



MACAU PASS TO JOIN 50 CITIES IN SMART CARD NETWORK

Macau Pass is expected to join the nationwide integrated City Union card scheme this July

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UMAC STUDENTS PROTEST DURING UNION INAUGURATION

2 students held a sign calling on the union to take a tough stance and pressure uni leaders to come clean on alleged political oppression

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GREAT FIGO IN THE RACE FOR FIFA'S TOP POST

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

WORLD BRIEFS



NORTH KOREAN leader Kim Jong Un will make his first foreign trip since coming to power three years ago to attend celebrations for the 70th anniversary of Russia's victory in World War II, the Interfax news agency reported. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed to Interfax that the Korean leader would attend the event to be held on May 9. Chinese President Xi Jinping and about 20 foreign leaders are also expected to attend, the Itar-Tass news agency reported on Jan. 21.

CHINA A man admitted yesterday that he set a fire that spread through a bus in eastern China and injured 33, entering his plea from a hospital bed wheeled into a courtroom because of his own injuries in the blaze, a court said. Bao Laixu said he started the fire last July in the city of Hangzhou to take revenge against society and because he wanted to end his own life after a relapse of tuberculosis, the Hangzhou Intermediate People's Court said on its microblog. The sentence is yet to be announced.

THAILAND A top leader of Thailand's "Red Shirt" political movement was sentenced Wednesday to two years in jail for insulting a former prime minister, the latest blow to the supporters of another ex-prime minister, billionaire Thaksin Shinawatra. Bangkok Criminal Court found Jatuporn Prompan guilty of defaming Democrat Party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva in two speeches in 2009.

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Cosmetics, fast fashion to gain from luxury decline

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JAPANESE HOSTAGE CRISIS

Mom to Abe: Please save Kenji

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João Pedro Lau

THE recent decline in the luxury retail market may benefit cosmetic and fast fashion stores in Macau, says Michael Klibaner, Jones Lang LaSalle's (JLL) regional director and head of research for Greater China. He also believes that, if the impact of the Chinese anti-graft measures starts to show its effects, it may be time for the government to look into rebranding Macau.

Mr Klibaner says that the proliferation of watch and jewelry stores is a response to the types of tourists coming into Macau from mainland China, who are eyeing the price differentiation between the two. However, he reckons that this has changed following the launch of anti-corruption measures by Chinese President Xi Jinping, which he says could hurt the whole retail industry.

"The luxury watch and jewelry brands are definitely consolidating. They're closing stores and they're rationalizing their footprint. That's a logical economic response to the market," he said.

Moreover, Klibaner noted that there has been growth in the cosmetics sector, as well as the food and beverage and fast fashion sector, which will gain a foothold in Macau due to a weakening luxury retail sector. However, he observed that many restaurants have been "priced out of the market" because of the constant growth in rental prices, "so I think there may be some opportunities, maybe not on the high streets but the secondary streets for restaurants to come back in."

Furthermore, the regional director said that the Macau government should start rebranding Macau if the impact of the Chinese anti-corruption measures becomes apparent.

He said that Macau still has not reached the stage of worrying about branding and rebranding at this moment, as businesses are still booming. "But if the impact of the current anti-corruption campaign on the economy of Macau is felt, with gaming revenue [in December] down by 30 percent, this could be the moment when [government officials] do need to think about the Macau brand," he said.

Klibaner used Las Vegas as an example, pointing out the



JLL FORECASTS

Cosmetics and fast fashion to benefit from decline in luxury retail

city's success in transforming itself into a tourist destination for the whole family, with the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferencing, Exhibition) industry driving a huge amount of visitors to the city.

The JLL regional director made the comments this week

on the sidelines of a business luncheon organized by the British Business Association of Macao, in conjunction with the American Chamber of Commerce in Macau and the French Macau Business Association. He gave a presentation on the impact of e-commerce

on China's retail and logistics properties.

During the Q&A session that followed, Klibaner explained that the future development of Hengqin Island would play a huge role in the successes and risks of the retail sector in Macau. "In terms of mass

market retail, if Hengqin Island is able to achieve even half of the successes that they have planned for, in terms of developing the service sector and bringing in hundreds and thousands of workers from mainland China and around the region; if Hengqin Island is successful in creating a vibrant new commercial district in Macau, it certainly will be a positive for the retail sector," he said.

Klibaner also commented on the luxury retail market, noting that the creation and maintenance of exclusivity is one of the big challenges. He also said that the experience of buying a luxurious product is also an element that drives people to luxury brands.

Logistics: 'China's best property investment opportunity'



Michael Klibaner

IN a presentation at BBAM's luncheon, Michael Klibaner argued that China's e-commerce market will continue to grow and will have a significant

impact on the physical retail sector. He also pointed out that there is an under-supply of modern warehouses and believes that logistics will be a great property investment opportunity.

Klibaner said that China's e-commerce market is predicted to reach USD1 trillion in 2020. While there are 40 to 50 million new internet users and 30 to 40 million new online shoppers each year, he said that there is still room for

e-commerce to grow in future, due to the internet's relatively low penetration rate – with only 40 percent of internet users being online shoppers.

He also suggested several other factors behind the rapid growth of e-commerce, including the fast-growing Chinese economy, the expansion of the middle class, and the immaturity of the retail sector in Tier 3 and Tier 4 cities, as well as innovation and competition in payment and delivery services.

With competition from online retail websites such as Taobao, Klibaner predicts that some outsized retail centres, with each small unit owned by different individuals, are uncompetitive. However, he does not think that e-commerce will annihilate the traditional retail market. In fact, he believes that people

will still spend time and money in shopping malls that can offer an engaging shopping experience. Therefore, he argued that it is crucial for shopping malls in mainland China to brand and differentiate themselves from their competitors.

He also said that the growth of e-commerce is going to drive up the demand for warehouse space. The JLL regional director reckoned that the sector has been "chronically under supply in China for a long time." The demand will be further driven by the rise of business-to-consumer sites, where businesses sell their products directly to consumers online.

Therefore, he predicts that there will be a boom in the warehouse industry, which will continue until the consolidation period arrives. **JPL**

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Industry calls for gov't to take leading role in building 'smart city'

Brook Yang

A "smart city" has never seemed closer, with more and more livelihood services being brought onto the digital platform. While the technical conditions have gradually matured, related sectors suggest that the idea of Macau being built into a "smart city" still largely depends on the government taking a leading role and a sufficient IT workforce.

"The most crucial factor is the Macau government's attitude and promotion; only with which can a smart city be made into reality," stated Ms Ebel Cham, local telecom operator CTM's vice president of Commercial, in a seminar held yesterday.

"When the government has a policy to push for it, we won't need to wait any longer to build the networks," she said, adding that enhancing the backbone network of telecommunications infrastructure is another key factor in building a "smart Macau."

"But no matter how perfect the network is, it still requires an enormous amount of human resources to maintain the entire operation and construction," she stressed, "Macau is sorely lacking information technology talent, which has been blocking the city from becoming a smart city."

A lack of unified planning has also been hindering Macau's integration process. A speaker from the smart card system operator Macau Pass S. A., Ms Stella Lei, indicated that such issues have caused repeated constructions, where the standards adopted by different departments and the ne-



Ms Ebel Cham, CTM, speaking at the seminar

tworks they build are not compatible with each other.

Moreover, different departments and sectors are fenced off by a communication barrier, with their data storage isolated from one other. As a result, information cannot be shared or exchanged instantly, while interdepartmental coordination is hard to achieve.

"To develop a smart city you really need the government to take the lead; it needs a comprehensive long-term development strategy that includes urban planning, integration of public services, and the safety of urban living," suggested Ms Lei.

"It not only depends on the application of the new generation of information technology like Cloud Computing

and the Internet of Things, but more importantly the push for innovation through a knowledge-based society," she added.

Besides e-payment, e-transportation, e-medical and e-governance, Macau also has huge potential in bringing tourist services onto the digital platform.

Among others, Ms Cham suggested that electronic-education is one of the first things to develop, "because of the huge demand in IT talents."

"The Macau government has put a lot of recourses into education but hasn't made a prioritized arrangement on cultivating IT talents in its strategy," she said. "We hope to push society to move faster towards a smart city by contributing to e-education."



Lau Si Io to join Science and Technology Fund

Former Secretary for Transport and Public Works Lau Si Io will be joining the Science and Technology Development Fund's board of trustees, the government announced yesterday through its Official Gazette (BO). Lau Si Io had told reporters in Beijing in December that he would be working within his area of expertise, which is public works, even though he's currently heading the Macau Science Center. Lau was appointed secretary in 2007, replacing disgraced Secretary for Transport and Public Works Ao Man Long, who had been arrested over alleged corruption and money laundering. Mr Lau has previously served as president of the Administration Council of the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau.

Merchant supplies counterfeit materials to casino site

An electronics store has provided counterfeit electrical materials to a large-scale casino resort construction site in Cotai, the Macau Customs Service revealed. The counterfeit materials were to be used on the top of elevators as the bridges and trays that store electric wires. According to the authorities, the quality of such materials needs to be strictly controlled, otherwise they might scratch and damage the wires, causing a short circuit or even a fire. The store is located in the Northern District and owned by a Hong Kong resident. Customs authorities seized a total of 1,281 counterfeit goods including cable troughs and cable trays. If genuine, the goods would be valued at over MOP170,000. The 66 year-old owner has been charged and transferred to the Public Prosecution Office, with three more suspects also arrested during the operation.

Teen girl allegedly involved in migration scam

The Judiciary Police (PJ) has officially charged a 17-year-old female with aggravated fraud after she was alleged to have defrauded two people out of a total of MOP400,000, claiming she could provide immigration services to them. The authorities have revealed that both of the victims were locals, who told the PJ that they were helping their friends to migrate to Hong Kong and Macau through investment. It is alleged that the suspect met her victims on the mobile application WeChat and claimed that she could help them obtain residency in the two SARs. The two victims then asked the girl about the fees and was told that they had to first pay MOP200,000 individually. However, the suspect was said to be stalling after receiving the money, which made the victims suspicious. Eventually, the two decided to approach the PJ on January 22.

Macau to join integrated nationwide city card scheme

MACAU'S smart card system, Macau Pass, is expected to join the integrated City Union card scheme this July, which will allow citizens in different cities across China to use their locally issued IC cards in other member cities for transportation and other payments.

The integrated city card scheme has been promoted by the Chinese Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (MOHURD) since 2012. So far, fifty cities across China have achieved the networking of their smart cards, covering a population of 180 million.



Mr Ni Jiangbo

The ministry's spokesperson for the scheme, Ms Ma Hong, told the media on the sidelines of a seminar yesterday that over the past year technical exchanges

have been ongoing between the ministry and Macau Pass S. A..

"According to our discussion with Macau Pass, [the linkup] may be implemented between June and July this year. [Macau Pass] needs to update its system before that; we will check and accept the work and send technical personnel here for technical guidance," she explained.

"It's rather quick to achieve the required technical conditions, but what specifically we will need to really implement it and make the initiative a reality, for example, will involve cur-

rency exchange rates. We need to jointly explore with the related governmental departments," said Macau Pass deputy general manager Mr Lao Kin Keong.

"That's why we invited representatives from the departments to the seminar today. Overall, I believe that the government has a crucial role throughout the whole process," he added.

At the seminar, speakers from related entities introduced the applications and prospects for an integrated city card as well as the outlook of building a "smart city" in Macau.

"I'd see the City Union card linkup plan as a 'happiness project' that benefits our country and facilitates Macau and the mainland's development," stated Mr Ni Jiangbo, deputy director of MOHURD's information center. **BY**

Gov't to regulate local vets

João Pedro Lau

LAWMAKER Kwan Tsui Lhang revealed that the Macau government is in the process of drafting legislation to regulate veterinarians practicing in Macau. She also revealed that it is difficult to guarantee whether the animal protection bill will be passed in the first half of 2015.

Ms Kwan is the president of the Legislative Assembly (AL) First Standing Committee, which continued to discuss the animal protection legislation in a meeting yesterday. During a post-meeting press conference, Kwan said that her committee colleagues have asked the government about the regulation of local vets.

"We have talked about [regulating vets] today. The government has already replied that they are currently drafting [the legislation]. But it is definite that the [regulation] will come after the legislation on animal protection," she said, adding that the regulation has to be legislated as a law instead of through administrative decree because it involves



the regulation of a profession. Apart from local vets, Kwan also mentioned regulations on pet stores. She said that Macau is still lacking supervision on the sale of pets, including

the demand for proof of origin of the animals. "The animal protection legislation needs these supplementary laws as soon as it is passed. Now that the government still cannot

give us that legislation, we only hope that it will not take years to propose those bills," she said.

As for discussion on the animal protection bill, Kwan said that lawmakers and government officials have debated 15 of the draft articles contained within the proposed legislation, regarding the catching and keeping of wild animals. Lawmakers suggested that the government should come up with a list of wild animals. They are also concerned that some wild creatures might approach residents and could even live in the residential apartments.

While addressing these concerns, the administration stated that, after the bill is passed, the responsibility will rest on residents to notify the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau once they spot wild animals in their apartments. Nevertheless, residents can still keep wild animals with the approval of the IACM. The authorities have also promised to provide a list of endangered species in the future.

Furthermore, lawmakers

have discussed the proposed Article 16, which regulates animals for commercial and recreational use, including those that are exhibited in commercial venues for sale. They pointed out that there are animals in some casinos in Macau that are exhibited but not for purchase, which also concerns the licensing by IACM under Article 16. AL members think this will create excessive administrative hurdles and the government later agreed to exclude animals in commercial venues kept solely for exhibition from special licensing.

In terms of the progress of the legislation, Kwan said that the committee has already endeavoured to discuss the bill at least once a week. However, she believes that various events, including Chinese New Year in February and the Policy Address by the Chief Executive in March will prevent committee members from meeting as frequently as they currently are. As a result, she said that it is difficult to promise that the animal protection bill will be passed by the AL in the first half of the year. Instead, she said that they will strive to finish the debate on the bill before the AL goes on Summer break in mid August.

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Group protests against illegal workers

THE local group "Labour Party" yesterday afternoon staged a demonstration outside the entrance to the Border Gate checkpoint protesting against several issues, including the hiring of illegal workers by Macau casino project contractors.

Cheong Weng Fat, the group's representative, told the Times that contractors of several casino projects in Cotai have been hiring illegal workers for overnight labour on their construction sites. "There are many people who work on the construction sites in Cotai at night because nobody will inspect the sites at night," he said. "I have already talked to the DSAL about the issue but the police would not handle it at night."

He also slammed the recent performance of the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) director Wong Chi Hong. "We have received complaints from many workers, saying that DSAL was stalling industrial dispute cases. [Wong] was very efficient when he first took office but his current performance has been awful. Therefore, we ask the government



Cheong Weng Fat

to replace him alongside those old Secretaries," he said.

Moreover, Mr Cheong said that they are dissatisfied with the current commissioner general of the Unitary Police Service, Ma Io Kun, who was recently promoted to his

position. He also criticized the decision of some local restaurants to increase prices, arguing that this is the reason behind the rising inflation. Cheong revealed that they will organize more demonstrations before Chinese New Year. **JPL**

SSM fines City of Dreams for breaching smoking ban

THE Health Bureau (SSM) has reviewed the objection raised by local casino operator Melco Crown Entertainment (MCE) and decided to fine it MOP100,000 for placing a smoking zone in the mass area of City of Dreams.

"Given that there were no 'no smoking' signs being placed in the casino area L01 Casino Floor Pit 11 in City of Dreams, which is stipulated by the law, [SSM handed MCE] the maximum penalty of a MOP100,000 fine", SSM said in a statement released last night. "Moreover, SSM has required the company to immediately place a 'no smoking' sign in the area after being notified".

The statement continued to suggest that SSM's Tobacco Control Office "suddenly inspected the said casino area today (yesterday)" after they notified the casino, and they still did not see any "no smoking" signs displayed.

As a result, the SSM officials reiterated the bureau's request at the scene to the casino. Nevertheless, the statement said that the City of Dreams representative claimed that they "would not actively carry out the [instruction]". Later, the Tobacco Control Office staff put the signs up by themselves.

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TWO students from the University of Macau (UM) held up a sign during the inauguration ceremony of the university's students' union, held yesterday. The sign called on the union to take a tough stance and continue to pressure university administration to come clean on the alleged political oppression within UM.

According to All About Macau, one of the protesting students, Lam Ka Sin, said that they wanted the public to keep focusing on the alleged suppression of former UM professor Bill Chou. "I hope that the students' union will remember that students did make a request [for the union to take a stance] and it is the union's responsibility to give a response," she said.

Unlike the previous protest staged at a UM graduation ceremony last year, where a protesting student and a journalist from Macau Concealer were taken away by university security, the two protesting students were able to raise the sign three times without being interrupted.

UM students protest during union inauguration



Kiang Hao Chi, UM's newly inaugurated student union director general, thanked the students for expressing their opinion. He said that students "should be in charge of the university". "We want a democratic students' union and we have to pass this [tradition] on here," he expressed.

It is reported that UM rector Zhao Wei did not look at the protestors once. After the ceremony, the rector was also asked about the recently emerged rumors that more female students had fallen victim to sexual harassment, with the perpetrator alleged to be a senior faculty member. Prof Zhao said that UM "absolutely opposes" sexual harassment and "will investigate [the accusation] seriously and in accordance with the proper procedures." **JPL**

Gov't invests 100 million to support tertiary education students

THE Macau government is investing MOP100 million this year in subsidies addressing higher education

students, revealed the coordinator of the Tertiary Education Services Office (GAES). Sou Chio Fai said that according

to the government's estimations about 34,000 students will likely be granted the subsidy, which is intended to help

them buy school-related materials.

A MOP3,000 subsidy is provided through a single installment and may

be requested by any student who holds a Macau ID and attends a higher education institution either in Macau or overseas.

Students can apply until March 31. An administrative decree regulating the application procedures will be published next week in the government's Official

Gazette.

The Macau government has recently been providing financial aid to students of different grades, mainly to help families acquire school materials. It has also been providing other types of grants, namely by supporting the payment of tuition fees, either as a partial or full grant. **MDT/Lusa**

DSPA launches campaign at local schools to reduce use of plastic bags

THE Macau Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) is launching a series of activities at local kindergartens and primary schools in an effort to reduce the number of plastic bags used in the city.

DSPA said it will visit a total of fifteen schools to present a theatrical play regarding the use of plastic bags; the importance of food and the need to raise students' environmental awareness. They're hoping to encourage these young citizens to use fewer plastic bags.

Between January and April the play will be presented at a variety of different schools and kindergartens addressing approximately 4,700 students.

DSPA said that the play is "lively and dynamic," making use of "simple language and dialogues" to convey a simple message: there's a need to reduce the number of plastic bags used. Actors will also focus on the importance of a growing environmental awareness and urge students to adopt a greener approach in their daily lives.

The 30-minute play has so far been effective in drawing children's attention, said DSPA in a statement.

The bureau said that it is committed to continued collaboration with local schools to raise students and teachers' environmental awareness. Therefore, it is planning to hold more lectures on ecological matters in the future. **CP**

Tourist price index increases 5 pct year-on-year



THE average Tourist Price Index (TPI) for 2014 increased by 5.15 percent year-on-year, the Statistics and Census Service revealed.

A marked increase was recorded in the price index of accommodation (+ 8.73 percent); res-

taurant services (+ 6.37 percent); clothing and footwear (+ 5.73 percent); and food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco (+ 5.22 percent).

However, the price index of transport and communications and of miscellaneous goods

decreased by 0.82 and 0.57 percent respectively year-on-year.

Data released by DSEC shows that the TPI for the fourth quarter of 2014 increased 2.43 percent year-on-year mainly due to rising charges for res-

taurant services and dearer prices of local food products.

A significant increase was recorded in the price index of restaurant services (+ 8.48); food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco (+ 6.22 percent); entertainment and cultural activities (+ 5.28 percent); and clothing and footwear (+ 4.42 percent).

On the other hand, the price index of hotel accommodation decreased by 2.65 percent year-on-year.

For the fourth quarter of 2014, TPI increased 7.82 percent quarter-to-quarter. Soaring hotel room rates throughout national holidays, the Macau Grand Prix and Christmas helped push the price index of accommodation up significantly, with an increase of 24.4 percent. Ferry tickets and taxi fares also recorded higher prices.

Brandon Bailey
Technology Writer, San Francisco

Record iPhone sales drive blowout quarter for Apple

APPLE had another blowout quarter thanks to its new plus-sized iPhones, which helped the company smash sales records for the holiday season.

Apple said yesterday that it sold 74.5 million iPhones during the three months that ended Dec. 31, beating analysts' expectations for the latest models of Apple's most popular gadget, introduced in September.

The surge in iPhone sales drove the company's total revenue to USD74.6 billion, up 30 percent from a year earlier. CEO Tim Cook said on a call with analysts that demand for the phones was "staggering," and noted that results would have been even higher if not for the impact of the strong dollar on overseas sales. Net income rose 38 percent to \$18 billion, as Apple reported earnings of \$3.06 a share. Analysts surveyed by FactSet were expecting earnings of \$2.60 a share on revenue of \$67.39 billion.

Apple also forecast revenue for the current quarter between \$52 billion and \$55 billion. The midpoint of that range is just below the average analyst estimate of \$53.6 billion for the period ending in March, when sales typically fall from their holiday season peak. Apple Chief Financial Officer Luca Maestri said in an interview that revenue for the current period will increase between 14 and 20 percent from a year ago, despite the strong dollar, which has forced other companies such as Microsoft to lower their forecasts.

"We feel very good about the March quarter," Maestri said, while calling the December results "pretty amazing."

Apple has set records with each new version of its iPhones. By comparison, the company sold 51 million smartphones



Shoppers walk by the Apple Store along the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica, Calif.

■ The surge in iPhone sales drove the company's total revenue to USD74.6 billion, up 30 percent from a year earlier

during the holiday quarter in 2013, when its iPhone 5s and 5c models were new on the scene. Bigger screens are one reason for the popularity of the iPhone 6 and 6 Plus. Apple had resisted when other companies such as Samsung began introducing smartphones with bigger screens. But its iPhone 6 has a 4.7-inch screen, measured diagonally, while the 6 Plus screen measures 5.5 inches. That compares to a 4-inch screen on iPhone 5 models.

"It took Apple a long time to

come to grips with the fact that the market did want the bigger screen," said Gartner tech analyst Van Baker. "They finally closed the gap on a feature they were missing, which their competition had capitalized on."

The surge in sales of Apple's signature smartphones helped make up for an expected decline in sales of iPad tablets. The company sold 21.4 million iPads, down 22 percent from a year earlier. Sales of Mac computers rose 9 percent, and Apple saw overall revenue gains

in all geographic regions.

The new models also helped Apple increase its share of the China market. Apple doesn't break out iPhone sales by country, but a report issued Tuesday by research firm Canals estimates that Apple sold more smartphones in China during the last quarter than any other maker, including South Korea's Samsung and the Chinese companies Huawei and Xiaomi.

Still, some experts worry that Apple's strength could become a weakness. Apple makes more money from iPhones than any other product, including its iPods, iPads and Mac computers. That could leave it vulnerable as the overall smartphone market shows signs of slowing growth, warned Colin Gillis, a tech stocks analyst with BGC Partners. He notes that Apple depends on iPhones for nearly two-thirds of its revenue.

"Selling north of 70 million of anything is fantastic. But what's going to happen a year from now?" he asked. "The strength today has potential to become a weakness down the road."

Maestri downplayed those concerns. "We are growing our portfolio in many ways," he told The AP, citing the upcoming Apple smartwatch, which will ship in April, and the recent launch of Apple Pay, the company's mobile payments system. He also said iPad sales were "a bit better than we were expecting" and added that new apps for business users, produced in partnership with IBM, should help iPad sales in the future. AP

corporate bits

SUSHI MAESTRO SHINJI KANESAKA TO OPEN FIRST GREATER CHINA OUTLET AT CITY OF DREAMS MACAU



Visitors and guests at City of Dreams Macau can look forward to indulging themselves in an authentic Omakase experience delivered by a team of seasoned Japanese sushi chefs trained by Master Shinji Kanesaka, one of the most renowned sushi chefs in the highly competitive

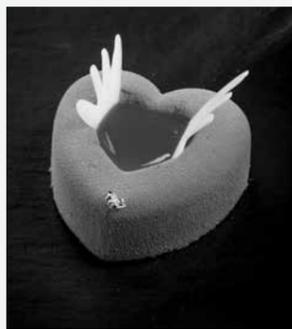
Ginza district of Tokyo. Named Shinji by Kanesaka, the Macau outlet is coming soon to City of Dreams Macau's Crown Towers, which will mark the Kanesaka brand's debut in Greater China. The opening will also diversify the dining offerings at City of Dreams Macau.

VALENTINE'S DAY SPECIALS AT MANDARIN ORIENTAL

This Valentine's Day Mandarin Oriental, Macau presents a passion-intensifying dinner menu, love-inspired cake, cocktail, afternoon tea sets and pampering spa offers.

On 13, 14 and 15 February 2015, Chef Dominique Bugnard at the hotel's signature Vida Rica Restaurant is creating six-course dinner menu. Featuring foie gras and grilled eel maki roll, scallop carpaccio with Sturia caviar dome, and veal loin and mixed mushroom duxelle Wellington, this special menu for two includes two glasses of champagne.

Vida Rica Bar provides lovebirds with a tea time delight, Afternoon Fantasy, including made-on-the-spot sandwiches



and desserts especially created for Valentine's Day.

The Spa at Mandarin Oriental also spices up Valentine's Day by offering guests a complimentary 30-minute mini facial or body scrub when booking any spa treatment.

FRANK STALLONE TO PERFORM AT THE VENETIAN'S BELLINI LOUNGE

American singer-songwriter and Grammy and Golden Globe nominee Frank Stallone will rock Macao for five nights when Frank Stallone Live in Concert comes to The Venetian Macao's Bellini Lounge Feb. 10 - 14.

The younger brother of Hollywood action superstar Sylvester Stallone, Frank Stallone has had a successful career full of accolades and awards. Throughout his 30-year music career, Stallone has recorded nine solo albums and has been awarded ten gold albums, four platinum albums and five gold singles.

Stallone has also been prolific in the movie business, writing songs for 13 feature films, including "Staying Alive," "Expendables II," Rocky I, II, III, "Rocky

Balboa," "Over The Top" and "Rambo First Blood II." Over the five nights, Stallone will reinterpret some of his timeless hits such as "Far From Over," "Take You Back" and "Music is my life it's what I know and what I love," allowing locals and visitors alike to sit back and listen to Stallone's unique tunes with a drink at Bellini Lounge.



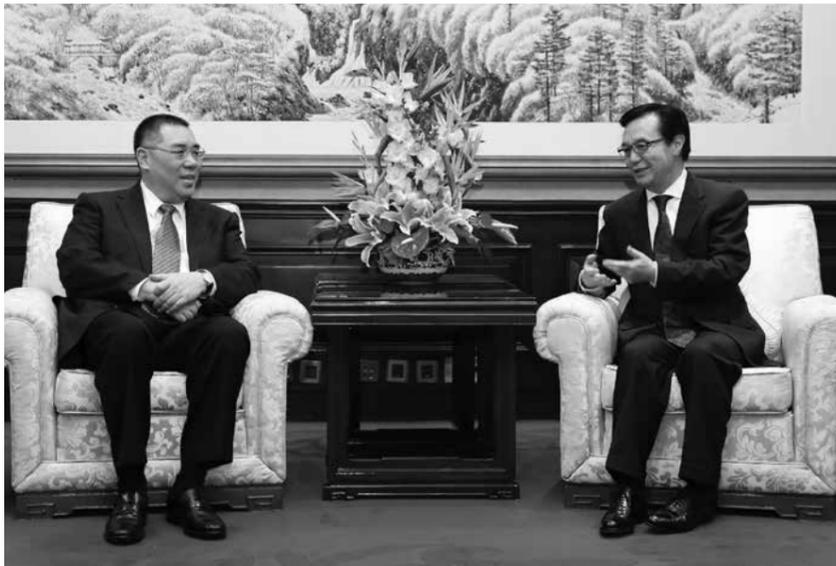
China focused on Macau as a cooperation platform for Portuguese-speaking countries

CHINA'S Trade Ministry is focused on Macau's role as a services platform for trade cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, Chief executive Chui Sai On said Tuesday.

Taking stock of his visit to Beijing during which he presented the central government with proposals for the 13th five-year plan, Chui said had meetings at the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine, the Ministry of Trade and the National Development and Reform Commission.

The Chief Executive said that during the next five-year plan Macau should continue its efforts to serve as a "platform for economic and trade cooperation services between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries" to move towards a "macro culture" consisting of integration of culture and innovation in various industries, so that this platform can bring together new elements in different areas and focus on its promotion.

Chui Sai On said Macau, as well as becoming a platform for servi-



The Minister of Commerce Gao Hucheng and Chief Executive Chui Sai On

ces for trade cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, would increase its work to fulfil the aim of becoming an international tourism and leisure center.

In the context of regional cooperation, along with Nansha, in

Guangdong and Hengqin Island in Zhuhai, Chui said Macau had already delivered an official request to the central government to create, through cooperation with Zhongshan, a pilot area of general cooperation between Guangdong and Macau. **MDT/Macauhub**

EAST TIMOR

Government approves USD102 million funding for Oe-Cusse Ambeno Authority

THE government of Timor-Leste has approved funding of USD102.43 million, for the 2014 and 2015 budget, of the Authority of the Special Administrative Region of Oe-Cusse Ambeno, according to a statement issued in Dili.

In the statement, the government said that this funding, which will also be channeled to the Special Social Market Economy Zone of Oe-Cusse Ambeno and Atauro, was approved at the extraordinary meeting of the Council of Ministers held on 23 January 23 in Pante Macassar, in the enclave.

The meeting also approved a budget of \$20.5 million for the special regional authority in the 2014 budget, which is added to \$81.93 million for this year's budget.

In addition to the budgetary allocation, the government approved the "transfer of functions, means and resources for the Oe-Cusse Special Administrative Region Authority."

The government also decided to dissolve the Oe-Cusse Ambeno Transition Commission established in September 2014, and create a Coordination and Monitoring Committee between the central government and the regional authority. **MDT/Macauhub**

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN' "

TIBET

Communist officials punished for helping Dalai Lama

Louise Watt, Beijing

INVESTIGATORS have found that 15 Communist Party officials in Tibet joined underground Tibetan independence organizations, provided intelligence to the Dalai Lama and his supporters or participated in activities deemed harmful to China's security, a party agency said yesterday.

The publicizing of party officials supporting Tibetan separatism was highly unusual and suggested continuing unrest in the Himalayan region, which has had a heavy security presence since a wave of riots and protests against Chinese rule in 2008.

The involvement was uncovered last year during an investigation of a small group of party officials, according to a statement from the Communist Party Disciplinary Commission of Tibet posted on its website. Fifteen officials received unspecified punishment for violating party and political discipline, the commission said.

It was not immediately clear why the cases were announced this week. The commission's statement gave no details of the groups that the party members joined, the intelligence they provided or other activities that would have harmed national security. Calls to party representatives in Tibet were not answered, and the discipline commission's phone number was not publicly available.

Journalists' access to Tibet is tightly restricted and all information from the region is extremely difficult to confirm. While details such as the name of

the officials punished were not provided, it is likely they were ethnic Tibetans who traditionally practice a form of Tantric Buddhism of which the Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader.

Ethnic minorities, including Tibetans and Muslim Uighurs from the neighboring Xinjiang region, make up about 6 percent of the Communist Party's 86 million members. They are recruited to fill posts at various levels as a key component of the party's united front policy, although the top party official in provinces and regions such as Tibet is always a member of China's overwhelming majority Han ethnic group.

A discipline investigator, Ye Dongsong, was quoted in the party-run Global Times newspaper as saying that the Tibetan regional government should focus on neutralizing separatists, maintaining social stability and more strictly monitoring projects in the region.

The announcement follows warnings of stiff punishments for those who offer support to the Dalai Lama or Tibetan separatism, and shows that the government has failed to eradicate support for the spiritual leader, even among party officials, said Kate Saunders, communications director for the Washington, D.C.-based International Campaign for Tibet. She said that failure has come despite efforts to guide people in the region into being more "patriotic and progressive."

"The Chinese government is literally seeking to replace loyalty to the Dalai Lama in Tibetan hearts and minds with allegiance to the Chinese Party-

AP PHOTO



Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama

state," she said.

Beijing accuses the Dalai Lama, who fled to India after a failed 1959 uprising, of being intent on splitting Tibet from China, a charge he denies.

Many Tibetans say Beijing's economic policies in the Hi-

malayan region have mainly benefited Chinese migrants, and resent the government's strict limits on Buddhism and Tibetan culture. More than 100 Tibetans have self-immolated since 2009 to protest Beijing's rule. **AP**

Yuan joins top 5 most-used global currencies

Joe McDonald, Beijing

CHINA'S yuan has become one of the five most widely used currencies in global payments, an international financial transactions agency announced yesterday.

The yuan passed the Canadian and Australian dollars in popularity in December, according to the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication, which provides communications between financial institutions and companies. It said the yuan now ranks behind the dollar, the euro, the British pound and Japanese yen.

AP PHOTO



The change is an "important milestone," and confirms the yuan's transition from an emerging to a "business as usual" curren-

cy, said Wim Raymaekers, Swift's head of banking markets, in a statement.

Beijing is gradually easing controls on the yuan and encouraging its use abroad in an effort to reduce costs for its traders and increase Chinese companies' role in the global economy.

The yuan's exchange rate is set by China's central bank and the currency doesn't trade freely on global markets. But Beijing has signed agreements with a number of foreign financial centers including London to become hubs for clearing yuan transactions.

The yuan, also known as the renminbi, accounted for 2.17 percent of global payments in December, behind the yen's share of 2.69, according to Swift. The U.S. dollar's share is about 45 percent.

Global payments in yuan increased by 20.3 percent in December, outpacing overall payments growth of 14.9 percent, according to Swift. **AP**

Two new billionaires emerge with Shenzhen stock rally

Sterling Wong and Jill Mao

A rally in shares on China's Shenzhen Stock Exchange has made Xiao Fen and Ruan Hongxian billionaires as their companies' stocks climbed.

Xiao, chairman of Shenzhen Fenda Technology Co., a consumer electronics company that invested in a maker of Google Glass-like products, has a net worth exceeding USD1 billion as the stock surged to a record. Ruan, who owns China's third-biggest publicly traded drug-store chain, also has a fortune of more than \$1 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index.

The Shenzhen Stock Exchange Composite Index, which tracks shares on the smaller of China's two stock exchanges, has jumped 8.7 percent this year, making it the best performer in Asia after Indian equity markets. Xiao's Fenda Technology has surged 49 percent since the start of the year, while Ruan's Yunnan Hongxiang Yixintang Pharmaceutical Co. added 19 percent.

"Investor confidence in the Chinese market has improved," said Wang Weijun, a strategist at Zhesang Securities Co. in Shanghai. "That has led to improved liquidity in the Shenzhen Stock Exchange."

The Shenzhen index dropped 0.7 percent at the close, reversing a gain of 0.3 percent. Ruan's stock jumped to an 11-week high, while Xiao's company extended gains to a record.

Xiao, 52, controls more than half of Fenda Technology along with his wife and daughter, according to exchange filings.

"Being on a rich list only reflects paper wealth," Zhou Guiqing, a securities representative at Fenda Technologies, said on behalf of the billionaire, describing him as "thrifty." "His mission is to develop the business well." **Bloomberg**

Joe McDonald
Business Writer, Beijing

Regulators criticize Alibaba in report withheld until after IPO

CHINESE regulators accused e-commerce giant Alibaba of permitting sales of fake goods and hurting consumers in a report that was withheld until now to avoid disrupting the company's U.S. stock market debut.

Alibaba, one of China's biggest private companies, responded yesterday with a statement accusing the regulator of bias and misconduct in a rare break with the obedient public tone of Chinese businesses in dealings with authorities.

The sternly worded report by the State Administration of Industry and Commerce said Alibaba allowed unlicensed merchants to use its Taobao and Tmall platforms and failed to protect consumers' rights.

The report was the result of a meeting in July between regulators and Alibaba Group Ltd. management but the regulator said its release was postponed to avoid affecting progress toward the company's New York stock market listing. Alibaba went public in September after raising a record USD25 billion in an initial public offering.

Alibaba accused the SAIC official in charge of Internet monitoring, Liu Hongliang, of unspecified "procedural misconduct." It said the company will file a formal complaint with the agency.

Such public defiance is almost unheard of in a Chinese system in which companies nearly always respond to official criticism by promising to reform.

"We welcome fair and just supervision, and oppose selective omissions and malicious actions," said the statement.



Employees work at Alibaba.com Ltd.'s headquarters in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province

"Obtaining a biased conclusion using the wrong methodology has inflicted irreparable and serious damage to Taobao and Chinese online businesses."

Alibaba did not immediately respond to a request for details of what it believed to be misconduct.

The U.S. government and others have accused Alibaba of allowing sales of counterfeit goods but yesterday's report

was the first time the Chinese government has criticized a company that is a leading star in an Internet industry communist leaders are eager to develop.

"Illegal business exists on Alibaba Group's trading platforms, and for a long time the company has failed to pay adequate attention and failed to take measures to stop it," the government report said. "This

not only is the biggest crisis of integrity faced by the company since its founding, but also has hurt other Internet companies that try to operate legally."

It said Alibaba allowed "illegal advertising" that misled consumers with false claims about low prices and other details. It said some Alibaba employees took bribes and the company failed to deal effectively with fraud.

The report said regulators and Alibaba would work together to improve management but gave no details of planned changes.

Alibaba, founded in 1999 by Jack Ma, a former English teacher, was one of China's earliest Internet companies. Its IPO made Ma China's richest entrepreneur with a net worth of \$25 billion.

Alibaba earned \$485 million in the three months ended in September, which was its first quarter as a publicly traded company, and generated revenue of \$2.7 billion. It said the total amount of goods sold rose 49 percent and the number of active buyers rose 52 percent to 307 million.

The U.S. Commerce Department added Taobao in 2011 to a blacklist of "notorious markets" linked to sales of pirated and fake goods. The company was removed the following year.

In December, the company said it had removed 90 million listings for goods that might have violated intellectual property rights. The company said it spent \$161 million from the start of 2013 through late 2014 on blocking counterfeit goods and improving consumer protection.

In January, Alibaba and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission announced an initiative under which the Chinese company will prevent vendors from exporting to the United States goods that are the target of recall orders. **AP**

Army's call for commanders to obey Xi signals tensions

David Tweed

CHINA'S military must "resolutely obey" orders from President Xi Jinping, a commentary on the PLA Daily website said, a sign Xi is seeking to quell possible dissent as his anti-graft probe penetrates deeper into the armed forces.

"Adherence to the Party's absolute leadership is a founding principal of the army," said the commentary published yesterday on the website of the People's Liberation Army. All officers and soldiers should "resolutely obey" the Communist Party and Central Military



Members of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) walk past the Tiananmen Gate in Beijing

Commission Chairman's orders. Xi heads the party and the CMC, the highest military body.

Publication of the commentary comes two weeks after 16 People's Liberation Army generals were put under investigation for graft as Xi seeks to root out corruption that he says undermines combat readiness.

"There must have been a lot of grumbling in the PLA," said Jean-Pierre Cabestan, director of government and international studies at Hong Kong Baptist University. "It underscores that there must have been some friction between Xi and some leaders. Otherwise they wouldn't need a front page commentary."

Representatives of the military participated for the first time in the annual plenary session of

the party's top disciplinary agency, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, earlier this month, according to the official WeChat account of the People's Daily. At a recent internal meeting with senior military officials, Xi urged top PLA officers to set an example for both the military and the public.

"We should be self-disciplined," Xi was quoted as saying on the official WeChat account. "If we ourselves indulge in indiscreet activities, how can we demand others to discipline themselves?"

Xu Caihou, a former vice chairman of the CMC, was expelled from the party last June. That marked the highest-level military graft probe since 1949. His case has been handed over to military prosecutors. **Bloomberg**

Denis D. Gray, Chiang Mai

THE last time I encountered escargots they were served up by a French waiter, sizzling in garlic and herb butter. Now, one is slithering up the bridge of my nose while five others are being stuck onto other parts of my face by a Thai beautician, all secreting snail slime to hopefully smooth out some wrinkles and otherwise give me a younger-than-my-age look.

That this latest addition to the global beauty and wellness craze — snail facials — should surface in the hills of northern Thailand is only natural. This Southeast Asian country ranks among the world's top spa destinations, with massage treatments of every description offered around just about every corner. Other members of the animal kingdom are also enlisted, including fish at some 4,000 pedicure spas.

Merely another marketing ploy or an effective way to plump up skin in need of repair or rejuvenation? Expert opinions differ. The two young Thai women reclining next to me at Chiang Mai's Snail Spa sang the praises of helix aspera muller glycoconjugates, snail mucus for short.

And when I returned home, my wife described my face as "different," but declined to go into detail.

Appropriately, given the French passion for these gastropods, the spa was started last year by two Frenchmen who had imported 100 of them from home. The colony now boasts more than 30,000, munching on chemically free carrots, cabbage and aloe on a certified organic farm.

"We take care of the snails as if they were our family, our babies. You can see they look very good," says Luc Champeyroux, one of the partners, gently applying one to his forearm. He does confess to eating escargots ("but not mine"), plans to breed some for the table and is currently experimenting to produce "the perfect snail caviar."

A chosen few get plucked from the farm for duty at the spa, where I opted for the 45-minute Snail Spa Celebrity Course. For USD30, it's a bargain compared to the \$200 customers must shell out at Tokyo's Ci:z.



A customer receives a beauty treatment with snails at a snail farm in Chiang Mai province

THAILAND

Snails slither into spa scene

Labo, a beauty salon where snail massage made its debut in 2013. Spas have also opened in China and London, and the French duo are expanding to Bangkok next month.

Given its novelty, Chiang Mai public health inspectors last month descended on the spa to determine whether the treatment was safe and if imported snails — officially classified as "alien creatures" — might prove harmful to local species. Results of the investigation have not yet been released.

While the facials are new, concoctions made from snail mucus are said to date back to ancient Greece, when the great physician Hippocrates reportedly crushed snails and sour milk as a cure for skin inflammations. In recent times, the French have turned this essence of escargot into assorted creams and lotions.

The fluid, exuded by snails when under stress, is known to contain beneficial nutrients

and antioxidants, but Bangkok-based Dr. Dissapong Panithaporn and other dermatologists say that there has been no significant scientific research on how these actually work when applied to the skin.

Champeyroux, a manager in France's nuclear power sector before falling in love with

and other techno-treatments but after some research decided that "natural therapy" was better. She said snails helped clear her acne when she was stressed during her studies.

"My face is firmer and softer," she said. "But you don't get immediate results. It shows gradually."

■ That this latest addition to the global beauty and wellness craze — snail facials — should surface in the hills of northern Thailand is only natural

Chiang Mai some years ago, says his all-natural line of snail products, Coquille, acts against burns, acne, stretch marks, scars and aging. The two women next to me concurred.

Taksaphan na Pohn, a 22-year-old recent university graduate, said she had earlier tried laser

Like for many, the prospect of having my face crawling with slimy hermaphrodites (snails are unisex) did not immediately appeal. Although from my own research I decided it might be preferable to another natural therapy — "uguisu no fun," or nightingale feces facial, which

has been around in Japan for centuries.

So after being slathered with one of Champeyroux's creams, the beautician plopped down the first of half a dozen mollusks on my face. A balmy coolness I sensed as they proceeded to slide over my cheeks, furrow through my eyebrows and tickle my lips, taking particular liking to my nose since snails are fond of climbing.

Opening my eyes, I got a macro lens view of one critter perched on my nose tip. Its twin, antennae-like feelers were weaving about, possibly seeking an escape route with its tiny eyes. The snail's 14,000 microscopic teeth produced a slight, not unpleasant, scratching when it slid toward my nostrils.

So if truth be told, I sort of missed my harmless, sensuous sextet when they were dislodged, clinging to my skin with a gentle suction.

Maybe I won't eat another escargot again. **AP**

Rod McGuirk, Canberra

AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIA'S highest court yesterday narrowly ruled that Australia acted legally when it held 157 Sri Lankan asylum seekers at sea for almost a month last year.

The High Court judges voted 4-3 to reject a claim for damages for false imprisonment by one of the ethnic Tamils held

aboard an Australian customs vessel in the Indian Ocean.

Lawyers for the Sri Lankans had hoped that a win would have also challenged the legality of the Australian policy of turning back asylum

seeker boats to Indonesia.

The 157 Tamil men, women and children had left the southeast Indian port of Pondicherry in an Indian-flagged ship in late June and were intercepted by the customs vessel.

They spent weeks aboard the vessel before they were transferred to the remote Curtin Detention Center in Western Australia state on July 27, after India agreed to consider taking them back.

However, the Sri Lankans refused to meet with Indian officials and were flown to an immigration detention camp that Australia runs on the Pacific island nation of Nauru.

According to the U.N.,

more than 100,000 Tamil civilians fled to India to escape fighting between Sri Lanka's government forces and the now defeated Tamil Tiger rebels, who had been fighting for an independent homeland since 1983.

Australia enforces a tough policy of refusing to resettle refugees who attempt to reach the country by boat. **AP**

Elaine Kurtenbach, Tokyo

JAPAN

Hostage Mom's plea to Abe: Please save Kenji

THE mother of a Japanese hostage held by Islamic State group extremists appealed publicly to Japan's leader to save her son yesterday after his captors purportedly issued what they said was a final death threat.

Junko Ishido, mother of journalist Kenji Goto, read to reporters her plea to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, which she said she sent after both Abe and the main government spokesmen declined to meet with her because their schedules were full.

"Please save Kenji's life," Ishido said, begging Abe to work with the Jordanian government until the very end to try to save Goto.

"Kenji has only a little time left," she said.

The effort to free Goto and a captured Jordanian pilot, Lt. Mu'ath al-Kaseasbeh, gained urgency with the release of an apparent ultimatum late Tuesday from the Islamic State group.

In the message, the extremists said the two hostages would be killed within 24 hours unless Jordan frees Sajida al-Rishawi, an Iraqi woman sentenced to death in Jordan for her involvement in a 2005 terrorist attack on a hotel that killed 60 people.

Jawad al-Kaseasbeh, an uncle of the captured pilot, said yesterday that the family had seen no signs of progress toward his possible release. "We are still waiting," al-Kaseasbeh told The Associated Press by phone.

Yasuhide Nakayama, a Japanese envoy for the crisis in the Jordanian capital, Amman, said only that talks on securing Goto's release were "ongoing."

"I don't have any information that I can share with you at the moment," he said when asked about possible "good developments."

"There are various reports but I don't know at all if they are true," he said.

"We will never give up until our Japanese hostage Mr. Goto comes back," Nakayama said. "We will pray for him. We will never give up."

In Tokyo, chief government spokesman Yoshihide Suga said he had no new developments to report.

"As the government, we are doing everything we can," he told reporters, appearing grim and weary.

Abe earlier expressed outrage at the threat.

"This was an extremely despicable act and we feel strong indignation. We strongly condemn that," Abe said. "While this is a tough situation, we remain unchanged in our stance of seeking help from the Jordanian government in securing the early release of Mr. Goto."

The Jordanian pilot's father, Safi al-Kaseasbeh, beseeched his government "to meet the demands" of the Islamic State group.

"All people must know, from the

AP PHOTO



This still image taken from a video posted on YouTube by jihadists on Tuesday purports to show a still photo of Japanese journalist Kenji Goto holding what appears to be a photo of Jordanian pilot 1st Lt. Mu'ath al-Kaseasbeh

head of the regime to everybody else, that the safety of Mu'ath means the stability of Jordan, and the death of Mu'ath means chaos in Jordan," he told The Associated Press.

About 200 of the pilot's relatives protested outside the prime minister's office in Amman, chanting anti-government slogans and urging that it meet the captors' demands.

■ The extremists said the two hostages would be killed within 24 hours

The chairman of the foreign affairs committee of Jordan's parliament, Bassam Al-Manasseer, told Bloomberg News that the country was in indirect talks with the militants through religious and tribal leaders in Iraq to secure the hostages' release. He said Jordan and Japan would not negotiate directly with the Islamic State group and would not free al-Rishawi in exchange for Goto only.

Jordan's main ally, the U.S., opposes negotiating with extremists, but Manasseer's comments were the strongest suggestion yet that Japan and Jordan might be open to a prisoner exchange.

The militants reportedly have killed one Japanese hostage, Haruna Yukawa, and the crisis has stunned Japan.

Although many in Japan are critical of the two men for going to Syria, Goto's friends and supporters have launched a social media campaign calling for his release.

Tuesday's video resembled a message released over the weekend that purportedly withdrew a demand for USD200 million in ransom for Goto and Yukawa made in an earlier message.

The AP could not independently verify the videos released Saturday and Tuesday. They lack the logo of the Islamic State group's al-Furqan media arm. But some militant websites affiliated with the Islamic State group referenced the latest video and posted links to it Tuesday.

The latest message condemns Jordan for not releasing al-Rishawi, saying that unless she is freed within 24 hours, the pilot, followed by Goto, will be killed. It says it is the group's last message.

"I have only 24 hours left to live and the pilot has even less," it

says.

A release of al-Rishawi would be a major propaganda coup for the Islamic State and would allow the group to reaffirm its links to al-Qaida in Iraq.

Messages from other Western hostages held by the group have been read by the captives on camera and it is unclear why the group released only a recording and still picture.

Al-Kaseasbeh, 26, was seized after his Jordanian F-16 crashed near the Islamic State group's de facto capital of Raqqa in December. He is the first foreign military pilot they have captured since a U.S.-led coalition that includes Jordan began an aerial campaign against the Islamic State group in August.

This is the first time that the group has publicly demanded the

release of prisoners in exchange for hostages. Previous captives may have been released in exchange for ransom, although the governments involved have refused to confirm any payments were made.

Goto, a freelance journalist, was caught in October in Syria, apparently while trying to rescue Yukawa, 42, who was taken hostage last summer.

The mother of another Jordanian prisoner, Ziad al-Karboli, said her family was told the Islamic State group also wants his release as part of a swap, but it is unclear if that was related to a possible deal involving the Japanese hostage.

Al-Karboli, an aide to a former al-Qaida leader in Iraq, was sentenced to death in 2008 for killing a Jordanian citizen. **AP**

JORDAN READY TO SWAP PRISONER FOR PILOT HELD BY ISLAMIC STATE

JORDAN'S INFORMATION minister says his government is ready to swap an Iraqi woman held in Jordan for a Jordanian pilot captured in December by extremists from the Islamic State group. Mohammed al-Momani made no mention in his statement yesterday of Japanese journalist Kenji Goto, who is also being held by the Islamic State group. Al-Momani's comments were carried by Jordan's state Petra news agency. The minister says that "Jordan is ready to release the Iraqi prisoner" if the Jordanian pilot, Lt. Mu'ath al-Kaseasbeh, is released unharmed.



A passerby carrying a garbage bag stops to look at posters depicting politicians including President Enrique Peña Nieto, left, along with the words in Spanish "State terrorist," during a protest marking four months since the disappearance of 43 students from a rural teachers' college, in Mexico City

MEXICO

Investigation shows that all 43 students dead

Alberto Arce and Maria Verza, Mexico City

INVESTIGATORS are now certain that 43 college students missing since September were killed and incinerated after they were seized by police in southern Guerrero state, the Mexican attorney

general said.

It was the first time Jesus Murillo Karam said definitely that all were dead, even though Mexican authorities have DNA identification for only one student and a declaration from a laboratory in Innsbruck, Austria, that it appears impossible to identify the others.

The attorney general cited confessions and forensic evidence from an area near a garbage dump where the Sept. 26 crime occurred that showed the fuel and temperature of the fire were sufficient to turn 43 bodies into ashes.

"The evidence allows us to determine that the students

were kidnapped, killed, burned and thrown into the river," Murillo Karam said in a press conference that included a video reconstruction of the mass slaying and of the investigation into the case.

He added that "there is not a single shred of evidence that the army intervened ... not a single shred of evidence of the participation of the army," as relatives of the victims have claimed.

Murillo Karam's explanation seemed unlikely to quell the controversy and doubts about the case, in which the federal government has been criticized for acting slowly and callously. Thousands of people demonstrated in Mexico City Monday night, demanding the students be returned alive.

"They pretty much gave the same story as they had given two months ago. There are not many additional details," said analyst Alejandro Hope. "They are searching for closure but I'm not sure they're going to get it."

The attorney general has come under attack from many quarters, including the students' relatives and fire experts, who say the government's version of what happened is implausible. Family members are still searching in hopes of finding the students alive.

The Argentine Forensic Anthropologists, an independent team hired by parents to work with federal investigators, told The Associated Press on Sunday that there is still not "sufficient evidence" to link the charred remains found by authorities in a river in the town of Cocula to what happened at the garbage dump.

Valentin Cornelio Gonzalez, 30, brother-in-law of missing student Abel Garcia Hernan-

dez, said the shifting theories of what happened to the students have left him and other family members not believing anything that officials say.

"On a personal level, it makes me mad because this is what they've always done," he said of Tuesday's announcement. "There's no chance that the parents are going to believe the PGR (saying) that they're dead. ... They are going to look for them alive."

Murillo Karam said the conclusion was made based on the testimony of a key suspect arrested two weeks ago, Felipe Rodriguez Salgado, who said he was called to get rid of the students. There are also 39 confessions. Based on samples of gasoline, diesel and steel from burned tires, he said, they concluded that the amount of heat from the fire and the location could have kept the blaze going for hours, and that the remains were crushed afterward.

Authorities say they were burned the night of Sept. 26 and over the next day, and their incinerated remains were bagged up and thrown into a nearby river. The remains in the bags found in the river had traces of the garbage dump where the fire occurred, Murillo Karam added.

The scene of the crime was an 800-meter ravine that resembled a furnace, said criminal investigations chief Tomas Zeron.

Murillo Karam said the information was based as well on 386 declarations, 487 forensic tests, 16 raids and two reconstructions.

So far 99 people have been detained in connection with the crime, including the former mayor of Iguala, Jose Luis Abarca. **AP**

LIBYA

Group loyal to Islamic State claims hotel attack

Esam Mohamed, Tripoli

A Libyan affiliate of the extremist Islamic State group claimed responsibility yesterday for an attack on a Tripoli luxury hotel that killed 10 people, including an American and four Europeans.

The group, calling itself "Islamic State in Tripoli Province," said it launched the attack Tuesday to avenge the death of Abu Anas al-Libi, who was snatched off a Tripoli street by U.S. special forces in 2013 and died in U.S. custody earlier this month due to complications from liver surgery. Al-Libi had been indicted in U.S. federal court

over his alleged role in the 1998 al-Qaida bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

The group identified the attackers as Abu Ibrahim al-Tunsi and Abu Suleiman al-Sudani, noms de guerre that suggest the attackers were Tunisian and Sudanese. The claim of responsibility was dated Tuesday but first appeared on jihadi forums yesterday.

"The operation is not the last one on the lands of Tripoli... Let the enemies of God, the crusaders and their allies await what would harm them," the message read.

The affiliate previously claimed responsibility for an attack on the Algerian



In this image made from video posted by a Libyan blogger, the Cortinthia Hotel is seen under attack in Tripoli

Embassy that wounded three guards. It also previously posted pictures of

fighters touring markets and distributing pamphlets. Yesterday's pos-

ting matched previous messages posted on Twitter and social media, but it was not immediately possible to confirm the claim.

Since the 2011 uprising that ousted longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi the country has been awash in armed militias, including several Islamic extremist groups. A group of Islamist militias control Tripoli, and the internationally recognized government convenes in the far east of the vast, oil-rich country.

In addition to the foreigners, five guards were killed in the attack Tuesday on the seaside Cortinthia Hotel. Two attackers were

killed following an hour-long standoff that included a car bombing.

A senior U.S. State Department official confirmed that an American citizen was among those killed. Cliff Taylor, the CEO of a Virginia security company, Crucible LLC, identified the slain American as David Berry, a contractor with his company.

The online message said that those killed were American, French, South Korean and Filipino. Earlier, Essam al-Naasa, a spokesman for a Tripoli security agency, said the dead included an American, a French citizen and three others from the former Soviet Union. **AP**

Seth Borenstein and Geoff Mulvihill

USA

Blizzard wasn't a bust, but it was a miss for many

IN the wild world of winter weather, location is everything. So small last minute changes in the air morphed what was supposed to be crippling deep snow into a handful of centimeters, leading forecasters to apologize, politicians to explain themselves and some Northeast residents wondering where the much-hyped snow went.

The not-so-great blizzard of 2015 did wallop the Northeast: Long Island and Massachusetts got hammered with around one meter of snow.

But snowfall in the self-absorbed media capital of New York City, shut down in advance, was under 0.3 meters. New Jersey and Philadelphia also were spared.

Meteorologists say the nor'easter stayed about 120 to 160 kilometers east of its predicted track, which meant the western edge — New York and New Jersey — got 25 centimeters less than forecast.

"That miss occurred in the most populous corridor in the nation," said David Robinson, director of the Rutgers Global Snow Lab and New Jersey's state climatologist. "Had it been between Albany and Syracuse,



Pedestrians and cars cross the Brooklyn Bridge

not to disparage them, no one would have made much of this."

The region girded for something historic or epic but got much less.

"I expected tons of snow,"

New York cabaret singer Susanne Payot said, walking through Central Park with her home-from-school daughters and their golden retriever, Alvin. "This is nothing. I don't

understand why the whole city shut down because of this."

Before heavy snows began falling, officials shut down roads and public transportation across in New York City, in New Jersey and on Long Island. The Amtrak railroad suspended train service and air traffic slowed to a stop. Schools along the East Coast on Monday canceled Tuesday classes.

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie defended his decision to ban travel on all state roads. "We were acting based on what we were being told," he said.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said he was criticized for under-reacting to the November mega storm in Buffalo, so he worked "on the theory of living learned and a little wiser."

A National Weather Service forecaster who was called a hero of 2012's Superstorm Sandy tweeted an apology for the

errant forecast.

"You made a lot of tough decisions expecting us to get it right, and we didn't. Once again, I'm sorry," wrote Gary Szatkowski, a National Weather Service forecaster in New Jersey.

Late Monday, the computer models started to move the storm more east and away from New York City, but by that time "media and social media hype was out of the bottle," said University of Georgia meteorology professor Marshall Shepherd.

The European computer model that was praised for accurately forecasting Superstorm Sandy failed more than others, Masters said.

Meteorologists defended the forecast — to a point.

"It's just that we didn't get the western edge of the forecast correct. If you want to call that a bust, I think you're being a little harsh," Masters said. **AP**

AD


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what's ON



POSTER DESIGN EXHIBITION
IN CELEBRATION OF THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE MACAU HANDOVER
TIME: 10am-7pm
(Closed on Mondays, no admission after 6:30 pm)
UNTIL: March 15, 2015
VENUE: The Handover Gifts Museum of Macau,
Avenida Xian Xing Hai, NAPE
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 8504 1800

HAND PAINTED PORCELAIN
- FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH:
EAST-WEST RITUALS BY ARLINDA FROTA
TIME: 2pm-7pm (closed on Sundays)
UNTIL: February 7, 2015
VENUE: Creative Macau, G/F Macau Cultural
Centre Building, Xian Xing Hai Avenue
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2875 3282

**KOREAN ART EXHIBITION OH YOUNG SOOK
AND KIM YEON OK**
TIME: 11am-7pm
UNTIL: February 15, 2015
VENUE: IAOHIN Gallery, Rua da Tercena no. 39a
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2892 1908

GRAND TAIPA NATURAL PARK
PARK AND SCULPTURE ZONE: 24 hours
GRASS-SKIING FIELD: 2:30pm-5:30pm (Tuesdays
to Fridays); 10:30am-5:30pm (Weekends and
public holidays)
VENUE: Rampa do Observatório, Taipa
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2888 0087

**PENGUINS UNDERCOVER ICE WORLD
WITH THE DREAMWORKS GANG**
TIME: 11am-8pm
UNTIL: March 8, 2015
VENUE: Cotai Expo
ADMISSION: MOP120
ENQUIRIES: 2882 8818

"SEE AND TOUCH"
- TOUCHABLE ARTS EXHIBITION
TIME: 12pm-7pm (Closed on public holidays)
UNTIL: March 31, 2015
VENUE: Artistry of Wind Box Community
Development Association / Rua Tomas Vieira 3A
R/C
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 6685 9215

Offbeat

**US: YEARS-OLD STASH OF MARIJUANA
FOUND INSIDE WOMAN'S VAN**

A woman drove a van for more than 13 years without realizing there was marijuana hidden inside.

Melodie Peil told the Alamogordo Daily News (bit.ly/1Ep572B) she bought a 1990 Chevrolet van at a local dealership in 2001 so she would have room to transport her daughter's children.

Until Friday, she had no idea that on trips to softball games and on vacations out of town she had been transporting six kilograms of marijuana hidden in one of the vehicle's doors.

A family friend discovered the marijuana when he removed a door panel to repair a broken handle.

Inside a hole cut in the door were five bricks of marijuana covered in plastic wrap and foil.

Police say the marijuana is so old that it's worthless.

TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	RTPi Live
18:10	Brazil Avenue (Repeated)
19:00	Montra do Lilau (Repeated)
19:30	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	TDM Talk Show
21:30	Criminal Minds S8
22:10	Brazil Avenue
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Miscellaneous
00:20	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)

cinema

CINETEATRO

29 JAN - 4 FEV



BLACKHAT
ROOM 1
2.15, 4.45, 7.15, 9.45 pm
Director: Michael Mann
Starring: Chris Hemsworth, Viola Davis, Wei Tang
Language: English (Chinese)
Duration: 133min



NIGHTCRAWLER
ROOM 2
2.30, 4.45, 7.15, 9.30 pm
Director: Dan Gilroy
Starring: Jake Gyllenhaal, Rene Russo, Riz Ahmed, Bill Paxton
Language: English (Chinese)
Duration: 117min



AMERICAN SNIPER
ROOM 3
2.15, 4.45, 7.15, 9.45 pm
Director: Clint Eastwood
Starring: Bradley Cooper, Sienna Miller, Kyle Gallner
Language: English (Chinese)
Duration: 132min

MACAU TOWER

29 JAN - 4 FEB

BLACKHAT
2.30, 4.30, 7.00, 9.30 pm
Director: Michael Mann
Starring: Chris Hemsworth, Viola Davis, Wei Tang
Language: English (Chinese)
Duration: 133min

this day in history

**1959 FOG BRINGS
TRANSPORT CHAOS**

Dense fog - the worst for seven years - has brought road, rail and air transport in many parts of England and Wales to a virtual standstill.

London has been worst affected - but many areas of the Midlands, East Anglia, southern England and east and south Wales have also been shrouded in fog and frost for most of the day.

In 1952, London suffered from what became known as The Great Smog - fog intensified by thick smoke. More than 2,000 people died in the week ending 6 December mostly from chest and lung-related illnesses.

The Meteorological Office is predicting the latest "smog" will persist during the next 24 hours in the London area and possibly in some parts of South Wales, Birmingham and the industrial Midlands.

An AA spokesman said 28 hours of fog in the capital had left a nil-visibility ring around London.

He said: "It is a motorist's nightmare as rush-hour drivers grope their way through nil visibility in the Hendon, Finchley, Northolt, Wandsworth, Bromley and Sidcup districts."

Traffic patrols have reported nose-to-tail jams and vehicles travelling at a crawl from all parts of the capital.

At least six people were injured in three collisions on the ice-covered Kingston by-pass in Surrey. Thirty-five vehicles were involved in a collision in dense fog at Hampton Hill in Middlesex.

A London Transport spokesman said many buses had been unable to leave their garages because crews could not get to work on time.

London airport was closed with visibility down to 20 yards. Many flights were diverted into Gatwick.

Many long-distance trains from London were cancelled. Suburban services were also seriously disrupted.

There are some businesses benefiting from the smog. One Birmingham travel agent has reported bookings up 10% on last year and the number of inquiries has gone up since the fog descended.

Chemists are also reporting a boom in the sale of smog masks. One chemist in the centre of Manchester had sold out of masks by 1000 this morning.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

In response to the smog of December 1952, the Clean Air Act was introduced in 1956.

It restricted the burning of domestic fuels in urban areas with the introduction of smokeless zones, but fogs continued to be smoky after the act as residents and operators were given time to convert.

The act was revised in 1968 when industries burning coal, gas or other fuels were ordered to use tall chimneys. In 1974 the first Control of Air Pollution act introduced regulations on the composition of motor fuels.

By the 1980s and '90s the increasing use of the motor vehicle led to a new kind of smog caused by the chemical reaction of car pollutants and the sunshine.

The 1995 Environment Act introduced new regulations for air pollutants.

YOUR STARS

Aries

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Keep on moving forward! It's one of those days that's easy to write off if you feel lazy or depressed, but you should be able to find a spark within yourself that keeps you on track and energized.

Taurus

April 20-May 20

You feel terrific as great personal energy comes your way and brings you closer to nature. Even if you're a hardcore tech-lover or indoors type, you find a way to connect to the earth.

Gemini

May 21-Jun. 21

Things don't look good right now - but that just means you either need to try harder or come back in a few days when things are aligned in your favor. Don't slam your head against this wall!

Cancer

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

This isn't a big social day for you - or at least you wish it weren't! If you must drag yourself out and about, try to just smile and let others take the lead. You've got inner journeys to take care of!

Leo

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You feel slightly larger than life today - but watch out! Many people are on the lookout for signs of ego, and if you give them what they want, they are sure to turn against you. Stay humble!

Virgo

Aug. 23-Sept. 22

You're feeling a bit more critical than usual - but your energy is too good to nitpick! Try to redirect it in a positive, creative direction, so you can look back on the day with pride!

Libra

Sep.23-Oct. 22

You're thinking about your past - and you may not feel all that great about it! That's okay, as most of us have things we'd rather not dwell on. If you can accept it and move on, you're doing great!

Scorpio

Oct. 23 - Nov. 21

Today is all about willpower - and who wants to win. You may find that you need to push someone out of the way, but it's likely to be for their own good in the long run. Do what you must!

Sagittarius

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You have your own way of saying and doing things, and today you need to make sure that you're doing what comes naturally instead of trying to accommodate other people's comfort.

Capricorn

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

It's a really good time for you to move on autopilot - any plans you have are sure to work out just fine. If you've got nothing going on, then you can at least enjoy the influx of good energy.

Aquarius

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You feel somewhat restricted today - so see if you can just embrace that and keep your activities low-key. You know the pendulum will swing back toward freedom soon, so why fight it now?

Pisces

Feb.19-Mar. 20

You've got folks watching out for you that you don't even know about yet. It's a good time for you to ask the universe for assistance and see what comes of it. Things are sure to get really interesting!

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

5x5 grid for Easy Sudoku puzzle.

Easy+

5x5 grid for Easy+ Sudoku puzzle.

Medium

5x5 grid for Medium Sudoku puzzle.

Hard

5x5 grid for Hard Sudoku puzzle.

WEATHER

Table with columns: MIN, MAX, CONDITION

CHINA

Table of weather conditions for various Chinese cities like Beijing, Harbin, Tianjin, etc.

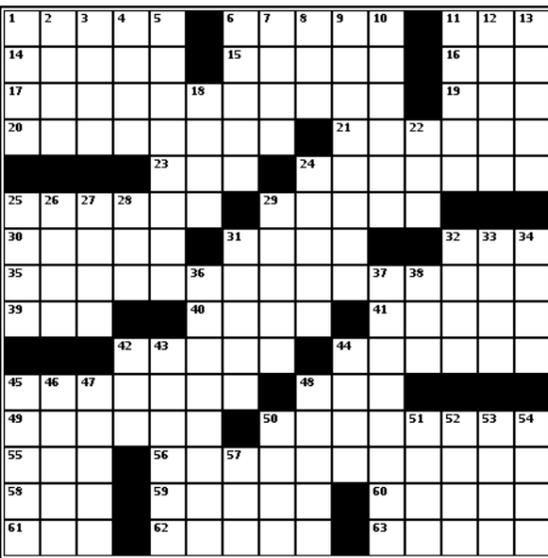
WORLD

Table of weather conditions for world cities like Moscow, Frankfurt, Paris, London, New York.

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Reason for a raise; 6- Big; 11- Altar in the sky; 14- Coeur d'Alene; 15- Midway state; 16- Tin; 17- Podiatrist; 19- Tractor-trailer; 20- Bring under Chinese influence; 21- Cherry red; 23- "Wheel of Fortune" buy; 24- Having two methods; 25- Zit; 29- Actress Spacek; 30- Slippery as ice; 31- Long objects used to row a boat; 32- Aussie hopper; 35- In spite of; 39- Lilt syllable; 40- Cleanse; 41- Enthusiastic; 42- Pixie; 44- Snarl; 45- Virgin Mary; 48- Neither's partner; 49- Pulsating; 50- Middle way; 55- Meadow; 56- Chopin's style; 58- Bar bill; 59- Got out of bed; 60- Stagnant; 61- "Exodus" hero; 62- Leg joints; 63- Mends a shoe;

DOWN: 1- PC alternatives; 2- K-12; 3- Bridle strap; 4- Cross inscription; 5- Aztec temple; 6- Extenuate; 7- Travel on; 8- U.K. record label; 9- The x-coordinate of a point; 10- Clan emblems; 11- Bitter; 12- Mrs. Gorbachev; 13- Celestial being; 18- Yearn deeply; 22- Siegfried's partner; 24- Lineage; 25- Breathe hard; 26- Are you out?; 27- Intro to physics?; 28- Sunday seat; 29- Impudent; 31- Butler's love; 32- Diana of "The Avengers"; 33- Like Nash's lama; 34- Monster; 36- Like Romulus and Remus; 37- Not a direct hit; 38- Rockers Steely; 42- Pro; 43- Hooded jacket; 44- Exactly; 45- Island near Sicily; 46- Shed; 47- Abu; 48- Dressed to the; 50- Mantel piece; 51- Prefix with plasm; 52- Clock face; 53- Archipelago part; 54- Iowa State city; 57- "The Simpsons" bartender;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222
Water Supply - Report 1990 992
PJ (Open line) 993
Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333
Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
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Ref: 14080435

Coloane Village
Investment Property Coloane
597 sq ft / HKD 5,671M
HKD 9,500sq ft
Open Views
Ref: 14105422
One Oasis D and J Units
Coloane
2 Bedrooms Apartment
Great Location
HKD 19,500 / 1,177 sq ft
Ref: 14100446

Millennium Court Tower 1
Unit F, Macau
1,501sq ft / HKD 15,30M
HKD 10,193sq ft
Bright & Spacious
Ref: 14075407
EDF. HOU CHAN
Macau
8 Bedrooms Apartment
Building in Old Macau
HKD 40,000 / 2,390 sq ft
Ref: 14090440

Designer Apartment
Perfect weekend home Macau
679 sq ft / HKD 6,588M
HKD 9,702sq ft
Overlooking St Pauls
Ref: 14105421
The Manhattan, Unit D Taipa
Taipa
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opinion

Extra Time

John Leicester, AP Sports Columnist

FIFA HOPEFUL IS TROJAN HORSE FOR GAMBLING INDUSTRY

Don't laugh. There's nothing funny about the gambling industry's latest wheeze to sink its teeth even deeper into football and its fans.

We're talking here about David Ginola. So silky as a player for Newcastle and Tottenham; so ridiculous now with his car-crash campaign for the FIFA presidency.

Ginola has zero chance of unseating Sepp Blatter. FIFA's election and ethics rules will almost certainly keep him off the May ballot. After Thursday's passing of the entry deadline, "Team Ginola" should fade away.

But that's not the point here. This was about making a splash. In pocketing 250,000 pounds (USD375,000) from bookmaker Paddy Power for this stunt, Ginola became the latest Trojan horse in the gambling and gaming industry's creeping and creepy embrace of football.

"I'm here today to talk about love" were the Frenchman's seductive opening words at his campaign launch in London this month.

But the targets were our wallets and spending habits, not our hearts. That much was clear from the Paddy Power branding.

Bet. Bet again. Bet some more.

That is the message that football, more than most other sports, is mainlining into our homes, helped by names like Ginola and teams lending their cachet, stadiums, jerseys and players to the industry that had cash to splash when the 2008 financial crisis hobbled other sponsors.

"It's eyeballs we're after," 12Bet executive Rory Anderson, quoted in the Daily Mail, said when the online bookmaker became the name on Hull City's shirt for this Premier League season.

And how about this blurb from Sky Bet, title sponsor since 2013 of England's three divisions below the Premier League. It reads like a plug for Fifty Shades of Grey.

Sport "matters more when there's money on it," it says. "There's more passion, more pleasure and more pain."

Whoa. What ever happened to sport for sport's sake, for the buzz of competition, not a bet? How quaint. That was before online bookmakers offered odds on anything and everything, from match results and goals scored to which team will win the coin toss or take the first corner, and before their relentless advertising.

Sports and gambling have, of course, long gone together, feeding off each other's success and growth. Tuning in for results of football betting pools, which offered big jackpots for small stakes, was a Saturday afternoon ritual for many 20th Century English families.

But gambling advertising wasn't as in-your-face as now. In the UK, which liberalized gambling advertising in 2007, adults' exposure to gambling commercials on television soared five-fold in eight years to 2012, regulator Ofcom found. The increase was three-fold for children aged 4-15.

Asking your kids to make tea during half-time breaks won't shield them from the bombardment, not with gambling ads flashing throughout matches on pitch-side light-boards. Hull against Aston Villa on Feb. 10 will pit two Asian online bookmakers against each other. Villa's shirt sponsor is dafabet, a name that works better in Chinese, where "dafa" means "big wealth." Stoke and Burnley players are billboards for Bet365 and Fun88 (another name that plays on the Chinese word to get rich).

All this in a sport grappling with the increasing danger of gambling-related match-fixing and with ample examples of gambling-addicted players who frittered away their wealth.

One of those is Kevin Twaddle, a former player for Motherwell and other Scottish clubs who told his story in the biography, "Life On The Line: How to Lose a Million and So Much More." He no longer gambles and has delivered talks to other players about the risks.

Twaddle takes a very dim view of Ginola's Paddy Power-backed grab for FIFA.

"It's an absolute disgrace," he said in a phone interview. "It's great for Paddy Power. But I mean you're talking about one of the biggest, powerfulest jobs in football and all you're getting to hear about is Paddy Power."

"It just makes like a mockery of football."

Imagine, for a moment, a Paddy Power-financed FIFA president. It won't happen; FIFA's ethics rules should see to that. But the mere thought of the gambling industry even attempting to place a stooge at the very top of football makes the prospect of another Blatter term seem perhaps not quite so bad.

And that isn't funny at all.

FOOTBALL

Portugal's great Luis Figo enters FIFA presidential race

Graham Dunbar
Sports Writer

LUIS Figo wants to become FIFA president and claims he has the nominations needed to be an official candidate against Sepp Blatter.

The former Portugal, Barcelona and Real Madrid playmaker announced his campaign in a statement yesterday timed for release with an interview with CNN.

"I look at the reputation of FIFA right now and I don't like it. Football deserves better," Figo said in the statement. "Football has given me so much during my life, and I want to give something back to the game."

FIFA president Blatter is the strong favorite to get a fifth presidential term in the May 29 ballot despite bribery and financial scandals which have

I look at the reputation of FIFA right now and I don't like it. Football deserves better

LUIS FIGO



implicated several of his executive committee colleagues.

The deadline for would-be candidates to file nominations from five of FIFA's 209 member federations is 2300 GMT Thursday.

Figo launched his campaign one hour before Netherlands federation president Michael van Praag held a news conference in Amsterdam to launch his bid.

Van Praag also says he has five nominees but, like Figo, has not identified them.

Their rival campaigns suggest splits within UEFA, which is the only one of the six FIFA confederations officially opposing Blatter.

Figo was UEFA's ambassador for the Champions League final in Lisbon last year, and Van Praag is an elected member of UEFA's ruling board.

UEFA President Michel Platini opted last August not to oppose his former mentor Blatter.

Platini has also supported the candidacy of his fellow FIFA vice president, Prince Ali bin al-Hussein of Jordan.

Other potential contenders seeking nominations include former FIFA official Jerome Champagne, a longtime Blatter ally, and former France player David Ginola, who is being paid by a betting operator to run. **AP**

EPL

Mourinho fined USD38,000 for referee 'campaign' comments

JOSE Mourinho has been fined USD38,000 (£25,000) for comments claiming there is a "campaign" to influence referees' decisions against his Chelsea side.

Mourinho made his comments after his side were denied a penalty in the 1-1 draw with Southampton on 28 December.

The Football Association ruled Mourinho's quotes were "improper and brought the game into disrepute".

But the Chelsea boss,



who was warned about his future conduct, was cleared of implying bias by referees.

During the game at St Mary's, referee Anthony Taylor booked Cesc Fabregas for diving after going down

in the box under Matt Targett's challenge.

After the draw, the Stamford Bridge manager told BBC Sport: "The media, commentators, other managers are all doing it [putting pressure on referees]."

In his news conference later, he added: "There is a campaign against Chelsea. I don't know why there is this campaign and I do not care."

"Everybody knows it was a penalty."

Mourinho was also issued with a formal warning for comments ahead of Chelsea's 2-0 win at Stoke on 22 December.

The Portuguese called on referee Neil Swarbrick to produce a strong performance at the Britannia Stadium.

BBC News

opinion

Views on Macau

Teresa Chan, CSR Asia Weekly

SMOKING BAN: WHAT STEPS SHOULD MACAU TAKE?

The debate about smokers' versus non-smokers' rights continues and will continue as long as there are smokers in the world. What we all agree in this debate is that no employers should sacrifice employee health for business return. It is the responsibility of each employing organisation to find the right balance between employees and customers.

Since 6th October 2014, the Macau Government has expanded smoking ban to casino main floors. Smoking is now only allowed in VIP rooms and enclosed airport-style smoking rooms that do not contain any gaming tables or slot machines. Some expressed concerns that the policy could hurt gaming operators' revenue which is already declining due to Beijing's anti-graft campaign. In the same month, Barclays said, "the negative impact from a stricter smoking ban is now highly likely to be more than we previously expected." There seems to be evidence that Macau casinos are suffering from the non-smoking policy. Macau casino revenue fell to 23.3 billion patacas in December 2014 for a seventh straight month of decline and the biggest drop since records began in 2002 according to the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau.

When the Hong Kong government implemented the 2006 Public Health (Smoking) (Amendment) Ordinance to ban smoking in indoor areas, the catering trade feared they would close down business. The purpose of the Amendment Ordinance was to protect members of the public against second-hand smoking in both indoor workplaces and indoor public places especially restaurants and karaokes. The smoking ban was enacted finally in the face of the overwhelming opposition from the catering trade. However, the results were positive. The Hong Kong government stated that restaurant receipts had surged by around 30% after the smoking ban had taken effect for around two years, and that employment had also increased in the hospitality industry in the same period.

A recent report published by the School of Public Health and Department of Community Medicine of the University of Hong Kong indicated that the Amendment Ordinance made an important contribution to the protection of many catering workers in their workplace. Levels of tobacco chemicals in smoke-free restaurants were reduced by up to 90% compared to the pre-ordinance period. This helps to reduce the harm of second-hand smoke, thereby improving the community health and reducing the medical expenditure of the government.

Returning to the topic of Macau, did anyone - gaming operators or financial analysts - count those long-term benefits of tobacco control raised by the Hong Kong government? With more than 85% of government revenue coming from the casinos, it still remains to be seen if the long-term benefits will outweigh the potential immediate financial losses.

In Macau, there are many gamblers coming from mainland China which is the world's largest nation of smokers. A hypothesis is that the desire to smoke will urge gamblers to leave the gaming tables to smoke, allowing them to take time to consider leaving with their winnings or going back. These smoke breaks will lead to casino revenue loss. But I think this concern is far less important than the two emerging issues - China's economic slowdown and Macau's labour problems.

Macau now relies too much on one source of visitors - mainland gamblers. Beijing has urged Macau to come up with concrete plans to diversify its economy. It is time for Macau to transform itself with responsible gaming and environmental initiatives and gain the potential to be a world tourism and leisure destination, competing with other Asian countries such as Singapore.

Given the shortage of labour, casino operators are facing the rising labour cost and negative impact of employee turnover on operating performance. There is an increased awareness of employee rights in Macau. Labour activists advocated the smoking ban to be enforced in VIP rooms as soon as possible. Besides offering competitive wages, building a pleasant working environment can help to attract and retain staff.

As a key market player in Macau, the gaming industry should take greater social responsibility in the development of a sustainable community. Macau is suffering not because of tobacco control but because of being unchanged in response to global dynamics. Courtesy CSR-Asia.com

THE FRENCH LOTTERY JOINS IOC BETTING MONITORING PROGRAM

The operator of France's national lottery has signed up to the International Olympic Committee's system for monitoring betting patterns during major sports events.

Francaise des Jeux said yesterday it became the first lottery in the world to join the Integrity Betting Intelligence System.

The intelligence-sharing digital platform was in place at the 2014 Sochi Winter Games, where no irregularities were reported. The IOC has

said all 28 summer sports federations will have signed up before the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro.

FDJ's head of risks and security department, Thierry Pujol, says "it's an important step in the coordination against tampering with sporting events."

FDJ is the fourth biggest national lottery worldwide, with nearly 13 billion euros (USD14.8 billion) in stakes in 2014.

Friend disputes US police account of teen's death



Eric Verlo, left, of Denver holds a placard during a vigil near the scene of the early morning fatal shooting of a young woman who hit and injured a Denver Police Department officer while driving a stolen vehicle

Sadie Gurman, Denver

A passenger who was in a car when a 17-year-old girl was shot and killed by Denver police has disputed authorities' account of her death, saying officers opened fire before one of them was struck by the vehicle.

The shooting occurred amid a national debate about police use of force fueled by racially charged episodes in Ferguson, Missouri, and New York City.

The passenger, speaking yesterday to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because of safety concerns, said her friend, Jessica Hernandez, lost control of the vehicle because she was unconscious after being shot.

Police have said the Monday morning shooting in a residential alley came after Hernandez drove a stolen vehicle into one of them.

Prosecutors promised

a thorough probe of the shooting as a small group of angry protesters demanded swift answers and called for a special prosecutor to investigate the death.

It was also the fourth time in seven months that a Denver police officer fired into a moving vehicle after perceiving it as a threat, and the city's independent police monitor now says he will investigate the department's policies and practices related to shooting at moving vehicles, which he said poses unique safety risks.

Police spokesman Sonny Jackson offered no new details about the case on Tuesday, citing the department's open investigation.

The shooting happened after an officer was called to check on a suspicious vehicle, Chief Robert White has said. A colleague arrived after the officer determined the car had been reported stolen. Police have said the

two officers approached the car on foot when Hernandez drove into one of them, and they both then opened fire.

The car's passenger said police had surrounded the car in the alley, and Hernandez was trying to flee, attempting to drive around one of the squad cars.

The officers came up to the car from behind and fired four times into the driver's side window, narrowly missing others inside, the passenger said.

Hernandez wrecked the car into a fence after she was shot, according to the witness. Police said the officer suffered a leg injury for which he was treated at a hospital and released.

Officers with their guns drawn then pulled people out of the car, including Hernandez, who they handcuffed and searched.

The passenger was unaware the vehicle was stolen and provided only vague details about what the group of teenagers was doing earlier in the night.

By law, police are allowed to use force to stop and overcome the resistance of another person. They can use it to match the force and overcome it.

Both officers involved in the shooting have been placed on routine administrative leave pending the investigation. AP

Station	Air quality
Roadside	55-75 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	65-95 Moderate
Ambient	45-65 Moderate

SOURCE: DSMG

WORLD BRIEFS

MALAYSIA Civil aviation authorities will release a required report on the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 a day before the one-year anniversary, but it won't have any conclusion on what happened because the search is ongoing. The report to be released March 7 is to focus on the search for the plane, which is believed to have crashed in the remote southern Indian Ocean.

AUSTRALIA's prime minister promises to consult more widely before bestowing knighthoods in the future as he weathers an avalanche of criticism over his decision to make the husband of Queen Elizabeth II an Australian knight.



ISRAEL-LEBANON The Lebanese Hezbollah group claims responsibility for firing a missile that targeted an Israeli military convoy, an attack that prompted Israel to fire at least 50 artillery shells into Lebanon in a significant escalation along the volatile border.

UK A pathologist testifies that the body of former Russian agent Alexander Litvinenko was so radioactive that his post-mortem was "one of the most dangerous" ever undertaken. In Moscow, one of the suspects accused by Britain says the evidence being presented is "nonsense."



GREECE's radical new government yesterday signaled the country would backtrack or scrap a series of budget measures its eurozone creditor nations had demanded in exchange for bailout loans. Left wing Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras (pictured) described the country's bailout budget commitments as "crushing and unobtainable," while his finance minister called the bailout agreements a "toxic mistake."

THE DECISIVE MOMENT



Although casino revenues were at their lowest during 2014, the number of visitors doesn't reflect that variation... And prepare yourselves for the great invasion: 1 million are expected for CNY.

Renato Marques