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STEVE VICKERS: THE ABSENCE OF CONCRETE PLANS ON THE GAMING LICENSE RENEWAL TENDERING PROCESS LEAVES THE CASINO SECTOR IN A STATE OF LIMBO

P5

COVID-19: THE NEW POTENTIALLY MORE CONTAGIOUS OMICRON VARIANT POPPED UP IN MORE EU COUNTRIES, LEAVING LEADERS AROUND THE WORLD SCRAMBLING TO STOP THE SPREAD

P8,12

AP PHOTO



The Netherlands confirmed 13 cases of the new omicron variant of the coronavirus yesterday and Australia found two as the countries half a world apart became the latest to detect it in travelers arriving from southern Africa. A raft of curbs being imposed by nations around the world as they scramble to slow the variant's spread also grew, with Israel deciding yesterday to bar entry to foreign nationals in the toughest move so far.

AP PHOTO



Japan The northern Japanese city of Sapporo is set to announce what it says will be a reduction in costs that will make it an attractive venue for the 2030 Winter Olympics. City officials were expect to announce details today. The announcement comes almost four months after the delayed Tokyo Olympics closed with officials costs estimated at \$15.4 billion. Some estimates suggest the costs might have been twice that much, and all but about \$6 billion was public money.

India The government has asked Starlink Internet Services of Elon Musk's SpaceX aerospace company to comply with the country's regulatory framework before offering its satellite-based internet services. A Communications Ministry statement late Friday said that because Starlink is not the holder of a license, the public is advised not to subscribe to Starlink services that are being advertised.

More on backpage

JEOPARDIZING JUNKETS

Junket mogul Alvin Chau arrested for mainland illicit gambling; JP Morgan anticipates 'immediate' contraction of gaming VIP revenues in response

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ECONOMY CHIEF POINTS THE WAY TO RECOVERY - 'TOURISM +'

P2

CLOSE CONTACT OF CONFIRMED COVID-19 CASE UNDER MEDICAL OBSERVATION

The health authorities in Guangzhou have notified the Health Bureau that an individual in Macau has been in close secondary contact with a Covid-19 patient in the city of Hangzhou, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre has informed. The individual, a mainland resident, was immediately contacted by the bureau and was later transported to the hospital for a nucleic acid test, testing negative for the virus. They are currently under medical observation at the Public Health Center in Coloane.

CCM RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS FOR SINGING CLUB

The Macao Cultural Centre, with the backing of the Cultural Affairs Bureau, is recruiting new choristers to join its Singing Club. Applications are now open for those aged 8 to 16 wishing to foster their musical talents. Applications are open until December 9, and registered candidates will be individually notified to attend auditions scheduled for December 11 and 12. Once selected, members will be subject to a per-semester fee of MOP1,200.

REGISTRATION FOR WINTER GAMES BANKNOTES TO START WEDNESDAY

The Bank of China (BOC) has been authorized to issue the XXIV Winter Olympic Games banknotes to celebrate the games, which will be held in Beijing in 2022. The notes will be available for registration and exchange by residents on Wednesday, December 1. Residents can register from 9 a.m. on December 1 until 6 p.m. December 23, on the Monetary Authority of Macau's website. The exchange period is between January 10, 2022, and March 25, 2022. Registrants should bring their Macau ID in order to proceed with in-person note exchange at selected locations.



POLICY ADDRESS ECONOMY CHIEF POINTS THE WAY TO RECOVERY - 'TOURISM +'

RENATO MARQUES

BROADER horizons in targeting new visitors to Macau, keeping the city a safe place for tourism, and, above all, exploring the advantages of "Tourism+" are the priorities identified by the Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong to promote economic recovery in 2022.

Lei named these three factors at the Legislative Assembly (AL) last Friday, where he was to discuss with lawmakers the Secretary's policies for the coming year.

"For the next year, we should guide ourselves in three ways. Expanding our tourist and visitor source [markets] by having a more proactive attitude and a greater initiative in attracting [them]," Lei said. In addition to presenting Macau as a safe city for tourism and worldwide travelers, Lei added that "We [...] also [must] provide more personalized services for our tourists. That's why we have this policy of 'Tourism+.'" The Secretary noted that "Tourism + Sport" is the first concept to be presented and ongoing, but that are other areas of "Tourism+" are to be explored "to provide more experiences and services to the visitors coming to Macau."

Likewise, Lei expressed hope that Macau would be reopening its borders "to the world" in 2022.

"Next year we will do better to

contain the epidemic and so, probably, we will be able to open the borders and receive more friends from around the world," Lei said in his initial presentation, noting that "now we have a close negotiation between the three parties, the mainland, Hong Kong and Macau, so we are quite confident about the future."

POPULATION WELLBEING WILL BE ACCOUNTED FOR

In a session where many questions about government support measures for the population were raised, the Secretary emphasized that the wellbeing of the population is being addressed and is one of the government's priorities in the economic recovery efforts.

According to Lei, the government is hopeful that, as soon as the vaccination rate increases and social activities resume, "economic development can return to normal."

Regarding the measures enforced during 2021, Lei said that the government's priority remains the population's wellbeing, which is why, despite a downturn in government revenue, it has continued to support the population through several rounds of financial supports, as well as ensuring guaranteed priority access to jobs for residents are in place.

For 2022, Lei said the government is mobilizing an extra 30.3 billion patacas from the govern-

ment's financial reserves to address the visible impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic upon the economy. He added that another 18.3 billion will be injected into the Government Investment and Development Expenditure Plan (PIDDA). Lei said he believes that this money "[will] increase domestic demand, revitalize the economy and create more employment opportunities."

E-CONSUMPTION POLICY DROPPED FOR GOOD

When asked by lawmakers about the abandonment of the electronic consumption policy for 2022, the Economy chief explained that it was an exceptional measure for a very exceptional moment, and confirmed that another round of financial support through this avenue is not expected.

"Don't forget that the consumer card [was created] just for a very extraordinary situation. The consumer card cannot be a long-term plan because we have to deliver to the market what it is lawfully deserved and the government must not interfere too much in the market," Lei said, justifying the measure's abandonment with the market's need to regulate itself according to free-market rules.

Replying to questions regarding the difficulties faced by the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) sector, which are the sig-

nificant majority in Macau, the Secretary also added that the closure of companies and businesses takes place in all kinds of markets and is a normal market regulation procedure which should not worry the government too much.

"The role of the government is to provide the basic [economic] rules that allow businesses to establish themselves," Lei said, hinting that "saving" companies from bankruptcy is not one of these duties.

"There are some who enter the market and there are others who leave the market. This is all very natural. The most important duty of the government is to build well the 'stage' where these [companies] can perform," he said. "When people are running a business, they have to take into account their situation and also [evaluate] the whole market environment and circumstances [that can pose a risk or provide opportunities to their business]."

Instead of blaming all on the pandemic, Lei placed the focus on the managerial skills and capacities of the people running companies through times of crisis. He reiterated that "better times" will come soon for those that have been able to overcome the difficulties of the pandemic, who have found "creative" ways to continue to run their businesses instead of relying solely on the government to solve their problems.

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ANTHONY LAM

THE head of the city's biggest casino junket organizer is among the 11 suspects that have been arrested on charges of illicit gambling and money laundering.

Macau police has detained the head of Suncity Group, Alvin Chau, and others after Chinese authorities issued an arrest warrant for them over accusations that they ran an illegal cross-border gambling syndicate.

The arrests in the gambling enclave came after prosecutors in Wenzhou, in the eastern province of Zhejiang, on Friday accused Chau and another person, Zhang Ningning, of leading cross-border gambling operations and setting up casinos across China.

The suspects are aged between 30 to 56 years, the Judiciary Police (PJ) yesterday revealed in a special press briefing.

Most of them reportedly work as senior administrators, said local authorities.

Authorities said they had been investigating the case since July last year. They said that the gambling syndicate has 199 shareholder representatives, over 12,000 agents that promoted its gambling operations and more than 80,000 gamblers in its network.

During preliminary interrogations, suspects admitted to establishing overseas "gambling platforms". However, they declined to cooperate with the investigations over other allegations.

As disclosed by the PJ, following the collection of intelligence, police discovered that the head of a criminal syndicate, "a local resident surnamed Chau," made use of his junket business in Macau to set up "gambling platforms" overseas.

He also solicited mainland Chinese residents to gamble on these platforms.

The chief suspect transferred the revenue illegally earned from these platforms between jurisdictions through underground financial agencies and his junket in Macau.

In April 2020, the PJ upgraded the case to a special task.

This past Saturday, the PJ deemed it timely to apprehend the 11 individuals, who were arrested

Police arrest junket mogul, 10 others amid allegations of illicit gambling

in a commercial building in the ZAPE District and Coloane.

The police have seized "a multitude" of computers, computer servers and data storage facilities as evidence. Approximately 3 million in Hong Kong Dollars and Macau patacas were also seized.

Investigations will continue, and the PJ will attempt to track down other individuals yet to be apprehended.

The press mentioned the name Suncity several times at the press conference and the PJ spokesperson neither admitted to nor denied any link between the suspects and the junket operator.

When asked whether the case is related to a recent arrest warrant issued by the authorities in Wenzhou, China, for Suncity CEO Alvin Chau, the PJ spokesperson reiterated that the investigations were commenced autonomously, with the apprehensions deemed timely by local police.

The police spokesperson added that the commencement of an investigation was prompted by intelligence they obtained. It is also a regular practice for the police to cooperate with other police authorities at the international level.

The chronological proximity between the mainland arrest warrant and the local apprehensions was merely a coincidence, the police's spokesperson emphasised.

On whether these suspects will be handed over to mainland authorities, the PJ spokesperson stressed that all practices will be based on local laws and the decision of the judicial branch.

All suspects were transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office for further investigation.

Authorities in China, meanwhile, said the syndicate "severely damaged the social order of the country" and on Friday urged Chau to turn himself in in exchange for a more lenient punishment.



JUNKET CRACKDOWN MAY AFFECT VIP REVENUES: JP MORGAN

FINANCIAL services provider and analysts JP Morgan have suggested in a recent note that the arrest of Suncity boss Alvin Chau and possible subsequent crackdowns on the local junket market are unlikely to hit Macau's already shrunk scale of operations hard.

However, the analysts of the brokerage said that it "wouldn't be surprised to see junket VIP revenues [in Macau] immediately contract in the coming weeks," as cited in a report by GGRAsia.

This amount could lead to "perhaps by 30% to 50% from current run-rates."

According to the brokerage, the arrest is "really bad for the junket/VIP" gaming sector in Macau.

The reason that the arrest is negative for the sector, according to JP Morgan, is because it may affect investor confidence amid the relicensing of local gambling concessions.

"While the news is only directly related to junket/VIP, some investors may interpret this as a signal of a potentially broader clampdown on gambling itself, a view that we don't agree with but cannot disprove," the brokerage noted in the statement.

Analysts DS Kim, Amanda Cheng and Livy Lyu added: "The fact that even he can be arrested - for just running the junket and doing [what seems to us like very] normal junket activities - should send a chill down the spine of any and all junkets."

The brokerage stressed that the recent arrest warrant issued by authorities in Wenzhou of Zhejiang Province in China confirm that Macau is considered an external region in the country's war against cross-boundary gambling activities and solicitation. **AL**

Local residents' unemployment rate 3.8%

STAFF REPORTER

TOTAL employment in the region was 376,400 and the number of employed residents totalled 280,300, up by 800 and 1,100 respectively from the previous period.

According to the Sta-

tistics and Census Service (DSEC), both the general unemployment rate (2.8%) and the unemployment rate of local residents (3.8%) for August-October 2021 decreased by 0.1 percentage point from the previous period (July-September 2021).

Meanwhile, the underemployment rate increased by 0.6 percentage points to 4.5%.

The number of unemployed decreased by 300 to 10,900. Among the unemployed searching for a new job, most were previously engaged in Gaming &

Junket Activities or in the Construction sector. The proportion of new labor market entrants seeking their first job increased by 1 percentage point to 15.9% of the total unemployed.

The number of underemployed rose by 2,500 to

17,500, as some establishments suspended operations due to the pandemic during the September to October period. Most of the underemployed were working in Gaming & Junket Activities, Hotels & Similar Activities, Restaurants & Similar Activities

and in the Construction sector.

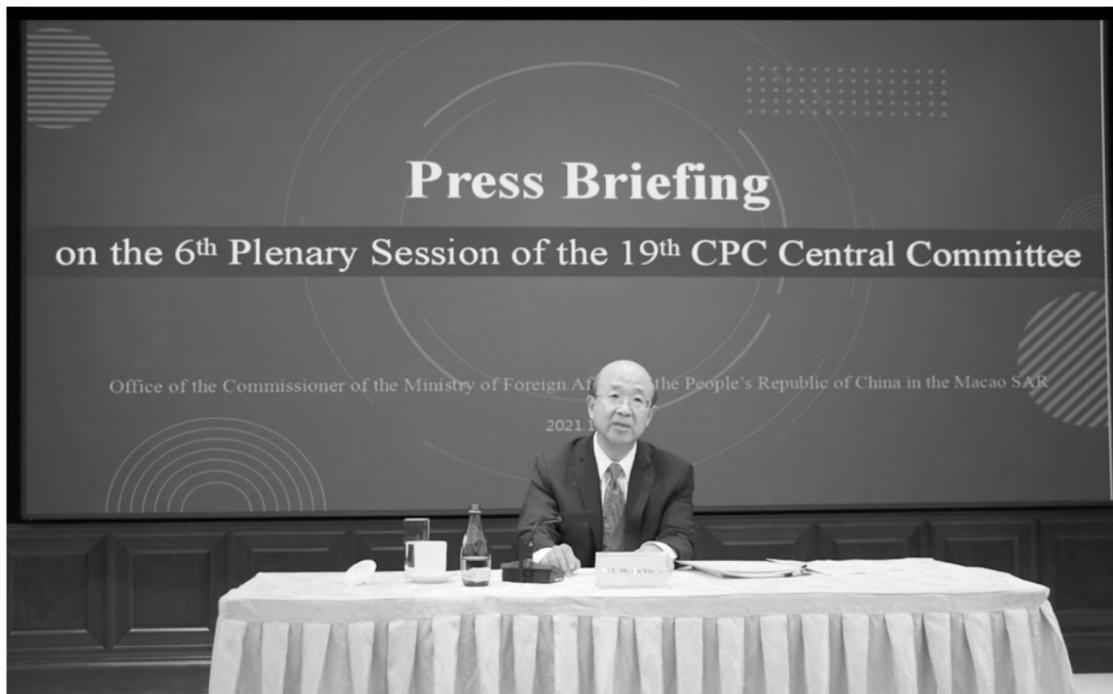
According to the preliminary estimates from movement records, an average of about 83,400 residents and non-resident workers worked in Macau but lived outside the territory during the reference period. When these individuals are included, the total labor force is found to decrease by 700 to 470,700.

COMMISSIONER LIU SAYS THIRD RESOLUTION UPHOLDS 'ONE-COUNTRY, TWO-SYSTEMS' POLICY

At a press briefing last Friday, the Commissioner of the Foreign Affairs Ministry in Macau Liu Xianfa highlighted the fundamental principles, directives and goals introduced by the "third resolution," which was adopted by the 6th Plenary Session of the 19th Communist Party Central Committee held this year on the centenary of the CCP.

"Over the past hundred years, the Party has led the people to a number of important milestones: achieving great success in the new-democratic revolution; achieving great success in socialist revolution and construction; achieving great success in reform, opening up, and socialist modernization; and achieving great success for socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era. The endeavors of the Party and the people over the past century represent the most magnificent chapter in the millennia-long history of the Chinese nation," Liu said.

Addressing Portuguese and English press and diplomats from the Forum Macau in English for over 30 minutes, Liu pinpointed the "four great transformations"



described by the "third resolution."

"In the new-democratic revolution, China achieved the great transformation from a millennia-old feudal autocracy to a people's democracy. In the socialist revolution and construction, China achieved the great transformation from a poor and backward East-

ern country with a large population to a socialist country. During the reform and opening up, and socialist modernization, China achieved the tremendous advance of the Chinese nation from standing up to growing prosperous. Following the Party's 18th National Congress, China has achieved the tremendous trans-

formation from standing up and growing prosperous to becoming strong."

The third resolution, which was drafted by President Xi Jinping in the footsteps of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, summarizes "the historic achievements and shifts in the cause of the Party and the country in the new era," in which

the one-China principle plays a major role alongside the strengthening of the country as a major world power.

In this context the CCP intends to "[uphold] the policy of One Country, Two Systems and [promote] national reunification," the commissioner stressed.

"The Central Committee has adopted a series of measures to address both symptoms and root causes of relevant issues and resolutely implemented the principle that Hong Kong and Macau should be governed by patriots. These moves have helped to restore order in Hong Kong and ensure a turn for the better in the region," he said, in a reference to the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, and the introduction of the National Security Law that led to arrests, trials and the imprisonment of high-profile opposition members.

As for Taiwan, Liu Xianfa was adamant: "We firmly oppose separatist activities seeking 'Taiwan independence.' We firmly oppose foreign interference. We have maintained the initiative and ability to steer cross-strait relations." PC

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City's public orchestras to change business models

THE city's two public orchestras will be privatized in the future to allow for swifter adjustment and reaction to market demands, Mok Ian Ian, president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), said at a recent Executive Council (ExCo) press conference.

The privatization will take effect January 1, 2022.

Mok emphasized that privatizing the Macao Orchestra and the Macao Chinese Orchestra will give them "greater chances of development [...] such as

performing overseas on behalf of the city."

Running the orchestras under the government, by contrast, produces some conflicts, because operations need to follow public administration procedures.

Privatizing the orchestras will also help improve the quality of performance and the cultivation of talent, Mok implied.

As with many corporations in the city — such as the Macau International Airport Co. Ltd., the Macao Light Rapid Transit Cor-

poration, Ltd. and public broadcaster TDM — the orchestras shall operate as public-financed companies.

The Cultural Fund and the Cultural Industry Fund will be combined into the Cultural Development Fund.

The subsidization budget of the fund for next year will be MOP224 million, with about MOP13 million from the Cultural Fund and MOP38 million from the Cultural Industry Fund included. AL

GAMING

Already-troubled casinos in 'state of limbo' as tendering process remain opaque: SVA

LYNZY VALLES

THE Chief Executive's (CE) reticence in his recent Policy Address regarding the upcoming expiration of the gaming licenses has added uncertainty to the already troubled sector, as it clearly illustrated "how rising political risk across China is directly affecting international investors."

CE Ho Iat Seng previously remarked that a public tender process would take place after the expiry of current concessions – however, he did not provide further detail on timing, despite earlier commitments to complete a tender process by the fourth quarter of this year.

According to a report by political and corporate risk consultancy Steve Vickers and Associates (SVA), as no concrete plans have been announced the "tendering process remains opaque, leaving the casino sector in a state of limbo."

"Macau is perhaps more acutely impacted by political risk than



other PRC cities," the report stated – a significant concern, as Ho has said little about the government's plans for the sector, which generates 80% of Macau's gross domestic product.

The SAR government announced back in September that they would change casino regulations to tighten restrictions on operators,

including appointing government representatives to "supervise" gaming operators.

The announcement caused a massive record loss of USD18 billion in combined market value.

The report noted that as part of tightened regulatory arrangements, major foreign companies, such as Wynn Macau, MGM China, and

Sands China, might have to increase the percentage of share capital held by Macau residents (currently at 10%), forcing casinos to become more "Chinese."

"The Macau government seems, under direction from Beijing, determined to diversify away from a total reliance on casino gaming; and the looming end of the concessions provides great leverage to force through the necessary changes," said SVA.

Macau's gross gaming revenue (GGR) has been on the receiving end of a 'double whammy' as border restrictions haven't gotten stricter each time new cases arose in the region – a similar state of affairs to late September to October, when potential revenue was wiped away during Macau's traditionally busiest months.

As of October, total GGR had reached USD8.99 billion, up by a significant 57% compared with the same period last year. However, when compared with Macau's former gaming revenue peak in 2013, the figure is well below the USD40

billion recorded that year.

"Macau's go-go years do seem over, then. After all, the casino industry's rapid expansion always depended on a degree of acquiescence in capital outflows and widespread, if concealed organised crime involvement with the junkets," SVA stated.

"Now, the central Chinese and the local Macau governments have retracted that acquiescence, and display an appetite for tighter controls. Investors in the casino businesses should manage expectations accordingly," he added.

According to the expert, Macau's situation also provides a "neat illustration of how rising political risks will affect foreign businesses across China."

In the report, SVA suggested that investors reappraise the impact of political risks on investments, adding that it should also monitor plans to implement the new measures in China, taking account of how a deterioration in relations between the US, its allies and China could affect the investment.

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US LAWMAKERS VISIT TAIWAN; CHINA CONDUCTS MILITARY PATROLS

HUIZHONG WU, TAIPEI

FIVE U.S. lawmakers met with Taiwanese leader Tsai Ing-wen on Friday in a surprise one-day visit intended to reaffirm America's "rock-solid" support for the self-governing island that is claimed by China.

The visit came as tensions between Taiwan and China have risen to their highest level in decades. Taiwan has been self-ruled since the two sides split during a civil war in 1949, but China considers the island part of its own territory.

China was quick to condemn the trip and later announced that its military conducted air and naval readiness patrols on Friday in the direction of the Taiwan Strait, the 160-kilometer-wide body of water that separates China and Taiwan.

"When news of our trip broke yesterday, my office received a blunt message from the Chinese Embassy, telling me to call off the trip," Rep. Elissa Slotkin, a Michigan Democrat in the delegation, wrote on Twitter.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian called the visit a violation of the "one-China principle" under which Taiwan is part of China.

"That individual U.S. politicians wantonly challenge the one-China principle and embolden the 'Taiwan independence' forces has aroused



US Representative Mark Takano, D-Calif. left is greeted by Taiwan's Tsai Ing-wen at the Presidential Office in Taipei, Friday

the strong indignation of 1.4 billion Chinese people," Zhao said. He added that the unification of Taiwan and China is an "unstoppable historical trend."

The four Democrats and one Republican from the House of Representatives arrived in Taiwan on Thursday night to meet senior leaders, said the American Institute in Taiwan, the de facto U.S. embassy. The U.S. does not have formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

"We are here in Taiwan this

week to remind our partners and allies, after two trying years that we've endured, that our commitment and shared responsibility for a free and secure Indo-Pacific region remain stronger than ever," said Rep. Mark Takano, a California Democrat.

Sara Jacobs, another Democrat from California; Colin Allred, a Texas Democrat and Nancy Mace, a Republican from South Carolina, were also part of the delegation.

Takano said the U.S. rela-

tionship with Taiwan is "rock solid and has remained steadfast as the ties between us have deepened."

Tsai, who welcomed the lawmakers at the Office in Taipei, noted the two sides' cooperation in veterans' affairs, economic issues and trade while reiterating the island's close alignment with the U.S.

"Taiwan will continue to step up cooperation with the United States in order to uphold our shared values of freedom and democracy and to ensure pea-

ce and stability in the region," she said.

A statement from the Eastern Command of China's People's Liberation Army did not mention the U.S. congressional visit but said the readiness patrols were "necessary measures for the current situation in the Taiwan Strait." It vowed to "take all necessary measures to counter any external interference and separatist attempts for 'Taiwan independence.'"

The visit is the third by U.S. lawmakers to Taiwan this year and comes just a few weeks after a group of six Republican members of Congress visited the island. That delegation met with President Tsai, National Security Secretary General Wellington Koo and Foreign Minister Joseph Wu, among others.

In June, three members of Congress flew to Taiwan to donate badly needed vaccines at a time when the island was struggling to get enough.

The Biden administration has also invited Taiwan to a Summit for Democracy next month, a move that drew a sharp rebuke from China.

In the Solomon Islands this week, anti-government rioters held protests and looted parts of the capital city in part over complaints about a 2019 decision to switch diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China. China has been on a campaign to poach Taiwan's remaining diplomatic allies. **MDT/AP**

#METOO

WTA remains 'concerned' about Peng's ability to speak freely

STEPHEN WADE

STEVE Simon, the head of the WTA, says he remains "deeply concerned" about the whereabouts of Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai and her ability to "communicate freely, openly and directly" after allegations that a powerful politician forced her to have sex.

Peng, a three-time Olympian and former top-ranked doubles player, has dropped out of public view after accusing former vice-premier Zhang Gaoli of sexual abuse in a Nov. 2 posting on the Chinese internet, which was quickly taken down by Chinese authorities.

"Steve Simon has reached out to Peng Shuai via various communication channels," the WTA said in a statement on Saturday.

"He has sent her two emails, to which it was clear her responses were influenced by others. He remains deeply concerned that Peng is not free from censorship or coercion and decided not to re-engage via email until he was satisfied her responses were her own, and not those of her censors. The WTA remains concerned about her ability to communicate freely, openly, and directly."

A week ago, International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach said he had talked with

Peng on a video call. The IOC did not release any transcript and said only that Bach reported she said she was well.

The IOC did release a photo of Bach talking with Peng through a video screen shot.

The IOC said in a statement that Peng appeared to be "doing fine" and said she had requested privacy. The IOC did not explain how the call was arranged, although it has worked closely with the Chinese Olympic Committee and government officials to organize the upcoming Beijing Winter Olympics which open Feb. 4.

Critics have suggested that Peng would not have called the IOC if she was



truly free to speak.

Human Rights Watch has criticized the IOC for working with China's propaganda department in arranging the talk with Peng. The IOC has previously failed to intervene in other human rights issues clouding the Beijing Winter

Olympics, claiming it must be neutral.

"The IOC has vaulted itself from silence about Beijing's abysmal human rights record to active collaboration with Chinese authorities in undermining freedom of speech and disregarding alleged sexual

assault," Yaqui Wang, a researcher for Human Rights Watch, said.

Simon has threatened to pull WTA events out of China unless he gets clear answers and assurances that Peng is speaking freely. It is the first sports body to publicly push back against China, which supplies critical income to other sports bodies like the IOC and the NBA.

The whereabouts of 75-year-old Zhang, the man accused by Peng, has not been reported. He has not spoken publicly about the incident. He stepped down from the powerful seven-member Politburo Standing Committee about three years ago. **MDT/AP**

KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

Widow of South Korean dictator issues apology over brutal rule

THE widow of South Korea's last military dictator issued a brief apology over the "pains and scars" caused by her husband's brutal rule as dozens of relatives and former aides gathered at a Seoul hospital on Saturday to pay their final respects to Chun Doo-hwan.

Chun, who took power in a 1979 coup and violently crushed pro-democracy protests a year later before being jailed for treason in the 1990s, died at his Seoul home Tuesday at the age of 90.

On the final day of a five-day funeral procession, Chun's family held a funeral service at Seoul's Severance Hospital before taking his remains to a memorial park for cremation. Chun's widow, Lee Soon-ja, said during the service at the hospital that her husband had wished to be cremated and that his ashes be spread in border areas near North Korea.

"As we wrap up the funeral procession today, I would like to offer a deep apology on behalf of our family toward the people who suffered pains and scars during my husband's time in office," said Lee, without specifying Chun's misdeeds.

Chun never apologized for his atrocities, which included overseeing a massacre of hundreds of pro-democracy protesters in the southern city of Gwangju in 1980, one of the darkest moments in the country's modern history that came as he attempted to solidify his rule following the coup.

Cho Jin-tae, a senior official at a foundation representing Gwangju victims, said Lee's vague expression of remorse rang hollow



AP PHOTO

Lee Soon-ja, second from right, the wife of the late former South Korean President Chun Doo-hwan, watches the coffin containing the body of her husband at a funeral hall in Seoul, Saturday

and called for Chun's family to back her words with action, including cooperating with truth-finding efforts into Chun's major wrongdoings.

"I don't think anyone will be consoled by Lee Soon-ja's comments today," Cho told The Associated Press by phone.

Lee Jae-myung, the South Korean governing party's candidate for the presidential election in March next year, said the comments by Chun's widow "insulted the citizens of

Gwangju and our people."

He questioned whether Lee Soon-ja deliberately excluded Gwangju victims from her apology by explicitly referring to Chun's time in office. While Chun's coup was in 1979, it wasn't until September 1980 that he formally made himself head-of-state, which was months after the killings in Gwangju in May.

Chun was an army major general when he seized power in December 1979 with his military cronies, including Roh Tae-

-woo, who later succeeded Chun as president after winning the country's first direct election in nearly two decades in 1987. The two former leaders died nearly an exact month apart, with Roh's death coming on Oct. 26.

While Roh was given a state funeral, there has been much less sympathy for Chun, who had been nicknamed the "butcher of Gwangju." Although Roh never directly apologized over the crackdown, his son repeatedly visited a Gwangju cemetery to pay

respects to the victims and apologized on behalf of his father, who was bed-ridden in the 10 years before his death.

Chun's coup extended military-backed rule of the country following the assassination of his mentor and former army general, Park Chung-Hee, who had held power since 1961. During their back-to-back dictatorships, South Koreans suffered huge human rights abuses although the national economy grew dramatically from the ruins of the 1950-53 Korean War.

Aside from the bloody crackdown in Gwangju, Chun's government also imprisoned tens of thousands of other dissidents during the 1980s, including future president and 2000 Nobel Peace Prize winner Kim Dae-jung. Kim, then a prominent opposition leader, was initially sentenced to death by a military tribunal on accusations of fomenting the Gwangju uprising. After the United States intervened, Kim's sentence was reduced and he was eventually freed.

Desperate to gain international legitimacy, Chun's government successfully pushed a bid to host the 1988 Olympics, a process that was accompanied by massive house clearings and roundups of vagrants and homeless people as officials tried to beautify the country for foreign visitors. MDT/AP

Japan PM vows to step up defense amid China, North Korea threats

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

JAPANESE Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, at his first troop review Saturday, renewed his pledge to consider "all options," including acquiring enemy base strike capability, and vowed to create a stronger Self-Defense Force to protect the country amid growing threats from China and North Korea.

Kishida said the security situation around Japan is rapidly changing and that "the reality is severer than ever," with North Korea continuing to test-fire ballistic missiles while advancing its capability, and China pursuing a military buildup and increasingly assertive activity in the region.

"I will consider all options, including possessing so-called enemy base strike capability, to pursue strengthening of defense power that is necessary," Kishida said in an address to hundreds of Ground Self-Defense Force members in olive-colored helmets and uniforms.

Kishida, who took office in October, served as top commander for the first time at Saturday's Self-Defense Force troop review held at the main army base Camp Asaka, north of Tokyo. About 800 troops gathered for the inspection, according to the Defense Ministry.

"The security environment surrounding Japan has been rapidly changing at an unprecedented

speed. Things that used to happen only in science-fiction novels are today's reality," Kishida said. He said his government will lead "calm and realistic" discussions to determine what is needed to protect people's lives and gain their understanding.

The possibility of possessing so-called enemy base strike capability has been a divisive issue because opponents say it violates Japan's war-renouncing Constitution.

Kishida has shifted his dovish stance to a more hawkish one, apparently to please influential leaders within his governing party, including former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and to strengthen his grip on power. He now ad-

vocates increasing Japanese military capability and spending.

On Friday, Kishida's Cabinet approved a 770 billion yen (\$6.8 billion) request for an extra defense budget through March to expedite the purchase of missiles, anti-submarine rockets and other weapons amid rising concern over the escalation of military activities by China, Russia and North Korea.

The request, still pending parliamentary approval, is a record for an extra defense budget and will bring Japan's military spending for the current year to a new high of more than 6.1 trillion yen (\$53.2 billion), up 15% from 5.31 trillion yen in 2020. The combined budget for 2021

AP PHOTO



Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida

will be just over 1% of Japan's GDP, keeping its customary cap.

Kishida has said he is open to doubling Japan's military spending to cope with the worsening security environment. Critics also say Japan, as the world's fastest-aging country with a shrinking population, should allocate more money toward health care and other services.

Compared to past troop reviews, which included 4,000 soldiers, more than 200 vehicles and dozens of warplanes, Saturday's event was significantly scaled down to minimize the impact on regular troop activity, officials said. There was no parade or public viewing, and only nine tanks and other vehicles participated in the online event. MDT/AP

Covid variant spreads to more countries as world on alert

PAN PYLAS, LONDON

THE new potentially more contagious omicron variant of the coronavirus popped up in more European countries on Saturday, just days after being identified in South Africa, leaving governments around the world scrambling to stop the spread.

The U.K. on Saturday tightened its rules on mask-wearing and on testing of international arrivals after finding two cases. New cases were confirmed Saturday in Germany and Italy, with Belgium, Israel and Hong Kong also reporting that the variant has been found in travelers.

In the U.S., Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious diseases expert, said he would not be surprised if the omicron variant was already in the United States, too.

"We have not detected it yet, but when you have a virus that is showing this degree of transmissibility [...] it almost invariably is ultimately going to go essentially all over," Fauci said on NBC television.

Because of fears that the new variant has the potential to be more resistant to the protection offered by vaccines, there are growing concerns around the world that the pandemic and associated lockdown restrictions will persist for far longer than hoped.

Nearly two years since the start of the pandemic that has claimed more than 5 million lives around the world, countries are on high alert. Many have already imposed travel restrictions on flights from southern Africa as they seek to buy time to assess whether the omicron variant is more transmissible than the current dominant delta variant.

Britain's Department of Health said the two cases found in the U.K. were linked and involved travel from southern Africa. One of the two new cases was in the southeastern English town of Brentwood, while the other was in the central city of Nottingham.



The two confirmed cases are self-isolating with their households while contact tracing and targeted testing takes place.

The British government also added four more countries — Angola, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia — onto the country's travel red list from Sunday. Six others — Botswana, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe — were added Friday. That means anyone permitted to arrive from those destinations will have to quarantine.

Many countries have slapped restrictions on various southern African countries over the past couple of days, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, the European Union, Iran, Japan, New Zealand, Thailand and the United States, in response to warnings over the transmissibility of the new variant. This goes against the advice of the World Health Organization, which has warned against any overreaction before the variant was thoroughly studied.

Despite the banning of flights, there are mounting concerns that the variant has already been widely seeded around the world.

Italy and Germany were the latest to report confirmed cases of the omicron variant.

An Italian who had traveled to Mozambique on business landed in Rome on Nov. 11 and returned to his home near Naples. He and five family members, including two school-age children, have since tested positive, the Italian news agency LaPresse said. All are isolating in the Naples suburb of Caserta in good condition with light symptoms.

The variant was confirmed by Sacco hospital in Milan, and Italy's National Health Institute said the man had received two doses of the vaccine. Italy's health ministry is urging all regions to increase its tracing of the virus and sequencing to detect cases of the new variant first identified in South Africa.

In Germany, the Max von Pettenkofer Institute, a Munich-based microbiology center, said the omicron variant was confirmed in two travelers who arrived on a flight from South Africa on Nov. 24. The head of the institute, Oliver Keppler, said that genome sequencing has yet to be completed, but it is "proven without doubt that it is this variant," German news agency dpa reported.

The Dutch public health institute said the omicron variant was "probably found in a number of the tested persons" who

were isolated after arriving Friday in Amsterdam on two flights from South Africa. The institute said in a statement that further sequencing analysis is underway to determine for sure that it is the new variant. The results were expected Sunday. A total of 61 people were tested.

Israel said it detected the new strain in a traveler who had returned from Malawi and was tracing 800 travelers who returned recently from southern African countries. And Australia said early yesterday its scientists were working to determine whether two people who tested positive for COVID after arriving from southern Africa are infected with the omicron variant.

The variant's swift spread among young people in South Africa has alarmed health professionals even though there was no immediate indication whether the variant causes more severe disease.

A number of pharmaceutical firms, including AstraZeneca, Moderna, Novavax and Pfizer, said they have plans in place to adapt their vaccines in light of the emergence of omicron. Pfizer and its partner BioNTech said they expect to be able to tweak their vaccine in around 100 days. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1975 GRAHAM HILL KILLED IN AIR CRASH



One of Britain's greatest motor racing drivers has been killed in a plane crash in south-east England.

Graham Hill, 46, who retired from the sport in July 1975, was killed instantly along with the four other occupants in his Piper Aztec - all members of the Embassy Hill team.

Hill was piloting the plane when he clipped a row of trees on Arkley golf course in Hertfordshire, just before 2200 GMT.

The two-times world champion was flying Embassy Hill manager Ray Brimble, fellow driver Tony Brise, and two mechanics from France to attend a party in London.

Arley Golf Club steward Ted Dickens said visibility had been very poor at the time of the accident.

"It was terrible - the ambulances couldn't even see the bunkers as they were driving down," he said.

Friend and Elstree Aero Club chairman Spencer Flack said the champion driver was taking a risk by trying to land in bad conditions but told reporters he was an experienced flier.

"He was a skilful pilot who tried to get in and failed.

"In those conditions it's just a matter of feet and seconds between life and death," he said.

Government accident investigation officials are sifting through the wreckage to try to establish the cause of the crash.

Hill is the only driver to have won the Triple Crown of the Indianapolis 500, the 24 hours of Le Mans and the Formula One World Championship.

He won the world title with BRM in 1962 and again in 1968, with Lotus.

Hill retired from Formula 1 mid-season so he could concentrate on coaching Brise, a promising new driver in his own fledgling team Embassy Hill.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Three thousand people attended Graham Hill's funeral in St Alban's, Hertfordshire, on 5 December. An inquest found he was flying only 60 ft (18.3m) above the ground when the plane hit the tree - but did not realise because of the poor visibility. Verdicts of accidental death were returned for all six occupants of the plane. Hill's son, Damon, followed his father into Formula One racing and won the world championship in 1996.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 It's hard to stay planted in reality under Monday's skies, Aries. Give yourself space to traverse into a world of otherworldly thought rather than cling to practical details.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
 The illuminating sun merges with expressive Mercury, delivering potent insights and important conversations around intimate relationships and financial concerns.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
 Monday's skies find Mercury wrapped up in a sweet union with the energy-giving sun, shining a bright spotlight onto the current story swirling around your intimate relationships.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Motivated Mars slinks off into a daydream as it reaches out to reality-dissolving Neptune, creating a foggy romantic haze around love interests and creative pursuits.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Turn your focus towards the current story brewing around your personal self-expression, Leo. Your ruling planet, the illuminating sun, spends the day merged with expressive Mercury.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Give yourself space to navigate today's revelations, Virgo. Your ruling planet, silver-tongued Mercury, finds itself merged with the clarity-bringing sun today.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Messenger Mercury unites with the illuminating sun, bringing important revelations and conversations to your doorstep, especially those concerning friends, neighbors, or siblings.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Reality seems to be slipping through your fingertips under Monday's skies, Scorpio. Your ruling planet, soldiering Mars, finds itself enchanted by a smooth connection with illusory Neptune.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 The cosmic spotlight shines upon you today, Sagittarius. What stories are working to make themselves known around your independence, health, and identity today?

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Meanwhile, motivated Mars smooth meet-up with dreamy Neptune imbues the day with fantastical longing and poetic thinking. Save practical affairs for another time!

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 The clarifying sun's union with expressive Mercury delivers news or important conversations around your long-term goals or friend groups.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Important insights and news seem to seep in around your current career trajectory as the illuminating sun merges with information-gathering Mercury.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

EASY					EASY+				
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	8	3	7			4 3			8
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MEDIUM					HARD				
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WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	2	5	rain
Harbin	-3	-8	cloudy
Tianjin	4	8	rain
Urumqi	-5	-12	fine
Xi'an	2	10	rain
Lhasa	-4	15	fine
Chengdu	10	13	overcast
Chongqing	11	13	rain
Kunming	7	17	cloudy
Nanjing	13	24	overcast
Shanghai	13	19	rain
Wuhan	5	19	overcast
Hangzhou	11	19	rain
Taipei	20	23	cloudy
Guangzhou	14	25	fine
Hong Kong	20	26	fine
WORLD			
Moscow	-5	-6	snow
Frankfurt	0	3	snow
Paris	2	6	cloudy
London	4	11	cloudy
New York	3	8	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Quaking trees; 7- Penlight battery; 10- Headland; 14- Occurring in spring; 15- Apt. divisions; 16- Among; 17- Playground retort; 18- Fire starter?; 19- Having a sound mind; 20- Put in place; 23- Part of Hispaniola; 26- Pother; 27- Leases; 28- Drum sound; 29- Health haven; 30- Damage; 31- Sets straight; 33- Place for ordering alcoholic drinks; 34- City in GA; 37- RR stop; 38- Abu Dhabi's fed.; 39- One ___ time; 40- "Conquest of Space" writer Willy; 41- Down; 42- Bodybuilder's pride; 43- Correspondences; 45- "ER" extras; 46- Porcine pad; 47- Peseta replacement; 48- Ruin; 51- Bordeaux buddy; 52- Flower segment; 53- Incidental remark; 56- Take a breather; 57- Like Phoenix in summer; 58- Correctly; 62- Blackthorn fruit; 63- Before, of yore; 64- Impressionist Pierre; 65- Small gull; 66- Loser to DDE; 67- Undo;

DOWN: 1- Actress Gardner; 2- Sun. talk; 3- Historic beginning; 4- Qualify; 5- Model Campbell; 6- Swill; 7- Fleet; 8- Acid type; 9- Little helper?; 10- Small wheel; 11- At full speed; 12- Wine grape; 13- Parades; 21- Passes by degrees; 22- Turkey's highest peak; 23- ___ Perot; 24- Truck line; 25- Greek epic poem; 29- Runs through; 30- British buddy; 32- Subtlety; 33- European sea; 34- Aboriginal Alaskan; 35- ___ firma; 36- Disinfectant brand; 44- Abounding; 45- Putrid; 46- Strikes; 48- Actor Buchholz; 49- White-barked poplar tree; 50- Shield; 51- Love deeply; 52- Blender setting; 54- She played Carla on "Cheers"; 55- Mountain lake; 59- Indian holiday resort; 60- Strike; 61- It's past due;

Friday's solution

S	I	N	G	E	S	L	A	V	S	U	V	A
O	S	C	A	R	L	O	G	E	T	R	A	T
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O	P	T	I	C		E	R	R	S		T	O
H	A	D										
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- 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
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Property of the Week



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Wa Bao
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Wa Bao two bedroom apartment with fantastic views across the Taipa stadium towards Cotai. More photos to follow once the current tenant leaves the property in December. A car park is available to purchase separately.



Ref: 2111 6004

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Property Hotlist



FOR SALE

Manhattan
HKD 15,750,000

2,305 ft²
4
2



Ref: 2005 6001



FOR SALE

Taipa Village
HKD 7,980,000

1,404 ft²
4
2



Ref: 1909 6006



FOR RENT

Old Taipa studio
HKD 7,200/mth

376 ft²
1



Ref: 2110 1002

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- [Coloane] Hellene Gardens 1 2 2 1,707 ft² **HKD 10,880,000** Ref: 2107 6005
- [Taipa] Chun U Villa 4 3 1,979 ft² **HKD 12,380,000** Ref: 2104 6001
- [Taipa] Manhattan 4 2 2,305 ft² **HKD 17,980,000** Ref: 1807 5558
- [Taipa] Panorama 4 4 5,700 ft² **HKD 24,800,000** Ref: 2103 6003

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- [Coloane] One Oasis 2 2 1,185 ft² **HKD 11,200/mth** Ref: 2109 1001
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- [Taipa] Chun U Villa 4 3 1,979 ft² **HKD 16,500/mth** Ref: 2104 1001
- [Cotai] One Grantai 3 3 2,158 ft² **HKD 20,000/mth** Ref: 2105 1002
- [Taipa] BCM building office 4,100 ft² **HKD 85,000/mth** Ref: 2101 1001

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1,663 ft²
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SIX MORE POSITIVE COVID-19 CASES AT LEIPZIG, NINE IN QUARANTINE

GERMAN soccer club Leipzig reported six more positive coronavirus cases on Friday following its Champions League game in Belgium against Brugge.

Defender Willi Orban, forwards Yussuf Poulsen and Hugo Novoa, and goalkeeping coach Frederik Gößling all tested positive for COVID-19 after returning from Belgium, while defender Mohamed Simakan and a member of the backroom staff were infected despite not traveling, Leipzig said.

Leipzig coach Jesse Marsch, goalkeeper Péter Gulácsi and another member of the coaching staff tested positive at the beginning of the week. Leipzig said they remain in quarantine.

The club carried out tests on 61 staff members on Thursday. It said it remains in regular contact with the

local health authority and will continue to carry out tests on a regular basis.

Leipzig is based in the east German state of Saxony, which is on the front line of the latest wave of infections hitting the country. Infection rates are the highest and vaccination rates the lowest in Saxony compared to other regions. Local authorities have responded by banning crowds from sports events in the state.

Leipzig's game against Bayer Leverkusen on Sunday will be the Bundesliga's first without fans in months. Leipzig's Champions League game against Manchester City next month will also be affected.

Leipzig previously said all of its players and staff members were either fully vaccinated or have recently recovered from COVID-19. **MDT/AP**

IIHF meets to review Olympic eligibility of Chinese players

STEPHEN WHYNO

THE International Ice Hockey Federation council held a call Friday to review the Olympic eligibility of Chinese men's national team players, though no decisions were made about the host country's status for the upcoming tournament in Beijing.

Officials are set to review information from the Chinese Ice Hockey Association about players on the host country's potential player list. Another meeting is scheduled for Dec. 6.

Several players on China's national team are North Americans who moved to play for a Chinese-owned club in the Kontinental Hockey League in an attempt to naturalize and gain Olympic eligibility. But the pandemic-forced move of KHL club Kunlun Red Star out of China and to Moscow adds a layer of uncertainty about whether players meet the eligibility standard.

Kunlun played two so-called test



AP PHOTO

games against KHL opponents in mid-November with IIHF officials watching closely to determine the level of competitiveness. Players' performances in a 5-4 overtime loss and a 4-1 defeat were apparently enough to satisfy concerns about how they'll handle NHL competition in Beijing, making eligibility the only hurdle to China remaining in the Olympics.

In other possible Olympic news, Canada named Claude Julien coach for two international tournaments

coming up in December: the Channel One Cup and the Spengler Cup. Former Arizona Coyotes captain Shane Doan was named general manager, with Bruce Boudreau and Scott Walker set to serve as Julien's assistants.

The Channel One and Spengler Cup staffs are significant because they would take over Olympic roles if the NHL and NHL Players' Association withdraw before the Jan. 10 deadline. **MDT/AP**

AD



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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, Global Times

'DEMOCRACY SUMMIT' A WIMPY SHOW OF US, TAIWAN ISLAND

The US Department of State released on Tuesday evening the list of 110 "participants" to the "Summit for Democracy."

What caught the immediate attention of worldwide media were, first, the island of Taiwan was on the list; second, several countries were missing from the list, not just China and Russia, but also Turkey, a NATO member, Hungary, an EU and NATO member, and Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam from Asia, and all the countries from the Middle East except for Israel and Iraq.

Taiwan being invited was the most eye-catching. In addition to being thankful to the Biden administration, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) authority immediately announced its representatives to the summit including Audrey Tang Feng, a member of Taiwan's "executive authority," and Hsiao Bi-khim, the island of Taiwan's representative to the US.

It's apparent that the DPP authority played along with the US in a concerted effort to minimize the impact of Taiwan's participation. In terms of the same consideration, the US State Department deliberately used the term "participant list" instead of "country," even though the majority of the invited participants are countries with the exception of Taiwan and Kosovo.

Media worldwide widely reported that Taiwan island being invited by the US to the summit for democracy would probably "irritate" China. It has not been long since the virtual meeting between the top leaders from the two countries. The US wants to ease relations with China as it needs China's help in a number of issues. As a result, the US was careful in its choice of words when it released the list and let Taiwan announce its lower-level representatives as soon as possible to reduce the risk intentionally.

There is no need for China to feel "grateful" to the US in this. Other participants, apart from Kosovo, are sovereign countries. With Taiwan authorities being invited to a conference like the upcoming one, the case has already become a provocation to China. Due to China's serious preparations for military struggles with Taiwan island and severe warnings against official-level collusion between the US and the island, the US had to take a step back in making such a "maneuver."

When the White House announced in August it would hold a summit for democracy, the Global Times published an editorial, warning: If the US invites high-level Taiwan official to participate in the meeting, "PLA fighter jets will fly over the island," realizing a historic cruise to declare our sovereignty. They must be clear: PLA fighter jets flying over the island is a long-awaited wish of all Chinese people. All we have been waiting for is an opportunity. For the Chinese people, this move will speak louder than thousands of words and can overwhelm various dirty tricks in the collusion between the US and Taiwan island.

The Biden administration is promoting its ties with Taiwan through the "salami-slicing" tactics. It would only be an illusion if the US ever thinks it can continue to use the trick forever. The Chinese mainland is making progress in its military preparations, which have specific targets. When the preparations are carried out, they will clear all the slices the US and Taiwan island had cut.

It is obvious that almost everyone is sure that the army on the Taiwan island dares not open fire if the mainland's warplanes fly over the island because that will mean the outbreak of a war, and the PLA will definitely carry out a destructive strike on the island's armed forces.

[Abridged]

Taiwan's annual Golden Horse Awards kicked off Saturday with a Hong Kong drama receiving the most nominations for the Asian equivalent of the Academy Awards.

The Golden Horse Awards, which began in 1962, is considered one of the most prestigious awards for Chinese-language films.

This year, the Hong Kong film "Drifting", which is based on a 2012 court case involving homeless people in the working neighborhood of Sham Shui Po, received 12 nominations including for Best Director, Best Leading Actor and Best Cinematography.

Two Taiwanese movies, titled "The Soul," "The Falls" and "Till We

Meet Again" received 11 nominations each.

"The Falls" won Best Original Screenplay, while "Drifting" won Best Adapted Screenplay.

"Revolution of Our Times," a documentary about the Hong Kong political unrest in 2019 by Hong Kong director Kiwi Chow, won Best Documentary Feature.

The film was a controversial topic in Hong Kong and Chow was accused of flouting coronavirus rules after authorities raided a private screening of the documentary in Hong Kong. Under Hong Kong laws, private gatherings are not limited by coronavirus restrictions.

SWISS VOTE ON COVID LAW AMID SHARP RISE IN INFECTIONS

AP PHOTO



SWISS voters were having their say in a referendum yesterday on legislation which imposed the use of a special COVID-19 certificate that lets only people who have been vaccinated, recovered or tested negative attend public events and gatherings.

The vote offers a relatively rare bellwether of public opinion specifically on the issue of government policy to fight the coronavirus in Europe, currently the global epicenter of the pandemic.

The vote on the country's "COVID-19 law," which also has unlocked billions of Swiss francs in aid for workers and businesses hit by the pandemic, comes as

Switzerland — like many other nations in Europe — faces a steep rise in coronavirus cases.

The Swiss federal government, unlike others, hasn't responded with new restrictions. Analysts say it doesn't want to stir up more opposition to its anti-COVID-19 policies before they face Sunday's test at the ballot box. If the Swiss give a thumbs-up, however, the government may well ratchet up its anti-COVID efforts.

Polls suggest a solid majority of Swiss will approve the measure, which is already in effect and the rejection of which would end the restrictions — as well as the payouts. But in recent

weeks, opponents have raised heaps of cash for their campaign and drawn support from abroad.

On Tuesday, Swiss health authorities warned of a rising "fifth wave" in the rich Alpine country, where vaccination rates are roughly in line with those in hard-hit neighbors Austria and Germany at about two-thirds of the population. Infection rates have soared in recent weeks.

The seven-day average case count in Switzerland shot up to more than 5,200 per day from mid-October to mid-November, a more than five-fold increase — with an upward curve like those in neighboring Germany and Austria. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Myanmar The United States and six other nations issued a joint statement Friday calling on the international community to suspend all assistance to Myanmar's military, and expressing grave concern over reports of human rights abuses by its security forces. The statement comes as fears of an escalation of violence grow in the Southeast Asian nation, whose army is attempting to crush an increasingly active armed opposition movement seeking to end military rule.

AP PHOTO



UK At least three people have died in the U.K. after the year's first winter storm battered parts of the country with gusts of nearly 100 mph. The storm, which was named Arwen by the country's Met Office, hit parts of the north of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland particularly hard late Friday and early Saturday. Three men — one in each of those parts of the U.K. — died as trees were blown over.

AP PHOTO



Russia A court on Saturday ordered five people to remain in pre-trial detention for two months pending an investigation into a devastating blast in a coal mine in Siberia that resulted in dozens of deaths. Authorities reported 51 deaths after a methane explosion rocked the Listvyazhnaya mine in the Kemerovo region in southwestern Siberia on Thursday — 46 miners and five rescuers. The tragedy appears to be the deadliest in Russia since 2010.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Rafael Yaghobzadeh



Camped in Calais. At the makeshift camps in France near Calais and Dunkirk, migrants are digging in, waiting for their chance to make a dash across England.