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**MacauDaily 澳門每日時報**

# Times

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN' "

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**AS UKRAINE MARKS YEAR OF WAR, LEADER VOWS TO SECURE VICTORY**

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AP PHOTO



**Sri Lanka** Police yesterday fired tear gas and water cannons to disperse protesters angry over a decision to postpone local elections after the government said it cannot finance them because of the country's crippling economic crisis. About 15 people were treated for minor injuries, according to Colombo National Hospital. Thousands of supporters of the opposition National People's Power party tried to march toward the main business district in capital Colombo.

AP PHOTO



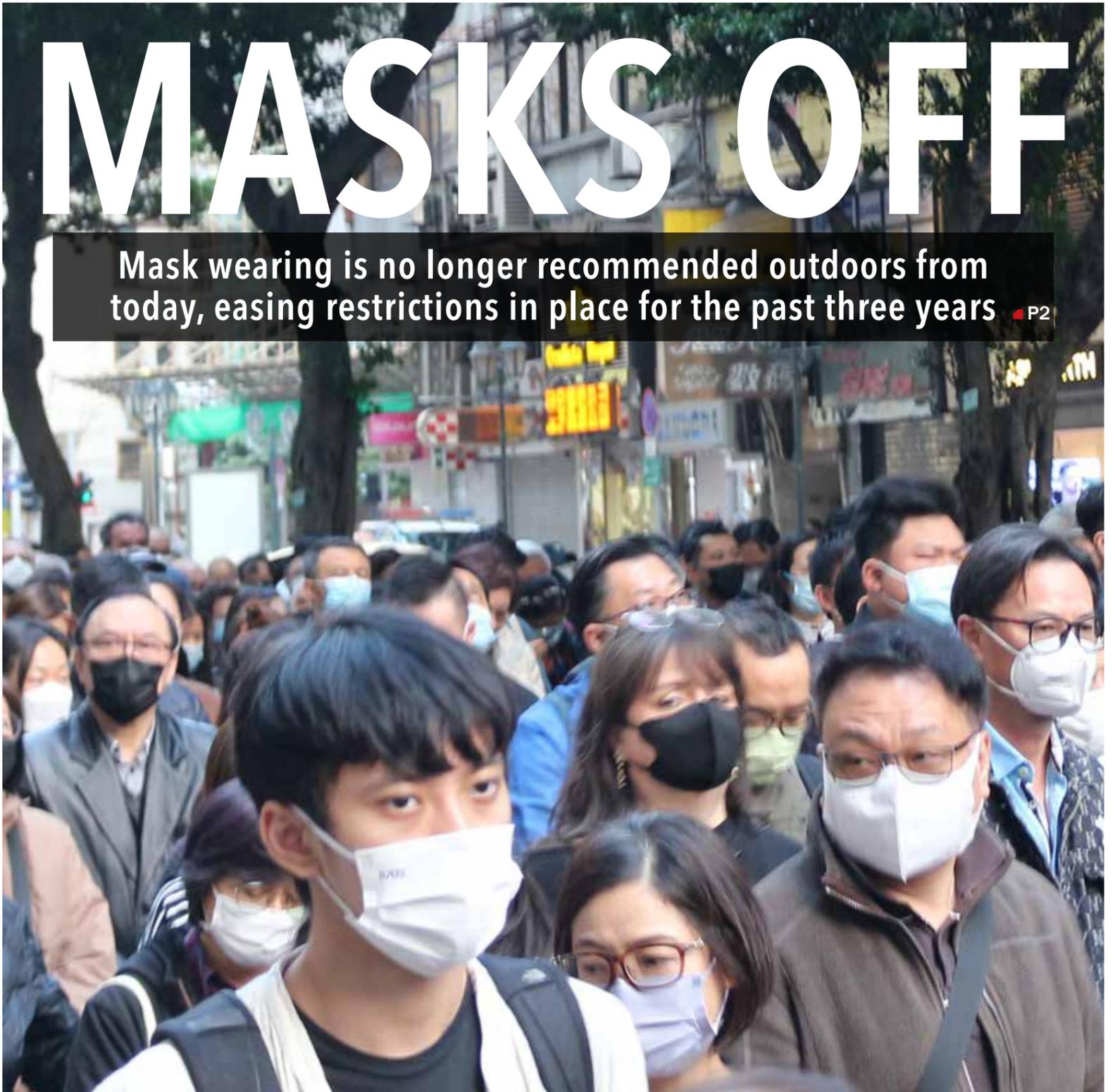
**Israel** A Palestinian gunman seriously wounded two people when he opened fire at an Israeli car in the occupied West Bank yesterday, casting a shadow on a high-level meeting between Palestinian and Israeli delegations meant to reduce surging violence ahead of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Israeli media reported that the two Israeli victims had died, while Israeli politicians issued condemnations and condolences, but the reports could not be confirmed immediately.

AP PHOTO



**UN** Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will help kick off the latest and longest-ever session of the U.N.'s top human rights body today, with Iran's foreign minister, a senior Russian envoy, and the top diplomats of France and Germany among scores of leaders set to take part. The more than five-week session of the Human Rights Council opens as the world grapples with rights concerns including Russia's war in Ukraine, repression of dissent in Russia and Belarus, new violence between Palestinians and Israelis, and efforts to solidify a peace deal in Ethiopia.

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# MASKS OFF

Mask wearing is no longer recommended outdoors from today, easing restrictions in place for the past three years

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**STIMULUS**  
**ANOTHER ROUND OF CONSUMPTION CARDS REQUIRES STUDY: CE**

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**HO IAT SENG, JOHN LEE PLEDGE TO BOLSTER TIES IN FIRST MEETING**

P2

# GOV'T DROPS OUTDOOR MASK WEARING FOR MOST PLACES

ANTHONY LAM

**M**ASK wearing will no longer be suggested for outdoor environments, although it is still required at certain indoor venues, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre announced yesterday.

Government officials have reiterated that except during the June 18 outbreak last year, no mask mandate has been imposed in Macau. Mask wearing has nearly always been "recommended." In June last year, however, the Chief Executive issued an Executive Dispatch making out-of-home mask wearing compulsory.

Although mask-wearing recommendations in outdoor areas have been eased, masks are still required to enter medical institutions, except for inpatients; elderly and rehabilitation homes, except for those living in them; or on public transport other than taxis, the centre said.

Operators of other types of indoor venues and means of trans-



port may decide whether masks are required for their customers. If so, proper announcements or notices should be posted appropriately, the centre said.

If the local Covid-19 situation escalates, events or venue operators "should require people to wear a mask before entering relevant premises," the centre noted.

People with respiratory symptoms should also wear masks, it added. Those below the age of three are exempted from wearing masks.

The centre has suggested people carry masks when in public.

Meanwhile, the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) announced that from today, under general situations, teachers and students of schools of non-tertiary education will not be required to wear masks during classes or activities.

Tertiary education institutions should refer to the relevant requirements for implementation.

Also, interviews for children entering kindergarten for the first time in the academic year 2023/2024 will commence from 1 March, parents and children are not required to wear masks when entering schools or during the interviews.

## TOO EARLY FOR MASS OUTBREAK CONCLUSION

At a recent government event, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng decli-

ned to comment on the December outbreak, "because Covid-19 has not yet ended."

He said the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong, had summarized the past outbreak in parliament, but asked the press whether the disease had completely faded. "It has not," said Ho, adding new cases have been regularly recorded.

The head of the government said it was "not appropriate" to issue a general summary on the December outbreak.

A new online media organisation has reported that a man, whose wife caught Covid-19 and died during labor, wanted the government to honestly admit it "had had too much on its plate."

Ho was asked if a summary on the outcomes of the mass outbreak will be released, including but not limited to deaths and those caused by insufficient medical staff. He was also asked if he was aware of the report and the requests the man made in the report.

Ho did not say whether he was aware of the case, but said that should anyone feel impacted by the government's disease control measures, they have the right to initiate judicial procedures against the government.

# Two CEs meet after assumption of offices, focus on GBA development

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE Chiefs Executive (CEs) from China's two Special Administrative Regions (SARs) have finally met, after assuming their offices in 2019 and 2021 respectively.

On Saturday, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng led a government delegation to Hong Kong and met Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu and several senior officials. Covid-19 emerged soon after Ho's inauguration as the head of the government, while Lee was inaugurated during the Covid-19 pandemic. The period saw the suspension of quarantine-free border crossings between the two SARs.

Lee received his Macau counterpart at the Hong Kong Government House.

He said since the full resumption of normal travel between Hong Kong and Macau on Feb. 6, travel between the two had vigorously resumed, demonstrating the close ties and connection between Hong Kong and Macau.

Ho said Hong Kong and Macau had close relations and that Hong Kong had given Macau great support in various fields. To promote reciprocal cooperation in industrial and economic development, the two SARs should strengthen cooperation and coordinated development in the fields of scientific and technological innovation, finance, traditional Chinese medicine, tourism and culture and sports events, Ho added.

He further said that as Hong Kong and Macau

were parts of the Greater Bay Area (GBA), the two SARs should further strengthen cooperation and increase their contributions to the high-quality development of the GBA, and the process of integration into overall national development.

Lee and Ho discussed the Steering Group on Integration into National Development. The group is chaired by Lee, which also has three secretaries of departments as deputies, bringing the leadership to "1+3". The strengthened top-level coordination and leadership will enable Hong Kong to integrate more proactively into the overall development of the country.

Both CEs agreed that Hong Kong and Macau, as semi-autonomous regions,

should adhere to the "one-country" principle while taking advantage of the "two-systems" model. Within such an advantageous framework, Hong Kong and Macau are crucial bridges for linking the mainland to the wider world, being simultaneously closely-integrated with the mainland, while remaining highly-connected to the rest of the world.

Regarding legislation on national security matters, the two heads of government noted that although the legal traditions of the two SARs were different, there were still many common aspects. They agreed that two SARs should strengthen exchange and communication about their legal frameworks, and their enforcement mechanisms



for safeguarding national security.

The Hong Kong CE also said he looks forward to visiting Macau this week.

Ho and the delegation also visited the Hong Kong Science Park and the Centre for Chinese Herbal Medicine Drug Development. The latter is established under the InnoHK initiative in cooperation with the University of Macau.

The Macau delegation included Secretary for Administration and Justice

André Cheong, Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong and the Chief-of-Office of the Chief Executive's Office, Hoi Lai Fong. Meanwhile, the Hong Kong government saw the participation of Secretary for Justice Paul Lam, SC; Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism Kevin Yeung; Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Erick Tsang Kwok-wai; and Director Carol Yip of the Chief Executive's Office, in the meeting.

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STIMULUS

# A new round of consumption cards requires study, CE said

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE decision to implement a new round of internal consumption stimulus via the so-called consumption cards has neither been completely ruled out nor approved yet, the Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng, said Friday evening on the sidelines of a dinner hosted by the Women's General Association of Macau.

Responding to a media inquiry about whether the cards would be reissued, the CE said, "I never said that there is a chance that the consumer card will be issued again. This is a matter that requires study by the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong," Chinese news outlet Macao Daily News reported.

The question arose after the Hong Kong government decided to distribute another HKD5,000 in consumption vouchers. The CE noted the local government has continued supporting local residents, adding the cash handouts will continue to be issued this year, for instance, although he did not want to advise when



the handouts would be issued. He said whether there is an early distribution (like last year) will depend on further consideration and evaluation from Secretary Lei.

## CONFIDENCE IN LEI'S GGR FORECAST

Addressing the different forecasts about local gaming industry revenues for this year, Ho is confident the government's forecast points to 130 billion patacas of Gross Gaming Revenue

(GGR) from local casinos.

"I am not in a position to comment on the forecasts from investment banks, which predicted that we could not reach even half of our [MOP130b] projection," the CE said, adding he is confident that such a target will be achieved at the end of this year.

## LOCAL-ONLY PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS POLICY TO REMAIN

At the same event, the CE also said the recently signed

agreement recognizing driving licenses between Macau and the mainland will not affect the measures already in force, including the policy that only Macau residents can work as professional drivers.

Ho said although there is mutual recognition of driver's licenses taking effect in May this year, this does not mean there will be policy amendments, with the jobs of professional drivers being restricted to residents to avoid "social chaos."

## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE AT 4.3%

The general unemployment rate and the unemployment rate of local residents (4.3%) for November 2022 - January 2023 stood at 3.4% and 4.3%, data from the Statistics and Census Service shows. The number of unemployed residents dropped 400 from the previous period to 12,800. The number of underemployed residents decreased 2,500 from the previous period to 11,900, with a notable drop in the number of those engaged in gaming and junket activities. Total employment was 361,000 and the number of employed residents totaled 282,000, up 800 and 900 respectively from the previous period.

## 48 NPC DEPUTIES FROM HONG KONG, MACAU

The 14th National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee confirmed the validity of the qualifications of the 2,977 NPC deputies and published the list of names. Among the 14th NPC deputies, 442 are from ethnic minorities, representing all of China's 55 ethnic minority groups. There are also 36 deputies elected from Hong Kong and 12 from the Macau. 13 deputies representing Taiwan Province will sit on the national legislature. 42 deputies represent those overseas Chinese who have returned to the motherland. Altogether, 797 deputies were re-elected, accounting for 26.77% of the total.

## CE WANTS MORE PERFORMANCES TO USE HISTORICAL VENUES

RENATO MARQUES

**M**ORE artistic and cultural performances should use historical venues to connect with Macau's background culture and heritage, the Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng, said on the sidelines of the last concert of a series named "Unforgettable Melodies at the Saint Paul's Ruins" held Saturday evening.

This was the last of a series of concerts by the Macao Orchestra held at the end of the stairway of the historical landmark. It attracted many residents and some passing tourists.

After the concert, the CE said holding the musical event at such a world heritage site "adds artistic realism on several levels. [It fuses] historic architecture with musical art and demonstrates the charis-



ma of the meeting of eastern and western cultures, as well as linking culture and tourism, allowing residents and visitors to experience Macau's uniqueness in terms of culture and traditional customs."

He said more events of this kind should be planned for other historical venues of the city.

In the past, several artistic performances have been conducted at his-

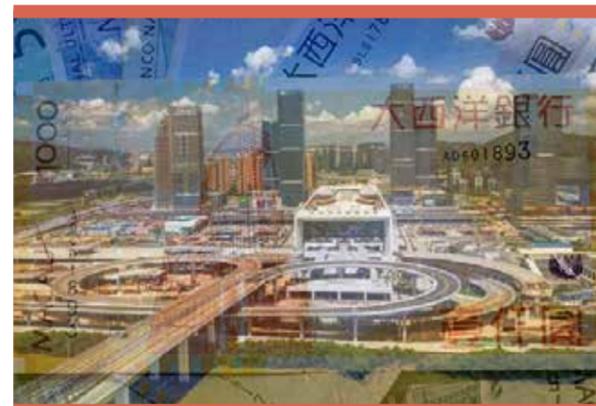
torical venues, under the Macao Arts Festival program that previously used venues such as Mount Fortress, where a Fado performance was held in 2015, among others. The use of such venues seemed to have been abandoned shortly after, giving way to performances held exclusively indoors. However, their use for such events could gain a new momentum.

## RESIDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO USE MOP AT COOPERATION ZONE

RENATO MARQUES

**M**ACAU residents living and working in the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin will be allowed to use local currency (pataca) for small transactions while in the Cooperation Zone. The measure is included in a proposal from the People's Bank of China as well as several other institutions and regulatory bodies. The proposal aims to improve the lives of those living and working at the Cooperation Zone.

The Money Authority of Macao (AMCM) is seeking to phase in a financial system at the Cooperation Zone that will evolve according to the circumstances and needs. The AMCM also wants to implement financial reform and optimize services in the Zone to improve quality of life within the population. These



proposals are contained in a document titled "Opinion on Financial Support for the Construction of the Hengqin-Guangdong In-Depth Cooperation Zone."

The measure includes not only the possibility of payments in patacas but also other measures that will be deployed experimentally. Such measures were said to include "projects related to individual capital, facilitation of the use of cross-border mobi-

le payments, as well as the simplification of applications for credit financing in the Cooperation Zone submitted by Macau residents."

The AMCM statement also noted that in 2025, the local government "will carry out the preparatory integration of the Cooperation Zone and Macau in the area of financial services, to create a favorable financial environment for the life and employment of Macau residents."

# PRO-ESTABLISHMENT CAMP MEMBER TERMINATED AT CPU

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE Chief Executive has terminated the appointment of an Urban Planning Committee member from a pro-establishment association, a government dispatch has announced.

Chan Chio I is an urban planner and the convenor of the Concern Group for Urban Planning and Development Policy of the Macao New Chinese Youth Association (MNCYA). She has only served a single three-year term on the committee, in contrast to the normal two terms.

Over the past three years, Chan has commented several times on controversial architectural projects, usually reminding the government to consider public opinion, in contrast to other pro-establishment members.

Meanwhile, vice president Iao Teng Pio and member Au Chung Yee have also finished their two terms on the committee. Both were appointed by former Chief Executive Chui Sai On. Iao has served on the election campaign of incumbent Chief Executive Ho

ANTHONY LAM



Iat Seng, who appointed Iao in 2020 as the committee's vice president.

Replacing the three outgoing members are Professor Mok Kai Meng, Teng Kai On and Si Kun Hong. Mok is the vice rector for student affairs at the University of

Macau, which notes he is renowned for its expertise in civil engineering.

Teng is the executive director at the Macao Urban Planning Institute, while Si is the vice convenor of the MNCYA's urban planning concern group.

# EDUCATION AND HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES DRIVE MACAU INFLATION

RENATO MARQUES

**C**ONSUMER prices are rising in Macau, the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) has confirmed, noting an increase in January of the composite consumer price index (CPI) by 0.77% year-on-year.

The increase was attributed to the higher cost for eating out, rising wages of domestic helpers, increased tuition fees and higher prices for gasoline and vegetables. However, the rise was partially offset by lower house rental prices, reduced charges for telecommunications services and the falling price for liquefied petroleum gas (LGP).

Among the various sections of goods and services, the price indices of education and household furnishings and services rose the most, recording hikes of 10.07% and 7.45% respectively year-on-year. The communications index registered the most

significant drop, decreasing 9.14%.

Compared with December 2022, the composite CPI rose 0.24% in January 2023. Higher charges for eating out, together with rising prices for vegetables, fruits, and fresh fish, increased the price index of food and non-alcoholic beverages 0.84%.

Concurrently, the price index of recreation and culture grew 0.71% due to higher prices for fresh flowers and higher hotel room rates. On the other hand, price indices of communications, household furnishings and services, and housing and fuel decreased respectively by 1.06%, 0.45%, and 0.14% month-on-month.

For the 12 months ending January 2023, the average Composite CPI grew 1.02% from the previous period, and the price indices of household furnishings and services (+11.08%) and transport (+5.73%) showed notable growth.

AD

  
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**Notice**  
**Funding Scheme for Enterprise Innovation and R&D Application (Type A & B) of 2023**

**I. Objectives**  
In line with the Macao SAR Government's policies, FDCT is committed to enhance innovation and R&D in Macao enterprises, create a research-friendly environment, and inspire enterprises to increase their R&D investment through providing financial support, so as to promote the industry-university-research partnership, facilitate the transformation of scientific research achievements, cultivate emerging industries, and promote the moderately diversified development of related industries in Macao.

**II. Support Areas**  
The research projects shall align with the Second Five-Year Plan of Macao economic and social development, the Macao SAR Government's Policy Address for 2023, related planning and programs of Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, etc., especially the projects that can promote scientific research and industrial development in the fields such as Chinese medicine, integrated circuits, electronic components, Internet of Things, big data, artificial intelligence, new energy, space science, advanced materials and biomedicine.

**III. Applying Entities • Funding Amount • Duration and Requirements for Expected Project Findings of Type A & B**

Type A	Type B
<p><b>A. Applying Entities</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enterprises registered in the Macao SAR for one year or more;</li> <li>The enterprise is not in arrears with tax and social security contributions (if any) in the Macao SAR;</li> <li>50% or more shares of enterprises shall be held by Macao residents;</li> <li>No less than three full-time employees;</li> <li>In case of full-time employees less than three, the applying entity shall be recommended by a nation-level makerspace established in Macao.</li> </ol> <p><b>B. Funding Amount and Project Duration</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The amount applied for each project shall not exceed MOP 1,000,000;</li> <li>Each project has a maximum funding duration of 3 years.</li> </ol> <p><b>C. Requirements for Supporting Fund and Expected Project Findings</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The supporting funds invested by the applying enterprise for R&amp;D shall not be less than the funding amount of FDCT;</li> <li>The expected project findings shall include software, hardware (prototype, mock-up), technical standards, formulas, new materials, new technologies, etc., and specify the potential economic or social benefits after the utilization of the project;</li> <li>The project proposed shall aim at reaching TRL (Technology Readiness Level) 4 or above upon its conclusion.</li> </ol>	<p><b>A. Applying Entities</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enterprises registered in the Macao SAR for one year or more;</li> <li>The enterprise is not in arrears with tax and social security contributions (if any) in the Macao SAR;</li> <li>No less than five full-time employees;</li> <li>The applying entity shall be an "enterprise engaged in scientific and technological innovation activities" accredited by the "Scientific and Technological Innovation Commercial Enterprise Accreditation Committee" according to law as stipulated in Article 6 of Law No. 1/2021 – Tax Preference System for Enterprises Engaged in Scientific and Technological Innovation Activities, or an enterprise previously funded by FDCT, without prejudice to the high-tech enterprise certification issued by other government departments.</li> </ol> <p><b>B. Funding Amount and Project Duration</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The amount applied for each project exceeds MOP 1,000,000, but shall not exceed MOP 3,000,000;</li> <li>Each project has a maximum funding duration of 3 years.</li> </ol> <p><b>C. Requirements for Supporting Fund and Expected Project Findings</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The supporting funds invested by the applying enterprise for R&amp;D shall not be less than the funding amount of FDCT;</li> <li>The expected project findings shall include software, hardware (prototype, mock-up), technical standards, formulas, new materials, new technologies, etc., and specify the potential economic or social benefits after the utilization of the project;</li> <li>The expected TRL of the project proposed shall be TRL 4 or above upon its conclusion.</li> </ol>

**IV. Assessment Criteria**

- The assessment is performed by FDCT according to the Financial Aid Grant Regulation approved by the Chief Executive's Dispatch No. 64/2021.
- Key considerations will be given to the followings: (Please refer to the online Application Guidelines for further information)
  - Assessment of technologies and research findings
  - Competence of the applying entity
  - Project planning
- The priority goes to the industry-university-research projects conducted in partnership with higher education institutions or scientific research institutions inside or outside Macao.

**V. Application Period**  
27<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 to 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2023

**VI. Application Method**  
The applying entities shall log in the online application system to complete the proposal prior to the deadline of application: <https://apps.fdct.gov.mo/sams/public/main-page.faces>  
Office Address: Room K, 11/F, Macau Square, No.43-53A Avenida do Infante D. Henrique, Macao.  
Tel.: 28788777

President of FDCT Administrative Committee,  
Chan Wan Hei  
2023 / 02 / 24

  
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Fundo para o Desenvolvimento das Ciências e da Tecnologia

**Notice**  
**Funding Scheme for Scientific Research and Innovation Application (Type A & B) of 2023**

**I. Applying Entities**

- Local higher education institutions under the supervision of the Macao SAR Government;
- Laboratories or other entities engaged in scientific and technological R&D in the Macao SAR;
- Private non-profit organizations registered in the Macao SAR;
- Researchers engaged in R&D activities in the Macao SAR.

**II. Types of Application and Application Requirements**

- Type A: For research projects conducive to enhancing scientific research strength and cutting-edge original innovation ability;
- Type B: For research projects with application-oriented scientific research findings;
- The amount applied for each project shall not exceed MOP 3,000,000;
- Each project has a maximum funding duration of 3 years.

**III. the objectives • support areas and requirements for Supporting Fund and expected project findings of type A & B**

Type A	Type B
<p><b>A. Objectives</b></p> <p>In line with the Macao SAR Government's policies, FDCT is committed to assist local research institutions and researchers in launching all kinds of in-depth research projects, for the purposes of enhancing their scientific research strength and cutting-edge original innovation ability in Macao and maintaining the leading position of Macao's dominant discipline.</p> <p><b>B. Requirements for Supporting Fund and Expected Project Findings</b></p> <p>The expected project findings, not limited to academic or applied achievements, may include papers, monographs, research (consultation) reports, patents, talent cultivation, software, hardware (prototype, mock-up), technical standards, formulas, new materials, new technologies, etc.</p>	<p><b>A. Objectives and the support Areas</b></p> <p>In line with the Macao SAR Government's policies, FDCT is committed to promote the industry-university-research partnership, facilitate the production of application-based research findings, so as to improve the contribution of scientific and technological innovation to social and economic development in Macao, specially the projects that can promote scientific research and industrial development in the fields such as Chinese medicine, integrated circuits, electronic components, Internet of Things, big data, artificial intelligence, new energy, space science, advanced materials and biomedicine.</p> <p><b>B. Requirements for Supporting Fund and Expected Project Findings</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The expected project findings shall include software, hardware (prototype, mock-up), technical standards, formulas, new materials, new technologies, etc., and specify the potential economic or social benefits after the utilization of the project;</li> <li>The expected TRL (Technology Readiness Level) of the project proposed shall be TRL 4 or above upon its conclusion.</li> </ol>

**IV. Assessment Criteria**

- The assessment is performed by FDCT according to the Financial Aid Grant Regulation approved by the Chief Executive's Dispatch No. 64/2021.
- Key considerations will be given to the followings: (Please refer to the online Application Guidelines for further information)
  - Scientific value and cutting edge
  - Competence of the applying entity
  - Project planning
- The priority goes to the collaborative projects jointly proposed by the applying entities and commercial institutions inside or outside Macao.

**V. Application Period**  
27<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 to 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2023

**VI. Application Method**  
The applying entities shall log in the online application system to complete the proposal prior to the deadline of application: <https://apps.fdct.gov.mo/sams/public/main-page.faces>  
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Tel.: 28788777

President of FDCT Administrative Committee,  
Chan Wan Hei  
2023 / 02 / 24

# GEG Promotes Drone Technological Advancement to Local Schools

**B**elieving that technology and innovation plays meaningful roles in Macau's sustainable development, Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) supports technological advancement and cultivates innovative talents through promoting STEM education in Macau, in hopes of supporting Macau's transformation into a smart city. Since 2019, GEG has been contributing to the promotion of drone technology and application to more than 20 of Macau's local schools via the title-sponsorship of the "GEG Presents: Popular Science Activities in Schools on Chinese Drones" enrichment program. This year, we will continue to support the program and arranged more visits to a number of local schools, broadening students' horizons with a wide array of drone-related activities and campaigns. Recently, GEG engaged more than 1,000 students from four schools in drones through the enrichment program, namely Saint Paul School Macau, Colégio de Santa Rosa de Lima Seção Chinesa, Macau Pooi To Middle School and Escola Choi Nong Chi Tai, to enhance the young generation's scientific knowledge, stimulate their innovative thinking, and strengthen their interests and understanding of the applications and uses of the drone technology.



## BROADEN TECHNOLOGICAL HORIZONS



During the activity, teachers and students gained an in-depth understanding of drone

technology through an introduction of its history, development, operating principles and structure, and applications and uses in various fields in China. Furthermore, a dazzling drone-light-and-music show was also presented in the school halls while a hands-on drone flying session was also arranged for the students under the guidance of specialized technicians. In addition, videos from GEG's previous drone light shows were also shown, including the GEG Presents Drone Show of the "Light up Macao Drone Gala 2022" held by Macao Government Tourism Office

(MGTO) of the Macau SAR Government in May 2022, and the Aerial Drone



Light Show that GEG hosted at Galaxy Macau™ in 2019 in celebration of the

20th Anniversary of Macau SAR and the 2019 Galaxy Entertainment Macao International Marathon.

The event was well-received by the participants, with students overwhelmed with excitement and passion during the drone flying experience. Through the "GEG Presents: Popular Science Activities in Schools on Chinese Drones" enrichment program, GEG hopes to continue to inspire local young peoples' passion in drone technology and programming, encourage them to embrace for technology and innovation, and further contribute to the advancement of the community.



PUTIN'S WAR

# CHINA ISSUES PEACE PLAN; ZELENSKY SAYS HE'LL AWAIT DETAILS

HANNA ARHIROVA, KYIV

CHINA called for a cease-fire and peace talks between Ukraine and Russia on Friday, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy cautiously welcomed Beijing's involvement but said success would depend on actions not words.

Beijing claims to have a neutral stance in the war that began one year ago, but has also said it has a "no limits friendship" with Russia and has refused to criticize Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, or even refer to it as an invasion. It has accused the West of provoking the conflict and "fanning the flames" by providing Ukraine with defensive arms.

"I believe that the fact that China started talking about Ukraine is not bad," Zelenskyy told a news conference Friday. "But the question is what follows the words. The question is in the steps and where they will lead to."

The plan released by China's Foreign Ministry mainly reiterated long-held positions, and analysts said Beijing would be an unlikely broker.

But some observers warned that Ukraine and its allies need to tread carefully, saying that rejection of what China sees as its peace overture could move Beijing closer toward providing arms to Russia instead.

Volodymyr Fesenko, head of the Kyiv-based Penta Center independent think tank, believes that Zelenskyy "will try to play with China... in order not to allow China and Russia to come closer together."

"As long as China comes up with peacemaker initiatives, it will be forced to maintain neutrality and to abstain from supplying weapons and direct military assis-

AP PHOTO



tance to Russia," Fesenko told The Associated Press.

Ukraine also might see "a scenario in which China is at least pressuring Russia to contain the use of nuclear weapons and create a mechanism to control nuclear power plants in Ukraine," he said.

For Beijing's part, it needed to clarify its stance, whether or not Kyiv and Moscow pay much heed, said Shi Yinhong, a professor of international relations at Beijing's Renmin University.

"China feels it necessary to repeat its self-perceived neutrality at this juncture, to save some international influence by not only criticizing NATO but also distinguishing itself from Russia's behavior," Shi said.

China's proposal calls for the territorial integrity of all countries to be respected, but does not say what will happen to the regions Russia has occupied since the invasion. It also calls for an end to "unilateral" sanctions on Russia,

indirectly criticizes the expansion of the NATO alliance, and condemns threats of nuclear force.

The proposal is "an attempt for public relations on the part of China," said Li Mingjiang, a professor and international security expert at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University. "I'm not convinced that this policy is going to improve their credibility in being an honest broker."

Russia's Foreign Ministry welcomed the proposal and said it shares China's ideas, including the rejection of Western sanctions. At the same time, ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova reaffirmed Moscow's demand for Ukraine to acknowledge Russia's land gains, renounce its bid to join NATO and assume a neutral status, among other conditions for peace.

Ukraine has said it will not agree to any peace without the return of all its territory.

Zelenskyy's adviser Mykhailo

Podolyak tweeted that any peace plan that envisages only a cease-fire and allows Russia to continue occupying any part of Ukraine "isn't about peace, but about freezing the war, Ukraine's defeat, next stages of Russian genocide."

Ukraine's allies also expressed skepticism. U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on CNN that his first reaction to the proposal was that "it could stop at point one, which is: Respect the sovereignty of all nations."

He added: "This war could end tomorrow if Russia stopped attacking Ukraine and withdrew its forces. [...] This was a war of choice."

German government spokesman Wolfgang Buchner said the Chinese proposal contained several important points, but was missing a key one: "first and foremost the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine."

China abstained Thursday when the U.N. General Assembly

approved a nonbinding resolution that calls for Russia to end hostilities in Ukraine and withdraw its forces.

Its 12-point peace proposal also urges measures to prevent attacks on civilians, keep nuclear facilities safe, establish humanitarian corridors and ensure the export of grain. It called for an end to the "Cold War mentality" — China's standard term for what it regards as U.S. hegemony and maintenance of alliances such as NATO.

"Dialogue and negotiation are the only viable solution to the Ukraine crisis," the proposal said. It offered no details on what form talks should take but said "China will continue to play a constructive role in this regard."

Zelenskyy said Friday that his main goal was making sure China doesn't supply weapons to Russia. And he expressed hope that China's involvement could be useful in isolating Russia. "Our task is to gather everyone to isolate the one," he said.

He also said he'd like to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping: "I believe that it will benefit our countries and the security of the world."

China's proposal comes as U.S.-China relations have hit a historic low over Taiwan, disputes over trade and technology, human rights, and China's aggressive actions in the South China Sea.

The U.S. recently said China may be preparing to provide Russia with military aid, an allegation that Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin called "nothing more than slander and smears."

On Friday he referred to a "massive disinformation in this respect against China."

Wang was responding to a report in the German magazine Der Spiegel that Russia's military was negotiating with a small Chinese drone manufacturer for the "components and know-how" to allow the country to manufacture about 100 suicide drones a month. **MDT/AP**

HONG KONG

# Model's in-laws face charges in grisly killing

AP PHOTO



POLICE in Hong Kong filed murder charges against the former in-laws of a model, days after her body parts were found in a refrigerator.

Hong Kong model Abby Choi's father-in-law and his eldest son are being charged with murder, while her mother-in-law faces one count of perverting the course of justice, police said in a statement yesterday. The authorities also arrested the

woman's ex-husband on Saturday, but have not brought a charge against the 28-year old man.

The grisly case came to light when police officers discovered the model's body, dissected into parts and stored in a refrigerator, in a rural village home in Tai Po, a suburban part of Hong Kong closer to the border with mainland China on Friday.

"Police also have found that the flat was arranged by

cold-blooded killers meticulously," Superintendent Alan Chung said Saturday. "Tools that are used to dismember human bodies were found in the flat, including meat grinders, chainsaws, long raincoats, gloves, and masks."

The 28-year-old woman had financial disputes involving tens of millions of Hong Kong dollars with her ex-husband and his family, Chung said, adding that

"some people" were unhappy with how Choi handled her financial assets.

The victim had been missing for days when police discovered severed legs that belonged to a woman in the refrigerator as well as Choi's identity card, credit cards and other items in the house. They also found human tissue in pots of soup, Chung said. Police did not find the victim's head, torso or hands at the scene.

The house where her remains were discovered had been rented by her ex-husband's father only a few weeks ago, Chung said. **MDT/AP**

CRISIS

# N. Korea food shortage worsens amid Covid, but no famine yet

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

**T**HERE'S little doubt that North Korea's chronic food shortages worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and speculation about the country's food insecurity has flared as its top leaders prepare to discuss the "very important and urgent task" of formulating a correct agricultural policy.

Unconfirmed reports say an unspecified number of North Koreans have been dying of hunger. But experts say there is no sign of mass deaths or famine. They say the upcoming ruling Workers' Party meeting is likely intended to shore up support for North Korean leader Kim Jong Un as he pushes ahead with his nuclear weapons program in defiance of intense U.S.-led pressure and sanctions.

"Kim Jong Un can't advance his nuclear program stably if he fails to resolve the food problem fundamentally because public support would be shaken," said Lim Eul-chul, a professor at Kyungnam University's Institute for Far Eastern Studies in Seoul. "The meeting is being convened to solidify internal unity while pulling together ideas to address the food shortage."

An enlarged plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party is slated for late February. Its specific agenda is unknown, but the party's powerful Politburo earlier said that a "a turning point is needed to dynamically promote radical change in agricultural development."

The meeting will be the party's first plenary session convened just to discuss agricultural issues, though they often are a key topic at broader conferences in North Korea. Raising grain output was one of 12 economic priorities the party adopted during a plenary meeting in December.

It is difficult to know the exact situation in the Nor-



th, which kept its borders virtually closed during the pandemic. Food shortages and economic hardships have persisted since a famine killed an estimated hundreds of thousands of people in the mid-1990s.

In his first public speech after taking over from his father as leader in late 2011, Kim vowed that North Koreans would "never have to tighten their belts again."

During the first several years of his rule, the economy achieved modest growth as Kim tolerated some market-oriented activities and increased exports of coal and other minerals to China, the North's main ally and biggest trading partner. More recently, however, tougher international sanctions over Kim's nuclear program, draconian pandemic-related restrictions and outright mismanagement have taken a severe economic toll.

South Korean estimates put North Korea's grain production last year at about 4.5 million tons, a 3.8% decrease from a year earlier. Annual grain output has plateaued at about 4.4 million tons to 4.8 million tons in the past decade.

North Korea needs about 5.5 million tons of grain to feed its 25 million

people, so it's usually short about 1 million tons each year. About half of the gap is typically offset by unofficial grain purchases from China. The rest is an unresolved shortfall, said Kwon Tae-jin, a senior economist at the private GS&J Institute in South Korea.

Kwon says curbs on cross-border trade due to the pandemic have likely hindered unofficial rice purchases from China. Efforts by North Korean authorities to tighten controls and restrict market activities have also worsened the situation, he said.

"I believe this year North Korea is facing its worst food situation since Kim Jong Un took power," Kwon said.

Koo Byoungsam, a spokesperson at the South Korean Unification Ministry, said that an unknown number of North Koreans have died of hunger, but said the problem is not as serious as the mid-1990s famine, which stemmed from natural disasters, the loss of Soviet assistance and mismanagement.

The current food problem is more an issue of distribution than of an absolute shortage of grain since much of the grain harvested last year has not yet been eaten, ministry officials said. Food insecurity has worsened

as authorities tightened controls over private grain sales in markets, instead trying to confine the grain trade to state-run facilities.

Severe steps taken by the Kim government to contain the pandemic provided effective tools for imposing a tighter grip on the kinds of market activity that earlier helped foster stronger economic growth but might eventually erode the government's authoritarian rule, analysts say.

Kwon said current food shortages are unlikely to cause mass deaths because food is still available in markets, though at high prices. During the famine in the mid-1990s, grain was hard to come by, he said.

North Korea monitoring groups have reported increases in the prices of rice and corn — the two most important staples — though the price of corn has stabilized recently in some regions.

"If North Korea indeed sees people dying of hunger and faces a chaos, it won't publicly say things like 'a very important and urgent task' for an agricultural policy," said Ahn Kyung-su, head of DPRKHEALTH.ORG, a website focusing on health issues in North Korea. **MDT/AP**

ADVERTORIAL

## GREAT TIMES

Black Pearl Degustation Menu – Imperial Court at MGM MACAU

A great Chinese meal is intricate, nuanced, and full of delicate techniques and full-bodied flavor. Imperial Court at MGM MACAU embraces the riches of Lingnan's gastronomic heritage, blending tradition and creativity for an innovative creation. The restaurant has recently been awarded a rating of One-diamond from Black Pearl Restaurant Guide 2023.



To commemorate this accomplishment, we bring you a special menu – Black Pearl Degustation Menu, which features a roster of the restaurant's signature dishes that celebrate authentic Lingnan culinary culture. This tantalizing menu features the Crispy fried chicken skin with shrimp mousse and salted fish flakes, a Lingnan handcrafted classic known as the "deconstructed chicken". Swapping steamed chicken skin for a crunchy crispy-fried top shell offsets the shrimp mousse made of three types of shrimp – Japanese Obsiblu prawn, Vietnamese white shrimp, and Kuruma prawn from the Pearl River Delta Region, a thoughtful combination that gives the shrimp mousse an al dente texture and a vivid taste profile full of sweetness and umami. Finishing the refined creation with freeze-dried salted fish flakes, a specialty ingredient unique to Macau, to enrich the overall palate, this contrasting yet heavenly balanced delicacy is bespoke for Lingnan gastronomy. Other nostalgic Cantonese highlights are Braised partridge porridge with bird's nest and Yunnan ham, Tossed handmade shrimp roe egg noodles with shredded sea cucumber and barbecued pork, and more, which exemplify the core of Chef de Cuisine Homan Tsui's culinary philosophy – adorning traditional Lingnan gastronomy with creative use of premium ingredients.



This six-course luxurious meal made with impressive cooking methods and bursting with flavors is served in this delicious way. Pamper yourself with finely crafted creative and daring Chinese dishes that pay respect to classic flavors and techniques. For restaurant enquiry and reservation, please call (853) 8802 2361 or email imperialcourt@mgm.mo



ONE YEAR AFTER

# As Ukraine marks year of war, leader vows to secure victory

JOHN LEICESTER, HANNA ARHIROVA & SAMYA KULLAB, KYIV

**U**KRAINE'S leader pledged Friday to push for victory in 2023 as he and other Ukrainians marked the somber anniversary of the Russian invasion that upended their lives and Europe's security.

It was Ukraine's "longest day," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, but the country's dogged resistance a year on has proven that "every tomorrow is worth fighting for."

On a day of commemorations, reflection and tears, the Ukrainian president's defiant tone captured the national mood of resilience in the face of Europe's biggest and deadliest war since World War II. Zelenskyy, who has himself become a symbol of Ukraine's refusal to bow to Moscow, said Ukrainians proved themselves to be invincible during "a year of pain, sorrow, faith and unity."

"We have been standing for exactly one year," Zelenskyy said. Feb. 24, 2022, he said, was "the longest day of our lives. The hardest day of our modern history. We woke up early and haven't fallen asleep since."

Ukrainians wept at memorials for their tens of thousands of dead — a toll growing inexorably as fighting rages in eastern Ukraine in particular. Although Friday marked the anniversary of the full-scale invasion, combat between Russian-backed forces and Ukrainian troops has raged in the country's east since 2014. New video from there shot with a drone for The Associated Press showed how the town of Marinka has been razed, along with others.

The killing continued: Russian shelling killed another three civilians and wounded 19 others in the most recent 24-hour spell, Ukraine's presidential office said.

Around the country, Ukrainians looked back at a year that changed their lives and at the clouded future.

"I can sum up the last year in three words: Fear, love, hope," Oleksandr Hranyk, a school director in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, said.

Lining up in the capital,

AP PHOTO



Kyiv, to buy anniversary commemorative postage stamps, Tetiana Klimkova described her heart as "falling and hurting."

Still, "this day has become a symbol for me that we have survived for a whole year and will continue to live," she said. "On this day, our children and grandchildren will remember how strong Ukrainians are mentally, physically, and spiritually."

Although China on Friday called for a cease-fire, peace was nowhere in sight. Ukraine previously rejected a pause in the fighting for fear it would allow Russia to regroup militarily after bruising battlefield setbacks.

Zelenskyy gave qualified support to China's apparent new interest in playing a diplomatic role, saying: "The fact that China started talking about Ukraine is not bad."

"But the question is what follows the words," he said during a wide-ranging news conference. "The question is in the steps and where they will lead to."

A 12-point paper issued by China's Foreign Ministry also urged an end to sanctions that aim to squeeze Russia's economy.

That suggestion also looked like a non-starter, given that Western nations are working to further tighten the sanctions noose, not loosen it. Both the U.K. and U.S. imposed more sanctions Friday.

Ukraine is readying another military push to roll back Russian forces with the help of weaponry that has poured in from the West. NATO member Poland said Friday that it had delivered four advanced Leopard 2A4 tanks, making it the first country to hand

the German-made armor to Ukraine.

The prime minister of Poland said on a visit to Kyiv that more Leopards are coming. Poland's defense minister said contributions from other countries would help form Ukraine's first Leopard battalion of 31 tanks.

"Ukraine is entering a new period, with a new task — to win," Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov said.

"It will not be easy. But we will manage," he added. "There is rage and a desire to avenge the fallen."

Air raid alarms didn't sound Friday in Kyiv, alleviating concerns that Russia might unleash another barrage of missiles to pile yet more sadness on Ukraine on the anniversary.

Still, the government recommended that schools move classes online, and office employees were asked to work from home. And even as they rode Kyiv's subway to work, bought coffee and got busy, Ukrainians were unavoidably haunted by thoughts of loss and memories of when missiles struck, troops rolled across Ukraine's borders and a refugee exodus began a year ago.

Back then, there were fears the country might fall within weeks. Zelenskyy referred to those dark moments in a video address.

"We fiercely fought for every day. And we endured the second day. And then, the third," he said. "And we still know: Every tomorrow is worth fighting for."

The anniversary was also poignant for the parents of children born exactly a year ago as bombs began killing and maiming.

"It's a tragedy for the whole country, for every Ukrainian," said Alina Mustafaieva, who gave birth to daughter Yeva that day.

"My family was lucky. We didn't lose anyone or anything. But many did, and we have to share this loss together," she said.

Tributes to Ukraine's resilience took place in other countries. The Eiffel Tower in Paris and the Colosseum in Rome were among monuments illuminated in Ukraine's colors — yellow and blue. In Berlin, a wrecked Russian tank was put on display.

Anti-war activists in Belgrade, Serbia, left a cake covered with red icing representing blood and a skull on top on a pavement near the Russian Embassy, which police stopped them from approaching.

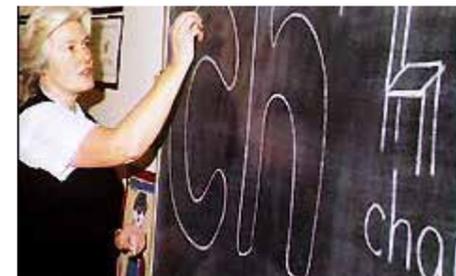
In Russia, media and rights groups reported more police arrests of protesters who took to streets with antiwar slogans and flowers in various parts of the country.

The war's one-year mark kept Ukraine's president exceptionally busy. Zelenskyy kicked off the day with an early morning tweet that promised: "We know that 2023 will be the year of our victory!"

He followed that up with his video address, in which he also pledged not to abandon Ukrainians living under Russian occupation. "One way or another, we will liberate all our lands," he vowed. He also addressed troops on a Kyiv square and handed out honors, including to the widow and daughter of a fallen soldier, telling them: "We will never forget." In a Kyiv hospital, he decorated wounded fighters. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1953 SPELLING BILL PASSES SECOND READING



A proposal to simplify English spelling has cleared its second hurdle in parliament.

After a second debate MPs in the House of Commons voted by 65 votes to 53 to approve the Simplified Spelling Bill for consideration by parliamentary committees.

The private member's bill was introduced by Labour MP Mont Follick earlier this month.

It proposes setting up an investigation into the feasibility of introducing a simpler version of English to make reading easier for younger children.

The children would switch to standard English as they got older.

The new system would be tested in school experiments in England and Scotland paid for by the government.

It is Mr Follick's second attempt to get parliamentary support for a new spelling system.

A bill he introduced in 1949 was eventually defeated by just three votes in spite of opposition by the Labour government of Clement Attlee.

The new bill has also attracted cross-party support - it was seconded by a Conservative MP, James Pitman, whose grandfather devised the Pitman shorthand system.

During a debate lasting four-and-a-half hours Mr Pitman said that around 150,000 of the 400,000 children who started school each year would leave without being able to read properly.

Mr Pitman - a member of the Simplified Spelling Society - used large printed cards with words such as "out" and "ought" to display what he said were inconsistencies in the spelling and pronunciation of some English words.

"English is halfway between the alphabetic system of Spanish and picture-writing of Chinese," he told MPs.

However, Labour's MP for South Shields James Ede said the bill would only confuse the less intelligent by making them learn two ways of spelling.

But Mont Follick said they had no intention of forcing children to learn two different systems.

Spelling reform was also one of the passions of the writer George Bernard Shaw who died two years ago.

His will set aside money for a national competition to devise a simplified version of English.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Mont Follick withdrew his bill after reaching a compromise with the government.

The Ministry of Education backed a small-scale research project conducted under the aegis of the University of London.

However, the idea was put on the back burner until James Pitman devised the Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA) - a phonetics-based system made up of 44 characters.

ITA was tested in a handful of schools in England during the early 1960s with mixed success for the children involved.

It largely fell into disuse although James Pitman had some success in persuading schools in the USA and Australia to try out the system.

ITA is among numerous alternatives to standard English spelling - others include Spanglish and Cut Spelling.



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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

DAN GELSTON, PHILADELPHIA

**BASKETBALL**

# Tatum's late 3 lifts Celtics past Embiid, 76ers 110-107

**J**AYSON Tatum buried the 3-pointer that put Boston ahead with 1.3 seconds left and casually backpedaled on defense before he turned to greet his teammates and — woosh! — a 70-foot shot sailed over his head and into the basket.

Joel Embiid shook his head no. The 76ers' All-Star center knew his tying, desperation heave was just a tick too late.

Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla needed a second look to know the Celtics were in the clear and he wasn't positive until "they showed it on the Jumbotron."

Time to celebrate.

Tatum hit the winning 3 that capped Boston's comeback from 15 points down in the third quarter and he finished with 18 points, 13 rebounds and six assists to help the Celtics hold on for a 110-107 win against Philadelphia on Saturday night.

"I dream about taking those shots," Tatum said. "The worst thing that can happen is you miss."

He didn't miss.

Jaylen Brown scored 26 points, Derrick White added 18 and Al Horford hit five game-changing 3s for 15 points.

"Our guys have been there," Mazzulla said. "They've been through it all."

Embiid finished with 41 points and 12 rebounds. He also made 17

of 18 free throws. James Harden scored 21 points and Tobias Harris had 19.

The late-game thriller proved worthy of a showdown between two of the top teams in the East.

Boston, though, proved it's still the team to beat.

The Sixers dug deep trailing by five with 3 minutes left. With booming "MVP! MVP!" chants filling the arena, Embiid hit two free throws and followed with a jumper that pulled the Sixers within one. Embiid then blocked Brown's layup and Tyrese Maxey went the other way for a go-ahead driving layup that sent another packed house into a frenzy.

Horford, once considered a key cog in the 76ers' chase for a championship, instead hit the clutch 3-pointer inside Wells Fargo Center that the city craved from him in 2019-20. He put the Celtics ahead by two points and a bucket by Tatum made it 107-103.

Harden and Embiid made four straight free throws that tied the game and put every fan — there was

a smattering of green in the stands — on edge.

Tatum, though, calmly hit a 3 to put Boston ahead. Embiid then heaved one from inside the opposing 3-point line and it fell through the basket -- just after the horn.

"I kind of had a feeling it wasn't going to count," Tatum said. "But it's the NBA, right? Anything can happen."

Just not on this night for the Sixers.

"Unfortunately, story of my life," Embiid said.

Tatum celebrated by giving his game-worn jersey to Philadelphia Eagles star wide receiver — and noted Celtics fan — DeVonta Smith.

The 76ers had another packed house and fans were hyped from pregame warmups for a game with a definitive playoff feel. Both teams came out firing -- they each hit four 3s and shot at least 50% in the first quarter. The scoring swings were so one-sided for a stretch that the Celtics went on a 20-4 run and only led 39-32. **MDT/AP**



Boston Celtics' Jayson Tatum (0) goes up for the shot against Philadelphia 76ers' De'Anthony Melton (8)

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**OPINION**

**China Daily**  
 Editorial, China Daily

**US ANIMOSITY TOWARD RUSSIA ROOT CAUSE OF UKRAINE CONFLICT**

Any proposal that fails to address the root cause of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict will not bring an end to the fighting and secure a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, as urged by a resolution the United Nations Security Council passed on Thursday, just hours before the conflict entered its second year on Friday.

Instead of just focusing on what happened over the past year, the international community should not ignore the fact that it is the United States' animosity toward Russia that has driven the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's continuous eastward expansion. This has led to Moscow changing its view on the West, from a partner in the distance to an enemy at the gate.

That the Cold War bloc has been relentlessly pushing eastward while Russia is still suffering from the aftermaths of the collapse of the Soviet Union has aggravated Moscow's sense of insecurity. It is that threat to Russia that has been unprovoked, rather than Russia's "special military action" in Ukraine, which is just what the US expected to reap from what it has sown.

That's why the US is in no hurry to help end the conflict. It wants it to drag down Russia and reassert its authority over Europe. Not to mention the tremendous profits it can make by selling arms and energy.

For Russia, the West's actions represent a security crisis. For the US, the conflict, which it frames as being a struggle between democracy versus autocracy, is not only the culmination of its years-long campaign to debilitate Russia, but also an opportunity to stake a claim to the moral high ground by criticizing those countries which refuse to join its unilateral sanctions on Russia.

Countries should look objectively at the rights and wrongs of the matter rather than let themselves be swayed by the moral burden the US is trying to put on them.

Among the other permanent members of the UN Security Council, China is the only one that has not joined the US in its sanctions on Russia or provided Ukraine with arms, nor has it provided support to Russia regarding its "special military action". Its position on the Ukraine crisis is neutral and it continues to urge the belligerents to agree on a cease-fire and talk.

China's ties with Russia are not subject to any party's approval, nor its relations with Ukraine. And the crisis is not in China's interests.

As the position paper China issued on Friday states, the security of a region will not be achieved by strengthening or expanding military blocs, and the security of a country should not be pursued at the expense of others.

It is absurd for Washington to try and claim the moral high ground while it continues to impose sanctions on Russia, which are unauthorized by the UN and have no legitimacy in international law, continues to supply ever more advanced long-range weapons to Ukraine, and encourages its NATO allies to do the same.

In waging its proxy war against Russia, the US is the primary aggressor. Putting a stop to those actions is the very first step to creating the necessary conditions for a cease-fire and peace talks.

Dialogue and negotiation are the only viable solution to the Ukraine crisis. But although Ukraine is a sovereign state, it is being funded and supported to such an extent by the US club, that even if Kyiv wants to talk with Moscow, so long as Washington doesn't want it to, Kyiv has no choice but to continue to fight.

**PENGUIN TO PUBLISH 'CLASSIC' ROALD DAHL BOOKS AFTER BACKLASH**

**THE BUZZ**

Publisher Penguin Random House announced it will publish "classic" unexpurgated versions of Roald Dahl's children's novels after it received criticism for cuts and rewrites that were intended to make the books suitable for modern readers.

Along with the new editions, the company said 17 of Dahl's books would be published in their original form later this year as "The Roald Dahl Classic Collection" so "readers will be free to choose which version of Dahl's stories they prefer."

The move comes after criticism of scores of changes made to "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" and other much-loved classi-

cs for recent editions published under the company's Puffin children's label, in which passages relating to weight, mental health, gender and race were altered.

Augustus Gloop, Charlie's gluttonous antagonist in "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" — originally published in 1964 — became "enormous" rather than "enormously fat." In "Witches," an "old hag" became an "old crow," and a supernatural female posing as an ordinary woman may be a "top scientist or running a business" instead of a "cashier in a supermarket or typing letters for a businessman."

**KEY US INFLATION MEASURE SURGES AT FASTEST RATE SINCE JUNE**

**PAUL WISEMAN, WASHINGTON**

**T**HE Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge rose last month at its fastest pace since June, an alarming sign that price pressures remain entrenched in the U.S. economy and could lead the Fed to keep raising interest rates well into this year.

Friday's report from the Commerce Department showed that consumer prices rose 0.6% from December to January, up sharply from a 0.2% increase from November to December. On a year-over-year basis, prices rose 5.4%, up from a 5.3% annual increase in December.

Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so-called core inflation rose 0.6% from December, up from a 0.4% rise the previous month. And compared with a year earlier, core inflation was up 4.7% in January, versus a 4.6% year-over-year uptick in December.

The report also showed that consumer spending rose 1.8% last month from December after falling the previous month.

January's price data ex-



ceeded forecasters' expectations, confounding hopes that inflation was steadily decelerating and that the Fed could relent on its campaign of rate hikes. It follows other recent data that also suggested that the economy remains gripped by inflation despite the Fed's strenuous efforts to tame it.

Last week, the government issued a separate inflation measure — the consumer price index — which showed that prices surged 0.5% from December to January, much more than the previous month's 0.1% rise. Measured year over year, consumer prices climbed 6.4% in January.

That was well below a recent peak of 9.1% in June but still far above the Fed's 2% inflation target.

Since March of last year, the Fed has attacked inflation by raising its key interest rate eight times. Yet despite the resulting higher borrowing costs for individuals and businesses, the job market remains surprisingly robust. That is actually a worrisome sign for the Fed because strong demand for workers tends to fuel wage growth and overall inflation. Employers added a sizzling 517,000 jobs in January, and the unemployment rate fell to 3.4%, its lowest point since 1969. **MDT/AP**



**German** Chancellor Olaf Scholz said yesterday that his government wants to make it easier for information technology experts from India to obtain work visas in Germany as the country struggles with a shortage of skilled labor. Scholz said improving the legal framework so Germany becomes more attractive for software developers and those with IT development skills is a priority for his government this year.



**Ireland's** prime minister said Saturday that the U.K. and the European Union are "inching" closer to agreeing on a deal to resolve a thorny post-Brexit dispute in Northern Ireland. Leo Varadkar told reporters that he believed an agreement may be possible within days. His comments came amid intense speculation that a breakthrough on months-long wrangling over the trading arrangements, known as the Northern Ireland Protocol, is imminent.

**THE DECISIVE MOMENT**



Way of the Cross. Held annually in the city's downtown, faithful Catholic devotees joined in the Procession of Our Lord, The God Jesus, which carries an image of Christ carrying the cross.



**Italy** At least 43 migrants died when their overcrowded wooden boat smashed into rocky reefs and broke apart off southern Italy yesterday, the Italian coast guard said. Survivors reportedly indicated that dozens more could be missing. "As of now, 80 persons were recovered alive, some of whom succeeded in reaching the shore after the shipwreck. and 43 bodies were found along the shore," the coast guard said in a statement issued shortly before noon.