



MORTGAGE LOANS FOR RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE HAVE RECORDED SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN NOVEMBER 2021: AMCM

P4

SURVEY: NEARLY 50% OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCE ANXIETY AND STRESS

P2

MACAU AND ZHUHAI HELD FIRST JOINT INVESTMENT EVENT IN HENGQIN

P4



AP PHOTO



Japan will keep its borders closed to most foreign citizens through February as it attempts to accelerate coronavirus booster shots for elderly people and expand hospital capacity to cope with the rapidly spreading omicron variant, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said yesterday. Kishida said the stringent border controls have helped slow the variant's spread and "bought time" to prepare for an imminent surge.

AP PHOTO



South Korean emergency officials yesterday said that at least six people were missing and dozens of nearby households forced to evacuate following the partial collapse of a high-rise apartment building that was under construction in the city of Gwangju. Jo Ho-ik, a Gwangju fire department official, said rescue workers temporarily stopped searching in the evening for the missing people — believed to be all construction workers on the site — because of concerns that the structure could crumble further.

AP PHOTO



Kazakhstan The president announced yesterday that a Russia-led security alliance will start pulling out its troops from the country in two days after completing its mission. The mostly Russian troops were deployed to Kazakhstan last week by the Collective Security Treaty Organization, a military alliance of six former Soviet states, at the president's request amid the worst public unrest the former Soviet nation has faced since gaining independence 30 years ago.

More on backpage

EQUAL ODDS

Amid concession renewal uncertainty, Fitch Ratings says Western operators will not be 'treated differently'

P3



BEIJING INVESTIGATES OVER 17,000 CROSS-BORDER GAMBLING OPS

P3

AP PHOTO



ANYANG CHINA LOCKS DOWN THIRD CITY AMID OMICRON SURGE

P6

EV ASSOCIATION SEEKS COOPERATION IN SUZHOU

The Macau Electric Vehicles Association (MEVA) recently visited the Suzhou plant of Chinese motor vehicle manufacturer Qiantu. The parties seek to collaborate in the Guangdong-Macau Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin with regard to marketing, sale space and racing. The sale of Qiantu vehicles in Macau and the integration of Macau's racing culture into the vehicles' design were also discussed. A local comic author has entered into an agreement with the brand to release co-branded merchandise in Shanghai and Macau.

FIRE BUREAU HOSTS SESSIONS TO TRAIN FIRE SAFETY MANAGER

As a new law on fire safety will come into effect in August, the Fire Services Bureau (CB) has recently organized workshops targeting local associations. The new law requires all buildings to have a fire safety manager accredited by the CB. At the sessions, the CB highlights focal points of the new law, such as how security companies can help the CB conduct checks, the enforcement scheme stipulated in the new law and the operational instructions for fire safety equipment. The workshops are open to the public, the CB added.

TOP COURT RULES COMPENSATION SHOULD BE PROPORTIONATE TO ACTUAL LOSS

Final judgement has been passed on the case of a family dispute regarding the sale of a property in 2014 which saw the mother suing her son and daughter-in-law for compensation as the couple sold the property, which was legally co-owned by the mother and her son, without the mother's consent. The property was sold for MOP3.19 million. The first court ruled that the son and his wife should pay the mother MOP3 million in compensation and legal interests. After an appeal was not entertained by the second court, the case was appealed to the top court, which upheld the judgment of the first court and noted that the property could have been sold for at least MOP5.99 million.

SURVEY FINDS HIGHER LEVEL OF ANXIETY AMONG STUDENTS

ANTHONY LAM

NEARLY 50% of the local population experience anxiety and stress at moderate or higher intensity, according to the results of a recent survey conducted by the General Union of Neighborhood Associations (UGAMM).

The survey was conducted in the form of a self-reported questionnaire and received 721 valid responses from local residents aged over 15 years. The highest intensity level for self-reported anxiety in the survey corresponded to a rating of 10.

The survey results revealed that the primary cause of stress is economic or financial pressure, followed by problems at work and school.

From the valid responses, the average score for the 394 employed respondents was 6.33 points, indicating an intensity level slightly above par. For student respondents, the average for 138 respondents was 7.54 points, indicating a relatively high intensity. The average for the 20 respondents in the unemployed group was 6.2 points.

Speaking on the sidelines of the announcement of results, Cheong Un Si, deputy director of

social services of the UGAMM, observed that the average intensity level rated by local students was higher than that reported by non-students, both employed and unemployed.

She believes that several factors contributed to the higher levels, including concerns regarding educational prospects, pressure from extra-curricular activities, the desire to improve competitiveness and irregular school suspensions amid the pandemic.

She added that certain societal values may also have contributed to stress among students, such as the mentality of "winning at the starting grid," referring to adults' desire to equip children to secure early victories in life.

Schools operated by the UGAMM, she revealed, have received more than 140 requests for assistance due to emotional issues during the 19/20 academic year. The figure soared to more than 300 in the following academic year. The requests included the need for assistance with negative emotions and depression, among others.

The official also pointed out that less than 10% of respondents reported finding support when they felt emotional or stressed



and that they would primarily seek help from family and friends.

However, Cheong noted that, as family and friends may lack the professional knowledge required to help, the city should increase efforts to support the mental health of local residents. Authorities should also improve the four-tier collaborative emotional support scheme.

In addition, she recommended

that the government implement more effective family-friendly policies, such as encouraging activities and interactions between parents and children to help reduce the stress levels of local residents.

She also pointed out that family-friendly policies and encouraging residents to participate in sporting activities would also help to improve emotional wellbeing.

Gov't says footprint record will eventually be mandatory

THE Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong, said in a recent interview that the footprint tracing function will eventually become mandatory, although the roll-out will be gradual. Footprint recording is a new function introduced by the government to allow users to record their movements. QR codes will be rolled out in different places across the city for users to scan and record their mo-

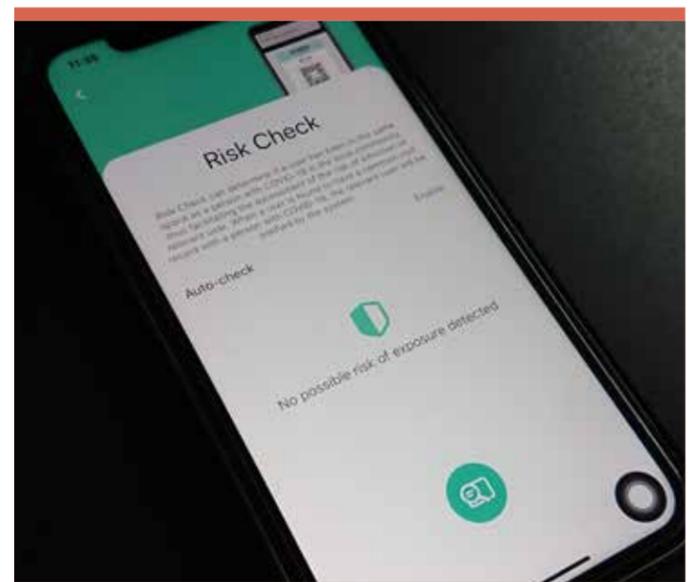
vements. Participation in the footprint record remains voluntary for the time being. IT professionals have raised warnings about possible security flaws in the function, including the risk of personal data leaks.

Two weeks ago, the government affirmed that public facilities will continue to allow entry of those who do not track their itinerary with the health code app,

Currently, the only locations in Macau

where QR codes can be scanned to track movements are government departments, social service facilities, medical clinics run by the Health Bureau and public buses.

Health authorities are gradually expanding the number of locations with QR tracking codes, and hope to expand to food and beverage establishments, other medical facilities and entertainment venues all over Macau by the end of January. **AL**



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DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR Lynzy Valles
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS Alex Torrão, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Emilie Tran, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Viviana Segui
DESIGNERS Eva Bucho, Miguel Bandeira | **ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS** JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | **NEWS AGENCIES** Associated Press, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua
SECRETARY Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com
OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com
ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR
Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84
Advertisement advertising@macaudailytimes.com
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FITCH RATINGS

Amid concession uncertainty, Western operators will not be 'treated differently'

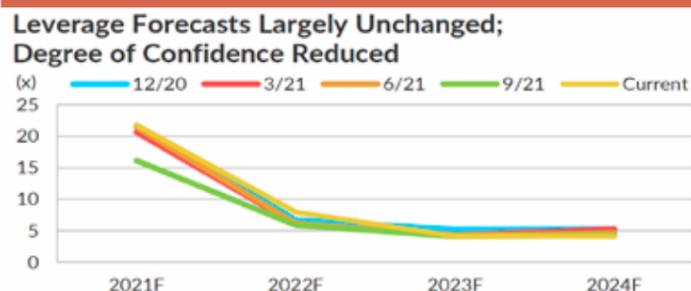
LYNZY VALLES

THERE is no obvious evidence yet that Western-controlled Macau gaming operators will be treated differently by the mainland government, according to a report issued by Fitch Ratings.

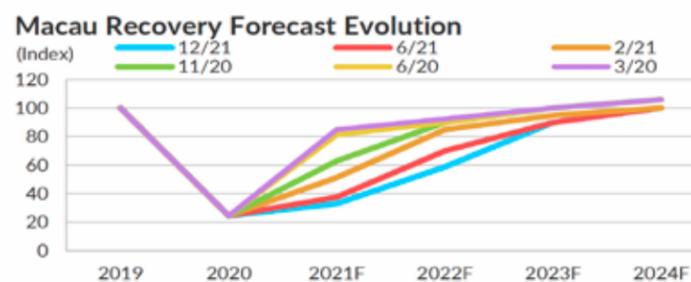
The American credit rating agency noted that the operating subsidiaries, who are large local employers, are ultimately owned by Hong Kong listed public entities and have invested "tens of billions of U.S. dollars in capital and consistently promoted the government's social goals."

The presence of influential local and Chinese figures on the Hong Kong listed boards of directors, such as Pansy Ho for MGM China, also play a part.

Macau is currently grappling with the issue of concession renewals, with the Chief Executive not ruling out the possibility of extending the expiry date of licenses as the gaming law amendment process remains ongoing. No updates have been issued following the release of the public consultation report on the gaming law amendment, as the law is currently being drafted.



F - Forecast. Note: Includes Las Vegas Sands, MGM Resorts, Wynn Resorts, Melco Resorts & Entertainment, and SJM Holdings. Leverage defined as Total Gross Debt/Operating EBITDA After Minority Distributions. Source: Fitch Ratings.



However, "the tone of the consultation summary report supports Fitch's underlying assumption that the process will take a pragmatic approach and be resolved by the expiration date," the firm stated.

Meanwhile, SAR is also grappling with the problem of tourism recovery, and junket and VIP headwinds following the arrest of junket mogul Alvin Chau over illicit gambling and money laundering charges.

Experts have previously told the Times that the high-profile arrest, along with Suncity's subsequent closure in December 2021, suggests that the Beijing and Macau governments will no longer allow the junket model to continue operating in its current form and will act to prevent wide-scale infringement of Chinese capital controls.

Noting these factors, Fitch Ratings placed Macau operators and

their respective credit complexes on Rating Watch Negative (RWN) back in December, given the imminent regulatory risk arising from the expiration of gaming concessions on June 26.

However, the firm expects further clarity to emerge this year in relation to these regulatory issues (although this is not guaranteed) and the sustainability of mainland Chinese visitors.

RNW APPROPRIATE UNTIL CONCESSIONS SECURED

Fitch is confident that Macau operators have been supportive of broader local policy goals, adding that these operators have ensured employment throughout the pandemic "despite meaningfully reduced revenue and paying billions in US dollar-equivalent gaming taxes over the years."

Although operators have been given a RWN, Fitch said it will "look to resolve the RWNs once the government clarifies the new concession regulatory environment and there is greater certainty that an existing concessionaire has secured a new concession."

Until there is greater certainty on these two items, the RWN will likely remain appropriate, the firm added.

OUTBOUND CHINESE TRAVEL

Macau gaming operators have bet on a slow recovery from the pandemic. With the zero-Covid policy that both Macau and Hong Kong adopted from Beijing, 2022 visitor prospects remain extremely volatile given the temporary lockdowns that will occur whenever a Covid case arises.

According to Fitch, meaningful outbound Chinese travel should not be expected until at least 2023, given the pursuit of a zero-Covid policy, ongoing risk of new variants, and key political events in 2022. This includes Beijing's Winter Olympics in February and the 2022 Chinese Communist Party National Party Congress set for autumn.

"The reputational risk of abandoning such a policy ahead of key events that attract international media is likely too great," the firm added.

Notably, the SARs have adopted China's strict health codes and further travel integration is expected during 2022. Since Macau's borders have remained closed except for visitors from mainland China and Hong Kong, Fitch has stressed that frictionless and quarantine-free travel would be a material positive for the gaming industry.

CHINA INVESTIGATES OVER 17,000 INSTANCES OF CROSS-BORDER GAMBLING

CHINA investigated over 17,000 instances of illegal cross-border gambling in 2021, according to the Ministry of Public Security.

Last June, the country announced that the government would intensify its targeted crackdown on cross-border online gambling activities. This involved coordinated efforts with various departments including the Ministry of Public Security to police online platforms, websites and mobile applications associated with gambling, with a focus on online livestreaming platforms, short videos, and online forums and websites.

The ministry stated in a report that it had arrested more than 80,000 suspects last year under increased measures aimed at cracking down on criminal activity.

2,200 online gambling platforms were taken down, as well as 1,600 illegal payment platforms and underground



banks, 930 illegal technical service teams and 1,500 gambling promotion platforms.

"Over the past year, the Ministry of Public Security partnered with the relevant ministries to place the crackdown and governance of cross-border gambling in full swing by

multiple means, successfully wiping out gambling recruitment and attraction networks, money laundering and other illegal monetary channels of many large, overseas gambling groups in China," the ministry stated, as cited in a report issued by Gambling Insider. LV

38% OF JUNKET WORKERS ATTENDED DSAL'S JOB-MATCHING SESSIONS

RENATO MARQUES

AS of January 7, 389 people (37.5%) out of 1,036 total candidates participated in job-matching sessions specifically organized by the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) exclusively for dismissed staff members of gaming promotion companies (junkets), the DSAL announced in a statement.

The bureau has organized seven specialized job-matching sessions thus far, aiming to reemploy 1,036 candidates who sought DSAL's assistance after losing their jobs following the closure of several casino VIP rooms.

DSAL also said that it will continue to monitor the results of the matching sessions, as well as the situation of an undisclosed number of candidates who are still waiting for a session. The bureau announced that the next sessions will be held between January 17 and 25 and will continue to be aimed at finding jobs for the dismissed workers.

The jobs available in the seven matching sessions included various positions for drivers, customer service staff, management staff and cooks. These job-matching sessions were held with the gaming concessionaires. In the same state-

ment, the DSAL urged workers to "do their best to collaborate with the referrals made by DSAL and ascribe importance to all interviews to increase hiring opportunities." The bureau added that the unemployed workers should "adjust their mindset, find a job first and then try to find a new career path," and "have the courage to get to know and experience different jobs to increase the chance of being hired."

DSAL also promised to continue to pursue the protection of labor rights for the dismissed workers from their previous employer.

MORTGAGE LOANS ON THE RISE AT END OF 2021, COMMERCIAL LOANS SKYROCKET

RENATO MARQUES

MORTGAGE loans for both residential and commercial real estate have recorded significant growth in November 2021, according to statistics released yesterday by the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM).

New approvals of residential mortgage loans (RMLs) and commercial real estate loans (CRELs) both increased in November 2021, with new RMLs approved by local banks in particular registering an increase of 35.2% month-on-month to MOP3.15 billion.

The AMCM also noted that MOP3.10 billion worth of RMLs were approved for local residents, representing 98.5% of the total. Meanwhile, the amount of loans granted to non-residents also increased to MOP48.7 million.

The monthly average of new RMLs approved across September to November 2021 was MOP3 billion, a decrease of 3.5% from the previous period (August to October 2021).

New RMLs collateralized by uncompleted units (i.e. equitable mortgages) also increased by 33% month-on-month to MOP271.8 million. When compared on an annual basis, the amount of new equitable mortgages approved dropped by 13.6%.

COMMERCIAL LOANS SOAR EXPONENTIALLY

New CRELs registered in November last year recorded an exponential increase of 547.7% month-on-month to a total



of MOP12.71 billion, AMCM reported.

New CRELs to residents increased by 552.3% to MOP12.69 billion, amounting to 99.9% of the total.

Despite accounting for just 0.1% of the total, CRELs approved to non-residents also increased by 10.2% month-on-month to MOP18.6 million.

The monthly average of new CRELs approved between September and November 2021 was MOP5.9 billion, an increase of 99.4% compared with the previous period (August to October 2021).

OUTSTANDING BALANCES WITH SLIGHT INCREASES

The outstanding balances for both RMLs and CRELs recorded slight increases in November last year, with the

outstanding value of RMLs growing by 0.8% month-on-month or 1.8% year-on-year to MOP239.0 billion.

When compared with the previous month, outstanding RMLs to residents and non-residents rose by 0.8% and 0.6% respectively.

The outstanding balance for the CRELs saw a slight increase by 0.3% from the previous month, however dropped by 8% when compared year-on-year with the same month in 2020.

The total outstanding balance of CRELs was MOP159.6 billion at the end of November.

Compared with a month earlier, outstanding CRELs to residents increased by 0.3%, while those to non-residents edged down by 0.1%.

HENGQIN

Macau and Zhuhai held first joint investment matchmaking event

AN investment matchmaking activity was recently held for the first time by the Economic Development Bureau of the Guangdong-Macao In-depth Cooperation Zone and Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM).

During the event, representatives from both Hengqin and Macau introduced the investment environment of the Cooperation Zone and Macau to 40 quality enterprises in various fields including biotechnology, third party medical examination, integrated circuit chips design, smart voice and AI.

Against the backdrop of the rapid development of



the Cooperation Zone, this event aims to attract quality projects and conduct international cooperation through Macau playing its role as a window and a bridge to the outside world.

"At present, Macau and Hengqin are striving to foster new industries to boost the SAR's appropriate economic diversification. And

with the utmost sincerity we welcome more and more strategic investors and companies to do business and invest here in the hope of bolstering the industrial development in Macau and Hengqin," said Li Ziwei, acting director of the Cooperation Zone's economic development bureau.

Zhang Ge, acting deputy

director of the Cooperation Zone's economic development bureau and Chen Jiaqi, IPIM senior manager briefed the attendees about the industrial policies, unique resources and investment environment in Hengqin and Macau respectively.

Through this activity, the entrepreneurs have gained an in-depth understanding of the general business environment and investment policies in the Cooperation Zone and the Macau SAR. It has also laid a solid foundation for the two areas to establish a joint investment attraction working mechanism and co-organize global investment promotion activities in the future.

MDT/NEWSGD

CRIME

WOMEN LOSE OVER HALF A MILLION PATACAS IN BITCOIN SCAM

RENATO MARQUES

TWO local women, aged 27 and 30 years old, have reported having been involved in a scam related to investments in cryptocurrency, the Judiciary Police (PJ) announced yesterday.

Although their cases are similar, they have made separate reports regarding different mobile apps. The PJ has not yet been able to establish a connection between them.

Still, the cases are similar, with both victims having been lured into the investment scheme through a romantic partner that they found online via a communication app.

After some time, the perpetrators, posing as male romantic interests, introduced the victims to a so-called investment scheme in Bitcoin. The first woman invested a total of

HKD129,109 through an app called PWA Coin, while the second woman invested as much as HKD390,000 using an app called R Coin.

Both women reported that they lost access to the app after some time, and also lost contact with the men they had been chatting with, losing all their invested money.

In an unrelated story, the PJ also reported that a resident lost a total of 19,000 patacas in a scam over WeChat.

The man had transferred money to a person using the app's payment system when he was contacted by someone claiming to be from a law enforcement agency who said that the transfer had been flagged as suspicious.

He was then tricked into sending the funds into a different account, purportedly for investigation, losing all his money as a result.

GOV'T RECEIVES 10 BIDS FOR MANAGEMENT OF FOUR PUBLIC CAR PARKS

THE government has received 10 bids for the management and operation of four public car parks, the Transport Bureau (DSAT) stated.

After preliminary analysis, the DSAT immediately approved nine of the bids while providing conditional acceptance for another.

The proposed fees ranged between MOP1,868,000 and MOP5,680,000 for every three months of operation.

On the line are bids for the management and operation of the public parking lots of Nam Van (Pak Wu), Rua de João Lecaros car park, the car park of the Was-

tewater Treatment Plant, and the heavy vehicles parking lot of the Estrada Flor de Lótus in Cotai.

According to a statement from DSAT, the purpose of the public tender is to standardize the management of several public car parks, thereby allowing the managing companies to combine the operations of profitable car parks with those that are less profitable to ensure the smoother operation and management of all car parks.

The tender aims to attribute concessions for the management and operation of the four car parks, valid for a period of six years. **RM**



Patriotic Macau history film premieres at MGM

ANTHONY LAM

A film celebrating the 500 known years of Macau has been completed and was screened for the first time yesterday. The film takes the form of a

montage highlighting fiber pen drawings by local veteran artist and executive producer, Lok Hei. Although the film was completed in September last year, the curation of drawings is ongoing. According to Lok, he first began drawing the 100-meter-

-long artwork in 2014, after celebrating the 15th day of the Lunar New Year, dubbed Chinese Valentine's Day. He completed the artwork at the end of September that year, "right before the National Day" as he put it.

The curation was not triggered by this film, but by a documentary series curated by a crew in mainland China who wanted to present Macau's history to the vast audience in the country. Each component drawing measures one meter and is connected as a cluster, each 10 meters. The idea of transforming it into a film started to incubate as Lok finished the artwork. Lok revealed that given the film revisited events taking place as early as the 1600s, it was particularly difficult to obtain sufficient details to inform both

his drawings and the film. Many details have been lost and become less reliable with time, so decisions on what to include in the curation were indeed challenging. Lok explained that the contents of the film were the result of a collective decision made by the crew. "People have asked me why [some] historic individuals were included in the film but not others. I have to say that's because we could not find sufficient supporting evidence about the other personages to get them included in the film," Lok said. The 28-minute film chronicles the transformation of Macau over the centuries. It comes in a Cantonese version with Chinese and Portuguese subtitles, and a Mandarin version with Chinese and English subtitles. Audiences can marvel at the entrancing visual effect of the 900-square-meter ultra-HD LED screen at MGM Theater. The film, enriched by compendious narration and original background music, will enlighten audiences with its artistic appeal and gripping depictions of Macau's history. The film will be on view at MGM Theater from January 23 to the end of 2022. Tickets can be reserved on the MGM website.

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ANYANG

AUTHORITIES LOCK DOWN THIRD CITY, RAISING AFFECTED TO 20 MILLION

KEN MORITSUGU, BEIJING

A third Chinese city has locked down its residents because of a COVID-19 outbreak, raising the number confined to their homes in China to about 20 million people.

The lockdown of Anyang, home to 5.5 million people, was announced late Monday after two cases of the omicron variant were reported. Residents are not allowed to go out and stores have been ordered shut except those selling necessities.

Another 13 million people have been partially locked down in Xi'an for nearly three weeks, and 1.1 million more in Yuzhou for more than a week. It wasn't clear how long the lockdown of Anyang would last, as it was announced as a measure to facilitate mass testing of residents, which is standard procedure in China's strategy of identifying and isolating infected people as quickly as possible.

The lockdowns are the broadest since the shutting down of Wuhan and most of the rest of Hubei province in early 2020 at the start of the pandemic. Since then, China's approach has evolved into one of targeting smaller areas hit by outbreaks for lockdowns.

The approach of the Winter Olympics, which open Feb. 4 in Beijing, and the emergence of omicron have brought back citywide lockdowns in a bid to snuff out outbreaks and prevent them



A volunteer wearing a face mask to protect from the coronavirus uses a loud speaker to give advice to masked residents as they line up for the coronavirus test during a mass testing in Tianjin

from spreading to other parts of China.

A Beijing Olympics official responsible for disease control, Huang Chun, said organizers are counting on the cooperation of athletes and officials to prevent an outbreak that could affect participation.

"If the mass cluster transmission happens, it will impact the

Games and the schedule for sure," Huang said. "The worst scenario, if it happens, is independent of man's will, so we leave our options open."

In Hong Kong, city leader Carrie Lam announced the closure of kindergartens and primary schools after infections were reported in students. Schools are to close by Friday and remain shut

until at least the Lunar New Year holiday in the first week of February.

The semiautonomous Chinese city has tightened pandemic-related restrictions in recent days after discovering the omicron variant had spread beyond people arriving from overseas.

The Anyang omicron cases are believed to be linked to two other

cases found Saturday in Tianjin. It appears to be the first time omicron has spread in mainland China beyond people who arrived from abroad and their immediate contacts.

Anyang is an important archeological site, the ancient capital of the Shang dynasty and where the earliest Chinese writing has been found on what are called oracle bones.

The city said that non-essential vehicles are banned from streets in a lockdown notice shared online by state media late Monday. The number of cases is still relatively low, with 58 new ones confirmed from the start of Monday to 8 a.m. Tuesday morning.

Tianjin, a major port that is less than an hour from Beijing by high-speed rail, has locked down only affected areas as it carries out mass testing. As of noon Tuesday, 97 people had tested positive in the city of 14 million people: 49 with symptoms, 15 without symptoms and 33 awaiting further verification.

Xi'an and Yuzhou are both battling the delta variant and neither has reported any omicron cases.

More than 2,000 people have been infected in Xi'an in China's largest outbreak since the initial one in Wuhan. The ancient capital is a popular tourist stop that is home to the Terracotta Warriors ruins and also a Samsung computer chip factory.

Authorities have credited the lockdown with curtailing the spread, though it disrupted lives and emergency medical treatment for some. The city reported 13 new cases in the latest 24 hour period, down from more than a hundred a day at the peak of the outbreak. MDT/AP

MAJ. GEN. PENG JINGTANG

Former Xinjiang official takes charge of Hong Kong garrison

CHINA'S military says the former head of internal security in the Xinjiang region will lead the People's Liberation Army's garrison in Hong Kong, in the latest of a series of moves aimed at bringing the semiautonomous city under Beijing's tight control.

A brief report on the Defense Ministry's website this week said Maj. Gen. Peng Jingtang's appointment had been signed by president, Communist Party leader and PLA commander Xi Jinping.

It said Peng had pledged to "perform defense duties in accordance with the law, resolutely defend national sovereignty, security and development interests, and firmly safeguard Hong Kong's long-term prosperi-

ty and stability."

Peng met Monday morning with Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam, who told him her government would work with the garrison to "jointly safeguard the sovereignty, security and development interests of the nation and help maintain the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong," according to a government news release.

The move follows China's stamping out of political opposition and curtailing free speech in the city, a former British colony that was promised it would keep its civil liberties and independent legal system intact for 50 years following the handover to Chinese control in 1997.

China imposed a sweeping National Security Law on Hong Kong following anti-government protests in 2019, resulting in the imprisonment, intimidation and exile of most opposition voices. Independent media outlets have been raided and forced into closure through seizure of assets or threats of prosecution.

Candidates considered insufficiently loyal to Beijing were barred from running in elections for the local Legislative Council.

From 2018, Peng commanded the paramilitary People's Armed Police force in Xinjiang, where China has detained hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs and other members of Muslim minority groups in political reeducation camps. The vast



region remains enveloped in a security blanket that controls most aspects of the lives of its Muslim residents.

The U.S. and others have labeled the campaign as genocide, while China says all participants in

what it describes as a push for job training and de-radicalization have now graduated. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



South Korean army K-9 self-propelled howitzers prepare to move in Paju, near the border with North Korea, yesterday

North Korea fires possible missile into sea amid stalled talks

KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

NORTH Korea yesterday fired what appeared to be a ballistic missile into its eastern sea, its second launch in a week, following leader Kim Jong Un's calls to expand its nuclear weapons program in defiance of international opposition.

The launches follow a series of weapons tests in 2021 that underscored how North Korea is continuing to expand its military capabilities during a self-imposed pandemic lockdown and deadlocked nuclear talks with the United States.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said North Korea fired what likely was a ballistic missile from the area of its northern Jagang province. It said the weapon flew 700 kilometers at a maximum speed of around Mach 10 before landing in waters off its eastern coast, demonstrating a more advanced capability than North Korea's launch last week.

The North's state media described the earlier launch as a successful test of a hypersonic missile, a type of weaponry it claimed to have first tested in September.

South Korean officials didn't provide a specific assessment of the missile type, but some experts said North Korea may have tested its purported hypersonic missile again in response to the South Korean military playing down its previous test.

Japan's Defense Ministry said

the suspected ballistic missile landed outside the country's exclusive economic zone.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said officials were checking the safety of ships and aircraft around Japan, but there were no immediate reports of disruptions or damage.

"It is extremely regrettable that North Korea has continued to fire" missiles so soon after the U.N. Security Council discussed its response to the North's earlier launch, Kishida said.

The Security Council held closed-door consultations on Monday on last week's launch, but took no action. Ahead of the talks, the U.S. and five allies issued a statement urging North Korea to abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

South Korea's presidential office said yesterday's launch was discussed at an emergency National Security Council meeting, whose members have urged North Korea to return to talks. President Moon Jae-in expressed concern that Pyongyang was dialing up its testing activity ahead of the South's presidential elections in March.

The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said the launch did not pose an "immediate threat to U.S. personnel or territory, or to our allies."

Still, the launch corresponded with an order issued to ground some flights on the U.S. West Coast.

KCRA, a television station in Sacramento, California, quoted officials at both its local airport and San Francisco International Airport as saying flights stopped for around five minutes at 2:30 p.m. local time, which was just minutes after the launch. They attributed the stop to an order by the Federal Aviation Administration.

President Moon expressed concern that Pyongyang was dialing up its testing activity ahead of the South's presidential elections in March

Air-traffic controllers in other West Coast areas similarly ordered aircraft down, according to recordings shared online. A San Francisco air traffic controller ordered flights to avoid its airspace and not take off or land around the time without explaining why, according to a recording by the website LiveATC.net.

"Things are changing really quick," the air traffic controller said in the recording, adding later: "I just heard something about ground-stopping all aircraft, so I don't know anything, just hold tight there."

An air-traffic controller at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport similarly told aircraft in the region they received

an order for a "ground stop, all aircraft, all airports." Air traffic controllers at Los Angeles International Airport also acknowledged receiving an order to stop departures at the same time, without explanation, according to another recording.

The FAA did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the ground stop.

The launch came six days after North Korea fired a missile into the sea in what it described as a successful test of a hypersonic missile.

Seoul's Defense Ministry said after that test that North Korea had exaggerated its capabilities and had tested a conventional ballistic missile the South was capable of intercepting.

The ministry said it doubts that North Korea has acquired the technologies needed for a hypersonic weapon.

Analyst Cheong Seong-Chang at South Korea's Sejong Institute said the North's leadership would have been "enraged" by South Korea's assessment of last week's launch and may have planned a series of tests in a push to make its threat credible.

Hypersonic weapons, which fly at speeds in excess of Mach 5, or five times the speed of sound, could pose a crucial challenge to missile defense systems because of their speed and maneuverability. Such weapons were on a wish-list of sophisticated military assets Kim unveiled last year along with

multi-warhead missiles, spy satellites, solid-fueled long-range missiles and submarine-launched nuclear missiles.

Experts say North Korea is likely years away from acquiring a credible hypersonic system.

North Korea's previous test on Jan. 5 came days after Kim vowed during a key political conference to bolster his military forces, even as the nation grapples with pandemic-related difficulties that have further strained its economy, crippled by U.S.-led sanctions over its nuclear program.

The setbacks have left Kim with little to show for his diplomacy with former U.S. President Donald Trump, which derailed after their second meeting in 2019 when the Americans rejected North Korea's demand for major sanctions relief in exchange for a partial surrender of its nuclear capabilities.

The Biden administration, whose policies have reflected a broader shift in U.S. focus from counterterrorism and so-called rogue states like North Korea and Iran to confronting a near-peer adversary in China, has said it's willing to resume talks with North Korea "anywhere and at any time" without preconditions.

But North Korea has so far rejected the idea of open-ended talks, saying the U.S. must first withdraw its "hostile policy," a term the North mainly uses to describe the sanctions and joint U.S.-South Korea military drills.

"Even with North Korea's pandemic border lockdowns restricting trade and diplomacy, Pyongyang is determined to run an arms race against Seoul and deny Washington the luxury of focusing on Russia and China," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul. **MDT/AP**

NICARAGUA

Ortega sworn in for fourth straight term as president

NICARAGUA President Daniel Ortega was sworn in for a fourth consecutive term yesterday [Macau time] following elections considered rigged and on a day marked by sanctions from the United States and European Union against members of his government.

Alongside him was first lady Rosario Murillo, sworn in for her second term as his vice president.

"We are going to continue fighting to defend the people so they have health care, education and housing," the former Sandinista commander said in the capital's Revolution Plaza filled with the waving flags of his party.

Ortega, 76, and Murillo, 70, oversaw the jailing of opposition leaders, including seven potential challengers for the presidency, months before the November election. They have remained defiant under foreign pressure.

On Monday evening, Ortega called for the lifting of sanctions against Venezuela and Cuba — both of whose leaders attended the event — and said U.S. President "has more than 700 political prisoners" in reference to those jailed in relation to the storming of the U.S. capitol a year ago.

Ortega maintains that huge street protests against his government in April 2018 were an attempt to overthrow his government with foreign backing.

Earlier Monday, the U.S. Treasury Department slapped sanctions on more Nicaraguan officials.

The Treasury Department announced it will freeze the U.S. assets of the defense minister and five other officials in the army, telecom and mining sectors. As with dozens of Nicaraguan officials already under sanctions, U.S. citizens will be prohibited from having dealings with them.

"Since April 2018, the Ortega-Murillo regime has cracked down on



Neighbors watch the inauguration of President Daniel Ortega, on a giant screen at a park in the Julio Buitrago neighborhood of Managua

political opposition and public demonstrations, leading to more than 300 deaths, 2,000 injuries, and the imprisonment of hundreds of political and civil society actors," according to a Treasury Department statement. "More than 100,000 Nicaraguans have since fled the country."

The State Department said Nicaragua "continues to hold 170 political prisoners, with many of those detained suffering from a lack of adequate food and proper medical care."

The State Department is also imposing visa restrictions on 116 individuals linked to the Ortega regime, "including mayors, prosecutors, university administrators, as well as police, prison, and military officials."

"Ortega's corrupt security and judicial system arrested these individuals for practicing independent journalism, working for civil society organizations, seeking to compete in elections, and publicly expressing an opinion contrary to government orthodoxy, among other activities considered normal in a free society," the State Department wrote.

"President Ortega will inaugurate himself for a new presidential term today, but the pre-deter-

mined election he staged on November 7 does not provide him with a new democratic mandate," according to the statement. "Only free and fair elections can do that."

Ortega was elected to a fourth consecutive term in Nov. 7 elections that were broadly criticized as a farce after seven likely challengers to Ortega were arrested and jailed in the months prior to the vote. His inauguration ceremony was expected to be held later Monday.

With all government institutions firmly within Ortega's grasp and the opposition exiled, jailed or in hiding, the 75-year-old leader eroded what hope remained the country could soon return to a democratic path. Instead, he appeared poised to test the international community's resolve and continue thumbing his nose at their targeted sanctions and statements of disapproval.

The Ortega regime has been hit by rounds of condemnation and sanctions since the vote.

Nicaragua's government announced in November it will withdraw from the Organization of American States, after the regional body accused Ortega's government of acts of repression and rigging the election.

The OAS General Assembly voted to condemn the elections, saying they "were not free, fair or transparent, and lack democratic legitimacy."

Twenty-five countries in the Americas voted in favor of the resolution, while seven — including Mexico — abstained. Only Nicaragua voted against it.

Ortega's defiant stance has placed Latin American governments in the dilemma of deciding whether to send representatives to the inauguration ceremony.

The Mexican government, for example, flip-flopped repeatedly Sunday and Monday on whether it would send anybody.

On Sunday, Mexico said it would send a mid-level foreign relations official, then said it wouldn't. President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said Monday that he wasn't sure, then corrected and said he would send the charge d'affaires at the Mexican Embassy in Managua.

The list of those expected to attend included representatives from China, North Korea, Iran, Russia and Syria. Venezuela President Nicolas Maduro and Cuba President Miguel Díaz-Canel also attended. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1976 CRIME WRITER AGATHA CHRISTIE DIES

The most popular novelist in the world, Dame Agatha Christie, has died leaving rumours of a multi-million pound fortune and a final book waiting to be published.

The British author, who sold an estimated 300 million books during her lifetime, had been in poor health for several years. She died at her home in Wallingford in Oxfordshire, aged 85.

Two London theatres dimmed their lights this evening - St Martin's where her record-breaking "The Mousetrap" is now in its 24th year and the Savoy, where "Murder at the Vicarage" will have its 200th performance next week.

Dame Agatha is believed to have left one last novel, as yet unpublished, featuring one of her most famous characters, the deceptively clever Miss Marple, as well as an autobiography.

During her lifetime, Dame Agatha published 83 books, including novels, romances written under the pseudonym of Mary Westmacott, short stories, poetry and the scripts for her plays.

She married Colonel Archibald Christie in 1914. While he was away during the war she worked as a nurse at her local hospital in Torquay, where she learned about the poisons that later featured in so many of her crime novels.

Dame Agatha established her name as a crime writer with her first detective book in 1920, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, in which she created her much-loved Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot.

In December 1926 she sparked a police search when her car was found abandoned in a chalk pit at Newlands Corner on the Surrey Downs.

It emerged she and her husband had had a row. Several days later she turned up in a hotel in Harrogate booked in under the name of a woman who was revealed to be her husband's mistress.

She divorced and married again, well-known archaeologist Sir Max Mallowan, and divided her life between several country and town homes, archaeological digs and the regular production of one thriller a year.

She was made a Dame of the British Empire in 1971. Newspaper estimates of her fortune vary, but in the late 1950s she was reputed to be earning about £100,000 a year.

The hugely successful play *Mousetrap* - first written as a radio sketch called *Three Blind Mice* for the 80th birthday of Queen Mary - is said to have made more than £3m. She gave the proceeds to her only grandson, Matthew Pritchard.

She was known to be a shrewd businesswoman, anxious to avoid leaving too much of her personal fortune to the taxman.

She once said: "I only write one book a year now, which is sufficient to give me a good income. If I wrote more, I'd enlarge the finances of the Inland Revenue who would spend it mostly on idiotic things."

In 1955 she formed a company, Agatha Christie Ltd and to save its dividends from tax, she later sold 51% to Booker McConnell, a firm best known as sugar giants but also with other investments including authors' copyrights.

Courtesy BBC News



IN CONTEXT

Dame Agatha Christie's will was published on 30 April 1976 and revealed she had left only £106,683, having managed to dispose of most of her wealth before she died.

She left most of her property to her husband and daughter with a number of smaller bequests such as £500 to her gardener, £250 to her secretary and £200 to her garden manager.

Sleeping Murder, Miss Marple's last case, was published after her death. Her autobiography was also published posthumously.

Her legacy lives on in Torquay, Devon, where her daughter by her first marriage Rosalind Hicks lived until her death in 2004. Today there is a museum and a bronze bust of the author at the harbourside.

Her only grandson, Matthew Pritchard, is chairman of Agatha Christie Ltd.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Don't let individuals with wild schemes talk you into a financial deal that is not likely to be successful. You'll have amazing ideas, but superiors may try to block your attempts at implementing them.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You will enjoy travel and getting together with peers. Changes at home might come fast and furious. Exercise is always a good way to relieve stress.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Tempers will mount if you are too pushy at work. Control those desires to cast your fate to the wind. Don't give out any personal information that you don't want spread around.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Younger relatives may seek your advice. Get involved in physical activities that will stimulate you. Unexpected visitors will be a welcome surprise.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Interaction with colleagues will only be upsetting. A change in position could be better than you thought. Try and avoid getting involved in idle chatter or gossip that might get you in trouble.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Disruptions may set you back, but you're strong, and in the end the choices you make will be favorable. You need to refrain from being the generous one in the group.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Uncertainties regarding relatives will make situations uncomfortable if you attend a family function. Don't hesitate to sign up for lectures or seminars that will enlighten you.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Do not overspend on entertainment. You could find that children will be a handful. Take on positions that offer on the job training or pay for courses related to the business.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You're in need of love. Chances are you split up the last time because you didn't really want to make a commitment. Inharmonious situations at home may be extremely upsetting for you today.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

There might be one who is quite willing to take the credit for your work. Favors will be offered readily. You need to spend less time daydreaming and more time accomplishing.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Lay your cards on the table regarding your personal direction. You will be encouraged to get involved in a moneymaking venture. Take care of your own responsibilities before you help others.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Based on your excitement, serious-minded individuals will be more than interested in backing your ideas. Travel will promote new romantic encounters. Your moneymaking opportunities will flourish.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

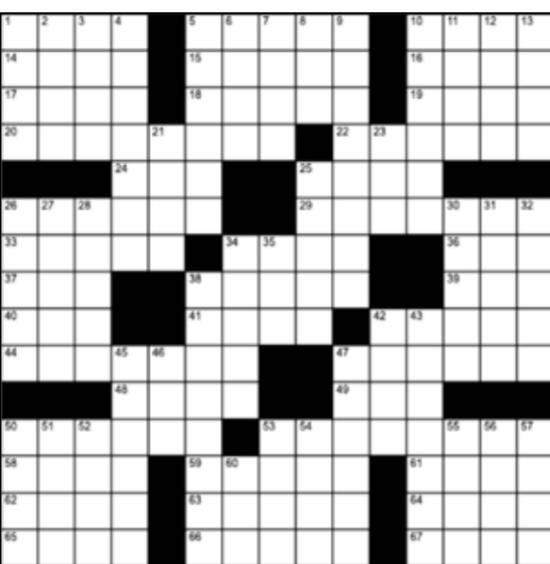
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-8	3	fine
Harbin	-20	-10	cloudy
Tianjin	1	12	cloudy
Urumqi	6	12	overcast
Xi'an	9	12	overcast
Lhasa	-9	0	snow
Chengdu	6	13	fine
Chongqing	7	16	cloudy
Kunming	5	8	overcast
Nanjing	0	8	fine
Shanghai	14	20	cloudy
Wuhan	0	9	fine
Hangzhou	-25	-15	cloudy
Taipei	-2	9	cloudy
Guangzhou	8	18	cloudy
Hong Kong	14	17	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	-13	-19	cloudy
Frankfurt	-1	4	cloudy
Paris	1	4	overcast
London	1	7	overcast
New York	-2	5	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Retain; 5- Old French expression meaning "goodbye"; 10- Dear, dear; 14- Broadway opening; 15- Early evening; 16- Capital city of Peru; 17- Zoo barrier; 18- Sniff; 19- Pre-owned; 20- State in the central United States; 22- Inhumanly cruel; 24- In favor of; 25- Analogous; 26- Shove; 29- Time spans; 33- Pretty girl; 34- Damage done; 36- VCR button; 37- Metal-bearing mineral; 38- Like a birthday dessert; 39- 12/24 or 12/31; 40- Figs.; 41- Ingrid's "Casablanca" role; 42- Country lad; 44- Shackle; 47- Dried strip of egg dough; 48- Turning point; 49- Eight-time Norris Trophy winner; 50- Composer; 53- Academic session; 58- Scored 100 on; 59- Novelist Calvino; 61- Sentry's shout; 62- Actress Heche; 63- Broadcaster; 64- Dies ___; 65- Clairvoyant; 66- Green; 67- Gives a bad review;

DOWN 1- Animistic god or spirit; 2- Earth Day subj.; 3- Catchall abbr.; 4- Pathetic; 5- Classify; 6- Moore of "G.I. Jane"; 7- Folk singer Burl; 8- Snakelike fish; 9- Improbable; 10- Reunion attendees; 11- One of the Simpsons; 12- Grace period?; 13- "The Sweetest Taboo" singer; 21- Centrepiece of the human face; 23- Russian space station; 25- Cop ___; 26- Steak order; 27- Wading bird; 28- Like non-oyster months; 30- Mountain nymph; 31- Satan; 32- View; 34- Stories; 35- Gives the go-ahead; 38- Citizen; 42- Smarting; 43- Render religious reverence; 45- Climbing device; 46- Handled tool, terminate; 47- Enough!; 50- Lukas of "Witness"; 51- Skin disorder; 52- Panamanian baby; 53- Delhi wrap; 54- Hgt.; 55- Skater Lipinski; 56- Dash; 57- Hwys.; 60- Spanish aunt;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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FOR SALE

REDUCED

Wa Bao **HKD 7,888,000**
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Rain Dance Property

"We dance until it's SOLD!"

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

AD

AP FILE PHOTO



A worker marks logs before transporting at a yard in Wuntho, northern Sagaing division

TIMBER

TRADE DATA: MYANMAR TEAK EXPORTS HELPING FUND MILITARY RULE

ELAINE KURTENBACH,
BANGKOK

AMERICAN companies are still importing teak from Myanmar despite sanctions imposed after the military seized power last year, a report based on trade data said yesterday.

Teak is one of the most valuable hardwoods, used in yachts, home flooring, doors, window frames and furniture. Myanmar is the biggest producer of the wood, even though its natural forests are dwindling.

American importers were still receiving shipments of teak from the Southeast Asian country as recently as December even though sanctions were put in place in April, data from the Panjiva global trade database show. Similar trends have been reported from Europe.

The human rights group Justice for Myanmar compiled the

data. It is urging the U.S. and other governments to crack down on the teak trade in line with sanctions against the country's military leadership.

Those U.S. Treasury sanctions, announced April 21, 2021, ban dealings with Myanmar Timber Enterprise, a state-owned company under the country's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation. It alone oversees exports of timber and sells to private companies through auctions.

The sanctions ban all transactions with the company or people connected with it by U.S. people and companies. It also imposed sanctions on the military appointed minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

The European Union imposed similar sanctions in June. It also bans dealings with Myanmar's Forest Products Joint

Venture Corp.

Yet, sales and shipments of teak and other valuable hardwoods to the U.S. have continued. The timber arrived in 82 different shipments between Feb. 1 and Nov. 30, 2021, mainly teak boards and other wood items used in shipbuilding, outdoor decking, construction and furniture.

By buying through intermediaries, the importers are skirting the sanctions, the report contends.

"Considering that sanctions aim to block trade with MTE, and the timber exported from Myanmar is originally auctioned by MTE," the military still receives funds from the trade "no matter who officially exports the timber," the report said.

It urged the U.S. government to enforce the sanctions and to investigate possible breaches of the restrictions.

It is not clear exactly where the teak ends up, since it is im-

ported by suppliers of timber for construction and other manufacturers. But teak is often used for patio furniture, decking and yachts because of its flexibility and durability.

Myanmar's military, headed by Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, deposed the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy on Feb. 1, 2021. Suu Kyi was arrested and charged with about a dozen crimes. On Monday, the 76-year-old Nobel Peace Prize laureate was sentenced to four more years in prison, on top of the two year sentence she was ordered to serve from earlier cases.

The military takeover has drawn nonviolent nationwide demonstrations, which security forces have quashed with deadly force, killing more than 1,400 civilians, according to a detailed list compiled by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

Peaceful protests have continued, but an armed resistance to the crackdown has been building, to the point that U.N. experts have warned the country could be sliding into civil war.

Timber is one of resource-rich Myanmar's most valuable industries, bringing in millions of dollars a year in taxes and export revenues. One auction held in June of about 10,300 tons of illegally harvested timber that was confiscated by Suu Kyi's government brought in \$5 million in revenue, local news reports said.

Myanmar's military sold that timber from a stockpile of about 200,000 tons of illegal timber, the reports said.

Myanmar began allowing private companies to set up teak and other timber plantations in 2006, ending a state monopoly on the industry. In 2014, the government banned exports of all raw timber, lifting the ban for timber from state-run and private plantations but keeping it in place for timber from natural forests.

Teak exports are subject to a special approval process.

But a sizable share of the teak shipped out of the country is smuggled across land borders. The data from Panjiva included only teak shipped directly from Myanmar, not other exports through intermediate destinations such as eastern Europe, Taiwan and Thailand.

The sanctions related to the coup overlay other restrictions on imports of teak meant to protect dwindling tropical forests, given that teak and some other species are in danger of becoming extinct in the wild.

The European Union has strict requirements for documenting the origins of each log or plank of lumber. Myanmar suppliers often have not provided such clear proof that the wood being exported has been legally harvested, environmental groups and reports by the EU have shown. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Three Melco team members receive hotelier awards



Three employees of Melco Resorts & Entertainment have received awards for hoteliers of the year at Stelliers Greater China 2021, the gaming operator announced in a statement.

The three winners from

the Melco team are Donald Cheng, director of IT Infrastructure Operations at City of Dreams Macau for Information Technology Hotelier of the Year; Joyce Wong, director of Property Training at the Learning Academy of

Melco Resorts & Entertainment for Human Resources Hotelier of the Year; and Kenny Wong, director of Housekeeping at Studio City Macau for Sustainability Hotelier of the Year.

Akiko Takahashi, executive vice president and chief of staff to the chairman and CEO, said, "We are grateful for the dedication and hard work of all colleagues who, as the company's most valued asset, continue to be the key drivers of Melco's success."

Launched in 2014 and formerly known as the Hotelier Awards, Stelliers is the only accolade in Asia that honors the dedicated professionals of the hotel industry.

'Godfather of Huaiyang Cuisine' highlights culinary heritage at The Londoner restaurant

Savor the sublime flavors of timeless Huaiyang cuisine at The Huaiyang Garden, one of The Londoner Macau's signature restaurants curated by celebrity master chef Zhou Xiaoyan.

Located in a space modeled on the aesthetic of classic Chinese gardens, guests can "enjoy premium, authentic Huaiyang delicacies offering a perfect combination of taste and presentation."

Recognized as one of the four great Chinese culinary traditions, Huaiyang cuisine originated in the lower reaches of the Yangtze and Huai Rivers about 3,000 years ago. The

cuisine features fresh and light yet powerful flavors, consummate knife skills and precise cooking methods.

As Zhou's first restaurant in Macau, The Huaiyang Garden combines traditional heritage cuisines with "contemporary aesthetics, elevating dishes to a true art form."

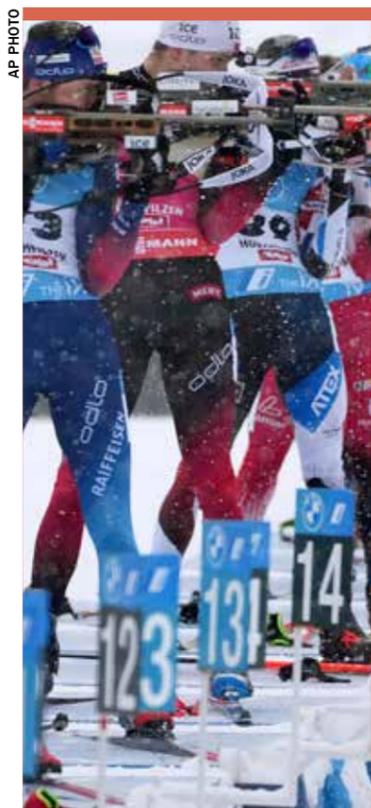
"The Huaiyang Garden brings a unique approach to Huaiyang food tradition and I hope those seeking a new and exciting experience will enjoy the healthy and flavorful delicacies on offer," said Zhou, who has been dubbed the "godfather" of Huaiyang cuisine.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

WINTER GAMES

Biathlon retirements mean new hopefuls take aim at Olympics



Athletes shoot during the men's 12.5 km pursuit race at the Biathlon World Cup in Hochfilzen, Austria, last Dec.

A flurry of retirements since the 2018 Winter Games left only a few athletes who will defend their Olympic biathlon titles, and the battle for gold will include a host of talented racers who have shown promise all season.

Hanna Öberg of Sweden took gold in the women's 15-kilometer individual at the Pyeongchang Olympics, while Norway's Johannes Thingnes Bø won the men's race, and both have stood on the podium during the World Cup circuit this season. But all other 2018 gold-medal winners — Martin Fourcade of France, Laura Dahlmeier and Arnd Peiffer of Germany, and Slovakia's Anastasiya Kuzmina — have moved on.

Bø won the overall World Cup in 2020 and again in 2021, but he has yet to find his top form this season and was sitting seventh in the standings by early January.

Anything could happen with a dozen races before everyone heads to China later this month, but Norway promises to be the

team to beat on both the women's and men's side.

PLOT TWISTS

No one nation has dominated the 2021-22 World Cup biathlon season, but several have consistently secured podium spots.

On the women's side, Norway, Sweden, Belarus and France have taken turns at the medals, and Marte Olsbu Røiseland of Norway is on fire this season, leading the World Cup standings. She won silver in Pyeongchang and is seeking gold this time.

Røiseland's teammate, Tiril Eckhoff, won bronze in 2018 and was last year's overall World Cup winner. But, she has had a slow start to the 2021-22 season. The next races will reveal her form.

Sweden's Öberg continues to be someone to watch, but her younger sister, Elvira Öberg, has grabbed attention this season with impressive ski speed and shooting accuracy. She took the gold in both the pursuit and mass start races in France last month and was second overall in the World Cup

standings in early January.

Two Belarussians, Dzinara Alimbekava and Hanna Sola, have taken turns on the podium this season and promise strong performances in Beijing.

Anais Bescond of France took home three medals from Pyeongchang, two in relays, and along with teammates Julia Simon and Anais Chevalier-Bouchet, has medaled this season. They won the women's relay in Oestersund, Sweden, with Belarus taking silver and Sweden bronze.

FRANCE STILL STRONG

While Bø works to find his fitness this season, his teammates have shown Norway's strength and depth.

Bø's older brother, Tarjei, along with Vetle Sjåstad Christiansen and Sturla Holm Laegreid, have secured medals in most World Cup races this season, including the team relay gold.

Although Fourcade is no longer France's ace, the men's team has fought its way to the top of the podium this season, making them

a team to watch. Quentin Fillon Maillet and Emilien Jacquelin are one and two overall in World Cup standings.

CHINA'S COACHES

Ole Einar Bjørndalen of Norway dominated the Olympic biathlon scene for years, earning the nickname "king of biathlon" and securing 13 Winter Olympic medals — second overall only to Norwegian cross country skier Marit Bjørgen, who holds the record at 15.

Bjørndalen married Belarusian biathlete Darya Domracheva in 2016 and they became the most successful biathlon couple in history. Domracheva has competed in three Olympics, winning six medals.

They both retired after the 2018 Games and were then appointed to work as head coaches for the Chinese biathlon teams — Bjørndalen overseeing the men and Domracheva the women. Their teams are the only ones to train at the 2022 Olympic biathlon stadium.

THE VENUE

Biathlon races will be held in the Zhangjiakou competition zone. The Chinese teams have trained at the site, but no other nation has seen the trails, meaning everyone will ski them for the first time at the end of January. MDT/AP

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OPINION

China Daily
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REGION MUST STAND
TOGETHER TO OPPOSE
ATTEMPTS TO INSTIGATE
COLOR REVOLUTIONS

Kazakhstan designated Monday as a National Day of Mourning to commemorate the civilians, police officers and soldiers who died in the rioting that started early last week in the country.

Although the situation has stabilized and is now under control, the country's National Security Committee said on Monday that it may take some time for Kazakhstan to iron out all the social, economic and political issues that seem to have been at play, especially as it will need to be vigilant to external forces hoping to exploit them to destabilize the country.

The verbal message President Xi Jinping sent to Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on Friday, along with the telephone call between State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Kazakh counterpart on Monday, not only conveyed China's sincere wish that Kazakhstan can quickly restore order, as well as its readiness to provide help to that end, but also the observation of China on the nature of the incident, the lesson of which should be heeded by other countries in the region.

As President Xi underlined in his message, and Wang also stressed, there were obviously external forces attempting to provoke unrest and instigate a "color revolution" in Kazakhstan, something China strongly opposes, and something the whole region must work together to resist.

External interference in Kazakhstan is evidenced by the fact that many of the more than 5,000 rioters who have been detained are foreign nationals and some detainees confessed they were paid in US dollars to take to the streets. Also, large numbers of unidentified personnel were caught trying to enter the country with arms and large amounts of currency; and the attacks on public institutions in all major cities of the country were organized and systematic.

What happened in the country has gone far beyond "protests" by the standards of most countries. Except, of course, those of the United States. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called on the Kazakh government to respect the rights of the "protesters", and the US State Department urged the Kazakh government to respect "human rights" and restore the country's internet services, something that was being done on Monday. Social media played an indispensable role in instigating and plotting the unrest, Kazakh authorities said.

Vividly exposing the US' hypocrisy, the US administration called the rioters who set the municipal government building in Almaty ablaze and ransacked stores in Nur-Sultan, the capital of Kazakhstan, "protesters" whose human rights must be respected, while describing those who stormed the Capitol on Jan 6 last year as a "brutal" "violent mob". And it called the "protesters" in Kazakhstan as "parties" the Kazakh government should work with for a resolution of the "state of emergency", while vowing to "make sure that such an attack (on the Capitol and US democracy) never, never happens again".

As President Xi noted in his message, the decisive and effective actions the Kazakh government took helped to quickly calm the situation, and demonstrated a highly responsible attitude to the people.

It is to be hoped that the regional security mechanisms such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization can do more to sustain regional peace and stability, and strengthen joint efforts to fight against any external elements attempting to instigate "color revolutions" in the region.

Harvard University is not required to pay legal defense fees for a professor who was found guilty of hiding his ties to a Chinese-run recruitment program, Massachusetts' highest court ruled yesterday [Macau time].

In its decision, the Supreme Judicial Court found that Harvard was acting within its "broad statutory authority" when it refused to provide upfront payment to cover defense costs for Charles Lieber, a former chair of the school's department of chemistry and chemical biology.

Lieber was found guilty in December of filing false tax returns, making false statements and failing to file reports for a foreign bank

account in China.

Prosecutors say Lieber lied to U.S. authorities to hide his involvement with China's Thousand Talents Plan, a program designed to recruit people with knowledge of foreign technology and intellectual property to China. He was also accused of hiding income, including \$50,000 a month from a Chinese university.

Lieber sued Harvard in October 2020 after the Ivy League school denied his request for advance payment to help mount his legal defense.

A Harvard policy offers to pay defense costs for certain workers who face legal action in the course of their work, but it gives university officials flexibility in deciding whether to grant the money.



Members of the surgical team perform the transplant of a pig heart into patient David Bennett in Baltimore on Jan. 7

IN FIRST, US SURGEONS
TRANSPLANT PIG HEART
INTO HUMAN PATIENT

CARLA K. JOHNSON,
MEDICAL WRITER

In a medical first, doctors transplanted a pig heart into a patient in a last-ditch effort to save his life and a Maryland hospital said yesterday [Macau time] that he's doing well three days after the highly experimental surgery.

While it's too soon to know if the operation really will work, it marks a step in the decades-long quest to one day use animal organs for life-saving transplants. Doctors at the University of Maryland Medical Center say the transplant showed that a heart from a genetically modified animal can function in the human body without immediate rejection.

The patient, David Bennett, a 57-year-old Maryland handyman, knew there was no guarantee the experiment would work but he was dying, ineligible for a human heart transplant and had no other option, his son told The Associated Press.

"It was either die or do this transplant. I want to live. I know it's a shot in the dark, but it's my last choice," Bennett said a day before the surgery, according to a statement provided by the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

Yesterday, Bennett was

breathing on his own while still connected to a heart-lung machine to help his new heart. The next few weeks will be critical as Bennett recovers from the surgery and doctors carefully monitor how his heart is faring.

There's a huge shortage of human organs donated for transplant, driving scientists to try to figure out how to use animal organs instead. Last year, there were just over 3,800 heart transplants in the U.S., a record number, according to the United Network for Organ Sharing, which oversees the nation's transplant system.

"If this works, there will be an endless supply of these organs for patients who are suffering," said Dr. Muhammad Mohiuddin, scientific director of the Maryland university's animal-to-human transplant program.

But prior attempts at such transplants — or xenotransplantation — have failed, largely because patients' bodies rapidly rejected the animal organ. Notably, in 1984, Baby Fae, a dying infant, lived 21 days with a baboon heart.

The difference this time: The Maryland surgeons used a heart from a pig that had undergone gene-editing to remove a sugar in its cells that's responsible for that hyper-fast

organ rejection. Several biotech companies are developing pig organs for human transplant; the one used for Friday's operation came from Revivicor, a subsidiary of United Therapeutics.

"I think you can characterize it as a watershed event," Dr. David Klassen, UNOS' chief medical officer, said of the Maryland transplant.

Still, Klassen cautioned that it's only a first tentative step into exploring whether this time around, xenotransplantation might finally work.

The Food and Drug Administration, which oversees such experiments, allowed the surgery under what's called a "compassionate use" emergency authorization, available when a patient with a life-threatening condition has no other options.

It will be crucial to share the data gathered from this transplant before extending it to more patients, said Karen Maschke, a research scholar at the Hastings Center, who is helping develop ethics and policy recommendations for the first clinical trials under a grant from the National Institutes of Health.

"Rushing into animal-to-human transplants without this information would not be advisable," Maschke said. **MDT/AP**

UN The United Nations yesterday made what it called a record \$5 billion appeal to help Afghanistan and its neighboring countries, warning half of the country faces acute hunger, millions of children are out of school and farmers are struggling against drought. The appeal from the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and refugee agency UNHCR reflects the world body's bid to help beleaguered civilians inside a country now run by a militant group that many Western donor countries once fought — and still oppose.



EU David Sassoli, an Italian journalist who worked his way up in politics while defending the downtrodden and repressed to become president of the European Union's parliament, died at a hospital in Italy yesterday. He was 65. European Council President Charles Michel called Sassoli a "sincere and passionate European. We already miss his human warmth, his generosity, his friendliness and his smile."

Russia The Kremlin said yesterday it saw "no significant reason for optimism" after the highly anticipated Russia-U.S. talks over Ukraine and other security issues. The talks aimed at defusing tensions over Ukraine took place in Geneva on Monday and offered no sign of immediate progress. Moscow went in insisting on guarantees to halt NATO's eastward expansion and even roll back the military alliance's deployments in Eastern Europe — demands that Washington had earlier firmly rejected as a nonstarter.

Kenya's only electricity distribution company is reporting a widespread power cut in East Africa's economic hub after towers collapsed on a major transmission line. Kenya Power in a statement yesterday said engineers were working to restore supply after the collapse on the Kiambere-Embakasi power line. The statement did not say what caused the collapse or when power would be restored across the country of some 55 million people.