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50 BRAND-NEW BLACK TAXIS WERE INTRODUCED ONTO MACAU'S STREETS WITH THE AIM OF ENHANCING TRANSPORTATION IN THE REGION

P4

BEIJING GRANTS TOUR GROUPS REGISTERED IN MACAU, HK VISA-FREE TO HAINAN

P4

CHINA TOP LEADERS VOW TO SUPPORT CONSUMERS, IMPROVE CONFIDENCE IN SLOWING ECONOMY

P6



AP PHOTO



China Torrential rains from Tropical Storm Gaemi have caused significant destruction in southeastern China, particularly Hunan province. The storm, escalating to typhoon strength, has led to seven deaths and three missing persons, damaged hundreds of homes, and necessitated the evacuation of over 11,000 people.

AP PHOTO



India Landslides triggered by heavy rains in southern Kerala have resulted in the deaths of 93 people, with many more possibly trapped. The disaster has overwhelmed local response efforts, with authorities mobilizing resources including the army to assist in rescue operations amid ongoing severe weather alerts.

AP PHOTO



Afghanistan The Taliban has officially disavowed several Afghan diplomatic missions abroad, declaring documents like passports and visas issued by these offices invalid. This move reflects their efforts to control Afghan diplomatic entities since their 2021 return to power, complicating international recognition and affecting Afghans globally.

Italy In Rome, two Syrians have transformed their culinary skills into a thriving community support venture, HummusTown. Originally intended to fundraise for war-impacted Syrians, it now also aids refugees in Italy, blending social support with gastronomic delight.

More on backpage

FLEXING FEMININITY

The testimonies of three women highlight the complexities of bodybuilding in Macau where traditional perceptions of femininity often clash with the muscular ideals of the sport, according to an MDT feature report

P2-3



KAIFONG SURVEY
MAJORITY OF RESIDENTS PERCEIVES A LACK OF ADEQUATE SPORTS FACILITIES

P2

URBAN PLANNING
COMMUNITY ADVISOR UNHAPPY WITH TAIPA HOUSES CHANGES

P3

Flexing femininity: The rising power of female

NADIA SHAW

IN recent years, the bodybuilding scene in Macau has gained serious momentum, particularly among women who are redefining strength and fitness. Athletes such as Coco Cheang, Iris Zhou, and Selina Chan are at the forefront of this movement, each driven by unique motivations, challenges, and aspirations.

Their stories highlight the complexities of bodybuilding in a region where traditional perceptions of femininity often clash with the muscular ideals of the sport.

Female bodybuilding is a sport that celebrates the pinnacle of feminine strength and sculpted physiques.

Through relentless dedication to rigorous training and meticulous dietary regimens, these remarkable women transform their bodies into living works of art, competing in various categories that showcase their unique attributes – striving to embody the perfect balance of power, symmetry, and aesthetics.

The Times spoke to Coco Cheang, 25, who began her fitness journey at 19. She described her journey and explained that she faced significant societal pressure to conform to conventional beauty standards. “Initially, my family and friends didn’t understand my passion for bodybuilding. They belie-



Coco Cheang



Iris Zhou

ved that women with muscles looked masculine and even set a deadline for me to quit if I didn’t succeed by age 25,” she reflected.

Cheang turned to bodybuilding as a means of empowerment, overcoming struggles with eating disorders and mental health issues.

“I started training at the gym to build both my mental and

physical strength,” Cheang said.

Her husband, Joseph Wu, encouraged her to pursue this path, becoming her coach as they ventured into competitive bodybuilding together. In 2023, she earned her pro card in the prestigious IFBB Pro league at the Tokyo Olympia Amateur.

She noted, “The sport’s inherent comparison of physiques adds to the pressure.”

To cope, she often disconnects from social media during intense preparation periods, so as to maintain focus. The level of mental resilience required in bodybuilding is underscored throughout her journey.

Despite these challenges, the now 25-year-old emphasizes the importance of community support, which has been instrumental in her journey.

“Our journey has been bolstered by a supportive community, including friends and fitness groups who share our vision. Their encouragement, such as recording competitions and expressing pride, plays a crucial role in our success and happiness,” she said.

Iris Zhou, 37, views bodybuilding as a reflection of personal integrity and discipline. “In bo-

KAI FONG

Survey indicates majority of residents perceives a lack of

LYNZY VALLES

A survey conducted by the Macau General Union of Neighbourhood Associations (UGAMM) has revealed that around 70% of respondents exercise regularly, indicating a relatively high level of physical activity among Macau residents.

However, despite the majority of respondents engaging in regular exercise, there is still a significant portion

of the population that thinks sporting facilities in the city are insufficient.

For the association, this suggests that there is a discrepancy between the number of people participating in physical activity and the perceived availability of suitable facilities.

The evaluation also gauged the sufficiency of athletic amenities through the employ of a five-point scale. Respondents awarded an average score of 3.19, a de-

crease from last year’s 3.33.

“With the return of sports enthusiasts to pre-pandemic levels, there has been a scarcity of sports facilities,” the report stated.

Kai Fong indicated that 68.6% of participants engaged in sports within the past three months, with nearly 30% partaking in aerobic exercise for one to two-and-a-half hours per week. 21.2% engaged in such exercise for less than one hour and 19.5% exercised

for more than two and a half hours but less than four.

The study indicated that a large number of participants believed that their health was above average. When evaluating their health status this year, 181 individuals (17.7%) rated themselves below five on a scale of zero (very unhealthy) to 10 (very healthy). 793 individuals (77.8%) fell between six and nine on the same scale and 45 individuals rated themselves as a perfect 10.

Furthermore, the findings highlighted that over 70% of respondents did not undergo regular medical check-ups, as well as that 76.5% did not regularly consume dietary or beverage supplements.

The survey also found that almost 60% of respondents welcomed the plan to build a sports garden at the former Canidrome, indicating a positive reception towards the development of new sports facilities in

the region.

However, it was also noted that most respondents were unaware that the SAR will co-host some of the National Games competitions in 2025, indicating a potential lack of awareness and engagement with upcoming sporting events in the region.

The survey, initiated earlier this month, involved 1,019 Macau residents, all of whom were aged 16 or above.

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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

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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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bodybuilding



Selina Chan

bodybuilding, no one can train, eat healthily, or carry out daily habits for you," she explained. Similarly, in 2023, Zhou earned her IFBB Pro Card; she did so at the Global Classic Superbowl IFBB Pro Qualifier in December, marking a significant milestone in her career.

Over the years, Zhou explained, "I have tried many sports, and only began proper personal

training in the last few years." She competed once before, placing fourth, and obtained her pro card in her second competition.

Zhou's approach to bodybuilding emphasizes mental and physical growth.

She believes that training is as much about developing discipline as it is about building muscle. "Just as muscles grow through

resistance, the mind grows through hardships," she stated, highlighting the psychological demands of the sport that often require athletes to push through discomfort and self-doubt. She stresses the importance of a supportive environment, noting that her husband, Antonio Barrias, serves as both her coach and motivator.

The distinction between professional and amateur female bodybuilders lies in their level of mastery and commitment to the craft.

Professional athletes, having honed their skills and knowledge to the highest degree, often devote more time to optimizing their recovery, nutrition, and training strategies, pushing the boundaries of what is physically possible.

Amateurs, on the other hand, while no less passionate, may focus more on the sheer frequency of their workouts, gradually refining their techniques as they ascend the ranks.

Meanwhile, Selina Chan's fitness journey reflects a narrative rooted in familial expectations and traditional values. She began her fitness journey with yoga and gym workouts at 16, initially facing skepticism from her peers and family, particularly her father.

However, her dedication to bodybuilding ultimately earned their respect. "Over time, my father began to see the positive results, such as winning medals," she recounted. This shift not only improved their relationship but also inspired her father to take better care of his health and start weightlifting himself.

Chan's transformation from a mindset of "smaller is better" to embracing a healthier lifestyle illustrates the power of bodybuilding in challenging societal norms. She recalls a time when she suffered from an eating disorder, consuming only one meal a day. "The turning point came when I realized that eating more did not make me gain fat," she said, emphasizing the importance of education in fitness and nutrition.

The 19-year-old athlete acknowledges that bodybuilding is extremely uncomfortable due to the rigorous training, diet, and lifestyle it demands. She also mentioned that while people initially did not know she lifted weights, their perception changed when they began to notice her presence in competitions.

She faced negative comments at school, at the gym and on social media, like, "Who is her coach?" or "I don't think she has a bright future in this sport." However, she didn't let the naysayers deter her from achieving her goals. Chan noted: "I am fortunate to find people who support me and give me direction, recognizing my potential in the sport."

Social media plays a significant role in all these women's journeys, as well as for most athletes in the bodybuilding space. Both Cheang and Chan often utilize platforms like Instagram and TikTok to connect with the bodybuilding community, though Chan acknowledges the pressure of constantly comparing herself to her peers. Zhou, on the other hand, views social media as a minor motivator, emphasizing that true motivation

comes from within.

What sets female bodybuilding apart from other fitness competitions is its singular focus on muscle development and symmetry, rather than performance-based metrics like speed or agility.

The sport is a celebration of the female form, a testament to the incredible potential of the human body when pushed to its limits. Judges, like discerning art critics, scrutinize every curve and contour, every ripple of muscle, and every flawless presentation, making the subjective criteria a crucial factor in determining the victors.

While all three athletes share an unwavering passion for bodybuilding, their experiences reveal distinct challenges. They all emphasize the importance of mental resilience, as well as a strong support system, in nurturing their love for the sport.

Looking ahead, each athlete has ambitious goals. Cheang aims to compete at the Olympia, the pinnacle of bodybuilding events, while Zhou wants to focus on continuous improvement and maintaining her physique as she ages. Chan plans to compete internationally, seeking to broaden her horizons beyond local competitions.

Their journeys reflect not only personal growth and resilience but also a broader cultural shift toward embracing strength and fitness.

As they continue to challenge societal norms, these athletes are paving the way for future generations of women in bodybuilding, proving that strength comes in many forms.

adequate sports facilities



PUBLIC WORKS

COMMUNITY ADVISOR UNHAPPY WITH TAIPA HOUSES MUSEUM CHANGES

RENATO MARQUES

A member of the Islands District Community Service Consultative Council, Ku Man Tat, is unhappy with the Municipal Affairs Bureau's (IAM) decision to revamp the ground in front of the Taipa Houses Museum.

According to both IAM and the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), which are heading the project, the construction works, announced on Monday, aim to create a path to facilitate walking, as well as wheelchair and baby stroller access, in the area, creating a more comfortable, safer environment.

In an interview with the Chinese channel of the public radio broadcaster TDM Radio, member Ku expressed dissatisfaction with the way IAM is handling the works, saying that the project lacks clarity in the eyes of the public.

Ku suggested authorities publish more accurate information on the project as soon as possible, so that residents can clearly understand what it involves and what it expects to achieve.

He also said that the area is part of Macau's collective memory and should be preserved in its original layout as much as possible.

In a separate inter-

view with the same media outlet, the deputy coordinator of the same Islands District advisory committee, Wong Leong Kuan, said that she hopes the works will freely facilitate access for residents and tourists in the area. According to Wong, the Islands District Community Service Consultative Council has received several pieces of feedback from residents noting that the uneven ground was bothersome.

Still, she agreed with Ku on the fact that there should have been better communication from authorities, more quickly and effectively disclosing information to residents about the project.

ANTI-TERRORISM BILL UNDERWAY

Confirmation from the Office of the Secretary for Security regarding the government's efforts towards anti-terrorism legislation has come, following an inquiry by legislator Lei Chan U last month. It was mentioned by authorities that they were engaged in research to formulate an anti-terrorism law for Macau, aligning it to combat the global patterns and features of terrorism. Consequently, the government will advance with the necessary steps in the legislative procedure to implement the anti-terrorism law effectively.

MAN FALLS VICTIM TO AI-GENERATED NUDE VIDEO

A local man is suspected to have fallen victim to blackmail involving a fabricated "nude video" created using artificial intelligence, following an online interaction with a female user. The authorities report that the individual connected with a woman via a mobile dating app and subsequently installed the app at her suggestion, so as to obtain "suggestive images." After engaging in a video chat with her, he was sent a "nude video" featuring his likeness. The woman then extorted him for a sum of RMB10,000, threatening to disclose the video if he did not comply. In response to her demands, the victim declined to make the payment and sought the help of law enforcement.

DOMESTIC WORKER COMMITS SUICIDE IN NEW EMPLOYER'S HOUSE

The Judiciary Police (PJ) is investigating the recent alleged suicide of a woman in the bathroom of a residence in Coloane. The woman was taken to the Conde de São Januário Hospital Center (CHCSJ) where she was pronounced dead. The tenant reported that the deceased had started working as a domestic worker on July 22; after a week, PJ reports that she locked herself in the bathroom and did not respond to the tenant's attempts at communication. After gaining entry, the tenant found the woman's body and immediately contacted the authorities.



CHILDREN'S ARTS FESTIVAL

BROADWAY MUSICAL 'ANNIE' TAKES MACAU

NADIA SHAW

ANNIE, a beloved family-friendly musical that tells the uplifting story of a courageous orphan girl and which takes its audiences on a journey back to 1930s New York, has arrived in Macau. With a memorable score featuring Broadway classics like "Tomorrow" and "It's the Hard Knock Life", the show promises a delightful experience for families and theater lovers alike.

Since its Broadway debut in 1977, Annie has captivated generations and the hearts of its audiences. The original production won seven Tony Awards, including Best Musical, and was later adapted into an Oscar-nominated film in the 1980s. Now, this iconic show is touring the world, introducing its heartwarming narrative

to a new generation.

As part of the first-ever Macau International Children's Arts Festival (MICAF), audiences will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in a host of creative and inspiring activities this summer.

At a press meeting yesterday, Rainier Trevino (Annie), Stefanie Londino (Miss Hannigan), and Christopher Swan (Oliver War-

bucks) spoke to the media about the show's characters and its storyline, and expressed their enthusiasm in bringing the musical to Asian audiences. Production manager, Heather Chockley said, "We didn't have to make many adjustments at all. It is the same show that you would see in North America. The only difference here is we also have some subtitles on the side of the stage. But other than that, it's the same show. We're excited for everyone to see it."

Annie is produced by Crossroads Live North American and Broadway Asia Productions, which will stage a total of 12 exciting performances at the Macau Cultural Centre's Grand Auditorium.

With a runtime of approximately two hours and 35 minutes, including an interval, Annie is suitable for ages six and above. The show will be performed in English, with subtitles in Chinese and English, ensuring accessibility for all attendees.

The Broadway musical's story follows Annie, who escapes the clutches of the cruel Miss Hannigan in search of her parents. Her adventure leads her to the mansion of Oliver Warbucks, a lonely billionaire who changes her life forever. The musical showcases the contrast between the innocence of children and the cunning of adults, celebrating themes of love, family, and perseverance.

Annie runs Aug. 2 to Aug. 14, 2024.

TRANSPORT

50 seven-seater taxis take streets today

A total of 50 brand-new black taxis were introduced onto Macau's streets yesterday, with the aim of enhancing transportation in the region.

The individual overseeing the initiative told TDM that services' initial day of operation was somewhat restricted. The entire fleet of seven-seater taxis is expected to be fully operational by today.

The taxi company now boasts a team of approximately 100 drivers, with nearly 90% of them having prior experience as taxi drivers and having undergone comprehensive pre-service training to ensure a high standard of service.

Among the 50 new taxis, at least five have been specially outfitted to accommodate passengers with reduced mobility.

These vehicles are equipped to accept elec-



tronic payments.

This introduction of new taxis not only expands the fleet but also signifies a step towards improving Macau's transport infrastructure. Many residents believe that the number of taxis in the city is insufficient.

Macau's current taxi fleet of 1,518 vehicles serves a population of 700,000 and is widely recognized as insufficient. This creates a drastic shortage of cabs and an inability to meet demand from both residents and large numbers of tourists,

with the latter swelling to the city on weekends.

To alleviate the problem, the Transport Bureau (DSAT), back in May, disclosed 10 new licenses, valid for eight years, that allow for the operation of 500 new taxis.

The 10 licenses will yield the government MOP36.47 million.

The lack of ride-hailing services such as Uber, which terminated operations in Macau in 2017 after a protracted legal battle with local authorities, has further exacerbated the city's taxi shortage. LV

144-HOUR

BEIJING GRANTS TOUR GROUPS REGISTERED IN MACAU, HK VISA-FREE TO HAINAN

LYNZY VALLES

THE National Immigration Administration announced yesterday that individuals from nations that maintain diplomatic relations with China are permitted to visit the southern island province of Hainan without a visa for a duration of 144 hours, provided they are part of tour groups registered in Macau and Hong Kong.

The coastal city of Sanya, Hainan province, is experiencing significant advancements in the international cruise tourism sector.

According to the China Ports and Harbors Association, the city hit a milestone in the first half of the year, with inbound and outbound passenger throughput of international cruise visits soaring to

54,624 passengers.

Hainan's 59-country visa-free entry policy has attracted a large influx of visitors, boosting the cruise industry in the region.

Meanwhile, the director-general of the Sanya Tourism Board, Albert Yip, said that Sanya is set to collaborate with neighboring cities and regions, like Macau and Hong Kong, to develop multi-destination cruise products.

Gao Yongning, deputy director of the Cruise and Yacht Department of the Sanya Central Business District Administration, said that the remarkable increase in the number of cruise ships and routes can be attributed to both a more favorable business environment and enhanced policy support, as cited in a report by China Daily.

Food safety during summertime tops concerns of IAM committee members

RENATO MARQUES

FOOD safety during summertime was the most discussed topic during yesterday's meeting of the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) Consultative Committee.

In the period before the agenda of the meeting, which was held yesterday afternoon at the IAM building, two committee members raised the matter and called for more attention around it.

Lo Kam Kuan and Wong Sok Kuan, in two separate speeches, highlighted the need to pay special attention to the matter, particularly during summertime, when high temperatures and humidity can pose additional risks to food safety.

Member Lo noted the need to keep the catering industry aware of the requirements to "separate raw and cooked food" and "top cooked and bottom raw", as well as to ensure that temperatures of refrigerated and freezing compartments accord to predefined standards.

The same member noted that, in the first half of this year, about 5,000 health inspections had been conducted, including of restaurants, takeaway outlets,



retail fresh food, supermarkets, and other places, and that the results overall were very positive, showing improvements.

Still, he noted, "There are sporadic cases of suspected collective gastroenteritis in Macau every year. The reasons behind these are related to staff members' weak awareness of food safety and hygiene, as well as insufficient maintenance and cleaning of food facilities."

"A few days ago, a restaurant was found to have pickled raw

shrimps that contained *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* [a bacteria that can cause gastrointestinal illness]. IAM has immediately intervened to prevent the spread of risk to food safety," he remarked, noting that, particularly concerning raw ingredients like sashimi, there is need for extra care in handling, transporting, and caring for foods. He called on authorities to increase training for staff, as well as to implement education programs.

The same case was later men-

tioned by Wong, who suggested IAM strengthen inspections of food types that have recently been involved in cases of food safety problems, in addition to the already-existent routine food sampling inspections.

Another of the suggestions aired was to use different platforms to reinforce information and knowledge disclosure, as well as to strengthen cooperation with food safety departments in neighboring regions, so as to afford for immediate action when sus-

pected cases occur across the border.

CONTINUED WORRIES: MOSQUITOES IN VACANT LAND

During a different discussion at the same meeting, member Lam Ka Chun called on authorities to continue to pay close attention to the conditions of vacant land plots, particularly those that have ponds, or those which form temporary bodies of water after heavy rainfall.

Lam noted that these land plots have the potential to breed hordes of mosquitoes, threatening the propagation of dengue fever.

The member identified in particular the large piece of land recovered by the government located adjacent to the taxi stand at Taipa Old Village, saying, "According to reports from nearby residents, this land has a lot of overgrown grass and weeds, affecting environmental conditions in the area. It remains frequently visited every day by a large number of tourists."

He called on the government, while waiting for the development of this plot to proceed with regular maintenance works, to keep the plot clean and avoid, among other things, the breeding of mosquito hordes.

TAIPA GRANDE TUNNEL

DSOP receives eight pre-qualification proposals, five to submit bids

RENATO MARQUES

THE government has received a total of eight proposals in the pre-qualification tender for the design and construction of the Taipa Grande Hill Tunnel, which will connect the Wai Long and Pac On precincts in Taipa.

The public bid-opening ceremony was held yesterday morning at the Public Works Bureau (DSOP), with officials acknowledging the receipt of eight proposals in total.

As the bureau noted, the eight proposals were a pre-qualification ahead of the final tender process, which will be held soon. DSOP is now analyzing and evaluating the received proposals to shortlist the best five. Those behind these



five will then be invited to submit their final bids, including pricings and construction durations.

As the Times previously reported, DSOP re-

quires a maximum of 1,165 working days for the project's construction, as well as the outline of several deadlines by which to complete its



various phases.

At the bid-opening ceremony, a DSOP official said that the government hopes to start the construction in the second

quarter (Q2) of 2025.

If the construction project commences at its expected time (Q2 2025), it should conclude by the end of 2028.

This tender and construction period will include only the main section of the project, which comprises the tunnel and each of its main entry points. The project also includes a second stage in which access links to the Macau Bridge will be built.

The project has been justified as relieving traffic in the Pac On and Airport area, which is expected to increase after the Macau Bridge enters into operation.

The tunnel will also facilitate the link between Zone A of the new landfills and the Cotai area, reducing the traveling time between these areas.

The tunnel section, which will cross Taipa Grande Hill, will have a total length of approximately 600 meters and two lanes in each direction. The southern section, which will connect Avenida de Wai Long with Avenida do Aeroporto, will have a total length of approximately 400 meters.

POLICY

Politburo vows to support consumers and improve confidence in its slowing economy

CHINA'S powerful Politburo has endorsed the ruling Communist Party's long-term strategy for growing the economy by encouraging more consumer spending and weeding out unproductive companies to promote "survival of the fittest."

A statement issued after the meeting of the 24 highest leaders of the party warned that coming months would be tough, perhaps alluding to mounting global uncertainties ahead of the U.S. presidential election in November.

"There are still many risks and hidden dangers in key areas," it said, adding that the tasks for reform and stability in the second half of the year were "very heavy."

The Politburo promised unspecified measures to restore confidence in financial markets and boost government spending, echoing priorities laid out by a wider meeting of senior party members earlier in July. After that gathering, China's central bank reduced several key interest rates and the government doubled subsidies for electric vehicles bought to replace older cars as part of the effort to spur growth.

The Politburo's calls to look after



low- and middle-income groups reflect pledges to build a stronger social safety net to enable families to spend more instead of socking money away to provide for health care, education and elder care. But

it provided no specifics on how it will do that.

"This sounds promising on paper. But the lack of any specifics means it is unclear what it will entail in practice," Julian Evans-Prit-

chard of Capital Economics said in a commentary.

The party's plans for how to improve China's fiscal policies at a time of burgeoning local government debt were "short on new ideas," he said.

Instead, the emphasis is on moving faster to implement policies such as the government's campaign to convince families to trade in old cars and appliances and redecorate their homes that includes tax incentives and subsidies for purchases that align with improved efficiency and reducing use of polluting fossil fuels.

China's economy grew at a 4.7% annual rate in the last quarter after expanding 5.3% in the first three months of the year. Some economists say the official data overstate the rate of growth, masking long-term weaknesses that require broad reforms to rebalance the economy away from a heavy reliance on construction and export manufacturing.

Under leader Xi Jinping, China has prioritized developing industries using advanced technologies such as electric vehicles and renewable energy, a strategy that has made the country a leader in some

areas but also led to oversupplies that are now squeezing some manufacturers, such as makers of solar panels.

The Politburo's statement vowed support for "gazelle enterprises and unicorn enterprises," referring to new, fast-growing companies and high-tech start-ups. It warned against "vicious competition" but also said China should improve mechanisms to ensure "survival of the fittest" and eliminate "backward and inefficient production capacity."

The party has promised to help resolve a crisis in the property sector, in part by encouraging purchases of apartments to provide affordable housing and to adapt monetary policy to help spur spending and investment.

But the document issued yesterday also highlighted longstanding concerns. The countryside and farmers need more support to "ensure that the rural population does not return to poverty on a large scale," it said.

It also condemned what analysts have said is widespread resistance to fresh initiatives, saying that "formalism and bureaucracy are stubborn diseases and must be corrected" and warning that economic disputes should not be resolved by "administrative and criminal means."

Chinese markets have not shown much enthusiasm for the policies outlined in recent weeks. Yesterday, the Hong Kong benchmark Hang Seng index sank 1.4%, while the Shanghai Composite index lost 0.4%. The Hang Seng has fallen 4.3% in the past three months while Shanghai's index is down 7.3%. **MDT/AP**

DIRE STRAIT

Lai welcomes largest gathering of IPAC in Taipei, Beijing slams it as 'not credible'

TAIWANESE leader Lai Ching-te welcomed what he called the "largest-ever" delegation of foreign lawmakers to Taiwan and said yesterday it showed the importance of democracies uniting, even as Beijing pressured members of the delegation not to visit.

"This demonstrates the support and the value various other countries place on Taiwan," Lai said. "It also sends an important message to democratic countries around the world. Maintaining democracy requires unity, and we must protect democracy together."

Lai made his remarks at a conference in Taipei held by the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC), a group of hundreds of

lawmakers from 35 countries concerned about how democracies approach Beijing.

Beijing sees Lai as a separatist and refuses to speak with him. China has ramped up pressure against the island since Lai took office in May, sending ships and planes on a large military drill to show displeasure at his inauguration. That comes after years of Beijing's pressure on Taiwan — which has been ruled by the DPP for three terms now — on diplomatic, military and economic fronts.

Lai said at the conference that Taiwan would work with other democracies to protect democracy from "the threat of authoritarian expansionism."



Taiwanese leader Lai Ching-te and some guests in Taipei, yesterday

IPAC has long been despised by the Chinese government: Some members have been sanctioned by Beijing, and in 2021 the group was targeted by Chinese state-sponsored ha-

ckers, according to a U.S. indictment unsealed earlier this year.

In a written statement, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said IPAC "has no credibility at all" and repeated its

stance that Taiwan is part of Chinese territory.

"China firmly opposes any form of official exchanges between countries with diplomatic ties with China and the Taiwan authorities," the statement said.

Lai, also known by his English name William, is reviled by Beijing for his staunch opposition to political unification with the mainland. Earlier in his career, Lai said he was a "pragmatic worker for Taiwan independence," but has since softened his rhetoric, saying he supports maintaining the status quo across the Taiwan Strait.

Top diplomats from the U.S., Japan, India and Australia met in Tokyo this week to discuss security is-

ssues in the Indo-Pacific region, shortly after the U.S. and Japan held their "2+2" security meeting Sunday, where they called China "the greatest strategic challenge."

High on the agenda were Taiwan and cross-strait relations. Beijing's escalating assertiveness in the South China Sea has triggered tensions with many neighbors, adding to fears of a confrontation.

Lai has vowed to continue maintaining stability with China while beefing up Taiwan's security by importing military equipment, expanding its defense industry, and reinforcing regional partnerships with unofficial allies such as the U.S., Japan, South Korea and the Philippines.

"We are willing to replace confrontation with dialogue and containment with exchanges under the principles of reciprocity and dignity," Lai told participants. **MDT/AP**

PHILIPPINES

US boosts alliance with Manila with \$500 million funding and pact

JIM GOMEZ & MATTHEW LEE,
MANILA

WASHINGTON'S top diplomat and defense chief announced \$500 million in military funding yesterday to boost Philippine defenses and progress on a proposed military intelligence-sharing pact as both allies renewed their concerns over China's continuing assertive actions in the region.

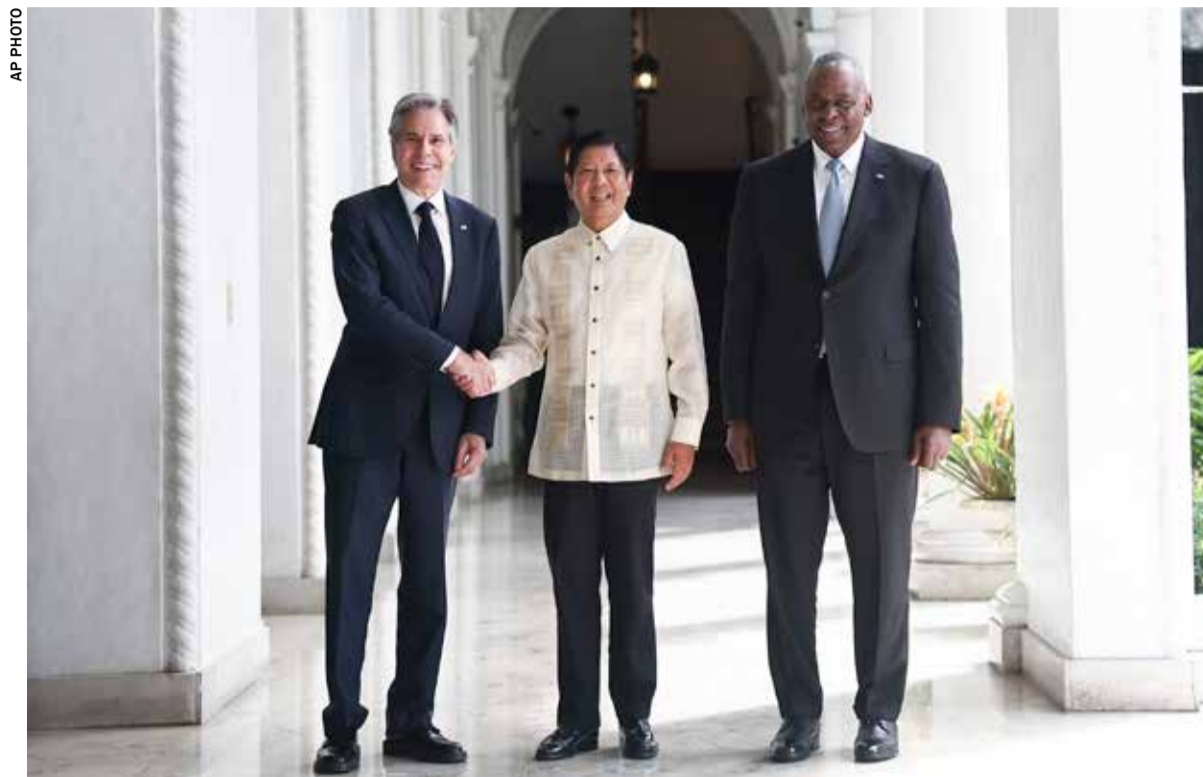
U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin met with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who has fortified Manila's decades-old treaty alliance with Washington as hostilities between Philippine and Chinese forces flared since last year in the disputed South China Sea.

Marcos hailed "very open" communication lines between Washington and Manila, adding that the two countries' treaty alliance and key issues in the South China Sea and the Indo-Pacific region "are continuously examined and reexamined so we are agile in terms of our responses."

Marcos has underscored the need for a U.S. military presence for Asian stability and peace.

After meeting their Philippine counterparts later, Blinken and Austin announced the \$500 million military funding to help in an ongoing modernization of the Philippine military and coast guard and boost security collaboration amid shared concerns over China's assertive actions.

"Both of us share concerns and many other countries in the region share concerns, as well, about some of the actions that the People's Republic of China has taken, escalatory actions in the South China Sea, the East China Sea," including "coercive methods," Blinken said in a joint



Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. (center) greets U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken (left) and U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin at the Malacanang presidential palace in Manila, yesterday

news conference.

He renewed a warning that the U.S. would help defend the Philippines if Filipino forces, ships and aircraft come under attack in the Pacific, including in the South China Sea.

The U.S. officials also offered condolences over the dozens of deaths wrought by typhoon-worsened monsoon rains in recent weeks and announced an additional \$1 million in aid for the victims and to help devastated communities recover.

The visit came the week after the Philippines and reached a temporary arrangement to prevent clashes around the Philippine-occupied Second Thomas Shoal like the violent faceoff between their forces on June 17.

Philippine forces transported food and other supplies and a fresh batch of navy personnel Saturday to Manila's territorial outpost at the shoal without a con-

frontation were reported for the first time since last year.

But the Philippines would continue strengthening its territorial defense with the assistance of the U.S. and other friendly military powers and build new security alliances, Philippine Ambassador to the U.S. Jose Manuel Romualdez said.

"The non-confrontational resupply and rotation is purely temporary. The People's Republic of China will not stop and we are determined just as well," Romualdez told The Associated Press.

The \$500 million in U.S. military financing would include funding for reinforcing the Philippine navy's capability. About \$125 million would be used for constructions and other improvements in parts of Philippine military bases to be occupied by U.S. forces under the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, Romualdez said.

With strong support in Congress, U.S. military funding may double next year "depending on our capacity to absorb it," Romualdez said.

Progress in negotiations on a proposed military intelligence-sharing pact, the General Security of Military Information Agreement was announced by Austin, who said that the accord may be signed later this year.

The agreement, similar to ones Washington has forged with other allied countries, would allow the U.S. to provide high-level intelligence, more sophisticated weapons, including missile systems, and access to satellite and drone surveillance systems to the Philippines with an assurance that such intelligence and details about sophisticated weapons would be closely kept secret in a highly secured manner to prevent leaks, two Philippine officials told the AP, speaking on condition of

anonymity because of a lack of authority to discuss the issue publicly.

Philippine efforts to obtain sophisticated weapons from the U.S. military in the past have been hampered by the lack of such an intelligence deal.

In his meeting with Blinken and Austin, Marcos alluded to the intense political divisions in the U.S. ahead of the presidential elections this year.

"I'm a bit surprised considering how interesting your political situation has become back in the States, but I'm glad that you found the time to come and visit with us," Marcos said.

Meanwhile, Romualdez said that U.S. support to the Philippines would "absolutely" not change regardless of who becomes America's next president. Numerous countries have expressed concerns about the implications of former President Donald Trump returning to the White House in January after President Joe Biden withdrew and threw his support to Vice President Kamala Harris.

"Both Republicans and Democrats are in full agreement for the Philippines," he said, adding that both sides have given assurances of continued support to Manila.

Marcos approved last year an expansion of the U.S. military presence in four more Philippine military camps under the 2014 defense agreement, and the largest war drills between Filipino and U.S. forces have been staged under his administration, drawing opposition and alarm from China, which said that increased deployments of American forces would endanger regional peace and security.

The Philippines has responded that it has the right to move to safeguard its territorial interests and national security. **MDT/AP**

CAMBODIA

Helicopter spotted crashed on a mountain 17 days after being lost, bodies of pilots found

THE wreckage of a Cambodian military helicopter that went missing more than two weeks ago with two pilots aboard was spotted Monday on a mountaintop, the government and state

news agency reports said. A Defense Ministry statement posted on its Facebook page said that a search flight spotted the wreckage of the Chinese-made Z-9 helicopter in the heavily forested Car-

damom Mountains in the southwestern province of Pursat.

The helicopter with two pilots were on training flight in bad weather when air force headquarters lost tou-

ch with it on July 12. An intensive search for the missing aircraft was launched the next day.

Military recovery personnel sent to the crash site found the body of one pilot inside the wre-

cked helicopter, state news agency AKP reported. The body of the other pilot was spotted about 200 meters away, state broadcaster TVK reported later.

A photo shared widely

on social media yesterday showed a helicopter broken into several pieces, partially covered by foliage. The photo and its source could not immediately be verified.

In 2014, another Chinese-made Z-9 helicopter crashed in a pond south of the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, killing two generals who headed the air force's helicopter unit along with two pilots. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



USA

Senate to pass bill designed to protect kids from dangerous online content

MARY CLARE JALONICK,
WASHINGTON

THE Senate is expected to pass legislation today [Macau time] that is designed to protect children from dangerous online content, pushing forward with what would be the first major effort by Congress in decades to hold tech companies more accountable for the harm that they cause.

The bill has sweeping bipartisan support and has been pushed by parents of children who died by suicide after online bullying. It would force companies to take reasonable steps to prevent harm on online platforms frequently used by minors, requiring them to exercise "duty of care" and ensure that they generally default to the safest settings possible.

Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, who wrote the bill with Republican Sen. Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee, said the bill is about allowing children, teens and parents to take back control of their lives online, "and to say to big tech, we no longer trust you to make decisions for us."

The House has not yet acted on the bill, but Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., has said he will look at the bill and try to find

consensus. Supporters are hoping that a strong vote in the Senate — a test vote last week moved the bill forward on an 86-1 vote — would push the House to act.

If the bill becomes law, companies would be required to mitigate harm to children, including bullying and violence, the promotion of suicide, eating disorders, substance abuse, sexual exploitation and advertisements for illegal products such as narcotics, tobacco or alcohol.

To do that, social media platforms would have to provide minors with options to protect their information, disable addictive product features and opt out of personalized algorithmic recommendations. They would also be required to limit other users from communicating with children and limit features that "increase, sustain, or extend the use" of the platform — such as autoplay for videos or platform rewards.

The idea, Blumenthal and Blackburn say, is for the platforms to be "safe by design."

As they have written the bill, the two senators have worked to find a balance in which companies would become more responsible for what children see online while also ensuring that Congress does not go too far in regulating what in-

dividuals post — an effort to appease lawmakers in both parties who worry regulation could impose on freedom of expression and also open up an eventual law to legal challenges.

In addition to First Amendment concerns, some critics have said the legislation could harm vulnerable kids who wouldn't be able to access information on LGBTQ+ issues or reproductive rights — although the bill has been revised to address many of those concerns, and major LGBTQ+ groups have decided to support the proposed legislation.

The bill would be the first major tech regulation package to move in years. While there has long been bipartisan support for the idea that the biggest technology companies should face more government scrutiny, there has been little consensus on how it should be done. Congress passed legislation earlier this year that would force China-based social media company TikTok to sell or face a ban, but that law only targets one company.

Some tech companies, like Microsoft, X and Snap, are supporting the bill. Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, has not taken a position.

In a statement last week, Snap praised the bill and said in

a statement that "the safety and well-being of young people on Snapchat is a top priority."

The bill also includes an update to child privacy laws that prohibit online companies from collecting personal information from users under 13, raising that age to 17. It would also ban targeted advertising to teenagers and allow teens or guardians to delete a minor's personal information.

As the bill stalled in recent months, Blumenthal and Blackburn have also worked closely with the parents of children who have died by suicide after cyberbullying or otherwise been harmed by social media, including dangerous social media challenges, extortion attempts, eating disorders and drug deals. At a tearful news conference last week, the parents said they were pleased that the Senate is finally moving ahead with the legislation.

Maurine Molak, the mother of a 16-year-old who died by suicide after "months of relentless and threatening cyberbullying," said she believes the bill can save lives. She urged every senator to vote for it.

"Anyone who believes that children's well-being and safety should come before big tech's greed ought to put their mark on this historic legislation," Molak said. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1991 SUPERPOWERS TO CUT NUCLEAR WARHEADS

The United States and the Soviet Union have signed an historic agreement reducing their stockpiles of nuclear warheads by about a third.

The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, known as Start, was signed in Moscow by US President George Bush and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

At a joint news conference after the signing ceremony, Mr Bush described the Start treaty as "a significant step forward in dispelling half a century of mistrust".

Mr Gorbachev said it promised to be the start of "an irreversible process" of arms reduction, but stressed there was "still a lot to do".

The agreement took more than nine years to negotiate, and reduces each side's strategic nuclear weapons by about 35% over seven years.

The Soviet Union's land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles will also be cut by 50%.

It is the first major agreement between the two countries over arms reduction since the Salt treaties, signed in 1972 and 1979, which limited the numbers of long-range nuclear missiles.

The Start treaty goes further, however, by committing the superpowers to scaling down their fleets of nuclear missiles and bombers, rather than just limiting expansion.

However, it still leaves the US and the Soviet Union with 9,000 and 7,000 warheads respectively. There was also no agreement over space weapons, or sea-launched cruise missiles.

Throughout the two-day summit, the emphasis has been on a new era of cooperation between the two sides.

Mr Bush and Mr Gorbachev spent much of their time discussing Mr Gorbachev's attempts to reform the ailing Soviet economy and the help that might be offered by the West, although neither leader would be drawn on specific details.

They are also understood to have discussed a jointly-sponsored Middle East peace conference.

Mr Bush's visit takes place at a time of increasing unrest in the Soviet republics.

Six months ago Moscow put down an uprising in Lithuania, and just yesterday six Lithuanian border guards were killed in suspicious circumstances.



Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Soviet Union collapsed in December 1991, before the Start treaty could be ratified.

After an intense period of diplomacy, agreements were reached with the Russian Federation and three former Soviet states where nuclear weapons were stationed - Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan.

The Start Treaty finally came into effect in December 1994, although the targets set out in the treaty were not met until 2001.

In 1993, the Start II treaty agreed to scrap a further 3,000-3,500 warheads. It was ratified by the US Congress in 1996.

In 1997, US President Bill Clinton and Russian President Boris Yeltsin extended the treaty's deadline to 2007, and set out to begin negotiations on a Start III treaty for further reductions.

Eventually Start II and Start III were superseded by a further arms reduction treaty signed in 2002.

The Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty, better known as the Treaty of Moscow, aims to cut the nuclear warheads of each side to between 1,700 and 2,200 by 2012 - a reduction of about two-thirds.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Edit carefully before publishing. Don't gossip, and don't believe everything you hear. Do the research. Rely on trusted sources. Connect and network for lasting benefit.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

There's more work coming in. Avoid a conflict of interests. Wait to see what develops. Take action to advance the most promising opportunities.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Take charge. Advance a personal project to new levels. Don't crowd about it yet. Privately push your agenda. Dress for success. Lasting benefits are available.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Privately plan and organize. Fix something before it breaks. Be prepared to move quickly. Learn from the past. Consider things from a spiritual perspective.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Keep showing up for your team. Do what you said you would. Community connections open exciting opportunities. Provide reliable collaborative services with a smile.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Make professional goals and deadlines for lasting benefits. Make sure you have the facts. Ignore gossip or rumors. Don't listen to everything you hear.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Develop your investigation. A fascinating inquiry reveals valuable treasure. Ignore false starts or deceptions. Patiently explore options. Watch for patterns in the data.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Your greatest asset is your own determination. Encourage full disclosure. Work quickly but carefully. Avoid jealousies, controversy or silly arguments. Collaborate without fuss.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Push to advance your shared plan and discuss it later. Action gets farther than words now. Avoid distractions or misunderstandings. Keep promises and deadlines.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Stick to tested physical and health routines. Something doesn't compute. Rely on trusted sources. Don't jump the gun. Move slow and steady to win.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Good fortune follows your own initiative. Go for what you want. Ignore gossip. Don't worry about the little stuff, especially regarding love and romance. Follow your heart.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Full speed ahead with domestic projects. Do the job you've been considering. Actions get farther than words. It's OK if you don't know how.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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8	1	5						
4				6	9			
5	4	1						

HARD

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	5	4						
			8					
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					4	2		
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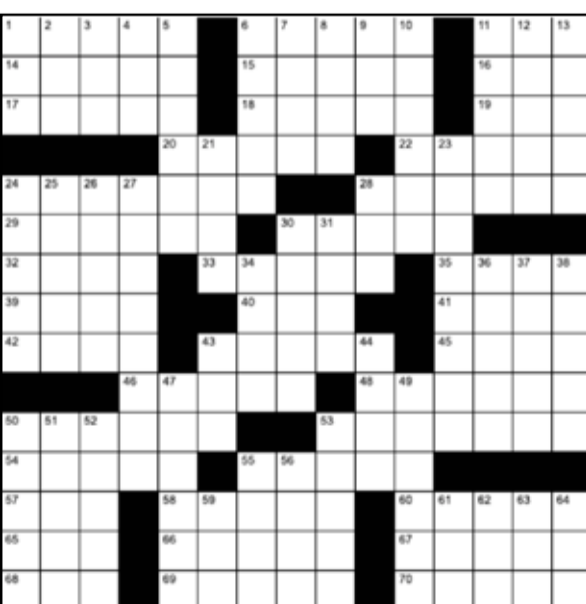
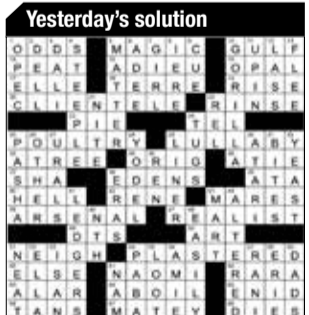
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	25	30	rain
Changchun	21	28	rain
Chengdu	24	37	fine
Chongqing	26	34	cloudy
Fuzhou	27	35	cloudy
Guangzhou	25	33	rain
Guiyang	20	25	rain
Haikou	25	32	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	29	39	fine
Harbin	22	27	rain
Hefei	27	36	fine
Nanjing	29	38	fine
Shanghai	28	38	fine
Taipei	26	30	rain
Wuhan	28	35	rain
Hong Kong	29	31	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	14	21	showers
Frankfurt	19	32	thunderstorms
Paris	21	32	thunderstorms
London	17	28	cloudy
New York	24	31	thunderstorms

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Cooperative race; 6- Lieu; 11- Prefix with content; 14- Angry; 15- Dweebish; 16- Lacto-___ vegetarian; 17- Sticker; 18- Pungent bulb; 19- Purse; 20- Unfettered; 22- Type of acid; 24- Tire rupture; 28- Separates metal from ore; 29- Continues a subscription; 30- Mexican moola; 32- Draft classification; 33- Abounds; 35- Boutique; 39- ___-Tass (Russian news agency); 40- ___ Are My Sunshine; 41- Greek goddess of youth; 42- "Damn Yankees" character; 43- Inward feeling; 45- Lotion additive; 46- Sanctify; 48- Bank employee; 50- Little hog; 53- Puzzled; 54- Mends a shoe; 55- Ascends; 57- Year abroad; 58- Flies high; 60- "Lovegirl" singer ___ Marie; 65- Actress Tyler; 66- Church instrument; 67- Senior; 68- Fannie ___; 69- People and places, e.g.; 70- Free from;

DOWN 1- Disencumber; 2- Before, to Byron; 3- Fond du ___ Wis.; 4- One ___ time; 5- Egg yolk; 6- Snob; 7- Sawbuck; 8- Great Lake; 9- Ruckus; 10- Electric generator; 11- It merged with Exxon; 12- ___-garde; 13- Company emblems; 21- Evict; 23- Military cafeteria; 24- Oven option; 25- Slow, to Salieri; 26- Tatum or Ryan; 27- Suitable for wearing; 28- Conscripted org.; 30- Lowly workers; 31- Big birds; 34- Sight organs; 36- Greeting; 37- Woodwind section members; 38- Equals; 43- Complete collection; 44- Novel ending?; 47- Something to be learned; 49- Christian festival; 50- Sacred song; 51- Ancient region of Asia Minor; 52- Covering for the hand; 53- Orgs.; 55- Newman's Own competitor; 56- Oil-rich Islamic theocracy neighboring Iraq; 59- Spanish gold; 61- Biblical high priest; 62- Byrnes of "77 Sunset Strip"; 63- Prefix with classical; 64- Comics bark;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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Jade Garden (Taipa)
HKD 11,880,000 4 bed 3 bath

AD

OLYMPICS 2024

HERE'S WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT SEINE RIVER WATER QUALITY DURING PARIS GAMES

DEVNA BOSE, PARIS

SWIMMING has been off-limits in the long-polluted Seine River in Paris for more than a century. So with Olympic swimming events on tap for the river, the city poured in \$1.5 billion (1.4 billion euros) to try to clean it up.

With the Paris Games underway, officials are keeping a close eye on water quality. Athletes could feel health effects from swimming in a river with higher-than-accepted levels of E. coli or other bacteria.

Here are key things to know:

WHAT MADE THE SEINE SO DIRTY?

Paris, like many old cities around the world, has a combined sewer system, which means that the city's wastewater and stormwater flow through the same pipes. With heavy or prolonged periods of rain, the pipes can get overwhelmed and untreated wastewater flows into the river instead of to a treatment plant.

That could mean bacteria, vi-

ruses or parasites get in the water, said Dr. Nicole Iovine, an infectious disease specialist at University of Florida Health in Gainesville. And it's not just from human waste.

"It's also the wildlife — rodents, for example. When it rains a lot, all of that from those animals can end up in the Seine," she said.

WHAT DID PARIS DO TO CLEAN UP?

To prepare for the Paris Games, the city built a giant basin to capture excess rainwater and keep untreated waste from flowing into the river, renovated the sewage system and upgraded water treatment plants.

Heavy rain may still swamp the system.

"The city of Paris has done a lot of work to clean up the Seine, but they can't control the weather," Iovine said.

The rain over the Olympics opening weekend filled up 20% of the basin, so the contamination levels afterward likely came from wastewater upstream, city officials said.

AP PHOTO



WHAT GERMS ARE IN THE RIVER?

Water quality tests in June revealed unsafe levels of E. coli bacteria, though results in early July showed improvement. E. coli is found in human and animal digestive tracts and waste. Most strains aren't harmful, Iovine said, but high numbers can indicate dangerous bacteria.

take into account additional factors — like the weather — when making decisions about the water quality.

On a sunny day, the sun's ultraviolet rays can kill the bacteria and lower levels.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SWIM IN CONTAMINATED WATER?

Swimming in water with unsafe levels of bacteria can lead to an upset stomach and intestinal problems. Swimmers may inadvertently swallow the water or pick up infections through open cuts.

Even a mouthful of contaminated water can lead to diarrhea, and germs can cause illnesses such as infections in the urinary tract or in the intestines, or in the worst-case scenario, life-threatening sepsis.

"The athletes are young, and they're in the best shape of anybody, so they're gonna be more resilient than many of us," Iovine said. "But that doesn't mean that they can't get sick from these things."

MDT/AP

AD



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NOW ON SALE

OLYMPICS 2024

Rugby sevens women's semifinals set: US vs New Zealand, Australia vs Canada

JOHN PYE,
SAINT-DENIS

NOW that they've reached the Olympic semifinals for the first time, Ilona Maher and the U.S. women's rugby sevens team could be just 15 minutes away from a shot at a gold medal.

Maher sent Naya Tapper into the clear to score the first try for the U.S. in the quarterfinals Monday night and went close to scoring herself in a 17-7 win over Britain.

Now for the tougher part: a semifinal today [Macau time] against defending Olympic champion New Zealand for a place in the night final at Stade de France.

The New Zealanders trounced China 55-5 in the quarterfinals and appear to be peaking at the right time.

So does 2016 gold medalist Australia, with Maddison Levi scoring three tries in a 40-7 quarterfinal win over Ireland to increase her tournament tally to an Olympic record 11.

"Record try scorer sounds pretty good but Olympic gold medalist would sound even better, so hopefully we'll get that tomorrow," Levi said. "I wouldn't be getting these accolades if it wasn't for the team beside me..."

It was the second meeting of the day between those teams and quite a contrast after the Australians only narrowly won 19-14 to finish the group stage unbeaten.

The world sevens series champions will face a Canada lineup coming off a 19-14 win over host France.

The French had wrapped up top spot in their group with a win over the U.S. earlier Monday but their loss in the quarterfinals meant two of the three medal-winning women's teams from the Tokyo Olympi-



United States' Ilona Maher celebrates after winning their women's quarterfinal Rugby Sevens match

cs didn't make it back to the medal rounds.

France won a silver in Tokyo but were confident of going one better and delivering the host nation a golden double in Paris after the men's team led by Antoine Dupont beat two-time champion Fiji to clinch the title on Saturday night.

Monday's two sessions attracted more than 120,000 spectators at Stade de France, a record for women's rugby sevens. Many parochial French supporters left disappointed after Chloe Daniels scored the winning try for Canada.

The Fijian women took bronze in Tokyo but haven't won a game in Paris, losing to Canada, China and New Zealand in the pool stage.

Sevens rugby, which features seven players on each team playing on a full field, is fast and full of attacking opportunities. All 12 teams play two 14-minute matches daily across three days, and it can be exhausting.

The Americans rebounded from their pool-stage loss to France with the come-from-behind over Britain that finally gave them a spot in the final four.

Maher played an ins-

trumental role in the first U.S. try in the night game, drawing in two defenders on an angled run and using her big fend to brush off a tackler, then release Tapper into the clear to score in the left corner.

She made another barging, long-range run just before halftime, only stopped by some brilliant cover defense from Jasmine Joyce. Then Kristi Kirshe beat two defenders to score first after the halftime break and give the U.S. a 12-7 lead.

With three minutes to go, Kirshe stepped inside one tackler and fended off two others in a bustling run before flipping a pass to Sammy Sullivan, who sprinted into the right corner to extend the cushion to 10 points.

"Yeah, that was a fingertip try," said Sullivan, a U.S. Army captain. "I think God was behind me on that one."

The win avenged a loss to the British at the same stage in Tokyo three years ago, which has served as motivation for Maher and her teammates ever since.

"Our team has never been in this position before," said Sullivan, a first-time Olympian. "I know for a lot of the girls, it was kind of

payback for last Olympics. But for me, coming in new, it was just really about wanting to make those girls proud from Tokyo and show up for

them."

The New Zealanders tussled all season with Australia for top spot in the world sevens series, finishing on top after the

league stage but then missing out at the series finale in Madrid, where Australia took the title.

The New Zealand women haven't lost an Olympic semifinal, beating Canada at that stage before losing the final to Australia in 2016 — when rugby sevens made its debut at the Summer Games — and edging Fiji after extra time at Tokyo before beating France in the final.

For the U.S. to end that record Tuesday, Sullivan said, "It's going to come down to us minimizing mistakes and us continuing to back ourselves in what we do.

"We're playing an American style of rugby, you know, hard, fast and resilient. So tomorrow is just about playing our game and just not giving them too many opportunities." **MDT/AP**

AD

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Paediatric Surgery : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong

Paediatrics : Dr. Zhang Zhiqin

Obstetrics & Gynaecology : Dr. Fong Kuan Io

Plastic & Aesthetic Surgery : Dr. Lam U Lin

Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine : Dr. Lam Kun Kuan

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OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

BIGGER BRICS BUILDING A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim announced on Sunday that Malaysia has officially applied to join the greater BRICS grouping. In late May, Thailand's Cabinet approved a draft application to join the newly expanded BRICS.

If the two key regional players in Southeast Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations are accepted as members of the grouping, which accepted Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Egypt and Ethiopia as new members earlier this year, it will have significant geopolitical ramifications, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. Their joining the group will further enlarge the platform, giving it greater representativeness of the Global South.

The total economy of the enlarged BRICS accounts for about 60 percent of that of the G7. The strong appeal the grouping has for emerging market economies and the great potential it has demonstrated to act as a responsible representative of the Global South make it a player on world stage that no party can afford to ignore.

While some in the West tend to increasingly view the swelling BRICS as an anti-West geopolitical tool, particularly against the backdrop of the Ukraine crisis and the United States' China-containment strategy, with Russia and China being members of the organization, they simply turn a blind eye to the fact that grouping is not a military alliance like NATO but largely an economic one that operates following the principles of mutual respect, sovereign equality, inclusiveness, consensus and strengthened collaboration.

It is the organization's openness and fairness, and the shared conviction of its members that the Global South deserves its due say in global affairs and the reform of global governance that have attracted new countries that recognize that the organization can provide them with a platform for strengthened coordination and cooperation to that end.

Unlike the G7, the expanding BRICS group is not a clique pursuing narrow interests. It provides a large space for countries to uphold their strategic autonomy and calls for resolving differences through dialogue and negotiations. Only those holding a zero-sum game Cold War mentality, or those thinking the rise of the Global South threatens to touch their cheese, would try to sow discord between the members of the augmented BRICS, or seek to misinterpret any country's application to join or display of interest in being an observer in the grouping. In the face of the contest between those countries seeking to build a multipolar world and those upholding the unipolar hegemony, and the clash between economic globalization and "de-globalization" tendencies, the growing BRICS grouping follows the trend of history, stands on the side of fairness and justice, and makes the right choices.

The accession of more countries to the enlarged BRICS can accelerate the process of building a multipolar world, and promote a more just and equitable international order. The organization should always stay committed to its original aspiration of openness, inclusiveness, and win-win cooperation to elevate the practical cooperation among its members to new heights.

Apart from pooling efforts to make unique contributions to resolving world hotspot issues, the grouping, in the face of the new technology revolution, should give full play to their strengths in terms of natural resources and market size, strengthen the supporting role of financial and trade cooperation, facilitate energy and food security cooperation, promote innovation cooperation, and act as a bridge for people-to-people and cultural exchanges so as to give meat to the bones of its principles.

Those claiming the expanded BRICS is nothing more than a "symbolic" troupe will have their eyes opened as what they regard as symbolism is materialized into results through down-to-earth actions that deliver real benefits to the people.

Tesla is recalling more than 1.8 million vehicles because of a hood issue that could increase the risk of a crash.

Billionaire Elon Musk's Tesla is recalling some 2021-2024 Model 3, Model S, Model X, and 2020-2024 Model Y vehicles because the hood latch assembly may fail to detect an unlatched hood after it has been opened.

The unlatched hood can fully open when the vehicle is in motion, potentially obstructing the driver's view and increasing the likelihood of a crash. The company is unaware of any crashes,

injuries or deaths related to the issue.

Tesla did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Tesla began investigating customer complaints about the issue on Model 3 and Model Y vehicles in China on March 25. By mid-April, the automaker had identified the condition impacting vehicles in China as a latch switch deformation.

Tesla has continued to look at the issue and found that the rates of occurrence were higher in China than in Europe and North America, but the reason for that disparity is unknown.



President Xi Jinping holds a welcoming ceremony yesterday for President of Timor-Leste Jose Ramos-Horta at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing

CHINA, TIMOR-LESTE TO ENHANCE TIES

CHINA and Timor-Leste pledged yesterday to deepen partnership under the Belt and Road Initiative and expand cooperation in agriculture, green development, the digital economy, and air transportation, as part of broader agreements reached during talks between the heads of state in Beijing.

President Xi Jinping hosted Jose Ramos-Horta, president of the island country in Southeast Asia, at the Great Hall of the People, and the two leaders jointly witnessed the signing of multiple cooperation documents after their talks. A joint statement on strengthening their comprehensive strategic partnership was also released.

The four-day trip, which started on Sunday, is Ramos-Horta's first visit to the country since he took office in 2022, and the first state visit to China by a president of Timor-Leste since China established diplomatic relations with the country in 2002 on the day of its independence.

Xi spoke highly of the two countries' traditional friendship, which dates back to the 13th century through the ancient Maritime Silk Road, saying that China always puts Timor-Leste at an important place in deepening cooperation with neighboring countries.

He commended Ramos-Horta, who was then foreign minister of

Timor-Leste, for personally signing the communique on the establishment of diplomatic relations and taking the lead in proposing the development of a comprehensive strategic partnership with China.

"(You) are the pioneer, builder and defender of the friendly cause between China and Timor-Leste," Xi said, vowing to work together with Ramos-Horta to take the two countries' ties to a new level and bring more benefits to their peoples.

China will share experiences and technologies with Timor-Leste in terms of water conservancy and disaster prevention and mitigation, and will promote cooperation in fisheries and poverty reduction, among other areas, with the purpose of assisting in the country's economic self-reliance and diversified development, Xi said.

He also expressed China's willingness to join hands with Timor-Leste to promote the development of the Global South and strengthen bilateral coordination within the United Nations and other multilateral platforms.

China will engage in more bilateral and trilateral cooperation with Timor-Leste within the framework of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and other platforms,

he said.

The visiting Timor-Leste president said he has made many visits to China since 1976 and has witnessed China's greatest transformations, including the eradication of absolute poverty under the leadership of President Xi.

He said he appreciated the long-term assistance China has provided for his country's economic and social development as well as the precious support for its COVID-19 response.

As a staunch upholder of multilateralism, China has put forward the BRI and a series of important global initiatives, and facilitated reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran, as well as among Palestinian factions, Ramos-Horta noted.

"This shows that China is a peaceful global power that contributes to peace and development," he said.

Ramos-Horta also said that South China Sea disputes should be resolved through negotiation and consultation among parties directly concerned. He said his country is willing to work with all countries in the region, including China, to jointly maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea.

Zhao Leji, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislative body, also met with Ramos-Horta on Monday. MDT/CHINA DAILY



Russia's nuclear doctrine, often cited by President Vladimir Putin, outlined yesterday conditions under which nuclear weapons could be used, emphasizing deterrence and extreme necessity. Amidst ongoing conflicts, adjustments to this doctrine are being considered to potentially lower the threshold for nuclear engagement.

Poland-Hungary A diplomatic rift has intensified between Poland and Hungary over their differing stances on Russia's actions in Ukraine. Poland criticizes Hungary for maintaining economic ties with Russia, which contradicts the European Union's stance, escalating tensions within the bloc.



England A horrific knife attack by a teenager at a dance class in northwest England yesterday left two children dead and 11 others injured. This brutal incident in Southport, which police say isn't terror-related, has sparked national outrage and intensified calls for stringent measures against the rising knife crime in the country.

Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu vows strong retaliation after a Hezbollah rocket attack killed 12 children in the Golan Heights. This incident threatens to escalate tensions between Israel and Hezbollah, with international diplomatic efforts intensifying to prevent further conflict.



Rwanda Thirty years post-genocide, survivors like Pascal Kanyemera use faith and remembrance to heal and educate about the atrocities that claimed nearly 800,000 lives. This commitment to memory serves as a crucial pillar in Rwanda's ongoing journey towards reconciliation and prevention of future genocides.