



MEAN AIR TEMPERATURE IN 2021 WAS RELATIVELY HIGH AT 23.5 DEGREES CELSIUS, UP BY 0.7 DEGREES ABOVE THE CLIMATOLOGICAL NORM FOR 1991-2020

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COVID-19: SHANGHAI ALLOWS 4M OUT OF HOMES AS VIRUS RULES EASE

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Japan formally revoked Russia's "most favored nation" trade status yesterday over its invasion of Ukraine, as Tokyo steps up sanctions amid revelations of the Russian military's widespread atrocities against civilians. The stripping of Russia's trade status is Japan's latest move against Moscow and was part of a list of sanctions measures Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced last month that also included a decision to expel eight Russian diplomats and trade officials.



India Authorities used bulldozers to raze a number of Muslim-owned shops in New Delhi before India's Supreme Court halted the demolitions yesterday, days after communal violence shook the capital and saw dozens arrested. Shop owners searched through the rubble of their shops afterward to collect their belongings. But for nearly an hour after the Supreme Court order, officials continued to demolish structures, including the outer entrance and stairs leading into a mosque. They stopped the bulldozers just outside the entrance of a Hindu temple, about 50 meters from the mosque.



Australia's prime minister and his opposition rival clashed heatedly over the country's tumultuous relationship with China yesterday in the first leaders' debate ahead of elections on May 21. The opposition center-left Labor Party has accused Prime Minister Scott Morrison's conservative government of Australia's biggest foreign policy blunder in the Pacific since World War II after China and the Solomon Islands announced this week they had signed a bilateral security pact.

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8,000 IN JUNE



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IS UKRAINIAN A LANGUAGE OR A DIALECT? THAT DEPENDS ON WHOM YOU ASK AND HOW THE WAR ENDS

JOSHUA HOLZER
WESTMINSTER COLLEGE

SINCE the start of the war in Ukraine, the number of people studying Ukrainian on Duolingo, a language learning website and mobile app, has increased by more than 500%.

Most of those who are taking up Ukrainian are probably unaware that there is a long-running controversy about this particular form of speech. One side views Russians and Ukrainians as “one people,” and the opposing side does not.

The former claim that Ukrainian is just a dialect of Russian, while the latter argue that it is a separate language. Who's correct?

Unfortunately, there isn't a clear answer. The difference between a language and a dialect depends upon whom you ask.

THE LINGUISTICS ANGLE

Many linguists base their determination of language-or-dialect on whether forms of speech are mutually understandable.

In simple terms, if two people are speaking different dialects of the same language, they can probably understand each other. However, if two people are speaking separate languages, they probably won't be able to understand each other.

By this definition, Czech and Slovak could be viewed as dialects of the same language. The same goes for Indonesian and Malay.

Some spoken forms look quite different when pen is put to paper. For instance, Serbian is written with a variation of the Cyrillic alphabet, like Russian, while Croatian uses a form of the Latin alphabet, like English. Nonetheless, many linguists would consider Serbian and Croatian to be dialects of the same language, because it's the understandability of spoken forms that generally counts.

Humans have been talking for a very long time, but we've only been writing things down for a few millennia. Plus, of the roughly 7,000 known living languages only about 4,000 have a writing system.

POLITICS SAYS SOMETHING DIFFERENT

For political scientists, the difference between a language and a dialect is not based on mutual understandability, but rather politics. For example, Hindi and Urdu are separate languages because the governments of India and Pakistan say they are, even though the colloquially spoken forms of the two varieties are strikingly similar.

Max Weinreich, a Yiddish scholar, popularized the idea that “a language is a dialect with an army and navy.” In other words, a government can promote the view that a dialect is a separate language even if it isn't in linguistic terms.

Moldova, for instance, argues that Moldovan is a separate language, even though it is nearly identical to Romanian. Although Romania has gotten upset about such linguistic rebranding, according to Article 13 of the Moldovan Constitution, the country's official language is Moldovan, and not Romanian. Thus the two are separate

languages – at least politically.

Bestowing official status on a particular spoken form not only encourages its use in government, including the courts, but it also usually means that a spoken form will be taught in schools, thereby ensuring that future generations share a common language – even if it was invented for nationalistic purposes.

Just as a dialect with an army and navy can be considered its own language, a language with an army and a navy can call other languages mere dialects. For example, the official language of the People's Republic of China is Standard Chinese, which is often shortened to simply “Chinese” and is sometimes – contentiously – referred to as Mandarin. However, this is not the only form of speech that can be heard throughout the country.

Cantonese is widely spoken in and around Hong Kong, yet it is often treated as a dialect of “Chinese.” However, spoken Mandarin and Cantonese are not mutually understandable. As such, in

linguistic terms, these two forms of speech would not be considered dialects of a single language, but rather separate languages.

In order to strengthen the power of the central government against separatist sentiment, the Chinese government has long promoted a language unification agenda. The intent is both to create a common way of communicating for the country but also to minimize the linguistic and cultural differences that exist among different communities. To help spread the adoption of Standard Chinese, as defined by the government, television and radio professionals are subject to strict requirements and can even be fined for using incorrect pronunciation.

Throughout China, local forms of speech are being phased out as mediums of instruction in schools in favor of Mandarin.

But politically, the difference between a language and a dialect is whatever China says it is. This is even reflected at the international level, as many organizations, such as the United Nations, recognize “Chinese” as being the form of speech standardized and promoted by the Chinese government.

RESOLVING THE CONFLICT

So, is Ukrainian a dialect of Russian or a separate language? Linguistically, Ukrainian and Russian are about as different as French and Portuguese. Although French and Portuguese both descend from Latin, they've now diverged enough to make mutual understanding difficult. Similarly, while both Ukrainian and Russian share a common ancestor, their present-day spoken forms are now different enough that there's a strong linguistic case for them to be considered separate languages.

Politically, however, whether Ukrainian is a dialect or language will, in part, depend upon how the war ends. If Ukraine remains an independent country that considers Ukrainian a separate language – it is a separate language.

If, however, Russia ends up controlling the entirety of Ukraine, thereby finishing the process that it began in 2014 with its annexation of Crimea, then Russia could promote the view that Ukrainian is but a mere dialect of Russian, to reinforce Ukraine's diminished status as a part of Russia.

In short, not only is Ukraine's territorial integrity at risk, but so is the independence of a unique and distinct cultural community. **MDT/AP**

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Gov't hopes to launch new round of consumption cards on Jun. 1

RENATO MARQUES

THE Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, said yesterday at the Legislative Assembly (AL) that the government hopes to be able to launch the third round of economic benefits through the issuing of consumption cards (e-vouchers) by June 1.

Lei was at the AL for the discussion and approval of the amendment to the government budget for 2022 including the new benefits announced previously by the Chief Executive.

According to the Secretary, although the bill was discussed and finally approved yesterday, there are still procedures to be dealt with, namely the issuing of the Administrative Regulation that will control the details of the new round of benefits. Lei stated that he hopes the Regulation is completed and published so the benefits can be launched by June 1.

The bill aiming to amend the budget for this year was finally approved yesterday as the government adopted the procedure for urgent matters, which omits the discussion of bills in the standing committees before the final reading.

The economic crisis and high unemployment rate due to the impacts of the Covid-19 justified the new rounds of benefits to the population, and the investment of an extra 7.2 billion patacas.

From this 7.2 billion, some 5.9 billion patacas are allocated to the new round of e-vouchers. This amounts to a total value of 8,000 patacas of which 5,000 form the



initial balance and another 3,000 are for the purpose of immediate discounts, as in the second round of these benefits.

Additionally, the government will spend another 1.3 billion patacas which will be used for the exemption of payment of water and electricity bills.

Contrary to what happened in the past, this time the exemption from payment of the utilities bills will also apply to commercial, rather than residential units only.

The government also clarified that in case the exemption is not fully redeemed over a period of three months, the government is planning to extend the period of use for up to six months or even longer, with the final details to be confirmed once the Administrative Regulation is published.

Although the lawmakers unanimously agreed with the enforcement of these measures from the government, some also expressed concern that such measures fall short of the goal to revive the economy and support the

residents through difficult times.

Several lawmakers have urged the government to take more significant measures to solve the real problem, namely, the lack of visitors to Macau: a result of border restrictions still in force for many regions of the mainland and in many other countries and regions.

The lawmakers also called for more support for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) which, they argue, are failing.

In response the government officials reaffirmed the need for the new round of benefits, aimed at supporting both families and the local SMEs, and called on residents to use the benefits wisely in the support of local SMEs.

Lei also urged the SMEs to reciprocate this support by offering special discounts and promotions for residents as an incentive for internal spending and the revival of the economy. This was in response to concerns expressed by lawmakers that the new round of benefits could be responsible

for a hike on the prices of essential goods to consumers, which they said is already occurring, according to consumer reports.

Lawmakers Ella Lei, Song Pek Kei, and Nick Lei also took the opportunity of this debate to ask for more measures aimed at the unemployed, as well as additional measures to help sectors that would not benefit from the e-vouchers, including the tourism companies, travel agencies, taxi drivers and real estate professionals.

According to these lawmakers the new support measures are "urgently needed but also very limited in scope", they said.

Lei added that according to data collected during the previous two rounds of support, "more than 77% of the money favored SMEs, and particularly restaurants, supermarkets and also logistics companies".

Lei noted that the previous rounds of e-vouchers also contributed to boosting the modernization of electronic payment

methods in most of the local stores, preparing them better for receiving payments from future tourists.

In his turn, lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho criticized the attitude of the Secretary on the discussion of the bill saying that he "runs from questions and explanations" and accused the government of making use of the procedure for urgent passage of legislation "to avoid a real and concrete discussion on the issues."

Pereira Coutinho also urged the government to change its attitude toward border restrictions and other preventive measures such as the nucleic acid tests (NAT) which he proposed be provided free of charge to "ease the burden on families."

"The government may save the economy now at this moment [with the third round of e-vouchers] but the future is still very uncertain and the problem can only be solved with the return of visitors," Pereira Coutinho said, a view that was shared by Wang Sai Man and Carmen Lo, among others lawmakers.

Referring to the measures previously enacted by the government, to provide subsidized training to facilitate professional reconversion, Wang indicated that these have proven to be useless. He said that most people looking for reemployment were university graduates and workers with many years of experience, to whom the training sessions provided by the Labour Affairs Bureau are not beneficial.

Wang called on the government to concentrate on new measures aimed at companies, to be presented for the third quarter of this year, at the latest.

In response to Pereira Coutinho and Lo's call for eased border restrictions, Secretary Lei said, "The priority of the government is to secure the health and safety of the population with the economic recovery coming second."

CLIMATE

Mean air temperature relatively high in 2021

THE annual mean air temperature in Macau in 2021 was relatively high, at 23.5 degrees Celsius, up by 0.2 degrees year-on-year and 0.7 degrees above the climatological norm for 1991-2020.

The highest temperature of the year was 35.8 degrees in July, a year-on-year increase of 0.3 degrees, information from the Statistics and

Census Service (DSEC) indicated.

The lowest temperature the city recorded last year was 6.1 degrees Celsius in January, a fall of 0.6 degrees.

Meanwhile, all monitoring stations, except the roadside stations in Macao and Ka-Ho, recorded a year-on-year decrease in the number of Good air quality days.

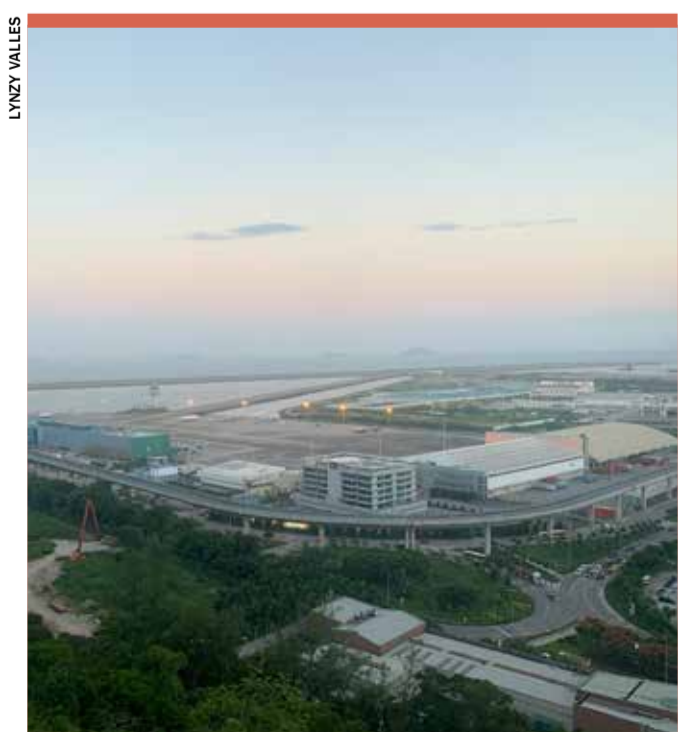
In 2021 Macau recor-

ded a total of eight tropical cyclones. Many people remember that tropical cyclone signal no. 8 was hoisted when the tropical storm Lionrock and typhoon Kompasu hit Macau. During the passage of Lionrock, a maximum gust of 94.7 km per hour and a maximum 10-minute average wind speed of 74.5 km per hour were recorded.

Lionrock also broke

duration records — it was the longest recorded duration of a severe typhoon affecting the region, with the Signal 8 hoisted for a total of 20 hours from October 9 at 6 a.m. until 2 a.m., October 10. At the typhoon's peak, the Civil Protection Operations Centre (COPC) registered a total of 30 incidents, including 22 cases of collapsing building plaster, concrete chunks or tiles, street signage from shops, windows, awnings, and other objects.

Meanwhile, total rainfall in the region increased by 493.0 mm year-on-year to 2,206.2 mm. LV





PLENARY

NEW JUNKETS BILL APPROVED ON FIRST READING

RENATO MARQUES

THE new bill to amend the rules and regulations for the activities of gaming promoters, also known as junkets, has passed on the first reading at the Legislative Assembly (AL) yesterday with only one vote against.

After a heated debate, lawmaker Ron Lam voted against the bill,

claiming that the government is overlooking the inevitable consequences, especially concerning the activities of the so-called "satellite casinos".

In his vote declaration, Lam noted that the government had not been able to convince the lawmakers why it was necessary for this bill to be separated from the general new gaming law that is in

discussion on the Second Standing Committee.

Lam also disagreed with what he described as the government's complete disregard for the potential consequences of the closing of the satellite casinos that, should it happen, will add enormously to the list of unemployed residents who registered just last month, the highest rate since 2009.

Although the bill has raised many questions and a long debate that extended beyond AL's normal functioning time, in the end, 30 out of 31 lawmakers voted in favor of passing the bill.

Most of the questions raised by the lawmakers were left unanswered, with the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, requesting AL president Kou Hoi In to reply to these questions at a later stage, when the bill moves to further detailed consideration at the Standing Committee due to the "technicality of the matter".

On the line are the new rules that add powers to the government to authorize or reject contracts between the gaming concessionaires and junkets, as well as the limitation of each concessionaire to be able to work with only one gaming promoter.

The government will also have veto power over the people composing the administration of these companies, who will be subjected to an inspection aiming at the reputation of the members.

Junkets will also not be able to receive money deposits in cash or even gaming chips. All the cashier operations will have to pass through the normal system of the gaming concessionaire, among many other rules which many lawmakers said would have a potential negative impact on the competitiveness of Macau in the gaming market.

F&B SECTOR REVENUES DROP 5% Y-O-Y

LYNZY VALLES

REVENUES of restaurants and related establishments interviewed dropped 5.3% year-on-year in February 2022, with Western restaurants, Chinese restaurants and Japanese & Korean restaurants recording respective falls of 8.5%, 7.7% and 7.2%.

Sales of the 161 retailers interviewed rose by 29.7% year-on-year in February; Watches, Clocks & Jewelry Retailers (+49.3%), Department Stores (+41.1%) and Leather Goods Retailers (+37.8%) all registered notable growth in sales, while Motor Vehicle Retailers (-22.5%) recorded a marked fall.

Concerning business expectations for March, 53% of the interviewed restaurants and similar establishments expected their receipts to decrease month-on-month; the corresponding prediction for Chinese Restaurants reached 81%.

Meanwhile, 18% of the businesses interviewed predicted that their receipts would increase month-on-month in March, and the corresponding figure for Local Style Cafes, Congee & Noodle Shops was 34%.

On the other hand, 43% of the retailers interviewed forecasted a month-on-month sales drop in March.

In a recently published survey, data shows that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are facing a gloomy outlook, with nearly 10% of the local firms interviewed set to close, while more than 85% indicated that their business' revenue has decreased by nearly half from pre-pandemic times.

The survey conducted by the Federal General Commercial Association of Macau Small and Medium Enterprises pointed out that the SMEs' business confidence index stands at only 30 points, far below the 100-point base line.

According to DSEC, the Business Outlook Index (BOI) that reflects the trend of month-on-month changes in receipts anticipated by the interviewed establishments, was lower than 50 for both restaurants and similar establishments (32.5) and retail trade (38.8), indicating that the respondents from both industries envisaged a less favorable business outlook in March than in February.



GAMING

Jefferies: Short-term prospects in Macau remain bleak

THE recovery of the gaming sector is likely to be further delayed even after the May 1 Labor Day, due to increased border controls and new cases being recorded on the mainland.

This is distressing the

sector, as the upcoming holiday is a potential catalyst for the gaming industry, as well as for SMEs.

According to Jefferies analyst David Katz, this bad timing means a longer stretch before the

long-awaited holiday tourism resurgence.

Casino stocks are also on the rise this week, with

Tuesday gaming stocks gaining up to 5%, led by Wynn Resorts, followed by Las Vegas Sands (+4.2%), Melco Resorts &

Entertainment (+4.0%) and MGM Resorts International (+3.2%).

However, according to Katz, short-term prospects in Macau remain bleak due to the Shanghai lockdown, as cited in a report issued by Seeking Alpha.

On Monday, Shanghai authorities reported the first Covid-19 deaths from the latest outbreak in China's wealthiest and most heavily populated city.

All three people who died were elderly and had underlying diseases such as diabetes or hypertension and had not been vaccinated against the coronavirus.

The city has reportedly also set a new target of zero cases at the community level yesterday, meaning no new cases outside of quarantined zones – a tough measure since most of Shanghai's cases are asymptomatic. In addition, Zhengzhou authorities have placed some areas in the Zhengzhou Airport Economy Zone under quarantine.

Brokerage firm Sanford C. Bernstein Ltd echoed that May would continue to record weak revenues, similar to its forecast with

April, mentioning that Macau's arrival-quarantine requirement has been extended to travelers from over 40 cities in 23 provinces.

This amounts to two-thirds of the provinces in China.

According to the SAR data, the volume of gross gaming revenues (GGR) of the mass market dropped by 9% quarter-to-quarter to MOP13 billion.

The Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau indicated that VIP gaming dropped slightly by 1.2% to MOP4.8 billion.

With these figures, the overall GGR is down 7% to MOP17.9 billion from January to March, with the latter month recording a new low, plunging 55.8% to its lowest level in 18 months, as a worsening Covid-19 outbreak in China has battered tourism in the SAR.

Despite the May forecast, the Macao Government Tourism Office is striving to boost arrivals through a series of events such as the upcoming drone gala, as well as the resumption of Macao Weeks in the mainland in the second half of the year.

More studies needed to reinforce HK-style SME support in Macau

ANTHONY LAM

MORE data and further studies are needed if a financial support scheme for small and medium sized enterprises on the Hong Kong model were to be adopted in Macau, commentators told the Times.

Ian Johnson and Au Kam San agreed that more data is required in order to judge whether or not the city should consider adopting the financial measures in place in Hong Kong that aim at supporting small and medium sized enterprises in the area of salary.

In Hong Kong, the new scheme will provide financial support to eligible enterprises on their salary costs during the period between May and July this year. During the subsidized period, these enterprises are not permitted to "hire fewer workers than the number reported to the government," meaning that they cannot shrink the size of their teams during this period.

There is no ceiling to the salary level of eligible employees, but there is a ceiling to the number of staff members eligible for the financial support. Each enterprise will only be allowed to register at most 1,000 employees.

In order to be eligible, employees must have active Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) accounts. The same applies to workers who are at or above 65 years of age. With that said, senior residents who are still contributing their efforts will be eligible. Self-employed people with active MPF accounts will also be eligible.

The Hong Kong government will issue HKD8,000 each month for each eligible worker. The maximum amount each month an enterprise could obtain will be HKD8 million, according to the scheme. The funds will be advanced to the employers' accounts but it must be used on salary spending.

Johnson recalled that in 2020, a similar scheme operated in Macau. However, the lack of updates and data on the scheme has caused uncertainty about its success. "We need data to conclude the effectiveness of the scheme," he said.

Despite this comment, he agreed that Macau's adoption of the scheme is worth considering.

He pointed out that last week, Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng agreed at a parliamentary plenary on the possibility of subsidized employment, by which he meant subsidizing employees if they get employed.

Johnson found this similar

RENATO MARQUES



Au Kam San (left) and Johnson Ian Heng Ut

to the salary subsidy scheme in Hong Kong. "This is actually feasible," he remarked, adding that the government should clarify eligibilities.

"A similar scheme in Hong Kong last year prompted public debate because many massive enterprises benefited from the subsidies," he added.

Meanwhile, Au found direct financial subsidies unsustainable due to the limit to the public reserve. He implied that the government cannot resolve financial challenges with subsidies and cash distributions every time the economy takes a dive.

Echoing Johnson's comments, Au emphasized that cash distribution can be inequitable. The same amount of money has varied realistic or psychological values to people of different wealth statuses.

"The pandemic has already lasted two years, the government should have distilled certain characteristics of the current economy. This knowledge should be utilized to facilitate targeted support schemes," the former lawmaker said.

In addition, Au called on the government to think more about the conditions for eligibility if the city should adopt the Hong Kong style scheme, although he was quite certain that "the government does have some clues by now."

Furthermore, he agreed with the CE's encouragement to the tourism industry to diversify both its target source markets and offerings of products and services, which the head of the government proposed at a recent parliamen-

tary plenary.

Au estimated that even if the pandemic were to disappear, in the best case scenario, the number of visitor arrivals would not rise instantly to the 40-million mark, which was the level before the pandemic.

"The mainland economy has been affected to certain levels, and I doubt if there will be an influx of tourists immediately after the relaxation of all disease control measures," Au explained.

On the other hand, at yesterday's parliamentary plenary, lawmaker Si Ka Lon also called for the adoption of certain financial support schemes currently operating in mainland China and Hong Kong.

EFFECTIVENESS OF LAST YEAR'S CONSUMPTION CARD

The amendment to the Annual Budget was passed at the parliament yesterday. A set of Executive Regulations is the only element missing to facilitate the coming round of consumption subsidies.

With the community expecting the subsidy this year to remain nearly identical to that of last year – with MOP8,000 to be spent by each eligible resident – the two commentators doubt if the scheme will be as effective as its first round.

"It can actually be seen from the past two rounds that the stimulation effect became weaker," Johnson said. "There were [fewer] promotions in the market during the second round of the consumption stimulus."

He mentioned particularly that he is not very confident of the po-

sitive impact of this coming consumption stimulus if the nature of the scheme were to be retained.

"People feel uncertain about the future," Johnson said. "They will use the subsidies on necessary spending, such as supermarkets and dining. The benefits to non-crucial merchandise, such as gadgets and sport shoes, may not be obvious."

Meanwhile, besides asking the government to release data to prove the effectiveness of the scheme, Au asked the government to consider long-term planning on economic support. "It seems to me that the consumption subsidy scheme was not powerful in terms of supporting employment," Au said. This appears to contradict the CE's comment that the scheme has safeguarded employment in many small and medium sized enterprises.

Seeing the scheme returning in another round with a similar appearance, Au wondered if it implies that the government is satisfied with the effect of the scheme in its previous rounds. "Data should be made available to the public," he said.

Moreover, the former lawmaker suggests the government envision how the economy can be revived in the long run. "What has the government considered in the past two years?" Au questioned.

Au also warned that financial support is easier to initiate than to withdraw. If the economy returns to normal level, the public will not spend at the same rate if these subsidies are withdrawn, since more public revenue means more ability for expenditure.

NEW 'STAY, DINE AND SEE MACAO' ITINERARIES

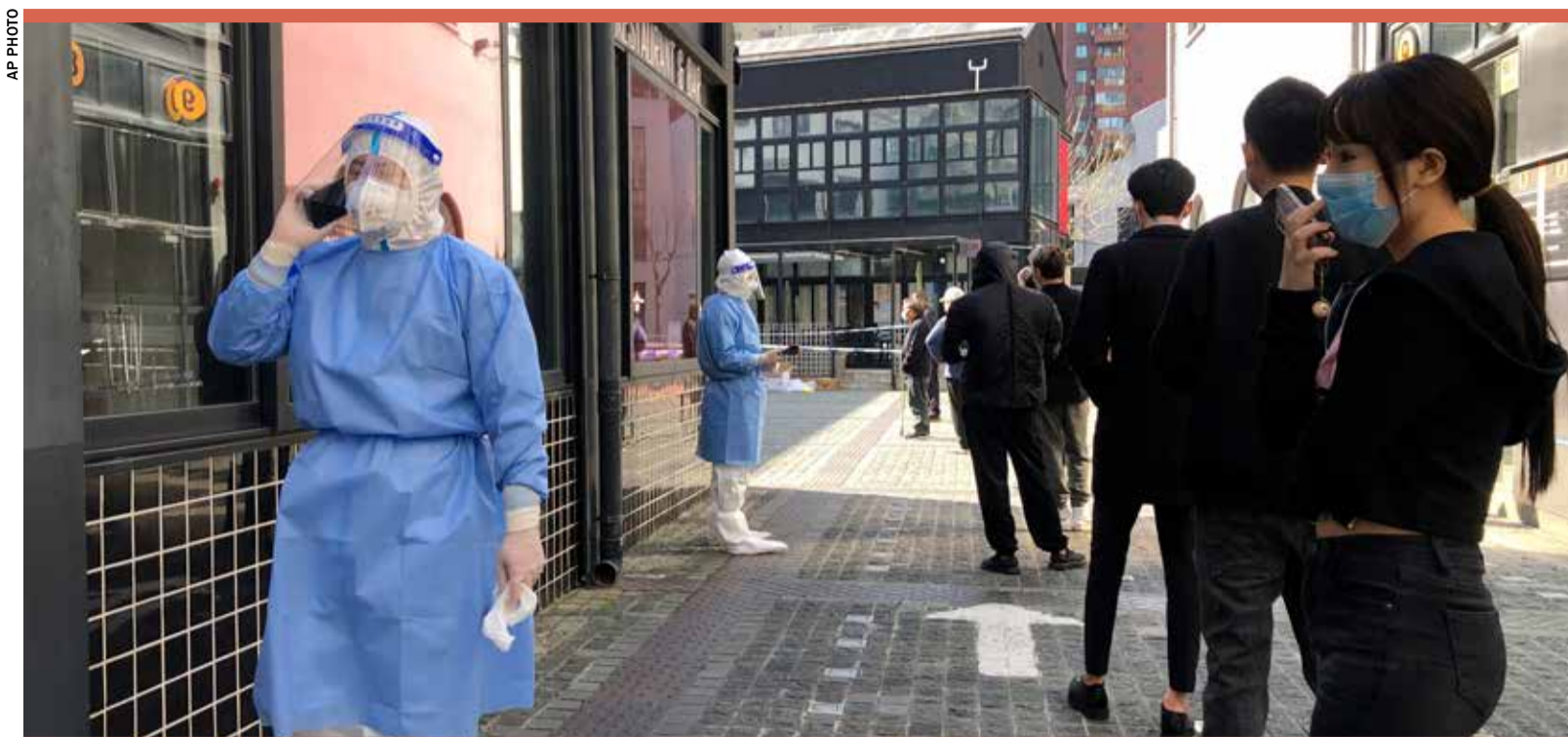
Parallel with the Light up Macao Drone Gala 2022 in early May, the "Stay, Dine and See Macao" project will unveil the drone-themed tour especially for the occasion. Professional photographers will be assigned to share nighttime photography skills with tour members. The tour is designed to encourage residents' interactive engagement with local events. A further 11 new itineraries will also be launched, including an encounter with miniature horses at Macau Jockey Club, a visit to the Fire Services Museum; water fun at the Grand Resort Deck of Galaxy Macau and visiting Lin Zexu Memorial Museum of Macao; and a trip to the Macao Museum of Art.

IC TO HOLD DISCUSSION ON FILM DISTRIBUTION

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) will hold a discussion on online film distribution on April 27 at 3:30 p.m. at the Macau Cultural & Creative Integrated Services Centre. Representatives of the film industry from the mainland and Macau will be invited to discuss and exchange ideas on the current situation of online film distribution. Members of the public can also watch the live stream of the event via the Macao Cultural and Creative Industries Website's Facebook page "Macao CCI."

NO ABNORMALITIES FOUND IN COLD-CHAIN MEAT PRODUCTS FROM VIETNAM, BRAZIL

IAM has found no abnormalities in re-tests of cold-chain meat products imported from Vietnam and Brazil, the Municipal Affairs Bureau announced in a statement. The re-testing follows China's recent announcement that samples of packaging containing frozen aquatic products imported from manufacturers in Vietnam tested positive in novel coronavirus nucleic acid tests. Furthermore, Hong Kong has announced that the outer packaging sample of a batch of frozen chicken drumsticks imported from Brazil tested positive for the virus as well. IAM has immediately suspended the import applications of the products of the relevant manufacturers following the notice.



COVID-19

SHANGHAI ALLOWS FOUR MILLION OUT OF HOMES AS VIRUS RULES EASE

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

SHANGHAI allowed 4 million more people out of their homes yesterday as anti-virus controls that shut down China's biggest city eased, while the International Monetary Fund cut its forecast of Chinese economic growth and warned the global flow of industrial goods might be disrupted.

A total of almost 12 million people in the city of 25 million are allowed to go outdoors following the first round of easing last week, health official Wu Ganyu said at a news conference. Wu said the virus was "under effective control" for the first time in some parts of the city.

Under the latest changes, more

than 4 million people are included in areas where the status shifted from closed to controlled, said Wu. He said some are not allowed to leave their neighborhoods and large gatherings are prohibited.

Meanwhile, the IMF reduced its forecast of Chinese growth this year to 4.4% from 4.8% due to the shutdowns of Shanghai and other industrial centers. That is down by almost half from last year's 8.1% growth and below the ruling Communist Party's 5.5% target.

China's case numbers in its latest infection surge are relatively low, but the ruling party is enforcing a "zero-COVID" strategy that has shut down major cities to isolate every case.

Yesterday, the government reported 19,927 new cases in Chi-

na's mainland, all but 2,761 of which had no symptoms. Shanghai accounted for 95% of the total, or 18,902 cases, of which 2,495 had symptoms.

The Shanghai city health agency reported seven people who had COVID-19 died Tuesday but said the deaths were due to cancer, heart disease and other ailments. All but two were over 60.

Shanghai shut down businesses and confined most of its population to their homes starting March 28 after a spike in infections. That led to complaints about lack of access to supplies of food and medicine. People in Shanghai who test positive but have no symptoms have been ordered into quarantine centers set up in exhibition halls and other

public buildings.

Official data this week showed economic growth in the first three months of this year declined compared with the final quarter of 2021.

The lockdowns in China "will likely compound supply disruptions elsewhere" and might add to pressure for inflation to rise, the IMF said in a report.

The ruling party has promised tax refunds and other aid to businesses but is avoiding large-scale stimulus spending. Economists say that strategy will take longer to show results and Beijing might need to spend more or cut interest rates.

Chinese leaders have promised to try to reduce the human and economic cost of anti-di-

sease controls by shifting to a "dynamic clearing" strategy that isolates neighborhoods and other smaller areas instead of whole cities. However, many areas appear to be enforcing more stringent controls after Shanghai officials were criticized for not acting aggressively enough.

Also yesterday, the Ministry of Agriculture ordered local officials to avoid any measures that might interfere with spring planting by farmers who feed China's 1.4 billion people. The order followed warnings that production of wheat and other crops might be disrupted, which would boost demand for imports and push up already high global prices.

The government reported 26,760 people who tested positive but had no symptoms were released from observation. That included 25,411 in Shanghai, where some residents of quarantine centers have complained they are unsanitary.

Other industrial and trading centers including Changchun, Jilin and Shenyang in the northeast, the port of Tianjin east of Beijing and Shenzhen and Guangzhou in the south have closed businesses, imposed travel restrictions or told residents to stay home.

Global automakers and other manufacturers reduced or stopped production because suppliers couldn't deliver.

This week, Volkswagen AG announced its Changchun factory resumed production and the automaker was considering when its Shanghai facility would reopen. BMW AG said its factory in Shenyang reopened.

While some cities were easing controls, the the government of Harbin, a city of 5.3 million in the northeast, suspended bus and subway service yesterday and barred the public from moving between districts.

HONG KONG

YouTube takes down leader candidate's channel

YOUTUBE yesterday took down the campaign channel of Hong Kong's sole candidate to become its next leader, John Lee, citing compliance with U.S. sanctions imposed against the former No. 2 official.

Lee had set up a Facebook page and a YouTube channel to promote his campaign, even though he is running uncontested in the election for chief executive on May 8, in which an Election Committee of about 1,500 people will select the city's leader.

The committee is made up largely of pro-Beijing members, including legislators and representatives of different professions and industries in the city.

Lee, who resigned as chief secretary earlier this month to run in the election, had been live-streaming his meetings with media and political figures in the city on both Facebook and YouTube prior to the termination of his YouTube channel.

He is among a group of top Hong Kong and Beijing officials — including current leader Carrie Lam

— who were sanctioned by the U.S. in 2020 for undermining the city's autonomy and restricting its freedoms following Beijing's imposition of a tough national security law on the semi-autonomous city.

Google, YouTube's parent company, said in a statement that it "complies with applicable U.S. sanctions laws and enforces related policies under its Terms of Service."

"After review and consistent with these policies, we terminated the Johnlee2022 YouTube

channel," it said.

A spokesperson for Facebook, now called Meta, said Lee will be allowed to "maintain a demonetized presence on Facebook and Instagram, and we have taken steps to prevent the use of payments services." His Facebook page remained accessible Wednesday evening.

Local media reported that Tam Yiu-chung, Lee's campaign director and the city's sole delegate to China's top legislative body, said YouTube's decision was "completely unreasonable." MDT/AP



EASTTIMOR

Ramos-Horta set to win presidency for second time

EAST Timor's former independence fighter and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jose Ramos-Horta is set to win the presidential runoff election, according to over 60% of the votes counted yesterday, defeating incumbent Francisco "Lu Olo" Guterres for the second time in Asia's youngest democracy.

Official results are not expected until next week, but Ramos-Horta, who led resistance during Indonesia's occupation of East Timor, had 61.72% of the votes counted so far. Guterres was trailing with 38.28% and had promised to accept the outcome.

The runoff was held peacefully on Tuesday. Ramos-Horta had a commanding lead in the first round but failed to exceed the 50% threshold for the victory.

Ramos-Horta, East Timor's president from 2007 to 2012, and Guterres have blamed each other for years of political paralysis. The two also squared off in a second round in 2007.

Ramos-Horta pledged to reduce poverty, improve health services for mothers and children and create more jobs if he is elected, and vowed to build communication with the governing parties to restore the the nation's political stability and prevent a more severe



Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jose Ramos-Horta

economic downturn.

The former Portuguese colony was occupied by Indonesia for a quarter century and gained independence after a U.N.-sponsored referendum in 1999. Indonesia's military responded with scorched-earth attacks that devastated the East Timorese half of the island of Timor.

More than 76% of the votes last month went to resistance-era figures, showing how much they dominate politics after two decades despite younger voices emerging.

The president is responsible for naming the government and dissolving parliament. The incoming president takes office on

May 20, the 20th anniversary of East Timor's independence.

In 2018, Guterres refused to swear in nine Cabinet nominees from the National Congress of the Reconstruction of East Timor, known as CNRT, a party led by former prime minister and independence leader Xanana Gusmao, who then backed Ramos-

Horta's run for president.

Guterres is from the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor, known by its local acronym Fretilin, which had led resistance to Indonesian rule.

Fretilin said that Ramos-Horta is unfit for president, accusing him of causing a crisis as prime minister in 2006, when dozens were killed as political rivalries turned into open conflict on the streets of Dili.

The latest impasse led to the resignation of Prime Minister Taur Matan Ruak in February 2020. But he agreed to stay on until a new government is formed and to oversee the battle against the coronavirus pandemic with a \$250 million war chest. His government has operated without an annual budget and has relied on monthly injections from its sovereign fund savings, called the Petroleum Fund.

During his campaign, Ramos-Horta declared he would call an early parliamentary election if a new majority — based on the CNRT — couldn't be negotiated among the parties in the current parliament. Many are concerned that calling an election early could inflame tensions.

East Timor's transition to a democracy has been rocky, with leaders battling massive poverty, unemployment and corruption as it continues to struggle with the legacy of its bloody independence battle. Its economy is reliant on dwindling offshore oil revenues.

Turnout in the second round was 71.6%, or 6% lower than in the first round. **MDT/AP**

DIPLOMACY

Solomon Islands leader defends new security pact with China

THE Solomon Islands prime minister confirmed yesterday that his government has signed a new security agreement with China, but told lawmakers it would not "undermine the peace and harmony of our region" as has been feared by the opposition and countries including the United States and Australia.

The security pact allows China to send police and military personnel to the Solomon Islands "to assist in maintaining social order," while also opening the door for Chinese warships to stop in port there for "logistical replenishment" — giving rise to worries of a possible Chinese naval base on the doorstep of Australia and New Zealand.

But in his address to parliament, Manasseh Sogavare defended the security



agreement as being directed entirely to "our internal security situation." He said it complemented a 2017 security arrangement with Australia, under which Australian police peacekeepers have been in the capital, Honiara, since riots in November.

"I ask all our neighbors, friends and partners to respect the sovereign interest of Solomon Islands on the assurance that the decision will not adversely impact or undermine the peace and harmony of our region," he told parliament.

A draft of the agreement

leaked online last month, and China's Foreign Ministry announced Tuesday that it had been signed "the other day." Sogavare was equally vague, telling lawmakers that it had been signed "a few days ago."

Sogavare has said his government would not

let China build a military base, and China has denied seeking a military foothold in the South Pacific.

After China announced the agreement had been signed, Seselji and Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Marise Payne said in a joint statement that they were "deeply disappointed."

"We are concerned about the lack of transparency with which this agreement has been developed, noting its potential to undermine stability in our region."

They added that they welcomed statements from Sogavare that the "Solomon Islands will never be used for military bases or other military institutions of foreign powers."

Earlier this week, U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price said the

agreement could destabilize the Solomon Islands and would set a concerning precedent for the wider Pacific region.

Micronesia and other Pacific Island nations have also expressed concerns about the deal, as has the Solomon Islands' main opposition party.

In his address, Sogavare defended the pact, saying it would strengthen the country's police and help them deal with future instability, and that it was "based on mutual respect for sovereignty and in compliance with domestic and international law."

"Let me assure the people of Solomon Islands that we entered into an arrangement with China with our eyes wide open, guided by our national interests," he said. **MDT/AP**

PUTIN'S WAR

Ukraine refugees top five million as assault intensifies

MONIKA SCISLOWSKA,
WARSAW

AFTER spending weeks with no electricity or water in the basement of her family's home in Ukraine, Viktoriya Savyichkina made a daring escape from the besieged city of Mariupol with her 9- and 14-year-old daughters.

Their dwelling for now is a huge convention center in Poland's capital. Savyichkina said she saw a photo of the home in Mariupol destroyed. From a camp bed in a foreign country, the 40-year-old bookkeeper thinks about restarting her and her children's lives from square one.

"I don't even know where we are going, how it will turn out," Savyichkina said. "I would like to go home, of course. Maybe here, I will enjoy it in Poland."

With the war in Ukraine approaching eight weeks, more than 5 million people have fled the country since Russian troops invaded on Feb. 24, the U.N. refugee agency reported yesterday. When the number reached 4 million on March 30, the exodus exceeded the worst-case predictions of the Geneva-based U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

The even bigger milestone in Europe's biggest refugee crisis since World War II was reached as Russia unleashed a full-scale offensive in eastern Ukraine that will disrupt and end more lives.

Ukraine had a pre-war population of 44 million, and UNHCR says the conflict has displaced more than 7 million people within Ukraine along with the 5.03 million who had left as of yesterday. According to the agency, 13 million people are believed to be trapped in the war-affected areas of Ukraine.

"We've seen about a quarter of Ukraine's population, more than 12 million people in total, ,,have been forced to flee their homes, so this is a staggering amount of people," UNHCR spokesperson Shabia Mantoo told The Associated Press.

AP PHOTO



Refugees from Ukraine stay inside a vast accommodation center set up at the Global EXPO exhibition hall in Warsaw

More than half of the refugees, over 2.8 million, fled at least at first to Poland. They are eligible for national ID numbers that entitle them to work, to free health care, schooling and bonuses for families with children.

Although many of have stayed there, an unknown number have traveled on to other countries. Savyichkina said she is thinking about taking her daughters to Germany.

"We hope we can live there, send children to school, find work and start life from zero," she said inside the vast premises of the Global EXPO Center in Warsaw, which is providing basic accommodations for about 800 refugees.

If "everything goes well, if the children like it first of all, then we will stay. If not...," Savyichkina said.

Further south, Hungary has emerged as a major transit point for Ukrainian refugees. Out of more than 465,000 who arrived, some 16,400 have applied for protected status, meaning they want to stay. Many are members of the ethnic Hungarian minority in Ukraine.

Hungary's government says it has provided around \$8.7 million to several charitable organizations and is giving subsidies to companies that employ Ukrainians granted asylum.

In March, a non-governmental organization, Migration Aid, rented an

entire five-story building in Budapest, a former workers' hostel, to provide temporary accommodation for people escaping the war in Ukraine. It has helped some 4,000 refugees so far.

Tatiana Shulieva, 67, a retired epidemiologist who fled from Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine and wants to travel on to Egypt, said the night she spent in the hostel was "like a fairytale" after having sheltered in a basement for weeks to escape constant shelling.

Neighboring Romania has received over 750,000 refugees from Ukraine. Oxana Cotus, who fled the southern Ukrainian city of Mykolaiv with her four small children, initially decided to go to Denmark but ended up in Bucharest because she speaks Romanian and didn't want to be far from Ukraine.

She praised the help she received from the International Red Cross in helping her relocate and get settled.

The European nations hosting refugees say they need international help to manage the challenge, especially now as Russia has intensified attacks in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region.

"If we have a second wave of refugees, then a real problem will come because we are at capacity. We cannot accept more," Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski told The Asso-

ciated Press.

About 300,000 war refugees are in the city of some 1.8 million, most of them staying in private homes, Trzaskowski said. Warsaw residents expected to host refugees for a few months, but not indefinitely, he said.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki was in Lviv, Ukraine, on Tuesday, visiting a refugee center made of mobile modules that the governments of Ukraine and Poland jointly built to house displaced individuals who do not want to leave Ukraine.

Organizations for refugees say the best help would be for the war to stop.

"Unfortunately, without an immediate end to the fighting, the unspeakable suffering and mass displacement that we are seeing will only get worse," UNHCR's Mantoo said.

Data from Poland show that some 738,000 people have crossed back into Ukraine during the war. Some of them shuttle back and forth to do shopping in Poland, while others return to Ukraine to check on relatives and property, electing to either stay or depart again depending on what they find.

More than half of the refugees from Ukraine are children, according to UNHCR. Thousands of civilians, including children, have been killed or wounded in shelling and air strikes. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1975 VIETNAM'S PRESIDENT THIEU RESIGNS



The President of South Vietnam has been forced to resign accusing the United States of betrayal.

In a TV and radio address, outgoing President Nguyen Van Thieu said his forces had failed to stop the advance of the Vietcong because of lack of funds promised to him by the Americans.

In a scathing attack on the US, he suggested US Secretary of State Dr Henry Kissinger had tricked him into signing the Paris peace agreement two years ago, promising military aid which then failed to materialise.

"At the time of the peace agreement the United States agreed to replace equipment on a one-by-one basis," he said. "But the United States did not keep its word. Is an American's word reliable these days?"

He continued: "The United States did not keep its promise to help us fight for freedom and it was in the same fight that the United States lost 50,000 of its young men."

The general - a fervent anti-Communist - first came to power in 1965 having helped overthrow the government of President Diem in 1963 with US support.

But the appetite for war has gradually waned in the US and at the same time, Thieu has stripped South Vietnam of many of its democratic institutions.

The pressure for him to resign has been intense - from politicians in Saigon as well as from peace negotiators representing North Vietnam who will not have any dealings with a man they regard as a dictator.

In the last few months, the communist Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) has said President Thieu must step down before any peace talks with Saigon could begin.

President Thieu's departure means peace talks will now be able to move forward.

US President Gerald Ford, however, denied his government had asked President Thieu to relinquish power. "There was no pressure by me or anybody else form here. He made the decision all on his own," he said in a TV interview.

North Vietnamese troops have surrounded Saigon and military expert are predicting the city will fall within weeks if not days.

Five divisions of South Vietnamese infantry troops, a division of US Rangers and two brigades of US Marines in position around Saigon are outnumbered by more than two to one.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Paris peace accord, agreed between communist Le Duc Tho, Henry Kissinger and reluctantly signed in January 1973 by President Thieu, produced a ceasefire and allowed for the exchange of prisoners of war.

Later that year the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho but the Vietnamese negotiator declined it saying that a true peace did not yet exist in Vietnam. Gerald Ford took over in 1974 after President Nixon resigned over the Watergate scandal.

In December 1974, North Vietnamese military forces attacked Phuoc Long Province in South Vietnam, in violation of the peace treaty. President Ford registered diplomatic protests, but did not intervene militarily.

With no US support, the North Vietnamese army were able to secure major cities in the south and reached the capital, Saigon, by April 1975.

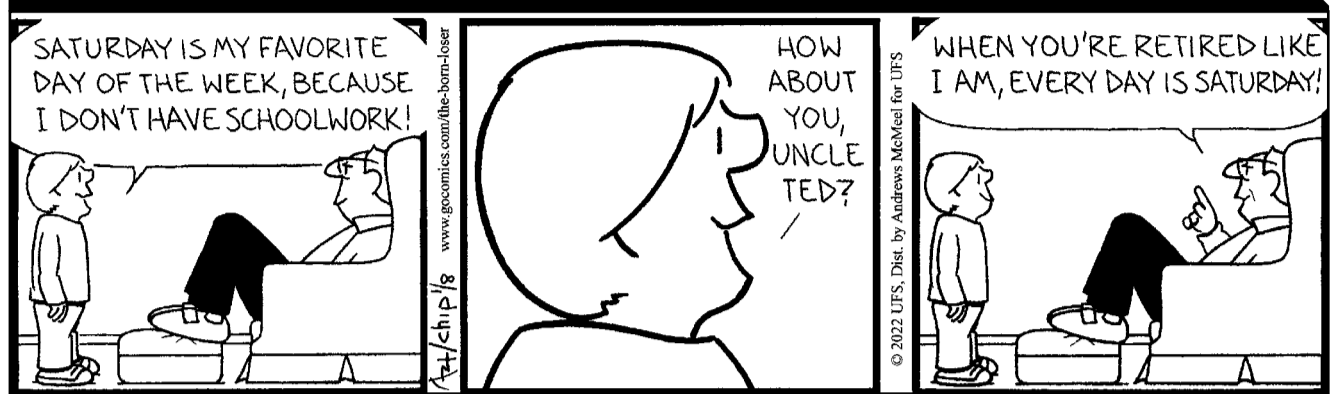
Nine days after Nguyen Van Thieu's resignation, the Vietnam war ended with the fall of Saigon. Thieu escaped to begin a life in exile - first in London, then in Boston. He died in Massachusetts in September 2001.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

 ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19 You should visit a friend or relative who hasn't been well. Plan a day of enjoyment with them. Avoid confrontations with coworkers who aren't pulling their weight.	 TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20 Don't put all your cash in one place. Relatives may be less than easy to deal with. Your ability to visualize will help you convince others of the possibilities.
 GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21 You could find yourself caught in a one sided relationship. Unstable relationships are likely. Your tendency to take on too much will end in fatigue.	 CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22 You may not have the same ideas when it comes to what you both enjoy. Think about starting your own small business. Make residential changes that will lift your spirits.
 LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22 You need to sit back and enjoy. Try to convince a good friend to take a holiday with you. You are best to be discreet. You can make sound financial investments if you act fast.	 VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22 Opportunities to pamper yourself may unfold. Get busy making those changes to your home. Put some energy into getting back into shape. Listen to reason.
 LIBRA Sep.23-Oct. 22 Secret affairs will eventually backfire on you. Don't let your health suffer because of abuse. You may want to get involved in financial investments presented to you.	 SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21 Be very careful while in transit or while traveling in foreign countries. Anger may cause you grief; control your temper and try to sit back and calm down.
 SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Double check your work and be sure that your boss is in a good mood before you do your presentation. Make changes that will enhance your appearance.	 CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Children's needs could be more costly than you anticipated. Focus, and concentrate on yourself and your future. Be sure to use your charm and diplomacy when dealing with potential new clients.
 AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Don't be afraid to say what's on your mind. Your anger may be impossible to contain if you get into debates with family members. Social activity should be on your agenda today.	 PISCES Feb.19-Mar. 20 Stay out of other people's affairs. You may be likely to have difficulties with females. Leave your checkbook and credit cards at home.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	13	29	cloudy
Changchun	12	26	cloudy
Chengdu	11	25	fine
Chongqing	14	25	fine
Fuzhou	15	21	rain
Guangzhou	15	19	rain
Guiyang	11	21	cloudy
Haikou	20	25	cloudy
Hangzhou	12	26	cloudy
Harbin	12	25	fine
Hefei	12	22	overcast
Nanjing	12	24	cloudy
Shanghai	14	25	cloudy
Taipei	18	22	rain
Wuhan	12	23	fine
Hong Hong	23	26	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	5	7	rain
Frankfurt	7	16	overcast
Paris	9	21	overcast
London	9	18	overcast
New York	11	15	overcast

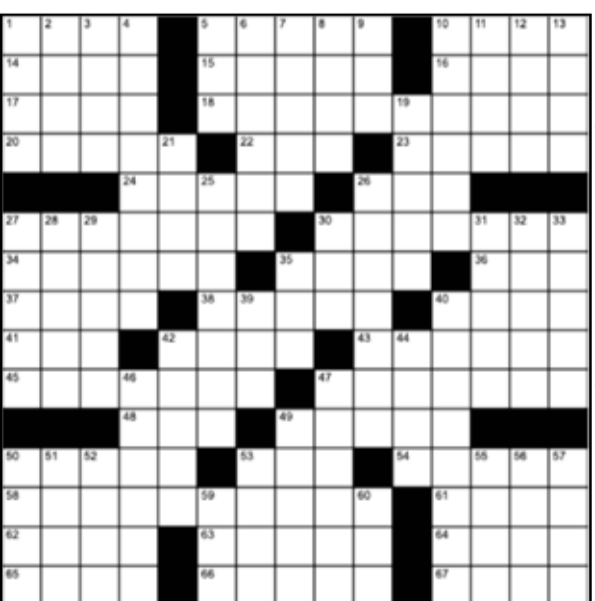
CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- "Magnum, PI." setting; 5- Trash; 10- Just the ___; 14- Examine, search; 15- Broadcasting; 16- Hgt.; 17- Aromatic plant; 18- Business activity; 20- Make sense; 22- DDE's rival; 23- Vows; 24- Stagers; 26- Eat dinner; 27- Forgives; 30- Kneecap; 34- Provide bearings; 35- Jittery; 36- Still, in poetry; 37- It may be floated; 38- Put a new price on; 40- Little biter; 41- Neb. neighbor; 42- Island dance; 43- Large lizard; 45- Naive; 47- Rashly; 48- Strike; 49- Ire; 50- A Musketeer; 53- Globe; 54- Plant problem; 58- Talkative person; 61- WWII turning point; 62- Panama and bowler; 63- Tally; 64- "Garfield" canine; 65- Affectedly dainty; 66- Pulls down; 67- Deities;

DOWN 1- Dept. of Labor division; 2- Scored 100 on; 3- Solid; 4- Take the weight off; 5- Heartache; 6- Historical records; 7- Satisfies; 8- Connections; 9- Make a faux pas; 10- Shawl worn in Mexico; 11- Got off; 12- Engage, as gears; 13- Nights before; 19- Sulky; 21- Lowly worker; 25- Confide; 26- Droopy; 27- Lively Bohemian dance; 28- Bellowing; 29- Cheerful; 30- Palm Pilot, e.g.; 31- Horne and Olin; 32- Inclined; 33- Architectural piers; 35- LAX posting; 39- Golfer Ernie; 40- Canine used for protection; 42- Robbery; 44- Clarified butter; 46- Fourth highest peak in the world; 47- Innate; 49- Shady spot; 50- Zwei cubed; 51- Warm up; 52- Can't stand; 53- Killer whale; 55- Other name for taro; 56- Female servant; 57- Affirmative votes; 59- Language ending; 60- Crosses (out);

Yesterday's solution

RAGER ALSO CAPS
 SPUME LAUD ATAT
 SEATS PLEA WERE
 SSR ETHOS FEAST
 APNEA IRATE
 OPNOTE COMET
 NOTE SALAD AGO
 EXEMPLIFICATION
 OVE KROMED ALOT
 FREED RISEN
 LEARN TISAAC TNT
 ARID TERI OTHER
 VASE GRAS REUSE
 ALAR ESE TASTE



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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TECH

NETFLIX AIMS TO CURTAIL PASSWORD SHARING, CONSIDERS ADS

An unexpectedly sharp drop in subscribers has Netflix considering changes it has long resisted: Minimizing password sharing and creating a low-cost subscription supported by advertising.

Looming changes announced yesterday [Macau time] are designed to help Netflix regain momentum lost over the past year. Pandemic-driven lockdowns that drove binge-watching have lifted, while deep-pocketed rivals such as Apple and Walt Disney have begun to chip away at its vast audience with their own streaming services.

Netflix's customer base fell by 200,000 subscribers during the January-March quarter, the first contraction the streaming service has seen since it became available throughout most of the world other than China six years ago. The drop stemmed in part from Netflix's decision to withdraw from Russia to protest the war against Ukraine, resulting in a loss of 700,000 subscribers. Netflix projected a loss of another 2 million subscribers in the current April-June quarter.



AP PHOTO

The erosion, coming off a year of progressively slower growth, has rattled Netflix investors. Shares plunged by more than 25% in extended trading after Netflix revealed its disappointing performance. If the stock drop extends into Wednesday's regular trading session, Netflix shares will have lost more than half of their value so far this year — wiping out about \$150 billion in shareholder wealth in less than four months.

The Los Gatos, California,

company estimated that about 100 million households worldwide are watching its service for free by using the account of a friend or another family member, including 30 million in the U.S. and Canada.

"Those are over 100 million households already are choosing to view Netflix," Netflix CEO Reed Hastings said. "We've just got to get paid at some degree for them."

To prod more people to pay for their own accounts, Netflix in-

dicated it will expand a trial program it has been running in three Latin American countries — Chile, Costa Rica and Peru. In these locations, subscribers can extend service to another household for a discounted price. In Costa Rica, for instance, Netflix plan prices range from \$9 to \$15 a month, but subscribers can openly share their service with another household for \$3.

Netflix offered no additional information about how a cheaper

ad-supported service tier would work or how much it would cost. Another rival, Hulu, has long offered an ad-supported tier.


While Netflix clearly believes these changes will help it build upon its current 221.6 million worldwide subscribers, the moves also risk alienating customers to the point they cancel.

Netflix was previously stung by a customer backlash in 2011 when it unveiled plans to begin charging for its then-nascent streaming service, which had been bundled for free with its traditional DVD-by-mail service before its international expansion. In the months after that change, Netflix lost 800,000 subscribers, prompting an apology from Hastings for botching the execution of the spin-off.



Tuesday's announcement was a sobering comedown for a company that was buoyed two years ago when millions of consumers corralled at home were desperately seeking diversions — a void Netflix was happy to fill. Netflix added 36 million subscribers during 2020, by far the largest annual growth since its video streaming service's debut in 2007.

But Hastings now believes those outsized gains may have blinded management. "COVID created a lot of noise on how to read the situation," he said in a video conference yesterday. **MDT/AP**


AD



HOLIDAY RENTAL HOUSES

Lugar das Letras  Casa de Gouvães 

The houses are set in the heart of the **World Heritage Site of the Douro Valley** and its famous winery landscape where the worlds Ports are produced. Both restored relics overlooking the Rio Douro, these eight rooms houses have been blessed with gorgeous wooden floors, plush queen beds and marble baths; the best have dazzling river views. But it is the welcome that makes this place stand out from the crowd.



visit us at www.lugardasletras.com visit us at www.casadegouveas.com

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CASA DE GOUVÃES - DOURO - PORTUGAL
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週年
ANNIVERSARY



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ON SALE

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With Festival

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FESTIVAL
SUPPLEMENT
INSIDE

ROB HARRIS, LIVERPOOL

FOOTBALL

LIVERPOOL is back where Manchester United is far from reaching: Top of the Premier League.

To know why there is such a deficit in quality now between English football's most successful clubs, just look at how Liverpool's forwards tormented United in a 4-0 rout on yesterday [Macau time].

It wasn't just Mohamed Salah scoring twice at Anfield, following a hat trick in the 5-0 humiliation in the reverse fixture.

Salah also assisted Luiz Diaz's opener. Salah's first was set up by Sadio Mané. And Mané's goal was provided by Diaz's pass.

All before Salah compounded another night of misery for United with a chipped finish for his second provided by Diaz's replacement — Diogo Jota.

"They make our life easier in the midfield and at the back," Salah said. "They always try to give us the ball in a one-against-one situation so it makes our life much easier."

A glorious night for Liverpool ended with four fist-pumps by manager Jürgen Klopp in front of the Kop. For the four goals? And maybe for the four trophies the season could yet end with.

The League Cup has already been collected and there's an FA Cup final meeting with Chelsea next month. Before then there's a Champions League semifinal clash with Villarreal. And there is the hope Manchester City does not regain first spot in the Premier League, although the two-point lead could be wiped out by the champions beating Brighton on Wednesday.

Regaining the Premier League trophy from City in the remaining six games would see Liverpool match United on a record 20 English titles.

"They just showed what kind of caliber they are," United interim manager Ralf Rangnick said. "We are far away from that."

United is struggling to secure one of the four Champions League qualification places, let alone win its first title since Alex Ferguson retired in 2013.

"Liverpool is fighting for the title," United midfielder Bruno Fernandes said. "We are not fighting for nothing."

Salah double as Liverpool routs Man United 4-0 to top EPL



The 80-year-old Ferguson will have been regretting making the trip across northwest England to watch United being torn apart after only five minutes.

United's five-man defense — featuring Phil Jones making his second league appearance of the season — was unpicked by a sweeping break launched from inside Liverpool's penalty area.

By the time the ball reached the halfway line, Mané had Salah running forward to release a pass to. Then Diaz arrived unmarked centrally to strike beyond goalkeeper David de Gea.

"That was not part of the game plan to be that high

up and to try to press high up and concede a transitional moment," Rangnick said. "Our left side was completely open."

It was another passing move that led to Liverpool's second. Receiving a pass from Joel Matip, Mané lofted the ball to Salah, who had time to take it past Diego Dalot before slotting low into the net in the 22nd minute.

Perhaps the only surprise at halftime was United limited the damage to 2-0.

There was more of a visiting threat after the break, sparked by Jadon Sancho as the replacement for Jones. But the formation change by Rangnick, the interim manager following

RONALDO GETS SUPPORT FROM UNITED, LIVERPOOL FANS

CRISTIANO Ronaldo received an outpouring of solidarity from Manchester United fans and their Liverpool counterparts during a Premier League match he missed yesterday [Macau time] after the death of one of his newborn twins. The boy's death was announced on Monday by Ronaldo and his partner,

Georgina Rodriguez. The show of support for United's No. 7 came when the clock at Anfield hit seven minutes. A chant of "Viva Ronaldo" was started by the United fans. There followed a brief rendition from Liverpool supporters of their club anthem — "You'll Never Walk Alone" — and applause around the stadium.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's firing in November, could not stir a comeback.

Any home anxiety was eased once Mané netted in the 68th. Andrew Robertson gained possession and ran with the ball unchallenged before feeding Diaz to cut-back to Mané to finish.

It would get worse for United.

Hannibal Mejbri replaced Anthony Elanga and within a minute he was giving the ball away. Robertson pounced and fed Jota whose pass to Salah allowed the Egypt forward to make it nine goals in six games against United, via a deflection off visiting defender Aaron Wan-Bissaka.

"It was a top performance from us here and away also," Salah said. "Hopefully carry on like this." MDT/AP

AD

An advertisement for Duffy's Irish Pub. The top part features the pub's logo and name "DUFFY'S IRISH PUB" in a stylized font. Below this is a circular inset showing a hand holding a glass of Guinness. To the right, there's a red banner that says "FREE Limo Service from 5PM (Tues-Sun)". The bottom part of the ad shows several plates of food, including what looks like a burger, a bowl of soup, and some bread. At the bottom, there's a location pin and the address "BROADWAY FOOD STREET, C-6002 - 6004, TAIPA, MACAU BROADWAY HOTEL, ROTUNDA DO DIQUE DESTA, TAIPA". Social media icons for Instagram and Facebook are also present, along with the handle "@duffysmacau". A phone number "PLEASE CALL US AT: 2884 5212 FOR RESERVATIONS" is at the bottom right.

OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

DYNAMIC CLEARING THE OPTION THAT PUTS PEOPLE'S LIVES FIRST

No matter how many countries choose to co-exist with the novel coronavirus, China will continue to stick to its tried and proved dynamic clearing policy, as that remains the best way to save people's lives for the time being.

True, in the process of implementing the policy, some problems have emerged. But these are mainly the result of the rigidity with which those at the grassroots level are carrying out the policy, rather than the policy itself. And most of the problems have been quickly addressed.

That China remains one of the few large countries to have effectively tamed the virus so far can be attributed to the nation's resolute implementation of the dynamic clearing policy under the leadership of the central authorities and with the cooperation of the people.

That some developed countries have reopened in the face of the raging Omicron variant is not because so-called herd immunity has been realized but because they have given up all virus control measures under the social and economic pressure.

The cost of doing so is clear. The number of deaths attributable to the Omicron variant of the virus is more than those caused by the Delta variant. The World Health Organization has rightly called the death toll "beyond tragic". The Omicron variant had claimed half a million lives and infected more than 130 million people as of early February since it first appeared in November. In the Chinese mainland, nearly half a million local cases have been reported since March.

Given China's large population of senior citizens, about 20 percent of its 1.4 billion population, and the uneven distribution of medical resources throughout the country, to join the "herd immunity" club would mean not only discarding what it has already achieved but also paying an expensive price in terms of people's lives, socioeconomic development and social stability, which would far outweigh the short-time inconveniences and problems caused by the current virus control measures.

China is making the most of what it has and its institutional strengths to save people's lives, guarantee their livelihoods, and keep the country developing on its charted courses.

Given the high infectiousness of the Omicron variant and the geometric progression of the risks it imposes on public health compared with its predecessor, China has done a good job in controlling the virus at the minimum cost.

Before a more effective way to fight the virus is devised, China will unswervingly adhere to its current dynamic clearing virus control policy. But while this is still the right course of action for the country given its circumstances, it should at the same time try to make its implementation on the ground more flexible and responsive to the needs of the people.

Mexico's Senate passed a bill yesterday to nationalize lithium mining and extraction. The bill was submitted by President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who is expected to sign it into law.

The law says a state-run company will have exclusive rights to mine lithium, a mineral used in electric car batteries and other devices. Such a company does not yet exist, and the Mexican government has no experience in mining lithium.

The bill passed in the lower house of Congress Monday,

marking a near-record speed of approval in both house of Congress.

Only one lithium mine in Mexico, operated by a Chinese firm, is anywhere close to starting production. It was not clear if that mine in northern Mexico would be taken over by the government.

The bill on lithium had been part of an electrical energy reform bill that failed to win approval Sunday in the lower house.



CITING RUSSIA'S WAR, IMF CUTS GLOBAL GROWTH FORECAST TO 3.6%

THE International Monetary Fund yesterday [Macau time] downgraded the outlook for the world economy this year and next, blaming Russia's war in Ukraine for disrupting global commerce, pushing up oil prices, threatening food supplies and increasing uncertainty already heightened by the coronavirus and its variants.

The 190-country lender cut its forecast for global growth to 3.6% this year, a steep falloff from 6.1% last year and from the 4.4% growth it had expected for 2022 back in January. It also said it expects the world economy to grow 3.6% again next year, slightly slower than the 3.8% it forecast in January.

The war — and the darkening outlook — came just as the global economy appeared to be shaking off the impact of the highly infectious omicron variant.

"The war will slow economic growth and increase inflation," IMF chief economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas told reporters.

Now, the IMF expects Russia's economy — battered by sanctions — to shrink 8.5% this year and Ukraine's 35%.

U.S. economic growth is expected to drop to 3.7% this year from 5.7% in 2021, which had been the fastest growth since 1984. The new forecast marks a downgrade from the 4% the IMF had predicted at the beginning of the year. Hobbled U.S. growth this year will be Federal Reserve interest rate increases, meant to combat resurgent inflation, and an economic slowdown in key American trading partners.

Europe, heavily dependent on Russian energy, will bear the brunt of the economic fallout from the Russia-Ukraine war. For the 19 countries that share the euro currency, the IMF forecasts collective growth of 2.8% in 2022, down sharply from the 3.9% it expected in January and from 5.3% last year.

The IMF expects the growth of the Chinese economy, the world's second biggest, to decelerate to 4.4% this year from 8.1% in 2021. Beijing's zero-COVID strategy has meant draconian lockdowns in bustling commercial cities like Shanghai and Shenzhen.

Some commodity-exporting countries, benefiting from the rising price of raw materials, are

likely to defy the trend toward slower growth. For example, the IMF raised its growth forecast for oil producer Nigeria — to 3.4% this year from the 2.7% the fund said it expected back in January.

The world economy had bounced back with surprising strength from 2020's brief but brutal coronavirus recession. But the rebound presented problems of its own: Caught by surprise, businesses scrambled to meet a surge in customer orders, which overwhelmed factories, ports and freight yards. The result: long shipping delays and higher prices.

The IMF forecasts a 5.7% jump in consumer prices in the world's advanced economies this year, the most since 1984. In the United States, inflation is running at a four-decade high.

Central banks are raising interest rates to counter rising prices, a move that could choke off economic growth. By driving up prices of oil, natural gas and other commodities, the Russia-Ukraine war has made their task of fighting inflation while preserving the economic recovery even trickier. MDT/AP



Israel A group of Israeli ultra-nationalists said it is determined to go ahead with a flag-waving march around predominantly Palestinian areas of Jerusalem's Old City, brushing aside a police ban of an event that served as one of the triggers of last year's Israel-Gaza war. In a sign of the already heated atmosphere, a small group of Palestinian protesters threw rocks at police while hundreds of Jewish visitors entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, known to Jews as the Temple Mount.

Poland Methane explosions at a coal mine in southern Poland yesterday killed four people and injured 19, authorities said. Seven others were missing. The blasts took place about 1,000 meters under the surface at the Pniówek mine in Pawlowice that is operated by the Jastrzebska Spolka Weglowa, or JSW, mining company. The immediate rescue operation by 13 units of rescuers had to be suspended because of a fire and the need to protect the rescuers.

UK A British judge yesterday formally approved the extradition of Julian Assange to the United States to face spying charges. The case will now go to Britain's interior minister for a decision, though the WikiLeaks founder still has legal avenues of appeal. The order, which brings and end to the years'-long extradition battle closer, comes after the U.K. Supreme Court last month refused Assange permission to appeal against a lower court's ruling that he could be extradited.



Spain took another step yesterday toward a sense of normalcy amid the pandemic by partially ending the near two-year-long obligatory use of masks indoors. The government decree, passed Tuesday, keeps masks mandatory for visitors and staff in medical centers and nursing homes, although patients won't always be obliged to wear them.