



**POLICE DETAINED EIGHT MEN WHO STOLE FUNDS TO PURCHASE MOP430 MILLION IN CRYPTOCURRENCY OF WHICH AT LEAST MOP180 MILLION WAS TRANSFERRED ABROAD** P4

**MARKETING PROFESSIONAL SUGGESTS MERCHANDISE SALE FOR RAILWAY PROMOTION** P2

**BACTERIA KNOWN TO CAUSE FOOD POISONING WAS DETECTED IN A SAMPLE OF SHRIMP SASHIMI AT A THAI RESTAURANT LOCATED IN THE INNER HARBOUR** P4



**Hong Kong** authorities this weekend asked the entire population of more than 7.4 million people to voluntarily test themselves for Covid-19 at home for three days in a row starting next week. The announcement by Chief Executive Carrie Lam came as the southern Chinese city is struggling to contain its worst outbreak with authorities sending mixed signals about testing and lockdowns.



**South Korean** President-elect Yoon Suk Yeol yesterday announced his intent to name a seasoned former prime minister and economic expert to serve as the country's No. 2 official under his incoming government. Yoon's pick of Han Duck-soo for prime minister is the first major nomination in his government, which is set to be inaugurated on May 10.



**North Korea** The influential sister of leader Kim Jong Un called the South Korean defense minister a "scum-like guy" for talking about preemptive strikes on the North, warning yesterday that the South may face "a serious threat." Kim Yo Jong's statement came amid heightened tensions between the rival Koreas over the North's spate of weapons tests this year, including its first intercontinental ballistic missile launch in more than four years. More on p7

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# ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER DOLLAR



The gov't is set to introduce a new round of consumption subsidy that could go ahead as early as next month P3

**NEW WAVE OF LOWS**  
**GAMING REVENUE PLUNGED 55.8% IN MARCH TO THE LOWEST LEVEL IN 18 MONTHS**



**CASINO AT GRAND EMPEROR HOTEL TO CEASE OPERATIONS**



Refined toy resembling the local LRT train

# LRT PASSENGER SUGGESTS MERCHANDISE SALE FOR RAILWAY PROMOTION

ANTHONY LAM

A Light Rapid Transit (LRT) passenger suggested yesterday the rail line sell branded souvenirs and merchandise to better promote the infrastructure.

Yesterday saw the railway's reopening following a six-month service suspension to replace high-voltage cables. The suspension started in October 2021 and completed on-time at the end of last month.

The passenger, who took the ride with his spouse and son, expressed his frustration that the LRT has so far not operated any merchandise sales.

In fact, the passenger's family was not the only one taking rides. LRT trains were mostly filled with

families and children yesterday.

Surnamed Chang, the passenger told the Times that he works in the marketing industry, which has led him wonder why the LRT company does not sell merchandise and souvenirs, which is a significant source of income.

It is not uncommon for railway operators to make and sell name-sake souvenirs and merchandise. The metro systems in Taipei and Kaohsiung sell merchandise related to the railways, which are popular among tourists.

Meanwhile, the MTR Corporation in Hong Kong, which runs the LRT under commission by the Macau government, also sells merchandise, which is popular even among local residents and railway enthusiasts.

Chang said that merchandise sales can help bring more income to the not-very-profitable railway system, and it can help promote the LRT system to people living in and out of Macau.

For example, Chang said, he has contacted the LRT for a model train for his son. However, after his enquiry went in vain, he had to purchase and refine a toy that can only resemble the local LRT train.

He hinted that children like the LRT system very much.

On the positioning of the railway system, Chang, among several other passengers, admitted that the LRT seems more like a tourist attraction than actual transport infrastructure.

Nonetheless, Wu, a student

from Zhejiang Province of China, said that the system may not be widely known to tourists, hinting that they may not use the system when they are in Macau.

Studying in a school near Cotai, she admitted that if she needs to visit any Cotai resort, she will simply travel on foot. The LRT line is a wide detour between her institution and the resorts in Cotai.

Echoing their comments is Albert Wong, president of the Macau Association of Railway Culture, who admitted that "few people would use LRT independently except for leisure use," which he objects to as the being the suggested true purpose of the system.

He thinks, similar to the local passengers whom the Times in-

terviewed, the LRT will only show its value when the Barra, Hengqin and East Lines are ready.

Wong also finds the LRT's means of payment problematic. "It is also a regret that no update of the payment system was made during the maintenance of the cable. This would make it easier for people to take the LRT," he said.

Public broadcaster TDM reported a railway enthusiast running to the platform after passing through the payment gate yesterday morning before the first train. He even made his own placard to celebrate the occasion.

He told TDM that he had arrived at the Ocean Station 30 minutes before the first train was scheduled to leave.

## APRIL FOOLS

# Macau bats may not have a 'taste for blood'

LAST Friday, April 1, Macau Daily Times did not forget to share an April Fools' joke as is common on this day across the world of media.

Our story on page 2 Friday titled "Scientists figure out how Macau-bats got a taste for blood" was made-up, inspired by an actual

news story.

Our bats are not "living Draculas" as far as we know – everything in the science domain must be proven right or wrong, after all. The Macau-based scientist Dr Joel Chau and the Science Kick journal were totally made-up.

However, real scientists

have discovered three species of bats among 1,400 kinds of bats that really feed only on the blood of mammals, as reported late March by real journal Science Advances.

According to a study by Germany's Max Planck Institute, the bats were found in Central and South Ame-

rica – but not in "Singapore and Macau hills," as stated in our April Fools' joke last Friday.

Media outlets have traditionally used the date of April 01 to let their imaginations run wild, with previous notable pranks including the BBC reporting in 1980 that Big Ben was to

undergo a digital update.

This year, late-night television hosts Jimmy Kimmel and Jimmy Fallon pulled off an elaborate talk show prank for April Fools' Day, as reported by The Independent:

"Those tuning in to watch ABC's Jimmy Kimmel Live on Friday (April 1)

would have been confused after seeing Fallon seated in the TV host's seat.

Meanwhile, viewers of The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon on NBC would have switched on to see Kimmel in Fallon's place."

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. The Press has been its custodian over the centuries. PC

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# ANOTHER ROUND OF E-VOUCHER SCHEME WILL BE LAUNCHED SOON: LEI WAI NONG

JING WU

**T**HE government will introduce a new round of electronic consumer cards (e-vouchers), Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, announced on Friday at the Legislative Assembly.

The details of the new round was not revealed but the measure could go ahead as early as May.

Lei stressed that the decision to re-launch the electronic consumer cards was not a continuation of the government's welfare measures from the previous year, but rather a re-launch in view of the current economic environment under the pandemic and the special circumstances of this year, in the hope of providing a certain degree of liquidity in the Macau market, supporting livelihoods and stabilizing domestic demand, preserving employment and even creating jobs.

Last year, a total of MOP5.27 billion was approved under the



consumer e-cards, bringing MOP8.24 billion into the market in the first round of consumption.

The government has recorded a deficit budget of MOP125 billion in the past three years.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the government issued two rounds of e-vouchers, each round worth

MOP8,000, to all local residents, aiming to stimulate the economy.

Recently, a group of lawmakers, namely those linked to the Macao Federation of Trade Unions, urged the government to review the support measures for the population and companies to help them cope with the economic downturn re-

sulting from the Covid-19 crisis.

Lawmaker Ella Lei had previously stated that economic recovery announced by the government is progressing very slowly which is ineffectual in supporting a population in distress and facing urgent problems.

Lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho has also urged the government to provide a new round of financial support using consumption cards, stressing that the pandemic has dealt a hard blow to local residents. Thus, the implementation of a new round of cash support is urgently needed, through monetary injection via electronic cards.

Back in February, the Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng advised that Secretary for Economy and Finance has been undertaking constant evaluation of economic circumstances, saying that Lei had been evaluating the situation and more news will be released as it becomes available.



## MUST APPOINTS VETERAN PEDIATRICIAN AS NEW VICE PRESIDENT

The Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) appointed on April 1 a new vice president, Chair Professor Paul Kwong-Hang Tam, who is a renowned surgeon-scientist and university leader. Tam graduated from The University of Hong Kong in 1976 and has since served in several world-class institutions, such as the University of Oxford, the University of Liverpool and the University of Hong Kong. He and his team have made significant contributions to advance pediatric minimal invasive surgery, genetics, and regenerative medicine of birth defects. They have made a breakthrough in discovering new genes and elucidating the complex functional genomics of Hirschsprung's disease. He has published 475 articles which have been cited nearly 30,000 times.

## MACANESE ASSOCIATION CANTEN CLOSING TEMPORARILY DUE TO STAFF SHORTAGE

The Macanese Association (ADM) canteen service will be suspended from tomorrow, April 5, a statement from the president of the board of the association, Miguel de Senna Fernandes, noted. In the statement, Senna Fernandes noted that the temporary suspension is related to a sudden shortage of staff following the decision of canteen staff not wishing to renew their employment contracts. The decision was justified as "family reasons and the uncertainty of the restrictions related to the [Covid-19] pandemic," the ADM president noted, adding that these staff members have been working at the association for the past 18 years. ADM is now looking for an alternative solution and aims to resume the canteen service as soon as possible, with a focus on maintaining the quality which ADM members are used to.

# Simple Pay operators offer surcharge reductions till end-September

**S**ERVICE providers of Simple Pay have agreed to extend special surcharge arrangements till September 30 this year, the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM) said in a statement.

The special arrangements, which include either a surcharge waiver or a rebate, will benefit 20,000 businesses, AMCM noted.

According to AMCM, as of February this year, a total of MOP4.75 billion worth of transactions involving small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have

been recorded on the mobile payment platform.

Guidelines from AMCM stipulate that the determination of surcharge depends on the payment consoles used to process the payment. With the Simple Pay function, business operators will have the freedom to use any payment console to charge their customers.

For example, if a business operator processes a particular payment using the console provided by the Bank of China, Macau

Branch, the surcharge level will be evaluated according to the bank's surcharge mechanism, regardless of what payment platform the customer is using.

AMCM disclosed that 90% of local retailers have migrated their payment gateway to Simple Pay. The city saw 190 million mobile payment transactions in 2021, the year in which the government provided consumption subsidies on the city's eight mobile payment platforms, aside from the tap-and-go Macau Pass card system.

The special surcharge arrangements were originally set to end March 31 this year.

Last week, Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong told the Legislative Assembly that the government is considering another round of consumption stimulus. In a statement, operator of mobile payment platform MPay and tap-and-go payment card, Macau Pass, said that it is "in full support of the government's new round of economic relief measures." **AL**

# ILLEGAL ACCOMMODATION LAW EFFECTIVE FROM APRIL 1

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE new legal regime on the banning of illegal accommodation came into force last Friday, April 1.

The new law aims to stop the provision of illegal accommodation to tourists in residential buildings, as well as strengthen the power of inspection and enforcement of penalties by the local au-

thorities, namely the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO).

The new law stipulates that all non-residents entering Macau, except workers and those holding special authorization to stay for over 90 days, are only allowed to stay in legally operated hotel establishments, including hotels, apartment hotels, and economical accommodation establishments.

Any person or entity accommodating visitors in premises or individual apartments that are not classified to function as hotel establishments, such as residential and commercial properties as well as industrial buildings, are regarded as illegal accommodation providers.

Exceptions are only considered in cases where visitors are visiting family

and friends who would provide them short stay lodging free of charge.

The new law also imposes stricter regulations on accommodation booking agents as well as real estate intermediaries and agents.

The law stipulates that accommodation booking agents such as online platforms for hotel reservations, for example, must provide documentation

and remove all online posts about accommodation at residential premises or flats.

Other amendments include a new penalty for real estate intermediaries and agents who are found to be facilitating the renting of units to provide illegal accommodation. These penalties include fines ranging from 20,000 patacas to 100,000 patacas.

CRIME

# MONEY LAUNDERING INVOLVED OVER MOP400M IN CRYPTOCURRENCY

JING WU

**P**OLICE have detained eight men for money laundering. The group used stolen funds to purchase USD56 million (MOP430 million) in cryptocurrency over a six-month period, of which at least MOP180 million was transferred abroad.

According to Judiciary Police (PJ), they detained the eight men last week at a telecommunications store and a hotel in NAPE.

The suspects are aged 33 to 44. Two of them are Macau residents and owners of telecommunications stores. The other six men are unemployed Hong Kong residents.

The eight men were charged with money laundering and criminal syndication, and were referred to the prosecutor's office for investigation yesterday morning, the PJ revealed.

The two local men are suspected of inviting Hong Kong residents into Macau to buy virtual money to help launder the proceeds of online fraud.

The six Hong Kong residents went to the telecommunications store to buy virtual currency with cash. They then sold it through a virtual currency overseas trading platform. The proceeds were transferred to a number of offshore bank accounts. The Hong Kong residents involved



then withdrew the money from local ATMs.

Police said that after the suspects withdrew the money, they went back to the telecommunication store to buy virtual currency and kept on making circular transactions and transfers, "which made it more difficult for the police to trace."

"Six Hong Kong men confessed that they were instructed by members of the crime syndicate to come to Macau to trade virtual currency for a daily reward of MOP2,000. Two of the Macau suspects refused to cooperate. However, the evidence

obtained by the police indicated that all eight suspects were involved," the police revealed.

During the operation, police seized the allegedly stolen Hong Kong dollars, Macau patacas, and Chinese yuan, amounting to MOP570,000 in cash.

Moreover, 168 bank ATM cards, mobile phones, an expensive watch and two cars suspected of being used in the crime were seized.

With the assistance of the Hong Kong police, PJ also froze a total of USD30,698 (MOP248,000) in cryptocurrency.

# Association calls on gov't to conserve Taipa trees

ANTHONY LAM

**A**S part of a radio show, Leong Kun Fong, executive director of the Association for the Promotion of Landscaping and Greening in Macao (the Association) said that the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) has a key role in conserving the old trees in Taipa.

Recently, debate has become heated on whether 10 trees located in the original Cheok Ka Village in Taipa should be retained as they are. Lawmaker Ron Lam, urban planner Lam Iek Chit and environmentalist Joe Chan have expressed their views on the necessity of conserving the trees at their current location.

The trees are officially and legally inscribed as old trees, which means they are under the protection of



the Cultural Heritage Protection Law.

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM), meanwhile, has made its stand clear that the trees should be retained. Any attempt to relocate them, the bureau emphasized, may injure or even kill them.

The trees have grown to a height as tall as three floors of a residential bui-

lding.

However, the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) has insisted that the trees be relocated, citing "significant public interest" as justification. The Cultural Heritage Protection Law allows for cutting down trees for this reason.

The public interest to which the DSSOPT refer-

red relates to the construction of a road connecting the Pou Long Garden roundabout to the Lakeside Economic Housing Estate.

Leong demands the government explains its reasoning in relation to "significant public interest." He also demands the scientific proof on relocating the trees.

Although IC president Leong Wai Man has recently said her bureau would discuss with the IAM on the matter, Leong did not find her comment very convincing. "I haven't seen any real suggestions from the IC," Leong remarked.

Some listeners of the radio show called to emphasize that in mainland China, officials who groundlessly cut down old trees can be dismissed.

The trees have been featured on the websites and blog posts of many mainland Chinese influencers.

So far, the city has listed 616 old trees under the protection of the Cultural Heritage Protection Law.

# FOOD POISONING AGENT DETECTED AT INNER HARBOUR'S THAI RESTAURANT

**B**ACTERIA known to cause food poisoning, *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, was detected in a sample of Thai shrimp sashimi at a Thai restaurant located in the Inner Harbour, the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) revealed on Friday.

"The sample of the Thai shrimp sashimi containing *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* did not meet the requirements of GL 009 DSA 2015 Microbiological Guidelines and posed a consumption risk," IAM indicated.

IAM ordered Chang Siam Thai Restaurant to stop its sale of the menu item and urged the establishment to strengthen management of food hygiene practices, as well as to review and rectify food storage conditions, food handling processes and staff hygiene.

Due to insufficient heating and sterilization during the preparation process of the Thai shrimp

sashimi, IAM urged the restaurant to purchase ingredients and in particular sashimi-grade ingredients from stores with reliable hygiene and good reputation. The restaurant was also advised to send their staff on food hygiene management and training courses for people in the food safety and environmental hygiene industry to enhance their knowledge of food and personal hygiene.

Meanwhile, IAM calls on the industry to comply with food hygiene and safety requirements, ensure the safety of food storage and preparation processes, and properly handle raw and cooked food to avoid cross-contamination.

*Vibrio parahaemolyticus* is a Gram-negative bacterium found in the sea and in estuaries which, when ingested, causes gastrointestinal illness in humans. JW

# NEW DIRECTORS FOR NEW BUREAUS SWORN IN

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE directors and deputy directors of the Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) and Public Works Bureau (DSOP) officially took office last Friday, April 1.

The two swearing-in ceremonies were presided over by the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário.

Lai Weng Leong will lead the DSSCU together with his new deputy director Mak Tat Io.

At DSOP, the new director is Lam Wai Hou who will be assisted by two new deputy directors, Sam Weng Chon and Luís Manuel Silva Madeira de Carvalho.

Lai had previously served as deputy director of the DSSOPT while Lam was the former director of the Infrastructure Development Office (GDI).

Lai has a bachelor's degree in civil engineering

and started to work at DSOPT in 1995 as acting chief of the Urbanization Department which he then headed from April 2016.

In January 2020, he was appointed deputy director of the DSSOPT – a position he has held until now.

Lam officially headed GDI in February 2019, having previously served as acting director from September 2018. He had been working at GDI since 2005, first as a senior technician until 2008 and subsequently in leadership positions.

He has a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and a master's degree in structural engineering.

The two new bureaus were announced March 25 as part of the government's efforts to restructure public administration, namely the former GDI and DSSOPT. The new bureaus officially started operations April 1, the same day as the swearing-in of their new leaders.

GAMING

# Casinos revenue in March down 56% to lowest level in 18 months

**M**ACAU'S gaming revenue plunged 55.8% in March to the lowest level in 18 months, as a worsening Covid-19 outbreak in China battered tourism in the city.

Gross gaming revenue was MOP3.67 billion (USD455 million), the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) revealed Friday, the lowest result since September in 2020.

According to Bloomberg, the results were slightly worse than the median analyst estimate of a 55% year-on-year decline and sent slightly down shares of the big-six casino operators, up to -1.2%.

Mainland China Covid-19 cases "and the tightened border policy remains to be the main dragger of poor GGR," said



analyst Vitaly Umansky of brokerage Sanford C. Bernstein Ltd in a Friday note cited by GGRAsia.

"Many Chinese provinces are still imposing lockdowns and travel res-

trictions to control Covid outbreaks, and since March 18, travelers crossing the Zhuhai land border must present Covid test certificate [issued] within 24 hours; and not likely

to relax soon as Zhuhai is still reporting local cases," Umansky said.

Last month, Macau authorities imposed a 14-day quarantine for visitors coming from high-risk areas in the mainland, including from major cities in Guangdong causing a significant drop in visitation numbers.

The March 2022 gaming revenue takes calendar-year Macau GGR to MOP17.77 billion, down 24.8% on the MOP23.64 billion achieved in the first three months of 2021.

As previously reported, the anticipated revival of the gaming sector is again receding into the distance: with no recovery expected for at least six months. Gaming insiders have admitted that the casino sector's financial situation is set to worsen in the next six months, especially given that casinos have paid tens of millions to renew their concessions. **PC**

## MONTHLY GAMING REVENUE FOR 2022 AND 2021

	2022	2021	Variance
Mar	3,672	8,306	-55.8%
Feb	7,759	7,312	+6.1%
Jan	6,344	8,024	-20.9%

## Casino at Grand Emperor Hotel to halt operations June 26

JING WU

**T**HE casino at Grand Emperor Hotel will close for business as they will not renew the service agreement with gaming concessionaire SJM, which expires June 26, citing "difficult business environment" due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Emperor Entertainment Hotel Limited stated in a filing to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange that in view of the gloomy outlook for the high-end gaming market, the "group has resolved not to renew the services agreement with SJM and to terminate the gaming operation on the expiry date." However, they will retain its hotel business at Emperor Entertainment Hotel, which is "considered to be in the best interests of the group and its shareholders as a whole."

According to the group's interim report last



year, the casino has a mid-court of 67 tables, a 10 table VIP lounge, and slot machines.

Emperor Entertainment Hotel said that in addition to its gaming operations, it is currently engaged in hotel busi-

ness, including the Emperor Hotel Wan Chai in Hong Kong, Grand Emperor Hotel and the Inn Hotel in Macau.

"The group will look for suitable opportunities to make good use of its financial resources

with the aim to expand its hotel business. Given the strategic position of Hong Kong and Macau in the Greater Bay Area, the long-term outlook for the hotel industry is positive following the relaxation of anti-epidemic measures and the re-opening of the border," the group stated.

Reports have noted that at least seven satellite casinos in ZAPE and Taipa will shut this year, bringing possible additional financial pressure amid the gaming revenue downturn recorded in March.

Gaming legal expert, António Lobo Vilela, has hinted that Babylon Casino is next to announce its halt of operations as satellite casinos will have to end operations before June 26, due to the new law proposes that satellite casinos should operate under the premises of the concessionaire.

## ELLA LEI: NO FURTHER EMPLOYMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR CASINO CLOSURE

**L**AWMAKER Ella Lei has stressed that the Grand Emperor Hotel group has not further announced any employment arrangements for its staff.

"Many people are worried that they will not be able to keep their jobs," Lei underlined.

She explained that the casino at Grand Emperor Hotel operates under a gaming concession held by SJM, and the croupiers, supervisors and staff are employees of SJM. A significant number of people will be affected by announcement of the casino ceasing operations.

The lawmaker expects the grantee company to take the initiative to assist the staff by keeping them in employment through other casino arrangements and the staff should be informed of those arrangements as soon as possible.

She also mentioned, at the end of last year, there were 1,774 fewer full-time employees in the gaming in-

dustry compared to the same period in 2020, among them, the number of croupiers decreased by 758.

Moreover, legislator and chairman of the Gaming Employees Home, Leong Sun Iok, pointed out that according to the existing law on the employment of non-resident workers, the authorities may revoke permission to employ non-residents in specific economic sectors due to major reasons such as changes in the economic situation.

Chinese media reported previously that seven satellite casinos are planning to stop operations by mid-year. Lei urges the government to take the initiative to understand the situation and prepare a plan to assist affected employees in the gaming industry. She also urges the casinos to fulfill their corporate social responsibility to continue the employment of their employees, so as to avoid making the unemployment situation worse. **JW**



## SHANGHAI LOCKDOWN TRIGGERS COMPLAINTS AS COVID CASES RISE

COVID-19 cases in China's largest city of Shanghai are still rising with millions isolated at home under a sweeping lockdown, as the draconian "zero tolerance" approach to the pandemic increasingly draws complaints from residents fed up with the restrictions.

Health officials yesterday reported 438 confirmed cases over the previous 24 hours, along with 7,788 asymptomatic ones. Both figures were up slightly from the day before, while the northeastern province of Jilin posted a combined 4,455 cases yesterday, also marking an increase from Saturday.

While small by the standards of some countries, the daily increa-

ses are some of the largest since the virus was first detected in the central city of Wuhan in late 2019.

Shanghai with its 26 million people last week began a two-stage lockdown, with residents of the eastern Pudong section supposed to be allowed to leave their homes Friday, while their neighbors in the western Puxi section underwent their own four-day isolation period.

Despite that assurance, millions in Pudong continue to be confined to their homes amid complaints over food deliveries and the availability of medications and health services.

Notices delivered to residents said they were required to self-test for COVID-19 daily and take

precautions including wearing masks at home and avoiding contact with family members — measures not widely enforced since the early days of the pandemic.

While Wuhan endured a 76-day lockdown in 2020 with relatively little complaint, Shanghai residents — many of whom were in isolation even before last week's lockdown began — appear to be growing increasingly fed up with the measures and methods being used to enforce them.

Although coverage in China's entirely state-controlled media remains overwhelmingly positive, complaints have been appearing online, including in the form of videos and sound recordings purporting to show heavy-han-

ded practices by officials and volunteers and alleging that sound medical advice has been ignored in favor of political expediency.

"Whereas there was little societal resistance to the lockdown once it was imposed in Wuhan, resistance in Shanghai is palpable now," Dali Yang, a professor of political science at the University of Chicago tweeted yesterday.

Given that the vast majority of cases in Shanghai are not life threatening, "it is not surprised that the imposition of the lockdown and forced quarantine of the infected in harsh conditions are meeting resistance," Yang tweeted.

A city official last week apologized in response to complaints

over the government's handling of the lockdown, and a vice premier made sweeping demands for improvements during a tour of Shanghai on Saturday.

Sun Chunlan, who sits on the ruling Communist Party's Politburo, urged "resolute and swift moves to stem the spread of COVID-19 in Shanghai in the shortest time possible," the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

However, Sun stressed "unswerving adherence" to China's hard-line "zero-COVID" approach, mandating lockdowns, forced isolation of all suspected cases and mass testing, even while acknowledging the social and economic toll that is taking.

"It is an arduous task and huge challenge to combat the omicron variant while maintaining the normal operation of core functions in a megacity," Sun said.

She called for safeguarding key industries and institutions and the functioning of supply and industrial chains in the commercial hub, along with ensuring "people's basic living conditions and normal medical needs."

State media reports indicate president and Communist Party leader Xi Jinping is directing the continuing tough approach, while seeking to avoid further damage to the sputtering economy and ensure overall stability ahead of a key party congress expected for November.

Despite the spike in infections, China has recorded no new COVID-19 deaths since March 20th, when two were added for a total 4,638. China's vaccination rate is above 87% — although significantly lower among seniors — and omicron is known to be more infectious while the illness it brings on is typically more mild than with the earlier delta variant. **MDT/AP**

## US investigators fly to China to aid in plane crash probe

U.S. accident investigators arrived in China on Saturday to help authorities look for clues into what caused last month's crash of a Boeing jetliner with 132 people aboard.

The seven-member team from the National Transportation Safety Board will participate in the Civil Aviation Administration of China's investigation of the March 21 crash of a China Eastern Airlines Boeing 737-800 because the aircraft was manufactured in the U.S.

As part of that assistance, the plane's cockpit voice recorder is being downloaded and analyzed at a U.S. lab in Washington, federal officials said Friday.

Investigators hope the



recording will explain why the plane went into a nose-dive from about 8,800 meters over a mountainous region in southeastern China.

Chinese officials have said that air traffic controllers were unable to get a response from the pilots while the plane was descending.

The cockpit voice recorder would pick up voices and other sounds from microphones worn by the pilots and another stationed over their heads.

Searchers also recovered the plane's flight-data recorder, which constantly captures speed, altitude, heading and other information and the performance of key systems on the aircraft, but that recorder was not being evaluated in Washington on Friday.

The NTSB said its investigators will limit contact with people outside the investigation so that they can start their work immediately without going through a quarantine period.

The plane that crashed was not a 737 Max, a newer

model that was temporarily grounded worldwide following two deadly crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia.

The impact caused by the crash in China created a 20-meter- (65-foot-) 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. More than 49,000 pieces of debris have been recovered, along with some human remains and personal items.

A Chinese aviation safety official said a preliminary investigation report would be completed within 30 days of the crash.

Flight MU5735 with 123 passengers and nine crew

members was headed from the southwestern city of Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province, to Guangzhou, a major city and export manufacturing hub near Hong Kong in southeastern China.

The 737-800 has an excellent safety record and the Chinese airline industry has had relatively few mishaps in recent years.

Before last month's accident, the last fatal crash of a Chinese airliner occurred in August 2010, when an Embraer ERJ 190-100 operated by Henan Airlines hit the ground short of the runway in the northeastern city of Yichun and caught fire, killing 44 people. Investigators blamed pilot error. **MDT/AP**

# Kim's sister enraged by Seoul's preemptive strike comments

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

**T**HE influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un called the South Korean defense minister a "scum-like guy" for talking about preemptive strikes on the North, warning yesterday that the South may face "a serious threat."

Kim Yo Jong's statement came amid heightened tensions between the rival Koreas over the North's spate of weapons tests this year, including its first intercontinental ballistic missile launch in more than four years. Some experts say her statement could signal that North Korea will conduct more significant weapons tests soon and take a hardline stance on South Korea.

The ICBM test on March 24 that broke North Korea's four-year moratorium on big weapons tests was an embarrassment to South Korea's liberal President Moon Jae-in, who has pushed hard to achieve greater reconciliation between the countries and find a peaceful resolution to the North Korean nuclear crisis.

During a visit to the country's strategic missile command on Friday, South Korean Defense Minister Suh Wook said that South Korea has the ability and readiness to launch precision strikes on North Korea if it detects the North intends to fire missiles at South Korea. Seoul has long maintained such a preemptive attack strategy to cope with North Ko-

AP PHOTO



rea's growing missile and nuclear threats, but it was highly unusual for a senior Seoul official under the Moon administration to publicly discuss it.

Yesterday, Kim's sister, Kim Yo Jong, issued blistering rhetoric directed at Suh and threats toward Seoul.

"The senseless and scum-like guy dare mention a 'preemptive strike' at a nuclear weapons state," Kim Yo Jong said in a statement carried by state media. "South Korea may face a serious threat owing to the reckless remarks made by its defense minister."

"South Korea should discipline itself if it wants to stave off disaster," she said.

Kim Yo Jong, a senior official in the North's ruling Workers' Party, is in charge of relations with Seoul and Washington. South Korea's spy service says she is the North's No. 2 official behind her brother.

Pak Jong Chon, a secretary in the Workers' Party's central committee, separately warned that "any slight misjudgment and ill statement rattling the other party under the present situation" may trigger "a dangerous conflict and a full-blown war."

Pak said North Korea will "mercilessly direct military force into destroying major targets in Seoul and the South Korean army" if South Korea preemptively attacks North Korea.

Relations between the Koreas briefly flourished in 2018 after North Korea abruptly reached out to South Korea and the United States and expressed its willingness to put its nuclear program on the bargaining table. At the time, Kim Yo Jong visited South Korea to attend the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics and conveyed her brother's invitation for Moon to visit the North. Kim Jong Un and Moon eventually met three times in 2018.

But North Korea turned a colder shoulder on Moon and cut off ties with South Korea after its broader nuclear diplomacy with the United States collapsed in 2019 due to disputes over U.S.-

-led economic sanctions on the North.

"Kim Yo Jong's remarks foreshadow another significant military test," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul. "Similar to how Moscow and Beijing try to gaslight the world that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is somehow the fault of NATO, Pyongyang will blame its nuclear and missile advancements on the U.S.-South Korea alliance."

Analyst Cheong Seong-Chang at the private Sejong Institute in South Korea said that the back-to-back North Korean statements indicate that it will take hardline steps toward South Korea. He said that Pyongyang is sensitive to Seoul's preemptive attack capability because it lacks military assets and capability to detect South Korean strikes in advance.

But Cheong worried that Seoul's public comments would result in strengthening the voices of hardline officials in Pyongyang and raising tensions between the Koreas.

Moon's single five-year term ends in May, when he will be replaced by conservative Yoon Suk Yeol, who openly discussed the preemptive attack strategy on North Korea during his campaign. His liberal rivals criticized him for unnecessarily provoking North Korea, but Yoon said he would pursue a principled approach on Pyongyang.

The United States has urged North Korea to return to talks without preconditions, but the North has rejected such an overture saying the U.S. must first drop its hostility toward it. Kim Jong Un has repeatedly vowed to expand his nuclear arsenal as a diplomatic stalemate with Washington continues. **MDT/AP**

# China to back military-ruled Myanmar regardless of situation

**C**HINA says it will back neighbor Myanmar "no matter how the situation changes," in the latest show of unequivocal support for the ruling military that seized power last year.

China "has always placed Myanmar in an important position in its neighborly diplomacy" and wants to "deepen exchanges and cooperation," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told his Myanmar counterpart Wunna Maung Lwin on Friday, according to China's official Xinhua News Agency.

Myanmar's military, which ousted the civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021, has continued to face popular resistance that amounts to what some U.N. experts have characterized as a ci-

vil war. The government is also facing genocide accusations at the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

In return for Chinese diplomatic support and material assistance, Myanmar has been a loyal ally of Beijing within a 10-member regional bloc, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The sides should accelerate work on the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, step up construction of "major landmark projects" and "deepen solidarity in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic," Wang said.

"No matter how the situation changes, China will support Myanmar in safeguarding its sovereignty, independence and territorial

integrity, and in exploring a development path suited to its national conditions," Wang said.

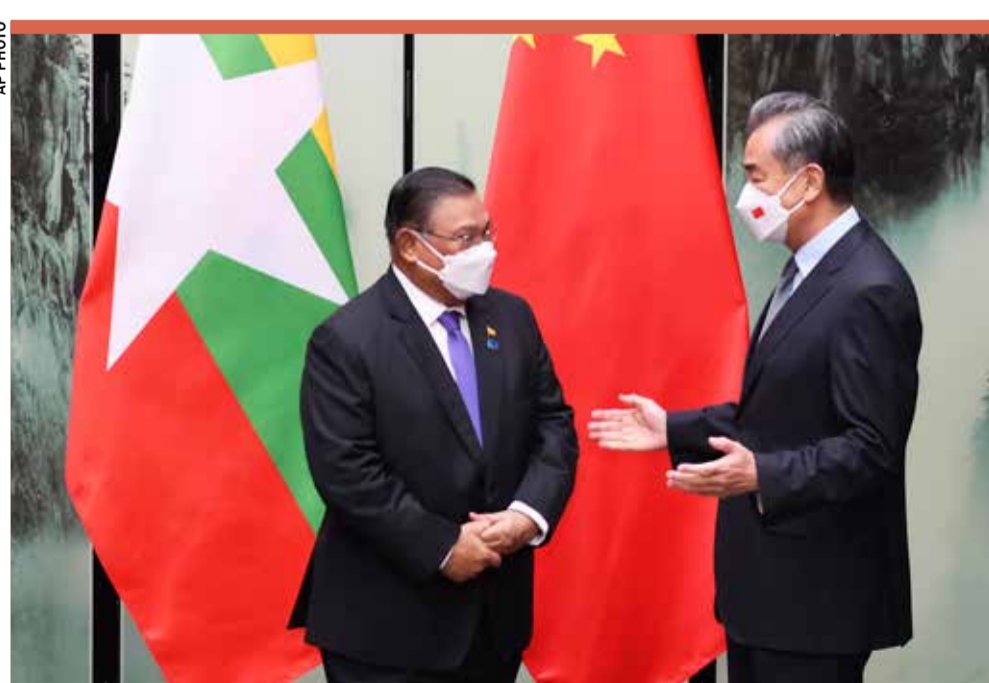
Myanmar's military leader has not been allowed to participate in ASEAN meetings following the army's seizure of power and violent suppression of opposition to its rule.

China pursues what it calls an independent foreign policy of peace that generally prioritizes its own narrow interests, with little or no consideration for a country's human rights record or other internal controversies.

China has refused to criticize Russia over its invasion of Ukraine while blaming the West for provoking the conflict.

And on Thursday, Chinese

AP PHOTO



leader Xi Jinping issued strong backing for Afghanistan while making no mention of human rights

abuses by the country's Taliban leaders, even as much of the world fumed over the hardline Islamic group re-

negating on a promise a day earlier to open schools to girls beyond the sixth grade. **MDT/AP**



PUTIN'S WAR

# Ukraine sees openings as Russia fixed on besieged Mariupol

NEBI QENA & YURAS  
KARMANAU, KYIV

**R**ESIDENTS of Ukraine's besieged southeastern coast awaited possible evacuation yesterday as the country's president said Russia's obsession with capturing a key port city had left its forces weakened and created opportunities for his military.

Two loud explosions were heard in Odesa on the Black Sea, and black smoke was seen rising above the city, which is where Ukraine's navy is headquartered. It is west of Mariupol, a smaller port that has been under attack for almost the entire war and rescuers are desperate to reach.

The Odesa city council said in a brief statement that a morning airstrike set off fires in some areas. The Russian military said hours later that it used ships and aircraft-fired missiles to strike an oil processing plant and fuel depots that were supplying Ukrainian troops.

The city council said Ukraine's air defense shot down some missiles before they hit the city. Ukrainian military spokesman Vladyslav Nazarov said there were no casualties from the attack.

In Mariupol, conditions remained dire and prospects for escape uncertain. The surrounded city, which has been brutalized by some of the war's worst attacks, reported weeks ago

that water, food, fuel and medicine were running out. About 100,000 people are believed to still be there, less than a quarter of the city's prewar population of 430,000.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said it hoped a team it sent to help evacuate residents would reach Mariupol yesterday. Ukrainian authorities said Russia agreed days ago to allow safe passage from the city, but similar agreements have broken down repeatedly under continued shelling.

Mariupol is in the mostly Russian-speaking Donbas region, where Moscow-backed separatists have fought Ukrainian troops for eight years. Its capture would create an unbroken land corridor from Russia to Crimea, which Moscow seized from Ukraine in 2014.

With Mariupol squarely in Russia's crosshairs, Ukraine insists it has gained a leg up elsewhere in the country. As his country's troops retook territory north of the capital of Kyiv from departing Russian troops, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called on all Ukrainians to do whatever they could "to foil the enemy's tactics and weaken its capabilities."

"Peace will not be the result of any decisions the enemy makes somewhere in Moscow. There is no need to entertain empty hopes that they will simply leave our land. We can only have peace by fighting," Zelenskyy

said late Saturday.

Zelenskyy and Ukraine's Western allies believe Russia has shifted its forces from the capital region and the country's north in order to build strength in the east and south. The Ukrainian leader again urged the West to supply his military with warplanes and more anti-missile systems.

"Every Russian missile that hits our cities and every bomb dropped on our people, on our children, only adds black paint to the history that will describe everyone on whom the decision depended - the decision of whether to help Ukraine with modern weapons," Zelenskyy said.

While the geography of the battlefield morphed, little changed for many Ukrainians more than five weeks into a war that has sent more than 4 million people fleeing the country as refugees and displaced millions more from their homes.

The regional governor in Kharkiv, said yesterday that Russian artillery and tanks performed over 20 strikes on Ukraine's second-largest city and its outskirts in the country's northeast over the past day. Gov. Oleh Synyehubov said a missile strike on the city of Lozovo wounded four people and that Russian tanks bombarded a hospital in the town of Balakliia.

Zelenskyy alleged Saturday that Russian troops have left mines around homes, abandoned equip-

ment and even the bodies of the dead as they withdraw from around Kyiv. Those claims could not be independently verified, but Ukrainian troops were seen heeding the warning.

In Bucha, northwest of the capital, Associated Press journalists watched as Ukrainian soldiers, backed by a column of tanks and other armored vehicles, used cables to drag bodies off of a street from a distance for fear they may have been booby-trapped. Locals said the dead — AP counted at least six — were civilians killed without provocation by departing Russian soldiers.

In towns and cities surrounding Kyiv, signs of fierce fighting were everywhere in the wake of the Russian redeployment. Destroyed armored vehicles from both armies lay in streets and fields along with scattered military gear.

Ukrainian troops were stationed at the entrance to Antonov Airport in the suburb of Hostomel, demonstrating control of the runway that Russia tried to storm in the first days of the war.

Inside the compound, the Mriya, one of the biggest planes ever built, lay wrecked underneath a hangar pockmarked with holes from the February attack.

The head of Ukraine's delegation in talks with Russia said Moscow's negotiators informally agreed to most of a draft proposal discussed during face-to-face talks in Istanbul this week, but no written confirmation has been provided.

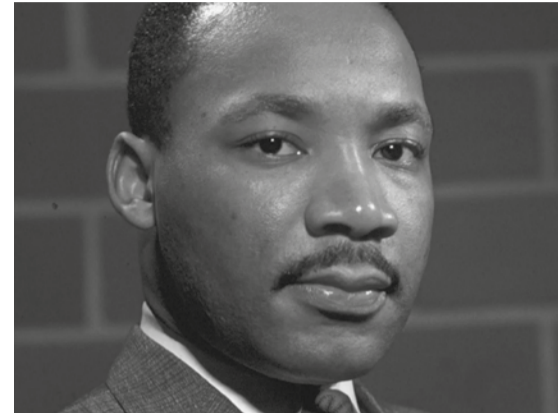
The Ukrainian negotiator, Davyd Arakhmia said on Ukrainian TV that he hoped the was developed enough so that the two countries' presidents can meet to discuss it.

Ukrainian authorities warned that Russia's focus on eastern Ukraine did not mean Kyiv and other cities wouldn't become targets again. In his evening address Saturday, Zelenskyy called for his people to do whatever they can to ensure the country's survival, even by engaging in acts as simple as showing each other kindness.

"When a nation is defending itself in a war of annihilation, when it is a question of life or death of millions, there are no unimportant things. [...] And everyone can contribute to a victory for all," the president said. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1968 MARTIN LUTHER KING SHOT DEAD



The American black civil rights leader, Dr Martin Luther King, has been assassinated.

Dr King was shot dead in the southern US city of Memphis, Tennessee, where he was to lead a march of sanitation workers protesting against low wages and poor working conditions

He was shot in the neck as he stood on a hotel balcony and died in hospital soon afterwards.

Reverend Jesse Jackson was on the balcony with Dr King when the single shot rang out.

"He had just bent over. I reckon if he had been standing up he would not have been hit in the face," said Mr Jackson.

Police in Memphis were put on alert for a "well-dressed" white man who is said to have dropped an automatic rifle after the shooting and escaped in a blue car.

There were early signs of rioting in Memphis after Dr King's death and 4,000 members of the National Guard were drafted into the city.

A dusk-to-dawn curfew has been ordered to ward off disturbances.

The US President, Lyndon Johnson, has postponed a trip to Hawaii for peace talks on Vietnam.

The president said he was "shocked and saddened" by the civil rights leader's death.

"I ask every citizen to reject the blind violence that has taken Dr King who lived by non-violence," Mr Johnson said.

Dr King, 39, had previously survived several attempts on his life including the bombing of his home in 1956.

The charismatic civil rights leader joined the crusade for equal rights for black people in America in the mid 1950s.

He first came to national prominence as one of the leaders of the Alabama bus boycott in 1955.

In 1963 Dr King led a massive march on Washington DC where he delivered his now famous "I have a dream" speech.

Dr King advocated the use of non-violent tactics such as sit-ins and protest marches.

In 1964 he was awarded the Nobel peace prize.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Martin Luther King's assassination led to riots in more than 100 US cities. James Earl Ray was convicted of his murder and sentenced to 99 years in prison. But he later retracted his confession and said he had been only a minor player in a conspiracy. However, his appeals for a new trial were rejected and he died in prison in 1998. Ray was supported by some members of Martin Luther King's family who believed the US Government may have been involved in Dr King's death. Their case was strengthened in December 1999 when a jury in a wrongful death case brought by the King family, decided the civil rights leader was the victim of a murder conspiracy. However, in June 2000 after an investigation the US Justice Department said it had uncovered no reliable evidence of a conspiracy.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Risky financial ventures will result in unrecoverable losses. You will meet potential new mates through friends or relatives. Help children complete projects they're having difficulty with.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Put something away in case of an emergency. You can make major gains if you talk to your boss about your findings. You will be popular and will easily attract members of the opposite sex.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

If you've been really busy, try to schedule some time to spend with loved ones. Property investments, insurance, tax rebates, or inheritance should bring you financial gains.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Watch your weight gain due to water retention. Secret activity is evident. Do not allow colleagues to hinder your ambitions. Be prepared to take advantage of your good fortune.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Don't hesitate to sign up for lectures or seminars that will enlighten you. Think twice before you say something you might regret later. Make any decisions you have to in order to avoid feeling unsettled.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

You will enjoy events that lean toward theater, art, or music today. You can help them with difficult projects. You should be traveling to that exotic destination you've been dreaming about.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Your flair for dramatic appeal will unleash itself at social functions. Dealing with foreigners will be most enlightening. Put your energy into moneymaking ventures.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Children may be less than honest with you. Sudden romantic connections may be short lived. Show what a dedicated person you can be. It's a favorable time for real estate investments.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Go out with close friends who understand your situation and your needs. Your ideas may be good, but they aren't necessarily right for everyone.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You will find your personal partner taxing today. Tempers may flare if you haven't been completely honest about your intentions or your whereabouts.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Be honest in your communication and don't lose your cool. Your lack of responsibility and attention has been a key issue in your relationship. New partnerships will develop if you join investment groups.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Don't spend more than is necessary on travel or friends. You have two choices; Get out on your own, or bend to your mate's whims. Pleasure trips will be most enjoyable and should lead to new and lasting friendships.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

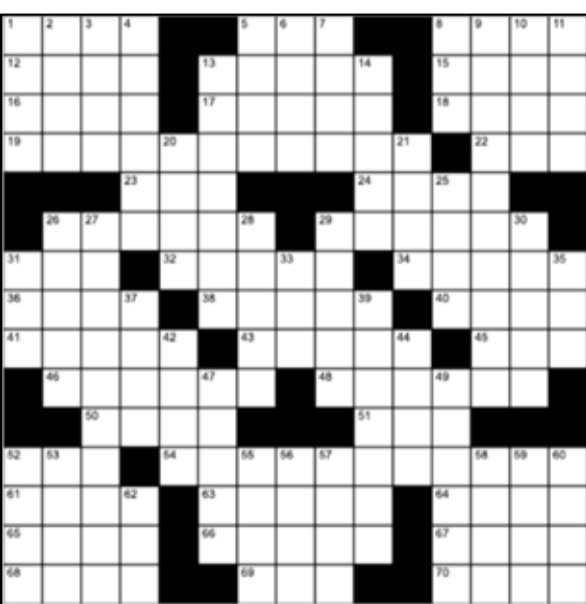
Table with columns: MIN, MAX, CONDITION. Rows for CHINA (Beijing, Changchun, Chengdu, Chongqing, Fuzhou, Guangzhou, Guiyang, Haikou, Hangzhou, Harbin, Hefei, Nanjing, Shanghai, Taipei, Wuhan, Hong Hong) and WORLD (Moscow, Frankfurt, Paris, London, New York).

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- No-win situation; 5- Marseilles Mrs.; 8- Morales of "NYPD Blue"; 12- Hindu music; 13- Daybook; 15- Stretch wide; 16- River to the Caspian; 17- Absurd; 18- Bounce back; 19- Adornment; 22- Jockey Turcotte; 23- Country bordered by Canada and Mexico; 24- Cheerful; 26- Accompanier of means and opportunity; 29- Puget Sound city; 31- Atmosphere; 32- More tender; 34- Head lock; 36- Editor Wintour; 38- Stork, e.g.; 40- Poker stake; 41- Fish covering; 43- Expressed disapproval; 45- Peg used on the first in golf; 46- Early stage; 48- Mariner; 50- Facilitate; 51- Twice Lili; 52- Long, long time; 54- Capital of Florida; 61- Violist's clef; 63- Actor Christopher; 64- Large village; 65- Unit of currency in Iran and Yemen; 66- Taboos; 67- ... saw Elba; 68- Tent stick; 69- Nine-digit ID; 70- Dweeb;

DOWN 1- Medicine; 2- ... avis; 3- Food thickener; 4- Edible nut; 5- Ho Chi ...; 6- Polite address; 7- Bald eagle's relative; 8- Spud bud; 9- Capital of California; 10- Horton Hears ...; 11- Get ... the ground floor; 13- Disown; 14- Gossipmonger; 20- Wife of Osiris; 21- Diplomacy; 25- When said three times, a 1970 war movie; 26- Chop into small pieces; 27- Decorative; 28- Muse of lyric poetry; 29- Tough trips; 30- Fall flower; 31- Small batteries; 33- Begley and Wynn; 35- Catch on; 37- Jessica of "Dark Angel"; 39- Attains; 42- Formerly, formerly; 44- Prima donna; 47- Long; 49- Pay attention; 52- Tombstone lawman; 53- Assortment; 55- Tolstoy and Gorcey; 56- Part of an eye or camera; 57- River in central England; 58- Peeved; 59- Large jug or pitcher; 60- Geraint's beloved; 62- Cheer for Manolete;

Friday's solution



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

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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HKD 12,980,000 2-STOREY SHOP

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TAIPA | Jade Garden | 4 | HKD 15,380,000  
TAIPA | Buckingham | 2 | HKD 8,590,000  
MACAU | Bai Yuen G. | 3 | HKD 12,800,000

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**RENT**

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MACAU | San On | 2 | HKD 10,500  
COLOANE | 1 Oasis | 2 | HKD 11,200  
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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

# China's World University Games still on despite withdrawals

STEPHEN WADE

**O**RGANIZERS of the World University Games, which open in just under three months in Chengdu, China, say they are going ahead despite some countries pulling out of the event.

Officials confirmed to The Associated Press on Friday that Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Luxembourg have withdrawn due to COVID-19 concerns. Australia has also indicated it is withdrawing its swimmers, volleyball players, and track-and-field athletes.

"Athletics Australia continues to have many concerns around the event and its management of COVID protocols," Athletics Australia said in a statement this week. "It is Athletics Australia's view that it cannot endorse competition for Australian athletes in an environment that could put athletes at risk."

A spokesman for Switzerland-based FISU — the International University Sports Federation —

AP PHOTO



Then FISU President George Killian, center, at the closing ceremony of the 24th World University Games in Bangkok, Thailand

told AP that it has raised many concerns with Chinese authorities.

FISU has said that Chinese officials have reassured them that Chengdu will not face a lo-

## It's expected that the World University Games will operate on a closed-loop system

ckdown. This is a concern since China's most populous city Shanghai, with 26 million people, is now under lockdown because of worries over spreading COVID-19 cases.

The Shanghai lockdown was unforeseen, as would be a lockdown in Chengdu.

It's expected that the World University Games will operate on a closed-loop system similar to one used in the just-completed Winter Olympics and Paralympics in Beijing.

That kept athletes and officials walled off from residents of the city of Beijing, required daily testing of all participants, extensive protocols to enter the country, and tracking by China-issued smart-phone apps.

Olivier Van Bogaert, a spokesman for FISU, said about 6,000 athletes from 90 delegations were expected to attend. He said the number was in flux.

The World University Games, scheduled to be held every two years, are to open on June 26 and close on July 7. They were pushed back from 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

China is also scheduled to hold the Asian Games from Sept. 10-25 in Hangzhou. This event involves more than 11,000 athletes and is usually larger than the participant numbers at the Summer Olympics. MDT/AP

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**Plastic & Aesthetic Surgery** : Dr. Lam U Lin

**Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine** : Dr. Lam Kun Kuan

**ENT** : Dr. Cheng Zheng Ang

**Cardiology** : Dr. Wong Kwok Yiu Chris, Dr. Jin Chun, Dr. Leong Man Kin

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**OPINION**

**Multipolar World**

Jorge Costa Oliveira



**CHINA AND THE WAR IN UKRAINE: MUCH TO LOSE AND LITTLE TO GAIN**

The war spurred by the invasion of Ukraine translates to a flagrant violation of international law, which is the foundation of one of the pillars of China's foreign policy - the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which include mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-aggression, and non-interference in other countries' internal affairs. At the UN, the vast majority of countries condemned Russia and underlined the risk that the war in Ukraine poses to world peace. China abstained. Expressing concerns about the expansion of NATO and Russia's border security, China claims to be neutral. The main reason is rooted in a desire to catalyze change, leading to a world where the US is no longer the preeminent superpower. And the more the U.S. focuses on Europe, the less time it will devote to the Far East, thus reducing the pressure to halt China's rise. There is also the temptation to take advantage of the fragile economic situation affecting its "main strategic partner" by bringing Chinese capital into relevant Russian oil, gas, copper, nickel, aluminum and other companies.

The war in Ukraine is hampering China economically. China imports more oil than any other country, and the conflict in Ukraine has pushed prices to the highest levels seen since 2008. And it needs energy, metals and minerals, as well as agricultural products for its economy. Both Russia and Ukraine are major suppliers of wheat and other food products; the UN has warned that, depending on its duration, the war could raise food prices between 8% and 20% this year. All these commodities have become more expensive with the war.

In terms of international trade, in 2021, China's trade reached \$756 billion with the US and \$828 billion with the EU, and only \$147 billion with Russia. Globalization has been beneficial to China's economic development. Notwithstanding the growth of its domestic market, the Chinese economy remains heavily dependent upon export markets. In addition, American and European companies continue to be important sources of investment, while also providing China access to innovation and technology, which are of vital importance. The disruption of this war on the functioning of the Eurasian BRI land corridor will not be small. Furthermore, if European public opinion perceives China as an ally or protector of Russia, the consequences for Chinese companies and Chinese products in European markets could be severe.

This war has confirmed that the EU is one of the essential hubs of the world. Its economic and financial relevance is clear. Its soft power is massive, its attractiveness as a model of society is enormous. Increased military spending in the coming years will turn it into a military superpower. The sanctions now imposed on Russia show that, on a financial level, the world is far from being multipolar, and some Chinese banks and state-owned companies have well understood the underlying risks.

With European and American public opinion ablaze with Russian aggression in Ukraine, perhaps China should reconsider whether to prolong this situation of collaborative neutrality with Russia, as it has much to lose and little to gain.

**WILL SMITH RESIGNS FROM FILM ACADEMY OVER CHRIS ROCK SLAP**

**THE BUZZ**

Will Smith resigned Friday from the motion picture academy following his Oscars night slap of Chris Rock and said he would accept any further punishment the organization imposed.

Smith said he will "fully accept any and all consequences for my conduct. My actions at the 94th Academy Awards presentation were shocking, painful, and inexcusable."

Film academy president David Rubin said Smith's resignation was accepted.

"We will continue to move forward with our disciplinary proceedings against Mr. Smith for violations of the Academy's Stan-

dards of Conduct, in advance of our next scheduled board meeting on April 18."

Smith loses voting privileges with his resignation. But there are other, less tangible benefits to being part of the academy, Hollywood's most prestigious organization: It bestows industry credibility on its members. It's invitation only, and with a once-a-year membership review.

"I betrayed the trust of the Academy. I deprived other nominees and winners of their opportunity to celebrate and be celebrated for their extraordinary work," Smith's statement said.



**MAN IN GERMANY GETS 90 COVID-19 SHOTS TO SELL FORGED PASSES**

**KIRSTEN GRIESHABER, BERLIN**

A 60-year-old man allegedly had himself vaccinated against COVID-19 dozens of times in Germany in order to sell forged vaccination cards with real vaccine batch numbers to people not wanting to get vaccinated themselves.

The man from the eastern Germany city of Magdeburg, whose name was not released in line with German privacy rules, is said to have received up to 90 shots against COVID-19 at vaccination centers in the eastern state of Saxony for months until criminal police caught him earlier this month, the German news agency dpa reported yesterday.

The suspect was not detained but is under investigation for unauthorized issuance of vaccination cards and document forgery, dpa reported.

He was caught at a vaccination center in Eilenburg in Saxony when he showed up for a COVID-19 shot for the second day in a row. Police confiscated several blank vaccination cards from him and initiated cri-

minal proceedings.

It was not immediately clear what kind of impact the approximately 90 shots of COVID-19 vaccines, which were from different brands, had on the man's personal health.

**Germany has seen high infection numbers for weeks, yet many measures to reign in the pandemic ended on Friday**

German police have conducted many raids in connection with forgery of vaccination passports in recent months. Many COVID-19 deniers refuse to get vaccinated in Germany, but at the same time want to have the coveted COVID-19 passports that make access to public life and many venues such as restaurants, theaters, swimming pools or work places much easier.

Germany has seen high infection numbers for weeks, yet many measures to reign in the pandemic ended on Friday. Donning masks is no longer compulsory in grocery stores and most theaters but it is still mandatory on public transportation.

In most schools across the country, students also

no longer have to wear masks, which has led teachers' associations to warn of possible conflicts in class.

"There is now a danger that, on the one hand, children who wear masks will be teased by classmates as wimps and over-protective or, on the other hand, pressure will be exerted on non-mask wearers," Heinz-Peter Meidinger, the president of the German Teachers' Association, told dpa.

He advocated a voluntary commitment by teachers and students to continue wearing masks in class and on school grounds, at least until the country goes on a two-week Easter holiday.

Health experts say the most recent surge of infections in Germany — triggered by the BA.2 omicron subvariant — may have peaked.

Yesterday, the country's disease control agency reported 74,053 new COVID-19 infections, less than a week ago, when the Robert Koch Institute registered 11,224 daily infections. However, usually the number of reported infections is lower on weekends.

Overall, Germany has registered 130,029 COVID-19 deaths. **MDT/AP**



**Pakistan's** embattled Prime Minister Imran Khan said yesterday he will seek early elections after sidestepping a no-confidence challenge and alleging that a conspiracy to topple his government had failed. The deputy speaker of Pakistan's Parliament threw out the opposition parties' no-confidence resolution and abruptly ended the session. Minutes later, Khan went on national television to say he will ask Pakistan's president to dissolve Parliament and call early elections.



**Sri Lanka** Opposition lawmakers yesterday marched in the capital, Colombo, protesting against the president's move to impose a nationwide curfew and state of emergency following demonstrations blaming the government for an economic crisis. Internet users in Sri Lanka were also unable to access Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp and other social media platforms, after they had been used to organize protests calling for President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to resign, saying he is responsible for the country's deepening economic woes.



**India** A recent court ruling upholding a ban on Muslim students wearing head coverings in schools has sparked criticism from constitutional scholars and rights activists who say that judicial overreach threatens religious freedoms in officially secular India. Even though the ban is only imposed in the southern state of Karnataka, critics worry it could be used as a basis for wider curbs on Islamic expression in a country already witnessing a surge of Hindu nationalism under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's governing Bharatiya Janata Party.