



CHINESE EXPERT MULLS CHINESE-STYLE COEXISTENCE WITH COVID-19, NOTING ‘DYNAMIC ZERO COVID’ WOULD NOT BE PERMANENT

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MACAU’S GDP GREW 18% TO MOP239.4 BILLION IN 2021

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TWO SESSIONS: GOV’T CUTS ECONOMIC GROWTH GOAL AS IT TRIES TO REVERSE SLUMP

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China Fourteen workers who were trapped when a coal mine in southwest China collapsed 10 days ago had died, media reported yesterday. A rescue operation finished yesterday after the bodies of the miners were retrieved, state-owned Xinhua News Agency said. The workers were trapped after the roof of a shaft at Sanhe Shunxun coal mine in Guizhou province collapsed on Feb. 25.

North Korea performed data transmission and other key tests needed to develop a spy satellite, state media said yesterday, in the second such tests in about a week, indicating the country intends to conduct a prohibited long-range rocket launch soon. The moves come as North Korea has been carrying out a spate of ballistic missile launches - including one detected by its neighbors on Saturday - in what experts call an attempt to add new weapons systems to its arsenal.

South Korea Thousands of firefighters and troops were battling a large wildfire over the weekend that tore through an eastern coastal area and temporarily threatened a nuclear power station and a liquified natural gas plant. The fire, which began Friday morning has spread across more than 6,000 hectares to the nearby city of Samcheok, destroyed at least 159 homes and 46 other buildings and prompted the evacuation of more than 6,200 people.



Indonesia More than 100 hungry and weak Rohingya Muslims were found on a beach in Indonesia’s northernmost province of Aceh on Sunday after weeks at sea, officials said. The villagers who saw the 114 ethnic Rohingya on a rickety wooden boat helped them to land and then reported their arrival to authorities, said Badruddin Yunus, the leader of the local tribal fishing community.

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PATRIOTS ONLY

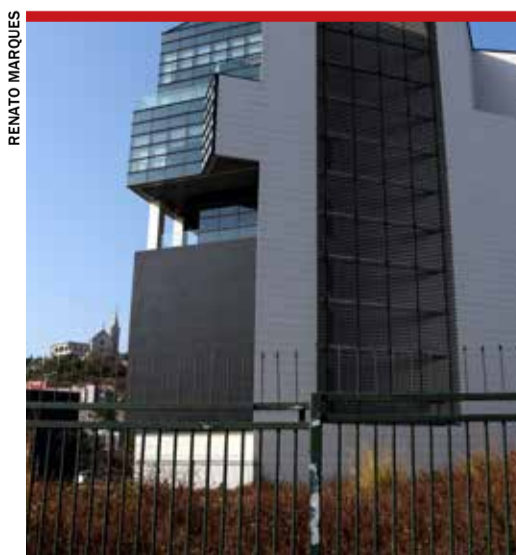


Chinese Premier Li Keqiang highlighted the ‘patriots ruling Macau’ principle at the annual plenary session, stating the need to implement the central gov’t’s full authority over the SARs

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COVID-19 ONLY 10% OF ALL QUARANTINE PERIODS EXEMPTED FROM PAYMENT

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URBAN PLANNERS OPPOSE PLAN FOR NAM VAN PLOTS C1 TO C4

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NEW LAW REQUIRES USE OF DECIMAL SCALE

Pursuant to a new law that came into effect on New Year's Day this year, the government requires all hawkers and vendors doing business in local wet markets to migrate to the metric system of measurement. The Chinese hexadecimal units of catty and tael are popular, in which a catty equals 16 taels. Furthermore, the units of pounds and feet are also used widely in Macau. For example, citizens usually measure the dimensions of apartments in square feet. In contrast, the decimal scale of units is more popular in mainland China. Apartment sizes are often discussed in square meters, for example.

SECOND COURT RULES IN FAVOR OF DASH-CAM FOOTAGE AS LEGITIMATE EVIDENCE

Hearing an appeal with regards to a car accident, the Court of Second Instance (TSI) ruled that footage from windshield or dashboard cameras ('dash-cam' footage) can be legally considered by a court of law as evidence. The court explained that car camera footage does not violate provisions in laws governing surveillance in public spaces or personal data privacy. In addition, the practice has also not violated the Civil Code or the Penal Code and fits the requirements set forth in the Criminal Procedure Code. Most importantly, the court ruled that driving on public roads does not constitute the driver's private life.

URBAN PLANNERS OPPOSE PLAN FOR NAM VAN PLOTS C1 TO C4

RENATO MARQUES

SEVERAL architects and urban planners have expressed their opposition to the plan proposed by the government for the occupancy of the plots of land C1 to C4 of Nam Van Lake.

The written opinions have been sent to the Urban Planning Committee (CPU), as the CPU is preparing to discuss the urban conditions plan (PCU) for those plots later this week, during the second plenary meeting of the committee this year.

A total of four opinions on the PCU were issued, all expressing similar concerns and opposing the maximum height proposed by the government for the constructions that would, in future, be erected on the land plots located on both sides of the Court of First Instance – Criminal Court.

The opinions presented all disagreed with the altimetric quota (50.8 meters) assigned by the Land, Public Works, and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) for future building.

This opposition, as they all explain, is not exclusively related to the disturbance of the view of the Chapel of Our Lady of Penha – a UNESCO heritage site since 2005 – but also with the Fortress of Bom Parto, a monument listed in Macau's Classified Immovable Properties, which was part of the ancient defensive network on the southern bay, together with the



St. Francis' Fortress and St. Peters' Fort (both demolished due to land reclamation during the 1930s), and also part of the defense link of the Inner Harbour in conjunction with the São Tiago da Barra Fortress.

The Fortress was built on a site that belonged to the Augustinians in the sixteenth century and was reconstructed later in 1775 (the 40th year of the reign of Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty).

It was abandoned in around 1892, and is currently part of the official residence complex of the Consul-General of Portugal in Macau and Hong Kong (formerly Hotel Bela Vista).

Specialists claim that this monument plays an important role in the definition of the characteristics of that area, as it is just 38 meters away from the tip of one of the plots in the discussion.

The urban planners argue that, according to the provisions of the Cultural Heritage Law, the proposal of DSSOPT to authorize the construction of a building up to 50.8m tall just across from this monument will cause irreparable damage to its study, protection, and appreciation by the public, especially future generations.

The subscribers of the four different opinions issued in both Portuguese and Chinese language are calling for a significant change

in the conditions for those plots, presenting, in some cases, alternatives for the development of the land plots to ensure the protection of the view of the Penha Hill and its monuments.

Some of these opinion-makers also note the need to observe the original project of the closing of the Nam Van Bay and the altimetry that was originally proposed, with a maximum ceiling of just six to seven floors' height.

Almost three years ago, former lawmaker Sulu Sou initiated a series of inquiries to the government in view of the plans to preserve the UNESCO World Heritage site of the Historic Centre of Macau, with particular reference to Penha Hill.

Sou argued that although 14 years [now almost 17] had passed since the listing, the government had still not compiled a plan for protecting and managing the Historic Centre of Macau, which is required by the law.

Previously in June 2018, the government had published a public consultation summary on such a plan, which included more than 1,000 public opinions, with more than half being related to the preservation of the view from Penha Hill.

The development of plots of land C1 to C4 is part of the bid from the government to expand the facilities of the courts, as well as Public Prosecutions Office venues.

IAM blames outsourced third party for cutting down Vasco de Gama trees

FOUR Camel's Foot Trees in the Vasco de Gama Garden in the city center have been "negligently cut [down]," the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) says, as reported by local media.

Scientifically named Bauhinia variegata, Camel's Foot Trees are widely planted in Macau.

Citing a radio morning show, a report by Chinese newspaper Cheng Pou

revealed that four trees in the aforementioned garden were cut down last Monday. An audience member called in to the radio show, reporting the matter as it was taking place.

The caller cited workers saying that they were following orders to cut all four trees down. The caller said the trees did not seem ill or infected.

After taking the call, a

host of the radio show attempted to defend the IAM, by saying that the external appearance may not necessarily reflect the internal condition of the trees, although the host agreed that the IAM should explain the matter.

Three days later, the IAM responded to the same morning show, claiming that the third-party service provider "negligently" cau-

sed the issue. The IAM has ordered the service provider to replant the trees.

The post about the occurrence on the news outlet's social media page garnered 100 comments in approximately 36 hours. Most comments slammed the IAM's explanation. A social media user questioned the possibility of the service provider doing extra work that was not assigned. **AL**



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Only 10% of all quarantine periods exempted from payment

RENATO MARQUES

ONLY around 10% of all quarantine periods undertaken in Macau's designated quarantine venues have been exempted from payment, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) acknowledged in a reply to the Times.

According to MGTO's registered figures, "from September 1, 2020, until March 4, 2022, a total of 6,115 cases were eligible for exemption and a total of 2,284 cases were rejected," MGTO said, adding that some 658 cases are currently undergoing evaluation.

According to the latest figures released by the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center last week, as of March 3, a total of 60,482 quarantine periods in medical observation had been undertaken in Macau.

As the Times had previously reported, the majority of the medically-observed quarantine periods hosted within Macau hotels have been completed by non-residents.

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

Currently, there are three categories of medical observation hotels in Macau.

RENATO MARQUES



Residents can choose to stay at the "optional medical observation hotel," instead of the "designated medical observation hotel," but, in that case, they must settle the payment at their own cost and cannot apply for exemption from the government.

The "designated medical observation hotel" is limited to Macau residents and their accompanying

relatives, as well as to non-resident laborers, while the "special medical observation hotel" is mandatory for people classified as "second-highest risk individuals." These include people returning from foreign countries, Hong Kong, or other high-risk areas according to the classification of the Health Bureau.

Currently, "special medical ob-

servation hotel" status is being assigned to Treasure Hotel in Taipa, which, besides the previously mentioned guests, also includes other groups of high-risk workers under closed-loop management housed in the hotel.

The price for the quarantine period will be determined by each hotel according to different room types, as well as quarantine duration.

Residents staying at both the "designated hotel" or "special hotel" can apply for exemption from the quarantine cost if they have been in Macau for at least 183 days within the last 365 days before returning to the territory, and are undergoing medical observation for the first time.

Special exemptions from quarantine payment may also be granted to students enrolled in higher or non-tertiary education recognized by the local authority and which justifies their absence from Macau due to studies abroad, as well as cases in which people had gone abroad for medical treatment and hospitalization, workers that need to travel as part of their working duties to Macau employers or companies, and those traveling as part of official duties to serve the Macau SAR government.

GOV'T INVESTMENT IN QUARANTINE

THE MGTO declined to provide, at present, figures relating to the total expenditure of the government in respect of the 6,115 cases in which residents were eligible for exemption from payment. In response to the inquiry from the Times, MGTO said, "Given the on-

going epidemic prevention works in Macau and the continuous use of various hotels as medical observation facilities and the varying cost due to changes in requirements according to the pandemic situation, we are not able to provide the cost of government investment."

MELCO, SJM, MGM TO APPLY FOR TEMPORARY LICENSE EXTENSION

THREE more casino operators have replied to the Times expressing their intention to apply for the temporary license extension announced by the government last week.

After attending a parliamentary committee meeting for the discussion on the gaming law amendment bill, Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong last week told the press that the government was planning to extend the validity of all current licenses to the end of 2022.

The extension is not automatic, though, as the senior official noted that license holders will need to apply.

Melco Resorts and Entertainment, SJM Resorts, S.A. and MGM announced their respective decisions in three separate emails.



The three resort operators stressed that they are committed to submitting an application for the license extension.

In addition to the three companies, Sands China Ltd. and Galaxy Entertainment Group have also replied to the enquiry of the Times on the matter, also saying that they would file an application.

Commenting on the go-

vernment's decision regarding the temporary extension, all five companies either said they welcomed or supported the matter.

The gaming law amendment bill is being reviewed by a parliamentary committee. Both the committee and the government have said they would strive to pass the bill at the earliest opportunity. **AL**

2021 GDP GROWS 18%

MACAU'S Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2021 amounted to MOP239.4 billion, while per-capita GDP was MOP350,445, according to the statistics bureau.

With a pickup in total demand, Macau's economy grew by 18.0% year-on-year in real terms last year, while domestic demand rose by 3.0% year-on-year.

Data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) indicated that the rates of change in GDP for the first, second and third quarters of 2021 were revised upward to -1.2%, 70.9% and 33.8%, respectively.

The Covid-19 pandemic situation remained volatile in 2021 but improved compared to 2020.

The local economic



activities of Macau residents have basically recovered, with private consumption expenditure expanding by 7.0% year-on-year.

With respect to external demand, exports of gaming services and other tourism services surged by 45.0% and 127.2% year-on-year respectively, driven by a rebound in the number of visitor arrivals to Macau; as a result,

exports of services leapt by 62.1%. Meanwhile, exports of goods exhibited an uplift of 91.0%.

Further, the implicit deflator of GDP, which measures overall changes in prices, dropped by 0.7% year-on-year in 2021, but rose by 0.3% in the fourth quarter.

GDP contracted by 4.4% year-on-year in real terms in the fourth quarter of 2021. **LV**

GALERIES LAFAYETTE TO OPEN IN DECEMBER

The 110-year-old upmarket Parisian department store Galeries Lafayette will open its fourth store in the Greater Bay Area at the "Treasure Island Resort World Hotel and Shopping Centre," which is to open in December. The shopping center is located on reclaimed land in the Nam Van area of the Macau Peninsula. "It is believed to be the last major new shopping and hotel project to be built in Macau in the next 10 to 20 years," according to a statement issued by realtor JLL Macau as part of a press invitation to the media. More information will be provided today.

RESIDENT DEPOSITS RECORD SLIGHT INCREASE

Resident deposits in January have risen 0.4% from the preceding month to MOP670.6 billion, while non-resident deposits have also increased 8.1% to MOP383.1 billion. Data from the Monetary Authority of Macao shows that total deposits in the banking sector increased 2.3% from a month earlier to MOP1,316.1 billion. Domestic loans to the private sector, meanwhile, dropped by 0.3% from a month ago to MOP561.6 billion, whereas external loans rose 3.3% to MOP764.2 billion. As a result, total loans to the private sector went up by 1.7% from a month earlier to MOP1,325.7 billion.

TANZHOU STUDENTS AND TEACHERS TO RETURN TO SCHOOL TODAY

Macau students and teaching staff of tertiary education institutions and non-tertiary education schools residing in Tanzhou town in Zhongshan return to face-to-face teaching in Macau today, the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) announced. "The epidemic situation in Tanzhou town [in] Zhongshan has stabilised. Classes will be fully resumed at schools in Tanzhou town from March 7," the bureau said. The DSEDJ explained that the reopening is possible due to all people receiving a negative result, with nucleic acid tests having been given in key areas and to the three key population groups in Macau.

ALL NEGATIVE FOR TARGET GROUPS' COVID-19 TESTS

All three of the key population groups who were required to take three nucleic acid tests (NATs) tested negative, it has been confirmed. Following the discovery of a positive case in Tanzhou Village of Zhongshan City on February 27, Macau authorities required those who departed or entered Macau more than four times on any of the days February 25, 26, and 27 to take the tests. Those who fail to take the test will see their health code turn yellow.

GBA

MACAU ENTREPRENEUR SEE NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE IN HENGQIN

In the past three years in Hengqin, I see more young people from Macau come, since the local government has created an environment to spur innovation and entrepreneurship," said Huang Yin, a young Macau entrepreneur, when expressing her experience in Hengqin.

Majoring in psychology at the University of Macau, Huang chose to devote herself to promoting traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) after graduation. Focusing on promoting TCM and Internet medical care, Huang established her first company in Macau in 2018 and set up a branch in Hengqin in the following year, Bay Valley Technology Research (Ltd.).

Last September, China issued a general plan for building the Guangdong-Macao in-depth cooperation zone in Hengqin. It addressed the TCM as one of the four major industries the Zone would develop. It attracted startups like Huang's.

GO GLOBAL FROM MACAU

Huang's company is located in the Macao-Hengqin Youth Entrepreneurship Valley (Inno Valley HQ), where many young entrepreneurs like Huang made the first step in Hengqin. They can enjoy rental subsidies, apartments for talent, regular job fairs, and so on. All of these have stimulated the development of enterprises within the valley.

According to the latest data, the Inno Valley HQ has incubated



775 companies (projects), of which 343 are Macau entrepreneurs.

After nearly three years of effort, Huang's company now runs quite well. One of the main businesses of Huang's company is to bring high-quality TCM products from the Chinese mainland to Macau by offering one-stop services covering all relevant procedures. And then, using Macau as a platform, the company will help the products and technologies explore Portuguese-speaking countries' markets.

Although the pandemic has slowed down the process, Huang is still confident that the TCM industry in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) will go global in the future. "Macau's advantage lies in the trade ties it

has established with Portuguese-speaking countries. Years earlier, when our team conducted market research in Portugal and Brazil, we found people open-minded about TCM products."

Last year, Huang and her team had successfully introduced the Ganoderma Lucidum Spore Oil of Guangzhou Pharmaceutical Holdings Limited (GPHL) into Macau.

FACILITATE TCM EXCHANGE

Huang's company has also created an online platform for medical appointments. So far, the platform has cooperated with 90 clinics and hospitals in the SAR. Although clinics are all located in Macau, services are open to all people in the GBA.

Daniel Kuan, the person in charge of one of the cooperati-

ve clinics, shared that although he started to use the platform less than six months ago, he had seen a noticeable increase in the number of patients. "In addition to local patients, many from other GBA mainland cities have come to my medical center," he added.

In recent years, Huang has also worked with the Associação dos Investigadores, Praticantes e Promotores da Medicina Chinesa de Macau (AIPPMCM), the largest TCM professional association in Macau, by arranging exchange activities between the association and TCM companies and schools in mainland cities in Greater Bay Area. Shi Chongrong, president of the AIPPMCM, said that such exchange activities could broaden the horizons of the members of the association.

Huang also assisted AIPPMCM and the Hengqin Branch of Zhuhai People's Hospital (Hengqin hospital) to invite Macau TCM doctors to work in Hengqin in its early stage. 53 Macau TCM practitioners practiced in Hengqin hospital last year.

When asked about her plan, Huang said Hengqin had a bright future ahead of it. She intends to invite more Macau doctors to Hengqin or other cities in the GBA to learn about the TCM development in the mainland. She added that she wanted to work with more TCM enterprises to explore global markets. **MDT/NEWSGD**

Chinese expert mulls Chinese-style coexistence with Covid-19

ANTHONY LAM

A social media post by a Chinese top epidemiologist has hinted at the consideration of a Chinese-style coexistence with Covid-19, several media outlets have reported.

At least three regional and international news outlets, including Hong Kong's Ming Pao Daily, reported the news, citing the Weibo post – on China's Twitter-like social media platform – of Zeng Guang, former primary

scientist of epidemiology with the China Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In the social media post, Zeng wrote that "Dynamic Zero Covid" would not be permanent. Instead, "in the near future, the roadmap to Chinese-style Coexistence with Covid will be presented at the appropriate point of time," the post read.

Zeng set out that Chinese and western scientists have agreed on certain facts: the lower fatality of the Omicron variant,

the encouragement of vaccination and the use of newly manufactured Covid medications.

Describing the economic burden brought about by the zero-Covid policy as increasing with a more highly transmissible variant, Zeng admitted that the coexistence with Covid policy is still risky to China and should not be introduced in a hasty manner.

Although praising the bravery of the western world, he thought that it was "completely un-

necessary" for China to open its doors when the pandemic was still severe, let alone in Spring, which is a prominent season for respiratory diseases.

According to Radio Free Asia (RFA), Zeng is not the first person to make such suggestions. A medical doctor at the Huashan Hospital in Shanghai suggested the idea last year, but was slammed by netizens in China.

What is different is that Zeng's post was appreciated by mainland netizens, reflected by the 24,000

positive reactions to the post.

Citing the Wall Street Journal, the RFA reported that Hong Kong's Covid-19 development is considered a stress test. It is not only used to evaluate the city's capability of handling mass infections, but also the effectiveness of various remedies.

Meanwhile, expert on China and Hong Kong commentator, Johnny Lau Yui Siu, told the RFA that, for the time being, what is most important for Beijing is to maintain a stable environment for the 20th National Congress of China. However, the possibility of pilot cities testing the Coexistence with Covid policy is present, Lau added.



TWO SESSIONS

Li Keqiang highlights patriots governing Macau and HK principle

JING WU

CHINESE Premier Li Keqiang has highlighted the 'patriots ruling Macau' principle in his speech at the opening of the Fifth Session of 13th National People's Congress (NPC) annual plenary sessions in Beijing on Saturday, held at the Great Hall of the People.

Chinese leaders Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang, Wang Yang, Wang Huning, Zhao Leji, Han Zheng and Wang Qishan attended the opening meeting of the fifth session of the 13th NPC.

Li presented the government's work report, which for the first time included 'patriots ruling Macau' principle in the section of Hong Kong and Macau and mentioned the need to implement the central government's full authority over the SARs.

The premier stated that the central government will continue to firmly implement the principles of "One country, two systems," while also emphasizing "Patriots ruling Hong Kong; Patriots ruling Macau," under which the people of Macau administer Macau, and the people of Hong Kong administer Hong Kong, both with a high degree of autonomy.

"Fully supporting the SAR government in its administration in accordance with the law, support Hong Kong and Macau in developing their economies and improving people's livelihood, and better integrate with the overall develop-

ment of the country, so as to maintain the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong and Macau," Li listed as government intentions.

Li said that the achievements of the past year were the result of the "strong leadership" of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China with President Xi Jinping at its core, the scientific guidance of Xi Jinping's thoughts on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, and the unity and struggle of the whole Party, the whole army and all ethnic groups in the country.

"On behalf of the State Council, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all ethnic groups, all democratic parties, all people's organizations and people from all walks of life," Li expressed.

"I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my compatriots [among] the Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and overseas compatriots."

Meanwhile, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng is visiting Beijing from March 4 to 7 to attend the opening of the fifth session of the 13th National People's Congress

(NPC) in Beijing.

During Ho's absence, the Secretary for Administration and Justice, Cheong Weng Chon, will take the role of Acting Chief Executive, according to the Government Information Bureau.

PROPOSALS FROM MACAU MEMBERS

During the session, Macau member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), Chui Sai Cheong, proposed that the relevant state departments should cooperate with the SAR Government to include the promotion of the Constitution and the Basic Law in its outline of the five-year national plan for legal literacy. He also called on to support Macau universities to conduct in-depth academic research and exchanges so as to enhance the promotion and publicity of the Constitution and the Basic Law.

Another Macau member of the CPPCC, Leong Sio Pui proposed to promote "red culture" education in Hong Kong, Macau and throughout the Greater Bay Area.

Leong hoped that the mainland, Hong Kong and Macau would jointly compile patriotic education textbooks, set up "red culture research and exchange bases" in various cities in the Greater Bay Area, and organize exchanges for young students in the Greater Bay Area, so as to consolidate the patriotic thinking of young people in Hong Kong and Macau.

MEETING WITH SENIOR VICE PREMIER

Three Macau members of the CPPCC spoke at the meeting with the Senior Vice Premier, Han Zheng, after the NPC.

One such representative, Vong Hin Fai, said that the system of safeguarding national security in Macau should be further improved and that the political pattern of 'patriots ruling Macau' should be strengthened.

He suggested that the central government should strengthen its guidance on the work of safeguarding national security in Macau, give full play to its role as an advisor and technical advisor on national

security affairs, and effectively coordinate the decision making on the work of safeguarding national security in Macau; study the amendment and improvement of Macau's law on safeguarding national security, clarify the crimes that endanger national security and properly promote complementary legislation on national security, and so on.

Meanwhile, more efforts should be made to cultivate patriotism among the young generation and expand the opportunities for young people to participate in politics.

In his speech, Chui Sai Cheong revealed that the impact of the pandemic on Macau's various trades and industries has highlighted the adverse impacts on the economy, and that the Macau government may still face a fiscal deficit for a period of time in the short-term.

Chui proposed to expedite the development of the Cooperation Zone and the development of four emerging industries, so as to add new impetus to the promotion of Macau's moderate and diversified economic development.

"To give full play to the "double positive role" of Macau members of the CPPCC, to strengthen the force of patriotism and love for Macau, to enhance the influence and recognition of CPPCC members in Macau society as a guide for action, and to take special care to collect Macau people's views and suggestions on economic and social development and reflect them to the SAR Government and relevant mainland authorities in a timely manner," Chui added as priorities.

Another CPPCC member from Macau, Sun Enguang, suggested that the development and opening-up of the Cooperation Zone should be accelerated, especially in terms of rules and regulations, strengthening the integration of industry and research and the cultivation of a reserve of high-quality talent, formulating precise industrial planning and industrial policies with regard to the preferences of the region, and setting up an industrial guide fund in the Cooperation Zone to attract a number of platform enterprises and backbone enterprises to the Zone as soon as possible to form an industrial ecology.

Macau currently elects 12 deputies to the National People's Congress every five years through an electoral committee, which comprised 481 members at the December 2017 election.

SUPPORT PLEDGED TO HELP SARs DEVELOP ECONOMY, IMPROVE PEOPLE'S WELLBEING

A Chinese government work report has pledged efforts to help Hong Kong and Macau develop the economy and improve the people's wellbeing, see that the two regions better integrate

themselves into the country's overall development, and maintain their long-term prosperity and stability. The report was submitted Saturday to the national legislature for deliberation.

CHINESE LAWMAKERS REVIEW DRAFT METHOD TO ELECT DEPUTIES TO 14TH NPC

THE National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature, on Saturday deliberated a draft method for the Macau Special Administrative Region to elect deputies to the 14th

NPC. Wang Chen, vice chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, delivered an explanatory speech on the draft at the opening meeting of the fifth session of the 13th NPC.



TWO SESSIONS

GOV'T CUTS ECONOMIC GROWTH GOAL AS IT TRIES TO REVERSE SLUMP

CHINA on Saturday cut its annual economic growth target to its lowest level in decades as Beijing struggles to reverse a slump at a time when Russia's war on Ukraine is pushing up oil prices and roiling the global economy.

The ruling Communist Party will aim for "around 5.5%" growth this year, down from last year's 8.1% expansion, the country's No. 2 leader, Premier Li Keqiang, said in a report to an annual meeting of its ceremonial legislature. It noted commodity prices are surging but made no mention of the reason: the attack by Beijing's friend, Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"Achieving this goal will require arduous efforts," Li said during a 55-minute speech at the opening of the National People's Congress in the Great Hall of the People in central Beijing.

Surging energy costs due to the war add to pressure from anti-coronavirus controls and a crack-down on debt in China's vast real estate industry that caused economic growth to fall to 4% over a year earlier in the final quarter of 2021. This year's growth forecasts by the International Monetary Fund and private sector analysts are as low as 4.3%.

Manufacturing has been disrupted by a "zero tolerance" COVID-19 strategy that has at times suspended access to some major cities, as well as weak demand for Chinese exports and shortages

of power and processor chips. The premier gave no indication Beijing might relax its anti-virus strategy that has helped to keep infection numbers low but at a rising cost.

President Xi Jinping's government has tried to distance itself from Putin's war by calling for dialogue but refused to criticize the attack. Beijing has denounced trade and financial sanctions on Moscow and says Washington is to blame for the conflict.

Li indirectly acknowledged the war's impact on prices of oil, wheat and other commodities, saying they "remain high and prone to fluctuation," but gave no indication why.

"All of this is making our external environment increasingly volatile, grave and uncertain," Li said.

His report focused on the economy, social welfare and other domestic issues, in contrast to Tuesday's State of the Union speech by President Joe Biden, which emphasized Russia's attack on Ukraine and international efforts to pressure Putin to stop.

The ruling party is trying to steer the world's second-largest economy toward slower, self-sustaining growth based on consumer spending instead of trade and investment but was alarmed by last year's abrupt slowdown.

The slide was triggered by tighter controls on borrowing by real estate developers that caused construction and housing sales to plunge.

Ruling party leaders responded by announcing a "policy pivot" in December toward shoring up growth and away from longer-term initiatives aimed at cutting debt and carbon emissions.

"We must make economic stability our top priority," Li said. He said that should "occupy an even more prominent position."

The premier promised to "en-

The premier gave no indication Beijing might relax its anti-virus strategy that has helped to keep infection numbers low but at a rising cost

sure food and energy security" with adequate supplies of grain and electric power. He said Beijing will step up exploration for oil, gas and minerals and improve its system of stockpiles of essential raw materials.

Li also promised to crack down on trafficking of women and children and protect their "lawful rights." The status of women who are mistreated and possible additional protections is expected

to be discussed by the legislature following the widely publicized case of a woman who was found chained in a shed in eastern China.

No growth target was announced in 2020 after much of the economy was shut down to fight the virus. Last year's target was "over 6%." This year is the first time since the 1990s the official target is below 6%.

The ruling party has promised tax cuts for entrepreneurs who generate jobs and wealth. Banks have been told to lend more. The government is injecting money into the economy through higher spending on building public works.

The ruling party is promising to build more solar, wind and other renewable power resources. But it also has eased pressure on utilities to restrain growth of climate-changing carbon emissions by burning less coal.

Energy efficiency will be "assessed with appropriate flexibility," Li said.

Turning to COVID-19, Li said China needs to "constantly refine epidemic containment" but gave no indication Beijing might ease its "zero tolerance" strategy. He called for accelerating vaccine development and "strengthening epidemic controls" in cities where travelers and goods from abroad arrive.

All the delegates attending the

opening session of the legislature wore face masks. The meeting, which normally lasts two weeks, has been curtailed to one week again this year because of the pandemic.

Also Saturday, the government announced a 7.1% increase in its military budget, up from last year's 6.8% rise. China has the world's second-highest military budget after the United States and is investing in long-range, nuclear-capable missiles and other weapons to extend its power beyond its shores.

Li affirmed the ruling party's insistence that Hong Kong "should be governed by patriots," a key element in a campaign to crush pro-democracy activism in the former British colony.

The premier indicated no change in stance toward Taiwan, the island democracy that Beijing claims as part of its territory and has threatened to invade. The two sides have been ruled separately since splitting in 1949 after a civil war but have multi-billion-dollar trade and investment ties.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has prompted suggestions Beijing might be more likely to use force against Taiwan if it sensed a lack of resolve on the part of the United States and its allies. The ruling party has offered no signs of changing its avowed approach of gaining control of Taiwan by peaceful means, without giving up the military option.

Beijing will "advance peaceful growth of relations across the Taiwan Strait and the reunification of China," Li said. "We firmly oppose any separatist activities seeking 'Taiwan independence' and firmly oppose foreign interference." **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



New US Ambassador Nicholas Burns

New US ambassador arrives in Beijing amid tense relations

NEW U.S. Ambassador Nicholas Burns has arrived to take up his post in Beijing amid heightened tensions between China and the United States over Taiwan, trade, human rights and the war in Ukraine.

Burns arrived Friday with his wife Libby and a group of other U.S. diplomats and their families and will undergo three weeks of quarantine at his official residence as China requires, according to a U.S. Embassy spokesperson.

During his quarantine, the ambassador will virtually meet with U.S. Mission staff, the spokesperson said.

The post had been empty since Terry Branstad departed in October 2020.

Burns is a career diplomat, former State Department spokesperson, ambassador to NATO and leading academic, teaching most recently at the Harvard Kennedy School and serving as a foreign policy adviser to Joe Biden's presidential campaign.

He has framed the U.S. relationship with China as manageable, saying Americans should "have confidence in our strength" when dealing with the rise of China.

The U.S. and China are considered leading geopolitical rivals, particularly for influence in the Indo-Pacific region where China's growing military and economic clout is challenging U.S. dominance.

While the Biden administration professes a desire for a

more stable and predictable relationship, it has maintained higher tariffs on Chinese imports imposed by former President Donald Trump and continued a trend of closer relations with Taiwan, the self-governing island China claims as a breakaway province.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, in a phone conversation Saturday with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, expressed "grave concern over recent words and deeds of the U.S. side," a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement said. Wang called on the U.S. to stop encouraging Taiwan independence and interfering in China's internal affairs.

Recently, China has refused to condemn Russia over its brutal invasion of Ukraine, blaming the U.S. for instigating the conflict by encouraging NATO expansion and refusing to consider Moscow's security concerns.

In their phone call, Blinken told Wang that the world is responding in unison to the invasion and watching to see which nations stand up for the principles of freedom and sovereignty, a U.S. State Department statement said.

Burns' own appointment became caught up in U.S.-China differences when Republican Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida announced in November that he had put the nomination on hold in an effort to press Biden to sign into law bipartisan legislation he co-authored banning products made with Uyghur labor in western China. **MDT/AP**

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"MGM Family Carnival" Fosters Harmonious Family Ties



As a responsible corporate citizen, MGM has been supporting different groups in Macau to promote a harmonious and healthy community. Earlier, MGM organized its first community event in the Year of the Tiger — "MGM Family Carnival". Through a series of educational interactive games and family-friendly workshops, the carnival aims to help strengthen family bonds and bring happiness to the community.

Kenneth Feng, President, Chief Strategic & Financial Officer of MGM, said, "MGM aspires to strengthen family bonds and promote a more harmonious society through offering loads of family fun in this carnival. We are honored to receive widespread support from various associations, bringing in a greater participation from local families to jointly promote a close-knit family culture. Family is the cornerstone of healthy relationships in society. MGM will continue to work closely with the Macau government and other parties to launch more parenting education programs and help develop a happy, harmonious home for all."

Mr. Kong, one of the parents who attended the carnival, said, "This one-stop carnival with a variety of family-friendly elements is very well designed. It has both physical and passive activities to appeal to children with different personalities and interests. Our family of four participated in workshops where we learned new knowledge together and enhanced our mutual communication and understanding. This event truly provides a great opportunity for local families to spend a happy, quality family time."



The two-day event attracted approximately 1,300 participants in total. Apart from MGM team members, over 300 participants from families of six local associations — FAOM, UGAMM, Women's General Association, Caritas Macau, Tung Sin Tong and Sheng Kung Hui — had fun at the event.



The "MGM Family Carnival" featured entertaining activities galore. There were eight family-friendly workshops of various themes — including Gold-Leaving Workshop, M Art Experience, Fun Culinary Experience and more — which were taught by coaches from MGM, Fu Hong Society of Macau and Sheng Kung Hui respectively. The educational fun workshops enabled participants to rejoice at the family time and meanwhile acquire communication skills. Besides, MGM also organized SME roadshow selling art and cultural products, stage performances by team members and various associations, and an array of game zones like kids karting area, curling experience, photo and game booths, lucky draw, etc.

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PUTIN'S WAR

Limited Russian cease-fire revived in Ukraine; talks planned

YURAS KARMANAU, LVIV

RUSSIAN forces will observe a temporary cease-fire yesterday in two Ukrainian cities, an official in one of the country's two pro-Russia separatist regions said after an agreement to allow civilians to evacuate collapsed a day earlier amid continued shelling.

Eduard Basurin, the head of the military in separatist-held Donetsk territory, said safe passage corridors for residents of the besieged port city of Mariupol and the city of Volnovakha would reopen yesterday. He did not say for how long nor whether a cease-fire would accompany the evacuation.

Ukrainian officials confirmed that evacuations from Mariupol would take place starting from 12 p.m. local time. Pavlo Kyrylenko, head of the Donetsk regional military administration, said a ceasefire would be in effect between 10 a.m. and 9 p.m.

A promised cease-fire in Mariupol failed amid scenes of terror Saturday. Ukrainian officials said the evacuation was aborted because the city remained under attack.

Russian President Vladimir Putin blamed Ukraine for the failure and warned that the country's ongoing resistance since Russia invaded its ex-Soviet neighbor on Feb. 24 is putting the country's future as a nation in jeopardy.

"If they continue to do what they are doing, they are calling into question the future of Ukrainian statehood," the Russian leader said Saturday. "And if this happens, it will be entirely on their conscience."

Putin also hit out at Western sanctions that have crippled Russia's economy and sent the value of its currency tumbling, likening to "declaring war."

With the Kremlin's rhetoric growing fiercer and a reprieve from fighting dissolving, Russian troops continued to shell encircled cities and the number of Ukrainians forced from their country grew to 1.4 million.

By nighttime Saturday, Russian forces had intensified their shelling of Mariupol, while dropping powerful bombs on residential areas



of Chernihiv, a city north of Kyiv, Ukrainian officials said.

Yesterday's evacuations were announced along with a third round of talks between Russia and Ukraine. Davyd Arakhamia, a member of the Ukrainian delegation, said the meeting would take place Monday. He gave no additional details, including the location of the talks.

Previous meetings held in Belarus had led to a cease-fire agreement to create humanitarian corridors for the evacuation of children, women and older people from Ukrainian cities, where pharmacies have run bare, hundreds of thousands face food and water shortages, and the injured have been succumbing to their wounds.

Mariupol Mayor Vadym Boychenko said thousands of residents had gathered for safe passage out of the city of 430,000 on Saturday when shelling began and the evacuation was stopped. Later in the day, he said the attack had escalated further.

"The city is in a very, very difficult state of siege," Boychenko told Ukrainian TV. "Relentless shelling of residential blocks is ongoing, airplanes have been dropping bombs on residential areas. The Russian occupants are using heavy artillery, including Grad multiple rocket launchers."

Plans for yesterday's evacuation called for the route from Mariupol to extend to Zaporizhzhia, a city 227 kilometers away.

Russia has made significant advances in the south, seeking to cut off Ukraine's access to the Sea of Avrov in the south. Capturing Mariupol could allow Russia to establish a land corridor to Crimea, which it

annexed in 2014.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged Ukrainians in cities taken over by the Russian forces to resist.

"It is a special kind of heroism - to protest when your city is occupied," Zelenskyy said Saturday night in his latest video address to the nation. "Ukrainians in all of our cities that the enemy has entered, go on the offensive! You should take to the streets! You should fight!"

Thousands of Ukrainians accepted the president's request and demonstrated on Saturday. Some climbed Russia's military vehicles and waved Ukraine's yellow and blue flag.

In the southern port city of Kherson, a city of 300,000 where Russian troops took control this week, the soldiers were reported to have fired warning shots to disperse the crowd, but the protesters were unfazed.

Russian forces also had encircled Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Chernihiv and Sumy, as of Saturday, while Ukrainian forces had managed to keep control of key cities in central and southeastern Ukraine, Zelenskyy said.

The head of the Chernihiv region said Russia dropped powerful bombs on residential areas of the city, which has a population of 290,000. Vyacheslav Chaus posted a photo online of what he said was an undetonated FAB-500, a 1,100-pound bomb.

"Usually this weapon is used against military-industrial facilities and fortified structures," Chaus said.

The West has broadly backed Ukraine, offering aid and weapons and slapping Russia with vast sanctions. But the fight itself has been

left to Ukrainians, who have expressed a mixture of courageous resolve and despondency.

"Ukraine is bleeding," Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said in a video released Saturday, "but Ukraine has not fallen."

Zelenskyy pleaded with U.S. lawmakers Saturday for additional help, specifically fighter planes to help secure the skies over Ukraine, even as he insisted Russia was being defeated.

"We're inflicting losses on the occupants they could not see in their worst nightmare," Zelenskyy said.

Russian troops advanced on a third nuclear power plant, having already taken control of one of the four operating in the country and the closed plant in Chernobyl, Zelenskyy told the American lawmakers Saturday.

The U.S. Congress is considering a request for \$10 billion in emergency funding for humanitarian aid and security needs. The U.N. said it would increase its humanitarian operations both inside and outside Ukraine, and the Security Council scheduled a meeting for Monday on the worsening situation.

U.S. President Joe Biden called Zelenskyy early yesterday, Kyiv time, to discuss Russia sanctions and speeding U.S. assistance to Ukraine. The White House said the conversation also covered talks between Russia and Ukraine but did not give details.

The death toll of the conflict has been difficult to measure. The U.N. human rights office said at least 351 civilians have been confirmed killed since the Feb. 24 invasion, but the true number is probably much higher.

The U.S. State Department updated its travel guidance Saturday and recommended that U.S. citizens leave Russia immediately.

"If you wish to depart Russia, you should make arrangements on your own as soon as possible," the updated advisory stated. "If you plan to stay in Russia, understand the U.S. Embassy has severe limitations on its ability to assist U.S. citizens, and conditions, including transportation options, may change suddenly." **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1975 KIDNAPPED HEIRESS FOUND STRANGLED



The body of Lesley Whittle, the 17-year-old heiress kidnapped from her Shropshire home 52 days ago, has been found at the bottom of a drain shaft.

Police made the discovery after a three-day intensive search of Bathpool Park at Kidsgrove in Staffordshire, where Lesley's brother Ronald Whittle had tried to meet the kidnapper some seven weeks earlier. It is thought she had been strangled.

Police investigating the disappearance of Lesley, a student left £82,000 by her father when he died five years ago, have said they are convinced she was taken by the killer known as the Black Panther because of his dark clothing.

He is already wanted in connection with murders at sub-post offices in Yorkshire, Lancashire and Worcestershire, and the wounding of a security guard at Dudley.

The Dudley shooting happened two nights after the kidnapping and a car found later abandoned in the town contained Miss Whittle's slippers and some office tape.

A white tent now marks the spot where Lesley's body was found. It is less than 200 yards (183m) from the spot where her brother was supposed to hand over the £50,000 ransom.

Questions are now being asked about why it took police so long to search the park.

Assistant Chief Constable of West Mercia, Frederick Hodges, told a news conference, "The visit made by Mr Whittle to Kidsgrove on 16 January was made with the full knowledge and under the operational control of the police.

"Any statements so made by Mr Whittle or the police were done in an attempt to instil confidence into the kidnapper with a fervent hope that Lesley was still alive and could be returned safe and well to her family."

Ronald Whittle, 31, had been waiting with his wife and mother at the family home at Highley, from where Lesley was snatched.

He told the BBC the kidnapper had left tape-recorded instructions for him to hand over the ransom money at a rendez-vous in Bathpool Park. He was to find the exact location by following the light of a flashing torch.

He said, "It was a very desolate area. I reached what I thought was the point and stopped there. I looked for a torch, but couldn't see any torch. So I drove on farther along the road... and flashed my lights again and looked around but still no sign of a flashing torch."

The meeting never took place.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Donald Neilson alias the Black Panther, a jobbing builder from Bradford, was convicted of Lesley Whittle's murder and given five life sentences in June 1976.

He was caught by police who saw him acting suspiciously outside a post office near Mansfield in Nottinghamshire in December 1975. When officers tried to question him he tried to hijack the patrol car and shot one of them.

The Oxford court heard how he had meticulously planned the kidnapping for three years after reading in the press about a court case over a disputed will involving the Whittle family.

He was also convicted for murders following raids on four post offices in Barnsley, Harrogate, Accrington and Langley, West Midlands and for the attempted murder of two others: a man who saw him acting suspiciously while planting clues for the ransom the day after the kidnapping and one of his arresting officers.

Detective Bob Booth, who was leading the investigation into Lesley's kidnapping, was subsequently demoted from CID to a uniformed beat officer.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 You can make successful moves. You may find a rare antique today. You need some excitement in your life, and meeting new people in exotic destinations will certainly satisfy your desires.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Investments are best left alone today. Don't second guess yourself, just go to it. The locks, stove, gas, or electric wires may not be secure. You should visit a friend or relative who hasn't been well.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Use your charm, but don't sign or agree to anything. Use your obvious talent to work with detail and you can come up with something great. Don't lend or borrow money or belongings.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 The great outdoors will allow you to teach youngsters some of the things you learned when growing up. Opportunities for travel and socializing are evident.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 You should try to elaborate on an idea you have regarding a product or service for the home. Broaden your horizons and look into programs that will teach you awareness and relaxation.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Empty promises will cause confusion. Investments are best left alone today. You will communicate easily and should be able to accomplish all that you set out to do.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Your courage and willpower will enable you to get rid of destructive habits as well. Put your time and energy into travel, philosophy, and soul-searching.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 It is best not to upset the apple cart if you learn information that may damage a colleague's reputation. You need a job with more responsibility and a higher wage.

SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 There could be disappointment regarding investments. You will be emotional about your personal life. Be discreet and don't reveal any personal information.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Socialize with friends, but don't overspend on lavish entertainment. Be prepared to meet new lovers through colleagues. Travel will be good if you are seeking knowledge.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Beware of colleagues who don't have your best interests in mind. Keep your thoughts and opinions to yourself and you won't get dragged into an unsavory debate. Trips should be your choice.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Compromise if you have to, to avoid verbal battles. Don't tell others of your plans. Romance and social activity will be a promising combination. You will be able to get to the bottom of things today.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-2	11	cloudy
Changchun	-9	1	cloudy
Chengdu	13	19	fine
Chongqing	12	20	overcast
Fuzhou	11	17	rain
Guangzhou	17	26	cloudy
Guiyang	10	15	cloudy
Haikou	22	28	cloudy
Hangzhou	7	11	rain
Harbin	-10	-2	fine
Hefei	5	11	overcast
Nanjing	6	12	cloudy
Shanghai	6	9	overcast
Taipei	18	20	rain
Wuhan	10	17	rain
Hong Kong	13	20	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	-7	0	snow
Frankfurt	-3	7	overcast
Paris	0	8	clear
London	1	7	overcast
New York	6	23	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Scarf; 5- Like some history; 9- Umpire's call; 13- This can be guilty or not guilty; 14- Fiend; 16- River to the Caspian; 17- Impersonator; 18- Crusoe's creator; 19- Clinton cabinet member Federico; 20- Comic Fox; 21- Doctrine; 22- Sharon's land; 24- Detest; 26- Look ____, I'm Sandra Dee; 27- White with age; 29- Barbaric; 33- Shakers et al.; 34- Poker pot starter; 35- Black, in poetry; 36- Compass dir.; 37- Flight segment; 38- Short life?; 39- Bedouin; 41- Pres., militarily; 42- At __ for words; 44- Card game; 46- Sulky; 47- Cheer (for); 48- Potter's oven; 49- "Fiddler on the Roof" setting; 52- Swiss river; 53- Nick and Nora's pooch; 57- Be in front; 58- Capital of Ghana; 60- Some digits; 61- Black-and-white cookie; 62- Charged; 63- Roman date; 64- Inner surface of the hand; 65- Allot; 66- Dramatic troupe;

DOWN 1- Practice pugilism; 2- Mont Blanc, par exemple; 3- Highly ranked competitor in sporting events; 4- Protective helmet; 5- Peculiarity; 6- Actress Witherspoon; 7- Radio switch; 8- Canterbury can; 9- Paramount; 10- Bailiwick; 11- Temple; 12- Airline to Tel Aviv; 15- Nor's partner; 23- Dallas sch.; 25- ____, longa, vita brevis; 26- Caper; 27- Artist Rousseau; 28- Current location; 29- Silly; 30- Superior of a monastery; 31- Clangorous; 32- Seth's son; 33- Pass the breaking point; 34- Inclined; 37- Student; 40- Tedium; 42- "You've got mail" co.; 43- Insane person; 45- Barracks bed; 46- Buccaneer; 48- Gold measurement; 49- Swill; 50- Mother of Ares; 51- Chinese weight; 52- Skin eruption; 54- Pop; 55- Driving aids; 56- Little helper?; 59- Irregularly shaped disk;

Friday's solution

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
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- 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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As war rages, Paralympics open in Beijing without Russia

KEN MORITSUGU

THE Winter Paralympics opened Friday in Beijing with the Russian athletes sent home, the Ukrainian team escaping a war zone to get to China and an impassioned call for peace.

Andrew Parsons, the president of the International Paralympic Committee, declared his horror at the fighting in Ukraine and called on world authorities to promote peace.

"Tonight, I want, I must begin with a message of peace," Parsons said in brief remarks to the athletes and spectators at the Bird's Nest stadium. "As the leader of an organization with inclusion at its core, where diversity is celebrated and differences embraced, I am horrified at what is taking place in the world right now."

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, shortly after the Winter Olympics wrapped up in Beijing, is roiling the world. And the world of sports is no exception.

Paralympic organizers initially



Maksym Yarovi of Ukraine carries the flag as the team makes their entrance during the opening ceremony at the 2022 Winter Paralympics, Friday

announced that Russians and Belarusians would be allowed to compete in Beijing, but reversed course one day before the opening and expelled athletes from both countries. They cited tensions in the Athletes Village. The Russian Paralympic Committee

called the decision "absolutely politicized."

The live broadcast of the opening on Chinese state TV did not translate Parsons' condemnation of war and then lowered the volume of his remarks in English for a while. The Chinese govern-

ment has been restricting anti-Russia views in state media and online. Unlike the U.S. and Europe, it has not criticized the invasion and opposed sanctions on Russia.

Ahead of the opening, about 16 members of the Ukrainian team, wearing their yellow and blue winter outfits and knit hats, chanted "peace for Ukraine" as they held up large banners including "Stop War" in a holding area for the participants. Competitors from other countries applauded and cheered and a few came up and hugged the Ukrainians.

Maksym Yarovi carried the country's now widely known blue and yellow flag into the stadium at the head the delegation. All the athletes and spectators wore face masks to protect against the coronavirus, including Chinese President Xi Jinping and other dignitaries.

"It's a miracle that we have made it to the Paralympics," Ukrainian delegation head Valerii Sushkevych said earlier.

He said it took four days for

team members in Ukraine to reach Beijing, and that he slept on the floor of a bus because of a back condition during the last two days of the journey through Europe.

"We overcame a lot of barriers on the way," Sushkevych said. "Many members of our team had to escape while there was bombardment and shells exploding."

Li Duan, a blind former long jumper for China who won gold in Athens in 2004 and in Beijing in 2008, felt around for the holder and then struggled a bit to insert the flame. The crowd cheered him on until he mounted it properly in the center of a large white snowflake that then ascended to the top of the open-air stadium.

A total of 564 athletes, of which 138 are women, are competing in the Paralympics. China has the largest team, with 96 competitors, followed by the United States with 65. The Paralympics includes six sports — Alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, biathlon, hockey, snowboarding and curling.

"Much work still needs to be done to achieve gender parity but having increased female participation significantly at the Winter Games in the last 20 years shows we are heading in the right direction," Parsons said.

The 10-day Paralympics close on March 13. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

Multipolar World

Jorge Costa Oliveira



THE US-CHINA TRADE AGREEMENT AND AMERICAN SEMANTIC RHETORIC

Despite the trade war between the US and China, the endless blacklists of Chinese companies in the US, along with the new Biden Administration's anti-China stance, and the US government's barrage of criticism of the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (agreed in principle at the end of 2020) the truth is that in early 2020 the US and China signed, and maintain in force, a Trade Agreement called "Phase 1", suggesting an intention to deepen the relationship in subsequent phases.

This US-China Trade Agreement is as complex and broad as the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, and in line with the then prevailing US narrative, includes an obligation for China to purchase large quantities of US goods.

Reading the international news, one would say that the increasing deterioration of relations at various levels between the US – currently, the only superpower – and China – the biggest of the new emerging powers – would preclude the existence of such a Trade Agreement. However, not only did not prevent it (the Trade Agreement was not denounced), but negotiations have been underway for further implementation..

Behind the diaphanous cloak of official American rhetoric on a new consensus on China – implying a global demonization of China in direct proportion to its growing international influence – there is a pragmatic policy of cool-headed American policymakers who see the difficulty in having a consistent American policy beyond a general internal consensus of "get tough on China". American think tanks and elites are well aware that the current trade war will change practically nothing and they want to put an end to it; but they are well aware of the internal political difficulty should some constancy of direction not be maintained and by articulating contradictory interests: American companies want access to the huge market of Urban China but American leaders have projected the country as an evangelist of democracy and civil and political rights and have been held hostage to this discourse (with occasional exceptions when access to energy sources are concerned or geo-strategic considerations that may jeopardize the Pax Americana).

Both elites and policymakers are well aware that in the multipolar world in which we find ourselves and in current international relations, economic interdependence is often necessary and irreversible; for example, funding the Biden Administration's ambitious plans for infrastructure, social and military investment requires there to be no hesitation by major borrowers of US Treasury bonds (China is second with about 15% of the total). Otherwise, interest rates will rise and place a drag on the issuing of bonds by American companies, slowing down the pace of post-pandemic economic growth. And it is indeed unlikely that China will reduce its purchase of large amounts of US Treasury Bonds.

In short, the American rhetoric of confrontation towards China serves to neutralize the matter in domestic political debate and American tabloid culture; however, if we want to understand the real US policy, we must closely follow the negotiations around the US-China Trade Agreement.

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China this weekend announced a 7.1% increase in defense spending in 2022 to USD229 billion, continuing years of robust spending on its increasingly powerful military that is challenging the U.S. armed forces' dominance in the Indo-Pacific region.

China has the world's second-largest defense budget after the U.S., allowing it to maintain the largest standing military, with 3 million personnel and an arsenal of advanced weaponry, including two aircraft carriers with more on the way, stealth fighters, an advanced missile force and nuclear-powered submarines.

This year's increase exceeds the 6.8% boost from last year, showing China's determination to maintain the drive to expand and modernize its armed forces despite high levels of government debt and a slowing economy, partly as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

By contrast, the U.S. increased defense spending by about 2% this year to \$768.2 billion.

The Chinese government says most of the spending increases will go toward improving welfare for troops. Observers say the budget omits much of China's spending on weaponry, most of which is developed domestically.



Workers move a baroque sacred art piece in the Andrey Sheptytsky National Museum in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, Friday

AP PHOTO

AT UKRAINE'S LARGEST ART MUSEUM, A RACE TO PROTECT HERITAGE

BERNAT ARMANGUÉ, LVIV

The director of Ukraine's largest art museum walked its hallways, supervising as staff packed away its collections to protect their national heritage in case the Russian invasion advances west.

In one partially empty gallery of the Andrey Sheptytsky National Museum, employees placed carefully wrapped baroque pieces into cardboard boxes. A few meters away, a group walked down the majestic main staircase carrying a giant piece of sacred art, the 18th century Bohorodchany iconostasis.

"Sometimes the tears are coming because a lot of labor has been put in here. It takes time, energy. You are doing something good, you feel pleased. Today you see empty walls, so it feels bitter, sad. We didn't believe it till the last minute that this could happen," museum General Director Ihor Kozhan said Friday.

The doors of the museum in the western city

of Lviv have been closed since Russia's war on Ukraine began on Feb. 24, and heritage sites across the country face danger as the fighting continues. Kozhan said he receives daily calls from other European cultural institutions offering to help as he and his staff race to preserve the museum's works.

" This is our story; this is our life. It is very important to us.

ANNA NAUROBSKA
 ANDREY SHEPTYTSKY NATIONAL MUSEUM

Anna Naurobska, the head of the rare manuscripts and books department, said she still doesn't know where to safely store the collection of more than 12,000 items being packed into boxes.

The relocation process and the fear that the collection is in danger in the event of an attack on the city overwhelms her.

"This is our story; this is our life. It is very important to us," Naurobska said.

bska said.

She walked into another room and held up a massive tome, tears forming in her eyes. "It's a Russian book," she said, putting it back on the shelf. "I'm so angry."

Like the museum, other sites in Lviv are rushing to protect works of artistic or cultural importance. The display cabinets at the Museum of the History of Religion are almost empty. Workers are assembling metal containers in the patio to safely store the remaining items before placing them in basements. At the Latin Cathedral, the sculptures have been covered with cardboard, foam and plastic to protect them from possible shrapnel.

Amid the bare walls and shrouded statues, Kozhan lamented the empty museum, which has survived two world wars.

"Museum has to live. People have to be there, and first of all children. They have to learn the basics of their culture," he said. **MDT/AP**



Myanmar's ruling military council has announced the revocation of the citizenship of top members of the main group coordinating resistance to army rule. The announcement broadcast on state-run MRTV television last week said 11 leaders of the opposition to military rule have had their citizenship terminated because they had allegedly fled the country and harmed the national interest.

Pakistan Officials vowed yesterday to hunt down and arrest the masterminds behind a deadly mosque attack in Pakistan a day earlier claimed by an Islamic State affiliate. The assault killed 63 people and wounded nearly 200. IS said in a statement the lone suicide bomber was from neighboring Afghanistan. He shot two police guarding the Shiite Muslim mosque in northwest Peshawar before entering inside and exploding his device, it said.

Israel Police shot and killed a Palestinian attacker yesterday after he stabbed an officer in Jerusalem's Old City, Israeli police said. In a statement, police said the attacker approached officers who were stationed in the Old City and stabbed one of them, injuring him lightly. The officers opened fire and shot and killed the man, identified as a 19-year-old resident of east Jerusalem. Israeli media reported a second officer was also lightly wounded as a result of the gunfire.



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday pledged America's support to the small, Western-leaning former Soviet republic of Moldova that is coping with an influx of refugees from Ukraine and warily watching Russia's intensifying war with its neighbor. Blinken met with senior Moldovan officials who are appealing for international assistance in dealing with more than 120,000 refugees from Ukraine that it is now hosting while also seeking security reassurances against potential Russian aggression.

AP PHOTO