



THE 2022 SANDS CHINA MACAO INTERNATIONAL 10K WILL BE HELD ON MARCH 20; REGISTRATION WILL BEGIN FEBRUARY 12

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VISITOR ARRIVALS GREW BY 30.7% YEAR-ON-YEAR IN 2021

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LOCAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES ARE NOT CONSIDERING, FOR THE TIME BEING, THE POSSIBILITY OF ENFORCING A FOURTH DOSE OF THE COVID-19 VACCINE

P2

AP PHOTO



India Police in Indian-controlled Kashmir said they arrested a prominent journalist on accusations of publishing “anti-national content,” in a widening crackdown against media in the disputed region. Fahad Shah, the editor of news portal Kashmir Walla, was summoned for questioning in southern Pulwama town last week and later arrested. Police said he was identified among Facebook users and portals that had published “anti-national content,” without specifying what it is.

AP PHOTO



Pakistan's military said security forces cleared two areas in a southwestern province of separatist militants after they attacked two army camps, leaving nine soldiers dead and six others wounded. Twenty militants were killed in intense, hours-long firefights and follow-up operations, it said. The military statement issued late Saturday said militants attacked security forces camps in Baluchistan province in the districts of Naushki and Panjur late Wednesday and both attacks were eventually repulsed.

AP PHOTO



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has tested positive for COVID-19, he tweeted Saturday. “Today my wife and I tested positive for COVID-19 with mild symptoms. Thankfully, we’re experiencing slight symptoms that we have learned is the omicron variant,” he wrote. “We are on duty. We will continue to work at home. We look forward to your prayers.” Erdogan, 67, sent the message after appearing via videolink at a tunnel-opening ceremony from Istanbul, having canceled his appearance in person.

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FALLING DEBRIS CASES PLUNGE IN 2021

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COVID-19

HEALTH AUTHORITIES DOWNPLAY FOURTH VACCINE, CALL FOR BOOSTER SHOT

RENATO MARQUES

LOCAL health authorities are not considering, for the time being, the possibility of enforcing a fourth dose of the Covid-19 vaccine, medical director of the Conde de São Januário Hospital Center and coordinator of local vaccination plan, Dr Tai Wa Hou, said on Friday during the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center press briefing.

Addressing the topic, Tai said that “for the time being, and taking into account the epidemic situation in Macau, the promotion of the fourth dose of the booster vaccine is not anticipated,” but added that local authorities “strongly encourage inoculation with the third dose of the booster vaccine.”

“There is evidence that vaccination and booster shots contribute to lowering the risk of serious illness and death from infection with Covid-19 virus variants, so the public is urged to receive the vaccines and the third booster dose as soon as possible,” Tai said.



At the same press briefing, Tai also continued to push for the vaccination of children and the elderly population, noting, “Data shows that children infected with the Omicron variant may face more severe symptoms and risks

of complications, while the elderly are at greater risk of severe illness and death after infection, therefore, the elderly and children are top priorities to be vaccinated.”

Tai also reinforced his statement by making use of data to

show that the “current global pandemic is still very serious.”

“Variants of the virus have infected people in many countries on a large scale and the number of new cases worldwide exceeds millions every day, totaling more than 380 million infected cases,” he said.

Data released by the same official shows that to 4 p.m. last Friday, the global vaccination rate in

Macau had reached 74.5% with the largest group of vaccinated people being those aged between 20 and 60 years which is now 90%.

The vaccination rate among those aged between 70 to 79 years (44.3%) and 80 years and above (17%) is considered very low.

The lowest vaccination rate is for children aged between three and 11 years, where only 5% have been vaccinated so far.

SCHOOLS TO RESUME CLASSES NORMALLY AFTER CNY

SCHOOLS are expected to resume classes after the Chinese New Year (CNY) holidays and there is no disruption expected for cross-border students or teachers, the Education and Youth Development Bureau’s (DSEDJ) deputy head of department, Cheong Chi Hin, advised at the Covid-19 press briefing.

According to Cheong, all non-tertiary and tertiary education institu-

tions had been closed from before the CNY until last Friday.

According to the same official, there are several scenarios to be considered but “if the epidemic situation in neighboring regions is stable, schools will resume classes right after the holidays, as scheduled.” He calls on teachers and students to strictly implement the anti-epidemic measures on their return to classes.

2022 SANDS CHINA MACAO INT’L 10K

10K run to take place next month, registration this weekend

RENATO MARQUES

THE 2022 Sands China Macao International 10K, a 10-kilometer run, will be held March 20, the Times learned from the Sports Bureau (ID).

Registration for the 10K run event will begin February 12, while Fun Run registrations will start the following day (February 13). For the time being, no details on the requirements to participate have been released by the ID but following regulations of previous events, it is likely that participants must be fully vaccinated and undergo a nucleic acid test before the event.



The 10K running competition started last year and was held for the first time in Macau in April. Due to its success and popularity, the organizers decided to hold the event in a similar format this year.

Last year, runners in the 10K event started from the Macau Tower Plaza towards the Macao Science Center and back, before crossing to Taipa island where the race

finished at the Macau Olympic Sports Centre Stadium.

In the Fun Run, participants take a shorter course. They start from the same point and continue directly to the finish line in Taipa via the Sai Van Bridge.

In 2021, the event gathered over 9,000 runners with most of them participating in it as a fun and recreational activity.

This will be the third

sports event in 2022 following the Macao International Regatta and the World Table Tennis Champions Macao 2021 China Stars held in January.

While the Macau annual calendar of sports events has not been finalized, ID’s president, Pun Weng Kun, advanced on a previous occasion that at least four more sports events were being planned.

Such events include the Dragon Boat Races (in June), the Grand Prix (in November), the International Marathon (in December), and at least one more “Basketball event,” which Pun did not wish to disclose in detail at this point.

NEW MUSIC DIRECTOR RECRUITED FOR MACAU’S ORCHESTRAS

THE new private entity that will manage Macau’s two orchestras is set to recruit a new music director, according to the new Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) president, Leong Wai Man, as cited by TDM Radio.

According to the new official who replaced Mok Ian Ian, Macao Orchestra (OM) and the Macao Chinese Orchestra could “perform better and look for staff with a more suitable fit” under the new arrangement.

The two orchestras are still publicly owned but will be managed by a private entity.

The official revealed

that the musicians of the two orchestras will be transferred to the new entity.

Lu Jia, who headed the orchestra from 2008, is said to have left Macau.

The IC has allegedly abruptly laid off musicians from the two orchestras, which caused the bureau to compensate its musicians up to MOP250,000.

The IC previously noted to the Times that in a bid to achieve its long-term sustainable development, the two orchestras will operate as a public enterprise in the future. LV

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Fewer cases of falling debris from buildings last year

RENATO MARQUES

THE Fire Services Bureau (CB) has handled a total of 240 cases related to the falling of debris from buildings in 2021, as per CB's statistical information provided to the Times.

According to the CB, the number of cases in 2021 represented a significant decline when compared year-on-year with 2020.

"We handled a total of 240 cases relating to the fall of debris from buildings in 2021. In the previous year [2020], we carried out a total of 300 operations of this kind, representing a year-on-year decrease of 60 cases in 2021," a CB spokesperson told the Times. The figure cited represents a drop of 20%.

Potentially accountable for the drop in the number of cases might be the fact that in 2021, Macau was spared from major weather-related even-



ts, namely strong typhoons, that can catalyze incidents of this kind in buildings with various weaknesses.

Other causes, besides the age of the buildings, include the quality of materials used, construction methods, and

the usage of the building.

Although having fewer cases do not represent less severity in terms of consequences, and while the CB has no statistics quantifying damage caused by the fallen debris, it was possible to assess the situation through the content of complaints received from several citizens. These included damage caused to vehicles and other assets due to falling tiles, cement, and concrete pieces from buildings, namely those located in the oldest parts of the city.

Specialists previously consulted by the Times on a separate occasion pointed out that temperature differences can also be an important factor. The start of the hotter weather or the switch to cooler temperatures can be the most dangerous times of the year for this problem due to the expansion or contraction of the materials on the buildings.

RESIDENT ARRIVING FROM US CLASSIFIED AS ASYMPTOMATIC FOR COVID-19

A local resident who arrived in Macau on February 6 from the United States, via Singapore, has tested positive for Covid-19 on arrival, the health authorities announced. The 55-year-old female resident was inoculated with three doses of the BioNTech vaccine in June and July 2021 in Macau, and January 2022, in the United States. Days before leaving the country, she underwent a nucleic acid test on January 31, February 1 and 2, in the United States and had three negative results. The woman showed no symptoms of Covid-19. She has been considered by Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center as an asymptomatic imported case and as a result is not included in Macau's confirmed case data.

OVER 160 PEOPLE CHECKED DURING WINTER ANTI-CRIME OPERATIONS

The Public Security Police Force (PSP) stated that they will maintain the winter anti-crime operations to ensure good law and order during the Chinese New Year. A total of 163 persons were intercepted during the operation. One man, suspected of exchanging illegal currency, was handed over to the relevant authorities for follow-up action. In addition, a total of 38 vehicles were stopped and seven prosecutions were made for failure to wear seat belts, use of mobile phones while driving, and failure to carry a driving license.

AD

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Property of the Week



Nova Taipa Gardens
HKD 12,880,000 2,500 ft² 4 2 1

Fantastic apartment in a central location. What was a large four bedroom apartment has been converted into three bedrooms, making the most fabulous master suite with masses of built in storage, dressing area and en suite bathroom. If a fourth bedroom is required it would be simple to revert to the original design.

Wonderful natural light streams through the front of the property which overlooks Central Garden. Large kitchen at the back of the property has plenty of built in storage and a small laundry balcony. The guest suite is located of the main living area. The open plan living dining area is huge approximately 700 sq ft.



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Ref: 1811 5570

Property Hotlist



Hellene Gardens
HKD 9,988,000

2,073 ft²
4
3
1



SCAN ME
Ref: 2111 6002

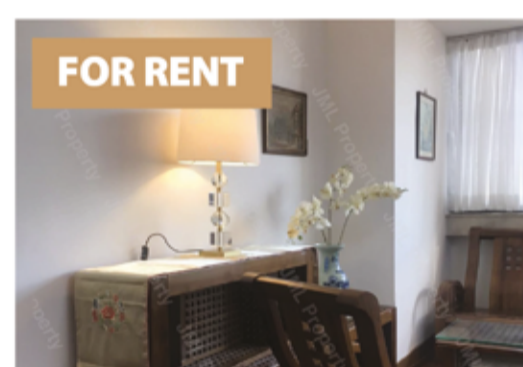


Buckingham
HKD 13,900/mth

1,080 ft²
2
1



SCAN ME
Ref: 2112 1004



Saint Lazarus
HKD 6,900/mth

650 ft²
2
1



SCAN ME
Ref: 2112 1001

More Listings

For Sale

- [Taipa] Nam Long 1 1 590 ft² **HKD 3,480,000** Ref: 2108 6002
- [Macau] Tai Nin 1 1 720 ft² **HKD 3,590,000** Ref: 2110 6001
- [Taipa] Triumph Court 4 2 1,756 ft² **HKD 11,180,000** Ref: 2104 6002
- [Taipa] Hellene Gardens 4 2 2,350 ft² **HKD 14,980,000** Ref: 2106 6003
- [Taipa] Manhattan 4 2 2,305 ft² **HKD 15,750,000** Ref: 2005 6001

For Rent

- [Taipa] Old Taipa Studio 1 440 ft² **HKD 7,900/mth** Ref: 2110 1001
- [Coloane] One Oasis 2 2 1,185 ft² **HKD 11,200/mth** Ref: 2109 1001
- [Coloane] One Oasis 2 2 1,325 ft² **HKD 11,900/mth** Ref: 2107 6003
- [Coloane] One Oasis 2 2 1,112 ft² **HKD 14,200/mth** Ref: 2102 1004
- [Cotai] One Grantai 3 3 2,158 ft² **HKD 20,000/mth** Ref: 2105 1002

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HKD 7,680,000

1,663 ft²
3
2
1



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Beijing 2022 broadcast to promote national sports development

JING WU

MACAU kicked off the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics celebration on Friday at the Macao Science Center to commemorate the Winter Games being held at Beijing's National Stadium until February 20.

President of the Sports Bureau

(ID) Pun Weng Kun said Friday that watching the broadcast of the Beijing 2022 will enable residents to learn about sports' development in China.

"Macao residents can watch the Winter Olympics on television to learn about the development of national sports and accelerate the promotion of patriotism and love for Macau," Pun said during the

ceremony held to mark the start of Beijing 2022.

The official stressed that Macau is promoting the Olympic spirit and "telling the Chinese story" by broadcasting all the events of Beijing 2022. Beijing is the first city to host both a Summer and Winter Olympics, after having organised the Summer Games in 2008, which are considered as celebrations for

a country on the rise.

Speaking at the event, deputy director of China Media Group (CMG), Li Feng, said that the event aimed to build a richer and more diversified platform for Macau compatriots to further understand the development of the country through the Winter Olympics and to cheer on the Olympic athletes, as well as to add a "festive atmosphere" to welcome the Year of the Tiger.

"In the future, CCTV Asia Pacific will continue to actively implement the strategic cooperation agreement between CCTV and the SAR Government, tell the story of Macau in the new era, build newer platforms for practical cooperation, and expedite Macau and the motherland moving forward together," Li stressed.

Meanwhile, chairman of TDM's Board of Directors, Ma Iao Hang, said, "Following the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, CCTV has once again authorised Macau TV to broadcast the 2022 Beijing Olympic Winter Games. This is another 'fruitful achievement,' guided by the spirit of President Xi Jinping's speech to Macau and the signing of the Framework Agreement on Deepening Strategic Cooperation between CCTV and the Macau SAR Government, and is another 'happy event' for the benefit of the Macau people," he expressed.

Beijing 2022 will be broadcast live in Macau for 17 consecutive days.

Friday's celebration was organized by Asia-Pacific headquarters of China Media Group (CMG), the Department of Publicity and Culture of the Liaison Office, the Sports Bureau, TDM, and the Macau United Citizens Association.

Visitor arrivals surge 30% in 2021

JING WU

VISITOR arrivals grew by 30.7% year-on-year in 2021, while overnight-stay visitor arrivals and the average length of stay of visitors both increased, according to the figures revealed by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) in a statement.

The MGTO explained that the reason for the increase in arrivals is due to their efforts in holding roadshows in mainland China as well as the launch of their travel offers.

"All these endeavors have translated into considerable tourism revival," the MGTO indicated.

The MGTO said that in 2021, they pushed forward various major activities including deepening integration across the fields of



"Tourism+," rolling out a series of "Macao Weeks" to promote Macau as a safe and quality destination as well as organizing events and activities to attract visitors.

As these endeavors were in tandem with online-and-offline promotions and various special travel offers, the total vi-

ditor arrivals reached 7.71 million last year, a year-on-year rise of 30.7%.

The average daily volume of visitor arrivals exceeded 21,000. Macau registered over 42,000 single-day visitor arrivals on both the first day of the Labour Day holidays (May 1) and New Year's Eve (December 31). It is due to "the synergy

of promotional measures and mega events that the single-day visitor arrivals increased further on festive holidays," the MGTO said.

The average length of stay of overnight-stay visitors and number of these visitors both increased in 2021. Overnight-stay visitor arrivals reached 3.7

million throughout the year, a surge of 31.0%, and constituted 48% of overall visitor arrivals.

Total visitor expenditure (including gaming expenditure) between January and September 2021 amounted to MOP94.09 billion, marking a period-on-period increase of 132.5%.

THREE MAJOR STRATEGIES IN 2022

The MGTO indicated that they have three major strategies in 2022 with regards to "tourism +" and regional cooperation, in order to drive tourism recovery and stimulate the local economy. These are to enhance online and offline promotions; deepen cross-sector integration of "Tourism+" and foster quality tourism development; as well as deepen regional cooperation and enhance destination glamour.

BROAD MONEY SUPPLY CONTINUES TO FALL IN DECEMBER

MACAU'S broad money supply decreased 0.5% month on month to 687.5 billion patacas in December 2021 with a stable share of patacas, the special administrative region's monetary watchdog said Friday.

According to statistics released by the Monetary Authority of Macao, the currency in circulation and demand deposits increased 0.6% and 2.9% respectively. M1 thus rose 2.3% from one month earlier.

Meanwhile, quasi-monetary liabilities dropped by 0.9%. The sum of these two items, i.e. broad money supply or M2, decreased 0.5% to 687.5 billion patacas.

On an annual basis, M1 and M2 fell 6.5% and 0.7%, respectively.

The shares of the pataca, the Hong Kong dollar, the renminbi and the U.S. dollar in M2 were 35.4%, 50.1%, 6.0% and 6.9%, respectively.

Resident deposits dropped 0.5% from the preceding month to 667.7 billion patacas while non-resident deposits also fell 6.9% to 354.3 billion patacas.

On the other hand, public sector deposits with the banking sector rose 0.5% to 264.5 billion patacas.

As a result, total deposits in the banking sector decreased 2.2 percent from a month earlier to 1,286.5 billion patacas.

At the end of December 2021, the loan-to-deposit ratio for the resident sector rose from 60.3% at the end of November to 60.4%. **MDT/XINHUA**



RENATO MARQUES

FESTIVITY RETURNS TO MACAU IN CHINESE NEW YEAR AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC

A “dancing golden dragon” of over 200 meters long meandered through Macau’s zigzagging narrow alleys. Dazzling floats and passionate performances entertained audiences lining up along a two-km-long main road. Glittering fireworks lit up the night sky above the sea.

Two years since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, festivity has returned to the SAR during this Lunar New Year, which fell on Tuesday, with caution against the coronavirus.

Thanks to the sound epidemic situation in Macau, which has reported no locally transmitted Covid-19 cases for nearly four consecutive months, the SAR government rolled out a series of traditional celebrations to usher in the Year of the Tiger.

On the first day of the Chinese New Year, performers holding a 238-meter-long “dancing golden dragon” and 18 “dancing lions” toured the streets of Macau, drawing large crowds of local residents and tourists at the landmark Ruins of St. Paul, where the road show started, and along the route connecting the major scenic spots on the Macau Peninsula.

On Thursday evening, a parade featuring 14 floats and performances by various teams weaved into a multimedia dance drama under the theme of “Turning the Fortune by the Mighty Tiger,” a story of the Tiger General’s victory

over a winged epidemic beast.

Crowds along the route took pictures with their mobile phones, waved to performers, and shouted “Happy New Year!” Children who are not tall enough had to sit on the shoulders of their parents or stand on scooters or trolleys to get a glimpse of the show.

In celebration of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, a 15-minute fireworks show on Thursday particularly included fireworks in the shape of the five Olympic rings, wishing the Chinese athletes great success in the games, which opened on Friday evening.

Lei Wai Nong, Secretary for economy and finance of the SAR government, said at the launch ceremony that the parade, which resumes this year under strict epidemic control, is particularly meaningful to branding the city as a safe and quality tourist destination.

A tourist surnamed Zhou from Chongqing Municipality in the mainland told Xinhua that the traditional Lunar New Year celebrations in Macau offered unforgettable travel experiences for her family. “Due to the pandemic, we haven’t traveled for two years,” she said.

According to the Public Security Police Force, Macau recorded around 23,700 entries and exits of tourists on Wednesday, the second day of the Chinese New Year, and 33,300 entries and exits of tourists on Thursday, the third day

XINHUA



of the New Year. On Feb. 13 and 14 of 2021, the second and third day of the Year of the Ox, the figures were 20,700 and 27,300 respectively.

After being suspended for two years, the SAR government also resumed designating certain areas for the public to set off fireworks by themselves, attracting a number of residents despite cold weather and drizzle on the outdoor sites.

A fireworks stall owner with

the surname of Lam said she had welcomed a horde of customers in the evenings, but the business was still not as good as before the Covid-19 pandemic. “There used to be a lot of tourists, even from other countries,” she said.

The Macau SAR government also hosted other events for Macau residents to share their joy of the Beijing Winter Olympics, including a public cycling event held on Thursday.

On Friday, the China Media

Group (CMG) and the Macau SAR jointly launched a campaign to cheer for the Beijing Winter Olympics. During the campaign, a total of 300 taxis in Macau, as well as outdoor screens, local media, and platforms displayed the promotional video of the Beijing 2022 made by CMG, the music video of Olympic themed song “Together for a Shared Future” and songs composed by Macau musicians in dedication to the Winter Olympics. **MDT/XINHUA**



Chinese New Year visitors below gov't expectations

VISITOR arrivals into Macau increased during the Chinese New Year period compared to 2021, as per data revealed by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO).

However, the figure falls short of government expectations of up to 20,000 tourist arrivals per day.

According to the MGTO, visitor arrivals exceeded 76,700 during the five-day

period from January 31 to February 4 (the 29th day of the prior month to the fourth day of the Lunar New Year), an increase of over 20% compared to the same period of last year’s Chinese

New Year Golden Week.

A total of 76,742 visitors arrived in Macau during the five-day period, the vast majority of which were from mainland China, with over 71,000 arrivals.

Of the five days between the 29th day of the prior month and the fourth day of the Lunar New Year, the highest number of visitors came on February 3 (the third day of Lunar New Year), with nearly 22,000 arrivals, of which 20,700 came from the Mainland.

Nearly 33,000 arrivals entered Macau through the Border Gate, followed by Hengqin and the airport, with over 20,000 and 13,000 arrivals respectively. Tsing Mau Port and Taipa Ferry Terminal each had over 3,000 arrivals coming through these two ports.

The latest figures provided by the Public Security Police indicate that almost 19,000 tourists crossed the border to the SAR Saturday, February 5. **JW**

IAM DESTROYS SURPLUS FIRECRACKERS AND ROCKETS

IN accordance with the regulations, the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) collected 39 boxes of surplus firecrackers, fireworks and rockets and destroyed them at Macau Peninsula’s fireworks area yesterday morning.

The firecrackers, fireworks, and rocket display on the Macau Peninsula and Taipa ended at midnight of February 6, the sixth day of the Lunar New Year.

According to the IAM, the total quantity of firecrackers, fireworks and rockets imported this year was 1,399 boxes, 61.4% fewer than 2020, while

39 boxes of surplus firecrackers, fireworks and rockets were destroyed, accounting for 2.8% of the total quantity imported this year.

The total number of visitors to the Macau fireworks display area this year was 24,233, an increase of 60% compared to 2020, while the total number of visitors to the Taipa fireworks display area was 29,344, an increase of 184% compared to 2020. The total number of injuries were fewer, with 11 in Macau and 41 in Taipa, a decrease of 36.6% compared to 2020, mostly sustaining slight injuries. **JW**



President Xi Jinping (right) meets with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Saturday

DIPLOMACY

Xi says China, Egypt hold 'similar visions and strategies'

CHINA and Egypt "share similar visions and strategies in defending their own interests," Chinese leader Xi Jinping said this weekend in a meeting with Egypt's authoritarian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

The Egyptian leader was one of a half-dozen heads of state who met with Xi after attending the opening of the Beijing Winter Olympics, seeking closer ties with China while shunning Western criticism of their heavy-handed rule.

Xi "hailed enhanced political trust" between the countries, citing cooperation in fighting the pandemic. Their comprehensive strategic partnership is a model of "China-Arab, China-Africa and China-developing world solidarity," Xi said, according to CGTN, the international arm of state broadcaster CCTV.

"China and Egypt share similar visions and strategies in defending their own interests, pursuing common development, enhancing their people's well-being and promoting fairness and justice in the world, as the world is undergoing changes unseen in a century," Xi said.

The sides will "continue to support each other on issues related to core interests and major concerns," he said.

Since taking power, el-Sisi has overseen a widespread crackdown on dissent and opposition, jailing tens of thousands and drawing international criticism.

In 2017, the government ar-

rested dozens of Uyghur students studying at Cairo's Al-Azhar University and deported them to China amid Beijing's ruthless crackdown targeting Muslim minorities in the far western Xinjiang region.

Egypt was the recipient of several free shipments of Chinese-made Sinopharm coronavirus vaccines and China says it helped set up Africa's first vaccine production in the country.

El-Sisi is one of more than 30 world leaders and heads of major international organizations who flew to Beijing for Friday's opening of the Winter Olympic Games.

Not having left China since 2019 amid the pandemic, Xi is holding a series of meetings on the sidelines of the Games with leaders whose mostly undemocratic countries are anxious to strengthen relations with the rising superpower and increasingly identify with its political model of strict, one-party rule.

Also Saturday, Xi met with the heads of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Serbia, Ecuador and Qatar. The leaders of Argentina and Poland are also among those in town.

Xi met also with United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who expressed hopes for closer cooperation on "peace and security, sustainable development, including climate change and biodiversity, and human rights," according to U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq.

Guterres also said he hopes

that China will allow U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet to make a "credible visit" to China, including Xinjiang, where a million or more Uyghurs have been detained in political re-education camps. China describes the facilities as centers for job training and de-radicalization and says all are now closed.

Beijing carefully controls access to the region, and says that while Bachelet has a standing invitation to visit, her trip must be "a friendly one" and should not start with "presumed guilt."

An official Chinese readout of the meeting made no mention of either Xinjiang or human rights, but quoted Xi, who is also leader of the ruling Communist Party, as saying "promoting democracy" should be a priority, in a reference to China's claims that its own system is just as valid or even superior to the Western multi-party model.

"President Xi pointed out that no system should be regarded as the only model to follow, nor is there a single development model that fits all. Every country has the right to choose a path that suits its national realities and meets its people's needs," the statement said.

The meetings follow a mini-summit between Xi and Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday that underscored the growing alignment of their authoritarian countries' positions as they push back against the liberal world order dominated by the U.S.

The two leaders oversaw the signing of more than 20 agreements covering trade, energy and other fields and issued a joint statement in which China backed Russia in opposing NATO's expansion, a move seen as signifying Xi's growing perception of himself as a global leader.

"President Putin emphasized that the strategic significance of Russia-China relations is unprecedented," Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng said in a commentary on the meeting posted to the ministry's website.

"Russia firmly supports China's legitimate position of safeguarding its core interests," Le said. "During the talks, the two heads of state reiterated that any attempt to harm the interests of China and Russia and divide China-Russia relations is doomed to failure."

While China formally eschews all military alliances, the sides have held a series of joint war games, including naval drills and patrols by long-range bombers over the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea. In August, Russian troops for the first time deployed to Chinese territory for joint maneuvers.

Putin has also noted that Russia has been sharing highly sensitive military technologies with China that helped significantly bolster its defense capability.

All the leaders of the five former Soviet republics of Central Asia came to Beijing, highlighting the region's increasingly close ties to its eastern neighbor. Trade has been booming between China

and the region, a key source of gas and other resources for the Chinese economy.

In his meeting Saturday with Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Xi said China is "unswerving in its support for Kazakhstan's safeguarding of its own independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity."

China issued strong backing for Tokayev's government during deadly street protests last month, though unlike Russia, it did not send troops to help restore order.

"China is ready to deepen security cooperation with Kazakhstan," Xi said, according to CGTN.

Tokayev "thanked China for supporting Kazakhstan's efforts to reject external interference and maintain its own security and stability," CGTN said.

Xi's meetings with Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov and Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic were equally upbeat, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

In his meeting with Vucic, who has been criticized for his increasingly authoritarian rule, Xi hailed the "ironclad friendship" between China and Serbia, saying the countries enjoy "high-level political mutual trust."

The U.S. and several other Western democracies declined to send dignitaries to Beijing under a diplomatic boycott to protest China's human rights record and policies in Xinjiang.

Others have stayed away due to COVID-19 restrictions, making for a very different guest list from that of the 2008 Beijing Summer Games, when most major world leaders were in attendance.

"With some exceptions, the high-level attendees at this year's Games make up a rogue's gallery of authoritarian leaders and those in thrall to Chinese cash," said Michael Mazza, a China specialist with the American Enterprise Institute. **MDT/AP**

Russian bombers fly over Belarus amid Ukraine tensions

VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV,
MOSCOW

RUSSIA yesterday [Macau time] sent a pair of long-range nuclear-capable bombers on patrol over its ally Belarus amid spiraling tensions over Ukraine.

The Russian Defense Ministry said the two Tu-22M3 bombers practiced interacting with the Belarusian air force and air defense during a four-hour mission. The flight followed several similar patrols over Belarus, which borders Ukraine to the north.

The mission came as the Kremlin has moved troops from Siberia and the Far East to Belarus for sweeping joint drills. The deployment added to the Russian military buildup near Ukraine, fueling Western fears of a possible invasion.

Russia has denied any plans of attacking Ukraine, but urged the U.S. and its allies to provide a binding pledge that they won't accept Ukraine into NATO, won't deploy offensive weapons, and will roll back NATO deployments to Eastern Europe. Washington and NATO have rejected the demands.

The West has called on Russia to pull back an estimated 100,000 troops from areas near Ukraine, but the Kremlin has responded by saying it will station troops wherever it needs to on Russian territory. As the tensions over Ukraine soared, the Russian military has launched a series of war games spreading from the Arctic to the Black Sea.

The Russian troop deployment to Belarus raised concerns in the West that Moscow could stage an attack on Ukraine from the north. The Ukrainian capital of Kyiv is just 75 kilometers from the Belarus border.

In recent months, Russia has conducted a series of joint drills with Belarus and repeatedly sent its nuclear-capable long-range bombers to patrol over Belarus, which borders NATO members Poland, Lithuania and Latvia.

Belarus' authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko, who has increasingly relied on the Kremlin's political



Demonstrators with Ukrainian national flags rally against Russian aggression in the center of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city

and financial support amid bruising Western sanctions triggered by his crackdown on domestic protests, has called for closer defense ties with Moscow and recently offered to host Russian nuclear weapons.

In an interview with a Russian state TV host aired Saturday, Lukashenko charged that the Russian-led security alliance demonstrated its quick deployment capability when its members briefly sent forces last month to Kazakhstan to help stabilize the situation after deadly riots.

"While they (NATO) will be still getting prepared to send some troops here, we will already stand at the English Channel, and they know it," he said in a reference to Western allies.

The Belarusian leader downplayed the threat of war, but added that if it still erupts "it will last for three or four days at most."

"There is no one there to fight us," he said about Ukraine.

On Saturday, the German newspaper Bild published a report alleging that Russia is poised to attack Ukraine from several directions, capture major cities and install a puppet government. Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova angrily dismissed the allegations.

As war fears mounted, Ukrainian authorities launched a series of civil defense drills for residents.

"I am here to learn how to defend myself, defend

my relatives and also understand how to act in the situation," Kyiv resident Ilya Goncharov said after taking part in drills on the outskirts of the Ukrainian capital. "I am happy that I came here to learn the basics of self defense and first aid."

In Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city just 25 kilometers south of the Russian border, thousands of people took to the streets Saturday carrying giant yellow-and-blue banners in the colors of the national flag in a show of determination to protect the city.

"We want to show that there are people in Kharkiv who are ready to defend it and fight back," said marcher Svitlana Galashko.

Amid the standoff over Ukraine, U.S. President Joe Biden has ordered 2,000 U.S.-based troops to Poland and Germany and shifted 1,000 more from Germany to Romania in a show of the U.S. commitment to NATO's eastern flank.

Earlier this week, Russian President Vladimir Putin has signaled Moscow's readiness for more talks with Washington and its NATO allies. As part of high-level diplomacy to ease the tensions, French President Emmanuel Macron is set to head to Moscow and Kyiv on Monday and Tuesday, while German Chancellor Olaf Scholz will travel to Kyiv and Moscow on Feb. 14-15.

On Saturday, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson had a call with Macron and "they agreed that finding a

diplomatic solution to the current tensions must remain the overriding priority."

Johnson's office said he and the French president "also stressed that NATO must be united in the face of Russian aggression" and "agreed to continue to work together to develop a package of sanctions which would come into force immediately should Russia further invade Ukraine."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also spoke Saturday with European Council President Charles Michel, saying on Twitter that the tensions around Ukraine's situation must be de-escalated.

In 2014, Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula after Ukraine's Moscow-friendly leader fled the country. Russia also threw its weight behind a separatist insurgency in eastern Ukraine, where over 14,000 have been killed in fighting.

Amid the tensions with the West, Putin on Friday attended the opening of the Winter Olympics in Beijing and met with China's leader Xi Jinping to strengthen the two countries' alliance. In a joint statement, Putin and Xi declared their opposition to any expansion of NATO while affirming that the island of Taiwan is a part of China.

Putin and Xi announced that the relations between Moscow and Beijing are "superior to political and military alliances of the Cold War era" and their friendship "has no limits." **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1964 BEATLEMANIA ARRIVES IN THE US



The four members of the British hit band, the Beatles, have arrived in New York at the start of their first tour of the United States.

The young men, with their now infamous mop-head hairstyles, stepped onto the tarmac at Kennedy Airport just after 1300 local time.

There were more than 3,000 screaming teenagers at the airport. Many had skipped school or work. Some were in tears and some were carrying placards with phrases such as "I love you, please stay".

The Beatles' first scheduled appearance will be on American television on Sunday on the Ed Sullivan show. He apparently booked them to appear after seeing the huge crowds who greeted their return to Heathrow from Sweden last October.

More than 5,000 fans applied for tickets to be part of the audience for the live show - only 750 were lucky enough to get them.

The Beatles - Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, John Lennon and George Harrison - received maximum police protection, the kind of arrangement usually produced for kings and presidents.

There were security barriers too, without which, the Beatles would almost certainly have been crushed by the throng of screaming women.

Elsewhere in the United States, excitement over the Beatles' arrival has reached almost fever-pitch.

Their songs are playing constantly on radio stations, in shops and other places of work.

Millions of Beatle records have already been sold and a company called Puritan Fashions Incorporated, which describes itself as "the only exclusive official licensed manufacturer of Beatle wearing apparel" is marketing T-shirts, sweat shirts, turtle-neck sweaters, tight-legged trousers, night shirts, scarves and jewellery inspired by the Beatles.

Beatle wigs are also for sale at \$2.99 each - or the equivalent of one guinea.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Beatles were the first British band to break into the American market.

Their appearance on the Ed Sullivan show reportedly led to a dip in the crime rate to a 50-year low as 73 million people or 40% of Americans tuned into watch.

They performed the songs All My Loving, Till There Was You, She Loves You, I Saw Her Standing There and I Want To Hold Your Hand.

The band appeared twice on the Ed Sullivan show and their performances still rate as the second and third most-watched programmes in the history of US TV. Only the 1983 final episode of Korean war comedy MASH achieved more viewers.

In February 2004, the Beatles were given the President's Award at the Grammys to mark the 40th anniversary of what became known as "Beatlemania". It was accepted by the widows of John Lennon and George Harrison, Yoko Ono and Olivia Harrison.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Don't avoid situations that may deteriorate; try to mend them. You'll find it easy to meet new people. Jealousy may be a contributing factor to your emotional ups and downs.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Get busy making those changes to your home. Your ability to see other people's points of view will allow you to come to reasonable agreements.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Dig deep, ferret out any hidden concerns before you sign your life away. If you haven't already, don't be afraid to start your own small business on the side. You are apt to meet someone special on your journey.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 This is a great day to start that new health regimen you've been talking about. Your personal life will still be experiencing difficulties and you are best to avoid the issues for the time being. You're eager to learn.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Make changes around your house and plan to do some entertaining. Ask family members for help and you will be able to complete the projects more quickly. You can make amends by taking them somewhere special.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Get back into a routine that promises a better looking, more aware individual. Don't let others restrict you from saying how you feel about family issues.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 They will jump at the chance to do something without you if it sounds like more fun. You will get great satisfaction from your efforts. Read some books on self awareness.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 You will easily charm members of the opposite sex. You'll find it difficult to control your emotions. Exhaustion combined with overindulgence could result in minor health problems.

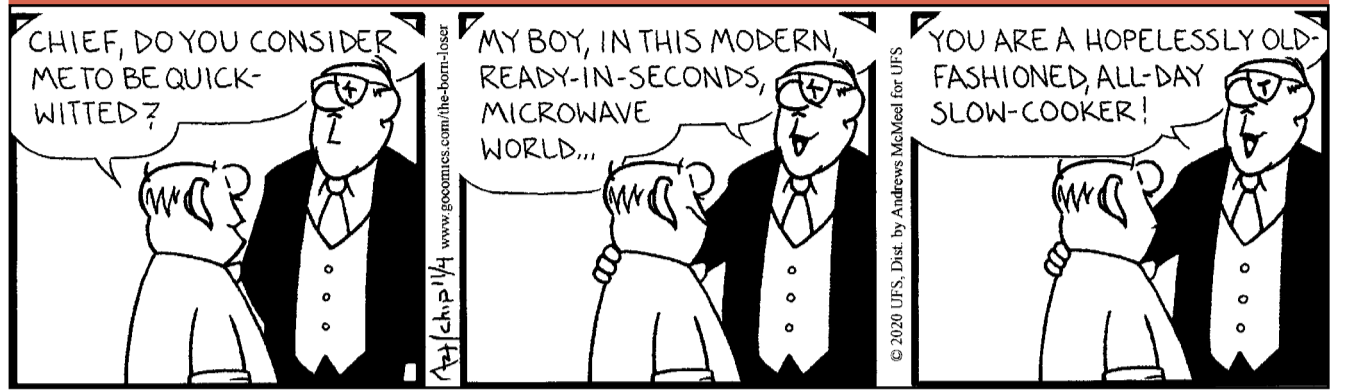
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Your creative ability will surface, giving you good ideas for ways of making money. Your goals will be in reach if you direct your energy wisely. You must lay down ground rules so that you can complete a job.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Sign up for seminars that will expand your business awareness. Overindulgence could lead to problems with digestion. Hidden matters are likely to surface.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 You can make changes to your home that will be pleasing to all concerned. Real estate investments will be extremely profitable in the long run. Your ideas will be well received.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 You need to concentrate on solving existing problems. You are ahead of your time, and trying to stay in one spot could be asking too much.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

MEDIUM					HARD													
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		1			3							8						

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- Clear the boards; 6- Bar, legally; 11- Clean air org.; 14- Makes out; 15- Christine of "Chicago Hope"; 16- British rule in India; 17- Body of values; 18- Plant flower; 19- ... mouse?; 20- Hand cream ingredient; 22- Duck with soft down; 24- Cat's front foot; 28- Fire starter; 30- Gave a speech; 31- Like some mouthwashes; 32- Thicket; 33- Oil; 37- Singer DiFranco; 38- Oil source; 39- FedEx rival; 40- Variety of magnetite; 43- Put away papers; 45- Unnerve; 46- "West Side Story" Oscar winner; 47- Neigh; 49- Entrails; 50- Article of bedding; 51- Stepped; 52- Sportage maker; 53- Befuddled; 56- ...ski; 61- Ltr. holder; 62- Sumptuous meal; 63- Clangorous; 64- Susan of "L.A. Law"; 65- Chew the scenery; 66- Race official;

DOWN 1- Chemical ending; 2- Emeritus; Abbr.; 3- Essen exclamation; 4- Go downhill fast; 5- One on the run; 6- Arm joint; 7- Cut-price retail event; 8- Howe'er; 9- Siouan speaker; 10- Sweet pepper; 11- Eat away; 12- Kitchen gadget; 13- Partly open; 21- Little guy; 23- Pastoral poem; 24- ... point: where it all becomes clear; 25- Home of the Black Bears; 26- Fleet; 27- French connections; 28- Name; 29- As to; 31- Had in mind; 33- Fake; 34- Swiss mathematician; 35- Turn over; 36- Windows predecessor; 38- Phaser setting; 41- Actress McClurg; 42- Capital of New Mexico; 43- Thick; 44- A Gershwin; 46- 6, on a phone; 47- Feeble peevish complaint; 48- Leaden; 49- Angry; 50- Timetable, for short; 51- Exam used to measure aptitude or intelligence; 54- Pro ...; 55- ... Paulo, Brazil; 57- Luau dish; 58- Canyon edge; 59- End for Siam; 60- Neighbor of Leb;

Monday's solution

C	H	I	C	I	A	R	M	P	S										
H	O	B	O	A	N	D	E	S	S	U	E	T							
O	R	E	L	T	E	S	L	A	I	L	S	A							
W	A	G	O	N	E	R	Y	U	L	F	I	O	S						
M	A	S	T																
I	N	A	B	I	T														
R	O	T	O	R															
A	L	T																	
N	A	I	T																
I	N	G	L	I	N	E	S												
I	N	C	L	I	N	E	S												
W	O	R	K	E	R	S													
A	B	E	E																
R	O	B	S																
M	E	A																	

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PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731	
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333	
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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

SURFING

NEARLY 50, SURFING ICON SLATER STILL CATCHING WINNING WAVES

PAT GRAHAM & EDDIE PELLIS

ON Day 3 of the Winter Olympics, America's biggest victory might very well have come not on a frozen halfpipe in China, but in the warm waves of the Banzai Pipeline, thousands of miles away in Hawaii.

The win belonged to Kelly Slater, the surfing great who turns 50 this week. Slater defeated a rider less than half his age to capture one of the sport's iconic events, the Billabong Pro Pipeline near the renowned reef off of Oahu.

Now that he's on top — again — Slater is starting to consider retirement. Nothing official, of course. Just thinking about it. For advice on the matter, Slater messaged with his buddy, Tom Brady, for a back and forth from one athlete dubbed the GOAT, or Greatest of All Time, to another.

"It would be interesting if that happened in the same week," Slater cracked in an interview Sunday (Saturday in Hawaii) with The Associated Press, on the possibility that he'd retire on the heels of Brady's announcement. "We'll see how that goes. I'm contemplating



Kelly Slater of the United States surfs in heat 1 of the quarterfinals at the Billabong Pro Pipeline in Haleiwa, Hawaii

whether I stop now or really go full bore this whole year, which would be, in my eyes, really for the fans and saying goodbye to everybody after all the years of support they've given me."

Should he step away, he already has his retirement plans: surfing.

"Everyone who retires from

surfing just goes surfing more," he said.

Not everyone has won this much. Slater was the youngest world champion when he captured the title at 20. He was also the oldest when he won it at 39. He just finished his last contest in his 40s with a win, too. He turns the

big 5-0 on Friday.

In all, he's become a household name and captured a total of 11 world championships. His win over the weekend was his eighth World Surf League Championship Tour victory on the Banzai. It also marked his 56th overall tour win.

To close out his latest victory, he beat Seth Moniz, a 24-year-old sensation from Hawaii. Slater goes way back with Moniz's dad, Tony, whom he looked up to when he was up and coming. One of the most touching moments of this day came when Seth Moniz embraced Slater, who was tearing up in the aftermath of the win.

"An honor to surf against him," Moniz said.

Only a few days earlier, it looked like Slater might be eliminated by pipeline favorite 22-year-old Barron Mamiya. There were a handful of seconds on the clock when Slater caught a magical wave to steal the heat and advance.

That was a matter of his vast experience, combined with some timely good fortune, coming through.

"I mean, I kind of think of it like

a martial art — you don't get worse as you get older, you get more experienced," said Slater, who also happens to be a scratch golfer.

This was the surfing equivalent of winning at Pebble Beach.

"I'm turning 50, but I look at it more like I have almost 40 years of experience at this wave and I'm able to draw on moments I've had out here before and find confidence in that," Slater said.

Still, the win was surreal, even for him.

"Indescribable, indescribable," he said. "A lifetime of dedication to one thing and it all comes together on a moment like that is, I don't know how you compare it to anything else."

Over his years of catching waves, he's seen the sport explode in popularity. This victory comes a mere six months after surfing made its Olympic debut. In keeping with the ethos of a true action-sports star, part of him loves the exposure and part of him is reluctant.

Sometimes, though, it's just best to ride where the wave takes you.

"All of us, I guess, feel a little bit funny about any kind of mainstream thing with surfing," Slater said. "We want it to be a sport, we want it to have an outlet and get paid for it and stuff. But at the same time, we all feel so passionate about it that we want it to just be kind of sacred still, and secret and special." MDT/AP

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BEIJING 2022

China wins first gold of home Olympics in short track relay

BETH HARRIS, BEIJING

DARTING through traffic, zipping around tight turns, avoiding potential disaster with every relay exchange. China eked out its first gold medal of the Beijing Games, winning the Olympic debut of mixed team relay in short track speedskating.

Asia is a hotbed of the sport known as roller derby on ice, although the typically raucous atmosphere Saturday night was greatly subdued by COVID-19 restrictions at the Olympic venues.

Still, the small number of Chinese allowed in the stands at Capitol Indoor Arena celebrated the host nation's historic win, yelling behind masks and waving tiny flags.

Wu Dajing edged Pietro Sighel of Italy by .016 seconds — or half a skate blade — to claim gold. Hungary earned bronze.

Qu Chunyu, Fan Kexin and Ren Ziwei joined Wu for the victory.

"It was a huge relief," Wu said. "Now we finally realized our dream on the first day."

The results were delayed while the referee reviewed the race. Canada was penalized for pushing from behind and causing contact with Hungary late in the race.

That set the stage for China to build a big lead over Italy going into the latter stages of the race. But the Italians rallied, careening around the rink in hot pursuit of the home team. Sighel nearly caught Wu in what would have been a huge upset.

"I never imagined today would be this tough," Ren said.

China was the gold-medal favorite coming in, having led the World Cup standings this season. But the host nation wasn't taking anything for granted.

"Even until this morning we had been working on the strategy, still training, still studying how to be better," Fan said.

China's first gold of the games brought cheers from a crowd gathered in front of a big screen outdoor TV in Beijing's Wangfujing shopping district.

"It was thrilling. I was very excited and was filled with all kinds of emotions as I watched the Chinese team approach the finish step by step," said Cheng Hongwei, who had stopped to



Wu Dajing of China reacts after crossing the finish line to win the mixed team relay final during the short track speedskating competition

watch while strolling down the main pedestrian street.

"It's a very exciting thing to see the Chinese national flag being raised again, and I'm very proud as a Chinese," said another Beijing resident Jolin Li, who said her 7-year-old daughter is a huge fan of the Winter Games.

The frantic mixed relay features four skaters per team

covering 18 laps. Each skater races twice in the following order: woman, woman, man, man, woman, woman, man, man.

The final got off to a rocky beginning, with Hungary and Canada crashing in the first turn, forcing the race to be called back to the start.

China needed some help even getting to the A final.

It took penalties to the Americans and Russians to elevate the Chinese to the final, along with Hungary, which won in the semifinals.

The U.S. was called for blocking by an infield skater after the Americans had finished second. The Russians were penalized for an extra skater on the team causing an obstruction.

In the first semifinal, Canada and Italy advanced to the A final. The Netherlands, ranked second in the world, didn't advance when Suzanne Schulting crashed in a turn early in the race.

Italy's Arianna Fontana made history with her silver medal in the relay. It was her ninth medal, breaking a tie with Apolo Ohno and Viktor An for most career medals. She was already the most decorated female short track skater.

"That doesn't mean that I'm better than them," said Fontana, who received a congratulatory hug from An. "They were great when they skated and it doesn't change that. It's just a different era."

The 31-year-old Italian also became the first skater to win short track medals at five Olympics. She almost thought her team had won.

"He was inching up on the Chinese skater. I thought he got it," Fontana said of her teammate Sighel. "It was pretty close. It was amazing to watch him fight for a gold medal."

Brothers Liu Shaoang and Liu Shaolin Sandor led Hungary to bronze in the relay.

Their mother is Hungarian and their father is Chinese. Four years ago, they helped Hungary win the 5,000-meter relay, the nation's first Winter Olympics gold.

Liu Shaoang arrived in China later than his teammates after contracting a case of COVID-19.

Joining the Liu brothers on the podium was U.S.-born teammate John-Henry Krueger, who skated in the relay's earlier rounds. He won a silver in the 1,000 for the U.S. four years ago before switching allegiances.

In the heats of the women's 500, Schulting set an Olympic record to advance to Monday's quarterfinals. Also moving on were Fontana, Fan, Kim Boutin of Canada and Minjeong Choi of South Korea, as well as American teammates Maame Biney and Kristen Santos.

In the men's 1,000 heats, defending Olympic champion Wu moved on, along with Daeheon Hwang of South Korea, who set an Olympic record. Krueger advanced to Monday's quarterfinals, as did the Liu brothers.

Music blared, colored lights flashed and one of the Olympic mascots waddled around, but the usually raucous atmosphere for short track was absent at Capital Indoor Stadium. COVID-19 restrictions kept most of the 17,345 seats empty. The only spectators were Chinese and they shouted behind masks for their country's skaters, but otherwise clapped politely and waved tiny flags.

The arena is famous for hosting table tennis matches between China and the United States in 1971 that became known as ping pong diplomacy, an event that paved the way for U.S. President Richard Nixon to visit Beijing the following year. It was the site of volleyball at the 2008 Summer Olympics.

MDT/AP

GLIMPSES

CONNECTIONS FORGED IN SHARED CHILLS AT OLYMPICS

ADAM SCHRECK, BEIJING

SHE was standing alone, bundled against the cold, as the bus doors swung open at the remotest mountain site of the Beijing Olympics. Her job was to point visiting journalists where to go — not that they had many options in these locked-down games.

All you could see behind the mask were her eyes and gold-tinted hair, and then only barely. The plastic face shield she wore to protect against the coronavirus had fogged up and frosted over in the frigid air of Zhan-gjiakou.

Foreign visitors at these Olympics are strictly segregated from the public under China's zero-tolerance virus containment strategy. They are in China but have little access to the country or its people.

The thousands of mostly young volun-

teers working in and around the venues are some of the only Chinese people they'll meet here, often in fleeting exchanges where masked smiles and hand gestures help overcome the language barriers.

"They are so nice and kind, and try to be very helpful," AP photographer Alessandra Tarantino, who captured the shot, said of volunteers like her subject, whose name she didn't get.

The Rome-based Tarantino would spend the next three hours outside shooting cross-country skiing on the first day of competition Saturday. She soon learned how punishing the conditions can be.

"The cameras freeze and the battery goes down really fast. When you put your face near the camera, there's fog and you can't see the viewfinder," she said. "When the temperature is low, the camera is like ice." MDT/AP



OPINION

China Daily
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GAMES AN OPPORTUNITY TO GALVANIZE TOGETHERNESS AMID GLOBAL CHALLENGES

With the rising of the curtain on the Beijing Winter Olympics on Friday, the world has an opportunity to put aside any differences and division under the common banner of “Higher, Faster, Stronger — Together”.

The full participation of the extended Olympic family shows the unpopularity of the clamor that has sought to tarnish the image of the host, which from the “One World, One Dream” theme of the Beijing Olympics in 2008 to the Winter Games theme of “Together for a Shared Future” has consistently championed the shared humanity that characterizes the Olympic spirit.

It is hoped that the Games will be able to play their part in galvanizing global solidarity and cooperation to help the world tide over this difficult time.

That the Games can be held as scheduled, despite the Omicron variant of the novel coronavirus still raging in most countries, speaks volumes about the tremendous work China has done to host them.

Since Beijing and Zhangjiakou, Hebei province, won the bidding for the Games in 2015, the whole country, under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, has regarded the preparation for the Games as a national priority. National resources have been mobilized to present to the world a simple, safe and splendid sporting spectacle that is open, sharing, green and clean.

Notably, China invited 37 experts and 207 technicians from overseas to ensure the professionalism of the infrastructure and management related to the Games, and its willingness to open its market to the world and share its development dividends is evident. It has welcomed world-class snow sports equipment manufacturers from France, Switzerland and Italy to localize their production in Zhangjiakou and expand their marketing in the country.

Along with the closed-loop management mode that is being employed to ensure the safety of all participants and attendees in the face of the grave challenges from the virus, it is no wonder that some foreign athletes have marveled at the state-of-the-art hardware, efficient organization and thoughtful reception China is providing.

The environmentally friendly infrastructure that has been newly built, as well as the green transformation of existing infrastructure, highlight that the Games are being staged in a manner that aligns with China's pursuit of high-quality development.

And the growing popularity of winter sports in the country provides a prism through which to view China's fast march to join the echelon of middle-income countries. China's per capita gross domestic product reached \$12,100 last year, and with the middle-income group already numbering more than 400 million people and swelling rapidly, the Games will not only become a memory of a generation in the country, but also trigger a boom in winter sports that will be a new milestone on the country's development journey.

By early 2021, the country boasted 654 standard ice rinks, a surge of 317 percent on the number in 2015, and the number of ski resorts has risen from 568 in 2015 to 803 now. Over the past seven years, about 346 million people in the country have taken part in winter sports — a laudable contribution that China has made to popularizing the sports. It is projected that the total scale of the country's winter sports industry will reach 1 trillion yuan (\$157.2 billion) by 2025.

As President Xi Jinping, a sports fan himself, said in the message he addressed to the opening of the 139th Session of the International Olympic Committee via video link on Thursday, by preparing for and organizing the Winter Games, China has boosted its regional development, ecological conservation and quality of life, in addition to opening up a broader space for the development of winter sports around the world.

With the world's eyes on China, we wish the Games a full success.

SCHOOLS IN NEPAL DEMAND REOPENING AS VIRUS CASES DECLINE

THE BUZZ

Schools in Nepal yesterday demanded the government open up physical classes that were shut down for weeks as the number of COVID-19 cases began to decline.

Teachers say online education was limited to only a small part of the population living in the urban parts of the Himalayan country while a majority of students were being deprived of their chance to learn.

The number of coronavirus cases fueled by the omicron variant has peaked in the past weeks but was declining in the last few days.

“We are ready to open the schools, students are eager to get

back, guardians are willing to send their children and the number of virus cases are on the decline so there is no reason for the government to continue the ban on schools,” said Tika Ram Puri, president of the Private and Boarding Schools Organization Nepal.

Puri said they want schools to reopen by next week.

“The standard of education is deteriorating and students are getting the wrong idea about education in the country because of the long and frequent shutdown of schools,” said Sangina Gomja, high school science teacher. “Students in the villages haven't had much education in the past two years.”



A performer, second from right, clad in a traditional Korean dress waves during the opening ceremony of the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing

SOUTH KOREA

POLITICIANS CRITICIZE CHINA OVER TRADITIONAL DRESS

KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

MAJOR South Korean presidential candidates accused China of laying claim to their culture after a performer wore a traditional Korean dress during the opening of the Beijing Winter Olympics.

A woman in a white and light purple hanbok dress marched along other performers apparently representing China's various ethnic groups as they carried the Chinese national flag during Friday's event at Beijing's National Stadium.

The resentment expressed by South Korean politicians came amid public sensitivity about recent Chinese claims on the internet about the origins of major Korean cultural items, including kimchi, a national dish of fermented cabbage.

But some South Koreans saw the reaction by their politicians as misguided, saying it was clear that the woman was representing an estimated 2 million ethnic Koreans living in China.

Aside from the online bickering about kimchi and hanbok, South Korea and China also have a long history dispute over the domain of ancient kingdoms whose territories stretched from the Korean Peninsula to Manchuria.

South Koreans see the-

se kingdoms as Korean, but China began to claim them as part of its national history in the early 1980s. Experts say Beijing's intent was to ideologically support its policies governing ethnic minorities, including the large communities of ethnic Koreans in the northeast, a group the hanbok-wearing performer was apparently representing at the Games' opening ceremony.

“Do not covet the culture (of others),” Lee Jae-myung, a presidential candidate representing the ruling Democratic Party at the March election, wrote on Facebook hours after the event.

Park Chan-dae, a lawmaker and spokesperson for Lee's camp, accused China of disguising hanbok as Chinese and insisted that China's claims to Korean culture have become an “extremely significant issue.”

“We cannot ignore China's blatant attempt to (claim Korean culture) while using a stage like the Olympics,” Park said during a briefing on Saturday.

When asked about the hanbok-wearing performer, Yoon Suk Yeol, a conservative candidate locked in a tight race with Lee, mentioned Goguryeo and Balhae and described them as “shining parts of Korean history.”

Lee Yang-soo, a cam-

paign spokesman of Yoon's People Power Party, said the opening ceremony was “tarnished” and vowed a stern response to Chinese attempts to “destroy the cultural identity of (South Korea) and distort history.”

Lee also criticized South Korean Sports Minister Hwang Hee, who is leading a government delegation in Beijing, for reportedly refusing to lodge a protest to organizers over the hanbok-wearing performer.

Hwang told South Korean reporters in Beijing that the opening ceremony could cause “misunderstandings” between the countries, but that Seoul had no plans to protest.

Kang Min-jin, a member of the progressive Justice Party, said the hanbok-wearing woman could have been a meaningful representation for ethnic Koreans living in China.

“Hanbok does not only belongs to us, but also to our fellow Koreans who live as Chinese citizens in China ... they too have the right to their culture and clothing to be respected by their state,” she said on Facebook. “If hanbok had been excluded from the (opening ceremony) that displayed the traditional clothing of many ethnic groups living in China, how would that have felt for the ethnic Koreans?”

MDT/AP

Iran The alleged leader of the militant wing of a U.S.-based Iranian opposition group went on trial yesterday, state TV reported. He's accused of planning a 2008 bombing at a mosque that killed 14 people and wounded over 200. In 2020, Iran's intelligence service detained Jamshid Sharmahd, an Iranian-German national and U.S. resident. Iran said he is the leader of Tondar, the militant wing of the opposition group Kingdom Assembly of Iran.



Poland Hundreds of U.S elite troops were expected to arrive in southeastern Poland near the border with Ukraine yesterday on President Joe Biden's orders to deploy 1,700 soldiers there amid fears of a Russian invasion of Ukraine. The airborne infantry troops of the 82nd Airborne Division were expected at the Rzeszow-Jasionka airport. Their commander is Maj. Gen. Christopher Donahue, who was the last American soldier to leave Afghanistan Aug. 30.



Russia Rarely in recent years has the Kremlin been so popular with European visitors. French President Emmanuel Macron arrives today. The Hungarian prime minister visited last week. And in days to come, the German chancellor will be there, too. All are hoping to get through to President Vladimir Putin, the man who singlehandedly shapes Russia's course amid its military buildup near Ukraine and whose designs are a mystery even for his own narrow inner circle.

UK Queen Elizabeth II offered her support Saturday to have the Duchess of Cornwall become Queen Camilla — using a special Platinum Jubilee message to make a significant decision in shaping the future of the British monarchy. In remarks delivered on the eve of the 70th anniversary of her accession to the throne, the monarch expressed a “sincere wish” that Camilla be known as “Queen Consort” when her eldest son Charles, the Prince of Wales, succeeds her as expected to the throne. In giving her blessing, the popular and respected sovereign is placing significant heft behind the move.