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**A SURVEY REVEALS THAT 60% OF YOUTHS HAVE FACED UNEMPLOYMENT OR INVOLUNTARY JOB CHANGES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC YEARS**

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**OVER 95% PEOPLE OPPOSE GOVERNMENT PROPOSAL ON TRADE UNION SEGREGATION**

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**INDIA, CHINA GROWING MARKETS FOR SHUNNED RUSSIAN OIL**

▲ P10




**North Korea** leader Kim Jong Un and his top deputies have pushed for a crackdown on officials who abuse their power and commit other “unsound and non-revolutionary acts,” state media reported yesterday, as Kim seeks greater internal unity to overcome a Covid-19 outbreak and economic difficulties. It wasn’t clear what specific acts were mentioned at the ruling Workers’ Party meeting.



**South Korea** A weeklong strike by thousands of truckers in South Korea has triggered major disruptions in cargo transport and production that have caused 1.6 trillion won (\$1.2 billion) in damages, officials said yesterday. An extended strike may eventually worsen the global supply chains already battered by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and China’s pandemic curbs. But the strike’s impact has so far been largely limited to South Korea’s domestic industry.



**NATO** Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg (pictured, right) said that Turkey has “legitimate concerns” over terrorism and other issues that need to be taken seriously. Turkey has accused Finland and Sweden of supporting Kurdish militants and says it will not back the two Nordic nations joining NATO until they change their policies. Stoltenberg stressed that “no other NATO ally has suffered more terrorist attacks than Turkey”

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RENATO MARQUES



EXCLUSIVE

# FOREIGN PILOTS BACK AT GUIA

Organizers preparing for ‘back to normal’ Macau Grand Prix this fall, MDT has learned

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**RETAIL**

## H&M CLOSSES DOORS IN MACAU, PROMISES TO RETURN



RYA WIJAYANTI

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**COVID-19**

## ‘10+7’ MEASURE REQUIRES 11 DAYS OF QUARANTINE

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# H&M OFFICIALLY CLOSES DOORS IN MACAU, PROMISES TO RETURN

RENATO MARQUES

**F**ASHION giant H&M has officially shut its doors in Macau with the closing on Sunday evening of the brand's last operating store at The Venetian Macao.

After seven years in operation, the first-ever H&M outlet in Macau, established on June 13, 2015, closed its physical store, calling on clients and fans of the brand to transition to the brand's online shop.

In a reply to an inquiry from the Times, Hennes & Mauritz Holding Asia Ltd, communications and press department, said, "As now we have reached the end of the lease of this H&M store in Shoppes at Venetian Macao, in mutual agreement with the landlord, we have decided to move out of this location."

They said that H&M would continue to seek new opportunities to open stores, "where we see great potential," but that for the time being, "H&M will continue to optimize its business in Macau via the digital platform (hm.com)



RIYA WIJAYANTI

to assure that we serve our customers and our future in the best possible way."

In the same statement, the brand explained that it is currently undergoing a transforma-

tion aiming to increase its digital business presence.

"H&M group is on a transfor-

mative journey and is now accelerating this process by further integrating digital and physical stores, providing a seamless omnichannel experience for our customers. Having stores in the right locations has always been fundamental to the success of the company, so reviewing and making changes to our store portfolio is something we do continuously across all markets."

When it first opened, the 19,000 square feet, two-story-high retail space at The Venetian Macao was launched with the presence of the global sporting icon, David Beckham.

Just two months after this, the brand opened a second store at the Promenade in Galaxy Macau, which was, at the time, the largest store of the brand in Macau.

The Galaxy store eventually closed last year during a difficult time for the brand in China, when the brand, among several others, was associated with concerns over alleged human rights abuses against Uyghur Muslims in China's Xinjiang province.

This led to landlords severing ties with the brand in China and closure of many physical stores. Several celebrities also announced they were cutting ties with the brand at the same time.

# Survey: 60% youth vocationally affected amid Covid-19

ANTHONY LAM

**A** survey has revealed that 60% of local youths have faced unemployment or involuntary job changes during the two and a half years of Covid-19 pandemic.

The survey was conducted between mid-May and early June by Sin Meng Charity Association, led by businesswoman Melinda Chan. A total of 1,024 valid questionnaires were received, in addition to focus dialogs conducted with 100 youths. The youths were aged between 21 and 45 years.

It was reported that there were several major reasons behind the involuntary job changes. Nearly half of the respondents reported the cause as economic de-



XINHUA

terioration, while 45% as unclear industry or career prospects. Slightly below 40% of respondents were either laid off or have faced

the closure of their former employer. Nearly 67% of respondents were seeing a mismatch between their educational backgrounds

and their current jobs.

The survey also pointed out that due to a rising unemployment rate, it was even more difficult for fresh

university graduates to find jobs that matched their educational backgrounds.

Furthermore, the survey also showed that 45% of the respondents were not familiar with the policy of neighboring Hengqin subsidizing employment. Additionally, they were not familiar with the employment market in Hengqin either.

It was also disclosed that the working cohort of respondents were more familiar with Hengqin policies than fresh graduates, with 66.5% for the former and 33.5% the latter.

Less than half of the respondents showed a desire or willingness to work in Hengqin or other parts of the Greater Bay Area (GBA). The three main factors that encouraged them to pursue a career across the border were development prospects, satisfactory salary levels and availability of subsidies, amounting respectively to 49.2%, 39.6%

and 34.6%.

The most popular ideal range of salary fell between MOP12,000 and MOP18,000. Nearly two-thirds of those impacted by Covid-19 in terms of employment requested at least MOP20,000 per month before they would commit to working in Hengqin.

In response to the findings, the association made several suggestions to the government, schools and other non-governmental organizations.

The government was asked to consolidate and provide clearer information about Hengqin, while improving channels that help disseminate employment data from within the GBA.

It was suggested that schools help students start focused career planning early. As for other organizations, the association suggested they gather youths to experience life and lifestyles in Hengqin.

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# Over 95% people oppose gov't proposal on trade union segregation

ANTHONY LAM

A majority of comments showed objection to the government's proposal of classifying future trade unions into three types, the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) disclosed recently.

The disclosure was made in the conclusive report on public consultation for the legislation concerning trade unions. Pursuant to the Basic Law of Macau, the rights to forming and participating in trade unions are protected.

Conducted between October 31 and December 14 last year, the public consultation attracted 24,537 opinions in 2,653 submissions of comments. Among them, over 5,500 opinions were related to the type of trade unions.

In the government proposal, if the legislation makes it through the parliament, trade unions will be segregated into three types



JON TYSON

following their nature: namely industry, profession and enterprise.

Nearly 98% of the comments opposed the proposal to classify trade unions.

The scope of opposing comments was wide. Some respondents feared that the operations of trade unions would become even more complex and the go-

vernment would eventually need more resources to conduct its administration.

Meanwhile, some people pointed out that certain workers may be members in all three types of trade unions. For example, a lawyer may be in all three types because they are in the practice of law by industry, a lawyer by profession and a partner in a law firm by enterprise. Some other comments also suggested that enterprise trade unions may set several trade unions in front of an employer.

A majority of comments agreed that tighter supervisions must be imposed upon local trade unions entering international entities.

On the trade union rights concerning civil servants, 75% of the comments received from the public consultation were not for the proposal of "appropriate" restrictions on certain civil servants, such as medical, transport and

public utility staffs.

The proposal on restricting the rights to trade unions for public utility staff received only 5% support in the public consultation.

Despite the fact, respondents had a different view on non-local workers, as most of them agreed that non-local workers should see tighter restrictions while making the most of their rights to trade unions.

On the matter of collective negotiation, quite a number of comments were against setting a par to trigger collective negotiations. The par, which was proposed by the government, would jeopardize the "harmonious development" of employer-employee relations, as some comments suggested.

The DSAL has pledged to consider the opinions thoroughly before compiling a draft law that will eventually be sent to the parliament.

## Organizers preparing for 'back to normal' Macau GP

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macau Grand Prix Organizing Committee (MGPOC) is preparing for the return of the local Grand Prix (GP) this year to past glories, with the presence of international racers, as confirmed to the Times by regular racers.

The competitors, who requested anonymity, acknowledged that last week they received formal invitations from the MGPOC to participate in this year's race. These invitations are mostly for the Motorcycle GP which has been put on hold for the last two years due to the restrictions on the entry of foreign nationals in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic prevention and control measures.

"It's true. We got the invitation from the Macau organizers. But at this point we are not yet taking this too seriously," one of the racers told the Times, adding that in the two previous years the



RENATO MARQUES

same invitation had also been extended, but the conditions imposed at the last minute prevented the racing event to take place.

From the racers' point of view, opinion seems to be unanimous, that they wish to return to Macau and resume the long-running racing event, "as long as [Covid-19] quarantine restrictions are dropped."

According to the information provided to the Times, the invitation extended to the racers in previous years required an almost one-month quarantine period in medical observation upon arrival in Macau, a condition that most of the racers and teams rejected.

Late last month, Pun Weng Kun, president of Sports Bureau (ID) hinted that the possibility

of international entrants appearing in the local GP in November is still unknown.

Pun was asked by the Times how confident he was about seeing international drivers. He only highlighted that over the last two and a half years, foreign drivers have wanted to race in Macau, whether it was touring cars or motorbike races. However, he said, work must be done pragmatically.

"I can't stress enough that over these couple of years, we have spent more time than ever in planning contingencies," the sports chief said.

The Motorcycle GP event has been in the main program of the GP since 1967 and completed its 53rd edition back in 2019, won by British rider Michael Rutter with just one lap raced after two incidents, leading to the early interruption of the event.

With this win, Rutter became a nine-time winner of the Macau race.

Pole man and three-time race winner Peter Hickman, from the U.K., was declared second in the same race while the third place was won by Australia's David Johnson.

### COVID-19

## '10+7' MEASURE REQUIRES 11 DAYS OF STAY AT QUARANTINE HOTEL

THE government has clarified that arrivals from June 15 may only leave the medical observation hotel on the 11th day, after completing a 10-day quarantine.

The arrival day, until 6 a.m. the following day, is considered as day zero.

Every 24 hours thereafter is considered a day.

After this 10-day period, the returnee starts monitoring their own health for seven days.

During the health monitoring period, the Health Code will be displayed in green, but nucleic acid tests must be performed on the 11th, 12th, 14th, 16th and 17th days after entry.

If the test is not performed on the scheduled da-

tes, the Health Code will be converted to yellow. If the test is not performed within 24 hours of the scheduled date, the Health Code will be converted to red.

Persons from Hong Kong SAR, Taiwan region or foreign countries are not allowed to travel to mainland China via the MSAR until the nucleic acid test on the 14th day after entry is negative.

Those who are now in quarantine will be subjected to the new "10+7" measure if they meet the required criteria.

Also, non-Chinese nationals will be accepted to mainland China if they have not been outside Macau in the past 14 days. LV

LYNZY VALLES



# PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE TO CONCLUDE GAMING LAW DISCUSSION TOMORROW

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE parliamentary committee responsible for the review of the gaming law will sign its opinions tomorrow, signaling the conclusion of the discussion process.

Yesterday, after the committee meeting to discuss the latest draft of the law review, President Chan Chak Mo of the committee told a press conference that the draft will be handed to the parliament's plenary for a second reading next week at the earliest.

In the previous draft submitted to the parliament, the government proposed that no licensee company would be allowed to be listed on the stock market, unless otherwise approved by the Chief Executive.

In this latest draft, the government made a U-turn so that no licensee would be allowed public listing under any circumstances.

The committee was told by government officials that the proposal aimed at avoiding direct or indirect sub-concessions. The ban on public listing will also make it easier for the government to take control of the situation.

Currently, all six casino operators have their acknowledged parent company's stocks publicly listed.

The proposal on banning mixed stock holding, which refers to the situation when stock holders of a concessionaire hold the stocks of another concessionaire, also saw a reversal. The original proposal was made to ensure competition, as the government has explained.

In this draft, the government changed its proposal to prevent direct individual mixed stock holding by concessionaires' management. Indirect stock holding, such as through funds, of not more than 5% of a competitor's stocks, was proposed.

It was also proposed that each junket may work only with a single concessionaire. They will be paid by commission and not be permitted to share casino profits.

Another major change proposed is related to the starting capital of any company in the hopes of participating in the bid for a license.

All six casino licenses were set to come to an end in less than two weeks. The law review could not cope with this deadline, so the government decided to extend all licenses to the end of this year.

The first draft of the law review was only submitted to the parliament in January this year.

During the early phase of the parliamentary procedure, the government expressed its hope to the parliament that the law be passed in June, so that it can commence relicensing procedures as soon as possible.



## Gov't widens scope of SME insurance policy

LYNZY VALLES

**S**MALL and medium-sized enterprises' (SME) insurance coverage has been expanded to cover losses

during black rainstorm warning signals, a joint-statement issued by government bureaus states.

In view of the extreme rainstorm events in the past

few years which caused flooding in many districts in Macau, local authorities have coordinated the insurance industry to optimize the catastrophe insurance plan this year, especially adding the black rainstorm warning signal as a claimable accident.

When the Meteorological and Geophysics Bureau issues a tropical cyclone signal No. 8 or above, or a red storm surge and above, or a black rainstorm warning signal, the insurance will provide SMEs with property damage protection.

Launched in 2019, the SME Catastrophe Property Insurance, and the SME Catastrophe Property Insurance Subsidy Program, aim to assist SMEs, especially in low-lying areas.

Back in 2017, the deadly Typhoon Hato's high-tide caused severe flooding in low-lying areas, affecting several SMEs, including firms that have been established for several decades.

This was followed by another typhoon, Mangkhut, which also caused severe flooding in the Inner Harbour.

In the past, during severe typhoons and storm surges, commercial property losses were not covered by insu-

rance.

From 2019 to 2021, a total of 55 policies have been issued and approved for subsidy, covering industries including catering, retail, seafood wholesale and electrical appliance wholesale and retail, according to a statement issued by the Macau Economic and Technologic Development Bureau (DSED) and the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM).

SMEs can purchase insurance through five participating local insurance companies.

The annual premium is set at 25% of the amount covered by the insurance, which offers coverage of up to 100,000, 200,000 and 300,000 patacas.

"Renewing merchants who have not made any claims can continue to enjoy the premium discount, with a 20% discount for the first year of renewal, 25% for the second year, 30% for the third year, and 35% for the fourth year or above. It is hoped that merchants will be encouraged to continue to take out insurance to manage their own risks," the statement read. Local establishments and commercial stores can buy the insurance from today

## CHEOC VAN POOL CLOSES TO PUBLIC DUE TO BAD WEATHER DAMAGE

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Cheoc Van Swimming Pool has been closed to the public since last Friday, the Sports Bureau (ID) announced.

In a statement, ID announced the closure, since "emergency inspection and repair work need to be carried out immediately" as the "pool drain is blocked and not functioning properly."

The malfunction that led to the temporary closure of the sports and leisure facility was said to be caused by "recent inclement weather and the low-lying coastal location of Cheoc Van Swimming Pool."

According to ID, the pool will be closed until further notice, as it is not clear at this point when it will be safe to use the facility again.

The pool has just recently reopened to the public (May 1) after the usual off-season period that started in November last year. During the off-season, the facility was subjected to a major revamp.

In previous years, Cheoc Van Swimming Pool has been affected on several occasions by extreme weather conditions, especially typhoons and high tides that caused significant damage to the pool.

The ID noted that all people who had previously purchased tickets online for the facility will have the money refunded to their online account via the same electronic payment method.

Wynn Celebrates the successful conclusion of the sixth "Wynn Cup – Macau Primary School Student National Education Drawing Competition", and sincerely congratulates the following winners on achieving the highest accolades:



Inter School Champion  
Escola Lin Fong Pou Chai



Inter School First Class  
Ling Nan Middle School



Inter School First Class  
Fu Luen School



Senior Individual Champion  
The International School of Macao  
Xiong Jun Jie



Junior Individual Champion  
Keang Peng School  
Leong Sam Ut

Organized by Wynn, the sixth Wynn Cup – Macau Primary School Student National Education Drawing Competition attracted active participation from 52 schools and nearly 10,000 entries were received. Under the theme of "Drawing the dream of the future – Aerospace Science and Technology". The competition aims to encourage local school children to paint China's achievements in aerospace science and technology, dreaming in their hearts of a future influenced by technology and space.



COVID-19

# VIRUS CLUSTER AT NIGHTCLUB SETS OFF NEW BEIJING CLAMPDOWN

**C**HINA'S capital has put school online in one of its major districts amid a new COVID-19 outbreak linked to a nightclub, while life has yet to return to normal in Shanghai despite the lifting of a more than two-month-long lockdown.

China has stuck to its "zero-COVID" policy requiring mass testing, quarantines and the sequestering of anyone who has come into contact with an infected person in concentrated locations where hygiene is generally poor.

A total of 166 cases have been linked to the Heaven Supermarket club in the downtown Gongti nightlife area after an infected person visited there Thursday. Of those, 145 were customers, while the rest were staff or people with whom customers had later contact.

The entire area, along with the adjacent Sanlitun shopping and dining complex, was shut down until further notice.

The outbreak prompted authorities in the sprawling Chaoyang district to put school back online, with the exception of students taking middle and high school placement exams. Sports gatherings in the city have also been put on hold.

Chaoyang has ordered daily mass testing, with long lines forming and wait times of two hours or more.



AP PHOTO

In Shanghai, 502 people have been linked to three positive tests detected Thursday among patrons of the Red Rose Beauty Salon. The individuals involved come from 15 districts across the city of 25 million people, prompting the first large-scale restrictions since the lockdown was formally ended June 1.

With mass testing and restric-

tions on movement back in force, streets and supermarkets emptied again over the weekend.

Failure to undergo testing will lead to a yellow code on a person's health status app, forbidding them access to all public places.

Most students remain at home and all but a few restaurants are open only for takeout. Many customers simply partake of their

food and drink on the steps beside blooming flower bushes outside the establishments.

While 22 million Shanghai residents were released from lockdown almost two weeks ago, 220,000 people are still restricted to their homes under a rule requiring that no positive cases are found within their residential compounds for more than

10 days. Another 600,000 are in control zones, where their movements are restricted within their compounds.

Corrugated steel fences and other barriers continue to block off neighborhoods and businesses, leading to further discontent and complaints from residents who remain in lockdown.

The strict implementation of lockdowns, along with a lack of information and poor distribution of food and other daily necessities, has led to rarely seen displays of anger and desperation. Residents have confronted workers and police who have become known as "big whites" for the protective gear they wear, circulated protest videos online and coordinated nightly screaming and pot-banging events to let off steam.

The loosening of restrictions led to an exodus of non-Shanghai residents, including foreigners, who had found themselves trapped in the lockdown.

Despite the recent outbreak, Beijing reported just 51 new cases yesterday, 22 of them asymptomatic. City residents are still undergoing regular testing — mostly every other day — and must wear masks and swipe a mobile phone app to enter public places and facilitate case tracing.

China has maintained its "zero-COVID" policy despite considerable economic costs and an assertion from the head of the World Health Organization that the policy isn't sustainable.

Nationwide, China reported just 143 cases, almost all in Beijing and Shanghai. The death toll from the outbreak in mainland China remained static at 5,226. **MDT/AP**

COURTS

# Chinese Canadian pop star Kris Wu faces rape charge

**C**HINESE Canadian pop star Kris Wu has faced rape and other criminal charges at a closed trial in Beijing as China was in uproar over a video showing a group of men physically assaulting four women in another city.

Wu's trial Friday at the Chaoyang People's court was reported late Friday night by Chang'An Net, which belongs to China's powerful Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, a commission controlled by the ruling Communist Party.

Many online users criticized the timing of the trial announcement. "More concerned about the Tangshan matter," said the top comment on Weibo in response to the Political and



AP PHOTO

A fashion magazine showing Chinese-Canadian singer Kris Wu (center) on display on a bookstore in Beijing

Legal Affairs' account. It was liked more than 22,000 times.

The attack on four women dining at a restaurant in Tangshan, a coastal city

east of Beijing, early Friday morning was seen in surveillance footage shared

widely on Weibo. By Sunday, police had arrested nine people on suspicion of violent assault in the case.

The assault and the public outcry renewed a conversation about misogyny and mistreatment of women in China. Earlier this year, video surfaced of a woman who had been chained in a shack. The police investigation found she had trafficked and sold as a bride.

Wu, meanwhile, had been in police custody since August last year. The trial of the former member of Korean group EXO was closed to the public to protect the victim's privacy, state media said.

Wu was tried on charges of rape as well as the "crime

of assembling a crowd to engage in sexual promiscuity." Rape is punished with anywhere between 3 years to 10 years in prison, although life sentences and death sentences can also be given in exceptional cases. The second charge Wu faces is punishable up to 5 years in prison.

The verdict and sentence were to be issued later, state media said.

Wu was accused last year by a teenager of having sex with her while she was drunk. Wu denied the accusation.

The teenager also then said seven other women contacted her to say Wu seduced them with promises of jobs and other opportunities. She said some were under 18. **MDT/AP**

ROD MCGUIRK, CANBERRA

AUSTRALIA

**C**HINA'S ambassador to Australia says relations between the two countries are at a "new juncture" with the election of a new Australian government and the first minister-to-minister talks in more than two years.

Ambassador Xiao Qian gave an upbeat assessment of the potential for the bilateral relationship in a weekend speech to the Australia-China Friendship Society in the west coast city of Perth. The speech was published yesterday on the embassy's website.

"The international, political and economic landscape is undergoing profound and complex changes. The China-Australia relationship is at a new juncture, facing many opportunities," Xiao said.

"My embassy and the Chinese consulates-general in Australia stand ready to work with the Australian federal government, state governments and friends from all walks of life to move forward the China-Australia relationship along the right track to the benefits of our two countries and two peoples," Xiao added.

Xiao's speech Saturday came a day before Chinese Defense Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe's hour-long meeting with his Australian counterpart Richard Marles on the sidelines of a regional security summit in Singapore.

Marles described the meeting as a "critical first step" in repairing bilateral relations. But observers are wary of describing the mee-

# China's envoy says two nations at 'new juncture'



Chinese Ambassador to Australia Xiao Qian speaks at a national conference of the Australia China Friendship Society in Perth

ting as a thawing of a diplomatic deep freeze between the countries.

Dennis Richardson, a former head of Defense, Foreign Affairs and the spy agency Australian Security Intelligence Organisation as well as a former Australian ambassador to the United States, noted that both governments took their first opportunity to have mi-

nisterial contact since Australia's government changed at elections May 21.

Bilateral relations had soured in the nine years that a conservative coalition had held power.

"The fact that they agreed to talk at the very first opportunity is noteworthy," Richardson told Australian Broadcasting Corp yesterday.

"I don't think we should get too far down the track on this. We have a long way to go," Richardson added.

Malcolm Davis, a senior analyst in defense strategy and capability at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute think tank, warned against overstating the significance of the meeting.

"They had an hour-long mee-

ting where they exchanged, in a frank and full manner, their respective views. That does not equate to restoring the status quo ante of the Australian relationship as it existed prior to 2015 when the relationship was reasonably good," Davis said.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang wrote to congratulate Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese days after his election victory in a gesture seen by some as China seeking to reset the relationship.

Albanese responded by urging China to show goodwill by lifting a series of official and unofficial trade barriers created in recent years to a range of Australian exports worth billions of dollars including coal, wine, barley, beef and seafood.

Bates Gill, a Macquarie University expert on Chinese foreign policy, suspected Beijing would not budge on trade sanctions.

"It would have to come at some price of Australia agreeing to Chinese demands. I just don't think the politics at the moment are going to allow for that," Gill said.

Bilateral relations plumbed new depths early in the pandemic when Australia called for an independent investigation into the origins of and responses to COVID-19.

China's latest ambassador to Australia has set a more conciliatory tone since he arrived in Canberra in January than his predecessor, Cheng Jingye, did.

Cheng warned in 2020 of Chinese trade boycotts if Australia persisted with its call for a COVID-19 inquiry. **MDT/AP**

THAILAND

# US Defense Secretary Austin meets PM Prayuth to boost ties

TASSANEE VEJPONGSA, BANGKOK

**U**.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin met with Thailand's prime minister yesterday as part of an effort to strengthen what Austin says is Washington's "unparalleled network of alliances and partnerships" in the region.

Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, who is also defense minister, also met Austin last month in Washington. Thailand and the United States are long-time military allies, despite a cooling of relations after the 2014 military coup that brought former army commander Prayuth to power.

A U.S. Defense Department statement said Austin's visit, his first to Thailand as defense secretary,



U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin (right) escorted by Thailand Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, who is also defense minister

is an important step toward modernizing the U.S.-Thai alliance and expanding the depth and breadth of military cooperation.

Thai media reported

that Prayuth would likely discuss arms procurement with Austin, including of F-35 fighter aircraft. No details of what they talked about were immediately

available.

Tensions between the U.S. and China have been growing in part over Beijing's claims to Taiwan and much of the South Chi-

na Sea, and its increasing power and influence in the region.

In a speech Saturday at the annual Shangri-La Dialogue defense summit in Singapore, Austin said China's "steady increase in provocative and destabilizing military activity near Taiwan" threatens to undermine the region's security and prosperity.

He said he was proud that Washington's "unparalleled network of alliances and partnerships has only deepened" in the past year.

China's defense minister, Gen. Wei Fenghe, said at the same conference that the U.S. is trying to turn Southeast Asian countries against Beijing and is seeking to advance its own interests "under the guise of multilateralism."

China over the past de-

cade has been trying to extend its influence in Southeast Asia, both through aid and investment, including its "Belt and Road" infrastructure projects and use of its navy and other maritime resources to press its claims to vast areas of the South China Sea.

Thailand and the United States were close allies during the Vietnam War, and in 2003, Washington designated Thailand a major non-NATO ally, one of about 20 worldwide.

Such status means the U.S. regards Thailand as a strategic partner, and facilitates some aspects of military assistance and cooperation. The annual multinational Cobra Gold military exercise, one of the world's biggest, is hosted in Thailand in partnership with the United States. **MDT/AP**

PUTIN'S WAR

# The battle of Donbas could prove decisive in Ukraine conflict

**D**AY after day, Russia is pounding the Donbas region of Ukraine with relentless artillery and air raids, making slow but steady progress to seize the industrial heartland of its neighbor.

With the conflict now in its fourth month, it's a high-stakes campaign that could dictate the course of the entire war.

If Russia prevails in the battle of Donbas, it will mean that Ukraine loses not only land but perhaps the bulk of its most capable military forces, opening the way for Moscow to grab more territory and dictate its terms to Kyiv. A Russian failure could lay the grounds for a Ukrainian counteroffensive — and possibly lead to political upheaval for the Kremlin.

Following botched early attempts in the invasion to capture Kyiv and the second-largest city of Kharkiv without proper planning and coordination, Russia turned its attention to the Donbas, a region of mines and factories where Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting Ukrainian forces since 2014.

Learning from its earlier missteps, Russia is treading more carefully there, relying on longer-range bombardments to soften Ukrainian defenses.

It seems to be working: The better-equipped Russian forces have made gains in both the Luhansk and Donetsk regions that make up the Donbas, controlling over 95% of the former and about half of the latter.

Ukraine is losing between 100 and 200 soldiers a day, presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak told the BBC, as Russia has "thrown pretty much everything non-nuclear at the front." President Volodymyr Zelenskyy earlier put the daily death toll at up to 100.

Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov described the combat situation as "extremely difficult," using a reference to an ancient deity of sacrifice by saying: "The Russian Moloch has plenty of means to devour human lives to satisfy its imperial ego."

When the war was going badly for Russia, many thought President Vladimir Putin might claim victory after



A Donetsk People's Republic militia's multiple rocket launcher fires from its position not far from Panteleimonivka, in territory under the government of DPR, eastern Ukraine

some gains in Donbas and then exit a conflict that has seriously bruised the economy and stretched its resources. But the Kremlin has made clear it expects Ukraine to recognize all the gains Russia has made since the start of the invasion — something Kyiv has ruled out.

Russian forces control the entire Sea of Azov coast, including the strategic port of Mariupol, the entire Kherson region — a key gateway to Crimea — and a large chunk of the Zaporizhzhia region that could aid a further push deeper into Ukraine, and few expect that Putin will stop.

On Thursday, he drew parallels between the Ukrainian conflict and the 18th century wars with Sweden waged by Peter the Great. Now, as in those czarist times, "our lot is to take back and consolidate" historic Russian lands, Putin said. Moscow has long regarded Ukraine as part of its sphere of influence.

Unlike earlier battlefield failures, Russia appears to be using more conservative tactics. Many had expected it to try to encircle Ukrainian forces with a massive pincer movement from the north and south, but instead it has used a series of smaller moves to force a retreat and not overextend its supply lines.

Keir Giles, a Russia expert at London's Chatham House think-tank, said Russia was "concentrating all of its artillery on a single section of the front line in order to grind its way forward by flattening

everything in its path."

Western officials still praise the ability of Ukrainian forces to defend their country, fighting back fiercely and similarly relying on artillery and retreating in some sections while launching frequent counterattacks.

"Ukraine has been pursuing a policy of flexible defense, giving ground where it makes sense to do so instead of holding on to every inch of the territory," Giles said.

A senior Western official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to discuss the sensitive issue in public said the Russian campaign "continues to be deeply troubled at all levels," noting that Moscow's forces are taking "weeks to achieve even modest tactical goals such as taking individual villages."

Last month, the Russians lost nearly an entire battalion in a botched attempt to cross the Siverskyi Donets River and set up a bridgehead. Hundreds were killed and dozens of armored vehicles were destroyed.

"There is a sense of strategic improvisation or muddling through," the official said, predicting that over the summer the Russian military could reach a "point where they can no longer effectively generate offensive combat power."

Russia has a clear edge in artillery in the battle for Donbas, thanks to a bigger number of heavy howitzers and rocket launchers and

abundant ammunition. The Ukrainians have had to be economical in using their artillery, with the Russians constantly targeting their supply lines.

Ukraine has begun to receive more heavy weapons from Western allies, who have provided dozens of howitzers and are now planning to start delivering multiple rocket launchers.

Putin has warned that if the West gives Kyiv longer-range rockets that could hit Russian territory, Moscow could hit targets in Ukraine that it has spared until now. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov also said that Russia could respond by seizing more land as a buffer zone from such weapons.

Moscow's earlier territorial gains in the south, including the Kherson region and a large part of the neighboring Zaporizhzhia region, have prompted Russian officials and their local appointees to ponder plans to fold those areas into Russia or declare them to be independent, like the so-called "people's republics" of Donetsk and Luhansk.

Ukrainian officials and Western analysts voiced concern that Moscow could try to press its offensive into the heavily populated and industrialized Dnipro region farther north, an advance that could potentially slice Ukraine in two and raise a new threat for Kyiv.

"Russian objectives in the context of this war are shifting in relation to the situation on the ground," said Eleonora Tafuro Ambrosetti, an analyst with the Milan-based Italian Institute for International Political Studies.

"Their goals are sort of flexible enough to be adaptive to context on the ground," she said, noting that Russia could try to damage Ukraine's economy by seizing the entire coastline to deny access to shipping.

A top Russian general already has spoken of plans to cut off Ukraine from the Black Sea by seizing the Mykolaiv and Odesa regions all the way to the border with Romania, a move that would also allow Moscow to build a land corridor to Moldova's separatist region of Transnistria that hosts a Russian military base. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1982 CEASEFIRE AGREED IN FALKLANDS



A ceasefire between British and Argentine forces on the Falkland Islands has been agreed, the prime minister has announced.

Margaret Thatcher made the statement to a packed House of Commons. The news was cheered by MPs from all parties.

More than 800 people have died since the first British warships reached the remote UK territory on 22 April, 20 days after Argentina invaded South Georgia.

BBC correspondent Brian Hanrahan reported at 1530 local time (2030 BST) that British troops had been ordered not to use their weapons except in self-defence.

Negotiations for the surrender of the Junta's army on the islands are now being held between their commander, General Mario Menendez, and British second-in-command Brigadier John Waters.

It is hoped the documents will be signed within the next 24 hours.

Mrs Thatcher told the Commons land forces commander Major-General Jeremy Moore had decided to press forward to the capital last night after a series of successful attacks on enemy troops.

"Large numbers of Argentine soldiers threw down their weapons - there are reported to be flying white flags over Port Stanley," she said.

The prime minister was welcomed outside Downing Street by a jubilant crowd cheering and singing when she returned from Westminster.

Mr Hanrahan - who is with the UK troops close to the frontline - said the Falklands felt strangely quiet after weeks listening to the noise of war.

"The sound of the heavy guns, the bombs, the machine-gunning is gone. The island is still and once again Stanley is under British control," he said.

The Falklands War is the result of years of disputed ownership of the islands.

Argentina says it inherited the Islas Malvinas from the Spanish crown in the early 19th century. The country also bases its claim on the islands' proximity to the South American mainland.

The UK argues that most of the British-descended islanders want to stay British. Its case also rests on the country's long-term administration of the territory.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Hostilities officially ceased on 20 June 1982. The war cost the lives of 655 Argentine and 255 British servicemen.

The victory greatly boosted the popularity of Margaret Thatcher's government which went on to win the next election.

Argentine president General Leopoldo Galtieri was deposed and served three years in prison for military incompetence.

In October 1983 Argentina returned to civilian rule but it was 1990 before full diplomatic relations with Britain were restored.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

 <b>ARIES</b> Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Don't do something silly just to get back at your mate. Emotional up and downs have caused doubts in your personal life. You could do extremely well in competitive sports events.	 <b>TAURUS</b> Apr. 20-May. 20 You will have to put those you live with in their place if they try to interfere with your work. You should be able to make major career gains if you plan your intentions carefully.
 <b>GEMINI</b> May. 21-Jun. 21 Your devotion will be persuasive. This will not be the best day to initiate change. Your ideas are right on the mark and your work commendable.	 <b>CANCER</b> Jun. 22-Jul. 22 You'll find it easy to meet new people. You can make money if you concentrate on producing services that will make domestic chores easier.
 <b>LEO</b> Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Business partnerships should turn out to be quite lucrative. Travel will promote new romantic connections. Take a break; you can finally mend any disputes on the home front.	 <b>VIRGO</b> Aug. 23-Sep. 22 You will do best to entertain those you wish to close deals with. Spend time with youngsters today. Do not blow situations out of proportion.
 <b>LIBRA</b> Sep. 23-Oct. 22 If you act with anger you may blow the relationship. You may be more emotional than usual. Don't allow your personal problems to interfere with your professionalism.	 <b>SCORPIO</b> Oct. 23-Nov. 21 Your sensitive, affectionate nature will capture the heart of anyone you are attracted to. You can make financial gains through your unique and creative approach to business.
 <b>SAGITTARIUS</b> Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Do not overspend on entertainment. You could find that children will be a handful. Don't overspend on luxury items. Travel if it's needed to start the ball rolling.	 <b>CAPRICORN</b> Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Call siblings or old friends to catch up on recent news. Make the necessary changes that will enable you to advance financially. You will be uncertain of your feelings.
 <b>AQUARIUS</b> Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Make sure that you have covered yourself legally and try not to let your temper get out of hand. Stay out of other people's affairs.	 <b>PISCES</b> Feb. 19-Mar. 20 A passionate encounter with your mate should help alleviate that pent-up energy. Don't blame everything on your mate. Do a little extra work at home.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

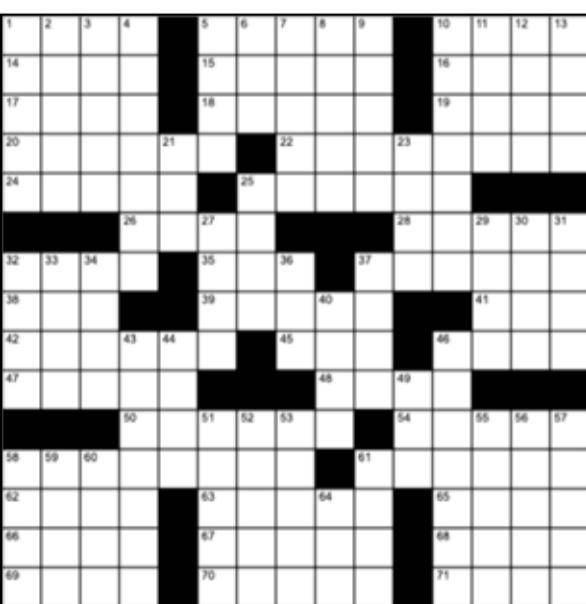
**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	18	27	rain
Changchun	17	24	thunderstorms
Chengdu	21	30	overcast
Chongqing	18	22	thunderstorms
Fuzhou	20	27	rain
Guangzhou	26	31	rain
Guiyang	17	21	showers
Haikou	26	35	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	20	26	rain
Harbin	17	24	thunderstorms
Hefei	18	30	cloudy
Nanjing	19	28	overcast
Shanghai	20	24	rain
Taipei	23	29	cloudy
Wuhan	20	30	fine
Hong Kong	27	29	thunderstorms
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	13	26	thunderstorms
Frankfurt	12	26	clear
Paris	14	27	clear
London	12	24	overcast
New York	20	27	overcast

**CROSSWORDS**

**ACROSS** 1- Throat trouble; 5- Separated; 10- Painter Mondrian; 14- \_\_\_ avis; 15- Passover meal; 16- The last Mrs. Chaplin; 17- Seed cover; 18- Antagonist; 19- Word processing command; 20- Interstellar cloud; 22- Languid; 24- Serious wrongdoing; 25- Group of six; 26- Big East team; 28- "\_\_\_" by any other name...; 32- Wild party; 35- Large bowl-shaped pan; 37- Trout catcher; 38- Arafat's org.; 39- Musical drama; 41- Turf; 42- Tenders; 45- Japanese computer giant; 46- Electronics giant; 47- Words on a Wonderland cake; 48- Dynamic beginning; 50- Prize; 54- Ph.D. hurdles; 58- Footsie; 61- Away from the mouth; 62- Circular band; 63- Let's Make \_\_\_; 65- Ceremony; 66- Effortlessness; 67- Dreadlocks wearer; 68- Tennis great Arthur; 69- Stepped; 70- Fragrant oil; 71- In case;

**DOWN** 1- Piece of French bread?; 2- Less common; 3- Small antelope; 4- Move along clumsily; 5- On or towards the Mediterranean, for example; 6- Farm enclosure; 7- Designer Simpson; 8- Change a song; 9- Rendezvous; 10- Domesticated fowl collectively; 11- Actress Sky; 12- Terminates; 13- New Mexico art colony; 21- Wreath of flowers; 23- Bluey-green color; 25- Discontinue; 27- Terrible time?; 29- Estimator's phrase; 30- In a jiffy; 31- Christian Science founder; 32- Lodge letters; 33- Code word for A; 34- Lenient; 36- Boy toy; 37- Confront; 40- Quantity of paper; 43- Appeared; 44- Repose; 46- Sisterly; 49- Hold up; 51- Ornamental coronet; 52- Conclude by; 53- Discharge; 55- Emerge; 56- Wood strips; 57- Driving hazard; 58- Worry; 59- Yarn spinner; 60- Words before "many words"; 61- Chemical used on trees; 64- \_\_\_ glance;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

**USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

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



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AD

ENERGY

# INDIA, CHINA GROWING MARKETS FOR SHUNNED RUSSIAN OIL

KRUTIKA PATHI & ELAINE KURTENBACH, NEW DELHI

INDIA and other Asian nations are becoming an increasingly vital source of oil revenues for Moscow despite strong pressure from the U.S. not to increase their purchases, as the European Union and other allies cut off energy imports from Russia in line with sanctions over its war on Ukraine.

Such sales are boosting Russian export revenues at a time when Washington and allies are trying to limit financial flows supporting Moscow's war effort.

A report by the Helsinki, Finland-based Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, an independent think tank released yesterday said Russia earned 93 billion euros (\$97.4 billion) in revenue from fossil fuel exports in the first 100 days of the country's invasion of Ukraine, despite a fall in export volumes in May.



AP PHOTO

"Revenue from fossil fuel exports is the key enabler of Russia's military buildup and aggression, providing 40% of federal budget revenue," it said.

India, an oil-hungry country of 1.4 billion people, has guzzled nearly 60 million barrels of Russian oil in 2022 so far, compared with 12 million barrels in all of 2021, according to commodity data firm Kpler. Shipments to other Asian countries, like China, have

also increased in recent months but to a lesser extent.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Sri Lanka's prime minister said he may be compelled to buy more oil from Russia as he hunts desperately for fuel to keep the country running amid a dire economic crisis.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said Saturday said he would first look to other sources, but would be open to buying more

crude from Moscow. In late May, Sri Lanka bought a 90,000-metric-ton (99,000-ton) shipment of Russian crude to restart its only refinery.

Russia is moving to diversify its exports. Russian Ambassador Marat Pavlov met Philippine President-elect Ferdinand Marcos Jr. yesterday and offered Moscow's help to provide oil and gas. He did not specify the terms.

Marcos Jr., whose six-year term is set to begin June 30, did not say if he was considering the offer.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in late February, global oil prices have soared, giving refiners in India and other countries an added incentive to tap oil Moscow is offering them at steep discounts of \$30 to \$35, compared with Brent crude and other international oil now trading at about \$120 per barrel.

Their importance to Russia rose after the 27-nation European Union, the main market for fossil fuels that supply most of Moscow's foreign income, agreed to stop most oil purchases by the end of this year.

"It seems a distinct trend is becoming ingrained now," said Matt Smith, lead analyst at Kpler tracking Russian oil flows. As shipments of Urals oil to much of Europe are cut, crude is instead flowing to Asia, where India has become the top buyer, followed by China. Ship tracking reports show Turkey is another key destination.

"People are realizing that India is such a refining hub, taking it at such a cheap price, refining it and sending it out as clean products because they can make such strong margins on that," Smith said.

In May, some 30 Russian tankers loaded with crude made their way to Indian shores, unloading about 430,000 barrels per day. An average of just 60,000 barrels per day arrived in January-March, according to the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air.

Chinese state-owned and independent refiners also have stepped up purchases. In 2021, China was the largest single buyer of Russian oil, taking 1.6 million barrels per day on average, equally divided between pipeline and seaborne routes, according to the International Energy Agency.

While India's imports are still only about a quarter of that, the sharp increase since the war began is a potential source of friction between Washington and New Delhi.

The U.S. recognizes India's need for affordable energy, but "we're looking to allies and partners not to increase their purchases of Russian energy," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said after a meeting of U.S. and Indian foreign and defense ministers in April. Meanwhile, the U.S. and its European allies are engaged in "extremely active" discussions on coordinating measures, perhaps forming a cartel, to try to set a price cap on Russian oil, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told a Senate Finance Committee meeting last week.

The aim would be to keep Russian oil flowing into the global market to prevent crude oil prices, already up 60% this year, from surging still higher, she said.

While Europe could find alternative sources for its

purchases of about 60% of Russia's crude exports, Russia also has options.

India's foreign minister, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, has emphasized his country's intention to do what is in its best interests, bristling at criticism over its imports of Russian oil.

"If India funding Russian oil is funding the war ... tell me, then buying Russian gas is not funding the war? Let's be a little even-handed," he said at a recent forum in Slovakia, referring to Europe's imports of Russian gas.

India's imports of crude from Russia rose from 100,000 barrels per day in February to 370,000 a day in April to 870,000 a day in May.

A growing share of those shipments displaced oil from Iraq and Saudi Arabia, most of it going to refineries in Sika and Jamnagar on India's western coast. Up until April, Russian oil accounted for less than 5% of the crude processed at the Jamnagar oil refinery run by Reliance Industries. In May, it accounted for more than a quarter, according to Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air.

India's exports of oil products like diesel have risen to 685,000 barrels per day from 580,000 barrels per day before the invasion of Ukraine.

China's imports also have risen further this year, helping Russian President Vladimir Putin's government record a current account surplus, the broadest measure of trade, of \$96 billion for the four months ending in April.

It's unclear if such exports might eventually be subject to sanctions meant to cut the cash flowing to Russia.

Regarding the sanctions, "Are those measures effective? And if not, how is the oil market working around them?" Myllyvirta said. MDT/AP

## GERMANY SLIPS BEHIND CHINA AS TOP IMPORTER OF RUSSIAN ENERGY

CHINA has overtaken Germany as the biggest buyer of Russian energy exports since the start of the war in Ukraine, an independent research group said yesterday. The Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air said Russia received about 93 billion euros (\$97 billion) in revenue for the sale of oil, natural gas and coal since Feb. 24, when it

invaded Ukraine. About 61% of the fossil fuels worth some 57 billion euros was exported to the European Union during the conflict's first 100 days, the Helsinki-based group said. That included 12.1 billion euros worth of exports to Germany, 7.8 billion euros each to Italy and the Netherlands, and 4.4 billion euros to Poland, the group said.

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**BOXING**

# Floyd Mayweather Jr. touched by Hall of Fame induction

**R**EDUCED to tears at a banquet on the eve of his big day, Floyd Mayweather Jr. was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame yesterday [Macau time], just a tinge of emotion in his voice as he accepted the honor.

"I done a lot in my career, but this is by far the best," said Mayweather, who credited his mom, dad and sister for much of his success. "I want to thank the International Boxing Hall of Fame for giving me this. This right here is going to my dad because he deserves it. Bernard Hopkins said it best — 'You've got to earn it.' — and my dad earned this ring."

"I want to say thank you to everybody for your support. I want to tell all the fighters — thank you, you guys are remarkable. There wouldn't be no me without you guys."

Mayweather, who retired unbeaten in 50 fights, headlined the three classes that were inducted yesterday. The pandemic forced the postponement of the



International Boxing Hall of Fame class of 2021 inductee Floyd Mayweather acknowledges paradegoers during the annual Parade of Champions

previous two induction ceremonies, making 2022 a crowded affair. The ceremony was moved from the Hall of Fame's home in Canastota, New York, to Turning Stone Resort and Casino in nearby Verona to accommodate the 36 honorees.

Roy Jones Jr., Miguel Cotto, James Toney and female champions

Regina Halmich and Holly Holm were part of this year's class. The Class of 2020 included multi-division champions Hopkins, Juan Manuel Marquez, and "Sugar" Shane Mosley. The Class of 2021 included Mayweather, Wladimir Klitschko, and Andre Ward.

Also among those honored were the first female fighters —

Christy Martin, Laila Ali, Lucia Rijker, Regina Halmich, and Holly Holm — to be enshrined. Martin shot to fame when she was featured on some of Mike Tyson's fight cards in the 1990s. Induction came on her 54th birthday.

For Laila Ali, it was a return to where her career started — and against the advice of her famous

father. She won her first match in October 1999 against April Fowler at Turning Stone.

"He told me not to do it. I had to earn his respect in the ring," said Laila, who retired unbeaten in 24 fights.

All but one of the 27 fighters inducted were scheduled to be at the ceremony. The one missing was former heavyweight champion Wladimir Klitschko. He's in Ukraine helping his brother, Vitali, a Hall of Famer himself and now the mayor of the capital city of Kyiv, during the ongoing war against invading Russia.

Instead, Wladimir Klitschko, who was heavyweight champion for 12 years and 2 days, longer than anyone in history, and finished with a pro record of 64-5 (53 KOs), released two short videos on social media to acknowledge the honor.

"Thank you fans. I never ever dreamed of getting that far in the sport. Amazing," Klitschko said. "Boxing just made me a better person, period. It taught me a lot."

Although his videos were short, Klitschko made a point of criticizing fellow inductee Jones for traveling to Russian-occupied Crimea.

"So Roy, whose side are you on?" Klitschko said. "I really respect you as a fighter, but I really question your moral compass."

Jones had other things on his mind. **MDT/AP**

AD

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山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues °  
馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata °  
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OPINION

China Daily  
Editorial, China Daily

EXPLOITATION  
OF EPIDEMIC  
MUST BE CURBED

There is no doubt the mobility controls the country has put in place have helped to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus whenever it has tried to gain a foothold in the country. Given the country's huge population and the reluctance of many elderly to get vaccinated, it is the country's weapon of choice in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

And everybody has wholeheartedly supported the restrictions, until they are implemented beyond the needs of the hour that is. Although prompt and decisive responses have proven instrumental in pre-empting the virus' community transmission, when prolonged beyond need, they have unnecessarily and disproportionately harmed people's livelihoods and local economic activities.

Since the anti-pandemic campaign has been a priority for all local governments, there has been a conspicuous tendency on their part to over-react when infections are detected locally.

A tendency that has been exacerbated by the exorbitant profits to be made by the businesses carrying out the nucleic acid tests, which have a vested interest in sustaining and sensationalizing the local epidemic situation. No wonder multiple institutions and individuals in multiple localities are under investigation on suspicion of illicit profiteering.

As downward pressure is building up on the Chinese economy, there have been growing calls for more targeted measures to minimize the impact on economic development and normal lives.

Contagious as it is, there has been mounting scientific evidence that the Omicron variant of the novel coronavirus is significantly less life-threatening than previous ones. Under such a circumstance, there is an imperative need to stop disproportionately hyping up fear of the virus, and to put more emphasis on balancing the needs of containing the pandemic and of safeguarding the economy.

The State Council's latest admonishments against such local practices as excessive duplicative nucleic acid testing requirements and unwarranted restrictions on movements that obstruct cargo transport, represent a sensible follow-up to its recent, repeated calls for removing man-made bottlenecks impeding the country's logistics supplies, which is crucial to not only the normal operation of pandemic-hit communities, but to the health of the national economy as well.

In fact, over the past few weeks, the State Council has issued frequent calls for stabilizing logistics, industry and supply chains. To little effect.

Its latest threat of legal actions against those whose obstruction of logistics supplies result in serious consequences are important, because otherwise it will be very difficult to deal with deeply entrenched vested interests.

Preventing the anti-epidemic measures from being applied over-zealously will help ensure that those implementing them keep their eyes on the right ball and they are applied appropriately and effectively to contain the virus.

A Swedish arms watchdog says the world's stockpiles of nuclear weapons are expected to increase in coming years, reversing a decline seen since the end of the Cold War.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, or SIPRI, said yesterday that all nine nuclear-armed countries are increasing or upgrading their arsenals.

"There are clear indications that the reductions that have characterized global nuclear arsenals since the end of the Cold War have ended," said Hans M. Kristensen, a researcher with SIPRI's Weapons of Mass Destruction Program and director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of

American Scientists.

The U.S. and Russia, which hold 90% of the world's atomic weapons, saw their inventories decline in 2021 due to the dismantling of warheads retired from military service years ago. Their useable military stockpiles remained relatively stable and within the limits set by a nuclear arms reduction treaty, SIPRI said.

The research institute said that the other nuclear states — Britain, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea — are either developing or deploying new weapon systems, or have announced their intention to do so. Israel has never publicly acknowledged having such weapons.



Chairman of the Nippon Foundation Jumpei Sasagawa (center), U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel (left) and Ukrainian Ambassador to Japan Sergiy Korsunsky during a news conference in Tokyo, yesterday

JAPAN PHILANTHROPIC  
GROUP BEGINS FUND  
RAISING FOR UKRAINIANS

MARI YAMAGUCHI,  
TOKYO

A Japanese foundation announced yesterday it is launching a fundraising drive to provide more than 1,200 Ukrainian evacuees in Japan with additional financial support for language studies and other needs.

Jumpei Sasakawa, executive director of the Nippon Foundation, said it aims to raise 1 billion yen (\$7.4 million) through cooperation with the U.S. and Ukrainian ambassadors.

The foundation has already pledged 5 billion yen (\$37 million) for the transportation and living costs of Ukrainian evacuees. Japan has so far accepted more than 1,200 war-displaced Ukrainians since Russia invaded in late February.

Sasakawa said he was approached by U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel, who asked him to enable ordinary Japanese to help support Ukrainian evacuees.

Ukrainian Ambassador to Japan Sergiy Korsunsky, who joined Sasakawa and Emanuel at a news conference, urged Japanese to

see donations to the fund as an "investment by Japan in a nation that will be always be friends with you." He said Ukrainians in Japan will be "a bridge between our countries" when Ukraine is ready to rebuild itself.

**" [See] donations to the fund as an investment by Japan in a nation that will be always be friends with you.**

SERGIY KORSUNSK  
UKRAINIAN AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN

Japan quickly joined the United States and other major industrialized economies in imposing sanctions on Russia and supporting Ukraine because it fears a similar development in East Asia, where Beijing has become increasingly assertive and has threatened to take military actions against Taiwan if it refuses to unite with China.

Acceptance of the Ukrainian evacuees is unusual for Japan, which has extremely strict refugee and immigration policies despite its own

shrinking labor force. Advocates have expressed hope that its support for the Ukrainians will lead to a more lenient immigration policy.

Human rights groups have criticized Japan for neglecting displaced people from other countries such as Afghanistan and Myanmar, who have not received such a warm welcome or a nationally-organized support system.

"I would say, this is a win-win situation. Japan could use the help on its labor shortage and Ukraine people or evacuees can bring their skill set and find work and contribute to their temporary new home," Emanuel said.

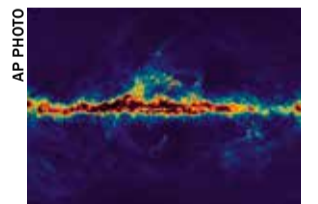
The Nippon Foundation was founded by Sasakawa's grandfather, Ryoichi Sasakawa, a far-right politician and businessman, to distribute money earned from motorboat racing, a popular gambling pastime.

Asked why he turned to the foundation, Emanuel, who has roots in Ukraine, said it is known for humanitarian assistance and was already working to support Ukrainian evacuees. MDT/AP

Germany's vice chancellor is proposing new powers for the country's antitrust agency to clamp down on oil companies amid disappointment over the limited effect of a cut in fuel taxes. A three-month cut took effect on June 1 as part of a wider package of measures aimed at blunting the financial fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which also includes cheap tickets for local public transport. But there have been widespread complaints that prices at the pump have crept back up substantially after initially falling.



Britain's government is expected to introduce legislation that would unilaterally change post-Brexit trade rules for Northern Ireland amid opposition from lawmakers who believe the move violates international law. The proposed bill aims to scrap parts of a trade treaty that Prime Minister Boris Johnson signed with the European Union by removing checks on goods entering Northern Ireland from the rest of the U.K.



Space The European Space Agency has released a trove of data on almost 2 billion stars in the Milky Way, collected by its Gaia mission in an effort to create the most accurate and complete map of our galaxy. Astronomers hope to use the data to understand better how stars are born and die, and how the Milky Way evolved over billions of years. The new data includes new information such as the age, mass, temperature and chemical composition of stars. This can be used, for example, to determine which stars were born in another galaxy and then migrated to the Milky Way.