



COMMUNITY URGES THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE TAIPA MUNICIPAL MARKET TO ENHANCE ITS APPEAL AND SET IT APART FROM NEARBY TOURIST AREAS P5

SAM HOU FAI DELEGATION HEADS TO BEIJING FOR TWO SESSIONS P2

CHINA EYEING US FARM EXPORTS FOR RETALIATION, AS IMPORTERS RUSH TO BEAT TARIFFS: REPORT P6



AP PHOTO



Japan is battling a forest fire in Ofunato that has burned 2,100 hectares since last week. Over 1,200 people have evacuated, and 84 homes have been damaged. More than 2,000 firefighters and troops are deployed. A man was found dead last Thursday, with investigations underway.

AP PHOTO



Japan Prince Hisahito, second in line to Japan's throne, held his first news conference yesterday. The 18-year-old discussed balancing royal duties and university studies in biology. He plans to research dragonflies and urban insect conservation while following the example of elder imperial family members.

AP PHOTO



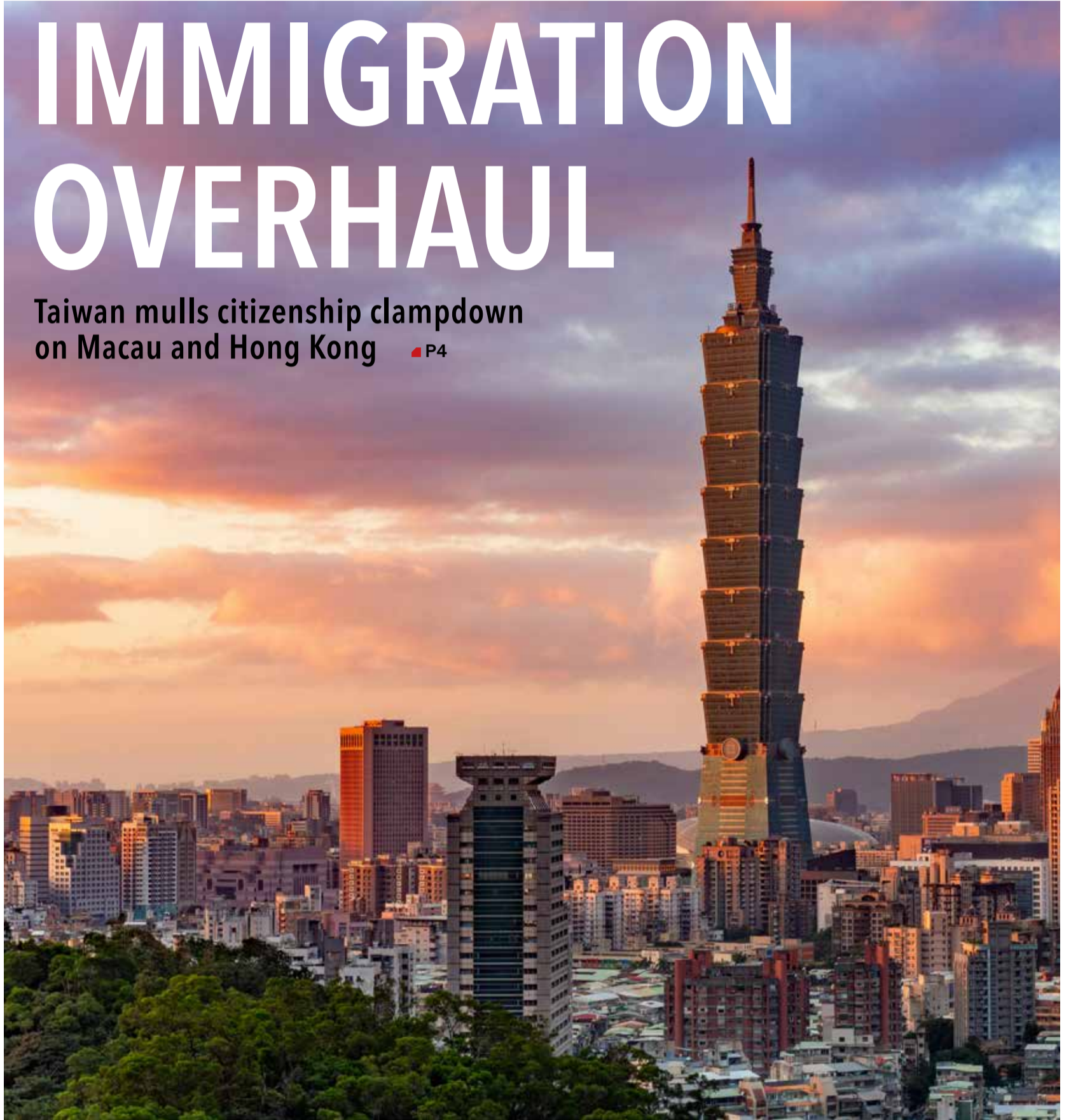
Serbia's populist president apologized yesterday for calling a state TV reporter an "imbecile" after her coverage of a massive anti-government protest. Nationwide student protests have emerged since a fatal train station canopy collapse in November, blamed on government corruption.

AP PHOTO



USA Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost lunar lander successfully touched down on the moon yesterday [Macau timely], delivering NASA experiments. The private lander, launched in January, marks a step in commercial lunar exploration. Its cargo includes a drill and a vacuum to study moon dust and subsurface temperatures.

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ENVIRONMENT

RON LAM CALLS FOR UNIFIED EMISSION STANDARDS AMID COLOANE SEWAGE PLANT CONCERNS

VICTORIA CHAN

LAWMAKER Ron Lam has called for unified emission standards for Macau's sewage treatment plants, citing ongoing environmental concerns at the Coloane Sewage Treatment Plant.

Residents have reported persistent odor problems and environmental issues, despite assurances from the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) that discharged water quality meets standards.

Lam visited the site following complaints and observed conditions similar to past incidents.

He noted that while the discharged water quality may meet standards, long-term sewage discharge with accompanying bubbles and an earthy smell could still impact the ecological environment and bird foraging areas.

Lam recommended a comprehensive ecological study to assess the suitability of the site for long-term sewage outfall.

The DSPA's 2023 report indicated that the pollution concentration of influent water at the Coloane Wastewater Treatment Plant exceeded design standards, though discharge water quality remained within limits.

However, Lam argued that even compliant discharge could affect the ecological environment under poor diffusion conditions, particularly impacting fish and birds in Ecological Zone II.

Lam also highlighted the on-

going upgrade project for the Coloane Wastewater Treatment Plant, awarded in 2023, which aims to meet national Level A standards for urban sewage treatment plants and optimize the odor treatment system.

He urged authorities to cla-

rify the project's progress, as its completion timeline remains unclear.

Additionally, the Marine and Water Bureau is working on the first phase of the Coloane Western Coast project, aiming to reuse part of the sewage plant's

tail water and reduce discharge.

Lam hopes this project will accelerate to help improve water quality at the discharge outlet.

Lam emphasized the need to update Macau's water supply and drainage regulations, which have been in effect for nearly 40 years and lack unified sewage plant emission standards.

He called for establishing unified minimum standards to replace the current system, where each plant discharges according to its design standards, which he said is detrimental to overall environmental protection.

Lam also pointed out that over half of Macau's sewage is discharged without secondary treatment, relying solely on dilution and diffusion.

He urged authorities to update regulations and improve environmental protection infrastructure to address these challenges.

In late February, Lam inquired about the government's plans following recent typhoons, emphasizing the need for a robust flood prevention system. He noted that the "Flood Prevention and Drainage Plan for the Coloane Western Coast" is set to begin.

Lam expressed concerns over insufficient community consultation and the potential ecological impact of proposed construction, particularly in heritage areas.

He urged the administration to prioritize urgent needs like drainage improvements and traffic management alongside flood protection efforts, advocating for a comprehensive public engagement process to ensure local voices are heard in future planning.



Sam Hou Fai delegation heads to Beijing for Two Sessions

SAM Hou Fai, along with a delegation of local representatives, has traveled to Beijing for the annual Two Sessions.

The key political event shaping the country's policy direction is set to convene in Beijing this week against the backdrop of a complex and challenging domestic and global environment.

Sam will attend the third session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) tomorrow. Meanwhile, the Chinese

People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), an advisory body, will commence today.

The Two Sessions, held annually as part of a five-year cycle, is expected to last about a week. During the meetings, Premier Li Qiang will present a government work report outlining China's economic objectives for 2025, including the projected GDP growth rate.

Analysts anticipate the target to remain at arou-



nd 5%, consistent with 2024.

Typically, the GDP growth target set in the

government work report is one of the most closely watched figures.

As China's economy

transitions to high-quality development, GDP is no longer the sole measure of economic performance, though it remains an important indicator.

Macau will be represented by 12 NPC deputies and over 20 CPPCC members. According to Seaport Research Partners, new stimulus measures and supportive policies could be introduced to boost consumer confidence.

Analyst Vitaly Umansky noted that Chi-

na's recent visa changes could positively impact Macau's economy in 2025.

More significantly, he highlighted Beijing's continued pro-Macau stance, with potential policy actions focused on real estate recovery, business regulations, and trade with the U.S.

"The policies from this year's Two Sessions are likely to emphasize growth more than in the past two years," Umansky stated. **LV**

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RENATO MARQUES

POLITICS

The elections for the eighth term of the local Legislative Assembly (AL) have been set for September 14, 2025.

In an executive order published yesterday in the government's official gazette (BO), the Chief Executive noted that the spending cap for each campaigning group in the AL elections will be MOP3,549,622, precisely the same amount as in the previous two elections, held in 2021 and 2017.

The amount candidates can spend while campaigning was significantly reduced in 2017 from the previous MOP5,644,278.46 established in 2013 and MOP8,942,959.84 in 2009.

When the cap was first reduced in 2017, the idea was that capping campaign spending would contribute to fairer elections. At the time, several campaign groups were accused of making high-priced offers to voters to secure their votes.

This was seen as giving a clear advantage to wealthy contestants.

The AL's direct and indirect elections are customarily held every four years in September.

The 33 members of the AL comprise 14 directly elected seats (elected by universal suffrage), 12 indirectly elected seats (elected by sectorial groups and associations), and seven CE-appointed seats, which are nominated shortly after the elections.

The current 14 directly elected seats are occupied by representatives from the civil servants' rights group (Macao Public Servants Association - ATPFM), the General Union of Neighborhood Associations of Macau, and the Macau Federation of Trade Unions, as well as representatives from the associations of those with links to mainland cities and provinces, which are more prominent in the Macau population.

After the disqualification of all candidates from pro-democracy camps in the 2021 elections under the justification of "lacking patriotism," the only group not entirely aligned with Beijing and more rooted in local policies and problems that managed to secure a seat in the AL was the Association of Synergy of Macao, which elected lawmaker Ron Lam.

Recently, the representatives from the ATPFM, led by lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho, and including lawmaker Che Sai Wang, have been attempting to expand their scope of action, targeting younger generations—who in the past were more aligned with the pro-democracy camp—as well as gaming concessionaire employees and Por-

AL elections set for Sept. 14 with unchanged campaign spending cap

tuguese-speaking communities in general.

Pereira Coutinho is currently the only lawmaker who uses the Portuguese language to address inquiries in the AL plenary.

According to information from the Electoral Affairs Commission for the Legislative Assembly Elections, more than 330,000 electors are registered to participate in this year's direct election.

Four years ago, the election saw only 137,279 votes cast, accounting for the lowest rate since the establishment of the Macau Special Administrative Region, with a voting rate of just 42%.



CAEAL BIDS FOR FAIR AND PATRIOTIC ELECTIONS

RENATO MARQUES

Seng Ioi Man, president of the Legislative Assembly Electoral Affairs Commission (CAEAL), has called for fair and patriotic elections this September.

In a press briefing after the CAEAL meeting yesterday afternoon, Seng noted that with the new regulations in force, there are extra guarantees that all candidates running in the election are patriots, thus ensuring the principle of "Macau ruled by patriots."

He also said that CAEAL will aim to

promote all election-related work to create a fairer, more just, and cleaner election environment.

The same official also sought to inform the public and voters about the election's progress through media and promotional activities.

After the meeting, following the announcement of the election date and spending cap, the CAEAL unveiled the full calendar for the elections, which start this Thursday (March 6) with the first distribution of forms for organizing the nomination committee.

Candidate lists and political platforms must be submitted to the CAEAL by June 26.

The final candidate list will be published by July 18, and the draw to assign each group's number will be held the next day.

All campaign propaganda is banned from June 27 until August 30, when the official 14-day election campaign starts.

All campaign activities will close on September 12, two days before polling.

The final election results will be announced in the government's official gazette by September 29.

PLATFORM FOR ELECTION REPORTS

The CAEAL announced that it has joined forces with the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) to establish a hotline and an online platform that will work around the clock to receive reports of any wrongdoing related to the AL elections.

This reporting platform will operate from today and aims to quickly forward complaints to the relevant authority, according to their content, Wong Kim Fong, Deputy Commissioner of the CCAC, said, adding that the CCAC will adopt a zero-tolerance policy for cases of wrongdoing related to the elections.

ELIGIBLE HOUSEHOLDS START SELECTING UNITS FROM 2019 COMPETITION

The Housing Bureau (IH) is notifying eligible households from the 2019 affordable housing competition to select their units starting today. This final competition under the previous affordable housing scheme includes 2,993 qualified buyers. Official letters with unit choices and prices have been sent out, and a catalog of available units is online. The 3,017 units in Zone A include T1, T2, and T3 models. Selected buyers must bring the necessary documents to finalize their selection without making a payment at signing.

GREEN WEEK AIMS TO INSPIRE ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Macau's 44th Green Week, organized by the Municipal Affairs Bureau, will take place from March 15 to 23, with the theme "Passing on the love of nature to build a beautiful city together." The event includes guided eco-tours, activities for caring for tree saplings, and educational booths on conservation. The opening carnival is scheduled for March 15 and 16 in Taipa, featuring workshops and games. Over 40 activities will engage the community, culminating in a tree conservation event on March 23.

GUIA HILL PARK TO BEGIN VINE REMOVAL PROJECT

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) will initiate a vine removal and forest protection project at Guia Hill Municipal Park starting March 18. This 90-day project aims to combat brown root rot disease and the proliferation of invasive vines, which threaten the park's ecological health. During the project, sections of the park will be closed for safety. IAM encourages public compliance and will establish an educational area to inform visitors about forest protection and the invasive species being removed.

MACAU AIRPORT REVIEWS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The government and Macau International Airport convened the Wildlife Management Committee to assess wildlife risks and preventive measures. Chaired by CAM-Macau International Airport Company Ltd., the committee includes representatives from various government agencies and an ornithologist. Discussions focused on bird strike occurrences and the effectiveness of strategies aimed at enhancing aviation safety. The committee emphasized ongoing monitoring and control measures to mitigate risks posed by wildlife during the airport's reclamation period.

TAIWAN CONSIDERS TIGHTENING IMMIGRATION RULES FOR MACAU RESIDENTS

LYNZY VALLES

TAIWAN'S government is considering changes to its immigration laws that would make it more difficult for residents from Macau and Hong Kong to obtain permanent residency and citizenship, according to a source familiar with the matter.

The proposed amendments, part of a broader effort to strengthen national security, aim to prevent potential infiltration by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) through immigration from the two territories, an official speaking on condition of anonymity said, as cited in a Taipei Times report.

Under the proposed changes, Macau and Hong Kong residents would need to live in Taiwan for four years—up from the current one year—before becoming eligible for permanent residency. Additionally, they would no longer have the option to apply for citizenship after gaining permanent resident status.

The amendments are being



considered in response to shifts in Hong Kong's political landscape, particularly following the enactment of the National Security Law in 2020.

The source noted that over two million mainland Chinese

have moved to Hong Kong since its 1997 handover.

"Whether they arrive through marriage, investment immigration, or a professional skill, Hong Kong migrants almost always apply for permanent re-

sidence in the second year," the source said. "No [region] in the world has immigration policies as relaxed as Taiwan's."

The revised rules would also impose stricter scrutiny on applicants who have worked for

the CCP, the Chinese military, or Chinese public institutions, potentially denying their applications, according to the report.

"The original purpose behind allowing Hong Kong and Macau residents to easily apply for permanent residency in Taiwan is no longer applicable given the changes to those territories caused by CCP policies," they said.

Despite these changes, the proposed framework would still be more lenient than policies for Chinese nationals, who must reside in Taiwan for six years before applying for a national ID. Authorities plan to review the proposal and consult with Hong Konger groups in Taiwan before implementing any amendments.

"We have found that some migrants from Hong Kong and Macau are not interested in Republic of China citizenship anyway, and only want some form of permanent residence. So, we do not anticipate the change being a problem," sources added.

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



Locals seek revival of Taipa market amid changing consumer habits

VICTORIA CHAN

COMMUNITY members and development advocates are calling for a transformation of the Taipa Municipal Market to revitalize its appeal and distinguish it from nearby tourist zones, as changing consumer habits and business patterns impact visitor flow.

The Taipa Municipal Market, located in one of the district's busiest areas, has long been a hub for both locals and tourists. However, shifts in local business dynamics and spending habits have affected the market's popularity. Many residents now prefer shopping at small stores or supermarkets for convenience. "I don't usually cook, and there are many small stores selling vegetables and meat in Macau," said one resident in a report by TDM.

Despite these changes, some locals still value the market for its fresh goods and unique offerings. "I think the goods here are fresher. It's also an extra place for me to shop. I don't really like packaged products in supermarkets. That's why I come to the market to buy



Stalls next to Taipa wet market

things," said another resident.

Stakeholders envision the market's potential for diversification. A stall owner hopes to see food and snack stalls added to attract more people, while others suggest adding lunch options or unique cafes with cultural and creative characteristics. Choi Seng Hon, Vice President of the Taipa

Community Development Promotion Association, emphasized the need for differentiated development to draw both tourists and residents. "The market should offer things not found in tourist zones, like unique cafes or culturally creative features, to attract both residents and tourists," he said.

With ongoing road work on

Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-sen, a Transport Advisory Committee member suggested the government optimize bus routes to better serve the area. This move could enhance accessibility and attract more visitors to the market.

As the Municipal Affairs Bureau continues to improve other markets like Patane and Red

Market, the Taipa Municipal Market's transformation could play a crucial role in supporting local businesses and preserving the area's cultural heritage.

In a related development, lawmaker Leong Sun Iok urged the government last month to enhance the public markets of São Domingos and Taipa Village.

He pointed out that despite recognizing the decline in interest among the population, no substantial actions have been taken to revitalize these markets. The facilities, which are aging, have seen increasing vacancy rates due to changing consumer demands.

Leong highlighted the success of the food court at São Domingos Market, which attracts both locals and tourists, suggesting that a similar model could benefit Taipa.

He also recalled that the government had previously considered optimizing these markets and proposed repurposing unused spaces for cultural and creative industries.

The idea of transforming old markets into vibrant destinations is gaining traction, reflecting successful examples from cities like Singapore and Hong Kong.

ECONOMY

Gov't financial reserve grew 5.3% on investment in 2024

RENATO MARQUES

IN 2024, the Macau Special Administrative Region (SAR) Financial Reserve recorded an investment income of MOP30.95 billion, an annual return of 5.3%, the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM) reported.

By the end of last year, the value of the Financial Reserve capital amounted to MOP616.21 billion, of which the basic reserve accounted for MOP153.39 billion and the extraordinary reserve MOP462.82 billion.

According to the AMCM, the 5.3% return was achieved through a diversified and balanced asset allocation.

AMCM also noted that, in 2024, in the context of a gradually controlled inflationary situation, the central banks of many coun-



tries have reduced their policy interest rates, which favored the trend of financial markets; however, the variation in the growth rate of the leading world economies, geopolitical complications and the gradual adjustment of market expectations regarding the interest rate cuts by central banks caused the prices of financial assets to retreat from their highs at the end of the year.

The authority no-

ted that the investments followed the premise of maintaining the liquidity and safety of overall assets, focusing on allocating high-quality assets that can provide stable returns on lower risks, while moderately optimizing the structure of the listed equity portfolio to achieve capital preservation and appreciation.

The AMCM remarked that the Macau SAR Financial Reserves are essential

in supporting social and economic stability, so they should be used prudently.

Fearing geopolitical uncertainty in 2025, AMCM expects that the prices of various types of assets will continue to be affected, posing challenges to the investment management of the reserves in the current year.

For this reason, the AMCM will allocate reserves investments according to the principle of "safe, efficient, and stable," with special emphasis on controlling downside risks, holding a more significant proportion of highly safe and liquid investment products, and timely adjusting the allocation in response to market conditions. These measures aim to promote medium—and long-term results by preserving capital and increasing its value as an SAR asset.

WEATHER

SMG FORECASTS HIGH TEMPERATURES IN SPRING

STAFF REPORTER

THE Meteorological and Geophysical Services (SMG) have provided forecasts for the upcoming spring season, indicating that the average air temperature in Macau from March to May is expected to be normal to relatively high.

The typical temperature for this spring season is projected to range between 21.9 and 22.6 degrees, while normal precipitation levels are estimated to be between 380 and 640 millimeters.

Spring in Macau serves as a transitional phase between winter and summer monsoons. Initially, the weather will be influenced by air currents from the east as cold high-pressure systems move away over the sea.

The climate will be predominantly humid with occasional rain.

As the cold high pressure

affecting mainland China diminishes, temperatures will gradually rise.

According to SMG, a trough of low pressure is expected to impact southern China, leading to increased rainfall and thunderstorms towards the end of the season, particularly in May.

Meanwhile, SMG said that Macau will experience a cold front beginning today, bringing occasional showers and possible thunderstorms.

As a result of the northeast monsoon, temperatures are expected to gradually decrease to around 13 degrees Celsius over the next few days. The weather is forecasted to remain cloudy and rainy throughout the week, leading to a perceived temperature that may feel lower than the actual readings.

Between Wednesday and Friday, temperatures will remain low, with highs reaching 18 degrees and lows of 13.

TRADE WAR

CHINA EYEING US FARM EXPORTS FOR RETALIATION, REPORT SAYS, AS IMPORTERS RUSH TO BEAT TARIFFS

ELAINE KURTENBACH,
BANGKOK

CHINESE manufacturers reported an uptick in orders in February as importers rushed to beat higher U.S. tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump, as a Chinese state media report said that Beijing was considering ways to retaliate.

Trump earlier imposed a tariff of 10% on imports from China and that will rise to 20% beginning Tuesday. He also ended the “de minimis” loophole that exempted imports worth less than \$800 from tariffs, in a blow to companies whose online sales direct to consumers had soared in recent years.

The Global Times, a newspaper of China’s ruling Communist Party, said Monday that Beijing was studying both tariffs and non-tariff moves to counter Trump’s higher tariffs. Asked about that report, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said that “China will take all necessary measures to firmly safeguard own legitimate rights and interests.”

“U.S. agricultural and food products will most likely be listed,” it said, citing an unnamed source. Last week, Chinese Commerce Ministry officials had said the two sides were in a “dialogue” about trade.

The stronger-than-expected data came as Chinese leaders gathered in Beijing for the annual session of the National People’s Congress. Lawmakers are expected as usual to endorse policies and priorities set by the ruling

AP PHOTO



Communist Party, which could include some fresh help for the economy as it slows to annual growth many economists forecast will fall to about 4.5% this year.

Surveys of factory managers showed China’s official purchasing managers index rose to 50.2% from 49% in January, though that was just above the 50 level that marks the break between contraction and expansion. The new orders index rose to 51.1.

Steady industrial production suggests that government spending and “front running” to beat the higher tariffs supported stronger business activity last

month, Zichun Huang of Capital Economics said in a report.

“But growth still looks at risk of slowing this quarter, at least partially reversing the pick-up in Q4 (October-December). And that’s before the hit from tariffs is felt in earnest,” Huang wrote.

Another survey released Monday, the Caixin manufacturing PMI survey, showed a similar improvement. That survey tends to show trends in smaller and export-oriented companies, Lynne Song of ING Economics said in a commentary.

“This could be a valuable gauge of the impact new tariffs are having on the manufacturing

sector. With an additional 10% tariff set to come into effect tomorrow, this seems likely,” she said.

Sudden increases in tariffs and other factors have raised uncertainty over the outlook for the world’s second largest economy, which grew at a 5% annual pace last year, just meeting Beijing’s official target.

Premier Li Qiang will present an annual work report to the congress as it opens on Wednesday that traditionally provides the annual growth target for this year, among other policies and economic updates.

2025 is the last year of leader Xi Jinping’s “Made in China 2025”

blueprint for upgrading Chinese industries to become global leaders in advanced technology. It also marks the end of China’s 14th five-year plan, the party’s traditional mid-term policy-setting document.

A key priority is likely to be outlining ways to get Chinese consumers to spend more, a weak point in the state-dominated economy following the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The government has moved to provide more support for private industry in recent months as part of that effort. Exports and targeted spending increases have also helped. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Melco hosts special screening of ‘Ne Zha 2’ for local community



Melco Resorts & Entertainment organized a special screening of the animated film Ne Zha 2 at Studio City Cinema, inviting local families and children through commu-

nity organizations such as Sheng Kung Hui Macau and the Young Men’s Christian Association of Macau (YMCA).

The screening was part of Melco’s “Splendors of

China” initiative, aimed at promoting traditional Chinese culture.

Ne Zha 2, the first Chinese film to surpass RMB10 billion in box office revenue, combines mythology with modern storytelling, exploring themes of identity, love, and compassion.

Melco’s Volunteer Team attended the event with their children as part of the company’s “Teaching Children Values” program, which promotes youth development.

A second screening, in collaboration with the Women’s General Association of Macau, is scheduled for March 8 and will include an early education session for attendees.

Galaxy launches springtime pastry celebration



GalaxyMacau has launched its “The Art of Patisserie Collaboration Series - Ode to Spring,” a springtime pastry celebration co-created with renowned

pastry chefs.

This collaboration, featuring Chef Yam Lok Hin, Executive Pastry Chef of StarWorld Hotel, and Chef Chong Ko Wai, the Malaysian

Ambassador for Elle & Vire Professionnel, highlights their expertise in the pastry world.

The “Ode to Spring” artisan afternoon tea, available from March to May at Cha Bei and the Raffles Lounge & Terrace, offers a refined selection of four savory items and six handcrafted desserts.

Highlights include a lavender honey, apricot, and white chocolate mousse tart, a hibiscus and chocolate dessert, and a caramel cheesecake.

Savory options include crispy mushrooms and sakura shrimp toast. Guests can also enjoy a special “Red Mist” drink made with passion fruit, hibiscus, and calamansi.

HONG KONG

3,500 souped-up taxis set to take to the road

STEPHY ZHANG, CHINA DAILY, HONG KONG

HONG Kong's first new government-approved taxi fleets were launched yesterday, offering 3,500 cabs from five operators.

The new-style taxis deliver enhanced service and digital payments, marking a milestone in reforming the industry.

The first fleet is expected to take to the road by the end of March, with the rest set to be rolled out before July, Secretary for Transport and Logistics Mable Chan announced at the launching ceremony.

With each fleet providing 300 to 1,000 taxis, the five fleets will account for around one-fifth of the city's total of 18,000 cabs. Out of the 3,500 taxis, over 40 percent, approximately 1,500, will be brand new.

Each fleet will provide electric taxis, wheelchair-accessible taxis and premium taxis, to promote green transport and cater for diverse travel needs. Chan said there will be 1,900 electric taxis.

All the new taxis will provide multiple electronic payment methods for passengers' convenience. A "triple guarantee" system, including global positioning, driving records, and driver monitoring systems will be introduced to ensure vehicle safety.

The cabs are also required to display the official certificate and plate of their taxi fleet for easy identification.

Chan emphasized that taxi



CHINA DAILY

Five new taxi fleets with more than 3,500 vehicles are unveiled at a taxi fleet launching ceremony at Transport Department Vehicle Examination Complex in Tsing Yi

drivers bear the responsibility of shaping visitors' first impressions of Hong Kong and are intricately linked to residents' daily lives, necessitating progress and innovation to keep pace with the times.

She said the overwhelming response to the fleet project since its launch last year reflects the industry's readiness for innovation, calling the initiative a "milestone" in promoting smart, high-quality services.

She said she hopes that these fleets, as pioneers, will attract more drivers and taxis to join the initiative.

The five licensed operators — Big Boss Taxi Company, CMG Fleet Management, Tai Wo Management, SynCab Service, and Sino Development

(International) — were selected from 15 bidders in a government tender concluded in July 2024.

The first three company's fleets will operate exclusively on urban routes.

During the launching ceremony at the Tsing Yi Transport Department Vehicle Examination Complex, around 40 taxis, painted in distinctive colors representing their respective fleets, showcased their features.

Aaron Ng Hoi-shan, the managing director of Tai Wo Management, unveiled their new fleet "JOIE", which is set to launch by the end of March with 800 taxis, comprising 400 luxury models, 100 wheelchair-accessible units, and 300 hybrids.

Ng highlighted that their fleet incorporates various new features such as wireless internet and a ride-hailing platform, emphasizing its superior service quality for drivers.

He mentioned the establishment of a training and assessment system within their fleet, along with the introduction of a new intelligent digital monitoring system to ensure service quality.

Furthermore, in accordance with the suggestions in the Policy Address, Ng noted that their fleet will provide information in multiple languages besides Chinese and English, including Arabic, to cater to different nationalities.

Sonia Cheng Man-ye, executive director of SynCab, stated that their fleet began trial

operation in December and started accepting reservations from late-January, receiving positive feedback from passengers and drivers. Passengers can make reservations via phone hotlines or the fleet's website and app.

Sino Development director Franky Wong Siu-pang explained that their fleet will establish a customer service center to provide 24-hour support, including a rapid complaint resolution mechanism.

CMG's fleet, named Amigo — Spanish for "friend" — hopes to deliver an especially friendly service, their operation manager Edward Tong explained.

The fleet will offer a mobile app covering relevant inquiries and taxi booking services.

Big Boss chief operating officer Alex Chiu explained that the fleet's name signifies "the passenger is our big boss when they board".

Chiu said the fleet mainly offers luxury taxis, currently numbering 30, which are more suitable for long-distance trips such as airport transfers, and come equipped with features like massage chairs and ventilated and heated seats.

At the same ceremony, Chan also mentioned that in future all taxi drivers will be required to offer at least two electronic payment options.

She said that the necessary legislative amendments are expected to be introduced in the second quarter of this year, and they will hopefully be submitted to the Legislative Council during this session. **MDT/CHINA DAILY**

ENVIRONMENT

China plays major role in global climate affairs

CHINA is a critical force in the global energy transition and its involvement in international climate talks is essential, the head of the United Nations' climate science panel said last weekend.

Jim Skea, chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, made the remarks ahead of the release of its findings from its 62nd plenary session, which concluded on Saturday in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

Skea emphasized China's leading role in de-



AP PHOTO

veloping renewable energy, noting it has the world's highest levels of solar and wind energy.

"Without China's par-

ticipation, global efforts would be much less effective," Skea said, highlighting the country's importance in discussions

under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement.

The weeklong session focused on outlining reports for the IPCC's seventh assessment cycle, covering the physical science of climate change, its impacts, adaptation, vulnerability and mitigation, as well as greenhouse gas inventories.

The Hangzhou meeting stressed the importance of integrating climate action with economic growth and improved

quality of life.

"The idea of improving people's well-being and quality of life is not opposed to taking climate change action. They actually go together," Skea said.

He praised China's advancements in climate monitoring technologies, including early warning systems and meteorological satellites, which are crucial for tracking climate conditions, greenhouse gas emissions and socioeconomic changes, particularly in developing nations.

Xiong Shaoyuan, deputy head of China's delegation, said the nation will collaborate with other countries to build early warning platforms and share its experiences in meteorological services.

Established in 1988, the IPCC provides scientific information to governments on climate change. For its current cycle, the IPCC will focus on climate change in urban areas and carbon dioxide removal technologies, including carbon capture, utilization and storage. The first meeting on urban climate change will be held from March 10 to 14 in Osaka, Japan, Skea said. **MDT/CHINA DAILY**

97TH ACADEMY AWARDS

Strip club Cinderella story 'Anora' seizes Oscar

JAKE COYLE,
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

ANORA," a strip club Cinderella story without the fairy tale ending, was crowned best picture at the 97th Academy Awards on Sunday [yesterday, Macau time], handing Sean Baker's gritty, Brooklyn-set screwball farce Hollywood's top prize.

In a stubbornly fluctuating Oscar season, "Anora," the Palme d'Or-winner at the Cannes Film Festival, emerged as the unlikely frontrunner. Baker's tale of an erotic dancer who elopes with the son of a Russian oligarch — unusually explicit for a best-picture winner — was made for just \$6 million but went home with five big awards, including four for its scrappy indie director.

But Oscar voters, eschewing blockbuster contenders like "Wicked" and "Dune: Part Two," instead added "Anora" — which has one of the lowest box-office totals ever for a best picture winner with \$16 million in ticket sales — to a string of recent indie best picture winners, including "Everything Everywhere All at Once," "CODA" and "Nomadland."

For a film industry that's been transformed by streaming and humbled by economic turmoil, Baker and "Anora" epitomized a kind of cinematic purity. On the campaign trail, Baker called for the return to the 90-day exclusive theatrical release.

"Where did we fall in love with the movies? At the movie theater," Baker said Sunday, accepting the award for best director. "Filmmakers, keep



Mikey Madison



Sean Baker



Anora



Adrien Brody

making films for the big screen."

In personally winning four Oscars (picture, directing, editing, screenplay), Baker tied the mark held by Walt Disney, who won for four different films in 1954. That Baker and Disney share the record is ironic; his "The Florida Project" took place in a low-budget motel in the shadow of DisneyWorld.

"Long live independent film!" shouted Baker from the Dolby Theatre stage.

OTHER AWARDS SPREAD AROUND

Eight of the 10 movies nominated for best picture came away with at least one award in a ceremony buoyantly hosted by Conan O'Brien

that favored song and dance over strong political statements. Acting awards went to Madison, Adrien Brody, Kieran Culkin and Zoe Saldña.

Twenty-two years after winning best actor for "The Pianist," Brody won the same Oscar again for his performance as another Holocaust survivor in Brady Corbet's "The Brutalist." His win came over Timothée

Chalamet ("A Complete Unknown"), who had the chance of becoming the youngest best actor ever, a record owned by Brody.

"I'm here once again to represent the lingering traumas and the repercussions of war and systematic oppression and of antisemitism and racism and othering," said Brody. "I pray for a healthier and happier and

Key Oscar moments

ZOE Saldña was the favorite but that didn't diminish her emotional win.

After accepting the Oscar for best supporting actress for her work in "Emilia Pérez," Saldña spoke emotionally about her family and her grandmother, tearing up during her speech.

"My grandmother came to this country in 1961 — I am a proud child of immigrant parents," she said. "With dreams and dignity and hard-working hands, and I am the first American of Dominican origin to accept an Academy Award, and I know I will not be the last. I hope. The fact that I'm getting an award for a role where I got to sing and speak in Spanish — my grandmother, if she were here, she would be so delighted, this is for my grandmother."

The accolade comes after Saldña swept awards season, taking home the Golden Globe, Critics' Choice, BAFTA and SAG awards for playing lawyer Rita Mora Castro.

A 'WICKED' OPENING

Host Conan O'Brien took a back seat at the Oscars' opening number, ceding the floor to a "Wizard of Oz"-themed, 8-minute musical medley led by Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo.

Grande, in a red sparkly dress, performed a rendition of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" from "The Wizard of Oz." Then Erivo, in a white gown with floral embellishments, took the stage to sing a staggering rendition of "Home" from "The Wiz." They joined up for "Wicked's" "Defying Gravity,"



Zoe Saldña, first Dominican to win an award

with Grande kissing Erivo's ring.

Wildfire-battered Los Angeles, on this night, stood in for Oz, with the graphic "We Love LA" showing after the pair were finished. The show began with a medley of film moments that used Los An-

geles as a backdrop, including "La La Land," "Straight Outta Compton," "Iron Man 2" and "Mulholland Drive."

Then it was O'Brien's turn, comically pulling himself — and a missing shoe — from within the body of Demi Moore, in a take on her film

"The Substance."

007, CELEBRATED BY WOMEN

There was no James Bond movie nominated in 2024 but there was a big James Bond section at the Oscars that ate up a lot of telecast time.

To honor transfer of the franchise to Amazon, three singers — Lisa, Doja Cat and Raye — each sang a different 007 title song. Lisa sang "Live and Let Die," Doja Cat tackled "Diamonds Are Forever" and Raye did "Skyfall."

Amazon MGM announced Thursday that the studio has taken the creative reins of the 007 franchise after decades of family control. Longtime Bond custodians Michael G. Wilson and Barbara Broccoli said they would be stepping back. On Sunday, Halle Berry thanked them for being the "heart and soul" of Bond.

The tribute began with "The Substance" nominee Margaret Qualley in a red gown taking to the stage to dance acrobatically with a team of male dancers to the James Bond theme.

GENE HACKMAN HONORED

Morgan Freeman made an understated tribute to a

s' night

more inclusive world. If the past can teach us anything it's to not let hate go unchecked."

Madison won best actress for her breakthrough performance in "Anora," a victory that came over the category favorite, Demi Moore ("The Substance"). Both she and Baker spoke, as they did at the Cannes Film Festival where "Anora" won the Palme d'Or, about honoring the lives of sex workers.

Netflix's beleaguered contender, "Emilia Pérez," the lead nominee going into the show, went home with two awards — best song and best supporting actress, for Saldaña — after a scandal caused by offensive tweets by star Karla Sofia Gascón torpedoed its chances.

"I am a proud child of immigrant parents with dreams and dignity and hard-working hands," said Saldaña. "I am the first American of Dominican origin to accept an Academy Award, and I know I will not be the last."

AN EXPECTED WIN AND AN UPSET

The night's first award went to Kieran Culkin for best supporting actor. Culkin has cruised through the season, picking up award after award, for his performance alongside Jesse Eisenberg in "A Real Pain."

"I have no idea how I got here," said Culkin, "I've just been acting my whole life."

The biggest upset early on came in the best animated feature category. "Flow," the wordless Latvian film upset DreamWorks Animations'

"The Wild Robot." The win for "Flow," an ecological parable about a cat in a flooded world, was the first Oscar ever for a Latvian film.

"Thank you to my cats and dogs," director Gints Zilbalodis accepting the award.

"Wicked" and "The Brutalist" each wins two

"Wicked" stars Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo kicked off the ceremony with a tribute to Los Angeles following the wildfires that devastated the Southern California metropolis earlier this year. Grande sang "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" and Erivo performed Diana Ross' "Home" before the "Wicked" stars joined together for "Defying Gravity" from their blockbuster big-screen musical.

Later, "Wicked," the biggest box-office hit among the best-picture nominees, won awards for production design and costume design.

"I'm the first Black man to receive the costume design award," said costume designer Paul Tazewell, who couldn't finish that sentence before the crowd began to rise in a standing ovation. "I'm so proud of this."

Best makeup and hairstyling went to "The Substance" for its gory creations of beauty and body horror. "Dune: Part Two" won for both visual effects and sound, and its sandworm — arguably the star of the night — figured into multiple gags throughout the evening.

Brady Corbet's sprawling postwar epic "The Brutalist," shot in VistaVision, won for its cinematography, by Lol Crawley, and its score, by Daniel Blumberg. The papal thriller "Conclave," which some had picked to upset "Anora," went home with just one award, for best adapted screenplay.

POLITICS GO UNMENTIONED, AT FIRST

Though the Oscars featured the

first time an actor was nominated for portraying a sitting U.S. president (Sebastian Stan as a young Donald Trump in "The Apprentice"), politics went largely unmentioned through most of the ceremony.

The president's name was never uttered during the nearly four-hour ceremony. While the show featured several striking political moments, much of this year's Oscars was more dedicated to considering the fluctuating place of movies in today's culture, and in Los Angeles' resilience following the devastating wildfires of January.

O'Brien avoided politics completely in his opening monologue. The first exception was nearly two hours in, when presenter Daryl Hannah announced simply: "Slava Ukraini" ("Glory to Ukraine!")

"No Other Land," a documentary about Israeli occupation of the West Bank made by a collation of Palestinian and Israeli filmmakers, won best documentary. After failing to find a U.S. distributor, the filmmakers opted to self-distribute "No Other Land." It grossed more than any other documentary nominee.

"There is a different path, a political solution, without ethnic supremacy, with national rights for both our people," said Yuval Abraham, an Israeli, speaking beside co-director Basel Adra, a Palestinian. "And I have to say, as I am here, the foreign policy in this country is helping to block this path. Why? Can't you see that we are intertwined, that my people can't be truly safe if

BASEL'S PEOPLE AREN'T TRULY FREE?

Walter Salles' "I'm Still Here," a portrait of resistance under the Brazilian military dictatorship, won best international film. At one point, that award seemed a lock for "Emilia Pérez."

But while "Emilia Pérez" collapsed, "I'm Still Here" rode a wave of passionate support in Brazil and political timeliness elsewhere.

O'BRIEN SCORES IN OPENING

O'Brien, introduced as "four-time Oscar viewer," opened the ceremony with genial ribbing of the nominees and the former talk-show host's trademark self-deprecation.

"A Complete Unknown." "A Real Pain." "Nosferatu." These are just some of the names I was called on the red carpet," said O'Brien.

Hosting for the first time, O'Brien was a smash success. In his opening monologue, the former talk show host leaned on the disappointed face of John Lithgow, a full-throated "Chalamet!" from Adam Sandler and a gag of Amazon founder Jeff Bezos being delivered to the red carpet in a cardboard box.

O'Brien's most sincere comments were reserved for Los Angeles, itself, in speaking about the enduring "magic and grandeur" of film in wake of the wildfires. O'Brien, whose house in the Pacific Palisades was spared by the fires, then segued into a musical routine,

singing: "I won't waste time."

AN UNPREDICTABLE OSCAR YEAR

This year's Oscars, among the most unpredictable in years, unpooled after a turbulent year for the film industry. Ticket sales were down 3% from the previous year and more significantly from pre-pandemic times. The strikes of 2023 played havoc with release schedules in 2024. Many studios pulled back on production, leaving many out of work. The fires, in January, only added to the pain.

Last year's telecast, propelled by the twin blockbusters of "Oppenheimer" and "Barbie," led the Oscars to a four-year viewership high, with 19.5 million viewers. With smaller indies dominating this year, the academy was sure to be tested in finding as large an audience.

The ceremony took place days following the death of Gene Hackman. Morgan Freeman, his co-star in "Unforgiven" and "Under Suspicion," honored him.

"This week, our community lost a giant," said Freeman, "and I lost a dear friend." **MDT/AP**



Lisa, center, sings "Live and Let Die" during the Oscars

friend: Gene Hackman

Freeman, who starred with Hackman in two movies, kicked off the in memoriam section with a somber note about Hackman, who was found dead last week alongside his wife.

"This week, our community lost a giant. And I lost a dear friend, Gene Hackman," Freeman began in his speech. "I had the pleasure of working alongside Gene on two films, 'Unforgiven' and 'Under Suspicion.' Like everyone who ever shared a scene with him, I learned he was a generous performer and a man whose gifts elevated everyone's work."

"Gene always said, 'I don't think about legacy. I just hope people remember me as someone who tried to do good work,'" Freeman continued. "I think I speak for us all when I say, 'Gene, you will be remembered for that, and so much more.' Rest in peace, my friend." **MDT/AP**

FLOW," a wordless cat parable that became the first Latvian film to win an Academy Award, prompted a sleepless night for Latvians celebrating the historic accolade.

"Flow" won the Oscar for animated feature at Sunday's 97th Academy Awards in Los Angeles, which aired starting at 2 a.m. Monday, in an upset over DreamWorks Animations' "The Wild Robot."

The Oscar statuette is the latest source of hometown pride for the Baltic country of nearly 1.9 million people who have embraced "Flow" and filmmaker Gints Zilbalodis in droves since the world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival in May 2024.

The National Film Centre of Latvia calls the film "an unprecedented

HOMETOWN PRIDE IN RIGA AFTER 'FLOW' WINS LATVIA'S FIRST OSCAR



phenomenon in the history of Latvian cinema."

More than 320,000 people have watched it in theaters across Latvia, an audience larger than any other film screened in the country in the last

30 years, according to the film center. And over 15,000 people over 10 days visited the Latvian National Museum of Art to see the film's Golden Globe Award — also Latvia's first — on public

display in January.

After thanking his cats and dogs during his acceptance speech, Zilbalodis acknowledged the momentous nature of his win. The film was also nominated for "Best International Feature Film" at the Academy Awards.

"This is the first time a film from Latvia has ever been nominated," Zilbalodis told the Los Angeles audience. "So it really means a lot to us. We are very inspired and we hope to be back soon."

Latvian musician Ralfs Eilands called the pre-dawn ceremony as "incredible! The best sleepless night in my life!" in a post on X.

The film — called "Straume" in Latvian — is a peaceful, yet post-apocalyptic, fable about a black cat, dog, capybara, ring-tailed lemur and secretary bird trying to survive a catastrophic flood. The film has no dialogue and forces viewers to be mesmerized by the unlikely relationship and understanding between the species trying to escape the rising waters.

"This is a great and historic day for Latvia! And we will all need time to understand what happened, because something big and beautiful occurred!" Latvian President Edgars Rinkvis wrote on X following the win. **MDT/AP**

PHILIPPINES

MANILA CONFIDENT TRUMP WILL CONTINUE MILITARY PATROLS IN DISPUTED SEA

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

THE Philippines' top diplomat to the United States expressed confidence yesterday that President Donald Trump's new administration would continue military patrols in the disputed South China Sea and move ahead with an agreed expansion of the U.S. military presence in the Philippines, as concerns rise over China's increasingly assertive actions in the region.

Ambassador Jose Romualdez, who has had meetings with Trump's diplomatic, defense and congressional officials, said the U.S. would likely maintain its support to help modernize the Philippine military, which is at the forefront of deterring China's growing assertiveness in the disputed waters.

"All of that will remain," Romualdez told foreign correspondents at a news conference in Manila. "I am confident that it will."

A Washington meeting between Trump and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. was being arranged and could happen as soon as both leaders' schedules allow, maybe in the spring, Romualdez said.

There was no immediate comment by Chinese officials on Romualdez's statements.

Trump's "America First" foreign policy and moves to roll back Washington's development assistance and security aid worldwide have set off

concerns about the scale and depth of the U.S. commitment to the Indo-Pacific in his new term.

In recent talks between Philippine defense and military officials and their American counterparts, both sides have reaffirmed their commitment to maintain robust ties.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio met Philippine Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference in Germany last month and "not only reaffirmed U.S. commitment to the United

States-Philippines alliance but noted his enthusiasm for building an even more invested and enduring relationship," State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said then.

Their "discussions included the ongoing bilateral coordination on addressing China's destabilizing actions in the South China Sea and increasing economic cooperation on infrastructure, critical minerals, information technology and energy, including through civil nuclear cooperation," Bruce said.

Confrontations between China and the Philippines have flared up in recent years in the South China Sea, a major global trade route, where Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei have had overlapping claims for decades.

Romualdez said helping the Philippines stand up to threats to unhindered passage and overflight in the contested waters would benefit the U.S. and other allied and friendly countries, which are strengthening their defense ties with Manila.

"We're right in the forefront

of this push to make sure that the Indo-Pacific region remains free and clear," he said.

Trump's predecessor, Joe Biden, took steps to strengthen an arc of security alliances in the Indo-Pacific to better counter China's assertiveness, including in any future confrontation over self-governed Taiwan.

That has aligned with Marcos' thrust to strengthen his country's external defenses to protect the territorial interests of the Philippines in the South China Sea. **MDT/AP**



Philippine Ambassador to the U.S. Jose Romualdez (center) during a news conference with the Foreign Correspondents Association in Manila, yesterday

MYANMAR

Head of military government travels to ally Russia for talks with Putin

THE head of Myanmar's military government traveled to Russia yesterday on an official visit to a major ally of the Southeast Asian nation that has been shunned by much of the West for overthrowing a democratically elected government and subsequent brutal repression.

Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, who departed from the military airport in the capital, Naypyi-

taw, will meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The general is accompanied by fellow members of the ruling military council and Cabinet, as well as military officials, state television MRTV reported.

The report said Min Aung Hlaing will also meet with other top Russian officials and discuss bilateral ties, economic affairs and security with the aim to strengthen



Myanmar's military leader Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing waves as he departs from Naypyidaw international airport, Myanmar

strategic cooperation. Russia, along with China, is a major supporter and arms supplier of Myanmar's military government. Rus-

sian-made fighter jets are used in attacks on territory under the control of ethnic minority groups, many of which are allies with pro-democracy resistance forces.

Russia defends Myanmar's military government in international forums, and the ruling generals generally support Moscow's foreign policy agenda.

Western nations have ostracized Myanmar's ruling generals and maintain economic and political sanctions against them because of their takeover and violent repression of opposition, which has led to the deaths of thousands of civilians and given

rise to an armed conflict widely seen as a civil war.

The trip is Min Aung Hlaing's fourth to Russia since his army seized power in February 2021 from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. His one known previous meeting with Putin was on the sidelines of the Eastern Economic Forum held in the eastern Russian city of Vladivostok in September 2022.

Russia and Myanmar have also held joint military drills and signed a pact on developing nuclear power. Myanmar's military government is planning to allow general laborers to go to Russia for work. **MDT/AP**

UK

Starmar says Europe is at 'crossroads in history' as leaders agree to steps to Ukraine peace

BRIAN MELLEY &
EMMA BURROWS, LONDON

B RITISH Prime Minister Keir Starmer rallied his European counterparts yesterday [Macau time] to shore up their borders and throw their full weight behind Ukraine as he announced outlines of a plan to end Russia's war.

"Every nation must contribute to that in the best way that it can, bringing different capabilities and support to the table, but all taking responsibility to act, all stepping up their own share of the burden," he said.

Starmer's exhortation to 18 fellow leaders that they need to do the heavy lifting for their own security comes two days after U.S. backing of Ukraine appeared in jeopardy when President Donald Trump lashed out at Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and said he wasn't grateful enough for America's support.

The meeting had been overshadowed by the extraordinary scolding that took place on live television at the White House. Starmer used the opportunity as part of his broader effort to bridge the gap between Europe and the U.S. and also salvage what had seemed like the start of a peace process

before Friday's spat.

Starmer said he had worked with France and Ukraine on a plan to end the war and that the group of leaders — mostly from Europe — had agreed on four things.

The steps toward peace would: keep aid flowing to Kyiv and maintain economic pressure on Russia to strengthen Ukraine's hand; make sure Ukraine is at the bargaining table and any peace deal must ensure its sovereignty and security; and continue to arm Ukraine to deter future invasion.

A 'COALITION OF THE WILLING'

Finally, Starmer said they would develop a "coalition of the willing" to defend Ukraine and guarantee the peace.

"Not every nation will feel able to contribute but that can't mean that we sit back," he said. "Instead, those willing will intensify planning now with real urgency. The U.K. is prepared to back this with boots on the ground and planes in the air, together with others."

It is far from certain whether Russian President Vladimir Putin will accept any such plan, which Starmer said would require strong U.S. backing. He did not specify what that meant, though he told the BBC before the summit that there were "intense discussions" to

get a security guarantee from the U.S.

"If there is to be a deal, if there is to be a stopping of the fighting, then that agreement has to be defended, because the worst of all outcomes is that there is a temporary pause and then Putin comes again," Starmer said.

Starmer said he will later bring a more formal plan to the U.S. and work with Trump.

Before arriving in London, French president Emmanuel Macron suggested in an interview with a French newspaper that he and Starmer are proposing a "truce in the air, on the seas and energy infrastructures" that would last a month.

There would be no European troops in the coming weeks and troops would only be deployed on the ground at a later stage, he said.

The question, Macron said, is "how we use this time to try and get an accessible truce, with negotiations that will take several weeks and then, once peace is signed, a deployment."

TWO DIPLOMATIC STEPS FORWARD, ONE BACK

Europe has been anxious since Trump initiated direct peace talks with Putin, who had been isolated by most Western leaders since invading Ukraine three years ago.

The scramble to remain relevant and protect European interests as their once stalwart ally appeared to be cozying up to Putin was even more troubling when Trump called Zelenskyy a dictator and falsely said Ukraine started the war.

Meetings last week had provided some hope — until Zelenskyy's trip to the White House on Friday.

Visits to the Oval Office by Starmer and Macron, who had declared his visit a "turning point," were seen as steps in the right direction. The meetings were cordial and Trump even took a gentler tone toward Ukraine, though he would not commit to providing U.S. security guarantees and maintained that Europe would need to provide peacekeeping troops.

Within 12 hours of Starmer's return from Washington, the talk of peace seemed to collapse as Trump and Vice President JD Vance berated Zelenskyy for challenging Trump's assertions that Putin could be trusted.

During his press conference, Starmer rejected the suggestion that the U.S. was no longer a reliable ally.

"There are no two countries as closely aligned as our two countries and our defense, our security and intelligence is intertwined in a way no two other countries are, so it's an

important and reliable ally for us," he said.

STARMER DOES NOT TRUST PUTIN

Starmer told the BBC before the summit that he does not trust Russian President Vladimir Putin but does trust Trump.

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni said she was sorry for what happened with Zelenskyy in Washington. Meloni is both a strong Ukraine supporter and — as head of a far-right party — she is a natural ally of Trump. She was the only European leader to attend his inauguration.

She said told reporters following the meeting that Europe must remain focused on its common goals and that "dividing the West would be disastrous for everyone."

"We need to work to reinforce our unity, and I think that Italy can play a role, not just in its own interest, but in everyone's," she said. "I don't want to take any other scenario into consideration."

Starmer hosted the meeting at Lancaster House, a 200-year-old mansion near Buckingham Palace, following his charm offensive with Macron to persuade Trump to put Ukraine at the center of negotiations and tilt his allegiances toward Europe.

Leaders from Germany, Denmark, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Canada, Finland, Sweden, the Czech Republic and Romania were at the summit. The Turkish foreign minister, the NATO secretary-general and the presidents of the European Commission and European Council were also in attendance.

TURNING UKRAINE INTO A 'STEEL PORCUPINE'

Starmer used sweeping terms to describe the challenge ahead, saying Europe was at a crossroads in its history and needed to step up to meet "once in a generation moment."

European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen emerged from the meeting and said she would present a plan to "rearm Europe" to bolster the bloc's security after a long period of underinvestment.

As for the future of war-torn Ukraine, von der Leyen said it needs security guarantees.

"We have to put Ukraine in a position of strength so that it has the means to fortify itself and to protect itself," von der Leyen said. "It's basically turning Ukraine into a steel porcupine that is indigestible for potential invaders."

Last week, Starmer pledged to boost military spending to 2.5% of gross domestic product by 2027. Other European nations may follow suit.

Starmer pledged to supply more arms to defend Ukraine, announcing that the U.K. will use 1.6 billion pounds (\$2 billion) in export financing to supply 5,000 air defense missiles. MDT/AP



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer, front center, hosts the European leaders' summit to discuss Ukraine, at Lancaster House, London

AP PHOTO



USA

MUSK'S EMBRACE OF RIGHT-WING POLITICS RISKS SINKING TESLA'S STOCK

BERNARD CONDON,
NEW YORK

ELON Musk's car company is required each year to report to investors all the bad things that could happen to it, and the latest version lists every imaginable threat from costly lawsuits to out-of-control battery fires to war and another epidemic.

But there's barely any mention in the latest annual update of Musk's full-bore entry into right-wing politics, which some experts say is turning off potential customers who don't share his views.

"It's marketing 101: Don't involve yourself in politics," said New York brand consultant Robert Passikoff. "People will stop buying your products."

It may be too late. Tesla sales plunged 45% in Europe in January, according to research firm Jato Dynamics, even as overall electric vehicle sales rose. That comes after a report of falling sales in California, its biggest U.S. market, and the first annual drop globally for the company last year.

"I don't even want to drive it," said Model 3 owner John Parnell, a Democrat from Ross, California, adding that he also is cancelling his order for the company's Cybertruck, losing a \$100 deposit. "He's destroying the brand with his politics."

Car industry analysts say it's too early to say for sure how much damage Musk is causing to Tesla because so many other factors could explain its current troubles. It's best selling vehicle,

the Model Y, is coming out with a new version this year, leading potential Tesla buyers to hold off purchases right now. And European and Chinese manufacturers are finally catching up to the world's EV leader, offering cars with battery life and dependability that are competitive.

But, if anything, that makes Musk's political comments even more reckless, auto analysts say. "Musk thinks he can say anything he wants to and doesn't think Tesla will suffer any consequences," said Morningstar analyst Seth Goldstein. "Tesla was in the sweet spot. Now it has competition."

The sales numbers were particularly bad in Germany and France in January, down roughly 60% each, more than the average decline for the more than two-dozen European countries surveyed. Sales in France fell another 26% in February.

More worrisome was the breakdown for Tesla's individual models. Sales of Tesla's Model 3 dropped 33% across all European countries even though that car is not being updated and there is no reason for buyers to wait

"Part of the population is not happy with his views, his political activism," said Jato senior analyst Felipe Munoz who had shrugged off the boycott threat earlier this year, but is now having second thoughts.

Many Tesla buyers used to be wealthy, environmentally-conscious professionals, often liberal, who were attracted to Musk's talk about how his EVs

could help save the planet from fossil-fuel destruction.

Not anymore. "I used to be adored by the left," Musk said in an interview with Tucker Carlson on February 18 as his stock was halfway through a nearly 30% plunge for the month. "Less so these days."

His decision to spend \$270 million on Donald Trump's presidential campaign and publicly back him was risky enough for his business. Then he doubled down, pursuing a slash-and-burn strategy as head of Trump's government efficiency team and taking his political revolution and incendiary talk abroad.

He has backed the far-right, pro-Russian, anti-Muslim party in Germany, called the British prime minister an "evil tyrant" who runs a "police state," and stated recently about a U.S. neighbor and major Tesla market, "Canada is not a real country."

The backlash has been fierce. Tesla showrooms in the U.S. have been besieged by protesters, its vehicles vandalized and bumper stickers appearing on its cars with sayings such as, "I bought it before Elon went nuts."

An effigy of Musk was hung in Milan and image of him doing a straight-arm salute projected on a Tesla factory outside Berlin. In London, a bus stop poster of him above the word "swastikas" lit up social media. A Polish government minister called for a Tesla boycott.

"I will not buy a Tesla again,"

said Jens Fischer, a 50-year-old microscope salesman in Witten, Germany, who thinks Musk is "destabilizing democracy" and has slapped one of those "Elon went nuts" stickers on his Model 3. "I'd sell if I got a good offer."

Tesla investor Ross Gerber says Musk has somehow managed to marry the world's best product with the world's worst marketing.

"People want to buy stuff that makes them feel good, you don't want politics involved," said Gerber, a money manager whose portfolios hold nearly \$60 million in Tesla stock. "It's even worse when you have such divisive issues, whether it's firing climate scientists or taking aid away from starving African children."

Boycotts have a habit of fizzling out, and Morningstar's Goldstein says that buying a car is too big a decision and costs too much to make them successful targets, anyway.

One Tesla owner, Londoner Harry Chathli, is unmoved by the backlash, saying he has no intention of getting rid of his Tesla S. He has nothing but praise for Musk who he calls a visionary for transforming "the way we think about transportation and the future of our planet."

But if Tesla's stock is any indicator, the company's prospects are deteriorating, and Musk's position in the Trump administration isn't helping. As of Friday, it has dropped 37% since its Inauguration Day, a loss of \$550 billion in investor wealth. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1975 COMIC GENIUS CHAPLIN IS KNIGHTED



Silent film legend Charlie Chaplin has become Sir Charles after a ceremony at Buckingham Palace.

The star of such films as *The Kid* and *The Great Dictator* was knighted in the New Year's Honours List.

The ceremony took place just miles from the south London district where he spent much of his childhood.

Sir Charles was accompanied to Buckingham Palace by his fourth wife, Oona, and the two youngest of his nine children.

The slapstick legend, famed for his acrobatic routines, received his knighthood, from a wheelchair.

It was a reflection of just how late in life - at the age of 85 - his honour had finally come.

As he was pushed into the hall where the ceremony was taking place the band struck up his signature tune, the theme from his 1951 film, *Limelight*.

He sat stiffly as the Queen tapped him on each shoulder and stooped to hang the KBE insignia around his neck.

The two then chatted briefly before Sir Charles was wheeled to the front of the hall to watch the rest of the ceremony.

Speaking to reporters afterwards Sir Charles said he had been "dumbfounded" by the occasion.

He said the Queen had thanked him for what he had done and that his films had helped her a great deal.

Sir Charles' knighthood follows years of calls for him to be honoured.

In the 1940s and 1950s he was accused of "communist sympathies" and vilified in his adopted home of the United States.

In 1952 his US visa was cancelled forcing Chaplin to relocate to Switzerland.

Three years ago, in what was seen as an act of contrition, he was awarded a special Oscar by the US' Academy of Motion Pictures.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Charlie Chaplin died in 1977. In 2002 confidential Foreign Office papers from 1956 released by Britain's Public Record Office revealed the comic's knighthood had been delayed because of his perceived "communist" sympathies. Worries about his morals had also played their part - he was twice married to 16-year-olds and once lost a paternity suit. Charlie Chaplin's body was stolen from his grave and was missing for 11 weeks until recovered in May 1978. Two men were convicted of the theft and trying to extort money from the Chaplin family.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Creative ideas abound. You're exceptionally clever with words over the next three weeks, with Mercury in your sign. Take notes. Write, articulate and communicate.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Update plans. Over the next three weeks, with Mercury in Aries, finish old business. Review what worked and didn't. Notice unspoken clues and intuition.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Your friends are a constant source of inspiration. Team participation scores over the next three weeks, with Mercury in Aries. Collaboration flourishes in communication.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Prepare to jump when the moment is right. Watch carefully for professional opportunities, with Mercury in Aries for three weeks. Expect a test.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Make long-distance connections. Travel beckons over the next three weeks, with Mercury in Aries. Focus on your studies and research. Get the word out.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Resolve a financial choice or determination. It's easier to organize shared finances, with Mercury in Aries over the next few weeks. Profit through collaboration.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Communication flourishes between partners, with Mercury in Aries. Delegate, compromise and negotiate terms. Remind someone what you appreciate about them. Share resources and info.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 What you're learning energizes your work, health and fitness, with Mercury in Aries. Discover efficiencies and best practices. Grow through collaboration with coaches.

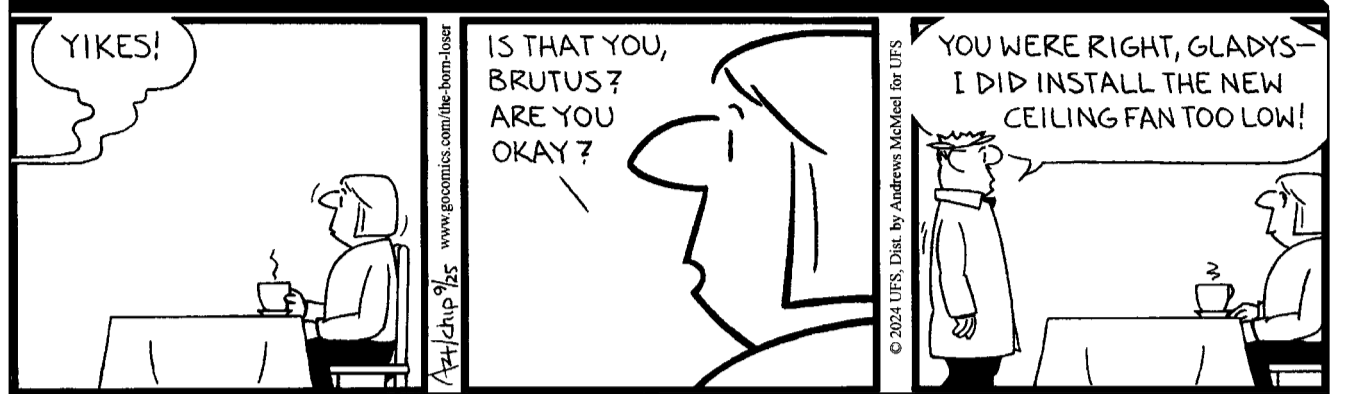
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Put your love into words. Express your deepest feelings. Romantic expressions blossom over the next three weeks, with Mercury in Aries. Get creative.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Discuss domestic dreams and possibilities. Advance home renovation projects, with Mercury in Aries for three weeks. Collaborate with your family.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 You're especially creative. Words flow with ease. Learn voraciously, with Mercury in Aries. Write, record and report. Create works of beauty. Communications travel farther.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Profit through communications. For nearly three weeks, with Mercury in Aries, develop new sources of income. Track your finances for growth. Make lucrative connections.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	0	8	cloudy
Changchun	-9	3	fine
Chengdu	8	16	overcast
Chongqing	10	18	cloudy
Fuzhou	16	21	rain
Guangzhou	13	21	rain
Guiyang	4	11	overcast
Haikou	22	30	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	7	10	cloudy
Harbin	-14	1	cloudy
Hefei	0	5	overcast
Nanjing	4	8	overcast
Shanghai	6	9	rain
Taipei	17	21	rain
Wuhan	1	8	overcast
Hong Kong	21	24	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	0	3	snow
Frankfurt	-1	11	cloudy
Paris	1	12	cloudy
London	1	11	sunny
New York	7	12	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Final notice?; 5- Pesto ingredient; 10- On ___ with (equal to); 14- Pulverize potatoes; 15- Black-wooded tree; 16- Boot bottom; 17- ___ uncertain terms; 18- Next largest scoop after tea; 20- Aquarium fish; 22- Beverage commonly drunk in England; 23- Ventilated; 24- The color of honey; 26- Remote; 27- Voted into a seat; 30- Open-minded; 34- Disappear; 35- Hardy girl; 36- Swelled head; 37- Electrically versatile; 38- Between Venus and Mars; 40- Futile; 41- Agnus ___; 42- Very funny; 43- Winter hanger; 45- Erik of "CHIPS"; 47- One more; 48- Mag. staffers; 49- Gardener's tool; 50- Gettysburg general; 53- ___-pitch softball; 54- Floor models; 58- Appraisal; 61- A Chaplin; 62- Stick around; 63- Bolshevik leader; 64- Takes advantage of; 65- Having all one's marbles; 66- Brewer's need; 67- RR stops;

DOWN 1- Leave off; 2- Cause of ruin; 3- "___ She Lovely?"; 4- ___ surgery opens the chest; 5- Wager; 6- Lessened; 7- On the wagon; 8- To Live and Die ___; 9- Caustic stuff; 10- Have high hopes; 11- Needy; 12- Drug-yielding plant; 13- Tear; 19- Swedish imports; 21- Tsp. and tbsp.; 25- Decapitates; 26- Angling; 27- Elude; 28- Shoe ties; 29- Break up; 30- Allow; 31- Arrive at; 32- Light on one's feet; 33- Hermit; 35- Singer's syllable; 39- I've got it!; 40- Resembling glass; 42- Mythical hell; 44- Like some dorms; 46- Late-night flight; 47- Handsome young man; 49- Actress Verdugo; 50- Church service; 51- Como ___ usted?; 52- Slippery ___ eel; 53- Hook's helper; 55- The majority of; 56- Draft status; 57- Mouth off; 59- Devious; 60- Big bang cause; :

Yesterday's solution

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

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	
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RUGBY

LEAGUE RETURNS TO VEGAS; TRIES GALORE, BIG HITS AND A CLIFF-HANGER FINISH

RUGBY league returned to Las Vegas yesterday [Macau time] in its continuing mission to convert Americans to football without pads, drawing 50,000 fans to Allegiant stadium where the grit of the quintessential Australian sport mixed with the glamor of the entertainment capital.

Curious locals mixed with traveling fans of teams from Australia, New Zealand and England on a day that saw four matches: two from Australia's National Rugby League (NRL), one from England's Super League and a women's international between world champion Australia and England.

The day delivered tries galore, big hits and a cliff-hanger finale.

The NRL has committed until 2028 to play regular season matches in Las Vegas as part of a strategic plan to win an international audience for the sport.

Australia has been cour-



ting the US market since 1987 when it played a State of Origin match between New South Wales and Queensland in Long Beach. Sunday's crowd was an improvement on last season when 40,746 people watched the Manly Sea Eagles play the South Sydney Rabbitohs and the Sydney Roosters play the Brisbane Broncos.

RAIDERS RAMPANT

Seb Kris scored the first try of the 2025 season after six

minutes and added another as the Canberra Raiders eased to a 30-8 win over the New Zealand Warriors.

Xavier Savage also scored a double and Matthew Timoko added a try from a sharp, well-directed Raiders attack. Kurt Capewell and Roger Tuivasa-Sheck scored tries for the Warriors who made too many handling errors to produce a sustained attacking threat.

The Warriors also were lax on defense, missing 40 tackles

in the opening match of the NRL season.

PANTHERS WIN THRILLER AGAINST SHARKS

Reigning premiers the Penrith Panthers delivered a cliff-hanger finale, producing a 75th minute try to Daine Laurie to clinch a 28-22 win over the Cronulla Sharks.

The Panthers led 12-10 at halftime and 22-10 after 52 minutes with tries to Isaah Yeo, Izack Tago, Laurie and Paul Alamoti. But the Sharks rallied strongly with second half tries to Kayal Iro and Addin Fonua-Blake to cut the lead to two points.

Laurie's late try allowed the Panther's to celebrate coach Ivan Cleary's 55th birthday in Vegas.

JILLAROOS EXCEL

Halfback Tarryn Aiken pulled the strings as the Australian Jillaroos crushed England 90-4 in the women's international.

Aiken produced an extraor-

dinary play-making performance, picking England apart and laying on five tries for Tamika Upton, including a first half hat-trick. Julia Robinson and Jessica Sergis also scored hat-tricks in a 17 tries to one victory. England's only try was scored by Georgia Roche 34 seconds from fulltime.

England prop Vicky Whitfield was taken to hospital after a second half head clash with Sarah Togatuki which stopped the game for 10 minutes.

WHAT HAPPENS IN VEGAS

It wouldn't be NRL Las Vegas without some naughtiness. Raiders players Hudson Young and Morgan Smithies were forced to apologize after being temporarily evicted from their hotel Thursday over a scuffle involving an inflatable baseball bat.

"Obviously things got a little bit out of hand on Thursday night," Young said. "I'm embarrassed for myself, my teammates, the NRL and the game." MDT/AP

AD



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FOOTBALL | CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

In-form Atletico Madrid looks to end its slump against city rival Real

TALES AZZONI,
MADRID

THE Madrid derby takes center stage in the round of 16 of the Champions League, with Atletico Madrid in a commanding position to try to finally get the best of rival Real Madrid in the European competition.

Madrid, the record 15-time European champion, has been a thorn for Atletico in the Champions League over the years, beating the city rival in two finals and eliminating it from the competition the other two times they faced off in the knockout rounds.

But this Atletico arrives for Tuesday's first leg at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium playing some of its best soccer since coach Diego Simeone took over more than a decade ago, and showing the confidence that it can take on the longtime rival head-on.

The round of 16 will begin this week to cap the inaugural season of a new Champions League format that featured a league phase and a playoff round.

The other last-16 matchups will include the local rivalry of German clubs Bayern Munich and Bayer Leverkusen, and powerhouses Paris Saint-Germain and Liverpool going against each other.

Atletico Madrid enters the match against Madrid in good form and enjoying one of its best seasons under Simeone. The team is ahead of its rival in the Spanish league standings, and is only one point behind leader Barcelona.

Atletico hasn't lost any of its matches this season against either Madrid or Barcelona. In the Spanish league, it beat the Catalan club 2-1 in Barcelona and drew 1-1 in both games it played against Madrid. Atletico hasn't lost to Madrid in four consecutive matches, having eliminated the city rival in the round



of 16 of the Copa del Rey last season.

"When you choose to be a coach, you want to face the strongest opponents, and to compete in every competition with the intention of winning," Simeone said ahead of the matchup against Madrid.

Simeone's team finished fifth in the league phase of the Champions League, while Madrid was only 11th and had to play extra playoff games against Manchester City.

The last time Atletico faced Madrid in the Champions League, it was eliminated in the semifinals in 2017. It also lost to Madrid in the final both in 2014 and 2016, and in the 2015 quarterfinals.

Overall, Atletico has won only three of its 10 meetings against Madrid in UEFA competitions, with five losses and two draws.

Madrid is coming off a loss at Real Betis in the Spanish league, while Atletico won 1-0 against Athletic Bilbao.

PSG VS. LIVERPOOL

Premier League leader Liverpool finished the league phase in first place but there was little reward as it will have to take on France powerhouse Paris Saint-Germain in the round of 16.

PSG struggled in the league phase, finishing in 15th place, but picked up momentum in the playoffs by routing fellow French club Brest 3-0 in the first leg and 7-0 in the return game at home, when seven different players scored.

Liverpool won seven of its eight Champions League matches this season, with the lone defeat coming at PSV Eindhoven in the final matchday, when it had little to lose.

BENFICA VS. BARCELONA

An in-form Barcelona, which had the second-best campaign in the league phase, will face a familiar foe in Benfica.

The two teams met in the league phase, with the Barcelona winning a 5-4 thriller in Lisbon. Benfica stunned Barcelona 3-0 at home in the group stage in 2021-22, and held the Spanish powerhouse to a 0-0 away draw in results that helped keep the five-time champion from advancing to the knockout stage at the time.

PSV VS. ARSENAL

PSV Eindhoven brought one of the surprises of the league phase with its 3-2 win over Liverpool, and then it got past Juventus with an extra-time victory in the playoffs.

It will now face another Premier League team in top form: An Arsenal squad that is second in the Premier behind Liverpool and that finished third in the league phase of the Champions League.

BAYERN MUNICH VS. BAYER LEVERKUSEN

The all-German encounter will feature a Leverkusen side that finished sixth in the league phase and a Bayern team that needed a stoppage-

-time goal by Alphonso Davies to get through the playoffs against Celtic.

Xabi Alonso's Leverkusen trails Bayern by eight points in the Bundesliga, but did not concede any attempts on target when the two played a 0-0 draw last month.

OTHER MATCHUPS

Last year's runner-up, Borussia Dortmund will take on a Lille side that thrived in the league phase, finishing seventh after a campaign that included wins over both Madrid and Atletico Madrid.

Aston Villa also was a league-phase surprise,

losing only once to finish eighth and set up the round-of-16 matchup against a Club Brugge squad that defeated Villa 1-0 at home in November. Brugge eliminated Atalanta in the playoffs.

Inter Milan conceded only once — in a 1-0 loss at Leverkusen — en route to a fourth-place finish in the league phase. It will face a Feyenoord team that will have Robin van Persie as its third coach in the Champions League this season. **MDT/AP**

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

	Date	Time	Home	Away	ODDS
Wed	Mar 05	1:45	Club Brugge	Aston Villa	H 3, D 3.5, A 2.5
Wed	Mar 05	4:00	Borussia Dortmund	Lille	H 1.73, D 4, A 5.1
Wed	Mar 05	4:00	PSV	Arsenal	H 4, D 3.5, A 2.05
Wed	Mar 05	4:00	Real Madrid	Atletico Madrid	H 1.93, D 3.6, A 4.2
Thu	Mar 06	1:45	Feyenoord	Inter Milan	H 5.75, D 4.4, A 1.61
Thu	Mar 06	4:00	Bayern Munich	Bayer Leverkusen	H 1.85, D 4, A 4.5
Thu	Mar 06	4:00	Benfica	Barcelona	H 3.8, D 4.2, A 1.91
Thu	Mar 06	4:00	PSG	Liverpool	H 2.4, D 3.8, A 2.82

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OPINION

The Conversation

Andrew Latham, Macalester College



THE HISTORY AND POLITICS OF OFTEN-MALIGNED ISOLATIONISM

Few terms in American foreign policy discourse are as misunderstood or politically charged as “isolationism.”

Often used as a political weapon, the term conjures images of a retreating America, indifferent to global challenges.

However, the reality is more complex. For example, some commentators argue that President Donald Trump’s return to the White House signals a new era of isolationism. But others contend his foreign policy is more akin to “sovereignism,” which prioritizes national autonomy and decision-making free from external constraints, and advocates for international engagement only when it directly serves a nation’s interests.

The idea of avoiding foreign entanglements has been a part of American strategic thinking since the country’s founding. President George Washington’s famous warning against “entangling alliances” reflected a desire to insulate the young republic from European conflicts.

Throughout the 19th century, this sentiment shaped U.S. policy, though not exclusively. The country expanded its influence in the Western Hemisphere, maintained strong economic ties abroad and occasionally intervened in regional affairs.

This cautious approach allowed the U.S. to develop its economy and military strength without becoming deeply embroiled in European rivalries.

After World War I, isolationism became more pronounced. The staggering human and financial costs of the war led many Americans to question deep international involvement.

Though getting increasingly involved in the European conflict in the years before the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, that day officially led the U.S. into World War II, marking the definitive end of traditional isolationism. With the war’s conclusion, American strategic thinking shifted, recognizing that even partial disengagement was no longer an option in a globalized world.

In the postwar era, isolationism devolved from a coherent strategic perspective into a term of political derision. During the Cold War, those who opposed military alliances like NATO or U.S. interventions in Korea and Vietnam were often dismissed as isolationists, regardless of their actual policy preferences.

This framing marginalized critics of U.S. global engagement, even when their concerns were grounded in strategic prudence rather than a reflexive desire to withdraw from the world.

The same pattern persisted going into the 21st century.

Many of those calling for an end to America’s “forever wars” did not argue for global retreat but for a prioritization of national interests over the broad defense of the so-called rules-based international order.

A persistent myth is that isolationism represents a total disengagement from the world.

In recent years, “restraint” has gained traction as a more precise and useful framework for U.S. foreign policy. Unlike isolationism, restraint does not imply withdrawal from global affairs but rather advocates a more selective and strategic approach.

Proponents argue that the U.S. should avoid unnecessary wars, focus on core national interests and work with its allies to maintain stability rather than relying on unilateral military action. Advocates of restraint suggest that recalibrating U.S. foreign policy would allow the country to address pressing domestic concerns while maintaining a strong international presence where it matters most.

As the U.S. reassesses decades of intervention, restraint offers a middle path between disengagement and unrestrained global activism. It encourages a more thoughtful and sustainable approach to foreign policy that prioritizes long-term stability and national interests over automatic involvement in conflicts.

Moving beyond the outdated and politically charged debate over isolationism would, I believe, allow for a more productive conversation about how the U.S. can engage globally in a way that is both effective and aligned with its strategic interests.

[Abridged]

UN RIGHTS CHIEF LAMENTS ‘SHIFT IN DIRECTION’ IN UNITED STATES

THE BUZZ

The U.N. human rights chief has expressed concern about a “fundamental shift in direction” taking place in the United States when it comes to human rights.

Völker Türk, the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, also praised bipartisan support for human rights for decades and the “generosity and compassion” of the American people in a sweeping address on his concerns on dozens of issues and country situations, including China, India, Russia, the United States and beyond.

He expressed new concerns about a change in tack in Washington.

“I am now deeply worried by the fundamental shift in direction that is

taking place domestically and internationally,” the rights chief told the Human Rights Council. “Divisive rhetoric is being used to distort, deceive and polarize. This is generating fear and anxiety among many.”

Türk did not specifically refer to the Trump administration, which announced pulling the United States out of the 47-member-country council in January — even though the Biden administration had already said last year that the U.S. would not seek a new three-year term.

A seat reserved for a U.S. representative sat empty yesterday, the start of the Week 2 of the council’s 5-1/2 week session. The rights body holds three sessions a year.



Australian Navy sailors from HMAS Choules use an inflatable boat to rescue Lithuanian rower Aurimas Mockus, yesterday

AUSTRALIAN NAVY RESCUES ADVENTURER WHO HIT A CYCLONE WHILE ROWING ACROSS THE PACIFIC

ROD MCGUIRK, MELBOURNE

An Australian warship yesterday rescued a Lithuanian solo rower who had encountered a tropical cyclone while attempting to cross the Pacific Ocean from California.

Aurimas Mockus was taken aboard Royal Australian Navy landing ship HMAS Choules, where he was undergoing a medical assessment, Vice Adm. Justin Jones said in a statement.

“Because of highly unfavorable sea conditions, Mr. Mockus’s boat could not be recovered except for two oars and some personal items,” the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, which coordinated the rescue, said in a statement.

Adventurer stranded for 3 days by storm

The 44-year-old adventurer had been stranded for three days in the Coral Sea around 740 kilometers east of the Queensland state coastal city of Mackay. He had rowed there in an enclosed boat nonstop from San Diego headed for the Queensland capital, Brisbane.

He began the

12,000-kilometer journey in October and was days away from Brisbane when he ran into the storm, which is forecast to cross the Australian coast within days.

Brisbane is 800 kilometers south of Mackay by air.

Mockus activated an emergency beacon on Friday after rowing into stormy seas and 80 kph winds generated by Tropical Cyclone Alfred, the rescue authority said.

The authority sent a plane that made radio contact with Mockus on Saturday. Mockus reported he was “fatigued,” the authority said.

The warship is taking Mockus south beyond Brisbane to Sydney in New South Wales, the navy said.

The cyclone has continued to track south and on Monday was 450 kilometers (280 miles) east of Brisbane, authorities said.

The cyclone is forecast to turn west and cross the Australian coast on Thursday or Friday.

Solo rowers have crossed the Pacific Ocean nonstop in the past

Mockus was attempting to become one of the few rowers who have

crossed the Pacific alone and without stopping.

Brit Peter Bird arguably became the first in 1983. He rowed from San Francisco and was towed the final 48 kilometers to the Australian mainland. But he is considered to have rowed close enough to Australia to have made the crossing.

Fellow Brit John Beeden rowed from San Francisco to the Queensland city of Cairns in 2015 and is considered by some to have made the first successful crossing.

Australian Michelle Lee became the first woman to make the crossing in 2023, rowing from Ensenada in Mexico to Queensland’s Port Douglas.

Another Australian, Tom Robinson, in 2022 attempted to become the youngest to across the Pacific, albeit with a break in the Cook Islands. He set out from Peru and spent 265 days at sea before he was rescued off Vanuatu in 2023.

A wave capsized the 24-year-old’s boat, leaving him clinging naked to the hull for 14 hours before he was rescued by a cruise ship that made a 200-kilometer detour to reach him. MDT/AP



UK The data watchdog announced yesterday it is investigating TikTok’s use of teenage users’ personal data. The regulator will examine whether TikTok’s algorithmic recommendations expose young users to harmful content. Similar probes into Reddit and Imgur’s child data handling are also underway.



Vatican City Pope Francis showed signs of recovery yesterday after a respiratory crisis last week. The Vatican said he is stable and off mechanical ventilation. Francis, 88, has been hospitalized since February 14 for pneumonia. He continues to receive therapy while overseeing church matters from his hospital room.



South Sudan Farmers in South Sudan are cultivating excelsa coffee, a climate-resistant variety, as global coffee prices soar. The rare bean, known for its resilience to drought, is gaining attention from international buyers. Experts say it could help sustain the coffee industry amid climate change challenges.



Fashion Emerging designer Susan Fang made her Milan Fashion Week debut yesterday [Macau time] with a collection supported by Dolce & Gabbana. Inspired by her mother’s childhood in rural China, Fang’s designs featured dreamy landscapes, layered fabric textures, and 3D floral structures, blending tradition with innovation.