



**THE GUANGDONG-MACAO IN-DEPTH COOPERATION ZONE IN HENGQIN WILL MEET CLOSED OPERATION REQUIREMENTS BY YEAR END**

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**DUTERTE HITS PUTIN: I KILL CRIMINALS, NOT CHILDREN, ELDERS**

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AP PHOTO



**Ukraine** When Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, it had hoped to overtake the country in a blitz lasting only days or a few weeks. Many Western analysts thought so, too. As the conflict marked its third month yesterday, however, Moscow appears to be bogged down in what increasingly looks like a war of attrition, with no end in sight and few successes on the battlefield.

AP PHOTO



**Chinese** Foreign Minister Wang Yi will visit Solomon Islands this week in what the South Pacific nation's leader said was a "milestone" in his country's relationship with China, amid concerns that their new security pact could allow Chinese military personnel on the islands. But Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare insisted in a statement posted on his government's website yesterday that the partnership with Beijing does not come at the expense of ties with Australia, the United States and others.

AP PHOTO



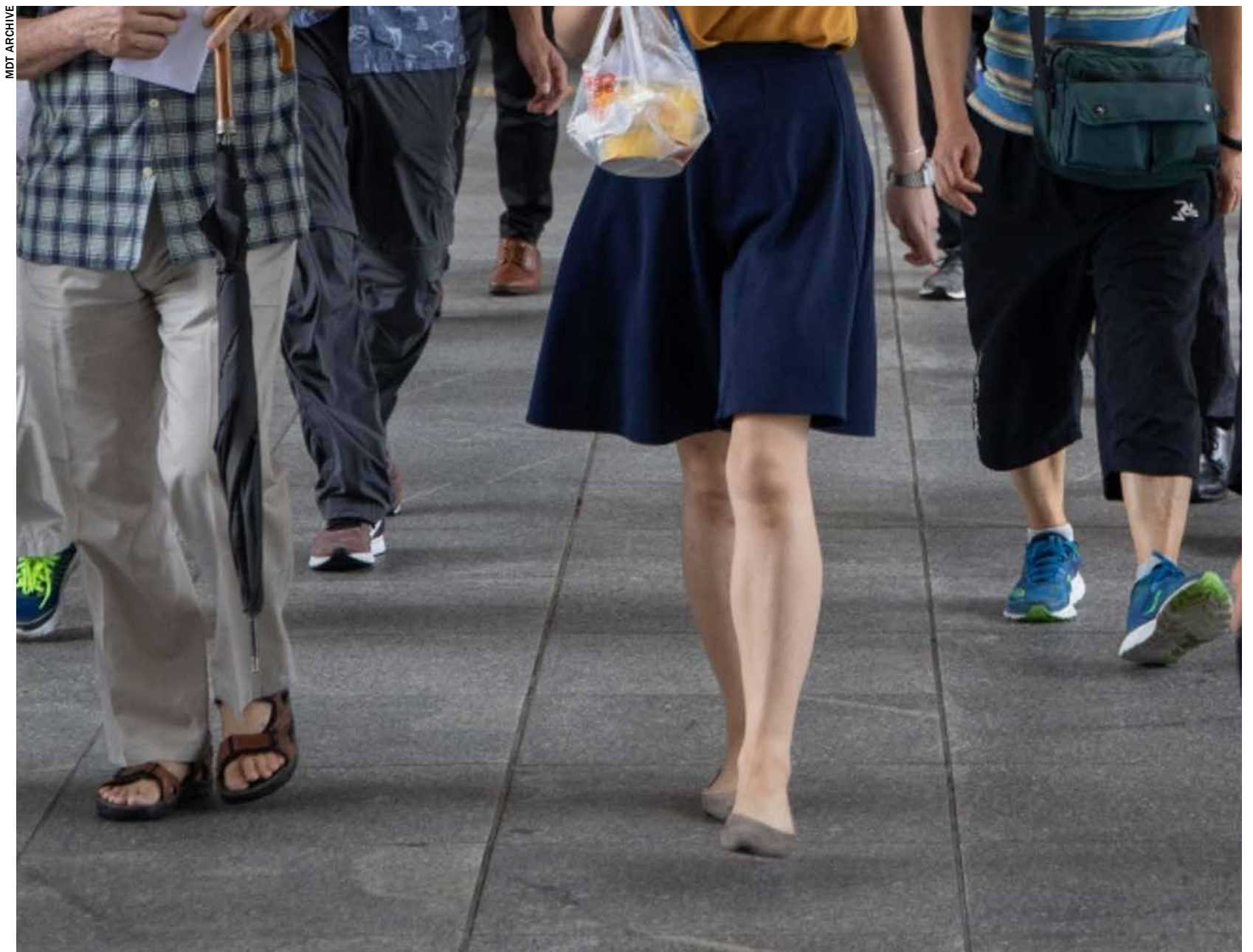
**Hong Kong** Former Hong Kong Catholic leader Cardinal Joseph Zen and five others yesterday have denied charges for allegedly failing to register a relief fund aimed at financially assisting protesters who faced legal costs during the 2019 anti-government protests. The six, which also include singer Denise Ho and former opposition lawmakers Margaret Ng and Cyd Ho, were first arrested two weeks ago on suspicion of collusion with foreign forces but were not charged.

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TRANSPORT 2021-2030

# PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM TO CREATE OVER 10KM OF WALKWAYS

RENATO MARQUES

WITH the twin focus on the expansion of the Macau railway transportation system as well as an efficient pedestrian network to complement it, the government is proposing to build over 10 kilometers of walkways, including flyovers and green promenades, to facilitate the circulation of local residents and tourists without the need for other transport systems, the government announced in the presentation of the 10-year plan for transport from 2021-2030.

According to the director of the Transport Bureau (DSAT), Kelvin Lam Hin San, the experience gathered, and the feedback collected from the public, on Taipa's central flyover have contributed to the government's decision to draft more projects that include this type of structure to facilitate commuters on foot and incentivize the

RENATO MARQUES



residents to walk more instead of taking the bus.

In the new 10-year plan, the government incorporates some 10 kilometers of new walkways with three main purposes: to shorten commuting distances on foot; to link public transport hubs or sys-

tems; and, as much as possible, to separate pedestrians from vehicular transit.

With the enforcement of this new pedestrian system, the DSAT director also said that it is expected to have a positive effect on commuting time for the vehicles,

as there will be fewer zebra crossings, traffic lights, and other factors that reduce the speed of circulation as well as create potential points for road accidents.

According to the 10-year plan, "pedestrian mobility is the main method of travel for citizens, representing 46.3% of all methods of travel in 2019."

"Due to the lack of connecting paths between hills, bodies of water, and terrain with topographical differences, some pedestrian paths are discontinuous and require a longer distance to travel on foot. Furthermore, the comfort and safety of walking routes still need to be optimized," the government stated.

In addition to the elevated pathways, the government has proposed the creation of greener sidewalks and promenades under shade to increase the comfort of pedestrians on hotter days.

GBA

## HENGQIN GEARS UP FOR CLOSED OPERATION BY END OF YEAR

THE Guangdong-Macau In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin will meet closed operation requirements by the end of December, according to Li Ziwei, acting director of the zone's Economic Development Bureau at a recent interview.

As cited in a statement issued by the Hengqin administration, construction on phase II of Hengqin's "first-tier" customs surveillance zones is now 70% completed, with works on coach and truck channels as well as innovations on customs clearance models underway.

Meanwhile, construction on the "second-tier" customs surveillance zones, covering five passages and seven customs inspection sites, is also moving ahead, with the main structures for the Hengqin Bridge, Hengqin Tunnel, and Shenjing Passage completed.

Li noted that the number of channels for coaches and trucks at Hengqin Checkpoint will be increased from 11 to 30, significantly increasing the checkpoint's customs clearance capacity and improving its environment. Working and living in Hengqin will be more convenient for Macau residents as Macau vehicles will soon be able to enter Hengqin with fewer limitations.

The total amount of Macau single-license vehicles crossing the border via Hengqin Checkpoint has already exceeded 500,000 on May 17 since Hengqin's establishment in September 2021, accounting for nearly 70% of total vehicles passing the checkpoint.

In addition, special channels at Hengqin Checkpoints for the University of Macau's Hengqin Campus have been reserved. LV

BUSINESS

# Retailers anticipate further sales downturn as revenue slightly plunges in Q1

LYNZY VALLES

LOCAL retailers are anticipating a year-on-year decrease in sales volume in the second quarter of 2022.

According to a survey conducted by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), 65.8% are expecting sales to decrease, while 31.9% expected the sales volume to stay stable, and only 2.3% forecasted an increase.

This comes after the value of retail sales for the first quarter of 2022 totalled MOP18.65 billion, down slightly by 0.6% year-on-year.

After removing the effect of price changes, the sales volume index rose by 1.9% year-on-year.

71.0% of the retailers, meanwhile, predicted that the retail prices would remain steady year-on-year in the second quarter, while 17.2% foresaw a decrease and 11.8% expected an increase.

When considering compari-

LYNZY VALLES



son of performance against the first quarter of 2022, about 59.0% of the retailers envisaged sluggish business in the second quarter, whereas retailers expecting stable performance (22.9%) and those anticipating a favourable outlook (18.1%) together accounted for 41.0% of the total.

Among the major retail trade activities, the sales value of Motor Vehicles (-25.3%) dropped significantly year-on-year, while sales

values of Cosmetics & Sanitary Articles (-15.6%) and Adults' Clothing (-10.9%) also recorded decreases.

On the other hand, sales values of Communication Equipment (+9.9%) and Leather Goods (+8.4%) increased.

The value of retail sales in the first quarter of 2022 edged up by 0.1% as compared with the revised figure (MOP18.64 billion) in the fourth quarter of 2021.

As previously reported, the to-

tal expenditure by visitors (excluding gaming expenses) rose by 6.7% year-on-year to MOP6.59 billion in the first quarter of 2022, despite the consecutive downturn in visitor arrivals from January to March.

Despite the casino sector being on the brink of revenue downturn, Macau's total expenditure by same-day visitors (MOP1.26 billion) leapt by 114.5% year-on-year, while that of overnight visitors (MOP5.33 billion) dropped by 4.7%.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which benefited from government support measures, have also been undergoing a crisis, as 261 have already closed their doors due to bankruptcy.

Some 181 companies from a total of 8,354 entities that benefited from the SME Aid Scheme, one of the most popular support programs, have already gone bankrupt.

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DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF\_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com  
ASSISTANT EDITOR\_Lynzy Valles  
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS\_Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS\_Alex Torráo, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Jorge Costa Oliveira, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Sérgio de Almeida Correia, Viviana Seguí DESIGNERS\_Eva Bucho, Miguel Bandeira | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS\_JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES\_Associated Press, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua SECRETARY\_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER\_Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS\_Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

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TRANSPORT 2021-2030

# Fifth road link and LRT West line big questions for gov't

RENATO MARQUES

**O**PENING yesterday and closing on July 22, the public consultation period regarding Macau's new 10-year plan for transport in Macau 2021-2030 aims to hear the public's opinions on topics such as the fifth road link between the Peninsula and Taipa Island as well as on the proposal to significantly expand the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) system.

On the line is the expansion of LRT into the west side of the Peninsula to create a double connection to and from the Border Gate, the director of the Transport Bureau (DSAT), Kelvin Lam Hin San, said yesterday in a press conference to launch the public consultation process.

Initially slated as an underwater tunnel linking NAPE's coastal area in front of MGM Macau to the Zone D of the new landfill facilities, an artificial island to be built on the Taipa side in front of the land formerly known as "Ocean World," - a theme park that was never developed - the fifth link between Macau and Taipa might never be a reality, Lam said yesterday.

"The fifth link has not yet been defined. For the time being, it's just an idea that we want to ask the opinion of the public on," Lam said, adding that "it is our understanding, at this moment, that building such a tunnel connecting to the central area of Macau would, by one side, shorten the distances to the city center but, on another, would potentially draw a lot of traffic [...] to this area, which is already very congested."

Lam said the government hopes that members of the public, as well as the sector, can take this opportunity to express their opinions on the matter so the government can reach a final decision.

"We don't want to spend a huge amount of money for something that might cause a contrary effect to what we want, which is to find ways of spread the traffic and ease the circulation of people and vehicles," he said, noting that the topic had also been discussed earlier in the day during the meeting of the Traffic Advisory Committee, in which Lam said members also expressed such an opinion.

"We hope that with the fourth bridge [Macau-Taipa] we

RENATO MARQUES



can [divert] some traffic from the central area to alleviate the existing traffic pressure," Lam concluded.

## LRT WEST LINE STILL A CONCEPT

The other big topic on which the government wants to hear public opinion is the idea of extending the LRT line from Barra through the Inner Harbour, reaching the Border Gate.

The idea is not new and although it is now part of the 2021-2030 plan, the director of DSAT says that there is not yet a concrete plan, describing the notion as just a conceptual idea.

"The West line is still a concept, it is not a plan yet. We included it in this plan because we want to hear the opinions of the public on it. We know that to have construction works in that area will be very problematic for people's lives," he said.

Still, and judging by his comments, it is clear that the government's position is that it should be built.

"We think it could be very useful [to build this line] due to the high number of people living in this area. We calculated that within the reach of this line, 250,000 people could

make use of this transportation system, contributing to raising the number of passengers of LRT," Lam explained. He added, "Currently, around 60,000 people in this area are using the bus as [their main means of] transportation. We hope that at least 30% of these people can shift immediately to the LRT."

Lam noted that while the West line is only six kilometers long, its construction would allow for the creation of a circular LRT network around Macau that would spread in two different directions from the Border Gate, a fact that would facilitate

the commuting of both locals and tourists, saving them a lot of time by allowing them to choose the route that would be more convenient for their final destination at the Border Gate.

Nonetheless, the director said that the all the efforts of the government at this moment are being devoted to the construction of the East line, which will link the Pac On area in Taipa to the Border Gate, passing through Zone A of the new landfill facilities and by the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge Port. "That is our number one priority," he remarked.

## FOURTH BRIDGE TO LINK DIRECTLY INTO COTAI VIA TUNNEL

**THE** fourth bridge linking Zone A of the new landfill facilities to Taipa will be complemented by a road tunnel in Taipa Grande, creating a direct entry/exit to Cotai, at the airport roundabout. Lam confirmed during the DSAT press conference that as the construction of the bridge is already at an advanced stage, the government will soon be launching the public tender for

this tunnel, which aims to divert traffic from the airport, Pac On, and Taipa areas, creating a shorter and more direct link between Cotai and Zone A, facilitating also access to the HKZM bridge port and the Border Gate area. According to Lam, the construction works on the new bridge, as well as access links, are expected to take another three to four years to be finalized.

## 30TH REPATRIATION FLIGHT BACK TO PHILIPPINES SET FOR TOMORROW

The Philippine Consulate General will hold its 30th repatriation flight tomorrow, departing the city at about 9 a.m., the Times has been told. Tickets for the two-hour flight have cost Filipino nationals some MOP2,250. The Philippine government has repatriated a total of 5,761 Filipinos as of March. Up to now, no flights have been operating to the Philippines due to strict border and entry measures in place in the SAR. The country's Department of Foreign Ministry (DFA) has previously said in a statement that it will continue to hold repatriation flights until the Macau government has declared it safe to allow international commercial flights to operate again.

## GOV'T WARNS BANK USERS TO BE VIGILANT OF SCAMS

The Monetary Authority of Macao (AACM) is reminding the public to be wary of false text messages that claim to be from banks in order to avoid scams and unnecessary losses. The bureau reminds that financial institutions will not ask customers to provide personal information (including login passwords and one-time passwords) through phone calls, emails and SMS, and will not direct customers to their websites by SMS or email hyperlinks. Anyone who has provided their personal data or conducted any transactions through the above forms should contact the Judiciary Police as soon as possible.

## IMPORT OF BRAZILIAN FROZEN MEAT PRODUCTS SUSPENDED

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has ordered a re-test of some imported frozen meat products from Brazil after Beijing announced that samples from the packaging had tested positive for Covid-19. Local businesses have been requested to immediately seal the products sourced from the relevant manufacturers. Moreover, samples have been collected again for re-testing and no abnormalities have been found in the results. Meanwhile, IAM has immediately suspended the import applications of the products of the manufacturers involved.

## FUNDING COSTS OF BANKING SECTOR INCREASE

At end-March 2022, the composite interest rates for MOP and HKD rose 2 basis points and 6 basis points, from 0.48% and 0.81% at end-December 2021 to 0.50% and 0.87%, respectively, according to statistics released today by the Monetary Authority of Macao (AACM). Macau's composite interest rates are the weighted average interest rates of all interest-bearing liabilities and non-interest-bearing demand deposits on local banks' books. These statistical indicators enable the financial sector to closely track movements in domestic funding costs.



CRIME

# DUO ARRESTED FOR GENERATING, USING FORGED HEALTH CODES

ANTHONY LAM

**A**NOTHER case of health code forgery has been uncovered, with two non-local residents arrested recently, the Judiciary Police (PJ) announced yesterday.

At the special press conference, the police revealed that a male surnamed Zhu, a 31-year-old security guard who worked at the Border Gate, and Wang, a 54-year-old female mainland Chinese resident who is an overstay, had been arrested.

While both are identified as suspects, only Zhu is currently in custody.

The investigation was triggered in July last year when the Public Prosecutions Office ordered the PJ to carry it out. The allegation is that Macau health codes with valid SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test (NAT) negative results had been forged and sold to people for border-crossing purposes.

The PJ recapped that, in July

2021, a person filed a complaint with the Macau Health Bureau (SSM) against a security guard at a local border checkpoint. It was reported that the security guard had pitched a health code and NAT negative result "forgery service" to the complainant.

According to the police, the complainant failed to obtain

their NAT negative result in time to facilitate entry into mainland China. While contemplating possible solutions, the complainant was approached by a security guard, who was pitching the "service" to them. They were requested to pay 400 Chinese yuan for each

health code with the NAT negative result.

The PJ managed to narrow down the scope to Zhu, a security guard working for a ser-

vice provider commissioned by SSM. Upon revisiting its records, the PJ linked Zhu to at least nine counts of similar case.

On May 21, 2022, in cooperation with the Public Security Police Force (PSP), who handles border clearance in Macau, the PJ apprehended Wang at the Border Gate. She confessed to the police that, in mid-2021, she purchased a forged health code with a fake NAT negative result from a security guard at a local border checkpoint for the price of 400 Chinese yuan. She successfully used it to enter Zhuhai.

Two days later, the PSP intercepted Zhu while he was entering Macau at the Border Gate. He said that he took advantage of the convenience of his security work to look for "clients" to sell his "service."

To provide his "product," he generated his own health code, altered the information shown on it and sent the codes to his "clients."

He was alleged to have conducted the crime for about a month between May and June last year. He claimed to have earned 2,000 Chinese yuan from nine "clients."



AD

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# 12% fewer crimes recorded in Q1 y-o-y

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE city has, in the first quarter of this year, recorded 12% fewer crimes than the same period last year, the Secretariat for Security announced yesterday.

In the quarterly report on crime count and nature, Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, disclosed that the police forces of the city commenced investigation into 2,565 crimes in the first quarter of the year, 349 crimes fewer than the same period last year.

However, the Secretary noted, the development of the gambling sector is closely linked to the city's social security. The Covid-19 pandemic, which has lasted for more than two years, has had a great impact on Macau's gambling and tourism sectors and has led to a significant decrease in gaming revenues.

Wong highlighted that, although re-licensing the current gambling concessions and the legislation concerning gambling intermediary operations are within the authority of the economy and finance section of the government, the security section has also turned its attention to the matter.

Justifying the section's concerns, Wong remarked that the gambling industry is a pillar of the local economy. The collection of



issues arising from its development will "definitely" make an impact on the industry, which may also lead to unsettled public security and social stability.

Therefore, "the security section of the government has consistently been highly vigilant and concerned with the varieties of unstable elements brought forward by the development of the gambling industry," Wong wrote in a statement.

The security section of the government has put all crimes into five categories: offence against persons; offence against assets; of-

fence against social life; offence against the territory; and unclassified types.

Among them, offence against the territory saw the greatest rate of decrease, equating to 28.5%. Unclassified types of offences saw nearly 25% drop in numbers of crime, which was the second steepest drop. A nearly 21% drop was recorded for offences against social life.

A worrying situation is that the city saw an 80% rise in sexual offences against children in the first quarter. In contrast, the crime of rape recorded a 12.5% drop. Despite the di-

fference in the incremental rate, both crimes saw nearly 10 cases in the first quarter, with nine of the former type and seven of the latter.

On the other hand, a 300% rise was recorded for the offence of having sexual intercourse with

minors, with a total of four cases.

However, the city saw the counts of kidnapping fall from nine to a single instance. Although Wong did not elaborate on the reason for the drop, it may have been caused by the

shrink in scale of gambling activities, logically leading to fewer illicit loans.

Also worrying is the number of suicides and attempted suicides, with 28 of the former and 50 of the latter. Psychologists, social workers, counselors and educators have separately voiced their concerns over the matter.

During the first quarter 30 sham marriages and 24 cases of sham employment were recorded. In addition, during the period, 3,963 people overstayed, a year-on-year increase of 624 cases, or 18%, and 167 crimes related to illegal accommodation or illegal stay were recorded, an increase of 27.5%.

Further, the Secretary for Security stated that the government is actively communicating with the embassies and consulates of various countries to assist in the repatriation of people stranded in Macau and extend the period of stay of those who cannot return to their places of origin as appropriate.

## GROUP CLARIFIES FAMILY MEDIATION FOCUSES ON CHILDREN'S INTERESTS, NOT DIVORCEES'

**F**AMILY mediation, when conducted during the process of divorce, will focus on finding the best path for the children, an accredited mediator has recently clarified.

At a public event, Chan Kam Iun, accredited mediator and instructor in professional practice, told participants that when a couple files for divorce, they may need family mediation services.

However, Chan pointed out that many divorcing couples mistakenly believed that the process is intended to help them settle their divorce. However, the service actually focuses on the interests of any children within the relationship.

The service aims at reducing the possibility of child custody fights or disagreements after the divorce or separation takes place. Moreover, it aims to encourage both members of the couple to care for their children

together, even after separation.

Lawmakers Wong Kit Cheng and Ma Io Fong, both hosts of the public event, highlighted that family mediation services and divorcee co-parenting services have become available in the city.

As lawmakers, they suggest the government start pre-legislation studies on family mediation. In their opinion, legislation will help provide legal protection to all parties in the process.

Furthermore, they recommended the public opt for family mediation whenever they encounter conflicts that cannot be resolved by their own efforts.

Apart from mediation during divorce, family mediation can also be conducted when family members fall into conflict or disputes that they cannot resolve across the process of everyday efforts. **AL**

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CHINA yesterday said the U.S., Britain and other foreign powers are seeking to sabotage its foreign relations by orchestrating criticism surrounding a trip by the top United Nations official for human rights.

China has long held back the fact-finding mission led by Michelle Bachelet, focused on allegations of mass confinement, forced labor and compulsory birth control measures imposed on members of the Uyghur, Kazakh and other Muslim minorities.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin went on the offensive over such criticisms yesterday, saying "the U.S., Britain and other Western countries have been repeatedly staging political farces around the U.N. high commissioner for human rights' visit to China."

"They have first openly pressured and strongly demanded that the high commissioner visit China and Xinjiang, and conducted the so-called investigation with presumption of guilt," Wang said at a daily briefing.

The U.S., Britain and other countries "jumped out and spared no effort to disrupt and sabotage the visit, creating conditions and obstacles for the visit," Wang said.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Bachelet in the southern city of Guangzhou on Monday, telling her that China opposes "politicizing" human rights and imposing double standards.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

# BEIJING CLAIMS SABOTAGE AS UN OFFICIAL VISITS XINJIANG



Foreign Minister Wang Yi (right) meets with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet in Guangzhou

Bachelet's trip is the first to China by a U.N. high commissioner for human rights since 2005.

Her six-day visit is focused on allegations of abuses against Muslim minorities in the northwestern region of Xinjiang, but rights groups fear it will help whitewash the crackdown labeled by the U.S. as genocide.

China says it has nothing to hide and welcomes all those without political bias to visit Xinjiang and view what it describes as a successful campaign to fight terrorism and restore order and

ethnic cohesion.

From Guangzhou, Bachelet is to travel to Kashgar, once a stop on the Silk Road, and Urumqi, the Xinjiang capital.

The U.N. quoted Bachelet as telling Wang that she was looking forward to exchanges with "many different people during my visit, particularly with government officials, business leaders, academics, students and members of the civil society working on human rights and other social and economic issues."

"While we will be discussing

sensitive and important issues, I hope this will help us to build confidence and enable us to work together in advancing human rights in China and globally," it quoted Bachelet as saying.

"Wang noted that to advance the international cause of human rights, we must first respect each other and refrain from politicizing human rights," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement posted on its website.

"Multilateral human rights institutions should become a platform for cooperation and

dialogue, rather than a new battlefield for division and confrontation. China is ready to carry out constructive cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) based on mutual respect and on an equal footing," he said.

Xinhua reported that Bachelet congratulated China "on its important achievements in economic and social development and in promoting the protection of human rights."

She spoke highly of China's contribution in supporting multilateralism, development financing and sustainable development, poverty reduction, climate change and ecological protection and other areas that are vital to human rights development.

She said OHCHR attaches great importance to China's role and hopes to take this visit as an opportunity to enhance mutual understanding and trust, jointly cope with global challenges and promote the development of international human rights.

According to international observers, China's ruling Communist Party allows no political opposition and strictly limits free speech and rights to assembly and religious expression. China is also one of the five veto-wielding permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and has signed but not ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights administered by Bachelet's office. **MDT/AGENCIES**

## ECONOMIC WATCH

# China charts roadmap for rural construction

A strong agricultural industry, beautiful countryside and well-off farmers - this is rural China described when speaking about the goal of the country's rural revitalization strategy for the upcoming decades.

What will China's future countryside look like? What would be done to turn this vision into reality in the next few years? The latest action plan on China's rural construction has provided more details.

By 2025, tangible progress should be made on rural construction, and continuous improvement should be seen in the rural living environment, said the document jointly issued by the General Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee (CPC) and the State Council General Office.

China also expects positive progress in ensuring that every village and household



Aerial photo taken on May 5 the day of Lixia, or beginning of summer, shows farmers working in the field in Huai'an

has access to rural infrastructure, steady advancement in basic public services, and solid results in promoting cultural and ethical progress in rural areas.

The action plan has focused on the development of both infrastructure and services. It arranged projects to

improve rural roads, water supply, energy, logistics, housing and living environments, as well as efforts to enhance public services and rural governance.

"Rural construction is an important task in implementing the rural revitalization strategy, as well as

an essential part of China's modernization drive," the Office of the Central Rural Work Leading Group said in a Q&A with Xinhua.

The action plan will play a guiding role in advancing the rural construction initiative and making rural areas more attractive places to live

and work, according to the office.

The rural revitalization strategy, which was first put forward during the 19th CPC National Congress in 2017, aims at achieving the basic modernization of agriculture and rural areas by 2035, and the grand goal of strong agriculture, beautiful countryside and well-off farmers by 2050.

To make the countryside more livable, China launched a three-year rural living environment upgrade campaign in 2018, which follows another five-year campaign from the previous year to further consolidate such efforts.

By the end of 2020, more than 40 million rural household toilets had been renovated during the three-year campaign, with the penetration rate of clean toilets achieving 68% in China's rural areas, statistics showed.

From 2016 to 2020, China also built or rebuilt more than 1.4 million km of rural roads. The country will continue road construction and bring the total length of rural roads to approximately 5 million km by 2035, according to a plan released by the transport ministry.

Despite the progress, there are still weak links between rural infrastructure and public services, which has yet to fulfill the farmers' ever-growing needs for a better life, the Office of the Central Rural Work Leading Group has noted.

Rural construction will be a green and resource-efficient process, according to the action plan, which has aimed for an alignment between construction and the natural environment.

In efforts to protect the rural environment, China has aimed to keep the rural green coverage rate above 32% by 2025, with some 20,000 national forest villages and a great number of local forest villages established, according to the country's forestry and grassland authorities. **XINHUA**



ROD MCGUIRK, CANBERRA

AUSTRALIA

**C**HINESE Premier Li Ke-qiang wrote to congratulate Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on his election victory, which some Australian media reported yesterday was a thawing of bilateral relations that Beijing put into deep freeze more than two years ago.

Chinese ministers had refused to return phone calls of their Australian counterparts under former Prime Minister Scott Morrison's conservative administration.

Albanese and Foreign Minister Penny Wong were sworn in Monday, then immediately flew to Tokyo for a summit with U.S., Japanese and Indian leaders after Australia's center-left Labor Party narrowly won an election Saturday.

Li told Albanese: "The sound and stable development of the Sino-Australian relationship conforms to the fundamental interests and common aspirations of the two peoples and is also conducive to peace, stability, development and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region," China Daily reported.

"China stands ready to work with Australia to learn from the past, look to the future and push forward the sound and stable development of a bilateral comprehensive strategic partnership by adhering to the principles of mutual respect and win-win results," Li added.

Albanese confirmed that he had received a "letter of congratulation" from Li and other world leaders.

"I welcome that," Albanese said in Tokyo. "We will respond appropriately in time." Albanese has said he expected bilateral relations to remain difficult despite Australia's government change.

Albanese has promised greater

AP PHOTO



Labor Party leader Anthony Albanese (center back) celebrates with his partner Jodie Haydon (right) and senate leader Penny Wong

ter Australian engagement with South Pacific island neighbors to counter growing Chinese influence in the region.

Labor described the recently announced security pact between China and the Solomon Islands as Australia's worst foreign policy failure in the Pacific since World War II. China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi will visit the Solomon Islands on Thursday and Friday to mark the new cooperation, the Solomons' government said yesterday.

Morrison argued that China wanted Labor to win because a Labor administration would be less likely to stand up to Beijing's economic coercion.

Albanese told his Quad partners on Tuesday that while Aus-

tralia's government had changed, the nation's commitment to their security alliance had not.

"The new Australian government's priorities align with the Quad agenda — taking action on climate change and building a stronger and more resilient Indo-Pacific region, through better economic security, better cybersecurity, better energy security and better environmental and health security," Albanese said.

Asked whether Sino-Australian relations were thawing from their "deep freeze," Treasurer Jim Chalmers told Australian Broadcasting Corp. on Tuesday: "We want to work with countries in our region to make sure it is stable and prosperous."

Bilateral relations peaked in

2014 when Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Parliament House a year after conservative Prime Minister Tony Abbott's administration was first elected.

But relations went into freefall under conservative Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, who angered China by outlawing covert foreign interference in domestic politics, which continued under conservative Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

Although the two countries are free trade partners, China has created a series of official and unofficial trade barriers to a range of Australian exports worth billions of dollars.

After conservative lawmakers replaced Turnbull with Morrison as prime minister in 2018, Pre-

mier Li had credited Morrison's "positive attitude" with helping to restore relations that Turnbull had put in the diplomatic freezer.

John Blaxland, Australian National University's Professor of International Security and Intelligence Studies, described Li's message to Albanese as a "positive step."

"It's now up to Penny Wong and Anthony Albanese on their return to Australia to capitalize on that and explore opportunities for opening up the freezer door," Blaxland said.

Because the bilateral relationship had deteriorated since Labor was last in office in 2013, China could be expected to give the new administration the benefit of the doubt.

"This is a key inflection point. We know that substantively, policy differences are hard to discern, but in this kind of domain, words matter and ... a shift in tone is ... really consequential," Blaxland said.

A Chinese expert said he expects Labor to be less confrontational toward China, though he doesn't foresee any immediate shift in Australia's position.

"We don't expect to see a rapid change in the Australian government's tough stance against China because the Labor Party believes the ideological differences between China and Australia are huge," said Su Hao, an international relations professor at the China Foreign Affairs University in Beijing.

"But at least bilateral relations should not deteriorate through more provocations that lead to new problems. Therefore, the sending of a congratulatory message by Li Keqiang is a kind of gesture, indicating China's hope that China-Australia relations could remain relatively stable," Su added. **MDT/AP**

PHILIPPINES-RUSSIA

## Duterte hits Putin: I kill criminals, not children, elders

**O**UTGOING Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte sharply criticized Russian leader Vladimir Putin for the killings of innocent civilians in Ukraine, saying while the two of them have been tagged as killers, "I kill criminals, I don't kill children and the elderly."

Duterte, who openly calls Putin an idol and a friend, voiced his rebuke for the first time over Russia's invasion of Ukraine in remarks aired yesterday where he blamed the three-month old war for the spike in global oil prices that has battered many countries, including the Philippines.

While stressing he was

AP PHOTO



not condemning the Russian president, Duterte disagreed with Putin's labeling of the invasion as a "special military operation," and

said it was really a full-scale war waged against "a sovereign nation."

"Many say that Putin and I are both killers. I've

long told you Filipinos that I really kill. But I kill criminals, I don't kill children and the elderly," Duterte said in a televised weekly meeting with key Cabinet officials. "We're in two different worlds."

Duterte, who steps down on June 30 when his turbulent six-year term ends, has presided over a brutal anti-drugs crackdown that has left more than 6,000 mostly petty suspects dead. Human rights groups have cited a much higher casualty and say innocent people, including children, have been killed in the campaign that Duterte vows to continue up to his last day in office.

The unprecedentedly massive drug campaign killings have sparked an investigation by the International Criminal Court as a possible crime against humanity.

When he took office in 2016, he reached out to Russia and China for trade and investment and to expand military cooperation while often criticizing the security policies of Washington, Manila's longtime treaty ally.

He visited Russia twice in 2017 and 2019 to meet Putin but cut short his first visit after Islamic State group-aligned militants laid siege on the southern

Philippine city of Marawi while he was away with his defense secretary and military chief of staff.

More than a week after Russian forces laid siege on Ukraine, the Philippines voted in favor of a U.N. General Assembly resolution condemning the Russian invasion. The Philippines appealed for the protection of civilians and public infrastructure in Ukraine, although Duterte held back from strongly criticizing Putin and said he would remain neutral in a conflict that could potentially lead to the use of nuclear weapons and spark WWII. **MDT/AP**



QUAD

# Biden: Leaders navigating 'dark hour' after Ukraine invasion

JOSH BOAK  
& AAMER MADHANI

**P**RESIDENT Joe Biden told fellow Indo-Pacific leaders assembled for a four-country summit yesterday that they were navigating "a dark hour in our shared history" due to Russia's brutal war on Ukraine and he urged the group to make a greater effort to stop Vladimir Putin's aggression.

"This is more than just a European issue. It's a global issue," Biden said as the "Quad" summit with Japan, Australia and India got under way.

While the president did not directly call out any countries, his message appeared to be pointed, at least in part, at Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with whom differences persist over how to respond to the Russian invasion.

Unlike other Quad countries and nearly every other U.S. ally, India has not imposed sanctions or even condemned Russia, its biggest supplier of military hardware.

With Modi sitting nearby, Biden made the case that the world has a shared responsibility to do something to assist Ukrainian resistance against Russia's aggression.

"We're navigating a dark hour in our shared history," he said. "The Russian brutal and unprovoked war against Ukraine has triggered a humanitarian catastrophe and innocent civilians have been killed in the streets and millions of refugees are internally displaced as well as in exile."

"The world has to deal with it and we are," he added.

Later, in comments to reporters after a one-on-one meeting with Modi, Biden said they discussed Russia's invasion of Ukraine "and the effect it has on the entire global world order." Biden added that the U.S. and India will continue to consult "on how to mitigate these negative effects."

But in a reflection of India's relationship with Moscow, the Quad leaders' post-summit joint statement made no mention of Russia.

In his comments, Modi made no mention of the war in Ukraine, instead ticking off



From left: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, U.S. President Joe Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Tokyo summit

several trade and investment programs that he discussed with the president.

The White House has been effusive in its praise of several Pacific countries, including Japan, Singapore and South Korea, for stepping up to hit Russia with tough sanctions and export bans while offering humanitarian and military assistance to Kyiv.

For several of the bigger Asian powers, the invasion has been seen as a crucial moment for the world to demonstrate by a strong response to Russia that China should not try to seize contested territory through military action.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, taking note of Russia's aggression in Ukraine, told the other leaders: "We cannot let the same thing happen in the Indo-Pacific region."

The White House has been disappointed with the relative silence of India, the world's biggest democracy.

Biden has asked Modi not to accelerate the buying of Russian oil as the U.S. and other allies look to squeeze Moscow's energy income. The Indian prime minister made no public commitment to get off from Russian oil, and Biden has publicly referred to India as "somewhat shaky" in its response to the invasion.

Facing Western pressure, India has condemned civilian deaths in Ukraine and called for an immediate cessation of hostilities. Yet it also has compounded fallout from a war that has caused a global food shortage by banning wheat exports at a time when starvation is a growing risk in parts of the world. The Indian prime minister did not address Russia's war against

Ukraine in his public remarks at the summit.

Biden has been making his case to Modi for weeks.

The two spoke about the Russian invasion during a virtual Quad leaders' meeting in March, and last month they had a short video conversation when Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin met with their Indian counterparts in Washington.

"So it won't be a new conversation," White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said ahead of the summit. "It will be a continuation of the conversation they've already had about how we see the picture in Ukraine and the impacts of Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine on a wider set of concerns in the world."

While Biden and Modi may avoid public confrontation over how to respond to Russia's aggression, the issue remains a major one as the U.S. and allies are looking to tighten the pressure on Putin, said Michael Green, senior vice president for Asia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

"It appears pretty clear the Biden administration is not looking for trouble with India and that most of these difficult conversations will be in private," said Green, who was a senior National Security Council aide during the George W. Bush administration.

The summit came on the final day of Biden's five-day visit to Japan and South Korea, Biden's first trip to Asia as president.

It also marked new Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's first moment on the global stage. The new

premier flew to Tokyo on Monday right after being sworn into office. The center-left Labor Party defeated Prime Minister Scott Morrison over the weekend, ending the conservative leader's nine-year rule.

Biden, Modi and Kishida welcomed Albanese to the club and expressed awe at his determination to join the informal security coalition so quickly after assuming office.

"I don't know how you're doing it," Biden, who looked a bit worn from his own travel, told Albanese. The U.S. president joked that it would be OK if the new prime minister happened to fall sleep during the meeting.

Biden was to meet separately with Albanese today [Macau time]. The four-way partnership has become increasingly relevant as Biden has moved to adjust U.S. foreign policy to put greater focus on the region and to counter China's rise as an economic and security power. He held bilateral talks with summit host Kishida on Monday.

Albanese told his fellow Quad leaders he was dedicated to the group's mission to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific.

"We have had a change of government in Australia, but Australia's commitment to the Quad has not changed and will not change," Albanese said.

Looming over the Quad leaders' talks was Biden's blunt statement on Monday that the U.S. would intervene militarily if China were to invade Taiwan.

Asked by the reporters at the summit if his comments on Taiwan a day earlier were meant to mark a policy change, Biden simply replied, "No." **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1961 KENNEDY PLEDGES MAN ON MOON



President John F. Kennedy has called for millions of dollars to fund a space programme to get the first man on the Moon by 1970.

In a speech to a joint session of Congress broadcast on TV and radio around the United States, he asked for an extra \$1,700m (£600m) on the federal budget.

The largest proportion of this would be spent on researching and developing ways of getting an American on the Moon by the end of the decade.

"I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to Earth," he said.

He said \$9,000m (£3,214m) would be needed over the next five years to fund space rockets and other projects need to get a man on the Moon. But the president added "this very urgent request" would not need to be funded by extra taxes provided the economy continued to grow and companies exercised wage and price restraint.

This was his last address to the country before his meeting with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev. He is still basking in the glory of Russia's latest achievements in space exploration - last month Yuri Gagarin became the first man in space.

Three weeks ago, when Alan Shepard became America's first astronaut, President Kennedy said the country had to "work with the utmost speed and vigour" to develop its space programme.

Today, he demonstrated his total commitment to the project.

"If we were to go only half way or reduce our sights in the face of difficulty," he said, "it would be better not to go at all."

The administrator of Nasa, James Webb, was encouraged by the president's speech and said the US and the USSR were on a level playing field in their ambitions to land a man on the Moon because as yet no Russian rockets were capable of such a mission.

Other Nasa officials told the Times newspaper that most of the funding would be used to research ways of reaching the Moon, surviving on it and returning safely to Earth.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

On 21 July 1969, right on schedule, Neil Armstrong became the first man to set foot on the Moon, stepping onto the Moon's surface in the Sea of Tranquility at 0256 GMT.

He was joined by Buzz Aldrin 20 minutes later. The entire event was watched avidly by millions live on television across the world.

The Apollo 11 crew returned safely on 24 July and spent the next 21 days in quarantine at an American military base - a procedure dropped in subsequent missions since no alien organisms were found.

The Moon landing marked the pinnacle of the space race and American investment in the space programme declined from then on.

The last three of the original 20 Apollo missions were cancelled, and the last lunar module, Apollo 17, landed in December 1972.

In January 2004 however, interest in missions to the Moon was rekindled when US President George Bush announced American astronauts would return to the Moon by 2020 as the launching point for journeys further into space.



YOUR STARS

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Difficulties with your mate may lead to isolation. Let your boss know your goals. You must deal with an emotional problem with your loved one that you have been avoiding for some time now.

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20  
A change in position could be better than you thought. You will be able to enlist the help of colleagues who believe in your ideas. You will benefit through hidden assets and property investments.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21  
Take care when dealing with older relatives. They will jump at the chance to do something without you if it sounds like more fun. You will be able to communicate well today.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
You can make changes that will enhance your appearance. You may be in love today, but who knows what tomorrow may bring. Find a way to consolidate.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
Confronting a situation will only result in indignation and misunderstandings. Don't deny yourself today. Don't be too quick to react.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
Don't let your mate stop you from attending an event that could be most important. Anger could lead to problems. Don't hold back.

**LIBRA**  
Sep.23-Oct. 22  
You may have difficulties with someone close to you. Your ideas may be good, but they aren't necessarily right for everyone. Don't let your emotions interfere with completing your chores.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
If you can get away for a vacation, do so. Travel could turn out to be more exciting than you imagined. You can work in conjunction with those in the know in order to get to the bottom of any pending issue.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
Look into the cost factor, but don't try to get backing yet. Health problems may prevail if you don't take care of them immediately. Responsibilities with respect to older relatives may be a burden.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
Get involved in fitness programs that will bring you in contact with new friends. You may find that lectures or travel will be highly successful. Be careful of disclosing personal information.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
Make sure any presentation you have is ready. You may want to put everyone to work on a project that will keep them all too busy to complain. Try not to be overly generous.

**PISCES**  
Feb.19-Mar. 20  
Be sure to spend time helping children with projects that are too difficult for them to accomplish alone. You will feel compelled to do some traveling.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

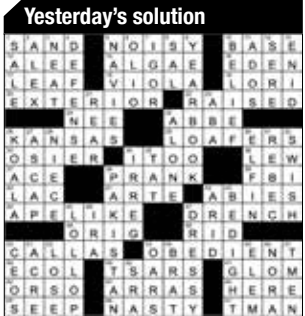
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	20	29	fine
Changchun	11	14	rain
Chengdu	19	25	overcast
Chongqing	22	30	cloudy
Fuzhou	20	25	rain
Guangzhou	24	30	rain
Guiyang	15	24	overcast
Haikou	25	32	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	18	28	cloudy
Harbin	11	19	thunderstorms
Hefei	18	30	cloudy
Nanjing	19	31	cloudy
Shanghai	18	26	overcast
Taipei	22	25	rain
Wuhan	20	30	fine
Hong Hong	26	27	thunderstorms
WORLD			
Moscow	4	14	showers
Frankfurt	17	29	showers
Paris	17	26	rain
London	12	22	overcast
New York	16	24	showers

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Unit of magnetic induction; 6- Burmese, Manx, and Scottish Fold; 10- Give one star, say; 13- Horse race venue in England; 14- Oklahoma Native; 15- Couch potato's place; 16- Declare; 17- Ringing instrument; 18- Be sorry for; 19- Held on to; 20- Start for fish, meatballs, or massage; 22- Do a slow burn; 24- Irish tongue; 28- Large sandwich; 31- Stage play; 32- Rendezvous; 34- Light touch; 36- Dutch cheese; 37- First name in Notre Dame football; 38- Constrain; 41- Bigger than med.; 42- Small change; 44- Heston's org.; 45- Titter; 47- Brings up; 49- Full; 51- Fancy home; 53- Summer ermines; 56- Follower; 59- Colorado resort; 61- Construction locale; 64- Came down to earth; 65- Intervening, in law; 66- NASA launch vehicle; 67- Barely passing grades; 68- In the future; 69- Floor covering where the cat sat; 70- "\_\_\_ quam videri" (North Carolina's motto); 71- Water wheel;

DOWN 1- Assignment; 2- Adlai's running mate; 3- Land's end?; 4- Method of raising money; 5- Had a bite; 6- Attic adornment; 7- To \_\_\_ (perfectly); 8- Tattled; 9- Baseball commissioner Bud; 10- Starchy dish; 11- Fore's partner; 12- Negative vote; 15- Globe; 20- Recluse; 21- Blue; 23- Exam used to measure aptitude or intelligence; 25- Big dipper; 26- Picture; 27- Arrived; 29- One of the Allens; 30- Writer Hentoff; 32- Forest makeup; 33- Charged; 35- Diminutive; 37- Farm measure; 39- College sr's test; 40- Emperor of Rome 54-68; 43- Baseball deals; 46- Forcible ejection; 48- \_\_\_-Foy, Quebec; 50- African fly; 52- Get around; 54- Stun gun; 55- Egyptian peninsula; 57- Corrida cries; 58- Connections; 60- Moon of Jupiter; 61- Newsman Donaldson; 62- Nest egg letters; 63- Hanoi holiday; 65- Oh, brother!



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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TAIPA CUTE & COZY STUDIO	HKD 3,980,000
TAIPA STUDIO WITH BALCONY	HKD 3,780,000
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PHARMA

# CHINA'S BET ON STRICTLY HOMEGROWN MRNA VACCINES MAY CHANGE

CHINA is trying to navigate its biggest coronavirus outbreak without a tool it could have adopted many months ago, the kind of vaccines that have proven to offer the best protection against the worst outcomes from COVID-19.

As early as the spring of 2020 a Chinese pharmaceutical company, Fosun Pharma, reached an agreement to distribute — and eventually manufacture — the mRNA vaccine made by Pfizer and BioNTech. It still has not been cleared in mainland China, despite being authorized for use by separate authorities in Hong Kong and Macau.

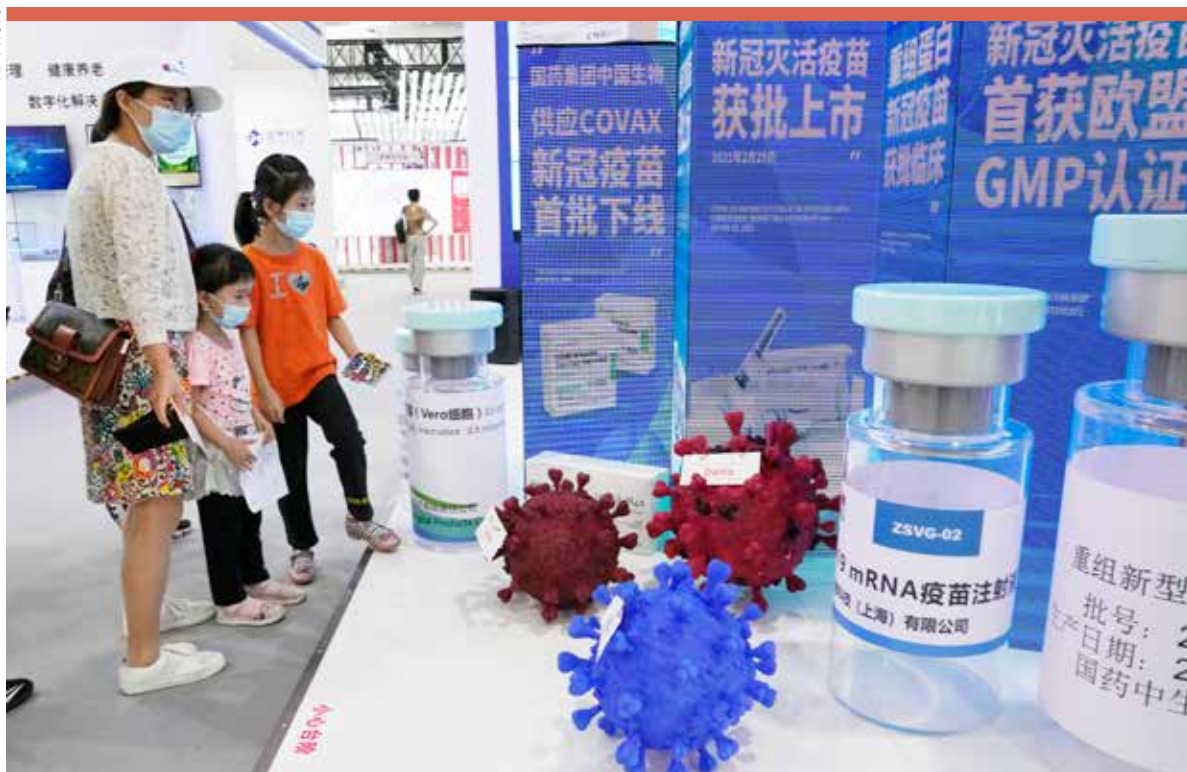
Now health experts say that delay could lead to avoidable coronavirus deaths and deeper economic losses because whole cities would be locked down to insulate the country's unprotected population.

"The biggest issue is about the delay of the reopening," said Xi Chen, a health economist at Yale University's School of Public Health. "The consequences will be huge, the supply chain disruption, the disruption to all kinds of service sectors."

Studies have consistently shown that vaccination with mRNA vaccines made by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna offer the best protection against hospitalization and death from COVID-19. Chinese vaccines made with older technology proved fairly effective against the original strain of the virus, but much less so against more recent variants.

As this evidence became clearer, even countries that initially used Chinese vaccines and some other less effective Western-made

AP PHOTO



vaccines have turned to mRNA vaccines for booster shots and new vaccinations.

A Chinese health official and another person directly involved in the negotiations told The Associated Press that authorities have held back because they want to master the technology in China and not depend on foreign suppliers. Both spoke on condition of anonymity, given the sensitive nature of the issue.

For more than a year, the approach seemed defensible. The country was able to keep the virus at bay better than any other large nation with its strict "zero COVID" approach that isolates infected people and locks down communities when infections pop up.

But now, the highly transmissi-

ble omicron variant is testing that strategy, requiring ever wider and longer lockdowns that are taking a greater economic and human toll. While other countries are able to operate close to normal because their people are protected by vaccination or previous infection, China is left with only its lockdown strategy to avoid huge numbers of hospitalizations and deaths.

China may be changing its mind. The Communist Party-owned Global Times newspaper reported last month that Fosun Pharma is still working with health authorities on its approval and Shanghai authorities recently issued new policies that could allow the import of COVID-19 vaccines. Fosun, based in Shanghai, did not respond to questions about the

announcement.

China's National Health Commission directed questions to the country's drug regulator, the National Medical Products Administration. That agency did not respond to a faxed request for comment.

In the meantime, hopes for a Chinese-developed mRNA vaccine center on Abogen Biosciences, a startup founded in 2019 by Bo Ying, an American-trained scientist who once worked for Moderna.

The company has partnered with more established companies in the country such as Walvax, a private company founded in 2001, and the Academy of Military Medical Sciences, the military's medical research facility. Abogen has raised more than \$1.7

billion since 2020.

The company's vaccine candidate succeeded in eliciting an immune response in a small, preliminary test in humans designed to evaluate safety, according to a study published in the journal *Lancet Microbe*.

The results were "promising," said Dr. Vineeta Bal, who studies immune systems at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research in Pune, India, although she said that a direct comparison of the immune response the shot triggered with the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines would have helped scientists better evaluate its performance.

But large studies that are needed to show whether the shot works to prevent infections or symptoms have not been completed. Abogen did not respond to requests for an interview.

Even if the studies can be completed and the vaccine proves effective, manufacturing the millions of doses required will be a challenge, experts say. Abogen built a manufacturing facility in December 2020 with a projected capacity of up to 120 million doses a year.

Manufacturing that vaccine and ensuring quality at scale will be a difficult hurdle to clear because mRNA is still a new technology, said Scott Wheelwright, chief operating officer at BioInno Bioscience, a Chinese biopharmaceutical contract manufacturer who has held conversations with Abogen.

In the meantime, Chen, the Yale health policy expert, said the Chinese government should better protect its elderly population by both approving the Pfizer vaccine and encouraging booster shots.

Using a Chinese phrase that means "giving up completely," Chen said the change from "zero COVID" does not have to be all or nothing. **MDT/AP**

## CORPORATE BITS

### Melco highlights achievements in latest sustainability report



Melco Resorts & Entertainment has published its fourth sustainability strategy "RISE to go Above & Beyond," highlighting its sustainability initiatives that helped the company reach its goals.

Lawrence Ho, chairman and CEO of Melco Resorts and Entertainment, said, "Melco has continued to rise beyond continuing pandemic challenges and in ways that have indeed accelera-

ted our sustainability efforts in 2021."

"From colleagues to suppliers and partners, the company is strengthening its actions to collectively address longer-term critical issues, including societal health, climate change and innovation," he added.

Initiatives and achievements highlighted in the strategy include keeping colleagues and communities safe, healthy and supported by launching mental wellness seminars, as well maintaining the success of campaigns to support community needs and promote the prosperity of small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

### Eight SJM teams to compete in dragon boat races



SJM Resorts, S.A. (SJM) is sending out eight dragon boat teams in the upcoming event scheduled to take place on May 29 and June 3.

Angela Leong, managing director of SJM and Rui Cunha, secretary-general of SJM, recently officiated the launch ceremony

of the SJM dragon boats at the Nam Van Lake Nautical Centre.

Daisy Ho, chairman of the Board of Directors of SJM, applauded participants' teamwork and excellent spirit, noting "Dragon Boat Racing is an integral part of our heritage and a long-standing traditional sport. It epitomizes our nation's perseverance and resilience. I wish the SJM team can bring out the best of this spirit through this competition."

Five dragon boat teams will compete in the men's group, while three teams will be competing in the women's group.



FOOTBALL

# Another Chinese Super League setback as Chongqing withdraws

JOHN DUERDEN

**U**NABLE to pay players and staff, Chongqing Liangjiang withdrew from the Chinese Super League just over a week before the start of delayed season in yet another setback for the domestic soccer scene.

In an unwanted echo of the build-up to the 2021 season, when champion Jiangsu FC folded, Chongqing announced yesterday that it was financially unable to continue and could play no part in the season that is scheduled to kick off on June 3.

"After careful deliberation by the club's shareholders, we very regretfully decided to withdraw from the league and disband the team," the club said in a statement. "Thanks to all the players and staff for their hard work."

A Chinese court was told earlier this month how Chongqing's players had gone 16 months without getting properly paid.

AP PHOTO



"From 2019, we have been subjected to the miseries caused by unpaid salaries," the players wrote in an open letter. "Our consistent, quiet and wholehearted commitment has been rewarded by lip service that did not come to anything."

In contrast to the lavish sums

spent on famous foreign players in the previous decade — the high point came in 2016-17 when the Chinese Super League was the biggest spender in the transfer market — soccer in China is facing severe financial issues.

An economic downturn has impacted the bottom line of

a number of companies that bankroll Chinese clubs and the effects of the pandemic, which has resulted largely empty stadiums for games for the past two seasons, has made the situation worse.

Last year it was reported that Evergrande, the Chinese property

developer that financed Guangzhou FC, the country's most successful club, was in a debt crisis with more than \$300 billion in liabilities.

Three months after being relegated from the top tier competition, Qingdao FC announced in April it was no longer operating. Players from other clubs, including Cangzhou Mighty Lions, have complained publicly about not being properly paid.

China's zero-COVID policy has led to strict lockdowns, disrupting the domestic soccer season that usually starts in March.


After delaying the start of the CSL, the Chinese Football Association announced the season would be played in three hubs: Dalian, Haikou and Meizhou.

The league had planned to expand from 16 to 18 teams for the new season, leading to reports that that Dalian Pro may be promoted to fill the gap left by Chongqing.



News of Chongqing's withdrawal follows the announcement earlier this month that China was relinquishing its right to host the 2023 Asian Cup.

Last month the Asian Games, an Olympic-scale multi-sport event due to be held September in the city of Hangzhou, were postponed and the East Asian Football Championships switched to Japan. **MDT/AP**









AD



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OPINION

China Daily

Editors, Xinhua

ANY PLOT TO  
USE XINJIANG  
AGAINST CHINA IS  
DOOMED TO FAILURE

It is no secret that the United States has been demonizing Xinjiang in a bid to curb China's development, nor is there any doubt that all such plots will end up as laughing stocks of history.

These plots are based on lies. China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region has made remarkable achievements in protecting and promoting human rights, which are well-documented, enjoyed by people of all ethnic groups in the region, and widely recognized by the international community.

For one simple example, when the Uygur population in Xinjiang is increasing and living longer and better-off lives than before, claims about a "genocide" are a calumny against China's Xinjiang policy.

It has become increasingly clear to the world that the United States is the world's largest human rights abuser. In the past, it committed genocide against the native Americans and enslaved Africans. Today, it allows gun violence and COVID-19 to claim countless lives on its soil, and its war machines to kill countless civilians in other countries.

Ironically, the United States runs its smear campaign against Xinjiang under the pretense of caring about the Muslims in China. So just as many clear-eyed observers have pointed out, what Washington really cares about is its hegemony.

Given the absurdity, hypocrisy and audacity inherent in these schemes to use Xinjiang against China, it would give anyone with a reasonable mind goosebumps just to think about joining Washington's machinations.

For starters, the People's Republic of China has shown the world that it has the will, wisdom and capacity to prevail over any plot to hinder its peaceful development.

From a longer historical perspective, China stands on the right side of history. It is truly committed to promoting peace and development, protecting human rights, improving people's well-being, and creating a better future for the world.

For example, in stark contrast with the trigger-happy United States, the People's Republic of China has never started a war since its founding in 1949. Also in stark contrast with the COVID-19 tragedy in the United States, China's response has demonstrated that the Chinese government walks its talk about putting the people and their lives first.

The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is a historical inevitability. China has made it clear that it does not seek hegemony, nor does it seek to replace or replicate the United States. Its global vision is to build a community with a shared future for humanity.

Essentially, China's peaceful development meets the needs of the Chinese people and the expectations of the international community. Any attempt to hamper the process will be crushed by the tide of the times.

For Washington and the few others who plot to use Xinjiang to contain China's development, the sooner they wake up and change course, the better for the world, and for themselves.

CHINA PLEDGES GREATER CREDIT  
SUPPORT TO STABILIZE ECONOMY

Chinese authorities have pledged to increase credit issuance and enhance financial support for key businesses and fields, Xinhua reports.

Strengthened financial support will be given for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, green development, scientific and technological innovation, energy supply, water conservancy and infrastructure, among others, according to a meeting jointly held by the People's Bank of China (PBOC) and the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission.

Downward pressure on the economy continues to increase due to the unexpected factors at home and abroad, the meeting said,

calling on the financial system to fully wield policy tools and underpin the high-quality economic development by expanding credit.

According to Xinhua, efforts should be made to promote the steady growth of real estate credit; defer repayments on loans to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, individual businesses and truck drivers; and postpone repayments on housing, consumption and other loans that were severely affected by the epidemic, according to the meeting.

The PBOC has pledged to double the quota of inclusive loans to smaller businesses, guide local financial institutions to grant more loans, and roll out new policies to enhance credit support.

AP PHOTO



WHO CHIEF TO BE  
CONFIRMED FOR SECOND  
TERM AFTER NO OPPOSITION

MARIA CHENG, LONDON

**W**HO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus is expected to be confirmed by the U.N. health agency's member countries for a second five-year term today [Macau time].

No other candidate challenged Tedros for the post amid the ongoing difficulties of responding to the devastating coronavirus pandemic.

Tedros, a former government minister from Ethiopia, has directed the World Health Organization throughout its management of the global response to COVID-19 and withstood occasionally withering criticism over its multiple missteps. He is the first African to lead the agency and the only director-general not qualified as a medical doctor.

Under Tedros, the U.N. health agency failed to call out countries including China for blunders that WHO officials grumbled about privately, advised against mask-wearing for months, and said initially that the coronavirus wasn't likely to mutate rapidly. Scientists drafted by WHO to investigate the coronavirus' origins in China said the critical probe was "stalled" last year, after issuing a report that even Tedros acknowledged had prema-

turely ruled out the possibility of a laboratory leak.

"There have been some mishaps, but Tedros has also been a steady voice throughout the pandemic, advocating for an equitable response," said Javier Guzman, director of global health policy at the Center for Global Development in Washington.

He said despite reservations about Tedros' leadership, some countries weren't willing to push for change.

"We are in the middle of the pandemic and there is some pressure for consistent leadership to take us through this difficult moment," Guzman said.

Tedros has frequently railed against rich countries for hoarding the world's limited supply of vaccines and insisted that pharmaceuticals aren't doing enough to make their medicines available to the poor. Amid the near-universal focus on Ukraine after the Russian invasion, Tedros slammed the global community for not doing enough to solve crises elsewhere, including Yemen, Syria and Afghanistan, arguing that it was possibly because those suffering weren't white.

Still, critics say Tedros has failed on some fundamental issues, like holding staff accountable after allegations that dozens of outbreak workers managed by

WHO sexually abused young women in Congo during an Ebola outbreak that began in 2018, in one of the biggest sex scandals in U.N. history. None of the senior WHO managers alerted to the abuse allegations and who did little to stop the exploitation, have been fired.

In January, The Associated Press reported that staffers in WHO's Western Pacific office filed an internal complaint accusing regional director Dr. Takeshi Kasai of abusive, racist and other misconduct, undermining efforts to stem the spread of COVID-19. In response, Tedros said an investigation into the allegations had been launched and promised to act "with urgency."

But last week, several WHO staffers wrote to the agency's Executive Board complaining that Kasai "has been able to continue his unethical, abusive and racist conduct without any form of restriction." In an email to staff, Kasai disputed the charges.

Public health expert Guzman said the apparent culture of impunity at WHO was problematic.

"We do need to see a stronger (WHO) director-general going forward, where misconduct is not tolerated," he said, calling for extensive reforms to make the agency accountable. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



**Australia** Hours after being sworn in as Australia's new prime minister, Anthony Albanese (pictured, left) found himself fresh off a jet and thrown into the glare of a global spotlight yesterday. He was rewarded with a warm welcome, as well as a bit of a gentle ribbing, from U.S. President Joe Biden and other leaders at an international summit in Japan. "You were sworn in and got on a plane, and if you fall asleep while you're here, it's OK," Biden joked as the leaders met at the Quad. **More on p8**

AP PHOTO



**Afghanistan** The Taliban announced a deal allowing an Emirati company to manage three airports in Afghanistan after the fall of the country's U.S.-backed government. However, the United Arab Emirates did not immediately acknowledge the deal. Under the deal, the Abu Dhabi-based firm GAAC Solutions would manage the airports in Herat, Kabul and Kandahar, the Taliban said. They held a news conference in Kabul in which they signed the deal with an individual they identified as a managing director for GAAC.

AP PHOTO



**Myanmar** A court ruled yesterday that a corruption trial for ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi and three political colleagues will continue after finding that prosecutors presented sufficient evidence for their indictment. Suu Kyi, who was forced from office when the military seized power from her elected government last year, has been charged with 11 counts under the Anti-Corruption Act, with each count punishable by up to 15 years in prison and a fine.