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The frequency of buses will be increased when the next school year starts for the convenience of students

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CHARITY RUN OPENS NEW CATEGORY

Caritas Macau is hosting its second Charity Run on October 8, with a new group category to accommodate the elderly

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WORLD BRIEFS



PHILIPPINES The country's president flew for the first time yesterday to a besieged southern city to cheer troops who have been trying to quell a nearly two-month uprising by Islamic State group-linked militants, who he warned were plotting to attack other cities. President Rodrigo Duterte landed with top generals in a military camp in Marawi city, which briefly came under fire from militant snipers shortly before he arrived. **More on p13**

THAILAND A former monk known for a jet-setting lifestyle was back in Thailand yesterday after he was extradited from the United States, where he fled to escape charges including statutory rape and fraud.



EAST TIMOR Almost two dozen parties are contesting parliamentary elections in East Timor this weekend that are likely to return independence heroes to power despite frustration in the young democracy with lack of economic progress and warnings the country could be bankrupt within a decade. **More on p12**

CAMBODIA Wildlife researchers have found a breeding location for the masked finfoot bird, one of the world's most endangered, raising hopes of its continuing survival, the researchers announced yesterday.

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Macau to host its biggest ever eSports tournament

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TRANSPORT

Bus frequency to increase from next school year

Julie Zhu

THE Transport Advisory Committee held a meeting yesterday to discuss recent issues regarding the city's transport situation.

Lam Hin San, Director of the Transport Bureau (DSAT), informed the media about the meeting's topic.

According to Lam, DSAT recently fined two of the region's public parking lot management companies for not meeting DSAT's requirements.

The two companies have already paid their fines, while four other companies are still in the process of payment.

According to Lam, the parking lot management company will be fined MOP10,000 daily, with the possibility of further penalties.

The meeting also discussed bus lanes in some regions in Taipa

and the Macau peninsula. In Taipa, some bus lanes have been converted into single direction lanes to reduce conflicts between pedestrians and buses.

Lam stated that the changes will protect passengers, who must look many times in different directions to guarantee their safety when using zebra crossings.

Another topic that was addressed was the number of bus passengers recorded last year. Lam noted that the authorities will continue to improve Macau's bus services, including transportation available at the Praça de Ferreira Amaral and the border gate.

DSAT will also increase the frequency of buses when the new semester starts, for the convenience of students.

DSAT is processing 21 large construction projects. The related information will be disclosed on its website.

Only ten large-scale projects will take place during the summer period, much less than in the previous year

Last year, there were 99 road construction projects during summer vacation, 20 of which were large-scale projects.

According to Lam, with the help of relevant departments, only ten large-scale projects will take place during the summer period, much less than in the previous year.

Previously, two projects were planned near Rua do Campo.



Lam Hin San

However, to minimize public inconvenience, DSAT has postponed the two projects to December.

DSAT is also considering moving the bus stop at the Macau Ferry Terminal from its current location to the west of the terminal.

Lam said that the transport committee hopes the taxi stand will allow for three taxis to simultaneously pick up passengers at the terminal.

DSAT is also renovating the taxi stop at the border gate to allow up to five taxis at the same time.

MUSIC

Chinese Orchestra's season closing concert to be held tonight

THE Macao Chinese Orchestra will present the closing concert for the 2016-2017 season, titled "Encounter with Chinese Music", tonight at the Dom Pedro V Theatre.

The concert will be conducted by national class one conductor, Pang Ka Pang. The orchestra will perform a number of pieces, including "Spring Festival Overture," which showcases the warm and joyful scenes in the Spring Festival, "Babbling Book, Dance of Golden Snake," a famous folk song from Yunan Province that uses percussion highlights to create a festive atmosphere, and "Silk Road," which integrates various musical styles such as flamenco, tango and tap dance.

In addition, the concert will feature a pipa (Chinese four-



stringed instrument) solo titled "A Moonlit Night on the Spring River" by the orchestra's youngest musician, Deng Le. The piece describes a moonlit night on the Spring River and the exotic scenery of a water village in Jiangnan. The concert will also present a Guangdong gaohu (Chinese bowed string instrument) solo titled "Sorrow of Twin Stars" by Cai Feng and a Zhongruan concerto titled "Blossom" by Lin Jie.

According to a statement from the Cultural Affairs Bureau, the season's closing concert presents an exquisite folk music performance to let the audience experience the artistic conception of the pieces and memories of youth through music.

The concert will also open the upcoming 2017-2018 concert season, with the theme "30 Years of Excellence with Everlasting Classics."

Restaurant performance in May dropped

RESTAURANTS in the territory performed "less satisfactorily" in May 2017, compared with April, according to data collected in the Business Climate Survey on Restaurants & Similar Establishments and Retail Trade, presented in a statement from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

Some 46 percent of establishments reported year-on-year growth in revenue, down by 6 percentage points from April, while those recording a year-on-year decline increased by 10 percentage points to 33 percent in May.

The restaurants surveyed in May said that they did not expect a significant improvement in business in

June, with 22 percent anticipating a year-on-year rise in revenue, up just 3 percentage points from their forecast in the previous monthly survey.

Among the various types of establishments, a quarter of the western restaurants predicted a year-on-year increase in revenue in June, up by 15 percentage points from May. Meanwhile, 45 percent of the "local-style cafes," and congee and noodle shops expected their receipts to stay stable year-on-year.

On the other hand, the establishments expecting a year-on-year decline in revenue climbed by 11 percentage points from May to 41 percent, with the corres-

ponding proportions of western restaurants, Chinese restaurants, and Japanese and Korean restaurants rising by 20, 18 and 13 percentage points respectively.

As for the retail trade, also included in the business climate survey, the proportion of interviewed retailers reporting a year-on-year increase in sales in May fell by 3 percentage points month-on-month to 46 percent. At the same time, 36 percent of the interviewed retailers registered a year-on-year decrease in sales, down by 2 percentage points from April.

Retailers generally remained cautious about their business prospects for June, according to DSEC.

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MACAU GRAND PRIX

WTCC race officially confirmed



The latest stage of the WTCC championship was held in Portugal last month

THE FIA World Touring Car Championship (WTCC) is now officially included in the Macau Grand Prix program, the Sports Bureau (ID) president Pun Weng Kun confirmed yesterday during a press conference.

The announcement follows doubts that the WTCC race would be included in the 64th edition of the Grand Prix. In May, during the first press conference introducing the event, Pun said

that the inclusion of the WTCC “was not confirmed” and that it was “just one of the many races that want to be included [in the local event].” Pun’s statement was received with surprise since the event was included on the Automobile International Federation (FIA) calendar at the time.

Pun didn’t clearly explain why the WTCC race was not confirmed before. “There are several racing series that take part in this event. As the Organizing Committee, we need to analyze which races bring more advantages. Lately we have been in touch with WTCC and we rea-

ched a consensus during the negotiations,” he said.

At yesterday’s press conference, the Macau Grand Prix Organizing Committee released details about the event’s program, which will be held from November 16 to 19.

The Formula 3 Macau Grand Prix has been once again designated as the official FIA F3 World Cup. The Macau GT Cup will feature in the FIA GT World Cup for the third consecutive year. The 51st Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix is also one of the four headliners on the six-race program.

This year’s highlights will also feature cultural elements. A representative from the organizing committee said that Macau will continue to add recreational aspects and entertainment elements to the competition, which will create a multi-cultural carnival atmosphere for the races.

FIA to change GP scheduling

THE FIA has decided to add more time to the schedule between the GT World Cup final and the headline Formula 3 Grand Prix on the Sunday of the Macau race.

The decision comes in response to the peculiar course of events last year, when timetable restraints forced organizers to end the GT World Cup race early, making WRT Audi driver Laurens Vanthoor the winner despite crashing and flipping his car.

To make space, the TCR International race will be moved from its traditional spot on the Sunday morning to Saturday afternoon.

According to Autosport, it will be the first time since the creation of the current WTCC that two races have been held on separate days.

The GT World Cup final will now occupy a 75-minute time slot, starting 40 minutes earlier at 12:55 p.m. The main F3 race will start as usual at 3:30 p.m.

Additionally, the FIA will decree that the GT World Cup final is to be open only to professional drivers with a platinum or gold rating. New safety measures, such as new curbs at the Reservoir and the Mandarin corners are also being implemented, the organization said.

30 EMPLOYEES ASK FOR COMPENSATION

MORE THAN 30 employees of the Sports Bureau (ID) claimed that they have not been compensated for working overtime in more than three years. At yesterday’s press conference, ID president Pun Weng Kun said that the case has already been handled by the bu-

reau, which will arrange for department heads and other leaders to attend events organized by Macau’s sports associations according to their situation. Pun also said that the ID will hold discussions with its employees about their willingness to attend sports events.

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opinion

CASINOS CAN TILT THE ODDS BACK IN THEIR FAVOR

Shelly Banjo, Bloomberg

It's natural to be scared of betting big just after losing a great hand. But savvy gamblers know that just because the first game played out one way, the next won't necessarily follow.

That's the case in Macau, where a junket operator's recent warning of large-scale money-laundering investigations has sparked a sense of déjà vu among investors fearful a renewed crackdown on Macau's high rollers could deal another blow just as the gambling hub was starting to feel steady again.

The Bloomberg Intelligence Macau Gaming Index has dropped 4 percent this month, compared to a 6 percent rise in the MSCI China Index, on reports of mainland police investigating questionable money transfers and freezing accounts of junket operators who find and ferry in wealthy players to gamble large sums, mostly on credit.

The worries are understandable: Memories of President Xi Jinping's anti-corruption drive, which began after the last twice-a-decade Communist Party Congress in 2012, have only recently faded with year-on-year revenue growth among VIP customers rising by double digits for three straight quarters.

As officials try to manicure the country's finances ahead of the 2017 congress, investors might fear casino operators will again bear the brunt of Beijing's political maneuvering.

But this time around, things could be different. And investors who look past the politics could benefit by scooping up some bargains.

For one, there's an end game in sight. The most recent Macau purge is coming before the congress this time and there are just a few months to go before the fall confab.

Meanwhile, the very public investigations into financial heavyweights like Anbang Insurance Group Co. and overseas dealmakers such as HNA Group Co. and Dalian Wanda Group suggest officials will spend more time going after entities whose ballooning debt levels and off-balance-sheet investing pose the largest systemic risks to the country's financial sector, rather than showy casino patrons who flaunt their wealth.

While Beijing's tightening grip on VIP gambling in Macau reflects real concerns over capital flight, this need not choke the life out of the city's leisure business -- particularly as casino operators develop alternative revenue streams that are less dependent on money flows from the mega rich.

Companies including MGM China Holdings Ltd. and SJM Holdings Ltd. are already much less reliant on high rollers than they used to be, with the VIP share of casino revenue slipping below 50 percent.

They're also running tighter businesses, with return on capital, profit margins and return on assets rising in recent quarters.

Tourists are visiting to do more than gamble, too: Macau's retail sales and spending in the first quarter rose by 12 percent and 16.6 percent respectively from the year before, according to the Macau Statistics and Census Service.

Meanwhile, companies including MGM, Sands China Ltd., SJM and Wynn Macau Ltd. are opening new resorts. Diverse attractions such as concert halls and gourmet restaurants should help boost takings, as mass-market guests from mainland China embrace the lower prices ushered in by additional competition.

As casino operators rely less on junkets, they will have to spend more on other kinds of marketing to appeal to lower-income customers who can provide a more dependable source of revenue. That will also help fend off other destinations trying to make inroads in gambling, such as Japan and Vietnam.

A share sell-off might even usher in some good news in the form of contracting valuations. The enterprise value to Ebitda multiple for the BI gaming index is expected to drop to 13.6 in the third quarter of this year, from a second-quarter multiple of 17.4, Bloomberg estimates show.

Ignoring politics is almost impossible when doing any kind of business in China. But if casino operators continue to focus on what they can control, they might be able to tilt the odds back in their favor.

GIRL GAMER

Unprecedented eSports festival to launch in August

Daniel Beitler

THE largest eSports event ever to be held in Macau - a four-day festival of tournaments, conference sessions and cosplay - was announced yesterday at the Macau Trade and Investment Promotion Institute headquarters (IPIM).

The large-scale event, which launches in just under six weeks, is the first of its kind in the city.

Named after its cast of eight all-female competitor teams, Girl Gamer eSports Festival is the single most ambitious project of local association Grow UP eSports following two years of relentless work to mature the city's virtual gaming scene.

"We are empowering [women] in eSports and bringing a new set of tourists to come to Macau," said association chairman Frederico Santos Rosário at a press conference yesterday.

Girl Gamer will be hosted in Studio City's Grand Ballroom, where up to 2,000 spectators can watch the eight teams contest two major tournaments, vying for the biggest share of a USD30,000 total prize pool.

Organizers say that they will broadcast the festival in English and Mandarin on some of the largest live-streaming platforms in the world, reaching a "guaranteed" minimum of three million people.

"The three-million figure is actually a little pessimistic,"



We are empowering [women] in eSports and bringing a new set of tourists to Macau.

FREDERICO SANTOS ROSÁRIO
GROW UP ESPORTS CHAIRMAN

said Santos Rosário. "This is a guaranteed number, [... but] we believe that our growth over the next few months means we can probably double that [number]."

Girl Gamer kicks off with a tour of some of the city's World Heritage Sites on August 31. Iconic tourist destinations, such as the Taipa Houses Museum, Senado Square, St. Paul's Ruins, Mount Fortress and A-Ma Temple, will be included in the tour.

A "business conference" is planned for the festival's second day, covering topics such as the role of eSports in Macau's economic and tourism diversification, and a session titled "Road to the Olympics: the future of eSports as a sport."

The final days of Girl Ga-

mer are dedicated to eSports competitions, with two invitational tournaments and an "open tournament" for mobile strategy game Clash Royale. Both men and women can participate.

Cosplay, a performance art where participants dress up as fictional characters, will also be included at a special showcase event on the festival's final day. The phenomenon will spill over to various sites across the MSAR, including the Macau Ferry Terminal, to promote the festival to tourists.

"At the moment, most of the [tourist] demographic is coming to gamble," said association president, Fernando Pereira. "We are offering something else for them to do. [...] Casinos are really

jumping into [eSports] in Las Vegas and we are seeing the same now happening in Macau."

The timing of the all-female tournament seems opportune. While they still represent the minority, female gamers are now among the most-subscribed social influencers in the eSports community and command an increasing presence in global eSports competitions.

Citing data from Newzoo's 2017 Global eSports Market Report, Girl Gamer organizers said that some 29 percent of the 191 million eSports enthusiasts worldwide are female, with half of them aged between 21 and 35.

Brigite Amaral, who was present for the unveiling of Girl Gamer yesterday, says she used to consider herself one of them. Though the games she used to play, Street Fighter and World of Warcraft, will not be featured, she nevertheless plans to attend.

"I love games and I'm not tired of them," she told the Times yesterday. "I'm just quite busy with work so I don't get the chance to play them much anymore."

"Even though I don't really know about the games at the festival, or the female players [of these games], I will increase my interest by going to the festival. I want to know more about it."

Girl Gamer is sponsored by IPIM, the Macau Government Tourism Office and Studio City, among other contributors.

Macau Franchise Expo to be held next week

THE 2017 Macau Franchise Expo (MFE) will be held at The Venetian Macao's exhibition hall A from July 28 to 30.

The MFE is an international event promoting franchise and retail chain business collaboration, combining exhibitions, forums, business-matching sessions and promotion seminars. It also acts as a business and investment platform that helps

local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) build their brand image and enhance their corporate culture.

According to a statement released recently by the Macau Trade and Investment Promotion Institute, this year's event will feature more than 140 exhibitors, including many well-known international brands. The organizers have

also invited world-renowned entrepreneur Li Ning as a special guest for the "Forum on Chain and Franchise Business Opportunities of International Brands" to share his business insights with attendees.

The third day of the event has been dubbed "Start-up Launchpad" day, where various forums and professional seminars will provide informa-

tion on several topics for young entrepreneurs and SMEs.

Organizers will also open a "Gourmet Avenue" to promote local food and beverage products and help their manufacturers expand their businesses abroad.

Another organizer, the Macau International Brand Enterprise Commercial Association, will bring back its "Brand Repackaging Pavilion", which provides consultancy services to those wishing to start or expand a business through franchising.

According to a statement from one of

the event organizers, MFE attracts an array of global brands and franchises each year.

MFE was first launched in 2009. The exhibition area has expanded from 1,900 square meters in its first year to around 6,000 square meters in recent years. Some 103 business-matching sessions were organized last year while 1,314 business negotiation sessions were conducted for invited professionals. Over the past eight years, 144 business agreements were signed on-site, with more than 80 percent implemented.



Photo of previous cast member

Paul Walden & Derek Nicol for Flying Music in association with Adrian Grant for Key Concerts present

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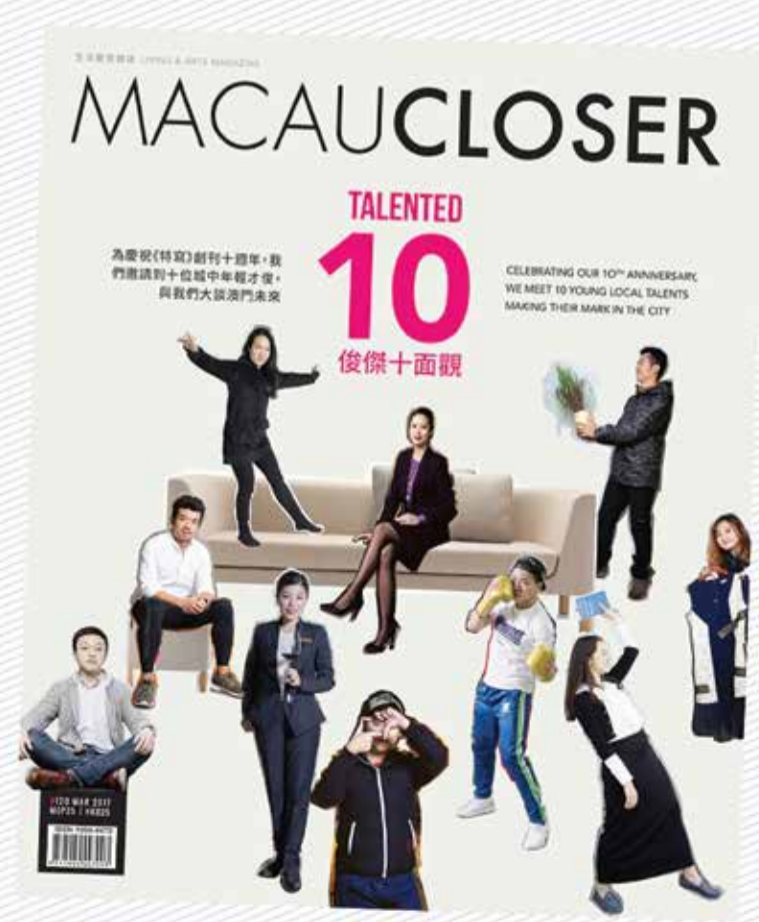
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Charity Run opens new category for the elderly

Lynzy Valles

CARITAS Macau is hosting its second Charity Run on October 8, with a new group category to accommodate the elderly. Co-hosted with the University of Macau, Caritas Macau is offering a new 'Exercise Walking' category targeting the elderly or participants who wish to walk for 1.6 km.

This year's run has also extended the distance to meet the needs of participants who want to run farther. The run now includes distances of 3.3km and 6.6 km.

The run has four categories: "Open Category A and B," "Family Category," "Rehabilitation Category," and "Exercise Walking Category."

Entry to the run costs MOP100 and participants are also encouraged to donate additional amounts.

Paul Pun, secretary general of Caritas Macau, expressed his hopes that this year's event would



Paul Pun (center), Grace Chau (right)

attract 2,000 participants – similar to last year's attendance.

However, Pun is also confident that, with the support of its co-host, the event will exceed last year's attendance due to the introduction of the new category.

The Charity Run will again be held at UM, as Pun noted that the premises are capable of accommodating their targeted number of participants.

"With the support of UM, we would also be able to gather more people and know the school environment," said Pun.

"One main [goal] is to alert the society of Macau [that events]

not funded by the government are still able to [raise funds] if they offer support," he continued.

Pun reiterated that all proceeds would go to Caritas Macau's social facility development, namely its latest initiative to provide wheelchair access to the elderly, dubbed the "upstairs and downstairs service".

The service assists wheelchair-bound elderly individuals who reside in apartments without elevators.

"[It's for] those who live in apartments with no elevators. We assist those [elderly] to go

down, to go hospitals and meet with families," Pun explained, adding that the number of users has significantly increased in both June and July.

On average, two to three elderly persons use this service daily.

"We hope that with the support of the upcoming function, we'll be able to generate more funds to extend more services to senior citizens and wheelchair users," Pun added.

Pun added that following the service's Macau launch in December, Hong Kong has also begun providing similar services.

Meanwhile, Grace Chau, acting director at UM's Office of Sports Affairs, also noted that the university is making efforts to increase the number of participants in the charity run.

According to Chau, the university is encouraging its students to adopt a healthy lifestyle and motivating them to participate in the upcoming event.

"We opened a registration counter at our sports complex and it's also open to the public. We [will] also cooperate with our track and field association so they can volunteer to participate in running or helping the organization," said Chau.

Applications are open from tomorrow until September 10.

Pun stated that the size of participants' donations would not affect their priority in the race.

Hengqin launches online tax payment for SAR residents

Hengqin has launched a tax payment system which allows Hong Kong and Macau residents to pay mainland taxes online, according to a report by TDM. Eligible SAR residents must work in Hengqin; previously, they had to visit the mainland to pay their taxes. Currently, 618 enterprises from Hong Kong and 860 from Macau are registered in Hengqin. More than 1,500 Hong Kong and Macau residents are qualified to apply for Hengqin's special talented human resources awards and for the tax subsidies.

Nineteen arrested for fake VIP room

Nineteen mainland residents were arrested yesterday for setting up a fake casino VIP room inside a hotel room at the ZAPE area. Fifteen men and four women, all aged between 32 and 54 years old, pretended to be casino security guards, dealers, public relations employees, VIP room owners, and gamblers. The mastermind of the group was from Guangdong. According to the Judiciary Police, the group had operated the fake room for more than two years, although only one victim – who claimed to have lost RMB400,000 – filed a police report.

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REAL ESTATE MATTERS

The most important questions to ask... when you are a landlord renting out a property

Juliet Risdon is a Director of JML Property and a property investor.

Having been established in 1994, JML Property offers investment property & homes. It specializes in managing properties for owners and investors, and providing attractive and comfortable homes for tenants.

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JULIET RISDON

All property transactions are sizeable when compared with most other decisions.

It follows then that we should give these transactions the extra time and attention that they warrant, but this does not always happen.

In many instances it isn't so much an issue of motivation, but rather not knowing the right questions to ask.

This series deals with key questions that we can, and sometimes should, ask. Knowing the answers to these questions can help to avoid misunderstandings and, in many cases, will save time, money or both.

...The most important questions to ask when you are a landlord

Renting out a property can be both stressful and risky, especially if you are unfortunate enough to encounter a bad tenant.

The trouble is, even though you own the property you are also very busy during the day and want to minimize the issues with this and any other apartment.

If you are looking for an Agency to lease out your property and a Property Administrator to take care of it whilst it rented, it is important to do your homework and look for an established and professional company with strong systems.

The list below is in no particular order, and is intended as a starting point to help identify which questions to ask.

Can I see a sample tenancy agreement?

Before you lease out your property, it pays to go through the Tenancy Agreement carefully and make sure everything that is important to you is covered.

There are many variations on a Tenancy Agreement, some are as short as one page and others spread over 20 pages or more.

Regardless of the length, it is advisable to go through the agreement and make sure the main points such as payment schedule, maintenance and deposits are all clearly documented.

What insurance arrangement should be made?

Generally speaking, the tenant is responsible for the goods inside the apartment and the owner / landlord is responsible for the infrastructure and rebuild should something happen to the property.

As such, insurance packages should be purchased accordingly.

It's a good idea to cover this point in the Tenancy Agreement to avoid any mis-understanding.

What happens if a tenant reserves the apartment and then changes their mind?

Generally the process in taking an apartment includes paying an initial deposit, without which the property will not be taken of the market.

Once the initial deposit is received the agent should give a very specific time frame to the tenant to let them know the timeframe for signing the agreement and paying the full security deposit (usually two months rent).

If the tenant changes their mind, the deposit remains with the landlord and the property goes back on the market.

What price do I want to achieve?

Asking this question will give you your top price, and answering the next question will give you the bottom price. You then have a rental 'range'.

Achieving the best price is not always the no. 1 objective. The equation depends also on the quality of the tenant and their treatment of your property.

What's the minimum rental amount I am willing to accept?

Following on from question 4, the minimum rental or your 'bottom line' is important to know in case you are presented with a high-quality tenant.

In this scenario, a high-quality tenant willing to pay the minimum rental may end up being a far better outcome than a low-quality tenant paying top rent, but not looking after the property, paying late etc.

The other reason for knowing your bottom line is so that you don't always accept the first offer that comes your way, especially if it is lower than expected.

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PokerStars LIVE Macau advertisement for Saturday SuperStack. Features stacks of chips, the text 'SATURDAY SUPER STACK', and details about the tournament: 'PokerStars LIVE Macau hosts the Saturday SuperStack with a HK\$100,000 guaranteed prize pool. With a buy-in of HK\$3,000, you start with a huge 15K starting chip stack. Don't miss out on the biggest tournament of the week. Every Saturday from 5th July to 19th August.' Includes the PokerStars LIVE Macau logo and address: Level 2, Estrada do Istmo, Cotai.

Hong Kong skyscrapers world's most expensive, Knight Frank says

Pooja Thakur

SKYSCRAPERS in Hong Kong are the world's most expensive commercial real estate assets, according to Knight Frank LLP.

Hong Kong skyscrapers are worth USD8,000 per square foot, about 60 percent more than Tokyo's tall towers, according to a Knight Frank report released Wednesday. The analysis used rents and prime yields to value office towers as of the fourth quarter of 2016.

"Capital values of Asia's tallest towers showed significant divergence with Hong Kong sitting at the top, and Mumbai at the bottom of the global rankings," Nicholas Holt, head of research for Asia Pacific at Knight Frank, said in the report. "In Hong Kong, strong demand and a lack of new land supply continues to push values higher, while the structure of the Mumbai office market has tended to see office markets develop outwards rather than upwards."

Henderson Land Development Co.'s recent \$3 billion acquisition of a five-story car park in Hong Kong, where it plans to build an office tower, underscores the frenzied state of the city's property market, Knight Frank said. The sale sets the world's most expensive city even further apart from its rivals, according to the report.

Savills has set an indicative price of HKD24.5 billion (\$3.1 billion) for the sale of Langham Place Office Tower in Hong Kong's Mong Kok district, which would be a record for an office building in the city. **Bloomberg**



Masayoshi Son



Marc Raibert and Spot Mini

SoftBank's Son finally explains how all those deals fit together

MASAYOSHI Son has had a busy year even by the standards of Japan's most prolific investor. Yesterday in Tokyo, he took time to explain how it all fits together.

In the past six months, SoftBank Group Corp. has invested in businesses ranging from ride sharing, co-working and robotics to agriculture, cancer detection and autonomous driving. The 59-year-old took the stage at SoftBank World, the company's annual two-day event for customers and suppliers, to outline the strategy behind those deals and the company's planned USD100 billion technology fund.

In the span of two and a half hours, Son painted a picture of the future where satellite networks cover every inch of the Earth and a trillion devices connected to the internet disgorge data into the cloud where it is analyzed by artificial intelligen-

ce. SoftBank and its companies will be there at every step of the way, the billionaire said.

"I'm so excited," said Son, SoftBank's founder and chief executive officer, dressed in a dark jacket and striped, open-collar shirt. "It really feels like sleeping is a waste of time."

SoftBank Vision Fund has already raised more than \$93 billion in total commitments from the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia, Apple Inc. and other large institutional backers, while SoftBank itself is contributing \$28 billion. The fund will invest in cutting edge technologies from virtual reality to autonomous driving and the Internet of Things. At the Tokyo gathering, Son let about 10 of the portfolio companies take the stage and speak for themselves.

"The Vision Fund is not about taking on the world with one specific technology, business model or brand," Son said. "It's about people sharing the same

vision coming together to start a revolution."

Marc Raibert, CEO of Boston Dynamics was the first to take the stage. SoftBank in June said it is buying the robot maker from Google parent Alphabet Inc. Terms of the deal weren't disclosed and it wasn't clear whether the companies would remain within SoftBank or become part of the Vision Fund.

At the event, Raibert demonstrated Spot Mini, one of the company's smaller robots. The quadruped, which uses stereo cameras and laser range finders to locate itself in space, trotted around the stage, clambering over or avoiding obstacles. At one point, he fetched a can of soda with an extendable claw for its inventor.

"Our goal is really to build robots that are equal to or greater than people in terms of their mobility, manipulation dexterity, perception and intelligence," Raibert said. "That's

a long range target."

Speakers at the event also included Guardant Health Inc., a startup developing low-cost DNA sequencing technology that would allow for early detection of cancer, and Nauto Inc., whose self-driving technology can help reduce accidents by tracking driver behavior.

In previous years, Son shared the stage at SoftBank World with Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. co-founder Jack Ma and the company's Pepper robot. The singularity has become a recurring topic. Last year, Son spoke about SoftBank's acquisition of chipmaker ARM Holdings Plc and its role bringing about advanced artificial intelligence, which he predicted can happen as early as 2018.

"Singularity is definitely coming, perhaps withing the next 30 years," he said. "Considering humanity's 200,000-year history, 30 to 50 years is just an error margin." **MDT/Bloomberg**

corporate bits

SANDS RESTAURANTS RECEIVE WINE SPECTATOR AWARDS



Sands China's 11 signature restaurants have been recognized for their outstanding wine programs by U.S. lifestyle magazine Wine Spectator.

Restaurants that received a "Two Glasses" Best of Award of Excellence commendation include Portofino, North

and Canton at The Venetian Macao, Brasserie and Lotus Palace at The Parisian Macao, and Golden Court and Copa Steakhouse at Sands Macao. Morton's Steakhouse at The Venetian Macao received a "One Glass" Award of Excellence. This is the sixth con-

secutive year that Wine Spectator has commended Sands China restaurants for their outstanding wine lists with these awards. The awards have three levels: Award of Excellence, Best of Award of Excellence, and Grand Award. The awards are granted according to the depth, range and display of the wine lists. Vice President of Food and Beverage for Sands China, Philip Chong, commented on the awards, saying: "We are honored that so many of our great restaurants have been recognized by Wine Spectator. We are committed to offering the complete fine dining experience to our customers and these prestigious awards are one of the best indicators that we are succeeding in this."

MICHELIN GUIDE STREET FOOD FESTIVAL TO DEBUT AT STUDIO CITY



Michelin Guide Hong Kong & Macau will organize its first Michelin Guide Street Food Festival at Studio City Macau in October.

Chefs from Michelin-starred restaurants and Michelin-recommended eateries across Asia will serve their street food creations and signature delicacies.

According to a press release issued yesterday, dishes will be

priced at value-for-money rates, with small plates starting from MOP40.

Eateries from Singapore and Japan will be visiting Macau for the first time, including the world's first-ever street food stall to be awarded a Michelin star, Hong Kong Soya Sauce Chicken Rice and Noodle from Singapore. Humble hawker-

turned-Michelin-acclaimed chef Chan Hon Meng will be flying in to cook at Studio City alongside fellow Singaporean Wayne Liew from Keng Eng Kee, the popular street food stall known for its fusion of Hainanese cuisine with Malaysian home-style food. Meanwhile, Japan's takoyaki eatery Kougaryu Honten will serve Bib Gourmand-awarded takoyaki in three different flavors.

In addition, three of Studio City's signature restaurants – including one-Michelin-starred restaurant Pearl Dragon, and Michelin-recommended restaurants Shanghai Magic and Bi Ying – will also showcase creative delicacies specially made for the festival.

The gourmet festival is free to attend and will be held at Studio City's Macau Gourmet Walk from 12p.m. to 8p.m. between October 5 to 8 this year.

Urbanization prevents 450,000 premature deaths since 1980, claims study

RAPID urbanization in China is not contributing to air pollution, but actually may have brought health benefits for the hundreds of millions of people who have moved into cities, preventing an estimated 450,000 premature deaths over the last three decades, a new study said Wednesday.

That's because after migrating into the city, many Chinese switched from crop residue, firewood and low-quality coal to cleaner fuel types such as electricity and natural gas, which considerably lessened regional emissions and cut their exposure to harmful particles less than 2.5 micrometers in size, known as PM2.5, according to the study published by the U.S. journal *Science Advances*.

"In the past, it was generally thought that population migration into cities would lead to the accumulation of pollutants and the affected persons in a small space, increasing the exposure in regional, high-density population areas, thereby raising health risks," Professor Shu Tao at Peking University, who led the study, told Xinhua.

"This understanding ignores the positive impact of energy structure changes on health," Tao said.

For the study, Tao's team investigated the influence of rural to urban migration on pollutant emissions from direct residential and transportation energy consumption sources and population exposure since 1980, when urbanization began to accelerate following the initiation of the Chinese economic reform and opening policy.

The researchers were able to track migration using the unique registration system of citi-



zens in China, known as hukou, and adjusted for migrants living in cities who are "unregistered" and have limited access to urban energy infrastructure, social welfare and other city services.

They found that as a result of increased migration, the na-

tional average PM2.5 exposure concentration in 2010 was reduced by 3.9 ug/m³, which corresponded to an annual reduction of 36,000 premature deaths.

Overall, 450,000 premature deaths were avoided between

1980 and 2010, indicating "a health benefit from the three decades of migration," the study said.

Despite the net benefit on a national level, pollution levels associated with migration are still on the rise in megacities

■ If China unilaterally changes the status quo of the tri-junction, it becomes a matter of security concern for India.

SUSHMA SWARAJ
INDIA'S EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

such as Beijing and Shanghai, which are experiencing massive immigrations that increase local emissions, it noted.

When looking into the future, the researchers predicted the country's urbanization rate will increase up to 70 percent by 2030 and corresponding pollutant exposure levels may drop by up to 8.8 ug/m³, doubling the current benefits on air quality and health. *Xinhua*

Chinese cities see fewer 'good air' days in H1

CHINESE cities have reported fewer days with "good air" in the first half (H1) of 2017, with the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei area suffering from higher density of key pollutants, official data showed.

The 338 cities monitored by the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) enjoyed good or excellent air quality on 74.1 percent of the days in H1, down 2.6 percentage points year on year, according to Liu Zhiquan, head of the environmen-

tal monitoring department at the MEP.

During the same period, the density of hazardous fine particle matter PM2.5 remained unchanged from a year ago while the density of PM10 was down 2.2 percent.

Air quality in 13 cities in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei area was rated good or excellent on 50.7 percent of the days in H1, down 7.1 percentage points year on year. In June, the ratio was only 34.1 percent, 14.2 per-

centage points lower than a year ago.

The density of PM2.5 and PM10 in these regions also climbed 14.3 percent and 13.2 percent, respectively, indicating worsened air quality.

Of the country's 74 major cities, Haikou in southern China's Hainan Province had the best air quality while Handan in northern China's Hebei Province was the most polluted, MEP data showed. *MDT/Xinhua*

India ready for talks to end border standoff

Ashok Sharma

INDIA said yesterday it was ready to hold talks with China with both sides pulling back their forces to end a standoff along a disputed territory high in the Himalayan mountains.

Tensions flared last month in the southernmost part of Tibet in an area also claimed by Indian ally Bhutan, after Chinese teams began building a road onto the Doklam Plateau.

The tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan turned to help from New Delhi, which

sent troops across the border from the northeastern state of Sikkim. China retaliated by closing a nearby mountain pass that Indian pilgrims use to reach Mount Kailash, a sacred Hindu and Buddhist site in Tibet.

India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said that a 2012 agreement bound China and India to settle the boundary issue with Bhutan. Her response came as China demanded that Indian forces leave the area to avoid an escalation.

India and China fought a

bloody war in 1962.

Speaking in Parliament yesterday, Swaraj said that Chinese forces recently came with bulldozers and excavators with the intent of building infrastructure that would change the status quo. In the past, the Chinese have built temporary roads in the area.

"If China unilaterally changes the status quo of the tri-junction, it becomes a matter of security concern for India," she said, referring to the area where the three countries meet.

Swaraj said China has

been demanding that India withdraw its forces from the area. "If China wants to discuss the matter, both sides should withdraw their forces and talk," she said.

She also said that China was becoming "aggressive" with Bhutan following its protest of the Chinese move.

The crisis is expected to be discussed when Indian National Security Adviser Ajit Doval visits Beijing on July 27-28 to take part in a security forum under the BRICS group of large developing nations that includes



Chinese troops hold a banner which reads "You've crossed the border, please go back" in Ladakh, India

Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The nuclear-armed neighbors share a 3,500-kilometer border, much of it contested. *AP*



A woman reacts near a booth promoting overseas marketing services on Facebook and Instagram, which are banned in China, during an internet conference in Beijing

Beijing clamping down on use of VPNs to evade Great Firewall

Joe McDonald, Beijing

CHINA is tightening control over foreign companies' internet use in a move some worry might disrupt their operations or jeopardize trade secrets as part of a crackdown on technology that allows web surfers to evade Beijing's online censorship.

In a letter to corporate customers seen by The Associated Press, the biggest Chinese internet service provider says virtual private networks, which create encrypted links between computers and can be used to see sites blocked by Beijing's web filters, will be permitted only to connect to a company's headquarters abroad. The letter from state-owned China Telecom Ltd. says VPN users are barred from linking to other sites outside China, a change that might block access to news, social media or business services that are obscured by its "Great Firewall."

The letter repeats an announcement from January that only VPNs approved by Chinese authorities are allowed. That has prompted fears of possible loss of trade secrets or information about customers or employees among companies that question the reliability of Chinese encryption services and whether authorities might read messages.

Regulators announced a crackdown in January to stamp out use of VPNs to circumvent web censorship.

Authorities have tried to reassure companies they won't be affected, but if the rules in the China Telecom letter are enforced, they could hamper activity ranging from gathering information for business deals to employees working on business trips.

The crackdown reflects President Xi Jinping's vision of "internet sovereignty," or Beijing's absolute right to control what people can do and see online.

Control over information is especially sensitive ahead of a party congress late this year at which Xi is due to be appointed to a second five-year term as leader.

The ruling Communist Party encourages web use for business and education but rejects the notion of a borderless internet and the free flow of information. It controls internet traffic across China's borders and tries to keep its public from seeing thousands of websites abroad including Google and social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, as well as news outlets and human rights groups.

This week, the Beijing municipal internet regulator announced it ordered website operators including Baidu Inc. and Tencent Holdings Ltd. to remove material that was "distorting the history of China and the Party" and "promoting abnormal values" or had other problems.

Also this week, a letter issued by the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Beijing to guests that circulated

on social media says the hotel can no longer provide VPN service "due to legal issues" as of last Friday.

In June, the Hong Kong-based operator of a popular service, Green VPN, announced Chinese regulators had ordered it to close.

The crackdown reflects Xi Jinping's vision of 'internet sovereignty,' or Beijing's absolute right to control what people can do and see online

Beijing has repeatedly pressured foreign companies to hand over technology, encryption know-how and other trade secrets in exchange for access to its huge and growing market.

Companies cite internet controls as among the biggest obstacles to doing business in China.

In a survey by the American Chamber of Commerce in China last year, 79 percent of companies that responded said web filters hurt them by blocking

access to information and business tools.

U.S. President Donald Trump said in April he would temporarily set aside disputes with Beijing over market barriers and currency while the two sides cooperated over North Korea's nuclear program. But Trump has expressed frustration with lack of progress on that and has resumed criticizing China's trade surplus with the United States.

It was unclear how many companies received China Telecom's letter. The American and European Chambers of Commerce in Beijing said their members had not reported receiving it.

The letter, which bears no date, says VPNs are for "internal office use only" and only can connect to a company's headquarters abroad, not to any other websites. That would block users from seeing business news or other information sources that are shielded by the filters.

Companies are required to provide the identities of every employee who uses a VPN, according to the letter.

Lester Ross, a lawyer in Beijing for the firm WilmerHale, said he had not heard of the China Telecom letter. But he said the conditions in it described to him by a reporter would be disruptive if enforced.

Without VPNs to bypass web filters, "then it is just impossible to do business under the constraints that apply officially," said

Ross. "You're either making it unenforceable or they are damaging business to an extraordinary extent."

A Western diplomat who asked not to be identified further due to the sensitivity of the issue said companies have told his government they worry the controls might lead to weaker data security and trade secrets being leaked to Chinese competitors. The diplomat said some are hesitant to invest more in China due to that.

China Telecom and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, which announced the January crackdown, did not respond to requests for information about the letter.

Authorities have never disclosed whether they read communications sent over Chinese VPN providers.

"Despite the fact that people get used to the system, protection of confidentiality is always a concern," said Ross. "They've never guaranteed privacy of communications."

Beijing has announced restrictions on VPN use over the past decade but did little to enforce them, possibly to avoid disrupting business or access to information for scientists and academics.

The VPN crackdown coincides with a Cybersecurity Law that took effect on June 1 and tightens control over data. It limits use of foreign security technology and requires companies to store information about Chinese citizens within this country.

On Tuesday, users of Facebook's WhatsApp messaging service, which normally operates freely in China, were no longer able to send images without using a VPN. That coincided with official efforts to suppress mention of Liu Xiaobo, the imprisoned Nobel Peace laureate who died last week and whom social media users have commemorated by exchanging images of him.

Already, companies increasingly limit VPN access to employees such as media managers "with a critical business need" to see a banned website, according to Jake Parker, vice president of China operations for the U.S.-China Business Council.

Companies can avoid the need for a VPN by leasing a circuit from China Telecom or other state-owned providers that connects directly to their headquarters abroad. Prices start at more than USD1,000 per month.

The information ministry tried to reassure commercial users in a statement reported last week in a Shanghai newspaper, The Paper.

"Foreign trade enterprises and multinational companies that need a cross-border line for their own office use can lease one from an authorized telecoms enterprise," said the statement. It said the January notice "will not affect normal operations." **AP**

East Timor vote highlights young nation's uneven progress

Raimundos Oki
and Stephen Wright, Dili

ALMOST two dozen parties are contesting parliamentary elections in East Timor this weekend that are likely to return independence heroes to power despite frustration in the young democracy with lack of economic progress and warnings the country could be bankrupt within a decade.

East Timorese hope the elections will repeat the success of a peaceful vote for the largely ceremonial role of president in March, which was the country's first election without U.N. supervision since peacekeepers left in 2012. Political stability is particularly crucial for the country, which officially gained independence only 15 years ago, because it is facing a financial time bomb.

Oil revenues, which finance more than 90 percent of government spending, are rapidly dwindling and the country's USD16 billion sovereign wealth fund could be empty within 10 years with the government's annual withdrawals exceeding its investment returns, according to La'o Hamutuk, an East Timorese research institute.

An opinion poll commissioned by the International Republican Institute, which promotes democracy in the developing world, showed almost half of East Timorese surveyed in May were undecided about which party they would vote for on Saturday. But the current cast of leaders, whose popularity owes much to their history as fighters in East Timor's struggle for independence from Indonesia, are unlikely to be unseated.

Parliament is currently dominated by a national unity coalition led by Fretilin, the party of



Former East Timorese President Xanana Gusmao speaks to supporters during a campaign rally in Dili

Prime Minister Prime Minister Rui Maria de Araujo, with CNRT, the party of resistance leader and former president Xanana Gusmao, who remains highly influential. Seats are allocated to parties based on the percentage of votes won if they poll higher than 4 percent.

The Popular Liberation Party, a new political force led by former president and resistance fighter Taur Matan Ruak, is campaigning on a platform of better access to education, anti-corruption and compulsory military service to address high youth unemployment and may pick up a few seats.

Campaigning, which was punctuated by parties trading accusations of vote buying, en-

ded on Wednesday without major incident.

East Timor, a former Portuguese colony, voted overwhelmingly in 1999 to end 24 years of brutal Indonesian occupation. Indonesia's military and pro-Indonesian militias responded to the independence referendum with scorched earth attacks that devastated the East Timorese half of the island of Timor.

Today, the country of 1.3 million people, still faces poverty with many people lacking clean water and sanitation. Unemployment is high and young people are increasingly looking abroad for work. The top and perennial concern of voters in the IRI survey was the

poor condition of roads. They also believed government corruption was worsening.

"Here in Dili it is very difficult to find jobs," said Agostinho Lopo, who like other young Timorese hopes he can find work in South Korea.

To develop the economy, leaders have focused on big ticket infrastructure projects such as airports, a highway and a special economic zone funded from the dwindling \$16 billion Timor-Leste Petroleum Fund. It was established in 2005 from revenues from the now almost-dry Bayu-Undan oil field. The field is forecast to end production in 2021.

In an acknowledgement that progress is uneven, both Fre-

tilin and CNRT have vowed during the campaign that the benefits of their development plans will be spread more widely.

As the country's funds run down, development of the potentially lucrative "Greater Sunshine" oil and gas field in the Timor Sea is stalled by a boundary dispute between East Timor and Australia and the insistence of top East Timorese leaders that the processing plant be located in East Timor despite industry experts saying that would make development of the field financially unviable.

The campaigning, which was punctuated by parties trading accusations of vote buying, ended without major incident

In March, an Australian parliamentary committee heard testimony from an expert who predicted East Timor could become a failed state without revenue from Sunrise, outraging East Timorese leaders despite similar warnings coming from other quarters in recent years.

East Timorese, however, are still optimistic about the future. The IRI survey showed 68 percent believed that East Timor would be better off in a year's time.

Ano Peji Colo, a student at the National University of Timor, said East Timor needs other industries, not only oil and gas, to compete with other Southeast Asian nations.

"I really hope that the new government will invest more in the economy. The government shouldn't depend on oil and gas because oil and gas is not sustainable," he said. **AP**

AD



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PHILIPPINES

Duterte flies to besieged city, warns of other attacks

THE Philippine president flew for the first time yesterday to a besieged southern city to cheer troops who have been trying to quell a nearly two-month uprising by Islamic State group-linked militants, who he warned were plotting to attack other cities.

Clad in a camouflage uniform, President Rodrigo Duterte gave a talk to troops and inspected recovered rebel rifles and other weapons in a military camp in Marawi city that is outside of the battle zone but remains dangerous because of stray bullets.

His past attempts to fly to the lakeside city were aborted because of bad weather.

"The soldiers and police are very happy over his visit because this proves that the president is very firm, very dedicated in supporting most specially the operations here," military spokesman Lt. Col. Jo-ar Herrera told reporters.

Duterte thanked the troops



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte (third from left)

for their heroism and sacrifices, Herrera said.

Duterte told Congress in a letter this week that even though troops have regained control of much of Marawi and killed hundreds of militants, "the rebellion persists and a lot more remains to be done to completely quell the same." The militants' leadership, he said, remains largely in-

tact and has funded diversionary attacks on other southern cities.

The seven-page letter, a copy of which was seen by reporters yesterday, aims to convince lawmakers to extend Duterte's 60-day declaration of martial law in the south until the end of the year. The statements in the letter appear to differ from his assurance last week that the Ma-

rawi crisis, the most serious he has faced so far, could end in 10 to 15 days.

In a separate report to the Senate, the military said the attackers' main leader, Isnilon Hapilon, "allowed the escape of 96 young recruits fighting in Marawi and instructed them to continue jihad outside Marawi." Jihad is an Arabic word that militants use to refer to "holy war."

Officials say at least 565 people, including 421 militants and 99 soldiers and policemen, have been killed in the worst urban uprising by Muslim militants in the volatile south in decades. Nearly half a million residents have been displaced in Marawi and outlying towns by the fighting.

Duterte wrote in his letter that the leadership of the Marawi siege "largely remains intact despite the considerable decline in the number of rebels fighting in the main battle area." Other radical armed bands "are ready to reinforce Isnilon Hapilon's group or

launch diversionary attacks and similar uprisings elsewhere," he said.

The attackers' lasting power and large arsenal of weapons have surprised Duterte and his top security officials, who acknowledged they underestimated the combat strength of the militants and their preparations, including the stockpiling of assault firearms in lakeside Marawi. Troops long used to fighting insurgents in the jungles have struggled to rout the gunmen from Marawi's dense urban sprawl.

Despite the large number of troops and checkpoints around the city, "there have been reported entries of reinforcements, weapons, ammunitions and other logistical supplies from outside Marawi city through clandestine routes," Duterte told the lawmakers. Followers of local politicians have backed the siege, which was partly funded by drug money, he said.

The crisis has sparked alarm that the IS group may be gaining a foothold in Southeast Asia, through allied local militants, as it faces major setbacks in Syria and Iraq. The United States and Australia have deployed surveillance planes to Marawi, and China has provided weapons for Filipino troops, including those fighting in the besieged city. **MDT/AP**

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Germany raises pressure on Turkey after activist jailed

Geir Moulson, Berlin

THE German government increased pressure on Turkey yesterday after the jailing of a human rights activist, telling all citizens traveling there to exercise caution and threatening to withhold backing for German investments in Turkey.

Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said Berlin had shown patience amid rising tensions with Turkey, but “time and again we have been disappointed.” While Germany stopped short of more drastic immediate action, his statement marked a shift to a more hawkish public stance.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s spokesman called Gabriel’s comments “unfortunate,” and the Foreign Ministry accused Berlin of “blackmail and threats,” saying that it would not make concessions regarding Turkey’s judiciary. Ankara rejects complaints about the jailing of German Peter Steudtner and five other activists accused of links to terror groups.

German-Turkish relations have been souring for over a year, particularly since last July’s coup attempt in Turkey. Twenty-two German citizens have been taken into custody in the ensuing crackdown. Nine are currently in jail, including Steudtner and journalists Deniz Yucel and Mesale Tolu.

The countries also have tangled over Turkey blocking German lawmakers’ visits to German troops serving in the campaign against the Islamic State group at two Turkish air bases and over authorities’ refusal to allow rallies by Turkish government politicians in Germany. The latter spat prompted Erdogan to accuse Germany of “committing Nazi practices.”



German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel

The immediate trigger of Germany’s ire was a Turkish court’s decision Tuesday to jail Steudtner and the other activists, including Amnesty International’s Turkey director and a Swedish IT trainer, who were detained in a July 5 police raid on a hotel on the island of Buyukada, where they were attending a digital security workshop.

Amnesty says Steudtner was providing training on non-violence and wellbeing. It’s unclear which terror group the six are accused of aiding.

Berlin was alarmed because Steudtner has no previous links to Turkey and yet was still accused of links to terror, which Germany says are far-fetched. Gabriel said the case “shows that German citizens are no longer safe from arbitrary arrests.”

“The cases of Peter Steudtner, Deniz Yucel and Ms. Tolu are examples of the absurd accusations of terror propaganda that

obviously are only meant to serve to silence every critical voice in Turkey [...] and also voices from Germany,” Gabriel said. He also complained that German companies are being accused without evidence of helping terrorists.

“We must be clearer than before so that authorities in Ankara understand that such policies are not without consequences,” Gabriel told reporters after interrupting his vacation for consultations with Chancellor Angela Merkel and other leaders.

The Foreign Ministry issued travel advice which, while short of a formal warning, stated that “people traveling for private or business reasons to Turkey are advised to exercise elevated caution” and to register with the German embassy or consulate even for short stays.

Gabriel also cast doubt on the future of government export guarantees for German companies’

“**The absurd accusations of terror propaganda obviously are only meant to silence every critical voice in Turkey.**

SIGMAR GABRIEL
GERMANY FOREIGN MINISTER

investments in Turkey in light of the threat of “arbitrary expropriations for political reasons.” The government offers such guarantees to insure exports to many countries, but Gabriel said that “you cannot advise anyone to invest in a country if there is no

longer legal security.”

He added that Berlin will discuss with its European Union partners the future of financial aid for Ankara allocated to help prepare Turkey to join the bloc, even as talks on its possible membership have stalled. And he said that credits from European development banks should be examined.

The German government will consider those questions and “further measures” over the coming weeks, Gabriel said.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has repeatedly said the rights activists now arrested were involved in a meeting that had the “nature of a continuation” of the coup attempt.

Erdogan’s spokesman argued that Gabriel’s comments were geared toward a domestic audience ahead of Germany’s Sept. 24 election. Merkel’s and Gabriel’s parties are rivals in that vote, but both have made clear that the new stance toward Turkey was coordinated.

“We strongly condemn statements that German citizens who travel to Turkey are not safe and that German companies in Turkey have hesitations and concerns,” Ibrahim Kalin said. “There is no such thing.”

Kalin also urged Germany to respect decisions by the Turkish judiciary, saying the human rights defenders weren’t ordinary visitors but “as far as the judiciary could establish, people who engaged in illegal or suspicious activities.”

In its statement, Turkey’s Foreign Ministry said that the two countries were going through a crisis of confidence, blaming it on what it said was Germany’s “double-standard attitude” toward Turkey.

Over the past year, more than 50,000 people have been arrested and 110,000 dismissed from their jobs for alleged links to U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen — on whom Ankara blames the coup attempt — and other terror groups. **AP**

FRANCE

Macron visits air force base amid military crisis

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron promised an “unprecedented” hike in defense spending next year and vowed to safeguard the country’s nuclear deterrent, as he tries to show his commitment to the troops amid a crisis over the military budget.

Macron flew in a C-135 military jet and visited nuclear forces at the Istres air base in southern France yesterday a day after the head of the French military quit in a damaging dispute with Macron over budget cuts.

His replacement as chief

of staff of the armed forces, Gen. Francois Lecointre, was at Macron’s side for much of yesterday’s event.

Macron promised to boost spending by 1.8 billion euros (USD2.1 billion) to 34.2 billion (\$39 billion) euros next year. He has also pledged to bring defense spending to 2 percent of GDP by 2025 to fulfill pledges to the NATO military alliance, from about 1.8 percent of GDP currently.

“This increase in the budget, in a year where no other budget except the army’s will see an increa-

se, is unprecedented, and I want to you to understand how important this is,” he told officers gathered at Istres.

He called France’s nuclear arsenal “the heart of our defense.”

France’s youngest-ever president, Macron has sought to establish his authority over the military, notably by touring a nuclear submarine and overseeing last week’s military parade for Bastille Day alongside U.S. President Donald Trump.

But Macron ran into conflict with former armed forces chief of staff

Gen. Pierre de Villiers, who resisted 850 million euros in cuts announced last week to this year’s budget.

Villiers’ departure Wednesday rattled the normally quiet, loyal French military and exposed simmering concerns about neglected facilities and dwindling resources. Villiers notably argued that France’s military is being stretched more and more to fight Islamic extremist threats at home and abroad.

But the dispute was as much about Macron exerting authority as it was



President Emmanuel Macron (right) and new French armed forces chief of staff Francois Lecointre review an honor guard in Istres

about money, with Macron lecturing military leaders “I am the boss”

and de Villiers cautioning that “no one deserves to be blindly followed.” **AP**

Venezuela's Maduro, foes head into crucial showdown



Nicolas Maduro (left) talks to defense minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez during Army Day celebrations at Fuerte Tiun

Michel Weissenstein,
Jorge Rueda

VENEZUELAN President Nicolas Maduro and his opponents face a crucial showdown yesterday as the country's opposition calls the first national strike since a 2002 stoppage that failed to topple Maduro's predecessor Hugo Chavez.

Fifteen years later, Chavez's socialist party controls vast swathes of the Venezuelan economy, making it harder for opponents to bring the country to a halt. Easing their task is the fact that much of the economy is already faltering, hamstrung by a plunge in oil prices and years of corruption and mismanagement.

The 24-hour strike was meant as an expression of national disapproval of Maduro's plan to convene a constitutional assembly that would reshape the Venezuelan system to consolidate the ruling party's power over the few institutions that remain outside its control. The opposition is boycotting a July 30 election to select members of the assembly.

The country's largest business group, Fedecamaras, has cautiously avoided full endorsement of the strike, but its members have told employees that they won't be punished for coming to work. Fedecamaras

played a central role in the months-long 2002-2003 strike that Chavez's political rivals and opponents in Venezuela's private business sector orchestrated in an attempt to topple him.

Chavez emerged from the strike and exerted control over the private sector with years of expropriations, strict regulations and imports bought with oil money and meant to replace local production. Business groups estimate that 150,000 Venezuelan businesses have closed over the last 15 years.

"This is a work stoppage by civil society. He who wants to work, work. Who wants to stop, stop," said Francisco Martinez, the president of Fedecamaras.

Government-run industries will remain open and Labor Minister Nestor Ovalles said the Maduro administration would punish private companies that close in sympathy with the strike.

"We won't allow, and we'll be closely watching, any disruption that violates the working class' right to work," Ovalles said. "Businesses that join the strike will be punished."

The business group's incoming president, economist Carlos Larrabal, said the strike would be of limited duration to avoid worsening Venezuela's already dire shortages

of food and other basic products.

"Inventory levels right are very precarious," Larrabal said. "If the supply chains are affected more than they are right now, we could have a bigger problem."

However, the Venezuelan Workers' Confederation, a labor coalition with ties to the opposition, said at least 12 of its 20 member organizations across the country had decided to join the strike. Transportation workers in the capital, Caracas, also said they would participate.

"There's an appeal to the conscience of the Venezuelan people," said Pedro Jimenez, head of a major transport workers' union. "There won't be transportation services."

More than 24 hours before the start of the strike, neighborhood groups across Caracas were setting up roadblocks of tree branches and tires in to protest Maduro's plans to change the constitution, irritating some residents.

"The government jails the people who protest and those who are protesting are caging the rest of us. It's unfair," said Maria Sandoval, a 27-year-old medical secretary.

But those manning the roadblocks said they had no plans to stop until Maduro fell, complicating the scenario for Wednesday.



SYRIA

Parents of missing US reporter believe he is alive

The parents of an American journalist who has been missing in Syria for the past five years said yesterday that they believe he is still alive — and that the U.S. and Syrian governments have assured them they are doing all they can to secure his safe release. The pair also expressed the family's readiness to deal with any government or group that will help them win the freedom of their son.

ITALY

Court convicts more than 40 in corruption trial

A Rome court yesterday convicted dozens of defendants in a wide-ranging corruption trial that revealed a system of kickbacks and intimidation to gain control of city contracts, but acquitted all of the defendants on key charges of mafia-style association. The trial was the first in Italy to unite allegations of corruption with the trappings of organized crime, and the court's across-the-board rejection of the mafia-style allegations was a blow to prosecutors' case, touted by Italian media as "Mafia Capital."

AD

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FRIDAY

13:00	TDM News (Repeat)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:50	RTPi Live
17:00	Revenge Sr 4
18:20	Now Generation (Repeated)
19:10	TDM Talk Show (Repeated) (PT)
19:40	Soap Opera (PT)
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (PT)
21:15	Miscellaneous
22:10	Now Generation
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Miscellaneous
01:15	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
02:05	RTPi Live

SATURDAY

10:40	Comedy
11:15	Blaze Riders
11:35	Chefs
12:30	Miscellaneous
13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast (PT)
15:00	Miscellaneous
18:30	Miscellaneous
19:20	Miscellaneous
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (PT)
21:00	Non-Daily Portuguese News
21:10	Drama (PT)
22:10	Comedy
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Miscellaneous
00:35	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
01:10	RTPi Live

SUNDAY

10:35	Young Adult
11:00	Sunday Mass (Live)
12:00	Miscellaneous
12:30	Miscellaneous
13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:50	Zig Zag
18:15	Miscellaneous
19:35	Non-daily Portuguese News (Repeated)
19:40	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (PT)
21:00	Non-Daily Portuguese News
22:00	Documentary Serie
23:00	TDM News
23:50	Europe 30
00:40	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
01:15	RTPi Live

Offbeat

U.S. STUDENT DETAINED IN CHINA AFTER DISPUTE WITH CABBIE

Police in central China have arrested an American college student on charges of intentional injury following an altercation with a taxi driver.

A family friend of Guthrie McLean said yesterday that the University of Montana student was formally arrested in the city of Zhengzhou earlier this week.

Tom Mitchell, the family friend who is also Beijing bureau chief for the Financial Times, said McLean was trying to protect his mother from a local taxi driver in a dispute that took place on June 10.

Mitchell said he's not aware if any U.S. official has visited McLean in detention.

The Zhengzhou municipal public security bureau, when contacted by The Associated Press, said it does not take inquiries about individual cases. The U.S. Embassy in Beijing referred questions to spokesmen in Washington.

cinema



CINETEATRO

20- 21 JUL

PRIPARA THE MOVIE

ROOM 1

2:00, 5:00pm

Director: Okubo Is Male

Starring:

Language: Cantonese (Chinese)

Duration: 58min



DESPICABLE ME 3

ROOM 1

10:00pm

Director: Eric Guillon, Kyle Balda, Pierre Coffin

Starring: Steve Carell, Kristen Wiig, Trey Parker

Language: Cantonese

Duration: 90min

MEOW

ROOM 1

6:00pm

ROOM 3

10:00pm

Director: Benny Chan

Starring: Louis Koo, Mary Ma, Jessica Liu, Andy Huang

Language: Cantonese (Chinese & English)

Duration: 109min

SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING

ROOM 1

9:45pm

Director: Jon Watts

Starring: Tom Holland, Michael Keaton, Robert Downey Jr.

Language: English

Duration: 133min



WAR OF THE PLANET OF THE APES

ROOM 2

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

Director: Matt Reeves

Starring: Woody Herrelson, Sara Canning, Judy Greer

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 140min



CARS 3

ROOM 3

2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00pm

Director: Brian Fee

Starring: Owen Wilson, Cristela Alonzo, Chris Cooper

Language: Cantonese

Duration: 102min

MACAU TOWER

6 - 26 JUL



SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING

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

Director: Jon Watts

Starring: Tom Holland, Michael Keaton, Robert Downey Jr.

Language: English

Duration: 133min

this day in history

1954 PEACE DEAL ENDS INDOCHINA WAR

The major world powers have reached agreement on the terms for a ceasefire in Indochina, ending nearly eight years of war.

The war began in 1946 between nationalist forces of the Communist Viet Minh under leader Ho Chi Minh and France, the occupying colonial power.

But there is no lasting agreement on peace in Korea, the main subject of the talks in Geneva, Switzerland between France, Britain, the USA, the USSR, China and countries of Indo-China.

The news of a ceasefire has come as a great relief in Europe and the United States. The newly appointed French Prime Minister, Pierre Mendes-France, had set a deadline for an agreement that was finally signed in the early hours of this morning.

This afternoon he told the French Parliament he had achieved his aim of "an honorable settlement" to end a war that has cost at least 300,000 lives.

However, there is concern that the terms of the Geneva Accord concede too much to the Viet Minh - not least in the United States which gave USD385m to equip the Vietnamese Army.

President Dwight D Eisenhower said in a statement from Washington the agreement contained elements which he did not like - such as the division of Vietnam between north and south - and a great deal depended on how they worked in practice.

Senate leaders from both parties went one step further and expressed their alarm at what is widely regarded as a victory for Communism.

"We may regret that such an agreement has been forced upon the French," said Senator William Knowland, Republican and Senate Majority Leader.

The conference was the first international meeting at which the Communist government of China took part.

The main provisions of the Geneva Accord are:

- Vietnam will be divided between north and south along the 17th parallel.

- A Communist government under Viet Minh leader Ho Chi Minh will control the north and a nationalist one in the south under Emperor Bao Dai and prime minister Ngo Dinh Diem.

- The capitals will be Hanoi in the north and Saigon in the south.

- Elections will be held in 1956 with the aim of creating a unified government.

- Prisoners of war will be released on both sides.

- French forces will withdraw from the north and the Viet Minh from the south;

- The Communists will recognize Laos and Cambodia as independent countries and agree to the withdrawal of their forces from both.

In Saigon, Supreme French Commander General Paul-Henri Romuald Ely promised the Vietnamese Army that "in peace, as in war, we will remain at your sides."

In a message to the Vietnamese people he said France would pay for transportation of all those who wanted to leave Communist-controlled Vietnam.

Since the Geneva conference opened on 26 April the French have suffered major defeats at the hands of the Viet Minh, the last and most humiliating being the fall of Dien Bien Phu on 7 May after a 55-day siege. It signaled the end of French rule in Indo-China.

Last month France began a major retreat giving up the south zone of Tonkin's Red River delta leaving behind 2.5 million people and a fertile rice-growing region.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

France created the territory of Indo-china in 1887 out of its four colonies - Cochinchina, Annam, Tonkin (all now part of Vietnam) and Cambodia. Laos was added in 1893.

Between 1940 and 1945 the region was occupied by Japan.

The Viet Minh was formed in 1941 as a nationalist party whose main aim was to free Vietnam from French control. Its Communist leader, Ho Chi Minh, declared Vietnamese independence on 2 September 1945.

In March 1946, France recognized the Vietnam Republic that controlled Tonkin and part of Annam north of the 16th Parallel in March 1946 but fighting broke out after disputes about control over the rest of Annam and Cochinchina.

The war began as a battle for independence from French imperialism.

But France, whose economy could ill afford such an expensive war, gradually conceded more power to indigenous nationalists and found itself supporting them against the armies funded and backed by Communist China.

After the Geneva Accord, two million North Vietnamese fled to the South.

South Vietnam's Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem refused to hold talks with the Viet Minh on elections to unify the country.

China, the Soviet Union and the Viet Minh gave material and moral support to the Viet Cong, Communist rebels in US-backed South Vietnam.

The United States, which had opposed the division of Vietnam at the Geneva talks, intervened in the mid 1960s to defend the 17th Parallel resulting in the long and bloody Vietnam War which finally ended in 1975.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Testy? Cranky? Who, you? Just because the planet in charge of your sign just so happens to be Mars, the ancient god of war? No way. It's not that you're irritable. It's just that 'the opponents'.

Taurus April 20-May 20 There's something going on. You're sure of it, and you're not willing to stand for it any more. You, however, are just calm, cool and collected enough to make all parties involved believe that you're over it.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 You really do want to go out and play and it has (almost) nothing to do with the fact that it's your day to goof off. What you're really after is socializing - but not on a lighthearted level.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 In public, you're the very soul of tact, reserve and discretion. Tonight, however, that won't be the case. If someone happens to ask for your opinion - even if you're out on a date with someone you were hoping to impress.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Ignoring that one particular individual who seems to have a talent for aggravating you won't be easy. You'll have to bite your tongue, smile falsely and force yourself to be totally different from the way you are.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 Just when you thought it was safe to go out, someone who's ordinarily the very soul of discretion will suddenly get you started on a topic that's near and dear to your heart - but far from fit for public consumption.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 You've just about had it with a certain person - the one who seems to be living for nothing else lately than to aggravate you, in any way possible. The bad news - for them.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 You are one of the most potentially intimidating signs in the zodiac. Unlike other signs, your retaliation tactics are far more subtle, but just as lethal. Oh, and then there's the fact that you'll wait a hundred years.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 It's your time to relax - and not a moment too soon. You still can't control yourself when it comes to asking questions, and you've still got a lot of questions, especially pertaining to one particular person.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 It's been a difficult and troubling week, in many ways -- but when it comes to romance, oddly enough, that department seems to be operating independently - and doing a darned fine job of it, too.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 It seems that the heavens have decided to pass out coupons, redeemable toward a veritable arsenal of verbal weapons. Interestingly enough, the offer is only good for your sign.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 You're definitely an 'impulse shopper' - no doubt about it. But what you're usually talked into buying are sentimental things or warm and fuzzy things. What you want It's an entirely new concept, isn't it?

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

9x9 grid for Easy Sudoku puzzle with some numbers filled in.

Easy+

9x9 grid for Easy+ Sudoku puzzle with some numbers filled in.

Medium

9x9 grid for Medium Sudoku puzzle with some numbers filled in.

Hard

9x9 grid for Hard Sudoku puzzle with some numbers filled in.

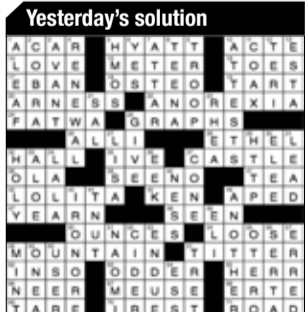
WEATHER

Weather forecast table for China and World locations, including columns for MIN, MAX, and CONDITION.

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- WWII battle site; 5- Angry with; 10- Currency of Turkey, and formerly of Italy; 14- Twin in Genesis; 15- Texas shrine; 16- Put a lid ___; 17- Talk wildly; 18- More tender; 19- Kodak rival; 20- ___ Rabbit; 21- Bonnet with a large brim; 23- Manipulate; 25- Faulkner's '___ Lay Dying'; 26- Living in the open water; 31- Low-budget prefix; 35- Game with Skip cards; 36- Actor Romero; 38- ___ Gay; 40- First man; 42- Like most movies; 44- Elevator man; 45- Utah's ___ Mountains; 47- Eight singers; 49- Holiday start; 50- Light ___; 52- Stocky; 54- Susan of 'L.A. Law'; 56- Ending for legal or Japan; 57- Gazette; 62- Pouches; 66- Take ___ your leader; 67- Prince Valiant's wife; 68- Dairy product; 69- Hebrew month; 70- March honoree, briefly; 71- An apple ___; 72- 'Cast Away' setting; 73- Flavor; 74- Votes against;

DOWN: 1- Balkan native; 2- Former Russian ruler; 3- Alley; 4- Surpass; 5- Jaw muscle; 6- Baseball's Felipe; 7- Mend socks; 8- Low life?; 9- Knobbed; 10- Bank offering; 11- 'Splendor in the Grass' screenwriter; 12- Fissure; 13- ___ standstill; 22- Pleasing; 24- Jiff; 26- Island feast; 27- Gandhi's land; 28- Haunted house sounds; 29- Golfer Aoki; 30- Trap; 32- Lennon's lady; 33- Short letters; 34- Antipasto morsel; 37- Nerve network; 39- I'd hate to break up ___; 41- 1959 Kingston Trio hit; 43- Remove air from; 46- Helps; 48- Boob tubes; 51- Meal; 53- Toady; 55- Seaport in the Crimea; 57- Sparks and Beatty; 58- And others: Abbr.; 59- Sported; 60- Enlivens, with 'up'; 61- Coup d'___; 63- Opera set in Egypt; 64- Pottery material; 65- The ___ the limit; 66- ___ tai;



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Fire department 28 572 222
Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993
Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333
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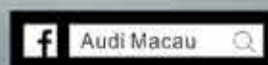
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Singapore's Christian Lee lets out a yell following his featherweight win over China's Wan Jian Ping in ONE Championship mixed martial arts bout in Pasay city, south of Manila

MMA

ONE Championship gets cash for major growth

Greg Beacham

ONE Championship has secured a major equity investment from venture capital firm Sequoia India and investment firm Mission Holdings, positioning the ascendant mixed martial arts promotion to increase its presence throughout Asia.

The investment means ONE Championship has raised over USD100 million in total capital less than six years after its first show, according to Chatri Sityodtong, the promotion's chairman and CEO.

Sityodtong told The Associated Press on Wednesday that ONE Championship plans to stage

up to 30 events in 2018 and will financially compete to sign the world's best fighters, all while concentrating on its primary goal of being Asia's dominant MMA brand. To that mission, Sityodtong intends to expand the Singapore-based promotion's reach next year into Japan, South Korea and eventually India.

"Already we're the largest martial arts organization in the history of Asia," Sityodtong said. "All the pieces suggest that we have a big, big runway of growth ahead of us and that we're just scratching the surface of our potential."

The growth is already visible: In the final five months of 2017 alone, ONE Championship has 11 scheduled shows spread

among Macau, Malaysia, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Myanmar.

After doing 18 events this year, Sityodtong projects 24 to 30 shows for 2018. The increase will include aggressive expansion into China, where ONE Championship is already staging events this year in Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, just north of Hong Kong.

ONE Championship already claimed it was the largest sports media property in Asia before the latest round of investment, with video programming seen in 128 countries and live shows attracting large crowds throughout the Eastern hemisphere. The promotion received capital last year from Heliconia Capital

Management, which is owned by Singapore's sovereign wealth fund.

Sityodtong is a Harvard-educated entrepreneur and a lifelong martial artist who left a lucrative career as a hedge fund manager to start ONE Championship as a showcase for homegrown Asian martial artists. He is looking forward to utilizing Sequoia's expertise on business expansion while he plots his still-young promotion's next moves.

"It's been a whirlwind," Sityodtong said. "Just six years ago, this was a PowerPoint presentation, and now we arguably have the most blue chip shareholder base for any sports property out here in Asia."

The UFC, the sport's richest and most prominent promotion, is striving to increase its presence in Asia with shows in Singapore, Japan and China this year. UFC fights are watched avidly across Asia, and the promotion has a healthy number of fighters under contract with Asian ethnicity, but Sityodtong claims ONE Championship already has "a massive lead over the UFC" in the fight for Asian fans.

"We're very focused on Asia, with Asian content that really resonates," Sityodtong said. "So it's very different scale. It would be like ONE Championship coming to America with Asian heroes and trying to ignite American audiences without any Americans on a show. It's hard to do so."

ONE Championship's talent pool is Asian-focused, but not exclusive. Its champions include Filipino-American heavyweight Brandon Vera, Wisconsin-born welterweight Ben Askren, Brazilian light heavyweight Roger Gracie — and Angela Lee, the Canada-born, Hawaii-raised atomweight who has become one of the promotion's most popular fighters.

While ONE Championship's roster of fighters probably

doesn't measure up to the UFC's group on pure overall talent, Sityodtong's promotion is about much more than blood and belts. Although he has the money to bid for top free-agent fighters alongside the UFC and Bellator, Sityodtong is more interested in creating a product that suits ONE Championship's conception of the Asian audience's sensibilities.

"The UFC has done a wonderful job in the Western hemisphere and deserve their success, but they focus primarily on the fighting, on the violence, on controversy, on disrespect," Sityodtong said. "You know, Conor McGregor, in your face, F-this, F-that. We've chosen to focus on Asian values, and that kind of stuff just doesn't fly. ONE Championship is a true celebration of martial arts, which is Asia's greatest cultural treasure, and we want to honor the Asian values of humility, kindness, integrity, strength and discipline. So it's a very different approach."

Sityodtong believes that cultivated, clean-cut image has the side benefit of attracting corporate sponsors and deep-pocketed partners — including Sequoia India, a branch of the famed U.S. venture capital firm that invested in Apple, Google, PayPal, YouTube, Instagram, Yahoo!, WhatsApp and countless other foundational technology companies.

"ONE Championship has been a pioneer and major driving force of the martial arts industry in Asia, with surging popularity across major countries," said Shailendra J Singh, the managing director of Sequoia Capital (India). "It has played an incredible role in nurturing local talent and developing local stars, led by a wonderful, mission-oriented team. We are delighted to join the team in their pursuit of developing the leading martial arts franchise for Asia's 4.4 billion people." AP

FOOTBALL

Villar appears before judge after arrest in corruption probe

THE president of the Spanish Football Federation and his son appeared before a judge yesterday, two days after being arrested in an anti-corruption probe.

Two other Spanish soccer officials who were also arrested in police raids on Tuesday will also stand before National Court judge Santiago Pedraz.

Angel Maria Villar, his son Gorka Villar, Juan Padron and Ramon Hernandez are accused by a state prosecutor of improper manage-

ment, misappropriation of funds, corruption and falsifying documents. Padron is the Spanish federation's vice president of economic affairs and also president of the Tenerife federation. Hernandez is the Tenerife federation's secretary.

A court spokesman said the Villars were placed in the court's jail after answering questions while Padron and Hernandez were testifying.

Judge Pedraz will decide whether the suspects remain in custody while the

investigation continues, a spokesman for the National Court told The Associated Press. The spokesman spoke on condition of anonymity in line with court policy.

Angel Maria Villar has been president of the Spanish federation for three decades. He is also FIFA's senior vice president and a vice president of UEFA.

On Tuesday, police said they suspect the elder Villar of having arranged matches for Spain that led to business deals be-

nefitting his son, a sports lawyer who has worked for CONMEBOL under three presidents who were all implicated in corruption cases.

Two weeks ago, Villar answered a judge's questions as part of an investigation into accusations brought by Spain's Higher Council of Sports that his federation had committed fraud in the misappropriation of 1.8 million euros (USD2 million) that was destined for humanitarian relief in Haiti. And in May,



Former President of the Spanish Football Federation Angel Maria Villar (right)

Villar's reelection for an eighth consecutive term was marred when the only rival candidate withdrew in protest for what he said were irregularities in the election of the federation's general assembly.

Villar has spent the last

two nights in a Guardia Civil jail on the outskirts of Madrid, not far from the Spanish federation offices which were raided by police on Tuesday along with private properties and regional federation offices. MDT/AP

opinion

Kapok
 Eric Sautédé



THE VARIABLE GEOMETRY OF THE 'ONE COUNTRY'

The fact that Macao immigration has been barring some Hong Kong residents from entering the territory of the Macao SAR is widely acknowledged and documented. It is neither a daily occurrence, nor an open secret, but the very fact that it has become duly admitted and vindicated by the Macao authorities, including Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak, testifies to a worrying trend in which a discretionary power has transformed into an accepted norm and a routine practice.

Suffice it to say that it is "in accordance with the law" for the audience to accept it matter-of-factly, as if for a high official to invoke the law and the compliance with that law were good enough to ease all doubts and worries. This is exactly what happened with the rejection of Hong Kong legislator Kwok Ka Ki on July 15th on the grounds that he was a "threat to stability" (威脅穩定). As Mr Kwok is strongly contesting the decision, Secretary Wong has been mildly challenged by (too few) local media and has been arguing that this kind of decision was indeed absolutely in line with existing laws regarding the security of the territory — which ones, no one really knows — and that it was not unique to the SAR but that many other jurisdictions — he reportedly quoted the examples of Portugal and the European Union — have similar legal provisions.

Mr Kwok was well aware that such a practice existed in Macao — and even the other way round as the recent Scott Chiang case proves — and he is now arguing that he never participated in any politically-related activity in the second SAR, merely visiting for holidays as this was the case that day when he was supposed to celebrate his 30th wedding anniversary together with his wife. He has now lodged a complaint with Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam and has sent a similar letter to the Macao Chief Executive, Fernando Chui, asking for the justification for his entry refusal.

There was a time when such rebuttals would create a stir. That was especially true in March 2009 when then-Dean of Law from the University of Hong Kong Johannes Chan was prevented from entering Macao over the same motives. This caused an embarrassment for both the Macao government and the inviting party, the University of Macao, as Professor Chan was supposed to be in the SAR for just a few hours to deliver a short lecture on the right to a fair trial — a purely academic endeavour. But that was a few days after the passage of the Article 23 national security law in our SAR, and yet it led not only to a public outcry — including, quite ironically, a vibrant declaration by former Hong Kong Secretary for Security Regina Ip that this was "tightening the freedom" of Hong Kong residents — but also to an informal discussion in Beijing between then-Hong Kong Chief Executive Donald Tsang and his Macao counterpart, Edmund Ho. Only Stanley Ho at the time had the bad taste of justifying the unjustifiable in coarse language.

What is truly problematic is that these "stability concerns" appear to be much more politically motivated than security-prompted, then and now. In that respect the practice reminds us of the disgraceful 1952 McCarran-Walter Act that allowed for many Nobel Prizes to be barred from entering the United States based on individual beliefs only — an act that was repealed in 1990 with the revision of the American immigration law. Are ideas and beliefs being treated the same as the likelihood of committing acts of espionage, sabotage or other dangerous unlawful activities in Macao?

And then a few other questions remain. Is the nature of the relationship between Hong Kong and Macao the same as one between two autonomous nation-states? How come residents from the same country but coming from separate entities can be considered as "foreign"? And if this is a marker of the "high degree of autonomy", why is it so different when it comes to other political and institutional matters?

THE MAN BEATS ODDS OF CATCHING BLUE LOBSTER, DONATES TO SCIENCE

A New Hampshire lobsterman has joined an elite club after catching a rare blue lobster. The Portsmouth Herald reports Greg Ward initially thought he had snagged an albino lobster when he examined his catch off the coast Monday where New Hampshire borders Maine. The Rye lobsterman quickly realized his hard-shell lobster was a unique blue and cream color.

The oft-cited odds of catching a blue lobster are 1 in 2 million. But no one knows for sure. Ward says the lobster is unlike anything he's ever seen. He gave the rare crustacean to the Seacoast Science Center in Rye to study and put on display. Center aquarist Rob Royer says Ward's blue lobster will go on display in the "exotic" lobster tank once it acclimates to the water.



Station	Air quality	
Roadside	15-35 Good	😊
High Density Residential Area	15-35 Good	😊
Ambient	15-35 Good	😊

SOURCE: DSMG

WORLD BRIEFS

AUSTRALIA-SRI LANKA Australia is contributing funds to help Sri Lanka combat its worst outbreak of dengue fever, which has claimed 250 lives and infected nearly 100,000 people so far this year in the Indian Ocean island nation.



ANGOLA Media say President Jose Eduardo dos Santos has returned to the country from Spain, where he has received medical treatment this year. The state-run news agency Agencia Angola Press reported yesterday that dos Santos and his wife, Ana Paula dos Santos, arrived at a military base in Luanda, the capital.

POLAND Lawmakers voted yesterday to approve a contentious law that gives control of the nation's Supreme Court to the president instead of to judges, sparking new protests outside parliament in Warsaw.

AUSTRIA-ITALY The Austrian foreign minister says he has told his Italian counterpart that migrants arriving by boat to Italy's islands should not be permitted to travel on to the mainland because that acts as a gateway to the rest of Europe.



BRAZIL's justice minister and the top prosecutor both insisted Wednesday that the corruption probe they've led against their country's top politicians will continue in full force, even after ensnaring President Michel Temer.

US A New York City couple has pleaded guilty to enslaving two children from South Korea who were in their care. Fifty-four-year-old Jeong Taek Lee and his wife, 50-year-old Sook Yeon Park, both pleaded guilty to two counts of labor trafficking Wednesday.

McCain battling brain cancer



AP PHOTO

BATTLING brain cancer, Sen. John McCain yesterday promised to return to work, making a good-natured dig at his Republican and Democratic colleagues who were jolted by news of the six-term lawmaker's diagnosis.

"I greatly appreciate the outpouring of support - unfortunately for my sparring partners in Congress, I'll be back soon, so stand-by!" McCain said in a tweet.

The 80-year-old McCain, the GOP's presidential nominee in 2008, was diagnosed with glioblastoma, an aggressive type of brain cancer, according to doctors at the Mayo Clinic in Phoenix, who had removed a blood clot above his left eye last Friday.

The senator and his family are considering further treatment, including chemotherapy and radiation, as he recuperates at his home in Arizona.

Prayers and words of encouragement multiplied yesterday from presidents and Senate colleagues past and present.

According to the American Brain Tumor Association, more than 12,000 people a year are diagnosed with glioblastoma, the same type of tumor that struck McCain's close Democratic colleague in legislative battles, the late Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts. The American Cancer Society puts the five-year survival rate for patients over 55 at about 4 percent.

McCain has a lifetime of near-death experiences — surviving the July 1967 fire and explosion on the USS Forrestal that killed 134 sailors; flying into power lines in Spain; the October 1967 shoot-down of his Navy air-

craft and fall into Truc Bach Lake in Hanoi; and 5 1/2 years in a North Vietnamese prison.

"The Hanoi Hilton couldn't break John McCain's spirit many years ago, so Barbara and I know — with confidence — he and his family will meet this latest battle in his singular life of service with courage and determination," said former President George H.W. Bush.

The absence of the senator and chairman of the Armed Services Committee forced Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., to delay action on health care legislation.

Politics aside, McCain and Bill Clinton developed a strong friendship, and the former president said: "As he's shown his entire life, don't bet against John McCain. Best wishes to him for a swift recovery."

The junior senator from Arizona, Republican Jeff Flake, said Thursday that McCain told him about his tumor only at the end of a telephone conversation, saying he was "feeling fine, but I might have some chemotherapy in my

future." Flake said on ABC's "Good Morning America" that his colleague is "optimistic, obviously. He's John McCain. That's what we'd expect."

In the past, McCain had been treated for melanoma, but a primary tumor is unrelated. Doctors said McCain is recovering from his surgery "amazingly well" and his underlying health is excellent.

With his irascible grin and fighter-pilot moxie, McCain was elected to the Senate from Arizona six times, most recently last year, but was twice thwarted in seeking the presidency.

An upstart presidential bid in 2000 didn't last long. Eight years later, he fought back from the brink of defeat to win the GOP nomination, only to be overpowered by Obama in an electoral landslide, McCain returned to the Senate, determined not to be defined by a failed presidential campaign. And when Republicans took control of the Senate in 2015, McCain embraced his new job as chairman of the powerful Armed Services Committee. **AP**

times square by rodrigo



AP PHOTO