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AP PHOTO



UAE British Prime Minister Boris Johnson arrived in the Gulf yesterday for meetings in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia aimed at easing skyrocketing gasoline prices, as the West grapples with economic headwinds from Russia's war in Ukraine. Johnson will be seeking greater investments in the U.K.'s renewable energy transition and ways to secure more oil to lessen British dependence on Russian energy supplies.

AP PHOTO



Yemen A United Nations appeal for Yemen yesterday is aiming at raising \$4.27 billion to alleviate what it describes as the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with 161,000 people likely to experience famine there in 2022. The virtual pledging conference is co-hosted by Sweden and Switzerland. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will address donors on the dire needs of the Arab world's poorest country.

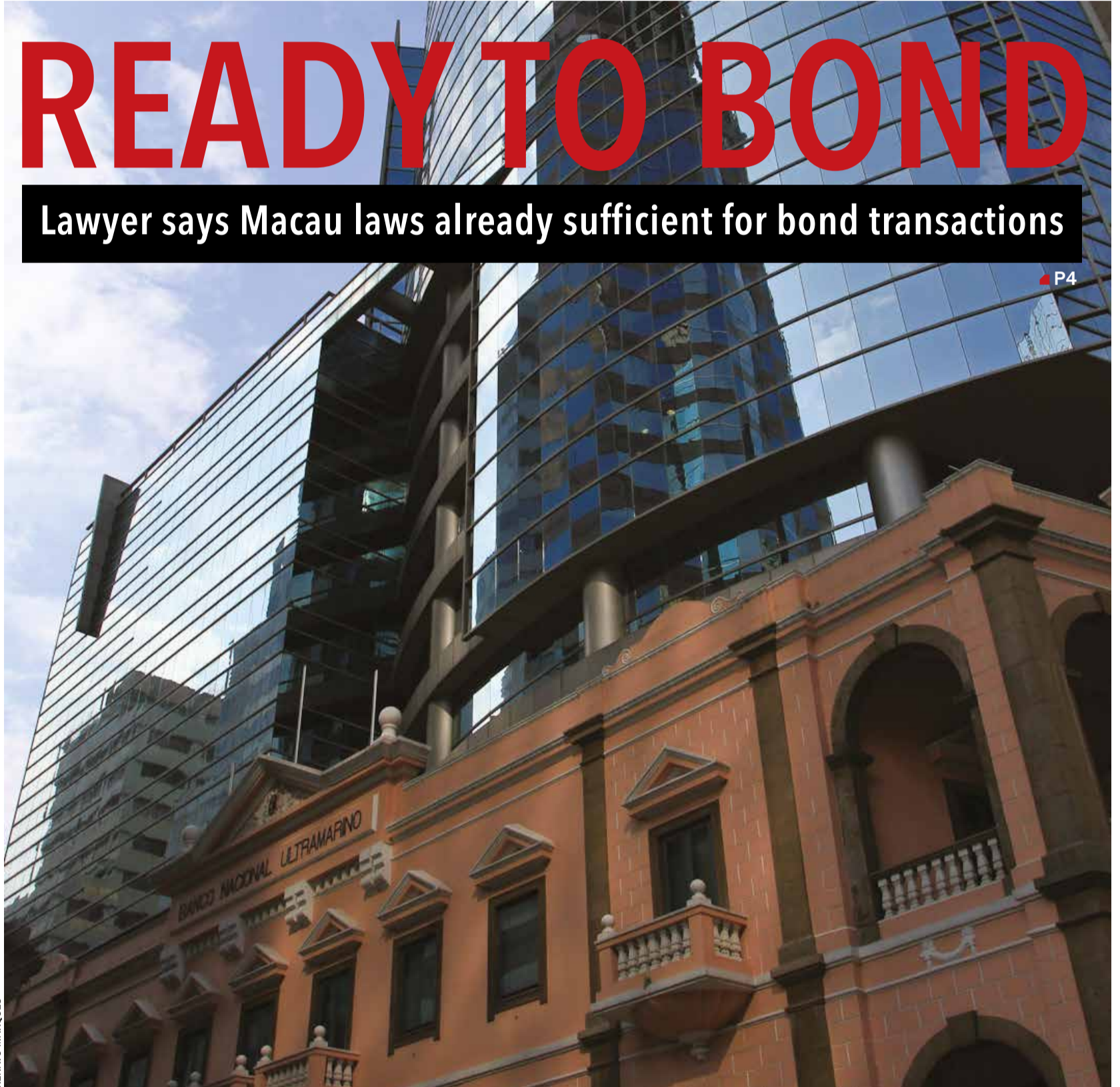
USA Two co-founders of a Taiwan biotechnology company were sentenced in San Francisco for plotting to steal trade secrets from Genentech in a \$101 million scheme, prosecutors said. Racho Jordanov, former CEO of JHL Biotech Inc., and former chief operating officer Rose Lin were sentenced in San Francisco federal court to a year and a day each in federal prison, the U.S. attorney's office said. They pleaded guilty last year to conspiracy to commit trade secret theft and wire fraud.

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CCAC: NOTHING UNLAWFUL IN TAXI MANAGEMENT SYSTEM CONTRACT AWARD

LYNZY VALLES

THERE was nothing illegal in the award of the contract for the “supply and maintenance service of the taxi management system” by the Transport Bureau (DSAT), according to a report on an investigation issued by the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC).

The anti-corruption watchdog also found that the monthly service fees and deposits charged to taxi license and permit holders by the entity awarded the contract, New Leader Tecnologia Informatica (Macau) Lda, were also legal and reasonable.

The investigation was undertaken after a group of taxi drivers voiced grievances and doubts via the media and other organisations, sparking continued discussion among the public in September 2020.

In early 2021, a group of taxi drivers was in the process of taking legal action against the taximeter company, on the accusation of “non-consensual fees.” The group accused the company of forcing them to pay a deposit of MOP5,000, in addition to a monthly service fee of MOP300.

With CCAC receiving complaints about these charges for the intelligent terminal systems and related management issues, the bureau, according to law, ordered

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that an inquiry be carried out.

The CCAC asked the DSAT for the tender file information, industry consultation papers and explanatory documents relating to the contract and also heard evidence from other parties, including the complainants, DSAT staff and taxi industry representatives.

The group of taxi drivers had previously revealed that two ta-

xis in which taximeters had been newly installed had failed government vehicle tests. The drivers were required to pay extra in order for a re-examination. In light of this occurrence, the group doubts the reliability of the new taximeter.

However, according to the recent CCAC report, New Leader, being the sole entity authorized

to provide Macau taxis with the installation, maintenance, testing and calibration of the vehicle devices, had scope to charge fees, with the amounts being stipulated by the administration through exercise of powers within the scope of law under the contract.

The CCAC said that it has not yet received any concrete information from taxi drivers in rela-

tion to complaints about shifting relevant obligations by taxi license and permit holders. Neither is there any concrete information proving that some taxi license and permit holders have shifted relevant fee expenditures onto taxi drivers, according to the anti-corruption watchdog.

In relation to doubts about procedures around the awarding of contracts, the CCAC said that, after investigation, it did not find any signs that the leadership of the DSAT and relevant individuals, shareholders of member companies of New Leader (the winning bidder) or members of the administrative management bodies were relatives or otherwise had cause to recuse themselves but failed to do so.

Following the enactment of the “New Taxi Law” and the implementation of the supervisory mechanism for the terminal system for taxis in 2019, DSAT inspectors recorded zero cases of illegal taxi operation in the following year, while the Public Security Police Force (PSP) recorded fewer than 150 cases. There were 1,900 cases of overcharging throughout 2019, however, only eight were recorded the following year until December 2020. By the end of 2021, the PSP recorded less than 100 cases of illegal taxi operation throughout the year.

GBA

Preferential tax rates implemented for skilled workers in Hengqin



DOMESTIC and overseas talent in the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin will not have to pay tax exceeding 15 percent of personal income, the Guangdong Provincial Taxation Bureau has recently announced.

In a statement issued on the cooperation zone’s website, the scope of new preferential individual income tax policies also covers comprehensive in-

come, operating profits, subsidies and other labor income for eligible taxpayers.

The overall development plan for the cooperation zone, released in early September 2021, states that measures will be rolled out to attract international top-notch, high-caliber talent, and skills in short supply. In response, a list of skilled workers who qualify for the favorable tax policies and related measures will be jointly formulated by Guangdong and Macau prior to approval by the Leading Group for the Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Meanwhile, Macau re-

sidents working in the zone will have the portion of their personal income tax burden exceeding Macau standards classed as exempt. This is to facilitate the construction of Hengqin as a new place for Macau people to live and work, and lay the foundations for a new system of high-level integration with Macau.

Approximately 10,000 domestic and overseas workers living and working in the cooperation zone will benefit from the new policies. More high-end professionals with global ambitions will be enticed to settle in Hengqin, said a spokesperson from the Guangdong Provincial Taxation Bureau. LV

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RENATO MARQUES

Dragon Boat Races might be locals-only this year

ONCE an international-level event, this year's Dragon Boat Races might be exclusively a local event, without even the participation of mainland teams, the Sports Bureau (ID) president, Pun Weng Kun, hinted during a press conference held yesterday to launch the event.

Remarking on the participation of non-local teams from the event, Pun said that although the participation of six mainland teams in total is expected, the final number depends on the mainland's Covid-19 pandemic situation.

"We hope that we will be able to invite [...] six teams from the mainland [this year], but this will depend on the pandemic situation," Pun said, remarking that, at this point, it is not clear whether any of them can join the event or not.

There definitely won't be teams invited from any other countries or regions, except mainland China, Pun confirmed when questioned on the possibility of the participation of teams from Hong Kong or Taiwan.

The event will follow the same schedule and format as the previous iteration of the competition, a format in place since 2020 due to pandemic restrictions.

The competition will be held over two days: May 29 and June 3. The first day will include races dedicated to the smaller boats, while on the second day, the standard dragon

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boats will take to the waters of the Nam Van Lake to paddle for victory.

Additionally, as has become a tradition, a series of activities including parades, performances and booths for the sale of creative products will be held at the Nam Van Nautical Center area.

The ID president did not make it clear whether this year's races will allow spectators on the stands. Questioned on the topic on the sidelines of the press conference, Pun said, "We are currently evaluating

the situation. It will ultimately depend on the pandemic situation [at the time]."

FULL VACCINATION AND NAT REQUIRED

Similar to requirements for other sporting events, participants in the Macao International Dragon Boat Races must be fully vaccinated with two doses of a Covid-19 vaccine, with the last dose to have been administered at least 14 days before the start of the practice sessions. Additionally, participants will also have to under-

go a nucleic acid test valid for both the practice sessions and the race day.

LIMITED TEAMS, FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVED

As in previous years, team applications will be limited across the six categories including the Macao Small Boat Race (48 teams for the Open Category and 18 teams for the Women's Category), Macao Government Departments Small Boat Race (12 teams), Macao University Students Small Boat Race (10 teams) and Macao Standard Dragon Boat Race (36 teams for the Open Category and 10 teams for the Women's Category).

Registrations can be lodged online at www.cmdragonboat.org.mo from 11 a.m. on March 21 until 1 p.m. on March 26. Team registrations will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis and no supplementary slots will be added.

Teams must submit their team members' information by 1 p.m. on April 30.

3X3 BASKETBALL TO RETURN THIS YEAR

QUESTIONED by the media on the progress of other sports events being organized in Macau this year, the ID president said that the bureau has been in negotiations with interested parties so that the 3x3 basketball, launched for the first time in November last year, can also return this year.

"We want that 3x3 basketball tournament to return this year. It was very well received last year and proven to be very popular among locals and tourists. But we

need some time to negotiate the details," Pun said, adding that the bureau is keen to find sports events that allow the participation of local athletes or teams so "Macao can be represented in the event." Last year the 3x3 basketball tournament was initially expected to take place in early October, but was postponed to late November due to a Covid-19 outbreak. Preparations are also ongoing for the Macao Grand Prix event, Pun added.

MACAU PASS ACQUISITION APPROVED BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

LOCAL payment service Loperator Macau Pass, S.A. will see its ownership transferred to a company owned by the Alibaba Group and the Ant Group in China.

The acquisition of the local company was approved by the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM), pursuant to the city's Financial System Act.

Macau Pass operates smartcard payment and mobile payment platforms in Macau. Some companies in Hong Kong also accept the company's mobile payment platform, MPay, for transaction settlements.

The new owner, AGTech Holdings Limited, has a 55% stake held by the two aforementioned Chinese fintech giants, and is listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange.



Once the acquisition is settled, AGTech will wholly own the local payment service company.

When news about the acquisition was first revealed last September, the local company commented that it had been anticipating the matter, adding that the buy-out will help the company expand its operations to Hengqin, which is now co-

-administered by the governments of Guangdong and Macau.

The public did not express complete support following the initial news, with some social media users expressing concerns that personal information provided to Macau Pass, including but not limited to consumption habits, will be transferred to mainland China. **AL**

UM LISTED AS NATIONAL SCIENCE EDUCATION BASE

THE University of Macau (UM) Macao Base for Primary & Secondary STEM Education has been included in the first batch of 2021-2025 national science education bases. UM is the first university in Macau to have entered the list.

The base offers STEM programmes to support science promotion in Macau and provides continuous training for teachers and students from local secondary schools, according to a statement issued by the university.

The base also advances science promotion in Macau by collaborating with all strata of society. So far, the base has organised sum-



mer camps, outreach programmes, the Liaison Professor to High School Project, the International Workshop on Research Innovation and STEM Education for Next Generation, science training workshops for teachers in primary and secondary schools, a technological innovation competition spon-

sored by the Bank of China, as well as various visits and science popularisation competitions.

The Macao Base for Primary & Secondary STEM Education was jointly established in June 2018 by UM and the Science and Technology Development Fund, among other institutes. **LV**

GOV'T REQUIRES STOCK CLERKS TO UNDERGO NAT EVERY SEVEN DAYS

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic situation in neighboring regions, the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) met with suppliers and supermarket operators yesterday to advise traders to arrange for their stock clerks to undergo a nucleic acid test (NAT) every seven days, as required by the Health Bureau. The DSED also requires traders to enhance the disinfection of goods after arrival in Macau to lower the risk of Covid-19 transmission through goods. There are around 8,900 stock clerks in the relevant businesses, with those who have received Covid-19 vaccines eligible to book free nucleic acid tests. They are required to complete their first test on or before March 19.

NEW POST FOR FIREFIGHTERS AT ILHA VERDE

The Ilha Verde Operational Post, located between the Estrada Marginal da Ilha Verde and Travessa do Crisântemo, was officially opened yesterday. The opening ceremony was presided over by the Chief Executive, Ho Iat Seng, who toured various facilities and the rescue and emergency vehicles at the post, accompanied by Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak. The new site, comprising four floors, has been staffed since February, with the Fire Bureau deploying 36 firefighters and five rescue and emergency vehicles to the site, operating in 24-hour shifts. The new post aims to effectively increase firefighting relief efforts in the Ilha Verde area by providing a quick response to deal with unforeseen incidents occurring in that area.

CE RENEWS MUR CHAIRMAN APPOINTMENT

The Chief Executive (CE) has renewed that appointment of Peter Lam as chairman of the Board of Directors of Macau Urban Renewal Limited (MUR) with effect from May 15, according to the Official Gazette. Lam has been MUR's chairman since May 2019. "The appointment of Peter is renewed, under an accumulation regime, as chairman of the Board of Directors of Macau Urban Renewal Limited for the period set out in the respective statutes," the order reads. In addition to renewing the appointment of the chairman, the CE also renewed the appointments of Sheng Li and Wang Yu as directors of the firm, with effect from May 24.

LAWYER SAYS MACAU LAWS ALREADY SUFFICIENT FOR BOND TRANSACTIONS

ANTHONY LAM

DESPITE the relevant laws not being reviewed since 1993, they are sufficient to allow or facilitate transactions of bonds in Macau, lawyer Calvin Tinlop Chui said yesterday.

Chui gave a presentation with his views on Macau's future bond market – from a legal perspective – at a lunch hosted by the British Chamber of Commerce in Macao (BritCham Macao).

In his view, the city is more than ready to commence transactions related to bonds. In fact, several offerings have been staged previously, including in 2018 and 2019.

For example, he noted that, in December 2018, Luso International Banking Limited, commonly known in the city as Luso Bank, issued a type of bond denominated in Hong Kong Dollars.

The issuance of this product followed a set of guidelines promulgated by the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM) specifically for local enterprises. The monetary value of the bonds issued amounted to HKD580 million.

He stressed that this was fully a Macau bond except for the currency of denomination — all parties taking part in the handling and issuance of the bonds were locally registered. The key highlight of this bond issuance, according to Chui, was that matters related to the product and its issuance were governed by the laws and courts of Macau.

A year after the issuance of the Luso Bank bonds, a Zhuhai-founded property developer, Huafa Group Co. Ltd., issued a US-dollar-denominated bond in Macau. The issuance was founded on laws governing the activities of mainland Chinese enterprises in Macau.

Although the Bank of China, Macau Branch and the ChongWa (Macao) Financial Asset Exchange Co., Ltd. (MOX) handled parts of the work on the issuance, Hong Kong firms and entities managed other parts. Hong Kong laws and courts prevailed in this offering.

Chui used these two examples to prove that not only is the law in Macau ready for the issuance of bonds, it is also ready to sell bonds that have competent jurisdictions outside of Macau.

These products were issued before the amendments to the commercial and financial laws in Macau which have been hinted at by local officials.

Previously, local senior of-



Calvin Tinlop Chui (right) and BritCham president Keith Buckley

ficials have reiterated that, in order to facilitate financial product transactions, laws in Macau have to be updated.

They have also said that, under a civil law system, financial markets cannot easily thrive in Macau as anything that financial institutions want to do requires legal grounds or permission.

In contrast, the senior officials said, a common law system allows a lot of room for interpretation, which is why financial markets have flourished in New York, London, Hong Kong and Singapore, where common law prevails.

Chui added his own views to those of the government officials, saying that there may be a historical factor at play. For example, over the past 100 years, all economies that prospered have been under common law systems. He did not dare to rule out the possibility of "coincidence" in this phenomenon.

Meanwhile, he believed that China, with its large economy, population and strong vitality, may be able to prove otherwise: that a jurisdiction operating un-

der a civil law system can have a vigorous financial market.

That said, he does not oppose the local government commencing a law review because many new financial concepts are now commonplace, but were not considered 30 years ago.

Chui commented that the development of Macau's financial law should be based on a firm commitment to uphold the constitutional order of the Special Administrative Region as established by the Constitution and the Basic Law.

He added that the target financial market should act as a guide to the legal construction. The development of Macau's financial law, moreover, should be based on the principle of "guiding the smooth flow of capital." The city should not block bonds issued in other currencies.

In addition, the city's financial services practitioners, including lawyers, should adopt a pragmatic mindset and appropriately incorporate the best practices of the industry in order to provide the best legal su-

pport and protection for the two major financial components, namely capital and the market.

Chui is a lawyer and partner at local firm Rato, Ling, Lei & Cortés, who specializes in commercial and corporate law, banking and finance, capital market, as well as bond issuance and listing.

He joined the firm in 2015 and became a partner in just six years. A member of the Bond Audit Committee of ChongWa (Macao) Financial Asset Exchange Co. Ltd., he is president of the Executive Committee of the Macau Financial Law Association and vice-president of the Macau Youth Law Society.

As well as holding a registration to practice in Macau, he is also registered in the State of New York in the U.S.

Holding a Master of Law from the University of Chicago, the 30-year-old teaches at the University of Macau and the City University of Macau.

He is the son of lawmaker José Chui Sai Peng and nephew of former Chief Executive Fernando Chui Sai On.

CE: 'Unswerving effort' to implement 'patriots governing Macau' principle

LYNZY VALLES

THE Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng has called for "unswerving effort" to ensure implementation of the "patriots governing Macau" principle and the safeguarding of the central government's overall jurisdiction regarding the SAR.

For the first time ever, the principle of "patriots governing Macau" was mentioned in the Central Government's Work Report, delivered to the recently concluded National People's Congress (NPC).

Ho made the remarks in a briefing held in the city to share information on policies and aspirations from the recent "Two Sessions" in Beijing, comprising plenary sessions of the NPC and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

According to the Chief Executive, the fact that the principle of "patriots governing Macau" was listed in Beijing's work report comes down to the central



government's determination and confidence in maintaining the "one country, two systems" principle. He added that it was also a new requirement raised by the central government at the present time.

"The MSAR government [will] resolutely adhere to 'patriots governing Macau,' to ensure poli-

tical power and [...] governance [are] firmly in the hands of patriots," the city's leader said.

At the opening of the fifth session of the 13th NPC annual plenary sessions in Beijing, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang highlighted the "patriots ruling Macau" principle in his speech, mentioning the need to imple-

ment the central government's full authority over both Hong Kong and Macau.

At his briefing, Ho said that there was a need for "unrelenting effort to coordinate social and economic recovery," and to maintain Covid-19 pandemic control measures, while stepping up adequate economic diversification.

Recently, the Macau Economic Association (MEA) forecast that the city's Prosperity Indices will see a rise in the period from February to May, although the association noted several uncertainties surrounding the recovery of the city's economy.

This includes the share prices of the six casino operators, which are significant in determining the city's Prosperity Index and have recently plummeted, dampening forecasts of the Prosperity Indices.

Forecasts previously made by the International Monetary Fund also noted that the SAR's gross domestic product is expected to surpass its pre-crisis level only in 2025, given the dep-

th of economic losses during the pandemic.


Although the city's recovery is likely to continue throughout 2022 due to strong fiscal support and the financial strength of the gaming operators, cushioning employment and consumption, Ho pledged that the government would continue to pursue stable economic development via modest progress for the remainder of 2022.

He said efforts would be made to ensure the implementation of planned policies and initiatives, and to strive for progress in relation to adequate economic diversification.

Further, city's leader said it would continue a series of welfare initiatives relating to education, healthcare, social security, and wealth partaking.

Work would be conducted to ensure employment of local residents and the "five-rung housing ladder" policy, a policy which provides home upgrading – for example, moving from the public housing segment to private housing.

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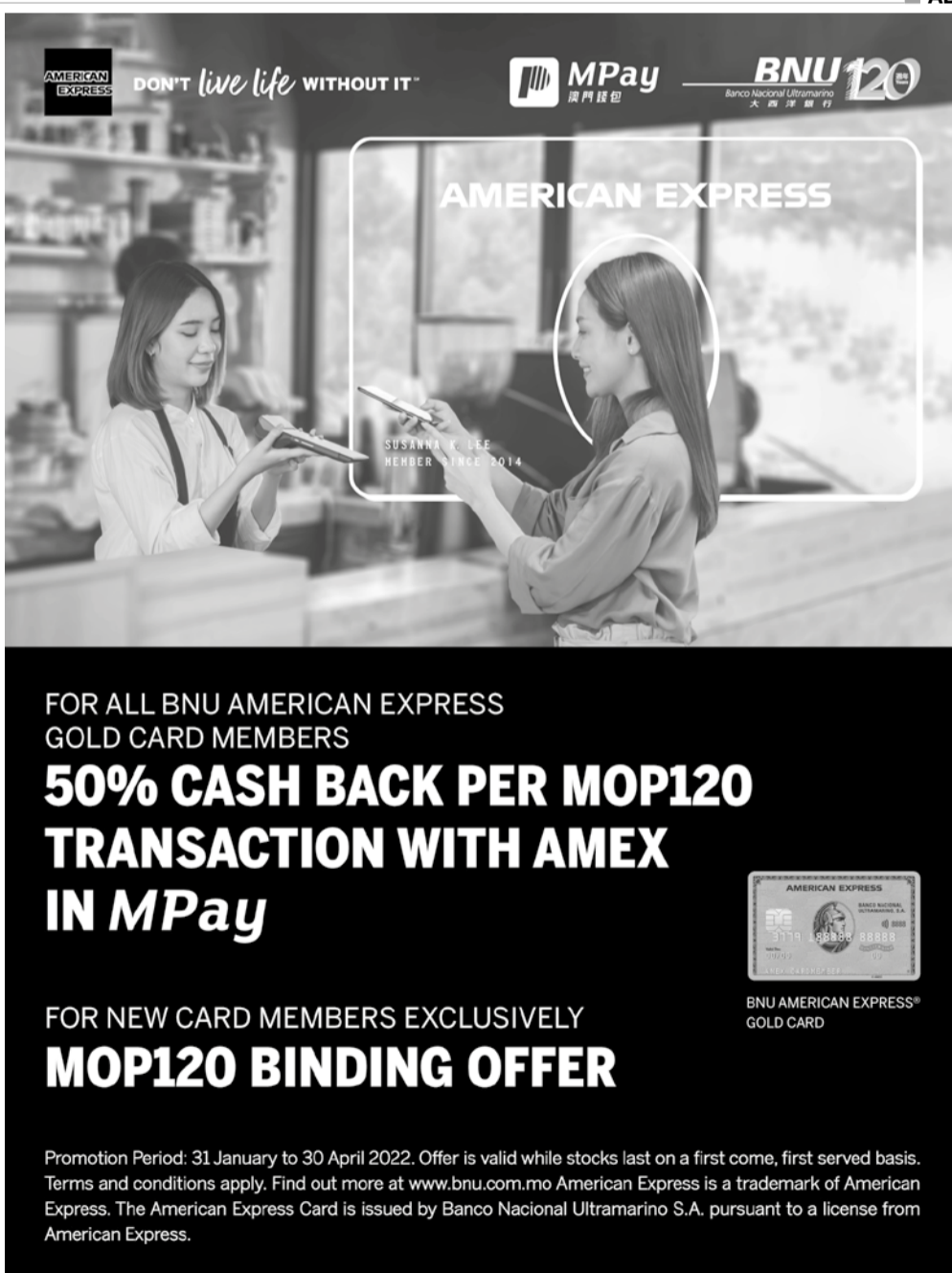
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PANDEMIC POSTCARD

COVID OUTBREAK LEAVES HONG KONG IN LIMBO

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HONG KONG

As a COVID-19 outbreak overwhelms Hong Kong, it's hard for its 7.4 million residents to know what's next.

Uncertainty is the only certainty as store shelves are stripped of goods, mainland Chinese companies throw up sprawling isolation and testing centers and the government sends mixed messages on whether it will lock down the population for a citywide mass testing.

Pandemic restrictions have sucked much of the energy out of a cosmopolitan city known for its neon lights and dense crowds. The latest closure, announced yesterday, is public beaches. An overburdened health system means those who get infected often have to fend for themselves. And the death toll, particularly among the elderly, keeps rising.

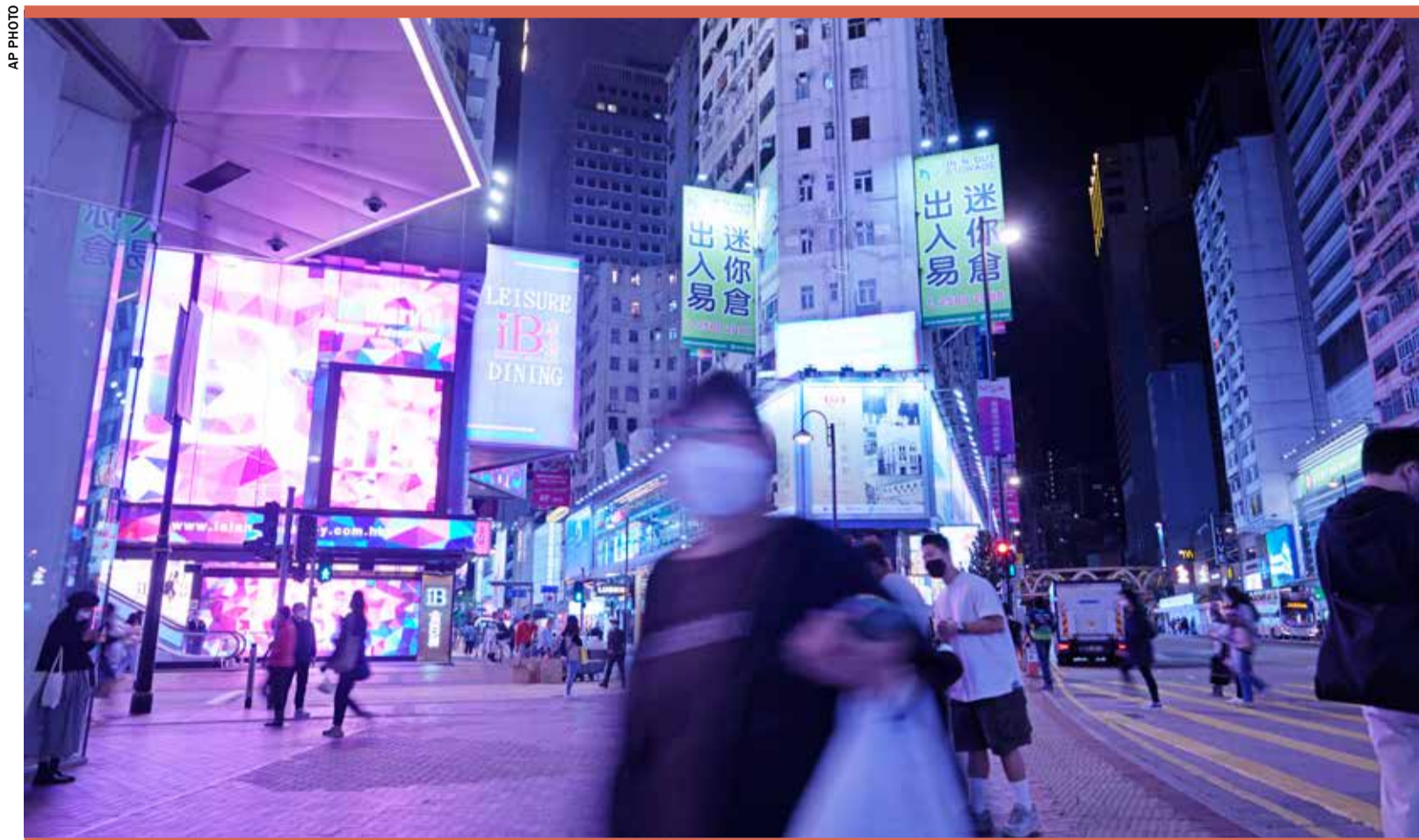
"It's a helpless situation," said Wong Wing-tsang, a single mother who spent days trying to get a doctor's appointment for her 10-year-old daughter who tested positive earlier this month. "We can only count on ourselves."

After keeping the virus mostly at bay for nearly two years, Hong Kong authorities have been unable to bring under control an outbreak driven by the highly transmissible omicron variant. So many people have been infected that there aren't enough drivers for the city buses and subways or clerks to keep some stores open.

China has responded by sending experts, medical staff and construction crews, expanding capacity but also raising fears that Hong Kong might adopt tough mainland-style restrictions, notably its lockdowns of entire cities.

Anxious residents have stockpiled daily necessities, as the government flip-flops on plans for mass testing and a possible lockdown. Infections among truck drivers interrupted shipments of meat and vegetables from mainland China, prompting worries of shortages and deliveries by sea.

"Honestly, I think government policies keep changing all the time and it's hard for residents to



follow," said Alison Hui, a Hong Kong resident. "We don't know if an announcement is real or not. It really makes us feel very worried."

Last month, officials announced a citywide, mass testing slated for March but said there were no plans for a lockdown. Days later, as cases surged, officials acknowledged that a lockdown was under consideration, prompting residents to wipe out supermarket shelves to stock up on food.

Then, two weeks after the February announcement, Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said that the citywide testing had taken a temporary backseat as authorities focused on reducing the number of deaths and critical cases, but she didn't say when the testing might happen.

Hong Kong was able to stamp out four earlier outbreaks with tough "zero COVID" restrictions that temporarily shuttered businesses, limited public gatherings and imposed entry curbs such as lengthy quarantine stays for arrivals and flight bans from countries deemed high-risk.

That has changed with the fifth wave. Since it began at the end of December, over 760,000 infections have been reported, with more than 4,300 deaths. Mortuaries are so full that refrigerated containers had to be set up to store some of the bodies.

Many more infections are likely going unaccounted for as residents self-test with rapid antigen tests and isolate at home. Researchers at the University of Hong Kong estimated that nearly 3.6 million people — about half of the city's population — have been infected as of March 14, based on modelling and data.

Lam, who has begun holding daily news conferences on the outbreak, said yesterday that it appears to have peaked on March 3 and then showed a downward trend, though it has leveled off since last Friday.

Mainland authorities have helped build emergency hospitals and inflatable testing labs. "This is an unprecedented situation," Lam said earlier, saying it had outgrown the capacity of the city government.

Wong, the single mother, said the only help she got from the government was a pack of five rapid antigen test kits. She sent her daughter to live with her mother-in-law, who was also infected, because there was no way to isolate at their home.

"I had no choice. I couldn't let her isolate at home alone, and we don't have enough bedrooms to separate us properly," she said.

The pandemic has brought many businesses to their knees. Some restaurants, once again restricted to takeout and delivery after 6 p.m., have shuttered for good.

Many shops in malls have temporarily closed — some for lack of business, others because they are understaffed as workers have tested positive. Hair salons were allowed to reopen recently, but gyms and bars were ordered shut in January and won't reopen until after mid-April at the earliest.

Fewer subway trains and buses are running as hundreds of employees contract the coronavirus. Some multinational companies have relocated outside of Hong

Kong, while others have temporarily sent senior executives elsewhere amid the uncertainty.

Mak Sin Chang, a Singaporean who has lived in Hong Kong for eight years, said he would consider leaving if he got a job elsewhere. He said the government should offer a road map for exiting the pandemic so people could see light at the end of the tunnel.

"Now we are all living in darkness, guided by the blind," he said.

It's a major setback from late last year, when Hong Kong had gone months without any locally spread cases and was working to get the quarantine requirement in mainland China lifted for people entering from Hong Kong.

"Everything was really starting to look up by the end of 2021, because we were looking forward to opening up with China," said Francis Lun, an investment manager and a veteran market commentator. "But all of a sudden, the omicron hit, and it's completely out of control now."

After two years, he said, "there's no end in sight." MDT/AP

US holds Chinese goods, cites possible North Korean labor

The U.S. customs agency says it is holding imported goods from Chinese sports brand Li Ning after an investigation indicated they were made by North Korean labor.

U.S. law prohibits imports of goods made in North Korea or by North Korean

citizens without proof they weren't made by forced labor, according to a notice from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection in Washington.

The goods will be forfeited if Li Ning Co. cannot provide "clear and convincing evidence" within 30

days that it wasn't made by convict, forced or indentured labor, the agency said.

It gave no details of the investigation, what goods were affected or their value.

Li Ning, founded by a former Chinese Olympic gymnast of the same name, is one of China's most pro-

minent athletic shoe and clothing brands.

Phone calls yesterday to its Beijing headquarters and investor relations office in Hong Kong weren't answered.

When asked, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian, said he

was not aware of that "specific situation."

"China is firmly opposed to any form of long-arm jurisdiction and unilateral sanctions," Zhao told reporters at a briefing.

Li Ning is among a group of Chinese and foreign shoe and clothing brands that

have been caught up in controversy over using materials and labor from China's northwestern region of Xinjiang. There, the ruling Communist Party is accused of detaining Muslim ethnic minorities and engaging in forced abortions and other abuses. MDT/AP



Seen from the South: A TV screen showing a news program reporting about North Korea's missile with file footage, at a train station in Seoul yesterday

KOREAS

Seoul: North missile exploded in air in failed launch

HYUNG-JIN KIM
& KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

A North Korean missile fired from its capital region exploded soon after liftoff in an apparent failed weapons launch yesterday, South Korea's military said, amid speculation that the North is preparing to launch its longest-range missile in its most significant provocation in years.

Details of the missile explosion weren't immediately known. But the launch, the 10th of its kind this year, shows North Korea is determined to press ahead on its push to modernize its weapons arsenal and pressure its rivals into making concessions amid dormant denuclearization talks.

The North Korean missile blew up while it was flying at an altitude of less than 20 kilometers, a South Korean military official said requesting anonymity because he wasn't publicly authorized to speak to media on the issue. He said the cause of the explosion wasn't known.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff earlier said that the launch was made from the Pyongyang region around 9:30 a.m. but gave no other details.

Lee Choon Geun, an honorary research fellow at South Korea's Science and Technology Policy Institute, said the missile likely exploded less than a minute after its launch. He said if the missile's

toxic fuels fell on civilian residential areas in North Korea, they would likely cause a major health impact. There was no immediate outside report of such damages in North Korea.

The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command later said that North Korea had fired a ballistic missile but didn't say whether it was a failed launch. A command statement said the launch didn't pose an immediate threat to U.S. territory and its allies but called on North Korea to refrain from further destabilizing acts.

Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told reporters that a flight of a ballistic missile has not been confirmed and that Tokyo is working with Washington and Seoul to further analyze what happened.

Experts say past failures have moved North Korea closer to its goal of acquiring a viable nuclear arsenal that could threaten the American homeland. Of eight "Musudan" intermediate-range missiles tests in 2016, only one of those launches was seen by outside analysts as successful, which led to debates of whether North Korea's path toward ICBMs had been cut off.

However, the North in 2017 flew more powerful intermediate-range missiles over Japan and conducted three successful tes-

t-flights of ICBMs that demonstrated a potential range to strike deep into the U.S. mainland.

North Korea's successful satellite launches in 2012 and 2016 — which were viewed by the U.N. as disguised tests of its long-range missile technology — also followed repeated failures.

The U.S. and South Korean militaries said last week that North Korea had tested an ICBM system in two recent launches, referring to the developmental Hwasong-17 missile, the North's biggest weapon, which it unveiled during a military parade in October 2020.

Observers say North Korea aims to boost its ICBM capability while trying to place its first functioning spy satellite into orbit

In the two recent launches on Feb. 27 and March 5, the North Korean missiles flew medium-range distances, and experts have said North Korea likely tested the first stage rocket of the Hwasong-17 missile. It wasn't clear if yesterday's launch also involved parts of the Hwasong-17.

After its two previous launches, North Korea said it had tes-

ted cameras and other systems for a spy satellite and released what it said were photos taken from space during one of the two tests, but it didn't confirm what rocket or missile it launched.

Observers say North Korea aims to boost its ICBM capability while trying to place its first functioning spy satellite into orbit. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has vowed to acquire an improved ICBM and a spy satellite among an array of sophisticated weapons systems he says his country needs to cope with what he calls American hostility.

Earlier, North Korea's state news agency released photos of a smiling Kim, clad in a long black leather coat, visiting a towering apartment complex under construction on the outskirts of Pyongyang. The news agency didn't say when Kim was there, but it typically reports on his public activities one or two days after they occur.

The Hwasong-17 could potentially fly up to 15,000 kilometers, far enough to strike anywhere in the U.S. and beyond. The 25-meter missile, which was shown again at a defense exhibition in Pyongyang last year, has yet to be test-launched.

The three ICBMs that North Korea tested in 2017 were the Hwasong-14 and Hwasong-15.

Some analysts say developing a larger missile could mean the country is trying to arm its long-range weapons with multiple warheads to overcome missile defense systems.

If North Korea makes a new ICBM launch, it would be its highest-profile weapons tests since its third and last ICBM launch in November 2017.

North Korea may call its potential new ICBM test a rocket launch to place a reconnaissance satellite in space, not a weapons test. That could invite condemnation but likely no fresh U.N. sanctions, some analysts say, since Russia and China wield vetoes on the Security Council and would oppose it.

Other North Korean missiles tested this year were mostly shorter-range, nuclear-capable weapons which place South Korea and Japan, both key U.S. allies, within striking distance. In January alone, North Korea carried out seven rounds of missile tests, a record number of monthly tests since Kim took power in late 2011.

U.S.-led diplomacy aimed at persuading North Korea to abandon its nuclear program collapsed in 2019 due to wrangling over U.S.-led sanctions on the North. Washington has urged North Korea to return to talks without any preconditions, but Pyongyang has rejected such overtures saying the United States must first withdraw its hostile policies.

In January, North Korea hinted at lifting its four-year moratorium on ICBM and nuclear tests. South Korea's Defense Ministry said Friday it detected signs that North Korea likely is restoring some of the tunnels at its nuclear testing site that it detonated ahead of the now-dormant nuclear diplomacy. **MDT/AP**

PUTIN'S WAR

Russia sees 'business-like spirit' in Ukraine talks

AS Russia's offensive pressed closer to Ukraine's seat of government, missiles and artillery slammed into high-rise apartment towers in Kyiv yesterday, setting buildings ablaze and leaving smoke hanging over the capital and its suburbs.

Russian forces escalated their bombardment of Ukrainian cities, including the city of Kharkiv and besieged port of Mariupol, intensifying the war's humanitarian toll and leaving cities smoldering.

But diplomatic activity is quickening, as well.

Russian and Ukrainian negotiators agreed to meet again yesterday after a fourth round of talks that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described as "more realistic" than previous meetings. He urged patience as officials prepared to return to the negotiating table.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that a "business-like spirit" has emerged in the diplomatic talks, which he described as focused on a so-called "neutral status" for Ukraine's military.

Zelenskyy meanwhile prepared to make a rare and direct appeal to members of the U.S. Congress, an attempt to marshal greater Western support against Russia's crushing invasion.

SHELLING AND FIGHTING OVER KYIV

Shrapnel from an artillery shell smashed into an apartment in the center of Kyiv early yesterday, wiping out the building's top floor and sparking a fire that sent plumes of smoke rising over the capital's skyline. Emergency services reported two victims from the blaze, without specifying if they were killed or injured.

The leaping flames and thick smoke that have engulfed Kyiv apartment towers in recent days pointed to a possible new stage in the war, puncturing a sense of calm that had returned to the capital after Russia's initial advance.

Fighting continued to rage in Kyiv's suburbs, depriving thousands of heat and clean water. Russian



troops were seeking to sever the capital from transport routes and supply lines as they planned a wider assault, a local official said.

A Russian airstrike slammed into the town of Markhalivka southwest of the capital and destroyed residential apartments, authorities said. The extent of the damage remained unclear.

Russia now occupies the city of Ivankiv, 80 kilometers north of Kyiv, and controls the surrounding region on the border with Belarus, local officials added.

A ceaseless barrage of strikes pounded the northeastern city of Kharkiv close to the Russian border that has suffered repeated bombardment. Ukrainian forces continued to thwart Russia's incursion into the heart of the city, authorities said.

Powerful explosions meanwhile thundered in the region around Kherson, a strategic Black Sea port, and near a train station in the southeastern energy-production hub of Zaporizhzhia.

The region "is on the verge of a humanitarian catastrophe," Zelenskyy's office warned.

EU ENVOYS MEET ZELENSKYY, US AID INCOMING

The leaders of three European countries, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia, returned yesterday from a risky trip to the besieged Ukrainian capital to show their support. They met with Zelenskyy and expressed their hope that Ukraine would achieve its

aspirations to join the European Union as fires burned in the wreckage wrought by Russian strikes outside.

Following Zelenskyy's scheduled virtual address to U.S. Congress today [Macau time], President Joe Biden is expected to announce that the U.S. is delivering \$800 million in new military assistance to Ukraine, according to a White House official. The sum includes money for anti-armor and air-defense weapons, bringing the total announced in the last week alone to \$1 billion.

Biden also plans to travel to Europe next week for face-to-face talks with European leaders about the Russian invasion, and will attend an extraordinary NATO summit in Brussels. NATO has been bolstering its eastern flank with troops and equipment to deter Russia from invading any of its members.

Around the world, governments continued to punish Moscow for its invasion. The U.S. targeted the assets of Russian military officials in an additional round of sanctions. The European Union imposed sanctions on Chelsea FC owner Roman Abramovich and announced new measures to deny Russian oligarchs high-end luxury goods.

THE RUSSIAN 'HUMANITARIAN' RESOLUTION

Russia circulated a proposed U.N. Security Council resolution demanding protection for civilians "in vulnerable situations" in Ukraine and safe passage for humanitarian aid and people

seeking to leave the country, but it make no mention of Russia's responsibility for the war against its smaller neighbor.

The draft resolution endorses U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' call for dialogue and negotiations and calls for a negotiated cease-fire to rapidly evacuate "all civilians," and underscores "the need for the parties concerned to agree on humanitarian pauses to this end." But it never identifies "the parties concerned."

The draft expresses "grave concern" at the deteriorating humanitarian situation and reports of civilian casualties in and around Ukraine, and strongly condemns "attacks directed against civilians and civilian objects, including indiscriminate shelling."

Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia told reporters the resolution was being put in a final form, and a Russian diplomat said a vote could take place as early today [Macau time].

Britain's U.N. Ambassador Barbara Woodward tweeted that the Russian draft "has a few glaring omissions. For example, the fact that Russia is the aggressor here, and it is Russia's invasion driving this humanitarian crisis."

The Russian draft was circulated a day after France and Mexico announced that a humanitarian resolution on Ukraine they cosponsored, which had been discussed for two weeks in the 15-member Security Council was being moved to the 193-member General Assembly. MDT/AP

this day in history

1968 ANTI-VIETNAM DEMO TURNS VIOLENT



More than 200 people have been arrested after thousands of demonstrators clashed in an anti-Vietnam war protest outside the United States embassy in London.

The St John Ambulance Brigade said it treated 86 people for injuries. Fifty were taken to hospital including up to 25 police officers.

The trouble followed a big rally in Trafalgar square, when an estimated 10,000 demonstrated against American action in Vietnam and British support for the United States.

The mood at the rally was described as good humoured. The violence broke out when the protesters marched to the US embassy in Grosvenor Square.

The embassy was surrounded by hundreds of police. They stood shoulder to shoulder to cordon off the part of the square closest to the embassy.

Tensions rose as the crowd refused to back off and mounted officers rode at the demonstrators.

The protesters broke through the police ranks onto the lawn of the embassy, tearing up the plastic fence and uprooting parts of a hedge.

During a protracted battle, stones, earth, firecrackers and smoke bombs were thrown.

One officer was treated for a reported serious spinal injury, another for a neck injury.

One officer had his hat knocked off and was struck continuously on the back of the head with a stick from a banner as he clung, head down, to his horse's neck.

Earlier the actress Vanessa Redgrave was allowed to enter the embassy with three supporters to deliver a protest.

She had been one of the speakers at the rally in Trafalgar Square.

Labour MP Peter Jackson, has said he will be tabling a private question for answer by the Home Secretary about what he called "police violence".

He told The Times newspaper: "I was particularly outraged by the violent use of police horses, who charged into the crowd even after they had cleared the street in front of the embassy."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

There was another big anti-Vietnam war demonstration on 27 October 1968. An estimated 25,000 took part in the march and once again trouble flared outside the US embassy in Grosvenor Square.

But security was very tight. There were 1,000 police outside the embassy and officers lined the streets of the march to prevent a repeat of the trouble in March. The last American troops left Vietnam on 29 March 1973.

The following year there were frequent violations of the peace treaty.

In 1975, fullscale warfare resumed between North and South Vietnam -without American intervention. In 1976 the first elections were held to a National Assembly, finally reuniting North and South.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
You can mix business with pleasure to get favorable results. Remember that no one can walk through your door if there's someone standing in the doorway. Take time to deal with the concerns of children.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Travel for business purposes may bring the highest returns. Take a look at yourself and prepare to make those changes you've been contemplating.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
You can help a close friend find solutions to personal problems. Pleasure trips should be on your agenda. You may divulge private information without realizing it today.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Changes to your self image will be to your benefit as long as you don't over pay. Try making some changes to your appearance and your attitude that will reinforce just that.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
You may have the day off but your thoughts will be on your work and your cash situation. A quiet restful day just staying in bed or catching up on reading will be your best bet.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Your changing philosophies may lead you into new circles and open doors that will give you a unique outlook on life. Try to avoid any drastic decisions concerning personal legal matters.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Don't point your finger unjustly at others. Don't overspend on entertainment, on children, or make poor investments. Get involved in creative projects that will enhance your earning power.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
You can win points if you present your ideas today. You may find that someone you live with may be irritable; you're best to leave them alone. You should put your efforts into creative projects.

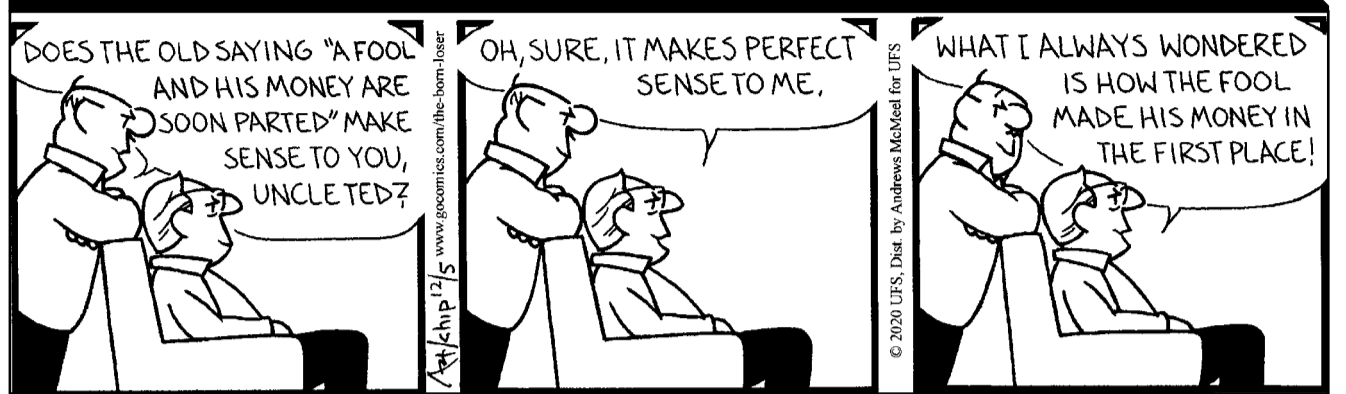
SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Your lover may disappoint you in such a way that estrangement will follow. Opposition is present and you should be prepared to counteract it as best you can.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Get proper medical attention and confront your situation decisively. You should not be concerned with coworkers who insist on spreading rumors. You may end up being blamed if anything goes wrong.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Try not to overspend on luxury items. You can open up to your mate and let them know what you expect out of this relationship. You will be emotional with regard to your personal life.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Your unique approach to life will interest others. You may be tempted to spend too much on entertainment or luxury items. Your family may be feeling neglected and unloved.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	6	13	cloudy
Changchun	-6	0	cloudy
Chengdu	19	25	rain
Chongqing	19	28	rain
Fuzhou	16	25	overcast
Guangzhou	19	26	cloudy
Guiyang	15	25	rain
Haikou	21	29	cloudy
Hangzhou	14	29	overcast
Harbin	-5	0	cloudy
Hefei	14	27	overcast
Nanjing	16	29	cloudy
Shanghai	14	27	overcast
Taipei	19	23	cloudy
Wuhan	16	26	rain
Hong Kong	22	25	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	-12	0	overcast
Frankfurt	4	13	cloudy
Paris	4	14	overcast
London	5	10	rain
New York	-1	5	clear

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Rejection power; 5- Ski lift; 9- Chadic language; 13- Sidestep, circumvent; 15- The munchies, e.g.; 16- Folk singer Burl; 17- Tennis's Monica; 18- Classic autos; 19- Frat party purchases; 20- Half a fly; 21- Stadium section; 23- Develop; 25- Able was ____; 26- Wise guy; 27- Ten plus five; 30- "Aladdin" monkey; 31- Religion of the Muslims; 32- A type of interpolation, transform, or map; 37- False god; 38- Piece of music written for a solo instrument; 40- Member of a great Peruvian people; 41- Brief summary; 43- Gangster Lansky; 44- Fashion designer's monogram; 45- Elaborate fabric; 47- Stellar; 50- As to; 51- Feathered fisher; 52- Golfer Aoki; 53- Gobble up; 56- Desperate; 57- "____ She Lovely?"; 59- Have a feeling; 61- It's a thought; 62- Go sky-high; 63- Born before, senior churchman; 64- Nair rival; 65- Bandleader Puente; 66- This ____ outrage!

DOWN 1- Sleeveless garment; 2- Nights before; 3- Story; 4- Shelley's "____ to the West Wind"; 5- Large soup dish; 6- ____ Fox; 7- Back in time; 8- To be similar to; 9- Member of a motorcycle gang; 10- Not concealed; 11- Having long gams; 12- Being, to Brutus; 14- Prize; 22- Dander; 24- Island in central Hawaii; 25- Author Calvino; 26- Stated; 27- Little lies; 28- ____ old chap; 29- Custardy dessert; 32- Student's conveyance; 33- Family tree member; 34- "Orinoco Flow" singer; 35- Scored 100 on; 36- Hard to find; 38- Editorial writer; 39- Work the soil; 42- Combustible heap; 43- Sullenly ill-humored; 45- European-style restaurant; 46- Retrovirus component; 47- Line in a play directed to the audience; 48- Carousel; 49- Rare delight; 51- Thor's father; 52- ____ the finish; 53- Terminates; 54- On the ocean; 55- Small gull; 58- ____ -disant (self-styled); 60- Lilly of pharmaceuticals;

Yesterday's solution

A	M	A	S	A	D	O	B	E	A	U	N	T
W	I	S	E	R	E	T	R	O	Y	R	I	S
O	D	O	R	S	C	O	R	N	T	A	T	A
L	I	F	E	L	I	K	E	T	E	L	E	R
T	R	E	E	S	S	O	N	S				
A	T	L	A	S	T	H	R	O	T	T	L	E
N	E	E	D	S	S	O	I	L	S	A	A	R
D	A	M	E	T	R	I	V	A	T	I	E	
E	S	O	A	T	E	A	T	F	R	A	N	C
S	E	N	T	I	N	E	L	E	F	O	R	E
P	I	E	C	E	A	D	A	R	A	C	L	A
P	I	E	C	E	T	E	L	L	A	B	L	E
E	N	D	O	A	C	E	T	O	B	E	A	R
T	R	I	M	S	E	N	N	A	L	T	D	S
S	E	T	A	K	O	D	A	K	E	A	S	T

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Emergency calls 999	Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
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	



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CHINA TRIES TO CALM MARKETS BY PLEDGING SUPPORT FOR ECONOMY

CHINA'S government tried yesterday to reassure jittery investors by promising support for its struggling real estate industry, internet companies and entrepreneurs who want to raise money abroad after regulatory crackdowns caused stock prices to plunge.

Regulators should issue market-friendly policies to "invigorate the economy," officials said at a Cabinet meeting led by Vice Premier Liu He, President Xi Jinping's top economic adviser, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

The ruling Communist Party is trying to revive economic growth that slid to 4% in the final quarter of 2021, compared with the full year's expansion of 8.1%. That was triggered by a collapse in construction and housing sales after Beijing launched a crackdown on debt in real estate that officials worry is dangerously high.

The economy also is under pressure from anti-coronavirus measures that shut down the southern business center of Shenzhen and other cities. That has fueled worries about possible



disruption of manufacturing and trade.

China's No. 2 leader, Premier Li Keqiang, said last week the government hopes to generate as many as 13 million new jobs this year but faces "many difficulties and challenges." Forecasters say the ruling Communist Party is likely to struggle to meet its official 5.5% economic growth target, the lowest since the 1990s.

The main stock market indexes in Shanghai and Hong Kong have slid by more than 10% this year after the debt crackdown. Tighter control of internet industries and

a spat with Washington about oversight of Chinese companies with shares traded on U.S. exchanges have added to pressures on the leadership.

Liu "spoke to stop the stock market rout," Larry Hu and Xinyu Ji of Macquarie Group said in a report.

"The tone of the meeting is strong, suggesting that policymakers are deeply concerned about the recent market rout," they said.

Share prices of some companies including e-commerce giant Alibaba Group have fallen

by almost half on foreign stock exchanges since the start of last year after they were hit by anti-monopoly and other investigations.

Chinese stock markets rebounded after the announcement. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index soared 9.1% while the Shanghai Composite index advanced 3.5%.

Hong Kong-traded shares in Alibaba jumped 25.8%. Tencent Holdings, operator of the popular WeChat message service, surged 23%. Livestreaming site Kuaishou Technology added nearly 34%.

Xi's government has promised to support entrepreneurs who create China's new jobs and wealth. But companies and investors are uneasy following a spate of anti-monopoly and data security investigations, multimillion-dollar fines and public criticism of internet companies.

More broadly, world markets are in a particularly volatile state given the uncertainties brought by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has pushed commodity prices sharply higher and raised risks of still more disruptions to trade at a time when economies

are just beginning to recover from the pandemic.

The meeting of the Cabinet's financial stability committee promised to "propose supporting measures" for the real estate market, Xinhua said, though it gave no details of possible initiatives.

Housing sales and construction, industries that support millions of jobs, plunged last year after Beijing's debt crackdown. The government has tried to revive demand by telling banks to lend more to home buyers, but economists say Beijing is moving cautiously to avoid igniting a rise in housing costs and debt.

The agency that regulates Chinese banks and insurers promised in a separate announcement to encourage lenders to "support development of the real economy" by maintaining moderate loan growth.

It promised to support "healthy development" of real estate while repeating the official slogan that housing is "for living, not for speculation."

The agency said China's state-owned insurers would be encouraged to increase investment in stock markets.

The government "will promote the development" of internet industries and improve their competitiveness, Xinhua said, while giving no details. MDT/AP

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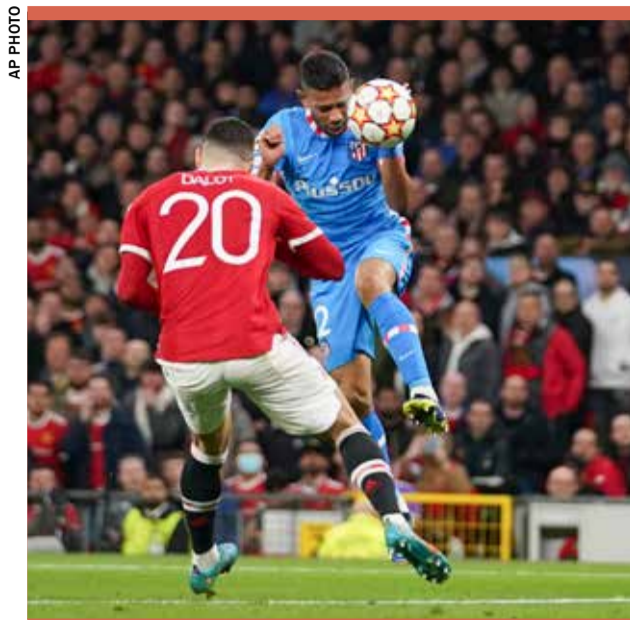
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FIVE-SEASON DROUGHT MAN UNITED KNOCKED OUT OF CL BY ATLETICO MADRID

ROB HARRIS,
MANCHESTER

MAN UTD 0, ATLETICO 1

EXPENSIVE mediocrity confirmed: Manchester United's trophy drought completes a fifth season.

The last path to a title was ended at an Old Trafford now accustomed to letdowns as United was knocked out of the Champions League in a 1-0 loss to Atlético Madrid yesterday.

In a tight and tense game, Renan Lodi made the difference by scoring his first goal in the competition in his 25th appearance, meeting Antoine Griezmann's cross with a header after being left unmarked at the far post by defender Diogo Dalot in the 41st minute.

"I wasn't playing a few months ago, but everything has changed now and I'm very happy with that," the 23-year-old left wing-back Lodi said. "It's a tough role. I'm working at it, learning."

So often the team's savior, David de Gea was beaten. The goalkeeper feels the pain more, being the only starter still in the team from the end of the trophy-filled Alex Ferguson era in 2013.

"Of course it's not good enough," De Gea said. "It's hard for the club, for us and the fans. This is where we are at the moment. It is a difficult situation, but we have to keep fighting."

Cristiano Ronaldo departed Old Trafford before Ferguson retired and the

malaise kicked in. The 37-year-old star returned this season — after collecting trophies at Real Madrid and Juventus — to be the difference-maker.

Rather than dazzling, as he did with Saturday's hat trick against Tottenham, Ronaldo didn't manage a single shot against the Spanish champions.

Instead, United was left relying on defender Raphaël Varane attempting to equalize in the second half, and his header was kept out by Jan Oblak. United could find no way past the goalkeeper three weeks after a 1-1 draw in Madrid that counted for nothing with away-goals no longer carrying an advantage.

"For me, Oblak is the best goalkeeper in the world," Atlético captain Koke said. "He's shown it once again tonight."

Atlético showed the blueprint to grab a win away, by scoring from one of only three shots on target.

"We suffered when we had to," said Rodrigo De Paul, whose long-range shot was blocked by De Gea in the first half, "and hit when we had the chance here at a great stadium, against a great team."

Diego Simeone, a two-time Champions League runner-up, leads Atlético back into the quarterfinals like in 2020. Europe is the platform for Atlético to raise its game this season, with the team clinging onto fourth place domestically after winning the title last season. **MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL

Benfica stuns Ajax to advance to CL quarterfinals

AJAX 0, BENFICA 1

UNABLE to win at home yet again, Ajax's great Champions League run has suddenly ended.

Ajax couldn't halt a 26-year winless streak at home in the knockout rounds of the European competition yesterday [Macau time], losing 1-0 to Benfica to waste a perfect campaign in the group stage.

Darwin Núñez scored late and Benfica reached the quarterfinals for the first time in six years. Núñez found the net with a 77th-minute header off a free kick from the right side to help Benfica make it to the last eight for the fifth time.

The teams had drawn 2-2 in the first leg in Portugal.

Ajax coach Erik ten Hag said he was "hoping for a moment of magic" in the end, but it never happened.

"Our positional play was excellent," he said. "We were very good on the ball. I gave my players a big compliment. Maybe only the creativity was lacking. So it's bitter that one moment of inattention means you're eliminated."

Ajax was one of three teams that won all six group-stage matches, along with Liverpool and Bayern. The Dutch club was in the last 16 for the second time since 2006, though it reached the semifinals the last time it got this far three seasons ago. It didn't win any of its home games in the knockout stage then either, with its last such victory coming against Borussia Dortmund in the 1996 quarterfinals.

Ajax had already equaled its most prolific Champions League campaign with 22 goals but struggled to capitalize on its chances despite dominating in Amsterdam. It had 16 total attempts against four by the visitors, which focused on defending well from the start.

Striker Sébastien Haller, the first player to score in his opening seven Champions League games and the quickest to reach 11 goals in the competition's history, had a goal disallowed for of-



Benfica's Darwin Nunez scores his side's win goal

side early in the game.

"If we defend well, we know that in attack we have great players who can find the space to score at any time," Benfica defender Nicolás Otamendi said.

"We knew we couldn't give

any chance to a team like Ajax."

Two-time European champion Benfica, which began this year's campaign in the third qualifying round, was eliminated by Bayern Munich in the 2016

quarterfinals.

The win extended Benfica's unbeaten run in all competitions to eight games, though it was coming off a 1-1 home draw against Vizela in the Portuguese league on Friday. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

World Views

Matthew Pauly, Michigan State University
 MDT/THE CONVERSATION

KYIV HAS FACED ADVERSITY BEFORE - AND A STRONGER IDENTITY GREW IN RESPONSE

This is not the first time residents of Kyiv have fought to defend the city from an encroaching, larger army.

On Jan. 30, 1918, a force made up primarily of military cadets and hastily armed students took up positions at Kruty, a railway stop northeast of Kyiv, to defend the capital city of the Ukrainian People's Republic against Soviet Russia. The republic had only declared formal independence a week earlier to rebuff aspirations by Vladimir Lenin's Bolshevik Party to control Ukraine.

By the end of the day, the young defenders at Kruty had succumbed to Soviet Russia's superior Red Army. With the help of aligned local Bolshevik militias, the Reds took Kyiv itself on Feb. 7.

The history of Ukraine following the battle for Kyiv is complex and messy. But as a historian of Ukraine, my research has found that this first period of modern independence from 1918 to 1920 is central to a national narrative that maintains Ukraine is a sovereign country, separate from Russia.

This sense of identity makes occupation a hard task, as the Soviets found out in 1918 following Kyiv's fall.

With the Red Army in possession of Kyiv, the government of the Ukrainian People's Republic took refuge in the northern city of Zhytomyr. Its representatives signed a peace agreement with the former Russian Empire's opponents in the ongoing First World War, the Central Powers, and German and Austrian soldiers proceeded to push the Red Army out of Ukraine.

Germany put in place a more pliant government in Kyiv. But after the Kaiser's army collapsed in defeat on the Western Front, Ukrainian forces under the leadership of a former journalist-turned-soldier, Symon Petliura, retook parts of Ukraine, including Kyiv, only for the city to be occupied again by the Red Army in February 1919.

An army comprising volunteer troops, Cossack units and bands of peasants - some of whom shirked their government's command and committed pogroms against the country's Jewish minority - fought for the restoration of dominion over Ukraine. After concluding a hasty alliance with Poland, the Ukrainian People's Republic briefly recaptured the capital with the help of Polish forces.

But in June 1920, the Red Army subjugated Kyiv for the final and last time.

Lenin was forced to concede a need to accommodate what he described as Ukrainian "national feelings" in the development of the USSR. The Ukrainian language was given equal standing in the early years of the Soviet Union, and Communists in Ukraine had greater say in the management of their republic under the nominally federal system than they would have had in a unitary state proposed by Lenin's detractors.

The Ukrainian national movement compelled these compromises. Ukraine - Soviet or otherwise - was not created by "Bolshevik, communist Russia" as Vladimir Putin claimed in a recent public distortion of history that has served as a justification for invasion.

If Kyiv passes again to Russian forces, as it did multiple times between 1918 and 1920, history suggests this control will likely not last.

A sense of Ukrainian identity has only grown stronger in the century since young men gathered at Kruty to defend Kyiv.

Now, Ukrainians of multiple ethnicities and linguistic preferences have taken up arms to defend a potent, pluralistic and democratic vision of their homeland.

It is unclear when or if Russia will occupy Kyiv. But Ukrainian defense of the city has been fierce.

The national movement in Ukraine in 1918 to 1920 was strong enough to complicate, if not defy, Russian and Bolshevik control. And the Ukrainian national idea did not evaporate under Soviet rule. It is likely to animate a tenacious resistance today.

[Abridged]

Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced plans to fully lift coronavirus restrictions on March 21 as new infections driven by the highly contagious omicron variant slow.

The COVID-19 restrictions currently in place in 18 prefectures, including the Tokyo area, will end on Monday as planned, Kishida said at a news conference yesterday, as his government seeks to cautiously expand consumer activity to help the badly hurt economy get back on track.

It will be the first time Japan has been free of virus restrictions

since early January. The plan will be formally adopted after an experts' panel endorses it today.

Daily caseloads have steadily declined in Japan in recent weeks after surging to new highs exceeding 100,000 in early February. New cases have fallen by about half.

The lifting of restrictions will allow more domestic travel, as well as parties and larger gatherings for people with vaccination records and negative virus tests, Kishida said.

But Japan is not opening its border to foreign tourists yet.



NEW ZEALAND TO 'WELCOME THE WORLD BACK' AS TOURISM RESTARTS

NICK PERRY, WELLINGTON

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said yesterday her nation was "ready to welcome the world back" with most tourists allowed to return by May as the nation continues to ease its coronavirus restrictions.

The announcement bought forward the date that tourists from countries including the U.S., Canada, Britain and much of Europe can visit from the previously announced date of October.

International tourism used to account for about 20% of New Zealand's foreign income and more than 5% of GDP.

But when the pandemic began, New Zealand enacted some of the world's strictest border controls and tourism evaporated. The measures were initially credited with saving thousands of lives and allowed New Zealand to eliminate or contain several outbreaks.

But with the omicron variant now spreading throughout the country, the border restrictions

have become largely irrelevant.

Ardern said the move would boost the economy.

"Closing our border was one of the first actions we took to stop COVID-19 over two years ago, and its reopening will spur our economic recovery throughout the remainder of the year," she said.

Under the new timeline, tourists from Australia will be able to visit from April 12 and tourists from other visa-waiver countries can visit from May 1. Tourists from non-waiver countries - including India and China - will need to wait longer, unless they already have valid visitor visas.

Tourists must be vaccinated and test negative for the virus before leaving their home country and again after arriving in New Zealand.

"I know from visiting tourism operators, and talking to their staff, how tough these past two years have been," Ardern said. "And not only because of the massive loss of tourism revenue, but because we lost something we derived so much

of our identity from."

New Zealand is renowned for its beautiful scenery and adrenaline-inducing adventure tourism. The announcement comes as a timely boost to ski fields trying to plan for the upcoming Southern Hemisphere winter.

"Tourism operators finally have confirmation they can get back to business," said Ann-Marie Johnson, a spokesperson for Tourism Industry Aotearoa. "Tourism was the first industry to be affected by the pandemic and will be the last to recover. Tourism operators both large and small have made huge sacrifices but can now focus on rebuilding their businesses."

Over the past couple of weeks, New Zealand has been reporting about 20,000 new virus cases each day, its biggest outbreak since the pandemic began. The nation's COVID-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins yesterday became the latest high-profile person to test positive.

But experts expect the omicron outbreak to fade quickly from its peak, as it has in many other countries. **MDT/AP**



USA Mercedes-Benz has opened a new electric vehicle battery factory near Tuscaloosa, Alabama, that will create up to 600 new jobs. The German automaker said that the plant in Bibb County opened a few months before Mercedes plans to start making two all-electric SUVs at a large assembly plant in nearby Tuscaloosa. The new plant will supply batteries for the EQS and EQE SUVs, which will be built for sale in the U.S. and for exports, the company said in a statement.



USA Several Republicans competing for the party's nomination to run for U.S. Senate in Ohio are facing scrutiny for their ties to Russia as the country intensifies its war against Ukraine. Much of the attention has focused on former Ohio Republican Party Chair Jane Timken (pictured), whose husband's family founded a company that does business in Russia. But other candidates in the race to succeed retiring GOP Sen. Rob Portman, including J.D. Vance and Mike Gibbons, also have links to business deals in Russia that could become vulnerabilities in the May 3 primary.

Sudan The U.N. Security Council extended the mandate for the 19,000-strong U.N. peacekeeping force in South Sudan for a year yesterday [Macau time], while demanding an immediate end to fighting in the country and political dialogue to advance a plan to prevent the world's newest nation from returning to civil war. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 13-0, with Russia and China abstaining, both calling the measure unbalanced for focusing too much on human rights in the east African nation.