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Myanmar Several top celebrities who were detained for criticizing the army's seizure of power were released from prison under pardons issued by the military government, state-run television reported. The celebrities released from Insein Prison in Yangon include prominent film industry figures Lu Min, Wyne, Pyay Ti Oo, his wife Eaindra Kyaw Zin, and popular male model and actor Paing Takhon.

AP PHOTO



New Zealand Thick black smoke billowed across the grounds of New Zealand's Parliament and sirens blared yesterday as retreating protesters against coronavirus vaccine mandates set fire to tents, mattresses and chairs. It appeared to be a final act of defiance as police broke up the camp that protesters first set up more than three weeks ago. Police retook control of the Parliament grounds although dozens of protesters remained in nearby streets, some hurling objects at officers.

AP PHOTO



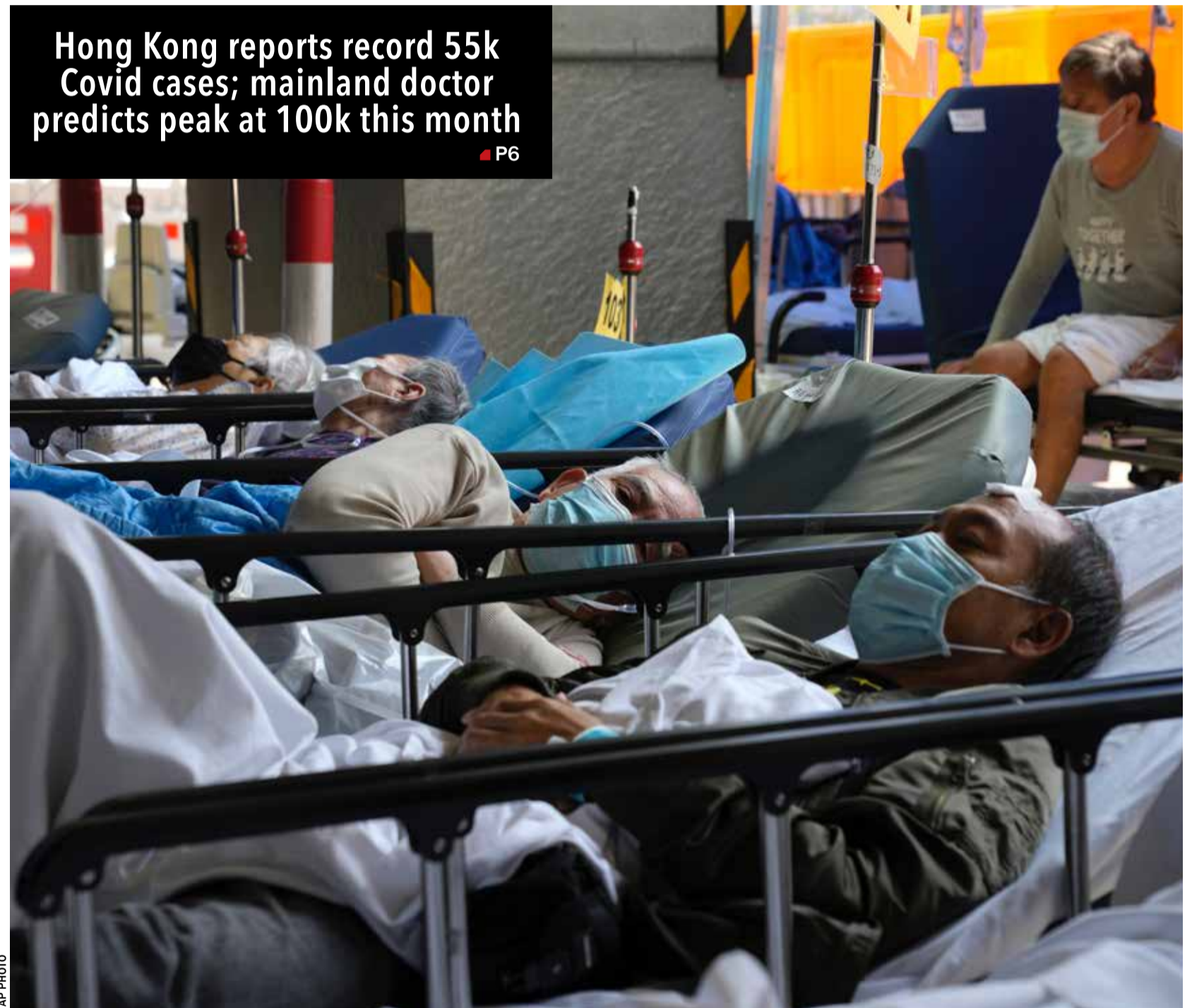
Netherlands A long-running global investigation into child abuse images shared online has led to the arrests of dozens of suspects in New Zealand and the safeguarding of 146 children around the world, European Union police agency Europol said yesterday. New Zealand authorities said in a statement that the child abuse material "is some of the most egregious investigators have been exposed to. Many of the children featured in the images and videos were just infants who were exposed to obvious and intentional pain and suffering."

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PEAKS OF MARCH

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AP PHOTO

COVID-19
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UNREASONABLY LOCKING OUT YELLOW CODE BEARERS IS ILLEGAL: SSM

ANTHONY LAM

PURSUANT to the Labor Relations Law, a failure to schedule employees for work is illegal unless reasonably justified, pulmonologist Alvis Lo, director of the Health Bureau (SSM), has said in response to a lawmaker's inquiry.

He stressed in his reply that the bureau has consulted with the Labor Affairs Bureau (DSAL) prior to making the statement.

Lawmaker Leong Sun Lok questioned the government's actions in safeguarding the rights of people who have had their Macao Health Code turned yellow to work and earn income. Several officials, including public health doctor Leong Iek Hou, division head at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, have advised the government that people with a yellow health code are completely fit for work.

Leong even suggested they could commute on foot, as yellow code bearers are technically banned on public transport — without addressing the fact that some people live on the Macau Peninsula and work on Cotai, or vice versa.

Worse still, according to the lawmaker, some yellow code bearers have been instructed by their employers not to attend work due for safety reasons. This non-working period is unpaid, causing complications, Leong pointed out.

In response, the SSM director noted that Clause 2, Article 10 of the Labor Relations Law forbids employers to “unreasonably obstruct workers to provide actual work.”

It is a hint that employers may be violating the law by unreasonably disallowing workers with yellow health codes from working.

If employers do want to make

RENATO MARQUES



special arrangements, they should negotiate these with their employees in advance, the SSM director noted in the reply.

He cited a message from the

DSAL calling for employers and employees to have understanding for one another's situation and negotiate on any unexpected matters.

In addition, Lo defended the de-

cision to allow yellow health code bearers to go to work by saying that the footprint-recording function of the Macao Health Code app will help lower risks.

CRIME

PJ ARREST SIX, SEIZE DRUGS WORTH MOP1.2 MILLION

RENATO MARQUES

A total of six people, three men and three women, were detained on Tuesday evening by the Judiciary Police (PJ) in relation to a case of suspected drug trafficking, the PJ has announced.

According to a PJ spokesperson, the operation took place in two apartment buildings at Rua de Brás da Rosa and Travessa do Ultramar in Macau and resulted in the seizure of 345.3 grams of methamphetamine (commonly known as “ice”) with an estimated street value of MOP1.2 million.

The PJ spokesperson said that the three men held temporary stay permits and all had criminal records with drug-related offenses, having been previously tried and sentenced to prison in Macau.

The three men involved are a 53-year-old from Tanzania, previously sentenced



to a Macau prison sentence in 2013, from which he was released at the end of last year; a 33-year-old from Cameroon who also served a prison sentence between 2016 and 2018; and a 46-year-old Nigerian man who was also in Coloane prison between 2018 and 2020.

The three women also involved in the case are all Indonesian nationals aged between 37 and 46 years old. The three hold non-resident worker status in Macau, with two of them working as do-

mestic helpers and the third as a worker at a local eatery.

Two of the male suspects and one of the women confessed to selling drugs to their friends as well as other people. The other three refused to confess to any crime and preferred not to cooperate with the investigation, the PJ said.

They have all now been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office for further investigation and to be accused of the crime of drug trafficking.

COVID-19

BORDER GATE MASS COVID TESTING RETURNS FULL NEGATIVE RESULTS

THE targeted mass SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid testing (NAT) operation conducted in the Border Gate District has tested 7,103 people in total, with zero positive results detected.

The mass testing was implemented to rule out possible infections after a person in nearby Tanzhou in Zhuhai recently tested positive for the coronavirus.

The mass testing was conducted free-of-charge, but results will not be uploaded to the Macao Health Code and therefore are not valid for border-crossing purposes.

However, those within the testing area who failed to participate in the mass testing will have their health code turned yellow. A yellow code bearer is not permitted to enter certain public venues, take public transport or leave Macau.



The government advises people in this situation to book a paid nucleic acid test to resolve the inconvenience.

In addition to the mass testing in the area, those who crossed the Border Gate more than four times on one day between February 25 and 27 are required to take NATs once a day between

March 1 and 4.

If a person in this category misses a required test on any day, their health code will be turned yellow until they receive a negative test result.

Others who have crossed the Border Gate between February 25 and 27 must take a NAT between March 1 and 3. **AL**

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Pang Chuan (left) and Kou Kam Fai

Two lawmakers propose sinology clubs to boost 'patriotic talent' training

RENATO MARQUES

LAWMAKERS Kou Kam Fai and Pang Chuan want the government to promote the creation of sinology clubs to facilitate training for educators and the general population, aiming to boost their patriotism and national education levels.

The idea was expressed via a spoken inquiry delivered at the Legislative Assembly (AL) by Kou, in the name of both lawmakers.

"As it is well-known, Macau's

positioning in the Greater Bay [Area] is a basis for exchange and cooperation that, with Chinese culture as predominant, promotes the coexistence of diversified cultures," Kou said. He added, "this definition, which marks a new era, was made five years ago, and we need to make a rigorous assessment of its fulfillment, in the areas of culture, education, tourism, and economy, to inspire future work."

In the lawmakers' view, the values of Chinese culture and its promotion facilitate strengthening national identity, self-confi-

dence in culture, and love for the motherland and Macau.

At the AL, Kou said that "the essential tenets of traditional Chinese culture are to seek truth from facts, coexist with disagreements, be people-based and uphold morality and benevolence, all taken from the canons of sinology," therefore promoting traditional culture inherently recognizes the value of sinology in building a morally and culturally oriented China in the modern era.

Pointing to what he claims to be the main problem, Kou said

that in primary and secondary education, "the education of traditional culture lacks a global program and substantial spirit, which will in its turn affect the work of the MSAR (Macau Special Administrative Region) in the training of talents who master the fundamental knowledge of sinology."

To solve this issue, Macau must resort to traditional cultural values to train talent "who truly love and serve the nation."

The "sinology intervention" program should focus, according to the lawmakers, on two aspects: the history and culture of Macau, and national studies. Kou said that primary and secondary teachers in Macau lack knowledge of these two aspects.

Kou expressed a view that the Education and Youth Development Bureau should define plans to encourage the population to take initiative in "creating academies or reading clubs to promote the national studies." He added that clubs, in turn, should be supported by local universities, "creating an academic environment and platform for national education, and teaching and research on Macau's history," providing opportunities for professional training and exchange to local teachers.

Another way to promote better sinology training would be through the organization of "Chinese classics reading sessions for teachers and students," in which Chinese literature classics would be selected for reading and discussion. This would be done in conjunction with history and culture of Macau and national studies subjects.

MACAO WATER, TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY JOIN FORCES TO CULTIVATE TALENT

Macao Water has announced that it will partner with the School of Environment at Tsinghua University to provide opportunities for students to undertake practical work with the aim of nurturing talent. The water supplier will bring students from top-ranking universities in the country to participate in water supply services and research in Macau. The partnership will promote in-depth integration between industry, academia and the research sector, while comprehensively safeguarding the city's water supply and driving industry development by stimulating innovative thinking in staff. Macao Water initiated negotiations with the university on the matter in early 2021, and a cooperation agreement was signed at the end of the same year.

CTM CUSTOMERS CAN DONATE BONUS POINTS TO DOG PROTECTION GROUP

CTM announced that the Everyone Stray Dogs Macau Volunteer Group has become the twelfth beneficiary organization of the "CTM Bonus Point Donation Scheme." The scheme was launched by CTM in 2014, with the aim of encouraging customers to participate in charity activities. For every 4,000 points donated by customers, CTM will pay MOP40 to the charitable organization of the customer's choice. In 2021, customers donated more than 26 million bonus points to the scheme, with CTM paying out a total of MOP264,840 to support the charity work of eleven beneficiary organizations participating in the scheme.

GOV'T DUMPS 720KG OF MILK AS CARGO WRAPPING TESTS COVID POSITIVE

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has decided to destroy a batch of milk imported from Hong Kong as its external stability plastic wrapping tested positive for Covid-19. The batch of milk was packed in 60 cartons and weighed 720kg in total. According to the IAM, on Monday, it took a sample of the outer plastic wrap of the cargo to test, which yielded positive results for SARS-CoV-2. The IAM conducted repeated tests on the wrapping and ultimately decided to destroy the cargo. It also triggered its emergency contingency to cordon off the warehouse, as well as all frozen and chilled cargo. It will also conduct sanitization procedures on the venue. Repeated tests will be run on the cargo too.

Pui Ching: Application for a new campus has been filed

ANTHONY LAM

KOU Kam Fai, the principal of Pui Ching Middle School, confirmed that the school has filed an application for a new campus, but no update has been received so far.

The principal would neither confirm nor deny whether the school will develop in the direction of an international school.

Yesterday, citing a source familiar with the matter, the Times reported that the Pui Ching was said to have a new campus on Coloane. Construction is underway on the land in question, with a diagram showing the location of a basketball field, among other facilities.

The head of the local school admitted that, due to space restrictions at the Avenida de Horte e Costa campus, the school does need more space to expand.

"Seats in our school have been popular in the past years," he said.

Kou revealed that, on average, the school receives between 1,100 and 1,300 applications for Kindergarten 1 admission each year. "From this pool of applicants, we can only take 168 candidates," Kou said.

In addition, he said, the Primary 1 level has one more class than Kindergarten 3. "We have four classes in Kindergarten 3, but five in Primary

1, which means that we have the capability of admitting an extra class of students for Primary 1," the principal explained.

He revealed that the school usually receives 400 applications for Primary 1 level and 200 for Secondary 1 level. The school currently has about 3,200 students in total.

"But the peak figure was 3,400," the principal added. "We started a tighter cap because there is a requirement for smaller classes."

Kou said that the recruitment of new teachers is a regular practice. He said the school not only complies with the small-class requirement, but



also assigns two teachers to a single class for certain subjects or education levels.

"For example, we assign two teachers to teach physical education to a single class, so as to better ensure students' safety," the principal said.

In recent years, teachers have been choosing to retire earlier than required. Kou speculates

that this might be because of the Covid-19 pandemic: "in the past two years, more teachers have opted to take pre-age retirement," he said.

He stressed that the school has been striving to "improve quality of their education," and that hiring high-caliber and international teaching staff is a way to reach that goal.

PEDESTRIAN FLYOVERS NOW LAWMAKERS' FAVORITE

RENATO MARQUES

ONCE hated, pedestrian flyovers seem to have established themselves as the new favorite transportation facilitation method for several lawmakers at the Legislative Assembly.

At the plenary session on Monday, several lawmakers mentioned this type of project and referenced the example of the once-infamous Taipa's Avenida de Guimarães pedestrian flyover to call for the expansion of the project, as well as the construction of more of these structures in several areas of the city.

Lawmakers Chui Sai Peng and Lam Lon Wai delivered separate inquiries calling for the expansion of these projects, stating that they facilitate pedestrian transportation and commuting, as well as contributing to more organized traffic and less dangerous interaction between pedestrians and vehicles.

According to Lam, the level of use of the Taipa pedestrian flyover is very good.

"95% of respondents [of a survey] use this crossing, of which 67% use it at least twice a week, so the results are positive. How-

ever, to connect [the system] to the Lake Building, the itinerary and access points must comply with the "Urban Planning Plan for the North Zone of Taipa", therefore, the government must quickly promote the development of this area so it can extend this crossing to other locations," he said, calling on the government to learn from the experience of the construction on the Taipa flyover to promote better execution on further projects of this kind.

Chui noted that, despite the efforts from the government in building this type of facility, many pedestrians still disregard the rules and insist on putting their lives and those of others at risk by crossing the streets under the flyovers.

Citing several other projects already in planning or undergoing construction, Chui said that, as more pedestrian flyovers are built, the more the citizens get used to them, increasing their effect.

For the lawmaker, a better pedestrian network will contribute to both a better organization of traffic in the streets, shortening the distance and commuting time for residents, and also act a facilitator for tourists, who would



RENATO MARQUES


be incentivized to explore Macau on foot and so, explore and get to know different areas.

One of the most important projects on this field, currently

undergoing construction, is the Guia Hill pedestrian network, expected to be concluded by the end of this year, linking the tourist attraction to both sides of the city

via a pedestrian flyover network, tunnels, escalators and elevators linking the ZAPE area and the Outer Harbor to the city center via a shorter route.

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GBA

ZHUHAI TARGETS 6.5% GDP GROWTH IN 2022

ZHUHAI is aiming to achieve regional GDP growth of 6.5% and boost domestic demand, according to a statement released by the neighboring region's government.

Zhuhai's economic and social development plan for 2022 was recently released by the municipal government, with goals including 7% growth in added value from industries above a designated size and in total retail sales of social consumer goods, 8% growth in fixed-asset investments, positive growth in total import and export volume and 5% growth in actual use of direct foreign investment.

The city is also aiming for a 6% increase in general public budget revenue as well as to control increases in the CPI and urban unemployment rate to less than 3%.

To achieve these goals, Zhuhai has laid out 465 key construction projects for 2022, with a total investment of 945.1 billion yuan and planned investment of 115.5 billion yuan (USD18.3 billion).

Support will also be gi-

ven to the Guangdong-Macau In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin to facilitate Zhuhai-Macau cooperation. Sixty measures facilitating Hong Kong and Macau residents' living in Zhuhai will be implemented, while more young talent from Hong Kong and Macau will be enticed to Zhuhai through innovation, entrepreneurship and employment opportunities.

Construction of the Hezhou New Area will be accelerated and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HZMB) economic zone is undergoing planning with high standards intended to create new spaces for cooperation between Zhuhai, Hong Kong and Macau.

The development of Zhuhai's advanced ma-

nufacturing industry will be given priority, while efforts will be made to push forward construction on major projects like the Gree Electric Appliances High-End Intelligent Manufacturing Industrial Park in Jinwan's Gaolan Port Economic Zone and the Zhuhai CosMX Battery expansion project in Doumen.

A 10 billion yuan fund will be set aside for infrastructure construction in industrial parks citywide. Efforts will also be made to entice prestigious domestic and overseas companies to set up regional or other headquarters in the city.

Other planned measures include the establishment of distinctive high-end commercial areas, as well as supporting UT Place in Old Xiangzhou, Uni Park in Qianshan and Jinwan's Huafa Mall in applying to be designated provincial demonstrative distinctive pedestrian streets. **MDT**



XINHUA

GAMING

Melco sees VIP junket players converted to premium direct

LYNZY VALLES

MELCO Resorts and Entertainment is seeing players who were formerly VIP players from junkets entering its premium direct program.

Speaking during an earnings call with analysts, Melco Resorts CEO David Sisk said that the team has been working hard over the last few years to grow their premium direct business, even attracting junket players.

In July last year, the gaming operator announced that its casino hotel, Altira Macau, would focus on the "high-margin premium mass segment," making it the company's first integrated resort to have a broader focus in the market. Melco has already shut down VIP operations at Altira Macau, and the junket and premium direct VIP operations have been moved to City of Dreams and to Studio City.

"This transition has actually worked out fairly well for us as we've gotten out of the VIP junket business and [...] continue to see more and more growth in our premium direct business. It's worked very well for us," said Sisk.

As the gaming operator has been premium mass focused, the junket business has "always had a very minimal amount of impact to our bottom line overall, so again this transition was a very natural and fairly easy transition for us."

The turmoil in the junket sector following the high-profile arrest of mogul Alvin Chau led to gaming operators halting their agreements with junket operators.



Melco Resorts was one of the first gaming operators that reportedly notified junket operators that, from late December, they intend to shut down the gaming rooms where high rollers are brought to play.

Altira, meanwhile, was expected to emerge as a "stronger, higher-margin, more stable property in the portfolio."

However, with current tourism levels in Macau, CEO and chairman Lawrence Ho believes that "it really doesn't justify, I think, many properties - not just Altira - being there. But we do think that with Covid normalizing, hopefully, and within the calendar year 2022, Macau getting closer to the traditional visitation that we would get, Altira has a niche positioning."

MELCO RECORDS USD812M LOSS IN 2021

MELCO Resorts and Entertainment Limited's total operating revenue for the fourth quarter of 2021 was USD480.6 million, a decrease of approximately 9% from USD528 million for the same period in 2020.

The decrease in total operating revenue was primarily attributable to "softer performance in the rolling chip segment," the company said in a statement.

The group reported a full-year net loss of USD811.8 million, an improvement on the USD1.26 billion loss in 2020.

In an earnings call with analysts, CEO and chairman Lawrence Ho said that results in the fourth quarter have continued to reflect Covid-19-related disruptions and their impact on travel and customer visits. Volume across all segments in Macau has therefore increased in the fourth quarter of 2021 compared to the third quarter, despite structural

changes in the VIP segment.

Group Adjusted Property EBITDA also showed meaningful sequential improvement during the fourth quarter as it was recorded at USD94 million, compared with an Adjusted Property EBITDA of USD53.4 million in the fourth quarter of 2020.

"Going into 2022, the Covid flare-up in Zhuhai led to softer performance in the pre-CNY period; however, volumes across our segments increased year-over-year during the Chinese New Year holiday period and this carried over into the weeks following the holiday," said Ho.

He added that premium direct business at City of Dreams Macau was more than double that recorded in the Chinese New Year period in 2021, and continued to outperform the following weeks. Mass table drop also demonstrated strength, increasing around 20% compared to the Chinese New Year in 2021. LV

Veteran Hong Kong lawyer departs following meeting with security police

STAFF REPORTER

A veteran lawyer based in Hong Kong has reportedly left for the UK after he was summoned to a meeting with the national security police.

Paul Harris, a former chairman of the Hong Kong Bar Association, faced criticism by the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong SAR last year, which urged him to step down following remarks in which he stated

that he advocated the right to peaceful protest.

This speech was made after Hong Kong's High Court sentenced 10 activists, including media tycoon Jimmy Lai Chee-ying, for their roles in illegal assemblies on August 18 and August 31 in 2019.

The Liaison Office decried Harris as an "anti-China politician."

Yesterday, according to Hong Kong reports, Harris was spotted at the Hong Kong International Airport. The sighting comes

after reports that he was called to a meeting with the national security police force and given a warning over an alleged breach of the national security law.

The meeting was reportedly related to the Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor, which was accused of playing a "major role" in the 2019 anti-extradition protests.

Harris was the founding chairperson of the non-government organization.

Harris confirmed his departure to Reuters,

saying "yes, [I'm] on [my] way to see my mother in England."

Last year, in the wake of the Liaison Office's accusation, Harris aimed to clear up misconceptions by reaffirming that he is not an anti-China politician, firmly supports the Basic Law and "one country, two systems" principle, and opposes "any violent behavior." He had also expressed a wish to meet with representatives of the Liaison Office in Hong Kong to clarify these matters in person.



Previously, Macau-based lawyer Sérgio de Almeida Correia told the Times that the central government's denunciation of Harris may be a "clear

intrusion in the sphere of the legal profession [in Hong Kong]."

Its impact on the city, meanwhile, remains uncertain or minimal.

NO PLANS TO RELAX BORDERS

Ho is not expecting China to relax its border restrictions, noting the Chinese policy is going to be "very conservative" this year with regard to opening up its borders.

"It's a very unique year in China, it's a very important year. Of course we went through the Olympics and then of course there are the two session meetings happening this week," Ho explained.

Other significant events coming up include the Hong Kong Chief Executive election and the 25th anniversary of the Hong Kong handover, and then, by far the most important event for the country, the Chinese Communist Party National Congress meeting set to happen in October.

With Hong Kong seeing its fifth wave of Covid-19 and tens of thousands of new cases, Ho said, "I don't have a lot of hope that group tours or eVisas are going to be normalized before the Hong Kong-China corridor, meaning the Hong Kong-Macau corridor will be open."

COVID-19

HONG KONG REPORTS RECORD 55K CASES; MOVEMENTS MAY BE RESTRICTED

HONG Kong's leader yesterday said people's movements may be restricted during mandatory testing this month of the entire population for the coronavirus, as health officials reported a record 55,353 daily infections and over a hundred deaths.

Chief executive Carrie Lam said authorities are still refining the plan, but that there would be no "complete" lockdown that would prevent entry and exit from the city.

"The extent of it must take into account Hong Kong's circumstances and people's needs," she told reporters.

Hong Kong is planning to test its more than 7 million residents as it grapples with soaring numbers of COVID-19 cases in its worst outbreak of the pandemic, linked largely to the omicron variant.

Officials yesterday reported 117 deaths, taking the total number above 1,000. About 80% of the deaths have occurred since late December. Most involved elderly patients who were not fully vaccinated.



"We recorded about 55,000 infections today, which is within our expectation. Recently every two or three days the number of confirmed cases is doubling," said Albert Au, a health officer with the Centre for Health Protection. He said cases have not yet peaked.

U.S. authorities yesterday Americans against traveling to Hong Kong, with the State De-

partment raising its travel advisory to Level 4 — Do Not Travel — because of rising cases and restrictions imposed by the city and mainland China under their "zero-tolerance" policy toward the coronavirus.

"We especially want to note for families considering traveling to or residing in Hong Kong that in some cases, children in Hong

Kong who test positive have been separated from their parents and kept in isolation until they meet local hospital discharge requirements," the travel advisory said.

The surge is threatening to overwhelm Hong Kong's hospitals, with officials saying they have reached maximum bed capacity and some general wards are being converted into isolation areas.

Public mortuaries have also reached full capacity, and help is being sought from the private sector to store bodies, officials say. The Hospital Authority has also ordered refrigerated containers to temporarily store bodies, health officials said.

Supermarket shelves were wiped bare this week as residents stockpiled daily necessities after reports spread of a possible citywide lockdown. Authorities have called for calm and reassured people that food supplies are normal.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin backed Hong Kong's virus control measures.

Wang said the measures "are necessary, science-based and responsible to effectively prevent and control the epidemic and ensure the health of Hong Kong residents and foreigners in Hong Kong."

"We believe that the relevant measures will further build up the international community's confidence in Hong Kong's epidemic control, ensure Hong Kong's safe and orderly interaction with the international community, and provide a more secure and stable business environment for international investors in Hong Kong," Wang said at a daily briefing yesterday. **MDT/AP**

XINHUA EXPLAINER

A look at Hong Kong's worst Covid-19 wave, and mainland-aided fight

HONG Kong has reported a rapid increase in COVID-19 infections since the fifth wave of the epidemic began.

During the week from Feb. 23 to March 1, Hong Kong reported a daily average of 23,961 cases, compared with 6,227 cases in the previous week.

Why are the cases rising so rapidly? What are Hong Kong's anti-epidemic measures? And how is the Chinese mainland beefing up Hong Kong's defense in this critical stage? Here is what you need to know.

WHY ARE CASES JUMPING RECENTLY?

An important factor is that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government changed the procedure for confirming cases.

Before the change, a preliminarily confirmed case required a positive retest before it would be recorded as a confirmed case, and the process would take three to

four days. After the change, re-testing is no longer needed. Besides, the conditions for confirmation have been simplified, the results of residents' rapid self-tests are recognized by the HKSAR government.

"The current surge in the number of confirmed cases is also related to the fact that the number of cases was not fully reflected in the previous tally," said Ming Wai-kit, an assistant professor at the Department of Infectious Diseases and Public Health, City University of Hong Kong.

WHAT MAKES THE FIFTH WAVE MORE CHALLENGING?

The fifth wave of coronavirus infections in Hong Kong is led by the highly transmissible Omicron variant of COVID-19.

David Lam, a member of HKSAR's Legislative Council, said the strain has outrun Hong Kong's inefficient case tracking system. Omicron can fuel a surge

in infections in a matter of days, and without the help of big data tools, Hong Kong's virus sleuths are overwhelmed by sprawling transmission chains that are hardly traceable.

Hong Kong has a high population density and many residents live in overcrowded rooms. Revamped sewage and ventilation pipes and poor air circulation in some houses have also sped up the transmission, he said in an interview with Xinhua.

A low vaccination rate among the elderly is also to blame. As of early February this year, the vaccination rate in elderly people over 80 years old in Hong Kong is only about 20 percent.

According to official data, up to 91 percent of the recent COVID-19 fatalities had not completed their vaccination, and the mortality rate for the elderly aged 80 or above without completed vaccination was 16 times higher than that for those who had done so.

WHAT'S NEW IN MAINLAND SUPPORT?

Ming Wai-kit said the fifth wave is believed to peak in mid- to late March, and that the HKSAR government needs to prepare the medical facilities in advance. He forecast the daily tally of new cases in Hong Kong may exceed 100,000 in the coming days.

A newly built community isolation facility (CIF) started admitting its first batch of COVID-19 patients in Hong Kong in Tuesday evening. The facility located in Tsing Yi, which is capable of accommodating about 3,900 patients, was completed within just one week on Monday with the support from the mainland.

Also on Monday, the third team of mainland health experts and personnel arrived in Hong Kong to work with the HKSAR government in fighting the latest COVID-19 outbreak. The team leader is Liang Wannian, head of the CO-



VID-19 response expert panel under China's National Health Commission (NHC).

The team said it will exchange views fully with the HKSAR government, and make every effort to help Hong Kong to put the epidemic situation under control. The mainland experts have offered suggestions, such as how to further tighten social distancing rules and make better use of Hong Kong's

strained medical resources, in order to contain the outbreak and cut the chain of transmission as soon as possible.

"We are still confident (in winning)," said Liang. "With firm support from the central government and strong leadership of the HKSAR government, we, in solid unity and with the power of science, will be able to defeat this outbreak of the virus." **XINHUA**

DAY 7

Russia, Ukraine ready for new talks on war

AS Day 7 of the Russia-Ukraine conflict dawned, Russia continued its attacks on crowded Ukrainian cities and a lengthy convoy of Russian tanks and other vehicles advanced slowly toward the capital of Kyiv.

Russia's escalation yesterday came as President Joe Biden, in his State of the Union speech to Americans, warned that if the Russian leader didn't "pay a price" for the invasion, the aggression wouldn't stop with one country, as both sides say they are open to a new round of talks.

POSSIBLE TALKS

Russian and Ukrainian officials say they are standing by to resume talks about their war, though the time and place for negotiations was unknown and hopes for a breakthrough remain low.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters yesterday that "in the second half of the day, closer to evening, our delegation will be in place to await Ukrainian negotiators."

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said Ukrainian officials are ready for new talks but said the venue is undecided and Kyiv won't accept any Russian ultimatums.

Kuleba said: "Russia's demands remain the same as (Russian President Vladimir) Putin announced in his address before the war started."

Peskov said Putin's culture adviser Vladimir Medinsky remains the main negotiator for Russia.

The first round of talks on resolving the Russia-Ukraine war were held near the Belarus-Ukraine border last Sunday.

THE SIEGE OF KYIV

A 40-mile convoy of hundreds of Russian tanks and other vehicles advanced slowly on Kyiv, a city of nearly 3 million people. The West feared it was part of a bid by Putin to topple the government and install a Kremlin-friendly regime. The Russians also pressed their assault on other towns and cities, including the strategic ports of Odesa and Mariupol in the south.

A senior U.S. defense official said Russia's military progress has slowed, plagued by logistical and supply problems. Some Russian military columns have run out of gas and food, the official said, and morale has suffered as a result. The Russian military has also been stalled by fierce resistance on the ground and a surprising inability to completely dominate Ukraine's airspace.

Ukraine's Defense Ministry said it had evidence that Belarus, a Russian ally, is preparing

AP PHOTO



An armed man stands at the Independent Square (Maidan) in the center of Kyiv

to send troops into Ukraine. A ministry statement posted yesterday on Facebook said the Belarusian troops have been brought into combat readiness and are concentrated close to Ukraine's northern border. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has said his country has no plans to join the fight.

On Tuesday, there were attacks on the central square in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, and a deadly bombing of a TV tower in the capital. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called the attack on Kharkiv "undisguised terror."

Ukrainian authorities said five people were killed in the attack on the TV tower. A TV control room and power substation were hit, and at least some Ukrainian channels briefly stopped broadcasting, officials said.

Russia previously told people living near transmission facilities used by Ukraine's intelligence agency to leave their homes.

Russia's Defense Ministry claimed yesterday that Russian aviation disabled the main TV tower in an airstrike, but said the attack did not hit any residential buildings. Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov did not address the deaths from Tuesday's strike or damage to the adjacent Babi Yar memorial to Kyiv's Holocaust victims. He said the attack was aimed at disabling Ukraine's ability to stage "information attacks."

Britain's Defense Ministry said it had seen an increase in Russian air and artillery strikes on populated urban areas over the past two days. It also said three cities — Kharkiv, Kherson and Mariupol — were encircled by Russian forces.

Many military experts worry that Russia may be shifting tactics. Moscow's strategy in Chechnya

and Syria was to use artillery and air bombardments to pulverize cities and crush fighters' resolve.

WHAT BIDEN SAID

Biden used his first State of the Union address to highlight the resolve of a Western alliance that has worked to rearm the Ukrainian military and adopt tough sanctions — including closing U.S. airspace to all Russian flights.

Biden devoted the first 12 minutes of his address to Ukraine, with lawmakers of both parties repeatedly rising to their feet and applauding as he praised the bravery of Ukraine's people and condemned Putin's assault.

RUSSIA INCREASINGLY ISOLATED

Russia found itself increasingly isolated, hit by sanctions that have thrown its economy into turmoil and left the country practically friendless, apart from a few nations like China, Belarus and North Korea. Biden said the sanctions have left Russian President Vladimir Putin "isolated in the world more than he has ever been."

Leading Russian bank Sberbank announced yesterday that it is pulling out of European markets amid tightening Western sanctions. The bank said its subsidiaries in Europe were facing an "abnormal outflow of funds and a threat to the safety of employees and branches," according to Russian news agencies. They did not provide details of the threats.

The U.S. and EU have levied sanctions on Russia's biggest banks and its elite, frozen the assets of the country's Central Bank located outside the country, and excluded its financial institutions from the SWIFT bank messaging system.

The harsh sanctions and the re-

sulting crash of the ruble have the Kremlin scrambling to keep the country's economy running. For Putin, that means finding workarounds to the Western economic blockade.

Former Treasury Department officials and sanctions experts expect Russia to try to mitigate the impact of the financial penalties by relying on energy sales and leaning on the country's reserves in gold and Chinese currency. Putin also is expected to move funds through smaller banks and accounts of elite families not covered by the sanctions, deal in cryptocurrency and rely on Russia's relationship with China.

CHINA WON'T JOIN SANCTIONS

China won't join the United States and European governments in imposing financial sanctions on Russia, the country's bank regulator said yesterday.

China is a major buyer of Russian oil and gas and the only major government that has refrained from criticizing Moscow's attack on Ukraine.

Beijing opposes the sanctions, said Guo Shuqing, the chairman of the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission.

"We will not join such sanctions, and we will keep normal economic, trade and financial exchanges with all the relevant parties," Guo said at a news conference. "We disapprove of the financial sanctions, particularly those launched unilaterally, because they don't have much legal basis and will not have good effects."

THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

It's worsening. Roughly 660,000 people have fled Ukraine, and countless others have taken shelter underground. The death toll

was unclear, with neither Russia nor Ukraine releasing the number of troops lost. The U.N. human rights office said it has recorded 136 civilian deaths. The actual toll is likely much higher.

Human Rights Watch said it documented a cluster bomb attack outside a hospital in Ukraine's east in recent days. Residents also reported the use of the weapons in Kharkiv and Kiyanka village. The Kremlin denied using cluster bombs.

The European Union is stepping up aid for Ukraine and is moving toward granting temporary protection to those fleeing Russia's invasion. The EU Commission announced yesterday it will give temporary residence permits to the refugees and allow them rights to education and work in the 27-nation bloc. The move still has to be approved by the member states, but they already expressed broad support over the weekend.

DEVELOPMENTS AT THE UNITED NATIONS

The U.N. General Assembly will vote today [Macau time] on a resolution demanding that Russia immediately stop using force against Ukraine and withdraw its military from the country, and condemning Moscow's decision "to increase the readiness of its nuclear forces."

The 193-nation General Assembly met yesterday for a second day of speeches about the war, with more than 110 member states signed up to speak. Unlike the U.N. Security Council, the General Assembly doesn't allow vetoes. And unlike Security Council resolutions, General Assembly resolutions aren't legally binding, though they have clout in reflecting international opinion. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



'MINISTER NO'

FM Lavrov embodies Moscow's steely posture

VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV,
MOSCOW

AS Russia's top diplomat during the invasion of Ukraine, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is embodying the Kremlin's defiant posture with a mixture of toughness and sarcasm.

While President Vladimir Putin single-handedly shapes the country's foreign policy, Lavrov delivers Moscow's message with a bluntness uncharacteristic of a diplomat.

In the role for nearly 18 years, the 71-year-old Lavrov has seen relations with the West shift from near-friendly to openly hostile, plummeting to a catastrophic new low with Russia's war against Ukraine. The invasion prompted the European Union to freeze the assets of both Putin and Lavrov, among others — an unprecedented blow to Moscow's pride.

Lavrov's tenure as foreign minister is second only to that of Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, who was in office for 28 years. Like Gromyko, who was nicknamed Mr. Nyet (Mr. No), Lavrov has come to represent the uncompromising face of Kremlin foreign policy vis a vis the West.

He doesn't mince words when defending what he

sees as Moscow's interests, and that style must appeal to the tough-talking Russian president.

In 2008, Lavrov famously responded to a reprimand from then British Foreign Secretary David Miliband by snapping: "Who are you to (expletive) lecture me?"

Like his boss, Lavrov has tapped into broad public nostalgia for the country's Soviet-era clout. He has vented anger at the West, depicting the U.S. as arrogant, conceited, treacherous and determined to dominate the world. He has contemptuously dismissed Western allies as stooges obediently toeing Washington's line to deter Russia.

Standing next to British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss after their meeting last month, a grim-faced Lavrov snapped that their talks were like a "conversation between deaf and dumb."

After a lifelong diplomatic career, Lavrov looks visibly bored by daily routine. When he appears before the media, he doesn't bother to hide his irritation at a naive or provocative question, often responding with an air of contempt or plain mockery.

When a CNN reporter in a video call from the Ukrainian capital asked Lavrov whether Moscow wants to topple the Ukrainian leadership, the aide who managed

Friday's briefing interrupted and said it wasn't his turn to put a question. The reporter continued, and an angry Lavrov weighed in: "He's discourteous. He's working in Ukraine now. He's got infected with discourtesy."

Lavrov has particular distaste for photographers, showing annoyance at the clacking of camera shutters.

At one news conference, he muttered an expletive into the microphone in apparent anger at disorderly reporters; the expression became a meme, widely adopted in T-shirt designs for the patriotic audience.

Lavrov has weathered endless waves of speculation that he was on the verge of retirement. Instead, he has become one of the longest-lasting members of Putin's Cabinet and a perennial figure among a changing kaleidoscope of foreign counterparts.

Before becoming foreign minister, he served as Russia's ambassador to the United Nations for 10 years and liked to have informal chats with journalists, trading news and jokes over a cigarette in the U.N. corridors. He writes poetry, sings songs on guitar with friends, and eagerly took part in skits with other diplomats at international events when Russia's ties with the West were less rancorous.

But his smiles and easy ways are a thing of the past now that Lavrov launches daily, angry diatribes against the West over Ukraine, the largest ground conflict Europe has seen since World War II.

On Tuesday, he was barred from flying to Geneva to attend a U.N. conference after European Union members banned Russian planes from their skies as part of bruising sanctions against Moscow.

Lavrov denounced what he called the "outrageous" move in a video address to the U.N. session, charging that "the EU countries are trying to avoid a candid face-to-face dialogue or direct contacts designed to help identify political solutions to pressing international issues."

"The West clearly has lost self-control in venting anger against Russia and has destroyed its own rules and institutions, including respect for private property," Lavrov said. "It's necessary to put an end to the arrogant Western philosophy of self-superiority, exclusivity and total permissiveness."

But Western diplomats from dozens of nations left the room in Geneva as Lavrov came up on the big screen, letting their feet show their anger at Moscow and in effect saying "nyet" to him and Russian diplomacy. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1966 BBC TUNES IN TO COLOUR



The BBC has announced plans to begin broadcasting television programmes in colour from next year.

Britain will be the first country in Europe to offer regular programming in colour.

The announcement was made in the Commons by the Postmaster General, Anthony Wedgwood Benn.

The new service is expected to cost the BBC between £1m and £2m per year, for an initial four hours of television per week on BBC2, rising to 10 hours a week after 12 months.

The colour programmes will still be available on ordinary television sets in black and white. A colour receiver will cost about £250 and there will be a supplementary licence fee.

David Attenborough, controller of BBC2, will be responsible for overseeing the new colour service.

He said the promised four hours of colour programming was based on what the BBC could produce from its own studios and did not include imported programmes.

He said the popular Western series, *The Virginian*, and the *Danny Kaye Show* were both available in colour, but currently shown in black and white.

Mr Attenborough denied the colour programmes would all be re-runs of old shows: "We have to remember that 95% of people initially will not be seeing these programmes in colour, they'll be seeing them in black and white. The shows that BBC2 will be scheduling will be exciting new shows in black and white. They'll be that much more exciting and newer in colour."

The technique for delivering the colour service has not been finally agreed. European leaders are meeting in Oslo in Norway later this year to decide on a single system which will enable countries to be able to exchange programmes.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Europe adopted the Phase Alternation Line or PAL system for broadcasting in colour. It works at 50 frames per second, slower than the National Television System Committee adopted in the US, but with a higher resolution.

BBC2 broadcast its first colour pictures from Wimbledon in 1967. By mid 1968, nearly every BBC2 programme was in colour. Six months later, colour came to BBC1.

By 1969, BBC1 and ITV were regularly broadcasting in colour.

The number of households owning a colour TV licence shot up from 275,000 to 12 million by the early 70s.

David Attenborough began a career in broadcasting in 1952, one of his first series was the popular *Zoo Quest*. He was made Controller of BBC2 in 1965, then Director of Programmes with responsibility for both networks. He resigned in 1973 to return to programme making.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You are best to stick to yourself today. Your ability to work with detail could help you achieve your goals. Having your own business is a good idea.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You will be a real chatterbox today. Enjoy some socializing today. Don't let your family put demands on you. A residential move may be necessary to get a better job.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Your tendency to overreact could get you into trouble. Your obviously unique way of doing things has caught the eye of someone in a higher position.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

If you have treated them equitably, you might be able to count on their loyalty. Take time to explain your intentions to loved ones. It may not be the best time to socialize with clients or colleagues today.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Don't let your friends talk you into taking time off. Try not to overreact to the loss. Make those phone calls and pay your bills. You will have excellent ideas and you should be able to help your partner get ahead.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

You will learn valuable skills if you sign up for seminars today. You will meet potential new mates through business. Pamper yourself; the self esteem it brings you will be most gratifying.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Do not allow colleagues to hinder your ambitions. A need to be in love may fool you. Talk to people who can give you important knowledge.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You can expect your mate to get fed up and make the choices for you or back off completely. Some of your new friends may not be that trustworthy.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

They didn't fully understand what was expected. Those you care about may oppose your ideas. Rid yourself of that which is old and no longer of use.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You can enjoy your involvement in organizations that make charitable contributions. Catch up on your correspondence and reading. Your own small business on the side sounds pretty lucrative.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Don't take your frustrations out on the ones you love. The answers can only come from within. Try to be as mellow as possible. Get into fitness programs to keep in shape.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Your ambitious mood may not go over well with loved ones. Consider making residential changes; either moves or renovations could payoff. Invest your money.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

	9		8	4				
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3	2		9					

HARD

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				1				
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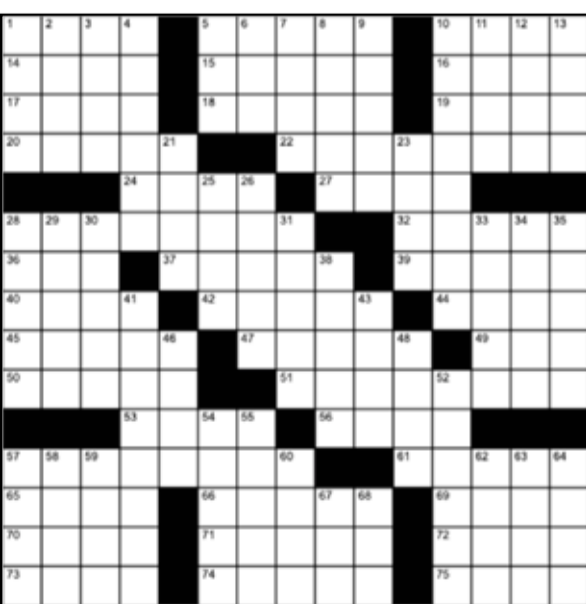
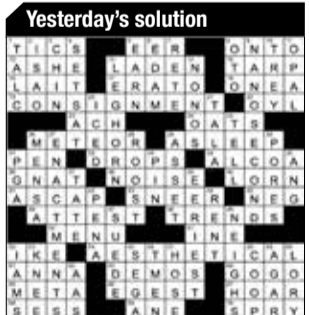
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-1	14	fine
Harbin	-5	4	cloudy
Tianjin	5	17	cloudy
Urumqi	8	15	cloudy
Xi'an	9	18	cloudy
Lhasa	2	9	fine
Chengdu	13	20	overcast
Chongqing	10	20	cloudy
Kunming	6	15	cloudy
Nanjing	18	24	cloudy
Shanghai	7	16	cloudy
Wuhan	10	17	cloudy
Hangzhou	-8	0	snow
Taipei	2	16	fine
Guangzhou	15	24	cloudy
Hong Kong	17	19	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	-6	2	snow
Frankfurt	-3	11	clear
Paris	6	14	cloudy
London	7	12	rain
New York	-6	6	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Plastic or liberal, e.g.; 5- Beat it!; 10- Voucher; 14- Enticement; 15- Sun-dried brick; 16- Unaccompanied; 17- Consumer; 18- Rot; 19- Atop; 20- Palpitate; 22- Soft-shell clams; 24- Round object, often used to store computer data; 27- Energy units; 28- Something removed; 32- Ventilated; 36- Like; 37- Leash; 39- Flat contract; 40- Badgers; 42- Capital of Yemen; 44- Confirmation, e.g.; 45- Benjamin; 47- Cavalry weapon; 49- Religious sch.; 50- Ford flop; 51- Altruistic; 53- Bunches; 56- Stringed instrument; 57- Peer; 61- Income source; 65- Work without ___; 66- ___ my case; 69- "David Copperfield" wife; 70- 8th letter of the Hebrew alphabet; 71- Trunk; 72- Nile wader; 73- Pale; 74- Rock; 75- Not one;

DOWN 1- Touch on; 2- Like some decisions; 3- Echelon; 4- Took steps; 5- Downcast; 6- Alphabet trio; 7- Fabled fliers; 8- Diminish; 9- Gangster Lansky; 10- More awkward; 11- Clinton's birthplace; 12- Are you ___ out?; 13- Sawbucks; 21- Smithereens; 23- I've Got ___ in Kalamazoo; 25- Takes a load off; 26- Reef material; 28- Move rhythmically; 29- Gnu cousin; 30- Nigerian seaport; 31- Grannies; 33- Worker's reward; 34- Politico Kefauver; 35- Judges; 38- Discussion group; 41- Furtive; 43- Legal rights org.; 46- Vogue rival; 48- Newts; 52- Introduction; 54- Leaves out; 55- Fortune-telling cards; 57- Okinawa port; 58- Till bills; 59- Playwright Henley; 60- Pianist Peter; 62- Timber wolf; 63- ___ Brockovich; 64- Freelancer's encl.; 67- Nine-digit ID; 68- Foot digit;



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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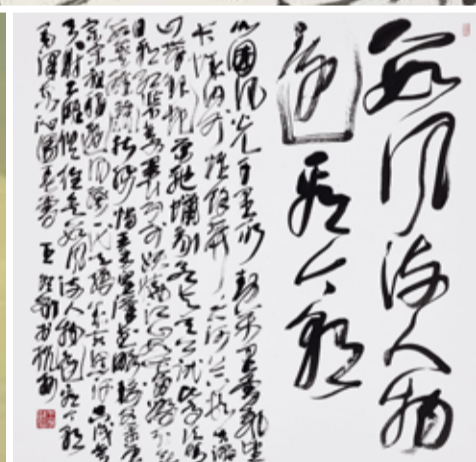
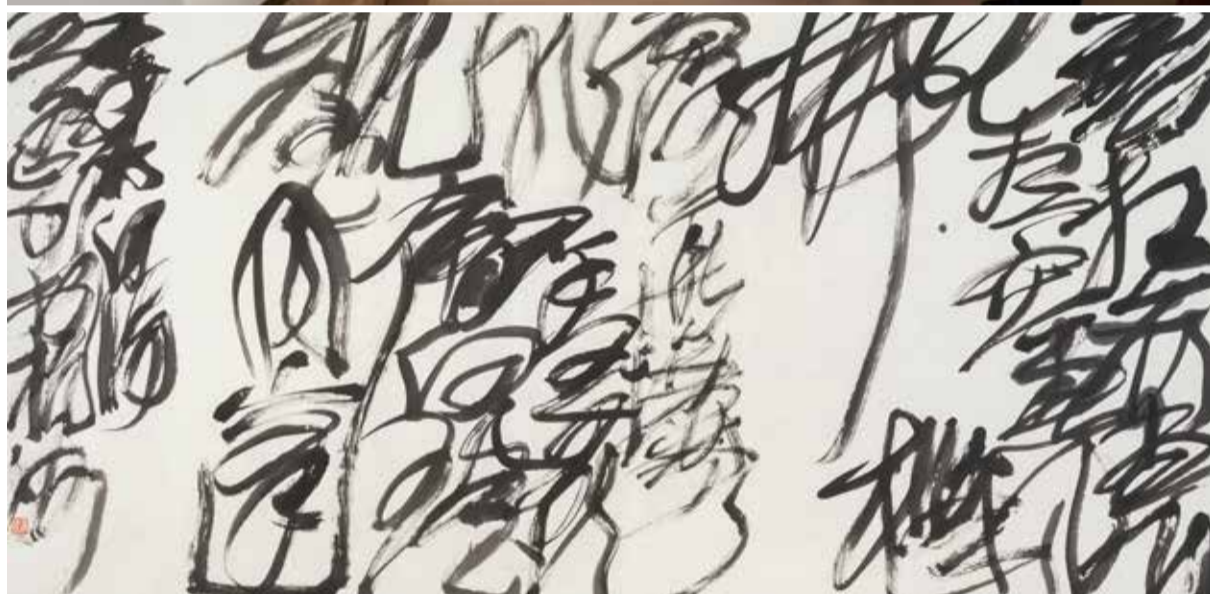
finding your home since 1998

Sands Gallery launched at Four Seasons



SANDS CHINA Ltd. officially launched the new Sands Gallery on February 23 and unveiled its debut exhibition, The Innovation of Ink: Transformation and Reinvention of Oriental Aesthetics – Featured Exhibition of Wang Dongling & Xu Lei.

Sands Gallery is a permanent art space on the 6th floor of The Grand Suites at Four Seasons, and provides an opportunity for guests to explore an ever-changing variety of art exhibitions. The Innovation of Ink features over 30 imaginative works of world-renowned Chinese artists Wang Dongling and Xu Lei, and runs until March 20, 2022. It was curated by internationally respected art historian Julia F. Andrews, who is a distinguished professor at Ohio State University and an expert in her field.



WINTER PARALYMPICS

Russians, Belarusians compete as 'neutral athletes' in China

STEPHEN WADE

RUSSIANS and Belarusians at the Winter Paralympics in Beijing will compete as "neutral athletes" because of their countries' roles in the war against Ukraine, the International Paralympic Committee said yesterday.

Russian athletes had already been slated to compete as RPC, short for Russian Paralympic Committee, as punishment for the state-sponsored doping scandal at the 2014 Sochi Olympics and a subsequent cover-up.

The IPC added more restrictions when the Paralympics open on Friday, but stopped short of expulsion. Belarus was sanctioned for its part in aiding Russia with the invasion and war against Ukraine.

Both delegations will be excluded from the medal table, and the IPC said it would not hold events in either country "while the present situation continues."

"What we have decided upon is the harshest possible punish-

AP PHOTO



ment we can hand down within our constitution and the current IPC rules," IPC President Andrew Parsons said in a statement. "In deciding what actions the IPC should take, it was fundamental that we worked within the framework of our new constitution to remain politically neutral and within the IPC Handbook, the rules and regulations that govern

the Paralympic Movement."

The International Olympic Committee on Monday pushed sports bodies to exclude Russian athletes from international events, but it left the final decision to individual governing bodies. The IOC has been slow to crack down on Russia, allowing its athletes to compete in the last four Olympics following Sochi.

The IOC said the action was needed now to "protect the integrity of global sports competitions and for the safety of all the participants" but left sports bodies with a way around the exclusion by adding that Russians and Belarusians could compete as neutral athletes or teams if expulsion was not possible because of short notice.

The move by the IPC comes as Russia is being barred from competing in a long list of sports including ice skating, skiing, soccer, hockey, basketball, track and field, and some tennis events. Some sports like swimming haven't followed the recommendation from the IOC to ban Russians, instead allowing them to compete as neutral athletes.

Parsons acknowledged the possibility that some Paralympic athletes might refuse to compete against their counterparts from Russia. He also had said the options for the IPC were "limited" because of the possibility of legal challenges from Russia or elsewhere.

IOC President Thomas Bach will not attend the Paralympics and has designated Parsons — an IOC member — to represent the body. IOC vice president Ser Miang Ng was to attend, but has tested positive for COVID-19. The IOC said Ng had only mild symptoms.

Paralympic officials say 648 athletes and 49 delegations will take part in the Winter Paralympics. There were 2,900 athletes at last month's Winter Olympics with 91 delegations.

Officials say 71 Russian athletes are expected to compete in the Paralympics, joined by 20 from Ukraine. The entire Ukrainian delegation was expected to arrive in time for Friday's opening ceremony. The Paralympics close March 13. MDT/AP

AD

 **Macao Bond Market**

Presented by:
Calvin Tinlop Chui
Partner at Rato, Ling, Lei & Cortés - Lawyers and Notaries
LEKTOU

britcham Business Lunch - Wednesday 16 March 2022

Join Calvin Tinlop Chui as he shares information on the development of the Bond Market in Macao; the recent trends of Macao's financial institutions, bond issuance and listing activities under the current legal framework, and case studies on RMB/HKD/USD denominated bonds.

Calvin is qualified to practice law in Macao and New York State. He focuses on capital markets (IPO and bond issue & listing), banking and finance, commercial and corporate matters. Calvin is President of the Board of Directors of Macao Financial Law Association, member of the supervisory committee of a local bank, and member of the bond specialist committee of a local trading platform. Calvin regularly teaches law subjects at universities and co-authors publications, including Chambers Global Practice Guide Banking & Finance 2021: Macao Chapter, Thomson Reuters Practical Law: Establishing a business in Macao, etc.

Date: 16 Mar. 2022 (WED) **Venue:** Mandarin Oriental Macao
Fee: Members MOP450 **Time:** 1215 - 1400 hours
Non-members MOP550
(includes lunch. Vegetarian request required by 11 March 2022)

Advance booking necessary. Email info@britchammacao.org or call +853 6331 1124

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Supporting Members:     

 **Casa do Brasil**

 **INVITES**

Carnaval Costume Party

Saturday March 5th
Live Show Dança Brasil
Live DJ
Free entrance
From 10pm till late

At The Roadhouse Macau

R/C, Shop E-G016-G019, Broadway Hotel, Rotunda do Dique Oeste, Taipa

OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

**CHINA WILL REMAIN
 BALLAST FOR WORLD
 ECONOMY**

At a time when the challenges posed by the still ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and increasing geopolitical tensions such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict are producing headwinds for a global economic recovery, that China has a solid foundation for achieving “stable economic growth” this year offers some reassuring ballast that it can be kept afloat.

Despite the challenges, China enjoys many favorable conditions for growth, and it still has room to maneuver to keep its growth within a “reasonable range” — possibly between 5 and 6 percent — a goal set by the government during the Central Economic Work Conference in December, which outlined the major economic targets for 2022.

The new development paradigm of “dual circulation” in which the domestic and overseas markets reinforce each other, with the former being the mainstay, has shown the resilience and potential of the Chinese economy in the face of the mounting difficulties.

China’s foreign trade has maintained good growth momentum, with imports and exports both registering double-digit growth of more than 20 percent last year, a rare phenomenon. The total foreign trade volume exceeded \$6 trillion, indicating Made-in-China products will continue to fuel the country’s growth and the world economic recovery.

As the largest trading nation and a leading recipient of foreign direct investment, the world’s second-largest economy plays an indispensable role in the world economy. This has been further proved by the fact that despite the trade war initiated by the United States, China’s production capabilities continue to be the only source for a reliant and large-scale supply chain in the world.

With its gross domestic product amounting to 114.37 trillion yuan (\$18.05 trillion), about 18 percent of the global total, China contributes around 25 percent to the global economic growth.

All this can be attributed to China’s effective epidemic prevention and control measures such as mass testing and localized lockdowns, which have enabled the country’s economic activities to continue as normal on the whole. Adept policymaking and implementation have helped the government timely address risks such as an abrupt increase in coal prices at the start of winter.

Premier Li Keqiang will deliver the government’s annual work report at the start of this year’s annual session of the National People’s Congress on Saturday, in which he is expected to promise more measures to cope with the anticipated economic pressures, including fiscal spending and tax cuts to spur investment and consumption.

Amid the soaring global inflation, China’s consumer price index, a major indicator of inflation, remained at a low level of 0.9 percent in January, which means the government still has many stimulus policy tools that it can use to propel growth.

**OIL TOPS \$110 A BARREL, RUBLE SINKS
 TO CENTS AS UKRAINE WAR RAGES**

**THE
 BUZZ**

Oil prices surged above \$110 per barrel yesterday as Russian forces stepped up attacks on Ukrainian cities. Global stock markets were mixed as investors waited to hear the latest from the head of the Federal Reserve on interest rates.

Markets in Shanghai and Tokyo declined as President Vladimir Putin’s invasion fed fears of global economic turmoil. Stocks turned higher in Frankfurt, Paris and London.

On Wall Street, the futures for the benchmark S&P 500 index, Dow Jones Industrial Average and the Nasdaq each rose about 0.5%.

The war is adding to worries about global economic growth as

the Federal Reserve and other central banks gear up to fight surging inflation by raising interest rates.

“The conspiracy of geopolitical uncertainty and stagflation-type impulses is a brutal shock,” Tan Boon Heng of Mizuho Bank said in a report.

The DAX in Frankfurt rose 0.2% and the CAC 40 in Paris gained 0.5%. The FTSE 100 in London added 0.6%.

The value of Russia’s ruble fell further to less than 0.9 U.S. cents despite its central bank’s decision Monday to raise interest rates to defend the currency.



Demonstrators and police face off at a protest opposing coronavirus vaccine mandates in Wellington

**NEW ZEALAND
 PROTESTERS SET FIRES AS
 POLICE BREAK UP CAMP**

**NICK PERRY,
 WELLINGTON**

THICK black smoke billowed across the grounds of New Zealand’s Parliament and sirens blared yesterday as retreating protesters against coronavirus vaccine mandates set fire to tents, mattresses and chairs.

It appeared to be a final act of defiance as police broke up the camp that protesters first set up more than three weeks ago. Police retook control of the Parliament grounds although dozens of protesters remained in nearby streets, some hurling objects at officers. Parliament’s once carefully manicured grounds were left scarred, a children’s slide in ruins.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said that in planning the operation, police had expected hostility, resistance and violence — but it was another thing entirely to witness it.

“I was both angry and also deeply saddened. To see the Parliament — your Parliament, our Parliament — desecrated in that way, and a children’s playground destroyed, by a small group of illegal protesters,” Ardern said. “But, as I say, it’s not something that will define New Zealand’s response to this pandemic.”

Earlier, police wearing riot gear and using pepper spray had moved in on

hundreds of people who had been occupying the grounds and surrounding streets. Police efforts in the morning focused on the periphery of the protest before turning to the main camp in the afternoon.

It was the most significant use of force to date by authorities against the demonstrators. As they retreated in the afternoon, they tossed objects onto several fires, which police doused with water hoses.

Protesters said in a statement they were united in wanting mandates dropped and to make their own informed choices regarding their health, free from coercion and punishment. They said the vast majority of protesters had been well-behaved and had chosen to camp as a last resort after other options for dialogue were quashed.

The operation began at dawn, when police started telling people over loudspeakers they were trespassing and needed to leave, while officers tore down tents in peripheral areas and a police helicopter circled overhead. Some protesters confronted police and used milk to try and clear their eyes from pepper spray.

Police also towed some of the 300 or so cars, vans and trucks that protesters have used to block streets. The convoy was inspired by similar protests in

Canada and has sparked other rallies around New Zealand, leading to a more charged political atmosphere.

Ardern’s security detail has been increased after protesters heckled her at events, including as she was leaving a school visit in Christchurch last week.

Police Commissioner Andrew Coster told reporters they had brought in several hundred additional officers from around the country for the operation, which would continue until all the vehicles and tents were gone.

Coster said some protesters had sprayed fire extinguishers and thrown paint at officers as they advanced, and others had used makeshift shields and barricades. He said a laser pointer was aimed at the police helicopter.

By evening, police reported they had towed about 50 vehicles and another 30 had left. They had arrested 65 people for trespassing, causing damage and carrying weapons. And three officers had been treated at a local hospital for non-life-threatening injuries.

Coster said officers decided to move in because previously constructive talks with protest leaders weren’t progressing and many genuine protesters had left and been replaced by people more intent on violent confrontation. **MDT/AP**



Germany The organization that handles claims on behalf of Jews who suffered under the Nazis said yesterday that Germany has agreed to extend another 647 million euros to provide home care and supportive services for frail and vulnerable Holocaust survivors. The New York-based Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, also referred to as the Claims Conference, said the money will be distributed to more than 300 social welfare organizations globally.

Germany is removing all countries currently on its list of “high-risk areas” as part of a rethink of its coronavirus travel rules that will take effect today. The country’s disease control center, the Robert Koch Institute, said that from now on Germany’s list will only include places where high infection rates are linked to variants of Covid-19 that are more virulent than the currently dominant omicron variant, which in many cases leads to relatively mild illness.

Iran likely suffered another failed launch of a satellite-carrying rocket in recent days attempting to reinvigorate a program criticized by the West, even as Tehran faces last-minute negotiations with world powers to save its tattered nuclear deal in Vienna. Satellite images from Maxar Technologies seen by The Associated Press show scorch marks at a launch pad at Imam Khomeini Spaceport in Iran’s rural Semnan province. A rocket stand on the pad appears scorched and damaged, with vehicles surrounding it.

Morocco At least 500 migrants crossed the fences separating the Spanish enclave of Melilla from Morocco, authorities in the North African city said yesterday. The Spanish government representative in Melilla, Sabrina Moh, told local radio station Cadena COPE she was surprised over 2,000 people had attempted the crossing, one of the highest numbers on record.