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Hong Kong's leader announced yesterday the city's toughest social-distancing restrictions yet, including unprecedented limits on private gatherings, as new daily cases surge above 600. Chief Executive Carrie Lam said gatherings in private premises of more than two families will be banned starting tomorrow. Public gatherings will be restricted to two people, and hair salons and places of worship will be closed until Feb. 24.



Philippines Campaigning in the presidential election started yesterday with a cast of candidates led by a late dictator's son and the pro-democracy current vice president. The official three-month election campaign for national posts, including the president and separately elected vice president and half of the 24-seat Senate, opened under tough anti-virus restrictions including a ban on handshakes, kissing, hugging and tightly packed crowds aimed at dampening the carnival-like rallies that have been the hallmark of Philippine elections. More on p7

Japan A remote-controlled robot on yesterday was used to probe the hardest-hit nuclear reactor at Japan's wrecked Fukushima plant, as officials push forward with clean-up operations that have been mired in delays and controversy. An earthquake and tsunami in 2011 unleashed a disastrous meltdown at Fukushima Daiichi's three reactors that partly sunk their radioactive cores into the plant's concrete foundations, making removal extremely difficult. More on backpage

'PARTY' IS OVER

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THE CONVERSATION

NOT EVERYONE IS MALE OR FEMALE – THE GROWING CONTROVERSY OVER SEX DESIGNATION

CARL STREED,
BOSTON UNIVERSITY

CHECK out your birth certificate and surely you'll see a designation for sex. When you were born, a doctor or clinician assigned you the "male" or "female" label based on a look at your genitalia. In the U.S., this has been standard practice for more than a century.

But sex designation is not as simple as a glance and then a check of one box or another. Instead, the overwhelming evidence shows that sex is not binary. To put it another way, the terms "male" and "female" don't fully capture the complex biological, anatomical and chromosomal variations that occur in the human body.

That's why calls are growing to remove sex designation from birth certificates, including a recent recommendation from the American Medical Association.

I am a professor of medicine who has worked extensively on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgen-

der, queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA+) issues. My co-author is a professor of gynecology who is deeply involved in the health of people who are trans and intersex.

Our research and clinical experience show that sex designation is not something to take for granted. For those who don't fit neatly into one of two categories – and there are millions – an inappropriate classification on a birth certificate can have consequences that last a lifetime.

THE PROBLEMS WITH SEX DESIGNATION

Variations in genital anatomy happen more frequently than you might think; they occur in 0.1 to 0.2% of births annually. In the U.S., that's about 4,000 to 8,000 babies each year.

Other sex traits don't necessarily help either. Doctors examining the reproductive organs can find people born with both a vagina and testes, and also those born without any gonads. And when evaluating an indivi-

dual's estrogen and testosterone hormone levels, long defined as key determinants of female and male bodies, doctors find some people with vaginas still produce significant amounts of testosterone. Because of this, testosterone is not a great indicator for defining sex; higher amounts of testosterone do not necessarily make someone male.

Even karyotyping – a laboratory procedure used since the 1950s to evaluate an individual's number and type of chromosomes – doesn't tell the whole story. While we typically expect people to either have XX or XY pairs of sex chromosomes, many people have variations that do not fit either category. These include Turner syndrome, in which a person is born with a single X chromosome, and Klinefelter syndrome, which occurs when a person is born with a combination of XXY chromosomes.

In short, human diversity has demonstrated that the binary

categories of male and female are incomplete and inaccurate. Sex designation, rather than "two sizes fit all," is on a spectrum. Up to 1.7% of the U.S. population – that's more than 5 million Americans – have an anatomy and physiology that present intersex traits.

BINARY DESIGNATIONS CAN BE DAMAGING

Those with intersex traits who are assigned at birth to be female or male can experience medical care that harms them, both physically and psychologically.

Sometimes physicians perform surgeries to align bodies into binary categories. For example, those born with a larger than typical clitoris may have it reduced in size. But some who have this childhood surgery suffer as adults from pain and difficulty having sex.

Additionally, governments sometimes limit those with intersex traits from fully participating in society. For instance, in Australia, marriages have been annul-

led because governments have previously ruled that an intersex person – someone not seen to be "100% man" or "100% woman" – cannot be legally married.

Private entities often do the same. The International Olympics Committee uses cutoffs of hormone levels to determine who plays in women's sports. As a result, some athletes have been barred from participation.

And for those with a gender identity that differs from the sex designation on a government document, discrimination, harassment or violence can result.

State governments have begun to acknowledge sex diversity. Some let gender-diverse people change their designation on birth certificates, although there are restrictions. Medicine too is changing. For example, some pediatric centers have stopped performing surgeries on newborns with differences in sex development. Still, society at large has been much slower to move beyond the use of strictly binary categories.

As clinicians, we strive to be accurate. The evidence shows that using male and female as the only options on birth certificates is not consistent with scientific reality. Evidence shows that removing this designation will tell new parents that it's not sex assignment that's most important at birth but rather the celebration of a healthy and happy baby.

MDT/THE CONVERSATION

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GAMING

February GGR to rebound following Lunar New Year visitor arrivals

LYNZY VALLES

ANALYSTS are expecting slightly higher gaming revenue for February following the increase in visitor numbers to the region during the Lunar New Year.

Although the visitor arrivals fell short of what the government had initially expected, the figure was 25% higher than last year.

The seven-day Spring Festival Golden Week saw total tourist arrivals hit 113,699.

Pre-pandemic, February was typically one of the busiest months with the highest gaming revenue due to the weeklong holiday in mainland China.

Bernstein Research forecasts gross gaming revenue (GGR) for February will likely be up 29% from January.

January GGR dropped 20.3% month-to-month to MOP6.34 billion. This decline coincides with a series of new outbreaks in the neighbouring region, causing local authorities to impose strict border entry measures to deter the spread of Covid-19 variants.

Due to the outbreak, the government shortened the validity period of negative nucleic acid test (NAT) results for those entering Macau



from Zhuhai in a bid to discourage tourists from traveling to Macau.

However, due to the stability of case numbers, Bernstein Research said that the average daily revenue from February 1 to 6 stood at MOP333 million compared with MOP205 million in January, as cited in Asia Gaming Brief.

The figure also represents a 60% increase compared to last year's Lunar New Year.

Month-to-date GGR is MOP2 billion, as daily mass gaming revenues have surged between 50% and 55% from January.

Meanwhile, brokerage J.P. Mor-

gan described the Lunar New Year figures as "very respectable" considering there are "no more junket businesses," which formerly accounts for 75% of the city's VIP gaming revenue.

Recently, two junket moguls Alvin Chau and Levo Chan were arrested over illegal gambling, leading to gaming operators halting their agreements with junkets.

The Chief Executive has previously pointed out that junket operations have been declining over the past five years.

Recent official data shows that the number of gambling promoter

licenses in the city has decreased nearly 50% in just one year, with only 46 junket licensees for the current year. 29 junkets are still awaiting licenses.

Meanwhile, analysts at J.P. Morgan said that mass GGR was likely over MOP300 million per day, a significant recovery when compared to the pre-pandemic figures during Lunar New Year (MOP500 million).

Average spending per visitor has also increased up to six times compared to 2019. According to analysts, this was due to the lack of tour groups in the SAR, as well as the longer length of stay per visit.

11,300 RESIDENTS PARTICIPATE IN CROSS-BORDER INVESTMENT

The "Cross-Border Financial Management" pilot project in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) has attracted some 11,300 residents from Macau and mainland China as of December 31, 2021. According to the Monetary Authority of Macao, about 400 investors from mainland China carried out transactions from the mainland to Macau. Around 10,900 Macau resident investors carried out transactions from Macau to the mainland. The cumulative number of transactions was approximately 2,500. Among these transactions, around 13% were carried out in the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

MANDATORY QUARANTINE FOR ARRIVALS FROM AIHUI DISTRICT

The Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre recently announced that individuals who have been in the Aihui District of Heihe City, Heilongjiang Province, will be required to undergo 14 days of quarantine, counting from the day they left the area. The period cannot be less than seven days, authorities clarified. The measure took effect yesterday morning.



GONGBEI BORDER CUSTOMS TOP OFFICIAL EXPELLED FROM POST

DEPUTY Commissioner of the Zhuhai Gongbei Border Customs, Xiong Zhenguo, was expelled from the public office for allegedly violating the "spirit of the Eight-Point Regulation."

The Eight-point Regulation is a set of regulations, stipulated by Chinese leader Xi Jinping, which were first announced in December 2021. Issued by the Political

Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, the regulation aims to reduce bureaucracy, extravagance and various undesirable work practices of party members.

Xiong Zhenguo, who has been in the post since 2013, was found to have accepted gifts, banquets and travel arrangements, leading to his dismissal from the party.

Guangdong authorities reportedly began investigating the official in July 2021 for suspected discipline and law violations.

Prior to the investigation, he served as a Commissioner of Zhongshan Customs from 2018 to 2020.

The 52-year-old official underwent a disciplinary review conducted by the State Supervision Commission of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection in the General Administration of Customs, as well as by the Guangzhou Supervision Commission, prior to his expulsion.

It is also alleged that he concealed and/or failed to disclose his real estate properties and share ownership in non-listed companies, and that he is also under investigation for interfering with the selection of cadres.

His case has been transferred to the neighboring region's public prosecutions office, and any assets and property that were illegally obtained have been seized by authorities. LV

GBA

HENGQIN GDP HIT USD7 BILLION IN 2021

THE annual regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin increased by 8.5% year-on-year to 45.46 billion yuan (USD7.1 billion) in 2021, 0.4, 0.5, and 1.6 percentage points higher than the national, provincial, and municipal average growth rates respectively. The two-year average growth rate stood at 6.3%, and the zone was home to 54,437 business entities by the end of December.

Among the 7,366 foreign-funded companies, 4,761 were funded by Macau parties. The number of new firms in December was 530, 62 of which were Macau-funded.



The operating revenue of service industries above designated size climbed up by 37% to 29 billion yuan from January to November 2021.

According to official figures, the total retail sales of consumer goods amounted to 1.49 billion yuan last year and the figure for wholesale and retail hit a record high of 1.02 trillion yuan with a

year-on-year increase of 26.3 percent.

Playing a vital role in the zone's development were employees from a younger age bracket, with 60.4% of employees under the age of 35 at the end of 2021. Hengqin's employed urban population grew by 2,544 and the registered unemployment rate was down to 1.71%. LV

STUDIO CITY CUTS BUDGET FOR PHASE 2

LYNZY VALLES

STUDIO City International Holdings Ltd reduced the project budget of the remaining works at Studio City to approximately USD1.2 billion, the company said in a filing.

As of November 30, 2021, the firm has incurred USD661.2 million in aggregate costs relating to the development of the remaining project, primarily related to the initial design as well as planning and construction costs. "We have taken various mitigating measures to manage the challenges of Covid-19 outbreaks, such as implementing a cost reduction program to minimize cash outflow of non-essential items and rationalizing our capital expenditure program with deferrals and reductions which benefits our balance sheet," the group said.

Melco Resorts & Entertainment has announced its strategic partnership with Marriott International, intended to bring the W Hotels Worldwide brand to Studio City Phase 2.

The project is scheduled for opening as part of Studio City Phase 2 in December 2022.

Meanwhile, the firm expects that gross gaming revenues in Macau will continue to be negatively

impacted by the significant travel bans or restrictions, visa restrictions and quarantine and social distancing requirements so long as these restrictions remain in place.

Due to the uncertainty presented by Covid-19-related disruptions, the group said, "We are currently unable to reasonably estimate the financial impact on our future results for operations, cash flows and financial condition."

The filing also confirmed that in December 2021, Melco Resorts Macau ceased all gaming promoter arrangements at the Studio City Casino.

POTENTIAL TRANSFER OF STUDIO CITY CASINO PREMISES

The group believes it would be required to transfer the Studio City Casino premises to the gaming operator to "comply with the requirements of the proposed law, if enacted under its currently proposed terms, in order for the gaming business to continue at the Studio City Casino."

The proposed amendments to the gaming law are currently under review and pending final approval by the Legislative Assembly.

"In accordance with the proposed law, after a transition pe-



riod of three years from the effective date of the amending law, gaming activities must be operated by a concessionaire within premises owned by the gaming concessionaire. Otherwise, such premises will revert to the Macau government without compensation upon the concession expiration or earlier termination," the

firm stated.

"We would need to seek an amendment to the terms of the Studio City land grant and complete other administrative procedures which are subject to the Macau government's consent, approval, and authorization," it added.

The company said that it will

need to comply with the requirements of the proposed law once those requirements are enacted as law and become effective.

However, it remains unclear how this would affect the status of the existing services agreements or the arrangements implemented under such agreements after the three-year transition period.

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Notions of time and interaction between people exhibited at Ka Ho

RENATO MARQUES

TITLED "Social Distance," the exhibition by architect and photographer Ricardo Meireles will open to the public this Saturday. The exhibition aims to explore different notions of time, interaction between people, and between people and urban spaces in a pre-pandemic world.

The exhibition will be held at the gallery house of the "Hold on to Hope" project at the former leprosy of Ka Ho, now refurbished and under the management of the Association of Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers of Macau (ARTM).

Twelve monochrome photographs and one video will be displayed. All works were taken before the Covid-19 pandemic which reshaped the way people interact and move in the urban space around the world.

According to the artist, the exhibition is based on the concept of social distance, prompting a reflection on how we relate to each other.

The exhibition will include



photographic works captured not only in Macau but also across several Asian cities, including Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Taipei.

By depicting different Asian cityscapes and the organic trails that human motion create throughout densely populated environments, "Social Distance" attempts

to evoke the lost collective dynamics of city life in the pre-pandemic era and contrast it with the current day.

The opposing concepts of moving versus waiting, and of crowded places versus isolation are also portrayed.

As the artist explained, this is

an exhibition that asks the audience to examine the details in addition to the "bigger picture."

If spectators look carefully, they can discover traces of an old world, in which mouths, lips, noses, and faces – which ultimately represent the human identity – are presented uncovered and not

obscured by facemasks.

In this sense, the exhibition is also appealing to spectators to conduct a personal reflection on their current day-to-day existence.

The exhibition will open to the public at 3 p.m. on February 12 and will be on display until March 2.

Housing prices held steady in Q4 of 2021

RENATO MARQUES

THE residential property price index has remained steady with only marginal variations during the last quarter (Q4) of last year, according to information from the Statistics and Census Service.

Between October and December 2021, the overall residential property price index increased slightly by 0.3% to 267.6, when compared to the period between September and November.

The indices for the Peninsula (267.2) and Taipa and Coloane (269.4) also followed a similar trend, rising by 0.3% and 0.5% respectively.

The growth in the index is attributable to the prices of new housing units, as existing residential units (286.1) decreased by 0.2% from the previous period. The index of existing residential units in Taipa and Coloane experienced a greater drop (0.5%) than the Peninsula



(277.8) where the difference was just 0.1%.

The residential property price index for residential units of buildings between 6 and 10 years old dropped by 2.8%, almost double that of residential units of buildings between 11 and 20 years old.

Meanwhile, the index for pre-sale residential units (315.8) increased by 2.8%.

By size, the units that were more undervalued belonged to the higher-end

and mid-range categories (i.e. units with areas over 100 square meters or between 50 and 74.9 square meters), where the index fell by 1.5% and 0.2% respectively.

Concurrently, the index for residential units with a floor area of less than 50 square meters increased by 0.7%.

In 2021, the overall average residential property price index decreased by 0.1% year-on-year to 266.8.

CRIME

RESIDENT SCAMMED IN CREDIT CARD FRAUD

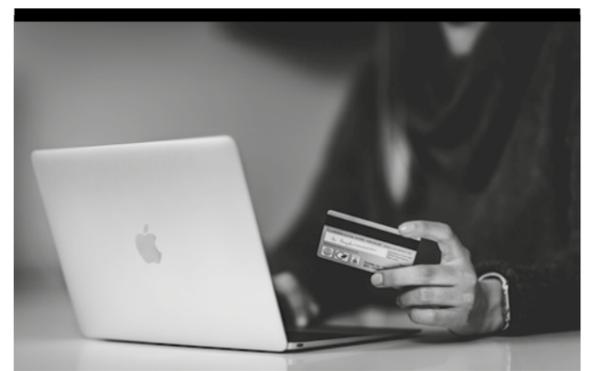
RENATO MARQUES

A local woman has filed a complaint with the Judiciary Police (PJ) claiming that her credit card details were unlawfully used to acquire an air ticket, a PJ spokesperson said during the regular joint police forces press conference on Monday.

The case occurred earlier this month. The woman suspects that someone gained access to her credit card information when she paid for items on an online shopping platform.

According to her statements to the police, minutes after she had used her credit card to pay for the shopping online, she received an SMS from her bank stating that her card had been used for a transaction amounting to USD864 (around MOP7,000).

After contacting her



credit card provider, she learned that the money was used to acquire an airfare ticket on an online platform.

The PJ is currently investigating the case but have no information about who might have unlawfully used the credit card data.

In a separate case, the PJ disclosed that a man had fallen victim to a known scam while trying to solicit the services of a prostitute.

Consistent with multiple reports from the police forces over the years,

after arranging a meeting with the alleged woman, the man received a phone call from a different person, asking for a security deposit.

Following the modus operandi of previous cases, the deposit was requested in the form of value stored cards acquired in convenience stores, and the card codes were provided to the person over the phone.

After repeated requests for more money, the victim realized he had been scammed, having lost MOP21,000 in total.

CHINA LOCKS DOWN SOUTHERN CITY AS OMICRON VARIANT SURGES

CHINA has ordered inhabitants of the southern city of Baise to stay home and suspended transportation links amid a surge in COVID-19 cases at least partly linked to the omicron variant.

Classes have been suspended, non-essential businesses closed and mass testing of residents ordered. Restaurants are only permitted to serve take-out. Traffic lights have been switched to red only to remind drivers to stay home.

As of yesterday, 135 cases had been reported in the city — at least two of them found to be omicron, health authorities said.

The city has become the latest to be placed under lockdown in keeping with China's "zero-tolerance" approach to the pandemic. The policy requires strict measures be applied even when only a small number of cases have been found.

A major concern is preventing outbreaks during the ongoing Beijing Winter Olympic Games. No new cases were reported in the Chinese capital yesterday.

More than 30 athletes at the Beijing Olympics are in isolation facilities after testing positive for the coronavirus, organizers said. The average stay in isolation is seven days.



Baise has an urban population of about 1.4 million, with another 3 million in the large surrounding rural area that abuts the Vietnamese border.

State media reported customs clearance at the crossing points of Longbang and Pingmeng were delayed, causing further disruptions to cross-border trade that have already inflicted major losses on Vietnamese fruit farmers who rely on the Chinese market for much of their revenue.

The first cases in Baise were reported Saturday at the tail end of the Lunar New Year holiday, when many Chinese travel vast

distances to their hometowns. For the third year running, the government asked people to remain in place to avoid a major spread, although such calls had only a slight effect on the numbers of trips taken.

Despite the occasional regional outbreak, China has largely brought the pandemic under control through lockdowns, mass testing, case tracing, mask mandates and other strict measures. Almost 85% of the population is fully vaccinated, according to Our World in Data, although questions have been raised about the efficacy of Chinese vaccines, particularly

against the omicron strain.

Chinese health authorities say the continuing emergence of outbreaks despite the high vaccination rate justifies the continued implementation of "zero-tolerance" policies and the quarantining of travelers arriving from abroad.

At the same time, lockdowns imposed in December and January on millions of residents of northern and central cities have been lifted.

China has reported a total of 106,524 cases of COVID-19, with 4,636 deaths. Currently, 1,473 people are in treatment for the disease. **MDT/AP**

US BILL AIMS TO ARREST CHINA, RUSSIA INFLUENCE IN LATIN AMERICA

TWO leading voices in Congress on Latin America have introduced bipartisan legislation to spur closer U.S. security cooperation in the region and turn back what they see as the growing, malign influence of China and Russia.

Republican Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, the ranking member of the Select Committee on Intelligence, and Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Bob Menendez introduced what they dubbed the "Western Hemisphere Security Strategy Act" this week.

The bill seeks to counter what the senators, both sons of Cuban immigrants, consider the "harmful and malign influence" in Latin America of China and Russia, arguing that the "destabilizing" influence of authoritarian governments in Beijing and Moscow pose unique risks to U.S. national security interests as well as the region's welfare.

If approved, the bill would require the Secretaries of State and Defense to jointly submit within 180 days a strategy to enhance diplomatic engagement and security assistance in the Western Hemisphere on issues ranging from drug trafficking to transnational crime. Concrete steps would include increasing military training exercises with partner nations and efforts to improve their capacity to conduct disaster relief operations.

"There is no greater threat in our region than the growing meddling of Russia and China in Latin America and the Caribbean," Rubio said in a statement.

"It is imperative for the United States to be strategic and proactive in strengthening security partnerships with democracies throughout the Americas," Menendez added. "This bill recognizes the geopolitical significance of Latin America."

China in recent years has replaced the U.S. as the main trading partner of several countries in Latin America while at the same time financing major investments in infrastructure, including the building out of the region's cellular network, which the U.S. considers a security risk.

Meanwhile, Russia is a major supplier of military support and weapons to Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela — the three top U.S. adversaries in the region that generations of U.S. policy makers had referred to as Washington's backyard. **MDT/AP**

US indictment accuses Chinese firm of stealing Motorola trade secrets

MICHAEL TARM,
CHICAGO

A federal indictment unsealed yesterday [Macau time] accuses a Chinese telecommunications company of stealing technology from Illinois-based Motorola Solutions Inc., in another case highlighting longstanding fears about China pilfering vital U.S. business secrets to bolster its own economy.

The Chicago filing charges Hytera Communications Corp., Ltd., with conspiracy to commit theft of trade secrets, alleging it recruited several Motorola employees as part of the scheme. They are accused of accessing Motorola's internal database, then described and even joked

about plans to use the stolen material at Hytera.

The secrets regard digital mobile radio technology Motorola developed for walkie-talkie type features on cellphones. For over a decade, from 2007 to 2020, Hytera used thousands of stolen documents to accelerate its development of similar features, the indictment says.

In a 2008 email cited in the indictment, one unnamed individual writes to another that, "We are trying to grab whatever we can. ... Do you have anything in mind that you need while we are still here?" In another, someone writes "haha" after describing Hytera as copying Motorola technology. One email ex-

presses concern, saying "some of our lies may cause problems once Motorola finds out."

Hytera's website says the company has 10 development centers in China, Germany, Great Britain, Spain and Canada. The Shenzhen, China, also says some of its two-way radios are being used by security at the Beijing Winter Olympics.

A message seeking comment from Hytera left at its Canadian office wasn't returned.

The 21-count indictment also charges Hytera and individual suspects with possession or attempted possession of stolen trade secrets. The heavily redacted document doesn't identify other charged defendants and a statement from

the U.S. attorney's office in Chicago announcing the charges doesn't say if any reside in the U.S.

If ever convicted, Hytera would face a criminal fine of three times the value of the stolen trade secrets and individual defendants could go to prison. But U.S. authorities are often unable to bring suspects to court in cases involving Chinese firms because China is unwilling to hand them over.

A Chinese-born American software developer, Hanjuan Jin, was convicted in 2012 of stealing secrets from Motorola. Jin, a naturalized U.S. citizen, was acquitted of more serious charges of economic espionage. A federal judge later sentenced her to four years in prison,

a sentence prosecutors said at the time should send a message to those tempted to steal U.S. trade secrets.

The new indictment doesn't name Jin. The U.S. attorney's office statement also doesn't refer to her. Many of the allegations in her case, however, were similar to ones made in the Hytera indictment.

At trial, prosecutors said Jin "led a double life" as an outwardly loyal company worker plotting to steal Motorola secrets. Even before downloading Motorola files over several days in 2007, prosecutors said Jin already worked for China-based Sun Kaisens.

Over 1,000 confidential Motorola documents she stole, including about its walkie-talkie feature, were discovered during a random security check at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, where Jin had arrived with a one-way ticket to China. **MDT/AP**

North Korea increases virus budget after partial border opening

KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

NORTH Korea plans to increase its government spending on pandemic measures by one-third this year to carry out leader Kim Jong Un's calls for a more "advanced and people-oriented" virus response, state media said yesterday.

The budget plans were passed during a session of Pyongyang's rubber-stamp parliament on Sunday and Monday, which came weeks after the North tentatively restarted its railroad freight traffic with China following two years of extreme border closures and economic decay.

Kim had hinted at broader changes to the country's pandemic response during a political conference in December, when he called for a transition toward advanced anti-virus measures based on a "scientific foundation."

The Korean Central News Agency said North Korea's Supreme People's Assembly passed plans to increase spending on anti-virus measures by 33.3% compared to last year. The report didn't describe those spending plans in monetary terms.

Kim Tok Hun, premier of North Korea's Cabinet, a key institution handling economic policies, described the North's pandemic response as the top priority in state



affairs, but also that the measures will be "put on a scientific basis to guarantee the security of the country and the people," KCNA said.

It appeared Kim Jong Un did not attend the parliamentary session and state media didn't mention any comments by senior officials toward Washington or Seoul amid a deepening diplomatic freeze.

Kim in recent political speeches has vowed to further bolster his nuclear arsenal. KCNA said

15.9% of the North's total government spending last year was invested in the nuclear weapons program and the same percentage of its budget this year would go to expanding military capabilities.

Cheong Seong-Chang, an analyst at South Korea's private Sejong Institute, said North Korea's description of its budget clearly reflected its plans to gradually expand trade and other exchanges with China, its main ally and economic lifeline, while reshaping its virus response.

He said the North could possibly adopt China's approach of sealing certain regions to stem transmissions, instead of locking down its entire country.

North Korea still claims to have a perfect record in keeping out COVID-19 from its territory — a claim widely doubted. But the closure of its border to nearly all trade and visitors for two years further shocked an economy already damaged by decades of mismanagement and crippling U.S.-led sanctions over Kim's nuclear weapons and missile program.

The North's resumption of railroad freight traffic with China last month came between a flurry of missile tests clearly aimed at pressuring the Biden administration over stalled nuclear diplomacy, which some experts say possibly shows the urgent need for outside relief.

The border reopening possibly shows the North is exploring more sustainable ways to deal with the coronavirus threat that may go on for years. It could also provide glimpse into the North's plans for vaccines against COVID-19.

North Korea so far has shunned vaccines offered by the U.N.-backed COVAX distribution program, possibly because those have international monitoring requirements. But some experts say the North may still seek the help of China and Russia to provide

regular testing and vaccinations of workers and troops in border areas, where access from other regions will be tightly restricted.

North Korea's resumed trade with China will almost certainly be driven by imports as much of the country's major export activities are banned under international sanctions tightened since 2016, when Kim began accelerating weapons development. The country needs fertilizers to boost food production, construction materials to support Kim's ambitious development projects and factory goods to spur industrial production decimated by the two years of halted trade.

Still, North Korea's trade with China is expected to be significantly smaller compared to pre-pandemic levels.

North Korea likely doesn't have enough foreign currency reserves to swiftly purchase a huge amount of goods, considering the toll of sanctions and pandemic-related difficulties. It would also be a major policy mistake to expand imports too quickly when an explosion in pent-up demand could further destabilize a fragile economy, experts say.

"It seems North Korea's employing a 'taste and test' approach — it will continue to reopen its border in phases if the COVID-19 situation stabilizes but seal itself again if the virus situation worsens," said Kim Byung-yeon, a professor of economics at Seoul National University. "It's also likely that the state will try to enforce greater control over trade compared to the past and clampdown on activities like smuggling, so the trade activity likely won't be as dynamic as it once was." MDT/AP

PHILIPPINES

No handshakes: Presidency hopefuls open campaigns

CAMPAIGNING in the Philippines' presidential election started yesterday with a cast of candidates led by a late dictator's son and the pro-democracy current vice president, with all vowing to bail out a country driven deeper into poverty by the pandemic and plagued by gaping inequalities and decades-long insurgencies.

The official three-month election campaign for national posts, including the president and separately elected vice president and half of the 24-seat Senate, opened under tough anti-virus restrictions including a ban on handshakes, kissing, hugging and tightly packed crowds aimed at dampening the carnival-like rallies that



Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. poses after filing his certificate of candidacy the presidential elections

have been the hallmark of Philippine elections. Social media has become a key battleground in the May 9 elections given the

restrictions with many fearing disinformation could worsen in an intense race.

Candidates for more

than 18,000 local positions, including provincial governors, town mayors and House of Representatives seats open their campaigns on March 25 under tight police watch due to a history of violent rivalries. More than 67 million Filipinos have registered to vote, including nearly 1.7 million who work abroad.

The presidential aspirants waved from convoys festooned with huge portraits to thousands of cheering followers. The motorcades were to end with night rallies featuring speeches, celebrities, songs and dance.

Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr., the son and namesake of the dictator who was overthrown in a 1986 army-backed "peo-

ple power" uprising, has topped pre-election surveys by a wide margin, alarming proponents of human rights and democracy, including Vice President Leni Robredo.

Robredo narrowly defeated Marcos Jr. in the 2016 vice presidential race but is trailing far behind him in recent polls for the presidential race, despite human rights atrocities and corruption during his father's rule that he has described as "lies."

The other main presidential contenders include Manila Mayor Isko Moreno, a former actor who has impressed many with his rags-to-power life story and cleanup of the capital, Sen. Panfilo Lacson, a former natio-

nal police chief known for his exploits against crime and corruption, and Sen. Manny Pacquiao, the former boxing star who has vowed to jail corrupt politicians and provide free houses to the poor.

Marcos Jr., 64, has served as vice governor and governor of northern Ilocos Norte province, congressman and senator. A sister, Imee Marcos, is currently a senator.

Despite Marcos Jr.'s lead in opinion polls, analysts say it's too early to predict the election outcome given often-unpredictable shifts in the volatile Philippine politics. "The surveys are just a snapshot," said Jean Franco, a professor at the University of the Philippines. MDT/AP



U.S. President Joe Biden speaks during a joint news conference with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in the East Room of the White House this week

Biden threatens: No gas pipeline if Russia invades Ukraine

AAMER MADHANI,
WASHINGTON

In a flurry of diplomacy across two continents, President Joe Biden met with Germany's new leader yesterday [Macau time] and vowed the crucial Nord Stream 2 Russia-to-Germany gas pipeline will be blocked if Russia further invades Ukraine. Russia's Vladimir Putin retorted that the U.S. and its allies are the only ones talking invasion.

Putin and French President Emmanuel Macron met for more than five hours in Moscow at the same time Biden and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz spoke at the White House in efforts to defuse the crisis before armed conflict breaks out. Russia has massed thousands of troops at the Ukraine border, adding military might almost daily.

The White House has expressed increasing alarm about the prospects of war, and Biden has been looking to solidify support among European allies for economy-jarring sanctions against Russia if it attacks.

"If Russia invades, that means tanks and troops crossing the border of Ukraine again, then there will be no longer a Nord Stream 2," Biden said. "We will bring an end to it."

That would hurt Russia economically but also cause supply problems for Germany. Construction of the pipeline has been comple-

ted, but it is not yet operating.

"We are jointly ready, and all of NATO is ready," Biden said, referring to the powerful Western alliance, though Ukraine is not a member.

While Biden reiterated with certitude that the pipeline would not move forward, Scholz stressed the need to keep some ambiguity about sanctions in order to press Russia to de-escalate the crisis.

"It's necessary for Russia to understand that a lot more could happen than they've perhaps calculated with themselves," Scholz said.

The buildup of over 100,000 Russian troops near Ukraine has fueled Western worries of 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."

At the same time, Biden and NATO allies have made clear there are no plans for sending in troops to fight Russia on Ukraine's behalf.

Macron and Putin, during their lengthy meeting — with a dinner that featured the choice of sturgeon or reindeer — registered their disagreements but also emphasized a need for more talks.

Putin noted that the U.S. and NATO have ignored Moscow's demands that the alliance guarantee it will

keep Ukraine and other ex-Soviet nations out, refrain from placing weapons in Ukraine and roll back alliance forces from Eastern Europe.

"We are categorically against any further NATO's expansion eastward because it poses a threat to us," Putin said. "It's not us who's advancing to NATO, it's NATO coming to us and so it's illogical to talk about Russia's aggressive behavior."

He scoffed at Western descriptions of NATO as a defensive alliance, saying sarcastically that "people of Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan have learned it from their own experience." And he threatened a wider war if Ukraine should join the alliance and perhaps try to win back Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014.

"European countries will automatically be drawn into a military conflict with Russia," Putin said. "You will be drawn into that conflict beyond your will. There will be no winners."

Macron described the talks as "substantial, deep" with a focus on conditions that could help de-escalation.

"We tried to build converging elements," he said. "The upcoming days will be crucial and deep discussions together will be needed."

Putin signaled his readiness to continue negotiations and denied anew that Russia has any intention of invading Ukraine.

In the meantime, Biden warned "it would be wise" for Americans other than essential diplomats to leave Ukraine.

On a positive note, Putin said without elaboration that some of Macron's proposals could serve as a basis for a settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, adding that they agreed to have a call after Macron's visit to Kyiv yesterday.

Likewise, Biden said when asked if there remained an "offramp" for Russia in the standoff, "The answer is yes."

Before meeting Biden, Scholz told German media that "there will be a very high price if Ukraine is attacked militarily. And we are preparing for this very precisely and have been talking about the details for a long time." Scholz will travel to Kyiv and Moscow Feb. 14-15.

German Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht said her country would add up to 350 troops within a few days to about 500 already a part of a NATO battlegroup in Lithuania. "With this, we are strengthening our contribution to forces on NATO's eastern flank and sending a very clear signal of unity to our allies," she said.

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

Britain said the U.K. was sending 350 troops to Poland to bolster NATO forces, joining 100 Royal Engineers already there.

At a news conference in Washington, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell defended the increasingly dire Western warnings that a Russian invasion may be imminent.

"This is not alarmism. This is simply the facts," Blinken said. "And the facts are that we've seen over the last few months a massive amassing of Russian forces on Ukraine's borders."

Borrell noted that "140,000 troops massed on the border is not to go to have tea."

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said the alliance is weighing a more permanent military presence in southeast Europe in response to Russia's "massive military deployment" near Ukraine. **MDT/AP**

this day in history



1950 McCarthy LAUNCHES ANTI-RED CRUSADE



United States Senator Joe McCarthy has accused more than 200 staff in the State Department of being members of the Communist Party.

He made the startling allegation in a public speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, saying the State Department was infested with communists and brandished a sheet of paper which purportedly contained the traitors' names.

Senator McCarthy told the Ohio county women's Republican Club that Secretary of State Dean Acheson knew the names of 205 people who were in his words still "working in and shaping the policy of the State Department".

His comments brought an immediate denial from Lincoln White, press officer at the State Department.

Mr White said: "If he is correctly quoted, his allegation that the Secretary of State has a list of 205 Communist Party members who are working and shaping policy in the State Department is entirely without foundation."

"We know of no Communist Party members in the department and if we find any they will be summarily dismissed. We did not furnish Senator McCarthy with any such list and we would be interested in seeing his list."

Senator McCarthy has made his claims against a background of growing anti-Communist feeling.

Alger Hiss, a former senior public servant, was convicted and jailed last month of perjury after being accused of being an accomplice to a self-confessed former member of an underground Communist network.

Senator McCarthy's speech also coincides with the collapse of the Kuomintang regime in China and the establishment there of a Communist government, adding to American fears about the global spread of Communism.

Mr McCarthy was defeated for the Republican nomination for the Senate in 1944 but two years later was able to win the Republican nomination away from veteran Senator Robert La Follette.

In the election he beat his Democrat opponent after a campaign of continuous misrepresentation of Professor Howard McMurray as a Communist sympathiser.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Two days after this initial outburst, Senator Joe McCarthy wrote to President Harry Truman saying he had been able to compile a list of 57 Communists.

On 20 February he delivered a six hour speech to Congress in which he referred to 81 individuals - not by name but nevertheless identifiable - who he said were members of the Communist Party or loyal to it.

By the time an investigating sub-committee was set up to look into his claims, his list of communists had dwindled to 10 names. He named Dr Owen Lattimore as "the top Russian espionage agent".

His claims were not substantiated, but many lost their jobs or reputations. He used a combination of intimidation and hearsay evidence to browbeat the accused.

His Communist witch-hunt did win him popular support. At its height, 25 states passed legislation outlawing communist organisations.

The conviction in March 1951 of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg for passing atomic secrets to the Russians also helped fuel his campaign.

His downfall came when he turned his attentions to the US Army. His methods were finally exposed to the public during a televised cross-examination of army personnel following further unsubstantiated allegations.

In 1954 he was censured by the Senate committee. His health declined through heavy drinking and he died in 1957.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You may overspend if you travel today; however, the trip will be one to remember. Your mate needs extra attention and is feeling rather insecure when you're not in sight.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Delve a little deeper if you really want to know the score. Travel will initiate new friendships or love connections. You may feel that someone at work is holding you back.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

You are likely to be left alone if you aren't willing to bend just a little. You are better off visiting friends or relatives than entertaining at home.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Find out exactly what's expected of you and you'll be surprised to find out how capable you are. Secret affairs could cause upset.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Watch your tendency to live for the day and to spend too much on entertainment and children; it could set you back. Lay your cards on the table regarding your personal direction.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Travel will be good if you are seeking knowledge. Travel for business will be advantageous. Get busy doing all those things at home that you have been putting off for so long.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You'll regret every word for some time to come. Disharmony in your relationship may cause minor ailments. Try to curb your tongue and let others at least get a word in.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Extend an invitation to clients you enjoy spending time with. You need an outlet that will not only stimulate you but also challenge your intelligence as well.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You will drive your emotional partner crazy today. Read between the lines when signing contracts. You will have to make changes in order to eliminate the tension.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Opportunities may come up at prestigious affairs. Try not to use emotional blackmail; it will only make matters worse. Find an outlet for any mounting frustration.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Trips will be more than adventurous. Do your own thing and everything will settle down. You may not have the same ideas when it comes to what you both enjoy.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Organize all the responsibilities that have to be attended to and make sure everyone knows what to do. Money may slip through your fingers.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

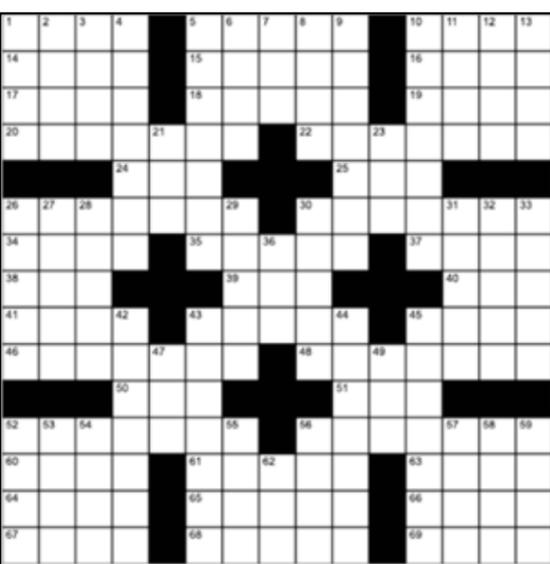
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-5	8	fine
Harbin	-11	3	cloudy
Tianjin	0	3	rain
Urumqi	2	8	cloudy
Xi'an	6	9	rain
Lhasa	-1	7	fine
Chengdu	9	12	overcast
Chongqing	2	6	rain
Kunming	-1	4	overcast
Nanjing	18	21	rain
Shanghai	3	7	rain
Wuhan	2	5	rain
Hangzhou	-16	-1	fine
Taipei	-1	6	overcast
Guangzhou	9	14	overcast
Hong Kong	15	17	cloudy
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- Brown-bag stuff; 5- Not as many; 10- Search thoroughly; 14- American space agency; 15- Diciembre follower; 16- End in ___ (draw); 17- Holly; 18- Brainstorms; 19- When said three times, a 1970 war movie; 20- News; 22- Kelp; 24- Adult males; 25- Simile center; 26- Office head; 30- Jock; 34- Shakespeare's river; 35- Compact; 37- Capital of the Ukraine; 38- It may be picked; 39- Large container; 40- Genetic letters; 41- Wife of Osiris; 43- Home on the range; 45- Comic Fox; 46- Hide; 48- Compunction; 50- Richards of Texas; 51- Male sheep who may play football for St Louis; 52- Eastern Algonquian language; 56- Extraordinary occurrence; 60- Stated; 61- Actress MacDowell; 63- Tidy, without fault; 64- Gumbo thickener; 65- Staggers; 66- Thicken; 67- Have a hunch; 68- Distributed cards; 69- Additional;

DOWN 1- Foul mood; 2- Timbuktu's land; 3- Not new; 4- London cabbie; 5- Pretended; 6- Winds up; 7- Teensy; 8- Historical periods; 9- A bit reddish; 10- Narrow footway; 11- Oklahoma Native; 12- Bog; 13- Glass ornament; 21- Bit of film, to a photo; 23- Blonde shade; 26- Frenzied; 27- Dispatch boat; 28- Out; 29- Have a ball; 30- Fall flower; 31- Duck with soft down; 32- Is inclined; 33- Avoid; 36- Short snooze; 42- Public disgrace; 43- Large drinking cup; 44- Most strange; 45- Love affair; 47- Bambi's aunt; 49- Scratch the surface of; 52- Beginning; 53- Harden by heat; 54- Cork's place; 55- Arrow poison; 56- Factory; 57- Prison room; 58- Neighbor of Cambodia; 59- Novel ending; 62- Narc's org.;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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Ref: 2109 6001 1,663 ft² 3 km 2 1

AD

HUIZHONG WU

BEIJING 2022

PRAISE FOR EILEEN GU BREAKS CHINESE SOCIAL MEDIA

TWO American-born athletes competing for China. Two radically different reactions from Chinese social media to their performances at the Winter Olympics.

As freestyle skier Eileen Gu won her gold medal in the big air competition yesterday, praise for the San Franciscan quite literally overwhelmed the Chinese internet.

Sina Weibo, the massive social network that is similar to Twitter, found its servers temporarily overloaded, according to Chinese media. Of the top 10 trending topics on the platform, five were dedicated to adoration for the 18-year-old champion.

"Gu Ailing is a genius young woman right?" was one trending topic, referencing her Chinese name.

"Dad was Harvard, Mom was Peking University, Stanford, Grandmother was an athlete. She's beautiful and classy," said one post recirculated 86,000 times.

It was a stark contrast to the reception received by another U.S.-born athlete competing for China, figure skater Zhu Yi, who a few days prior came under attack on social media after she crashed into a wall during the team event. Zhu finished last in the short



Eileen Gu, of China, waves after competing in the women's freestyle skiing big air finals

program and China placed fifth in the competition, which was won by the Russian team, with the U.S. taking silver and Japan

bronze. Weibo said it had suspended 93 accounts and deleted 300 abusive posts about the Olympian,

who was born in California to Chinese parents and won a U.S. national novice title as Beverly Zhu. Messages mocked her for falling while others criticized her for not being fluent in Chinese.

"There's no next time," wrote one Weibo user, under a video of Zhu crying at the end of her performance. "How shameful." That comment was liked more than 45,000 times.

"Go back to America," read another comment accompanied by a U.S. flag emoji.

The anger toward Zhu was likely fueled by an episode a few weeks earlier, when she qualified to compete at the Olympics.

She beat out two other skaters for the last spot on the Chinese team, which many fans felt should have gone to another young skater, Chen Hongyi, who had more competitive experience. It caused enough of a controversy at the time that the Chinese figure skating Olympic selection committee issued a statement defending the decision.

As online criticism of Zhu crested, Gu came to the defense of her

teammate. "Making mistakes and pressure are all part of sports," Gu said at a news conference after her victory.

The two athletes are competing at a politically fraught moment, with a foot in each of two countries that have been clashing on a variety of issues, from economics to the lockup of China's ethnic Uyghur minority population in the western Xinjiang region to the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although Gu's decision to compete for China has gotten outsized attention, what she and Zhu are doing is fairly common in the international sporting arena. Zhu gave up her U.S. citizenship in order to compete for China in Beijing. It's unclear whether Gu has done the same; she has never commented publicly on the question of her citizenship.

In a sign of today's highly polarized political climate, both Gu and Zhu have faced criticism from conservative political figures and right-wing media in the United States over their change of sporting allegiance. **MDT/AP**

AD



HOLIDAY RENTAL HOUSES

Lugar das Letras Casa de Gouvães

The houses are set in the heart of the World Heritage Site of the Douro Valley and its famous winery landscape where the world's Ports are produced. Both restored relics overlooking the Rio Douro, these eight rooms houses have been blessed with gorgeous wooden floors, plush queen beds and marble baths; the best have dazzling river views.

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A POEM TO MACAU
BY NOBEL PRIZE WINNER KAZUO ISHIGURO

BEIJING 2022

Chen flips, spins way to world-record score at Olympics

BERNIE WILSON, BEIJING

NATHAN Chen flipped, whirled and even punched his way to a world-record score in the men's figure skating short program at the Beijing Olympics.

Next up for the Salt Lake City native: an expected and long-awaited coronation as Olympic champion.

Chen made history in a historic venue yesterday, crushing the world record with a score of 113.97 at Capital Indoor Stadium, site of the 1971 ping pong diplomacy matches between the United States and China.

Chen shined on a day when the U.S. women's hockey team lost 4-2 to rival Canada in the preliminary round and San Francisco native Eileen Gu brushed aside a torrent of hate on social media and won the gold medal in freestyle big air while representing China.

Dressed in his typical, suave black-and-white suit, Chen performed perhaps his favorite program to La Boheme, the 1960s standard by the French-Armenian singer Charles Aznavour. When it was over, he had confidently made up for his poor short program four years at the Pyeongchang Games.

Opening with a perfect quad flip, the 22-year-old Chen breezed through his often-vexing triple axel and then drilled his quad flip-triple toe loop combination. He skated to a stop and, in a rare show of emotion, punched the air with his right fist.

"I was just elated," Chen said. "At the last Olympics, both of the short programs didn't go the way I wanted. To finally get an opportunity to skate the programs I wanted feels really good."

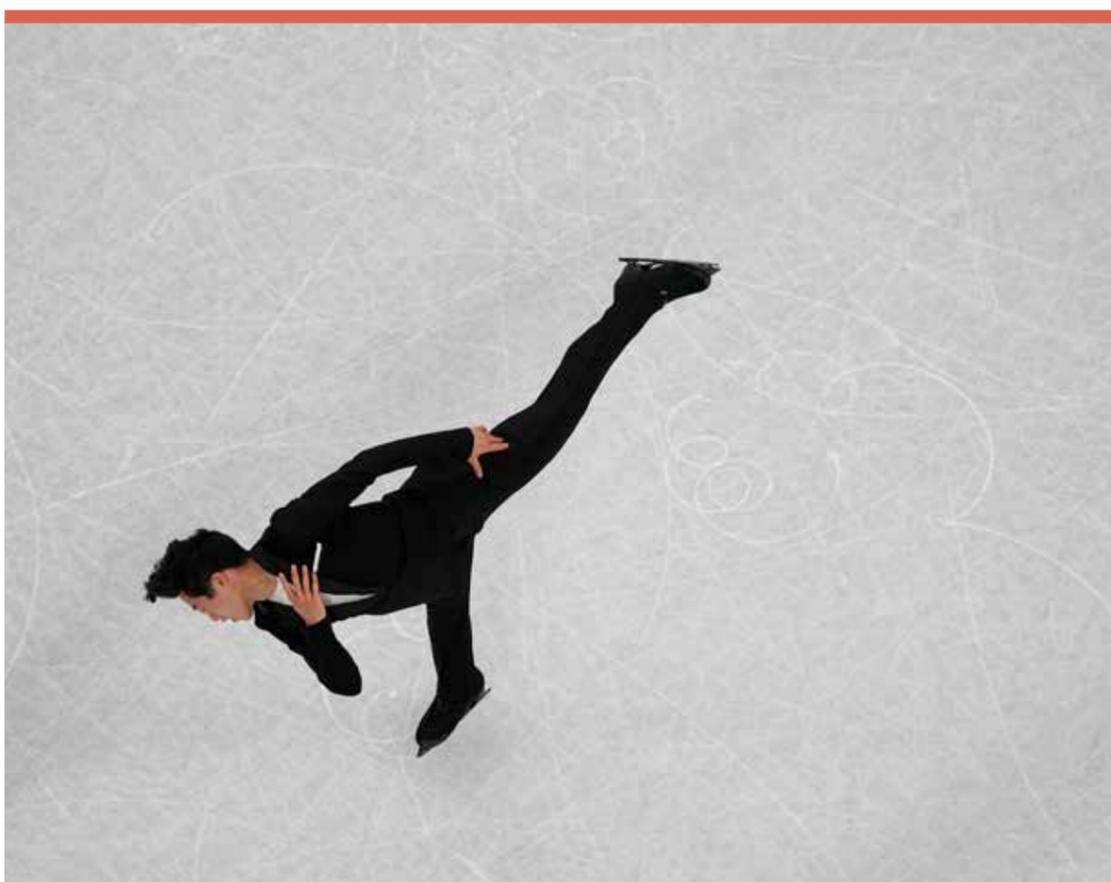
Chen's score was nearly two points more than the previous world record set by two-time defending Olympic champion Yuzuru Hanyu. To win the gold medal, Chen needs to hold off Japanese rivals Yuma Kagiyama and Shoma Uno in Thursday's free skate. Hanyu finished eighth Tuesday.

FREE-THINKING FREESTYLE SKIER

American-born Eileen Gu struck back at her many critics by winning the gold medal in the debut of freestyle big air and then defiantly answering questions about why she spurned Team USA to represent China at the Beijing Games.

The 18-year-old Gu is an American citizen whose mother is Chinese. Gu estimates she has spent

AP PHOTO



Nathan Chen of the United States

at least a quarter of her life in China. She sided with China in 2019, saying she wants to encourage girls and women to take up winter sports.

"If people don't believe me, if people don't like me, then that's their loss," Gu said. "They're never going to win the Olympics."

Gu stuck the best performance of her life at Big Air Shougang,

where the ski hill is set among the imposing cooling towers and smokestacks of a closed steel mill. She landed a double cork 1620 for the first time in her career in her final turn to stun Tess Ledeux of France. It's a move in which skiers spin 4 1/2 times while rotating twice off-axis while 20-some feet in the air.

"I want all the girls to break their

boundaries," she said in Chinese, via an interpreter. "I want them to think if Eileen can do it, I can do it."

While saying through an interpreter that Gu is an "amazing athlete" who is "extremely competitive," Ledeux groused that her rival "got lucky" because she had been practicing at Big Air Shougang for weeks, a benefit of competing for the host country.

Gu was having none of that, either.

"I'm not trying to keep everyone happy," Gu responded. "I'm an 18-year-old girl out here living my best life. Like, I'm having a great time."

Tennis player Peng Shuai, who has rarely appeared publicly since accusing a Chinese official of sexual assault, was in the stands.

HOCKEY SHOWDOWN

Barring a major upset, women's hockey powerhouses Canada and the United States are expected to meet for the women's hockey gold medal final next week.

So when the defending Olympic champions from the United States were beaten 4-2 by their biggest rival, it was largely academic, although it did give Canada the top seed entering the playoff round.

Canada rallied from a one-goal deficit by scoring three goals in a span of 5 minutes, 25 seconds in the second period. Brienne Jenner scored twice for the Canadians.

"They're a good hockey team. They're going to make plays, but I think we answered really well tonight," Jenner said.

U.S. coach Joel Johnson said the Americans need to be able to withstand momentum shifts, a lesson it needs to learn before the expected gold medal showdown.

"I thought we carried all the momentum, and all of a sudden we just kind of forgot our situation a bit," Johnson said about Canada's second-period surge.

Canada (4-0) and the United States (3-1) have been fierce rivals since before women's hockey made its Olympic debut at the 1998 Nagano Games, when the Americans beat the Canadians in the gold medal game. Canada won gold in the next four Olympics before losing a 3-2 shootout to the Americans in 2018. **MDT/AP**

SNAPSHOT

OLYMPIC PRESS CAN GRAB HIGH-TECH NAPS

WITH nowhere really to go, journalists inside the Beijing Olympics bubble are encouraged to sleep on the job.

They can't visit the village rooms where competitors are staying, but they can try out the high-tech beds athletes are sleeping in. Several corridors at the main media center are lined with "sleep rest cabins," small pods that open with a QR code and contain beds.

The beds can be adjusted by remote control and even have a "zero-gravity mode" meant to reduce stress on the body — you don't quite float, but it's pretty comfortable.

Some journalists nap in the cabins, while others in search of a quiet — and private — place to write bring their computers.

Zhao Yufeng, a spokesperson for cabin manufacturer Keeson Technology Corp., said 30 to 40 people a day have been using them so far.

"We've placed sleeping cabins here for journalists to give an environment to work, rest and get relaxed," she said.

Not everyone was excited about napping in a see-through box in full view of anyone walking by, though.

Guido Santevecchi, an Italian journalist, said the pods reminded him of something you might find in a psychiatric ward.

Given the already heavy potential mental health toll of living inside the Olympic bubble with major restrictions on movement, "I would rather avoid entering there," he said. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

**WASHINGTON
 RENEGES ON
 TAIWAN PLEDGES**

How far is Washington willing to push the envelope on the question of Taiwan? This is not just a grave concern for China, since Taiwan is an integral part of its territory. The answer is also of great consequence for the entire world as it will have a direct bearing on China-US relations, the world's most important bilateral relationship, which in turn will influence the development of the world situation in almost all aspects.

The America COMPETES Act of 2022 that the US House of Representatives passed on Friday is therefore a disappointment to China and worrying for the world, as it contains a considerable part dedicated to promoting ties between Taiwan and the United States, including advocating the renaming of the "Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office" as the "Taiwan Representative Office in the United States".

It also requires the US to assist Taiwan in developing its asymmetrical defense capabilities and help it engage with the world through "meaningful participation" in international organizations such as the World Health Organization as well as shore up technology and trade cooperation between the two sides.

If Washington really puts what the bill requires into practice, it will be a far cry from the pledges it made in the three communiqués that are the basis for China-US relations. In these it pledged that it would abide by the one-China principle and stop any form of official dealings with Taiwan.

What is even more worrisome is the fact that US President Joe Biden welcomed the passage of the act in a statement, describing it as a critical vote for the country to outcompete China and the rest of the world in the 21st century. "America can't afford to wait," he stressed.

However, he and other US politicians need to bear in mind that the US will have to pay a price if it reneges on the pledges it made in the three joint communiqués.

Washington should be clear about the redline that Beijing has drawn on the Taiwan question, as Beijing has made no bones about the Taiwan question and asserted that it will never tolerate any interference in its internal affairs and go to any length to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

China has not changed its stance and will do everything it can to seek peaceful reunification of the island with the motherland, but will never promise to give up the use of military force if necessary.

The US will certainly bear the blame if that worst-possible scenario occurs.

**RETIRED POPE ASKS PARDON FOR ABUSE,
 BUT ADMITS NO WRONGDOING**

**THE
 BUZZ**

Retired Pope Benedict XVI asked forgiveness yesterday for any "grievous faults" in his handling of clergy sex abuse cases, but denied any personal or specific wrongdoing after an independent report criticized his actions in four cases while he was archbishop of Munich, Germany.

"I have had great responsibilities in the Catholic Church. All the greater is my pain for the abuses and the errors that occurred in those different places during the time of my mandate," the retired pope said.

But Benedict's lack of a personal apology or any admission of gui-

It was likely to rile survivors and further complicate efforts by German bishops re-establish credibility with the faithful. Demands for accountability have only increased as the church has come to terms with decades of sexual abuse by priests and cover-up by their bishops.

Benedict, 94, was responding to a Jan. 20 report from a German law firm that had been commissioned by the German Catholic Church to look into how cases of sexual abuse were handled in the Munich archdiocese between 1945 and 2019. Benedict, the former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, headed the archdiocese from 1977 to 1982.

OSCARS 2022

**'POWER OF THE DOG'
 TOPS NOMS WITH 12;
 'DUNE' NABS 10**

**JAKE COYLE, MDT/AP
 FILM WRITER**

JANE Campion's gothic western "The Power of the Dog" led nominations to the 94th Academy Awards, where streaming services more than ever before swept over Hollywood's top honors.

Campion's Netflix film landed a leading 12 nominations in nominations announced last night, including nods for best picture, best director and all of its top actors: Benedict Cumberbatch, Kirsten Dunst, Jesse Plemons and Kodi Smit-McPhee.

Campion, a nominee for 1993's "The Piano," became the first woman to ever be nominated twice for best director. Last year, Chloé Zhao became just the second woman to ever win the award. Campion's director of photography, Ari Wegner, also became the second woman ever nominated for best cinematography. The only previous woman to do so was Rachel Morrison for "Mudbound" in 2018.

Denis Villeneuve's "Dune" followed closely behind with 10 nominations spread out largely in the technical categories as the academy gravitated to the craft of Villeneuve's science-fiction epic.

The nominees for best picture are: "Belfast"; "The Power of the Dog"; "Dune"; "Drive My Car"; "West Side Story"; "Don't Look Up"; "Licorice Pizza"; "CODA"; "King Richard"; "Nightmare Alley."

Best picture has never been won by a film from a streaming service, but half of the 10 nominees came from streaming services. This year, the odds may be better than ever that a streamer will finally barrel through one of the last walls of Hollywood tradition.

Apple notched its first best-picture nomination with the deaf drama "CODA." Netflix backed both "The Power of the Dog" and Adam McKay's apocalyptic comedy "Don't



Benedict Cumberbatch and Jesse Plemons in a scene from "The Power of the Dog"

Look Up." And both "King Richard" and "Dune" (despite the protests of its director) debuted simultaneously in theaters and on HBO Max.

In pulling from films released in myriad ways, the Oscar nominations reflected the tumult of pandemic year for Hollywood that began with many theaters shuttered and ended with Sony Pictures' "Spider-Man: No Way Home" smashing box-office records. Spidey, though, landed only a single nomination, for visual effects.

A largely virtual awards season added some unpredictability to this year's nominations, which were announced by actors Leslie Jordan and Tracee Ellis Ross. This year's Oscars will be delayed to make way for the Olympics, the Oscars will be held March 27 and will return to their usual venue, the Dolby Theatre.

And there were surprises all around. Lady Gaga, star of "House of Gucci," was overlooked in the uber-competitive best actress category. Nominated instead were Jessica Chastain, "The Eyes of Tammy Faye"; Olivia Colman, "The Lost Daughter"; Penélope Cruz, "Parallel Mothers"; Nicole Kidman, "Being the Ricardos"; and Kristen Stewart for "Spencer" — whose hopes for her first Oscar nomination had seemed dashed after she was snubbed by the Screen Actors Guild.

"Drive My Car," Ryusuke Hamaguchi's masterful

three-hour Japanese drama, scored major nominations including best picture, best director and best adapted screenplay. The academy, which in 2020 made Bong Joon Ho's Korean thriller "Parasite" the best picture winner, has drifted overseas in recent years, as more international members have been added to help diversify the organization.

The nominees for best actor are: Will Smith, "King Richard"; Javier Bardem, "Being the Ricardos"; Benedict Cumberbatch, "The Power of the Dog"; Andrew Garfield, "Tick, Tick ... Boom!" and Denzel Washington, "The Tragedy of Macbeth."

The nominees for best supporting actress are: Jessie Buckley, "The Lost Daughter"; Ariana DeBose, "West Side Story"; Judi Dench, "Belfast"; Kirsten Dunst, "The Power of the Dog" and Aunjanue Ellis, "King Richard."

The nominees for best supporting actor are: Ciarán Hinds, "Belfast"; Troy Kotsur, "CODA"; Kodi Smit-McPhee, "The Power of the Dog"; Jesse Plemons, "The Power of the Dog" and J.K. Simmons, "Being the Ricardos."

Nominees for best director are: Paul Thomas Anderson, "Licorice Pizza"; Kenneth Branagh, "Belfast"; Jane Campion, "The Power of the Dog"; Steven Spielberg, "West Side Story" and Ryusuke Hamaguchi, "Drive My Car." **MDT/AP**



North Korea plans to increase its government spending on pandemic measures by one-third this year to carry out leader Kim Jong Un's calls for a more "advanced and people-oriented" virus response, state media said. The budget plans were passed during a session of Pyongyang's rubber-stamp parliament on Sunday and Monday, which came weeks after the North tentatively restarted its railroad freight traffic with China following two years of extreme border closures and economic decay. **More on p7**



Portugal Vodafone Portugal, one of the country's leading telecommunications companies, said yesterday it had been hacked though no confidential customer data was compromised. The company said in a statement that "a deliberate and malicious cyberattack aimed at causing damage and disruption" was underway.

Poland's Health Ministry said yesterday that the March 1 deadline for full vaccination of teachers and so-called uniformed services is being pushed back indefinitely because it cannot be met. Last year the government said teachers, medics, police, armed forces and the firefighters need to be inoculated by March 1 if they want to perform their jobs.

Ugandan authorities are seeking to legally mandate vaccines in draft legislation aimed at boosting the East African country's drive to inoculate more people against Covid-19. The proposed bill, which is subject to changes as it faces scrutiny by a parliamentary health committee, calls for a six-month jail term for failure to comply with vaccination requirements during disease outbreaks.