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LAWMAKER CALLS FOR RAPID ENACTMENT OF WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH BILL FOR THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR IN LIGHT OF RECENT ACCIDENTS

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HO IAT SENG DOWNPLAYS GOV'T INVOLVEMENT IN JUNKET OPERATIONS

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POPULAR CHINA SCHOLAR JONATHAN SPENCE DIES AT 85

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AP PHOTO



Myanmar A court postponed its verdicts yesterday on two charges against ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi in which she is accused of importing and possessing walkie-talkies without following official procedures, a legal official familiar with the case said. The case in the court in the capital, Naypyitaw, is among many brought against the 76-year-old Nobel Peace Prize laureate since the army seized power on Feb. 1.

India A factory boiler exploded in eastern India on Sunday, killing at least six workers and injuring six others, police said. Rescuers were looking for any workers who may be trapped in the rubble of the factory that produced food snacks in an industrial area 95 kilometers north of Patna, the Bihar state capital. The cause of the blast in Muzaffarpur was being investigated, police said.

Afghanistan The Taliban dissolved Afghanistan's two election commissions as well as the state ministries for peace and parliamentary affairs, an official said Sunday. Bilal Karimi, deputy spokesman for Afghanistan's Taliban-run government, called them "unnecessary institutes for the current situation in Afghanistan." He said if there is a need for the commissions in the future, the Taliban government can revive them.

Iran insisted yesterday that the United States and its allies promise to allow Tehran to export its crude as negotiations on restoring the tattered nuclear deal were to resume in Vienna. The remarks by Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabbollahian signal that Iran is pressing its position ahead of the negotiations over reviving the landmark 2015 nuclear deal. The talks have struggled to make headway and were adjourned earlier this month after a round marked by tensions over new demands from Tehran.

More on backpage

SEASON FATALE

A former high government official and two prominent businessmen were arrested over the Christmas holidays in another major corruption scandal, involving a total of eight suspects ■ P3

AP PHOTO



THE HORROR, THE HORROR

IMAGES OF MYANMAR CHRISTMAS EVE MASSACRE SHOCK WORLD

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HO DOWNPLAYS GOV'T INVOLVEMENT IN JUNKET OPERATIONS

ANTHONY LAM

At a press conference last week, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng underlined the government's lack of involvement in the operation of junkets, upon being asked to comment on the recent collapse of junket operators

as he arrived home from his duty visit in Beijing.

Ho stated that the junkets are contractually related to gambling license concessionaires. He stressed that the government had never intervened in the relationship between casinos and junkets and had made no request

to establish or dismiss VIP gambling rooms. Furthermore, the government has not ordered casinos to facilitate the dissolution of high-roller gambling rooms.

The government has not mandated either the establishment or the dissolution of junkets, he said.

However, he admitted that the existence of junkets is a "problem" in Macau. Consequently, he said that when the gambling law is amended, the government will enforce it rigorously. "It is hoped that [junket operators] will adopt the remuneration system as stipulated by the [relevant] Executive Regulations," Ho said. "This is a more normal manner [of operation]."

The government head has also commented that brokers and collaborators in the gambling industry are legally defined, and that "individuals found to have committed violations of the law will be held responsible."

When asked whether next year's target of MOP-130-billion gross gaming revenue (GGR) was still achievable given the serial closures of junkets, Ho said the target remains the same, although noted that further coronavirus outbreaks will make the target less achievable.

He pointed out that the operations of junkets have been shrinking over the past five years, peaking in 2013. No studies on the economic impact have been conducted so far. "For the time being, it is still unclear how many junkets are departing from the market," Ho said.



Wang Weizhong

GBA

SHENZHEN SECRETARY TO HEAD GUANGDONG AS PROVINCIAL HEAD DEPARTS FOR XINJIANG

ANTHONY LAM

The Party Secretary of Shenzhen, Wang Weizhong, has been appointed to lead Guangdong Province as the previous provincial governor departs to fill another public post in Xinjiang.

At the 38th meeting of the 13th Guangdong Province People's Congress Standing Committee held yesterday, the resignation of the outgoing provincial governor, Ma Xingrui, was accepted.

Ma will relocate to the western Autonomous Region of Xinjiang and work as the member and secretary of the Party Committee for the region and member of the Standing Committee.

At the same session, Wang, deputy secretary of the Guangdong Provincial Committee and party municipal secretary of Shenzhen since 2018, was appointed deputy governor and acting governor of the province.

Meanwhile, the resignations of Lin Keqing and Guo Yonghang, deputy governors of the province, were accepted by the Standing Committee. Guo only took office at the provincial level in October this year. Upon his resignation, he was appointed as deputy and acting mayor of Guangzhou, the provincial capital of Guangdong.

Ma's resignation from the post and relocation to Xinjiang has come as a surprise to the Macau government. The outgoing provincial leader was only appointed as a director of the Management Committee of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin in September this year, the other director being Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng.

Born in Shandong province in 1959, Ma entered the Communist Party of China in 1988. He holds a PhD in engineering and is an academic at the International Academy of Astronautics.

Wang was born in 1962 and is a native of Shanxi Province. He entered the Party in 1983 and holds a PhD in management. He was appointed as the deputy minister of the Ministry of Science and Technology in 2010, and took up his appointment in Guangdong in 2017.

Education regulator accepts CCAC report

ANTHONY LAM

The findings of the corruption watchdog relating to the review process for educational subsidies "are considered harsh [but have nevertheless been] accepted," the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) said in a statement.

Before the Christmas holidays, the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) issued a report that criticized the DSEDJ for its weak performance in the reviewing, vetting and approving of grants released by the Education Development Fund (FDE).

Post-grant supervision was just as weak, the CCAC noted in its report.

In response, the DSEDJ and the FDE, a fund operated under and supervised by the bureau, stated that they



"appreciated the CCAC's work in the areas of the FDE's handling and implementation of grants."

The two bureaus "will also humbly study, analyze and learn from the CCAC's findings. Measures will also be put in place to close loopholes and improve procedures."

The DSEDJ noted that it had established a taskforce earlier this year to monitor the performance of the fund.

The taskforce comprises internal personnel who are not part of the grant review process.

Following that, measures have been enacted to improve five aspects of the grant review process.

For example, the bureau facilitated the implementation of a two-tier supervisory mechanism, with school management being the first tier and the bureau being the se-

cond. Occasional subsidies were changed to be issued after the review of the implementation report of preceding subsidies to lessen the chances of schools needing to refund the bureau.

A set of guidelines has also been drafted to codify details of grants and subsidies, including details on the coverage, types, and nature of grants. A database of vendors was also created for schools to choose from when an external procurement is necessary.

Schools will be required to provide financial reports when grants are issued for major projects. The reports will also be required to be reviewed by certified auditors or accountants.

The DSEDJ pledged that it would continue to improve the administration and operation of the FDE.

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Former DSSOPT head arrested under suspicion of corruption

RENATO MARQUES

THE former Land, Public Works, and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) director, Li Canfeng, has been arrested on suspicion of corruption following an investigation by the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC).

According to a statement from CCAC, the anti-corruption watchdog discovered during the course of the investigation into a suspected bribery case that the former DSSOPT leader had allegedly received several high-value benefits from business people, both directly and through family members. The CCAC links some of these transactions to Li's abuse of his position, as they involve the illicit approval of several applications for construction work permits during his tenure.

The CCAC report does not mention Li by name, but does note that the case involves a former DSSOPT leader. According to the CCAC report, the investigation revealed that he had committed several unlawful acts in his role



as director of DSSOPT to benefit people in the construction sector, by approving projects that did not meet the required conditions or else involved construction projects that had already expired.

Some legal requirements were ignored at Li's direct order, allowing construction projects to proceed without having been submitted for discussion and approval by the Urban Planning Committee, among other irregularities.

The CCAC added that it had also found that at least one busi-

ness person involved in the case had "allegedly assisted a relative of the former leader to falsely buy shares in a subsidiary of his group in the name of investment of a company, through which the relative applied for residency by major investment to the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute, and the application was eventually approved," CCAC noted.

There are additional allegations that Li unlawfully expedited certain processes for another businessperson to issue a license

for a certain land plot before the expiration of its period for use in exchange for compensation.

Li stands accused of several crimes, including receiving bribes for illegal activity, money laundering, and document forgery, while the businesspersons and individuals involved have allegedly committed bribery, money laundering, and document forgery.

The CCAC noted that the investigation had led to the detention of the former director and two other suspects who had obtained the support and cooperation from the mainland authorities. Li, anticipating the results of the investigation, had fled to the mainland where he was caught and transferred to the custody of Macau authorities.

After being referred to the Public Prosecutions Office, the criminal investigation judge decided that the former director would await trial in preventive custody.

A total of eight suspects were interrogated by the judicial authorities in this case. Considering the seriousness of the facts and the considerably high value of the

benefits and amounts involved, the judge applied, as coercive measures, the preventive detention of the abovementioned three suspects. The remaining five will need to present themselves to the authorities on a regular basis, cannot leave the city and are banned from contacting the other suspects.

The Chief Executive, Ho Iat Seng, refused to comment on Li's case after arriving in Macau following a trip to Beijing, stating that it was not the right time to do so.

Nonetheless, Ho remarked that authorities can only act after "things have already happened" and "they did [act]," hinting that the supervision and inspection procedures conducted by the anti-corruption body have been effective.

Li was replaced as director of DSSOPT in mid-January 2020 by Chan Pou Ha.

Li had taken up his post as director of DSSOPT in late December 2014 after resigning six years earlier. He served as deputy director of DSSOPT between 1998 and 2008, during the leadership of former Secretary for Transport and Public Works Ao Man Long.

He resigned from the post less than one year after Ao's trial and was one of the witnesses called to testify on the case. He had stated in court that he could not remember details related to the case.

Macau records first Omicron case, imported from the US

RENATO MARQUES

MACAU has recorded its first case of the Omicron variant of Covid-19, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center reported.

According to a statement from the Center, the Omicron variant was detected in a 23-year-old resident, who was a student in the US who returned to Macau on December 26.

The resident tested positive for Covid-19 upon arrival in Macau, and has been confirmed as the 78th case of infection with the virus.

"The Health Bureau Public Health Laboratory sequenced the virus' genome, the result of which showed [yesterday] that the patient was infected with the Omicron variant of the virus, recently discovered worldwide. This is the first case of Omicron variant infection in Macau," the Center noted.

According to information disclosed on the patient's route, the man left the US on December 23, having received a negative nucleic acid test (NAT). He then made a stopover in Singapore before continuing to Macau.

On his arrival in Macau, he received a positive result on another NAT and was immediately treated in isolation.

The Center said that the resident had no symptoms of the disease upon arriving in Macau, but that almost two days later he started to present with several symptoms including coughing and expectoration.

The Center also noted that the Omicron variant "is more contagious than the Delta variant," urging residents abroad to follow the principle of "traveling only if strictly necessary" and minimize optional trips that may increase the risk of contagion.

However, according to researchers elsewhere, this variant is being proved to be less aggressive.

Fears of contagion with the Omicron variant have been fueled by a recent study conducted by researchers from Shanghai Jiao Tong University, who concluded that the Sinopharm vaccine, including the booster jab, is significantly less effective against this variant.

The study conducted by the Shanghai-based lab specializing in respiratory infectious diseases compared the activity of Sinopharm's booster vaccine against an older coronavirus strain from Wuhan.

It was concluded that the Covid-19 booster shot produced by Sinopharm had "significantly lower" neutralizing activity against the Omicron variant, although they added the vaccine's efficacy against Omicron remained unclear.

GALAXY HOLDS EVENT SHOWCASING WHS, TALENT CULTIVATION

GAMBLING concessionaire Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG), has showcased workplace health and safety (WHS), as well as talent cultivation, in a recent event attended by Director of the Labor Affairs Bureau (DSAL), Wong Chi Hong.

Wong remarked at the event that, "Sustaining a high-standard WHS practice while retaining and cultivating talent is key to ensuring the long-term development of Macau's integrated tourism and leisure industry."

The official applauded the gambling concessionaire's effort in actively fostering a generally-observed WHS corporate culture and launching various programs dedicated to talent-development.

In a statement, the GEG noted that it continued to co-organize the Hotel and Catering Industry Safety Card Training Program with

DSAL this year. To date, 95% of GEG team members have completed the program – the highest completion rate in the industry.

To cultivate local talent in Macau, GEG provided team members with career development and training programs in a variety of fields to assist them with achieving personal growth. The GEG talent development programs provided more than one million training hours to team members throughout 2021.

Besides supporting the Internship Career Experience Program organized by DSAL for the second year, GEG re-launched the U-LEAD Graduate Internship Program.

Group director of human resources and administration of GEG, Eileen Lui, thanked DSAL, saying, "On behalf of GEG, I would like to thank DSAL for its guidance and support to GEG's WHS promotional work. Additionally, GEG has proactively supported the Macau SAR Government's policy of 'Building Macau through Talent Training' by allocating resources to cultivate more talent for Macau's integrated resort industry and foster Macau's economic diversification." **AL**



LAWMAKER WANTS FASTER WORKPLACE SAFETY LEGISLATION

ANTHONY LAM

LAWMAKER Lam Lon Wai is urging for the rapid enactment of Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) legislation for the construction industry, in light of recent industrial accidents.

Lam cited two fatal industrial accidents in November and December respectively. Although the government has been working on refining WSH rules, workplace accidents have been on the rise, with a high level of casualties.

As a result, he believes that the government should speed up legislative procedures on WSH for the construction industry and improve site inspection and training.

Lam pointed out



Lam Lon Wai

that the number of workplace accident victims in 2020 was 4,209. Meanwhile, in the first three quarters of this year, the toll has reached 3,690. It is estimated that the number will increase this year, Lam said.

For many years, the

entertainment, gaming and other service industries such as the hotel, catering and construction sectors have been heavily affected by high rates of workplace accidents. In particular, the construction industry has an especially high accident mortality rate.

In the first three quarters of the year, eight fatalities have been recorded in the construction industry.

The lawmaker has called on the government to expedite research into industry-based workplace accident compensation adjustment mechanisms. Lam recommends that the construction industry be a pilot industry when the mechanism is put into effect.

He also recommended that the government establish a detailed and comprehensive strategy to avoid workplace accidents in the construction industry in light of a series of large-scale and complex construction projects due to commence in the coming years, including the Fourth Harbor-crossing Bridge, the Light Rail Transit development and several casino-resorts.

Regular drills should also be held to familiarize workers with evacuation, rescue and contingency plans.

LEONG SUN IOK REQUESTS DETAILS ON 'DRIVING TO MAINLAND'

LAWMAKER Leong Sun Iok asked the government in a written inquiry to release more information on the "driving to mainland" scheme, with particular emphasis on insurance, digitization and timetabling arrangements.

He pointed out that the policy regarding driving to mainland China has been under discussion for more than a year, with Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak recently saying that work on the scheme was nearing its conclusion, although details on the plan have been scarce.

He believes that when the scheme kicks in, the government should have prepared procedures and confirmed the conditions for applications, border-crossing requirements, insurance, and other formalities.

Although he has received information from the government on its progress thus far, he wants to see the government demonstrate greater preparation to facilitate the implementation of the policy.

For example, Leong pointed out that so far he has not seen timetables and particulars on the



Leong Sun Iok

types of insurance needed for cross-boundary road trips. Previously, he said the government had confirmed that Macau drivers would be able to purchase the two types of insurance policies needed for such travel from Macau insurance companies.

He would like to know whether the government will establish a unified online platform to provide digitized services to facilitate the purchase of insurance and other necessary products and services, and details on the daily quota of motor vehicles eligible for the scheme. **AL**

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RENATO MARQUES

RETURNING to Macau after a four-day work visit to Beijing, the Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng, said in a press briefing at the Macau International Airport that national leaders have voiced their support for Macau's plans for economic diversification.

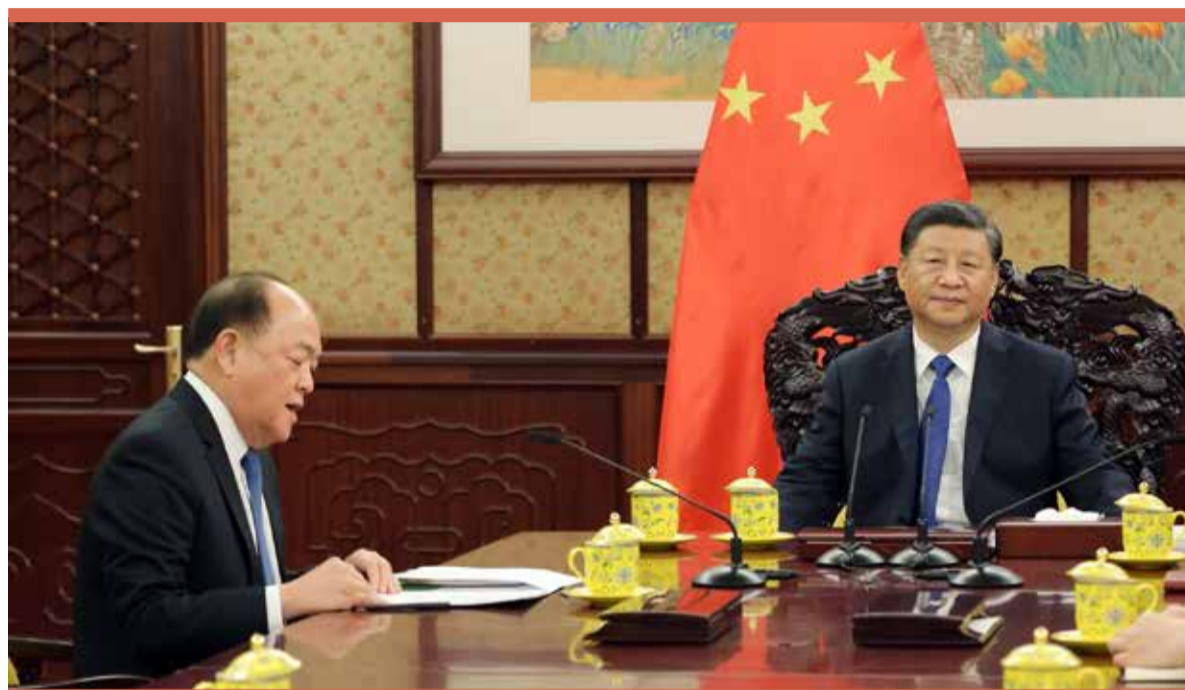
Speaking to the media about the goals and the achievements of his visit to Beijing, Ho said that he had reported to president Xi Jinping and premier Li Keqiang regarding Macau's current political, social, and economic development in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, which, in limiting visitor numbers, has battered the local economy.

Ho noted that the national leaders had made clear "the problem of over-reliance on a single industry," saying the Central government would, as always, "give its strongest support for Macau to diversify its economy adequately."

During meetings in Beijing, the same leaders gave the green light to the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) government's policy plan for 2022.

While in Beijing, the CE also held meetings with officials of Central government departments on the development of the Guangdong-Macau Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin. This mee-

Beijing supports plans for diversification, CE says



ting was intended to further work on several topics, seeking the swift resolution of problems that are obstructing the project.

NO DEAL YET ON HK BORDER REOPENING

On the topic of the partial resumption of quarantine-free

travel between Macau and Hong Kong, the CE said that this is yet to be implemented, once again remarking that the arrangement requires approval from the Central government.

Ho reaffirmed that once the arrangements for quarantine-free travel between the main-

land and Hong Kong are finalized, Macau would then be in a position to adopt similar measures, using the same standards and conditions negotiated between Hong Kong and the mainland.

A tentative timeline for the implementation of this policy

had been previously established as a result of the 2021 Hong Kong legislative election.

As the Times previously reported, a source close to the administrative process in the neighboring region said that the easing on the border restrictions to the mainland would take place after the conclusion of the election process, that is, after December 19, 2021.

ISLANDS HOSPITAL ON CE AGENDA IN BEIJING

Cooperation between Macau and Beijing on the management and operation of the Islands District Medical Complex (Islands Hospital) was also a topic on the agenda during the CE's visit to the capital.

Ho met with Peking Union Medical College Hospital (PUMCH) officials to exchange views on ways to strengthen cooperation on the project.

Although no concrete measures or decisions were announced following the meeting, the CE said that it "increased mutual understanding between the two sides, and would be the basis for furthering cooperation."

Ho highlighted the fact that the future complex will not just serve the medical needs of the local population, but would also accelerate the local development of a "big health" industry.

Academic Year 2022/2023

Central Registration for Children Entering Kindergarten for the First Time



Aims

To optimise schools' enrolment mechanism, simplify the procedures that parents complete for their children entering kindergarten for the first time and enable parents to confirm which school to enrol their children in as early as possible.

Eligibility

Macao residents aged 3 by 31st December, 2022, who will enrol in infant education in Macao for the first time.

Timeline (Year 2022)

Enrolment information	Starting from 1 st January onwards, parents can consult the enrolment information on the DSEDJ website or school website.
Central Registration	Parents register on the DSEDJ website or at the DSEDJ counters Between 6 th and 20 th January.
Schools release the interview date and time	Between 14 th and 16 th February
School admission interviews	Between 26 th February and 27 th March
Release of the admission list and the period for online confirmation	Release of the admission lists on the DSEDJ website and by schools 8 th April Parents can check the admission list and confirm one school to enrol their children on the DSEDJ website Between 8 th and 10 th April
Schools release the admission list of waitlisted students	From 11 th April onwards
Parents process enrolment / school transfer procedures in person	From 12 th April onwards (According to the period informed by schools) Admitted students must finish the registration procedure on or before 12 th April.
Enrolment at other schools	From 19 th April onwards

Gentle Reminder:

- To enrol in Macao schools, non-Macao residents must possess a stay or residence permit for over 90 days issued by the authorised entity of the Macao SAR. Parents must process the registration at any of the DSEDJ counters.
- Schools set no limit to the number of registrants and interviews. There is also no priority for early registration in the Central Registration system. Therefore, parents do not need to rush to be the first to register.
- Parents only need to bring the identification document(s)/ first-time enrolment QR code of their children to the school to process enrolment or school transfer procedure according to the requirement of the schools.
- The DSEDJ will provide "Service of consultation and arrangement of school places" to parents who are in need.

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For details, please browse
DSEDJ website: **www.dsedj.gov.mo**



JONATHAN D. SPENCE, POPULAR CHINA SCHOLAR, DEAD AT AGE 85

HILLEL ITALIE, NEW YORK

JONATHAN D. Spence, a British-born historian who became a longtime Yale University professor and prominent sinologist and attracted a wide following with his 1990 best-seller "The Search for Modern China," has died at age 85.

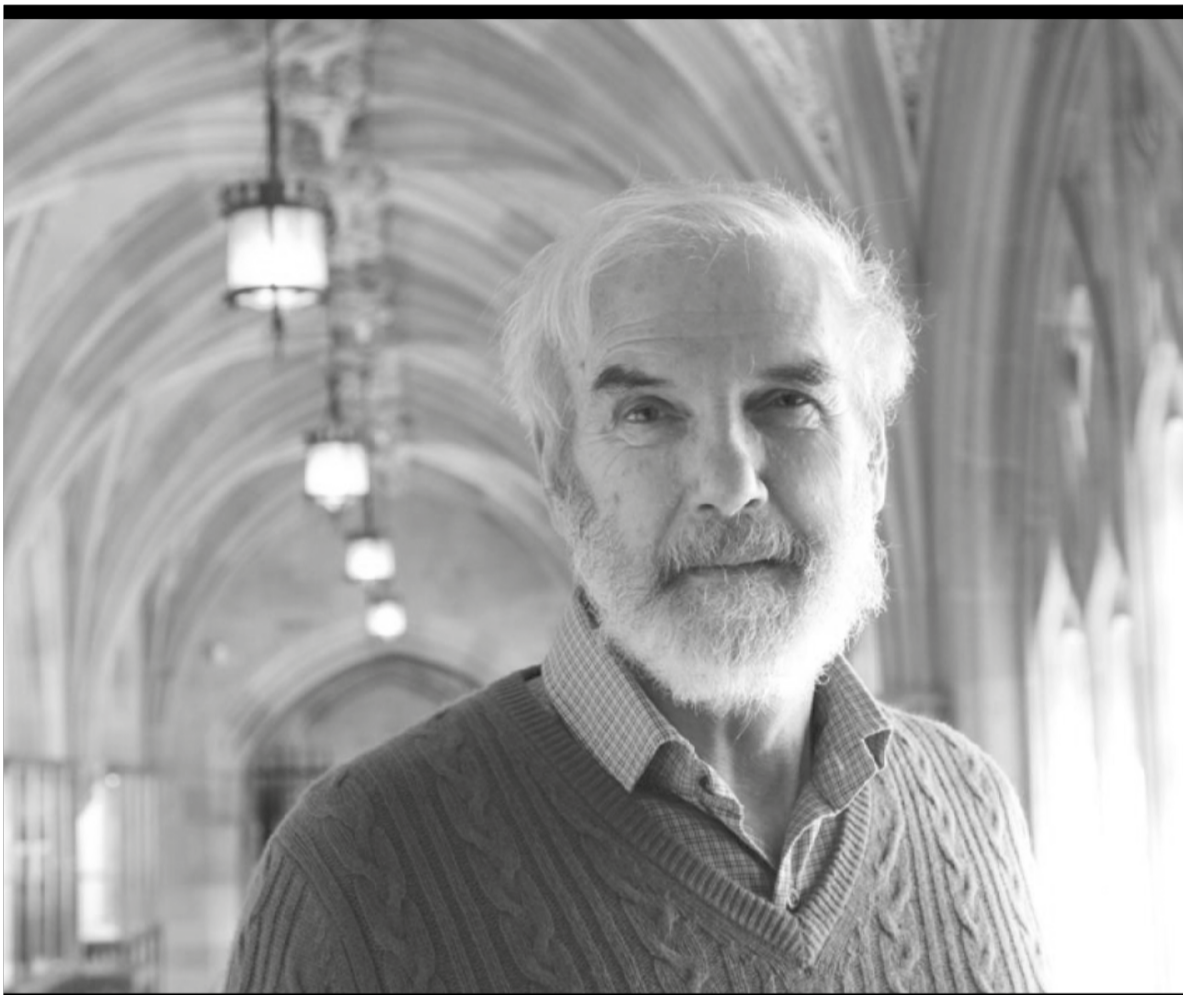
Spence, who retired from Yale in 2008, died Saturday at his home in West Haven, Connecticut. His wife and fellow Yale professor, Annping Chin, said the cause was complications from Parkinson's disease.

The recipient of a MacArthur fellowship, a Los Angeles Times book prize and numerous other honors, Spence wrote more than a dozen books on China, along with reviews, essays and lectures. He was best known for "The Search for Modern China," an 870-page publication that began in the 17th century, at the peak of the Ming dynasty, and continued through the 1989 demonstrations in Tiananmen Square.

As suggested by the book's title, Spence approached China as if writing a detective story, deciphering for Western readers one of the world's largest, most populous and complex countries. Drawing upon scores of previous books and original papers, he documented China's history of extreme upheavals and lasting traditions. He noted the "patterns of generational deference and concepts of obligation" and the rebellions designed to shatter them, whether the sacking of Beijing in 1644, the 1911 fall of the last emperor or the Communist triumph of the late 1940s.

"We can see how often the Chinese people, operating in difficult

NANCY CRAMPTON



or even desperate circumstances, seized their own fate and threw themselves against the power of the state," he wrote. "We can see how in 1644, again in 1911, and then again in 1949, disillusion with the present and a certain nostalgia for the past could combine with a passionate hope for the future to bring the old order crashing down, opening the way for an uncertain passage to the new."

Spence's book was praised by critics, reached The New York Times' best-seller list, remains widely used in classrooms and is often credited with popularizing Chinese studies.

"He narrates history that is always lively, always concrete, always comprehensible, no matter how complex the issue," wrote the Times' Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, who added that the book "will undoubtedly become a standard text on the subject."

Spence's other works included a short biography of Mao Zedong for the Penguin Lives series; "The Chan's Great Continent," which looked into how Westerners perceived China, and "The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci," about one of the first Jesuit missionaries to China. A 1996 book, "The Chinese Century: A Photographic History,"

was co-authored by Spence and Annping Chin.

Survivors include two sons from his first marriage, to Helen Alexander, and two stepchildren.

Born in Surrey, England, Spence grew up in a family of book lovers: his father was an editor, his mother a reader of French literature. He was an undergraduate at Clare College, Cambridge, where he edited the student newspaper and co-edited the student magazine Granta, now one of the world's most prestigious literary journals.

After graduation, he received a fellowship at Yale and befriended

the China scholar Mary Wright, who became a mentor. Through Wright, he met the biographer Fang Chao-ying and was granted special access to papers in Taiwan from the Qing dynasty, material used in his dissertation and his first book, "Ts'ao Yin and the K'ang-hsi Emperor: Bondservant and Master," which came out in 1966, the same year he joined the Yale faculty.

"I was able to hold in my hand the original writings of the emperor of China," he said in a 2010 interview with Humanities magazine, the in-house publication of the National Endowment of the Humanities. "It was something that is still very emotional for me, and it was a major moment for my thinking about the past."

Spence was among Yale's most popular teachers and much of "The Search for Modern China" expanded upon his classroom talks. One former student, the award-winning journalist and China scholar Susan Jakes, would recall Spence speaking at a measured and mesmerizing pace, touching upon grand themes and precise details.

"The lectures had the feel of finely crafted short stories, and at times full-length novels. They were beguilingly titled 'The View from Below,' 'All in the Translation,' 'Into the World,' 'Bombs and Pianos' — and they built in intensity to end in startling revelations or quietly delivered lines of poetry," Jakes wrote in 2008 for the web site www.thechinabeat.com.

"His lectures held out the promise that China and its past could be, if not quite within our reach, than at least a little closer than they seemed. ... I am sitting in Shanghai as I write this, quite as certain as one can be about historical causes and effect, that had I not found my way to that lecture hall in the spring of 1995, or if Spence had been lecturing on astrophysics or on Luxembourg, I would not be here. MDT/AP

Delta: Flight to Shanghai turned back because of Covid rules

DELTA Air Lines said yesterday that new pandemic-related cleaning requirements at a Shanghai airport were behind the turning back of a recent flight from Seattle in midair, a move that had prompted a protest from the Chinese Consulate in San Francisco.

An emailed statement said the new mandates at Shanghai Pudong International Airport "require significantly extended ground time and are not operationally viable for Delta."

It wasn't clear what the rules are and what prompted the change, but it comes as China tightens its already strict COVID-19 travel restrictions in the face of a growing outbreak in the city of Xi'an and ahead of the Winter Olympics in Beijing in six weeks.

Xi'an, which is about 1,000 kilometers southwest of Beijing, reported more than 300 new cases over the weekend, a sharp rise from previous days. The city of 13 million people has been locked down, with only one person per household allowed out every two days to shop for necessities.

The Delta flight that

turned back to Seattle last week left passengers with expired COVID-19 test results and U.S. visas, according to Chinese media reports.

The consulate in San Francisco did not name Delta but said in a short statement Sunday that many flights from the U.S. to China had been delayed or canceled in recent days including a flight that turned back more than halfway to its destination.

The consulate "had made a stern representation to the airline," the statement said. MDT/AP



Pudong International Airport

MYANMAR

Photos of aftermath of massacre fuel outrage

TASSANEE VEJPONGSA,
BANGKOK

PHOTOS of the aftermath of a Christmas Eve massacre in eastern Myanmar that reportedly left more than 30 people, including women and children, dead and burned in their vehicles, have spread on social media in the country, fuelling outrage against the military that took power in February.

The photos showed the charred bodies of over 30 people in three burned-out vehicles who were reportedly shot by government troops as they were fleeing combat. The accounts could not be independently verified.

The international aid group Save the Children said that two of its staffers were missing in the massacre, which sparked outrage against the military that took power after ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. Save the Children said it was suspending operations in the region.

On Sunday, the U.S. Embassy in Myanmar said it was appalled by the "barbaric attack in Kayah state that killed at least 35 civilians, including women and children."

"We will continue to press for accountability for the perpetrators of the ongoing campaign of violence against the people of Burma," it said in a statement.

A villager who said he went to the scene told The Associated Press that the victims had fled the fighting between armed resistance groups and Myanmar's army near Koi Ngan village, which is just beside Mo So, on Friday. He said they were killed after they were arrested by troops while heading to refugee camps in the western part of the township.

Save the Children said that two of its staff who were traveling home for the holidays after conducting humanitarian response work in a nearby community were "caught up in the incident and remain missing."

"We have confirmation that their private vehicle was attacked and burned out," the group added in a statement. "The military reportedly forced people from their cars, arrested some, killed others and burned their bodies."

The government has not commented on the allegations, but a report in the state-run Myanmar Alinn daily newspaper on Saturday said that the fighting near Mo So broke out on Friday when members of ethnic guerrilla forces, known as the Karenni National Progressive Party, and those opposed to the military drove in "suspicious" vehicles and attacked security forces after refusing to stop.

The newspaper report said they included new members who were going to attend training to fight the army, and that the seven vehicles they were traveling in were destroyed in a fire. It gave no further details about the killings.

The witness told the AP the remains were burned beyond recognition, and children's and women's clothes were found together with medical supplies and food.

"The bodies were tied with ropes before being set on fire," said the witness, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he feared for his safety.

He did not see the moment they were killed, but said he believed some of them were Mo So villagers who reportedly got arrested by troops on Friday. He denied that those captured were mem-

AP PHOTO



bers of locally organized militia groups.

Myanmar's independent media reported on Friday that 10 Mo So villagers including children were arrested by the army. The media said that four members of the local paramilitary Border Guard Forces who went to negotiate for their release were reportedly tied up and shot in the head by the military.

The witness said the villagers and anti-government militia groups left the bodies as military troops arrived near Mo So while the bodies were being prepared for cremation.

"It's a heinous crime and the worst incident during Christmas. We strongly condemn that massacre as a crime against humanity," said Banyar Khun Aung, director of the Karenni Human Rights Group.

Earlier this month, govern-

ment troops were also accused of rounding up villagers, some believed to be children, tying them up and slaughtering them. An opposition leader, Dr. Sasa, who uses only one name, said the civilians were burned alive.

A video of the aftermath of the Dec. 7 assault — apparently retaliation for an attack on a military convoy — showed the charred bodies of 11 people lying in a circle amid what appeared to be the remains of a hut.

Fighting resumed over the weekend on the border with Thailand, where thousands of people have fled to seek shelter. Local officials said Myanmar's military had unleashed airstrikes and heavy artillery on Lay Kay Kaw, a small town controlled by ethnic Karen guerrillas in neighboring Kayin state, since Friday.

The governor of Thailand's Tak province, Somchai Cha-

roenkitroongroj, told reporters that around 4,700 evacuees from Myanmar were in three shelters across the border. Sounds of gunfire and explosions could be heard across the river dividing the countries.

He ordered five border districts to prepare supplies and secure places to receive more refugees from Myanmar.

Myanmar's military's action prompted multiple Western governments including the United States to issue a joint statement condemning "serious human rights violations committed by the military regime across the country."

"We call on the regime to immediately cease its indiscriminate attacks in Karen state and throughout the country, and to ensure the safety of all civilians in line with international law," the joint statement said. **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

New South Wales reports first omicron death

AUSTRALIA'S New South Wales state reported more than 6,000 new COVID-19 cases yesterday and confirmed its first death from the omicron variant.

The fatal case was identified as a man in his 80s who was infected at an aged care facility in western Sydney. He was fully vaccinated but had underlying health conditions.

New South Wales, the country's most populous state, reported 6,324 new infections yesterday, a fall of 70 from the record num-

AP PHOTO



ber a day before. There were 524 people in hospitals, including 55 in inten-

sive care.

New measures came into force in New South

Wales on Monday, including limits of one person per 2 square meters in bars and restaurants and required "check-ins" with QR codes in hospitality venues.

Health Minister Brad Hazzard said the state government is considering lifting the requirement for health workers to isolate after being exposed to COVID-19 because of staff shortages.

Victoria state reported 1,999 new cases yesterday with three deaths.

State COVID-19 res-

ponse commander Jeroen Weimar said Victoria has moved to random genome testing for the omicron variant to better understand its spread.

Meanwhile, a Sydney laboratory which on Sunday said 400 people who received negative reports from COVID-19 tests had in fact tested positive now says almost 1,000 others also received premature negative results.

SydPath, based at Sydney's St. Vincent Hospital, said 995 people who were tested on Dec. 23 and 24

had prematurely received negative results.

"In fact their true result had not yet been determined," the pathology service said in a statement Monday. It said all the affected people have been told they will receive their accurate test results by Monday night.

"We are sincerely sorry for this error and acknowledge the significant impact it has had on those involved," it said.

The laboratory blamed the false negatives on human error, saying the testing system has been under severe strain.

"SydPath have put procedures in place to ensure this cannot happen again," it said. **MDT/AP**

OBITUARY

Desmond Tutu, South Africa's moral conscience, dies at 90

ANDREW MELDRUM,
JOHANNESBURG

DESMOND Tutu, South Africa's Nobel Peace Prize-winning icon, an uncompromising foe of apartheid and a modern-day activist for racial justice and LGBT rights, died Sunday at 90. South Africans, world leaders and people around the globe mourned the death of the man viewed as the country's moral conscience.

Tutu worked passionately, tirelessly and non-violently to tear down apartheid — South Africa's brutal, decades-long regime of oppression against its Black majority that only ended in 1994.

The buoyant, blunt-spoken clergyman used his pulpit as the first Black bishop of Johannesburg and later as the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, as well as frequent public demonstrations, to galvanize public opinion against racial inequity, both at home and globally.

Nicknamed "the Arch," the diminutive Tutu became a towering figure in his nation's history, comparable to fellow Nobel laureate Nelson Mandela, a prisoner during white rule who became South Africa's first Black president. Tutu and Mandela shared a commitment to building a better, more equal South Africa.

Upon becoming president in 1994, Mandela appointed Tutu to be chairman of the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which uncovered the abuses of apartheid.

Tutu's death on Sunday "is another chapter of bereavement in our nation's farewell to a generation of outstanding South Africans who have bequeathed us a liberated South Africa," South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said.

"From the pavements of resistance in South Africa to the pulpits of the world's great cathedrals and places of worship, and the prestigious setting of the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony, the Arch distinguished himself as a non-sectarian, inclusive champion of universal human rights," he said.

Tutu died peacefully at the Oasis Frail Care Center in Cape Town, the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Trust said. He

AP PHOTO



had been hospitalized several times since 2015 after being diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1997.

"He turned his own misfortune into a teaching opportunity to raise awareness and reduce the suffering of others," said the Tutu trust. "He wanted the world to know that he had prostate cancer, and that the sooner it is detected, the better the chance of managing it."

In recent years he and his wife, Leah, lived in a retirement community outside Cape Town.

Former U.S. President Barack Obama hailed Tutu as "a moral compass for me and so many others. A universal spirit, Archbishop Tutu was grounded in the struggle for liberation and justice in his own country, but also concerned with injustice everywhere. He never lost his impish sense of humor and willingness to find humanity in his adversaries."

Tutu's life was "entirely dedicated to serving his brothers and sisters for the greater common good. He was a true humanitarian" said the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual leader and Tutu's friend.

"His legacy is moral strength, moral courage and clarity," Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town Thabo Makgoba said in a video statement. "He felt with the people. In public and alone, he cried because he felt people's pain. And he laughed — no, not just laughed, he cackled with delight — when he shared their joy."

A seven-day mourning period is planned in Cape Town before Tutu's burial, including a two-day lying in state, an ecumenical service and an Anglican requiem mass at St. George's Cathedral in Cape Town. The southern city's landmark Table Mountain will be lit up in purple, the color of

the robes Tutu wore as archbishop.

Throughout the 1980s — when South Africa was gripped by anti-apartheid violence and a state of emergency gave police and the military sweeping powers — Tutu was one of the most prominent Black leaders able to speak out against abuses.

A lively wit lightened Tutu's hard-hitting messages and warmed otherwise grim protests, funerals and marches. Plucky and tenacious, he was a formidable force with a canny talent for quoting apt scriptures to harness support for change.

The Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 highlighted his stature as one of the world's most effective champions for human rights, a responsibility he took seriously for the rest of his life.

With the end of apartheid and South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, Tutu celebrated the country's multi-racial society, calling it a "rainbow nation," a phrase that captured the heady optimism of the moment.

In 1990, after 27 years in prison, Mandela spent his first night of freedom at Tutu's residence in Cape Town. Later, Mandela called Tutu "the people's archbishop."

Tutu also campaigned internationally for human rights, especially LGBT rights and same-sex marriage.

"I would not worship a God who is homophobic," he said in 2013, launching a campaign for LGBT rights in Cape Town. "I would refuse to go to a homophobic heaven. No, I would say, 'Sorry, I would much rather go to the other place.'"

Tutu said he was "as passionate about this campaign as I ever was about apartheid. For me, it is at the same level." He was one of the most pro-

minent religious leaders to advocate LGBT rights — a stance that put him at odds with many in South Africa and across the continent as well as within the Anglican church.

South Africa, Tutu said, was a "rainbow" nation of promise for racial reconciliation and equality, even though he grew disillusioned with the African National Congress, the anti-apartheid movement that became the ruling party after the 1994 election. His outspoken remarks long after apartheid sometimes angered partisans who accused him of being biased or out of touch.

Tutu was particularly incensed by the South African government's refusal to grant a visa to the Dalai Lama, preventing the Tibetan spiritual leader from attending Tutu's 80th birthday as well as a planned gathering of Nobel laureates in Cape Town. The government rejected Tutu's accusations that it was bowing to pressure from China, a major trading partner.

Early in 2016, Tutu defended the reconciliation policy that ended white minority rule amid increasing frustrations among some Black South Africans who felt they had not seen the expected economic opportunities since apartheid ended. Tutu had chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that investigated atrocities under apartheid and granted amnesty to some perpetrators, but some people believed that more former white officials should have been prosecuted.

Desmond Mpilo Tutu was born Oct. 7, 1931, in Klerksdorp, west of Johannesburg, and became a teacher before entering St. Peter's Theological College in Rosetenville in 1958. He was ordained in 1961 and six years later became chaplain at the University of Fort Hare.

He then moved to the tiny southern African kingdom of Lesotho and to Britain, returning home in 1975. He became bishop of Lesotho, chairman of the South African Council of Churches and, in 1985, the first Black Anglican bishop of Johannesburg. In 1986, Tutu was named the first Black archbishop of Cape Town. He ordained women priests and promoted gay priests. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1980 GREEN LIGHT FOR BREAKFAST TELEVISION



A shake-up of broadcasting franchises has paved the way for the launch of breakfast television.

The Independent Broadcasting Authority announced the breakfast contract will go to TV-am and will launch in 1983, a year later than planned, to lessen the impact on independent local radio.

It will also avoid clashes with a fourth channel launching in 1982 and the impact on company revenues.

In regional franchises TSW, Television South West, will take over from Westward, which was praised by the IBA for its control of management problems but was faced with fierce competition.

TVS, South and South East Communications, will take over from Southern which faced three times as much competition as any other company and was praised for its religious and children's schedules.

The IBA said it ultimately chose companies with programme makers of particular promise.

In separate statements both companies, which have a long established history, said they were "shattered" by the decision.

The IBA's announcement today also shocked many with its decision to award breakfast news to the new company TV-AM and not ITN.

The TV-am consortium is headed by Peter Jay, former UK ambassador to Washington, and the journalist David Frost.

Esther Rantzen, Anna Ford and Angela Rippon have been involved in the bid for a year and will join as programme makers from its inception.

They will be joined by Michael Parkinson, Robert Kee and Mr Frost as the presenters of the morning programme starting at 0615 GMT until 0915.

Mr Frost said the show would provide a "fast moving magazine programme" for all the family.

IBA also announced changes within the remainder of the 15 companies which fought against bids from 29 rival companies.

Yorkshire TV and Tyne Tees cannot be controlled by Trident, their holding company but must be run separately with firm proposals by February.

In the East and West Midlands, the new split area, ATV must restructure the company and reduce the shareholding of its parent body to 51% by February.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

V-am had a rocky rise to popularity and an abrupt end. The IBA set TV-am's launch at May 1983 to allow the new Channel 4 a secure start, but brought this forward to February with news the BBC was launching a rival "Breakfast Time".

The BBC launched its morning show in January and received higher ratings than TV-am.

It led to a cull of employees at TV-am including Peter Jay, Anna Ford and Angela Rippon in favour of "people-next-door" Anne Diamond and Nick Owen.

But ratings continued to plummet until Greg Dyke's creation of furry puppet Roland Rat who proved popular with children.

TV-am was transformed with a softer image and by the late 1980s it had amassed huge audiences.

But a new government act on broadcasting in 1990 changed the way franchises were awarded and TV-am lost out, going off air in 1992.

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Temper will mount if you are too pushy at work. Pushy people must be kept at arm's length. You don't need to pay out in order to have fun.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Travel should be considered. You will find your personal partner taxing today. Courses dealing with psychology or health care will be of interest.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

You are best to put in some overtime rather than get involved in family gatherings. You can learn a great deal more if you listen rather than rant and rave.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Don't confide in anyone for the time being. Take a long look at your present direction and consider your professional options. Channel your energy into passionate interludes with your lover.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Financial affairs do not look too favorable today. You're in the mood to do things such as competitive sports, or perhaps a night on the town. You need to lie back and enjoy a little rest.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

If you are in the midst of a financial deal, this is your lucky day. Children will be of major concern if you haven't kept the lines of communication open.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Try to put your money away for a rainy day. Get together with friends for some competitive physical activities. Property deals look good. Disruptions may set you back, but you're strong.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You will enjoy interaction with others today. Be sure to keep communication open with those you live with. Your ability to add a sophisticated touch will help you capture the look you're after.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Opportunities for new partnerships will develop through the organizations you encounter. You will be emotional about money matters. Shopping could cost more than you bargained for.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

A lot has changed and so have you. Strengthen your position among your peers. Don't push your luck with authority figures. You may want to get involved in financial investments presented to you.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Don't let other people meddle in your private affairs. You need to get involved in groups that offer physical activities. Try not to discuss important matters with colleagues.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Try to communicate if you wish to help. You might find that coworkers will support your endeavors. Trips should be your choice.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-8	6	fine
Harbin	-17	-4	fine
Tianjin	0	5	overcast
Urumqi	1	6	cloudy
Xi'an	5	7	overcast
Lhasa	-3	5	fine
Chengdu	7	14	cloudy
Chongqing	3	6	rain
Kunming	-2	4	overcast
Nanjing	14	17	rain
Shanghai	0	9	cloudy
Wuhan	-21	-9	fine
Hangzhou	-3	8	fine
Taipei	-16	-4	fine
Guangzhou	7	14	cloudy
Hong Kong	13	16	overcast

WORLD

Moscow	-8	-12	overcast
Frankfurt	8	11	rain
Paris	9	13	rain
London	7	17	rain
New York	5	11	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Aeons; 5- Musical instrument; 10- Ran, as colors; 14- "Goldberg Variations" composer; 15- Son of Abraham; 16- Assistant, particularly to heads of state; 17- Silver salmon; 18- Humorous; 19- Control; 20- Dawdler; 22- Sagacious; 24- Done, to Donne; 25- Canadian gas brand; 26- Edberg of tennis; 29- Joining; 33- Lara of "Tomb Raider"; 34- Nimbus; 36- Long March leader; 37- Small batteries; 38- Sophia of the screen; 39- Milne's "Mr. ___ Passes By"; 40- AT&T rival; 41- Prophetic sign; 42- Have a cow?; 44- Wistfully thoughtful; 47- Court figure; 48- ___-deucey; 49- Bauxite, e.g.; 50- Annoyed; 53- Biased attitude; 58- Broadway opening; 59- ___ a time (singly); 61- Dos cubed; 62- 1982 Disney film; 63- Compass point; 64- Lows; 65- Like some juries; 66- Rival of Helena; 67- Extremities;

DOWN 1- Basics; 2- London jail; 3- Bounce back; 4- Exhibitionist; 5- Having two horns; 6- "Dilbert" intern; 7- Title; 8- ___ alai; 9- Particular time; 10- Hungarian composer; 11- Stead; 12- Prepare a book or film for release; 13- Sand hill by the sea; 21- Heating fuel; 23- Nine-digit ID; 25- Actress Barkin; 26- Rascal; 27- Vestige; 28- Red fluorescent dye; 30- Suggest; 31- Ingenuous; 32- Private Pyle; 34- Cozy; 35- It may come after you; 38- Cherished relation; 42- Bugs, clunkers, and rides, e.g.; 43- Inspiring amazement; 45- Thrifty; 46- Rocks; 47- Feel intense aversion; 50- Course; 51- Creamy-beige color; 52- Kind of collar; 53- Dick Francis book "Dead ___"; 54- Overdue; 55- Desktop image; 56- Not barefoot; 57- Rock clinging plant; 60- Rejections;

Friday's solution

A	M	M	O	S	H	A	L	L	E	B	B	S
R	E	A	P	T	O	D	A	Y	L	E	A	K
A	T	I	P	I	R	E	N	E	D	E	L	E
M	O	N	O	P	L	A	N	E	A	R	I	E
S	E	T										
D	E	F	E	N	S	E						
R	O	O	S	T								
I	S	R										
N	I	C	E									
K	N	E	E	P	A	N						
F	L	F	I	N								
R	O	L	E									
J	O	E	S									
N	E	X	T									

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Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply – Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone – Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity – Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731	
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333	
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Hellene Gardens **HKD 7,680,000**
Ref: 2109 6001 1,663 ft² 3 1/2 2 1



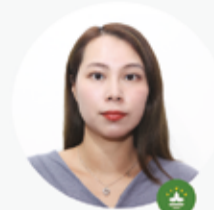
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Property of the Week



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Find out more on www.jmlproperty.com



Ref: 2112 6003

Property Hotlist



FOR SALE

Panorama

HKD 24,800,000

5,700 ft²

4

4

2



Ref: 2103 6003



FOR RENT

REDUCED

Chun U Villa

HKD 16,500/mth

1,979 ft²

4

3



Ref: 2104 1001



FOR RENT

Kingsville

HKD 14,900/mth

1,510 ft²

3

2

1



Ref: 2108 1002

More Listings

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- [Taipa] Taipa Village 4 2 1,404 ft² **HKD 7,980,000** Ref: 1909 6006
- [Macau] Lakeview Tower 3 2 1,344 ft² **HKD 11,680,000** Ref: 1912 6001
- [Taipa] Chun U Villa 4 3 1,979 ft² **HKD 12,380,000** Ref: 2104 6001
- [Taipa] Manhattan 3 2 1,720 ft² **HKD 12,980,000** Ref: 1909 6006
- [Taipa] Manhattan 4 2 2,305 ft² **HKD 17,980,000** Ref: 1807 5558

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Rain Dance Property "WE DANCE UNTIL IT'S SOLD!"



FOR SALE

REDUCED

Hellene Gardens
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1,663 ft²

3

2

1



Ref: 2109 6001

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FOOTBALL

Glut of goals, postponements as Man City still controls EPL

ROB HARRIS, MANCHESTER

MAN CITY 6, LEICESTER 3

CORONAVIRUS postponements aside, 28 goals in the Premier League's six Boxing Day games provided a heavy dose of drama even without changing the complexion of the title race.

Even Manchester City, coasting at 4-0 after 25 minutes, managed to shake things up with a 10-minute second-half implosion to end up delivering a nine-goal thriller. The 6-3 win over Leicester left the defending champions six points in front.

"It was a roller coaster, a typical Boxing Day with a lot of goals," City manager Pep Guardiola said. "For everyone it was an entertaining game."

Second-place Liverpool does have a game in hand on City after the COVID-19 outbreak at Leeds meant that was one of three games postponed on Sunday.

And Chelsea is now level on



Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne (center) celebrates after scoring the opening goal

points with Liverpool after coming from behind to beat Aston Villa 3-1. Arsenal is six points further back but in high-scoring form, routing last-place Norwich 5-0.

Arsenal's grip on fourth isn't so secure because Tottenham, which beat Crystal Palace 3-0, is six points adrift but with three games in

hand after coronavirus and snow postponements this month.

Like Villa manager Steven Gerrard, Palace counterpart Patrick Vieira began isolating this weekend after a positive test. Palace failed to get its match at Tottenham called off but the Premier League board on Sunday did approve two postpone-

ments for Tuesday.

Leeds, which was due to host Villa, and Wolverhampton, which was to play at Arsenal, were deemed to lack enough players to fulfil the fixtures due to COVID-19 outbreaks.

SURGING CITY

City has now won nine consecutive matches in its title defense to gain top spot and pull clear.

The early goal blitz saw Kevin De Bruyne and Ilkay Gundogan score from open play and Riyad Mahrez and Raheem Sterling net from penalties.

Leicester threatened a comeback when James Maddison, Ademola Lookman and Kelechi Iheanacho scored in 10 second-half minutes but Aymeric Laporte's header and Sterling's second eased City's path to victory.

LUKAKU ENDS DROUGHT

Romelu Lukaku hadn't scored in the Premier League since the home game against Villa. A trip to Villa ended the drought that's

coincided with injuries and a coronavirus recovery.

Lukaku was brought off the bench at halftime with the game tied at 1-1 after Reece James' own-goal was canceled out by Jorginho from a penalty for Chelsea.

Lukaku took 11 minutes to find the net after glancing in from Callum Hudson-Odoi's cross. A foul by Ezri Konsa to cut out Lukaku's run then led to another penalty that Jorginho converted in stoppage time.

NORTH LONDON WINS

Tottenham is now six league games unbeaten since Antonio Conte took charge to revive the bid for Champions League qualification.

Lucas Moura scored one and set up goals for Harry Kane and Son Heung-min. Wilfried Zaha was sent off in the 37th when Palace was already trailing 2-0 after flinging his arms at Davinson Sanchez having already been booked.

"We have to continue to improve," Conte said, "to exploit the confidence that is going to improve us. We know very well, I know very well, we have a big job to do."

Arsenal's fourth consecutive league win came with a sparkling performance that saw Bukayo Saka score twice, Kieran Tierney net, Alexandre Lacazette convert a penalty and Emile Smith Rowe complete the rout in stoppage time. **MDT/AP**

AD

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OPINION

China Daily

Editorial, China Daily

INDIA SHOULD NOT LET BORDER FRICTIONS HIJACK TIES

Reports that China and India will hold the 14th round of talks at the corps commander level as soon as possible to try to resolve their border disputes are encouraging, as it suggests both sides are willing to keep the door to negotiations open, even after they failed to achieve any agreement during the previous round in October.

Despite the lingering military standoff, efforts to ease tensions and restore peace and tranquility along the border have never ceased, with the two sides having just completed the 23rd Meeting of their Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on Border Affairs via video link last month, during which both vowed to “further deescalate” the border situation. That was in compliance with a consensus reached in July between the foreign ministers of the two countries that China and India, as partners rather than rivals or enemies, must refrain from taking unilateral actions that would complicate the border situation and work together to lift bilateral ties from the current low level.

Thanks to the efforts of both sides, the situation on the border has remained relatively calm since the deadly clash in Galwan Valley in June 2020, with troops of both countries having completed the disengagement process at some friction points. This has paved the way for the two militaries to resolve the remaining frictions at the border by holding further in-depth discussions based on existing agreements and protocols.

Indeed, as the two largest developing countries, China and India pose no threat to each other's development. Rather their ever-closer economic and trade relations have benefited both sides tremendously, which should prompt the neighbors to take all steps to avoid confrontation that may derail the healthy development of bilateral ties.

The two countries achieved a milestone this year when bilateral trade crossed the landmark \$100 billion during the first 11 months, with India's exports to China increasing 39 percent year-on-year and its imports from China surging 49 percent, which underscores how complementary their economies are.

The largest threat Sino-Indian relations face is the rising nationalistic sentiment in India, which some of its politicians have been constantly fueling to serve their own political ends.

This is evidenced in the widespread bans imposed on Chinese apps and boycotts of Chinese products in India last year. Recently, the Indian tax authorities launched a large-scale probe into Chinese companies operating in India, which affected their normal production and business activities.

The previous round of talks failed to reach agreement due to the “unreasonable and unrealistic” demands put forward by the Indian side. India must meet China half way to bring bilateral relations back on the track of sound and stable development.

‘SPIDER-MAN’ SURPASSES \$1B GLOBALLY IN SECOND WEEKEND

Peter Parker's good fortune continued over the holiday weekend as Hollywood prepares to close the books on a turbulent 2021. Even with some mighty competition from new Matrix and Sing movies, and rising concerns over the omicron variant, “Spider-Man: No Way Home” stayed in the No. 1 spot and netted a few more milestones too including crossing the \$1 billion mark globally.

According to studio estimates “Spider-Man” added \$81.5 million over the three-day weekend, down 69% from its first weekend. The Sony and Marvel film has now grossed \$467 million from North American theaters, more than doubling the domestic grosses of

2021's previous No. 1 film, “Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings.”

With \$587.1 million from 61 overseas markets, in just 12 days of release, “Spider-Man” has grossed \$1.05 billion globally. It's the first film of the pandemic to cross \$1 billion and is tied with “Star Wars: The Force Awakens” for being the third-fastest film ever to do so — and this without the benefit of its release in China.

Universal's “Sing 2” came in second place with an estimated \$23.8 million, while Warner Bros.' “The Matrix Resurrections” grossed \$12 million to take third place.

AP PHOTO



OMICRON SPREADS GLOBAL GLOOM OVER NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATIONS

RAF CASERT, BRUSSELS

AFTER struggling with the coronavirus for far too long, the world understands all too well Belgium's word of the year, “knaldrang!” — the urge to party, the need to let loose. Yet as New Year celebrations approach, the omicron variant is casting more gloom.

Yesterday was a case in point, with several governments considering more restrictions to add to a patchwork of measures and lockdowns already in place around Europe.

The French government and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson were assessing the latest data and the need to counter the record numbers of COVID-19 infections with more measures to keep people apart at a time when they so dearly want to be together.

But with indications that omicron might be a milder variant despite its massive transmissibility, politicians were caught in a bind whether to further spoil yet another party or play safe to make sure health care systems don't collapse.

Further complicating matters was the lack of full data over the Christmas weekend, making the chronicling of the rise of omicron more difficult.

In Belgium, people faced their first real test with several new measures yesterday. Shopping was reduced to maximum two

adults, possibly with kids in tow, and movie theaters and concert halls closed at a time when countless families are on vacation together.

The calls to close theaters and arts centers came in for especially heavy criticism.

“We need it also for our mental health. It is the only way for people to live experiences, to tell stories. It is of paramount importance for us to be open in these complicated and complex times,” said Michael De Kok, the artistic director of the Flemish Royal Theatre.

Even communal celebrations like New Year's fireworks, that would usually see thousands thronging Brussels for the best views, are off. Nightclubs are already closed and restaurants and bars need to shut doors at 11 p.m.

In the United Kingdom, there are similar creeping moves. Scotland will close its nightclubs today [Macau time] after Northern Ireland and Wales already did so on Sunday, though they remain open in England. Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who has resisted ordering new restrictions but hasn't ruled them out, is expected to be briefed today [Macau time] on the latest data on the spread of omicron.

Even that staple of British holiday celebrations, the steady stream of English Premier League games, is under threat. The

league has already called off 15 soccer matches in 2 1/2 weeks and more could well be upcoming.

U.K. daily infection numbers reached a new high of 122,186 on Friday, but there were no figures over the long Christmas weekend.

France has recorded more than 100,000 virus infections in a single day for the first time in the pandemic and COVID-19 hospitalizations have doubled over the past month. President Emmanuel Macron's government is holding emergency meetings yesterday to discuss the next steps in tackling the virus.

It is hoping that stepped-up vaccinations will be enough. The government is pushing a draft law that would require vaccination to enter all restaurants and many public venues, instead of the current health pass system which allows people to produce a negative test or proof of recovery if they're not vaccinated.

This piecemeal, often hesitant approach is visible through much of Europe. In Poland, a nation of 38 million where the daily death toll now often breaks through the threshold of 500 cases, nightclubs may be closed, but they will be allowed to reopen on New Year's Eve, with the government unwilling to go against the many voters opposed to restrictions and mandatory vaccinations. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Russia Talks between Russia and the United States on Moscow's demand for Western guarantees precluding NATO's expansion to Ukraine will start immediately after New Year holidays, Russia's top diplomat announced yesterday. “It is with the U.S. that we will carry out the main work of negotiations, which will take place immediately after the New Year holidays end,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in an interview. The holidays in Russia will last for 10 days, through Jan. 9.

Germany has reached its goal of 30 million additional immunizations against COVID-19 by year's end, a push aimed at re-energizing a lagging vaccination campaign and countering a resurgence in COVID-19 infections. Health Minister Karl Lauterbach said the 30-million mark was passed on Sunday, the dpa news agency reported.

AP PHOTO



El Salvador President Nayib Bukele's government has freed three Salvadoran women who were sentenced to 30 years in prison under the nation's strict anti-abortion laws after suffering obstetric emergencies, according to abortion rights groups. Morena Herrera of the Citizen's Group for the Depenalization of Abortion said last week that the group was told one woman would be set free at presidential order, but when they went to the prison to greet her, three were released.

Brazil Two dams broke yesterday in northeastern Brazil, threatening worse flooding in a rain-drenched region that has already seen thousands forced to flee their homes. The city governments of Jussiape and Itambe posted warnings on social media urging people to seek safety. “A dam with a high volume of water has broken and a strong flash flood is expected to affect the municipality of Itambe in a few moments. All residents should evacuate from the banks of the river Verruga urgently,” said the city message posted on Instagram.