

“All the News  
That’s Fit to Print”

# The New York Times

**THE WEATHER**  
Today, cloudy, showers, high 73. To-  
night, humid, showers, low 69. To-  
morrow, windy, heavy thunder-  
storms from Tropical Storm Debby,  
high 79. Weather map, Page B12.

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The emergence of the 11-year-old skateboarder Zheng Haohao, known as Lilibet, has signaled a shift in the Chinese sports machine.

## Certain Victory Dissipated Fast For Strongman

**By ANATOLY KURMANAEV**  
CARACAS, Venezuela — For the Venezuelan government, everything seemed to be falling in place.  
Francisco Torrealba, a senior ruling party official, described being in an electoral command center in the country’s capital, Caracas, on Election Day last month, watching the computer monitors with confidence as the presidential vote neared its close.  
The charts showed that a crucial party support base in Caracas had shown up in force.  
The picture was much the same in other traditional government strongholds nationwide, he said. This assured officials that a combination of high turnout among loyalists and suppressing the vote for the opposition would propel Venezuela’s president, Nicolás Maduro, to a presidential election victory.  
“We were calm,” Mr. Torrealba, a veteran lawmaker and a senior official of the ruling Socialist Party, said in an interview, describing the mood among government officials during the July 28 vote. “We did everything necessary to achieve a good victory.”  
What happened next appears to have delivered a seismic jolt to the government’s expectations.  
Vote tallies showed that the ruling party’s supporters in the public sector and poor neighborhoods had abandoned the country’s leader in droves, according to vote tallies obtained by the opposition. An electoral disaster loomed.  
“We were betrayed, because they said they were going to vote for Maduro and what did they do? They voted for the lady,” said a ruler.  
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## Teens and Tactics Blur in China’s Quest for Gold

**By HANNAH BEECH**  
PARIS — Lilibet speaks good English. Her coach is British and amply tattooed. She competed on Tuesday in park skateboarding, an insurgent sport in which the point among the sisterhood of athletes is not just winning a medal but embodying a mantra of female empowerment.  
Lilibet is just a nickname. Her full name is Zheng Haohao, and at 11 she is the youngest athlete at the Olympic Games. She is also the new face of a Chinese sports-industrial complex that for decades has harnessed tens of thousands of small children in hopes of forging a tiny fraction of them into Olympic champions.  
Yet Lilibet’s debut, along with those of a few other Chinese Olympians, has come in large part because she has grown up outside the state’s full embrace.  
“I don’t want to put any pressure on myself,” Lilibet wrote on Chinese social media before her competition. “I just want to show my best in Paris.”  
Lilibet’s carefree attitude, an energy tonic for Chinese fans at these Games, has prompted questions of whether it’s worth pushing Chinese athletes so hard for national glory.  
In Paris, China is once again locked in a gold-medal race with the United States — a contest that probably means more to Beijing than to Washington. As expected,  
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## Young, Carefree Skater Challenges the State’s Definition of Glory



**Great Barrier Reef Ebbs Away**  
This generation will probably see the demise of the largest coral reef system in the world unless humanity acts with far more urgency to rein in climate change, new research suggests. Page A7.

## In Consumer-Driven Economy, Is Foot on Accelerator or Brakes?

*This article is by Sydney Ember, Jordyn Holman and Julie Creswell.*  
The economy’s resurgence from the pandemic shock has had a singular driving force: the consumer. Flush with savings and buoyed by a sizzling labor market, Americans have spent exuberantly, on goods such as furniture and electronics and then on services including air travel and restaurant meals.  
How long this spending will hold up has become a crucial question.  
Despite contortions in world markets, many economists are cautioning that there is no reason to panic — at least not yet. In July, there was a notable slowdown in hiring and a jump in the unemployment rate to its highest level since October 2021, but consumer spending has remained relatively robust. Wages are rising, though at a slower rate, and job cuts are still low.  
“Overall, there isn’t evidence of That could change if the labor market’s slowdown accelerates.  
Already, some consumers, especially those with lower incomes, are feeling the dual pinch of higher prices and elevated interest rates that are weighing on their finances. Credit card delinquencies are rising, and household debt has swelled. Pandemic-era savings have dwindled. In June, Americans saved just 3.4 percent of their after-tax income, compared with 4.8 percent a year  
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## Spending Stays Strong, but Worries Grow

a retrenchment in consumer spending,” said Gregory Daco, chief economist at the consulting firm EY-Parthenon. The strength of spending helped power greater-than-expected economic growth in the spring.  
That could change if the labor

## Extraordinarily Ordinary: Walz’s Path to Prominence

### A Swing-State Plan, Clad in Plain Talk and Carhartt

**By LISA LERER**  
In selecting Gov. Tim Walz of Minnesota as her running mate, Vice President Kamala Harris has picked a partner who is many things she is not: a product of small-town America. A union member known to campaign in a T-shirt and camo hat. A white guy who exudes Midwestern dad energy.  
And, perhaps most important, a politician who has had to rely on the support of independent, or even Republican, voters to win elections.  
Their pairing is somewhat predictable; a cardinal rule of vice-presidential selection is to construct the ticket with political balance in mind. But it is also a statement about what many Democrats believe is one of Ms. Harris’s key vulnerabilities: that she is perceived as too liberal, putting even the small slice of rural, working-class and moderate voters that she needs across Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Michigan out of her reach.  
Ms. Harris, a California Democrat, has never won an election as a solo candidate outside the liberal bastion of California, where races often hinge not on winning swing voters but on successfully navigating intra-party fights. That has left her with limited experience acquiring a political skill Mr. Walz honed over his nearly two decades in politics: talking to conservatives.  
The great dream of Ms. Harris’s pick is that Mr. Walz’s brand of affable cultural politics can help broaden her appeal and win back some of the voters who have been fleeing the party for years.  
In other words, Democrats hope that “Brat summer,” the lime green, pop-culture meme for Ms. Harris’s campaign, can translate into the kind of brat summer that evokes a staple of Midwest barbecues.  
“This is a man who is as comfortable walking into Farm Fest in southern Minnesota and talking to corn and soybean growers as he is walking into a Black church in north Minneapolis,” said Senator Tina Smith, the Minnesota Democrat. “He is a person who just knows how to sit down and listen and connect with people.”  
But Republicans are not going to let Mr. Walz’s casual style and  
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**By ERNESTO LONDOÑO and ADAM NAGOURNEY**  
ST. PAUL, Minn. — Tim Walz never attended an Ivy League school. He never wrote a political memoir. He once worked at a tanning bed factory in Jonesboro, Ark. And until he was 40, he never showed much interest in a career in politics.  
Mr. Walz, the 60-year-old governor of Minnesota chosen by Vice President Kamala Harris as her running mate on Tuesday, had not devoted his life to reaching this pinnacle.  
In selecting Mr. Walz, Ms. Harris has picked a one-man rejoinder to the idea that the Democrats are the party of the cultural and coastal elite. His biography and his style are a sharp contrast not only to Ms. Harris, who is from Califor-  
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Gov. Tim Walz of Minnesota has displayed shrewd instincts.

## Trump Dangles New Tax Cuts, Now for a Larger Voting Group

**By ANDREW DUEHREN**  
First it was a tax cut for hotel and restaurant workers in Nevada, a swing state where Donald J. Trump proposed exempting tips from taxes. Then, in front of powerful chief executives gathered in Washington, Mr. Trump floated cutting the corporate tax rate, helping to ease concerns in the business community about his candidacy.  
Now Mr. Trump is calling for an end to taxing Social Security benefits, which could be a boon for retirees, one of the most politically important groups in the United States.  
Repeatedly during the campaign, Mr. Trump and Republicans have embraced new, sometimes novel tax cuts in an attempt to shore up support with major constituencies. In a series of social-media posts, at political rallies, and without formal policy proposals, Mr. Trump has casually suggested reducing federal revenue by trillions of dollars.  
While policy experts have taken issue with the ideas, Mr. Trump’s pronouncements have real political appeal, at times putting Democrats on their back foot. Nevada’s two Democratic senators and its powerful culinary union have endorsed ending taxes on tips. The AARP supports tax relief for seniors receiving Social Security benefits, though it has not taken a position on Mr. Trump’s proposal.  
“You do have to scratch your head a little bit when someone’s going around offering free lunches everywhere,” said Jesse Lee, a Democratic consultant and former Biden White House official.  
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**SPORTS B6-11**  
**A Sports Pipeline in Tatters**  
With battered facilities and few coaches, Ukraine faces a long road toward repairing its programs. PAGE B6

**Skaters Get Overdue Golds**  
U.S. Winter Olympians received the team medals they won in 2022 after a Russian was disqualified. PAGE B6

**NATIONAL A12-17**  
**Astronauts May Fly on SpaceX**  
NASA officials admitted that problems with Boeing’s Starliner were more serious than first thought, and they are exploring a backup option. PAGE A17

**Wildfire Actions Lag in Hawaii**  
After a fast-moving blaze devastated Maui a year ago, officials vowed to take preventive measures. But progress has been slow and costly. PAGE A17

**City’s Tax Revenues Increase**  
Despite vacancies, the assessed market value of New York’s buildings is growing, leading to a small rise. PAGE A16



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**Fine-Tuning Her Sound**  
On Niki’s third album, “Buzz,” she moves toward West Coast folk-rock and explores fresh heartbreak. PAGE C1

**Songs Inspired by Books**  
In search of a link between two worlds — one beloved, one baffling — a bibliophile made a musical pilgrimage. PAGE C1

**INTERNATIONAL A4-11**  
**Ukraine Strikes Into Russia**  
In a surprise ground attack, troops and armored fighting vehicles crossed into the western region of Kursk, advancing several miles, according to Moscow and independent analysts. PAGE A7

**Terror Plot Cancels Swift Shows**  
Taylor Swift’s Eras Tour has been canceled in Austria after officials arrested two men accused of plotting attacks, with one focused on her concerts. PAGE A6

**OPINION A18-19**  
**Ross Barkan** PAGE A18



**THURSDAY STYLES D1-6**  
**A Culture War on Wheels**  
Since Tesla’s Cybertruck began leaving the factory floor, its novel look has been a love-it-or-hate-it proposition. PAGE D6

