



WYNN MACAU SAW 'MEANINGFUL GROWTH' IN BOTH PREMIUM MASS AND IN OWN DIRECT VIP PROGRAM, SAYS IAN COUGHLAN P5

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NATO SEES NO SIGN RUSSIA IS PULLING BACK TROOPS FROM UKRAINE P8



Nepal Protesters opposing a proposed U.S. half-billion dollar grant for Nepal clashed with police outside Parliament yesterday, leaving injuries on both sides. The proposal was scheduled to be presented in Parliament for approval, but the debate was postponed because of disagreements among political parties.

FULL VACCINATION FOR HK, TAIWAN ENTRANTS P3



American support for Israel remains "ironclad," U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi told members of Israel's parliament yesterday, despite deep differences between the nations on Iran, peace with the Palestinians and other issues. Pelosi stuck to what the U.S. and Israel have in common, particularly on their desires to rein in Iran's nuclear capabilities and find a path toward peace with the Palestinians.

Flight information board with columns for flight number, destination, status, and time.



Germany chancellor Olaf Scholz conferred with 16 state governors yesterday to map a way out of coronavirus restrictions as official figures show new infections beginning to drift downward. Germany saw infections caused by the omicron variant, which is highly contagious but generally causes milder illness than previous variants, surge later than in several other European countries.



40 LOCAL STUDENTS TO RETURN FROM HONG KONG FROM TODAY P3

CHINESE NATION MOVING WITH MACAU TOWARDS THE 'GREAT REJUVENATION': FU ZIYING P5



AP PHOTO



## THE CONVERSATION

# OLYMPIC SKIERS AND SNOWBOARDERS ARE COMPETING ON 100% FAKE SNOW – THE SCIENCE OF HOW IT'S MADE

PETER VEALS  
UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

**T**he winter Olympics conjure up images of snowy mountain ranges, frozen ice rinks and athletes in cold-weather gear. And for good reason. Winter Olympic venues have often been in places that receive an average snowfall of 300 inches per year or more.

However, barring some extremely anomalous weather patterns, the mountains surrounding the snow events for the Beijing Winter Olympics will be tones of brown and green and nearly devoid of snow. The region typically receives only a few inches of snowfall in each winter month. This means that basically all of the snow the athletes will be competing on will be human-made.

I am an atmospheric scientist who specializes in mountain weather and snow. I am also the co-founder of a snowmaking startup and an avid skier. There are distinct differences between natural and artificial snow, and it will be interesting to see if these differences have any effect on competition.

### HOW TO MAKE FAKE SNOW

Though artificial snow and natural snow are both frozen water, most skiers and snowboarders are able to immediately recognize that the two are very different.

Traditional snowmaking uses high pressure water, compressed air and specialized nozzles to blow tiny liquid droplets into the air that then freeze as they fall to the ground. But snowmaking is not as simple as just making sure the air is sufficiently cold.

Pure water does not freeze until it is cooled to nearly -40 F (-40 C). It is only the presence of microscopic suspended particles in water that allow it to freeze at the familiar 32 F (0 C). These particles, known as ice nuclei, act as a sort of scaffolding to help ice crystals form.

Without these particles, water struggles to turn into ice. Different particles can raise or lower freezing temperatures depending on their specific molecular configuration.

Two of the best ice nuclei are silver iodide and a protein produced by the bacteria *Pseudomonas syringae*. Most snowmaking systems add a commercial form of

the bacterial protein to water to ensure most of the tiny droplets freeze before they hit the ground.

### SLIDING ON HUMAN-MADE SNOW

Natural snow starts as a tiny ice crystal on an ice nucleus in a cloud. As the crystal falls through the air, it slowly grows into the classic six-sided snowflake.

By comparison, human-made snow freezes quickly from a single droplet of water. The resulting snow consists of billions of tiny spherical balls of ice. It may resemble natural snow to the naked eye on a ski run, but the natural and artificial snow "feel" very different.

Due to the fact that the tiny ice balls pack together quite densely – and that some of them may have not frozen until they touched the ground – artificial snow often feels hard and icy. Fresh natural "powder" snow, on the other hand, provides skiers and snowboarders an almost weightless feeling as they soar down the mountainside. This is largely because the natural snow crystals stack very loosely – a fresh layer of powder is as much as 95% or

more air.

While fresh powder is what most recreational skiers dream of, Olympic skiers have different tastes. Racers want to be able to glide as fast as possible and use their sharp edges to make powerful, tight turns. The dense, icy conditions of artificial snow are actually better in these regards. In fact, race organizers often add liquid water to race courses of natural snow which will freeze and ensure a durable, consistent surface for racers.

Another consideration is the fact that natural snowstorms produce dull, flat lighting and low visibility – hard conditions to race or jump in. Heavy natural snowfall will often cancel ski races, as happened during the snowy 1998 Nagano Games. For racers, clear skies and artificial snow provide the advantage there, too.

But hard human-made snow does have its downsides. Freestyle skiers and snowboarders who are flying off jumps or sliding on rails high above the ground seem to prefer the softer surface of natural snow for safety reasons. This is also true of Nordic skiers, who recently flagged the dangers

of artificial snow in the event of crashes as icy, hard surfaces can lead to more injuries.

### MIMICKING NATURE

While Olympic athletes have mixed needs for their snow, for the vast majority of recreational skiers, natural snow is far better. Due to the air-filled crystals, it is much softer and more enjoyable to ski or snowboard on.

Scientists have been trying for decades to create more natural snow on demand. The first way that people tried to make "real" snow was by seeding natural clouds with silver iodide. The goal was to facilitate moisture in clouds turning into falling snow crystals. If you could make this process – called the Wegener-Bergeron-Findeisen process – occur more easily, it would theoretically increase the snowfall rate.

In practice, it has historically been difficult to prove the efficacy of seeding. However, recent work using large, meticulously deployed sets of atmospheric instruments has shown that – for a fraction of storms with the proper conditions – seeding clouds with silver iodide does indeed yield modest increases in the total amount of snowfall.

Another option – which doesn't require storm clouds to seed in the first place – is to create snowmaking machines that can grow fluffy natural snow crystals. Scientists have been growing snowflakes in laboratories for many decades, but the process is delicate, and typically researchers only produce a few flakes at a time. Because ice crystals typically grow slowly, it has been tricky for researchers to scale the process up by the many orders of magnitude needed to grow enough snow for skiing. But in a quest to produce fluffy powder for skiers and snowboarders, my colleague Trey Alvey and I developed a process that can produce snowflakes in larger quantities using a technique that mimics the natural crystal formation process. We're commercializing it through our company called Quantum Snow.

The dry, barren mountains hosting the 2022 Winter Olympic venues are not exactly a skiing destination. But thanks to snowmaking science, the athletes will have reliable, if icy, runs to compete on. And sports fans can all be thankful for the technology that allows them to enjoy the high-speed spectacle put on by the brave souls who compete in the skiing and snowboarding events. **MDT/AP**

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# Three education funds to be merged

ANTHONY LAM

A parliamentary committee has concluded its discussion of the reviews of two education-related laws, in which the integration of three existing education funds has been proposed.

The laws in concern are the Outline Law for the Non-tertiary Education System and the Higher Education System Law.

The Third Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL), led by indirectly elected lawmaker Vong Hin Fai, issued its opinions on the law review. A press conference was held yesterday for this purpose.

Member lawmakers of the

committee were concerned with the mode in which the government could ensure uninterrupted operation of the funds, as otherwise it may cause severe disruption to students and to the operation of educational institutions.

To facilitate the merger of the three funds, namely the Education Development Fund, the Higher Education Fund and the Student Welfare Fund, dedicated Executive Regulations will be promulgated as the Bill goes through its second reading in parliament, the government said in response to concerns raised by committee lawmakers.

Elaborating on the contents of the aforementioned Executive

Regulations, Vong, citing the government, said that necessary transitional rules will be included, so that the new fund will be able to inherit all rights and obligations currently vested in the three existing funds.

So as to achieve a seamless transition while unifying the three existing funds, the Executive Branch has proposed that the bill be promulgated as law on June 1, if it is passed by the legislature, even though not passing a bill has been rare.

The date was also proposed in order to leave at least 60 days prior to the law's coming into effect. The Executive Regulations, meanwhile, will come into effect on the same date.

Another topic of concern, as Vong disclosed, was supervision over subsidies issued to educational institutions. In response, the government pointed out that the regulations and charters have been introduced in the Education Development Fund and the Higher Education Fund to require the subsidized parties to operate tenders when they need external services.

The government style of tender operation needs to be followed by the subsidized parties. Different modes will be followed for different scales of service or product acquisitions. The government has also disclosed that it would consider establishing a central vendor database for frequent services, such as field trips and excursions.

With that said, a central database of interested or participating travel agencies will be established for educational institutions to request quotations.

In this regard, Vong said member lawmakers accepted the government's explanation. They also hope that the new fund will be better managed, so as to avoid the misuse of public funds.

Previously, the Commission Against Corruption had issued reports slamming the perplexity and lack of transparency in the operations of the three funds, which gave way to potential corruption and the misuse of public resources.

On the applicability of the new laws to the Higher Institute of the Security Forces, Vong disclosed that the entity would be exempted, in spite of it being a higher education institution.

For example, Vong said, to require the institution to have five full-time academics with a doctoral degree would be unrealistic, as it does not regularly open programs, like other comprehensive institutions.

## 40 LOCAL STUDENTS TO RETURN FROM HONG KONG FROM TODAY

RENATO MARQUES

A group of 40 local students who have been studying in Hong Kong university institutions are to return to Macau today and tomorrow, the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) has informed in a press statement.

According to the statement, these 40 students belong to a larger group of around 100 students that have expressed their wish to return to Macau due to the current Covid-19 outbreak in the neighboring region.

The first batch of students arriving from today includes those most affected by the measures implemented by several higher education institutions in Hong Kong, which have urged the students to vacate their dormitories.

The DSEDJ also said that, considering the current entry and exit measures at the border between the two regions, it had specially organized sampling of nucleic acid tests (NAT) as well as other preventive measures to ensure safety and prevent the outbreak from spreading into Macau.

Upon their arrival in Macau, and in case their NAT results are negative, the 40 university students will undergo a quarantine period with medical observation in hotels designated for this purpose.

The DSEDJ has also informed that other students located in Hong Kong intending to return to Macau must comply with necessary preparations before returning, calling on them to avoid any unnecessary contact with potentially infected people and to avoid gatherings of any kind.

Those that need support from Macau authorities should contact the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center via phone: 28700800; email: info.cdc@ssm.gov.mo; the Internet portal of Health Bureau: www.ssm.gov.mo/covidq; or DSEDJ email: studentblog@dsej.gov.mo; or phone: 83969233 (during office hours).

### COVID-19

## Full vaccination needed for HK, Taiwan entrants

THE Macau government announced yesterday that, from February 21, entrants older than 12 years from Hong Kong or Taiwan will need to be fully vaccinated before boarding incoming transportations.

The requirement is a tightened restriction, as quarantine-upon-arrival will be retained for these entrants. Those from Hong Kong will complete 14 days in quarantine and those from Taiwan, 21

days. The former will not be allowed to enter Mainland China within 21 days from release.

According to the notice released by the government, a full primary course of vaccination must be completed at least 14 days, and at most seven months, prior to the date of departure. Should the last jab have been received more than seven months prior to the date of departure, a booster shot must be taken to

facilitate travel.

"Violators may need to bear corresponding administrative and criminal responsibilities pursuant to the law," the government stated in the notice.

Elaborating on the additional restriction, the government stated that all vaccines used against Covid-19 that are recognized by any health authorities will be considered by Macau as legitimate.

It stressed that the

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number of doses required for primary vaccination varies between brands and types of vac-

cines. The threshold for primary vaccination will rely accordingly on each brand or type of shots. **AL**

RENATO MARQUES





## JLL NAMES OLIVER TONG AS GENERAL MANAGER

Real estate services firm JLL Macau has recently appointed Oliver Tong as general manager, effective March 1. While taking up his new role, Tong will continue to lead the firm's retail business in Hong Kong and Macau, according to a statement. Current general manager Gregory Ku will take on a new executive consultant role, based in Hong Kong. Currently Head of Retail at JLL Hong Kong and Macau, Tong manages and sets the strategic direction for both cities' retail leasing business. Ku, meanwhile, joined JLL in 1996 and assumed the role of Head of Industrial Hong Kong in 2002. In 2005, Gregory relocated to Macau to lead the new office in the city.

## HONG KONG RETURNEE TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

A 46-year-old non-resident worker arriving from Hong Kong who entered Macau on February 15 has tested positive for Covid-19. The Hong Kong resident is considered an imported case of asymptomatic infection. This individual was administered two doses of an mRNA vaccine, respectively, in October and November of last year. On February 15 at 8:10 p.m., he took the connecting bus to the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (Golden Bus) border crossings, which departed from Hong Kong. Upon entering Macau, he underwent a nucleic acid test and was referred to the Regency Art Hotel for medical observation. The test result was positive and he was transferred to the Public Health Clinical Center in Coloane.

## TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS SET FOR CABLE LAYING ON TRAV. DE PEDRO COUTINHO

Due to cable-laying work by Companhia de Electricidade de Macau (CEM), from February 19 to March 26, traffic at the Travessa de Pedro Coutinho section will be closed, the firm announced in a statement. Parking will be prohibited at the metered parking spaces under the number 3155(1-4), the motorcycle parking spaces and the loading/unloading area on the section. Bus services will not be affected during the working period.



## GAMING

# COMMITTEE ON TRACK TO COMPLETE LAW ANALYSIS BEFORE 'DEADLINE'

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Second Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL) has been meeting daily, aiming to finish its discussion of the new gaming law.

According to sources close to the process, the reason for this rush is related to an unwritten deadline for the discussion and final approval of the law in the AL of June this year, the Times has learned.

The same source hinted that the goal is to pass the law before the current gaming licenses expire (June 26, 2022) so that the tender to attribute the new licenses can be launched as soon as possible and completed before the end of this year.

If such a scenario becomes a reality, then the extension of the current gaming concessions would be on the line to be stretched for a much shorter period than initially expected when the Public Consultation period of the new gaming law was launched (about six months).

The goal seems to be to enter 2023 with new concessions attributed and operational.

Without going into details on this matter, the committee that is analyzing the bill also introduced, earlier this week, this idea of having the law discussion and approval concluded by June.

Yesterday, the lawmakers comprising the second committee gathered for the third time this week to discuss matters related to the perfecting of the bill.

After the meeting, and in the usual press briefing by the presi-

dent of the committee, lawmaker Chan Chak Mo, it was said that after the first two meetings, in which much time was devoted to discussion of the so-called satellite casinos, the work has progressed and several articles of the law have been addressed.

Among the most heated topics, Chan said, was the law provisions that seem to state that concessionaires can only host gaming activity in premises owned by the concessionaire.

Lawmakers want to know if that is the correct interpretation and intention of the law and, if so, how this new rule might interfere in the current situation of several casinos, which are operated with the permission of the license holder, but in venues that are not owned by the concessionaire but instead by hotels and other companies.

Another of the matters that the committee intends to question the government about in an upcoming opportunity is the financial capacity of the new concessionaires, as the new law sets a new minimum ceiling of MOP5 billion of effective responsibility for the concessionaires, a very significant increase from the current one, set at MOP200 million.

On this topic, Chan said that several lawmakers representing the labor interests have also raised the creation of the guarantee fund related to salaries and benefits of the workers.

These lawmakers are worried that, in the case that one of the

concessionaires loses their license, a high number of the staff members will be in a complex situation unless this type of fund is maintained and adjusted to the number of works of the concessionaires.

Chan noted that, "currently, only SJM and MGM have this mechanism of 'guarantee of labor credit' but we will question the government on if there is an intention of enforcing this [type of tool] for all concessions."

Another of the law articles that warranted discussion yesterday was Article 16, related to Corporate Social Responsibility.

## The goal seems to be to enter 2023 with new concessions attributed and operational

As the committee president noted, "this is a completely new article [...] that attempts to establish responsibilities for the concessionaires to participate and support [...] the development of the society at different levels including support for SMEs [Small and Medium-size Enterprises], economic diversification, training, hiring of people with disabilities and support of local activities, among others. We are already doing this to some extent, but lawmakers feel that the article is too vague, and they want these responsibilities to be clearer and more specific," Chan

said, noting that the committee will also ask the government whether or not these responsibilities will be specifically written into the concession contracts.

Yesterday's meeting was finalized with the addressing of article 17 and, more specifically, 17A, which relates to the listing of the concessionaires in the stock exchange market and a maximum ceiling of stocks circulating of 30%, a limit the new law establishes.

Chan explained that there were several questions and clarifications about the matter, namely regarding the intentions of

this provision and if it could effectively grant that continuity of the dominant stakeholders in a concession, as well as questions about the need for new stakeholders that might arise through the acquisition of stocks needed to undergo the same "reputability analysis" by the authorities.

According to Chan, the committee will likely need another two meetings to conclude the first round of the analysis and discussion on the law provisions, after which time they will likely have one or several meetings with the representatives of the government to hear the replies to the questions raised.

The next meeting of the committee is scheduled for today at 3 p.m., and a meeting with the representatives of the government has also been scheduled to take place next Tuesday (February 22).



GAMING

# Wynn seeing pent-up demand 'at all levels of business'

LYNZY VALLES

**T**HE only measure by which to judge the impact of the disappearance of junket operators is activity over the Chinese New Year holiday, during which Wynn Macau saw "meaningful growth in both premium mass and in our own direct VIP program," according to Ian Coughlan, president of Wynn Macau.

Speaking in a recent earnings call with analysts, over the recent long holiday, the casino operator saw the migration of former junket players, adding, "they have the desire to gamble; they have a desire to come to Macau."

According to the executive, there is huge pent-up demand at all levels of the business, as family and millennial travel have both increased.

"We're seeing new customers come to Macau. We've seen that again over Chinese New Year. So during the week when we have rooms available at times, there is cash business and rich cash business from affluent customers to come," said Coughlan.

Meanwhile, the SAR market continued to experience subdued visitation numbers during the fourth quarter, and the gaming operator's results reflected that in



roll, in drop, and volatility of hold.

According to Craig Billings, president and chief financial officer of Wynn Resorts and CEO of Wynn Macau, during the Chinese New Year holiday, turnover per day in Wynn's direct program was up nearly 175% from 2021 and down only 12% from Chinese New Year in 2019.

"You need to only look at Chinese New Year to remind yourself of the power of that market and the pent-up demand for visitation," he told analysts in the earnings call.

"Wynn Macau is seeing both strong spend per customer and significant new customer sign-

-ups in its direct business, highlighting the strength of our market-leading product and service offering," Billings, who recently replaced former CEO Matthew Maddox, said.

On the mass side, table drop was up 34% versus 2021, and that drop was 60% of the firm's 2019 Chinese New Year levels.

The CEO also added that, between the shift to higher-margin premium mass customers and to customers who have more motivations to visit than just gaming, the market is evolving.

Therefore, Wynn is "prepared to adapt and grow our business as we embrace those changes."

## RECAPTURING FROM VIP TO MASS

Amid the turmoil in the city's junket sector, which accounts for 75% of Macau's VIP gaming revenue, equating to around USD3 billion each year, Billings assured that they started a journey of becoming very adept at pitching to mass marketers with the opening of Wynn Palace in 2016.

Expressing confidence in its Macau market and speaking on the demand of gaming customers, the executive noted, "It's

really just a question of how they're choosing to play, whether they're playing with roll or they're playing with cash. We have the best kit in the market. We have the best service in the market."

He recalled that, following the opening of Wynn Palace, by 2019, more than 80% of its earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) was derived from sources other than VIP.

"We already have what it takes to be competitive with respect to the mass market," he added.

Previously, MGM China had expressed its goal of capturing a high degree of conversion from the junket market to in-house markets to the mass market as possible amid the havoc in the sector following the arrest of junket moguls Alvin Chau and Levo Chan.

## WYNN REPORTS REVENUE OF USD626M IN 2021

Wynn Macau recorded USD208.14 million in net losses during the fourth quarter of 2021, representing an increase on the USD179.8 million reported in the quarter prior. According to the integrated resort's financial data, despite the downturn, its casino revenues surged by up to 4.7% in the last quarter to USD243.2 million. The data shows that its operations underwent a surge with a 32% year-on-year increase in its total revenue in 2021, recording USD626 million in revenue. Operating revenue from Wynn Palace was USD194 million for the fourth quarter of 2021, a 12.4%

decrease from the USD221.5 million in revenue recorded for the fourth quarter of 2020. The table games win percentage in mass market operations was 22.7%, above the 21.6% experienced in the fourth quarter of 2020. Meanwhile, operating revenue from Wynn Macau was USD131.7 million for the fourth quarter of 2021, a 27.6% decrease from the USD181.9 million revenue recorded for the fourth quarter of 2020. The table games win percentage in mass market operations was 17.4%, below the 17.9% experienced in the fourth quarter of 2020.

# Chinese nation moving with Macau towards the 'great rejuvenation': Fu Ziyang

RENATO MARQUES

**C**HINA is moving forward into a new chapter of "great power and worldwide significance" and Macau is moving with it, assuming the responsibilities and reaping the rewards of such a change, the director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macau Special Administrative Region, Fu Ziyang, expressed yesterday in a speech during the office's Spring Lunch.

"The Chinese nation, bursting with vigor, is moving towards the great rejuvenation and no one can stop it; this is a motive for immense pride," Fu said, adding that major steps



Fu Ziyang

have been taken by Macau towards this goal.

"The construction of

the Intensive Cooperation Zone between Guangdong and Macau in Hengqin has

gotten off to a good start, and the development of proper diversification of the economy has taken new steps. The seventh Macau Legislative Assembly Election was successfully held. 'Patriot-ruled Macau' has entered a new phase," Fu listed, adding that activities held for national security education and the establishment of the roles of National Security advisors have also shown the progress made by Macau in defending the security of the country.

For the director, it is clear that people in Macau are developing their patriotic passion and love for Macau, and that this will contribute to the maintenance of Macau's stable

development, showing, at the same time, the institutional advantages of "one country, two systems" and its strong vitality.

Pointing the way, Fu implored Macau people to trust the words of President Xi Jinping and to continue the work that has been done so far with the same motivation.

"To write a new chapter, it is necessary to firmly defend the general jurisdiction of the Central government. The implementation of the Central government's general jurisdiction is an important conclusion drawn from the historical experience since the return of Hong Kong and Macau to the Motherland. I hope that everyone can reso-

lutely defend the general jurisdiction of the Central government, uphold the constitutional order defined in the Constitution of China and the Basic Law of the Macau SAR, safeguard sovereignty, security, and national development interests, implement the principle of 'Macau governed by the patriots', to ensure that the 'one country, two systems' principle is implemented in the right direction and in a correct, stable and sustainable way," he said, adding that is also necessary to consolidate the foundations of Macau's development through a proper economic diversification for the long-term stability of Macau.

For that, Macau must make use of the advantages created by the Central government initiatives, namely the Belt and Road policy, the Greater Bay Area and the Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.





Patients lie on hospital beds as they wait at a temporary holding area outside Caritas Medical Centre in Hong Kong, yesterday

## XI URGES HONG KONG TO GET CONTROL AS COVID-19 CASES SURGE

ALICE FUNG  
& DAVID RISING, HONG KONG

**HOSPITALS** in Hong Kong were struggling yesterday to keep up with an influx of new coronavirus patients amid record numbers of new infections as the city's leadership doggedly sticks to its "zero-COVID" strategy, and China's leader Xi Jinping said it was the local government's "overriding task" to control the situation.

Hong Kong is facing its worst outbreak of the pandemic, topping 2,000 new COVID-19 ca-

ses per day this week. The city government has already instituted strict rules, banning gatherings of more than two households.

But health care facilities are beginning to overflow, forcing the city's Caritas Medical Center yesterday to treat some patients in beds outside the building.

Xi personally issued instructions and directed Vice Premier Han Zheng to express to Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam the high level of concern Chinese Communist Party leaders had about the city's ongoing outbreak, according to Wen Wei Po, a pro-

-Beijing news outlet.

Zheng stressed that the Hong Kong government "should earnestly assume the main responsibility, and regard the rapid stabilization and control of the epidemic as the current overriding task" to Lam, the outlet said.

Zheng said China's central government agencies and neighboring Guangdong province would provide Hong Kong with resources to fight the outbreak, including rapid antigen tests, medical expertise and supplies.

China has been able to control the virus within its borders, main-

taining a strict "zero-tolerance" policy that involves total lockdowns and mass testing millions of people.

Lam has also been sticking to the "zero-COVID" policy despite geographical and other differences between the city, a special administrative region, and China itself. The comments from Xi and Zheng were the latest pressure from Beijing for her to stay that course.

Practically, Hong Kong adopting the same approach means that travel between the city and the mainland remains subject to

less stringent quarantine rules than the three weeks or more required for all foreigners arriving in the Chinese mainland.

Beijing will not let Hong Kong's borders to the mainland reopen unless the city reaches and maintains zero COVID-19 cases.

The system seeks to contain and stop outbreaks as soon as they arise, with measures including snap lockdowns and extensive contact tracing. Last week, the entire upscale Discovery Bay neighborhood was ordered to undergo testing after authorities found traces of the virus in its sewage.

People who test positive are required to quarantine either in hospitals if they have serious symptoms or in government-run facilities for light or even no symptoms. The new record number of cases, driven by the highly transmissible omicron variant, has led to the current overcrowding.

By contrast, the city-state of Singapore, which is similarly sized to Hong Kong with a population of some 5.7 million compared to 7.5 million, undertook strict lockdown measures early in the pandemic but is now pursuing a "living with COVID" approach.

The number of new cases per capita in Singapore has skyrocketed with the arrival of omicron, with 1,911 new cases per million people reported on Monday, versus 66 per million in Hong Kong, according to Our World in Data.

But people testing positive who have no symptoms or only mild symptoms just need to self-quarantine at home, and even those who have more severe symptoms are told to see a physician for medical advice before going to the hospital.

Consequently, it is not suffering the stress on its health care system that Hong Kong is now experiencing.

Singapore also boasts one of the world's highest vaccination rates, with 88% of its population fully vaccinated, compared to Hong Kong's 64%. MDT/AP

## Japan's Kirin to sell China joint venture to investment fund

**KIRIN** is selling its China soft drinks joint venture to an investment fund, the Japanese beer and beverage maker said yesterday.

The move comes shortly after Kirin decided to pull out of a joint venture brewery in Myanmar.

The sale to Plateau Consumer, a Chinese fund, for 115 billion yen (\$994 million) covers Kirin's entire 40% stake in China Resources Kirin Beverages, Tokyo-based Kirin said in a statement.

The joint venture, established in 2011, had been ex-

panding its business in China, making bottled water and bottled tea, according to Kirin Holdings Co.

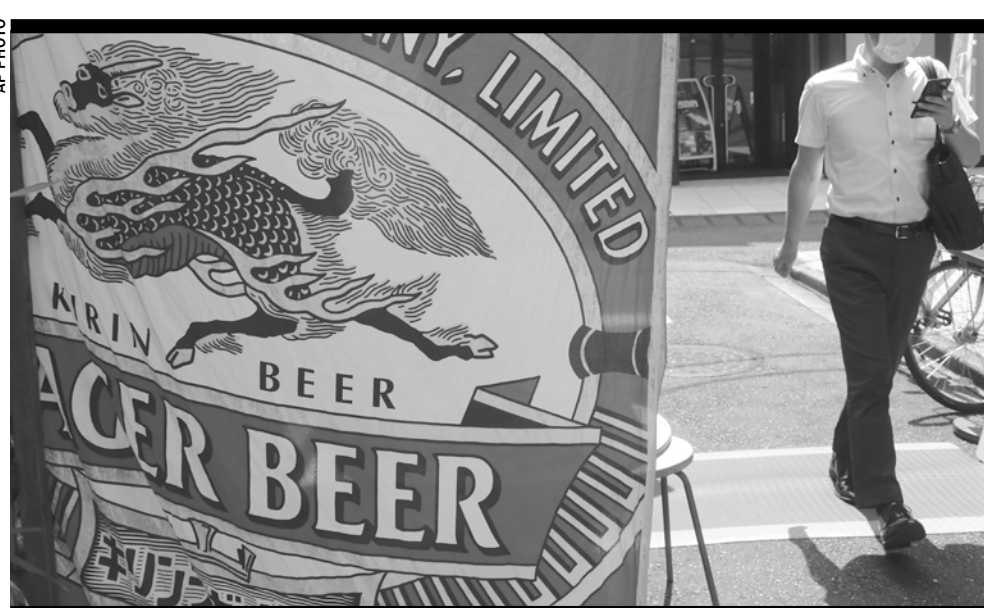
Kirin said the move was part of its recent decision to review its investment portfolio, including foreign operations, under a management plan that runs through 2024.

The plan has the company focusing on certain areas, including pharmaceuticals and health science as well as food and beverages.

More recently, Kirin has been trying to streamline its

sprawling operations to focus on projects like developing drugs for diseases that have no existing treatments, and working on what Kirin calls LC-Plasma to offer health products that help maintain immune systems.

Kirin is among Japan's top beer brands, but beer companies here have in recent decades expanded into other kinds of beverages. It still has various global operations, including Four Roses Distillery in the U.S. and San Miguel Brewery in the Philippines. MDT/AP





# South Korea to give out rapid tests as Omicron shatters record

KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

**S**OUTH Korea will distribute free coronavirus rapid test kits at schools and senior care facilities starting next week as it weathers an unprecedented wave of infections driven by the fast-moving omicron variant.

Health officials yesterday reported its highest daily jump in coronavirus infections with 90,443 new cases, shattering the previous one-day record set on Tuesday by more than 33,000 cases. The figure represents more than a 20-fold increase from the levels seen in mid-January, when omicron emerged as the country's dominant strain, and some experts say the country could see daily cases of around 200,000 in March.

While experts say omicron appears less likely to cause serious illness or death compared to the delta variant, which rattled the country in December and early January, hospitalizations have been creeping up amid the greater scale of outbreak.

Prime Minister Kim Boo-kyum, Seoul's No. 2 official behind President Moon Jae-in, said officials will start distributing free rapid test kits next week at kindergartens, elementary schools and senior care facilities, including nursing homes and neighborhood welfare



centers, to strengthen protection for unvaccinated children and high-risk groups.

Education Minister Yoo Eun-hye said schools will be getting enough kits for students to use twice a week, but added that such tests won't be mandatory.

"We ask for students to be tested at home with the rapid antigen test kits on the evenings of Sunday and Wednesday before coming to school," Yoo said during a briefing. "When testing positive from those tests, please visit the local health office to get PCR (lab) tests."

Health workers have diagnosed a daily average of 60,230 new coronavirus cases in the past seven days, which translates to 116.64

infections per 100,000 people, as the national caseload grew over 1.55 million.

The fast-developing omicron surge has left officials debating whether the country should maintain strict social distancing rules, including a six-person limit on private social gatherings and a 9 p.m. curfew for restaurants.

Struggling business owners have called for the measures to be removed, questioning whether they are meaningful when cases are growing rapidly.

But health experts warn that easing social distancing may allow transmissions to veer further out of control, which would further stretch worn-out health and go-

vernment workers and threaten high-risk groups and children younger than 12 who have yet to be vaccinated.

The country has already eased quarantine restrictions significantly starting this month to prevent major disruptions at workplaces and essential services, which may occur if huge numbers of people are constantly forced into isolation.

There are also concerns that transmissions could worsen as campaigning and political rallies began on Tuesday ahead of the March 9 presidential elections.

Prime Minister Kim said officials will consider both the pandemic's growing economic strain and threats posed by the omicron surge before announcing new social distancing measures on Friday.

While omicron more easily infects those who have been vaccinated or had COVID-19 previously, experts say vaccination and booster shots still provide strong protection from serious illness and death.

More than 86% of South Koreans have been fully vaccinated and 58% have received booster shots. Health officials plan to offer fourth vaccination shots at nursing homes and other long-term care settings starting later this month. **MDT/AP**

## CAMBODIA LAST FRESHWATER DOLPHIN IN MEKONG RIVER DIES

**T**HE last surviving freshwater Irrawaddy dolphin on a stretch of the Mekong River in northeastern Cambodia has died, apparently after getting tangled in a fishing net, wildlife officials said yesterday.

The aquatic mammal was found dead Tuesday on a riverbank in Stung Treng province near the border with Laos, Cambodia's Fisheries Conservation Department announced on its Facebook page.

The Irrawaddy dolphin, also known as the Mekong River dolphin, is classified as an endangered species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Other groups of these dolphins are found farther downstream in Cambodia and in two other freshwater rivers: Myanmar's Irrawaddy and Indonesia's Mahakam on the island of Borneo.

The first census of Irrawaddy dolphins in Cambodia in 1997 estimated their population was about 200. In 2020, the population was estimated to be 89, but there was optimism at that time that the number had stabilized.

The tail of the dolphin that died Tuesday was seen tangled in a fishing net about a week earlier, the Cambodian state news agency AKP reported. It said the dolphin was unable to swim properly after that and died due to its injury and inability to catch its usual prey for nourishment.

In addition to being entangled in fishing nets, the species is also threatened by pollution, according to Cambodia's Fisheries Administration and other conservationists. In recent years, risks have also increased due to climate change and waters made shallow by the construction of upstream dams, both of which decrease the number of other aquatic species that the dolphins eat. **MDT/AP**



## NORTH KOREA

# Regime celebrates late leader's birthday amid hardships

**N**ORTH Korea celebrated the 80th birthday of late leader Kim Jong Il with a concert, fireworks and a rare outdoor ceremony near its border with China, state media reported yesterday, as the country pushes for greater public support amid pandemic-related hardships.

The snowy celebration involving a cheering crowd is likely meant to solidify the leadership of Kim's son and current leader, Kim Jong Un, as he faces one of the toughest moments of his decade in power. The younger Kim said last year his country was grappling with "the worst-ever situation" due to the pandemic, U.N. sanctions and other problems.



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, a meeting is held to celebrate the 80th birth anniversary late leader Kim Jong Il in Samjiyon City

North Korea's state TV showed Kim Jong Un, dressed in a dark winter coat, waving when people clapped their hands and hopped as he appeared at the ceremony at Samjiyon city Tuesday on the eve of his father's birthday.

The official Korean Central News Agency said the

ceremony showed participants' firm resolves to rally behind Kim Jong Un and achieve a prosperity with self-reliance.

Similar ceremonies were held across North Korea to mark the birth anniversary, while senior officials visiting Samjiyon city observed fireworks and a

music concert, according to KCNA.

It's rare for North Korea to hold a high-profile state event in the city at the foot of Mount Paektu, the highest peak on the Korean Peninsula which is the heart of North Korea's foundation myth revolving around the Kim family. A major development project has also been underway in Samjiyon, which Kim Jong Un has said epitomizes his country's "iron will" to achieve prosperity.

The birthday of Kim Jong Il is one of the most important holidays in North Korea, along with that of Kim Il Sung, the late grandfather of Kim Jong Un who established North Korea in 1948. Kim Jong Un has ru-

led North Korea since Kim Jong Il died of a heart attack in late 2011.

Yesterday, North Korean citizens climbed Pyongyang's Mansu Hill to lay bouquets of flowers and to bow before the giant statues of Kim Jong Il and Kim Il Sung. Elsewhere in Pyongyang, signs with celebratory messages like "the great event of the nation" were set up along streets.

Last month, North Korea conducted a spate of missile tests in what some experts say was an attempt to pressure the United States to offer concessions like sanctions relief. North Korea paused testing activity before the start of the Winter Olympics in China, its last major ally and economic pipeline, earlier this month.

South Korea's Defense Ministry said North Korea's military hasn't showed any suspicious activities yesterday. **MDT/AP**



UKRAINE CRISIS

# NATO sees no sign Russia is pulling back troops

VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV,  
MOSCOW

**R**USSIA said yesterday it was returning more troops and weapons to bases, but NATO declared it saw no sign of a drawdown as fears that Moscow could invade Ukraine soon persisted.

Russia has massed about 150,000 troops east, north and south of Ukraine, sparking Western concerns it was planning an attack. Moscow denies it has any such plans and this week said it was pulling back some forces and weapons, though it gave few details. Those claims have been met with skepticism from the U.S. and its allies — even as they seemed to lower the temperature following weeks of escalating East-West tensions.

yesterday, the Russian Defense Ministry released a video showing a trainload of armored vehicles moving across a bridge away from Crimea, the Black Sea peninsula that Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014. A day earlier, the ministry reported the start of a pullback of troops following military exercises near Ukraine.

But NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg threw cold water on those statements, saying the military organization does not see any sign that Moscow is decreasing its troop levels in and around Ukraine.

"At the moment, we have not seen any withdrawal of Russian forces," he said, before chairing a meeting of NATO defense ministers in Brussels.

"If they really start to withdraw forces, that's something we will welcome but that remains to be seen."

Countries in the alliance have also expressed doubt, as have leaders in Ukraine. Caught between Russia and the West, Ukrainian leaders have repeatedly sought to project calm but also strength during the crisis.

In a show of resolve, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy declared — tipped by some officials as a possible start for an inva-



A Russian serviceman fires from his weapon during naval exercises at a military base in Syria

sion — a "day of national unity." To mark the day, demonstrators unfolded a 200-meter (656-foot) national flag at a sports arena in Kyiv.

"We are united by a desire to happily live in peace," Zelenskyy said in a video address to the nation. "We can defend our home only if we stay united."

The Russian military hasn't given the number of troops or weapons being withdrawn and offered few other details. And while Russian President Vladimir Putin has signaled he wants a diplomatic path out of the crisis, he hasn't committed to a full withdrawal.

Putin has emphasized that he did not want war and would rely on negotiations to achieve his key goal of keeping Ukraine from joining NATO.

While those comments seemed to change the tenor, Western leaders insisted that the crisis was far from over. President Joe Biden said Tuesday that American officials had not verified Russia's claim, and British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace also said "it's too soon to tell" whether the pullback is genuine, noting that the Russians "haven't taken the foot of the gas."

"I think what we ha-

ven't seen is evidence of withdrawal that has been claimed by the Kremlin," Wallace told Sky News. "In fact we've seen continued buildup of things like field hospitals and strategic weapons systems. Until we see a proper de-escalation, I think we should all be cautious about the direction of travel from the Kremlin."

Yesterday, Russian fighter jets flew training missions over Belarus that neighbors Ukraine to the north and paratroopers held shooting drills at firing ranges there as part of massive war games that the West feared could be used as cover for an invasion of Ukraine.

Belarusian Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei reaffirmed that all Russian troops and weapons will leave the country after the maneuvers wrap up Sunday.

Russia has denied having any invasion plans and has mocked Western warnings about an imminent invasion as "paranoia" and "madness."

Asked by German daily Welt if Russia was going to attack yesterday, Russia's ambassador to the European Union Vladimir Chizhov quipped: "Wars in

Europe rarely start on a Wednesday."

"There won't be an escalation next week either, on in the week after, or in the coming month," he said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov also pointed sarcastically at warnings of yesterday's invasion, saying that Russian officials had a good sleep on that night.

Russia wants the West to keep Ukraine and other former Soviet nations out of NATO, halt weapons deployments near Russian borders and roll back forces from Eastern Europe. The U.S. and its allies have roundly rejected those demands, but they offered to engage in talks with Russia on ways to bolster security in Europe.

Speaking after meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Putin said Tuesday that the West agreed to discuss a ban on missile deployment to Europe, restrictions on military drills and other confidence-building measures — issues that Moscow put on the table years ago. He added that Russia was willing to discuss those issues, but only in conjunction "with the main issues that are of primary importance for us." **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1992 CANNIBAL KILLER JAILED FOR LIFE



Serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer has been sentenced to life in prison by a court in Wisconsin for murdering and dismembering 15 young men and boys.

Dahmer, 31, was unable to convince the jury that his cannibalism and necrophilia were the result of madness. He was given 15 consecutive life sentences and will never be eligible for parole.

Dahmer's trial, which ended in Milwaukee on Saturday night (15 February), included some of the most gruesome evidence ever heard in a US courtroom.

It also became a test case of the insanity defence seldom used in America.

He has escaped the death sentence because Wisconsin is one of the few states which does not have capital punishment.

After sentence was passed, Dahmer read a statement to the court. In a calm voice he said: "I never wanted freedom. Frankly, I wanted death for myself. I knew I was sick or evil or both."

"Doctors have told me about my sickness and now I have some peace. I know how much harm I have caused. I feel so bad for what I did to those poor families."

Victims' families were in court and some lashed out at the bullet-proof screen, which was all that separated them from the man described by his own lawyer as "a steamrolling, killing machine".

Rita Isbell, sister of victim Errol Lindsey, lunged at Dahmer screaming: "You are Satan. I want to kill you."

Tears rolled down the face of Donald Bradehof, brother of another victim, as he said: "We lost the baby of our family - I hope you go to hell."

Dahmer tended to prey on young gay black men. The court was told how he drugged them with sleeping pills and practised crude lobotomies on the brains of three of them. Various body parts were found in his flat.

His lawyers argued he suffered from necrophilia, a compulsive desire to have sex with corpses. But the prosecution claimed Dahmer had chosen his victims carefully and had not intended to kill them all.

There has been criticism of the Milwaukee police for failing to realise there was a serial killer operating in the city.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Dahmer was convicted of 15 murders but confessed to 17 killings.

He became increasingly religious in prison and was baptised. On 28 November 1994 he was murdered by a fellow inmate, who bludgeoned him to death with a metal bar.

His killer Christopher Scarver was a black man with a diagnosed mental illness, who was later convicted of the murder. Before his death Dahmer talked to NBC about religion.

The interview - broadcast the day after his murder - revealed how he had previously believed he was accountable to no-one for his behaviour but since finding Christianity that had changed.

In his will, Dahmer requested no funeral or service of any kind.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

## YOUR STARS



### ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You can get good solid advice from relatives or close friends you trust. You'll have great insight. Trips will be exciting. Don't let any small misunderstandings get in the way.



### TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

It is best not to upset the apple cart if you learn information that may damage a colleague's reputation. You will be on the rampage today. You may be up for some changes in your home.



### GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Sudden changes of heart may cause disruptions in your domestic scene. Deceit around you is evident. Direct your energy into physical entertainment.



### CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

If you want to make your mark, try to get involved in projects that will bring you some glory. You can be sure that any dealing with large institutions should go well.



### LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

This will not be the best day to make changes or renovations to your residence. Your need to be in a leadership position will help you surpass any rivals you might encounter.



### VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

There might be a problem with a will or with an insurance policy. Chances are you could get stuck with a colleague's job unexpectedly. You can accomplish the most if you travel for business purposes.



### LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Monitor your budget carefully to avoid unnecessary stress. Don't put limitations on yourself. Uncertain changes regarding your personal life are evident.



### SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You will have some wonderful ideas that should bring you extra money. Don't agree to make any of those cosmetic alterations you've been considering.



### SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Don't hesitate to talk to your partner about rekindling your relationship. It's a great day to attend social functions. Don't be too quick to react.



### CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You'll look guilty if you don't lay your cards on the table. Be aware of any emotional deception. Do not sign legal contracts or documents today.



### AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Your partner may be erratic today if you haven't paid enough attention to him or her. Real estate investments will payoff. You can make money if you put your mind to it.

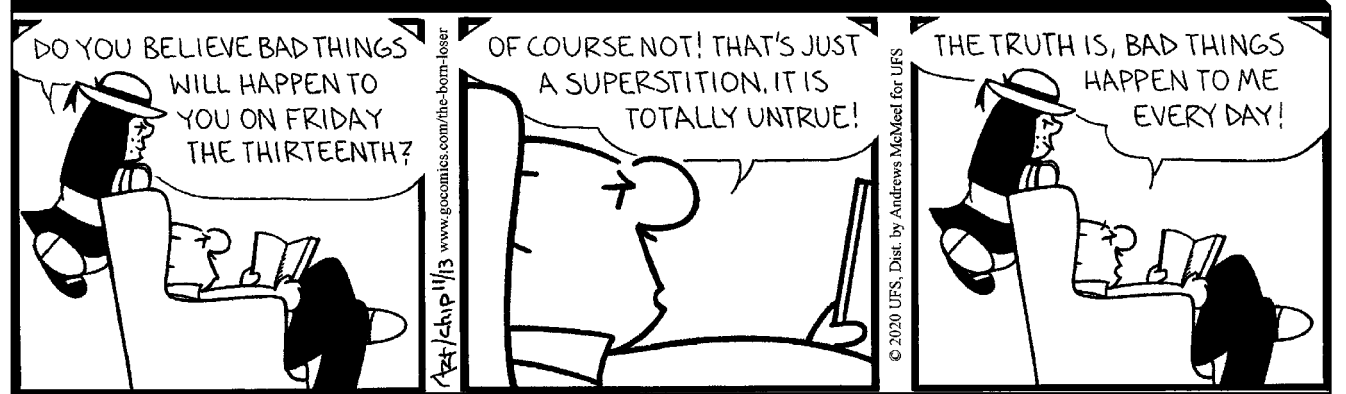


### PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Entertainment should include your whole family. You can look into new jobs but don't count on getting help from someone who may have promised you assistance.

## The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



## SUDOKU

### EASY

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

### EASY+

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

### MEDIUM

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

### HARD

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

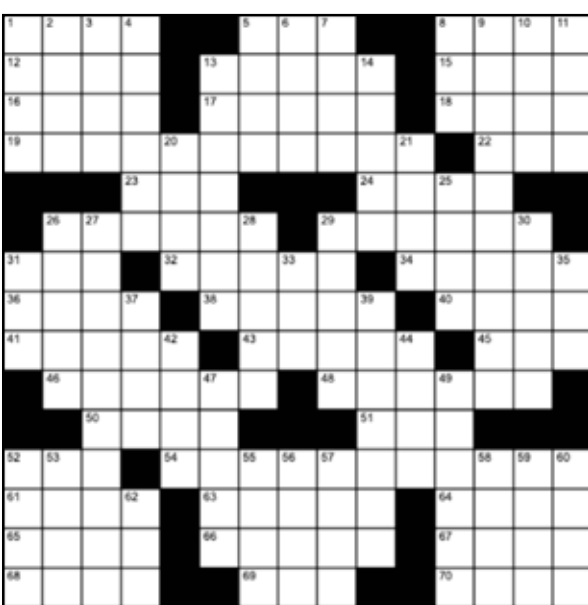
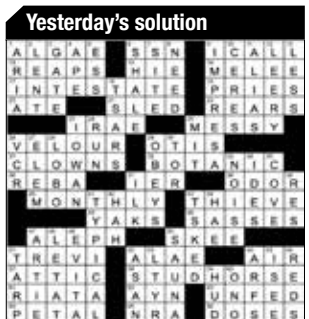
## WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	-9	0	cloudy
Harbin	-18	-6	cloudy
Tianjin	4	8	rain
Urumqi	7	11	rain
Xi'an	9	12	overcast
Lhasa	-9	-2	fine
Chengdu	8	11	rain
Chongqing	7	9	rain
Kunming	2	6	rain
Nanjing	21	26	rain
Shanghai	1	6	rain
Wuhan	-22	-9	fine
Hangzhou	-1	4	snow
Taipei	3	5	overcast
Guangzhou	13	18	rain
Hong Kong	17	18	rain
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-12	-14	snow
Frankfurt	3	4	cloudy
Paris	8	11	overcast
London	7	12	rain
New York	1	3	overcast

## CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- From the U.S.; 5- Literary monogram; 8- Word that can precede bodied and seaman; 12- \_\_\_ avis; 13- Actress Phoebe; 15- No \_\_\_!; 16- Fighting; 17- Maker of Pong; 18- Baltic capital; 19- Threaded fastener; 22- Spanish title; 23- 911 respondent; 24- Bird of prey; 26- Sharon's land; 29- Potentate; 31- This was produced by Van Gogh, for example; 32- Discontinue; 34- Stopwatch-holder; 36- Timber; 38- One who cries "uncle?"; 40- Ultimate; 41- Affectation of sophisticates; 43- Model Campbell; 45- Follower's suffix; 46- Do a slow burn; 48- Cedex; 50- Make tracks; 51- Heston's org.; 52- Boxer's warning; 54- Public assembly; 61- Nope; 63- Hickory-nut; 64- Switch back?; 65- Gilda of Israel; 66- Viewpoint; 67- Quartz grains; 68- Fill completely; 69- It may come after you; 70- Driving aids;

DOWN 1- Composer Khachaturian; 2- First name in spydom; 3- Actor Stoltz; 4- Prefer; 5- London gallery; 6- Thrust with a knife; 7- Architect Saarinen; 8- Calendar abbr.; 9- Wedding attendant; 10- Trademark; 11- Abba of Israel; 13- Snack bar; 14- Like corn tassels; 20- Apple variety; 21- Hue; 25- Follow; 26- Golf clubs; 27- Drupe; 28- Singer Frankie; 29- Lure; 30- Quizzes, trials; 31- Admiration; 33- Multitude; 35- Hwy.; 37- Shootout; 39- Distinguished; 42- Bit of gossip; 44- Able was \_\_\_; 47- Piles; 49- Current; 52- Wrigley varieties; 53- She played Carla on "Cheers"; 55- Actress Ward; 56- Injury reminder; 57- Long luxuriant hair; 58- Dies \_\_\_; 59- Zilch; 60- Olympus residents; 62- Charlemagne's realm; Abbr.;



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: 2110 6001 720 ft<sup>2</sup> 1 km 1 1



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

BEIJING 2022

# VALIEVA LISTED TWO LEGAL OXYGEN BOOSTERS ON OLYMPIC FORMS

EDDIE PELLIS, ZHANGJIAKOU

**T**WO legal substances used to improve heart function are listed on an anti-doping control form filled out for Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva before her drug case at the Olympics erupted, according to documents submitted in her case.

The World Anti-Doping Agency filed a brief in the Valieva case stating that the mention on the form of L-carnitine and Hypoxen, though both legal, undercuts the argument that a banned substance, trimetazidine, might have entered the skater's system accidentally.

Hypoxen, a drug designed to increase oxygen flow to the heart, was a substance the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency recently tried, without success, to get placed on the banned list. L-carnitine, another oxygen-boosting performance enhancer, is banned if injected above certain thresholds. The supplement was the focal point of the doping case involving track coach Alberto Salazar.

Combining those with 2.1 nanograms of trimetazidine, the drug found in Valieva's system af-

AP PHOTO



Kamila Valieva of the Russian Olympic Committee

ter a Dec. 25 test, is "an indication that something more serious is going on," USADA CEO Travis Tygart said.

"You use all of that to increase performance," he said. "It totally undermines the credibility" of Valieva's defense.

Two people with knowledge of the case told The Associated Press that a brief seen by AP that was filed by the World Anti-Doping Agency in a hearing on Valieva's case was authentic. The people spoke on condition of anonymity because the document was not

publicly available. WADA did not immediately respond to an email left by AP asking for comment on the brief.

The brief describes Valieva's mother as arguing that the skater's grandfather was a regular user of trimetazidine, which would ex-

plain how it got into her system.

WADA said while that explanation involves "some form of exposure" to trimetazidine, it is not an argument that she had taken a "contaminated product," which can be used as a defense.

In addition, WADA said there was no attempt to argue that the legal substances listed on the form were contaminated, either, so "the athlete necessarily cannot meet the criteria to have her" suspension lifted via the contaminated-product rule.

Valieva's positive test came to light after she had led the Russians to a gold medal in the team skating event last week. Russia's anti-doping agency at first suspended her, then lifted the suspension. That led WADA and the IOC to appeal to CAS, which determined Valieva could skate in the women's event that began Tuesday.

Because she is 15, she is considered a "protected person" under anti-doping rules and could escape major sanctions. Her coaches and other members of her entourage are subject to automatic investigation and bigger penalties.

The larger case involving the positive test, and resolving whether Russia will get its gold medal, will be decided later. In the meantime, the IOC has said there will be no medals ceremony for events in which Valieva makes the podium. She's a favorite for gold, and was leading after the short program. **MDT/AP**

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AP PHOTO



Shannon Abeda of Eritrea

# After blow of Beijing, Olympians ask: What about Africa?

JOHN LEICESTER, BEIJING

**V**ICTORY, of sorts, for Eritrea's sole Winter Olympian — one of just six athletes competing for African countries at the Games in China — was achieved even before his feat of surviving two runs in blizzard conditions down a hazardous course aptly named The Ice River.

Before flying to China for his Olympic ski race in the mountains northwest of Beijing, Shannon-Ogboni Abeda learned of a cross-country skier living in Germany who has been so inspired by Abeda's trailblazing that he's aiming to qualify for their East African nation at the next Winter Games in 2026.

"It was because of all the interviews that I did and, you know, me coming and doing this again," Abeda, who also raced at the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics, said after his 39th-place finish in the giant slalom that only 46 of 87 starters completed in Sunday's snowstorm.

"He wants to now carry the torch," Abeda said.

So just imagine: How many other enthused young wannabes could emerge from the African continent of 1.3 billion people, and from the African diaspora spread around the world, if they

only had more than a handful of Olympic pioneers leading the way, showing that barriers of racial prejudice, inequality and geography are surmountable?

That question is more pertinent than ever at the Beijing Games, because African representation has shrivelled since a record eight African nations, fielding twice as many athletes as in Beijing, competed in 2018. Eritrea, Ghana, Morocco, Madagascar and Nigeria are back; Kenya, South Africa and Togo are not.

Skiing — Alpine and cross-country — was the only sport Africans qualified for. There was just one African woman: Mialitiana Clerc, born in Madagascar and adopted by a French couple as a baby, is now a two-time Olympian. Having broken through in Pyeongchang, she raced in Beijing to 41st place, out of 80 starters, in giant slalom and 43rd, out of 88, in slalom.

Elsewhere, at the skating rinks, snow parks and sliding track, there was no African representation at all. African sliders were thwarted by less inclusive qualifying rules, despite making history in Pyeongchang. There, Nigeria fielded Africa's first-ever bobsled team; Simidele Adeagbo, also Nigerian, became the first African and Black woman in skeleton; and Ghana's Akwa-

si Frimpong blazed trails on the men's side.

Adeagbo, frustrated to have been left on the sidelines for Beijing, says the plunge in African representation requires an Olympic response. The movement's five rings are meant to symbolize the five inhabited continents. But in Beijing, Africa's presence feels barely bigger than a dot. Adeagbo notes that the Summer Olympics "see a rainbow of nations represented" and wonders why that's less the case in winter, given that "sport is supposed to be democratic for all."

"Is this the European Olympics or is this an Olympics that reflects the world?" she asked in a video interview with The Associated Press. "So hopefully this will be a catalyzing moment to help everybody kind of regroup and think about a different way forward."

"We're talking about the Olympics; we shouldn't have complete exclusion," Adeagbo said. "Given the resources and support, Africans are just as capable."

Looking ahead to 2026, the International Olympic Committee says it will reexamine qualification rules and quotas, which African Olympians want used to carve more space for them. But there's no sign of IOC dismay about Africa's retreat in Beijing.

"There are five continents represented here," said James Macleod, head of an IOC sponsorship program that helped fund athletes on their Beijing journeys.

The IOC gave individual scholarships to 429 athletes. Europe, with 295 beneficiaries, got the lion's share. Africa, with 16, got the least. Five African recipients qualified for Beijing. The Americas (50), Asia (47), and Oceania (21) got the remainder. The IOC says its aim is Winter Games that are more competitive, rather than "artificially" more universal.

African recipients say the funding was vital for them. They argue that increased financing for African winter athletes would see more qualify. Abeda — born in Canada, where his parents resettled in the 1990s, fleeing war in Eritrea — said US\$1,500 per month in IOC funding helped cover his living, training, coaching and equipment costs. He wants private businesses "to step up," too.

"At Pyeongchang, it was really great to see more Africans," he said. "At these Games, there's very little. So I am disappointed."

Adeagbo said her bobsled alone, cost \$40,000.

"I don't think any sport should be just for the privileged and these are the things that we need to

have real conversations about," she said. "Sport is not meant to be just for one group."

The IOC says COVID-19 disruptions that played havoc with athlete preparations could partially explain Africa's slump. Frimpong's hopes of qualifying again for Ghana in skeleton were dashed by coronavirus positives that forced him out of races ahead of Beijing. South Africa also likely would have sent athletes had it not been for the pandemic, says Cobus Rademeyer, head of social sciences at South Africa's Sol Plaatje University, who has written on Africa's history at the Winter Games.

"The pandemic has definitely broken the momentum," Rademeyer said by email to The AP. He expects Africa to bounce back for 2026, writing: "Although some people see the participation of African athletes at the Winter Olympics as 'glory-hunters,' it has been an inspiration for many others."

Skier Carlos Maeder, born in Ghana and adopted by Swiss parents, says he's been amazed by a flood of messages from supportive Ghanaians. Also an IOC scholarship recipient, he raced in the snow-hit giant slalom but skied out in the first run.

At 43, he'd like to find other Ghanaians to follow in his footsteps and "will ski as long as it's necessary to find some."

"I hope that these games will be a door opener," he said. "It's not just about the African continent: We are spread around the world. So that makes it important that our continent is represented." **MDT/AP**



OPINION

China Daily  
Editorial, China Daily

WASHINGTON IS ASKING ASIA-PACIFIC TO PAY THE PRICE FOR ISOLATING CHINA

In the Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States it released on Friday, the Joe Biden administration has notably proposed an Indo-Pacific economic framework. The harm that such a politically driven economic initiative can do to the region and beyond calls for the attention of all stakeholders.

Under the framework, the US will seek to set new standards and raise the thresholds for trade, investment and cooperation in technology and industry. All of these actions are targeted at reshuffling the current Indo-Pacific economic and trade cooperation mode with the aim of isolating China.

The framework envisioned by the Biden administration is more comprehensive than those of the Barack Obama and Donald Trump administrations. Both of which tried to set up a US-centered trade framework in the Indo-Pacific that excluded China.

Yet despite their lower requirements in comparison with the one the Biden administration has proposed, neither of those frameworks actually materialized, not only because of the caprice of the Trump administration, but more importantly because doing so would mean taking a wrecking ball to the existing economic framework in the region.

That framework has proved its worth over the past more than four decades, enabling the Asia-Pacific region to develop into a world growth engine.

Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand and Association of Southeast Asian Nations members all have close trade, economic and people-to-people connections with China. The US administration should know their nodding to its solicitations that they jump on the bandwagon of the new Indo-Pacific economic framework it proposes might reflect a few politicians' eagerness to curry favor with it, if not the effects of the US' coercion and intimidation.

But that does not mean it is the true inclinations of the nations, which are in multiple free trade and investment deals with each other and China. They are not going to tear these up simply to please Washington.

For them, cooperation with China and the rest of the world is largely based on a multilateral system with the World Trade Organization rules as the foundation; the arrangement the US has unveiled is fundamentally a US-centered system and they would have to surrender their initiative, if not their core data and technologies, to the US. The question is how many countries will bet their future on the US sharing the benefits.

Like those of its predecessors, the Biden administration's bid to impose a new system on the region is doomed to fail. But regional countries should be vigilant to the increasing possibility of the US trying to shatter the existing supply and value chains in pursuit of that goal, since it is the region that will end up paying the price.

CYBERATTACKS KNOCK OUT SITES OF UKRAINIAN ARMY, MAJOR BANKS

THE BUZZ

A series of cyberattacks knocked the websites of the Ukrainian army, the defense ministry and major banks offline, Ukrainian authorities said, as tensions persisted over the threat of a possible Russian invasion.

Still, there was no indication the relatively low-level, distributed-denial-of-service attacks might be a smokescreen for more serious and damaging cyber mischief.

At least 10 Ukrainian websites were unreachable due to the attacks, including the defense, foreign and culture ministries and Ukraine's two largest state banks. In such attacks, websites are barraged with a flood of junk data packets, rendering them unreachable.

"We don't have any information of other disruptive actions that (could) be hidden by this DDoS attack," said Victor Zhora, a top Ukrainian cyberdefense official. He said emergency response teams were working to cut off the attackers and recover services.

Customers at Ukraine's largest state-owned bank, Privatbank, and the state-owned Sberbank reported problems with online payments and the banks' apps.

Among the attackers' targets was the hosting provider for Ukraine's army and Privatbank, said Doug Madory, director of internet analysis at the network management firm Kentik Inc.

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Brian Panish, left, an attorney for the family of late cinematographer Halyna Hutchins, speaks next to a portrait of Hutchins at a news conference

ALEC BALDWIN SUED BY FAMILY OF CINEMATOGRAPHER KILLED ON SET

ANDREW DALTON, LOS ANGELES

THE family of a cinematographer shot and killed on the set of the film "Rust" sued Alec Baldwin and the movie's producers yesterday [Macau time] alleging their "callous" disregard in the face of safety complaints led directly to her death.

At a news conference announcing the lawsuit, attorneys for the husband and 9-year-old son of Halyna Hutchins said that Baldwin refused training for the type of "cross-draw" he was performing when he fired the shot that killed her.

Baldwin's attorney responded that any claim the actor was reckless is "entirely false."

The suit filed in New Mexico's Santa Fe County in the name of Matthew and Andros Hutchins shows a text message exchange between a camera operator and a producer in which a complaint over gun safety was met with what the suit calls "callous sarcasm."

The operator, Lane Luper, texted unit production manager Katherine Walters saying: "We've now had 3 accidental discharges. This is super unsafe."

Walters responds: "Ac-

cidental discharge on the firearm? Awesome. Sounds good."

At least four other lawsuits have been filed over the shooting, but this is the first directly tied to one of the two people shot.

The defendants' "reckless conduct and cost-cutting measures led to the death of Halyna Hutchins," attorney Brian Panish said.

Had proper protocols been followed, the suit says, "Halyna Hutchins would be alive and well, hugging her husband and 9-year-old son."

Baldwin, who was also a producer on the film, was pointing a gun at Hutchins inside a small church during the setup for the filming of a scene for the Western in New Mexico on Oct. 21 when it went off, killing Hutchins and wounding the director, Joel Souza. The attorneys showed an animated recreation of the shooting at the news conference.

Baldwin has said he was pointing the gun at Hutchins at her instruction and it went off without him pulling the trigger.

The suit says industry standards call for using a rubber or similar prop gun during the setup, and there was no call for a real gun.

It also says that both Baldwin and assistant director David Halls, who handed him the gun, should have checked the revolver for live bullets.

The suit also names as defendants Halls, Walters, the film's armorer Hannah Gutierrez Reed, and ammunition supplier Seth Kenney.

"Any claim that Alec was reckless is entirely false," Aaron Dyer, attorney for Baldwin and other producers, said in a statement yesterday. "He, Halyna and the rest of the crew relied on the statement by the two professionals responsible for checking the gun that it was a 'cold gun' - meaning there is no possibility of a discharge."

He added that "actors should be able to rely on armorers and prop department professionals, as well as assistant directors, rather than deciding on their own when a gun is safe to use."

Last month Baldwin turned over his cellphone to investigators, and Dyer said he continues to cooperate fully with the investigation.

Authorities have described "some complacency" in how weapons were handled on the "Rust" set. They have said it is too soon to determine whether charges will be filed.

Baldwin said he does not believe he will be criminally charged in the shooting.

Several crew members have filed lawsuits, including Gutierrez Reed, who blamed Kenney for the shooting. MDT/AP

EU's highest court ruled yesterday that the 27-nation bloc can suspend support payments to member states if they breach rule of law principles, and dismissed a challenge by Hungary and Poland. The right-wing governments of both nations had argued that such action lacked a proper legal basis. Both nations, large recipients of EU funds, have come under increasing criticism over the past few years for veering away from the Western principles of the respect for democratic values in their nations.

France is hosting a summit devoted to the fight against Islamic extremists in West Africa as Paris considers withdrawing its troops from Mali while maintaining military operations in the broader Sahel region, the French presidency said. The move comes amid growing tensions between Mali, its African neighbors and European partners.



Portugal The swearing-in of Portugal's new Socialist government may be delayed until mid-March, six weeks after the general election, due to a snafu over voting from abroad. In a ruling yesterday that embarrassed politicians, Portugal's Constitutional Court voided around 80% of mail-in votes cast by Portuguese living in the rest of Europe and ordered a rerun of January's balloting in those areas.



Brazil The death toll from devastating mudslides and floods that swept through a mountainous region of Rio de Janeiro state has reached 34, according to a statement from local authorities. After the city of Petropolis was slammed by a deluge, there are fears the number of dead could rise higher as searchers picked through the wreckage.