



**PJ WARNS
PHONE
SCAMS ON
THE RISE**

▲ P2



**HIGH PREVALENCE
OF DEPRESSION**

A recent study concluded that, as a proportion, there are more suffering from depression in Macau than in Hong Kong

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**US-RUSSIA TIES
AT NEW LOW**

Russian President Putin has demanded the United States cut its embassy and consulate staff in Russia by 755 people

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AD

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Dengue Fever and Zika**

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Services de Saúde
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Rent control bill to go to vote this month . P7

WORLD BRIEFS

AP PHOTO



PHILIPPINES The national police chief warned yesterday that law enforcers will be going after more drug lords following a raid that left 15 people dead, including a city mayor who was among politicians President Rodrigo Duterte had publicly linked to illegal drugs. More on p13

INDIA Coast guard authorities say they seized a large amount of heroin from a ship off the country's western coast. The authorities said the 1,500-kilogram haul was the country's biggest seizure of narcotics in recent years.

AP PHOTO



AFGHANISTAN The Islamic State group targeted the Iraqi Embassy in Kabul yesterday, with a suicide bomber blowing himself up outside the gates, followed by three gunmen who stormed into the building. The assault set off a four-hour firefight that ended only after Afghan security forces said they had killed all the attackers.

More on backpage

BLOOMBERG



13 Holdings misses deadline to open luxury hotel in Macau . P3

Phone scams consistently increasing

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) has been consistently receiving reports regarding phone scams over the last week, with the number of reports increasing every day.

From July 25 through to July 30, PJ received 43, 23, 87, 81, 81, and 8 reports, respectively, regarding phone scams.

Out of these reports, three cases resulted in financial losses, with the amount of money involved ranging from MOP1,000 to approximately MOP100,000.

All of the above-mentioned reports describe criminals who pretended to be from Macau's government departments and the mainland's police authority, asking people to pay different kinds of fees in order to allow the mainland police authority to process ongoing investigations.

The PJ issued an advisory statement yesterday, warning residents that phone scam culprits have recently started to call landlines as well as mobile phones. Previously, individuals posing as



Scam culprits have recently started to call landlines as well as mobile phones

Macau Customs, Immigration or other government officials from mainland China would only call mobile phones.

The advisory statement remind-

ed residents that these types of calls are scams, as government departments do not ask citizens to perform bank transfers or send remittances over the phone.

New registrations of motorcycles soar

THE number of new registrations of motor vehicles increased in the second quarter of 2017 by 22.6 percent year-on-year to 3,494, according to information released yesterday by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). Of this figure, motorcycle registrations (2,258) surged by 44 percent.

To put these figures into perspective, in the entire first half of 2017, new registrations of motor vehicles increased by 6 percent year-on-year to 7,256. DSEC attributed this to an increase in the number of heavy motorcycles (+21.2 percent).

At the end of June 2017, the total number of licensed motor vehicles in Macau dropped by 1.9 percent year-on-year to 243,570, however within this figure, heavy motorcycles (94,600) grew by 3



percent while light automobiles (109,500) decreased by 1.6 percent.

In the second quarter of this year, there were a total of 3,630 cases of traffic accidents and the number of victims reached 1,141. This represents an increase of 2.2 percent and 6 percent respectively year-on-year. However, in the first half of 2017, the number of traffic accidents fell by 2.9 percent year-on-year to 7,208 cases.

Cross-border vehicle traffic amounted to a to-

tal of almost 1.2 million trips in the second quarter of 2017, down considerably by 7.1 percent year-on-year. In the broader context of the first half of the year, vehicle traffic was down by 6.9 percent year-on-year, with traffic via the Border Gate dropping by more than 12 percent during those six months. However, across the same period, traffic via the Cotai Checkpoint rose by 10.5 percent.

As for non-road transport, passenger ferry movements linking Ma-

cau with Hong Kong and mainland China increased by 3.6 percent year-on-year to 34,714 trips in the second quarter. In the first six months of 2017, a total of 69,252 trips were made, an increase of 1.7 percent.

Commercial flights at the Macau International Airport totaled 13,474 in the second quarter of 2017, edging down by 0.1 percent year-on-year. In the first half-year of 2017, commercial flights decreased by three percent to 26,381.

CRIME

Man attempted suicide to escape usury group

Julie Zhu

A mainland man attempted to commit suicide in front of a usury group inside a public restaurant earlier this month, the Judiciary Police (PJ) revealed yesterday in a police press conference.

The origin of this case dates back to the night of July 17, when the victim met the suspects - two mainland men, one of whom is surnamed Hong - in a casino located in the Zona de Aterros do Porto Exterior (ZAPE).

The victim borrowed HKD500,000 from the two suspects on the condition that the pair would collect 30 percent of the man's gambling winnings from every single play.

At 7 a.m. on July 18, the victim lost the whole sum that he had borrowed. This notwithstanding, during the victim's gambling activities, the two usurers obtained a total of HKD500,000 from the

man's plays.

On the afternoon of July 20, the two suspects took the victim and one of his friends to a restaurant where the pair of suspects asked the man to pay back all the money he had borrowed, before leaving the restaurant.

In an attempt to commit suicide, the victim then swallowed a large number of sleeping pills while the two suspects were not paying attention. They left the scene immediately upon finding out that the man had tried to kill himself and that his friend had already called the police.

The victim was then sent to the Centro Hospitalar Conde de São Januário (CHCSJ), where he was treated before leaving the hospital on the next day.

The suspect surnamed Hong was arrested last Friday morning, when he was crossing the Lotus border gate to Macau.

The second suspect is still at large.

Woman forced to pay huge interest rate

A mainland woman paid HKD80,000 for HKD10,000 she had borrowed from a usury group.

The woman met another person from the mainland, who she considered a friend, in mainland China in March of this year where the two agreed to come to Macau.

The woman and her friend eventually met another person, surnamed Yang, in a casino located in ZAPE, where they jointly borrowed HKD20,000 from Yang.

The woman and her friend separated the money into two HKD10,000 parcels and went gambling.

After losing all the money they had borrowed, the woman and her friend each paid HKD80,000 to Yang for the HKD20,000 Yang had lent them earlier.

Upon paying the HKD80,000 to Yang, the woman reported this to the Macau's police authority, claiming that she believes that her friend conspired against her and cooperated with the usury group.

Yang was arrested last Saturday while crossing a checkpoint in Macau. Yang refused to cooperate with the investigation conducted by the local police's authority.

According to the PJ, the bureau has sufficient evidence to charge Yang, who has been forwarded to the prosecution authority.

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Daniela Wei, Annie Lee

13 Holdings misses deadline to open luxury hotel

COMPANY 13 Holdings Ltd. missed yesterday's deadline to open its luxury hotel in Macau, a condition of a HKD3 billion (USD384 million) loan from Bank of Communications Co. for the gaming project just off the Cotai strip, according to people familiar with the matter.

The \$1.6 billion development, started by 13 Holdings co-chairman Stephen Hung, formerly co-head of Asia investment banking at Merrill Lynch, now aims to open before the end of the year, said the people, who asked not to be identified because the discussions are confidential.

Set to feature 200 villas with furniture evocative of the French Baroque period, marble Roman baths and 24-hour butler service, the project was planned before China's crackdown on corruption scared VIPs away and sent casino revenue into a slump for almost three years.

A spokeswoman for 13 Holdings said the company has obtained the occupation permit from Macau's government, is currently in the process of obtaining necessary licenses for the pre-opening and operational phase, and is in the final stages of completion of the property known as The 13 Hotel.

The entrance to the hotel over

the weekend was blocked by construction materials.

Shares dropped as much as 2.9 percent in Monday afternoon trading. The company has lost more than half of its market value this year.

A spokesman for Bank of Communications in Hong Kong declined to comment on the loan or its terms, while another in Shanghai didn't immediately comment.

■ The company is currently in the process of obtaining necessary licenses for the pre-opening

13 Holdings has raised \$1.2 billion for the project, according to exchange filings. Total budget for the development is \$1.6 billion, meaning \$400 million is

BLOOMBERG



needed to finish construction of the hotel, and pay financing fees as well as costs associated with a casino, according to people with knowledge of the matter.

"I think there is a certain amount of skepticism in the capital markets regarding a project of this scope," said Andrew Klebanow, Las Vegas-based senior partner of Global Market Advisors LLC. "The downturn in the

very high-end market certainly illustrated that this market segment is vulnerable to changes in central government policy as well as traditional economic forces."

The bulk of 13 Holding's assets are pledged, according to the company's most recent annual results announcement. 13 Holdings said it has plans to run a casino on the site of the hotel project. That means it would have to work with

one of the six casino operators with concessions to run gaming tables.

Even as VIPs have returned to Macau and gaming revenue has rebounded in the past year, operators including Wynn Resorts Ltd. and Las Vegas Sands Corp. have shifted focus to attracting casual gamblers and visitors to the only Chinese territory where casinos are allowed. **Bloomberg**

AD



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Customs update e-channel capacity at border

The Macau Customs Service is adding another nine e-channel lanes for vehicles at the Lotus border gate. The construction period starts today, and is expected to end within the next three months. By the time all of the new channels are completed, there will be a total of 19 e-channel lanes for vehicles at the Lotus border gate. Customs is currently updating all e-channel systems across all Macau's border gates. According to Customs, the e-channels' vehicle checking capacity will be increased to 70,000 vehicles daily from the current 15,000.

Property owners blamed for potential elevator risks

The Macau Elevator and Escalator Engineering Professional Association have insisted that property owners are partially responsible for the safety conditions of the elevators in their properties, according to a report by Macao Daily News. According to the president of the association, Fong Shao Long, a few property owners are not willing to contribute to the payment of their elevators' maintenance service. Fong also noted that in some cases, professionals from elevators companies had already suggested to the owners that their elevators needed maintenance and these owners had ignored the warnings. The government's latest data shows that 70 percent of Macau's elevators do not have safety certificates.

MUST wins national orienteering competition

The Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) took first place in one of the games of the latest edition of China's national university students' orienteering competition. This victory marks the first time that Macau has won the tournament. The leader of the Macau team is a male student from MUST. He took the first place in the 100 meters orienteering competition with a time of three minutes and 22 seconds, only one second ahead of the runner up. The contest was attended by more than 160 universities, comprising a total of 202 teams, corresponding to more than 280 amateur athletes from Chinese universities.

HEALTH

Study finds high prevalence of depression among locals

Lynzy Valles

A recent study has shown that the estimated number of the Chinese population in Macau that suffer from depression is between 23,556 and 36,625; 8 percent of the MSAR's population.

In a report titled "The epidemiology of current depression in Macau, China: Towards a plan for mental health action," a research group from the University of Macau (UM) noted that the number of residents suffering from depression corresponded to a larger share of the population than in Hong Kong or the mainland.

Led by Brian Hall, a scholar and an associate professor at UM, the study surveyed 1,068 Chinese individuals over the age of 18. Telephone surveys and respondent recruitment were carried out in January 2015 using a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) system.

According to the report, a higher proportion of women (9.3 percent) were reported to suffer from depression than men (6.6 percent). In addition, older women reported a higher prevalence (13.4 percent) of depression than other demographics.

The groups at risk of developing depression were those residents that were unemployed, separated or divorced, reported poor self-rated health, low quality of life, and lower social standing.

The study showed that a person's perceptions of fairness and their own social integration are also among the factors that increase the likelihood of experiencing depression.

So far, no study has attempted to estimate the prevalence of depression in Macau specifically.

Thus the research team argued that there are key differences in population and living conditions, suggesting that a separate psychiatric epidemiologic program is needed in Macau, citing the MSAR's rapid economic development in the past ten years.

A prior population-representative study showed that 10.4 percent of 1,881 older adults of 60 and above; and 15 percent of 380 urban-dwelling older adults living in public housing showed depression.

With the aim of correlating depression within local residents and estimating the prevalence of current depression in the Macau populace, the study is said to be the first step to determining the overall picture of mental health in Macau.



Brian Hall

"Overall, we know little about the level of depression and general mental health of the Macau population, which limits public health planning and action towards establishing appropriate care models of mental health," the study notes.

Depression is a mental illness that tends to be more invisible and more difficult to see, and is coupled with stigma.

BRIAN HALL
SCHOLAR

After over two years of conducting the research, the team concluded 46.1 percent of the participants reported fair or poor health. Some 52 percent reported low relative social class, and 55.8 percent reported low quality of life. A total of 35.8 percent reported low trust, 20.4 percent reported low perceived fairness, 21.8 percent reported low integration, and 16.8 percent reported low social cohesion. The mean depressive symptom severity in the population was 3.54 (the standard being = 4.7).

As the overall population estimate of depression stood at 8 percent, scholars concluded between 23,556 and 36,625 Macau

is developing a comprehensive action plan for mental health, they engage community stakeholders, NGOs, government offices and academics, and work together to try to solve the problem," he said.

However, research shows that mental illnesses are still considered a taboo to Asians in general, making it more difficult for people with mental disorders to reach out to their families.

Yet Hall expressed the belief that mental health is a key and important factor to consider for overall comprehensive public health initiative for Macau.

"I think that the issue of stigma would make it more difficult to establish a more comprehensive mental health system in Macau," Hall lamented.

"Depression is a mental illness that tends to be more invisible and more difficult to see, and is coupled with stigma, I think it makes [the community] less likely to take action on these issues," the academic added.

The research also suggested that "mental healthcare should shift to community-based outpatient centers," noting that it could increase access to care and reduce the stigma associated with seeking psychiatric care.

Although there are two hospitals in the territory that provide inpatient hospitalization for patients with severe mental illness there are no outpatient care services.

"This leads to medication and hospitalization as frontline treatments rather than preventative or psychosocial interventions," the study noted.

Researchers lamented that despite the rapid growth in the Macau's economic development, the health system has not necessarily kept up.

Hall hoped that the recent study would open dialogues in a more public discourse about mental health, and would have an impact on treating depression.

According to Hall, the team is looking at other potential contributing factors to the prevalence of depression and other mental disorders in Macau, as they aim to examine more specific indicators and risk factors of depression that might be relevant to the region.

"We plan on making an even more context specific, even more appropriate for Macau context. [...] We want to measure things that might be more relevant to the local population in terms of how themselves think about mental health," the scientist concluded.

Chinese adults are likely to meet the criteria for major depression, when applying the estimates of the total population.

Researchers hinted that since results are higher than those reported in previous studies in Hong Kong and China, mental health care should be a priority in the region.

Government registration figures show that there is a mismatch between the numbers of depression cases found in the study and the number of registered psychotherapists in Macau.

According to figures, there are only 21 registered psychotherapists in Macau, yet the current professional accreditation law does not specify the qualification requirements of psychotherapists.

"So far as we are aware, in Macau, there are only four doctoral-level clinical psychologists, but only one among them can conduct treatment in the Chinese language," the researchers stated. "There are currently no specialist programs for postgraduate training in clinical psychology, so it is unlikely that Macau can train an adequate workforce and other models should be considered," it added.

Speaking to the Times, Brian Hall, assistant professor of Psychology at the University of Macau, expressed his concern that the treatment gap presented a challenge in terms of seeking healthcare in the territory and suggested a public consultation and discussion on mental health that is coordinated with the government.

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Rent control bill to go to vote this month

YESTERDAY, the Third-Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL) concluded its article-by-article analysis on the government's proposal to amend the city's rental laws. The AL president, Ho Iat Seng, said that the bill will be discussed in the AL plenary later this month.

The amendment of the city's rental bill mandates the extension by an additional year of the city's current minimum of two-year rental contracts. It also proposes a rental control mechanism, a rate based on a coefficient set by the Chief Executive according to factors like the consumer price index and housing market conditions.

The agreement was signed after the Third-Committee meeting yesterday, where the amendment was un-



der discussion. It will now be forwarded to the wider legislature for its second reading, with Ho Iat Seng hopeful it can be approved before this assembly's term comes to an end on August 15.

Ho said yesterday that it was a good

thing that the committee could sign the agreement and that it now awaits its final discussion in the AL.

The controversial bill has come under fire by real estate associations, which claim that the bill unfairly advantages tenants at the expense of owners. They have called for the government to reconsider the proposed law.

Other concerns centered on the capacity of public notary offices in Macau to service a rise in demand if, as the bill decrees, all contracts will need to be signed with an official witness.

According to public broadcaster TDM, Cheang Chi Keong, the head of the Legislative Assembly panel, said yesterday that some 57 private notaries in the city can also fulfill this requirement.

Four new teams for int'l fireworks contest

Lynzy Valles

THE 29th Macau International Fireworks Display Contest will welcome four new teams from Australia, France, Philippines and China that will make their debut in the territory. From September 23, the event will line up 10 international teams who will showcase their firework displays orchestrated to music and laser effects over the following five weekends.

The public will see the fireworks above the waterside area in front of the Macau Tower on September 2, 9, 16 and 23, and October 1.

In a press conference held last week, Macau Government Tourism Office's (MGTO) director, Helena de Senna Fernandes, revealed that the budget was reduced to roughly MOP25 million this year, down by 10 percent compared to last year's edition. The director said that this year's transportation tender contributed to the budget's decrease.

"Last year, it was about MOP27.6 million. [...] We had a major reduction as earlier we opened a tender for transportation [so] after [calculations], it has been cheaper than expected," she said.

According to Fernandes, transportation of the fireworks constitutes a large proportion of the contest's budget.

The contest is also introducing four new companies that will compete in Macau, namely the Cardile

International Fireworks Pty Ltd from Australia, Alpha Pyrotechnie from France, Philippines' Dragon Fireworks Inc and Liuyang New Year Fireworks Trading Co. from China.

The other six teams include FIREevent - Die Feuerwerker from Austria, MLE Pyrotechnics Limited from the United Kingdom, Marutamaya Ogatsu Fireworks from Japan and Germany's Potsdamer Feuerwerk.

Panzer S.A.S from Italy and Grupo Luso Pirotecnica from Portugal, and they had previously participated in past editions of the contest in Macau.

Meanwhile, the MGTO director stressed that the bureau is doing its best to bring the fireworks to the venue at its designated time without any delay.

Towards the end of 2016, the bureau announced that the New Year fireworks show was cancelled due to the "impossibility of the pyrotechnic material to be transported to Macau within the scheduled date."

"We would try our best to avoid this issue. However, different kinds of problems may occur. For example, with transportation, we may have problems with the weather," Senna Fernandes told the press.

"I cannot guarantee 100 percent that we can avoid [such] problems but we will try our best so that for those five nights, we will have the team arrive as scheduled," the director stated.

Sin Fong homeowners slam gov't inefficiency

THE Sin Fong Garden saga continues as flat owners are criticizing the government for failing to provide a timeline for the reconstruction of the damaged property.

The 30-storey high-rise building was abandoned in 2012, with some 140 families being forced to evacuate after one of its main pillars burst.

The Macau Tung Sin Tong Charitable Society (TST) and the Macau Jiangmen Communal Society previously pledged to provide financial assistance to the Sin Fong proprietors to rebuild the damaged building.

However, the Jiangmen Communal Society, which has promised to cover 60 percent of the building's

reconstruction costs, criticized authorities for sluggishness in gathering evidence against the building developers.

Other homeowners also criticized the government for failing to address safety issues.

Vicki Lao, head of the Macau Jiangmen Communal Society, asked who would be responsible when windows fall, especially during typhoon season.

"And who will be blamed for any injuries?" Lao asked, as cited in a TDM report.

"Maybe a typhoon will come one day and will blow away all the windows and what if they fall down? Someone walking along the street may get hurt, and who will pay for that?" she

added. Upset homeowners still have no idea what lies in store for their former property.

"Five years have gone by and the government is still gathering evidence," several upset proprietors shouted.

"I don't understand what we're waiting for now," said a former resident. "Why can't we kick-start the project?"

"We don't know when exactly the building will collapse, so let us make ourselves clear right here," said another homeowner.

Other homeowners warned that they would not be held accountable if any windows were to break and injure passers-by.

"It's not our fault [...] it's



the government's fault for wasting our time, not even letting us go back home to close the windows," said another.

Lao made it clear that both money and the construction company is ready, lamented that the delay is "ridiculous and unreasonable" and expressed hopes for an update from the authorities.

corporate bits

MGM OFFERS HAIRCUT AND APPLIANCE MAINTENANCE SERVICES TO SENIOR CITIZENS



In July, MGM offered their support to local senior citizens through two programs titled "Love Flows Through" and "Haircut for Love," in an effort to care for the elderly community of Macau.

The "Love Flows Through" program provided complimentary maintenance of household electrical appliances and installations to 30 local senior

citizens. A team of electrical technicians from facilities management led by Mel Hansen, Senior Vice President of Design, Development and Construction of MGM, along with MGM volunteer team members, visited the Fai Chi Kei Social Housing Unit to help repair and replace the citizens' appliance plugs.

Executive Director of Facili-

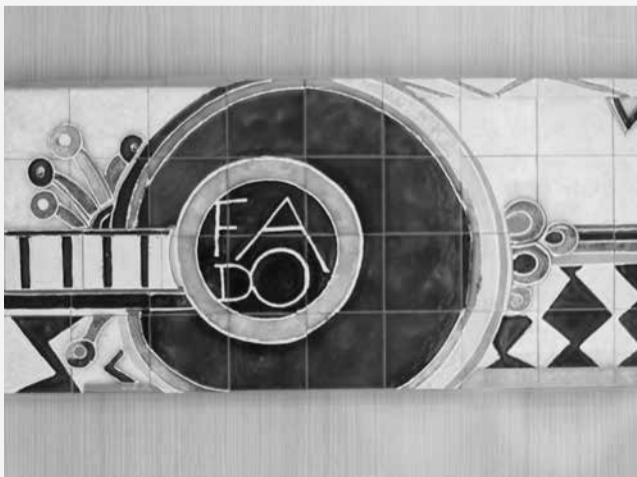
ties Management Operations, Edmund Choi, participated in the program and said, "Replacing appliance plugs is just a small gesture, but it can improve the elderly's livelihood."

The "Haircut for Love" program offered complimentary haircut services to a total of 180 senior citizens, among which were seniors with mobility impairment. A total of 15 volunteer haircut team members offered their services at three centers.

"MGM volunteers are so warm at heart," said one of the elderly, Fong. "They not only did my haircut, but they were also very concerned about how I wanted it done."

According to a press release from MGM, the volunteer haircut team was established in 2015 and provides complimentary haircuts for local senior citizens on a monthly basis.

NEW MENU AT HOTEL ROYAL MACAU'S FADO



Fado's Executive Chef, Luis Américo, has incorporated key Portuguese ingredients with new elements

to present the new "Chef's Specials" menu. Appetizer options range from "Suckling Pig Pie

with Apple", "Rocket Salad and Honey Mustard Sauce" and "Portuguese Style Cod Sashimi with Cold Tomato Soup, Olive Oil and Parsley." According to a press release from Hotel Royal, these elements are designed to pair seafood with the natural sweetness of cold tomato soup.

The main dishes available include "Pan Roasted Sea Bass With Fresh Clams", "Coriander and Sautéed Shrimp," and "Boar Cheek from Alentejo with Mushroom Bread Stew and Red Peppers Comfit."

For dessert, the selection will include "Passion Fruit Mousse with Fresh Fruits and Chocolate" and "Caramelised Banana Pie with Pecan Nuts Nougat, Raisins and Custard Cream."

HSBC reports higher profit, plans USD2b more in share buybacks

Kelvin Chan, Hong Kong

HSBC said yesterday it plans to buy back another USD2 billion in shares after reporting a strong set of quarterly profits thanks to higher interest rates that helped fatten margins for its lending business.

The London-based global bank, which earns most of its income in Asia, said it will carry out its latest share repurchase in the second half of the year, bringing the total amount since last year to \$5.5 billion.

The bank said second-quarter net profit jumped by more than half to \$3.87 billion as revenues grew faster than expenses.

For the first half of the year, net profit rose 10 percent to \$7 billion as revenue adjusted for currency fluctuations and one-off gains and losses rose



A woman poses for a photograph at the HSBC building in Hong Kong

0.8 percent to \$26.1 billion.

In Hong Kong, HSBC shares rallied on the news, rising 2.6 percent to their highest in nearly three years.

"We have made an excellent start to 2017," Chief Executive Stuart Gulliver said in a statement. "Our three main global businesses performed well, generating significant increases in both reported and adjusted profit before

tax, and gaining market share in many of the products that are central to our strategy."

Chairman Douglas Flint said that as central bank interest rates edged higher, the bank "began to benefit from improved margins on our core deposit bases."

Interest rates in Hong Kong, one of the bank's main markets, have risen in line with the Federal Reserve's two increases this year because the city's currency is pegged to the U.S. dollar.

HSBC is carrying out a sweeping overhaul to increase profitability. That includes shedding thousands of workers and exiting some markets in order to focus even more on Asia. It has also tapped an outsider for the first time to be its next chairman, with Flint to be replaced later this year by AIA Group's Mark Tucker. AP

Discovery and Scripps seek to tie up in USD12b TV deal

DISCOVERY Communications will buy Scripps Networks for close to USD12 billion, tying together two powerful stables of TV shows ranging from Animal Planet to the Food Network.

The deal, announced yesterday, puts the combined company in a stronger position to draw more women viewers and to navigate an increasingly chaotic entertainment landscape, where cable companies and streaming services like Netflix and Hulu fight for eyes.

Discovery owns TLC and the Discovery Channel. Scripps owns HGTV and the Travel Channel, among others. The combined company will house five of the top pay TV networks for women and account for more than 20 percent share of women watching prime-time pay TV in the U.S.

By combining the content of each company, Discovery has more power to create



"skinny bundle" options for viewers, which offer fewer channels and are cheaper for people unwilling to shell out for a big, monthly cable bill.

The companies yesterday said they will produce approximately 8,000 hours of original programming each year, and possess 300,000 hours of library content. They have the potential to generate 7 billion short-form video streams monthly, and expect about \$350 million in cost savings. The buyout, which still needs approval from the shareholders of both companies, is targeted to close by early next year. AP

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India is said to block Fosun's USD1.3b gland purchase

Siddhartha Singh,
George Smith Alexander

INDIA is poised to reject Shanghai Fosun Pharmaceutical Group Co.'s proposed USD1.3 billion takeover of an Indian drugmaker, according to people familiar with the matter, scuppering the biggest-ever Chinese acquisition in the country.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, which is chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has decided to block the Chinese firm's purchase of an 86 percent stake in Gland Pharma Ltd., according to the people. The companies haven't been formally notified yet of the move, the people said, asking not to be identified because the information is private.

Tensions between India and China - the South Asian nation's biggest trading partner - have escalated amid a renewed spat over territory in a remote area of the Himalayas, one of the most serious flareups since a border war in 1962. A collapse of the acquisition would be a setback for Fosun Pharma, which had sought Gland

Pharma's stable of generic injectable medicines and facilities approved to manufacture products for sale in the U.S.

"This is almost like a sanction," said Abhijit Joshi, a mergers and acquisitions lawyer and managing partner at Veritas Legal in Mumbai, who isn't involved in the deal. "Rejecting a deal like this is almost like sending a signal to say, 'no Chinese business,' which means there could be a retaliatory action, trade wise, by China."

Fosun Pharma, backed by Chinese billionaire Guo Guangchang, agreed in July last year to acquire control of Gland Pharma from an investor group including KKR & Co. The setback highlights the difficulties faced by China's onerous acquirers, who are facing mounting pressure at home and abroad. HNA Group Co. recently scrapped the purchase of an in-flight entertainment provider, while Dalian Wanda Group Co. agreed to sell most of its theme-park assets amid scrutiny from regulators.

The Gland Pharma purchase had already completed Indian antitrust filings and been reviewed by the



country's Foreign Investment Promotion Board. Jagdish Thakkar, a spokesman in the Indian Prime Minister's Office, didn't return phone calls, while an email sent to Cabinet Secretary Pradeep Kumar Sinha wasn't answered. Representatives for Gland Pharma and KKR didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

"India's engagement with China is multi-faceted. In areas where we have commonality of views, engagement has expanded and upgraded in recent years," India's junior Foreign Minister V.K. Singh told lawmakers on Thursday, adding that both sides should be

guided by previously agreed principles. "India and China, in their relationship, must not allow differences to become disputes."

A representative for Fosun Pharma declined to comment beyond an exchange statement last week. Fosun Pharma said in a July 27 filing to the Hong Kong bourse that it had obtained relevant approvals from Chinese authorities. The acquisition is still subject to the review and approval of India's Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, so the termination date has been further extended to Sept. 26, the filing shows.

Chinese drugmakers have grown

more ambitious in seeking deals that will give them access to the U.S., the world's biggest pharmaceutical market. Valeant Pharmaceuticals International Inc. this year sold its Dendreon Pharmaceuticals unit to Chinese conglomerate Sanpower Group Co. for \$820 million. Humanwell Healthcare Group Co., a Chinese maker of anesthetics and contraceptives, is part of a consortium that agreed in June to buy U.S.-based RiteDose for about \$605 million.

Chinese companies such as Alibaba Group Holding, Tencent Holdings and Xiaomi Corp. have been investing in India. Alibaba's finance unit is on the board of Paytm, India's largest digital payments startup, while Tencent owns a stake in Flipkart Online Services Pvt. Xiaomi, which has invested \$500 million in the subcontinent, plans another investment of the size over the next three to five years. India's trade with China was at \$72.3 billion last year, with Chinese exports accounting for 84 percent of the volume.

"From Chinese investment into India for M&A, yes there's going to be an impact," Veritas' Joshi said. "They're going to be increasingly nervous about investing in India. That capital that was available from China is not going to be available, at least in the short term, which means doing a deal is going to be that much more difficult."

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'A strong army is needed now more than ever' Xi said, without specifically addressing North Korea or Trump's comments

ANALYSIS

China bets Trump won't resort to strike against North Korea

CHINA is betting that U.S. President Donald Trump won't make good on his threats of a military strike against North Korea, with Beijing continuing to provide a lifeline to Kim Jong Un's regime.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson singled out China and Russia as "economic enablers" of North Korea after Kim last week test-fired an intercontinental ballistic missile for the second time in a matter of weeks. While Tillerson said the U.S. wants a peaceful resolution to the tensions, the top American general called his South Korean counterpart after the launch to discuss a potential military response.

China condemned the latest test while calling for restraint from all parties, a muted reaction to Pyongyang's progress on an ICBM capable of hitting the U.S. mainland. Despite Kim's provocations, analysts said Beijing still sees the collapse of his regime as a more immediate strategic threat, and doubts Trump would pull the trigger given the risk of a war with North Korea that could kill millions.

"The military option the Americans are threatening won't likely happen because the stakes will be too high," said Liu Ming, director of the Korean Peninsula Research Center at the Shanghai Aca-

demy of Social Sciences. "It's a pretext and an excuse to pile up pressure on China. It's more like blackmail than a realistic option."

Relations between the world's biggest economies have soured after an initial honeymoon between Trump and President Xi Jinping. The U.S. last month sanctioned a regional Chinese bank, a shipping company and two Chinese citizens over dealings with North Korea, which could be a precursor to greater economic and financial pressure on Beijing to rein in its errant neighbor.

Trump has expressed periodic public frustration with Beijing over the pace of its efforts to curtail Kim. Late Saturday he again linked China's actions to the broader U.S.-China trade relationship.

Hours later, Xi called on China to speed up its military modernization, telling troops at an army parade that "the world isn't safe at this moment."

"A strong army is needed now more than ever," he said, without specifically addressing North Korea or Trump's comments.

Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said the U.S. isn't seeking an emergency Security Council session today [Macau time]. Pyongyang already

violates council resolutions with impunity, she said in a statement, and it "sends the message to the North Korean dictator that the international community is unwilling to challenge" him.

"China must decide whether it is finally willing to take this vital step," Haley said. "The time for talk is over. The danger the North Korean regime poses to international peace is now clear to all."

Dianne Feinstein of California, the top Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, said she was "very disappointed in China's response" and that it wasn't firmer or more helpful.

"The only solution is a diplomatic one," Feinstein said on CBS's "Face the Nation" on Sunday. She called North Korea's threat "a clear and present danger" to the U.S. and said she hoped new White House Chief of Staff John Kelly, a retired Marine Corps general, will be able to help negotiate to stop the nuclear program.

China's biggest fears related to North Korea remain a collapse of Kim's regime that sparks a protracted refugee crisis, and a beefed-up U.S. military presence on its border.

It has repeatedly called for both sides to step back, proposing the U.S. halt military drills in the region and North

Korea freeze weapons tests. The U.S. has dismissed that proposal, saying North Korea must first be willing to discuss rolling back its nuclear program. On Saturday, the U.S. announced that two Air Force B-1B bombers conducted bilateral exercises with South Korean and Japanese fighter jets in response to the ICBM test.

North Korea is "probably correct" in its view that it can survive sanctions long enough to build its arsenal to the point where the world has to accept it as a nuclear state, according to Andrew Gilholm, director of North Asia analysis at Control Risks Group. The U.S. is likely to make a "dramatic move" this year against China in a bid to stop that from happening, he said.

"If the U.S. really loses patience and moves against major Chinese banks or firms it will certainly impact North Korea's financing, but I don't see Beijing making a radical policy change under that kind of pressure," Gilholm said from Seoul. "It'll likely harden China's insistence that Washington has to deal with Pyongyang, not coerce China into strangling it."

China's relations with its neighbor and ally have become more fraught, though China still accounts for about 90 percent of North Korea's

trade. North Korea warned China of "grave consequences" earlier this year after it banned coal imports, while Beijing's Communist Party media stepped up criticism of Kim's regime.

The latest ICBM test also risks boosting tensions between China and South Korea over a missile shield.

Seoul has partially installed the U.S.'s Terminal High Altitude Area Defense missile shield despite Chinese protests. It had halted that roll out under the new administration of President Moon Jae-in, but after the ICBM test Moon called for talks with the U.S. on temporarily deploying more launchers. China warned on Saturday that Thaad would disrupt the region's strategic balance.

The U.S. carried out a test of Thaad yesterday [Macau time], the Pentagon said in a statement. A medium-range target ballistic missile was launched from a plane over the Pacific Ocean, then tracked and intercepted by a system located in Alaska.

Despite the disagreement over Thaad, on the whole China probably prefers Moon to the conservative government he replaced in May. Since taking office, Moon has sought to engage North Korea, calling for peace talks and saying he'd meet Kim under the right conditions.

Moon's dovish views on North Korea make it likely he'll oppose a U.S. missile strike on North Korea. U.S. Marine General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also warned in June that an armed conflict with North Korea would leave Seoul facing casualties "unlike anything we've seen in 60 or 70 years."

As relations with the U.S. cool, China has boosted ties with Russia. The countries blocked U.S.-led efforts to expand penalties against North Korea in a draft UN Security Council resolution condemning its first ICBM test on July 4. Those ties are likely to strengthen after Trump said he'd tighten sanctions on Russia for meddling in the U.S. election and aggression in Ukraine.

To placate Trump, China will likely take some moderate measures against North Korea without doing anything that could collapse the regime, said Gilholm from Control Risks.

"China has a lot of room to step up pressure on Pyongyang while staying well short of a really destabilizing 'cut-off,'" he said. "Personally I don't think North Korea is going to roll over and give up its nuclear survival card even under a life-threatening level of economic pressure." **Bloomberg**

Chinese official says no link between US trade and N. Korea

A senior Chinese trade official said yesterday the issue of China-U.S. trade should be kept separate from the issue of North Korean security threats, pushing back on statements from President Donald Trump.

Vice Commerce Minister Qian Ke-ming's remarks came after Trump over the weekend complained that China had benefited massively from trade with the U.S. while providing no help resolving problems with North Korea.

"North Korea's nuclear issue and the issue of trade between China and the United States are two different issues. They are not related. You cannot speak about them together," Qian told reporters at a news conference to announce new trade data.

Qian also emphasized the mutual benefits of China's trade and investment with the U.S., rebuffing Trump's repeated claims that Beijing has exploited liberal U.S. trade policies to its own advantage.

Trump sent a pair of tweets on Sunday, saying: "I am very disappointed in China. Our foolish past leaders have allowed them to make hundreds of billions of dollars a year in trade, yet...they do NOTHING for us with North Korea, just talk. We will no longer allow this to continue. China could easily solve this problem!"

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley joined in the criticism, saying China "must decide whether it is finally willing to take this vital step" of getting tough on the North.

China is the North's biggest trade partner and food and fuel aid source, leading the U.S. and others to press Beijing to use its leverage to rein in Pyongyang's behavior by cutting off assistance or agreeing to harsher sanctions. Chinese companies also have a virtual monopoly on investments in North Korea's economy, particularly natural resources.

China however says its influence with Pyongyang is overblown and has declared repeatedly that it would not agree to measures that could bring about the collapse of the regime and create chaos along its border.

Also yesterday, Qian said China reported trade volume rose in the first half of 2017 against the same period last year, ending a two-year decline. Imports rose 19.6 percent in the period from January to June, while exports rose 25.7 percent. **AP**

AP PHOTO



In this October 2016 photo, loaded trucks are seen crossing the friendship bridge connecting China and North Korea in Dandong

BLOOMBERG



ECONOMY

Bond buyers quiz taxi drivers to see if credit's good

IN China, taxi rides aren't just a form of transportation any more. They've also become useful for bond buyers doing due diligence. Dining out at restaurants is also helpful.

It's all part of a boom in field trips by market participants coming to grips with a new reality in China: the potential for bond defaults. After decades when authorities effectively provided blanket assistance to keep troubled companies from going under, the Communist leadership's focus on shuttering unproductive assets has upended the market.

A total of 45 onshore corporate bonds have defaulted since the start of last year, a surge from the eight recorded in 2014 and 2015 - which themselves were the first since the market was established in the 1980s. While China has the world's third-largest bond market, corporate financial transparency can be limited, forcing investors to get creative.

"If you just sit in the office, you would never know if an issuer has actually closed business," said Xu Hua, a money manager and deputy head of research at Colight Asset Management in Shanghai. "When you go to the local places, be sure to have a chat with taxi drivers or restaurant customers after talking to the issuer - ask them if they have friends working for the company. Has their

friends' pay been cut or raised this year? Has the company delayed paying salaries? What's the local reputation?"

Recent incidents have showcased concerns about corporate governance and disclosure standards. The onshore bonds of two China Hongqiao Group Ltd. units slumped in March after the world's biggest aluminum maker said full-year results may be delayed because of issues raised by its auditor. Bondholders of China Shanshui Cement Group Ltd. are still trying to recoup most of their money - at one point the company said it couldn't repay interest without a company seal.

"A lot of information about Chinese bond issuers isn't disclosed; when they do, the quality of the information may be unreliable," said Christopher Lee, Hong Kong-based managing director

■ In China, the world's third-largest bond market, corporate transparency [is] limited, forcing investors to get creative

of corporate ratings at S&P Global Ratings.

Onshore market players are finding themselves traveling a lot more nowadays, across the world's third-largest nation by geography. Xu at Colight, one of the top-rated private fund firms for fixed-income strategy by the official China Securities Journal last year, says his team has even ventured as far as Xinjiang - a central Asian region 4,000 kilometers from Shanghai.

Xu said a field trip at the end of 2015 had helped his firm avoid investing in a risky company with apparently normal cash flow. They learned from local people that its coal mine had halted production and the firm had delayed paying employee salaries.

"Chinese companies only disclose the parts they want you to see," said Xu. "If you just stay at the companies for one day or half a day, you won't be able to see the real situation."

The research team at Borsera Asset Management Co., China's fourth-biggest money manager, has ramped up its on-site visits since the start of last year, to an annual pace of 70 to 80 currently, according to Chen Zhixin, head of fixed income research in Shenzhen. Their counterparts at the country's largest fund manager, Tianhong Asset Management Co., have roughly doubled their on-site visits compared with a couple

years ago.

"Given the many explosions of credit risk in 2016 and this year," more road trips became critical, said Cheng Shixiang, a fixed-income researcher in Beijing at Tianhong, which oversees 1.5 trillion yuan (USD223 billion) of assets. His team's grassroots research includes talking to locals about the bond issuers.

"If it's a property company, we would interview people around its projects and ask nearby real-estate brokers if the projects have been involved in any financial dispute," Cheng said. He and his colleagues also gather intelligence from local banks.

That's a contrast with fund managers abroad, who have an abundance of information readily available about companies selling bonds. In addition to publications like quarterly earnings reports, they can tap the research of investment bank analysts, along with articles in the media and specialty trade publications. And issuers themselves are typically active in communicating with investors, says Wang Ying, a senior director in Shanghai at Fitch Ratings.

"Few Chinese issuers initiate such communication with bondholders," she said. "It's more toilsome to be a Chinese bond investor - but without those toils, you may step on a land mine and end up with a loss of money." **Bloomberg**



The 105-story pyramid shaped Ryugyong hotel towers over residential buildings in Pyongyang

NORTH KOREA

Under ICBM's red glare, Pyongyang pretties up its 'pyramid'

Eric Talmadge, Pyongyang

WHILE North Korea's second launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile dominated headlines late last week, Pyongyang quietly unveiled renovations around the capital's biggest landmark: a futuristic, pyramid-shaped 105-story hotel, the world's

tallest unoccupied building.

After decades of embarrassing delays and rumors that the building may not even be structurally sound, could this be Kim Jong Un's next pet project?

If nothing else, it at least has a new propaganda sign: "Rocket Power Nation."

Walls set up to keep people

out of a construction area around the gargantuan Ryugyong Hotel were pulled down as the North marked the anniversary of the Korean War armistice. Revealed were two broad new walkways leading to the building and the big red propaganda sign declaring that North Korea is a leading rocket power.

That, of course, is Kim's other pet project.

The day after Thursday's anniversary, North Korea test-launched its second ICBM, which experts believe demonstrated that the North's weapons can now theoretically reach most of the United States.

For more than a week leading up to the anniversary, a major holiday in North Korea, "soldier-builders" at the site in central Pyongyang were clearly visible behind the walls, along with heavy equipment for digging and brightly colored propaganda billboards that are a staple at North Korean construction sites, intended to boost morale.

Rumors, almost always unfounded, of plans to once and for all finish the hotel project are something of a parlor game among Pyongyang watchers. And it remains to be seen if the current work on the Ryugyong is intended to be a step toward actually finishing the long-stalled project or, more likely, an effort to make better use of the land around it.

But it's not surprising that work to do something with the idle landmark would begin. Pyongyang has been undergoing massive redevelopment since Kim assumed power when his father died in late 2011.

At Kim's orders, several major high-rise areas have been completed, including one with a 70-story residence and dozens of other tall buildings in the capital's "Ryomyong," or "dawn," district in April. Pyongyang also has a new international airport, a massive sci-tech complex with a main building shaped like a giant atom, and many other recreational and educational facilities.

How Kim can afford to pay for the apparent construction boom and his significantly accelerated testing of multimillion-dollar missiles is a mystery, but has led many

sanctions advocates to point the finger at China, by far North Korea's biggest trading partner, for not doing enough to turn the economic screws on its neighbor.

From a distance, the glassy, greenish-blue Ryugyong looks like it's ready for business. But it is believed to be far from complete inside and possibly even structurally unsound.

Rumors of plans to once and for all finish the hotel project are a parlor game among Pyongyang watchers

Work on the building started in 1987 while Kim's grandfather Kim Il Sung, North Korea's founder and "eternal president," was still alive. It was supposed to open in 1989 and would have been the world's tallest hotel — surpassing another in Singapore that was built by a South Korean company.

But a severe economic crash and famines in the 1990s left North Korea in no position to pump funds into the hotel's construction, and it stayed little more than an embarrassing concrete shell for well over a decade before Egypt's Orascom Group — which was also key in establishing the North's cellphone system — helped pay for work to complete the building's shiny exterior in 2011.

Questions remain about whether it is structurally sound enough to ever operate as a hotel or office building.

Officials have offered no information regarding their plans for its future. **AP**

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AUSTRALIA

Court debates release of Queen's secret letters

A legal battle over secret letters revealing what Queen Elizabeth II knew of her Australian representative's stunning plan to dismiss Australia's government in 1975 opened in federal court yesterday, in a case that could finally solve a mystery behind the country's most dramatic political crisis.

Historian Jenny Hocking is asking the Federal Court to force the National Archives of Australia to release the letters between the British monarch, who is also Australia's constitutional head of state, and her former Australian representative, Governor-General Sir John Kerr. The Archives have classified the letters as "personal," meaning they might never be made public.

The letters would reveal what, if anything, the queen knew about Kerr's plan to dismiss Prime Minister Gough Whitlam's government in 1975 to resolve a deadlock in Parliament. It is the only time in Australian history that a democratically elected federal government was dismissed on the British monarch's authority. The dismissal stunned Australians and bolstered calls for the country to sever its colonial ties to Britain and become a republic.

Whitlam's own son, lawyer Antony Whitlam, is arguing the case on behalf of Hocking, and took on the case free of charge.

Hocking, a Whitlam biographer, argues that Australians have a right to know the details of their history, and that the letters written in the months leading up to the unprecedented dismissal are key to unraveling the truth.

"It needs to be settled once and for all," she said during a court recess. "There's a lot of

AP PHOTO



Prof. Jenny Hocking, a Monash University historian, is asking the court to force the National Archives to release the letters between the British monarch and her former Australian representative, Sir John Kerr

uncertainty in this."

Antony Whitlam argued that the letters should be viewed as official, rather than personal, documents in part because the relationship between the governor-general and the Queen is an official one.

"It couldn't seriously be suggested that there was a personal relationship between the

Queen and John Kerr," he told the court.

If the letters lose their "private" and "personal" classification, they are free to be made public 30 years after they were written like other government documents held in the Archives. That means they could be available immediately.

Lawyer Tom Howe, who is

representing the Archives, told the court that there was a distinction between the institution of the governor-general and the governor-general himself. The governor-general himself, Howe argued, is not a national institution, and thus his personal records are owned by him and are not subject to the Archives Act. The

Act allows for the release of official records.

Questions and conspiracy theories still swirl about the motivations surrounding the prime minister's dismissal. Kerr, who died in 1991, said the decision to oust Whitlam was his alone. But some Australians believe the Queen had a hand in the decision.

One of the most spectacular theories is that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency ordered Whitlam's dismissal because the agency feared his government would close a top-secret U.S. intelligence facility in the Australian Outback. Kerr rejected that theory as false.

Before 1975, few Australians realized the governor-general — whose role is largely ceremonial — had the power to fire a prime minister during a constitutional crisis.

That crisis began when the opposition party tried to force Whitlam to call general elections by blocking routine legislation in the Senate that allowed the government to pay public servant salaries and provide services. Whitlam refused to call an election, sparking a weeks-long constitutional impasse.

Kerr then fired Whitlam, called an election and appointed opposition leader Malcolm Fraser as prime minister. Weeks later, Fraser's coalition won an overwhelming election victory.

Critics of Kerr dubbed his firing of Whitlam an ambush, and said the governor-general should have warned the prime minister that it was coming. Kerr said he was worried Whitlam would have fired him first if he'd tipped him off ahead of time.

Yesterday's hearing was the only one scheduled in the case. Federal Court Justice John Griffiths is expected to issue a ruling at a later date. **AP**

PHILIPPINES

Police say Duterte's crackdown to target more drug lords

THE Philippine national police chief warned yesterday that law enforcers will be going after more drug lords following a raid that left 15 people dead, including a city mayor who was among the politicians President Rodrigo Duterte had publicly linked to illegal drugs.

Police Director General Ronald dela Rosa said authorities are building up cases against more illegal drug operators included on Duterte's list, warning that the police will enforce the law "without fear or favor."

Officers were about to serve warrants early Sunday to Ozamiz Mayor Reynaldo Parojinog Sr. to search his houses for the suspected presence of unlicensed firearms when gunmen opened fire on the police, sparking clashes that killed the mayor and at least 14 other people, said Ozamiz police chief Jovie Espenido.

Espenido, who oversaw the simultaneous, post-midnight raids on Parojinog's residence and three other houses, described the mayor as a "high-value target on illegal drugs."

AP PHOTO



Policemen were approaching the mayor's house when his bodyguards opened fire and hit a police car and wounded an officer, sparking a firefight amid a power outage, he said.

Eight people were arrested, including two of Parojinog's children — Ozamiz Vice Mayor Nova Princess Parojinog-Echavez and her brother Reynaldo Parojinog Jr., officials said. The

siblings were flown to the national police headquarters in Manila.

Dela Rosa denied allegations of a rubout, saying the operation in Ozamiz resulted in deaths because the police were met with armed resistance.

Asked by reporters who the next drug lords to be targets of police operations will be, dela Rosa said, "There are many of them because there are many in the president's list."

"If they are not doing anything bad, they should have no fear, but if it is validated that they conti-

nue to be involved in drugs then they have to prepare themselves," dela Rosa said. "The [police] will implement the law without fear or favor."

Also yesterday, Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II ordered the immigration bureau to be on the lookout for seven suspected illegal drug operators, including at least two publicly linked by Duterte to the narcotics trade. Anyone who is the subject of an immigration lookout bulletin needs to get permission from the justice secretary to leave the country. **AP**



Transgender U.S. army captain Jennifer Sims during an interview with The Associated Press last week

US MILITARY

Transgender soldier fears life setback after Trump's tweet

Julie Watson & Christoph Noelting, Beratzhausen

THE U.S. Army soldier took a deep breath before hitting the button that sent the email to more than 200 fellow troops.

"All considered, I am, and have been, traversing what is essentially a personal matter, but is something I must address publicly," the email stated. "I am transgender."

The April 13 email officially ended the secret that burned inside Capt. Jennifer Sims, who was known as Jonathan Sims. But the feeling of relief swiftly turned to unease last week after President Donald Trump tweeted that transgender people were no longer welcome in the U.S. military.

"I read the tweets while I was at work and you know it was devastating because I still have work to do and here I am reading basically what sounds like the president of the United States — who is the commander in chief, he is the ultimate boss of the military — telling me and anybody else that is transgender that we are fired," Sims said.

Pentagon officials say the policy will remain unchanged without official White House

guidance. But for Sims, the uncertainty has been upsetting.

"So in the initial moments after the tweet, I saw myself forced into the state that I was in before I started transitioning — a state of depression, exhaustion and inability to enjoy things," said Sims, 28, who spoke to The Associated Press on her own behalf and not on that of the Army.

The reversal of the Obama administration policy that allows transgender people to serve openly and receive military medical coverage for transitioning from one gender to another also could affect her physically.

Sims has been on hormone therapy by her military doctor since November. If she interrupts the treatment, her body will revert to being male.

"It would be very difficult to have to go through that," said Sims, who is based at Hohenfels, a U.S. Army garrison in the German state of Bavaria.

Growing up in Minnesota and Florida, Sims, a high school football player, never felt comfortable being male. The son and grandson of military veterans quietly came to terms with identifying as a woman a year after joining the Army

R.O.T.C., but outwardly kept it a secret "because I wanted to continue serving," Sims said.

Sims stopped socializing, feeling drained over worries about being masculine enough, and instead focused on work, serving in Afghanistan, Indonesia and Germany. Her sister, Natasha Sims, 24, said she saw "emptiness" in her eyes.

I read the tweets while I was at work and you know it was devastating.

CAPT. JENNIFER SIMS

After the Defense Department announced in 2015 that it was considering allowing transgender troops to serve openly, Sims told Natasha and their parents. When the policy became official in June 2016, Sims said she felt the meaning of the word freedom personally after spending years fighting for it for her country.

"It was the best day of my life really," Sims said.

Sims made an appointment with the behavioral health office, was given a diagnosis of gender dysphoria and started hormone therapy in November.

Five months later, she decided to tell fellow troops.

She first told her two closest colleagues, Capt. Brandon Shorter and another infantry officer.

They were at a loss for words.

After Shorter got home, allowing it to sink in, he texted Sims about how that was brave.

"Infantry officers are best described as brutish. So Capt. Sims pulled me and another brute aside face to face. That took a lot of courage and that's the first thing that went through my mind, mixed in with surprise," Shorter said.

Sims then announced the "personal change" to more than 200 other troops.

It was not an emotional email. The seasoned military officer wrote how a lifetime of discomfort had peaked three years ago. Sims meticulously explained gender dysphoria, announced she was Capt. Jennifer Sims, not Jonathan, and outlined the steps she would take to

fully transition to a woman.

"Officially in DEERS, my gender will remain male until my medical transition is complete, which means I will still comport to male standards and use male facilities," she wrote, referring to the acronym for the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, a kind of HR database for U.S. military personnel.

"While it is my preference for people to refer to me with female pronouns, if you are uncomfortable with this, there is no requirement to do so, I only respectfully request you refer to me by my proper name, Captain Sims," the email stated.

Sims assured her unit the change "if anything, will only make me more productive and capable, as I no longer have to live two personas."

Five soldiers sent emails back with words of encouragement. Most didn't respond. For a few days, there were murmurs of "hey did you see the email?"

The force had just undergone training explaining what was expected in regards to transgender soldiers.

Sims is the first transgender person Shorter has known.

The unit is basically full of "young men wanting to chew on nails and prove how tough they are and rightly so since they are infantry men," Shorter said. There are only about eight women among the 500 soldiers in the battalion.

He had a lot of questions "being naturally curious and wanting to be a good friend because we didn't really have a personal relationship. He's, excuse me, she's — see I still slip up sometimes — a single captain, I'm married with two daughters. Our lives are different."

Shorter, 32, of Alanson, Michigan, describes himself as conservative. He said he struggles with his beliefs about what's appropriate. An assistant operations officer for the battalion, Shorter is concerned about how Sims — whom he considers to be the best signal officer he's seen in the Army — cannot deploy while undergoing medical procedures.

But Shorter, speaking on his own behalf and not that of the Army, said he would be "incredibly disappointed" if Sims were kicked out.

After Trump's tweet, a few soldiers, including Shorter, asked Sims how she was doing. She didn't know what to say.

Her pills will run out in three months. Doctors recommend 12 months of hormone therapy before surgery. The cost of her surgery can run close to USD50,000, which Sims was expecting the military would help cover.

Army officials told her nothing will change without official guidance.

"I had waited so long just to be able to tell the world this is who I am," Sims said. **AP**

Nataliya Vasilyeva, Moscow

RUSSIA-US

Putin: Washington must cut 755 Moscow diplomats

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin has demanded the United States cut its embassy and consulate staff in Russia by 755 people, underlining his displeasure with U.S. sanctions and heightening tensions between Washington and Moscow.

The U.S. State Department called Putin's move "a regrettable and uncalled-for act."

Putin's announcement yesterday [Macau time] came three days after the U.S. Congress approved sanctions against Russia and just hours after U.S. Vice President Mike Pence landed in Estonia, which borders Russia, for talks with the country that holds the rotating European Union presidency.

Russian's Foreign Ministry last week ordered a reduction by Sept. 1 in U.S. diplomatic personnel in Russia to 455 people in response to a new package of American sanctions. The White House says President Donald Trump will sign those sanctions into law.

The sanctions, which also target Iran and North Korea, seek to punish Moscow for meddling in the 2016 U.S. election and for its military aggression in Ukraine and Syria.

"We had hoped that the situation will somehow change, but



President Vladimir Putin (center) Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu (left) Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Navy Vladimir Korolev (right) and Commander of Western military district Andrei Kartapolov attend a military parade

apparently if it changes, it won't be soon," Putin told Rossiya 1, explaining why Moscow decided to retaliate. "I thought it was the time to show that we're not going to leave it without an answer."

Russia is open to cooperating with the U.S. on various issues, including terrorism and cybercrime,

but instead it "only hears unfounded accusations of meddling in U.S. domestic affairs," he said.

Putin said more than 1,000 people are currently employed at the Moscow embassy and three U.S. consulates in Russia. They include both Americans and Russians hired to work in the di-

plomatic offices.

The Russian leader did not explain how the figure of 755 positions was calculated.

In a statement, the State Department said: "This is a regrettable and uncalled-for act. We are assessing the impact of such a limitation and how we will respond to it. We have no further comment at this time."

The State Department declined to give an exact number of American diplomats or other U.S. officials in Russia, but the figure is believed to be about 400, some of whom have families accompanying them on diplomatic passports.

The vast majority of the more than 1,000 employees at the various U.S. diplomatic missions in Russia, including the embassy in Moscow and consulates in St. Petersburg, Vladivostok and Yekaterinburg, are local employees.

Asked about the potential for additional sanctions against Washington, Putin described the reduction in diplomatic staff as "painful"

and said he currently opposes further measures.

"We certainly have something to respond with and restrict those areas of joint cooperation that will be painful for the American side, but I don't think we need to do it," he said, adding that such steps could also harm Russian interests.

Putin mentioned space and energy as the main areas where Russia and the United States have successfully pursued projects together.

Along with the cap on the size of the U.S. diplomatic corps in Russia, the Russian foreign ministry on Friday said it also was closing down a U.S. recreational retreat on the outskirts of Moscow as well as warehouse facilities.

The diplomatic tit-for-tat started under former U.S. President Barack Obama. In response to reports of Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election, Obama ordered the expulsion of 35 Russian diplomats and shut down two Russian recreational retreats in the U.S. **AP**

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what's ON



BALLADE – CONTEMPORARY ART ANIMAMIX
TIME: 10am-7pm (Last admission at 6:30pm, closed on Mondays)
UNTIL: October 15, 2017
VENUE: Macao Art Museum
ADMISSION: Free
ORGANIZER: Cultural Affairs Bureau
ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

EXHIBITION OF CHAN IU PUI
TIME: 11am-6pm (Closed on Mondays and public holidays)
UNTIL: August 7, 2017
Venue: 10 Fantasia, No. 10, Calçada da Igreja de S. Lazaro
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 4582

STORY OF CANNON MAKING - CHILDREN EXPERIENCE EXHIBITION
TIME: 10am-6pm (Last admission at 5:30pm, closed on Mondays)
UNTIL: August 20, 2017
VENUE: Exhibition Gallery, 3rd floor of Macao Museum
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 7911

FLOAT INTO THE FLOW - THE EXHIBITION OF SOU CHON KIT
TIME: 1pm-7pm (Closed on Mondays)
UNTIL: September 17, 2017
VENUE: Artistry of Wind Box Community Development Association, Rua Tomas Vieira 3A R/C
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 6685 9215

MACAU ARTS WINDOW 2017 - HUNDRED SPECIES - WORKS OF PEGGY CHAN
TIME: 10am-7pm (Last admission at 6:30pm, closed on Mondays)
UNTIL: August 13, 2017
VENUE: Macao Art Museum
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

ABSTRACT PAINTINGS FROM THE MAM COLLECTION
TIME: 10am-7pm (Last admission at 6:30pm, closed on Mondays)
UNTIL: September 17, 2017
VENUE: Macao Art Museum
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

Offbeat

AUTHORITIES CAPTURE ALLIGATOR ROAMING AROUND UPSTATE NY TOWN

Authorities in upstate New York have captured an alligator that got loose.

According to Animal Adventure Park, New York state Department of Environmental Conservation crews captured the renegade reptile Saturday behind the fairgrounds in rural Whitney Point. Sightings of the alligator were first reported July 22.

Officials say the alligator is 3 feet, 3 inches long. They believe it's someone's pet.

The alligator will be quarantined and then permanently placed in an exhibit at Animal Adventure Park in Harpursville. The privately owned zoo, just east of Binghamton, is home to April the giraffe, whose pregnancy and birthing of a male calf was an internet sensation this year.

Staffers at Animal Adventure say they are looking forward to educating visitors about the alligator.

TV canal macau



13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:50	RTPi Live
18:50	Now Generation (Repeated)
19:40	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	Miscellaneous
21:30	Grimm Sr.1
22:10	Now Generation
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Miscellaneous
00:05	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
00:40	RTPi Live

Cinema



CINETEATRO

27 Jul - 2 Aug

PRIPARA THE MOVIE

ROOM 1

2:15PM

Director: Okubo Is Male

Starring:

Language: Cantonese (Chinese)

Duration: 58min

DESPICABLE ME 3

ROOM 1

3:30, 7:45pm

Director: Eric Guillon, Kyle Balda, Pierre Coffin

Starring: Steve Carell, Kristen Wiig, Trey Parker

Language: Cantonese

Duration: 90min

WAR OF THE PLANET OF THE APES

ROOM 1

5:15, 9:30pm

Director: Matt Reeves

Starring: Woody Herrelson, Sara Canning, Judy Greer

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 140min



VALÉRIAN AND THE CITY OF A THOUSAND PLANETS

ROOM 2

2:30, 5:00, 9:30pm

Director: Luc Besson

Starring: Dane DeHann, Cara Delevigne, Clive Owen

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 137min

CARS 3

ROOM 2

7:00pm

ROOM 3

4:30pm

Director: Brian Fee

Starring: Owen Wilson, Cristela Alonzo, Chris Cooper

Language: Cantonese

Duration: 102min

MEOW

ROOM 3

2:30, 7:30pm

Director: Benny Chan

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

Language: Cantonese (Chinese & English)

Duration: 109min

SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING

ROOM 3

9:15pm

Director: Jon Watts

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

Language: English

Duration: 133min

this day in history



1994 LIBRARY FIRE WIPES OUT HISTORIC RECORDS

Thousands of historic documents and more than 100,000 books have been destroyed in a blaze which ripped through Norwich Central Library in the early hours of this morning.

Initial reports suggest the fire was caused by a gas explosion, triggered when the caretaker switched on the lights.

He was catapulted backwards by the force of the explosion but escaped unhurt. No-one else was injured in the incident.

Archivists are currently attempting to salvage documents including the 800-year-old Norwich City Charter and manuscripts dating back as far as 1090.

These items were among more than two million documents stored in fire-proof vaults in the basement of the library which became drenched as fire-fighters attempted to extinguish the blaze.

The American Air Division Memorial Library, a unique record of the activities of US servicemen who were stationed in Norfolk during World War II, was also destroyed.

At the height of the fire smoke could be seen 20 miles away and more than 65 fire officers were in attendance at the scene. The fire burned for four hours.

Mr Hilary Hammond, director of Norfolk library services, said the loss to the people of Norfolk was on the same scale as if the National Gallery in London had gone up in flames.

The library, which was opened in 1963 by Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, had recently undergone a £380,000 refurbishment project.

Work included upgrading the fire protection system but a sprinkler system was ruled out because it was thought water would cause unacceptable damage in the event of a small fire.

An investigation into the cause of the fire has been launched by the fire service.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The fire at Norwich Central Library was the worst British library fire in living memory.

The building was destroyed and had to be demolished, but in November 2001 a new £63.5m state-of-the-art information centre, called The Forum, was opened on the site of the old library.

In the immediate aftermath of the blaze the local community rallied round - food companies donated refrigerated lorries to freeze-dry waterlogged manuscripts and thousands of people donated old books and pictures about Norfolk to replace the lost records.

The new library, designed by Michael Hopkins, was funded by the city council, county council and local businesses and a £31m grant from the Millennium Commission.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 You're always the person everyone comes to when they're after advice, counsel or a couple of dollars to pay the rent. Does that mean it's the only type of relationship you're capable of having? Hardly.

Taurus April 20-May 20 Okay, you're done. It's finally time to let go of all those intense feelings you've been dealing with. If you have some free time, you can actually spend it having some fun.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 With any luck, you have gotten over the urge to exact revenge, because with the kind of conscience you're toting around, it wouldn't work for long, anyway. You'd have to turn yourself in and apologize.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 One-on-one relationships are your specialty - you absolutely live for them. For the next month or so, that's going to be even more true. You'll want to spoil your partner rotten.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 After what seems like months of dealing with cranky, unfriendly people who aren't at all open to seeing things your way, you've finally arrived at a better way of doing things. You're going to ignore them.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 That higher-up you've been especially disgusted with? They can only keep bugging you if you let them. So don't. Take the whole day off to enjoy the company of those you love.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 You've been juggling work, family and your primary relationship for what seems like weeks. But it's finally over. The heavens have just unwound themselves, giving you the green light to pursue anything.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 You can do yourself a tremendous favor by simply letting go of the anger and resentment you've been feeling - and what finer way to do just that than by taking yourself out for a ride? A nice, long one.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 The roadblocks will officially be removed, and connecting will be easy. Now stop worrying about what's in the past. It might not have been pleasant, but it's over.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 To say the past couple of days have been tricky isn't really quite capturing the spirit of the times. In fact, you've had it with just about everyone and everything. Fortunately, you have a respite at your disposal.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 After what you went through over the past couple of days, today will be an absolute dream come true. That means no more explaining your every move to loved ones who don't quite believe you.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 Still not done clearing the air? Still feel as if there's something you need to say? Well, go ahead. Just make sure you're finished by tonight, because the heavens are ready to banish all such unpleasant moments to the past.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

9x9 grid for Easy Sudoku puzzle.

Easy+

9x9 grid for Easy+ Sudoku puzzle.

Medium

9x9 grid for Medium Sudoku puzzle.

Hard

9x9 grid for Hard Sudoku puzzle.

WEATHER

Table with columns: MIN, MAX, CONDITION

CHINA

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

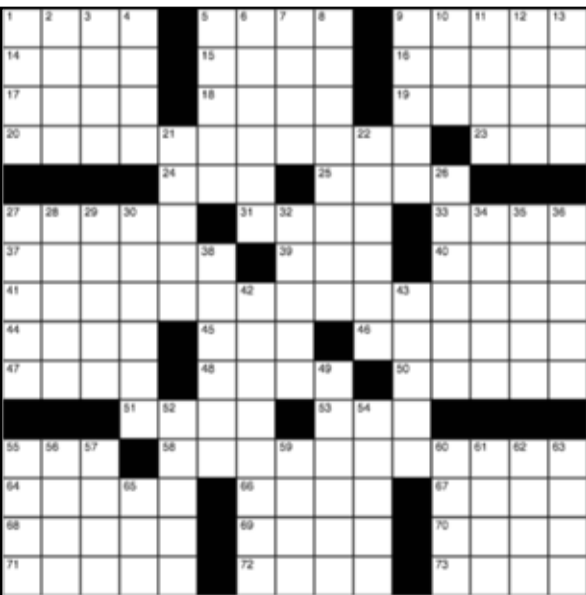
WORLD

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

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Lukas of "Witness"; 5- Controversial orchard spray; 9- Phase; 14- Edison's middle name; 15- Irritate; 16- Mr. Moto portrayer; 17- Slay; 18- Feat; 19- Standard of perfection; 20- Young; 23- Conscriptio org.; 24- Picnic crasher; 25- Moat; 27- Idealized concept of a loved one; 31- Singer Redding; 33- "Le Roi d'Ys" composer; 37- Generic; 39- Thunder Bay's prov.; 40- Bartlett's abbr.; 41- Frankie Carle's theme song; 44- Morales of "NYPD Blue"; 45- Involuntary muscular contraction; 46- More bohemian; 47- Sawbucks; 48- Med. school course; 50- Orgs.; 51- Humble homes; 53- Fall mo.; 55- Cutting tool; 58- The science of weather; 64- Toothbrush brand; 66- Harper's Bazaar illustrator; 67- Land of shamrocks; 68- Eagle's nest; 69- Pronunciation you...; 70- Out of port; 71- Abbreviated time off; 72- Modernists; 73- Frat party purchases;

DOWN: 1- Pilgrimage to Mecca; 2- Baseball's Felipe; 3- Tel ___; 4- Having all one's marbles; 5- Shakespearean forest; 6- Deceives; 7- One of the Baldwins; 8- Change the meaning of; 9- Narrow cuts; 10- Director Browning; 11- Son of Zeus in Greek mythology; 12- Mardi ___; 13- Morays; 21- A Judd; 22- Cosa ___; 26- Biases; 27- Atlas feature; 28- Small rodent; 29- Kofi of the U.N.; 30- Excessively bright; 32- Puccini classic; 34- "Delta of Venus" author Nin; 35- Water-repellent cloth; 36- Lulus; 38- Fancy home; 42- German physicist; 43- Muse of love poetry; 49- Tastelessly affected; 52- Brown earth pigment; 54- Ships' companies; 55- Fly; 56- Tract; 57- Tip off; 59- Fish-eating eagle; 60- Escaping fluid; 61- River to the Seine; 62- Diver Louganis; 63- Votes for; 65- Cover;



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Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993
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PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
Electricity - Report 28 339 922
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MOTORSPORT

Hamilton needs a break in tense F1 title fight with Vettel

Jerome Pugmire, Budapest

HEADING into Formula One's mid-season break, Lewis Hamilton is completely drained.

It has been a topsy-turvy 11 races so far, with nine to come after a month off. Hamilton trails F1 leader Sebastian Vettel by 14 points, with both drivers winning four races. But Mercedes has struggled with reliability issues on its tires and problems with car balance, all of which has taken its toll on Hamilton.

He clearly needs a rest before the tussle with Vettel starts again at the Belgian Grand Prix on Aug. 27.

"I definitely think it's come at a good time. It's been tough, physically, mentally and emotionally," Hamilton said. "I think this break will be good. Recharge and come back hopefully fresh. I truly believe we have the capability of winning this championship."

Hamilton finished fourth at



Lewis Hamilton (right)

the Hungarian GP, with Vettel winning from pole position ahead of Ferrari teammate Kimi Raikkonen.

Third place was possible for Hamilton, but he stuck to a gentleman's agreement with Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas and let him past at the end. That was because Bottas had allowed Hamilton to overtake him earlier in the race to attack the Ferraris.

The decision raised eyebrows, considering how valuable the points were that Hamilton was essentially giving away to a main rival.

"It cost us three points and potentially the drivers' championship, we are perfectly conscious about that," Mercedes head of motorsport Toto Wolff said. "Nevertheless, it is how the drivers and the team operate. We stick to what we say. If

the consequences are as much as losing the championship, we take it."

That is quite some admission, but it shows — at least — that Hamilton and Bottas are there for each other.

In the three previous years, Hamilton was constantly bickering and feuding with former Mercedes teammate Nico Rosberg, who retired just days after beating Hamilton to win last year's title.

"The truth is that if you miss out the championship by those three points everybody would point the finger to Budapest," Wolff added. "It was a tough call to make, and probably the most difficult that we had to make in the last five years, but it was the right one in terms of our values."

Ferrari certainly liked it.

After the problems of last year, when Ferrari failed to win a race and finished third behind Red Bull and Mercedes in the constructors' championships, things

are looking up.

Ferrari has not won the drivers' title since Raikkonen's win in 2007, and its last constructors' title came the following year.

Last year, Mercedes finished 367 points ahead of Ferrari, with the Silver Arrows winning 19 of 21 races.

The gap this season is only 39, in favor of Mercedes because Bottas has also won two races while Raikkonen has yet to win.

"You mustn't forget where we were last year, and the step that Ferrari has made is bigger than anyone else," Vettel said. "Over the winter, I think we were the team that made the least noise. There was a lot of talk about the new cars [...] We just kept to ourselves and did the job."

Ferrari has closed the gap on Mercedes in terms of speed and the car seems more reliable and more flexible than Mercedes, which has struggled on twisting tracks like Hungary and Monaco where overtaking is difficult. There is another one of those coming at the Singapore GP in mid-September.

Before that, there is Belgium and then the Italian GP in Monza — Vettel's home race.

"The mission has been to get back to the top," the German driver said. "We got a 1-2 [finish in Budapest] but that's what we want every weekend." AP

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CRISTIANO Ronaldo told a Spanish judge yesterday that he has "never tried to avoid taxes."

The Real Madrid forward, who is from Portugal, was questioned to determine whether he committed tax fraud worth almost 15 million euros (USD17.5 million). Ronaldo spent more than 90 minutes answering the questions of investigating judge Monica Gomez.

According to a statement released by his public relations firm, the 32-year-old Ronaldo told the judge: "I have never hidden anything, and never tried to avoid taxes."

Judge Gomez took Ronaldo's testimony as part of an investigation to determine if there are grounds to charge him. The session at Pozuelo de Alarcon Court No. 1 on the outskirts of Madrid was closed to the public because it is part of an ongoing investigation.

In June, a state prosecutor accused Ronaldo of four counts of tax fraud from 2011-14 worth 14.7 million euros (\$16.5 million). The prosecutor accused the Portugal forward of having used shell companies outside Spain to hide income made from image rights. The accusation does not involve his salary from Real Madrid.

Ronaldo denies any wrongdoing. "Spain's Tax Office knows all the details about my sources of

FOOTBALL

Ronaldo tells judge he has 'never tried to avoid taxes'

income because we have reported them," Ronaldo told the judge, according to his statement. "I always file my tax returns because I think that we should all file and pay our taxes."

"Those who know me know that I tell my consultants that they must have everything in order and paid up to date because I don't want trouble."

Both before and after his court appearance, Ronaldo used an alternative entrance to avoid a large swarm of more than a hundred journalists from Spain and aboard gathered near the main door to the court.

Court officials had said that either Ronaldo or his lawyer would speak to the media after he saw the judge, but instead the player's spokesman, Inaki Torres, stepped up to the temporary podium in front of the courthouse to announce that Ronaldo "was on his way home."

The prosecutor said in June that



Ronaldo used what was deemed a shell company in the Virgin Islands to "create a screen in order to hide his total income from Spain's Tax Office."

The prosecutor accused Ronaldo of declaring 11.5 million euros (\$12.8 million) earned from 2011-14 in a tax return filed in 2014,

when the prosecutor said Ronaldo's real income during that period was almost 43 million euros (\$48 million). It added that Ronaldo falsely claimed the income as coming from real estate, which "greatly" reduced his tax rate.

The prosecutor also said that Ronaldo did not declare income of

28.4 million euros (\$31.8 million) made from the cession of image rights from 2015-20 to another company located in Spain.

Ronaldo said that he told judge Gomez yesterday that his financial planning hadn't changed since 2004, when he was at Manchester United. He said he kept the same arrangement when he joined Madrid in 2009.

"When I signed for Real Madrid I didn't create a special business structure to handle my image rights, I kept the same one that had been managing them when I was in England," Ronaldo said, according to the statement. "It was checked out by the English Tax Office and was found legal and legitimate."

A four-time Ballon d'Or winner, Ronaldo is one of Europe's best soccer players. He has led Madrid to back-to-back Champions League titles and helped Portugal to win last year's European Championship. **MDT/AP**

Albanian drone-flying fan seeks asylum in Croatia

AN Albanian soccer fan detained on a Serbian warrant for allegedly flying a drone with a nationalist banner during a high-risk match has asked for political asylum in Croatia to avoid extradition, his lawyer said yesterday.

Ismail Morinaj was arrested in Croatia in June on a Serbian warrant. A court in Dubrovnik agreed last week to extradite the 35-year-old Albanian to Belgrade.

Morinaj's lawyer Darko Butigan said his client has appealed the extradition ruling and also sought political asylum in Croatia. Butigan said Morinaj fears he would not get a fair trial in Serbia.

"He has asked for international legal protection in Croatia and with other European Union institutions," Butigan told The Associated Press by phone.

Last week's approval for Morinaj's extradition by the court in Dubrovnik is yet to be confirmed by higher courts before Croatia's justice minister makes the final decision whether to hand him over. Croatia is an EU member state.

In Tirana, the Albanian Football Federation, or



Serbia's Stefan Mitrovic (right) grabs a banner containing the Albanian flag attached to a drone flying above the pitch during the Euro 2016 Group I qualifying match between Serbia and Albania

FSHF, said yesterday they have sent their legal representative to help Morinaj's case.

Spokesman Denis Bastari also said Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama promised "maximum efforts so that this issue is over soon and Mr. Ismail Morinaj is released soonest."

Violence interrupted an October 2014 European qualifying match between the Serbia and Albania after a drone with an Albanian banner appeared over the pitch. Belgrade-Tirana ten-

sions have been high over breakaway Kosovo, formerly a Serbian province dominated by ethnic Albanians.

The 0-0 game was suspended after Serbian fans injured some Albanian players who rushed a Serbian player who pulled down the banner.

UEFA, soccer's governing body in Europe, ultimately awarded Albania the match victory, helping the tiny western Balkan country win a spot in the Euro 2016 finals, its first major tournament. **AP**

Judge grants bail for Spanish federation president

A Spanish judge granted bail yesterday to the suspended president of the Spanish Football Federation, who is in jail for suspected corruption.

Angel Maria Villar was denied bail by National Court judge Santiago Pedraz on July 20, two days after the 67-year-old Villar, his son and two other soccer officials were arrested during police raids. But Judge Pedraz granted bail to Villar, his son Gorka Villar and suspended federation vice president Juan Padron yesterday.

The bail for Villar and Padron was set at 300,000 euros (USD352,000), and for Gorka Villar at 150,000 euros (\$176,000).

Judge Pedraz confiscated their passports and ordered that the three suspects make weekly appearances at the court and provide a phone number to reach them at all



Angel Maria Villar (right)

times.

A statement by the court said the judge made the decision to grant them bail because "the steps that have already been taken [...] make it difficult for them to interfere with the investigation."

A fourth suspect, Ramon Hernandez, had already been granted and paid a bail of 100,000 euros (\$117,000).

A state prosecutor accused them of improper management,

misappropriation of funds, corruption and falsifying documents.

Villar, who ran the Spanish soccer federation since 1988, was suspended from the presidency for one year last week by Spain's top sports authority. He also resigned from his vice presidencies of both FIFA and UEFA.

Villar is suspected of misappropriating private and public funds received by the federation since 2009. **AP**

opinion

Our Desk

Julie Zhu



POLITICIANS MAKE THEIR POINTS MORE CLEARLY IF GIVEN LESS TIME

The Legislative Assembly (AL) recently passed a proposal which suggests an amendment of AL procedures.

The original draft of the bill included 24 detailed proposals which included; banning lawmakers from displaying banners during AL meetings, shortening lawmakers' oral inquiry time from the current five minutes to three minutes and removing the restrictions on the length of time of some sessions of the lawmakers' inquiries to government representatives (lawmakers currently have 30 minutes to question the government regarding its works). These examples stand among other amendments which either shorten or extend the lawmakers' inquiry time.

Besides the proposal withdrawn during the AL plenary meeting that took place last Friday, the remaining 23 proposals still triggered great debates among lawmakers and also the public, including the New Macau Association, which completely opposed every proposal brought to the table.

As a person who, once in a while, witnesses the entire process of an AL meeting, I support some of the proposals with every fiber of my being.

The one that I find genius, or at least kind from whoever brought it up, is the proposal to shorten the length of time of the lawmakers' oral inquiry.

I have attended many AL meetings, including the government's policy addressing sessions, which are tediously long.

Sometimes they are short, and normally that happens when a minority of lawmakers who proposed a few topics did not prepare a speech to read, which means everyone talks and expresses opinions in a straightforward and simple fashion.

However, most of the meetings end up being very long, consisting mostly of a big show where almost every single actor is well-prepared, and where every member of the cast also knows that everyone else is well-prepared. The performance is reminiscent of the movies except in this case the actors are worse at acting.

Shortening the lawmaker's inquiry time will probably be good for everyone who is involved. Regarding the lawmakers, whether they know or not that their inquiries might be fake, big, and empty, shortening their speech time will likely force them to come up with more efficient and concise inquiries.

I suppose that the Macau public is familiar enough with the locals' famous speech style, which takes years of training until people can eventually get rid of all necessary things and replace them with everything that is pointless and superfluous.

The proposal suggesting the shortening of lawmakers' window of opportunity does not affect the government representatives and because of this inequality I tend to agree with lawmaker Ng Kuok Cheong's stance, alongside the New Macau Association, to not change any of the rules because it simply grants the government more time to deliver their discourses.

Personally, I am not interested in arguing about anything the public or the lawmakers are concerned about in terms of the lawmakers' rights. I am just posing a request asking that both the lawmakers and the government representatives, during their talking time, say more understandable things with a meaning that is easier to grasp.

Seldom does someone answer a yes or no question in a straightforward manner. Most of the time, upon being asked a question about art, they (lawmakers and government representatives) start a dissertation on Mozart.

Hence, AL; it is not a question of time, it is a question of content.

THE BUZZ **DON'T TRY THIS: THIEVES STEAL IPHONES FROM MOVING TRUCK**

Dutch police have arrested five Romanian men suspected of stealing iPhones worth 500,000 euros (USD590,000) in a dangerous heist on a moving truck.

Police said yesterday that the five men, aged from 33 to 43, allegedly stole the iPhones in a late-night raid a week ago by driving a modified van so close to the delivery truck that one of the suspects was able to clam-

ber across the van's hood and break into the truck while it drove along a Dutch road. The suspect then passed boxes of iPhones back to the van.

The men were arrested Saturday at a holiday park in the central Netherlands, where police also recovered iPhones and the van they believe was used in the theft. The suspects are to appear in court today.

EU concerned for future of Venezuelan democracy

THE European Union says it is concerned about the future of democracy in Venezuela after the widely-criticized vote to elect a powerful constitutional assembly.

European Commission spokeswoman Mina Andreeva said yesterday that such an assembly "elected under doubtful and often violent circumstances cannot be part of the solution."

Andreeva said the weekend poll, held amid protests in which 10 people were killed, "has increased division and will further de-legitimize Venezuela's democratically elected institutions."

She said EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini is working on a "joint response" to developments from the 28-nation bloc but would not be drawn on whether that might involve sanctions.

Venezuela's National Electoral Council says more than 8 million people voted to grant President Nicolas Maduro's ruling socialist party virtually unlimited powers with a constitutional assembly — a turnout more than double the estimates of both the government's political opponents and independent experts.

Council president Tibisay Lucena announced just before midnight that turnout in Sunday's vote was 41.53 percent, or 8,089,320 people.

The count was met with



Venezuela: Voters receive instructions about their voting machine place by a National Guard officer outside of a poll station

mockery and anger from members of the opposition, who said they believed between 2 million and 3 million people voted. One well-respected independent analysis said 3.6 million appeared to have voted.

The electoral council's vote counts in the past have traditionally been seen as reliable and generally accurate, but Sunday's announcement appeared certain to escalate the polarization and political conflict paralyzing the country.

The U.S. State Department is officially condemning Venezuela government for holding a vote to elect a powerful National Constituent Assembly, calling it a step toward authoritarian rule.

The new assembly would concentrate near-total power

in the hands of socialist President Maduro and his supporters. In a statement released yesterday [Macau time], the State Department says the new body seems designed to "undermine the Venezuelan people's right to self-determination."

The U.S. had already joined Argentina, Peru, Colombia and Panama in saying it would not recognize the vote results. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley tweeted that earlier that the vote was a "sham election" which takes Venezuela "another step toward dictatorship."

The State Department says Washington will "continue to take strong and swift actions against the architects of authoritarianism in Venezuela." **MDT/AP**

THE DECISIVE MOMENT



Two to tango. Two men practice martial arts techniques at a public park in Beijing.

Station	Air quality	Icon
Roadside	45-65 Moderate	☹️
High Density Residential Area	45-65 Moderate	☹️
Ambient	45-65 Moderate	☹️

SOURCE: DSMG

WORLD BRIEFS

AUSTRALIA A legal battle over secret letters revealing what Queen Elizabeth II knew of her Australian representative's stunning plan to dismiss Australia's government in 1975 opened in federal court yesterday, in a case that could finally solve a mystery behind the country's most dramatic political crisis. **More on p13**



LEBANON-SYRIA Scores of buses and ambulances arrived at the Lebanon-Syria border yesterday for the second phase of an exchange between Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group and Syria's al-Qaida affiliate that would lead to the resettlement of thousands of refugees in Syria.

ITALY A man from the Ivory Coast who faced expulsion from Italy for previous aggressive behavior stabbed a public transit bus driver in the Tuscan city of Siena, causing a serious injury.

UGANDA-SOMALIA Twelve Ugandan soldiers were killed and seven others injured in an ambush by al-Shabab Islamic extremists in southern Somalia, Uganda's military said yesterday.

U.S.-RUSSIA U.S. Vice President Mike Pence yesterday strongly pledged America's commitment to protecting NATO allies against attacks, including the Baltic states, which have anxiously watched a growing Russian military presence in the region.



VENEZUELA's socialist government says a national election has given it a popular mandate to dramatically recast the country's political system even as condemnations of the process have poured in from nations abroad and the opponents at home.