



ASIAN AMERICAN WILL APPEAL FROM THE IMPENDING VERDICT IN THE CASE AGAINST THE LOCAL SUBSIDIARIES OF LVS

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HIGHEST SAR AWARD GIVEN TO KIANG WU HOSPITAL AND CHUI SAI CHEONG

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THE TRANSPORT BUREAU IS WORKING WITH THE OPERATOR OF GOLDEN BUS TO MINIMIZE THE INCONVENIENCE CAUSED BY REDUCTION OF SERVICES

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AP PHOTO



Australia The Defense Department said that a Chinese navy ship fired a laser at one of its surveillance aircraft, putting the lives of the crew in danger. The incident happened last week when the P-8A Poseidon plane detected a laser illuminating the aircraft while in flight over Australia's northern approaches, the department said. Such episodes are not uncommon as the U.S. and its allies accuse China of asserting its military might, and have taken steps to challenge Beijing's growing clout in the western Pacific and elsewhere.

AP PHOTO



Iranian lawmakers have urged President Ebrahim Raisi to obtain guarantees from the U.S. and three European countries that they won't withdraw from the nuclear agreement being renegotiated in Vienna, an Iranian news agency reported yesterday. Meanwhile, Israel's prime minister said the emerging deal is less stringent than the previous agreement. Negotiators from Iran and the remaining parties to the agreement — Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China — are working to restore life to the 2015 accord.

AP PHOTO



EU The foreign policy chief said yesterday that he's deeply concerned about tensions in Bosnia and has appealed to leaders there to avoid the breakup of the Balkan country. "The situation in Bosnia is more worrying than ever. It was never easy, but now the centrifugal tendencies are really very worrying," Josep Borrell, the EU's high representative for foreign policy, said at an annual security conference in Munich.

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WORST WAVE YET

Hong Kong is sinking under the fifth wave of Covid-19, causing authorities to postpone election, impose stringent anti-virus controls as over 6,000 new cases were reported; Macau and Beijing send help

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AP PHOTO

XINHUA

BEIJING 2022 CHINA KEEPS PROMISES AS WINTER OLYMPICS DRAWS TO 'TRIUMPHANT CLOSE'

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LABOR BUREAU'S 24 JOB-MATCHING SESSIONS PUT 610 INTO EMPLOYMENT

The Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) has said that its 24 job-matching sessions since December 2021 resulted in the employment of some 610 residents. The reason for not securing employment for the remaining participants was mainly their lack of interest in the job referred to them. As such, it launched a series of presentations for jobseekers' market demands, job seeking and relaxation techniques, as well as information on vocational training. The series of events will be held in association with employers.

GAMING TAX REVENUE UP BY 13.8% Y-O-Y IN 2021

The Macau SAR government collected approximately MOP33.91 billion in gaming taxes in 2021, a growth of 13.8% year-on-year and an amount constituting 68% of the estimated goal for the year. Direct taxes from gaming accounted for 67.2% of the Macau SAR's MOP50.44 billion in total revenue collected in 2021. The total amount of casino gross gaming revenue last year stood at MOP86.8 billion, an increase of 43.7% on the MOP 60.44 billion collected in the previous year. The government in November revised the estimate to MOP33.73 billion, after Covid-19 outbreaks in the SAR and the mainland continued to impact visitor numbers, combined with the continued compression of the VIP market pool.

HAO VS LVS

AAEC LAWYER TO APPEAL TO TSI FROM UNANNOUNCED VERDICT

RENATO MARQUES

THE Asian American Entertainment Company (AAEC) will appeal from the impending verdict in the case against the local subsidiaries of the Las Vegas Sands Corporation (LVS) that is running in the Court of First Instance (TJB).

The information was announced to media outlet TDM by Jorge Menezes, the lawyer representing the AAEC as part of the case.

The announcement of an appeal being prepared comes as the verdict of the case in TJB is still to be formally handed down.

In the case, Menezes said that the preparation of the appeal will follow the reading, last week, of the facts considered proven and unproven by the court, which led to the acknowledgment from the AAEC that the case, insofar as the first instance is concerned, has been lost by the AAEC.

During the session where the

RENATO MARQUES



court is scheduled to hear from the legal representatives of both sides as to their response to the decisions of the court on objections to factual matters before the court issues the final ruling, none of the sides presented any concrete objections, although, according to a TDM report, Menezes said that he had never seen a judgment with so many flaws and contradictions in his legal career.

Still, he prefers to keep his justification for the appeal that he is filing in the Court of Second Instance (TSI).

He also reaffirmed his willingness to take the case through every avenue of appeal available in an attempt to secure justice for his client Marshall Hao, whom he said has been looking for justice on the matter for over 20 years.

Before the final verdict being

handed down, the date for which has not yet been set, the court will still have to handle a few procedures, namely the reception of written arguments from the lawyers of both sides.

In the previous session, held on Tuesday last week, the court considered that most of the facts the plaintiff presented to the court to justify a compensation claim in the amount of around MOP60 billion were unproven.

CE presents awards to 22 individuals and entities

THE Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng, presented awards to a total of 22 individuals and organisations Friday for their achievement, outstanding contribution or distinguished service on behalf of Macau in 2021.

No Decoration of Honour – Silver Lotus or Grand Lotus were awarded this year.

The Golden Lotus is awarded to individuals or entities said to have made outstanding contributions to the image and reputation of the MSAR.

The Decoration of Honour – Golden Lotus, the highest honor awarded by the Macau SAR, was given to the private Kiang Wu Hospital and to Chui Sai Cheong, vice-president of the Legislative Assembly.



Seven types of Medal of Merit are awarded, covering Professions; Industry and Commerce; Tourism; Edu-

cation; Culture; Philanthropy; and Sports.

Each of the awards in these categories is for indi-

viduals or entities that have made major or excellent contributions in their respective fields. JW

DECORATIONS, MEDALS AND CERTIFICATES OF MERIT AWARD RECIPIENTS

MEDAL OF MERIT – PROFESSIONS

State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine (University of Macau)
State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicines (Macau University of Science and Technology)

MEDAL OF MERIT – INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

U Seng Pan
Wu Tat Chong

MEDAL OF MERIT – TOURISM

Cinco de Outubro Pastelaria (Macau), Limitada

MEDAL OF MERIT – EDUCATION

Rui Paulo da Silva Martins

MEDAL OF MERIT – CULTURE

Chui Weng Chi
Au Chon Hin

MEDAL OF MERIT – PHILANTHROPY

Emergency Department of Conde S. Januário Hospital

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ANTHONY LAM

IN his latest written inquiry, directly-elected lawmaker Ron Lam has slammed the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) for not proactively revealing its acquisition of the Chio Mansion.

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

The committee, when studying the execution rate of the public Investment and Development Expenditure Plan (PI-DDA) of the second and third quarters of the 2021 fiscal year, was told by the government that MOP8 million was spent to acquire real property on Travessa da Porta. The property is commonly known as the Chio Mansion.

The lack of disclosure of the purchase of the Chio Mansion to date was facilitated by the engagement of personal privacy protections, Leong Wai Man, president of the IC, said after being questioned about the mystery surrounding the move.

Leong added that premature revelation of the acquisition may trigger speculation about the property's price.

Despite standing with the IC on its justification for prospective secrecy, Lam slammed the bureau for not releasing information on the purchase following the deal. Moreover, neither was the public made aware of the grounds for the acquisition, among other details of the operation.

Lam finds the fashion in which the IC handled the acquisition and the release of related

Lawmaker slams IC for lack of transparency in heritage acquisition

information "difficult to accept, which also violated the principle of openness and transparency regularly emphasized by the government."

The lawmaker was also not happy about the lack of transparency in the operation of the Cultural Heritage Committee which has never expressly mentioned the details of this acquisition.

He added that the committee has had diminishing level of transparency in its operation, from allowing the press to sit in on meetings without confidential information, to the latest phase of not notifying the press about the committee's meeting taking place, despite press releases being disseminated afterwards.

As a result, Lam questioned the government about the procedures and mechanisms based on which the IC purchases constructions of historic value or utilizes its priority rights stipulated in the Cultural Heritage Law. He also wondered how the IC ensures the public interest is served in its decision to buy or not buy certain properties.

On the openness of the committee, Lam asked if the government has plans to reopen meetings to the public, unless topics of confidentiality are discussed. Moreover, he asked about the promulgation timetable of the Executive Regulation for the Protection and Management Plan for the Historic Centre of Macao.



SERIES OF EVENTS PROMOTING CULTURAL HERITAGE PROTECTION TO RETURN

AS in previous years, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) will throughout this year organize a series of events to educate the community about protecting cultural heritage.

Mobile promotion kiosks, the exhibition of comic drawings and hand puppet drama performances will be held across the city to promote the protection of cultural heritage to locals and tourists. Furthermore, information on the Cultural Heritage Protection Law will be disseminated, the IC noted.

Kiosks will be set up on weekend afternoons in various places throughout the city to educate local and external communities about the provisions of the Cultural Heritage Protection Law. The locations

of the kiosks include some of the most popular landmarks in the city, such as the Pearl of the Orient, the Tap Seac Square, the Camões Garden and the "Three Lampposts."

IC's libraries in Seac Pai Van, in Patane, on Largo de Santo Agostinho and in Taipa will see exhibitions of comic drawings featuring cultural heritage protection information. The same exhibition will also be held in the libraries of four higher education institutions.

Hand puppet dramas, meanwhile, will be held in the Taipa, Patane, Ho Tung and Seac Pai Van Libraries, as well as in the Lou Kau Mansion.

The series of events will be held until the end of the year. **AL**

DSAT attempts to mitigate impact of Golden Bus service cuts

THE Transport Bureau (DSAT) has said that it is working with the operator of Golden Bus to minimize the inconvenience caused by the sudden reduction of its evening services.

Golden Bus is the colloquial name given to the public shuttle running between Macau and Hong Kong, as well as between Hong Kong and Zhuhai.

The service reduction, according to various sources, was instructed or ordered by the government, to which it has relented. The hasty decision has left many – among whom a Macau tea entrepreneur – helpless on the road to return home.

DSAT's coordination

may have come a little late because, according to Justin Ng, the Japanese tea ritual professional and entrepreneur, his inquiry regarding the service was swung like a tennis ball between the government and the operator of the bus.

He says his initial inquiry – made right after he was told that his bus booking was cancelled – resulted in the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) deferring its responsibilities, the Health Bureau (SSM) pledging to give a reply when it becomes available, as well as the Golden Bus operator claiming that no instruction on compensational services had been received.

As of press time, Ng has already returned to Macau after eventually being transferred to another time slot.

His return infuriated a multitude of Facebook users on public broadcaster TDM's page, under the video depicting his story. The social media users blamed him for taking advantage of his status. In fact, Ng started his business in Macau but did not get the same appreciation as he does in Hong Kong.

Similar social media reactions – especially those blaming returnees for bringing the Covid-19 virus in – have occurred almost every time returnees have tested positive in Macau. **AL**



JING WU

A man has been detained on charges of substantial fraud, issuing empty cheques and money laundering, involving a total of MOP2.93 million, the Judiciary Police (PJ) announced.

According to the PJ, in mid-February 2022, the PJ and the Public Security Police Force of Macau received 16 reports, including by a number of elderly people, of fraudulent claims of losses totalling MOP2.93 million from a local man pretending to be a staff member of an aerial company who was offering valuable gifts for the installation of TV set-top boxes.

The PJ took over the investigation and arrested the suspect on Wednesday night, "but he refused to cooperate," the authority stated.

The suspect, surnamed Chan, is 38 years old and is reported to be unemployed.

The 16 victims included nine men and seven women, aged between 23 and 81, who were unemployed, retired, businessmen, gambling workers, electricians, chief security officers and casino electricians. The remainder are local residents, most of whom live in the North District.

The PJ said that some elderly people have had the entire contents of their bank accounts transferred.

According to the authority, due

CRIME

LOCAL MAN DETAINED OVER MOP2.9M FRAUD



to the large amount of money involved, a special task force has been set up by the superintendent to follow up on all the cases.

"[Upon] investigation, police detained the man outside a building in Rua do Almirante Sérgio

on Wednesday, but he refused to co-operate," the PJ added.

About MOP300,000 of suspected stolen money was seized during the operation, as well as a number of tools used to commit the crime, including TV set-top boxes.

who answered the door.

During the installation, a "staff card" was presented. Although the customer did receive the gifts, the fraudster would claim that the company had a requirement that the customer had to pay a "deposit" ranging from a few thousand to tens of thousands of patacas to receive the valuable gifts, and that the "deposit" would be returned in full after one month.

"Therefore, the client believes it to be true," PJ said.

A month later, the fraudster comes back to the customer and presents them with a cheque for the refund of the "deposit".

During the "visit," the fraudster claims that the cheque issued by the company is for more than the "deposit" and asks the customer to return the difference in cash or by transferring the money via internet banking.

The fraudsters also assisted some of the older clients to use their mobile phones to transfer money via internet banking, in order to transfer all the money from the elderly's bank accounts.

The fraudsters defrauded the clients of between MOP2,000 and MOP730,000. When the cheques were cashed, they turned out to be blank cheques and the fraudsters could no longer be contacted.

The case has been referred to the Public Prosecutor's Office for investigation.

IFTM HOSTS MACANESE FOOD PROMOTION WEEK

A Macanese Food Promotion Week hosted jointly by the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM) and the Associação dos Macaenses (ADM) will be held this week to promote Macau's gastronomic culture.

The IFTM Educational Restaurant will present nearly 20 classic Macanese dishes to "promote the region's unique Macanese gastronomy," the institute indicated.

According to IFTM, the Macanese dishes are characterised by the influences of Malaysian, Indian and Portuguese flavours such as 'Camarões Malaio,' stir-

-fried tiger prawns with turmeric; 'Galinha di tempu di caça,' chicken stew with green olives; and 'Saransurável,' sponge cake with coconut frosting.

Fernandes, who heads ADM, has contributed to the publication of several culinary books, participated in food workshops, and appeared in a Macanese television cooking series. Currently, she is promoting Macanese cuisine at the ADM's member's restaurant.

In 2021, IFTM was appointed as the protection unit for national intangible cultural heritage linked to Macanese

Gastronomy.

To this end, the institute has offered Macanese gastronomy cooking courses. Moreover, the IFTM has also launched a web version of the Macanese Cuisine Database in collaboration with the Macao Government Tourism Office, the Cultural Affairs Bureau, the International Institute of Macau and other organisations.

Additionally, the institute set up a dedicated space for Macanese cuisine data in its library, "which is home to a variety of classic recipes, manuscripts, Macanese culinary books, and publications."

The IFTM Educational Restaurant is open for reservations during the Macanese Food Promotion Week. JW



Actress Chrissie Chau

LOCAL ACTRESS NOMINATED AT HONG KONG GOLDEN FILM AWARDS

JING WU

ACTRESS Chrissie Chau has been nominated for Best Actress in a Leading Role at the 40th Hong Kong Golden Film Awards for the Macau film Maddalena, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) has announced.

The film is one of the projects selected as part of the Film Production Support Programme of the IC, and was directed and written by Macau director Emily Chan.

Madalena, which was released in Hong Kong and Macau in 2021, stars Louis Cheung Kai Chung and Chrissie Chau, and tells the story of two strangers who meet, fall in love and

get to know one other as they navigate through life in Macau.

The film has been nominated for the 55th Golden Horse Film Festival, invited as a competition film for the 23rd Far East Film Festival in Udine, Italy, and the Sunrise International Film Festival in Japan, and was the opening film of the Hong Kong Asian Film Festival in 2021.

On the same note, the Macau director, Emily Chan has expressed her excitement at having her film shortlisted for the Golden Film Awards, saying she was honored that the film and its cast had been recognized by the organizers and judges.



Macau, mainland medical team support Hong Kong Covid-19 response efforts

A Macau nucleic acid testing team was sent to Hong Kong via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Friday, to support the fight against the fifth wave of Covid-19.

The medical aid team of eight professional inspection and technical personnel arranged by China Certification & Inspection Group Macau (CCIC Macau), will join with CCIC Hong Kong to provide support to the Yuen Long district in Hong Kong.

The team is initially set to remain until the end of the fifth wave of pandemic outbreak in Hong Kong.

CCIC Macau said the aim of the action is to ensure the scientific and efficient completion of Hong Kong's large-scale nucleic acid testing target.

The eight-strong testing team, consisting of four men and four women, are all laboratory nucleic acid testers, who are the "technical backbone" of CCIC Macau.

CCIC Macau is the only agency



accredited by Mainland authorities to carry out inspection and quarantine operations in Macau, and is authorized by the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council.

Meanwhile, the second team of mainland health experts and workers arrived in Hong Kong via the Shenzhen Bay Port on Saturday.

The team is comprised of 114 members, including four critical care medical specialists, four administrative staff members, and 106 sampling workers.

The four critical care specialists will discuss with clinical medi-

cal experts in Hong Kong on the treatment of severe and critical Covid-19 cases, and share the treatment experience of Covid-19 patients in the mainland.

Also on Saturday, the construction of two community isolation and treatment facilities built with assistance from the mainland began at Penny's Bay and Kai Tak Pier in Hong Kong, respectively.

Designed and constructed by China State Construction International Holdings Ltd., the two isolation facilities are expected to provide about 9,500 quarantine units when fully operational. JW/XINHUA

COVID-19

HEALTH AUTHORITIES REPORT ANOTHER THREE IMPORTED ASYMPTOMATIC CASES

THREE further cases of asymptomatic infection with Covid-19 have been found in residents arriving in Macau from Hong Kong, health authorities have reported.

According to a statement from the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center, last Saturday, a 52-year-old and a 10-year-old tested positive after being transferred from the quarantine hotel where they were undergoing medical observation to the Public Health Clinical Center in Coloane.

They had initially been transferred to the Clinical Center after having been considered close contacts of a 41-year-old woman who had already tested positive last Wednesday (February 16).

Information from the center notes that the three people entered Macau from Hong Kong together on the evening of February 13 and had all been staying in the same room at the Regency Art Hotel in Taipa.

In addition, a local resi-

dent who arrived in Macau February 14 from Hong Kong tested positive for Covid-19 on Friday.

The 59-year-old male resident was inoculated with three doses of the mRNA vaccine in April, May and December 2021.

He arrived in Macau by bus via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. Upon arrival, he returned a negative Covid-19 test immediately and was subsequently transferred to the Pousada Marina Infante Hotel for medical observation.

On Saturday, he tested positive for Covid-19 and was transferred to Public Health Clinical Center in Coloane for medical isolation. The man is showing no symptoms of the virus.

The three new cases have been classified as imported cases of asymptomatic infection and not confirmed cases of infection by Covid-19, being the reason that the cases were not added to the local statistics of confirmed cases. RM/JW

COVID-19

HEALTH AUTHORITIES URGE VACCINATION OF THREE AGE GROUPS

RENATO MARQUES

THE Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center have issued a statement calling on people unvaccinated against Covid-19 to become inoculated as soon as possible.

The center appeals particularly to those in three different age groups to get vaccinated with urgency, claiming that the number of cases of death and severe disease has been rising in the neighboring regions, affecting children and the elderly.

In this sense, the center aims to raise the vaccination rate among three different age groups including, children from 3 to 11 years old; senior citizens with ages ranging between 70- and 79-years-old; and those aged 80-years-old and above.

Authorities said in the same statement that currently, the vaccination rates for these three groups is low. The vaccination rate for those aged between 70 and 79 years old is 45.7%, while it is



a low of 6.7% for the young children group. The vaccination among the most elderly is also considered very low, at 17.9%.

According to the same health authorities, the low rates of vaccination amongst these three groups are pulling down the general vaccination rate of Macau, which now stands at 75.4%.

The authorities justify their call with the fact that the elderly and those with chronic diseases are at greater risk of contracting a serious illness, the reason for which they are considered a priority group for vaccination.

As for the children, the

center stated that "the risk of serious illness in children cannot be ignored either."

At midnight today the deadline given by the government for the vaccination of all civil servants that are eligible to be inoculated with a Covid-19 vaccine was reached. Those that fail to comply will not be able to work, namely in job roles in which contact with the public is necessary.

According to the figures cited by the health authorities last Thursday, 83.6% of all civil servants have already received two or three doses of the vaccine and 85.6% have already received at least one dose of the vaccine.

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HONG KONG POSTPONES LEADER ELECTION AMID COVID-19 OUTBREAK

HONG Kong will postpone the election of its next leader until May 8 as it grapples with a worsening coronavirus outbreak with thousands of new infections daily.

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said Friday the election will be delayed six weeks from March 27 because holding the polls as originally scheduled would pose "public health risks" even if a committee of only 1,462 people is involved.

Hong Kong's leader is elected by a committee made up of legislators, representatives of various industries and professions, and pro-Beijing representatives such as Hong Kong deputies to the Chinese national parliament.

Several candidates including film producer Checkley Sin and Titus Wu, a former member of Hong Kong's largest pro-establishment political party, have confirmed their intention to run. It is not clear if Lam will run for reelection.

Lam also said there were plans to test the entire city of Hong Kong for Covid-19, but denied that it would be put under a strict lockdown even as the city pursues a "zero Covid" approach.

"Mandatory testing and a complete city lockdown may not need to go hand in hand.

It depends on the actual situation," she said. "In our case, having examined the unique situation in Hong Kong, we'll probably just go for universal testing of everyone, but testing more times."

She cited as an example Macao, which has tested its entire population twice for the virus.

Health authorities said Thursday that the city's hospitals were at 90% capacity and that its isolation facilities were full. Hong Kong's daily new cases exceeded 2,000 for the first time on Monday. On Friday, over 3,600 new local infections were reported.

Hong Kong has aligned itself with mainland China's strict "zero-Covid" policy that involves quarantining incoming travelers, total lockdowns, extensive contact tracing and mass testing of millions of people.

Lam has stuck to the same strategy despite the city's greater population density, higher incomes and more service-oriented economy than in mainland China. Last week, the entire upscale Discovery Bay neighborhood in Hong Kong was ordered to undergo testing after authorities found traces of the virus in its sewage. **MDT/A**



ELECTION POSTPONEMENT NECESSARY: BEIJING

THE postponement of the election for the Chief Executive of China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) was necessary, sensible and legitimate, the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council said on Friday.

HKSAR Chief Executive Carrie Lam earlier on Friday announced that the election, originally scheduled for March 27, would be postponed to May 8 due to the Covid-19 epidemic.

The HKSAR government's decision to postpone the election in accordance with the law shows its sense of responsibility concerning the health of Hong Kong residents and its determination to control the epidemic by all means necessary and as quickly as possible, and the central government

fully supports the decision, the office said in a statement.

As the epidemic situation in the HKSAR has deteriorated quickly, President Xi Jinping is deeply concerned with the safety and health of the Hong Kong compatriots, and pays close attention to the region's fighting the epidemic, according to the statement.

Demonstrating the principle of putting people and their lives front and center, the decision will help the HKSAR government unite the society in concentrating on battling the Covid-19 epidemic, the office said.

The decision will also help make sure the election will take place under fair, just, open and safe conditions, and is in line with Hong Kong's overall and long-term interests, it added. **MDT/XINHUA**

HONG KONG SAYS ANTI-VIRUS CONTROLS MIGHT BE TIGHTENED

STRINGENT anti-virus controls that ban public gatherings in Hong Kong of more than two people might be tightened to stop a surge in infections, the territory's top health official said yesterday as 14 deaths and more than 6,000 new cases were reported.

Health Secretary Sophia Chan, speaking on a radio program, gave no details of possible new restrictions and called on the public to stay at home.

Hong Kong already is operating under its strictest curbs on travel, business and public activity since the pandemic began. In place since Feb. 10, they also prohibit gatherings of more than two households. Restaurants, hair salons and religious sites were ordered closed.

The territory had 6,067 confirmed cases in the previous 24 hours. That was clo-



se to Thursday's 6,116 cases, its highest daily total yet.

Chief Executive Carrie Lam said last week the rapid spread of the omicron variant was overwhelming Hong Kong hospitals. The government said Thursday that 90% of hospital beds were filled.

To ease the pressure, construction crews from mainland China will buy-

ld isolation units for 10,000 people after crowding at hospitals forced patients to wait outdoors in winter cold.

Also Sunday, the government said Environment Secretary Wong Kam-sing would work from home after his driver received a preliminary positive virus test result. Wong tested negative but he and his driver will undergo additional testing. **MDT/AP**

CHINA CHARGES BLOGGER WITH INSULTING KOREAN WAR DEAD

A popular figure on Chinese social media has been arrested on charges he insulted soldiers who froze to death during a Korean War battle.

Luo Changping referred to Chinese soldiers known as the "Ice Sculpture Company" as the "Sand Sculpture Company," or "Stupid Company" in internet slang, on his Sina Weibo account.

Luo's case was handed to prosecutors in his southern hometown of Sanya in January, state TV reported Saturday. It gave no indication when he might stand trial.

The "Ice Sculpture Company" were soldiers who froze to death during a battle with U.S.-led United Nations forces at Chosin Reservoir in November and December



1950. Temperatures are estimated to have fallen as low as -40 C.

Luo has some 2 million followers online, according to China Central Television.

Luo is accused of "insulting and slandering" war heroes, which is "blatant opposition to and trampling on core socialist values and patri-

tism," CCTV said on its website.

It gave no details of possible penalties, but other news reports cited the Law on the Protection of Heroes and Martyrs. The law allows for prosecution or lawsuits against people accused of hurting the reputation of war veterans but gives no specific penalties. **MDT/AP**

China keeps promises as Winter Olympics draws to 'triumphant' close

THE Olympic flame has been extinguished, bringing down the curtain on the Beijing 2022 Winter Games, but the passion still lingers from the sports gala that has enlivened and inspired the world amid the pandemic.

After all 109 medal events had been decided, the closing ceremony was held yesterday at the National Stadium in Beijing, the first ever city to have hosted both the Summer and Winter Olympics. The Olympic baton now has been passed to the Italian cities Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo, which will host the 2026 Winter Games.

The 2022 Winter Olympics stands out as it both provided a stage for the world's top winter sports athletes and also highlighted China's efforts to host a safe and sustainable global-scale event.

Thomas Bach, President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), lauded the Beijing Winter Olympics as "truly exceptional" when addressing at the closing ceremony yesterday.

"The Olympic spirit could only shine so brightly, because the Chinese people set the stage in such an excellent way - and in a safe way," said Bach.

"The Olympic Villages were outstanding. The venues - magnificent. The organization - extraordinary [...] This unforgettable experience was only possible because of our gracious hosts, the Chinese people," he added.

THE OLYMPIC SPIRIT SHINES

"Let the Olympic spirit of peace, mutual respect, and understanding shine throughout the Games and beyond," said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in a video message to the opening of the Games on February 4.

And the smooth running of the Olympics has met what the organizers promised - that is, to warm up the world through greatness in winter sports and offer up tear-jerking and heart-filled moments.

Ski prodigy Gu Ailing



caused a huge sensation at the Olympics, as the 18-year-old became the first freestyle skier to win three medals in a single Games, inspiring millions of people of younger generations.

"It's really great to see and it's so inspiring. She makes me want to be a better skier myself. I think she's amazing for the sport," said British freestyler Zoe Atkin.

The host nation dispatched a 388-member contingent, including 177 athletes. With its largest-ever presence in the Winter Games, China recorded its best-ever Winter Olympic haul of 15 medals, while powerhouse Norway leads the medal count with 37 medals, 16 of which are gold.

But medals are not all that matters at the Olympic Games.

After losing to the United States, China's curling duo Fan Suyuan and Ling Zhi presented their American counterparts, Vicky Persinger and Chris Plys with a set of pin badges featuring Bing Dwen Dwen, the mascot for the Games that has gone viral.

China's four-time Olympian Xu Mengtao finally realized her dream of winning an Olympic gold in the women's aerials and she burst into tears before receiving a long hug from American freestyle skier Ashley Caldwell.

Despite coming in last in the women's 3,000m, German speed skater Claudia Pechstein embraced the result as if she had won a

gold. "It's my success!" remarked the 49-year-old who made history to become the oldest woman Winter Olympian, and the first-ever female, to compete in eight Winter Olympics.

AN ENDURING OLYMPIC LEGACY

Beijing 2022 has been a journey about both physical and human infrastructure: encompassing green construction and reuse of venues, and massive investment to fuel domestic participation in winter sports.

Several technologies were applied for the first time to realize a carbon-neutral event. All competition venues were powered with renewable energy, marking a first in the Games history. As a gesture of the Games' sustainable intent, the National Speed Skating Oval in downtown Beijing - which measures 12,000 square meters - is the first Olympic venue in the world to use carbon dioxide for making ice.

The impressive Big Air Shougang has seen world's top snowboarders flying down ramps built on the side of former cooling towers, but the gigantic ski ramp rising from a disused steel mill was designed with a bigger agenda: boosting the winter sports industry and tourism.

"The design of new solutions for the venues will be a sign for everyone else that it is doable," said Dubi.

"Sports venues and infrastructure are certainly the tangible legacies of the

Games, but the human capital is possibly an even more impactful aftermath. Engaging and educating children and youths about the Olympic Games and Olympic values goes beyond sport," he added.

The world can expect the passion generated for winter sports to loom larger and longer, as more Chinese people become true-hearted winter sports enthusiasts due to the Games.

As of last October, around 346 million people -- about a quarter of the country's population -- have participated in winter sports since China's successful bid to host the Winter Olympics, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. China's winter sports industry is projected to achieve one trillion RMB in value by 2025.

China's fulfillment of its pledge to engage 300 million people in winter sport was praised by Bach, who hailed it as an "unprecedented, great achievement" and an important legacy of Beijing 2022.

"With over 300 million people now engaged in

winter sports, with the great success of the Chinese athletes, the positive legacy of these Olympic Winter Games is ensured," said Bach.

"With the truly exceptional Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022 we welcome China as a winter sport country."

And the inspiration derived from the 2022 Olympics goes far beyond sport.

"What we could learn is that in the Olympic movement if we are united, we can be extremely resilient," said Bach, adding that this has been demonstrated by organizing Olympics under the pandemic.

The Games could also very much contribute to expanding the global knowledge and better understanding of China's philosophy and ideas, said Muhammad Asif Noor, secretary general of the Pakistan Organization Friendship Forum.

The Games' motto of "Together for a Shared Future" corresponds to China's aspiration of building a community with a shared future for mankind, he added. XINHUA

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UKRAINE CRISIS

Ukraine's Zelenskyy calls on Putin to meet as tensions soar

JIM HEINTZ, DASHA LITVINOVA & LORI HINNANT, MOSCOW

UKRAINIAN President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, facing a sharp spike in violence in and around territory held by Russia-backed rebels and increasingly dire warnings that Russia plans to invade, on Saturday called for Russian President Vladimir Putin to meet him and seek resolution to the crisis.

"I don't know what the president of the Russian Federation wants, so I am proposing a meeting," Zelenskyy said at the Munich Security Conference, where he also met with U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris. Zelenskyy said Russia could pick the location for the talks.

"Ukraine will continue to follow only the diplomatic path for the sake of a peaceful settlement."

There was no immediate response from the Kremlin.

Zelenskyy spoke hours after separatist leaders in eastern Ukraine ordered a full military mobilization



A Ukrainian serviceman stands in a shelter on a position at the line of separation between Ukraine-held territory and rebel-held territory near Zolote, Ukraine, Saturday

on Saturday while Western leaders made increasingly dire warnings that a Russian invasion of its neighbor appeared imminent.

In new signs of fears that a war could start within days, Germany and Austria told their citizens to leave Ukraine. German air carrier Lufthansa canceled flights to the capital, Kyiv, and to Odessa, a Black Sea port that could be a key target in an invasion.

NATO's liaison office in

Kyiv said it was relocating staff to Brussels and to the western Ukraine city of Lviv. Meanwhile, top Ukrainian military officials came under a shelling attack during a tour of the front of the nearly eight-year separatist conflict in eastern Ukraine.

The officials fled to a bomb shelter before hustling from the area, according to an Associated Press journalist who was on the tour.

Violence in eastern Ukraine has spiked in recent days as Ukraine and the two regions held by the rebels each accused the other of escalation. Russia on Saturday said at least two shells fired from a government-held part of eastern Ukraine landed across the border, but Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba dismissed that claim as "a fake statement."

U.S. President Joe Biden said late Friday that based on the latest American intelligence, he was now "convinced" that Russian President Vladimir Putin has decided to invade Ukraine and assault the capital.

"As of this moment, I'm convinced he's made the decision," Biden said. "We have reason to believe that." He reiterated that the assault could occur in the "coming days."

Biden was briefed on Harris' meetings in Munich and has been getting regular updates on the Ukraine situation, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said in a statement Saturday. **MDT/AP**

MODELING AGENT CLOSE TO EPSTEIN FOUND DEAD IN FRENCH JAIL

ANGELA CHARLTON, PARIS

A modeling agent who was close to disgraced U.S. financier Jeffrey Epstein was found dead Saturday in his French jail cell, where he was being held in an investigation into the rape and sex trafficking of minors, according to the Paris prosecutor's office.

Paris police are investigating Jean-Luc Brunel's death at the historic La Sante prison in Paris, the prosecutor's office said.

Victims of his alleged abuse described shock and dismay that the 75-year-old, a well-known model scout in the 1980s and 1990s who ran different agencies in Paris and New York, will never face trial. They called his death as a double blow after Epstein killed himself in 2019 in a

Manhattan jail while awaiting sex-trafficking charges.

Brunel's lawyers suggested Saturday that he, too, killed himself. In a statement, they described his "distress" at his incarceration and his repeated requests for a provisional release from the prison.

"Jean-Luc Brunel never stopped declaring his innocence," they said. "His decision was not guided by guilt, but by a deep sentiment of injustice."

The lawyers would not further comment on what happened, and it was unclear whether the jail had suicide prevention measures in place.

Brunel was detained at Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport in 2020 as part of a broad French probe unleashed by the U.S. sex-trafficking charges against Eps-

tein. A frequent companion of Epstein, Brunel was considered central to the French investigation into alleged sexual exploitation of women and girls by the U.S. financier and his circle. Epstein traveled often to France and had apartments in Paris.

One of Epstein's main accusers, Virginia Roberts Giuffre, has alleged that Brunel procured women, some of them minors, for sex with Epstein and other wealthy people, luring them with promises of modeling work.

Multiple women who identified themselves as victims have spoken to police since the French probe began in 2019, and at times expressed frustration with the slow pace of the investigation.

One of them, Thysia Huisman, said Saturday that the

news of Brunel's death sent her into "shock."

"It makes me angry, because I've been fighting for years," Huisman, a Dutch former model who told police she was drugged and raped by Brunel as a teen, told The Associated Press. "For me, the end of this was to be in court. And now that whole ending — which would help form closure — is taken away from me."

A lawyer representing Huisman and other victims, Anne-Claire Le Jeune, said other women involved in the case feel the same.

"Great disappointment, great frustration that (the victims) won't get justice," she told The AP.

She expressed doubt that the investigation would lead to a trial, because Brunel was so central to the case. She also voiced concerns that Brunel's death means his accusers won't get any official recognition of their status as victims. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1972 NIXON MAKES HISTORIC VISIT TO CHINA



The American President Richard Nixon has arrived in China at the start of a week-long summit aimed at ending 20 years of frosty relations between the two countries.

His visit began with an unexpected audience with Chairman Mao Zedong at the leader's home. Few details have been released, but officials said the one-hour meeting involved a "serious and frank discussion".

After a modest reception at Peking airport, the president was formally welcomed at a lavish banquet held in the Great Hall of the People and hosted by Prime Minister Chou En-lai.

Mr Chou described Mr Nixon's long journey to China as a "positive move" responding to the wishes of the peoples of both countries.

He hinted at the years of tension between China and the United States - largely due to American support for nationalists in Taiwan - and credited both governments for "common efforts" to open the gate to better contacts at last.

The president responded positively. "There is no reason for us to be enemies," he said. "Neither of us seeks the territory of the other; neither of us seeks domination over the other; neither of us seeks to stretch out our hands and rule the world."

Using one of Mao's own quotations, Mr Nixon said it was time to seize the day and seize the hour "for our two peoples to rise to the heights of greatness which can build a new and better world".

There followed an elaborate round of toasts, in which the 800 guests at the banquet wandered from table to table clinking thimble-sized glasses containing Chinese firewater.

Commentators said the elaborate banquet was in marked contrast to the coolness of the president's reception at the airport.

This historic visit was engineered by the president's national security adviser, Dr Henry Kissinger, during two visits to China last year. It is part of a policy of rapprochement aimed at restoring diplomatic relations between the two sides.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The BBC carried extended news bulletins of President Nixon's ground-breaking visit to China - which included a walk along the Great Wall.

The Chinese people eagerly followed news of the visit and newspapers rapidly sold out.

The main diplomatic achievement of the visit was the Shanghai joint communiqué which declared Taiwan to be part of China.

Formal diplomatic relations were restored between the US and China in 1979 following a second communiqué which suggested a further weakening of US ties with Taiwan.

However, in the years since, Taiwan has remained a sticking point in relations. Different US administrations have chosen to maintain links with Taiwan by selling arms. President Bill Clinton attempted to persuade China to improve its human rights record by offering better trading conditions.

In February 2002, President George Bush visited China to mark the 30th anniversary of Nixon's historic trip. The two countries continue to disagree over Taiwan.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 You need to concentrate on your business ventures more than on your relationship today. Your personal situation is fluctuating. You can travel for business or pleasure.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 You will enjoy socializing and unusual forms of entertainment. Your childlike quality may get you into big trouble today if you neglect your responsibilities.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Avoid purchasing expensive items. Beware of colleagues who don't have your best interests in mind. You need to take a long, hard look at yourself and your personal situation.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Spend a quiet day with the one you love. Your energy will be high. Don't hesitate to go ahead with any plans for entertainment. You can pick up information that will give you an edge.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Opportunities to expand your circle of friends will result in possible new romantic encounters. You will meet some interesting people if you attend promotional functions.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 You can make a serious attempt at quitting those bad habits that you've picked up over the years. You can write beautiful love letters today. Be sure to take advantage of the opportunities that exist.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 It's time to reevaluate your motives. You are best to work behind the scenes on projects that require detail or precision. Travel and family gatherings should be in order.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 You should try to elaborate on an idea you have regarding a product or service for the home. You will be highly sensitive to comments made by your lover.

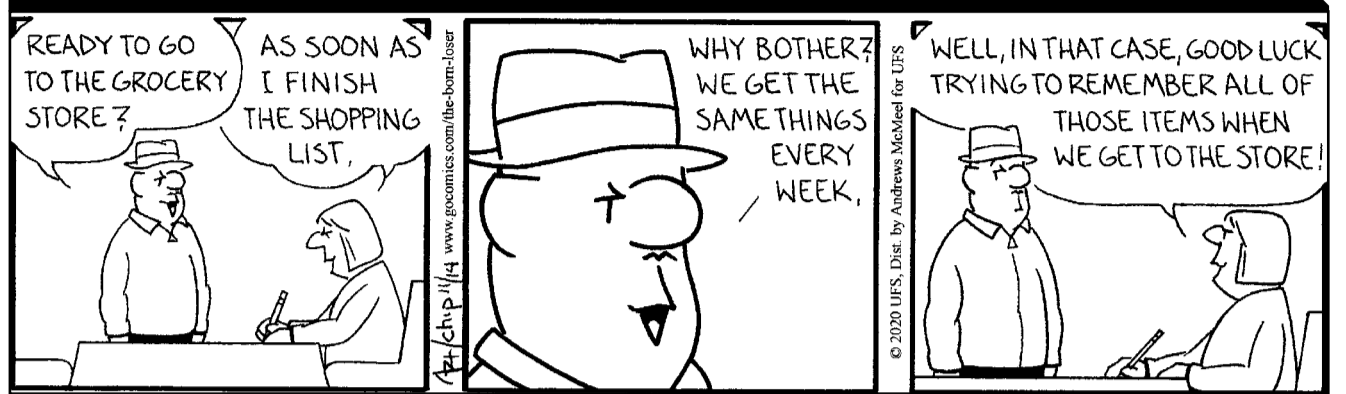
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Catch up on your reading and correspondence. Think of starting a new business or emotional partnership. Don't get talked into get rich quick schemes.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 You are best to stick to yourself today. You will meet new romantic partners if you get involved in seminars or travel. Problems with ear, nose, or the throat are likely.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 You can make new friends who could turn into intimate connections if you join clubs or take creative courses. Be prepared to take advantage of your good fortune.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 You will learn a great deal about yourself if you go somewhere secluded. You will be too quick to point your finger at your mate. Romantic encounters will be full of excitement.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-7	5	cloudy
Harbin	-18	-9	cloudy
Tianjin	2	5	overcast
Urumqi	3	5	rain
Xi'an	5	10	overcast
Lhasa	-5	1	fine
Chengdu	4	7	rain
Chongqing	2	4	overcast
Kunming	-2	0	snow
Nanjing	9	12	rain
Shanghai	0	8	cloudy
Wuhan	-1	8	cloudy
Hangzhou	-23	-12	cloudy
Taipei	-3	8	overcast
Guangzhou	4	6	rain
Hong Kong	10	12	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	1	2	snow
Frankfurt	3	7	rain
Paris	6	11	cloudy
London	5	11	cloudy
New York	5	12	clear

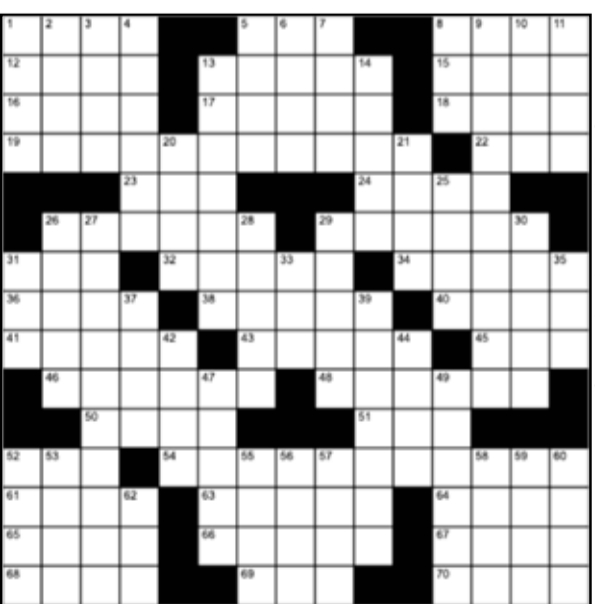
CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Flat sound; 5- Televised; 8- Petty quarrel; 12- Read 'em and ___; 13- ___ vincit amor; 15- Fast-food option; 16- Length times width; 17- Bowwow; 18- Second hand, took advantage of; 19- "Great" Australian landmark; 22- B'way hit sign; 23- Musical ability; 24- Yorkshire river; 26- Insane person; 29- Spatter; 31- Rat-a-___; 32- Square one; 34- Meditates; 36- Against; 38- Duck with soft down; 40- Director Wertmuller; 41- Absurd; 43- Visible exhalation; 45- Cpl., for one; 46- Allege; 48- Dirty mark; 50- Mature male European red deer; 51- Hydrocarbon suffix; 52- Irregularly shaped disk; 54- Defeat; 61- Western Native Americans; 63- Piece of French bread?; 64- Cover; 65- Of high grade; 66- Specialty; 67- Additional; 68- Spanakopita ingredient; 69- French possessive; 70- Pool grades;

DOWN 1- Do the deck; 2- Lab fluids; 3- Psychic; 4- Was merciful to; 5- Cupid; 6- Are you ___ out?; 7- Starchy staple; 8- Actor Erwin; 9- Owning; 10- Antiquing agent; 11- Commotion; 13- Run; 14- Lots; 20- Alpo alternative; 21- Thin layer; 25- Actor Julia; 26- Spiritual sustenance; 27- Adhesion; 28- Ingenuous; 29- Paces; 30- Therefore; 31- Skater Babilonia; 33- Nutritional std.; 35- ___ Paulo; 37- Member of a great Peruvian people; 39- Love affair; 42- Monetary unit of Greece; 44- Mysterious character; 47- Cram; 49- Confounded; 52- Wristband; 53- End in ___ (draw); 55- Horse's gait; 56- Female horse; 57- Fornicary residents; 58- Meadow mouse; 59- Effortlessness; 60- Hwys.; 62- Ocean;

Friday's solution

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



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

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- 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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FOR SALE

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FOR RENT

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HKD 10,500 2



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TAIPA | Nova Taipa | 4 | HKD 12,880,000
TAIPA | Buckingham | 2 | HKD 8,590,000
TAIPA | Soi Cheong | 1 | HKD 3,980,000

...more properties for

RENT



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COLOANE | Houston | 1 | HKD 9,500
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Panel denies US skaters' appeal to get Olympic silver medals

EDDIE PELLIS & GRAHAM DUNBAR, BEIJING

ARBITRATORS have rejected a last-ditch request by American figure skaters to have their silver medals awarded before the end of the Olympics.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport said early yesterday in Beijing that it dismissed the appeal by the nine skaters, who finished second in the team event marred by a doping positive from 15-year-old Russian Kamila Valieva.

It did not elaborate on its decision, and said it would release details in upcoming days. The panel, with arbitrators from Denmark, France and China, met for 2 and a half hours Saturday evening.

In an earlier decision, CAS had allowed Valieva to compete in the women's event after her doping positive went public following the Russians' victory in the team event. The International Olympic Committee responded by saying that no medals would be awarded in any event in which Valieva finished in the top three.

Losing the case means the U.S. skaters will receive their medals months, maybe even years, from now, after Valieva's case winds its way through hearings and appeals. She led the Russians to a convincing victory in the team event. If that result is overturned, the U.S. would get gold medals.



Alexa Knierim and Brandon Frazier of the United States

The skaters had argued, without success, that they should at least receive the silvers before last night's closing ceremony. In a letter sent to IOC President Thomas Bach that was obtained by The Associated Press, the skaters' attorney argued that the IOC's "own rules mandate that a victory ceremony to present medals to the athletes shall follow the conclusion of each sports event."

"We're disappointed in the decision. It's unfortunate that these deserving athletes will leave Beijing without their medals," said Ramsey Baker, executive

director of US Figure Skating. "We are proud of the historic accomplishments of our team and we look forward to joining them, their families and friends, and the entire United States in celebrating their achievements from these Olympic Games."

A few hours before the decision, the U.S. team of Alexa Knierim and Brandon Frazier finished sixth in the pairs event. They are among the skaters who would receive the medals from the team event. After they skated Saturday, Frazier said "they should have a ceremony for the clean athletes that delivered.

They deserve that."

In the letter to Bach, attorney Paul Greene wrote "a dignified medal ceremony from our clients' vantage point is one in the Medals Plaza as originally planned and afforded to all other medalists."

Instead, the skaters could end up with Olympic torches. In a meeting with the skaters earlier this week, Bach offered the torches as keepsakes while the doping case plays out. He later said at a news conference that they were not meant to replace the medals.

Valieva might never get anything. She finished fourth in the women's event — crying as she left the ice, then criticized by her coach after a mistake-filled long program.

After her test became public, Russia's anti-doping agency at first put her on provisional suspension, then lifted the suspension. That triggered the IOC and World Anti-Doping Agency to lead an appeal to CAS, which acted swiftly and said Valieva could still compete. This time, CAS ruled in favor of the IOC.

Neither decision, however, resolves the larger question about the result from the team competition.

Because she is 15, Valieva is considered a "protected person" under anti-doping rules, and is not expected to receive a harsh penalty. Her coaches and doctors are being investigated by Russian and world anti-doping authorities. **MDT/AP**

SAMARANCH VOTED BACK ON IOC EXECUTIVE BOARD AT BEIJING GAMES

GRAHAM DUNBAR, BEIJING

THE International Olympic Committee member who oversaw preparations for the Beijing Games was voted back onto the body's executive board on Saturday.

Juan Antonio Samaranch, whose father was IOC president from 1980-2001, was the only candidate for the sole vice president slot that was open.

The move puts Samaranch in position for an expected run at the IOC presidency. Current IOC rules require Thomas Bach to stand aside in 2025 after 12 years as president.

"You cannot, or maybe you can, imagine how happy I am to continue working with all of you," Samaranch told IOC members.

Samaranch received 72 votes in favor while four voted against. Nine abstained.

Samaranch will take over the vice president seat of Yu Zaiqing of China, who had to step down after completing the maximum two consecutive four-year terms.

Samaranch previously served as a VP from 2016-20. He now returns to the 15-member IOC board, where decision-making and power has become more concentrated under Bach's hands-on leadership.

Samaranch served as chairman of the IOC coordination commission for the Beijing Olympics from 2018 and became the main point of contact with officials in China.

He has longstanding ties to the country. In 2012, he founded the Chinese government-backed Samaranch Foundation, which said it wanted to develop Olympic culture in the country to honor of his father. The elder Samaranch, who had the same name, died in 2010.

The IOC board now includes several potential candidates to succeed Bach, including another vice president, Nicole Hovertsz of Aruba. **MDT/AP**



Taiwan premier wants athlete punished for wearing China suit



Huang Yu-ting

TAIWAN'S premier wants a Taiwanese Olympic speedskater to be punished for wearing what appeared to be a suit from China's team during training.

Symbols of the two sides are especially sensitive at a time when China's ruling Communist Party, which claims Taiwan as part of its territory even though the island has long operated with its own national government, is trying to intimidate the democracy by flying fighter jets and bombers nearby.

Huang Yu-ting, one of

four Taiwanese athletes at the Winter Games, posted a video on her social media page Jan. 23 showing her training in what appeared to be a Chinese suit, the Central News Agency reported. It said Huang apologized and removed the video.

Premier Su Tseng-chang asked the Ministry of Education and the Sports Administration to investigate so Huang would "receive an adequate punishment," CNA reported, citing a Cabinet spokesperson, Lo Ping-cheng.

The Olympics are one

facet of a wide-ranging campaign by Beijing to isolate Taiwan.

The International Olympic Committee requires Taiwanese athletes to compete under the name "Chinese Taipei," which obscures the island's longstanding self-ruled status.

Taiwan's Sports Administration said Huang would face no penalty but should be "more aware of the sensitivity of cross-Taiwan Strait politics," according to CNA.

The Taiwanese team leader at the Olympics, Steven Chen, said the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee would review in April whether Huang was wearing the appropriate clothing, according to CNA. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO

AP PHOTO

OPINION

Multipolar World

Jorge Costa Oliveira



HOLD ME BACK OR I'LL INVADE! - PUTIN'S UKRAINE GAMBIT

According to the US government, the Russian armies' invasion of Ukraine is imminent... for several days now. Foreigners are pressured to leave Ukraine and American special troops are being transferred to bolster NATO armies on European territory. The Russian government continues to amass military forces near Ukraine but Russian TV channels not only do not highlight the tension on Ukrainian borders but also there is no preparation of Russian public opinion for an imminent war. The Government of Ukraine as well as Ukrainian citizens seem calm. How to explain this situation?

One of the reasons invoked by the Russian side is the violation of commitments regarding NATO's non-expansion to the east ("not one inch eastward") which were supposedly given in 1990 to leaders of the Soviet Union (during the negotiations on the German reunification process) and whose existence the American and European governments deny (most likely such a compromise was not written down but was the spirit underlying the agreements). It seems clear that eastern European states that have become NATO members will not leave the Alliance and NATO soldiers will not be removed from their territories. Thus, the useful effect of this Russian argument is reduced to preventing Ukraine's membership of NATO, which may turn out to be one of Putin's main legacies. In 2014, he achieved the "feat" of forging a strong Ukrainian anti-Russian nationalist unity after the annexation of Crimea and a war in the Donbass. Anyone who has gone to Ukraine after 2014 knows well that anti-Russian sentiment is strong; Ukraine will no longer return to the Russian area of influence. The Kremlin leaders know that too.

Russia's economy shows a total GDP slightly higher than Spain's and a GDP per capita (in 2020) of \$11,786 (between Turkey and Argentina), with a production structure typical of a developing country based on the export of natural resources. Russia is only strong in military power and it is this card that the Russian leader has now played with the deployment of several armies on Ukraine's borders. This move aims to: (i) force the future neutrality of Ukraine; (ii) pressure the Ukrainian government to implement the 2015 Minsk agreements; (iii) if the Ukrainian government does not grant a high degree of autonomy to the Donbass, create the conditions for its separation from Ukraine and incorporation into Russia; (iv) remind us that Russia is a relevant military power; (v) show that European stability, in particular in economic and energy aspects, depends on Russia; (vi) test the cohesion of NATO and EDA members; (vii) raise oil and natural gas prices, the main products that Russia exports.

But in this gambit it is important that Russian leaders realize when to stop, before incidents caused by extremists cause enormous international economic and financial instability. This would have harmful effects on the credibility of Russia, trigger unprecedented financial sanctions and greatly displease friendly countries such as India and China...

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The Chinese anti-corruption agency is investigating a former boss of one of the country's three major state-owned phone carriers.

Li Guohua, formerly general manager of China Unicom, is suspected of "severe violations of discipline and law," the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection said in a one-sentence statement Friday, using the official term for corruption.

The agency gave no details. Thousands of

Chinese officials and executives of state-owned companies have been ensnared in a long-running crackdown on embezzlement, taking bribes and other misbehavior.

China Unicom, or China United Network Communications Group Co., Ltd., is one of the world's biggest mobile phone carriers and also operates fixed-line internet and digital TV services. It reported 9.2 billion yuan in profit for the first half of 2021 on revenue of 164.2 billion yuan.



UK TO SCRAP ALL REMAINING COVID RESTRICTIONS

JILL LAWLESS, LONDON

THE British government confirmed Saturday that people with Covid-19 won't be legally required to self-isolate starting next week, as part of a plan for "living with Covid" that is also likely to see testing for the coronavirus scaled back.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said ending all of the legal restrictions brought in to curb the spread of the virus will let people in the U.K. "protect ourselves without restricting our freedoms."

But some of the government's scientific advisers said it was a risky move that could bring a surge in infections and weaken the country's defenses against more virulent future strains.

Johnson's Conservative government lifted most virus restrictions in January, scrapping vaccine passports for venues and ending mask mandates in most settings apart from hospitals in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland also have opened up, although more slowly.

A combination of high vaccination rates in the U.K. and the milder omicron variant means easing restrictions didn't lead to a surge in hospitalizations and deaths. Both are falling, though the

U.K. still has Europe's highest coronavirus toll after Russia, with more than 160,000 recorded deaths.

In Britain, 85% of people age 12 and up have had two vaccine doses and almost two-thirds have had a third booster shot.

Now the Conservative government says it will remove "all remaining domestic Covid regulations that restrict public freedoms" as part of a "move away from government intervention to personal responsibility."

The legal requirement to isolate for at least five days after a positive Covid-19 test will be replaced with advisory measures, and the coronavirus will be treated more like the flu as it becomes endemic.

The new plan foresees vaccines and treatments keeping the virus in check, though the government said "surveillance systems and contingency measures will be retained" if needed.

"Covid will not suddenly disappear, and we need to learn to live with this virus and continue to protect ourselves without restricting our freedoms," said Johnson, who is expected to announce details of the plan today in Parliament.

"We've built up strong protections against this virus over the past two years through the vac-

cine rollouts, tests, new treatments, and the best scientific understanding of what this virus can do," he said.

The announcement will please many Conservative Party lawmakers, who argue that the restrictions were inefficient and disproportionate. It could also shore up Johnson's position among party lawmakers, who have been mulling an attempt to oust him over scandals including lockdown-breaching government parties during the pandemic.

But scientists stressed that much remains unknown about the virus, and future variants that may be more severe than the currently dominant omicron strain.

The New and Emerging Virus Threats Advisory Group, which advises the government, said last week that the idea viruses become progressively milder "is a common misconception." It said the milder illness associated with omicron "is likely a chance event" and future variants could be more severe or evade current vaccines.

Epidemic modelers who advise the government also warned that "a sudden change, such as an end to testing and isolation, has the scope to lead to a return to rapid epidemic growth" if people throw caution to the wind. **MDT/AP**

EU Moscow would have its access to financial markets and high-tech goods limited under Western sanctions being prepared in case Russia attacks Ukraine, a top European Union official said Saturday. The comments from Ursula von der Leyen, head of the EU's Executive Commission, came as tensions over Russia's intentions toward Ukraine intensified. U.S. President Joe Biden said Friday he was convinced "that Russian President Vladimir Putin has decided to invade the neighboring country."



UK Queen Elizabeth II tested positive for Covid-19 yesterday and is experiencing mild, cold-like symptoms, Buckingham Palace said. The palace said the 95-year-old British monarch will continue with light duties at Windsor Castle over the coming week. "She will continue to receive medical attention and will follow all the appropriate guidelines," the palace said in a statement.



Greece A survivor was rescued yesterday from the stern of a still burning passenger ferry, Greece's coast guard said. There are 11 people still missing. A coast guard spokesman told The Associated Press the man, a Belarussian, was found on the left rear side of the Euroferry Olympia in apparently good condition. The Italian-owned ferry, which was carrying more than 290 passengers and crew, as well as 153 trucks and 32 cars, caught fire after it left the northwestern Greek port of Igoumenitsa.

Ethiopia has started generating electricity from the controversial mega-dam that is being built on the Blue Nile. The milestone was reached yesterday when one of the 13 turbines of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam started power generation in an event officiated by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. "From now on, there will be nothing that will stop Ethiopia," Abiy said. The dam will be Africa's largest hydroelectric dam upon completion.