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A 44-YEAR-OLD RESIDENT HAS BEEN ACCUSED OF SCAMMING A LOCAL MAN AND TWO MAINLANDERS TO THE AMOUNT OF 435,000 PATACAS

P6

HK TOURISTS PREFER PENINSULA FERRY TERMINAL OVER PAC ON'S, Y-BRIDGE

P2

HONG KONG TO SCRAP ISOLATION RULE FOR COVID NEW CASES

P10



China An avalanche trapped vehicles outside a highway tunnel in Tibet, and at least eight people have died. The falling snow and ice collapsed at the exit of the tunnel connecting the city of Nyingchi in Tibet's southwest with outlying Medog county on Tuesday evening. The search and rescue mission are ongoing, although it wasn't clear how many people remained missing.



North Korea's rubber-stamp parliament has passed a budget that sustains a high level of defense spending despite the country's economic troubles as leader Kim Jong Un pushes for an aggressive expansion of his nuclear arsenal. State media reports indicated Kim didn't attend the Supreme People's Assembly's two-day.



Cambodia Cambodian experts, whose country has the dubious distinction of being one of the world's most contaminated by landmines, walked a group of Ukrainian soldiers through a minefield being actively cleared yesterday, hoping their decades of experience would help the Europeans in their own efforts to remove Russian mines at home.



Germany faced mounting pressure to supply battle tanks to Kyiv and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy aired frustration about not obtaining enough weaponry as Western allies conferred yesterday on how best to support Ukraine. Just hours into his tenure, Germany's new defense minister, Boris Pistorius (pictured, left), welcomed U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to Berlin.

More on backpage

MACAU BOUNCES LIKE THE RABBIT



The MSAR is the preferred destination of mainlanders traveling outside of its borders during the CNY holidays, crowding the heritage/casino city P2,4

CNY INFLATION

UNDERSTAFFED HOTELS ADD ZEROS TO ROOM PRICES OVERNIGHT

P4



CNY MACAU, HONG KONG FAVORED BY CHINESE TOURISTS; ASIAN HOPES FIZZLE

THE Chinese territories of Macau and Hong Kong appear to be the most favored destinations, according to travel agencies.

Just days before Sunday's start of the Lunar New Year, iconic tourist spots like historic Senado Square and the Ruins of St. Paul's, were packed.

Gambling floors at two major casinos were largely full, with groups of Chinese visitors sitting around the craps tables, The Associated Press reported yesterday.

"I'm so busy every day and don't have time to rest," said souvenir shop owner Lee Hong-soi. He said sales had recovered to about 70%-80% of the pre-pandemic days from nearly nothing just weeks ago.

Kathy Lin was visiting from Shanghai, partly because it was easy to get a visa but also because she was concerned about risks of catching COVID-19. "I don't dare to travel overseas yet," she said and she and a friend took photos near the ruins, originally the 17th century Church of Mater Dei.

That worry is keeping many would-be vacation goers at home even after China relaxed "zero-COVID" restrictions that sought to isolate all cases with



mass testing and onerous quarantine requirements.

"The elderly in my family have not been infected, and I don't want to take any risks. There's also the possibility of being infected again by other variants," said Zheng Xiaoli, 44, an elevator company employee in southern China's Guangzhou. Africa was on her bucket list before the pandemic, but despite yearning to travel over-

seas, she said, "there are still uncertainties, so I will exercise restraint."

Cong Yitao, an auditor living in Beijing, is not worried about catching the virus since his whole family has already had COVID-19. But he was put off by testing restrictions and other limits imposed by some countries, including the U.S., Japan, South Korea and Australia, after China loosened its

pandemic precautions.

"It seems like many countries are not welcoming us," said Cong, who instead was planning to head for a subtropical destination in China, like Hainan island or Xishuangbanna, to enjoy some warm weather.

A desired boom in Chinese tourism in Asia over the Lunar New Year holidays looks set to be more of a blip as most tra-

velers opt to stay within China. From the beaches of Bali to Hokkaido's powdery ski slopes, the hordes of Chinese tourists often seen in pre-COVID days will still be missing, tour operators say.

It is bitterly disappointing for many businesses who had hoped that lean pandemic times were over after Beijing relaxed restrictions on travel and stopped requiring weeks' long quarantines. Still, bookings for overseas travel have skyrocketed, suggesting it is only a matter of time until the industry recovers.

"I think the tourists will return around the end of February or early March at the earliest," said Sisdivachr Cheewarattaporn, the president of the Thai Travel Agents Association, noting that many Chinese people lack passports, flights are limited and tour operators are still gearing up to handle group travel.

COVID-19 risks are another big factor as outbreaks persist following the policy about-face in China, he said in an interview with the AP. "People may not be ready, or are just getting ready."

According to Trip.com, reservations for travel to Southeast Asia were up 10-fold, with Thailand a top choice, followed by Singapore, Malaysia, Cambodia and Indonesia.

Tourism Australia forecasts that spending by international travelers will surpass pre-pandemic levels within a year's time. PC/AGENCIES

TRANSPORT HK tourists find Outer Harbor ferry more convenient than Pac On or HKZMB

RENATO MARQUES

THE ferry between Macau's Outer Harbor Ferry Terminal and Sheung Wan in Hong Kong resumed yesterday with the first ferry from Hong Kong arriving in Macau at 9 a.m. carrying 176 passengers.

Passengers told Macau and Hong Kong media that it is more convenient to enter Macau via the Ou-

ter Harbor Terminal than the Taipa Ferry Terminal or even the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HKZMB) Port.

They have been awaiting the resumption of the Outer Harbor ferry route to Macau since it was suspended as part of Covid-19 border restrictions three years ago.

They said the Macao Government Tourism Of-

fice's (MGTO) promotion offering return tickets for those staying overnight in Macau may attract more Hong Kong residents to Macau in upcoming days or weeks.

The resumption of Outer Harbor Ferry Terminal operations adds another 10 round-trip connections between Macau and Hong Kong daily.

It also means that, un-

like Taipa, ferries will run in the evening.

The last ferry from Outer Harbor leaves for Sheung Wan at 10:30 p.m., while the last vessel from Hong Kong to Macau departs at 9:00 p.m.

TurboJet's schedule shows the first ferry to Hong Kong departs Macau at 7:30 a.m., while the first ferry from Hong Kong to Macau leaves at 8 a.m.



RENATO MARQUES

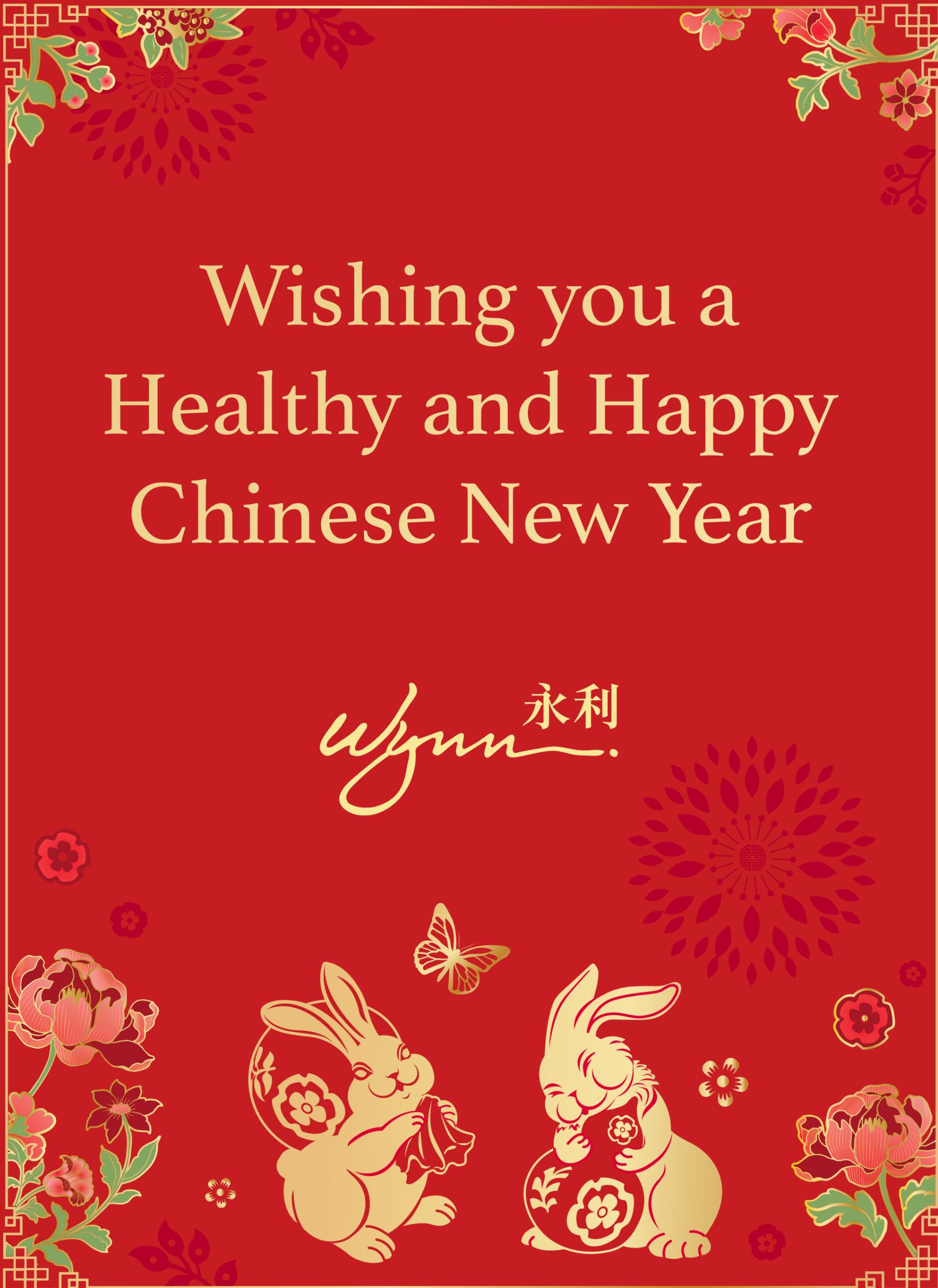
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DRUG BUREAU SEIZES UNAPPROVED COVID GENERIC MEDICINE

Primovir, a generic medicine for treating Covid-19 patients, has been seized in a shop near Border Gate, the Drug Supervision and Administration Bureau has announced. The bureau noted the brand has local approval. However, unapproved medicines were also found in seven other shops in the district. The bureau said only two brands have been approved in Macau, namely Pfizer's Paxlovid and Lagevrio by Merck & Co. Both are prescription drugs, the dbureau added.

GBA INDEX LOGS SIX-QUARTER DROP WITH THE STANDARD CHARTERED

GBA Business Confidence Index (GBAI) at 39.5 points in the last quarter, the index has now fallen for six consecutive quarters and reached its lowest point in 10. Active destocking and weak intention for capitalization are thought to be behind the index's serial plunge. Manufacturing and trading performed weakly in the past quarter, but innovation and technology plus retail and wholesale helped the index. The index is expected to rise in the first half of this year. A senior bank analyst forecast mainland China's expected economic growth at 5.8% for this year.

FIRST CHINA MAHJONG OPEN TO START IN MARCH

Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province in Eastern China is set to stage the country's first Mahjong Open between March 24 and 26, the event's organizing body has announced. The contest will have a total cash prize of 1 million Chinese yuan. It will have two categories – Sichuan style and International style – apart from having Hangzhou 2V2 style as a promotional game. Contestants must have requisite qualifications and accreditations to participate. Two million people have registered as mahjong athletes, of which 1.19 million are accredited. It was also announced that 140 athletes had achieved the highest qualification for amateurs.



Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes

CNY

TOURISM BUREAU INSPECTED SKYROCKETING HOTEL PRICES

ANTHONY LAM

THE issue of skyrocketing hotel room prices during the Lunar New Year holiday period has been rectified, Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), said yesterday.

On the sidelines of a government event, the tourism official was asked to comment on the scenario.

As compared to pre-Covid times, prices for hotel accommodation in Macau have regularly reached higher levels – such as HKD10,000 for an entry-level room – during major China holiday seasons.

In response, Senna Fernandes said her bureau had contacted hotels and travel agencies about the matter. It was revealed that rooms sold via hotels' own channels charge more reasonable prices.

Foreign online travel agencies (OTAs) were responsible for increased room prices. Senna Fernandes said her bureau had sent letters to hotel operators and some hotels had then negotiated with OTAs and had managed the situation.

For example, an entry-level room at Grand Emperor Hotel was on lease on Trip.com for about HKD2,600 last week, but yesterday the same room type was priced at HKD1,300, a 50% drop.

Some hotels are still facing a workforce shortage, so they have had to block out a portion of rooms during the Lunar New Year period. On this, Senna Fernandes said the MGTO is gathering workforce data from the hospitality industry.

She also said the promotional

strategy will move from counting the number of tourists to enticing them to stay longer in Macau.

Before Covid-19, Macau employed the former strategy. Although it had boosted the city's visitor arrival counts to nearly 40 million in 2019, the massive number of arrivals had overwhelmed regular people's lives, causing difficulties in daily commuting, dining and hygiene, among other areas.

Speaking about Macau-Hong

Kong ferry services, Senna Fernandes said that over recent days, about 7,000 Hong Kong residents had entered Macau by ferry daily. She believes that arrivals can rise to 10,000 at maximum.

The MGTO has reserved MOP30 million for the Hong Kong tourists travel promotion scheme that offers eligible tourists a complimentary return ticket to Hong Kong.

Meanwhile, the bureau is contemplating seven-seater group

tours targeting Hong Kong tourists.

Yesterday, the MGTO organized a religious ritual at the Sai Van Lake Square to pray for unobstructed events over the Lunar New Year holidays. Senna Fernandes expects 80,000 to be viewing the Lunar New Year Float Parade along the route this year. The main stand of the event has a capacity of 1,500 members. The event will be aired live on public broadcaster TDM.

TOURISM TRADE EXPECTS CNY HOTEL OCCUPANCY TO REACH 90%

CCHEUNG Kin Chung, president of Macau Hoteliers & Innkeepers Association, expects most of the city's hotels to be fully occupied during Lunar New Year.

While speaking with public broadcaster Radio Macau earlier this month, Cheung, an appointed lawmaker, said he expected that during the holiday period, local hotels will be at 90% capacity, which is the same level of pre-Covid Lunar New Year holidays.

He said the peak of booking activities would occur five to seven days before Lunar New Year. Most incoming tourists will be individual or family travelers. There will be some small groups as well.

Group tours from mainland China have not yet resumed.

Echoing the same anticipation is Wilfred Wong, president and executive director of Sands China Ltd., who told Hong Kong media he expected the hotel occupancy rate will reach 90% during the holiday period.

This Lunar New Year holiday period is the first major holiday season in mainland China after the cessation of Covid-19 travel restrictions.

Wong said casino revenue will also rise during this coming holiday season because,



Cheung Kin Chung

traditionally, Chinese people are eager to try their luck during Lunar New Year. Luck garnered during the period signifies a good year ahead.

The executive also expects the peak of hotel occupancy and casino revenue will occur between Jan. 23 and 26.

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CRIME

LOCAL MAN SCAMS THREE IN OVER MOP435,000 USED TO GAMBLE

RENATO MARQUES

A 44-year-old local resident has been accused of scamming a local man and two tourists from the mainland in a fraud amounting to over 435,000 patacas, the Judiciary Police (PJ) said yesterday during a specially organized press conference.

The first alleged victim, who first reported the matter to the PJ, said the suspect had offered him the opportunity to invest in construction works, luring him with the potential of high return.

He lost some 340,000 patacas and reported the suspect to the PJ.

While investigating the case, the PJ determined the suspect was allegedly involved in two other cases reported by mainland tourists of scams related to currency exchange.

The two alleged mainland victims met the suspect via social media and said he offered to exchange RMB for HKD at a better rate. The second alleged victim was said to have



RENATO MARQUES

lost some HKD80,000, while the third reported a loss of HKD14,500.

After transferring the amounts to the suspect, both alleged victims lost contact with him and reported him to PJ.

The suspect was detained on Jan. 18 at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge Port. He confessed to having performed the scams for money to play in the casino.

He told the PJ the three victims' money had already been lost at the casino tables.

The case has been referred to the Public Prosecutions Office for the suspect to be charged with fraud.

OVERSTAYERS DETAINED

Three mainland people were detained yesterday for using forged

visas and identification documents (IDs) to overstay in Macau, the PJ said.

According to the PJ spokesperson, the police received a tipoff and detained the trio in a hotel unit in Cotai.

The suspects are alleged to have acquired four forged visas for RMB18,000 and two forged IDs for RMB2,000 from an unknown wo-

man they met via social media.

Further investigation revealed an entry ban had already been imposed on one of the suspects in 2022 because of overstaying.

All suspects have been referred to the Public Prosecutions Office to be charged with illegal entry and the possession and use of forged documents.

WELFARE

APPLICANTS QUESTION FSS'S LACK OF ONLINE APPLICATION FOR COVID SUBSIDY

APPLICANTS have criticized the Social Security Fund (FSS) for the absence of online application channels for Covid-19 illness subsidies.

The fund's offices have seen long queues since early January when local workers started to recover from Covid-19.

Yesterday, the Taipa Government Service Center saw about 15 people queue for inquiries and applications. Because there is no online application channel, the fund has employed hotels' "express check-out" tactic to accelerate submissions by placing a letter box to collect submitted documents at the center's entrance.

When the subsidies were first announced, people flocked to FSS offices to inquire about application procedures, required documents and prerequisite conditions. According to public broadcaster Radio Macau Chinese channel, at midday on Jan. 6, over 20 people queued at the fund's headquarters either to make inquiries or to submit application forms.

At the time, applicants had already raised complaints with the local broadcaster about the lack of an online application platform.

Despite praising the fund's workers for being flexible with the "express submission" tactic, an applicant still complained about the lack of online channels. The applicant, surnamed Lou, also complained that information was unclear. Information about the scheme was not posted on the fund's website.

Had the website had sufficient information, the application procedure would have been smoother, she said.

According to government estimates, about 60% of the local population has contracted SARS-CoV-2 in the current outbreak, which equates to about 360,000 people.

In the past three years, the government has introduced several digital platforms to the public, such as the health code and Covid test booking system. In a press release on Jan. 17, the FSS recommended people make their fund installment using digital channels to avoid crowds. **AL**

MACAO ARCHIVES

Proposals on archive declassification under review

THE government is reviewing proposals on file declassification in the Archive Bill, which a parliamentary committee is considering.

According to President Vong Hin Fai of the parliamentary committee, the committee is awaiting an updated edition of the draft law from the government. The committee will then study the new draft and, if things go well, it will start compiling the complementary note to facilitate the Bill's debate and voting at the plenary of the parliament.

The current draft has had the definition of "historic values" and



the objective amended. The government has also accepted certain suggestions on related policies and technicalities from the committee. However, more changes are re-

quired. The main concern is that the government has changed proposals about file declassification. The first draft proposed public files under the Macao

Archives' possession could be declassified 25 years from the date of the compilation of the last document of the file.

It also proposed a file with personal data

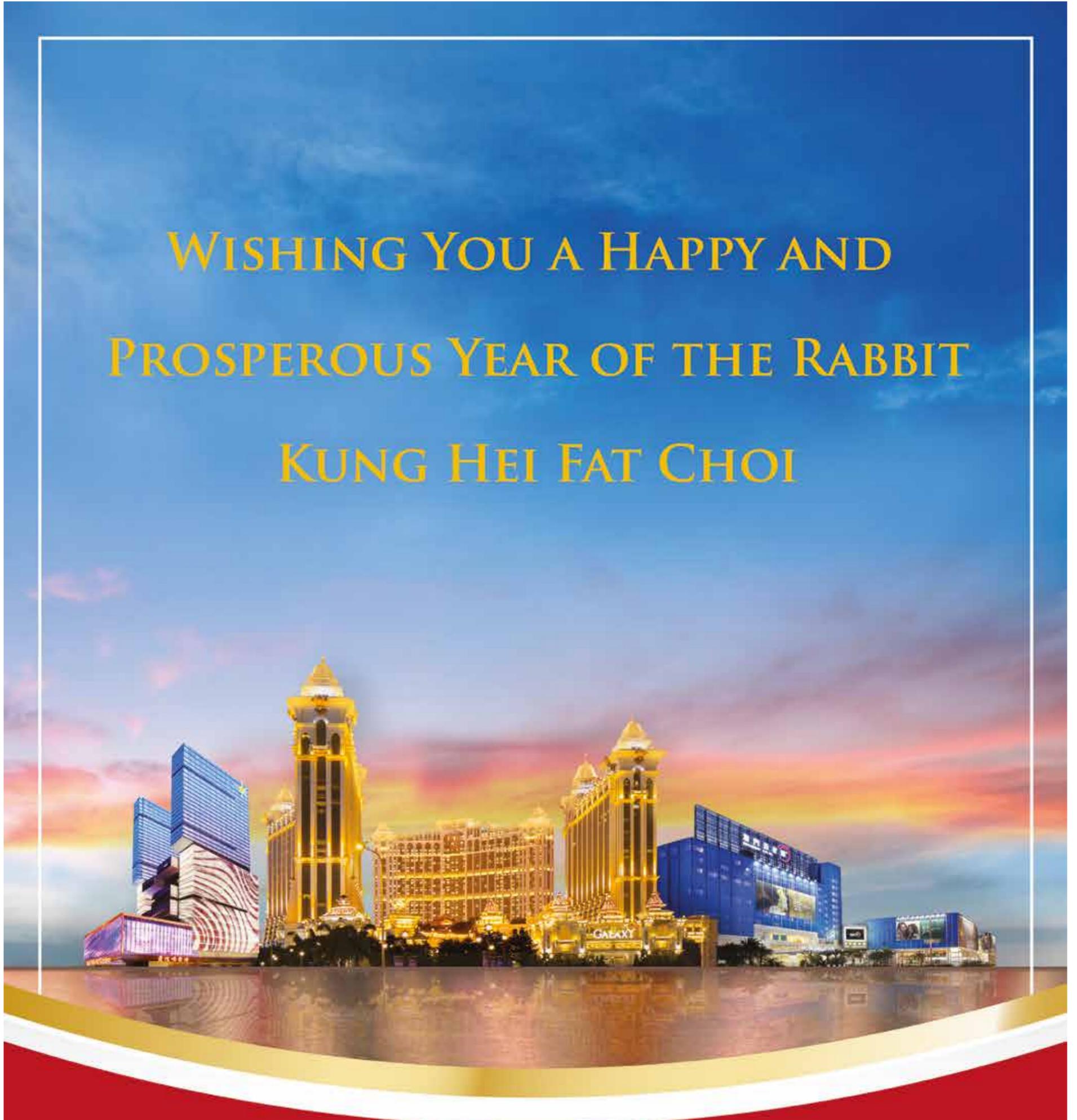
be declassified when either all personal data is covered and unidentifiable, or in 80 years after the date of compilation of the last document in the file.

The latest draft has retained the 25-year timeframe, but the remaining proposals have been changed.

It is now proposed that such files be declassified 25 years after the death of the concerned people, or in 100 years from the compilation date of the last document in the file should the date of death of the concerned people be unknown.

The government said it would consider committee members' suggestion to retain the "cover and unidentifiable" proposal, while adding that extending the classification period from 80 to 100 years is consistent with international practices. **AL**

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BASKETBALL

THREE WINS IN FOUR MATCHES ADDED TO BLACK BEARS' CAMPAIGN IN ABL

RENATO MARQUES

AFTER a slow start in the Singapore round of the 2023 ASEAN Basketball League (ABL) invitational tournament, the Macau Black Bears have improved their performance in the Indonesian round by achieving three wins in four matches.

In the round played at the city of Batam, the Bears faced and won the first match against the Hong Kong Eastern by four points (67 vs 71).

Two days later, the Bears played once again and beat the Cooly Bangkok Tigers 64 vs 94.

On a streak of three consecutive wins, the Bears were finally stopped by the Singapore Slingers who won by a marginal difference in the game played last Sunday (88 vs 81).

Completing the Batam round Tuesday, the Bears returned to victory, winning the match over the Zamboanga Valientes by 12 points (90 vs 78), thus completing the Indonesian round with the upper hand.



The Bears are now placed 5th overall on the ABL invitational tournament table with 4 wins and 4 losses and a 30 point positive differential on points won versus points conceded.

Leading the tournament table is Hong Kong Eastern

with 6 wins and only 2 losses, followed by the NS Matrix and Saigon Heat with the same points but with a worse points differential. In fourth position is the Slingers with 5 wins and 3 losses.

After an almost three-week

break the ABL resumes on Feb. 3 with the third round, this time played in Malaysia at the MABA stadium in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur.

The Bears resume playing on Feb. 4 at 8 p.m. when they will once again face the Zamboan-

ga Valientes.

After that the Bears continued their campaign with two games in two consecutive days (Feb. 6 and 7) facing the Slingers and Louvre Surabaya, respectively. Both matches are scheduled for 6 p.m.

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RABBITS ALLIANCE

Food stall wins awards for CNY fair young tenants

RENATO MARQUES

A food stall named "Rabbits Alliance" was grand winner of the Entrepreneurship Contest for Young Tenants of the Lunar New Year's Eve Fair, located at Tap Seac Square.

The awards, co-organized by the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) and the Macau Youth Entrepreneurship Association (YEA), offer cash prizes for the best stalls rented and run by young people and two special awards for Best Multimedia Advertising and Best Original Product.

In total, over 70,000 patacas in cash awards were distributed with the first three classified getting 20,000, 16,000, and 12,000 patacas, respectively.

This year, 22 stalls participated in the contest, including 18 selling festive products for the Lunar New Year, and four

food and drinks stalls.

A jury of several professionals from different areas evaluated the entries, based on aspects such as the style of a stall's decoration, type of products sold, promotion strategy, operating model, and creativity.

"Rabbits Alliance" won the gold award while the silver award was attributed to "Buytown" and "Fooktoushop."

The Best Advertising in Multimedia and Best Original Product awards were won, respectively, by "Jade rabbit welcomes you" and "Portua."

The organizers hope that, through this competition, young people will be able to gain experience conducting a business and develop a creative and innovative mentality.

The Lunar New Year's Eve Fair will continue to operate every day from 10 a.m. till midnight, ending on Jan. 22 at 2 a.m.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



Melco promotes physical and mental wellness through Reach! athlete nurturing program

IN alignment with the Macao SAR government's emphasis on promoting physical and mental wellbeing, Melco Resorts & Entertainment has developed and launched its Reach! athlete nurturing program to encourage colleagues to adopt healthier and more active lifestyles.

With the aim to inspire colleagues of all fitness levels to maximize their full potential in sports and physical activities, including through the provision of training support and resources such as the supply of facilities, venues and sports medicine, the program also helps colleagues who are engaged in competitive sports achieve their best possible results.

Speaking about the program, Executive Vice President and Chief of Staff to Melco Chairman & CEO, Ms. Akiko Takahashi, said, "Physical wellbeing contributes to mental wellness. Melco's Reach! program supports colleagues in the achievement of their personal best in sports and physical fitness, whether they are competitive athletes or those simply looking to optimize their physical best."

Reach! team member and winner of 2022 Macao Cycling Road Race – 5th Round's three category races Mr. Miguel Kok, Investigations, said, "Since joining the company nine years ago I have been training every day after work. What started off

as a hobby developed into an essential part of my life. It became my ambition to take part in large-scale competitions and races. To help me attain the best possible results, my manager and colleagues have been immensely supportive. For example, when I was required to attend training sessions in various travel locations for the 2018 Asian Games, they were so supportive and accommodating. While an athlete's success is often made possible through the support of family, friends and teammates, in my case, I have been fortunate enough also to have the support of my company to enable my dream chasing."

Leader of the Reach! Amazing team, who were named the

Champion team of 2022 Macao Obstacle Challenge's Team competition, Mr. Alex Kuok of Table Games, said, "I am thrilled and honored to be part of the Melco Reach! team. Joining the team has enabled me to achieve my first ever champion award. Coach is professional and attentive, helping us understand the challenges and safety needs of each segment, as well as designating team members within the race according to their strengths. Our success has been thanks to coach's on-day support, including pre-game planning, strategic analysis and general guidance. Not only have I met great teammates and friends through the competition, but I have also met my best self."

Ms. Xiang Guan of Table Games, 4th Runner-up of 2022 Macao International Marathon's Women's Competition, added, "I have been running for at least an hour each day regardless of my shift duty arrangements, be it squeezing in the time before or after work. Determination is key. I am glad to receive professional advice through the Reach! program, because training with professional coaches and learning to improve posture has greatly enhanced my core strength. It's a wonderful learning opportunity and chance to excel."

Mr. David Sisk, Chief Operating Officer of Macao Resorts, Melco, said, "We are pleased to have developed this new Reach! athlete nurturing program, as staying active through physical fitness and training is truly a great thing for both the mind and body. I invite all colleagues to join the program in the pursuit of one's personal best."



RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS:



Miguel Kok, Investigations

2022 Macao Cycling Road Race – 5th Round
Champion: Individual Time Trial – Elite
Champion: Mountain Bike Race – Open
Champion: Macao Cycling Champion – Elite



Next Leung, Table Games

2022 Macao Water Run
3rd Runner-up: 10KM Challenge



Reach! Amazing team

Alex Kuok, Table Games; Keith Cheang, Transportation; and Nini Liu, Public Relations

2022 Macao Obstacle Challenge
Champion: Team Challenge



Reach! Brilliant team

Next Leung, Table Games; Xiang Guan, Table Games; and Nick Chio, Table Games

2022 Macao Obstacle Challenge
2nd Runner-Up: Team Challenge

Day Leong, Table Games

2022 Macao Obstacle Challenge
6th Runner-Up: Men's – Individuals

Sailor Moon Lo, Table Games

2022 Macao Obstacle Challenge
8th Runner-Up: Men's – Individuals



Xiang Guan, Table Games

2022 Macao International Marathon
4th Runner-up: Women's Competition



COVID-19

BEIJING ACCUSES 'SOME WESTERN MEDIA' OF COVERAGE BIAS

CHINA yesterday accused "some Western media" of bias, smears and political manipulation in their coverage of China's abrupt ending of its strict "zero-COVID" policy, as it issued a vigorous defense of actions taken to prepare for the change of strategy.

The move in December to end mass testing and quarantines led to a sharp rise in cases, with some hospitals and crematoriums overwhelmed with victims.

An editorial in the ruling Communist Party mouthpiece People's Daily outlined what it called China's "optimization and control measures" and blasted reports by media outlets they didn't identify as "completely biased hype, smear and political manipulation with ulterior motives."

Since the initial wave of new cases, life in much of China has largely returned to normal, although officials have expressed concern about a further spread of the virus into the countryside during the Lunar New Year travel rush now underway.

Despite that, the editorial said many localities have "passed the peak of the epidemic, and production and life are speeding up to return to normal."

"Zero-COVID," as the strategy



came to be known, sought to track and isolate every case of infection, along with those who had contact with them and even third-hand contacts. It confined millions of people in cities such as Shanghai to their homes for two months or longer, with many suffering from food shortages and lack of access to health care.

China strongly defended the policy but began dismantling it under economic pressure and after highly rare street protests broke out in Beijing and other major cities denouncing the ru-

ling party and its leadership. On Jan. 8, it took the further step of eliminating the requirement that those arriving from abroad undergo lengthy and expensive quarantines.

China rejected both foreign and domestic criticism of the policy's excesses, denouncing earlier calls from the World Health Organization for it to adjust to changes in the nature of the virus, calling them "irresponsible."

That made the abrupt mid-winter shift to a policy of merely seeking to prevent the most se-

rious cases all the more jarring for the population, many of whom have defied censors to express anger online. Virtually overnight, testing stations where people had stood in long lines disappeared, while field hospitals used to quarantine millions simply packed up.

China also ceased publishing figures on new cases and deaths, which it had long been suspected of underreporting, leading to further complaints from the WHO and foreign nations about a lack of transparency. Unconfirmed es-

timates now put numbers of new cases at tens of thousands a day, with up to 85% of the population in some provinces having become infected.

China has also rejected calls to release more data and provide more information about the origin of the virus, first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019, accusing those making the requests of "politicizing" the issue.

The government has also lashed out at countries that require travelers coming from China to show a negative virus test, calling the demand "discriminatory" even though it requires the same of anyone entering China.

That defensive attitude was reflected in the People's Daily editorial, which said: "Thanks to meticulous medical preparations, sufficient production capacity reserves, and strong organizational planning and equipment, China has smoothly passed the adaptation period after the 'transition' and 'shift' of the epidemic prevention policy."

"In the face of China's prevention and control achievements, any political manipulation is pale and powerless," it added, citing endorsements from academics in Nigeria, Kenya and Russia, all close Chinese diplomatic partners.

"All parties should focus on fighting the epidemic itself, avoid any words or deeds that politicize the epidemic, strengthen solidarity and cooperation, and work together to defeat the epidemic," the editorial said. **MDT/AP**

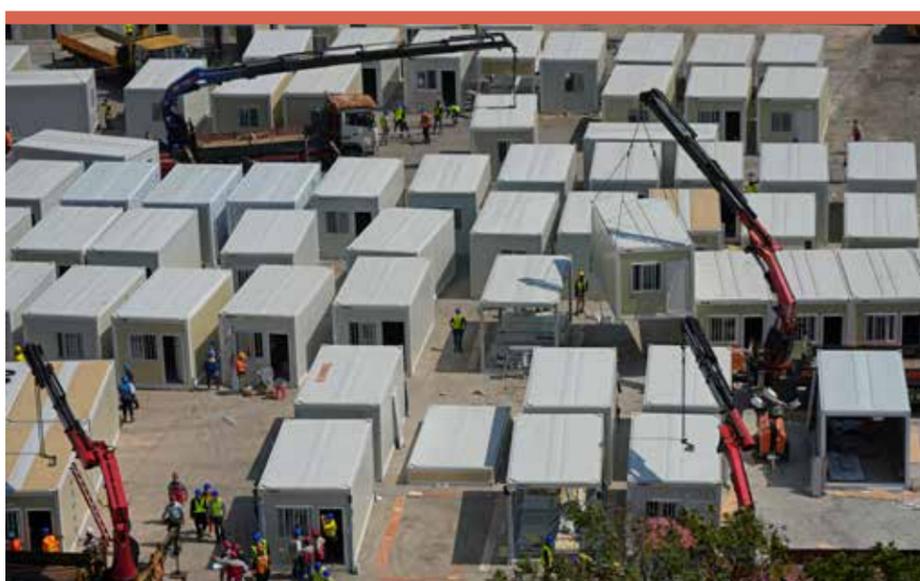
COVID-19

Hong Kong to scrap isolation rule for new cases

HONG KONG will scrap its mandatory isolation rule for people infected with COVID-19 starting Jan. 30 as part of its strategy to return the semi-autonomous Chinese city to normalcy, the city's leader said yesterday.

For most of the pandemic over the last three years, Hong Kong has aligned itself with mainland China's "zero COVID" strategy, requiring those who test positive to undergo quarantine. Many residents had to be sent to hospitals or government-run quarantine facilities even when their symptoms were mild.

Currently, infected persons are allowed to isolate at home for a minimum of five days and can go out once they test negative for two consecutive days. After the rule is dropped, a mask mandate will be the only major COVID-19 restriction left in the city.



An aerial view shows a construction site of a new makeshift COVID-19 hospital and isolation facilities in Tsing Yi of Hong Kong, in Feb. 2022

Chief Executive John Lee told lawmakers he made the decision based partly on the city's high vaccination and infection rates, saying the local community has a strong "immunity barrier."

"As most infected persons only suffer mild symptoms, the government should shift from a clear-cut, mandatory approach to one that allows residents to make their own decisions and take their own respon-

sibilities when we manage the pandemic," he said.

He said it is a step all countries make on their paths to normalcy and that Hong Kong has reached this stage now, adding that the city's pandemic situation

has not worsened since it started to reopen its border with mainland China about two weeks ago.

Edwin Tsui, the controller of the Centre for Health Protection, said people with asymptomatic infections can go out freely or return to their workplace, but infected students should not go to school until they obtain a negative test result. Those who suffer from COVID-19 symptoms should avoid leaving home, he said at a news conference.

Residents will no longer need to report to the government when they self-test positive, and doctors will be asked to only report serious cases and deaths, he added. The government will only publish daily data on the number of deaths and people who test positive using PCR tests.

"We will monitor COVID-19 similar to the way

we monitor influenza. It is an endemic respiratory disease," he said.

Hong Kong's daily tally has fallen to about 4,000 cases from 19,700 over the past two weeks. With many infected residents only having mild symptoms, most choose to isolate at home. The figures don't include those who never report their cases but stay at home to avoid spreading the virus to others.

The city has one government-run facility in operation for those who are unable to quarantine at home, according to a government reply to a lawmaker's inquiries on Wednesday. A daily average of about 150 people requested to go to the facility this week, Tsui said.

Hong Kong, which once had some of the world's strictest COVID-19 rules, has been easing its restrictions to revive its economy, including removing an isolation rule for close contacts of those who test positive for COVID-19 and vaccination requirements to enter certain types of venues. **MDT/AP**

Macao Lunar New Year Celebrations 2023

A line up of spectacular performances is ready to celebrate the Lunar New Year - parades, fireworks displays, musical performances, concerts and more.
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MACAO GOVERNMENT TOURISM OFFICE

20/1 Friday	Lunar New Year Market	10:00 - 24:00	Tap Seac Square
	Unforgettable melodies at St. Dominic's Church	20:00	St. Dominic's Church
21/1 Saturday	Lunar New Year Market	10:00 - 02:00	Tap Seac Square
	Fireworks and Firecrackers Zones	12:00 - 01:00	Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, Macau (Reclaimed land for new urban area near Macau Tower) Estrada Almirante Marques Esparteiro, Taipa (near the waterfront)
	Performances in the sphere of the Insightful Cultural Excursion	16:00 - 18:00	Taipa Houses
	Unforgettable melodies at the Ruins of St. Paul's	18:00 & 19:00	Ruins of St. Paul's
	Incense and Pinwheel Stalls	18:00 - 24:00	Barra Square
22/1 Sunday	Super Trio CNY Countdown Celebration 2023	22:00	Broadway Theater (Galaxy Entertainment Group)
	Incense and Pinwheel Stalls	00:00 - 18:30	Barra Square
	Fireworks and Firecrackers Zones	10:00 - 24:00	Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, Macau (Reclaimed land for new urban area near Macau Tower) Estrada Almirante Marques Esparteiro, Taipa (near the waterfront)
	Strolling on Almeida Ribeiro - Pedestrian area pilot project	From 12:00	Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro
	Interactive experiences on Foshan Woodblock New Year Paintings	15:00 - 18:00	Former Iec Long Firecracker Factory
	Performances in the sphere of the Insightful Cultural Excursion	16:00 - 18:00	Carmo Fair
	Gigantic Golden Dragon Parade	11:00 - 13:00	Ruins of St. Paul's > Senado Square > Calçada do Tronco Velho > Largo de S. Agostinho > Rua Central > Travessa da Paiva > Main entrance of MSAR Government Headquarters > Travessa do Padre Narciso > St. Lawrence's Church > Lilau Square > Rua da Barra > A-Ma Temple > Avenida Panorâmica do Lago Sai Van > Rotunda da Bala da Praia Grande > Sai Van Lake Square
	Lion Dance Performance	13:15 - 16:15	AnimArte NAM VAN, Macao Grand Prix Museum, Hong Kung Temple, Rua de Cinco de Outubro and area around Rua dos Ervanários, Rua da Felicidade
	Mak Mak Dance Performance, Lion Dance Performance	16:45 - 17:00	Leisure area at Rotunda de Carlos da Maia
	Chinese Dance Performance (Zhaoqing Dance Team), Lion Dance Performance	17:30 - 17:45	Areia Preta Urban Park
23/1 Monday	Roping Skipping Performance (Ziberty Group Limited from HK), Lion Dance Performance	18:15 - 18:30	Taipa Houses
	Incense and Pinwheel Stalls	09:00 - 18:30	Barra Square
	Fireworks and Firecrackers Zones	10:00 - 24:00	Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, Macau (Reclaimed land for new urban area near Macau Tower) Estrada Almirante Marques Esparteiro, Taipa (near the waterfront)
	Strolling on Almeida Ribeiro - Pedestrian area pilot project	Around the clock	Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro
	Roping Skipping Performance (Ziberty Group Limited from HK), Lion Dance Performance	10:30 - 10:45	Ruins of St. Paul's
	Lion Dance Performance	11:00 - 12:00	Senado Square, AnimArte NAM VAN
	Chinese Dance Performance (Zhaoqing Dance Team), Lion Dance Performance	12:30 - 12:45	Barra Square
	Lion Dance Performance	14:00 - 16:00	Macao Grand Prix Museum, Leisure area at Rua do General Ivens Ferraz, Qingmao Port
	Interactive experiences on Foshan Woodblock New Year Paintings	15:00 - 18:00	Former Iec Long Firecracker Factory
	Mak Mak Dance Performance, Lion Dance Performance	16:30 - 16:45	Iao Hon Market Garden
24/1 Tuesday	Lion Dance Performance	17:15 - 18:15	Carmo Fair, Rua do Cunha, Largo Eduardo Marques Coloane
	Eric Moo Year of Rabbit Chinese New Year Concert at Wynn Macau	21:00	Wynn Macau (Wynn Macau, Limited)
	New Year's Fortune Bike Ride	09:00	Taipa and Coloane
	Incense and Pinwheel Stalls	09:00 - 18:30	Barra Square
	Fireworks and Firecrackers Zones	10:00 - 24:00	Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, Macau (Reclaimed land for new urban area near Macau Tower) Estrada Almirante Marques Esparteiro, Taipa (near the waterfront)
	Strolling on Almeida Ribeiro - Pedestrian area pilot project	Until 22:00	Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro
	New Year's Sport for All Carnival	14:00 - 17:00	Iao Hon Market Garden
	Interactive experiences on Foshan Woodblock New Year Paintings	15:00 - 18:00	Former Iec Long Firecracker Factory
25/1 Wednesday	Parade for Celebration of the Year of the Rabbit	20:00	Sai Van Lake Square to Macao Science Center
	Chinese New Year Fireworks Display	21:45	Sea area in front of Macau Tower
	Incense and Pinwheel Stalls	09:00 - 18:30	Barra Square
26/1 Thursday	Fireworks and Firecrackers Zones	10:00 - 24:00	Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, Macau (Reclaimed land for new urban area near Macau Tower) Estrada Almirante Marques Esparteiro, Taipa (near the waterfront)
	Fortune Rabbit Visits Grand Lisboa Palace	18:00	Jardim Secreto, Grand Lisboa Palace 3/F (SJM Resorts, S.A.)
	George Lam Keep Smiling Concert Macau	20:00	MGM Theater, MGM Cotai
27/1 Friday	Incense and Pinwheel Stalls	09:00 - 18:30	Barra Square
	Melco Style Presents - Grady Guan SCEC Concert 2023	19:30	Macau Studio City Event Center (Melco Resorts & Entertainment Limited)
	Unforgettable melodies at St. Dominic's Church	20:00	St. Dominic's Church
28/1 Saturday	George Lam Keep Smiling Concert Macau	20:00	MGM Theater, MGM Cotai
	Incense and Pinwheel Stalls	09:00 - 18:30	Barra Square
	Performances in the sphere of the Insightful Cultural Excursion	16:00 - 18:00	Taipa Houses
	Unforgettable melodies at the Ruins of St. Paul's	18:00 & 19:00	Ruins of St. Paul's
	Parade for Celebration of the Year of the Rabbit	20:00	Rua Norte do Patane to Iao Hon Market Garden
29/1 Sunday	The Night of Fortune Lunar New Year Concert	20:00	Cotai Arena, The Venetian Macao (Sands Resort Macao)
	Chinese New Year Fireworks Display	21:45	Sea area in front of Macau Tower
	New Year's Motorcycle Parade	14:00 - 18:00	Start and finish at the Macao Science Center Square
4/2 Saturday	Performances in the sphere of the Insightful Cultural Excursion	16:00 - 18:00	Carmo Fair
	Strolling on Almeida Ribeiro - Pedestrian area pilot project	From 12:00	Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro
5/2 Sunday	Strolling on Almeida Ribeiro - Pedestrian area pilot project	Until 22:00	Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro
	2023 Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Chinese New Year Cup in the year of the Rabbit	14:00	Olympic Sports Centre - Stadium
	Chinese New Year Fireworks Display	21:00	Sea area in front of Macau Tower



THAILAND

BANGKOK'S NEW PASSENGER TRAIN TERMINAL STARTS OPERATIONS

TASSANEE VEJPONGSA &
 JERRY HARMER, BANGKOK

THAILAND ushered in a new age of train travel yesterday Southeast Asia's biggest railway station officially began operations. The government says the huge, modern development on the edge of central Bangkok will bolster the country's position as a regional hub and boost its economy.

It's officially called Krung Thep Aphiwat Central Terminal, a name bestowed by the king. But to most people it's more likely to be known simply as Bang Sue Grand Station, after the part of Bangkok it's in.

The cost of the new terminal, including the station, elevated train tracks and a connecting station for Bangkok's mass transit system, is around \$1 billion, according to Takun Indarachome, director of traffic operations for the State Railway of Thailand.

Almost all of Thailand's long-distance domestic and international rail services will pass through the new terminal, on which work began 10 years ago. The first train out of the new station was bound for Sungai Kolok, on Thailand's southern border

AP PHOTO



A train departs for the southern Narathiwat province at the Krung Thep Aphiwat Central Terminal in Bangkok, yesterday

with Malaysia.

Many Thais, however, are lamenting the shunting aside of the previous terminal, Hua Lamphong Station on the edge of Bangkok's Chinatown in the middle of the capital. The classic station, with its high-ceilinged waiting room, has hosted generations of travelers, ranging from rural workers looking for jobs in the city to backpacking tourists headed south to chill at seaside resorts.

All is not lost for the nostalgic, however. Several lines — running locally and to the east — will still wend their way to the older, more

central station. For the time being at least, 62 trains will use it daily.

The construction of the new terminal coincided with major projects expanding rail networks in Thailand and other countries in Southeast Asia, largely spurred by China's Belt and Road infrastructure initiative and its high-speed rail technology.

Passengers will encounter a four-story station covering almost 30 hectares. Many Bangkokians are already familiar with the premises because its cavernous halls were used last year as the main venue for the government's free

COVID-19 vaccination program.

Trains will come and go on 24 tracks at 12 platforms, with the station able to manage up to 40 trains at the same time, according to the government. At peak times it can handle up to 600,000 passengers per day, more than 10 times the capacity of Hua Lamphong station, it says.

In Bang Sue's ultra-modern control room, banks of panels and screens oversee operations and make sure that everything is running smoothly. Video from more than 120 security cameras is monitored using artificial in-

telligence. In public areas, smart robots are on hand to assist puzzled passengers, and smart wheelchairs can carry handicapped people without human help.

"Today is the first day after they moved the service from Hua Lamphong and lots of people did not know that yet, so the place looks empty," said Theerawat Peangda, who was waiting to catch a train south for a holiday break. "But I think this station is OK, very nice and convenient."

Hua Lamphong, in contrast, looks more to the past than the future. To walk through the neo-Renaissance portal of the station, designed by Italian architects and opened in 1916, is to step back in time to a simpler era. For a while, it even appeared that it would be relegated to become a museum.

"I don't want them to move the grand station. I'd rather it stayed here," Prathuang Ruengsamut, 68, said earlier this week as he waited for a train at Hua Lamphong. "They just need to renovate this place a little bit and it'll be fine."

Such deep affection for the old station may well have saved it. When plans were mooted to tear it down, there was a public outcry, and the authorities backtracked.

"Had they closed it and turned it into a museum it would have become lifeless. But if we let people keep using it, it's much better," said Thanong Thooptian, 61, who regularly takes trains from Hua Lamphong. **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

FM Wong 'deeply troubled' by Chinese espionage case

ROD MCGUIRK,
 CANBERRA

AUSTRALIA'S foreign minister said yesterday her government was "deeply troubled" by the delays in China resolving espionage allegations against Chinese-Australian Yang Hengjun, while a supporter said the Chinese-born writer and blogger would remain detained until at least April.

Foreign Minister Penny Wong raised the issue on the anniversary of Yang's detention in 2019 when he arrived in southern China's Guangzhou from New York with his wife and 14-year-old stepdaughter.

Yang faced a closed trial on an espionage charge in Beijing in May 2021 and is still waiting for a verdict.

"The Australian government is deeply troubled by the ongoing delays in his case," Wong said in a

AP PHOTO



This undated, file photo released by Chongyi Feng shows Yang Hengjun (left) and his wife Yuan Xiaoliang

statement.

Australia would continue to advocate for the 57-year-old's interests and wellbeing "at the highest levels," she said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin offered no information about Yang's case when asked about it yesterday, saying only that China

had allowed Australian diplomats to meet with him, as is required under international law.

"China urges Australia to earnestly respect China's judicial sovereignty, refrain from interfering in any form in the handling of cases by Chinese judicial organs in accordance with the law, and take concrete

actions to create conditions and an atmosphere for the improvement of bilateral relations," Wang said at a daily briefing.

Yang's Sydney-based supporter, Feng Chongyi, confirmed a report in Australia's Fairfax Media Publications newspapers that the case would not be resolved before April.

The court was recently granted a seventh three-month extension to resolve the case, Feng said.

The Australian government, which was elected in May, should insist that Yang's case be resolved before it takes further steps toward mending troubled bilateral relations with China, Feng said.

"I hope they will resolve the issue of Yang Hengjun before they normalize trade relations," Feng said.

"That is my wish, my hope. But I am not confident that they won't yield to Chinese pressure and commercial interests," he added.

Chinese-born Australian journalist Cheng Lei, who China accuses of sharing state secrets, would also have to wait until April before there could be any progress in her case, Fairfax reported.

The 47-year-old journalist for CGTN, the English-language channel of China Central Television, has been detained in China since August 2019.

Feng described the extensions of both cases until April as a coincidence. The cases were not linked, he said.

Cheng's partner, Nick Coyle, told Fairfax the "continual delays are disappointing."

Coyle did not immediately respond to the AP's request for comment.

Supporters of both dual citizens hope that they will be deported to Australia once they are convicted and sentenced.

There are signs that bilateral relations have improved since May when the previous Australian government was voted out of office after nine years in power. **MDT/AP**



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NEW ZEALAND

Premier Jacinda Ardern, an icon to many, to

NICK PERRY, WELLINGTON

NEW Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Arden, who became a global icon of the left and exemplified a new style of leadership, said yesterday that she would leave office.

Just 37 when she became leader, Ardern was praised around the world for her handling of the nation's worst-ever mass shooting and the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic. But she faced mounting political pressures at home and a level of vitriol from some that hadn't been experienced by previous New Zealand leaders.

Still, her announcement came as a shock throughout the nation of 5 million people.

Fighting back tears, Ardern told reporters in Napier that Feb. 7 would be her last day as prime minister after five and a half years in office.

"I know what this job takes, and I know that I no longer have enough in the tank to do it justice. It is that simple," she said.

Lawmakers in her Labour Party will vote for a new leader on Sunday.

Ardern became an inspiration to women around the world after first winning the top job in 2017. She seemed to herald a new generation of leadership — she was on the verge of being a millennial, had spun some records as a part-time DJ, and wasn't married like most politicians.

In 2018, Ardern became just the second world leader to give birth while holding office. Later that year, she brought her infant daughter to the floor of the U.N. General Assembly in New York.

She notched up center-left victories while right-wing populism was on the rise globally, pushing through a bill targeting net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, overseeing a ban on assault weapons, and largely keeping the coronavirus out of New Zealand for 18 months.

Her approach to the pandemic earned the ire of U.S. President Donald Trump, and she pushed back against wildly exaggerated claims from Trump about the spread of COVID-19 after he said there was a massive outbreak and "It's over for New Zealand. Everything's gone."

"Was anyone the word?" Ardern

AP PHOTO



New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, right, with her fiancée Clark Gayford leave a press conference after announcing her resignation in Napier, yesterday

said about Trump's comments in an interview with The Associated Press at the time.

COVID AFTER TERROR

In March 2019, Ardern faced one of the darkest days in New Zealand's history when a white supremacist gunman stormed two mosques in Christchurch and slaughtered 51 worshippers during Friday prayers. Ardern was widely praised for her empathy with survivors and New Zealand's wider Muslim communi-

ty in the aftermath.

After the mosque shootings, Ardern moved within weeks to pass new laws banning the deadliest types of semi-automatic weapons. A subsequent buyback scheme run by police saw more than 50,000 guns, including many AR-15-style rifles, destroyed.

Less than nine months after the shooting, she faced another tragedy when 22 tourists and guides were killed when the White Island volcano erupted.

Ardern was lauded globally for her country's initial handling of the coronavirus pandemic after New Zealand managed to stop the virus at its borders for months. But she was forced to abandon that zero-tolerance strategy as more contagious variants spread and vaccines became widely available.

She faced growing anger at home from those who opposed coronavirus mandates and rules. A protest against vaccine mandates that began on Parliament's grounds

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last year lasted for more than three weeks and ended with protesters hurling rocks at police and setting fires to tents and mattresses as they were forced to leave. This year, Ardern canceled an annual barbecue she hosts due to security fears.

Ardern last month announced a wide-ranging Royal Commission of Inquiry would look into whether the government made the right decisions in battling COVID-19 and how it could better prepare for future pandemics. A report is due next year.

Many observers said that sexist attitudes played a role in the anger directed at Ardern.

"Her treatment, the pile on, in the last few months has been disgraceful and embarrassing," wrote actor Sam Neill on Twitter. "All the bullies, the misogynists, the aggrieved. She deserved so much better. A great leader."

But Ardern and her government also faced criticism that it had been big on ideas but lacking on execution. Supporters worried it hadn't made promised gains on increasing housing supply and reducing child poverty, while opponents said it was not focusing enough on cri-

me and the struggling economy.

MILLENNIAL, WOMAN, PROGRESSIVE

Ardern described climate change as the great challenge for her generation. But her policies faced skepticism and opposition, including from farmers who protested plans to tax cow burps and other greenhouse gas emissions.

Ardern had been facing tough prospects at the ballot box. Her center-left Labour Party won reelection in 2020 with a landslide of historic proportions, but recent polls have put her party behind its conservative rivals.

Ardern said the role required having a reserve to face the unexpected.

"But I am not leaving because it

was hard. Had that been the case I probably would have departed two months into the job," she said. "I am leaving because with such a privileged role comes responsibility. The responsibility to know when you are the right person to lead, and also, when you are not."

She said her time in office had been challenging but fulfilling.

"I am entering now my sixth year in office, and for each of those years, I have given my absolute all," she said.

"I know what this job takes, and I know that I no longer have enough in the tank to do it justice. It is that simple."

JACINDA ARDERN
PRIME MINISTER, NEW ZEALAND

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Ardern "has shown the world how to lead with intellect and strength."

"She has demonstrated that empathy and insight are powerful leadership qualities," Albanese tweeted. "Jacinda has been a fierce advocate for New Zealand, an inspiration to so many and a great friend to me."

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau thanked Ardern on Twitter for her friendship and "empathic,

compassionate, strong, and steady leadership."

Ardern charted an independent course for New Zealand. She tried to take a more diplomatic approach to China than neighboring Australia, which had ended up feuding with Beijing. In an interview with the AP last month, she said that building relationships with small Pacific nations shouldn't become a game of one-upmanship with China.

New Zealand Opposition Leader Christopher Luxon said Ardern had been a strong ambassador for the country on the world stage. He said that for his party "nothing changes" and it remains intent on winning this year's general elections to "deliver a government that can get things done for the New Zealand people."

LEADER IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Jacinda Ardern announced that vote would be held on Oct. 14, and that she would remain a lawmaker until then. Deputy Prime Minister Grant Robertson announced that he won't contest the leadership of the Labour Party, throwing the competition open.

It's unclear who will take over as prime minister until the election.

If no candidate gets at least two-thirds support from the caucus when Labour lawmakers vote on Sunday, then the leadership contest will go to the wider party member-

ship. Ardern has recommended the party chose her replacement by the time she steps down.

Ardern said she hadn't had too much time to reflect on her tenure in the role, although noted it had been marked with crises.

"It's one thing to lead your country in peace times, it's another to lead them through crisis. There's a greater weight of responsibility, a greater vulnerability amongst the people, and so in many ways, I think that will be what sticks with me," she said. "I had the privilege of being alongside New Zealand during crisis, and they placed their faith in me."

Aya Al-Umari, whose brother Hussein was killed in the Christchurch mosque attacks, tweeted her "deepest gratitude" to Ardern, saying her compassion and leadership during that grim day "shone a light in our grief journey."

"I have a mixture of feelings, shocked, sad but really happy for her," Al-Umari wrote.

Ardern said she didn't have any immediate plans after leaving office, other than family commitments with her daughter, Neve, and her fiancé, Clarke Gayford, after an outbreak of the virus thwarted their earlier wedding plans.

"And so to Neve, Mum is looking forward to being there when you start school this year," Ardern said. "And to Clarke, let's finally get married." **MDT/AP**

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BRAZIL

Fashion sneakers propel sustainable rubber in Amazon

FABIANO MAISONNAVE,
XAPURI

RUBBER tapper Raimundo Mendes de Barros prepares to leave his home, surrounded by rainforest, for an errand in the Brazilian Amazon city of Xapuri. He slides his long, scarred, 77-year-old feet into a pair of sneakers made by Veja, a French brand.

At first sight, the expensive, white-detailed urban tennis shoes seem at odds with the muddy tropical forest. But the distant worlds have converged to produce soles made from native Amazonian rubber.

Veja works with a local cooperative called Cooperacre, which has reenergized the production of a sustainable forest product and improved the lives of hundreds of rubber tapper families. It's a project that, though modest in scale, provides a real-life example of living sustainably from the forest.

"Veja and Cooperacre are doing an essential job for us who live in the forest. They are making young people come back. They have rekindled the hope of working with rubber," Rogério Barros, Raimundo's 24-year-old son, told The Associated Press as he demonstrated how to tap a rubber tree in the family's grove in the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve. Extractive reserves in Brazil are government-owned lands set aside for people to make a living while they keep the forest standing.

Rubber was once central to the economy of the Amazon. The first boom came at the turn of the 20th century. Thousands of people migrated inland from Brazil's impoverished Northeast to work in the forest, often in slave-like conditions.

That boom ended abruptly in the 1910s when rubber plantations started to produce on a large scale in Asia. But during World War II, Japan cut the supply, prompting the United States to finance a restart of rubber production in the Amazon.

After the war, Amazon la-



tex commerce again fell into decline, even as thousands of families continued to work in poor conditions for rubber bosses. In the 1970s, these relatively wealthy individuals began selling land to cattle ranchers from the south, even though, in most cases, they didn't actually own it, but rather just held concessions because they were well-connected with government officers.

These land sales caused the large scale expulsion of rubber tappers from the forest. That loss of livelihood and deforestation to make way for cattle raising is what prompted the famous environmentalist Chico Mendes — together with a cousin of Barros — to found and lead a movement of rubber tappers. Mendes would be murdered for his work in 1988.

After Mendes' assassination, the federal government began to create extractive reserves so that the forest could not be sold to make way for cattle. The Chico Mendes reserve is one of these. But the story did not end with the creation of the reserves. Government attempts to promote the latex, including a state-owned condom factory in Xapuri, failed to create a reliable income.

What sets the Veja ope-

ration apart is that rubber tappers are now getting paid far above the commodity price for their rubber. In 2022, the Barros family received US\$ 4.20 per kilo of rubber tapped from their grove. Before, they made one tenth that amount.

This price that shoe company Veja pays the tappers includes bonuses for sustainable harvests plus recognition of the value of preserving the forest, explains Sebastião Pereira, in charge of Veja's Amazonian rubber supply chain. The rubber workers also receive federal and state benefits per kilo.

Veja also pays bonuses to tappers who employ best practices and local cooperatives that buy directly from them. The criteria range from zero deforestation to the proper management of rubber trees. Top producers also receive a pair of shoes as a prize.

Veja's rubber is produced by some 1,200 families from 22 local cooperatives spread across five Amazonian states: Acre, home to the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve, Amazonas, Rondonia, Mato Grosso, and Pará.

All the rubber goes to the Cooperacre plant in Sena Madureira, in Acre state, where raw product is cut, washed, shredded into smaller pieces, heated, wei-

ghed, packed and finally shipped to factories that Veja contracts with in industrialized Rio Grande Sul state, thousands of miles to the south, as well as to Ceara state, in Brazil's Northeast.

From there the sneakers are distributed to many parts of the world. Over the last 20 years, Veja has sold more than 8 million pairs in several countries and maintains stores in Paris, New York and Berlin. The amount of Amazon rubber it purchases has soared: from 5,000 kilos in 2005 to 709,500 kilos in 2021, according to company figures.

However, it has not been a game changer for the forest in the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve, where almost 3,000 families live. The illegal advance of cattle, an old problem, has picked up. Deforestation there has tripled in the past four years, amid the policies of former President Jair Bolsonaro, who was defeated in his reelection bid and left office at the end of last year.

Cattle long ago replaced rubber as Acre's main economic activity. Nearly half of the state's rural workforce is employed in cattle ranching, where only 4% live from forest products, mainly Brazil nuts. MDT/AP

this day in history

1961 JOHN F KENNEDY SWORN IN AS US PRESIDENT



The Democrat John F Kennedy has been sworn in as the youngest ever elected president of the United States.

The 43-year-old Roman Catholic was inaugurated as the 35th president on a snow-covered Capitol Hill in Washington. He takes over from the oldest president in American history, General Dwight Eisenhower, who is bowing out aged 70.

The president's Republican rival, Richard Nixon, who came a close second in the race for the White House, also attended the inauguration ceremony.

Millions watched the swearing-in of the new president on television. He chose to wear formal dress, including a top hat, for the occasion.

President Kennedy began his speech by addressing "my fellow citizens" - the term first used by President George Washington but rejected by later presidents in favour of the less formal "my fellow Americans".

His ten-minute address appealed to Americans to unite in the fight against the common enemy of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.

For the people of the world struggling against the "bonds of misery", the president pledged, "our best efforts to help them help themselves".

He continued: "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich."

He also appealed to the Soviet Union to begin a new quest for peace.

"Let both sides for the first time, formulate serious and precise proposals for the inspection and control of arms and bring the absolute power to destroy other nations under the absolute control of all nations," he said.

President Kennedy closed his speech with the words: "Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world, ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man."

His words were greeted with rousing applause.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

President Kennedy was a Harvard graduate and a war hero.

He became a Democratic Congressman in 1946 and a senator in 1952. He married Jacqueline Bouvier in 1953.

He ran against Richard Nixon for the White House. In September 1960 millions watched the pair battle it out in a series of television debates.

Shortly after his election, he supported a Cuban rebel attempt to overthrow the communist regime of Fidel Castro in Cuba.

It was unsuccessful and led the Russians to install nuclear weapons on Cuba in 1962 triggering what became known as the Cuban missile crisis.

The crisis was narrowly averted. In August 1963, Kennedy negotiated the first nuclear test ban treaty with the Soviet Union in what was seen as a first step towards ending the Cold War.

On 22 November 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated. He was shot in the head as he drove through Dallas, Texas on his way to a political festival.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Don't spend too much in order to impress others. You need to concentrate on solving existing problems. You could be blind to the defects of those you love.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Do not get involved in joint financial ventures. Your partner could make you angry if they steal your thunder or embarrass you in front of others.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Your position may be in question if you haven't been pulling your weight. Problems with ear, nose, or the throat are likely. You may want to stay in the background today.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
You may be tired of working for someone else. Short trips will be educational. You can evade the issue as usual by being affectionate, fun loving, and far too active for your lover to catch on.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Passion will be your only answer. Don't waste this exciting day by sitting at home. You could come into extra cash. Travel will enhance romance and adventure.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Be tolerant, but don't let any one take you for granted. Make your intentions perfectly clear and find out exactly what is expected of you.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Your nerves are frazzled. Minor accidents could occur if you don't take precautions. Get back into a routine that promises a better looking, more aware individual.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
You will have good ideas for home improvement projects. You must not lead someone on or show interest in them for the wrong reasons.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Try out for a local sports team such as volleyball, tennis, lawn bowling, or whatever interests you. You can sell your ideas to those who have the money to back them.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Keep on your toes when dealing with others. Real estate investments will be extremely profitable in the long run. Luck is with you.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Rethink your motives and make the necessary changes to yourself. You may find that your plans will cost a little more than you had expected.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Minor health problems will flare up if you don't take care of yourself. You can meet interesting new friends if you join worthwhile groups.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

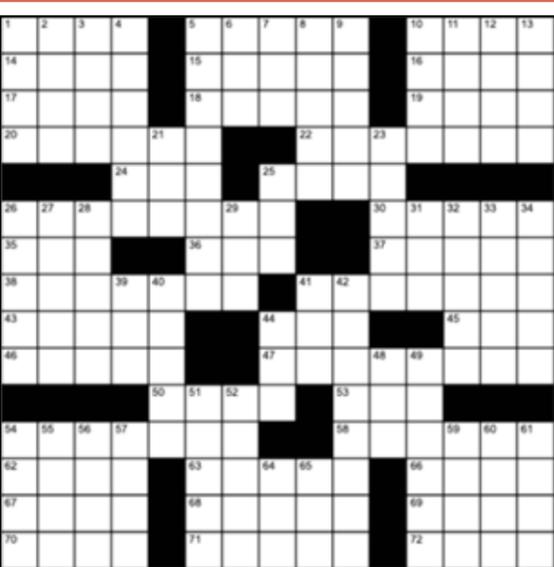
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-9	-2	fine
Changchun	-18	-12	cloudy
Chengdu	2	10	cloudy
Chongqing	4	7	rain
Fuzhou	9	14	cloudy
Guangzhou	8	20	cloudy
Guiyang	1	5	rain
Haikou	14	19	cloudy
Hangzhou	0	10	fine
Harbin	-25	-20	fine
Hefei	-1	8	cloudy
Nanjing	-1	7	cloudy
Shanghai	3	9	fine
Taipei	14	16	rain
Wuhan	-1	12	cloudy
Hong Kong	16	16	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-2	4	cloudy
Frankfurt	-3	19	cloudy
Paris	2	7	overcast
London	-1	7	overcast
New York	2	9	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Basics; 5- In the future; 10- Small fastener; 14- Jump; 15- Brass wind instrument; 16- Gutter location; 17- Slight; 18- Incite; 19- Mass utterance; 20- Horrify; 22- Tidal river; 24- Kipling novel; 25- Uh-huh; 26- Freezing rain squall; 30- A Musketeer; 35- Japanese computer giant; 36- Plant juice; 37- Now you ____; 38- Ill-fated; 41- Regal; 43- Hiding place; 44- Attila, for one; 45- Fam. reunion attendee; 46- Lauder of cosmetics; 47- Where to find a seasonal fruit stand?; 50- Son of Zeus in Greek mythology; 53- Twisted; 54- Flourish; 58- Eritrea's capital; 62- Wife of Jacob; 63- Conger catcher; 66- Russian pancake; 67- Architect Saarinen; 68- Fish covering; 69- Pinguid; 70- " ____ sprach Zarathustra"; 71- Group character; 72- In ____ land;

DOWN 1- Soprano Gluck; 2- High-pitched tone; 3- Bellyache; 4- Talks; 5- Musk yielding herb; 6- Embrace; 7- Silly Putty container; 8- Healing plants; 9- Compact; 10- Boyfriend; 11- Hindu hero; 12- Allege; 13- Gainsay; 21- Plastered; 23- Fluff, as bangs; 25- Little devil; 26- Busy; 27- Some change; 28- Dazzling display; 29- 2004 biopic; 31- Driving peg; 32- Artist Rousseau; 33- Greased; 34- Elegance; 39- Put into service; 40- Inexpensive; 41- Status follower; 42- Without warning; 44- Timecard abbr.; 48- AMA members; 49- Emblem; 51- Actress Witherspoon; 52- Set up; 54- This can be guilty or not guilty; 55- Rod's partner; 56- Long objects used to row a boat; 57- Beat it!; 59- Inter ____; 60- Small rivulet; 61- Author Seton; 64- Well, ____-di-dah!; 65- "Xanadu" band;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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SWEET CNY

AT LUNAR NEW YEAR, DESSERTS CAN BE CUSTOMARY OR 'CUTE-IFIED'

TERRY TANG

EVERY Lunar New Year without fail, Kat Lieu's mother would make her steamed nian gao, which is a sweet rice — or mochi — cake. It was a tasty tradition of having dessert for breakfast.

The Seattle-based author of the "Modern Asian Baking at Home" cookbook and founder of the Subtle Asian Baking online group switches things up for her 9-year-old son. He gets mochi waffles made with bright green pandan the first morning of the new year.

"This year again I'm going to make the waffles," said Lieu, who is half Chinese and half Vietnamese. "I'm also going to make the steamed nian gao and things like that, and try to have him appreciate it more, too."

Unlike Thanksgiving, when pie is a given at many households, desserts and confections at Lunar New Year are as varied as the Asian diasporas around the world that celebrate it.

Families from China to the U.S. to Vietnam will mark the new year on Sunday with the usual customs such as elaborate dinners and red envelopes with money for children. There will be customary sweet snacks like nian gao. But in this age of social media, food saviness and cultural pride, younger generations of Asians also are getting more inspired to have dessert courses that are whimsical and creative — from black sesame financiers to peanut butter miso cookies.

In Beijing, residents have been flocking to the flagship store of Daoxiangcun, one of the city's best-known bakeries, for new year-themed dessert gift boxes in



A chiffon cake modeled after a popular Chinese red candy made by Ng in her home for Lunar New Year in Hong Kong

which some of the pastries were shaped like a rabbit, the animal of the upcoming year's Chinese zodiac.

Known for its diverse food culture, China offers a variety of Lunar New Year desserts that are usually rice-based or flour-based. They include tang yuan, which are mochi-esque rice balls with black sesame or peanut paste in soup, as well as sesame balls, almond cookies, candied lotus seeds and fat goh — steamed cakes also known as prosperity cakes.

Nian gao remains one of the most popular options. Its key ingredient is glutinous rice flour, along with other things such as taro, dates, jujube and red bean paste, depending on the variety. Its name is a homonym for "higher year" in Chinese, meaning a more prosperous year ahead and expressing wishes for children to grow taller.

The well-preserved tradition plays a vital role in passing on Chinese culture because it keeps alive a food culture honoring grains and reminding people of how festivals are celebrated going back to the seventh century, according to Siu Yan Ho, a Hong Kong-based expert in Chinese food culture.

"Food is memory, and this memory is connected with festivals," Siu said.

In Vietnam, which is celebrating the Year of the Cat, sweets also differ by region. Vietnamese people eat nian gao, which they call banh to. They also eat che kho gao nep, a pudding made with sticky rice and a mixture of water, ginger and either sugar or molasses. Other delectables include che kho dau xanh — a mung bean pudding made with coconut milk and sugar — and banh tet chuoi, a glutinous rice cake with bananas.

"On Lunar New Year, for three days you go visit family, friends and teachers," said Linh Trinh, a Vietnamese food historian who is getting a PhD in the subject at the University of Michigan. "So everybody has to store a lot of snacks in their house for people to come visit and have tea. It becomes like the pride of the household to serve their traditional snacks."

More U.S. companies are finding a sweet spot in incorporating Lunar New Year elements. Cupcake chain Sprinkles, in collaboration with the pan-Asian cultural support nonprofit Gold House, is selling red velvet cupcakes with an almond cookie crust and almond cream cheese frosting. At Disney California Adventure Park, guests can order milk tea cheese-cake with taro mousse.

Judging by the 150,000-plus membership of the Subtle Asian

Baking Facebook group, a lot of Asians are more about showing off something they made for the holiday rather than bought. The community has come a long way from when Lieu started it in 2020. For the third year, there has been a virtual Lunar New Year bake-off on Facebook and Instagram where members share photos of stunning macarons, chiffon cakes and other pastries.

"You're innovating. You're bringing appreciation to all these amazing ingredients," Lieu said. "And then you're you're making it your own traditions, which is amazing."

Kelson Herman, of San Francisco, crafted a sourdough boule with an illustration of Miffy, a girl bunny from a popular Dutch children's book series, for the Lunar New Year. Already an avid baker, the 44-year-old got inspired by seeing online what other people were doing.

"I see a lot of boundaries being pushed, people trying to not just one-up each other but be more creative," Herman said. "I feel like it always comes down to flavors that bring back kind of familial memories. ... It could be things that just evoke conversation and family."

In Queens, New York, Karen Chin made a two-tier cake frosted in coconut buttercream topped with a white chocolate rabbit. One layer was vanilla with red bean paste. The other was spiced cake with cardamom and mango curd. It's a far cry from the fat goh her grandmother makes.

"I told my grandma that I was going to make a cake. And she's like, 'Don't make it too complicated,'" Chin said, chuckling.

Yet, Chin's creativity yielded some special family moments.

"I was so touched because last time when she came and she ate something, she's like 'You make good food.' I was like, 'Wow, that's the first time she complimented me,'" Chin said. MDT/AP

Macau Racing Tips

By Davy Chiu, MDT



THE GREEN PAWS LUNAR NEW YEAR TROPHY 1200 METRES TURF

2023-01-23 | Mon | 14:35

KUNG Hei Fat Choy to all readers of Macau Daily Times, may the good new year of the Rabbit bring you luck and prosperity all the way including winners in each and every single meeting in MJC. Your lucky bets falls to **Happy Babe** in that New Year feature race. **Happy Babe** should be able to take on this field with his light weight as well as the gift draw in barrier three, his consistency holds him in good stead as does the booking of his jockey K.H Yu. Take him as your Fat Choy bets of the day, he should come up a decent price. **Happy Babe** will have best shot at scoring another win here.

Race 2 Horse no. 5 Happy Babe Kung Hei Fat Choy Win & Place bets in the Year of the Rabbit



TASTE OF EDESIA

A Gleaming Oasis

IRENE SAM, MDT

THIS Chinese New Year, many covid restrictions are lifted and we can finally visit Hong Kong without having to quarantine. For those who are thinking of a new hotel to stay, one of the latest additions to the cool hotels in the city that is worth mentioning is MGallery Hotel Collection's Aki. The name of the hotel Aki means clear, bright crystal – a reference to its glistening glass structure that shines above the streets of the vibrant multicultural district of Wanchai.

Impressing visitors and residents of Hong Kong with its stylish, smart living design, on-trend dining concepts, and thoughtful opportunities for wellness and self-care rituals woven throughout a stay, it is a discreet and stylish cocoon in the busy city, minutes away from the chic shopping district of Causeway Bay and the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. The neighbourhood of Wanchai is one of Hong Kong's most iconic and dynamic districts, rich in history, creativity, and

multicultural influences. Nearby landmarks that are conveniently accessible also include the Hong Kong Arts Centre, Tamar Park, Wanchai Heritage Trail, and the many restaurants and bars of Lockhart Road.

Guest rooms at Aki are thoughtfully designed with a modern minimalist aesthetic, creating a natural, airy and chic retreat for each guest journey. Abundant natural light sweeps in through broad windows, most offering spectacular city views and some with amazing panoramas of the Hong Kong cityscape. Lofty ceilings, natural wood tones, and artful mood lighting, contribute to the calming décor. In a first for Hong Kong, the hotel offers signature Japanese style tatami rooms featuring sumptuous mattresses on tatami mat floors.

Designed as a low-energy consumption hotel, each of its rooms are equipped with a tablet control panel for guests to adjust the blinds, curtains, and temperature to their own preferences. When guests are out of their room, the smart living function will automatically close blinds and shut off air conditioning to conserve energy.



For foodies, Tangram restaurant gathers unique forms of cuisine and pieces them together to create a full picture of diverse, colourful and flavourful elements. Executive Chef Keith Chan oversees a multi-faceted range of interactive breakfasts and lively bento box lunches by day; and innovative small plates, international tapas and Japas for dinner, with a buzzy evening sake bar at night. Tangram's open

kitchen and diverse menus contribute to the restaurant's upbeat and social vibe, bringing people together for delectable feasts and joyful rendezvous.

Uncle Ming's Whisky Bar crowns the 25th top floor as an iconic expression of the city: a house of light suspended above the city where visitors will experience the unexpected but delightful mix of an engaging whisky tasting experience, and

a sparkling backdrop of skyscrapers, mountains, and harbour. The sommelier will guide guests through tasting rituals and an extensive array of more than 80 international whiskies including rare single malts, as well as sake, fine wines and champagne. Guests will adore this high-altitude hangout, with its private cellars for storing their favourite bottles and an indulgent menu of cocktails and light fare.

AD

癸卯兔年

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Happy Chinese New Year!

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OPINION

The Conversation

Feng Wang, University of California



WHY CHINA'S SHRINKING POPULATION IS A BIG DEAL

Throughout much of recorded human history, China has boasted the largest population in the world – and until recently, by some margin.

So news that the Chinese population is now in decline, and will sometime later this year be surpassed by that of India, is big news even if long predicted.

As a scholar of Chinese demographics, I know that the figures released by Chinese government on Jan. 17, 2023, showing that for the first time in six decades, deaths in the previous year outnumbered births is no mere blip. While that previous year of shrinkage, 1961 – during the Great Leap Forward economic failure, in which an estimated 30 million people died of starvation – represented a deviation from the trend, 2022 is a pivot. It is the onset of what is likely to be a long-term decline. By the end of the century, the Chinese population is expected to shrink by 45%, according to the United Nations. And that is under the assumption that China maintains its current fertility rate of around 1.3 children per couple, which it may not.

This decline in numbers will spur a trend that already concerns demographers in China: a rapidly aging society. By 2040, around a quarter of the Chinese population is predicted to be over the age of 65.

In short, this is a seismic shift. It will have huge symbolic and substantive impacts on China in three main areas.

In the space of 40 years, China has largely completed a historic transformation from an agrarian economy to one based on manufacturing and the service industry. This has been accompanied by increases in the standard of living and income levels. But the Chinese government has long recognized that the country can no longer rely on the labor-intensive economic growth model of the past. Technological advances and competition from countries that can provide a cheaper workforce such as Vietnam and India have rendered this old model largely obsolete.

This historical turning point in China's population trend serves as a further wake-up call to move the country's model more quickly to a post-manufacturing, post-industrial economy – an aging, shrinking population does not fit the purposes of a labor-intensive economic model.

It is perhaps no coincidence then that 2022, as well as being a pivotal year for China in terms of demographics, also saw one of the worst economic performances the country has experienced since 1976, according to data released on Jan. 17.

The rising share of elderly people in China's population is more than an economic issue – it will also reshape Chinese society. Many of these elderly people only have one child, due to the one-child policy in place for three and a half decades before being relaxed in 2016.

The large number of aging parents with only one child to rely on for support will likely impose severe constraints – not least for the elderly parents, who will need financial support. They will also need emotional and social support for longer as a result of extended life expectancy.

How the Chinese government responds to the challenges presented by this dramatic demographic shift will be key. Failure to live up to the expectations of the public in its response could result in a crisis for the Chinese Communist Party, whose legitimacy is tied closely to economic growth. Any economic decline could have severe consequences for the Chinese Communist Party. It will also be judged on how well the state is able to fix its social support system. [Abridged]

The United Nations cultural organization is training law enforcement and judiciary officials from countries on Ukraine's western borders, seeking to prevent the trafficking of looted cultural objects from Ukraine amid Russia's war against its neighbor.

UNESCO partnered with Poland's Culture Ministry to hold three days of workshops in Warsaw this week for the officials from Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Moldova. Representatives from Ukraine also attended the training that began yesterday [Macau time].

The aim is for the officials to be able to identify and prevent any artistic treasures looted in Ukraine from crossing their borders.

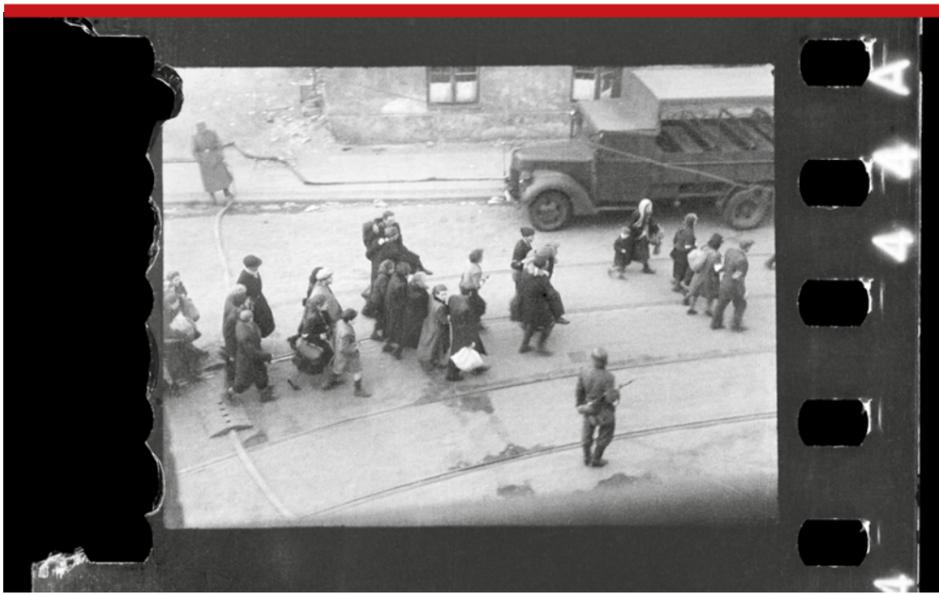
Krista Pikkat, UNESCO's director of culture and emergencies, said that more than 230 cultural sites have been damaged or destroyed in Ukraine since Russia invaded the country.

She said that UNESCO is working to document lost cultural objects, among them treasures from museums and archaeological sites.

Another priority for the agency is making sure that the wider public is aware that looted Ukrainian treasures could end up on art markets in Europe, so that buyers are more careful about what they buy.

Poland suffered mass looting of its cultural heritage during World War II.

AP PHOTO



This handout negative dated on April 20, 1943, and taken by Polish firefighter Zbigniew Leszek Grzywaczewski negative shows Jewish people being evacuated from the Ghetto to Umschlagplatz during the uprising of the Warsaw ghetto in 1943

NEW PHOTOGRAPHS OF WARSAW GHETTO FOUND IN FAMILY COLLECTION

VANESSA GERA, WARSAW

WARSAW'S Jewish history museum yesterday [Macau time] presented a group of photographs taken in secret during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943, some of which have never been seen before, that were recently discovered in a family collection.

The POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews described the discovery of negatives with some 20 never-seen images as important discovery.

The photos were taken inside the Warsaw Ghetto by a Polish firefighter, Zbigniew Leszek Grzywaczewski, as the Nazi Germans were brutally crushing the uprising of 1943. As the Germans burned down the ghetto, they called in Polish firefighters to keep the flames from engulfing nearby buildings outside the ghetto.

The museum's historians said that the value of Grzywaczewski's pictures lies in their being the only known images from the ghetto uprising that were not taken by the German forces, and which therefore were not shot with the intention of serving Nazi propaganda.

Grzywaczewski, then a 23-year-old whose family members were risking their lives to save Jews, took his camera into the ghetto and secretly photographed Jews being led to Umschlagplatz, the holding area where the occupying German forces held them before deportation to the Treblinka death camp. The images also show burning buildings.

Grzywaczewski's son, Maciej Grzywaczewski, recently found negatives with the images in the collection of his father, who died in 1993. He said he became very emotional when he found them.

Some of his father's other images, including photos capturing the Jews being deported, are held by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

POLIN says the discovery adds more pictures to the deportation sequence. Furthermore, the ones in Washington are prints that have been cropped, with the newly discovered negatives offering more details.

Some of the photos are blurred or not framed well, indicating that Grzywaczewski, who was an avid photographer, was

taking them surreptitiously.

The newly discovered images will be included in an exhibition at the POLIN museum called "Around Us a Sea of Fire," opening on April 18, the eve of the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising's outbreak.

It began on April 19, 1943, after German troops and police entered the ghetto to deport its surviving inhabitants. Some 750 young Jewish fighters armed with just pistols and other light arms attacked a German force more than three times larger. In their last testaments they said they knew they were doomed but wanted to die at a time and place of their own choosing.

In the end, the fighters held out nearly a month, longer than some German-invaded countries did.

It was largest uprising by Jews during World War II and the first significant urban revolt against the German occupation in Europe. By May 16, 1943, the Germans had crushed the uprising and deported surviving ghetto residents to concentration and death camps. MDT/AP

Cyprus The government of Cyprus has stripped 222 wealthy investors and their family members of citizenship, an official said, part of efforts to mend a reputation sullied by an investment-for-passports program that an inquiry found had unlawfully granted citizenships in hundreds of instances. The figure includes 63 investors and 159 of their relatives, including spouses, children and parents.

AP PHOTO



Spain French President Emmanuel Macron is meeting today [Macau time] with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez in Barcelona to strengthen relations between the European neighbors by signing a friendship treaty. The one-day summit in Barcelona comes amid a day of widespread strikes and protests against Macron's bid to increase the minimum retirement age from 62 to 64.

AP PHOTO



UK King Charles III has asked that annual profits from a 1 billion-pound Crown Estate windfarm deal be used for the public good rather than the royal family. The Crown Estate confirmed yesterday that it had signed lease agreements for six offshore wind projects. Such a windfall would normally lead to a jump in funding for the royals under complex arrangements that support the activities of the monarchy in the U.K.

HOLIDAY TIMES

Macau Daily Times will not be published during the holiday. The Times will be back on the stands on Friday January 27. However the MDT website will be updated with breaking news during the recess period. We wish our readers, advertisers and friends the best of times. KHFC!