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**GAMING INDUSTRY WORKERS ARE ENJOYING STABLE SALARIES, WITH A MEDIAN MONTHLY INCOME OF MOP21,000 REPORTED IN THE THIRD QUARTER**

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**JOURNALIST ASSOCIATION URGES GOV'T TO LIFT REPORTING RESTRICTIONS**

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**BEIJING APPROVES \$840B PLAN TO REFINANCE LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEBT, BOOST SLOWING ECONOMY**

▲ P6



AP PHOTO



**Indonesia** Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki volcano spewed towering columns of hot ash high into the air Saturday, days after a huge eruption killed nine people and injured dozens of others. Activity at the volcano on the remote island of Flores, in East Nusa Tenggara province, has increased since Monday's initial eruption.

AP PHOTO



**South Korea** The military said North Korea disrupted GPS signals from border areas for the second-straight day on Saturday, affecting an unspecified number of flights and vessel operations. Tensions between the rival Koreas have escalated as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un flaunts his advancing nuclear and missile program and engages in electronic and psychological warfare.

AP PHOTO



**Pakistan** A suicide bomber blew himself up at a train station in restive southwestern Pakistan on Saturday, killing at least 26 people, including soldiers and railway staff, and wounding about 62 others, some critically, officials said. The attack happened when nearly 100 passengers were waiting for a train to travel to the garrison city of Rawalpindi from Quetta.

AP PHOTO



**Russia** is open to hearing President-elect Donald Trump's proposals on ending the war, an official said, as a Russian drone killed one person and wounded 13 in the Ukrainian port city of Odesa and the European Union foreign policy chief held talks in Kyiv after the change in U.S. leadership.

# HEALTH HUB 101

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RENATO MARQUES



**AUTOMOBILE SHOW**

**GOOD VISITATION, BUT FEW DEALS INKED** ▲ P4

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### SAR PASSPORT HOLDERS ELIGIBLE FOR VISA-ON-ARRIVAL IN MYANMAR

Myanmar has announced a visa-on-arrival policy for holders of the Macau SAR Passport, allowing them to apply for a Tourist Visa upon arrival at international airports. This visa permits a maximum stay of 30 days and is effective on a trial basis for one year, starting October 21, 2024. Currently, 148 countries and territories offer visa-free access or visa-on-arrival to Macao passport holders. This initiative aims to enhance tourism between Macao and Myanmar.

### UNIVERSITY OF TOURISM PLANS ENROLLMENT EXPANSION

The Macao University of Tourism (UTM) announced plans to expand enrollment and introduce new bachelor's and master's degree programs after 2024. The Jubilee Building at the Taipa campus is set to be completed in the first quarter of next year, transforming into a teaching facility, while the old faculty building will become a teaching hotel. According to university president Fanny Vong, this expansion aims to accommodate the growing demand for culinary courses, featuring a new teaching kitchen to enhance training for local catering talent.

### FASHION POP-UP STORE LAUNCHES AT GALAXY MACAU

The "Macao Fashion Pop-Up Store" opened at Galaxy Macau, featuring 15 local fashion brands. Running from Nov. 9 to 18, the store is located on the Promenade East and welcomes visitors daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. This initiative, organized by the Cultural Affairs Bureau and supported by Galaxy Entertainment Group, aims to promote Macau's original fashion scene by showcasing a variety of clothing and accessories, including handbags and silk scarves. There are plans to expand the event to Shenzhen in December, further enhancing brand visibility and Macau's fashion presence in the Greater Bay Area.

### ISAF LAUNCHES PHARMACY TRAINING COURSE

Macau's Pharmaceutical Administration Bureau (ISAF) launched the "Pharmacy Training Course" from Nov. 8 to 14, aimed at enhancing the local pharmaceutical industry's capabilities. The opening ceremony featured ISAF vice president Ng Kuok Leong, who emphasized the government's commitment to advancing the health sector and improving pharmaceutical management. The course covers essential topics, including Macau's pharmaceutical legislation and Medication Therapy Management (MTM) practices. Over 100 participants, including pharmacists and technical directors, are expected to benefit from this initiative. MTM involves specialized services from pharmacists, including comprehensive drug assessments, pharmacotherapy planning, and monitoring drug efficacy and safety.

# JOURNALIST ASSOCIATION URGES GOV'T TO LIFT REPORTING RESTRICTIONS

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE Macau Journalists Association (AJM) has voiced serious concerns about the escalating restrictions on press freedom in the city, calling on the government to withdraw unnecessary reporting limitations.

This plea comes as the region prepares to celebrate the 25th anniversary of its handover from Portugal to China.

In a statement released last week, the AJM highlighted several recent incidents that illustrate a troubling trend in the erosion of press freedom.

"We are witnessing a systematic preclusion of various media outlets from covering government-hosted events," said the AJM.

"This is achieved through an attendance registration system that effectively screens out journalists and deprives them of their right to report."

The association said this practice contradicts the rights enshrined in Macau's press law, which guarantees journalists' freedom to access information sources.

Events such as the opening ceremony of the Judicial Year 2024/2025 and press conferences by the Executive Council have seen selective media participation, limiting coverage to



only a few pre-approved outlets. "This is not just about access; it's about transparency and fairness in reporting," said the MJA.

The government's justification for these restrictions has been criticized as unconvincing by the AJM.

Officials have cited "limited resources and seats" at events as reasons for excluding certain journalists.

"The Macau Cultural Centre has over 1,000 seats, yet we see only a dozen journalists allowed at briefings," the association noted.

Moreover, the association recalled that there have been reports of local media being pressured to retract articles under political duress.

One case noted by the AJM involved an opinion piece pu-

blished during the recent chief executive election campaign, which was reportedly withdrawn following external pressure.

"This kind of interference is not only unacceptable but also undermines the integrity of journalism in Macau," said the association.

As Macau approaches its 25th anniversary of its handover, the AJM is urging the incoming Chief Executive, Sam Hou Fai, to foster better relations with the press and uphold constitutional freedoms.

"We call on the Chief Executive-elect to engage openly with journalists and respect our legally protected rights," the statement read.

"We believe that this would be an important opportunity

for Macau to prove to the world its success in implementing 'One country, two systems.'"

The AJM's concerns are echoed by international organizations that monitor press freedom.

Reporters Without Borders has previously noted, "The environment for journalists is increasingly hostile."

Considering these developments, the AJM has called for immediate action from the government.

It has demanded clarity on policies about media access and has urged officials to abandon practices that hinder journalistic work.

"Attendance registration should facilitate coverage, not obstruct it."

The association also highlighted a trend where press releases replace traditional press conferences, limiting opportunities for reporters to ask questions directly.

"This shift reduces journalists to mere conduits for government messages rather than active participants in public discourse," remarked the association.

"The time has come for our government to reflect on its relationship with the media," said the AJM. "We urge them to recognize that a free press is essential for a healthy democracy."

# Student photography showcases sustainable development

**T**HE "All for 17, 17 for All 2024 Macau SDGs Photography Exhibition" opened on Saturday, showcasing selected photographs taken by local students. Running until November 17, the exhibition features photographs that highlight Macau's commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Centered on sustain-



able development, the exhibition showcases submissions from full-ti-

me students in Macau, collected from June to October. A professional

panel selected exemplary works for display in various locations, linking the city's history, present, and future to inspire community engagement in sustainability efforts.

The opening ceremony took place at the Cardinal Newman Center of Culture and Performing Arts, allowing attendees to explore Macau's journey toward

sustainability. Award-winning photographs will also be featured on outdoor electronic screens courtesy of Macau Cable TV, as well as inside TurboJet vessels.

Organized by the Macau Institute for Corporate Social Responsibility and sponsored by the Macao Foundation, this collaborative initiative aims to position Macau as a sustainable city and actively involve the public in its development goals. VC

\*Macau Daily Times is a collaborating partner of the event.

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HEALTH

# Gov't opens new health center in Hengqin

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE government's new health center at the Macau New Neighborhood in Hengqin was unveiled Saturday, spanning 1,000 square meters and is staffed by seven medical professionals sourced

from the city's health centers. According to Health Bureau director Alvis Lo, the team includes two doctors, two nurses, two pharmacists, and one nursing assistant. Given the nature of cross-border services, specialized training in mainland medical laws and

emergency first aid will be provided. In its initial phase, the center will follow the operational model of the Macau Health Center, offering adult health care, women's health care, children's health care, and non-appointment outpatient services.

Lo said it is expected to serve between 60 to 70 patients daily. For patients needing specialist follow-up, referrals will be made to Conde S. Januário Hospital or Macau Union Hospital. In emergencies, patients will initially be taken to the First Affiliated Hospital of Guangzhou Medical University Hengqin Hospital. Further treatment can be arranged based on the patient's preferences, including possible transfer back to a hospital in the Macau SAR if feasible. The Guangdong's Food and Drug Administration has appro-

ved over 290 types of Macau SAR medications for use in designated medical institutions within the district. According to Lo, the official inauguration and launch of the health center in Hengqin represents a new practice of the 'One country, two systems' principle in the realm of healthcare, as well as a concrete demonstration of integration within the context of national development. The official emphasized the profound historical significance of this endeavor, as it marks the first time the Macau government has directly operated and managed a mainland medical institution. Meanwhile, on the same day, the Traditional Chinese Medicine Scientific and Industrial Park for Guangdong-Macao Cooperation (GMTCM Park) celebrated the inauguration of the "Hengqin-Macao Traditional Chinese Medicine Themed Cultural Street". The Cultural Street, part of GMTCM Park, spans approximately 94,900 square meters and houses a variety of commercial activities, including high-end medical treatment, recreational care, traditional Chinese medicine brands, retail and catering. Key attractions include the Hengqin Pien Tze Huang Museum, the Beijing Tong Ren Tang Experiment Complex, and the Health-100 Digital and Intelligent TCM Health Management Center. According to a government statement, future plans aim to enhance collaboration in industry, academia, and research, promoting the industrialization and global expansion of traditional Chinese medicine while supporting Macau's economic diversification.

# Aviation exhibition boosts industry and market

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE 13th Macau Business Aviation Exhibition concluded yesterday, offering exchanges within the sector and targeting the high-end business and private aircraft markets. Taking place at the Macau International Airport's apron, the event provides a vital platform for both domestic and international companies to showcase their products and expand their market presence.

The first two days were reserved for industry professionals, featuring a business aviation financial forum and educational



seminars, while the exhibition opened to the public on Saturday. "The exhibition offers a valuable opportunity for

in-depth exchange and collaboration within the business aviation sector," said Pun Wa-kin, president of the Civil Aviation

Authority, as cited in a China Daily report. "As Macau hosts more international events and welcomes more high-pro-

file visitors amid economic recovery, I believe improvements to airport facilities and an increase in flight availability will further propel the growth of our business and private aviation industries." In early October, the Macau International Airport received government approval for a significant reclamation and expansion project, with construction anticipated to begin by year-end. This initiative aims to increase the airport's capacity from 9.6 million to 15 million passengers annually, addressing the rising demand as most pandemic-affected routes have resumed operations.

In the first 10 months of this year, passenger traffic surged to 6.34 million, reflecting a 57% increase compared to last year. Among the exhibition highlights is Air China's domestically produced C919 aircraft, which made its debut at the event. This aircraft represents a significant milestone in China's aviation industry, being the first large passenger jet developed with independent intellectual property rights. Meanwhile, B-919Y is the second C919 delivered to the airline, and made its inaugural flight from Beijing to Macau last week. Following its first commercial flight in May last year, 12 C919 aircraft are currently in commercial operation.



MACAU AUTOMOBILE SHOW

# GOOD VISITATION, BUT FEW DEALS INKED

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HOUGH many potential customers visited the 2024 China (Macau) International Automobile Exposition, very few deals were inked, several exhibitors told the Times.

The Exposition took place at the Cotai Expo at the Venetian Macao over the weekend.

"Many people are coming, seeing the cars, and asking questions. But at the end of the day, they are mostly window shopping," a representative in charge of the local branches of several international car brands told the Times.

"We made almost no sales over the weekend. [...] I believe there is a clear contraction of the market caused by recent government policies."

"It has become much more expensive to own a car in Macau in the past few years, and while the car prices are actually the same or even lower, the expenses of keeping a car, particularly parking, have increased a lot," said an exhibitor.

Another sales representative from a multi-brand concessionaire in Macau humorously commented, "The [coffee shop brand] outside is



making a lot more money than us this weekend, for sure," noting the sector's current poor circumstances.

The highlight of this year's expo continued to be the electric mobi-

lity (EVs) and the mainland manufacturers, with the Chinese brands presenting their latest models and developments in the EV market.

Japanese manufacturers were

also well represented in the exhibition areas.

But unlike the Chinese and some European manufacturers, Japanese brands exhibited hybrid

and extended-range EVs.

Covering 65,000 square meters, the event hosted over 100 automotive brands from 20 countries and regions.

## Tourism accreditation reaches record high in 2024

**T**HE Quality Tourism Services Accreditation Scheme (QTSAS) reached a new milestone this year, with a record-high 390 accredited merchants across the travel agency, catering and retail sectors.

The QTSAS Assessment Committee convened its Annual Meeting last week to review and approve the assessment results.

The number of accredited businesses, at an all-time high, reflects the trade's efforts to advance service quality and promote sustainable tourism development.

The Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has been working to promote and elevate the city's tourism industry since the establishment of the Quality Tourism Services Accreditation Scheme (QTSAS) in



2014.

The MGTO emphasized its goal to encourage and support local businesses in continuously enhancing their service quality through recognition and commendation programs.

This effort aims to enrich Macau's offerings as a world-renowned center of tourism and leisure.

Of the 390 accredited merchants, 312 catering businesses received awards, including "Quality Tourism Services Merchant Award," "Quality Tourism Services Gold

Award," and special theme awards.

In the travel agency sector, 44 businesses were recognized, with one receiving the top "Quality Tourism Services Excellence Award."

The accreditation process involves "Mystery Customer Service Assessment" and "Service Management System Audit" conducted by MGTO and the Consumer Council.

The scheme's objective is to ensure fair assessment and set standards for the tourism industry and consumers. VC



### STATS

## PAY STABILITY FOR GAMING WORKERS AMID EMPLOYMENT SHIFTS

NADIA SHAW

**M**ACAU'S gaming industry workers are enjoying stable salaries, with a median monthly income of MOP21,000 reported in the third quarter

This figure remains unchanged from the previous quarter but marks a 2.43% increase from MOP20,500 a year earlier, according to a recent survey by the Statistics and Census Service.

Gaming workers, who make up 18.9% of the total workforce, have seen their earnings remain robust despite fluctuations in employment numbers.

The gaming sector's workforce grew 1.7% from the previous quarter and 0.7% year-on-year, reflecting a broader recovery in the economy as tourism rebounds post-Covid-19.

As of Sept. 30, the number of unemployed individuals dropped 12.5% to 9,100,

with many former gaming employees seeking new opportunities in the job market.

While median earnings for gaming workers are second only to those in finance—where salaries reached MOP22,000—concerns regarding worker welfare persist.

Lawmakers have called on both the government and casino operators to reinstate pre-pandemic benefits as the industry stabilizes.

The overall employment landscape remains positive, with total employment rising to 379,300.

The unemployment rate for residents stood at 2.3%, unchanged from the previous quarter.

However, fresh graduates entering the labor market face increased competition for jobs, with those seeking their first jobs now comprising 16% of total unemployed individuals.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

## EVENTS

# Over 60 bands perform at hush! Beach Concerts

VICTORIA CHAN

**T**HE “hush! Beach Concerts x Yoga Wellfest 2024,” a two-day music and yoga event, took place this past weekend at Hac Sa Beach.

The event featured over 30 renowned fitness and yoga instructors from Asia and nearly 60 bands, musicians and artists from both local and international scenes.

The event began with the award ceremony for the short video competition “hush! 300 Seconds,” which aimed to showcase the boundless possibilities of music.

The “hush! Beach Concerts” featured three stages - Hot Wave, Music Chill, and hush! Kids! -

where an array of musicians and artists performed, including singer-songwriter 9m88 from Taipei, the Canadian guitar player Jay Leonard J and Macau musician Jun Kung, guitar master Tomo Fujita, the new generation rock band NeonGarden from Chongqing, and the emerging music band Lola Amour from the Philippines.

In addition to the music and yoga events, the festival also featured a hush! Bazaar with over 20 food stalls and local cultural and creative brands, a new physical and mental experience zone, a DJ party with interactive music installations for children, and a hush! Kids! Yoga Playground.

## WEATHER

# SMG mulls issuing typhoon signal as 'Toraji' approaches Macau

**A** new tropical cyclone, named “Toraji,” is currently developing east of Luzon Island.

Forecasts indicate that it will move northwestward across Luzon over the next two days before entering the South China Sea. The cyclone is expected to come within 800 kilometers of Macau from late today into early tomorrow morning.

The Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) said it is closely monitoring the situation and may issue a tropical cyclone signal based on the evolving conditions.

“There are still uncertainties in the track and intensity of “Toraji,”” said the bureau.

Additionally, the combined effects of the northeast monsoon are anticipated to strengthen winds in Macau, with some showers expected to begin midweek.

On Saturday, the Philippine government ordered the evacuation of residents in 2,500 villages as Severe Tropical Storm Toraji approached the northern regions of the country.

This directive follows the devastation caused by three major cyclones that struck the Philippines in less than a month.

Nearly 700,000 individuals are cur-



rently taking shelter in evacuation centers or staying with relatives after their homes were damaged or destroyed by previous storms—Trami, Kong-rey, and Yinxing. These earlier cyclones resulted in 159 fatalities.

With Toraji expected to make landfall in the Philippines today, authorities emphasized the urgency of the evacuation order for communities in the northern regions, including Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, and Cordillera. LV

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## MICSRGC 澳門企業社會責任大中華學會

# “ All for 17, 17 for All ” 捕捉SDGs在澳門的精彩瞬間

## 2024 Macau SDGs Photography Exhibition

## 2024 澳門可持續發展目標攝影展

09-17 November, 2024  
2024年11月09-17日

Event details: 活動詳情:



# Beijing approves \$840b plan to refinance local government debt, boost slowing economy

KEN MORITSUGU & ZEN SOO

**C**HINA on Friday approved a 6 trillion yuan (\$839 billion) plan to help local governments refinance their mountains of debt, in the latest push to rev up growth in the world's second largest economy.

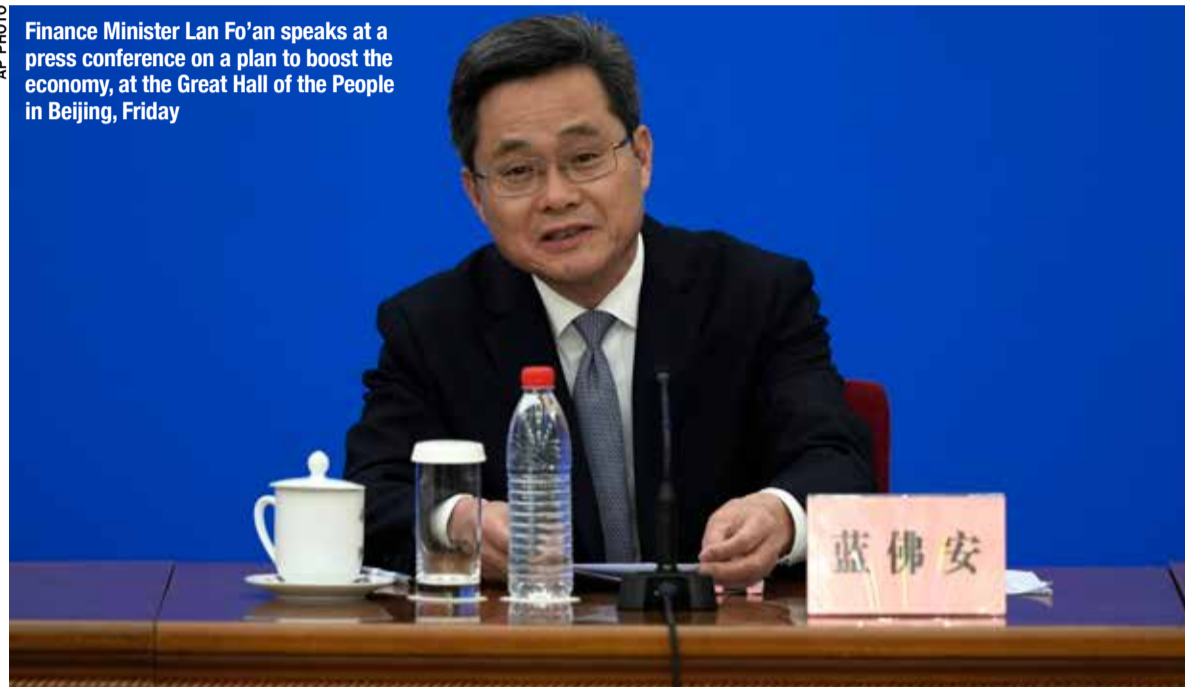
The plan will be implemented over the next three years, Xu Hongcai, vice-chairman of the National People's Congress's financial and economic committee, said at a news conference Friday.

Finance minister Lan Fo'an estimated that the hidden debt of local governments was 14.3 trillion yuan (\$2 trillion) at the end of 2023. Hidden debt refers to debt that has not been disclosed publicly.

Lan said 2 trillion yuan would be allocated each year from 2024 to 2026 to help local governments resolve their debts. He estimated that the amount of hidden debt will drop to 2.3 trillion yuan (\$320.9 billion) by the end of 2028.

Officials also said Friday that the ceiling to issue special bonds

AP PHOTO  
Finance Minister Lan Fo'an speaks at a press conference on a plan to boost the economy, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Friday



will be raised to 35.52 trillion yuan (\$4.96 billion) from 29.52 trillion yuan (\$4.12 billion) for local governments.

Lan said that the implementation of such a large-scale replacement measure indicates a "fundamental shift" in China's approach to debt restructuring and said that China's government debt risk was "controllable."

Analysts have called for bold,

multi-trillion-yuan measures to reinvigorate the world's second largest economy, which has yet to bounce back fully from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Local government debts have ballooned partly due to high spending and low tax revenues during the pandemic, but also due to a downturn in the property industry, since sales of land use rights, a key source of

local government revenue, have sagged.

The central bank loosened restrictions on borrowing in late September, sparking a stock market rally, but economists say the government needs to do more to ignite a sustained recovery. Government officials have indicated that could come at the meeting of the Standing Committee of the National People's

Congress, which must give official approval to any new spending.

The economy has shown signs of life in the past two months. Purchase subsidies offered to people who trade in old cars or appliances for new ones helped auto sales rebound in September. A survey of manufacturers turned positive in October after five straight months of decline, and exports surged 12.7% last month, the largest increase in more than two years.

For most of the year, the ruling Communist Party appeared more focused on addressing long-term structural issues with the economy rather than short-term ones. Previous steps to boost the economy were piecemeal, seemingly aimed at keeping the economy afloat rather than sparking a robust recovery.

In recent weeks, the party has signaled a growing concern about the economy's sluggishness as it tries to meet its goal of achieving growth of around 5% this year. The central bank's monetary easing was followed by government pronouncements that it still has ample funds to pump into the economy.

Still, the longer-term goals of transforming China into a high-tech and green energy economy seem likely to remain the chief aims of the Communist Party, which doesn't face election pressures like the ones that toppled the Democrats and swept Donald Trump's Republicans to power in America this week. **MDT/AP**

## DIPLOMACY

# Newly inaugurated Indonesian President Subianto visits China in first overseas trip

DAKE KANG, BEIJING

**I**NDONESIAN President Prabowo Subianto pledged to maintain close ties with China during a meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Beijing on Saturday, his first overseas stop since he took office three weeks ago.

Subianto is seeking to strengthen relations with China, Indonesia's largest trading partner and one of its most important foreign investors. This is his second visit to Beijing this year, following a visit in April as president-elect, the first overseas trip he made after winning the Indonesian presidential election in February.

"Indonesia considers China not only as a great

power but as a great civilization," Subianto said at the meeting, adding that the two countries had had close relations for centuries. "Therefore, I think it is only natural that now in the present situation, geopolitical and geo-economic, that Indonesia and China have become very close partners and in many, many fields."

Xi vowed support for Subianto's administration, thanking him for choosing to visit China first and saying he believed "Indonesia will adhere to an independent development path, continue to make new achievements in the journey of achieving national prosperity and national rejuvenation, and play an important role on



AP PHOTO  
Chinese President Xi Jinping, centre, and Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto attend a welcome ceremony during a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China, Friday

the international and regional stage."

Earlier on Saturday, Subianto met with other top Chinese leaders, including Premier Li Qiang and Zhao Leji, who is chairman of the National

People's Congress and considered the No. 3 official in the ruling Communist Party.

Subianto is on the first stop on a multi-country tour. He is scheduled to visit four other nations,

including the U.S. and the U.K., suggesting that Indonesia will continue its longstanding stance of neutrality between Beijing and Washington. He is scheduled to meet U.S. President Joe Biden and expected also to meet president-elect Donald Trump early next week.

Subianto, 73, is a wealthy ex-general with ties to both Indonesia's popular outgoing president and the country's dictatorial past. He presented himself as heir to the immensely popular President Joko Widodo, the first Indonesian president to emerge from outside the political and military elite. Subianto vowed to continue the modernization agenda that has

brought rapid growth and vaulted Indonesia into the ranks of middle-income countries.

Indonesia's economic ties with China flourished during Widodo's decade in office. China became Indonesia's largest trading partner and plowed billions into major infrastructure projects such as the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway, which opened last October, and Cirata, Southeast Asia's largest floating solar power project, on a reservoir in West Java, 130 kilometers (80 miles) from the capital, Jakarta.

The two leaders presided over the signing of various agreements on fishing, mining, housing and import and exports. Subianto said during the meeting with Xi that he will later preside over the signing of over \$10 billion worth of deals during a meeting between Chinese companies and the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. **MDT/AP**



PHILIPPINES

# President angers China with new laws to demarcate South China Sea territories

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

**P**HILIPPINE President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. signed two laws on Friday reaffirming the extent of his country's maritime territories and right to resources, including in the South China Sea, angering China, which claims the hotly disputed waterway almost in its entirety.

China's foreign ministry said it summoned the Philippines ambassador to China to lodge a "stern protest." The ministry condemned the move as an attempt to "solidify the illegal ruling of the South China Sea arbitration case through domestic legislation."

Confrontations between Chinese and Philippine coast guard and naval forces in the disputed sea passage have spiked alarmingly since last year. That has sparked fears that the United States — Manila's longtime treaty ally — may get drawn in a major conflict.

The laws, called the Philippine Maritime Zones act and the Philippine Archipelagic Sea Lanes act, were signed by Marcos in a nationally televised ceremony attended by top military and national security officials. They further cement Manila's rejection of China's claims to virtually the entire sea passage, and stipulate jail terms and stiff fines for violators.

"These signal our resolve to protect our maritime resources, preserve our rich biodiversity and ensure



Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., center, holds a document during the ceremonial signing of the Philippine Maritime Zones and Philippine Archipelagic Sea Lanes Act, at the Malacanang presidential palace, in Manila, Philippines, last week

that our waters remain a source of life and livelihood for all Filipinos," Marcos said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said the move "seriously infringes on China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea."

"China strongly condemns and firmly opposes it," she said.

In a new national map it released last year the Chinese government demarcated its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea with vague dash lines that drew protests and rejections from rival coastal states and government, including Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan, Indonesia and the Philippines.

The maritime zones act demarcates key parts of the Philippine archipelago's territory and outlying waters where it has full sovereignty and sovereign rights under international law and the 1982 U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, Philippine officials said.

Those zones include the country's Exclusive Economic Zone, a 200-nautical-mile stretch of water, where a coastal state like the Philippines has exclusive rights to tap energy and other resources. Foreign ships and aircraft have an internationally recognized right known as "innocent passage" to pass through such a zone, as long as the coastal state's security would not come under threat.

The archipelagic sea lanes act allows the Philippines to designate sea lanes and air routes in the archipelago where foreign ships and aircraft could transit under its regulation and in compliance with international law.

"These legal instruments solidify our territory and enhances our ability to protect our country against any infringement," National Security Adviser Eduardo Ano said.

Marcos said the laws comply with international law and the UNCLOS, but many of their provisions stand in stark contrast to Beijing's claims in the South China Sea and would likely be rejected and defied by China.

It's unclear how the Philippines

could enforce the laws, which take effect 15 days after their publication in the government's official gazette or in a newspaper, given China's increasingly aggressive actions to push its claims.

Copies of the laws signed by Marcos were not immediately available but a final version of the maritime zones bill stated that "all artificial islands constructed within the Philippine EEZ belong to the Philippine government."

China has transformed seven disputed reefs into what are now missile-protected island bases, including the Mischief Reef, which lies within the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone.

The law based the Philippines' maritime rights on UNCLOS, Philippine laws and a 2016 international arbitration ruling that invalidated China's extensive territorial claims based on historical grounds.

China refused to participate in that arbitration, rejected the ruling and continues to defy it. Its massive coast guard, navy, air force and suspected militia fleets have used water cannons, military grade lasers and dangerous sea and air maneuvers to intimidate rival forces it accuses of straying into what Beijing calls its territory.

Washington has repeatedly warned that it's obligated to defend the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia, if Filipino forces, aircraft or ships come under an armed attack in the disputed waters. MDT/AP

AUSTRALIA

# States back national plan to ban children younger than 16 from social media

ROD MCGUIRK,  
MELBOURNE

**A**USTRALIA'S states and territories on Friday unanimously backed a national plan to require most forms of social media to bar children younger than 16.

Leaders of the eight provinces held a virtual meeting with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to discuss what he calls a world-first national approach that would make platforms including X, TikTok, Instagram and Facebook responsible for enforcing the age limit.



"Social media is doing social harm to our young Australians," Albanese told reporters. "The safety and

mental health of our young people has to be a priority."

The government leaders had been discussing for

months setting a limit, considering options from 14 to 16 years of age.

While Tasmania would

have preferred 14, the state was prepared to support 16 in the interests of achieving national uniformity, Albanese said.

The legislation will be introduced into Parliament within two weeks, and the age ban would take effect a year after it passes into law, giving platforms time to work out how to exclude children. The government has yet to offer a technical solution.

The delay is also intended to allow time to address privacy concerns around age verification.

The main opposition party has given in-principle

support to the 16-year age limit since it was announced on Thursday, suggesting the legislation will pass the Senate.

The minor Greens party was critical, saying the ban would prevent the emergence in Australia of future child environmental activists like Sweden's Greta Thunberg.

More than 140 academics with expertise in fields related to technology and child welfare signed an open letter to Albanese last month opposing a social media age limit as "too blunt an instrument to address risks effectively."

Critics say most teenagers are tech savvy enough to get around such laws. Some fear the ban will create conflicts within families and drive social media problems underground. MDT/AP



SPAIN

# Spaniards demand the resignation of Valencia leader for bungling flood response

PAOLO SANTALUCIA & JOSEPH WILSON, VALENCIA

**T**ENS of thousands of Spaniards marched in the eastern city of Valencia on Saturday to demand the resignation of the regional president in charge of the emergency response to last week's catastrophic floods that left more than 200 dead and others missing.

A group of protestors clashed with riot police in front of Valencia's city hall, where the protestors started their march to the seat of the regional government. Police used batons to beat them back.

Regional leader Carlos Mazón is under immense pressure after his administration failed to issue flood alerts to citizens' cellphones until hours after the flooding started on the night of Oct. 29.

Many marchers held up homemade signs or chanted "Mazón Resign!" Others carried signs with messages like "You Killed Us!" Upon arrival at the regional government seat, some protesters slung mud on the building and left handprints of the muck on its facade.

Earlier on Saturday, Mazón told regional broadcaster À Punt



Thousands of demonstrators gather in front of the city council for a protest in Valencia, Spain, Saturday

that "there will be time to hold officials accountable," but that now "is time to keep cleaning our streets, helping people and rebuilding."

He said that he "respected" the march.

Mazón, of the conservative Popular Party, is also being criticized for what people perceive as the slow and chaotic response to the natural disaster. Thousands of volunteers were the first boots on the ground in many of the hardest hit areas on Valencia's southern outskirts. It took days for officials to mobilize the thousands of police reinforcements and soldiers that the regional government asked central authorities to send in.

In Spain, regional governments are charged with handling civil protection and can ask the national government in

Madrid, led by the Socialists, for extra resources.

Mazón has defended his handling of the crisis saying that its magnitude was unforeseeable and that his administration didn't receive sufficient warnings from central authorities.

But Spain's weather agency issued a red alert, the highest level of warning, for bad weather as early as 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday morning as the disaster loomed. Some communities were flooded by 6 p.m. It took until after 8 p.m. for Mazón's administration to send out alerts to people's cellphones.

Mazón was with Spain's royals and Socialist prime minister when they were pelted with mud by enraged residents during their first visit to a devastated area last weekend.

Sara Sánchez Gurillo atten-

ded the protest because she had lost her brother-in-law, 62-year-old Candido Molina Pulgarín. She said his body was found in a field of orange trees after he was trapped by the water in his home in the town of Cheste, west of Valencia.

She wanted Mazón to go, but also had harsh words for the country's leaders.

"It's shameful what has happened," Sánchez said. "They knew that the sky was going to fall and yet they didn't warn anyone. They didn't evacuate the people. We want them to resign!"

"The central government should have taken charge. They should have sent in the army earlier. The king should have made them send it in. Why do we want him as a symbolic figure? He is worthless. The people are alone. They have abandoned us."

The death toll stood at 220 victims on Saturday, with 212 coming in the eastern Valencia region, as the search for bodies goes on.

Thousands more lost their homes and streets are still covered in mud and debris 11 days since the arrival of a tsunami-like wave following a record deluge. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1987 VAN GOGH FETCHES RECORD PRICE



A painting by Vincent Van Gogh has been sold for \$49m (£27m) - a world record for a work of art.

The final price was more than twice what the painting, called Irises, had been expected to reach.

The anonymous purchaser must also pay a 10% commission fee to the auction house, Sotheby's, bringing the total to \$53.9m (£29.5m).

The sale was also accomplished in what may have been a record time given the figures involved - the bidding rose from the starting point of \$15m (£8.5m) to reach the final sale price in less than two minutes.

Irises depicts the garden of the Saint-Remy mental asylum in France where Van Gogh was a patient.

It was painted in 1889, a few months before the artist committed suicide aged 37.

The previous record for a painting was set in March by another Van Gogh masterpiece, Sunflowers.

It was bought in London for just under \$40m by a Japanese insurance company.

Traditionally art prices have reflected the state of the economy so in the wake of a stock market crash Irises had not been expected to fetch such a huge sum.

Sotheby's North America chairman John Marion said the sale proved the art world was "alive and well".

"This painting was beyond the stock market. It transcended the stock market. There just is no other opportunity to buy a painting like this," Mr Marion said.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The anonymous purchaser turned out to be Australian entrepreneur Alan Bond. Controversially, it emerged Sotheby's had lent him half the money to purchase Irises. Critics said such practices artificially inflated the value of artworks. After buying Irises, Mr Bond ran into difficulties repaying the loan. In spite of many offers for Irises, it was three years before he agreed to sell it to the Getty Museum in California for a sum rumoured to be between \$55m and \$60m.

US

# Judge cancels court deadlines in Trump's 2020 election case after his presidential win

ALANNA DURKIN RICHER, WASHINGTON

**T**HE judge overseeing Donald Trump's 2020 election interference case canceled any remaining court deadlines Friday while prosecutors assess the "the appropriate course going forward" in light of the Republican's presidential victory.

Special Counsel Jack Smith charged Trump last year with plotting to overturn the results



of the 2020 presidential election and illegally hoarding classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate. But Smith's team has been evaluating how to wind down

the two federal cases before the president-elect takes office because of longstanding Justice Department policy that says sitting presidents cannot be prosecuted,

a person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press.

Trump's victory over Vice President Kamala Harris means that the Justice Department believes he can no longer face prosecution in accordance with department legal opinions meant to shield presidents from criminal charges while in office.

Trump has criticized both cases as politically motivated, and has said he would fire Smith "within two seconds" of taking office.

In a court filing Friday in the 2020 election case, Smith's team asked to cancel any upcoming court deadlines, saying it needs "time to assess this unprecedented circumstance and determine the appropriate course going forward consistent with Department of Justice policy."

U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan quickly granted the request, and ordered prosecutors to file court papers with their "proposed course for this case" by Dec. 2. **MDT/AP**



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
 The action is behind the scenes. Don't react impulsively. Consider consequences. Follow through on details. Use what you've kept hidden. Tie up loose ends.

**TAURUS**  
 Apr. 20-May. 20  
 Share advice. Communications can get tangled. Group input helps. Consider another's perspective. Find solutions to adapt around a challenge. Share resources and tricks.

**GEMINI**  
 May. 21-Jun. 21  
 Professional misunderstandings could get expensive. Listen carefully. Follow through on what you said and by when. Adapt around unforeseen obstacles. Rely on teamwork.

**CANCER**  
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
 Keep your objectives in mind. Communications could seem distorted or muddy. Beware of scammers. Compile and clarify your research. Prepare to present your theory.

**LEO**  
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
 Misunderstandings spark easily. Clarify ideas before presenting. Postpone a financial discussion. Share support with your partner around unforeseen events. Stand for each other.

**VIRGO**  
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
 Slow to avoid stepping on someone. Coordinate carefully. Communication kinks disrupt. Keep your promises despite a challenge. Let your partner do the talking.

**LIBRA**  
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
 Maintain healthy routines. Miscommunications, traffic and delays could be frustrating. Physical action gets results. Exercise, good food and rest provide peaceful stress relief.

**SCORPIO**  
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
 Listen to your heart. Ignore gossip, chaos and distractions. Practice your favorite arts, passions and diversions. Share extra patience. Prioritize fun and laughter.

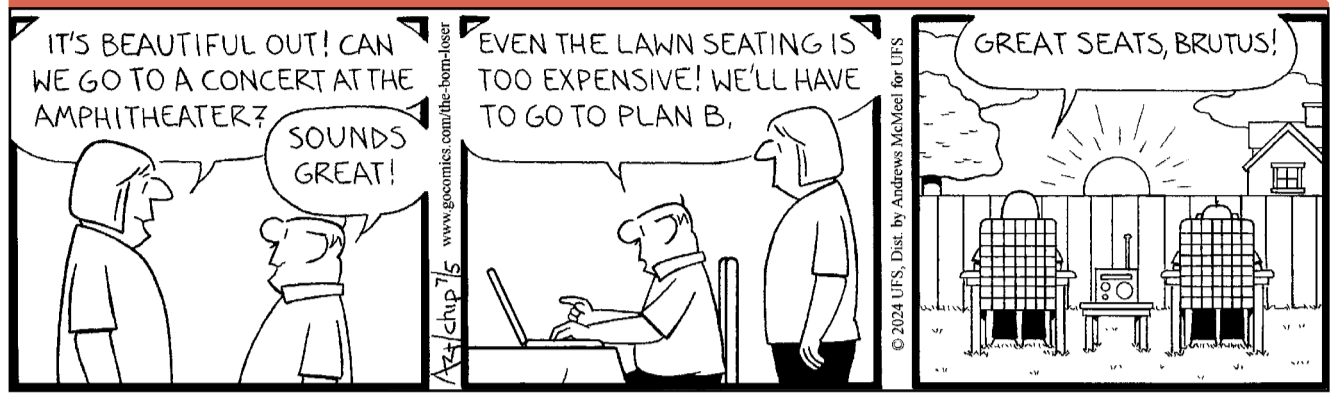
**SAGITTARIUS**  
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
 Home and family take priority. Clean messes and declutter spaces for more breathing room. Patiently untangle domestic misunderstandings. Love is the best medicine.

**CAPRICORN**  
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
 Consider an upcoming decision. List the pros and cons. Don't blurt out half-baked ideas. Make your determinations. Edit, clarify and polish your message.

**AQUARIUS**  
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
 Mistakes could get expensive. Prioritize practical actions. Communication breakdowns could cause delays. Work out backup plans. Simplify for ease and clarity. Maintain momentum.

**PISCES**  
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
 Regardless of what happens, you can determine your story about it. Tell yourself an empowering story, despite circumstances. Practice compassion. Feed your heart.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

**WEATHER**

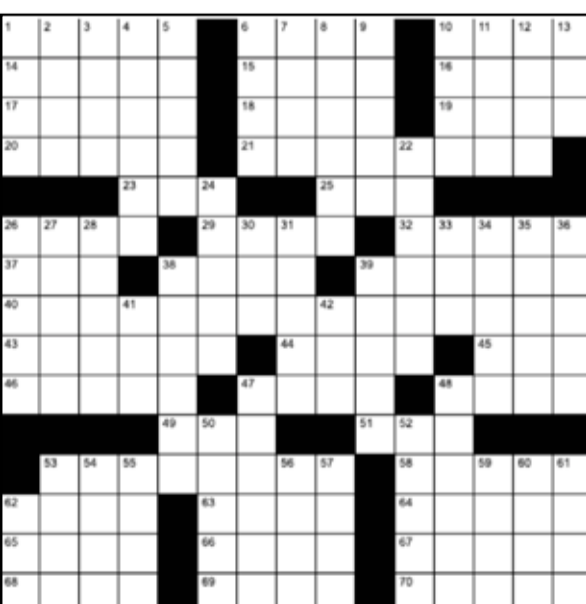
	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	7	15	cloudy
Changchun	-3	9	cloudy
Chengdu	15	17	rain
Chongqing	15	21	overcast
Fuzhou	20	26	cloudy
Guangzhou	21	28	cloudy
Guiyang	11	22	fine
Haikou	24	26	rain
Hangzhou	13	21	cloudy
Harbin	-7	4	rain
Hefei	10	22	fine
Nanjing	11	21	fine
Shanghai	14	21	overcast
Taipei	22	23	rain
Wuhan	12	24	fine
Hong Kong	23	26	cloudy
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-2	1	cloudy
Frankfurt	6	8	rain
Paris	8	13	cloudy
London	6	12	sunny
New York	11	21	cloudy

**CROSSWORDS**

**ACROSS** 1- Flat circular plates; 6- \_\_\_ mater; 10- Carson's successor; 14- Island greeting; 15- Departs; 16- Raw materials; 17- Cooperative race; 18- Envelope abbr.; 19- Foundation; 20- Perfect places; 21- Most precipitous; 23- Peace officer; 25- Nocturnal bird; 26- Ask for divine guidance; 29- Den; 32- Ablaze; 37- Small batteries; 38- Cap'n's underling; 39- Set in layers; 40- In spite of; 43- Coercion; 44- Bridge position; 45- Canonized mlle.; 46- As \_\_\_ resort; 47- Kitchen addition; 48- Cries of discovery; 49- Future flounder; 51- Carnival site; 53- The day following today; 58- Chalice; 62- Dorothy's dog; 63- West Wing worker; 64- Chopin piece; 65- Como \_\_\_ uted?; 66- Summer shirts; 67- Captures; 68- Org.; 69- Prefix for while; 70- Donkeys;

**DOWN** 1- Challenge; 2- \_\_\_ Three Lives; 3- Boot bottom; 4- Risky; 5- Authority; 6- Turkish titles; 7- Mississippi senator Trent; 8- Shooting star; 9- Good \_\_\_; 10- Ear part; 11- Historical periods; 12- Treehouse used by birds; 13- Sugar suffix; 22- Lament; 24- Schemes; 26- White-and-black bearlike mammal; 27- Fauvist painter Dufy; 28- Latin stars; 30- Shade of blond; 31- Map within a map; 33- With "up," exasperated; 34- Notre Dame's Fighting \_\_\_; 35- \_\_\_-car; 36- Peripheries; 38- European-style restaurant; 39- Stun gun; 41- Basketball Hall of Famer Unseld; 42- Tit for \_\_\_; 47- More spine-tingling; 48- Main arteries; 50- Make a speech; 52- \_\_\_ Kick Out of You; 53- Fling; 54- Ed and Mel of baseball; 55- Grumble; 56- Lofty poems; 57- Sunset direction; 59- Diving birds; 60- \_\_\_ fixe (obsession); 61- Discounted; 62- Leaves in a bag;

**Friday's solution**



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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**Tou Un (Taipa)**  
 HKD 2,750,000 1 bed 1 bath

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

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Cabana Verde (Taipa Village)  
Studio & 1 bath  
41.80 m<sup>2</sup> / 450 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD2,800,000



VA FAT (Taipa Village)  
2 bed 1 bath  
77.10 m<sup>2</sup> / 830 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD3,980,000



Nam Long (Taipa Village)  
2 bed 1 bath  
59.92 m<sup>2</sup> / 645 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD3,650,000



Jade Garden (Taipa)  
4 bed 3 bath  
379.04 m<sup>2</sup> / 4,080 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD 11,880,000



Ocean Garden Cattleya Court (Taipa)  
2 bed 2 bath  
73.95 m<sup>2</sup> / 796 ft<sup>2</sup> | HKD6,980,000

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TENNIS

# Coco Gauff wins WTA Finals for the first time by rallying to beat Zheng Qinwen

**C**OCO Gauff won the WTA Finals for the first time by rallying to beat Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (2) in the final on Saturday.

The 20-year-old American came from 2-0 and 5-3 down in the final set and was two points from defeat at one stage.

Yet she took the set to a tie-breaker and won the first six points. Zheng threatened a comeback but Gauff took the victory off her third match point with a forehand winner as she came into the net.

She is the first American to win the Finals since Serena Williams in 2014, and received \$4.8 million in prize money. She also is the youngest player to win it since Maria Sharapova in 2004, the year Gauff was born.

Gauff beat the world's top two players — Aryna Sabalenka and Iga Swiatek — on her run to the final at the season-ending event in Riyadh.

She felt vindicated after that



Coco Gauff of the U.S. holds her trophy after winning against China's Qinwen Zheng in their women's singles final match of the WTA finals at the King Saud University Indoor Arena, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Saturday

the first time at the Australian Open and delivered China's first Olympic tennis singles gold medal.

"The match today, it's just a couple of important points," Zheng said. "The match was very close."

Gauff edged the three-hour final which included 26 break points. Gauff also won their only previous meeting, in the Rome quarterfinals on clay in May.

Gauff beat Sabalenka at age 19 in last year's U.S. Open final to win her only major in singles to date. She teamed with Katerina Siniakova to win the French Open doubles this year.

In the WTA doubles final, Gabriela Dabrowski of Canada and Erin Routliffe of New Zealand beat Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic and Taylor Townsend of the United States 7-5, 6-3. They are the first players from Canada and New Zealand to win the doubles title. **MDT/AP**

and appeared to take a swipe at observers who wrote her off.

"I just love to say I'm right. Specifically today, I got comments about how I was going to

lose badly, so I was just like, 'OK, we'll see,'" Gauff explained. "It's honestly just liking the idea of just proving people wrong and, and letting your racket do the

talking. And so, yeah, I use it as motivation."

Zheng was looking to complete a season in which she reached a grand slam final for

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**Urology** : Dr. Lo Kwong Yin Richard, Dr. Zhao Yun Qiao

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**Obstetrics & Gynaecology** : Dr. Fong Kuan lo

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**Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine** : Dr. Lam Kun Kuan

**ENT** : Dr. Cheng Zheng Ang

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**OPINION**

**Business Views**

Shuli Ren, Bloomberg



**CHINA'S LUCKIN SHOWS STARBUCKS HOW TO SELL COFFEE**

**Barbarians** are coming to the gate. Just as Starbucks Corp.'s new Chief Executive Officer Brian Niccol begins to revamp the ailing coffee chain, its Chinese nemesis plans to offer low-priced drinks in the US as early as next year.

This will be an amazing homecoming of sorts for Luckin Coffee Inc., which raised \$645 million in a public listing in New York in 2019. In 2020, the company admitted to fabricating 2.2 billion yuan (\$307 million) in sales, got delisted from Nasdaq, and agreed to pay \$180 million in fines to the Securities and Exchange Commission. Four years on, Luckin is roaring back. It has emerged as China's biggest coffee chain, overtaking Starbucks in sales and number of stores.

Meanwhile, at Starbucks, revenue plunged for the third consecutive quarter, with same-store sales down 10% in the US. A push to launch more products and offer promotions have failed to bring more customers into its stores, the company said.

One major issue is its clumsy mobile app, which in recent quarters accounted for more than one-third of transactions. Wait time has lengthened, so has customer dissatisfaction.

Customization, a feature that Starbucks pioneered, became supercharged with the app.

By comparison, Luckin doesn't have a problem with digital ordering. The company, founded in 2017, is tech-savvy and manages its entire operation digitally. In fact, orders can only be made via its app. As a result, stores don't have the two lines seen at Starbucks — one for in-person and the other for mobile orders — which can be confusing for infrequent visitors.

Granted, variety is Starbucks's way to lure young people. The endless concoctions one can do to a Frappuccino and cold, sugary refreshers, which teenagers love, accounted for 35% of beverages sold, more than the contribution from traditional iced espresso or cold brews.

Luckin goes about attracting the fickle, social media-obsessed youth a bit differently. Rather than offering an extended menu, the company periodically introduces new, limited-time items, to test demand and keep its pipeline simple. This summer, it took advantage of the milk-tea craze among young Chinese, selling more than 44 millions cups of a jasmine tea drink in the first month.

For now, Niccol is shaking up the menu to reduce customer wait time and make life easier for overworked baristas. He is dropping much-hyped olive oil-infused coffee and bringing back the condiments bar so fussy patrons can add sugar and cream to their own liking. He also wants to make the cafes "inviting places to linger," and move away from the "transactional" nature of mobile-app ordering. But wait time aside, Starbucks also has the issue of value-for-money. In the US, the average order costs 51% more than pre-pandemic, outpacing the 34% growth in personal disposable income, according to JPMorgan Chase & Co. At Luckin, a basic latte costs just about \$2.

To be sure, the verdict is still out on whether Luckin can make inroads in the US. Americans might be hesitant to download an app created by a Chinese company, fearing data privacy issues. Indeed, Luckin will first target cities with large numbers of Chinese students and tourists, who probably already have the app installed on their smartphones.

Nonetheless, it has a shot. Ultimately, the battle between Starbucks and Luckin is over what consumers see in these drinks: Is coffee an expression of individualism or a habit? For many, it's the latter. [Abridged]

Courtesy Bloomberg/Shuli Ren

**TOURISTS IN ROME NOW HAVE A WALKWAY TO VISIT THE TREVI FOUNTAIN BUT CAN'T TOSS COINS**

THE BUZZ

Tourists in Rome won't be allowed to toss coins over their shoulders into the Trevi Fountain, following tradition, though an elevated walkway now gives limited access to the monument during maintenance work.

Rome Mayor Roberto Gualtieri inaugurated the steel walkway on Saturday, saying it will provide tourists with a close-up view of the fountain and calling it a "unique experience" that won't be ruined by overcrowding.

The walkway over the fountain's basin will be able to accommodate about 130 people at a time.

But tourists won't be allowed to toss coins from there, as the fountain is currently drained, and could face a 50-euro fine if they do, the mayor warned.

City lore has it that tossing a coin into the Baroque fountain will ensure a return trip to Rome.

Gualtieri said a small pool has been set up next to the walkway to collect the coins, which are donated to the Caritas charity to fund meals for people in need.

The walkway will remain until the end of the maintenance work, which is expected to finish by year's end.



2025 GRAMMY

**BEYONCÉ LEADS THE NOMS, BECOMING THE MOST NOMINATED ARTIST IN THE SHOW'S HISTORY**

MARIA SHERMAN, NEW YORK

**WELCOME** to Beyoncé country. When it comes to the 2025 Grammy Award nominations, "Cowboy Carter" rules the nation. She leads the nods with 11, bringing her career total to 99 nominations. That makes her the most nominated artist in Grammy history.

"Cowboy Carter" is up for album and country album of the year, and "Texas Hold 'Em" is nominated for record, song and country song of the year. She also received nominations in a wide swath of genres, including pop, country, Americana and melodic rap performance categories.

This is her first time receiving nominations in the country and Americana categories. Previously, she and her husband Jay-Z were tied for most career nominations, at 88.

If Beyoncé wins the album of the year, she'll become the first Black woman to do so in the 21st century. Lauryn Hill last won in 1999 for "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill," joining Natalie Cole and Whitney Houston as the only Black women to

take home the Grammys' top prize.

Post Malone also received his first ever nominations in the country categories this year, having released his debut country album "F-1 Trillion" in August. That one is up for country album and "I Had Some Help," his collaboration with Morgan Wallen, is nominated for country song and country duo/group performance. They are Wallen's first ever Grammy nominations.

Malone is just behind Beyoncé, with seven nominations, tied with Billie Eilish, Kendrick Lamar and Charli XCX, who earned her first nominations as a solo artist.

Lamar's ubiquitous diss track released during his feud with Drake, "Not Like Us," is nominated for record and song of the year, rap song, music video as well as best rap performance. He has two simultaneous entries in the latter category, a career first: Future & Metro Boomin featuring Lamar, "Like That" is up for best rap performance and best rap song.

This is his third time receiving two simultaneous nominations for

best rap song.

Taylor Swift and first-time nominees Sabrina Carpenter and Chappell Roan boast of six nominations each.

Last year, women artists dominated the major categories. This year, that continues somewhat, but the main trend seems to be a variance of genre. In the album of the year category, alongside "Cowboy Carter" is André 3000's new age, alt-jazz "New Blue Sun" and multi-instrumentalist Jacob Collier's "Djesse Vol. 4." Rising pop stars Carpenter and Roan round it out, with "Short n' Sweet" and "The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess" respectively, as well as Swift's "The Tortured Poets Department," Eilish's "Hit Me Hard and Soft," and Charli XCX's rave-ready "BRAT."

Eilish is the only artist to have her first three albums become nominated for album of the year.

Last year, Swift won album of the year for "Midnights," breaking the record for most wins in the category with four. This year, she becomes the first ever woman to seven career nominations in the category. MDT/AP



**US** Southern California firefighters gained ground Saturday on a wildfire that has ravaged more than 100 structures as gusty winds subsided with favorable weather conditions expected through the weekend. Evacuation orders were downgraded to warnings for residents in several areas of Ventura County.



**Lithuania** European nations should not repeat the mistake of creating a barrier between them and President-elect Donald Trump, Lithuania's defense minister said Saturday. Laurynas Kasčiūnas (pictured) outlined areas where Europe and the new president could join forces: more investment in defense, European acquisition of American weapons and cooperation on containing China and Iran.



**Ecuador** Vice President Veronica Abad (pictured) was suspended Saturday for 150 days accused of "unjustified abandonment" of her duties. It comes during a public rift between Abad and President Daniel Noboa that could have implications for Ecuador's February elections.



**Russia** opened the first ministerial conference of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum in the city of Sochi, seeking to deepen ties with African nations and dispel a notion that it's isolated by Western sanctions. The conference is billed as building on last summer's Russia-Africa summit.