



**TRAFFIC FINE HIKE WOES**  
Ahead of a protest scheduled for Sunday, authorities called journalists to defend the implementation of traffic fine hikes

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Gray is a dying French town. But for one Syrian family it offers hope of rebuilding their shattered lives

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**WORLD BRIEFS**

**CHINA** A falling roof triggered a gas outburst in a central Chinese coal mine that killed five people and trapped seven others. The outburst occurred Wednesday night when 51 workers were underground at the mine in the city of Dengfeng in Henan province, state broadcaster CCTV said.



**SINGAPORE** is due to deliver a blueprint outlining strategies to boost the economy as the export-dependent nation seeks new growth engines. The Committee on the Future Economy will publish its recommendations in a few weeks time, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said in his New Year Message. [More on p11](#)

**PHILIPPINE** President Rodrigo Duterte will consider joint naval exercises with Russia, his spokesman said yesterday, months after he decided to reduce military drills with the U.S. At a briefing in the presidential palace, spokesman Ernesto Abella said Duterte saw this week's visit by two Russian warships to Manila would enhance friendship between the navies.

**AUSTRALIA** scrambled to calm tensions with Indonesia yesterday, promising that an investigation was nearly complete into an alleged insult of Indonesian state ideology that prompted Indonesia to suspend military cooperation with its neighbor.

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# LRT planners admit fares still unknown

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RENATO MARQUES

## Tired of the cold wait, Nepal quake survivors rebuild

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**STATUE EXPORT BAN HITS AT NORTH KOREA'S SOFT POWER**

**Extra** times

weekend Guide

INSIDE

Daniel Beitler

## LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT

## Gov't admits no idea of passenger

WITH the Taipa Line of the Macau Light Rapid Transit (LRT) project planned for a 2019 launch, local transport authorities have admitted that they have no estimates for ticket fares, nor do they have projections for the number of passengers expected to use the service on a daily basis.

The Transportation Infrastructure Office (GIT) announced that it is conducting studies on ticket pricing, the results of which will be announced closer to the launch date.

"The government is conducting relevant studies and preliminary works on the LRT ticket pricing. To formulate future policies, the government will carefully consider various factors including social and economic benefits, public affordability [and] system operating costs," said the GIT in a statement emailed to the Times. "Relevant progress will be announced in due course."

Early government projections claimed that the system could accommodate a maximum of 7,800 passengers per hour per direction across both lines.

However, as the Taipa Line took priority over the Macau Peninsula Line, the GIT said "the government will further study and assess the passenger flow for the project."

The GIT refused to comment on whether project developers had forecasted an average number of commuters per hour. A GIT representative said the only passenger assessment conducted to date was of the system's expected maximum capacity.

RENATO MARQUES



"At the very beginning of the LRT project development, the project consultant carried out relevant research on capacity of the LRT system. According to the assessment at that time, the LRT will operate 19 hours a day with the maximum capacity of 7,800 passengers per

hour, per direction. Based on the assessment result, the government then carried out the procurement of rolling stock and systems and the construction works," explained the GIT.

If the LRT operates as expected – for 19 hours a day, with a total capacity of up to 15,600 passengers per hour – the light rail infrastructure would be able to accommodate almost 300,000 passengers daily.

However, Macau's small land mass and abundance of alternative transportation options means that the willingness of residents and non-resident workers to use the LRT will depend on ticket pricing, relative convenience and journey length, among other factors.

Peter Zabielskis, a scholar and urban development expert at the University of Macau, told the Times that "convenience will be the major factor" for residents, provided that tickets are not too expensive.

He rationalized that LRT stations near Cotai's integrated resorts might attract customers among the territory's

many casino workers.

"I can't speculate about the prices," cautioned Zabielskis, "but MOP10-20 might be a bit too high and would act as a disincentive. People are very content with the low bus prices. They are also aware of the high government [budget] surplus and assume that it will be used for socio-economic im-

provement. I expect there will be resistance to high prices."

Some residents told the Times that motorbikes and scooters will remain the preferred option for many locals, because of the flexibility they offer in terms of parking.

For the city's low-wage workers, the MOP2 fare for a bus ride in town is likely to remain the most attractive option. Most journeys clock in at under 30 minutes, while the bus network offers multiple "nodes" that give travelers greater flexibility in choosing where to start and end their journeys.

On the other hand, tourists are typically less price-sensitive and, according to some academic studies, are more influenced by convenience when choosing their mode of transport.

This is fortunate for those responsible for the LRT project, as the Taipa Line will connect the Taipa Ferry Terminal and the Macau International Airport to the Cotai area.

Seemingly built for tourists, the Taipa Line will encourage

GIT

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**The LRT will operate 19 hours a day with the maximum capacity of 7,800 passengers per hour per direction.**

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# numbers, journey fares



cross-boundary transportation for visitors from Guangdong Province, according to the GIT website. In its capacity “as a motivation [for] the region’s development potential” and promoting “the increase of people flow inside the city and among regions”, it remains to be seen whether the LRT system will attract more tourists through boasting improved connectivity.

Nevertheless, locals may be satisfied with the investment even if few of them plan to use the system. Zabielskis told the Times that transportation issues now top the list of resi-

## The number one problem mentioned by people in Macau is transportation.

PETER ZABIELSKIS  
UM SCHOLAR

dents’ most pressing concerns. “As far as I know, the number one problem mentioned by people in Macau is transporta-

tion – even more than public housing. It’s a very important issue.”

“From the start, [the LRT] was geared toward moving casino customers around and was supported [by locals] because it would keep non-locals off the roads and reduce the number of shuttle buses causing congestion,” he said.

The LRT project has been in the works, at least in a conceptual sense, since 2002 when former chief executive Edmund Ho announced that the MSAR government would begin developing “a brand new mass transit system.”

## LRT fares likely to exceed bus prices

Daniel Beittler

**TICKET** pricing will be a major factor in determining the light rail’s usage, sustainability and even profitability – especially as it will likely influence locals’ willingness to use the service.

However, the Transportation Infrastructure Office (GIT) admitted that little consideration has been given to ticket fares.

Local residents told the Times this week that LRT fares will be a major consideration in how frequently they use the service, but many were under the impression that tickets would cost less than MOP10. Others said that ticket prices should be similar to local bus fares.

At around MOP2-3 for a one-way ticket, a trip to town on the LRT would only cost as much as a bus fare. If ticket prices are similar to the cost of short journeys on Hong Kong’s MTR, commuters may be expected to pay around MOP10-15. Any more would place the fare closer to that of a brief journey by taxi or ride-hailing service.

The number of years needed to recover the MOP11 billion investment in financial terms (excluding socio-economic benefits) will depend not only on the price of tickets, but also the average volume of passengers daily. The GIT could not provide an estimate, reiterating in an email to the Times that the only available statistic is the maximum capacity of around 300,000 passengers per day.

Data is difficult to compile for occupancy rates of metro systems. According to the 2012 National Transit Database in the U.S., most major cities (excluding New York City, Boston and Phoenix) record an average occupancy rate of between 25 and 45 percent for light rail systems. This includes both peak and off-peak hours.

Meanwhile, a 2014 discussion in Hong Kong’s LegCo revealed that some of the city’s MTR lines recorded an average occupancy rate “at almost 70 percent for both morning and afternoon peak hours.”

The MTR network operates in a city that serves a resident population roughly 11 times larger than Macau’s, and a tourist population about twice as numerous. Ticket fares vary depending on journey distance, but are typically priced between HKD10 and HKD30.

For example, a short one-way ride from Central to Mong Kok – a route frequented by tourists, at a distance comparable to that of a typical journey on Macau’s LRT – would cost HKD13.5, or about HKD12 with an Octopus card.

The size of the customer base in Hong Kong allows for economies of scale, which reduce the revenue required for each individual trip in order to break even. Contrarily, a concessionaire operating the Macau LRT might have to charge more per individual ticket in order to offset the significant fixed costs of regular maintenance, repairs and staffing.

## Local perspectives

**GABRIELA LAM**, a 25-year-old retail worker residing in Taipa, told the Times that she would be interested in using the LRT to travel to and from the Macau peninsula if the service was competitively priced. She said she would be a “regular user” of the LRT if ticket fares were set at around MOP2-3, similar to buses in the MSAR. However, she would “use it only occasionally” if they were priced at MOP10 or above. Given the relative distances covered by Hong Kong’s MTR and Macau’s planned LRT, Lam said she would be surprised if the latter is more expensive for commuters.

**CHEOK CHIN SENG**, an 18-year-old student at the University of Macau, told the Times that he will use the LRT service once it is up and running. “Of course I will choose the LRT,” the Macau resident said, adding that he would be prepared to pay up to MOP10 for a single journey – but at that price, he will only take the LRT when he needs to arrive at his destination “urgently”. Otherwise, he expects to pay MOP5. “Macau is so small, I don’t think it will be very expensive,” he said.

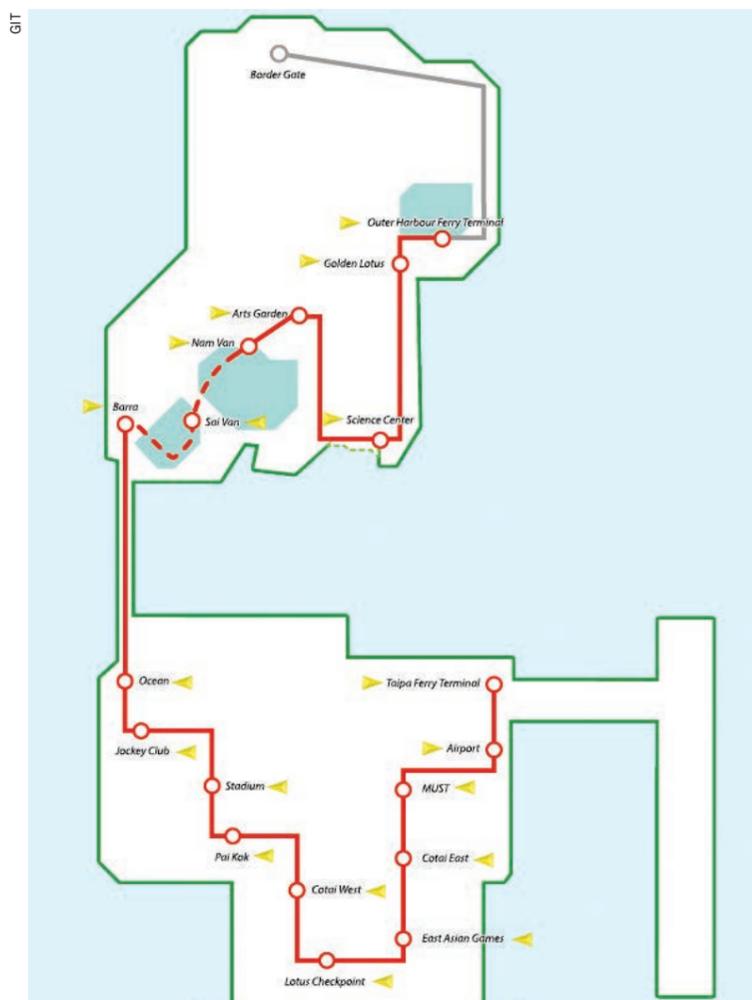
**JOANA LEONG**, a 24-year-old professional in Macau, says she will not use the LRT for commuting given the short distance between her home and workplace. She told the Times that for general use, she would be prepared to pay around MOP5-10 for a single journey. “MOP15 is too much... In fact, MOP13 is too much!” said Leong. “I cannot foresee when I would need to pay MOP13 for a one-way trip [...] it feels like too much.”

**SIMON LAM**, 33, the co-owner of iAOhIn Gallery in Macau, said that the LRT project is “a step in the right direction” for Macau transportation and that he would happily fork out MOP10-20 for a ride, provided that “the service is frequent, runs at night and most importantly, runs where most people live [and] need to go.” Emphasizing the need for the LRT service to facilitate better transportation for people living and working in the city, Lam criticized the project’s current trajectory as “more [of] a shuttle for casino-goers than any real solution to [the] polluting transport chaos in Macau.” **DB/JZ/LV**

The Macau segment of the line was more recently put on hold as construction authorities re-focused their efforts on completing the Taipa Line, which is estimated to cost at least MOP11 billion.

Today, construction works can be seen across much of Taipa, with the skeleton in-

frastructure blending seamlessly with other large-scale projects in the area. The works have caused traffic diversions, road closures and congestion – much to the annoyance of some residents, who were gridlocked in a two-way, hours-long standstill at both ends of Amizade Bridge last year.



# Government responds to criticism about fee hikes



**T**HE government has responded to public criticism of the recent fee increase for some services under the Traffic Affairs Bureau (DSAT), especially those concerning the removal of vehicles and deposits when caught in violation of parking law.

The Spokesperson's Office held a joint press conference at the government headquarters this week, together with representatives from DSAT and the Public Security Police Force (PSP).

At the conference, DSAT director Lam Hin San and PSP commander Leong Man Cheong tried to clarify the

motives behind the new regulation.

Lam said fines had been raised because "most of the stipulated amounts haven't changed since 1998, which has led to an increase in the spending of the administrative services."

"The government intends to recoup some of the costs incurred through this adjustment. The goal of the measure is only to cover some of the expenditure and not to make a profit," he said.

Lam argued that the policy would alleviate the lack of available public parking spaces and "create fairer

parking conditions" in the long term.

Lam revealed that more than 900,000 fines were issued throughout 2016 and that 255,000 were related to parking meters. He also highlighted the government's efforts to increase the number of available parking spots, which resulted in the creation of about 2,000 new parking spots in 2016. Lam expects the number of new spots to double in 2017.

Leong said the PSP "has always been concerned about the illegal occupation of public car parks." He said between January 1 and 3, only 44 vehicles were blocked for illegal parking, of which only three were towed.

Leong added that the PSP's main priority is targeting vehicles that show signs of prolonged occupation of parking spaces, damage or abandonment.

"The authorities will continue to combat illegal parking [...] in order to free public space and prevent abuse," he reaffirmed.

A group of unhappy citizens, supported by lawmakers Pereira Coutinho and Leong Veng Chai, have booked a demonstration for Sunday afternoon to urge the government to withdraw the new policy. **RM**



## CE says government respects press freedom

At two separate lunches with local media representatives, Chief Executive Chui Sai On said that the government respects the freedom of the press. Chui said the government would continue to support local media outlets and make an effort to improve relationships between the government, media and residents. He also praised Macau's media industry, saying that it has long maintained a patriotic stance of loving the MSAR, serving the people and maintaining social harmony, thus contributing to the implementation of the "One Country, Two Systems" policy. Chui and the five government secretaries hosted members of the local Chinese press at a lunch on Wednesday, while the English and Portuguese press attended one yesterday.

## Customs arrests 16 smugglers

The Macau Customs Service (SA) arrested 16 smugglers and seized one boat in the Outer Harbor area earlier this week. The SA said in a notice that one of the smugglers, suspected of having transported the other 15 criminals into Macau, jumped into the sea in an attempt to escape. At the same time, the mainland customs authorities also informed the SA about three men swimming in the direction of Macau at said location. The SA arrested one of the men in question, while the other two were seized by the Public Police Security Force (PSP) together with mainland customs authorities.

AD

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EDUCATION

# Polytechnic Institute, IFT host 'Open Day' tomorrow

**T**HE Macao Polytechnic Institute (IPM) will host several activities for its annual Open Day, which will take place tomorrow afternoon on its main campus at Luís Gonzaga Gomes Street.

The theme of the Open Day is "Start Your Dream Voyage with IPM".

Through presentations, demonstrations and performances, high school graduates aspiring to enroll in IPM will be introduced to the campus facilities, curriculum, research capabilities and admissions information.

Visitors can expect to learn more about IPM's major programs, which include Chinese-

Portuguese/Portuguese-Chinese Translation and Interpretation, Computing and Physical Education, among others.

The Open Day will also feature other activities including a guided campus tour, an exhibition of teaching and research achievements, art workshops and more.

Guests are also welcome to visit the IPM library to see the teaching equipment, to eat in the IPM canteen and win gifts by participating in competitive games.

The event is open to high school students, their parents and any other interested parties.

The deadline for admission applications is January 20.

Separately, the Institute of Tourism Studies (IFT) opened applications for its bachelor's degree programs on Wednesday, with an "IFT Open Day" planned for tomorrow at the IFT Amphitheater.

The IFT said the aim of the Open Day is to inform graduating high school students and the general public about the institute, its learning environment and faculties. Senior leaders from the institution will conduct presentations during the event. IFT alumni will also return to share their study and career experiences.

The event will begin at 2.30 p.m. tomorrow with a welcome speech by IFT president Fanny Vong.

## Call on local filmmakers for cinematic proposals

**T**HE Macao Cultural Centre (CCM) is calling for local filmmakers to submit new cinematic proposals for the next edition of "Local View Power" (LVP) from now until January 23.

Since its inaugural edition, this yearly film project has been producing and taking to the screen stories about the region.

The LVP will finance individual proposals up to MOP 270,000 from a total budget of more than MOP1,000,000 across all of its categories, as cited in a statement released by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC).

The project's format welcomes candidates across three experience tiers, from "Advan-



ced" and "Open" levels aimed at directors aged 18 or above, to "Freshmen."

Participants can enter into "Documentary," "Short Feature" and "Animation" categories, which will each be assessed by a panel composed of three audio-visual professionals.

This year, the jury is composed of veteran

film critic Cheung Wai-Hung, Hong Kong Art Centre's program director Teresa Kwong, and an as yet-unannounced representative from the CUT Audio-visual Association.

Established in 2007, the previous nine editions had over 450 proposals, resulting in 90 finalized works presented each year, some of which were

awarded overseas, IC noted.

Selected teams are given technical and financial support to complete their productions, including a mentorship scheme under which guest professionals provide guidance.

This year the mentoring team is comprised of Clara Choi, a former documentary producer at Radio and Television Hong Kong, Mathew Tang, an experienced film producer of award-winning productions, and Puzzle Lai, a local animator and lecturer at several institutes.

Applicants can download application forms for "Local View Power 2016-2017" at CCM's website until January 23.

CONSUMER COUNCIL

## Number of complaints down 12percent



**T**HE Consumer Council handled approximately 6,420 cases last year, of which 1,673 were complaints, 4,711 inquiries and 36 suggestions.

The Consumer Council said in a statement that the total number of complaints in 2016 decreased by 12 percent year-on-year, with almost 43 percent (717 cases) falling within the five most popular complaint categories.

The top five categories are as follows: telecommunications equipment (198 cases), real estate (184 cases), telecommunications services (144 cases), public transportation (99 cases) and food and beverage (92 cases).

All categories except real estate recorded a year-on-year decrease. At 35 percent, complaints regarding telecommunication equipment recorded the most drastic decline.

The Council received 683 cases of tourist complaints and inquiries in 2016, which represented about 10 percent of all cases. Major issues included the quality and price of watches, jewelry and goldsmiths, as well as telecommunication equipment.

The Council met several chambers and organizations last year to discuss the issues behind major complaints, and said it would publish a detailed analysis of the 2016 cases at a later date.

SECOND-HIGHEST WORLDWIDE

## Macau ATM density continues to soar

**M**ACAU has the world's second-highest density of Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) with 254 ATMs per 100,000 adults in 2015, according to a report issued last year by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The data, published in the IMF's Financial Access Survey, shows a spike in Macau's ATM density over the last decade, coinciding with or resulting from the growth of the local gaming industry. In 2005, there were just 56 ATMs per 100,000 adults, 4.5 times fewer than in 2015.

The average number of ATMs in Macau per 100,000 adults far outstrips the regional average of 52 in East Asia and the Pacific. The world avera-

ge stood at about 40.5 in 2015, up from fewer than 16 a decade earlier.

Hong Kong came in slightly below the regional average with around 50 ATMs per 100,000 adults. China had about 76 ATMs per 100,000 adults, up from just nine in 2006.

South Korea topped the global rankings with 278 ATMs per 100,000 adults, followed by the MSAR (254), Canada (220), Portugal (174) and Russia (173).

The survey also noted that ATM density in the world's poorest nations has significantly risen over the last decades. However, the growing popularity of mobile phones as a means to store, send and receive money somewhat distorts the survey results. **DB**

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Regional Director, Head of Research -China Jones Lang LaSalle Limited "The effects of Chinese investment on the Macau property market: What can we expect?"

The Chinese economy has been going through a structural slowdown, as the government seeks to re-orient it from a dependence on investment towards domestic consumption as a more sustainable source of growth.

China had a turbulent start to 2016, then stabilised over the rest of the year. Short-term worries have subsided as stimulus measures gained traction.

Looking forward, will the economy continue to be guided downwards at a measured and non-disruptive pace? Or will the government choose to push forward more radical reform? What does this mean to Macau's property market?

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# Barclays flags 'black swan threats' to commodities in 2017

**W**ATCH out for the unexpected in commodities in 2017. Barclays Plc said raw materials markets from energy to metals face the high likelihood of disruptions, giving a laundry list of possible threats including a default by Venezuela, riots in Chile and a trade war with China.

"The new politics of populism and protectionist trade policies have the potential to disrupt global supply and demand assumptions for various commodities," analysts including Michael Cohen and Dane Davis wrote in a Jan. 5 report. "We see risks skewed to the upside in 2017, based on a high likelihood of disruption risk."

Commodities advanced in 2016 to post the first annual



gain since 2010 as energy markets rebounded and investors reacted to unexpected political events including Donald Trump's election win in the U.S. and Britain's vote to quit the European Union. Barclays said that

the markets will surprise in some fashion this year, and the bank's analysis illustrated the key point that politics are likely to matter just as much as economics.

"Commodity market black swan events come in many

forms, and the market may take years or an instant to price them in," the analysts wrote, defining them as extreme events or dynamics that market participants aren't currently pricing in. "China, Russia, the Middle East and Turkey are likely to surprise the commodity complex in 2017."

The bank listed more than dozen potential black swan events, dividing them into threats to supply, such as a loss of oil output in Venezuela after a default, and threats to demand, such as an unexpected slowdown in China's economy. There were also what it termed threats to transit, with risks to the supply routes that are vital to the flow of raw materials, such as the South China Sea.

China also offered other scopes for concern, with potential for both a slump in the pace of expansion in Asia's top economy, hurting raw materials demand, and for a trade war, according to the note. The U.S. may implement a tariff schedule designed to halt the flow of Chinese imports, the bank said.

"Heading into 2017, the major black swan risk for commodity demand is an unexpected economic downturn in any of the major commodity consuming nations. Namely, investors will continue to focus on the Chinese economy," it said. While the bank's sees solid growth for the country in 2017, "shocks do happen, and China is not immune from the unforeseen."

Among the other threats listed, there's potential for riots in Chile after the 2017 general election results, with high and real risks of disruptions to copper production, it said. In Europe, an "aggressive" Russia could push further into Ukraine, hurting the country's iron ore output, it said. **MDT/Bloomberg**

# South Korea may be named currency manipulator

**A**S Donald Trump prepares to be sworn in as U.S. president, state-run think tanks in South Korea are raising the possibility of the country being labeled a currency manipulator along with China.

Korea was listed in the U.S. Treasury Department's currency watch list in October, along with China, Japan, Germany, Taiwan, and Switzerland, for meeting two of the three criteria used to monitor currency practices. There's concern in Seoul that the U.S. may adjust the

criteria so Trump can make good on his pledge to brand China a currency manipulator within 100 days of taking office, and that changes could also apply to South Korea.

While Trump's focus with Korea has been more on the free trade agreement with the U.S. and how it has affected his country's trade deficit, the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy warned in a Jan. 4 report that changes to the criteria would bring a "high possibility" of Korea

being tagged a manipulator. The think tank also noted that the U.S. may target smaller economies like Taiwan and Korea before China.

Korean authorities have repeatedly said that they only perform "smoothing operations" when volatility in the currency marke-

ts is high, and that they don't target a specific direction or level. Korea's trade surplus with the U.S. was more than USD23 billion in 2016,

and its current-account surplus is expected to amount to \$97 billion in 2016, close to seven percent of gross domestic product. **MDT/Bloomberg**

## Offshore yuan soars

**C**HINA'S efforts to choke capital outflows are beginning to pay off, with the offshore yuan surging the most on record as traders scrambled for a currency that's becoming increasingly scarce outside the nation's borders.

Bloomberg News earlier repor-

ted Chinese policy makers were encouraging state-owned enterprises to sell foreign currency.

Investors are cutting bullish positions in the dollar after the report underscored China's determination to support the yuan.

"Given the recent capital con-

trols, the channels for domestic institutions and retails to bring out onshore cash to the offshore market have also been tightened," said Becky Liu, a rates strategist at Standard Chartered Plc. "There is a lack of supply of yuan liquidity."

### corporate bits

#### COTAI WATER JET ANNOUNCES 2017 PROMOTIONS



Cotai Water Jet's 2017 promotional campaign includes announcements for expanded Wi-Fi, an open check-in facility for air-to-sea passengers and coupon giveaways.

Besides premium Wi-Fi services in First Class, Wi-Fi is now available for Cotai Class in more than half of all Cotai Water Jet vessels. The remaining ferries will be fully

equipped by March 2017.

The company said in a statement that passengers who buy air-to-sea airport route tickets via their official website, mobile app or designated counters can use the tickets to board any vessel sailing between Macau and Hong Kong International Airport.

Passengers purchasing a full-fare Cotai Water Jet Airport route ticket will also receive a HKD/MOP50 cash coupon for their next journey along city or airport routes.

Daily services run from 7 a.m. to 1 a.m., with departures every 30 minutes between 7 a.m. and 11:30 p.m.

#### CTM SETS UP BOOTH AT EXPO



CTM will set up a sales booth at "The 17th Baby & Child Products Expo" to offer telecommunications services and products at exclusive promotional prices.

The booth is located at The Venetian Cotai Expo Hall A (B6) and will be open until Sunday.

The company said in a press release that new subscribers to

the 4G+ "City Link" (Macau, HK & China) Service Plan would be entitled to a special monthly rate of MOP138, allowing them to enjoy shared data services across Macau, Hong Kong and China, as well as shared Wi-Fi, voice call and SMS services between Macau and Hong Kong.

Students are entitled to a 20 percent discount on monthly payments for new subscriptions to the "No.1 Home Fiber Broadband", and can redeem a wireless router at MOP430. CTM will waive installation fees.

During the exhibition, residents can also redeem the SINO-MAX Cuddle N Smart Pillow at an exclusive price of MOP229.

REAL ESTATE MATTERS

Your Financial Health In 2017 - Part 2

Last week we looked at why people might want to review their investment strategy, and how to start forming investment goals. This weeks article looks at two more steps that are important considerations for achieving those goals.



JULIET RISDON

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\* Figures expressed in MOP unless otherwise stated

4. Be clear on the timescale - Is this a long-term or short-term investment?

When exactly do you need the money? You may need to factor in contractual investment periods e.g. fixed term bonds for 3 or 5 years or possibly how long an investment property sale takes to complete. When will you need the money to be available?

5. Income or capital investment?

Do you want a regular income or a lump sum as the end of the investment?

Further considerations are - How long do you want to tie this money up for? Will you put it in to high or low risk investments?

If you are looking to grow a lump sum over a longer period of time say two years or more, then considering the capital growth of a well-invested property would be worthwhile.

If you are considering needing a regular income, looking at rentable properties might be the way forward for you.

If you choose rental income then how much on a monthly basis do you need to make? When

does the property need to start earning for you? Property prices in Macau have dropped significantly over the past two years, and whilst there is no guarantee for the future, you should find that a good rental investment will out-perform money sitting in the bank or under the mattress so to speak.

There is certainly no magic answer when it comes to making money, if there was we would all be doing it, so taking time to consider our goals and options to make the most of what we have is always a good idea.

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GAMING

# Atlantic City mayor urges Icahn to sell ex-Taj Mahal casino

Wayne Parry

**A**TLANTIC City's mayor is calling on billionaire investor Carl Icahn to sell the shuttered Trump Taj Mahal casino, saying his struggling city can't afford to let such a big piece of its Boardwalk lie vacant indefinitely.

Republican Don Guardian said Wednesday that allowing the casino to stay vacant is "the worst of the worst" in terms of outcomes for the property, which Icahn closed Oct. 10 after a bruising strike by the city's main casino workers' union.

Icahn replied he'd be happy to sell the casino to the mayor — if he ponied up the USD300 million Icahn says he has lost on it.

Guardian made the comments after his unofficial State of the City speech, in which he listed the numerous challenges facing his city, including a state takeover and hundreds of millions of dollars in debt. Asked for his response to



In this Oct. 10, 2016 photo, striking union members protest outside the Trump Taj Mahal casino in Atlantic City, N.J., as it shut down

Icahn's handling of the Taj Mahal, Guardian replied, "Sell it, make a profit and move on."

Icahn said the mayor is wrong in attacking someone who rescued the struggling city's Tropicana casino and tried to do the same with the Taj Mahal.

"Telling us we should sell the Taj and make a profit is easier said than done," Icahn said. "We've lost almost \$300 million on that investment. If he's a

buyer at that price, I'd be a happy seller."

He wondered where the mayor was last summer when the strike forced him to shut the casino's doors. "Some help back then would have been nice," he said.

Before the strike by Local 54 of the Unite-HERE union, which began on July 1 and ended the day the casino closed in October, Icahn had promised to pump \$100 million into the aging ca-

sino to reinvigorate it and help it better compete against newer, more luxurious casinos. The investment was never made.

"He doesn't have any faith in the city, I get it," Guardian said. "But don't let us lose that building on the Boardwalk. We need that activity and those jobs."

The strike sought the restoration of health insurance and pension benefits that were terminated in bankruptcy court. Nearly 3,000 workers lost their jobs when the Taj Mahal closed.

Republican President-elect Donald Trump opened the casino in

1990 but lost control of it in a casino bankruptcy. Icahn acquired it from bankruptcy court after Trump, a New York real estate mogul, had cut most ties with Atlantic City.

Guardian also said he might support a Democrat for governor this fall if his own party nominates someone who favors continuing a state takeover of Atlantic City that Republican Gov. Chris Christie's administration launched in November.

Guardian also used the speech to reveal:

— That he rigorously inspects the cleanliness of public restrooms on the Boardwalk during his morning bicycle ride: "I can wipe my finger on a urinal and find out if it's been steam cleaned."

— That he and his husband, Louis, imagined jobs other than mayor that would be fun to hold, considering police officer and firefighter before settling on an alternative: "I could have been a pastor, because all I do is beg, because I don't have the money."

— That he looks at the massive tax refund debt the city owes to the Borgata through an unusual lens: "It's like your frat buddy lends you \$20 and you don't pay it back and it gets awkward and you don't hang out with him as much. It's like that with me and [Borgata president Tom Ballance], only I owe him \$150 million." AP

## Telling us we should sell the Taj and make a profit is easier said than done.

CARL ICAHN

AD

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# Immigrant kids in Japan continue to sharpen their mother tongue

**F**OR Chinese immigrants and their offspring in Japan, while they learn the Japanese language and try to fit in there, many of them are still making great efforts to sharpen their mother tongue.

This was evidenced on Friday in the city of Kobe as dozens of children with a Chinese lineage attended a Chinese speech contest to proudly display the achievements they've made in mastering the language of their home country.

It was the third time for 18-year-old Ren Xiaoning to take part in the contest. She came to Japan with her parents when she was only 10 years old, and while she's made a great effort to learn Japanese, she has never forgotten her mother tongue.

"I talk with my parents in Chinese, I read books in Chinese, and I watch Chinese soap operas on the Internet," she said, citing the means she used to improve her language skills, as she no longer has Chinese lessons in school.

The distance between the second-generation immigrants and China has narrowed greatly compared to years ago, as later generations have much easier access to Chinese culture and language thanks to the Internet and other technology.

PAULO BARBOSA



Kobe's Chinatown is a rare sight in Japan

"I'm watching 'Stay With Me' recently," Ren said, referring to a popular TV opera in China. "I don't want to forget my mother tongue. Besides, China is developing fast and I would like to know more about China in the future," she said.

This year's contest has the theme "Starting Point" and Ren talked about the college life that she looks forward

to ahead of a career as a businesswoman traveling between China and Japan.

Wu You, a primary school student, came to Japan when she was little. Her parents entered her into a school that teaches lessons in Chinese.

In schools such as the Kobe Chinese School, lessons are taught in Chinese, and teaching materials compiled by the school itself are used.

The school has even attracted many Japanese students who are interested in Chinese culture or want to learn the Chinese language.

For Hu Shiyun, a professor at Kobe Gakuin University, immigrant children face two difficulties when studying Chinese: firstly, they lack the opportunity to speak or write the language, when using it is the fastest way to pick up

a language; secondly, they don't have conditions, as in China, that are conducive to learning the language.

The "China Cup" Chinese Speech Contest, launched in 2007, has been held annually since then, aiming to provide a platform for young Chinese in Japan to showcase their Chinese-speaking skills and encourage them to study it further.

"The speech contest gives children a platform to exhibit their achievements and encourages them to learn more. Many of the students even spend several months making preparations," said Hu Shiyun, one of the founders of the contest.

**Immigrants today have much easier access to Chinese culture and language thanks to the Internet**

"The children are enthusiastic about their mother tongue. For one thing, they have their roots in China, and their families encourage them to remember that. In addition, the Chinese economy is developing rapidly. Hence, mastering Chinese also means grasping the key to open the door to China's vast market," he said. **MDT/Xinhua**

## Frigid Harbin hosts snow and ice sculpture festival

AP PHOTO



Contestants carve an ice sculpture for an international ice sculpture contest during the Harbin Ice and Snow festival

**T**HE city of Harbin in China's frigid northeast is hosting one of the world's largest festivals featuring ice sculptures of animals, cartoon characters and famous landmarks.

The festival, which officially opens late Thursday and last

year drew more than a million visitors, showcases the region's tradition of snow and ice carvings as well as ice swimming in the Songhua River. Harbin's temperatures can fall to minus 25 degrees Celsius (minus 13 degrees Fahrenheit).

Harbin's best ice and snow

carvers have been busy putting the finishing touches to their sculptures, which are based on big chunks of ice that are dragged out of the nearby river and carved, brushed, and lit up.

The sculptures range from animals and cartoon characters to replicas of famous world monuments and landscapes, as well as a 340-meter-long slide that state media say took around 500 builders to complete.

Lu Fu was helping to finish a giant ice castle on a busy roundabout in Harbin, brushing it with a small rake.

"I feel happy. Especially after completion, I feel so excited when looking at the ice wall with lights on in distance," said Lu, who has been carving ice for more than 20 years. "Ice building is the pride of Harbin people." **AP**

## Taiwan protests Vietnam deporting fraud suspects

**T**AIWAN has protested to Vietnam after the country deported four Taiwanese accused of fraud to its rival, China, alleging that this was done under pressure from Beijing.

Scores of Taiwanese have been arrested around the world in the past year in connection with vast telecoms fraud scams targeting Chinese. Countries including Malaysia, Cambodia and Kenya have recently deported Taiwanese suspects to China, in deference to Beijing's claim to sovereignty over the self-governing island.

Taiwan has vigorously protested the deportations, saying it should be allowed to prosecute its own citizens. But it lacks diplomatic relations with many of the countries, which have close diplomatic and economic ties to Beijing.

The Taiwanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs said this week that it "regretted" that the Vietnamese government violated the principle of governments exerci-

sing their jurisdiction over their overseas nationals. The ministry said mainland officials obstructed Taiwanese attempts to look into the case and visit its citizens, and despite several meetings, Vietnam "forcibly sent the suspects to the Chinese mainland under intense pressure."

Beijing contends that Taiwan gives light treatment to the suspects, who are accused of extorting hundreds of Chinese by posing as bank or government officials. Chinese authorities say they should try the cases because their citizens are the primary victims and have been swindled out of millions of dollars.

China has upped pressure on Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen in recent months, suspending contacts with her administration and waging a diplomatic campaign to further isolate Taiwan after she refused to endorse Beijing's claim that Taiwan and the mainland are part of a single Chinese nation. **AP**

# Singapore to deliver new growth map with economy under strain



People sit on a set of steps on Orchard Road in Singapore

David Roman

**S**INGAPORE is due to deliver a blueprint outlining strategies to boost the economy as the export-dependent nation seeks new growth engines.

The Committee on the Future Economy will publish its recommendations in a few weeks time, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said in his New Year Message, days before the government reported that growth slumped to a seven-year low in 2016. Southeast Asia's only developed economy faces risks

including rising trade protectionism in the U.S. and a slowdown in China.

Here is an outline of the committee and what to expect:

## WHAT IS THE CFE?

The 30-member CFE was set up in December 2015 to develop economic strategies for the city-state, along the lines of earlier groups convened since at least 1985. Comprising government and private sector representatives, such recommendations have helped shape Singapore's economic policies.

The committee has the wei-

ghting of senior officials: it's led by Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat and Minister for Trade and Industry S. Iswaran. Chan Chun Sing, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office who is a rising political star in the government, is the vice chairman.

The CFE has consulted with more than 1,000 educators, business leaders and academics, The Straits Times reported. It seeks to identify growth industries and markets as well as ways to make Singapore-based companies more competitive. Job crea-

tion, urban development and infrastructure are also part of its remit.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Singapore has a history of success with similar committees in helping to drive economic change. Recommendations from the previous group - known as the Economic Strategies Committee - released in 2010, were mainly followed. These included raising fees companies must pay to hire foreign workers, a measure designed to curtail immigration growth, and setting up a National Pro-

ductivity Fund to finance programs to boost productivity.

"Historically, when Singapore convened these kinds of committees they are not for show," said Brian Tan, a Singapore-based economist with Nomura Holdings Inc. "This will set the tone for policy making over the next period."

## WHAT TO EXPECT?

The CFE is likely to focus on financial technology and nanotechnology as well as ways to improve productivity with the working population set to decrease in coming years, said Song Seng Wun, a regional economist at CIMB Private Bank in Singapore.

"Singapore must find a few tricks up its sleeve to make sure it remains relevant," Song said. "The question is how Singapore, a small open economy, can stay relevant when social media and other developments have made businesses almost borderless. Singapore is not that limited by its small size anymore."

Singapore is no stranger to innovation. In the 1990s, it shifted its focus to chemicals, electronics, engineering and developed biomedical sciences. In 2015, the biomedical industry had an output of SGD26.9 billion (USD18.6 billion), about 10 percent of overall manufacturing production.

## WHAT ABOUT JOBS?

Employment may feature more prominently in the committee's recommendations at a time when the city-state is shedding jobs at the fastest pace since 2009. In particular, there is expected to be a focus on initiatives for the retraining of older workers, said Nomura's Tan.

"There is growing evidence that structural unemployment is rising in Singapore because some careers may not be so viable anymore," Tan said. "It's an issue of how you redeploy the workers into the new sectors that the CFE is going to come up with." **Bloomberg**

## SOUTH KOREA

# Court formally starts president's impeachment trial

**S**OUTH Korea's Constitutional Court yesterday began to hear oral arguments in the impeachment trial of President Park Geun-hye, who lawmakers voted to remove over a corruption scandal that saw millions of people protest over the last several months.

Park's lawyers and lawmakers, who serve as prosecutors in the trial, traded pointed arguments yesterday on the validity of accusations that she

colluded with a confidante to extort money and favors from companies and allowed the friend to unlawfully interfere with government affairs.

Lawmaker Kweon Seong Dong, the chief prosecutor in the trial, said Park betrayed the trust people put in her by "broadly and gravely" violating the constitution and criminal laws. Park's lawyer, Lee Joong-hwan, said the accusations stated in the impeachment

bill "lack evidence and fail to make legal sense" because they were based on allegations and media reports, not criminal convictions.

The hearing proceeded without Park, who refused to testify for the second time following her no-show on Tuesday. The nine-justice court cannot force Park to appear.

Park's lawyers may prefer her not to testify because their chief argument is that the ac-

cusations against Park haven't been fully proven, said Han Sang-hie, a law professor at Seoul's Konkuk University. Park rejected requests by state prosecutors to question her and has yet to be questioned by the special prosecution team that has taken over the inquiry.

The court has six months to decide if Park should permanently step down or should be reinstated. **AP**



Nine judges of the Constitutional Court sit during a hearing on whether to confirm the impeachment of President Park Geun-Hye

**PEOPLE** who lost their homes in the devastating earthquake that hit Nepal nearly two years ago are tired of waiting for help to rebuild.

The slow pace of distributing government grant money for rebuilding has left many people to spend their second winter without a home.

Nhuchhe Laxmi Prajapati and Shiva Prajapati, who are not related, are building their houses now, by taking out loans with high interest rates.

Their homes and hundreds of others were damaged during the April 25, 2015, earthquake in the town of Bhaktapur, which is known for brick paved roads, old palaces and artistic Hindu temples. It's just 13 kilometers west of the capital, Kathmandu.

When the earthquake shook the house of Shiva Prajapati, 12 family members were buried by the falling bricks. Three died and six of the survivors had serious injuries.

He waited for months for help but finally took out a USD30,000 loan from the bank at 12 percent interest rate and began constructing a house for the family at the same spot where their old house once stood.

"We hear that the government has spent millions and billions for reconstruction but I have not received any money. The government has done nothing," Shiva Prajapati said

## Tired of the cold wait, Nepal quake survivors rebuild

as he was digging the foundation for the house.

In a nearby neighborhood, Nhuchhe Laxmi Prajapati, 61, was also digging the foundation with the help of family members. She too took out a

**We hear that the government has spent millions and billions for reconstruction but I have not received any money.**

SHIVA PRAJAPATI

loan of \$10,000 from a local money lender. She has no clue how much the interest is or how she is even going to pay back.

"I just got tired of living in the sheds in the field. It is just



Shree Krishna Chusyabagaa works on his house construction which was damaged by the 2015 earthquake in Bhaktapur

too cold there," she said.

The government has been repeatedly criticized for the slow work helping earthquake victims.

The National Reconstruction

Authority has said it has distributed the first installment of government grant money — about \$500 to 450,000 families — but it is still collecting details from residents in sev-

eral districts where the earthquake caused damage.

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal has asked the authority to explain the delays. **AP**

### JAPAN

## Bluefin tuna goes for USD632,000 in 1st Tsukiji auction of '17

Elaine Kurtenbach, Tokyo

A Japanese sushi chain boss bid a winning 74.2 million yen (USD632,000) yesterday for a 212 kilogram bluefin tuna in what may be Tsukiji market's last auction at its current site in downtown Tokyo.

The winning bid yesterday for the prized but imperiled species was the second highest ever after a record 155.4 million yen bid in 2013 at the annual New Year auction. This year's price was \$2,981 per kilogram, compared with about \$7,930 per kilogram for the 2013 record-setting auction price.

Kiyomura Corp. owner Kiyoshi Kimura posed, beaming, after the predawn New Year auction with the gleaming, man-sized fish, which was caught off the coast of northern Japan's Aomori prefecture. His company, which runs the Sushi Zanmai chain, often wins the annual auction.

Last year's New Year auction was supposed to be the last at Tsuki-



ji's current location. The shift to a new facility on Tokyo Bay was delayed due to soil contamination at the former gas plant site.

Japanese are the biggest consumers of the torpedo-shaped bluefin tuna, and surging consumption of sushi has boosted demand, as experts warn the species could go extinct.

A report by the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean last year put the population of bluefin tuna at

2.6 percent of its "unfished" size, down from an earlier assessment of 4.2 percent.

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission tightened international limits in 2015 as the species remained under threat, halving the catch of bluefin tuna under 30 kilograms from the average caught between 2002 and 2004.

But overfishing has continued and in some areas bluefin are harvested at triple the levels considered sustainable. **AP**

### PHILIPPINES

## 34 of 158 inmates recaptured after jailbreak

**PHILIPPINE** security forces have recaptured 34 out of 158 inmates who escaped after suspected heavily armed Muslim rebels stormed a jail in the country's south, officials said yesterday.

Police said one jail guard died in the initial gunfight, while five inmates who resisted capture were killed during pursuit operations. A village official who allegedly drew a gun when encountered by police also was killed.

The brazen attack on the North Cotabato District Jail in Kidapawan took place before dawn Wednesday when more than 100 heavily armed gunmen facilitated what officials say was the biggest jailbreak in the country. Kidapawan city is about 930 kilometers (580 miles) southeast of the capital, Manila, in a restive region when Muslim rebels have been active for generations.

Acting Provincial Jail Warden Superintendent Pe-

ter John Bongngat Jr. earlier said the attackers were suspected to include members of the outlawed Bangsa-moro Islamic Freedom Fighters and guerrillas who broke away from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the main Muslim separatist group in the predominantly Roman Catholic Philippines that has signed a peace deal with the government. The two groups, however, have denied involvement.

The village official was among the seven dead, although his wife denied that her husband was part of the attackers or that he aided the escape.

The jail held 1,511 inmates, including rebels facing murder charges for a series of bombings in the province, officials said. It was the third attack on the provincial jail facility since 2007. **AP**

# Uprooted by war, fearing troops, Myanmar girls learn karate



Esther Htsuan

**E**VERY afternoon, dozens of teenage girls at the school for displaced children line up on the grounds, dressed in white uniforms with belts of various colors: yellow, blue, white. They kick high and jump with glee before settling into their exercises, shouting in Japanese as they punch into the air.

The reason many of these girls are in this class is sobering: They want protection from their own country's military.

Mostly between 13 and 16, they have lost their homes, and in some cases their families, to the long-running civil war in Myanmar's Kachin state — a war in which soldiers have been repeatedly accused of raping girls and women, but rarely prosecuted. This karate

class offers some small sense of power to the vulnerable.

"For all the girls, we teach them how to protect themselves when someone tries to sexually assault them and how to fight back," instructor Hkun Naw said. "Basically teaching the girls to make themselves safe."

"We wanted to make sure all the internally displaced children have the right to do something that gives them joy, and to be confident."

More than 100,000 people in Kachin state, in Myanmar's north, have been forced from their homes by fighting between government troops and ethnic Kachin rebels who have sought greater autonomy for decades. A 17-year-long cease-fire ended in 2011.

Je Yang is among the most crowded camps, with more than 8,000 people, including 16-year-old Hkawn Ra. She fled fighting

in her village of Man Dung while she was at school five years ago, when she was 11. She has not seen her parents since.

She once dreamed of becoming a nurse, but no longer. "Because of the political situation and civil war, I cannot become who I want to be, and I am not angry about it anymore," she said.

Hkawn Ra is, however, learning karate, after hearing about rapes and sexual violence against women in the region. A community-based organization operating under the Kachin Independence Organization has held karate classes in Kachin-controlled areas since the year the cease-fire ended, seeking to teach girls and boys self-defense and self-confidence.

"They [the military] rape women and that's why I was interested, and decided to learn karate to

protect myself at least," Hkawn Ra said.

Women organizations say the military has been long using rape as weapon of war. The Women's League of Burma says it has do-

**They [the military] rape women and that's why I was interested, and decided to learn karate to protect myself at least.**

HKAWN RA

documented more than 100 cases of rape and sexual violence against ethnic women by the military army since 2010. The government and the military have remained largely silent on the issue.

This fall, Muslim Rohingya and rights groups have said soldiers and police have repeatedly raped members of the ethnic minority in northwestern Rakhine state. Authorities have been conducting sweeps of the region since October, when nine border guards were killed by unknown attackers. The government has blocked foreign media from the area, but Rohingya who fled to nearby Bangladesh report rapes and murders by security forces, and satellite images back up their claims of village-burning. At a recent press conference, military spokesman

Soe Naing Oo denied that soldiers in Rakhine were committing any human-rights violations or sexual violence.

The Kachin Women's Association of Thailand and the Legal Aid Network last year released a report on investigators' lack of progress in the brutal 2015 rape and murder of the two Kachin volunteer teachers. Dozens of soldiers were housed closed to the rape scene, and several left shortly before the bodies were discovered, but no suspects have been identified.

Prosecutions have been few. In 2014, a soldier was sentenced to 7 years in prison for raping a 7-year-old Kachin girl in northern Shan state. Accused Myanmar soldiers normally face a military tribunal, but in that case lawyers successfully pressed for a civilian trial.

Ethnic minorities overwhelmingly voted for Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy last year, helping it replace an elected but military-dominated government. But many are now disappointed with her government's efforts to resolve a host of ethnic conflicts and what they see as the military's impunity.

"Without talking about human-rights violations and ignoring the truth and justice for the victims, there won't be a real peace and national reconciliation in our country," said Julia Marip, secretary of the Women's League of Burma.

With little confidence that soldiers will be held to account for misdeeds, the girls in the karate class hope to at least deter them from committing any to begin with. They compete with each other, and some have dreams of fighting professionally.

"Our instructor said we can go abroad to learn more skills, and I want to go overseas and be a professional fighter," said 14-year-old Nu Ja.

"When they know how to defend themselves," said Hkun Naw, the instructor, "they will be able to protect their families, their people and their country." AP

Saritha Rai

**XIAOMI** Corp. surpassed USD1 billion in annual India revenue two years after selling its first smartphone in the country, as Chinese names begin to dominate the world's fastest-growing major market at the expense of local players.

Xiaomi said it grew shipments by almost 150 percent in 2016, selling two million smartphones in the third quarter alone. The company had focused on India since failing to meet sales tar-

gets and dropping to number four in a home market it once led.

India is increasingly attracting foreign players as global demand stagnates. Apple Inc. is said to be exploring ways to expand its business there. Chinese companies in particular went on an advertising blitz in 2016, touting superior specifications at affordable prices.

That helped Chinese brands from Xiaomi and Oppo to Lenovo Group Ltd. account for 51 percent of smartphone shipments in November, according

## Xiaomi's India sales pass USD1b as Chinese brands hold sway

to Counterpoint Research. In contrast, local names such as Micromax Ltd. saw their share dive to less than 20 percent from a high of over 40 percent earlier in the year. Samsung Electronics Co. held onto top spot in the country.

Xiaomi assembles over three-quarters of its Indian smartphones in the country under the government's

"Make in India" program. Oppo, currently the sales leader in China, is planning to invest 1.5 billion yuan (\$217 million) on its own industrial park in India within two to three years, with an initial output of 50 million units, Caixin reported last month. This week, local rival OnePlus will open its first store in India, in Bangalore. **Bloomberg**



People check the features of Xiaomi's smartphone after its launch in Delhi

# Fading French town offers hope of new life for Syrian family

Elena Becatoros, Gray

**G**RAY is a dying town, its residents lament. Big businesses have moved away, taking jobs with them. Though it still lives up to its nickname “Gray la jolie,” or “Gray the pretty,” many stores now lie vacant, with fading “to rent” signs in their windows.

But for one Syrian family, the picturesque streets, red-tiled rooftops and quiet river walks offer hope of rebuilding their shattered lives, away from the fear of death lurking around every corner in their homeland.

“I will start to love life another time,” said Abd Alwahab Alahamad, a 43-year-old Damascus oncologist. “Because sometimes [in the] last two years, I thought it will be very difficult to stay alive.”

Like hundreds of thousands before them, the Alahamads risked everything to escape war and the dark brutality of the Islamic State group, embarking on a perilous and uncertain journey through checkpoints, bombs and a nightmarish sea crossing to Greece.

But after months of uncertainty and doubt, their luck began to change. Alahamad, his wife Iman Mshantati and their three children — 5-year-old Nora, 2-year-old Ahmed and baby Layan, born in Greece six months ago — were among the fortunate few accepted so far into an ambitious European relocation program.

Launched in late 2015, the program was designed to relieve pressure on Greece and Italy, the main entry points for more than a million people fleeing into the European Union. But it has come under fire for moving too slowly. Of the 66,400 people who should be relocated from Greece by this September, just 7,286 had been resettled by the end of December, according to figures from the International Organization for Migration, which organizes the transfers. France has taken in the most refugees from Greece, 2,420. The next highest-receiver is the Netherlands, which has taken 836.

Applicants cannot choose their destination. The Alahamads were assigned to France, a country neither the Russian-trained doctor nor his wife, a 33-year-old nutritionist and beautician, had ever visited.

“We are going into the unknown; We do not know the city, the people, nothing,” said Mshantati in a small apartment in Athens the day before the family’s flight to Paris, three small suitcases sitting neatly packed on the floor. “But we hear from people who had left before us that they are happy, and we felt relieved.”



The Alahamad family smile as they enjoy their first walk in the town of Gray

The family had never intended to leave Syria. They didn’t expect the 2011 street protests against Syrian President Bashar Assad to turn into a full-blown civil war.

“At first everybody thought — not only me — that it will finish tomorrow, the day after tomorrow,” Alahamad said of the early days of the rebellion.

The trials of their months-long journey are etched on their faces.

In 2014, warned government forces were looking for him after he treated a man for gunshot wounds, Alahamad fled Damascus. He moved the family to an eastern town near the city of Deir-e-Zor, where his parents are from, and quickly found a job in a private clinic.

But the war followed.

The area was overrun by IS extremists who imposed strict Islamic rule. Mshantati had to wear the all-enveloping black abaya; Alahamad was questioned for treating female patients, and forced to watch a public killing. A family friend was beheaded, his body left on the street for three days. Relentless bombings claimed the lives of relatives and friends.

After a particularly close call, when rockets landed near their home, wounding relatives, Alahamad decided the time had come.

“I left. I left everything behind,” he said.

With two young children and a pregnant wife, the journey was harrowing. The nighttime treks and border crossing, the smugglers, the ride jammed into the back of a truck with nearly 100 others. But nothing compared to the boat crossing from Turkey to Greece. Nora cried, clutching her father’s hand. She was convinced they would die.

Their first try failed. The couple paid USD800 each, for four spots in an overcrowded dinghy that nobody on board knew how to drive. They went round in circles on the Aegean Sea until the Turkish coast guard intercepted the boat and took all its passengers to a detention center.

On their second attempt, a fellow passenger motored for hours through rough seas to the Greek island of Chios. The family reached mainland Greece 10 days later.

Alahamad spent months working as a volunteer doctor in refugee camps housing some of the more than 62,000 asylum seekers stranded in Greece by border closures and a deal between the EU and Turkey intended to stem the flow of migrants into Europe. He and Mshantati thought of staying, but Greece’s asylum system was overwhelmed.

So they applied for relocation. Months of waiting ensued, punctuated by interviews with autho-

rities for the relocation procedure and Layan’s birth. Then in September, the news they had been waiting for: Their application was successful.

## Alahamad spent months working as a volunteer doctor in refugee camps housing some of the more than 62,000 asylum seekers

The Alahamads were assigned to Gray, a pretty, sleepy medieval town in eastern France of about 6,000 people on the River Saone just before it flows into Burgundy. They would be part of the second group of families sent there from Greece. The first arrived in March, with a maximum 29 people arriving each time.

Gray Mayor Christophe Laurentot stipulated the town would accept only families, and each would be assigned a social worker. The families are given housing

while they apply for asylum, a process that normally takes about four months in the fast-track relocation procedure, said Guillaume Germain, regional director of the French Immigration and Integration Office. Once granted refugee status, they can stay in state housing for another six months while searching for jobs and living arrangements of their own, but are free to move elsewhere in France if they prefer. Of the first five families to arrive in Gray, four have moved elsewhere.

But small, close-knit towns do not always embrace outsiders. To facilitate integration, Laurentot decided the best tactic was full transparency and informed residents about the program before the first arrivals in March.

“We had reactions straight away,” he said. “Good, less good or bad, I had them all.” Some residents offered overwhelming generosity, while others questioned why the state should help foreigners.

But, Laurentot said, “France is after all a country of hosts, a country of reception, a welcoming country. And it’s not enough to say it; we had to do it.”

So far, the mayor’s tactic appears to be working.

“It’s very, very good, we see them pass by, there are no worries on that account, everything is going well,” said Stephanie Vanhee, who runs an optical shop in Gray. Toddler Ahmed squealed with joy at being allowed to pet her puppy, Morito, during the family’s first tour around town. “It must be done, you know. We must receive them.”

Clothing store owner Roberte Fouillot said reactions were more or less positive, although there was some initial reticence to the idea, what with the recent terror attacks by Islamic extremists and demands on social services by needy French people. But images of the war in Syria in the media shocked her.

“These poor kids, these poor families who are suffering — it’s unacceptable in our day and age,” Fouillot said.

As for the issue of integration, Fouillot does not foresee problems.

“They are people like everyone else. We all have our religion,” she said. “Today, if everyone reached out to each other, well, there might be less wars, less misery in the world.”

The Alahamads arrived in Gray on a foggy mid-December night. Allocated a bare but warm apartment, Alahamad and Mshantati breathed a sigh of relief. They look forward to learning French, finding work and sending the children to school. Alahamad hopes France will recognize his Russian medical degree.

An exploratory walk, with Nora and Ahmed playing excitedly in a small playground near the river, cemented their impression: The town was perfect. The worst, they hoped, was finally behind them.

“It’s difficult. We lost many things,” Alahamad said. “I want to start a new life. Now, I think we have a chance.” AP

# Unrest over Mexico gasoline price hike erupts into looting

Lev Garcia, Mark Stevenson

**PROTESTS** over a sharp gasoline price hike erupted into looting of gas stations and stores in various parts of Mexico on Wednesday, with dozens of businesses reportedly sacked.

Protesters also continued to block highways, burn tires and seize gas stations, snarling traffic and jeopardizing fuel supplies across the country.

The National Association of Self-Service and Department Stores of Mexico said in a statement that 79 stores had been looted and 170 were closed or blockaded in central Mexico, including the capital.

The unrest "resulting in the theft of merchandise put at risk the lives of clients and workers in the stores, primarily in Mexico State, Michoacan, Hidalgo and Mexico City," the statement said.

In the Gulf coast city of Veracruz, 50 establishments including convenience stores, supermarkets and big-box outlets suffered looting, according to a preliminary count by the local chamber



Residents steal gasoline and diesel from a gas station following protests against an increase in fuel prices in Allende

of commerce.

Store guards were overrun by crowds who carried off clothing, food, washing machines, televisions, DVD players and refrigerators.

Extra police patrols were deployed, and at least 14 people were detained, the state government reported. At one supermarket officers fired into the air to disperse the multitudes.

Earlier in the day, President Enrique Pena Nieto took to the airwaves to defend his unpopular gasoline deregulation measure that resulted in price hikes of up to 20 percent over the weekend.

The increases took effect as the government ends regulated prices for gasoline and diesel, which it says represented subsidies that unduly benefited wealthier Mexicans.

The change boosted the average price for a liter of premium gasoline to 17.79 pesos (about 90 cents). That makes 4 liters, or about a gallon, equal to nearly as much as Mexico's just raised minimum wage for a day's work — 80 pesos (about \$4).

Pena Nieto said he would try to help groups hit hard by the increases, in an apparent reference to bus, truck and taxi drivers.

"I understand the anger and irritation felt by the general public," Pena Nieto said, saying that "this is an action that nobody would want to take."

"If this decision had not been taken, the effects and consequences would have been far more painful," he added.

The farm activist group El Barzon said that even with tax breaks or government support for truck drivers, "the wave of anger and discontent among Mexicans cannot be held back."

The state-owned oil company Pemex said Tuesday that blockades of fuel terminals in the states of Chihuahua, Morelos and Durango had caused a "critical situation" in distributing fuel to gas stations there.

It said that if the blockades continued, it could interrupt operations at airports in Chihuahua and Baja California.

The country's industrial chamber, known as Concamin, said that "impeding production and commerce is not the best way to handle the increase in fuel prices." AP

## TURKEY

### Nightclub gunman most probably Uighur

Turkish police are closing in on the gunman who killed 39 people at an Istanbul nightclub, a senior official said yesterday, insisting his possible whereabouts and contacts had been established. Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Veysi Kaynak told A Haber news channel in an interview that gunman who attacked Istanbul's upscale Reina nightclub during New Year's celebrations, is most probably from China's Muslim Uighur minority and was a "specially trained member of a [terror] cell."

## GERMANY

### Tunisian who dined with market attacker arrested

An acquaintance of suspected Berlin Christmas market attacker Anis Amri who dined with him the night before the rampage is under investigation for possible participation in planning the attack, German prosecutors said. He was arrested, but in a separate case. The 26-year-old Tunisian had known Amri since the end of 2015 and the pair ate together at a Berlin restaurant the night before the Dec. 19 attack, said Frauke Koehler, a spokeswoman for federal prosecutors. His quarters at a refugee home were searched on Tuesday.

AD



# LOTTO BAND



**LOTTO BAND, will be performing live at D2 Club Macau**

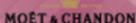
**From:**  
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## TV canal macau



## FRIDAY

13:00	TDM News (Repeat)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:50	Non-Daily Portuguese News
15:50	ABU TV Song Festival MTV 2016
16:00	Official Programme (Live)
16:50	Happy Endings Sr.1
17:30	Castle S6 (Repeated)
18:10	Precious Pearl (Repeated)
19:00	TDM Talk Show (Repeated)
19:30	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:15	Documentary Serie
22:10	Precious Pearl
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Portuguese Movie
01:15	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
02:05	RTPi Live

## SATURDAY

10:35	Comedy
11:05	Blaze Riders
12:30	Documentary Serie
13:00	TDM News (Repeat)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:50	Soap Opera
19:10	Documentary Serie
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	Drama
22:00	Revenge S.4
22:45	Non-Daily Portuguese News
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Musical
00:10	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
00:45	RTPi Live

## SUNDAY

10:35	Young Children
11:00	Sunday Mass (Live)
12:00	Miscellaneous
12:30	Miscellaneous
13:00	TDM News (Repeat)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:50	Zig Zag
16:10	Miscellaneous
16:35	Documentary Serie
19:00	Miscellaneous
19:30	Comedy
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	Non-Daily Portuguese News
22:00	Greece With Simon Reeve
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Non-Daily Portuguese News
00:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
01:05	RTPi Live

## Offbeat

## FLOODING DISRUPTS TRANSIT, SPOILS HOLIDAYS IN SOUTH THAILAND



Flooding in southern Thailand has killed at least five people, disrupted transportation and spoiled tourists' holidays at one of the country's most popular resort islands.

An Interior Ministry report said eight southern provinces have been flooded by heavy rains that began Sunday. It said three people had died, and the state broadcaster MCOT reported that two more, a mother and child, were found dead yesterday morning in a submerged vehicle.

Rail service was cut at several points, as were some roads, leading to the suspension of six long-distance bus routes from Bangkok.

Flooding on the resort island of Samui in the Gulf of Thailand snarled traffic and delayed flights to and from the popular tourist destination. AP

## cinema



## CINETEATRO

05 JAN - 11 JAN



## ALLIED

ROOM 1

2:30, 4:45, 7:15, 9:30pm

Director: Robert Zemeckis

Starring: Marion Cotillard, Brad Pitt

Language: English

Duration: 124min

## A STREET CAT NAMED BOB

ROOM 2

2:30, 4:30, 7:30, 21:30pm

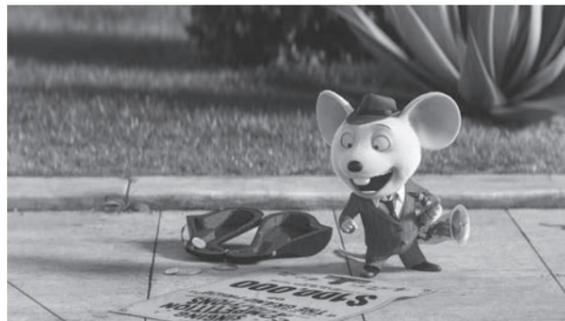
Director: Roger Spottiswoode

Starring: Luke Treadaway, Joanne Froggatt, Ruta

Gedmintas

Language: English

Duration: 103min



## SING

ROOM 3

7:30pm

Director: Garth Jennings

Starring: Matthew McConaughey, Reese Witherspoon,

Seth MacFarlane

Language: Cantonese (English)

Duration: 108min



## A MONSTER CALLS

ROOM 3

2:30, 4:30, 21:30pm

Director: J.A. Bayona

Starring: Lewis MacDougall, Felicity Jones, Sigourney

Weaver

Language: English

Duration: 108min

## MACAU TOWER

05 JAN - 11 JAN



## THE GREAT WALL

(3D) 2:30, 4:30, 7:30, 9:30pm

Director: Yimou Zhang

Starring: Matt Damon, Pedro Pascal, Willem Dafoe

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 104min

## this day in history



## 1977 EMI FIRES SEX PISTOLS

The music publisher EMI has ended its contract with the Sex Pistols punk rock group because of their notorious behavior in public.

In a statement, the company said: "EMI feels it is unable to promote this group's records in view of the adverse publicity generated over the past two months."

The move follows the group's appearance on ITV's Today program six weeks ago in which they used strong language.

Reports that they had sworn at Heathrow Airport staff and spat at each other while waiting to board a plane for the Netherlands yesterday proved to be the final straw.

EMI broke the news to Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren by telephone this morning. But he denied the contract had been ended by mutual agreement.

In Amsterdam preparing for a series of concerts and recordings, he told the BBC: "That's rubbish. I haven't signed a single paper - as far as I'm concerned, we're still on EMI."

The four-man band - Johnny Rotten, Steve Jones, Paul Cook and Sid Vicious - had only served three months of the two-year contract, worth £40,000, and release one single - Anarchy in the UK.

EMI has also come under pressure to drop the group from the Conservative MP for Christchurch and Lymington, Robert Adley.

Last night, he wrote to the managing director, Sir John Read, saying: "Surely a group of your size and reputation could forgo the doubtful privilege of sponsoring trash like the Sex Pistols."

Asked whether he would sign up another punk rock group, Sir John told the BBC: "Certainly. I am told there is a demand for this style of music and provided we can have groups that don't attract the adverse publicity this group has had, we'll certainly want to be in it."

## IN CONTEXT

In March 1977 the Sex Pistols signed up with A&M Records but were sacked soon afterwards.

By June they had joined Virgin and sold 150,000 copies of God Save the Queen in just one day. The single officially reached number two - despite a BBC Radio One ban and several high street chains refusing to stock it. It caused a national outrage in the year of the Queen's Jubilee.

On 12 October 1978 Sid Vicious was charged with murdering his girlfriend, Nancy Spungen. That same year the group disbanded.

Sid Vicious died of a drug overdose on 2 February 1979 while out on bail.

Virgin Records continued to release Sex Pistols music, including one compilation appropriately called Flogging a Dead Horse.

Then in 1986 former Sex Pistols won substantial damages against their ex-manager Malcolm McLaren.

Ten years later in 1996, the band reformed for their final worldwide tour - and live album Filthy Lucre - that lasted six months.

The band reformed again in 2002 and re-released God Save the Queen in response to the Queen's Golden Jubilee celebrations. They came together again in August 2003 for a short USA tour.

**YOUR STARS**

**Aries**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
This is your day to be lucky. If you've been thinking about getting to know someone new, and you're feeling a bit on the not-so-brave side about starting up a conversation, think about that good fortune and use it.

**Taurus**  
April 20-May 20  
If you're asked to make a donation, buy something whose proceeds will go to a nonprofit organization, or contribute your time to a worthy cause, you'll be only too happy to do it now, and you really should.

**Gemini**  
May 21-Jun. 21  
Be careful to think before you speak today, because you could be letting a secret out without meaning to. In fact, if you're not sure that you've been authorized to talk about a certain issue, don't utter one single peep.

**Cancer**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
Your feelings about a certain situation, probably involving a family member or an old and dear friend, will absolutely need to be expressed right now. Fortunately, you're ready to let them out.

**Leo**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
Dreams, nostalgia and thoughts of how great things used to be are on your mind now, and they're having a powerful effect on you. Before you get too swept up in all that nostalgia, be sure you're remembering everything.

**Virgo**  
Aug. 23-Sept. 22  
Your first impulse will be to say exactly what's on your mind now, and that might be the best thing. On the other hand, if there's any way you can count to ten before you reply, that might not be a bad idea either.

**Libra**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
The family members you've been trying to help out will finally realize what you've been up to, and believe it or not, you may even hear a thank you or two. In the meantime, keep doing what you've been doing.

**Scorpio**  
Oct. 23 - Nov. 21  
Be careful with your money matters now. It will be easy for you to be taken advantage of by others who know how soft your heart is and how much you care for others.

**Sagittarius**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
Your daily routine will keep you quite busy. In fact, you really shouldn't count on your schedule turning out even close to the way you'd expected it to. You'll be busy, dealing with pleasant and unexpected situations.

**Capricorn**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
Higher-ups will be especially helpful to you now - but it won't seem that way at first. In fact, you probably won't know what they're talking about when they first broach the issue, no matter how hard they try to explain it to you.

**Aquarius**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
The folks you've been associating with for months now will be only too happy to back you up, no matter what you need or when you need it. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, will be to agree to let them help you.

**Pisces**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
Your dreams will be especially prophetic now, so try to remember them when you wake up. Keeping track of what your mind does while you're sleeping can help you figure out what's going on in the real world.

**THE BORN LOSER** by Chip Sansom



**SUDOKU**

**Easy**

5	6							9
	2	7			4			
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		8 1	4 6	5				
7					8			6
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**Easy+**

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**Medium**

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2								9

**Hard**

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2						5		
				9				
				5 7		8		
3		8						
		1						

**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	-3	4	smoggy
Harbin	-22	-8	smoggy
Tianjin	-1	3	foggy
Urumqi	-13	-5	foggy/flurry
Xi'an	0	4	drizzle
Lhasa	-9	3	clear
Chengdu	7	14	cloudy
Chongqing	10	13	overcast
Kunming	4	16	cloudy/overcast
Nanjing	8	11	drizzle
Shanghai	10	14	drizzle
Wuhan	6	8	drizzle/moderate rain
Hangzhou	11	14	drizzle
Taipei	18	24	cloudy/overcast
Guangzhou	17	25	cloudy
Hong Kong	20	24	cloudy
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-16	-9	flurry
Frankfurt	-8	3	flurry/drizzle
Paris	-3	4	overcast/drizzle
London	-1	4	cloudy/drizzle
New York	-1	2	overcast/drizzle

**CROSSWORDS**

**ACROSS:** 1- Member of a largely Middle Eastern people; 5- 24 hour periods; 9- Herring type; 14- Valley, Calif.; 15- Robt. \_\_\_; 16- Link with; 17- Shake \_\_\_ (hurry); 18- What you do to a shadow; 19- Photographer Adams; 20- Execute; 22- Not blind; 24- Cream-filled cookies; 26- Corp. bigwig; 27- Broadway opening; 30- Bald; 35- Pic; 36- Entice; 37- Way out; 38- Loser to DDE; 39- Seesaws; 42- Land in la mer; 43- Pouches; 45- Meets one's maker; 46- Claw; 48- Staircase; 50- To a greater extent; 51- Cinque follower; 52- Pitchers; 54- Moment; 58- Like some jacks; 62- Highway stop; 63- On the disabled list; 65- Director Ephron; 66- Separated; 67- Not \_\_\_ many words; 68- Farming prefix; 69- Unordered; 70- Psychic; 71- Glasgow gal;

**DOWN:** 1- Prontol; 2- Make angry; 3- From the U.S.; 4- Sasquatch; 5- Formal order; 6- 1836 siege site; 7- Absolutely!; 8- Hardens; 9- Person of experience; 10- Tiny aperture; 11- Take five; 12- Fit to \_\_\_; 13- Tattled; 21- Ready \_\_\_; 23- More frigid; 25- Sleep; 27- Make \_\_\_ at; 28- Swindle; 29- Puccini opera; 31- Son of Zeus in Greek mythology; 32- Banishment; 33- Grain stores; 34- Dictation taker; 36- "Star Wars" princess; 40- Newsman Newman; 41- Grocery, e.g.; 44- Nuns; 47- Weapons supply; 49- Property; 50- Wise counselor; 53- More unfavorable; 54- Mosque leader; 55- Uh-uh; 56- RR stops; 57- Michael Moore's "Downsize \_\_\_!"; 59- Indian exercise method; 60- Drops the ball; 61- Speaker's spot; 64- French article;

**Yesterday's solution**

P	R	O	S	E	S	A	I	D	E	T	E	L	S
A	O	R	T	A	L	Y	R	E	T	N	U	T	
A	T	E	A	T	A	L	E	S	U	C	L	A	
R	O	S	S	I	G	A	N	K	B	I	L	L	
S	S	T	S	E	R	T	I	C	A	L	A	T	E
A	P	U	S	A	A	B	M	I	S	L	E	D	
N	O	T	W	I	T	H	S	T	A	N	D	I	N
T	O	T	E	M	S	E	M	M	Y	V	E	E	
A	L	I	B	I	T	I	N	C	A	L	E	T	S
M	A	G	E	L	L	A	N	E	D	E	N	S	
D	E	L	E	L	I	L	A	A	G	R	E	E	
E	L	A	M	E	N	E	R	L	E	N	D	S	
R	T	E	S	R	I	C	A	E	R	O	S	E	

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- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IACM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
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- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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**Nova Taipa Tower 29 Car Park, Taipa**  
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HKD 0sq ft  
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SPANISH KING'S CUP

# James comes through for Real Madrid



James Rodriguez celebrates after scoring a goal during a Spain's King's Cup match

**J**AMES Rodriguez made the most of a rare start for Real Madrid yesterday [Macau time], scoring twice in a convincing 3-0 win over Sevilla in a first-leg match in the Copa del Rey's Round of 16.

Less than a month after he called for more playing time and

said he might leave the club if things didn't change, the Colombian midfielder got to start at the Santiago Bernabeu. And his performance showed that Rodriguez believes he should still be considered for a place in Zinedine Zidane's regular starting lineup.

"Obviously we all want to play,"

Rodriguez said. "We all go through bad moments, but this is like a new beginning for me. I'm staying, I'm staying in Madrid."

He opened the scoring with a low, left-foot shot from outside the area in the 11th minute, and netted his second by converting a penalty just before halftime after Luka Modric had been fouled

inside the area.

"He played a good game," Zidane said of Rodriguez, who was cheered loudly by the crowd when he was substituted near the end. "He scored the goals and worked well. I'm happy for the match he had."

Defender Raphael Varane scored the other goal with a header from the middle of the area in the 29th, as Madrid extended its unbeaten streak to 38 games - one short of the Spanish record set by Luis Enrique's Barcelona last season.

Zidane, celebrating one year at Madrid's helm, had downplayed Rodriguez's complaints following the Club World Cup in December, saying he counted on the talented midfielder going forward. He included Rodriguez in Wednesday's lineup after resting some of the regular starters, including Cristiano Ronaldo and Karim Benzema.

Madrid, which beat Sevilla in the European Super Cup five months ago, will be the clear favorite for the second leg in Seville on Jan. 12. The teams are only four points apart atop the Spanish league, with Madrid first and Sevilla third.

Sevilla lost last season's Copa final to Barcelona, which plays at Athletic Bilbao today [Macau time].

On Wednesday, Real Sociedad earned a 3-1 home win against Villarreal in another matchup between teams near the top of the Spanish league table - Villarreal is fourth, one spot ahead of Real Sociedad.

In a game between second-division clubs, Alcorcon and Cordoba played to a scoreless draw. **AP**

FOOTBALL

## Hull hires Marco Silva as manager



Hull hired Marco Silva to manage the relegation-threatened Premier League club yesterday. The 39-year-old Portuguese coach, who has no previous experience in English football, succeeds Mike Phelan at the last-place club. Silva won the Greek title with Olympiakos last season and has also coached both Sporting Lisbon and Estoril in Portugal. "Marco is a young coach who has impressed us with his philosophy and football style," Hull vice chairman Ehab Allam said.

TENNIS

## Radwanska loses in quarterfinals at Shenzhen Open

Defending champion Agnieszka Radwanska lost in the quarterfinals of the Shenzhen Open yesterday, falling to Alison Riske 6-2, 3-6, 6-0 a year after beating the American in the final. The third-seeded Radwanska was broken three times in both the first and third sets, winning less than a third of the points on her first serve. Third-seeded Johanna Konta fared better in her quarterfinal match against Kristyna Pliskova, withstanding 15 aces from her Czech opponent to win 6-4, 6-7 (11), 6-3. Konta will next face another Czech player, Katerina Siniakova, a 6-3, 6-4 winner over Nina Stojanovic. The eighth-seeded Riske will play Camila Giorgi of Italy. Giorgi beat Wang Qiang 6-0, 6-2.

CYCLING

## 105-year-old Frenchman sets record



Nearly a century ago, Robert Marchand was told by a coach that he should give up cycling because he would never achieve anything on a bike. He proved that prediction wrong again this week. In a skin-tight yellow and violet jersey, the 105-year-old Frenchman set a world record in the 105-plus age category - created especially for the tireless veteran - by riding 22.547 kilometers in one hour. "I'm now waiting for a rival," he said.

PITTSBURGH

Pirates infielder Jung Ho Kang has been left off South Korea's roster for the World Baseball Classic while he remains subject to a criminal investigation into allegations that he fled the scene after crashing a car into a guardrail while driving under the influence of alcohol.

The decision by South Korea manager Kim In-sik came after police in capital Seoul sent the case to the prosecution with a recommendation that he should be indicted. Prosecutors will also investigate Kang's friend, who after the crash in December falsely told police he was behind the wheel.

Kang (pronoun-

# Kang left off S.Korea's WBC team amid DUI allegations



Pittsburgh Pirates' Jung Ho Kang

ced Gahng) signed a four-year, USD11 million deal with the Pirates in 2015 after Pittsburgh paid his Korean club, the Nexen Heroes, \$5 million

to negotiate with the slugger.

He hit 21 home runs and 62 RBIs

in 103 games in 2016, but his second season in the majors also inclu-

ded an incident in Chicago in June when a 23-year-old woman alleged she was assaulted by Kang at a hotel. The woman's name has not been released and Kang has not been charged.

Kim (pronounced Ghim), who has been reluctant to take on players with history of off-field issues, also had a decision to make on St. Louis Cardinals reliever Seung Hwan Oh, who was fined by a South Korean court last year for breaking gambling laws by betting large sums at a casino in Macau in 2014. **AP**

opinion

Bizcuits

Leanda Lee



READY, SET... ABORT FIRE

I am in the middle of a malaise of post-holiday blues. The inertia is taking its toll on any focus and drive that I had in last year. 2016 ground to a halt, productivity extinguished and hasn't got crackling in 2017. I know it's only been a week but there's no spark, no fire in the belly. Where is that something to enkindle energy and ignite my soul?

I blame this snuffing out and smothering on the detained New Year's fireworks. That powerful Macau extravaganza energises us into the new year but alas, not this year, and I remain in that limbo land of the ashes of the old and yet to be committed to resolutions of the new.

What happened to those fireworks? Really, what happened? Incredibly, residents have been requested by MGTO to offer their understanding in such time of disappointment – a quest made rather challenging when scant explanation is but all that is offered.

The blame for the cancellation of the fireworks seems to have been placed with the Guangzhou supplier. Did they get the "New Year" order confused? Did the Gregorian get replaced with an ETA of 27th January? How can an organisation with such a long history of globally celebrated events that include the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the Shanghai Expo - if reports are to be believed - have their reputation sullied by this apparently simple error of delivery?

Any event of such magnitude is usually painstakingly organised. Arrangements for New Year's celebrations throughout the world are often commenced a year in advance, with logistics and suppliers well under control, contingency plans in place, invitations issued to VIPs, and peripheral entertainment, restaurants and hotels booked, not to mention the arrangements for champagne-popping parties on private balconies within view. It is not just about the MOP2.2 million fireworks themselves but the flow-on effect to suppliers, visitors and residents alike who look forward to this heralding of the New Year.

As is common in the SAR, when clear explanations are not forthcoming, people make up their own: it's been suggested that the cancellation was to save money for and build up to an improved big bang for the more significant Chinese New Year, or to ensure 2017 commences smoke-free, and further, if the volume of commentary about the utilisation and obligations regarding payment under the supply and service contract is any indication, there is also implied shenanigans to do with where the money will eventually end up. When a credible account is lacking, trust will diminish. Where there's smoke there's fire, so to speak. Not a great way to commence a bright new year.

For me, leaving these holidays behind and creeping towards another year of endeavour, whilst the emails have piled up and the to-do list has expanded, the brain has ceased and seized - some may say deceased, certainly diseased. The holiday hangover is more difficult to brush off this time. Maybe it's because the normal festivities that mark the period were made incomplete, diminished, of lesser value, and I've not been told why.

Enough of cultural self-indulgence; it's time to move on, or to get with the program. Perhaps it will all work out and activity will be kick-started later this month when the real New Year will be greeted with due festive energy. I hope they get the ETA right this time.

THE UK ECONOMY ENDED 2016  
BUZZ ON A HIGH NOTE

A survey of Britain's services sector, which accounts for the bulk of the economy, shows it grew at a 17-month high at the end of 2016.

The purchasing managers' index, a gauge of business activity, rose for a third month to 56.2 points in December from 55.2 the month before.

The index, published yesterday by IHS Markit and the Chartered Institute of Procurement

and Supply, is on a 100-point scale, with figures above 50 indicating growth.

The improvement was due to an increase in new work and comes despite uncertainty over the country's decision to leave the European Union. Britain says it will trigger the two-year Brexit process by the end of March.

The pound's slide has helped parts of the economy and pushed the stock market to a record.

Bahrain, reversing reform, restores arrest powers to spies



Bahraini anti-government protesters carry signs and national flags during a march in the northern village of Abu Saiba, Bahrain

Jon Gambrell

BAHRAIN announced yesterday that it has restored the power of its domestic spy service to make some arrests, reversing a key reform recommended in the wake of the crackdown that followed the country's 2011 Arab Spring protests.

The decree affecting its National Security Agency comes as Bahrain is in the midst of a renewed clampdown on dissent. It also follows an armed assault on a prison that killed a police officer and freed 10 inmates.

The decision came in decree, announced by the state-run Bahrain News Agency. It described the decision as making the arrest powers "limited" to terrorism cases, though it was in fact restoring them.

The royal decree was made "in view of the high risk of terror crimes, which necessitates prompt action to thwart plots,

halt their impact, gather evidence and arrest the culprits," the report said.

However, terrorism allegations have been levied against activists and protesters in the past. Bahrain's government did not immediately respond to questions from The Associated Press about the decision.

Activists immediately warned the move would create an environment that allows security service abuses to flourish.

"Today's decision makes it clear that Bahrain has turned its back unapologetically against human rights," said Husain Abdulla, the executive director of Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain.

The National Security Agency was created in 2002, replacing the country's feared General Directorate for State Security. It gained arrest powers by royal decree in 2008.

Limiting the agency's powers was a main recommendation made by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, which investigated the 2011 protests and subsequent crackdown. Another royal decree after the protests stripped the agency of its arrest powers.

The commission linked the agency to the systematic torture and raids conducted after the protests, which saw the island's Shiite majority and others demand more political freedom from the country's Sunni rulers. Troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates ultimately helped put down the protests.

Bahrain, a small island off the Arabian Peninsula that's home to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet and an under-construction British naval base, launched a wide-ranging crackdown on dissent in April. It's seen authorities imprison some prominent political figures and force others into exile.

On Sunday, gunmen armed with automatic rifles and pistols stormed Bahrain's Jaw prison, killing a police officer and freeing 10 inmates convicted on terrorism charges. In the time since, police have stepped up checkpoints and patrols, but have yet to announce the recapture any of those who escaped. AP

Station	Air quality	
Roadside	55-75 Good	
High Density Residential Area	55-75 Moderate	
Ambient	55-75 Moderate	

SOURCE: DSI/MG

WORLD BRIEFS



SOUTH KOREA'S Constitutional Court began to hear oral arguments in the impeachment trial of President Park Geun-hye, who lawmakers voted to remove over a corruption scandal that saw millions of people protest over the last several months. More on p13

TAIWAN has protested Vietnam sending four of its nationals accused of fraud to China, saying they were denied visits by Taiwanese diplomats and forcibly sent to the mainland under pressure from Beijing. More on p13

COLOMBIA The United Nations is removing four officials from its peacekeeping mission in Colombia following an uproar over a video showing observers dancing with leftist rebels they're supposed to be monitoring.



ISRAELI police questioned Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday for the second time over allegations that he improperly accepted gifts from wealthy supporters, pressing ahead with a probe that has threatened to challenge his entrenched leadership even as he has adamantly denied wrongdoing.



KOSOVO A former Kosovar prime minister is facing possible extradition to Serbia to face war crimes charges after being arrested at a French airport. Ramush Haradinaj is scheduled to appear in a court in Colmar in eastern France. The court will decide whether to keep him in custody during extradition proceedings or release him under judicial supervision.

times square by rodrigo



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