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**AL ELECTION: CANDIDACY LISTS APPLICATIONS OPEN TODAY, RUNNING FOR THREE MONTHS**

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**CHINA STICKS TO ECONOMIC GROWTH TARGET OF 'AROUND 5%'**

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AP PHOTO



**North Korea** Satellite images show North Korea nearing completion of its first airborne early warning aircraft, experts said. The aircraft, an Ilyushin IL-76 with a radar dome, could improve North Korea's air defense. Analysts suspect Chinese influence in its design but cannot confirm direct support.

AP PHOTO



**Philippines** Search teams found the wreckage of a Philippine FA-50 fighter jet and the bodies of its two pilots yesterday. The aircraft crashed in Bukidnon province during a nighttime mission against insurgents. The cause remains unknown, and the rest of the country's FA-50 jets have been grounded.

AP PHOTO



**Australia** Residents near Brisbane are bracing for Tropical Cyclone Alfred, expected to make landfall late today. Authorities warn of destructive winds, flooding, and coastal erosion. It will be the first cyclone to hit the region in 51 years. Schools will close, and evacuation centers are being prepared.

AP PHOTO



**USA** Michigan Sen. Elissa Slotkin delivered the Democratic response to Trump's congressional address, criticizing his economic policies and tariffs. She warned of rising costs and a potential recession. Slotkin also condemned Trump's handling of Ukraine and accused him of undermining democracy by ignoring court orders and the Constitution.

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### ISAF RECALLS TCM PRODUCT FOR EXCESS PESTICIDES

The Pharmaceutical Administration Bureau (ISAF) has recalled a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) product due to excessive pesticide levels, according to ISAF. The issue was detected by Hong Kong's Health Department, which alerted local authorities. The affected product, "Viticis Fructus," batch No. 241108, was imported to Macau in December 2024 and distributed to pharmacies and polyclinics. ISAF has instructed the importer to recall the batch and notified pharmacies to cease distribution.

### MAN LOSES HKD600,000 IN VIRTUAL CURRENCY SCAM

A local man has reported a loss of HKD600,000, suspected to be the result of a virtual currency scam, according to police. In December 2024, the victim connected with others on a social media platform and was encouraged to download an investment program for virtual currency. After making a profit, the victim was asked to pay additional deposits and taxes to withdraw funds. Despite transferring the requested amounts, the victim was unable to access his money and subsequently reported the incident to the police.

### IC TO ENHANCE PUBLIC LIBRARIES WITH SMART TECHNOLOGY

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) stated that it aims to enhance public libraries by adopting emerging technologies such as the Internet of Things, big data, and artificial intelligence, while promoting smart library initiatives. In response to Ho Ion Sang's interpellation, the bureau pledged to enrich collections, optimize library distribution, and review operating hours to meet the diverse needs of the community.

### COURT SENTENCES CUSTOMS OFFICER FOR DRUNK DRIVING

A Customs officer was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment, suspended for two years, and 240 days of suspension for drunk driving on his way to work. His appeal to the Court of Final Appeal was dismissed. The judge emphasized the severe impact of the officer's actions on the public service's reputation. The court deemed the disciplinary actions appropriate, considering the public interest and the seriousness of the offence.

### HEALTHY MACAO

# LAWMAKER QUESTIONS EFFECTIVENESS OF BLUEPRINT IN ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

LYNZY VALLES

**L**AWMAKER Ho Ion Sang has questioned the effectiveness of the "Healthy Macao Blueprint" in tackling mental health awareness amid the rise in suicide deaths in 2024.

The blueprint is the government's long-term plan that aims to transform Macau into a healthy city by 2030.

In recent years, the rising number of suicide cases in the city has sparked growing concern among lawmakers and the public.

According to official data, a record 90 suicide deaths were reported in 2024, the highest in the past decade.

To tackle these concerns, the government has implemented several initiatives aimed at enhancing mental health services.

These include increasing accessibility to psychological counseling, promoting community-based mental health support organizations, and launching



suicide prevention and intervention programs.

However, despite these efforts, Ho said the region still faces a pressing need to further strengthen its social support networks and increase resource allocation to mental health services.

He has urged authorities to analyze suicide cases in accordance with the Healthy Macao Blueprint, identifying high-risk groups based on factors such as age, occupation, and personal

circumstances.

Given the aging population, the lawmaker said there is also a need to address loneliness and depression among senior citizens through education, awareness campaigns, and the integration of technology in mental health services.

"Will the authorities concerned conduct a territory-wide survey and assessment on the mental health of Macau residents on a regular basis, so as to understand

the mental health conditions of residents, with particular attention to the mental health of groups such as the elderly and the youth?" he asked.

The lawmaker noted that such surveys would help policymakers understand mental health trends and provide targeted support, particularly for vulnerable groups such as the elderly and the youth.

"In the face of the rising number of suicides, Macau still needs to further strengthen its social support network and increase resource allocations, so as to enhance mental health awareness and strengthen professional services," said Ho.

Health Bureau data shows that 2024 figures indicate a 2.3% increase, constituting a new record high of suicide cases in Macao. The figure represents an average of one suicide case every four days for the whole year.

The same report notes that the people involved were between 13 and 75 years old, which indicates a large spectrum of issues among all age groups.

### GAMING

# Increase in gaming tax rebates for foreign bets in 2024

LYNZY VALLES

**T**HE government has confirmed an increase in approved tax rebates for gross gaming revenue generated by international players in 2024 compared to the previous year.

However, specific details on the total rebate amount or whether all six gaming concessionaires applied for the relief remain undisclosed.

This follows lawmaker Lei Chan U's inquiry to the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) regarding the city's efforts to broaden its international



tourism feeder markets.

Under Macau's revised gaming law, implemented in 2022 alongside new 10-year gaming concessions, operators must pay a 40% levy on their gross gaming revenue. This includes a 35% gaming tax and up to

5% allocated to public and social initiatives.

However, to encourage international market expansion, a rebate of up to 5% is available for operators who successfully attract foreign visitors.

All six gaming opera-

tors have responded to this incentive by establishing designated foreigner-only betting zones within their casinos.

As of 2023, 12 such areas had been set up across the city.

According to the MGTO, which consulted with the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ), the total approved tax rebate amount for these efforts increased in 2024 compared to 2023.

Despite the rebate program running for over two years, the government has yet to publish detailed figures on the to-

amount granted.

Lawmakers have previously urged the administration to disclose the data, emphasizing the need for public accountability.

In response, the MGTO reiterated the DICJ's regulatory commitment, stating that it will continue to ensure strict oversight of gaming concessionaires' compliance with tax reduction requirements.

Additionally, the MGTO highlighted ongoing efforts to enhance Macau's international appeal, including premium membership benefits, private jet services, and overseas promotional campaigns.

With gaming tax revenue reaching MOP88.13 billion in 2024—a 35% increase year-on-year—the government projects further growth in 2025.

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POLITICS

# Xia Baolong believes Sam's gov't is able to unite all sectors of society

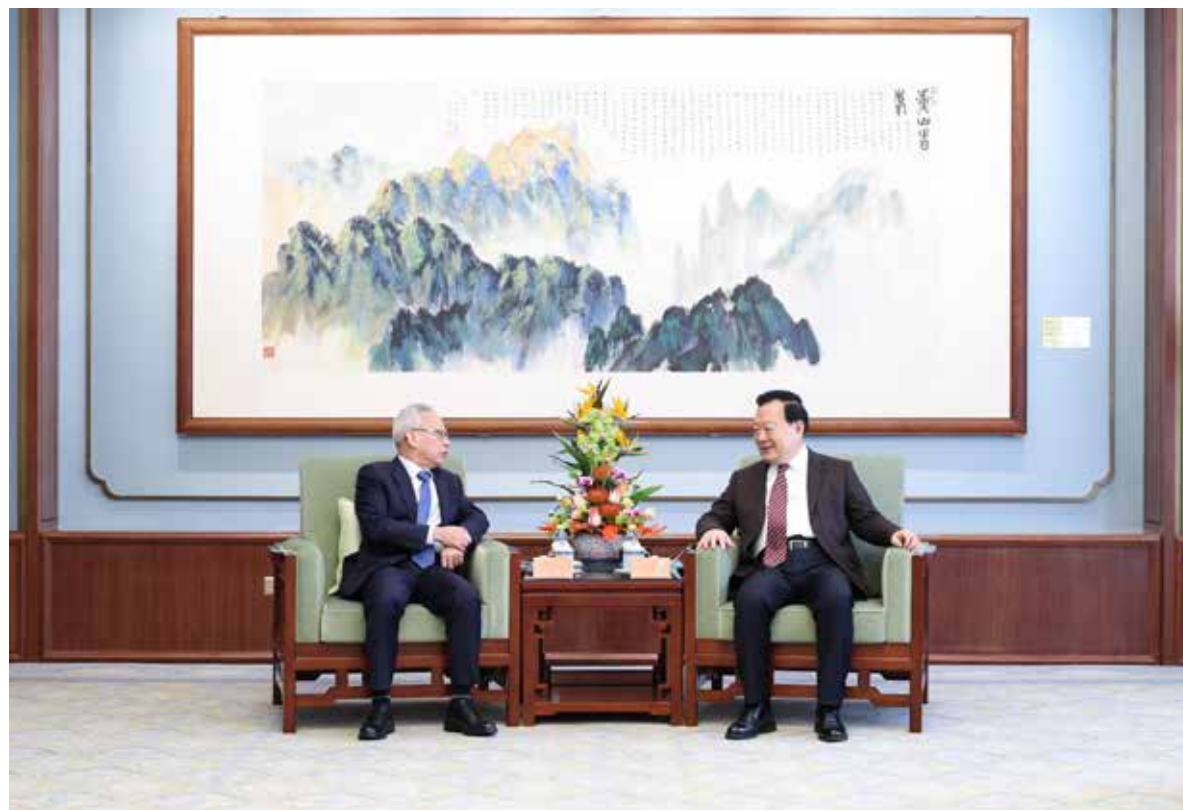
RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Director of the Hong Kong and Macao Work Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Director of the State Council's Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office, Xia Baolong, believes that the new-term government, led by Sam Hou Fai, will be able to unite and lead all sectors of society.

Xia made the comments on Tuesday during a meeting with the Chief Executive (CE) in Beijing, ahead of the opening meeting of the third session of the 14th National People's Congress.

The same high official of the Chinese government added that "since the inauguration of Sam Hou Fai as Chief Executive of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR), he has led his team to resolutely implement the spirit of President Xi Jinping's important speeches, and the central authorities' directions relating to decision-making and deployment."

The person responsible for



Hong Kong and Macau at China's State Council also added that the MSAR government "has demonstrated a good spirit and demeanour through much beneficial and pioneering work."

He also added that President Xi's visit to Macau late

last year clarified the direction for the development of the SAR and provided fundamental guidance for his work related to Hong Kong and Macau.

Reviewing Xi's important speeches, Xia remarked that the new government of the MSAR must "fully and accurately

implement the 'One country, two systems' principle; fully leverage Macau's unique status and advantages; and strengthen the pursuit of the 'One Centre, One Platform, One Base' strategic goals."

He added that "with greater efforts, Macau will wel-

come appropriate economic diversification, especially via development of the Guangdong-Macau Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, while continuously opening up new prospects for the MSAR's development via Macau's contribution to the Chinese path to modernization."

In his turn, the CE briefed Xia on the work carried out by the government to implement the instructions in President Xi's important speeches, which include the establishment of five cross-sector leadership and working groups that aim to strengthen top-level guidance and overall coordination and strive to enhance the government's governance capabilities and levels.

Sam also expressed his appreciation for the central authorities' care for, and expectations of, Macau.

The CE also remarked on his latest work of soliciting opinions and suggestions from all sectors of society to formulate this year's Policy Address, noting that the preparation of the Policy Address for this year is in full swing.

DEMOGRAPHICS

## Population sees modest growth in 2024 driven by blue cards

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE city's total population saw a slight increase of 0.7% in 2024, reaching 688,300 by year-end, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

The growth was primarily driven by a rise in the number of non-resident workers, which increased by 4,900.

Women made up 53.7% of the population, while men accounted for 46.3%.

By age distribution, 12.5% of the population (85,900 individuals) were aged 0-14, while those aged 65 and above consti-



tuted 14.6% (100,200 individuals).

The local population, which excludes non-resident workers and non-local students, declined by 0.4% to 568,700 due to a higher net outflow of residents compared to natural population growth.

The number of households in Macau rose to 205,000, an

increase of 600 from the previous year. Meanwhile, births declined by 105 to 3,607, bringing the birth rate down to 5.3 per thousand. Mortality also decreased, with 2,477 deaths recorded, resulting in a mortality rate of 3.6 per thousand. The leading causes of death remained malignant neoplasms, heart di-

seases, and pneumonia.

Population movement figures showed that 3,677 individuals arrived from mainland China on one-way permits, up by 260.

The number of individuals granted right of abode increased by 196 to 1,074, with most coming from Hong Kong.

Marriage registrations totaled 3,187, a slight increase from 2023, while the divorce rate rose to 2.0 per thousand, with 1,361 cases recorded.

The median age for first-time marriage also increased slightly for both men and women.

ECONOMY

## DSEDT SETS UP 60 CARD REPLACEMENT POINTS FOR SENIORS AHEAD OF SPENDING REWARDS CAMPAIGN

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSEDT) has partnered with the Macao Chamber of Commerce to set up 60 card replacement points for senior citizens.

The measure comes ahead of the Community Consumption Grand Prize 2025 campaign, which runs from March 24 to June 1.

The card replacement points will facilitate the exchange of old senior citizens' "Macau Pass" cards for new ones, as the old model chip does not allow for the benefits of the spending rewards campaign.

As previously announced, all senior citizens who have reached the age of 65 and have a personalized Macau Pass card can enjoy an instant discount of MOP300 on consumption by loading the new version of the "Macau Pass for Senior Citizens Card." To facilitate the process of exchanging cards, over 60 card re-

placement service stations will provide services starting today. This card exchange campaign will run from today until May 20.

It is supported by the Social Welfare Bureau and other civic society institutions that assist the elderly.

The addresses and opening hours of the service stations are available on the dedicated website (<http://www.macaospendingrewards.com>). To exchange their cards, senior citizens only need to bring the old version of the senior citizen card. After the staff has verified the information, the old card will be collected, and a replacement card slip will be issued.

The card replacement takes six to 10 working days. The balance stored in the old card will also be automatically transferred to the new card. To collect the new card, senior citizens or third parties can go to the service points with all the documents, according to the date on the card replacement slip.



AL ELECTIONS

# CANDIDACY LISTS APPLICATIONS OPEN TODAY, RUNNING FOR THREE MONTHS

RENATO MARQUES

FROM today until June 6, the Legislative Assembly Electoral Affairs Commission (CAEAL) will be accepting applications for recognition of eligibility to establish a candidacy list for the upcoming Legislative Assembly (AL) elections on September 14.

A statement from the Government Information Bureau informed that those interested in establishing the candidacy committee must submit the completed form to the CAEAL by June 6 to recognize its legal existence.

According to electoral law, only political associations and candidacy committees can propose candidates for direct suffrage elections. In contrast, only candidacy committees can propose candidates for indirect suffrage elections.

From today onwards, those interested in forming a candidacy committee can go to the electoral affairs service counter in the basement of the Public Administration Building or the Legislative Assembly Elections website (www.eal.gov.mo) to obtain the necessary form.

The applications are divided into two sections: the first is dedicated to the details of the Candidacy Committee, and the second includes the declarations of the candidacy subscribers.

In the first part, the name and acronym of the candidacy committee must be filled in, both in Chinese and Portuguese, and a member must be appointed as its representative. In addition, the electronic file of the candidacy committee's symbol must also be provided in color and black and white.



RENATO MARQUES

Each direct suffrage candidacy committee must consist of a minimum of 300 and a maximum of 500 voters registered in the electoral registration book published in January 2025; each voter subscribed to the candidacy committee must fill out a "Voter De-

claration" indicating their name and Permanent Resident Identity Card number as well as signature, according to the identification document.

After the amendments made last year to the AL elections law, it was established that each voter

may only subscribe as a member of one candidacy committee. All subscriptions are null and void if a voter subscribes to multiple candidacy committees.

In indirect suffrage, the candidature committees shall be formed by a minimum of 20% of the total legal entities belonging to the respective electoral college, registered in the electoral register published in January of this year.

The subscription of the candidacy committee must be signed by the legal representative of the voting entity, stating the legal entity's name and the registration number of the same entity in the electoral register.

A Declaration of Appointment of a Representative of the Legal Entity must also be provided. After the CAEAL recognizes the legality of the candidature committees, they may submit their political programs until June 26. At this time, they must also provide a security deposit of MOP25,000.

Each candidate must sign a declaration stating support for the Macau Basic Law and loyalty to the Macau Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

# IPIM and MGTO lead delegation to promote Macau in Dubai and Saudi Arabia

RENATO MARQUES

FOR the first time, representatives of the Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) and the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) conducted investment and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) promotion activities in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

IPIM noted in a press statement that, at the end of last month, a five-day series of activities promoting Macau's advantages to foreign investment took place.

During the trip, IPIM representatives visited enterprises in the Middle East. They presented IPIM's one-stop services, Macau's favorable MICE environment, and business opportunities to entice these enterprises to in-



vest in Macau and encourage them to host a diverse range of MICE events in the region.

The local delegation participated in two Middle East Market Tourism and MICE Destination Promotion and Networking Seminars (Promotion and Networking Seminars) organized by MGTO.

According to a Saudi Arabian enterprise's owner, face-to-face communication with

the IPIM team provided insight into Macau's MICE activities, noting that the enterprise intends to organize buyers to participate in conventions and exhibitions in Macau for more collaboration opportunities and business expansion.

The exchange included a general presentation of the MICE software and hardware facilities in Macau and

Hengqin. A UAE-based MICE enterprise expressed interest in visiting the locations for field inspection and participation in MICE events.

The same delegation also visited the Riyadh International Convention & Exhibition Centre and the Dubai World Trade Centre to explore how their MICE facilities and services consistently attract international MICE events.

The IPIM discussed potential future collaborations in exhibitions and conferences with the organizer of the Gulfood Expo.

During the Promotion and Networking Seminars organized by MGTO, IPIM representatives presented the latest updates on the Macau-Hengqin exhibition to the local MICE industry, fully leveraging the advantages of the Multi-venue Event pattern.



GAMING

# SJM RETURNS TO PROFITABILITY IN 2024

LYNZY VALLES

GAMING operator SJM Holdings Limited has reported a return to profitability in 2024, marking a turnaround from previous pandemic-related losses.

The company's audited financial results show a net profit of HKD3 million, reversing a loss of HKD2.01 billion in 2023.

"We are pleased to report a solid year for SJM, marking a significant inflection point as we return to profitability for the first time since the pandemic," said Daisy Ho, chairman of SJM Holdings.

"This achievement reflects our disciplined execution, operational efficiencies, and commitment to long-term sustainable growth."

SJM's total gross gaming revenue (GGR) climbed to HKD28.82 billion, a 35.9% year-on-year increase. Its

market share rose to 13.1%, driven in part by the success of Grand Lisboa Palace Resort Macau, which saw its share increase to 2.4%.

Meanwhile, in a statement, SJM said it plans further investments, including the expansion of its MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions) facilities and the development of a three-star hotel in Hengqin.

The company is also enhancing its entertainment and dining experiences, with seven new restaurants set to open at Grand Lisboa Palace Resort.

"In the first half of 2025, SJM will expand its cultural offerings at Grand Lisboa Palace Resort with the launch of a resident show and a permanent art gallery, enriching the property's entertainment and cultural portfolio," the gaming operator said.



PRITZKER PRIZE GOES TO...

# Liu Jiakun of China, an architect who celebrates lives of ordinary citizens

**T**HE annual Pritzker Architecture Prize has been awarded to Liu Jiakun of China, who earned the field's highest honor for "affirming architecture that celebrates the lives of ordinary citizens," organizers announced Tuesday.

Liu, 68, becomes the 54th laureate of the prize, considered akin to a Nobel in the field of architecture. In an interview with The Associated Press in his office in Chengdu in China's southwestern Sichuan region, the architect said he had a simple definition of his profession:

"To simplify, the task of architects is to provide a better living environment for human beings," he said, speaking in Mandarin. "First of all, you do something that is functional. But if it is just like that, it cannot be called architecture. (So) you have to provide poetry."



Pritzker Architecture Prize winner Chinese architect Liu Jiakun stands during an interview in his office in Chengdu

Liu is known for creating public areas in highly populated cities where there is little public space, "forging a positive relationship between density and open space," a Pritzker statement said.

The architect "upholds the transcendent power of the built environment through the harmonizing of cultural, historical, emotio-

nal and social dimensions, using architecture to forge community, inspire compassion and elevate the human spirit," the statement said.

Among his 30 or so projects, which range from academic institutions to commercial buildings to civic spaces, organizers cited in particular his 2015 West Village in Chengdu, which

spans a block. The five-story project includes a perimeter of pathways for cyclists and pedestrians around "its own vibrant city of cultural, athletic, recreational, office and business activities within, while allowing the public to view through to the surrounding natural and built environments."

They also noted the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute

Department of Sculpture in Chongqing, which they said displays an alternate solution to maximizing space, "with upper levels protruding outward to extend the square footage of a narrow footprint."

Liu was born in 1956 in Chengdu and sent at age 17, during the Cultural Revolution, to labor on a farm in the countryside. He has said life felt inconsequential — until he was accepted to architecture school in Chongqing, where he "suddenly realized my own life was important."

In the interview Sunday in his office in Chengdu, Liu said the speed of change in China during his early adulthood was "very fast, and it was turning things upside down. Even until now, sometimes I feel like I have lived several lifetimes."

Liu established his practice, Jiakun Architects, in 1999. He said he is not one of

those architects who likes to have a strongly recognizable visual style. Rather, Liu said, he pays more attention to method and strategy.

"Many architects use a strong personal style and form to gain a foothold in the world," Liu said. "No matter where it is, people can tell immediately that it is his or her work with a very strong symbolism. But I am not such a kind of architect."

"I don't want to have a very clear or obvious style that can be recognized as mine just at a glance," he said. "I take a more methodological and strategic approach. I hope that when I go to a specific place, I can use my methodology and strategy to adapt to local conditions. I like to fully understand the place, and then look for resources, problems ... and then distill and refine, and finally turn (this) into my work." MDT/AP

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HONG KONG

# BLACKROCK STRIKES DEAL TO BRING PORTS ON BOTH SIDES OF PANAMA CANAL UNDER AMERICAN CONTROL

DIDI TANG & ALEX VEIGA,  
HONG KONG

A Hong Kong-based conglomerate has agreed to sell its controlling stake in a subsidiary that operates ports near the Panama Canal to a consortium including BlackRock Inc., effectively putting the ports under American control after President Donald Trump alleged Chinese interference with the operations of the critical shipping lane.

In a filing, CK Hutchison Holding said Tuesday that it would sell all shares in Hutchison Port Holdings and in Hutchison Port Group Holdings to the consortium in a deal valued at nearly \$23 billion, including \$5 billion in debt.

The deal will give the BlackRock consortium control over 43 ports in 23 countries, including the ports of Balboa and Cristobal, located at either end of the Panama Canal. Other ports are in Mexico, the Netherlands, Egypt, Australia, Pakistan and elsewhere.

The transaction, which must be approved by Panama's government, does not include any interest in a trust that operates ports in Hong Kong, Shenzhen and South China, or any other ports in China.

Some 70% of the sea traffic that crosses the Panama Canal leaves or goes to U.S. ports. The United States built the



A cargo ship goes through the Panama Canal's Cocoli locks in Panama City

canal in the early 1900s as it looked for ways to facilitate the transit of commercial and military vessels between its coasts. Washington relinquished control of the waterway to Panama on Dec. 31, 1999, under a treaty signed in 1977 by President Jimmy Carter. Trump has claimed that Carter "foolishly" gave the canal away.

Trump and his supporters have also complained about the fees that ships are charged

to use the waterway and alleged that China has been operating the canal, an assertion denied by Panama's government.

In January, U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, the Republican chair of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, raised concerns that China could exploit or block passage through the canal and that the ports "give China ready observation posts" to take action. "This situation, I be-

lieve, posts acute risks for U.S. national security," Cruz said.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio visited Panama in early February and told President José Raúl Mulino that Panama had to reduce Chinese influence over the canal or face potential retaliation from the United States. Mulino rejected the idea that China had any control over canal operations.

Panama quit China's Belt

and Road Initiative following Rubio's visit, drawing condemnation from Beijing. Belt and Road is Beijing's global development strategy to build roads, ports and railways to open up new markets.

But while much attention was focused on Trump's threat to retake control of the canal, his administration trained its sights on Hutchison Ports, the Hong Kong-based consortium that manages the ports key ports at either end of the canal.

Hutchison Ports had recently been awarded a 25-year no-bid extension to run the ports, but an audit looking at that extension was already underway. Observers believed the audit was a preliminary step toward eventually rebidding the contract, but rumors had swirled in recent weeks that a U.S. firm close to the White House was being lined up to take over.

Frank Sixt, co-managing director of CK Hutchison, said in a statement that the transaction was "the result of a rapid, discrete but competitive process in which numerous bids and expressions of interest were received."

"I would like to stress that the transaction is purely commercial in nature and wholly unrelated to recent political news reports concerning the Panama Ports," Sixt said.

In addition to BlackRock, a New York-based global investment management company with \$11.6 trillion in assets under management as of Dec. 31, the consortium includes BlackRock subsidiary Global Infrastructure Partners and Terminal Investment Limited.

BlackRock declined to comment outside of a press release touting the deal. Shares in BlackRock fell 1.5% in afternoon trading Tuesday. **MDT/AP**

ANALYSIS

# China can help Africa unlock AI potential

EDITH MUTETHYA,  
NAIROBI

ARTIFICIAL intelligence is one of the promising areas of cooperation between China and Africa. The continent's flourishing tech hubs and young tech-savvy population are well complemented by the Asian powerhouse's wealth of expertise and investment capability.

Speaking ahead of the two sessions, the annual meetings of China's National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Poli-

tical Consultative Conference, Lawrence Nderu, a research fellow in the Department of Computing at Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, said that China is revolutionizing the AI sector.

He said that through the development of DeepSeek, China has proven that it's possible to develop AI solutions with fewer computing capabilities as long as the developer is efficient at the algorithm level.

This, he said, has particularly given confidence to the Global South, which

lacks computing capability and will leapfrog the region's ability to benefit from AI and create meaningful solutions.

Nderu hopes that the two sessions could hold discussions that will pave the way for collaborations between Chinese and African scientists to build solutions that can upscale, taking note of Africa's constrained resources in terms of computing capability.

Nderu said that AI can help Africa improve its agriculture and healthcare sectors as well as address climate change and securi-

ty challenges. In the education sector, he said that AI can be used for personalized learning. Teachers and lecturers can also build lesson plans using AI or create solutions that students can use for science, technology, engineering and mathematics-based courses.

In light of corruption that has plagued some African countries for a long time, he said that AI can be used to ensure that resources are utilized properly. Financial institutions or tax authorities can deploy AI solutions to uncover money laundering, fraud,

or tax evasion.

AI applications have the ability to work with datasets too large for manual handling, making it possible to reveal or even predict corruption or fraud that previously was nearly or completely impossible to detect, according to some anti-corruption experts.

Noting that China is known for its production capability, which also involves the use of AI in some industries, Nderu suggested the need for technology transfer capability to Africa.

With DeepSeek having

sent shockwaves through the US tech establishment, Nderu said that he expects heightened competition in the development of AI solutions and building of more optimized solutions. "Going forward, this kind of competition has its own advantage as well, because here in Africa, where we believed that it would take a bit of years for us to get to that computing power, we know we can do it now," he said.

Nderu said that contrary to the current scenario, many people would expect China and the US to cooperate, which could result in the development of the best solutions because they both have tech-intensive industries. **MDT/CHINA DAILY**



NPC

# China sticks to economic growth target of 'around 5%' despite a looming trade war

SIMINA MISTREANU & KEN MORITSUGU, BEIJING

**T**HE Chinese government unveiled an annual economic growth target of "around 5%" yesterday, despite the possible negative impact of a looming trade war with the United States, and pledged to address what it called "inadequate" consumer spending at home.

The target, announced at the opening session of the annual meeting of China's legislature, is the same as the last two years but will likely be more difficult to achieve because of higher U.S. tariffs on Chinese products and other economic headwinds. The use of the modifier "around" gives the government some wiggle room if growth falls short of the target.

The level signals the government's intention to try to stabilize growth in challenging economic times but hold back on more dramatic action that some economists say is needed to supercharge it.

The government also said in a draft budget released yesterday that defense spending would rise 7.2% this year to 1.78 trillion yuan (\$245 billion), second only to the United States.

It released the growth target in a separate report, portions of which were presented to the nearly 3,000 members of the National People's Congress by Premier Li Qiang in a 55-minute address. The 32-page document acknowledged both international and domestic challenges.

"An increasingly complex and severe external environment may exert a greater impact on China in areas such as trade, science, and technology," the report said. "Domestically, the foundation for China's sustained economic recovery and growth is not strong enough. Effective demand is weak, and consumption, in particular, is sluggish."

The IMF has projected China's economy will grow 4.6% this year, down from 5% in 2024, according to Chinese government statistics.

The annual report placed more emphasis on reviving domestic demand and consumption than last year's version, echoing a shift by the ruling Communist Party at meetings in December. It said the government should "make domestic demand the main engine and



President Xi Jinping and Chinese Premier Li Qiang arrive for the opening session of the NPC at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, yesterday

anchor of economic growth."

The question is whether the steps the government takes will be enough to stabilize the economy and reach its targets for growth, employment and other economic indicators.

"Achieving this year's targets will not be easy, and we must make arduous efforts to meet them," the report said.

It offered some details on the party's plans for a "more proactive fiscal policy," including a rise in the government budget deficit from 3% to 4% of GDP, or the size of the overall economy.

Economists expressed doubts over whether the policies will do enough, noting that the government reduced its inflation target to 2% from 3% last year, suggesting leaders have accepted that the economy is still mired in deflation, or a cycle of weakening prices.

The degree of support is "more modest than it may appear," Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said in a report. "We remain skeptical that it will be sufficient to prevent growth from slowing this year, especially given the headwinds on the external front and the lack of a more pronounced shift in government spending toward support for consumption."

The government will issue 1.3 trillion yuan (\$180 billion) in ultra-long term bonds, up from one trillion yuan last year, the report said. Of that, 300 billion yuan would go toward a program launched last year that offers rebates to consumers who trade in automobiles or appliances for new ones, doubling central government su-

pport for the program.

At the same time, Chinese leader Xi Jinping wants to wean the economy off its long-running dependence on the highly inde-

bted real estate market.

He is directing economic resources into developing a more innovative, high-tech economy — and with growing restrictions

on U.S. technology exports to China, one that isn't beholden to other countries for the most powerful semiconductors and other electronic components.

That has remained an overarching long-term economic goal of the Communist Party, though it has enacted various measures since September that suggest a shift in emphasis toward shoring up growth in the short-term.

"A target of around 5% is well aligned with our mid- and long-term development goals and underscores our resolve to meet difficulties head-on and strive hard to deliver," Li said, reading from the government report.

The report highlighted artificial intelligence in a section on fostering "industries of the future," saying the government would support the application of large-scale AI models, smart manufacturing equipment, connected vehicles and intelligent robots. MDT/AP

## BEIJING WILL INCREASE ITS DEFENSE BUDGET 7.2% THIS YEAR

**C**HINA said yesterday it will increase its defense budget 7.2% this year, as it continues its campaign to build a larger, more modern military to assert its territorial claims and challenge the U.S. defense lead in Asia.

China's military spending remains the second largest behind the U.S. and it already has the world's largest navy.

The budget, which adds up to about \$245 billion, was announced at the National People's Congress, the annual meeting of China's legislature.

The boost is the same percentage as last year, far below the double-digit percentage increases of previous years and reflecting an overall slowdown in the economy. The nation's leaders have set a target of around 5% growth for this year.

Tensions with the U.S., Taiwan, Japan and neighbors who have overlapping claims to the crucial South China Sea are seen as driving spending on increasingly high-tech military technologies. Those include stealth fighters, the country's three — soon to be four — aircraft carriers, and a broad expansion of its nuclear arsenal.

China generally ascribes the budget increases to exercises and maintenance and improving

the lives of its two million service people.

The People's Liberation Army has built bases on artificial islands in the South China Sea but its China sent a relatively small contingent of just five planes and seven into territory near Taiwan on Wednesday, just days after sending dozens of aircraft. Such missions are intended to demoralize and wear down Taiwan's defenses, which have been bolstered by upgraded U.S. F-16s, tanks and missiles, along with domestically developed armaments.

In his comments at the Congress, Premier Li Qiang told the nearly 3,000 party loyalists that China still preferred a peaceful solution to the Taiwan issue, but "resolutely opposes" those pushing

for Taiwan's formal independence and their foreign supporters.

"We will firmly advance the cause of China's reunification and work with our fellow Chinese in Taiwan to realize the glorious cause of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," Li said.

Faced with slower growth, China will likely prioritize key strategic goals over social and economic reforms, said Antonia Hmadi, a senior analyst with the Mercator Institute for China Studies.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, who oversees the armed forces, has attempted to force through major reforms and removed senior military leaders including two former defense ministers and the head of the missile corps.



AP PHOTO



USA

# Trump vows to press ahead on reshaping America in speech to Congress as Democrats register dissent

**P**RESIDENT Donald Trump vowed yesterday [Macau time] to keep up his campaign of "swift and unrelenting action" in reorienting the nation's economy, immigration and foreign policy in an unyielding address before Congress that left Democratic legislators to register their dissent with stone faces, placards calling out "lies," and one legislator's ejection.

Trump's prime-time speech was the latest marker in his takeover of the nation's capital, where the Republican-led House and Senate have done little to restrain the president as he and his allies work to slash the size of the federal government and remake America's place in the world.

The president's address, clocking in at a record 99 minutes, added up to a defiant sales pitch for the policies that Trump promised during his campaign and leaned into during his first weeks back in office. Trump pledged to keep delivering sweeping change to rescue the nation from what he described as destruction and mistakes left by his predecessor. He seldom addressed his comments directly to the American people, who are trying to keep up with the recent upheaval, while repeatedly needling the Democratic lawmakers seated before him.

Michigan Sen. Elissa Slotkin, who delivered the Democratic response following Trump's speech, allowed that "America wants change, but there's a responsible way to make change and a reckless way, and we can make that change without forgetting who we are as a country and as a democracy."

Emboldened after overcoming impeachments in his first term, outlasting criminal prosecutions in between his two administrations and getting a tight grip on the GOP-led Congress, Trump has embarked on a mission to dismantle parts of the federal government, remake the relationship with America's allies and slap on tariffs that have sparked a North



President Donald Trump addresses a joint session of Congress in the House chamber at the U.S. Capitol in Washington

American trade war.

"It has been nothing but swift and unrelenting action," Trump said of his opening weeks in office. "The people elected me to do the job, and I am doing it."

Trump, who has billionaire adviser Elon Musk orchestrating his efforts to slash the size and scope of the federal government, said he is working to "reclaim democracy from this unaccountable bureaucracy" and threatened federal workers anew with firings if they resist his agenda.

Musk, who was seated in the House gallery, received a pair of standing ovations from Republicans in the chamber, as Trump exaggerated and shared false claims about alleged government abuse uncovered by the Tesla and SpaceX founder and his team of disrupters.

Trump repeated false claims that tens of millions of dead people over 100 years old are receiving Social Security payments, prompting some Democrats to shout, "Not true!" and "Those are lies!"

Trump spoke at a critical juncture in his presidency, as voters who returned him to the White House on his promise to fix inflation are instead finding economic chaos. All the gains

the S&P 500 have made since Election Day are now gone, while consumer sentiment surveys show the public sees inflation as worsening.

Trump seemed prepared to double down on his trade policies, which experts have warned will raise prices for consumers.

"Whatever they tariff us, we tariff them. Whatever they tax us, we tax them," Trump said. At the same time, he tried to ease concerns about the resulting price increases, saying, "There'll be a little disturbance, but we're okay with that. It won't be much."

Trump said one of his "very highest priorities" was to rescue the economy and offer relief to working families. He promised to organize the federal government to lower costs on eggs and energy, blaming his Democratic predecessor Joe Biden for the situation and offering scant details of his own plans.

Trump also called for the extension of his first-term tax cuts and additional federal funding for his border crackdown, including for his promised efforts at "mass deportation" of people in the U.S. illegally.

He celebrated his crackdown on migration, saying, "It

turns all we really needed was a new president."

Speaking about his promised tax cuts, Trump seemed to goad Democrats, saying: "I'm sure you're going to vote for those tax cuts. Because otherwise I don't believe the people will ever vote you into office."

The backdrop was the new economic uncertainty unleashed after the president opened the day by placing stiff tariffs on imports from the country's neighbors and closest trading partners. A 25% tax on goods from Canada and Mexico went into effect Tuesday — ostensibly to secure greater cooperation to tackle fentanyl trafficking and illegal immigration — triggering immediate retaliation and sparking fears of a wider trade war. Trump also raised tariffs on goods from China to 20%.

Republicans were boisterous as Trump stepped to the lectern in the House, chanting "USA! USA!" as the president basked in the cheers. The GOP lawmakers were jubilant, having won a trifecta of the White House, Senate and House in the elections. However, they face the challenging task of delivering on Trump's agenda as well as avoiding a government shutdown later this month. MDT/AP

## this day in history

### 1993 ANGOLANS DIE IN BATTLE FOR HUAMBO



More than 350 people have died in a battle between Unita rebels and Angolan government forces in the city of Huambo, according to Angolan army reports.

The government of the southern African country also said that up to 1,500 people had been injured in the fighting.

Diplomats say the battle is "vicious", with neither side taking many prisoners.

According to the radio station of Angola's rebel movement Unita, government troops are fleeing from the city and large amounts of arms and ammunition have been seized, including several Russian-built tanks.

The government garrison in the city has been cut off for several weeks and is being supplied by occasional air drops.

Fighting around Huambo has intensified after Unita brought in troop reinforcements from Bie province, which is around 165km away to the east of the city.

Unita radio also reported that its leader, Dr Jonas Savimbi, would address the nation on the search for a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Since January there has been no running water or electricity in Huambo, which is home to 400,000 people, and many areas have been flattened by artillery shells.

The battle for the key city is seen as more symbolic than strategic.

The fighting in Huambo comes after the breakdown of a 1991 peace agreement which was aimed at ending 16 years of civil war in the former Portuguese colony.

Huambo is home to the Ovimbundu, the people who gave Mr Savimbi's Unita (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) movement its main support.

Earlier, UN officials admitted defeat in their diplomatic attempts to halt renewed civil war in Angola, calling the outcome a "bitter disappointment".

Unita failed to attend UN-sponsored peace talks in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, last week, but proposed fresh talks in Geneva.

Local aid agencies have described the health situation in Angola as "dramatic" - with a child dying every two hours in the paediatric hospital in the capital Luanda.

Most of the main aid agencies have left the country after Unita launched an abortive coup attempt in Luanda last November.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Two days after the gun battle started in Huambo, Unita announced it had seized the country's second city and was in complete control after capturing government positions.

More than 10,000 people are estimated to have died in the two-month battle for Huambo.

The rebel leader of Unita, Jonas Savimbi, died in a gun battle with government forces in February 2002. Unita went on to become a political party and signed a ceasefire with the Angolan government in April 2002.

In 2003, Unita apologised for its part in Angola's 27-year civil war and asked for forgiveness.

Unita's secretary for political affairs, Abilio Camalata Numa, said his movement took responsibility for the many lives lost but he defended what he called the "political project" which had been the reason for the war.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Clarity finds you, though you'll want to ask questions to fill holes. Luckily, you'll have no problem accessing your inner investigator. Trust the read you gain on others.

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20  
Move slowly and weigh your options, but try not to get too caught up in minor details. A burst of potential finds you, helping you break patterns that have caused you to hold back.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21  
It might be wise to take note of any profound dreams that occurred early this morning. Set your priorities straight. Put your heart into the wishes you make, and they might come to fruition.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
Take a backseat to observe your situation, view current circumstances from multiple angles. Take into consideration how partnerships contribute to personal and professional growth.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
Take your role seriously when it comes to forging community links and looking for opportunities to expand your social and professional circle.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
It's vital that you stay planted in the present and your responsibilities. Playing with routines can help you find a more innovative way forward.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
Take a few leaps of faith, trusting that your dreams will land when you pursue them. Help or advice from a loved one could transform your situation.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
Consider what your terms are when it comes to negotiations and moving forward, but be mindful of where others are at as well. You'll need to combine compassion with practicality.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
Give yourself space to love and be loved. Now is the time to put your relationships first, making it a point to connect, no matter how demanding your schedule is.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
Brilliant ideas could emerge through vibrant dreams. Take a hands-on approach toward expressing yourself bringing richness to your creations.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
Take a few moments to connect with your intuition and sense of gratitude. You'll feel brilliant and eager for approval, which your peers will gladly provide when you are loud and authentic.

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
Your ability to pick up on other people's emotions intensifies as the hours pass, inspiring you to show love and compassion. It'll be vital that you show this same level of support to yourself.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	0	12	cloudy
Changchun	-5	2	fine
Chengdu	7	11	rain
Chongqing	10	12	rain
Fuzhou	9	13	overcast
Guangzhou	11	15	rain
Guiyang	1	5	overcast
Haikou	19	20	rain
Hangzhou	6	12	cloudy
Harbin	-13	1	fine
Hefei	2	12	fine
Nanjing	4	11	cloudy
Shanghai	5	10	cloudy
Taipei	13	16	rain
Wuhan	2	15	overcast
Hong Kong	15	19	rain
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	2	1	cloudy
Frankfurt	1	14	sunny
Paris	7	16	sunny
London	9	14	sunny
New York	1	13	cloudy

**CROSSWORDS**

**ACROSS** 1- Hold on!; 5- Fasteners; 9- Cost; 14- Alan of "M\*A\*S\*H"; 15- At the summit of; 16- Pave over; 17- Outback hoppers; 18- Female horse; 19- Run away to get married; 20- Mathematical operation; 23- ... saw Elba; 24- Slugger Mel; 25- Palm Pilot. e.g.; 28- Bow and arrow skill; 31- ... carte; 34- Favored crime of pyromaniacs; 36- Granola bit; 37- Not "fer"; 38- In spite of; 42- Score; 43- Did nothing; 44- Sniggler; 45- Camera type, briefly; 46- Rubdown; 49- Dreyer's partner in ice cream; 50- Musical talent; 51- Went by horse; 53- Planes, trains, and automobiles, e.g.; 60- Monument; 61- Help a hood; 62- Impulse to act; 63- ... Mio; 64- Greet the judge; 65- Challenge to complete a task; 66- Blender maker; 67- Envelope abbr.; 68- Cabinet dept.;

**DOWN** 1- Toasty; 2- Moises of baseball; 3- Object of devotion; 4- Flavor; 5- Treat with excessive indulgence; 6- Sloping letter; 7- Me neither; 8- Blueprint detail, for short; 9- Attractive; 10- Ignited again; 11- Langston Hughes poem; 12- ... Crunch; 13- Afore; 21- Teheran native; 22- Artery that feeds the trunk; 25- Sudden pains; 26- Salivate; 27- When You Wish Upon ...; 29- Emcees; 30- Attack a sub?; 31- Spry; 32- Covered on the inside; 33- Wrathful; 35- Hooter; 37- Citrus cooler; 39- Former Russian rulers; 40- Contains; 41- ... lift?; 46- Mode of action; 47- Take into custody; 48- Obtained; 50- Steve of country music; 52- Chopin piece; 53- Soviet news agency; 54- Public disturbance; 55- Graph prefix; 56- Final notice?; 57- Oil-rich Islamic theocracy neighboring Iraq; 58- Monster; 59- Not e'en once; 60- Dove's sound;

**Yesterday's solution**

S	A	R	I	T	R	E	K	A	T	R	A
C	L	O	T	H	N	I	C	A	L	O	A
A	I	M	T	O	A	E	O	N	O	E	N
R	T	E	R	I	N	G	U	A	R	D	S
S	E	T	T	E	S	D	R	E			
E	X	I	S	T		N	E	O	P	R	E
T	E	E	M		E	C	O	N	O		O
A	S	S	E	S	S	O	R		O	L	D
T	E	S	T	E		R	E	H	R	A	D
T	E	S	T	E		R	E	H	R	A	D
C	H	E	E		G	A	R		T	I	D
P	E	R	T		M	O	A	T		A	D
A	R	I	A		E	L	L	E		S	I
S	M	E	E		D	E	A	N		N	A

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



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BOXING

# TRAILBLAZING OLYMPIC REFUGEE BOXER CINDY NGAMBA SET FOR A PRO DEBUT ON ALL-FEMALE FIGHT CARD

KEN MAGUIRE, LONDON

**SOMETHING** stood out to Cindy Ngamba as she glanced around when Friday's all-female boxing event was first announced.

So many world championship belts. Ngamba wants one of her own.

"I saw Natasha Jonas and Lauren Price and Caroline Dubois with their belts, and I remember saying 'Oh, that looks nice, I would love to have one of them,'" she said.

Achieving goals is kind of Ngamba's thing. At the Paris Games, she became the first athlete competing as a refugee to earn a medal when she took bronze in the middleweight category.

A decade ago the Cameroon-born Ngamba thought she was about to be deported from Britain. Now she's set to make her professional debut at Royal Albert Hall. She's facing veteran Kirstie Bavington in a super welterweight bout in London as part of an all-female card headlined by the Jonas vs. Price welterweight world title unification fight.

"I can see it, that dream of me having a belt and being the world champion," Ngamba told The Associated Press, "but at the same time you have to be in the present



AP PHOTO

and you have to make sure you get the job done."

The 26-year-old Ngamba tries not to think ahead too much. That's because she knows circumstances can change so quickly.

Ngamba had arrived in Britain at age 11 — her father and siblings live here, too — in Bolton, just north of Manchester, and set about learning English and trying to fit in. She picked up boxing at age 15, and it became an escape from the stress of worrying about her residency status.

She described being arrested as

a teenager while checking in at an immigration center in Manchester.

"My case was still pending. I applied and they rejected it. When they reject your case, you have to go and re-apply again. I was in a situation where even though I was re-applying every time, they could have arrested me at any moment," she said. "I visualized that they could arrest me in the street or in my house, in school or with my friends. I never knew it was going to be at an immigration center where I usually (went) every weekend."

Worried she would be deported,

she thought to herself: "I have no one in Cameroon, no family in Cameroon. Who is going to take care of me?"

She was held overnight at a detention facility in London before being released.

Ngamba, who came out as gay when she was 18, eventually won her case and was given refugee status. Same-sex relations in Cameroon can result in prison sentences of five years in the country.

Her progress in the boxing ring — Ngamba was an England amateur champion at three different

weights — attracted the attention of Britain's elite development program. Ngamba was brought in to spar the likes of Jonas, Price and others in hopes that she would eventually compete for Britain.

Ngamba, one of the flagbearers for the Olympic refugee team at the opening ceremony in Paris, is still treated as one of their own at "GB Boxing." After the Olympics, her name was added to the wall of fame at the English Institute of Sport in Sheffield, and she joined British Olympians at a Buckingham Palace reception where she met King Charles III.

The main attraction is a welterweight clash of generations with 40-year-old Natasha Jonas facing 30-year-old Lauren Price.

Both are former Olympians. Welsh boxer Price (8-0) won a gold medal for Britain at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021. She is the WBA champion.

Jonas (16-2-1), of Liverpool, competed at the 2012 London Games when women's boxing made its debut in the Olympic program. She fell just short of a medal when she lost to Ireland's Katie Taylor in the quarterfinals. Jonas holds the WBC and IBF welterweight titles.

American boxer Mikaela Mayer holds the other major welterweight belt — the WBO championship.

It's the second all-female event by promotion company Boxer and Sky Sports following their October 2022 event at a sold-out O2 Arena (20,000 capacity) in London. Sky said that event had a TV audience of more than 2 million in Britain and Ireland. **MDT/AP**

AD

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FOOTBALL | CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

# Real Madrid beats Atletico in derby, Arsenal romps to record away win at PSV

SAMUEL PETREQUIN

A superb goal from Brahim Diaz helped Real Madrid maintain its dominance of the Madrid derby on Europe's biggest stage with a 2-1 victory over bitter rival Atletico in the first leg of their Champions League last 16 tie yesterday [Macau time].

Atletico has been beaten by the record 15-time European champion in both Champions League final matchups and has won only three of 11 meetings with their city rivals in UEFA competitions.

Arsenal made a massive step toward a quarterfinal spot with a 7-1 win at PSV Eindhoven. It was the biggest victory in an away match in the knockout stage of the Champions League, UEFA said.

"It's a massive result away from home in a competition that we love, that we miss for so many years," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said. "Today is a really special night for us."

On a good night for Premier League teams, Aston Villa won 3-1 at Club Brugge, and Borussia Dortmund drew 1-1 with Lille.

A tense encounter in the Spanish capital was decided by a moment of individual brilliance. Diaz scored the winner for Real Madrid after squeezing past a couple of Atletico players and curling a low strike into the far corner in the 55th minute.

Diego Simeone's team could not change the script after losing its finals to Madrid in 2014 and 2016. It was also eliminated the other two times they faced off in the knockout rounds — in the 2015 quarterfinals and 2017 semifinals.

Playing at home at Santiago Bernabeu stadium, Real Madrid took the lead on its first chance through a great goal from Rodrygo. After being picked up down the flank, he cut inside the box, was too fast for defenders and beautifully curled the ball into the back of the net.

"It stemmed from a nice ball from Fede Valverde,"



Real Madrid's Brahim Diaz (right) celebrates with his head coach Carlo Ancelotti after scoring his side's second goal

Rodrygo said. "He absolutely read my movement and put the ball in behind the man covering me. I made a little dribble inside and then smashed it off my left."

Atletico patiently waited for an opportunity. It came in the 32nd minute and Julian Alvarez seized it with a spectacular strike. The forward collected the ball down the left, cut inside the box and curled the ball past Thibaut Courtois for his seventh goal in the tournament this season.

"I leave with the feeling that we competed well," Atletico coach Diego Simeone said. "We could have done more in terms of the goals we conceded. We must continue with this rhythm for the second leg, which will be tough and difficult, and in which we will have the support of our fans."

## GUNNERS ROMP TO EMPHATIC WIN

Arsenal, which returned to the Champions League after a six-year absence last season, got off a shaky start and Jurrien Timber scored against the run of the play with a header at the far post, just after PSV hit the woodwork.

The London team never looked back after that and led 3-0 at the half-hour mark.

Seventeen-year-old Ethan Nwaneri doubled the lead in the 21st after his

teammates combined well in the area to set him up. Mikel Merino then made the most of the confusion in the box to make it 3-0 after PSV repeatedly failed to clear the ball.

A silly foul from Thomas Partey on Luuk de Jong in the box gave PSV some hope before halftime and Noa Lang converted.

But PSV crumbled once back from the locker room. Arsenal captain Martin Odegaard scored twice, with Leandro Trossard and Riccardo Calafiori adding more luster to the win.

## DORTMUND HELD

Last season's runner-up Borussia Dortmund is evenly matched with Lille ahead of the second leg after Hakon Arnar Haraldsson's goal salvaged a 1-1 draw for the French team.

Dortmund led thanks to Karim Adeyemi's low shot from outside the box in the 22nd minute, but Canada forward Jonathan David sliced open the Dortmund defense with a through ball in the 68th for Haraldsson to level the score.

Aston Villa wins away Aston Villa shook off its poor away form, and it was largely due to an own goal from a rival player.

A turning point came in the 82nd minute when Club Brugge defender Brandon Mechele beat his own goalkeeper with the teams tied 1-1. Mechele slid to stop a cross from

Morgan Rogers, only to deflect into the back of the net.

Before that, the Belgian side had looked solid, enjoyed most of the posses-

sion and created the best chances in the second half.

Looking demoralized, the hosts then conceded a late penalty that was converted by substitute

Marco Asensio.

Villa had suffered two away defeats in the group phase of the tournament, including one at Club Brugge. In the Premier League, the team has lost seven of 13 away matches.

The visitors needed less than three minutes to take the lead when Leon Bailey swept the ball home. Club Brugge leveled two minutes later after a long ball in the back of Villa's defenders found Christos Tzolis. He came into the area and delivered an excellent cut back pass for the unmarked Maxim De Cuyper, who beat Emiliano Martinez with his left foot, into the far corner.

On Wednesday, it will be Paris Saint-Germain hosting Liverpool, Inter Milan visiting Feyenoord, Benfica taking on Barcelona, and Bayern Munich welcoming fellow German club Bayer Leverkusen. MDT/AP



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OPINION

**Business Views**

Shuli Ren, Bloomberg



**WHEN EVEN CHINA MARKETS START TO IGNORE TRUMP**

Is it the lull before the storm, or has the tempest lost its destructive power?

China's tech stock rally is remarkably resilient considering the blizzard of tariffs President Donald Trump is unleashing on Beijing. The Hang Seng Tech Index, which tracks the largest Chinese stocks listing in Hong Kong, wobbled on Friday after a surprise announcement of a 10% levy to be introduced on Tuesday. The blue-chip index regained composure Monday ahead of the annual National People's Congress, where Beijing is expected to announce this year's growth target and fiscal deficit.

Make no mistake: Trump has bite in addition to bark. This week's tariff, on top of the 10% implemented in February, would take the average rate on all US imports from China to more than 30%, from just over 10% in 2024, according to Bloomberg Intelligence.

Geopolitical risk has also flared up. Trump's recent attempts to reset relations with Russia have led to worries of a so-called "reverse Nixon" move, referring to former US President Richard Nixon's decision in the 1970s to repair relations with Beijing in order to isolate the Soviet Union. This time, of course, the ultimate adversary is not Russia, but China, which could spell trouble far beyond tariffs.

Why are Chinese stocks so resilient, and what does this mean to the US exceptionalism thesis that the dollar and American equities will continue to outperform — which global asset managers overwhelmingly, but apprehensively, embraced entering 2025?

One possible explanation is that even if the Trump administration sees Beijing as the real foe, a chaotic implementation of priorities and policies at the White House gives China the much-needed breathing room to fortify its tech boom.

Slowing its rival down in the tech race doesn't seem to be on Trump's top agenda right now. The president has a lot on his plate. He needs to engineer a ceasefire in Ukraine, slim the federal workforce and halt illegal immigration. Now, Americans are growing more insistent about bringing down inflation, too.

Last week, Xiaomi Corp. unveiled a \$73,000 four-door sedan, its most premium model yet, as fans of the gadget-maker put themselves on a long wait-list. Both stocks hit record highs this year.

So, is it possible that even Chinese stocks are starting to ignore Trump? If Hong Kong-listed tech shares stay firm this week, it will be a huge inflection point for a market that some have bitterly called uninvestable. It will be a boost of confidence for global investors who want to diversify from US big tech but are wary of geopolitical tensions. American investors own about \$800 billion of Chinese equities, recovering from the cycle lows in late 2023, but still far shy of the \$1.2 trillion at the beginning of 2021, according to Goldman Sachs Group Inc.

Everyone seems to have an opinion about what Trump ultimately wants from China, even though his true intent is still inscrutable.

Some embrace a Nixon 2.0 vision, believing that Washington will strike a big deal with Beijing that solves tensions over trade, Taiwan and the US government's ballooning debt. Some others are more cynical, seeing a "reverse Nixon" instead that would leave Beijing out in the cold. But it's also possible that neither narrative matters and the impact of geopolitical risks on Chinese shares starts to fade. That would be a notable driver that can lift the nation's assets out of their value trap. [Abridged]

Courtesy Bloomberg/Shuli Ren

Authorities misidentified a deceased dog while investigating the deaths of actor Gene Hackman and his wife, pianist Betsy Arakawa, according to a pet care specialist.

The couple's German shepherd, named Bear, survived along with a second dog named Nikita, but their kelpie mix, Zinna, died, according to Joey Padilla, owner of the Santa Fe Tails pet care facility that is involved in the surviving dogs' care.

The dog that died "was always attached to Betsy at the hip and it was a beautiful relationship," Padilla said in an email statement yesterday [Macau time]. "Zinna went from being a re-

turned shelter dog to this incredible companion under Betsy's hand."

Authorities have been searching for answers after the deaths of Hackman and Arakawa, whose partially mummified bodies were discovered on Feb. 26 at their Santa Fe home. Hackman and Arakawa may have died up to two weeks earlier, Santa Fe County Sheriff Adan Mendoza said.

Authorities did not perform a necropsy on Zinna, who was found in a kennel in a bathroom closet near Arakawa, a sheriff's office spokesperson said.



Images made from video provided by Dean Harrison, shows the dolphin in a boat, being hosed with water

**ONE MOMENT, CALM WATERS. THE NEXT, A 900-POUND DOLPHIN LANDED ON THEIR BOAT**

CHARLOTTE GRAHAM-MCLAY, WELLINGTON

A placid fishing trip turned "berserk" for three New Zealand men when a dolphin weighing more than 400 kilograms (900 pounds) appeared to fall out of the sky before crash-landing in their small boat.

No one was badly hurt when the 3.4 meter (11-foot) bottlenose dolphin jumped aboard the open-top boat Friday, said Dean Harrison, the owner of the nearly 16-foot vessel.

Harrison and two companions were fishing near the Hole in the Rock, a picturesque spot off the far north coast of New Zealand's North Island, while dolphins frolicked ahead. The men saw a shadow across the bright summer sun and heard an almighty boom — before chaos unfolded.

"This one decided to jump on board and say

hello," Harrison said. "One minute everything was fine and then just like lightning striking, there's a big dolphin in our boat thrashing around and breaking everything."

The creature's flailing snapped "every single fishing rod we had in the boat" and severely damaged the bow as the trio clung to the sides of the vessel, said Harrison. One man had minor injuries to his arm where the juvenile male dolphin grazed his back and shoulder, but all three fishermen and the dolphin were otherwise uninjured.

But returning the majestic creature to the sea was not an option for the trio due to its size.

"We looked at the dolphin still alive and breathing and we thought, we've got to start looking after him and figure out what to do," Harrison said. "Because he's stuck in the boat for now, so he's coming along for

the ride."

The men alerted New Zealand's conservation agency and were directed to a boat ramp an hour away, where workers waited to help the dolphin. On the way, the trio used a hose to keep the creature wet and protected it from the sun using a damp towel depicting players from the All Blacks rugby team.

On shore, members of a local Mori tribe prayed for the dolphin before it was returned to the ocean using a tractor. Helpers gave the 2-3-year-old creature a name: Tohu, which means "sign" in the Mori language.

Tohu is now also the name of Dean Harrison's boat.

"The dolphin got to swim away and we got to walk away and we've all got a story to tell," he said. "It's a good ending in a situation that could have been very different." MDT/AP



**USA** President Trump's Pentagon nominee, Elbridge Colby, reluctantly acknowledged yesterday [Macau time] that Russia invaded Ukraine. Pressed by senators, Colby also avoided labeling Putin a war criminal. His hesitance reflects shifting U.S. policy under Trump, who recently criticized Ukrainian President Zelenskyy for being ungrateful.



**Israel** Israel has halted aid to Gaza, driving up food prices and straining humanitarian operations. Officials say the blockade is pressuring Hamas in ceasefire negotiations. Aid groups warn of worsening conditions, with fuel shortages threatening hospitals and water supplies. Palestinians fear another escalation.



**South Sudan** Soldiers surrounded Vice President Riek Machar's home yesterday as tensions rose in Juba. Allies of Machar were arrested after an armed group linked to him attacked an army base. Political disputes between Machar and President Kiir threaten the fragile 2018 peace deal.



**UK** London celebrated Shrove yesterday [Macau time] with pancake races at Guildhall Yard. Competitors in elaborate costumes tossed pancakes while running. The event, part of Pancake Day traditions, marks the beginning of Lent. The custom dates back centuries and remains a lighthearted highlight in the British calendar.