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COUTINHO DEMANDS ANSWERS ABOUT THE CONSTANT DELAYS OF THE CONVERGENCE LICENSE WHICH IS THE BASIS FOR DEPLOYMENT OF 5G NETWORK

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TWO BODIES FOUND ON SHORE ABOUT DOWNTOWN, SUICIDE SUSPECTED: PJ

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A MATTER OF CHIPS: CHINA PURSUES TECH 'SELF-RELIANCE'

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Syria Israeli missiles fired from the Mediterranean struck the Syrian port of Latakia yesterday, igniting a fire in the container terminal, Syrian state media reported, in the second such attack on the vital facility this month. It is also a rare targeting of the port handling most imports for Syria, which has been ravaged by a decade-old civil war and western-imposed sanctions.

Dubai The multibillion-dollar world's fair in Dubai has warned that some venues on site may shut down as coronavirus cases rapidly rise in the United Arab Emirates. Dubai's Expo 2020 said that virus outbreaks among staff may force some parts of the fair to "close temporarily for deep cleaning and sanitization," without elaborating on the scope or the location of the infections.



Lebanon's prime minister said yesterday that his government's talks with the International Monetary Fund are inching closer to a "final formula" for a draft on an agreement before the end of February. Najib Mikati said the Cabinet was doing "its homework" ahead of talks with the IMF in mid-January. An IMF delegation will visit Lebanon again in late January or early February to lay out "the final formula for the agreement with them and then we will announce to the Lebanese where we stand," Mikati said.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said yesterday he is not opposed to a "good" nuclear deal between Iran and world powers, but voiced skepticism that such an outcome would emerge from the current negotiations. Bennett spoke a day after negotiators from Iran and five world powers resumed talks in Vienna on restoring Tehran's tattered 2015 nuclear deal. He reiterated that Israel was not bound by any accord, leaving it room to maneuver militarily.

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X'MAS BONUS

Tourists flood the city and its shopping malls in record numbers during season holidays

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CHINA
ADVERTISEMENTS DRAW FLAK OVER ASIAN STEREOTYPES

AP PHOTO



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GBA

LAWMAKERS-ELECT VOW TO ENHANCE HONG KONG'S SOUND GOVERNANCE

XINHUA INTERVIEW

AS the commencement date of Jan. 1, 2022 approaches for the seventh-term Legislative Council (LegCo) of China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), lawmakers-elect have vowed to enhance Hong Kong's sound governance at this new starting point.

HKSAR Chief Executive Carrie Lam will administer the oath-taking ceremony for members of the seventh-term LegCo on Jan. 3, 2022.

Lam said earlier she is confident that the seventh-term LegCo can effectively enhance the governance efficiency of the HKSAR.

She hoped to cooperate with the members of the new LegCo to promote Hong Kong's economic development, its integration into the overall development of the country, and improve people's livelihoods, so as to build a better Hong Kong.

Ninety members of the Hong Kong legislature, elected by the Election Committee constituency, the functional constituencies, and the geographical constituencies, are ready to get down to business. Xinhua interviewed several lawmakers-elect with different backgrounds to learn about their vision and plans.



Carrie Lam is confident that the seventh-term LegCo can effectively enhance the governance efficiency of the HKSAR

PROBLEM SOLVER

Zhang Xinyu won a seat from the New Territories North geographical constituency without any experience in politics. Born and raised in the Chinese mainland, Zhang finished higher education and developed his career in Hong Kong. He is a station manager of public transport operator MTR Corporation.

Zhang, known as being pragmatic and solution-oriented, believed that Hong Kong residents who are tired of the vicious political battles in the past have voted for the interests of the whole society and the development of the next generation in the seventh-term LegCo election on Dec. 19.

As a directly elected LegCo member, Zhang pledges to bring the voices of New Territories North voters into the new LegCo and actively promote the development of the region. Issues over the construction of the Northern Metropolis are among his top concerns.

According to the 2021 policy address by Carrie Lam, Hong Kong will develop a new metropolis in its northern part, which adjoins the boomtown of Shenzhen in neighboring Guangdong Province, to accommodate 2.5 million people and better integrate the financial hub into the overall development of the country.

It is hoped that policy resources will be tilted towards the New Territories North to make up for the gaps in local infrastructure development. Zhang said he looks forward to establishing a mutually beneficial relationship between land release, housing, and industrial development and the well-being of local residents.

SUPER-CONNECTOR

Under Hong Kong's improved electoral system, a new functional constituency has been created for the LegCo election. The name of the group is HKSAR deputies to the National People's Congress (NPC), HKSAR members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and representatives of relevant national organizations.

Chan Yung has served two terms as an HKSAR deputy to the NPC, China's top legislature. He won the only seat from the new constituency and wants to serve as a super-connector between central authorities' policies and Hong Kong residents.

To that end, he said he wants to better expound and explain the central government's overall planning and favorable policies for Hong Kong to the LegCo and local communities.

Chan also looks forward to serving as a bridge between the expectations of Hong Kong residents and the central authorities, and facilitating communication between Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland.

Only by taking the initiative to fully integrate into the overall development of the country can Hong Kong gain better development opportunities, he said.

DEVELOPMENT BOOSTER

Ophthalmologist Lam Shun-chiu won a seat in the Election Committee constituency. He said he is happy to have the opportunity to serve Hong Kong and the country, but at the same time he also felt a heavy responsibility.

He said he would conduct in-depth discussions in the LegCo on issues such as housing, wealth gap, healthcare, and integration into the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

"The Greater Bay Area will certainly take off in the future; Hong Kong must be integrated into the area and the overall national development," said Lam, who began tapping into the regional opportunities to grow his business in 2013.

The lawmaker-elect said he wants to serve as an example of success in leveraging the Greater Bay Area to encourage more Hong Kong residents to prosper in mainland cities of the area.

"I am very confident that the new LegCo will promote good governance and open a new page in the history of the HKSAR," he said. XINHUA

Telecommunications, antique cars: Coutinho seeks answers from gov't

RENATO MARQUES

LAWMAKER José Pereira Coutinho has criticized the gov't for delays in establishing the so-called "convergence license for telecommunications," which will allow competitors to enter in the market which has been monopolized by local telecommunications company, CTM.

The lawmaker accuses the government of stalling the inevitable process of establishing the conver-



gence license that would allow other players to join the market and use public assets. The delay benefits CTM by preserving a com-

munications monopoly that has lasted for decades.

Coutinho is demanding answers from the government on the reason for the

constant delays in the implementation of the convergence license, which would become the basis for the establishment of the future 5G network.

In a separate inquiry delivered to the Legislative Assembly on Monday, the same lawmaker called on the government to implement a special regime to manage the antique and historical motorized vehicles. Coutinho argues that vehicles of antique and historical value in Macau

are a potential advantage in the economic diversification of the city. He is calling for a special regime for the registration and issuing of license plates, and for the regular vehicle inspections to fill the current "legal vacuum."

Under the proposed regime, the lawmaker also calls on the government to establish exemptions for the payment of road tax and other benefits for all vehicles older than 20 years which do not travel more than 500 kilometers per year.

Pereira Coutinho noted the historical value as well as the attraction for tourists that such vehicles have through their appearance

in exhibitions, parades, and events.

In Macau, there are several groups interested in antique vehicles, of which Macau Vintage Vehicle Culture Association (MVV) is one of the most active, participating in and holding several events annually.

In an interview with the Times, the chairman of the MVV, Eddie Lam said that the association had [at the time] over 100 members aged from their early 20s to their late 70s.

According to Lam, there are over 300 vehicles of historical interest in Macau, some of which are rare or unique in Asia or even worldwide.

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95,000

Christmas weekend sees visitor numbers spike

RENATO MARQUES

THE number of mainland tourists entering Macau over the Christmas holiday weekend reached over 95,000, figures reported by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) show.

According to the local author-

ities, in the three days from December 24 to 26 around 95,000 tourist arrivals were reported, the highest figure being recorded on Christmas Eve when around 40,000 visitors entered Macau.

The following day (Christmas Day) recorded a comparable tourist's entry figure of around

37,000, while the final day of the weekend recorded significantly fewer entries, at only slightly over 18,000.

The total number of border crossings, including entries and exits of visitors, non-resident workers, and local residents, reached a total of 330,000 on December 26, the

same sources reported.

The figures reported by the PSP confirm the trend previously reported by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) that over 40,000 people had entered Macau on one single day (December 24) making it one of the highest single-day entries of the whole year.

With the border restrictions currently in force, no foreign tourists may enter the city: only mainland arrivals are permitted.

Recent MGTO figures show that although 2021 has seen weak visitor numbers, it still registered a significant increase from 2020.

In the third quarter (Q3) this year total visitor arrivals reached 1,827,699; almost a 2.5-fold increase from the same quarter in 2020 (around 750,000).

Still, this figure is a long way from the almost 10 million registered during Q3 in 2019, before the Covid-19 pandemic.

So far, the highest number of tourist arrivals this year was recorded in the second quarter (April to June) which saw almost 2.2 million visitors to the city.

From the results recorded so far, it is estimated that the year will close with a total number of visitor arrivals at around 8 million: over 2 million more than in 2020 (25%) and around 80% less than in 2019.

ANOTHER RETURNEE POSITIVE FOR SARS-COV-2

A 62-year-old man who returned home from Los Angeles on December 27 has tested positive for the coronavirus at the airport upon his arrival. The patient received three doses of the Moderna mRNA vaccine in February, March and November. The man tested negative as he boarded Singapore Airlines flight 37 on December 25 for the first leg of his flight home. He was seated in 62E. Two days later, he took seat 20A on flight TR904 from Singapore to Macau. The case has not contributed to the local tally, as it is considered an imported case. Two days before this returnee's arrival, another returnee, also coming from the US, tested positive for the Omicron variant.

XI'AN RECORDS 175 LOCAL INFECTIONS

The mainland city of Xi'an recorded 175 local coronavirus infections yesterday, as it grapples with a coronavirus outbreak that has pushed China's daily cases to record highs since early last year. The 175 infections reported in Xi'an, in the northwestern Shaanxi province, were up from 162 on Sunday, and 158 the day before, according to a government notice issued yesterday. Authorities blame the outbreak on the Delta variant. Authorities have locked down 13 million residents in Xi'an amid the rise in infections as they attempt to curb the spread.

AD

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MACAO WATER OFFERS INTERNSHIPS AT MACAO SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Internship positions have recently been offered by Macao Water to trainees at the Macao Special Olympics (MSO). The interns were trained to make "coffee art" lattes, as well as tea and snacks at Macao Water's dining room for team members. 50 trainees participated in the internship workshop. The water supplier revealed that the trainees may have the chance to be hired by tea shops in Macau. Macao Water has also introduced an "alternative text" function on its social media platforms since October to allow the visually-challenged to understand the pictures posted on the forums.

WASTE COOKING OIL COULD BE RECYCLED

An environmental protection enterprise has suggested that around 50 tons of waste cooking oil could be recycled every month, TDM reported. After processing and refining, the waste oil might be turned into diesel for vehicles, which in turn could help reduce pollution and carbon emissions. The waste oil could also be recycled into soaps and other industrial products. The environmental protection company suggests that Macau strengthen its recycling chain, aiming to begin reducing net carbon emissions before 2030.

EIGHT WORKPLACE FATALITIES RECORDED IN FIRST 9 MONTHS OF 2021

STAFF REPORTER

ACCORDING to the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL), eight work accident deaths were recorded in the first nine months of 2021, one involving a violation of occupational health and safety laws.

The Macau Construction Safety Association has voiced concerns that the pandemic might be affecting workers' daily routines and work patterns, which might have led to the increase in industrial accidents. "I hope that workers pay attention, because the workers are in the front line. If they notice or find out that there are hidden dangers to work safety, they should refuse to work, and provide the opinions to the employees and superior safety management personnel" said Lei Ka Chi, president of the Macau Construction Safety Association.

Regarding workplace accident compensations, one lawyer, Ho Kam Meng, has pointed out that in past cases insurance companies have

PHOTO ARCHIVE



considered the safety awareness of the worker involved, when performing their duties, which has in turn affected the final amount of compensation awarded.

Ho commented that the compensation standard distinguishes whether the worker harmed themselves due to

personal negligence, in which case the compensation would be at a lower rate. "The insurance company would determine whether there would be a decrease in the compensation amount according to the worker's behavior, and whether or not he needs to bear the responsibility of his injuries due

to his own negligence. There may be some doubts in terms of this," said Ho. Ho also believes that a majority of work accidents are due to the workers' or employers' carelessness, and suggests that the government campaign for greater awareness of occupational and industrial safety.

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

RENATO MARQUES

Two bodies found on shore, suicide suspected

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) have reported two similar cases of dead bodies that were found floating near the Macau coastline on December 26 and 27.

The first case was reported at around 4 a.m. on December 26 (Sunday) when the body of a 27-year-old man, a resident of Macau, was found floating in waters close to the Avenida da Amizade opposite the Crowne Plaza Hotel. A passer-by spotted the body and alerted the authorities.

After she had been informed, the mother of the deceased stated that her son had been ill for many years and required long-term medication and regular follow-up visits to the hospital.

She also said that her son had left home on the morning of the previous day and had not returned.

After a preliminary examination, PJ investigators said there were no obvious marks or evidence to indicate the possibility of crime, and classified the case as a body discovery with the cause of death to be determined through a forensic medical examination.

In a separate case reported on the morning of December 27, another body was found

RENATO MARQUES



floating in waters near Macau Tower.

It was Macau Tower staff who

first spotted the corpse and notified the police.

After a preliminary exami-

nation of the body, it was confirmed that the deceased was an adult male and he presented

minor scratches on the upper eyebrows of his left eye. No other suspicious or crime-related injuries were found on the body.

However, a search of the body found the deceased man's Macau resident identity card.

Checking his identity, the PJ also discovered that the deceased's family had reported his disappearance a few hours before the discovery of the body. He was said to live in the Northern District.

Investigators also spoke to the daughter of the deceased who told the police that she had communicated [to authorities] her father's disappearance. She had found him missing from the house that morning, and had discovered a suspicious mobile phone message suggesting that he was planning suicide. The deceased was a 67-year-old local resident.

The case has been classified the "discovery of a body," with the cause of death to be determined through a forensic medical examination.

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) encourages residents to be aware of their psychological and emotional state, as well as those of their relatives and friends. Residents can call Caritas' Life Hope hotline (28525222) or IAS' counseling hotline (28261126).

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DIPLOMACY

NICARAGUA SEIZES FORMER TAIWAN EMBASSY TO GIVE IT TO CHINA

THE Nicaraguan government has seized the former embassy and diplomatic offices of Taiwan, saying they belong to China.

President Daniel Ortega's government broke off relations with Taiwan this month, saying it would recognize only the mainland government.

Before departing, Taiwanese diplomats attempted to donate the properties to the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Managua.

But Ortega's government said earlier this week that any such donation would be invalid and that the building in an upscale Managua neighborhood belongs to China.

The Attorney General's Office said in a statement that the attempted donation was a "maneuver and subterfuge to take what doesn't belong to them."

Taiwan's Foreign Relations Ministry condemned the "gravely illegal actions of the Ortega regime," saying the Nicaraguan government had violated standard procedures by giving Taiwanese diplomats just two weeks to get out of the country.

It said Taiwan "also condemns the arbitrary obstruction by the Nicaraguan government of the symbolic sale of its property to the Nicaraguan Catholic church."



The President of Nicaragua Daniel Ortega attends the closing ceremony of the XX ALBA Summit, at the Convention Palace in Havana earlier this month

Msgr. Carlos Avilés, vicar of the archdiocese of Managua, told the La Prensa newspaper that a Taiwanese diplomat had offered the church the property, saying, "I told him there was no problem, but the transfer was

still in the legal process."

The Central American country said in early December it would officially recognize only China, which claims self-ruled Taiwan as part of its territory.

"There is only one China," the

Nicaraguan government said in a statement announcing the change. "The People's Republic of China is the only legitimate government that represents all China, and Taiwan is an inalienable part of the Chinese territory."

The move increased Taiwan's diplomatic isolation on the international stage, even as the island has stepped up official exchanges with countries such as Lithuania and Slovakia, which do not formally recognize Taiwan as a country. Now, Taiwan has 14 formal diplomatic allies remaining.

China has been poaching Taiwan's diplomatic allies over the past few years, reducing the number of countries that recognize the democratic island as a sovereign nation. China is against Taiwan representing itself in global forums or in diplomacy. The Solomon Islands chose to recognize China in 2019, cutting diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

Taiwan depicts itself as a defender of democracy, while Ortega was reelected in November in what the White House called a "pantomime election."

"The arbitrary imprisonment of nearly 40 opposition figures since May, including seven potential presidential candidates, and the blocking of political parties from participation rigged the outcome well before election day," U.S. President Joe Biden said in a statement in November.

Nicaragua established diplomatic relations with Taiwan in the 1990s, when President Violeta Chamorro assumed power after defeating Ortega's Sandinista movement at the polls. Ortega, who was elected back to power in 2007, had maintained ties with Taipei until now. **MDT/AP**

Advertisements draw flak over Asian stereotypes

ADVERTISEMENTS featuring some Chinese models have sparked feuding in China over whether their appearance and makeup are perpetuating harmful stereotypes of Asians.

German automaker Mercedes-Benz and a Chinese food company are the latest to get caught up in the fray.

Some Chinese consumers complained after the local snack brand Three Squirrels featured advertisements for noodle products on its Weibo microblogging account showing a Chinese model with eyes they said looked slanted. Critics accused the company of spreading Western stereotypes.

Mercedes Benz also was attacked by some Chinese online who accused it of using a model with "slanted eyes" in its advertisements on Weibo. The company did not immediately res-



pond to requests for comment.

The "slanted eyes" stereotype emerged in the West in the 19th century and is considered offensive and derogatory to Asians.

The latest backlash over advertisements followed one over luxury brand Dior,

which apologized and withdrew a photo at an art exhibition showing an Asian model with freckles and very dark makeup clutching a Dior handbag. In response to criticism in China, the company said that it "respects the feelings of the Chinese people."

Three Squirrels said in a post Saturday on its official Weibo account that it did not intend to portray a Chinese person in a bad light. The advertisement was shot in 2019, the company said in a statement. The model is Chinese and the makeup style was designed

to suit her natural features, it said.

"In response to the feedback from netizens that the model's makeup does not conform to publicly-accepted aesthetics standards and caused discomfort, our company apologizes," the statement read.

"The page has been replaced and arrangements have been made to check other company pages to ensure that this situation will not happen again."

Online, Chinese internet users have criticized the selection of models and makeup styles to deliberately portray the "slanted eyes" image.

One user with the handle MaoBuErXiong said that such slanted eyes imagery is derogatory and is deeply embedded in the fashion industry, with Asian models and their makeup styles often se-

lected to fit a stereotype.

The model featured in the Three Squirrels advertisements has spoken out against the criticism.

"Just because my eyes are small, I'm not good enough to be a Chinese person? I don't know what to say to these comments ... I'm really helpless," the model said in a Weibo post under the handle Cai Niangniang.

"As a professional model, what I need to do is be photographed accordingly to what the client wants, I don't know how this became about me humiliating the Chinese people," she said.

The communist party newspaper Global Times said Cai's response drew more than 330 million views.

"I hope people online would stop messaging me with personal attacks. I'm not a supermodel nor am I a public figure, I'm just someone who loves my motherland and a law-abiding citizen." **MDT/AP**

NORTH KOREA

Workers' Party holds key meeting as Kim marks 10 years in power

HYUNG-JIN KIM,
SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

NORTH Korea opened a key political conference Monday to review past projects and discuss new policies amid the pandemic and a diplomatic deadlock with the United States.

The official Korean Central News Agency said yesterday that leader Kim Jong Un presided over a plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the ruling Workers' Party. The report did not carry any remarks by Kim.

The meeting approved unspecified agenda items and went into the discussions of them, KCNA said.

The report said the meeting would review major policies this year and decide on "the strategic and tactical policies and practical tasks for dynamically guiding the struggle of our party and people to usher in a new period of the development of socialist cons-



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, Kim Jong Un (center) attends a meeting of the Central Committee of the ruling Workers' Party in Pyongyang on Monday

truction to the next stage of victory."

The plenary meeting is one of the highest-level decision-making bodies in North Korea. Kim has previously used plenary meetings to announce his positions on relations with the United States and South Korea or his country's nuclear program.

It's not known how long this week's meeting may last. In 2019, a plenary meeting was held

for four days.

The meeting comes as Kim is marking 10 years in power. Since his father and longtime ruler Kim Jong Il's death in December 2011, Kim Jong Un has established absolute power at home and fortified North Korea's nuclear and missile arsenals. The economy has been devastated by the coronavirus pandemic, U.N. sanctions and mismanagement, but few experts still question

his grip on power.

After a torrid run of nuclear and missile tests in 2016-17, Kim Jong Un participated in a series of landmark summit talks with then-President Donald Trump to discuss the future of his weapons arsenals. Those talks collapsed in 2019 over disputes about how much sanctions relief North Korea would get in return for steps toward partial denuclearization. **MDT/AP**

INDONESIA

POLICE ARREST FIVE PEOPLE IN METHAMPHETAMINE SMUGGLING

FIVE people suspected of smuggling 29 kilograms of methamphetamine into Indonesia from Malaysia have been arrested, Indonesian police said yesterday.

The five are part of an international drug smuggling network and include a Malaysian citizen, Central Sulawesi Police Chief Rudy Sufahriadi said at a news conference.

An initial suspect, who was arrested Saturday, told police where the methamphetamine was hidden, and said it originated in China and was smuggled from Malaysia's Sabah state to Central Sulawesi on a fishing boat, Sufahriadi said.



Further investigation after his arrest led to the arrests of four other people suspected of involvement in the smuggling, Sufahriadi said.

Police also seized a

fishing boat, five cellphones and a gun from the suspects.

They face a possible death penalty if found guilty of drug smuggling under Indonesia's Narco-

tics Law, among the world's strictest.

Over the past two decades, easily manufactured methamphetamine has replaced opium and heroin as the dominant illegal drug in the region.

Methamphetamine is smuggled across much of Southeast Asia, China and Australia, part of a multi-billion-dollar illegal trade in the drug.

The Golden Triangle, a remote jungle area where the borders of Myanmar, Laos and Thailand meet, was once a major source of the world's opium and heroin. In recent years it has become a major source of methamphetamine.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime said late last year that the value of the methamphetamine market in Asia is more than \$60 billion. **MDT/AP**

INDIA

Authorities block foreign funds for Mother Teresa's charity

INDIA'S government has blocked Mother Teresa's charity from receiving foreign funds, saying the Catholic organization did not meet conditions under local laws, dealing a blow to one of the most prominent groups running shelters for the poor.

The Home Ministry said a statement yesterday [Macau time] that the Missionaries of Charity's application for renewing a license that allows it to get funds from abroad was rejected on Christmas.

The ministry said it came across "adverse inputs" while considering the charity's renewal application. It did not elaborate.

Its troubles come in the wake of a string of attacks on Christians in some parts of India by Hindu right-wing groups, who accuse pastors and churches of forced conversions. The attacks have especially been prominent in the southern state of Karnataka, which has seen nearly 40 cases of threats or violence against Christians this year, according to a report from the Evangelical Fellowship of India.

Earlier on Monday, the chief minister of West Bengal state, Mamata Banerjee, sparked outrage when she tweeted that the government had frozen the bank accounts of the charity. But the government soon clarified that it had not frozen any accounts.

The charity confirmed in a statement that the go-

vernment had not frozen its accounts but added that its Foreign Contribution Regulation Act renewal application had not been approved.

"Therefore ... we have asked our centers not to operate any of the (foreign contribution) accounts until the matter is resolved," it said.

Earlier this month, the Missionaries of Charity, which Mother Teresa started in Kolkata in 1950, found itself under investigation in the western state of Gujarat following complaints that girls in its shelters were forced to read the Bible and recite Christian prayers. The charity has denied the allegations.

The charity runs hundreds of shelters that care for some of the world's neediest people who Mother Teresa had described as "the poorest of the poor."

India is home to the second largest Catholic population in Asia after the Philippines, but the roughly 18 million Catholics represent a small minority in the largely Hindu nation of nearly 1.4 billion. Critics say religious tensions have grown under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government, with more frequent attacks against minorities.

Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize for her work in 1979, and Pope Francis declared her a saint in 2017, two decades after her death. **MDT/AP**



Homeless people gather beside a portrait of Saint Teresa, the founder of the Missionaries of Charity, to collect free food outside the order's headquarters in Kolkata

ISRAEL

Hard-hit by Covid, ultra-Orthodox slow to get shots

TIA GOLDENBERG,
BNEI BRAK

YOSSEI Levy has repeatedly booked and canceled his coronavirus vaccine appointment. The 45-year-old ultra-Orthodox Jew recovered from the virus earlier this year, as have his eight children and wife. But a combination of lethargy and procrastination has prevented him from following through and getting inoculated.

"It isn't something pressing. I'm not opposed to it. It's just laziness," he said.

Levy is among the hundreds of thousands of ultra-Orthodox Jews who have yet to receive their COVID-19 shots. The group has some of the lowest vaccination rates in the country despite being hit hard by the pandemic.

Facing the new coronavirus variant omicron, officials are now scrambling to ramp up vaccination rates in a population that has so far been slow to roll up their sleeves.

"We are going on the offensive with the issue of vaccinations," said Avraham Rubinstein, the mayor of Bnei Brak, the country's largest ultra-Orthodox city.

It has been one year since COVID-19 vaccines became available, yet vaccine reluctance persists even as deaths mount and the highly contagious omicron variant spreads around the globe. An unconventional cadre of people has stepped up to promote vaccination with efforts that traditionally have been the realm of public health officials.

Israeli officials have appealed to the community's prominent rabbis, who serve as arbiters on all matters, to promote vaccination. They are deploying mobile clinics. And they are beating back a wave of lies about the vaccine that has washed over parts of the community.

The vaccination rate is low in part because half of the ultra-Orthodox population is under 16 and only recently made eligible for vaccination. Also, many

AP PHOTO



ultra-Orthodox were already infected or believe they were and don't think they need the vaccine.

The outreach effort has had mixed success. Officials hope to raise the vaccination rate with a new mobile-clinic campaign at religious schools and a media blitz stepping up pressure on parents to vaccinate children.

Israel was one of the first countries to vaccinate its population late last year and the first to give booster shots. But the campaign has lagged in recent weeks and hundreds of thousands of people remain unvaccinated or without a booster as the specter of an omicron surge looms.

While vaccination rates for the second dose among the general population hover around 63% and the booster at 45%, in the ultra-Orthodox community the number is around half of that. The community's immunity shoots up somewhat when the 300,000 or so of those who are known to have recovered are included, but Israel's Health Ministry recommends those who were infected to get at least one shot if six months have elapsed since the infection.

The low vaccination rate stands in stark contrast to the heavy price the community paid during the pandemic. The ultra-Orthodox were hit hard from the start, with the commu-

nity's 1.2 million people often leading the country's morbidity rates and losing hundreds to the disease. The ultra-Orthodox make up 13% of Israel's 9.3 million population.

There are societal reasons for the quick community spread. The ultra-Orthodox tend to live in poor, crowded neighborhoods, with large families in small apartments, where sickness can quickly spread. Synagogues, the centerpiece of social life, bring men together to pray and socialize in small spaces.

The particular way of life of the ultra-Orthodox, also known as Haredim, has made driving up vaccination rates a unique challenge for health officials.

The cloistered community has long been separate from mainstream Israeli life, with children studying scripture but very little math and English. The community typically shuns the internet, doesn't watch secular TV and tends to live separately from non-religious Israelis. It is suspicious of secular state authorities and many of the trappings of modernity.

"For Haredim, there is a double fear: fear of the state and fear of science. There is no basic trust in these entities," said Gilad Malach, who heads the ultra-Orthodox program at the Israel Democracy Institute, a Jerusalem think tank. He

said that skepticism has allowed unfounded claims about the vaccines to spread in the community.

Avi Blumenthal, an adviser to the Health Ministry on the ultra-Orthodox, said vaccine information is disseminated to the ultra-Orthodox public through its local media as well as in biweekly messages posted on community notice boards, known as "pashkevils." He says these means reach the overwhelming majority of Haredim.

The ultra-Orthodox follow a strict interpretation of Judaism and rely on rabbis to guide them in many life decisions. While some rabbis have actively encouraged vaccination, others have taken a less aggressive approach and their followers have been less enthusiastic about getting inoculated.

Blumenthal, who himself is ultra-Orthodox, said the Health Ministry recently held a conference at the country's largest hospital, inviting prominent rabbis to converse with doctors about the importance of the vaccine. The head of the government's coronavirus advisory panel has repeatedly met with important religious figures, urging them to spread the word on vaccines.

"We go by the Jewish sages," said Dvora Ber, 27, a Bnei Brak resident and mother of four who is vaccinated. "What they tell us, we do." **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1975 NEW LAWS TO END BATTLE OF THE SEXES



Radical new legislation introducing a woman's right to equal pay and status in the workplace and in society have come into force in the UK.

The Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts will prevent women being paid less than their male counterparts. The Acts are being introduced to coincide with the end of the International Women's Year.

Sex discrimination by employers, unless they employ five or fewer people, is now illegal as is any form of bias by landlords, finance companies, schools and restaurants.

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has been set up, and under the Act it has a duty to promote equality of the sexes.

Job advertisements will now have to be sexless and it will no longer be possible to offer a position exclusively for males or females.

In every day language there will be many changes for example, such as "firemen" becoming "fire fighters".

The impact of the Acts is far-reaching and affects the media and education.

The EOC has begun issuing guidelines to discourage advertisers showing women in stereotypical roles of domesticity or in submissive work.

But with no means of enforcing this there have been criticisms the organisation is toothless, although many advertisers have taken heed and plan to be more representative.

The Inner London Education Authority is already considering the replacement of "sexist" reading material which uphold stereotypes, for example a woman in the kitchen and a man at work.

These are currently not barred by the Acts but in a booklet sent to 13,000 head teachers, managers and governors of schools the authority recommends "myths and taboos" should be tackled.

Advisory panels of teachers are also considering lobbying authorities to make mathematics compulsory up to the fifth year in a move designed to help girls.

But the most poorly-paid women are unlikely to gain a lot from the new legislation the Low Pay Unit said in a report yesterday.

Despite the gradual introduction of equal pay until its final implementation today women's earnings have risen to only 55.5% of men's earnings from 51.1% in 1972.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Sex Discrimination Act is applicable to men, women, and children of any age and also prohibits discrimination against someone who is or is not married.

The Act came as a culture shock to many in a society where some venues still barred women.

Some employers attempted to circumvent the Equal Pay Act by changing women's job descriptions or employing women for roles in which there was no male equivalent position.

But they faced fierce resistance from the authorities. Many commentators said the combined Acts were too radical to introduce at once and public attitudes would need to change before they were readily implemented and this would take time.

Twenty five years after its implementation a survey showed the Acts had helped close the pay difference in the gender gap from 40% less than male counterparts, to 20%.

YOUR STARS

ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Try to ease any disappointment by making amends. Opportunities to pamper yourself may unfold. Overindulgence will mean poor health.

TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20
Look into intellectual and physical games that will test your abilities. Use some diplomacy to get your point across delicately.

GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21
This is a turning point. Get involved in sports events that will benefit your physical appearance. You may have difficulties while traveling or problems dealing with close friends or relatives.

CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22
You will be up and down emotionally. Join a club to work off that excess energy; but consider ways of doing that without spending the money. The only thing you'll accomplish is a bad reputation.

LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Don't overextend yourself in the process. You will inspire confidence in others. Changes regarding family members will set you off. Use your genuine warmth and compassion to win hearts.

VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22
You can accomplish the most if you travel for business purposes. You might have some problems balancing your books. Romance will unfold if you take trips or get together with friends.

LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22
You may want to invest in something that will grow in value. Your ability to see other people's points of view will allow you to come to reasonable agreements.

SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21
You can make money through your creative efforts. Some time spent with that special someone should be your intent. Get back into a routine that promises a better looking, more aware individual.

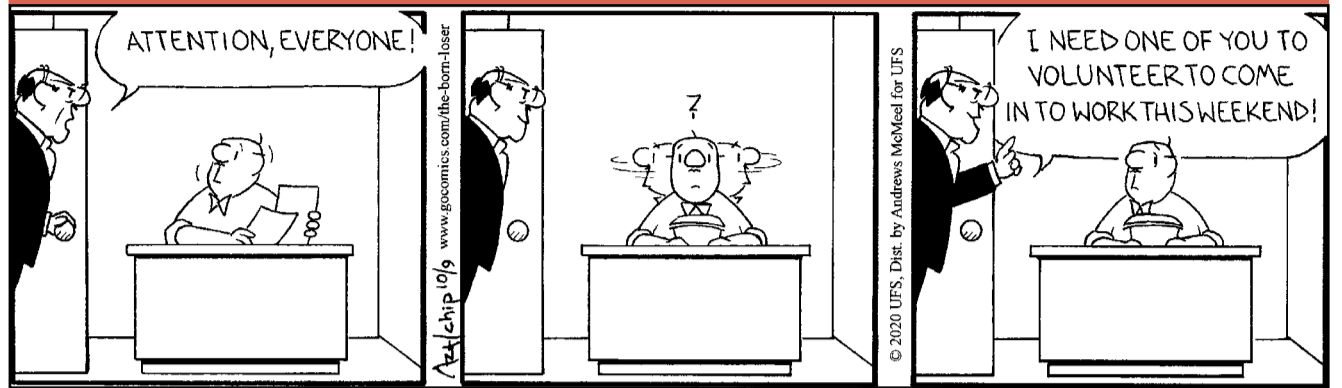
SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Don't be too quick to blame others for your bad mood. Social activity should be on your agenda. You're apt to make a move or experience changes at home.

CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Deceit around you is evident. Use your intellectual approach to get the best results. You may find that others do not do things the way you want; however, if the job gets done, let it pass.

AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Ask those in key positions to help you overcome the delays and to support your concerns in order to move on. Problems with your boss could lead to unemployment.

PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Don't blow situations out of proportion or you could find that others will misinterpret what really happened. You may have difficulties with someone close to you. It may be a disappointing day emotionally.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

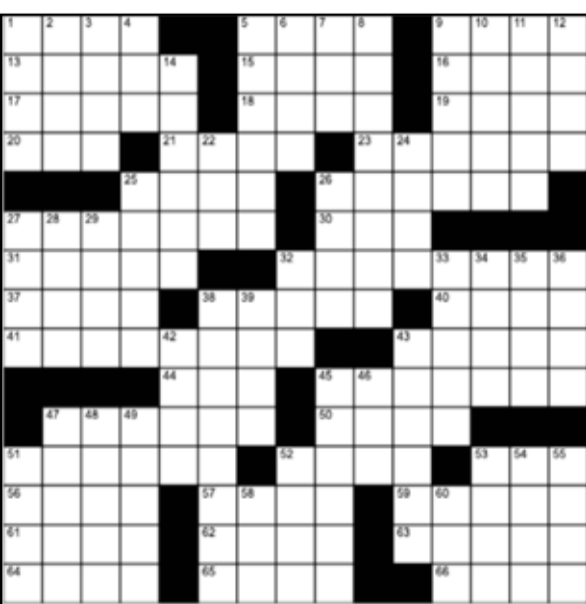
WEATHER

	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- Poker pot starter; 5- Garbage boat; 9- When Hamlet dies; 13- Perch; 15- Word in many college names; 16- Delhi wrap; 17- Instruct; 18- Prefix with meter; 19- Muse of history; 20- Antiquity, old-style; 21- Super Bowl XXXIV champs; 23- Journey; 25- Sterile hybrid; 26- Pager; 27- Craftsperson; 30- Bar order; 31- Hit back, perhaps; 32- An amorous glance; 37- Code word for A; 38- Confiscate; 40- ___ impasse; 41- Fictitious; 43- Garlic sauce; 44- Acapulco article; 45- Hasty; 47- Seek ambitiously; 50- Raw materials; 51- Zealot; 52- Russian pancake; 53- Monopoly quartet; Abbr.; 56- Unwritten; 57- Attention; 59- Concerning; 61- Raced; 62- Biblical birthright seller; 63- Move sideways; 64- Till bills; 65- Enlist again; 66- "It's ___ real";

DOWN 1- Commedia dell'___; 2- Christmas song; 3- Tailless amphibian; 4- Computer key; 5- Pollen producer; 6- Collectible frames; 7- Fall mo.; 8- Fib; 9- Tin Pan Alley org.; 10- Have a cow?; 11- Judge, e.g.; 12- Six-stringed instrument; 14- Shove; 22- According to; 24- Winder for holding flexible material; 25- Book after Jonah; 26- Folk singer Joan; 27- Composer Khachaturian; 28- Depend; 29- 27th president of the U.S.; 32- Wildcatter's find; 33- Dens; 34- Yours, in Tours; 35- Roy's "singin' pardner"; 36- Geraint's lady; 38- Very hot day; 39- Effortlessness; 42- Hip bones; 43- Places of contest; 45- Robbery at gunpoint; 46- "Mentalist" Geller; 47- Biblical brother; 48- Capture; 49- Heaps; 51- Marquand sleuth; 52- Boyfriend; 53- Sat on the back of a horse; 54- Dominion; 55- Anna of "Nana"; 58- Compass pt.; 60- Front part of an apron;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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Hellene Gardens HKD 7,680,000
Ref: 2109 6001 1,663 ft² 3 2 1

A MATTER OF CHIPS

CHINA PURSUES TECH 'SELF-RELIANCE', FUELING GLOBAL UNEASE

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

To help make China a self-reliant "technology superpower," the ruling Communist Party is pushing the world's biggest e-commerce company to take on the tricky, expensive business of designing its own processor chips — a business unlike anything Alibaba Group has done before.

Its 3-year-old chip unit, T-Head, unveiled its third processor in October, the Yitian 710 for Alibaba's cloud computing business. Alibaba says for now, it has no plans to sell the chip to outsiders.

Other rookie chip developers including Tencent, a games and social media giant, and smartphone brand Xiaomi are pledging billions of dollars in line with official plans to create computing, clean energy and other technology that can build China's wealth and global influence.

Processor chips play an increasingly critical role in products from smartphones and cars to medical devices and home appliances. Shortages due to the coronavirus pandemic are disrupting global manufacturing and adding to worries about supplies.

Chips are a top priority in the ruling Communist Party's marathon campaign to end China's reliance on technology from the United States, Japan and other suppliers Beijing sees as potential economic and strategic rivals. If it succeeds, business and political leaders warn that might slow down innovation, disrupt global trade and make the world poorer.



AP PHOTO

"Self-reliance is the foundation for the Chinese nation," President Xi Jinping said in a speech released in March. He called for China to become a "technology superpower" to safeguard "national economic security."

"We must strive to become the world's main center of science and the high ground of innovation," Xi said.

Beijing might be chasing a costly disappointment. Even with huge official investments, businesspeople and analysts say chipmakers and other companies will struggle to compete if they detach from global suppliers of advanced components and technology — a goal no other country is pursuing.

"It's hard to imagine any one country rebuilding all of that

and having the best technology," said Peter Hanbury, who follows the industry for Bain & Co.

Beijing's campaign is adding to tension with Washington and Europe, which see China as a strategic competitor and complain it steals technology. They limit access to tools needed to improve its industries.

If the world were to decouple, or split into markets with incompatible standards and products, U.S.- or European-made parts might not work in Chinese computers or cars. Smartphone makers who have a single dominant global operating system and two network standards might need to make unique versions for different markets. That could slow down development.

Washington and Beijing need to "avoid that the world becomes

separated," U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told The Associated Press in September.

China's factories assemble the world's smartphones and tablet computers but need components from the United States, Europe, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. Chips are China's biggest import, ahead of crude oil, at more than \$300 billion last year.

Official urgency over that grew after Huawei Technologies Ltd., China's first global tech brand, lost access to U.S. chips and other technology in 2018 under sanctions imposed by the White House.

That crippled the telecom equipment maker's ambition to be a leader in next-generation smartphones. American officials say Huawei is a security risk and might aid Chinese spying, an accusation the company denies.

Huawei and some Chinese rivals are close to matching Intel Corp., Qualcomm Inc., South Korea's Samsung Electronics and Britain's Arm Ltd. at being able to design "bleeding edge" logic chips for smartphones, according to industry analysts.

But when it comes to making them, foundries such as state-owned SMIC in Shanghai are up to a decade behind industry leaders including TSMC, or Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp., which produces chips for Apple Inc. and other global brands.

Even companies such as Alibaba that can design chips likely will need Taiwanese or other foreign foundries to make them. Alibaba's Yitian 710 requires precision no Chinese foundry can achieve. The company declined

to say which foreign producer it will use.

"My country still faces a big gap in chip technology," said industry analyst Liu Chuntian of Zero Power Intelligence Group.

China accounts for 23% of global chip production capacity but only 7.6% of sales.

Packing millions of transistors onto a fingernail-size sliver of silicon requires some 1,500 steps, microscopic precision and arcane technologies owned by a handful of U.S., European, Japanese and other suppliers.

They include KLA Corp. in California for super-precise measurement and Japan's TEL for machines to apply coatings a few molecules thick. Many are covered by restrictions on "dual use" technologies that can be used in weapons.

China "lags significantly" in tools, materials and production technology, the Semiconductor Industry Association said in a report this year.

Washington and Europe, citing security worries, block access to the most advanced tools Chinese chipmakers need to match global leaders in precision and efficiency.

Without those, China is falling farther behind, said Bain's Hanbury.

"The TSMC horse is sprinting away and the Chinese horse is stopped," he said. "They can't move forward."

Washington stepped up pressure on Huawei last year by banning global foundries from using American technology to produce its chips. U.S. vendors can sell chips to the company, but not for next-generation "5G" smartphones.

For its part, the European Union said it will review foreign investments after complaints China was eroding Europe's technology lead by purchasing important assets such as German robot maker Kuka. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Melco helps local SMEs earn MOP8M during pandemic



Melco Resorts & Entertainment has provided the opportunity for local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to earn more than MOP8-million revenue in 2021 through its Heart of House (employee

area) roadshow series.

The final session this year, the Christmas Bazaar, was held earlier this month, in which participants earned over MOP970,000. The various products on offer included

electronics, food & beverages, clothing & accessories, and shoes. More than 140 local SMEs and NGOs participated in approximately 110 sessions this year, promoting their brands and businesses and selling directly to 16,000 colleagues working at properties including City of Dreams, Studio City and Altira Macau.

Ms. Akiko Takahashi, Executive Vice President and Chief of Staff to Melco Chairman & CEO, said, "We are thrilled that Melco's Heart of House roadshows — offering innovative, additional revenue-generating opportunities for local SMEs to sell and market directly to our colleagues — have been well received once again."

Shun Tak donates grocery products to Fu Hong for charity sale



Up until Christmas, the conglomerate Shun Tak Holdings Limited, has donated a total of 1,000 grocery packs to the Fu Hong Society of Macau to help

support the mentally-challenged, the autistic and recovering psychiatric patients.

Fu Hong's facilities assist clients to search for job

opportunities and reintegrate into society following training or recovery.

The product packs were put on sale at the Happy Market Social Enterprise under Fu Hong's management and operation. Proceeds of the sales will fund initiatives supporting households on welfare and other individuals in need, in order to provide them with financial relief during the current pandemic. Fu Hong will invest any surplus proceeds from the sales in a specific charity campaign for future initiatives.

The Happy Market is intended to expand charity initiatives in Macau in a sustainable and self-supporting manner.

SKIING DIARIES

I'm here to help for mental health, ski advice

LINDSEY VONN

WITH the Winter Olympics less than six weeks away, I'm starting to get excited about ski racing again. You're probably asking, "Shouldn't you always be excited about ski racing?" Well, it's not that straightforward.

When I retired almost three years ago, it wasn't because I was ready to stop racing. It was because my body gave out. My surgically repaired knees couldn't handle the strains of hurling myself down the mountain at 80 mph. For about a year after I retired, I couldn't watch skiing — it was too depressing.

It was difficult to get my mind around retirement. Obviously, I always knew that would happen — every athlete has an end point. But for someone who is always in that "grind" mindset it's not an easy thing to just shut off. So, I tried to set myself up in a way in which I would always have work as soon as I retired from skiing.

After retirement, I took a week for myself and then starting booking events and going to work. I was busier than ever. But just because I had work set



AP PHOTO

Lindsey Vonn (pictured) is the most successful female ski racer of all time with 82 career World Cup victories

up doesn't mean that the transition was easy. It was hard. It was a new routine that wasn't dictated by or around skiing.

From mental trials to physical trials, I had always used skiing as my outlet: No matter what was going on, I could retreat to the mountain. That was my happy place, a sort of meditation, and an escape.

Which is why it was difficult when skiing was no longer there when I retired. I had to find a different way to mentally sort through things. I didn't have the outlet of skiing anymore. I didn't have a "next race" or "next season" to make my comeback. I had to create new goals, with different tangibles and different timelines. It took me a while to

find my place.

Now, I love that I can provide support and feedback for those going through any type of comeback — both mentally and physically. And, I've found a way to connect with skiing (and skiers) on another level.

Before and during last season's world championships in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy, I went over video with Breezy Johnson and tried to help her out in any way I could. I think Breezy has the mental side of it pretty much dialed in. But I know that she knows that I'm always there if she needs me. Same with the other girls on the U.S. team. I've also developed a great relationship with Bella Wright. She's very inquisitive and eager to learn and I love her energy.

Then there's Sofia Goggia, the Italian who is the reigning Olympic champion in downhill. Like me, Sofia has battled back from a ton of injuries in her career. But when she's healthy, there's nobody faster. She's gone through a lot in her life, and I've helped her through quite a bit of it the last couple years. She's a very tough competitor and I think we have a lot of similarities in the way we approach things.

I want to encourage current

and next generation skiers to reach out for help when you need it.

I learned how to deal with a lot of these things on my own. I internalized everything and kept it bottled up. When I was a teenager, mental health wasn't a thing by far, and there was definitely — and still is — a stigma to it. Back then it was like, "Suck it up and bear it." There are so many resources nowadays and good people willing to help. Reach out. I wish I had. There is no reason to feel alone in your struggles.

These days, my biggest challenge is multi-tasking and balancing all my different post-racing commitments. I'm a limited partner and a general partner on two different venture capital funds. I'm an advisor to a few companies. I still represent Under Armour, Rolex and Land Rover. And I'm designing my own ski wear.

So I have a lot going on but there's not as much pressure on me from outside now; it's more pressure that I put on myself. Actually, it's just like when I was racing: The most pressure ever put on me was from myself.

Luckily, I know now that I'm not alone. **MDT/AP**

AD

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BY ALEX TORRÃO

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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

ATTEMPTS TO THROTTLE CHINESE TECH ARE SELF-DEFEATING MIND GAME

As always, the Joe Biden administration has provided no evidence to back its justifications for blacklisting dozens of Chinese entities on Dec 16 on the grounds that they are weaponizing technology.

Craig Singleton, a former US diplomat and an adjunct fellow at a Washington think tank, who is allegedly behind the move, told the media that China's new technology could include "the stuff of science fiction, such as brain-controlled weaponry" that would allow "a Chinese commando to discharge a weapon with just a thought, not a trigger finger".

Which exposes the great lengths Washington is going to in its efforts to whitewash its baseless long-arm jurisdiction.

Thanks to the Biden administration's continual belying of its stated intention to keep the United States' relations with China on a healthy development track, there are about 260 Chinese entities, State-owned and private, on its Entity List, which stretch across almost the whole spectrum of cutting-edge technologies, ranging from quantum communications and 5G to artificial intelligence and robots. The entities on the blacklist include almost all of China's major players in these fields.

That the blacklisted Chinese entities — which consist of institutes, companies, universities and individuals — form almost complete industrial chains for the relevant technologies makes it clear that the US is intent on ensuring China's technology endeavors hit a dead end so as to secure the US' technological supremacy.

But the scale of the industries and technologies in which China seeks excellence, and the extent to which China has already integrated into the world market system mean that for the US to tame China by repeating what it did to subdue Japan and France late last century is almost a mission impossible. Not to mention the close economic and trade connections between the Chinese and US economies.

It is not only because of the direct costs of doing so — breaking the global supply chains and dividing the world market — but also its far-reaching impacts as the institutional foundation for global governance will be undermined paralyzing the collective responses to global challenges.

The protracted COVID-19 pandemic and the foundering global economic recovery, which are both attributable to the US' divisive endeavors, should be a wake-up call to the US decision-makers.

When strategists in Washington are willing to accept science fiction conceits, such as brain-controlled weaponry, as the basis for important decision-making, they cannot objectively shoulder the US' international responsibilities as the world's sole superpower.

And when they become increasingly hysterical in scapegoating, smearing and containing China, and trying to imprison the world in the information cocoons they make, they should feel lucky that China has retained its common sense.

China is not interested in a dogfight, and it is still exercising strategic restraint, and keeping its door open for dialogue and cooperation with the US.

That is by no means because of weakness, but thanks to its foresight and sense of responsibility that, as a major country dedicated to seeking national rejuvenation and promoting common development of the world, it must always stand on the right side of history.

The US has been and will continue to be a paper tiger when it acts against the trend of the times.

US OFFICIALS RECOMMEND SHORTER COVID ISOLATION, QUARANTINE

THE BUZZ

U.S. health officials cut isolation restrictions for asymptomatic Americans who catch the coronavirus from 10 to five days, and similarly shortened the time that close contacts need to quarantine.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention officials said the guidance is in keeping with growing evidence that people with the coronavirus are most infectious in the two days before and three days after symptoms develop.

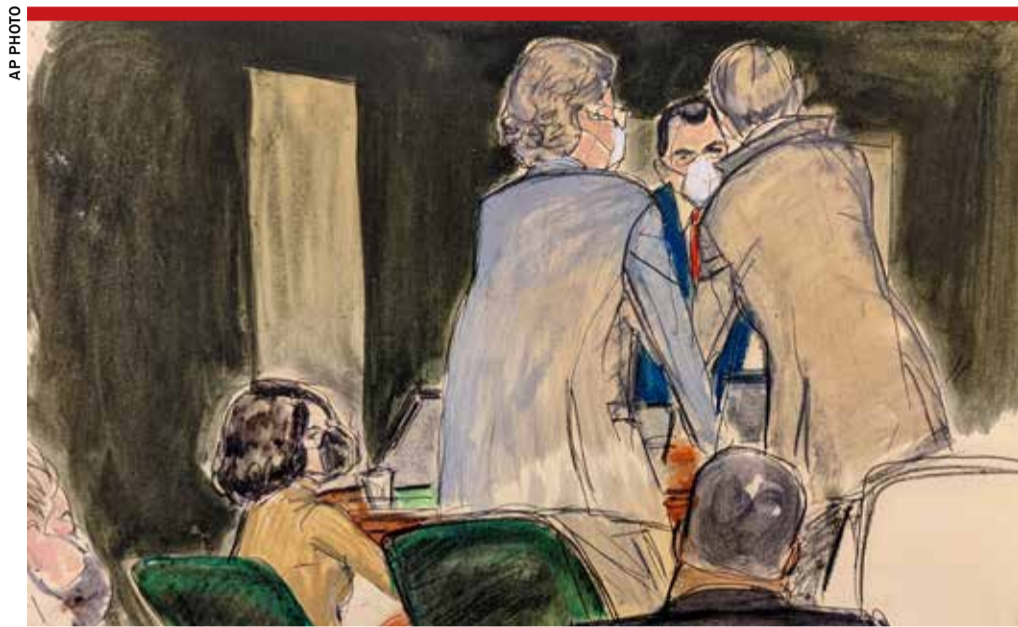
The decision also was driven by a recent surge in COVID-19 cases, propelled by the omicron variant.

Early research suggests omicron may cause milder illnesses than

earlier versions of the coronavirus. But the sheer number of people becoming infected — and therefore having to isolate or quarantine — threatens to crush the ability of hospitals, airlines and other businesses to stay open, experts say.

CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said the country is about to see a lot of omicron cases.

"Not all of those cases are going to be severe. In fact many are going to be asymptomatic," she told AP yesterday. "We want to make sure there is a mechanism by which we can safely continue to keep society functioning while following the science."



In this courtroom sketch, Ghislaine Maxwell (left) wears a court-ordered N95 face mask while her defense team (right) confers

JURY SIGNALS VERDICT NOT NEAR AT GHISLAINE MAXWELL TRIAL

TOM HAYS, NEW YORK

THE jury considering the fate of Ghislaine Maxwell at her sex trafficking trial finished a third full day of deliberations yesterday [Macau time] with no sign that a verdict is near and no clear signal either that there is dissension in their ranks.

Jurors in Manhattan federal court asked for multi-colored sticky notes and a white board, along with transcripts of some trial testimony, the definition of "enticement" and a question on the law. Judge Alison J. Nathan referred them to her legal instructions that she read to them just before they began deliberations a week ago.

The judge also requested that they deliberate an extra hour beginning yesterday, unless that created a hardship.

The British socialite is charged with recruiting and grooming teenagers as young as 14 to be sexually assaulted by financier Jeffrey Epstein. Maxwell's lawyers say she was a U.S. government scapegoat after Epstein killed himself in 2019 in a Manhattan federal jail cell while awaiting a sex trafficking trial.

Maxwell, who was

behind bars for her 60th birthday Saturday, was described as a central component to Epstein's plans by four women who testified they were sexually abused as teenagers by Epstein with help from Maxwell when she was his girlfriend and afterward.

Maxwell's lawyers said the memories of her accusers were corrupted by the passage of time and the influence of lawyers steering them toward multimillion-dollar payouts from a fund set up to compensate Epstein victims.

The jury, which deliberated two full days last week, already has asked to review the testimony of the four women, along with former Epstein housekeeper Juan Patricio Alessi. They have given little hint of their overall progress on six charges, including a sex trafficking count that carries a potential penalty of up to 40 years in prison.

On Monday, jurors asked for the transcript of testimony by "Matt," the pseudonym of a television actor who testified that he is the ex-boyfriend of "Jane," the pseudonym of an actor who is one of the four accusers who testified against Maxwell. The

judge had ruled that some witnesses in the trial could testify with only first names or pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

Matt, who lived with Jane from 2007 to 2014, testified that Jane initially described Epstein as a godfather who helped her family pay bills after her father's illness and death depleted their finances. She was 14 when she met Epstein.

He said she eventually told him that the help Epstein provided "wasn't free," but did not provide any details about what happened.

When he was asked what her demeanor was like when he asked Jane questions about her encounters with Epstein, he testified that she was "ashamed, embarrassed, horrified."

Matt said she also told him that she felt more comfortable in her encounters with Epstein because there was a woman around. Matt said he contacted Jane after Maxwell's July 2020 arrest and asked her if Maxwell was the woman she had referenced as making her feel more comfortable in her dealings with Epstein.

He testified that she confirmed Maxwell was the woman. **MDT/AP**



NATO fighter jets were scrambled hundreds of times this year to intercept aircraft, most of them Russian warplanes in northwest Europe that were flying too close to the airspace of its member countries, the military organization said yesterday. NATO said that 290 of around 370 total missions were flown in 2021 in response to the activities of Russian aircraft. Most of those took place in the Baltic region around Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, where the organization has an air-policing operation.



Russia's Supreme Court yesterday ruled that one of the country's oldest and most prominent human rights organizations should be shut down, a move that stirred up much public outrage and is the latest step in a months-long crackdown on rights activists, independent media and opposition supporters. The Prosecutor General's Office last month petitioned the Supreme Court to revoke the legal status of Memorial — an international human rights group that rose to prominence for its studies of political repression in the Soviet Union and currently encompasses more than 50 smaller groups in Russia and abroad.

Germany's highest court said yesterday that officials must draw up rules to protect disabled people if hospitals end up having to triage patients in the pandemic. The Federal Constitutional Court said that the parliament violated a clause in the constitution stating that no one can be discriminated against because of a disability, and ordered it to rectify the situation "without delay."