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LOCAL REALTOR ESTIMATES MACAU PROPERTY MARKET WILL GRADUALLY PICK UP AND PRICES MAY REBOUND BY MORE THAN 5% THE NEXT QUARTER P3

IPIM REJECTS ALL BUT ONE APPLICATION FOR RESIDENCY IN 2021 P2

CE: CURRENT SAR GOV'T EFFORTS FULLY RECOGNIZED BY XI P4



North Korea launched a ballistic missile into the sea yesterday, its neighbors said, in a resumption of weapons tests. The missile launch was the eighth of its kind this year. Some experts have said North Korea is trying to perfect its weapons technology and pressure the United States into offering concessions like sanctions relief amid long-stalled disarmament talks. North Korea also might view the U.S. preoccupation with the Ukraine conflict as a chance to accelerate testing activity without any serious response from Washington.



Malaysian Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob (pictured, left) met with his Thai counterpart Prayuth Chan-ocha last week in the first official visit of a foreign leader to Thailand since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. The two leaders reviewed an honor guard outside Prayuth's offices in Bangkok before sitting down to discuss bilateral issues, including ways to boost their economies. They also briefly touched on the ongoing crisis in Myanmar.



Indonesia Search efforts continued yesterday in the hardest-hit areas of Indonesia's Sumatra island after a strong earthquake there killed 10 people, injured nearly 400 and left thousands displaced, a disaster official said. Rescuers retrieved two more bodies late Saturday from the rubble of homes toppled by the magnitude 6.2 earthquake that shook West Sumatra province last week, said National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari.

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70-YEAR-OLD FALLS FROM HEIGHT, SUSTAINS HEAD INJURY

A man around the age of 70 fell from two meters over the weekend when he was redecorating at a Christian church. He was sent to hospital as he sustained a bone fracture to the back of his head. The incident was made known to the Fire Services Bureau Saturday morning. Arriving at the scene, paramedics saw the man lying on the ground. They immediately transported him to the private Kiang Wu Hospital. Citing information given by the man's family, he fell from a two-meter-tall aluminium ladder while working.

CITY SEES 81ST COVID-19 PATIENT

The toll of Macau Covid-19 patients went up to 81 as a returnee from Hong Kong tested positive with mild cough and headache symptoms February 26 while in hotel quarantine. The 63-year-old male resident is now hospitalized at the Public Health Clinical Centre in Coloane. According to the Health Bureau, the man received his first dose of the mRNA vaccine in January 2022. On February 19, he arrived in Macau with negative test results. Tests conducted the next four days were negative. The government did not report any travel history of the resident.

TOURISM

RECORD-BREAKING WEEKEND ON VISITOR ARRIVALS

RENATO MARQUES

MACAU has recorded, so far, the best tourism arrival results for this year with a daily score-bar rising over 30,000 visitors per day for three consecutive days, statistic figures published by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) show.

Last Friday (February 25), there was a significant growth registered with the number of arrivals, bringing the total to 34,247 people.

Saturday was even better for tourism numbers with this year's new daily record reaching 37,229 visitors entering Macau in a single day.

On Sunday, until 9 p.m., another 21,697 people had crossed the border into Macau adding to the good results of the weekend.

In the week of February 18 to 24, a total of 171,288 visitors arrived in Macau, establishing a daily average of 24,470. The figure, which has been slowly growing since the start of this year, repre-



sented an increase of 9.2% compared with the daily average in January 2022.

To recall that during the week-long Chinese New Year (CNY) holidays, the average number of visitor arrivals was around 20,000 per day, a figure that was considered below the expectations of the government as well as the different economic sectors, which were expecting more visitors to be attracted to

visit Macau during the festive season.

During CNY, the highest single-day number of visitors reached was nearly 22,000, which was recorded on the third day of the Lunar New Year (February 3).

Coincidentally, this was the first weekend after the launch of the Macao Government Tourism Office's (MGTO) new promotional scheme to attract more visitors to Macau from new markets

in the mainland.

The new scheme, titled "My Treat for You, See You in Macao," offers significant benefits for people booking trips to Macau on a range of online platforms including half-price fares and hotel discounts.

Still, the scheme is not yet responsible for the growth registered as the arrivals via the airport continue to range between 1,000 to 2,000 per day.

IPIM rejects all but one residency application in 2021

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) has rejected all but one application for Macau residency in 2021 for various programs running under IPIM's umbrella, as per statistics released by IPIM.

According to the statistics released, IPIM processed a total of 75 applications for temporary residency last year. Of these, 74 were for the management and technical personnel program and only one was for an application based on the major investment program.

Out of these, only one application for the management and technical personnel scheme, was approved and it involved an applicant in the education sector.

Among the applications handled in 2021, which in-

Statistics and industry classification of approved investors, management and technical personnel in 2021

Industry	Major Investment / Investment Plan	Management and Technical Personnel	Total	Percentage
Financial Services	0	0	0	0%
Information Technology	0	0	0	0%
Traditional Chinese Medicine	0	0	0	0%
Portuguese-Speaking Market and Chinese-Portuguese Translation	0	0	0	0%
Convention and Exhibition	0	0	0	0%
Cultural and Creative	0	0	0	0%
Manufacturing	0	0	0	0%
Construction	0	0	0	0%
Wholesale and Retail	0	0	0	0%
Hotel and Dining	0	0	0	0%
Transportation, Storage and Communications	0	0	0	0%
Education	0	1	1	100%
Medical and Healthcare	0	0	0	0%
Entertainment and Gaming	0	0	0	0%
Other Industries ¹	0	0	0	0%
Total	0	1	1	100%

Remark¹: Other industries include accounting, legal services, other commercial and services industries.

cluded those received in previous years, IPIM said that there were no applications approved with exception of the abovementioned, which means that all 74 applications handled were rejected or cancelled.

Among those rejected, IPIM said there were 32 applications for the mana-

gement and technical personnel program.

Citing internal statistics, IPIM had said last year that it had approved a total of 2,084 temporary residency applications for technicians with special qualifications over a period of 15 years between 2005 to 2019.

While carrying out a long-

term evaluation of the program, IPIM said that the education sector was the one that received the largest number of approvals, with 36.2% of all applications approved (754 people).

The second highest approvals were for the architecture-related sector, for which until 2019, 428 appli-

cants received approvals, a figure that accounts for 20.5% of the total.

The aviation sector came in third with 10.3% (214 applicants).

IPIM also acknowledged having a backlog of some 211 temporary residency renewal applications by technicians with special qualifications. This involved a total of 403 people.

The delay in processing renewal applications and new residency applications by IPIM has been highlighted many times by several sectors of society as well as by different lawmakers at the Legislative Assembly.

To fix the problem, the government announced late last year a new regime known as the Attraction of Qualified Personnel will replace the two existing methods.

The new scheme will also

be managed by IPIM.

It has been known for some time that the government has sought to overhaul the troubled existing system, especially since the revelation of the far-reaching fraud and corruption scandal involving IPIM and other senior government officials, resulting in the case going to the local courts.

With the new system, the government aims to solve two problems, and aims to create a new scheme to attract Chinese talent as well as finally putting an end to the infamous processes of IPIM, which in some cases saw applications being processed for several years without any final or conclusive decision.

Public consultation was held from November 10 to December 24 for the new regime. There have been no updates issued since then.

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REAL ESTATE

Centaline estimates property prices rebound by more than 5% next quarter

JING WU

REAL estate company Centaline Property Macau estimates the Macau property market will gradually pick up and property prices may rebound by more than 5% in the next quarter.

"It is estimated that after the Chinese New Year this year, with the start of some new first-hand properties and the recovery of internal and external sentiment, the Macau property market will gradually pick up, which is expected to be reflected in the number of transactions in March and April at the earliest. [There is] a chance of a rebound to the level of around 500 transactions in March last year, and in terms of prices, driven by the increase in the number of transactions, property prices may rebound by more than 5% in the next quarter," Centaline Property Macau said.

The Senior Regional Sales Director of Centaline Macau Taipa, Lo Chun Meng, said that in recent years, property prices in Macau have not fallen much despite the Covid-19 pandemic, with transaction prices still above MOP100,000 per square meter, and rental returns have remained relatively stable, with residential properties generally yielding around 1.5% and some commercial properties



yielding even higher returns.

"In addition, the property market is more self-sustainable and is supported by domestic demand in the long run. As the pandemic has weakened, the general sentiment of property owners on bargaining is [that it is] easier than before," Lo added. "Some users and investors had already entered the market before the Chinese New Year."

Nevertheless, he indicated that the earlier announcement by the Central Bank to ease credit facilities is believed to be beneficial to real estate financing and will have

a positive effect on the trading sentiment in the national property market.

"As for Macau, much of the bad news came at the end of last year, but there was no significant negative sentiment in the market, as Macau has built a solid economic foundation over the past decade or so," he explained.

Centaline Property Macau indicated that as a result of the global pandemic, investment products have become riskier, especially in the last year where the stock market has been in turmoil and some blue-chip stocks have fallen

by 30% to 50% in value. "Technology and education stocks, which used to be popular, and even takeaway stocks, which have become popular in recent years, have also fallen."

In addition, the agency stated that in the face of the shrinking value of financial products, some investors have started to ditch stocks and purchase property.

"After all, the Chinese traditionally 'love' to buy 'bricks and mortar' and believe in its ability to retain value," Centaline Property Macau added.

However, according to JLL Macau in its Macau Mid-year Review 2021, the property market remained stagnant with no significant improvement.

"Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, residential buyers in general have a bigger bargaining power and transaction prices are largely close to the appraised values. Coupled with the current low mortgage rate environment, it's now a good time for homebuyers to enter the market," comments Gregory Ku, Managing Director at JLL Macau.

"Though unemployment and underemployment rates remain high, we expect them to decrease when the travel restrictions between Macau and the neighbouring regions are eased or lifted, and [we expect] a further increase in residential demand," Ku added.

WOMAN BLACKMAILED WITH NUDE PICTURES

A female non-resident worker from the Philippines has been blackmailed for USD1,500 with nude pictures secretly taken when she was having a video call with the suspect during her shower. The suspect, whom she met online, commenced communication with the 50-something-year-old victim last October. Other explicit pictures had also proactively been sent to the suspect. On February 22, the suspect claimed to the victim that he wanted to travel to Macau and asked for cash. As the victim declined the request, the suspect threatened that he would publicize the pictures.

MAN LOSES HKD150,000 IN CRYPTO SCAM

A local man lost HKD150,000 worth of cryptocurrency in a scam staged by someone who impersonated his friend. On the night of February 16, the man was helping a friend sell the cryptocurrency, and the impersonator said he had ways to do so. After transferring the cryptocurrency to the impersonator, the man did not receive any cash in return. Three days later, the man contacted his friend who told him he had never mentioned anything about exchanging cryptocurrency for cash. The man realised he had been scammed. In total, he lost 20,000 units of cryptocurrency. The case is now under investigation by the Judiciary Police.

MUR and ICBC sign loan contract for Lot P temporary and home swap housing project

RENATO MARQUES

MACAU Urban Renewal Limited (MUR) and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China -Macau Limited (ICBC Macau) have signed a contract over the weekend for the syndicated loan to finance the construction of the buildings to be used for temporary and home swap housing on urban renewal projects, MUR informed in a press statement.

In a ceremony that took place last Saturday at the Macau Tower, ICBC Macau Chairperson Jiang Yisheng said that the signing of the



syndicated loan agreement amounting to 13.8 billion patacas and involving a total of 23 banks in Macau

is of great significance as it marks the start of a new chapter for urban renewal in Macau.

"This marks the largest syndicated loan amount with the greatest number of participating banks and the highest rate of loan subscription in the history of the construction of a livelihood project in Macau," Jiang said.

ICBC Macau said that by leveraging the advantages of a mainstream bank, it connected and cooperated with its local peers to form a syndicated loan for MUR, and received positive responses from the industry with another 22 participating banks giving their support.

The loan approval and

financing were completed within a short period, and the loan was oversubscribed with commitments exceeding the actual facility amount by 1.8 times.

During the event, MUR Chairperson of the Board of Directors Peter Lam Kam Seng thanked ICBC Macau for being the leading bank for the syndicated loan and uniting as many as 22 local banks as participants in the syndication for this important project.

Lam said that the combined effort and support from the banking industry and the government are the driving force

behind urban renewal.

He also added that MUR, as a company with the mission of coordinating and promoting urban renewal projects, will push forward the revitalization of old neighborhoods under the laws and regulations and the Urban Master Plan.

Currently, MUR is focused on the construction of temporary and home-swap housing units on Lot P of Areia Preta, formerly known as the "Peal Horizon" land plot.

The project started mid-2021 with the removal of the abandoned pile caps from the previous projects, and works for the new pile foundation are underway.

According to MUR, the project is progressing according to plan and is expected to be completed at the end of 2024.



CE: CURRENT SAR GOV'T EFFORTS FULLY RECOGNIZED BY XI JINPING

JING WU

CHIEF Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng said this weekend that the current government had been fully acknowledged by President Xi Jinping and the Central Government.

"Over the first two years in office, the current-term government had enhanced its ability to think strategically, while public administration services have pressed ahead with work linked to promoting adequate economic diversification," the CE said Saturday during a governmental exchange session named Retrospective and Perspective of Governmental Cooperation.

Ho highlighted "such efforts had been fully recognized by President Xi Jinping and the Central Government."

The exchange session, hosted by Ho, aimed to review and present various perspectives on the government's work and announced new requirements to develop and implement government activity.

The administration stressed that local authorities should do their best to improve the quality of the city's development and not to disappoint the Central Government, following the care and concern it had shown for Macau.

"Such initiative upheld the spirit of the Central Government's directives to Ho during his visit to Beijing in 2021," the Government Information Bureau (GCS) indicated.

Ho added that the government should seek to promote innovation regarding existing institutions, mechanisms and systems, in order to further integrate Macau into overall national development, said Ho.

The exchange session, held at the China-Portuguese-speaking Countries Commercial and Trade Service Platform Complex, was at-

tended by some 280 officials.

The attendees included top government officials; department-level officials; and officials appointed by the MSAR Government to work in the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

SECRETARIES COMMENT

During the session, the Secretary for Administration and Justice, André Cheong, pointed out that over the past two years, the SAR Government has been promoting the integration of departmental functions, optimizing the structure of departments, promoting the reorganization and merger of autonomous funds or reforms, actively promoting the reform of the funding system of the Macao Foundation, and implementing staffing management in public departments.

Cheong said the government will also continue to enhance the three-tier pandemic prevention framework for cold chain food, environment and practitioners, and use the Cold Chain Food Tracking System to track the movement of goods in a timely manner.

Moreover, he stressed that the MSAR Government will continue to improve open spaces and the walking environment for residents.

The Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, said that in the future, it is necessary to deepen the cross-border integration of "tourism+," strengthen the interaction between tourism and related industries "such as MICE, sports, e-commerce and cultural and creative industries, promote the in-depth integration of health and tourism, collaborate on innovative tourism products, and accelerate the development of modern finance."

The Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, said that in 2022 work will be carried out in nine areas,

including national security protection, law enforcement deployment, modern civil defense, police construction, technology-enhanced policing, cooperation between the police and the public, port management, correctional re-entry and financial intelligence.

Wong indicated that the SAR Government has implemented the legal system and enforcement mechanism, as well as strengthened the system and capacity for safeguarding national security.

"The Government has effectively combated various types of crimes and ensured the stability of social security," Wong stressed.

Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Ao Ieong U, expressed that in the future, the pandemic prevention work will continue to be carried out, especially to increase the vaccination rates among children and the elderly.

She also said that this year, the government will continue to implement various measures to enhance the protection of people's livelihood and promote the construction of a medical complex on the outlying islands, with the Seac Pai Van Health Centre coming into operation this year.

The Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, pointed out that despite the impact of the pandemic, the SAR Government has persistently invested in major infrastructure projects to consolidate economic development.

"The government office buildings in N12 and N25 of the new Outer Harbour Reclamation will commence in 2022, while the government office building at plot 6K in the ZAPE has entered the fitting-out stage," he added.

He also pointed out that traffic is a serious issue of concern to the general public.

CE'S FOUR KEY REQUIREMENTS FOR CIVIL SERVANTS

1. Devote unrelenting effort to speed up the city's adequate economic diversification and to deepen anti-epidemic work.

Adequate economic diversification was of utmost importance for the MSAR Government. Revision work related to Law no. 16/2001 "Legal Framework for the Operations of Casino Games of Fortune" would be continued this year.

The MSAR Government would devote additional resources to consolidate the advantages of the city's traditional industries.

In addition, further effort would be made to foster the development of a 'big health' industry, with traditional Chinese medicine research and development as an entry point; expedite development of modern financial services; promote high and new technology industries; and ensure development of cultural tourism, convention and exhibition, sports, and commercial and trade industries.

"Advances have to be made in these areas, to spur Macau's economic development," Ho stressed. Regarding anti-epidemic effort, the MSAR Government would remain vigilant, work stringently to maintain the city's anti-pandemic mechanisms, and remain as prudent as at the beginning of the pandemic.

"Further effort would be made to improve joint epidemic prevention and control mechanisms with regional partners," the CE highlighted.

2. Constantly optimise social and livelihood-related work, and enhance digital public services.

Ho said that the Government should persist with people-oriented policies, while continued effort should be made to resolve issues regarding housing, healthcare, education, care for senior citizens, and employment opportunities for local residents.

Moreover, he added that the government should strengthen the development of public infrastructure, enhance the quality of support services for the community, and respond actively to demands from the public.

"Advancing digital public services was a policy goal of the Government to provide the public with greater ease of access to public services," he shared.

3. Pragmatically promote the development of the Guang-

dong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, and proactively engage Macau in the country's overall development.

Ho stressed that work for advancing the Cooperation Zone had to be conducted in coordination with the original purpose of helping to diversify Macau's economy, and in line with four strategic positions.

"For instance, a new platform for promoting Macau's adequate economic diversification; a new space in which Macau residents could live and work; a new showcase to enrich the implementation of the 'One country, two systems' principle; and new and high-level grounds for promoting development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area."

"In order to ensure the integration of Macau into overall national development, the city's roles, positioning and strengths would be maximised, to serve the country's 'dual-circulation' development pattern for the economy," he explained.

4. Keep enhancing the quality of governance and promote coordinated planning of legislation.

The CE called on government officials to absorb the spirit of the important speeches by President Xi when he visited Macau.

"Adherence to law-based governance was a fundamental principle of the MSAR," he emphasised.

"They should also have a better grasp of the master plan of the city's development, and be able to expand their horizons, fulfil their duties, increase efficiency and complete their tasks, in order to ensure stability of Macau's politics, economy and society," the CE advocated.

"All public departments have to strengthen their political awareness and responsibilities. Further effort should be devoted to ensuring social stability and the security of the nation, which were the premises for economic development," Ho added.

In addition, he said that team spirit within governmental departments and cross-departmental communication should be encouraged, while inviting greater participation from the community in government work, as these were helpful to push forward projects relating to people's livelihoods.

RED PACKETS

HO IAT SENG INSTRUCTS FINANCE SECRETARY TO MULL EXTRA CONSUMPTION SUBSIDY

COMMENTING on the overall global economic outlook, Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng advised that Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong has been undertaking constant evaluation

of economic circumstances.

The CE was asked whether another round of consumption subsidy would be issued, on the side-lines of a public event held over the weekend.

Last week, Hong Kong Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po announced the issuance of HKD10,000 worth of electronic consumption vouchers.

In response, Ho said that the local finance se-

cretary had been evaluating the situation and more news will be released as it becomes available.

The head of the government has also commented on the impact of the Hong Kong Covid-19 outbreak

and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. He said he did not have an evaluation on the depth of the impact but was certain that a rising trajectory of oil prices will have an effect on local inflation.

Meanwhile, the Covid-19 outbreak in Hong Kong, which equates to an unpredictable delay in normalization of border controls, will inevitably

restrict the bounce-back of local tourist arrivals. Although over the last couple of weeks, more tourists have arrived from mainland China, the CE hinted that Beijing will not allow mass visits to Macau.

He also expressed that he understands smaller enterprises had been struggling, but the current Covid-19 management protocols will be maintained. **AL**

Wynn: Proud Supporters of Rallying the Nation's Olympic Spirit

TO implement the Macao SAR government's policy to develop the sports industry, Wynn continues to collaborate with related sectors to provide opportunities for local youngsters to participate in a wide range of recreational and sports activities, with the aim to further expand the value chains of the sports industry in Macao, and thereby facilitate the diversification of the city's economic development, while enriching Macao's position as a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure.

SHOWCASING THE FIRST TORCH OF BEIJING 2022 WINTER OLYMPICS

The 24th Winter Olympic Games opening ceremony held in Beijing—with the Olympic flame returning to the city for the first time since the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games—marks a significant new milestone in the development of sports in China.

To promote the spirit of sportsmanship with the Macao community, Wynn was honored to welcome the first torch of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, named "Flying," to be exhibited in the lobby of Wynn Macau from February 9 to 20, 2022, its first official exhibition nationwide.

Linda Chen, President and Executive Director of Wynn Resorts (Macao) S.A., believes that the torch is an important symbol that embodies the heart of the Beijing Winter Olympics and Chinese culture, as well as being a representative symbol of the vision and spirit of the Beijing Winter Olympics. Chen also hopes that the exhibition will enable people from Macao and the wider family across the motherland to share and experience the appeal and grandeur of the Beijing Winter Olympics.



Linda Chen, President and Executive Director of Wynn Resorts (Macao) S.A. and Pun Weng Kun, President of Macao Sports Bureau, place the torch "Flying" on its display stand to kick off the exhibition.



The Olympic torch was on display in the lobby of Wynn Macau for 12 consecutive days, followed by an exhibition tour to 10 local schools.

SPREADING THE OLYMPIC SPIRIT IN SCHOOLS

Upon completion of the 12-day exhibition, Wynn embarked on an exhibition tour to display the Olympic torch around 10 local schools in order to promote the culture and spirit of the Olympic Games. The first stop of the tour was held in Pui Ching Middle School, where teachers and students were able to see the

torch up close and share a special moment together.

The flame lighting ceremony for the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games was held at the historic site of the ancient Olympic Games. The flame was then carried to Beijing by the first Chinese torchbearer for the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Torch Relay Li Jiajun, one of China's best short track speed skaters and the first Chinese

male athlete to win a medal at the Winter Olympics.

The spiral torch is named "Flying", with its red and silver coloring symbolizing fire and ice, and the torch flies with passion to illuminate the ice and snow and warm the world. It also represents mutual exchange and learning between different cultures and the Olympic vision to unite the world in solidarity.

EXCHANGE ACTIVITIES WITH OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALISTS

With the aim to further promote exchanges in sporting activities between Harbin and Macau, Wynn partnered with the Macau Universitarian Sports Association to co-host a "Harbin-Macau Youth Athletes Exchange Session," inviting an Olympic medal-winning curling coach and athletes from Harbin to interact with more than 300 local floor curling athletes, youngsters, students, and members of Macao Federation of Trade Unions, the Women's General Association of Macau, and Macau Special Olympics.

Yue Qing Shuang, Olympic gold medal winner and coach of the Chinese wheelchair curling team, alongside 4 young athletes—Li He, Jiang Si Miao, Du Yu Chen and Ma Bo Ya—were invited to introduce the history and techniques of curling to the members of the public.

SUPPORTING SPORTS ACTIVITIES FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETES

Macao Special Olympics athletes won 1 silver and 3 bronze medals at the 11th China National Games for Persons with Disabilities and the 8th China National Special Olympic Games. To recognize the athletes' outstanding performances and promote social inclusion, Wynn joined hands with Macau Special Olympics to organize an Award Presentation Ceremony cum Experience Sharing Session on February 13. During the ceremony, the Macau Special Olympics athletes were awarded certificates of excellence for their incredible achievements and display of their indefatigable spirit and sportsmanship.

Executive Director of Macau Special Olympics Hetzer Siu Yu Hong spoke highly of Wynn's efforts and also introduced their preparation and participation in the National Games last year. Athletes from Macau Special Olympics were also invited to the stage as guest speakers to share their remarkable experiences and the positive aspects of sports competition.



Wynn invited an Olympic medal-winning curling coach and athletes from Harbin to interact with members of the public.



Wynn joined hands with Macau Special Olympics to honor athletes for their outstanding performance and achievements.



An aerial view shows a construction site of a new makeshift COVID-19 hospital and isolation facilities, in Tsing Yi of Hong Kong

COVID-19

HONG KONG'S SUCCESS IN FENDING OFF CONTAGION COMES BACK TO HAUNT

ALICE FUNG & ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL, HONG KONG

FOR two years, Hong Kong successfully insulated most of its residents from COVID-19 and often went months without a single locally spread case. Then the omicron variant showed up.

The fast-spreading mutation breached Hong Kong's defenses and has been spreading rapidly through one of the world's most densely populated places, overflowing hospitals and isolation wards and prompting measures to test the entire 7.4 million population and hastily build six isolation and treatment centers.

The surge shows what happens when COVID-19 strikes a population unprotected by immunity from previous infections, and has exposed a low vaccination rate among elderly citizens who are bearing the brunt of the crisis.

Only about 30% of Hong Kong residents over the age of 80 and around 58% of those in their 70s are fully vaccinated, lagging younger populations by a large margin. This is despite the fact that vaccines have been widely available in Hong Kong since early 2021.

The city has reported about 150 deaths in the past three days, many among the unvaccinated

elderly.

Health authorities said that the vaccine reluctance among the elderly is an unfortunate side-effect of Hong Kong's success in warding off the virus for months.

Many people thought that the risk of getting COVID-19 was virtually nil since there were no cases, and senior citizens were led to believe that the risk of vaccination was greater than not getting vaccinated, said Karen Grépin, a public health expert at the University of Hong Kong.

Hundreds of millions of jabs have been given to people around the world and few serious risks have been identified after intense safety monitoring. But early reports of a few adverse reactions to the vaccine in Hong Kong created a false perception that people needed to be perfectly healthy to get vaccinated.

"Hong Kong is the world's guinea pig, when it comes to omicron," said Grépin.

The Hong Kong experience may also hold lessons for mainland China and its decision on when to re-open its borders and eliminate a two- to three-week quarantine requirement for anybody entering the country. Only a small proportion of the population has been infected, thanks to the Communist Party's

strict zero-COVID approach of mass testing and lockdowns.

The Hong Kong government's response has been to ramp up a zero-COVID approach similar to the mainland. Chinese officials have urged Hong Kong to stick to the approach, despite grumbling from residents, with even leader Xi Jinping weighing in to make sure the message got through.

Under the zero COVID-19 policy, everyone who tests positive in Hong Kong needs to be isolated. While this worked in the past, Hong Kong, unlike the mainland, does not have the beds to isolate so many people in a large outbreak.

Construction teams from the mainland are rushing to build two permanent and four temporary isolation and treatment centers to handle more than 20,000 patients in an effort reminiscent of the early days of the virus when China threw up two temporary hospitals in the city of Wuhan in a matter of days.

Authorities also launched a vaccine pass on Thursday, requiring vaccination to enter shopping malls and other premises, and it is driving some to get the shot.

"If I don't get vaccinated, I can't even go to restaurants," said 73-year-old Yu Mui as she lined

up for her first dose Friday. "So I have to come here today even though I am worried about the side effects."

Scientists believe that the omicron variant is milder than the delta version of the virus. But Hong Kong's situation is nearly unique. In other nations where the omicron variant spread, people had immunity from vaccines or previous infections, and this blunted the severity of the disease.

With many people unvaccinated and vulnerable, Michal Head, a global health expert at University of Southampton, fears that it may have a "worryingly high burden of severe COVID-19 in coming weeks."

"Omicron has been described by some as 'mild'. But it's certainly still severe enough to have a high mortality rate, far higher than flu or other similar respiratory infections," he warned.

Irene Leung, who is 70, said she didn't feel the need to be vaccinated earlier because the pandemic was under control in Hong Kong. On Friday, she lined up for her first dose.

"But now it gets worse and so I decided to come and get vaccinated," she said. "It protects not only myself but also my family members."

And Hong Kong has announced it will test everyone in the city next month, taking another page from the mainland playbook. China has sent in experts and others to put up temporary labs to handle the volume of tests.

But Benjamin Cowling, who studies epidemics at Hong Kong University, advised against mass testing in March since it would be hard to deal with the sheer number of confirmed cases that the approach would throw up. Instead, he suggested using the nimbler, rapid tests to alert people to isolate at home if they were infected and had mild symptoms.

The ultra-contagious nature of the omicron variant means that unless you have incredibly stringent lockdown measures, mask-wearing and social distancing norms, you're not going to stem the spread, said Dr. Jimmy Whitworth, an infectious diseases expert at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Even China is battling multiple outbreaks, though they are much smaller than Hong Kong's. China yesterday reported 239 new cases in the mainland, of which 127 were among people who had arrived from overseas.

Hong Kong, by comparison, on Saturday reported more than 17,000 new cases in the latest 24-hour period and 66 deaths.

Whitworth said that Hong Kong's priority right now should be to encourage vaccination. "That is by far and away, the most important message. And particularly targeting the elderly." **MDT/AP**

UKRAINE INVASION

Putin puts Russia's nuclear forces on alert, cites sanctions

VLADIMIR Putin put his nuclear forces on increased alert yesterday in an unprecedented escalation of tension with the West since the collapse of the Soviet Union over Russia's massive conventional assault of Ukraine, which entered its fourth day with fighting in the streets of the country's second-largest city.

In a shocking move that immediately unearthed fears many thought permanently buried from the Cold War of the previous century, Putin ordered Russian nuclear weapons prepared for increased readiness to launch, ratcheting up tensions with Europe and the United States over the conflict that is dangerously poised to expand beyond the former frontiers of the defunct U.S.S.R.

The Russian president told his defense minister and the chief of the military's General Staff to put the nuclear deterrent forces in "special regime of combat duty."

He said that leading NATO powers had made "aggressive statements" toward Russia in addition to stiff economic sanctions and cutting leading Russian banks from the SWIFT banking system.

RUSSIA AND UKRAINE TO HOLD TALKS

After rejecting Putin's offer to meet in the Belarusian city of Minsk on the grounds that their common neighbor was facilitating the Russia assault, Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy agreed to send a Ukrainian delegation to meet with Russian counterparts at an unspecified time and location on the Belarusian border.

The announcement comes hours after Russia announced that its delegation had flown to Belarus to await talks. Ukrainian officials initially rejected the move, saying any talks should take place elsewhere than Belarus, a country that has supported Putin directly by allowing Russia to use its territory as a staging ground.

Zelenskyy, who has refused to abandon Kyiv, named Warsaw, Bratislava, Istanbul, Budapest or Baku as alternative venues for talks, before accepting the Belarus border.

The Kremlin added later that Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett had offered to help broker an end to fighting in a call with Putin. It didn't say whether the Russian leader accepted.

FIGHTING SPREADS

Attempting to lay siege to Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, Russian



forces focused on cutting off the country's southern coast and isolating it from the sea, while also probing the inner defenses of Kharkiv.

Ukrainians awoke yesterday to street fighting in the northeastern city of 1.4 million located about 20 kilometers (12.4 miles) south of the border with Russia. Regional authorities administration said that Ukrainian forces had engaged Russian troops inside the city and asked civilians not to leave their homes.

The immediate fate of the Russian advance was uncertain, but with Ukrainians volunteering en masse to fight back alongside regular army units, it seemed that the city's defenses offered stiff resistance. Having already ordered men between 18-60 years old not to leave the country, Ukrainian officials said yesterday that they were releasing prisoners with military experience who want to take up arms for their country.

The ground attack came after Russians blew up a gas pipeline in Kharkiv, according to Ukrainian officials who ordered residents to cover their windows with a damp cloth given the "environmental catastrophe" it posed.

Britain's defense ministry said that while overnight skirmishing in Kyiv had been less intense than on Friday night, Russian forces were attempting to encircle the city. The capital remains under lockdown after its mayor called a curfew from 5 p.m. Saturday until 8 a.m. Monday.

Kyiv mayor Vitali Klitschko told The Associated Press that he estimated some of the Russian attackers are within 20 kilometers of the city center and that he feared for a long siege.

"Right now, we have electricity, right now we have water, and heating in our houses, but the infrastructure is destroyed ... I guess we have not so much time," Klitschko said.

MOST FLEE, SOME RETURN TO FIGHT

Those fleeing Europe's largest armed conflict since World War II grew to 368,000 Ukrainians — mostly women and children — who have reached neighboring countries, the United Nations' refugee agency said. That figure more than doubles the agency's estimate from the day before.

The line of vehicles at the Poland-Ukraine border stretched 14 kilometers, and those fleeing had to endure long waits in freezing temperatures overnight. Over 100,000 people have crossed into Poland alone, according to Polish officials.

Amid the rush to escape the bombs and tanks, there was also what looked like a trickle of brave men and women who want to head home to defend Ukraine or help others do so.

At a border crossing in southern Poland, Associated Press journalists spoke to people in

a line heading against the tide. They included a group of some 20 Ukrainian truck drivers who worked in Europe and wanted to face combat.

GERMAN MILITARY SHIFT

A day after Germany announced it would send military aid to Ukraine, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that his government will increase its own defense spending to rearm amid the uncertainty of the extent of Putin's ambitions.

Scholz's pledge to dedicate 100 billion euros to a special fund for its armed forces would raise Germany's defense spending above 2% of GDP, finally satisfying a longstanding request by NATO allies for Europe's largest economy to do more for the continent's security.

Late on Saturday Germany announced that it would send 1,000 anti-tank weapons and 500 "Stinger" surface-to-air missiles to Ukraine. Those weapons are in addition to the 400 German-made anti-tank weapons Germany also approved to be shipped from the Netherlands, as well as 9 D-30 howitzers and ammunition from Estonia.

RUSSIANS AGAINST THE WAR

Defying crackdowns by police, demonstrators marched in city centers from Moscow to Siberia chanting "No to war."

In St. Petersburg, where dozens gathered in the city center, police in riot gear grabbed protesters and dragged some to police vans, even though the demonstration was peaceful. According to the OVD-Info rights group that tracks political arrests, by late yesterday [Macau time] police had detained at least 356 Russians in 32 cities over anti-war demonstrations.

MORE CLOSE AIRSPACE TO RUSSIA

Italy and Austria joined a growing list of European countries to have closed their airspace to all Russian aircraft. They follow Britain, Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Luxembourg. MDT/AP



USA

Trump talks Putin, grievances as GOP focuses on midterm wins

STEVE PEOPLES,
ORLANDO (FLA.)

LEADING Republicans spent much of three days avoiding Donald Trump's chief grievances or ignoring him altogether as they unified behind a midterm message designed to win back the voters the polarizing former president alienated while in office.

That changed yesterday. Facing thousands of cheering activists at the Conservative Political Action Conference's annual meeting, Trump falsely blamed his 2020 election loss on widespread voter fraud, for which there is no evidence. As Russian troops advanced on the Ukrainian capital in an invasion widely condemned by Western leaders, Trump described Russian President Vladimir Putin as "smart."

"Of course he's smart," Trump said, doubling down on praise of the Russian leader that many other Republicans have avoided in the wake of the invasion. "But the real problem is our leaders are dumb. Dumb. So dumb."

While Trump expressed support for the Ukrainian people and called the country's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, a "brave man," he also noted his ties with other leading autocrats. He specifically pointed to his friendly relationships with Xi Jinping of China and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Trump then left no doubt he is the most powerful voice in Republican politics by indicating he will run for president a third time in 2024. "We did it twice, and we'll do it again," Trump said. "We're going to be doing it again, a third time."

Up until Trump's appearance, lies about election fraud, the focus of last year's conference, had been an afterthought among the top speakers. No one parroted Trump's approving rhetoric toward Putin. And some leading Republicans didn't even mention Trump's name.

Instead, those most likely to seek the GOP's 2024 presidential nomination not named Trump united behind an agenda that includes



more parental control of schools, opposition to pandemic-related mandates and a fierce rejection of "woke" culture. The message from more than a half-dozen elected officials, delivered to thousands of mostly white activists at an event that usually celebrates far-right rhetoric, does not mean the party has turned its back on Trumpism.

Far from it. The former president was a frequent topic among some of the conference's lower-profile speakers. T-shirts proclaiming "Trump won" were being sold in the hallways. And Trump is expected to be announced the overwhelming winner of CPAC's 2024 presidential preference straw poll on Sunday.

Still, conference organizer Matt Schlapp, the chair of the American Conservative Union, noted that Trump does not have an absolute lock on his party's base.

He pointed to Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, in particular, who was a crowd favorite throughout the first three days of the four-day conference. Audience members applauded almost every time DeSantis' name was referenced or his picture appeared on big screens.

"Trump looms large," Schlapp said in an interview. "No. 1 is, Does he run again? And it's overwhelming that people want him to. But there's a diversity of opinion."

And while Trump's most controversial supporters were generally given lower-

-profile speaking slots over the four-day program, they were not excluded. Rep. Majorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., appeared on a Saturday morning panel hours after being featured at a conference of pro-Trump white nationalists.

Trump offered Taylor Greene a particularly warm shoutout during his speech as he ticked down the Republican officials in attendance.

"I refuse to shut up," Taylor Greene said earlier in the day during a brief appearance as she railed against "Democrat communists."

Despite Trump's dominant place at the head of the Republican Party, other party leaders are increasingly optimistic they have found a forward-looking strategy to overcome pro-Trump extremism and expand the party's appeal with control of Congress at stake in November.

It's essentially the same playbook that Virginia's Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin used last fall when he won in the swing state by avoiding Trump and his biggest grievances, including the false notion that the 2020 presidential election was plagued by mass voter fraud.

"There are people that perhaps have never voted the same way any of you have in a presidential race and they're really angry," Florida Sen. Marco Rubio said Friday. "And that's why I believe that for all the negative we've heard, the pendulum is swinging."

Democrats are clinging to paper-thin majorities in the House and Senate, and voter sentiment has swung in an ominous direction for them since President Joe Biden took office in January 2021. In an AP-NORC poll conducted Feb. 18-21, 70% of Americans said the country was headed in the wrong direction. As few as 44% said the same in April 2021.

Some leading Republicans seemed intent at CPAC on not helping Democrats by embracing Trump.

Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley, who tried to block the certification of Biden's electoral victory after the Jan. 6 Capitol attack, sidestepped a question about whether he would challenge Trump in a 2024 prospective matchup.

"I've said I'm not planning to run for president," Hawley said. He also declined to say whether he wants Trump to run again in 2024: "I never give him advice, including on this."

Hawley also said it was a mistake for Republicans like Trump to offer soft praise for Putin. "Putin is our enemy. Let's be clear about that," Hawley said.

DeSantis, who has also refused to rule out a 2024 presidential bid should Trump run, did not mention the former president in his 20-minute address, focusing instead on his resistance to mask and vaccine mandates.

Trump's former secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, spoke about his work in the Trump administration, but he did not repeat his own recent flattering comments about Putin, in which he called the Russian leader "very capable" and said he has "enormous respect for him."

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, considered a potential running mate for Trump in 2024, talked about the 2016 presidential election and the unsubstantiated allegations that Democrats in power "spied" on the Trump campaign. But she pivoted quickly to the future.

"We have some fantastic fighters, like President Donald Trump. But he's not alone. The American people are on our side," Noem said. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1986 SWEDISH PRIME MINISTER ASSASSINATED



The Swedish prime minister has died after being shot in a street ambush in central Stockholm. His wife was wounded.

Olof and Lisbeth Palme were attacked as they were leaving a cinema at about 2330 local time. Mr Palme was shot twice in the stomach, his wife was shot in the back.

Police say a taxi-driver used his mobile radio to raise the alarm. Two young girls sitting in a car close to the scene of the shooting tried to help the Prime Minister.

He was rushed to hospital but was dead on arrival. Mrs Palme is being treated for her injury, but it is not thought to be life threatening.

Mr Palme, 59, and a social democrat, was serving his second term as leader. He believed in open government and shunned tight security.

He had two bodyguards to protect him on official functions but frequently walked unattended through the Swedish capital and went on holidays unescorted to his summer cottage on the island of Gotland.

His assassination will come as a shock to the Swedes. They have always taken great pride in the fact their prime minister could walk openly in the streets without the security which accompanies other heads of state.

Mr Palme will be remembered as a campaigner for the working classes and Third World causes. He was first elected as prime minister in 1969.

He became a leading advocate of peace and non violence and campaigned for an end to the war in Vietnam.

He saw himself carrying the banner of Social Democracy through Europe at a time when the Right was only temporarily in triumph.

He once said: "I know that the Thatchers and the Reagans will be out in a few years. We have to survive till then."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Olof Palme's deputy Ingvar Carlsson was chosen to succeed him as Social Democratic party leader.

At the time of his death, Mr Palme had been accused of being pro-Soviet and not safeguarding Sweden's interests. Arrangements had been made for a trip to Moscow to discuss Soviet submarine incursions into Swedish waters.

A drug addict and social outcast, Christer Pettersson, 42, was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder in July 1989.

The verdict immediately became controversial as the court's two judges voted for acquittal but six lay assessors disagreed.

In October 1989, Pettersson was cleared. Although several witnesses thought they could place him at the scene of the crime, no motive was ever found for the killing.

Pettersson died in September 2004. He was reported to have confessed to the killing before his death.

The investigation into Olof Palme's death remains open. In November 2006 police recovered a Smith and Wesson revolver believed to have been used in the murder. It was found in a lake in central Sweden.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

 ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Your versatile mind and common sense will allow you to come up with various solutions. You can make reasonable bids on real estate or large items for your home.	 TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20 Offers of joint ventures are likely. One-sided relationships are likely. You will be able to find the perfect outfit, and the greatest new accessory for your house.
 GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21 Don't be afraid to lay your cards on the table. Visit someone who hasn't been feeling well lately. You will easily blow situations out of proportion.	 CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Be cautious of making any residential changes today. Don't push your luck with your boss. Don't let your mate talk you into going somewhere you'd rather not go.
 LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Your suggestions for fund raising events will be well received. Sentimental feelings may make it difficult to get much done at work.	 VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22 You may experience setbacks due to additional responsibilities with loved ones. Take time to deal with authority figures or government agencies.
 LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22 Be aware that you might be at fault as well. Don't get intimately involved with a coworker. Deception regarding joint finances or investments will cause upsets between family members.	 SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21 You may want to make changes that will not be to their liking. You may have a hard time relating to children today. Your determination may make you a little overbearing when dealing with others.
 SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Your emotional partner may make you angry today. Try to avoid being extravagant today. You need to interact with others if you want to expand your knowledge.	 CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Uncertainties about your personal life are probable. Offer consolation, but don't give them any direction. Your need to be in a leadership position will help you surpass any rivals you might encounter.
 AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Try to have patience and refrain from being judgmental. Try to slow down, and take another look. Don't let your stubborn nature get the better of you.	 PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20 Be aware that a female you work with may be trying to hold you back. Be prepared to neutralize any threats. Secret intrigues could get you into trouble.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

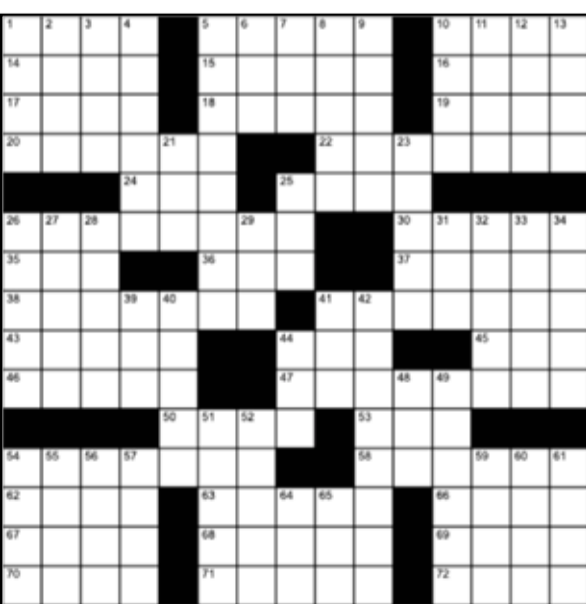
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-2	13	fine
Harbin	-8	3	cloudy
Tianjin	6	19	cloudy
Urumqi	6	15	cloudy
Xi'an	8	17	cloudy
Lhasa	2	9	fine
Chengdu	11	21	cloudy
Chongqing	10	19	cloudy
Kunming	6	17	cloudy
Nanjing	14	22	cloudy
Shanghai	6	15	fine
Wuhan	5	14	fine
Hangzhou	-12	1	cloudy
Taipei	0	17	fine
Guangzhou	10	23	cloudy
Hong Kong	18	20	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	-13	0	overcast
Frankfurt	-3	9	fine
Paris	3	13	fine
London	6	12	rain
New York	-3	2	fine

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Sugar substitute?; 5- Gives a 9.8, say; 10- Designer Schiaparelli; 14- Bruins' home; 15- Make amends; 16- Campus mil. group; 17- Percussive instrument; 18- Not as many; 19- Jai ___; 20- Apex; 22- Condiment; 24- Trauma ctrs.; 25- Song in praise of God; 26- Professors, collectively; 30- Stern with a bow; 35- Posed; 36- Punching tool; 37- Nervous person, maybe; 38- Free; 41- Place for bottling suds; 43- Less healthy; 44- Honey insect; 45- Final letters?; 46- Young male horses; 47- Language letters; 50- Gymnast Korbut; 53- German article; 54- Daily record; 58- Idolizes; 62- Italian wine city; 63- Full range; 66- Emilia's husband; 67- Ostrichlike bird; 68- Form of oxygen; 69- Final Four org.; 70- Disrespectful back talk; 71- Stitched; 72- Sawbucks;

DOWN 1- Clothes; 2- Creamy-beige color; 3- Grad; 4- Battered; 5- Tom Sawyer was one; 6- Supped; 7- Haul; 8- Other side; 9- Watery animal fluid; 10- Quod ___ demonstrandum; 11- "Damn Yankees" role; 12- The closest one to us is the sun; 13- Sour; 21- Vexation; 23- Long-billed sandpiper; 25- Gaffer Sutton; 26- Cold mold; 27- Monte ___; 28- Coral island; 29- ___ Jima; 31- Witnessed; 32- Sour; 33- Eagle's home; 34- Subterranean vault; 39- You ___! Sure!; 40- Director Welles; 41- ___ canto; 42- Done again and again; 44- Noise made by a sheep; 48- Secrated; 49- Choose by divine election; 51- Nigerian seaport; 52- Fill with glass; 54- Jolts; 55- Dept. of Labor division; 56- Western Native Americans; 57- Narrow inlets; 59- Speed contest; 60- Richard of "A Summer Place"; 61- In order (to); 64- Cut down grass; 65- French article;



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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 TAIPA | Nova Park | 2 | HKD 10,800,000
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 TAIPA | Buckingham | 2 | HKD 8,590,000
 MACAU | Bai Yuen G. | 3 | HKD 12,800,000

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 MACAU | San On | 2 | HKD 10,500
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Ukraine invasion puts Russia's elite sports status at risk

EDDIE PELLIS

RUSSIA spent upwards of \$50 billion to host the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, then concocted the most elaborate doping scheme in history — all to cement its standing as a global sports superpower.

The country's invasion of Ukraine, coming on the heels of yet another drug scandal that consumed the Beijing Olympics earlier this month, could serve to undermine an athletic dynasty tarnished by cheating and deception, and often countered with only tepid pushback from international sports leaders.

If a further reckoning comes, it would damage Russia's ability to host events domestically and dominate them abroad. It would deliver a financial and a psychological blow. And it would compromise the image that President Vladimir Putin and leaders before him have tried to cultivate — one of a prosperous country fortified by strong athletes who beat their international



AP PHOTO

opponents in the games people play.

Edwin Moses, the American gold-medal hurdler who had a key role in sorting through the Russian scandals, recalled trying to explain Moscow's point of view to anti-doping leaders.

"One thing I was always trying to get across to them was, 'You

don't understand how important sports are to them,'" Moses said. "And I'd tell them, 'You don't understand how far they're willing to go to corrupt it.'"

In addition to widespread condemnation from Western governments, Russia's move into Ukraine was largely disparaged by major sports organizations,

including the International Olympic Committee.

A number of federations, including skiing, curling and Formula 1, pulled premier events out of Russia. European soccer's governing body UEFA led the way when it relocated this spring's Champions League final from St. Petersburg to Paris. The International Biathlon Union banned Russia from its events. The largest conglomerate of them all, the IOC, condemned the invasion.

One economics professor estimated the financial loss of the Champions League final could be in the tens of millions of dollars, a fraction of what Russia might forfeit from all the relocated events. But, he said, money is a small part of what motivates Putin.

"He's in it for the prestige and power," said Victor A. Matheson of College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass.. "The real thing here is that this is a big blow to his ego. He loves being in charge of things."

Russia's power in the world

sports community is most sharply defined by its relationship with the IOC. Even though Putin's country officially was banned from the Beijing Games, it fielded a team of more than 200 athletes competing as members of the "Russian Olympic Committee." They combined to win 32 medals, the second-biggest haul at the Games.

Every bit as notable was that Putin attended the opening ceremony with IOC leader Thomas Bach at Beijing's Bird's Nest stadium. It was a show of defiance: Putin was there, while the U.S. and some of its allies refused to send diplomats to protest China's human rights record. It also underscored how Putin was in good enough standing with the IOC to be present despite the ban.

"In Putin's mind right now, Russia will be at the Olympics again" three years from now in Paris, said Paul Massaro, a senior policy adviser to Congress who works on issues involving sports and international corruption. "But I'm not sure he totally appreciates what a paradigm shift he's created. I don't want to be eating these words, but I actually think Russia could be banned this time."

The Russian government has portrayed the doping investigations as politically driven by the West. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

Multipolar World

Jorge Costa Oliveira



THE EU-CHINA COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

At the end of 2020, the EU Council and Commission concluded an agreement in principle on a Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) with the P. R. China. Fundamental to this agreement are the beliefs held by both parties in an open multilateral trading system, the reaffirmation of their respective commitments under the WTO agreement, and the creation of a climate that facilitates and develops trade and investment between the parties, establishing the necessary provisions for the liberalization of investment. Another fundamental assumption is based on the numbers – the EU is the main destination for Chinese exports; China is the third destination for EU exports (after the US and the UK). Between 2000 and 2020, EU companies invested around 148 billion in China and Chinese companies around 117 billion in the EU.

In terms of concrete elements, the most important is the strong desire of companies on both sides to access the other's domestic market. On the European side, the growth of the Chinese economy - which will be the largest in the world by 2050 with a GDP of about 49 trillion – makes it essential to have access to the Chinese market as soon as possible, especially the urban Chinese market (875 million persons in 2020; about 1 billion in 2030). On the Chinese side, more and more companies want or need to internationalize and the most desirable market for this is the European market, given its size and per capita income.

On the other hand, it is important to level the terms in which the investment in the other party takes place, namely by removing strong restrictions or limitations – for example, China's strong restrictions in the financial services and telecommunications sectors. On the other hand, this Comprehensive Agreement on Investment will prohibit forced technology transfers and restrict the terms under which Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) can operate outside the normal rules of a competitive market.

The timing is right for this CAI. On the EU side, the huge exposure of large European companies in China – especially in the manufacturing sector – demands a relationship based on more equitable rules. On the other hand, the financial services, commercial services and healthcare sectors in China are of particular interest to European companies and more competition is actually needed in Chinese domestic market.

On China's side, despite the perception by many that Chinese capital is inexhaustible, the truth is that it is barely enough to finance the New Silk Roads (BRI), and is not even supposed to fuel the new waves of internationalization of [medium sized] Chinese companies (rather, capital is likely to be raised via European IPOs). Accordingly, it is paramount for China to create conditions for a constant flow of FDI into the country.

On the other hand, the successive blacklisting of Chinese companies by US authorities will not diminish; on the contrary, the Biden Administration will not soften the previous policy in this domain, which will force many Chinese companies – mainly state-owned and technological, but not limited to these – to leave the North-American markets and look for new markets with a similar level of income, capital and technology.

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RESCUE UNDERWAY AFTER CHINA MINE COLLAPSE TRAPS 14 WORKERS

A rescue operation is underway to rescue 14 workers trapped in a coal mine in southwestern China, media reported yesterday. The roof of a shaft at Sanhe Shunxun coal mine in Guizhou province collapsed on Friday morning, state-run China Daily reported.

More than 500 rescuers and over 80 emergency vehicles have been dispatched to the site, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

The rescue operation has been challenging as the roof caved in about 3 kilometers from the entrance of the mine, and the collapsed area is considerably large.

Rescuers were attempting to excavate alongside the mine's walls from the exit side. As of 6:30 p.m. Saturday, rescuers had managed to make a headway of only about 7 meters.

Huang Hua, the head of the team, was quoted as saying that workers must race against time.

"As long as there is a glimmer of hope, we must do our best to rescue the trapped miners as soon as possible," Huang said.

China's coal mines are among the world's deadliest, regularly suffering explosions and gas leaks despite repeated safety crackdowns.

THE BUZZ

SHARON STONE TAKES IN DOLCE&GABBANA AT RELAXED MILAN FASHION

COLLEEN BARRY, MILAN

Front-rows of A-listers and shoulder-to-shoulder seating gave Milan Fashion Week a pre-pandemic air.

So far this week, Sharon Stone has sat appraisingly at Dolce & Gabbana, Rihanna and A\$AP Rocky have rocked Gucci, and Kim Kardashian wore Prada, at Prada.

After two years of digital-physical mix, social distancing and travel restrictions that kept many overseas buyers and editors away, there was a sense of return to some new normal, one now that includes war on Europe's eastern fringe. Tens of thousands of people gathered in Milan's central Piazza Duomo to demonstrate for peace on Saturday, crisscrossed by weekend shoppers and fashionistas.

Want to be your own real-life avatar? Check out the latest collection by Dolce & Gabbana, who brought the metaverse onto the runway.

Why leave all the fun to the digital universe, when there is a real-life version of a shiny red mini-dress with exaggeratedly puffy sleeves, or a shaggy Yeti-style coat in bold stripes or checks?

Whatever the real-life avatar, the catchword in Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana's new collection is sexy. The season's staple are sheer stockings with garters, that peek out of short hemlines, through sheer lace dresses and even, improbably, from one-legged trousers. Yes, apparently, that innovation will be of some advantage in the D&G metaverse.

Corsets defined the shape of many coats and dresses, and also appeared as silky outlines on fitted black dresses, tops and jackets. For better moving from digital world to digital world, there were sleek



fitted tops and leggings with shiny finishes worn under cutout dresses and skirts. Large 3-D-style sunglasses finished the look, along with stilettos. The designers also showed off-beat humor in a series of pod-like garments — coats, jackets and knitwear — designed to be worn protectively over the head, almost like a nun's habit.

Sharon Stone sat in the front row alongside Sam Webb, Lady Kitty Spencer and Adam Senn and rapper Gunna. She nodded appreciatively at looks as they past, mouthing, "Gorgeous" at a strappy faux fur black dress and "Wow" at a furry white number.

The designers recently announced they were giving up fur this year, but that they would continue to work with furrier artisans on synthetic alternatives to maintain the craftsmanship.

Each Marni look appeared out of nowhere, on an undefined runway inside an abandoned warehouse

with dirt floors and overgrown with greenery.

The models walked as though stunned through the crowd, each followed by a hooded torchman guiding their way wearing a uniform of trousers with dragging hems and spikey plastic shoes.

The models themselves each wore a creation by creative director Francesco Rizzo, but also an object from their own wardrobe, part of Rizzo's growing collaboration with a community around the brand that he calls collaborators. Elaborate head-dressings, including teddy bears sticking out of knit caps, twisted felt and wool, or wire devils ears, gave a sort of zombie menace to the slow, irregular procession.

Rizzo himself walked in the show, midway, wearing a geometric sweater he knit himself in two days, distressed trousers from the new collection and a worn tuxedo jacket that belonged to his grandfather. MDT/AP



Russia As troops were closing in on the Ukrainian capital, more and more Russians spoke out against the invasion, even as the government's official rhetoric grew increasingly harsher. Street protests, albeit small, resumed in the Russian capital of Moscow for the third straight day, with people taking to the streets despite mass detentions last week.

NATO U.S. President Joe Biden and his NATO counterparts agreed last week to send thousands of troops, backed by air and naval support, to protect allies near Russia and Ukraine in response to President Vladimir Putin's decision to invade. Speaking after chairing a NATO summit, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the 30-nation organization will send parts of the NATO Response Force and elements of a quickly deployable spearhead unit to the alliance's eastern flank. It's the first time the force has been used to defend NATO allies.

Poland's refusal to play its World Cup qualifier against Russia next month in response to that nation's invasion of Ukraine gained wider support when Sweden followed with its own plans to protest to FIFA on Saturday. Polish soccer federation president Cezary Kulesza announced Poland's decision and said it was in talks with other federations to present a unified position to FIFA, which is responsible for the March 24 game in Moscow.



Brazil The pandemic may have disrupted Carnival plans in Rio de Janeiro for a second straight year, but revelers who have flocked to the Brazilian city for sun, sea and samba still found ways to party this weekend. Thousands defied an official ban on street parties by dancing, singing and mingling to the rhythm of Samba, sometimes as police looked on.