



BNU OPENS HENGQIN BRANCH
 BNU's CEO tells the Times the bank hopes to capitalize on the fact that the new branch can conduct business in Renminbi

P5 INTERVIEW



LAI KIN IAN 'UNDER FIRE'
 Ho Chio Meng's Chief of Office was the protagonist during yesterday's session of the former prosecutor's trial

P7



TAIWAN'S LAST ALLIES IN AFRICA

P9

THU.26
 Jan 2017

T. 14° / 22° C
 H. 50 / 90%

facebook.com/mdtimes
 + 11,000

N° 2731

MOP 7.50
HKD 9.50

2305 4271

MacauDaily 澳門每日時報®

Times

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

China • Macau • HK

Share Data Plan

Monthly Rental \$198/3GB

CTM

"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

WORLD BRIEFS



AFGHANISTAN-US
 In a long rambling letter, the spokesman for the Taliban tells U.S. President Donald Trump that it's time to leave Afghanistan. The letter, emailed to journalists, was written on behalf of the so-called Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban's spokesman, warns Trump that peace will be elusive as long as foreign troops are on Afghan soil.

CHINA Authorities have shuttered the website and social media accounts of a prominent economics think tank amid a mounting assault on liberal academic voices. More on p11



SOUTH KOREA
 Prosecutors say they plan to question impeached South Korean President Park Geun-hye and search her office by early next month over a huge corruption scandal involving Park and her longtime confidante. Earlier in the day, Park's confidante, Choi Soon-sil (pictured), called the investigation unfair.

KUWAIT hangs seven prisoners, including a royal family member, a Filipina and a woman convicted of killing more than 40 people, in a mass execution, the first death sentences carried out in several years in the oil-rich emirate. More on p12

More on backpage

10 percent fewer junkets at year start

GAMING EXPERT PREDICTS CONTINUING GGR GROWTH

P4,8



CNY

The world's largest annual human migration at a glance

P2,3

SHI Ying won't be making the traditional pilgrimage back to Shanghai to celebrate the Lunar New Year holiday with her extended family. Instead, they're all going to Japan for shopping and sightseeing.

That new custom lets her family bypass the mobs, clogged roads and subways, lousy customer services - and boredom - that can mark holidays at home. During the past few celebrations, Shi and her relatives left China for Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and the U.S.

"The last thing my parents want for the Chinese New Year is a cheerless holiday with the three of us staying home in Shanghai," said Shi, 30, who works for a non-governmental organization in Beijing. "Going overseas during the Spring Festival costs about the same as going to some domestic tourist spots."

The essence of China's seven-day holiday is morphing as rising incomes and an expanding network of international flights prompt more people to go abroad - the equivalent of Ame-

USD12,000 trips abroad replace

PRC visitors to Japan jumped 28 percent last year to 6.4 million - the most from any country

ricans choosing Bermuda over the Midwest for Thanksgiving. Outbound travel for the holiday break is expected to top a record 6 million passengers, with airlines hauling near-full loads to Japan, South Korea and Southeast Asia.

"Chinese New Year is a major international peak for the Chinese airlines," said Steve Saxon, a Shanghai-based partner at consultant McKinsey & Co. "For many, this is one of the only two



Tourists view the lights decoration for the upcoming Chinese Lunar New Year in Macau

opportunities to take a long holiday during the year."

The Spring Festival shuts down the world's second-biggest economy for a week as hundreds of millions of factory and office workers leave their adopted ho-

mes in Shenzhen or Beijing to reconnect with their ancestral ones, often on the opposite side of the country. Thousands more expatriates return.

Chinese airlines generate about 20 percent of their reve-

nue during this period, Saxon said.

Chinese will travel to 174 destinations outside mainland China for an average of 9.2 days during the holiday period, according to online travel service

AT A GLANCE

The world's largest annual human migration

DURING Chunyun, also known as the Spring Festival, travel is a sweet moment for those going home - however, the annual peak travel season puts immense stress on the country's transport system. According to the Ministry of Transport, a record 2.98 billion trips will be made during the 40-day period this year, up 2.2 percent from last year.

Here are some facts on how people travel, and how China manages this tremendous human migration:

MOVEMENT

The tides of Chunyun typically have two peaks. As this year's Spring Festival falls on January 28, the peaks are expected on January 25 when people leave for home and on February 2 when they return for work. College students and 270 million migrant workers are the main travelers.

As for the direction of the

flow, people generally move from the country's booming eastern and southern coasts, as well as Beijing, to inland cities, towns and villages before the new year. A reverse trend occurs about a week after the holiday.

Travel by road, rail, air and sea represents 84.6 percent, 12 percent, 2 percent and 1.4 percent respectively of the total trips, according to the Ministry of Transport estimates.

"This year, we are facing greater pressure as Chunyun starts earlier," said Zhao Chenxin, a spokesman for the National Development and Reform Commission. "However, we will harness big data and mobile internet technologies to offer better services."

HIGH-SPEED TRAINS

Although more people travel by bus, the strain has been acutely felt by the railway system - the most affordable and practical mode of transport for long-distance travel. A total of



356 million train trips will be made during this year's travel rush.

China Railway Corporation says that 3,570 pairs of trains are in service and an additional 1,264 pairs will be added as temporary support. According to Xinhua, since the last Chunyun, 3,200 kilometers of new rail tracks have been put to use.

ONLINE TICKETING

With the development of fast trains, tickets can now be booked in person, on the phone, or more commonly through websites and mobile phone apps. People can book tickets online about 30 days before they travel.

Most of the booking is done via the railway company's official website www.12306.com. Although the site crashed under enormous traffic in the first year it was launched, improved technical support has enabled it to withstand subsequent tests.

This has put an end to the typical occurrence of crowds of migrant workers camping out in front of major stations' ticketing halls as seen in past Chunyuns. As travelers are required to match their identification cards with each online purchase, unauthorized ticket resellers who used to have excellent leverage during

Chunyun have been largely forced out of business.

FACIAL RECOGNITION CHECK-IN

To fast-track check-in, some stations have started using facial recognition technology to verify passenger identities. Beijing Western Railway Station, for example, has set up six automatic check-in lanes. Passengers insert their ticket and ID card into a machine and have a photo taken for verification. The whole process takes less than five seconds.

This technology has smoothed the check-in and prevented the practice of boarding trains with someone else's ticket. A staffer at the station says about 665,500 passengers have taken the automatic lanes since they became operational in late November 2016.

CAR SHARING

Many who take the train still need to switch to roads to reach homes in faraway towns and villages. Buses and private vehicles have a key role to play.

As the sharing economy gains the trust of a growing

number of Chinese, the country's largest online car-hailing company Didi Chuxing says travelers can make good use of its car-pooling service that allows those going home to take a ride in private cars traveling towards the same direction.

The company estimates around 8.4 million people will make use of the service during Chunyun. Liu Qing, president of the company, said that inter-city car-pooling could help ease the strain on public transport.

AIRPLANES

Tickets during the Chunyun travel rush are generally sold without discounts.

All four major Chinese airlines - Air China, China Southern, China Eastern and Hainan Airlines - plan to add flights while China United Airlines has opened two new routes.

For the airlines, Chunyun has a new dimension - overseas travel. All are geared up to carry more Chinese taking holidays abroad as more families can afford such trips. **MDT/Xinhua**

www.macaudailytimes.com.mo

**+ 4 Million page views
PER MONTH**

Thank You!

+11,000 like us on [facebook.com/mdtimes](https://www.facebook.com/mdtimes)

Times

DIRECTOR AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
MANAGING EDITOR Paulo Barbosa paulo.barbosa@macaudailytimes.com
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Eric Sauttedé, Leanda Lee, Severo Portela

DESIGN EDITOR João Jorge Magalhães magalhaes@macaudailytimes.com | **NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS** Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Daniel Beittler, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Joseph Cheung, Julie Zhu, Juliet Risdon, Lynzy Valles, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Rodrigo de Matos (cartoonist), Sandra Norte (designer), Viviana Seguí | **ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS** JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | **NEWS AGENCIES** Associated Press, Bloomberg, Financial Times, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua | **SECRETARY** Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

A MACAU TIMES PUBLICATIONS LTD PUBLICATION

ADMINISTRATOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

SECRETARY Denise Lo denise@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR **Telephones:** +853 287 160 81/2 **Fax:** +853 287 160 84

Advertisement advertising@macaudailytimes.com

For subscription and general issues:

general@macaudailytimes.com | Printed at Welfare Printing Ltd

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

Chinese New Year treks to grandma's

Ctrip.com International Ltd. "Any airline should be able to swim in money during a Chinese traveling holiday," said Will Horton, a Hong Kong-based analyst at CAPA Centre for Aviation.

Fueling those excursions is an economy growing annually by at least 6.7 percent since 1990, giving people more money to spend. Disposable income for urban households rose 165 percent from 2006 to 2015, reaching about 31,195 yuan (USD4,551), according to China's National Bureau of Statistics.

Instead of going back to her hometown in the northeast China forest, Xi Chunhui is going to Macau, Singapore and Hong Kong for 11 days with a friend.

"The Spring Festival celebration is the same old thing every year at home," said Xi, 27, an editor for an internet portal in Beijing. "I don't think me not being there with them will kill the mood."

Going sightseeing abroad also is a consequence of the government's generations-long policy restricting most families to one child, said Catherine Lim, a Singapore-based analyst with Bloomberg Intelligence. A more-affluent younger generation now wants to see the world, she said.

"When your entire family size shrinks, there really isn't much to do" at home, Lim said. "They want to spend more money - particularly the younger generation - on experiencing new



Chinese tourists walk along a pier after disembarking a cruise ship in Fukuoka, Japan

destinations rather than buying the biggest Hermes bag."

China is the biggest source of overseas travelers in the world,

Any airline should be able to swim in money during a Chinese traveling holiday.

WILL HORTON
HK-BASED ANALYST

with 128 million people spending \$292 billion on their trips in 2015, according to the World Tourism Organization.

That's been a boon to the na-

tion's airlines, with demand running so high that discounts are ending as many as 50 days before takeoff, according to Ctrip.com. The top-dollar tickets help carriers make up for the massive price cuts offered during slow seasons.

China Southern Airlines Co., Asia's biggest carrier, added nearly 3,600 flights during this peak travel season - and expanded services to Australia and New Zealand, the Guangzhou-based airline said. Subsidiary Xiamen Airlines Co. is adding more than 100 flights to Southeast Asia destinations such as Bali and the Maldives, said Hu Nan, a manager for international business.

China Eastern Airlines Corp., based in Shanghai, added 400 flights starting this month mostly to connect second-tier cities with Okinawa, Japan; Bangkok and Chiang Mai, Thailand; and Cebu, Philippines.

"All the airlines in China, not just us, are throwing in all resources to brace for the Chinese New Year travel," Hu said. "There is no slack there."

On the destination sides, Japan, Australia and even Israel are rolling out the welcome mats for Chinese tourists by offering multiple-year, multiple-entry visas to Chinese passport holders. The United Arab Emirates is going a step further

by offering visas upon arrival, according to state-run Xinhua News Agency.

Chinese visitors to Japan jumped 28 percent last year to 6.4 million - the most from any country, according to the Japan National Tourism Organization.

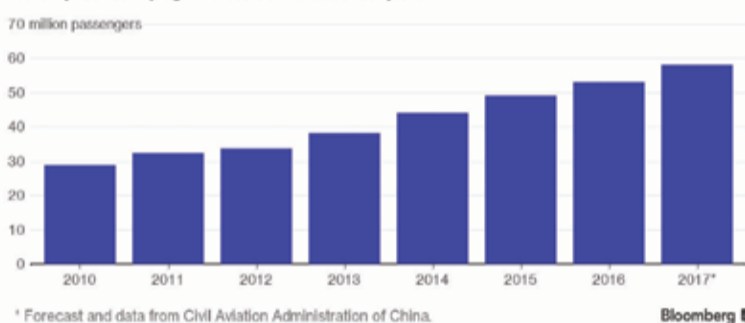
When they arrived, they spent 1.47 trillion yen (\$12.8 billion), according to the separate Japan Tourism Agency. Chinese perceive Japanese electronics, luxury items and consumer goods like cosmetics and toothpaste to be of better quality than those made at home.

Shi's family will fly to Japan on Jan. 27 for a seven-day trip in Kyoto and Tokyo. Besides the tourist attractions, they plan some serious shopping - for cosmetics, clothes, rice cookers and high-technology toilet seats.

"My parents really get a kick out of traveling during the Chinese New Year," she said. "Let's hope I can cap my spending for the whole trip at 80,000 yuan."

Bloomberg

Chinese New Year Travelers Take to the Skies
Holiday season flying numbers double in seven years



CHINESE New Year marks the beginning of the Chinese lunar calendar. China's most important holiday is a period that is seen to enshrine values like unity and family ties.

Citizens get a statutory seven-day holiday beginning on Chinese New Year's Eve, which is January 27 this year.

That day also welcomes the Year of the Rooster. Traditionally, the celebrations span 16 days, from a family feast on New Year's Eve to the Lantern Festival on day 15.

Throughout this festive season, China's railways expect to host 356 million passengers during the 40-day official travel season, known as "Chun Yun."

"Chun Yun" translates as "Spring Festival Transportation" and begins 15 days before the start of Chinese New Year.

During this period there is the estimated 58.3

CNY fliers estimated to reach 58.3 million



million people who will board flights, up by 10 percent from 2016. In total, the government is anticipating a 2.2 percent increase to 2.98 billion journeys for the 2017 holidays, as many migrant workers seize their only chance in the year to flock from the cities back to their rural roots.

Despite sub-zero temperatures, China's Ministry of Transportation stated

that last year's pilgrims travel an average of 255 miles.

The start of the Spring Festival last year coincided with the worst cold snap in China in 30 years, with blizzards in eastern and southern China delaying flights and trains. This year, weather forecasts predict more benign conditions and the horrendous pollution that marked the start of 2017

is expected to have mostly cleared.

In addition to the traditional travel routes, the rising wealth of the population has dispersed celebrations to scenic, and less chilly, venues than the wintry mainland.

Some of the most popular domestic spots are the tropical resort island of Hainan, the coastal city of Xiamen and Kunming, dubbed the "spring city"

for its ever-pleasant weather. Popular international destinations include Japan, Singapore, Vietnam, Australia, South Korea and even the U.S.

Chinese New Year falls on different dates on the Gregorian calendar every year, and may begin any time from late January to mid-February. As a result, year-on-year comparisons of economic data are difficult to compile.

The central bank will also be watching carefully as the mass withdrawal of funds before the holiday puts a strain on liquidity as travelers exchange their yuan for foreign currency.

Aside from the travel industry that benefits from the Spring Festival, alcohol sellers in China have in the past recorded bumper sales during Chinese New Year. Luxury retailers at home and in countries like South Korea also count this among their make-or-break seasons.

AACM APPROVES 40 ADDITIONAL FLIGHTS FOR CNY

WITH THE high demand from outbound travels of Macau residents and inbound travels of visitors during the Chinese New Year, the Civil Aviation Authority (AACM) has approved a total of 40 extra flights, including charter flights. The approved flights are to and from mainland China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea and Vietnam, in ac-

cordance with the applications submitted by the airlines. The first of the approved extra and charter flights start today and will run until February 5, according to a statement issued by AACM. The applications for operating these flights were submitted by Air Macau, Juneyao Airlines and Vietjet.

Scholar Davis Fong predicts continuing GGR growth

Lynzy Valles

THE region's gambling revenue has seen its fifth month of recovery, and a Macau-based scholar has predicted that growth will continue into the second quarter of 2017.

Director of the Institute for the Study of Commercial Gaming at the University of Macau David Fong anticipated that the growth of the region's gross gaming revenue would also be affected by the VIP market.

"I think the momentum in the VIP side pushed GGR [gross gaming revenue] up in the fourth quarter of 2016," he told the press, saying that there had been an increase of 14 percent in the region's VIP gaming market in the fourth quarter.

"I believe the momentum will continue this year, especially in the first and second quarter of 2017," Fong added.

The Macau scholar connec-

ted the potential growth of the region's GGR to the upcoming Chinese New Year (CNY).

He noted that there would be the traditional CNY gamblers, mostly VIP gamblers, who try their luck during the festive season. Thus he remarked that the CNY growth rate in the VIP sector may outperform the mass market.

When questioned by the Times as to whether the gaming resorts slated to open this year would influence the region's GGR growth, Fong hoped that the resorts would flow in the right direction.

He stated that the region is keen on attracting the premium mass market, noting that "this is the direction that we would like to fight for."

"If they can develop their product tailor-made for the premium mass market, I strongly believe it would create new casino effects," he answered.

Paulo Martins Chan, head of the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau told the

press that the central credit database system is suffering delays.

While it is still not known when the system will be launched, Chan hinted it is undergoing a trial period.

The pending credit database system could keep track of gambling credit issued to individual players by the Macau junket sector.

Last month, the Macau Association of Gaming and Entertainment Promoters said that it had completed the establishment of the system. Speaking to GGRAsia, president of the association Kwok Chi Chung said that the group was now waiting for the credit database system to be approved by the Macau government in order to go live.



Davis Fong

Two responsible gaming kiosks inaugurated

TWO responsible gaming kiosks, version 3.0, were introduced yesterday at the casino floors of Galaxy Macau and Wynn Palace.

The kiosks are a gaming help response mechanism that was launched by the government in 2012 – a program conceived and developed by the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS), Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) and the University of Macau's Institute for the Study of Commercial Gaming.

Currently there are a total of 27 responsible gaming kiosks in the territory, three of which are located on three casino floors.

According to organizers, the kiosks have served some 9,000 residents and tourists, while around 81 of them used telephones to seek help.

Last year, 42 people registered for "self-exclusion from the casinos."

Also last year, the first of a new version of self-use kiosks that aim to help tackle "problematic gaming" were inaugurated at Studio City.

The newly set up kiosks in the two gaming resorts also feature "Ambassadors of Responsible Gaming" staff that can help to provide information and kiosk operation procedures, as well as participate in promotional events.

AD

New Sunshine Cleaning Services Ltd.

Residence Cleaning
Glass Cleaning
Carpet Cleaning
Pest Control

Call : 2883 3008

Member of General Association of Macao Cleaning Service Industry

優悅牙科護理中心
ICQ Oral Health Center

I Care for Quality

ICQ dental team is a group of dental specialists with internationally recognized qualifications. We provide all range of dental services:

- Oral examination and radiology investigation
- Restorative and Cosmetic Dentistry
- Children Dentistry
- Orthodontic Treatment
- Oral and Dental implant Surgery
- Endodontic Treatment
- Periodontal Treatment
- Emergency Treatment

We are committed to deliver high quality dental services with personalized care. We ensure the highest level of infection control.

Website: www.icqoral.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/icqoral

CONSULTATION BY APPOINTMENT: OFFICE HOUR: 10:00AM-19:00PM
CLOSE ON SUN, TUE AND PUBLIC HOLIDAY

Rm1907, 19/F, AIA Tower, Nos. 251A-301, AVENIDA COMMERCIAL DE MACAU, MACAU SAR
TEL: (853)28373266 FAX: (853)28356483 EMAIL: INFO@ICQORAL.COM WWW.ICQORAL.COM

KTRANZ
TRANSLATIONS LIMITED

ACCURATE, TIMELY & COMPETITIVE
TRANSLATIONS

Languages
ENGLISH, CHINESE,
PORTUGUESE, JAPANESE,
KOREAN, SPANISH,
FRENCH, ARABIC,
RUSSIAN

Services
TRANSLATIONS,
PROOFREADING, COPYWRITING,
DATA INPUT, NEWS MONITORING

We translate +10,000 words a day

Contact: Ms Amy Yang
Email: amy@ktranz.com.mo
Tel: +853 2871 6081/2 Fax: +853 2871 6084

Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR

Paulo Barbosa

BANCO Nacional Ultramarino (BNU) inaugurated its Hengqin branch last week. Having the historical role of being the first note-issuing bank in Macau, BNU has now become the first international banking group opening in the Hengqin Free Trade Area. In an interview with the Times, BNU's CEO, Pedro Cardoso, said that the bank hopes to capitalize on the fact that the new branch can conduct business in Renminbi. As part of Caixa Geral de Depósitos (CGD) group, BNU also expects to take advantage of CGD's vast network in the Portuguese-speaking-countries.

Macau Daily Times (MDT) – The new Hengqin branch will allow transactions in Renminbi. Can you explain what the main advantages of this arrangement will be?

Pedro Cardoso (PC) – With its Hengqin branch, BNU will provide services to our Macau customers, as well as to some selected mainland China customers within two main lines of business. The first has to do with Macau customers that have business or investments in mainland China, particularly in Guangdong Province, and the second line of business is more linked with our outstanding position within the Portuguese-speaking world. It involves Chinese companies that have frequent business with Portuguese-speaking countries [PSC] as well as PSC companies that operate in mainland China. For this line of business, Renminbi is an absolutely essential currency to operate with, in particular for the transactions related with PSC. The [Chinese] Central Government increasingly wants to have the Renminbi frequently and widely used in foreign trade transactions, as well as in investment, and we are fully cooperative with that line of thought. For our Macau customers that have businesses in mainland China – since their revenues tend to be in Renminbi – it is also quite important that they finance themselves in that currency.

MDT – And what about people interested in making real estate investment in China?

PC – The only case where eventually we see, at this moment, a less frequent usage of Renminbi is individual customers that want to buy property in mainland China. Due to the lower interest rates that we have in Hong Kong dollar and pataca, in some cases they will prefer to finance in those currencies instead of Renminbi, although I think that over time this may change a little bit.

MDT – BNU became the first local bank to open in mainland China, which is symbolic. During the inauguration of the Hengqin branch, the president of the Monetary Authority, Ansel-

**Q&A PEDRO CARDOSO
BNU CEO**

HENGQIN BRANCH OPENS

'We will see more Macau banks taking the same step'



mo Teng, said other banks are interested in following the example.

PC – It is a normal step as we have been observing throughout the years a greater integration in the Pearl River Delta, including Hong Kong and Macau. This is the trend: more and more companies from Macau providing services in mainland China/Hong Kong and vice versa. This is the normal trend and we also believe, like Mr Teng, that we will see more Macau banks taking the same step.

MDT – You mentioned that the Hengqin branch will link entrepreneurs from Portuguese-speaking countries to the mainland. Will it make it easier for them to move capital to and from the mainland?

PC – That is not exactly the goal that we expect to achieve. The bulk of the business relationship between China and PSC is concentrated in mainland China. Hong Kong and Macau have, with all due respect, much less importance. So, if we want to be part of that flow of business we have to be in mainland China and the goal is to support the investments of Chinese companies in PSC, where we expect our colleagues from other PSC to have an important role in terms of supporting those companies in those countries. At the same time, countries like Portugal and Brazil already have a significant number of companies operating in mainland China – some of

them quite small, others bigger, many of them more trade-related companies, like distributing products from those countries. We expect to support these types of companies that in many cases are already customers in those PSC.

The banking sector across the world has been facing a lot of challenges. They are not only related with the financial crisis.

PEDRO CARDOSO

MDT – And what will be the role of Caixa Geral de Depósitos in that strategy?

PC – Caixa Geral de Depósitos has a unique position within the PSC world, so we are in seven of the eight PSC – we are not in Guinea Bissau – and in five of those seven we are market leaders, so we have a unique positioning that we want to fully leverage. For some of these countries, China is their top trade and investment partner. For instance, in the case of Portugal, China is now amongst our top ten trading partners,

but is our number one investor. The same happens in Angola, Mozambique, Brazil...

MDT – So, will CGD promote this new Hengqin operation in those countries?

PC – Yes. We have been very active in terms of the service and products in Renminbi for our customers in those countries, so we are having our sister banks and our mother company opening accounts in Renminbi in BNU and, at the same time, promoting amongst their customer base, in particular corporations, the service that we have in Renminbi. This was a first step that we took a long time ago in order to have this flow of business more developed. With this branch in mainland China, I think we can take further steps in this direction.

MDT – The banking sector was affected by the financial crisis. How has BNU coped with the period following the financial crisis?

PC – Since the big financial crisis almost ten years ago, the banking sector across the world has been facing a lot of challenges. They are not only related with the financial crisis but also with the business model of the sector. The development of new technologies and the change in the customer behavior pattern, has created a number of additional challenges to the banking sector. In the case of BNU, we have been developing quite smoothly over the last few years. Year after year, we have been providing more value-ad-

ded services and products to our customers. We have also provided more value-added services to our shareholders through the consecutive increase in terms of business volume, as well as net income and dividends paid to our shareholders.

MDT – Would you say that BNU was not largely affected by the markets' turmoil?

PC – In Macau, in the last few years we saw some significant correction in the main economic indicators, like GDP and real estate prices. This had some impact in the financial sector, which is not immune to the situation of the economy in general. But BNU has been going quite smoothly. Probably, had those factors not occurred, it would be going even better. Overall, all of us in BNU are quite happy about the development of the market.

MDT – CGD is temporarily without a president [following the resignation of António Domingues], although a new head is due to be appointed soon [Paulo Macedo]. Has the recent instability in terms of CGD's management had any effect in BNU, or is the operation autonomous here?

PC – As I told you, our operation has been going very smoothly, and very soon we will present our financial performance in 2016. It will be a good sign of how things are going here in the bank.

MDT – Going back to Hengqin: are there any plans to open new branches there or in mainland China?

PC – Not for the time being. This branch is not like what we normally see in our day-to-day life in Macau. It is not a sort of ground floor branch, where people just walk in. It is a branch in the high floor building and with a very specific niche target. Although it is a niche market, we believe it is quite big and has a lot of good business opportunities that will be fully exploited in the next few years. Our strategy is following our customer base and with that branch we think we can fully exploit that strategy. For the time being, we don't have any further plans in mainland China.

MDT – Hengqin is becoming a large city. The plan is to make it even larger than Macau. Do you see a lot of potential there?

PC – The potential is huge and there's a very strong commitment from the Central Government and from Guangdong Province, as well as the Zhuhai municipality government and the Macau government to develop Hengqin. But I have to stress that although our branch is centered in Hengqin, our target market is not just Hengqin. In the medium-long run we are extremely positive that Hengqin will further support Macau's economic diversification.

All New Infiniti Q30



INFINITI Q30 HAS BEEN LAUNCHED

Q30 2.0t Sport AWD

- Intelligent All-Wheel-Drive
- Sport-tuned aerodynamics kit
- suspension and brake system
- Racing D-shaped leather steering wheel
- 19" alloy wheels

With head-turning design and impeccable craftsmanship, combining the sportiness of a coupé and the empowered stance of a crossover, the Q30 premium compact hatchback is set to challenge convention.


INFINITI 新康誠汽車有限公司
 INSPIRED PERFORMANCE XIN KANG CHENG MOTORS LTD.
 Showroom: Estrada Almirante Magalhães Correia, N. 307-313,
 JARDIM HOI WAN AI/AK/AL, Taipa, Macau
 Tel: +853 2885 0700

Q30# BORNTOCHALLENGE

COURTS

Lai Kin lan 'under fire' during Ho's trial



Renato Marques

Tformer Chief of Office of the Prosecutor General of Public Prosecutions Office, Lai Kin lan, came under heavy fire as the trial of Ho Chio Meng resumed yesterday morning.

In a session that was mainly dedicated to hearing the witness account of former deputy director of the Prosecutions Office (MP) Elsa Cheang, Lai eventually became the main target of the day with "all fingers" pointing in his direction.

Lai, who is a defendant in a different judicial process that resulted from the investigation into Ho's case, featured prominently in Cheang's replies.

All bases of the charge were included in questioning, with emphasis on those relevant to the many rentals and services contracts.

When questioned by the prosecution on her repeated recommendations over the need to settle the cleaning service contracts (among others) in a "legal way," the witness explained that since the service implied a spending of over MOP500,000 it was necessary to follow the law and execute a proper written contract instead of an internal proposal. She said that she had repeatedly made these statements to Lai, who had ignored them.

The prosecutor questioned Cheang about whether or not she had attempted to bring the problem directly to Ho. She responded to this ques-

tion negatively, arguing that she had fulfilled her duty by informing on the misconduct and advising on the right procedure.

Eventually this problem was solved by resorting to another scheme - designating each floor as an independent account; a situation that Cheang believes was finally solved in a legal way shortly after she had commented.

The witness also informed the court that the MP had received a delegation of guests that were in the Cheoc Van Villa, although there are no official records of these guests or when they made use of the venue. At this point, these alleged visits are a novelty, as none of the previous testimonies included these visits.

Among the alleged guests received at Cheoc Van were the Hong Kong Public Prosecutor, as well as high ranked officials and the Public Prosecutor Guangdong Province.

In one of his many remarks before the break, Ho Chio Meng requested to address the court to note that it "was never said that the villa [of Cheoc Van] was to lodge in guests but to receive them and hold meetings that demanded for a more private and independent venue."

Throughout the prosecution's lengthy questioning process, the witness tried to clarify the details of several procedures and duties of the different departments and groups within the MP, reaffirming as others had before, that "acquiring a product or service first and then settling the situation with the Office

by a proposal and resorting to 'backdating' was a common procedure."

Regarding the alleged nepotism that is one of the most highlighted topics of this case, Cheang remarked that the applications were all presented to Lai, who would ask whether the applicant would be "okay or not" for the duties in her opinion.

When questioned by the defense lawyer on whether she also presented people to be hired by the MP, the witness

admitted to that fact, saying, "in the beginning yes. I was involved in the establishment of the Office and there was an urge for staff." She added: "I had friends that I thought were competent and yes I recommended some of them to the MP."

Analyzing specifically the case of Ieong Chon Kit's hire, a relative of Ho, there were doubts about whether there was any impediment to the declaration from the former Prosecutor on the case since the order was signed by one of the deputies instead of him. The witness suggested that this fact should be ignored, noting, "only from that document I don't think that was clear any family relationship."

On the topics of the contracts related to both the 16th floor of the Hotline Building and the Accommodation Villa in Cheoc Van, the prosecution was interested to know which person initiated the process. In response, the witness failed to recall the initiator, instead acknowledging only that the first contracts of both venues were signed by Lai. In an apparent contradiction to what she had said earlier, she said, "new contracts were always signed by the [former] Prosecutor. Only the renewals could be [signed by] another person [namely the Chief of Office]."

The reason Ho Chio Meng was not signing those contracts remained unexplained.

Regarding the 16th floor and the warning "not to go to there," she claimed that this had been a direct order, once more, from Lai.

Witness says 'resting room' resembled a hotel room

TESTIFYING yesterday in court was another witness, a former staff member at the Judiciary Assistance Department of the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) surnamed Chan. Chan admitted to having been physically inside the Teachers' Resting Room on the 16th floor of the Hotline Building on three separate occasions.

"My feeling as I was entering there was that the place resembled a hotel room," Chan said. "Looked like a big room with several partitions, a living room, a meeting room and a resting room," he added.

Chan said he was asked to go to the Teacher's Resting Room by the Chief of the Department, Lam I Nah so he could help to set up a new computer located in the resting room.

He admitted that at that time Lam warned him not to mention to anyone else that he had been in that space.

The other two times, Chan was also asked to go to the room to handle a repair job regarding the internet line. He was called once by Lai and the other time by Leong I Tak. On one of the times, he was accompanied not only by Leong but also by two workers that were doing some renovations in the space.

When called to identify the people in several photographs, Chan recognized only the brother of Lam I Nah but admitted to be unaware of whether he was a staff member at the MP. He also recognized Wong Kuok Wai as "Wai go," the person in charge of several maintenance and renovation works.



Manuel Pires to continue as TDM head

Teledifusão de Macau (TDM) Executive Committee president Manuel Pires will continue to lead the public broadcaster for the next three years. A notice published yesterday in the Official Gazette (BO) indicates that Pires' term will be renewed starting March 1. Pires was initially appointed in March 2014. The head of the Government Information Bureau (GCS), Victor Chan, and the director of the Tertiary Education Services Office, Sou Chio Fai, saw their terms renewed as members of TDM's board of directors.



Youth Correctional Institution holds CNY party for detainees

The Youth Correctional Institution, under the Correctional Services Bureau, held a New Year's Resolution Ceremony and Chinese New Year Party 2017 this week for all of its detainees. At the beginning of each year, the institution's team of counselors assists the young offenders in setting goals for the year ahead. Based on the young offenders' individual plans, the counselors will guide them towards gradually completing their goals. Young offenders who successfully achieve their goals will be awarded a certificate. With support from Caritas Macau, the institution also made arrangements for the young offenders and their guardians to have a pre-Chinese New Year reunion lunch together amid the festive atmosphere.

Canadian Pop-Up event next month

For the second year running, the Consulate General of Canada in Hong Kong and Macau will feature a temporary (or "Pop-Up") consular presence in Macau on February 22 and 23. Serving as a networking event to promote Canada's ties with Macau, as well as to celebrate Canada's 150th Anniversary of Confederation, the event will include two full days of activities such as meetings and presentations aimed at highlighting opportunities in the Canada-Macau relationship. Examples from last year's Pop-Up event include study abroad opportunities and foreign investment prospects. According to the Consulate General, there are an estimated 4,000 Canadians currently living in the MSAR.

10 percent fewer junkets at year start

THE total number of licensed gaming junkets fell from 141 in January 2016 to 126 at the start of this year, according to GGR Asia citing the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ), marking a decline of 10.6 percent over the course of 12 months.

The licenses, which are issued on an annual basis by DICJ, are subject to the gaming inspector's review of the entities' financial accounts. According to DICJ director Paulo Martins Chan, the decline was partly the results of a number of junkets failing these inspections.

The decline is a continuation of the change registered in the previous year.

At the start of 2015, the MSAR was home to 183 licensed entities. That decreased to 141 in January 2016 and 126 at the beginning of this year. Over the past three years, the city has lost more than 90 junkets, according to official data.

The 15 junkets that closed up shop during the course of last year included both companies and individuals licensed as junkets, notes the bureau.

Analysts have weighed in with their speculation over the cause of the decline.

Generally, it is thought to be connected to the VIP gaming downturn driven by Chinese President Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign, which has

impacted the profitability of Macau junkets.

Gaming revenues for VIP baccarat fell from its peak of MOP238.5 billion in 2013 to just under MOP119 billion at the end of the last year, according to data published by DICJ, with uninterrupted decline for the two years in between. Meanwhile, mass-market baccarat revenues remained about the same last year as they were in 2015, at around MOP76 billion.

While, junkets in Macau have been closing over the past few years, some have been eyeing the opportunity to relocate to other markets in Southeast Asia, namely the Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia.



Chinese New Year boxing competition to be held at The Venetian Macao

THE 2017 5th CCTV Chinese Lunar New Year Cup – IBF World Championship, jointly presented by IBF and CCTV, will be held at the Cotai Arena at The Venetian Macao during the Chinese Lunar New Year period, from 7:30 p.m. until midnight on both Sunday (Jan. 29) and Monday.

According to organizers, this is the first time that CCTV has cooperated with the international sporting organization to forge CCTV-5's classic Chinese Lunar New Year Celebration television program.

The competition will see a total of 24 fighters compete during two nights of bouts. Hailing from China, France, Japan, Mexico, Romania,

the Philippines and Thailand, the fighters will compete for a number of golden belts from categories such as World Junior Champion, World Female Flyweight Champion, Intercontinental Heavyweight Champion and China Lightweight Champion.

A press conference was held yesterday in anticipation of the competition. Present at yesterday's conference were renowned international boxing stars Jerwin Ancajas of the Philippines and Mexico's Jose Rodriguez and also Wang Ruihang, the president of IBF China.

Macau homegrown and up-and-coming boxer Ng Kuok Kun (a.k.a. "The Macau Kid") also made an



appearance during the pre-event press conference. He is due to fight in his 11th bout during the competition.

With 10 wins (6 K.O.s), zero losses and zero draws, The Macau Kid told reporters yesterday that he feels no pressure to continue his streak by winning his 11th match on Sunday. The fight will be against Thailand's Komsan Polsan, who has 33 wins (20 K.O.s), five losses and one draw under his belt.

"I don't feel the pressure," said Ng. "I am pretty confident for the competition this year, though I am also cautious. I know my opponent is very experienced... that's something I will keep in mind in this competition."

Meanwhile, also on Sunday, the aforementioned Ancajas and Rodriguez will compete for the IBF World Junior Bantamweight Championship Golden Belt. Both fighters have strong

records behind them with 25 and 32 wins respectively and 16 and 19 knockouts respectively.

French fighter Carlos Takam and Polish boxer Marcin Rekowski will stage another headline act during the Chinese Lunar New Year celebration competition. With an 187 centimeter height and 204 centimeter arm reach, Takam will go face-to-face with Rekowski who measures 189 centimeters in height and 193 centimeters in arm reach.

Taka holds a record of 33 wins (25 K.O.s), three losses and one draw, while his challenger, Rekowski stands at 18 wins (15 K.O.s), four losses and zero draws.

On Monday (Jan. 30), Chinese fighter Cai Zongju will take on Japan's Etuko Tada in the IBF World Female Bantamweight Championship competition. Organizers, including IBF China President Wang

Ruihang, said during yesterday's press conference that this battle will be of "special concern for Chinese audiences."

Besides Cai, several other Chinese fighters will be making an appearance at the two-day competition, one of China's biggest in boxing. Chinese boxer Ge Wenfeng will be up against Melmark Dignos of the Philippines, while Wang Feihu will be against Russia's Aleksei Podkolzin. Afterwards, Chinese boxers Sun Xiangxing and Wang Kun will take to the ring to compete for the IBF China Lightweight Championship Golden Belt.

The weigh-in ceremony of the two-day sporting event will be held at 2 p.m. on both January 28 and 29 at Wynn Palace.

Tickets are on sale now for the event. They start at MOP580 and go as high as MOP100,000. **DB**

corporate bits

RIVERDANCE BEGINS 20TH ANNIVERSARY RESIDENCY



Irish performance "Riverdance" has begun its residency at The Venetian Macao, as part of its "20th Anniversary World Tour", which will see shows performed in the resort's Venetian

Theatre until February 5.

Riverdance is an innovative and exciting blend of dance and music that draws on Irish traditions, as well as the history and movement of the people of

Ireland. It has been seen live by over 21 million people worldwide, according to a statement from Sands China.

The 20th Anniversary performances will feature new costumes, lighting design and projections as well as a brand new song titled "Anna Livia", which will feature the dance troupe's female cast members in a cappella hard-shoe number.

During the past 20 years, the show has staged over 18,000 performances in more than 117 countries and regions, and has been described as an "Irish national treasure." Its soundtrack has been recognized by the Grammy Awards as the "Best Musical Show Album" with over 11 million albums being sold.

With Chinese New Year around the corner, CEM yesterday organized 17 Ambassadors to accompany 18 elderly from Peng On Tung Association to take a test ride on electric vehicles (EVs).

Six of the senior citizens were the participants of "CEM Ambassadors 1+1 Elderly Program" held last year. This is the fourth year that CEM has joined hands with Peng On Tung Association to hold such activities prior to the Chinese New Year, according to the company's press release.

This week, CEM Ambassadors set out from CEM Building driving EVs, and picked up the elderly before touring around the Taipa Houses Museum and taking photos

CEM HOLDS ACTIVITY FOR THE ELDERLY



there.

After that, CEM Ambassadors had a lunch together

with the elders, and presented them with down vests to wish them good health.

Chinese billions fail to sway Taiwan's last allies in Africa

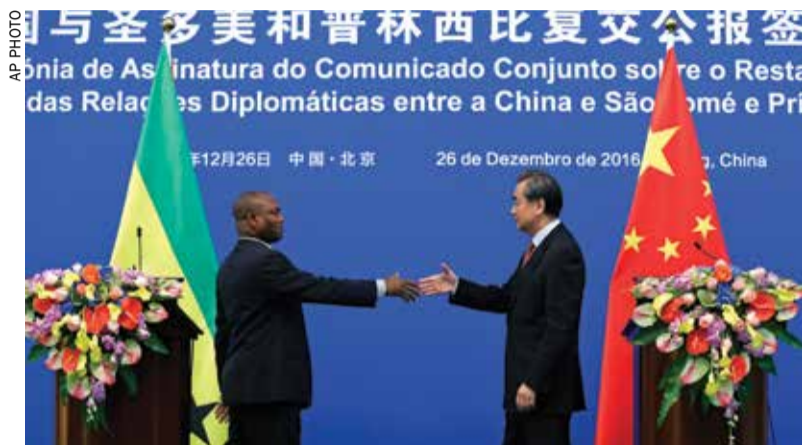
Pauline Bax, Simon Gongo and Lungile Dlamini

TAIWAN'S last two African allies have no plans to switch allegiances and break ties with Taipei as Beijing tries to woo the self-ruled island's diplomatic partners.

Burkina Faso won't cut relations with Taiwan despite people and companies with links to China offering funding in return for recognition of the One-China principle, according to Foreign Minister Alpha Barry. Swaziland said its relationship with Taiwan is based on mutual interests, not on money.

"We get outrageous proposals telling us, 'if you sign with Beijing we'll offer you USD50 billion or even more,'" Barry said in an interview in the capital, Ouagadougou, this month. "Taiwan is our friend and our partner. We're happy and we see no reason to reconsider the relationship."

Competition between China and Taiwan for diplomatic allies has intensified since Tsai Ing-wen be-



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (right) prepares to shake hands with his Sao Tome counterpart Urbino Botelho

came the island's president last year. She has refused to explicitly endorse the One-China policy, an acknowledgment that the two are part of the same China even if they disagree on what that means. China, which considers Taiwan a breakaway province, won't have diplomatic relations with countries that recognize Taiwan as a separate nation.

Last month the tiny island nation of Sao Tome and Principe split

with Taiwan because it's facing dwindling support from its traditional partners, mainly oil-producing nations hit by the slump in crude price. Taiwan said Sao Tome had asked for more than USD100 million to maintain relations, and called the move that cut to 21 the number of its diplomatic partners "reckless and unfriendly."

At a summit in 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping offered African nations \$60 billion in export

credit and interest-free and preferential loans, saying that relations between China and Africa "have reached a stage of growth unmatched in history."

Taiwan's increasing isolation amid tensions with China was further highlighted when Nigeria on Jan. 11 ordered Taipei to close its trade mission in the capital, Abuja. Nigeria's foreign affairs minister, Geoffrey Onyeama, announced the measure after meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, who said his government planned to invest \$40 billion. Onyeama said the trade office was an "anomaly" and should be moved to the commercial hub, Lagos.

China last year resumed diplomatic relations with Gambia, which initially recognized Taiwan before shifting to China and shifting back again to Taiwan in 1995. When then-President Yahya Jammeh abruptly cut ties with Taiwan in 2013, the Taiwanese foreign affairs minister said Gambia had made financial requests that Taipei considered unacceptable.

That's left Taiwan with Burkina Faso and Swaziland, two landlocked nations with a combined population of less than 20 million people and economies worth \$11 billion and \$4 billion respectively. Burkina Faso resumed relations with Taiwan in 1994 following a 21-year hiatus, while ties between Swaziland and Taiwan date to 1968, making Swaziland the African partner with the longest history.

Swaziland says it has no plans to change its approach. "We're very happy with our relationship and intend to maintain it for a very long time because our friendship is based on our national interests and not on the size of Taiwan's wallet," Swaziland government spokesman Percy Simelane said by phone. Taiwan provides doctors to health facilities across the southern African nation, shares agricultural expertise and offers university scholarships.

Taiwan's deputy foreign minister flew to Burkina Faso in September to discuss projects "and we looked at our cooperation and decided to continue," Barry said. The talks resulted in subsidies worth 44 million euros (\$47 million) over the next two years in industries ranging from agriculture to education and defense, he said. Taiwan also offers worker training programs and funds tuition for some university students. **Bloomberg**

AD

MPC 26

3-19 FEBRUARY 2017

RED DRAGON MAIN EVENT
HKD \$10,000,000 GUARANTEED

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT
WWW.POKERSTARS LIVEMACAU.COM

Level 2,
Estrada do Istmo,
Cotai Macau SAR

All events subject to regulatory approval.

POKER STARS LIVE MACAU

Joe McDonald, Beijing

DROWNING in debt, metals trader Sinosteel Corp. got an unprecedented lifeline last month from the Chinese government — a multibillion-dollar debt-for-equity rescue that could be the first of many for struggling state-owned companies.

China's economy is still growing relatively quickly, but a prolonged slowdown is raising fears that companies in many industries have borrowed and invested too much, too fast, posing a serious risk for the world's second-largest economy.

The government hailed the Sinosteel deal, in which state-owned banks agreed to accept shares in the company to repay half the 60 billion yuan (USD9 billion) it owes, as a model for debt reduction. Analysts are more skeptical. They say such maneuvers are typical of the ruling Communist Party's tendency to avoid bold action and support politically favored state industry.

"They are still tinkering at the edge of the problem instead of tackling it head on," said Mark Williams, chief Asia economist for Capital Economics.

Total debt owed by companies and households in China is estimated by private sector analysts to amount to 270 percent of annual economic output — high for a developing country and close to the levels of the United States and the European Union before the 2008 crisis.

Debt has risen at double-digit annual rates since the crisis as Beijing repeatedly used infusions of credit to shore up economic growth and avoid politically risky job losses.

In 2016, lending grew by 17 to 18 percent, outpacing the rise in savings by China's famously thrifty households, according to Standard & Poor's. It said that leaves banks with slimmer "funding buffers."

China faces political conflicts in moves to cut debt burden



AP PHOTO

Explosive economic growth that peaked at 14.2 percent in 2007 helped China power its way out of previous financial quandaries. That is no longer assured now that growth has tumbled to less than half that level — at 6.7 percent for the first nine months of last year the weakest since 1990.

The bank regulator reported in October that loans on which borrowers have made no payments in 90 days had passed 2 trillion yuan (\$300 billion).

That is equivalent to a relatively modest 2.15 percent of total lending, but private sector analysts say the true level is far higher at up to 19 percent, or nearly 18 trillion yuan (\$2.5 trillion). They say banks fail to include loans to

state companies in their count because they assume the government will bail them out.

A banking crisis like those that hit Japan and South Korea in the 1990s is unlikely because both Chinese lenders and major borrowers are state-owned, so as a last resort, the government could order creditors to keep lending and then replenish their balance sheets, economists say.

That would keep banks solvent, but might divert money from investment in productive companies or from paying for schools, health care and other public services needed in China's rapidly aging society.

"You can get away without a crisis over the next few years, but

you won't be able to avoid slower growth," Williams said.

The latest plan for Sinosteel calls for transforming some of its debt into "convertible bonds" that creditors can redeem later for stock, according to Bank of China Ltd., which led a consortium of lenders. It said regulators would press the company for "internal reform."

The business magazine Caixin reported that half of Sinosteel's debt would be turned into such bonds.

Lenders that accept Sinosteel stock still can lose money if its finances fail to improve, said Sheng Hong, director of the Unirule Institute in Beijing, an independent economic research group.

"Banks should have refused the deal right from the start," he said.

The debt dilemma reflects the leadership's conflicting desires for the prosperity that comes from free-market competition and for ensuring state companies will still dominate the economy.

Under President Xi Jinping, the Communist Party has pledged to clear up debt and get banks to finance productive activity instead of subsidizing state companies. But the debt burden has kept rising as Beijing avoided taking painful, decisive action.

Regulators say they will use market forces to force state companies that control industries including steel, utilities, telecoms, airlines, banking and insurance to become more efficient. But they have ruled out allowing any to go bankrupt: The ruling party's latest economic blueprint for 2017 promises "financial stability," which

suggests Chinese leaders might be leery of pushing companies so hard they might collapse.

Bailing out companies such as Sinosteel that are deemed strategically important could set back efforts to shrink bloated heavy industries.

A glut of production in steel, aluminum and other industries where supply exceeds demand has led to price-cutting wars and complaints that low-cost Chinese exports are threatening jobs in the United States and Europe.

Instead of state-engineered bailouts, the companies could just sell off equity stakes and use the proceeds to pay debts, Citigroup economists Li-Gang Liu and Xiaowen Jin said in a report.

Sinosteel has operations in mining, steel trading and engineering. It came close to defaulting on a 2 billion yuan (\$315 million) bond payment in 2015 before regulators intervened and persuaded creditors to wait.

Bank of China described the Sinosteel debt-for-equity deal as a model for future debt restructuring.

But some companies that get such relief might "lose motivation to improve," said Zhang Yingjie, research director for China Chengxin International Credit Rating Co. "The key lies in how to select the enterprises."

"They are selling this as dealing with the debt problem and creating viable businesses," said Williams, "but it seems to me it is aimed at making sure state-owned firms can continue to dominate." AP

Hong Kong denies mainland role in Singapore shipment probe



AP PHOTO

The Singapore-made Terrex infantry carrier vehicles were seized at a container terminal in Hong Kong, in November

HONG Kong's customs chief yesterday denied suggestions that Beijing was involved in the investigation into nine armored personnel carriers belonging to Singapore that were seized in the Chinese-controlled territory.

Commissioner Roy Tang said his department was acting only under Hong Kong law when it impounded the nine SAF Terrex infantry carriers and other equipment.

He spoke a day after the Hong Kong government said the vehicles would

be returned to Singapore following an investigation into a suspected violation of rules governing the shipment of "strategic commodities." The vehicles were being shipped back home via Hong Kong after military training exercises in Taiwan when they were seized in November.

Analysts have speculated that the seizure signaled Beijing's displeasure over Singapore's position on China's territorial claims in the South China Sea. Singapore is not a claimant but has irritated China by advocating that

countries making claims on the strategic waterway abide by international rules.

Experts say the dispute could also indicate China's unhappiness with Singapore's longstanding practice of holding military training with Taiwan, which Beijing considers a part of China.

"Hong Kong customs is only authorized to enforce the Hong Kong law. We have no role to play in any enforcement or work other than laws applicable to Hong Kong, so there's no such implication," Tang said when asked whether Beijing had any role in the seizure. "We are a Hong Kong law enforcement agency," he added, making the points repeatedly during a news briefing.

Nine armored personnel carriers belonging to Singapore that were seized in the Chinese territory of Hong Kong will be returned, officials said this week.

The Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong received a letter from Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying saying that Hong Kong had completed an investigation of the SAF Terrex infantry carrier vehicles and other equipment and would release them to the Singapore government.

"This is a positive outcome," the ministry said in a statement. Lee expressed gratitude for "Hong Kong's cooperation in resolving this matter," it said. MDT/AP

AUTHORITIES in China have shuttered the website and social media accounts of a prominent economics think tank amid a mounting assault on liberal academic voices.

The Unirule Institute of Economics in Beijing is the latest target of a government crackdown after the forced retirement of a professor who criticized Mao Zedong and sacking of a provincial official who called communist China's founder the "devil."

Liberal intellectuals and Chinese political observers are growing alarmed by the government crackdown, which overlaps with the rise of an increasingly cohesive and confident movement both on China's internet and its streets dedicated to defending Mao's reputation and his hardline legacy. Since President Xi Jinping took power in 2012, reformist magazines and websites have been shut while university professors and even the country's judiciary have been warned against spreading liberal Western values.

Mao Yushi, Unirule's founder who is not related to Mao Zedong, said yesterday that representatives from the ruling Communist Party informed him last week that the website was shut down because it violated the law, but gave no details.

"It's a terrible thing, it existed for many years," Mao told The Associated Press. "I told [the officials] this is not the law, and they had no response because they won't answer these questions."

The Beijing branch of the Cyberspace Administration of

Liberal economics think tank latest to be silenced

China said this week it closed 17 websites, including that of Unirule, as part of a cleanup of websites providing unauthorized news and pornography.

“ Liberals absolutely must learn this lesson: openly being an oppositional speaker or denier will get you nowhere in China.

EDITORIAL
GLOBAL TIMES

Unirule and Mao Yushi are particularly reviled by China's increasingly vocal "leftists" who see their support of free-market economics as antithetical to Mao Zedong's revolutionary legacy and traditional Communist Party ideology. In recent weeks, Maoists have organized online campaigns and



street demonstrations to target a succession of liberal academics, with the apparent support from Chinese authorities who typically break up most forms of unauthorized political activity.

The party's nationalistic Global Times tabloid, which reported yesterday on the phenomenon of the growing Maoist movement,

opined in a separate piece this week that Mao Yushi's silencing should serve as a lesson.

"Liberals absolutely must learn this lesson: openly being an oppositional speaker or denier will get you nowhere in China," said the op-ed, which was later removed from the paper's website. "Taking ideas from the West, and trying

to pass them off as genuine, will eventually hit a wall."

Since 2010, Mao has been under an undeclared overseas travel ban, one of the Chinese government's frequently utilized methods of silencing and punishing its critics. He was prevented that year from going to Oslo to attend the ceremony awarding imprisoned Chinese dissident writer Liu Xiaobo the Nobel Peace Prize.

Two years later, he was awarded the Milton Friedman Prize by the libertarian Cato Institute, but was again banned from traveling to Washington, D.C. to accept the award. Unirule's website was also temporarily taken down by authorities at the time.

In recent years, Mao has openly questioned whether the Xi administration has reversed course on decades of Chinese economic reform in favor of companies and entire industries under state control. He has also warned about the revival of a militant neo-Maoist movement reminiscent of the political violence and extreme xenophobia of the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution, when fanatical Mao loyalists targeted ideological opponents and neighbors and relatives turned against each other to survive.

In June last year, the 88-year old economist detailed to The Associated Press the abuse he suffered during the Cultural Revolution, when a gang of young Mao loyalists lashed his father and him with copper-flecked whips.

His public remarks and incessant blogging have attracted protesters to his public events and threats against his safety at home. **AP**

EU asks Beijing to open markets following free trade support

THE European Union ambassador to China welcomed its endorsement of free trade in the face of U.S. President Donald Trump's promise to restrict imports and appealed to Beijing yesterday to make good on that sentiment by lowering its own market barriers.

Hans Dietmar Schweisgut also said it was too early to know how Trump's rejection of an Asian trade pact this week might affect a similar proposed U.S.-European agreement.

Schweisgut's comments reflected the potentially global repercussions of Trump's promises of sweeping change in U.S. trade, climate and foreign policy. That has prompted questions about whether Beijing, which relies

on the United States for technology and export markets, might move closer to Europe as a political and commercial partner.

In an implicit criticism of Trump, President Xi Jinping said in a speech last week a "trade war" would harm all sides and called on other governments to reject protectionism. That was despite complaints by trading partners that China is the most closed major economy.

"We appreciate this commitment by China not only to open up its own market but also to very much support and champion an open international trading system" said Schweisgut at a news conference.

Xi's gave no details of possible changes in his



European Union ambassador to China Hans Dietmar Schweisgut walks to a press conference in Beijing, yesterday

speech at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland, but Schweisgut expressed confidence the comments will lead to "concrete progress" in market opening. He said that is necessary because China has "no level playing field" for foreign

companies while Europe is "the most open market in the world."

U.S., European and other foreign companies complain they are barred from or sharply restricted in telecoms, information technology, finance and other promising indus-

tries in violation of Beijing's free-trading pledges.

European companies are frustrated that they are blocked from acquiring Chinese assets at a time when China's companies have bought major global brands including German robot maker Kuka.

U.S. companies express similar frustration. In a report last week, the American Chamber of Commerce in China said 81 percent of companies that responded to a survey feel "less welcome in China" than they did in the past. It said most believe China's business environment "discourages investment."

The American chamber said U.S. companies want Trump to take a tougher stance with Beijing on market access but to proceed carefully.

The ambassador gave a similar reply when asked whether European exporters of aircraft, autos and other goods might benefit if Trump raises tariffs on

Chinese goods and Beijing retaliates by cutting purchases of Boeing jets and other U.S. imports.

Schweisgut said Europe expects to develop closer relations this year with Beijing on trade and climate, but acknowledged they have disagreements, especially on human rights.

Asked about last year's detention of lawyers who handle human rights and other sensitive cases, the ambassador said European envoys planned to raise those and other cases with Chinese authorities.

"We have an obligation to speak up and we will do so," he said.

Regarding Beijing's move this week to restrict use of virtual private networks that allow users to bypass filters blocking access to many foreign websites, Schweisgut said Europe was "very concerned" about any restrictions that weren't based on "very plausible and concrete security concerns." **AP**

Denis D. Gray, Kampot

CAMBODIA

'Perfect pepper' conquering world's taste buds

A nearby sea, flanking mountains, a quartz-rich soil: It's the perfect spot on earth, devotees say, to yield a product they describe in that rapturous vocabulary usually reserved for fine wines: "aristocratic, virile, almost aphrodisiacal," with subtle notes of caramel, gingerbread and mild tobacco.

Celebrity chefs from Paris to Los Angeles swear by Kampot pepper, a southwestern Cambodian spice with a tragic past that is now reclaiming its global pre-eminence. It is also proving to be "black gold" for some of its once-impooverished farmers, thanks in part to Kampot pepper last year being awarded a Protected Geographical Indication by the European Union. This identifies unique products — like Stilton cheese, Champagne or Darjeeling tea — as originating in a very specific region.

So far Kampot pepper production is a mere dusting — just 70 tons last year. Vietnam, the world's top pepper producer, churned out some 145,000 tons of the spice. But more plantations are springing up while Kampot quality is rated as high as ever and hitherto slack markets, like the United States, are getting hooked on the spice. A New York chef has even concocted a Kampot pepper ice cream while Michelin three-starred French chef Olivier Roellinger rhapsodizes about its "olfactory richness" and broad spectrum of flavors.

The spice's EU designation "has permitted a renaissance of pepper in Kampot. [...] This not only recognizes the singularity of this pepper but helps protect it from imitations," says Nathalie Chaboche, a Frenchwoman who with her Belgian husband, Guy Porre, owns La Plantation, where pepper plants entwine 20,000 posts on a rolling green landscape fronted by the Gulf of Thailand.

The couple, who started the enterprise four years ago after lucrative careers in the computer industry, aim to boost production from 6 tons last year to 50 tons in 2018. They intend to grow without weakening quality control or endangering Kampot's status

AP PHOTO



Pepper plantation in Kampot, in southwestern Cambodia

as a "premier cru," a French term for wine and other produce signifying impeccable quality — and hefty price.

Kampot red pepper was recently selling in Germany for as much as 378 euro per kilogram (USD185 per pound), compared to an average import price of about \$8 for one kilo in Europe for Vietnamese pepper. The farm-gate price for the three pepper varieties — red, white and black — averages around \$10 per pound.

Believed to have originated in southern India, pepper became a widely traded item across Asia and Europe. Pepper farming in Cambodia was first recorded by a Chinese traveler in the 13th century, and energized centuries later by French colonialists. By the early 1900s, annual production peaked at 8,000 tons.

War disrupted the industry and after their 1975 victory, the

murderous Khmer Rouge turned farmers into slave laborers. Deeming the "king of spice" too decadent for their ultra-revolution, the regime left plantations to decay.

A Japanese aid worker, Hironobu Kurata, pioneered a revival in the mid-1990s, but the scars of the Khmer Rouge era took long to heal. As late as 2000, only 2 tons were grown annually, but now about 450 farms produce Kampot pepper. Most belong to the Kampot Pepper Promotion Association, which assists in price-setting and marketing while policing strict standards, including adherence to organic practices.

Cultivators use methods tested over 700 years, with some injecting new techniques.

Sorn Sothy, a former teacher and social worker, tries to reproduce the jungle environment native to the pepper plant on her

small plantation. Palm leaves are used as shade; the soil is enriched with bat and cow manure mixed with bloodied animal bones. To ward off predatory insects, she sprays plants with a bitter extract from the leaves of neem trees.

The plantation run by Chaboche and Porre is Cambodia's first semi-automated pepper operation, but its more than 100 employees still do much of the work by hand. "Our growing is traditional. The processing is modern," says Porre.

Jean-Marie Brun, a French agricultural development expert, says the advent of large plantations could lower prices, and possibly quality. "The future will tell us if the large plantations are as successful as the smallholder farms," he says.

Ngoun Lay, the association's head and a fourth-generation pepper farmer, waxes bullish about

the future despite potential problems and ongoing robust sales of fake Kampot pepper, mostly from Vietnam.

Kampot red pepper was selling in Germany for as much as 378 euro per kilogram, compared to an average import price of about USD8 for one kilo for Vietnamese pepper

A recent report, he says, shows European demand for the brand at around 200 tons while production next year is expected at some 100. Farm gate prices have tripled over the past seven years, keeping once-poor farmers on the land rather than seeking menial work in neighboring Thailand.

Stephane Arrii, producer of the Marquis de Kampot label, worries that extensive deforestation has degraded the region's soil. He says huge plantations on the still-fertile lands of northeast Cambodia could one day offer competition.

But will they match Kampot's quality?

"As a Frenchman, I can attest that tasting Kampot pepper is like making love," says Arrii. "Once you start, you can't stop." **AP**

Kuwait hangs seven prisoners, including Filipina migrant

KUWAIT hanged seven prisoners, including a royal family member and a woman convicted of killing more than 40 people, in a mass execution yesterday, the first death sentences carried out in several years in the oil-rich emirate.

Those executed included a Bangladeshi, a Filipina, an Ethiopian, two Kuwaitis and two Egyptians, according to a statement carried on the state-run KUNA news agency.

The royal was identified as Faisal Abdullah Al Jaber Al Sabah. The

statement said he was convicted of premeditated murder and illegal possession of a firearm.

The second Kuwaiti national executed yesterday was Nasra al-Enezi. She was convicted of charges including premeditated murder and sentenced to death in

2010. She was accused of setting fire to a wedding tent the previous year after her husband took a second wife. The blaze killed more than 40 women and children inside.

In the Philippines, Department of Foreign Affairs spokesman Charles

Jose identified the Filipina hanged as Jakatia Pawa, who was convicted of killing her employer's daughter.

Pawa's brother, Air Force Lt. Col. Gary Pawa, said his sister called early morning yesterday, crying as she informed him of her scheduled execution. She asked him to take care of her two children.

Ernesto Abella, a spokesman for Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte, said in a statement that the authori-

ties used "all efforts to preserve her life, including diplomatic means and appeals for compassion."

"Execution, however, could no longer be forestalled under Kuwaiti laws," he said. "We pray for her and her bereaved family."

The last known executions to be carried out in Kuwait were in 2013, when a Pakistani, a Saudi and a "Bidoon" — a name used in the emirate for people without citizenship — were hung. **AP**

AUSTRALIA

'Tanna' director recounts path from tiny island to Oscar nod

Kristen Gelineau, Sydney

THE premiere of "Tanna," Australia's first-ever Oscar nominee for a foreign language film, was as far from Hollywood glamor as one can get. The guests gathered not in an opulent theater, but in a cyclone-flattened village on a remote island. There were no glittering gowns, but plenty of grass skirts. And the film's stars were hardly A-list actors; they had, in fact, never acted before — or seen a movie.

For Australian directors Bentley Dean and Martin Butler, their film's evolution from a tiny production in the South Pacific to an Oscar contender for best foreign film is as thrilling as it is inconceivable. The tale of tribal love was shot on the island of Tanna in Vanuatu, in the indigenous Nauvhal language, with an amateur cast of villagers.

"It was just fabulous news and a little bit hard to believe," Dean said in an interview yesterday, shortly after receiving word of the film's Oscar nod. "Given how it all started, I think it makes it a bit more improbable."

The film's roots began 10 years ago, when Butler sent Dean to Tanna to work on a documentary. Dean fell in love with Tanna's lush landscape and rich culture and vowed to find a way to return.

A few years ago, he and Butler decided to approach the people living in the tiny village of Yakel to see if they would be interested in collaborating on a feature film.



AP PHOTO

The idea was certainly novel to the tribe, who had never even seen a film. Though aware of the outside world, the community chooses to live like their ancestors, hunting with bows and arrows and eschewing modern conveniences like electricity.

The directors showed the villagers a couple of movies on a laptop to give them an idea of what they wanted to create. The tribe loved the idea and quickly agreed to the project.

Dean wanted the film to be a collaborative effort in which the Yakel people could tell their own

story. And so in 2014, he moved to the community with his wife and two young children and lived there for seven months, absorbing everything he could about their history and culture. The experience was particularly exciting for his kids, who learned to hunt with bows and arrows and got to run around the surrounding mountain valleys with the village children.

"They loved it," Dean said. "Our 2-year-old was given a machete on arrival."

The villagers told Dean the true story of two lovers who, years be-

fore, found themselves caught in a tribal war over a traditional arranged marriage that threatened to split them apart. That story became the plot for "Tanna."

The tribe speaks Nauvhal — a language spoken by only a few thousand people worldwide. Luckily, a man from a neighboring village who had learned English while attending school on another island agreed to serve as a translator.

Though none of the villagers had ever acted before, they managed to turn out performances so genuine they stunned the fil-

mmakers.

"Trained actors have said to us that they're envious of the performances that they see," Dean said. "They're so truthful."

The directors promised the tribe they would be the first in the world to see the completed film. But shortly before the planned first screening, a cyclone tore across Vanuatu, flattening all the houses in Yakel and ruining the crops. The filmmakers suggested they postpone the premiere, but the villagers insisted they come anyway.

And so Dean and Butler traveled back to Yakel, where the tribe had constructed a viewing screen by stringing a couple of sheets up to a giant banyan tree that had survived the storm. Dean set up a projector and everyone gathered to watch the story unfold. The villagers loved it so much, Dean said, the chiefs delivered a formal speech praising the film for reflecting the tribe's truth. While the directors had come to them with the idea for the film, the chiefs said, the tribe now considered "Tanna" their own.

"It just doesn't get any better," Dean said of the villagers' praise.

The fact that "Tanna" is the first Australian movie to be nominated for an Oscar in the foreign language category makes it even more special, Dean said.

"I think it's the most exciting category to have a film in," he said. "It's a real celebration of cinema, no matter who you are, where you come from."

And while the film's Oscar nomination and other accolades are thrilling, the best part of the experience for Dean was the connection he and his family made to a culture so different from their own.

"There's a saying there — the chiefs — that when you connect with an outsider, you build a road between one another," Dean said. "And there's a definite road between us now that will go on indefinitely." AP

JAPAN posted its first trade surplus in six years in 2016 thanks to a rebound in exports late in the year and persisting low oil prices, though uncertainties over U.S. policy and global growth are overshadowing the recovery.

The 4.1 trillion yen (USD35.8 billion) surplus in 2016 compared with a 2.8 trillion yen deficit in 2015, the government reported yesterday. Exports fell 7.4 percent from a year earlier to 70.04 trillion yen (\$617 billion) while imports dropped 16 percent to 66 trillion yen (\$581 billion), the report showed.

But December's data showed a strong rebound

Japan sees first trade surplus on cheaper oil, China rebound



AP PHOTO

in exports to China and some other Asian countries, suggesting a recent uptick in growth

in Asia's biggest economy is filtering through supply chains across the region.

A weakening in the Japanese yen against the U.S. dollar since Donald Trump was elected pre-

sident also increased the value of exports in yen terms. A dollar now buys about 114 yen, up from about 101 yen at the time of the Nov. 8 election.

In the full year, Japan's trade surplus with the U.S. fell nearly 5 percent, to 6.8 trillion yen (\$59 billion). Exports fell 7.1 percent from the year before to 14.1 trillion yen (\$124.6 billion) and imports dropped 7.3 percent to 7.3 trillion yen (\$64.4 billion), the report said.

Japan ran a 4.6 trillion yen (\$41 billion) deficit with China, its largest trading partner, down by a quarter from a year earlier.

U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to drop out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade pact, and his comments on imposing "border taxes" on some imports has added to uncertainties over U.S. trade policy.

A Japanese government spokesman said yesterday that Tokyo was discussing how to handle future trade negotiations such as the TPP and another Asian trade pact involving China, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. AP

Julie Pace, Vivian Salama,
& Rachel Zoll, Washington

USA

Trump moving forward with border wall, weighs refugee cuts

PRESIDENT Donald Trump will begin rolling out executive actions on immigration today [Macau time], beginning with steps to build his proposed wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, according to two administration officials. He's also expected to target so-called sanctuary cities and is reviewing proposals that would restrict the flow of refugees to the United States.

The president is expected to sign the first actions — including the measure to jumpstart construction of the wall — during a trip to the Department of Homeland Security. Additional actions will be announced out over the next few days, according to one official.

Trump is said to still be weighing the details of plans to restrict refugees coming to the U.S. The current proposal includes at least a four-month halt on all refugee admissions, as well as temporary ban on people coming from some Muslim majority countries, according to a representative of a public policy organization that monitors refugee issues. The person was briefed on the details of that proposed action by a government official and outlined the expected steps for The Associated Press.

The officials and the public policy organization's representative insisted on anonymity in order to outline the plans ahead of Trump's official announcements.

On his personal Twitter account, Trump tweeted: "Big day planned on NATIONAL SECURITY tomorrow. Among many other things, we will build the wall!"

Trump campaigned on pledges to tighten U.S. immigration policies, including strengthening border security and stemming the flow of refugees. He also called for halting entry to the U.S. from Muslim countries, but later shifted the policy to a focus on what he called "extreme vetting" for those coming from countries with

AP PHOTO



terrorism ties.

While the specific of Trump's orders were unclear, both administration officials said yesterday's actions would focus in part on the president's plans to construct a wall along the southern border with Mexico. He's also expected to move forward with plans to curb funding of cities that don't arrest or detain immigrants living in the U.S. illegally, — localities dubbed "sanctuary" cities — which could cost individual jurisdictions millions of dollars.

Trump's insistence that Mexico would pay for the wall was among his most popular proposals on the campaign trail, sparking enthusiastic cheers at his raucous rallies. Mexico has repeatedly said it will not pay for any border wall.

Earlier this month, Trump said the building project would initially be paid for with a congressionally approved spending bill and Mexico would eventually

reimburse the U.S., though he has not specified how he would guarantee payments.

Trump will meet with Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto at the White House next week.

In claiming authority to build a wall, Trump may rely on a 2006 law that authorized several hundred miles of fencing along the 2,000-mile frontier. That bill led to the construction of about 700 miles of various kinds of fencing designed to block both vehicles and pedestrians.

The Secure Fence Act was signed by then-President George W. Bush and the majority of the fencing in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California was built before he left office. The last remnants were completed after President Barack Obama took office in 2009.

The Trump administration also must adhere to a decades-old border treaty with Mexico that

limits where and how structures can be built along the border. The 1970 treaty requires that structures cannot disrupt the flow of the rivers, which define the U.S.-Mexican border along Texas and 24 miles in Arizona, according to The International Boundary and Water Commission, a joint U.S.-Mexican agency that administers the treaty.

It appeared as though the refugee restrictions were still to be finalized. The person briefed on the proposals said they included a ban on entry to the U.S. for at least 30 days from countries including Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen, though the person cautioned the details could still change.

There is also likely to be an exception in the refugee stoppage for those fleeing religious persecution if their religion is a minority in their country. That exception could cover Christians fleeing

Muslim-majority nations.

As president, Trump can use an executive order to halt refugee processing. President George W. Bush used that same power in the immediate aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks on the U.S. homeland. Refugee security vetting was reviewed and the process was restarted several months later.

Big day planned on NATIONAL SECURITY tomorrow. Among many other things, we will build the wall!

TRUMP ON TWITTER

Other executive actions expected today include bolstering border patrol agents and ending what Republicans have argued is a catch-and-release system at the border. Currently, some immigrants caught crossing the border illegally are given notices to report back to immigration officials at a later date.

If Trump's actions would result in those caught being immediately jailed, the administration would have to grapple with how to pay for jail space to detain everyone and what to do with children caught crossing the border with their parents. **AP**

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Leaders from Latin America, Caribbean talk Trump at summit



Leaders from left: Salvador Sanchez (El Salvador), Danilo Medina (Dominican Republic), President Rafael Correa (Ecuador) and Raul Castro (Cuba) attend the V Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States

A summit of Latin American and Caribbean leaders began yesterday in the Dominican Republic with a call to establish mechanisms against the protectionist measures expected from U.S. President Donald Trump.

The relationship between the region and the new U.S. administration wasn't on the original agenda of the gathering of leaders from the Community of Latin American and Car-

ibbean States but Trump's pledges to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement and to crack down on migration dominated the discourse.

Host President Danilo Medina of the Dominican Republic expressed concern about the appearance of the "ghost of protectionism and the resulting trade wars."

"We are worried by the growing discourse of protectionism and the closing of borders that is not limited

to the economic sphere but which could also seriously affect our migrant populations," Medina said at the opening of the summit of the 33-nation grouping, which took place days after Trump took office.

Other leaders expressed concerns about Latin American migrants to the United States.

In addition to trade protectionism, "we have to protect ourselves from other things: the persecution of migrants," said Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa.

Bolivia's leftist President Evo Morales said Trump's policies are motive for a debate and we "came to share our experiences."

Cuban President Raul Castro was in attendance, while

Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto canceled without providing details.

At the summit, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean urged the region's countries to set up mechanisms against any possible protectionist measures adopted by the new U.S. president.

"Faced with this uncertainty, I think that regional integration is more necessary than ever," said Alicia Barcena, the executive secretary of the commission.

Trump's promises to review trade pacts, deport migrants and build a wall along with border with Mexico have been greeted with alarm in much of Latin America. **AP**

新年快樂

金雞報喜·迎新納福

2017【农历丁酉年】新年快樂

D2 CLUB
www.d2club-macau.com

Macau Fisherman's Wharf, Edf. New Orleans III
澳門漁人碼頭新奧爾良館 III
Tel: (853) 2872 3777

villa frangipani
EXCEPTIONAL LUXURY LIVING

20,000 square feet of privacy

At Villa Frangipani impeccable service means knowing when you want to enjoy a private moment.

Whether that is in the Private Spa, your suite, the garden bale, or any other area, our Villa Staff anticipate your needs at all times.

Please visit www.privatevillasofbali.com to get an idea of what we offer.

...wish you could stay forever...

PRIVATE VILLAS OF BALI	VILLA TIRTA KENCANA • VILLA FRANGIPANI	info@privatevillasofbali.com
		www.privatevillasofbali.com
		skype ID: privatevillasofbali
		+62361 8468513

MAGNUS SECURITY SERVICES
馬格納斯 保安 (澳門) 有限公司

MAGNUS SECURITY (MACAU) LTD
Avenida Leste do Hipodromo N.S 25-69
Edif. Ind. Fok Tai, 12 floor "B", Macau SAR
Tel.: (853) 2822 1341
Fax.: (853) 2822 0824

License No. 5/2010

MAGNUS SECURITY (MACAU) LTD MAGNUS SECURITY (MACAU) LTD MAGNUS SECURITY (MACAU) LTD MAGNUS SECURITY (MACAU) LTD MAGNUS SECURITY (MACAU) LTD MAGNUS SECURITY (MACAU) LTD MAGNUS SECURITY (MACAU) LTD

SECURITY SERVICES
全面保安服務

EVENTS SECURITY
活動場地保安

SPECIAL OPERATIONS
特別行動

SECURITY SYSTEMS
保安及安全系統

RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK MITIGATION
風險評估及應對措施

SECURITY FORCE TRAINING & EVALUATION
保安部隊訓練及評核

MAGNUS SECURITY (MACAU) LTD MAGNUS SECURITY (MACAU) LTD MAGNUS SECURITY (MACAU) LTD MAGNUS SECURITY (MACAU) LTD MAGNUS SECURITY (MACAU) LTD MAGNUS SECURITY (MACAU) LTD MAGNUS SECURITY (MACAU) LTD

what's ON

LOVE OF MACAU – PHOTOGRAPHS BY LEE KUNG KIM
 TIME: 10am-7pm (Last admission at 6:30pm, closed on Mondays)
 UNTIL: July 9, 2017
 VENUE: Macao Museum of Art, Av. Xian Xing Hai, s/n, NAPE
 Museum Admission: \$5 (Free on Sundays and public holidays)
 ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

AD LIB- RECENT WORKS BY KONSTANTIN BESSMERTNY
 TIME: 10am-7pm (no admission after 6:30 pm, closed on Mondays)
 UNTIL: May 28, 2017
 VENUE: Macao Museum of Art, Av. Xian Xing Hai, s/n, NAPE
 ADMISSION: MOP5 (free on Sundays and public holidays)
 ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

KUNG FU PANDA ACADEMY
 TIME: 11:30am-1pm & 2pm-15:30pm
 UNTIL: February 5, 2017
 VENUE: Level 4, Tian Shan Ballroom, Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel, Sands Cotai Central
 ADMISSION: MOP200 per child (complimentary entry for one adult and MOP100 for each additional adult)
 ENQUIRIES: (853) 8113 0000

THE STAMP FESTIVAL
 TIME: 9am-5:30pm (no admission after 5:00 pm), closed on public holidays
 UNTIL: April 7, 2017
 VENUE: Communication Museum of Macao / Estrada D. Maria II, No. 7
 ADMISSION: MOP10
 ENQUIRIES: (853) 2871 8063 / 2871 8570

SAILING FOR DREAMS - WORKS BY KWOK WOON
 TIME: 10am-7pm (Closed on Mondays)
 UNTIL: April 23, 2017
 VENUE: Navy Yard No.1, Rua de S. Tiago da Barra
 ADMISSION: Free

Offbeat

POLISH TOWN THAT ONCE MADE TINY FIATS OFFERS TOM HANKS ONE



A Tom Hanks fan in southern Poland says her town that once produced small Fiat cars is offering one to the actor.

Monika Jaskolska of Bielsko-Biala said she was inspired last fall by photos Hanks posted of himself jokingly posing by Fiat 126p cars parked in Budapest, Hungary. The economy cars were made in Bielsko-Biala from 1973-2000 and the Poles still have warm feelings for them.

Jaskolska organized a public collection for a Fiat 126p for Hanks and received a huge response. A pre-1975 turquoise car has been bought and is undergoing a thorough overhaul at a private garage, at no charge. After a paint job, it is to be flown to Los Angeles.

"I hope he will love the car as much as I do," Jaskolska told The Associated Press.

She still needs to contact his agents to make the arrangements. Jaskolska said Hanks is a great actor and a "very nice person, who helps others and deserves a present himself."

TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:50	RTPi Live
17:40	Happy Endings Sr.3
18:20	Precious Pearl (Repeated)
19:10	Non-Daily Portuguese News (Repeated)
19:40	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	TDM Talk Show
21:30	Castle S6
22:10	Precious Pearl
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Miscellaneous
00:05	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
00:40	RTPi Live

cinema

CINETEATRO

26 JAN

POKEMON THE MOVIE 19: VOLCANION AND THE MECHANICAL MARVEL

ROOM 1
 2:30, 4:00, 7:45pm
 Director: Kunihiko Yuyama
 Starring: James Carter Cathcart, Kiyotaka Furushima, Megumi Hayashibara
 Language: Cantonese (Mandarin)
 Duration: 90min

LA LA LAND

ROOM 1
 7:30, 10:00pm
 Director: Damien Chazelle
 Starring: Emma Stone, Ryan Gosling
 Language: English
 Duration: 128min

RESIDENT EVIL: THE FINAL CHAPTER

ROOM 2 (2D)
 2:30, 9:30, 11:30pm
 Director: Paul W.S. Anderson
 Starring: Mila Jovovich, Ali Larter, Shamwn Roberts, Ruby Rose
 Language: English (Cantonese)
 Duration: 106min

RESIDENT EVIL: THE FINAL CHAPTER

ROOM 2 (3D)
 7:30pm
 Director: Paul W.S. Anderson
 Starring: Mila Jovovich, Ali Larter, Shamwn Roberts, Ruby Rose
 Language: English (Cantonese)
 Duration: 106min

LA LA LAND

ROOM 2
 4:30pm
 Director: Damien Chazelle
 Starring: Emma Stone, Ryan Gosling
 Language: English
 Duration: 128min

MOANA

ROOM 3
 2:30, 4:45, 7:15, 9:30pm
 Director: Ron Clements, John Musker
 Starring: Auli'i Cravalho, Dwayne Johnson, Rachel House
 Language: Cantonese (English)
 Duration: 107min

MACAU TOWER

19 JAN - 27 JAN



ARRIVAL

2:30, 4:45, 7:15, 9:30pm
 Director: Denis Villeneuve
 Starring: Amy Adams, Jeremy Renner, Forest Whitaker
 Language: English
 Duration: 116min

this day in history



1971 IDI AMIN OUSTS UGANDA PRESIDENT

General Idi Amin has seized power from President Milton Obote, the man who led Uganda to independence in 1962.

The general led a military coup while the president was out of the country attending the Commonwealth conference in Singapore.

Ugandan troops have sealed off Entebbe airport and there are reports of tanks and soldiers on the streets of the capital, Kampala. The president's residence is said to have been surrounded and major road links have been blocked.

Dr Obote became the country's first prime minister in 1962 at the head of an uneasy coalition between his own Uganda People's Congress and the Kabaka Yekka or King's party representing the Baganda tribe from the largest and richest province of the country.

Sir Edward Mutesa, better known as "King Freddie", became president.

Four years later Obote ousted the king and revised the constitution to make himself president.

General Amin, for seven years heavyweight boxing champion of Uganda, spent most of his army career as a sergeant, but once Dr Obote became president was rapidly promoted to chief of the armed forces.

A broadcast on Uganda radio accused the Obote government of corruption and said that ministers and senior civil servants owned cars, fleets of buses and even aeroplanes.

The broadcast said the army believed President Obote's policies would lead to bloodshed, accusing him of giving preferential treatment to the Lango region in the north of the country.

Cheering crowds were reported in the streets of Kampala after the radio broadcast.

The army has imposed a night-time curfew.

Dr Obote arrived at Nairobi airport in Kenya tonight and was taken immediately to a hotel where he is holding talks with the Kenyan vice president, Arap Moi and the attorney general and foreign minister.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Reports from Uganda had indicated that revolution against Obote's regime was brewing. He survived an assassination attempt in 1969. After the coup, he went into exile in Tanzania, from where he tried to organise his comeback.

In 1979, Amin was toppled by Ugandan rebels and Tanzanian troops. He fled the country in 1979 and spent his last years in exile in Saudi Arabia where he died in August 2003.

In 1980 Obote was re-elected president and established a multi-party democracy.

But the army remained unwilling to submit to his control and in 1985 he was deposed in a second military coup. He has since lived in Zambia.

Yoweri Museveni has been president of Uganda since 1986.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 You know that old saying about how denial ain't just a river in Egypt? Right now, someone you know (or possibly you) could have just bought beachfront property on that ol' river.

Taurus April 20-May 20 Going berserk on someone if they say something that ticks you off is certainly an option, but probably not the one you want to exercise if you want this person to stick around. Take a step back and a deep breath.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 Emotions might be running high, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. Think of it as a sign that it's time to do some mental house cleaning, especially when it comes to feelings.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Does someone keep hanging around even though it's long past time for them to go? If that's the case, now is the moment for you firmly (but gently, gently!) to get them out the door.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 If you were a superhero, your name would be Captain Goodtimes. Right now you're determined to lead you and your crew to the biggest possible source of fun, and nothing's going to get in your way.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 Playing hide-and-go-seek when you were a kid was lots of fun, but right now it might just confuse things more than you'd like. If there's something on your mind, spit it out.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 Oh-oh. You're getting that 'freeway feeling' again - as in, you have a serious urge to merge. Is it time to take this relationship just a little bit deeper? Several signs do point to yes.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 They may just have to invent a new word for 'magnetic' once they get a load of you. The power you're exuding could knock someone off their feet if you weren't careful (fortunately, you're almost always careful).

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Every good tailor knows that the tiny things make a garment fit like it was, well, made for you. All that care and attention will take a simple piece of clothing and turn it into a statement.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Have a little patience and hold back on any urge to push, and all the little details might just work themselves out. It's a hard stance to take, especially for someone who's as driven and hard working as you are.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Ambition can be pretty heady, like an expensive perfume or that new car smell, and you're both drawn to it and a little afraid of it. Ambition, like most strong forces, is an excellent servant but a bad master.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 Being on a merry-go-round, it's lots of fun at first, but then after a few minutes, you could start to feel just a touch nauseous. Even if you're not sure where you want to go, it's imperative that you clear your head.



SUDOKU

Sudoku puzzles categorized by difficulty: Easy, Easy+, Medium, and Hard. Each category contains a 9x9 grid with some numbers pre-filled.

WEATHER

Table with columns: MIN, MAX, CONDITION. Rows include CHINA (Beijing, Harbin, Tianjin, Urumqi, Xi'an, Lhasa, Chengdu, Chongqing, Kunming, Nanjing, Shanghai, Wuhan, Hangzhou, Taipei, Guangzhou, Hong Kong) and WORLD (Moscow, Frankfurt, Paris, London, New York).

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1-Thrash; 5- 'Bali --'; 8- Mournful songs; 14- Actress Sofer; 15- Circle segment; 16- Maximally; 17- Sweet liqueur; 19- Memorandum; 20-Triangular pyramid; 22- Golf ball prop; 23- Take an oath; 24- Like some jacks; 26- Chats; 29- Son-gun link; 32- Euripides tragedy; 33- Collection of maps; 37- In spite of; 40- Curved moldings; 41- Choose; 42- Phila. clock setting; 43- Raise the level; 45- Aseptic; 48- Deep sleeps; 53- Craggy hill; 54- Supply with blood vessels; 58- Singer Morissette; 60- Frankincense; 61- Wyoming range; 62- ___ Lingus; 63- Amos or Spelling; 64- Boring; 65- Open field; 66- French summers; DOWN: 1- Mild oaths; 2- Continue a subscription; 3- Band together; 4- Iraqi port; 5- Hell ___ no fury...; 6- Comedian Johnson; 7- Chilled; 8- Singer Vic; 9- Traveling from place to place; 10- LBJ's successor; 11- Swollen, from an overactive thyroid; 12- First name in cosmetics; 13- War horse; 18- Attention; 21- Turned; 25- Cornerstone abbr.; 26- Butterfly catcher; 27- Sticks; 28- Inventor Nikola; 29- Lennon's mate; 30- Cloudlike mass; 31- Consumed; 32- Apprehension; 34- Tell it like it isn't; 35- Ques. response; 36- Cpl.'s superior; 38- Don; 39- Whiz; 44- Like expressionless eyes; 45- Data; 46- Renter's sign; 47- Muse of love poetry; 48- Where the truck driver rides; 49- To talk, usually in a pompous manner; 50- North Dakota city; 51- Sky blue; 52- Big rigs; 55- Lumpy fuel; 56- Peter Fonda role; 57- Currency of Turkey, and formerly of Italy; 59- Tacit assent;

Yesterday's solution crossword grid with filled-in words.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



FOR SALE FOR RENT
www.JMLProperty.com
More info, please contact us
Info@JMLproperty.com
(853) 2835 2699 Office

Real estate listings for Nova Taipa Tower 29, Taipa Warehouse, Iau Lei Garden, Nam Long (J Unit), Calçada da Surpresa, Kingsville, Manhattan - B unit, Hellene Gardens.

JML property logo and Chinese text '卓雅物業'.

WARNING! Advertising with Macau Daily Times may be highly addictive.

 **52,872,473 page views in 2016**

160,000 in 24 hours

 + 11,000 likes



www.macaudailytimes.com.mo

facebook.com/mdtimes

advertising@macaudailytimes.com



The top countries of origin for visitors to the MDT website are Macau, greater China and the East Asia region. But the USA, Australia, Great Britain and other European countries are also in the top 10. The Times website has a true worldwide reach welcoming visits from more than 11,000 cities.

MacauDaily 澳門每日時報®
Times

" THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN' "

Gerald Imray, Port-Gentil

FOOTBALL | AFRICAN CUP

Curse of the champion strikes Ivory Coast, Congo dances on

THE curse of the defending champion struck Ivory Coast at the African Cup of Nations and Congo put a strike over money well behind it to dance into the quarterfinals yesterday [Macau time].

The titleholder and a team of big stars from European clubs, Ivory Coast didn't even make it past the group stage in its defense, crashing out without winning a game.

Ivory Coast needed to beat Morocco in the last round of matches in Group C but lost 1-0 to follow Algeria out of the African championship in Gabon — two big teams gone in the space of 24 hours.

"It's tough to go out like that in the first round. It's hard to swallow," Ivory Coast midfielder Franck Kessie said.

Instead, Congo topped the group with a colorful 3-1 win over Togo in Port-Gentil, where the Congolese players danced in front of their fans for every one of their goals, and again at fulltime.

Congo and Morocco went through and their quarterfinal opponents will be decided today on the last day of the group stage. They joined Burkina Faso, Tunisia, Senegal, Cameroon, and Ghana in the knockouts. One last quarterfinalist out of Egypt and Mali will be decided also today [Macau time].

Ivory Coast, with two draws to start its title defense, was completely flat when it mattered most in Oyem and was outsmarted by Morocco coach Herve Renard, who guided the Ivorians to the title two years ago.

Substitute Rachid Alioui scored Morocco's goal with a curling long-range shot on a counterattack, deciding a cagey game in which neither team produced an impressive performance but where Mo-



Congo's players celebrate at the end of a soccer match against Togo

rocco didn't have to make the running.

Alioui's curler made sure of Ivory Coast's elimination and continued the recent curse of the champion at the African Cup: In the last four tournaments, the titleholder has struggled badly, or not even made it to the tournament at all. Egypt, winner in 2010, didn't qualify in 2012. Zambia went out without winning a game in 2013. Nigeria didn't

qualify in 2015. And now Ivory Coast.

"My thoughts are with the people of Ivory Coast, who will be really disappointed," coach Michel Dussuyer said.

The most compelling performances in Group C came from Congo, a giant of African soccer in the late 1960s and early 70s that fell on real hard times. Congo finished third two years ago, though, and could be a dangerous challenger in the

knockout stages in Gabon, especially with Ivory Coast, Algeria, and the host team all gone.

Congo's style of soccer is fast and exciting and team spirit appears to be strong, in good times and in bad. This tournament began with the players on strike and refusing to train for two days because of a dispute with officials over bonus payments. Then, all of the Congo players stood together in protest. On Tuesday, they

all stood together in celebration, lining up on the sideline in front of their fans to shimmy and shake every time they scored at Stade de Port-Gentil.

Congo is most likely to play Ghana or Egypt in the quarterfinals, a game in which they might have been written off a few years ago. Not now.

"We are going to keep going, you know," Congo midfielder Youssouf Mulumbu said. "When we started this tournament no one would have bet on us. We're a surprise. We want to go to the final. It's going to be tough [...] but we have quality players."

Congo led Togo in Port-Gentil with a first-half goal from Junior Kabananga, who has scored in every one of Congo's games at the tournament. Ndombe Mubele lobbed over Togo substitute goalkeeper Cedric Mensah for a 2-0 lead early in the second half.

Togo, with only a long shot at qualifying for the quarters, pulled it back to 2-1 through Kodjo Fo-Doh Laba.

Congo confirmed itself as group winner and a team to watch when Paul-Jose Mpoku struck a sweet free kick that soared toward the right corner of the goal and bounced down off the crossbar and over the goal-line.

A few of the Congo players stopped and looked at the linesman to be sure the ball crossed the line, but not Mpoku. He was already heading off to the edge of the field to start the dancing. **AP**

SUMO

A Japanese reaches top rank for first time in 19 years



A Japanese sumo wrestler has reached the pinnacle of the country's ancient sport for the first time in almost two decades.

Kisenosato was promoted to the highest rank of "Yokozuna" yesterday, three days after winning his first title at the New Year Grand Sumo Tournament with a 14-1 record.

"I humbly accept the honor," he said at a ce-

emony in Tokyo. "I will concentrate on being true to the title of Yokozuna."

Kisenosato, whose real name is Yutaka Hagiwara, is the first Japanese wrestler to earn the coveted rank of "grand champion" since 1998.

Mongolians and Hawaiians have dominated the sport for more than a decade, causing concern among some sumo officials and fans.

The last three wrestlers promoted to Yokozuna were Mongolian: Hakuho, Harumafuji and Kakuryu. Before them came Hawaiian Akebono and Samoan Musashimaru.

The sport's popularity has waned in recent years amid a series of scandals involving bullying of junior apprentices, and wrestlers gambling on professional baseball games. The lack of a Japanese at the top, and competition from football and baseball, has also had an impact.

Previously, the last Japanese promoted to Yokozuna was Wakanohana in 1998. His bro-

ther, Takanohana, was the last Japanese to compete as a Yokozuna. He retired in 2003.

Wrestlers must normally win two consecutive tournaments to be promoted. Kisenosato only has one title but earned the top rank based on his consistent results in recent tournaments and the New Year title.

As much as his promotion will give the sport a shot in the arm, it comes at an advanced age for a sumo wrestler.

Kisenosato is 30 years old. Mongolian Hakuho, who is 31, was 22 when he became a grand champion. He went on to win a record 37 championships. **AP**

opinion

Made in Macao
 Jenny Lao-Phillips



PEACH-BLOSSOMS-LUCK

During this time of year when lots of places are decorated with large peach blossom trees, we often see young people running around the trees for luck. This is not just for enhancing luck in general, but specifically for "Tou Faa Wan" "桃花運" (directly translated as "peach blossoms luck").

Tou Faa Wan is the luck for finding love. And the correlation between peach blossoms and romance was rooted in the story behind the famous poem 人面桃花 "Her face and the peach blossom" written by Cui Hu during the Tang Dynasty. The short poem is roughly translated as:

This day last year by the door
 Her face and the peach blossom, reflections
 of red

Her face is no longer there,
 The peach blossoms remains, smiling at the
 spring breeze

The story behind this beautiful poem was that Cui Hu was hiking far up on the hills on Ching Ming day when he started to feel tired and thirsty. He came across a field full of peach blossoms. Amongst the blossoms stood a house in the middle of nowhere, so he went to knock on the door expecting some refined, retired scholar. To his surprise, a very beautiful girl answered the door. Guess what? They fell in love at first sight. But being an educated, young, gentlemen, Cui Hu knew the inappropriateness of being with a young girl alone in a house. So he asked for some water and then went away.

However, Cui Hu couldn't keep the face of the girl out of his mind, so on the same day the next year, he went to the house among the peach blossoms again. This time a refined, scholarly, older gentlemen answered the door. The gentlemen was crying when he told Cui Hu that his daughter just passed away from a heart break. Apparently, after meeting Cui Hu the year before, the girl couldn't forget him and had been waiting day after day for him to return. In one year of waiting, her mysterious prince charming didn't return and she died of heartbreak. Probably more out of malnutrition from not being able to eat or sleep.

Cui Hu broke down after knowing the truth, and legend has it that he wept so bitterly that a fairy felt sympathy for him and brought the girl back to life. Then, of course, they lived happily ever after. The belief that peach blossoms can bring luck in finding love came from this story. But how?

Just putting the blossoms at home is probably not enough. It is customary for people who would like to enhance their "peach blossom luck" to run three times, clockwise, around a large peach blossom. For those who are single and are in search of love, don't forget to take three laps around a blossom this weekend, and don't run the wrong way.

For those who are married, perhaps the peach blossom is not for you, but it is still a nice custom to take a walk amongst the flowers at the flower market, be it merely for appreciating the colorful flowers, or to pick up a plant for bringing more Chinese New Year spirit at home, or just to inhale some luck from all those auspicious flowers. The pussy willow, for instance, the Chinese name of which is 銀柳 (Yin Liu), has the same sound as money and apartment, so you probably know what kind of luck it brings. Most of the Chinese New Year flowers, such as the Kumquat and Narcissus, boost prosperity but there are those that are believed to bring other kinds of luck. Chrysanthemum, Rose Supreme or Gladiolus, Carnation, etc. brings felicity, and therefore are good choices of gifts for the family. Well, happy flower shopping.

THE BUZZ MAN ARRESTED AFTER DISCOVERY OF USD20M CASH HELD WITHOUT BAIL

A Brazilian man arrested in connection with the discovery of about USD20 million in cash hidden inside a box spring in a Massachusetts apartment has been held without bail.

A judge ruled that 28-year-old Cleber Rene Rizerio Rocha is a flight risk and held him on a charge of conspiring to commit money

laundering.

Prosecutors say Rocha was part of a scheme to transfer millions of dollars to Brazil by laundering the cash through Hong Kong. The money was from TelexFree, a defunct internet phone company authorities say was a massive pyramid scheme.

Senior North Korean defector says his sons were reason he fled



Former North Korean deputy ambassador to the UK, Thae Yong Ho speaks at the Foreign Correspondents Club in Seoul, yesterday

THE highest-level North Korean diplomat to defect to South Korea said yesterday he decided to flee last year because he didn't want his children to live "miserable" lives in the North.

Thae Yong Ho, a former minister at the North Korean Embassy in London, told reporters that he was lucky to have been able to bring both of his sons to London, unlike other North Korean diplomats who are forced to leave some of their children at home as "hostages."

After his sons, now 20 and 27, learned about life in Britain, they began asking him questions such as why North Korea barred use of the internet and executed people without proper legal procedures, he said.

Their British friends at school made fun of them over the nature of their homeland,

he said. For instance, when they grew long hair, their friends laughed and asked whether they could be arrested in North Korea because they had heard all young men were required to have short haircuts.

"These kinds of questions bombarded my sons," Thae said.

Thae, who said as a diplomat abroad he had the privilege of access to outside information, said he decided to talk frankly with them about North Korea. He concluded that his sons would have "miserable" lives if they returned home because they had come to know the truth about the country.

Ahead of their defection to South Korea, Thae said he told his sons that he was going to "cut the chains of slavery and you are free men."

He said his sons are happy

and are "now feeling a true sense of freedom" in South Korea.

Thae said his disappointment with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was another reason he defected. He said he initially had some hopes for Kim but eventually fell into "despair" after watching him execute officials without proper reasons and pursue development of nuclear weapons.

Kim, believed to be in his early 30s, took office in late 2011 following his dictator father's death. He has since orchestrated a series of high-profile executions, purges and dismissals in what outside analysts say is an attempt to bolster his grip on power. Kim's pursuit of nuclear weapons has drawn tough international sanctions.

Since his release into society last month following months of custody by South Korea's intelligence agency, Thae has conducted a series of media interviews and appeared on various TV programs in what he says is an attempt to reveal the truth about North Korea.

Thae described himself as a big fan of South Korean dramas and other TV programs while serving in London, and said ordinary citizens in North Korea also enjoy watching them secretly at home. He said if North Korea is able to obtain more information about their country's situation, it could trigger a public uprising against Kim's government. **AP**

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Thibault Camus



Haute Paris. Models wear creations as part of Franck Sorbier's Spring-Summer 2017 Haute Couture fashion collection presented yesterday in Paris.

Station	Air quality	
Roadside	50-70 Moderate	
High Density Residential Area	50-70 Moderate	
Ambient	60-80 Moderate	

SOURCE: D5M/G

WORLD BRIEFS

CAMBODIA Celebrity chefs from Paris to Los Angeles swear by Kampot pepper, a southwestern Cambodian spice with a tragic past that is now reclaiming its global pre-eminence. **More on p12**

AUSTRALIA The premiere of "Tanna," Australia's first-ever Oscar nominee for a foreign language film, was as far from Hollywood glamor as one can get. The guests gathered not in an opulent theater, but in a cyclone-flattened village on a remote island. **More on p13**



RUSSIA A manager in charge of investigating hacking attacks at Russia's biggest cybersecurity firm has been arrested, the company said. Kaspersky Lab confirmed reports in Kommersant newspaper that Ruslan Stoyanov, head of its computer incidents investigations unit, was arrested in December. Stoyanov was arrested along with a senior Russian FSB intelligence officer and that they both face charges of treason.



RUSSIA-US Moscow has "no illusions" that strained relations between Russia and the United States can quickly improve under President Donald Trump, Russia's foreign minister told the parliament yesterday. Russian officials previously cheered Trump's election and expressed hopes of better ties between the two countries.



MIGRANT CRISIS The European Commission urged European leaders to endorse sweeping measures to help stop tens of thousands of desperate people from leaving Libya in search of better lives in Europe, with thousands dying during the perilous journey. The Commission said that the leaders should "deploy the full range of EU missions and projects" to help Libyans manage their borders and protect migrants.