippines has been a constant of American policy in Asia.

Former President Donald Trump, now the Republican candidate for president, cast doubt on the usefulness of U.S. alliances around the world during his first term in office and suggested that the American military presence in Japan and South Korea could be reduced or eliminated.

MDT/AP

BORDER TENSIONS

India and China agree to work urgently to achieve the withdrawal of troops

INDIA and China have agreed to work urgently to achieve the withdrawal of tens of thousands of troops stationed along their disputed border in a long-running standoff, India's government said.

Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar met his Chinese counterpart, Wang

Yi, last week on the sidelines of Association of Southeast Asian Nations meetings in Laos, where they stressed the need for an early resolution of outstanding issues along the disputed Line of Actual Control, the long Himalayan border shared by the two Asian giants.

The line separates Chi-

nese and Indian-held territories from Ladakh in the west to India's eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims in its entirety.

Ties between the two countries deteriorated in July 2020 after a military clash killed at least 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese. It turned into a

long-running standoff in the rugged mountainous area, where each side has stationed tens of thousands of military personnel backed by artillery, tanks and fighter jets.

Both India and China have withdrawn troops from some areas on the northern and southern banks of Pangong Tso,

Gogra and Galwan Valley, but continue to maintain extra troops as part of a multitier deployment.

The two foreign ministers "agreed on the need to work with purpose and urgency to achieve complete disengagement at the earliest," according to an Indian statement last week, which added that peace on the border is essential for restoring normalcy in ties between the two countries.

Jaishankar in his opening remarks said the border issues have "cast a shadow" over India-Chi-

na ties for the last four years despite considerable efforts by both sides to solve them. "The state of the border will necessarily be reflected on the state of our ties," he said, according to the statement.

Wang stressed that improving China-India ties is beneficial for both countries as well as for other nations, China's official Xinhua News Agency reported. The two sides agreed to work together to maintain peace in border areas and push for progress, it said. MDT/AP

WEATHER

At least 12 killed by mudslide as heavy rains from tropical storm Gaemi drench region

KEN MORITSUGU, BEIJING

AT least 12 people were killed after a mudslide hit a homestay house in a tourist area in southeastern China yesterday as heavy rains from what remained of a tropical storm drenched the region, state media said.

Elsewhere in China, a delivery person on a scooter was killed Saturday after being hit by a falling tree in Shanghai, apparently because of storm-related winds, according to The Paper, a digital news outlet.

The deaths were the first in China that appear linked to Typhoon Gaemi, which weakened to a tropical storm after making landfall on Thursday. Before reaching China, the typhoon intensified monsoon rains in the Philippines, leaving at least 34 dead, and swept across the island of Taiwan, where the death toll has risen to 10, authorities said late Saturday.

The mudslide struck the homestay house about 8 a.m. and trapped 21 people in Yuelin village, which falls under the jurisdiction of Hengyang city in Hunan province, state broadcaster CCTV said in a series of online reports. About 30 centimeters of rain was recorded in the area over a 24-hour period.



AP PHOTO

Six injured people were rescued. The reports didn't say whether the injuries were serious. The owner of the house initially reported that 18 people were trapped, but a search and rescue team later determined that three more people were unaccounted for, CCTV said.

The one-story house offered food and accommodation near Hengshan, a mountain in a scenic area where tourists come on weekends to escape the summer heat, a report by The Paper said. The scenic areas had been closed starting Sunday because of the rains until further notice, even before the mudslide.

The CCTV reports said the mudslide was triggered by water rushing down the mountains from the rains. They didn't mention Gaemi but the China Meteorological Administration said that heavy rain tied to the tropical storm hit southeastern parts of Hunan province on Saturday.

In Shanghai, a photo posted by The Paper showed a delivery scooter on its side mostly covered by leafy branches near the still-standing barren trunk of a tree. It said that winds from the storm were the suspected cause, and that the investigation

was continuing.

The wide arc of the tropical storm also was bringing heavy rain about 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles) away to China's northeast.

The Linjiang city government in Jilin province posted a notice on social media asking residents living below the third floor to move to higher places on Sunday as the Yalu River, which forms the border with North Korea, rose above the warning level.

In neighboring Liaoning province, hundreds of chemical and mining companies suspended operations from Saturday as a precautionary measure and more than 30,000 people had been evacuated, the official Xinhua News Agency said. Nearly 40 trains were suspended through Thursday for safety reasons after steady rain in recent days created hazards and damaged tracks.

Two more people were reported dead in Taiwan, raising the death toll to 10, the island's Central News Agency said, quoting the emergency operation center. Two others were missing, and 895 people were injured.

The latest victims were a man found in a drainage ditch and another man who died in a car accident.

More than 800 people remained in shelters in Taiwan as of Saturday night, and more than 5,000 households remained without power.

The typhoon caused nearly 1.7 billion New Taiwan dollars (\$51.8 million) in damage to crops including bananas, guavas and pears; chicken and other livestock farming and oyster and other fisheries, the Central News Agency said, citing figures from the Ministry of Agriculture.

A cargo ship sunk off Taiwan's shore during the typhoon, killing the captain, while eight other ships ran aground. **MDT/AP**

PARIS 2024

Zhang Yufei hopes Chinese swimmers will be accepted as clean after dozens of tests

JANIE MCCAULEY,
NANTERRE

ZHANG Yufei hopes her international rivals will believe she is competing clean after the Chinese swimming star estimates she took between 20 and 30 drug tests monthly in the lead up to the Paris Olympics.

"I don't think there's a single athlete, Chinese or foreign, who would test positive for doping. They would not want to destroy all the hard work they've put in over the years on do-

ping," Zhang told reporters in Chinese in the mixed zone Saturday, when she was the top qualifier for the 100-meter butterfly semifinal.

Zhang said she and her teammates have tested three to four days a week in the past couple of months leading up to the Paris Games and in the wake of a doping scandal involving 23 Chinese swimmers — including Zhang — ahead of the Tokyo Olympics three years ago. The World Anti-Doping Agency stood by its decision to clear the



AP PHOTO

Zhang Yufei, of China, competes during a heat in the women's 100-meter butterfly at the 2024 Summer Olympics, Saturday

swimmers who tested positive for a banned heart medication months before the Tokyo Games began.

She won her preliminary race during the first day of swimming competition at Paris La Defense Arena,

then had the third-fastest time after Saturday night's two semifinal heats going into the final Sunday.

Later Saturday night, Zhang was part of the Chinese 4x100-meter relay team that earned a bronze medal behind the gold-medal winning Australians and the American team that took silver. Zhang's relay teammate Yang Junxuan was also on the list of Chinese swimmers who tested positive. They captured the first Chinese swimming medal in Paris.

"It was the first medal in

swimming of this Olympic Games," Zhang said, beaming with the medal around her neck and a special poster medalists received.

Zhang said after her first swim of the day she is anxious about what her friends and competitors in the swim world are thinking about Zhang and others from the Chinese team.

Chinese officials said the swimmers tested positive because of contamination from spice containers in a hotel kitchen where some of the Chinese team stayed for a national meet in January 2021. American anti-doping officials complained, and the FBI is investigating WADA based on a new federal law that allows U.S. officials to prosecute doping globally. **MDT/AP**



2024 Sands Shopping Carnival achieves great

THE Sands Shopping Carnival recently concluded its latest edition with tremendous success, backing the SME strategy of the Macau SAR government.

Held at The Venetian Macao's Cotai Expo from July 18 to July 21, the carnival saw foot traffic numbers reach 120,000 – the largest turnout so far.

The integrated resort operator's annual signature event has emerged as the premier platform for Sands retailers and SMEs to exhibit their products and services, attracting over 540,000 visitors since its inception in 2020.

This year, the carnival offered nine exhibition zones across 21,000 square metres: Sands retailers; household products; parenting and family; gourmet and wine; food court; green living; Macao cul-

tural and creative; play and fun; and Macao specialties and souvenirs.

The event featured more than 580 booths, with a record-breaking 325 booths dedicated to local small and medium enterprise (SME) suppliers.

One third of the SME suppliers were participating in the carnival for the first time.

For Sands China, its commitment to supporting local SMEs is unwavering, embracing the philosophy of growing with local firms.

With this year marking the momentous 20th anniversary of Sands Macao, Sands China has been a long-standing pillar of Macau's business landscape, having already established deep ties with the local community.

Dr. Wilfred Wong, executive vice chairman of Sands China Ltd., remarked, "Sands Chi-

na has maintained a steadfast partnership with the Macao SAR Government, the Macao Chamber of Commerce, and other supporting entities, providing relentless support to SMEs through this platform without seeking any financial return. Together, we have successfully created nearly 2,800 exhibition booths over the years."

"We feel that this is now fast becoming a platform where the SMEs want to showcase their products, their strengths. Particularly when visitors, especially tourists, are increasing in number," he added.

The carnival's remarkable achievement has solidified its position as one of the integrated resort operator's key projects, showcasing its dedication to bolstering the prosperous local economy and promoting growth for Macau-

-based businesses.

The 2024 Sands Shopping Carnival not only supported local SMEs but also provided complimentary booth space to local community groups.

This allowed them to showcase their services to attendees, increase their presence in the local market, and create employment opportunities for their members.

For instance, the Bosco Youth Service Network made their debut at the carnival, advocating for the inclusion and empowerment of individuals with mental challenges and highlighting their value and ability to contribute to society.

The diverse platform provided by the association allows its members to engage actively and contribute to the local community through the sale of products created by the Bosco Youth Service Network.

"At the carnival, you get to meet all sectors of the community. So, this could help them promote their message and hopefully the general public will support them," said Vincent Yp, chief executive officer of Bosco Youth Service Network.

Echoing similar sentiments, the Association of Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers of Macau (ARTM) remarked that participating in the carnival increases visibility and awareness, fundraising opportunities, networking and partnerships.

"By participating in this high-profile carnival, local NGOs gain exposure to a large audience and this massive reach significantly raises awareness of the NGOs' causes, missions, and the important work they do within the community," said Hoi Wai Hong, ARTM's social worker.



at success with largest turnout yet

“The large visitor turnout presents valuable fundraising prospects for the participating NGOs. They can set up booths, sell merchandise, or organize interactive activities

to raise funds. This can be an important source of funding to sustain the NGOs’ operations and expand their impact,” he added.

At the annual carnival, local

NGOs have the opportunity to utilize this prominent platform to tackle various obstacles, enhance their reputation, secure financial support, establish alliances, and ultimately

further their goals in making a positive difference in society.

NGOs frequently encounter obstacles in obtaining sufficient and steady funding to maintain their activities and

expand their influence. Hence, the carnival’s extensive audience and promotional platforms can greatly enhance the visibility and public outreach of NGOs.

FUN ACTIVITIES AT THE CARNIVAL

While giving exposure to local SMEs and organizations, the 2024 Sands Shopping Carnival also featured a variety of fun activities, including the fifth return of the popular BOC Smart Kids Presents: Little Master Chef Workshop. Two new competitions made their debut – the ICBC ePay Presents: National Essence: Hanfu Styling Contest and the Bank of Communications Presents: Rising Stars: 2024 Kids Talent Showdown, both of which were open to participants in the Greater Bay Area.



“This marks our fourth consecutive year participating in the Sand Shopping Carnival, the most renowned sales event in Macau. Our performance has consistently been exceptional in our past involvement. Despite the pandemic during the previous years, the event persevered, providing us with a valuable platform to showcase our brand. While the economy is still in the process of recovery, events like this play a crucial role in presenting us with numerous opportunities and invaluable support.”

Focus Optical, Pary Tam



“We are confident that this platform offers an excellent opportunity to showcase our brands and introduce customers to our new products. We believe that integrated resorts should organize additional events like these and also facilitate both in-person and virtual events to enable local SMEs to expand their range of products and services. Additionally, promoting these events beyond Macau will attract a wider customer base and contribute to the growth of Macau’s tourism industry.”

Loyal Pharmacy Limited, Ivy Leong - Purchasing Director



“Despite the improvement in the economy, certain local businesses continue to struggle. However, I am confident that the carnival will contribute to an increase in sales by enhancing our brand’s visibility. With its broad appeal and high attendance, we anticipate gaining exposure and garnering support for local businesses from both citizens and visitors. Additionally, we hope to identify potential business opportunities.”

Giorostan, Alan Chang - Brand Director

SEA TENSIONS

PHILIPPINE FORCES SAIL TO HOTLY DISPUTED SHOAL WITHOUT INCIDENT FOR FIRST TIME SINCE DEAL WITH CHINA

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

PHILIPPINE government personnel transported food and other supplies Saturday to a fiercely disputed shoal occupied by a Filipino navy contingent but closely guarded by Beijing's forces in the South China Sea and no confrontations were reported, Philippine officials said.

It was the first Philippine government supply trip to the Second Thomas Shoal, which has been the scene of increasingly violent confrontations between Chinese and Philippine forces, since the Philippines and China reached a deal a week ago to prevent clashes, the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila said in a statement.

"The lawful and routine rotation and resupply mission within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone is a credit to the professionalism of the men and women of the Philippine navy and the Philippine coast guard and the close coordination among the National Security Council, Department of National Defense and the Department of Foreign Affairs," the Philippine Foreign Affairs Department said, without providing other details.

A top Philippine security official told The Associated Press that the Chinese and Philippine coast guards communicated for coordination Saturday, and their ships did not issue two-way radio challenges like in the past to demand that each other's ships leave the shoal immediately.

Also, for the first time at the shoal,



A Chinese coast guard ship uses water canons on a Philippine Coast Guard ship near the Philippine-occupied Second Thomas Shoal, South China Sea as they blocked its path during a re-supply mission in 2023

Chinese coast guard ships did not shadow or block the Philippine vessels as they had repeatedly done in the past, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authorization to discuss the delicate issue publicly.

China's coast guard said the Philippine ship delivered daily necessities "in accordance with a temporary arrangement reached between China and the Philippines."

"The China Coast Guard confirmed it, supervised and managed the entire process," spokesperson Gan Yu said in a statement posted online.

The deal was reached by the Philippines and China after a series of meetings between the two countries' diplomats in Manila and ex-

changes of diplomatic notes aimed to establish a mutually acceptable arrangement at the shoal — which Filipinos call Ayungin and the Chinese call Ren'ai Jiao — without conceding either side's territorial claims, Philippine officials said.

The deal has not been made public by either side.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken welcomed the news that the resupply mission was completed without a confrontation.

"We applaud that and hope and expect to see that it continues going forward," said Blinken, who was in Laos for a meeting of foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a group that includes the Philippines.

China's coast guard and other

forces have used powerful water cannons and dangerous blocking maneuvers to prevent food and other supplies from reaching Filipino navy personnel at Manila's outpost at the shoal, on a long-grounded and rusting warship, the BRP Sierra Madre.

In the worst confrontation, Chinese forces on motorboats repeatedly rammed and then boarded two Philippine navy boats on June 17 to prevent Filipino personnel from transferring food and other supplies, including firearms, to the ship outpost in the shallows of the shoal, according to the Philippine government. The Chinese seized the Philippine navy boats and damaged them with machetes and improvised spears. They also sei-

zed seven M4 rifles, which were packed in cases, and other supplies. The violent faceoff wounded several Filipino navy personnel, including one who lost his thumb, in a chaotic skirmish that was captured in video and photos that were later made public by Philippine officials.

China and the Philippines blamed each other for the confrontation and each asserted their own sovereign rights over the shoal.

The United States and its key Asian and Western allies, including Japan and Australia, condemned the Chinese acts at the shoal and called for the rule of law and freedom of navigation to be upheld in the South China Sea, a key global trade route with rich fishing areas and undersea gas deposits.

In addition to China and the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have been locked in separate but increasingly tense territorial disputes in the waterway, which is regarded as a potential flashpoint and a delicate fault line in the U.S.-China regional rivalry. The U.S. military has deployed Navy ships and fighter jets for decades in what it calls freedom of navigation and overflight patrols, which China has opposed and regards as a threat to regional stability.

Washington has no territorial claims in the disputed waters but has repeatedly warned that it is obligated to defend the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia, if Filipino forces, ships and aircraft come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea. **MDT/AP**

SRI LANKA

Gov't will hold presidential election on Sept. 21, its first since declaring bankruptcy in 2022

BHARATHA MALLAWARACHI, COLOMBO

SRI LANKA will hold a presidential election on Sept. 21 that will likely be a test of confidence in President Ranil Wickremesinghe's efforts to resolve the country's worst economic crisis.

The date was announced by the independent elections commission Friday, which said nominations will be accepted

on Aug. 15.

Wickremesinghe is expected to run while his main rivals will be opposition leader Sajith Premadasa and Anura Kumara Dissanayake, who is the leader of a leftist political party that has gained popularity after the economic debacle.

It will be the first election in the South Asian island nation after it declared bankruptcy in 2022 and suspended repayments on some \$83 billion in domes-



A Muslim man walks past a wall pasted with election propaganda of the main opposition candidate in the upcoming presidential election in Colombo, Sri Lanka

tic and foreign loans.

That followed a severe foreign exchange crisis that

led to a severe shortage of essentials such as food, medicine, fuel and cooking

gas, and extended power outages.

The election is largely seen as a crucial vote for the island nation's efforts to conclude a critical debt restructuring program and as well as completing the financial reforms agreed under a bailout program by the International Monetary Fund.

The country's economic upheaval led to a political crisis that forced then-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to resign in 2022.

Parliament then elected the then-Prime Minister Wickremesinghe as president.

Under Wickremesinghe, Sri Lanka has been negotiating with the international creditors to restructure the staggering debts and to put the economy back on the track. The IMF has also approved a four-year bailout program last March to help Sri Lanka.

Last month, Wickremesinghe announced that his government has struck a debt restructuring deal with countries including India, France, Japan and China — marking a key step in the country's economic recovery after defaulting on debt repayment in 2022. **MDT/AP**

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VA FAT (Taipa Village)
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77.10 m² / 830 ft² | HKD3,980,000



Nam Long (Taipa Village)
2 bed 1 bath
59.92 m² / 645 ft² | HKD3,650,000



Jade Garden (Taipa)
4 bed 3 bath
379.04 m² / 4,080 ft² | HKD 11,880,000



Tou Un (Taipa)
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44.121 m² / 475 ft² | HKD2,750,000

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G20

Finance ministers agree to work toward effectively taxing the super-rich

ELÉONORE HUGHES,
RIO DE JANEIRO

FINANCE ministers from leading rich and developing nations agreed Friday to strive toward effectively taxing the super-rich, a joint ministerial declaration said.

"With full respect to tax sovereignty, we will seek to engage cooperatively to ensure that ultra-high-net-worth individuals are effectively taxed," the declaration said after the two-day meeting in Rio de Janeiro.

Brazil has made a proposal to impose a 2% minimum tax on billionaires a top priority of its presidency of the Group of 20, ahead of the Nov. 18-19 summit in Rio.

While the final declaration stops short of agreeing on a specific global tax, Brazilian Finance Minister Fernando Haddad nevertheless called it a "significant step forward."

"We were always optimistic about this result, but it really exceeded our initial expectations," Haddad told reporters.

Brazil's proposal to tax billionaires has divided G20 nations. France, Spain and South Africa have expressed support, while the U.S. is against.

"Tax policy is very difficult to coordinate globally, and we



Brazilian Economy Minister Fernando Haddad attends a press conference to review the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, last week

don't see a need or really think it's desirable to try to negotiate a global agreement on that," U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told journalists Thursday.

Governments fear the super-rich would transfer their money to tax havens if a country individually adopted such a tax, said economist Rogério Studart, a senior fellow at the Brazilian Center for International Relations think tank.

"When action is done collectively, everyone wins. When there is fragmentation, many lose," Studart said.

The richest 1% have amassed \$42 trillion in new wealth over the past decade, nearly 36 times more than the entire bottom 50% of the world's population, according to an Oxfam analysis released Thursday ahead of the finance ministers' meeting.

Billionaires currently pay the

equivalent of 0.3% of their wealth in taxes, according to a report by Gabriel Zucman, commissioned by Brazil. A 2% tax would raise \$200 billion to \$250 billion per year globally from about 3,000 individuals, money that could fund public services such as education and health care as well as the fight against climate change, the report said.

Zucman, who is the founding director of the Paris-based EU Tax Observatory, celebrated the outcome of the finance ministers' meeting.

"For the first time in history, there is now a consensus among G20 countries that the way we tax the super-rich must be fixed, and a commitment to work together for this. It's an important step in the right direction," he said in a statement.

NGOs also welcomed the declaration, while encouraging

further action at the G20 summit in November.

Extreme weather events made more likely by climate change are expected to cost "trillions of dollars every year and it is outrageous to expect that the regular taxpayer should pay for it," Camila Jardim, an international politics specialist with Greenpeace Brazil, said in a statement.

Brazil has put inequality, poverty and hunger at the heart of its presidency of the G20. President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva defended the need for increased taxation of the world's richest in Rio on Wednesday when he unveiled plans for a global alliance against hunger and poverty.

Brazil is also pushing for changes in global governance institutions and advocating for a sustainable energy transition.

On the sidelines of the discussions around taxation, Haddad and Yellen on Friday announced the launch of a climate partnership between Brazil's Ministry of Finance and the U.S. Treasury.

It will seek "to address today's most pressing environmental challenges and strengthen the region's green economy," Yellen said, citing efforts to bolster clean energy supply chains and improve the integrity and effectiveness of the voluntary carbon market. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1981 CHARLES AND DIANA MARRY



Crowds of 600,000 people filled the streets of London to catch a glimpse of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer on their wedding day.

The couple were married at St Paul's Cathedral before an invited congregation of 3,500 and an estimated global TV audience of 750 million - making it the most popular programme ever broadcast.

Britons enjoyed a national holiday to mark the occasion.

Lady Diana, 20, arrived almost on time for the 1120 BST ceremony after making the journey from Clarence House in the Glass Coach with her father, Earl Spencer.

She made the three-and-a-half minute walk up the red-carpeted aisle with the sumptuous 25 ft (7.62 m) train of her Emmanuel designed, ivory taffeta and antique lace gown flowing behind her.

Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Robert Runcie led the traditional Church of England service, but he was assisted by clergymen from many denominations.

The bride's nerves showed briefly when she mixed up the Prince's names - calling him Philip Charles Arthur George, rather than Charles Philip.

Charles, 32, in the full dress uniform of a naval commander, slightly muddled his vows too, referring to "thy goods" rather than "my worldly goods".

After a brief private signing ceremony the Prince and Princess of Wales walked back down the aisle to the refrain of Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance.

The newlyweds took the open-topped state landau to Buckingham Palace where they emerged on the balcony at 1310 BST to give the crowds the kiss they had been longing to see.

Afterwards Charles and Diana retired from the public gaze to enjoy toasts and a wedding breakfast with 120 family guests.

A "just married" sign attached to the landau by Princes Andrew and Edward raised smiles as the married couple were driven over Westminster Bridge to get the train to Romsey in Hampshire to begin their honeymoon.

CourtesyBBCNews

DIPLOMACY

Italy and China sign a three-year action plan as Italian leader Meloni tries to reset relations

KEN MORITSUGU,
BEIJING

ITALY and China signed a three-year action plan yesterday to implement past agreements and experiment with new forms of cooperation, Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said on an official visit to the Chinese capital.

Meloni is trying to reset relations with Chi-

na as fears of a trade war with the European Union are interwoven with continued interest in attracting Chinese investment in auto manufacturing and other sectors.

"We certainly have a lot of work to do and I am convinced that this work can be useful in such a complex phase on a global level, and also important at a mul-

tilateral level," she said in remarks at the start of a meeting with Chinese Premier Li Qiang.

Her five-day visit comes several months after Italy dropped out of China's Belt and Road Initiative, a signature policy of Chinese leader Xi Jinping to build power and transportation infrastructure around the world to stimulate global trade while also

deepening China's ties with other nations.

Still, Italy remains keen to pursue an otherwise strong economic relationship with China. Stellantis, a major automaker that includes Italy's Fiat, announced in May that it had formed a joint venture with Leapmotor, a Chinese electric car startup, to begin selling EVs in Europe.

Li, addressing Italian and Chinese business leaders after the meeting with Meloni, said that China's push to upgrade its economy will increase demand for high-quality products, expanding opportunities for cooperation between companies from their two countries.

He pledged to open Chinese markets further, ensure that foreign companies get the same treatment as Chinese ones and create a transparent and predictable business environment, responding to frequently heard complaints from businesses operating in the world's second-largest economy. **MDT/AP**

IN CONTEXT

In less than a year the couple produced their first child, William, on 21 June 1982. A second son, Prince Harry, was born on 15 September 1984.

By that time Prince Charles' long-running relationship with Camilla Parker-Bowles was putting strain on his marriage.

Princess Diana's relationship with the rest of the Royal Family deteriorated and she developed bulimia.

The couple separated in 1993.

Diana spoke publicly about her problems and her own and her husband's infidelities in a Panorama documentary in November 1995.

The marriage formally ended with a decree absolute in August 1996.

Diana was killed in a car crash in 1997. Prince Charles and Camilla Parker-Bowles married on 9 April 2005.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Sell stuff you no longer need. Generate lucrative new possibilities utilizing your talents and experience. Stick to the budget and stay in action.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Take time for yourself. Enjoy a spa moment or try a new style. Prepare your presentation before stepping into the spotlight. Polish your message.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Old assumptions get challenged. Prepare for a new direction. Get tools and supplies together. Consider what came before and what's ahead. Reinforce foundations.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Pay attention to public opinion. Keep a positive outlook and find ways to decrease stress or tension. Share resources, inspiration, motivation and energy.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Stay focused at work. Hidden problems could arise. If something goes against your grain, turn it down. Follow rules carefully. Strengthen and reinforce structures.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Slow to reconsider your route. Watch for barriers or pitfalls. Work with someone who can see your blind spot. An experienced guide makes a difference.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Stay thrifty and frugal. Maintain existing financial responsibilities before agreeing to more. Reinforce structural elements to grow shared accounts. Cover basics and keep things simple.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Collaborate with your partner. Don't get talked out of what you want. Find a win-win solution and avoid a conflict. Put promises in writing.

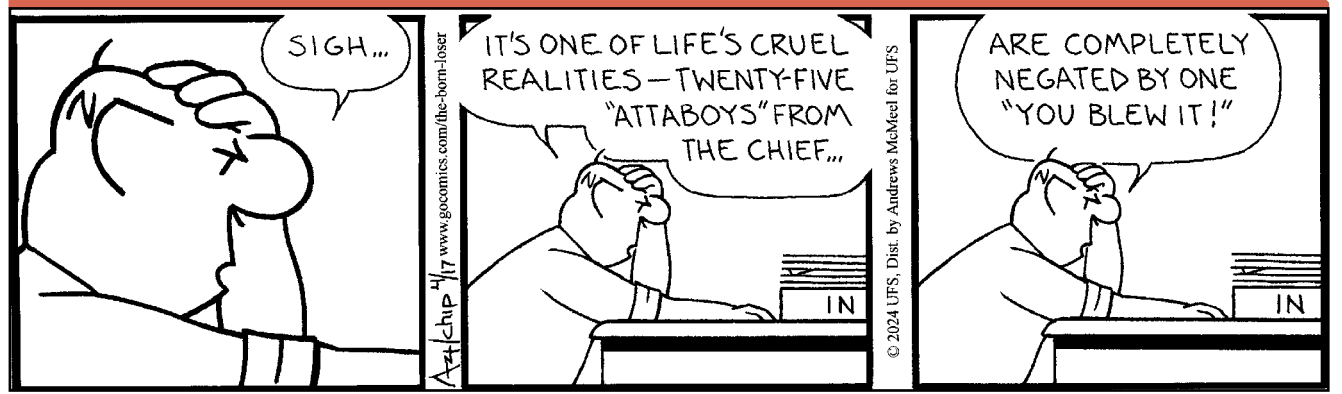
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Work could interfere with play. Aim for balance. Practice mental and physical discipline. Gather support for your project. Accept assistance to outsmart the competition.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Wait for better conditions to pursue romance. Don't try to force anything. Play by the rules and work your plan. Get creative. Enjoy the game.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Decrease clutter at home. Go for clarity and free space. Keep your bargains, especially with family. Stay in action on a shared dream.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Stay attentive to shifting dynamics. Notice the unspoken as well as what's said. Keep your word. You're gaining influence and responsibility. Speak out.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	25	33	rain
Changchun	23	27	rain
Chengdu	25	31	overcast
Chongqing	24	34	overcast
Fuzhou	27	35	cloudy
Guangzhou	25	30	rain
Guiyang	21	27	showers
Haikou	26	31	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	28	36	fine
Harbin	21	28	cloudy
Hefei	26	35	fine
Nanjing	29	36	fine
Shanghai	28	36	fine
Taipei	26	30	cloudy
Wuhan	27	35	rain
Hong Kong	28	30	thunderstorms
WORLD			
Moscow	14	21	rain
Frankfurt	14	28	sunny
Paris	19	24	sunny
London	16	29	sunny
New York	23	29	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Foot-operated lever; 6- Rare bills; 10- ___ Hari; 14- Boxing venue; 15- Social standing; 16- I've Got ___ in Kalamazoo; 17- Rod used to reinforce concrete; 18- Toiletries case; 19- Gratuity; 20- Tempe sch.; 21- Sleeveless garments; 23- Up ___ (trapped); 24- Autocratic Russian rulers; 26- The Pacific, for example; 27- Baby's napkin; 29- Spanish Mister; 31- Complexion woe; 32- Spud; 33- ___ kwon do; 36- In spite of; 40- Compass point opposite WSW; 41- Put back into service; 42- 2002 erupter; 43- Like beaches; 44- Joined by treaty; 46- Hilton competitor; 48- Great bargain; 49- 1980s attorney general; 50- Identified; 52- Chaney; 55- Make the grade; 56- Captain of the Nautilus; 57- Tomb; 59- "Judith" composer; 60- Wyo. neighbor; 61- Kett and James; 62- Hullabaloo; 63- Sandusky's lake; 64- Country dances;

DOWN 1- Graph prefix; 2- "___ Tu": 1974 hit; 3- Society girl; 4- Santa ___; 5- Immature insects; 6- Lock of hair; 7- Power unit; 8- Burden of proof; 9- Go downhill fast; 10- Something that occupies space; 11- Greek marketplace; 12- Spoken for; 13- Nautically sheltered; 22- Be off; 23- Future oak; 25- Gush forth; 26- Draft rating; 27- Hamlet, for one; 28- Computer symbol; 29- Impudent; 30- Novel ending?; 32- Dull sound; 33- Excite agreeably; 34- Singer Murray; 35- Crikey!; 37- Angry; 38- Camp sight; 39- Boxer Oscar ___ Hoya; 43- Talks back to; 44- Dug in; 45- Account book; 46- Got wind of; 47- Type of question; 48- Campfire treat; 49- Movie-rating org.; 50- ___-do-well; 51- Prefix with dexterity; 53- Racetrack shape; 54- Capone foe; 56- U-turn from SSW; 58- Hwy.;

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PARIS 2024

Paris' Olympics opening was wacky and

JOHN LEICESTER, PARIS

PARIS: the Olympic gold medalist of naughtiness.

Revolution ran like a high-voltage wire through the wacky, wonderful and rule-breaking Olympic opening ceremony that the French capital used to astound, bemuse and, at times, poke a finger in the eye of global audiences on Saturday morning (Macau time).

That Paris put on the most flamboyant, diversity-celebrating, LGBTQ+-visible of opening ceremonies wasn't a surprise. Anything less would have seemed a betrayal of the pride the French capital takes in being a home to humanity in all its richness.

But still. Wow. Paris didn't just push the envelope. It did away with it entirely as it hammered home a message that freedom must know no bounds.

A practically naked singer painted blue made thinly veiled references to his body parts. Blonde-bearded drag queen Piche crawled on all fours to the thumping beat of "Freed From

Desire" by singer-songwriter Gala, who has long been a potent voice against homophobia. There were the beginnings of a menage à trois — the door was slammed on the camera before things got really steamy — and the tail end of an intimate embrace between two men who danced away, hugging and holding hands.

"In France, we have the right to love each other, as we want and with who we want. In France, we have the right to believe or to not believe. In France, we have a lot of rights. Voila," said the audacious show's artistic director, Thomas Jolly.

Jolly, who is gay, says being bullied as a child for supposedly being effeminate drove home early on how unjust discrimination is.

The amorous vibe and impudence were too much for some.

"Know that it is not France that is speaking but a left-wing minority ready for any provocation," posted far-right French politician Marion Maréchal, adding a hashtagged "notinmyname."

Here's a closer look at how

Paris both awed and shocked.

A 21ST-CENTURY UPDATE OF LEONARDO DA VINCI'S 'LAST SUPPER'

DJ and producer Barbara Butch, an LGBTQ+ icon who calls herself a "love activist," wore a silver headdress that looked like a halo as she got a party going on a footbridge across the Seine, above parading athletes — including those from countries that criminalize LGBTQ+ people. Drag artists, dancers and others flanked Butch on both sides.

The tableau brought to mind Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper," which depicts the moment when Jesus Christ declared that an apostle would betray him.

Jolly says that wasn't his intention. He saw the moment as a celebration of diversity, and the table on which Butch spun her tunes as a tribute to feasting and French gastronomy.

"My wish isn't to be subversive, nor to mock or to shock," Jolly said. "Most of all, I wanted to send a message of love, a message of inclusion and not at

all to divide."

Still, critics couldn't unsee what they saw.

"One of the main performances of the Olympics was an LGBT mockery of a sacred Christian story - the Last Supper - the last supper of Christ. The apostles were portrayed by transvestites," the spokesperson for Russia's Foreign Ministry, Maria Zakharova, posted on Telegram.

"Apparently, in Paris they decided that since the Olympic rings are multi-colored, they can turn everything into one big gay parade," she added.

The French Catholic Church's conference of bishops deplored what it described as "scenes of derision and mockery of Christianity" and said "our thoughts are with all the Christians from all continents who were hurt by the outrage and provocation of certain scenes."

LGBTQ+ athletes, though, seemed to have a whale of a time. British diver Tom Daley posted a photo of himself recreating the standout Kate Winslet-Leonardo DiCaprio scene from "Titanic," only with

the roles reversed: He was at the boat's prow with arms outstretched, as rower Helen Glover held him from behind.

IS THAT A REVOLVER IN YOUR POCKET?

When a giant silver dome lifted to reveal singer Philippe Katerine reclining on a crown of fruit and flowers, practically naked and painted blue, audiences who didn't think he was Papa Smurf may have guessed that he represented Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and ecstasy.

But unless they speak French, they may not have caught the cheekiness of his lyrics.

"Where to hide a revolver when you're completely naked?" he sang, pointing down to his groin. "I know where you're thinking. But that's not a good idea."

"No more rich and poor when you go back to being naked. Yes," Katerine continued.

Decades after Brigitte Bardot sang "Naked in the Sun," this was Paris' reminder that everyone starts life in their birthday suit, so where's the shame?

RUSSIAN MEDIA THROW SHADE AT PARIS OLYMPICS, WHICH TV WON'T SHOW

JIM HEINTZ, TALLINN

WATCHING the Paris Olympics will be difficult for most people in Russia — and in the view of its media, it's not really worth the effort.

Only 15 Russian citizens will be competing in the Games and, in principle, they won't be representing Russia. Because Russia and neighboring Belarus were banned from fielding national teams because of the war in Ukraine, Russian and Belarusian athletes approved to compete will be doing so as neutrals.

Russians have been intense Olympics fans since the days when the Soviet Union's sports prowess was nicknamed "The Big Red Machine." But with so few of their countrymen competing, Russia's state TV channels aren't broadcasting any of the events. Russians may find feeds online, but could need a virtual private network to circumvent the country's block of some channels.

The last time the Olympics weren't on TV in Russia — whi-



People watch the television broadcast of the opening ceremony of the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, France via Kazakhstan satellite channel sitting in the Waterloo pub & bar in St. Petersburg, Russia

ch has won the second-largest number of medals, counting the Soviet era — was in 1984, when the Soviet Union boycotted the Summer Olympics in Los Angeles.

State news channel Rossiya 24 did broadcast a report from Paris on the opening ceremony Friday night, showing dancing and plumes of colo-

red smoke rising over the Seine River. News agencies Tass and RIA-Novosti gave it glancing attention, with terse stories saying the opening ceremony had begun, but little detail other than noting the rain drove many spectators away.

Newspapers aren't ignoring the Olympics entirely, but their main approach has been

to accentuate the negative, writing at length about crime in Paris, the inconvenience of barricades placed throughout the city and reported food shortages for athletes.

"The Paris Olympics is an amazing event, if not to say a phenomenon: Competitions in individual disciplines have just just started, the opening

ceremony has not even taken place, and so many scandals have already accumulated that they will be enough for several Games," Sovietsky Sport newspaper reporter Alexander Shulgina wrote Thursday.

"I think that this Olympics will go down in history with a completely negative result," the newspaper Sport-Ekspress quoted Irina Rodnina, a three-time figure skating gold winner and now a member of the Russian parliament, as saying.

A whiff of schadenfreude floats through many of the stories. Writing about the fences and barriers erected in Paris, Sovietsky Sport's Andrei Tupikov said: "Once upon a time, everyone pointed their finger at the structure of sports competitions in Russia. Many did not like the fact that before any mass events there were too many different fences and barriers around the arenas and stadiums. ... In our reality the practice is slowly fading away, but in Europe it is being actively adopted."

MDT/AP

wonderful – and upset bishops

Paris museums are full of paintings that celebrate the human form. Gustave Courbet's "Origin of the World" hangs in the Musée d'Orsay. The 16th-century "Gabrielle d'Estrées and one of her sisters," showing one bare-breasted woman pinching the nipple of another, hangs in the Louvre.

FRANCE SENDS A MESSAGE

Clad in a golden costume, French-Malian pop star Aya Nakamura strode confidently out of the hallowed doors of the Institut de France, a prestigious stronghold of French language, culture and commitment to freedom of thought. Even without a note being sung, the message of diversity, inclusion and Black pride was loud.

The most listened-to French-speaking artist in the world was a target of fierce attacks from extreme-right activists when her name emerged earlier this year as a possible performer at the show. Paris prosecutors opened an investigation of alleged racism targeting the singer.

Nakamura performed with musicians of the French mili-

tary's Republican Guard, who danced around her.

Au revoir, closed minds and stuffy traditions.

OFF WITH THEIR HEAD!

When London hosted the Summer Games in 2012, it paid homage to the British monarchy by giving Queen Elizabeth II a starring role in the opening ceremony. Actor Daniel Craig, in character as James Bond, was shown visiting the head of state at Buckingham Palace before the pair appeared to parachute out of a helicopter over the stadium.

The French love to joyfully tease their neighbors across the English Channel and, perhaps not incidentally, took a totally different, utterly irreverent tack.

A freshly guillotined Marie Antoinette, France's last queen before the French Revolution of 1789, was shown clutching her severed head, singing: "The aristocrats, we'll hang them." Then, heavy metal band Gojira tore the Paris evening with screeching electric guitar.

Freedom: Does anyone do it better than the French? MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



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OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

CHINA'S APPEAL BELIES BUSINESS EXODUS

Given the rising geopolitical tensions between China and the United States, and the "de-risking" strategy being pushed ahead by some Western countries to reduce dependence on China in terms of technologies and trade, it is not surprising that reports about foreign businesses cutting investment or shifting production out of China should have emerged. Or that such news is often cited by those who are hostile to China as evidence for what they believe is the country's diminishing economic potential and gloomy future.

Yet it is the foreign business communities in China, which feel the pulse of China's economic dynamics firsthand, and they are the most qualified to offer insights into the country's economic prospects. The visit to Beijing by a delegation of the US-China Business Council earlier this week reflects the business communities' confidence in the Chinese market and the readiness of foreign companies to continue deepening their cooperation with China.

As a private, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization of more than 270 US companies that do business in China, the council has, over the past more than 50 years, played a major role in supporting China-US economic and trade cooperation, which has brought tangible benefits to people in both countries. The visit was arranged as part of an agreement the two countries' top leaders reached during their San Francisco summit last November to expand bilateral exchanges.

It is noteworthy that the trip came shortly after the conclusion of the third plenum of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, which charted China's course of reform in the years ahead.

That's why Foreign Minister Wang Yi, during his meeting with the delegation on Monday, told the group, the first foreign business delegation that China received after the event, that they came to Beijing "at the right time" because they could feel the "new vibe" of China as it pushes ahead with comprehensive reforms.

The plenum, which concluded on July 18, has set a timetable for a new round of economic reforms that include those aimed at promoting alignment with high-standard international economic and trade rules, and harmonizing rules, regulations, management and standards relating to property rights protection, industrial subsidies, environmental standards, labor protection, government procurement, e-commerce and other areas, in an effort to create an institutional environment that is transparent, stable, and predictable, thus making the Chinese market even more attractive to foreign investors ready to benefit from China's process of modernization.

That FedEx CEO Raj Subramaniam, who led the delegation, said that the US business sector would continue to explore the Chinese market with confidence, and hoped to contribute more to the bilateral trade and investment relationship, underscores the enormous opportunities for Sino-US economic cooperation that are there to be explored despite Washington's restrictive and even repressive policies targeting China.

US business people's confidence is rooted in the resilience and vibrancy of the Chinese economy. The International Monetary Fund has recently upgraded its forecast for China's economy, saying that the world's second-largest economy will likely expand at a 5 percent annual rate this year, a 0.4 percentage point increase from its earlier estimate. Investment bank Barclays has also revised its 2024 GDP growth forecast for China from 4.4 percent to 5 percent, primarily supported by China's stronger-than-expected first-quarter economic data.

China's modernization will provide more opportunities for businesses from the US and all other countries. Hopefully the US business community will continue to play its role as a stabilizing force for Sino-US relations, and contribute more to both economies and global stability.

JAPAN'S SADO GOLD MINE GAINS UNESCO STATUS AFTER TOKYO PLEDGES TO EXHIBIT DARK WWII HISTORY

THE BUZZ

The UNESCO World Heritage committee on Saturday decided to register Japan's controversial Sado gold mine as a cultural heritage site after the country agreed to include it in an exhibit of its dark history of abusing Korean laborers during World War II.

The decision signals an improvement in ties between Tokyo and Seoul.

The mine on an island off the coast of Niigata in northern Japan operated for nearly 400 years and was once the world's largest gold producer before closing in 1989. It was also linked to Japan's

wartime abuse of Korean laborers.

Committee members, including South Korea, gave unanimous support to the listing at Saturday's annual meeting in New Delhi, India. They said Japan provided additional information, made all necessary amendments to the plan and consulted with South Korea over the mine's wartime history.

The Japanese delegate told the meeting that Japan has installed new exhibition material "to explain the severe conditions of (Korean laborers') work and remember their hardship."

US ELECTIONS

HARRIS RAISED \$200M IN FIRST WEEK OF WHITE HOUSE CAMPAIGN AND SIGNED UP 170,000 VOLUNTEERS

AAMER MADHANI, WASHINGTON

Vice President Kamala Harris' campaign has raised \$200 million since she emerged as the likely Democratic presidential nominee last week, an eye-popping haul in her race against the Republican nominee, former President Donald Trump.

The campaign, which announced its latest fundraising total on Sunday, said the bulk of the donations — 66% — comes from first-time contributors in the 2024 election cycle and were made after President Joe Biden announced his exit from the race and endorsed Harris.

Over 170,000 volunteers have also signed up to help the Harris campaign with phone banking, canvassing and other get-out-the-vote efforts. Election Day is 100 days away.

"The momentum and energy for Vice President Harris is real — and so are the fundamentals of this race: this election will be very close and decided by



AP PHOTO

a small number of voters in just a few states," Michael Tyler, the campaign's communications director, wrote in a memo.

Harris campaigned in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, on Saturday, drawing hundreds to a fundraiser that had been organized when Biden was still at the top of the Democratic ticket. The fundraiser had originally been expected to raise \$400,000 but ended bringing in about \$1.4 million, according to the campaign.

Harris quickly coalesced Democratic support after Biden, whose candidacy fizzled following his disastrous June 27 debate performance against Trump, exited the

race. Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries, former House Minority Whip Jim Clyburn, former President Bill Clinton and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton were quick to announce their support.

Prodigious Democratic fundraisers former President Barack Obama and his wife Michelle Obama announced their endorsement on Friday.

Harris at her Saturday fundraiser said she remained the "underdog" in the race but that her campaign was picking up steam. MDT/AP



US-Japan Defense chiefs and top diplomats held talks in Tokyo yesterday on further bolstering their military cooperation, including by upgrading the command and control of U.S. forces and strengthening American-licensed missile production in Japan, amid a rising threat from China. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin joined their Japanese counterparts, Yoko Kamikawa and Minoru Kihara, at the Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee, known as "2+2" security talks, to reaffirm their alliance.

Congo Seven people were killed and many others were injured during a stampede at a music concert in Congo's capital Saturday, authorities said. The stampede occurred at the 80,000-capacity Stade des Martyrs stadium in the heart of Kinshasa where Mike Kalambayi, a popular Congolese gospel singer, was performing. Kinshasa Gov. Daniel Bumba said. State television RTNC said seven people were killed in the chaos and some of those injured were admitted to intensive care.

Pakistan Two Japanese climbers went missing on Saturday while attempting to scale K2, the world's second-highest mountain in northern Pakistan, officials said, the fourth such incident in less than two months. The latest incident happened when the pair fell from a height of 7,500 meters while trying to ascend the 8,611-meter high K2, which is also referred to as the "killer mountain," a regional officer, Waliullah Falahi told The Associated Press by phone.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT



"Spiral Dragon." Macau conducted a counter-terrorism drill in collaboration with members of the PLA Macao Garrison and local security authorities



Italy's ancient Roman Appian Way was admitted to the UNESCO World Heritage List on Saturday, becoming the country's 60th entry on the list. At more than 800 kilometers long, the Appian Way, known as the "Queen of Roads," is the oldest and most important of the great roads built by the Ancient Romans from 312 B.C. The Appian Way marked a revolution in road construction, quickly becoming the most important roadway connecting Rome with the southern part of the peninsula.