



AS OF MID-SEPTEMBER, NEARLY 200,000 PEOPLE HAVE USED THE SELF-SERVICE QR CODE FOR CUSTOMS CLEARANCE BETWEEN MACAU AND HONG KONG P6

INTENSE PREPARATION FOR OCTOBER'S 'CONSUMPTION GRAND PRIZE' P3

XI JINPING TO VISIT RUSSIA NEXT MONTH FOR THE BRICS SUMMIT P10



AP PHOTO



Vietnam Typhoon Yagi's aftermath has caused flash floods and landslides in Vietnam, killing 199 people with 128 missing, Hanoi's Red River floodwaters remain high, damaging homes and businesses. Rescue efforts continue, particularly in Lao Cai province, as rivers stay dangerously swollen despite weakening weather conditions.

AP PHOTO



Singapore Pope Francis yesterday praised Singapore's economic success but urged focus on the welfare of marginalized foreign workers during his visit. Meeting with local leaders, he emphasized inclusivity and fair treatment of migrant workers, calling for social and environmental responsibility alongside the city-state's rapid development and high living standards.

AP PHOTO



Koreas South Koreans remain divided on the threat posed by North Korea's nuclear capabilities, AP reported yesterday. Conservatives, particularly older citizens, express concern, while many younger individuals are less worried. This divide mirrors broader South Korean political views, with Pyongyang's provocations and nuclear development driving sharp contrasts in public opinion.

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TIMBER!



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GLOBAL TIMBER FORUM STRENGTHENS SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAINS

VICTORIA CHAN

REPRESENTATIVES from over 40 countries gathered in Macau this week for the second Global Legal & Sustainable Timber Forum (GLSTF), seeking to enhance cooperation on legal and sustainable timber markets.

“Through networking, collaboration, and business exchanges, the GLSTF aims to promote stable, transparent and predictable business environments in the global timber sector,” said a representative from the International Tropical Timber Organization.

Over 800 participants attended the two-day event, a 15% increase from the previous year, exploring topics such as blockchain technology, action plans on supply chains, and green finance integration.

During the forum, participants discussed the “Action Framework for Promoting Legal & Sustainable Timber Supply Chains” and committed to implementing concrete actions across eight areas of the industry through voluntary and transparent cooperation.

“We believe that these achievements are of milestone significance for the sustainable development of the global forestry industry,” said the Secretary-General of the organizing Global Green Supply Chain Initiative.

“Next, we will formulate specific action plans based on the consensus reached at the forum and strive to translate these plans into practical actions.”

Participants attended spe-



cialized sub-forums, business matching sessions, and an exhibition to foster ties between governments, businesses and other organizations.

The press release stated, “The GLSTF, a professional conference on the global timber industry, has been held in Macau for two consecutive

years, further consolidating and enhancing Macau’s international image and influence as a hub for conventions and exhibitions.”

Local involvement also grew, with the University of Macau co-hosting a youth event and the Greater Bay Area Green Finance Alliance promoting collaboration between African, Chinese and Macanese groups.

In closing, the representative from the Timber Organization expressed satisfaction with the results and emphasized the organization’s commitment to strengthening sustainable forest management globally.

While challenges remain in verifying product sources, participants agreed open discussion and joint projects were critical to building reliability across timber industries and markets.

The Global Legal & Sustainable Timber Forum will continue working to meet these goals.

ITTO OFFICIAL OUTLINES CERTIFICATION ROLE AT TIMBER FORUM

VICTORIA CHAN

IN an interview at the Global Legal and Sustainable Timber Forum 2024, Mohammed Nurudeen Iddrisu, the officer-in-charge of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), underscored the meeting’s focus on sustainable management. Iddrisu highlighted the importance of collaboration among producer countries, primarily in Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia, with a particular focus on the significant trade volume directed towards Asia, especially China. A key concern address-

ed at the forum was the impact of various regulations, such as the European Union’s deforestation-free policy, which poses barriers to timber trade. The forum served as a platform for private sector representatives, particularly from China, to engage with producer countries and gain insights into their sustainable forest management practices. As Iddrisu noted, “These producer countries... manage their forests very well and they manage them sustainably.” This dialogue reinforced the message that timber products destined for markets like China, Eu-



Mohammed Nurudeen Iddrisu

rope, and North America can be traced back to their sources, ensuring they are legally sourced. Iddrisu also reiterated an “actual framework” aimed at enhancing market access, transparency, and networking among stakeholders. The discussion on certification and sustainable forest management emphasized the role of two

main voluntary bodies: the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). These organizations establish criteria that countries must meet to manage their forests sustainably. As explained, “Sustainability means that this forest, which is renewable, can be replanted.”

This ensures that resources are used wisely, allowing future generations to benefit from the forest’s resources. The forum not only reinforced existing frameworks and strategies but also served as a crucial networking opportunity, enabling producers to connect with potential buyers and understand market demands. The overarching message was one of collaboration and transparency in achieving sustainable timber trade. As Iddrisu mentioned, “If you are able to discuss issues, then transparency is going to be improved.”

Macau international fireworks contest starts this weekend

THE 32nd Macau International Fireworks Display Contest begins Saturday after its original opening displays were postponed due to Super Typhoon Yagi last week.

Pyrotechnic teams from Canada and Thai-

land will stage the first shows, while teams from Russia and France will light up the skies Sunday.

The fireworks displays, scheduled for 9 p.m. and 9:40 p.m. each night, will last about 18 minutes. A fireworks carnival will also be held

by the Macau Science Center during each evening of the contest, from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Spectators are encouraged to enjoy the shows from prime viewing locations, including Avenida Sun Yat-sen, the Macau Science Center,

and Avenida do Ocean in Taipa. The displays will also be broadcast live on TDM. The Macao Government Tourism Office cautions the shows remain dependent on weather events and urges the public to pay attention to forecasts. **NS**



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ECONOMY

Intense preparation for 'consumption grand prize'

NADIA SHAW

OFFICIALS are intensifying efforts to stimulate Macau's local economic activity, with the government

gearing up for the launch of the "Macau Consumption Grand Prize" in early October.

This initiative follows the success of the "Grand Prize for Consumption in the Northern District during the

Weekends," which has proven effective in boosting community spending.

The upcoming consumption drive is designed to encourage residents to shop within their neighborhoods,

thereby enhancing economic resilience across all districts of Macau.

The initiative, which will run for approximately three months, aims to distribute electronic benefits to consumers who make purchases on weekdays, redeemable on weekends.

This structure mirrors the successful model used in the Northern District, where residents have already adapted to similar promotional strategies.

In recent meetings, the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSE-DT) collaborated with the Monetary Authority (AMCM) and various stakeholders to finalize the details of the program.

The DSEDT anticipates over 22,000 small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will participate, providing a much-needed boost to local businesses struggling with competition from neighboring regions.

Angus Chu, Distinguished Professor and Head of the Department of Economics at the University of Macau, expressed optimism about the initiative to The Times.

"The Macau Consumption Grand Prize will certainly sti-

mulate local consumption and benefit local SMEs," he stated.

"Previously, the government led a campaign on the Northern District's spending drive, and it was very successful. The participating businesses saw a 10% to 30% increase in sales."

He noted the allocated budget of MOP102 million is expected to generate about MOP500 million for local businesses [...] and this grand prize campaign serves as one useful policy tool to stimulate the local economy and strengthen local SMEs."

Chu emphasized the importance of economic diversification, stating, "The gaming sector accounts for about 36% of Macau's GDP in 2023, a significant decrease from 63% between 2011 and 2013. This grand prize campaign serves as one useful policy tool to stimulate the local economy and strengthen local SMEs."

He added, "The government has made good progress on economic diversification and is likely to continue doing so... If there is sufficient fiscal budget, I am hopeful that the government will continue exploring more policy measures to support local SMEs."

AD

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VICTORIA CHAN

TREND STARTED TO PICK UP THIS YEAR

What's the hype over electric

MACAU has seen rapid growth in electric vehicle (EV) adoption in recent years, fueled by strong consumer demand and supportive government policies. However, some experts argue the territory's tax incentives for EVs could be better structured to maximize environmental benefits.

Macau's EV market is experiencing a surge of growth, with the territory emerging as a promising hub for EV adoption. According to data from Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), the numbers show a compelling picture of this trend.

Macau customs service's data shows a 55% increase in electric heavy passenger vehicles, a 34% increase in electric light vehicles, an increase in electric trucks (from zero to two), and a 5.6% decrease in electric motorcycles from January-July 2023 to January-July 2024.

As of January 2024, Macau had a total of 1,324 registered EVs, marking a significant increase from 784 in the same month the previous year. EVs in January account for an impressive 32.48% of new vehicle registrations in the territory. This rapid uptake is driven by strong consumer interest, with Macau residents favoring EVs from leading brands such as Tesla, BMW, BYD, and Mercedes-Benz.

The government has also played a role in driving EV adoption, with 110 EVs in its own fleet by the end of 2023, including 71 light cars, one heavy vehicle, and 38 motorcycles. However, EVs still represent only 3.23% of Macau's total registered vehicle fleet of around 252,000.

According to statistics from DSEC, China has been the largest source of EV imports into Macau so far in 2024, supplying 894 EVs from January to July. Germany was the second largest, providing 129 EVs. Total imports have reached 1,082 so far in July 2024.

China and Germany have dominated imports since 2021. Prior to that, the US was the main source, importing around 400 EVs in 2020 and 100 in 2019.

Overall, EV imports have steadily risen each year, with a particularly rapid increase so far in 2024. Imports in the first seven months have already reached 72% of the total for all of 2023. This demonstrates accelerating growth in EV adoption and import rates.

LOW TAXES, HIGH FUEL PRICES

Macau's favorable tax policies have driven the surge in EV sales in the territory. Luxury EVs are significantly more affor-



dable in Macau thanks to unrestricted tax exemptions. For example, an HKD838,000 luxury EV in Hong Kong costs just HKD428,000 in Macau, representing a 4 million HKD loss in tax revenue per vehicle.

While these incentives have effectively promoted EV adoption, some lawmakers like Ron Lam have questioned the true environmental benefits. Lam argues that Macau's tax exemptions have created a "tax haven" for luxury cars without real environmental gains or restrictions. They

disproportionately benefit the wealthy and provide minimal emissions reductions. Lam calls for clearer vehicle categories and a reevaluation of taxes

Switching to EVs could vastly improve air quality by eliminating emissions from the internal combustion engines.

ANTÓNIO TRINDADE

to better support sustainable transportation.

Nevertheless, Macau's EV market continues growing rapi-

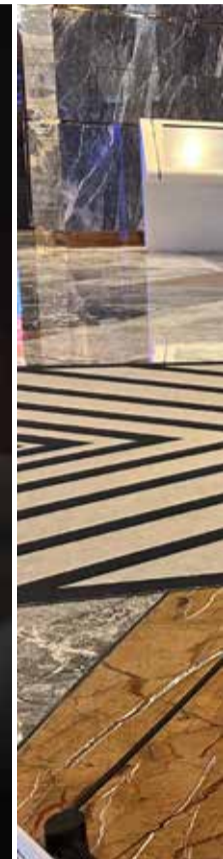
dly. Import trends suggest 2024 may surpass 2023's 1,486 imported EVs.

Interviews with Macau EV owners reveal multiple adoption drivers. Some cited technological appeal, with MacGyver Leong saying that "the main reason for purchasing my EV was because of its technology." Others emphasized financial considerations including rising gas prices and EVs offering sustainable alternatives that conserve oil and cut emissions, according to Belinda Chan. Several stressed long-term fuel and maintenance savings from going electric, such

as Jim Cheang who emphasized the "long-term fuel and maintenance cost savings of going electric."

In fact, Macau's EV incentives have emerged as a key purchase influencer. Multiple owners cited significant import and annual tax savings as a major reason for choosing electric. As Cheang stated, "The government's exemption of car purchase taxes and annual vehicle taxes are significant incentives for buying an electric vehicle and are important factors that influenced my decision."

While environmental concerns were not sole or primary motivators for all, many did acknowledge EVs' sustainability benefits as a contributing



vehicles in Macau?



factor. Brian Mok noted, "Considering that the government is supporting environmentally friendly policies, sustainability considerations may act as a minor reason in favor of choosing electronic cars."

The EV owners highlighted several key advantages of owning an electric vehicle. Leong praised the auto-pilot features, finding them particularly useful for longer drives. Chan emphasized the convenience of EVs in Macau's compact urban environment, noting their low energy consumption.

Many cited financial benefits as well, including significant

savings on fuel and maintenance costs compared to gas vehicles. As Cheang explained, his monthly fuel expenses dropped from around MOP2,100 to just MOP300 after switching to an EV.

"Many old buildings in Macau are just not able to provide charging post."

JOSÉ LUÍS SALES MARQUES

Some appreciated the environmental advantages of zero-emissions driving. Cheang expressed satisfaction in "knowing

that I'm reducing my carbon footprint." Mok simply enjoyed the "surge of acceleration" from the EV's rapid pickup.

However, not all experiences were positive. Mok noted an issue with cockroaches infesting his Tesla, which he disliked. The availability and affordability of charging infrastructure were also concerns raised by owners.

The EV owners had mixed reviews of charging facilities in Macau. Leong and Chan were generally satisfied, with the latter praising the "abundant free charging stations for Teslas" during their first few years of purchasing their

EVs. Although they are no longer free, there are still a lot of charging facilities in public car parks.

In contrast, Cheang felt there was "room for improvement" in the network, noting government charging was "relatively expensive." He suggested subsidies for home installations to encourage broader adoption.

Mok also expressed frustration with introduced fees, as he initially expected free charging when purchasing his Tesla.

Overall, the interviews suggest that Macau has made strides in developing its EV charging infrastructure, but must ensure accessibility and affordability for owners.

ENVIRONMENT BENEFITS, ECONOMIC RISKS

The adoption of electric vehicles in Macau holds significant environmental benefits but also poses challenges to the local economy and infrastructure according to Antonio Trindade, president of the Macau Association of Environment Protection Industry and President and CEO of CESL Asia Investments and Services Limited.

When asked about the potential impact of widespread electric vehicle use in Macau, Trindade was optimistic about the reduced air pollution, saying, "Most of the air pollution would come from traffic. It's localized pollution, not the pollution that comes from the surrounding areas of Macau." Switching to electric vehicles could "vastly improve Macau's air quality by eliminating emissions from the internal combustion engines" that currently generate most of the traffic pollution.

However, Trindade acknowledged that the transition also presents challenges. Existing car dealerships that sell gas vehicles may lose business to electric vehicle importers from mainland China. As Trindade stated, "the suppliers of electrical vehicles from mainland China come to Macau and do it themselves. They are external newcomers to the market." This could negatively impact Macau's domestic automotive industry.

In addition, Macau's energy infrastructure may struggle to accommodate widespread electric vehicle charging. As Trindade noted, successful adoption requires "policy from the Macau government to make this possible and incentivize diversification in the industry."

Electric vehicles present an opportunity to improve environmental and economic sustainability in Macau, but also demand coordinated policy solutions to maximize benefits and mitigate disruptions. While electric vehicles are growing in popularity in Macau, many roadblocks remain to widespread adoption, according to economist Jose Luis de Sales Marques. Registration data from July 2024 shows electric vehicles made up less than 30% of new car sales, suggesting market penetration is still relatively low.

Sales Marques noted the lack of public charging infrastructure as a key challenge. "Many old buildings in Macau are just not able to provide charging posts," he said, and setting them up requires overcoming significant bureaucracy. Without convenient places to charge, electric cars remain impractical for most residents.

Higher upfront costs also dissuade many consumers, Sales Marques said. While fiscal incentives lower the price difference compared to gas cars, electric vehicles are still more expensive. He explained the premium can only be justified "if the car will be used for long trips, mostly outside of Macau." Running costs are also impacted by Macau's relatively more expensive electricity compared to mainland China.

Given these issues around infrastructure, pricing and operating costs, Sales Marques argued more research is still needed on policies like taxes based on vehicle power. A sustainable long-term framework must consider both energy efficiency and safety to maximize the benefits of electric vehicle adoption to Macau. Significant barriers clearly remain before they become the norm on local roads.

While EV adoption is growing rapidly in Macau, supported by favorable tax policies, some question if incentives could be better structured to maximize environmental benefits rather than disproportionately helping wealthy buyers. As the market continues to boom, stakeholders will need to address challenges around public charging availability, vehicle costs, and long-term fiscal planning to ensure electric mobility solutions are accessible and sustainable for the broader community.

As of January 2024, Macau had 1,324 registered EVs, marking a significant increase from 784 y-o-y

CLIMATE CHANGE

RISE IN SEA LEVEL TO EXACERBATE 'IMPACT OF ASTRONOMICAL TIDES AND STORM SURGES'

NADIA SHAW

ACCORDING to a study by the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG), Macau's average sea level could rise by a staggering 64 centimetres (2.1 feet) by the end of this century, between 2081 and 2100.

The study, based on the latest models developed by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), presents five possible scenarios for climate change, depending on the emission levels of greenhouse gases.

Even under the intermediate scenario, local sea levels could rise between 31 and 64 centimetres (1-2.1 feet). This poses significant implications for many low-lying areas of Macau already prone to flooding.

"The rise in sea level is expected to exacerbate the impact of astronomical tides and storm surges in Macau," the SMG statement said.

The city can also anticipate more extreme rainstorms and severe weather events because of climate change.



Under the intermediate scenario, Macau's annual rainfall and annual maximum daily precipitation are projected to increase 8.3% and 5.8% respectively between 2041 and 2060, compared to averages recorded from 1995 to 2014.

As Macau grapples with the impending threat, the government has acknowledged the need for action.

In February 2023, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, expressed

doubts about the feasibility of initial plans to construct a tidal retention gate and 1.5-meter-high walls around the Inner Harbour to mitigate flood risks.

However, the reluctance stems from a desire to maintain the coas-

tal appeal for tourists and residents.

Experts said a multi-faceted approach is necessary to address this global challenge.

Faith Chan, a professor at the University of Nottingham in Ningbo, said even reclaimed lands are not immune to the combined dangers of sea level rise, storm tides and extreme weather events.

Shi Huabin, a researcher from the University of Macau, cautioned against expecting a single, perfect engineering solution, stressing the need for community preparedness and individual actions in managing regular flood events.

As the world grapples with the consequences of climate change, Macau faces a critical juncture.

The city must balance its economic interests with the urgent need to adapt to the changing climate and protect its residents from the looming threat of rising seas.

With planning, innovative solutions, and a commitment to sustainability, Macau can strive to safeguard its future in the face of this global challenge.

Two men arrested in HKD4.35 million fraud scheme

VICTORIA CHAN

POLICE have uncovered a complex fraud case involving two suspects, Lee and Wong.

The incident occurred Tuesday and resulted in a loss of HKD4.35 million for the victim.

According to the police report, the victim, a longtime friend of Lee, was lured into the scheme through the promise of a lucrative currency exchange opportunity.

Lee, 42, a chef from the mainland, assured a quick profit following the exchange of HKD5 million with a wealthy client, as well as that he already had HKD650,000 on hand ready for the transaction.

The victim, believing the story, handed over the remaining HKD4.35 million to Lee, in cash Tuesday.

Lee introduced the victim to an unknown man at a Cotai casino, who claimed the wealthy client was gambling there.

When the unknown man took the cash into the casino, ostensibly to complete the exchange, he disappeared, as the victim and Lee waited outside.

Suspecting fraud, the victim



and Lee searched for the unknown man but could not find him or confirm the presence of a wealthy client.

The victim subsequently reported the incident to the police.

Police investigations revealed Lee never actually possessed HKD650,000 during the incident, as he had claimed, and that the wealthy client was fictitious.

Authorities are convinced Lee's role was to divert the victim while his accomplice bolted with the cash.

The unknown man then alle-

gedly passed HKD2.4 million to Wong, 43, a local shopkeeper, in exchange for a commission of HKD90,000.

Wong has been charged with aiding and abetting.

The police have recovered the HKD2.4 million transferred to Wong's store, but the remaining HKD1.95 million remains unaccounted for.

Both Lee and Wong have been arrested and are facing charges of fraud and money laundering. The case remains under investigation.

200,000 RESIDENTS USE NEW QR CODE FOR CUSTOMS CLEARANCE

SINCE its July 19 launch, the "Hong Kong and Macau Customs Clearance QR Code" has transformed the travel experience for residents of both regions.

As of mid-September, nearly 200,000 individuals have taken advantage of this innovative system, which allows qualified residents to bypass traditional ID checks and use a self-service QR code for customs clearance.

"This measure will be important in the context of cooperation between the two regions, namely in increasing the movement of people at border posts," said Chao Wai Ieng, director of the Identification Services Bureau (DSI), at the launch



press conference. The initiative, implemented by the Identity Identification Bureau in collaboration with other governmental agencies, aims to streamline the immigration process at key entry points, including the Macau Port of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and the Outer Port Passenger Terminal.

Service stations were established to assist residents in

generating their QR codes, facilitating access for approximately 9,000 individuals during the initial rollout.

To use the QR code service, Macau permanent residents aged 18 and older can register at designated self-service machines or the Hong Kong e-way registration office.

Those aged 11 to 17 must be accompanied by a guardian. NS

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

ADVERTORIAL

SANDS CHINA NEWS

Sands China Ltd. Macau Open Badminton 2024 Tournament Coming in September

Sands China Ltd. and the Badminton Federation of Macau (BFM) are co-organising the **Sands China Ltd. Macau Open Badminton 2024** tournament, to be held at the Macao East Asian Games Dome Sept. 24-29, with the support of the Sports Bureau of the Macao SAR Government. The event offers early bird ticket discounts to local residents to bolster the promotion of badminton among the wider community. Additionally, the semi-finals and finals will be livestreamed on the Badminton World Federation's YouTube channel, "BWF TV."

An event of the **HSBC BWF World Tour Super 300**, the Macau Open Badminton Championships have been held as an annual competition since 2006. Around 400 of the world's top players from 20 countries and regions play in the tournament each year.

Sands China is the first integrated resort operator to jointly organise the Macau Open, in alignment with the company's support of 'tourism + sports' cross-sector integration and Macao's positioning as a world centre of tourism and leisure. Sands China will also host related community events, where local badminton enthusiasts will closely interact with elite badminton players, thereby fostering the participation of the local community.

Grant Chum, chief executive officer and executive director of Sands China Ltd., said: "Badminton enjoys widespread popularity in Macao. As this year marks the dual celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China and the 25th Anniversary of Macao's Return to the Motherland, we are honoured to host the Sands China Ltd. Macau Open Badminton 2024. This six-day world-class tournament provides both locals and visitors with a chance to savour the city's diverse allure, thereby enhancing the cross-sector integrated development of 'tourism+' and 'sports+' in the city. As the first world-class badminton tournament to be held in Macao since the Paris Olympics, the Macau Open will feature top players such as Zhang Shuxian, ranked 5th globally in women's doubles, and Wang Chilin, the gold medallist in men's doubles at the Paris Olympics."

Visit www.macaupenbadminton.org.mo for more details, including ticketing info via the Macau Ticketing network.



TIS welcomes new school year with community BBQ

NADIA SHAW

THE International School of Macau (TIS) kicked off the 2024 school year with a Welcome Back BBQ, bringing together students, families and staff for an evening of fun, food and festivities.

Yesterday's event coincided with the Mid-Autumn Festival, the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, and the 25th anniversary of the Macau Special Administrative Region, making it a notable occasion.

Head of School Lorne Schmidt expressed enthusiasm for the gathering, emphasizing its role in fostering a sense of community, highlighting the importance of these events in building connections among families and staff.

The BBQ served as an ideal environment for all attendees to enjoy some food, get involved in various activities, and watch student performances.

Families mingled, children played, and the school community united to celebrate not only the new academic year but the Mid-Autumn Festival.

As TIS continues to evolve and welcomes the new academic year, it remains committed to providing a comprehensive education that prepares students for international opportunities.

The school is in the process of becoming an authorized International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme (PYP) institution, aligning with its mission to equip students with essential skills for future success.

Schmidt said "We're looking to

get accredited in November this year for PYP. We've been working on that process all year last year. Adding, "they (PYP) should be coming in November for an accreditation visit."

Schmidt underscored the curriculum's focus on inquiry-based learning, stating, "We are preparing students for university abroad, ensuring they develop critical skills in research, communication and collaboration."

This approach is designed to enhance students' readiness for higher education and future careers, particularly as Macau diversifies its economy away from gaming.

Despite facing challenges in an increasingly competitive landscape with more schools emerging in Coloane and Hengqin, namely the newly opened Pui Ching Middle School Coloane and Hengqin School affiliated with Hou Kong Middle School, TIS has continued to successfully attract and recruit highly qualified teachers, boasting a diverse staff from countries including Canada, South Africa and the United States.

Schmidt said, "From the 16 new staff that came in, only one is Macanese [...] And she did her schooling in New Zealand before turning to Macau. All the other teaching staff are mainly from Canada."

TIS plans to expand its extra-curricular offerings, particularly in robotics and innovation.

Currently, over 100 students are participating in robotics competitions, fostering creativity and problem-solving skills essential for navigating a rapidly changing world.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

BRIEFS



CHINA'S NEW POLICY ON FOREIGN-OWNED HOSPITALS

China has announced a new policy allowing wholly foreign-owned hospitals in nine cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, as part of a pilot project aimed at boosting foreign investment and enhancing the healthcare sector. This policy, part of a broader strategy to stimulate economic growth, excludes traditional Chinese medicine and public hospital acquisitions. Additionally, foreign-invested companies can now engage in gene and stem cell technology development in pilot free-trade zones. According to Xinhua, policy seeks to address declining foreign business sentiment and foster high-quality medical advancements.

CHINA DAILY



JIANGXI'S INTEGRATION INTO THE GREATER BAY AREA

Jiangxi Province is accelerating its integration into the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area following the recent opening of a high-speed rail link to Shenzhen. At the Jiangxi-GBA Economic and Trade Cooperation Promotion Conference, Jiangxi officials highlighted new investment opportunities in sectors such as electronic information and modern agriculture. The province signed 74 projects worth 64.13 billion yuan (\$9.01 billion) and aims to deepen cooperation in industries including new energy and logistics, leveraging its growing industrial base and strategic location.

XINHUA



SOUTH AFRICA'S INVESTMENT APPEAL TO GBA

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has urged GBA investors to explore opportunities in South Africa, particularly in the green economy and electric vehicle sectors. During the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Summit in Beijing, Ramaphosa praised Shenzhen's technological advancements and expressed interest in collaboration, especially in renewable energy and EV industries, as cited by Xinhua. He highlighted regulatory changes in South Africa designed to attract substantial investment in electricity generation and emphasized potential partnerships with Shenzhen-based companies like BYD and CATL.

LEVERAGING COMPETITIVENESS

ANALYSIS
BY LEANDA LEE, MDT

SEMINARS introducing the spirit underpinning the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China were held in Macau on Wednesday 28th and Thursday 29th August attended by Macau officials and representatives of the Executive Council and the Legislative Assembly and representatives of various sectors of the community. Similar sessions were held in Hong Kong at the Central Government Offices earlier in the week. This was the first time such sessions had been held and publicly broadcast; an initiative that will surely build a shared vision, set expectations and guide populations, industries and businesses to travel together along the planned pathway.

According to Hong Kong government press releases, the sessions started by Shen Chunyao (Vice-chairperson of the Constitution and Law Committee of the National People's Congress and the Chairman of the Legislative Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress) and Wang Wentao (Secretary of the CPC Leadership Group of the Ministry of Commerce and the Minister of Commerce) introduced the Resolution of the Plenary Session which focuses on deepening institutional reform and promoting Chinese modernisation. This national strategy is established to improve economic and social outcomes and

AI-GENERATED ILLUSTRATION



enhance standards of living.

Delegates representing different sectors presented their perspectives on how the Resolution could foreseeably be implemented in their fields of

economic, industrial and social activity, showcasing the unique strengths and advantages of each of the SARs.

The message being made clear both at the sessions and through broad

Hong Kong to host Greater Bay Area Culture and Arts Festival

ON THE AGENDA

In a landmark event for regional cultural integration, Hong Kong is set to host the 4th Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) Culture and Arts Festival for the first time from October 19 to November 24, according to the organizers. Under the theme "Integration in Diversity - Power and Possibilities," the festival aims to showcase the rich cultural tapestry of the GBA and foster deeper collaboration among its cities.

Presented by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the People's Government of Guangdong Province, and the Macao Special Administrative Region, this year's festival will span all 11 GBA cities,



featuring an impressive lineup of over 260 performances, exhibitions, and cultural exchanges.

The opening event is

set to be a highlight of the festival. It will premiere "Sound River," a symphonic poem created by the renowned Chinese composer and conductor Tan Dun.

The composition weaves together 16 sounds and visuals from various GBA cities, culminating in

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

E ADVANTAGES



media dissemination is that economic and social players in the respective SARs have critical roles to play in this national reform. They are expected to take

responsibility for the integration into the GBA and the national economy through an understanding of their roles and the national goals, and to embrace chan-

ge as required.

Although these directives are top-down and the weight of their import impressed upon the communities, the method of the sharing of the vision subsequent to the Resolution and an enumeration of the opportunities available and benefits to accrue to those who take up the call bode well for a gentler motivational style. We have an appeal to the heart and purse-strings, as well as patriotic loyalty. Such a resourced and multipronged approach to incentivising appropriate buy-in – the participative nature, the quasi-consultative process, the clarification of expectations – feels new in spirit and nature. One can sense an urgency to get this right.

Macau and Hong Kong have unique attributes to bring to this reform and modernisation of China's economy. At the Macau session, its external-facing role as a connector between Portuguese-speaking countries and ASEAN was raised, as was multi-lingual proficiency. More insular concerns about local public administrative restructuring, although seemingly at odds with the larger mission, hint at the role a small and confined administration can play as a "testing ground for innovative administrative reform policies," according to Wang Wentao. There were further opportunities for highlighting the unique competitive advantages of Macau. Some of these novel attributes are less valued but none-the-less worth acknowledging due to the

opportunities for leverage, rather than hiding them under the carpet.

As Shun Tak's recent half-yearly report has raised, integration into a larger economy brings with it difficulties for both large and small businesses as structural changes in human, goods and capital movement shift the status quo. A dispassionate assessment of the areas where Hong Kong and Macau will no longer be able to compete needs to be made - such as in day-to-day retail and services which are better and more cheaply provisioned through increasing ease of cross-border access to both SARs populations (note the most recent permission for non-Chinese permanent residents for north-bound car access and the significant rise of cross-border traffic which have impacted local retail, restaurants, family leisure activities and real estate).

A searing focus on assessing the SARs' unique attributes, devoid of value judgements may uncover further opportunities to play a role in the larger economy whilst supporting local amenity and livelihoods. Macau, for example, has competitive advantage in gaming due to regulatory provisions giving the SAR monopoly status, Portuguese language due to historical and current cultural institutions, quality western-tradition educational establishments, a modern village-lifestyle close to family and friends, a population generally tolerant of difference, receptivity to a range of management styles, and management and operational expertise in large, complex integrated resorts, amongst others.

Much of what Macau has to offer leverages off its historic openness to the outside world and its residents', institutions' and government's willingness to engage. It is a spirit and a mindset, a set of attributes that has kept Macau as a cohesive yet agile entity that adapts to the circumstances it finds itself in, out of necessity due to its lack of local material resources.

Macau's true resources are intangible. Each of the current economic competitive advantages are built upon these. The concern is that the integration of and openness to outside influence upon which Macau is built can alternatively be the source of its demise or recognised as an intangible treasure chest. This will depend upon the value placed on Macau's Macau-ness.

Much has been written about President Xi Jinping's rare letter to Hong Kong business leaders related to the Ningbo-born entrepreneurs. It has been seen as support for development and a reinvigoration of private business, gratitude for this group's ongoing support of Ningbo in

business, education and philanthropy, recognition of patriotism and a call for continued efforts towards integration, China's modernisation and opening up. It is also seen as a signal of reassurance for foreign investment through Hong Kong and into mainland China.

It is difficult, however, to obtain clarity as to what level of openness opening up entails. The South China Morning Post reported Wang Wentao as saying President Xi Jinping has stressed that "only an open China would become a modern China." However, according to Wang Xiangwei, former editor-in-chief of the South China Morning Post, there is still much commentary in public discourse that is hell-bent upon protecting against perceived foreign influence and the unassailability of patriotism. The latter voice has been the loudest until recent times.

The juxtaposition of Xi Jinping's letter with the sessions in Hong Kong and Macau last week on the Resolution and the SAR's roles in China's economic reforms, together with the likes of surveys of Hong Kong residents on the advantages of Hong Kong's opening-up, and promises in Macau to spread the word of China's progress towards reform globally suggests these economies are seen as critical to the national agenda. Perversely, the SARs' advantage to the GBA and national economic integration is precisely their ability to be perceived as unique and separate from China. Think of it as a marketing exercise: one country, three brands – to attract different segments of investors, human and capital resources.

Economist Daniel Susskind offers us an even greater rationale for a belief in the pivotal role that knowledge-based economies and intangible resources such as Hong Kong and Macau have to offer. Growth is generally believed to be limited and that there are natural declines as economies mature. Much of this is predicated on the idea that material resources are finite and even with improvements in productivity and technology there will inevitably be a slowing down of the growth curve (not to mention the resistance caused by the environmental, equity, health and social failures that come with material prosperity). But Susskind says the "tangible world is not where the origins of sustained growth are to be found." Ideas have properties that material resources do not: they can be used again and again, and one idea builds upon another. The non-rival and cumulative properties of ideas embedded into the DNA of the economies and communities of Macau and Hong Kong offer much promise to the national vision.

and Arts Festival



Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra, the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra, and the Macao Orchestra.

Hong Kong's participation will be significant, featuring diverse programs such as the dance drama "Wing Chun," with contributions from local artists including George Lam, who has produced the theme song. Another standout production is the "ChoreoMusica Soiree," a Hong Kong adaptation of the critically acclaimed Guangzhou production, reinterpreted by local cross-disciplinary artist Tsang Man-tung.

Macau's contribution to the festival will also be substantial. The Macao Orchestra, alongside its GBA counterparts, will perform Tan Dun's "Sound River," showcasing the region's musical talent. The Cantonese Opera Troupe from Foshan will present "The Legend of the White Snake," a classic story brought to the big screen, highlighting the cultural richness of Cantonese opera. Macau will also host performances such as the

"POP KONG" concert, featuring young artists from both Macau and Mainland China, celebrating the creative energy of the next generation.

The festival's cultural exhibitions will include the "Celebrating National Day - Auspicious Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Greater Bay Area" at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum and the "Heritage and Inclusion: Literary Treasures of the Greater Bay Area" at the Hong Kong Central Library. These exhibitions aim to introduce the public to the region's intangible cultural heritage and literary treasures.

Tickets for the festival will be available starting September 12 via URBTIX, with further information accessible on the festival's official website. With its diverse programming and wide-ranging participation from across the GBA, this festival promises to be a vibrant celebration of the region's artistic and cultural diversity.

Festival website:
www.gbaxlo.gov.hk/en

a performance by the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Culture and Arts Festival Orchestra, which includes musicians from the

AP FILE PHOTO



DIPLOMACY

Xi Jinping to visit Russia next month for the BRICS summit

CHINESE leader Xi Jinping will visit Russia next month for a summit of the BRICS bloc of developing economies, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi confirmed yesterday, a move that comes as Moscow and Beijing seek to counter the West's global influence.

Xi's visit to Russia will be his second since the Kremlin sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022. China claims to take a neutral position in the conflict, but it has backed the Kremlin's contentions that Russia's action was provoked by the West, and it continues to supply key components needed by Moscow for weapons

production.

Wang Yi met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in St. Petersburg yesterday and the two hailed ties between the two countries. The Chinese foreign minister said that Xi "happily accepted" Putin's invite to attend the BRICS summit in the Russian city of Kazan in October.

Putin, in turn, announced that

the two will also sit down for a bilateral meeting in Kazan and discuss various aspects of the Russia-China relations, which "are developing quite successfully" and "in all directions."

Xi last visited Russia in March 2023 and Putin reciprocated with his own trip to China in Oct. that year. The two leaders have since

also met in Beijing in May, where Putin took the first foreign trip of his fifth presidential term, and in Kazakhstan in July.

After launching what the Kremlin insists on calling a "special military operation" in Ukraine, Russia has become increasingly dependent economically on China as Western sanctions cut its access to much of the international trading system. China's increased trade with Russia, totaling \$240 billion last year, has helped the country mitigate some of the worst blows from the sanctions.

Moscow has diverted the bulk of its energy exports to China and relied on Chinese companies to import high-tech components for Russian military industries to circumvent Western sanctions.

The two countries have also deepened their military ties in the last two years.

The BRICS alliance was founded in 2006 by Brazil, Russia, India and China, with South Africa joining in 2010. It has recently undergone an expansion and now includes Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates. Saudi Arabia has said it's considering joining, and Azerbaijan and Malaysia have formally applied.

BRICS has a stated aim to amplify the voice of major emerging economies to counterbalance the Western-led global order. Its founding members have called for a fairer world order and the reform of international institutions like the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. **MDT/AP**

TRADE & INVESTMENT

US companies see record-low profits in China amid geopolitical tensions

AMERICAN companies in China are seeing record-low profits, with business confidence at an all-time low amid U.S.-China tensions and a slowing Chinese economy, according to a report published Thursday by a U.S. business group.

Out of 306 companies polled, a record-low 66% were profitable in 2023, according to the China business report published by the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai.

The report also found that only 47% of respondents were optimistic about their business outlook in China over the next five years, the lowest in the survey's history of more than two decades.

Beijing and Washington have been at odds in recent years over issues like trade



and manufacturing, as well as China's claims over the South China Sea.

China is also grappling with a slowing domestic economy, with lackluster consumer demand and deflationary pressures persisting even post-COVID.

The geopolitical tensions between both countries was the top challenge to businesses' operations in China, the report found.

"It's a balance between risk and reward," said Eric Zheng, president of AmCham Shanghai, during a news conference ahead of

the report's publication.

"The perceived risks of doing business in China have gone up in the past few years, but at the same time the market is slowing down, with soft demand and overcapacity," he said.

Many businesses are now redirecting investments to other regions such as Vietnam, Malaysia and South Asia, Zheng said.

A record high of 25% of companies polled cut investment in China in 2023, AmCham's report found, largely driven by concerns over China's slowing growth.

While just over half of U.S. companies expect their revenue to increase over last year, only 37% are expecting growth in China to outpace global growth in the coming three to five years.

The AmCham report came a day after the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China published a report with similar sentiments on the increasing risks of doing business in China. The report highlighted a lack of implementation on promised reforms and an increasingly politicized business environment.

The European business group called on China to prioritize economic growth and reform, and to boost investor confidence by leveling the playing field for all companies in the country. **MDT/AP**

ELDERLY CARE

AUTHORITIES MULL LAW FOR AILING SENIORS

CHINA is planning to establish a legal framework to boost elderly care targeting seniors with disabilities to meet surging demands in a rapidly aging society, said Lu Zhiyuan, minister of civil affairs.

Official data shows that China has about 35 million disabled elderly, who make up 11.6 percent of the nation's elderly population. That number is expected to climb to 46 million by 2035 and 58 million by 2050, he said in a report delivered to an ongoing session of the National People's Congress Standing Committee this week.

The incidence rate of chronic diseases among the elderly is four times that of the total population, and on average, the elderly live over eight years after being diag-

nosed.

To assist them better, Lu said that China has constructed more elderly care facilities and has issued subsidies for them in the past decade.

By the end of last year, the proportion of nursing beds among all beds at elderly care homes nationwide had risen to about 59 percent, and 67 percent of all seniors admitted into these homes live with disabilities.

Meanwhile, nearly 3.67 million older adults who live alone and have severe diseases, disabilities or other difficulties can now receive stable assistance and support from the government, and about 5.63 million seniors who are struggling financially are eligible to receive nursing care or elderly care subsidies. **MDT/CHINA DAILY**

THAILAND

Slumping economy is new leader Paetongtarn's focus in her first parliamentary address

JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI,
BANGKOK

THAILAND'S new Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra vowed yesterday in her inaugural speech to Parliament to continue many of her predecessor's plans to solve the country's economic woes.

Paetongtarn, the leader of the ruling Pheu Thai Party and daughter of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, took office last month after a court ousted Srettha Thavasin from his post over an accusation that he had violated an ethics law by appointing a Cabinet member who had served time in prison in connection with a bribery case.

Pheu Thai formed a government headed by Srettha after members of the conservative Senate refused to endorse the prime minister nominated by the progressive Move Forward Party, which won the most seats in last year's general election.

Thailand is facing several economic challenges and Paetongtarn said yesterday her government will urgently address the issues of high household debt, the rising cost of living and lagging incomes "to bring the hope of Thai people back as soon as possible."

Among the government's more immediate plans are measures to relieve household debt and reduce



Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra reads the policy statement at parliament in Bangkok, yesterday

the rising cost of electricity, petrol and transport, as well as to boost tourism and bring new technologies to the agricultural sector, she said.

Paetongtarn said the government will generate new income by legalizing and taxing the "informal economy" and the "underground economy." Although she provided no details, it was an apparent reference to plans to legalize casinos, which are being promoted as "entertainment complexes" that can attract revenue windfalls.

The draft of the law, sponsored by the Finance Ministry, says a casino would be allowed to operate within a complex that also houses other businesses such as a hotel, a convention hall, a mall or a theme park. Access to casinos will be

restricted to those younger than 20 years old. They will be open for foreigners, while Thai citizens must pay 5,000 baht (\$148) for an entrance fee, according to the draft.

She said the government will protect small businesses from unfair competition from foreign operators, especially on online platforms. Industry groups in Thailand have expressed increasing concern about an influx of cheap products from China that they say have hurt sales by domestic producers.

Paetongtarn said she will carry out Srettha's 10,000-baht (\$296) digital cash handout program, although details in her speech were sparse. Officials from her administration have said the "Digital Wallet" program, initially promised during last year's election campaign to give

cash handouts to all Thais aged 16 and older, will now prioritize vulnerable low-income groups. They are set to be paid a lump sum this month or by October, while others who are eligible may be paid in installments starting later this year.

In a shift from Srettha, who had vowed to make cannabis illegal again, Paetongtarn said her administration will support medical cannabis as a way to boost the economy, with regulations added to mitigate its social impact. Cannabis was decriminalized in Thailand in 2022, intended only for medicinal use, but in practice the market is virtually unregulated and there was a proliferation of retail shops catering to recreational users.

Fears of drug abuse, especially among young people, as well as concerns about health, prompted a public backlash, and during last year's election campaign Paetongtarn's Pheu Thai, along with other parties, pledged to restore measures to ban the drug. However, the government in July suddenly signaled it was backtracking from that pledge.

Paetongtarn said her government in the longer term will also address climate change, improve the quality of education and the universal healthcare system, and tackle political instability by drafting a more democratic constitu-

tion and reforming the bureaucratic system and the military.

The results of Thailand's elections last year revealed a strong mandate for change after nearly a decade under military control. Reforms to the military — a powerful political player that has staged two coups since 2006 — were part of Pheu Thai's campaign platform, although it hedged the pledge significantly after it took power and formed a government with pro-military parties.

Paetongtarn's rise to power, which made her the country's youngest leader and second female prime minister, represents the revival of the embattled political dynasty that began with her father Thaksin, a billionaire telecoms tycoon, who was elected prime minister in 2001 but ousted by a military coup in 2006.

She is the third close member of the Shinawatra clan to take the prime minister's job. Thaksin's sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, was Thailand's first female prime minister from 2011 to 2014. An in-law, Somchai Wongsawat, also served briefly as prime minister in 2008.

Thaksin remains a highly influential political figure and is seen as a de facto leader of Pheu Thai. His apparent dominance over the party has triggered controversy, including a petition to the Election Commission accusing Pheu Thai of allowing an outsider to control it, which could result in the party's dissolution.

After Thaksin was ousted in 2006, the military joined hands with other conservative forces in Thai society to try to thwart a comeback of his political machine. Thaksin's ouster triggered years of struggle between his supporters and his opponents, in the streets, in the courts and at the ballot box. **MDT/AP**

SRI LANKA

Opposition leader says the rich will pay more if he becomes president

KRISHAN FRANCIS,
COLOMBO

SRI Lanka's opposition leader contesting the presidential election next week said yesterday that if he comes to power he will renegotiate with the International Monetary Fund the 2022 economic reforms package to ensure that the rich pay more taxes and the poor see their conditions improve. The reforms were introduced after Sri Lanka defaulted on its foreign debt creating the worst economic crisis in its history.



Opposition leader and the presidential candidate of United People's Power Sajith Premadasa

Sajith Premadasa, the opposition leader in Parliament told The Associated Press in an interview that his party has already

started discussions with the IMF to find ways to ease the tax burden on the people. "We will be embarking

on the third path, the middle path, the path is where wealth is created, the country grows and the wealth is equitably distributed," Premadasa said. He said there needs to be "fundamental changes" to the current agreement between the IMF and Sri Lanka's government but those should be in a more "humanistic manner" to ensure that the burden on the people is lessened.

"And if there are burdens that have to be imposed, the super-ri-

ch and the rich have to disproportionately take a bigger share of the burden rather than the working men and women of Sri Lanka."

Sri Lanka is in the middle of reforms and a debt restructuring program under an IMF agreement whereby taxes have been increased to boost state revenue. After the island nation defaulted on its foreign debt in 2022, borrowing was reduced and the printing of new currency notes was stopped by law.

The opposition parties say however that many of the wealthy and those with connections with the authorities don't pay their taxes and the burden is borne by the middle classes and the poor through income taxes and value-added tax on

goods and services.

The presidential election on September 21 is seen as a referendum on the reforms initiated by President Ranil Wickremesinghe. They have improved key economic figures, but their effects have yet to reach many ordinary people.

Premadasa criticized Wickremesinghe's economic policies saying that he is trying to find solutions through contraction. Premadasa said his policy is to "grow out of the problem" through an export-oriented, knowledge-based economy.

Premadasa, 57, is the son of a former president late Ranasinghe Premadasa who was assassinated by an ethnic Tamil separatist suicide bomber in 1993. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



USA | 9/11

Anniversary brings Biden, Harris and Trump together at ground zero

JENNIFER PELTZ & KAREN MATTHEWS, NEW YORK

WITH presidential candidates looking on, some 9/11 victims' relatives appealed to them Wednesday [yesterday, Macau time] for accountability as the U.S. marked an anniversary laced with election-season politics.

In a remarkable tableau, President Joe Biden, former President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris stood together at ground zero just hours after Trump and Harris faced off in their first-ever debate. Trump and Biden — the successor whose inauguration Trump skipped — shook hands, and former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg appeared to facilitate a handshake between Harris and Trump.

Then the campaign rivals stood only a few feet apart, Biden and Bloomberg between them, as the hourslong reading of victims' names began. At Trump's side was his running mate, Sen. JD Vance.

The image was one of putting politics aside at this year's solemn commemoration of the hijacked-plane attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people on Sept. 11, 2001. But some victims' relatives, after reading out names, delivered political messages of their own.

"We are pleading for your help, but you ignore us," Allison Walsh-DiMarzio said, directly challenging Trump and Harris

to press Saudi Arabia about any official involvement in the attacks. Most of the 19 hijackers were Saudi, but the kingdom denies it was behind their plot.

"Which one of you will have the courage to be our hero? We deserve better," Walsh-DiMarzio said. She's a daughter of 9/11 victim Barbara P. Walsh, an administrative assistant.

Joanne Barbara was one of multiple readers who spoke out against a now-revoked plea deal that military prosecutors struck with alleged 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and two fellow defendants.

"It has been 23 years, and the families deserve justice and accountability," said the widow of Assistant Fire Chief Gerard A. Barbara.

Biden, on his last Sept. 11 in office, and Harris paid respects Wednesday at all three 9/11 attack sites: ground zero, the Pentagon and a rural part of Pennsylvania.

The president, vice president — and, separately, Trump — laid wreaths Wednesday afternoon at the Flight 93 National Memorial near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Biden and Harris spoke with victims' relatives and visited the local fire department; Trump and Vance went to a New York City firehouse earlier in the day.

The Flight 93 memorial stands where one of the hijacked planes crashed after crew members and passengers tried to storm the cockpit. Trump described the site as an "incredible place" in brief remarks

from afar to reporters.

The attacks killed 2,977 people and left thousands of bereaved relatives and scarred survivors. The planes took down the World Trade Center's twin towers and carved a gash in the Pentagon, the U.S. military headquarters, where Biden and Harris laid a red, white and blue wreath Wednesday afternoon.

While many Americans may not observe 9/11 anniversaries anymore, "the men and women of the Department of Defense remember," Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said earlier in the day.

The attacks altered U.S. foreign policy, domestic security practices and the mindset of many Americans who had not previously felt vulnerable to foreign extremists.

Effects rippled around the world. Victims came from more than 90 different countries, and the U.S. responded to the attacks with a "Global War on Terrorism." U.S.-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq killed hundreds of thousands of Afghans and Iraqis and thousands of American troops.

Communities around the country hold events on the anniversary, which Congress has titled both Patriot Day and a National Day of Service and Remembrance.

Thousands of Americans commemorate it with volunteer work — among them Harris' running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz. He packed meals in St. Paul for people in need.

During early anniversaries

at ground zero, presidents and other officeholders read poems, parts of the Declaration of Independence and other texts.

But the National Sept. 11 Memorial and Museum decided in 2012 to limit the ceremony to relatives reading victims' names.

If politicians "care about what's actually going on, great. Be here," said Korryn Bishop, who attended Wednesday to remember her cousin John F. McDowell Jr., who worked in finance. "If they're just here for political clout, that upsets me."

Brandon Jones was glad politicians weren't on the podium.

"This should be a site for coming together to find feasible solutions and peace. This should not be a place to score political points to get brownie points to round up your base," said Jones. He's a cousin of victim Jon Richard Grabowski, an insurance firm technology executive.

In 2008, then-senators and presidential campaign rivals John McCain and Barack Obama jointly paid their respects at ground zero.

Eight years later, the Democratic nominee, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, abruptly left the trade center ceremony, stumbled while awaiting her motorcade and later disclosed that she had been diagnosed with pneumonia. The episode stirred fresh attention to her health, which her Republican opponent — Trump, who was also at that observance — had been questioning for months. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1993 RABIN AND ARAFAT SHAKE ON PEACE DEAL



The Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, and the PLO leader, Yasser Arafat, have shaken hands before cheering crowds on the White House lawn in Washington.

The handshake - the first ever in public between the two former arch enemies - marked the signing of a Declaration of Principles for peace between the Arabs and Israelis.

Under the terms of the deal, Israel has agreed to withdraw its troops from Gaza Strip and West Bank by April 1994. Elections will be held in the territories to allow the Palestinians some form of self-government.

A deadline for a final settlement has been set for February 1999.

The deal has only been made possible by talks brokered by the Norwegians earlier in the year - and by the election of Mr Rabin's Labour government which includes the pro-peace campaigners Shimon Peres and Yossi Beilin.

President Bill Clinton introduced the two leaders to the crowd of invited guests in front of the White House. By his side, were former Presidents Jimmy Carter and George Bush who had vigorously campaigned for peace during their terms in office.

Mr Clinton said: "The peace of the brave is within our reach. Throughout the Middle East there is a great yearning for the quiet miracle of a normal life.

"We know a difficult road lies ahead. Every peace has its enemies."

The leaders did not sign the declaration themselves. Instead, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and his Palestinian counterpart did the signing.

Mr Rabin then addressed the crowd: "We who have fought against you the Palestinians, we say to you today in a loud and clear voice, enough of blood and tears, enough."

Mr Arafat said: "The difficult decision we reached together was one that required great courage."

The BBC's correspondent John Simpson said Mr Arafat had undoubtedly put his life on the line for this agreement.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Declaration of Principles paved the way for Israel's first withdrawals from occupied territory and Yasser Arafat's triumphant return to Palestinian territory in July 1994. He was elected president of the Palestinian National Authority in 1996.

Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by a Jewish extremist wanting to prevent further Israeli withdrawals on 4 November 1995.

Binyamin Netanyahu of Likud won Israeli elections in 1996. He agreed to a withdrawal from Hebron in the West Bank but talks on further peace moves with the Palestinians stalled. His successor Ehud Barak was equally unsuccessful and in the impasse veteran right-winger Ariel Sharon toured the al Aqsa mosque/Temple Mount complex in what was seen as a provocative move by the Palestinians.

Demonstrations soon turned into another uprising or intifada.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Take care of business. If one avenue is blocked, try another. Explore new directions. Avoid traffic or hassle. Patient, careful efforts get through.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Handle practical details before dashing off. Create backup plans. Review alternate routes. Research costs and benefits. Discover treasure in your own backyard.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Review financial agreements and handle obligations. Postpone buying treats. Choose good structure. Build solid foundations for future goals.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Don't get pushy. Coordinate practical details with your partner. Schedule actions after determining who will do what. Resolve a breakdown together and celebrate.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Maintain your health, fitness and work routines. Slow for tricky sections. Don't push beyond your capacity. Avoid impulsive moves. Keep a steady pace and rhythm.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Discuss the finer aspects of the game. Plot moves in advance. Postpone a major reveal. Talk gets further than action now. Romance kindles in conversation.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Adapt to domestic changes as illusions evaporate. Avoid unnecessary arguments. Stick to practical priorities and don't worry about the small stuff.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Do the research before making statements. Things may not be as appearing. Don't fall for a trick. Stick to reliable news sources. Anticipate surprises.

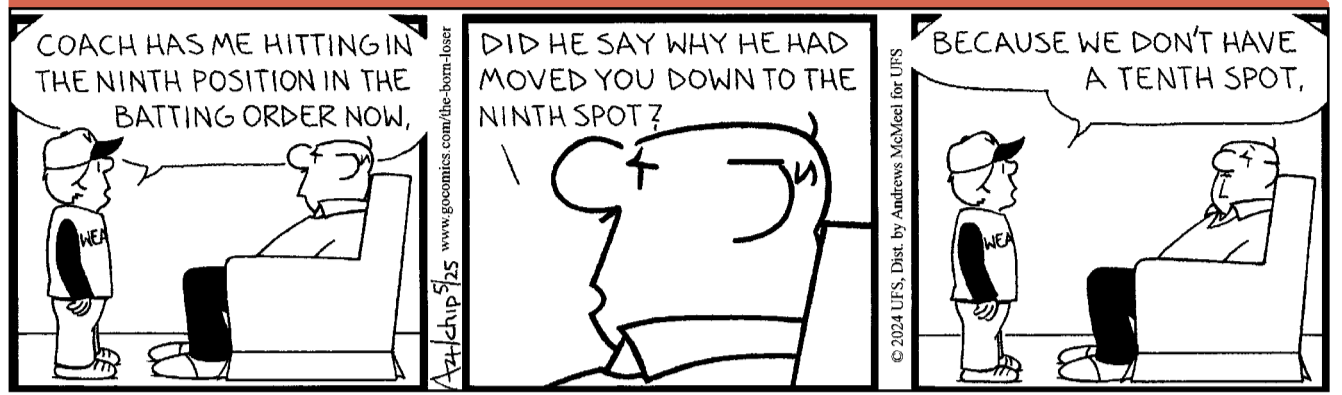
SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Figure out what your ideal customer or client wants. Polish marketing materials and articulate your brand. Plan and prepare for a powerful launch.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Follow intuition. A trickster baits a hook. Don't respond automatically. Consider personal priorities. Keep your agreements and sense of humor.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Rest, review and revise. Anticipate chaos, controversy or resistance. Complications could arise. Wait to see what develops. Lay low to reformulate plans.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Voice your views to your team. Illuminate a shadowy area. Passions could get intense. Listen to all perspectives. Discoveries could alter your group's direction.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	18	26	cloudy
Changchun	13	19	cloudy
Chengdu	24	32	rain
Chongqing	28	38	fine
Fuzhou	26	34	cloudy
Guangzhou	26	34	showers
Guiyang	19	31	fine
Haikou	24	31	cloudy
Hangzhou	26	34	fine
Harbin	12	17	cloudy
Hefei	23	32	overcast
Nanjing	27	33	thunderstorms
Shanghai	27	33	fine
Taipei	26	31	overcast
Wuhan	23	29	cloudy
Hong Kong	27	32	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	15	28	cloudy
Frankfurt	8	17	cloudy
Paris	7	18	cloudy
London	6	17	cloudy
New York	19	27	cloudy

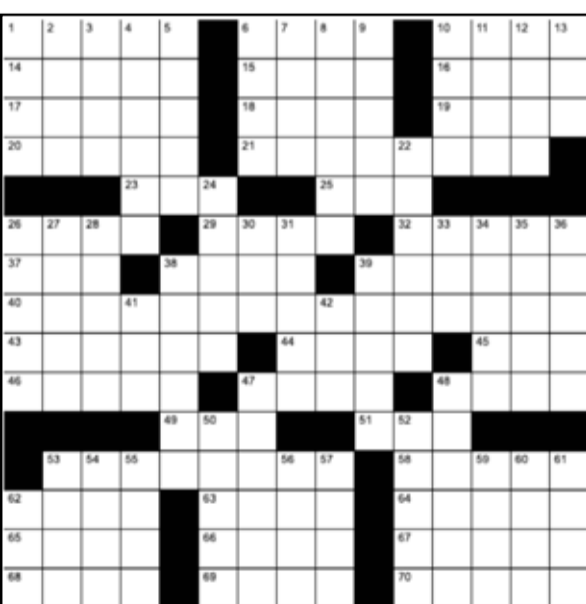
CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Video game pioneer; 6- Greek peak; 10- ___ many words; 14- Bishop's headdress; 15- Mindy of "The Facts of Life"; 16- Drinks (as a cat); 17- Unescorted; 18- Tortoise racer; 19- Foil alternative; 20- Macho types; 21- Performed surgery; 23- Itsy-bitsy; 25- Glob of gum; 26- Part of an eye or camera; 29- Female servant; 32- Leaves out; 37- Earth-friendly prefix; 38- The majority of; 39- Trifles; 40- In spite of; 43- Certifiable; 44- Untidy condition; 45- Compass point opposite WSW; 46- Gallows loop; 47- Warmth; 48- Ice cream brand; 49- ___ v. Wade; 51- May I help you?; 53- Large percussion instrument; 58- Stagnant; 62- Heap; 63- A Chaplin; 64- George of "Just Shoot Me"; 65- Greek love god; 66- Bridle; 67- Weird; 68- Mid-month time; 69- Concordes; 70- Campfire treat;

DOWN 1- Eastern nanny; 2- Scrabble piece; 3- Elemental unit; 4- Continues a subscription; 5- "Goodnight" girl; 6- Cuatro doubled; 7- Work up lather; 8- Astute; 9- The end of ___; 10- Belinda Carlisle's "Should ___ You In?"; 11- Back of the neck; 12- Put the pedal to the metal; 13- Sugar suffix; 22- Decorates; 24- Ham it up; 26- Bolshevik leader; 27- Low-budget prefix; 28- Au contraire!; 30- Volcanic output; 31- "Who's there?" reply; 33- Central; 34- Like some college walls; 35- Metallic-sounding; 36- Wise ones; 38- Pit-workers; 39- Delicious; 41- Used to be; 42- Some like it hot; 47- People of courage; 48- Regard; 50- Smells; 52- Curved letters; 53- Feathered creature; 54- Moisturizer ingredient; 55- Cong. meeting; 56- Condo; 57- ___ best friend; 59- Farming prefix; 60- Den; 61- Waiting for the Robert ___; 62- Architect I.M.;

Yesterday's solution

A	L	A	S		A	C	R	E		U	L	N	A
L	A	T	H		M	E	E	T	S		P	O	O
M	I	N	I		U	R	B	A	N		T	O	T
S	T	O	A		S	E	A		E	M	O	T	S
T	E	E			T	E	E		C	A	A	N	
A	R	G	U	E		G	E	R	E		W	I	R
T	E	R			A	N	E	A	R		S	I	T
T	A	E	L		P	A	N	T		A	L	I	C
A	T	T	E	M	P	T		E	V	I	T	A	
P	A	N	A	M	A		R	E	D		R	I	N
E	D	E	L		R	E	E	V	E		A	L	E
R	I	L			L	I	N	E	S		R	E	A
T	I	T			S	O	R				V	A	R



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

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PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
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DRIVE IN

IN 'THE CRITIC,' IAN MCKELLEN'S THEATER CRITIC TAKES HIS JOB VERY SERIOUSLY

LINDSEY BAHR,
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

THE arts rarely have anything good to say about critics. That they're not generally the hero of many stories is, at the very least, understandable. More often they're portrayed as joyless, cruel and a little pathetic; themselves failed artists who live to take down others, or, worse, sycophants in search of a famous friend.

Without getting into any sort of philosophical, or even factual debate about the nature of the kind of person drawn to criticism (besides perhaps a staunch antipathy to either job security or amassing wealth), it is safe to say that the drama critic of "The Critic" takes all the worst stereotypes to hysterical heights.

Set in the 1930s in London, Ian McKellen is Jimmy Erskine, a veteran theater critic whose reviews can make or break a play or a performer. He has a monastic devotion to telling the truth, as entertainingly as he can, and knows what he must sacrifice to do so.

"The drama critic is feared and



Ian McKellen (left) and Gemma Arterton in a scene from "The Critic" (Greenwich Entertainment)

reviled for the judgement he must bring," McKellen says in an ominous voiceover. "(He) must be cold and perfectly alone."

When one woman dares to chat him up after a play, offering her take on the material and performances, he swiftly tries to have her removed from the restaurant claiming he must be protected from the general public. When an actress, Nina Land (Gemma Arterton), confronts him

about his wildly inconsistent criticisms of her (how can she be both plump and emaciated, she wonders), he refuses to apologize. And he scoffs when the new boss at the newspaper, David Brooke (Mark Strong), implores him to tone it down: "Be kinder," he says. "More beauty, less beast."

But what starts as satire spirals into a wildly messy tragedy with contrivance upon contrivance.

This is a film that could have listened to its anti-hero's advice to the flailing actress: Do less. That someone as great as Lesley Manville, as Nina's mother, gets a mere handful of scenes and is only minimally consequential to it all is telling.

"The Critic," handsomely directed by Anand Tucker ("Hilary and Jackie," "Leap Year") and written by Patrick Marber ("Closer," "No-

tes on a Scandal"), is very loosely based on Anthony Quinn's novel "Curtain Call," itself more a murder mystery than this ever allows itself to be. Instead, the film is about the desperate lengths a man will go to when his job and freedom are threatened.

There are some fun ideas here, and good performances. McKellen is having a wonderful time living inside this charismatic monster who you are with until you're really not. Erskine is also gay; an open secret that becomes a liability with his new boss and the rise of fascist thought around him. But none of it really adds up to anything poignant or enormously entertaining; its darkness is both lopsided and superficial, as most become casualties of Erskine's aims. Theater critic as tyrant is a juicy premise; "The Critic" just can't live up to the promise.

"The Critic," a Greenwich Entertainment release in select theaters Friday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for "some language and sexual content." Running time: 100 minutes. ★★☆☆

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C&C RECEIVED THE 1ST SILVER
"DEIGNAN AWARD"
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IN MACAU (2023)





"My Method Actor" by Nilüfer Yanya (Ninja Tune Records)

tTUNES

Nilüfer returns with the vibrant, spare and breathtaking 'My Method Actor'

THE great news is that Nilüfer Yanya's third album is about to drop. But that means a little homework on your part: Carving out the time to listen. Not just half-listen.

Her 11-track "My Method Actor" is not the kind of music you blast from cars or bars or even put on while cooking. Yanya's brand of spare, jewelbox-like songs demand your attention, each note and instrument used so deliberately.

The London-based singer-songwriter is like no one else out there, offering songs that appear at first like pleasing soft sketches until they reveal their depth and power, like tissue paper made of palladium.

"My Method Actor" sees Yanya reunite with Will Archer, who co-produces and adds lyrics as well as guitar, drums, piano, backing vocals and synthesizer. In the publishing splits, he sometimes earns the majority of the percentage, making this in many ways as much his album as hers.

The standout tracks — "Call It Love," "Made Out of Memory" and "Just a Western" — are just three that show off Yanya's allegorical lyrics on a bed of shifting, bright then shadowy riptides of rhythms and melodies that can include gorgeous smears of pedal steel guitar or cello. Her vision is sharper and even less cluttered than before.

There is always the air of unpredictability, with Yanya whipping out her falsetto or a wall of fuzzy guitars coming from nowhere. On "Mutations," strings briefly pop up and it's as pleasing as a glass of water in the desert.

Her lyrics explore the push-pull of love and sometimes the space between lovers, the pulling away. "Can you tell I'm torn now, baby?/Tell me it's alright/When I'm falling out of view," she sings on "Like I Say (I runaway)." More ominously, on the title track, she reveals coiled emotions: "Spit my teeth out as you're bleeding/I gave you everything you needed."

This is music that is part of the world and yet not of it. So a suggestion: Grab a pair of noise-canceling headphones, hit "play" and really focus on a remarkable collection of songs. **MARK KENNEDY, MDT/AP**



TASTE OF EDESIA

Southeast Asian Delights

IRENE SAM, MDT

LAST week the typhoon did not stop two award-winning chefs, Barry Quek and Jan Ruangnukulkit, coming together for an exclusive four-hands dining experience. Chef Barry, the renowned Head Chef of the Michelin-starred Whey in Hong Kong, is renowned for his masterful fusion of Singaporean flavours with modern European cuisine. Alongside him, Executive Chef Jan's creativity came through in her innovative and delectable

Thai dishes from Saffron, the Michelin Selected Restaurant.

Chef Jan's experience is stellar. Before joining Saffron, she worked in several Michelin-starred restaurants with award-winning international chefs recognized in "The World's 50 Best Restaurants", and learned from famous chefs from all over the world, including Thomas Keller, a three-Michelin-starred chef renowned for his culinary skills and exemplary standards and David Thompson, a maestro of Thai cuisine.

This captivating dinner showcased the chefs' dedication to using premium ingredients from their origins, resulting in a symphony of Southeast Asian flavours that seduced our palate. With a menu featuring a tantalising array of dishes, including appetisers, salad, curry, soup, main course and dessert, each course promised to delight. The night was elevated by an experience with a breathtaking night view, as the dinner was hosted on the 31st floor of Banyan Tree Macau, offering a truly unforgettable ambiance.



OPINION

World Views

Linley Sanders, MDT/AP



YOUNG WOMEN ARE MORE LIBERAL THAN THEY'VE BEEN IN DECADES

Young women are more liberal than they have been in decades, according to a Gallup analysis of more than 20 years of polling data.

Over the past few years, about 4 in 10 young women between the ages of 18 and 29 have described their political views as liberal, compared with two decades ago when about 3 in 10 identified that way.

For many young women, their liberal identity is not just a new label. The share of young women who hold liberal views on the environment, abortion, race relations and gun laws has also jumped by double digits, Gallup found.

Young women "aren't just identifying as liberal because they like the term or they're more comfortable with the term, or someone they respect uses the term," said Lydia Saad, the director of U.S. social research at Gallup. "They have actually become much more liberal in their actual viewpoints."

Becoming a more cohesive political group with distinctly liberal views could turn young women into a potent political force, according to Saad. While it is hard to pinpoint what is making young women more liberal, they now are overwhelmingly aligned on many issues, which could make it easier for campaigns to motivate them.

Young women are already a constituency that has leaned Democratic — AP VoteCast data shows that 65% of female voters under 30 voted for Democrat Joe Biden in 2020 — but they are sometimes less reliable when it comes to turnout.

Young women began to diverge ideologically from other groups, including men between 18 and 29, women over 30 and men over 30, during Democrat Barack Obama's presidency. That trend appears to have accelerated more recently, around the election of Republican Donald Trump, the #MeToo movement and increasingly successful efforts by the anti-abortion movement to erode abortion access. At the same time, more women, mostly Democrats, were elected to Congress, as governor and to state legislatures, giving young women new representation and role models in politics.

The change in young women's political identification is happening across the board, Gallup found, rather than being propelled by a specific subgroup.

Taylor Swift's endorsement Tuesday of Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris, after her debate against Trump, illustrated one of the issues where young women have moved to the left. In Swift's Instagram announcing the endorsement praised Harris and running mate Tim Walz for championing reproductive rights.

The Gallup analysis found that since the Obama era, young women have become nearly 20 percentage points more likely to support broad abortion rights. There was a roughly similar increase in the share of young women who said protection of the environment should be prioritized over economic growth and in the share of young women who say gun laws should be stricter.

Now, Saad said, solid majorities of young women hold liberal views on issues such as abortion, the environment, and gun laws.

Young women are "very unified on these issues ... and not only do they hold these views, but they are dissatisfied with the country in these areas, and they are worried about them," she said. That, she added, could help drive turnout.

"You've got supermajorities of women holding these views," she said, and they are "primed to be activated to vote on these issues."

Thethiwe Mahlangu woke early on a chilly morning and walked through her busy South African township, where minibuses hooted to pick up commuters and smoke from sidewalk breakfast stalls hung in the air.

Her eyes had been troubling her. But instead of going to her nearby health clinic, Mahlangu was headed to the train station for an unusual form of care.

A passenger train known as Phelophepa — or "good, clean, health" in the Sesotho language — had been transformed into a mobile health facility. It circulates throughout South Africa for much of the year, providing

medical attention to the sick, young and old.

For the past 30 years — ever since South Africa's break with the former racist system of apartheid — the train has carried doctors, nurses and optometrists on an annual journey that touches even the most rural villages, delivering primary healthcare to about 375,000 people a year.

The free care it delivers is in contrast to South Africa's overstretched public health care system on which about 84% of people rely.

More on macaudailytimes.com.mo/buzz



Three-month-old Amur tiger cub Amaliya explores her outdoor enclosure for the first time with mother Dari at the Minnesota Zoo

RARE AMUR TIGER CUBS DEBUTING AT MINNESOTA ZOO RAISING HOPES FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES

MARK VANCLEAVE, APPLE VALLEY

A pair of rare Amur tiger cubs are making their public debut at the Minnesota Zoo, raising hopes for preserving an endangered species that's native to far eastern Russia and northern China.

Andrei and Amaliya got to venture outside and feel the grass of their new home under their paws yesterday [Macau time] for the first time since their 12-year-old mother, Dari, gave birth on May 23.

"They've done quite well since then," zoologist Trista Fischer said. "We've monitored them very closely. Dari's been fantastic. She's provided outstanding maternal care. And so today we've reached the point where they're fully vaccinated and they're now about 40 to 45 pounds (18-20 kilograms)."

Scientists estimate the Amur tiger population is just around 400 to 500 in the wild. They were near the brink of extinction in the 1930s and 1940s but have recovered somewhat since then. It's tricky to breed them, and around one in

four Amur cubs don't make it to adulthood, whether it's in the wild or in captivity, she said. Poachers are another major threat.

But the Minnesota Zoo, located in the Minneapolis suburb of Apple Valley, has a long history of conserving tigers. Its Amur tigers have produced 57 cubs, 46 of which survived for at least 30 days. Of those 46, 21 have gone on to produce litters of their own, amounting to another 86 cubs. The births of Andrei and Amaliya raised the zoo's population to seven Amur tigers, including their sire, Luka.

Fischer is the leading coordinator for the Tiger Species Survival Plan, a breeding program in the United States with facilities in other countries that works on a global level to preserve the big cats. The plan manages three groups of tigers: Sumatran, Malayan and Amur.

"This litter is so valuable to the population right now," she explained, saying the genetic diversity of healthy tigers in human care could someday be used to help support populations in the wild.

Zoo spokesperson Zach Nugent said the cubs will remain housed together with their mom for about 18 months, before Andrei, the male, is moved to separate housing, around the same time a male cub in the wild would start venturing out on his own. Amaliya, the female, may spend a little more time with Dari, up to 24 months. Then Fischer will determine whether either cub should be bred, and potentially moved for that to another accredited zoo, which typically happens after the cubs are 2 years old.

"Aww, I love when they get their little Yoda ears," Fischer said referring to the pointy ears of the Star Wars character as she watched Amaliya and Andrei explore the new terrain of their enclosure. She said it was an emotional, exciting and proud moment for her and her team.

"Our work's not over, but all that work so far is really paying off in how well that these cubs are acclimating to a new surrounding, pretty much immediately," she said as the little tigers roamed outside with their mother. MDT/AP



Ukraine U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy pledged nearly \$1.5 billion in aid during their visit to Kyiv. The funds will assist Ukraine's energy grid and humanitarian needs amid Russia's continued aerial assaults. Ukrainian officials renewed calls for long-range missile authorizations from Western allies.



Germany The European Central Bank cut interest rates again yesterday to prop up tepid growth with lower borrowing costs for companies and home buyers. The U.S. Federal Reserve likely won't be far behind in joining the rate-cutting process. The bank's rate-setting council lowered the deposit rate from 3.75% to 3.5%.



United Kingdom Uruguayan midfielder Rodrigo Bentancur has been charged by the English FA for a racially offensive remark made on a television show. The Tottenham player apologized for the joke, which referenced South Koreans, including teammate Son Heung-min. Bentancur has until September 19 to respond to the charge.



Algeria President Abdelmadjid Tebboune and opposition candidates have questioned Algeria's recent election results, citing inconsistencies. With a low turnout and allegations of fraud, the election authority faces criticism. Appeals have been filed, and concerns grow over political legitimacy as Algeria navigates economic challenges and unrest following the 2019 Hirak protests.