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AP PHOTO



Singapore and Indonesia yesterday signed a series of key defense and diplomatic agreements that appeared to mark a turning point in relations between the Southeast Asian neighbors. The agreement on defense cooperation — along with separate treaties on extradition and airspace rights — were signed in the presence of Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Indonesian President Joko Widodo.

AP PHOTO



Indonesia A nightclub in West Papua province burned after two community groups clashed inside the building and 19 people were killed, officials said yesterday. Members of the two groups attacked each other with machetes, arrows and Molotov cocktails, National Police spokesperson Ahmad Ramadhan said at a news conference. One of the dead was a member of the groups that clashed, and 18 bodies were found after the fire Monday night at the club in Sorong city.

AP PHOTO



Pakistan has a woman on its highest court for the first time. Ayesha Malik's swearing-in on Monday as a justice on Pakistan's Supreme Court was a landmark moment for the Islamic nation. Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmad administered Malik's oath-taking in Islamabad. The event had been a controversial development for Pakistan's male-dominated judicial system. Malik's appointment, confirmed last week by Pakistani President Arif Alvi, silenced some of her critics who opposed her promotion on technical grounds.

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EXPAT EXODUS

Macau's seeing a pandemic-boostered trend of expatriates shipping personal goods back home

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AP PHOTO



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AP PHOTO



COVID-19 HONG KONG VIRUS CLUSTER IN HOUSING PROMPTS PARTIAL LOCKDOWN

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MACAU-SHENZHEN FERRY SERVICES TO RESUME TODAY

Ferry services between Macau and Shenzhen will resume today, with ferries to be operated between the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal, the Taipa Maritime Terminal in Macau and the Shekou Ferry Terminal in Shenzhen. The Macau government reminds the public to be aware of travel restrictions in effect. It also noted that cross-boundary travels are currently discouraged due to the unstable coronavirus situation. Ferry services between the two localities were suspended from January 9. By that time, Shenzhen had recorded a series of new SARS-CoV-2 infections, prompting the implementation of travel restrictions, quarantine requirements and other measures.

ZHUHAI RECORDS ZERO NEW CASES FOR TWO DAYS

According to health authorities in Zhuhai, the city has recorded no new Covid-19 infections in the past two days, as of January 25. Since January 14, the city recorded 39 Covid-19 cases, among which three were asymptomatic. Further north, in the city of Zhongshan, a 10-year-old girl tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 on both January 24 and 25. She was identified on January 16 as a close contact of a person who had tested positive for the virus. She was then transferred to Zhuhai for quarantine and is now in hospital there.

POLICE ISSUE REMINDER ON ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIR SAFETY

After a car crash involving a taxi and an electric wheelchair in the middle of a road near lao Hon, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) issued a statement reminding users to use electric wheelchairs safely. It called on users to use electric wheelchairs in compliance with rules governing pedestrians, hinting that they should not be "driven" on roads for motor vehicles, or in reverse. In the recent accident, the PSP fined both the wheelchair user and the taxi driver. Heated online debate was prompted by the decision, with claims that the wheelchair was moving in reverse in the center of the motorway.

LAWMAKER DEMANDS GOV'T PREPARE EARLY FOR BORDER NORMALIZATION WITH HONG KONG

LAWMAKER Ip Sio Kai has called on the government to release more details of plans for border normalization between Macau and Hong Kong.

He pointed out that border restrictions between the two Special Administrative Regions have impacted the economy and modes of life in the two localities. More importantly, he said, border normalization with Hong Kong is crucial to Macau because 20% of Macau's visitors came from Hong Kong.

Ip expects that Hong Kong residents will be likely to visit Macau, reasoning that Hong Kong residents like to travel a lot but foreign travel is still very inconvenient.

Furthermore, he said, Hong Kong residents usually do not travel in tour groups, so it will be more beneficial to traditional communities.

On the business side, Ip has been told that many local companies rely on IT support from Hong Kong. Technicians being unable to visit Macau has affected



their operations. Business operators who need to attend commercial events and meetings in Hong Kong have not been able to do so for the past two years without quarantine requirements.

The public had anticipated border normalization back in December, but this did not come to fruition.

The local government has hin-

ted that, even if border normalization is implemented, quotas will be levied in the early phases. Spaces would be reserved for those with urgent needs.

However, the lawmaker pointed out that the government has so far not disclosed any further details about the quota. He therefore asked the government to make early preparations and

make the guidelines clear, such as the daily quota and eligibility requirements.

Moreover, he proposed an online pre-screening mechanism to allow the government to gather data on the number and types of interested registrants. He also demanded that the government prioritize interested registrants who have business needs. **AL**

Partial win on sentence appeal for former IAM chief tried for abuse of power

RENATO MARQUES

A former Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) Chief of the Division of Animal Inspection and Control, accused of abuse of power with the purpose of self-enrichment, has partially won an appeal of his sentence to the Court of Second Instance (TSI), claiming that the First Instance Court (TJB) had erred.

The former chief had been sentenced by the TJB in January 2020 for two counts of the crime of abuse of power in the continuous form, which implies that crimes have been repeatedly commit-



ted over a period and that there was an external factor conditioning these actions which could be

considered mitigating.

Analyzing the appeal, the TSI judges agreed that, on the first count of

the crime, the defendant had been appropriately sentenced for a crime performed over time. On the second count, however, it was proven that the defendant only once took advantage of his unlawful conduct to produce a benefit to himself and to a private company he was part of, accepting the appeal of the defendant on this section.

Nonetheless, the TSI noted that for the second count of the crime of abuse of power, there were no mitigating factors that could justify the reduction of the penalty to be applied, senten-

cing the defendant to one year and six months of imprisonment for this count, leading to a total sentence of four years imprisonment.

According to the ruling of the courts, the defendant had made use of his position within the government department to create a company with other defendants on the same case through a hidden share, which they used to personal advantage by supplying veterinary services to the IAM between June 2012 and February 2019, namely related to the neutering of greyhounds from the former Canidrome.

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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, Jing Wu, João Palla Martins, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Viviana Seguí
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
For subscription and general issues: general@macaudailytimes.com | Printed at Welfare Printing Ltd

ERWAN HESRY



Macau seeing a pandemic-boosted expat exodus

RENATO MARQUES

A large number of people are currently leaving or preparing to leave Macau in what can potentially represent the largest exodus of expatriates in a long time, analysis of data from local freight forwarding companies suggests.

To the Times, Omar Jr, founder and board member of OT&T Cargo Group noted that while the number of inquiries per day has not registered a significant difference to the past couple of years, "the big difference is on the closing rate. While in the past we would roughly close 50% of the deals inquired [about], nowadays we are having a closing rate of around 100%. People that search for our services are not just doing inquiries, they are immediately closing the deal and reserving space for their removals," Omar Jr said.

According to data provided, the company is receiving an average of three to four inquiries for direct flight between Macau and Portugal per day. Of these, as he previously noted, almost all turn into removals.

Besides Portugal, which is the route in which OT&T is a specialized and market leader, Omar Jr also noted that the company has been receiving requests for relocations from people from Macau to other

places in the world with a notable number seeking to go to Dubai and other Middle-Eastern countries.

"Besides Portuguese, who are our main clients, we also have requests from Americans, Singaporeans, New Zealanders, Australians, and other Europeans, [especially] British nationals," the freighting company official noted that sometimes, the Macau-Portugal route is also used to forward the belongings of people relocating to other parts of western Europe, such as Spain.

Although he noted that the pandemic has contributed to growth in the industry, Omar Jr also observed that the growth started before the pandemic.

"Back in 2019, we had a [peaking] summer when we helped to relocate a total of 87 families just in the summertime. Before 2019 an average of eight to 12 families would leave due to contract expiry and children's end of term, among other reasons," he said, adding, "In 2020, the suspension of flights and quarantine compliance prevented the families from leaving but as flights opened, there's a mass exodus."

OT&T says most customers relocating are mainly families, although they also note that there are a few requests from single people returning to the SAR.

Questioned on the motivations for the relocations, Omar Jr said they vary "from non-renewal of contracts or job exonerations, family reunions to assisting elderly parents in post-pandemic life re-assessment, and probably [also] due to the overall change in SAR dynamics."

"Many of these families [have been] in Macau for many years and they own housing units and other real estate property that they wish to sell before leaving."

OMAR JR.
OT&T CARGO GROUP FOUNDER

He further explained that the recent move to put locals into higher managerial positions in most medium and large-size enterprises has resulted in the termination and consequent removal of many expats who, over the years, occupied those leadership positions.

An addition contribution to a sometimes chaotic situation in the shipping industry is the fact that concurrently with the Covid-19 pandemic, the market has suffered changes to the so-called mass carriers that have significantly reduced the number of ships transporting goods and products worldwide, in addition to operating in an oligarchic system.

As Omar Jr explained, this resulted in fierce competition between small companies to secure container space in the few fleets circulating, which resulted in an exponential price hike.

"I can say that the current reference price for the route Macau-Portugal compared with the price from November 2020, has increased 18-fold. And on average, the prices of sea transport between Asia and Europe are 1,000% higher," Omar Jr noted. This increase has also justified the decisiveness of the clients in immediately reserving, sometimes with a significant lead time, space for their belongings.

A similar perspective was shared with the Times by another major freight forwarding company in Macau. A company representative of World Freight Logistics Services Limited told the Times that it has been relocating "at least two to three families per week since 2021 until January this year."

As with OT&T, World Freight noted that 2020 had a low point of relocations: "In 2020, the relocation rate dropped to about two to three families per month, while during the pre-pandemic period we would normally relocate at least one to two families per week."

Among the major destina-

tions of the relocations done in the past years by World Freight are Portugal, Australia, New Zealand, Korea, USA, UK, and some part of South East Asia," the same representative remarked to the Times inquiry.

TRAVEL AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR MORE RETURNS THAN DEPARTURES

A local travel agency which has been favored by expatriates for the booking of inbound and outbound flights told the Times that at the moment and for upcoming months, there is more of an increase on requests from people to return to Macau than there is in those seeking to leave the MSAR.

"Leaving Macau, for the time being, and for the upcoming few months, we do not have many people. Including the departures via Hong Kong, we have 10 to 12 people for this month and the upcoming two to three months," an agent surnamed Ng told the Times. Ng added, "returning to Macau [in the same period] we have more. Both returning clients and new, we have around 40 people returning."

As Omar Jr also noted to the Times, due to the current situation regarding the expense of sea transportation, sometimes between the reservation of the removal and the effective time that a family departs, there is a significant time gap.

"Many of these families [have been] in Macau for many years and they own housing units and other Real Estate property that they wish to sell before leaving. Sometimes this takes some time and the reservation of container space must be done some time in advance," he said. He added that the price hikes have contributed to people looking to reduce significantly the number of belongings they wish to ship, "which is perfectly understandable," Omar Jr concluded.

MACAU JOINS OTHER JURISDICTIONS WELCOMING BACK B737 MAX

RENATO MARQUES

FROM Monday, Macau has joined the group of countries and regions accepting flight applications involving the once-troubled Boeing B737 MAX aircraft, the Civil Aviation Authority of Macau (AACM) announced.

According to a statement from the local aviation authority, the AACM has "reviewed the mitigating actions taken by the Boeing company to improve the systems of the B737 MAX aircraft in both the airworthiness and operational aspects, and having analyzed the airworthiness directives published by the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), accepts that the B737 MAX aircraft has met the conditions for the return to service." The AACM added that, as a result, "the authority has resumed the acceptance of flight applications with the aircraft model."

The two models (737 MAX 8 and 737 MAX 9) from the American manufacturer had been grounded and suspended from flights to and from Macau for an



indefinite period since March 13, 2019, following two accidents involving these aircraft occurring in 2018 and 2019, in line with similar safety precautions taken by aeronautical authorities worldwide.

The AACM now says that, taking into account "modifications to the aircraft design, the revision of crew procedures, and flight crew training," the same aeronautical authorities have started gradually lifting bans on the aircraft, in close cooperation with

and under supervision from the FAA.

Among the areas noted as more important changes were the updating of the flight control computer software, the revision of the checklists for abnormal situations, and the revision of the flight crew training program to ensure that pilots are well-trained for operations.

Concurrently, the AACM, in line with the CAAC and the Hong Kong Civil Aviation Department,

has undertaken a group evaluation of the B737 MAX aiming at its return to service.

In the same statement, the AACM also noted that Boeing, CAAC, FAA and EASA conducted several validation flight tests on B737 MAX aircrafts which resulted in confirmation that the safety issues previously identified with the aircraft had been cleared.

Following the validation flights, the three authorities published their airworthiness directives

approving the return to service of the B737 MAX aircraft, a decision now followed by the AACM.

Among the primary users of the B737 MAX is the Guangzhou-based China Southern Airlines Company.

The B737 MAX had been grounded worldwide due to recurring failures in the Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System which was said to be the cause of two fatal accidents involving Indonesian airliner Lion Air flight 610 and Ethiopian Airlines flight 302.

The two crashes led to the deaths of 346 people and, subsequently, the decision to ground the aircraft worldwide from March 2019 to November 2020.

Investigations pointed to an attempt by Boeing to cover up a known defect. The company was then charged with fraud, having settled with a payout of over MOP20 billion (USD2.5 billion) in penalties and compensation.

On November 18, 2020, the FAA cleared the B737 MAX to resume service, subject to a set of mandated design and training changes. Transport Canada and the EASA both recertified the aircraft a year ago, subject to additional requirements. The CAAC followed suit in early December last year.

Of the 195 countries and regions that had grounded the planes, over 180 have already lifted the sanction.



LACK OF SKILLS AND PERSISTENCE JUSTIFIES LOW RATE OF CONSTRUCTION WORKER EMPLOYMENT: DSAL

RENATO MARQUES

THE lack of professional skills and willingness to learn new skills and techniques were given as justifications in a statement by the Labour Affairs Bureau

(DSAL) explaining the low employability rate of local construction workers in 2021.

According to the DSAL, in 78% of the cases in which the bureau tried unsuccessfully to help employ workers, they did not get an

interview "mainly because they did not pass the techniques test or dropped out of the skill tests [before completing them]." The bureau added that "the remaining [22%] was justified with remuneration or working conditions below expectations."

The bureau noted that most of the job offers in the sector over the last year were for positions such as construction assistant, formwork carpenter, electrician, painter and plasterer, which do not suit many local workers' available skills.

The DSAL used this to justify the fact that from almost 5,000 candidates contacted initially, only 2,054 workers (41.7%), took part in the interviews, leading to a total of 1,043 people employed in the past twelve months.

This data shows that only 21.2% of the initial number of candidates were effectively hired.

The DSAL also added that, to increase the effectiveness of job-matching sessions, it has maintained close contact with contractors and construction companies so as to be updated as fast as possible on changing employment needs as construction works progress, and ensure that these workers are hired in a fair manner and have reasonable work conditions.

AMCM WORKING TO INTRODUCE CROSS-BANK CREDIT CARD SETTLEMENT SERVICES

ANTHONY LAM

THE Easy Transfer function may be upgraded to facilitate settlement of credit card repayments from one bank to another, the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM) announced in a statement.

Officially known as Easy Transfer, the interbank prompt funds transfer function was opened for public use on December 6. The function is led by the AMCM but not supported by all banks in the city.

Banks have the discretion to participate in real-time transfers. Thirty-one banks in Macau have registered to provide services using the function, of which only 11 provide real-time funds transfers.

By participating in real-time transfer, banks will allow their customers to transfer funds in as little as 30 seconds. Customers from banks other than the 11 participating, on the other hand, will have their

funds transferred more slowly on the same day.

For the time being, funds can only be transferred between savings or current accounts. The AMCM confirmed that it is working with banks to explore the possibility of interbank credit card bill settlement using the Easy Transfer function.

The authority is also investigating whether the function could handle various currencies, "so as to prepare for the integration into the Greater Bay Area," the AMCM said.

For the past month and a half, the new function has seen 136,000 accounts registered and 266,000 transactions. Five thousand of the transactions were cross-bank payroll.

The AMCM also noted that more than 60% of all the transactions were conducted outside bank hours, which the authority interprets as "reaching the goal of efficient services."

COVID-19

Hong Kong virus cluster in housing prompts partial lockdown

HONG Kong expanded a partial lockdown and tightened pandemic restrictions yesterday after more than 200 cases of Covid-19 were discovered at a public housing estate.

Hong Kong has already suspended many overseas flights and requires arrivals be quarantined, similar to mainland China's "zero-tolerance" approach to the virus that has placed millions under lockdowns and mandates mask wearing, rigorous case tracing and mass testing.

Earlier this month, Hong Kong and Macau have announced a two-week ban on flights from regions outside the mainland China. The move is to deter the spread of Covid-19 variants.

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said a second residential block at the Kwai Chung housing complex would be locked down for five days. The block where the virus was first discovered is already under lockdown, which will now be extended from five to seven days.



Residents line up to get tested for the coronavirus in a lockdown area in Kwai Chung Estate, Hong Kong, Saturday

The measures aimed to "play safe protecting the residents as well as preventing the spread of the virus," Lam told reporters.

Schools have been closed and restaurants cannot offer in-house dining after 6 p.m. in a return to previous measures to contain surges in cases. Compulsory testing has been ordered on people who reside in or visited buildings where the virus was detected.

The outbreak has also prompted the city of Shenzhen just across the border in mainland China to

tighten rules on people arriving from Hong Kong. Starting from today, Hong Kong travelers will need to show a negative Covid-19 test result obtained over the previous 24 hours, undergo 14 days of quarantine at a government-designated location and seven further days of isolation at home.

Lam also criticized one of her senior Cabinet members, Home Affairs Secretary Casper Tsui, who was among several government officials suspended from duty and ordered into quarantine after they

attended a birthday party where two guests later tested positive for coronavirus.

"The Secretary for Home Affairs is an official whom we will have to look into very deeply because of various aspects," Lam said.

As with mainland China, Hong Kong's tough anti-pandemic rules have helped keep case numbers relatively low, but are also taking a toll on the economy and public patience.

An international center of finance and trade, the city has a prominent expatriate population, some of whom are beginning to chafe at the travel controls and other restrictions.

A survey released this month by the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong showed more than 40% of members surveyed were more likely to leave because of the restrictions.

VACCINE OR NAT NEEDED FOR MACAU'S SCHOOLS

The Education and Youth Development Bureau has issued a

notice to tertiary education institutions to inform them that from February 21, all faculty members, college students, school teachers and staff must present proof of completing two doses of the primary series of Covid-19 vaccine 14 days ago, when entering the campus.

A statement from the bureau published last week mentions that for non-tertiary education schools, the rule will apply to teachers and staff.

Those who were not fully vaccinated 14 days ago (receiving two doses of mRNA vaccines or Inactivated vaccines in the primary series) need to take a nucleic acid test every seven days.

The statement adds that private continuing education institutions and private supplementary education support centres should also start to implement the above-mentioned guidelines on the same day.

Secondary schools also have been implementing extra protective measures since January 24.

With the recent string of Covid-19 cases in Zhuhai, the Education and Youth Development Bureau announced last week that cross-border teachers and students of tertiary education institutions and non-tertiary education schools will not return to Macau for classes temporarily until the end of the Spring Festival holiday. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

GAMES ALL SET TO BE SPECTACULAR AND SAFE

After seven years of preparation, the curtain will soon be raised on the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games, as the Games are now entering the final countdown.

On Saturday night, a rehearsal of the opening ceremony, involving about 4,000 participants, was held at the National Stadium. While the Olympic villages in the three Games venues of Beijing, Yanqing and Zhangjiakou opened on Sunday to accommodate the international delegates, media personnel, and those athletes who have already arrived.

Yet for all the complexities involved in hosting such a large event in three different localities, the biggest challenge the organizers face is undoubtedly the novel coronavirus, which is still rampant in most parts of the world.

Despite the "closed loop" system that has been put in place to separate Games-related personnel from the Chinese population, the risks remain. That 72 people who have arrived inside the "bubble" since it opened earlier this month have tested positive — 39 detected during entry tests and 33 in closed-loop tests — points to the mounting pressure for the organizers to contain any possible infections.

Adding to the difficulties are sporadic locally transmitted cases in Beijing, which means the capital is fighting against the spread of the virus on two fronts — one inside, and the other outside, the closed loop. After Beijing reported nine infections on Saturday, authorities immediately organized nucleic acid tests for COVID-19 for all of the residents in the city's Fengtai district, where six cases were detected, as part of precautionary measures.

Such moves are essential to ensure the Games can be held safely and successfully, even amid the pandemic.

That some countries are not sending official delegations to the Games is symptomatic of the world's polarization on ideological, political, technological and economic fronts, which has fueled prejudice and even hatred.

This makes the upcoming Games motto of "together for a shared future" all the more pertinent. That the Games is being held is an expression of hope in the future, as it serves to provide a rare healing and unifying moment for different nations to come together under the Olympic flag and recall all that it stands for: peace, unity, brotherhood, and mutual understanding.

Now that Beijing, with all its "meticulous" preparation work, has set the stage, let the Olympic flame be a marker on the way to better days ahead.

ANALYSIS

2008 BEIJING OLYMPICS VS 2022: NO LOFTY PROMISES THIS TIME

STEPHEN WADE

THE 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics showcased China's reemergence on the world stage. In awarding those Games to China, the International Olympic Committee predicted the Olympics could improve human rights, and Chinese politicians hinted at the same.

Soaring promises are absent this time as the Beijing Winter Olympics open in just over a week in the midst of a two-year-long pandemic.

The Games are a reminder of China's rise, but also its disregard for civil liberties, prompting a diplomatic boycott led by the United States.

Rights groups have documented forced labor, mass detention and torture, which China calls the "lie of the century."

With more political, economic, and military clout, China appears to worry less about global scrutiny than it did 13 1/2 years ago. And the pandemic has given it even more control over the Olympics, particularly with the isolation of visiting journalists, separated in a "bubble" from the general Chinese population.

"There's nothing to 'prove' at this point; 2008 was a 'coming out' party and all this one does is confirm what we've known for the last decade," Amanda Shuman, a China researcher at the University of Freiburg, wrote in an email to The Associated Press.

"If anything, there's a lot less pressure than 2008," she said. "The Chinese government knows full well that its global economic upper hand allows it to do whatever it wishes."

The IOC had few options when it awarded China the Games or the second time. Six possible European candidates, led by Norway and Sweden, bowed out for political or cost reasons. Voters in two other countries — Switzerland and Germany — voted "no" in referendums.

IOC members eventually picked Beijing over Almaty, Kazakhstan, in a close vote — 44-40. The result came on paper ballots after the IOC said there was an electronic glitch in the first vote. Beijing becomes the first city to host both the Summer and Winter Games.

IOC President Thomas Bach called Beijing a "safe



choice." China spent more than \$40 billion organizing the 2008 Olympics. The authoritarian state doesn't need voter approval to proceed.

As for Kazakhstan, it was hit this month on the eve of the Olympics with massive protests and political unrest.

The IOC has allowed China to avoid human rights oversight. Beginning with the 2024 Paris Olympics, cities must adhere to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. However, China was not subjected to those rules when it was picked in 2015.

"When China hosts the Olympics again, it is no longer the China back in 2008," Ai Weiwei, China's famous dissident artist, wrote in an email to The AP. Ai helped design the famous Bird's Nest stadium — hoping it would signify a new openness — and then regretted doing so, calling it and the Olympics China's "fake smile."

Ai was jailed in 2011 in China on unspecified charges and now lives in exile in Portugal. The Bird's Nest will again host the opening ceremony on Feb. 4.

"China today has deviated further away from democracy, freedom of press and human rights, and the reality has become even harsher," Ai added.

Here are some examples of how China's tone has toughened.

In 2008, Beijing put some curbs on broadcasting from Tiananmen Square but allowed it; agreed to "protest zones," although they were never used with access repeatedly denied; and dropped some reporting restrictions more than a year ahead of the Games. It also unblocked its censored internet for journalists.

In 2022, there is less accommodation. The pandemic will limit journalists to a tightly sealed "bubble," though there

will be internet access. Chinese organizers have warned foreign athletes that any statement that goes against Chinese laws could be punished, and a smartphone app widely used by athletes and reporters has glaring security vulnerabilities, according to an internet watchdog.

Some national Olympic committees have advised teams and staff not to take personal phones or laptops to Beijing. The IOC, which generates billions from sponsorships and broadcast rights, seldom pushes back in public against Chinese organizers who are, in reality, the Chinese government.

Changes that affect 2022 began a month after the 2008 Olympics ended when the global financial crisis hit world economies. China fared better than most, which — coupled with the Olympics — increased its confidence. This also coincides with the rise of Xi Jinping, who headed the 2008 Olympics and was named General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in 2012.

"Although Xi was in charge of 2008 Olympic Games, the Winter Games is truly Xi's Games," said Xu Guoqi, who teaches history at the University of Hong Kong. He is the author of "Olympic Dreams: China and Sports, 1895-2008."

Mary Gallagher, director of the Center for Chinese Studies at the University of Michigan, said the state of U.S. democracy and its "poor pandemic response" has further emboldened China.

"Right now the multiple U.S. failures create momentum for renewed nationalism and confidence in China," Gallagher said by email. "This is made all the more effective by the Communist Party's strict control over information, which can rain 'positive energy' down on what's ha-

ppening in China while only publicizing negative accounts of other countries, especially the U.S."

China complained in 2008 that human rights protests around Tibet politicized the Olympics. The Olympic Torch Relay, taken on a world tour, faced violent protests in London and elsewhere. The IOC has not tried such a relay since, and then-President Jacques Rogge said the protests put the Beijing Olympics in "crisis."

China again says the Olympics are only about sports, a shield the IOC's Bach also uses against critics. China says mixing in politics goes against the Olympic Charter, although China itself dabbled in politics by boycotting the 1980 Moscow Olympics.

"Sports and politics do mix," Laura Luehrmann, a China specialist at Wright State University, said in an email. "Politics is about the distribution and use of limited resources — most notably power and decision-making, but also finances as well. Sports is all about power and money — even if framed as glorifying athletic achievement."

Victor Cha, who served in the White House under President George W. Bush and is the author of "Beyond the Final Score — The Politics of Sport in Asia," said China moaning about others politicizing sports was "the pot calling the kettle black."

"There is no country that has ignored the Olympic Charter's mandate to keep politics out of sports more than China," Cha, who teaches at Georgetown University, wrote in an essay last week for the Center for Strategic & International Studies.

"Much as the world would like the Olympics to be devoid of politics, as George Orwell once wrote: 'Sport is war minus the shooting.'" MDT/AP

US combat jet crashes in South China Sea exercise, seven hurt

DAVID RISING, BANGKOK

A U.S. Navy F35C Lightning II combat jet conducting exercises in the South China Sea crashed while trying to land on the deck of an American aircraft carrier, injuring seven sailors, the military said yesterday.

The pilot was able to eject before the aircraft slammed into the flight deck of the USS Carl Vinson on Monday and then fell into the water. The pilot was safely recovered by a helicopter, said Lt. Mark Langford, a spokesman for the U.S. 7th Fleet.

Seven sailors, including the pilot, were injured and three were evacuated for medical treatment in Manila, Philippines, while four were treated on board the ship. The three sent to Manila were reported in stable condition on Tuesday morning, the Navy said.

Details on the crash of the multimillion-dollar aircraft were still being verified, Langford said.

"The status and recovery of the aircraft is currently under investigation," he told The Associated Press.

Two American carrier strike groups with more than 14,000 sail-



ors and marines are conducting exercises in the South China Sea, which the military says is to demonstrate the "U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Joint Force's ability to deliver a powerful maritime force."

Impact to the deck of the USS Carl Vinson was "superficial," Langford said, and both carriers have resumed routine flight operations.

As China has pressed territorial claims in the South China Sea and increased pressure on Taiwan, the

U.S. and its allies have stepped up exercises in the region, in what they call freedom of navigation operations in line with international law.

As the Carl Vinson and Abraham Lincoln strike groups began their dual carrier operations on Sunday, China flew 39 warplanes toward Taiwan in its largest such sortie of the new year, according to Taiwan's defense ministry.

The formation of 24 Chinese J-16 and 10 J-10 fighter jets stayed out of Taiwanese air space, but the maneuver prompted Taiwan to scramble its own aircraft in response.

Chinese pilots have been flying toward Taiwan on a near-daily basis, and it was unclear if Sunday's flights were a response to the American exercises. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs refused to comment. **MDT/AP**

KOREAS

South officials say North tested cruise missiles

NORTH Korea yesterday test-fired two suspected cruise missiles in its fifth round of weapons launches this month, South Korean military officials said, as it displays its military might amid pandemic-related difficulties and a prolonged freeze in nuclear negotiations with the United States.

One official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, citing department rules, said South Korean and U.S. intelligence officials were analyzing the launches, but didn't provide further details. Another military official, who requested anonymity over similar reasons, said the tests were conducted from an inland area, but didn't specify where.

North Korea has been increasing its testing activity recently in an apparent effort to pressure



People watch a TV showing file images of North Korea's missile launch during a news program at the Seoul Railway yesterday

the Biden administration over the stalled diplomacy after the pandemic unleashed further shock on an economy broken by crippling U.S.-led sanctions over its nuclear weapons program and decades of mismanagement by its own government.

North Korea last Thursday issued a veiled

threat to resume the testing of nuclear explosives and long-range missiles targeting the American homeland, which leader Kim Jong Un suspended in 2018 while initiating diplomacy with the United States.

Some experts say North Korea could dramatically escalate weapons demonstrations after the

Winter Olympics, which begin Feb. 4 in China, the North's main ally and economic lifeline.

They say Pyongyang's leadership likely feels it could use a dramatic provocation to move the needle with the Biden administration, which has offered open-ended talks but showed no willingness to ease sanctions unless Kim takes real steps to abandon the nuclear weapons and missiles he sees as his strongest guarantee of survival.

yesterday's launches could have been followup tests of a weapon North Korea has described as a long-range cruise missile and first tested in September, said Kim Dong-yub, a professor at Seoul's University of North Korean Studies.

State media in reports at the time said the missiles were fired from lau-

ncher trucks and could strike targets 1,500 kilometers (932 miles) away. It described those missiles as a "strategic weapon of great significance" — wording that implies they were developed to carry nuclear weapons.

While halting the tests of nuclear devices and intercontinental range ballistic missiles, Kim Jong Un since 2019 has been ramping up tests of various shorter-range weapons apparently designed to overwhelm missile defenses in the region. Experts say the North's expanding missile arsenal reflects an aim to apply more pressure on its rivals to accept it as a nuclear power in hopes of winning relief from economic sanctions and convert the diplomacy with Washington into mutual arms-reduction negotiations. **MDT/AP**

MALAYSIA

NEW CARRIER SKS AIRWAYS TAKES TO THE SKIES

NEW low-cost Malaysian carrier, SKS Airways, took to the skies yesterday with short-haul flights to holiday island resorts as domestic travel rebounds after months of lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic last year.

SKS launched its maiden flight from the smaller Subang airport near Kuala Lumpur to Pangkor, a northern tax-free island, becoming the first carrier to fly there. It will also fly to northeastern Redang island, a popular scuba-diving haven, and southern Tioman island using 19-seater Twin Otter turboprop aircraft. There are currently no commercial flights to these islands.

The launch comes even as other airlines in the country, including the region's budget carrier AirAsia, are still struggling to ride out the effects of the pandemic.

"As a new set-up, we are nimble, agile and flexible and able to tap into any opportunities that arise. We are positioning ourselves to capitalize on the current pent-up demand for domestic travel," SKS Airways director Rohman Ahmad said at the launch.

SKS Airways is owned by the SKS Group, a real estate company based in southern Johor state. The airline said its operations will initially focus on island and coastal resorts with connections to major cities within peninsular Malaysia.

Rohman said SKS aims to expand regionally to Southeast Asia and southern China in the long-run.

Transport Minister Wee Ka Siong said the launch of SKS will bolster domestic tourism. He said Malaysian airports have seen an increase in passengers following the progressive reopening of the country's borders.

Wee said Malaysia recorded only 11 million air passenger traffic last year, with the numbers picking up in the last two months of 2021. He said air passenger traffic is forecast to rise as much as 45% this year from pre-pandemic figure of nearly 120 million in 2019. **MDT/AP**



UKRAINE CRISIS

German caution on arms rooted in history, energy

FRANK JORDA, BERLIN

GERMANY'S refusal to join other NATO members in providing weapons to Ukraine has annoyed some allies and raised questions about Berlin's resolve in standing up to Russia.

The issue rose to the fore over the weekend following a report that Berlin had gone so far as to block Estonia from supplying old German howitzers to Kyiv to help defend itself against Russian troops massing near the Ukrainian border.

Germany's stance on arms supplies does "not correspond to the level of our relations and the current security situation," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on Twitter.

Speaking to reporters yesterday [Macau time] in Berlin, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz denied a decision had been made on the howitzers and insisted that his country stands with its NATO and European Union allies in opposing any Russian incursion into Ukraine.

"Should this situation occur, we will jointly act," he told reporters. "There would be a high price."

Still, while Germany would continue to provide help to Ukraine, there would be one exception, he said: "We don't provide any lethal weapons."

That stance, criticized in Kyiv and — less loudly — in Washington and London, has caused consternation among some in Germany who worry that their country may not be considered a reliable partner.

"How many in Berlin are actually aware how our seemingly confused Ukraine policy harms not just (Germany) but the entire EU?" asked Wolfgang Ischinger, Germany's former ambassador to the United States and now head of the annual Munich Security Conference.

Experts say Germany's position is partly rooted in its inglorious history of aggression during the 20th century.

"There's the obvious le-



Ukrainian soldiers walk at the line of separation from pro-Russian rebels near Katerinivka, Donetsk region

gacy of Germany's own militarization in Europe during two world wars that has led many German leaders to view any military response as the last resort," said Rachel Ellehuus, deputy director of the Europe, Russia and Eurasia program at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies.

That attitude could backfire, she said. "The current government does not seem to grasp that sending defensive weapons to Ukraine might actually deter further Russian aggression."

And while Germany has pointed to its restrictive position on arms exports to conflict zones in the past, analysts say the rule has not been consistently applied.

"There have always been borderline cases here, such as the Kosovo war or support for the Kurds against IS in Syria," said Sabine Fischer, a senior Russia expert at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

The debate over German weapons was unfolding days after the head of the German navy resigned following criticism at home and abroad for comments he made on Ukraine and Russia. Speaking at an event Friday in India, Vice Admiral Kay-Achim Schoenbach said it was important to have Russia on the same side against China and suggested that Russian President Vladimir Putin

deserved "respect."

With Scholz's Social Democrats steeped in the legacy of Cold War rapprochement pursued by his predecessor Willy Brandt, and the Greens rooted in a tradition of pacifism, two out of Germany's three governing parties would balk at the idea of supplying arms to a non-NATO country in a conflict with Russia. But letting Estonia pass on the old Soviet-designed 122-mm D-30 howitzers to Ukraine might be an acceptable compromise.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock made clear that, qualms about exporting arms to Ukraine aside, Berlin takes a dim view of Russia's behavior.

"In recent weeks, more than 100,000 Russian troops with tanks and guns have gathered near Ukraine for no understandable reason. And it's hard not to see that as a threat," she said during a recent visit to Moscow.

Speaking alongside her Russian counterpart — whom she referred to as "dear colleague" — Baerbock acknowledged the "suffering and destruction that we Germans brought upon the peoples of the Soviet Union" during the Nazi era, but warned that Germany was willing to consider tough steps if Russia acts against Ukraine.

This includes calling into question the future of the new Nord Stream 2 pipeline meant to bring much-nee-

ded natural gas from Russia to Germany.

Such a move against its biggest energy supplier would come at a high price for Germany, too.

With plans to switch off its last three nuclear power plants this year and phase out the use of coal by 2030, Germany's reliance on gas will increase in the short term until enough renewable energy comes online, said Georg Zachmann, a senior fellow at the Bruegel economic think tank in Brussels.

Yet German officials believe that being a large customer of Russian gas can give it leverage, as Moscow won't want to harm its reputation as a reliable supplier of gas, painstakingly built up over decades.

Speaking yesterday at a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels, Baerbock said the German government's priority is to deescalate the situation over Ukraine, dampening allies' calls for military support to Kyiv and swift new sanctions against Moscow.

"Berlin will have to deal with the criticism that is now coming from Ukraine, other European countries and Washington," Fischer said. "At the same time, Germany remains an important player in the negotiations surrounding the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and, I predict, will continue to support sanctions and other measures in the future." MDT/AP

this day in history

1969 PRAGUE RIOTS OVER STUDENT MARTYR



Police wielding truncheons and firing tear gas from pressure canisters have broken up a march by hundreds of demonstrators in central Prague.

The violence erupted as officers tried to disperse the crowd gathered at the foot of the Wenceslas Statue, to pay tribute to Jan Palach, the student who burned himself to death in protest at the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia.

The mourners, mostly students, have been placing lighted candles and wreaths at the foot of the statue — traditionally a focal point for protesters.

The statue was also daubed with a slogan "Do not be indifferent to the day when the light of the future was carried forward by a burning body."

Signs which said "Red Army Square" have been painted over with the words "Jan Palach Square".

Palach was buried yesterday after a ceremony at Charles University, where he was studying philosophy. An estimated 500,000 people gathered in the rain to watch the funeral procession on its final journey to the cemetery at Olsany.

There were no government representatives at the funeral and no police. Soviet troops kept out of sight.

It is understood the tough measures adopted by police trying to clear today's demonstration were the result of an ultimatum from the Soviet authorities.

The Russian leader, Leonid Brezhnev, is said to have threatened to use military force to restore order if the Czech authorities did not take control themselves.

Police say they moved in after the crowd began chanting slogans, like "Russians go home", and refused to disperse.

Officers waving batons charged the crowd and began letting off tear gas. They made a number of arrests.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Soviet authorities had felt their control being undermined after the appointment of the reformist Alexander Dubcek as first secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in January 1968.

After what became known as the Prague Spring during which Dubcek tried to develop "socialism with a human face", Soviet troops invaded Czechoslovakia on 20 August 1968.

Protests against the Soviet occupation continued after the death of Jan Palach. On the first anniversary of the invasion, there were again violent clashes between police and demonstrators. Soviet tanks entered Prague the following day.

Gustav Husak, a hardliner who supported the Warsaw pact invasion, became state leader replacing Dubcek in April 1969. He remained in power until 1988.

The communists were finally overthrown in November 1989 during the "Velvet Revolution", the first of many relatively peaceful anti-communist revolts that swept through Eastern Europe that year.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Listen to the advice given by those with experience. There's a good chance that they won't come back. You can elaborate on your creative ideas and get involved in groups that relate to the arts.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Romantic encounters will develop through group activity. Put your energy into behind the scenes activities. You can make changes to your domestic scene that will benefit all who reside there.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Don't back down but don't ignite the situation. Look into the cost factor, but don't try to get backing yet. You should regain some of your self esteem if you get involved in organizational functions.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Be cautious when dealing with foreigners. You can make favorable real estate offers today. Opportunities for new romantic encounters will unfold through the social events you attend.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Extend an invitation to clients you enjoy spending time with. Don't let coworkers interfere with your objectives. Be sure to pay attention to your financial status.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Today will be hectic. Arguments with children or friends may leave you steaming. Don't let someone try to bully you into doing things their way.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You will need to spend extra time sorting through your work. Be careful; you may upset someone you live with if you don't consult with them. You can sort out any differences you have in an amiable manner.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

New partnerships will develop if you join investment groups. You might find that coworkers will support your endeavors. Investments concerning your residence will be profitable.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Be prepared to have relatives or close friends introduce you to new and exciting individuals. Use your ingenuity to manipulate things to get what you want. Someone you live with will be impossible.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Take positive action. You'll be able to discuss your ambitions with your mate. Be careful not to lead someone on if you truly have no interest. Travel should be on your agenda.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You may find yourself in an uncomfortable situation if you have overloaded your plate unintentionally. Don't bang your head against a wall. Get involved in creative groups.

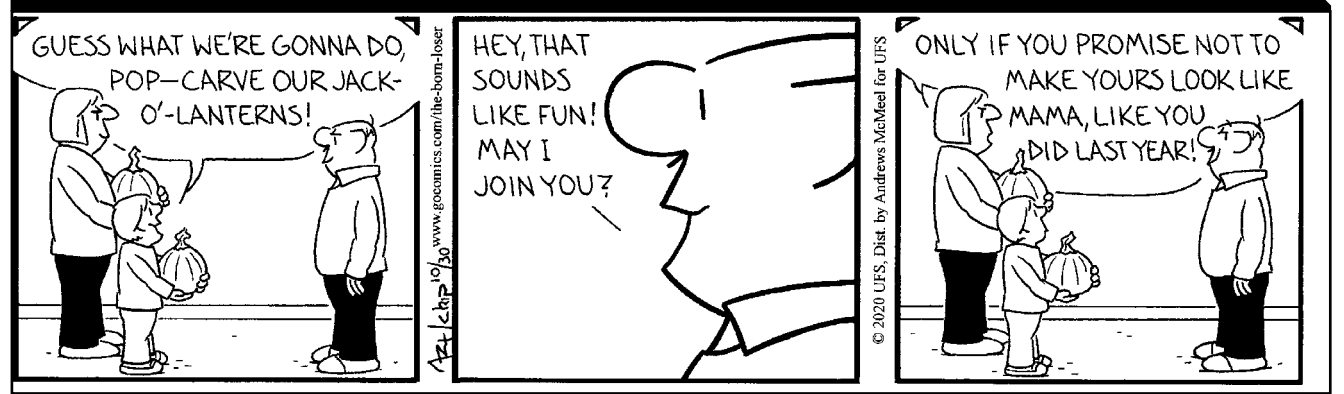


PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Changes in your home are apparent, and you must be willing to bend if you don't want to find yourself alone. Make changes that will enhance your appearance and entice potential partners.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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							9	5
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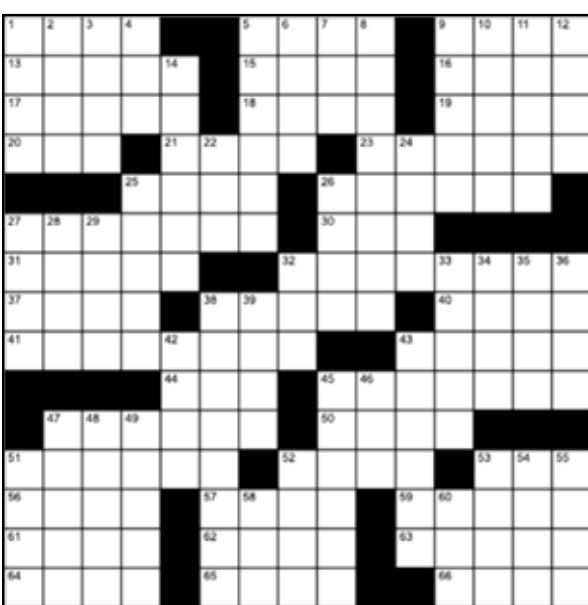
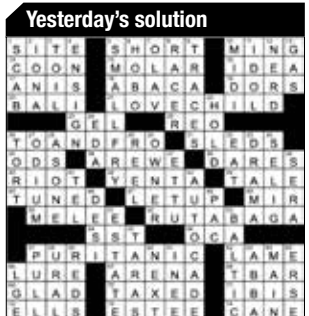
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-5	5	fine
Harbin	-21	-14	cloudy
Tianjin	3	11	fine
Urumqi	1	9	fine
Xi'an	6	11	overcast
Lhasa	-5	0	fine
Chengdu	10	15	cloudy
Chongqing	5	15	cloudy
Kunming	1	6	overcast
Nanjing	17	20	cloudy
Shanghai	1	12	fine
Wuhan	-22	-16	cloudy
Hangzhou	-3	10	fine
Taipei	-15	-2	fine
Guangzhou	10	18	fine
Hong Kong	16	20	fine
WORLD			
Moscow	-12	-14	snow
Frankfurt	3	4	cloudy
Paris	8	11	overcast
London	7	12	rain
New York	1	3	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Delhi wrap; 5- Orenburg's river; 9- Makes lace; 13- Under way; 15- Emperor of Rome 54-68; 16- Gen. Robert ___; 17- Basic monetary unit of Denmark; 18- Bridle part; 19- Spanish snack; 20- Drunkard; 21- Made do, with "out"; 23- Attic; 25- Capital city of Western Samoa; 26- Blazing; 27- Hindmost part; 30- Philosopher ___-tzu; 31- Say "y'all," say; 32- Accepted; 37- Designer Gucci; 38- Actress Taylor; 40- Author Morrison; 41- Unmatched; 43- Ulan ___; 44- Horned viper; 45- Least original; 47- Capital of New South Wales; 50- Askew; 51- Aries; 52- Frequently; 53- Code-cracking org.; 56- PlayStation maker; 57- Aromatic fragrance; 59- Construct; 61- Organization to promote theater; 62- Trademark; 63- Radiolocation; 64- Went through, as the paper; 65- Dash; 66- This, in Tijuana;

DOWN 1- Fifth Avenue store; 2- Bushy hairstyle; 3- Underground part of a plant; 4- Euripides drama; 5- Like much spam; 6- Oboe, e.g.; 7- Uris hero; 8- Gloomy expression; 9- Aquarium fish; 10- Warning; 11- Native American tent; 12- Chair; 14- Home on the range; 22- Relatives; 24- Tropical plant; 25- Passion; 26- Sheltered, nautically; 27- Harvest; 28- Fashion mag; 29- Assistant; 32- Hosp. workers; 33- San Marino surround; 34- Cast a ballot; 35- Seth begat him; 36- Gossip; 38- To be similar to; 39- Catch a view of; 42- Actress Turner; 43- Trade; 45- Falls-jumping fish; 46- Tango need; 47- Excelled; 48- Gossipmonger; 49- Wood nymph; 51- Nicholas II was the last Russian one; 52- Pond organism; 53- Beatty and Rorem; 54- Beat it!; 55- Gillette brand; 58- "You've got mail" co.; 60- Actress Charlotte;



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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Ref: 2107 6005 1,707 ft² 4 2 1

FOR RENT
Taipa Village **HKD 11,500/mth**
Ref: 2012 1001 900 ft² 2 1

Rain Dance Property
"We dance until it's SOLD!"
Hellene Gardens **HKD 7,680,000**
Ref: 2109 6001 1,663 ft² 3 1

AD



Ron Deibert, professor at the Munk School of Global Affairs and in the Department of Political Science, and Director of the Citizen Lab

TECHNOLOGY | RON DEIBERT, CITIZEN LAB

'THE WORLD IS HEADING INTO A PRETTY DARK PERIOD'

FRANK BAJAK, BOSTON

THE internet watchdog Citizen Lab has been remarkably effective in calling to account governments and private sector firms that use information technology to put people in peril.

Its digital sleuths at the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs are best known for exposing abusive targeted espionage, particularly through the use of hyper-intrusive spyware

from Israel's NSO Group. Its Pegasus tool has been used to hack and surveil dozens of journalists, human rights activists and dissidents globally. In November, the U.S. government blacklisted NSO Group and Apple sued it and notified Pegasus victims.

Citizen Lab's work elsewhere is less known. It exposes digital espionage campaigns and insecure software, most recently an app the Chinese government created for athletes, journalists and other

foreigners attending the Winter Olympics.

The Associated Press recently spoke with Citizen Lab's director, 57-year-old political scientist and prize-winning author Ron Deibert. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Q: You founded Citizen Lab in 2001. How did that happen?

A: I was doing work on how intelligence agencies use satellite reconnaissance technology for

arms control verification. It exposed me to a world that I didn't even know existed. I saw the mixture of tools being used to gather electronic evidence and wondered why something like that could not be done in the public interest, on behalf of journalists, NGOs, and human rights activists. And what better place to do such evidence-based research – alongside people with technical skills I didn't have -- than at a university? This was all in the back of my mind when the Ford Foundation reached out to see if I was interested in a project on information tech and international security. So I pitched the lab as "counterintelligence for global civil society." It was hubris at the time. I had no case to make such a claim. But here we are many years later, fulfilling that role.

Q: What do you consider Citizen Lab's greatest contributions? And is it growing?

A: I think the greatest thing we've done is develop a reputation for research that is highly credible, methodical and unbiased. We go where the evidence leads us and are beholden to no one. I have been able to surround myself with very talented, highly ethical people most of whom could be earning 5-6 times more in the private sector. We have about 25 full-time researchers and a half dozen or so fellows or affiliates. We can't really grow much larger. We are a professor's lab and I need to do due diligence properly. So we have to stay this size.

Q: We seem to be at a perilous digital juncture. The experts say disinformation and cybercrime are rampant and online safety is eroding. The public is losing trust in digital systems. We seem to need a Citizen Lab in every country. What are your current challenges?

A: It seems to me, and a lot of people agree, the world is heading

into a pretty dark period, kind of a worldwide descent into authoritarianism coupled with all the maladies around social media, Big Tech and artificial intelligence. The challenges grow and amplify, so we have no end of work. Ever since Apple made those notifications, it's like we're on a world tour of despotism (confirming Pegasus infections on victims' phones). We are currently searching at the University of Toronto for a professor in information security and could potentially hire someone to offload some work and maybe eventually replace me as lab director. The bigger mission: We want to build more Citizen Labs – they don't have to be named that! I'd like to see 5-6 in the U.S. and Europe. It's frustrating that more universities don't jump into digital accountability research. I think it's just a matter of time.

Q: You have called ending the global spyware scourge a tall order. You can't see governments agreeing to ban it. So what can we collectively do to discourage unethical cyber mercenaries?

A: I see three pillars of what can be done: First, investigative journalism is vital to expose abuses and more awareness-raising to be done in civil society. A lot more can also be done in the private sector. We need tech platforms to better protect their users from this threat. Apple and WhatsApp (a Facebook subsidiary that sued NSO Group in 2019) have sent strong signals that they are not going to put up with it as they have in the past. We need governments to act, too, as the Commerce Department did in blacklisting NSO. If we can get them to build export controls around the sector and pass laws so individuals can sue these companies -- and maybe even foreign governments who hire them -- a lot could be done to mitigate some of the harms we're seeing. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Sands Resorts and Sands Macao launch Valentine's Day offerings



This Valentine's Day, a romantic rendezvous is available at The Venetian Macao, The Parisian Macao, The Londoner Macao and Sands Macao restaurants, with an array of specially curated menus for a memo-

orable celebration.

At The Londoner Macao's Churchill's Table, the British-themed restaurant will launch a four-course menu for guests to celebrate the day of love in a joyful environment, while Copa

Steakhouse at Sands Macao will offer a "Tender Hearts Romance 2022" set menu for lovebirds.

The Parisian Macao's Brasserie is presenting a French dinner menu with up to four main course options, while La Chine, located on Level 6 of The Parisian Macao's Eiffel Tower, offers diners a Valentine's Day menu that begins with a deluxe "Eiffel Seafood Platter on Ice."

Executive Chef Hiroshi Kagata of The Venetian Macao's Hiro by Hiroshi Kagata will present an omakase menu, a celebrated style of upscale Japanese cookery, while the newly opened restaurant Jiang Nan by Jereme Leung will present Jiangnan's signature dishes.

MGM announces festive activities for upcoming CNY



Celebrating the arrival of the Year of Golden Tiger, MGM extends the joyous spirit of the Winter Sports Village at the Spectacle to its upcoming Chinese New Year celebrations.

From a winter sport experience, festive feasting and holiday themed workshops to festive decorations, MGM

will offer its guests an array of splendid happenings, ushering in the new lunar year.

A "Curling Go" experience will be offered during the Chinese New Year holiday and select weekends, where guests can try out this emerging sport.

The Anytime restau-

rant will host the "Chinese New Year Cupcake Decoration Workshop" and "Winter Festive Donut Decoration Workshop."

At the same time, experienced pastry chefs will also be sculpting festive chocolate showpieces at the craftsmanship demonstration sessions in the restaurant.

MArt has also launched a time-limited Lunar New Year art workshop, to embrace the Awakening Lion spirits and traditional festive elements of the Chinese lanterns, showcasing the culture of Lingnan through contemporary art. The workshop is available every afternoon from now until February 15.

TENNIS

Where is Peng Shuai? T-shirts will be OK at Australian Open

JOHN PYE, MELBOURNE

RESTRICTIONS which resulted in the removal of a spectator for wearing a T-shirt supporting Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai at the Australian Open have been overhauled after international backlash.

With reports of activists planning to distribute hundreds of shirts branded with the question "Where is Peng Shuai?" in time for Saturday's Australian Open women's final, the message shouldn't be hard to find.

Australian Open tournament director Craig Tiley told The Associated Press it would be OK for people to wear the shirts at Melbourne Park, as long as they didn't congregate in large groups or cause problems for other spectators.

"If they want to do that, that's fine," Tiley said in a telephone interview. But "if anyone's coming on site with the express intent of



Australian Open tournament director Craig Tiley

disrupting the comfort and safety of our fans, they're not welcome.

"We can't sell tickets in advance and have people come in and feel unsafe because there's a large group of people that are using

(the tournament) as a platform to espouse their views on whatever topic it is."

Footage screened last weekend of security and police requesting a fan remove a shirt which featured an image of Peng

on the front and "Where is Peng Shuai?" on the back sparked widespread condemnation.

"To ensure that the Australian Open remains a welcoming, safe and inclusive event for everyone, we have a longstanding policy of not allowing banners, signs or clothing that are commercial or political," organizers said in a statement.

In a later statement, Tennis Australia said it understood "people have strongly held personal and political views on a range of issues."

"Peng Shuai's safety is our primary concern. We continue to work with the WTA and the global tennis community to do everything we can to ensure her well-being," the statement said. "Our work is ongoing and through the appropriate channels."

Tiley said the security staffer was following the tournament's protocols on the weekend but, after a review, the woman involved in the incident would be

invited back to the tournament because she wasn't deemed to be trying to cause a disruption.

China drew international criticism following the near-total disappearance from public view of Peng. She wrote in a social media post in November that she was sexually assaulted by a former senior member of the ruling Communist Party.

Her accusation against former Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli briefly appeared on her verified Weibo social media in early November before being swiftly removed. Screen shots of the post were shared across the internet, drawing widespread concern about Peng's safety.

Following the posting, the three-time Olympian and former doubles champion appeared standing beside a tennis court in Beijing, waving and signing over-size commemorative tennis balls for children. The foreign arm of state TV also issued a statement in English attributed to Peng that retracted her accusation against Zhang.

The WTA made repeated calls for China to conduct an inquiry into the 35-year-old Peng's accusations and to allow the tennis officials to communicate directly with the former No. 1-ranked doubles player and owner of doubles titles at Wimbledon and the French Open. **MDT/AP**

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COMUNA DE PEDRA
CELEBRATES
25 YEARS OF COURAGEOUS
PERFORMANCES

諾貝爾文學獎得主石黑一雄
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A POEM TO MACAU
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OPINION

World Views

Alysson Light, University of the Sciences
 MDT/The Conversation

**MORE WOMEN IN A STEM
 FIELD LEADS PEOPLE TO LABEL
 IT AS A 'SOFT SCIENCE'**

One factor that influences the use of the labels “soft science” or “hard science” is gender bias, according to recent research my colleagues and I conducted.

Women's participation varies across STEM disciplines. While women have nearly reached gender parity in biomedical sciences, they still make up only about 18% of students receiving undergraduate degrees in computer science, for instance.

In a series of experiments, we varied the information study participants read about women's representation in fields like chemistry, sociology and biomedical sciences. We then asked them to categorize these fields as either a “soft science” or a “hard science.”

Across studies, participants were consistently more likely to describe a discipline as a “soft science” when they'd been led to believe that proportionally more women worked in the field. Moreover, the “soft science” label led people to devalue these fields – describing them as less rigorous, less trustworthy and less deserving of federal research funding.

Over the past decade, a growing movement has encouraged girls and women to pursue education and careers in science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM. This effort is sometimes described as a way to reduce the wage gap.

By encouraging women to enter high-paying fields like science, technology and engineering, advocates hope that women on average will increase their earning power relative to men. Others have hoped that, as women demonstrate they can be successful in STEM, sexist stereotypes about women's ability and interest in STEM will erode.

Our research suggests this may not be the case. Stereotypes about women and STEM persist, even in the face of evidence that women can and do productively participate in STEM fields.

Other research has found that explicit “science equals men” stereotypes were weaker among people who majored in science disciplines with high participation by women, like biological sciences, compared to those who majored in fields with few women, like engineering. This finding suggests that exposure to women in your own field can shift the gender stereotypes you hold.

But our studies more closely align with other research suggesting that, rather than reducing gender stereotyping, women's increased participation results in the devaluation of more heavily female fields.

When women make up more than 25% of graduate students in a discipline, men – and to a lesser extent women – become less interested in pursuing that discipline, and salaries tend to go down.

We don't know how scientists and non-scientists ended up making the same connection between gender and soft science labels. It's possible that people who work in science are just more aware of norms against expressing such gender stereotypes – meaning their self-reports are less likely to reflect their true beliefs and actually more closely match those of non-scientists.

But it's also possible that something else is driving their use of the “soft science” label. For example, to our surprise, women who worked in science were more likely compared to men in science to label fields with many women as “soft sciences.” This could reflect the tendency for some women who experience sexism in their fields to distance themselves from other women as a way to protect themselves from being targets of sexism.

Science advocates must grapple with the fact that women's work in scientific fields can result in fields being devalued. For society to benefit fully from the broad spectrum of scientific disciplines, advocates may need to address gender stereotypes more directly.

Gender stereotypes about STEM could also affect which fields talented students choose to pursue. The label of “soft science” might be a turnoff for high-achieving students who want to prove their strengths – or, conversely, students who are insecure about their abilities might avoid a major described as a “hard science.”

The opposition leader in Australia said yesterday its relationship with China will remain difficult even if his center-left Labor Party wins power at elections for the first time in almost a decade.

Anthony Albanese addressed the National Press Club in what is regarded as an unofficial launch of campaigning ahead of elections due by May.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison will address the club next week. Albanese suggested Australia's policy toward a more belligerent China would not divide the parties during the campaign.

“Whoever's in government, it will be a difficult relationship,”

Albanese said. “It will be difficult because the posture of China has changed. It is China that has changed, not Australia that has changed.”

“I don't ... blame the government and never have for the current circumstances,” Albanese added.

Morrison is the third prime minister of the conservative coalition since 2013 when Albanese was the deputy prime minister of a Labor government that was voted out of office.

The first conservative Prime Minister Tony Abbott hosted Chinese President Xi Jinping during a Canberra visit in 2014 that marked a high point in bilateral relations.

AP PHOTO



AP PHOTO



Australia Nearly two dozen sailors on an Australian military ship going to deliver aid to Tonga have tested positive for the coronavirus, officials said yesterday, raising fears they could bring COVID-19 to a Pacific nation that has so far managed to avoid any outbreaks. Australian Defense Minister Peter Dutton said his government was working with Tongan authorities to keep the ship at sea and make sure there is no threat to Tonga's 105,000 residents.

Turkey Rescue crews in Istanbul and Athens scrambled yesterday to clear roads that came to a standstill after a massive cold front and snowstorms hit much of Turkey and Greece, leaving countless people and vehicles in both cities stranded overnight in freezing conditions. Highways and roads in and around Istanbul became clogged after the storm pounded the city of about 16 million people that straddles the European and Asian continents — accumulating more than 80 centimeters of snow in some areas.

UK London police said yesterday they were investigating Downing Street parties during lockdown, putting further pressure on British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government. Metropolitan Police Commissioner Cressida Dick revealed that an investigation was underway in a statement before the London Assembly. Dick said that Scotland Yard is now investigating “a number of events” at Downing Street.

AP PHOTO



Burkina Faso People awoke to a new military-led junta yesterday, after mutinous soldiers ousted democratically elected President Roch Marc Christian Kabore and seized control of the country. Days of gunfire and uncertainty in the capital, Ouagadougou, ended Monday evening when more than a dozen soldiers on state media declared that the country is being run by their new organization, the Patriotic Movement for Safeguarding and Restoration.

**UK TO LIFT TRAVEL
 TEST REQUIREMENTS
 FOR THE VACCINATED**

JILL LAWLESS, LONDON

THE British government announced yesterday [Macau time] that it is scrapping coronavirus travel testing requirements for the vaccinated, news hailed by the travel industry as a big step back to normality.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said that “to show that this country is open for business, open for travelers, you will see changes so that people arriving no longer have to take tests if they have been vaccinated, if they have been double vaccinated.”

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said the change would take effect Feb. 11, coinciding with a midterm holiday break for many schoolchildren.

“Border testing of vaccinated travelers has outlived its usefulness,” Shapps said. “Today we are setting Britain free.”

Tourism and travel firms that have been hammered by pandemic restrictions welcomed the move, which makes the U.K. one of the most open countries in the world for international travel.

Tim Alderslade, chief executive of airline industry body Airlines U.K., said

it was “a landmark day.”

“Nearly two years since the initial COVID restrictions were introduced, today's announcement brings international travel towards near-normality for the fully vaccinated, and at last into line with hospitality and the domestic economy,” he said.

“ Border testing of vaccinated travelers has outlived its usefulness. Today we are setting Britain free.

GRANT SHAPPS
 TRANSPORT SECRETARY

Johan Lundgren, chief executive of budget airline easyJet, said “testing for travel should now firmly become a thing of the past.”

“It is clear travel restrictions did not materially slow the spread of omicron in the U.K. and so it is important that there are no more knee-jerk reactions to future variants,” he said.

Currently, travelers who have had at least two vaccine doses must take a rapid coronavirus test within two days of arriving in the U.K. Those who are unvac-

inated face stricter testing and quarantine rules.

Testing requirements are being lifted for vaccinated adults and all children under 18. Britain is also easing rules for the unvaccinated, who will have to take coronavirus tests before and after traveling to Britain but will no longer face quarantine.

Johnson's Conservative government is also lifting mask mandates and other restrictions this week, and is relying on vaccinations and widespread testing to keep the virus in check.

The U.K. government sets public health policy for England. The other parts of the U.K. — Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland — set their own health rules, but said they would adopt the same rules as England for international travel.

Coronavirus cases in Britain soared in December, driven by the extremely transmissible omicron variant, though hospitalizations and deaths have remained well below previous pandemic peaks.

Britain has seen over 154,000 deaths in the pandemic, the second-worst toll in Europe after Russia. MDT/AP