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**A LOCAL WOMAN IS ACCUSED OF PERFORMING A SCAM TARGETING TNRS BY PRETENDING TO BE A REAL ESTATE AGENT WITH APARTMENT TO RENT** P5

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**MU5735: SEARCH FINDS 49,000 PIECES OF PLANE IN CHINA EASTERN CRASH** P6



**China** A pregnant U.S. citizen was held in China for eight months and threatened that she couldn't leave unless she convinced her mother to return to China, authorities revealed yesterday as they criminally charged a man who they said enlisted a U.S. law enforcement officer and others to help repatriate Chinese individuals facing trouble at home. Sun Hoi Ying, 53, was charged in a criminal complaint in Manhattan federal court with failing to register as an agent of the People's Republic of China as he allegedly pursued about 35 individuals described as fugitives from China.



**Chinese** Australian journalist Cheng Lei (pictured) went on trial in Beijing yesterday on espionage charges, with diplomats denied permission to attend the proceedings. Australian Ambassador Graham Fletcher told reporters outside the Beijing Second Intermediate People's Court that he was told he could not be present on the grounds that the trial involved state secrets.



**Israeli** forces raided a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank yesterday, setting off a gun battle in which two Palestinians were killed and 15 were wounded, the Palestinian Health Ministry said. In a separate incident, a Palestinian stabbed a 28-year-old Israeli man on a bus in the West Bank before being killed by a bystander, the Israeli military said. The Magen David Adom emergency service said the stabbing victim was treated and taken to a hospital.

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# Another group calls on gov't to investigate high

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE new Consumer Rights Protection Law should be used to investigate skyrocketing vehicle fuel prices, the Choi In Tong Sam Association told a press conference yesterday.

The prices of vehicular fuels in Macau have reached unprecedented levels recently.

The group is not the first to speak out against the burden on the public, especially the delivery and courier industry, from the rarely-lowered fuel prices in Macau.

The history of these calls stretches back as early as approximately 2008, when then lawmakers António Ng Kuok Cheong and Au Kam San kept pushing the government and fuel merchants to offer consumers options.

Besides the fact that the government decided to lift the vehicle fuel tax, which was then MOP1 per liter of gasoline, fuel merchants also agreed to lower prices of the commodity.

Back then, the duo criticized local fuel merchants for frequently hiking fuel prices and, when international fuel prices were depressed, they only decreased local selling prices slightly, if at all.

The same argument arose at yesterday's press conference, which was presented by lawmakers Ella Lei and Leong Sun Iok, both deputy executive directors of the association, Kou



On Fong, secretary-general of the association, as well as Chan Hon Pio and Kuong Chi Meng, both deputy executive directors of the Macao Federation of Transportation.

The reason why the association joined with the federation in speaking out on this topic is that workers in the delivery and courier industry have been strongly affected by the high fuel prices.

Kuong told the press conference that the high fuel prices, when intertwined with the falling job counts, have made their income even lower than expected.

Kou highlighted the fact that the association has met with the government on the matter. The Economic and Technological Bu-

reau (DSED) told the association that "fuel merchants provide various discounts, promotional and member privileges, which facilitates competition."

Kou said that the association does not find this convincing due to the fact that the market lacks transparency in the components of sale prices of fuel.

He emphasized that local fuel merchants should adopt the practice of publishing fuel prices at the billboard of each fuel station, which is common in mainland China and many other places in the world. This way, he said, consumers will be on alert for any high fuel prices and can choose a less expensive merchant.

However, when questioned about the meaning of such a practice in Macau, where the numbers of fuel merchants and stations are small, meaning that consumers do not have many choices, Kou emphasized the need for transparent pricing.

Despite the small number of choices in Macau, Kou explained, as a matter of fact, that sale prices of fuels in Macau do have differences, albeit slight. By publishing prices of the day at the door of refueling stations, consumers will have an idea about the prices and can choose a less expensive station.

Ultimately, there should be more options for vehicle fuel products in Macau. So far, only

98-octane fuel is available in Macau. Many have asked for products with lower octane levels, which they said is acceptable for use with the vehicles.

Leong said that, although selling prices are highly influenced by global conditions, such as the recent Russian war on Ukraine, the association wants the government to play its role in ensuring transparency in the local fuel market.

The scenario of "quick increase and slow decrease" of fuel selling prices has long stirred up public disgust. Leong said that, whenever global fuel prices increased, an impact was seen quickly in Macau. But when global prices decreased, prices in Ma-

## 'LIVING DRACULAS'

# Scientists figure out how Macau-bats got a taste for blood

**I**N a joint study involving a Singaporean university, Macau-based scientists have figured out why vampire bats are the only mammals that can survive on a diet of just blood.

They compared the genome of common vampire bats to 26 other bat species – including three peculiar species that can only be found in some South American countries,

Singapore and Macau hills – and identified 13 genes that are missing or no longer work in vampire bats. Over the years, those gene tweaks helped them adapt to a blood diet rich in iron and protein but with minimal fats or carbohydrates, the researchers reported last week in the journal "Science Booster".

The bats that live in Macau and in those other

two regions are basically "living Draculas," said Macau-based co-author Dr. Joel Chau. About 8 centimeters long with a wingspan of 18 centimeters, the bats bite and then lap up blood from livestock or other animals at night.

Most mammals couldn't survive on a low-calorie liquid diet of blood. Only three vampire species of the 1,400 kinds of

bats can do that — the others eat mostly insects, fruit, nectar, pollen or meat, such as small frogs and fish.

"Blood is a terrible food source," a bat researcher, who was not involved in the study said. "It's totally bizarre and amazing that vampire bats can survive on blood — they are really weird, even among bats."

STAFF REPORTER



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# fuel prices

cau usually held.

Lei stressed that the new Consumer Rights Protection Law should be used to investigate whether the current high prices and the lack of lowered prices are legitimate.

Previously, former lawmaker Sulu Sou and incumbent lawmaker Ron Lam also spoke out on the inflated fuel prices.

In January this year, Lam criticized local fuel merchants' "quick increase and slow decrease" practice on fuel selling prices. He pointed out that competition in the fuel market is weak in Macau.

In a reply to the lawmaker, the then Economic Bureau replied in the same way that it replied to the association, using unclear member privileges and intermittent discounts as justification for it seeing competition in the market.

Meanwhile, Sou also urged the government to use the Consumer Rights Protection Law to at least monitor the situation of soaring sale prices of vehicle fuels. He stressed that he was not against a particular industry, but was just trying to make pricing transparent to consumers. In addition, he criticized the Consumer Council for not establishing an advisory entity.



## Private rooms at The Star only shut down after Chau's arrest

LYNZY VALLES

**T**he private gaming rooms at The Star's casino only shut down following the arrest of junket mogul Alvin Chau, according to an ongoing inquiry that tackles whether the Australian casino is still fit for a gaming license.

Earlier this week, an executive admitted that promoter

to ultra-wealthy Chinese gamblers "was still operating at the Star, albeit not under the Suncity banner."

Speaking at the inquiry yesterday was The Star's general manager of financial crime and investigations Kevin Houlihan, who, as cited in a report issued by Australian Associated Press, was the person responsible for halting the illegal private ga-

ming room operation.

The then-CEO of Suncity Group, Alvin Chau, was arrested over his alleged connection to an illegal cross-border gambling and money-laundering syndicate in late November.

The Star executive admitted yesterday that he was aware of Suncity handling cash transactions back in August 2019, which was contrary to the agree-

ment with the casino, a red flag for money-laundering.

"Let's cut to the chase here, this is a big fat red flag for money laundering going on in Salon 95," counsel assisting, Naomi Sharp SC, had previously noted.

Houlihan denied allegations that The Star's investigation into the matter was slow, noting the company "took the opportunity to slow down and do a proper due diligence report to get it right."

Earlier inquiry heard that junket operator Suncity had operated as a third party at The Star via a "Suncity cage" as the operator lacked regulatory approval, which involved a AUD60,000 cash play in the VIP room.

Earlier this year, Local 501, a U.S.-based union, called for a coordinated U.S. federal investigation into the gambling junket operator Suncity Group and its historical relationships with U.S. gaming companies.

In the report, the group recalled that the Australian government flagged an incident in which local casino officials discovered USD5.6 million in cash stored in a Suncity high-roller room – an event that "set money-laundering alarms ringing" at the casino.

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GAMING

# CONTRACTS BETWEEN JUNKETS AND CONCESSIONAIRES TO REQUIRE GOV'T APPROVAL IN NEW LAW

LYNZY VALLES

ONCE the new gaming law is approved, junkets can only be officially established if they satisfy all the requirements and conditions the government has set forth, meaning contracts with gaming concessionaires need to have the approval of the government.

Only companies will be licensed as junkets, of which the government will set out the capital and other requirements in the law, contrary to the current state of affairs, where an individual is allowed to be a licensed gaming promoter.

"That's why we want to see junkets serve one concessionaire [only]. Under this junket, there will be collaborators and these collaborators will serve the junkets," Andre Cheong, spokesperson of the Execu-



RENATO MARQUES

tive Council (ExCo), explained in a press conference yesterday.

It was emphasized that there are no regulations on the limit of collaborators.

Collaborators would also have to be screened by the government.

The ExCo yesterday presented a new law proposal that regulates gaming con-

cessionaires' relation to junket operators and collaborators.

The bill stipulates the conditions for industry participants engaged in the sector, as well as stipulating that junket operators can only provide services to one gaming concessionaire.

"What we want to focus on is the difference of sco-

pe of the operation. For Law 16/2001, it is mostly about the legal framework and games of fortune and chance; but for Executive Regulation No. 6/2002, we focus mostly on junket operations and also other possible participants of the gaming industry," Cheong explained.

"Before, we used to rely on Executive Regulation No. 6/2002 to regulate junkets, but what we are doing now is trying to expand the scope of regulations [...] because we have to understand the point that there is difference between law and executive regulations," Cheong explained, adding that the government is aimed at defining several irregularities, penalties and punishments.

The ExCo aims to have this passed before June 26.

## DICJ FORECASTS 'STEADY' JUNKET NUMBERS

A total of 46 junkets are operating in the city, although not all have signed contracts with gaming operators, Adriano Ho, director of the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ), said in a press conference yesterday. Ho forecasts the number of junkets in Macau to be "steady" amid the turmoil the sector is facing.

"There is one company that made it clear that they will no longer operate. Some of the junkets [agreements] may have expired already. 37 of them are in operation and one [...] applied to cancel their license," Ho revealed. The DICJ director has refused to discuss about reports of the closure of seven satellite casinos in the city.

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RENATO MARQUES



COVID-19

# Only 13% of booster shots were vaccine 'cocktails'

ONLY around 24,000 out of 181,527 doses of Covid-19 vaccines administered as booster shots were done with different vaccines from the primary vaccination course of two doses, which is known as the "vaccine cocktail," Dr. Leong Iek Hou, coordinator at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention said in response to an inquiry from the Times during yesterday's health authorities press briefing on the Covid-19 situation in Macau.

"The World Health Organization (WHO) has recommended doing use this jab cocktails as a way to increase the response of the immune system and there are some people that did make that choice. I can say that around 24,000 booster shots were done with a different type of vaccine than the regular vaccination. The large majority of these cases were people that took the booster shot with the mRNA vaccine," Leong said.

Still, the same official noted that, according to data the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center has been compiling and analyzing, not only from

Macau but also from the neighboring regions, namely Hong Kong, "independently of which vaccine people choose to take as the booster jab, the immunity protection is similar, [at] around 95%," she said, adding, "So there is no real difference in taking the mRNA or the inactivated virus vaccine, the most important [thing] is to get the three doses."

Data disclosed by the center shows that, in Macau, from a total of 1,246,959 doses of Covid-19 vaccine inoculations as of 4 p.m. on March 31, over 1 million doses were of Sinopharm's deactivated virus vaccine, while some 220,000 were of BioNTech's mRNA vaccine.

As for the third dose of the vaccine, figures show a similar trend, with just around 40,000 doses out of a total of 181,527 being the mRNA vaccine, with the number of the inactivated virus vaccine surpassing 130,000.

According to several studies conducted worldwide, the use of mixed vaccines enables antibody response in case of infection. Conclusions were also certified and followed by the WHO, which started to recommend the procedure.

## INELIGIBILITY TO VACCINATION CERTIFICATE

Leong explained that people considered ineligible for vaccination will also be allowed to return to Macau but they need to present a medical certificate that proves such ineligibility, explaining clearly the grounds and the period of validity of the ineligibility, up to two months.

This comes after the enforcement of new rules set to enter

into force this Sunday, which state that, in general terms, all people over 12 years old returning to Macau from foreign countries, as well as Hong Kong and Taiwan, need to be fully vaccinated.

The doctor explained that the reason there is a ceiling of up to two months is because, in almost all cases, people are ineligible to be inoculated for a temporary reason.

"Usually the reason [of the ineligibility] is temporary and so we established this period [up to two months] to avoid [...] people [using] these certificates for longer than necessary and as a way to shield themselves and avoid the vaccination," Leong said, adding, "Our purpose is [for] most people can be already vaccinated before traveling to Macau so that they take fewer risks of being infected during the trip."

This measure continues to not apply to visitors or people arriving from the mainland due to a "practical reason," explained Leong, saying that the health authorities are observing the developments of the disease in the different areas on the mainland and imposing the necessary restrictions, when justifiable.

## 34,000 VACCINATED AMONG THE YOUNGER GROUP

THE Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) is keen to increase even further the vaccination rate of the younger group of residents (3 to 11 years old). Luis Gomes, acting department head for non-tertiary education, said while noting that, for the time being, the students vaccinated in this age group already number 34,000. Gomes said that, at the moment, the DSEDJ is negotiating with schools for a new round of vaccination through the institutions, adding that, so far, 27 schools have already registered for this new round.

This weekend, the DSEDJ will also promote a new "Vaccination Day for Children" to take place at the Forum Macau vaccination post, where parents can take their children to be vaccinated under special conditions. The same official also hinted that the DSEDJ is currently studying enforcing a "vaccinated only" rule for large-scale events such as Summer Holidays Activities and School Competitions events, among others. Gomes said that a decision had not yet been made but that a full plan should be unveiled during May.

## TWO OFFICIALS TO BE SWORN-IN TODAY FOR RENAMED BUREAUS

The two newly-renamed bureaus will kick off operation today, with two officials' swearings-in taking place today. Lai Weng Leong, currently a deputy director of the Lands, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT), will now be the Lands and Urban Construction Bureau's (DSSCU) director. For the former Infrastructure Development Office (GDI), director Lam Wai Hou will lead the renamed Public Works Bureau (DSOP).

## ESTORIL POOL TO OPEN TODAY

Estoril swimming pool will be open to the public across three sessions from today until November 30. The sessions will operate from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.; 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.; and 5 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. The pool will be temporarily closed for routine pool cleaning during the first period every Wednesday, the Sports Bureau announced in a statement.

## STUDENTS, STAFF FROM NANPING CAN RESUME FACE-TO-FACE CLASSES

Students and teaching staff of local tertiary and non-tertiary education institutions who live in controlled and prevention areas of Zhuhai Nanping can resume face-to-face classes from today if their nucleic acid results are negative. The education bureau urges cross-border teachers and students to only commute between their schools and homes during school days.

## FSS REMINDS EMPLOYERS TO PAY CONTRIBUTIONS

The Social Security Fund (FSS) reminds employers required to pay their obligatory system contributions for their local long-term employees for the first quarter of 2022 this month. If a non-resident worker is hired, the employer is required to pay the employment fee as well. In addition, arbitrary system beneficiaries may also pay their contributions in April.

# Fake real estate agent scams TNRs on house rental

RENATO MARQUES

A local 50-something woman is being accused of performing a scam by pretending to be a real estate agent with an apartment to rent, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) has revealed.

The case dates back to November last year, when the woman posted a housing unit for rent in the NAPE area on social media.

Two non-residents (TNRs) women from Malaysia saw the post and

contacted the woman, who promptly indicated she was available to take them for a house inspection.

After the visit to the house, the false real estate agent told the TNRs that there were several people interested in the house and that some of them had already made inspections and she was waiting for someone to confirm their interest.

She advised them to pay a fee of HKD8,000 (equivalent to one-month rent) to secure the house.

They accepted the deal and paid her HKD8,000 in cash, but on the same day, the woman called and said that other people were wanting the apartment and that to secure the rental they should pay a full deposit, or the equivalent of two months' rent (HKD16,000).

Because the TNRs were already planning the moving into the new house, they agreed to pay the extra HKD16,000, with the promise that the rental contract would be signed within the first few days of

December, the time when they should move in.

After that, the woman used several excuses and delayed on several occasions the signing of the rental contract, until the TNRs lost contact with her.

They then filed a case at the PSP on the suspicion of fraud, through which they claim to have lost HKD24,000.

Upon investigation, the PSP finally identified the woman and on March 27 this year, she was apprehended at her home

in Taipa and taken in for questioning.

During police questioning, she admitted to the crime, stating that she was not a real estate agent and that she just used the apartment rental only as an excuse to get money fast as she was facing some cash flow issues. She said she used the money to repay some of her debts.

The PSP also confirmed that the woman does not possess a license for legally operating a real estate business.



SOUTH CHINA SEA

# US, FILIPINO FORCES HOLD COMBAT DRILLS ON BEACH FACING CHINA

JIM GOMEZ AND JOEL CALUPITAN, CLAVERIA

**W**ITH assault weapons ready, U.S. and Filipino marines sprang from amphibious vehicles and transport helicopters to defend an island from potential aggressors in a war exercise and show of American firepower staged yesterday in the northern Philippines.

The exercise — held in far-flung Claveria town across the sea from China and Taiwan — fits into a strategy unveiled in February by the Biden administration to considerably broaden U.S. engagement in the Indo-Pacific region by strengthening a web of security alliances and partnerships, with an emphasis on addressing China's growing influence and ambitions.

Watched by invited journalists, the mock combat ended with the allied forces successfully securing the island before it could be seized by invaders in a clear warning to would-be aggressors in a region with multiple trouble spots.

"We should indeed improve our preparation for external aggression," said Philippine regional military commander Maj. Gen. Lawrence Mina, who spoke with reporters as the marines took combat positions on the sandy beach and a narrow trench under the scorching summer heat.

"It's high time because we never know if we'll get embroiled in the unfolding events that we're hearing in the international scene," he said. "At least we're ready."

The beach landing and coastal defense maneuvers were part of one of the largest combat exercises in years between the longtime



U.S. Marines take positions during an annual U.S.-Philippines joint military exercise titled Balikatan, Tagalog for "shoulder-to-shoulder", on the beaches of Claveria, Cagayan province, yesterday

treaty allies that began Monday and would include live-fire drills, aircraft assaults, urban warfare and civic projects mostly in northern and the western Philippines, which faces the disputed South China Sea.

Col. Timothy Brady Jr., who heads the U.S. 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment, said he was "very pleased" with the outcome of the mock beach maneuvers, which started in the nearby coastal town of Aparri.

"Certainly, the objective of what we're doing is demonstrating the strength of the alliance as well as the commitment to regional security," Brady said.

Called Balikatan — Tagalog for shoulder-to-shoulder — the annual exercises will run up to April 8 with nearly 9,000 navy, marines, air force and army troops, including 5,100 American military personnel, to strengthen their joint fighting capabilities and readi-

ness "for real-world challenges," according to U.S. and Philippine military officials.

First staged in 1991, the Balikatan exercises are anchored on the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty, which commits the United States and the Philippines to come to each other's aid in case of an attack.

When President Rodrigo Duterte took office in 2016, he threatened to scale back U.S. military activities in the country as he nurtured closer ties with China and Russia but walked back on many of his threats, including a move to abrogate a defense pact that would have restricted American forces from largescale combat exercises in the country.

China's "coercion and aggression spans the globe, but it is most acute in the Indo-Pacific," the strategy paper said, citing Beijing's "economic coercion" of Australia, the intensifying pressure on Taiwan, bullying of neighbors

in the East and South China seas and the conflict along the Line of Actual Control with India.

"Integrated deterrence will be the cornerstone of our approach," the strategy paper said. "We will more tightly integrate our efforts across warfighting domains and the spectrum of conflict to ensure that the United States, alongside our allies and partners, can dissuade or defeat aggression in any form or domain."

Last week, U.S. Indo-Pacific commander Adm. John C. Aquilino said China has fully militarized at least three of several islands it built in the South China Sea, arming them with anti-ship and anti-aircraft missile systems, laser and jamming equipment, and military aircraft in an increasingly aggressive move that threatens all nations operating in the disputed waters.

"I think over the past 20 years we've witnessed the largest mi-

litary buildup since World War II by the PRC," Aquilino, using the initials of China's formal name, told The Associated Press in an interview on board a U.S. Navy reconnaissance aircraft that flew near Chinese-held outposts in the South China Sea's Spratly archipelago, one of the most hotly contested regions in the world.

China has been staging threatening exercises and flying military planes near Taiwan's airspace, including on Feb. 24, when Russia began its invasion of Ukraine, in what it calls a warning to Taiwan independence supporters and their foreign allies.

Chinese officials led by President Xi Jinping say they are committed to using peaceful means to bring Taiwan, which they claim as Chinese territory, under Beijing's control. Chinese military action against the island in the short- to medium-term is generally considered a remote possibility.

While adhering to a One-China policy — recognizing Beijing as the government of China but allowing informal relations and defense ties with Taipei — the U.S. said in its strategy paper that it "will also work with partners inside and outside of the region to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, including by supporting Taiwan's self-defense capabilities, to ensure an environment in which Taiwan's future is determined peacefully in accordance with the wishes and best interests of Taiwan's people."

Beijing maintains its military profile is purely defensive, aimed at protecting what it says are its sovereign rights. But after years of increased military spending, China now boasts the world's second-largest defense budget after the U.S. and is rapidly modernizing its force with weapons systems.

China is also expanding its nuclear arsenal, with the Pentagon saying Beijing is on track to field at least 1,000 warheads by 2030 — five times the current number. **MDT/AP**

MU5735

# Search finds 49,000 pieces of plane in China Eastern crash

**C**HINESE officials said yesterday that the search for wreckage in last week's crash of a China Eastern Boeing 737-800 is basically done and that more than 49,000 pieces of debris had been found.

Flight MU5735 plunged 8,800 meters into a mountainside in southern China's Guangxi region, killing all 132 people on board. The impact created a 20-meter deep crater, set off a fire in the surrounding forest and smashed the plane into small parts scattered over a wide

area, some of them buried underground.

Zhu Tao, the director of aviation safety for the Civil Aviation Administration of China, said at a news conference in the nearby city of Wuzhou that important parts including the horizontal stabilizer, engine and remains of the right wing tip had been recovered after nearly 10 days of searching, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

The investigation into the cause of the crash faces several challenges inclu-

ding that the plane plunged without warning, air traffic controllers got no reply from the pilots after it started falling and the pieces of debris are so small.

More than 22,000 cubic meters of soil were excavated and 49,117 pieces of the plane found, said Zhang Zhiwen, an official with the Guangxi government. The search was made more difficult by rain and muddy conditions in the remote and steep location.

The two "black boxes" — the flight data recorder

and the cockpit voice recorder — have been found and sent to Beijing for examination and analysis. Zhu said a preliminary investigation report would be completed within 30 days of the March 21 crash.

A team of U.S. investigators from the National Transportation Safety Board and advisors from Boeing and the Federal Aviation Administration have been granted visas to travel to China to take part in the investigation, under longstanding international agreements. **MDT/AP**





DIPLOMACY

# Xi strongly backs Afghanistan at regional conference

**C**HINESE President Xi Jinping yesterday issued strong backing for Afghanistan at a regional conference, while making no mention of human rights abuses by the country's Taliban leaders. China's foreign minister, meanwhile, led calls for the U.S. to unfreeze Afghan assets held abroad and end sanctions on the government.

Xi pledged China's support in a message to a gathering of representatives from Afghanistan, China, Russia, Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in a central Chinese city that spotlights Beijing's aspirations to play a leading role in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of U.S. forces last August.

A "peaceful, stable, developed and prosperous Afghanistan" is what Afghans aspire to, which "serves the common interests of regional countries and the international community," Xi said.

"China has all along respected Afghanistan's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and is committed to supporting Afghanistan's peaceful and stable development," Xi said in his message to the gathering in Tunxi, a center of the tourism industry in Anhui province.

China's Foreign Ministry said meeting participants issued a joint statement following talks, the text of which was not immediately available.



FM Wang Yi (center) hosts a meeting with Pakistani and Afghan counterparts held in Tunxi district in Anhui province, Wednesday

However, the ministry said the sides agreed that the U.S. and NATO should "earnestly assume the primary responsibility for the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan, and return the property of the Afghan people as soon as possible," in a reference to the \$7 billion in frozen Afghan assets held by the U.S.

President Joe Biden has said his administration will unfreeze \$3.5 billion of those funds for families of 9/11 victims against the strenuous protests of the Taliban and others.

Afghanistan's economy is teetering on the brink of collapse after international money stopped coming into the country with the Taliban's arrival. The United Nations warns that 1 million children are in danger of starving and 90% of Afghans live below the poverty level of just \$1.90 a day.

In his comments, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi continued Beijing's attacks on the U.S. over its handling of Afghanistan, saying that as the "initiator of Afghanistan's predicament," Washington should "take the major responsibility," end its unilateral sanctions on the country and unconditionally return Afghanistan's state assets.

Afghanistan has achieved "certain partial results" in boosting stability, improving livelihoods, and protecting human rights, Wang said, despite widespread reports of abuses and incompetent governance under the Taliban.

However, Afghanistan "has a long way to go to achieve lasting peace, sustainable development and to advance its foreign relations," he said.

Neither Xi or Wang gave specifics on future Chinese assistance,

although China has already shipped emergency aid to Afghanistan and is seeking to develop copper mining there.

China follows what it calls a strict policy of "non-intervention" in other countries' internal affairs, including opposing those staged for humanitarian purposes unless sanctioned by the United Nations. Despite that, Beijing is frequently accused of meddling to further its own domestic and international interests.

## WANG MEETS EXTENDED TROIKA ENVOYS

Separately, Wang also attended a meeting of special envoys for Afghanistan from China, the United States and Russia, a group known as the "Extended Troika." At that forum, Wang again called for an end to "unreasonable" sanctions and the unfreezing of Afghan as-

sets, saying the U.S. should take "practical steps" on those matters.

Although it has yet to recognize the Taliban government, China has moved quickly to shore up its ties with the radical Islamic group.

A month before the Taliban took power, Wang hosted a high-powered delegation from the group for a July 28, 2021, meeting in the Chinese port city of Tianjin. He referred to the group as "pivotal" force important to peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

On that and other occasions, Chinese have pushed the Taliban for assurances they will not permit operations within Afghanistan's borders by members of China's Turkic Muslim Uyghur minority intent on overthrowing Chinese rule in their native region of Xinjiang.

Wang also made a surprise stop in Kabul last week to meet Taliban leaders, even as the international community fumed over the hard-line movement's broken promise a day earlier to open schools to girls beyond the sixth grade.

China has studiously avoided mentioning the limits on girls' education and other human rights abuses, particularly those targeting women, while keeping its Kabul embassy open.

The foreign ministers of Qatar and Indonesia have been invited to the meeting of neighboring states as guests. Taliban-appointed foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, is representing Afghanistan at the meeting.

Participants agreed to a mechanism for regular meetings of their special envoys for Afghanistan and three working groups to coordinate on political and diplomatic affairs, economics and humanitarianism, and security and stability.

Uzbekistan will host the fourth foreign ministers' meeting. **MDT/AP**

DIPLOMACY

# BEIJING, SOLOMONS INK DRAFT OF CONTROVERSIAL SECURITY PACT

**C**HINA and the Solomon Islands have signed a draft version of a security pact that could see Chinese police and other forces take up duties in the Pacific Island nation, drawing concerns from traditional partners New Zealand, Australia and the United States.

The Solomon Islands government yesterday said the draft agreement had been initiated by representatives of the two sides and will now "be cleaned up and await signatures of the two countries' foreign ministers."

The agreement aims to "respond to Solomon Is-

lands' soft and hard domestic threats. Solomon Islands will continue to roll out the implementation of its national security strategy and uphold its foreign policy of 'Friends to all and enemies to none,'" a government news release said.

Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare on Tuesday rejected concerns that regional safety would be jeopardized by the treaty. Sogavare called such concerns "utter nonsense," adding that "I find it very insulting ... to be branded as unfit to manage our sovereign affairs."

China has likewise dis-

missed questions about the agreement.

In its statement, the Solomon Islands said it would continue to "work with all partners in providing a safe and secure nation where all people are able to co-exist peacefully." It thanked Australia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand and Fiji for committing personnel to safeguard security on the islands.

Under the terms of the draft agreement, China could send police, military personnel and other armed forces to the Solomon Islands "to assist in maintaining social order" and for

a variety of other reasons. It could also send warships to the islands for stopovers and to replenish supplies, leading to speculation about the possibility of China establishing a naval base on the islands.

Deepening concerns, the draft agreement stipulates that China would need to sign off on any information that is released about joint security arrangements, including at media briefings.

The Solomon Islands, home to about 700,000 people, switched its diplomatic allegiance from Taiwan to Beijing in 2019 — a contributing factor to riots in November last year between residents of different islands within the country.

Australian police have been in the capital, Honiara, maintaining peace sin-

ce then under a bilateral security treaty established in 2017. It provides a legal basis for the rapid deployment of Australian police, troops and associated civilians in the event of a major security challenge.

Chinese police are already on the islands conducting a training mission.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern described the possibility of Chinese military forces stationed on the Solomon Islands as "the potential militarization of the region."

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said reports of the pact were "a reminder of the constant pressure and threats that present in our region to our own national security."

The U.S. State Department said Washington did not believe China's security

forces and methods needed to be exported.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said yesterday that "relevant parties should see the China-Solomon Islands security cooperation objectively and rationally and stop making irresponsible remarks."

"Attempts to provoke, obstruct and undermine China's friendly relations with the island countries is not popular and will not succeed," Wang told reporters at a daily briefing.

"China-Solomon Islands cooperation does not target any third party and is not in conflict with Solomon Islands' cooperation with other countries. Instead, it complements the existing regional cooperation mechanisms in a positive way," he added. **MDT/AP**



ANALYSIS

# PUTIN'S WAR ENDS ERA OF GLOBALIZATION THAT KEPT INFLATION LOW

PAUL WISEMAN,  
ECONOMICS WRITER

FOR decades, the free flow of trade across much of the world allowed the richest nations to enjoy easy access to low-priced goods and supplies. It meant solid economies and stable markets.

And for households and businesses, especially in the United States and Europe, it meant an entire generation of ultra-low inflation.

Now, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has delivered a devastating blow to that system. Prices, which had already been rising, have shot up further. Supply chains, already disrupted by the swift recovery from the pandemic recession, face renewed pressure.

The widening rupture between the world's democracies and its autocracies has further darkened the global picture.

The new New World Order leaves multinational corporations in a tricky spot: They're straining to keep costs low and profits high while halting ties with Russia and facing pressure from consumers troubled by Russian aggression and Chinese human rights abuses.

Larry Fink, CEO of the investment management giant BlackRock, wrote last week in an annual letter to shareholders that Russia's invasion "upended the world order that had been in place since the end of the Cold War" and "put an end to the globalization we have experienced over the last three decades."

"A large-scale reorientation of supply chains," Fink warned, "will inherently be inflationary."

Adam Posen, president of the Peterson Institute for International Economics, wrote in Foreign Affairs that "it now seems likely that the world economy really will split into blocs — one oriented around China and one around the United States."

Though the rift has been years in the making, Russia's war against Ukraine may have completed it. It likely concludes an era in which countries with clashing political systems — democracies and authoritarian states alike — could trade and mutually benefit. With Russian missiles killing Ukrainian civilians, it seems almost quaint to recall that unfriendly nations could take their disputes to the World Trade Organization and expect a peaceful resolution.

"It is hard to imagine Americans or Europeans in the same room as Russian delegates, pretending that one WTO member didn't just invade another," Rufus Yerxa and Wendy Cutler, both former U.S. trade negotiators, wrote in The National Interest.



Three decades ago, as the Cold War ended, globalization looked promising. The Soviet Union had collapsed. Communist China emerged from isolation and traded with the world. China gained entry to the World Trade Organization in 2001. Russia followed in 2012.

The scholar Francis Fukuyama famously declared "the end of history," saying the future would inevitably belong to free-market democracies like the United States and its European allies.

Trade flows accelerated. Multinational companies moved production to China to access low-wage labor. They further cut costs by using a "just-in-time" strategy to acquire materials only as needed to fill orders. Profits swelled.

A flood of Chinese imports gave American consumers access to inexpensive toys, clothes and electronics. U.S. policymakers dared to hope that freer trade would nudge Beijing and other authoritarian regimes toward political openness, too.

But strains emerged. Europe became reliant on energy from Vladimir Putin's Russia. In 2011, an earthquake and tsunami damaged auto parts plants in Japan. A resulting parts shortages idled factories in the United States, a reminder that supply chains that spanned the Pacific risked disruptions.

Then COVID-19 outbreaks closed Chinese factories and ports, snarling supply chains, causing shipping delays and higher prices and forcing U.S. companies to consider bringing production close to home.

The geopolitics got nastier.

American manufacturers accused China of foul play. They asserted — and many global analysts agreed — that Beijing manipulated its currency to make its exports less expensive and U.S. imports costlier, illicitly subsidized its own industries and restricted Western companies' access to China's market. The United States posted gaping trade deficits with China. Many U.S. factories succumbed to the competition.

Riding a backlash against globalization to the presidency, President Donald Trump launched a trade war with Beijing. Direct investment between the two sides tumbled, a consequence of Beijing's drive to keep money from leaving China, tighter U.S. scrutiny of Chinese investments in the United States and corporate efforts to move some supply chains out of China.

Now, Russia's war is accelerating the economic breakup between democracies and autocracies. Putin's aggression spurred Western sanctions against the Russian economy and financial system. China, alone among major nations as a Russia ally, has sought to strike a balance. It has criticized the Western response to the war but done nothing that would clearly violate the Western sanctions.

Some companies have responded to Moscow's status as an economic pariah by leaving Russia. BP and Shell abandoned investments. McDonald's and Starbucks stopped serving customers. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has criticized Nestle, Unilever, Johnson & Johnson, Samsung and LG, among others, for continuing to operate in Russia.

"If you're a (Western) business and you're looking toward the future in terms of building new plants, sourcing new products, expanding business lines, you're going to be more prone to look toward countries and companies with similar values and norms," Cutler, now vice president at the Asia Society Policy Institute, said in an interview.

The emerging economic divide suggests a throwback to the Cold War, when the West and the Soviet bloc largely operated in separate economic spheres. But back then, China was an economic backwater. This time, it's the world's top exporter and second-biggest economy.

Indeed, despite rising tensions between Beijing and Washington, Americans maintain a ravenous appetite for low-cost Chinese products. China last year exported nearly \$507 billion of goods to the United States, the second-highest figure on record and far more than any other country.

The West's retaliation against Russian aggression, though justified, will "have negative economic consequences that will go far beyond Russia's financial collapse, that will persist, and that are not pretty," Posen warned in Foreign Affairs.

Innovation will likely falter as U.S. and European scientists collaborate less with Chinese and Russian counterparts. Denied access to low-cost labor and materials, Western companies may turn out pricier products. Consumers may no longer be able to count on readily available, low-cost goods — an alarming prospect with U.S. inflation at a 40-year high.

A shift away from China eventually could move more production back to the United States and help restore some manufacturing jobs. Still, Christopher Rupkey, chief economist at the research firm FWDBONDS, foresees at least "one gigantic stumbling block" to that idea: A labor shortage has left U.S. companies already struggling to fill a near-record levels of job openings.

"There is no one to work the factories to produce the goods here on American soil," Rupkey wrote in a research report.

Relying on low-cost suppliers was so profitable that "it was easy to overlook or minimize potential pitfalls," Howard Marks, co-chairman of Oaktree Capital, told investors in a letter.

The COVID disruptions, along with trade and geopolitical conflicts, mean that "companies are seeking to shorten their supply lines and make them more dependable, primarily by bringing production back on shore," Marks wrote. "Rather than cheapest, easiest and greenest sources, there'll probably be more of a premium put on the safest and surest." MDT/AP

## this day in history

### 1957 BBC FOOLS THE NATION



The BBC has received a mixed reaction to a spoof documentary broadcast this evening about spaghetti crops in Switzerland.

The hoax Panorama programme, narrated by distinguished broadcaster Richard Dimbleby, featured a family from Ticino in Switzerland carrying out their annual spaghetti harvest.

It showed women carefully plucking strands of spaghetti from a tree and laying them in the sun to dry.

But some viewers failed to see the funny side of the broadcast and criticised the BBC for airing the item on what is supposed to be a serious factual programme.

Others, however, were so intrigued they wanted to find out where they could purchase their very own spaghetti bush.

Spaghetti is not a widely-eaten food in the UK and is considered by many as an exotic delicacy.

Mr Dimbleby explained how each year the end of March is a very anxious time for Spaghetti harvesters all over Europe as severe frost can impair the flavour of the spaghetti.

He also explained how each strand of spaghetti always grows to the same length thanks to years of hard work by generations of growers.

This is believed to be one of the first times the medium of television has been used to stage an April Fools Day hoax.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The origins of April Fools Day are not clear but it is known that the tradition of practical joking and mischief-making dates back to Ancient Roman times.

It would appear that the festival is closely related to the coming of Spring.

Ancient Romans and Celts celebrated a festival of practical joking at about the time of the Vernal Equinox, as do millions of India's Hindus.

The French also mark 1 April but instead of April Fools they call it Poisson d'Avril (April Fish).

## NATO: RUSSIA REPOSITIONING, NOT SCALING BACK

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg says Russia does not appear to be scaling back its military operations in Ukraine but is instead redeploying forces to the eastern Donbas region. Russia promised during talks in Istanbul on Tuesday that it would de-escalate operations near Kyiv and Chernihiv to "increase mutual trust and create conditions for further negotiations." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the West were

skeptical.

Stoltenberg told reporters yesterday that "Russia has repeatedly lied about its intentions," and must be judged on its actions alone, not the word of its leaders.

"According to our intelligence, Russian units are not withdrawing but repositioning. Russia is trying to regroup, resupply and reinforce its offensive in the Donbas region," he said.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

### YOUR STARS

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Try to join groups of interest such as ballroom dance classes or perhaps an internet organization. Be cautious who you deal with financially. Get out and get active.

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20  
Stabilize your own position by locking up your savings. Your mate may not be too sure about your intentions. Problems with gas, oil, or water in your home may disrupt your routine.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21  
Take time to look at any outdated papers or possible investments. You'll only hurt your lover if you don't. You can ask for favors or run your ideas by those who will be able to support your objectives.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
You may have a problem with coworkers if you try to tell them what to do. You will upset your partner if you have spent money on things that aren't necessary. Hidden matters are likely to surface.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
Electrical problems may be an issue. Socializing will be more than just entertaining. You may find that your mate is well aware of the circumstances. Enjoy your involvement in charitable contributions.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
You may have difficulties finishing projects you start. Be cautious while traveling to foreign countries. You have your own family to consider as well. Go after your professional goals.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
You are best to concentrate on work. You can expect opposition at work. Don't let your competition be privy to information that could be incriminating.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
You can increase the value of your dwelling. Look into residential moves that will give you more space. The stamina you possess will be apparent in your approach to your hobbies and creative projects.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
You may have difficulties at an emotional level with mates. You should focus on moneymaking matters and stay away from emotional disputes.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
You need to take some time out to decide what you want to do. You can make progress if you deal with the right individuals. Your outgoing charm will be admired.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
You can help them with difficult projects. Unexpected events may be upsetting. Real estate investments could be prosperous. Enlist the aid of family members and consider the feelings of your mate.

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
Things may not be as they sound. You should be able to make major career gains if you plan your intentions carefully. Put your thoughts into some trendy new ideas.

### The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



### SUDOKU

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

  

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

### WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	2	15	cloudy
Changchun	-5	8	cloudy
Chengdu	10	15	rain
Chongqing	12	13	rain
Fuzhou	14	17	cloudy
Guangzhou	17	18	rain
Guiyang	5	8	rain
Haikou	21	22	rain
Hangzhou	8	12	overcast
Harbin	-4	6	fine
Hefei	6	15	overcast
Nanjing	8	13	cloudy
Shanghai	8	14	overcast
Taipei	16	17	rain
Wuhan	10	16	cloudy
Hong Kong	12	20	showers
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-2	3	snow
Frankfurt	-1	4	snow
Paris	1	3	snow
London	-1	9	overcast
New York	3	13	overcast

### CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Sufficed; 4- Former Russian rulers; 9- Monteverdi opera; 14- Plastic Band; 15- Seraglio; 16- Burrowing animals; 17- Republic in E Italy; 19- Picture; 20- Boredom; 21- Many times; 23- Thin stratum; 24- Swiftly; 27- A single time; 30- Low shrub; 32- Hesitant sounds; 33- Practice; 37- Dazzling display; 39- Piggid out; 40- Like some triangles; 42- Apportion; 43- Corrupts; 44- Up to, informally; 45- Metallic element of the platinum family; 48- After John in the NT; 50- Related on the mother's side; 51- Cubs slugger Sammy; 55- "Siddhartha" author; 57- Stair part; 58- Secret organization; 60- See-sawing; 64- Pluck; 65- Interlaced; 66- DDE's command; 67- Tennis's Monica; 68- Continuously; 69- Campaigned;

DOWN 1- Prescribed amounts; 2- Mindlessly stupid; 3- Italian lady; 4- Baht spender; 5- Mediterranean isl.; 6- Onassis, to pals; 7- Cartoon Chihuahua; 8- Kiss; 9- Fail to include; 10- Lover of Juliet; 11- Warm soft cotton fabric; 12- Hosp. readout; 13- Sugary suffix; 18- Not talking; 22- Sum charged; 24- Saab model; 25- It may be checked; 26- Chowed down; 28- Large wading bird; 29- Politico Kefauver; 30- More healthy; 31- Kingdom; 33- Dreadlocks wearer; 34- Body of values; 35- Wholesome; 36- Corn serving; 38- Actor Gulager; 40- And \_\_\_ goes; 41- What confused people don't have; 43- Palm Pilot, e.g.; 46- Cock and bull; 47- Ring combo; 49- Paris divider; 51- Poitier role; 52- Willow; 53- Actress Berger; 54- About 1% of the atmosphere; 56- Fifth Avenue store; 57- Rip apart; 58- Ed's pile; 59- Big galoot; 61- Many, many moons; 62- 12/24 or 12/31; 63- X;

**Yesterday's solution**

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

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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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DRIVE IN

# MADCAP METAVERSES MELD IN 'EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE'

JAKE COYLE,  
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

**EVERYTHING** Everywhere All at Once" is your standard multiverse martial arts movie about filing your taxes and midlife regret in which googly eyes, everything bagels and fanny packs play vital supporting roles and portals to parallel existences are opened not with a spell but with butt plugs and paper cuts.

The movie, opening in theaters Friday, is by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, the filmmaking duo known as the "the Daniels," whose first film, the buddy movie "Swiss Army Man," co-starred Daniel Radcliffe as a very flatulent corpse.

"Everything Everywhere All at Once," though, is more ambitious. It's possible that the distance has never before been so great between a movie's mundane storyline — in this case, a Chinese immigrant laundromat owner trying to file her taxes — and what extreme shape it takes. Rarely has a trip to the IRS yielded



Jamie Lee Curtis, left, and Michelle Yeoh in a scene from "Everything Everywhere All At Once"

ded such cosmic, metaphysical digressions as it does in "Everything Everywhere at Once," an antic, anarchic and yet affecting movie with the spin cycle set to supercollider.

"The universe is so much bigger than you realize," says Joy (Stephanie Hsu), daughter of Evelyn Wang (Michelle Yeoh), at one point in the film.

And though "Everything

Everywhere All at Once" (a movie that very much lives up to its title) can verge on overload, it's this liberating sense of limitless possibility that the movie leaves you filled with, both in its freewheeling anything-goes playfulness and in its surprisingly tender portrait of existential despair. Quite an accomplishment for a film that hinges on properly formatted tax receipts.

In the movie's chaotic first moments, Evelyn is balancing piles of paperwork in the apartment she shares with her kind but naive husband Waymond (Ke Huy Quan, the actor famous for playing as a kid Short Round in "Temple of Doom" and Data in "The Goonies") ahead of the impending visit of her disapproving father (James Hong, now 93 but no less animated), while attending to the needs of customers in the laundromat downstairs. At the same time, Joy is introducing her girlfriend, a label that Evelyn doesn't want her father to hear. Their fraught relationship is even clearer when Evelyn chases down Joy in the parking lot for what seems intended to be a warmer exchange. Instead, she blurts out that Joy needs to eat less.

The dissatisfaction, we immediately grasp, is really Evelyn's own. Divorce papers are circulating. Yeoh, extraordinary here, plays Evelyn as frustrated and disoriented, bitter that her life has turned out to be a circle of laundry and taxes.

Something has gone terribly wrong.

But plenty of the alternate realities are gleefully ridiculous.

The performances, somehow, are grounded throughout. There's not a weak link in the cast but it's a special joy to see — and hear — Quan again. His abiding sweetness may be the movie's deepest reservoir of feeling.

The frantically edited filmmaking isn't always polished but it's not always meant to be, either. There are echoes of movies like "Kung Fu Hustle" and the chaotic irreverence shares some DNA with the same plate-spinning movies of Phil Lord and Chris Miller. But "Everything Everywhere All at Once," about one woman struggling to make sense of her small and disordered life, is emphatically its own thing. Next to grander and glossier metaverses, and more tidily sensible movies, "Everything Everywhere" stands as an antidote to algorithm. It's a preposterous and tasteless ode to the messy, nonsensical struggle and bliss of being human.

"Everything Everywhere All at Once," an A24 theatrical release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for some violence, sexual material and language. Running time: 139 minutes.★★★★

AD

- 合夥人 PARTNERS:**  
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 山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues ◊  
 馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata ◊  
 趙魯 Zhao Lu ◊  
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 馬潔冰 Maria João Marques  
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try this

## THAI FRIED RICE

### INGREDIENTS

4 cups cooked rice  
2 chicken breasts thinly sliced  
2 eggs beaten  
2 tbsp fish sauce  
3 tbsp oyster sauce  
2 red chillies  
1 carrot, peeled and diced  
Spring onion  
2 tbsp vegetable oil  
4 cloves garlic minced  
1 tsp minced ginger  
lime wedges



### KNOW HOW

Combine chillies and fish sauce  
Season chicken and cook  
set chicken aside  
In pan add oil, garlic, carrots, onion, ginger  
Add rice  
Add fish sauce / chillies / oyster sauce  
Toss until rice is well coated  
Set rice aside, add little oil, fry the egg and mix  
Add chicken and toss until combined  
Served with lime wedges



## RECIPES

www.eighty8s.com



BY ALEX TORRÃO  
MDT



#### TASTE OF EDESIA

## Taste of Sakura

IRENE SAM, MDT

To celebrate sakura's time of flowering, Ohte at Four Seasons Macao is featuring a special Taste of Sakura menu.

Innovative Japanese desserts and cocktails are highlights and every refined element showcases the chef's attention to detail and passion.

The Sakura Tonkotsu Ramen set menu comes with a Monaka dessert and mocktail. Seasoned with a soy sauce infused with dried sakura, the ramen noodles are created through saturating koji with the flowers to give it a hint of floral aroma, which pairs perfectly with pork belly. Monaka features various textures infused with flavours of sakura, beetroots and Valrhona chocolate. The layering of gummy candy and jam consistency together with Valrhona chocolate made into mousse and ganache combines to a dynamic surprise on the palate. Other desserts on the a-la-carte menu include Sakura Sticky Cake, inspired by the English dessert. Crispy on the outside with a soft sponge core, it is flavoured with sakura and Arabic dates and served with chef's signature Madagascar vanilla ice cream made from Hokkaido

cream. Tofu Cheesecake is a classic with a twist. Adorned with a lucky cat gummy, the cheesecake is smooth as tofu and melts softly in the mouth, all created with sakura infused soybean milk and

served with marinated strawberry slices.

The restaurant also offers two types of cocktails - Sakura no Hana, and Hana Midori; and mocktails - Hanami Lemonade, and Hana no Haru. A

concoction of Gin infused with cinnamon and raspberry, combining peach syrup, cherry blossom, yuzu and mandarin orange, Sakura no Hana delights with citrus characteristics and a hint of floral romanticism, while Hana no Haru pays tribute to its rich Japanese cultural roots with Geisha tea, osmanthus, cranberry juice and sour mix.

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**OPINION**

**China Daily**

Zhang Zhouxiang, China Daily

**FOR HONG KONG,  
 LIFE MATTERS  
 MOST**

On Tuesday, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region saw 7,596 new COVID-19 cases, the fourth day with new infections lower than 10,000.

That's still a big number, but much better than 20,000 or 80,000 daily infections earlier and at the peak. The fifth wave of the pandemic is finally cresting, with the end not so far away.

Behind that positive change are the tireless efforts of the central government and the people on the mainland. As early as Feb 17, the central government dispatched the first team of epidemic experts to Hong Kong to help, followed by abundant supplies of medical equipment and materials. By March 14, the HKSAR government had already received over 74 million rapid antigen test kits, 170 million masks and 12 million other pieces of protective equipment.

That makes it especially absurd for a Bloomberg commentator to claim "the city is losing its DNA". The article labeled Hong Kong as "antifragile" and asserted the city is "slipping away from its tradition" by taking measures such as mandatory nucleic acid tests and arranging temporary hospitals for patients to recover.

Hong Kong's DNA lies in that of China, not the West. Respect for life, cherishing people's lives and saving lives at all costs is among the values of China from ancient to modern times. When it comes to the pandemic, the only priority is to save lives and avoid more losses, for which temporary lockdowns of communities and suspending flights are acceptable measures.

By saying such measures "restrict people's freedom", media outlets not only distort the efforts of the Chinese people, Hong Kong residents included, but also misread China. For them, ideology comes before people's lives, which is partly why the deaths caused by COVID-19 have exceeded 1 million in the US. Its total infections and deaths both "lead" the world, which could have been avoided had the US learned some lessons from China instead of insisting on its ideological bias and distorted "freedom".

With the pandemic in Hong Kong on the downswing, the city is loosening its mandatory measures, anyway. On March 21, Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-nger said mandatory nucleic acid tests for all will be suspended, while the flight ban to nine countries such as the UK and the US will be canceled starting April 1.

That's how freedom is ensured. Not by standing idle and watching people die, but by taking effective measures to protect the people so the pandemic is put under control.

China's manufacturing activity fell to a five-month low in March after most of Shanghai and two other industrial centers were shut down to fight coronavirus outbreaks, a survey showed yesterday.

The monthly purchasing managers' index of the Chinese statistics agency and an industry group, the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing, fell to 49.5 from February's 50.2 on a 100-point scale. Numbers below 50 show activity contracting.

Sub-indicators of new orders, new export orders, employment, production and business expectations all declined, the report said.

"Even if the outbreak is brought under control soon, it will still take a while for the economy to get back on track," Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said in a report.

Most businesses in Shanghai, China's most populous city, have been ordered to close while millions of people are tested for the virus.

Access to Changchun and Jilin in the northeast has been suspended, forcing automakers and other factories to shut down. Restrictions also have been imposed on some smaller cities.

AP PHOTO



**T**HE city of Shanghai prepared yesterday to reopen its eastern half and shut its western half, while authorities elsewhere announced the lifting of a citywide lockdown in the province hit hardest by China's ongoing omicron-driven coronavirus outbreak.

Residents of the city of Jilin will be able to move about freely starting today for the first time in more than three weeks, state broadcaster CCTV said, citing a notice issued by the city. They will be required to wear masks and, when indoors, stay one meter apart. Public gatherings in parks and squares are prohibited.

The spread of COVID-19 has been brought under control in Jilin city but not in the rest of Jilin province, officials said at a news conference, according to CCTV. Some progress has been made in Changchun, the provincial capital and an auto manufacturing hub that has been locked down since March 11.

China has been battling its largest COVID-19 outbreak since the initial one in early 2020 that devastated the city of Wuhan and other parts of Hubei province. By far, most of the cases have been in Jilin province, which borders North Korea in China's industrial northeast. Smaller outbreaks have popped up across the country, including Shanghai, the financial capital and China's largest city with 26 million people.

**Residents of Jilin will be able to move about freely starting today for the first time in more than three weeks**

The two-phase lockdown of Shanghai, being carried out over eight days, has shaken global markets worried about the possible economic impact. China's manufacturing activity fell to a five-month low in March, a monthly survey showed yesterday, as lockdowns and other restric-

tions forced factories to suspend production.

Pudong, the half of Shanghai on the east side of the Huangpu River, was to reopen at 5 a.m. Friday after a four-day lockdown during which residents were tested for the coronavirus and isolated if the result was positive. A lockdown of Puxi on the west side of the river was starting at 3 a.m.

About 16 million people will be tested in Puxi. Residents are not allowed to leave their neighborhoods or housing compounds during the four-day lockdown, with groceries or meals delivered to their complexes.

China yesterday reported 8,559 new cases in the previous 24-hour period, of which 6,720 had no symptoms. The proportion of asymptomatic cases has been higher than in previous outbreaks, particularly in Shanghai. About 100 of the new cases were imported ones among people who had recently arrived from abroad. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



**US** Yesterday, The Washington Post reported that Meta, Facebook's parent company, is using predatory tactics to go after another rival TikTok. Meta, the Post reported, hired a Republican consulting firm called Targeted Victory to "orchestrate a nationwide campaign" against TikTok. Targeted Victory, according to the Post, contracted with dozens of public relations firms across the U.S. to help "sway public opinion against TikTok" by planting local news stories and helping place op-eds targeting TikTok around the country, the story says.

AP PHOTO



**UK** An intelligence chief warned that the Kremlin is hunting for cyber targets and bringing in mercenaries to shore up its stalled military campaign in Ukraine. Jeremy Fleming (pictured), who heads the GCHQ electronic spy agency, praised Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's "information operation" for being highly effective at countering Russia's massive disinformation drive spreading propaganda about the war.

**UK** The government is ending the supply of free rapid coronavirus tests to most of the population even though Covid-19 infections remain at record levels, and health officials warn the pandemic could still have nasty surprises in store. More than 1.7 billion test kits have been handed out in workplaces, pharmacies and by mail over the past year, the government says, under a policy that encouraged people to test themselves regularly as a way to stamp out new outbreaks.

**Poland** As the number of people leaving Ukraine for points west slows, authorities in Poland and other neighboring nations are encouraging refugees from the war to find jobs, especially in health care and education. The U.N. refugee agency UNHCR reported yesterday that the daily number of arriving refugees recorded by the countries that border Ukraine dropped below 40,000 on Wednesday, the fewest since Russian troops invaded five weeks ago.