



THE 15 MACAU CANDIDATES TO THE UPCOMING NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS HAVE BEEN CONFIRMED, LOCAL DELEGATION AFFIRMED

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AP PHOTO



Hawaii A handful of centenarian survivors of the attack on Pearl Harbor are expected to gather at the scene of the Japanese bombing yesterday to commemorate those who perished 81 years ago. That's fewer than in recent years, when a dozen or more traveled to Hawaii from across the country to pay their respects at the annual remembrance ceremony. Part of the decline reflects the dwindling number of survivors as they age. The youngest active-duty military personnel on Dec. 7, 1941, would have been about 17, making them 98 today. Many of those still alive are at least 100.

USA-Taiwan The Biden administration yesterday [Macau time] signed off on two new significant arms sales to Taiwan in approvals that are sure to rankle China. The State Department said it had okayed sales worth more than \$425 million of spare aircraft parts to support Taiwan's fleet of F-16 fighters, C-130 transport planes and other U.S.-supplied weapons systems. The package includes \$330 million in standard replacement parts and \$98 million in non-standard equipment along with related accessories and logistics.

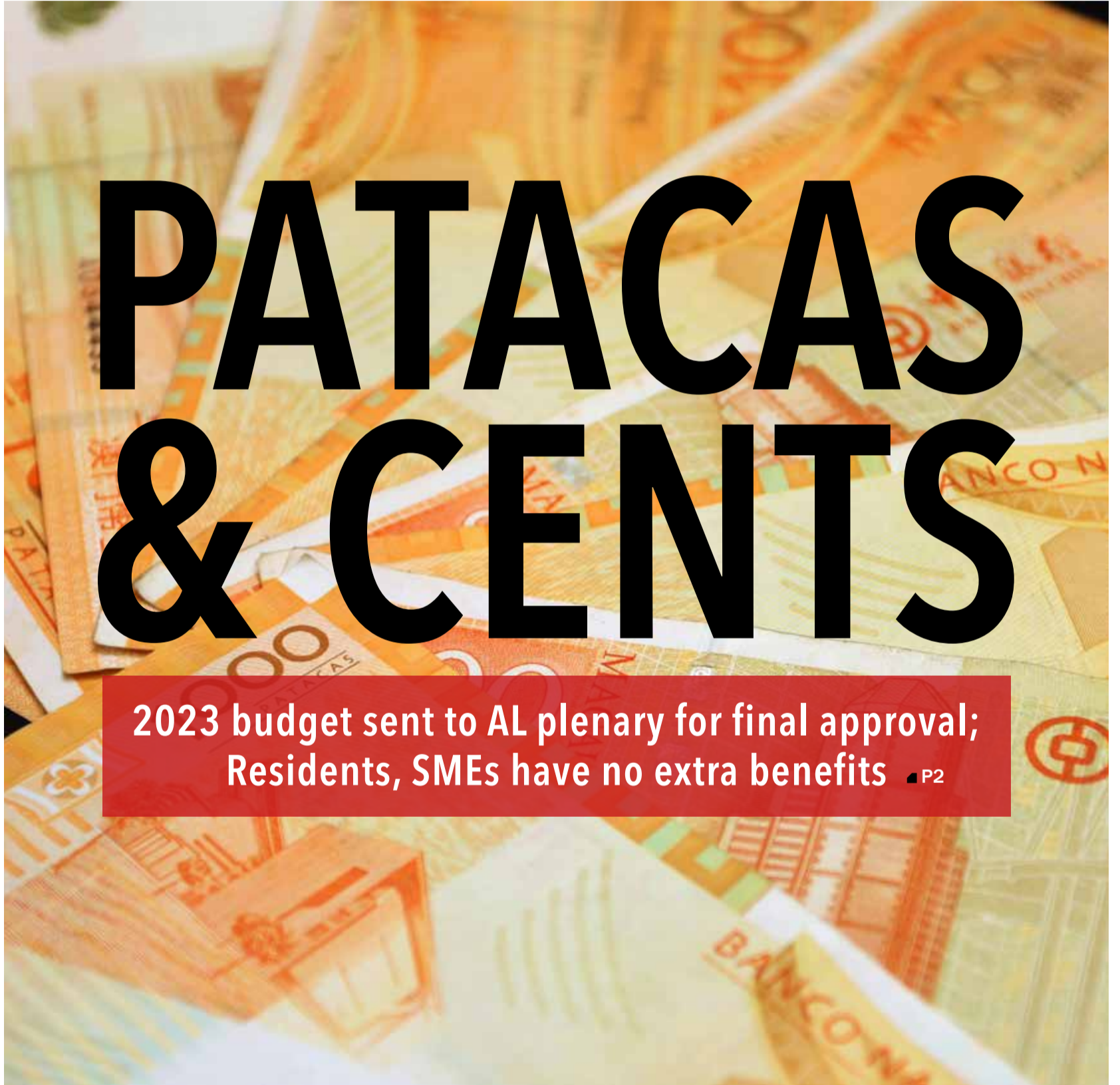
AP PHOTO



European Union announced yesterday that it has begun legal action at the World Trade Organization against China over what it says are import restrictions Beijing has imposed on Lithuania. The European Commission estimates that China cut trade from the EU member country by 80% this year after Lithuania broke with diplomatic custom in 2021 by allowing a Taiwanese office in Vilnius to bear the name Taiwan, instead of Chinese Taipei, which most other countries use to avoid offending Beijing.

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RENATO MARQUES



PATACAS & CENTS

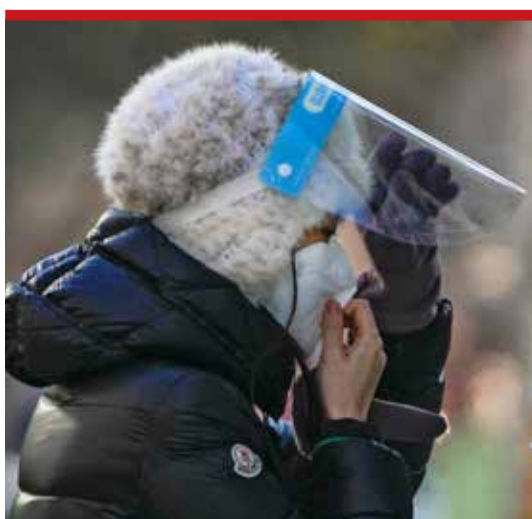
2023 budget sent to AL plenary for final approval; Residents, SMEs have no extra benefits

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FITCH ESTIMATES 46% GDP REBOUND IN 2023

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AP PHOTO



DYNAMIC-ZERO CHINA FURTHERS EASES ANTI-COVID MEASURES FOLLOWING PROTESTS

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POLICEMAN SHOOTS OWN THIGH WHILE TRAINING

A policeman has allegedly accidentally shot himself in the thigh while on an instructors' training session at the the Academy of Public Security Forces yesterday. According to a statement, an investigation is underway to determine the cause of the incident and to avoid such incidents in the future. The participants of the shooting session had been reportedly training for days after concluding theory courses. The police officer, who has been at the Public Security Police since 1997, is in a stable condition after being rushed to the public hospital.

PROPERTY PRICE INDEX STABLE

The overall residential property price index for August - October 2022 held steady compared to the previous period (July - September 2022) at 250.4, data from the Statistics and Census Service shows. The index for the Macau Peninsula (250.2) grew by 0.2% while that for Taipa & Coloane (251.1) dropped by 0.8%. Analyzed by age of building, the indices for residential units of buildings between six and 10 years old and for those over 20 years old decreased by 1.3% and 0.3% respectively, whereas the index for those between 11 and 20 years old grew by 1.4%.

CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS INCREASE TO OVER 2,700

A total of 2,764 organisations were operating in the four core domains of cultural industries in Macau in 2021, namely 'Creative design', 'Cultural exhibitions & performances', 'Art collection' and 'Digital media'. The figure represented an increase of 248 year-on-year, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). Total number of persons engaged rose by 1.4% to 12,067, and Compensation of Employees went up by 1.4% to MOP 2.13 billion. Total Service Receipts grew by 12.3% to MOP 5.67 billion.

2023 BUDGET READY FOR APPROVAL, COMMITTEE UNPHASED BY GGR FORECAST

RENATO MARQUES

THE 2023 Budget is ready for final reading and approval at the Legislative Assembly (AL). Yesterday, the Second Standing Committee of the AL, who was analyzing the bill in detail, signed the final opinion. This means the bill will progress to a plenary session, yet to be scheduled, for voting.

In a media briefing held after the committee's final meeting on this matter, the chairman, lawmaker Chan Chak Mo, highlighted the fact that this budget is, once again, a deficitary one, making the government resort once again to the special financial reserve account.

As announced by the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, this time the government is withdrawing some 35.6 billion patacas from the reserves to cope with the low tax yield caused by the poor performance of the local gaming industry.

Nonetheless, the same budget document forecasts a gross gaming revenue (GGR) in 2023 to reach as much as 130 billion patacas. This is the same amount that was forecasted for this year, with the actual revenue to fall far short.

Contrary to the previous year, and notwithstanding the failed forecasts from the previous years, this time the lawmakers who compose the committee and the AL seem to be generally less concerned with the figure.

Questioned by the media on whether the figure raised any concerns in the committee, Chan said that although the figure is considered "optimistic" by the majority, they believe that it is still possible to achieve this result at the end of next year, depending on how the "situation evolves" and when the resumption of tour groups and visas begin producing effects, he said.

Admitting that the easing of Covid-19 restrictions and potential resulting impact on the economy were not discussed at the committee meetings, Chan said that the most important part is "to see how things evolve next year and if, as expected, visitors' figures increase."

RENATO MARQUES



He also noted that "we need to observe if the new concessionaires will be able to attract any clients from abroad" as the new rules clearly state, and result in better performance by the gaming industry.

In the calculations made by the government, the government will reach the end of 2023 with a positive balance of approximately 600 million patacas, Chan remarked.

NO SALARY RAISES

In the same briefing Chan also discussed the fact that, yet again, there will be no salary increases for civil servants in 2023.

The chairman noted that although there are no salary rises for civil servants the total spending on public service wages has increased from 2022 to 2023. Chan said that the government explains this increase by reference to career promotions that

cause changes in the salary index and, consequently, on the budget.

It is budgeted that the government will spend 27.9 billion patacas in this way.

The budget for PIDDA (Macau government's Investment and Development Expenditure Plan) will also increase by 3.9 billion patacas, Chan said, noting that for 2023, the PIDDA has a total of 233 projects, including 44 new ones.

SUPPORT MEASURES FOR THE RESIDENTS UNCHANGED

THE 2023 budget will not change the so-called measures of support to the residents, with the continuing of the "wealth partaking scheme" that includes annual cash handouts and health vouchers to residents.

In both cases, the amounts remain unchanged with each permanent resident to receive in 2023 a cheque of 10,000 patacas while non-permanent residents will get 6,000 patacas. As for the health vouchers, the amount will continue to be 600 patacas per resident.

According to the chairman of the Second Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly, Chan

Chak Mo, in 2023 the measures of support to the residents will total 20.9 billion patacas, which adds another 2.8 billion patacas to tax exemptions and the reduction of taxation to professional income.

No plans have been drafted for new rounds of support to the residents via electronic consumption. This is currently the fourth round of this type of financial support measure, extended until June 30, 2023.

The Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, had previously said during the debate of the Policy Address for 2023 that these expenses had not been included in the budget for next year. **RM**

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ECONOMY

Fitch estimates 46% rebound in 2023 amid 'lack of clarity' on timing of policy shifts

LYNZY VALLES

HEIGHTENED policy uncertainty and a lacklustre recovery in mainland China, coupled with the global monetary tightening cycle and recessions in the US and Eurozone, will affect growth momentum in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, according to Fitch Ratings.

In its report, the group forecasts a 46% rebound in 2023 from a 17% decline, while Hong Kong will face a 2.2% growth following a 2.8% downturn in 2022.

Real gross domestic product levels in both economies will remain below those of 2018, the statement read.

The forecasts are based on the institution's assumption that the city's gross gaming revenue (GGR) will bounce back to half of the pre-pandemic levels.

Recently, the SAR government announced that the city's GGR will be MOP130 billion, similar to its forecast for this year.

However, data from the Ga-

ming Inspection and Coordination Bureau shows that until November, revenues stood at only MOP38.7 billion – far below the government's optimistic expectation of MOP130 billion.

According to the institution, it could take at least until end-2025 for GDP to return to its 2019 level, "along with a moderate non-gaming diversification."

The statement was previously echoed by the local government where it stated that with the approval of the new gaming law and new concessions to be attributed before the year's end, the gaming concessionaires will "promote next year the development of non-gaming elements, according to the commitment made on the public tender."

Also, the white paper noted that the near-term recovery trajectory for Macau "remains volatile, due to a lack of clarity on the timing and pace of policy shifts."

In the city, the local government has announced that a plan is underway to ease pandemic restrictions, a move that echoes

MDT ARCHIVE



Beijing's relaxation of measures.

Yesterday, China rolled back rules on isolating people with Covid-19 and dropped virus test requirements for some public places in a dramatic change to previous strategy. The former strategy disrupted global manufacturing and trade as well as the

lives of ordinary Chinese, while many nations switched to trying to live with the virus.

Fitch forecasts growth in mainland China to recover partially to 4.1% in 2023, from 2.8% in 2022, both well below pre-pandemic trends.

"With social tensions running

high, we expect the mainland authorities to retire the most draconian elements of "zero Covid" - such as city-wide lockdowns," the statement read.

"However, a fully-fledged policy pivot is not in our baseline, as we believe numerous restrictions will remain in place".

CONGRESS

NPC MACAU DELEGATION CONFIRMS GROUP OF 15 CANDIDATES

THE 15 candidates in the upcoming National People's Congress (NPC) Macau have been confirmed, the delegation told a press conference yesterday.

Earlier this month, the delegation chose a presidium to process the selection procedure.

Iau Teng Pio, spokesperson of the presidium, made the aforementioned announcement.

Prior to the press conference, the presidium held a meeting, during which Permanent President Ho Iat Seng spoke about the selec-

tion process.

At the press conference, Iau said that 18 people obtained nomination forms between November 22 and 28. At the end of that period, 16 people had nominated by returning their forms.

Following review by the presidium, 15 of the 16 people were confirmed eligible to participate in the selection process. They are all above the age of 18 years and are Chinese citizens having the right of abode in Macau.

The remaining person

had not managed to secure sufficient nominations, Iau explained, when he was asked for the reason.

The 15 candidates are namely Ho Sut Heng, Kevin Ho, Ng Sio Lai, Si Ka Lon, Iong Weng Ian, Ma Chi Seng, Kou Hoi In, José Chui Sai Peng, Chan Hong, Cheng Son Meng, Vong Hin Fai, Wan Neng Hon, Lao Ka U, Lao Ngai Leong and Sio Chi Wai.

Most of these candidates are administrators or managers at local associations, while others are business-people. **AL**

NEARLY A DOZEN SAMPLED DRINKS EXCEED WHO'S RECOMMENDED SUGAR LEVELS

THE Consumer Council of Macao (CC) has tested 15 bottled tea drinks and discovered only three of them had sugar levels within the daily limit recommended by the WHO.

The three products are Kai Shi Oolong Tea, AGV Barley Drink and Kirin Straight Tea. The former two are from Taiwan and the latter from Japan.

According to the CC, the WHO has two daily limits set for daily sugar intake. The recommended limit is 25 grams per day and the strict limit is 50 grams. The figures are calculated against a 2000-kilocalorie diet.

Nine of the 15 drinks sampled had sugar levels surpassing the recommended limit of the WHO, while three surpassed the strict limit. The sample with the highest sugar level had sugar consistency equivalent to 13 sugar cubes, the CC reported.



The higher the sugar level, the higher the energy level. The CC appeals to members of the public not to replace water with tea drinks because "excessive sugar and energy intake negatively impacts health."

The CC also reminds members of the public, when they want to drink

sugary drinks, to opt for drinks with lower or even zero sugar level. They should also be mindful of the caffeine level in their tea drinks.

The product that had the highest sugar level was VITA's Lemon Tea Drink. It was tested with 65 grams of sugar in a 500mL bottle. **AL**

ANTHONY LAM

中華人民共和國澳門特別行政區第十四屆全國人民代表大會代表選舉會議
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ANTHONY LAM

THE new Central Library is at stage 10 of its draft planning process, in which the Urban Planning Committee (CPU) invites opinions on the project.

The draft planning of the new Central Library, which is located opposite the Tap Seac Square on Avenida de Sidónio Pais, proposes to restrict the building's height to 14 meters on the side facing the Square, and to 8.5 meters on the side facing Estrada da Vitória.

However, the highest point of the future building should not exceed 29.37 meters above sea level on Sidónio Pais and 41.71 meters above sea level on Estrada da Vitória. Another restriction is that the visual skyline between the Guia Fortress as well as the Chapel of Our Lady of the Snows and Lighthouse, and the Tap Seac Square should be fully protected.

Two old trees located on the eastern and southern tips of the land plot will be protected. A small shrine on the southern tip will also be relocated with the consensus of local religious leaders.

Previously, on behalf of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), presi-

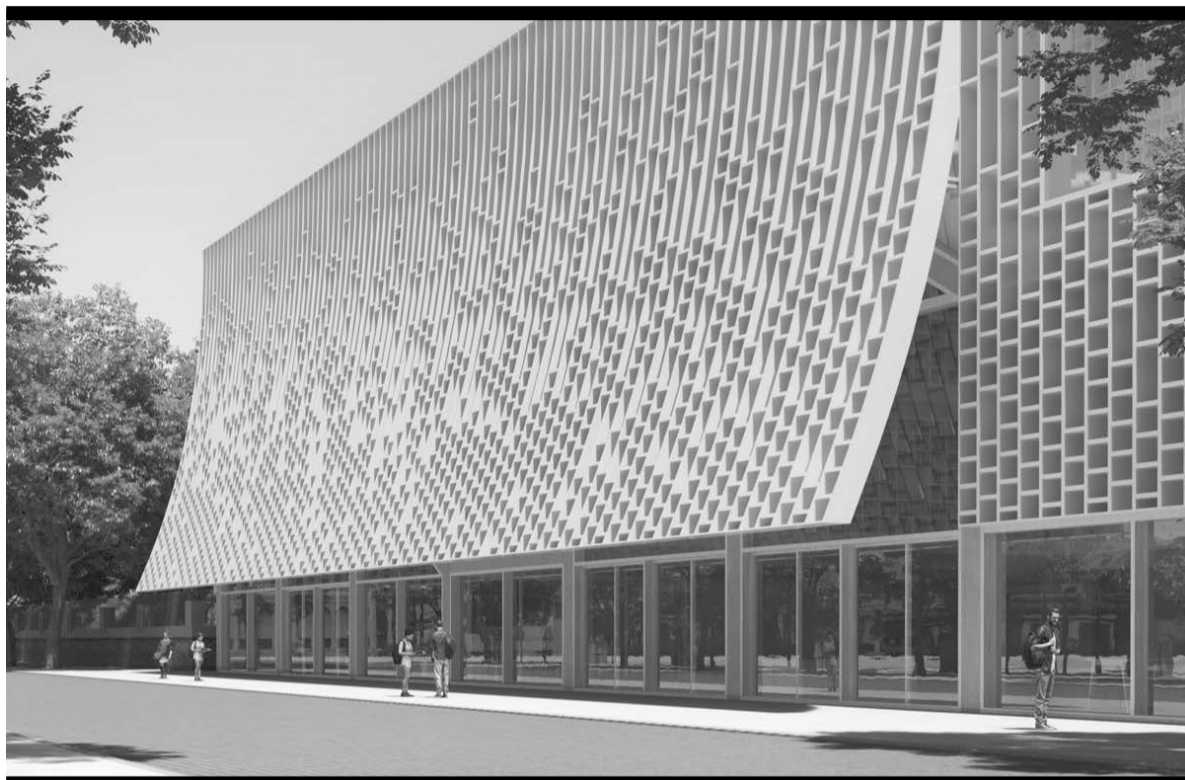
CPU collects opinions on draft planning for new Central Library

dent of the Social Welfare Bureau Hon Wai has promised lawmaker Ron Lam that an automated vertical pedestrian movement facility will be installed in the new library. This is not shown in the draft planning.

The other cultural facility is a set of two townhouses next to the aft entrance of public broadcaster TDM's headquarters, on Rua de Francisco Xavier Pereira. The project consists of three land plots. Part of the pair of townhouses – referred to by the government as Plot B – is currently used as the Xian Xinghai Memorial Museum.

Considering their historical significance, the retention of their façades and open spaces is required by the draft planning.

Earlier, the IC has said that it would invite commercial operators to run certain catering offerings at the facilities.



COVID-19

Health authorities amend testing requirements to mainland entries

RENATO MARQUES

THE Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center has issued new requirements for those entering Macau from the mainland. The requirements, already in force, relate to the Covid-19 testing requirements that apply according to the areas of departure and border checkpoint used.

Keeping for the time being the "5+3" quarantine measures for those arriving from the high-risk zone, those arriving from areas considered low risk and who have stayed in these areas for the past five

days will have to undergo a 24 hours validity nucleic acid test (NAT) before entering Macau. They will also need to take a Rapid Antigen Test in the six hours before crossing the border. After this, they must undergo four NATs in five days (on the first, second, third, and fifth day) and also daily RAT for the same period of five days.

As for those arriving from areas considered regular Covid-19 prevention areas (similar status as Macau currently), they will have to present a 24 hours NAT if they arrive from the Zhuhai-Macau border posts and a 24 hours NAT plus

a 6 hours RAT if they arrive via other ports (Ferry terminal or airport).

Those who arrive via the Zhuhai-Macau border posts will then have to undergo NAT for two more days or, if they are staying in hotels, daily RAT until the fifth day in Macau.

If instead they arrived via ferry or airplane, they will need to undergo NAT plus RAT on the first two days, and then daily RAT until the fifth day.

Risk classification of the different mainland areas can be consulted at <http://bmfw.www.gov.cn/yqfxdjcx/risk.html>.

COVID-19

CASINO WORKERS TO BE TESTED EVERY SECOND DAY

CASINO workers are now required to undergo nucleic acid tests (NATs) every two days as authorities shortened the validity of their results from four days.

This measure also applies to front-line hotel workers amid the announcement that the city is planning to relax measures gradually, echoing Beijing's move.

Workers including dealers, cleaning staff, and security guards working on casino premises are now required to submit their rapid

antigen tests every two days along with their NAT results on the Health Code system.

Prior to this current Covid-19 outbreak, these workers were only required to undergo NAT once a week. This timeframe was shortened in response to the cases detected from late November.

On Tuesday, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong U, said that plans are underway to relax pandemic measures – a move long-awai-

ted by the public. The city had been adhering to Beijing's zero-Covid policy.

Yesterday, China relaxed rules on isolating people with COVID-19 and dropped virus test requirements for some public places. This has been a dramatic change to the previous strategy, which disrupted global manufacturing and trade as well as the lives of ordinary Chinese. Meanwhile, many nations have begun trying to live with the virus. LV



RENATO MARQUES

DYNAMIC-ZERO

GOV'T FURTHER EASES ANTI-COVID MEASURES FOLLOWING PROTESTS

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

CHINA rolled back rules on isolating people with COVID-19 and dropped virus test requirements for some public places yesterday in a dramatic change to a strategy that confined millions of people to their homes and sparked anti-government protests.

The move adds to earlier easing that fueled hopes Beijing was scrapping its “zero COVID” strategy, which is disrupting manufacturing and global trade. Experts warn, however, that restrictions can't be lifted completely until at least mid-2023 because millions of elderly people still must be vaccinated and the health care system strengthened.

China is the last major country still trying to stamp out transmission of the virus while many nations switch to trying to live with it. As they lift restrictions, Chinese officials have also shifted to talking about the virus as less threatening — a possible effort to prepare people for a similar switch.

People with mild cases will be allowed for the first time to isolate at home, the National Health Commission announced, instead of going to sometimes overcrowded or unsanitary quarantine centers. That addresses a major irritation that helped to drive protests that erupted Nov. 25 in Shan-



ghai and other cities.

Public facilities except for “special places,” such as schools, hospitals and nursing homes, will no longer require visitors to produce a “health code” on a smartphone app that tracks their virus tests and whether they have been to areas deemed at high risk of infection.

Local officials must “take strict and detailed measures to protect people's life, safety and health” but at the same time “minimize the impact of the epidemic on economic and social development,” the statement said.

China's restrictions have helped to keep case numbers low, but that means few people have developed natural immunity, a factor that might set back reopening plans if cases surge and authorities feel compelled to reimpose restrictions.

Still, after three years spent warning the public about COVID-19's dangers, Chinese officials have begun to paint it as less threatening.

People with mild cases “can recover by themselves without special medical care,” said Wu Zunyou, chief epidemiologist of

the China Centers for Disease Control, on his social media account.

“The good news is that the data show the proportion of severe cases is low,” said Wu.

The latest changes are “small steps” in a gradual process aimed at ending restrictions, said Liang Wannian, a member of an experts group advising the National Health Commission, at a news conference.

“We will look at it, study and judge, and analyze again,” said Liang, one of China's most prominent anti-epidemic experts.

The government's goal is “to return to the state before the epidemic, but the realization of the goal must have conditions,” Liang said.

The government announced a campaign last week to vaccinate the elderly that health experts say must be done before China can end restrictions on visitors coming from abroad. They say the ruling Communist Party also needs to build up China's hospital system to cope with a possible rise in cases.

But public frustration is rising now, as millions of people are repeatedly confined at home for uncertain periods, schools close abruptly and economic growth falls.

The changes have been rolled out despite a renewed spike in infections started in October. Yesterday, the government reported 25,231 new cases, including 20,912 without symptoms.

Yesterday, the government said the scope of closures will be narrowed still further to single apartment floors or buildings instead of neighborhoods.

It said schools in communities with no outbreaks must return to in-person teaching.

That appeared to be a response to complaints that local leaders, threatened with the loss of their jobs in the event of outbreaks, impose closures that are destructive, might be unnecessary and exceed what the central government allows.

The demonstrations in at least eight major cities and on dozens of university campuses were the most widespread display of public dissent in decades. **MDT/AP**

FROM PORTUGAL

Dissident artist Weiwei says China unrest won't alter regime

BARRY HATTON,
MONTEMOR-O-NOVO

DISSIDENT Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei is taking heart from recent public protests in China over the authorities' strict COVID-19 policy, but he doesn't see them bringing about any significant political change.

“I don't think that's possible,” he told The Associated Press in an interview at his home in Portugal.

The recent unrest in several Chinese cities that has questioned Beijing's authority — in what have been the boldest protests in decades — is “a big deal,” Ai acknowledges. But it is unlikely to go further, he says.

Challenges to Chinese Communist Party rule are routinely snuffed out with whatever “degree of bruta-



Ai Weiwei at the garden of his country house in Montemor-o-Novo, Portugal

lity is required.” Ai points, for example, to how Beijing cracked down on Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement two years ago.

In his view, some “realistic thinking” is required.

“Everything is about control ... to guaran-

tee the whole nation will follow (Xi's) direction,” the 65-year-old said in the interview yesterday [Macau time] at his country house about 100 kilometers east of Lisbon.

His 2020 documentary “Coronation,” about the lo-

ckdown in Wuhan, China, during the COVID-19 outbreak, illustrated the country's ruthlessly efficient and brutal official response to the pandemic.

The Chinese government's “zero-COVID” policy included harsh measures that, according to Ai, kept some people confined to their apartments for 100 straight days.

Three grueling years of lockdowns and other severe restrictions, along with Xi's scrapping of civil liberties, built up “tremendous pressure” in Chinese society, Ai says.

The balloon popped on Nov. 25, after at least 10 people died in a fire in an apartment building in China's northwest. Though officials denied suggestions that firefighters or victims were blocked by locked doors or

other anti-virus controls, the disaster became a focus for public frustration.

Ai sees an inevitability in the public's exasperation, and is cheered by the questions it has raised. “Of course, they start questioning the leadership and the social structure, the political structure,” he said.

Beijing has in recent weeks relaxed some measures, and yesterday announced a series of steps rolling back some of its harshest pandemic restrictions in “an apparent nod to public frustration.”

Ai warns, however, that the relatively small protests, some of which have involved just individuals or neighborhoods, shouldn't be overstated in a country with a population of 1.4 billion people. And he recalls that the Chinese Communist

Party has some 100 million members, all loyal to the regime.

“What (is) clear is the new generation of young people from China — students or young workers — they start to be more clear about what kind of government China is and maybe also (demand) political change,” Ai said. “But that would take a long time.”

Long an outspoken critic of the Chinese government, Ai was detained by the authorities for almost three months in 2011. He has lived in exile since 2015, most recently in the countryside of southern Portugal where he says he has now settled.

He is building a 3,000-square-meter studio on his land, with a view of the crumbling 13th-century castle of Montemor-o-Novo. **MDT/AP**

DIPLOMACY

President Xi to visit Saudi Arabia to cement Gulf Arab ties

JON GAMBRELL, DUBAI

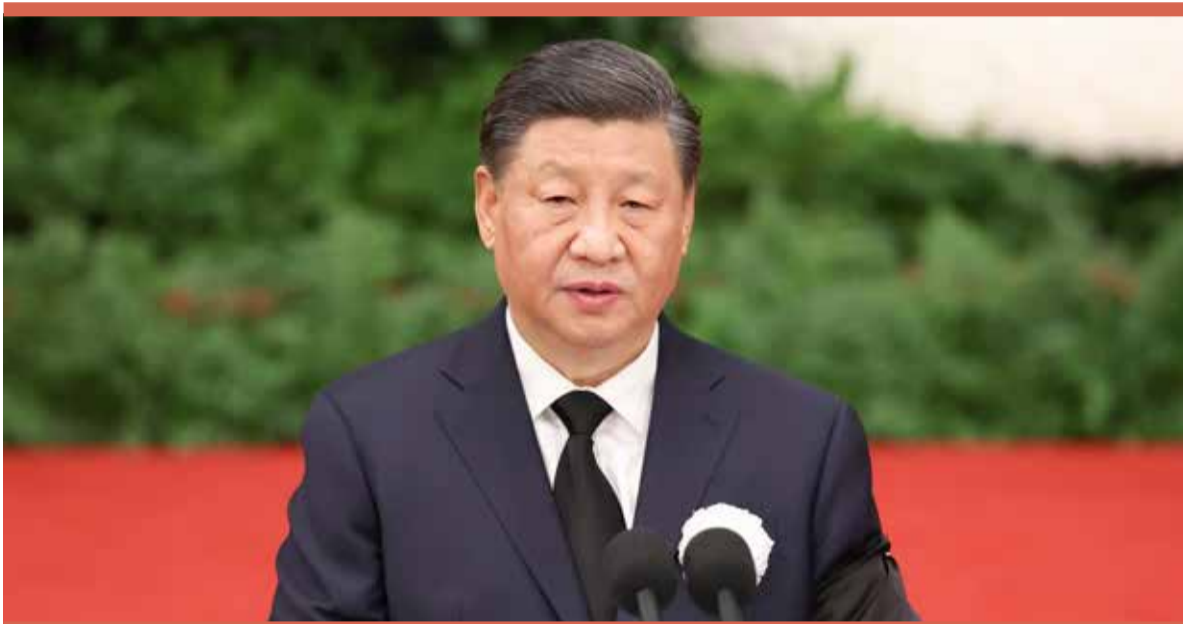
CHINESE leader Xi Jinping will arrive in Saudi Arabia on Wednesday to attend meetings with oil-rich Gulf Arab nations crucial to his country's energy supplies as Beijing tries to revive an economy battered by its strict coronavirus measures.

Saudi and Chinese flags flew yesterday in Riyadh, the Saudi capital, ahead of the visit. Gulf Arab states are trying to recalibrate their foreign policy as the United States turns its attention to elsewhere in the world.

Russia's war on Ukraine — and the West's hardening stance on Moscow — has also left the Arab countries wanting to cement ties with China.

During the visit, Xi is expected to attend the inaugural China-Arab States Summit and a meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which includes the kingdom along with Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

AP PHOTO



Though few other details about the visit have emerged, Chinese authorities offered superlatives ahead of the trip.

It's the "largest and highest-level diplomatic event between China and the Arab world since the founding of the People's Republic of China and will become an epoch-making milestone in the

history of China-Arab relations," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told reporters at a daily briefing yesterday.

Whether the meeting reaches those heights, Xi knows he needs that supply of crude oil. China, the world's largest crude oil importer, relies heavily on Saudi oil, paying tens of billions of dollars annually

to the kingdom.

Xi plans to meet both 86-year-old Saudi King Salman, as well as his 37-year-old son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. For Prince Mohammed, hosting Xi boosts his own international profile after being linked to the killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi.

Beyond China's oil purchases, its construction expertise could be tapped as well for Prince Mohammed's planned \$500 billion futuristic city of Neom on the Red Sea. Chinese construction firms have worked elsewhere in Arab countries in the Persian Gulf, particularly in Dubai in the UAE.

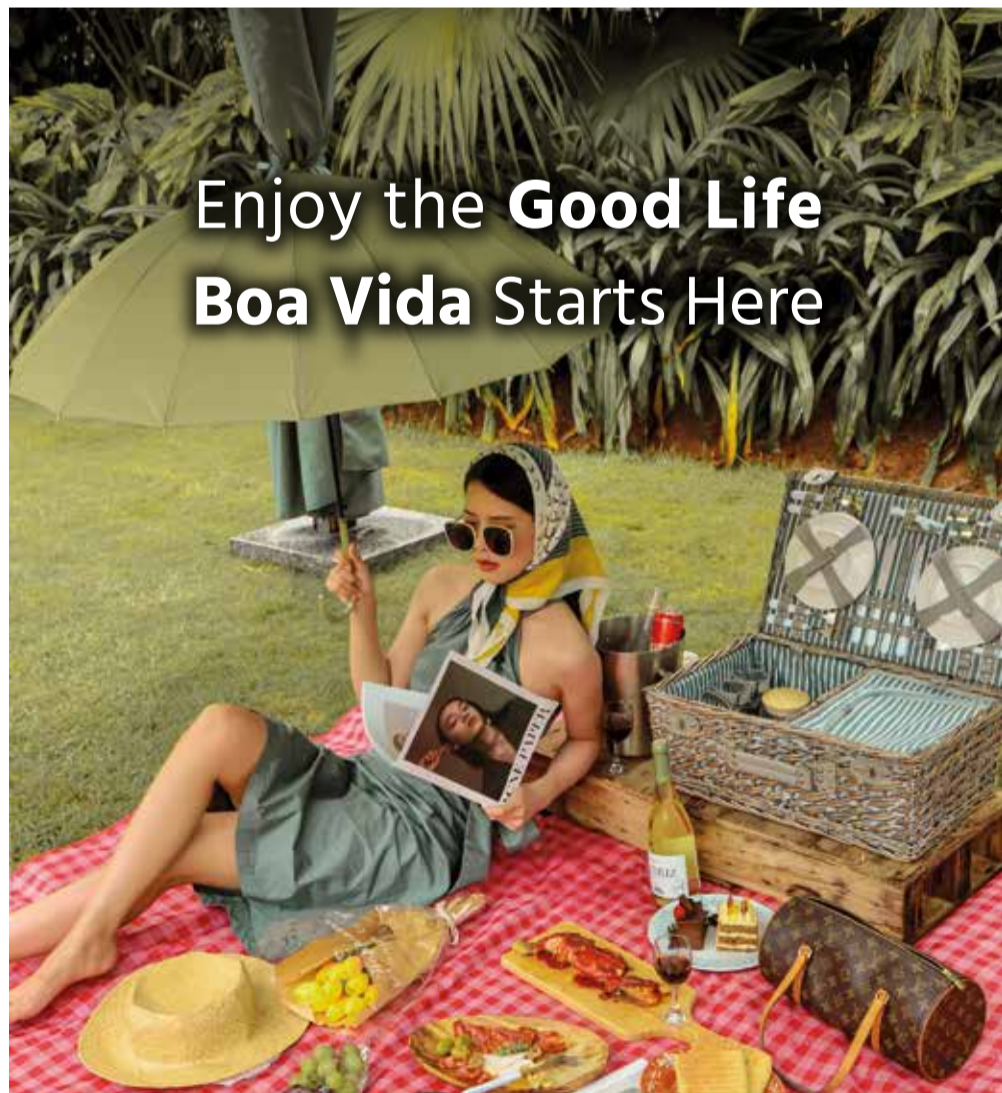
Saudi Arabia, home to the holiest sites in Islam, also has provided political cover to China over its harsh policies toward Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities.

The trip to Saudi Arabia marks a further move by Xi to restore his global profile after spending most of the pandemic inside China. The visit is his third overseas trip since early 2020. It also comes as Xi, who was granted a third five-year term as leader in October, has faced street protests over his zero-COVID-19 policies that represent the most-significant challenge to his rule.

The political risk consultancy Eurasia Group said in a report that with no major differences between China and Saudi Arabia on human rights, the tone of Xi's visit is "likely to be much more positive" than the visit earlier this year to the kingdom by U.S. President Joe Biden,


"Nevertheless, the relationship still has a long way to go if it is to become as deep and nuanced as Saudi-U.S. ties," the report said. **MDT/AP**


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A suspect (second right) is escorted from a police helicopter by police officers after the arrival in Karlsruhe, yesterday

GERMANY

25 arrested on suspicion of planning armed coup

FRANK JORDANS, BERLIN

THOUSANDS of police officers carried out raids across much of Germany yesterday against suspected far-right extremists who allegedly sought to overthrow the government in an armed coup. Officials said 25 people were detained.

Federal prosecutors said some 3,000 officers conducted searches at 130 sites in 11 of Germany's 16 states. While police raids against the far right are not uncommon in the country — still sensitive to its grim Nazi past — the scale of the operation was unusual.

Justice Minister Marco Buschmann described the raids as an “anti-terrorism operation,” adding that the suspects may have planned an armed attack on institutions of the state.

Germany's top security official said the group was “driven by violent coup fantasies and conspiracy ideologies.”

Prosecutors said the suspects were linked to the so-called Reich Citizens movement, whose adherents reject Germany's postwar constitution and have called for bringing down the government.

Officers detained 22 German citizens on suspicion of “membership in a terrorist organization,” prosecutors said. Three other people, including a Russian citizen, were held on suspicion of supporting the organization, they said. Another 27 people

were under investigation.

German media outlet Der Spiegel reported the searched locations included the barracks of Germany's special forces unit KSK in the southwestern town of Calw. The unit received scrutiny in the past over alleged far-right involvement by some soldiers.

Federal prosecutors declined to confirm or deny that the barracks was searched.

Along with detentions in Germany, prosecutors said one person was detained in the Austrian town of Kitzbuehel and another in Perugia, Italy.

Prosecutors said those detained are alleged to have last year formed a “terrorist organization with the goal of overturning the existing state order in Germany and replace it with their own form of state, which was already in the course of being founded.”

The suspects were aware their aim could only be achieved by military means and with force, prosecutors said.

Some of the group's members had made “concrete preparations” to storm Germany's federal parliament with a small armed group, according to prosecutors. “The details (of this plan) still need to be investigated” to determine whether any of the suspects can be charged with treason, they said.

The group is alleged to have believed in a “conglomerate of conspiracy theo-

ries consisting of narratives from the so-called Reich Citizens as well as QAnon ideology,” according to the statement. Prosecutors added that members of the group also believe Germany is ruled by a so-called “deep state;” similar baseless claims about the United States were made by former President Donald Trump.

Prosecutors identified the suspected ringleaders as Heinrich XIII P. R. and Ruediger v. P., in line with German privacy rules. Der Spiegel reported that the former was a well-known 71-year-old member of a minor German noble family, while the latter was a 69-year-old former paratrooper.

Federal prosecutors said Heinrich XIII P. R., whom the group planned to install as Germany's new leader, had contacted Russian officials with the aim of negotiating a new order in the country once the German government was overthrown. He was allegedly assisted in this by a Russian woman, Vitalia B.

“According to current investigations there is no indication however that the persons contacted responded positively to his request,” prosecutors said.

Prosecutors identified another individual detained by police yesterday as Birgit M.-W. Der Spiegel reported she is a judge and former lawmaker with the far-right Alternative for Germany party.

The party, known by its German acronym AfD, has increasingly come under scrutiny by German security services due to its ties with extremists.

AFD's co-leaders, Tino Chrupalla and Alice Weidel, condemned the reported plans, which they said they had only learned of through the media.

“We have full confidence in the authorities involved and demand a swift and comprehensive investigation,” they said in a statement.

Prosecutors said that apart from a council of leaders, or Rat, the group had tasked several members with the formation of an armed wing. Led by Ruediger v. P., they planned to obtain weapons and conduct firearms training.

Yesterday's raids showed that “we know how to defend ourselves with full force against the enemies of democracy,” Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said.

“The investigation offers an insight into the depths of the terrorist threat within the Reich Citizens milieu,” Faeser said. “Only the further investigation will provide a clear picture of how far the coup plans had come.”

Sara Nanni, a Green party lawmaker, suggested the group may not have been very capable.

“More details keep coming to light that raise doubts about whether these people were even clever enough to plan and carry out such a coup,” Nanni said in a post on the social network Mastodon. “The fact is: no matter how crude their ideas are and how hopeless their plans, even the attempt is dangerous!”

Officials have repeatedly warned that far-right extremists pose the biggest threat to Germany's domestic security. This threat was highlighted by the killing of a regional politician and the deadly attack on a synagogue in 2019. A year later, far-right extremists taking part in a protest against the country's pandemic restrictions tried and failed to storm the Bundestag building in Berlin.

Faeser announced earlier this year that the government planned to disarm about 1,500 suspected extremists and to tighten background checks for those wanting to acquire guns as part of a broader crackdown on the far right.

Germany's chief federal prosecutor planned to make a statement on the case today [Macau time]. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1980 JOHN LENNON SHOT DEAD



Former Beatle John Lennon has been shot dead by an unknown gunman who opened fire outside the musician's New York apartment.

The 40-year-old was shot several times as he entered the Dakota, his luxury apartment building on Manhattan's Upper West Side, opposite Central Park, at 2300 local time.

He was rushed in a police car to St Luke's Roosevelt Hospital Center, where he died.

His wife, Yoko Ono, who is understood to have witnessed the attack, was with him.

A police spokesman said a suspect was in custody.

“This was no robbery,” the spokesman said, adding that Mr Lennon was probably shot by a “deranged” person.

Witness reports say at least three shots were fired and others have claimed they heard six.

There are also reports Mr Lennon staggered up six steps into the vestibule after he was shot, before collapsing.

Jack Douglas, Lennon's producer, said he and the Lennons had been at a studio called the Record Plant in mid-town earlier in the evening and Lennon left at 2230.

Mr Lennon said he planned to have some dinner and then return home, Mr Douglas said.

The Lennons are said to have left their limousine on the street and walked up the driveway when the gunman opened fire.

It is unclear whether the man had been lying in wait in the entrance to the building for Mr Lennon, or whether he came up behind him.

Witnesses describe the gunman as a “pudgy kind of man”, 35 to 40 years old with brown hair.

Other former band members, Paul McCartney, guitarist George Harrison and drummer Ringo Starr are thought to have been informed of Lennon's murder.

Fans have already begun arriving at the scene, many still unaware Lennon has died.

Mr Lennon is survived by his wife, their son Sean, and his son from a previous marriage, Julian.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

John Lennon was shot four times in the back by Mark Chapman who had asked the former Beatle for his autograph only hours before he laid in wait and killed him. Chapman pleaded guilty to gunning down Mr Lennon and is currently serving life in Attica prison near New York. In October 2004 he failed for the third time to secure his release. He said he had heard voices in his head telling him to kill the world-famous musician. Twenty years after his death millions of fans paid tribute to Mr Lennon in his home town of Liverpool and in New York. His widow launched a campaign against gun violence in the United States to mark the anniversary.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You can gain valuable cultural knowledge through dealing with foreigners. Visit someone who hasn't been feeling well lately. Get motivated and follow up on some self-improvement resolutions.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Be cautious not to get involved in office chatter that will cause problems for others. You need time to rejuvenate. You will gain new friends if you get involved in environmental issues.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

You will reap the benefits if you put money into upgrading your residence. Don't delay; go to your physician or dentist and get to the bottom of the discomfort.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You will have the getup and go to contribute a great deal to groups of interest. You will easily capture the interest of those you talk to.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Refuse to get involved in idle chatter; it will only make you look bad. Don't take sides if you wish to remain on good terms with both parties.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Don't hesitate to look for alternatives that will enable you to raise the kind of donations you need to do the job right. Concentrate on spending quality time with children.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Don't torment yourself. You need time to make things better. Sooner or later your partner will have had enough. Sudden trips will take you by surprise.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You must deal with an emotional problem with your loved one that you have been avoiding for some time now. You will find your personal partner taxing today.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

A passionate party for two might be just the remedy. This will be a great night to invite friend over to visit. You will feel better about yourself and you may also meet potential lovers.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Your emotions will be touched off concerning recent encounters with your lover. Someone is trying to pull the wool over your eyes, and if you're gullible, it may cost you.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Partners may try to argue with you; however, you must stand your ground. You should get involved with activities that can be enjoyed by both young and old alike.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Things may not be as harmonious as you would like with colleagues or employers today. You are best to stick to yourself today. Your competitive nature will enable you to win any contest you enter.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-4	7	fine
Changchun	-14	-2	fine
Chengdu	6	11	overcast
Chongqing	9	13	overcast
Fuzhou	12	20	cloudy
Guangzhou	11	20	fine
Guiyang	2	6	overcast
Haikou	16	22	cloudy
Hangzhou	5	15	overcast
Harbin	-15	-6	fine
Hefei	2	8	overcast
Nanjing	6	11	overcast
Shanghai	7	14	rain
Taipei	17	21	rain
Wuhan	6	11	overcast
Hong Kong	14	20	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	-6	-5	snow
Frankfurt	-1	4	snow
Paris	-1	3	fog
London	-3	3	fine
New York	2	12	overcast

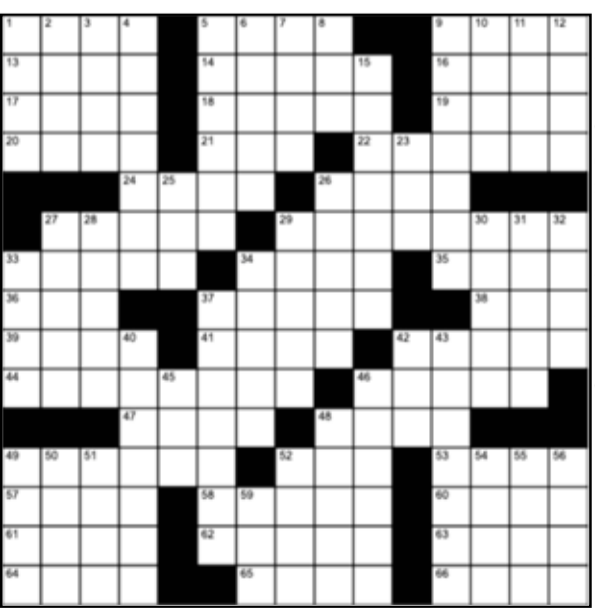
CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Succulent; 5- Old MacDonald's place; 9- OPEC units; 13- Pinza of "South Pacific"; 14- Regions; 16- Hanging to one side; 17- Bites; 18- Break out; 19- Author Jaffe; 20- Helper; Abbr.; 21- Knock vigorously; 22- Thief; 24- Large wading bird; 26- White House staffer; 27- Fight, disturbance; 29- Wrapper; 33- Like some vbs.; 34- Window piece; 35- Draw in; 36- Flamenco cheer; 37- Company emblems; 38- "... the cows come home"; 39- Bottle part; 41- Pinguid; 42- Israel's Shimon; 44- Free; 46- Roman name of Demeter; 47- "... quam videri" (North Carolina's motto); 48- Female horse; 49- "Honor Thy Father" author; 52- Metallic element; 53- Tibetan monk; 57- Richard of "A Summer Place"; 58- In a fresh manner; 60- Raw materials; 61- Cleveland's lake; 62- Shorthand taker; 63- ___ a soul; 64- German economist and socialist; 65- Witnessed; 66- Elation;

DOWN 1- Actress Olin; 2- Israeli weapons; 3- Drinks slowly; 4- Not friendly; 5- "The ___ Queen"; 6- Hand woven wall hanging; 7- Enlist again; 8- Chart; 9- Weightlifting apparatus; 10- Amoeba-like alien; The ___; 11- The ___ Ranger rode a horse called Silver; 12- Box; 15- Tries hard; 23- Lyric poem; 25- Implore; 26- Bother; 27- 1957 hit for the Bobbettes; 28- Set up; 29- Specimen of genus Aquila; 30- Unconventional; 31- Gets nosy; 32- Electric fish; 33- They're all charged up; 34- Composure; 37- Gives slack; 40- Brand of facial tissue; 42- ___ capita; 43- Soon; 45- Old spy org.; 46- Gorge; 48- Pooh's creator; 49- Abound; 50- Mogul capital until 1658; 51- Burrow; 52- Affectedly dainty; 54- Shrinking sea; 55- Slight; 56- ___ sow, so shall...; 59- Aliens, briefly;

Yesterday's solution

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



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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AD



STRESS IN THE DESERT

TOURNAMENT FRENZY PUTS STRAIN ON QATAR'S CAMELS

LUJAIN JO AND SUMAN NAISHADHAM, MESAIEED

SHAHEEN stretched out on the sand and closed his eyes, but there was little time to rest for the camel. World Cup fans coming in droves to the desert outside Doha were ready for their perfect Instagram moment: riding a camel on the rolling dunes.

As Qatar welcomes more than a million fans for the monthlong World Cup, even its camels are

working overtime. Visitors in numbers the tiny emirate has never before seen are rushing to finish a bucket list of Gulf tourist experiences between games: ride on a camel's back, take pictures with falcons and wander through the alleyways of traditional markets.

On a recent Friday afternoon, hundreds of visitors in soccer uniforms or draped in flags waited for their turn to mount the humpbacked animals. Camels that did

not rise were forced up by their handlers. When one camel let out a loud grunt, a woman from Australia shrieked, "it sounds like they're being violated!" Nearby, a group of men from Mexico dressed in white Qatari thobes and headaddresses took selfies.

"It's really an amazing feeling because you feel so tall," 28-year-old Juan Gaul said after his ride. The Argentine fan was visiting Qatar for a week from Australia.

Cashing in on the opportu-

nity are the animals' handlers who, thanks to the World Cup, are making several times more than they normally would.

"There's a lot of money coming in," said Ali Jaber al Ali, a 49-year-old Bedouin camel herder from Sudan. "Thank god, but it's a lot of pressure."

Al Ali came to Qatar 15 years ago but has worked with camels since he was a child. On an average weekday before the World Cup, Al Ali said his company would offer around 20 rides per day and 50 on weekends. Since the World Cup started, Al Ali and the men he works with are providing 500 rides in the morning and another 500 in the evening. The company went from having 15 camels to 60, he said.

"Tour guides want to move

things fast," Al Ali said, "so they add pressure on us."

As crowds formed around them, many camels sat statue-like with cloth muzzles covering their mouths and bright saddles on their bodies. The smell of dung filled the air.

Like other Gulf cultures, camels once provided Qataris a vital form of transport and helped in the exploration and development of trade routes. Today, the ungulates figure into cultural pastimes: camel racing is a popular sport that takes place on old-school tracks outside the city.

Al Ali said he knows when an animal is tired — usually if it refuses to get up or sits back down after rising to its feet. He can identify each camel by its facial features.

"I am a Bedouin. I come from a family of Bedouins who care for camels. I grew up loving them," Al Ali said.

But the sudden rise in tourists means there's less time to rest between rides, he said. A short ride lasts just 10 minutes while longer ones run 20 to 30 minutes long.

Normally, Al Ali said a camel can rest after five rides. "Now, people are saying we can't wait ... because they have other plans they need to go to in the middle of the desert," he said.

Since the World Cup started, the animals are taken for 15 to 20 — sometimes even 40 rides — without a break.

Al Ali's day starts around 4:30 a.m., when he feeds the animals and gets them ready for customers.

Not every visitor has been taken by the experience.

Pablo Corigliano, a 47-year-old real estate agent from Buenos Aires, said he was hoping for something more authentic. **MDT/AP**

IN OTHER SPORTS...

Djokovic to start 2023 in Adelaide ahead of Australian Open

NOVAK Djokovic will open his 2023 campaign in Adelaide as he prepares for a shot at a 10th Australian Open crown a year after having his visa revoked on the eve of his title defense.

The 21-time major winner has been granted a visa by the Australian government and has been listed to play at the Adelaide International, which starts Jan. 1.

Serbia isn't contesting the inaugural United Cup team competition, leaving Djokovic free to play regular

warmup tournaments head of the Jan. 16-29 Australian Open.

He'll be joined in the men's draw at Adelaide by Russians Daniil Medvedev and Andrey Rublev, Felix Auger-Aliassime of Canada and Andy Murray.

Ons Jabeur, Aryna Sabalenka will headline the women's draw.

Immigration Minister Andrew Giles last month confirmed Djokovic had been granted a visa to compete in Australia in January. The 35-year-old Serbian

had been facing a possible three-year ban after being deported last January over his stance against COVID-19 vaccination.

Djokovic has won the Australian Open a record nine times, including the last three times he played. Rafael Nadal won this year's title in Djokovic's absence.

Djokovic was not vaccinated against COVID-19 when he arrived in Melbourne ahead of the 2022 tournament, but Australia has since lifted strict rules for unvaccinated travelers. **MDT/AP**



Serbia's Novak Djokovic poses with his trophy after defeating Norway's Casper Ruud, in Turin, last November

GRAHAM DUNBAR, LUSAIL

LAST 16

PORTUGAL 6, SWITZERLAND 1

Little known before WC, Ramos goals lift Portugal

IN his first start for Portugal's national team, Gonçalo Ramos showed that he has the goods — and the goals — to stand in for Cristiano Ronaldo.

Even at the World Cup.

The 21-year-old forward scored a hat trick yesterday [Macau time] after surprisingly being called on to start against Switzerland in place of Ronaldo, the men's record holder for most international goals. Portugal won the match 6-1 and advanced to the quarterfinals for the third time.

"Not even in my wildest dreams did I think about being part of the starting team for the knockout stage," Ramos said through a translator after being named player of the match.

Those three goals, and the smoking pistols goal celebration, instantly made Ramos one of the sport's hottest prospects.

Morocco, which will next play Portugal on Saturday for a spot in the semifinals, may not have known anything about Ramos before Tuesday. That has certainly changed.

Ramos had never played for Portugal before being selected in the World Cup squad last month. He was given the No. 26 shirt in the 26-man squad and played for only a few minutes as a late substitute in Portugal's group wins over Ghana and Uruguay. He had zero attempts on goal in those games.

"Most people in the world had



Portugal's Gonçalo Ramos scores his side's fifth goal

never heard about him until today," Portugal midfielder Bruno Fernandes said.

The first hint that Ronaldo's place might be at risk came Monday. Portugal coach Fernando Santos vented his frustration with his long-time star's body language after being replaced in a 2-1 loss to South Korea on Friday.

Sure enough, 80 minutes before the start of the match at Lusail Stadium, Ronaldo's name was missing from the starting lineup. Ramos was his replacement.

The final result made Santos look more like a mad genius than a madman.

Ramos scored early, giving his team the lead in the 17th minu-

te. Passes then started flowing, attacks came in waves and consumed the Swiss opposition, leaving them seemingly unable to track the speed and mobility of playmakers like Fernandes, João Félix and Bernardo Silva.

Ramos was at the center of it all.

"Gonçalo is more dynamic," Santos said through a translator. "Cristiano currently is a player who is more fixed and plays in a more determined area."

Ramos linked easily with a group of teammates he has barely played with, ghosting in at the near post to poke the ball in from close range for his second goal, and the team's third, soon after halftime.

He created the fourth goal with a pass to Raphael Guerreiro and then completed his hat trick with a deft flick over onrushing Swit-

zerland goalkeeper Yann Sommer in the 67th minute.

Seven minutes later, Ronaldo came off the bench and replaced Ramos on the field.

They next met in the center circle after the final whistle, the established star hugging his potential successor. Ramos was holding the match ball, the usual gift for a player who scores three goals.

The first hat trick at this year's World Cup was only the fifth in the past three tournaments. One of those came from Ronaldo four years ago, when he was 33, in a 3-3 group-stage draw with Spain.

When Ramos returns to play for Benfica in the Portuguese league, he will no longer be under anybody's radar.

Yet clues were there when the young forward stepped up a level this season to replace Darwin Núñez, now at Liverpool after another big-money sale by the Lisbon club. Led by goals from Ramos, Benfica is unbeaten both in Portugal and in the Champions League.

"It's because people are not aware of the quality in the Portuguese league," Fernandes said. "I think people should be aware of Gonçalo and his qualities." **MDT/AP**

THE QUARTERS

	Date	Time	Home	Away	ODDS
Fri	Dec 9	23:00	Croatia	Brazil	H 9.6, D 5, A 1.39
Sat	Dec 10	3:00	Netherlands	Argentina	H 3.78, D 3.23, A 2.26
Sat	Dec 10	23:00	Morocco	Portugal	H 6, D 3.82, A 1.7
Sun	Dec 11	3:00	England	France	H 3.16, D 3.3, A 2.52

LAST 16

Young Spain squad and its 'tiki-taka' stumble on Morocco

TALES AZZONI, DOHA

MOROCCO 0, SPAIN 0
(3-1 PENALTIES)

SPAIN lost to Morocco 3-0 in a penalty shootout in the round of 16 at the World Cup yesterday [Macau time], failing to make it to the quarterfinals for the third straight time since winning its last world title in South Africa in 2010.

La Roja also lost in a shootout in the last 16 four years ago, and it was also on penalties that it was eliminated in the semifinals of the European Championship last year.

There were high hopes for Spain ahead of the World Cup after it did well at Euro 2020 and at the Nations League, where it lost in the final to France.

The expectations became even higher after a resounding 7-0 rout of Costa



Spain's head coach Luis Enrique (centre right bottom) hugs Alvaro Morata after exiting the World Cup round of 16

Rica in its opener in Qatar, when Spain's young squad successfully brought back the "tiki-taka" ball-possession style that had led La Roja to triumphs in the past.

But Spain's run in a major tournament ended in disappointment again after it struggled to translate its ball possession into goals. After the big win against Costa Rica, Spain played

well against Germany but was held 1-1 after conceding a late equalizer. It then lost 2-1 to Japan when it needed a draw to win its group.

By finishing second, Spain apparently had fallen into an easier path by avoiding an encounter with 2018 runner-up Croatia in the round of 16, as well as possible matchups with Brazil and Argentina later

on. Instead, it faced Morocco, which was one of the surprises of the tournament but had never made it to the last eight at a World Cup.

Spain controlled the game Tuesday but struggled to get past the well-organized Moroccans, who ultimately prevailed in the shootout after Pablo Sarabia's penalty kick hit the post and Carlos Soler and Sergio Busquets had their attempts saved by goalkeeper Yassine Bounou.

"It's my responsibility," said Spain coach Luis Enrique, who had asked his players to practice 1,000 penalty kicks while with their clubs. "I picked the first three penalty-takers."

Spain's only win in five penalty shootout attempts at a World Cup came against Ireland in the round of 16 in 2002. It was eliminated by co-host South Korea on pe-

nalties in the quarterfinals of that tournament.

Spain has won only three of its last 11 World Cup games since 2010.

WHO'S OUT

Busquets, the only remaining member of Spain's World Cup-winning team, is likely to end his career with the national team, although he hasn't yet officially announced his decision.

"Now the important thing is the team and not

me," said the 34-year-old Barcelona midfielder, who made his 17th World Cup appearance Tuesday to tie goalkeeper Iker Casillas and defender Sergio Ramos for the most matches with Spain in the tournament.

The future also was uncertain for other veterans in the squad, including Jordi Alba and César Azpilicueta.

Luis Enrique said one of his regrets in Qatar was not to have used 30-year-old Sarabia more often during the tournament. **MDT/AP**

ROUND OF 16 SCOREBOARD

Netherlands	3	1	United States
Argentina	2	1	Australia
Japan	1 (1-4)	1	Croatia
Brazil	4	1	Korea Republic
England	3	0	Senegal
France	3	1	Poland
Morocco	0 (3-0)	0	Spain
Portugal	6	1	Switzerland

OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

NATION CONTRIBUTES TO BIODIVERSITY VIA COP 15

Because of human activities, species are disappearing from the planet with alarming rapidity, at 50 to 100 times the historical rate. But while the loss of individual species makes the news and catches people's attention, "it is the fragmentation, degradation, and outright loss of forests, wetlands, coral reefs, and other ecosystems that poses the gravest threat to biological diversity", as the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity points out.

On Wednesday, representatives of the 196 nations that have ratified the UN Convention on Biological Diversity will meet in Montreal, Canada, for the start of the second phase of the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

The meeting, which has the task of securing a consensus on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, was split into two parts to allow more time for continued negotiations on the framework. As China is the current chair, it will lead the deliberations in Montreal, setting the agenda and tone.

Huang Runqiu, China's minister of ecology and environment and COP 15 president, said the aim is to ensure biodiversity loss is halted and reversed by 2030, and that humans live in harmony with nature by 2050.

The size of the challenge to realize those ambitious but vital objectives cannot be overemphasized. At COP 10 in Nagoya, Japan, in 2010, the parties agreed on the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. None of the 20 objectives has been fully realized.

This shows how crucial it is to turn consensus into concrete actions and find common ground on issues such as funding, genetic resources, and enforcement and oversight mechanisms.

As with the recent negotiations on climate actions, one of the sticking points is the developed countries failing to fulfill the obligations stipulated in the Convention and related protocols to provide funding, technology and capacity building to the poorer nations.

To help set the ball rolling in this respect, China launched the Kunming Biodiversity Fund and contributed \$230 million to it at the first phase COP 15 meeting held in Kunming last year.

China has a clear vision for protecting its own rich biodiversity, much of it endemic, which is encapsulated in the goal of realizing an ecological civilization that has been written into the country's Constitution. It has been taking concrete steps to realize this goal, and these have been widely recognized by the international community.

This provides it with a solid platform on which to demonstrate the bold leadership that is required to produce a meaningful outcome in Montreal.

CHINA TRADE SHRINKS AMID VIRUS PRESSURE, INTEREST RATE HIKES

China's imports and exports shrank in November under pressure from weakening global demand and anti-virus controls at home.

Exports sank 9% from a year ago to \$296.1 billion, worsening from October's 0.9% decline, customs data showed yesterday. Imports fell 10.9% to \$226.2 billion, down from the previous month's 0.7% retreat in a sign of a deepening Chinese economic slowdown.

The country's global trade surplus narrowed by 2.5% from a year earlier to \$69.9 billion.

Trade had been forecast to weaken as global demand cooled following interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve and central banks in Europe and Asia to rein in surging inflation.

Chinese consumer demand has been hurt by a "zero-COVID" strategy that shuts down large sections of cities to contain virus outbreaks. That has disrupted business and confined millions of people to their homes for weeks at a time.

Consumer spending contracted in October and factory activity weakened as anti-virus controls following a rise in infections weighed on the economy.

The performance was even weaker than expected by forecasters who said activity would cool as Chinese anti-virus controls and interest rate hikes by the U.S. Federal Reserve and other central banks weighed on global activity.

THE BUZZ



Tesla electric vehicles are displayed during a public launching event yesterday, in Bangkok

TESLA LAUNCHES IN THAILAND, VYING TO COMPETE WITH CHINA EVS

TASSANEE VEJPONGSA & TIAN MCLEOD JI, BANGKOK

TESLA has launched sales in Thailand, offering its popular Model 3 and Model Y at prices aimed at competing with rivals like China's BYD.

The company staged a glitzy showcase of its plans yesterday at Bangkok's Siam Paragon mall. Online purchases have begun, with plans to deliver vehicles to buyers in the first quarter of next year.

Southeast Asia's market of more than 600 million consumers is increasingly a focus for automakers looking to expand sales, especially of electric vehicles.

Tesla said the vehicles will have the latest satellite navigation systems and other features such as over-the-air software updates.

The company is selling its Model 3 Long Range and Performance models. The Model Y will be sold in three versions "to meet the specific demands of the EV

lifestyle for every Thai driver," the company said.

It said prices will range from 1.76 million Thai baht-2.5 million baht (\$50,000-\$71,000).

"The price is much lower than we expected. As far as the after-sale service concerns, I'm not worried too much about that as the EV car parts are not very complicated compared to combustible engine cars," said Wit Wongngamdee, who attended the launch with his wife and said he was planning to order one of the models.

Apichat Prasitnarit, another potential buyer, said he was surprised by the price.

"At the same time, other countries' brands are launching their cars here, so we have choices and that's great for consumers," he said.

Tesla said it will open its first Service Center and Supercharger station in Thailand by March and plans to have at least 10 set up in the country in 2023.

Apart from Tesla and BYD, Nissan Motor Co. has

made Thailand a regional EV hub. Mercedes says it is due to announce sales of its EQS450+ soon.

Nithi Thuamprathom, an auto expert for Auto Life Thailand, said Tesla's launch would likely give the EV market in Thailand a big boost, largely thanks to its competitive pricing and brand value, which is an advantage over Chinese automakers like BYD.

"It's unbelievable that Tesla announced the entry price (of its cheapest model) at 1.7 million Thai baht," he said. "That's the price of Japanese cars with combustible engines or hybrid engines. This will create such a big change in the market."

Still, Thailand remains mainly a land of gasoline, diesel and LPG-fueled vehicles, even as a nationwide network of charging stations expands.

"The EV trend is growing in Thailand and there is an increase in the consumer acceptance. But we have to accept that this is just a beginning," Nithi said. "It's in a pioneering stage." MDT/AP



Middle East Commercial brakes produced by a Dutch company to be used in ambulances in Turkey instead ended up in missiles used by Turkey in attacks in northeastern Syria, a report released yesterday [Macau time] said. Between September 2021 and June 2022, field investigators with London-based Conflict Armament Research analyzed the remnants of 17 air-to-surface missiles used in strikes in northeast Syria, the report said.



USA Maryland is banning the use of TikTok and certain China and Russia-based platforms in the state's executive branch of government, Gov. Larry Hogan (pictured) said, the latest state to address cybersecurity risks presented by the platforms. The Republican governor announced an emergency cybersecurity directive to prohibit the platforms' use, saying they could be involved in cyberespionage, government surveillance and inappropriate collection of sensitive personal information.



Uruguay A summit of the four Mercosur nations exposed tensions as Uruguay's eagerness to seek out foreign markets collided with opposition from Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay. Uruguayan President Luis Lacalle Pou (pictured) said his country must "open up to the world" and it intends to negotiate a free trade agreement with China as well as join the Trans-Pacific Partnership. "We are one of the most protectionist areas in the world," he said of the bloc, speaking at the meeting in Mercosur's headquarters in Montevideo.