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THE JUDICIARY POLICE ARE INVESTIGATING A SUSPICIOUS FIRE THAT BROKE OUT AT AN APARTMENT BUILDING IN THE INNER HARBOR AS A POTENTIAL CASE OF ARSON

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SME STRUGGLING TO COMPLY WITH TAX BUREAU UNEXPECTED INSPECTIONS

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TRUMP'S INAUGURATION: WHAT TO EXPECT

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AP PHOTO



BRICS Nigeria joined BRICS as a partner country, aligning with Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa to promote South-South cooperation and reform global governance. Nigeria's inclusion reflects its population size, economic significance, and active role in global economic restructuring efforts.

AP PHOTO



ASEAN foreign ministers, led by Malaysia, met yesterday in Kuala Lumpur to address Myanmar's escalating conflict and territorial disputes in the South China Sea. They pushed for an inclusive election in Myanmar and progress on a binding code of conduct with China for disputed waters.

AP PHOTO



Philippines Nearly 200 Afghans, including children, were resettled in the U.S. after special visa processing in the Philippines, over the weekend. The temporary arrangement underlined Manila's cooperation with Washington to assist refugees fleeing Taliban rule after U.S. forces withdrew from Afghanistan.

AP PHOTO



United States Outgoing U.N. envoy Linda Thomas-Greenfield warned that U.S. global influence may further erode under Donald Trump's leadership. She emphasized the need for America's engagement in multilateral institutions to counter rivals and address critical global challenges effectively.

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185,000 PER DAY

Upcoming CNY extended holiday is expected to bring record numbers of visitors to town, according to the MGTO

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SPRING FESTIVAL GOLDEN WEEK

GOLDEN DRAGON PARADE AND THREE SESSIONS OF FIREWORKS ARE PROPOSALS OF MGTO

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has unveiled its proposals for this year's Chinese New Year (CNY) festivities, which include continuing the Golden Dragon Parade and three sessions of fireworks displays, among other community activities.

The "2025 CNY Activities" were presented in a press conference on Friday at the Macau Tower.

The float parade, once again listed by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of China as part of the "Happy Chinese New Year" celebrations, will also continue.

This year's edition will count with 17 floats and over 30 performing troupes worldwide on the third day of the New Year. The float parade will be unveiled at Sai Van Lake Square at 8 p.m. and march along Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, pass by Macao Science Center, and reach the destination at



Macau Fisherman's Wharf.

Macau, Huzhou of Zhejiang (China), Kamakura (Japan), and Anseong (Korea) are the Culture Cities of East Asia 2025, represented by artistic troupes that will perform on this day.

According to MGTO, some 1,300 performers from Macao, Hong Kong, the Mainland, Colombia, France, India, Romania, and Spain will participate in the performances.

The fireworks display will occur on the New Year's third, seventh, and fifteenth day (January 31 - 9:45 p.m., Fe-

bruary 4, and February 12 at 9 p.m.). It will be held above the sea, overlooked by Macau Tower, and last 15 minutes.

MGTO also announced that temporary traffic restrictions would be imposed on show nights near Macau Tower and Avenida do Oceano in Taipa to facilitate each fireworks display session.

Other activities include interactive games on social platforms that kick off today and will continue until February 17, where participants can enter lucky draws and win prizes.

MGTO sees Portugal as key to EU market growth

VICTORIA CHAN

MARIA Helena de Senna Fernandes, director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), emphasized that Portugal can play a pivotal role in attracting more European visitors to the Special Administrative Region.

"Portugal is not just a gateway to Portugal itself. It also serves as a bridge to reach the European market," Senna Fernandes told Lusa, highlighting the potential for increased tourism collaboration.

In June, the semi-annual meeting of the European Travel Agents and Tour Operators' Associations (ECTAA) will be held in Macau, marking a significant step in this initiative. Senna Fernandes credited the strong partnership with the Portuguese

Association of Travel and Tourism Agencies (APAVT) for facilitating this connection. "It was through APAVT that we were introduced to ECTAA," she added.

This meeting will be particularly noteworthy, as it will be the first ECTAA gathering outside of Europe since its last session in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Additionally, Macau has been selected as the preferred destination for the confederation's 2025 meeting. "I think this is a good start," Senna Fernandes remarked, noting that while fewer than 100 attendees are expected, they collectively represent 80,000 travel agencies across Europe.

Senna Fernandes expressed optimism that the event will enhance awareness of Macau among European travel agencies.



ASK THE VET
by Dr Ruan Du Toit Bester

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WHAT SIGNS MIGHT HELP ME DECIDE IF MY DOG NEEDS EMERGENCY TREATMENT?

You can do some checks quickly at home or on a walk that will help you decide whether your dog's condition requires immediate veterinary attention.

Gum colour – your dog's gums (unless they are black and pigmented) should be salmon pink. If they are pale pink, white, blue/grey, or bright red, you should call a veterinarian right away.

Hydration status – if you lift the skin of your dog's scruff (at the back of their neck) and then drop it, it should fall straight back into place. If there is a delay, or it doesn't return to its normal position, this could indicate dehydration and could be an emergency.

Breathing pattern – watch your dog breathing for 15 seconds, then multiply it by 4. If their breathing rate is more than 40 breaths per minute, or if it seems faster than normal, you should speak to your veterinarian immediately. Equally, if the breathing pattern seems unusually shallow or your dog seems to be requiring a lot of effort to breathe, this is an emergency.

Responsiveness – is your dog aware of you calling their name? If they



are unconscious, unresponsive, or less responsive than normal, it would be sensible to contact your veterinarian right away.

What can I do to help in an emergency?

Stay calm

If you think your dog's condition might be an emergency, the most important thing to do if you think your dog's condition might be an emergency is to stay calm. It can be hard to think clearly when stressed or

panicked, and there could be an additional risk to you or your dog.

Assess your dog

Ensure you are in a safe place where no further harm can come to your dog or yourself. If your dog is in pain or feeling unwell, they may lash out, so approach them gently and cautiously. Check their gum colour, hydration, breathing pattern, and responsiveness, and assess any blood loss. This will give you an idea of whether it is a true emergency and

ensure you have information ready to pass on to your veterinarian.

Once you have determined that your dog needs an emergency assessment by a veterinarian, call them immediately. If you are unsure whether your dog's condition is an emergency, it is best to contact your veterinarian for advice.

First aid and risk prevention

While awaiting veterinary help, you may be able to apply a clean dressing, towel, or other clean clothing to any wounds if they are bleeding. Even if you have nothing to use to cover the injury, applying pressure with a clean hand can help to slow any bleeding.

If your dog is having a seizure, ensure that they have space and are clear of any furniture, stairs, or other areas where they could be injured. Often, veterinary advice would be to wait for an episode to end before moving your dog, so you can keep busy by ensuring the area is clear and timing or filming the episode to help your veterinarian later. Do not try to put anything in or near your dog's mouth during a seizure.

If you think your dog has heatstroke, consider placing them in the car with the air conditioning on, using a hose or buckets of tepid water, or placing cool, wet towels on them to help start reducing their

body temperature safely.

What if I wait and see?

It can be tempting to delay seeking veterinary treatment due to fear of what might be wrong or if the timing isn't good or funds are tight. However, in most veterinary emergencies, prompt treatment means a much better chance of recovery.

For instance, it is easy to see how a 'wait and see' approach could prove fatal if your dog is bleeding heavily, and with heatstroke, it is clear why it is vital to start safe cooling methods right away.

In other cases, the risk of waiting can seem less clear. For example, if your dog has a cluster of seizures they will need medication from a veterinarian to bring them out of the cycle of seizures. And your dog's constant retching and bloating may seem like it can wait an hour or two in case it resolves, but a twisted and bloated stomach (known as Gastric Dilatation and Volvulus) is a condition that is rapidly fatal without intervention.

So, if your dog is showing signs consistent with an emergency, do not hesitate to contact your veterinarian.

Hope this info helps
Till next week
Dr Ruan Bester

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SPRING FESTIVAL GOLDEN WEEK

MGTO forecasts 185,000 a day during CNY

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) forecasts that over the Chinese New Year (CNY) holidays, Macau should receive an average of 185,000 visitors per day, MGTO director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes told the media on the sidelines of the press conference that unveiled the series of CNY activities to take place in Macau.

She explained that during the 8 days between January 28 and February 4, there were an average of 185,000 visitors per day, roughly representing around 1.5 million visitors for the whole period.

"We are expecting some 185,000 people per day over this period of eight days, so this is a significantly high increase compared to last year," she said in an interview with public broadcaster TDM.

A year ago, the same official forecasted about 120,000 visitors



per day for the CNY festivities known as the Spring Festival Golden Week. This figure was surpassed by far, with the daily average reaching 169,725 visitors.

This year's forecast is about 9% higher than the average of 2024.

Senna Fernandes justified the forecast with the new policies recently enforced by the Central government, which gives MGTO hope to reach a new and extended goal.

She also noted that, according to the forecast, some 8,000 of the 185,000 daily visitors will be international visitors.

INDUSTRY HOPES OCCUPANCY RATE TO EXCEED 90%

In a different interview with the TDM, Cheung Kin Chung, a lawmaker and president of the Macau Hoteliers & Innkeepers Association, said that most of the city's hotels should

be fully occupied during CNY. He noted that hotel booking rates for this period currently exceed 60%, which is expected to increase over this week.

Cheung said that the occupancy rate will likely be between 90% and 95%, and room prices are estimated to increase by about 1% to 1.5%, which he considered reasonable.

In the same report, Andy Wu, president of the Travel Industry Council of Macau, added that it is expected that the number of visitors will increase this year when compared to 2024, remarking that there are already many hotel reservations, particularly for the third day of the new year (January 31).

He said the industry is in close contact with the tourism authorities to ensure that room prices do not "skyrocket" during this period.

He also added that the industry expects the occupancy rate to exceed 90% during the holidays.

2025 COULD BRING SOME 39 MILLION TO MACAU

When questioned by the media about the topic, the MGTO director said that for the whole year of 2025, the Office forecasts that the number of entries to Macau can reach as many as 39 million.

"If we are a bit optimistic and consider the figures seen in 2024, we can expect that [this year] we can receive between 38 to 39 million visitors. This will be a figure very close to the one seen back in 2019," Senna Fernandes said, adding that this is a more "optimistic forecast" than in previous years and that it is also grounded in the growth seen in international visitation last year.

SHOPPING

'Sasa' scales back mainland retail amid tourism shift

VICTORIA CHAN

SA Sa International Holdings (Sasa) has announced a strategic shift away from offline investments in mainland China, reflecting changing consumer preferences and ongoing challenges in the retail sector. The company's latest report highlights a significant decline in its mainland operations, prompting a reevaluation of its market strategy.

In the six months ending September 30, 2024, Sasa's turnover reached HKD1.92 billion, a 10.4% year-on-year decline. This decline was driven mainly by a sluggish macroeconomic environment and reduced consumption from Mainland Chinese tourists. Notably, offline sales in Hong Kong and Macau fell by 19.4%, totaling HKD1.31 billion, while the mainland experienced an alarming 36.7% drop due to the closure of 12 stores.

Macau's resurgence in tourism has welcomed some 17 million visitors (from March to Septem-



ber 2024), with 11.9 million arriving from mainland China—a 13.8% increase from the previous year. However, a demographic shift among these tourists is evident, with younger travelers increasingly favoring experiential activities over traditional shopping. This change is attributed to rising hotel costs in Hong Kong and the convenience of same-day returns to the Greater Bay Area.

"The demographic of Mainland Chinese tourists has changed, now seeking experiential travel over shopping," the report stated, emphasizing the need for retailers to adapt to the-

se evolving preferences.

Despite the challenges, opportunities exist within the retail sector. In July 2024, visitor tax-free allowances rose from RMB5,000 to RMB12,000, potentially boosting tourist spending. Additionally, Mainland Chinese consumers are increasingly open to exploring niche and domestic beauty brands, which Sasa aims to leverage through a revamped store portfolio and a focus on local markets.

The company operates 82 stores across Hong Kong and Macau, located near tourist attractions. However, it has scaled

back its footprint in mainland China, closing several outlets as part of a broader restructuring to enhance operational efficiency and improve financial performance.

As of September 30, 2024, Hong Kong and Macau sales accounted for 73.1% of the Group's total sales, although turnover in these key markets decreased by 18.4% compared to the previous year. The decline moderated through the year, thanks in part to increased foot traffic from Mainland Chinese tourists, which improved sales performance from a 33.8% year-on-year decline in the first quarter to a 24.1% drop in the second quarter.

Looking ahead, Sasa is enhancing its online presence and integrating its membership program across channels, aiming to cultivate customer loyalty and boost repeat purchases. The group is optimistic that emerging government initiatives to attract large-scale business exhibitions will gradually revive regional retail consumption.



TOURISM

NEW BORDER CROSSINGS RECORD REACHED OVER THE WEEKEND, OVER 803,000 ON SATURDAY

THE Public Security Police Force (PSP) reported that over 803,000 people crossed different border crossings in Macau last Saturday, setting a new record for border movements in a single day.

According to the PSP, the new figure is about 6.6% higher than the previous record obtained on August 24 last year, when about 753,000 entries and exits were recorded.

These border movement figures accounted for almost 170,000 visitors on the same day.

Most of these visitors (77.6%) were mainland tourists (131,000), while another 15.8% (27,000 people) were from the neighboring region of Hong Kong.

As usual, the border posts

of Border Gate and Qingmao were the busiest, with over half of the total crossings recorded at the Border Gate.

The Hengqin border post came third in the preference of the tourists.

According to several media reports and content shared on different social media platforms, the sudden influx of passengers at the Border Gate led to long lines on both the Zhuhai side to access the border checkpoint and on the Macau side, particularly in the search for taxis and buses to head to different locations across the city.

Many visitors were said to have waited for long minutes or over an hour for transportation after arriving in Macau.

RM

NEW HAWKER MANAGEMENT REGIME SET TO LAUNCH

Macau's "Hawker Management Regime" will take effect on March 1, as the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) promotes the new law. IAM held three explanatory sessions to brief the Consultative Committee on Municipal Affairs, community service committees, and industry representatives on key provisions and transitional measures. During the sessions, IAM officials outlined the obligations of hawker license holders and the enforcement mechanisms to enhance management standards. Participants provided feedback, emphasizing that the new regime would facilitate better operational order and resource utilization within the hawker industry.

DSPA LAUNCHES INITIATIVE TO COLLECT 'LAI SI' ENVELOPES

Despite collecting approximately 16.21 million "lai si" envelopes over the past eight years, the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) reveals that only about 3.83 million—roughly 23.6%—have been reused. DSPA continues to promote recycling and launched the "It's Very Easy to Collect Lai Si Envelopes" initiative on Saturday, during World Wetlands Day, at the Ecological Zones in Cotai. The event aims to encourage carbon reduction practices across the community and promote the reuse of "lai si" envelopes. From February 3 to 16, collection points will be available at 56 locations.

MONG-HA VILLA LAUNCHES CNY CELEBRATION

The Mon-Ha Villa, a Portuguese-style landmark, has reopened its doors to the public following a major renovation. On Saturday, the venue kicked off its Chinese New Year (CNY) festivities, marking the transformation of the space into a multi-purpose arts and cultural venue. Festive stores and photo spots now fill the venue, attracting vendors and visitors eager to participate in this new chapter. The operating company views the event as a pilot program and plans to organize regular community events once the structural reinforcement works are completed.

ECONOMY

SMES STRUGGLING TO COMPLY WITH DSF UNEXPECTED INSPECTIONS

RENATO MARQUES

LOCAL small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are struggling to comply with recent requirements from the Financial Services Bureau (DSF). This requires business owners to provide additional proof of their receipts and expenses related to a financial assistance program launched during Covid-19.

On the line is an inspection decided by the bureau for those granted government support measures between 2020 and 2024.

Lawmaker Ron Lam wrote to the government that the DSF recently required business owners to present proof of their activities from 2020 onwards. Many without an organized accounting system are struggling to comply with this requirement.

"Several merchants have reflected that they have recently received notices from the DSF requesting



Lawmaker Ron Lam

them to provide all the receipts and information of the year when the assistance was granted to prove that they are eligible for tax returns, but due to the lapse of time, merchants are unable to collect and provide all the receipts," Lam said, adding that due to this incapacity, there are being considered ineligible for tax refunds and are asked to return the sums of the assistance received.

Lam claims that the government

has many ways to verify merchants' honesty and reports, but this method only burdens small business owners.

In response, the DSF noted that three assistant schemes launched from 2020 to 2022 had specific and clear rules that those professionals and companies had to comply with.

"To expedite fund distribution, the government has implemented clear policies focused on 'trustful

distribution with subsequent oversight,' using pre-screening and post-monitoring to ensure funds reach eligible beneficiaries. The program also emphasizes responsible resource use as the DSF verifies beneficiary eligibility, and those who submit false information or commit fraud will have their funds revoked and may face legal consequences," the response notes.

DSF director Long Kong Leong added, "if discrepancies are found in accounting records during the five-year settlement period, the bureau can assess the taxable income of business operators and determine the tax owed."

In light of this, Long noted that Article 49 of the Commercial Code, which requires operators to maintain accurate accounting records for five years, is why he considers DSF fully complying with the law and ensuring that public money is well spent.

LABOR

Minimum wage law under review

THE Labor Affairs Bureau has commenced its second mandated review of the Minimum Wage Law, a process required every two years under local legislation. The announcement follows a written inquiry from lawmaker Lei Chan U, confirming that the Bureau will assess the law's implementation from November 2022 to October 2024.

The review will involve analyzing execution data and current economic conditions to evaluate whether adjustments to the minimum wage or severance compensation limits are necessary. Once completed, the Bureau will compile its findings into a report for consideration by the Social Coordination Standing Committee.



tee. While changes to minimum wage rates and severance compensation limits require legislative action, the Bureau says it's working to streamline the review process.

In 2024, Macau's government increased the minimum wage to MOP7,072 per month, a rise of MOP416 from the previous rate of MOP6,656. This decision was made after assessing the macroeconomic environment and labor market evolution. The amend-

ment to Law 5/2020 will be sent to the Legislative Assembly for discussion, with an intended enforcement date of January 1, 2024.

The amendment does not extend to domestic workers operating under a separate regime with a minimum wage ceiling of MOP3,500. Wong Chi Hong, director of the Labor Affairs Bureau, emphasized that domestic workers receive benefits such as food and lodging, impacting their overall compensation. VC



CRIME

PJ SUSPECTS OF ARSON IN INNER HARBOR APARTMENT FIRE

VICTORIA CHAN

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) are investigating a suspicious fire that broke out at an apartment building in the Inner Harbor on Friday, January 17, as a potential case of arson.

According to a statement from the PJ, the reporting center received a notification about a suspected arson incident at 3:05 p.m. on Friday.

The Fire Services Bureau (CB) had responded to a fire alarm at a residential unit in the Inner Harbor around 1:52 p.m. that day and notified the PJ that the cause of the fire was not clear and was deemed suspicious.

After investigating the scene, the PJ found that many electrical appliances and furniture in the living room

of the affected unit had burned, causing an estimated MOP400,000 in damage. No one was injured or needed assistance during the incident.

The PJ has now taken over the case and is investigating it. The blaze prompted the evacuation of 23 residents from the Rua do Almirante Sergio apartment building, and residents living in the surrounding buildings captured it on video.

In a separate incident on Sunday, a fire on the ground floor of a building in Pátio de São Paulo next to the Ruins of Saint Paul's also prompted an evacuation of residents. Ten people were forced to leave their homes, but there were no reports of injuries. The CB said that the causes of this fire are also being investigated.

SOCIAL MEDIA

TikTok goes dark as US ban takes effect

HALELUYA HADERO,
NEW YORK

MILLIONS of TikTok users in the United States are no longer able to watch videos on the social media platform as a federal ban on the immensely popular app takes effect.

The company's app was removed yesterday [Macau time] from prominent app stores, including the ones operated by Apple and Google, while its website told users that the short-form video platform was no longer available. The blackout began just hours before the law took effect.

Users opening the TikTok app on Saturday encountered a pop-up message preventing them from scrolling videos that read, "Sorry, TikTok isn't available right now."

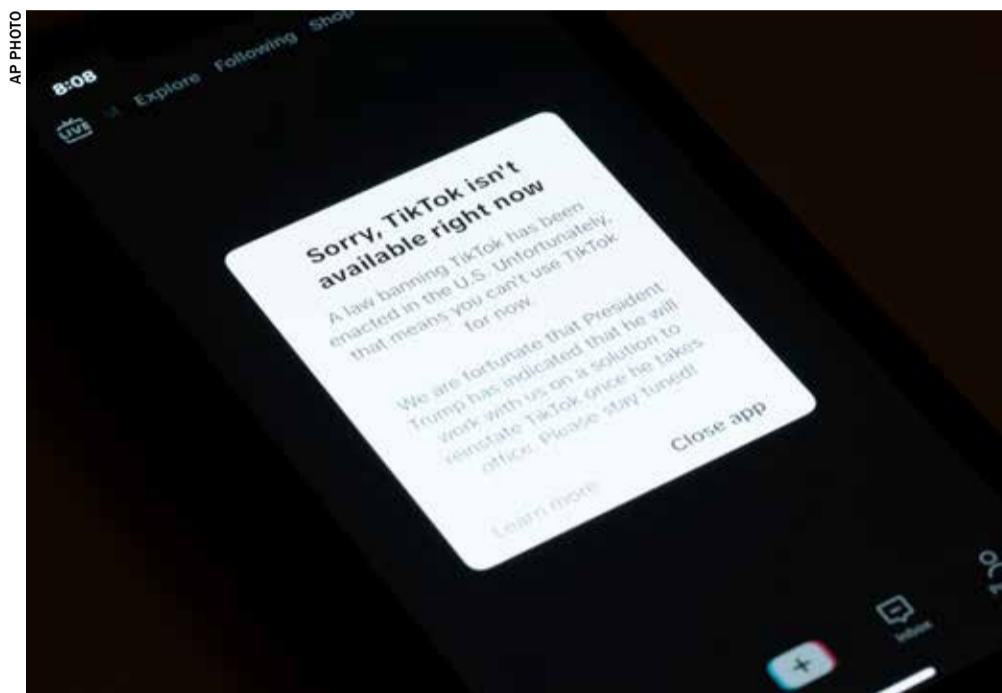
"A law banning TikTok has been enacted in the U.S.," the message said. "Unfortunately that means you can't use TikTok for now."

"We are fortunate that President Trump has indicated that he will work with us on a solution to reinstate TikTok once he takes office," the notice continued, in a reference to President-elect Donald Trump's pledge to "save" the platform. The company told its users to stay tuned.

The only option the message gives to U.S. users is to close the app or click another option leading them to the platform's website. There, users are shown the same message and given the option to download their data, an action TikTok previously said may take days to process.

Before the announcement went out, TikTok said in another message to users that its service would be "temporarily unavailable" and the company was working to restore its U.S. service "as soon as possible." But how long the platform will remain dark is unclear.

Apple said in a sta-



tement on its website that TikTok and ByteDance apps were no longer available in the U.S., while visitors to the country could have limited access. "Apple is obligated to follow the laws in the jurisdictions where it operates," the company said.

"If you already have these apps installed on your device, they will remain on your device. But they can't be re-downloaded if deleted or restored if you move to a new device. In-app purchases and new subscriptions are no longer possible," the statement said, adding that the change could impact performance, security and compatibility with future versions of iOS and iPadOS.

TikTok CEO Shou Chew posted a video thanking Trump for his commitment to work with the company to keep the app available in the U.S. and a "strong stand for the first amendment and against arbitrary censorship."

"We are grateful and pleased to have the support of a president who truly understands our platform. One who has used talk to express his own thoughts and perspectives, connecting with the world and generating more than 60 billion views of his content in the process," Chew said.

In an interview with NBC News on Saturday, President-elect Donald Trump said he was thinking about giving

TikTok a 90-day extension that would allow them to continue operating. If such an extension happens, Trump — who once favored a TikTok ban — said it would "probably" be announced Monday, the day that he is sworn in as president. TikTok CEO Shou Chew is expected to attend Trump's inauguration with a prime seating location.

In Washington, lawmakers and administration officials have long raised concerns about the app, which they see as a national security threat due to its Chinese ownership. TikTok is owned by ByteDance, a technology company based in Beijing that operates the well-known video editing app CapCut and Lemon8, both of which were also unavailable for service Saturday evening.

The federal law required ByteDance to cut ties with TikTok by today (Macau time) or face a nationwide ban. The statute was passed by Congress in April after it was included as part of a high-priority \$95 billion package that provided foreign aid to Ukraine and Israel. President Joe Biden quickly signed it, and then TikTok and ByteDance quickly sued on First Amendment grounds.

While defending the law in court, the Biden administration argued it was concerned about TikTok collecting vast swaths of U.S. user data

that could fall into the hands of the Chinese government through coercion.

Officials have also warned the algorithm that fuels what users see on the app is vulnerable to manipulation by Chinese authorities, who can use it to shape content on the platform in a way that's difficult to de-

tect. But to date, the U.S. has not publicly provided evidence of TikTok handing user data to Chinese authorities or tinkering with its algorithm to benefit Chinese interests.

The Supreme Court unanimously decided on Friday the risk to national security posed by TikTok's ties to China overcomes concerns about limiting speech by the app or its 170 million users in the United States.

After TikTok's service started going dark, some in China slammed the U.S. and accused it of suppressing the popular app. In a post on the Chinese social media platform Weibo, Hu Xijin, a former editor-in-chief for the Chinese Communist Party-run newspaper Global Times, said "TikTok's announcement to halt services in America marks the darkest moment in the development of internet."

"A country that claims

to have the most freedom of speech has carried out the most brutal suppression of an internet application," said Hu, who is now a political commentator. TikTok does not operate in China, where ByteDance instead offers Douyin, the Chinese sibling of TikTok that follows Beijing's strict censorship rules.

After the court ruling, both White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco said the Biden administration would leave the law's implementation to President-elect Donald Trump given that his inauguration falls the day after the ban takes effect.

But TikTok said on Friday evening it "will be forced to go dark" if the administration didn't provide a "definitive statement" to the companies, such as Apple, Google and Oracle, that deliver its service in the U.S. **MDT/AP**

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DIPLOMACY

Xi and Trump talk about trade, fentanyl and TikTok

DIDI TANG, WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT-ELECT Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping discussed trade, fentanyl and TikTok in a phone call this weekend, just days before Trump heads back to the White House with vows to impose tariffs and other measures on America's biggest rival.

Despite that, Xi congratulated Trump on his second term and pushed for improved ties, the Chinese foreign ministry said. The call came the same day that the U.S. Supreme Court backed a law banning TikTok unless it's sold by its China-based parent company.

"We both attach great importance to interaction, hope for a good start of the China-U.S. relationship during the new U.S. pre-

sidency and are willing to secure greater progress in China-U.S. relations from a new starting point," Xi said in the call.

Trump confirmed on his Truth Social platform that he had spoken with Xi, saying "the call was a very good one for both China and the U.S.A." They talked about trade, fentanyl and TikTok and more, he said.

"President Xi and I will do everything possible to make the World more peaceful and safe!" Trump wrote. His transition team pointed to the social media post when asked for more details on the call.

The past few days have shown a warmer side of the U.S.-China relationship, which is expected to be one of the main focuses of Trump's second term. In his campaign, Trump threatened to raise tariffs on Chinese goods by as

much as 60% and later pledged an additional 10% hike over allegations China has failed to stem the flow of illicit drugs into the United States.

Experts believe that Trump would expand controls on products sold to China, too. But they also have pointed to Trump vowing to "save TikTok" even though he tried to ban the social media platform the last time he was in the White House.

Following the Supreme Court's ruling, Trump said on social media that his "decision on TikTok will be made in the not too distant future, but I must have time to review the situation. Stay tuned!"

Hal Brands, senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, said Trump is siding with TikTok because he believes the social media platform helped him in the 2024 election.

"So I think it is a sign that Trump's own convictions on China are fairly changeable, given what is politically advantageous to him," Brands said. "He certainly isn't a cold warrior at heart. In my view, his goal is to reach some sort of deal or accommodation with Beijing over the long term, even though he may well use confrontational tactics to build the leverage that is needed for that in the short- and medium-term."

Hours before the Trump-Xi call, the Chinese foreign ministry announced that Vice President Han Zheng would attend Trump's swearing-in ceremony as Xi's special representative. Trump extended an unusual invitation to Xi in December, but no head of state has attended a U.S. president's inauguration in the past.

Trump in the past has praised his relationship with Xi and suggested China could help mediate international crises such as the war in Ukraine.

Beijing and Washington, however, have been locked in a tense economic competition since Trump's first term, when relations shifted toward a more contentious rivalry. President Joe Biden also has imposed limits on the sale of advanced technology to China and slapped high tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles and solar cells.

Sen. Marco Rubio, Trump's nominee for secretary of state, said at his confirmation hearing this week that China was "the most potent and dangerous near-peer adversary this nation has ever confronted."

In the call over the weekend, Xi told Trump that differences are inevitable between the two powers, but the key lies with "respecting each other's core interests and major concerns and finding a proper solution," according to the

Chinese foreign ministry.

Xi urged Trump to approach the Taiwan issue "with prudence" because it is about China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"Confrontation and conflict should not be an option for the two countries," Xi said.

Trump has criticized Taiwan for pulling some of the semiconductor industry from the U.S., but U.S.-Taiwan relations also significantly improved during his first term.

Taiwan is sending legislative speaker Han Kuo-yu and seven others to Trump's inauguration, tasked with conveying Taiwan's commitment to democracy and "best wishes" to Trump and his administration.

In their phone call, Xi told Trump that the essence of trade and the overall economic relationship between the two countries is "mutually benefiting and win-win."

The two leaders exchanged views on the war in Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war and agreed to establish "a channel of strategic communication," according to the Chinese foreign ministry.

Craig Singleton, senior director of the China Program at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, said such leader-to-leader calls are important and noted that Trump and Xi appear to be speaking more frequently.

"Regular communication is critical for advancing U.S. interests while ensuring clarity in competition," Singleton said.

Trump said in a December interview on "Meet the Press" that he had been communicating with Xi since he won the November election. Trump in the interview said he has "a very good relationship" with China's leader. He said they did not discuss Taiwan but other issues. **MDT/AP**

TOURISM

Taiwan group trips getting underway

GROUP tours to Taiwan will be resumed soon for residents from Fujian province and Shanghai in the Chinese mainland, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism announced last week, according to China Daily.

The ministry said that preparations for the resumption of group tours are underway, and expressed hope that tourism industries on both sides of the Taiwan Strait will strengthen communication and collaboration to offer high-quality services and products for the Chinese mainland residents participating in these tours.



The Taipei 101 skyscraper commands the urban landscape in Taipei

The decision is part of broader efforts to further normalize people-to-people exchanges and cooperation across various sectors between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan. It responds to the strong de-

sire expressed by the people and tourism industry in Taiwan and aims to enhance the welfare of people on both sides of the Strait, according to a statement published on the ministry's website.

Individual and group tours of residents from the Chinese mainland to Taiwan have been suspended for over four years. In April and August last year, the ministry resumed group tours of residents in Fujian province to Matsu and Jinmen, islands of Taiwan, respectively.

Chen Binhua, a spokesman for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, said during a press conference on Friday that the resumption of group tours is a practical response to the desire of people on both sides of the Strait to promote exchanges and contacts.

"The resumption aligns

with the shared wish of Taiwan compatriots for peace, development and increased exchanges and cooperation, which we fully support and welcome," he said.

Chen stressed that the Chinese mainland has always upheld the principle that both sides of the Strait are one family and has consistently supported the normalization of cross-Strait people-to-people exchanges, as well as cooperation in various fields, for the benefit of Taiwan compatriots.

Chen also urged Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party to acknowledge the mainstream public opinion in Taiwan and the voice from the industry.

"The DPP should lift the ban on group tours to the

Chinese mainland as soon as possible, ease travel alerts for Taiwan people traveling to the mainland, and fully restore direct cross-Strait flights to help create favorable conditions for exchanges between the two sides," he said.

The ministry announced the resumption of group tours for Taiwan residents to the Chinese mainland in May 2023. However, the DPP has yet to lift the ban on group tours to the mainland, which has been in place since 2020.

In addition, the DPP upgraded the travel alert regarding the mainland to orange in June last year and has refrained from commenting on restoring direct flights between the two sides. **MDT/CHINA DAILY**

USA

Trump's family circle has a different look as he returns to the White House

DARLENE SUPERVILLE,
WASHINGTON

WHEN Donald Trump returns to the White House on Monday, his family circle will look a little different than it did when he first arrived eight years ago.

His youngest son, Barron, was in fifth grade back then. He's now a college freshman who towers over his 6-foot-plus (1.8-meter-plus) dad. Granddaughter Kai, who was 9 in 2017, is now an aspiring social media influencer and impressive golfer. Grandson Joseph, who posed in Trump's lap with a Lego model of the White House last time, is 11 now.

The most prominent relatives in Trump's political sphere, daughter Ivanka and her husband, Jared, are in Florida this time around after working in his first administration.

Family members can provide presidents with a ready source of moral and sounding-board support, companionship and even relief from the world's problems. Not to mention creating headaches for the president at times, too.

"Family can do things that other people can't, and they can be trusted in a way that other people also can't," said Tevi Troy, a former George W. Bush administration official and author of several books about the presidency. "Everyone needs someone they can talk to late at night when you let your hair down, so to speak."

The president-elect has five children — three of whom are married — from his marriages to Ivana Trump, Marla Maples and current wife Melania Trump. He has 10 grandkids, with an 11th on the way.

MELANIA TRUMP

THEN: She spent the opening months of Trump's term at the family's Manhattan penthouse so that 11-year-old Barron wouldn't have to switch schools in the middle of the year. After moving to the White House, she traveled around the United States and to other countries, alone and with Trump, partly to promote her "Be Best" children's initiative while fiercely guarding her privacy.

NOW: She avoided active campaigning during Trump's 2024 run, limiting her public appearances to key moments, such as the campaign's launch, the Republican National Convention and election night. She released

AP PHOTO



a self-titled memoir late last year and will be the subject of a documentary distributed by Amazon Prime Video that is expected to be released later this year. While some doubt that Trump's 54-year-old wife will spend much time at the White House, she said on Fox News' "Fox & Friends" that she has already packed and picked out the furniture she wants to take to the executive mansion.

DONALD TRUMP JR.

THEN: Trump's eldest son, now 46, campaigned for his father in 2016 and 2020.

NOW: Trump Jr.'s influence has grown to the point that he lobbied his father to choose close friend JD Vance for vice president. He also pushed for former Democratic Rep. Tulsi Gabbard and Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the president-elect's picks for director of national intelligence and health and human services, respectively. Trump Jr. helps run the family real estate business and is an honorary chairman of Trump's transition. He has a podcast and has said his role is to prevent "bad actors" from getting into the administration. He recently flew on his father's airplane to Greenland; the president-elect has expressed a desire to take control of the mineral-rich Danish territory.

Trump Jr. has five children — or "smurfs," as he sometimes refers to them — with his former wife, Vanessa Trump. They are Kai Madison, 17; Donald John III, 15; Tristan Milos, 13; Spencer Frederick, 12; and Chloe Sophia Trump, 10.

IVANKA TRUMP

THEN: Ivanka, 43, campaigned for her father in 2016 and moved her family from New York City to Washington to work in his White House as a senior adviser. She

was on the campaign trail in 2020, too, but she and her family moved to Florida and retreated from the spotlight after his loss.

NOW: As Trump geared up for the 2024 run, Ivanka announced that she loved and supported him but was getting out of politics to focus on her husband and their three kids. She did, however, join her father and other family members on election night and when he rang the bell at the New York Stock Exchange in early December after Time magazine named him Person of the Year. She told "The Skinny Confidential" podcast that this time around she just wanted to "show up for him as a daughter" and be there to watch a movie or a sports game.

Ivanka and her husband have three children: Arabella Rose, 13; Joseph Frederick, 11; and Theodore James Kushner, 8.

ERIC TRUMP

THEN: The 40-year-old helped run the family business and participated in his father's campaigns.

NOW: Eric is also an honorary chair of the transition and a close adviser to his father. But he continues to focus more on running the family business. In September, he and his brother started a crypto platform called World Liberty Financial, and their father helped launch it in an interview on the X social media platform.

Eric and his wife, Lara, have two children: Eric Luke, 7, and Carolina Dorothy Trump, 5.

TIFFANY TRUMP

THEN: Trump's daughter with second wife Marla Maples was 23 and a recent University of Pennsylvania graduate who kept a low profile when Trump was first elected.

NOW: She was more present in the 2024 campaign but still largely

avoids the spotlight. Tiffany, 31, and her husband, Michael Boulos, are expecting their first child this year. Boulos is a businessman who traveled with Trump in the final stretch of the campaign. His father is Massad Boulos, a Lebanese American businessman who helped Trump with the influential Arab American community in the swing state of Michigan. Trump has named Massad Boulos to be a senior adviser on Arab and Middle Eastern affairs.

BARRON TRUMP

THEN: At the start of Trump's first term, Barron and his mother stayed at the family's Trump Tower penthouse in Manhattan so he could finish his school year. When they got to Washington, his soccer net appeared in what's known as the first lady's garden.

NOW: Barron, 18, is a freshman New York University business student. His parents and Trump campaign officials credit him for recommending podcasts popular with young men that the president-elect appeared on during the campaign. Barron will have a bedroom in the White House, Melania Trump said on "Fox & Friends."

Donald Trump said Barron had helped introduce him to people he had never heard of before.

"He was very good," the president-elect told NBC News in a telephone interview Saturday. "It's the new wave. And he was very helpful."

His mother had told "Fox & Friends" last year that "I'm very proud of him, about his knowledge, even about politics and giving an advice to his father. He brought in so many young people. He knows his generation."

LARA TRUMP

THEN: Trump's daughter-in-law, 42, campaigned for him during all his runs. After Trump lost to Democrat Joe Biden in 2020, she considered running for a U.S. Senate seat from her home state of North Carolina but ultimately decided against it. She became a Fox News commentator.

NOW: As Trump revved up his 2024 campaign, he installed his daughter-in-law as co-chair of the Republican National Committee, where she was a TV-ready advocate overseeing fundraising, voter outreach and the party's "election integrity" initiative. She stepped down from the RNC after the election and removed her name from consideration as a possible successor to Sen. Marco

Rubio, R-Fla., Trump's choice for secretary of state.

Lara Trump is passionate about fitness and has her own line of activewear. She also has explored a side venture as a singer and has released some songs. Daughter Carolina is named after her home state.

JARED KUSHNER

THEN: Kushner, 44, was also a key figure in Trump's 2016 campaign. He joined his wife in the White House as a senior adviser, a role that included working on U.S. policy toward Israel and the broader Middle East.

NOW: Kushner has stepped out of the political spotlight — but his father could soon step in. Trump announced after the election that he intends to nominate Charles Kushner, a real estate developer, to be U.S. ambassador to France. The elder Kushner was pardoned by Trump in December 2020 after he pleaded guilty years earlier to tax evasion and making illegal campaign contributions.

KAI TRUMP

THEN: Kai was in elementary school when her grandfather became president.

NOW: Donald Trump Jr.'s 17-year-old granddaughter is an aspiring social media influencer. Her behind-the-scenes video from election night garnered 3.7 million views on YouTube. Other posts related to her grandfather have been watched millions more times on TikTok. Kai delivered her first public speech at the Republican convention and is an avid golfer who sometimes plays with her grandfather.

"If I'm not on his team, he'll try to get inside of my head, and he's always surprised that I don't let him get to me," she said at the convention. "But I have to remind him, I'm a Trump, too."

ARABELLA KUSHNER

THEN: Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner's daughter was 6 when her grandfather showed China's Xi Jinping a video of her, in a traditional Chinese dress, belting out Chinese-language songs.

"It's very good, right? She's very smart," Trump said. Xi responded that Arabella was her grandfather's "little angel" and a "messenger of China-U.S. relations."

NOW: Arabella is 13 and enjoys singing, playing the piano, horseback riding and Brazilian jiu-jitsu, according to a social media post from her mother. **MDT/AP**

ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON,
WASHINGTON

USA | WHAT TO WATCH AT TRUMP'S INAUGURATION

BIG TECH CEOs, CARRIE UNDERWOOD AND FOREIGN LEADERS

DONALD Trump's inauguration as the country's 47th president was expected to be an extravagant break from tradition — before it got moved indoors due to cold weather.

There will still be well-known performers, influential billionaires as guests and foreign heads of state. Unlike his first inauguration eight years ago, Trump will be welcomed back to office by business titans and global leaders, groups that often shunned him in his first term.

Here are some things to look out for during Trump's inauguration, which starts today at 12:00 p.m. EST and can be watched here on the major cable TV networks [1:00 a.m. Tuesday, Macau time].

TRUMPS INSIDE THE CAPITOL ROTUNDA, BUT WHO ELSE?

Expect to see Melania Trump, the president-elect's five children and grandkids. Don Jr., his eldest son, and Lara Trump, who is married to Eric Trump, have gained more influence over the past year. The fathers of Trump's two sons-in-law were given key adviser posts as well. While Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner have taken a step back, they are expected to attend just like they did for election night.

But the Capitol Rotunda can only hold around 600 people, according to organizers. There will be precious few spots for Supreme Court justices, military leaders, former presidents and their spouses, Cabinet nominees and visiting dignitaries — along with the 535 members of Congress who traditionally get prime spots, though some Democratic lawmakers are skipping the ceremony.

Tesla and X owner Elon Musk was invited to the dais along with Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman. Who will make it into the Rotunda?

COUNTRY SUPERSTAR AND THE Y.M.C.A.

Country music star Carrie Underwood, who has won eight Grammy Awards, will sing "America the Beautiful" before Trump is sworn in around noon EST by Chief Justice John Roberts. Underwood, who



Officials inspect the construction of a stand in the Rotunda, where President-elect Donald Trump is due to take the oath of office today

went from 2005 "American Idol" contestant to the most decorated artist in CMT Music Awards history, was a surprise get for the president-elect's inauguration program.

Another unexpected announcement came from the Village People, the late-'70s American disco group behind the hit "Y.M.C.A." The group was booked for a Trump rally in Washington yesterday and at one of the inaugural balls. The hit song was played at the end of Trump rallies and became a viral trend on social media after the election with people mimicking the president-elect's signature dance moves.

Other performers will include two of Trump's musical favorites: opera singer Christopher Macchio, who will sing the "The Star-Spangled Banner," and country singer Lee Greenwood, known for his patriotic anthem, "God Bless the USA," also played at Trump rallies.

Singer-songwriter Gavin DeGraw, best known for his hit song "I Don't Want To Be," will perform at one of the three balls Trump is attending. Country singers Jason Aldean, Parker McCollum and country music band

Rascal Flatts will be performing at the other two balls.

THE INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Trump is known for delivering hour-plus speeches where he makes grand promises, attacks political opponents and mocks some foreign leaders.

During his 16-minute inaugural address in 2017, Trump stuck to his campaign script and painted a bleak picture of the country blaming other countries for shuttering factories and shrinking the middle class. He said he would end "American carnage" and would govern with an "America First" approach.

This time around, his main campaign promise has been to launch the largest deportation operation in history and seal off the U.S.-Mexico border. He has spoken about ushering in a "golden age" and pledged to impose tariffs on imports, rolling out more details in recent days on how he plans to pursue those goals.

He told NBC News on Saturday that the theme of his inaugural address will be "unity and strength, and also the word 'fairness.'"

"Because you have to

be treating people fairly," Trump said. "You can't just say, 'Oh, everything's going to be wonderful.' You know, we went through hell for four years with these people. And so, you know, something has to be done about it. ... You can't have that happen, and we shouldn't have that happen."

FOREIGN LEADERS IN TOWN

Trump may be breaking a tradition on Inauguration Day after extending invitations to world leaders. No heads of state have previously made an official visit to the U.S. for the inauguration.

Chinese President Xi Jinping was the first foreign leader whose invitation to the inauguration became public last December. Xi will not attend but is sending Vice President Han Zheng as his special representative.

Argentina's president, Javier Milei, and Italy's premier Giorgia Meloni, accepted Trump's offer. The offices of Ecuadorean President Daniel Noboa and Paraguayan President Santiago Peña have also said they were invited and were planning to attend. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1961 JOHN F KENNEDY SWORN IN AS US PRESIDENT



The Democrat John F Kennedy has been sworn in as the youngest ever elected president of the United States.

The 43-year-old Roman Catholic was inaugurated as the 35th president on a snow-covered Capitol Hill in Washington. He takes over from the oldest president in American history, General Dwight Eisenhower, who is bowing out aged 70.

The president's Republican rival, Richard Nixon, who came a close second in the race for the White House, also attended the inauguration ceremony.

Millions watched the swearing-in of the new president on television. He chose to wear formal President Kennedy began his speech by addressing "my fellow citizens" - the term first used by President George Washington but rejected by later presidents in favour of the less formal "my fellow Americans".

His ten-minute address appealed to Americans to unite in the fight against the common enemy of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.

For the people of the world struggling against the "bonds of misery", the president pledged, "our best efforts to help them help themselves".

He continued: "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich."

He also appealed to the Soviet Union to begin a new quest for peace.

"Let both sides for the first time, formulate serious and precise proposals for the inspection and control of arms and bring the absolute power to destroy other nations under the absolute control of all nations," he said.

President Kennedy closed his speech with the words: "Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world, ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man."

His words were greeted with rousing applause.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

President Kennedy was a Harvard graduate and a war hero. He became a Democratic Congressman in 1946 and a senator in 1952. He married Jacqueline Bouvier in 1953. He ran against Richard Nixon for the White House. In September 1960 millions watched the pair battle it out in a series of television debates. Shortly after his election, he supported a Cuban rebel attempt to overthrow the communist regime of Fidel Castro in Cuba. It was unsuccessful and led the Russians to install nuclear weapons on Cuba in 1962 triggering what became known as the Cuban missile crisis. The crisis was narrowly averted. In August 1963, Kennedy negotiated the first nuclear test ban treaty with the Soviet Union in what was seen as a first step towards ending the Cold War. On 22 November 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated. He was shot in the head as he drove through Dallas, Texas on his way to a political festival.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Enter an exciting social period. Team efforts and projects are favored this month, with the Sun in Aquarius. Schedule carefully. Collaborate with friends.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Take advantage of a career opportunity. Accept a professional challenge this month, with the Sun in Aquarius. Your status and influence are growing.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Leap boundaries, push limitations and discover solutions. Travel beckons this month, with the Sun in Aquarius. Conditions are favorable, so go! Expand your education.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Contribute to the family pot. Prioritize growing shared resources, with the Sun in Aquarius for a month. Discuss long-term plans and initiate lucrative actions.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Rely on each other. Partnership multiplies efforts, with the Sun in Aquarius. Collaborate, compromise and negotiate win-win deals over the next month. Link arms.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Faithful routines build muscle. Grow physically stronger over the next month, with the Sun in Aquarius. Raise the level of your performance with practice.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Have fun with friends and family. You're especially lucky in love this month, with the Sun in Aquarius. Practice creative passions. Share your heart.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Manage household responsibilities. Prioritize home and family this month, with the Sun in Aquarius. Comfortable surroundings nurture creativity. Fill your place with love.

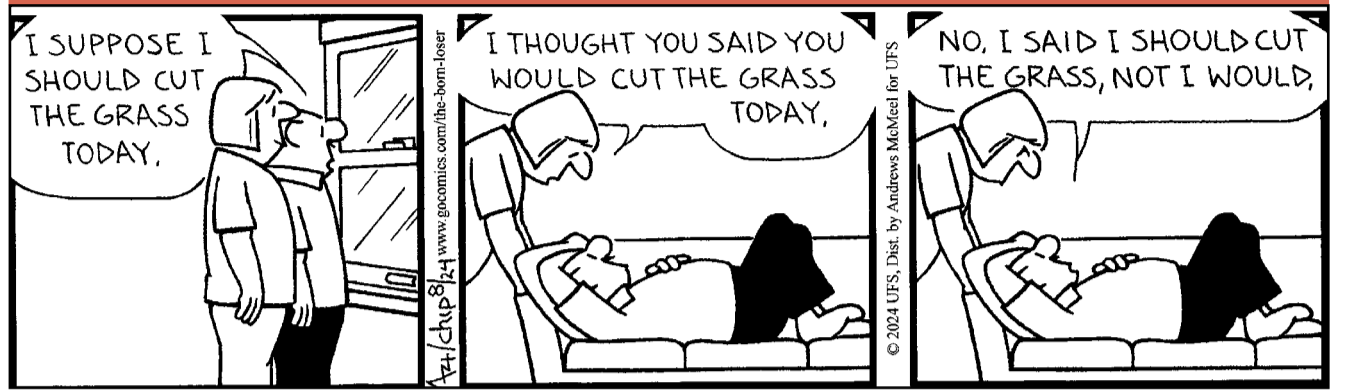
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Write your story. Words come easily, with the Sun in Aquarius for a month. Learn complex material. Creative projects flower. Express your ideas.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Catch the silver rain. Money comes more easily this month, with the Sun in Aquarius. Balance expenses with income. Advance a wild idea.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Go for your personal best. You have a natural advantage this month, with the Sun in your sign. Use your growing strength for good.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Savor solitude and introspection. Finish old projects in peaceful productivity this month, with the Sun in Aquarius. Recharge with rest, exercise and meditation.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-3	8	fine
Changchun	-14	-5	fine
Chengdu	2	17	fine
Chongqing	6	17	fine
Fuzhou	8	20	fine
Guangzhou	7	23	fine
Guiyang	5	16	overcast
Haikou	14	21	cloudy
Hangzhou	4	14	overcast
Harbin	-15	-7	fine
Hefei	-2	14	fine
Nanjing	0	14	fine
Shanghai	5	14	overcast
Taipei	12	19	fine
Wuhan	0	19	fine
Hong Kong	18	21	sunny
WORLD			
Moscow	-7	2	snow
Frankfurt	-3	4	sunny
Paris	-1	1	cloudy
London	-1	6	cloudy
New York	-12	-4	sunny

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Foot-operated lever; 6- To ___ (exactly); 10- Folklore fiend; 14- Prince Valiant's wife; 15- Baseball glove; 16- Modeling material; 17- Rod used to reinforce concrete; 18- Collections of anecdotes; 19- Traditional passed-down knowledge; 20- ___ Darya (Asian river); 21- Sleeveless garments; 23- Adored; 24- Autocrats; 26- More pleasant; 27- Pheasant female; 29- Trick; 31- ___ uncertain terms; 32- Brownish gray; 33- Mamma ___; 36- In spite of; 40- Peer Gynt's mother; 41- Fang, e.g.; 42- Words of comprehension; 43- Caterpillar rival; 44- Consented; 46- Swarms; 48- Lazybones; 49- Begets; 50- White-and-black bearlike mammal; 52- You ___ here; 55- Maryland athlete, for short; 56- Skater Lipinski; 57- Insurgent; 59- Siouan tribe; 60- Slippery ___ eel; 61- China's Zhou ___; 62- Threadbare; 63- Lacking color; 64- Considers;

DOWN 1- Graph prefix; 2- K-6; 3- Society girl; 4- ___ snail's pace; 5- Immature insects; 6- Collect; 7- Windshield option; 8- Greek letters; 9- UFO pilots; 10- Word of the hour?; 11- Covering for the hand; 12- Less common or less cooked; 13- Watched warily; 22- East ender?; 23- Fabric woven from flax yarns; 25- Demonstrate; 26- Wine valley; 27- ___ colada; 28- Slaughter of baseball; 29- Kindergarten adhesive; 30- Battering Babe; 32- Norse god of thunder; 33- Wretchedly unhappy; 34- Arrow poison; 35- Old; 37- Things; 38- Some digits; 39- Urgent; 43- Intensify; 44- Put two and two together; 45- Stared fiercely; 46- Link with; 47- Miscalculation; 48- Silly; 49- Put away; 50- Que ___?; 51- Asian inland sea; 53- 500 sheets; 54- New Haven students; 56- Faucet; 58- U-turn from WSW;

Friday's solution

S	O	H	O	A	I	L	S	E	A	U									
A	B	O	K	S	T	E	I	N	S	S	T	S							
S	H	O	R	S	T	A	R	E	N	A	T	E							
S	A	F	A	R	I	N	E	W	F	O	U	N	D						
S	O	S	O																
S	A	R	A	T	R	A	R	E	P	E	A	T							
E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E							
A	R	L	O																
T	I	E	T	U	P														
G	E	T	T	L	E														
S	O	D	A																
A	B	I	T	W	E	R	E												
R	O	N	A																
T	I	N	Y																
S	L	O																	

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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Hoi Wan Retail (Taipa)
 HKD 12,980,000

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 m² / 450 ft² | HKD2,800,000



VA FAT (Taipa Village)
2 bed 1 bath
77.10 m² / 830 ft² | HKD3,980,000



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



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



Ocean Garden Cattleya Court (Taipa)
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TENNIS

Coco Gauff writes 'RIP TikTok USA' on a TV camera at the Australian Open

HOWARD FENDRICH,
MELBOURNE

AMERICAN tennis star Coco Gauff mourned the loss of TikTok's app back home, writing on a TV camera lens "RIP TikTok USA" and drawing a broken heart right after winning a match at the Australian Open to reach the quarterfinals.

Gauff's 5-7, 6-2, 6-1 victory over Belinda Bencic in the Grand Slam tournament's main stadium finished yesterday local time in Melbourne — about an hour after TikTok could no longer be found on prominent app stores on Saturday in the United States.

"I could not access it after my match. I honestly thought I would be able to get away with it because I was in Australia," Gauff said at her news conference. "Hopefully it comes back. ... It's really sad. I've been on the app since it was called Musical.ly. I love TikTok. It's like an escape. I honestly do that before matches. I guess it will force me



to read books more — be more of a productive human, probably. Maybe it's a blessing in disguise."

Tennis players at many tournaments often are handed a pen after a win so they can deliver whatever thoughts they want via the lens of a

courtside camera. In this case, Gauff paused a bit to think and said, "I think I'm going to go with this one," before offering her TikTok message in blue ink.

At the French Open in June 2022, after reaching her first Grand Slam

final as a teenager, Gauff referred to a recent spate of mass shootings in the U.S. at the time and wrote in marker: "Peace. End gun violence."

Now 20, Gauff is one of the top players in her sport. She won the 2023 U.S. Open and is currently

ranked No. 3.

Gauff frequently has posted on TikTok, often mimicking popular trends.

"I feel this is the third or fourth time this has happened. This time it's just like, 'Whatever.' If I wake up and it doesn't work, fine. I'm done wasting my time figuring it out," Gauff said earlier during the Australian Open. "I see there's a new app called RedNote that a lot of people are migrating over to. So I feel, regardless, people are going to be fine because people are always going to migrate to another app."

She added that she hoped TikTok would survive, calling it "a great thing for a lot of small businesses in our country, and a lot of creators make money on it and have the chance to spread stories. Personally, me, a lot of great stories I've heard are from TikTok and connecting with people has been (through) TikTok. I hope it will stay, (but) obviously I don't know all the security issues and things like that." **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

Business Views

Shuli Ren, Bloomberg



HONG KONG-DOLLAR PEG MAKES LESS SENSE THAN EVER

Whenever the Federal Reserve turns more hawkish and the cost of dollar funding soars, debate over whether Hong Kong should change its currency's peg resurfaces. The fixed exchange rate system has been around for more than four decades, with a narrow trading ban of HK\$7.75 to HK\$7.85 introduced in 2005.

As the rate differential between the US and China hits a record high, it's increasingly clear that this currency regime, which inevitably ties the city's lending rates to those of the US, is outdated and needs a revamp. The US 10-year Treasury yield is flirting with 5%, while it's only a matter of time before China goes to sub-1%.

Because of the dollar peg, Hong Kong can no longer be Asia's go-to fundraising platform, eroding a key selling point for the financial center. For blue-chip companies, borrowing in the mainland has become a lot cheaper than in the city, where benchmark lending rates move in lockstep with the fed fund rate. Hong Kong-based flagship real estate developer New World Development Co., for one, has been ramping up its onshore yuan borrowings to lower interest repayments. The company said in August that it obtained a 12-year yuan loan at only 3.1%, while the average rate of its offshore bank loans were roughly 1.1% above Hibor, or 5.2% at the prevailing rate.

Or consider what the peg does to the spluttering local economy. The \$3 trillion residential property market is in its fourth year of downturn. But it still suffers from negative carry, which discourages home purchases because it's cheaper to rent than to buy. Adding salt to the wound, for the first time in history, new mortgage rates in Hong Kong are higher than in Shenzhen, the neighboring tech hub in mainland China.

In other words, when the Fed is making it clear that we won't go back to the zero-rate era after the Global Financial Crisis, it's time for the city to move on and get its monetary flexibility back.

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority said in a statement [earlier this month] that it had no intention and no need to change the dollar peg.

The biggest roadblock is timing and perhaps political paralysis. Over the years, foreign hedge fund managers, including long-time China skeptic Kyle Bass, have bet against the Hong Kong dollar — and lost big. When market pressure is on, policymakers rightly worried that any tweak to the exchange rate — not carried out on their own terms — would encourage more speculative trades and trigger a financial crisis in the city. As such, they would dig in and stay firm. But in better times, such as now when the currency is trading at the strong end, they tend to lose a sense of urgency and choose to just stay put. After all, few question Hong Kong's ability to defend the peg. The government holds about HK\$4 trillion (\$515 billion) in reserves, with HK\$2.1 trillion in highly liquid, dollar-based assets to fully back its monetary base.

Nonetheless, it's not ability but suitability that counts. It makes no sense for a financial hub to keep a rigid monetary regime when, in the foreseeable future, the source of cheap funding has flipped from the US to China. Behind closed doors, policymakers should start to prepare for an orderly change to its dollar peg.

Courtesy Bloomberg/Shuli Ren

SOUTH KOREA'S IMPEACHED PRESIDENT IS ARRESTED OVER MARTIAL LAW DECLARATION AND HIS SUPPORTERS RIOT

THE BUZZ

Hours after South Korea's impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol was formally arrested, triggering rioting by his supporters, his lawyers said yesterday that he remains defiant in his refusal to answer questions over the probe into his declaration of martial law last month.

Yoon was formally arrested early yesterday, days after being apprehended at his presidential compound in Seoul. He faces possible imprisonment over his short-lived imposition of martial law, which set off the country's most serious political crisis since its democratization in the late 1980s.

Yoon's arrest could mark the beginning of an extended period in

custody, lasting months or more.

The decision to arrest Yoon ignited unrest at the Seoul Western District Court, where dozens of his supporters broke in and rioted, destroying the main door and windows. They used plastic chairs, metal beams and police shields that they managed to wrestle away from officers.

They shouted demands to see the judge who had issued the warrant, but she had already left.

Hundreds of police officers were deployed and nearly 90 protesters were arrested.

AP PHOTO



Displaced Palestinians flash V-sign as they return to Rafah, while a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas went into effect, in Rafah, yesterday

MIDDLE EAST

A LONG-AWAITED GAZA CEASEFIRE STARTS AFTER A DELAY

A ceasefire in the Gaza Strip took effect yesterday following an almost three-hour delay after Hamas was late to name the three hostages it plans to release.

The announcement from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said the ceasefire began at 11:15 a.m. local time. Israel said earlier it would keep fighting until the names were handed over in accordance with the agreement.

Hamas blamed the delay in handing over the names on "technical field reasons." It said in a statement that it is committed to the ceasefire deal announced last week.

The ceasefire is set to pause the fighting after 15 months of war and see the release of dozens of hostages held by the militants in the Gaza Strip and hundreds of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. Israel's Cabinet approved the deal early on Saturday.

Brokered by mediators the United States, Qatar and Egypt in months of indirect talks between the warring sides, the ceasefire is the second truce achieved in the devastating conflict.

The Hamas-led Oct. 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel killed some 1,200 people

and left some 250 others captive. Nearly 100 hostages remain in Gaza.

Israel responded with an offensive that has killed more than 46,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, who do not distinguish between civilians and militants but say women and children make up more than half the dead.

Yesterday, Israeli government spokesman David Mencer told journalists that "both Trump and Biden have given full backing to Israel's right to return to the fighting if it reaches the conclusion that the second stage of negotiations is ineffectual."

Mencer adds, however, that Israel wants "all stages" of the phased ceasefire deal to come into effect. Negotiations on the ceasefire's second phase are to start just over two weeks into the first phase that began Sunday.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz in a separate statement reiterated that Israel won't stop the war until everyone returns home. He added that "we will take care to maintain the buffer zones and respond forcefully to any violation and threat." Israeli forces are withdrawing to buffer zones inside Gaza in the first phase.

Residents of Gaza's southern city of Rafah returned to find massive destruction following the ceasefire.

"It's an indescribable scene. It's like you see a Hollywood horror movie," Mohamed Abu Taha told The Associated Press as he and his brother inspected the family home in Rafah's Salam neighborhood. He described "flattened houses, human remains, skulls and other body parts, in the street and in the rubble."

In London, the mother of one of the three female hostages expected to be released today [Macau time] said she was praying her daughter will return to Israel alive, adding, "I have more hope now than I've had in the last 15 months."

Emily Damari, a 28-year-old British-Israeli national, was kidnapped from her apartment on Kibbutz Kfar Aza, a communal farming village hit hard by Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack.

"It would be the most wonderful feeling in the world if she comes back, the most wonderful feeling. But I won't believe it until I see and feel it for myself," her mother Mandy said in a statement released on behalf of her family. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



United States MLK Day coincides with Donald Trump's presidential inauguration, highlighting tensions between civil rights leaders' calls for justice and Trump's divisive policies. Advocates see the day as a reminder to continue Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy amid political challenges.

AP PHOTO



United States SCOTUSblog publisher Tom Goldstein was indicted on tax evasion charges involving concealed poker winnings, including in Macau casinos, false mortgage applications, and improper law firm expenses. Goldstein, who has argued 44 Supreme Court cases, denies the allegations and plans to contest them in court.

AP PHOTO



Venezuela The U.S. maintained Chevron's license to export Venezuelan oil despite disputed elections and Maduro's continued rule. Critics argue the sanctions reprieve has strengthened Maduro's government without achieving democratic reforms, fueling economic and migration challenges.

AP PHOTO



Iran Two judges linked to Iran's 1988 mass executions were shot dead yesterday [macau time] in Tehran in a rare courthouse attack. Officials described the shooter as an infiltrator and arrested suspects linked to the incident, sparking investigations into the motives.