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JAPAN AND SOUTH KOREA DEFENDED PUBLIC HEALTH RESTRICTIONS ON TRAVELERS FROM CHINA P6



AP PHOTO



China The Chinese air travel regulator is preparing to allow airlines to fly more routes between China and the United States following the lifting of anti-virus travel restrictions, state TV reported yesterday. U.S. and Chinese airlines are among some 40 carriers that have submitted applications covering some 700 flights per week involving 34 countries, CCTV reported on its website. It gave no timeline for when normal flights might resume. China suspended most airline flights and other travel into and out of the country following the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020.

AP PHOTO



Brazil The Biden administration is under growing pressure from leftists in Latin America as well as U.S. lawmakers to expel Jair Bolsonaro from a post-presidential retreat in Florida following his supporters' brazen attack on Brazil's capital over the weekend. But the far-right ex-president may pre-empt any plans for such a stinging rebuke. He told a Brazilian media outlet that he would push up his return home, originally scheduled for late January, after being hospitalized with abdominal pains stemming from a 2018 stabbing.

AP PHOTO



USA The infighting was so intense a year ago that Democrats who controlled both the White House and Congress couldn't win support for a sweeping social spending package that was the party's top legislative priority. President Joe Biden, meanwhile, was viewed skeptically enough that some of his fellow Democrats questioned the wisdom of him seeking reelection. What a difference a year makes.

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TOUGH HAND

The hospitality sector is suffering from shortage of staff following retrenchment three years ago, and the current influx of tourists

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GLOBAL ECONOMY 2023

THREE WAYS THE PANDEMIC FORCED COMPANIES TO RETHINK AND TRANSFORM HOW THEY SOURCE THEIR PRODUCTS

NADA R. SANDERS,
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

THIS is the sixth and final installment in our series on where the global economy is heading in 2023. It follows recent articles on industrial action, inflation, energy, food and the cost of living.

The global supply chains that modern companies depend on were turned upside down three years ago after COVID-19 emerged in China. The spread of the new respiratory illness and efforts to slow it resulted in shortages of everything from toilet paper and prescription drugs to refrigerators and semiconductors. Even today, retailers continue to struggle to keep some products, including household items like Tylenol and eggs, in stock. Overall stress in supply chains remains high.

Because shortages, delays and bottlenecks can hurt their bottom line, many companies that didn't go bust during the pandemic have been rethinking their supply chains and implementing changes to make them more resilient.

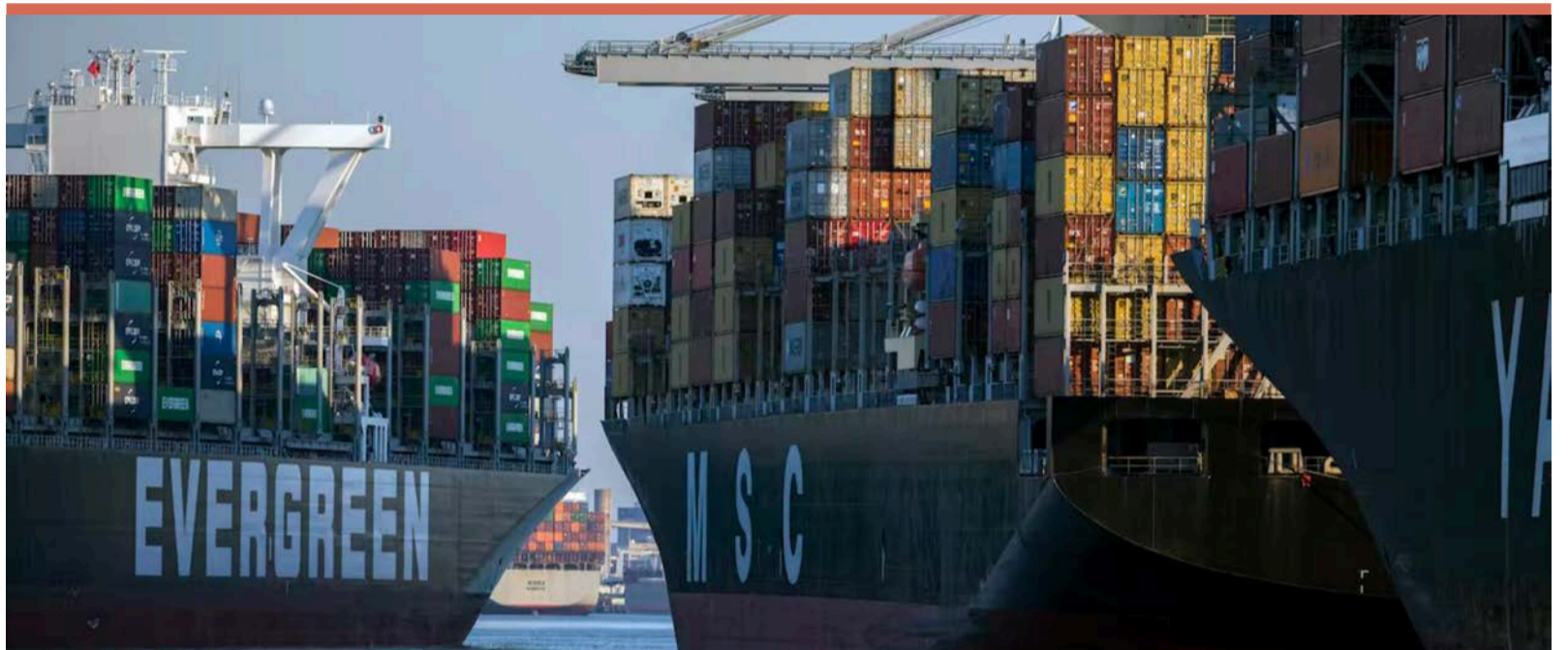
As a supply chain expert, I have observed three major shifts in how companies manage their supply chains – changes that will significantly affect consumers and businesses alike.

BRINGING SUPPLY CHAINS HOME

One of the main downsides of having supply chains that span the globe is that they are more vulnerable to problems outside of a company's control, such as an earthquake that strikes a key supplier or a citywide lockdown that shuts down factories.

That's why companies in every industry have been working to relocate suppliers and production facilities closer to home or geographically spreading them out so that they're not so dependent on one country or region. The goal is to ensure they can withstand

AP PHOTO



Companies are remaking their supply chains to rely less on China and the massive container ships steaming across the oceans

disruptions and maintain business continuity.

The pace of reshoring – the process of shifting production and manufacturing from overseas factories – has surged in recent years. Over 60% of European and U.S. manufacturing companies expect to reshore part of their Asia production in the next three years, according to a survey conducted in early 2022.

A more recent survey found that U.S. transport and manufacturing reshored about 350,000 jobs in 2022, up 25% from the previous year.

This trend not only has support from government subsidies but retailers as well. Walmart, one of the world's biggest retailers, has committed to help its suppliers reshore by increasing its purchases of U.S.-made products by US\$350 billion over the next decade. In the U.K., a survey of 750 small businesses found that 2 in 5 are considering switching to domestic manufacturers to avoid COVID-19 disruptions and high shipping costs.

At the same time, other companies are trying to diversify their sources of supply, often away from China, which until recently was regularly locking

down whole cities to maintain its now-lapsed zero COVID-19 policy. India and Vietnam are popular destinations.

U.S.-based Apple, for example, frustrated by product delays in China, where 98% of its iPhones are made, recently started producing models in India. In addition, Foxconn, its largest supplier, agreed to expand production in Vietnam. Overall, U.S. manufacturing orders from China are down 21% since August 2022.

In Europe, carmaker Volvo announced in July plans to open its first European factory in 60 years in Slovakia. And leaders of the U.S., Mexico and Canada are meeting to discuss ways to encourage more investment in the region, which may result in more reshoring.

INVESTING IN MORE TECHNOLOGY

One of the biggest issues when the COVID-19 pandemic began was that companies often didn't know what was going on with their suppliers because of poor technology. For example, prior to the pandemic, over 50% of companies didn't communicate with or know the locations of all their suppliers, making it difficult to anticipate shortages.

Companies have since learned, if they didn't already know, that being able to see what is happening along their supply chains is critical to avoiding and adapting to disruptions. And modern digital technologies are key to making this happen.

This includes everything from state-of-the-art software to better communication with suppliers to cloud computing for efficient data storage, artificial intelligence tools to make better decisions and robotics for automating processes. Implementing these new technologies is the biggest global corporate priority for 2022, according to strategic consultancy the Hackett Group.

FROM 'JUST-IN-TIME' TO 'JUST-IN-CASE'

One of the great supply chain advancements in recent decades is a Japanese management philosophy known as "just-in-time."

While the essence of the philosophy is eliminating waste, businesses reduced just-in-time to the idea of having low or even zero inventory. That meant carrying as little stuff in warehouses as possible to minimize storage costs, maximize efficiencies and yield higher

profits. As long as there were no disruptions, the system worked.

However, just-in-time made businesses vulnerable to even small disruptions. Companies' super-lean supply chains meant the disruptions caused by the pandemic – and pretty much anything else – were amplified considerably, making even a hiccup potentially cascade into a major problem.

Companies now fearful of shortages are moving toward carrying more inventory. Since the pandemic began, many have been shifting from just-in-time to a "just in case" model. While having more inventory will make it less likely companies will experience shortages, it's also more costly because it can lead to a lot of excess stock and products becoming obsolete before they're sold.

But this trend, like the others, is unlikely to change anytime soon despite the elevated costs they'll incur. That is, companies learned that the cost of empty shelves was higher than the cost of some inefficiency. In most cases, these costs will be passed on to consumers in terms of higher prices – which may be bad news for consumers tired of inflation.

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Understaffed hotel sector caught off-guard by influx of tourists

LYNZY VALLES

THE government has admitted that the hotel sector is understaffed amid the current tourism advertising campaign that aims to boost tourist arrivals in the city following the easing of border restrictions on Sunday.

Cheng Wai Tong, deputy director of the Macao Government Tourism Office said in a TDM's Macau Forum that due to the layoffs during the onset of the pandemic, "it may be difficult to replenish manpower in the short term."

The lack of manpower may also be due to the Covid outbreak, as many employees may still be recovering, he said.

Back in mid-2020, integrated resorts did not renew the contracts of most of their non-resident workers, particularly those in the service industry as casinos have been bleeding cash every day due to the strict virus restrictions.

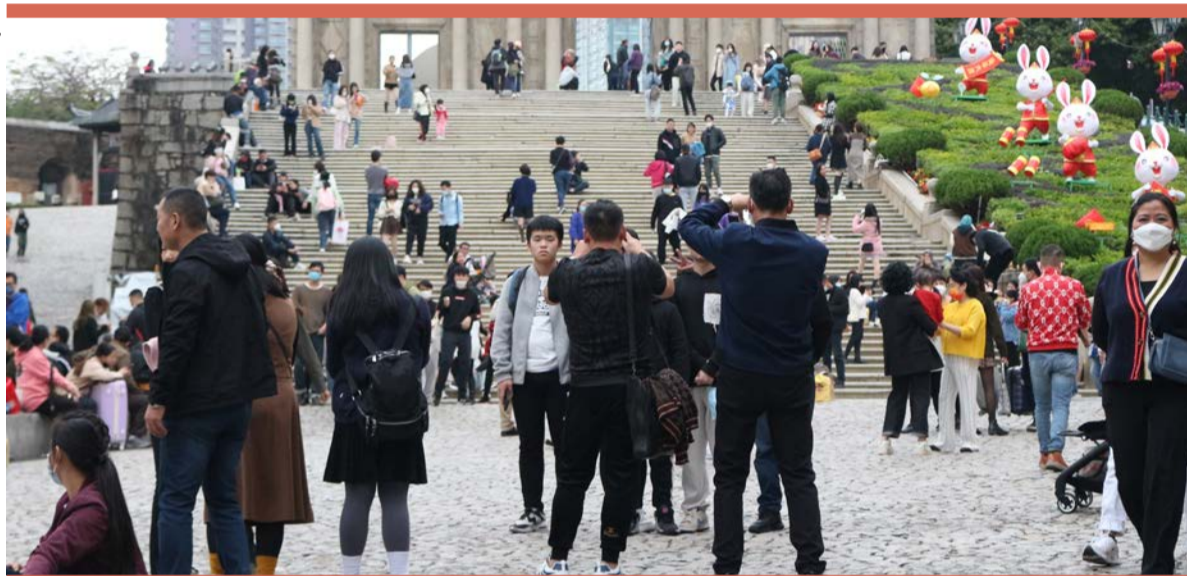
The city's adherence to zero-Covid policy has led to district lockdowns, mandatory quarantine and the requirement for negative Covid-19 tests.

Yet in a move that caught many by surprise, the SAR lifted its restrictions Jan. 8, welcoming tourists from all countries, as well as dropping health codes, mandatory quarantine and the need to present negative nucleic acid tests.

With all these developments happening in such a short period, the hotel sector is facing a shortage in manpower.

Rutger Verschuren, vice-chairman of the Macau Hotel Association confirmed that "the

RENATO MARQUES



hospitality industry is coping with a shortage of hardworking hands to cover three shifts per day including weekends and holidays."

"Many operation departments such as Housekeeping, Food & Beverage Service and Kitchens, as well as Engineering and Front Office are dealing with thin manning required for when hotels run high occupancies. With a short average stay per guest, the turnover of guestrooms is very high," he told the Times.

According to the hotelier, some hotel managers in the city have pledged to find ways to operated on limited resources. However, such move is only manageable in the short term.

A housekeeping employee working for a Cotai hotel told the Times that they have been asked by their managers to recommend people who could work in the Housekeeping department.

"They are now looking for staff with experience as room attendants. And it's urgent. We can directly submit their CVs to our

manager as they need it as soon as possible," said the employee, speaking on condition of anonymity.

On Tuesday, Manila-based recruitment agency, Ikon Solutions Asia, has posted new jobs posts on its social media pages, targeting those who want to work in Macau.

Qualifications include a minimum of two years of working experience required, as well as the ability to speak English fluently.

The employer is set to provide a MOP500 housing allowance, as well as transportation. Such positions are being offered by the gaming operators.

In a reply to the Times, the agency stated, "As Macau remains a sought-after market for Filipino job seekers, we have seen an increased number of inquiries regarding when the properties will start hiring again," said managing director of the agency, Paulo Martel.

The Times is also aware that several Filipino workers who used to work in the city's integra-

ted resorts have started to apply at the agency. Some of them returned home on vacation in March 2020 and were unable to return due to the border closure, while others have had not had their contracts renewed.

"We are proactively pooling potential candidates to ensure that we are ready to supply the best 5-star Filipino workers for our Macau clients. With over a decade of service, we are excited to help our clients recover and bounce back from the pandemic," Martel added.

With over 40,000 hotel rooms in the city, the sector needs more room attendants. "One room attendant can do 12 to 13 rooms a day, depending on the property," Verschuren previously said.

Macau saw 109,386 tourist arrivals from Jan. 8 to Jan 10, while the tourism bureau is launching promotions for tourists, particularly for arrivals from Hong Kong, encouraging them to stay at least one night by offering to pay for their return travel expenses.

NEW APPROVED RESIDENTIAL MORTGAGE LOANS RISE 41%

The new approvals of Macau's residential mortgage loans (RMLs) rose in November 2022 whereas those of commercial real estate loans (CRELs) decreased in the month. According to the statistics released by the Monetary Authority of Macao, the new RMLs approved by banks in November last year increased 40.9% month-on-month to 1.39 billion patacas. The new RMLs to residents, representing 99.5% of the total, grew 41.0 percent to 1.38 billion patacas. The non-resident component jumped 20.7% to 7.3 million patacas. The new CRELs plunged 80.8% from the relatively high base in the previous month to 1.40 billion patacas. The new CRELs to residents, or 93.1% of the total, fell by 82.1% to 1.30 billion patacas.

TOUR GUIDES FROM MACAU VISIT ZHUHAI TO EXPLORE HENGQIN TOUR PROGRAMS

Travel agency guides from Macau reached Zhuhai on Jan. 8 to perform a trial run for upcoming group tours, aiming to promote the tourism exchange between the two cities. The group are comprised of 60 people, including mostly professional guides who came from multiple travel agencies in Macau, but also tourists. Leisure travel is Hengqin's leading industry. Zhang Xihua, general manager of China International Travel Service (Macao) Co., Ltd. Macau, said, "We will offer the Hengqin tour as our most recommended program, intensify efforts to promote theme parks, wetland parks, and other tourism resources, and attract more tourists to the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin."

TOURISM

Macau among top destinations for mainland tourists

DATA from the Trip.com Group, formerly known as Ctrip, shows that of orders from Chinese mainland customers, flights from or for Macau, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Phnom Penh have seen a significant increase in popularity since Dec. 27.

During the week of Jan. 2 to 8, Spring Airlines' flight orders from Shanghai

Pudong airport to Hong Kong, Macau, Tokyo and Phuket more than doubled from the previous week.

China's inbound and outbound tourism market saw a steady and gradual recovery at the beginning of 2023.

Dai Bin, president of the China Tourism Academy, said that judging from leading indicators such as air

ticket searches and travel intentions, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Hong Kong and Macau are likely to be the first outbound tourist destinations to recover, followed by medium and long-distance markets such as West Asia and Europe.

As China downgraded its management of Covid-19 on Sunday, China's travel platforms have seen

a surge in inbound and outbound orders.

In recent months, the country has made an array of active adjustments to its Covid-19 response, including 20 measures in November, 10 new measures in December, and changing the Chinese term for Covid-19 from "novel coronavirus pneumonia" to "novel coronavirus infection."

The number of inbound and outbound air ticket orders on Sunday rose 628% year on year. Popular destinations for inbound flights are Shanghai, Nanjing, Guangzhou, Chengdu and Nanning, while the destinations of outbound tourists include more than 100 cities in 53 countries and regions, according to Tongcheng Travel, an online travel servi-

ce provider.

Meanwhile, Shen Jiani, a senior researcher at the strategic research center of the Ctrip Research Institute, believes that with the adjustment of China's COVID response and entry-exit policies, Chinese tourists' travel confidence will be rebuilt, and tourism consumption confidence will be quickly restored. LV/XINHUA

POLICE WARN PUBLIC AGAINST UNCONFIRMED ONLINE NEWS REPORTS

The Judiciary Police have issued a statement reminding the public to be skeptical of unconfirmed online news reports, and warning against the dissemination of fake news. On January 8, a social media post went viral which published allegations about an incident concerning illegal currency exchange, robbery and murder at a local resort. The post also claimed that two people were killed and a third was injured. The police emphasized that it received no such report and the resort's security department denied that any such incident took place. The police thus remind the public that the crime of forging news reports in Macau carries a maximum penalty of a year in prison or 120 days fine.

DSAL TO OFFER 353 VACANCIES IN THIRD WEEK OF JANUARY

The Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) will organize four job-matching sessions between Jan. 18 and 20, putting a total of 353 vacancies on offer. On the first day, a holding company will offer 55 vacancies, including positions in sales, art gallery and catering. On the second day, 77 vacancies with a focus on the catering industry will be offered. The last two days will focus on the hospitality industry, with 221 vacancies on offer. Prior registration is required for inclusion in the limited quota of applicants. The first two sessions will be held near the Border Gate, with the last two near the Inner Harbor.

TAX COLLECTOR RUNS LUCKY DRAW TO ATTRACT DIGITAL SERVICE USERS

The Financial Services Bureau (DSF) will run lucky draws from February to April in order to encourage taxpayers to make tax declarations through the bureau's digital platforms between January and March, which is the annual tax declaration period. These platforms include the Macau Tax mobile app, the bureau's online platform and self-service kiosks. The draw will be held on sixth days across February, March and April, with a grand prize to be drawn at the last session. Prizes include such items as smart watches, smart phones, tablet PCs, and supermarket coupons.

FIXED PRICES FOR NEW SANDWICH-CLASS HOUSING RAISE MAJOR CONCERNS FOR LAWMAKERS

RENATO MARQUES

THE lawmakers who compose the Third Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL) have major objections to fixing and disclosing the acquisition price of the housing units to be built under the new type of public housing, commonly known as "sandwich-class housing."

The concerns were mentioned yesterday by the chairman of the committee, lawmaker Vong Hin Fai in a press briefing following the second committee meeting to scrutinize the bill that will regulate this new type of public housing.

In the media briefing, Vong noted that many lawmakers are very concerned about the procedure, especially the date when will the acquisition prices will be announced by the government.

"While addressing Article 14 of the bill concerning the public tender advertising, some lawmakers questioned why there is no reference to the price per square meter of the housing units, a matter that also related to Article 26 that we also addressed today," the chairman said. Vong also noted that, following on the discussion that started at the plenary meeting for the first reading of the bill, the lawmakers want to know exactly how and when will the prices be published, a matter that is unclear in both the bill and in the government's explanatory note to the AL which accompanied the bill's introduction.

"The lawmakers are asking questions such as when is the price going to be turned public? Will it be via a dispatch from the Chief Executive? Will this be the same dispatch or at the same time that the tender is launched?", Vong asked. The chairman reiterated that the matter is unclear, adding also that the majority of the lawmakers share the opinion that the selling price should be disclosed together with the tender opening and application procedures. This would prevent people who cannot afford to buy the units from wasting their time with futile applications.

In a related matter, the committee members are concerned with the factors to be used and weighted in the calculation of the final price.

"On number 2 of Article 26,



it is said that the price weighing factor mostly depends on the price of private market units in the surrounding areas. This is very different from the rules applied for the affordable acquisition housing that follows completely different criteria," Vong said. He noted that for the current types of public housing, when it comes to the economic acquisition, the cost of construction and the land premium are major factors taken into account in the definition of the selling price, something that seems not to be taken into account in this case.

"This seems to be a political decision and a choice by the government that lawmakers want to see clarified," he remarked.

HOUSING FOR THE YOUNGER GENERATION?

Another of the many problems and questions raised by the committee concerns the government's statement in the explanatory note that this type of housing is aimed mostly at the younger generation.

In this sense, the committee said it fails to understand how the government is giving preference or incentives for young people to acquire these housing units. "There seems not to be any particular factor that takes age into account, nor is there any incentive as occurs with other types of public housing where there is an exemption from stamp duty and other [measures]," Vong noted. Vong added that this is another topic on which the committee has many questions for the government.

"Maybe for this type of hou-

sing, the dispatch [from the Chief Executive that will launch the tenders] will state something similar to the [dispatches] for the applications for other types of public housing. [These] include number and composition of the household, time of permanence in Macau and other factors. But we don't know exactly," said the chairman. Vong predicted that it might also include some special criteria or markup for younger people. "In reality, at this moment, we don't know!"

WEAKER LAW COMPARED TO OTHER PUBLIC HOUSING REGIMES

After the first scrutiny of the 54 articles that compose the bill, the members of the AL committee consider that this law seems to be "weaker" and less specific than the current laws on the other types of public housing.

"On economic housing, even after signing the pre-contract agreement, candidates can quit. There is a mechanism for the refund of the security deposit and also for the repayment of expenses related to the process, but with this [scheme], there is no such mechanism. We need to ask if the intention is to follow just the general rules of the civil code or if there are any other criteria," Vong said.

With a long list of questions to put to the government, the committee chairman also explained that several problems have also been found by the AL's juridical advisory regarding the application method for the tenders (exclusively online) and some inconsistencies

between the draft legislation and the explanatory note which accompanied it.

The government is also yet to explain how the exclusive online submission process will operate. Lawmakers questioned whether this will be done via the Macao One Account system, or through a standalone platform like the one to be used for applications for the new talent recruitment scheme, or even the one to be used by the lawyers to submit court documents.

16 YEARS IS TOO LONG FOR THE RESALE BAN

The members of the committee appear to agree that the proposed ban on the resale of the units acquired under this scheme within 16 years is too long.

Lawmakers are calling on the government to introduce a less restrictive system since there are already other provisions to guarantee that such housing units stay in the possession of permanent residents of Macau.

The lawmakers also want to enforce a less "rigid" system that allows that in an extreme case, such as the death or severe disease or disability of the applicant, that the family can lift the ban before the 16 years in order to meet unexpected expenses.

Regarding the stipulation in Article 38 that the housing unit cannot be seized or pledged as security or for repayment of debts, lawmakers want to ask the government whether this rule applies in every situation, including cases in which the creditor is the government.

Trade: Several MICE events with over 1,000 participants confirmed for this year

ANTHONY LAM

SEVERAL meeting, incentive, convention and exhibition (MICE) events set to attract over 1,000 participants have been confirmed for 2023, the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) disclosed in a statement.

The institute, which is a government entity, recently met with the city's five MICE associations regarding plans for the upcoming year. The meeting aimed to coordinate resources in the trade to help boost the recovery of the industry, the IPIM noted in the statement.

Besides announcing the 1,000-participant events, Acting President U U Sang of the IPIM also disclosed that one of the events, which he declined to name, is set to attract over 10,000 participants. The event in ques-



tion was held in Macau before Covid-19.

Commenting on the event, the IPIM official revealed the institute's previous conversations had made a good impression on the organizing body, on the pros-

pects of organizing a successful trade show in Macau. This is the reason why they have decided to return.

Although U was reticent about naming the event, one major event that was held in Macau

before Covid-19 but not over the previous three years due to disease control measures was Global Gaming Expo (G2E) Asia. The expo was relocated to Singapore last year.

In addition, the IPIM aims to

organize 700 to 1,000 MICE events in the coming year: about half the pre-Covid annual figure.

U also emphasized that the IPIM would coordinate resources between the MICE trade and local leisure and tourism operators to attract international and regional events to Macau. Resources will also be allotted to attract multinational enterprises to host annual meetings, summits, exhibitions or trade shows in Macau.

Moreover, U pledged to use various tactics to entice business travellers to Macau for MICE events.

The IPIM will also participate in major events in Portugal and Malaysia in the attempts to promote Macau.

With Covid restrictions nearly all scrapped, the MICE industry expressed its confidence in the revival of Macau in the year ahead.

CHCSJ

Health Bureau opposes mother-newborn separation reports

ANTHONY LAM

THE Health Bureau (SSM) has issued a statement denying the separation of newborns from their mothers at the government hospital as reported by several media outlets.

Recently it was reported that all newborns in Macau hospitals are being separated from their mothers immediately after birth and are being placed in a different ward due to Covid-19 restrictions. This makes it impossible for mothers to see or breastfeed their babies for the entire period they remain in hospital.

The SSM admitted to temporarily merging the postpartum care and the gynecology wards, which are not occupied frequently. The arrangement has led to the situation that mothers cannot breastfeed their newborn babies in the same room.

The bureau described



the reason for the arrangement as a "special scenario".

Meanwhile, the bureau defended the policy that when expectant mothers are admitted to the hospital for labor, they are asked if they want to breastfeed their babies. If they do, they will be able to do so within 10 hours giving birth unless they have another medical condition which prevents it.

It was also emphasized

that the policy of promoting breastfeeding "has not changed." The bureau reiterated the need for ensuring the availability of emergency medical services and safety of both mothers and infants. However, the statement did not respond to netizens' questions about the bureau's apparent lack of preparedness despite having three years to prepare for a major Covid-19 outbreak.

EVENTS

SAN MA LO TO BE CORDONED OFF FOR CNY ART FAIR

SAN Ma Lo will be reserved for pedestrians over the Lunar New Year holidays and will host an art fair for everyone to enjoy, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) has recently announced.

Officially referred to as Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro, San Ma Lo is arguably the central artery of the Macau Peninsula's land traffic. Linking two commercial districts of Praia Grande and Inner Harbour and running through the Senado Square, the road has rarely – if ever – been completely cordoned off.

From midday on Jan. 22 to 10 p.m. on January 24, as well as from midday on Feb. 4 to 10 p.m. on Feb. 5, 450 meters of the major road between the Inner Harbour and Rua Central will be decorated and cordoned off for pedestrians only.

Three different themes of decorations will be installed on the cordoned sector of the road, with each theme occupying its respective section.

For example, the Magic Moment theme will fea-



ture colorful clouds and nocturnal light projections. Nemophilist Paths will see irregularly laid artificial turf to resemble forests in a city center. Lastly, Urban Oasis will comprise coffee tables covered with sun umbrellas for people to rest under.

Street shows will also be staged at the pedestrian event, such as the presentation of manufacturing of Dragon Beard Candy and flour sculptures. Catering services and cultural merchandise will also be on sale at the event.

Participating local sellers include Rotten Rock Teahouse, Flyer Coffee, Keica Macau and Trek Coffee Roasters.

The six casino operators will make contributions to enrich the celebratory vibes of the event. SJM Resorts, S.A will showcase a locally designed lotus installation. All operators will distribute Lunar New Year greetings on site to participants. Meanwhile, the Public Security Police Force band will also stage performances at 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. each day during the event. **AL**

COVID SPAT

JAPAN, S. KOREA PROTEST CHINA VISA STOPPAGE

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

JAPAN and South Korea defended public health restrictions on travelers from China yesterday, a day after China stopped issuing new visas in both countries in apparent retaliation.

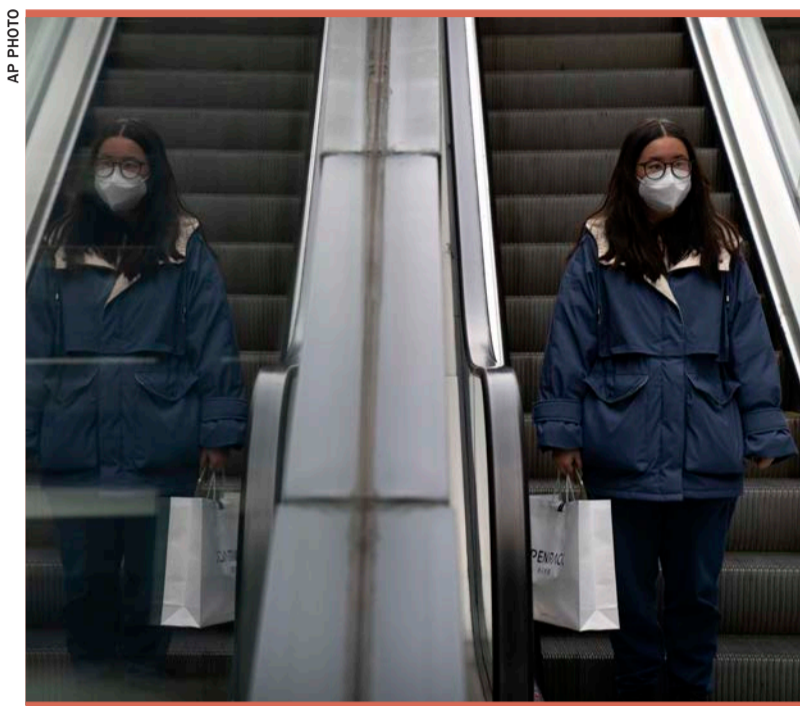
Chinese embassies stopped issuing new visas for South Koreans and Japanese on Tuesday. It wasn't clear whether China would expand the visa suspensions to other countries that have imposed stricter virus testing on passengers from China following its COVID-19 surge.

South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin said yesterday he finds "significantly regrettable" that China stopped issuing short-term visas to South Koreans and called for China to align its pandemic steps with "scientific and objective facts."

According to South Korea's Disease Control and Prevention Agency, about 17% of the 2,550 short-term travelers from China from Jan. 2 to Tuesday have tested positive.

South Korea has stopped issuing most short-term visas at its consulates in China through the end of January while also requiring all passengers from China, Hong Kong and Macau to submit proofs of negative tests taken within 48 hours of their arrival in addition to COVID-19 tests at the airport.

Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno criticized China for "one-sidedly" restricting visa issuances to the Japanese nationals "because of a reason that is not related to COVID-19 measures."



Tokyo protested and demanded China scrap the measures and that Japan will "respond appropriately while closely watching China's infection situation and how information disclosures are handled by the Chinese side," Matsuno said.

Matsuno said Japan had to take temporary measures to avoid rapid inflow of infections into Japan because of China's spreading infections and lack of transparency about the situation.

He said that Japanese border measures are purely aimed at preventing infections and have aimed to limit effects on international travel. "It is extremely regrettable that China has one-sidedly restricted visa issuances."

The Chinese embassies in Tokyo and Seoul announced the

suspensions in brief online notices, without providing reasons or details such as when visa issuances will resume.

China's Foreign Ministry threatened countermeasures last week against countries that had announced new virus testing requirements for travelers from China. At least 10 governments in Europe, North America and Asia have done so recently. Meanwhile, Thailand sent three ministers to Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport to welcome the country's first planeload of Chinese tourists in years, in a bid to revive inbound tourism.

Japan reopened its borders for individual tourism in October. Most travelers can show proof of vaccination instead of testing at the airport, unless they show symptoms, but since Dec. 30 travelers from China must show

pre-departure negative tests and take an additional test upon arrival. Those who test positive must quarantine at designated facilities for up to seven days.

According to health ministry statistics, about 97% of 497 people who tested positive upon arrivals from Dec. 31 to Jan. 9 were Chinese or had recently been in China.

Some Japanese media recently showed Chinese tourists at pharmacies buying anti-fever medicine, noting shortages.

China's worsening COVID-19 situation and lack of information mean that South Korea may need to extend restrictions, senior Disease Control and Prevention Agency official Lim Sook-young told a briefing. "Just because we haven't seen the emergence of a new variant doesn't necessarily mean we won't see one later," she said.

Park said he doesn't believe that the friction over COVID-19 measures would seriously hurt bilateral relations, which he described as stable.

"The most important reason for our government's measure is the lives and safety of our people," he said. "We will monitor the COVID-19 situation in China before determining how long we will maintain our measures."

Withholding of visas from South Korean or Japanese businesspeople could delay commercial activity and potential new investment.

South Korea's Ministry of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Startups yesterday opened telephone lines for small businesses to report any disruption

caused by China's decision to halt short-term visas. While only a few calls had been received as yesterday afternoon, officials say that the Chinese steps could hurt some companies exporting to China by forcing their employees to cancel visits and business meetings.

"We are closely monitoring how much disruption," the Chinese steps may cause, said ministry official Lee Gwon-jae.

Impact on Japan could be limited for now, as Japanese business people are still largely watching the development. A major tour agency said none of its customers were currently seeking China visas.

A South Korean restaurant owner in Beijing said the announcement forced friends to postpone plans to visit China. He spoke on condition of anonymity out of concern his business might be affected. He added that he is preparing to renew his Chinese work visa and doesn't know whether that will be affected.

China's move appeared to be grounded in its strict view of reciprocity, and demands that its citizens be treated the same as those of other countries.

"A handful of countries, in disregard of science, facts and their actual epidemic situation, have insisted on taking discriminatory entry restriction measures targeting China," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said yesterday. "China made reciprocal responses in light of the actual discriminatory measures taken by these countries against China." **MDT/AP**

DIRE STRAIT

China renews threat against Taiwan as island holds drills

CHINA renewed its threats yesterday to attack Taiwan and warned that foreign politicians who interact with the self-governing island are "playing with fire."

A spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office said the country was re-committed in the new year to "safeguarding sovereignty and territorial integrity" and "smashing plots for Taiwan independence" on the self-governing democracy that separated from mainland China in 1949.

"The malicious support for Taiwan independence among anti-China elements in a few foreign countries

are a deliberate provocation," Ma Xiaoguang said at a biweekly news conference.

China views Taiwan as a Chinese territory that must be brought under Beijing's control, by force if necessary. A string of visits in recent months by foreign politicians to Taiwan, including by then-U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and numerous politicians from the European Union, spurred displays of military might from both sides.

This week, Taiwan's military is staging drills intended to reassure the public of its ability to counter China's threats ahead of this

month's Lunar New Year holiday.

"The most important thing is to maintain the safety of our airspace and national security," air force Lt. Col. Wu Bong-yeng told reporters at Hsinchu Air Base just south of the capital, Taipei.

The drills coincide with a visit from German and Lithuanian lawmakers — the latter Baltic state being a particular target of Chinese ire for upgrading its ties with Taiwan.

"We call on the relevant countries to ... cease sending the wrong signals to Taiwan independence separatist forces and cea-

se playing with fire on the question of Taiwan," Ma said.

China has responded to foreign visits by holding large-scale military exercises seen by some as a rehearsal for a blockade or invasion. Beijing sends airplanes and warships toward Taiwan on a near-daily basis, often crossing the midline of the 160 kilometer Taiwan Strait dividing the sides. At the end of December, China sent a record 71 planes and seven ships toward Taiwan — the largest such scale exercise in 2022.

China's efforts to isolate the island diplomatically have left Taiwan with just 14



official diplomatic partners, although it retains robust

unofficial relations with key ally the U.S. and more than 100 nations around the world. **MDT/AP**

JAPAN

Washington, Tokyo poised to agree on shift in Marine unit on Okinawa

LOLITA C. BALDOR,
WASHINGTON

TOP national security officials from the United States and Japan are expected to agree to changes in the joint defense posture this week as the two nations confront rising threats from North Korea and increasing aggressiveness from China.

U.S. officials say Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will meet today [Macau time] with their Japanese counterparts and plan to issue a joint statement that will adjust, but not increase, the American troop presence on the island of Okinawa. It also will add a formal mention of space in the longstanding mutual defense treaty the two countries have held, in a nod to the Pentagon's creation of the Space Force and Space Command.

The new agreements to be sealed at the so-called "two-plus-two" meeting will come just ahead of a visit to Washington by Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who will meet with President Joe Biden at the White House on Friday.

"The leaders will discuss our shared vision of a modernized alliance that will tackle 21st century challenges in the Indo-Pacific and around the world," said



Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon press secretary, yesterday. "China certainly will be a topic of discussion with our Japanese allies during the consultative meetings this week."

Ryder declined to provide details on the new agreement.

But U.S. officials said the 12th Marine Regiment currently on Okinawa will transform into a smaller, more rapidly mobile unit — the 12th Marine Littoral Regiment. The new regiment is designed to be better able and equipped to fight an adversary and defend the U.S. and its allies in the region. U.S. officials said the decision will not increase the number of Marines on the island.

Reinforcement of military capability or troops is a sensitive issue for Okinawa, site of one of the bloodiest ground battles at the end of World War II. The island hosts more than half of the U.S. troops based in Japan, and Okinawans want that number reduced. While there is a growing fear of a Taiwan emergency, many islands in the region are concerned that a defense buildup could increase risks of getting embroiled in war.

The change is part of a broader shift being made across the Marine Corps, as the commandant, Gen. David Berger, aims to make the service better able to operate and fight in contested areas,

particularly within striking range of an enemy. That element is critical in the Indo-Pacific, where thousands of U.S. and allied forces are easily within missile — or even rocket — range of both China and North Korea.

One Marine littoral regiment has already been set up in Hawaii, the second would be in Okinawa and another is planned later this decade, with a possible location being Guam, according to officials. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss plans not publicly announced.

Details are still being worked out, but a littoral regiment is made up of roughly 2,000 Mari-

nes, and includes a combat team with an anti-ship missile battery, a logistics battalion and an air defense battalion. The current Marine regiment on Okinawa that it would essentially replace includes about 3,400 Marines and sailors. The overall number of Marines on Okinawa would remain about the same, officials said.

Asked about specific announcements, Ryder would only say that the meeting will provide an opportunity for talks on how to modernize the alliance and maintain a stable and secure Indo-Pacific.

Speaking to Pentagon reporters, Ryder also noted U.S. concerns over Chinese military activity in the region, including a recent incident when a Chinese fighter jet flew dangerously close to a U.S. Air Force plane over the South China Sea.

"In terms of Chinese behavior, as evidenced most recently by the PRC air intercept, it is concerning when you see these types of provocative actions taking place in sensitive areas," said Ryder. "And so, again, our focus from the United States standpoint is working with our allies and our partners in the region like Japan, to ensure a free and open Indo Pacific and to ensure that security and stability continue to be present throughout the region." **MDT/AP**

PHILIPPINES

Court voids oil exploration pact involving Beijing

THE Philippine Supreme Court declared unconstitutional a 2005 pact by China, the Philippines and Vietnam to jointly explore for oil in the disputed South China Sea, a decision that also brings other proposed agreements into doubt.

The decision by 12 of the court's 15 justices voided the Joint Marine Seismic Undertaking agreement by state-owned companies in the three nations, which are among Asian countries locked in decades-long territorial disputes in the busy waterway.

Two justices dissented and one was on leave and did not vote. The court did not immediately make public the full decision and only released highlights in a statement.



Ferdinand Marcos Jr. (right) walks with Xi Jinping after reviewing an honor guard during a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Jan. 4

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who took office in June last year, expressed willingness to revive failed negotiations for joint oil exploration with China in a meeting with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, in Beijing last week.

The court ruled that the 2005 agreement violated the constitution by allowing the state-owned oil companies of China and Vietnam to undertake joint oil exploration in Philippine waters. The charter specifies that "the explora-

tion, development and utilization of natural resources shall be under the full control and supervision of the state."

The petitioners argued that oil exploration in Philippine waters should be undertaken by Filipino ci-

tizens or corporations and groups that are at least 60% owned by Filipinos, according to the court.

Proponents argued that the agreement only involved pre-exploration activities which were not covered by the constitutional prohibition.

But the court said the accord's intent "is to discover petroleum which is tantamount to `exploration.'"

The agreement led to a joint oil search in 142,886 square kilometers (55,168 square miles) of sea, including waters claimed by the Philippines as part of its territory and other areas it contests with China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

Under President Rodrigo Duterte, Marcos's predeces-

sor, the Philippines signed a 2018 agreement with China aimed at agreeing on terms for a possible joint oil and gas exploration in the disputed waters. But years of negotiations failed, mainly due to disagreement over which side has sovereign rights over the stretch of sea to be covered by the joint search.

Duterte's administration terminated the agreement shortly before his six-year term ended last year.

A 2016 ruling by a United Nations-backed arbitration tribunal invalidated China's extensive territorial claims based on historical grounds in the South China Sea. Beijing did not participate in the arbitration, rejected the decision and continues to defy it. **MDT/AP**



Protesters clash with police officers next to the Garzweiler lignite opencast mine at the Luetzerath village near Erkelenz, Germany

GERMANY

Coal mine clash pits laws against climate

FRANK JORDANS, ERKELENZ

THE fate of a tiny village has sparked heated debate in Germany over the country's continued use of coal and whether tackling climate change justifies breaking the law.

Environmental activists have been locked in a standoff with police who started eviction operations yesterday in the hamlet of Luetzerath, west of Cologne, that's due to be bulldozed for the expansion of a nearby lignite mine. Some stones and fireworks were thrown at officers in riot gear, who could be seen dismantling stalls set up by protesters.

Protesters refused yesterday [Macau time] to heed a court ruling effectively banning them from the area. Some dug trenches, built barricades and perched atop giant tripods in an effort to stop heavy machines from reaching the village, before police pushed them back by force.

"People are putting all of their effort, all of their lives into this struggle to keep the coal in the ground," said Dina Hamid, a spokesperson for the activist group Luetzerath Lives.

"If this coal is burned, we're actually going to take down our climate goals," she said. "So we're trying to, with our bodies, protect the climate goals."

The debate flared up hours later at a townhall meeting in nearby Erkelenz, when one regional official accused activists of being willing to "spill human blood" to defend the now-abandoned village.

Stephan Pusch, who heads the district administration, said that while he sympathized with the protesters' aims, the time had come to give up Luetzerath. The village's last resident left in 2022 after being forced to sell to utility company RWE. "You've achieved your goal. Now clear the pitch," he said to jeers from the room.

Many disagreed, arguing that the village is more than just a potent symbol for the need to stop global warming.

Studies indicate that about 110 million metric tons of coal could be extracted from beneath Luetzerath. The government and RWE say this coal is needed to ensure Germany's energy security — squeezed by the cut in supply of Russian gas due to the war in Ukraine.

Critics counter that burning so much coal would make it much harder for Germany, and the world, to cap global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) as agreed in the 2015 Paris climate accord.

"Nobody wants to be out there in the cold right now, defending a forest or a villa-

ge," said Maya Rollberg, a 26-year-old student who had traveled from southern Germany. "But I think that people have realized that they have to do that in order to (protect) future generations."

Dietmar Jung, a retired priest attending the meeting, said he was tired of hearing officials say the law was on the side of RWE.

"They keep going back to the legal situation," he said. "But the right to live doesn't play a role here (for them)."

Pusch, the regional administration chief, warned protesters that intentionally breaking the law wouldn't help their cause in a country where the violent seizure of power and the horrors of dictatorship are still within living memory.

"I'll tell you honestly that I'm scared my children will grow up in a world that isn't worth living in anymore," he said. "But I'm at least as scared of my children growing up in a country where everyone takes the law into their own hands."

"You won't save the world's climate on your own," said Pusch. "(We'll) only do so if we manage to take the majority of the population with us."

Similar debates over how far civil disobedience can go have taken place in Germany and elsewhere in recent months amid a wave of road blockades and other

dramatic actions by protesters demanding tougher measures to combat climate change.

Some climate activists say the law is ultimately on their side, citing a 2021 ruling by the country's supreme court that forced the government to step up its effort to cut emissions. They also note the legally binding nature of Germany's commitments under the Paris accord.

Speaking after the townhall meeting, student Jannis Niethammer acknowledged that the dispute over Luetzerath touches on fundamental issues. "It's a question of democracy and how do we actually get a democracy to move toward climate protection, toward climate justice," he said.

Janine Wissler, a federal lawmaker and co-leader of the opposition Left party, suggested the way out would be for the government to reverse its decision allowing the village to be razed.

"If we want to achieve our climate targets and take the Paris climate agreement seriously, then the coal beneath Luetzerath needs to stay in the ground," she told The Associated Press on the sidelines of the protest.

Wissler criticized an agreement struck last year between the government and utility company RWE to permit mining beneath the village in return for an earlier end to coal use in Germany. Some experts say that, in sum, the deal will lead to higher emissions.

"We're already experiencing droughts, famines and floods. Climate change is happening already," she said. "And therefore wrong decisions need to be corrected." MDT/AP

this day in history

1976 CRIME WRITER AGATHA CHRISTIE DIES

The most popular novelist in the world, Dame Agatha Christie, has died leaving rumours of a multi-million pound fortune and a final book waiting to be published.



The British author, who sold an estimated 300 million books during her lifetime, had been in poor health for several years. She died at her home in Wallingford in Oxfordshire, aged 85.

Two London theatres dimmed their lights this evening - St Martin's where her record-breaking "The Mousetrap" is now in its 24th year and the Savoy, where "Murder at the Vicarage" will have its 200th performance next week.

Dame Agatha is believed to have left one last novel, as yet unpublished, featuring one of her most famous characters, the deceptively clever Miss Marple, as well as an autobiography.

During her lifetime, Dame Agatha published 83 books, including novels, romances written under the pseudonym of Mary Westmacott, short stories, poetry and the scripts for her plays.

She married Colonel Archibald Christie in 1914. While he was away during the war she worked as a nurse at her local hospital in Torquay, where she learned about the poisons that later featured in so many of her crime novels.

Dame Agatha established her name as a crime writer with her first detective book in 1920, The Mysterious Affair at Styles, in which she created her much-loved Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot.

In December 1926 she sparked a police search when her car was found abandoned in a chalk pit at Newlands Corner on the Surrey Downs.

It emerged she and her husband had had a row. Several days later she turned up in a hotel in Harrogate booked in under the name of a woman who was revealed to be her husband's mistress.

She divorced and married again, well-known archaeologist Sir Max Mallowan, and divided her life between several country and town homes, archaeological digs and the regular production of one thriller a year.

She was made a Dame of the British Empire in 1971.

Newspaper estimates of her fortune vary, but in the late 1950s she was reputed to be earning about £100,000 a year.

She once said: "I only write one book a year now, which is sufficient to give me a good income. If I wrote more, I'd enlarge the finances of the Inland Revenue who would spend it mostly on idiotic things."

In 1955 she formed a company, Agatha Christie Ltd and to save its dividends from tax, she later sold 51% to Booker McConnell, a firm best known as sugar giants but also with other investments including authors' copyrights.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Dame Agatha Christie's will was published on 30 April 1976 and revealed she had left only £106,683, having managed to dispose of most of her wealth before she died.

She left most of her property to her husband and daughter with a number of smaller bequests such as £500 to her gardener, £250 to her secretary and £200 to her garden manager.

Sleeping Murder, Miss Marple's last case, was published after her death. Her autobiography was also published posthumously.

Her legacy lives on in Torquay, Devon, where her daughter by her first marriage Rosalind Hicks lived until her death in 2004. Today there is a museum and a bronze bust of the author at the harbour-side.

Her only grandson, Matthew Pritchard, is chairman of Agatha Christie Ltd.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Be careful when dealing with investments. Sudden changes regarding colleagues may surprise you. Do not reveal personal information to those you feel may be untrustworthy.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20

Put your time and energy into travel, philosophy, and soul-searching. You will need to take a look at the renovations that are necessary and try to find the cheapest way to get things done.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21

After all, they may have valuable information to pass on. You will easily blow situations out of proportion. Expect your workload to be heavy.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Don't let your health suffer because of abuse. Renovations to your domestic scene will pay high rewards. Watch your weight gain due to water retention.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Be aware that you don't get anything for nothing. Do not allow colleagues to hinder your ambitions. Be careful when dealing with investments.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22

You will be best suited to doing things around the house or inviting friends over for a visit. Do your own thing without drawing attention to it.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Do not force your opinions on others the connections will be short lived. You may want to take a look at courses offered at a local institute. Difficulties with your mate may lead to isolation.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You have more energy than the rest of the people you live with anyway. You can make money through real estate or by using your head when it comes to personal investments.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21

There'll be difficulties if you spend too much. You may want to try your hand at a little creative writing. Don't let your boss get the better of you.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Make sure that you have covered yourself legally and try not to let your temper get out of hand. You may be uncertain about some of your coworkers and your boss.

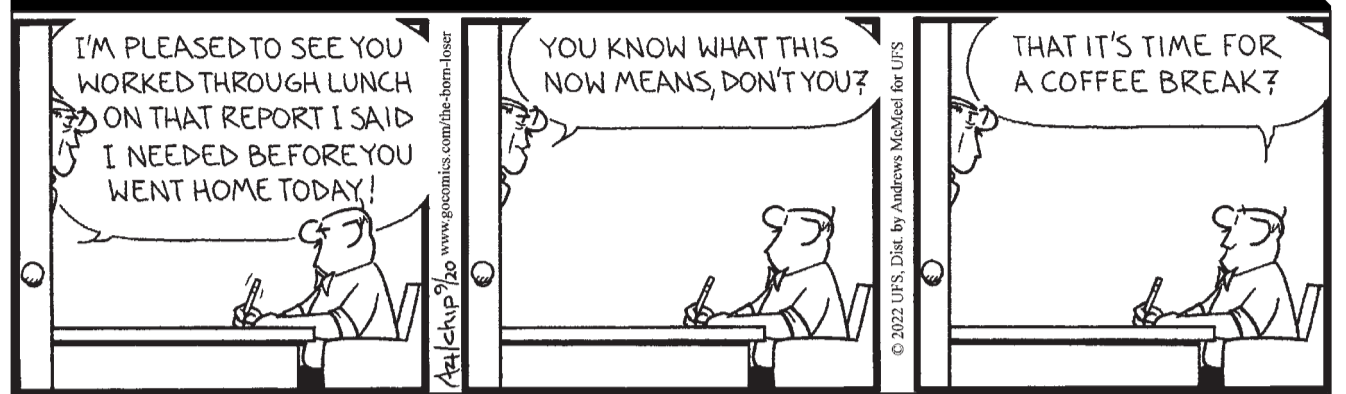
AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You're best not to get involved in joint financial ventures. Your ability to deal with others will help you in getting the support you need.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Try not to get backed into corners. Discrimination will be in order. Control your temper when dealing with your emotional partner.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-2	3	overcast
Changchun	-3	4	cloudy
Chengdu	9	14	cloudy
Chongqing	8	15	cloudy
Fuzhou	13	23	rain
Guangzhou	15	20	rain
Guiyang	10	21	fine
Haikou	19	25	rain
Hangzhou	7	19	rain
Harbin	-7	3	cloudy
Hefei	2	19	rain
Nanjing	4	19	rain
Shanghai	8	18	rain
Taipei	15	22	cloudy
Wuhan	2	16	rain
Hong Kong	19	21	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-8	-7	cloudy
Frankfurt	8	9	rain
Paris	8	12	cloudy
London	7	12	rain
New York	10	11	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Swindle; 5- Sincere; 9- Settled down; 13- Killer whale; 14- Gal's guy; 15- Ballot choice; 16- Sequence; 18- Are you ___ out?; 19- Body art; 20- Particular time; 22- Loose coil of yarn; 23- Eight Days ___; 24- Footfall; 26- Surrender by deed; 31- First name in Notre Dame football; 34- Earthbound bird; 37- Towering; 38- One recording the past; 42- Old French expression meaning "goodbye"; 43- Remove from text; 44- Nationality suffix; 45- Assaults; 47- Prophetic sign; 50- Equip; 53- Constructed; 57- Rulers; 61- Stevedore; 62- One with no capacity for veracity; 63- Laugh loudly; 65- Pass over; 66- Collect; 67- Bok ___; 68- Hawaiian goose; 69- Sharp to the taste; 70- Seemingly forever;

DOWN 1- Out of ___; 2- Frog sound; 3- Sharp; 4- Predaceous insect; 5- Stutz contemporary; 6- Arm joint; 7- Wonderland girl; 8- Cavalryman; 9- Thrifty competitor; 10- Burt's ex; 11- Langston Hughes poem; 12- Small gull; 14- To's partner; 17- "___ you dare!"; 21- Pack leader; 23- Garden pest; 25- Be human; 27- Cleaning implement; 28- "___ Walked Into My Life" (song from "Mame"); 29- Canonized Fr. women; 30- Bronte heroine; 31- Gregory Peck role of 1956; 32- Travel on; 33- Warts and all; 35- Fair-hiring abbr.; 36- Beaming; 39- Driving peg; 40- External; 41- "Everybody Hurts" band; 46- Winter vehicle; 48- Black, in poetry; 49- Subtlety; 51- Stage play; 52- Academy award; 54- Boise's state; 55- Admit; 56- Low cards; 57- North Carolina university; 58- Jester; 59- Physical suffering; 60- Romain de Tiroff, familiarly; 61- Fleur-de-___; 64- DDE's predecessor;

Yesterday's solution

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

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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FILM

AT REHABBED GLOBES, 'THE FABELMANS,' 'BANSHEES' TRIUMPH

JAKE COYLE, FILM WRITER

THE Golden Globes returned to the air yesterday [Macau time] with a red carpet flush with celebrities, comedian Jerrod Carmichael as a hesitant emcee and top awards for Steven Spielberg's "The Fabelmans" and Martin McDonagh's "The Banshees of Inisherin," as the beleaguered award show sought to rekindle its pre-pandemic and pre-scandal glamour.

Spielberg's autobiographical coming-of-age film "The Fabelmans" won best drama film and the dark friendship tale "The Banshees of Inisherin," captured best film, comedy or musical. "Abbott Elementary," "White Lotus" and "House of the Dragon" led the TV awards.

The Globes' would-be comeback ended like many Globes ceremonies before it: with a triumphant Spielberg. For the fifth time, one of Spielberg's films won a best picture Globe. Nominated 14 times by the Globes for best director, Spielberg also won the honor for the third time. He began by thanking his three sisters, his late father and his late mother, Leah Adler (played by Michelle Williams in the film). "She is up there kvelling about this right now," said Spielberg.

Carmichael kicked off the 80th Golden Globes from the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California, with little of the fanfare that usually opens such ceremonies. He plunged straight into the issues that drove the Globes off television and led much of the entertainment industry to boycott the Hollywood Foreign Press Association after the group was re-



Steven Spielberg accepting the Best Director award for "The Fabelmans" during the 80th Annual Golden Globe Awards at the Beverly Hilton Hotel, in California

vealed to have no Black members. Carmichael opened by asking the crowd to "be a little quiet here."

"I am your host, Jerrod Carmichael," said the "Rothaniel" comedian. "And I'll tell you why I'm here. I'm here 'cause I'm Black."

"I won't say they were a racist organization," he continued before sitting on the stage. "But they didn't have a single Black member until George Floyd died. So do with that information what you will."

McDonagh's "The Banshees of Inisherin" left with three awards, including best screenplay for McDonagh and best actor in a comedy for Colin Farrell. Fourteen years earlier, Farrell won a Globe for McDonagh's "In Bruges," which likewise paired him with Brendan Gleeson. In his remarks, Farrell thanked the playwright, his castmates, his kids and the film's donkey, Jenny.

On a soggy night following punishing, prolonged rains that have lashed Southern California, the first award went to Ke Huy Quan, the former child star of "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom," for best supporting actor in "Everything Everywhere All at Once." A clearly emotional Quan, who had left acting years before directors Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert cast him in their multiverse tale, thanked them for his second act.

"More than 30 years later, two guys thought of me," said Quan. "They remembered that kid. And they gave me the opportunity to try again."

Michelle Yeoh, the star of "Everything Everywhere All at Once," also won, for best actress in a comedy or musical. The Malaysian-born Yeoh was just the second female actor of Asian descent to win in the category, after her "Cra-

zy Rich Asian" costar Awkwafina, who won for "The Farewell" in 2020. "Forty years," the 60-year-old Yeoh said. "Not letting go of this."

Possibly Yeoh's stiffest competition at the Academy Awards, Cate Blanchett of "Tár," won best actress on the drama side. Blanchett, in production, wasn't in attendance to pick up her fourth Globe. (Also absent was Kevin Costner, best-actor winner in a drama series for "Yellowstone." Presenter Regina Hall said he was sheltering in place in Santa Barbara due to flooding.)

Angela Bassett, a likely Oscar frontrunner, won best supporting actress for her performance in "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever."

"Weeping may come in the evening, but joy comes in the morning," Bassett said, referencing the loss of "Black Panther"

star Chadwick Boseman.

Best actor was an upset. Austin Butler won for his performance in Baz Luhrmann's "Elvis." The favorite in the category has arguably been Brendan Fraser for "The Whale." Ahead of the Globes, Fraser said he would not attend because "my mother didn't raise a hypocrite." In 2018, Fraser said he was groped in 2003 by longtime HFPA member Philip Berk. Berk, who is no longer an HFPA member, denied it.

Mike White's "The White Lotus" won for best limited or anthology series. Fresh off her dramatic finale, Jennifer Coolidge gave one of the night's lengthiest and warmest speeches while accepting the best supporting actress in a limited series award.

"Even if this is the end, you sort of changed my life in a million different ways," Coolidge told White. "My neighbors are speaking to me, things like that."

The public school sitcom "Abbott Elementary" came in the lead TV nominee and took home three awards, including best comedy series. Quinta Brunson, the show's creator and star, won best actress in a comedy series, and Tyler James Williams won for his supporting role.

"It has resonated with the world in a way that I couldn't even have imagined it would have," said Brunson as she thanked the studios that backed her vision. "But let's be real. I did imagine it. That's why I sold it to you."

Best drama series went to "Game of Thrones" prequel "House of the Dragon."

"Naatu Naatu" from the Telugu sensation "RRR," won best song over the likes of Rihanna and Taylor Swift.

The Globes were plunged into chaos shortly before a largely remote pandemic 2021 awards show when a Los Angeles Times report revealed that the HFPA, then numbering 87 members, had no Black members. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

The St. Regis Bar introduces new head mixologist



The St. Regis Bar has announced its new head mixologist who aims to elevate and establish the bar as "one of Asia's Best Bars by bringing new concepts and trends to the table."

Born and raised in Taiwan, Kevin Lai started his career in Taipei and over the course of 10 years, gained experience from around the world through guest bartending

stints, competitions, and various other bartending opportunities.

Prior to joining The St. Regis Bar, he was bar manager and later, bar consultant, for Hope & Sesame Guangzhou, one of the most popular bars in Asia which took 18th place in 2022 Asia's 50 Best Bars.

He has participated in a variety of bartending competitions and was awarded Top 4 at the 2020 Flor de Caña Competition China Final, Top 5 at the Elit Art of Martini Taiwan and Jameson Competition China Final, and was Champion at the 2016 Start with Stoli Taiwan.

Urban Kitchen presents CNY feast



Urban Kitchen at JW Marriott Hotel Macau has prepared two eclectic menus for the upcoming Chinese New Year. After

a hiatus, the restaurant is bringing back its popular lunch buffet just in time for the Year of Rabbit. The Chinese New

Year Lunch Buffet features a string of crowd-pleasers, with headliners such as Peking Duck Live Station and Slow Cooked Angus Roast Beef.

Meanwhile, for guests in the mood for a more decadent experience, the Chinese New Year Dinner Buffet presents some of the most beloved traditional Chinese dishes. From the Sashimi Lou Hei and Golden Prawns with Salted Eggs, to the Roasted Crispy Fried Chicken and the Traditional Clay Pot, these festive must-haves combine premium ingredients with masterful culinary skills.

FOOTBALL

Felix joins Chelsea on loan, but extends Atletico contract

PORTUGAL forward João Félix has joined Chelsea on loan from Atlético Madrid in a deal that will keep him at the Premier League club until the end of the season.

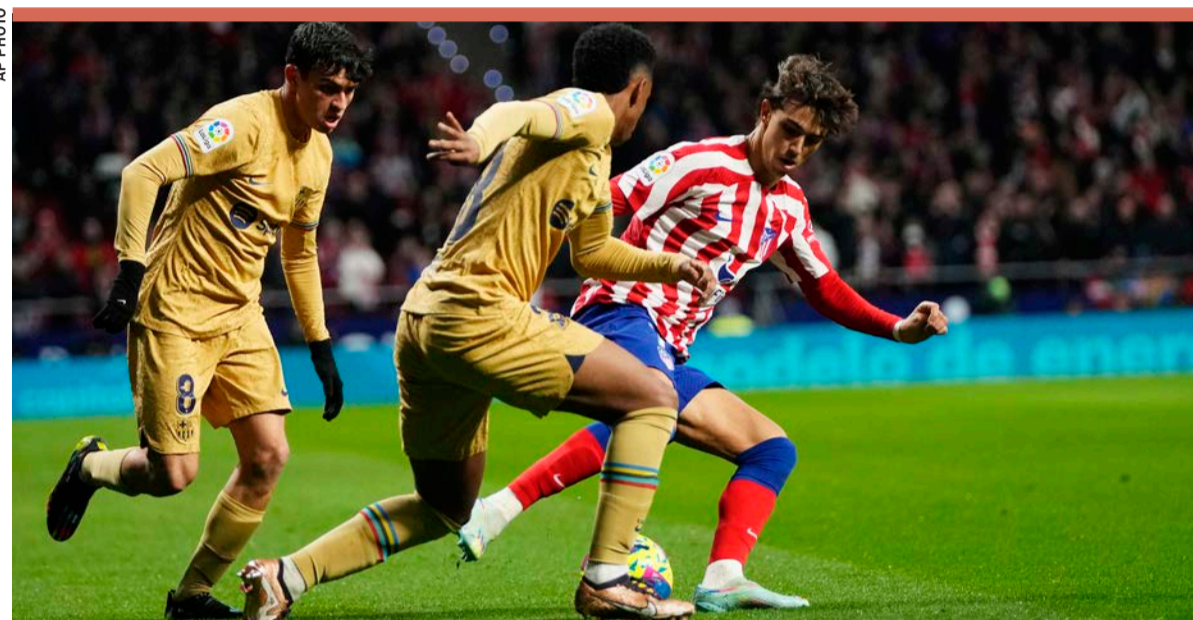
Felix has also extended his contract with Atletico for one more year until June 2027, it was announced yesterday.

"Chelsea is one of the great teams in the world and I hope to help the team reach their objectives, so I am very, very happy to be here and very excited to play at Stamford Bridge," the player said.

Felix became the third most expensive player of all time when Atlético triggered the 126 million euro (around \$140 million) buyout clause in his contract in 2019 to sign him from Benfica.

The 23-year-old Felix is no longer a guaranteed starter under coach Diego Simeone, but Atletico still moved to extend his existing deal.

"From Atlético de Madrid we



Atletico Madrid's Joao Felix (right)

wish João Félix every success in this new professional stage," the Spanish club said in a statement.

Felix will hope to rediscover his best form at Chelsea, which has been struggling for attacking

inspiration in a poor run of recent results that has left manager Graham Potter under pressure.

Chelsea has now signed four players in January — Ivory Coast forward David Datro Fofana, Bra-

zilian midfielder Andrey Santos and France defender Benoît Badiashile had already joined this month — but Felix is by far the most high profile.

Félix adds to the vast array of

attacking options at Potter's disposal, fitness permitting, with the Portugal international — who played in four of the country's five matches at the World Cup in Qatar — competing with Raheem Sterling, Christian Pulisic, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, Kai Havertz and Hakim Ziyech for a place in the forward line.

Félix never fully fulfilled the expectations that came along with his high-profile transfer in 2019 to replace Antoine Griezmann, who had left Atlético to join Barcelona. Then 19, Félix was considered by many in Portugal as the successor to Cristiano Ronaldo and Atlético fans expected him to become one of the team's biggest stars.

His lackluster first season was blamed mostly on him needing more time to adapt to playing in a top league. He won the Spanish league championship with Atlético the following season despite struggling with injuries and not having a key role in the title campaign. He has since shown spurts of greatness but hasn't played consistently at the level that fans had hoped to see from him.

His departure comes amid reports that he became increasingly at odds with Simeone, who has repeatedly denied having any problems with the player. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

CONTINUED DIPLOMATIC TRADITION SHOWS CHINA-AFRICA BOND OF BROTHERHOOD

The ongoing visit of Foreign Minister Qin Gang to Ethiopia, Gabon, Angola, Benin, Egypt, the African Union headquarters and the League of Arab States headquarters from Monday to Jan 16 represents the 33rd consecutive year that Africa has been the destination for the Chinese foreign ministers' first overseas trip of the year.

This diplomatic tradition fully demonstrates the unbreakable and sincere friendship between China and Africa. No matter how the international situation changes, China's endeavor to strengthen ties with African countries remains unchanged.

Qin's visit, judging from its length and scope, is set to deepen the China-Africa comprehensive strategic partnership in an all-round manner. The cooperation between the two sides does not target any third party, and China and Africa welcome all major players on the world stage, including the United States, to work with them to promote the common development of Africa.

But Qin, who was previously the Chinese ambassador to the US, will be well aware that Washington is attempting to sow the seeds of discord between African countries and China, and that the continent has never been a priority in the US' diplomacy.

It is China's rise that has provided African countries with opportunities to secure positions in the global industry and supply chains by making the most of their comparative advantages of labor costs and resources. Sino-African cooperation brings about win-win results, and all of China's cooperation projects with African countries are aimed at resolving the structural issues hindering their development. These range from improving infrastructure to enhancing the quality of the labor force. Rather than short-term speculative interests, these projects invariably focus on long-term mutual benefits and improving people's livelihoods. It is the uncertainty of returns on investment and the long period of delay before any are forthcoming that has deterred most Western investors from making Africa part of their business plans, as they care more about quick money instead of the needs of the African people.

In the congratulatory message on the 20th anniversary of its founding that he sent to the African Union on Sept 9 last year, President Xi Jinping called for continuously upgrading Sino-African cooperation in the fields of public health, food security, digital and green economy, aerospace and cross-regional infrastructure construction. By helping to usher in a new development stage for African countries, China is also making contributions to address the global governance and development deficits.

It is believed that Qin's visit, his first overseas trip since he took up the position on Dec 30, will help further advance this cause. And what makes it hard for the US to drive a wedge between China and Africa is not only the bonds of brotherhood that have been forged between the two sides thanks to their similar historical experience of colonial exploitation, but also the efficiency, sustainability and potential of their pragmatic cooperation today.

US: NEW MEGA MILLIONS JACKPOT OF \$1.35B IS GAME'S 2ND HIGHEST

THE BUZZ

The Mega Millions prize has grown again to an estimated \$1.35 billion after there was no winner of the lottery's latest jackpot.

The numbers drawn yesterday [Macau time] were: 7, 13, 14, 15, 18 and gold Mega Ball 9.

The new jackpot drawing on the weekend will be another milestone in the game, Mega Millions said in a statement yesterday.

"Now at \$1.35 billion, the Mega Millions jackpot is moving up and making history as the second highest Mega Millions jackpot

ever," Pat McDonald, Ohio lottery director and lead director of the Mega Millions Consortium, said in the statement.

The only Mega Millions jackpot larger than Friday's prize is the \$1.53 billion won in South Carolina in 2018, Mega Millions said.

The largest jackpot in the U.S. to date was a \$2.04 billion Powerball won by a single ticket in California in November.

There have been 25 drawings over three months since the last time a player matched all six numbers and claimed the jackpot.

Despite the game's long odds of 1 in 302.6 million, players continue to purchase tickets as the size of the grand prize grows.



AFTER HYPE, READERS GET HANDS ON PRINCE HARRY'S 'SPARE'

JILL LAWLESS, LONDON

AFTER weeks of hype and days of leaks, readers got a chance to judge Prince Harry's book for themselves when it went on sale around the world yesterday [Macau time].

The book's publisher said "Spare" sold 400,000 copies in the U.K. in all formats — hardback, e-book and audio — on its first day.

"As far as we know, the only books to have sold more in their first day are those starring the other Harry (Potter)," said Larry Finlay, managing director of Transworld Penguin Random House. The final Potter book, "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," sold more than 2.5 million copies on its first day of release, in 2007.

A few stores in Britain opened at midnight to sell copies to diehard royal devotees and the merely curious. Many said they wanted to form their own opinion of the book after days of snippets and debate on news sites and television.

"I'm excited just to hear about Prince Harry's life from Prince Harry," said Sarah Nakana, a surveyor who bought the book at London's Victoria station. "There's so much misinformation, disinformation

about Harry and Meghan."

The book's myriad revelations and accusations have already been splashed across the media. In the ghostwritten memoir Harry, 38, recounts his grief at the death of his mother, Princess Diana, his disputes with brother Prince William and frustration at the role of royal "spare" in the shadow of his elder sibling, who is heir to the British throne.

He lacerates the U.K.'s tabloid press for coverage he considers prurient, intrusive and sometimes plain wrong, claims his relatives were unwelcoming to his wife Meghan and accuses members of the royal family, including his stepmother Camilla, of leaking stories to the media to burnish their own reputations.

Buckingham Palace has not commented on any of the allegations, though royal allies have pushed back, largely anonymously.

Harry's exposure of bitter divides inside the House of Windsor — alongside details of his mental health struggles, experiences with sex and drugs and decade-long military career — has generated reams of media coverage.

"Spare" is the top-selling book on Amazon's U.K. site and on Amazon.

com in the U.S., and is already one of the year's biggest sellers.

John Cotterill, nonfiction buyer at the Waterstones bookstore chain, told trade magazine The Bookseller that "Spare" was "one of the biggest pre-order titles of the last decade for Waterstones." In the U.S., Barnes & Noble issued a statement citing an "exceptional" level of customer interest, although the superstore chain did not release any specific numbers.

Excitement is far from universal, however. Harry's interview with broadcaster ITV drew 4.1 million viewers on Sunday — fewer than the 5.3 million who watched BBC drama "Happy Valley" at the same time.

Retail worker Caroline Lennon arrived at 6 a.m. Tuesday [GMT] at a branch of Waterstones in central London to await its opening.

"I did expect a queue. Unfortunately, there's no queue. I'm just by myself," she said.

"I want to read (it) because I like the royal family and I don't care what anybody says," she said. "People will criticize that. I don't care because I like the royal family, and I like Harry and Meghan." MDT/AP



Peru A police officer on patrol was attacked and burned to death by protesters in the Peruvian region of Puno as the death toll from demonstrations in the wake of the ouster of former President Pedro Castillo rose to 47, authorities said yesterday. José Luis Soncco Quispe, 29, was on patrol with a fellow officer in Juliaca, a city near the border with Bolivia and Lake Titicaca, on Monday night when they were attacked by a mob that later set fire to their vehicle, according to police reports.



France An attacker wounded six people in an unprovoked blade attack in Paris' busy Gare du Nord train station yesterday (morning) before being shot and wounded by police. France's interior minister said, praising the swift intervention of police for helping prevent any fatalities. The suspect attacked several people, including a police officer, with a "bladed weapon" during the morning rush hour. The unnamed assailant was currently "between life and death" in hospital after being shot in the chest, according to French media. Darmanin thanked the police "for their effective and courageous reaction."



Vatican Cardinal George Pell, a onetime financial adviser to Pope Francis who spent 404 days in solitary confinement in his native Australia before his child sex abuse convictions were overturned, has died at age 81. He was a divisive figure. He lived to see Vatican rivals charged with financial crimes after he worked to reform the Holy See's finances. In Australia, he was a lightning rod for disagreements over whether the Catholic Church had been properly held to account for historic child sex abuse. Pell died Tuesday in Rome.