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**DOZENS OF DRIVERS ARE REQUESTING THE AUTHORITY TO UNLOCK THEIR TAXI METERS THAT WERE SUSPENDED FOR FAILING TO PAY SERVICE FEES**

**MOODY'S DOWNGRADES SJM AS CONCERNS FOR FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT GROW**

**THE IC DEFENDED THAT THE UNDISCLOSED PURCHASE OF CHIO MANSION WAS FACILITATED BY THE INVOLVEMENT OF PERSONAL PRIVACY PROTECTIONS**

**Indonesia** Eleven people drowned after being dragged by big waves on a beach in Indonesia's East Java province despite warnings to avoid the sea, officials said yesterday. They were part of a group of 24 people from several villages who took part in a local ritual that involves swimming in the ocean on Saturday night, officials from the Surabaya Search and Rescue Agency said. A 2-year-old girl was among the 13 survivors at the Payangan beach in Jember district, the officials said. They were being treated at a health clinic.



**Afghanistan's** former president yesterday called a White House order to unfreeze \$3.5 billion in Afghan assets held in the U.S. for families of 9/11 victims an atrocity against the Afghan people. Former President Hamid Karzai at a packed news conference sought the help of Americans, particularly the families of the thousands killed in the 9/11 terrorist attacks, to press President Joe Biden to rescind last week's order. He called it "unjust and unfair," saying Afghans have also been victims of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden.



**US** F-22 fighter jets arrived in the United Arab Emirates on Saturday, part of an American defense response to recent missile attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels targeting the country. The Raptors landed at Al-Dhafra Air Base in Abu Dhabi, which hosts some 2,000 U.S. troops. American soldiers there launched Patriot interceptor missiles in response to the Houthi attacks last month, the first time U.S. troops have fired the system in combat since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

More on backpage

# MORE ROOMS, PLEASE!

**A civil servant group is calling on gov't for sufficient quarantine hotel rooms for student returnees; however, MGTO admitted it has become difficult for hoteliers to agree on converting their premises**



**PANDEMIC OPENS A WINDOW ON EXISTING PROBLEMS: CE**



**TOURISM NUMBER OF VISITORS CONTINUES TO RISE AFTER CNY HOLIDAYS**

### RETURNEE FROM PORTUGAL CLASSIFIED AS ASYMPTOMATIC FOR COVID

A local resident who arrived in Macau February 9 after travelling from Portugal via Munich and Singapore, has tested positive for Covid-19 upon his arrival on February 11, health authorities have announced. The 53-year-old male resident was inoculated with three doses of the mRNA vaccine in March, April and November 2021. He tested negative for Covid-19 twice on February 9 and February 10, respectively. However, on February 11, he tested positive. The resident was placed in the Coloane Public Health Clinical Centre for isolation. The man shows no symptoms of the virus. He is considered an asymptomatic imported case and as a result is not included in Macau's confirmed case statistics.

### FINALE FIREWORKS DISPLAY TOMORROW

Themed as "Myriad of fireworks on Lantern Festival," the finale fireworks show will light up the sky above the sea overlooked by Macau Tower at 9 p.m. on tomorrow. Various special fireworks in the patterns of heart, colorful brocade crown, comet and more will add another doze of sweetness on this heartwarming day, according to a statement issued by the Macao Government Tourism Office.

# AIRPORT RECORDS 29,000 PASSENGERS IN FIRST FIVE DAYS OF LUNAR NEW YEAR

RENATO MARQUES

**D**URING the first five days of the Chinese New Year holiday the Macau International Airport (MIA) recorded passenger traffic of over 29,000, the MIA company has reported.

While the figure represents an increase of 208% in passenger traffic compared to the same period last year, it accounts for only 16% of passenger traffic recorded in 2019, prior to the pandemic.

Nevertheless, the significant increase in the number of passengers has also contributed to a higher number of flights recorded in the same period – 270 – accounting for a 75% increase year-on-year when compared to the same period of last year.

Although the number of passengers is still considered low, the significant increase in procedural requirements has led to the MIA deploying a high number of staff members to safeguard the airport operation and the pandemic prevention gateway.

The airport continues to implement a pandemic prevention strategy guarding against impor-



ted cases and preventing a resurgence of the outbreak at home, which includes a closed-loop area, nucleic acid test sampling points, as well as the undergoing of continuous disinfection work and temperature checking points at all airport entrances.

According to an MIA statement, passengers conducted themselves in good order at the airport during the pandemic prevention period, and people showed understanding and were cooperative with the measu-

res in force for checking-in and boarding procedures.

In a separate statement, the MIA also advised that the local airport has been awarded by the Airport Council International (ACI) with the "The Voice of the Customer" recognition award.

This recognition acknowledges the efforts in gathering passengers' feedback to better understand their needs during 2021.

Over the past ten years, MIA has been a participant in the

ACI's Airport Service Quality program, which works as a measurement and benchmarking tool for airports, helping to improve operational efficiency and performance.

Due to the pandemic, the aviation industry contracted rapidly and so, in 2020, MIA suspended participation in the program.

After a slow recovery, participation in the program resumed in 2021, to which this recognition relates.

# MGTO: Visitors continue to rise after CNY

JING WU

**T**HE director of the Macao Government Tourism Office, Helena de Senna Fernandes, has said that the number of visitors continues to rise following the Chinese New Year holidays, with 28,000 arrivals on Saturday.

Speaking to TDM Chinese Radio, the official said that the overall Chinese New Year was busier than that of the same period last year.

"We saw more overnight visitors, which is believed to be a boost to all trades and industries [...] We hope to attract more visitors to Macau once the pandemic in neighbouring cities has stabilised," Senna Fernandes added.



Visitor arrivals for the first seven days of the Chinese New Year holiday totaled 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), the highest

single-day number of visitors during last week's Spring Festival Golden Week.

The overall figures also showed a 25.4% increase from last year's Spring Festival, while average tourist arrivals totaled to 16,242 during the week-long holiday.

Information provided by the industry last week noted that the average occupancy rate of hotel establishments during the Spring Festival Golden Week was 63.8%, an increase of 15.2 percentage points over last year's Spring Festival figures.

Speaking to the press last week, managing director of SJM, Angela Leong, said she was satisfied with gaming reve-

nue and hotel occupancy rates during the Chinese New Year period, especially after the first and second days of the Lunar New Year, when some hotels were 100% occupied and some were 60 to 70% occupied.

Analysts are expecting slightly higher gaming revenue for February following the increase in visitor numbers to the region during the Lunar New Year, which will likely be up 29% from January.

Last week, Linda Chen, vice-chairman and chief operating officer of Wynn Macau, said that, during the recent Chinese New Year Golden Week holiday, the group saw a year-on-year increase in visitor arrivals to Macau, with Wynn's hotel occupancy rate reaching "99% and almost full, in line with expectations."

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# Civil servant group calls for more quarantine hotel rooms

ANTHONY LAM

A civil servant group has issued a letter to the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture to call for sufficient quarantine hotel rooms for student returnees from Hong Kong.

Represented by lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho, who is also executive director of the group, the Macau Civil Servant's Association (ATFPM) sent a letter on the matter to Secretary Elsie Ao leong.

As neighboring Hong Kong levied stricter measures and with universities there reportedly forcing stay-in students out, many Macau students are attempting to return to Macau.

In the regular health press briefing last week, questions on the matter were raised. The authorities said that work was being done in the hopes of finding a solution.

In the letter, the ATFPM pointed out that all quarantine hotel rooms are fully booked until mi-



d-March. Without a valid room booking, these students will not be allowed to board any means of transport headed for Macau.

The group added that the lack of rooms arose as early as January. It cited the current situation in Hong Kong to justify the need for more quarantine hotel

rooms, claiming Macau residents working or studying abroad should be able to return to Macau at any time.

Meanwhile, after a public event, Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), told the press that

it has become more difficult for hoteliers to agree on converting their premises into quarantine facilities, as tourist arrivals have improved during the Lunar New Year period.

She disclosed that the MGTO has so far received 60 calls seeking help. Inter-departmental

work is being conducted in search of a solution to the problem, Senna Fernandes added.

"We are working in collaboration with the Health Bureau (SSM) and the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) to explore a possible solution to the matter," Senna Fernandes said. However, she was frank in admitting that a short-term solution may not be feasible.

"We have seen gradual [booking] revival recently, which boosted the demand for hotel rooms, and I'm talking about ordinary hotel rooms," she said. "The overall hotel occupancy rate reached 60% over the past holidays."

The MGTO head admitted that the rising occupancy rate facilitated by regular tourists or staycation-goers has discouraged hotels from becoming quarantine facilities.

Furthermore, she said, the strict requirements upon quarantine facilities have also made the introduction of new quarantine hotels more difficult.

"Many factors have to be taken into account. The SSM needs to inspect the ventilation system before giving [the] green or red light," Senna Fernandes said. "The 'closed-loop' management mechanism is also not attractive to some security guards."

## DOZENS OF TAXI DRIVERS PROTEST AT DSAT, URGE AUTHORITIES TO RESTART TAXI METERS

SEVERAL dozen taxi drivers participated in a protest at the Transport Bureau (DSAT), requesting the authority to unlock their taxi meters, which were suspended as some drivers failed to pay service fees.

About 70 taxi drivers gathered at the DSAT building over the weekend, which prompted the security branch to deploy numerous officers and vehicles for security purposes.

The current type of taxi meter approved by the government, and thus used in all taxis, is the object of complaints from drivers about its purported user-unfriendliness and the mandatory service fees.

According to the report by local Chinese media outlet Cheng Pou, a taxi driver claimed that more than 100 taxi meters have been suspended, resulting in the drivers not being able to work.

Another driver told the same media outlet that 600 meters have been suspen-



ded, affecting more than 1,000 drivers. They complained about not being able to earn income.

Despite the fact that a local court of law has ruled in favor of the service provider of the taxi meters in regards to the service fees, the drivers slammed the fees for being "unreasonable."

The taxi drivers, in the meantime, also disputed

the legality of the service fees. They said that, as per their understanding, the service provider has no legal grounds to levy the charge.

DSAT was also accused of not addressing the requests from the drivers, who urged the authority's intervention in the matter, so that they may restart work and earn an income. **AL**

## SECRET PURCHASE OF ANTIQUE MANSION BACKED BY PRIVACY PROTECTIONS

ANTHONY LAM

THE heretofore undisclosed purchase of the Chio Mansion was facilitated by the involvement of personal privacy protections, Leong Wai Man, president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), has recently said.

Located on a narrow alley near the Senado Square, the mansion was earlier secretly purchased by the IC. The move was only unearthed by the press when a parliamentary committee reviewing public spending discussed the purchase.

This was amidst many questions raised about the background of the mansion and the fashion in which the IC conducted the purchase.

Besides Leong citing personal privacy of the seller as the reason for non-disclosure, she also claimed that the Chio family, made up of generations of intellectuals, have made major contributions



to Macau.

She stressed that the decision was made legally, backed with data collected by the IC's Cultural Heritage Department. In addition, she pledged that more information will be disclosed at a latter date.

Meanwhile, on the preservation of the site of the former Iek Long Firecracker Factory, Leong disclosed that works have not yet

commenced. For the time being, the bureau is clearing various objects from the site.

Once the renovation is concluded, the plot will have green spaces, tourist information counters, cafés and cultural facilities.

The main entrance to the site, when open to the public, will be located next to the entrance of the Chun Su Mei Parking Lot.



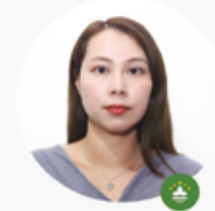
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Property of the Week



**Nova Taipa Gardens**  
**HKD 12,880,000** 2,500 ft<sup>2</sup> 4 2 1

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

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



SCAN ME  
Ref: 1811 5570

Property Hotlist



**Rua Dos Clerigos**  
**HKD 80,000,000**

2,874 ft<sup>2</sup>



SCAN ME

Ref: 2202 6100



**Loi Fu**  
**HKD 12,000/mth**

710 ft<sup>2</sup>

2   
1



SCAN ME

Ref: 2112 1003



**Taipa Village**  
**HKD 6,800/mth**

660 ft<sup>2</sup>

1   
1



SCAN ME

Ref: n/a

More Listings

For Sale

- [Taipa] Lun Vo 2 1 770 ft<sup>2</sup> **HKD 4,800,000** Ref: 2107 6001
- [Taipa] Vai Cheong 2 1 600 ft<sup>2</sup> **HKD 4,500,000** Ref: 2112 6001
- [Taipa] Taipa Village 4 2 1,404 ft<sup>2</sup> **HKD 7,980,000** Ref: 1909 6006
- [Taipa] Chun U Villa 4 3 1,979 ft<sup>2</sup> **HKD 12,380,000** Ref: 2104 6001
- [Taipa] Manhattan 4 2 2,305 ft<sup>2</sup> **HKD 17,980,000** Ref: 1807 5558

For Rent

- [Taipa] Kingsville 3 2 1,510 ft<sup>2</sup> **HKD 14,900/mth** Ref: 2108 1002
- [Macau] One Central 2 2 1,269 ft<sup>2</sup> **HKD 16,500/mth** Ref: 2005 1002
- [Taipa] Chun U Villa 4 3 1,979 ft<sup>2</sup> **HKD 16,500/mth** Ref: 2104 1001
- [Taipa] Manhattan 3 2 1,626 ft<sup>2</sup> **HKD 17,500/mth** Ref: 2003 1001
- [Taipa] BCM building office 4,100 ft<sup>2</sup> **HKD 85,000/mth** Ref: 2102 1001

PROPERTY OF THE MONTH



**Tai Nin**  
**HKD 3,590,000**

720 ft<sup>2</sup>

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Ref: 2110 6001

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GAMING

# Moody's downgrades SJM as concerns for financial management grow

LYNZY VALLES

**M**OODY'S Investors Service has downgraded SJM Holdings Limited's corporate family rating (CFR) to Ba2 from Ba1, reflecting the gaming operator's delays in "its execution of its refinancing plan, which raises some concern over its financial and liquidity management."

According to Sean Hwang, a Moody's assistant vice president and analyst, "The review for downgrade reflects the fact that SJM's refinancing risk will remain elevated until its near-term maturities are fully refinanced. A further downgrade is possible if SJM fails to secure long-term financing to address the maturities in a timely manner."

In a statement, the financial services firm stated that SJM has been seeking to execute new secured loan and revolver facilities of HKD19 billion to refinance its existing facilities, which will fall due on February 28, 2022, and whose balance stood at approxi-



mately HKD13 billion at the end of 2021.

However, the execution of the new facilities has been delayed due to pending regulatory approvals.

As the gaming operator is arranging for a maturity extension on the existing loans in case of a further regulatory delay, Moody expects SJM to be able to extend

the maturity by one year, considering its quality assets in the SAR, and its long-standing banking relationships.

"Moody's also expects SJM to eventually obtain the necessary approvals to execute its new banking facilities. Nevertheless, the absence of an executed refinancing arrangement at a time when the large debt maturity is

forthcoming raises a degree of concern over the company's liquidity management," the firm added.

At the same time, the backed senior unsecured ratings on the bonds issued by Champion Path Holdings Limited and guaranteed by SJM have been downgraded to Ba3 from Ba2 by Moody's.

The ratings remain under re-

view for further downgrade.

Meanwhile, the rating action also reflects increasing operational uncertainties driven by the slow recovery of gaming revenue in Macau in the face of the ongoing outbreak in Greater China.

With that, Moody's has also lowered its 2022 forecast for the city's mass-market gross gaming revenue to around half of 2019 levels and expects a substantial recovery to take place only during 2023. The expected slower market recovery will also lead to a slower ramp-up of SJM's new property, Grand Lisboa Palace, the firm added.

Based on these assumptions, Moody's expects SJM's adjusted debt to EBITDA ratio to be around 4.0x in 2023, which positions SJM more appropriately in the Ba2 rating category.

For Moody's, an issue rated Ba2 is judged to be speculative and is subject to substantial credit risk. The modifier '2' indicates that the obligation ranks in the middle of its generic rating category — that is, one notch below Ba1 and one notch above Ba3.

AD



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Notice

First General Scientific Research Funding Application of 2022

- I. Objectives  
The Science and Technology Development Fund (FDCT) aims to concur with the objectives of the science and technology development policy of the Macao Special Administrative Region, and provide funding for projects that would enhance Macao SAR's science research capability, innovativeness and competitiveness.
- II. Targets
  1. Local universities, colleges and their R&D centers;
  2. Laboratories or entities engaged in R&D activities in Macao;
  3. Local private non-profit organizations;
  4. Commercial enterprises and entrepreneurs registered in Macao and engaged in R&D activities;
  5. People engaged in R&D activities in Macao.
- III. Eligible Projects
  1. Projects facilitating the popularization and deepening of scientific and technological knowledge;
  2. Projects facilitating enterprises' improvement in productivity and competitiveness;
  3. Projects facilitating the research and development, promotion and innovation of industrial development;
  4. Projects facilitating the transformation of R&D achievements
  5. Projects facilitating foreign scientific and technological cooperation;
  6. Technology transfer projects promoting the city's economic development as a priority;
  7. Patent application.
- IV. Project Types  
Applicants shall select one of the following project types for their projects, defined based on the classification of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
  1. Fundamental research: projects undertaken to obtain new knowledge of the basic theories of phenomena and observable facts;
  2. Applied research: innovative projects with specific aims, undertaken to promote the application of the results of fundamental research.
  3. Experiment and development: projects with practical applications, undertaken for the introduction of useful products, materials, devices, techniques, systems, services, etc. They include cooperation projects between industry, academic and research sectors as well as enterprises' R&D and clinical research projects.
- V. Approved Amounts:
  1. Applications for less than or equal to MOP1,000,000.00 (One million Patacas) (reviewed by Administrative Committee)
  2. Applications for more than MOP 1,000,000.00 (One million Patacas) (reviewed by Trustee Committee)
- VI. Application period:  
14<sup>th</sup> February, 2022 to 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2022
- VII. Application Method  
Please apply through FDCT's online funding application system with the required documents listed in Article 6 of the Financial Aid Grant Regulation, approved as per the Chief Executive's Dispatch No. 64/2021 published in the Official Gazette, No.18 dated May 4<sup>th</sup> 2021. (website: www.fdct.gov.mo)  
Office Address: Room K, 11/F, Macau Square, No.43-53A Avenida do Infante D. Henrique, Macao. Tel.: 28788777
- VIII. Review Criteria  
The review is conducted according to the Financial Aid Grant Regulation approved as per the Chief Executive's Dispatch No. 64/2021.

President of FDCT Administrative Committee,  
Chan Wan Hei  
2022 / 02 / 11



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## CROSS-BORDER CASE COMPLETED VIA ONLINE LEGAL SERVICE

JING WU

**T**HE Guangdong High Court has announced that a Macau resident has successfully completed a cross-border filing of a case through an authorized witness pass service, a new online legal service launched in Enping People's Court, Jiangmen, according to media reports.

A local resident, surnamed Lam, filed a lawsuit against a developer for delay in providing a refund for a property in Enping.

Lam purchased a property costing RMB546,600 in Enping in July 2019. However, on January 8, 2021, the parties signed a release agreement under which the developer would only refund the buyer a total amount of RMB493,400.

According to the announcement, Lam is a Macau resident and holds a Hong Kong and Macau Resident Permit for traveling to and from the mainland; she is thus eligible for online authorized witness pass services.

The authorized witness pass is a software service developed specifically for online cross-border litigation through which three parties, including the court, the client and the lawyer/agent, are appointed to witness the application for authorization online.

As announced by the central government, the court's authorized witness pass is not only applicable to Hong Kong and Macau residents, but also provides cross-border litigation services to parties holding documents such as Taiwan Resident Permits, Taiwan Resident Travel Permits, Permanent Resident Identity Cards for Foreigners and Ordinary Passports.



## PANDEMIC OPENS A WINDOW ON EXISTING PROBLEMS

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted some extant structural problems in Macau, making them visible to society and allowing the community to take action to address the issues, the Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng has said, quoting President Xi Jinping, during a speech the CE gave late last week during the Macao Chamber of Commerce's Spring Dinner.

"In December last year, on the occasion of my visit to Beijing to present the annual work report, President Xi Jinping stated that this epidemic allowed all sectors of Macau society to better understand the problems existing in the economic structure, also prompting an in-depth reflection on the direction of Macau's development," Ho said, adding that such acknowledgment will contribute to the acceleration of local economic diversification.

Anticipating the many challenges of the year ahead, namely those related to the pandemic, the CE also noted that it is "in difficult times that courage and perseverance reveal themselves," calling on everyone to continue to pursue the traditional values of excellence, "love for the Motherland and Macau," and in defense of the "One country, two systems" principle as the path to success in overcoming all the difficulties.

"The year 2022 brings new opportunities but also new



challenges. On one hand, due to the great uncertainties that remain regarding the evolution of the epidemic and the economic recovery in global terms, Macau will continue to face an unstable and volatile environment for development," said Ho.

"On the other hand, the holding this year of the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, the implementation of the country's 14th Five-Year Plan, the rapid establishment of the new development pattern of 'dual circulation' [strategy] and [...] promoting

the construction of the Intensive Cooperation Zone between Guangdong and Macau in Hengqin, will give strong impetus to Macau's economic and social development," Ho added.

According to Ho, the city should keep its "confidence firm and our perseverance strong, work together, and hand-in-hand seize opportunities, face challenges and jointly create a new vision for Macau's development."

The CE said that local government will, in 2022, "foster a better business environment, support with exactitude, and more de-

ply, small and medium-sized enterprises, boost scientific and technological innovation, create a new regime for the introduction of qualified staff and constantly strengthen the passage of Macau development."

More opportunities will also arise from national development projects, thus the CE says that Macau must continue to push forward the construction of the Intensive Cooperation Zone and "enthusiastically participate in the construction of the Greater Bay Area and the 'Belt and Road' projects."

## Cross-border RMB tax online services open to Macau residents

**H**ENGQIN has now implemented full electronic payment of cross-border RMB taxes, social insurance premiums and tax refunds, with the services available to Macau residents, the Guangdong Provincial Tax Administration announced last week.

"As a taxation department directly servicing Hong Kong and Macau, Hengqin has also enhanced the convenience of tax payment for Hong Kong and Macau taxpayers," the authorities indicated.

Moreover, according to a report from chinanews.com, the non-



-contact processing rate of transactions involving Hong Kong and

Macau has increased from 4% to 99%.

The Guangdong Pro-

vincial Tax Administration announced last week that the first non-

-contact tax payment services in Guangdong Province are operational.

The authorities also explained that before the implementation of the non-contact tax services, less than 5% of the 1,200 invoices processed on behalf of the taxpayers in Hengqin each month were handled online.

"However, by optimizing the functions of the e-tax bureau, simplifying the entry operation at the taxpayers' end of the approved invoice types, streamlining the process of authorizing invoicing and increasing the types of invoices authorizing to the taxpayers, the online processing rate of Hengqin invoicing business was significantly increased to 96.48%," the government added. JW

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MGM Organized CNY Festivities for Seniors for 11 Consecutive Years



MGM has carried on its long-standing philanthropic tradition to give out Chinese New Year (CNY) care and blessings to the elderly for the 11th year in a row. As usual, the Golden Lion Volunteer Team offered free haircuts to seniors and conducted Spring Cleaning at several elderly centers. With an aim to foster intergenerational inclusion in society, MGM launched a new Fai Chun workshop, where local youths could unleash their artistic knack and deliver CNY blessings to seniors.



Fai Chun Workshop to Promote Intergenerational Inclusion

To start the New Year with novelty, MGM rolled out the "Heart-written CNY Couplets for Elderly" for the first time — where 15 primary six to high school students of Escola Tong Sin Tong, together with MGM volunteers, gave their festive blessings to around 50 seniors at Centro de Dia Brilho da Vida of Caritas Macau. The pupils wrote over 200 pieces of Fai Chun on the spot upon seniors' requests, creating heart-warming scenes that embody an inclusive society across generations. The students later visited some seniors' houses with other guests to brighten the interiors with Fai Chun.

Philanthropic CNY Traditions to Spread Love

Since the "Haircut for Love" initiative was launched in 2015, MGM volunteers provide complimentary haircuts for the elderly every month. In January, the Company organized haircut sessions at five elderly care centers, including Mong Ha Elderly Center of Macau Federation of Trade Unions (FAOM), Tung Sin Tong Elderly Activity Centre, Centro de Dia Brilho da Vida of Caritas Macau, Seac Pai Van Family and Community Service Center of General Union of Neighborhood Associations of Macau (UGAMM) and Day Centre "Prazer para Idosos" of Women's General Association of Macau. The event benefitted over 150 seniors, enabling them to celebrate the CNY with a refreshed look.



MGM again partnered with a small-to-medium-sized (SME) cleaning company to carry out Spring Cleaning at four elderly centers for the second consecutive year, including Mong Ha Elderly Center of FAOM, Day Centre "Prazer para Idosos" of the Women's General Association of Macau, Community Service Center of UGAMM and Tung Sin Tong Elderly Activity Centre. The activities are intended to offer a clean and sanitized environment to the elderly. Through the help of the elderly centers, the Company also gave away 500 gift bags, with daily necessities like oatmeal and noodles, prepared by Fuhong Society of Macau, to seniors in need.

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US aims to counter China by opening Solomon Islands embassy

NICK PERRY, WELLINGTON

THE U.S. says it will open an embassy in the Solomon Islands, laying out in unusually blunt terms a plan to increase its influence in the South Pacific nation before China becomes "strongly embedded."

The reasoning was explained in a State Department notification to Congress that was obtained by The Associated Press.

The plan was confirmed by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken during a Saturday visit to Fiji, part on a Pacific tour that began in Australia.

Blinken later landed in Hawaii, where he hosted the foreign ministers from Japan and South Korea to discuss the threat posed by North Korea, amid rising concerns over its recent missile tests.

The State Department said Solomon Islanders cherished their history with Americans on the battlefields of World War II, but that the U.S. was in danger of losing its preferential ties as China "aggressively seeks to engage" elite politicians and business people in the Solomon Islands.

The move comes after rioting rocked the nation of 700,000 in

November. The riots grew from a peaceful protest and highlighted long-simmering regional rivalries, economic problems and concerns about the country's increasing links with China, after it switched allegiance from the self-ruled island of Taiwan to Beijing three years ago. Rioters set fire to buildings and looted stores.

Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare survived a no-confidence vote the following month, telling lawmakers in a fiery 90-minute speech that he'd done nothing wrong and would not bow down to "the forces of evil" or to "Taiwan's agents."

The embassy announcement fits with a new Biden administration strategy for the Indo-Pacific that was announced Friday and emphasizes building partnerships with allies in the region as a way to counter China's growing influence and ambitions.

In its notification to Congress, the State Department said China had been "utilizing a familiar pattern of extravagant promises, prospective costly infrastructure loans, and potentially dangerous debt levels," when engaging with political and business leaders from the Solomon Islands. **MDT/AP**

HONG KONG REPORTS RECORD COVID-19 CASES, TIGHTENS MEASURES

HONG Kong on Saturday reported its daily record of confirmed COVID-19 cases, at 1,514.

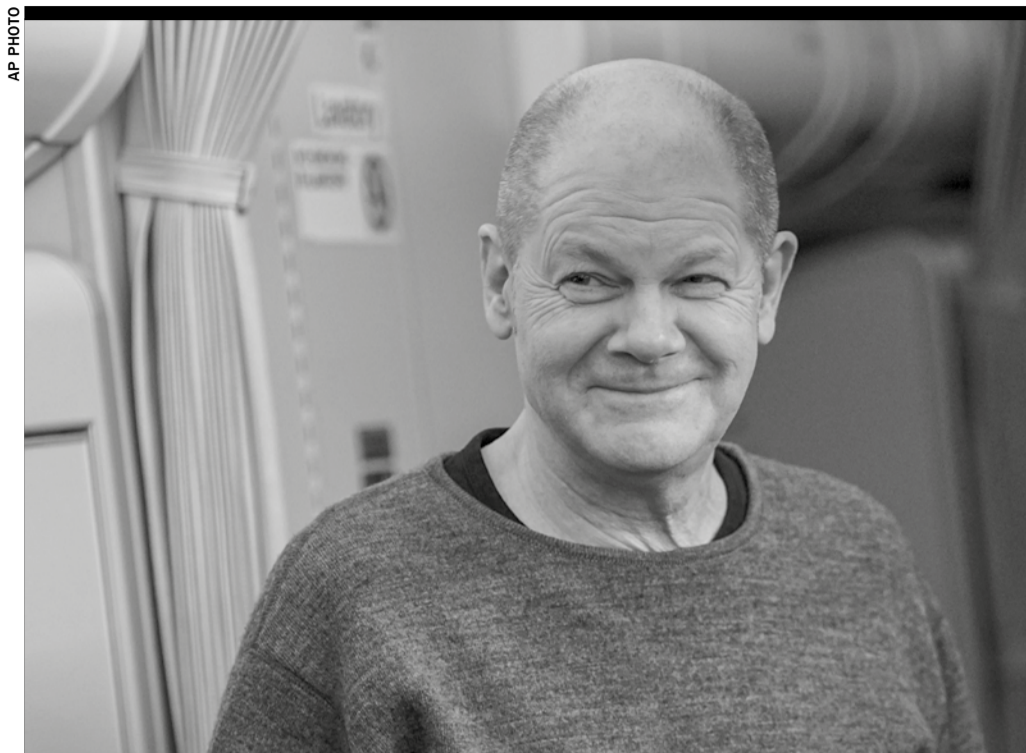
The city is struggling with the worst outbreak of the pandemic as it tries to implement China's zero-tolerance strategy using a mandatory quarantine for all travelers and mass testing.

Hong Kong imposed new restriction this week, limiting in-person gatherings to no more than two households. It plans to allow only vaccinated people in shopping malls and supermarkets. Places of worship, hair salons and other businesses were ordered to close.

Beijing officials and Chinese state media warned Hong Kong against loosening any of the measures, saying that adopting a "living with the virus" policy would overwhelm its medical systems.

Hong Kong residents have been rushing to grocery stores to stock up on vegetables and get haircuts. Authorities have imposed lockdowns on residential buildings wherever clusters of infections are identified, and had already banned public dining after 6 p.m.

Hong Kong has full vaccinated 73% of its eligible population. The number does not include children. **MDT/AP**



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz

UKRAINE CRISIS

# German leader travels to Russia, Ukraine as tensions grow

KIRSTEN GRIESHABER,  
BERLIN

**G**ERMAN Chancellor Olaf Scholz is flying to Ukraine and Russia this week in an effort to help defuse escalating tensions as Western intelligence officials warn that a Russian invasion of Ukraine is increasingly imminent and Germany has called on its citizens to leave Ukraine as quickly as possible.

Ahead of his first visits as chancellor to Kyiv today and Moscow on tomorrow for meetings with the Ukrainian and Russian presidents, Scholz has renewed his warning to Russia, as well as his advocacy of continuing diplomacy in multiple forums.

"It is our job to ensure that we prevent a war in Europe, in that we send a clear message to Russia that any military aggression would have consequences that would be very high for Russia and its prospects, and that we are united with our allies," Scholz told the German parliament's upper house on Friday.

"But at the same time that also includes using all opportunities for talks and further development," Scholz said.

Russia has concentrated more than 100,000 troops near Ukraine's border and launched a series of military maneuvers in the region, but says it has no plans to invade the nation.

Moscow wants guarantees from the West that NATO won't allow Ukraine and other former Soviet countries to join as members, and for the alliance to halt weapon deployments to Ukraine and roll back its forces from Eastern Europe. The U.S. and NATO flatly reject these demands.

Scholz has repeatedly said that Moscow would pay a "high price" in the event of an attack, but his government's refusal to supply lethal weapons to Ukraine or to spell out which sanctions it would support against Russia have drawn criticism abroad and at home and raised questions about Berlin's resolve in standing up to Russia.

Germany's reluctant position is partly rooted in its history of aggression during the 20th century when the country's own militarization in Europe during two world wars led many postwar German leaders to view any military response as a very last resort.

Despite this historic burden, experts say it is of ut-

most importance now that Scholz stresses Germany is in sync with its European and American allies, especially when he meets with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"Scholz has to convey a very clear message in Moscow, and it can really only be: There is unity and oneness in the Western alliance. There is no possibility of driving a wedge into the Western alliance, and that must be understood in Moscow. I think that's the most important message he has to convey there," said Markus Ziener, an expert with the German Marshall Fund.

"At the same time, he has to make it clear that the costs are high," Ziener added. "That's basically the message that is most likely to catch on in Moscow as well. So a military invasion of Ukraine has significant consequences for Russia."

Scholz has not explicitly said what kind of consequences or sanctions Russia would have to face if it invades Ukraine, but it is clear that the future of the controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline that seeks to bring Russian natural gas to Germany under the Baltic Sea, bypassing Ukraine, is at stake.

U.S. President Joe Biden threatened last week that the pipeline would be blocked in the case of an invasion.

That would hurt Russia economically but also cause supply problems for Germany. Construction of the pipeline has been completed, but it is not yet operating.

"Germany doesn't have much leverage, except for saying that it won't approve Nord Stream 2, which is the only political leverage," Claudia Kemfert, the head of department of energy, transport and environment at the German Institute for Economic Research, said.

"Otherwise, Germany is very susceptible to blackmail. We can't do too much. We have committed ourselves to getting the gas supplies, unlike other European countries we have not diversified our gas supplies and we have dragged our feet on the energy transition. So we did a lot of things wrong, and now we are paying the price," Kemfert added.

It is not surprising, then, that Scholz has stressed the need to keep some ambiguity about sanctions to press Russia to deescalate and has so far avoided mentioning Nord Stream 2 specifically.

"The hesitancy of Olaf Scholz obviously leads to the fact that one does not really know what the Germans actually want," Ziener said. "With regard to Nord Stream 2, I think there should have been a clear statement that if it comes to a military intervention, then Nord Stream 2 is off the table."

Asked on Friday whether Scholz will be taking any new initiative to Kyiv and Moscow or the positions that are already on the table, his spokesman, Steffen Hebestreit, replied that he will stick with "the positions that we have already set out."

Scholz can only hope that in his talks with Putin he can dissuade him from taking military action with a face-saving solution, says Ziener.

"He can actually only hope that at the end of this whole round of negotiations there will be a success, that the war is prevented. Then Scholz will be praised for his negotiating skills," Ziener added. "If not, the question will be asked: What was actually the line of the German government?" **MDT/AP**

## this day in history



### 1984 BRITISH ICE COUPLE SCORE OLYMPIC GOLD



Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean have been crowned the Olympic ice skating champions after scooping gold in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia.

More than 24 million people watched the British couple score maximum points at the Zetra Stadium for their slow, sensuous free dance performance of Ravel's Bolero.

It was an overwhelming St Valentine's Day victory for the duo in an event traditionally dominated by Soviet skaters.

The couple from Nottingham received a standing ovation from the 8,500 spectators in the arena and flowers rained onto the ice after they completed their stirring four-minute performance.

They scored 12 out of 18 possible sixes for their free dance and the maximum possible of nine sixes for artistic impression.

Torvill smiled as the gold medal was hung around her neck and Dean had to fight back tears as he stood on the Olympic podium to receive his award.

"Tonight we reached the pinnacle. I don't remember the performance at all. It just happened," Dean said.

"But I think it was the most emotional performance we have ever given. What just happened out there - getting the medals - that is what we've worked for so hard for so long."

Torvill added: "I just don't believe it. I don't think we'll get to bed tonight at all. I just want to say hello and thank the people of Nottingham."

Natalya Bestemianova and Andrei Bukin, from the Soviet Union took the silver medal while the American skaters Judy Blumberg and Michael Seibert picked up the bronze.

Princess Anne, who has been in the front row for all their Olympic performances, congratulated the pair on their victory.

The Queen also sent a telegramme commending the British couple on their outstanding achievement.

Throughout the Olympics they have picked up three sixes for the first time in the tournament's history and another four for their Original Set Pattern Dance which, with their gold finish, gives them a career total of 107 perfect marks, more than any previous skaters.

Torvill and Dean now have only their world championship to defend before starting a lucrative professional career.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Torvill and Dean's Olympic gold was followed up with a record-breaking maximum points in the world figure-skating championship shortly after.

It was their fourth world title in their amateur career.

In 1984 they were also crowned BBC Sports Personality Of The Year.

The duo went on to win the European Championships in 1994 and they made a dramatic return to the Olympic stage in Lillehammer, Norway in that same year, picking up a bronze medal.

They performed together for the last time on the Canadian Stars Ice tour in 1998 before they announced their retirement from a 23-year partnership.

A year later Torvill and Dean were awarded an OBE.

The pair were reunited on ice in 2006 when they took part in a celebrity show for ITV, *Dancing on Ice*, where they provided commentary and coaching for the contestants.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
 Accept the inevitable and continue to do your job. You will have no problem getting your point across. Now is the time to concentrate on building a strong financial future for your family.

**TAURUS**  
 Apr. 20-May. 20  
 You're ready to take action and take over. You need to keep everyone on your domestic scene too busy to complain. You are likely to be left alone if you aren't willing to bend just a little.

**GEMINI**  
 May. 21-Jun. 21  
 Don't agree to make any of those cosmetic alterations you've been considering. Try to be there for someone if they need assistance. Use your intellectual approach to get the best results.

**CANCER**  
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
 You will find an unexpected gift from someone close to you. Opportunities to make money and deepen existing relationships will be plentiful for those that take a few leaps of faith.

**LEO**  
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
 You should try to elaborate on an idea you have regarding a product or service for the home. You may be sensitive to a point of absurdity. You probably aren't getting straight answers to your questions.

**VIRGO**  
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
 Travel should be on your mind. Don't make mountains out of molehills if you want to avoid conflict. You may find that your anger stems from lending or borrowing money.

**LIBRA**  
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
 You can pick up information that will give you an edge. Coworkers may not be giving you all the pertinent information. Females may put demands or added responsibilities on you.

**SCORPIO**  
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
 People close to you may neglect your selfish needs, but they will be there when it counts. Don't take their attention for granted. You have the perfect opportunity to ask for that promotion.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
 Older family members may try to put unreasonable demands on you. Talk to those in a position of power about your intentions. Don't depend on coworkers to help; they may only hold you back.

**CAPRICORN**  
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
 Verbal abuse may lead to walkouts; don't make any rash statements you may regret later. Friends or groups that you're affiliated with may want you to contribute more cash than you can really afford.

**AQUARIUS**  
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
 Be prepared to meet new lovers through colleagues. You need to do something energetic and different. Organize all the responsibilities that have to be attended to and make sure everyone knows what to do.

**PISCES**  
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
 Travel could turn out to be more exciting than you imagined. Look into events that you might find interesting, and compromise by doing a few things that you both like to do.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

**WEATHER**

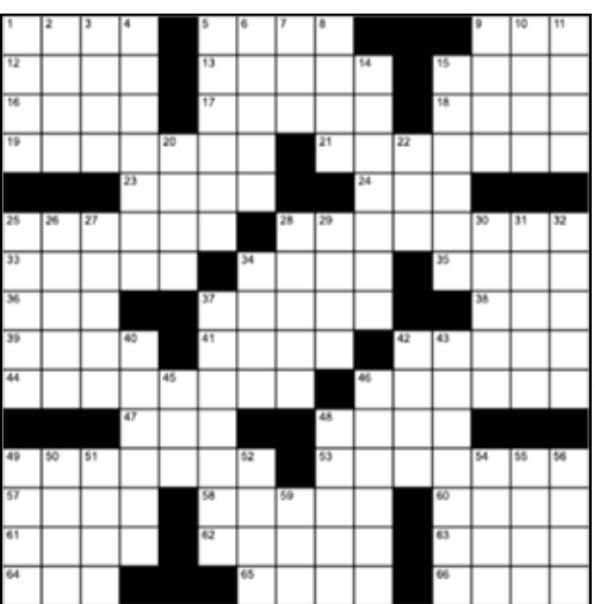
	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	-6	0	cloudy
Harbin	-16	-9	overcast
Tianjin	2	11	fine
Urumqi	8	11	overcast
Xi'an	5	17	cloudy
Lhasa	-7	-1	cloudy
Chengdu	10	17	cloudy
Chongqing	5	16	cloudy
Kunming	-1	14	cloudy
Nanjing	16	18	overcast
Shanghai	3	11	fine
Wuhan	-24	-11	cloudy
Hangzhou	0	11	cloudy
Taipei	3	11	fine
Guangzhou	9	17	cloudy
Hong Kong	13	17	overcast
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-4	0	cloudy
Frankfurt	3	11	overcast
Paris	4	12	rain
London	3	9	rain
New York	-2	-7	clear

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Discontinue; 5- "\_\_\_ She Lovely?"; 9- Move about recklessly; 12- Gimlet garnish; 13- Lost a lap; 15- Racer Yarborough; 16- Long time; 17- Soaked; 18- Geographical expanse; 19- Part of speech; 21- Slighted; 23- \_\_\_-deucey; 24- Singer DiFranco; 25- Thin soups; 28- Pulp summer refreshment; 33- Ways to the pins; 34- Polo of "Meet the Parents"; 35- Macho man; 36- Verse starter?; 37- Ruin; 38- Sounds of hesitation; 39- Self-images; 41- Corrida cries; 42- Without \_\_\_ in the world; 44- Lookout; 46- Ethically neutral; 47- Jurist Fortas; 48- Dance move; 49- Sleep; 53- Russian premier 1964-80; 57- Bring down; 58- Having auricular protuberances; 60- Deep unconscious state; 61- Put \_\_\_ on it; 62- Celtic priest; 63- Graceful horse; 64- Brillo rival; 65- Contact, e.g.; 66- Sawbucks;

**Friday's solution**

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



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

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- 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
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EXPLAINER

# HALFWAY THROUGH OLYMPICS, WHAT'S HAPPENED SO FAR?

**H**ALFWAY through the world's second pandemic Olympics, lots has happened. We have a doping scandal out of Russia, an American skier who faltered unexpectedly, and a lot of people in full protective medical gear managing — perhaps against the odds — to keep COVID contained through the Games' first week.

What are the most noteworthy things to think about so far? Here, AP's interim global sports editor, Howie Rumberg, breaks it down.

### WHAT STANDS OUT TO YOU THE MOST?

Despite all the restrictions and COVID protocols and a general lack of that Olympic spirit that engulfs a host city during the Games, the athletes are still enthralling. Nathan Chen's short program, Eileen Gu's third run at big air, Ayumu Hirano soaring out of the halpiper and Shaun White's elegant exit from snowboarding come immediately to mind. On the other end of the spectrum, the Russian doping case is heartbreaking. Kamila Valieva is just 15 years old.



### HOW SIGNIFICANT IS THE RUSSIAN DOPING SITUATION?

Very. Not only has it ensnared the heavy favorite for gold in the marquee event of the Games, women's figure skating, it involves, once again, Russia, which isn't even technically here because of sanctions imposed after being caught running a massive state-sponsored doping program at the 2014 Sochi Olympics. It's to be seen if the IOC and the World

Anti-Doping Agency try to extend Russia's mostly toothless ban from international competition for two years. Russian athletes compete under the name Russian Olympic Committee, but they still wear the Russian red and most fans couldn't tell the difference.

Also, what makes this potentially more significant is that the United States could pursue prosecution of Valieva's team — for example, Russian coaches,

doctors or trainers — under the Rodchenkov Anti-Doping Act, passed by Congress in 2020. Under the law named for Grigory Rodchenkov, the head of the Russian anti-doping lab in Moscow during the Sochi Games who became a whistleblower, U.S. prosecutors can go after doping schemes at international events in which Americans are involved as athletes, sponsors or broadcasters.

### HAVE COVID RESTRICTIONS MADE THESE GAMES VERY DIFFERENT? ARE THEY EVEN DIFFERENT FROM TOKYO LAST SUMMER?

The severity of the COVID restrictions and the "closed-loop" system all Olympics stakeholders are living under make these Winter Games very different, even from last summer's Tokyo Games, the first pandemic Olympics. Other than the athletic achievements — not to be diminished — this doesn't feel much like an Olympics. In Tokyo, there at least seemed to be a lot of local interest, and we were only limited in our movements for the first 14 days in Japan. Also, being fenced in to this extent is completely demoralizing. It feels oddly like an in-between: We are in Beijing, but at the same time we are not.

### WHAT'S LEFT FOR US TO WATCH OUT FOR THIS COMING WEEK?

There is plenty of action left at the Olympics. In addition to the women's figure skating, Eileen Gu has two more events in freestyle skiing, the snowboard big air competition with the industrial setting as a backdrop and a potential gold-medal U.S.-Canada rematch in women's hockey. There's also curling gold to decide. Bobsledding and speedskating, too. **MDT/AP**

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# Beijing Winter Olympics exceeds IOC expectations: Chairman

**I**NTERNATIONAL Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach has said that the Olympic Games is perhaps the most complex event on the planet, like a huge and difficult jigsaw puzzle.

For each Olympic Games, the IOC sets up a special Coordination Commission to work with the organizing committee on competitions, venues, media operations, accommodation, arrivals and departures, transport and registration.

Due in large part to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the preparations for the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games have been extremely difficult but received positive feedback from Juan Antonio Samaranch Jr., the chairman of the IOC Coordination Commission for Beijing 2022 during an exclusive interview with Xinhua.

## PREPARATION FOR BEIJING 2022 AMAZES ALL

Despite constant discussions on the capacity of the host countries and the organizing committee, Samaranch Jr. said that the IOC has never doubted China's hosting capacity and the preparations for the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, which fully met and exceeded their expectations.

Due to travel restrictions since the COVID-19 outbreak, Samaranch Jr. and other members of the coordination committee have had to communicate with BOCOG most of the time by vi-



International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach (center)

deo calls with a time difference. "What has been really amazing and impressive is the capacity of this team of people, this organizing committee, and the people of China to organize the Games despite the pandemic, in very difficult conditions and making it successful and very safe for everybody. Very nice effort," said Samaranch Jr.

## CLOSED LOOP MANAGEMENT PROTECTS ALL

In order to deliver a safe Games, the Beijing Winter Olympics has been taking place in a closed loop. Samaranch Jr.

said that China's public health authorities have done a lot of rigorous and comprehensive work, in which the closed-loop management has played a key role in the smooth operation of the Games so far.

"You have a very important gatekeeper at the airports that is doing tests when everybody arrives," he said. "We have prepared everybody to stay home, to stay calm, not to expose themselves and to do PCR test before they fly. So we are getting these people that get infected last minute were catching them up and putting

them in isolation."

"Since there is no interaction between in and out of the bubble. Inside the bubble it is the Olympic world and all the Chinese people working in the organization of the Games. The outside is the Beijing and Hebei populations. We are safe and it's working," he added.

## WINTER OLYMPIC LEGACY BENEFITS ALL

Samaranch Jr.'s father and honorary life president of the IOC, Juan Antonio Samaranch, was an old friend of the Chinese people.

During Samaranch's IOC presidency, China successfully hosted the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, while Samaranch Jr. has been involved in the preparations for the 2022 Winter Olympics from the beginning.

Samaranch Jr. recalled the opening ceremony of Beijing 2022 and liked the flow of the storytelling and technology that was displayed.

"I think that the ceremony is a reflection on the state of mind of the whole country. In 2008, China wanted to tell the world 'here we are, we are here to say we had a big, very powerful celebration. It was a statement there.'"

"Now China doesn't have to say to anybody here we come. You are in the center of things of world affairs. This was a very interesting way of presenting 'Together for a Shared Future.' It was very well crafted and a very good message to give to the world."

Samaranch Jr. also mentioned how the Beijing Winter Olympic legacy will have a positive impact on future generations as did the 2008 Summer Games.

"You have extraordinary venues that will serve the population of China or many years to come, not 16 days, but for much more than 60 years."

"It's an infrastructure that is very important for the population, like high speed trains, and highways that is going increase the quality of life."

Samaranch Jr. also lauded China's commitment to engaging 300 millions people in winter sports. "China is now a winter sports country and that will have a bigger effect in many things in your country and society," he concluded. **MDT/XINHUA**

## BEIJING2022

# For the aged: Older Olympians in the medal mix, too

**W**HEN the Beijing Olympics close on Feb. 20, IOC President Thomas Bach, by tradition, will call on the "youth of the world to assemble four years from now." He may consider expanding that invitation to the 2026 Winter Games at Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo in Italy to another group: the oldies but goodies.

Start with Frenchman Johan Clarey. He turned 41 last month and in Beijing became the oldest man to win an Olympic medal in Alpine skiing. He took silver in downhill, his first medal in his fourth Olympics.



"When you're a medalist, whether you're 20 or 41, it doesn't matter," Clarey said.

Clarey barely outdid Nick Baumgartner. In Bei-

jing, the 40-year-old American won his first Olympic medal — a gold — with fellow American Lindsey Jacobellis in mixed team

snowboard cross.

"You're never too late to take what you want from life," Baumgartner said. "You let yourself down if you quit too early, doesn't matter how old you are."

Baumgartner, a concrete worker/contractor from Michigan, is the oldest snowboarder to win an Olympic medal.

At 36, Jacobellis is no kid herself. She won two gold medals — one with Baumgartner, and the other in snowboard cross.

She became the oldest U.S. woman to win gold in Winter Games history. She's also the second ol-

dest behind Baumgartner — from any nation — to win an Olympic medal in snowboarding.

Jacobellis also won a silver medal in 2006. The 16 years marked the longest gap between medals for any U.S. woman at the Winter Olympics.

Olympic historian Bill Mallon counted at least 10 athletes in Beijing who were born in the 1970s, meaning they are well into their 40s.

The oldest is speedskater Claudia Pechstein, who is almost out of her 40s. She turns 50 just two days after the Winter Olympics close. At Beijing, she became the

oldest woman to compete in a Winter Olympics — and the second and only woman to compete in eight Winter Games.

The German they call "Grandma" is a five-time gold medalist, and a winner of nine overall. She won't medal in Beijing — and it won't matter.

"Every day is harder to get motivated, especially when you feel not so great and the results aren't coming along," she said in an interview with The Associated Press. "But I'm still proud of myself. I can still compete with the world's younger girls." **MDT/AP**

**OPINION**

**Multipolar World**

Jorge Costa Oliveira



**MADE IN CHINA  
 2025 AND THE NEW  
 MULTIPOLAR WORLD**

In 2015, China adopted one of its most ambitious plans – the Made in China (MIC) 2025. MIC 2025 is an initiative that aims to guarantee China's position as a global power in the high-tech industry, focusing on 10 strategic sectors: integrated circuits technology and new IT; automated machine tools and state-of-the-art robotics; aeronautical and aerospace equipment; maritime engineering equipment and high-tech vessel manufacturing; modern rail transport equipment; vehicles powered by alternative energy; energy equipment; new critical materials; biomedicine and high-performance medical apparatus; agricultural machinery and technology.

Although inspired by the German Industry 4.0 plan, the MIC 2025 follows the path of the Far East development model which breaks the mold of low-tech, labor-intensive manufacturing that constrains the growth of developing economies; this original development model is characterized by industrial policies to develop strategic sectors, with financing underpinned by national financial entities and a strong government that aligns business interests with national interests.

Chinese authorities do not have much choice as companies in the manufacturing sector are increasingly relocating to countries with lower production costs. With MIC 2025, China hopes to reduce its dependence on foreign technology imports and invest heavily in innovation in order to establish Chinese companies that can compete both domestically and globally.

Even if some MIC 2025 targets are not met, the initiative will improve China's general economic governance, contribute to sustainable development in combatting climate change and address the environmental impact, and strengthen its financial, education, health and manufacturing sectors.

Although Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore have already paved the way with this model, MIC 2025 has been heavily criticized by several Western powers, most notably by the US. This is, from the outset, a reaction to a change in the current paradigm of globalization – for decades developing countries were not supposed to become meaningful producers of intellectual property rights or technological innovation, nor producers of significant capital goods, much less leading in strategic sectors of the economy of the future.

But why was there no such reaction when Japan, South Korea or Taiwan similarly changed their economic model? These countries were not perceived as real threats. Firstly, in only a few sectors have they managed to produce state-of-the-art products and technology with significant market share. Furthermore, none of them is perceived as a potential threat to U.S. global leadership, much less a military threat.

The reality, however, is that we are heading towards a multipolar world where China, India, Brazil and other emerging countries increasingly compete in innovative and cutting-edge technology-based industries, and in the production of sophisticated products, including capital goods.

The intelligent approach is the one underlying the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment – ensuring access to the respective markets on equitable terms; and being rigorous in the reciprocity of this access.

**MAN ACCUSED OF BLASPHEMY STONED TO DEATH BY MOB IN PAKISTAN**

**THE BUZZ**

An enraged mob stoned to death a middle-aged man for allegedly desecrating the Quran in a remote village in eastern Pakistan, police said yesterday.

The custodian of a local mosque said he saw the man burning the Muslim holy book inside the mosque Saturday evening and told others before informing police, according to police spokesman Chaudhry Imran. The violence took place in a village in the district of Khanewal in Punjab province.

Imran said police rushed to the scene, where a man was found

surrounded by an angry crowd. Officer Mohammad Iqbal and two subordinates tried to take custody of the man but the group began throwing stones at them, seriously injuring Iqbal and slightly injuring the other two officers.

Munawar Gujjar, chief of Tulamba police station, said he rushed reinforcements to the mosque but they did not arrive before the mob had stoned to death the man and hung his body from a tree. Gujjar said the victim was identified as Mushtaq Ahmed, 41, of a nearby village.



**US, JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA  
 MEET IN HAWAII TO  
 DISCUSS NORTH KOREA**

AUDREY MCAVOY,  
 HONOLULU

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met his Japanese and South Korean counterparts Saturday in Hawaii to discuss the threat posed by nuclear-armed North Korea after Pyongyang began the year with a series of missile tests.

Blinken said at a news conference after the meeting that North Korea was "in a phase of provocation" and the three countries condemned the recent missile launches.

"We are absolutely united in our approach, in our determination," Blinken said after his talks with Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi and South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong.

He said the countries were "very closely consulting" on further steps they may take in response to North Korea, but didn't offer specifics.

The three released a joint statement calling on North Korea to engage in dialogue and cease its "unlawful activities." They said they had no hostile intent toward North Korea and were open to meeting Pyongyang without preconditions.

Hayashi later told Japanese reporters the three ministers had "very fruit-

ful" discussion on the North. He declined to give details on additional measures they may take.

North Korea has a long history of using provocations such as missile or nuclear tests to seek international concessions. The latest tests come as the North's economy, already battered by decades of mismanagement and crippling U.S.-led sanctions, is hit hard by pandemic border closures.

Many see the tests as an attempt to pressure President Joe Biden's administration into easing the sanctions. The Biden administration has shown no willingness to do so without meaningful cuts to the North's nuclear program, but it has offered open-ended talks.

North Korea has rebuffed U.S. offers to resume diplomacy, saying it won't return to talks unless Washington drops what it says are hostile policies. The North bristles at both the sanctions and regular military exercises the U.S. holds with South Korea.

The tests also have a technical component, allowing North Korea to hone its weapons arsenal. One of the missiles recently tested — the Hwasong-12 intermediate-range ballistic missile — is capable of reaching the U.S. territory of Guam. It was

the longest-distance weapon the North has tested since 2017.

North Korea appears to be pausing its tests during the Winter Olympics in China, its most important ally and economic lifeline. But analysts believe North Korea will dramatically increase its weapons testing after the Olympics.

The recent tests have rattled Pyongyang's neighbors in South Korea and Japan. South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who helped set up the historic talks between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and former President Donald Trump in 2018 and 2019, said last month that the tests were a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions and urged the North to cease "actions that create tensions and pressure."

The Security Council initially imposed sanctions on North Korea after its first nuclear test in 2006. It made them tougher in response to further nuclear tests and the country's increasingly sophisticated nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

China and Russia, citing the North's economic difficulties, have called for lifting sanctions like those banning seafood exports and prohibitions on its citizens working overseas and sending home their earnings. MDT/AP



Canada Hours after removing their vehicles blocking a key U.S.-Canadian border bridge, protesters opposed to Covid-19 vaccine mandates continued to block traffic outside in the bitter cold yesterday, while in the capital Ottawa, police were forming a new command center with provincial and national authorities that they said would help them respond better to a larger demonstration that has paralyzed downtown. The tense standoff at the Ambassador Bridge linking Detroit and Windsor, Ontario, eased somewhat Saturday when Canadian police persuaded demonstrators to move the trucks they had used to barricade the entrance to the busy international crossing.



Ukraine Some airlines have canceled or diverted flights to Ukraine amid heightened fears that an invasion by Russia is imminent despite intensive weekend talks between the Kremlin and the West. In an hourlong call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, President Joe Biden said that invading Ukraine would cause "widespread human suffering" and that the West was committed to diplomacy to end the crisis but "equally prepared for other scenarios," the White House said. It offered no suggestion that the call diminished the threat of an imminent war in Europe.



Germany A special parliamentary assembly met yesterday to elect Germany's president for the next five years. Incumbent Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who has been endorsed by most mainstream political parties, is seeking a second term as the largely ceremonial head of state. The president will be elected by a special assembly of 736 people made up of the members of parliament's lower house and representatives of Germany's 16 states.