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THE GOV'T REINSTATES SEVEN-DAY NAT VALIDITY FOR PLANE PASSENGERS LEAVING MACAU IN A RELAXATION OF PREVIOUS REQUIREMENT P5

CLOEE CHAO ASKS GOV'T TO ENCOURAGE CASINOS TO ISSUE SUBSIDY TO EMPLOYEES P4

NEW ZEALAND WILL REOPEN ITS BORDERS TO THE WORLD OVER THE COMING MONTHS ALLOWING FOR THE RETURN OF DISPLACED RESIDENTS P12



AP PHOTO

Australia intends to add far-right extremist group The Base and the entirety of the Lebanese group Hezbollah to its list of outlawed terrorist organizations as national security services grapple with a surge in neo-Nazi cells and other ideologically motivated extremists. Home Affairs Minister Karen Andrews (pictured) said yesterday.

USA The White House requires essential, nonresident travelers crossing U.S. land borders, such as truck drivers, government and emergency response officials, to be fully vaccinated beginning on Jan. 22. A senior administration official said the requirement brings the rules for essential travelers in line with those that took effect earlier this month for leisure travelers, when the U.S. reopened its borders to fully vaccinated individuals.

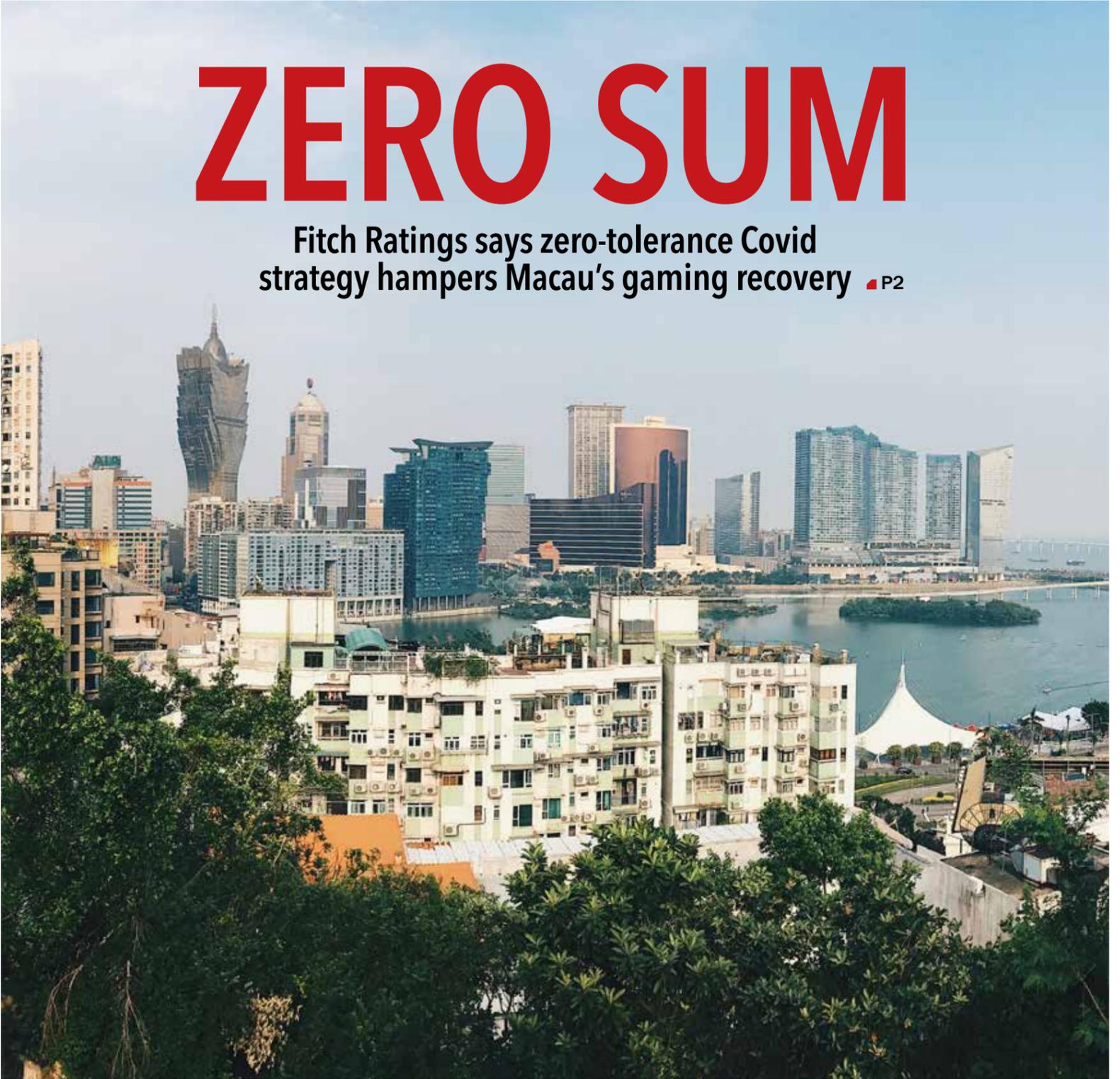


AP PHOTO

USA Biotechnology entrepreneur Elizabeth Holmes (pictured, center), a former billionaire accused of engineering a massive medical scam, expressed some remorse while on the witness stand yesterday, but denied trying to conceal that her company's blood-testing methods weren't working as she had promised. In her third day of testimony during the high-profile criminal trial, Holmes acknowledged making some mistakes as CEO of Theranos, a company she founded in 2003 when she was just 19.

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ZERO SUM

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FITCH RATINGS: ZERO COVID STRATEGY HAMPERS SAR'S GAMING RECOVERY

LYNZY VALLES

CHINA'S zero Covid policy is slowing Macau's recovery and its new concession process, according to the report, Fitch Ratings 2022 Outlook: Global Gaming.

According to the American credit rating agency, global gaming operating environments are improving, with those geared toward domestic visitation poised to reach or exceed beyond pre-pandemic levels in 2022.

While several countries learn to live with the virus, China, Hong Kong and Macau still maintain a zero tolerance policy, hence the closure of borders and maintenance of strict entry requirements.

However, the policy comes at a cost.

According to Fitch, China's "zero Covid" policy is hindering Macau's recovery, while alternative gaming destinations have accepted the endemic status of the virus.

"Local and regional Covid-19 cases will be the primary driver of visitation and ultimate performance in 2022," according to the note.

"To the extent travel between China and Hong Kong recovers



RENATO MARQUES

faster than our assumption of a gradual recovery, Macau revenues should outperform [those projections]. Operators note that pent-up demand exists and [that] transit visas [will not be] an impediment, [assuming the absence of] regional Covid-19 cases," it added.

On Tuesday, Macau casino

stocks in New York surged 6.19% yesterday as a result of speculation that Hong Kong's border will soon reopen. This comes after reports that Hong Kong and Beijing are in discussions about the opening of quarantine-free travel between the two regions, which is reportedly planned for "early December."

Analysts from Sanford C. Bernstein had previously noted that the "reopening [of restrictions between mainland China and] Hong Kong would be a positive impact on Macau and successful reopening for HK/China travel could lead to continued easing of travel restrictions between China and Macau."

Meanwhile, regulatory uncertainty will be a key global theme in 2022 as Macau's gaming concessions expire in June and uncertainty remains concerning the rebidding process and the regulatory and operating structure.

Just recently in his Policy Address, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng admitted that current gaming licenses could again be extended if the new gaming law setting the rules for the new concession tender is not enacted in time.

"Fitch believes the new concession process will be pragmatic, though additional volatility is expected ahead of the June 2022 expirations to extent government communication is sparse," the firm said.

It added that the gaming operators in the SAR have contributed "meaningful capital and social investment" as part of their current concessions.

"Unlike other industries seeing greater Chinese government regulation, such as tech and education, Macau operators have been heavily regulated for the past 20 years and its gaming environment already provides for meaningful social and financial oversight," Fitch concluded.

RENATO MARQUES



Wynn issues investor alert after court defeat

WYNN Macau's chairman, Allan Zeman, has stated in a filing submitted to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange that the company will be jointly liable with Dore to pay HKD6 million, following a ruling from the city's Court of Final Appeal (TUI) in favor of a former gaming promoter whose funds had been stolen.

Last week, the TUI decided that that the gaming

concessionaire Wynn Macau, which Dore was operating, shares responsibility for the repayment of a debt perpetrated by a casino cage manager, who disappeared after stealing HKD700 million from Dore's accounts in September 2015.

In a filing, Zeman noted, "Pursuant to the Judgment, WRM shall be jointly liable with Dore to pay HKD6.0

million, together with the relevant interests of about HK\$3.65 million, to the plaintiff."

The statement also read that "the shareholders and potential investors of the Company are advised to exercise caution when dealing in the shares of the Company."

As the Times reported, the government appears to have placed additional importance on the decision, which is considered to be of critical importance to the sector. The government has included a new provision in a document for public consultation on the new gaming law. It is proposed that the new law will establish license holders as being responsible for all activities developed by junkets operating VIP rooms and other facilities used by high-stakes gamblers. LV

CONSULTANCY IGAMIX LAUNCHES CAMBODIAN SUBSIDIARY

LYNZY VALLES

IGAMIX Management and Consulting Ltd (Macau) launched a Cambodian subsidiary yesterday, the firm being optimistic on the prospect of projects for the new branch.

IGamiX Management & Consulting Ltd (Cambodia) will be led by Daniel Li, a veteran of the gaming industry in Indo-China, who will manage the new office in Phnom Penh as regional director.

Li has spent the majority of his

working life in Asia in fields which include banking, hospitality and gaming. The executive also served as vice president of Hong Kong-listed Nagacorp Ltd, and a consultant to the Cambodian Ministry of Tourism. Li has also served as senior consultant to Entertainment Gaming Asia.

"We have been encouraged by demand for our project consulting services in Cambodia as well as excited by the prospect of a new line of business," IGamiX Mana-

gement and Consulting Ltd (Macau) managing partner, Ben Lee, told the Times.

IGamiX, established by Lee, focuses on gaming consultancy, which was founded in Macau and has engagement in the gaming industry across the Asia-Pacific region. The group conducts research on gaming industry topics, and provides the international investment community with regular gaming industry data for the Macau and Manila casino markets.

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RENATO MARQUES

DESPITE the large number of items mentioned in the presentation of the Policy Address for 2022 (LAG22) for the Secretariat of Administration and Justice, Secretary André Cheong noted that the Departments and Bureaus under his Secretariat will spend most of 2022 continuing projects begun this year or even back in 2020.

Without any major new announcements at the Legislative Assembly (AL), yesterday, Cheong opted instead to evaluate the work undertaken this year, noting that, in many cases, initiatives which have already been announced will continue for two or more years.

Cheong mentioned the continued reform of public administration and the introduction of several new regulatory regimes. Among the latter is a new law aiming to solve problems caused by water infiltration to buildings: a much-discussed topic in the AL in the past. Cheong also mentioned several government projects which aim to improve public and leisure areas as well as the functioning of public markets.

Although most of the lawmakers did not disagree with any of the policies presented, most of them expressed concerns about the vagueness of the policies: since the government has stated its objectives but not explained clearly when or how it will achieve them.

WATER INFILTRATION LAW TO BE INTRODUCED Q4

A new law aiming to mitigate the problem of the water infiltration in buildings and promoting "quicker ways and add powers to government entities to tackle these problems" is in train and will be likely be introduced the AL for discussion and approval on the last quarter (Q4) of next year.

Although few details of the legislation have been advanced, the Secretary said that it aims to solve or at least facilitate the actions of the government authorities on this matter.

The issue of water infiltration has been brought countless times to the AL plenary session in the form of inquiries to the government from former lawmaker Mak Soi Kun and most recently for lawmaker Zheng Anting.

In the past, Mak has called on the government to amend existing regulations to allow the government to enforce measures such as stopping water and energy supply to the units suspected of leaks in case the owners refuse to cooperate with the authorities in finding and repairing the leaks.



POLICY ADDRESS

André Cheong: 2022 will mostly be a year of continuity

WASTE COLLECTION SYSTEM TO BE REPLACED

A novelty when introduced a couple of years ago, the waste collection system which was installed in the Area Preta district and which never entered operation, will finally be replaced, the Secretary for Administration and Justice revealed.

The system based on the underground deposit system was never put into use because the company which manages the waste collection and treatment never acquired the specific equipment necessary to operate it. It will be replaced by a "pressure" system, the Secretary revealed, retiring the novel collection bins that were installed but have been out of service for several years.

No information was provided on how much money was spent on the now obsolete system.

MARKETS TO OPERATE ON A SINGLE WEIGHT UNIT

One of the new initiatives announced by Cheong is the enforcement of the requirement for sellers operating in public markets to use the same

and only one mass unit to weigh the products.

The new regulation, to be enforced in phases, aims to unify all the types of measurements and units in use, from Grams and Catty to Pounds, among others.

The government wants to turn all these units into a single one using the metric system and electronic scales to prevent confusion and any potential infringement of consumers' rights.

The price system and reference prices for the most sold items will need to be displayed following the new system so that consumers can effectively compare the price of the products they are acquiring, namely fresh produce, seafood and meat.

LEISURE AREAS IN DEMAND

During the long session on Wednesday, several lawmakers questioned the Secretary on the construction of leisure areas and other public spaces.

While Cheong noted that the second phase of the so-called "green corridor of the South Coast of the Pe-

ninsula" will begin development, to link the Statue of Goddess Kun Iam to the area of the Macau Tower next year. Lawmakers criticized the slow progress of projects such as the linking of the bicycle and running path in Taipa's coastal area to the path in the Lotus Flower area.

On the topic, Cheong explained that there are some issues to be solved in that area since "this includes two separate land plots which need to be connected via a bridge." He noted that the government is working to complete the paths as soon as possible.

Questions were also raised by lawmaker Leong Sun Iok about the former Canidrome area but the Secretary refused to expand on the matter, claiming that the project is the responsibility of other Secretariats.

REGIME OF RESPONSIBILITY EXCLUDES SENIOR OFFICIALS

The government has not yet published details of the regulatory regime for financial mismanagement by public officials which it plans to introduce to the AL. Nevertheless,

according to the presentation made by the Secretary, the proposed legislation is likely to exclude senior officials, focusing only on mid-level bureaucrats.

The proposed laws concern the responsibility of public officials for misconduct or errors of judgment causing severe loss of public funds.

Questioned on the matter, the Secretary did not clarify whether that decision is final but noted that there is already a regime establishing criminal responsibility in severe cases such as corruption and other matters of impropriety, hinting that the new regime will apply only to the mid and lower-ranked officials.

Lawmakers also expressed concerns about the fact that of the 17 new laws and law amendments due to be deliberated next year, two-thirds are expected to be introduced to the AL on the last quarter of the year.

Lawmakers are concerned that this will cause an overload on the work for AL and, thus, discussion of these bills, which are of great public importance, will be unduly rushed.

UM OFFERS SCHOLARSHIPS TO 356 OUTSTANDING STUDENTS

The University of Macau (UM) yesterday offered MOP3.45 million in scholarships, donated by institutions, to 356 outstanding students. UM has offered more than 70 scholarships and academic prizes in the past year. In the 2020/2021 academic year, UM received over MOP4 million in funding for academic prizes and scholarships from more than 50 institutions and individuals. These academic prizes and scholarships were awarded to more than 400 students at the university's major events, including the scholarship presentation ceremony.

CE TO ATTEND FORUM IN GUANGZHOU

The Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng travelled to Guangzhou yesterday to attend the opening ceremony of the China Internet Media Forum, due to take place today. While in Guangzhou, the CE will also attend a signing ceremony between China Media Group and TDM, concerning the authorization for the broadcast of sporting events. The ceremony will also mark the launch of a 4K-definition documentary titled "Crunch and Munch in Macao." While Ho is out of town, the Secretary for Administration and Justice, André Cheong will take the role of Acting Chief Executive.

CLOEE CHAO ASKS GOV'T TO ENCOURAGE CASINOS TO ISSUE SUBSIDY TO ALL EMPLOYEES

ANTHONY LAM

MANY employees of the six gambling concessionaires are demanding an extra month of salary before Chinese New Year as a winter livelihood subsidy. Cloee Chao, president of the New Macau Gaming Staff Rights Association, announced yesterday.

The association has submitted a list of demands to the Chief Executive, Ho Iat Seng.

In the letter, Chao stressed that the gambling industry provides economic stability for more than 80,000 workers and their households. The stability of the industry is essential to the stability of the entire economy.

Furthermore, she inferred that the impact of the current pandemic on ordinary households has been exceptionally heavy, mentioning the government's budget deficit this year.

Chao justified the request, arguing that most casino workers have taken furlou-



ghs within the last two years, although she expressed the group's appreciation for the retention of casino workers by concessionaires and the government.

She added that since March 2020, all casino workers have been required to take unpaid or semi-paid leaves, on top of salary freeze and withdrawal of mid-year bonus.

However, she pointed out

that many workers are ineligible for the Covid-19 vaccine for various reasons, and that following Health Bureau's guidelines, they must therefore take the nucleic acid test (NAT) in order to work. Some workers who reside in Zhuhai because they cannot afford to live in Macau must also take the NAT regularly for border crossings. She said that each household needs to spend more than

1,000 patacas each month just for the NAT.

Those workers who happened to live in yellow or red zones could not go to work. Even if they were able to keep their positions, the law allowed their employers to cut their salaries.

Considering all these conditions, workers' monthly incomes have generally been lower since the pandemic began. She revealed that some workers have earned 30% less in the past two years.

Because expenses, such as mortgage repayments, have not decreased, most households have been running on deficit each month, taking funds from savings to pay the bills.

Chao also called on the government to make special arrangements regarding the Central Provident Fund, which is under government administration, so that ordinary residents can apply for the early withdrawal of their funds in order to support their families.

AD

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CRIME

**TEEN SUFFERS SERIOUS
BRAIN INJURY AFTER
PHYSICAL ASSAULT**

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) yesterday announced that inspectors are still trying to track down two or more persons suspected of an aggravated physical assault which left a 17-year-old male with brain damage and in a temporary coma.

The police have arrested four suspects, aged between 23 and 32 years old. Upon admission to the hospital, the victim, who is a student, had to undergo emergency brain surgery. He is now in a stable condition.

At about 2 a.m. on November 21 the boy and his friend walked past the suspects after practicing skateboarding at the plaza of the Macao Cultural Centre. The group ac-

cused the pair of "leering at them" and began to assault them.

The friend managed to flee the scene but the victim fell to the ground during the assault. One member of the gang even hit the victim with his skateboard, leaving him unconscious on the ground.

Returning to the scene and seeing the situation, the friend immediately called the Public Security Police Force (PSP).

At about 5 a.m. the same day, PSP officers arrested three suspects at the Macau Fisherman's Wharf, all three of whom denied the accusation. Later, the PJ apprehended another suspect in a building in Areia Preta. **AL**

**Gov't reinstates seven-day NAT
validity for plane passengers**

INDIVIDUALS intending to leave Macau on a civil aviation flight are now required to present a nucleic acid test (NAT) certificate with a validity of seven days from the day the sample is taken proving that they are negative for Covid-19.

The measure came into effect at 1 a.m. yesterday, and represents a relaxation of previous Macau testing rules regarding outbound flights.

According to the Health Bureau, people intending to leave Macau should pay close attention to any additional requirements for incoming travellers at their destination. For example, people travelling from Macau to Beijing are currently required to present a NAT certificate issued within the previous 48 hours.

In addition, people intending to enter Macau by air from any mainland city are required to present a nega-



ve NAT certificate with a validity of seven days starting the day after the sampling date.

Rules for persons arriving in Zhuhai from Macau were also updated on Tuesday. These travellers are now re-

quired to present a test certificate with a validity period of seven days from the day after the test report is issued.

Likewise, from 1 a.m. Tuesday individuals intending to leave Macau on a ferry service must present a

negative NAT certificate with a seven-day validity period, beginning the day after the sampling date. Arrivals from Hong Kong will need to show a valid a test certificate within three days after the date of sampling. **LV**

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IT'S NOT JUST PENG; CHINA IS CRACKING DOWN ON METOO MOVEMENT

HUIZHONG WU

HUANG Xueqin, who publicly supported a woman when she accused a professor of sexual assault, was arrested in September. Wang Jianbing, who helped women report sexual harassment, was detained along with her. Neither has been heard from since. Meanwhile, several other women's rights activists have faced smear campaigns on social media and some have seen their accounts shuttered.

When tennis star Peng Shuai disappeared from public view this month after accusing a senior Chinese politician of sexual assault, it caused an international uproar. But back in China, Peng is just one of several people — activists and accusers alike — who have been hustled out of view, charged with crimes or trolled and silenced online for speaking out about the harassment, violence and discrimination women face every day.

When Huang helped spark a grassroots #MeToo movement in China in 2018, it gained fairly wide visibility and achieved some measure of success, including getting the civil code to define sexual harassment for the first time. But it was also met with stiff resistance from Chinese authorities, who are quick to counter any social movement they fear could challenge their hold on power. That crackdown has intensified this year, part of wider efforts to limit what's acceptable in the public discourse.

"They're publicly excluding us from the legitimacy, from the legitimate public space," said Lu Pin, an activist who now lives in the U.S. but is still active on women's rights is-



sues in China. "This society's middle ground is disappearing."

In a sign of how threatening the #MeToo movement and activism on women's rights is to Chinese authorities, many activists have been dismissed as tools of foreign interference — a label used to discredit their concerns as fabrications by China's enemies meant to destabilize it.

The ongoing crackdown has mostly targeted activists with little fame or clout and who often worked with marginalized groups.

Huang and Wang both had a history of advocating for disadvantaged groups, and have been charged with subversion of state power, according to a friend of both activists who saw a notice sent to Wang's family. He spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of police retaliation. Police in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou where the two were arrested did not respond to a faxed request for comment.

The charge is vague and often used against political dissidents. Huang's and Wang's families have

not heard from them since they were detained and are not able to contact them — another tactic often deployed in political cases.

The #MeToo movement burst into view in China, when Huang helped a woman named Luo Xixi to publicly accuse her professor at Beihang University of trying to force her to have sex with him. The university conducted an investigation and fired the scholar, who it said had violated professional ethics.

Luo's account inspired dozens of other women to come forward — all online. Thousands of students signed petitions and put pressure on their universities to address sexual violence. Women in other industries spoke up, leading to public discussions about the power imbalances between the sexes in many workplaces, the lack of justice for survivors of sexual violence, and the way gender can determine how one is treated in Chinese society.

While that national conversation was unsettling for authorities from the beginning, efforts to counter activism on women's issues have

increased this year, including by nationalist, pro-government influencers, some of who seem to have the blessing of authorities and have been praised by state media.

In a span of a few weeks in the spring, influencers with millions of followers launched a wave of attacks against women's rights activists on Weibo, one of China's leading social media platforms. They accused them of being anti-China and of being backed by foreign forces, without evidence. Such allegations have often been leveled at protest movements, including the pro-democracy one in Hong Kong that Beijing has relentlessly tried to stamp out.

By late April, roughly a dozen activists and nonprofits found their accounts restricted from posting temporarily or permanently suspended. It's not clear why in all cases, but one activist who had lost her account, Liang Xiaowen, shared a notice from Weibo that said her account had "shared illegal and harmful information."

Even Zhou Xiaoxuan, who accused well-known state TV host Zhu Jun of groping her when she was an intern and was once praised for her courage in speaking up, faced a campaign of harassment and can no longer post on her public-facing accounts.

On Weibo, users send her private messages such as, "Get out of China, I feel disgusting living with a type of person like you, on the same piece of land." Another called her a piece of "toilet paper" that "foreigners would use and then throw away."

The effect is such that any discussion about the harassment, violence or inequalities that women face has

been increasingly shielded from the public view.

"Now, the situation on social media is such that you have been completely sealed off, you have no way to speak," said Zhou.

The attacks have not been limited to the digital space. In September, when Zhou went to a court hearing in the civil case where she was suing Zhu for damages and an apology, a group of aggressive bystanders yelled at her and tried to prevent her from speaking to reporters. Police at the scene did not stop them.

Late that night, when Zhou left the courthouse and headed for home, she said she was followed by men in two cars. The men waited outside her residential complex for half an hour before leaving.

The pressure campaign also forced a low-profile group called Hot Pepper Tribe, which worked with female migrant workers, to shut down in August. The group had tried to raise awareness of the hardships faced by women who work in factories, construction and other manual labor fields. It had come under pressure from authorities, though it's not clear why it was singled out.

Still, activists are hopeful that the #MeToo movement has opened a door that cannot be shut.

"This is not so simple that you find a few feminist bloggers and you shut down their accounts," said Zhou. "Becoming a feminist comes from discovering what kind of problems you face. And once you become a feminist, then it's very hard to give it up. And #MeToo's very important meaning is that it has inspired a broad feminist community." **MDT/AP**

ERIKA KINETZ, BRUSSELS

DANIEL HSU

DANIEL Hsu, a U.S. citizen, fought for four years to escape China.

The Seattle resident was barred from leaving despite having committed no crime. Then earlier this month, just four days before a virtual meeting between President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping, Hsu was told to prepare to go home. He had less than 48 hours.

"It was a total rush," he told The Associated Press in a telephone interview from his home in Seattle.

Hsu knew nothing of the horse-trading going on between China and the U.S. in the build-up to the three-plus hour video meeting between Biden and Xi on Nov. 15. Both countries appeared to be trying to dial back tensions in their fractious relationship, and Hsu had become a bargaining chip. He could return to Seattle, and seven Chinese nationals who were convicted of crimes in the U.S. would be sent back to

China.

China's ability to make deals by effectively taking people like Hsu hostage has raised concerns that Beijing may feel emboldened to double down on the practice.

"There's no deterrent imposed on Beijing to doing it again," said Sophie Richardson, China Director at Human Rights Watch. "The problem is if you took the truly principled road, a lot of people would still be sitting in arbitrary detention in China."

A U.S. official knowledgeable about the administration's talks with Beijing told AP that Hsu was not a "deliverable" for the Biden-Xi meeting and that what looked to some like a prisoner exchange was rather the product of long — and continuing — efforts to get Beijing to live up to its international obliga-

tions. The official wasn't authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said he wasn't clear on the details of Hsu's case, but that China handled such matters according to established rules.

"I would like to emphasize that all are equal under the law and the relevant Chinese organs handle such matters in accordance with the law and regulations," Zhao said at a daily briefing yesterday. "In the carrying out of such duties, there is no tolerance for interference, slander or distortion."

Hsu told the AP he had been effectively held hostage by Chinese authorities seeking to convince his father to return to China and face justice for allegedly embezzling

roughly \$63,000 over 20 years ago. Hsu's father said he is innocent and the target of a political vendetta.

Under Chinese law, authorities have broad discretion to block Chinese citizens and foreign nationals from leaving the country. The U.S., Canada, Australia and the U.K. have issued advisories warning people they can be prevented from leaving China arbitrarily.

Hsu's is not the first case of hostage diplomacy involving China.

Hours after Canada released Meng Wanzhou — a powerful executive at Chinese tech giant Huawei who had faced a U.S. extradition request on charges of fraud — Beijing freed two Canadians detained in China on national security charges. China's Foreign Ministry downplayed any connection with Meng's case. The next day, two

American siblings who — like Hsu — had been blocked from leaving China for years returned to the United States.

Hsu's luck didn't change until the weeks leading up to the November video conference. Hsu said he got a call from the U.S. Embassy in Beijing on the afternoon of Thursday, Nov. 11. He was instructed to get to Guangzhou, a southern Chinese megacity about 900 miles from his apartment in Shanghai, in time for a charter flight home early that Sunday morning.

He went to see his 103-year-old grandmother. She cried when he told her he was leaving. "I could tell she was wondering if she'd see me again," he said.

Hsu never told his grandmother about his exit ban because he worried for her health. He ne-

After four years as pawn in US-China game, Seattle resident returns home



Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu shows his signature under a roadmap for military cooperation between Russia and China during a video call with Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe in Moscow

China, Russia sign roadmap for closer military cooperation

VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV,
MOSCOW

RUSSIA'S defense chief yesterday signed a roadmap for closer military ties with China, pointing to increasingly frequent U.S. strategic bomber flights near both countries' borders.

During a video call, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and his Chinese counterpart Wei Fenghe "expressed a shared interest

in stepping up strategic military exercises and joint patrols by Russia and China," according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

"China and Russia have been strategic partners for many years," Shoigu said. "Today, in conditions of increasing geopolitical turbulence and growing conflict potential in various parts of the world, the development of our interaction is especially relevant."

Shoigu pointed to increasingly intensive flights by the U.S.

strategic bombers near Russian borders, saying that there were 30 such missions over the past month alone.

"This month, during the U.S. Global Thunder strategic force exercise, 10 strategic bombers practiced the scenario of using nuclear weapons against Russia practically simultaneously from the western and eastern directions," Shoigu said, adding that they came as close as 20 kilometers to the Russian border.

He also noted a rise in the number of U.S. bomber flights over the Sea of Okhotsk where they practiced reaching the points for launching cruise missiles, saying that it poses a threat to both Russia and China.

"In such an environment, the Russian-Chinese coordination becomes a stabilizing factor in global affairs," Shoigu said.

Wei praised Russia for successfully countering what he described as U.S. pressure and military

threats.

Shoigu and Wei hailed a series of maneuvers that involved Russian and Chinese warplanes and naval ships, and signed a plan for military cooperation for 2021-2025.

On Friday, two Russian Tu-95MS strategic bombers and two Chinese H-6K strategic bombers flew a joint patrol over the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea, prompting South Korea to scramble fighter jets.

The bomber patrol followed joint naval maneuvers by Russian and Chinese warships and aircraft in the Sea of Japan last month.

In August, Shoigu visited China to attend joint war games, which marked the first time that Russian troops had taken part in drills on Chinese territory.

They were the latest in a series of war games in recent years, intended to underline increasingly close military relations between Moscow and Beijing.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and China's leader, Xi Jinping, have developed strong personal ties to bolster a "strategic partnership" between the former Communist rivals as they both faced tensions with the West.

Russia has sought to expand ties with China as its relations with the U.S. and its allies sank to post-Cold War lows over Moscow's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimea Peninsula, accusations of Russian hacking attacks, interference in elections and other disputes.

Even though Russia and China in the past rejected the possibility of forging a military alliance, Putin said last year that such a prospect can't be ruled out. He also has noted that Russia has been sharing highly sensitive military technologies with China that helped significantly bolster its defense capability. **MDT/AP**

Battle man is home

ver told her that he had been held for six months in solitary confinement, under constant surveillance, with lights that never went off. Or that his wife – also innocent of any crime – had also been blocked from leaving China until last year, for reasons that were never clear to them. As a consequence, their teenage daughter was effectively orphaned in Seattle for nearly three years.

Sunday morning, Nov. 14, dawned in Guangzhou with a glorious blue sky. At the airport, Hsu walked across the tarmac toward a waiting Gulfstream 5 jet.

Hsu said he saw seven people disembark, though he didn't know who they were.

Only one - Xu Guojun, a former Chinese bank executive - was in handcuffs. China called Xu's return

a "major achievement" in China's global anti-corruption fight. A federal court in Las Vegas had convicted the former Bank of China manager on conspiracy charges and he spent nearly 13 years in U.S. prison, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

Two other returnees – Zhang Yujing and Lu Jing – tried to enter Mar-a-Lago in 2019. Another two – Wang Yuhao and Zhang Jielun – illegally photographed a naval air station in 2020. The final pair – Sun Yong and Tang Junliang – were convicted of financial crimes, according to DHS and Justice Department records.

And then it was Hsu's turn. He walked up ten boarding stairs with a single suitcase and one carry on.

"That was really a relief," Hsu said. "I took a deep breath when I



U.S. citizen Daniel Hsu poses for a portrait near his apartment in Shanghai in April last year

sat down in my chair."

Thanksgiving this year promises to be a massive improvement on the holiday four years ago, which Hsu said he celebrated in solitary confinement in Hefei, where he

managed to convince his minders to bring him a special meal of Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Hsu spent the six-hour flight from Guangzhou to Guam reading "Dune" in Mandarin, playing video

games and chatting with a half dozen Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials. Then there was a three-hour layover in Guam, a seven-hour flight to Honolulu, a 24-hour layover in Hawaii and a five-and-a-half-hour flight to Phoenix.

In Phoenix, he switched to a commercial flight, which was delayed by nearly three hours. As Biden and Xi spoke of the need to avoid conflict, Hsu paced the airport, exhausted and aimless. "I tried to read a book or read something on my phone, I just can't," Hsu said. "I couldn't focus on anything. I couldn't wait to see my wife."

Finally, around 10 p.m., Hsu touched down in Seattle. A representative from the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs was waiting for him. So was his wife, Jodie Chen.

"I just held her and gave her a hug," Hsu said. "A very big one, very tight."

"Welcome home," Chen said. **MDT/AP**



USA

Many environmentalists back Biden's move to tap oil reserve

MATTHEW DALY,
WASHINGTON

DEMOCRATS and climate activists generally supported President Joe Biden's decision to release a record 50 million barrels of oil from America's strategic reserve, even as the move appeared to contradict his long-term vision of combating climate change.

The U.S. action, announced yesterday [Macau time] in coordination with countries such as India, the United Kingdom and China, is aimed at global energy markets and helping lower gasoline prices that have risen more than a dollar per gallon since January. But it could also undermine Biden's climate goals, including a 50% cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

Some leading climate hawks, however, said they were not concerned by the move because they see it as a short-term fix to meet a specific problem. Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass., who has focused on combating climate change, said Biden was "taking effective action to protect Americans from oil price gouging" even as the administration continues to boost renewable energy that it hopes will eventually mean less dependence on fossil fuels.

"This is what reserves are for — defending our economy against disruption," Markey tweeted. "Profiteering can't go unanswered, especially as Big Oil makes billions and fuels the climate crisis through exports."

The Strategic Petroleum Reserve is an emergency stockpile to preserve access to oil in case of natural disasters, national security issues and other events. Maintained by the Energy Department, the reserves are stored in caverns created in salt domes along the Texas and Louisiana Gulf Coasts. There are roughly 605 million barrels of petroleum in the reserve.

Markey and other Democrats had urged Biden to release oil from the reserve to ease prices on consumers. There have also been calls on the president to reinstate a ban on crude oil exports that was lifted in 2015. Biden has made no move to reimpose the export ban, which was repealed by congressional Republicans in a bid to assert U.S. energy dominance and promote domestic production.

Biden has authority under the legislation to declare an emergency and limit or stop oil exports for up to a year but is not expected to do so.

Kelly Sheehan, senior director of energy campaigns with the Sierra Club, hailed Biden's actions as a way to

ease Americans' energy burdens. But she said the current spike in oil prices was a reminder that "the only way to truly achieve energy security is to rapidly transition away from risky fossil fuels like oil and gas and make it easier for more people to access clean energy."

Lorne Stockman, research director of Oil Change International, an environmental group focused on creating a "fossil-free future," said Biden should have acted sooner, if only to counter a barrage of Republican criticism blaming him for high gasoline prices.

"Presidents are always blamed for high gas prices, whether they have anything to do with it or not," Stockman said, calling the measure a small step to bring short-term relief to American consumers.

Speaking at the White House, Biden said the rise in gas prices made the move necessary and that it wouldn't distract from his larger ambitions of moving toward energy independence.

"My effort to combat climate change is not raising the price of gas," Biden said. "What it is doing is increasing the availability of jobs building electric cars like the one I drove ... in a GM factory in Detroit last week."

Americans who buy electric cars will save up to \$1,000

in fuel costs this year, Biden said, "and we're going to put those savings within reach of more Americans and create jobs installing solar panels, batteries and electric heat pumps. We can make our economy and consumers less vulnerable to these sorts of price spikes when we do that."

Biden said the White House was looking into potential price gouging by oil companies squeezing customers while making money off lower costs. And Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said U.S. companies were keeping production below pre-pandemic levels in order to increase profits.

The coronavirus pandemic has roiled energy markets. As closures began in April 2020, demand collapsed and oil futures prices turned negative. Energy traders did not want to get stuck with crude that they could not store. But as the economy recovered, prices jumped to a seven-year high in October.

Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyo., called Biden's use of the strategic reserve, along with calls for OPEC and Russia to increase production, "desperate attempts to address a Biden-caused disaster" and no substitute for increased American energy production.

Lukas Ross, manager of climate and energy justice at Friends of the Earth, another environmental group, said the spike in gas prices shows that "our continued dependence on a volatile compound that is literally cooking the climate is exactly why we need" Biden's sweeping social and environmental bill approved as quickly possible.

The \$2 trillion bill, which has been approved in the House and is pending in the Senate, includes about \$550 billion for climate change efforts, including proposals to boost wind and solar power and support electric vehicles. Republicans unanimously oppose the measure.

Biden has said the U.S. needs to transition away from oil dependence, and "now is the moment to keep that promise by urgently speeding the transition to electric cars and a renewable energy grid," said Kassie Siegel, director of a climate law institute at the Center for Biological Diversity, another environmental group.

"Price volatility will always be part of Big Oil's playbook," she added. "Let's break their stranglehold on our economy once and for all." MDT/AP

this day in history

1973 ARMY DEPOSES 'HATED' GREEK PRESIDENT



The Greek Government has been toppled by the country's armed forces after weeks of unrest.

There appears to have been little or no resistance when tanks rolled into Athens and troops took up positions around government buildings shortly before dawn.

The coup was orchestrated by the head of the feared military police, Brigadier Demetrios Ioannidis.

It follows growing unrest in Greece, and comes eight days after student uprisings in which 13 people died and hundreds were injured.

The former Greek leader and self-appointed President, George Papadopoulos, is thought to be under heavy guard at his seaside villa 20 miles from the capital.

He himself came to power in a military coup six years ago. Since then he has headed a regime characterised by repression and brutality.

No air of tension was reported in Athens after the coup and exiled Greek publisher Helen Vlachos told the BBC in London the former president would not be missed.

"I don't think anyone was so bitterly hated - he humiliated the Greek people," she said. Lieutenant-General Phaedon Gizikis, commander of the First Army, has been sworn in as his successor.

In a broadcast to the nation this evening, he said he nursed no personal ambition and accepted the mandate of the armed forces.

"My only ambition is to contribute to the normal operation of the regime, as well as the consolidation of tranquillity and unity among the Greek people," he said.

Soon after the coup all telephone services were suspended. Athens International Airport was closed but reopened after a few hours.

A curfew was also imposed but is due to be lifted tomorrow morning.

A military communiqué announced the overthrow of the government was supported by the army, navy and air force and said it was a "continuation of the revolution of 1967", when the Greek colonels, headed by Mr Papadopoulos, seized control.

The statement went on to accuse Mr Papadopoulos of "straying from the ideals of the 1967 revolution" and "pushing the country towards parliamentary rule too quickly".

Earlier this year, Mr Papadopoulos declared Greece a republic, abolishing the monarchy and declaring himself president.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Brigadier Ioannidis partially restored civilian rule but retained a large measure of power.

His regime lasted only a few months, collapsing in 1974 after provoking an unsuccessful coup attempt in Cyprus which led to the Turkish invasion of the island.

He was charged with high treason and revolt and jailed for life. Exiled former Prime Minister Constantine Karamanlis was recalled to the country to head the new government.

A referendum rejected the restoration of the monarchy and instead a parliamentary republic was formed.

Karamanlis was prime minister for six years and was then elected president.

He is credited with guiding the country's return to democracy and engineering its entry into the European Economic Community in 1980.

Following the restoration of democracy, George Papadopoulos was convicted of treason and sentenced to death by firing squad. This was later commuted to life in prison.

A decision by the government to free him on humanitarian grounds in December 1990 was dropped after a public outcry. He spent the last three years of his sentence in a prison hospital before dying in June 1999.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

A challenging—but somewhat amusing—situation will give you an opportunity to demonstrate your flexibility, and you'll make an especially good impression on someone.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You've worked hard to create a comfortable world for yourself, but sometimes discomfort can be a very enriching experience. Pare down your lifestyle just for one day.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Try as hard as you can to keep conversations light today—some touchy subjects will be brought up, but you should have no problem sidestepping them with grace.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Today you should apply an extra measure of caution to everything you do—especially financial transactions. When you prepare to buy something, make sure you can afford it!



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

There are all types of celebrities—the beautiful people who populate the pages of glossy magazines, the workplace luminaries who shine at your office, and the kings and queens of your social realm.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

You might feel like getting off on your own for awhile today, but that won't be terribly easy right now. Too many overbearing people are demanding that you get involved with things you're just not interested in.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Sweet romantic memories from long ago will be unexpectedly triggered early today, and they will really get your creative juices flowing. You'll also get an energy boost when things get boring later.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

In your professional life, this is a time to lie low and wait for things to come to you. Don't ask for a raise or make any big power plays—doing so may backfire on you.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Figuring out how to balance your selflessness with your selfishness will be pretty easy today—it looks as though you'll be able to have it both ways!



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

It's perfectly acceptable for you to pick and choose whom you listen to—not everyone deserves to be taken seriously, as you well know. Some people are too easy on you.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

To learn more about a new person who has recently arrived on the scene, you should move beyond simple questions and answers. But this situation calls for a series of experiments!



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

A big personality who works with you can be entertaining—but sometimes this colleague can be exhausting. Today it may seem he's preventing you from getting your work done.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

						8	3	
	2							
	1							
4								
			1	6		5		
3						7		
			4					
6						2	1	
2		3						
						8		

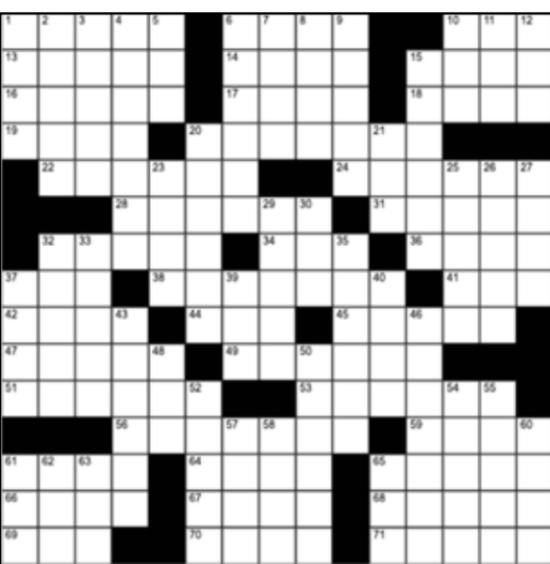
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-4	8	cloudy
Harbin	-10	-3	flurry
Tianjin	1	10	cloudy
Urumqi	-9	-4	clear
Xi'an	0	8	cloudy
Lhasa	-2	14	clear
Chengdu	5	11	cloudy
Chongqing	10	13	overcast
Kunming	9	20	clear
Nanjing	7	11	drizzle
Shanghai	11	15	drizzle
Wuhan	4	7	drizzle
Hangzhou	8	13	drizzle
Taipei	21	24	drizzle
Guangzhou	19	28	clear
Hong Kong	22	26	clear
WORLD			
Moscow	0	-4	flurry
Frankfurt	0	6	sleet
Paris	3	8	overcast
London	8	11	drizzle
New York	5	10	drizzle

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Novelist Calvino; 6- Hang-up; 10- Aussie hopper; 13- Tendon; 14- Clinton cabinet member Federico; 15- German economist and socialist; 16- Monetary unit of Zambia; 17- Film spool; 18- Saab model; 19- Warm up; 20- Narrow footway; 22- Of inferior quality; 24- Language communication; 28- Perches; 31-Above; 32- Verbal flourishes; 34- Catchall abbr.; 36- Unskilled laborer; 37- Lobbying org.; 38- New member; 41- Alphabetical trio; 42- Hgt.; 44- ___ gloom of night...; 45- Browned sliced bread; 47- Broadcaster; 49- Uncouth; 51- Maze runner; 53- Take offense at; 56- Tries hard; 59- Small batteries; 61- Long luxuriant hair; 64- Words of understanding; 65- Take as one's own; 66- Delighted; 67- Woodstock singer Joan; 68- Comfortably informal; 69- Fairy queen; 70- Raison d' ___; 71- Burning;

DOWN: 1- "___ She Lovely?"; 2- Taut; 3- Menachem's 1978 co-Nobelist; 4- Away from the wind; 5- Be in the red; 6- Squirts; 7- Nair rival; 8- Once more; 9- Balls; 10- Actress Charlotte; 11- Bobby on the ice; 12- Tic-tac-toe loser; 15- Cosmetics; 20- Selected; 21- CD predecessors; 23- Go sky-high; 25- Sporting blades; 26- Lara of "Tomb Raider"; 27- Put up; 29- ___ firma; 30- Poker legend Ungar; 32- Actress Shire; 33- Harsh; 35- Large towns; 37- Ring out; 39- Whisper sweet nothings; 40- Chuck; 43- Skilled; 46- Leading; 48- Rodent, betrayer; 50- Change into ice; 52- Clan; 54- Model Campbell; 55- Get to the point?; 57- The wolf ___ the door; 58- Change direction; 60- Eye sore; 61- "The Wizard of Oz" studio; 62- After; 63- Apprehend; 65- Caught yal;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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Ref: 2111 6002 2,073 ft² 4 3 1

Rain Dance Property
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Hellene Gardens **HKD 7,980,000**
Ref: 2109 6001 1,663 ft² 3 2 1

AD

TECH

SAMSUNG SAYS IT WILL BUILD USD17B CHIP FACTORY IN TEXAS

MATT O'BRIEN AP
TECHNOLOGY WRITER

SAMSUNG said it plans to build a \$17 billion semiconductor factory outside of Austin, Texas, amid a global shortage of chips used in phones, cars and other electronic devices.

"This is the largest foreign direct investment in the state of Texas, ever," Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said in announcing the project yesterday [Macau Time].

Samsung said it will start building the Texas plant next year and hopes to begin operations in the second half of 2024. The South Korean electronics giant chose the site based on a number of factors, including government incentives and the "readiness and stability" of local infrastructure, said Samsung Vice Chairman Kinam Kim, speaking alongside the Republican governor.

The chip shortage has emerged as both a business obstacle and a serious U.S. national-security concern. Short supplies of semiconductors kicked off by COVID-era shutdowns have hampered production of new vehicles and electronic devices for more than a year. New questions of economic and national security are also at stake since many U.S. companies are dependent on chips produced overseas, particularly in Taiwan, which China has long claimed as its own territory.

"It's a concentration risk, a geopolitical risk" to be so reliant on Taiwan for much of the world's chip production, said Nina Turner, a research analyst at IDC. She said the current shortages will likely subside but there will be a long-term demand for chips as more



AP PHOTO

and more everyday products rely on them.

Many chipmakers are spreading out their manufacturing operations in response to the shortages, which have taken a toll on sectors from automakers to the video game industry.

"It makes sense for the supply chain to be a bit more diversified geographically," said Angelo Zino, an analyst at CFRA. "You're clearly seeing some new foundry capacity plans being announced in the U.S. as well as Europe."

Zino said another factor is the expectation that Congress will approve federal subsidies for the semiconductor industry to build its factories in the U.S., in the hopes it will bring jobs, lessen future supply concerns and give the U.S. more leverage

over economic rivals like China.

Samsung had previously indicated it was exploring sites in Texas, Arizona and New York for a possible new U.S. chip plant. It has had a chip fabrication plant in Austin, Texas, since the late 1990s. But most of its manufacturing centers are in Asia.

Samsung said it expects to spend \$17 billion on the Texas project, which will make it the company's largest investment in the U.S. It said the new facility will boost production of high-tech chips used for 5G mobile communications, advanced computing and artificial intelligence, and also improve supply chain resilience.

The U.S. share of the worldwide chip manufacturing market has declined from 37% in 1990 to 12% today, according to the Semi-

conductor Industry Association, a trade group. The Biden administration has been pushing for Congress to pass the \$52 billion CHIPS Act to increase computer chip manufacturing and research. Separate legislation also under consideration would create a new tax credit for investment in semiconductor manufacturing facilities.

Samsung's Kim was effusive about Republican-led Texas in his comments Tuesday but also credited partnerships with the Biden administration and congressional leaders from both parties. Abbott said the project will benefit from "multi-tiered" incentives at the federal, state and local levels.

"Increasing domestic production of semiconductor chips is critical for our national and economic security," said U.S. Commerce

Secretary Gina Raimondo in a written statement praising Samsung's announcement.

Several chipmakers have signaled an interest in expanding their American operations if the U.S. government is able to make it easier to build chip plants. Micron Technology, based in Boise, Idaho, said it will invest \$150 billion globally over the next decade in developing its line of memory chips, with a potential U.S. manufacturing expansion if tax credits can help make up for the higher costs of American manufacturing. Pat Gelsinger, the CEO of California-based chipmaker Intel, has urged the U.S. to focus its semiconductor subsidies on American companies.

Intel earlier this year announced plans to invest \$20 billion in two new factories in Arizona. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co., or TSMC, has been building its own plant in Arizona.

Samsung is the dominant player in the market for the memory chips that are key to smartphones and other gadgetry, but Zino said it's also expanding its role on the "foundry side," meaning the manufacture-for-hire of chips designed by other firms.

"My expectation is it's going to be foundry-based in nature," he said of the Texas plant. "It's in line with their intent to triple their foundry capacity."

Other countries have made similar pushes to get chips made closer to where they are used. The European Commission earlier in November said it could approve aid to fund production of semiconductors in the 27-nation bloc.

Officials in Williamson County have been working for several months on a package of incentives that would bring Samsung's plant to a rural tract between the cities of Taylor and Hutto that would employ about 1,800 workers. Abbott said Tuesday it will bring more than 2,000 jobs. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Melco hosts competition promoting patriotism



In celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Founding of the Communist Party of China, Melco Resorts & Entertainment hosted the "Melco Han Hero Chinese Knowledge Com-

petition" for its employees at Studio City yesterday.

Under Melco's signature "Splendors of China" learning program, the competition aims to instill patriotism and appreciation

for the motherland through strengthening colleagues' Chinese cultural knowledge. Colleagues from eight teams of different departments took part in the competition.

Akiko Takahashi, executive vice president and chief of staff to chairman and CEO of Melco, said, "The competition provides an effective platform for colleagues to enhance understanding and interest in Chinese culture and heritage, thereby increasing the sense of national belonging. We will continue to create programs to further build patriotism among our colleagues."

The St. Regis Macao announces festive menu



The St. Regis Macao is celebrating the festive season with a range of exquisite dining experiences at The Manor and the St. Regis Bar in December.

The Manor will offer a five-course gourmet lunch on December 24 to 26 featuring Foie Gras Terrine, French Turbot and Pandoro White

Chocolate Mousse; while on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the restaurant will offer a six-course festive set dinner featuring Brittany Scampi, Artichoke Fagottelli with Red Prawns, Rhug Estate Pheasant and Panettone paired with Valrhona Dulcey Chocolate and Earl Grey Tea Ice Cream.

For rum and chocolate lovers, The St. Regis Bar will be offering the "Xocolate X Rum" experience where guests can enjoy a set of four different unique rums with chocolates and rum cocktails from December 1 to 31.

To farewell 2021, guests are invited to count down to 2022 in the style of the Great Gatsby at the St. Regis Bar.

SNOOKER

PRO STAR ANGRY AT HAVING TO PLAY AMATEUR AFTER LOSS

AFTER losing to an amateur in the first round of a major tournament, a former snooker world champion has blasted the decision to let a player without "a care in the world" compete against professionals.

"This is our livelihood. This is how I put food on the table," said an angry Shaun Murphy, who lost 6-5 to Chinese player Si Jiahui at the UK Championship yesterday [Macau time].

The tournament is widely regarded as among the top three on the snooker circuit and offers more prize money than many events.

Murphy, the No. 6-ranked player who reached the world championship final this year, was unhappy he was drawn to play against an opponent who "is not playing with the same pressures and

concerns I am."

Si fell off the main tour at the end of last season and only entered the UK Championship as an "amateur top-up" to complete the 128-player field.

"This is how I earn money," said Murphy, the world champion in 2005. "Since turning professional at 15, I have earned the right to call myself a professional snooker player. He hasn't done that. He shouldn't be on the table."

"He played," Murphy added, "like a man who does not have a care in the world, because he does not have a care in the world. It is not fair, it is not right. I am not picking on him as a young man, he deserved his victory. Amateurs should not be allowed in professional tournaments, the end." **MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL

Ronaldo helps Man U into CL's last 16 with win at Villarreal

VILLARREAL 0, MAN U 2

A smart piece of improvisation by Cristiano Ronaldo helped send Manchester United into the last 16 of the Champions League as Michael Carrick's spell as the English club's interim manager began with a 2-0 win at Villarreal yesterday [Macau time].

Scoring his fifth goal of this group stage and 140th overall in the competition, Ronaldo adjusted his feet and lobbed the goalkeeper with a first-time effort in the 78th minute after Fred won the ball back high up the field.

Jadon Sancho then scored his first goal since his \$100 million move to United, firing in off the underside of the crossbar in the 90th minute at the end of a sweeping counterattack



AP PHOTO

that used to be a feature of the team under Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

Solskjaer is now gone, fired on Sunday following a run of woeful results that culminated in a humiliating 4-1 loss at Watford in the Premier League on Sunday.

Carrick, one of Solskjaer's assistants, is filling in as a replacement until a more long-term interim is found and he put his stamp on the team by dropping Bruno Fernandes and star-

ting Donny van de Beek.

Carrick oversaw a disciplined if limited performance by United until Ronaldo sparked an explosive ending with his 140th goal in the competition. He has scored in all five group-stage matches this season.

United moved onto 10 points, three more than Villarreal, and was guaranteed of advancing as the winner of Group F thanks to Atalanta drawing 3-3 at Young Boys.

Villarreal can finish tied

on points with United but has an inferior head-to-head record, which is the tiebreaker.

In the first half, United sat off Villarreal and was opened up at times, with Ronaldo virtually anonymous playing mostly on the left of a front three with Sancho on the right and Anthony Martial.

He came to life in the second half and his goal was stunning after Fred dispossessed Etienne Capoue following an ill-advised pass out from the back by goalkeeper Gerónimo Rulli.

Ronaldo swivelled and placed his right-footed lob over Rulli just inside the near post.

Fred also sparked the break that was finished by Sancho in ruthless fashion following a lay-off from Fernandes, who came off the bench in the 66th. **MDT/AP**

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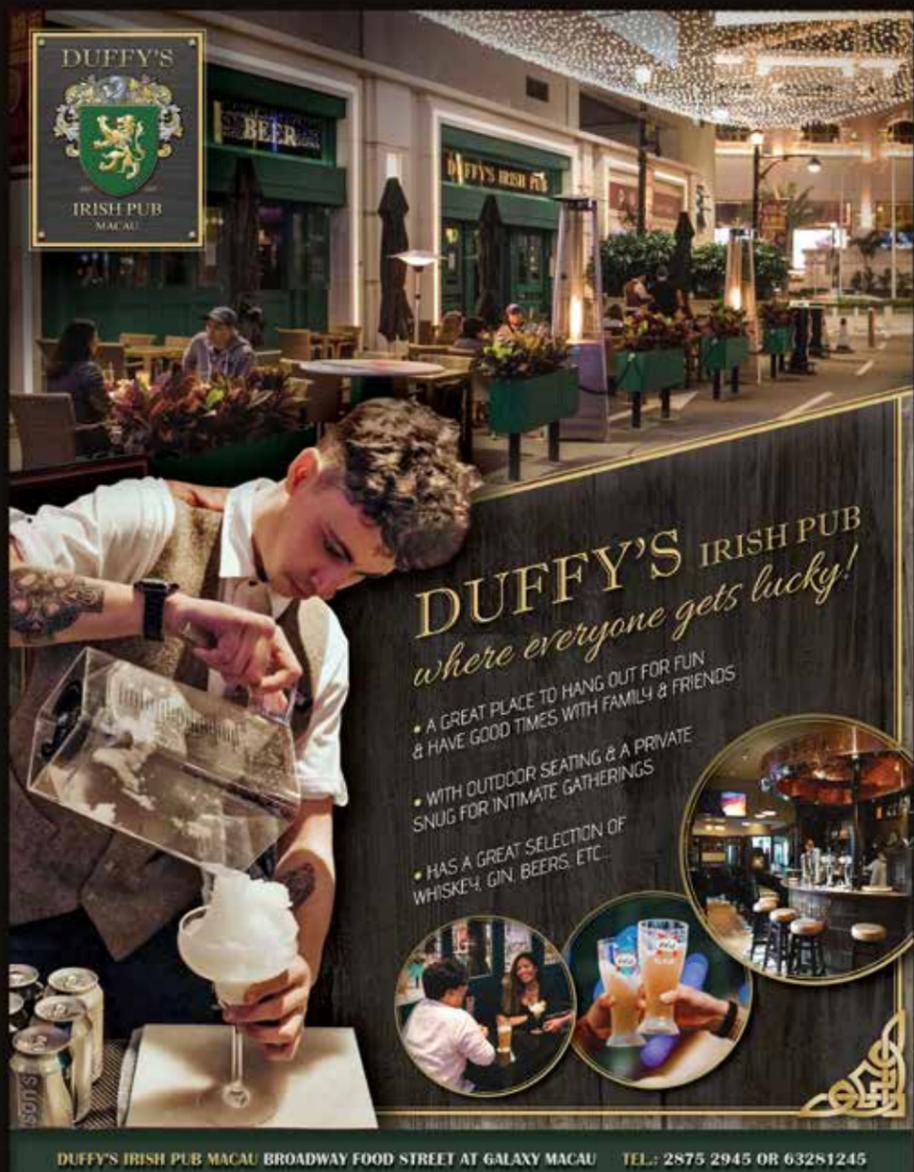
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OPINION

China Daily

Editorial, China Daily

CALL FOR OIL RESERVE RELEASE COORDINATION ONLY TESTIFIES TO LIMITS OF US LEADERSHIP

US President Joe Biden announced on Tuesday that the United States will release 50 million barrels of oil from its Strategic Petroleum Reserve from next month to curb the fast rise of gasoline price at home.

But given that the US consumes more than 20 million barrels of oil a day, the move, which it says is part of a coordinated effort with other major energy-consuming nations, will do little to reduce the demand-supply gap in the US.

It is the US' own quantitative easing policies that are the root cause of the soaring oil prices, as they have prompted the major oil producers to control their supplies with the purpose of further maximizing their profits, forming a vicious cycle. So the move represents a desperate attempt of the Biden administration to address a problem of the US' own making.

Calling on the other countries — Japan, the Republic of Korea, India, the United Kingdom and China — to do the same thing is just a way to make the self-made disaster a collective consequence.

Yet, these countries' replies have been lukewarm at best. Both Japan and the ROK are beating about the bush without promising anything. The UK said it will allow companies to "voluntarily release" oil reserves of up to 1.5 million barrels. Although India has agreed to release 5 million barrels, it stressed that the release is to be timed in agreement with the other five nations, and that does not exist.

Although to check the fast-rising price of oil is in line with China's economic interests, and this might also be an opportunity to ease the Sino-US tensions, it has to think about whether it is worthwhile to use its strategic petroleum reserve to respond to the appeal of the US to fulfill a mission impossible — especially after knowing that the US side has simply set the stage for it to make the offer and has shown no intention of easing the pressure it is putting on China in a bid to contain it.

The objective of the Biden administration is to try and iron out the inflation curve before the 2022 mid-term elections. Although it brags that the US economy is the only major economy recovering to its pre-pandemic level, it cannot afford to ignore the costs behind the rosy figures that may burst the bubble at any time.

Thanks to its addiction to printing bank notes and faith in borrowed prosperity, inflation in the US, which hit a 31-year high last month when consumer price index soared 6.2 percent year-on-year, the biggest 12-month jump since 1990, seems to be out of control and ready to extend into the foreseeable future. The soaring prices raise living costs, dilute savings, eat into industrial interest margins and hollow out the employment market.

That explains why Biden's call has met with de facto cold shoulders even among the US allies, as none of the countries is willing to bet its oil reserves and credit on the US administration. Rather than showing its ability to manage its economy and lead the world, the desperate call only testifies to the opposite.

The World Health Organization said that coronavirus cases jumped by 11% in Europe in the last week, the only region in the world where COVID-19 has continued to increase since mid-October.

In its weekly assessment of the pandemic released yesterday [Macau time], the U.N. health agency said cases and deaths globally have risen by about 6%, with about 3.6 million new infections and 51,000 new deaths reported in the previous week.

WHO's Europe director Dr. Hans Kluge warned that without urgent measures taken soon, the continent could see

another 700,000 deaths by the spring.

In the last week, Austria, the Netherlands and Belgium have all adopted stricter measures including partial lockdowns to try to stem the latest surge of the coronavirus. Germany is also set to record more than 100,000 COVID-19 deaths this week, with some politicians now calling for a vaccine mandate, like the one ordered in Austria.

Globally, WHO reported that COVID-19 in Southeast Asia and the Middle East dropped by 11% and 9% respectively.

NEW ZEALAND TO START REOPENING BORDERS TO WORLD FROM JANUARY

NICK PERRY, WELLINGTON

NEW Zealand will reopen its borders to the world over the coming months, the government announced yesterday, allowing for the return of displaced residents from January and tourists from April.

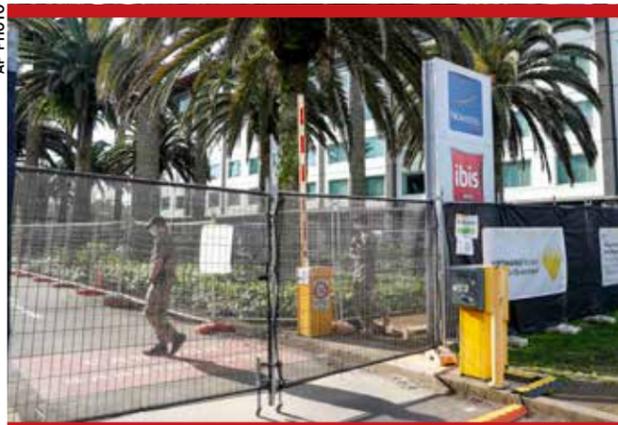
The South Pacific nation imposed harsh border restrictions when the pandemic began, effectively banning tourists and requiring returning residents to spend two weeks in a quarantine hotel run by the military.

At times, demand for quarantine beds has far outstripped supply, causing some displaced residents to wait months for available slots.

For the first 18 months of the pandemic, the border measures were considered vital in keeping New Zealand free from the virus.

But an August outbreak proved impossible to stamp out, prompting New Zealand to abandon its elimination strategy in October. Vaccination rates have also been rising, making the border measures increasingly hard to justify.

COVID-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins said the government had made difficult trade-offs to keep New Zealanders as safe as possible throughout the pandemic.



"We acknowledge that it has been very tough. Families have been separated. People have found themselves having to shelter in places they did not expect to stay for prolonged periods of time," Hipkins said. "We are acutely aware of the impact that these restrictions have had on individuals' lives and their livelihoods."

Under the government's plan, all incoming travelers will still be required to isolate themselves for seven days, at least for now.

Hipkins said it wanted to mitigate the virus risk posed by incoming travelers by reopening the border in stages.

Fully vaccinated New Zealanders will be able to return from Australia without staying in quarantine from Jan. 16 and from other countries after Feb. 13. The door will then open in stages to tourists and other travelers from April 30.

New Zealand is also removing a very-high-risk designation from certain countries including Indonesia, India and Brazil, allowing people from those countries to return or visit.

New Zealand announced earlier this week that bars, restaurants and gyms can reopen in Auckland from Dec. 2, removing the last remnants of a lockdown that began in the nation's largest city in August.

It also signaled a new phase in New Zealand's response to the pandemic, in which people around the country will need to be fully vaccinated in order to participate in anything from getting a haircut to watching a concert.

About 69% of New Zealanders are fully vaccinated, including 84% of those aged 12 and over. New Zealand has reported just 40 coronavirus deaths since the pandemic began. MDT/AP



Israel began administering the coronavirus vaccine to children age 5 to 11. The country recently emerged from a fourth COVID wave and daily infections have been relatively low for the last few weeks. But Health Ministry statistics show that a large share of the new infections have been in children and teenagers. Children age 5 to 11 make up nearly half of active cases. Officials hope the new inoculation campaign will help bring down the numbers and perhaps stave off a new wave.

Sweden recommended yesterday that everyone between the ages of 18 and 65 should get a booster shot against COVID-19 six months after having received the second jab. Social Affairs Minister Lena Hallengren said about 7 million people in Sweden, which has a population of 10 million, have had both shots. But she expressed concern about the uptick in coronavirus infections.



Germany The three parties negotiating to form the next government will finalize and present their coalition agreement today. The deal paves the way for center-left leader Olaf Scholz (pictured right) to replace longtime Chancellor Angela Merkel in the coming weeks. The center-left Social Democrats have been negotiating with the environmentalist Green party and the pro-business Free Democrats since narrowly winning a national election on Sept. 26.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

Gabriel Guzman Calypso Productions via AP



Coral procreates. Australia's Great Barrier Reef is spawning in an explosion of color as the World Heritage-listed natural wonder recovers from life-threatening coral bleaching episodes.



France and Real Madrid forward Karim Benzema was given a one-year suspended jail sentence and a fine of 75,000 euros (\$84,000) yesterday in a sex-tape case that rocked French soccer and put the talented striker's international career on hold for more than five years. Benzema was found guilty of being involved in an attempt in 2015 to blackmail France teammate Mathieu Valbuena. In addition to the fine, Benzema was ordered to pay Valbuena 80,000 euros (\$89,700) in damages.