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“ THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’ ”

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AIRPORT 2022: PASSENGER TRAFFIC AND FLIGHT MOVEMENTS ARE PROJECTED TO RECOVER TO ABOUT 30% OF PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

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GAMING: USD6B SALE OF VENETIAN PROPERTIES ON VEGAS STRIP COMPLETE

P2

COVID-19: CHAOS AT TREASURE, EXCLUSIVE HOTEL FOR HK RETURNNEES

P4



Hong Kong launched a vaccination requirement to enter shopping malls, restaurants and a host of other places yesterday as it battles an expanding omicron outbreak and tries to overcome vaccine hesitancy in parts of its population. Businesses posted a QR code at their entrances for people to scan with a smartphone app to check their vaccine status before entering.

More on p7



AP PHOTO

US-China The Justice Department is scrapping the name of a Trump-era initiative that was intended to crack down on economic espionage by Beijing but has been criticized as unfairly targeting Chinese professors at American colleges because of their ethnicity. The decision to abandon the China Initiative and to impose a higher bar for prosecutions of professors was announced yesterday [Macau time] by Assistant Attorney General Matthew Olsen (pictured).



AP PHOTO

Nepal Protesters demonstrating against a contentious half-billion-dollar aid grant from the U.S. clashed with police outside the legislature as political leaders postponed debate over the proposal. Hundreds of protesters chanted slogans, pelted police with stones and pieces of glass, and pushed through police barricades. Riot police responded by firing tear gas and water canon and beating protesters with bamboo batons. Several people were injured on both sides and police detained a number of protesters.

More on backpage

PUTIN'S WAR

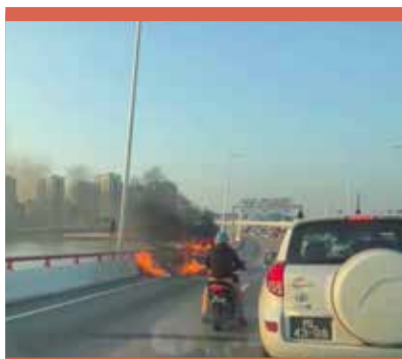
P8-9,12



Russia invades Ukraine as Putin threatens the West with 'consequences you have never seen'

AP PHOTO

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



POLICE INVESTIGATES CAUSE OF FRIENDSHIP BRIDGE FIRE

The Judiciary Police (PJ) has commenced an investigation into the cargo fire that took place yesterday on the Amizade Bridge. Videos depicting a cargo fire on an open-roof truck went viral on several social media groups yesterday afternoon, showing flames reaching heights as tall as a third of a lamppost. Meanwhile, a person who is believed to be the driver or an assistant was attempting to throw the cargo out to sea. The PJ later confirmed that the Fire Services Bureau considered the fire suspicious and had referred the case on to the police. No injuries was recorded.

PJ ISSUES WARNING ON FAKE COURIER COMPANIES

The Judiciary Police (PJ) has been notified by members of the public of SMS messages from fake courier companies, the PJ announced in a statement. Targets were told to log into the website provided in the SMS, key in their personal information, and pay an additional fee as their parcel deliveries were unsuccessful due to disruptions caused by the pandemic. As similar cases resulting in financial loss had earlier been reported to the police, the PJ asked the public to continue to stay vigilant and safeguard their personal information.

USD6.25B SALE OF VENETIAN PROPERTIES ON VEGAS STRIP COMPLETE

THE new and old owners of the Venetian and Palazzo casino resorts and former Sands Expo and Convention Center announced Wednesday they have completed the sale of the iconic Las Vegas Strip properties for USD6.25 billion.

Apollo Global Management and Las Vegas Sands Corp., parent company of Sands China, said in separate statements that gamblers, conventioners and hotel guests should see few changes at the luxury hotel complex including the renamed Venetian Expo.

The names will remain the same and George Markantonis, CEO of The Venetian Resort, said the management team will stay in place.

"We have an exciting opportunity to build on our past successes while capturing future opportunities," Markantonis said, citing hospitality, meetings and events, gambling and entertainment.

New York-based VICI Properties acquired assets associated with the Venetian Resort Las Vegas and the expo for \$4 billion. Apollo Global Management bought Venetian operations for \$2.25 billion.

Apollo executives told Nevada casino regulators last week the company will step into an ongoing partnership with Madison Square Garden Entertainment Corp. to continue de-

AP PHOTO



velopment of the \$1.9 billion, 17,500-seat MSG Sphere being built just east of The Venetian Expo, the Las Vegas Review-Journal reported.

Sands, the company led by Sheldon Adelson until his death last year, will effectively cease U.S. operations to focus on operations in Asia.

Patrick Dumont, Sands president and chief operating officer, pointed to a recently announced \$1 billion reinvestment at Marina Bay Sands in Singapore and a \$2.2 billion renovation of The Londoner Macao.

"The foundation of this company was built in Las Vegas, and even though the overall size of

the organization here will be smaller, it is important to each of us that we continue to strongly support our community," Dumont said.

Adelson bought the Sands hotel, once a hangout for Frank Sinatra's Rat Pack, in 1989, razed it and built a towering Italian-inspired complex featuring gondolas gliding on a stylized canal through an indoor plaza with stores, restaurants and entertainment and outside near Las Vegas Boulevard pedestrians.

Today, the Venetian and Palazzo have more than 7,000 guest rooms, sprawling casino and convention spaces, and more than 8,000 employees.

Adelson became a billionaire and Republican mega-donor. His family bought Nevada's largest newspaper, the Las Vegas Review-Journal. He died in January 2021 at age 87 from complications related to treatment for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. His wife, Dr. Miriam Adelson, remains the majority shareholder of Las Vegas Sands Corp.

"The opening of The Venetian more than 20 years ago represents the beginning of the company's success," said Las Vegas Sands Chairman and CEO Robert Goldstein. "The property, and most importantly, the people who represent it every day will always remain indelible parts of our history." **MDT/AP**

MOP74B RETAIL SALES IN 2021

Retail trade business improved in 2021, with the total value of retail sales surging by 63.5% year-on-year to MOP73.96 billion, albeit from a low base.

However, the figure represented a drop of 4.2% from 2019's figure of MOP77.19 billion.

The year-on-year increase in the value of retail sales was mainly driven by an uplift in sales in the categories of communication equipment (+128.7%), watches, clocks and jewellery (+126.6%), leather goods

(+111.0%) and department stores (+81.8%).

By contrast, the sales value of supermarkets decreased by 2.0%, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

Retail sales for the fourth quarter of 2021 totalled MOP18.50 billion, up by 1.7% year-on-year. After accounting for the effect of price changes, the sales volume index grew by 4.6% year-on-year.

Among the major retail trade activities, su-

permarkets (+19.8%) and communication equipment (+12.3%) registered notable year-on-year sales increases, whereas sales of motor vehicles (-16.4%) and adults' clothing (-13.1%) decreased. In terms of the volume of retail sales, the sales volume indices of communication equipment (+19.5%) and supermarkets (+17.9%) increased year-on-year, while the indices of motor vehicles (-16.5%) and automotive fuels (-15.1%) decreased. **LV**

LYNZY VALLES



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Times

DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR Lynzy Valles
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS Alex Torrão, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Emilie Tran, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, Jing Wu, João Palla Martins, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Viviana Seguí
DESIGNERS Eva Bucho, Miguel Bandeira | **ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS** JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | **NEWS AGENCIES** Associated Press, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua
SECRETARY Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com
ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR
Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

Advertisement advertising@macaudailytimes.com

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Air passenger traffic expected to recover up to 34% in 2022

LYNZY VALLES

PASSENGER traffic and flight movements of the Macau International Airport (MIA) are projected to recover to about 30% and 34% of pre-pandemic levels in 2019, respectively.

In a media luncheon held yesterday, the Macau International Airport Co. Ltd. (CAM) announced that it expects that, while there will be a boost in passenger arrivals through air traffic, cargo volume is expected to grow by about 20% compared to that of 2019.

Last year, due to travel restrictions and quarantine requirements associated with Covid-19, the civil aviation market mainly resumed routes to the mainland after a long period of suspension.

About 10 routes were re-launched, including routes to Shanghai, Beijing, Hangzhou, Chengdu, Ningbo, Tianjin, Chongqing, Wenzhou, Nanning and Nanjing. Passenger traffic volumes for East China routes have been re-



latively stable and accounted for about 80% of traffic volume in 2021.

The Shanghai route increased to an average of 12 round-trip flights per day in July 2021.

"In this protracted battle against the Covid-19, MIA has never stopped its pace [in the acceleration of] the airport's development and carried out 75

optimization projects on airport facilities, equipment and information technology," remarked CAM's chairman of the Board of Directors, Ma lao Hang.

It is predicted that the global demand for air travel will reach 61% of pre-pandemic levels, while capacity is expected to continually increase faster than demand, reaching 67% of pre-

-pandemic levels for 2022.

Last year, the Macau airport received 1.14 million passengers with a year-on-year decrease of 2.2%, while 15,791 aircraft movements were handled, representing a yearly decline of 6.9%.

Benefiting from the growth of global e-commerce, the demand for air cargo rose significantly as MIA attained cargo volumes of 48,595 tonnes with a year-on-year increase of 45.72%, an increase of 15% compared to pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

As the "Renovation for MIA Terminal 2 and Heliport Project" design work has been completed and approved by government authorities in 2021, CAM pledged that it would continue to work closely with related departments and launch the subsequent tendering and construction work in due course.

Upon completion, the annual capacity of Terminal 2 will reach 2 million passengers, in connection with Pac On Ferry Terminal to build a sea-land-air integrated transportation hub in the GBA.

COMPOSITE INTEREST RATE DROPS SLIGHTLY

The funding costs of the local banking sector dropped slightly in the fourth quarter of 2021, according to the Monetary Authority of Macao. At end-December 2021, the composite interest rate for MOP remained virtually unchanged from the previous quarter, at 0.48%, whereas that for HKD edged down by 1 basis point, from 0.82% at end-September 2021 to 0.81%. The composite interest rates are the weighted average interest rates of all interest-bearing liabilities and non-interest-bearing demand deposits on the books of local banks.

56 SUSPECTED ILLEGAL WORKERS IN JANUARY

A total of 56 suspected illegal workers were detected by the local authorities during a joint operation between the Public Security Police Force, the Labour Affairs Bureau, and other authorities against illegal workers in January. This figure is 46% higher than that of the previous month. The Public Security Police Force, the Labour Affairs Bureau and other authorities searched 464 locations, including construction sites, private flats, commercial and industrial establishments. During a similar operation in December, authorities inspected 306 locations and found 35 suspected illegal workers.

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COVID-19

CHAOS AT TREASURE AFTER ITS APPOINTMENT AS EXCLUSIVE VENUE FOR HK RETURNEES

RENATO MARQUES

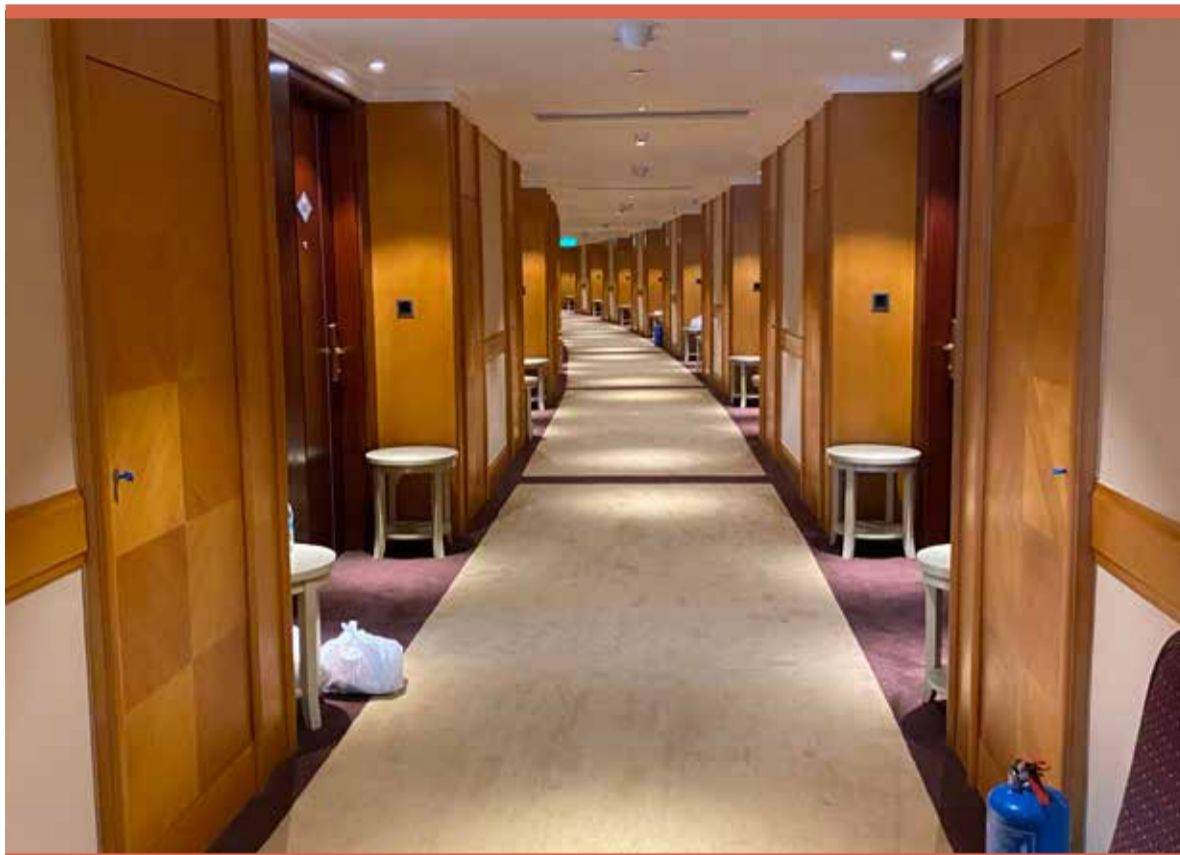
CHAOS has ensued at Taipa's Treasure Hotel after the government announced that, from today onwards, people returning from the neighboring region of Hong Kong would exclusively be permitted to quarantine at this venue.

The hotel reported that the number of booking requests by far exceeds capacity and that it has been unable to respond to a large number of inquiries.

Local health authorities acknowledged the difficulties during yesterday's press briefing from the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre, claiming that they are doing "all they can" to help, while nevertheless reaffirming the impracticability of finding a new venue.

"We have received many requests and inquiries from people that have been affected by the [forced] cancellation of rooms in other hotels. We are trying to collaborate with the hotel [Treasure Hotel] to help people from Hong Kong who already had rooms booked in other hotels," a representative from the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Lau Fong Chi, said.

In addition, Lau stated, "We are aware that the hotel has received over 2,000 email inquiries and a very high number of attempts via phone. We are ensuring that the hotel can provide support to all people. We know that there are problems and that the phone line is always occupied. We advise people to use email instead for inquiries as phone is not a recommended method at this moment."



The health authorities also noted that the Treasure Hotel is the only venue capable of providing quarantine facilities in a closed loop, ensuring that there is no possibility of an outbreak.

Furthermore, its rooms must be shared between not only the returnees from Hong Kong, but also those returning from medium and high-risk areas abroad.

It must also be available for staff members from border checkpoints and airports that are in close contact with people arriving from abroad, who must comply with guidelines of undergoing periodic periods of isolation to ensure containment of the virus.

According to other media re-

ports during the press briefing, all other quarantines hotels, which were previously fully booked until April, are now available for the purposes of quarantine and have an adequate supply of available rooms.

RETURNEES CAN POSE RISK IN OTHER HOTELS

In response to many media inquiries, Dr. Leong Iek Hou, coordinator at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, justified the measure of placing all returnees from Hong Kong in the Treasure Hotel, stating that these people could pose a risk to public health if they stay elsewhere.

"The Treasure Hotel is a spe-

cial hotel for quarantine. It ensures that there is no circulation of people coming from medium and high-risk areas as it is managed in a closed-loop system. It also

allows separation of floors, lifts and other kinds of equipment so people from different areas do not mix," she said, adding that the total number of recent arrivals from Hong Kong provided a clear indication that the number of those potentially infected is high.

Questioned as to why there was a distinction between the number of days in quarantine for people arriving from Hong Kong and those returning from other countries or regions with a similar pandemic risk status, Leong said, "According to our experience, in general, the incubation time for people infected with the Omicron variant of the disease is within 14 days [which is the case for those who tested positive arriving from Hong Kong], while for other variants of the disease, the incubation period can be longer, as there is a possibility [that] these people have been infected with other variants."

According to Leong, this justifies the different number of days in quarantine for returnees from Hong Kong (14 days) and those coming from Singapore or other countries abroad (21 days).

TWO-THIRDS OF COLOANE'S ISOLATION FACILITY OCCUPIED

FORTY rooms out of a total of 60 available for treatment in isolation at the Public Health Clinical Center in Coloane are occupied by people undergoing treatment, Dr. Leong informed yesterday. According to the official, the center has 60 rooms and a maxi-

mum capacity of 110 beds. She said that currently, 40 rooms are occupied by 43 people undergoing treatment, 30 of whom are recent returnees from Hong Kong. Of these, 29 occupants are asymptomatic and one has been recorded as the 80th case of infection with Covid-19.

Majority of hotel quarantine guests non-locals

RENATO MARQUES

THE majority of the medically observed quarantine periods hosted within Macau hotels have been completed by non-residents, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre has said in a response to an inquiry from the Times.

According to figures cited by Dr. Leong Iek Hou, yesterday, from a total of 60,208 quarantine periods hosted in Macau, 35,857 – or 59.6% – were completed by non-residents, including non-resident workers and tourists.

The figures show that the number of non-residents in quarantine hotels has been systematically higher than the number of residents for a long time. However, health authorities claim that they are prioritizing access to quarantine hotel venues for residents.

Questioned yesterday once again by the media, Lau Fong Chiu from the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) stated that the government is prioritizing access to quarantine facilities for local residents, with special priority given to those al-

ready on waiting lists. Leong also said that a new group of approximately 30 students from Macau studying in universities in Hong Kong wish to return by the end of this month. However, there are currently no guarantees that this will be possible, due to the lack of rooms in the Treasure Hotel.

WAIVED QUARANTINE PAYMENTS UNKNOWN

When questioned by the Times, Lau said that she did not have data on the number of exemptions granted by the government to local

residents in relation to quarantine fee payments.

She explained that there are several situations in which quarantine fee payments can be waived for residents, and that this depends on the resident making a formal request and meeting eligibility criteria.

She also noted that some cases were not resolved immediately, as authorities call upon residents to provide more information and justification. In particular, this may affect cases in which the person has been absent from Macau for over 183 days.



RENATO MARQUES

Melco leads as world's first and only operator with Responsible Gaming accreditation RG Check across global portfolio

99.9% of management and non-management colleagues completed RG training

MELCO Resorts & Entertainment is dedicated to being the industry leader for the promotion of Responsible Gaming (RG). The Company continues to inculcate the importance of RG among colleagues and the community – supporting the Macau government's promotion of Responsible Gaming. To date, Melco's RG Activities have garnered more than 100,000 participants.

Melco was the world's first operator to require mandatory RG training for all colleagues, both gaming and non-gaming, management and non-management, to ensure that all colleagues, regardless of their position, understand their role in the promotion of RG culture. Since Melco opened its first integrated resort, 173,000 colleague participants have received RG training globally to help raise awareness among colleagues, guests and the community at large.

In December 2021, Melco became the world's first and only operator to receive the esteemed RG Check Responsible Gaming accreditation across its global portfolio, with scores in RG policy, Strategy and Culture achieving above industry average in recognition of its strong responsible gaming leadership and comprehensive and integrated approach to building a responsible gaming culture.

"Providing a safe and fair gaming experience for guests continues to be at the core of the Company's commitment to society. The sustainable development and continued implementation of a Responsible Gaming culture is prioritized within every jurisdiction that we operate," said Lawrence Ho, Chairman & CEO of Melco.

Melco's Responsible Gaming Committee is personally led by



its executive sponsor Lawrence Ho, who drives the Company RG strategy by working with management executives on the inter-departmental committee to implement related policies. Leaders of Melco's gaming and non-gaming divisions, as well as those of all its properties, are represented on the committee, which meets quarterly to provide strategic directions for all RG programs, while additional working committees meet more frequently for the implementation of related measures.

In 2017, Melco launched its advanced responsible gaming training program for all colleagues, and in January 2021, its advanced digital learning program to enable greater accessibility

for colleagues. To date, approximately 15,000 Melco colleagues have completed the advanced training. In 2020, Melco also launched its annual RG refresher training for colleagues, striving to do more by going above and beyond the government's biennial refresher training requirement.

Also, Melco continues to host a range of innovative and wide-reaching RG activities, including regular training, roadshows and internal promotional videos to enhance colleague awareness and provide information on the Company's latest RG policies. In 2021, Melco achieved record colleague participation for both on-property and digital RG activities.

Globally to date, Melco has a team of more than 800 qualified front-line RG Ambassadors who are available onsite at Melco properties 24/7, and who serve as departmental contact points for all RG-related issues. RG Ambassador responsibilities include identifying and detecting actual or suspected abnormal gaming behavior, providing proactive consultation services and professional support for relevant guests.

Moreover, in 2021, twelve additional colleagues completed the government-sponsored Macau Responsible Gaming Advisors (MRGA) program, a specialized external certificate program developed by Macau's Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ), University of Macau,

Macao Polytechnic Institute and IAS, to bring Melco's MRGA-accredited colleague total to 76.

In support of the Macau government's 'Responsible Gambling Promotion 2021' organized by DICJ in partnership with the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) and the Institute for the Study of Commercial Gaming of the University of Macau, close to 7,700 Melco colleague participants have visited the 'Lost Control, Lose Family'-themed RG education booths situated across the Company's properties. A digital quiz to further promote the government's RG message attracted participation from over 13,000 Melco colleagues.

To further promote the importance of RG culture among the colleagues and the community, Melco collaborated with Macau Gaming Industry Employees Home to set up quarterly RG promotional roadshows, games and counseling services in its employee Heart of House areas, as well as supporting further social promotions. The Company also cooperated with Youth Volunteers Association of Macau (AJVM) and S.K.H. Macau Social Services Coordination Office to set up internal RG promotion roadshows in 2021.

Last month, to continue spreading RG awareness among the community, the Melco volunteer team helped local NGOs distribute leaflets while explaining RG principles to around 600 tourists and residents. Furthermore, the Company will soon be introducing more bi-monthly workshops for women through its "Art of Living" lifestyle series, which was first launched in 2018, with themed classes in flower arrangement, cooking and dessert-making, to name a few, while promoting the importance of healthy gaming and RG culture to the community.



GOV'T ASSURES PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON STRICT CONDITIONS FOR TELECOM INTERCEPTION

ANTHONY LAM

THE bill regarding the interception of telecommunications contains clear provisions governing the grounds and modes of the permission to intercept, as well as the scope of the permitted interception, Ella Lei, president of a parliamentary committee, said yesterday.

The bill for the Legal System Governing the Interception and Protection of Communications is now before the parliament's First Standing Committee. A meeting was held yesterday morning with government officials answering questions from committee members.

The Code of Criminal Procedures already contains stipulations on the interception of telecommunications. The bill is an independent piece of legislation and, according to the government, supplements the Code's stipulations.

Once passed, the bill will invalidate Articles 172 to 175 of the Code, while Article 251 of the Code will be modified to account for the new law.

At the post-meeting press conference, Lei remarked that, according to the bill, evidence obtained from data intercepted without obtaining the approval of a judge of law will not be taken as valid. Moreover, the judges responsible will determine the scope of the interception.



Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak said that, in order to trigger the interception, the crime to be investigated must fall within a list of 12 crimes. The law enforcement entity must prove the necessity of the interception to the judges responsible.

Also, police must also prove the absence of alternative, more advantageous means of obtaining evidence to the court.

The crimes should also comply with the principles of severity, necessity, legality, and appropriateness, among others, Lei explained.

In the bill, communications are defined as activities that involve emitting, transmitting or receiving information, using telecommunication, in the forms of symbols, texts, images, audios, graphics or other related forms.

Communications between suspects and their lawyers are protected from interception, but the government left a loophole for judges to allow interception to occur when the communications are believed to have been made with a criminal intent or constitute the crime itself.

The question as to whether the government will install a tracking app, such as Pegasus, on the devices of investigative targets, was raised at the press conference. Lei said the committee did not discuss this, but provided assurance on the protective nature of the bill.

On the sidelines of the committee meeting, Wong said that the government would provide a reward for people who provide clues to the police during investigations. He also encourages members of the public to report suspected cases of illegal migration or smuggling.

WONG: INFORMANTS ARE REWARDED

Wong made these statements in response to a request for comment on the mainland government's incentives for informants.

In addition to monetary incentives, gifts are also often used as rewards for people who are able to provide essential information to the police, Wong disclosed. He admitted that the government has specifically budgeted for such incentives.

When asked about the extent of the budget, Wong refrained from giving an exact figure, saying that he did not have the authority to disclose such information.

Moreover, each reward is independently reviewed and approved by the Chief Executive, bypassing the Financial Services Bureau. Documentation is sometimes redacted to provide enough protection on the informant, Wong explained.

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COVID-19

Grumbling grows as Hong Kong sticks with zero-tolerance policy

ALICE FUNG & DAVID RISING,
HONG KONG

HONG Kong residents are becoming increasingly annoyed with the administration's insistence on sticking to China's "zero-COVID" strategy as the city posted another record number of cases Wednesday, bristling at ever-stricter regulations and a plan to test everyone for the virus.

Schools have already switched to online learning and summer holidays are being moved forward so that the buildings can be used as facilities for testing, isolation and vaccination. Hong Kong says it will go ahead with the plan to test every one of its 7.5 million residents three times in March.

Under the "zero-COVID-19" strategy, every person testing positive case must be quarantined in a hospital or other government facility for 14 days regardless of symptoms. It's in contrast with most countries, which are reducing restrictions and allowing people with mild or no symptoms to remain at home.

"The whole world knows we have to live with the virus, only the Hong Kong government does not know," said taxi driver Chan Tai-man. "Actually it's not that they don't know, they only do what the Chinese government tells them to."

With hospitals in Hong Kong already overwhelmed, construction crews from mainland China are being sent to build new isolation units and the city was moving to convert hotels, halls, indoor stadiums and other quarantine locations, Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam said.

Chinese medical teams were also building mobile testing laboratories to help prepare Hong Kong for the launch of the mass testing.

"Everybody is now predicting that we will have a pretty sizeable percentage of people infected with COVID-19 in Hong Kong, so hopefully through comprehensive universal testing we will try to identify these infected cases and put them in isolation," Lam told reporters Tuesday night.

"To ensure the success, we need a lot more isolation facilities."

Leung Chun-kit, a kitchen worker, said he didn't think the government was prepared for universal testing and dealing with the results.

"I think the government should consider increasing hospital manpower and facilities to better

AP PHOTO



support the health workers," he said.

In his presentation of the city budget this week, Financial Secretary Paul Chan announced a series of measures to provide relief to residents and small businesses, as well as resources to fight the pandemic.

After keeping the coronavirus largely at bay with extremely strict regulations on international travel and internal restrictions, Hong Kong has seen record numbers of new cases fueled by the highly contagious omicron variant.

Last week the daily figure climbed to more than 6,000 confirmed cases for the first time, then hit more than 7,000 earlier this week.

The analysis of sewage samples suggest the real number could be far greater, with experts predicting that the citywide testing

could catch some 300,000 cases.

"We probably have not seen the peak of this wave, so how we are going to manage the next two to three months will be extremely essential and critical to containing, but there is no guarantee whatsoever," Lam said.

As part of its zero-tolerance strategy, China has locked down entire cities, keeping people sequestered in their homes and providing them with food and supplies during extensive testing and contact tracing.

Hong Kong, a former British colony and semi-autonomous region of China, lacks the resources for a complete lockdown but there is growing fear among residents that it is going in that direction. Smaller lockdowns of single buildings or city blocks have raised vehement criticism.

Hong Kong operates under the "one country, two systems" principle within China, but the mainland has been exerting ever-increasing authority.

Lam insisted "there is no instruction from the Central People's Government on a lockdown" and that the current outbreak was "entirely a matter" for her administration to handle.

"Our motherland is giving us all the support that we need at this critical stage," she said. "But at the end of the day, I am responsible under 'one country, two systems.'"

China on Wednesday reported 90 new cases of domestic transmission, almost half in the northern Inner Mongolia region and 10 in Beijing. Shenzhen in Guangdong province, which borders Hong Kong, reported seven

new cases.

Guangdong also recorded 38 imported cases, all from Hong Kong, despite strict border controls that have virtually severed travel between Hong Kong and the mainland.

Addressing the surge in Hong Kong on Monday, China's leading epidemiologist Zhong Nanshan said strict control measures were needed to prevent a higher death rate among the elderly.

Mainland China has lifted lockdowns on millions of people in cities in the north and center of the country, but continues to impose quarantines and require mass testing in districts where cases have been reported.

Practically for Lam, relaxing the zero-COVID-19 strategy would further hinder travel between the city and the mainland, where authorities require three weeks of quarantine or more. Beijing will not reopen Hong Kong's border with the mainland until the city reaches and maintains zero cases.

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 app will contain the user's vaccination records and only residents who have had at least one shot, or certain specified medical exemptions, will be allowed to enter places like restaurants, malls and supermarkets.

"If Hong Kong still has to live the zero-COVID policy and then cannot achieve it, then Hong Kong would become an island because it basically will be cut off from the rest of the world, including China, and we already see the escalation in price of vegetables," said Francis Lun, the CEO of Geo Securities in Hong Kong.

"In addition, the status of Hong Kong as an international financial center would suffer." **MDT/AP**

VACCINE REQUIREMENT FOR RESTAURANTS, STORES STARTS

HONG Kong launched a vaccination requirement to enter shopping malls, restaurants and a host of other places yesterday as it battles an expanding omicron outbreak and tries to overcome vaccine hesitancy in parts of its population.

Businesses posted a QR code at their entrances for people to scan with a smartphone app to check their vaccine status before entering.

Everyone aged 12 and over must have at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine to enter these places. Beginning April 30, those aged 18 and above will be required to have two doses. Booster shots will be required for some starting June 30.

Mainland experts have been brought in to help put up temporary testing facilities and new isolation wards to handle a mass testing of the entire population of 7.4 million people next month, similar to what China does in ci-

ties hit with even relatively small outbreaks. The city of Hohhot in China's Inner Mongolia region launched a sixth round of citywide testing yesterday in an outbreak with 277 confirmed cases.

In Hong Kong, the Health Department reported 8,798 new cases of people testing positive in the latest 24-hour period, the highest daily total since the start of the pandemic.

The ongoing outbreak, along with the new requirement to be vaccinated to enter certain premises, has driven more people to get a shot. About 5.9 million people, or 87% of the population 12 years old and older, have gotten at least one dose, according to the government.

Nearly 45,000 people received their first dose of vaccine in the 24 hours through 8 p.m. Wednesday, and more than 43,000 got either their second or third dose, the city government said.

The vaccine requirement also applies to fresh food markets, gaming centers, gyms, beauty parlors and barbershops, swimming pools, department stores and nightclubs. Exceptions are made for people making a delivery or picking up an item, including takeout food.

King Woo, who was waiting for takeout outside a restaurant, said that people should have the freedom to choose whether to use the vaccine pass.

"Even if I'm not vaccinated, I should have the right to dine-in," he said. "Therefore, in the current situation, I'd rather get takeaway."

At restaurants, an employee is required to check each customer's vaccine status and scan it with their smartphone. At many other places, including shopping malls, there is no required check. The government said that police may conduct spot checks. **MDT/AP**



A Chinese paramilitary policeman stands watch at the Russian Embassy in Beijing

China calls for talks over Ukraine, OKs Russian wheat import

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

CHINA repeated calls for talks to resolve the crisis in Ukraine yesterday while refusing to criticize Russia's attack, and in a move that could help reduce the impact of Western sanctions against Moscow, approved imports of Russian wheat.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told reporters at a daily briefing that "the Ukraine issue is complex in its historical background ... what we are seeing today is the interplay of complex factors."

"China is closely following the latest developments," Hua said. "We still hope that the parties concerned will not shut the door to peace and engage instead in dialogue and consultation and prevent the situation from further escalating."

Although China has not endorsed President Vladimir Putin's recognition of independence of eastern Ukraine's separatist areas or Putin's decision to send Russian forces there, Hua said China "called on parties to respect others' legitimate security concerns."

"All parties should work for peace instead of escalating the tension or hyping up the possibility of war," Hua said, repeating the language China has consistently used to

criticize the West during the crisis.

"Those parties who were busy condemning others, what have they done? Have they persuaded others?" Hua said.

China and Russia have largely aligned their foreign policies in opposition to the U.S. and its allies. Hua did not describe Russia's actions as an invasion or directly refer to the movement of Russian forces into Ukraine.

Yesterday, China's customs agency approved imports of wheat from Russia. It is one of the biggest wheat producers but its exports would be vulnerable if its foreign markets block shipments in response to its attack on Ukraine.

The two governments announced an agreement Feb. 8 for China to import Russian wheat and barley after Putin became the highest-profile foreign guest to attend the Beijing Winter Olympics.

China is a big market for other farm goods suppliers, but Beijing had barred imports until now from Russia's main wheat-growing areas due to concern about possible fungus and other contamination. Thursday's announcement said Russia would "take all measures" to prevent contamination by wheat smut fungus and would suspend exports to China if it was found.

Earlier, China's Embassy

in Kyiv issued a warning to its citizens to stay home and place a Chinese flag inside or on their vehicle if they needed to travel long distances.

On Wednesday, Hua accused the West of creating "fear and panic" over the crisis and said the U.S. was fueling tensions by providing weapons to Kyiv. She said China opposes new sanctions on Russia.

China-Russia ties have grown closer under Chinese leader Xi Jinping, who hosted Putin at talks in Beijing earlier this month.

The two leaders issued a joint statement backing Moscow's opposition to a NATO expansion in former Soviet republics and buttressing China's claim to the self-governing island of Taiwan — key foreign policy issues for Beijing and Moscow.

Li Xin, director of the Institute of European and Asian Studies at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law, said the West had forced Russia to take action, citing NATO's expansion eastward and the deployment of missile defense system.

"On the one hand, we respect territory integrity and the sovereignty of Ukraine, but on the other hand, we must consider the historical process of the of the situation where Russia has been pushed into a corner and forced to counterattack," Li said.

MDT/AP

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

PAUL WISEMAN & DAVID MCHUGH, WASHINGTON

JUST what a vulnerable world economy didn't need — a conflict that accelerates inflation, rattles markets and portends trouble for everyone from European consumers to indebted Chinese developers and families in Africa that face soaring food prices.

Russia's attack on Ukraine and retaliatory sanctions from the West may not portend another global recession. The two countries together account for less than 2% of the world's gross domestic product. And many regional economies remain in solid shape, having rebounded swiftly from the pandemic recession.

Yet the conflict threatens to inflict severe economic damage on some countries and industries — damage that could mean hardships for millions of people. Russia is the world's third-biggest producer of petroleum and is a major exporter of natural gas. Ukraine's farms feed millions around the world. And financial markets are in a precarious spot as central banks prepare to reverse years of easy-money policies and raise interest rates to fight a resurgence of inflation. Those higher rates will likely slow spending and raise the risk of another downturn.

"I wouldn't be misled by just calculating GDP ratios ... especially at a time when commodity prices are already high, inflation is already high," said Elina Ribakova, deputy chief economist at the Institute of Interna-

tional Finance, a trade group for banks. "It's a tricky moment now, given where the global economy is."

Russia's attack could slow Europe's economic recovery by sending already elevated energy prices ever higher. Europe, an energy importer, receives close to 40% of its natural gas from Russia. A cutoff of that energy source could undercut the continent's economy. High natural gas prices have already led to higher home utility bills for both natural-gas heat and electricity generated from gas, crimping consumer spending.

"Gas prices in Europe are already crushing households and consumers, especially low-income households," said Adam Tooze, director of Columbia University's European Institute, whose 2018 history of the last decade's financial crisis, "Crashed," explored tensions over Ukraine.

Costly gas has forced production cutbacks at producers of fertilizer and some other heavy industrial users. Annual inflation hit 5.1% in January in the 19 countries that use the euro, the highest rate since record-keeping began in 1997.

"Escalating tensions put two cornerstones of this year's expected growth recovery — a rebound in consumer spending and a pickup in industrial activity — at further risk," Oliver Rakau and Mateusz Urban at Oxford Economics said in a research note.

Natural gas prices, which have tended to rise on crisis news, remain about four times what they were at the start of 2021.

EXPLAINER

What to know as Russia attacks

VANESSA GERA, WARSAW

RUSSIAN troops launched a broad assault on Ukraine from three sides yesterday, an attack that began with explosions before dawn in the capital Kyiv and other cities.

Ukraine's leadership said at least 40 people had been killed so far in what it called a "full-scale war" targeting the country from the east, north and south.

In a televised address as the attack began, Russian President Vladimir Putin warned other countries that any attempt to interfere would "lead to consequences you have never seen in history."

Ukrainians started fleeing some cities, and the Russian military claimed to have incapacitated all of Ukraine's air defenses and air bases within hours.

World leaders decried the start of an invasion that could cause massive casualties, topple Ukraine's democratically elected government and threaten the post-Cold War balance on

the continent.

U.S. President Joe Biden declared that the world will "hold Russia accountable." NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg condemned Russia's action as a violation of international law and a threat to European security.

Ukraine's foreign ministry said Russia's intent was to destroy the state of Ukraine, a Westward-looking democracy intent on moving out of Moscow's orbit.

Here are the things to know about the conflict over Ukraine and the security crisis in Eastern Europe:

PUTIN MAKES HIS MOVE

Putin said the military operation was needed to protect civilians in eastern Ukraine — a claim the U.S. had predicted he would falsely make to justify an invasion.

Putin accused the U.S. and its allies of ignoring Russia's demands to block Ukraine from ever joining NATO and offer Moscow security guarantees.

Putin said Russia does not intend to occupy Ukraine but will "demilitarize" it. Soon after his address, explosions were heard in the cities of Kyiv, Kharkiv and Odesa. Russia said it was attacking military targets.

He urged Ukrainian servicemen to "immediately put down arms and go home."

Ukraine's border guard agency said the Russian military has attacked from neighboring Belarus, unleashing a barrage of artillery. The agency said Ukrainian border guards fired back, adding that there was no immediate report of casualties. Russian troops have been in Belarus for military drills.

THE WEST REACTS QUICKLY

Biden, Stoltenberg and other world leaders quickly condemned Russia's attack as unprovoked and unjustified.

Putin "has chosen a premeditated war that will bring a catastrophic loss of life and human suffering,"

CONFLICT RAISES BIG RISKS FOR GLOBAL ECONOMY



The Azovstal metallurgical plant is seen on the outskirts of the eastern Ukrainian city of Mariupol

Russia sold less gas than normal on the short-term spot market, raising concerns that the Kremlin was using gas to press for approval of its Nord Stream 2 pipeline. The pipeline has now been frozen by sanctions imposed by Germany's government.

A mild winter and extra supplies of liquefied natural gas from the United States have helped ease some of Europe's jitters about a potential loss of Russian gas. Analysts say Russia

has no interest in a complete gas cutoff, which would mean a sharp loss of revenue.

The threat to farms in eastern Ukraine and exports through Black Sea ports could reduce wheat supplies at a time when global food prices are at their highest level since 2011 and some countries are suffering from food shortages.

Ukraine is the world's fifth-largest wheat exporter, agricultural analyst

Alex Smith wrote last month in the journal Foreign Policy, and many of the countries that rely on its wheat "already face food insecurity from ongoing political instability or outright violence." Yemen, for instance, imports 22% of its wheat consumption from Ukraine, Libya about 43%, Lebanon roughly half.

Rising energy and food prices will intensify the inflationary pressures that policymakers and central

banks are struggling to ease. In the estimation of Capital Economics, a worst-case scenario of an escalating conflict and sanctions could send oil prices up to as much as \$140 a barrel — international Brent crude had surged above \$100 yesterday after Russia attacked Ukraine — and force natural gas prices up, too.

That combination would add a sizable 2 percentage points to annual inflation in the world's wealthy countries, Capital Economics estimates. In the United States, the world's largest economy, consumer inflation jumped 7.5% last month compared with 12 months earlier, the steepest annual increase since 1982.

With inflation running hot, central banks may have less leeway — or inclination — to ride to the rescue with stimulus if the economy sputters in the face of the military conflict in Ukraine.

"The current inflationary backdrop suggests that policymakers have less flexibility than in the past to respond to a slowdown in real activity or a fall in asset prices," said Jonathan Petersen at Capital Economics.

Indeed, stocks have tumbled in anticipation of higher rates and a potential downturn. Market benchmarks in Europe and Asia fell by as much as 4% yesterday, while Wall

Street futures retreated by an unusually wide daily margin of 2.5%.

In the face of geopolitical worries, Michael Taylor, managing director at Moody's Investors Service, warns that investors may flee to Treasuries and other super-safe investments, thereby driving up the relative credit costs for riskier businesses.

"Chinese property developers would be particularly exposed to this risk" as they try to roll over large amounts of foreign debt this year, Taylor said.

Financial markets could grow even more chaotic if the United States proceeds with what some call the "nuclear option": Cutting Russia out of the SWIFT payment network, a messaging service that links thousands of banks and allows them to transfer payments around the world.

Such a move would isolate Russia and bar the transfer of profits from energy production, which account for more than 40% of the country's revenue. But shutting Russia out of international finance could backfire, too, hurting U.S. and European companies that do business with Russian companies.

"There is a risk for global finance as much as there is for Russia," said Ribakova of the Institute of International Finance. **MDT/AP**

Ukraine

Biden said in a statement.

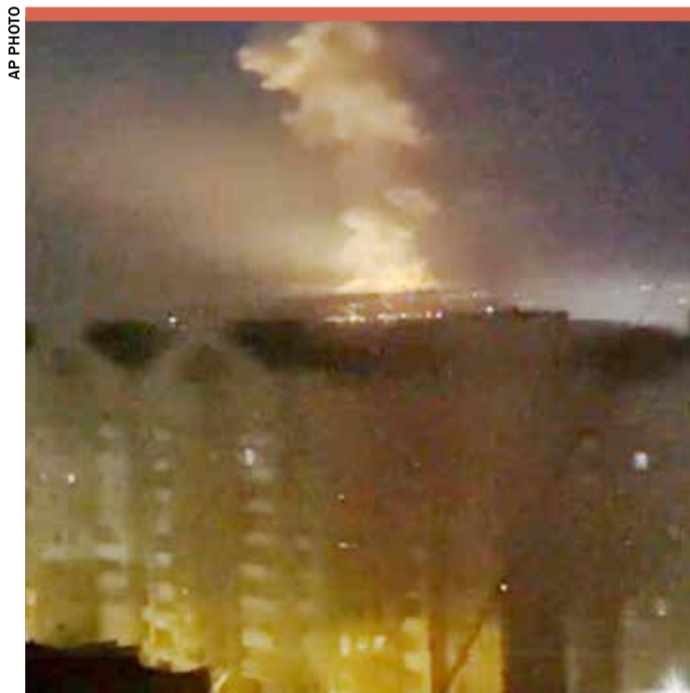
British Prime Minister Boris Johnson says Western allies will not stand by as Russia attacks Ukraine, and told Zelensky in an early morning call that he was appalled by events.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said: "This Russian invasion stands to put at risk the basic principle of international order that forbids one-sided action of force in an attempt to change the status quo."

UKRAINE'S PRESIDENT URGES CALM

Residents of Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, could be heard shouting in the streets when the first explosions sounded. But some kind of normalcy quickly returned, with cars circulating in the streets in the early morning commute.

President Volodymyr Zelensky issued a video statement declaring martial law. He told Ukrainians that the United States was gathering international support to respond to Russia. He urged residents to remain calm and stay at home.



A flame is seen from an area near the Dnieper river in Kyiv yesterday

WORLD MARKETS FALL

World stock markets have plunged and oil prices surged by nearly \$6 per barrel after Putin launched Russian military action in Ukraine.

Market benchmarks tumbled in Europe and Asia and U.S. futures were sharply lower. Brent crude oil jumped to over \$100 per barrel Thursday on unease about possible disruption of Russian supplies.

The ruble sank 7.5% to more than \$87 to the U.S. dollar. Earlier, Wall Street's benchmark S&P 500 index fell

1.8% to an eight-month low after the Kremlin said rebels in eastern Ukraine asked for military assistance.

WEST TO IMPOSE MORE SANCTIONS

Ukraine's forces are no match for Moscow's military might, so Kyiv is counting on other countries to hit Russia hard — with sanctions.

Biden on Wednesday allowed sanctions to move forward against the company that built the Russia-to-Germany Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline and against the com-

pany's CEO.

Biden waived sanctions last year when the project was almost completed, in return for an agreement from Germany to take action against Russia if it used gas as a weapon or attacked Ukraine. Germany said Tuesday it was indefinitely suspending the pipeline.

Biden said more sanctions would be announced on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the European Union planned the "strongest, the harshest package" ever, to be considered at a summit on Thursday, according to EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell.

"A major nuclear power has attacked a neighbor country and is threatening reprisals of any other states that may come to the rescue," Borrell said.

"This is not only the greatest violation of international law, it's a violation of the basic principles of human co-existence. It's costing many lives with unknown consequences ahead of us. The European Union will respond in the strongest possible terms."

HOW IS UKRAINE'S ECONOMY HOLDING UP?

It was Ukraine, not Russia, where the economy was eroding the fastest under the

threat of war.

One by one, embassies and international offices in Kyiv closed. Flight after flight was canceled when insurance companies balked at covering planes arriving in Ukraine. Hundreds of millions of dollars in investment dried up within weeks.

The squeezing of Ukraine's economy is a key destabilizing tactic in what the government describes as "hybrid warfare" intended to eat away at the country from within.

The economic woes include restaurants that dare not keep more than a few days of food on hand, stalled plans for a hydrogen production plant that could help wean Europe off Russian gas and uncertain conditions for shipping in the Black Sea, where container ships must carefully edge their way around Russian military vessels.

UKRAINE SEES MORE CYBERATTACKS

The websites of Ukraine's defense, foreign and interior ministries were unreachable or painfully slow to load Thursday morning after a punishing wave of distributed-denial-of-service attacks as Russia struck at its neighbor.

In addition to DDoS attacks

on Wednesday, cybersecurity researchers said unidentified attackers had infected hundreds of computers with destructive malware, some in neighboring Latvia and Lithuania.

Officials have long expected cyberattacks to precede and accompany any Russian military incursion.

HOW CONFRONTATION IS SEEN IN RUSSIA?

In the buildup to the attack, Russian state media portrayed Moscow as coming to the rescue of war-torn areas of eastern Ukraine where residents were tormented by Ukraine's aggression.

"You paid with your blood for these eight years of torment and anticipation," anchor Olga Skabeyeva said during a popular political talk show Tuesday morning. "Russia will now be defending Donbas."

Channel One struck a more festive tone, with its correspondent in Donetsk asserting that local residents "say it is the best news over the past years of war."

"Now they have confidence in the future and that the years-long war will finally come to an end," she said.

Whether ordinary Russians were buying it is another question. **MDT/AP**

SLENG TENG

HOW A JAPANESE WOMAN INFLUENCED JAMAICA'S REGGAE

YURI KAGEYAMA, TOKYO

A musical revolution in Jamaica has a connection with a bouncy rhythm from a portable electronic keyboard that's the brainchild of a Japanese woman.

The pattern that resonates in the 1985 reggae hit by Wayne Smith, "Under Mi Sleng Teng," came from Casiotone MT-40, which went on sale in 1981, the first product Hiroko Okuda worked on after joining the Tokyo-based company behind G-Shock watches.

"It's really like my first child, and the child turned out so well it's outright moving," said Okuda, honored as "the mother of Sleng Teng" among the hard-core reggae aficionados.

Sleng Teng is a form of digital Jamaican music that began in the mid-1980s, part of the rich repertoire of the disco-like genre called "dancemusic." No one contests the key role played by artists like Smith and King Jammy, as well as the humble, battery-operated, \$150 MT-40.

One of the rhythm patterns Okuda created called "rock" on the MT-40 evolved into "Sleng Teng riddim."

As legend goes, Noel Davey, the Grammy-winning keyboard player for the Marley Brothers, got an MT-40 from a friend, who picked it up in California. Before, Davey was blowing into a Melodica portable keyboard for that sound.

Davey was toying around with the MT-40 and chanced upon the beat that's in Smith's megahit "Under Mi Sleng Teng."

And the rest is history, so to speak.

"You don't plan," Davey said, when asked about that moment.

There are so many buttons on the MT-40, he was "fooling around," found it, lost it, then had to look for it and found it again.

"It was a searching process," he said from Kingston, Jamaica.

The power of reggae comes from its healing effect, like "therapy," being a music for the poor, for those moving up against apartheid, for the people, he said.

Davey, who has never been to Japan, said he would like to meet Okuda. The two share something in common — just

AP PHOTO



Hiroko Okuda holds, at its headquarters in Tokyo on Feb. 9, 2022, the Casio MT-40 portable keyboard player, which she created in 1981

as he feels he has never been properly credited for his role in the history of reggae, he stressed Okuda deserves credit for the Casio instrument.

That groove went on to inspire much of subsequent reggae, distinctly heard in works by Sugar Minott, Ibo Cooper, Gregory Isaacs and Dennis Brown.

Michael "Megabass" Fletcher, a musician in Jamaica, said repetitive music isn't inferior.

"It has its place," he said, demonstrating Sleng Teng on his bass. "A good song is a good song."

Fletcher said other keyboards were also used to play Sleng Teng, such as Casio CZ-101 and Yamaha DX100, from Casio's Japanese rival.

"Sleng Teng will never die," said Fletcher, who has performed or produced songs for Shaggy, Maxi Priest and Alborosie.

Okuda, whose graduation thesis at Kunitachi College of Music in Tokyo was on reggae, was among the first recruits at Casio Computer Co. assigned to work on musical instruments, then a new sector for the company.

The company didn't have very many musicians, and she was the one with background in world music. Okuda had immersed herself in reggae in the late 1970s, including going to Bob Marley's concerts in Japan.

Okuda worked out six

kinds of rhythms for the MT-40, including samba, swing and waltz, creating a bass line and a beat.

She also created two licks called "fill ins" to be played between sections of a song — or at the start of a song, as it is in "Under Mi Sleng Teng."

For the prototype, she initially had an even more brash punk-rock-like rhythm called "avant garde." The managers killed it as "too crazy."

At least the "rock" pattern got approved, Okuda recalled with a laugh.

Casio's main business was calculators, not keyboards, and so Okuda's invention didn't make much of a wave at her company. Okuda said she was usually among a handful of women in a room filled with men.

"I was a pioneer in so many places, and there were Japan's old ways everywhere I went. I had to put up a fight each time," she said.

She was never promoted to managerial positions, and never chosen for a business trip abroad. She has not traveled to Jamaica, or anywhere else except for China.

When asked if she has any advice for working women, Okuda pointed out having a special skill tends to help. She also has an extremely supportive husband, who took on much of the child-care responsibilities.

That definitely helped, she said.

The family shares a love for music, and music is always playing in their house. When they were younger, Okuda did feel a bit sad when her daughter and son would see her off at the door, singing, "Heigh-ho, heigh-ho, it's work she loves to go," to the tune in Walt Disney's "Snow White." These days, they joke maybe she'll win the Nobel for the MT-40.

A more recent Casio technology Okuda has worked on is Music Tapestry, which translates music being played into a fluid visual image on the computer. Flowers float and swirl in time to the notes. Circles, squares and triangles dance about on the screen. Its sale date is undecided.

She doubts any of the reggae musicians know she is behind the MT-40. And how her MT-40 became part of such great music is nothing short of "a miracle," she said.

"If I can ever meet them, I just want to express my deep gratitude. I want to tell them thank you so much for finding the rhythm and for using it," she told The Associated Press.

Casio still sells keyboards. The CT-S1000V, set to go on sale in March, turns words into vocaloid-like singing. The smaller portable versions come with dozens of preset rhythms.

In the 2010 model, the rock pattern was called "MT-40 riddim" in honor of where it all began. MDT/AP

CAMBODIA

MALAYSIAN PM DISCUSSES MYANMAR CRISIS DURING VISIT

THE leaders of Malaysia and Cambodia discussed the crisis in military-ruled Myanmar and other regional issues during a meeting in Phnom Penh yesterday, the two countries said.

Malaysian Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob met with his counterpart, Hun Sen, and King Norodom Sihamoni during his first visit to Cambodia since becoming Malaysia's leader last August.

Both countries are members of the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which has been trying to help restore peace in Myanmar, where the army seized power a year ago from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Cambodia is the chair of ASEAN this year, and Hun Sen has sought to engage Myanmar's generals in a conciliatory manner. In January, he became the first foreign leader to visit Myanmar since the military takeover, which critics say lent legitimacy to the army's rule in a situation that some U.N. experts have termed a civil war.

Malaysia is one of several members of the regional group which have taken a harder line toward Myanmar's military government for its failure to implement a five-point ASEAN consensus on promoting peace.

In their talks, Hun Sen and Ismail both endorsed the five-point plan and Malaysia fully supported the work of ASEAN's special envoy on Myanmar, Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn, the two countries said in a joint statement.

They also discussed tensions in the South China Sea and "geopolitical rivalry among major powers," the statement said. Many ASEAN members strongly dispute China's claim to wide swaths of the South China Sea, but Cambodia, China's closest ally in the region and without claims of its own, has been lukewarm in supporting its fellow members' positions.

Their differences on the Myanmar issue were highlighted last month when Malaysian Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah said Hun Sen should have consulted with other ASEAN leaders before going to Myanmar to meet the head of its ruling military council, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing.

Hun Sen responded that Malaysia's foreign minister should not be "arrogant" and disrespectful of the ASEAN chair. MDT/AP



Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen (right) with his Malaysian counterpart Ismail Sabri Yaakob in Phnom Penh

AP PHOTO



Survivors Sulaki Kafoika (left) and Sione Vailea (center) pose for a photo with Drew Havea, vice president Tonga Red Cross, in Nuku'alofa

TONGA

Uncertain future for islanders who survived eruption

NICK PERRY, WELLINGTON

THE first two booms from the volcano were scary enough, but the third explosion was immense, sending everyone from the village running from their homes in a reaction that would save all but one of their lives.

Even now, more than five weeks later, the children from Mango Island still often run or cower when they hear a thunderclap or loud noise.

The small island in Tonga was one of the closest places to the Jan. 15 South Pacific volcanic eruption, an event so massive it sent out a sonic boom that could be heard in Alaska and a mushroom plume of ash that was seen in startling images taken from space. On Mango Island, every single home was destroyed by the tsunami that followed.

All 62 survivors were rescued by boat and moved to Tonga's capital, Nuku'alofa, where they have been living together since in a church hall. Most of that time they've been in lockdown after Tonga experienced its first outbreak of the coronavirus.

Two of the survivors described their experiences and uncertain future to The Associated Press in an interview that was translated by an official from the Tonga Red Cross.

Sione Vailea, 52, said Mango Island is the prettiest place he knows and nothing compares to it in all of Tonga. Just 14 families lived on the island, he said, all of them close together in a single village.

Each family owned a small, open-sided boat and each morning the weather was favorable, they would go onto the ocean to catch reef fish, snapper, octopus and lobster.

What they couldn't eat themselves they would take to the capital to sell, getting enough money to buy food and other necessities. For those fortunate enough to have a decent-sized engine on their boats, it was a six-hour return journey to the capital, but it could take double that time for those puttering along on 15 horsepower.

Mango Island is a little over 20 miles (32 kilometers) from the Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai undersea volcano, which back in late 2014 had rumbled to life, creating a small, new island and briefly disrupting air travel in a series of eruptions.

But those were nothing compared to the scale of eruption that took place on that Saturday evening in January. When the islanders heard the third massive boom, they began running from their low-lying village up a nearby hill, the highest point on Mango Island.

"There was no sign that there was going to be a tsunami, but our gut feeling was we needed to get up to the top, because we weren't sure what was happening," Vailea said.

As the island's appointed town officer, Vailea checked to make sure everybody was gathered. He noticed one family was missing.

Another survivor, 72-year-old Sulaki Kafoika, who goes by the name Halapaini — or talking chief — a title bestowed upon him by Tonga's king, said that once he got to the top of the hill, he looked back. He could see waves crashing over the tops of their houses. He'd never experienced anything like it in his life.

Vailea scrambled back down the hill and saw the wife, two daughters and son of a 65-year-old man coming up. The man was gone, taken by the waves.

"He was the first victim of the tsunami," Vailea said. "Because he died right then, as they were trying to get up to the top of the island."

Two other people elsewhere in Tonga also died from the tsunami, including a British national, and a fourth person died from what authorities described as related trauma. The tsunami crossed the Pacific Ocean to Peru, where it caused an oil spill and two more people drowned.

On Mango Island, night's darkness quickly followed the

tsunami as the villagers remained huddled at the top of the hill. Throughout the night, the men held blankets above the women and children to protect them from the ash and small volcanic rocks that were pelting down. The tsunami had cut off all phone and internet connections, and they were alone and isolated.

When dawn broke, they walked down the hill and found the body of the drowned man. Amid the wreckage, they found a small shovel and an axe. They dug a grave, a process that took much of the day after they hit rock about 1 meter (3 feet) down.

All of their boats were wrecked and they had almost no food. After searching the village, they found two small bags of rice, which they cooked for the children, Vailea said. The adults ate nothing that day, or the next, as they waited.

Finally earlier this week, a boat arrived from a neighboring island to check on them. Their neighbors had brought with them some cassava, a root vegetable, and a bunch of plantains, which are similar to bananas.

"They cooked it and it was the best meal," said Vailea. "On a normal day, you wouldn't call it a good meal. But on that day, it was very special."

The next day, they were all transported to the nearby island

of Nomuka and then a few days later to Nuku'alofa, the capital, where they have been living since. None of them have been back to Mango Island. Until Sunday, they were in lockdown after the outbreak of the virus, which was likely brought in by foreign military crews delivering vital aid.

The survivors say it has been difficult for them over the past few weeks as they deal with the trauma and the lockdown restrictions, but it has helped immensely that they have all been living together and have been able to comfort one another. They've benefited from the clothes, food and money that have been donated by people from around the world.

What happens next remains uncertain. As town officer, Vailea has been meeting regularly with Tongan officials but said the final decision of whether they will be able to return and resettle Mango Island rests with Tonga's government and the monarch, King Tupou VI. The survivors hope they will get a decision within the coming weeks.

Vailea said the people of Mango Island are split, with some wanting to return and others happy to start life afresh in Nuku'alofa or elsewhere. He said it is his duty to support whatever his people want.

Halapaini said he has mixed feelings. All the good things that he enjoyed in life were on Mango Island, but he also worries that the volcano could erupt again.

Vailea is more emphatic. He wants to return to Mango Island, where life can be hard but where you own your time and share everything with your neighbors. Where you wake up in the morning and jump on your boat to fish. **MDT/AP**

Ukraine attack leaves Baltics wondering: Are we next?

LIUDAS DAPKUS
& KARL RITTER, VILNIUS

VIEWED from Paris, London and Washington, the events unfolding in Ukraine may seem like a new Cold War taking shape in Europe.

From the Baltic countries, it looks much worse.

To Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians — particularly those old enough to have lived under Soviet control — Russia's belligerence toward Ukraine has some worried that they could be the next target. The tensions have brought back memories of mass deportations and oppression.

"My grandparents were sent away to Siberia. My father was persecuted by the KGB. Now I live in a free democratic country, but it seems that nothing can be taken for granted," said Jaunius Kazlauskas, a 50-year-old teacher in Vilnius, Lithuania's capital.

Russia's attack on Ukraine sent shockwaves through the Baltic countries on Thursday. Lithuania's president declared a state of emergency and Latvia suspended the broadcast licenses of several Russian TV stations accused of spreading disinformation and propaganda.

All three Baltic countries were seized and annexed by Stalin during World War II before gaining independence again with the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. They joined NATO in 2004, putting themselves under the military protection of the U.S. and its Western allies. Ukraine is not part of NATO.

Along with Poland, also a NATO member, the small Baltic countries have been among the loudest advocates for powerful sanctions against Moscow and NATO reinforcements on the alliance's eastern flank. Baltic government leaders in recent weeks have shuttled to European capitals, warning that the West must make Russian President Vladimir Putin pay for attacking Ukraine, or else his tanks will keep rolling toward other parts of the former Soviet empire.

"The battle for Ukraine is a battle for Europe. If Pu-



People including Ukrainians, take part in a demonstration in support of Ukraine, outside the Russian Embassy in Tallinn, Estonia, yesterday

tin is not stopped there, he will go further," Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis warned last week in a joint news conference with U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin.

Two days before the attack, President Joe Biden announced that some American forces deployed in Europe, including 800 infantry soldiers, F-35 fighters and Apache helicopters, would be moved to the three Baltic states, describing the step as purely defensive.

The news was met with enthusiasm in the Baltic capitals. While the NATO treaty commits all allies to defend any member that comes under attack, the Baltic countries say it is imperative that NATO show resolve not just in words but with boots on the ground.

"Russia always measures the military might but also the will of countries to fight," said Janis Garisons, state secretary at Latvia's Defense Ministry. "Once they see a weakness, they will exploit that weakness."

While Putin hasn't publicly expressed any ambition to reassert Russian control over the Baltic countries, many Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians worry he wants to regain influence across all former republics of the Soviet Union, the collapse of which he once described as a tragedy for the Russian people.

In his speech earlier this week setting the stage for Russia's military intervention, Putin said Ukraine is "not just a neighboring country for us. It is an inalienable part of our own his-

tory, culture and spiritual space."

Culturally and linguistically different, the Baltic countries don't have the same connection to Russian history and identity. However, they were ruled by Moscow for most of the past 200 years, first by the Russian Empire, then for almost 50 years following World War II by the Soviet Union. All three countries have ethnic Russian minorities; in Latvia and Estonia, they make up about one-quarter of the population.

Though many of them are well integrated, tensions flared in 2007 when hundreds of ethnic Russians rioted against government plans to relocate a Soviet war memorial in Tallinn, Estonia's capital. Estonia suspected Russia of stoking the unrest and orchestrating cyberattacks that paralyzed government computer networks.

"When we hear Putin humiliating Ukraine, calling it an artificial state with no history, it reminds us of the same things that they have been repeating about all former Soviet republics for many years," said Nerijus Maliukevicius, a political analyst at Vilnius University. The Russian "state propaganda machine is now working on unprecedented levels of intensity, and the message is not just about Ukraine," he added.

Lithuania borders both Kaliningrad, a Russian region where the country's Baltic Sea fleet is based, and Belarus, the former Soviet republic where tens of thousands of Russian

troops have been deployed for joint exercises. Belarus recently announced that the drills would continue because of the tensions in eastern Ukraine.

"It seems they are not going to leave," Lithuanian Defense Minister Arvydas Anusauskas said before Russia launched its attack on Ukraine. "But we must understand that numbers do not mean everything. There are technically very advanced troops on our side of the border. Their main task is deterrence — and defense, if necessary."

The Baltic countries have expressed strong support for Ukraine. Baltic leaders have traveled to Kyiv recently to show their solidarity and have sent both weapons and humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

Estonia, which celebrates its independence day on Thursday, is taking a strong stance in the conflict, but not because it fears for its security, said former President Kersti Kaljulaid, the first woman to hold that office.

"We are doing it because we find it is our moral obligation," she said. "We very strongly feel that ... every nation should have the right to decide their future."

While the Baltics are direct neighbors of Russia, she said other European countries should be equally worried about the crisis in Ukraine.

"Frankly speaking, I don't think it concerns the Baltics more," she said. "If you look from Kyiv, it's the same distance to Berlin as Tallinn." MDT/AP

this day in history

1956 KHRUSHCHEV LASHES OUT AT STALIN



The Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, has denounced Joseph Stalin as a brutal despot.

In a sensational speech to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party Mr Khrushchev painted a graphic picture of a regime of "suspicion, fear, and terror" built up under the former dictator who died three years ago.

He said he wanted to break the "Stalin cult" that has held Soviet citizens in its thrall for 30 years.

The prime minister described the purges during the period of 1936-38.

He implied that one of Stalin's most trusted aides Kirov had been assassinated in 1934 at the leader's behest.

Stalin then initiated a series of trials of members of the politburo and had some executed for Kirov's murder, including Zinoviev, Kamenev and Rykov.

Stalin meted out humiliation and persecution to those officers and members of the Politburo who fell from favour, said Mr Khrushchev.

He revealed that in 1937 and 1938, 98 out of the 139 members of the Central Committee were shot on Stalin's orders.

The leader also criticised Stalin's foreign policy during World War II. As an ally of Adolf Hitler, Stalin refused to believe Germany would invade Russia - despite warnings from Winston Churchill and Sir Stafford Cripps, the British Ambassador in Moscow, amongst others.

When the attack was launched, Stalin ordered the Red Army not to retaliate saying the raid was merely "discipline" on the part of some of Hitler's units.

Mr Khrushchev also condemned Stalin's autobiography as an "odious book" in which Stalin refers to himself as "the workers' genius-leader" and a "shy and modest person".

He also accused Stalin of violent nationalism and anti-Semitism.

He revealed that in his last will and testament Lenin advised against the retention of Stalin as general secretary of the Communist Party.

He said the information he had just divulged should only be made known to the public by degrees.

"You understand, comrades, that we could not spread this information to the people at once," he said. "It could be done either suddenly or gradually, and I think it would be more correct to do it gradually."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Mr Khrushchev's "secret speech" was not made public until 18 March 1956 and then only in Belgrade and Washington. It had a dramatic effect in Eastern Europe where "de-stalinisation" raised expectations of change, especially in Poland and Hungary.

The text of the speech was not published in Russia until 1988, some 32 years later.

Lenin's last will and testament was published in The New York Times in 1926, though it was not made public in the Soviet Union until Khrushchev's announcement.

Party agitators (official propagandists) were sent to Georgia to disseminate revelations about Stalin, where opposition to the new information was anticipated.

In the wake of the denouncement, Mr Khrushchev's pictures were torn down in Georgia, Stalin's home state. Riots occurred for several days in Tbilisi as Georgians reacted angrily to the denunciation of their hero.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You could be cornered, so be prepared to tell the truth. Spending too much time talking to friends or relatives could easily turn into a debate that could lead to estrangement.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You will need to finalize important deals today. Listening can be more valuable than being a chatterbox. You are best to work at home, clearing up overdue projects.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Your loved ones could set you off. Your dramatic nature may be too much to handle. You will be highly sensitive to comments made by your lover.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Don't overspend on items for your home. Don't hesitate to take short trips. Relatives will be cordial. You can pick up valuable information if you listen to those with more experience.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Make sure that you have covered yourself legally and try not to let your temper get out of hand. Stick to doing things that will make you a better person both physically and mentally.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

You can learn a great deal if you listen to those who are older or more experienced. You have to feel free to come and go as you please to achieve happiness.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You may find yourself in an opportune position if you are willing to take a bit of a risk. Don't go out of your way, and don't let these unexpected guests cost you money.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Get involved in philosophic groups that will enlighten you. Your creative talent may well be recognized by others today. Don't push your opinions on others today or you may find yourself in the doghouse.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You can put in some overtime and make extra cash. Invite friends in for a visit. You may not be too pleased with the actions of those you live with.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Find out all you can; secret enemies may lead you astray. Don't play on your partner's emotions. You can make it up to them later.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Escapist tendencies will result in a poor reputation and a lack of confidence. Don't invest too much of your own money. It's a great day to attend social functions.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Don't be too quick to judge those you live with. You may want to invest in something that will grow in value. Your lover may disappoint you in such a way that estrangement will follow.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

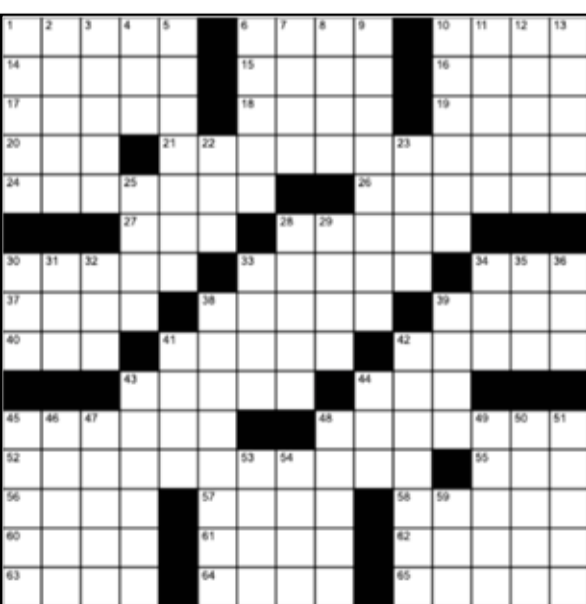
WEATHER

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

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Swollen part; 6- Coal-rich region; 10- Lhasa ___; 14- New York city; 15- Otherwise; 16- Thick slice; 17- New Hampshire's state flower; 18- Like some decisions; 19- Kerno ___; 20- ___ de France; 21- Politely; 24- Execute; 26- Self-supporting structures; 27- Canterbury can; 28- Cattail's locale; 30- Boatswain; 33- Dogie catcher; 34- Breast-supporting undergarment; 37- Goofing off; 38- Contradict; 39- Tirade; 40- Chinese "way"; 41- Prospect; 42- More unfavorable; 43- Main artery; 44- Blotto; 45- Outcome; 48- Split; 52- Render physically insensible; 55- Dance step used in ballet; 56- Hauls; 57- Mend with rows of stitches; 58- Merchandise; 60- "The Time Machine" race; 61- To ___ (perfectly); 62- Radii neighbors; 63- Having a sound mind; 64- Belgian river; 65- Long;

DOWN 1- Bell-shaped flower; 2- Of some benefit; 3- Distance runner; 4- South American tuber; 5- Nocturnal carnivore; 6- Watery animal fluid; 7- Banned apple spray; 8- Kind of prof; 9- Practice; 10- In itself; 11- Gentle water sound; 12- Fine fur; 13- Follows orders; 22- Acapulco gold; 23- About; 25- Duct for smoke; 28- Mediterranean island; 29- Bhutan's continent; 30- Mouthpiece of a bride; 31- Name of a feudal Japanese clan; 32- ___-pitch softball; 33- In case; 34- Place for ordering alcoholic drinks; 35- "ER" extras; 36- Had a bite; 38- The date on which a person is born; 39- Goes bad; 41- Unit of potential difference; 42- Smart aleck; 43- Outback resident; 44- Designer Claiborne; 45- Gives a 9, 8, say; 46- ___ Gay; 47- Attach, as a patch; 48- More delicate; 49- Once ___ time...; 50- Radiolocation; 51- Ruhr city; 53- Consumes; 54- It transforms carbon dioxide into oxygen; 59- Flamenco cheer;



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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AD

DRIVE IN

CHANNING TATUM AND HIS DOG CO-STAR RAISE THE WOOF

LINDSEY BAHR,
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

SOMETHING would have had to go very, very wrong for “Dog” not to work on a basic level. Pairing Channing Tatum, one of our most likable leading men, with a dog in a road trip two-hander is probably the closest you can get to a guaranteed win in Hollywood.

This is also a project that was born out of utter sincerity in the wreckage of a few years wasted on a squashed superhero movie. Tatum and his longtime producing partner Reid Carolin put their heads together to make something small, something meaningful, something they could do by themselves and something that they would want to see in a movie theater. And “Dog” was born, with both Tatum and Carolin making their directorial debuts.

In addition to directing, Tatum plays former U.S. Army Ranger Jackson Briggs, who is a lost soul when not in deployment. His day job making sandwiches at a Subway-type fast casual restaurant isn't exactly giving him life. And all he wants is to get back



Channing Tatum in a scene from “Dog”

overseas. There, he feels, he has a purpose. But though he has the motivation, he needs a recommendation, too, and his superior is not budging on that.

Then he gets an assignment: Take Lulu, a Belgian Malinois who Briggs served with, from Washington to Arizona for her handler's funeral. If he can do this, maybe he'll get the recommendation and be back in the field. Lulu, who is played by three different dogs, is

not doing well, though. She can't handle flying and she's prone to attacking people, so they have to drive the 1,600 miles to make the service.

The start is a little rough and meandering. Briggs sees Lulu as just a means to an end and basically a nuisance that he has to deal with for a few days. On their first stop, he leaves her trapped in his truck while he goes prowling for women in Portland — a fruitless

endeavor that seems to be played for comedy, but ends up just feeling sad. The film has several over-the-top gags, including one with a sadistic cannabis farmer and another bit where Briggs impersonates a blind man to get a fancy hotel room. All may theoretically work on their own, but they also don't quite mesh with the overall tone.

It's an interesting conundrum, too, because Tatum and Reid were not wrong to want to inject some

humor and levity into a pretty heavy subject. But perhaps the issue is that Briggs is not your average Tatum character. He is not Magic Mike or Jimmy Logan, who are both fundamentally good guys in himbo packaging: He's selfish, he's got an ego and a temper and a young child (with an estranged partner played by Q'orianka Kilcher) who doesn't even recognize him when he comes to the door bearing a gas station stuffed unicorn. Briggs is someone who doesn't even really know how broken he is.

The disjointedness starts to mesh after an illuminating stop in Los Angeles (where there is still a strange showdown in a homeless encampment near the boardwalk) and the film gets back to its roots, which is Briggs and Lulu, without distractions. Together they have some genuinely moving breakthroughs and Tatum is allowed to flex his dramatic muscles more than usual.

Ultimately it does work, but “Dog” is a movie that is trying to do quite a bit, and perhaps bites off a little more than it can reasonably handle in 90 minutes.

“Dog,” a United Artists Releasing release in theaters Friday, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for “for language, thematic elements, drug content and some suggestive material.” Running time: 90 minutes. ★★☆☆

AD

- 合夥人 PARTNERS:**
 官樂怡 Rui José da Cunha °
 山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues °
 馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata °
 趙魯 Zhao Lu °*
 馬傑安 João Nogueira Marques
- 大律師 ASSOCIATES:**
 高文軒 Adelino Correia °
 羅善齡 Zelina Rodrigues *
 白秀蘭 Susana Batalha
 馬潔冰 Maria João Marques
 陶義德 António Isó de Azeredo
 白穎怡 Iclia Berenguel
 冼玲鳳 Mariana Afonso Esteves
 馬秀文 Sofia Mendes Martins
 飛嘉華 Carlos dos Santos Ferreira °
 杜力信 Nelson de Azevedo
 宋哲言 João Gonçalves Assunção
 莫永誠 Rui Velez de Moura
 安東尼 António Manuel dos Santos
 巴慧雅 Vera Bastos
 歐文傑 Miguel Evaristo
 陳芷喬 Joana Chan
 顏曉蓉 Teresa Xiaorong Yan
 諾瑪莉 Maria Noras
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 楊詩婷 Si Teng leong



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HEALTH BESPOKE SPA EXPERIENCE

THE Spa at Four Seasons Hotel Macau is known to be a space where relaxation, health and inner peace is achieved through a range of luxurious treatments. This season, a new collection of products and facials by Black Pearl is launched there.

A luxurious and innovative range of skin care products developed with tireless effort over the last 40 years, Black Pearl has risen from humble beginnings to a line that pairs the benefits of ancient knowledge with rare ingredients, combining natural ingredients with cutting edge science.

27 unique minerals that heal and moisturise the skin are enhanced with Tahitian black pearl rich in organic-matrix calcium carbonate. Known to draw water into the skin particular-

ly well, calcium carbonate lends the product its name and ensures results that aid an even skin tone and provide iridescence to the skin. The Time Control Series, exclusive to The Spa at Four Seasons Hotel Macao, creates a timeless illumination for the skin, enabling it to be flawless and bright much like a pearl. Through a bespoke menu concept, personalisation of treatments is achieved by comprehensive pre-treatment consultations with skilled and highly trained skincare specialists. Customisation of treatment rituals takes place to meet the guests' skincare needs. This includes a choice of eye treatments, masks and hydration for the skin. Finally, home care rituals are curated to enhance and maintain results achieved.



TASTE OF EDESIA

Timeless heritage

IRENE SAM, MDT

FOR lovers of sophisticated Chinese cuisine, a new concept curated by celebrity master chef Zhou Xiaoyan is the must-visit dining destination this spring. The **Huaiyang Garden** at The Londoner Macao provides a premier dining experience and highlights timeless culinary heritage in an elegant space. As one of the four great traditional Chinese cuisines, Huaiyang cuisine originated in Southeast China, around the Huai and Yan-

gtze Rivers, about 3,000 years ago. It is popular for its fresh, light yet complex flavours, requiring all ingredients to be prepared with consummate knife skills and precisely cooked to ensure perfect texture and taste.

Exceptional cuisine from the "Godfather of Huaiyang Cuisine" is complemented and enhanced by sumptuous décor and masterful service. As an ambassador for Huaiyang culinary heritage, Chef Zhou is credited with introducing innovations based around contemporary techniques and pre-

sentation to further refine this classic cuisine. The award-winning chef elevates authentic Huaiyang cuisine to a true art form, combining traditional heritage with contemporary plating and highlighting the best of Chinese gastronomic culture. Chef Zhou's culinary philosophy is to maximise and perfect each individual ingredient, before carefully combining them with other elements in a symphony of harmony and delight. "Each ingredient is handled delicately, with precise cutting and preparation employed to ensure

perfect texture and exquisite presentation. Flavour is added where necessary to elevate dishes to new levels," he shares.

All authentic Huaiyang delicacies offer a perfect combination of taste and presentation, prepared with the best seasonal ingredients while following the rhythms of nature. Signature dishes include stewed meatballs with crab roe in superior soup, which takes two days to make; steamed Hilsa herring with 20-year-old Huadiao wine, which requires chefs to painstakingly remove over 100 fish bones; shredded bean curd with crab meat and egg white in superior soup; braised Hokkaido sea cucumber with shrimp roe; baked rice with eel and yellow chives and more.

OPINION

China Daily

Editorial, China Daily

ZERO-TOLERANCE TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING, A BOTTOM LINE FOR MODERN GOVERNANCE

The Jiangsu provincial government released a probe report on Wednesday into the case of a woman in Fengxian county who was the victim of human trafficking that gives her an identity and the facts of her case. Although there are still some doubters.

The nightmare of the woman known as "Xiaohuamei", which means "little plum blossom", started in 1998, when she was 21. The woman, who suffers from mental health problems, was cheated away from her single mother by a human trafficker on the pretext of treating her. In the following months she was sold three times to at least four men and became the "legal" wife of her last buyer's son, thanks to the dereliction of duty by grassroots civil affairs officials.

She gave birth to her eldest son in 1999, and due to the failure of the contraceptive measures the family planning department implemented and malpractices of the department, she gave birth to another six sons and a daughter between 2011 and 2020. Her plight came to people's attention, when a livestreamer was reporting on a "hero father" in a village last month. He came across her chained by her neck in a dirty adobe shack in the backyard of her "home" and posted a video of her on social media.

An important reason why the incident has grabbed so much public attention since then is that the county and city authorities have released four investigation reports on her situation whose contents have been self-contradictory and it has become evident that human trafficking is a chronic problem in the region.

That a total of 17 civil servants of village, township and county departments, including the Party chief of the county, have been punished for malpractices and nine people from Jiangsu, Henan and Yunnan provinces detained for further criminal investigation related to human trafficking or jailed on charges of human trafficking and maltreatment shows the extent to which the woman has been exploited and her fate manipulated.

The country attaches great significance to protecting the legitimate rights of women, children and people with mental health problems. And the incident should prompt authorities at all levels to exercise zero-tolerance to any violation of their legal rights and interests.

The punishments meted out to those who have played a role in the heartrending story of Xiaohuamei should be a reminder to all grassroots officials that they will be held accountable for any malpractices or dereliction of duty. The incident has revealed the shortcomings in the protection of women's and children's rights and interests at the grassroots level, especially in areas where there is weak awareness of the rule of law, resulting in the failure of the defenses intended to protect the vulnerable.

All grassroots departments should heed the lessons of Xiaohuamei's case and strengthen their vigilance against human trafficking. The related law should also be reviewed so that the severity of its punishments act as a more effective deterrent.

FENDI, CAVALLI OPEN A MORE RELAXED MILAN FASHION WEEK

THE BUZZ

As Europe braced for winds from a possible war in Ukraine, the Italian fashion world carried on with a Milan Fashion Week that brought the return of Russian buyers after two years and the easing of pandemic travel restrictions.

An agreement with the government brokered by the Italian National Fashion Chamber allowed Russians who were vaccinated with

the Sputnik V shot to enter the country if they were traveling for business and submitted to frequent rapid tests for the coronavirus.

They arrived for the first day of shows Wednesday as tensions built over Russia's military intensions in Ukraine. Show invitations also were extended to Ukrainian buyers, but they did not attend, according to the fashion council.



Abortion-rights activists celebrate after the Constitutional Court in Bogota approved the decriminalization of abortion

ABORTION RULING ELIMINATES HURDLES FOR COLOMBIAN WOMEN

ASTRID SUAREZ, BOGOTA

FROM the first day of her pregnancy, the Colombian woman was fainting. Then she started to vomit constantly and had two blood clots. Her health wasn't going well, nor was her baby's, so she chose to get an abortion.

But the woman, an engineer from Bogota, had to wait almost six months as a team of doctors and psychologists at her public health care provider debated whether a risk to her health made her eligible for the procedure. At the time, the law in Colombia called on doctors to make a decision within five days of abortion requests.

"March went by, April and then May. The doctors had several meetings and nothing happened," said the woman, who did not want to have her name used because she still hasn't told her family about that abortion 11 years ago. She said that at one point in her pregnancy, she was losing the ability to walk and finally paid a doctor at a private clinic to carry out the abortion and certify that she was at risk.

Colombia's Constitutional Court this week ruled that women can get abortions until the 24th week of their pregnancy without any permits from lawyers or doctors, removing almost insurmountable hurdles for getting the procedure legally.

Previously abortions were allowed in the South American country only if women had letters from doctors proving their health was in danger, if they could show their pregnancy was a consequence of rape or if doctors certified the fetus had no chance of surviving.

From 1998 through July 2019, 346 women were punished for abortions — 85 of them minors — according to Colombian prosecutors.

The court said the existing ban violated several rights — including to health, reproductive rights and liberty of conscience. It said the decision to give birth or not is "a very personal, individual and un-transferable matter."

With Monday's ruling, Colombia joins several other Latin American countries in facilitating access to abortion in a region where some nations still ban the procedure altogether. Last year Argentina legalized abortion until the third month of pregnancy, while Mexico's Supreme Court ruled that women cannot be prosecuted for ending their pregnancies.

Under the new ruling in Colombia, abortions carried out after the 24th week can still be punished with up to three years in prison. Women's rights groups say their next challenge will be to get abortion removed from the nation's penal code.

"It's hateful to tell women that ending their pregnancies will hurt them when there are so many other things that can cause damage if they are exposed to clandestine abortions or forced motherhood," said Laura Gil, a gynecologist who has campaigned for the legalization of abortion.

The Bogotá woman who spoke about her difficult path to getting an abortion said she had grown up in a Catholic household where abortion was anathema. But she has changed her way of thinking: "This is not a sin," she said.

Most Colombians identify as Roman Catholic and faith influences perceptions on the issue. Earlier this week, President Iván Duque spoke out against the abortion ruling on a popular radio program, saying it will "help abortion to become something common, almost like birth control."

The Colombia Bishops Conference issued a statement expressing "profound pain" over the ruling.

"Church doctrine is very clear, life must be respected from the moment of conception until death occurs. Therefore there is no room to allow for abortion under any circumstances," said Bishop Francisco Ceballos, the president of Colombia's Episcopal Commission for the Promotion and Defense of Life. MDT/AP

Pakistan Security forces in volatile southwest raided a militant hideout yesterday [Macau time], triggering an intense firefight that killed 10 insurgents, the military said. The operation took place in Hoshab, a remote district in Baluchistan province, the military said in a statement. It said the militants were involved in multiple recent attacks on security forces. Troops also recovered a cache of weapons from the hideout.



Pakistan A court sentenced a man from a prominent industrialist family to death yesterday, after finding him guilty of beheading a childhood friend who had refused to marry him. The ruling will likely be appealed. Zahir Jaffar's killing of Noor Mukadam last year shocked the country and drew nationwide condemnation, with the subsequent trial widely covered in the media. The verdict was quickly hailed by civil society groups.

United Nations The Palestinian U.N. ambassador, wearing a mask saying "End Apartheid," accused Israel of engaging in "apartheid" in nearly a dozen ways, and Israel's ambassador accused him of regurgitating claims from the Palestinian Authority, which he said "promotes hate, incitement, violence and terror." The exchange at the U.N. Security Council's monthly meeting on the Middle East reflected the huge chasm between Israel and the Palestinians, and the immense challenge to ending decades of conflict with a two-state solution that would see the antagonists live side-by-side in peace.



Cyprus An 18th-century icon that a British officer spirited out of war-ravaged Cyprus in 1974 was returned to the island's Orthodox Church by the officer's son to reunite it with those "who really appreciate what it stands for." A representative of the Cyprus Archbishop Chrysostomos II (pictured) received the icon during a ceremony at Geneva's Villa Moynier which houses the Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights.