



LAWMAKER IP SIO KAI SUGGESTS GOV'T SHOULD ESTABLISH A NEW PERMANENT FUND TO SUPPORT SME IN CASE OF CATASTROPHE, NAMELY A PANDEMIC

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HOTEL QUARANTINE EXTENDED TO 28 DAYS IN 2022 FOR HIGH-RISK VISITORS

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CENSUS: MACAU POPULATION INCREASES BY A QUARTER OVER PAST DECADE

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AP PHOTO



North Korea yesterday urged its 1.2 million troops to unite behind leader Kim Jong Un and defend him with their lives, as the country celebrated the 10th anniversary of Kim's ascension to supreme commander of the military. The anniversary comes as North Korea is holding a key multi-day political conference in which officials are expected to discuss how to address difficulties brought by the pandemic and long-dormant diplomacy with the United States.

Indonesia An navy ship yesterday was towing a boat carrying 120 Rohingya Muslims into port after it had drifted for days off the country's northernmost province of Aceh, a navy official said. The refugees' wooden boat was reportedly leaking and had a damaged engine. Efforts to rescue its passengers, who are overwhelmingly women and children, began after Indonesia's government said it would allow them to dock because conditions on the boat were so severe.

AP PHOTO



Iran yesterday announced it launched a satellite carrier rocket bearing three devices into space, though it's unclear whether any of the objects entered orbit around the Earth. The state TV report, as well as others by Iran's semiofficial news agencies, did not say when the launch was conducted nor what devices the carrier brought with it. However, the launch comes amid difficult negotiations in Vienna over Iran's tattered nuclear deal.

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HENGQIN BONDS

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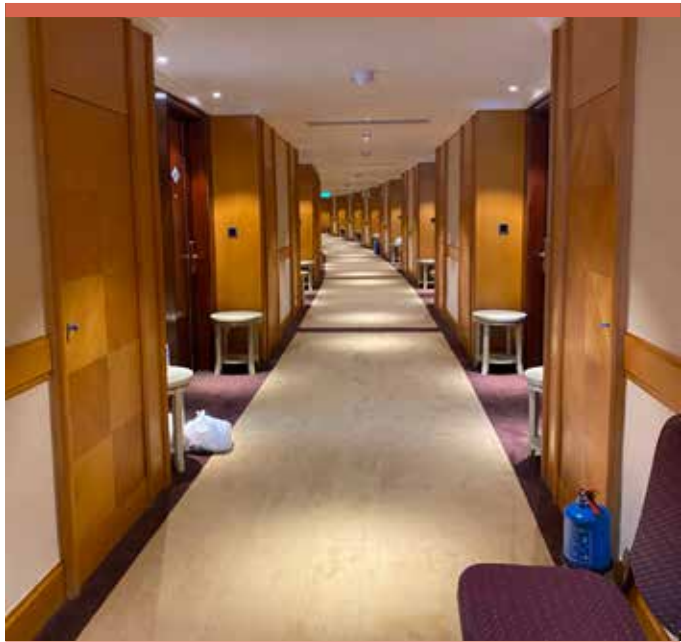


GOODBYE 2021

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HONEY TSANG



HIGH-RISK VISITORS

Hotel quarantine extended to 28 days in 2022

STAFF REPORTER

STARTING on January 6, 2022, visitors flying in from high-risk countries will be subject to a 28-day medical observation, announced Leong Iek Hou, coordinator of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center, at yesterday's press conference.

Passengers on direct or connecting flights to Macau from these countries must present three negative nucleic acid tests (NAT) across five days with 24 hours between tests, and must undergo a 28-day quarantine in designated hotels. Countries included in the high-risk category are: Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Russia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Turkey, United States, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, and Malawi.

For those departing from other countries, individuals will need to present a valid negative NAT within 48 hours and undergo a 21-day quarantine period in a hotel, plus a 7-day self-isolation period at home.

Earlier this week, a 62-year-old resident return-

ed to Macau from the United States. The patient was diagnosed with the Omicron variant, following genome sequencing of the virus. At the time, he did not present with any symptoms, and was thus classified as an imported case of asymptomatic infection. He remained asymptomatic until yesterday, and has now been added to Macau's coronavirus tally, which is now at 79.

The center reaffirmed that the Omicron variant is more contagious than other variants of Covid-19, and that health officials urge residents to get vaccinated to help reduce the possibility of another outbreak. The Health Bureau has continued to keep up with the pandemic and has updated prevention measures in accordance with emerging variants since the beginning of the pandemic.

With the emergence of the more readily transmitted Omicron variant, frontline workers – including those working at hotels designated for medical observation – are now subject to a higher frequency of nucleic acid tests in order to better detect asymptomatic cases and prevent a possible outbreak, stated Leong.

HENGQIN COOPERATION ZONE

Companies eligible for up to RMB5.5m support when issuing bonds in Macau

RENATO MARQUES

COMPANIES operating in the Hengqin Guangdong-Macau Intensive Cooperation Zone will be eligible for a financial subsidy of up to RMB5.5 million when issuing bonds in Macau. This was announced yesterday by the Executive Committee of the Zone, as reported on Chinese financial website "Securities Times."

According to the report, law firms, accountancy firms, credit rating agencies, and rating agencies for green bonds, among others, that establish themselves in Hengqin

and provide services in the zone can benefit from RMB100,000 each time they issue bonds in Macau.

To be eligible, companies must also issue a total amount of at least MOP500 million, attracting a subsidy of 0.8% of the funds raised.

This financial support measure is said to encourage the use of the Macau bond market, aiming for direct financing as well as reducing the cost of issuing corporate bonds in Macau. The government reportedly hopes that companies will preferentially choose to issue bonds in Macau, increasing activity on the local bond market.

All of these bonds will be sett-

PAULO COUTINHO



led by the recently launched Central Securities Depository System (CSD), a mechanism begun to strengthen the integration of Macau's financial market with overseas markets.

Issuers of green bonds can benefit further, as they can be granted an additional RMB500,000 of external review fee funds.

The measures will be implemen-

TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS, AIR AND LAND CARGO VOLUMES UP IN NOVEMBER

STAFF REPORTER

THE number of licensed motor vehicles in Macau was up by 1.5% from 2020 as of November this year, totaling 247,049 vehicles, according to information from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). The numbers of light automobiles and heavy motorcycles increased by 1.8% and 3.1% to 112,985 and 105,606 respectively.

New registrations of motor vehicles last month decreased by 9.4% year-on-year to 1,171, with heavy motorcycle registrations dropping by 5.9% to 652 and light automobiles down by 8.8% to 497. New registrations of motor vehicles went up by 1.7% across the first 11 months of 2021 to 11,368.

The number of traffic accidents rose in November by 6.1% to 1,074, with 354 people injured. Traffic accidents grew overall by 27.5% from January to November to 11,700.



Cross-border vehicular traffic rose by 12.8% to 374,512 crossings, of which light automobile crossings rose by 12.5% to 339,807. The gross weight of container cargo travelling by land increased by 15.6% to 3,286 tons. In the first 11 months of 2021, cross-border vehicular traffic and the gross weight of container cargo on land rose by 68.6% to 3,634,277 trips and by 8.6% to 27,230 tons, respectively

Last month, there was a total of 874 arriving and departing commercial flights, a drop of 14.7%. The gross weight of air cargo rose by 14.8% to 5,176 tons, of which inward and outward cargo rose by 19.4% and 17.7%, standing at 455 tons and 4,709 tons respectively. The number of arriving and departing commercial flights went up by 1.1% year-on-year to 12,700 trips from January to November.

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A MACAU TIMES PUBLICATIONS LTD PUBLICATION

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For subscription and general issues:

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ted on March 1 next year and will be in force for one year, with applications and guidelines governed by the Financial Development Bureau of the Cooperation Zone.

QFLP TO PROVIDE ANOTHER FINANCIAL BOOST

Another financial boost to be launched in the zone from

the end of January next year is a scheme to attract foreign investors to Macau, under which they use the city as a base for investment in mainland start-ups and other projects.

From January 29, the Qualified Foreign Limited Partnership (QFLP) scheme will allow foreign investors to set up funds in the Macau-Hengqin zone and

raise money from both domestic and foreign investors, according to a statement issued yesterday by the joint management committee of Macau and Hengqin.

The plan follows the same logic of promoting Macau as a financial services hub, in line with the master plan launched in September allowing Macau to take part in governing the

economic affairs of neighboring Hengqin.

"The new scheme represents an important step supporting the development of Macau's financial services industry," the statement said.

The QFLP scheme is the latest policy put forward by central authorities aimed at diversifying Macau's economy.

LAWMAKER WANTS SMES RISK GUARANTEE FUND, INSURANCE TO INCLUDE PANDEMICS

RENATO MARQUES

LAWMAKER Ip Sio Kai has called on the government to establish a new permanent fund to support micro, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in case of catastrophe. The lawmaker proposed that the "SMEs Risk Guarantee Fund" be linked to an insurance system that covers epidemic and pandemic conditions.

The proposal was delivered at the Legislative Assembly this week through a spoken inquiry in the period before the agenda.

"I propose that, as soon as possible, the government [research and develop], together with the financial and insurance sectors, a 'risk protection fund' for SMEs and micro-enterprises. [This would] include 'insurance in the event of epidemics,' so that business owners can take on this insurance to [bolster themselves against] risks

and resume, as soon as possible, their normal activities after damage caused by natural disasters," Ip said.

"The financial capacity of these companies, in terms of premiums, must be seriously considered. In addition, the [government] should also investigate the reasons for the relatively few requests for insurance against major catastrophes [since the scheme's launch in 2019]," the lawmaker added.

Ip called on the government to expedite these measures, explaining that, given the current situation and the possibility of further outbreaks, more financial losses for most business owners may be on the horizon.

For Ip, the insurance and its link to the "SMEs Risk Guarantee Fund" would work as a "shock absorber" for the economy and increase overall economic resilience. It would also provide more incentives for com-

panies to take on insurance plans that would significantly improve their post-disaster recovery capacity.

Speaking on behalf of the four lawmakers of the commercial and industrial sector, Ip said: "We – the four lawmakers from the commercial and industrial sectors – have already proposed to the authorities the elaboration of the 'Law for the Promotion of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises,' to improve their business environment.... First, it is necessary to examine, as soon as possible, the creation of the 'Risk Guarantee Fund for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises,' to support [their response] to losses caused by the pandemic and reduce its impact. Second, attention must continue to be paid to the survival of micro, small and medium sized enterprises, and to the strengthening of guarantees for them and their workers. [Moreover,] the defini-

tion [of SMEs] and of the legal retirement age must be clarified, to support the continuous development, health, and stability of these companies."

Emphasizing the importance of the matter, Wang Sai Man – another of the lawmakers representing the commercial and industrial sector – also delivered an inquiry to the government articulating the ideas raised by Ip.

culating the ideas raised by Ip.

Agreeing with Ip, Wang focused more specifically on the establishment of a legal age for retirement in Macau, claiming that it would contribute to the revitalization of the workforce. For Wang, the policy would provide more job opportunities for the younger generation, reduce the unemployment rate, and at the same time offer stable living conditions for the elderly to relax into their retirement, "harmonizing society."

CONSUMPTION PLAN ENDS TODAY

The Electronic Consumption Benefits Plan (ECBP) ends today. The Macau SAR Government has appealed to residents to use their funds in a timely manner. Remaining balances unused within the outlined period will be returned to treasury coffers. After the usage period of the ECBP, the balance amount charged by residents will continue to be available. In addition, Macau Pass will convert the consumer card into a regular MP card for those who wish to continue using their card. Residents can check the details of the conversion service through the Macau Pass website.

EMPLOYMENT RATE CONSISTENT THIS QUARTER

The overall and local unemployment rates for the period from September to November were 2.8% and 3.8%, both unchanged from the previous quarter. The underemployment rate dropped by 0.2% to 4.3%. The labor force living in Macau totaled 386,900 people, with the participation rate at 68.6%. This was mainly driven by a number of larger events held in November that required an increased workforce. Analyzed by industry, employment in real estate and business activities increased, while participation in restaurants and similar activities decreased.

PJ ARREST SERIAL UPSKIRTER, SEIZE 1,300 PHOTOS

A resident was arrested last week for upskirting four female colleagues of a resort hotel in Cotai earlier this month. Judiciary Police (PJ) said at a press conference this week. The suspect, 41, surnamed Leong works as a chef in the property. The hotel's security reported to the PJ last Sunday that during their random checks of the hotel's CCTV footage, they discovered that a staffer was caught taking upskirts of a female colleague with his smartphone in the staff locker area. The security guards later also discovered from other footage that the man took upskirts of another three colleagues either in the hotel lift lobby or inside the lift earlier this month.

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澳門特別行政區政府消費者委員會
Conselho de Consumidores do Governo da RAEM
Macao SAR Government Consumer Council

Law No. 9/2021
"Consumer Rights and Interests Protection Law"
Effective from 1 January 2022

TRENDY FITNESS

'WE SHOULDN'T COMPETE ON PRICE, BUT RATHER ON SERVICE AND QUALITY'

JESSICA SILVA

EVER since the start of pandemic, businesses in Macau and all over the world have been struggling, and especially SME's (small and medium enterprises).

Over countless lockdowns the government's pandemic prevention guidelines have required the closure of innumerable businesses, making profits difficult or impossible, and leaving a number of businesses with no choice but to shut down.

According to data obtained by the Times, preliminary bankruptcies during Covid-19 years, from March 2020 to October 2021, are over 1,200. But this statistic combined with the number of inoperable small and micro companies would show a much higher number, veteran economist Albano Martins said.

Martins alerted to the fact that "local culture of 'face-saving' prevents

JESSICA SILVA



many to declare officially a bankruptcy, and they just halt operations, eventually indefinitely."

However, we have found a niche market that is telling another story, and actually becoming trendy: fitness clubs that mushroomed during the pandemic.

Macao Fitness is a locally owned fitness center. It has been open for almost 11 years, and is located in the center of the peninsula business district.

Macao Fitness is a locally owned fitness center. It has been open for almost 11 years, and is located in the center of the peninsula business district.

The Times interviewed Norika Chio, CEO of Macao Fitness, to better understand the company's perspective in this situation: their struggles, what inspires them to keep going, as well as the increasing competition in the industry as fitness centers become ever more popular.

As a professional who is committed to high standards, Chio makes sure to provide the best service and management, as well as the best quality classes and equipment she could for the fitness community in the city. Macao Fitness also provides services that other local gyms do not, being the only gym in Macau to provide classes from the renowned fitness company Les Mills.

Licenses for gyms come under the same category as cinemas, beauty salons, entertainment venues such as bars and nightclubs. Considering the variety and lack of correlation between the facilities under this license, the Times asked Chio whether she believes these licenses should be divided into different tiers or separated into different categories, since all businesses under this license type are required to close during the Macau SAR Government lockdowns.

To Chio, fitness centers are still high-risk locations, since they are places where large groups of people gather. She added that although closing is difficult, they understand the necessity and accept it because they want to follow the government's guidelines. "We want to cooperate to be able to create a safe space even if it is difficult business wise. We just want everyone to be okay."

Over the past two years since the start of the pandemic, countless gyms have opened in Macau

The coronavirus pandemic has affected every business in Macau and around the world. The recurring lockdowns have "helped everyone here realize how important fitness is, and keeping themselves healthy," commented Daniela Gomes, general manager of Macao Fitness and certified Les Mills Grit instructor. Gomes added that they are able to stay in business because of their clients' trust in them, the length of time the business has been open and their continuing efforts to maintain standards and professional services.

Over the past two years since the start of the pandemic, countless gyms have opened in Macau. In

the same way that it was a trend to open new coffee shops, it is now fashionable to open recreational gym facilities. The majority of these new gyms offer much lower membership prices than established venues, making it harder to attract new clients.

"Everyone has different desires and needs when it comes to choosing a gym," Gomes commented on the growing fitness community in Macau, spread over a plurality of gyms.

Chio believes that everyone should try out these different gyms to assess how they match their own priorities and needs.

"Many who have experienced Macao Fitness have gone to try out other gyms. Most still prefer us, as they've experienced the service and quality difference," stated Chio. Although the competition creates challenges, she is happy to see Macau experience this blooming fitness trend, as she wants to see the city become more interested in fitness and aim for a healthier lifestyle.

Macao Fitness management is not afraid of its clients trying other alternatives, but is secure in the knowledge of having a strong foundation, and enjoying the trust of their clients who continue to seek their services. "Some people need a lower price and that's okay. With this trend and new gyms, everyone is curious to try. I always say we should not be competing on prices but rather the service. It is why we're still standing."

Chio first started out in her sports nutrition supplement shop, Power Nutrition Macau, with an interest and passion in nutrition and fitness. Over time, Power Nutrition Macau would try to teach clients how to use sports nutrition supplements, and educate them on the importance of fitness and exercise. This work slowly led Chio to decide to open Macao Fitness.

"At the time, Macau didn't have a high-quality gym, and many clients suggested to me to open one; I was also very confident that I would be able to do it. I like doing business, I am quite competitive so I like that aspect of it," Chio reflected.

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CENSUS

Population increases by nearly a quarter over past decade

ANTHONY LAM

THE city recorded a population of 682,100 in August 2021, equating to an increase of 23.5% decade-over-decade, the government's Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) announced yesterday.

The data was collected during the 2021 Population Census conducted between September 3 and October 31 this year. Yesterday, the DSEC announced its preliminary results.

The average annual growth was 2.1% over the past decade.

A total of 202,700 households were recorded in this census period, amounting to a rise of 18.7% from 10 years ago. Households were sized at 2.98 people on average.

Women continued to outnumber men, with females and males accounting for 53% and 47% of the total population respectively. The gender ratio – 320,300 males and 361,800 females – was calculated to be 88.5 males per 100 females.

In comparison to the data from 2011, the youth popula-



tion (aged 0-14 years) increased by 50.3% to 99,000, and the adult population (aged 15-64 years) rose by 12.0% to 500,300.

Macau has become an aging population, with the elderly population (aged 65 and above) surging by 107.2% to 82,800.

The data indicates an overall rise in life expectancy. The median age increased from 37 years in 2011 to 38.4 years this year. As population aging continued, the elderly dependency ratio grew from 8.9% in

2011 to 16.6%.

Analyzed by district, the three most populated districts were Baixa da Taipa, Novos Aterros da Areia Preta (NATAP) and Areia Preta & Iao Hon, with respective counts of 75,700, 70,700 and 68,900.

Coloane, Ilha Verde, Universidade & Baía de Pac On, and Pac On & Taipa Grande recorded surges of 753.7%, 143.5%, 124.4% and 121.1% respectively in their populations.

These districts have had a

relatively high number of new buildings and large public housing estates constructed in the past decade.

The total land area of Macau measured 33.0 square kilometers, with an average annual growth of 1% over the past 10 years, less than the average annual population growth.

As a result, the population density increased from 18,454 persons per square kilometer in 2011 to 20,645 persons per square kilometer.

GOV'T WANTS SENIORS TO USE ONLINE PLATFORM FOR PROOF OF LIFE

RENATO MARQUES

THE government wants senior citizens currently receiving pensions to use the My Government Account system to provide their annual proof of life, the authorities announced this week in a joint press conference held by five public services.

Through the use of this online system, authorities are seeking to facilitate the proof of life process. Users would need to provide information just once per year, which would be immediately valid as proof across three public services: the Social Security Fund (FSS), Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) and Pension Fund (FP).

The online proof of life process will launch at 9 a.m. on January 1, 2022, with the government partnering with several associations and social services institutions to assist seniors in creating and managing their accounts, and completing the proof of life process. Temporary service stations in a number of locations will be established as part of the effort.

A system that does not require pensioners to register in person will not only assist people residing in Macau with completing the process, but will also facilitate the participation of those currently outside of Macau. The new online system was tested and implemented for the first time last year.

CREATION OF ACCOUNT, PROOF OF LIFE ABROAD

According to data disclosed by the government, due to the new feature of completing proof of life using a "single account," the service recorded around 110,000 proof of life records made electronically in 2021 for the first time, of which around 43,000 were made online. The rest were completed at self-service kiosks.

This year the government aims to increase participation via a single account, no longer requiring people to travel to undergo the process.

According to the government, last year over 10,000 proofs of life from abroad were completed using the My Government Account system, comprising over 60% of all proofs from abroad.

Beneficiaries abroad need only create and access their account and enable facial recognition on their mobile phone to complete proof of life – a three step process. Spouses and any first-degree relatives (parents or children) of the beneficiary who have their own account can also assist the beneficiary in carrying out process.

Additionally, the system also provides SMS notification functions, allowing beneficiaries to receive a confirmation SMS and check their status at any time.

More information about the registration and procedure can be found on the IAS website.

Young people striving to end mortgages by age 50

ANTHONY LAM

A survey has found out that almost young people want to have their residential mortgages fully repaid before they reach the age of 50, but also hope not to use above one-third of their household income for the monthly repayments.

The survey was conducted by the Macao New Chinese Youth Association in early November. The association held six focus group sessions, interviewing 35 youths aged 18 to 35.

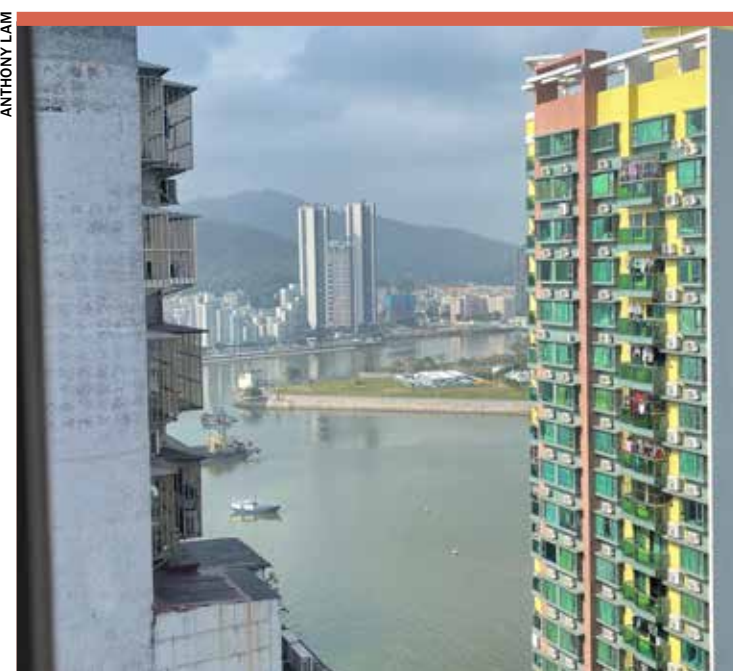
According to the group, the participants had a range of work, family and residential backgrounds. They were asked to outline their feelings on their current residences, property ownership, and factors

affecting property purchases and public housing.

Apart from the aforementioned findings, the participating youths found current property prices "too high" and felt that their incomes weren't keeping up with rising property prices. As such, they did not feel confident in their ability to buy an apartment.

Another problem is they did not see the possibility of saving enough for a down payment for their preferred properties. An avenue for gathering a down payment was, the participants said, by having "family support."

Despite their complaints about accelerating property prices, property ownership remained a "must" in their life paths. This idea was more prominent among the participan-



ts with children, who found a sense of security and stability from owning property, and the longevity of the assets ensured it remains attractive.

Several participants were adamant they would not buy residences located in low-lying, flood-affected areas.

Many weighed facilities such as supermarkets, catering establishments, parks, car parking and public transport access significantly in their

consideration of apartment purchasing. Some were even willing to pay a higher price to acquire apartments with balconies.

Some participants had doubts about the "economic housing forever" policy, suspicious of its power in regulating property prices. The policy was levied by the government so that new economic housing apartments would not be allowed to trade freely in the market.



Subdistrict office staff carry daily necessities to be delivered to households under closed-off management in Xi'an

XI'AN

CHINESE OFFICIALS PROMISE GROCERIES FOR LOCKDOWN RESIDENTS

CHINESE officials promised steady deliveries of groceries to residents of Xi'an, an ancient capital with 13 million people that is, in some districts, under lockdown.

China's Commerce Ministry has contacted nearby provinces to help ensure adequate supplies of everyday necessities, a ministry spokesperson said yesterday.

State broadcaster CCTV aired a story yesterday showing building staff assembling free grocery deliveries for the residents of an apartment complex in Xi'an.

The deliveries included a box of 15 eggs, a 2.5-kilogram bag of rice and some green vegetables. Residents could also expect either some chicken or pork, it said.

Still, some people complained in comments below the segment shared on Weibo, a social media platform, that they have not received the same deliveries in their communities. Many worried if they will be able to obtain fresh vegetables and meat.

This week, authorities tightened restrictions in Xi'an so that

people can no longer leave their homes to buy groceries. Previously, residents were allowed to buy food once every two days. The city is also sealed off, meaning that people cannot leave without special permission.

Xi'an reported 155 new locally transmitted cases on Wednesday, and a total of about 1,000 cases in the latest outbreak.

The numbers pale in comparison to outbreaks elsewhere in the world, but are significant for China, which continues to follow a policy of trying to eradicate the coronavirus. That has resulted in widespread lockdowns to cut the virus's spread.

China has reported a total of 101,890 cases and 4,636 deaths since the pandemic began. **MDT/AP**

HONG KONG

Editors charged with sedition, denied bail

TWO former editors from a Hong Kong online vocal news outlet were charged with sedition and denied bail yesterday, a day after one of the last openly critical voices in the city said it would cease operations following a police raid on its office and seven arrests.

Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam defended the raid on Stand News amid a wider crackdown on dissent in the semi-autonomous city, telling reporters that "inciting other people ... could not be condoned under the guise of news reporting."

According to a charge sheet, national security police filed one count each



Activist and music star Denise Ho (right) bows as she is released from Western Police Station after more than twenty-four hours in custody

of conspiracy to publish a seditious publication against Chung Pui-kuen and Patrick Lam, former editors at Stand News. Police also said they would

prosecute the company for sedition.

The cases were brought to West Kowloon court yesterday, police said in a statement. Lam was not pre-

sent in court because he was in the hospital. Both were denied bail.

The others have been detained for further questioning. They include four former Stand News board members, including activist and music star Denise Ho and former lawmaker Margaret Ng. Ho was released from police custody yesterday afternoon.

The seven were arrested on Wednesday under a crime ordinance that dates from Hong Kong's days as a British colony before 1997, when it was returned to China with a promise from Beijing that it would keep Western-style freedoms for 50 years. If convicted, they could face up

to two years in prison and a fine of up to 5,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$640).

"Journalism is not sedition, but seditious acts and activities and inciting other people through other acts and activities could not be condoned under the guise of news reporting," Lam, the Hong Kong leader, told a news conference. "It should be very clear what is reporting of news, and what is seditious acts or activities to undermine national security."

Stand News said Wednesday that it is ceasing operations and had laid off all its staff.

The United States has sanctioned five Hong Kong-

based Chinese officials following legislative council elections in the city earlier this month for reducing Hong Kong's autonomy and freedoms.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said at a daily briefing yesterday that China will respond by imposing countermeasures on five Americans, including former Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission President Carolyn Bartholomew.

U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken called on Hong Kong authorities to release the detainees, and Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly said her country was deeply concerned about the arrests, which included Denise Ho, a Canadian citizen and activist. **MDT/AP**

ASIA 2021

Myanmar military reverts to strategy of massacres, burnings

SAM MCNEIL, DAVID RISING AND RISHABH R. JAIN, BANGKOK

WHEN the young farmhand returned to his village in Myanmar, he found the still smoldering corpses in a circle in a burned-out hut, some with their limbs tied.

The Myanmar military had stormed Done Taw at 11 a.m. on Dec. 7, he told the AP, with about 50 soldiers hunting people on foot, killing 10 people including five teenagers. A photo taken by his friend shows the charred remains of a victim lying face down, holding his head up, suggesting he was burned alive.

"I am very upset, it is unacceptable," said the 19-year-old, who like others interviewed by the AP asked to remain anonymous for fear of reprisal.

The carnage at Done Taw is just one of the most recent signs that the Myanmar military is reverting to a strategy of massacres as a weapon of war, according to an AP investigation based on interviews with 40 witnesses, social media, satellite imagery and data on deaths.

The massacres and scorched-earth tactics — such as the razing of entire villages — represent the latest escalation in the military's violence against both civilians and the growing opposition. Since the military seized power in February, it has cracked down ever more brutally, abducting young men and boys, killing health care workers and torturing prisoners.

They also signal a return to practices that the military has long used against ethnic minorities such as the Muslim Rohingya, thousands of whom were killed in 2017. The military is accused of killing at least 35 people on Christmas Eve in the village of Mo So, an ethnic Karenni region.

But this time, the military is also using the same methods against people and villages of its own Buddhist Bamar ethnic majority. The focus of most of the latest killings has been in the northwest, including in a Bamar heartland where

AP PHOTO



support for the opposition is strong.

More than 80 people have died in killings of three or more in the Sagaing region alone, including those in Done Taw, since August, according to data from the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, or AAPP, a group that monitors verified arrests and deaths in Myanmar.

The military is also reprising a hallmark tactic of destroying entire villages where there may be support for the opposition. Satellite imagery the AP obtained from Maxar Technologies shows that more than 580 buildings have been burned in the northwestern town of Thantlang alone since September.

"There are similar cases taking place across the country at this point, especially in the northwest of Myanmar," Kyaw Moe Tun, who refused to leave his position as Myanmar's United Nations envoy after the military seized power, told the AP. "Look at the pattern, look at the way it's happened....it is systematic and widespread."

The military, known as the Tatmadaw, did not respond to several requests by phone and by email for comment. Three days after the Done Taw attack, the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper dismissed reports of the slayings as "fake news," accusing unidentified countries of "wishing to disintegrate Myanmar" by inciting bloodshed.

Since the military seized power in February,

more than 1,375 people have been killed by soldiers and police, and more than 11,200 arrested, according to the AAPP.

In May, the opposition National Unity Government announced a new military wing, the People's Defense Force, and in September declared a "defensive war." Loose-knit guerrilla groups calling themselves PDF have since emerged across the country, with varying degrees of allegiance to the NUG.

An early example of the military unleashing its battle-tested tactics on majority Buddhist areas came just 23 miles up the river from Done Taw in Kani township. In July, images circulated of massacres in four small villages that Myanmar's ambassador to the United Nations called "crimes against humanity." Four witnesses told the AP that soldiers killed 43 people in four incidents and discarded their bodies in the jungle.

"We all live in fear," said a woman whose brother was killed, who like the other villagers asked to remain anonymous for safety.

The army's attacks in Sagaing are thought to be the opening salvo in a campaign to stamp out resistance in Myanmar's northwest, and recent troop movements suggest violence could soon pick up.

Two military convoys of more than 80 trucks each with troops and supplies from Sagaing have made it to neighboring Chin state, according to an opposition group. And a former mili-

tary captain, who deserted in March, told the AP that soldiers in Chin State were resupplied and reinforced in October, and the army is now stockpiling munition, fuel and rations in Sagaing.

"We're talking about the Bamar heartland that basically should be the core foundation of this military,"

said Manny Maung, a researcher for Human Rights Watch. "It's telling how worried the military is of its own people."

As fresh soldiers have flowed into Chin state, residents have reported troops putting down protests with live rounds and brutal beatings.

A teacher in the town of Mindat said the military fired artillery into the town so the "houses would shake like an earthquake," she said. She fled to India in October after her cousin, a member of the PDE, was killed by a sniper.

A half-day's drive west from Mindat lies Matupi, a town with two military camps that is now bereft of its young people, according to a college student who fled with her two teenage brothers in October. She said the military had locked people into houses and set them alight, hid bombs in churches

and schools, killed three protest leaders she knew and left bodies in the middle of roads to terrorize people.

Thantlang, a town near the Indian border, has also been emptied of its people after four months of heavy fighting, according to the Chin Human Rights Organization. Drone footage shot by the group in October and December and seen by the AP shows fires raging inside buildings and charred churches, collapsed schools and ruined homes. The footage matches fires detected by satellites and interviews with villagers.

Still, there are growing signs the military's strategy of intimidation may be steeling people's resistance rather than leaving them cowed.

"Instead of dying fleeing, I will use my life for a purpose," said one Kani survivor.

Likewise, the farmhand who told the AP about the Done Taw massacre is now defiant, vowing to take up with the PDE.

"I have just decided to fight until the end for them," he said. "I will do whatever I can until I die or until I am arrested." MDT/AP



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LIGHT SHOW EXTENSION CHEERS UP NEW YEAR'S SCARCE CELEBRATIONS

ANTHONY LAM

RESIDENTS and tourists can be dazzled by the 2022 new year with an eye-catching light festival at a dozen locations across the city, as the annual event has been extended to January 16.

As in its December program, the shows will be staged from 7pm to 10pm every night, with the last show of each night starting at 9:50pm.

On the first two nights of the new year, Tokyo and local teams will present projection mapping in Taipa and Coloane. The performance team from Tokyo's show "GLID" will be staged at Largo dos Bombeiros in Taipa, while a local performance team will undertake "In Pair" at Chapel of St. Francis Xavier in Coloane. The organizing entity, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), is expecting crowds of spectators.

Due to the pandemic situation, the team from Tokyo could not come to Macau themselves. Instead, they used the Internet to pass the production on to a local coordinator offering equipment and technicians to assist with projection mapping.

The projection mapping shows presented by local artists at Largo do Pagode do Bazar will remain. The MGTO said that the shows at the Macao Science Center cannot be extended.

The projection mapping shows, along with light installations and interactive games, enliven the already unique communities in Taipa and Coloane. There is "House of Popular Slangs" at Carmo Fair, "Cosmic Kaleidoscope" at Vila da Taipa His-



torical Center Archway, "Weekend Love" at Chapel of St. Francis Xavier and Largo Eduardo Marques as well as "Sand Painting in Light" at Largo do Bazar, among others.

Macao Light Festival 2021's theme is "Travelers from Mars". The storyline is centered on friends from Mars who plan to travel to Macau, connecting a series of elements related to tourism, culture and creativity, science, leisure, gastronomy, environmental protection, recreation and sports, nature and the universe. It is presented with a humorous touch, bringing some positivity to the audience while highlighting Macau as a safe travel destination.

COUNTDOWN AND YEAR-CROSSING FESTIVITIES

In compliance with disease control guidelines, many hotels

and resorts are refraining from holding a new year countdown party or show. For those that are, the events are smaller in scale.

The Mandarin Oriental is hosting a farewell-to-2021 night at its Vida Rica Bar, with two sessions. The first will take place tonight from 5:30 to 8:30 and the second from 9 to 12:30. For the price of MOP788 or MOP888 there will be a free flow of seafood, oysters, steak and desserts.

The Sofitel Macau at Ponte 16 is hosting a Great-Gatsby-themed countdown party on its sixth-floor terrace from 9 o'clock tonight to 1 a.m. tomorrow. Entry is priced at MOP100 per person and drinks are for sale at MOP50 each. New Year's Day will also see the reopening of the French-branded hotel's lobby bar, Rendezvous.

In Taipa, the Altira Macau is staging a countdown party at the bar atop the hotel building, the 38 Lounge. Partygoers will be enveloped by a panorama of the Macau coastline as they bid farewell to 2021. The countdown party will start at 9pm today. Each ticket is MOP388 and includes two glasses of Moët & Chandon NV champagne.

Further away in Cotai, the MGM COTAI is turning its Anytime coffee bistro into a midnight dancefloor tonight from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., replete with flowing champagne, oysters and snacks at the price of MOP888 per set. Discounts and privileges are offered with various conditions.

888 patacas is also the auspicious price of New Year's Eve set menu at The Churchill's Table at The Londoner spacious and so-

phisticated lobby and shopping area. The Times has learned that at the stroke of midnight, the bells at Big Ben, Cotai will toll for the first time.

The newly-opened Mesa Portuguese fine-dining at the Grand Lisboa Palace encourages guests to suit up and welcome the new year in style. New Year's Eve dinner services will be conducted from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. today. However, at 9 p.m. the restaurant will transform into a party space for the countdown event that will run until 3 a.m. the next day. Various packages are available.

SHOP IN THE HOPES OF A BETTER YEAR

A new addition to the shopping landscape in Macau, the 7,500-sqm CDF Macau Grand Lisboa Palace Shop is the first flagship store operated by the China Duty Free Group (CDFG) in Macau. It recently opened in the Grand Lisboa Palace Macau.

Embodying the CDFG's ongoing expansion into the Greater Bay Area and overseas, CDF Macau Grand Lisboa Palace Shop houses over 170 world-renowned high-end brands of fashion, accessories, watches, jewelry, cosmetic products, perfumes, wines, culinary delights and souvenirs.

Featuring an array of official locations of top international brands – including Balenciaga, Cartier, Dior, TASAKI, THE GINZA and IWC – the flagship store promises to become Macau's new shopping hotspot.

CDF Macau Grand Lisboa Palace Shop has a special VIP area measuring approximately 226 square meters. It is CDFG's first member lounge in Hong Kong and Macau, offering VIP-grade hospitality and a superior personalized shopping experience in line with CDFG's consistent high-quality service.

THE FORBES TASTING LIST

7 can't-miss foods to eat in Macau

Forbes travel contributor, Elizabeth Brownfield put up a list of her favorite dishes in Macau for the accidental foreign tourist – and for you to judge her taste buds. Courtesy of Forbes.

THANKS to a diverse mash-up of culinary influences from mainland China, Portugal, Africa, and elsewhere on the spice route, Macau is a foodie paradise. A Chinese SAR (Special Administrative Region), Macau was actually under Portuguese rule for over 400 years: beginning in 1557, and up until 1999.

That means that before "fusion food" was a buzzy term, Macanese cuisine boasted a delicious combination of traditional dishes

from Portugal and southern regions of China, India, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. Today, Macau's status as the luxe "Las Vegas of Asia" has attracted as many world-class chefs as high-rolling gamblers. The emerging culinary capital was even named as a Creative City of Gastronomy by UNESCO.

From comforting beef minchi — one of Macau's national dishes — to Michelin-starred dimsum and the Macanese version of

the Portuguese egg tart, here are the foods no visitor to Macau should leave without tasting for themselves.

PORTUGUESE EGG TART

Pasteis de nata aren't just famous in Portugal: the iconic egg tart is one of Macau's best-known foods too. With a silky and creamy custard, crisp flaky shell, and a slightly burnt top, they're best eaten warm with a sprinkle of cinnamon.

And while you'll see these ubiquitous egg tarts sold

all over Macau, it's worth a visit to sample the originals at Lord Stow's Bakery in Coloane.

Where to try it: Lord Stow's Bakery

AFRICAN CHICKEN

The Portuguese introduced Macau to African Chicken, which evolved into a local favorite over the decades. The variation on chicken curry showcases spices from African countries on the Portuguese trading route. The hot chicken dish

(both in temperature and spice) is bathed in a rich, addictive peanut sauce made with tomatoes, coconut, chiles, and a slew of dried spices like paprika.

Where to try it: Belos Tempos, 10 Rua da Felicidade

HIGH-END DIM SUM

Macau's emerging culinary scene has attracted a score of world-renowned chefs in recent years, many of whom strike a balance between tradition and innovation.

Case in point: the delicious, creative, and gorgeous dim sum delicacies at Michelin-starred Ying in the Altira hotel (stunning views from the elegant 11th-floor dining room only enhance the top-notch dining experience).

Don't miss the exquisite dumplings shaped black swans: the crunchy fried taro exteriors are filled with yam and roast goose, and the slender, curving black neck is crafted from edible bamboo.

Where to try it: Ying

SERRADURA

Serradura translates to «Sawdust» in Portuguese... which isn't the best endorsement for this sweet and simple dessert that you can find at bakeries, restaurants, and from street vendors all over Macau.

But think of serradura as a Macanese semifreddo: sweetened whipped cream is layered between cookie crumbs that are crushed so fine, they look like sawdust. Served chilled at bakeries and street carts, it's an inex-

Vegas fireworks show will go on, 300,000 expected: officials

KEN RITTER, LAS VEGAS

LAS Vegas isn't canceling or scaling back plans for big New Year's gatherings amid concerns about the rapid spread of the omicron variant of COVID-19, regional public safety and elected leaders said yesterday [Macau times].

More than 300,000 visitors are expected in town for events including a New Year's Eve fireworks show on the Las Vegas Strip that was canceled last year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Thousands of ticketholders also are expected at a multi-stage outdoor music event beneath a canopy light show at a downtown casino pedestrian mall called the Fremont Street Experience.

"If you're sick, stay at home. If you're indoors, wear a mask," said Michael Naft, a Clark County commissioner who stood with Las Vegas Mayor Carolyn Goodman and police, fire and communications center officials to outline restrictions including bans on glass and metal containers, coolers, strollers, backpacks, purses and luggage.

"We encourage everyone to look out for one another, take personal responsibility and proactively take actions to limit the spread of COVID-19," Naft said.

The safety talk came on a day that a coronavirus surge driven largely by the highly contagious omicron variant pushed new cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. to the highest level on record, at more than 265,000 per day on average. The previous mark was 250,000 cases per day last January, according to



Las Vegas Mayor Carolyn Goodman speaks during a press conference discussing preparations for the upcoming Las Vegas New Year's Eve celebration

data kept by Johns Hopkins University.

Paris, London, Berlin and New York are among cities that have scaled back or called off New Year's festivities, and airlines have canceled thousands of flights amid staffing shortages blamed on the virus.

Chicago officials said this week their fireworks show was still on, despite Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker's warning during a news conference that, "Omicron and delta are coming to your party."

In Las Vegas, regional health officials yesterday reported 2,201 new coronavirus cases — the biggest increase in one day since last Jan. 11 — and 15 new deaths. New cases and deaths have been trending up, and the number of people hospitalized in Clark County with confirmed or suspected cases of

COVID-19 has also jumped.

The county's 14-day test positivity rate, representing a percentage of people tested for COVID-19 and found to be positive, reached 10.1%, the Las Vegas Review-Journal reported. The World Health Organization goal is 5% or less to relax mitigation measures.

The Southern Nevada Health District reported 68.2% of Las Vegas-area residents have had at least one shot of COVID-19 vaccine, and 55.8% are fully vaccinated.

Goodman, a vocal critic of Nevada mask mandates and restrictions on crowd sizes in the first months after business closures were enacted in March 2020, wore a mask yesterday but removed it to remind the media that the biggest Las Vegas events will be outside.

"We are saying people (can) feel

comfortable to be mask-free," the mayor said. "But individually, if you have an issue or you're concerned, wear your mask. It's a question of respect."

Last year, even though fireworks were canceled, thousands of revelers still congregated on casino-lined Las Vegas Boulevard to ring in 2021.

This year, the National Weather Service predicts a chilly Friday night with temperatures near freezing on the Strip beneath mostly clear skies and winds that are not expected to prevent fireworks.

The eight-minute choreographed pyrotechnic display will be shot from atop eight resort properties bracketed by The STRAT tower and the MGM Grand hotel, accompanied by a soundtrack airing on two FM radio stations in

Las Vegas.

Clark County Undersheriff Christopher Darcy invoked lessons learned about police, fire, ambulance and communications cooperation since a lone shooter in October 2017 rained gunfire for 10 minutes from a high-rise hotel into a Las Vegas Strip concert crowd. Fifty-eight people died that night, and hundreds were injured. At least two other deaths were later attributed to the mass shooting, which remains the deadliest in modern U.S. history.

Darcy said about 1,200 police officers will be assigned in the Las Vegas Boulevard area, where roads will be closed and hotels also have thousands of security guards. Several hundred officers will be assigned to the Fremont Street district.

A curfew requires anyone under 18 in both areas to be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

"We encourage folks to take the proper precautions — be that vaccinations or the wearing of face coverings — and to do all the things you can do to protect yourself," the police official said.

He added revelers should arrange transportation that does not involve driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

"Wear warm clothes and comfortable shoes," said Deputy Clark County Fire Chief Warren Whitney. "Stay hydrated, and be prepared to do a lot of walking."

The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority pointed in a statement to the fireworks being visible "on and off the Strip and around the Las Vegas valley."

"We encourage revelers to take the proper health and safety precautions before they arrive and while they are in Las Vegas, follow the indoor mask mandate and seek medical care if they are feeling unwell," the statement said.

MDT/AP

pensive sweet treat that's the perfect way to cool down on hot, humid days.

Where to try it: Mok Yi Kei, 9 R. do Cunha

MINCHI

Another one of Macau's most iconic foods is minchi, a warming combination of minced beef and/or pork stir-fried with diced potatoes and onions that's usually infused with soy or Worcestershire sauce.

This British-influenced dish has dozens of variations, but most are served over rice and topped with a crispy fried egg.

Where to try it: Belos Tempos, 10 Rua da Felicidade

PORK CHOP BUN

This popular street snack is simple, cheap, and totally satisfying. A succulent sea-

soned pork chop is sandwiched between a crunchy on the outside, soft on the inside bun, baguette, or other type of bread.

Where to try it: Sun Ying Kei, Rua da Alegria 2B-C, or from street food vendors around popular areas like near the Ruins of St. Paul's

Almond Cookies

A popular souvenir, these not-too-sweet made with crushed almonds and mung bean flour are embossed with pretty designs and lettering.

You'll see them sold in countless shops near popular tourist attractions, most of which encourage you to sample the different flavors before you pick up a few boxes to take home.

Where to try it: Koi Kei Bakery



AP PHOTO



MARKETS 2021

STOCKS SOAR, IPOs EXPLODE, CRYPTO GOES WILD

WALL Street delivered another strong year for investors in 2021, as a resurgence in consumer demand fueled by the reopening of the global economy pumped up corporate profits.

As of Dec. 29, the S&P 500 had risen 28%, its third-straight annual increase. Along the way, the benchmark index set 67 all-time highs.

The market weathered a number of challenges along the way. Skyrocketing inflation, worldwide supply-chain disruptions and a global economy still vulnerable to the uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic fueled market volatility, especially toward the end of the year.

Wall Street got a boost from the Federal Reserve, which kept its key short-term interest rate near zero all year. That helped keep borrowing costs for companies low and stock valuations high. However, investors expect the Fed to start pushing rates higher next year.

INFLATION GETS STICKY

Inflation awoke from a long slumber in 2021. The U.S. government's consumer price index skyrocketed 6.8% in the 12 months that ended in November — the sharpest such jump since 1982. Wholesale prices rose even more. Many companies have raised pri-

ces to offset higher input costs and keep profit margins steady. Consumers are paying more for everything from diapers and detergent to cereal and household appliances. It's unclear exactly when the supply bottlenecks will ease, so further price increases could be in store for 2022.

AP PHOTO



INVESTORS PILE INTO 'MEME STOCKS'

Small investors piled into stocks in 2021, at times banding together on online forums like Reddit's WallStreetBets to stoke a frenzy over certain companies like GameStop. The financially struggling video-game retailer surged more than 1,600% in January. The mania led to big losses for some hedge funds, multiple halts in trading and congressional hearings asking who was getting hurt. The rise of small investors is one reason stocks represented a quarter of household assets as of the third quarter, up from only 13% a decade ago, according to Wells Fargo Securities.

BONDED RETURNS

Bond prices fell and, in turn, their yields rose this year, but not as much as one might expect with the economy growing and inflation jumping. Still, yields remain low relative to history. The yield on the 10-year Treasury, for example, is still below where it was in the spring. That could be a product of expectations for inflation to eventually fall and for the economy to moderate its growth too. Low bond yields have been one of the main reasons that stock prices have surged so high: With bonds paying so little, there's a widespread belief on Wall Street that there is no alternative to buying stocks.

AP PHOTO



BATTERY POWERS

Electric vehicle sales nearly doubled worldwide as automakers rolled out new models. Many consumers bought EVs to avoid burning oil, but others went for the quick acceleration and crisp handling. Shares of Tesla, the world's EV leader, jumped more than 40% as of Dec. 22. The industry's

old guard revved up its commitment to EVs — for example, General Motors plans a GMC Hummer EV. Although EVs will only be 5.8% of global new-vehicle sales this year, that figure could grow close to 15% in 2025, says research firm LMC Automotive.

GOT CHIPS?

A global chip shortage had repercussions across much of the economy in 2021, thwarting consumers who faced delays in getting new cars, video-game consoles and an array of other products. The shortage had its origins in the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, starting with the lockdowns shuttering Asian semiconductor factories in early 2020. As 2022 approaches, some analysts are now worried about what happens when the shortages ease and an oversupply of chips affects prices.

CRYPTO GOES MAINSTREAM

Cryptocurrency prices went on another roller coaster this past year: surging, plunging and then cycling again. What made 2021 different was how many more people experienced those swings, as crypto crossed into the mainstream. In the most famous example, El Salvador became the first country to make Bitcoin legal tender. Perhaps more impactful for financial markets, the first exchange-traded fund tied to Bitcoin futures also began to trade.

CHINA TECH CRACKDOWN

Anxious investors knocked more than \$1 trillion off the value of high-flying Chinese tech companies on foreign stock exchanges after the ruling Communist Party

tightened control over their industries. Alibaba Group, the world's biggest e-commerce company by sales volume, was fined \$2.8 billion on charges it suppressed competition. Tencent Holdings, operator of the popular WeChat message service, was ordered to end exclusive contracts with music suppliers. Regulators criticized Didi Global Inc., China's dominant ride-hailing service, for its handling of customer data.

GONE TO MARKET

Initial public offerings exploded in 2021 as companies sought to take advantage of a soaring stock market. There were 389 IPOs through the first week of December, easily surpassing the total of 221 for all of last year, according to Renaissance Capital. Among the more notable IPOs were online broker Robinhood, dating app Bumble and electric vehicle maker Rivian Automotive. It was also a blowout year for special-purpose acquisition companies, or SPACs, which raise money from public investors with the intent of buying a private company later. However, SPACs have been facing tougher scrutiny from regulators.

ENERGY CRUNCH

Rising prices for oil and natural gas unsettled the global economic recovery in 2021. The biggest crunch came in Europe, where by December natural gas prices had soared more than nine times their level at the start of the year amid fears that reserves would run out in a colder than average winter. President Joe Biden tried pressuring OPEC to boost production and tapping his country's emergency stockpiles of oil in an effort to lower gasoline prices for U.S. drivers. Oil and gasoline prices did fall, but mostly due to fears of another possible economic slowdown from the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

AP PHOTO



REALITY AND THE METAVERSE

The debate over social media's impact on the public exploded when Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen leaked tens of thousands of damning internal documents about the harm the company is causing to its users around the world. Amid the fallout, Facebook rebranded itself Meta Platforms, reflecting its commitment to developing the metaverse. CEO Mark Zuckerberg described the metaverse as a "virtual environment" you can go inside of — instead of just looking at on a screen. Meta's stock price and revenue have so far withstood the turmoil. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTOS



STUFF 2021

Dystopia, 'she-cession,' TikTok dances: We're over you, 2021

LEANNE ITALIE

THE pandemic, politics, pervasive anxiety over the climate and the economy. Did 2021 leave us any time to ponder anything else? As we limp our way into a new year, there are a few more things we'd like to leave behind, from pop culture's obsession with all things apocalyptic to the well meaning but exhausting lay dancers on TikTok.

A list of what we're over as we look for renewal and hope in 2022:

DYSTOPIA PALOOZA

War, destruction, disaster: Popular entertainment has certainly reflected, expanded upon and imagined the very doom of it all. But must it continue at the same rapid clip? The latest, "Squid Game," was a huge score for Netflix. Its creator can't imagine a future without a second season of the deadly Korean series. Fans rejoiced. Dystopia is merely one genre, however, one storytelling technique. Would we not benefit from an equally heavy dose of stories that focus on solutions and, dare we say it, inspiration? We're talking that middle ground between zombies and "The Great British Baking Show." Just think about it.

TIKTOK DANCEATHON

You seem like a nice person, but you're a registered dietitian, not a dancer. And, quite sadly, you never will be. Yes, we could scroll right on by and not gaze on your barely the-

re moves. Yes, we realize you're having a great time and simply trying to entertain. But there are just so darn many of you. TikTok was built on wacky dance trends (remember the Floss?), but the short-video platform has grown into much, much more as millions signed on during the pandemic. So where does that leave all that dancing? Slightly and thankfully muted for the dance-craze weary.

THE SHE-CESSION

There's little doubt the pandemic touched all our lives in different ways and continues to wreak havoc around the globe. There's also little doubt that women were disproportionately impacted as they struggled to make it all work from home. And, yes, men did things but women had higher job losses and increased responsibilities. The economic fallout was dubbed the "she-cession." The thing is, what's the alternative, a "he-cession?" Nope. Some women find the gender-specific term demeaning and ask that the media and economists cut it out. And while we're on the subject, can we rid ourselves of the term Great Resignation, aka the Great Quit, for all those folks who voluntarily left the workforce? Good luck to them.

SHAPEWEAR

It made Kim Kardashian West a pile of money to go with her other piles of money. Her Skims shapewear brand, which branched into loungewear during the pandemic, is valued at \$1.6 billion,

according to The New York Times. It comes in a range of styles, colors and sizes. Oprah Winfrey and Reese Witherspoon are among new investors in Spanx. But hasn't life lived largely at home taught us to embrace our bulges, bumps and whatever else it is we're trying to hide with shapewear? Can't we all just march back into our old lives feeling good in our own skins? Let alone the idea there are some health risks to intensely compressing our organs for prolonged periods. Let it fly, people! Don't let the old constraints of the fashion elite take over after all those months in cozy duds and the de-escalation of underwire. #FreeOurBodies.

NFTS

Will they be over before oh so many people have figured out exactly what they are? So some naysayers predict while stans fuel headlines and the little buggers sell for millions. Non-fungible tokens are, basically, digital art or just about anything else in digital form. They're stored on blockchains (digital ledgers). The point, you ask? Good question. NFTs are effectively digital certificates of authenticity, like the declaration in the physical world that your original van Gogh is one of a kind. The rest of us will be heading to the non-digital gift shop for the poster or fridge magnet as the world figures out the metaverse. On offer: The NFT of the Merriam-Webster definition of NFT, with net proceeds going to the global nonprofit Teach for All. Hallelujah.

LEVEL UP

There's a whole lotta leveling up going on in a world where level off and level out already reside. And by level up, we're talking the gamer term for making it to the next level. The phrase has gone mainstream in a range of contexts. The perfectly good and universally understood alternatives? How about advance, develop, improve, evolve, grow and, we venture, ameliorate. Can we just celebrate our work successes, our upgrades, our escalations, our impressive pushes onward without reinvention for reinvention's sake? As Ciara sings: five, four, three, two, one ...

HARD SELTZERS

What Zima started White Claw ran with. Now, we've got enough hard seltzers to make it straight on through to end of days. Just about any flavor profile can be had in a bubbly, spiked concoction in a can. There was a pickle-flavored variety until the marketing grab by two companies in collaboration sold out. No worries. You've still got your Bud Lites, your Pabst Blue Ribbons, your Topo Chico. You've got your pineapple-limes, your honeydew and your apple-pear. You've got your tequila-based grapefruit, your ultra organic and your watermelon chili. Still unavailable, as spoofed on "Saturday Night Live": the J.C. Penneys and Jiffy Lubes, Exxons and Verizons. Can we take day drinking old school, pretty please?

BILLIONAIRES IN SPACE

The billionaires in space boys club got plenty of attention in 2021 as the rest of us navigated our topsy-turvy lives here on Earth. There's lots to chew on as to the many millions spent to make that happen, in a sub-orbital, edge of space, floating in microgravity for a few minutes at most kind of way. And there's the off-color jokes, of course. The ones about size and whether it matters. And there's the great pondering over Elon Musk and why he isn't a card carrying club member despite his founding of Space X. Richard Branson went into space aboard his Virgin Galactic rocket July 11. Branson beat out Jeff Bezos, who took his supersonic jaunt aboard his Blue Origin ship July 20. Billionaire Jared Isaacman led the first all-private orbital mission that splashed down in September after three days in orbit thanks to Space X. Because, commercial space travel is the future, don't ya know. So are food insecurity, income insecurity, health care access barriers and homelessness for folks without a ticket to ride. Aim higher.

SUPPLY CLOGS

The global supply chain is under the weather. Factories have been forced to close amid COVID surges. The number of shipping containers is short and they're unattainable to those who can't afford them. Small businesses can't pay for alternate shipping methods. Ports and warehouse are backed up. There aren't enough truckers. Prices are on the rise as U.S. households feeling flush from stimulus checks, booming stock markets and fattened home equity have gone all spendy. Really spendy, with all of the above creating shortages of goods. Oh my. Happy holidays, one and all. Over It. **MDT/AP**

PANDEMIC

Low-vaccinated Eastern Europe braces for omicron surge

STEPHEN MCGRATH,
SIBIU

AS the fast-spreading coronavirus variant omicron rages through Western Europe, officials and experts in low-vaccinated Eastern Europe anticipate a post-holiday explosion of COVID-19 cases in much of the region.

Many countries in Eastern Europe only recently emerged from infection waves that put a catastrophic strain on health care systems, and at times have tallied some of the highest pandemic death rates globally.

Now, with omicron already confirmed across the region and the winter holidays bringing more community gatherings and international travel, public health officials are predicting a sharp virus surge in the coming weeks.

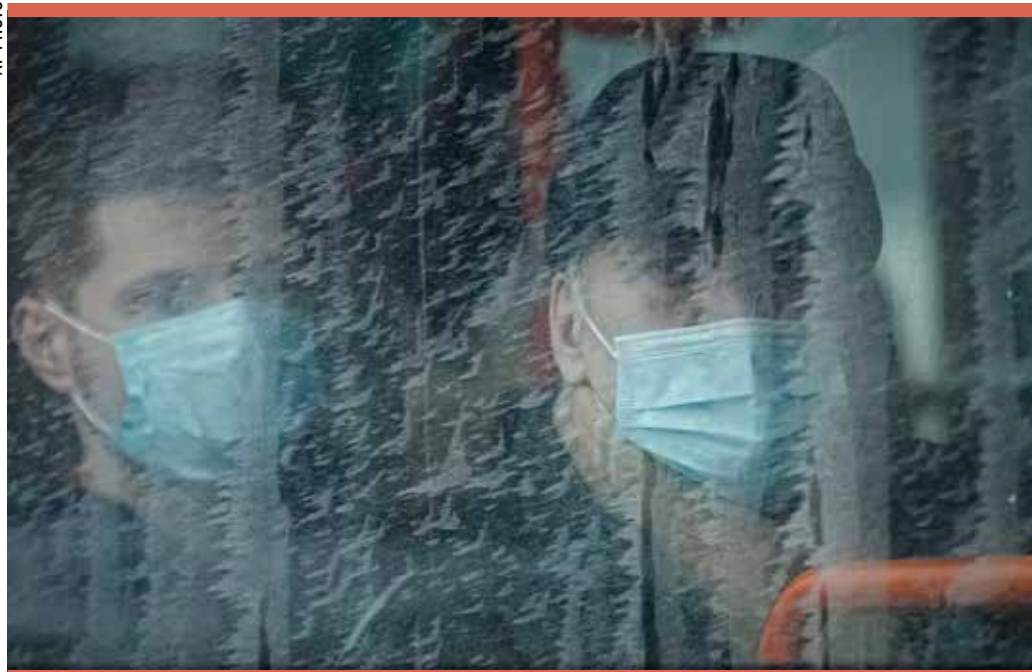
Adriana Pistol, director of Romania's National Center for Surveillance and Control of Communicable Diseases, warned yesterday [Macau time] that the country could see a peak of 25,000 new daily cases during the expected next wave. Romania is the European Union's second-least vaccinated member nation.

Noting that roughly 60% of Romania's people over age 65 or living with chronic diseases remain unvaccinated, Pistol said: "Even if the omicron strain does not have the same level of severity(.) ... the health system will be overloaded anyway and reach levels recorded this year in October."

Romania saw huge lines at borders before Christmas as hundreds of thousands of citizens flocked home, many from the West. The government started requiring travelers to complete passenger locator forms as of Dec. 20 to help track infections, but Pistol said many have failed to fill them out.

Only 40% of Romania's population of around 19 million has been fully inoculated against COVID-19. Although booster doses are considered necessary

AP PHOTO



to provide adequate protection against omicron, Pistol noted that three-quarters of the country's fully jabbed individuals have yet to receive an additional shot.

Romania's underfunded public health system teetered on the brink of collapse a few months ago, during the country's last explosion of virus cases. Hospital morgues ran out of space for bodies, and some patients were transferred abroad for treatment because COVID-19 intensive care units were filled to capacity.

Exhausted medical personnel watched with dread as countries with high vaccination rates such as France, Italy and the U.K. reported record cases as omicron spread in recent days.

"It's very clear that the fifth wave will probably hit us in January," Dragos Zaharia, a primary care doctor at the Marius Nasta Institute of Pneumology in Bucharest, said. "We just hope that there will be fewer deaths, fewer severe cases, and fewer hospital admissions."

Neighboring Bulgaria is the EU's least-vaccinated member, with just 32% of adults having received a full vaccine. It, too, suffered a deadly fall outbreak, but its vaccine rollout has continued at a sluggish pace. Government data shows that only 255,000 booster jabs have been administered in the country of 7 million people.

"Epidemiologists predict that wave five will hit Bulgaria at the end of January and probably harder in February," Mariya Sharkova, a public health law specialist based in Plovdiv, told The Associated Press. "Holidays will bring omicron to Bulgaria and probably will have a negative impact on the spread of COVID-19."

In the Balkans region of Europe, Bosnia, Slovenia, Serbia, and Croatia have all confirmed omicron cases but so far not tightened restrictions to control the variant's spread.

Serbian authorities decided this week to allow planned outdoor concerts to go ahead on New Year's Eve. Experts opposed the move and called for requiring COVID-19 status passes for 24 hours due to omicron concerns.

"We are aware that a significant number of our nationals will return home from the European Union for holidays, as well as... foreign guests visiting our ski resorts," said Goran Cerkez, the assistant health minister in the larger of Bosnia's two highly autonomous regions. "But we hope that we will weather what is ahead of us."

The Czech Republic, which has a population of 10.7 million, is among the European countries hardest hit by the pandemic and is currently registering around 6,000 new cases a day. The country's Health Ministry yesterday estimated the omicron va-

riant currently accounts for about 10% of all new cases and by Jan. 10 could be 25%.

Some experts are cautioning against taking comfort from preliminary studies that suggest the omicron variant causes milder cases of COVID-19.

Mircea Iliescu, a Romanian doctor in human evolutionary genetics at the University of Cambridge, says that even if that is the case, Romania still "has a lot of people susceptible to hospitalization."

"We can only assume that many cases being transmitted now are omicron, since it's transmitting so fast compared to delta," he said. "If other countries are now getting towards it being the majority strain, we should be getting there in a couple of weeks."

Despite concerns over the variant, Romanian authorities eased some internal restrictions in early December and are allowing businesses to stay open all night on New Year's Eve.

Andrei Otelea, 31, who lives in the U.K. and is unvaccinated against COVID-19, arrived with his young family at Sibiu International Airport in central Romania on Tuesday, returning home for the first time since the pandemic started.

"We are a little bit scared (of visiting grandparents), but we're going to go and keep our distance for the moment," Otelea said. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1999 UK PREPARES TO CELEBRATE MILLENNIUM



Britain is gearing up to join a global party in a spectacular array of revelries to welcome in the third millennium.

The scale of the celebrations ranges from large organised events, to street parties to an evening at home watching television footage from around the world.

Despite predictions of rain, millions are expected to pack the banks of the Thames in London Thames for funfairs, music, and street entertainment from 1100GMT until 0200GMT New Year's Day.

Celebrations around the world will kick-off at 1000 GMT as the Chatham Islands, Tonga, Fiji and Kiribati experience the new millennium first.

The people of Samoa will have to wait 25 hours more as the millennium arrives there last.

In between, festivities will be staged around the world.

With Britain's capital the home of time, eyes turn to the Queen's official opening of the £758m Millennium Dome, in Greenwich, south London.

She will arrive by boat along the River Thames to join 10,000 invited guests including 6,000 members of the public - who have not all received their tickets yet.

Celebrities and politicians including Prime Minister Tony Blair will attend.

In a blow to the celebrations, the Millennium Wheel will be officially unveiled but will not take passengers due to a capsule failing a safety check.

At midnight, a 60m high "River of Fire", created by pyrotechnic candles, will light up along the Thames in 10.8 seconds - as fast as the earth rotated into a new age.

In Scotland, the Royal National Scottish Orchestra, pop group Texas, and old favourites the Bay City Rollers will perform in Edinburgh and a beacon lit at Ben Nevis.

A giant beacon will be lit in Cardiff as part of Welsh celebrations, and one in Northern Ireland.

In Liverpool, the nightclub Cream is hosting a dance party with Fat Boy Slim and Pete Tong while in Birmingham people are expected to gather in Centenary and Victoria Squares.

Celebrations in Manchester include a huge fireworks display at Castlefield.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

While many enjoyed the festivities thousands in London did not. Revellers struggled to get home for hours as key tube stations were shut for safety reasons and central parts of the capital were cordoned off. The Millennium Wheel - the British Airways London Eye - did not open until a month later but its subsequent success could make it a permanent feature of the capital's skyline. Thousands suffered delays of several hours in being admitted to the Dome on Millennium Eve because of an administrative error. It failed to attract sufficient visitors and suffered huge losses before it closed a year later. After difficulties selling the site, the government gave it to developers for free in return for a share of any profits.

CINEMA 2021

'THE WORST PERSON IN THE WORLD,' 'LOST DAUGHTER,' 'LICORICE PIZZA' TOP BEST FILMS

1. The Worst Person in the World: Joachim Trier's richly compassionate character study wasn't our first movie back in theaters this year, but it was the first film that filled me with all the joy, delight and surprise of going to the movies. Trier's film, which debuted at the Cannes Film Festival and properly opens in February, stars Renate Reinsve as an uncertain Oslo 30-something finding her way. We haven't yet worked out whether it was the movie's warm, exuberant humanity or the experience of seeing it on the big screen in a theater with other people that moved me to tears. But what's the difference?

2. The Lost Daughter: There's an element of danger, real and theoretical, permeating every moment of Maggie Gyllenhaal's electric adaptation of the Elena Ferrante novel. Despite the idyllic Greek seaside setting and the intoxicating premise of a solo vacation, the unease hovers oppressively as we follow the brilliant,

passionate, selfish, cruel and inscrutable Leda Caruso (Olivia Colman) through some unorthodox choices, past and present. Not only

is she one of the richest characters that has ever graced our screens, it's the kind of film that will bury itself in your subconscious.

3. Licorice Pizza: It's a rare film that makes you nostalgic for a time and place you never knew, but Paul Thomas Anderson's breezy, sunny "Licorice Pizza" does just that for the San Fernando Valley of Gary Valentine (Cooper Hoffman) and Alana Kane's (Alana Haim) youths. Awash in Southern California calm and optimism, this is a playful and joyous ode to the big personalities, embellished stories, endless possibilities and endearing Hollywood-adjacency of a place that barely exists anymore.

4. Dune: A bigger-than-IMAX vision that is as smart as it is spectacular, Denis Villeneuve's "Dune" is far and away the best blockbuster of the past few years. There was so much baggage and failure and missed opportunities swirling around "Dune" that it's kind of miraculous that they were able to make something this clear-eyed, thrilling and visually unique. The best part is it's not even finished yet.

5. Drive My Car: There is a tranquility to the Japanese drama "Drive My Car," which filmmaker Ryusuke Hamaguchi adapted from a Haruki Murakami short story about a widowed actor who develops a connection with his chauffeur, while putting together a multilingual production of

Uncle Vanya. Don't be scared off by the three-hour runtime, which lately has seemed to be the exclusive province of bloated epics: Here, it is sublime.

6. Barb and Star go to Vista Del Mar: Writing about the absurd joys of "Barb and Star Go to Vista Del Mar" is almost a disservice to something that just needs to be experienced, preferably in pastel culottes with curlers in your hair and a blended tropical drink in hand. It was a big swing that could have been a disaster. Instead, we got a new comedy classic. Let's just hope it doesn't take Annie Mumolo and Kristen Wiig another 10 years to dream up their next adventure.

7. Luca: This is the only film on the list that we've seen countless times already. It's not exactly by choice, there's a 2-year-old in the equation, but it's not a chore either. In fact, it's a joy to be transported into the Cinque Terra-inspired town of Portorosso to watch a few adolescent sea monsters dream of Vespas and a better future. It also has a tremendous score and a lively soundtrack of mid-century Italian bops.

8. The Power of the Dog: A story about loneliness in the barren Montana frontier of 1925, Jane Campion's stunning and sure-footed

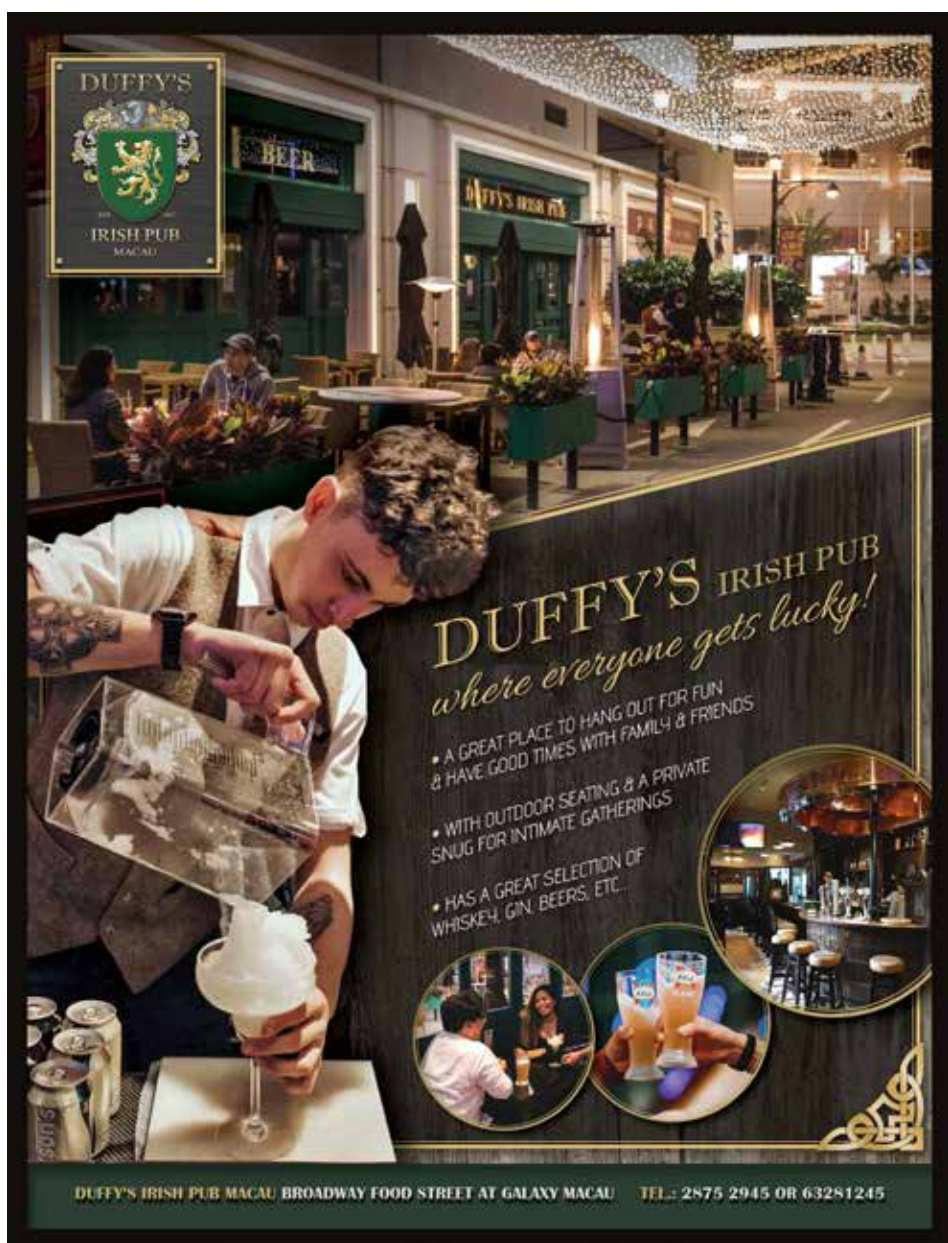
film is as rich and layered as a novel, playing out as a mystery, a Western, and a meditation on masculinity, femininity, class, love and hate. Benedict Cumberbatch's, brilliant, unbathed, casually cruel rancher Phil Burbank is a villain for the ages.

9. The Truffle Hunters: Michael Dweck and Gregory Kershaw's exquisitely charming documentary is about old Italian men who scavenge truffles with faithful canine companions. Their tradition, though, is imperiled by the greed of those who would thwart or even kill the dogs so they can better compete for the high-priced delicacy. With lush, pointillist imagery (and dog cams!), the filmmakers unearth an enchanting, vanishing world. (For a truffle-hunting double feature, pair with "Pig," starring a fabulous Nicholas Cage.)

10. The Hand of God: Autobiographical doesn't feel like a natural mode for Paolo Sorrentino, but that's part of what makes his most personal film so full of wonders. Sorrentino's film, about a childhood in Naples that stretches from the divine to the profane, from bliss to tragedy, is best when he's gazing not at himself as a young man but outward, at his seaside city and the family around him. **MDT/AP**



Renate Reinsve in a scene from "The Worst Person in the World"



FASHION REDEFINING TRADITIONS

LONG-TIME collaborators Canada Goose and Boston-based streetwear brand Concepts have come together for their latest collection with the addition of renowned Japanese fashion brand A BATHING APE. Founded in 1993, BAPE specializes in men's, women's and children's lifestyle and street wear. With its mixture of imported American street and sportswear and pioneering Japanese streetwear, the brand is known for its distinctive BAPE Camo pattern which has been integrated into this new partnership.

The collaboration between Canada Goose, Concepts and BAPE takes streetwear to new heights. Drawing inspiration from Canada Goose's Expedition Parka, Chilliwack Bomber and Crofton Hoody, this collec-

tion is a true celebration of the brand's expertise in protecting from the harshest climates on Earth. Featured throughout the collection, BAPE's signature ABC CAMO is fashioned alongside Canada Goose's Snow Camo, driven by the brand's legacy in performance luxury and extremeweather protection. BAPE's ABC CAMO, the unique pattern with worldwide recognition, was first introduced in 1996, the very same year Concepts was founded.

This collection features three unisex outerwear styles built for cold weather protection and optimal warmth. The Expedition Parka for Concepts x BAPE is a reinterpretation of Canada Goose's iconic Expedition Parka, originally developed for scientists working in Antarctica.



TASTE OF EDESIA

Ritzy Celebration

IRENE SAM, MDT

2022 is here! For this new year's glamorous celebration, The Ritz-Carlton Café, Lai Heen, and The Ritz-Carlton Bar and Lounge have curated options for discerning guests to indulge in. Under the French ambience at The Ritz-Carlton Café, New Year's Eve Dinner includes 6 delightful gourmet courses full of classic European flavours, like Seared Langoustine with Sea Urchin Veloute and Oscietra Caviar, as well as Australian Wagyu M7 Beef Tenderloin and more.

Located on the 51st floor, guests will enjoy the bird's eye view of Macau when celebrating the new beginnings at Lai Heen. The Michelin-starred home of contemporary Cantonese cuisine features 8 gorgeous courses of indulgent flavours such as the Double-boiled Quail and Fish Maw with Fresh Ginseng and 150 grams of Braised Whole Abalone with Pan-seared Foie Gras.

Last but not least, for the countdown party, celebrate with a fantastic 1920s Haute Couture theme at The Ritz-Carlton Bar and Lounge, where one can immerse oneself in the sensual rhythms of our 5-piece local jazz band while indulging in luxe delicacies and selected cocktails.



AD

合夥人 PARTNERS:

官樂怡 Rui José da Cunha °
山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues °
馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata °
趙魯 Zhao Lu °*
馬傑安 João Nogueira Marques
大律師 ASSOCIATES:
高文軒 Adelino Correia °
羅善齡 Zelina Rodrigues *
白秀蘭 Susana Batalha
馬潔冰 Maria João Marques
陶義德 António Isóo de Azeredo
白穎怡 Iclia Berenguel
冼玲鳳 Mariana Afonso Esteves
馬秀文 Sofia Mendes Martins
飛嘉華 Carlos dos Santos Ferreira °
杜力信 Nelson de Azevedo
宋哲言 João Gonçalves Assunção
莫永誠 Rui Velez de Moura
安東尼 António Manuel dos Santos
巴慧雅 Vera Bastos
歐文傑 Miguel Evaristo
陳芷喬 Joana Chan
顏曉容 Teresa Xiaorong Yan
諾瑪莉 Maria Noras
康靜雅 Viviana Hong
梁淑嵐 Ana Leon
黃瀚賢 Frederico Vong
實習律師 TRAINEE LAWYERS:
張偉鴻 Cheong Wai Hong
陳健雄 Eurico Chan
吳露鋒 Ng Teng Fong
戴博晴 Tai Pok Cheng
吳韻愉 Ng Pui U
法律專家 JURISTS:
羅成軒 José J. Rodrigues
斐彥德 Gonçalo Figueiredo
潘卡莉 Candice Pun
陳子健 Kimi Chan
伍福賢 Domingos Ng
劉慧敏 Amanda Liu
楊詩婷 Si Teng leong



To protect the health and safety of our Clients and Staff, we continue implementing prevention measures at the office entrance, as recommended by the local Authorities.

為了保護客戶和員工的健康和安全，我們將繼續按照本地政府的建議在辦公室入口處實施預防措施。

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SINCE 1996

OPINION

Editorial

Paulo Coutinho



IMAGINE

Imagine a world without Covid. And no “religion” too.

Lennon’s hopeful words echo strongly in my mind more than ever four decades after I first heard “Imagine.” Not hard to understand or explain why. We live in a kind of a dystopian world, the polar opposite of John’s utopia, which is the kind of planet humans should aim for. A note about “no religion”; Lennon meant no disrespect for the believers and faithful – he was aiming at the conflicts generated by religions over the times: His song was a hymn to peace and harmony.

The Covidian era is far from over and everywhere commoners, scientists and politicians are realizing that a world without the contagious virus and its army of variants is not foreseeable in near future.

The remedy?

Aside from therapeutic medicines being developed and used in emergency cases, the “cure” is high vaccination rates and herd immunity. There are theories, from scientists in several countries, that Omicron – the uber-contagious variant of the novel coronavirus – may be part of the solution too, if, as it is asserted, that Omicron really is predominantly asymptomatic and/or mild, due to the very low cases of hospitalization in people infected by this latest variant discovered somewhere in South Africa.

That is the news that has come as a relief by the year end, just as the vaccines brought the sigh of relief in Christmas 2020.

And while the world is being affected by the millions, isolated Macau registered three “outbreaks” of less than ten people infected in the community and three instances of mass testing following the contagions – which was seen as a draconian measure of dubious benefit by experts outside government quarters.

In the balance of losses and gains, I would elect three events that marked 2021:

- The arrest of the “king of junkets,” Sun-city Group’s Alvin Chau, and the collapse of an operation involving over 3,000 workers and dozens of companies which led to the closure of most VIP rooms in the city’s casinos.

- The arrest of a former senior government official and two prominent businessmen involved in a web of corruption that embroiled a total of eight individuals so far. Land deals, construction and suspicious donations are in the mix.

- Last but not the least, the announcement of the Intensive Cooperation Zone Macau-Guangdong in Hengqin.

I visited there in early December. There’s not much going on yet, except for formidable infrastructure built in little more than ten years. Also, the pleasant and healthy urban landscape with a striking resemblance to our tiny territory: nothing stands more than a 10 to 15-minute ride away. Is this the key to Macau’s end of the proverbial over-reliance of MSAR’s economy on gaming?

It remains to be seen which of these events, or a combination of them all, will help shape Macau 2022 and beyond.

Imagine.

MEXICO APPROVES USE OF CUBA’S ABDALA CORONAVIRUS VACCINE

Mexico’s health safety council announced that it has approved the use of Cuba’s three-dose Abdala coronavirus vaccine.

The council said it had sufficient evidence the vaccine is safe and effective.

The approval for emergency use does not necessarily mean the Mexican government, which is currently the country’s only

purchaser of vaccines, will acquire or administer Abdala in Mexico.

Mexico has approved 10 vaccines for use, but has made little use of some, like China’s Sinopharm.

Cuba has approved Abdala for use domestically and begun commercial exports of the three-dose vaccine to Vietnam and Venezuela.

THE
BUZZ

AP PHOTO



VIVALDI OPERA GETS PREMIERE IN FERRARA NEARLY 300 YEARS LATE

NICOLE WINFIELD

THE Catholic Church and the northern Italian city of Ferrara made their peace yesterday with Antonio Vivaldi nearly 300 years after the city’s archbishop effectively canceled the staging of one of his operas, sending the famed Baroque composer into debt for his final years in exile.

Ferrara Archbishop Giancarlo Perego attended the ceremony opening Vivaldi’s “Il Farnace” at the city’s public theater, a decision hailed by the theater’s artistic director as a “marvelous gesture” that helps heal the past and highlight one of Vivaldi’s lesser-known works.

“We want to restore to Vivaldi what was taken from him here in Ferrara,” Marcello Corvino told The Associated Press ahead of the premiere of “Il Farnace,” which tells the story of the tragic dynasty of King Pharnaces II.

According to historians, in the late 1730s, Ferrara Cardinal Tommaso Ruffo banned Vivaldi from the city because Vivaldi, an ordained Catholic priest, had stopped celebrating Mass and was said to be in a relationship with one of his singers, Anna Giro. The decision effectively meant the cancellation of the scheduled 1739 Carnival production of Vivaldi’s “Il Farnace,” which had already enjoyed success in Italy and beyond.

In reality, Vivaldi didn’t celebrate Mass because he had long suffered from res-

piratory problems, and his relationship with Giro was like that of any of a composer with his lead singer, while Giro also served as something of a nursemaid to the sickly composer.

The cancellation proved financially disastrous for Vivaldi, Corvino said, since he had paid for the production himself ahead of time and was already experiencing a period of decline as his instrumental works had fallen out of favor.

Vivaldi went into debt and died in 1741 in Vienna. Only after his manuscripts were rediscovered did he earn posthumous fame for “The Four Seasons” and other concertos.

Massimo Faggioli, a Ferrara-born church historian and theologian, said Vivaldi like other artists of his era had enjoyed much more artistic freedom in his native Venice than in places like Ferrara, which had been part of the papal states and under the authority of the pope.

“Vivaldi got away with a lot of things in his life, but at a certain point he couldn’t avoid the Vatican controlled or church controlled culture,” Faggioli said.

Federico Maria Sardelli, a Vivaldi expert who is conducting the opera, said that after Cardinal Ruffo prohibited the Venetian composer from entering Ferrara, Vivaldi initially tried to score the production from afar. He wrote down explicit stage directions as well as expressive and interpretative notations

that he normally would have given his singers in person.

Those notations remain in the manuscript prepared for the Ferrara production, which was never staged. Those notations provided guidance for the opera opening yesterday for a two-night run, Sardelli said.

“We have this treasure, this score, which is a mirror of Vivaldi’s process,” he said. “He wrote incredible things that no Baroque composer ever wrote in a score because they would say it in person. We have the fortune of having the voice of Vivaldi written down on this score.”

At a conference at the theater before the premiere, Sardelli gave the current Ferrara archbishop, Perego, a bound copy of the score.

“With this gesture, we want to heal a fracture that needed to be healed,” Sardelli said.

Perego, for his part, accepted the score and admitted that Cardinal Ruffo had taken a decision against Vivaldi that was based on rumor rather than fact. He noted that even Vivaldi’s parish priest had attested to the “morality” of the priest-composer in a letter to Ruffo and that Giro was known to be a woman of “virtue and faith.”

While insisting Ruffo had merely sought to promote “public morality,” Perego said the lesson of Vivaldi, “Il Farnace” and Ferrara was one that Pope Francis often makes: “The tongue kills more than the sword.”

MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Israel An Israeli and three Palestinians were wounded yesterday in the first exchange of fire in months on the Gaza frontier. The violence came as Israel announced measures aimed at improving living conditions in the occupied West Bank after a rare meeting of top officials. Israel has announced a number of measures in recent months it says are aimed at easing tensions, but they have had little visible impact on the ground, where attacks by both Israeli settlers and Palestinians are on the rise.

AP PHOTO



US navy vessels seized 385 kilograms of heroin in the Arabian Sea worth some \$4 million, in a major bust by the international maritime operation in the region, officials said yesterday. The USS Tempest and USS Typhoon seized the drugs hidden aboard a stateless fishing vessel plying Mideast waters, the international task force said in a statement. The seizure took place on Monday.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday that Russia and Belarus will hold joint war games early next year. Putin welcomed Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko’s proposal to hold another round of military drills, saying that they could be held in February or March. Speaking during a meeting with Lukashenko in St. Petersburg, he added that military officials will coordinate details.

HOLIDAY TIMES

Macau Daily Times will not be published during the holiday. The Times will be back on the stands on Tuesday January 4. However the MDT website will be updated with breaking news during the recess period. We wish our readers, advertisers and friends the best of times. Happy New Year!