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FOUNDER & PUBLISHER Kowie Geldenhuys EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Paulo Coutinho www.macaudailytimes.com.mo

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“THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’”

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AP PHOTO



South China Sea Thousands of American and Filipino forces began yesterday one of their largest combat exercises in years that will include live-fire maneuvers, aircraft assaults, urban warfare and beach landings in a showcase of U.S. firepower in the northern Philippines near its sea border with Taiwan. The annual exercises, called Balikatan — Tagalog for shoulder-to-shoulder — will run up to April 8 with nearly 9,000 navy, marines, air force and army troops, including 5,100 American military personnel, to strengthen the longtime treaty allies' "capabilities and readiness for real-world challenges," U.S. and Philippine military officials said.

North Korea said yesterday leader Kim Jong Un has vowed to develop more powerful means of attack, days after the country's first intercontinental ballistic missile launch in more than four years. The statement suggests North Korea might perform additional launches or even test a nuclear device soon as it pushes to modernize its arsenal and increase pressure on the Biden administration while nuclear diplomacy remains stalled. Last Thursday, the North performed its 12th round of weapons tests this year, launching the newly developed, long-range Hwasong-17, which analysts say was designed to reach anywhere in the U.S. mainland.

Solomon Islands The Australian and New Zealand prime ministers yesterday voiced concerns about the potential for a Chinese military presence on the Solomon Islands. A document leaked last week indicates that China could boost its military presence in the South Pacific island nation, including with ship visits. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he had spoken to New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern over the weekend about the development and planned to speak to his counterparts in Papua New Guinea and Fiji later on.

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COVID-19

SHANGHAI STARTS BIGGEST LOCKDOWN

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AP PHOTO

OSCARS WERE A 'HIT'

Millions watch Will Smith smack Chris Rock on Oscars' night; 'CODA' gets the final (gestural) ovation

AP PHOTO



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PROTECTION OF OLD TREES DEMANDS COORDINATION AMONG STAKEHOLDERS: IC

RENATO MARQUES

A group of 10 old trees in Taipa's Caminho das Hortas street can only be protected through a coordinated decision involving all the stakeholders, the president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), Deland Leong told the media on the sidelines of the press conference that announced this year's Macau Arts Festival.

As the Times reported, the topic was raised for the first time during a meeting of the Urban Planning Committee (CPU) two weeks ago while discussing the Urban Conditions Plan of a two-tower residential building to be built in the area.

Questioned by the media on the matter, Leong explained that IC is only one of the departments involved in heritage protection and which issues advice for the protection of valuable heritage items such as old trees.

"According to law for the preservation [of the trees] there are several government departments involved, and IC is mostly in charge of cultural heritage. We do have a [view] on the preservation of old trees as we have a list of classified trees for preservation but our role is more on the management of these trees," Leong said, adding, "If our advice is solicited [by the government] we will issue it."

The IC president stated that preservation of the trees was dependent on a coordinated response from the different departments involved, including the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM), and other stakeholders such as the landowner and the Land, Public Works, and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT).

She also clarified that, contrary to the procedure for buildings and other immovable property, moving trees does

not require a decision from the Chief Executive.

On the line are trees located by the side of the road in Caminho das Hortas street in Taipa, in an area known as Cheong Ka Village.

At the discussion in the CPU, the DSSOPT proposed that the trees should be relocated to another area to give way for the enlargement of the current street, which would be an important part of Taipa's road network in the future.

According to the Urban Plan for the North of Taipa, the government aims to widen this narrow road to connect to the Avenida de Guimarães and Avenida de Sun Yat Sen at the Sun Yat Sen roundabout.

An IAM representative at the meeting expressed concern that widening the existing road poses a risk to the trees, and proposed the possibility of a change to the current plan.



CE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS BEFORE AL

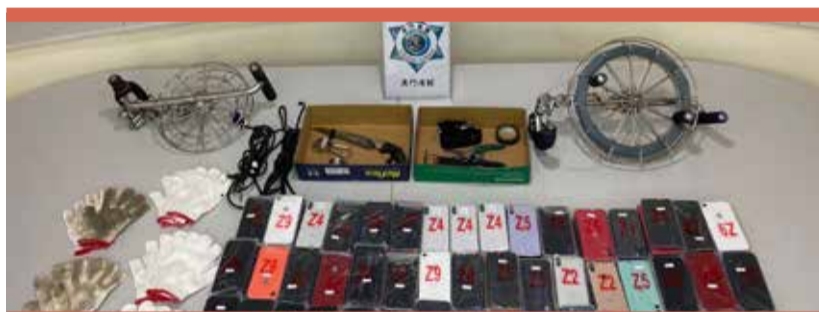
The Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng will attend the Legislative Assembly to answer lawmakers' questions on April 12. The session will be held as a plenary meeting of the parliament. According to a government statement, Ho will answer questions submitted by lawmakers on topics of general concern to the community, such as policies affecting household incomes and the cost of living. Meanwhile, the parliament has announced the schedule for lawmakers to receive members of the public. They will do so from midday to 1 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The lawmaker designation list can be viewed on the parliament's website.

LRT TO RESUME SERVICES APR. 3

After six months of service suspension due to the replacement of its high-voltage cable network, the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) will return to service on April 3. The service will operate from 6:30 a.m. to 11:15 p.m. every day. Carriages will run at 10 to 15 minute intervals. The LRT system currently operates an 11-station trackless railway between Ocean Garden and the Taipa Ferry Terminal. The entire journey normally takes 20 minutes. Single-journey fares range between MOP6 to MOP10, depending on the length of the journey. Payment using the LRT stored-value card will come with a discount of at least 50%.

CRIME

FOUR ARRESTED TRYING TO SMUGGLE CELLPHONES WORTH MOP1.07M



FOUR tourists have been arrested on charges of smuggling 308 cellphones by rope gliding, the Macao Customs (SA) announced yesterday.

Another suspect, who gave orders from mainland China, is still at large there.

The apprehended suspects are aged between 25 and 46. Each were reportedly guaranteed to receive 500 Chinese yuan. The total value of the cellphones is MOP1.07 million, according to the SA.

It is believed that the four were told to rope glide the cellphones from the Macau side to the mainland side.

The suspects refused to cooperate during the investigation, except to

tell the SA about another man who gave orders from mainland China. As such, the SA's counterpart in mainland China has been notified of the case.

March 27, the SA discovered some suspicious activities on the coast near Pousada Marina Infante on its surveillance system. Clippers and drones were deployed to the scene as an initial response.

At the scene, officers found four men and three cartons of old cellphones, as well as pulleys, gloves and ropes. No other suspects or methods of transport were found.

The SA stressed that this has been the only smuggling case on the coast of Taipa in recent years. AL

EMPLOYMENT

921 RESIDENTS HIRED THROUGH DSAL SESSIONS

921 residents have been hired through the 31 job pairing sessions held by the Labor Affairs Bureau's (DSAL).

The Subsidized Chief Training Plan, which aims to reduce the economic pressure on people affected by the pandemic, has accommodated over 10,000 residents, while some 7,000 have been subsidized, according to data from the bureau.

Up to middle of March of this year, the bureau held 10 pairing sessions for specific sectors, including cleaning and security, retail sales, hospitality, public hygiene.

The DSAL said that in view of the condition of the labor market in Macau, they are organizing "New Start" em-

ployment seminars to help residents understand job matching, and thereby assist them in changing careers.

Previously, Chief Executive has encouraged workers to "adjust their mentality, so as to try different professions according to their own aptitudes."

A special platform was created for registered job seekers to improve the efficiency of job matching, in a program which ran from March 10 to March 17, involving 697 residents.

The most sought-after positions were: marketing assistant manager, casino operations supervisor, cable car goodwill ambassador, marketing representative, and dispatcher. JW

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MacauDaily 澳門每日時報
Times
DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR_Lynzy Valles
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS_Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai
NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS_Alex Torrao, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Emilie Tran, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, Jing Wu, João Palla Martins, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Viviana Segui
DESIGNERS_Eva Bucho, Miguel Bandeira | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS_JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES_Associated Press, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua
SECRETARY_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com
SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

A MACAU TIMES PUBLICATIONS LTD PUBLICATION
ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com
OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com
ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C.
MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84
Advertisement advertising@macaudailytimes.com
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Arts Festival moving forward despite Covid-19 fears

RENATO MARQUES

THE 32nd Macau Arts Festival (MAF) is moving ahead, opening April 29, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) announced yesterday in a press conference at the Macao Cultural Centre.

The event, which has been suffering from Covid-19-related interruptions and readjustments since 2020, aims this year to appeal more to local audiences, the president of IC, Deland Leong told the media on the sidelines of the event announcement.

"We hope this year we can attract the greatest possible number of local attendees, including students and underprivileged people. Our goal is to attract higher participation [from locals] and make use of more diverse places as venues and not only theatres. We want to make better use also of outdoor spaces to allow people to interact more [with the event]," Leong said.

The official explained that the large increase in the number of activities, specifically the addition of events comprising the MAF outreach program is responsible for the events budget increase from last year.

According to the figures cited, this year MAF has a total budget of 24 million patacas, 14% more than in 2021 when the total budget was 21 million patacas.

"We have a much larger program than in 2021 and this is why the budget is higher this year. We moved from 18 to 27 activities or events on the program and from 44 to over 100 on the extended and outreach pro-



gram," Leong added.

Tickets for the MAF go on sale from 10 a.m. on April 3 through the Macau Ticketing Network.

Questioned by the media on which pandemic restrictions would apply, Leong explained that the two major restraints upon the MAF are the need to restrict the sale of tickets for indoor theatres to just 50% of capacity and the prohibition on live performances from international groups.

The same official also said that contingency plans have been prepared in case a new outbreak of Covid-19 prompts further restrictions. If no major developments occur, the MAF is expected to run until June 2.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic situation, which is con-

sidered unstable, the IC claims that moving ahead with the event is the right choice despite several restrictions limiting the program, including the ban on foreign artists performing live.

To tackle this issue, at least in part, the IC opted to include a series of pre-recorded international performances in this year's program to be screened during the event.

According to the organizers, this year the festival will feature several performances involving local artists exclusively or including the participation of local artists and performers in productions from the mainland and Hong Kong.

Of these, the highlight is "Carlos I" by Step Out, a performance with no actors, fea-

turing only lighting, sound, and space installations which aims to recall historical events. Another highlight is "The Vanished Figures" led by Jenny Mok, director of the Comuna

de Pedra, a performance that explores the topic of female labor roles in today's society.

The dance-theatre piece, "Vaster Far than the Ocean," features local dancer Stella Ho in a joint production by Hong Kong dancer, Mui Cheuk Yin, and Guangzhou choreographer, ErGao. The act combines dance and traditional bamboo scaffolding and explores the possibilities of dancers' bodies interacting with the bamboo scaffolding installation.

The big stage will also include intangible cultural heritage, with performances of Traditional Chinese opera and Patuá theatre. These include the new Shanghai-style Peking opera "New Dragon Inn," as well as "The Phantom of Liaozhai," a recreation by local Cantonese opera veteran Chu Chan Wa bringing together elite and rising local Cantonese opera artists.

As usual, the Patuá theatre performance will be put on by the local "Dóci Papiaçám di Macau Drama Group." The group continues to explore the life of the city through "Love Cruise," a story of a luxury cruise from Hainan to Macau, which highlights, in a humorous treatment, Macau as a city of multiple cultures.

ORCHESTRAS TRANSFER GOING SMOOTHLY

THE transfer of administration from the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) to a management company for the Macao Orchestra and the Macao Chinese Orchestra is ongoing and has been a smooth process, the president of IC, Deland Leong told the media at the launching of the Macao Arts Festival. According to the official, the two orchestras have been operating well and without any problems. Leong also said that concerts from the two orchestras have been

planned and scheduled and she hopes that the programmed concerts take place without disruptions. Questioned on the topic of the current number of musicians, Leong also said that the orchestras are functioning with the same number of musicians and there are no places to fill or need to reduce the numbers. "If eventually there is a need [in the future] for more musicians, we will invite some to perform with the orchestras temporarily," she stated.

THE Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) officially opened the National Observation and Research Station of Coastal Ecological Environments in Macao (the Station) yesterday with a plaque unveiling ceremony.

October 11 last year saw the Ministry of Science and Technology announce a total of 69 National Field Science Observation and Research Stations; including the Station which focuses on Macau's coastal ecology.

In his speech, Tam Vai Man, director of the Environmental Protection Bureau, said that the establishment of the Macau

MUST opens China's first external scientific field station

station will fill the gap in China's data on subtropical Chinese coasts.

He added that the Station is part and parcel of China's innovation system, while the establishment of the Station in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) will assist with collection of data to help monitor the region's environmental change.

The Station, he pointed out, will help the GBA better conserve the environment.

Through the establishment of the Macau Field Station, the MUST will cooperate with Tsinghua University, Peking University, Chinese Academy of Sciences, China Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research, Guangdong University of Technology, Sun Yat-sen University, Jinan University, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and Hong Kong Chinese University in related fields in the future. **AL**



COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED FOR 15TH NATIONAL GAMES

A committee responsible for the organization of the 15th National Games jointly organized by Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau has been officially established, according to a dispatch in the Official Gazette. The Macau National Games Organizing Committee will be led by Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao Ieong U, while Pun Weng Kun, president of the Sports Bureau will be secretary-general. It is the first time that Macau will be involved in the organization of the mega sports event. At the close of the 14th National Games in September in Xi'an city, Shaanxi Province, the Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng received the flag of the Games as a symbol of Macau's role as co-host of the 15th National Games in 2025.

2022MIECF POSTPONED TO AUGUST

The 2022 Macao International Environmental Co-operation Forum & Exhibition (2022MIECF) will now take place from August 18 to 20. Originally planned for March 31 to April 2, organizers delayed the event due to the current Covid-19 pandemic situation in the neighboring regions. In February, the organizer announced that the theme of this year's forum is "Commitment to Green Development, Moving Towards the Dual Carbon Goals." The environmental exhibition will focus on topics such as carbon neutrality, green mobility, and technological innovation.

GAMING

INSIDERS FORSEE GLOOMY OUTLOOK FOLLOWING PREMIUM PAYMENTS, CLOSURE OF SATELLITE CASINOS

LYNZY VALLES

THE anticipated revival of the gaming sector is again receding into the distance: with no recovery expected for at least six months. Gaming insiders have admitted that the casino sector's financial situation is set to worsen in the next six months, especially given that casinos have paid tens of millions to renew their concessions.

The insiders expressed concerns about possible additional financial pressure coming from the closure of at least seven satellite casinos in ZAPE and Taipa, as operators would have to pay the salaries of dealers in the closing casinos.

With the economic downturn and turmoil in the junket sector, casinos have seen steep falls in revenue, resulting in depleted cash flow.

This is on top of the ongoing pandemic, which has closed Macau's borders except to arrivals from the mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

However, outbreaks in the neighboring region are also preventing visitors from entering Macau given the SAR's 'zero-Covid' strategy, which has led the government to require quarantine for arrivals from some high-risk mainland Chinese cities.

Previously, TDM Radio reported that it will cost gaming operators between MOP50 to MOP80 million to have their licenses ex-



tended for up to six months.

This comes after Secretary Lei Wai Nong announced that applications for extensions would remain open until December, since the licenses are due to expire on June 26 and the new gaming law has not yet been finalized.

In Sands China's annual report released late last week, the gaming operator revealed that the "Macau government has invited Venetian Macao Limited (VML) to submit a formal request for an extension along with a commitment to pay the Macau government up to MOP47 million, and to provide a bank guarantee to secure

the fulfillment of VML's payment obligations towards its employees should VML be unsuccessful in tendering for a new concession contract after its sub-concession expires."

Heeding this call, the request for extension was submitted on March 14.

However, with the ongoing gaming law amendment and renewal process, the gaming operator admitted that it is not excluding the possibility that the government could further "change or interpret the associated gaming laws in a manner that could negatively impact us."

According to insiders contacted by Macau Daily News, at least seven satellite casinos located in the Z.A.P.E and Taipa are currently planning to halt operations in the middle of the year. Although the dealers in the satellite casinos are hired by casino operators, their salaries are paid by the satellite casinos.

However, if the satellite casinos cease operations, gaming operators would have to pay for their salaries – adding another burden to the sector.

Speaking to the Times, Ben Lee, managing partner of IGamiX Management & Consulting, said, "The operators actually have a valid [complaint]. The past two years have impacted their operations quite significantly, given their commitment to maintaining social stability by keeping on as many locals as they could and did."

Although the six-month extension of gaming licenses came as no surprise to gaming operators, given the limited time remaining before the concessionaires expire on June 26, Lee said, "one would have perhaps expected some concession from the authorities."

"There is after all a finite limit to the financial reserves of the operators," he added.

Casino operators generated a total of MOP7.7 billion compared to the MOP6.34 billion amassed in January. However, this figure still represents a 69% decline from pre-pandemic levels.

Executive confirms 'Suncity cage' operation at The Star

LYNZY VALLES

JUNKET operator Suncity has operated as a third party at Australian casino, The Star, via a "Suncity cage" as the operator lacked regulatory approval, which involved a AUD60,000 cash play in the VIP room.

Suncity's involvement was confirmed at a NSW Independent Liquor & Gaming Authority inquiry yesterday at which Star NSW regulatory manager David Aloï testified for the second time, expressing concerns of alleged money laundering.

According to him, the "Suncity cage" was located at the private gaming room called Salon 95.

Cash transactions at

the casino would have to be processed through The Star's cage. However, Aloï said that he had learnt of a AUD60,000 cash play in the VIP room.

The current inquiry was sparked by reports that the operator of the Australian casino, Star Entertainment Group, has allowed Suncity to run a high roller gambling business in the private room.

With the cancellation of numerous contracts between Suncity and casino regulators following the scandals surrounding the recent arrest of its CEO Alvin Chau, a senior Star executive admitted before an inquiry last week that the promoter to ultra-wealthy

Chinese gamblers "was still operating at the Star, albeit not under the Suncity banner," as cited in several media reports.

The announcement contradicted the gaming operator's statement back in 2019 that the two companies have already terminated their relationship – a relationship which came to light after a scandal in 2019 when Australian newspapers, The Age and the Herald Sun, revealed its ties to powerful Asian crime syndicates.

At the inquiry on Friday, CCTV footage was shown, confirming that cash transactions were taking place at Salon 95. Bundles of cash were brought in and handled out of the private room.

Suncity was given access to a private gaming room for its customers in 2016, under the condition that they use the Star's cage to purchase gaming chips or cash them in.

However, the inquiry has

shown that Suncity has been in breach of this condition.

Amid the ongoing inquiry, the managing director and CEO of The Star Entertainment Group Matt Bekier resigned yesterday, saying that it was the right thing to

take the responsibility.

In a company statement, Bekier said that as the head of the group, he was "accountable for the effectiveness and adequacy of the company's processes, policies, people and culture."

PHILIPPINES SUSPENDS SUNCITY LICENSE

SUNCITY Group has been suspended from operating junkets in the Philippines in the latest blow to the company, whose operations are now in global turmoil. The country's gaming regulator, Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp (PAGCOR) has laid out conditions if the troubled junket group wants to continue to operate in the Philippines. These conditions include a requirement for Suncity to place all of its clients' front

money into a separate bank account; and for the group to be transparent in declaring how much front money it has on deposit, providing a quarterly statement. If the group fails to comply, Suncity, and Alvin Chau will be deemed "permanently unsuitable" to operate in the Philippines. Last year, PAGCOR received two complaints that Suncity may be misappropriating a total of USD57.9 million, prompting the government to launch an investigation.

AP PHOTO



COVID-19

Shanghai starts China's biggest Covid-19 lockdown in two years

CHINA began its most extensive lockdown in two years yesterday to conduct mass testing and control a growing outbreak in Shanghai as questions are raised about the economic toll of the nation's "zero-COVID" strategy.

China's financial capital and largest city with 26 million people, Shanghai had managed its smaller, past outbreaks with limited lockdowns of housing compounds and workplaces where the virus was spreading.

But the citywide lockdown that will be conducted in two phases will be China's most extensive since the central city of Wuhan, where the virus was first detected in late 2019, first confined its 11 million people to their homes for 76 days in early 2020. Millions more have been kept in lockdown since then.

Shanghai's Pudong financial district and nearby areas will be locked down from Monday to Friday as mass testing gets underway, the local government said. In the second phase of the lockdown, the vast downtown area west of the Huangpu River that divides the city will start its own five-day lockdown Friday.

Residents will be required to stay home and deliveries will be left at checkpoints to ensure there is no contact with the outside world. Offices and all businesses not considered essential will be closed and public transport suspended.

Already, many communities within Shanghai have been locked down for the past week, with their housing compounds

blocked off with blue and yellow plastic barriers and residents required to submit to multiple tests for COVID-19. Shanghai's Disneyland theme park is among the businesses that closed earlier. Automaker Tesla is also suspending production at its Shanghai plant, according to media reports.

Panic-buying was reported on Sunday, with supermarket shelves cleared of food, beverages and household items. Additional barriers were being erected in neighborhoods yesterday, with workers in hazmat suits staffing checkpoints.

In-person observations of the April 5 Tomb Sweeping Festival have been canceled and memorials will instead be held online.

Some workers, including traders at the city's stock market, were preparing to stay within a COVID-19 "bubble" for the duration of the lockdown.

Li Jiamin, 31, who works in the finance industry, said she had packed several days of clothing and supplies, and her company was sorting out sleeping and eating arrangements.

"The overall impact is still great," Li told The Associated Press, pointing especially to losses suffered by workers in the informal sector who have no such support.

Huang Qi, 35, who works at a local university, said he had undergone a lockdown at home before and prepared for the new round by stocking up.

"I think if the closure continues like this, our school workers will not be affected much, but what about those who work

in the real economy? How can their business be maintained?" Huang said.

"I still hope that our society can find a better balance between ensuring normal life and epidemic prevention and control," Huang added.

Shanghai detected another 3,500 cases of infection on Sunday, though all but 50 were people who tested positive for the coronavirus but were not showing symptoms of COVID-19. While people who are asymptomatic can still infect others, China categorizes such cases separately from "confirmed cases" — those in people who are sick — leading to much lower totals in daily reports.

Nationwide, 1,219 new confirmed cases of domestic infection were detected on Sunday, more than 1,000 of them in the northeastern province of Jilin, along with 4,996 asymptomatic cases, the National Health Commission reported yesterday.

China has reported more than 56,000 confirmed cases nationwide this month, with the surge in Jilin accounting for most of them.

Jilin province is enforcing travel bans and partial lockdowns in several cities, including Changchun, one of the centers of the Chinese auto industry. Although the province has seen more than 1,000 new confirmed cases per day, prevention and control measures taken there do not appear to have been as extreme as in other places.

As has become customary, Jilin has been building pre-fabricated temporary wards to

house COVID-19 patients and those under observation as suspected cases. The city of Suzhou, about an hour from Shanghai, as well as Changsha in the country's center and Shenyang in the northeast are also erecting such structures capable of housing more than 6,000 people.

Shanghai itself has converted two gymnasiums, an exhibition hall and other facilities to house potential infected patients.

China has called its long-standing "zero-tolerance" approach the most economical and effective prevention strategy against COVID-19.

The new measures being enforced in Shanghai aim to "curb the virus spread, protect people's life and health, and achieve the dynamic zero-COVID target as soon as possible," the city's COVID-19 prevention and control office stated in an announcement Sunday evening.

That requires lockdowns and mass testing, with close contacts often being quarantined at home or in a central government facility. The strategy focuses on eradicating community transmission of the virus as quickly as possible.

While officials, including Communist Party leader Xi Jinping have encouraged more targeted measures, local officials tend to take a more extreme approach, concerned with being fired or otherwise punished over accusations of failing to prevent outbreaks.

Most recently, Hunan province, which has seen relatively few cases, ordered punishments against 19 officials for "failure

to vigorously consolidate anti-pandemic policies," state broadcaster CCTV reported.

With China's economic growth already slowing, the extreme measures are seen as worsening difficulties hitting employment, consumption and even global supply chains. With a 21-day curfew in place for all foreigners arriving from abroad, travel between China and other countries has fallen dramatically.

On Friday, the International Air Transport Association announced it was moving its annual general meeting from Shanghai to Doha, citing "continuing COVID-19 related restrictions on travel to China."

"It is deeply disappointing that we are not able to meet in Shanghai as planned," IATA Director General Willie Walsh said in a news release.

Still, Shanghai's announcement of the dates when the two lockdowns would be lifted appeared to show a further refinement in China's approach. Previous citywide lockdowns had been open-ended.

Although China's vaccination rate is around 87%, it is considerably lower among older people who are more likely to become seriously ill if they contract the virus.

In Hong Kong, Chief Executive Carrie Lam said the government was still considering next steps in what has been criticized as a halting response to a recent fifth wave of COVID-19 infections that has led to tens of thousands of cases and more than 7,000 deaths.

Lam said no decision has been made on whether or when to test all 7.4 million residents of the southern Chinese semi-autonomous region.

"I don't have a timetable yet. It's not easy to predetermine a timetable, in the same way that I don't know how quickly the cases will come down," Lam told reporters at a daily briefing.

MDT/AP



Becky G (center left) and Luis Fonsi perform "We Don't Talk About Bruno" from "Encanto"



The cast and crew of "CODA" that won 3 awards: Best picture, best supporting actor (Troy Kotsur) and best adapted screenplay



Best international film: "Drive My Car," Japan



Best costume design: Jenny Beavan, "Cruella"



Best original screenplay: Kenneth Branagh, "Belfast"

CODA

The night emotion won, for better and worse

JOCELYN NOVECK,
LOS ANGELES

DID I miss anything?" quipped Oscars co-host Amy Schumer, returning to the Dolby Theatre stage after a break. "There's a different vibe in here."

Oh my, was there ever.

With a sudden, shocking outburst of anger from actor Will Smith, who bounded onstage to slap Chris Rock after the comedian joked about his wife's appearance, the theater was thrown into a state of deeply uncomfortable shock.

"Did we just see that?" people said to each other, as realization grew that the outburst was not pre-planned or meant as a joke. Phones buzzed, too, with many audience members saying they were getting texts from friends or family watching at home, asking if they had seen what they thought they did.

The discomfort continued through the end of the show,

even as a tearful Smith, as expected, won the best actor prize for "King Richard" and apologized to the academy, though not to Rock.

Every Oscar show has its big moments, but this one overshadowed them all. Still, there were others: The heart-tugging "CODA" had a great night, winning best supporting actor, best adapted screenplay and the big kahuna, best picture, ending the ceremony on an ebullient note. It was emotion that won there, too, as voters went with the movie that so many said made them cry, rather than the cool sophistication of the earlier favorite, "The Power of the Dog."

There were other history-making wins, impassioned speeches, a smidgen of politics, and hardly a thought about the pandemic as revelers packed into the post-show Governor's Ball.

Some key Oscar moments, some you saw on TV and some you didn't:

AN EARLY START

Remember when the most controversial thing about these Oscars was those awards they moved to the hour before the TV broadcast began? In the end, the theater was about two-thirds full and winners accepted their awards with nary a protest, and the most rabble-rousing speech of the relaxed (untelevised) proceedings was when a winner paid tribute to craftspeople on all movie sets. "Dune" took an early lead in those awards, ultimately taking six Oscars. And the team responsible for Jessica Chastain's metamorphosis in "The Eyes of Tammy Faye" won the Oscar for hairstyling and makeup.

KOTSUR'S GROUNDBREAKING WIN

It began on Oscar nomination day when Troy Kotsur, learning of his supporting actor nod for "CODA," literally fell off his chair in a video that went viral. He continued to charm Hollywood and by Oscar night Kotsur, who plays

a randy father in the film about a deaf family with a hearing child, was a clear favorite. Still, his win was emotional — many in the audience, including Chastain, Javier Bardem and Nicole Kidman, responded with waving hands — what is known as a deaf clap. Even his interpreter choked up during Kotsur's speech. He joined "CODA" costar Marlee Matlin as the only deaf Oscar winners. "I just wanted to say this is dedicated to the Deaf community, the CODA community and the disabled community," Kotsur signed. "This is our moment."

TO BE IN AMERICA

Holding her Oscar in triumph, Ariana DeBose echoed the words of her famous character in "West Side Story," Anita. "Now you see why Anita says, 'I want to be in America,'" said DeBose, who won for best supporting actress, as expected. "Because even in this weary world that we live in, dreams do come true." There was much that was special about her

win. DeBose won the trophy 60 years after Rita Moreno claimed the award in 1962 for the original film version of the Broadway musical. And she made history as well, becoming the first Afro-Latina and openly LGBTQ actor to win in the category. "To anybody who has ever questioned your identity," she said, echoing more lyrics from "West Side Story," "I promise you there is a place for us."

DO SAY GAY

One might have expected there to be more political references on this Oscar night. There actually weren't too many, but several presenters and winners did refer to Florida's so-called "Don't Say Gay" bill. Co-host Wanda Sykes — one of a trio with Schumer and Regina Hall — took a shot at the bill that passed a Republican-controlled state legislature earlier this month. "We're going to have a great night tonight," said Sykes, who is openly gay. "And for you people in Florida, we're going to have a gay night." Later, Chastain, best



Will Smith (right) hits presenter Chris Rock on stage



Best actress: Jessica Chastain, "The Eyes of Tammy Faye"



Best director: Jane Campion, "The Power of the Dog"



Best actor: Will Smith, "King Richard"



Best documentary feature: "Summer of Soul (Or, When The Revolution Could Not Be Televised)"



Best original song: "No Time to Die" from "No Time to Die," music and lyric by Billie Eilish and Finneas O'Connell



Best animated feature: "Encanto"



From left: Hosts Amy Schumer, Wanda Sykes and Regina Hall

actress winner for "The Eyes of Tammy Faye," told the crowd: "We're faced with discriminatory and bigoted legislation that is sweeping our country with the only goal of further dividing us."

BEYONCÉ HOLDS (TENNIS) COURT

After an opening greeting from Venus and Serena Williams, whose tennis-playing youth and life with their father is the subject of "King Richard," the opening number was performed by none other than Beyoncé. The superstar sang her nominated song, "Be Alive," in a dance-heavy performance from an open-air stage in Compton, where the Williams sisters were raised. Even her star power didn't win the song an Oscar, though. It was Billie Eilish and her brother, Finneas, who won for their "No Time to Die" James Bond theme song. Finneas thanked the duo's parents with words that brought smiles to many, saying: "We love you as parents and we love you as real people, too."

BUT SPEAKING OF 'KING RICHARD' ...

(You knew we had to get back to this one.) "King Richard" may not have won best song but it took the prize for Smith himself,

not long after the slap heard 'round the world. A hugely emotional Smith rose to accept his trophy and began with a clear reference to what had just happened, noting that "Richard Williams was a fierce defender of his family. In this time in my life, in this moment, I am overwhelmed by what God is calling on me to do and be in this world. ..." He also noted that Denzel Washington had told him that "At your highest moment, be careful. That's when the devil comes for you." He apologized to the academy and said he hoped he'd be invited back. And Hollywood clearly was expressing its love: A stream of celebrities came over to comfort Smith after his slap moment, including Washington, Keith Urban and Nicole Kidman, Tyler Perry and others.

CAMPION CELEBRATES

At the post-Oscar Governor's Ball, where stars and guests guzzled Champagne and munched on smoked salmon hors d'oeuvres shaped like Oscars (and many other things), it was a jolly mood but especially for Jane Campion, who impulsively broke out dancing in the packed room, surely an expression of joy at having won the best director Oscar for

"The Power of the Dog." Her win was a moment for history, as it marked the first time the directing award went to women in back-to-back years, with Chloé Zhao's victory last year for "Nomadland." Campion is the third woman to win in the category. Her win was the only one for her reimagined Western despite 12 nominations. Campion lost out on best adapted screenplay to Sian Heder of "CODA."

AND SPEAKING OF 'CODA'...

It was just that kind of night. After the emotions of the previous few hours, it seemed appropriate that "CODA" would take the final prize. (And, luckily,

it WAS the final award, reversing last year's reversal of the tradition.) Besides being a huge moment for the Deaf community, it was the first win for a streaming service; though a small movie, it had deep support in Apple TV+, which scored its first best picture prize. Later at the Governor's Ball, the entire cast walked in and was mobbed by photographers and well-wishers, with Kotsur clutching his Oscar in one hand and happy co-star Matlin in the other.

OH YES, PARTYING WAS BACK

After last year's distanced pandemic Oscars, partying was back with a vengeance. The au-

dience — all vaccinated and COVID-tested, twice — packed into bars during the awards and then at the Governor's Ball, where hardly a mask was to be seen. The main subject of conversation at the Ball was, no surprise, the Will Smith developments. "At first everyone thought it was fake," said one guest, real estate broker Sara Roche from Charlotte, N.C. "Everyone was texting from home and saying, 'What is going on?'" But Roche also had thoughts about "CODA," whose win made her happy. "I'm not an emotional person and not a cryer," she said. "But I got a lump in my throat when 'CODA' won." **MDT/AP**

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE SHOWN AT OSCARS

At the Academy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles attendees expressed support for Ukraine by going silent for 30 seconds.

A tribute that started with words from the Ukrainian-born Mila Kunis ended with the Academy Awards fading to black about midway through the show, with a plea for anyone watching to do whatever possible to send help to those in the war-torn nation.

"We'd like to have a moment of silence to show our support for the people of Ukraine currently facing invasion, conflict and prejudice within their own borders," read the screen. "While film is an im-

portant avenue for us to express our humanity in times of conflict, the reality is millions of families in Ukraine need food, medical care, clean water and emergency services. Resources are scarce and we — collectively as a global community — can do more."

The tribute ended with a display of the following: "We ask you to support Ukraine in any way you are able. #StandWithUkraine."

Some arrived to the event wearing blue-and-gold ribbons, the colors of the Ukrainian flag. Sean Penn had also campaigned for Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy — a former actor — to speak at the ceremony. **MDT/AP**

PUTIN'S WAR

Ukraine leader says he seeks peace 'without delay' in talks

YURAS KARMANAU, LVIV

UKRAINE could declare neutrality and offer security guarantees to Russia to secure peace "without delay," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said ahead of another planned round of talks — though he said only a face-to-face meeting with Russia's leader could end the war.

While hinting at possible concessions in an interview with independent Russian media outlets, Zelenskyy stressed that Ukraine's priority is ensuring its sovereignty and its "territorial integrity" — preventing Russia from carving up the country, something Ukraine and the West say could now be Moscow's goal.

But, Zelenskyy added: "Security guarantees and neutrality, non-nuclear status of our state — we are ready to go for it."

The Ukrainian leader has suggested as much before, but rarely so forcefully, and the latest remarks come as the two sides said talks would resume Tuesday.

Russia has long demanded that Ukraine drop any hope of joining the western NATO alliance, which Moscow sees as a threat. Zelenskyy said that the question of neutrality, which would keep Ukraine out of NATO or other military alliances, should be put to Ukrainian voters in a referendum after Russian troops withdraw.

Zelenskyy has also long stressed that Ukraine needs security guarantees of its own as part of any deal.

"We must come to an agreement with the president of the Russian Federation, and in order to reach an agreement, he needs to get out of there on his own feet [...] and come to meet me," he also said in an interview that Russia barred its media from publishing.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said yesterday that the two presidents could meet, but only after the key elements of a potential deal are negotiated.

"The meeting is necessary once we have clarity regarding solutions on all key issues," Lavrov said in



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy

an interview with Serbian media. He accused Ukraine of only wanting to "imitate talks," but said Russia needed concrete results.

In an overnight video address to his nation, Zelenskyy said Ukraine sought peace "without delay" in talks due to get underway in Istanbul. That location was agreed after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan spoke to Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday, the Turkish leader's office said. Negotiators are expected to arrive today [Macau time].

Earlier talks, both by video and in person, have failed to make progress on ending a more than month-old war that has killed thousands and driven more than 10 million Ukrainians from their homes — including almost 4 million from their country.

With Russia's offensive stalled in many areas, its troops have resorted to pummeling Ukrainian towns and cities with rockets and artillery in a grinding war. Fierce fighting has raged on the outskirts of Kyiv, but Russian troops remain miles from the city center, their aim of quickly encircling the capital faltering.

In Stoyanka village near

Kyiv, Ukrainian soldier Serhiy Udod said Russian troops had taken up defensive positions and suffered heavy losses.

He said "probably they thought it would be like Crimea," which Russia annexed in 2014.

"But, here it's not like in Crimea. We are not happy to see them. Here they suffer and get killed."

A fiercer than expected Ukrainian resistance — bolstered by weapons from the U.S. and other Western allies — has been credited with bogging Russian forces down.

But Zelenskyy has made increasingly exasperated pleas for Western countries to do more, including sending fighter jets, accusing political leaders on Sunday of lacking courage. Countries from the NATO alliance have been hesitant to give Zelenskyy some of the more powerful equipment he's begged for, for fear of triggering a much wider war.

In fact, Russia's invasion has most Americans at least somewhat worried that the U.S. will be drawn directly into the conflict and could be targeted with nuclear weapons, according to a new poll from The Associa-

ted Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Moscow now says its focus is on securing the entire eastern Donbas region, which has been partially controlled by Russia-backed separatists since 2014.

Kyrylo Budanov, the head of Ukrainian military intelligence, accused Russia of seeking to split Ukraine in two, making the comparison to North and South Korea. He predicted that guerrilla warfare by Ukrainians would derail such plans.

Meanwhile, Ukraine has banned reporting on troop and equipment movements not announced or approved by the military. Journalists who violate the law could face three to eight years in prison.

The restrictions come after Ukrainian authorities criticized social media users who posted photos or videos of troop movements. In a widely publicized case, a Kyiv resident was accused by the security services of posting images on TikTok showing Ukrainian military vehicles near a shopping mall that was later destroyed by a Russian missile strike. Russia alleged Ukraine used the site to resupply rocket artillery. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1971 MANSON SENT TO GAS CHAMBER



Charles Manson and three members of his hippy cult have been sentenced to death in Los Angeles.

They were found guilty of the August 1969 murders of seven people and one unborn child at the beginning of the year.

Their victims included eight-months pregnant actress Sharon Tate - wife of film director Roman Polanski.

None of the defendants heard their verdicts as they were ejected from the courtroom for disrupting proceedings - as they had done several times during the nine month trial.

Manson, 36, was led out after telling the judge and jury: "you don't have any authority over me. You're not nearly as good as me."

His accomplices - Susan Atkins, 22, Patricia Krenwinkel, 23 and Leslie Van Houten, 21 - were dragged screaming from court.

Ms Atkins shouted: "It's gonna come down hard. Lock your doors. Protect your kids."

The prosecution - led by Vincent Bugliosi - depicted Manson as a satanic monster who controlled the women whom he described as "mindless robots".

Jury member Marie Mesmer said: "He was the leader, the worst...I think he's a dangerous influence on society, highly dangerous."

The women - who, like Manson, had shaved their heads - admitted carrying out the killings under the influence of the hallucinogenic drug LSD but denied Manson's involvement.

It took the jury 10 hours to give their verdict in a case that has cost the state of California over £400,000 (over \$1m).

As well as the Tate murder Atkins, Krenwinkel and Manson were condemned for killing Polish writer Voyteck Frykowski, coffee heiress Abigail Folger, Hollywood hairdresser Jay Sebring and a friend of Sharon Tate's caretaker, Steven Parent.

Ms Van Houten was sentenced for murdering supermarket owner Leno la Blanca and his wife.

Judge Charles Older said he would pass formal sentence on 16 April, when he may reduce the punishments to life imprisonment, but it is considered unlikely he will do so.

Manson is expected to be confined to the notorious 'death row' in San Quentin to wait for the final outcome of his - automatic - appeal.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Judge Older confirmed the death penalty in his judgement on 19 April 1971.

It had been one of the longest-running murder trials in US history, with a jury sequestered for longer than ever before - 225 days.

The California Supreme Court abolished the death penalty in 1972 and the four were given life sentences.

Manson and four other (male) accomplices were subsequently convicted for the murders of Gary Hinman and Donald (Shorty) Shea.

Charles Manson has endured as a cult figure for various extremist groups and has been the subject of various films and documentaries.

In April 2002 Manson was refused parole for the 10th time and Van Houten had her fourteenth request turned down in June of that year. Atkins and Krenwinkel have also had numerous parole applications refused.

TECHNOLOGY

CHINA'S HUAWEI SAYS 2021 SALES DOWN, PROFIT UP

CHINESE telecom equipment maker Huawei said yesterday its sales fell but profit rose 76% in 2021, despite U.S. sanctions.

Huawei's chief financial officer was released by Canadian authorities last year, ending a standoff with Washington over the tech giant's dealings with Iran. The company is caught in the middle of tensions with Washington over technology and security.

American officials say Huawei, the biggest maker of network gear for phone carriers, is a security risk that might enable Chinese spying, an accusation the company rejects.

Huawei Technologies Ltd., China's first global tech brand, stepped up its emphasis on serving hospitals, mines and other industrial customers after its smartphone business, once one of the biggest, was crippled by the curbs imposed by Washington on access to U.S. components and other technology in 2019.



AP PHOTO

The company reported 2021 revenue of 636.8 billion yuan (\$99.9 billion), down 28.6% from 2020. It said its profit rose 75.9% to 113.7 billion yuan (\$17.8 billion).

"Our overall financial resilience is strengthening," the CFO, Meng Wanzhou,

said at a news conference at Huawei headquarters in the southern city of Shenzhen. "The company is more capable of dealing with uncertainty."

Meng, the daughter of Huawei's founder, was arrested in Canada in 2018 on U.S. charges that she lied to

banks in Hong Kong about dealings with Iran. Chinese authorities arrested two Canadians in an attempt to force Canada to release her.

Meng was released in September under a deal with the U.S. Justice Department that will dismiss the charges in exchange for her accepting responsibility for misrepresenting Huawei's dealings with Iran. The two Canadians were released after Meng returned to China.

In a passing reference to her arrest, Meng said,

"in the few months after I came back, I have been trying to catch up."

Huawei, founded in 1987, says it is owned by the Chinese employees who make up half of its workforce of 195,000 people in 170 countries and regions.

Sanctions imposed by then-President Donald Trump blocked Huawei's access to U.S. processor chips and other components and Google's music, maps and other services for smartphones. The White House tightened those

restrictions in 2020 by blocking global manufacturers from using U.S. technology to produce Huawei-designed chips.

Huawei responded by stepping up emphasis on its home China market and on electric and self-driving cars, industrial networks and other applications that are less vulnerable to U.S. pressure.

The company sold its lower-priced Honor smartphone brand to a government-led investment group in November 2020 in hopes of reviving sales by separating it from sanctions on the parent company. Honor received U.S. government permission to resume buying processor chips and other technology.

Huawei said its unit industrial and government customers had 102.4 billion yuan (\$16.1 billion) in 2021 revenue. The company said it launched products for transportation, finance, energy and manufacturing and dedicated coal mine, ports and "smart road" teams.

The unit that serves phone and internet carriers had 281.5 billion yuan (\$44.2 billion) in sales. MDT/AP

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CORPORATE BITS

Sands China observes Earth Hour for 14th straight year



Sands China Ltd. observed Earth Hour 2022 at its properties Saturday, turning off exterior lights and non-essential indoor lights for one hour in support of the annual global event. It is the company's 14th straight year joining businesses and individuals around the world in the lights-off activity, with all Sands China properties taking part.

Sean McCreery, senior vice president of resort operations for Sands China Ltd., said, "Raising cons-

sciousness is a crucial first step in prompting people to take action against climate change, and Earth Hour remains one of the most visible global initiatives in that regard."

"Besides the very real effects of reducing energy consumption, Earth Hour, along with our properties' monthly observances, are an important reminder that all of us have a significant role to play in living and promoting an eco-friendly lifestyle and operating en-

vironmentally responsible businesses," he added.

Besides participating in Earth Hour, Sands China has been taking the initiative since 2013 to observe Earth Hour each month. The company's resorts turn off exterior lights, signage and marquees for one hour on the first Tuesday of each month.

Since 2019, Sands China's varied sustainability measures have resulted in 26 Million kWh of annualized energy savings to date.

MOTORSPORT

Was it worth it? F1 race in Saudi Arabia raises questions

WHEN a missile flew into an oil depot close to the track hosting the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, discussions among Formula One teams and drivers switched from human rights to personal safety.

The big question: Was it safe to remain in Jiddah and compete in the second race of the F1 season after Friday's attack about 11 kilometers away?

Emergency meetings were held long into the night before the decision to race was confirmed at noon on Saturday. World champion Max Verstappen won Sunday's race but he says answers are still needed.

"About the race here, well, we had a lot of guarantees that of course we would be safe," the Red Bull driver said. "But I think after this weekend all the drivers (will) sit together (and) will speak to F1, and of course team bosses, to see what's happening for the future."

The attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels targeted the North Jiddah Bulk Plant, just southeast of the ci-



A passenger airplane flies over a smoldering fire at a Saudi Aramco oil depot after a Yemen Houthi rebel attack the day before ahead of a Formula One race

ty's international airport, where F1 fans flew in for Saudi GP.

The attack came two weeks after 81 people were put to death in Saudi Arabia in the kingdom's biggest mass execution. Even when F1 ran its inaugural event at the

circuit last December, drivers expressed concerns about human rights.

Questions were asked this weekend whether lucrative deals signed with Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia — which reporte-

dly pays \$55 million per year to host the race — are worth it given everything else that can come with a race; and whether commercial interests take priority in making the final decision to host races.

And it seems like there's a long queue to join F1, which is holding a record 23-race season. The sport's popularity has risen with the Netflix series "Drive to Survive" and was boosted by last year's thrilling duel for the drivers championship between Lewis Hamilton and Verstappen.

"The good news is that Formula One is in a great moment, where a lot of countries would like to host," F1 chief executive Stefano Domenicali said.

Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have been accused of "sports-washing" their human rights records by using high-profile sporting events to project a favorable image of the countries.

A 10-year F1 deal signed with Qatar starts as from 2023 — after the inaugural race last year — and Bahrain's contract was extended until 2036.

Qatar is set to host the soccer World Cup and is under scrutiny over working conditions for migrant workers preparing the Gulf nation for kickoff on Nov. 21.

A familiar refrain is that the presence of high-profile sports events can be a force for change.

"We believe what we're doing will have a very positive impact in the political situation," Domenicali said.

F1 terminated its contract with Russia after Russia invaded Ukraine. Four-time F1 champion Sebastian Vettel said he wouldn't have raced there anyway. Other drivers agreed and, during pre-season testing, they wore "No War" messages as they gathered behind a flag of Ukraine.

Saudi Arabia is leading a coalition against the Iran-backed Houthis, who seized Yemen's capital of Sanaa in September 2014. The kingdom entered the war in Yemen in 2015 and has been internationally criticized for its airstrikes killing civilians.

Overnight airstrikes on Sanaa and Hodeida — both held by the Houthis — followed the attack by rebels on the oil depot in Jiddah.

If F1 should not be going to places that are at war, like Russia, then why go to Saudi Arabia?

"It's different if one country invades another country, or if something is going on with terrorists," Williams team principal Jost Capito said. **MDT/AP**

AD

合夥人 PARTNERS:

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OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

FOLLOWING THE US NOT IN EU'S BEST INTERESTS

The current Russia-Ukraine crisis has played into the hands of the United States, which had hitherto been witnessing a widening divergence with its European allies. The European Union, meanwhile, is swallowing bitter fruit having tried to loosen the reins the US held on it.

But while the Joe Biden administration is doubtlessly ecstatic at the US being able to call the shots as the head of North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the unity demonstrated in the statement released after the just-concluded NATO summit is nothing more than a mirage.

The world is not what it was during the Cold War when there was a conspicuous division between the two antagonistic camps. Then, European countries were content to rely on the US for protection against the threat from the Warsaw Treaty Organization. But the world is much more pluralistic in many ways today.

The problems in the Western alliance run far deeper than technocratic complaints about defense budgets and gas pipelines between the EU and Russia, or even the question of who should be calling the shots.

There is a limit to how much pain Europe will endure to pressure Russia at the US' instigation. Is it possible for European countries to follow the US if its obedience means a recession and social turmoil in European countries?

Although the Biden administration does not directly shout the slogan "America first", it goes without saying that it is the US that is the biggest beneficiary of the Russia-Ukraine crisis. By selling liquefied natural gas and arms to European countries, US companies are making a lot of money, not to mention the political position of the US as the leader of the Western alliance appears to have been strengthened for the moment.

Nevertheless, the world is different from what it was. And so too are the positions of the US and the Europe.

On the one hand, it remains to be seen how long the EU will let the US put its own interests before those of its allies.

On the other hand, the EU as an economic entity has to consider what policies will benefit its economic growth and social progress the most. Other factors, such as the cooperation with China, will most likely be considered.

If anything, making as much effort as possible to seek a political solution to the Russia-Ukraine crisis is in the best interests of the EU countries. The continuation of the crisis and its spillover effects will only be detrimental to the interests and future of Europe.

TESLA SEEKS 2ND STOCK SPLIT IN LESS THAN TWO YEARS

Shares of Tesla jumped at the opening bell yesterday after the electric car maker announced its second stock split in less than two years.

The company said in a regulatory filing, and also in a tweet, that it plans to make a request at an upcoming annual shareholders meeting to increase its number of authorized shares so that it can split the stock in the form of a dividend.

It did not say when a split would occur or the ratio of such a stock split, but it would follow similar maneuvers by a trio of tech com-

panies that have seen their shares soar in recent months.

Tesla's shares are up more than 60% over the past year, with each costing more than \$1,000.

And the company is growing. CEO Elon Musk opened Tesla's first European factory last week, a "Gigafactory" in Germany that will employ 12,000 people and produce 500,000 vehicles a year.

"Given the stock's meteoric run it's not a surprise that Musk & Co. are heading down the path of another stock split especially, said Dan Ives, who follows Tesla for Wedbush.

THE BUZZ



UKRAINIAN WELDERS TURN DONATED VEHICLES INTO ARMY TRANSPORT

CARA ANNA, LVIV

A strawberry-scented hair freshener dangled from the Ukrainian military's latest vehicle to head to war.

In a welding shop in Ukraine's western city of Lviv, workers were adding steel plates to a donated pickup truck so a volunteer could drive it to the front.

"Our victory depends on us," said Ostap Datsenko, a welder who is part of a huge volunteer effort playing a role in Ukraine's resistance, with support from the diaspora.

But he hadn't expected to see so much of the war, or its shrapnel, so soon.

He had been standing on the truck hurrying to finish the job before sunset Saturday when he heard a noise, looked up and saw an object whizzing through the air.

"It was pretty large, but I've never seen rockets before," he said. "Then I heard a huge explosion."

The Russian airstrike hit a factory connected to the military, and the blast sent Datsenko tumbling. Dazed, he hurried into the garage's makeshift bunker in the grease pit.

The following day, he was back at work for

the finishing touches on the truck before it's driven yesterday to eastern Ukraine, along with three other vehicles.

The truck's camouflage paint job was complete. The welders put bars in the back to help support a machine gun.

The 31-year-old Datsenko, his clothes streaked with oil, said he was ready like all Ukrainian men to be called up to fight. But he had no combat experience, meaning his time is yet to come.

Until then, he said, "I'm doing what I can."

Ukraine's military appears to have fought Russia's much larger army into a stalemate on some fronts, which has surprised many observers. One of Ukraine's weapons is a parallel army of volunteers who are busy mobilizing funding and supplies ranging from body armor to cigarettes. Others make the military connections.

In Lviv, which had been relatively far from the war until the airstrikes on Saturday, the welding shop looked for ways to help. It started off making "hedgehogs," or the metal barriers placed at checkpoints and around some sensitive facili-

ties. Then they heard the call for cars.

"Any vehicles are very much in demand on the front line" by commanders, said Artem Pastushyna, a 27-year-old welder with metal nuts glinting in his earlobes.

Only a small number of the vehicles have been adapted with steel plates and camouflage, he said. The need is too big and there's little time.

"Many cars from Europe are driven directly to the front line," Pastushyna said.

The truck was the first vehicle that the welding shop has adapted, he said, and he hopes they'll do many more.

Until then, the welding shop is paying new attention to its grease pit after Saturday's airstrikes. They had expected an attack sometime but not one so big, Datsenko said.

In the pit-turned-bunker, accessed by a wooden ladder, an empty pizza box indicated that the workers had spent more time there than usual.

"Until yesterday, it was only a basement," Datsenko said. "Now we realize it would be wise to have more stuff there." MDT/AP



USA With the last nine, unscripted words of an impassioned speech about Russia's aggression in Ukraine, President Joe Biden created a troubling distraction, undermining his effectiveness as he returned home to face restive Americans who strongly disapprove of his performance on issues that matter most to them. His comment that Russia's Vladimir Putin "cannot remain in power" — an assertion that his aides were forced to quickly clean up — overshadowed his larger message of solidifying the Western coalition that's confronting Moscow.



Vatican Indigenous leaders from Canada and survivors of the country's notorious residential schools met with Pope Francis and told him of the abuses they suffered at the hands of Catholic priests and school workers, in hopes of securing a papal apology from him and a commitment by the church to repair the harm done. "While the time for acknowledgement, apology and atonement is long overdue, it is never too late to do the right thing," Cassidy Caron (pictured), president of the Metis National Council, told reporters in St. Peter's Square after the audience.



El Salvador's congress granted President Nayib Bukele's request to declare a state of emergency early Sunday amid a wave of gang-related killings over the weekend. Fourteen people were killed Friday and 62 people died Saturday, a scale of violence that has not been seen for years. By comparison, there were 79 homicides in the entire month of February. Bukele announced the request Saturday in his social media accounts, and congress approved it early Sunday.