



EDUCATIONAL FARM IN HAC SA

The Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau set up a farm to promote practical sessions of agriculture and educational activities

P4 MDT REPORT



SURGE IN NEW VEHICLE REGISTRATION

New registration of motor vehicles rose substantially, by 78.6 percent year-on-year, to 1,665 in March

P7



ACTIVIST, LAWYER'S FAMILY SAYS US HELPED THEM FLEE

P9-10 CHINA

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WORLD BRIEFS



JAPAN AND INDIA

affirmed plans to strengthen their military cooperation amid rising tension in the Asian region. Indian Defense Minister Arun Jaitley told his Japanese counterpart, Tomomi Inada, in Tokyo that his country hopes to pursue a strategic partnership with Japan for regional peace and stability.



CHINA A gas leak in a coal mine in Hunan has killed 18 people, local authorities said. The leak happened this weekend when miners were working in the shaft of the mine in Youxian county in Hunan province, according to a statement from the Communist Party committee of Zhuzhou city. Rescuers managed to bring to safety 37 miners.



VIETNAM A senior Communist Party official has been removed from the powerful Politburo for committing "very serious mistakes and violations" when he was head of the country's oil and gas monopoly PetroVietnam. The Central Committee voted in majority to impose the disciplinary measures against Dinh La Thang [pictured, right].

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GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES

Facial scans at ATMs to deter money laundering

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Zhang first Politburo Standing Committee member to visit AL

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Lynzy Valles

Alliance Française finding new head for Macau delegation

ALLIANCE Française de Macao (AF) has been searching for the successor to its current director, Xavier Garnier, after he disclosed to the association several months ago that he is planning to move back to France in July.

AF has held interviews with 35 candidates who applied for the position and 11 applicants went through to a second interview.

According to Garnier, the association's Board is currently choosing between three final contenders to be his successor.

Speaking to the Times, the AF director explained that he lived and worked in China for more than 15 years; before coming to Macau working in the regions of Shandong and Jinan.

He also stressed that his plans to leave Macau are based purely on "personal and family" reasons.

"The main reason why I'm leaving has nothing to do with Macau. I could have stayed even longer. But it's really for personal reasons," he reiterated.

"And I just feel it's time for me to go back to France with my family because I've been here already for quite a long time," he continued.

Garnier has been living in Macau for nearly four years and has been the director of AF for three years.

One of the highlights during his term was the establishment of the Sacred Music Festival which aims to "both to valorize the heritage of Macau" by enlivening some of



Xavier Garnier

its monuments, namely churches, with musical concerts, and to "cooperate with local artists." The festival features a baroque music concert.

Another project that the association worked on was the French Film Festival, which features film

screenings and master classes with French directors.

Last year, the festival was held at the Macau Science and Technology University and presented three French films, along with master classes.

"We did contribute a lot in the

cultural life of Macau. [...] We are quite active in terms of cultural events," Garnier concluded, citing some of the 15 events they held annually.

Commenting on Sunday's French presidential election, the AF director revealed that only less than half of the registered voters went to vote at the Macau polling station.

We did contribute a lot in the cultural life of Macau.

XAVIER GARNIER

In the tally of the voting this past Sunday in Macau, Emmanuel Macron got 42 votes and his opponent Marine Le Pen 17; there were six blank votes and 1 null.

"Totally, we have 138 registered voters so we were expecting that maybe we could have 60 percent of them vote, [but] it's a little less. Yet the French people who came here to vote were very happy as

they do not need to go to Hong Kong," he said.

Garnier addressed the French citizens residing in the region who did not participate in the polls, saying, "What happened in Macau also happened in France," adding that some 25 percent of the registered voters in France did not vote due to dissatisfaction over the presidential candidates.

"The last edition in which such a big number of people who didn't vote was in 1969. [...] A lot of people decided not to vote because they were not satisfied with these two choices between Macron and Le Pen," he explained.

Commenting on the organization of the first polling station that has been set up in Macau for the French Presidential Election, Garnier said that accommodating 66 registered voters was "not a big problem," compared to the number of voters in Hong Kong and Guangzhou.

"Everything went okay, especially there were enough people to organize," he said.

The Macau polling station, located at the headquarters of the AF was initially promoted by the French Consul General for Hong Kong and Macau, Eric Berti.

Over 1 million credit cards in circulation

THE total number of personal credit cards in circulation continued to grow in the first quarter of 2017, according to statistics released yesterday by the Monetary Authority of Macau. Both the credit card turnover and total repayments demonstrated varied degrees of increase from a year ago.

At the end of March, the total number of personal credit cards in circulation was 1,093,213, an increase of 3.2 percent over the previous quarter, or 11.9 percent over the previous year. The numbers of pataca (MOP) cards, Hong Kong dollar (HKD) cards and

renminbi (RMB) cards rose year-on-year by 10.7 percent (to 768,289), 11 percent (to 93,005) and 16.5 percent (to 231,919) respectively.

Credit card credit limits granted by banks in Macau reached MOP26.4 billion, up 4.1 percent from end-December 2016 or 16.1 percent from end-March 2016. Credit card receivables amounted to MOP2.3 billion while the rollover amount totaled MOP739.7 million, accounting for 32.7% of credit card receivables. The delinquency ratio, i.e. the ratio of delinquent amount to credit card receivables overdue for more than three

months, rose from 1.21 percent at end-December 2016 to 1.46 percent at end-March 2017.

For the first quarter of 2017 the credit card turnover totaled MOP4.8 billion, down 3.5% quarter-to-quarter but up 9.1 percent year-on-year. The cash advance turnover was MOP249.9 million, accounting for 5.2 percent of total credit card turnover. Credit card repayments, in which payments for interest and fees are included, amounted to MOP5.1 billion, representing an increase of 5.5 percent from the previous quarter or 9.2 percent from the same period last year.

HEALTH

Patient family accuses hospital of negligent surgery

THE Kiang Wu Hospital and a mainland doctor have been accused of being responsible for a patient's life-threatening condition, according to a statement released by the Health Bureau (SSM).

Late last week, the patient, a mainland resident, came to the Kiang Wu Hospital seeking medical treatment for her intracranial aneurysms.

After having undergone surgery at the hospital, the patient's life is now in danger due to a cerebral hemorrhage.

According to a report by Jornal Va Kio, the patient's family believe that both the hospital and the surgeon were negligent during the operation.



The mainland doctor came to Macau specifically to lead the surgery.

SSM says it has already

received a report from the Kiang Wu hospital, and that the patient is currently still in a critical condition.

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MACAU'S government is requiring facial recognition and identification card checks at ATMs before Chinese UnionPay cardholders can withdraw cash, a stepped-up measure to curb money laundering in the world's largest casino hub.

Holders of China UnionPay cards issued by banks in China must show mainland identification cards and have their identities verified through a facial recognition system for ATM cash withdrawals, according to a Macau government statement late Sunday. The technology will be eventually applied to all ATMs, focusing on ones in casinos, according to the statement.

"The government spares no effort to implement anti-money laundering and anti-terrorism rules," it said in the statement.

The move is Macau's latest effort to strengthen anti-money laundering rules in the territory, the only place in China where gambling is legal. Chinese authorities are seeking to halt billions of dollars worth of outflows that have pushed down the value of the currency and drained capital reserves. The ATM rules follow a ban last year that prohibits proxy betting by telephone aimed at staunching bets from gamblers in China.

The ATM rules, which didn't come with a timeline for rollout, are not expected to curb demand

Facial scans at ATMs introduced to deter money laundering

significantly, JPMorgan Chase & Co. analyst DS Kim wrote in a note yesterday. It's common to see people using multiple cards to withdraw cash from Macau ATMs, with some possibly using other peoples' accounts or cards, Kim wrote.

Still, there are other channels that players and junket operators employ to get cash in Macau, he said.

"We can't rule out any potential impact on 'player psychology,' as some players/junkets may feel reluctant to use ATM cards given increased ID checks," Kim wrote. "The news could and will likely remind many investors of how vulnerable the sector is to regulatory issues, and may serve as a 'wake-up call' to the sector's inherent headline risks."

The Bloomberg Intelligence index of Macau gaming shares dropped as much as 0.8 percent yesterday, while the benchmark Hang Seng Index gained as much as 0.6 percent.

The announcement came just ahead of a visit by Zhang Dejiang, the Chinese Communist Party official responsible for overseeing the city. Zhang, who

arrived yesterday in Macau for a three-day visit, said the city was facing a "significant phase in its development."

Zhang is expected to make a major announcement during the trip, which comes as the party prepares for a leadership reshuffle later this year.

“We can't rule out any potential impact on 'player psychology,' as some players/junkets may feel reluctant to use ATM cards.

DS KIM
JPMORGAN CHASE ANALYST

Macau's casino revenue in April grew for a ninth straight month as high-stakes players, most from China, continued



to return to the tables at casinos including the Wynn Macau and Sands China. Gross gaming receipts rose 16.3 percent to MOP20.2 billion (USD2.5 billion) in April.

All the big-six Macau gaming stocks were down 2-4 percent by mid session New York markets in the wake of yesterday's ATM facial recognition news.

MDT/Bloomberg

ATMS 'IN OR NEAR CASINOS' INCLUDED

THE GOVERNMENT Information Bureau issued a statement yesterday about the new technology to be installed in automated teller machines across the city. "The government will install - in phases - "know your customer" (KYC) technology in ATMs in Macau. When using ATMs in Macau

with such KYC features, holders of UnionPay cards issued by mainland banks will be required to scan their mainland identity card and undergo a facial recognition check," the statement reads. The ATMs to be equipped with the new features include "those in or near casinos."

Macau Daily Times contest



Question for readers:

What fans can expect in Thriller Live show?

Please email the answers to:
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Along with your name and contact details.

Tickets - Giveaway

Four sets of two tickets each will be awarded to the four readers who send us the correct answers the fastest. The contest will run for four days (Monday to Thursday), each day with a different question to be answered. Each ticket is valued at MOP480 for a total prize value of MOP3,840. Shows tickets (show session: May 17, 8pm) will be offered.

Tickets from MOP180 are now available through cotaiticketing.com or 2882 8818.



THRILLER LIVE, a stunning theatrical concert that commemorates one of the world's greatest ever entertainers Michael Jackson, made a triumphant return at The Parisian Theatre from April 28 - September 3, 2017. The show is the 15th longest running musical in West End history and will perform at a limited season. Theatrical producer and THRILLER LIVE creator Adrian Grant said that he and his team were excited to be back after the great response the show received back in 2016. "It's wonderful the show was so successful here first time around, and that the love for Michael Jackson means we can come back to Macao. We are honoured to be able to perform at The Parisian Theatre again, this time with a show that focuses on Michael's hits from 1983



onwards. "The cast still perform the medley of Jackson 5 hits which is important as we tell the story of Michael's career through his music. And while there are no song changes, we do have some new cast members, including singers and dancers, who I know the audiences will just love." THRILLER LIVE features Jackson's timeless songs and signature dance moves, has been performed close to 5,500 times and seen by more than four million people in over 30 countries. Direct from London's West End where it is now in its eighth year, it is a 90-minute, high-energy explosion of pop, rock, soul and disco that takes the audience on a magical audio-visual journey through Michael Jackson's astonishing 45-year musical legacy. As well as experiencing his

legendary live performance and innovative dance routines, fans can expect to hear their favourite Jackson songs perfectly rendered by the exceptionally talented cast, including I Want You Back, ABC, Man in the Mirror, Black Or White, The Way You Make Me Feel, Smooth Criminal, Beat It, Billie Jean, Dirty Diana, Bad, They Don't Care About Us, Dangerous, Thriller and many more. Leading the talented team are theatrical producer and THRILLER LIVE creator Adrian Grant, performers Rory Taylor, Britt Quentin, Sean Christopher and Shaquille Hemmans.

Tickets for THRILLER LIVE, which runs from April 28 - September 3, 2017 at The Parisian Theatre, are still available via Cotai Ticketing. Tickets are priced from HKD/MOP 180-480, and can be booked online now at www.cotaiticketing.com or by phone at +853 2882 8818 (Macao) / +852 6333 6660 (Hong Kong) / 4001 206 618 (mainland China).

Paulo Barbosa

THE Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau (IACM) intends to spend MOP500,000 this year on an educational farm located in Hac Sa. According to answers provided to the Times by IACM, the "Happy Farm" received 4,000 visitors in 2016, with 1,300 people applying to participate in farming and greening activities. However, the Times visited the facility on several occasions and it was virtually empty, with the exception of the staff.

With the "Happy Farm," the IACM's hope is to create an "urban oasis, organizing a variety of programs, including tourist tours, practical sessions of agriculture and educational activities." The facility also intends to promote recycling, rational water usage and reuse of organic resources.

The farm opened in the beginning of 2015 and has since been subject to construction works, which are by now "mostly concluded." Works done last year included the setting up of CCTV surveillance system across the entire farm "in order to improve the farm's management quality."

According to answers provided in Chinese to the Times, "in order to provide a better farming leisure activity space for the public, improvement works in many fixtures will be conducted starting next year, including metal scaffolding, and refining



ENVIRONMENT

IACM spends MOP500,000 in educational farm

the orchard"

IACM stated that currently there are four workers working in the "Happy Farm". Staff working at the facility include a "coordinator who possesses knowledge and experience in farm and green management," the bureau said. "The remaining three members of the staff are responsible for the

tillage, pruning, tree repair, weeding, vine cleanup, composting, and other maintenance work, all within the farm's range. There is also one cleaning operative responsible for cleaning up the ecological pool and the waterways twice a week."

According to IACM, more "farm education" activities are being

held at the facility this year. Aiming to "allow local residents to have more opportunities to get close to nature, as well as to experience the fun of planting," the venue has extended 2017's "farming new experience" class to three sessions, and the advanced class to two sessions. However, these sessions happen only once

every three months or once every six months.

IACM adds that there are also special arable lands set up for local groups and schools to use and practice after the due application. Concurrently, during Greening Week, each year, the garden will accept groups and schools to attend a farming tour.

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Zhang Dejiang says Macau is full of vitality

Julie Zhu

ZHANG Dejiang, chairman of the National People's Congress and the official responsible for overseeing Hong Kong and Macau Affairs, arrived yesterday in Macau for a three-day visit.

The Times knows that this morning, among other visits, Zhang will be at the Legislative Assembly for a closed-door meeting with lawmakers. It's the first time that one of the seven members of the Politburo Standing Committee of the Communist Party visits the local parliament.

Speaking to reporters on the tarmac of the Macau International Airport right after he set foot on the territory, Zhang said that "since Macau's handover, its economy and society have made notable changes, the life of the population has improved significantly, and there is a vitality in all aspects."

Zhang said that he was in Ma-

cau at the behest of President Xi Jinping to observe the evolution of the region and to hear the local government's work report. He added that his first goal in Macau is to "feel Macau's development, success, and the happiness of its citizens."

Zhang said he will 'walk a lot, listen a lot, and see a lot'

Zhang noted that, since he oversees Macau and Hong Kong affairs, he "follows up Macau's development and changes daily." He said he will "walk a lot, listen a lot, and see a lot" during his three-day trip to Macau.

The high official of China, when referring to Xi Jinping's directives, said that he is in Macau specifically to "listen to the work

report from the government and related departments; listen to opinions from all sectors; and, ensure that Macau improves."

He said that the central government will keep supporting Macau's economic and social developments.

At the very beginning of Zhang's speech he asked the media to convey "cordial greetings and kind wishes from chairman Xi Jinping and the Central Government, and from the country's people from all ethnicities."

According to Zhang, his first visit to Macau traces back to the year of 2004, when he was still working for Guangdong Province. "In order to push forward the collaboration among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau, following the approval of the Central Government, and in order to push forward the Pan-Pearl River Delta (PPRD), I came to Macau," explained Zhang.



Aside from these recent changes, in the past, Macau and Guangdong were planning to explore the Hengqin Island as well as the relocation of the University of Macau. "During that period, [Macau] left us with beautiful memories," admitted Zhang, adding that the fruitful results of these projects were witnessed yesterday.

In order to show Macau's enthusiastic welcome to the top Chinese leader, Macau sent 240 primary school students to the airport. The students were hol-

ding China's national flags, Macau SAR flags, and flowers, and repeatedly shouting "welcome, welcome, warmly welcome" to Zhang.

Macau Chief Executive Chui Sai On, the director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, Wang Guangya, and the head of the Central Government Liaison Office in Macau, Wang Zhimin, among other current and previous Macau government high officials, welcomed Zhang, yesterday morning, at the airport.

MEETING WITH GOVERNMENT

'Macau SAR's high autonomy is fully protected'

ZHANG Dejiang was at the government headquarters listening to the SAR government delivering their work report in a session led by Chief Executive Chui Sai On. The session also included all the government's secretaries and the heads of Commission Against Corruption and the Commission of Audit.

The session, held yesterday afternoon, was open to the media for only seven minutes, during which time the Chief Executive launched the meeting and Zhang delivered his opening speech before the government closed the door.

Zhang pointed out that



ever since Macau's handover, the "One country, two systems" policy and the region's Basic Law have been implemented fully, and that the Central Government comprehensive control rights have also

been implemented effectively.

"Macau SAR's high autonomy is fully protected," stated Zhang, adding "the administration driven system has been operated nicely."

In Zhang's opinion, Macau's "economy developed rapidly, livelihood improved steadily, and the society remains harmonized and stable."

Moreover, he expressed the belief that all sectors have been continuously improving. "These facts prove that the One Country, Two Systems has been practiced in Macau successfully," concluded Zhang, who then declared himself to be happy to see the current Macau government, under the leadership of Chui Sai On, diversifying Macau's economy.

"The Central Government feels satisfaction

towards what is going on," revealed Zhang.

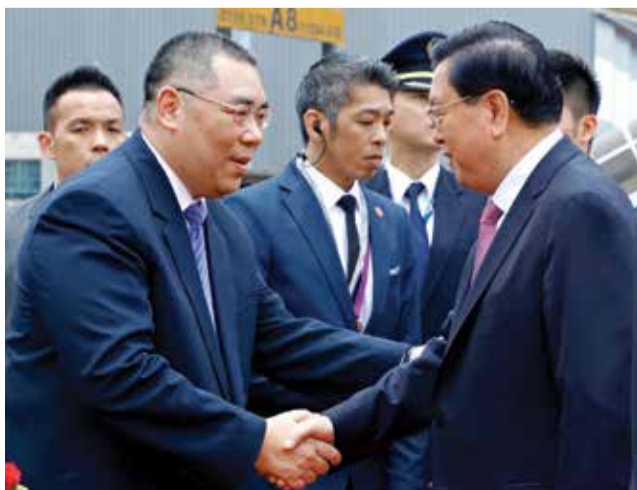
Zhang pointed out that, right now, Macau's overall status is good, although there are problems and challenges, and the residents do have high expectations of the government.

He expressed the hope that the SAR government can unify all departments and sectors, and have the courage to undertake even more responsibilities. He also hopes to improve the administration ability and work efficiency, and to push forward Macau's One Country and Two System's successful practice.

During his speech at the government headquarters, the chairman of the National People's Congress noted that with the support of the Central Government and the country, in conjunction with the hard work of everyone and also a full interpretation of the One Country, Two System, "Macau's future will be more beautiful and more prosperous."

Chui Sai On thanked Zhang Dejiang for his concerns and for the support he has shown Macau by saying that the region's overall development is positive.

During Zhang's appearance at the government headquarters, yesterday, the police restricted the roads from the Praça De Lobo De Avila bus stop to the Calçada De Santo Agostinho bus stop. **JZ**





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Chinese export, import growth slow in April as rebound cools

CHINA'S exports expanded at a slower pace in April while import growth also decelerated as demand cooled both at home and overseas, according to data released yesterday.

Exports rose to USD180 billion last month, up 8 percent from a year earlier, according to Chinese customs data. They grew 16.4 percent in March.

Imports rose 11.9 percent to \$142 billion, slowing from 20.4 percent growth the previous month.

Both were below forecasts by economists, who said lower commodity prices also contributed to the weaker growth in trade.

Economists said the latest numbers, which follow softer readings in the most recent China and U.S. factory activity indexes, indicate slowing trade momentum.

"We think these may signal a softening momentum in China's export growth in the second quarter although the pipeline of electronic



A man pushes a fashion advertisement billboard outside a fashion boutique under renovation at Ritan International Trade Center in Beijing. AP

products in the global supply chain is still likely to keep China's export outlook stable through 2017," Betty Wang of ANZ Research said in a commentary.

China's politically sensitive global trade surplus came in at \$38 billion, up from \$23.9 billion in March. The trade surplus with U.S. rose to \$21.3 billion, from \$17.7 billion the previous month.

Earlier this month, the U.S.

reported that its trade deficit was at its narrowest in months but rising imports of Chinese cellphones and telecoms gear pushed the trade gap with China higher.

U.S. President Donald Trump has often decried trade deficits with other countries including China. He blames unfair trade practices by China for the loss of hundreds of factories and millions of manufacturing jobs. AP

REAL ESTATE

London home rents fall for first time since Dec 2009

LONDONERS are paying lower home rents for the first time in more than seven years amid rising supply and weakening demand from senior executives for properties.

The average rent paid in April for new lettings in Greater London was 1,519 pounds (USD1,968) a month, a 1.2 percent decline from a year earlier, HomeLet, the U.K.'s largest reference-checking and rentals insurance company, said in a statement yesterday. Annual rental inflation across the U.K. was 0.4 percent in the same period, the lowest in seven years.

"Rents have been rising at a more modest pace across the whole of the U.K. in recent months," HomeLet Chief Executive Officer Martin Totty said. "We continue to see landlords and letting agents weighing tenant affordability considerations very seriously."

London's housing market is weakening amid affordability issues, new taxes and preparations for Brexit. Landlords rushed to buy homes before the introduction of a new stamp



duty sales tax in April of last year, boosting supply and leading to greater competition for tenants.

The number of tenancies agreed at 1,000 pounds to 5,000 pounds a week fell 3.7 percent in the first quarter from a year earlier, Knight Frank said on Friday. Demand in that segment of the market usually comes from senior executives in industries including financial services, the broker said.

Home values in the U.K. capital grew at their slowest annual rate in almost five years in February as values in the most expensive boroughs including Camden and Kensington and Chelsea fell, according to Aca-data and LSL Property Services Plc. Bloomberg



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Taiwan pushes for inclusion in global health summit

TAIWAN is pushing for a last-minute invitation to an annual World Health Organization summit amid rising pressure from Beijing to isolate the island by blocking its participation in international events.

Online registration for the 10-day World Health Assembly closed yesterday. Although Taiwan has attended as an observer since 2009, China has been stepping up diplomatic pressure on Taiwan's government over President Tsai Ing-wen's refusal to endorse Beijing's view that Taiwan is Chinese territory.

Tsai tweeted Sunday that the self-governing democracy deserves inclusion at the summit in late May in Geneva. She linked to an article detailing Taiwan's "medical magic" and cross-border humanitarian efforts.

Foreign Minister David Lee vowed last week to take action if Taiwan can't attend, although the island appears to have little leverage to counter China's efforts to sideline it.

WHO spokeswoman Fadela Chaib said the organization "understands that there is a concern" about Taiwan participating as an observer at this year's assembly, but declined to specify the nature of the concern or who had raised it.

While Taiwan has received some international support, Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said most countries back China's stance.

"Taiwan's participation in international organizations' activities must follow the 'one China' principle," Geng said, referring to China's claim of sovereignty over the island.

"Only a few individual countries have voiced their support for Taiwan's participation and we are firmly opposed to that," he told a daily news briefing.

Beijing insists that Taiwan and the Chinese mainland are part of a single Chinese nation and has vowed to take control

of the island by force if necessary. It doesn't recognize the island's government and refuses to have diplomatic ties with any of the handful of foreign countries that do so.

China has also used its clout as one of five veto-wielding members of the United Nations Security Council to exclude Taiwan from the U.N. and other world bodies that require sovereign status for membership.

Beijing has increasingly sought to hinder Taiwan's attendance at even sporting, cultural and trade gatherings, including a meeting on the international trade in "blood diamonds" last week in Australia, where a disruption of the proceedings by the Chinese delegation resulted in Taiwan's representatives being forced to leave.

Since Tsai's election last year, China has also discouraged tourism to Taiwan, with Taiwan's government saying the number of Chinese visitors fell by more than 50 percent in the first four months of the year. Beijing severed limited contacts with Taiwanese officials in June shortly after Tsai's inauguration.

The animosity dates to a post-World War II civil war between the two sides led by Communist leader Mao Zedong and Nationalist Chiang Kai Shek, who fled to Taiwan with his government after losing the fight over the mainland.

WHO was established in 1948 by members of the United Nations as the global guardian of public health with offices in more than 150 countries. Its assembly is used to appoint a director general and adopt a health agenda for the coming year.

For the past decade, WHO has been led by Margaret Chan, the former director of health for Hong Kong, which is a special administrative region of China. Her current five-year term expires in June. **AP**

AP EXCLUSIVE

Activist lawyer's family safe



Chen Guiqiu, right, holds a "Welcome to America" sign with her daughters Xie Yajuan, 15, and Xie Yuchen, 4, after arriving at an airport in Texas (March 17)

Gerry Shih, Beijing

STUCK in a Bangkok jail with a deportation order against her, Chen Guiqiu waited with dread over what seemed certain to come next. A Thai immigration official showed her surveillance video of the jail entrance, where more than a dozen Chinese security agents were waiting.

Within minutes, Chen feared, she and her two daughters would be escorted back to China, where her husband, the prominent rights lawyer Xie Yang, was held on a charge of inciting subversion — and where punishment for attempting to flee surely awaited her.

After weeks on the run, Chen was exhausted, and so was her luck. A Christian, she prayed: "Don't desert us now, not like this."

Help arrived, from America.

U.S. Embassy officials managed to enter the facility just in time to whisk Chen and her daughters out a back door. The Chinese agents outside soon realized what had happened and pursued them, finally meeting in a standoff at the Bangkok airport where Chinese, Thai and U.S. officials heatedly argued over custody of the family.

Chen and her supporters disclosed details of her family's March escape for the first time to The Associated Press. Their journey reveals the lengths that China's government has been increasingly willing to go to reach far beyond its jurisdiction in the pursuit of dissidents and their families.

The saga also demonstrates that in at least some cases, American officials are willing to push back, even at a moment weeks before President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping

were to meet in Florida. The Trump administration has been criticized for downplaying human rights in foreign policy, but may have viewed Chen's case as special — if not for herself then for her youngest daughter, a 4-year-old American citizen.

The family's ordeal began July 9, 2015, when the Chinese government launched a nationwide crackdown on human rights lawyers. Chen's husband, Xie, a lawyer who represented evicted farmers and pro-democracy activists, was among dozens detained in the "7-09 crackdown" and, months later, charged with crimes against the state.

US Embassy officials [in Bangkok] managed to enter the facility just in time to whisk Chen and her daughters out a back door

In January, Chen helped release her husband's account of being beaten, deprived of sleep and otherwise tortured while in detention — drawing further condemnation of Beijing by Western governments. Police summoned Chen for hours-long meetings where, she said, they threatened to evict her, deny her children schooling and have her fired from her job as a professor of environmental engineering at Hunan University.

By early February, the pressure was becoming unbearable. Seemingly unable to extract a

confession out of Xie, the authorities turned up threats against Chen and, increasingly, those close to her.

When police detained Chen's 14-year-old daughter as she tried to board a train for Hong Kong, Chen knew a travel ban had been placed on their names.

That was when she decided to contact Bob Fu, a Christian rights activist based in Texas who has helped several high-profile dissidents flee China, including Chen Guangcheng, a blind rights lawyer whose 2012 flight to the U.S. Embassy in Beijing sparked diplomatic tensions.

"We're going on a trip," Chen told her daughters the morning of Feb. 19.

They headed south from their home in central China, then crossed into at least two countries without paperwork. There were nights, she said, when they had nowhere to sleep and days when they had nothing but a bag of chocolates to eat.

Traveling by foot and car for five days, they finally arrived at a safe house in Bangkok whose owners knew Fu.

Even though Chen took precautions, never turning on her phone or accessing the internet, Chinese authorities had gotten wind that she might be in Thailand. While she was in hiding, Chinese security agents forced her 70-year-old father, her sister, her university employer and other relatives and friends to fly with them to Bangkok in an unusual attempt to locate her.

Less than a week later, on March 2, Thai police, directed by a Chinese translator who Chen believed was from the Chinese Embassy, barged into the safe house, seized her belongings and sent the family to detention. It is unclear how they were located. ►►



China's Margaret Chan, General Director of the World Health Organization

ays US helped them flee

Chen appeared in immigration court the next morning. She was accompanied by the translator, who took away Chen's phone and snapped pictures of Chen's court documents with her own phone camera. A judge ruled that Chen had entered the country illegally and ordered her deported. The translator paid for her legal proceedings and fine.

An increasing number of Chinese in recent years have sought refuge in Thailand only to be sent back. In 2015, Thailand deported two Chinese dissidents who the United Nations recognized as refugees, a journalist who feared Beijing's persecution and 109 minority Uighurs who said they had fled repression. Later that year, a Hong Kong publisher of books on Chinese political gossip vanished from his Thai home and into Chinese custody, alarming the international community.

As Chen was taken back to the jail to pick up her children and things, with Chinese officials waiting for her outside, she appeared likely to meet a similar fate.

In Texas, Fu was dumbfounded by news of Chen's arrest. He sprang into action to alert the State Department, and his associates in Thailand, who quickly located her in the jail.

According to Fu, U.S. officials made it into the facility on March 3 while Chen was in court, found Chen's daughters and stayed with them while they searched for the mother. Finally, through their Thai contacts in the jail, the Americans located her and convinced Thai officials to let them whisk her out the back, said Fu and another person with knowledge of the operation, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the person was not authorized to



This image made from Aug. 1, 2016 video shows Chen Guiqiu, left, having lunch with lawyer Jiang Tianyong, in Tianjin

speak publicly.

The family piled into a car and sped through Bangkok's congested streets headed for the airport while Fu, 12 time zones away, frantically tried to book flights and prepare the family's requisite U.S. paperwork.

But the Chinese agents were not far behind.

Despite her deportation order, Chen was stopped at the airport by Thai immigration officials who explained that they were under immense Chinese pressure to prevent her departure. In an hours-long standoff at the airport, the person with knowledge of the operation said, the confrontation between the Chinese, American and Thai officials nearly boiled over into a physical clash.

Chen and Fu declined to explain what happened next, citing diplomatic sensitivities, other than that the family eventually made it to the U.S. on March 17.

It is unclear whether Chen was housed in the U.S. Embassy in the intervening weeks or whether and how a deal was nego-

tiated to allow Chen's departure from Thailand.

A spokesman for China's foreign ministry said yesterday he was not aware of the matter. The Ministry of Public Security did not respond to faxed requests for comment. Thai and U.S. authorities declined to comment on Chen's experience.

Justin Higgins, a State Department spokesman for East Asia, said that in general the U.S. "urges China to release all of the lawyers and activists detained in the July 9, 2015, crackdown and remove restrictions on their

An increasing number of Chinese in recent years have sought refuge in Thailand only to be sent back

freedom of movement and professional activities."

It's unusual for U.S. officials to take such bold action to help Chinese citizens — in Chen's family's case, human rights workers say. But the citizenship of Chen's younger daughter, who was born 4 years ago in the U.S. while Xie was studying in the country on a sabbatical, was likely a key factor.

Compared to previous years, when China's diplomacy with its neighbors touched mostly on economic and national security issues, Beijing increasingly demands foreign governments' cooperation when it hunts for fugitives, even those whom other countries may view as political dissidents.

"China is exporting its human rights abuses beyond its borders," said Susan Shirk, chair of the 21st Century China Center at the University of California, San Diego, and former deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asia.

"The Thai government has always tried to maintain good relations with the U.S. and with China," Shirk said, "but these kinds of cases make that balancing act very difficult."

The U.S. may be changing its stance on China, given Trump's effusive praise for Xi and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's recent remarks that Washington will not force human rights issues on other nations. Yet Chen's case suggests that America is still willing to confront China on thorny rights issues, at least when U.S. citizens are involved.

"This administration appears to be more muscular, more assertive, and we're seeing 'Putting Americans First' play out," said John Kamm, the founder of the Dui Hua Foundation in San Francisco who has advised U.S. administrations on Chinese human rights issues. "But what I'm hoping is that 'Putting Americans First' doesn't mean putting other people last."

Kamm noted that two U.S. citizens — Texas businesswo-

man Sandy Phan-Gillis and aid worker Aya Hijazi — were released by China and Egypt, respectively, in recent weeks in response to high-level pressure from U.S. officials. Yet the U.S. notably did not sign onto a letter from 11 Western countries who, spurred by Xie's allegations, protested the torture of Chinese human rights lawyers, he added.

Now safe in Texas, Chen said she wanted to thank the State Department and the Trump administration. But her sense of relief has been tempered by a painful reckoning of the ruin and chaos she left behind.

Xie's trial began yesterday. A government-appointed defense lawyer is representing him (see separate article).

Chen Jiangang, Xie's former lawyer who helped release his account of torture, was detained last week in a Chinese province near Myanmar, human rights observers say.

The relatives of Chen who were pressed by the government to travel to Thailand have had their passports confiscated upon their return to China. They have been repeatedly interrogated, and their jobs have been threatened, she said.

The electricity at Chen's apartment has since been cut, forcing her elderly father to move back to his village. Authorities have emptied her Chinese bank accounts, she said.

For now, Chen and her daughters are living off the charity of her supporters. The former professor plans to seek a job, a home, and school for the girls. Chen said she was happy to start over in America. She has little money, but still has her voice.

"All the things we tried to expose, all the articles we used to write about the truth of 7-09 — the harassment, the torture, the denial of our children's schooling, the forced evictions — we were always smeared so quickly," she said.

"If I've escaped the country, they can't control the situation anymore. Now, what can they do?" AP

Lawyer Xie Yang tells Chinese court confession wasn't forced

CHINESE human rights lawyer Xie Yang told a court yesterday that he wasn't forced into confessing to crimes after being detained in a large government crackdown on the country's legal professionals.

The Intermediate People's Court in Changsha posted a brief video on social media in which Xie was asked that question as his trial opened Monday. He replied, "No, I haven't, and furthermore I've not been tortured."

Xie gave his lawyer an account in January saying he had been beaten, deprived of sleep and held in stress positions. The statement said any future confession from Xie would be due to prolonged torture.

Arrested in July 2015 along with dozens of other lawyers and activists, Xie faces charges of inciting subversion against state power and disturbing court procedures.

His wife, Chen Guiqiu, and

two daughters fled to Thailand, where they were pursued by Chinese agents, and then to the United States after she distributed Xie's account of his torture.

Prosecutors told the court that Xie used the encrypted messaging app Telegram to conspire with people inside and outside China to distort incidents of police brutality to subvert state power, overthrow the socialist system and harm national security and social stability, accor-

ding to the court's account.

Xie also testified that he briefly attended a legal training course in Hong Kong and South Korea, it said. Prosecutors said that indicated he had shadowy ties to foreign elements.

The accusations against Xie mirror those brought against other lawyers and activists detained as part of the July 2015 crackdown.

With little evidence shown, they have been



A photo described as the trial showing human rights lawyer Xie Yang which is seen on the social media of the Changshai Intermediate People's Court

accused of contacting international news media to spread stories about human rights abuses and of receiving aid and training from

overseas rights groups, an indication, prosecutors say, that they sought to destabilize China and smear its government.

NEWS GUIDE

What to know about South Korea's election

Kim Tong-Hyung, Seoul

TWO months after booting their sitting president over corruption allegations, South Koreans will select a new leader today after weeks of heated debate.

The winner will be tasked with healing a nation that's split deeply between left and right, and faced with a decaying job market, an uneasy alliance with the United States and a growing threat posed by North Korea's nuclear weapons and missiles.

SOUTH KOREA LOOKS READY TO GO LIBERAL

With the country's previous conservative president in jail awaiting trial on corruption charges, the race has become a showdown between two liberal candidates: Moon Jae-in and Ahn Cheol-soo. Moon, a former human rights lawyer and aide to late liberal President Roh Moo-hyun, was the Democratic Party candidate in the last presidential election in 2012 and lost to Park Geun-hye. Ahn, a former doctor and computer software mogul, competed with Moon as an independent to be the single candidate representing liberal camps in 2012, but he dropped out at the last minute. He then joined Moon's party in 2014 only to leave to form his own party a year later. Ahn is closer to the center than Moon, and has been getting support from some conservatives disappointed by Park but who detest Moon. Still Moon has been leading in opinion surveys for months.



ANY OTHER CANDIDATES?

After former U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon unexpectedly declared he would not run, Hong Joon-pyo became the leading conservative. The candidate for Park's Liberty Korea Party, however, has suffered politically because of revelations in a 2005 memoir that he assisted a friend in a failed date rape attempt as a teen. Sim Sang-jung, a left-leaning candidate from the minor Justice Party, has struggled to get out of single digits in polls.

CAMPAIGN SHOWS NATIONAL DIVIDE

South Korea's election frenzy is not always noticeable on the streets: There are no bumper stickers, flags, door signs or

balloons touting candidates. A strict election law says only registered campaign officials can use material displaying names and photos of candidates or parties with the purpose of promoting them during election periods. Candidates even face restrictions over the size of their name cards. Still, the electorate is deeply divided along ideological and generational lines and also by decades-long regional loyalties. The campaign has grown bitter online, with message boards and social media sites overflowing with testy exchanges between supporters of Moon, Ahn and others.

NORTH KOREA FRONT AND CENTER

As always, the threat posed by nuclear-armed North Korea has

been a major campaign issue. Both Moon and Ahn are critical of the hard line that previous conservative governments took with North Korea over the past decade, arguing the approach did nothing to prevent Pyongyang from speeding up its nuclear weapons and missile development and only diminished Seoul's influence over its rival. The two have slightly different ideas of what to do next.

WHAT MOON WANTS

Moon argues that South Korea should put dialogue over sanctions when dealing with the North and says he is open to talks with its leader Kim Jong Un. He's vowed to reopen a joint industrial park in a North Korean border town that Park's govern-

ment closed last year following another nuclear test and rocket launch. Moon has also shown a willingness to challenge ally Washington, saying Seoul should reconsider its plans to deploy an advanced U.S. anti-missile system to cope with North Korean threats.

AHN DRIFTS TO THE RIGHT

Ahn has been trying to cater to both conservatives who oppose so-called sunshine policies with the North, while at the same time trying to win over voters in the important Jeolla region, who traditionally support rapprochement. Ahn says he is willing to negotiate with North Korea "if the conditions are right," but has also described Kim Jong Un as irrational and unpredictable. Ahn initially opposed the U.S. anti-missile system but later shifted to support it amid deepening anti-North Korea sentiments. He accuses Moon of being too North Korea-friendly.

PATH TO VICTORY

In South Korea's electoral system the winner is the candidate who receives the most votes, even if it is not a majority. There is no runoff. The National Election Commission officials say it's likely that the winner will be officially declared sometime Wednesday morning after vote counts are finalized. The winner will be sworn in as president immediately after the announcement is made. Recent polls show Moon with a double digit lead over Ahn. AP

PHILIPPINE and U.S. troops kicked off yesterday annual joint exercises that are smaller in scale than in years past, focusing on disaster response and counterterrorism while excluding territorial defense operations and maritime security.

The changes were directed by President Rodrigo Duterte, who has had an antagonistic stance toward U.S. security policies while expanding security ties with China and Russia. Since taking office last June, he has taken a softer stance than his predecessor toward territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea and has ordered some of the joint drills scrapped.

Opening rites for the 12-day "Balikatan," or "Shoulder-to-Shoulder," exercises were led

SOUTH CHINA SEA

Philippines, US begin smaller-scale joint military exercises

by Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and U.S. Ambassador Sung Kim at the Philippine military's headquarters in metropolitan Manila.

Officials said 5,400 personnel — 2,600 Americans and 2,800 Filipinos — will be involved, or about half the 11,000 troops who took part last year. The two countries are long-time treaty allies and are conducting the yearly training for the 33rd time to ensure coordination and interoperability of their forces. Small contingents from Japan and Australia are also participating as observers this year.

This year's exercises will be based on a scena-

rio of troops responding to a super typhoon hitting the Philippines.

Kim said the exercises address global challenges. "We recognize the need to work together to overcome the daunting challenges posed by international terror networks; we also understand that bilateral disaster response training can help save lives and help rebuild devastated communities," the ambassador said.

Lorenzana said what has changed in the exercises is a focus on humanitarian assistance and disaster response and counterterrorism. More resources need to be devoted to such activities because natural



Co-directors for this year's military exercise dubbed "Balikatan 2017": Lt. Gen. Lawrence Nicholson, right, and Lt. Gen. Oscar Lactao

calamities are becoming more severe and the world faces challenges posed by violent extremism, he added.

"I think despite the fact that there is not a large-scale conventional force portion of

Balikatan this year, the counterterrorism is legitimate, it's real, it's something we are doing together and I think the continued training at that is beneficial for both of our nations," said U.S. Marine Lieute-

nant General Lawrence Nicholson, the exercise co-director.

His Filipino counterpart, Lt. Gen. Oscar Lactao, said the exercise's priority was chosen based on guidance from Duterte. AP

Kim Tong-Hyung, Seoul

N. Korea detains another American over alleged hostile acts

NORTH Korea has detained another American citizen accused of committing unspecified hostile acts against the country.

The country's official Korean Central News Agency said Kim Hak Song was detained Saturday and that "a relevant institution is now conducting detailed investigation into his crimes."

He worked at Pyongyang University of Science and Technology, the same workplace as another American, accounting instructor Kim Sang Dok, whose detention was announced last week. The KCNA didn't say whether the two cases are connected.

The university said in a statement yesterday that Kim Hak Song was doing agricultural development work at an experimental farm. It said his detention was not related to his work at the university and therefore it could not comment further.

In Washington, the State Department said it was aware of the report of the new detention and that "the security of U.S. citizens is one of the department's highest priorities."

Kim Sang Dok, the former accounting instructor at the Pyongyang university, was arrested at the Pyongyang International

Airport on April 22, the KCNA said. It said he was "intercepted for committing criminal acts" to overthrow the North's government, but didn't elaborate.

The Pyongyang University of Science and Technology is the only privately funded university in North Korea and is unique for having a large number of foreign staff.

South Korea, the U.S. and others often accuse North Korea of using foreign detainees to wrest diplomatic concessions, which have sometimes involved high-profile Americans sent to secure the release of the Americans.

Two other Americans detained in North Korea are Otto Warmbier, serving a 15-year prison term with hard labor for alleged anti-state acts, and Kim Dong Chul, serving a 10-year term with hard labor for alleged espionage.

Warmbier, a University of Virginia student from suburban Cincinnati, made a tearful public confession to stealing a

propaganda banner while visiting North Korea with a tour group last year. Kim Dong Chul, a South Korean-born U.S. citizen told CNN he was president of a trade and hotel services company in Rason, North Korea. In his public confession, he said he had spied for South Korean intelligence and had tried to spread religion among North Koreans.

Some foreigners have said after their release that their declarations of guilt had been coerced while in North Korean custody.

When an American citizen is reported detained, the U.S. works with the Swedish Embassy in the North Korean capital, since the U.S. and the North do not have diplomatic relations.

North Korea's announcement of the detainments comes amid tensions over fears that Pyongyang is preparing another round of nuclear or missile tests and comments. U.S. President Donald Trump has further spiked animosity by saying he



isn't ruling out military action against the North, although Trump has also said he would be willing to talk with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un under the right circumstances.

North Korea last week accused the U.S. and South Korean spy agencies of an unsuccessful assassination attempt on leader Kim Jong Un involving biochemical weapons. **AP**



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USA

Syrian family who sued Trump warms to life in Wisconsin

Cara Lombardo, Madison (Wis)

A Syrian family who reunited after suing President Donald Trump over his travel bans is now settling into life in Wisconsin.

Ahmad, 32, and his wife, Iman, spoke to The Associated Press at their lawyer's office last week through a translator. They requested that only their first names be used to protect family members still in danger in Aleppo, Syria.

"I feel like I'm dreaming because an impossible thing became possible," Iman, 25, said of their reunion and new Madison apartment with views of trees, squirrels and children on their way to school. "Waking up in Wisconsin made me regain my feeling of being safe. ... Waking up in Aleppo was a nightmare."

Iman and the couple's 3-year-old daughter had been living in hiding in an apartment regularly shaken by bombings and hit by gunfire. Iman said now their daughter is enjoying trips to Chuck E. Cheese's, going on walks without hearing gunshots and time with her father after not seeing him for three years.

Ahmad, who according to his lawsuit was imprisoned and tortured by opposing military factions in Syria, came to Wisconsin in 2014 and received asylum status two years later.



After Trump issued a January executive order banning travel from seven predominantly Muslim countries, including Syria, lawyers from two law firms — Pines Bach in Madison and Holwell Shuster and Goldberg in New York — suggested that Ahmad file a lawsuit alleging the ban stalled his petitions to bring his wife and daughter to

join him.

One of his attorneys, Vincent Levy, said that after U.S. District Judge William Conley barred Trump from imposing the ban on the family, the federal government expedited the family's visa interviews, leading to a cheerful reunion in a crowded terminal of Chicago's O'Hare Airport.

Spokeswomen for the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Customs and Immigration Services declined to comment on what prompted the action. Trump said the ban and its subsequent replacement, which remains largely blocked by courts, were meant to prevent foreign terrorists from entering the country. Iman said it prevented

innocent victims from escaping dangerous conditions like those in Syria.

Ahmad, whose mother and several other relatives also live in Madison, said he'd been consumed by worry as conditions deteriorated in Aleppo.

"Every morning when I woke up, I had fears I'd get a phone call with bad news that I lost one of them, similar to the call I got when my son was killed," he said.

The couple's son died in 2015 at age 3 after their building was hit by artillery fire and he fell three stories trying to escape.

"I don't like talking about him," Iman said through tears. "It brings back too much."

Iman had never traveled outside of Syria before embarking on the grueling, weeks-long journey last month that took her through Lebanon to Jordan and onto the U.S., which was all the more complicated traveling alone with an active 3-year-old.

As the couple spoke, their daughter happily crawled from one parent's lap to the other's, taking a break to play with Arabic counting blocks on the floor and playing a Syrian game with her mother that involves darting out of the way as Iman pretends to be a fly buzzing toward her.

Ahmad, who managed his father's sporting goods business in Syria before it was destroyed in the civil war, worked as a chef at the now-closed Palmyra Mediterranean Grill in downtown Madison before becoming a delivery driver.

When asked about their worries now, Ahmad and Iman looked at each other and smiled. "Everything is wiped out," Iman said. "As long as I'm with Ahmad, I'm fine." AP

TERRORISM

PM says IS fighter's son can return to Australia

A 6-year-old Australian boy photographed making an Islamic State movement salute in front of a human body hanging from a cross somewhere in the Middle East was entitled to return to Australia with his siblings, Australia's prime minister said yesterday.

But such children who returned from the battlefields of Syria and Iraq would be subjected to "the closest attention" to ensure Australians were safe, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said.

"We will be utterly resolute in keeping Australians safe, and that applies to anyone who returns from the conflict zone,



whether they are an adult or a child," Turnbull told reporters.

Australian media on Sunday published the photograph posted on social media by Sydney-born convicted terrorist Khaled

Sharrouf of his youngest child. The smiling boy holds up his right index finger in a salute in front of an apparently lifeless body suspended from a cross with plastic cable ties. A sign hanging from

the body said the capital crime was collaborating with Christians.

Sharrouf's Muslim-convert wife Tara Nettleton took their five children from Sydney to Syria to join their father in February 2014.

Nettleton died of surgery complications in September last year, but her mother Karen Nettleton continues to lobby governments for help to bring the children home.

Turnbull criticized Sharrouf, 35, over the picture, saying such behavior demonstrated why Australia is committed to destroying the Islamic State movement.

"The despicable conduct

of Khaled Sharrouf in using his child to promote the barbaric, terrorist activities of the organization of which he is part, is almost beyond belief," Turnbull said.

"All of the children that are being exploited in this way, if they are Australian citizens, of course, would be able to return to Australia. But under the closest possible supervision," he added.

Australian Federal Police Commissioner Andrew Colvin said his officers were working with foreign partners toward prosecuting Sharrouf. The image of the child "says a lot more about Khaled Sharrouf than it does about his

children," Colvin said.

Sharrouf horrified the world in 2014 when he posted on social media a photograph of another son clutching the severed head of a Syrian soldier.

Then-U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry described that image as "one of the most disturbing, stomach-turning, grotesque photographs ever displayed."

The U.S. State Department in January announced sanctions against two Australian militants, including Sharrouf.

Sharrouf was among nine Muslim men accused in 2007 of stockpiling bomb-making materials and plotting terrorist attacks in Sydney and Melbourne, Australia's largest cities.

He pleaded guilty to terrorism offenses in 2009 and served less than four years in prison. AP

Raf Casert, Brussels

ANALYSIS

Macron election gives a gasping EU a breath of fresh air

TODAY is Europe Day, and this year European Union leaders got to unwrap their present a bit early.

French voters elected as president Emmanuel Macron, whose platform espouses a stronger EU and a tough line in negotiations on Britain's exit from the bloc. Perhaps just as important, they rejected far-right contender Marine Le Pen, whose EU bashing knows few bounds.

But if champagne corks are popping in Brussels, beware of the hangover: Brexit negotiations could go horribly wrong. Italian elections could see an anti-euro movement become the biggest party. Greek finances could wreck the value of the shared European currency.

Despite overwhelming support for Macron across the continent, the new French leader remains a political novice, untried and untested on European issues. And even as he celebrates European unity, he has argued that the bloc needs a fundamental retooling.

"It makes it tough to predict how he will act — in France and also in the EU," said Hendrik Vos, a European policy analyst at Ghent University in Belgium.

For a dozen years, the European Union has slumped from one cri-



French President-elect Emmanuel Macron

sis to another, from referendum losses to bailout emergencies, a situation so dire that the term "muddling through" has taken on a ring of deliverance instead of setback.

Last year was particularly bad, with Britain's vote to leave the bloc on June 23 producing the most cathartic day in the EU's 60 years. Suddenly, the ever-expanding union started to shrink. The

election in the United States of President Donald Trump created even more panic, especially after he showed such delight at Brexit and potential further breakaways that the EU threatened it would "promote the independence of Ohio and Austin, Texas" if he didn't stop.

2017 looked set to be even worse for the union, with firebrand Geert Wilders leading the Dutch

polls for March elections and Le Pen rising in France, both thriving on their hatred for anything even remotely linked to the EU. After Trump's election proved unpredictability was the norm, anything could happen.

But Wilders disappointed in the Dutch polls, and Le Pen fell short Sunday. The German elections are up next, in September, and both Chancellor Angela Merkel and Socialist challenger Martin Schulz have impeccable pro-EU credentials.

Little wonder there are some shoots of optimism this spring.

Macron campaigned for the European Union at a time when it was fashionable and politically expedient to dump on it. Now he has to deliver on his words.

Key will be his relationship with the German leader. Germany and France have been the twin engine driving the European Union as it grew from six members to 28. Former world war enemies, they stuck together


as much of the continent gelled around their drive for unity. Le Pen saw Germany much more as a competitor and a meddler in French affairs, another reason why her presidency would have spelled doom for the EU.

The relationship unraveled under President Francois Hollande. It was not so much that Hollande was a Socialist and Merkel a Christian Democrat — after all, Francois Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl had a political bromance for the ages. It was because Hollande seemed as weak on the European stage as he was at home.

Macron realizes he will need to do better and has set out to make Berlin his first port of call. But like Hollande, he will need to establish himself at home before becoming an effective champion of a closely knit Europe.

"To have a voice of authority in Europe, it is important to be credible and run your own country smoothly," Vos said. "That is a tough chore for Macron." AP

AD



BBAM @ St. Regis Breakfast
on Thursday, 11th May 2017
Guest Speaker: Grant Govertsen
Managing Director - Head of Asia Equity Research, Macau
Union Gaming Securities Asia (Macau)

*Getting Macau back on track,
a closer look at the gaming industry
and how it can thrive in the face of regional changes*

- * Post-mortem of the last three years
- * New casino resort supply, what works and what doesn't
- * Forecasting through the end of the decade
- * Beyond Macau, what's next for gaming in Asia


Grant Govertsen co-founded Union Gaming in 2009 after spending 12 years on Wall Street predominantly in equity research covering the gaming sector.
Mr. Govertsen was responsible for establishing and developing the company's presence in Asia in 2011, and today remains the only gaming analyst based in Macau.

Venue: Amber Room I, 5/F, The St. Regis Macao, Cotai
7.45 am: Registration
8 am: Sit-down for breakfast
8.15: Presentation and Q&A session
9 am: Close

*Strict No-Show/Late Cancellation policy applies for this event
Vegetarian option to be requested before Monday 8th May*

BBAM Members: Complimentary
Non-Members - MOP/HKD 180.00


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what's ON



MACAO ORIGINAL FASHION EXHIBITION
TIME: 10am-8pm (Closed on Mondays, open on public holidays)

UNTIL: June 4, 2017

ADDRESS: No. 47, Rua de S. Roque

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 3341

EXHIBITION OF CHAN IU PUI

TIME: 11am-6pm (Closed on Mondays and public holidays)

UNTIL: July 8, 2017

VENUE: 10 Fantasia, No. 10, Calçada da Igreja de S. Lázaro

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 4582

I AM 0.38: EXHIBITION OF AN AUTISTIC ARTIST

TIME: 11am-7pm (Closed on public holidays)

UNTIL: May 14, 2017

VENUE: T1, Macau Tower Convention and Entertainment Centre

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2822 0330

MACAU GIANT PANDA PAVILION

TIME: 10am-1pm and 2pm-5pm daily (Except Mondays, closed on the following day instead if a public holiday falls on Monday and no admission after 4:45 pm; six viewings per day)

VENUE: Seac Pai Van Park, Coloane

ADMISSION: MOP10

ENQUIRIES: Civil and Municipal Affairs Bureau (853) 2833 7676

TAK SENG ON PAWNSHOP

TIME: 10:30am-7pm daily (Closed on the first Monday of every month)

VENUE: No. 396 Avenida Almeida Ribeiro

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 7911

A BONSAI OF MY DREAM — ON THE PATH TO THE INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION - LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

TIME: 10am-7pm (Last admission at 6:30pm, closed on Mondays, open on public holidays)

UNTIL: December 12, 2017

VENUE: Macao Museum of Art, Av. Xian Xing Hai, NAPE

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

Offbeat

SMITTEN WITH MISTRESS, ELECTED OFFICIAL LANDS IN JAIL

An elected official in a small Michigan town is serving a 90-day jail sentence after he was accused of forging documents to impress an overseas mistress.

Charles Rogers is a member of the village council in Northport, north of Traverse City. Authorities say he created divorce documents with forged signatures of court officials and sent them to a woman in London.

The Traverse City Record-Eagle (bit.ly/2qMwBvG) says the woman contacted Rogers' wife, who reached out to police. Rogers pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor and began a jail sentence in February in Leelanau County.

Northport Village President Phil Mikesell says Rogers plans to be released in time for the board's June meeting.

TV canal macau



13:00	TDM News (Repeat)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:50	RTPi Live
15:20	Nos League: Porto - Feirense (Repeated)
17:00	Revenge S1
17:50	Now Generation (Repeated)
18:40	TDM Sport (Repeated)
19:40	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	TDM Interview
21:40	Once Upon A Time S2
22:10	Now Generation
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Miscellaneous
00:25	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
01:05	RTPi Live

cinema



CINETEATRO

08 - 10 MAY



GIFTED

ROOM 1

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

Director: Marc Webb

Starring: Chris Evans, Octavia Spencer, Mckenna Grace

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 101min

THE SHACK

ROOM 2

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

Director: Stuart Hazeldine

Starring: Sam Worthington, Octavia Spencer, Radha Mitchell

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 132min

THE BOSS BABY

ROOM 2

9:30pm

Director: Tom McGrath

Starring: Alec Baldwin, Steve Buscemi, Jimmy Kimmel

Language: Cantonese (English)

Duration: 97min

THIS IS NOT WHAT I EXPECTED

ROOM 3

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

Director: Derek Hui

Starring: Takeshi Kaneshiro, Zhou Dongyu, Sun Yizhou

Language: Putonghua (Chinese & English)

Duration: 106min

MACAU TOWER

27 APR - 10 MAY



GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY VOL.2

2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30pm

Director: James Gun

Starring: Chris Pratt, Zoe Saldana, Dave Bautista

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 136min

this day in history



1999 CHINESE ANGER AT EMBASSY BOMBING

Major cities in China have seen their biggest and angriest demonstrations for years in response to the destruction by Nato bombs of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade with the loss of four lives.

Hundreds of students chanting anti-American and anti-Nato slogans marched in Shanghai, Chengdu, Guangzhou.

In Beijing about 100,000 people invaded the embassy district, massing on streets littered with rocks and broken bottles from earlier protests.

Buses packed with students headed out of campuses across the city. Correspondents said the authorities appeared to be deliberately encouraging the action.

The residence of the US Consul General in the south-western city of Chengdu was stormed and partially burned.

Nato said its pilots hit the embassy in the early hours of 8 May with precision-guided bombs by accident - they had mistaken the embassy for a legitimate military target.

The Chinese press has carried front-page pictures of the victims of the embassy bombing.

At an emergency session of the UN Security Council, the Chinese ambassador accused Nato of carrying out a war crime.

The Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, condemned the bombing as a violation of international law and called for an immediate end to the air strikes on Serbia.

Serbian state television reported that Yugoslavia's President Slobodan Milosevic has conveyed his deepest sympathy to China over the deaths.

President Clinton has offered deep regrets to the people of China, but said the bombing was an accident, not a barbaric act.

He echoed the words of the Nato Secretary-General, Javier Solana, in saying that the incident would not deter the alliance from continuing its air campaign.

As Nato countries try to contain the damage from the embassy bombing, Russia's special Balkans envoy, Viktor Chernomyrdin, said that the conflict itself must be resolved by political means as quickly as possible.

He was speaking after talks in Bonn with the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, about the G8 countries' outline peace plan for Kosovo.

Both the chancellor and Mr Chernomyrdin later held separate talks with the Kosovo Albanian leader, Ibrahim Rugova.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

In 1998 the Kosovo Liberation Army - supported by the majority ethnic Albanians - came out in open rebellion against Serbian rule over Kosovo. International pressure grew on Serbia's President Slobodan Milosevic to stop the escalating violence against ethnic Albanians, and Nato launched air strikes against Yugoslavia in March 1999.

Within days, tens of thousands of Kosovo Albanian refugees poured out of Kosovo with accounts of killings and atrocities at the hands of Serb forces. Eleven weeks later on 10 June 1999, Nato stopped the bombing after Belgrade agreed to a full military withdrawal from Kosovo.

Nato troops were deployed in Kosovo under Operation Joint Guardian to oversee the departure of Serb forces and maintain law and order.

Milosevic was ousted from power in September 2000 and arrested for corruption in April 2001. In February 2002 he stood trial in the Hague for war crimes but died in his cell in March 2006.

The US and China broke off diplomatic contact for about four months until discussion on China's entry into the World Trade Organisation - which finally happened in September 2001 - softened relations between the two nations.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19
If you're not feeling so hot about your ability to get things done on schedule, it's time to reach out and ask for help.

Taurus April 20-May 20
So what if folks aren't giving you your props - they may have been bitten by the green-eyed monster!

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21
It's much more helpful to get your ideas and concerns out in the open. There's nothing wrong with debating with yourself to come to a firm conclusion about how you feel on a certain issue.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22
When you look at an empty lot, you'll see the elaborate mansion that could stand there some day.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Have you let your flirting skills get rusty? Shame on you! Whatever your excuse is - you're in a committed relationship, you haven't been feeling confident, or you've just been a bit lazy.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22
When the accolades come your way today, don't be shy about accepting them. On the other hand, don't brag about what you've done - let other people do that for you!

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22
Organization is key for understanding the details that will shower down on you today. Dates, names, budgets, and itineraries will all need your full attention right now, so get ready to get it together!

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21
You're deep in the thick of a work situation, and while you are enjoying this particular challenge, it might be causing you some stress.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Reserve your strength and plan a little getaway if you can - solo travel is favored highly. It will enable you to do whatever you want, whenever you want.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Whatever insight you've been taking from your dreams lately will serve you well today. Follow your gut and do what you think you need too.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18
One of your friends is seeking a bit more independence in your relationship, and it could feel as if they are pushing you away.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20
The normal routine of your day will be disrupted early on by someone who needs your help with something entertaining.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

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

Easy+

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

Medium

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

Hard

9 8 4
2 6
9 5 6
2 3 4
1
6 1 3 2
5

WEATHER

Table with columns: MIN, MAX, CONDITION. Rows include CHINA (Beijing, Harbin, Tianjin, etc.) and WORLD (Moscow, Frankfurt, Paris, etc.).

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Univ. recruiting group; 5- "A Passage to India" heroine; 10- Room in a casa; 14- Melville novel; 15- Pesto ingredient; 16- "___ Tu" ('70s hit); 17- First king of Israel; 18- A Bell for ___; 19- Melody; 20- Takes into custody; 22- Disordered; 24- Litigate against; 25- Capp and Capone; 26- Toothbrush brand; 29- Early hrs.; 32- Trades; 36- Paul Sorvino's daughter; 37- Addison's collaborator; 39- Pasture used for grazing; 40- In spite of; 43- T.G.I.F. part; 44- Suppuration; 45- ___ sow, so shall...; 46- Sanctuaries; 48- Thesaurus wd.; 49- Kett and James; 50- Tree used to make baseball bats; 52- Division of geologic time; 53- Felt hat; 57- Semiautomatic rifle; 61- Must've been something ___; 62- Peter and Franco; 64- Zip-___-Doo-Dah; 65- Sardine containers; 66- Each partner; 67- Penn name; 68- Strip of wood; 69- 4th letter of the Greek alphabet; 70- Catch a view of;

DOWN: 1- Parks on a bus; 2- Bridge expert Sharif; 3- Travel from place to place; 4- Cabbage salad; 5- Become less intense, die off; 6- Pops; 7- Conductor ___-Pekka Salonen; 8- "The Mod Squad" role; 9- Island greeting; 10- Bristly; 11- In ___ (stuck); 12- Director Riefenstahl; 13- Wait ___; 21- Prefix meaning "beneath"; 23- Pilgrim John; 26- ___ vincit amor; 27- Mob scenes; 28- Bohemian; 29- Dumas dueler; 30- Unordered; 31- Take hold; 33- Elite group; 34- Weill's wife; 35- Wise ones; 37- Eye infection, pig house; 38- Part of UNLV; 41- Bridge declaration; 42- Computerized information storage; 47- Up-to-the-minute; 49- Be off; 51- Sharpened; 52- Snap course; 53- Poses; 54- Follow; 55- 2002 erupter; 56- Actress Campbell; 57- Bud of "Harold and Maude"; 58- Bad day for Caesar; 59- Half-moon tide; 60- Start of a counting rhyme; 63- Fam. member;



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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
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IACM 28 387 333
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“ THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’ ”



Michael Essien



Didier Zokora

FOOTBALL

Indonesia follows China in big-name recruitment

John Duerden

CHINA may have the most star-studded league in Asia but Indonesia is another sleeping giant that is starting to import some internationally famous players in a bid to raise standards at home and profile overseas.

Former English Premier League stars Michael Essien, Didier Zokora, Carlton Cole and Peter Odemwingie are closer to the end of their careers than the imports in China but their arrival could make a difference.

After years of corruption scandals, political infighting, crowd violence and international bans,

the players are helping Indonesian soccer make positive overseas headlines for the first time in years.

"Their arrival is a good thing because they can help the Indonesia football league profile overseas," Jacksen Tiago, former head coach of the Indonesia national team and now in charge of league side PS Barito Putera, told Associated Press. "We have more coverage from international media and more quality players will be looking for a chance to come over here in future."

That has an effect at home too, said the Brazilian. "Now television, papers and fans are more excited about football and people

are really happy with those big names around the country. They feel really proud to have international players here and local players can learn from them."

Like China, Indonesia has long been regarded as one of the world's great underachievers given its undoubted passion for the sport and league games that regularly attract more than 20,000 fans.

The national team appeared at the 1938 World Cup as Dutch East Indies but has made little impact since. A FIFA ban, imposed in May 2015 after governmental interference in the running of the game, was seen as necessary by some after years of mismanagement and scandals in the local game.

The ban was lifted in May 2016 and in December, Indonesia reached the final of the AFF Suzuki Cup, Southeast Asia's regional tournament, equaling its best ever showing.

Alfred Riedl was the national team coach at the time and retired after the final. "There has always been talent in Indonesia and we showed that," he said. "Indonesian football could be very soon the number one in Southeast Asia but the clubs and the federation need to be future-oriented."

There are challenges for the foreign stars coming to Indonesia according to the Austrian.

"The facilities such as dressing rooms, training fields and stadiums are still poor so if you are coming from Chelsea to Indonesian football there is a big difference."

Jacksen is sure that, assuming the imports settle, they will enjoy their time in the passionate soccer nation.

"The football atmosphere is Indonesia is just amazing and the foreign players will enjoy the atmosphere inside the stadium and it will help them adapt to the culture here. Fans make us really enjoy our work, because they really appreciate people with quality here."

The biggest star is Essien, formerly of Chelsea and Real Madrid, who signed for Persib Bandung in March along with former England international striker Carlton Cole.

Essien scored his second goal of the season on Sunday to put Persib top of the standings. Odemwingie has scored three in four appearances for Madura United.

Riedl, who had three spells in charge of the national team, has doubts whether the imports will

have a lasting impact and would prefer more money to be invested in youth development.

"It may be more exciting for the fans and the media," he said. "But I don't think that bringing former big players to Indonesia will help. I am not sure that they are coming to serve Indonesian football. They take big money, for Indonesia at least, and leave whenever they want."

Like China, Indonesia has long been regarded as one of the world's great underachievers

Jacksen, who has coached eight clubs in Indonesia, is confident however that money spent on star players will encourage improvements elsewhere. "It will make clubs invest more in their facilities for training sessions. The quality of referees will improve sooner or later, we coaches must improve our coaching knowledge to handle players like those big names and the facilities to training will be better."

The Brazilian acknowledges however that it will all take time.

"There is still complaining about referees, aggressive football and riots between fans," he said, but added: "The federation is trying to solve the problems and bring more coverage and money to the game. They are trying to make the league more professional in every aspect." **AP**

BOXING

Alvarez, Golovkin eager for September megafight

MINUTES after turning what was touted as a big fight into a glorified sparring session, Saul "Canelo" Alvarez invited his next opponent into the ring.

About 90 minutes later, Alvarez had already changed into a suit and tie to pose for the first staredown with Gennady "GGG" Golovkin.

At long last, Alvarez is ready to give boxing fans what they want. The two will square off on Sept. 16, Mexican Independence Day.

"I'm very happy that this fight is finally here," Alvarez said through an interpreter, "the one that a lot of you said would never be made."

Alvarez, who had been fighting at light middleweight, had been accused of ducking the heavier Golovkin for a year. But after pummeling countryman

Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. on Saturday night, Mexico's top fighter is eager for the long overdue megafight to determine the middleweight champion.

"For us, this is the biggest fight in boxing," Golovkin said.

The Kazakhstan native owns the IBF, WBA and WBC middleweight titles. Alvarez had to relinquish his WBC belt to Golovkin (37-0, 33 KOs) last year when he declined a mandatory challenge.

"I've always stated that Triple G will happen in 2017," said Oscar De La Hoya, Alvarez's promoter. "Everybody was saying, 'Why are you afraid of Triple G? Why is this not going to happen?' I told everybody it's going to happen in September, and we're extremely proud and happy

that this fight is going to take place."

Still to be determined is the venue, and De La Hoya insisted it could be "anywhere in the world." One possibility is AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, which would allow for a crowd upward of 100,000. The Dallas Cowboys play on the road that weekend, making it an option.

"Those negotiations, those talks will start in the weeks to come," De La Hoya said.

Alvarez (49-1-1, 34 KOs) had never fought above 155 pounds until he weighed in at 164 on Friday. He had no trouble adjusting, appearing to toy with Chavez. The 26-year-old occasionally would lean back into the ropes and take punches from Chavez, only to quickly regain control with uppercuts and jabs.

According to CompuBox, Alvarez landed 83 jabs to Chavez's 15. All three judges scored it 120-108, giving Alvarez all 12 rounds.

Immediately after Michael Buffer announced the results, Alvarez told the crowd that Golovkin was next. The lights then dimmed, and the 35-year-old Golovkin walked out of a tunnel and into the ring. They later showed a promotional video for the fight.

It was a WWE-style display that showed how little concern the Alvarez camp had for Chavez. The deal with Golovkin was signed a week earlier but successfully kept under wraps.

"It couldn't be a bigger announcement in the sport of boxing," said Tom Loeffler, Golovkin's promoter. "It wasn't easy making the



Mexican boxers Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., left, and Saul "Canelo" Alvarez, right, clash in Las Vegas

fight, but it was even harder not announcing the fight."

Alvarez's dominance leaves him confident about facing bigger boxers. Golovkin weighed in at 159.6 pounds before winning a unanimous decision over Daniel Jacobs in March for his 18th title defense.

The September bout will be at the middleweight li-

mit of 160 pounds. Alvarez believes the two styles will make for an entertaining fight, and Golovkin was impressed by his next opponent as he watched ringside Saturday night at a sold-out T-Mobile Arena.

"Canelo looked very good," Golovkin said, "and 100 percent he is the biggest challenge of my career." **AP**

opinion

Our Desk
Renato Marques



HOW TO TRAIN OUR TALENTS?!

Some years ago a new word sprouted in the local vocabulary. Although it was not a new one its (repetitive) use by high ranked officials, especially those related to the Social Affairs and Culture matters, brought it to a new life and... suddenly 'Talents' was in the pages of all newspapers, on TV/Radio and in the mouths of most locals.

The fascination for the word was so high that even the "Dóci Papiçám di Macau" drama group, known for its humorous theatrical satires, took it to the stage in 2015 naming their play "Macau has Talent."

Off stage or should I say moving into the political stage, around 2013, was announced the creation of the Talents Development Committee (SCDT).

At the time it was said that such a creation was "to facilitate the building of Macau as a 'World Tourism and Leisure Centre' and a 'Service Platform for Commerce and Trade between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries,' as well as to enhance talent cultivation to meet the needs of the society in improving livelihood."

The government further explained that this was driven by "an increasing demand for talents" which had been grounded in the roots of the "rapid urban development of Macau after the formation of the SAR."

When the SCDT was created in early 2014 it was also said that its role was "to stipulate, plan and coordinate initiatives for long-term talents cultivation strategies for Macau SAR, to devise measures (short/medium/long-term) and policies for nurturing talents, to setup a mechanism to motivate talents to stay and/or to return to Macau, as well as to coordinate cooperation among local, regional and international efforts on talents cultivation."

Three years after and although the drive for talents continues, it seems that not many measures were taken to foster these "talents," although I do acknowledge that to create talents is not an easy task, especially if we do not know what we should do in order to achieve that goal.

Recently I came across an article that enlightened me over the "talents" issue.

The feature was talking about a small organization called "Open Door" created by two young Indian entrepreneurs, the 30-year-old Aneesh Bangia and the 29-year-old Abhishek Kariwal.

What do these two Indian young "talents" propose? Only to train over 50,000 students in critical thinking, in order to foster "talents" for India's future scientists. Yes! That's it! Two 30-year-olds proposed to train more than 50,000 children to be the country's future generation of scientists.

But what is this "Open Door" project and how can they possibly achieve such a task? By "simply" creating a platform that helps children learn mathematics and science content with a focus on concepts and scientific thinking.

Bangia arrived at the conclusion that India needed this platform by pondering why his country has not been able to produce quality scientists in the manner other nations have done.

As he mentioned, "I could see no other conclusion but that, in our schools, while we focus on teaching content, we do not spend enough time on making children think."

As the inventors mentioned, their focus is not on helping children learn the content, but on helping them develop the habit of thinking and questioning.

But for those who feel that is not possible to transform or replace current schools into "Open Door" projects, here comes the good news. The project is not a school but a project that currently aims to implement 'mastery learning' in over 100 schools, where around 50,000 students are discovering greater depths to learning through repeated questioning.

And guess what? The investment is not that high, and after only a short time the project has announced a return on investment of around USD75,000 (over MOP600,000) for the 2016-2017 school year.

THE BUZZ N. KOREA TO HOST MALAYSIA IN SOCCER AFTER DIPLOMATIC DISPUTE

North Korea has finally been approved to host a 2019 Asian Cup qualifying match against Malaysia following political tensions between the countries. The Asian Football Confederation says the game can go ahead in Pyongyang on June 8 after the Malaysian soccer federation confirmed it was not subject to "government travel restrictions."

Diplomatic tensions escalated amid investigations into the death of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's estranged half-brother in Kuala Lumpur. Both countries imposed travel bans on the other's citizens. The original March 28 qualifier was postponed and a neutral venue sought.

ENVIRONMENT

Watchdog says Vietnamese officials bribed by log smugglers

An environmental watchdog has accused Vietnamese government and military officials of taking payoffs to ignore vast smuggling of lucrative lumber from neighboring Cambodia.

Millions of dollars in bribes have been paid by Vietnamese timber traders to both Vietnamese and Cambodian officials, the report issued yesterday by the U.K.-based Environmental Investigation Agency alleges.

It says the Vietnamese officials are paid off in exchange for granting import quotas for the timber and Cambodians are paid to open up logging areas and smuggling routes. The logging itself in Cambodia is often illegal, taking place in protected areas such as national parks.

Cambodia has banned the export of logs and since early 2016 has closed its border with Vietnam to timber as well. However, Vietnam has official quotas for such imports, which are also taxed.

Sear Ra, deputy chief of Cambodia's Forestry Administration, noted that such exporting was stopped 2016, and if it had happened since then, it would have been done secretly and illegally.

Cambodia has one of the highest rates of deforestation in the world, much of it due to illegal logging and corrupt land deals.

Much of the timber trade



is protected by military units that profit from deals with the loggers.

Vietnam's official quotas facilitate the smuggling from Cambodia and even allows Vietnam to profit by taxing the smuggled logs, the report says.

"Approximately 300,000 cubic meters of logs have been smuggled out of Cambodia and laundered in Vietnam under these quotas," it says, estimated the kickbacks have totaled more than USD13 million since the beginning of November 2016.

The watchdog says Vietnam and the European Union are expected to sign an agreement to try to ensure only legal timber is exported from Vietnam.

"This is the single largest log-smuggling operation that we have seen for years," the group's senior forests campaigner, Jago Wadley said in a news release. "Vietnam must address this weak

approach to any agreement with the EU to combat illegal logging and the associated trade."

The report points out that the illegal trade comes as Vietnam is working hard to protect its own forests, even as Vietnam's government "has promoted the rapid expansion of an export-oriented wood processing sector, which has become the sixth largest in the world."

It says Vietnamese exports of wood products are projected to total \$8 billion this year, while imports account for at least 80 percent of the raw materials consumed by its factories.

Cambodia and Laos, another neighbor of Vietnam, together provided Vietnam with illicit timber worth almost three quarters of a billion dollars in a single year, says the report, noting that a crackdown in Laos has shifted the smugglers' attention to Cambodia. **AP**

Station	Air quality
Roadside	25-45 Good
High Density Residential Area	40-60 Moderate
Ambient	40-60 Moderate

WORLD BRIEFS



MALAYSIA Authorities have seized pangolin scales worth USD2.1 million and believed to have been smuggled from Africa. Customs officials said officers made two seizures last week at the Kuala Lumpur airport cargo warehouse based on a tip. No arrests were made. The case is being investigated for smuggling of prohibited goods.



FRANCE Today is Europe Day, and with Emmanuel Macron winning France's presidential election, European Union leaders get to unwrap their present a bit early. **More on p15**



SYRIA'S foreign minister says there will be no international forces under U.N. supervision as part of a deal struck by Russia, Iran and Turkey last week on setting up four safe zones in Syria. Walid al-Moallem told reporters that the agreement stipulates for the deployment of "military police."

USA President Donald Trump is set to announce several nominees to fill federal court openings. A White House official said that a formal announcement would come today [Macau time], with names released at an afternoon press briefing. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the plans in advance.



AFRICA Joseph Kony, Africa's most notorious warlord for three decades, may never face justice as countries end the international manhunt.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT



Cinecittà. Monica Bellucci poses for photographers during a photo call of the movie "On The Milky Road" in Rome, yesterday.