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REGISTERED COMPANIES IN MACAU TOTALLED 81,060 IN 2021, UP 5.7% COMPARED TO THE NUMBER OF FIRMS IN 2020 WHEN THE PANDEMIC BEGAN

SECOND COURT IMPOSES HEAVIER PENALTY FOR DOCUMENT FORGERY

OLYMPICS SPOTLIGHT: PENG SHUAI RESURFACES



Japan A team of experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency will visit Japan's wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant next week to review plans to begin releasing more than a million tons of treated radioactive water into the sea, a mission the government hopes will assure people of the plans' safety. The team of about 15 experts will meet with government and utility officials during their Feb. 14-18 mission, which includes a visit to the Fukushima Daiichi plant, industry ministry officials said.



Australia will open its borders to all vaccinated tourists and business travelers from Feb. 21 in a further relaxation of pandemic restrictions announced yesterday. Australia imposed some of the world's toughest travel restrictions on its citizens and permanent residents in March 2020 to prevent them from bringing Covid-19 home.

Dubai announced yesterday it would begin charging a fee on plastic bags used in the sheikhdom, with an aim of outlawing them entirely in two years over environmental concerns. A statement from the government-run Dubai Media Office said a 6 cent charge would start July 1.

Israeli police allegedly used spyware on the phones of former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's son and members of his inner circle, an Israeli newspaper reported yesterday. Calcalist has published a series of recent reports alleging that police used sophisticated spyware against protesters and other Israeli citizens, prompting condemnation from across the political spectrum. The police commissioner has joined those calling for an independent investigation.

More on backpage

SLOWER RISE

Chinese New Year arrivals at just over 113,000, lower than gov't estimate, but 25% up from last year



CRIME
CROUPIER COUPLE CONS MAN OUT OF HKD2.2 MILLION

GAMING
LVS ENDS AGREEMENT WITH THREE JUNKETS AMID TURMOIL IN SECTOR

CRIME

CROUPIER COUPLE CONS MAN OUT OF HKD2.2 MILLION

RENATO MARQUES

A local couple in their fifties is accused of defrauding a mainland man of the sum of HKD2.2 million over an alleged currency exchange deal, the Judiciary Police (PJ) announced yesterday during the regular police forces jointed press conference.

According to a PJ spokesperson, the two suspects are married and work as croupiers at an undisclosed casino.

The case emerged after a complaint was filed by the victim with the PJ on January 29. The man told the PJ he had used the services of the couple to convert HKD2.2 million he had withdrawn from a local bank into RMB, so that he could spend the money on the mainland.

As on previous occasions, he found a contact on WeChat to help him conduct the currency exchange.

The contact told him to take the cash to a location near the Border Gate area and to seek a person holding a HKD20 banknote

RENATO MARQUES



with a specified serial number. The directions stated he should hand the HKD to this person and then head to the mainland, where another individual would hand him the RMB1.8 million agreed for the exchange.

The victim said that he trusted the system because he had used it on other occasions for large

amounts (over HKD1 million) and everything had been performed as agreed.

This time, at the arranged location, he found a man with the HKD20 banknote, but the victim noticed that the serial number was not the correct one.

Suspecting that something might be amiss, the victim again

consulted his contact. The contact said that the man he had seen holding the banknote was covering for another man, and that it was safe to give the cash to the substitute, which advice the victim followed.

However, after crossing the border into Zhuhai, the victim realized there was nobody at the

delivery point with the cash in RMB, so he decided to cross back to Macau to seek help from the PJ.

After the identification of the suspects, the PJ managed to intercept and detain them at the border gate the following day (January 30).

In the couple's possession was a total of HKD812,000 in cash, while a search conducted at their home address led to the discovery of another HKD1,254,000.

When questioned, the two suspects denied ever having had contact with the victim and refused to collaborate with the PJ in explaining the origin of the cash that they had found.

During the investigation, the PJ said it had collected enough evidence of the involvement of the two suspects as well as discovering proof through surveillance cameras footage that it was the husband the person that met the victim and received the cash in HKD.

The victim also recognized the suspect and the HKD20 banknote with the number used serving as the password to identify the person to whom he should hand the cash, which had also been found among the wife's possessions.

The case has been referred to the Public Prosecutions Office for further investigation. The couple was charged with fraud on February 2.

CRIME

Motorcyclist accused of hit and run involving pedestrian on sidewalk

RENATO MARQUES

A local 27-year-old man is accused of a hit and run after riding a motorcycle on the sidewalk and hitting a pedestrian, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) informed media yesterday.

The case occurred at around 7:15 a.m. on February 1 at Rua do Canal Novo within Areia Preta district.

According to both the victim and two eyewitnesses who called the police, the man was riding a motorcycle on the pedestrian sidewalk of this street when he hit a pedestrian, causing both to fall to the ground.

RENATO MARQUES



The motorcyclist attempted to convince the victim not to call the police, saying

that he would settle the matter privately, but the woman refused.

Before the authorities arrived at the scene, and with the excuse that he needed to

use the toilet, the man fled the scene, leaving the vehicle behind.

When the PSP officers arrived at the scene, the rider was long gone, and both the victim and two eyewitnesses told the police what had occurred.

Upon investigation, the PSP found that the vehicle did not belong to the suspect but to one of his friends. Having successfully reached the suspect via telephone, he handed himself in at the police station around 5:45 p.m. on the same day.

Speaking to the police, the motorcyclist denied hitting any pedestrian, saying that he fell without colliding with any other person after having lost control of the motorcycle.

He admitted to having consumed alcohol prior to the incident, but said that, when he crashed, he was not under the influence of

alcohol.

The PSP performed a breathalyzer test (almost 11 hours after the incident) which had the result of a concentration of 0.38 grams of alcohol per liter of blood, a concentration that is not punishable by the law.

Nevertheless, the police said they have enough evidence that the accident occurred and that it was caused by irresponsible riding, and also that the man tried to evade responsibilities by fleeing the scene and abandoning the victim. Both of these acts are felonies which are punishable by local laws.

The man was referred to the Public Prosecutions Office on February 4 where he was accused of attempting to escape responsibility by fleeing the scene of the accident and abandoning of the victim as well as damage to the physical health of the victim.

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Chinese New Year arrivals at over 113,000

LYNZY VALLES

VISITOR arrivals for the seven-day long Chinese New Year holiday totaled to 113,699 tourists, far fewer than the average 20,000 daily tourist arrivals the government had initially expected.

Nearly 22,000 tourists visited Macau on the third day of the Lunar New Year (February 3), which was the highest single-day number of visitors during this Spring Festival Golden Week.

The overall figures also showed a 25.4% increase from last year's Spring Festival.

Average tourist arrivals totaled to 16,242 during the week-long holiday.

However, speaking to TDM, di-

rector of the Macao Government Tourism Office, Helena de Senna Fernandes, said the sector's recovery will be gradual, and noted that the bureau's offers designed to attract tourists are still in place.

According to information provided by the industry, the average occupancy rate of hotel establishments (hotels, apartment-style hotels and budget accommodation) during the Spring Festival Golden Week was 63.8%, an increase of 15.2 percentage points over last year's Spring Festival figures. The average occupancy rate of five-star hotels was 70.3%, up 19.3 percentage points.

Two years since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, festivities have returned to the SAR during this Lunar New Year, which

fell on Tuesday of last week.

After being suspended for two years, the SAR government resumed celebrations this year, designating certain areas for the public to set off fireworks by themselves.

However, due to the Covid-19

cases that were recorded in neighboring cities, including Zhuhai and Zhongshan, entry restrictions were put in place.

Tourist arrivals from Guangdong Province are required to present a negative Covid-19 test from the previous 48 hours. During the peak of the cases last month, the validity of these tests was reduced to 24 hours, discouraging tourists from visiting Macau.

HONG KONG REACHES RECORD CASE NUMBERS

Hong Kong's authorities are confronting record cases, straining its so-called "zero-Covid" policy. Yesterday, the city reported a new high of 614 local infections, following the Chinese New Year celebrations.

"We expect there will be more cases coming in a few days. We consider this as some effects [of] the holiday events and clusters," Edwin Tsui, an official with the Centre for Health Protection, told reporters.

"With our current containment measures, we hope we can still contain the disease."

Hong Kong currently requires all cases to be hospitalized. Yesterday, authorities announced that close contacts of infected persons will be allowed to isolate at home, starting from today.

NUMBER OF TOURISTS DURING CNY

| | Total number of visitors | Average number of visitors per day |
|--|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2021 | 90,631 | 12,947 |
| 2022 | 113,699 | 16,242 |
| Year-on-year difference in the daily average visitors | | +25.4% |

UM RESEARCH TEAM DEVELOPS NOVEL METAL-PHENOLIC NETWORK

A research team from the University of Macau (UM) has developed a novel metal-phenolic network to potentiate the activation of stimulator of interferon genes (STING) pathway within tumour microenvironment for advanced radiotherapy. Led by assistant professor Dai Yunlu in the University of Macau (UM) Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), the novel nanomedicine is expected to improve the efficacy of immunotherapy. The research findings have been published in Advanced Materials. In recent years, new developments in immunotherapy have revolutionised cancer treatment. However, the "cold" tumour microenvironment caused by low tumour-infiltrating lymphocytes results in a low response rate of cancer immunotherapy.

MAINLAND UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE EXAM TO OPEN REGISTRATION

The "2022 Mainland China Postgraduate Course Examination (Macau Region)" will be open for registration from February 10 until February 25. The preliminary examination and re-examination of postgraduate students in mainland China for Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan will be organized and notified by the universities themselves. The Education and Youth Affairs Bureau will also hold a briefing session on postgraduate course examinations in mainland Chinese universities on February 10 from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. to introduce the registration procedures and related information. The registration is divided into two stages: online pre-registration and online (on-site) confirmation.

CPPTM LAUNCHES NEW FASHION DESIGN COURSE

In order to cultivate local fashion design talents, the Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Center (CPPTM) has launched a new "Fashion Design and Production Diploma Course." The deadline for registration is February 25. The class will start on March 7 and end on September 8 of the following year. The 480 class hours will be divided into 160 sessions, with classes to be held on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 7 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. The course content covers clothing design, drawing skills, material knowledge, production drawing and artificial intelligence (AI), pattern making, three-dimensional tailoring, clothing sewing technology, as well as entrepreneurship and marketing.

Mobile payment transactions rise to 57m in Q4

LYNZY VALLES

THE number of transactions carried out using local mobile payment tools grew by 5.4% from the previous quarter, to 56.9 million in the fourth quarter of 2021. Total transaction value reached MOP5.7 billion, up 8.5% from the third quarter of 2021, according to recent data from the Monetary Authority of Macao.

The average amount per transaction was MOP101.1. At end-December 2021, the number of mobile payment terminals and QR code

signs totaled 90,900, expanding by 8.1% quarter-to-quarter.

Meanwhile, the total number of personal credit cards issued by banks in Macau stood at 1,538,947 at end-December 2021, representing an increase of 1.9% over the previous quarter. The total number of debit cards issued by banks in Macao reached 1,951,643, up by 1.6% from the previous quarter.

At end-December 2021, the credit card credit limit granted by banks in Macau reached MOP45.0 billion,



up 0.4% from end-September 2021. Credit card receivables amounted to MOP2.6 billion, of which the rollover amount totaled MOP752.9 million,

representing 29.0% of the total.

For the fourth quarter of 2021, credit card turnover totaled MOP5.3 billion, an increase of

9.8% quarter-to-quarter. Meanwhile, debit card turnover totaled MOP1.1 billion, representing an increase of 16.4% from the last quarter.

TSI IMPOSES HEAVIER PENALTY FOR DOCUMENT FORGERY

RENATO MARQUES

THE Court of Second Instance (TSI) has ruled in favor of an appeal from the public prosecution regarding a case involving forged documents and false declarations to grant more quotas for non-resident workers (TNRs), the office of the president of the Court of Final Appeal has stated.

The case relates to the owner of a beauty salon, tried for having made use of false declarations and forged documentation to have more quotas granted to hire TNRs to work for his company.

In the First Instance, the beauty salon owner was sentenced to the payment of a fine in the equivalent of 90 days of imprisonment, that is, MOP36,000 for being judged responsible for three counts of the crime of document forgery.

Analyzing the appeal from



the public prosecution, the judges of TSI gave credence to their arguments, noting that the sentence was too lenient for a case of this severity.

The TSI then changed the sentence to a penalty of six months of imprisonment for each count of the crime of document forgery, which cumulatively resulted in one year and three months' imprisonment.

Nonetheless, the same

court considered that this penalty should be suspended from enforcement for a period of two years under the condition of the payment of the fine of MOP36,000 as a contribution to the government in view of the damage caused.

It was proven in both trials that, through the fraud, the salon owner was able to obtain at least one more quota than he was entitled to for the period 2012 to 2018.

REGISTERED FIRMS SLIGHTLY INCREASES TO OVER 81,000 IN 2021

THE number of registered companies in Macau totaled 81,060 in 2021, a slight increase of 5.7% compared to the number of firms registered in 2020 when the pandemic began, official statistics show.

Newly incorporated companies in 2021 totaled 5,434, a decrease of 261 year-on-year, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

The total value of registered capital surged by 123.9% to MOP1.36 billion in the reporting period. The number of companies in dissolution was 828 in 2021, and the value of registered capital of these companies amounted to MOP370 million.

In the latest report, the bureau noted that a total of 1,082 new companies were incorporated in the fourth quarter of 2021, a decrease of 455 year-on-year.



PHOTO ARCHIVE

The number of new companies operating in Wholesale & Retail Trade (389) and Business Services (257) went down by 206 and 144, respectively.

The total value of registered capital soared by 278.2% year-on-year to MOP539 million, which can be attributed to the incorporation of new Business Services companies with relatively large capital during the quarter. Companies

in dissolution totaled 194 in the fourth quarter, and the value of the registered capital in these companies amounted to MOP88 million.

Capital from mainland China totaled MOP97 million, taking up 18.0% of the total; capital from Guangdong totaled MOP35 million, of which MOP34 million came from the mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area (with 57.0% coming from Zhuhai). LV

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LVS terminates agreement with three primary gaming promoters

LYNZY VALLES

LAS Vegas Sands has confirmed that it has terminated its contracts with three gaming promoters as of December 2021.

In its annual report, the parent company of Sands China Ltd. noted that while the gaming operator is dependent on junkets, it harbors concerns as to whether they are able to meet the firm's "high standards."

"While we strive for excellence in our associations with gaming promoters, we cannot assure you the gaming promoters with whom we are associated will meet the high standards we insist upon," said LVS.

"If a gaming promoter falls below our standards, we may suffer reputational harm, as well as worsening relationships with, and possible sanctions from, gaming regulators with authority over our operations."

This announcement comes after junket magnates Alvin Chao and Levo Chan were arrested – on separate occasions



– over illegal gambling allegations.

The arrest of the CEO of the largest junket operator in Macau, Suncity Group's Alvin Chau, in December for alleged involvement in illegal activities rela-

ted to online gaming and money laundering has put the city on maximum alert for potential direct and indirect repercussions of the event.

Tak Chun boss Levo Chan was arrested over a month after.

Junket operators have been instructed to cease offering credit to their customers and request that chip purchases only be made upfront and in cash, brokerage Sanford C. Bernstein stated in a note back in December.

The Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) has reportedly ordered these gaming promoters to end their loan services to VIP gamblers.

This comes after the reported termination by Wynn Macau of its VIP room on December 20 following the arrest of junket mogul Alvin Chau.

"Some (if not all) other casino operators may also follow Wynn's move with respect to the junket room operations," Bernstein analysts said.

In the report by LVS, the group clarified, "We terminated our agreements with our three primary gaming promoters in December 2021."

According to the current law, junkets are allowed to offer loans through contracts signed with a gaming concessionaire or

sub-concessionaire.

Casinos lend the operators chips so they can extend credit to VIP gamblers.

Junkets account for some 75% of Macau's roughly USD3 billion in annual VIP gaming revenue.

"There can be no assurance we will be able to maintain, or grow, our relationships with gaming promoters or that gaming promoters will continue to be licensed by the gaming regulator to operate in Macau, which could impact our business, financial condition, results of operations and cash flows," the group said.

Furthermore, LVS also noted that it cannot be assured as to "what extent the Macau courts will in the future find us liable for the activities carried out by gaming promoters in our casinos, nor are we able to determine what Macau courts would deem typical activities of gaming promoters to be."

Recently, in an earnings call with analysts, Rob Goldstein, chairman and CEO of LVS, said that customers in the junket business will return in different segments and find new ways of materializing in the casino.

According to the executive, business will just evolve to a different segmentation, adding that the customers are here to stay.

AD

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A MUTED LUNAR NEW YEAR, INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OLYMPIC BUBBLE

SALLY HO & KEN MORITSUGU, BEIJING

CHINA'S capital city returned to work yesterday after a weeklong Lunar New Year holiday that was muted by the pandemic — especially for the thousands of people inside the Winter Olympics bubble.

For volunteers and competitors at the Games, there's no hong bao — red envelopes — with gifts of cash, no lucky tang yuan rice cakes with sesame filling, no dramatically-choreographed lion dance.

"I really wish that we could gather outside and watch some fireworks or something but due to the pandemic, we can't really gather and do that stuff unfortunately," said Vincent Zhou, a Chinese-American figure skater with deep ties to Beijing.

Across China, the pandemic has meant a subdued Lunar New Year for the third year in a row. The government discouraged residents of the capital from traveling home to visit family to limit the spread of the virus. Those who did needed two negative virus tests before heading back to Beijing and a third test within 72 hours of returning.

Jing Kefei, a 28-year-old webpage designer, said he had just taken the third test before heading back to work. The Beijing subway was crowded again and the roads congested with commuters.



"It's the same as normal working days, except that we were ordered to take the nucleic acid test," he said.

Also known as the Spring Festival, the new year's holiday that fell on February 1 this year is the most important in China. Locally, it is faithfully celebrated with a singular focus of spending time with family for a week, though the celebration actually lasts most of the month, including the traditional Lantern Festival on February 15.

Chinese New Year is framed around one of the twelve signs of the Chinese zodiac. This year is the Year of the Tiger, an especially lucky animal in Chinese culture.

"My mom is the Year of the Tiger, so it's very cool to just experience Chinese New Year here," said Madison Chock, a Chinese-Hawaiian figure skater on the U.S. team.

The grandest display of the Chinese New Year revelry happened at the Opening Ceremony on Friday, when fireworks dotted the sky above the Bird's Nest stadium, small cheerful children wearing Tiger hats did musical numbers, and other locals danced for hours to celebratory Chinese pop music as thousands of Olympic athletes took their turn in the parade.

International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach noted the ceremony's theme in his address at the Opening Ceremony, typically the most watched event of the Olympics.

"May this encourage you to go faster, to aim higher, to become stronger — together. In this way you will inspire the world in this Olympic Year with the same ambition, courage and strength like the Year of the Tiger," Bach said in a message to the athletes.

It's clear the pandemic has complicated what grand celebrations may have been.

Xiang (Robert) Li, director of Temple University's U.S.-Asia Center for Tourism and Hospitality Research, said the COVID-19 restrictions have hampered what could have been an extraordinary cultural tourism opportunity for overseas visitors here for the Olympics.

"Having the Winter Olympics to coincide with this actually gives China something to promote to help understand its culture. Unfortunately, the pandemic doesn't help and the closed loop doesn't help," Li said. "Traveling during the pandemic, everything is against a very different backdrop."

The Lunar New Year usually marks China's busiest travel season. This year, China's Ministry of Transport expects 1.2 billion trips to be made, a 35% increase from last year but lower than the 3 billion trips taken before the pandemic in 2019.

Wearing a red scarf, 49-year-old Chai Xiaoping arrived in Beijing on Sunday morning from the nearby port city of Tianjin after an anticlimactic holiday.

"In the past, my home was more lively and more festive with the family gathering for a reunion. But this year ... we were separated into several clusters," said Chai, "The pandemic messed it all up."

Even without the pandemic, the festival has become less boisterous over recent years amid fireworks bans, a campaign against food waste and concerns among Communist Party members that conspicuous consumption could draw the attention of anti-corruption commissioners. In recent years, Chinese people had increasingly taken advantage of the holiday to travel abroad, although quarantine restrictions have since led many to stay home.

In a normal year, the domestic travel associated with Lunar New Year creates the largest human migration in a single turn, but inbound travel from overseas visitors isn't an especially established tourism phenomenon, Li said.

A China visit for outsiders during Chinese New Year — a holiday that revolves around family — Li likened it to a foreigner visiting Thanksgiving in America with no family home to visit for the turkey dinner.

For Zhou, the figure skater, the fact that Beijing is like a second hometown to him with his grandparents and much of his extended family just down the road, it's a missed opportunity to celebrate with them.

"The volunteers were very festive. They all said 'Happy New Year' — or 'xnnián kuài lè' — to all of us," Zhou said. "They had brought in hotpot and Beijing Koy (Peking duck), so I had some of that, and I mean, the food's been pretty good." MDT/AP

OLYMPIC DIPLOMACY

Xi meets Poland, Pakistan leaders

CHINESE President Xi Jinping met last weekend with leaders from Poland and Pakistan in a flurry of diplomacy on the sidelines of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games.

Xi told President Andrzej Duda that China seeks to further improve ties with Poland, whose warm relationship with Beijing has not sat well with main rival the United States.

Poland was the only European Union nation to send an elected leader to the Games despite a U.S.-led diplomatic boycott. The meeting also comes amid concerns over a potential Russian attack on Ukraine, with which NATO member Poland shares a lengthy border.

Xi, who has not left China since 2019, has met a

range of world leaders over recent days, including President Vladimir Putin of Russia, with which China is building a closer informal alliance.

The meetings highlight Xi's moves to elevate himself as a major player in world diplomacy, while positioning China's single party authoritarian political model as an alternative to the long-dominant liberal world order led by the United States.

Xi told Duda the two countries should "respect and accommodate each other's core interests and major concerns," the Communist Party newspaper Global Times reported.

Along with strengthening communication on "major international issues," they should "tap the potential of

their economies, trade and investment, transportation and logistics, and high and new technologies, and lift bilateral practical cooperation to a new level," Xi said.

He said China is ready to take an active part in the construction of a logistics hub in Poland and help Poland become a key node in the China-Europe supply chain.

No statement was immediately available from Duda. However, in Warsaw, his foreign policy advisor Jakub Kumoch said Poland wanted "the best possible relations with China and we can see a similar interest on the Chinese side."

Poland, along with Hungary and Serbia, has been viewed as one of China's backdoors into Europe. The uncritical support

from Beijing contrasts with Washington's expressions of concern over the increasing autocratic rule of Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki.

Poland participates in a Chinese initiative to nurture relations with Central and Eastern European governments known as the China-CEEC group, as well as Xi's signature "Belt and Road" drive to build infrastructure linking China to Europe and beyond.

As well as prompting unease in Washington, China's moves have raised concerns among France, Germany and other Western European governments that Beijing is trying to make political inroads into the European Union.

The Polish president has a role in shaping Poland's



President Xi Jinping seen on podium and his wife Peng Liyuan host a banquet to welcome distinguished guests from around the world who attended the opening ceremony of the 2022 Winter Olympics at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing

foreign ties but is not the chief policy-maker.

In a separate meeting with Prime Minister Imran Khan, Xi pledged closer cooperation under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor investment program to build roads, power plants and other infrastructure.

He said China was willing to join hands with its longtime ally to "build a closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era," Global Times re-

ported.

"The strategic relationship between China and Pakistan is of prominence in a changing world," Xi was quoted as saying.

"China upholds fairness and justice in international affairs. China is willing to strengthen the coordination and cooperation with Pakistan in multilateral venues such as the U.N. and promote justice and world and regional peace," Xi said. MDT/AP



COVID-19

Across Asia, spike in virus cases follows Lunar New Year

ZEN SOO, SINGAPORE

MANY Asian countries are facing a spike in COVID-19 infections after the widely-celebrated Lunar New Year holidays, as health officials grapple with the highly-transmissible omicron variant and expectations that numbers will continue to rise in coming weeks.

The Lunar New Year, which is China's biggest holiday, was celebrated across Asia on Feb. 1 even as pandemic restrictions in many countries kept crowds and family outings to a minimum.

Hong Kong's authorities are confronting record cases that are straining its so-called "zero-COVID" policy. Yesterday, the city reported a new high of 614 local infections.

"We expect there will be more cases coming in a few days. We consider this as some effects after the holiday events and clusters," told reporters Edwin Tsui, an official with the Centre for Health Protection.

"With our current containment measures, we hope we can still contain the disease."

Hong Kong currently requires all cases to be hospitalized. Yesterday, authorities announced that close contacts of infected persons will be allowed to isolate at home, starting from today. Those who test positive while in

home isolation will be transferred to a hospital.

Hong Kong has aligned itself with China's "zero-COVID" policy that aims to totally stamp out outbreaks, even as many other countries change their approach to living with the virus. Authorities look to impose lockdowns on residential buildings wherever clusters of infections are identified, and have banned public dining after 6 p.m.

In Singapore, a dramatic rise in coronavirus infections followed last week's holiday, with cases tripling to 13,000 on Friday.

Daily infections have since dipped to 7,752 on Sunday, amid restrictions that include limited capacity for restaurants and capping the number of unique visitors to each household.

Singapore has reported over 100,000 cases spanning the last month, although over 99% of the cases are mild or asymptomatic.

Across Asia, authorities are confronting a similar pattern as the more easily transmissible omicron becomes dominant, even as health officials in several countries report that omicron surges are not driving hospitalizations or deaths as high as the previous delta variant.

In Japan, nearly 90,000 new cases nationwide were reported on Sunday, including 17,526 in Tokyo, as local omicron infections showed no signs of slowing.

Experts say the infections are now spreading to vulnerable elderly people who are beginning to fill more hospital beds. Less than 5% of the country's population has received their third dose of the coronavirus vaccine.

Local outbreak numbers are similarly rising in Indonesia, edging toward the caseloads that marked the height of last year's devastating delta outbreak.

On Jan. 6, Indonesia recorded 533 new COVID-19 cases and seven deaths. A month later on Sunday, the daily figure had soared to 36,057. Daily deaths have also climbed to 57, almost four times the rate a week ago.

In Thailand, officials yesterday reported more than 10,000 daily cases for the third day in a row, but the Department of Disease Control said that the number of severely ill patients was dropping, while the fatality rate has remained stable.

Department chief Opas Karnkawinpong said that Thailand might consider relaxing some of the country's pandemic restrictions, as the omicron variant seemed to be less severe.

"The global situation of COVID-19 seems to be moving in the same direction," he was quoted as saying in The Bangkok Post. "Many countries have started to ease measures despite spikes in daily infections."

In other countries where the

Lunar New Year is a major holiday, governments are likewise on high alert ahead of expectations that omicron will continue to stoke higher infections.

New cases in Malaysia have been hovering higher, with the health ministry reporting 11,034 on Monday. The rise came after the Lunar New Year when many Malaysians travel, but health officials said most of the cases were asymptomatic or have light symptoms.

Top health official Noor Hisham Abdullah has warned that daily cases could double by the end of March and urged Malaysians to take their booster dose. Some 98% of adults in the country have completed their vaccination and half of them have received their third jab.

In South Korea, health experts warn that the country may see daily jumps of 130,000 or 170,000 by late February.

The country reported 38,691 new cases of the virus, a nine-fold increase from the levels seen in mid-January, when omicron became the country's dominant strain.

In Vietnam, authorities have warned that infections may rise after the popular new year holiday.

Vietnam reported 192 cases of the omicron variant in the past month, with most of those showing only mild symptoms

or no symptoms at all. With low hospitalization and death rates, Vietnam had previously moved toward resuming most social activities.

The Philippines has moved to ease coronavirus restrictions and open its doors to tourists as outbreak numbers eased to about 8,300 on Sunday, down from a peak of 39,000 in mid-January.

But social distancing restrictions remain in place amid fears of an outbreak ahead of the country's presidential and general elections May 9. Campaigning begins on Tuesday, with a ban in place on handshakes, kissing, hugging and large crowds.

In mainland China, new local infections continue to fluctuate, falling as low as nine on Friday, but rising again to 45 yesterday, most of them in the southern region of Guangxi.

Recent cases have included a handful of omicron infections, though such outbreaks have been tightly contained. Chinese authorities have imposed strict local lock downs and mass testing, as the country kicked off the Beijing Winter Olympics last week.

Meanwhile, the far-flung Pacific archipelago nation of Tonga has been trying to contain its first outbreak since the start of the global pandemic, which might have been brought in with the delivery of emergency medical supplies and water after last month's volcanic eruption and tsunami.

Two Tongan men who worked handling shipments tested positive last week. Over the weekend, Prime Minister Siaosi Sovaleni said two more positive cases were confirmed, bringing the total of active cases to seven. **MDT/AP**

Leaders meet around the globe hoping to calm Ukraine crisis

SYLVIE CORBET & VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV, MOSCOW

INTERNATIONAL efforts to defuse the standoff over Ukraine intensified yesterday, with French President Emmanuel Macron set to hold talks in Moscow and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Washington to coordinate policies as fears of a Russian invasion mount.

The concentration of an estimated 100,000 Russian troops near Ukraine has fueled Western worries that it heralds a possible offensive. White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan warned Sunday that Russia could invade Ukraine "any day," triggering a conflict that would come at an "enormous human cost."

Russia has denied any plans to attack its neighbor, but is urging the U.S. and its allies to bar Ukraine and other ex-Soviet nations from joining NATO, halt weapons deployments there and roll back NATO forces from Eastern Europe. Washington and NATO have rejected the demands.

Macron, who is set to meet in the Kremlin with Russian President Vladimir Putin before visiting Ukraine today, said last week that his priority is "dialogue with Russia and de-escalation."

Before heading to Moscow, Macron had a call Sunday with U.S. President Joe Biden. They discussed "ongoing diplomatic and deterrence efforts in response to Russia's continued military build-up on Ukraine's borders, and affirmed their support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity," the White House said in a statement.

The French presidency said Macron sought to ensure "good coordination" with Biden in the call.

"The security and sovereignty of Ukraine or any other European state cannot be a subject for compromise, while it is also legitimate for Russia to pose the question of its own security," Macron said in an interview with French newspaper Journal du Dimanche published on Sunday.

Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, described Ma-



Members of Ukraine's Territorial Defense Forces, volunteer military units of the Armed Forces, train close to Kyiv

cron's visit as "very important," but sought to temper expectations, telling reporters that "the situation is too complex to expect a decisive breakthrough after just one meeting."

He noted that "the atmosphere has remained tense," adding that the U.S. and its allies have continued to ignore Moscow's security demands.

Continuing the high-level diplomacy, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is set to meet with Biden in Washington today [Macau time] for talks also expected to focus on the Ukrainian standoff. Scholz is set to travel to Kyiv and Moscow on Feb. 14-15.

National Security Adviser Sullivan, who spoke in a round of appearances on Sunday talk shows reiterated that the Russian Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline to Germany "will not move forward" if Russia attacks Ukraine.

Biden and Scholz are expected to address the pipeline during their White House talk, which will mark their first face-to-face since Scholz became the head of the German government nearly two months ago.

Ahead of the visit, the White House sought to downplay Germany's refusal to supply lethal weapons to Ukraine, bolster its troop presence in eastern Europe or spell out which sanctions it would support against Russia — moves that have drawn criticism abroad and inside Germany.

White House officials, who briefed reporters ahead of the meeting on the condition of anonymity, noted

that Germany has been a top contributor of non-military aid to Ukraine and has been supportive of the U.S. decision to bolster its troop presence in Poland and Romania to demonstrate its commitment to NATO.

On Sunday, German Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht raised the possibility that the country could send more troops to Lithuania to reinforce its presence on NATO's eastern flank.

Biden has ordered additional U.S. troops deployed to Poland, Romania and Germany, and a few dozen elite U.S. troops and equipment were seen landing Sunday in southeastern Poland near the border with Ukraine with hundreds more infantry troops of the 82nd Airborne Division set to arrive.

In 2015, France and Germany helped broker a peace deal for eastern Ukraine in a bid to end the hostilities between Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed separatists that erupted the previous year following the Russian annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

The agreement signed in the Belarusian capital, Minsk, helped stop large-scale fighting, but efforts at a political settlement have stalled and frequent skirmishes have continued along the tense line of contact in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland called Donbas.

The leaders of Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany last met in Paris in December 2019 in the so-called Normandy format summit, but they failed to resolve

main conflicting issues.

Amid the tensions over the Russian military buildup, presidential advisers from the four countries held talks in Paris on Jan. 26 this year, but they didn't make any visible progress and agreed to meet again in Berlin in two weeks.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has pushed for another four-way Normandy summit, but the Kremlin said a meeting of leaders would only make sense if the parties agree on the next steps to give a special status to the rebel east.

Putin and his officials have urged France, Germany and other Western allies to encourage Ukraine to fulfill its obligations under the 2015 agreement, which envisaged a broad autonomy for the rebel east and a sweeping amnesty for the separatists. The agreement stipulated that only after those conditions are met would Ukraine be able to restore control of its border with Russia in rebel regions.

The Minsk deal was seen as a betrayal of national interests by many in Ukraine and its implementation has stalled. Amid the latest tensions, Ukrainian authorities have strongly warned the West against pressuring Ukraine to implement the agreement.

Last week, Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, told The Associated Press that an attempt by Ukraine to fulfil the Minsk deal could trigger internal unrest that would play into Moscow's hand. MDT/AP

this day in history

1952 NEW QUEEN PROCLAIMED FOR UK



Princess Elizabeth has formally proclaimed herself Queen and Head of the Commonwealth and Defender of the Faith.

Lords of the Council - numbering 150 - representatives from the Commonwealth, officials from the City of London - including the Lord Mayor - and other dignitaries witnessed the accession of the deceased king's eldest daughter this morning.

The new monarch read an official Proclamation - also ordered to be published - declaring her reign as Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second.

Queen Elizabeth II read: "By the sudden death of my dear father I am called to assume the duties and responsibilities of sovereignty."

"My heart is too full for me to say more to you today than I shall always work, as my father did throughout his reign, to advance the happiness and prosperity of my peoples, spread as they are all the world over."

Her husband, Prince Philip of Greece, the Duke of Edinburgh, was also present at the 20 minute meeting at St James's Palace.

The couple returned to the UK yesterday after cutting short a tour of the Commonwealth - beginning in Kenya a week ago - because of King George VI's sudden death on 6 February.

After the Accession Declaration, at 1000 GMT, the new Queen held her first Privy Council meeting and her Proclamation was signed by the Lord Chancellor, the prime minister, and many other privy counsellors along with representatives of the Commonwealth and the City and the Lord Mayor of London.

During the ceremonies the 25-year-old Queen also took an oath to assure the security of the Church of Scotland and approved several other Orders in Council.

Other dignitaries formally announced the new sovereign across the UK and Commonwealth.

In a statement this evening the Home Secretary, Sir David Fyfe, asked the nation for two minutes' silence on 15 February when the late King will be buried at St George's Chapel, Windsor.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

King George VI's body lay in state in the Great Hall in Westminster from 11 February until the funeral. Many thousands of people queued for hours to pay their respects. His funeral was held on 15 February 1952. Queen Elizabeth II's coronation was held in Westminster Abbey on 2 June 1953. In 2002 the Queen enjoyed a year of celebrations and special visits to commemorate 50 years on the British throne.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Children will be of major concern if you haven't kept the lines of communication open. Limitations with females could lead to unfortunate circumstances. You need more time to think this whole situation through.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 You can evade the issue as usual by being affectionate, fun loving, and far too active for your lover to catch on. You can easily impress others with your generous nature. Don't overspend on luxury items.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 You can accomplish a lot if you deal with other people's money or possessions today. Maybe it's time to look into ways you can improve your health.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Deal with in-laws today. Take work home but be sure to spend some time with your mate. Try to stay calm and understand both sides of the situation.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Help those incapable of taking care of their personal affairs. Don't avoid situations that may deteriorate; try to mend them. Exercise is always a good way to relieve stress.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 You will be able to dazzle others with your obvious charm and your outgoing nature. Don't donate more than you can afford in order to impress others. You can't win and they won't listen.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Don't reveal information that is personal or confidential. Stick to your own projects and by the end of the day you'll shine. You may have difficulties while traveling or problems dealing with close friends.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Be careful when dealing with female members of your family. You're on the right track and you can make money if you are willing to go out on a limb.

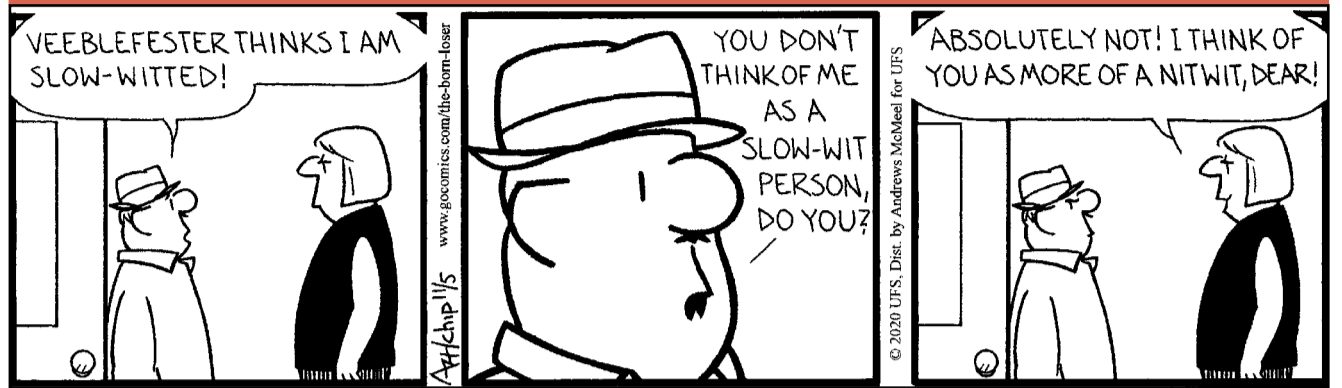
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Changes in your domestic situation will prove to be favorable in the long run. Don't take advantage of your expense account. Delve into worthwhile causes that will show results if you put in the effort.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 This could be the cause of a dispute that may result in estrangement. You will find that superiors may not see situations as you do. Travel or short trips will probably be your best outlet.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Remember; talk to them, not at them. This day was meant for love. Make creative changes to your residence. Real estate investments will be extremely profitable in the long run.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Compromise if you have to, to avoid verbal battles. You may find yourself interested in more than one person. Don't be too quick to blame others for your bad mood.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

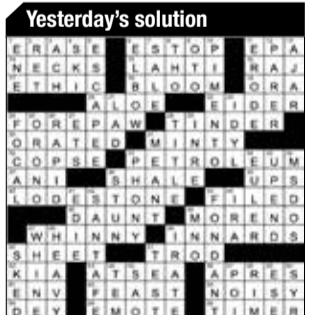
WEATHER

| | MIN | MAX | CONDITION |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----------|
| CHINA | | | |
| Beijing | -5 | 7 | fine |
| Harbin | -12 | -1 | fine |
| Tianjin | 0 | 2 | rain |
| Urumqi | 3 | 7 | overcast |
| Xi'an | 6 | 8 | rain |
| Lhasa | -3 | 5 | fine |
| Chengdu | 9 | 12 | rain |
| Chongqing | 4 | 7 | rain |
| Kunming | -2 | 4 | rain |
| Nanjing | 19 | 21 | rain |
| Shanghai | 3 | 7 | overcast |
| Wuhan | 1 | 5 | rain |
| Hangzhou | -1 | 3 | rain |
| Taipei | -12 | 0 | cloudy |
| Guangzhou | 8 | 14 | overcast |
| Hong Kong | 12 | 18 | overcast |
| WORLD | | | |
| Moscow | -2 | 1 | snow |
| Frankfurt | 1 | 8 | overcast |
| Paris | 8 | 11 | overcast |
| London | 8 | 12 | overcast |
| New York | 13 | 16 | cloudy |

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Singer DiFranco; 4- Fiddled; 9- Easy ___; 14- Lisa, to Bart, briefly; 15- D. ebeum, a tropical tree; 16- Components; 17- Inhabitant of the grassland; 19- Healing plants; 20- Gnu cousin; 21- Biblical brother; 23- Tiered shelves; 24- Considers; 27- Denials; 30- Assume; 32- Einstein's birthplace; 33- Roman capital of Palestine; 37- Rope used to guide a horse; 39- Comfortably familiar; 40- Amusing; 42- Part of Hispaniola; 43- Dire warning; 44- Invoice abbr.; 45- Widen; 48- Midday; 50- Alternative; 51- Appraise, charge per unit; 55- Android; 57- Clear-headed; 58- Pixie; 60- Eradicate; 64- ___ of thousands; 65- Pardon; 66- Gumshoe; 67- Noted Civil War biography; 68- Old; 69- Ballpark fig.

DOWN 1- According to; 2- Nabisco's ___ Wafers; 3- Stern with a bow; 4- Look after; 5- Delivery room docs; 6- ___ Kippur; 7- Bambi's aunt; 8- Electric generator; 9- On ___ with; 10- Permanent place?; 11- Articulate; 12- Suffix with meteor; 13- Start of something?; 18- Publicity; 22- Mule's sire; 24- Hard, in Havana; 25- Pentathlon need; 26- Clean air org.; 28- "Pomp and Circumstance" composer; 29- Silvery fish; 30- Indian term of respect; 31- Violinist Mischa; 33- "Over There" composer; 34- Budget alternative; 35- Pertaining to redaction; 36- Atl. crosser; 38- Black gold; 40- Sign over; 41- River to the Baltic; 43- Cheering word; 46- Friend of Tigger; 47- Furry swimmers; 49- Scandinavian; 51- Jockey Turcotte; 52- Lessen; 53- French beans?; 54- Establish; 56- Unit of computer memory; 57- Construction locale; 58- At a great distance; 59- Point of no return?; 61- Permit; 62- "___ Believer" (Monkees hit); 63- Wire measure;



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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AD

AP PHOTO



Mikaela Shiffrin of United States loses control and skis off course during the first run of the women's giant slalom

BEIJING 2022

SHIFFRIN'S FALL IN OLYMPIC GIANT SLALOM WILL STICK WITH HER

ANDREW DAMPE, BEIJING

MIKAEALA Shiffrin will not soon forget what happened yesterday in her first race of the Beijing Olympics. The poor transition that came five turns, and about 10 seconds, into the defense of her 2018 gold medal in the giant slalom. The skidding slide onto her left side. The missed gate that meant she was done so early in the opening run of a two-leg event.

The first “DNF” — “Did Not Finish” — next to her name on any GS result sheet in more than four years, a streak encompassing 30 races.

It's not simply about how rare these mistakes are. It's about the sting that sticks with her.

“I won't ever get over this,” Shiffrin said, her voice steady, after slowly making her way to the bottom of a course known as The Ice River at the Yanqing Alpine Skiing Center. “I've never gotten over any.”

That's what happens when an athlete is as successful as Shiffrin, a 26-year-old American who owns three Winter Games medals — including a pair of golds — along with three World Cup overall titles and six world championship victories.

The misses stand out.

She spoke about “how much it hurt” and how “heartbreaking” it was when she failed to complete a giant slalom on Jan. 23, 2018, in the Kronplatz World Cup stop at San Vigilio di Marebbe, Italy — the last time she didn't complete a GS, which came three weeks before she won the gold at the Pyeongchang Games. She mentioned, too, a slalom error before

those same Olympics. And a flub six years ago in another race.

“That's what drives me to try to keep working and improving, so I can try to make it (so) those things don't happen. But sometimes they still do happen and, unfortunately, it happened today,” said Shiffrin, who plans to be out there again Wednesday in the slalom, a race she won at age 18 at the 2014 Sochi Games. “I felt like there was a lot to look forward to, but, well, now we need to reset.”

The giant slalom was the first women's Alpine race on the schedule in Beijing — Shiffrin intends to enter all five — and she was hardly the only racer to encounter trouble. The second run went on without her; in all, 19 of the 80

first-run starters failed to finish.

Sara Hector of Sweden — who leads the GS standings this season — continued her recent run of success with the biggest win of her career later yesterday, taking the gold with a two-run time of 1 minute, 55.69 seconds.

Federica Brignone of Italy added a silver medal to the bronze she claimed behind Shiffrin four years ago. Lara Gut-Behrami of Switzerland was third for her second Olympic bronze.

“It's not easy, but I like when it's not easy,” Brignone said about the course conditions. “It's not easy, because when you push too much, you slide. When you don't push, you slide.”

Marta Bassino of Italy, who

won the World Cup giant slalom title last season and went two spots earlier than Shiffrin fell on her left hip, slid down and spun around.

Shiffrin, who is from Colorado, was the seventh racer out of the start gate, lost control coming around a left-turn and later blamed “trying to push it,” describing her skiing as “almost anxious.”

She tried to right herself but could not.

Eventually, she propped herself up, stopped on the side of slope, stuck her poles in the snow and put her hands on her hips.

“It's hard to know,” she said later, “how it would have gone the rest of the run. ... It's like, ‘Well,

yeah, the day was finished, basically, before it even started.’”

Shiffrin is as precise a skier as there is, someone who prides herself on making sure she gets all the way down the course, pushing just the right amount to be faster than everyone else while staying upright — no easy task while sending yourself down the icy side of a mountain.

“That's the brutality of the sport: You can be as prepared as you want to and you still ski out in the fourth gate or the seventh gate or the 10th gate,” said Norwegian rival Ragnhild Mowinckel, who was fifth yesterday after getting the GS silver in 2018. “Anyhow, I think (Shiffrin) will rise up again and she will probably nail the slalom and the other disciplines.”

After her tumble, Shiffrin spoke to her boyfriend, Norwegian skier Aleksander Aamodt Kilde, who finished fifth in the men's downhill won by Beat Feuz of Switzerland.

“Of course it's a pity to ski out early in the race, but that's also part of the game,” Kilde said. “She tried and she went for it 100%.”

Shiffrin speaks honestly and openly about the pressure created by the weight of expectations — her own, of course, and those of fans, but also coaches, friends and family. She is upfront about the burden of dealing with the accidental death of her father, Jeff, two years ago.

Not long after Shiffrin's competitive day was done far sooner than expected, she got a hug from her mother, Eileen, who serves as one of her coaches, then headed back out to do some training for the slalom.

Shiffrin still should have a handful of chances over the next two weeks to become the first Alpine ski racer from the United States to win three Olympic golds across a career.

“I'm not going to cry about this,” she said, “because that's just wasting energy.” **MDT/AP**

GLIMPSES

THE VIBE'S INDUSTRIAL CHIC AT OLYMPIC BIG AIR RUN

ADAM SCHRECK, BEIJING

CANADIAN freestyle skier Elena Gaskell twists and bends backward to grab her ski as she takes flight off the end of a manufactured ramp covered in snow.

Associated Press photographer Jae C. Hong captured her in midair on Sunday, framed against a wintry sky and a pair of smokestacks. From this perspective Gaskell appears to be higher than a dense cluster of high-rise buildings in the distance. Not in the shot: hulking cooling towers nearby that look like the set of a post-apocalyptic film.

A pristine Alpine piste this is not.

The extreme sport known as big air made its Olympic debut for snowboarders at the 2018 Pyeongchang Games. Now the skiers are out there, too, catching air against the backdrop of a former steel mill on the wes-

tern edge of Beijing's urban sprawl.

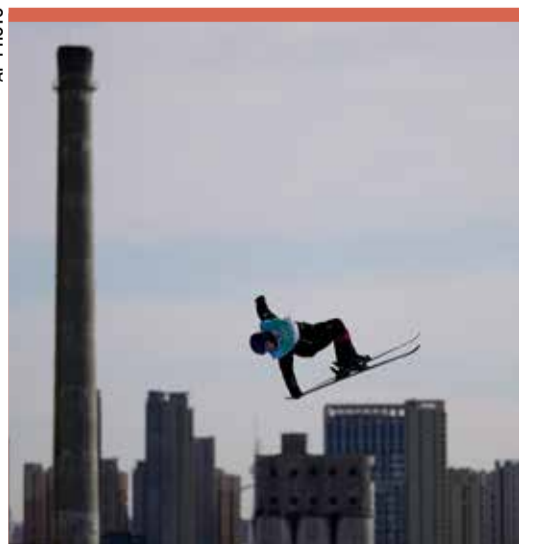
The incongruous scene at Big Air Shougang is a reminder that Beijing isn't known as much of a winter sports destination. Most of the downhill action is happening at mountain sites far from the Chinese capital itself.

It's also a surprising nod to the fact that industrial powerhouse China remains the world's biggest carbon polluter, even if this site's furnaces have gone cold.

And yet the urban industrial run has managed to charm many of those who've made it there so far — athletes and viewers alike.

“To me, it was just such a contrast,” said Hong, who's covering the action at Shougang. “It seemed dark. But with the live music and this cool venue like I've never seen in an industrial district, I think it works.” **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Canada's Elena Gaskell trains for the women's freestyle skiing big air competition

BEIJING 2022

US skating star Chen, Japanese rival Hanyu set for showdown

DAVE SKRETTA. BEIJING

NATHAN Chen had enough pressure on him heading into the men's program at the Beijing Olympics: One of the faces of the NBC broadcast, he is a suave, Nike-sponsored superstar whose marketability rivals his figure skating ability.

Yesterday night, he was left worrying about whether he might test positive for COVID-19 before his event began.

That's because his teammate Vincent Zhou returned a positive test earlier in the day, shortly after Team USA won a surprising silver medal in the team event. Zhou was still awaiting word on whether he had returned the same result during additional testing, but the uncertainty left Chen wondering whether his own test might come back positive.

"I don't have much information other than the fact he tested for it," Chen said after a late-afternoon final practice yesterday, which was also attended by his biggest rival, two-time defending Olympic champion Yuzuru Hanyu.

"Everything out there is speculation," Chen said. "Where did you get it? Where have you been going around? I've not really been around (Zhou) and any time that I've been around, I've been wearing a mask."

In fact, Chen has been taking so much precaution that he wears his mask in the dining hall, only dipping it down to take a bit before putting it right back in place. He isn't taking any chances with what could be his final Olympics, especially given the long, four-year wait since his disappointing fifth-place finish at the Pyeongchang Games.

"I mean, you know, because it's happened — everyone is talking about it and thinking about it," Chen said. "And hopefully that gets people involved a little bit more, being a little more careful and doing what they need to do."

The showdown between Chen and Hanyu is one of the marquee events of the Winter Olympics, so much so that their programs will start



Nathan Chen, of the United States, competes during the men's singles short program team event in the figure skating competition at the 2022 Winter Olympics

around 10 a.m. in Beijing so that they can be broadcast in prime time in the eastern U.S. Many of the other events in which the American contingent is not expected to medal will take place in the evening in Beijing.

That's the kind of attention that the 22-year-old Chen has generated ever since leaving South Korea.

Rather than sit back and rest, Chen drilled even harder into his programs with his longtime coach, Rafael Arutyunyan, even while he juggled his studies at Yale. And the results came through on the ice, where Chen has won three consecutive world championships, pushed his national championship streak to six and has been generally unbeatable.

His only loss since Pyeongchang? To his teammate Zhou at Skate America last fall.

The reason he's been so dominant has been his array of quads, the jump that was once cutting edge but now has become standard fair. Most of the skaters in the field can land them but few do so with the degree of elevation, difficulty and, well, panache — not to mention the remarkable consistency that sees Chen rarely hit the ice.

"If I wake up on the right side of the bed they are effortless," he joked, "and if not, they are not so effortless. I try my best; sometimes they are good, sometimes they are bad. As with anything, you learn any time you make a mistake,

and you try to make it better the next time."

The only quad that Chen has never landed — though he's tried a few times while goofing around in practice — is the quad axel, which involves 4 1/2 rotations. In fact, only a few have tried it in competition and nobody has ever landed it.

Hanyu could change that this week. He landed a couple of shaky ones during his final practice yesterday

"Yuzuru has definitely pushed me a lot," Chen said. "Long before I competed against him, he was that benchmark for what an exceptional figure skater should be. I remember watching him when I was at the Junior Grand Prix Final, he was at the senior final and I was amazed at how good he was, how much he commanded the audience. He was a shining star.

"I went home," Chen said, "and I was like: 'Oh, man. That's what figure skating is supposed to be like.'"

Chen has had plenty of success in his head-to-head meetings with Hanyu since Pyeongchang. But while marquee events such as the Grand Prix Final are important, and the world championships are nearly the pinnacle of the sport, nothing tops winning a gold medal at the Olympics, and so far that is the one thing Chen has yet to accomplish.

If he continues to test negative, and takes the ice as scheduled, that quest begins anew today in Beijing. **MDT/AP**

Olympics Spotlight

PENG SHUAI

Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai has met with International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach in Beijing.

The IOC says the meeting took place over dinner Saturday and IOC member Kirsty Coventry also attended. Coventry and Peng attended the China-Norway mixed curling match that night. Peng briefly disappeared from public view in November after she accused a Chinese official of sexual assault on her verified Weibo social media. The post was swiftly removed. Peng told a French newspaper in an interview published yesterday that the international concern over her well-being is based on "an enormous misunderstanding." She denied having accused the Chinese official of sexual assault.

L'Equipe, which specializes in sports news, published the interview yesterday. The publication said it spoke to the tennis player a day earlier in a Beijing hotel in an hour-long interview organized through China's Olympic committee.

The newspaper said it had to submit questions in advance and that a Chinese Olympic committee official sat in on the discussion and translated her comments from Chinese.

IREEN WÜST

Ireen Wüst has added to her haul as the most decorated speedskater in Olympic history with another gold. The 35-year-old Dutch skater won her second straight gold in the 1,500 meters, setting an Olympic record with a time of 1 minute, 53.28 seconds at the Ice Ribbon oval in Beijing. Miho Takagi of Japan claimed the silver in 1:53.72, while the bronze went to Antoinette de Jong of the Netherlands in 1:54.82.

It was another Olympic disappointment for Brittany Bowe. The U.S. skater again came up short in the quest for her first individual Olympic medal, fading badly at the end to finish 10th in 1:55.81.

DINIGEER YILAMUJIANG

China's U.N. ambassador has fired back at his U.S. counterpart over her remarks that sending a member of the Uyghur ethnic group to help deliver the Olympic flame was an attempt to distract from the issue of abuses against Muslim minorities. Ambassador Zhang Jun issued a statement to "resolutely refute" what he called unfounded accusations against China made by Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield in an interview with CNN. Zhang said China's Winter Olympics team includes 20 athletes from nine ethnic minorities, including Uyghur and Tibetan. China chose cross-country skier Dinigeer Yilamujiang, a Uyghur, as one of two final Olympic torchbearers at the opening ceremony.

"She is the pride and excellent representative of the Chinese people. On what ground does the U.S. has such inexplicable anger over this? And why?" Zhang said.

MAX PARROT

Canadian snowboarder Max Parrot took home the Olympic gold medal in men's slopestyle just over three years removed from being diagnosed with cancer.

Technically superior on his second of three runs, Parrot scored a 90.96 to hold off the field. He tossed his snowboard in delight after the final score was revealed.

Su Yiming of China earned the silver and Mark McMorris of Canada used a strong final run to bump himself into bronze — his third straight one — and knock defending champion Red Gerard of the United States off the podium.

EILEEN GU

Eileen Gu's goal of three Olympic medals nearly blew off in the wind. The American-born freestyle skier who spurned Team USA for China ahead of the Beijing Games risked missing the finals in women's big air when she lost a ski on her second run and crashed into do-or-die position entering Round 3. Gu scaled back her plans in the final round and landed a conservative right-side 900. Gu said the wind changed direction between her first and second runs. Because she was the fifth of 25 skiers down the jump at Big Air Shougang, she didn't notice the shift until she was mid-air. She gathered herself for a clean third run and finished fifth, easily into the 12-skier finals.

KAMILA VALIEVA

Kamila Valieva became the first woman to land a quad in the Olympics — two of them, in fact — and her historic free skate put a stamp on Russia's dominant run to the gold medal in the team figure skating event at the Beijing Games yesterday. The 15-year-old Valieva opened with a huge quad salchow and followed with the difficult triple axel before landing another quad, this time a toe loop in combination with a triple toe loop. The only blemish on her program came when she fell on her quad toe loop late in the program, but by that point her first gold medal in Beijing was assured. Valieva scored 178.92 points, giving Russia 74 points and their second gold medal in three editions of the team event. The U.S. took the silver medal after back-to-back bronze, while Japan won its first team medal with bronze. **MDT/AP**



OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

FACE-TO-FACE WINTER GAMES DIPLOMACY CAN HELP RALLY MUCH NEEDED UNITY

The Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games that officially kicked off on Friday night are not only a sports gala, they also provide a venue for intensive diplomacy between Chinese and world leaders.

The long-needed face-to-face interactions injected a breath of fresh air and hope into today's world which is grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic and other formidable challenges.

The opening ceremony of the Games attracted more than 30 international dignitaries, including heads of state, heads of government, members of royal families and heads of international organizations. Their attendance underscores the wide global support for the Beijing Games as well as the general wish for greater unity to help the world through this difficult time.

President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan hosted a banquet on Saturday noon to welcome distinguished guests from afar and expressed China's gratitude for their support. In his toast at the banquet, Xi stressed the importance of promoting the spirit of the Olympic Movement and building a community with a shared future for mankind.

Indeed, as Xi pointed out, since ancient times the Olympic Movement has carried humanity's aspirations for peace, solidarity and progress. With humanity facing such grave challenges as climate change and resurgent protectionism, the world badly needs the guidance of such clearheadedness.

It has to be pointed out that some Western countries, the United States in particular, have sought to use the sporting event as an opportunity to sow the seeds of difference, stoke confrontations and poison the atmosphere of international relations. Against such a backdrop, the joint statement issued by Xi and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin after their talks in Beijing on Friday provides a timely strategic guidance for countries around the world to navigate the complexities in international relations.

In their joint statement, China and Russia make clear their strong opposition to any attempts to abuse democratic values, to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign states in the name of protecting democracy and human rights, and to stir up divisions and confrontation in the world.

Such a stance, expressed by two permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, will have a far-reaching impact on the global governance system and international relations.

It is no exaggeration to say that China and Russia have become key stabilizing forces in safeguarding global peace and security, justice and fairness.

With Xi meeting the visiting world leaders on the sidelines of the Games, it is to be hoped that as the sound of firecrackers bids the old year farewell, more countries will come together to welcome the new year with the "warmth of wine and the spring breeze" and the conviviality of friendship.

TAIWANESE SUPPLIER TO CHIP PRODUCERS ANNOUNCES EXPANSION

THE BUZZ

GlobalWafers Co., which supplies silicon wafers to semiconductor manufacturers, says it will invest \$3.6 billion in facilities in Asia, the United States and Europe after its attempt to acquire Germany's Siltronic AG failed.

The announcement comes amid shortages of processor chips and other semiconductors that are disrupting auto manufacturing, smartphone and other industries. Producers are announcing plans to expand output, which will boost demand for wafers.

GlobalWafers' bid to buy Siltronic fell through after German regulators failed to complete a review of the offer by a Jan. 31 deadline.

The Taiwanese company said the 100 billion New Taiwan dollars (\$3.6 billion) earmarked for the purchase will go into expanding its production capacity instead.

The company, headquartered in Hsinchu, Taiwan, said production should increase in the second half of 2023 but gave no details of possible locations.

GlobalWafers says it is the world's third-largest supplier of silicon wafers used in semiconductors for information technology, auto manufacturing and other products. It has factories in Taiwan, Japan, the United States, South Korea, China and Southeast Asia.



Spotify founder and CEO Daniel Ek

SPOTIFY CEO SAYS CANCELING JOE ROGAN ISN'T 'THE ANSWER'

JOE Rogan has put Spotify in a tough spot, but the streaming giant is not ready to part ways with the popular podcast host despite intense criticism over his anti-coronavirus vaccine comments and use of racial slurs.

Spotify CEO Daniel Ek also said in a message to employees yesterday [Macau time] that Rogan's racist language was "incredibly hurtful" and that the host was behind the removal of dozens of episodes of "The Joe Rogan Experience."

"While I strongly condemn what Joe has said and I agree with his decision to remove past episodes from our platform, I realize some will want more," Ek said in the note. "And I want to make one point very clear — I do not believe that silencing Joe is the answer."

The letter is the clearest indication yet of where Spotify stands on Rogan's fate with the company as some musicians, including Neil Young, Janis Joplin and India.Arie, have pulled their work from the streaming service in protest and others could follow. Spotify reportedly paid \$100 million to exclusively host Rogan's podcast, which now threatens the bottom line but is also a key part of the company's strategy to be a one-stop shop for audio.

"We should have clear lines around content and take action when they are crossed, but canceling

voices is a slippery slope. Looking at the issue more broadly, it's critical thinking and open debate that powers real and necessary progress," Ek wrote.

He said he was "deeply sorry" for the impact the controversy was having on Spotify's employees. Rogan apologized Saturday for his use of the N-word on some past episodes.

Spotify's move likely won't sit well with one side of an increasingly polarized country where there are heightened sensitivities on race and vaccine misinformation, experts say.

"If Spotify says, 'We can't drop him. He has the right to say what he wants,' that continues on the line where there is this implicit support to say racist things on these platforms," Adia Harvey Wingfield, a sociology professor at Washington University in St. Louis, said before Ek's letter was released.

The streaming site also has to decide whether offensive words are allowable elsewhere on its app, where songs with racist, homophobic and anti-immigrant messages are available, said John Wihbey, a Northeastern University professor and specialist in emerging technologies.

"There's some real self-examination to be doing beyond Joe," Wihbey said Sunday. "This is a big moment of reckoning for entertainment and streaming platforms to see where the

window is, what's over the line."

In his letter, Ek announced an investment of \$100 million to license, develop and market "music and audio content from historically marginalized groups," without giving more details.

Rogan's public troubles started on Jan. 24 when Young asked to have his music removed over concerns Rogan was promoting skepticism about the COVID-19 vaccines. Other artists followed suit, including Joni Mitchell and Roxane Gay.

Spotify said it would soon add a warning to all podcasts that discuss COVID-19, directing listeners to factual, up-to-date information from scientists and public health experts.

The scrutiny intensified when a video compilation emerged last week showing Rogan repeatedly using the N-word. Arie posted it on her Instagram account, using the hashtag #DeleteSpotify.

"They take this money that's built from streaming, and they pay this guy \$100 million, but they pay us like .003% of a penny," the Grammy winner wrote. "I don't want to generate money that pays that."

Rogan apologized in an Instagram video Saturday, saying that the slurs were the "most regretful and shameful thing" he has ever had to address and that he hasn't used the N-word in years. MDT/AP



Greece Authorities in Greece promised yesterday to toughen rules governing soccer supporters' associations in the wake of a fatal attack last week on a 19-year-old man who was stabbed and severely beaten by a gang of youths in the northern city of Thessaloniki. Nine people have been arrested in connection with the Feb. 1 attack in which Thessaloniki resident Alkis Kambanos was killed and two others were injured. Arrest warrants have been issued for two others.



Canada The mayor of Ottawa declared a state of emergency yesterday and a former U.S. ambassador to Canada said groups in the U.S. must stop interfering in the domestic affairs of America's neighbor as protesters opposed to COVID-19 restrictions continued to paralyze the capital. Mayor Jim Watson said the declaration highlights the need for support from other jurisdictions and levels of government. It gives the city some additional powers around procurement and how it delivers services, which could help purchase equipment required by frontline workers and first responders.

Switzerland A criminal court was opening a trial yesterday on charges that Credit Suisse failed to do enough to stop money laundering linked to drug trafficking by a Bulgarian criminal organization, which employed a wrestler who once hauled millions in currency by car to Switzerland. The case against the bank in federal criminal court, in the southern city of Bellinzona, centers on charges that it "did not take all necessary measures to halt the infraction of money laundering" by one of its employees, according to a summary from the court announcing the start to the proceedings.