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AP PHOTO



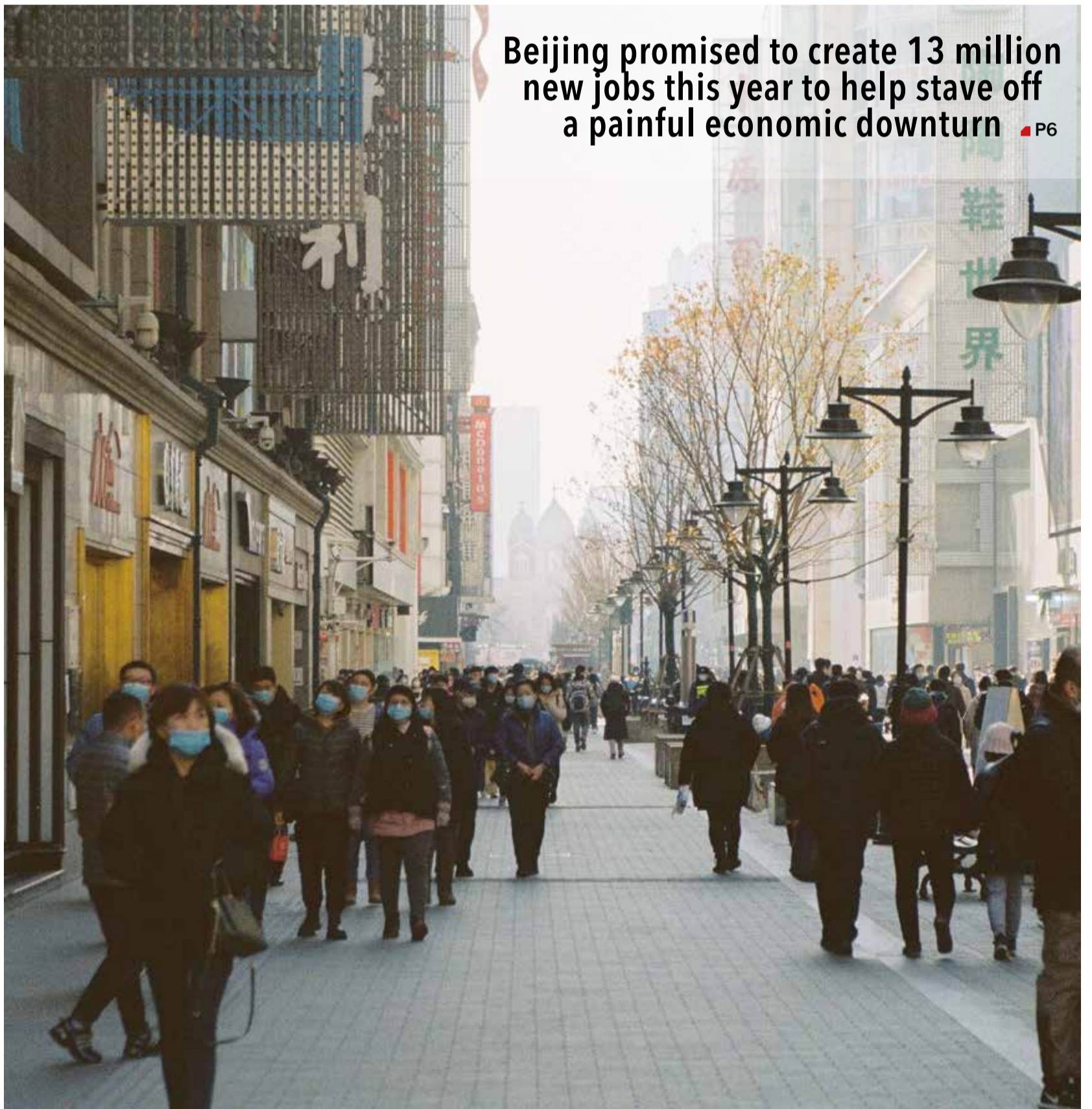
Malaysian Prime Minister Ismail Sabri's Malay party has defeated its allies in the ruling party and the opposition to score a landslide victory in a second state election that could presage early national polls. Saturday's big win in southern Johor state by the United Malays National Organization mirrored its victory in another state election in November and will embolden supporters to escalate demands for early general elections, which are not due till July 2023.

Saudi Arabia executed 81 people convicted of crimes ranging from killings to belonging to militant groups, the largest known mass execution carried out in the kingdom in its modern history. The number of executed surpassed even the toll of a January 1980 mass execution for the 63 militants convicted of seizing the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979, the worst-ever militant attack to target the kingdom and Islam's holiest site.

Greece's prime minister kicked off his visit to Istanbul yesterday by attending a service for Orthodox Christians at the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis is in Turkey to hold talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in a rare meeting between the neighbors who have been at odds over maritime and energy issues, the status of Aegean islands and migration.

Finland's long-delayed and costly new nuclear reactor went online yesterday amid expectations that it will boost the Nordic country's electricity self-sufficiency and help to achieve its carbon neutrality targets. Finnish operator Teollisuuden Voima said the Olkiluoto 3 nuclear reactor in the country's west started supplying electricity to the national power grid.

JOBBS FOR ALL



Beijing promised to create 13 million new jobs this year to help stave off a painful economic downturn P6

ANOTHER ROUND OF CASH HANDOUT

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CASH HANDOUT

WEALTH PARTAKING SCHEME KICKS OFF NEXT MONTH

JING WU

THE annual Wealth Partaking Scheme will commence next month, with each permanent resident and non-permanent resident set to receive MOP10,000 and MOP6,000, respectively.

This year, the subsidy scheme will involve approximately 697,000 permanent residents and 42,000 non-permanent residents, with the total expenditure involved approximately MOP7,230 million, the government announced.

The government explained that the economic recovery of Macau is uncertain due to the turnaround of the Covid-19 pandemic, and that it "will continue to implement the tax relief measures of the previous year and extend the other measures related

to education, healthcare, social security and cash benefits."

The cash handout will operate under the same rules as last year with two main forms of beneficiaries, namely bank transfer and crossed cheque, which should be sent by post to eligible residents.

These eligible residents include those who receive the senior citizens allowance, disability allowance and economic assistance, teaching staff who receive a direct subsidy or professional development allowance, and higher education students receiving scholarships, among others.

Those who have opted for a bank transfer to receive a tax refund or other payments from the Financial Services Bureau (DSF) will have the cash contribution directly transferred to their account.

For other eligible residents, the financial assistance will be paid within five weeks by postal cheque in chronological order of birth.

The first cash handout was distributed in 2008. A total of MOP5,000 and MOP3,000 were distributed to each permanent and non-permanent resident, respectively. Pre-pandemic, the cash handout was distributed every summer, beginning in June.

The Social Welfare Bureau is also responsible for the coordination of the allocation process, which is carried out jointly with the Identification Services Bureau, the Social Welfare Institute, the Education and Youth Development Bureau, the Institute for Municipal Affairs and other departments.



RENATO MARQUES

GOV'T PLANS TO EXTEND TOURISM TAX EXEMPTION

THE executive council is planning to regulate the tourism tax by regrouping hotel and restaurant establishments and extending the tourism tax exemption, the Secretary for Administration and Justice, André Cheong, announced on Friday.

The executive council is proposing that the current services provided by hotel establishments, restaurants, and karaoke bars redefine which goods and services incur the tourism tax, expressly contemplating "goods" within the scope of the tourism tax in order to more clearly define the incidence of the tax.

At the same time, in accordance with the tourism policy of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR), in which the development of "low cost accommodation" is encouraged, the draft bill suggests the redefinition of the scope of exemption from the tourism tax, determining that goods and services provided by two-star hotels, low cost



accommodation; simple dining establishments, kiosks of the restaurant areas; drinking establishments, and eating establishments be exempt from tourism tax.

Furthermore, the administration said that it follows from the Tourism Tax Regulation in force that the collection of the tourism tax constitutes revenue earmarked for the Tourism Fund.

"In view of the development of Macau's tourism industry, the draft legislation stipulates that the collection of tourism tax

shall be paid directly to the Macau SAR Treasury, and the disposal and allocation of the funds shall be carried out by the Macau SAR Finance Services," the government added.

Last year, amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the government launched measures to introduce reductions and exemptions from a range of taxes and extend the coverage of the tourism tax exemption, which is expected to benefit over 370 tourism service establishments and cost about 379 million patacas in the budget. JW

HEALTH SUBSIDY VOUCHERS AVAILABLE FROM MAY 1

STARTING from May 1, each eligible Macau resident will be provided with a healthcare subsidy of MOP600, and all Macau residents holding valid Macau SAR Permanent Resident Identity Card before April 30 2023 are eligible to receive the vouchers, the executive council announced on Friday.

The voucher usage period is two years, from May 1, 2022 to April 30, 2024, and the rules for issuing the healthcare vouchers of 2022 are the same as last year.

The total value of the subsidy is MOP432,665,000, the government said.

The administration has said that residents can directly use the e-purse vouchers by presenting their identity card during medical consultation. Residents can also transmit the e-payment voucher in whole or in part to a spouse, their parents, or children of the beneficiary who hold a Macau SAR Permanent Resident Identity Card.

As with the previous schemes, the electronic



healthcare vouchers can only be used for services provided by healthcare professionals who are members of the Healthcare Subsidy Scheme; it is not applicable to healthcare professionals subsidized by the MSAR Government.

Moreover, the government added that the electronic monitoring of the issuance of healthcare vouchers has been effective in recent years and that fewer cases of infringement have been recorded.

"Residents and healthcare professionals should make proper use of heal-

thcare vouchers. Regarding the cases of falsification of medical records to defraud the value of healthcare vouchers, the Health Bureau will investigate and impose a penalty upon the offenders in accordance with the law," the authority said.

Back in 2020, the government said that from 3,711 inspections of private clinics and medical institutions under the scheme, 504 were referred to the Public Prosecution Office for allegedly defrauding the government through the illegal use of the voucher. JW

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Four more confirmed imported asymptomatic Covid-19 cases

FOUR Macau residents from Singapore, Myanmar, USA and Australia have been classified as imported cases of asymptomatic infection and one Macau resident from Dubai has been classified as a relapsed case, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre has said.

Four of the confirmed cases were administered at least two doses of a Covid-19 vaccine and tested positive upon arrival in Macau on March 12, and were referred to the Public Health Clinic in Coloane, and all of the patients denied any history of infection, the health authorities said.

A 33-year-old female Macau resident from Singapore was administered two doses of an mRNA vaccine in July and August 2021. On March 11, she tested negative in Singapore.

A 37-year-old male Macau resident, who came from Myanmar via Singapore, was administered three doses of



the Sinopharm vaccine in March, April and November 2021.

A 25-year-old female Macau resident from the USA via Singapore was administered three doses of an mRNA vaccine in March, April and December 2021. On March 7, 8 and 9 this year, the three nucleic acid tests tested in the USA returned negative results.

A 23-year-old female Ma-

cau resident traveling from Australia via Singapore was administered two doses of mRNA vaccine in July and August 2021.

The relapsed case, a 39-year-old Macau resident from Dubai, was administered two doses of the Sinopharm vaccine in October and November 2021. On March 7, 8 and 10, this year, the tests conducted in Dubai were all negative, with all

three nucleic acid tests returning negative results.

"This woman had been diagnosed as a confirmed case on January 12, 2022, so she was classified as a relapsed case, and was referred to the Coloane Public Health Clinical Centre," the health authorities added.

To date, 82 confirmed cases of Covid-19 and 50 asymptomatic infections have been registered in Macau.

NAT REQUIRED FOR INDIVIDUALS RE-ENTERING MORE THAN THREE TIMES

INDIVIDUALS with a Family Visit Permit who enter Macau three times or more on the same day will be required to undergo a nucleic acid test (NAT) and wait for the result on-site.

The health authority said the new requirement is "in order to reduce the potential epidemiological risks caused by the frequent movement of people through the Border Gate or the Qingmao Border Gate."

Holders of a Family Visit Permit who enter Macau three or more times through the Border Gate or Qingmao Border Post on the same day will be subject to this requirement, regardless of the date of sampling indicated on their certificate of negative NAT result.

"Such individuals shall be subjected to a nucleic acid test at their own expense upon entry into Macau and shall be allowed entry only after obtaining the test result," the health authorities indicated.

The test result will not be displayed as part of these individuals' health code.

S.F. EXPRESS SUSPENDS DELIVERIES TO MAINLAND

S.F. Express announced on Friday that all deliveries in and out of mainland China have been suspended in Hong Kong and Macau due to anti-Covid-19 control measures.

The company's decision came after 11 Covid-19 cases were reported in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

It is reported that S.F. Express's transfer center is not directly delivering goods to users, but mainly sorting parcels and then transporting them after sorting them according to regions.

S.F. has a number of transit centers in Hangzhou, and S.F. parcels entering and leaving Hangzhou must be transferred through these transit centers.

Macau health authorities are reminding citizens to be cautious with online purchases.

"This situation reveals that shopping on electronic platforms runs the risk of being contaminated by the new type of coronavirus," said a representative of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

"Therefore, the center alerts citizens to handle with care, products purchased by mail and appeals to residents to pay attention [to these risks]." JW

Provisional Red Market to commence operating from Mar. 29

THE provisional Almirante Lacerda Municipal Market, which is located near the Patane Wet Market, will commence operations on March 29, the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has announced.

The existing facility, located at the lower tip of Avenida de Horte e Costa, will be closed from March 27 for refurbishments.

More commonly known as the Red Market, the Almirante Lacerda Municipal Market has been added to the List of Macau Relics. It was built in 1936. With five towers serving an aesthetic rather than pragmatic function, the building is agreed to have an Art Deco style.

After being used for nearly a century, refurbishment is required, so the IAM has pledged to retain the exterior of the building. The structure



will be reinforced and the interior will be overhauled.

Meanwhile, the two-floor provisional facility, which was used during the reconstruction of the Patane Wet Market from 2013 to 2018, will have 127 stalls. The facility is accessible, with elevators

and accessible washrooms.

The IAM stated that March 28 will be reserved for vendors to relocate their equipment. Both markets will not be in operation on this day. The provisional market will open daily from 7 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

A free-of-charge shuttle bus route will also operate between the Horte e Costa District and the provisional market. The frequency of the shuttle bus will be every 15 minutes between 9 a.m. and 12 noon and between 3:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. AL



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

CPU MEMBERS WANT MORE GUARANTEE OF SAFEGUARDS FOR PENHA HILL



RENATO MARQUES

THE Urban Conditions Plan (PCU) for the plots of land surrounding the Court of First Instance at Nam Van Lake was under discussion yesterday at the Urban Planning Committee (CPU).

As the Times first reported earlier last week, the PCU attracted much concern and opposition to the conditions being proposed for the plots of land, namely the one closer to the Bom Parto Fortress.

In the session, the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) continued to reaffirm that the maximum ceiling established, among other conditions, was determined according to the opinions of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) and took into account the protection of the heritage site, namely the Penha Hill area.

Several members, including architect André Lui, noted the concerns expressed over the visual impact if the conditions are not changed.

"We already discussed this

last year and there are concerns over the visual impact. Many Portuguese friends [are] also worried about the height and impact on monuments," he said, adding, "Just evaluating the numbers, it is very difficult to see the real impact that is going to be [made]. That's why we need to work with image models: to better understand [what] it will look like if we insist on following these urban conditions."

Lui added that he is well aware of the limited resource of land in Macau, which makes him insist on its responsible use, following good planning.

"I know that we have few resources of land in Macau and we need to use them well, but the lack of a proper plan can cause a problem for the next decades that we can't revert. This is a problem, because these conditions will then serve as a reference to all the surrounding land plots, because they will take this height as a reference," he remarked.

Another member, Chan

Chiu I, also noted that the committee lacks sufficient information to make a decision.

"We lack information because there is no technical report," she said, expressing the view that a report was needed before further debate is had on the matter.

Despite the concerns expressed, an IC representative said that public opinion has already been already noted and considered in the issuing of their opinion, adding that the bureau "already added a few conditions so that there is a visual corridor between the [Penha] Chapel and the coastal area of the lake, and that also extends till the Nobre the Carvalho bridge. This means that includes all the coastal areas of Nam Van so we can see the hill from there."

The committee president, Wong Chiu Man, closed debate on the topic by saying that there was already enough debate on the matter, as well as consultation with the public, who had the opportunity to express their opinions and concerns.

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RECONSTRUCTION OF HOUSING QUARTERS AT LILAU RAISES QUESTIONS

RENATO MARQUES

AN Urban Conditions Plant (PCU) – a building located next to the Lilau Square – has raised questions from the members of the Urban Planning Committee (CPU).

Some members would like the government to enforce further restrictions on the project, as it is located in a heritage area, but the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) says it is enough to impose limits upon the maximum height of the building and the maintenance of the original façade of the building.

On the line is a former housing building, which has sat vacant and unused for many years, and faces directly onto Lilau Square.

As part of the discussion, CPU member Chan Chiu I raised the concern that the building is characteristic of Macau architecture, located in a protected heritage zone right beside the Lilau Square, and a stone's throw away from the Mandarin House and other relevant structures and protected monuments. In her opinion, just asking



the owners to retain the façade falls short in the attempt to preserve this historic area of the city, calling on the government to enforce additional restrictions, such as requiring the building's original internal structure and areas to be retained.

In reply, the representative of the IC said that, although the location is seen as important, "the building is not in an area considered as part of the historical center," adding, "but since it's, in fact, a building that has particular characteristics, this is why we are making an effort to keep the façade and the roof unchanged, as well as the garden. But we cannot do anything regarding the

interior spaces."

The same CPU members, backed by some others, expressed their wish that buildings of this nature could instead be acquired by the government, to be preserved and rebuilt according to the original layout and used as public venues.

In one of the opinions submitted regarding the project, during the period of public consultation, an unidentified citizen expressed similar concerns, adding that the current law regulating the protection of the buildings of public interest should be clarified to ensure that buildings of historical value, such as this one, are not completely lost.

Local orchestras resume activity this weekend

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macao Orchestra and Macao Chinese Orchestra will resume their concert activities this weekend after undergoing structural transformations.

Both orchestras, which are coordinated by the Macao Orchestra Company, will present their first concerts of this new era after the structural transformation on Saturday (March 19) at 8 p.m. in different venues.

While the Macao Orchestra will present "Charming Romance" at the Grand Auditorium of the Macao Cultural Centre, the Macao Chinese Orchestra will take the stage in Broadway Macau's Theatre to present the concert "Enchanting Tunes from the Screen 3."

The two concerts are organized



by the Cultural Affairs Bureau and will feature renowned conductors and musicians from mainland China, who will collaborate with the Macao Orchestra and the Macao Chinese Orchestra to present a repertoire of Chinese and Western classics from different periods.

Tickets for both concerts are

now on sale and available through the Macao Ticketing Network.

The concert "Charming Romance" will include the performance of pianist Hao Duanduan to perform Beethoven's Piano Concerto No.4 in G major and will also present Brahms' Symphony No.1.

As part of "Enchanting Tunes

from the Screen 3," the Macao Chinese Orchestra will join forces with soprano Wei Jiani and Macao singer Sean Pang Veng Sam to perform a repertoire of theme songs from classic and popular television and film productions such as A Dream of Red Mansions, A Love of No Words and Titanic, as well as revisiting scenes of the big and small screens through music.

The two orchestras in the city were in limbo earlier this year as musicians await information on the future of the organizations following leaks that several staff have allegedly been compensated up to MOP250,000 for breach of contract.

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) has allegedly abruptly laid off musicians from the orchestras.

Late last year, it was disclosed that the city's two public orchestras will be privatized in the future to allow for swifter adjustment and reaction to market demands.

The privatization was set to take effect on January 1, 2022, aiming to give the orchestras "greater chances of development [...] such as performing overseas on behalf of the city."

R. DE PEDRO COUTINHO SUSPENDED FOR FIVE DAYS DUE TO ROADWORKS

Due to roadworks, the section of Rua de Pedro Coutinho between Avenida de Horta e Costa and Avenida do Ouvidor Arriaga will be suspended from 7:30 p.m., March 15 until 7 a.m., March 16. The section of the same road between Avenida do Ouvidor Arriaga and Avenida do Coronel Mesquita will be suspended from 7:30 p.m., March 16 to 7 a.m., March 17. Parking and loading spaces will be suspended between March 14 and 19. Roadworks will be conducted at night so as to minimize the impact upon that area.

IC HOLDS BOOK EXCHANGE ACTIVITY

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) will hold the "Book Exchange" activity, which forms part of the 2022 Macao Library Week, from today until April 17. Interested residents can bring their book collection to the city's public libraries and receive a "Stamped Scorecard." On April 30 and May 1, during the Macao Library Week's promotion day, residents can exchange books of equivalent value at the "Book Exchange" venue, located within the Old Court Building in Praia Grande and the Seac Pai Van Library.

FSS REMINDS PENSIONERS TO PROVIDE PROOF-OF-LIFE

Approximately 3,400 beneficiaries receiving old-age and disability pension this year have yet to provide their proof-of-life, according to the Social Security Fund (FSS). Beneficiaries who have not provided their proof-of-life must complete the relevant forms by the end of March, otherwise the relevant payment will be suspended from April. In order to facilitate beneficiaries providing proof-of-life, beneficiaries, whether in or outside Macau, may log in to the "My Government Account of the Macao SAR" mobile application and provide proof-of-life through facial recognition technology.

68 students win city's 2021 English essay competition

ANTHONY LAM

STUDENTS from the City University of Macau, The International School of Macao, the Macao Anglican College and the Premier School Affiliated to Hou Kong Middle School have won this year's English Essay Competition.

Apart from these four, who won the first prizes in four different categories separated by levels of studies, 64 other students attained honors as well. In addition, two group awards – the Empowerment Award and Best Achievement Award – went to the Premier School

Affiliated to Hou Kong Middle School.

Dubbed the first Macau-wide event of its kind by the organizer, the Macao Speech Professionals Association (MSPA), the competition attracted as registrants more than 1600 students from 53 local schools. The selection process was conducted in a blind fashion, the organizer emphasized.

The winning essays will be compiled into an essay collection, the first of its kind published in Macau, in an aim to allow more stakeholders in the community to learn the younger generation's thoughts on the crucial issues and

build a sustainable community together.

As the competition is geared towards promoting the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals, students are encouraged to strengthen their English writing skills while learning about global topics.

Chair of the Macau-wide English Essay Competition, Sandy Leong, noted that the theme, "The Change I Want to Make," was designed to initiate conversations in the community about the power people have to create a better future. Through learning about the Global Goals – a set of 17 commitments made by 193 world



leaders to end extreme poverty, inequality, and climate change by 2030 – Macau citizens can all appreciate the importance of sustainable development and bring positive change to the world.

The competition has invited Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Youth Hong Kong to act as the supervisor and the United Nations University Institute in Ma-

cau to act as the advisor for the competition.

The MSPA describes itself as consisting of professional speakers and public speaking enthusiasts, bringing together Macau's talented speakers, including international and national public speaking competition winners, national public speaking coaches and trainers, as well as large-scale public speaking event organizers and judges.

MACAU, HENGQIN COOPERATE IN PROMOTING CONSUMER RIGHTS

THE consumer rights agencies of Macau and Hengqin will collaborate in a series of events aiming to promote consumer rights, the Macau Consumer Council has announced.

In order to make further progress in consumer rights protection, consumption environ-

ment integration and consumer rights unification between Macau and the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone, the agencies from the two jurisdictions will host a series of events from March 15.

March 15 marks the International Day for Protecting Consumers' Rights.

The series of events will include an outdoor promotional activity held in the zone and a Q&A contest with prizes, which will be held online. The local agency said that by participating in the contest, consumers will gain a deep understanding of laws in the two jurisdictions with regards to protecting con-

sumer rights.

The Q&A contest will be held between March 14 and 16. Questions will cover the differences and similarities between consumer rights laws in Macau and Hengqin. A support section will be established to assist participants in answering the questions.

Registration can be

conducted by following the WeChat account of the Hengqin Consumers' Association. Those who answer 10 questions correctly will have the chance to win prizes.

The Macau agency is confident that the series of events will help promote cross-boundary consumer rights. **AL**

AP PHOTO

ECONOMY

GOV'T PROMISES 13 MILLION JOBS TO REVERSE SLUMP



JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

CHINA'S government hopes to generate as many as 13 million new jobs this year to help reverse a painful economic slump but faces "many difficulties and challenges," the country's No. 2 leader said Friday.

Forecasters say the ruling Communist Party is likely to struggle to meet its official target of 5.5% annual economic growth, its lowest since the 1990s.

That would be down sharply from last year's 8.1% expansion at a time when China is under self-imposed pressure from a crackdown on debt that Beijing worries is dangerously high, as well as the coronavirus, weak global export demand and high energy costs as oil prices surge during the war in Ukraine.

Premier Li Keqiang promised "pro-job policies" including tax and fee cuts totaling 2.5 trillion yuan (\$400 billion) for businesses, especially small entrepre-

neurs. He said if that works, "we are prepared to step it up."

China's workforce is shrinking and has fallen by almost 5% from its 2011 peak.

But efforts to control debt in the vast real estate industry triggered a plunge last year in housing sales and construction, which supports millions of jobs, raising the prospect of a politically dangerous spike in unemployment.

As economic growth slid to 4% over a year earlier in the final quarter of 2021, leaders responded by easing up on longer-term measures to reduce debt and nurture self-sustaining growth based on domestic consumption instead of trade and investment.

"China aims to create 11 million — or preferably 13 million — urban jobs in 2022," Li said at a nationally televised news conference after the closing of the annual meeting of China's ceremonial legislature.

He said the total number of job seekers this year is forecast at 16.6 million, including a record 10.6 million university graduates. The government also needs to ensure almost 300 million rural migrant workers in cities have jobs, he said.

The world's second-largest economy created 12.7 million jobs last year, up from 2021's 11.9 million, according to government data reported earlier.

Forecasters expect the economy to weaken further before rebounding in mid-year. A recovery is expected to take longer than usual due to Beijing's desire to avoid relying on its traditional tool of encouraging real estate investment, which might push up debt and housing costs. Efforts to end outbreaks of coronavirus are also slowing a recovery.

The premier expressed confidence official economic targets can be met but warned China also is grappling with debt, glo-

bal warming and a gulf between its elite and the poor majority.

"The situation we face is still complex and severe, and there are still many difficulties and challenges," he said.

Li expressed hope for better relations with Washington but announced no concessions in a tariff war over Beijing's technology ambitions.

Trade envoys from the two sides have talked by phone since President Joe Biden took office in January 2021 but haven't announced plans for face-to-face talks.

"We still hope that the two sides will respect each other, peacefully coexist and cooperate for win-win results," Li said.

China was the first major economy to rebound from the coronavirus pandemic, but annual growth has declined steadily over the past decade. The International Monetary Fund and private sector forecasters expect growth as low as 4.3% this year.

Meanwhile, investors are nervously watching to see if one of China's biggest developers, Evergrande Group, can avoid defaulting on 2.1 trillion yuan (\$310 billion) in debt.

Li said Chinese business leaders he talked with support tax cuts as the quickest way to generate jobs instead of government-led investment or handing out vouchers to households to boost consumer spending.

"We need to rely on market-oriented avenues and means to resolve issues related to employment," Li said.

Also Friday, Li said he plans to step down next year at the end of his second five-year term as premier.

That is in line with ruling party tradition since the 1990s of leaders handing power to a younger generation once a decade, but President Xi Jinping is expected to defy that by having himself named to a third term as party leader this year. **MDT/AP**

Premier Li offers China's help for 'grave' Ukraine situation

CHINESE Premier Li Keqiang on Friday called the situation in Ukraine "grave" and offered Beijing's help in playing a "positive role" for peace while continuing to refrain from criticizing Russia.

China has largely sided with Russia in the conflict, which it has refused to refer to as a war or invasion. The U.S. has accused Bei-

jing of helping spread unsubstantiated claims coming out of Moscow.

China has offered to serve as a facilitator of talks between the sides, although it has little experience in such a role and would not likely be viewed as a neutral party.

"We support and encourage all efforts that are conducive to a peaceful

settlement of the crisis," Li told reporters at an annual news conference. "The pressing task now is to prevent tension from escalating or even getting out of control."

Beijing this week said it was sending humanitarian aid including food and daily necessities worth \$791,000 to Ukraine while continuing to oppose

sanctions against Russia over its invasion and pledging to continue normal trade and economic cooperation with Moscow.

Li, who as China's No. 2 leader behind Xi Jinping is primarily responsible for overseeing the world's second-largest economy, spoke following the close of the annual session of China's rubber-stamp

legislature. He said that sanctions would "hurt the world economic recovery."

"It is in no one's interest. China is ready to make its own constructive efforts in maintaining world peace and stability and promoting development and prosperity," Li said.

He also repeated China's position that the sovereignty and territorial

integrity of all countries should be respected, but that the legitimate security concerns of all countries should also be taken seriously.

"On that basis, China makes its own assessment and will work with the international community to play a positive role for the early return of peace," he said. **MDT/AP**

JAKE COYLE, NEW YORK

A rivalry with Russia. A proxy battleground. Nuclear brinkmanship. For many generations of Americans, it's just like old times.

The invasion of Ukraine has rapidly returned echoes of a Cold War mentality to the United States, with a familiar foe in Russia. Bars have poured out their Russian vodka. McDonald's, a symbol of the end of the Soviet Union when it first opened in Moscow, has shuttered its Russian locations. Once again, a U.S. president sees a pitched ideological battle. "We will save democracy," President Joe Biden said in his State of the Union address.

For an America where Russia never quite went out of style as an evergreen villain in film and television, revived tensions with the Kremlin have drawn from a well-worn geopolitical script. A familiar, chilly East-West wind is blowing again.

"It's very much a Cold War echo," says James Hershberg, professor of history and international affairs at Georgetown University and former director of the Cold War International History Project of the Woodrow Wilson Center.

Hershberg sees much that's different about today's inflamed tensions with Russia. Vladimir Putin's aggressions, he says, don't seem driven by ideology the way communism was for the Soviet Union. A transformed media landscape, too, has helped turn Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky into a global protagonist.

But in a crisis that pits two nuclear superpowers on opposing sides, history is repeating in other ways. A Russian strategic overreach, Hershberg says, is again sparking a potentially perilous moment in international order.

"We are in a second Cuban Missile Crisis in many ways in terms of the danger of escalation," says Hershberg, whose books include "Marigold: The Lost Chance for Peace in Vietnam." "Putin is acting so irrationally he makes Nikita Khrushchev appear like a rational actor in comparison."

The largest land conflict in Europe since World War II, Russia's two-plus weeks of war in Ukraine has rallied Western alliances like few events before it. In repudiating Putin's invasion, the U.S. and its European allies have enacted crippling economic sanctions on Russia -- which Biden on Tuesday extended to Russian crude oil -- while still drawing the line on military engagement with Russia.

"If we're talking about a capitalized Cold War, I don't think I could call this Cold War II," says Fredrik Logevall, professor of history and international affairs at Harvard and Pulitzer-Prize winning author most recently of

In Russian invasion of Ukraine, Cold War echoes reverberate



"JFK: Coming of Age in the American Century, 1917-1956."

"But," Logevall says, "if we're talking more generally about a cold war, if we mean a titanic struggle that involves all aspects of national power waged between two incompatible systems but short of outright military conflict -- then yeah, I guess this is a cold war."

The Cold War is innately connected to the crisis in Ukraine partly because it so much informs Putin's world view. A former KGB agent, he once called the collapse of the Soviet Union "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe" of the 20th century. The invasion of Ukraine is intended to deter Western influence and NATO infringement from Russia's sphere of influence, and potentially to restore a Texas-sized part of the former Soviet Union.

Barely two weeks in, the Cold War has often been invoked. The U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said "the threat to global security now is more complex and probably higher" than during the Cold War, partly be-

cause there aren't the same back channels of communication. A Russian Foreign Ministry official, Alexander Darchiyev, according to an Interfax report, recently suggested that "perhaps it would be worth recalling the well-forgotten principle that worked during the Cold War -- peaceful coexistence."

Even before war began in Ukraine, Americans had a historically dim view of Russia. According to Gallup poll conducted in February, 85% of Americans viewed Russia unfavorably, easily the country's worst rating in more than three decades -- a slide accelerated by Russia's meddling in U.S. elections, its annexation of Crimea and the nerve agent attack on Putin's leading opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, who's currently imprisoned.

And while former president Donald Trump has maintained his esteem for Putin, anti-Russian opinion has uncommon bipartisan support. Gallup found that 88% of both Republicans and Democrats have an unfavorable view of Russia. Nothing

unites like a common enemy.

Nina Khrushcheva, a Moscow-born professor of international affairs at the New School in New York and the great-granddaughter of Nikita Khrushchev, maintains that the Cold War never really went away -- that the West's view of Russia remained stuck in the broad portrayals of villains Boris and Natasha in "Rocky and Bullwinkle" cartoons. To her, Putin's invasion was devastating because it confirmed the worst about her native country. Now, she begins her classes by apologizing.

"Putin is the global villain he deserves to be, and Russia is finished for decades to come," says Khrushcheva, whose great-grandfather was premier of the Soviet Union during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, when John F. Kennedy was president of the United States. "My country just killed itself," she says, and the U.S. "got their enemy back."

"They got their enemy that has always been, always deserves to be and is always at the forefront of the American mind,"

says Khrushcheva. "Russia has no excuse. But for America, it's a field day. America is back and it's on a white horse saving a white country in the middle of Europe against the horrible Russian Bear."

Logevall, who co-authored the book "America's Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity," doesn't expect a Cold War rerun. The world isn't as bipolar as it was decades ago. China, which signed a pact with Russia shortly before the invasion of Ukraine, looms much larger. And the interconnectedness of the global economy -- where waves of corporations have severed ties with Russia -- makes isolated coexistence harder to tolerate.

The conflict in Ukraine seems sure to be at least a coda to the Cold War, if not a new beginning.

"Putin feels great resentment about how the Cold War ended. The West declaring victory. Russia losing power and influence. I think he resents a certain Western triumphalism," Logevall says. "In a way, I think history is what drives him." MDT/AP

PUTIN'S WAR

Russian airstrike hits base in western Ukraine, kills 35

YURAS KARMANAU, LVIV

WAVES of Russian missiles pounded a military training base close to Ukraine's western border with NATO member Poland, killing 35 people. The strike followed Russian threats to target foreign weapon shipments that are helping Ukrainian fighters defend their country against Russia's grinding invasion.

More than 30 Russian cruise missiles targeted the sprawling training facility that is less than 25 kilometers from the closest border point with Poland, according to the governor of Ukraine's western Lviv region. Poland is a key location for routing Western military aid to Ukraine.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine, Lviv had largely been spared the scale of destruction unfolding further east and become a destination for residents escaping bombarded cities and for many of the nearly 2.6 million refugees who have fled the country.

The training center in Yavoriv appears to be the most westward target struck so far in the 18-day invasion. The facility, also known as the International Peacekeeping and Security Center, has long been used to train Ukrainian military personnel, often with instructors from the United States and other NATO countries.

It has also hosted international NATO drills. As such, the site symbolizes what has long been a Russian complaint: That the NATO alliance of 30 member countries is moving ever closer to Russia's borders. Russian has demanded that Ukraine drop its ambitions to join NATO.

Lviv governor Maksym Kozzytskyi said most of the missiles fired yesterday "were shot down because the air defense system worked." The ones that got through killed at least 35 people and wounded 134, he said.

Russian fighters also fired at the airport in the western city of Ivano-Frankivsk, which is less than 150 kilometers north of Romania and 250 kilometers from Hungary,



countries that also are NATO allies. The airport, which includes a military airfield as well as a runway for civilian flights, also was targeted Friday.

Fighting also raged in multiple areas of the country overnight. Ukrainian authorities said Russian airstrikes on a monastery and a children's resort in the eastern Donetsk region hit spots where monks and refugees were sheltering, wounding 32 people.

Another airstrike hit a westward-bound train evacuating people from the east, killing one person and injuring another, Donetsk's chief regional administrator said.

To the north, in the city of Chernihiv, one person was killed and another injured in a Russian airstrike that destroyed a residential block, emergency services said.

Around the capital, Kyiv, a major political and strategic target for the invasion, fighting also intensified, with overnight shelling in the northwestern suburbs and a missile strike yesterday that destroyed a warehouse to the east.

In Irpin, a suburb about 12 miles northwest of central Kyiv, bodies lay out in the open Saturday on streets and in a park.

"When I woke up in the morning, everything was covered in smoke, everything was dark. We don't know who is shooting and where," resident Serhy Protsenko said as he walked through his neighborhood. Explosions sounded in the distance. "We don't have any radio or information."

Chief regional administrator Oleksiy Kuleba said

Russian forces appeared to be trying to blockade and paralyze the capital with day and night shelling of the suburbs. Kuleba said Russian agents were in the capital and its suburbs, marking out possible future targets.

He vowed that any all-out assault would meet stiff resistance, saying: "We're getting ready to defend Kyiv, and we're prepared to fight for ourselves."

Talks aimed at reaching a cease-fire again failed Saturday, and the U.S. announced plans to provide another \$200 million to Ukraine for weapons. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov warned other nations that sending equipment to bolster Ukraine's military was "an action that makes those convoys legitimate targets."

Russian soldiers pillaged a humanitarian convoy that was trying to reach the battered and encircled port city of Mariupol, where more than 1,500 people have died, a Ukrainian official said. Ukraine's military said Russian forces captured Mariupol's eastern outskirts, tightening their siege of the strategic port. Taking Mariupol and other ports on the Azov Sea could allow Russia to establish a land corridor to Crimea, which it seized from Ukraine in 2014.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russia of trying to break his country apart, as well as starting "a new stage of terror" with the alleged detention of a mayor from a city west of Mariupol.

"Ukraine will stand this test. We need time and strength to break the war machine

that has come to our land," Zelenskyy said during his nightly address to the nation Saturday.

Zelenskyy reported that 1,300 Ukrainian soldiers had died since the Russian invasion began Feb. 24.

The first major city to fall, earlier this month, was Kherson, a vital Black Sea port of 290,000 residents. Zelenskyy said Saturday that Russians were using blackmail and bribery in an attempt to force local officials to form a "pseudo-republic" in the southern Kherson region, much like those in Donetsk and Luhansk, two eastern regions where pro-Russian separatists began fighting Ukrainian forces in 2014. One of the pretexts Russia used to invade was that it had to protect the separatist regions.

Zelenskyy again deplored NATO's refusal to declare a no-fly zone over Ukraine and said Ukraine has sought ways to procure air defense assets, though he didn't elaborate. U.S. President Joe Biden announced another \$200 million in aid to Ukraine, with an additional \$13 billion included in a bill that has passed the House and should pass the Senate within days. NATO has said that imposing a no-fly zone could lead to a wider war with Russia.

Moscow has said it would establish humanitarian corridors out of conflict zones, but Ukrainian officials have accused Russia of disrupting those paths and firing on civilians. Russian forces have hit at least two dozen hospitals and medical facilities, according to the World Health Organization. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1960 RADIO TELESCOPE MAKES SPACE HISTORY



The British radio telescope at Jodrell Bank in Cheshire has set a new space record making contact with the American Pioneer V satellite at a distance of 407,000 miles.

The previous record, about 290,000 miles, was set by the Soviet satellite Lunik III, which photographed the back of the Moon last year.

Jodrell first made contact with Pioneer V after it went into orbit around the Sun, between the paths of Earth and Venus.

The American satellite was launched from Cape Canaveral in Florida three days ago on 11 March.

Shortly after launch, the Jodrell Bank telescope was used for the first time to give commands to a rocket in space.

By pressing a button at Jodrell Bank, the 90lb (43kg) payload was separated from the third stage of the launching rocket.

The telescope then succeeded in switching off the satellite's transmitter, which will help conserve its battery power for later in the mission.

It is hoped eventually Jodrell Bank will be able to pick up signals from the satellite up to 50 million miles from Earth.

This will only be made possible by the very large solar-powered batteries on board which run the transmitter. The solar "paddles" projecting from the satellite will recharge the batteries using the sun's radiation, but the current will still need to be conserved if it is to last until July, as planned.

The transmitter will be switched on for no more than 45 minutes a day at first. Later transmitting time will be reduced to five minutes a day.

Within a week, the satellite will be more than a million miles from Earth and its more powerful 150-watt transmitter will have to be switched on by command from Jodrell Bank.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

In April 1960, the command centre in Hawaii began having problems contacting Pioneer V and Jodrell Bank began to play a bigger role in controlling the satellite. When the telescope was built in 1957, it was the world's largest fully steerable radio telescope, a title it held for more than 10 years. It is still in the top few radio telescopes in the world. Originally called the Mark 1, it was upgraded to the Mark 1a in 1970. It was rededicated the Lovell Radio Telescope in 1987 to mark 30 years of operation. The Lovell Radio telescope now has a new galvanised steel surface built at a cost of £2.5m. It is 30 times more sensitive than when it was built.

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

RUSSIA stepped up its legal fight against isolation in sports because of the war in Ukraine when its national Olympic body made an urgent appeal Friday to overturn a ban on its athletes competing at a European youth winter sports festival.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport said it was setting a timetable for the case ahead of the Winter European Youth Olympic Festival being held in Finland from March 20-25.

Russian officials had promised to challenge athlete bans imposed by most Olympic sports bodies this month, though no appeal to CAS has been announced relating to the figure skating world championships which start March 21. The International Skating Union is organizing that event in Montpelier, France.

The appeal by the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) challenges the European Olympic Committees, whose executive committee decided on March 2 to exclude Russian and Belarusian athletes.

CAS said Friday the ROC has not asked for an interim ruling — so-called “provisional measures” — to freeze the ban, suggesting the full merits of the case could be decided over the next week.

Russia steps up legal fight against isolation in sports



Ingrid Landmark Tandrevold of Norway competes in the Biathlon 4x6 km relay women's World Cup competition, in Kontiolahti, Finland, March 3

The appeal joins Russian soccer in going to CAS to push back against the country's sporting

isolation after the invasion of Ukraine.

The Russian soccer federation

has appealed against bans on national and club teams by FIFA and UEFA. Those suspensions

were imposed March 1 within hours of the International Olympic Committee urging sports bodies to act against Russia.

The arguments in favor of Russian athlete bans were restated Friday by IOC president Thomas Bach in an open letter to international sports officials.

Bach said that while it was clear Russian athletes were not responsible for the war, the fairness and integrity of competitions where Ukrainians could be unable to compete had to be considered.

He also cited “safety risks for Russian and Belarusian athletes taking part in international competitions, because of deep anti-Russian and anti-Belarusian feelings following the invasion.”

Bach also criticized those who made the “cheap argument” that the IOC broke its own rules on neutrality by politicizing sport with its call to block Russian competitors.

“Whoever so blatantly violates the Olympic Truce with political and even military means cannot denounce the consequences as being politically motivated,” Bach wrote, referencing the pledge signed by all 193 United Nations member states, including Russia, ahead of the Beijing Olympics and Paralympics. **MDT/AP**

AD



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OPINION

Multipolar World

Jorge Costa Oliveira



FROM THE EXTRATERRITORIALITY OF SANCTIONS TO THE POWER OF EUROPEAN CITIZENS

One aspect that will differentiate the Russian war in Ukraine from previous wars will be the sanctions and their nature. The EU applies sanctions to implement UN Security Council resolutions or to further the objectives of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) (the promotion of international peace and security, the prevention of conflicts, support for democracy, the rule of law and human rights and the defense of the principles of international law). In the EU, there is a legal framework to apply various types of sanctions targeting members of government bodies, companies, groups, organizations or individuals from countries that violate international law. In the case of the EU, sanctions have been the usual ones: (i) arms embargoes; (ii) admission restrictions (travel bans); (iii) asset freezing; (iv) other economic measures, such as restrictions on imports and exports. Following the Russian Federation's intervention in Ukraine in 2014, the EU has applied several sanctions on Russia.

The US also applies (since 2017 at least) relevant sanctions on Russia based on the "Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act" (Public Law 115-44) (CAATSA). The main difference with the US sanctions is that many of them have an extraterritorial effect, which means that secondary sanctions may be imposed on non-US persons who facilitate payments / breach of embargoes / access to assets to a blocked entity. The extraterritorial effect of US sanctions has, moreover, led the EU to take measures to avoid them, considering them illegal and unilaterally imposed.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine will lead to a change in Europeans' stance in this domain. European public opinion is afire and deeply outraged by the daily images of Russian bombings of civilians. Pressure on European policymakers will quickly produce two results: on the one hand it will create an extension to the scope of sanctions (and the train has yet to leave the station); on the other hand, it will lead them to attribute extraterritorial effects to EU sanctions on Russia.

European public opinion finds it unacceptable that Russian oligarchs are able to continue operating from countries that are largely dependent on the EU (Switzerland quickly realized this). Or that Russian banks excluded from the SWIFT system can overcome this sanction by triangulating operations with the connivance of third-country banks (some Chinese banks seem to have already realized this). On the other hand, people fired up by what they consider morally unacceptable, quickly become Manicheans – either with us or against us. Countries that think it's possible to have a neutral stance and the best of both worlds – to maintain access to cheap Russian raw materials (oil, gas, nickel, copper) while maintaining access to European and American consumer markets – will find that the power of European and American citizens is exercised more quickly than that of their governments, with boycotts of products from these countries. But many people, including decision makers, in Turkey, India and China don't seem to have realized what may be on its way.

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IRAN CLAIMS MISSILE BARRAGE NEAR US CONSULATE IN IRAQ

THE BUZZ

Iran has claimed responsibility for a missile barrage that struck yesterday near a sprawling U.S. consulate complex in the northern Iraqi city of Irbil, saying it was retaliation for an Israeli strike in Syria that killed two members of its Revolutionary Guard.

No injuries were reported in the attack, which marked a significant escalation between the U.S. and Iran. Hostility between the longtime foes has often played out in Iraq, whose government is allied with both countries.

Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard said on its website that it

launched the attack against an Israeli "strategic center of conspiracy" in Irbil. It did not elaborate, but in a statement said Israel had itself been on the offensive, citing the recent strike that killed two Revolutionary Guards.

Earlier, a U.S. defense official and Iraqi security officials said the strike was launched from neighboring Iran.

One Iraqi official in Baghdad initially said several missiles had hit the U.S. consulate in Irbil and that it was the target of the attack.



AP PHOTO

CHINA SHUTS BUSINESS CENTER OF SHENZHEN TO FIGHT VIRUS SURGE

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

CHINA'S government responded yesterday to a spike in coronavirus infections by shutting down its southern business center of Shenzhen, a city of 17.5 million people, and restricted access to Shanghai by suspending bus service.

Everyone in Shenzhen, a finance and technology center that abuts Hong Kong, will undergo three rounds of testing after 60 new cases were reported yesterday. All businesses except those that supply food, fuel and other necessities were ordered to close or work from home.

Case numbers in China's latest infection surge are low compared with other countries and with Hong Kong, which reported more than 32,000 yesterday. But mainland authorities are enforcing a "zero tolerance" strategy and have locked down entire cities to find and isolate every infected person.

Shenzhen is home to some of China's most prominent companies, including telecom equipment maker Huawei Technologies Ltd., electric car brand BYD Auto, Ping An Insurance Co. and Tencent Holding, operator of the popular WeChat mes-

sage service.

On the mainland, the government reported 1,938 new cases, more than triple Saturday's total.

About three-quarters, or 1,412 cases, were in Jilin province in the northeast, where the industrial metropolis of Changchun was placed under lockdown on Friday and families were told to stay home after a spate of infections.

China, where the first coronavirus cases were detected in late 2019 in the central city of Wuhan, has reported a total of 4,636 deaths on the mainland out of 115,466 confirmed cases since the pandemic started.

In Shanghai, China's most populous city with 24 million people, the number of cases in the latest surge rose by 15 to 432.

The city government called on the public not to leave unless necessary. It said intercity bus service would be suspended starting from yesterday.

"Those who come or return to Shanghai must have a negative nucleic acid test report within 48 hours before arrival," said a city health agency statement.

In Hong Kong, a health official warned the public not to assume the terri-

tory's deadly coronavirus surge was under control as the government reported 190 new fatalities, most of them elderly people, and 32,430 new cases. That's down from above 50,000 after stringent travel and business curbs were imposed.

Hong Kong, a crowded financial hub of 7.4 million, is trying to contain an outbreak that has killed 3,993 people, most of them in the latest surge driven by the omicron variant, and swamped hospitals.

Construction crews sent from the mainland have built temporary isolation centers in Hong Kong for thousands of patients.

On the mainland, 831 new cases were reported yesterday in Changchun, 571 in the nearby provincial capital city of Jilin and 150 in the eastern port city of Qingdao.

Authorities in Jilin are stepping up anti-disease measures after concluding their earlier response was inadequate, according to Zhang Yan, deputy director of the provincial Health Commission.

"The emergency response mechanism in some areas is not sound enough," Zhang said at a news conference, according to a transcript released by the government. MDT/AP



AP PHOTO

Serbia AirSerbia will go back to one flight a day to Moscow, the Serbian president said, following criticism that the country's national carrier is busting a European Union-wide ban on flights to Russia and profiting from the war in Ukraine. Since the Russian invasion started over two weeks ago, AirSerbia has doubled the number of flights to the Russian capital and introduced larger aircraft to increase the number of seats for what has become its most profitable destination.



AP PHOTO

Croatian officials criticized NATO for what they said was its slow reaction to a military drone that apparently flew from the Ukrainian war zone through the airspace of three NATO member states, before crashing in the Croatian capital. The Russian-made unmanned aircraft crossed Romania and Hungary before entering Croatia and slamming into a field near a student dormitory. Some 40 parked cars were damaged but no one was injured after a loud blast.



AP PHOTO

Italy A bus carrying about 50 Ukrainian refugees overturned on a major highway in northern Italy yesterday, killing one person, Italian firefighters said. Italian state TV said there were also five people injured, but none of the injuries was serious, on the accident on the A14 autostrada near Forlì, a town in the Emilia-Romagna region in northeastern Italy. It said the rest of those aboard were safely evacuated.

Ethiopian authorities say they will prosecute individuals seen in a gruesome video in which armed men appear to burn at least three people alive. The video, shared widely on social media since last week, has sparked anger among many in this country facing war in its northern region as well as ethnic strife in other parts.