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THE NEW PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENTS AND THE FUTURE URBAN CONSTRUCTION BUREAU WILL BE ESTABLISHED ON APRIL 1

HR GROUP: GOV'T SHOULD SUBSIDIZE EMPLOYMENT OF LOCAL WORKERS

SECRETARY FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE HAS CLOSED THE DOOR TO FURTHER TRANSPORTATION OF RETURNEE STUDENTS IN BATCHES



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met top Nepalese officials during a three-day trip over the weekend, which comes just weeks after Nepal's parliament approved a contentious half-billion-dollar aid grant from the United States. Wang arrived in Nepal on Friday and held talks with his counterpart, Narayan Khadga, and Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba on Saturday. He is scheduled to meet several political leaders before flying out of Kathmandu.



Philippines A small volcano in a scenic lake near the Philippine capital blew a white plume of steam and ash 1.5 kilometers into the sky in a brief but powerful explosion this weekend, prompting authorities to raise the alert level and evacuate hundreds of residents from high-risk villages. Magma came into contact with water in the main crater of Taal volcano in Batangas province, setting off the steam-driven blast that was followed by smaller emissions and accompanied by volcanic earthquakes.



Myanmar's leader vowed yesterday to intensify action against homegrown militia groups fighting the military-run government, saying the armed forces would "annihilate" them. Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, speaking at a military parade marking Armed Forces Day, also urged ethnic minorities not to support groups opposed to army rule and ruled out negotiations with them.

More on backpage

UNDER ATTACK



One of MGTO's email accounts was hacked following a DarkHotel malware threat; expert Steve Vickers told the Times that defenders might have as little as 45 minutes to mitigate against ransomware once an attack commences

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MU5735
THE SECOND 'BLACK BOX' FOUND

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DARKHOTEL

PJ INVESTIGATION PROMPTED BY MGTO REPORT

RENATO MARQUES

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) investigation into the DarkHotel malware threat in Macau was prompted by a complaint made about the case by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), the MGTO has confirmed in a statement to the Times.

The same office also acknowledged that its email account, which is commonly used to communicate with hotels, was hacked, leading them to suspend this account and change all communication to other methods.

"At the end of last year, MGTO received a report from one local hotel about a suspicious email sent from this office. Following an investigation, MGTO found that an email from this office to communicate with hotels had been appropriated to send emails out automatically. MGTO immediately stopped using this email address and informed local hotels to be aware of spear-phishing emails," MGTO said to the Times, adding that the case was immediately reported to the Macao Cybersecurity Incident Alert

and Response Centre (CARIC). According to the office, "The PJ is following up on the case, with MGTO in communication with CARIC to find ways to improve the level of security on the Internet."

MGTO also said that, so far, no reports have been received from local hotels about any damage resulting from this case.

As the Times reported last week, the PJ confirmed that it received a report relating to a threat involving DarkHotel malware initially reported by Trellix, a privately-held cybersecurity firm that had earlier reported that at least 17 hotels in Macau had been targeted with attempted cyberattacks using DarkHotel between November last year and January this year.

On the hotel industry side, the vice-chairman of the Macau Hotel Association, Rutger Verschuren, also told the Times that local hotels are generally safe from malware attacks such as the DarkHotel spear-phishing spyware and malware-spreading campaigns, as they possess "the latest sophisticated malware security systems in place."

Similar to the statements

made by MGTO, Verschuren, who is the Area Vice President for Artyzen Hospitality Group, also noted that he is not aware of reports of different hotels being potentially targeted or in any way affected by this malware.

Nonetheless, and as a precautionary measure, he said the company has informed all employees of the potential threat, but affirmed that they had not encountered malware attempts from DarkHotel so far, nor had any data breaches occurred. "All data is safe," he concluded.

According to the report from Trellix, a company with experience in the detection and prevention of major cyberattacks and a vendor of cybersecurity hardware and software, the alleged attacks on 17 hotels in Macau involved an email impersonating the MGTO, with the 'trojan' file disguised as an Excel spreadsheet.

They also said that the attacks, which have been ongoing for several years in different locations including Asia and the USA, normally start with a spear-phishing email directed to the hotel's senior managerial staff, who have database access privileges.

The phishing attacks that follow are usually in the form of fraudulent communications that appear to come from reputable sources, usually via email, and that attempt to steal sensitive data such as credit card information or login and password information.

VULNERABILITY DEPENDS ON STAFF AWARENESS, TRAINING

Steve Vickers, CEO of Steve Vickers and Associates (SVA), a specialist political and corporate risk consultancy, said that the vulnerability of the hotel industry to these types of cyberattacks depends essentially on the level of awareness and response from staff, which is linked to their relevant training.

"The vulnerability to attacks like DarkHotel will depend on the system, configuration and most importantly the level of awareness, training and response testing at the hotel concerned," Vickers told the Times. He added, "Recent experience suggests that defenders might now have as little as 45 minutes to mitigate against ransomware once an attack commences and the files start to be encrypted".

For SVA, the entities and companies must focus their mitigation efforts on "an early detection and very swift response" to cyberattacks, as several minutes can make the whole difference to tackling the problem.

According to SVA, cybersecurity threat analysis shows that most of the attacks have a "dwell time" of two to three days before the encryption of files and other highly damaging processes takes place. However, they mentioned that "things seem to be speeding up now."

As for recommendations to the local hotel industry, Vickers said, "As far as Macau hotels are concerned, we would recommend testing and retraining, as well as discreet internal profiling of potential aggressors. The recent implosion of junket and related operators in Macau has created many dissatisfied parties; some with a deep grudge and empty pockets."

"SVA has advised various organizations as to how best to protect their legitimate business interests," taking into account this potential new threat, which comes in connection with the crackdown on the junkets' activity.

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Gov't says returnee student requests to be considered case-by-case

ANTHONY LAM

SECRETARY for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong, has closed the door to further transportation of returnee students in batches yesterday, saying that requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

On the sidelines of a university event, she recapped that in February and March, the government opened applications for two cohorts of returnee students. "Recently, there have not been many registrations," she said.

She said that her teams are currently determining how much hotels must do to be converted into quarantine hotels. This is done in order to identify venues with better hygiene standards that can be used to handle entrants from higher-



-risk places.

The official also remarked that, for the first time, the government will consider making vaccination mandatory for student and open sporting com-

petitions. When this comes into effect, all athletes participating in such competitions must be fully vaccinated and take regular SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid tests (NATs) throu-

ghout the event.

In fact, the Sports Bureau has made full vaccination mandatory for at least three events, including the Macao International Marathon, the Macao 10K Run and the upcoming Macao International Dragon Boat Races.

Another plan concerning students has seen the government order BioNTech mRNA vaccines for children. The official said the reason for the purchase of the children's mRNA vaccine is to offer choice to the younger population, despite the fact that half of the city's school children have received at least one vaccine dose, according to a government disclosure.

The official was also asked about whether the validity period for NAT results would be extended for those seeking to travel from Zhuhai to Macau.

She said it had been agreed between Macau and Zhuhai that negotiations concerning the validity period could commence once Zhuhai had had no new cases for seven days.

The last new recorded case in Zhuhai was March 25.

Regarding the government's preparations against possible outbreaks, Ao Ieong said contingencies had been outlined and were constantly being refined.

Drugs have also been ordered in preparation for potential outbreaks. One drug has already arrived in Macau, with three others (two to be delivered via injection and the third in pill form) still to come.

First-response resources for an outbreak have already been delivered, the official said, adding that asymptomatic patients normally do not receive medications.

HR GROUP: GOV'T SHOULD SUBSIDIZE EMPLOYMENT OF LOCAL WORKERS

ANTHONY LAM

SUBSIDIES may be given to local businesses to help them with the salary costs of local workers and encourage them to hire more staff, Chui Chin Man, executive director of Macao Human Resources Association (MHRA), has said.

The MHRA leader also suggested that policies should be made to incentivize employers to cancel their non-resident worker quotas.

Moreover, there should be measures to support the job-seeking efforts of fresh university graduates, a report by public broadcaster TDM quoted the group leader as saying.

Meanwhile, the report cited Ip Kuai Peng, director of the Research Centre for Macau Social and Economic Development, who is expecting the unemployment rate to increase further.

The academic told the TV station that the transformation of the gambling industry and the continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic may cause the unemployment rate to continue to rise.

However, he hinted locals should take this chance to reconsider their career path. He



thinks the transformation of the gambling industry, especially the restructuring of 'satellite casinos,' has prompted industry workers to consider their occupational mobility. "They should work more on their career transitions or transformations," Ip said.

Information from the government's Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) indicated that both the general unemployment rate (3.3%) and the unemployment rate of local residents (4.3%) for the period from December 2021 to February 2022 had increased by 0.1% from the preceding period. Meanwhile, the underemployment

rate dropped by 0.3% to 2.9%.

Previously, the Women's General Association of Macau called on the government to set up more training and hands-on support for the unemployed.

The association foresees that the pandemic's impact on the local labor market is expected to linger for some time, which will affect many families economically. The group therefore hopes that more training and internship packages can be established to help the unemployed, so that they have a better chance of making it through tough economic times.

UNEMPLOYMENT CONTINUES TO GROW IN MACAU, 0.4% Y-O-Y

RENATO MARQUES

A survey from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) has shown that both the general unemployment rate and the unemployment rate of local residents for the three-month period between December 2021 and February 2022 has continued to grow by 0.1%, reaching 3.3% and 4.3% respectively as at the end of February.

In the same survey, the DSEC found a drop of 0.3% in the underemployment rate, which is now 2.9%.

According to the DSEC, the total labor force living in Macau amounts to 386,300, with a labor force participation rate of 69.3%.

A total of 373,600 people were employed, of which 281,000 were residents. These figures represent a drop of 5,400 and 3,500, respectively, when compared with the period between November 2021 and January 2022.

The drop in the number of people who are



underemployed – which fell by about 1,500 people (to 11,100) – was mostly attributed to those engaged in the sector Gaming & Junket Activities, who have now either been reemployed or are now unemployed.

The survey also shows that a larger decline was registered in the Construction sector, while the Wholesale & Retail Trade sector registered a slight increase.

Most of those who are currently unemployed but searching for a new job were people previously engaged in Gaming & Junket Activities and the

Construction sector.

The unemployment rate did not register a higher increase than what was reported, as there was a significant decline in the proportion of new labor market entrants seeking their first job. This group registered a decrease of 2.3%, representing 7.4% of the total number of unemployed people.

When compared year-on-year in the same period, the growth of the unemployment rate reached 0.4%, while the underemployment rate is now 1.6% lower than one year ago.

PSP DETECTS 30 ILLEGAL WORKERS IN FEBRUARY

The Public Security Police Force (PSP) detected a total of 30 suspected illegal workers in February, and inspected 302 locations, according to data revealed by the PSP. The operation includes the joint and sole operations against illegal workers launched by the PSP, the Labour Affairs Bureau and other authorities in February 2022 at construction sites, private flats, commercial and industrial establishments, among others.

FEBRUARY CPI ROSE BY 0.81% Y-O-Y

The Composite CPI for February 2022 (103.40) rose by 0.81% year-on-year, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). Among the various sections of goods and services, the price indices of Household Furnishings & Services and Transport grew by 9.86% and 4.58% year-on-year respectively, whereas the index of Communication dropped by 10.51%. The increment was attributed to higher wages of domestic helpers, dearer charges for eating out and electricity, along with increasing prices of gasoline and fruits. However, the rise was partially offset by lower rentals for dwellings, falling charges for telecommunication services and reduced prices of pork.

MACAU DIOCESE TO CONCLUDE SPECIAL PRAYER FOR UKRAINE WAR TODAY

THE nine-day special prayer for Ukraine will end today, following Pope Francis' invite to bishops, priests and ordinary faithful around the world to join him in the consecration prayer.

Bishop Stephen Lee from the Macau Diocese announced that, from March 20 to 28, the prayer for peace in light of the war in Ukraine that was recently shared by Pope Francis will be recited in all parishes after public Masses, "imploping God to forgive us for war."

"God help Ukraine and make people realise peace is the way," a member of the community prayed during the prayer session yester morning.

On Friday, Pope Francis prayed for peace in Ukraine in a ceremony that harked back to a century-old apocalyptic prophecy about peace and Russia that was sparked by purported visions of the Virgin Mary to three peasant children in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917.



Francis entered St. Peter's Basilica before an estimated 3,500 people on Friday and concluded with Francis sitting

alone before a statue of the Madonna. There, he solemnly asked forgiveness that humanity had "forgotten the lessons

learned from the tragedies of the last century, the sacrifice of the millions who fell in two World Wars."

"Free us from war, protect our world from the menace of nuclear weapons," he prayed.

The President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, has twice spoken with Pope Francis over the telephone, and the conversation took place as the war – described by the Pope on Sunday as "inhuman" and "sacrilegious" – continued to escalate.

In a tweet about the phone call, Zelenskyy wrote that he "told His Holiness about the difficult humanitarian situation and the blocking of rescue corridors by Russian troops."

The Ukrainian President also thanked the Pope for his prayers for Ukraine and his efforts for peace, after noting that the "mediating role of the Holy See in ending human suffering would be appreciated."

According to the Ukainian Ambassador, Zelensky told the Pope, "His Holiness is the most awaited guest in Ukraine."

On February 26, two days after the Russian invasion, Pope Francis expressed to the president of Ukarine "his deepest sorrow for the tragic events that are taking place in your country." JW

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Restructured public works departments to be established Apr. 1

JING WU

THE new public works departments and the future urban construction bureau will be established on April 1, 2022, the Executive Council announced on Friday.

The Macau SAR Government will incorporate into the structure of the Infrastructure Development Office (GDI) the attributions and powers of the Department of Public Buildings and the Department of Infrastructure – previously included in the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT).

The new bureau will be headed by a director and assisted by two sub-directors with responsibility for three departments and ten divisions, namely the Department of Public Buildings, the Department of Infrastructure, the Department of Studies and Projects and any respective administrative and technical sub-units.

The Public Works Services will have a staff of 174 employees, which will result from the transition of the staff assigned to the GDI and from the Department of Public Buildings and the Department of Infrastructure, both previously a part of the former DSSOPT.

In addition, the former DSSOPT will take the name of the Land and



MACAU PHOTO AGENCY

Urban Construction Bureau and will be responsible for studying, planning, promoting and implementing policies in urban planning and management as well as the use and development of land for construction projects delivered by the public services. However, this will not have carriage of any projects delivered by the Public Works Services and the Institute for Municipal Affairs, or the inspection of electrical and mechanical installations.

The Land and Urban Construction Bureau will be headed by a director and assisted by two sub-directors, and will go from seven departments and eleven divisions

to six departments and seven divisions.

Within the structure of the Land and Urban Construction bureau, the Electrical and Mechanical Installations Department will be created. This department will be responsible for specialty projects involving electrical and mechanical installations for civil construction works, and the supervision of elevators and large-scale mechanical equipment for entertainment purposes.

In the context of its new organizational structure, the Land and Urban Construction Bureau will decrease from 300 employees to 240 employees.



ACADEMIC: LIFE WILL BECOME 'TESTABLE AND PREDICTABLE' IN THE FUTURE

ACADEMIC Jun Wang said in a recent forum that decision making in the future will be radically different to the present.

Wang is the founder and CEO of iCarbonX, as well as distinguished professor at Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST). His comment was made at a forum on medical frontiers, held as part of celebratory events for MUST's 22nd Anniversary.

At the forum, the academic said that life will metaphorically transform from carbon-based to silicon-based life-forms in the future, in that it will be possible for scientists to create an infinite number of parallel universes to calculate the results of choices.

As such, he said, a life that is quantifiable, calculable,

predictable, testable and intervenable will be possible.

His comment echoed the recent heated discussion on the metaverse, an artificial digital world that is both similar and different to the real world.

Professor Rui-Ping Xiao, chair professor and dean of College of Future Technology of Peking University, said at the same forum that the importance of information technology to medical development is growing and that the field of medicine will leap forward as a result. The university will help to incubate 20 high-tech enterprises.

Professor Wenhong Zhang, head of Shanghai Covid-19 Medical Treatment Expert Team, told the forum that technology has been key to the containment of the pandemic in mainland China. **AL**

Gov't plans to allow for electronic presentation of driving license

THE government plans to allow drivers to present their licenses through the standardized electronic platform (single account), dispensing with the need to provide physical documents, the Executive Council announced on Friday.

"To avoid the need to carry physical documents, the draft law proposes that the legal requirement will be considered fulfilled when the driver displays the driving license and proof of civil liability insurance through the standardized electronic platform," Secretary for Administration and Justice, André Cheong said.

The government explained that the action is an implementation of



PHOTO ARCHIVE

the Governmental Action Plan for the Promotion of Electronic Services.

While driving, drivers are legally required to carry their driving license, vehicle identification document, vehicle registration title, and proof of civil liability insurance.

"If necessary, the driver must show the abo-

vementioned documents so that the traffic control officers can check them," the Executive Council said.

André Cheong expects the bill to be passed by the Legislative Council in the first half of the year, given its relative simplicity.

The requirement for

drivers to carry an owner's permit and property registration when driving will also be abolished as online data sharing between law enforcement, traffic management, and vehicle registration departments will enable law enforcement officers to access vehicle registration information. **JW**

GBA

SCHOOLS FOR MACAO NEW NEIGHBORHOOD UNDERWAY

PRIMARY schools and kindergartens for Macao New Neighborhood will come under construction this week whereas currently basement floors are being poured for the main apartment buildings.

Macau Urban Renewal reports that the main body of the apartment buildings, fine decoration works, roads, and landscaping will begin in June. The project is expected to be completed in 2023.

Only six minutes by car from Hengqin Checkpoint, the project covers 190,000 sqm between Zhongxin Blvd and Tianyu Ave along Gang'ao Blvd, and near Small Hengqin Mt. It will have floorage of 620,000 sqm and is the first comprehensive livelihood project tailored for Macau citizens in the Chinese mainland. Twenty-seven high-rise

buildings will provide 4,000 finished apartments and 200 talent rental units. Schools, a health clinic, and elderly service and community centers will be built along with 4,000 parking spaces.

Once operational, Macau residents are to receive the public services they are accustomed to. The community will become a new home for Macau people to live, study, and work, and will provide for high-level social and livelihood integration between Zhuhai and Macao.

Notably, Macau elements and characteristics are integrated into brick laying, architecture, railing, and other design elements. The facilities will be connected in an all-round way and roofed corridors will give outdoor protection between buildings in all weather. **MDT**

Document indicates China could boost military in Solomons

NICK PERRY, WELLINGTON

A leaked document indicates that China could boost its military presence in the Solomon Islands — including with ship visits — in a development that is raising alarm in nearby Australia and beyond.

The Solomon Islands revealed on Thursday it had signed a policing cooperation agreement with China. But more concerning to Australia was the draft text of a broader security arrangement that was leaked online.

Under the terms of the draft agreement, China could send police, military personnel, and other armed forces to the Solomons “to assist in maintaining social order” and for a variety of other reasons. It could also send ships to the islands for stopovers and to replenish supplies.

The draft agreement stipulates that China would need to sign off on any information that’s released about joint security arrangements, including at media briefings.

Without directly addressing the content of the draft agreement, Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade issued a statement saying “We would be concerned by any actions that destabilize the security of our region.”

The department said that after riots last year in the Solomon Islands’ capital, Honiara, Australia and its neighbors had been able to send security assistance “without the need for external support.”

“Pacific Island nations have the right to make sovereign de-

AP PHOTO



“Australia’s cooperation with our Pacific family is focused on the economic prosperity, security and development of our region.”

New Zealand said it planned to raise its concerns about the document with both the Solomon Islands and China.

“If genuine, this agreement would be very concerning,” Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta said. “Such agreements will always be the right of any sovereign country to enter into; however, developments within this purported agreement could destabilize the current institutions and arrangements that have long underpinned the Pacific region’s security.”

Questioned about the agreement, China’s Foreign Ministry said Beijing and the Solomons “conducted normal law enforcement and security cooperation on

the basis of equal treatment and win-win cooperation.”

“This is in line with the international law and international practice, conducive to maintaining social order in the Solomon Islands and promoting peace and stability in the region, and helpful to enhance common interests of China and the Solomon Islands, as well as all countries in the region,” ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin told reporters at a daily briefing on Friday.

Wang referenced China’s previous support for the Solomons in handling riots and “maintaining stability,” but did not cite the agreement directly.

Referring to Australia, he said China hoped “the relevant party will see this objectively and calmly, and refrain from overinterpreting it.”

“It is irresponsible and unhelpful for regional stability and deve-

lopment that the individual Australian official hyped the fallacy of China’s so-called coercion and deliberately created tensions,” Wang said.

Anna Powles, a senior lecturer in international security at New Zealand’s Massey University, said Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. would all be “very concerned” about the draft agreement, which was ambitious on China’s part.

Powles said it would be interesting to know what kind of goods China might want to send to the Solomons to service its ships, and whether there was the potential for mission creep in the future, like China developing a naval base.

She said she was concerned China was trying to direct the political narrative by controlling what information could be publicly released.

A lot of the wording in the draft agreement was vague, Powles said, including exactly what type of military and paramilitary forces that China might send to the Solomons. She said it was either clumsily worded or deliberately opaque.

It was not immediately clear when the security agreement might be finalized, signed or go into effect.

The Solomon Islands, home to about 700,000 people, in 2019 switched its diplomatic allegiance from Taiwan to Beijing, which was a contributing factor to last year’s riots.

Last month the U.S. announced plans to open an embassy in the Solomon Islands, laying out in unusually blunt terms a plan to increase its influence in the South Pacific nation before China becomes “strongly embedded.”

The U.S. previously operated an embassy in the Solomons for five years before closing it in 1993. Since then, U.S. diplomats from neighboring Papua New Guinea have been accredited to the Solomons, which has a U.S. consular agency.

A news release from the Solomon Islands government on its new policing agreement with China revealed few details. The statement said the agreement had been signed in a virtual meeting between China’s Wang Xiaohong, an executive vice minister, and Solomon Islands Police Minister Anthony Veke.

Wang said in the release that since the Solomon Islands began diplomatically recognizing China, “the bilateral relations have developed rapidly and achieved fruitful results” and that China was ready to “advance practical cooperation in police and law enforcement.”

Veke, meanwhile, said the Solomon Islands government attached great importance to its relationship with China. **MDT/AP**

Philippine coast guard: Chinese maneuvers endangered ships

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

CHINESE coast guard ships maneuvered dangerously close to Philippine coast guard ships at least four times near a disputed shoal over the past year, in moves that increased the risk of collision and violated international safety regulations, the Philippine coast guard said Sunday.

It was not immediately clear if the Philippine government has formally protested the aggressive actions by the Chinese coast guard ships, but Ma-

nila’s coast guard said the incidents would not deter it from deploying patrol ships at the Scarborough Shoal and in other areas within the country’s internationally recognized exclusive economic zone.

The incidents were reported to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila and an inter-agency body on the disputed South China Sea “to address this issue through rules-based and peaceful approaches,” Philippine coast guard chief Admiral Artemio Abu said in a statement.

Earlier this month, a Chinese coast guard ship maneuvered just 21 yards from a Philippine coast guard patrol vessel and restricted its maneuvering space in the vicinity of Scarborough, the Philippine coast guard said, adding that the Chinese ship’s action was “a clear violation” of a 1972 international safety regulation that aims to prevent sea collisions.

In June last year, two Chinese coast guard ships on two successive days moved dangerously close to two Philippine coast

guard ships, which were participating in a maritime exercise off Scarborough. A month before, a Chinese coast guard ship moved close to a Philippine Bureau of Fisheries vessel manned by coast guard personnel also near Scarborough, according to the coast guard.

There was no immediate comment from the Chinese Embassy in Manila.

China seized Scarborough, a rich fishing area about 200 kilometers off the northwestern coast of the Philippines and 600 kilometers

AP PHOTO



southeast of China, after a tense sea standoff in 2012. Chinese coast guard ships then surrounded the shoal and restricted the access of Filipino fishermen to it.

That prompted the Philippines to bring its disputes with China to international

arbitration the following year. In 2016, a U.N.-backed arbitration tribunal invalidated China’s claims to virtually the entire South China Sea and said China has violated the rights of Filipinos to fish at Scarborough. **MDT/AP**



A search and rescue worker holds the second orange-colored "black box" recorder which was recovered at the China Eastern flight crash site in Tengxian County yesterday

EXPLAINER

What's next in China Eastern plane crash probe?

EVEN after the finding of the two "black boxes," it may be a long time before investigators figure out what caused a China Eastern Airlines Boeing 737-800 to nosedive into the ground last week, killing all 132 people aboard.

Searchers found the first black box two days after the March 21 crash and the second one on Sunday, six days later. Experts say it could take weeks or months to analyze their contents and start to find answers.

WHAT IS A BLACK BOX?

Most commercial jetliners carry two recorders to help investigators try to determine the cause of accidents. Despite their name, they are usually orange to make them easier to find.

The cockpit voice recorder captures the voices of pilots and others in the cockpit, audio alerts and the sound of engines or switches being moved. It stores at least two hours of sound before starting to record over itself.

Flight data recorders constantly capture at least 88 pieces of

information, including airspeed, altitude, direction and whether the nose of the plane is pointing up, down or level. They can also record the position of wing flaps and whether the plane is flying by autopilot. They usually record 25 hours of data.

Both stop recording when power is lost. They are designed to withstand fire and powerful impacts and usually are installed in the back of the cargo compartment. They are equipped with radio beacons that activate under water but not on land.

Flight recorders used to use magnetic tape but now are digital, which allows them to hold more information.

WHAT HAVE INVESTIGATORS FOUND?

Searchers found the cockpit voice recorder first and then the flight data recorder. The two orange cylinders, the size of a large, elongated canister, were dirt-covered. The second one was found under 1.5 meters (5 feet) of soil.

Officials said the exterior of the cockpit voice recorder was dama-

ged but have given no indication whether the recording was intact. Both will be examined and analyzed in Beijing.

WHAT CAN THE RECORDERS TELL CRASH INVESTIGATORS?

The recorders can tell investigators what pilots were doing before a crash, whether they were aware of problems and how engines and other equipment were functioning. They are especially important following disasters such as the China Eastern crash in which no survivors are found and air traffic controllers heard nothing from the pilots.

In the 2018 crash of a Lion Air Boeing 737 Max in Indonesia, the flight recorder showed pilots struggled to keep its nose up, fighting an automated system that pushed it down. An Ethiopian Airlines 737 Max crashed in a similar manner four months later. The crashes led to the grounding of the plane, which is a different model than the 737-800.

WHAT WILL THE INVESTIGATION LOOK LIKE?

China will lead the investigation. It will include a representative of the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board and representatives from Boeing and CFM, the General Electric Co.-Safran joint venture that made the engines. The NTSB has said that talks were ongoing with China to address COVID-19 quarantine requirements.

Investigators will look at the plane's maintenance history, the training and record of the pilots and weather data. They will examine pieces of the wreckage for clues. Even the size of the debris field is important. When wreckage is spread over a very large area, it could indicate the plane was breaking up before hitting the ground. **MDT/AP**

MU5735

Gov't says no survivors in plane crash with 132 on board

CHINESE authorities officially confirmed Saturday that there were no survivors in the crash of a China Eastern 737-800 earlier this week with 132 people on board.

The announcement by an official of the Civil Aviation Administration of China at a late-night news conference was followed by a brief moment of silence. Investigators have identified 120 of the victims through DNA analysis, state media reported.

The flight from the city of Kunming in southwestern China was flying at 29,000 feet on Monday when it suddenly nosedived into a mountainous area, shortly



before it would have started its descent to the airport in Guangzhou, a provincial capital and export manu-

facturing hub near Hong Kong on China's southeastern coast.

Construction excavators

dug into the crash site Saturday in the search for wreckage, remains and the second black box. Searchers found

the cockpit voice recorder on Wednesday but have yet to find the flight data recorder.

Workers wearing knee-high rubber boots used shovels and other hand tools to sift through the earthen slopes in a 20-meter deep pit left by the plane. Debris and other items were collected in dozens of rectangular, mud-stained plastic containers.

Pumps were used to drain water as muddy conditions in the rainy Guangxi region hampered the search. One excavator stopped working after getting partially stuck, state broadcaster CCTV said.

The cause of the crash remained a mystery. An air traffic controller tried to contact the pilots several times after seeing the plane's altitude drop sharply but got no reply, officials have said.

Authorities said that forensic and criminal investigation experts had confirmed the identities of 114 passengers and six crew members.

China Eastern, one of China's four major airlines, and its subsidiaries have grounded all of their 737-800 aircraft, a total of 223 planes. The carrier said the grounding was a precaution, not a sign there was anything wrong. **MDT/AP**

PUTIN'S WAR

Biden lashes at Putin, calls for Western resolve for freedom

CHRIS MEGERIAN,
VANESSA GERA & AAMER
MADHANI, WARSAW

PRESIDENT Joe Biden delivered a forceful and highly personal condemnation of Russia's Vladimir Putin on Saturday, summoning a call for liberal democracy and a durable resolve among Western nations in the face of a brutal autocrat.

As he capped a four-day trip to Europe, a blend of emotive scenes with refugees and standing among other world leaders in grand settings, Biden said of Putin: "For God's sake, this man cannot remain in power."

It was a dramatic escalation in rhetoric — Biden had earlier called Putin a "butcher" — that the White House found itself quickly walking back. Before Biden could even board Air Force One to begin the flight back to Washington, aides were clarifying that he wasn't calling for an immediate change in government in Moscow.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov quickly denounced Biden, saying "it's not up to the president of the U.S. and not up to the Americans to decide who will remain in power in Russia."

While Biden's blunt language grabbed headlines, in other pieces of his roughly 30-minute speech before Warsaw's iconic Royal Castle he urged Western allies to brace for what will be a turbulent road ahead in a "new battle for freedom."

He also pointedly warned Putin against invading even "an inch" of territory of a NATO nation.

The address was a heavy bookend to a European visit in which Biden met with NATO and other Western leaders, visited the front lines of the growing refugee crisis and even held a young Ukrainian girl in his arms as he sought to spotlight some of the vast tentacles of the conflict that will likely define his presidency.

"We must remain unified today and tomorrow and the day after, and for the years and decades to come. It will not be easy," Biden said as Russia continued



to pound several Ukrainian cities. "There will be costs, but the price we have to pay, because the darkness that drives autocracy is ultimately no match for the flame of liberty that lights the souls of free people everywhere."

Biden also made the case that multilateral institutions like NATO are more important than ever if the West and its allies are going to successfully push back against autocrats like Putin.

During his campaign for president, Biden talked often about the battle for primacy between democracies and autocracies. In those moments, his words seemed like an abstraction. Now, they have an urgent resonance.

Europe finds itself ensconced in a crisis that has virtually all of Europe revisiting defense spending, energy policy and more, and so does the U.S.

Charles Kupchan, who served as senior director for European affairs on the White House National Security Council during the Obama administration, called the invasion a "game-changer" that left Atlantic democracies with "no choice" but to bolster their posture against Russia.

But the path ahead for Biden — and the West — will only grow more complicated, Kupchan said.

"The challenges Biden's presidency faces have just grown in magnitude," said

Kupchan, now a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. "He now needs to lead the West's efforts to protect the West from the pressing external threat posed by Russia. And he needs to continue strengthening the West from within by countering the illiberal populism that still poses internal threats to democratic societies on both sides of the Atlantic."

Hours later, Biden was in front of a crowd of a 1,000 — including recent Ukrainian refugees — at the Royal Castle, a Warsaw landmark that dates back more than 400 years and was badly damaged in World War II. He made clear that the West would need to steel itself for what will be a long and difficult battle.

"We must commit now, to be this fight for the long haul," Biden said.

The Biden administration, which has been selective about putting too great of importance on any single policy speech, sought to elevate what White House officials billed as a major address. Biden spoke with grand palace behind him to an invited audience — one bigger than just about any he's spoken to during his presidency.

He singled out Lech Walesa, the Polish labor leader who led the push for freedom in his country and was eventually elected its president, and connected the moment to the former

Soviet Union's history of brutal oppression, including the post-World War II military operations to stamp out pro-democracy movements in Hungary, Poland and what was then Czechoslovakia. And he urged Europe to heed the words of Pope John Paul II, the first pontiff from Poland: "Be not afraid."

Biden's trip has reaffirmed the importance of European alliances, which atrophied under former President Donald Trump. He's worked with his counterparts to marshal an array of punishing sanctions on Russia, and placed the continent on a course that could eliminate its dependence on Russian energy over the next several years.

The collective response to the invasion of Ukraine has little parallel in recent history, which has been more characterized by widening divisions than close coordination. But the Russian invasion of Ukraine has changed that dynamic, with European nations stepping up defense spending and imposing crushing sanctions against Moscow, and some taking initial steps to reorient their energy needs away from Russia.

"I'm confident that Vladimir Putin was counting on dividing NATO," Biden said during a meeting with Polish President Andrzej Duda on Friday. "But he hasn't been able to do it. We've all stayed together." **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1965 THOUSANDS JOIN DR KING IN ALABAMA RALLY



Dr Martin Luther King has taken a crowd of nearly 25,000 people to the steps of the state capital of Montgomery, Alabama to highlight black grievances.

The procession marks the end of a five-day march which started in Selma last week and it brings to a close a month of civil rights protests in Alabama.

Troops policed the roads surrounding the capital and army helicopters hovered overhead as the crowd swelled to nearly 25,000.

Dr King, who addressed the protesters from a podium in the square, described the trek as "one of the greatest marches in the history of America".

"Our aim is not to humiliate and defeat the white man, but to win his friendship and understanding," he added.

Dr King tried to present a petition of black grievances to Governor George Wallace but he refused to meet the delegation.

The civil rights leader said he would ask trade unions to refuse to transport or use the state's products and he urged the Federal Government and the Treasury to withdraw all assistance from the area.

Dr King also said that demonstrations would have to continue where essential conditions remained unmet.

When the march began last week, large bombs were planted at a black church, a funeral parlour and a leading black lawyer's home.

They were later discovered and detonated by experts from the army base at Anniston, Alabama.

To prevent further attacks, US President Lyndon Johnson gave the marchers the protection of nearly 3,000 troops, plus FBI and local police assistance.

But three days ago Viola Liuzzo, a white civil rights advocate who had been ferrying demonstrators to their homes, was shot dead on a lonely stretch of road near the route of the march.

Meanwhile, leaders of the Ku-Klux-Klan movement have reportedly tried to contact President Johnson to discuss his aversion to their organisation.

There was no immediate response from the US President, who recently launched a scathing attack on the group, describing it as "a band of hooded bigots, whose loyalty was not with the United States".

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The protests came just months after the signing of the Civil Rights Bill which created equal rights regardless of race, colour, religion or national origin.

The Voting Rights Act, which banned literacy tests and poll taxes which had previously been used to prevent black people from voting, was introduced in August 1965. But many states acted quickly to circumvent the law and most of the decade was marked by race riots and assassinations.

Further riots followed in Los Angeles in August 1965.

They lasted six days and left 34 dead and a further 1,000 people injured.

Dr King was assassinated in April 1968 and this led to riots in 100 US cities.

Black people continued to remain at a disadvantage when looking for work, and programmes of "affirmative action" were introduced during the 1970s under President Nixon.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Children may be less than honest with you. Problems with relatives and friends could surface. You're on the right track and you can make money if you are willing to go out on a limb.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Be sure to pay attention to your bank account. Take care of your own responsibilities before you help others. You need to control your temper and deal with the situation rationally.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Keep your thoughts and opinions to yourself and you won't get dragged into an unsavory debate. This will not be the time to give too much to your children. Travel will promote new romantic encounters.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Your persuasive nature will win the heart of someone you've had your eye on. Love could develop with someone of a different cultural background. Get involved in fitness programs with friends.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Be careful that you don't overextend yourself. Your lover may be annoyed if you have been flirtatious or not attentive to their needs. Don't make promises.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Older family members may take advantage of you by making you feel guilty. Travel will be good if you are seeking knowledge. Inharmonious situations at home may be extremely upsetting for you today.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 You will have a tendency to put on pounds. Uncertainties about your living arrangements may be unnerving. Groups you belong to will not only enjoy your company, but they will also share your interests.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Don't be shy to promote your own interests. Dazzle them with your intellectual conversation. You may need a good friend to lean on.

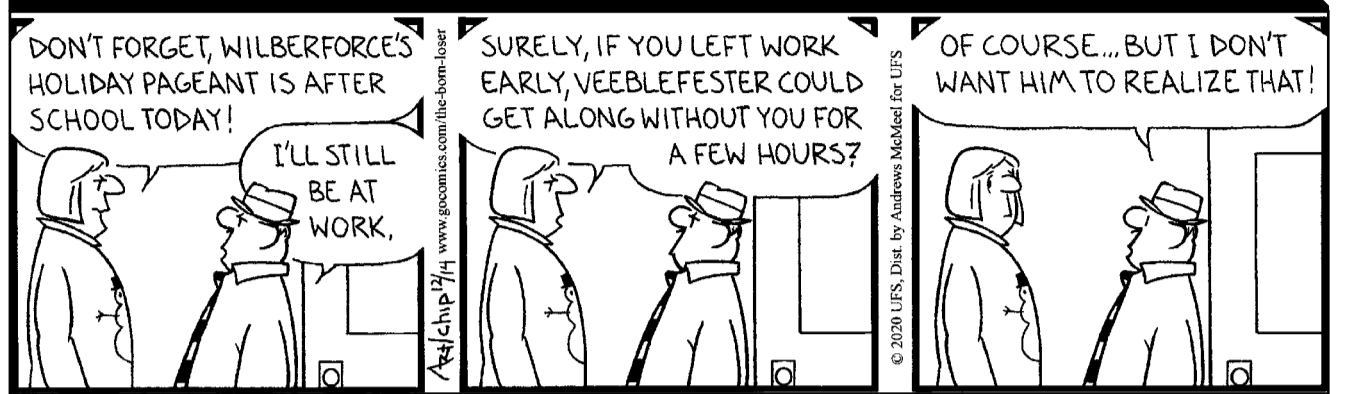
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Don't expect new acquaintances to be completely honest about themselves. Relationships may be hard to handle. Wait and get all the information before consulting your boss.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 You can get others to do things for you but be sure not to overpay them or lend them money. Opportunities for romance are present. Don't expect support from your mate.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Romantic opportunities will develop through friends or relatives. Problems with fire, gas, or oil may cause disruptions and annoyances. Don't let anyone take credit for a job you did.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Romance can surface if you get into some of those fitness programs you've been putting off. Good friends will give you honest answers. It's doubtful anyone will try to stand in your way today.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	6	18	cloudy
Changchun	-3	13	cloudy
Chengdu	10	19	cloudy
Chongqing	11	23	cloudy
Fuzhou	13	14	rain
Guangzhou	15	22	showers
Guiyang	6	20	fine
Haikou	19	22	rain
Hangzhou	9	16	overcast
Harbin	-3	11	fine
Hefei	5	17	fine
Nanjing	6	16	cloudy
Shanghai	8	15	fine
Taipei	17	21	rain
Wuhan	7	21	fine
Hong Kong	18	20	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	1	6	snow
Frankfurt	6	1	fog
Paris	11	22	overcast
London	8	18	overcast
New York	-4	0	cloudy

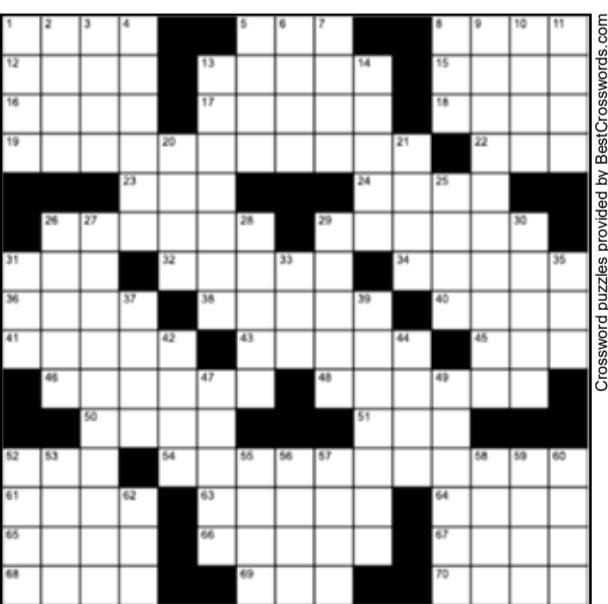
CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Fine and delicate; 5- Commercial; 8- Drama award; 12- Norwegian saint; 13- Dictation taker; 15- "Chicken of the sea"; 16- Yorkshire river; 17- Lid; 18- Goes astray; 19- An example of excellence; 22- Decease; 23- ___-Bo; 24- Car bar; 26- Ring combo; 29- Quaking trees; 31- End for Siam; 32- Uses a straw; 34- Beginning; 36- Gulf War missile; 38- Freedom from war; 40- Planted; 41- Chocolate substitute; 43- Garlic sauce; 45- Manhattan museum, familiarly; 46- Fame; 48- SAT giver; 50- Money; 51- Actor Gulager; 52- Pepper, e.g.; 54- Automate by computers; 61- Revivalists; 63- Flat contract; 64- Hydroxyl compound; 65- Treater's words; 66- Broke off; 67- Gas burner or Sicilian volcano; 68- Methods; 69- Carrier letters; 70- Christmas;

DOWN 1- Rich soil; 2- Inter ___; 3- Autos; 4- Actress Mimieux; 5- Riding; 6- Hindu mother goddess; 7- Dagger of yore; 8- Suffix with Capri; 9- Oppressively heavy; 10- Calvary letters; 11- Smooth sailing; 13- Foul-up; 14- Killer whales; 20- Diner sign; 21- Public exhibition; 25- Part of an eye or camera; 26- Academy award; 27- Surgical removal of a nerve; 28- Body of salt water; 29- Horse race venue in England; 30- Effluent system; 31- Computer key; 33- Chiang ___-shek; 35- Big bang cause; 37- Lady of Spain; 39- Voted into a seat; 42- Winter pear; 44- Capri, for one; 47- Entire; 49- Large soup dish; 52- Reason to cancel school; 53- Actress Rowlands; 55- Computer list; 56- Cushions; 57- Employs; 58- A big fan of; 59- Sector; 60- Airline to Tel Aviv; 62- Paris possessive;

Friday's solution

RASH	TRST	MEMO			
THAI	LENIN	ARIA			
EMIL	APACE	DONT			
SELL	TAG	TRISES			
	TREY	OTIR			
	FLOOD	SCHOONER			
	CREPE	TWEE	NAPS		
LAM	GRIAR	REV			
AMAS	LINN	SWEEP			
	URNACING	AMISS			
	POSE	ARUT			
ANOINT	NUS	NICE			
LANE	TRODE	TNOL			
AGIN	HESIN	STAR			
SSTS	LETT	SOLE			



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PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731	
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333	
Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300	
IAM 28 387 333	
Tourism 28 333 000	
Airport 59 888 88	

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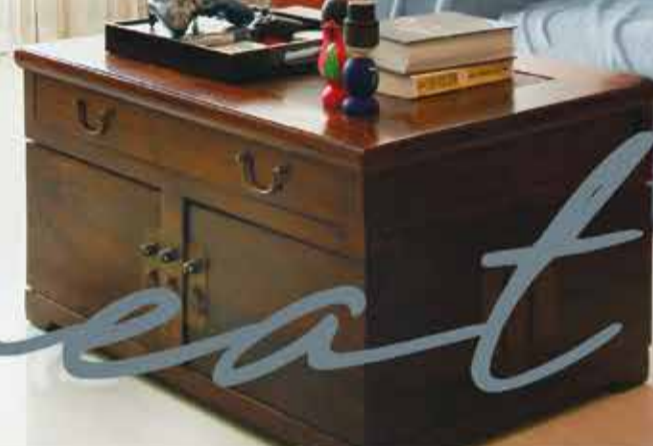
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QUIET Retreat



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new price!



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3 𠄎

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- TAIPA | Jade Garden | 4 𠄎 | HKD 15,380,000
- TAIPA | Buckingham | 2 𠄎 | HKD 8,590,000
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MOTORSPORTS

Elliott searches for first win of season in return to Austin

JENNA FRYER, AUSTIN

PERHAPS it is at last Chase Elliott's turn to take a Hendrick Motorsports car to victory lane, where his three teammates have all visited over the last month.

The blazing start for the Hendrick stable has stretched to three wins over four races — Kyle Larson won at Fontana, Alex Bowman at Las Vegas and William Byron at Atlanta — and only Elliott is still seeking his first win of the season. He's got a good shot Sunday in NASCAR's second trip to the Circuit of the Americas permanent road course, where Elliott is the defending race winner.

Elliott's victory last year came in torrential rains that shortened the event by 14 laps. It was no surprise to see the 2020 Cup Series champion pick up the road course win; he leads all active drivers with seven career victories on road courses.

The challenge this year is un-



AP PHOTO

derstanding NASCAR's new Next Gen car, which debuted in January and has been spectacular in improving the racing. The season has opened with five different winners through five races as the entire garage — except maybe the Hendrick teams — figures out the new car. Austin is the first of six

road courses on this year's Cup Series schedule.

"I think it's really more questions than answers," Elliott said. "To me, COTA is going to be that first opportunity for all the drivers to really kind of get in tune with this car on a road course. I didn't think it really drove a ton different

than the old cars on the road course."

When he did get to turn laps in the Next Gen on the hybrid road course at Charlotte Motor Speedway, NASCAR's new car reminded him of the IMSA GT cars Elliott has competed against when he dabbles in sports car ra-

cing. Elliott, who is the Cup points leader despite being winless so far this year, said the Next Gen should make for a good race.

"It is almost better suited for road racing than - I shouldn't say better suited - but more normalized for road racing type vehicles than it is for oval racing cars. So, I think it will be fine," he said,

Byron, his teammate and winner last Sunday in Atlanta, said the car may be so suited for a road course that the teams who are learning the Next Gen quickest might dominate.

"Maybe the car drives so good that the race isn't as good?" Byron said. "The races on the ovals are good because the car drives so bad. We used to have all the side-force and the rear end, all the skew, and now you don't have any of that. I think it will be exciting because you'll see a lot of commitment from the drivers, but it also might be a spread-out race."

The 20-turn, 3.41-mile, multi-elevation counterclockwise circuit uses the rolling landscape as part of the course. Last year's race in a blinding rain saw 11 lead changes by 10 drivers.

Elliott is the race favorite per FanDuel Sportsbook. NASCAR's stop at COTA is promoted by Speedway Motorsports, which leases the track in an effort to add a variety of racing circuits to the schedule. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

Multipolar World

Jorge Costa Oliveira



FROM 'GREAT RUSSIA' TO 'LITTLE CHINA'

Until the invasion of Ukraine, European countries considered economic interdependence, in addition to NATO's military presence, to be the main assurance of peace on the European continent. Russia had much more to lose than gain from a war, making it wise, even in the event of confrontation, never to involve the use of armed forces.

The invasion of Ukraine has led to a profound shift in Europe's stance. Henceforth, there is no long any trust in Russia, regardless of its leadership. And no longer will it be taken for granted that economic interdependence is a sufficient condition for peace; the Russian invasion will serve as a lesson for generations to come. Europe will massively increase military investment.

Furthermore, there is the perception that economic powers with ultra-nationalistic autocratic regimes cannot be trusted. Many Europeans have realized that it is not possible to be neutral in a world in which autocratic regimes make it their mission to attack Europe's liberal democracies with their foundations of freedom, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

However, warfare does not stop at the military level. Cyberattacks and the manipulation of information via data and social networks have been examples of the areas on which Europe has been suffering special offensives. Also in these areas, as in the domain of space, all signs point to Europe changing its passive stance, and its military-industrial complexes will grow.

In this total war in Ukraine, the EU and the "Western world" are using economic, trade and financial sanctions that are deeper than those traditionally imposed in cases of international law violations, and have been extending and refining such sanctions.

These economic sanctions seem to be used in a trans-Clausewitzian sense — not only as a tool for continuing policies aimed at eliminating one (Russian) threat, but also as a general deterrent against other current latent threats.

The gradual destruction of the Russian economy, banking and financial sector (the value of 31 Russian companies traded on the London Stock Exchange has fallen 98%) in the face of the inability to weather these sanctions has meant that some relevant Chinese banks and companies — with exposure to Western markets and integrated within the international banking and financial system — have been reluctant to take action that could expose them to the effects of the extra-territorial nature of the sanctions imposed on Russia. It is possible that China, which has adopted a stance of "collaborative neutrality" with Russia, will realize that it has much to lose from the instability caused by this war and join in the efforts to force an end to it.

But it is also possible that China's position will evolve into firm support for its main strategic partner, especially if Russia allows Chinese capital to flow into Russian oil, gas, copper, nickel, aluminum and other companies.

The Putinian delusion of a Greater Russia has turned an extraordinary nation into an international pariah that, dependent as it is on China's goodwill, is one step away from becoming its tributary state.

EU ENVOY IN TEHRAN AMID HOPES TO RESTORE NUCLEAR AGREEMENT

A leading European Union diplomat held talks in Tehran yesterday, Iran's state-run media reported, amid hopes that an agreement to restore Iran's tattered nuclear deal with world powers could be completed.

The meetings between the EU's envoy, Enrique Mora, and top Iranian officials come at a sensitive moment for talks to revive the deal, as the glimmers of a resolution to some of the thorniest issues in the negotiations have emerged.

The report on the talks in Tehran gave scant detail, saying only that the diplomats discussed the latest on the nuclear agree-

ment, with Iran's top nuclear negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani repeating that Iran believed a deal was within reach if America was "realistic" in its demands.

Former President Donald Trump abandoned the nuclear deal in 2018 and re-imposed crushing sanctions. Iran gradually breached the agreement with a massive expansion of its nuclear work.

Nuclear talks broke off earlier this month as last-minute wrangles in Vienna coincided with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and financial sanctions imposed by the West on Moscow.

THE BUZZ



U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel (center left) with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (right)

JAPAN PM, US ENVOY PRAY IN HIROSHIMA AMID RUSSIA NUKE FEARS

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

JAPANESE Prime Minister Fumio Kishida escorted the U.S. ambassador to his hometown Hiroshima on Saturday to pay respects to atomic bombing victims and warned that the world is again facing threats of nuclear attacks stemming from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"As we face a possibility of Russia's use of nuclear weapons as a realistic concern, I felt strongly [as leader of] the world's only country to have suffered atomic attacks that we should never allow threats or use of nuclear weapons," Kishida told reporters after a tour of the peace park and the museum with Ambassador Rahm Emanuel.

"The tragedy should never be repeated," Kishida said.

Leaders from the Group of Seven countries on Thursday urged Russia not to use biological, chemical or nuclear weapons in its war on Ukraine. That prospects was raised when Russian President Vladimir Putin in February ordered his nation's nuclear forces put on high alert over tensions with the West.

The Aug. 6, 1945, atomic bombing by the United States killed about 140,000 people and nearly destroyed Hiroshima. Three days later, a second U.S. atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki killed 70,000 more, before Japan surrendered six days later.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine "highlights the harsh road toward achieving a world without nuclear weapons," Kishida said. "As prime minister from Hiroshima, I must firmly send a message [of peace] to the rest of the world."

Kishida, however, has been pushing to bolster Japan's military budget and capability amid growing threats from China, North Korea and Russia. He says his realistic approach is to protect lives while seeking to achieve the ideal for the future.

About 3,000 Russian troops were conducting drills on the disputed Kuril islands, according to media reports, first since Russia's Foreign Ministry said it was suspending peace treaty talks with Japan, citing Tokyo's sanctions against Moscow.

Russia has also increased naval activity around Japan, which Japanese

officials say is meant to project Moscow's military strength.

Kishida and Emanuel visited the Peace Memorial Museum and laid flowers to the victims at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park.

In 2016, Kishida accompanied then-President Barack Obama on his visit to Hiroshima, where he made a pledge to seek a world without nuclear weapons and met with several atomic bombing survivors.

A visit to Hiroshima by Emanuel, known for his close ties to President Joe Biden, is raising hopes for a similar presidential visit.

Emanuel said that he cannot speak for Biden but there is a possibility.

"I think as a friend I can say if he makes it here to Japan I know he'll want to visit one of the two cities, but not both," he said.

The mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have requested that Biden make a similar trip to their cities during his visit to Japan to attend a summit of Quad nations, which also includes Australia and India, expected in late April. Quad, or the "Quadrilateral Security Dialogue," is an Indo-Pacific alliance established in 2007. **MDT/AP**



Afghanistan's Taliban rulers refused to allow dozens of women to board several flights, including some overseas, because they were traveling without a male guardian, two Afghan airline officials said. Some of the women were dual nationals returning to their homes overseas, including some from Canada, according to one of the officials. Women were denied boarding on flights to Islamabad, Dubai and Turkey on Kam Air and the state-owned Ariana Airline.

US called last week for tougher U.N. sanctions after North Korea said it test-fired its biggest intercontinental ballistic missile to date, with Kim Jong Un vowing to expand his country's "nuclear war deterrent" while preparing for a "long-standing confrontation" with the United States. The launch extended a barrage of weapons demonstrations this year that analysts say are aimed at forcing the United States to accept the idea of North Korea as a nuclear power and remove crippling sanctions against its broken economy.



Yemen A Saudi-led coalition fighting Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen unleashed a barrage of airstrikes on the capital and a strategic Red Sea city, officials said. At least eight people were killed. The overnight airstrikes on Sanaa and Hodeida — both held by the Houthis — came a day after the rebels attacked an oil depot in the Saudi city of Jiddah, their highest-profile assault yet on the kingdom.

Germany The western state of Saarland held an election yesterday that offered the country's first test at the ballot box since Chancellor Olaf Scholz's national government took office in December. Polls pointed to a solid lead for Scholz's center-left Social Democrats in a region led since 1999 by the center-right Christian Democratic Union party of former Chancellor Angela Merkel.