

# Don't Lie Down!

## Voice of the World

Edited by QI Liming

Some countries including UK and the U.S. have chosen a "lying down" [nonfeasance] policy towards the COVID-19 pandemic since early 2021. To date, this approach has failed to ease the medical burden in these countries and the spread of the pandemic has not been alleviated by the claimed "herd immunity".

WHO report is yet another reminder that governments and their people cannot afford "lying down" toward COVID-19 pandemic.

WHO recently issued a report, titled *Global Excess Deaths Associated with COVID-19, January 2020 - December 2021* in May.

According to the report, the impact of the pandemic has been felt over several waves, with each characterized by unique regional distribution, mortality levels and drivers.

Twenty countries, representing approximately 50 percent of the global



People crowded on the beach on March 24, 2021 in Daytona Beach, Florida. (PHOTO: VCG)

population, account for over 80 percent of the estimated global excess mortality for the period from January 2020 to December 2021. These include UK, U.S., and Germany. WHO said 84 percent of the deaths were "concentrated in South-East Asia, Europe, and the Americas."

According to NBC News, at the end of May 5, the U.S. had surpassed one million COVID-19 deaths, a once un-

thinkable scale of loss even for the country with the world's highest recorded fatality from the virus.

That number, which is equivalent to the population of San Jose, California, the 10th largest city in the U.S., was reached at stunning speed — 27 months after the country confirmed its first case of the virus.

The government's lying down atti-

tude does nothing to prevent and control the pandemic, but also causes irreversible losses to people's livelihood and the economy.

An article released on *The Atlantic*, said that because of the pandemic, some 200,000 American children now face these stark odds.

Even after two years that have injured the country to the carnage of the coronavirus, the scope of the loss is so staggering that it can be hard to comprehend.

COVID-19 case counts rise and fall, but "orphanhood doesn't come and go. It is a steadily rising slope, and the summit is still out of sight," said Susan Hillis, a co-chair of the Global Reference Group on Children Affected by COVID-19.

An exclusive poll in the UK's *Mirror* has exposed the devastating extent of the cost of living crisis in Britain. More than half of British won't be able to afford to pay their bills within a matter of months, with more than five million already forced to choose between heating and eating, the research revealed.

Given that the social situation in other lying down countries is also troubled to varying degrees, governments should adopt proactive strategies to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, rather than asking their people to pay for the lying down policies.

## Opinion

# Mateverse: Lower Your Expectations on Its Investments

By YU Haoyuan

Since Mark Zuckerberg announced Facebook's morphing into Meta and its metaverse concept, the somewhat obscure new evolution of social connection has become very popular. Despite not being fully understood, many people are still willing to hop onto the investing bandwagon, believing it could be a lucrative opportunity to get rich quickly.

The metaverse could be the future of the Internet as alluded to by some Internet gurus, who have great expectations. Already, many game producers are busy competing in their research and development in preparation of entering the metaverse. Just in April, tens of millions of dollars was ploughed into the metaverse market. For example, in early April, Sony and Lego Group announced a two billion USD investment in funding for Epic's metaverse efforts. In late April, former CEO of Foundation 9 Entertainment, Jon Goldman, also joined the competition to invest 50 million USD in VR games and the metaverse. These indications augur well for a bright metaverse future.

However, because it is in its infancy, there are practical business concerns about how to lower high risks in investing in the metaverse.

Up to now, no one in this industry has invented anything new. According to *Forbes*, the present situation of the metaverse is more like something that has existed in the gaming industry for decades. Much of what metaverse promises, people have already seen in games. People can talk to, be entertained, and interact with virtual objects just by playing games.

What's even more disturbing is that the metaverse may just be a Mark Zuckerberg's bet on the future for his business. Zuckerberg pointed out that the metaverse technology could be realized later in this decade, "This is laying

the groundwork for a very successful 2030s, when this is more established as the primary computing platform," he said, which caused a great deal of debate online.

David Z Morris of Deskcoin has taken a dim view of the future of the metaverse. He considered the statement by Zuckerberg as an absolutely hare-brained notion for the CEO of a massive corporation to say about its so-called marquee project. For serious investors, "This is a complete gamble and maybe not real at all and we had no substantive reason to rebrand around it. Ignore it."

Those who think the metaverse could work, should also pay attention to avoiding financial swindling and bubble bursting situations. International media and observers have already voiced their concerns in this regard.

"In reality, the metaverse seems to be a one-size-fits-all solution, partly as a result of poorly undefined connotation and denotation. This situation also leaves much room for hype, speculation, financial fraud, illegal transactions and other activities," Wu Tong, a well-known scholar of the digital economy, told *Science and Technology Daily*.

However, despite these concerns, this seems like a phase that every emerging industry will see in its preliminary development. Many industries won't reach maturity until they experience several rounds of bubble accumulating and bursting.

As a suggestion to level up metaverse future development and reduce concerns from the public, Wu made a suggestion. "Having ones' hands tied in the early stages of the metaverse is indeed not conducive to industrial development. My personal advice is to make a dynamically updated 'negative list' for the development of the metaverse industry, specifying what cannot be done and what can be done beyond that."

## Comment

# Beijing 2022 Guides the Public to Low Carbon Lifestyle

By YU Haoyuan

The Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games was the first carbon-neutral Olympic Games. With the vigorous promotion made by Beijing Municipal Government, carbon neutrality will continue to be promoted in the capital and gradually spread throughout China, providing the possibility for Chinese people to live in a low-carbon modern society.

Beijing 2022 is based on the concept of low-carbon and green development. According to the official website of the Olympic Games, during Beijing 2022, all competition venues were powered by renewable energy. In addition,

among all vehicles serving for the games, the number of energy-saving and clean-energy vehicles accounted for 85 percent of all vehicles, proving that a low-carbon lifestyle could be normalized in the future.

The low-carbon management during Beijing 2022 was embraced by Chinese people, and the idea of a low-carbon life has gained widespread public attention. According to Tencent's online survey, most people consider that construction of green buildings, reuse and renovation of Beijing 2008 Summer Olympics Stadium and the use of green power are very effective for Beijing 2022 low-carbon goal.

Surveyed people believe that the success of Beijing 2022 could bring improvements of low-carbon actions in future: 84.1 percent of them agree, including 52.8 percent strongly agreeing that a low-carbon lifestyle is able to effectively reduce carbon emissions. Although 33.3 percent of people argue that a low-carbon lifestyle could reduce the quality of life, 78.9 percent of them express their strong desire to practice a low-carbon lifestyle. For some people, it seems acceptable to reduce the quality of life in order to achieve a low-carbon lifestyle.

Nearly 50 percent of Internet users are unaware of how to live in a low-carbon life or how to start the process. It is

therefore an important area of responsibility of the public green and low-carbon national action system to improve the public's understanding of a low-carbon life, and providing this as the foundation of promoting ecological protection.

Beijing 2022 has become a great example for the world to lower its emissions. China is expected to develop its society rapidly for the sake of achieving carbon peaking and carbon neutrality based on the successful experience.

*All figures used in the article are from a Tencent's online survey of 12,088 people from 31 provincial administrative divisions in China.*

## Hi! Tech

# First Omicron Vaccine Enters Clinical Trials

By ZHANG Jiaxing & QI Liming

The vaccine designed exclusively to combat the Omicron variant by China National Biotech Group began its clinical



Medical workers carry out nucleic acid tests in Hangzhou in April. (PHOTO: VCG)

trials in May. The research of a special vaccine against Omicron variant is underway.

Shortly after Omicron variant emerged in December 2021, WHO had already warned that preliminary evidence suggested it could make COVID-19 vaccines less effective and put people at a higher risk of reinfection. This warning has since been confirmed as Omicron has become the dominant strain of the virus.

When neutralizing antibodies produced by the prototype strain significantly decreased its neutralizing activity against Omicron, a new vaccine was needed. The results of the current study

showed that neutralizing activity of the neutralizing antibody was indeed significantly decreased in response to Omicron.

During the development of the vaccine, the research team paid close attention to cellular immunity. They included continuous testing of cellular immunity in the design of the clinical study. Cellular immunity will compensate for the generally poor persistence of neutralizing antibodies in the novel coronavirus.

According to the current situation of COVID-19 vaccination in China, clinical research programs will be carried out in two ways.

One way is that clinical trials of

one and two doses of Omicron vaccine will be given to those who have received two or three doses of inactivated COVID-19 vaccine.

The other way is that the Omicron vaccine will be administered directly to unvaccinated people to observe its safety and immunogenicity. If data is obtained from clinical study, the new vaccine can be administered directly to the unvaccinated population.

The researchers say clinical trials of the new vaccine were not designed as a fourth dose of the vaccine, but rather a study of vaccination based on whether full immunity had been completed.



A woman stands in front of a Meta sign in the San Francisco Bay Area. (PHOTO: XINHUA)

# Mt Qomolangma Gets World's Highest Auto Weather Station

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The elevation gradient meteorological station system is of great significance for monitoring the melting glaciers and mountain snow at the high altitudes, according to Zhao Huabiao, researcher at Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research, CAS.

At the summit, the team measured the thickness of the ice and snow using high-accuracy radar for the first time, and collected samples for further research.

China has launched more than six scientific expeditions to Mount Qomolangma since the mid-1950s, with most studies done at an altitude of around 5,000 meters to 6,000 meters and none

environmental data from above 8,000 meters.

Belonging to the second scientific research survey of Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, this expedition is the country's first scientific research above an altitude of 8,000 meters on the peak.

More than 270 research members from five research teams and sixteen groups participated in the summit mission scientific expedition project.

"The new understandings and breakthroughs we have achieved by conducting the comprehensive scientific expedition on the summit of Mount Qomolangma for the first time are our contributions to science, our people, our country and the whole world," said Yao.

# Ai Aiguo: A Welding Craftsman of the Nation

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## Hard work and learning

Ai's achievements can be put down to dedicated learning and hard work over 50 year period.

"It is easy to learn how to weld, but it is difficult to uplift one's skills to a high level," said Ai, adding that there is no short cut and only practice makes perfect.

One year after Ai entered the factory, he began to learn welding. Later he also took on electric welding. Though his skin was often burnt by the arc light, he never thought to give up learning.

Apart from practicing at every op-

portunity, he also didn't neglect theoretical knowledge. The notes he wrote exceeded 100,000 words. At the age of 58, he started to teach himself to use a computer. His experience on innumerable projects and materials used are now stored in dozens of categories and thousands of folders in his computer.

Even now, after half a century in the welding industry, Ai always does some research before offering solutions to problems presented to him. When asked why, he said, "I could lag behind if I stopped learning welding for a single day, and previous experience of mine can only be used as a reference."

## Paying it forward

As a welding master, Ai does not keep his skill to himself, but rather transfers it freely to a large number of apprentices.

For the past decades, Ai has nurtured more than 600 welding technicians. He has taught over 80 percent of the senior welders in his company, some of whom have already been recognized by the State Council and gone on to receive national honors for their skills. Many of his apprentices have also become key members in the welding groups of other enterprises.

Since 2003, Ai started to offer free

lessons to jobless workers and young people from the rural areas during his spare time.

Many of the apprentices did not have a solid foundation of welding knowledge or practice. "We couldn't even make a straight weld," said former apprentice Liu Siqing. "Master Ai would teach us step by step if we still didn't get it after he explained several times." Liu also said that he will still turn to Ai for help when he encountered problems with sophisticated welding techniques.

After his retirement, Ai was invited back to his company as a welding consultant. He is now still working on the frontline and teaching his skill to apprentices.

"Skills, are to be passed on," he said.