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China's reopening is prompting bullish forecasts from strategists and money managers the world over, Bloomberg reported. Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs see Chinese equities gaining about 10% this year, while Citi Global Wealth Investments sees greater upside of about 20%. Separately, meme-stock investor Ryan Cohen has taken a stake in Alibaba and is pushing the e-commerce leader to buy back more of its shares.

AP PHOTO



**Nepal** Airplane passenger Sonu Jaiswal's (pictured) 90-second smartphone video began with the aircraft approaching the runway by flying over buildings and green fields over Pokhara. Everything looked normal as Jaiswal's livestream on Facebook shifted from the picturesque views seen from the plane's window to fellow passengers who were laughing. Finally, Jaiswal, wearing a yellow sweater, turned the camera to himself and smiled. Then it happened.

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AP PHOTO



**Yemen** Amid the longest-ever pause in fighting — more than nine months — Saudi Arabia and its rival, the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, have revived back-channel talks, hoping to strengthen the informal cease-fire and lay out a path for a negotiated end to the 8-years-long civil war, according to Yemeni, Saudi and U.N. officials. The quiet is fragile, with no formal cease-fire in place since a U.N.-brokered truce ended in October. It has been shaken by Houthi attacks on oil facilities.

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AP PHOTO

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PETER DAZELEY



## ON TOP OF THE CAKE

# MARRIAGE PROVIDES HEALTH BENEFITS – AND HERE'S WHY

**LIBBY RICHARDS**  
PURDUE UNIVERSITY

**T**HE new year is traditionally a time when many people feel a renewed commitment to create healthy habits, such as exercising regularly, drinking more water or eating more healthfully.

It turns out that when it comes to health, married people have an edge, especially married men. But surely the act of walking down the aisle is not what provides this health advantage.

So what exactly is at play?

As a team, we study how relationships affect health. One of us is a nursing professor who studies how social support influences health behaviors. One is a social health psychologist who explores how stress affects couples' relationships and health, and one is a social psychologist who researches how relationships influence health behavior changes. Together, we examine how partners influence each other's health, taking gender into account in this equation.

### HEALTH BENEFITS FOR MEN AND WOMEN

It's important to note that most marriage and health studies have been limited to mar-

ried men and women. But more recent studies are examining these relationships in partners who have the same gender identity, the same biological sex and who are gender diverse.

One theory that seeks to explain the link between marriage and health is the act of self-selection. Simply put, people who are wealthier and healthier than average are more likely not only to get married but also to find a partner who is wealthier and healthier than average. Men and women with poorer health and wealth than average are less likely to marry at all.

While this may be part of the story, marriage also provides partners with a sense of belonging, more opportunities for social engagement and reduced feelings of loneliness. This social integration, or the extent to which people participate in social relationships and activities, can greatly influence health – from reducing the risk of hypertension and heart disease to lowering one's risk of death or suicide.

Another important connection between marriage and health involves the body's inflammatory process. Research links loneliness and lack of close relationships with inflammation,

or the body's way of reacting to illness, injury or disease. Though inflammation is needed for healing, chronic inflammation is associated with heart disease, arthritis, cancers and autoimmune diseases. While single adults undoubtedly have very meaningful close relationships too, a healthy marriage by nature provides more opportunities for closeness and socialization, supporting the link between marriage and inflammation.

When you dig deeper, gender seems to play a role as well. One study related to marital quality, gender and inflammation found a connection between lower levels of spousal support and higher levels of inflammation for women, but not men. In another study, if couples used negative communication patterns, such as one partner making demands while the other partner withdraws, women but not men experienced heightened inflammation.

### MARRIAGE AND LONGEVITY

Married men and married women live, on average, two years longer than their unmarried counterparts. One reason for this longevity benefit is the influence of marital partners on healthy behaviors. Study after

study shows that married people eat better and are less likely to smoke and drink excessively. All of these healthy behaviors help explain why married people tend to live longer. However, men married to women tend to see additional longevity benefits than women married to men, for several possible reasons.

For example, female spouses may be looking out for their male partners, reinforcing healthy behaviors and providing more opportunities for healthy choices. On the flip side, married men are less likely to attempt to influence their wives' health behaviors.

Women tend to take the lead in promoting healthy behaviors, benefiting their husbands. Data suggests that men and women in same-gender relationships tend to engage in teamwork to mutually promote positive health behaviors. Further, married men and women are more likely to want to change their partners' health behaviors, such as exercise, especially if the spouses' habits are worse than their own. These findings suggest that both the person and the partner's gender matter.

Relationship quality can also influence health behaviors. For example, in the context of exercise, both men and women who reported higher levels of marital support were more likely to walk for exercise. However, as men aged, the association between marital support and walking became even stronger for them, but the same was not true for married women.

### CULTURAL NORMS AND CAREGIVING

To further understand how men's health benefits from their wives, consider cultural norms that foster expectations that women will be the primary caretaker in committed relationships.

Middle-aged people, and in particular women, have also been described as the "sandwich generation," since they are often "sandwiched" between taking care of growing children and aging parents. Caregiving can take a toll on the immune system and one's overall health. Additionally, invisible labor related to child care and household duties, which often disproportionately fall to women, can leave women with less time for self-care, such as being physically active.

Women also take on more responsibilities in terms of coordinating doctors' appointments and promoting adherence to medical advice for their husbands than husbands do for their wives. However, men often increase their time spent caregiving when their wives are ill.

### NOT ALL MARRIAGES ARE CREATED EQUAL

Relationship quality and relationship conflict also play important roles when it comes to marriage and health. Gendered socialization and power differences often lead to women's thinking and caring about their relationships more than men, causing women to take primary responsibility for managing relationship issues, while men take on less of the burden.

Research shows that women are also more likely to base their identities on their relationships, and so when they experience marital conflict or other relationship issues, they experience more negative emotional and physical health effects than men. This can include increased risk of metabolic syndrome, inflammation and cardiovascular disease.

Does this mean that all men should get married to protect their health or that unmarried people can't enjoy the same health benefits as those who have said "I do"?

Not at all. Unmarried people can, of course, enjoy good health and longevity. Creating and maintaining strong social ties and engaging with one's community go a long way when it comes to health. Further, making the best lifestyle choices available, seeking preventive health care and reducing stress can help everyone live a longer, healthier life. **MDT/THE CONVERSATION**

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HOSPITALITY

# Hotels may reduce capacity during CNY due to manpower shortage

RENATO MARQUES

**L**OCAL hotels may need to cap their maximum guest capacity to 70-80% during the Lunar New Year holidays (CNY), commencing this Sunday, due to a shortage of staff in operations, the president of the Macau Hotel Association, Luís Heredia, said in a TDM TV report.

According to Heredia, staff shortages in several areas of the hotel's operations have resulted from the abrupt reopening of Macau borders on Jan. 8. The need for restricted capacity stems from a need to ensure the quality of service provided by hotel units, which must comply with the standards of their respective class.

Still, he believes the border reopening and the influx of tourists over the last 10 days have already contributed to revitalizing the sector, as well as retail stores and restaurants.

Heredia explained that since the measure came suddenly without warning, many hotel units were understaffed and unable to recruit new staff members at such short notice. This is especially the case since many roles require staff to undergo training before being able to work without supervision.

According to information the Times gathered from local hotel units' connoisseurs, some are likely to cap their guest numbers due to staff shortages, while others have been able to re-hire former staff members who were laid-off or did not have their contracts renewed during the pandemic.

The latter solution aims to overcome the problem of the training period, as these workers are ready to start working as soon as they



arrive in Macau.

Other hotels are choosing to recruit local part-time workers to fill positions that require less experience, as well as calling on their current staff members to extend their working times and temporarily reduce their rest days.

Those workers recruited part-time are mostly students and people who are currently unemployed. However, the majority of students are non-residents coming from the mainland as well as South Asian countries. A bigger concern, in this case, is the time it takes for the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) to approve these workers' quotas so they can travel to Macau.

This issue has been mentioned by some lawmakers representing the business and commercial sectors.

During Monday's Legislative Assembly plenary session, the topic was raised once again by lawmaker Wang Sai Man. In a spoken inquiry before the agenda, Wang noted the sectors have voiced concerns that the pool of available workers has halved compared to the pre-pandemic pe-

riod, and even so, "only half of those workers have experience, while the other half has very little to none."

Wang said, "the most urgent thing [to do] is to quickly increase staff numbers as the lack of staff and particularly experienced staff affects the experience of tourists and the reputation of stores."

The same lawmaker also recalled that during the pandemic, "DSAL promised companies that took the initiative to return the labor import quotas that, if they requested them again, the assessment of their requests would expedited. I hope they keep that promise so that companies can quickly get back on track," he said. Regarding the entry of the non-resident workers to Macau, he said, "I hope that the authorities will review and optimize the current formalities and strengthen communication with the relevant mainland departments so that the formalities for issuing an entry permit can be handled smoothly, and be more convenient and hassle-free."

Wang also expressed fears that the recruit-

ment of local workers by gaming operators would increase as the hotel and tourism sectors recovered, again causing staffing problems for local SMEs.

"These companies [SMEs] look like a 'sponge.' During the pandemic they became a 'training center' for qualified personnel for large companies, which was not an easy task. But now with the potential economic recovery, they will again be left behind and see their staff being 'absorbed' by large companies," he said. He called on the government to find ways of stabilizing the labor supply.



TRAFFIC

## More public parking lots to open by CNY

ANTHONY LAM

**A** new public parking lot in Coloane has recently been opened, alongside two existing lots that will be functionally transformed or expanded, the Transport Bureau (DSAT) has announced.

The new parking lot is at the Concórdia Roundabout in Coloane. It has 198 car and 104 motorcycle spaces and has already opened for use.

This coming Friday will see the opening of the parking lot of the Macao Cultural Centre as a public paid parking space. Since the opening of the cultural facility, the parking lot has only served those using the Centre.

Following the announcement, parking services at this parking lot will come with a price tag. On the contrary, the ZAPE district will see the addition of 135 car and 34 motorcycle spaces.

These two parking lots will accept cash, Macau Pass and MPay. Contactless UnionPay will be accepted at a later date. Parking services follow the most common pricing model of government-operated parking lots.

The Vasco de Gama Garden parking lot has also been expanded to include the former parking lot of the Tap Seac Sports Pavilion, the entrance of which is located down from Yuet Wah College.

With the expansion, the number of parking spaces at the parking lot will increase from 171 to 255 for cars and 113 to 154 for motorcycles.

Meanwhile, from today, the DSAT will open a new turning point in Cotai that will direct traffic to the Galaxy Macau resort.

Drivers traveling towards Cotai from the Macau Stadium will see a new turn on the right side near the Taipa Base of the People's Liberation Army's Macau Garrison. To facilitate safer passage, the new opening is equipped with traffic lights to stop opposing traffic. **AL**

AD



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CRIME

# FORMER PAWNSHOP WORKER BEING TRACED FOR PROPERTY APPROPRIATION

ANTHONY LAM

A former pawnshop worker is being investigated on allegations of appropriating pawned items from their former employer, the Judiciary Police (PJ) announced.

Meanwhile, another suspect, a local man aged 35 years surnamed Lio, has been apprehended due to his connection to the case.

The case was reported to the police on Jan. 12 by the pawnshop owner.

While inventorying goods at the pawnshop on November 7, 2022, the owner discovered that a gold necklace and watch, each worth HKD40,000, were nowhere to be found.

After questioning the team, the person at large admitted to the owner that he had appropriated the goods. He promised to return the goods at a later date, however, the promise was unfulfilled.

ANTHONY LAM



The police discovered that the watch was pawned to another pawnshop by Lio on March 18, 2022, 11 days after he took the two items. In return, he received HKD25,000 from the second pawnshop.

The police intercepted Lio at his residence near the pri-

vate Kiang Wu Hospital. He confessed to the police that he had "helped a friend" pawn the watch. The HKD25,000 has been given to his friend.

Lio has also confessed to the police that he was aware of the source of the goods, making him an accomplice to

the crime.

Following his confession and the results of subsequent investigations, the police have decided to charge him with fraud, fraud involving a major amount, and handling stolen goods.

On other cases, the Public

Security Police Force (PSP) announced that two people have been arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol.

The first suspect is a local woman in her 30s surnamed Lei, who was involved in a traffic accident that led to the discovery of her intoxication.

Around 4 a.m. on Jan. 14, the police were notified of a traffic accident in Cotai. The accident was caused by a car in the center lane abruptly changing to the left lane and crashing into a neighboring vehicle.

Both drivers underwent breath testing. The suspect had a reading of 2.61g/L and the other driver's reading was nil. She confessed she had consumed alcohol at dinner.

When questioned by the police, she said she had no memory of going home. However, she was sure she departed from home before the car accident.

Another case involved a local man, also in his 30s, surnamed Wong. He was caught by the police at a roadblock around 3 a.m. on Jan. 16.

He had a reading of 2.08g/L on an alcohol test and confessed to consuming alcohol at dinner.

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## Macau Pass Covid-19 identity registration ends Feb 10

THE mandatory ownership identity verification on Macau Pass cards for bus fare discounts will be terminated on Feb. 10, the Transport Bureau (DSAT) has recently announced.

The DSAT triggered the program during a previous Covid-19 outbreak, purportedly in response to the Health Bureau's (SSM) request for easier tracing of Covid-19 patients and their close-contacts.

Back then, the SSM claimed that tracing was inexplicably difficult due to large numbers of people taking the bus each day. As such, it requested that the DSAT trigger the identity verification program.

Those without their identities linked to their Macau Pass cards would not be entitled to government discounts on bus fares.

Some people did have data security concerns



and decided not to participate. Some also suspected the program of collecting data on individual users' travel habits.

Since November 2021, over 600,000 cards have been registered.

Recently, almost all Covid-19 restrictions have been withdrawn in Macau. Within the past month, the suspension of health code and footprint registrations has also been announced, meaning that tracing of positive cases and their close contacts is no longer necessary.

As such, the DSAT announced the termination

of the program. The data will stay with the bureau for three more months and will be destroyed on May 10. In defense of the extended data retention period, the bureau said that it is necessary to facilitate lost card reporting.

Following the termination of the program, all Macau Pass holders will be entitled to government bus fare discounts.

In addition, the DSAT said the delayed announcement on the termination was due to communications with service provider, as well as testing and renewing of the payment console. **AL**





## HEALTH

# Lawmakers' concerns with fees at the Islands hospital

RENATO MARQUES

**L**AWMAKERS have raised concerns about the medical fees residents will incur if they seek medical services at the Islands District Medical Complex (Islands Hospital).

The topic was raised Monday at the Legislative Assembly (AL) where the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong, was to present the bill on the management of the Islands Hospital. The hospital will be under the management of the Peking Union

Medical College Hospital.

Ao Ieong said that although the hospital will operate in a public-private system and under private administration, the mechanism for the payment of smaller fees or even free health care for residents still exists, as long as the Health Bureau refers these patients to the services of this unit.

Still, she noted that both local and non-local residents who want the new medical unit's services "are encouraged to acquire medical insurance to be able to receive private medical services hassle-free."

Ao Ieong said part of the hospital will continue to operate as a public hospital unit under the same model as the Conde de São Januário Hospital Center for general medicine, while other specialized services, such as medical cosmetology, will be operated under a private model. The government will be able to subsidize services the public sector cannot provide but which it considers necessary.

She also noted that through this system, the government aims to save on expenditure currently incurred on forwarding medical

cases of patients to be treated abroad.

The Secretary also said the medical complex will recruit as many local residents as possible to integrate the team of this new facility and help others to expand their training and skills.

Ao Ieong said nine specialist physicians have qualified to potentially join the Islands Hospital team. The Union Medical College team will conduct individual interviews next month.

Those who are approved will be trained at the Union Medical College Hospital.

## SJM 'SPECIAL DISCRETIONARY' BONUS FOR STAFF

SJM Resorts has announced a "special discretionary bonus" for its employees, equivalent to one month's salary. The gaming operator said the bonus is meant to show appreciation for its staff's "hard work" and "contribution" in the past year. The casino operator did not specify how many staff will receive the bonus. "We have full confidence in the future of Macau. As borders reopen in synchronicity with our Government's timely promotional efforts, we have seen encouraging tourism recovery," said managing director of SJM Daisy Ho in a statement. By now, all gaming operators have announced CNY bonuses for staff.

## CARITAS TO HOST CHARITY DINNER FOR INTERNATIONAL FUND-RAISING

Local charity Caritas of Macau will organize a charity dinner on Feb. 18 at the Grandview Hotel in Taipa to raise funds for international missions conducted globally by Caritas International. Each ticket is sold for MOP380 at 2893 3255. The headquarters of Caritas International is located in the Vatican City and has over 160 subsidiary organizations, serving more than 200 jurisdictions. The organization provides assistance in humanitarian emergencies and the aftermath of war and natural disasters. The Covid-19 pandemic has made the work of Caritas International more challenging, Caritas of Macau added.

## FUHONG SOCIETY SELLS CHARITY SCARVES

The Fuhong Society of Macau is holding a charity sale of scarves knitted by its service users. Each scarf will be sold for MOP88 and the proceeds will contribute towards running daily support programs offered by the organization. The organization provides vocational training workshops, assisted employment, on-the-job training and independent living skills training to service users so they can be more self-reliant. During previous Covid-19 outbreaks, the center gave wool to users of its services to make scarves in training workshops held to bolster work motivation during the pandemic.

## PUBLIC WORKS

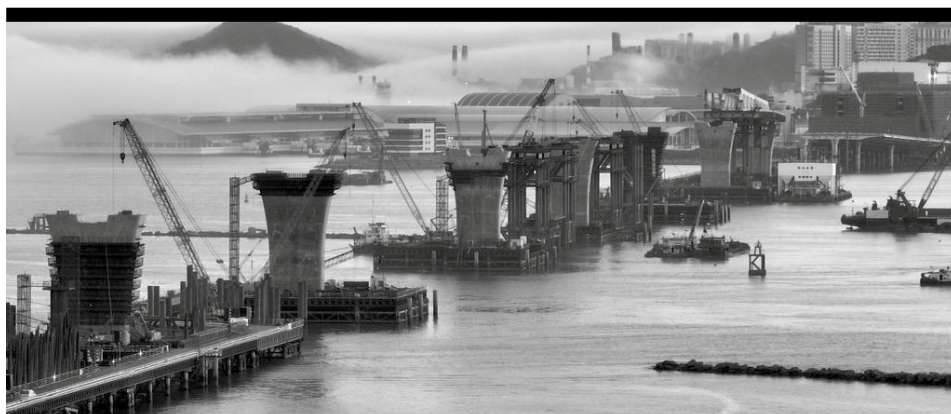
# Main pillars of Macau-Taipa fourth bridge completed

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE seven main pillars of the fourth Macau-Taipa Sea Bridge were completed Monday Jan. 16, according to a news release on the Land and Public Works Bureau (DSOP) webpage.

The bridge construction will now transition fully to the deck and other supporting structures, some of which have already commenced construction in other parts of the site.

Despite a delay of 24 days in the construction



due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the bridge will be ready by January next year.

The completed sea bridge will link the east

side of "Zone A" of the New Urban Landfills and the artificial island of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge border post to Taipa Island at

"Zone E1" of the New Urban Landfills, with a viaduct. The viaduct will also link to the tunnel to be built on the Colina da Taipa Grande, which will

go directly to Avenida de Wai Long.

The bridge's central deck structure will be about 3.1 km long, with 2.9 km over the sea.

The bridge's main road section comprises eight traffic lanes (four in each direction) with the two central lanes specially reserved for motorcycles (reflecting the arrangement on Sai Van Bridge).

The government is said to be installing wind barriers within the central section of the bridge. This will ensure wind speed on the deck matches the land sections. According to the government's technical experts, this will allow driving on the bridge even in typhoon signal 8 conditions.



AP PHOTO



## DEMOGRAPHICS

# CHINA RECORDS FIRST POPULATION FALL IN DECADES AS BIRTHS DROP

KEN MORITSUGU, BEIJING

**F**OR the first time in decades, China has fewer people than it did at the start of last year, according to official figures released yesterday.

The world's most populous country has worried for years about an aging population's effect on the economy and society, but the population was not expected to go into decline for almost a decade.

The National Bureau of Statistics reported that the country had 850,000 fewer people at the end of 2022 than the previous year. The tally includes only the population of mainland China, excluding Hong Kong and Macao as well as foreign residents.

Over one million fewer babies were born than the previous year, amid a slowing economy and widespread lockdowns, according to official figures. The bureau reported 9.56 million births in 2022, compared to 10.62 million in 2021. Deaths rose from 10.14 million to 10.41 million.

China's population has begun to decline 9-10 years earlier than Chinese officials predicted and the United Nations projected, said Yi Fuxian, a demographer and expert on Chinese population trends at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

"China has become older before it has become rich," Yi said.

China has sought to bolster its population since officially ending its one-child policy in 2016. Last year, the country adopted policies to encourage couples to have three children.

Men outnumbered women by 722.06 million to 689.69 million, the bureau reported, a result of the one-child policy and a traditional preference for male offspring to carry on the family name.

Since abandoning the policy, China has sought to encourage families to have second or even third children, with little success, reflecting attitudes in much of east Asia where birth rates have fallen precipitously. In China, the expense of raising children in cities is often cited as a cause.

China has long been the world's most populous nation, but is expected to soon be overtaken by India, if it has not already. Estimates put India's population at more than 1.4 billion and continuing to grow.

The last time China is believed to have experienced a population decline was during the Great Leap Forward launched at the end of the 1950s, under then-leader Mao Zedong's disastrous drive for collective farming and industrialization that produced a massive famine killing tens of millions of people.

Yi said that, based on his own research, China's population has actually been declining since 2018, showing

the population crisis is "much more severe" than previously thought. China now has one of the lowest fertility rates in the world, comparable only to Taiwan and South Korea, he added.

That means that China's "real demographic crisis is beyond imagination and that all of China's past economic, social, defense, and foreign policies were based on faulty demographic data," Yi told The Associated Press.

China's looming economic crisis will be worse than Japan's, where years of low growth have been blamed in part on a shrinking population, Yi said.

China's statistics bureau said the working-age population between 16 and 59 years old totaled 875.56 million, accounting for 62.0% of the national population, while those aged 65 and older totaled 209.78 million, accounting for 14.9% of the total.

If handled correctly, a declining population does not necessarily predict a weaker economy, said Stuart Gietel-Basten, professor of social

science at Khalifa University in Abu Dhabi.

"It's a big psychological issue. Probably the biggest," Gietel-Basten said.

The statistics also showed increasing urbanization in a country that traditionally had been largely rural. Over 2022, the permanent urban population increased by 6.46 million to reach 920.71 million, or 65.22%, while the rural population fell by 7.31 million.

It wasn't immediately clear if the population figures have been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak that was first detected in the central Chinese city of

Wuhan before spreading around the world. China has been accused by some specialists of underreporting deaths from the virus by blaming them on underlying conditions, but no estimates of the actual number have been published.

The United Nations estimated last year that the world's population reached 8 billion on Nov. 15 and that India will replace China as the world's most populous nation in 2023. India's last census was schedu-

led for 2022 but was postponed amid the pandemic.

In a report released on World Population Day, the U.N. also said global population growth fell below 1% in 2020 for the first time since 1950.

Also yesterday, the bureau released data showing China's economic growth fell to its second-lowest level in at least four decades last year under pressure from anti-virus controls and a real estate slump.

The world's No. 2 economy grew by 3% in 2022, less than half of the previous year's 8.1%, the data showed (see p10).

That was the second-lowest annual rate since at least the 1970s, after the drop to 2.4% in 2020 at the start of the coronavirus pandemic, although activity is reviving after restrictions that kept millions of people at home and sparked protests were lifted.

Gietel-Basten said that China has been adapting to demographic change for years by devising policies to move its economic activities up the value chain of innovation, pointing to the development of semiconductor manufacturing and financial services industry.

"The population of India is much younger and is growing. But there are many reasons why you wouldn't necessarily automatically bet your entire fortune on India surpassing China economically in the very near future," he said.

Among India's many challenges is a level of female participation in the work force that is much lower than China's, Gietel-Basten added.

"Whatever the population you have, it's not what you've got but it's what you do with it ... to a degree," he said. **MDT/AP**

**National Bureau of Statistics reported that the country had 850,000 fewer people at the end of 2022 than 2021**



SOUTH KOREA

# PRESIDENT YOON, IN UAE, BACKS RETURN TO NUCLEAR POWER

JON GAMBRELL, ABU DHABI

**S**OUTH Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said yesterday [Macau time] that his nation's efforts to be carbon neutral by 2050 would rely in part on returning to nuclear power, even though his predecessor had tried to move away from atomic power.

Yoon's comments at a summit in the United Arab Emirates, made in front of the country's leader, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, served to underline Seoul's commitment to nuclear power as it works to finish the Arabian Peninsula's first atomic power plant. That could see South Korea in line for lucrative maintenance contracts and future projects in the UAE, which Seoul has grown closer to over recent years.

"Korea has ... declared its 2050 carbon neutrality goal," Yoon said in an address at Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week. "To achieve this goal, we are working to rapidly restore the nuclear power system, which supplies carbon-free electricity."

"If our two countries join efforts in clean energy development ... it will not only enhance our two countries energy security but also will contribute to global energy market stability," Yoon added.



South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol arrives to the UAE-Korea Business Forum in Abu Dhabi

Yoon's predecessor, President Moon Jae-in, sought to move South Korea away from nuclear power amid safety and graft scandals and Japan's 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. But the renewed global focus on climate change — and the surge in fossil fuel prices after the lockdowns of the coronavirus pandemic and Russia's war on Ukraine — has some reconsidering nuclear power.

The UAE also promises to be

carbon neutral by 2050 — a target that remains difficult to assess and one that the Emirates still has not fully explained how it will reach. The \$20 billion Barakah nuclear power plant, Seoul's first attempt to build atomic reactors abroad, will one day account for nearly a quarter of all of the Emirates' power needs.

Yoon traveled later Monday to the Barakah nuclear power plant in Abu Dhabi's far western desert

near Saudi Arabia with Sheikh Mohammed before a planned business summit back in the capital.

On his arrival back, Yoon told the summit that, using the Barakah plant as an example, he hoped the Emirates and South Korea could expand this "new model of cooperation" to include nuclear fuel, small reactors and other joint advances to third countries.

"Through the construction of the Barakah nuclear power plant,

we were able to develop relations that are now genuinely like brothers," Yoon said.

Yoon's embrace of nuclear power also provides a guarantee of sorts that South Korea remains invested in servicing the Barakah plant. France, also home to nuclear power plants and another Emirati business and military ally, has sought contracts here as well.

Already, Yoon's four-day trip the UAE has seen a promise from Sheikh Mohammed to invest some \$30 billion in the country. Heavyweight business leaders from Hyundai, Samsung and other companies also are taking part in the state visit.

On Sunday, Yoon also visited South Korean special forces stationed in the United Arab Emirates, a murky deployment that grew out of Seoul's deal over the nuclear power plant. The Akh unit is comprised of some 150 troops.

"The UAE is our brother nation. ... This isn't a foreign country called the UAE — this right here, is your country," a hawkish Yoon told the gathered forces. Both he and his wife, who accompanied him on the trip, wore desert fatigues.

"The security of our brother nation is our security. The enemy of the UAE, its most-threatening nation, is Iran, and our enemy is North Korea. ... We are in a very similar situation with the UAE," he said.

Yoon's comments comes as the Emiratis have been trying to hedge in its relationship with Iran, a major business partner. **MDT/AP**

NEPAL

# Authorities to send data recorder from crash to France

**N**EPALESE authorities yesterday began returning to families the bodies of victims of a flight that crashed Sunday, and said they were sending the aircraft's data recorder to France for analysis as they try to determine what caused the country's deadliest plane accident in 30 years.

The flight plummeted into a gorge on Sunday while on approach to land at the newly opened Pokhara International Airport in the foothills of the Himalayas, killing at least 70 of the 72 people aboard. Searchers found the plane's cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder on Monday, and combed through debris scattered down the 300-meter-deep gorge in search of the people who remain missing, but are presumed dead.



Medical personnel load the body of a victim onto a truck to be transported to Kathmandu, in Pokhara, yesterday

One body was found yesterday, and two remain missing.

Jagannath Niraula, spokesperson for Nepal's Civil Aviation Authority

said the cockpit voice recorder would be analyzed locally, but that the flight data recorder would be sent to France. The aircraft's manufacturer, ATR,

is headquartered in Toulouse. The French air accident investigations agency confirmed it is taking part in the investigation, and its investigators are

on site today.

The twin-engine ATR 72-500 aircraft, operated by Nepal's Yeti Airlines, was completing the 27-minute flight from the capital, Kathmandu, to the resort town of Pokhara, 200 kilometers west.

It's still not clear what caused the crash, which took place less than a minute's flight from the airport in light wind and clear skies.

Aviation experts say it appears that the turboprop went into a stall at low altitude on approach to the airport, but it is not clear why.

From a smartphone video shot from the ground seconds before the aircraft crashed, one can see the ATR 72 "nose high, high angle of attack, with wings at a very high bank angle, clo-

se to the ground," said Bob Mann, an aviation analyst and consultant.

"Whether that was due to loss of power, or misjudging aircraft's energy, direction or the approach profile, and attempting to modify energy or approach, that aircraft attitude would likely have resulted in an aerodynamic stall and rapid loss of altitude, when already close to the ground," he said in an email.

The aircraft was carrying 68 passengers, including 15 foreign nationals and four crew members. The foreigners included five Indians, four Russians, two South Koreans, and one each from Ireland, Australia, Argentina and France. Pokhara is the gateway to the Annapurna Circuit, a popular hiking trail in the Himalayas. **MDT/AP**



AP PHOTO



First Lady of Ukraine Olena Zelenska delivers a speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, yesterday

DAVOS

# Ukraine first lady urges leaders to 'use influence'

JAMEY KEATEN, DAVOS

UKRAINE'S first lady scolded world leaders and corporate executives at the World Economic Forum's annual gathering in the snowy Swiss town of Davos for not all using their influence at a time when Russia's invasion leaves children dying and a world struggling with food insecurity.

As the anniversary of the war nears, Olena Zelenska said yesterday that parents are in tears watching doctors trying to save their children, farmers are afraid to go back to their fields filled with explosive mines and "we cannot allow a new Chernobyl to happen," referring to the 1986 nuclear disaster as Russian missiles have pounded Ukrainian energy infrastructure for months.

"What you all have in common is that you are genuinely influential," Zelenska told attendees. "But there is something that separates you, namely that not all of you use this influence, or sometimes use it in a way that separates you even more."

She spoke as hundreds of government officials, corporate titans, academics and activists from around the world who descended on the town billed as Europe's highest. The weeklong talkfest of big ideas

and backroom deal-making prioritizes global problems such as hunger, climate change and the slowing economy, but it's never clear how much concrete action emerges to help reach the forum's stated ambition of "improving the state of the world."

"We are all internally convinced that there is no such global problem that humanity cannot solve," Zelenska said. "This is more important now when Russia's aggression in Europe poses various challenges."

The war in Ukraine, which has killed thousands of civilians, displaced millions and jolted food and fuel markets worldwide. With the war raising inflation and expanding food insecurity in developing nations, Zelenska called it "an insult to mankind and human nature to have mass starvation."

Ukraine and Russia had been key suppliers of wheat, barley and other food supplies to Africa, the Middle East and Asia where many were already going hungry.

About 345 million people in 82 countries are facing acute food insecurity, according to the U.N. World Food Program, up from 135 million in 53 countries before the pandemic and war in Ukraine.

Zelenska warned that the war could expand beyond

Ukraine's borders and worsen the crises but "unity is what brings peace back."

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen urged the assembled executives and global leaders at Davos to keep aiding Ukraine.

"Ukraine wants to become a member of the European Union, and it is a perfect opportunity to take investment and reform to pave this way for Ukraine towards the European Union," she said after Zelenska's address. "And my call on you is: We need every helping hand on board. Ukraine deserves to have as much support as possible."

While urging unity for Ukraine, von der Leyen unveiled a major clean tech industrial plan to compete with China and the United States as the 27-nation bloc looks to stay a leader on plotting a greener future.

She said the plan would make it easier to push through subsidies for green industries and inject funding into EU-wide projects to help reach its goal of climate neutrality by 2050. The bloc also would be more forceful in countering unfair trading practices.

At Davos, a helicopter buzzed overhead in overcast skies as scores of notables, including former U.S. Vice President Al Gore, trudged

through the snow and crisscrossed the Alpine town of 10,000 to attend a number of panel sessions on everything from the environment to cryptocurrencies to the fight against COVID-19.

Many concerned minds in Davos were on the devastation from a Russian missile strike that hit an apartment building in the southeastern Ukrainian city of Dnipro, killing 44 people in one of the deadliest single attacks in months.

Zelenska said Ukrainians "can't take a day off from war" and that they "have to risk their lives each day" but said she believed the world would unify for peace.

Her husband, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, will be beamed in by video today to complement the in-person delegation of his wife and officials such as Minister of Digital Transformation Mykhailo Fedorov.

Davos offers a new chance for Ukrainian envoys to ramp up international support for donations of weapons like tanks and anti-rocket defenses and greater pressure to further isolate and squeeze Russia's economy.

France, the U.K., the U.S. and other nations are vowing to send increasingly powerful weapons to Ukraine, such as tanks or armored combat vehicles. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1996: UK: GREEN GROUPS JOIN BYPASS BATTLE



Six major environmental organisations today added their support to the growing anti-bypass campaign in Newbury, Berkshire.

Friends of the Earth, the Council for British Archaeology, Greenpeace UK, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Wildlife Trusts and the World Wide Fund for Nature all voiced disapproval of the new road scheme.

In a joint statement they said that a solution to the serious traffic problem was needed but that "the proposed bypass route is not the answer".

It said: "Traffic on the A34 in Newbury will be back to the intolerable levels of today within five to 10 years of the bypass opening."

Yet supporters of the scheme say the new road will provide essential relief to the congested town centre.

Contractors began work in earnest on the project last week but have since suffered numerous delays and setbacks.

Clearance has been hampered by well-organised activists employing effective disruption tactics.

Protesters have built tunnels and tree houses and are using themselves as human shields to prevent security men and diggers from moving in.

The ensuing conflict over the future of the prime countryside has become known as the 'Third Battle of Newbury' after the two 17th century English Civil War battles that took place in the same area.

Yesterday contractors supplied as many as 300 of their own security guards.

350 trees were felled, and there were 39 arrests.

In a separate development, Thames Valley Police have asked the government to help meet the rising costs of the enterprise.

They fear that policing the protest could cost up to £12 million.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Support for and protest against the Newbury bypass have been long-standing. Both have been active since the 1980s. Protest camps remained on the route until 1997 and protesters continued their campaign which included a fight for the protection of a local rare snail habitat. The road cost in excess of £100m and took 34 months to complete. It was opened in November 1998. In total more than 1,000 people were arrested over the course of Britain's most notorious road protest campaign. While 1996 was the 100th anniversary of the birth of the motorcar, the anti-Newbury bypass campaign made a major contribution to the debate about how to counter ever-increasing levels of traffic on Britain's roads.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Don't overdo it. Be careful when dealing with female members of your family. Residential changes, renovations, or moves are likely to disrupt your routine.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Concern yourself with legal matters and formulating contracts rather than finalizing your objectives. You will get great satisfaction from your efforts.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Group endeavors will provide you with entertainment. Don't try to deal with important issues or make changes that will upset the apple cart.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You may exaggerate your emotional situation. You need time to put your house in order and sort out what you are going to do about your personal direction.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Your mate may be distressed if you refuse to make a commitment. Organize your day well if you wish to accomplish all you set out to do.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

You should look into making some physical changes, such as new hair color or toning up your body. Children may be less than honest with you.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Look into attending seminars that can expand your perception. Your ability to relate will close the generation gap. Children may be less than honest with you.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You can gain distinction; however, it may be for the wrong reasons. Renovations or purchases made for your home will payoff.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You mustn't make promises that you won't be able to keep. Travel could be in order. Things aren't as they appear. Your relationship is undergoing some changes.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Try to deal with the problems of those less fortunate; however, don't allow them to make unreasonable demands. You can make career moves that will be prosperous.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Put your money into a safe place that will ensure a profit if you let it sit long enough. Try to slow down, and take another look. Social events will be favorable.

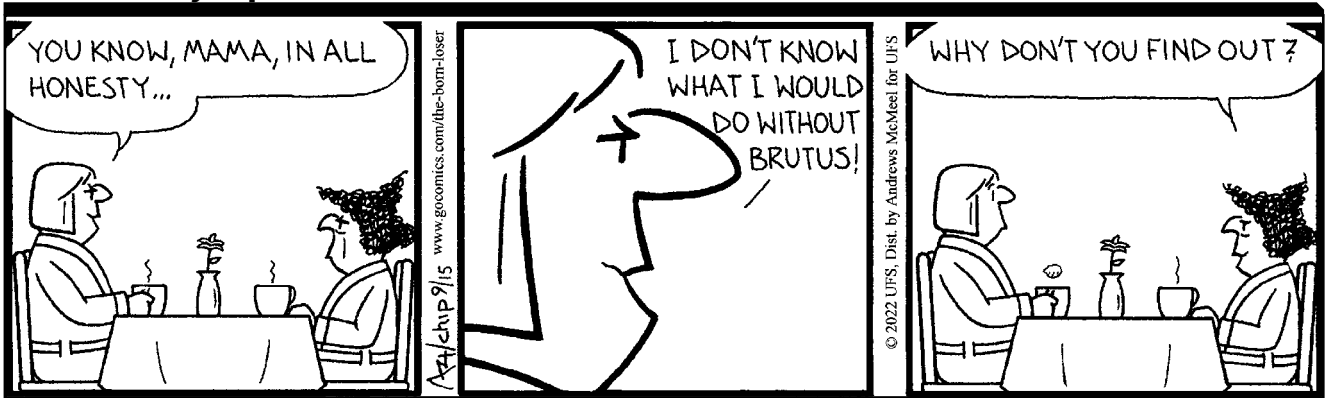


PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Educational pursuits can bring interesting, helpful people. In-laws may cause difficulties. Travel should be considered. You should expect to have changes in your home.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-9	3	fine
Changchun	-16	-5	fine
Chengdu	0	9	cloudy
Chongqing	3	5	overcast
Fuzhou	6	15	fine
Guangzhou	7	16	cloudy
Guiyang	-3	4	overcast
Haikou	10	16	cloudy
Hangzhou	0	8	fine
Harbin	-24	-9	fine
Hefei	-3	7	fine
Nanjing	-3	8	fine
Shanghai	0	8	fine
Taipei	12	13	rain
Wuhan	-3	9	fine
Hong Kong	12	17	overcast

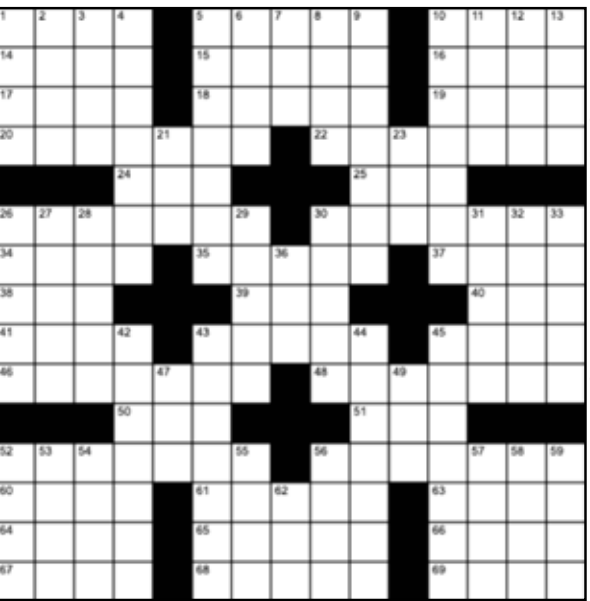
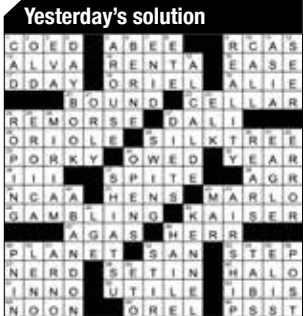
WORLD

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
Moscow	1	2	snow
Frankfurt	-2	3	overcast
Paris	1	6	overcast
London	-1	6	overcast
New York	4	11	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Aromatic fragrance; 5- Swedish imports; 10- Ardent; 14- Gen. Robert \_\_\_\_; 15- Heart chambers; 16- Travel on; 17- On \_\_\_\_ with; 18- Race official; 19- High schooler; 20- British soldier; 22- Railroad; 24- Coffee container; 25- Alphabet trio; 26- Sluggishness; 30- Shore; 34- Fibrous; 35- Jester; 37- Rebuff; 38- Hesitant sounds; 39- Washington bill; 40- French possessive; 41- Kind of alert; 43- Entire; 45- Commedia dell'\_\_\_\_; 46- Old entertainment; 48- Pasquinade; 50- Aussie hopper; 51- Agent; 52- Trounce; 56- Improve in appearance; 60- The last Mrs. Chaplin; 61- Panorama; 63- Emilia's husband; 64- Obstacle; 65- Glacial ridge; 66- Great quantity; 67- Fork feature; 68- Freshen, as a stamp pad; 69- Seemingly forever;

DOWN 1- Tolerate; 2- Mont Blanc, par exemple; 3- Be in front; 4- Liquid metallic element; 5- Diabolical; 6- Arguing; 7- Escort's offering; 8- Coffin stand; 9- Muslim opponent of the Crusaders; 10- Naive; 11- Vista; 12- Brain wave; 13- Gainsay; 21- Meal crumb; 23- Highest mountain in Crete; 26- \_\_\_\_ my case; 27- Bellini opera; 28- \_\_\_\_ salts; 29- Island greeting; 30- Bulge; 31- Opening; 32- Because of; 33- Clappett player; 36- Lennon's love; 42- Trash; 43- No matter who; 44- Money set aside for a particular purpose; 45- Inform; 47- Whimper; 49- Cry \_\_\_\_ River; 52- Amount to; 53- Burt's ex; 54- Son of Judah; 55- Ascend; 56- Type of gun; 57- \_\_\_\_ Bell; 58- Richard of "A Summer Place"; 59- Agrees tacitly; 62- Hit the slopes;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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AD



JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

ECONOMY

**CHINA'S** economic growth fell to its second-lowest level in at least four decades last year under pressure from anti-virus controls and a real estate slump, but activity is reviving after restrictions that kept millions of people at home and sparked protests were lifted.

The world's No. 2 economy grew by 3% in 2022, less than half of the previous year's 8.1% rate, official data showed yesterday. That was the second-lowest annual rate since at least the 1970s after 2020, when growth fell to 2.4% at the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

China's slump has hurt its trading partners by reducing demand for oil, food, consumer goods and other imports. A rebound would be a boost to global suppliers who face a growing risk of recession in Western economies.

Economic growth sank to 2.9% over a year earlier in the three months ending in December from the previous quarter's 3.9%, the National Bureau of Statistics reported.

Consumer spending started to recover but still was weak in December after the ruling Communist Party abruptly ended its "zero-COVID" controls.

# CHINA'S GROWTH FALLS TO 3%, GRADUALLY REVIVING



"The outlook for GDP growth in 2023 has improved," said Iris Pang of ING in a report.

To shore up the economy, the ruling party also has backtracked on key financial and industrial policies, winding down anti-monopoly and data crackdowns aimed at tightening control over China's tech industries. That campaign wiped hundreds of billions of dollars off the share prices of e-commerce giant Alibaba and other companies on foreign stock exchanges.

The government is loosening controls on real estate financing after tighter controls on debt that Chinese leaders worry is dangerously high caused economic growth to slide starting in 2021.

China's economic growth is in long-term decline after hitting a peak of 14.2% in 2007, hampered by hurdles including an aging, shrinking workforce and growing curbs on Chinese access to Western technology due to security concerns.

China's population of working

age people 16 to 59 has fallen by about 5% from its 2011 peak to 876.6 million last year, based on official data released yesterday. The working-age group as a share of the population of 1.4 billion fell to 62% from 70% a decade ago (see p6).

The International Monetary Fund and private sector forecasters expect economic growth no higher than about 4% through the rest of the decade.

In December, retail sales fell 1.8% from a year earlier, but that

was an improvement over the previous month's 5.9% contraction. Wary consumers are returning only gradually to shopping malls and restaurants amid a surge in COVID-19 infections that has flooded hospitals with patients.

Investment in factories, real estate and other fixed assets in December rebounded to 0.5% growth over the previous month following November's 0.5% contraction.

"The good news is that there are now signs of stabilization," Louise Loo of Oxford Economics said in a report.

Growth is forecast to improve this year to a still-modest level of about 5%. Economists point to weakness in real estate, an important economic engine, and slowing exports.

Factory output in 2022 rose 3.6% over the previous year, suggesting activity tumbled after hitting 4.8% in the third quarter of the year as U.S. and European demand for Chinese goods weakened under pressure from interest rate hikes to cool record-setting inflation.

The surprise end of some of the world's most pervasive anti-virus controls followed a promise by the Communist Party in November to reduce the cost and disruptions of "zero COVID." **MDT/AP**

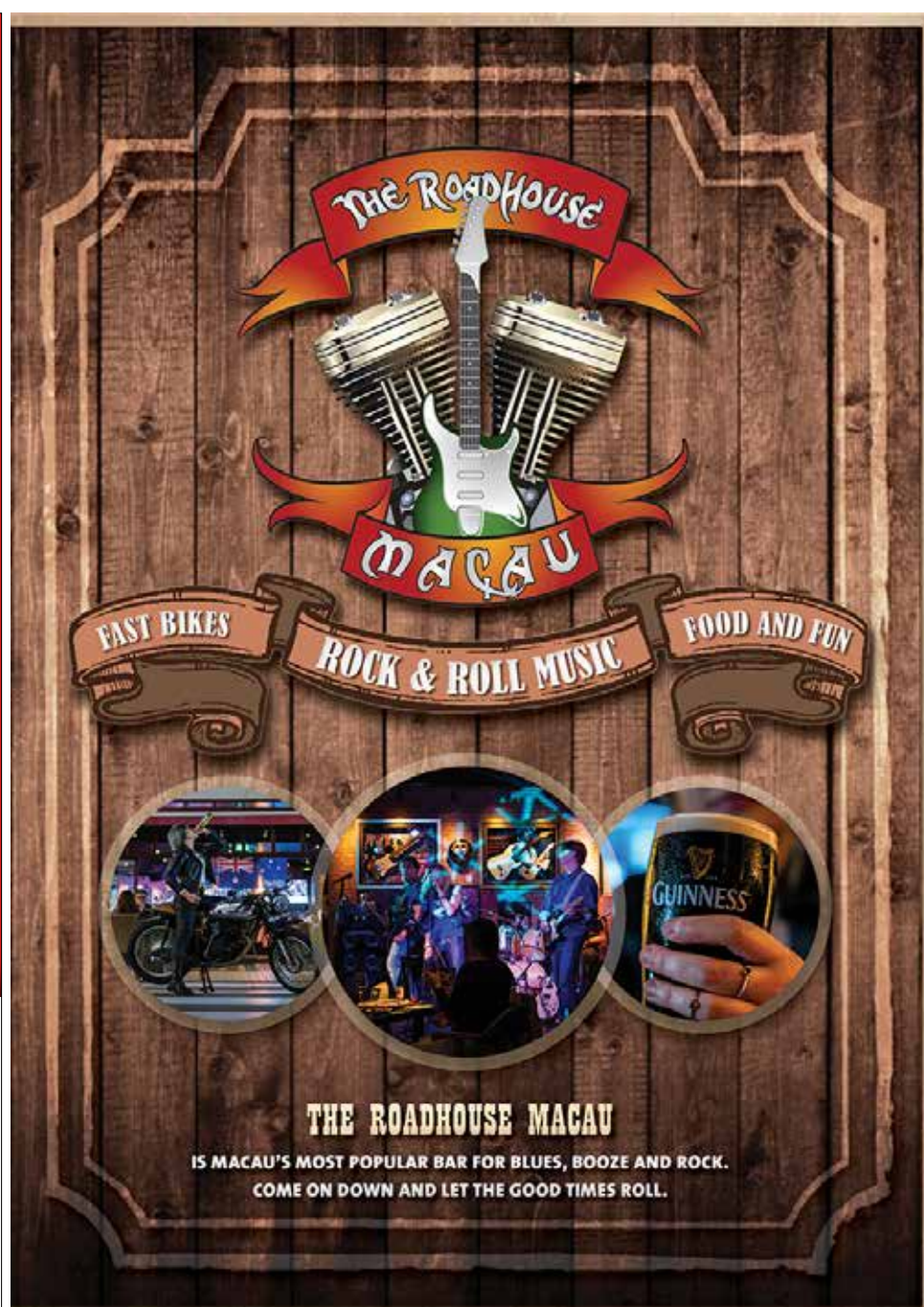
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AP PHOTO



Andy Murray of Britain plays a forehand return to Matteo Berrettini of Italy

TENNIS

# Andy Murray tops Berrettini in 5-set epic at Australian Open

HOWARD FENDRICH,  
MELBOURNE

**M**ETAL hip, bloody knee and all, Andy Murray produced his biggest victory in years.

Murray built a huge lead, let it disappear completely, then needed to save a match point against Matteo Berrettini — who is nearly a full decade younger and ranked more than 50 places higher — before managing to pull out a 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 6-7 (7), 7-6 (10-6) triumph across more than 4 1/2 epic hours yesterday in the Australian Open's first round.

"The last few years, I've certainly questioned myself at times. There's certainly a lot of people (who) questioned me and my ability, whether I could still perform at the biggest events and the biggest matches," said the 35-year-old Murray, a former No. 1 now ranked No. 66. "I felt very proud of myself after the match. That's not something that I generally felt over the years at the end of tennis matches."

This was the three-time major champion's first defeat of a top-20 opponent at a Grand Slam tournament since 2017. That was before Murray thought he would need to retire — and

even was given a career send-off at Melbourne Park in 2019, when he exited in the first round a year after his first hip operation.

After a second surgery inserted an artificial hip, Murray decided to try to continue playing. This sort of evening was likely what he had in mind when he pressed on — and when he spent three weeks in Boca Raton, Florida, practicing under the tutelage of coach Ivan Lendl during the offseason.

"I've put a lot of work into the last few months with my team to give me the opportunity to perform on stadiums like this, in matches like this, against players like Matteo," Murray told a crowd that roared with approval for him. "And it paid off tonight."

Oh, yes, what a performance it was, filled with the sort of grit that defined much of Murray's time on tour, that carried him to championships at the U.S. Open in 2012 and at Wimbledon in 2013 and 2016 and to two Olympic singles gold medals.

Murray is also a five-time runner-up at Melbourne Park, with four losses in the final to Novak Djokovic and one to Roger Federer.

"He's a great champion. I said it so many times," said Berrettini, an Italian who is one of

the players chronicled in the new "Break Point" Netflix docuseries. "Personally, was great to play with that atmosphere against him. Just a great match. Unfortunately it didn't go my way."

The night session matches that followed in Rod Laver Arena couldn't possibly equal the intensity and drama. First came a 7-6 (8), 4-6, 6-1 win for the No. 2-seeded woman, Ons Jabeur, over Tamara Zidansek, followed by nine-time champion Djokovic's 6-3, 6-4, 6-0 defeat of Roberto Carballes Baena in his return to the Australian Open after being deported from the country a year ago for not being vaccinated against COVID-19. In a match that ended after 1 a.m., the second-seeded man, two-time major finalist Casper Ruud, got past Tomas Machac 6-3, 7-6 (6), 6-7 (5), 6-3.

Djokovic received a loud and warm reception when he entered the court from fans who chanted his nickname and waved dozens of Serbian flags.

There were moments yesterday when Murray played as he did a long time ago, diving to hit a volley before slamming to the blue court — scraping his right leg — or sprinting to somehow reach seemingly unreachable shots, then looking up into the stands at Lendl and shaking

a fist while yelling, "Let's go! Come on now!"

Murray raced through the first two sets in less than 1 1/2 hours before the big-hitting, big-serving Berrettini turned things around and took the match to a fifth, even coming within one point of victory at 5-4 in that set but faltering and flubbing an easy backhand.

By beating the 13th-seeded Berrettini, who was the runner-up at Wimbledon in 2021, Murray became only the fifth man in the Open era with 50 match wins at the Australian Open, joining Djokovic, Federer, Rafael Nadal and Stefan Edberg.

They played under a closed roof at Laver because of temperatures that soared up to 38 degrees Celsius and caused suspensions of play that lasted hours in matches on smaller courts that can't be covered. Later, a rainstorm came, creating another pause in the action, and several matches were halted in progress, with plans to resume today.

This was the most-anticipated match of the afternoon session and lasted so long it finished after 7 p.m. local time, most definitely living up to the hype.

"Some of the tennis at the end was really good," Murray said. "It felt like that playing; I

don't know what it looked like."

Looked terrific, Andy.

Murray and Berrettini concluded with the first-to-10-points, win-by-2 tiebreaker formula that all Grand Slam events adopted for the fifth sets of men's matches and third sets of women's. Murray said it was his first experience with that relatively new format.

Make no mistake: He was far better in that decisive section of the match, jumping out to leads of 5-0 and 8-3. It ended in a bit of anticlimactic fashion: Murray's service return clipped the net cord and trickled over for a winner.

"Just a bit lucky at the end," said Murray, who next will meet Thanasi Kokkinakis or Fabio Fognini. Their match was suspended for the night with Kokkinakis five points from winning.

Murray has wondered aloud whether all of the work he put in to get back to a level of play that satisfied him was worth it.

"I need to give myself some credit, because the last few years have been tough," Murray said. "I've lost a few of those matches, those type of matches, in the Slams the last couple years."

He arrived in Australia having lost in the first or second round in seven of his nine most recent Grand Slam appearances. The other two ended in the third round.

For now, this one continues.

"It's impressive what he could do after so many surgeries, after all the kilometers that he ran in his career. It's impressive," Berrettini said. "It just shows how much he loves the game, how much he loves these kind of matches." **MDT/AP**



OPINION

**Multipolar World**

Jorge Costa Oliveira



**FOURTH QUARTER  
HORRIBILIS FOR THE  
CHINESE ECONOMY  
IN 2022**

Following the cessation of China's zero-Covid policy last December, the rate of Covid-19 infections has skyrocketed, with Wu Zunyou, chief epidemiologist at the China Center for Disease Control and Prevention, predicting China will experience three waves of Covid-19 infections this coming winter. The first wave is underway and is expected to have peaked early this month. It will then be followed by a second wave, triggered by the movement of people for the Lunar New Year holiday (January 21–27), which will last until mid-February. The third wave will occur from late February to mid-March, with people returning to work after vacation. The speed of contagion spread seems to be so high that the whole process may be catalyzing.

Meanwhile, there seems to be a consensus that for economic activity to return to normal, the market to function and the economy to grow significantly, the “wartime” anti-pandemic regime needs to be discontinued. Apart from some protests, what made the Chinese authorities turn around 180° with such haste? It is most likely the performance of the Chinese economy in the last quarter of 2022.

Preliminary GDP data for 2022 will only be released later in January. However, according to the Rodhium Group, in the first three quarters, growth on an annualized basis will have been 3%, supported by modest increases in household and public consumption (+1.2%), business investment (+0.8%) and net exports (+1.0%).

In the last quarter of 2022, there was a progressive downturn in the economy. In terms of household consumption, retail sales fell 0.5% in October and again by 5.9% in November. Public expenditure figures are hard to come by, but there is no reason to believe that it has offset the reduction in domestic demand. If we conservatively assume a 2% contraction in consumption in Q4 – similar to what we saw in Q2 – we can expect an annual contribution from household and government expenditure of about +0.8% of GDP.

When it comes to business investment, the fourth quarter of 2022 was poor. In November, there was a significant drop in new properties for which construction was started (-49.7%) or completed (-18.3%). Industrial production of construction-related products also fell, including cement (-3%), asphalt (-7%) and UPR (-39%). While this is a consequence of policies to correct the housing bubble, total investment in the constructions sector is only expected to contribute +0.6% to GDP.

Surprisingly, China's net exports rose. But by the end of the year, with global interest rates rising and inflation, this trend was no longer clear. At best, there may have been a modest increase in the fourth quarter, resulting in a maximum net export contribution of +1.1% to the 2022 GDP.

The first quarter of 2023 will be tough in China, with waves of hundreds of millions infected by Covid-19, the real estate and construction sector still in readjustment and under immense uncertainty, and the economy stagnant or exhibiting low growth. Then better days will come. But only then.

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**SWIFT GUITAR, EMINEM SHOES  
AMONG ITEMS IN CHARITY AUCTION**

Taylor Swift's acoustic guitar, Eminem's signed tennis shoes and an ensemble worn by a BTS member are among the items to be auctioned for charity next month.

Julien's Auctions said yesterday the memorabilia from some of the most popular music performers will be auctioned at the MusiCares Charity Relief Auction on Feb. 5.

All proceeds from the event following the Grammy Awards ceremony will go toward MusiCares, an organization dedicated to helping musicians in times of financial and medical crisis.

A signed Epiphone acoustic guitar that appeared on Swift's

2020 “evermore” album artwork could draw between \$5,000 and \$10,000. Eminem wrote the words “Shady” on a white pair of Nike Air Max that could go for up to \$3,000. A black utility-style jumpsuit and buckle belt worn by BTS's J-Hope during a photo shoot for his debut solo album “Jack In the Box” could garner up to \$4,000.

Snoop Dogg and his son, Cordell, will donate sound systems signed by both, along with a special NFT that could go for up to \$8,000.

Joni Mitchell will have several items auctioned including a signed print of her original oil painting of Jimi Hendrix.

**ON KING'S HOLIDAY,  
DAUGHTER CALLS  
FOR BOLD ACTION  
OVER WORDS**

AMERICA has honored Martin Luther King Jr. with a federal holiday for nearly four decades yet still hasn't fully embraced and acted on the lessons from the slain civil rights leader, his youngest daughter said yesterday [Macau time].

The Rev. Bernice King, who leads The King Center in Atlanta, said leaders — especially politicians — too often cheapen her father's legacy into a “comfortable and convenient King” offering easy platitudes.

“We love to quote King in and around the holiday. ... But then we refuse to live King 365 days of the year,” she declared at the commemorative service at Ebenezer Baptist Church, where her father once preached.

The service, organized by the center and held at Ebenezer annually, headlined observances of the 38th federal King holiday. King, gunned down in Memphis in 1968 as he advocated for better pay and working conditions for the city's sanitation workers, would have celebrated his 94th birthday Sunday.

Her voice rising and falling in cadences similar to her father's, Bernice King bemoaned institutional and individual racism, economic and health care inequities, police violence, a militarized international order, hardline immigration structures and the climate crisis. She said she's “exhausted, exasperated and, frankly, disappointed” to hear her father's words about justice quoted so extensively alongside “so little progress” addressing society's gravest problems.

“He was God's prophet sent to this nation and even the world to guide us and forewarn



Music students from the Kipp Scholar Academy prepare to participate in the Kingdom Day Parade in Los Angeles

us. ... A prophetic word calls for an inconvenience because it challenges us to change our hearts, our minds and our behavior,” Bernice King said. “Dr. King, the inconvenient King, puts some demands on us to change our ways.”

Other commemorations echoed Bernice King's reminder and Biden's allusions that the “Beloved Community” — Martin Luther King's descriptor for a world in which all people are free from fear, discrimination, hunger and violence — remains elusive.

In Boston, Mayor Michelle Wu talked about advancing truth in an era of hyper-partisanship and misinformation.

“We're battling not just two sides or left or right and a gradient in between that have to somehow come to compromise, but a growing movement of hate, abuse, extremism and white supremacy fueled by misinformation, fueled by conspiracy theories that are taking root at every level,” she said.

Wu, the first woman and person of color elected mayor of Boston, said education restores trust. Quoting King, she called

for overcoming the “fatigue of despair” to enact change. “It is sometimes in those moments when we feel most tired, most despairing, that we are just about to break through,” Wu told attendees at a memorial breakfast.

Volunteers in Philadelphia held service projects focused on gun violence prevention. The city has seen a surge in homicides that saw 516 people killed last year and 562 the year before, the highest total in at least six decades.

Some participants in the effort's signature project, led by Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, worked to assemble gun safety kits for public distribution. The kits include “gun cable locks and additional safety devices for childproofing,” according to organizers. They also include information about firearm storage, health and social services information, and coping in the aftermath of gun violence.

In Selma, Alabama, a seminal site in the civil rights movement, residents were commemorating King as they recover from a deadly storm system that moved across the South last week. **MDT/AP**



**Ukraine** The final death toll from a weekend Russian missile strike on an apartment building in southeastern Ukraine reached 44, officials said yesterday, as the body of another child was pulled from the wreckage. The strike in the city of Dnipro was the war's deadliest attack since the spring on civilians at one location.

Those killed in the Saturday afternoon strike included five children, and 79 people were injured.



**European Union** pushed forward with a massive clean tech industrial plan which not only should keep the continent in the vanguard of plotting a greener future but also guarantee its economic survival as it faces challenges from China and the United States. EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen presented the outlines for her “Green Deal Industrial Plan” that will make it much easier to push through subsidies for green industries and pool EU wide projects that are boosted with major funding as the EU pursues the goal to be climate neutral by 2050.



**Germany** Chancellor Olaf Scholz has put forth Boris Pistorius to be Germany's new defense minister, filling a critical role in his cabinet after Christine Lambrecht resigned on Monday following a series of missteps. In a statement, Scholz praised Pistorius's “strength and calmness,” and singled out his experience with defense policy. The 62-year-old is a veteran Social Democrat who has served as the interior minister for the state of Lower Saxony since 2013.